

Box 52 Association



The Line Box Goes to the Beach!



I.F.B.A. Member club since 1955!

Vol. 17

Summer Supplement

Welcome to our summer issue. We have titled this issue ***The Line Box Goes to the Beach!***

We have several article on beach communities' conflagrations along the coast.



Box 52 Assoc. Photo by member Peter Aloisi

Revere Firefighters evacuate the upper floors after heavy fire conditions were encountered on the third floor and attic. RFD Chief Bright is just ordering the second alarm for this house fire on June 3 at 24 Kingman Avenue. Photo by member Peter Aloisi.

Here is the lineup:

- Hull Steamboat Wharf fire 1929
- Massachusetts Forest Fire protection in 1939
- Marshfield Conflagration
- Paragon Park Conflagration in 1923
- Newburyport Conflagration 1941
- Cape Cod Forest Fire in 1923
- Multiple Alarm Record for June and July
- Apparatus Deliveries

So, stick your feet in the sand, pop a cold beverage, enjoy a day at the beach, or pool side with the Line Box!



Box 52 Assoc.
Collection of member F. San
Severino

Photo by the Biddeford-Saco Journal

Ogunquit, Maine August 14th, 1968 Maxwell House fire. Just about 2030 hrs a fire broke out in this historic former resort hotel in Ogunquit Center. I was an 11 year old on vacation in York Beach begging my parents to "bring me to the fire"! We will have a report on this fire in a future Line Box.



BFD Doin's

**By Mark Roche
Line Box Staff**

On Wednesday July 14th a ceremony was held at the quarters of Engine Company 55 for the reactivation of Fire District 10. The ceremony also featured the promotions of 12 fire officers.

A brief history of District 10:

District 13 at E-45 re-designated District 10 on May 5, 1954

District 10 moved to the new E-53 firehouse on June 11, 1959

District 10 relocated from the quarters of E-53 to E-55 on June 29, 1971

District 10 deactivated in 1981 due to Proposition 2.5

District 10 reactivated at E-55 on July 21, 1982

District 10 again deactivated on July 1, 2009

District 10 reactivated at E-55 during a ceremony on July 14, 2021



On display at the event was the new Brush Fire 55. Photo by member Michael Boynton.
2005 Stewart & Stevenson MTV/2021 Acela Monterra 6X6 500/1000/30 gallons of foam.

Newburyport's MILLION Dollar Fire

**By David Parr
Line Box Staff**

Newburyport, Massachusetts is a beautiful coastal city of 18,000 located 35 miles northeast of Boston, on the Merrimack River where it enters the Atlantic Ocean. A historic [seaport](#) with a vibrant tourism industry, Newburyport includes part of [Plum Island](#). The mooring, winter storage, and maintenance of recreational boats, motor and sail, still contribute a large part of the city's income. A [Coast Guard](#) station oversees boating activity, especially in the sometimes dangerous tidal currents of the [Merrimack River](#).

The city features beautiful brick buildings in the downtown area, surrounded by stately Victorian style homes that were once owned by sea captains sailing out of the port. Despite its former prosperity, in the 1950s and 1960s Newburyport's center fell into disrepair. Consequently, by 1970 Newburyport's historic downtown section was scheduled to be razed prior to reconstruction with federal money known as "urban renewal". At the last moment, the city changed its mind and signed a federal grant that allowed it to keep most of its historic architecture. Renovations and restorations began during the early 1970s and continued throughout most of the decade. Newburyport is often cited as an example by preservationists of how to maintain a city's architecture and heritage, while still having it remain functional and livable.

Like many New England cities, Newburyport has seen its share of major fires, including two conflagrations. The largest of the two fires occurred on May 31, 1811 when the Great Fire consumed 250 buildings over 16 ½ acres of property in the heart of the city, displacing ninety families. The 1811 fire was attributed to an arsonist, a 16-year-old boy named Stephen M. Clark. Clark was tried, found guilty and on May 10, 1821, he was hung at Execution Hill on Winter Island in Salem. At the time, Clark was the youngest person ever executed for a crime in the United States.

The second fire has become to be known as the Million Dollar Fire that hit the city on early Saturday morning, May 20, 1934. In the two-day period between May 18th and May 20th, the city was plagued by an arsonist, with three fires set at a house at Merrimac and Bartlett Streets that required one occupant to be rescued; followed by shed fires set at Elbow Lane and Liberty Street; then by another house fire at Merrimac and Unicorn Streets; and a false alarm at Park and Harris Street.

Newburyport's Fire Department was a combination department of fifty members consisting of paid drivers and call men, led by Fire Chief John F. Cutter Sr. and Assistant Chief Richard K. Pike. (Chief Cutter's son John F. Cutter, Jr, his grandson John F. Cutter III, and his great grandson Steven Cutter all later served the city as Fire Chiefs). The department operated out of the Headquarters Station located at Market Square at the intersection of Merrimac, Water and State Streets, which still stands today as the Firehouse Center for the Arts and a restaurant. The apparatus consisted of Engine 1 a 1919 Seagrave pumper, Engine 2 a 1929 American LaFrance pumper, Hose 7 a Larrabee Hose Wagon, and Ladder 1 a Maxim city service ladder also known as the "lumber wagon".

City Marshal James E. Sullivan, father of former Box 52 member and retired Hampton, NH Fire Chief William "Skip" Sullivan, had been called out to work on a Friday night with some other officers to investigate a series of small fires in the downtown and South End. (Newburyport is one of only a few cities to refer to their Police Chief as the City Marshal) As he was leaving Police HQ on Green Street with Officer Doyle to track down a loose horse over on Temple Street, he glanced at the clock tower of Central Congregational Church on Titcomb Street to check the time and noticed a strange glow on the steeple. He then looked over and saw a spectacular glow coming from Merrimac Street near the Route One bridge, and immediately pulled Box 47 at Pleasant and Green Street.

At fire headquarters just down the street, weary firefighters were repacking hose on first due Engine 1, when the box hit at 1:24 AM. Instead, they rolled out with Engine 2 the American LaFrance pumper, and on scene within a minute, firefighters found the four-story Dodge Brothers Shoe factory at Merrimac



Market Square Fire Headquarters with 1919 Seagrave pump. Collection D. Parr.

Street and Bridge Road engulfed in flames. The fire quickly spread to the adjacent Learned Shoe Factory, also a four-story brick building, then jumped to the Gillis building on Bridge Road, then across Merrimac Street to the Kerkian building, and proceeded down both sides of Merrimac Street, driven by a strong wind from the southwest. Keefe's Garage at Merrimac and Market streets was destroyed, as was McKay's Boat Yard on the riverfront and up to 20 small boats stored there. Aurslanian Brothers electrical shop went up in flames, along with the Collins Coal office, the Odd Fellows Hall, John McBride's barber shop and the John Elliott funeral parlor. (Residents assisted in the removal of caskets from the funeral home before it was consumed).

Chief Cutter quickly realized that they would need help to stop the fire from spreading into Market Square and the downtown area. A police car was dispatched to intercept an Amesbury engine that was returning to their town from the previous evenings fires and turned them around near the chain bridge. The on-duty telephone operator was instructed by Chief Cutter to call fifteen departments to respond, which included Amesbury, Salisbury, Merrimac, Lowell, Lawrence, Danvers, Salem, Haverhill, Newbury, Hamilton, Georgetown, Ipswich, and from New Hampshire Exeter, Hampton and Portsmouth, with 22 pieces of firefighting equipment and 268 firemen responding. When leaving their beach station to respond, Hampton firefighters thought that the immense glow was a fire at the south end of Hampton Beach! A privately owned engine from the Dibble Farm in Newbury responded and was used to patrol for embers in the city's congested south end.

Once the mutual aid engines arrived and sufficient water supply was established, a stand was made at the Sedgewick House, corner of Merrimac and Titcomb Streets, where firefighters successfully stopped the spread of the fire around 3:30 AM. In addition to pumping from the city hydrant system, several engines drafted directly from the Merrimack River, the Market Street cistern, and the Frog Pond, located at the Bartlett Mall on High Street, which was pumped dry! Flying brands set fire to roof tops on Prospect, Federal, Lime, and Temple Streets, as well as a porch fire as far away as Morgan Avenue in Newbury. The embers, in fact, were a particular problem, forcing firefighters to divert their attention from fighting the main blaze.

