

# BOX 52 ASSOCIATION



## THE LINE BOX

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Vol. 11 No. 5

Special Summer Edition

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### Welcome to the Line Box Special Summer Edition!

Here's what's inside! First up is a great historical article on the Brookline High School fire from 1936 by applicant John Pozark. Followed by a story on the B.F.D. and their ladder truck mounted deluge guns with photos from the collection of member William Noonan. From the prolific camera of member Michael Boynton, we feature a gallery of new apparatus deliveries from all over. Finally we round it out with a few of the tidbits about Box 52 that the Staff found, while researching some of the above stories from the Boston Globe Archives. We have cleaned them up by retyping them.

### New look for the Line Box!

After having received much feedback about the format of the Line Box and the left margin box forcing photos appearing to be compressed, the staff has decided to change out the letterhead and allow for full page use. Please let us know what you think!

### IFBA Hartford Convention

Reminder.....the 63rd annual convention of the International Fire Buffs Association will be held in Hartford from August 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>. Member and Convention Chairman Kenneth Beliveau reports that single day registrations are still available. Here is a link to the registration page:

<http://ifba.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015conventionpacket.pdf>

Please try and attend, even if it is only for a single day.

## BROOKLINE HIGH SCHOOL FIRE, 1936

By John Pozark Jr.



All photos courtesy of the Leslie Jones Collection Boston Public Library.

Fire struck the Old Building of Brookline High School known as Shailer Hall on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1936. Shailer Hall, a three and a half story brick structure with a pitched roof was built in 1894 and classified as 2<sup>nd</sup> Class construction. From the ground to the gutter the main building rose 60 feet. A hard pine roof covered by slate shingles topped an un-fire stopped attic of 21,000 square feet. There were 21 classrooms in the building each with an average of 20 students. Foreign Languages and Domestic Science were the principal subjects taught. The third floor auditorium had been converted to a library. In the center of the building was a brick tower 185 feet tall including the weather vane. The old building had an addition and was the oldest of the four buildings in the Brookline High School Quadrangle. The four buildings had a combined capacity of approximately 1800 students.

School had been dismissed for the day at 1:30 P.M. About 50 students and 30 teachers remained in the building. The fire was discovered burning in the Library on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor about 2:30 P.M. by civics teacher Ralph Totman. Mr. Totman sounded the fire alarm and the school bell. The peeling of the school bell brought baseball coach Thomas Fitzgerald. Both Fitzgerald and Totman raced to the third floor to see what they could do but were driven back by smoke. Without difficulty or panic the other teachers evacuated everyone from the building.

At 2:32 P.M., The Brookline Fire Alarm Office received Box 31 Sumner Rd. at Tappan St. from the street. A full first alarm assignment of Engine Co.'s 1-2-7, Ladder Co.'s 1-2, Deputy Chief McDonald and Chief of Department Allen responded.

When the first fire companies arrived, fire had full possession of the attic and was spreading rapidly. Smoke was pushing from the windows on the third floor. Upon his arrival Chief of Department Allen struck a Second Alarm. Companies began to advance 2 ½ inch handlines to the assembly hall on the top floor and opening windows on floors one and two. Thirty five and fifty five foot ground ladders were muscled up the stairways and firemen used "Church Raises" to make inspection holes and open up the assembly hall ceiling.



A total of sixteen 2 ½" handlines would be stretched and operated to put wet stuff on the red stuff. The height of the attic varied from 14' to as much as 26' in places. Four 55' and four 35' ground ladders were used for access to the cockloft.

On the roof, two firemen attempted to ventilate the fire vertically and create a central flow. Using a roof ladder the two members made their way across the slippery, smoke shrouded slate roof. Reaching a skylight, they smashed plaster hooks through the panes of glass. Bottled up smoke enveloped them. Suddenly, a swirl of convective hot air and gases cleared. Visible now was one man at the edge of the roof being held by the other! The roof ladder was now on fire. The two men quickly retreated to an uninvolved section of the roof which formed the branch of an ell in the building. Seconds later, the roof section, where they had just been collapsed into the third floor. A wave of radiated heat passed over the crowd of spectators.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm was transmitted at 2:37 P.M. followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Alarm at 2:47 P.M. Responding on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm, Brookline Engines 4-5 Ladder 3 and Deputy Chief Hayes. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Alarm brought Brookline Engines 3-6. The striking of multiple alarms activated automatic mutual aid from the City of Newton. Newton Engine 3 went direct to the fire, while Newton Engine 1 covered at Brookline Headquarters. Newton Chief of Department Randlett also responded to the fire. With more help needed, Brookline Chief of Department Allen called Boston to send help. Boston Engine Co's 37 and 28 along with Ladder Co. 10 responded.

