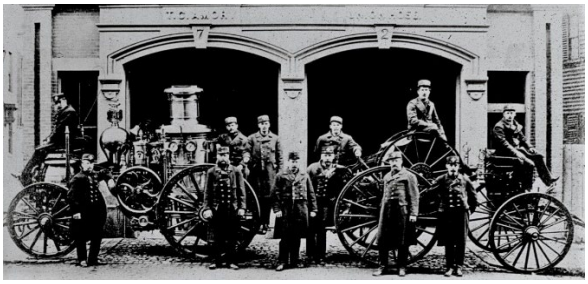
Box 52 Association



The Line Box

I·F·B·A· Member club since 1955!

Celebrating the sesquicentennial of the sounding of Box 52 November 9th, 1872

Vol. 18 No. 3

Welcome to issue 3 for this season and the first Line Box for celebrating the 150th anniversary of the sounding of Box 52.

Hope you all enjoy the updated mast head with the photo of Engine 7 in 1872 courtesy of Bill Noonan.

This issue has some great articles and we know that you are going to enjoy each and every page!

Multiple Alarms

December 1st – January 31st

December

Date	Time	Box	City	Address	Building
12/01	0407 0416 0433	5176 2-5176 3-5176	Boston	95 Washington St	6 story brick OMD
12/02	2222 2228 2231 2236 2243	16 WF-16 2-16 3-16 4-16	Chelsea	63 Marginal St	2.5 story wdfr
12/03	1715	2-3478	Boston	1063 Washington St	2.5 story wdfr under const.
12/04	2024	2-3332	Boston	385 Geneva Ave	3 story wdfr
12/05	1125 1141 1214	621 2-621 3-621	Wakefield	95 Audubon Rd. Colonial Point Apartments	12 story 1st class OMD
12/06	0326	2-144	Randolph	148 Warren St	2.5 story wdfr
12/08	0812 0814	3713 2-3713	Everett	69 Rover St	Metal Recycling facility
12/15	1043	2-8865	Arlington	279 Florence Ave	1.5 story wdfr
12/15	1251	2-176	Newton	155 Jackson Rd	2.5 story wdfr
12/17	0431 0434 0436 0446 0502 0523 0539 0704	5158 2-5158 3-5158 4-5158 5-5158 6-5158 7-5158 8-5158	Boston	185 Corey Rd	2 & 3 story wdfr vacant commercial Orders L14 Lt. Williams Orders Dist Chief Carey Orders Dep Chief Tully Orders Dep Chief Tully Orders Dep Chief Tully Orders Comm. Dempsey Orders Comm. Dempsey
12/25	0735	2-2541	Boston	3313 Washington St	4 story wdfr OMD under construction
12/29	0725 0731 0737	23 2-23 3-23	Cambridge	45-49 Webster St	3 story wdfr OMD

January

Date	Time	Box	City	Address	Building
01/10	1650 1653 1700 1719	24 WF-24 2-24 3-24	Malden	1 Glenwood St Oak Grove Square	3 story wdfr apartments over mercantile
01/12	0846	2-N/A	Braintree	421 Elm St	2.5 story wdfr
01/15	0840	2-364	Watertown	17 Flint Rd	2.5 story wdfr
01/15		2-2795	Boston	60 Wellsmere Rd	2.5 story wdfr
01/22	0409	2-3515	Arlington	54 Medford St Chestnut Manor	7 story 1st class elderly housing
01/23	1448	2-3258	Boston	800 Morrissey Blvd Ramada Inn	2 story concrete motel
01/23	2301	2-3334	Everett	69 Norman St	1 story vacant warehouse
01/28	1131	2-281	Cambridge	256 Broadway	3 story wfrm

February

Date	Time	Box	City	Address	Building
02/05	1719	2-3332	Boston	74 Corona St	3 story wdfr
02/05	1938	2-7423	Boston	16 National St	3 story wdfr
02/14	1719	2- 134	Chelsea	29 Cottage St	2.5 story wdfr
02/22	1416	2-8549	Quincy	41 Whaler Lane	2.5 story wdfr Condo
02/28	0328 0329 0339	6145 2-6145 3-6145 4-6145 5-6145 6-6145	Boston	183 Maverick St	3 story wdfrm OMD Orders Ladder 2 Orders Dep Chief Green

Swampscott Train Crash Feb 28 1956

All photos courtesy of Swampscott IAFF Local 1459

A late winter storm was blanketing Greater Boston with the typical heavy wet snow of a late winter storm. The snow stuck to every surface. Winds were from the south west at 12 mph with occasional gusts to 25. At the time of the accident, the temperature was 29 degrees.

As the morning rush hour was getting under way, commuters trudge through the snowfall to local stations of the Boston & Main Railroad waiting for their trains to Boston and another mundane work day. This morning's commute would be anything but mundane when two trains collided just past the Swampscott station.

The Track Plan

The accident occurred in the Portland and Terminal Divisions known to crews as the "Eastern Route" which extended from Portsmouth New Hampshire to Boston, a distance of 56.91 miles. This was a double tracked main line with traffic moving by timetable, train orders and automatic block system.

The Danvers branch extends from Danvers to the Salem Tower, a total of 4.75 miles before it merges into Eastern Route at Salem Tower 40.25 miles west of Portsmouth.

Another line known as the Swampscott branch extends from Marblehead to Swampscott for 4.41 miles and merges into the Eastern Route at Swampscott 44.11 miles west of Portsmouth.

The Collision

The accident occurred 2,115 feet east of the Swampscott station on the west bound main of the Eastern Route.

As west bound trains approached the station the engineers view was restricted by a rock cut on the north side of the tracks and the north overpass abutment of Essex Street. The rock cut was 655 feet east of the accident.

The trackage was controlled by several block signals:

- P154 located 2.01 miles east
- P146 located 1.31 miles east
- P138 located 3,158 feet east
- RA3 a semi-automatic signal located 570 feet west
- P154 a semaphore arm type signal

The Scene is Set

Train # 214 a westbound, (towards Boston) was a first class passenger train from Portsmouth powered by an ALCO RS-3 road switcher # 1516, with four coaches and a combination baggage-smoker car in this order. All passenger cars of steel construction. The train departed Portsmouth at 0640 and passed the Salem Tower at 0810. The engineer of 214 had reduced speed due to the P146 signal aspect obscured by snow. The engine crew was unable to identify the signal indication until the locomotive was with five feet of the signal mast. The engineer reduces speed further and as they approached P138 and RA2. The lights were so covered by snow that the engine crew could not see any light in either signal. As they came

upon signal RA2 the crew stopped the train. Within two to three minutes the rear of 214 was struck by Train # 2406.

Train 2406 was a westbound commuter train to Boston from Danvers consisting of two RDC-1 *(Rail Diesel Car-These were commonly known as "Budd Liners"-Editor)* 85 feet in length and could carry 90 passengers and had a weight of 118,300 pounds. Followed by an RDC-2 combination baggage/coach. This car was also 85 feet in length and carried 79 passengers and the baggage compartment measured 17 feet. This car's weight was 114,200 pounds. Train 2406 had been held at the Salem Tower to allow 214 to pass. After it had passed, 2406 entered the Easter Route at 0812 hours. It passed signal P146 which should have indicated a "stop and then proceed at restricted speed" indication. Witness statements stated that the speed of the Budd Liner was estimated between 40 to 55 mph when it struck the rear end of # 214. Train 2406 was due to leave Swampscott station at 0808 hours, ten minutes before the accident.

The rear end brakeman had dropped off the stopped 214 with his red flag, fusses and track torpedo's and began to trudge through the snow the required rule book distance to protect the rear of his train. Meanwhile the conductor had gotten off and trudged through the snow to use a track side call box to call the Lynn Tower and ask for permission for 214 to proceed past signal RA2. As the rear end brakeman was making his way, he heard 2406 coming and began to run east towards it waving his flag frantically. He had not had time to light a fuse and place the track torpedo. At this time, 2406, was close to the Essex Street overpass, passed the brakeman without slowing and the engineer on 2406 began sounding his horn repeatedly.