By the time the last ember was extinguished, 15 families were homeless, and 500 people were unemployed. Damage was estimated at \$1 million, which was an unimaginable amount of money during the Depression era. Piles of furniture were seen on sidewalks as residents were ready to flee the city if

the monstrous fire had not been quelled. Electrical power, telephone lines and the fire alarm system to the north end of the city were knocked out by the fire. Many firefighters were injured: mainly smoke



Aerial shot of fire area. Photo by Lesile Jones Boston Globe, Courtesy of Digital Commonwealth L. Jones collection



Remains of Dodge Brothers. Photo courtesy of Fire Engineering Archives

inhalation, burns and cuts, including Thomas Dockery, Donald Barth, William Dickie, and Edward Butler from the Newburyport department.

The fire also created a wave of fear in the city. Residents were terrified that a pyromaniac was loose among them. After all, the signs were all there. Five small fires had been started and snuffed out Friday night before the big one erupted Saturday morning. Before dawn on Monday, a Charter Street couple discovered two piles of burning papers in their multi-family house, one in their basement and another in the front hallway. At first, authorities tried to assure the public that they would soon have the arsonist in custody and several people were questioned, but in the end, no one was ever charged.

Meanwhile, the weekend brought literally hundreds of thousands of people into the city to gawk at the ruins, creating what was called "the greatest traffic jam in the history of the city, and it appeared as if every other automobile in Massachusetts was being driven into this city." An estimated 125,000 people jammed into the area, even as demolition crews tried to raze and secure what was left of the remaining structures.

The fire of 1934 came during the Depression and had a major effect on the economy in Newburyport. It wiped out what remained of the shoe industry, left people homeless and added to the fear of destitution that was sweeping the country.



Another views of the Dodge Brothers. Photo courtesy of Fire Engineering Archives

Special thanks to former Box 52 member and retired Hampton, NH Fire Chief Skip Sullivan for his assistance with this story.



Multiple Alarms

June 1st – July 31st, 2021

Date	Time	Box	City	Address	Building
06/02	2322	2-462	Dedham	355 Sprague St	2 story wdfr
06/04	1342	2-341	Lynn	8 Lafayette Pk	3 story wdfr
06/14	2309	2-3223	Boston	61 Shepton St	2.5 story wdfr
06/30	0104	N/A	Braintree	375 Granite St	2 story wdfr
07/03	1055	2-3142	Boston	115 Adams St	2 story wdfr
07/03	1444	2-1917	Chelsea	22 Willow St	2 story brick office condos
07/05	N/A	2-1721	Winthrop	316 Pleasant St	2.5 story wdfr
07/06	0522	2-2435	Boston	41 Cornwall St	2.5 story wdfr
07/09	1939	2-57	Medford	12 Ronaele St	2 story wdfr

Third Alarms and Above

Wednesday June 2nd Revere

Three alarms were sounded on Revere Box 154 for 24 Kingman Avenue. Fire was in a 2.5 story two family wood frame dwelling. The third alarm was ordered for water supply and relief purposes. At 1618 hrs. Revere Fire Dispatch struck the box and reported receiving calls for a roof fire. Arriving first due Engine 4 reported fire showing from the second floor. One victim was removed to Cataldo Ambulance and interior companies reported heavy fire on the top floor and cockloft. Crews working on the upper floors were forced to evacuate as conditions deteriorated rapidly. Revere C1 Chief Bright (Box 52 Member) ordered the second alarm. At 1631 hrs the progress report from OIC "heavy fire 3rd floor and attic, exterior attack. 1 ladder pipes in operation and several big lines". The third alarm was ordered for water supply and relief purposes.

Time	Alarm	Engines	Ladders	Other
1618	154	4, 5, 3	2	C2, C7
1621	W.F	1	1, Che. L2 RIT	A6
1625	2-154	Che. E3, Wint. E1, Eve.E3		C1, M1 w/air trailer, Massport E1 RIT
1650	3-154	Mal. E4, Bos. E56, Lynn E9	Mal. L1	Bos. D1

Friday June 18th Boston

At 0245 hrs. Fire Alarm transmitted Box 1853 for a three decker at 15 Castle Rock Street. The FAO advised first alarm companies that they were receiving calls. Engine 21 arriving first due reported fire showing from the second and third floors and ordered the second alarm at 0248 hrs. The third alarm was transmitted at 0253 hrs on the orders of District 7.

Friday June 18th Somerville

Late in the afternoon Somerville FAO transmitted Box 238 for a reported fire in a three decker at 93 Temple St. Companies arrived and found heavy fire at the rear porches of the second and third floors with fire extending to the Bravo exposure, a 2.5 story wood frame.

Time	Alarm	Engines	Ladders	Other
1503	238	2, 3, 7	L2, L3	R1, C2
1505	W.F.	6		C3, C5
1510	2-238	1, Camb E5, Med. 5	Tw. 1	Camb. Sq. 2 & Div. 1
1535	3-238	Eve. E1, Bos. E32, Camb. E4	Camb. L1, Med. L1	Bos. Dist. 4

Tuesday June 22nd Somerville

Four days after the Temple Street job, another three alarm fire was fought at 17 Bond Street. The fire was in a large occupied 2.5 story wood frame dwelling. Box 3463 was transmitted at 0123 hrs. Arriving first on scene, SPD Officers attempted to gain entry via the front door to alert residents. There was exterior fire showing at the front and the sudden rush of air caused the fire to race up the interior stairway to all floors. The officers were forced to retreat due the fire conditions. First arriving companies faced heavy fire conditions on all floors on the Alpha side of the building. The second alarm was transmitted five minutes after the box was struck.

Time	Alarm	Engines	Ladders	Other
0123	3463	2, 6, 7	2, 3	R1, C2
0128	2-3463	1, 3 Camb. E5, Med. E5	Tw. 1	C3, Camb Div. 1, Camb. Sq. 2
0156	3-3463	Eve E1, Bos. E32, Camb. E4	Camb. L1, Med. L1	Bos. Dist. 3

Tuesday June 29th Revere

Report by Box 52 Vice President & Revere Deputy Fire Chief James Cullen

Report of a house fire at #25 Hyde Street Box 26 transmitted

Revere E4, E1, E5, L2, & C6

The first arriving company (E4) arrived on scene and reported fire and smoke showing.

E4 reported a working fire

Box 45-26

Revere E3, L1, Chelsea L2 (RIT)

C6 (Deputy S. Manion) arrived on scene, assumed command, and reported heavy fire on the exterior "A" side of #25 Hyde St. with arcing wires down in the street

Revere L1, Revere L2, and Chelsea L2 began a primary search of #25 Hyde St. Due to heavy fire conditions companies were only able to complete a primary search of floor #1. Companies were evacuated from #25 Hyde St. All truck companies were ordered to search and evacuate residents from exposure buildings "B" and "D"
Companies ran several 2 1/2" handlines to the exposure buildings (side "B"& "D") and attempted to knock down the heavy fire in the original fire building

2nd Alarm per C6

Box 2-26

Chelsea E3, Winthrop E1, Everett E3, **Chelsea L2 (reassigned to operations)** Massport E1 (RIT)
C1, C2, K2, M1 with air trailer.

C1 Command

C2 Operations

C6 Exposure Divisions "B" & "D"

Box 3-26 per C6.

Malden E4, Boston E56, Lynn E9, **Malden L2**, All remaining Deputies, Boston Car 1
C5 Division "C" (Pleasant St.)

Due to heavy fire, smoke conditions, water supply issues (low volume and pressure) and hot temperatures and heat index, additional alarms were struck for manpower and crew relief.

4th Alarm per Command

4-26

Medford E?, Cambridge Engine and Squad, Somerville Engine, **Lynn Truck**

5th Alarm per Command

5-26

Melrose Engine diverted for a still alarm and then to coverage (additional Lynn pump to fire) Stoneham Engine, Wakefield Engine, **Medford L2**

6th alarm per Command

6-26

Boston Engine, Milton Engine, Belmont Engine, **Boston L21**

7th alarm per Command

7-26

Arlington E2, Winchester E1, Boston E5, **Somerville L2**

4 members from outside fire departments and 1 Revere member to the hospital for heat exhaustion.
Rehab area set up inside of inspectional services for fire crews.

Saturday July 17th Saugus

This three alarm fire around dawn claimed the lives of two residents. The Line Box will have a full report on this fire in Vol. 18 No. 1 issue in October.