Chief Allen was inside, upstairs, directing his men in the tough fight. Suddenly the ceiling began to collapse. Handlines and ladders were abandoned in place. Trapped under the collapsed roof were Fire Lt. Donovan, Firemen Daxon, Pons, Mealey, Duggan and Harrington. Firemen worked rapidly in dangerous conditions to remove them. All members then evacuated and Chief Allen along with his people had a near miss as they were injured by the falling plaster.

Operations now went to the exterior and became defensive. Jets of water from firemen perched on ladders poured into the fire. Baker portable deluge guns were setup and fed by multiple siamese lines. The Boston Engine Companies operated using the Morse Guns on their hose wagons. From the roof of the annex, handlines shot streams of water into the flames. Smoke was thick and blanketed half the town. Hot air explosions blew out windows. Streams could not reach the top of the tower and finally, the great weathervane, weighing more than a ton, came crashing down.

For four hours they battled the inferno. Operating a handline on the roof, Ladderman Kessler was overcome by smoke and nearly died. Missing for 10 minutes, he was found unconscious, rescued by his brothers and removed to the hospital.



A first aid station was set up in the new wing of the school. Doctors treated the injured. Brookline Fire Department Physician Frederick Hayes assisted some of the men to the hospital. Reverend George M. Dowd, Brookline Fire Department Chaplain, was summoned from St. Mary of the Assumption Church to minister to the injured members and accompany them to the hospital. All members were taken to the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital by Private automobile as well as the Brookline Police Ambulance and the "Wagon". Among the injured were Lt Clarence Donovan Hose 1-Back Injury, Ladderman Roy Kessler Ladder 1-Overcome by Smoke Inhalation, Hoseman McCarthy company not listed-Overcome by Smoke Inhalation, Ladderman Thomas J. Daxon Ladder 1-Broken Shoulder, Ladderman Frank Pons Ladder 1-Bilateral Leg Injury, Ladderman John Mealey Ladder 2-Bilateral Leg Injury, Hoseman Thomas E. Duggan Engine 3-Multiple Lacerations to Body, Ladderman Joseph Harrington Ladder 3-Injuries to Hand & Face, Lt. Edward Forbes Engine 7-Hand Laceration, Ladderman James Kirrane Ladder 2-Hand Laceration, Ladderman John E. Patterson Ladder 3-Eye Laceration. Lt Donovan, Laddermen Kessler, Harrington and Daxon were all admitted to the hospital overnight for observation. Doctors agreed Lt. Donovan was the most seriously injured.

The thick smoke which blanketed the area snarled traffic on the Boston to Worcester Turnpike and could be seen as far away as Wellesley. The smoke brought a crowd estimated at 20,000 people to watch the battle. Early in the fire, Brookline Police Lt. Joseph P. Mahoney responded. With traffic in the town paralyzed and an enormous assembly of people he needed help. Using state of the art, wireless technology he summoned a police radio car and set up a link with police headquarters. The day platoon of police was held over and 40 men of the night platoon were called in early. When all the police horses and all the police ropes weren't enough to contain the crowd, reinforcements were called. The Brookline Street Dept. brought people, horses and ropes to the scene. Suppression operations carried on into the night. The Boston Fire Department's Lighting Plant was special called. Both of the units Kohler generators were put to work. A Homelite portable generator fed floodlights at the rear of the building.

At 4:26 A.M., on September 26<sup>th</sup>, the All Out was sounded on Box 31. The fire was confined mostly to the top floor and attic area. There was some extension to the second floor via pipe chase. A number of stock covers spread on lower floors as part of salvage operations protected bookcases and reduced the financial loss. The exposures including the attached building were protected from serious damage. An investigation after the fire attributed the cause and origin to a defective incinerator flue in the chimney of the old tower at the front of the building. The chimney passed through the blind attic space. Chief Allen believed the fire had been burning for at least two hours before being discovered.

No job is finished till the paper work is done. The Statistics: Chief of Dept. Allen estimated the financial loss at \$150,000.00. Water supply from the post hydrants was adequate with an average pressure of 80 psi and an estimated 1,900,000 gallons of water used. The amount of hose used was 12,000' with 1,600' lost to damage. American LaFrance apparatus dominated the fire ground with two ALF aerial ladders used. All pumbers used were of ALF make and of 750Gpm capacity at 120 psi. One hundred and sixty firemen fought the fire with at least fourteen treated for injuries, mostly from falling plaster and slate. Brookline Fire Commissioner George W. Goode praised the firemen. A young "Spark" wrote to Fire Engineering Magazine to extol the virtue and sacrifice of his hometown department and their comrades. His name was, Ben Ellis.