At Lynn Engine 6 and Rescue Company 1's house close to the Swampscott line, the crews heard the frantic horn blowing and knew something was wrong.

IMPACT

The horn of 2406 stopped sounding when it struck the rear of 214 moving it nearly fifty feet by the impact. The underframe of the last car in 214's consist over road the underframe of the first RDC of 2406 ripping both trucks off the car. The underframe then sheared off the supper structure of the first RDC car. The rear car on 214 derailed and twisted to face north and stopped at a 4 degree angle to the track. The front end of the car was now resting atop the rear end of the first RDC car which had heavy damage and distorted car ends.

Box 52 Assoc. Photo courtesy of Salem Firefighters IAFF Local 1459

Train 214 derailed with all cars remaining upright facing south between the two main line tracks. The remaining two RDC's of # 2406 derailed, but stayed upright in line with the track.

RESPONSE

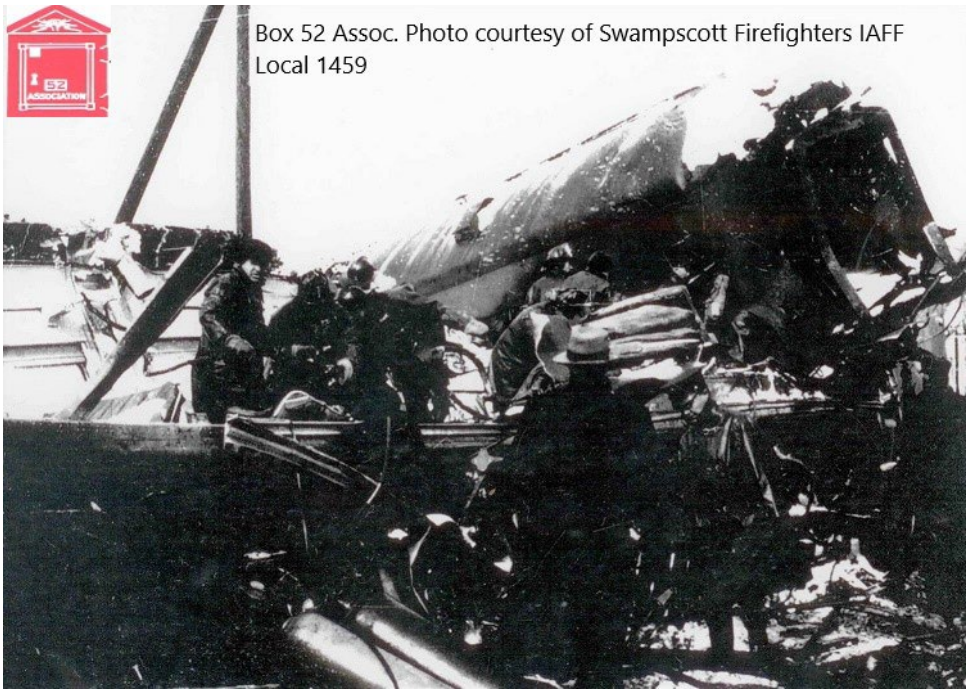
At Swampscott Police Headquarters Captain John Costin received the first call reporting the accident. He immediately alerted the SFD and then using the Inter-City Police Radio System summoned aid from surrounding communities and the MSP, who in turn requested the response of Civil Defense units.

The day shift had just stood roll call and was under the command of Captain Champion. His crew of seven firefighters set about checking equipment and readying their gear for a cold snowy day shift.

At 0821 the police ring down line rang and the terse message from Captain Costin was train crash by Essex Oil! The firefighter on watch wasted no time striking box 526 for the rear of Essex Oil Company on Essex Street. Engines 1, 2 and Ladder 1 responded. Mutual aid was called immediately from Lynn, responding were Engines 8, 12, Ladder 1 and Rescue 1 with Engine 6's crew on board. Salem Ladder 2 was also responding.

First to arrive on scene was Patrolman Herbert Frazier who recalled that "it was snowing hard and there was no fire. Dead bodies were laying in the tracks and the Budd Liner was spilt open right down the middle."

As the Companies arrived to a horrific scene. Injured passengers screaming in pain and for help, the dead lying about both sides of the tracks, the snow turning a crimson red. Dazed passengers trying to climb out of the mangled cars. To many a responder they were for the briefest second transported back to the bloody battlefields of World War II and Korea.



The crews started to get to work. Hose lines were stretched in the event of fire. Ladder 1's crew grabbed tools and went to work on the wreckage trying to free those trapped. They were joined by the mutual aid companies and 19 off duty members.

Using only hand tools they worked with grim determination to free the injured passengers. Police officers used blankets and salvage covers to shield the dead from onlookers. The Lynn Rescue had arrived and with the extra manpower from the crew of Engine 6 they went to work with hand tools, some jacks, a Porta-Power and a small acetylene torch. The acetylene was quickly used up trying to cut through the heavy steel underframe of the cars. Lynn Chief Joseph Scanlon also responded to the scene.

In Somerville at the Boston & Maine yard the request was received for the "Big Hook" (railway crane-editor) to respond. The whistle on the Round House began to sound and men working in the yard raced for the Wreck Train. A switcher was quickly hooked on and the train was given a clear path of green

signals and high balled all the way to the crash site. At the grade crossing in West Medford, the gate tender barely had time to lower the gates as the train thundered by.

At the wreck site rescuers found a 24 year old male crushed in the mangled front of the lead RDC. Companies worked for hours to free him. He was severely injured, but alive when they started. As the extrication went on the young man passed away and his body was removed around 1400 hours with the help from the heavy duty torches carried on the Wreck Train. He was the last victim to be removed.

Ambulances had been called from near and far to respond. Swampscott Police and the Swampscott Red Cross ambulances arrived first followed by: Lynn, Marblehead, Peabody, Danvers, Saugus, Revere, Chelsea Naval Hospital, Middleton, Beverly, Nordstrom's Ambulance and the Post 6 Ambulance from Lynn. Summoned by the police were all clergymen in town to respond and render what aid and comfort they could.

The injured were first taken to Lynn Hospital. They received so many stretcher cases that Engine 2 was dispatched to assist as stretcher bearers at 0909. They returned to quarters at 1113 hours.

As the dead still lay covered along the track, the decision was made to remove the bodies to Swampscott Central Fire Station on Ocean Street and the apparatus floor was used as temporary morgue. Nine unidentified bodies were brought in seven males and two females. All were pronounced dead by 1000 hours and at 1100 the bodies were removed to Lynn Hospital.

By noon time all of the dead and injured had been removed from the scene. Both trains were carrying combined passengers and crew of nearly 1,000 persons. Thirteen passengers and crew members were killed and over one hundred injured.

The report of the Swampscott Fire Department reported that two member suffered hand lacerations from the jagged metal of the wreck and that both were transported by the police to Lynn Hospital. Six hundred feet of inch and a half hose was used along with one hundred and fifty feet of two and a half inch hose. Sixty one feet of ladders were used to gain access to the wreck. Two stretchers, all blankets and three salvage covers were used along with portable generators and lights.Lynn Engine 8 laid of 300 feet one and a half inch hose.

ACT II

Another Crash

Revere

Train # 2206 was a westbound first class train with a similar consist of # 214 headed from Marblehead to Boston. It departed on time at 0757 hours and passed the Lynn Tower at 0911. Once again the signal aspects were covered with snow and it was impossible for the engine crew to see what the indication was. At signal #4 the train was stopped and two minutes later was struck by train # 2208 a two car RDC Buddliner.