Big Forest Fire on Cape Cod

H. BELKNAP

7.25.1923 Fire Engineering

Cape Cod, Massachusetts, from Bourne and Monument Beach to Sagamore and East Sandwich, was recently swept by a disastrous forest fire which laid waste thousands of acres of timber land and threatened several towns with destruction. The fire raged for three days and nights and jumped roads and clearings in spite of the efforts of several hundred fire fighters working under direction of the forest wardens. One vacant homestead was burned and in many cases the flames were stopped within a few feet of farm houses and residences. Back firing was finally resorted to and a ditch nine miles long was cut with a motor plow and this proved an effective barrier from which to start back fires and prevent the main fire from crossing into new territory.



Several times when the fire was believed to be under control a shift in direction of the wind fanned the flames to renewed fury. Extensive use was made of chemical extinguishers which were transported along woods roads on motor trucks. Shovels and brooms were also employed to beat out the advancing lines of fire, but the main fire could only be checked by starting back fires from main roads and intersecting highways and confining the flames to a section about five miles square which was done after a large territory had been burned over. Plumbers' blow torches were used to start the back fires which swept in and joined the main blaze until both died out for want of further fuel. If the main fire had not met the area already burned it would have easily crossed the road.

Chemical engines and motor pumpers were sent to Sagamore from Plymouth and motor apparatus was also sent from Falmouth. The flames raged fiercely in the vicinity of Forestdale between Pocasset and East Sandwich. Coffee, sandwiches, and drinking water were sent in to the fire fighters, many of whom were so exhausted that they lay asleep by the roadside.

The section of woods burned was just to the south and east of the Cape Cod Canal and in some places the flames extended nearly to the banks of the waterway where navigation was made difficult by the

heavy smoke. Motorcycle police from the state constabulary patrolled the burned area by the roads and diverted the heavy auto traffic.

The woods were very dry as there had been no rainfall for several weeks before the flames broke out. There were conflicting reports as to the origin of the blaze, one story giving a broken high-tension wire and sparks from a short circuit as the cause, and the other report being that cigars or cigarettes thrown aside by telephone linemen were responsible. More than 20,000 acres of woodland, much of it state reservation property, were burned over. High credit was given to P. H. Lombard, of Forestdale, who drove his 45 horsepower Holt farm tractor attached to a plow and made a long ditch which would have required great labor to dig by hand. The plant of the Keith Freight Car Company at Sagamore was threatened and also the high school at Bourne.



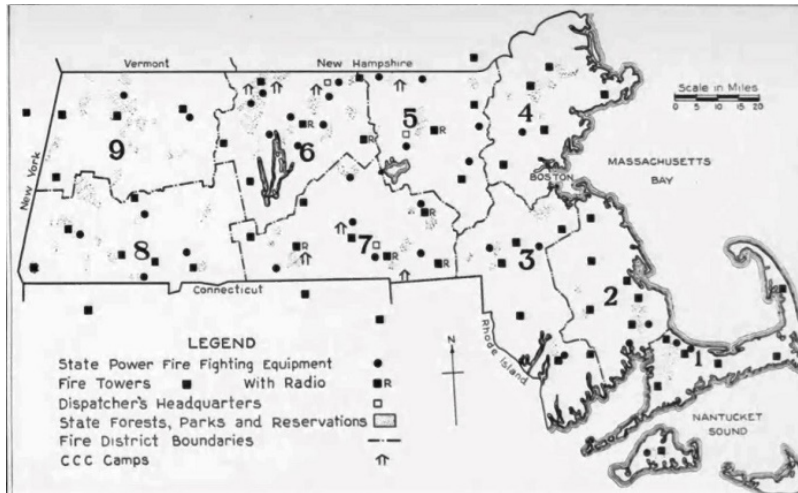
Box 52 Assoc. Photo Fire & Water Engineering Archives -
1923

Massachusetts Forest Firefighting circa 1939

Article that appeared in the September 1939 issue of NFPA Volunteer Firemen Magazine

Editor's Note: *This article deals with the damage suffered in forest lands after the Great Hurricane of 1938. The central part of Massachusetts was in the direct path of the storm and Most damage occurred in Forest Fire Districts 5, 6 and 7.*

Massachusetts 5,000 square miles of forest fooled several experts by getting by through the first two summer months of 1939 without a major burn. Though there are hundreds of hurricane blow-downs in all parts of the state and entire forests are devastated in the central portions; though the driest July on record is being followed by an August drought which has dried out the fallen timber to the flammability of tinder: and though over 2,000 fires have already started and been extinguished, the total area burned has been less than 20,000 acres and no single fire has consumed over 600 acres



One of the largest factors in this favorable record is the firefighting organization which has been set up by the State Department of Conservation. This department maintains 39 forest fire trucks in hazardous locations throughout the state. Fourteen of these are new and were ordered especially in the path of last fall's hurricane. The new apparatus are equipped with 100 gpm pumps, a supply of 2-inch suction hose, 275 gallon water tank, and 2,500 feet of 1 ½ inch fire hose.



Publicity photo of new apparatus on April 8, 1939 in Westborough. Photo NFPA Fireman Magazine Archives

The Department of Conservation has taken other special steps to protect the three central districts. It has equipped several of the fire lookout towers with two-way radio. It has installed the office of the district dispatcher to keep track of the locations of all state equipment and summon it to fires.

When a lookout spots a fire, he reports it first to the local fire warden, who is often the fire chief of the nearest town. The town apparatus then rolls to the fire immediately and makes the preliminary attack. Meanwhile the lookout calls the dispatcher. The dispatcher has a map showing areas of different degrees of hazard. After consulting this he summons whatever state apparatus he deems necessary for quick and sure control. Ordinarily he calls only the apparatus from his own district. Sometimes he calls the local apparatus of surrounding towns. If he judges the fire an extremely dangerous one he may send to adjoining districts for state aid.

The CCC (*Civilian Conservation Corps-Editor*) Border Camps. Organized in the hurricane area for the purpose of trimming slash and clearing out brush, form another fire fighting force available to the dispatcher. Each camp is provided with a portable pump and 2,000 feet of hose. There are 120 men, all experienced in CCC work located at each camp. They do not respond to fires unless summons by the dispatcher or the district fire warden.

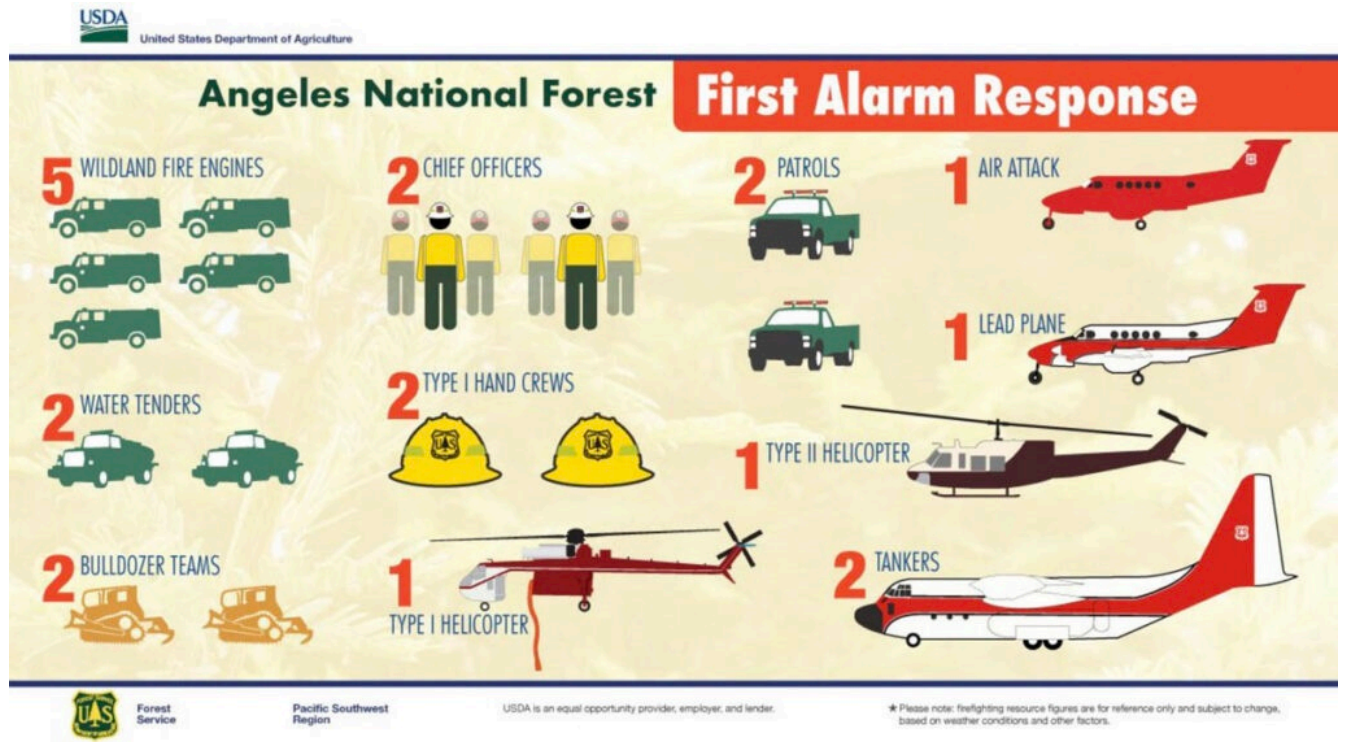
In fire districts outside the hurricane area, there is no dispatcher. State apparatus is summoned only by the district warden.