### Boston's Ladder Truck Deluge Guns And the Passing of the Water Towers

The B.F.D Water Towers, by 1956 were tired and battle scarred. They had started their careers during the horse drawn days and had gone into the motorized era and were now on their second or third motorized tractors. They had fought some of the most famous blazes in the history of the Department, and on Tuesday May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1956 at 08:00 AM, Water Towers 1 and 2 were placed in reserve status. The Towers had a combined total of 110 years of service!



Water Tower 2 1890 Kansas City Fire Dept. Supply 55 foot mast with its 1914 American-British Tractor  
All photos from collection of Member William Noonan

In 1956, the National Board of Fire Underwriters issued new standards and grading schedule for fire departments. Among these new standards were newly defined schedules for large appliances and ladder trucks, The NBFU stated that "adequate facilities shall include equipment for siamesing lines, the installation of turret or monitor nozzles on apparatus, and the carrying of deluge sets or portable monitor or turret nozzles or large spray nozzles." It further stated that a "complete ladder pipe shall be provided for each aerial ladder truck either attached or convenient for quick attaching and shall have an assortment of tips and large spray nozzles. Two aerial ladder trucks each equipped with a ladder pipe permitting its use at an elevation of at least 65 feet may be equivalent to a water tower". With this new standard, it was the death knell to the Water Towers.

Boston, had ordered two new metal tiller aerials that would be assigned to Ladder Company 8 (S/N 280) at Fort Hill Square and Ladder 17 (S/N 279) at Broadway. The new apparatus, built by the Seagrave Corporation featuring 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary series tractors and 100 foot metal aerial ladders. Fire Commissioner Francis X. Cotter speaking to the Boston Globe on April 27<sup>th</sup> stated that the long serving water towers were soon to be placed in reserve status, as the new ladder trucks were equipped with 'huge deluge guns and ladder guns, rendered the Towers obsolete'. Assistant Fire Chief Leo C. Driscoll was quoted several weeks earlier in the Globe speaking about the new Ladders "A huge deck gun is mounted on the side of the apparatus with a water capacity of 2,000 gallons per minute. No other apparatus in New England is equipped with this type of deluge gun".



Ladder 17's crew drilling with the aerial ladder.

According to the 1956 Annual Report under Ladder Truck Equipment of the new Seagraves it stated "Deluge Gun – Each of these trucks is equipped with a large size deluge gun permanently mounted on the side of the apparatus with Siamese fittings allowing for the incorporation of discharge from four lines into one stream of 2,000 gallons per minute." The B.F.D had high hopes for these guns.

The next three Seagrave Ladder trucks ordered, all had the deluge guns mounted on the trailer section. Two additional ladders were ordered for 1957 delivery, and one for 1958 delivery. The 1957 models were delivered to Ladder Company 15 (S/N 281) and Ladder Company 26 (S/N 282). The 1958 rig was assigned to Ladder 13 (S/N 283) in the South End.

These five Trucks saw plenty of fire duty, civil unrest, and the start of the 'War Years'.

As the Seagrave Tractors gave out, the units were re-powered with the massive Diamond-Reo tractors.



Ladder 13 shows off its 1968 Reo tractor mated to its 58 Seagrave tiller.



Not to be out done, Ladder 8 models it mated Reo and Seagrave trailer.

None of the 6 1962 Seagrave Tillers were equipped with the guns. This was also the case with both the 1968 and 1970 American La France rigs.

It would be fifteen years before any new tillers would be ordered with the trailer mounted deluge guns. Between 1971 and 1973 the Department took delivery of nine Maxim tillers. But, only three would be equipped with deluge guns



Ladder 4's 1973 Maxim showing the mounted deluge gun

As the years passed, and new apparatus was delivered the Seagraves and the Maxim were transferred all over the City. You could see them at Ladder 2 in East Boston and in West Roxbury at Ladder 25 and running as Ladder 9 in Charlestown.



Ladder 2 circa 1974 with former Ladder 17's 56 Seagrave.

When the 1976 Seagraves were ordered they came in with out the deluge gun. And when the last of the Maxim were placed out of service by the new wave of rear mount ladders with pre-piped water ways, the heavy stream appliance faded into lore and legend of the Boston Fire Department. The guns did see action at some of the big ones. In fact Ladder 17 on Mutual Aid to Wakefield for the Robie Fire, both the ladder pipe and the deluge gun were in operation.

## Apparatus Deliveries By Member Michael Boynton

For your enjoyment a bakers dozen of new 'Masheens'!