2208 was a west bound that departed Marblehead at 0830 on time passing the Lynn Tower at 0921.

Train 2206 had arrived in Swampscott at 0812 and was held for a considerable time. Uninjured passengers were taken aboard to continue the trip to Boston. This train was switched to the east main and went by the accident scene at slow speed. When passing the Lynn Tower it was switched back to west main track.

Train 2206 tried to brake, but the ice and snow on the rails made adhesion for the wheels difficult and it hit the rear car of # 2206, it was 0936 hours exactly one hour and sixteen minutes after the Swampscott collision had occurred. At the time of the accident visibility was down to less than 200 feet.

The accident occurred 50.32 miles west of Portsmouth, NH at a point 1,932 feet east of the former Revere station.

The crews of both trains suffered minor injuries. Of the passengers, some who were uninjured in the first crash now suffered minor injuries and were transported to area hospitals. Twenty three persons were injured in this rear end collision.

Again, ambulances were summoned to the scene, along with Revere Fire and Police.

Engine 1 was stilled out at 0936 to assist with stretcher cases on the tracks off Hitchborne Street.

Most of the injured were able to make their way off the trains unassisted and thirteen persons were removed via stretchers to waiting ambulances and transported to Mass General. Many of the injuries were caused by flying glass and from being knocked out of their seats.

It was estimated that the first RDC car of 2206 was at full capacity of 90 persons, plus crew members.

The Interstate Commerce Commission report on the accidents listed the following as causes:

1. Weather related, the snow blocking signals, ice on the rails.
2. Human error in not following rules about blocked signals.
3. Failure of the Boston & Maine Railroad to keep employees proficient in operating rules.
4. Problem with the braking system on the RDC cars. This was investigated thoroughly and found that ice and snow on railheads rendered the braking systems wheel adhesion to be useless under such adverse conditions.

Today, a memorial stone marks the location of the accident. A stark reminder of the horror of that morning and the thirteen persons who never returned home that evening.

INTERVIEW WITH RETIRED FF FRANCIS DELANO

Witness Account

Francis "Red" Delano

On Monday Feb. 7th I conducted an interview with retired Swampscott Firefighter Francis "Red" Delano. Mr. Delano was appointed a Provisional firefighter in 1961 and made permanent in 1964. He retired in 2003. For the last two winters of his career he served as an Acting Lieutenant on Engine 2.

"In 1956 I was still in high school. At the time of the accident I was at the garage near Essex Oil putting chains on my car. It was snowing at a good clip. I heard a loud thud followed by sirens. I was a 'brush hound' helping out at brush fires and shoveling hydrants in the winter'. I headed for the scene following Engine 2. I beached my car up on the sidewalk, this was just about two to three minutes after the crash. Captain Maitland of Engine 2 pulled an 1 ½ line and handed it to me telling me "stay here come no further till I tell you!" The first thing I saw was a pair of L.L. Bean boots with the feet still in them and nothing else. The scene was horrible people injured, yelling for help. The ambulances hadn't arrived yet and the injured were put in police and private cars and taken to the hospital. One of the Buddliner's was nearly upright against a pole. Two of them had been opened up like a can of sardines. Steam and smoke was coming up from the wreck. I had the nozzle cracked open so the line wouldn't freeze. Crews were throwing 12 and 14 foot roof ladders up against the cars and looking for victims. They pulled a couple of people out this way. By this time the Mass. State Police arrived in force and started to push everyone back. A bunch of Lynn cops under a sergeant were already on scene. About two hours after the crash, I guess around 10:00 AM I was told they were taking some bodies to the fire house for use as a morgue. They stripped the dormitory beds for blankets and used them to cover the dead bodies. The only rescue tools that the SFD had at the time were hand tools and one H.K. Porter Company Porta-Power manual jack. By now the off shift had arrived. I was told by Captain Maitland to bring the line closer to the wreckage. I got a good look at the wreckage. The Boston & Maine crews were starting to work with their heavy torches and wanted everyone way back in case of fire or an explosion with all of the fuel and oils on the ground. The wreck was some 60 years ago and I still remember it like it happened yesterday."

The following assisted with the preparation of this article:

Members: Frank Barry, Chris Bright, Jeff Brown, James Cullen, Mark Wolfgang, John Pozark, William Wilderman. Swampscott Fire Captain James Snow. Special thanks to "Red" Delano for his memories of that day.

Celebrating the sesquicentennial of the sounding of Box 52 November 9th, 1872

The Line Box staff will do fire reports from before the November fire in 1872. On the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1897, the fiftieth in 1922, seventy fifth in 1947 and the one hundredth in 1972 finishing with fires on the 125th anniversary in 1997.

Here is our first story and it has been copied verbatim from the newspaper report.

Saturday January 6th, 1872

237 - 239 Broad Street

2-47

From the Boston Evening Transcript

Two alarms from Box 47 Broad St & Rowe's Wharf at a few minutes before 9 o'clock this morning called the firemen to the six-story brick building 237 Broad street for the second time in four weeks. The fire originated in the fifth story, occupied by Merriam & Gray, starch manufactures, and when first seen appeared to be around a large kettle used for boiling. The flames quickly spread over the fifth floor extending back to Purchase street, and into the new French story added since the fire of December 8th. The smoke was dense, and the fire, when it burst from the Broad street front, was so fierce that it threatened to envelop the flanking structures—the Oxnard refinery and E. & F. Kings storehouse. The alarm was late, and when the firemen arrived their duty to be long and arduous. They attacked the flames from front and rear, however, and but a few minutes elapsed before the longest spliced-ladders were raised and six or eight engine streams were pouring over the roof and into the windows of the burning stories. The fire was quickly checked and totally extinguished in about three quarters of an hour, before it had a chance to cause much damage to the currier-shop of Mr. J. W. Lowe who occupied the second, third and fourth floors. His injury by water, however, is considerable, though the most valuable of his stock was on the second floor. The Oxnard Sugar Refinery Company occupied the street floor as an office. The burned building belongs to Franklin King who has an insurance of $5000 each in the Manufactures, Merchants, Neptune and Firemen's offices and $3000 in the People's. His loss will be about $5000. J.W. Lowe's stock of $30,000 was insured for $44,000 in the Firemen's, Narraganset, People's and Equitable offices, and that amount will more than cover his loss. The starch factory suffered the most damage to its proportion to its value, and no insurance is reported.

Box 47 @ 0856

2-47 @ 0900

The response was put together from the BFD Annual Report of 1872.

Box	Engines	Hose Companies	Ladders
47	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10	1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10	1
2-47	1	5	3

Thanks to honorary member Paul Christian for his assistance with this article.

METRO FIRE Could Have Been One Hundred and Twenty Fire Years Old!

Article from Fire Engineering Archives 11-6-1897

CHIEF J. R. HOPKINS, of Somerville, Mass., is one of the most practical engineers in the country, and his knowledge on all matters relating to fire protection and his faculty of being able to describe them are very well known everywhere. Lately he compiled some valuable data on the equipment of the fire departments round Boston, which were read at a meeting of the Massachusetts club of fire engineers. In the information furnished the following statistics were given:

The scheme of the Greater Boston federation, which the associated board of trade in this city has recently indorsed with virtual unanimity, rests for the most part on generalizations. The separate factors which enter into it. While, doubtless, considered by the commission as the data from which their conclusions were drawn, have not to any great extent, been made public. Perhaps, therefore, the members of the Massachusetts Fire Chiefs' club did this enterprise a service by opening up the subject as it appears from their point of view, and as it is connected with their interests.