Rig owned by Box 52 member H. Smith's father.

The Line Box Knows!

While responding to or working at a brush/outside fire have you ever asked yourself what the first alarm assignment for a reported brush fire in the Angeles National Forest in California? This is a very aggressive assignment designed to keep fires to small areas.



Meanwhile here is the Cal Fire statewide report for Sunday July 25th, 2021



**Dixie Fire in Dixie National Forest
Butte & Plumas Counties
Northern California near Nevada State Line**

US Forest Service & Cal Fire

The Dixie fire is now the largest wildland fire and the 15th largest in California State history.

July 31st h, 2021 Update at 1905 hours PDST

Fire started on July 14th at 1200 hours in the Feather River Canyon near the Cresta Power House.

Containment: 33%

Acres burned: 244,388

Fuels: Timber, Grass, Understory and Chaparral

Expected Containment: August 13th

Evacuation orders: Mandatory and in various places.

Structures Destroyed: 66

Structures Damaged: 9

Cause: Under Investigation

Assets committed: Personnel 5, 563

Engines: 485 Water Tenders (Tankers): 100

Dozers 80

Hand Crews: 91

Helicopters: 28

Other type units: 1,380

Air Tankers: Numerous from entire state. Flying suppression missions as conditions allow.





Box 52 Assoc.
Photo by KOLO Channel 8 TV News



Box 52 Assoc.
Photo NBC News

OCEAN BLUFF CONFLAGRATION

Marshfield Monday April, 21, 1941

By Frank San Severino

Line Box Editor

April 21st of this year marked the 80th anniversary of this little known, but devastating conflagration that lasted less than five hours destroying some 550 buildings.

As New Englanders all know, the month of April can be a fickle Mistress. Snow one day, 75-80 degrees the next, flooding rains or drought conditions. That April 80 years ago found the entire Commonwealth suffering from dry conditions. Brush and forest fires were occurring all over the state prompting bans on all outside fires.

On April 22nd, the day after the fire the Commissioner of Conservation Raymond J. Kenney in a Boston Globe interview about conditions stated the following; "There are 3,000,000 acres of forest land in the Commonwealth. Since the first of the month we have experienced over 14 serious forest fires. There are several factors involved:

- Federal funds to clean up the debris left in the "hurricane belt" through the central part of the state has been terminated (*refer to the article Massachusetts Forest Firefighting 1939-Editor*).
- The Civilian Conservation Corps Camps have been reduced in size.
- Most forest fires occur in small towns with volunteer fire departments. These towns are facing manpower shortages as young men have entered military service. Other able body men are now engage in defense work and have moved from the community. I know of one south shore town where Boy Scouts were used to help quell a fast moving brush fire.

It takes nature fifty years to grow a tree and only minutes for a fire to kill it. No one is going to take notice until many homes and lives are lost."

Monday April 21st was like many days before it, sunny dry conditions with winds out of the northwest at 25-30 mph with low humidity. Today this known as a Red Flag Day.

At approximately 1350 hours, Mr. Harold Bourne, the proprietor of Fieldstone Filling Station thought he saw a small flicker of flame in Dyke's Meadow. He thought that a passing motorist had flicked a cigarette butt out the window and it had ignited the marsh grass. He telephoned the Marshfield Fire Department. The call was answered at the New England Telephone and Telegraph switching office operator who in turn started to run down the telephone tree list to summon the firefighters.

At the time of the fire the Marshfield Fire Department was all volunteer and had three fire companies in town operating four engines and one combination. The first pump was responding six minutes after the call and was soon joined by an additional three pumps and a combinations. The fire was being fanned by the winds and was now sending plumes of smoke filled with brands skyward and consuming the marsh grass that was over five feet high in some parts faster than the firefighters could get lines into operation. Twenty minutes after the first call, Fire Chief Silas Wright, who would lose his own home in the fire, raced to a telephone and called to operator and told her to notify every fire department within 30 miles to send all the help they could!

At 1410 hours the fire headed towards Ocean Avenue and soon buildings on both sides were in flames. The fire raced on from Ocean Avenue and 8th Road to the north and Samoset Avenue in the south. The fire was untamed and wild. It destroyed anything in its path. The brands dropped on combustible shingle roofs and started burning buildings behind the hastily established fire lines. The fire seemed to be playing leap frog with the firefighters! Dwellings with non-combustible roof shingles caught fire from the radiated heat.



As mutual aid companies were pulling in, two Marshfield pumps had to cut their lines on two different hydrants and leave them flowing resulting in lower water pressure which in turn created water supply problems. The two engines relocated to the unlimited water source of Massachusetts Bay and started to draft and were able to feed several strong streams. The Water Department estimated that the fire required 1,250,000 gallons of water and dropped the main water tank some five feet.



Aerial photo taken by 101st Observation Company from East Boston Airport. Photo courtesy of Boston Globe Archives.

Another Marshfield Engine that was operating on Ocean Street had to rescue two elderly males from two different houses that were on fire. A single big line struggled to hold the fire back long enough for the rescue of Mr. Arthur Everson age 80 and Mr. Walter Clark age 83, who had just been released from the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston a few days earlier. Police officers took the men from the area and within moments both homes were fully involved. Ocean Street was a sea of fire and all buildings on both sides of the street were being consumed with firefighters continuing to be pushed back rapid fire spread.

Mutual aid from the surrounding towns of Duxbury, Pembroke and Scituate had arrived and were going to work where they could. The fire over took and destroyed a Duxbury combination nicknamed the "Old Girl".



Destroyed Duxbury Combination. Digital Commonwealth L. Jones Collection

As the afternoon wore on, mutual aid arrived from Bourne, Cohasset, Falmouth, Hanover, Hull, Plymouth, Rockland and a Plymouth County Forest Fire truck also responded. Twenty six pieces of apparatus with 175 firefighters answered the call for help with 11 engines, 4 ladders, 4 hose wagons, 5 forestry trucks, 1 1,800 gallon tanker and a rescue company.

The fire roared on devouring everything in its path. The stone St. Anne's Catholic Church was consumed as was the Post Office, two hotels and the three story wood frame Casino with its ball room, bowling alley and mercantile stores on the first floor.