**Boxford Brush 1** 2015 Ford F-550/Brat 4x4  
200 gpm 300 gallon tank 15 gallons foam



**Chelmsford Ladder 1** 2013 Smeal Sirius 2000/300  
20 gallons foam, 100 ft tower. Former Demo unit



**Deerfield Engine 2** 2014 Freightliner/Wilde Fire  
1500/3000/20 gals of A & B foam



**Egremont Tanker 5** 2015 I.H/ Rosenbauer  
1500 pump, 3000 gallon tank



**Hamilton Ladder 4** 2014 Pierce Velocity  
2000 gpm, 500 gal. tank, 100 ft rear mount



**Hanson Squad 4** 2015 Ford F-550/HME  
1500 gpm pump and 400 gallon tank



**Lunenberg Engine 1** 2015 E-One Quest  
1750 gpm pump, 1250 gal. tank, 30 gals foam



**Mass. Fire Academy Engine 2** 2015 I.H/E-One  
1250 gpm , 530 gallon tank. One of three similar  
pumps delivered.



**Montague Center Engine 1** 2013 Spartan/ERV  
1500 gpm pump, 1000 gal tank, 30 gal. foam tank



**Oak Bluffs Engine 522** 2015 Spartan.4-Guys  
1500 gpm pump, 510 gal tank, 30 gals foam



**Rowley Ladder 1** 2015 E-One Metro  
100 foot rear mount aerial



**Savoy Tanker 1** 2015 Freightliner/Midwest Fire  
500 gpm pump and a 2400 gallon tank



Ware Engine 3 2015 Ferrara Igniter MVP 1750/500

## Box 52 History from the archives of the Boston Globe

Boston Globe Feb, 20 1914

**FIREMEN ARE GUESTS,  
Box 52 Association Host at Annual Dinner,  
Thanks of Boston Department Given for Aid at Fires.**

The Box 52 Association at its second annual dinner at Louis' Café last night heard Ernest Goldsmith, engineer in charge, explain the new high-pressure system for fighting fires, Fire Commissioner Charles H. Cole advocated a Metropolitan Fire and Police Department and Chief John A. Mullen thanked then for assistance rendered at big fires.

About 60 members and guests attended, among the other guests who spoke being Deputy Chief Peter McDonough, Supt Samuel Abbott of the Protective Department, Supt George L. Fickett of the fire alarm branch, Commissioner of Public Safety Cunningham of Cambridge Capt James Fitzgerald, Protective, and Ex-Commissioner Potter of Buffalo. Pres George Y. Berry was toastmaster.

Mr Goldsmith pointed out how Boston is fortunate in its domestic water supply, which is declared far above any demands that can be made upon it during ordinary times. He showed how tests indicated that water from the Charles River Basin could not be used in the high-pressure system. He strongly condemned the proposals to attach the new high-pressure to the sprinkler systems in buildings, saying that even with the heavy going now, an engine company can reach any fire downtown within a few minutes, and if the sprinkler system need the high pressure, it can be put into them through sidewalk standpipe connections.

Fire Commissioner Charles H. Cole was also opposed to a connection with the sprinkler systems. "when a fire prevention law goes through," he said, "which will have to be sometime, I want to see the practical firemen do the inspecting. At the present time with the different inspectors, builders and architects doing the work, it is not done as it should be."

"Something that should be done by the Legislature, and it cannot be done too soon, is to place all permanent chiefs of fire departments under Civil Service. At the present time, every new Mayor or Board of Selectmen, has the power to turn the chief out; experienced men doing good work."

"Another thing coming, maybe not one year, two years or five years, but it has got to come sooner or later, and that is a Metropolitan Fire District under the command of a State official. It seems very queer to see Engine 10 passing three engine houses in Cambridge while responding to a second alarm in Brighton, while these companies are still in quarters and miles nearer to the fire than the Boston Companies."

In ending his address, Commissioner Cole said: "On behalf of the city of Boston and the officers and members of the Boston Fire Department I want to thank the members of the Box 52 Association for the work they have done in practically putting new life into freezing men with hot coffee and sandwiches at different fires."

# FIRST in '56

## Eastman DELUGE GUNS

THIS — the FIRST of EASTMAN'S DEMONSTRATION TRUCKS  
is a fire fighting unit for you  
to SEE and OPERATE  
personally.

*Coming  
Your  
Way*

The illustration shows a white truck with red horizontal stripes. On the side of the truck, the text "Samuel Eastman Company, Inc." and "CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE" is visible. The truck is equipped with various fire-fighting apparatus, including several large deluge guns mounted on the rear bed. A small ladder is also visible. The truck is shown from a three-quarter front view, angled slightly to the right.

**Chief:**

We want you to handle and operate EASTMAN Deluge Guns on your own home grounds. This will give you the opportunity to see what EASTMAN equipment can do for your fire fighting problems.

**SAMUEL EASTMAN CO., INC.**  
EASTMAN DELUGE GUNS AND PLAYPIPES — FIRE DEPARTMENT SUPPLIES  
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Introducing  
**BOB FITZ**  
Bob is our factory representative. He will bring this demonstration truck to you and will be ready to answer your questions regarding EASTMAN fire fighting equipment.