Chief Hopkins, of Somerville, in a carefully prepared paper, led the discussion, showing the advantages that might be derived from a plan of concentration in any serious emergency in Boston, or in any one of the towns or cities that may from location and a community of interests be reckoned as parts of one general family. For the purpose of his argument he grouped in alphabetical order the towns and cities of Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Hingham, Hull, Lexington, Malden, Melrose, Medford, Newton, Stoneham, Somerville, Waltham Watertown, Weymouth, and Winchester—a total of twenty. The aggregate fighting strength of this alliance at the present time would be as follows:

Steam Fire Engines: 75

Hose Wagons: 156

Chemical Engines: 34

Ladder Trucks: 41

Fire Horses: 544

Total Hose: 230,900 feet *(equals 43.73 miles of hose-Editor)*

Total Ladders: 8,563 feet

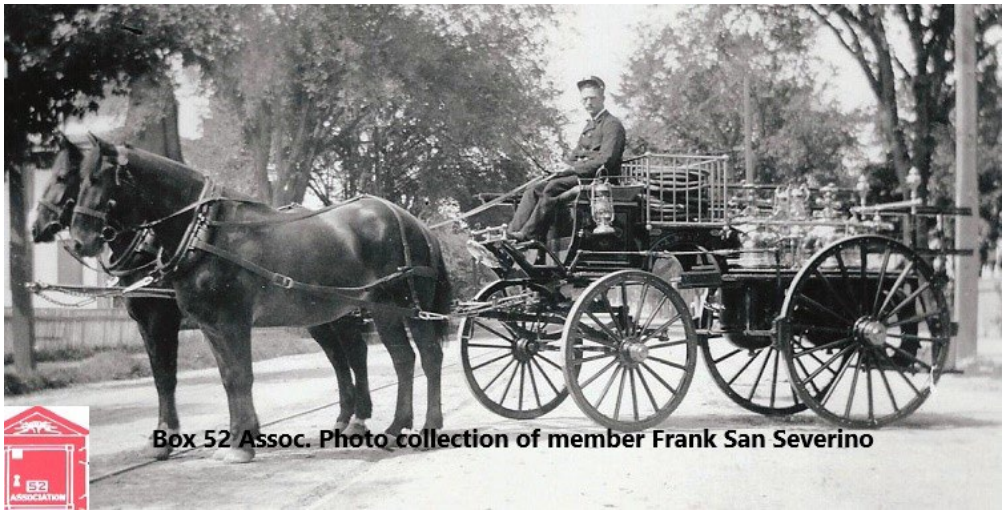
Manual Force: 2,103 men

Of course, when the actual group was decided on, it would include a greater strength than here indicated, taking in Quincy, Milton, Hyde Park, Dedham, Revere, and, possibly, even Lynn**.** As Chief Hopkins said, this is a greater force, both of men and appliances, for extinguishing fire than was ever concentrated at one conflagration hereabouts, and it is practically all within ten miles of Boston. Not one of the cities named has sufficient strength to subdue all fires; but, united, they are almost invincible, and under practical regulations their mutual services might be made more quickly and effectively available than at present, notwithstanding the kindly feeling and ready courtesies always to be reckoned upon.

Several years ago, Chief Hopkins relates, he was entertaining a dozen or more visiting chiefs from the South and West, and said to them: “Where that flag is waving is Chelsea; where the church spires are is Everett; where you see the chimneys is Malden, and over yonder is Medford.” Their first inquiry was: “How can you tell where a city begins and where it ends? Those places you point to as being separate cities seem only one.” Where they came from, the distance from one city to another was in almost every case considerable. The point was made that it is inconsistent with the general zeal for good work that all these twenty-five departments, organized for a common purpose, should act without reference to one another. Yet that is the situation of today. In case of a large fire in East Boston, the city of Chelsea can render assistance much more promptly than the Boston branch of our service, and she is always ready to do so—though, of course, it is wholly a matter of courtesy. She could not be criticized if she refused all aid, so long as the fire did not invade her own limits.

We are in close proximity to Cambridge. Somerville, Watertown, Newton, Brookline, and so forth, and alarms sounded in one place are heard in another; but they carry no authority beyond the immediate boundary of the town or city involved. It was not proposed in these suggestions that any municipality should lose the control over its own fire department which it now exercises. It would appoint its own firemen, purchase and pay for its apparatus, and control its buildings, but cooperation for general safety should be mandatory. The command, as a rule, would naturally rest with the chief of the city or town in which the fire occurred; but in a conflagration of great magnitude he “would have the chief of the Boston department take command.” In case of legislation looking to this end, the details would need to be very carefully considered, and with the benefit of expert counsel; but, with proper and practical arrangement, none of the varied interests which federation might involve would derive larger advantage from the union than the fire departments of Boston and vicinity.

The closer network and greater extension of our trolley lines that every new year brings would make it easy under the proposed system to adopt the plan of transporting apparatus to the outlying districts by electric cars, which has just been put in operation in Springfield, and which is expected to be of great benefit to the service.



Arlington Chemical Engine 5 1889 Babcock dual 35 gallon tanks.

Ukraine Firefighters Fighting Fires during War Time

Photos various Internet sites

It has been 82 years since the world has seen photos of firefighters in action during war times. These photos show what firefighters the world over do, fight fires and save lives. The present day Ukrainian firefighters bear a striking resemblance to their London counterparts during the Blitz. As of March 16th the IAFC reports 12 firefighters have been killed in the line of duty.

This and That

One of our members has brought back the Box 52 license plate and it is back on the road after several year hiatus. Does anyone know who had this plate in the past? If so, please let the editor know.

FDNY Battles Underground Electrical Vault
Box 10-76-862
51st Street & Lexington Ave.
Near quarters of Engine Company 8 and Ladder 2's quarters

Video on the fire and the use of the rebreather masks, well worth the watch. Click the link below for the video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA9MYtwZlVA

Heavy smoke 2 floors below grade

BC8 to MAN: Transmit a 10-76, we have heavy smoke 2 floors down below in the basement

CIDS: 35-story 150x225 class 1 office building. Fully sprinklered.

L4 FAST

BC8 to MAN: Attack stairway is “C”. Have Con-Ed respond, electrical fire in basement.

BC8: Using All-Hands for a fire on the “C2” level of a 35-story office building. 1LSO. Primaries are in progress.

BC8: Send us an extra engine and truck please (E54, TL35)

Div. 3 to MAN: s/c a rebreather unit and purple K unit (E229)

BC6 is safety officer, BC4 is an ABC

Car 4D is responding

Div. 3: We’ll need an additional truck (L20/L24) company and a priority response from Con-Ed.

L20/L24 to MAN: We’ll be delayed to box 862 due to heavy traffic.

TL117 s/c SOC truck

FC: car 4D reports in process of setting up rebreather operations for secondary searches. All members have been removed from cellar. Continue to flood transformer vault on E51 Street. DWH. S/C (1) extra truck. S/C (1) squad company, make sure it’s not SQ1.

FC: Be advised, we now have a manhole pushing on E51. We need (2) additional trucks to check exposures (TL21, L43).

L26/L4, TL138/TL7 s/c

TL138/TL7 new FAST truck

Probably:
E008, E021, E065, E039, E023CFRD, E040L, E054s/c
L002, L016, L004F, T007, L024, T035s/c, L020/L024s/c, T021s/c, L043s/c, L26/L4s/c, T138/T007s/c
RS01, SQ18, SQ288 s/c
BC. 8, 9, 10, 6S
Div. 3
E022T HR
RB, SB, FC
Rebreather 1
E229 Purple K
Car 4D
MSU
T117 SOC s/c

Thanks to NYC Fire wire for the information on this fire.

B.F.D. Doin's

Four new Ladder trucks have been delivered and placed in service with Ladder Companies 16, 17, 18 and 26.
Ladder 16 & 18 are 2021 Emergency-One Cyclone Metro 100 ft. aerial. Ladders 17 & 26 are 2021 E-One Typhoon model Metro 100 ft. rear mount aerials.