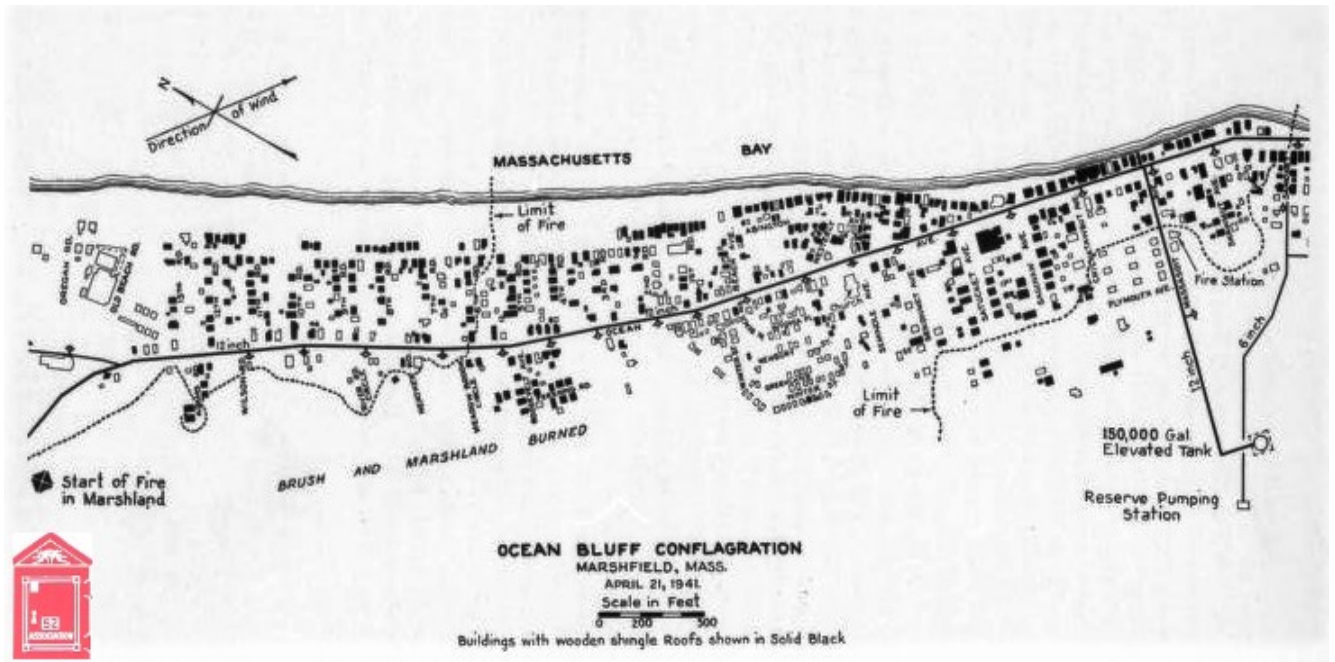
Around suppertime, the wind shifted from the northwest to the northeast and dropped in speed. Firefighters were able to establish a ring around the burnt area and were busy wetting down the ruins. Eighteen firefighters were injured including Duxbury firefighter Elmer Peterson, age 40, who suffered a heart attack. This was the most serious injury and he was removed to his home by the police. Thirteen Plymouth firefighters suffered minor burns as did four men from Duxbury.

The local constabulary was overwhelmed with the number of sightseers, who flocked to area. A call went out to the State Police who arrived in sufficient numbers to discourage sightseers and remove traffic from the area and back onto State Route 3.

The East Bridgewater dairy firm of A. B. Parker sent several trucks loaded with coffee and sandwiches for the firefighters. Companies stayed on scene throughout the night. Mutual aid departments started to be released by 2200 hours.

The fire destroyed 550 buildings which included 2 hotels, mercantile, houses, summer cottages, out buildings, the Casino and one stone church. Damaged area was 1 ½ miles long by ½ mile wide. Loss was estimated to be over one million dollars.

In the aftermath of the fire, many residents pointed to the Board of Selectman for causing such a fire. For the first time in decades the request for \$ 300.00 to burn off the marsh grass was denied. Chief Wright stated "that for want of three hundred dollars, my town burned and we couldn't stop it"!



The official cause of the fire is still listed as careless disposal of smoking materials.

On Wednesday April 23rd crews arrived to start the cleanup and rebuilding of the Town.



Today opposite St. Anne's Church stands a memorial to the fire that was dedicated in 2016 on the 75th anniversary of the fire.

A-Tisket, A-Taskit, Fires in Nantasket!

By Frank San Severino

Line Box Editor

Paragon Park Conflagration

Wednesday March 28, 1923

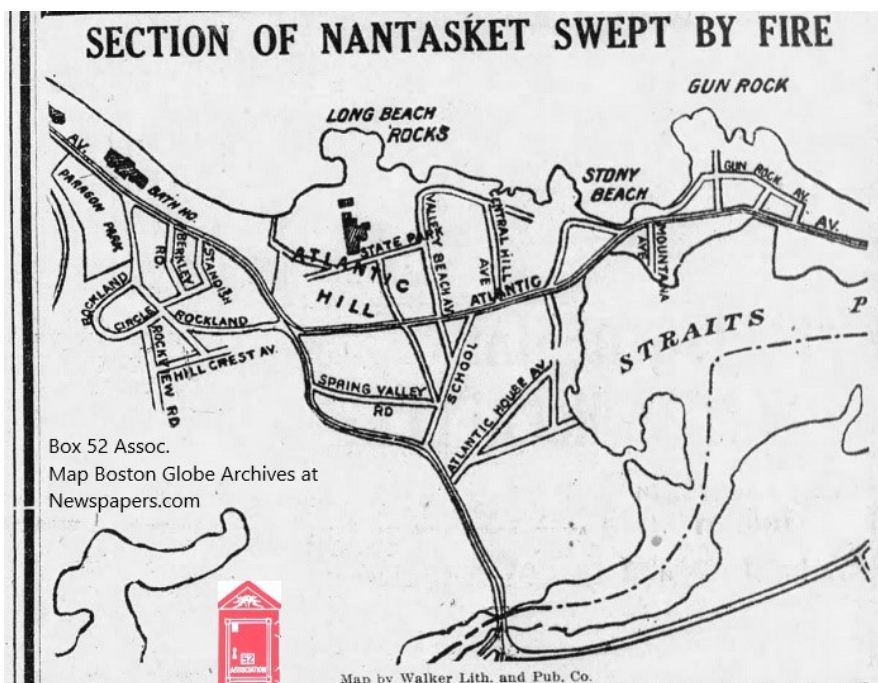
General Alarm Box 56

On Wednesday evening March 28th, 1923 a gale was blowing in from the North West at 40 miles an hour gusting to over 70. The temperature had dropped to 5 degrees above zero and the sun had been down only three hours.

At 1945 hours a Metropolitan Park police officer left the station on Nantasket Avenue. A glow caught his eye coming from the paint shop in the rear of Paragon Park. He raced to box 56 and pulled the hook. As the box banged on the taper and the whistle blew, the permanent men headed for the box as the call men were still responding.

The apparatus hadn't even left quarters and the paint shop was fully involved and fire had entered into the Palm Garden restaurant and dance hall. Hull Fire Chief Henry Stevens on his arrival, quickly transmitted the second, third and then the General Alarm. The fire was throwing up embers that were being carried by the wind and landing on the wooden shingled cottages, igniting them almost immediately.

The first few hose lines had not even been laid and Paragon Park was fully involved and the fire was headed into the Rockland Park neighborhood where all but one house was destroyed. By chance the house that withstood the flames was that of Police Chief Reynolds. The fire now had jumped the Boulevard and was heading towards Atlantic Hill destroying everything in its path. The fire marched on, now headed towards Green Hill destroying another 30 buildings including Damon's Ice House on the shore of Straits Pond.



Mutual aid companies were now rolling in to assist the overwhelmed Hull force. It was only a few minutes after 2000 hours.

Chief Stevens attempted to make a stand on Berkley Street in a thickly settled residential district a block away from the Park. They had good water and several big lines and were checking the fire.....until a wind gust brought the fire back to life with a vengeance. Two Hull engine companies were nearly caught in the burst of flames. Firefighters had to use axes on Engine 3's hydrant and hose lines. It was driven out of the danger zone dragging what was left of the lines still attached to the pump.

Weather conditions were creating icing conditions and many firefighters would suffer frost bite. But worst was the water supply problems. Hull receives their water supply from the town of Hingham and the small sized mains proved to be inadequate for the supply needed by the demands of so many engines.

At 2118 more help was needed and a phone call was placed to the Boston Fire Department. At the time of the call Fire Commissioner Glynn was in his office and ordered Chief of Department John Tabor to dispatch two engine companies, with 25 men under command of a District Chief to respond to Hull. Fire Alarm notified Chief Alan MacDonald of District 14, then located with Engine Company 46 in Peabody Square to respond with Engine Companies 46 and 12. The companies prepared for the 16 mile trek and the convoy set off headed for the glow that was visible as they neared the Quincy city line.

Chief Stevens attempted another stand at the Municipal Building and this was successful. However, the fire was still raging all around them. The flimsy wooden construction of the cottages along with marsh grass was still making an ample fuel supply for the fire.

The fire now headed directly towards St. Mary's Catholic Church located at 208 Samoset Avenue. Companies from Quincy, Rockland and Braintree worked together and were able to save the church though, it did suffer damage. Police Chief Reynolds was quoted "these firemen never took a step back and they stayed the course in front of a frightening wall of flame".



To add to the confusion, several thousand on lookers headed for the scene. Chief Reynolds requested help from the State Police. MSP Colonel Foote brought a large force of Troopers that he marshalled at Allston and they responded in trucks to the scene.