District 10 has been assigned a 2022 Chevy Suburban.

Rescue 1's former 2007 Pierce Quantum has been sold to the Decatur, Il Fire Department.

On Jan. 26th at 0800 the new ten alarm running card went into effect City wide.

SPECIAL ORDER **JANUARY 20, 2022**
NO. 6

From: Chief of Operations
To: Deputy Fire Chiefs, All Divisions
Subject: I. **IMPLEMENTATION OF 10 ALARM RUNNING CARD FOR ALL DISTRICTS**

Effective 1000 hours, January 26, 2022, new running cards will be implemented for all Districts. The updated cards will be available on all department desktop computers and MCT's. A sample card is attached to this order. All members shall review the sample 10 alarm card and be familiar with the new running card format.

The new cards are in a 10 alarm format and specify a RIT Engine on the first alarm and a RIT Ladder on smoke showing. District Chiefs responses and assignments will be listed as well.

The new running cards are based on the policy of sending the closest companies to an incident and/or cover assignment and are entered in the computer aided dispatch system. Companies will be dispatched immediately through Purvis or their MCT when a box is struck or multiple alarms ordered. **Companies shall respond and cover according to the new 10 alarm running cards.**

It is imperative that companies keep their status updated on their MCT. A company whose status improperly indicates they are unavailable will not be dispatched to an incident and cause a delay in response.

Members shall not call the Fire Alarm Office with feedback about the new running cards. Each company's feedback should be submitted to the Captain of the company. The Captain shall evaluate the feedback he/she received and shall summarize any concerns he/she deems appropriate on a Form 5A submitted to Acting/Chief of Operations Steven Shaffer through the chain of command. District and Deputy Chiefs shall evaluate feedback submitted and note their recommendations on the Form 5A as it passes through the chain of command.

All department computers and MCT's will have the new running cards accessible by 1000 hours on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. All Company Commanders shall review the process of accessing the running cards through the database available on all desktop computers and MCT's.

Paper running cards will be printed and distributed to all firehouses in the future. In the meantime, access to all running cards will be on desktop computers and MCT's.

Per Order:

Joseph McMahon
Chief of Operations
Support Services

Steven Shaffer
A/Chief of Operations
Field Services

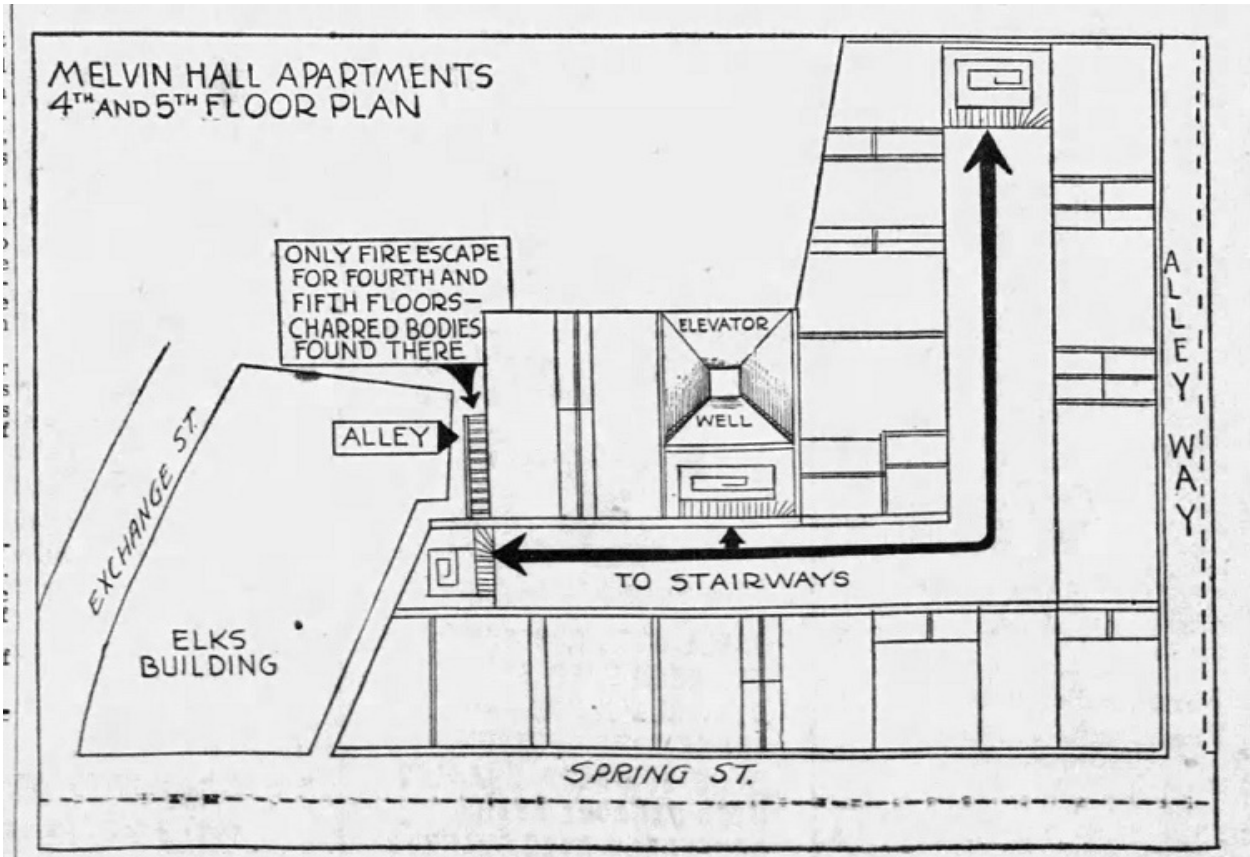
13 Dead 4 Injured
Melvin Hall Apartments
January, 19, 1942
Box 414
Lynn, MA

By John Pozark Jr. Line Box Staff

Looking to the right of the Elks, is Melvin Hall

Built as the Parker House Hotel in 1898 the building was patronized by playwrights and vaudeville actors. Located in the heart of the city, it was convenient to many of Lynn's theaters. At some point, the hotel's name was changed to the Hotel Hamilton. During 1924, the building changed from a transient to a residential hotel and the rooms were changed to make small apartments.

The Melvin Hall Apartments were built on grade, sloping down Spring St. from Exchange St. towards Broad St. This made it a half story taller on the Delta Side. Addresses ran from 14 to 34 Spring St. Five stories of a brick box surrounded an interior of wood. On the first floor was the Celtic Café, a bar and restaurant, along with the Jason Electric Supply Store. On the Alpha/Delta corner of the building was the door that led down a half flight of stairs to Foo's Laundry located in the basement of the building. A small apartment where the Foo's lived adjoined the laundry. A center doorway at 26 Spring St. led into the lobby serving the apartments. The vaulted two-story interior of the lobby had been little changed by the renovation and a full height wooden stair and stairwell and an automatic elevator in the center of the building led to the upper floors. Additional interior wooden stairways were located at either end of the building. Above the first floor, an L-Shaped hallway ran all the way around the building. A small fire escape ran along the Bravo side of the building from the top floor and down to a shed roof in the rear. There was also a fire escape along the rear of the Bravo Exposure. There were no other fire escapes. Rope fire escapes were not required because it was a "Residential Hotel". There was no local or central station fire alarm. There were no automatic sprinklers.

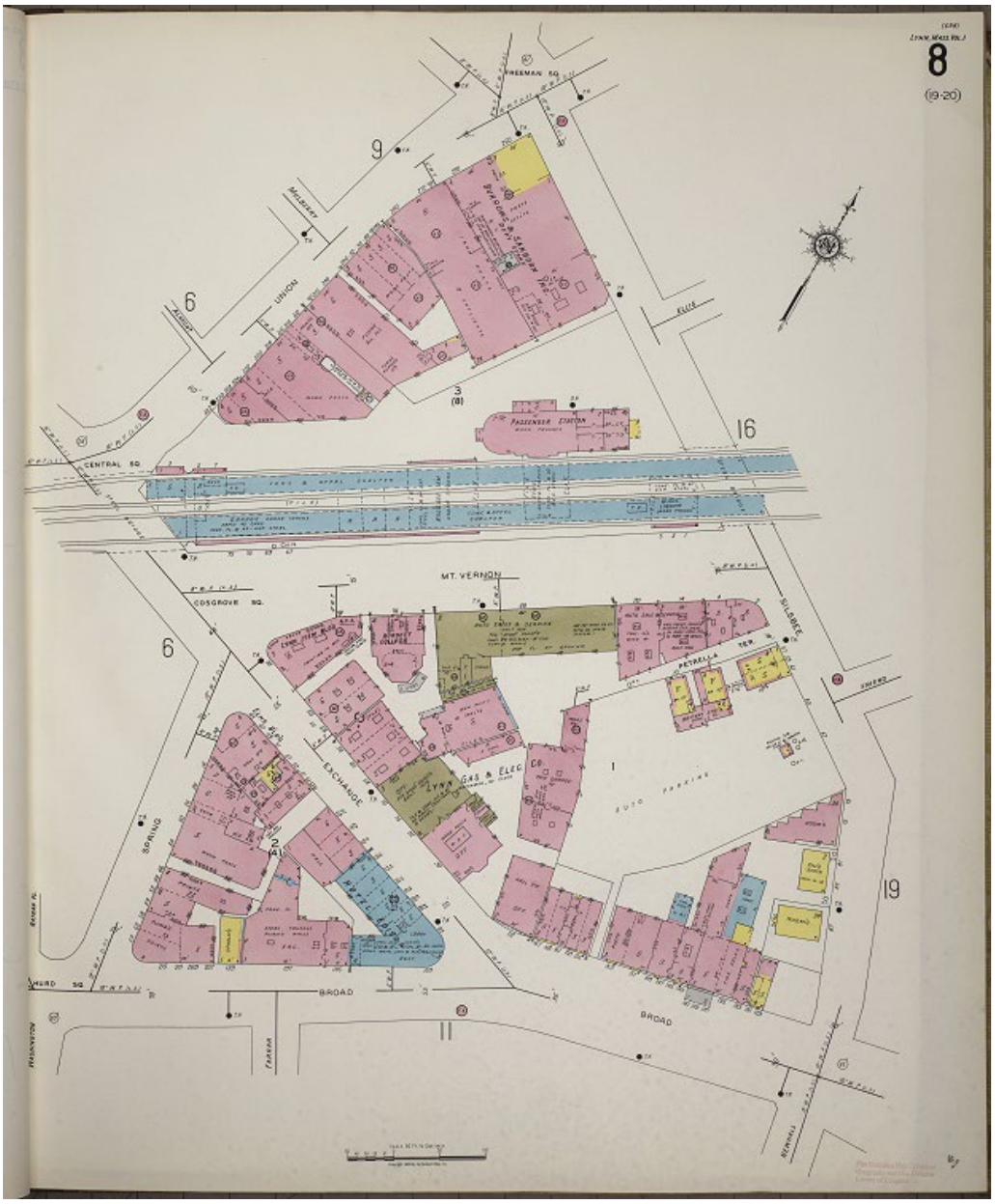


FLOOR PLAN OF BURNED BUILDING—Flames roared up elevator well and stairway in center.

The rear of the fire building included a one-story addition which backed up to a three story and a one-story building, both of ordinary construction facing Exchange St. These formed half of the Charlie Side of the fire building. A vacant lot blocked by a wooden fence on Exchange St. ran beside the one-story building. This lot opened to a small courtyard and alley in the rear of Melvin Hall. The congested block plan created exposed buildings fronting on Exchange and Broad St.'s. The Delta Exposures were an alley which separated Melvin Hall from a 4-Story ordinary construction paint store. A basement boiler room and underground coal bunker were located at the rear of the fire building.

The Bravo Side Exposure was the Elks Hall. A 5-story building of similar construction, this was a corner building fronting on Spring and Exchange Streets and attached to the Melvin Hall Building. The Elk's Hall was equipped with Automatic Sprinklers and a Fire Department Connection and news media reported a fire wall separated the Elks Building and the apartment building. (For better understanding, see the included diagram.)

The water supply in the area around the building included 5-6 triple nozzle post type hydrants. A 12" water main went down Spring St. and Exchange St.'s while the nearby section of Broad St. had a 10" main.



Sanborn Fire Map of the area

At the time of the fire, the Lynn Fire Department consisted of 13 Engine Companies, 4 Hook & Ladder Companies, a Rescue Company and 2 District Chief's. Engine apparatus were a mix of Ahrens-Fox piston, Buffalo rotary vane and a pair of American La France rotary gear pumps. The Rescue Company ran a 1930 Maxim Chemical Car converted in the department shops to a rescue truck.

The jobs of a Ladder Company at a fire are to open-up, ladder, locate the fire and any people in danger, remove or rescue victims and ventilate. All these responsibilities require many people. All Lynn Ladder Companies were assigned staffing of an Officer and 5 Firemen but, according to N.B.F.U. Standards, this staffing was still inadequate.

First due, Ladder 3, from the Broad Street Engine House, ran with the newest ladder in the department. A 1934 American LaFrance tiller truck with 85' wooden aerial raised by a spring assist, quick raise hoist. The ground ladder complement was the largest in the department with a 50', two 45' and two 35' extension ladders. The rest of the ladder racks were filled with 8 other ladders including 2 Pompier ladders.

Lynn Ladder 3

Second due Ladder 1 was a bastid. A 1923 White Motor Co. truck was the donkey pulling a trailer with an 85' wooden aerial raised by a Dahill compressed air hoist. Ground ladder compliment was a 50' and 35' extension and 13 other ladders including 3 Pompiers. Total footage of ladders carried was 384 feet.

Ladder 1 the second due Truck

Ladders 2 and 4 were essentially a pair. Both were purchased in 1925 to replace tillered city service trucks. Manufactured by the Ahrens-Fox Fire Engine Co. they were equipped with 75' wooden aerials and had Dahill Air Hoists. The ground ladders included a 40' extension and 10 or 11 other ground ladders.

According to N.B.F.U. Surveys, all ladder companies carried Hooks & Axes, Bale Hooks, Bars, Door Openers, Ladder Dogs, Wire Cutters, Rope, Life-Nets, (1-2) 2 ½ Gallon Extinguishers and Cellar Pipes. Some but not all Ladder Companies carried Lifebelts, Roof Cutters, First Aid Kits, Ram & Wall Cutters, and a Life-Gun. The Rescue did have a First Aid Kit and an H&H Inhalator with spare tanks of Carbogen.

By N.B.F.U. Standards the Lynn F.D. was deficient in master stream service. The standards called for a true Water Tower. For years, Chief Engineers had asked for one to be purchased. This type of device being essential due to the large number of loft type factory buildings in the city. Many years before, the city government had attempted to appease the fire department by purchasing a single ladder pipe. Water towers were designed to flow between 2000 and 2500 GPM. For many years, the Lynn Fire Department had to make do with a 400 GPM ladder pipe. By 1942, some first line ladder companies had been equipped with a ladder pipe. But still no true Water Tower to protect the city.