Army troops based at Fort Revere on Hull Neck were also requested to help guard against looting and assist the civilians. Companies F and H of the 14th Infantry were quickly assembled and marched to the scene. Privates Norman D. Newton and George M. McArriston marching at the rear of the column were struck by a motor vehicle and both suffered serious injuries. These men guarded personnel belonging found in piles and assisted the citizens however they could.

It was up to the MSP and Hull Police to deal with the throng of onlookers. This took most of the night, but they cleared all but residents from the area.

By now, it was approaching 0100 hours and the exhausted crews got a surprise from Mother Nature. The wind shifted to the north east and dropped to 20 miles per hour. This pushed the fire back onto the burnt areas and a fire line was able to be established along Nantasket Avenue and Valley Beach Avenue. In front of them a row of 2 story cottages burned fiercely as the fire finally was controlled.

Mutual aid came from Braintree, Cohasset, Hingham, Milton, Marshfield, Quincy, Rockland, Weymouth and Boston. All apparatus working at the fire were motorized. In all 18 engines, 3 ladder companies responded. Four firefighters were injured.

The Salvation Army Canteen responded and served hot coffee and soup to the firefighters. It was manned by members of the Box 52 Association

The fire consumed all buildings located in Paragon Park including the Virginia Reel and the roller coaster. In addition, 50 other buildings of all types were destroyed. Dollar loss was estimated at \$ 750,000.00. In today's dollar value that would be in excess of eleven million dollars.



Box 52 Assoc.
Photo by L. Jones. Collection of Lesile Jones
Digital Commonwealth

An extensive investigation was conducted and numerous witnesses interviewed. A cause of the fire was not determined.

Brockton Fire Chief William F. Daley responded to the fire to observe. He penned a letter to Fire & Water Engineering magazine about his observations. It is presented in its entirety here. It was published in the May 4, 1923 issue.

"The writer attended the fire and from his observations the contributory causes of the rapid spread of fire were due to the following causes:

1. Shingle roofs.
2. Inadequate water supply.
3. High winds.
4. Flimsy construction.

"It was very evident that shingle roofs constitute the severe fire hazard that has been claimed by men of our profession and with the gale blowing at 50 miles an hour at least, this combination was the contributing cause for the rapid spread of fire. Most of the buildings were of frame construction set on posts, with lattice work construction around the bottom and wall partitions of wood.

"Water mains were not of sufficient size and supply totally inadequate.

"Do you know of a better combination than that of the above and is there any reason why fire should not reach the proportions of a conflagration under these conditions?"

Nantasket Wharf Fire

Thanksgiving Day November 28, 1929

Hull Box 26

It was six years five months and one day since the Paragon Park conflagration sliced a one mile long path through the town of Hull. Was it time for another fire?

Winter in Hull made the town almost into a ghost town. The hotels, board walk, Paragon Park and other summer venues and cottages were shut down and prepared for the coming of winter.

During the summer season, ferry boats plied the waters between Boston to the north and Plymouth to the south. The Nantasket Beach Steam Boat Company was based in Hull. The line had six coal fired steam powered ferry boats, the oldest was the *Mayflower* the others were: *Old Colony*, *Nantasket*, *Betty Alden*, *Rose Standish* and the *Mary Chilton*. In the past the vessels had been split up between two wharves in Hull. This year it was felt that the risk of a conflagration from the wooden structures near the pier in Hull Village was a danger to the ships and all six were tied up along Nantasket wharf.

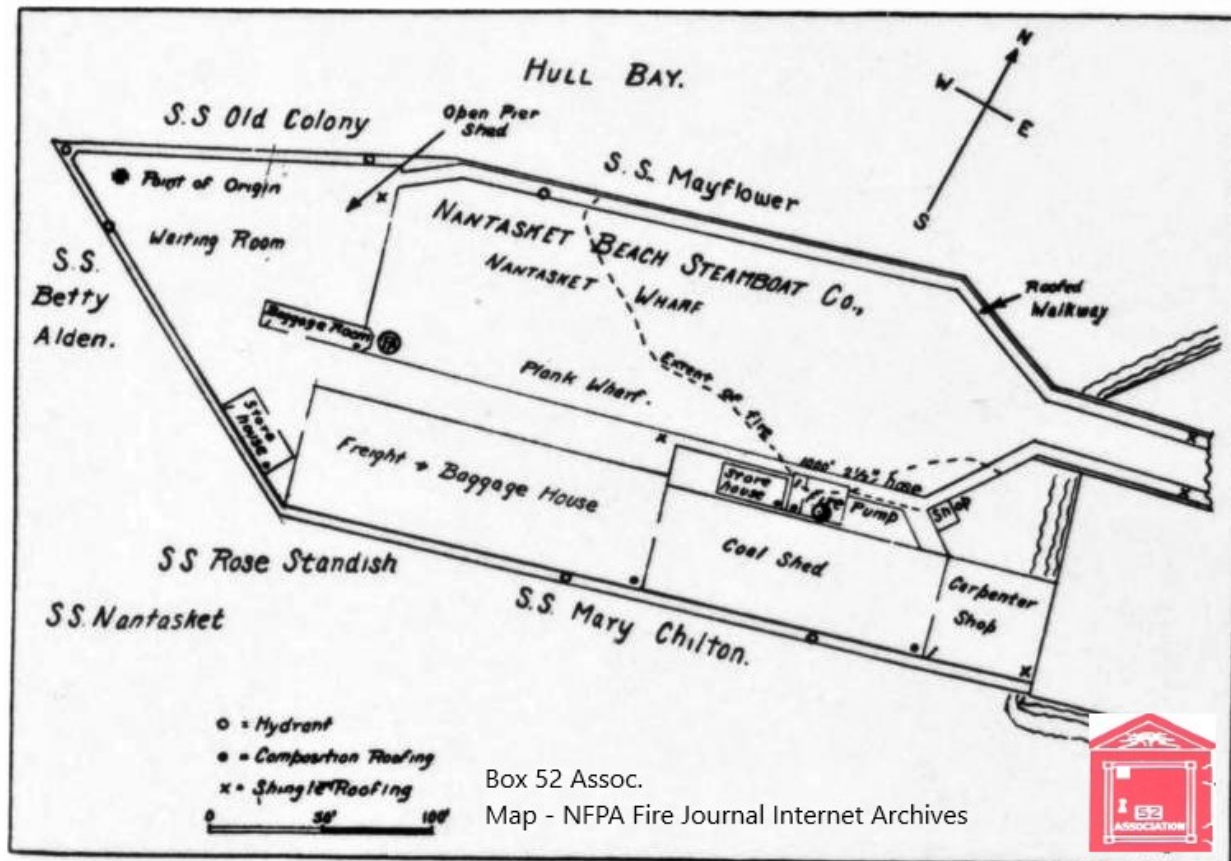
During the winter, company regulations stated that the Captain, First Mate and Engineer must remain with their ship. Each of the ships was equipped with a small donkey engine. These were to be used in an emergency situation to help tugs pull them away from the wharf. The last two ships in line had steam up in their small engines. The six steamers were in a semi-circle around the wharf. Just about 1600 hours the engineer of the *Old Colony* fired up the donkey engine. She was aft of the *Betty Alden* and the first ship in line closest to the beach. This was a few minutes before the fire was discovered. A few hearty fishermen on the other side of the wharf were fishing for smelts.

The wharf was made of plank wood and had a large waiting room at the far end. Along the left side was a coal shed, two storage houses, carpenter shop, freight and baggage house. On the right side which faced Hull Bay was a wooden covered walkway.

The pier watchman Elmer Dunn reported that he had not seen any fire when he went off duty at 1600 hrs.

At the time of the fire wind was coming from the northwest, right off the ocean and gusting past 40 miles per hour.

One of the engineers spotted the fire on the roof of the shed on the northwest corner. He yelled for help and the others came on the run. One pulled Box 26 at the head of the wharf. The others ran out a line off the electric fire pump on the pier which drew water from the harbor as one of the engineers started the pump. By the time that this first aid line was in operation the wind had pushed the fire and the *Betty Alden* was already in flames. The men manning the hose line had an effective stream going and were trying to push the fire back against the wind when the Hull Electric Light Company cut the power to the 2,300 volt primary lines that went to a transformer at the head of the pier. This was due to a standing order by the management to "protect the firemen from shock". The single factor in this fire causing over a million dollars in damage, was the loss of this one hose line.



The box was pulled at 1615 hrs. The whistle, bells and tappers all sounded. The first alarm turned out with 2 pumps, a city service ladder and two combination chemical and hose wagons.