Fire methods included initial attack with chemical hose lines fitted with straight pipe ¾" tips. If a significant fire was indicated upon arrival, a 2 ½" hose line with a 1 ¼" tip was run direct from the hydrant using a controlling gate and hydrant pressure. As necessary, the hose lines would be connected to Engines and the pressure increased. Sprinkler Siamese were seldom supported. Ladder companies performed the traditional truck assignments although salvage work was minimal as ladder companies carried no stock covers. The Rescue performed Engine or Truck work as necessary but was the only company equipped with masks (the All-Service, 2-hour canister, filter type) for every member. One of the Chief's aides would establish voice contact with the Fire Alarm Office via the Fire Alarm Box using a telephone type handset. The other aides would do fire duty.

Running cards for the area of the fire, assigned 3 engines and 2 ladders and the Rescue Company on the first alarm. All on duty Chiefs responded to a box. Two pumps and one truck were assigned on subsequent alarms. The off-duty members would report back on the 2nd Alarm, being summoned by residential tappers or the outside sounding devices, the steam whistle at the Lynn Gas & Electric Plant

and tower bells on two churches and two firehouses. Turnout was typically around 75%. Unlike some communities, Lynn had no plan for vicinity boxes. If a box was already in and a nearby box was pulled, the second box would still receive a full box assignment.

This practice would figure significantly at the Melvin Hall Fire. Automatic Mutual Aid using a running card, was in effect with Swampscott. There was also some arrangement with Peabody and Revere for Mutual Aid.

It was Monday Night, January 19th, 1942. It was a foggy night. A little over six weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines. The country had begun to mobilize for war in earnest. Plans, training, and resources were incomplete. The country was still stunned.

At 1800 hours the Second Platoon reported for 14 hours of night duty. At the Franklin St. Firehouse, members of Rescue Co. 1, Fire Capt. O'Rourke, Firemen Kelley, Lynch and Saulnier reported at Roll Call. At Federal St. Lt Campbell took command of Ladder 2 and Firemen Gilroy, McGrath, O'Brien and Saulnier.

From 1945 to 2200 hours the Rescue Company and the Post #6 First Aid Team of the Civilian Defense drilled on Burn Injuries under the direction of Dr. Aldrich at the Franklin St. Firehouse. At 2012 hours City Box # 51 was received Ladder 2 responded but was sent right along. The Rescue did not respond. Recall was sounded at 2036 hours. At 2120 hours the Rescue Company responded to a Still Alarm for a refrigerator leak at 21 Shepard St. No duty was listed, the company was absent from quarters for 15 minutes returning at 2135 hours. And then the bells went silent, until...
Tuesday, January 20th, 1942, an estimated 120 persons were inside the Melvin Hall apartment building.

Shortly before 0200 a police officer walking his beat passed through the area and found nothing amiss. But a fire had started in the basement boiler room where a furnace burned soft coal to heat the building.

Fire was discovered about 10 minutes before 0200. Suddenly, smoke, thick black smoke, pushed from the basement. The smoke rushed up the funnel created by the central stairwell and elevator shaft to the top floor and mushroomed out, spreading horizontally. One man, resident of the 4th floor, woke up, left quickly, and had time to use the back stairs.

In his basement apartment, Mr. Foo roused his wife, the pair took their 9-month-old daughter and left the building safely.

At 0159 hours a passing cab driver pulled City Box #414 located at Broad and Washington St.'s. This called 3 Engines, Ladders 3 and 1, the Rescue Co. and 3 Chiefs and their Aides to the Scene.
At 0202 hours City Box # 416 Central Square was received at the Fire Alarm Office on Baker St. The FAO sent 3 Engines and Ladders 2 and 4 to this Box. By a quirk of procedure and circumstance, all city ladder trucks were responding to the fire almost immediately.

Fire was spreading rapidly; it was through the roof and upper floors were well involved on arrival. First arriving firemen saw heads in every window. Trapped persons were screaming. There were some people on the roof, others were at the windows on the 4th and 5th floors. Dozens of people hung out of windows screaming for help. Some people hung by their hands from windowsills. Some people just jumped.
Less than 100 yards away at the Hotel Edison (formerly known at various times as the Lennox and the Seymour Hotels) the Night Clerk could hear the screams. One guest at
the Edison, awakened by screams, ran to the rear of Melvin Hall. This man witnessed a man tie a bed sheet at a 5th floor window, slide down the sheet, and enter a window on the 4th floor. No one knew if he made it out of the building.

Other people tied bedsheets inside the windows. These were a false hope as the end of the sheets dangled 50 feet above the sidewalk. District Fire Chief Ed Mills, the initial Incident Commander, could make out at least 20 people in the windows on floors 4 and 5. Their heads were silhouetted by fire. Firemen turned first to rescue.

Thick smoke banking down to street level obscured the scene. Firemen couldn't see where the windows were to throw ladders to people hanging from the windowsills.
According to one newspaper report, an eyewitness described, "People stood at windows with fire behind them, then they seemed to melt back into the rooms." Firemen couldn't put streams of water through windows because there were so many people there. Ladders went up. One man and his wife were on the 3rd floor and awakened by noise in the street. He opened the door and a blast of smoke hit him. He shut the door and roused his wife. They hung out the window, neither would jump first. Then the ladders came up and they were rescued.

Another couple, residents of the 2nd floor, attempted to exit the building. Making their way into the hall, they were blocked by a burst of flame which blew up the elevator shaft. They turned around, went back to their room, and made their way out over a ladder. Another man on floor 2 had a similar experience.

Interior searches were attempted. Firemen, Police Officers, and civilians entered the lower floors and attempted to locate and remove occupants. L.P.D. Patrolman Bruce Wicker, walking his route nearby when the fire was discovered, made entry to the building, and went to the 2nd floor. He couldn't see anything. He shouted and waved his flashlight as a beacon. Through the choking smoke, three women and a child made their way to him. Patrolman Wicker removed them to the outside. He turned around to continue his search but was driven back. Entry was impossible.

At 0204 Hours, a 2nd Alarm was transmitted on CB# 414. With Box 416 already in, the 2nd Alarm activated Mutual Aid and called Swampscott Ladder 1 and a Revere Ladder to the Box along with 3 Lynn Engines.

Firemen and civilians spread life nets and raised ladders, both ground ladders and aerials. Victims in the windows couldn't see the ladders rising towards them or the nets spread below them in the dark and the

fog and the smoke. Rescuers tried waving white handkerchiefs so that those above could see where the nets were and jump for them.

Firemen shouted to people to jump for the life nets. There were so many people in the windows, nobody could tell for whom the shouts were intended. Many jumped. Some hit the nets, others missed and struck the sidewalk.

Some jumped where there were no nets. One woman jumped and came down screaming. She missed the net. A second woman landed safely and wasn't much hurt. Another woman missed the net by inches. Her husband struck the net with such force his impact tore the life net from the grasp of the rescuers, and he was seriously injured.

In front of the building was a streetlight, about 20 feet tall and topped by a white glass globe. One man tied bedsheets together and tried to lower himself down from the top floor. He dangled momentarily, and then fell about 50' striking the streetlight, bouncing off and then hitting the pavement.

A reporter's description from the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in Manhattan is brought to mind, the horrible sound of people jumping and their bodies hitting the sidewalk, "thud, dead, thud, dead". Two firemen on the sidewalk outside the building were struck glancing blows by the bodies of falling women. Lynn Firemen Edward Garrett and E.B. Hersey narrowly escaped serious injury.

One man, aroused by the commotion, arrived at the fire early on. He saw four firemen and a civilian carrying a life net to the rear of the building and joined them. A third civilian came to help. Together they all broke down a 10-foot wooden fence on the Exchange Street side to make access to the rear for the life net. The 7 men opened the net and began trying to catch the people falling through the night sky. Seven men on a life net ordinarily requiring 10-12 men to operate safely. This man then watched in horror as his own sister fell 3 stories from a fire filled window into the open "Life Saving Machine". She was injured, but not seriously.