At this point fact and fiction accounts of the Hull firefighters needs to be addressed.

In a September 13th, 2017 article in the Hull edition of *Wicked Local* by William Pepe who stated **"The entire Hull Fire Department - which doubled as the town's football team - was out of town playing a game when the steamboat fleet caught fire at the wharf."** This statement, is false. It was Thanksgiving and Hull High was playing Scituate High and a number of the call firefighters and Hull residents were returning from the game.

The HFD had permanent men on duty and they did respond quickly to the fire. In no fire report, including the prestigious NFPA Fire Journal which had laid the blame for the fires extension on the loss of power to the fire pump on the wharf, or newspaper accountings was such a fact even mentioned.

Chief of Department Henry Stevens arrived just ahead of the apparatus and sounded the second alarm at 1621 hours which summoned two additional out of town engine companies to the fire. The Chief was quoted as saying "even if all the combined apparatus and men had arrived at the same time, nothing more could have been done about preventing the spread of flames". (Boston Globe Friday Nov. 29, 1929-Editor)

The Chief assigned the two Combinations to brand patrol around the Atlantic Hill area as the embers from the now burning coal bin on the wharf were dropping like snowflakes onto roofs with wooden shingles and igniting them, just like the 1923 fire. The two Hull pumps were quickly trying to get at least four big lines on the fire to try and head it off. Firefighters assisted by crews of the steamers and a few smelt fisherman helping on the lines soon were pouring 1,000 gallons a minute into the inferno. The wind was just bending the steams. By the time Chief Stevens transmitted the General Alarm, 50-60 firefighters both permanent and call were on scene.

At 1630 hours, Chief Stevens gave the order to summon aid via telephone to other south shore departments to respond. The first two out of town pumps pulled up, one from Hingham and the other from Scituate, were both assigned to protect the wooden buildings at Paragon Park.

One of the calls made was to the Boston Fire Department requesting that a fireboat respond. Chief of Department Daniel Sennott ordered Engine Company 31 the *Thomas Ring* to respond. The Chief boarded the boat and responded. Once in Hull waters, she was delayed by the low tide and the need for a pilot, as the navigation aids in the channel were not illuminated in the winter.

The embers from the coal pile soon found what they wanted a 350 foot long wooden structure with dry wood from years of exposure to ocean winds. The State Bathhouse on Nantasket Avenue had the roof's wooden shingles ignited. MDC Police Sergeant Thomas Kelleher found a fire extinguisher and a ladder and climbed to the roof to try and stop the fire. As the Hingham engine was responding. They looked up and saw the lone figure on the roof through the swirling smoke. The next look the figure was gone. Firefighters Frank Thompson and William Hatch turned the engine around and headed for the Bathhouse. They threw the ground ladder to the roof and made their way to the other side. Peering down into the alley way they saw the body of Sgt. Kelleher. Firefighter Thompson went down the ladder and carried the officer to the roof. He left him in care of Firefighter Hatch and grabbed the chemical line they had brought with them to the roof. Hatch caring for the officer, took a step to the left and in the thick smoke he fell into the alley way. Thompson once again descended the ladder and reached his comrade. Not having the strength to climb back up the ladder he followed the alley way out and found several other companies working on the fire and tending to Sgt. Kelleher.

Both injured men were carried to the MDC Police Station. Dr. Sturgis tended to the injured officer who was then transported to the hospital. Hingham Fire Department surgeon, Dr. C. W. Hoyt tended to Hatch who had suffered a back injury. He was transported to Cohasset Hospital.

The main battle line had now shifted to the Bathhouse where companies were trying to save it. The building was 350 feet long and had a common roof, but a covered entry way separated the men's and women's sides. Six mutual aid pumps and two city service ladder trucks were hard at work. The men's side was fully involved and lines were being positioned around the women's side to save that part of the building. The ladder companies had thrown ladders to the roof and several big lines were at work trying to drive the fire back towards the burned side. This was pushing directly into the wind and straight streams were being blown away from the main body of fire. This battle was hard fought and the fire was beaten back. The men's side was a total loss with only the toppled metal lockers remaining. The roof over the walkway was burned away as was some of the roof on the women's side. The structure would need to be replaced.

Back at the wharf, Boston Towboat Company's tug *Mars* under the command of Captain A.C. Simpson was attempting to tow out some of the burning ships, but ran aground at the edge of the channel. It would take a few hours of waiting for the rising tides for *Mars* to be refloated.

Five of the steam ferries were fully involved as well as the pier. Multiple companies were trying to quell the fire with no success. The Norwell pump which had responded was drafting from the harbor when the pump became clogged with seaweed and needed to shut down, taking the two big lines it was pumping with it. Efforts to clear the pump were unsuccessful. Chief Stevens when advised of the situation ordered that the Maxim Fire Apparatus Company in Middleboro be notified and to respond a mechanic by State Police escort to the fire. This was accomplished and within an hour the pump was cleared and was back in action.

Engine 31 finally arrived at the fire and with her bow facing into Hull Bay she was able to use a broadside attack with all of her deck monitors in use. This deluge of water was able to push the flames back onto the burned area. She then turned her attention to the burning ships.

As with the 1923 fire, the church of St. Mary's of the Assumption was under the attack by the falling embers. The steeple was burned off, but the church was saved by valiant work by multiple mutual aid companies, manned by many of the same firefighters who tried in vain to save the church six years prior.

Roof fires were still breaking out and companies were dashing from one roof fire to the next. Their efforts prevented a conflagration from developing. But, the efforts of some larger residences were not successful and these structures were total losses. All the companies could do was protect the exposures as best they could using chemical tanks and what water was still available from hydrants in the area.

By 2200 hours, the wind died down and the fire was only burning in pockets that were quickly extinguished. At the wharf five steamers were burned to the water line. The only ferry to escape major damage was the line's flagship the *Mayflower*.

Hull Engine 2 along with one combination remained on scene for the night operating several big lines on the wharf's remains. Engine 31 assisted until after midnight and then made her way back to her berth.

Two firefighters were seriously injured while scores suffered burns and lacerations. Fifteen engine companies, two chemical engines and four city service ladder trucks with over 175 firefighters battled this Thanksgiving fire.

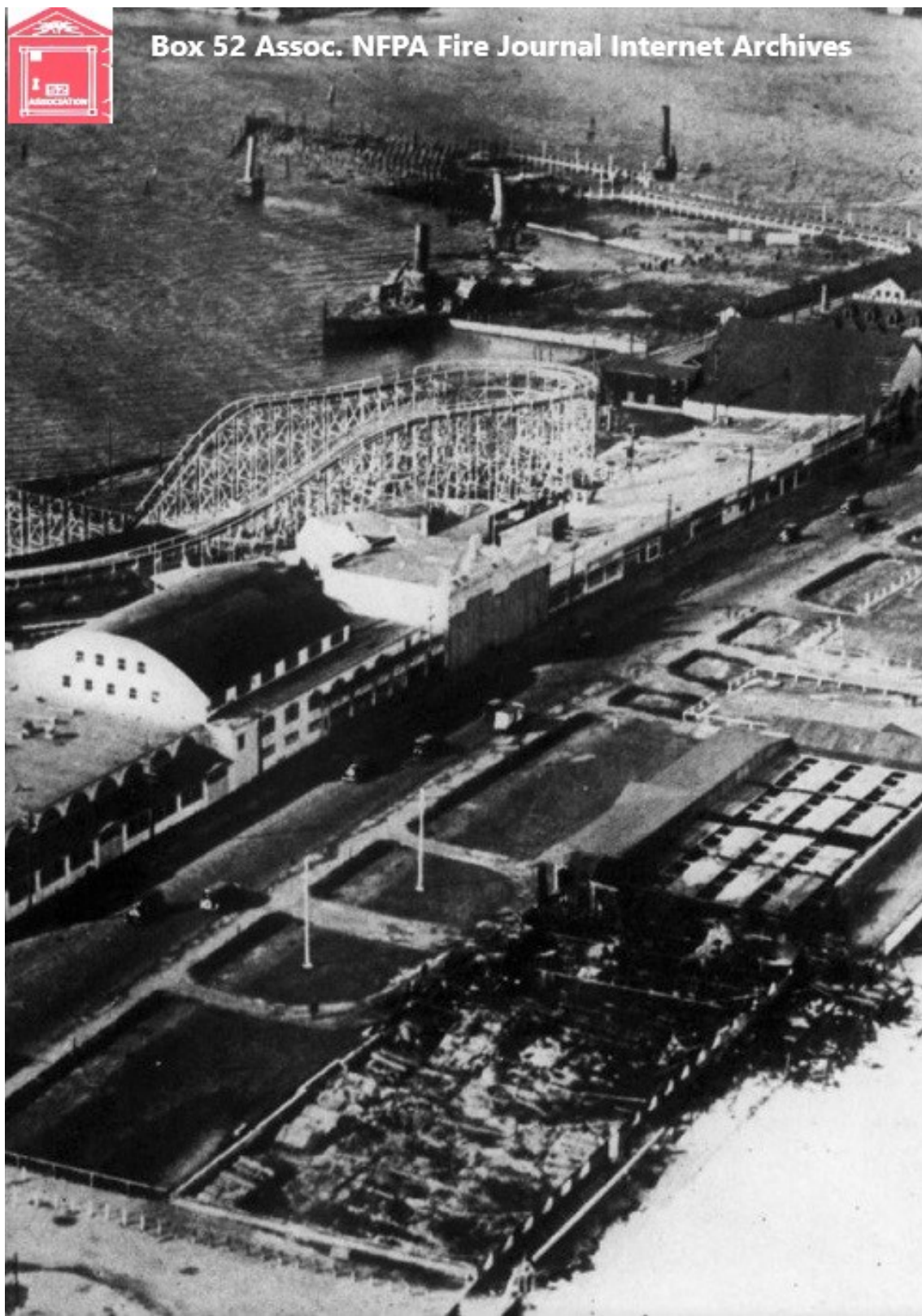
Losses suffered: Five steamships of the Nantasket Beach Steamship Line were destroyed at a loss of over \$ 1,000,000. Loss on the wharf \$ 10,000. Bathhouse loss placed at \$ 35,000. Loss of steeple at St. Mary's \$ 5,000, losses to houses destroyed \$ 11,000. Total loss of all other structures with minor damage \$ 9,000. Fire loss was \$1,070,000. In 2021 the fire loss would be \$ 17,000,861!

On Friday the 29th, the investigation into the fire began. The Globe quoted Mr. Frederick Lane General Manager of the Line stating that the estimate to rebuild the fleet was over two million dollars. "We had just finished the reconditioning on Wednesday the 27th on the *Mary Chilton* and the *Rose Standish*". The main cause of the fire was never determined, but investigators were split between sparks from starting the donkey engine on board the Old Colony and careless disposal of smoking materials in the public toilet as probable causes. The one fact that investigators were unanimous in was that the power being cut to the wharf fire pump gave the fire much headway and the blaze was beyond being stopped by any modern well equipped department.

The Commonwealth quickly approved funding to build a new bathhouse that must be ready for use in the summer of 1930.



Box 52 Assoc. NFPA Fire Journal Internet Archives



This aerial photo appeared in the NFPA's Fire Journal. In the upper right is the wharf and the remains of the ferries. At the center is Paragon Park and lower foreground is the ruins of the MDC Bathhouse.

The sole survivor and the line's flagship the *Mayflower* was the only vessel to survive the fire and for many years she sailed off Nantasket as a dance boat. She was retired in the late 1950's hoisted onto dry land and became a very popular nightclub in Hull for almost two decades. By the late 1970's as the night club scene changed to disco's she went out of business and stood derelict until November of 1979 when her sisters returned to bring her home during a multiple alarm fire in which the *Mayflower* was gutted, a total loss.



Box 52 Assoc. Photo courtesy of the Wreckhunter.net

Remains of the *Mayflower*.



APPARATUS UPDATE

By Michael Boynton
All Photos by the Author

The deliveries have certainly continued at a brisk pace since our last update, and several more are on the horizon! At press time the new KME Engine 2 for Quincy Fire is due to arrive at the local dealer, Boston has two Heavy Rescues and a new Engine in production at E-One. E-One is also working on a Tower for Watertown and a Ladder for Wellesley. Seagrave delivered the new Engine 2 to Wakefield, however as of this time that rig is at the dealer for the so-called punch list corrections. We soon expect to see additional Seagrave rigs arriving for Medford and Melrose. From Pierce, the new Ladder 2 for Cambridge is due to arrive at the dealer by the end of the week (August 6).

Here is a look at some of the deliveries since our last edition:

METRO FIRE



Belmont Engine 2 2021 E-One Typhoon e-MAX 1500/510/20 class B foam



Randolph Ladder Tower 1 2021 E-One Typhoon 2000/300 100' RMA



Somerville Engine 3 – 2021 Spartan/Toyne 1250/500/30F

OTHER MASSACHUSETTS ARRIVALS



Bedford Forestry 1 2020 Ford F-550/Greenwood 4x4 250/250



Brockton Engines 4, 5 and 7 2020 Pierce Enforcers 1500/750/40B



Carver Tanker 1 2021 Kenworth/Pierce 1000/3000



Franklin Engines 1 and 2 2021 E-One Typhoons 1500/750/30A



Greenfield – 2021 Pierce Impel PUC 1500/750



Haverhill Engines 1 and 3 2021 Pierce Enforcers 1500/750



Lawrence Engine 6 – 2021 Pierce Enforcer 1500/750



Massachusetts Department of Fire Services Mobile Extraction Unit (MEU) – 2021 Peterbilt/RedLine - Gear Washing & Decon Unit

RHODE ISLAND

In case you have missed it, our largest neighbor to the South has been very busy with new rigs in 2021. As of press time, Providence has received four new Pierce Saber engines (3, 9, 10 and 15), a 2021 Pierce Arrow XT 100' mid-mount tower for Tower Ladder 1, and a 2021 Spartan/Rescue 1 for their Special Hazards 1. In addition, four straight stick" aerials are now in production at Pierce. Congrats to Providence Fire for receiving these rigs.



CAPTAIN JAMES FLOWERS
Laurel Fire Department
Laurel, Mississippi

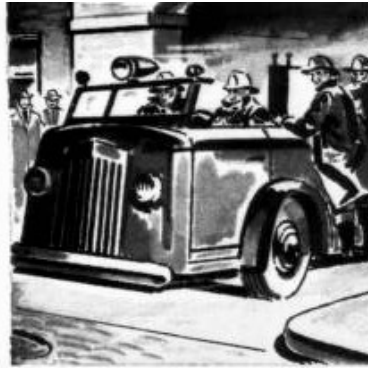


*"Here's why I say...
thanks a million
for a Fireman's
Helmet that
CAN TAKE IT!"*



M.S.A.
STREAMLINED
FIREMAN'S HELMET

You're doubly protected when you wear this proved helmet. The one-piece, high pressure molded construction takes bumps and blows without passing them on, its high dielectric strength safeguards against electrical hazards—and because the laminated bakelite is non-absorbent, this protection isn't affected by moisture conditions. Ask for Bulletin No. DX-8, for complete details.



1. "Seconds after the alarm came in, we were on the truck and roaring out of the station."



2. "It was a concrete block theater building. All we could see were flames and smoke, and the heat was terrific. We rolled into action."



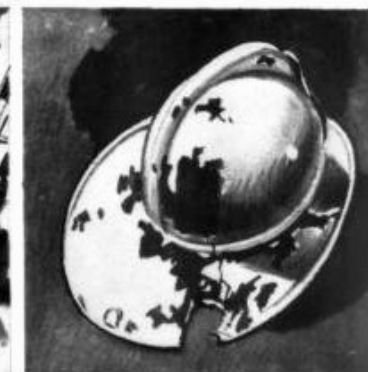
3. "I'd been manning a hose from a ladder position for about 5 minutes when the Chief yelled to come down, on the double."



4. "I just made the ground when the wall gave way. The air was filled with concrete—all of it headin' my way."



5. "I made a run for it, but a falling block crashed into my helmet, sent me sprawling. More followed, hitting my legs, back, feet."



6. "When it was over, my nose was broken, and I was plenty bruised. But thanks to your helmet, I was saved from serious injury, or death."



Call the M.S.A. Man on your every safety problem . . . his job is to help you.

MINE SAFETY APPLIANCES CO.

Braddock, Thomas and Meade Sts., Pittsburgh 8, Pa.
At Your Service: 66 Branch Offices in the United States

MINE SAFETY APPLIANCES CO. OF CANADA LIMITED

Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Winnipeg, Vancouver, New Glasgow, N.S.
Representatives in Principal Cities in Mexico, Central and South America
Cable Address: "Minsaf" Pittsburgh