Ladder 2 commanded by Lt. Luther Campbell, was sent to City Box 416, the first due ladders having already responded to Box 414. Approaching the fire, Lt. Campbell could see Ladder Companies already at the front of the building. He directed his driver to the rear. Pulling up to the Charlie side of the building, Lt. Campbell saw people in every window. He split his crew, one group going to throw ground ladders or search. He took the Driver and threw the stick to the building looking. Looking up, he noticed one window with a young man and a woman in it. They moved the tip of the ladder to that window. Climbing up and leading the way Lt. Campbell found a mother trying to push her son up to the window. The young man had been crippled by polio. Campbell and the Driver struggled to get the man onto the aerial. Cling to the ladder 50 plus feet above the pavement they somehow managed to get the man swung over. While his legs were paralyzed, his upper arm muscles were more developed from compensating and the added strength helped him help the rescuers. Then his mother, who's bare feet had been burned from standing on the floor holding up her son, also was brought down. The effort took time, a lot of time. When both had been brought to the base of the aerial, Lt. Campbell looked back up to pick the next spot for rescue. Except, all the other faces were gone. The time they had, had been used up. Decades later, in speaking with the author, the pain was plain on Lieutenant, by then, Retired District Fire Chief Campbells face. He questioned; did he make the correct decision to go after the first two people.

At 0206 hours, Ten Blows, the General Alarm, by order of Chief of Department Scanlon, was transmitted for CB# 414. The remaining 4 Lynn Engines responded. Swampscott Engine 1 to the fire along with a Saugus Engine and Ladder and a Revere Engine. At the same time Special Calls were sent out for additional fire companies, ambulances, doctors, the Red Cross and the newly organized Civilian Defense Auxiliary Fire and Police Units.

Lynn Police would have sent a wagon with two Patrolmen, a Sergeant and the Patrolmen walking beats in the area on the first alarm. Subsequently additional Patrolmen, superior officers, and the Police Ambulance would have been summoned. But the work of assisting with search and rescue, first aid and

controlling the crowd was overwhelming. Ambulances from Swampscott, Saugus, Revere, Malden, and the General Electric Plant responded to assist with treatment and transport.

Some American Red Cross Disaster workers mobilized at the headquarters across the street from Melvin Hall and went to work assisting the injured.
At 0245, Swampscott Engine 2 was sent to the fire from their cover assignment at Fayette St. At 0255 hours Marblehead Engine 1 went from their cover assignment to the fire. Peabody, Nahant, and Lynnfield also sent engine companies. (Author's Note: One other occurrence of all Swampscott companies operating together at a Lynn Fire was the Church Fire on Nahant St. during 1976.)

Based on fire conditions, when all viable occupants had been removed, firefighting operations began in earnest, attempting to hold the fire to the block of origin. Hose lines were stretched. Playpipes and appliances were set up. At the height of the fire there was no time to count the dead. Firemen took their places on Spring St. with handlines and "buried the fire in water". At peak operation, twenty streams played into the fire. Ladder 2's ladder pipe would flow water for hours. Approximately 22 minutes after Boxes # 414 and # 416 were struck, the roof collapsed and took the 5th floor with it down to the 4th floor.

Fearing fire would spread throughout the downtown area and lacking sufficient elevated master streams, Chief Scanlon sent a Special Call to Boston for a Water Tower. The Boston F.A.O. dispatched Ladder 31 with an Officer and 6 firemen and the District Chief from East Boston to the fire with reserve Tower 4.

Making the 10-mile run from East Boston in a record time, the Tower was set up on the Spring St. side. But by this time, about two hours into the job, the fire was under control. Tower 4 never passed water.

The Rescue Company set up their portable generator and supplied 5 floodlights for 4 hours.

The scene at Lynn Hospital was like a first aid room in a London Hospital during the Blitz. It was filled with the injured from the fire, mostly women. Hospital Staff put their recent training for war to use. Cots were set up in corridors. Patients were quickly examined and given hypodermic injections.
The Surgeon in Chief, Dr. C.L. Hoitt called in Physicians. Admitting Supervisor Lena Spears called in off duty nurses to supplement the 15 R.N.'s on duty in the hospital. American Red Cross Nurses and Civilian Defense Medical Auxiliary Corps personnel hurried to the hospital to assist. About 45 nurses cared for the many suffering people.

Toward dawn the fire was out. At 0832 hours Engine 1 was detailed to take Hose 3 to the fire scene and evacuate the water from the cellar. The crew set up a syphon fed by a hydrant line and began flowing water. They would not make up until 1950 hours being absent from quarters 11 hours and 18 minutes.

By 0835 Engine Co.'s 5-7-8-9-11 and 13 and Ladder Co's 3-4 were back in service. Mutual Aid units began returning to their own quarters.

The streetlight in front of the fire building stood out. Silhouetted in the morning light it was bent at a crazy angle. A mute testimony to the tragic collision with falling bodies the night before. Bed sheets, wet with the water from fire streams, hung from many windows.

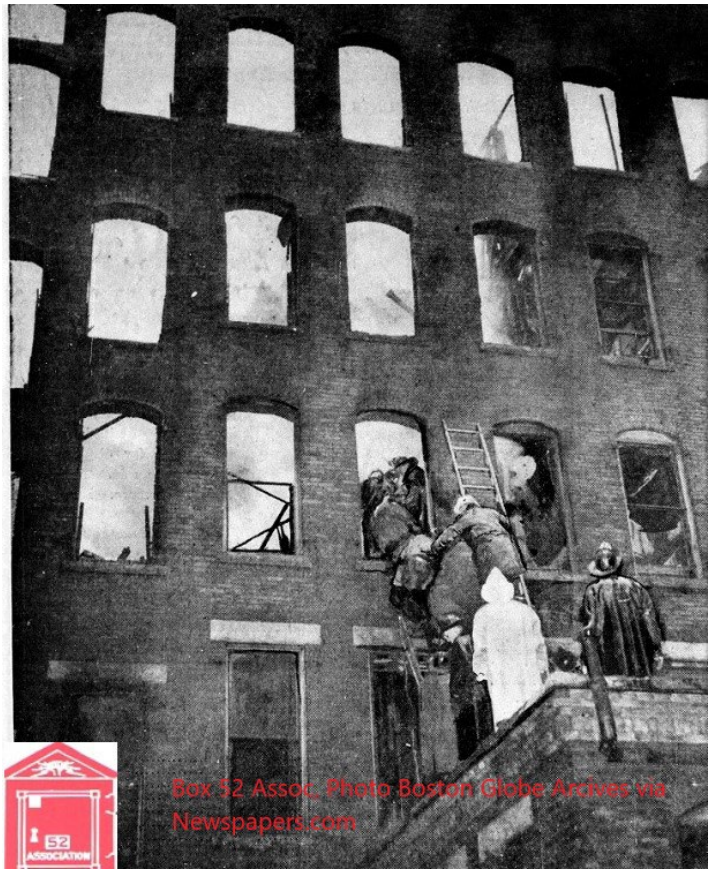
Now that the fire was subdued, firemen and policemen entered the building for a secondary search. They carried rolled up stretchers for the recovery operation.

The debris formed a large pile inside the building like a child's pick-up sticks. Wooden flooring, interior partition walls from the 4th and 5th floors and the roof had piled up on the 3rd floor. The brick outer walls on all four sides remained standing to their full height threatening an additional collapse.

Firemen had to be very careful as they moved through the wreckage, searching for, and removing the victims. Rescue Co.1 brought in their Blanchard Flexi-Cot Stretcher using it to package and remove

human remains via window with a rope. At times they had to use a handsaw to cut through charred building materials to carefully disentangle the bodies without starting a collapse.

The bodies of two women and a child were removed around 0900 hours.
About 1000 hours, the 4th and 3rd floors crashed down to the 2nd floor. All searchers were accounted for, but the operation became more complicated.



During the recovery operation Chief of Department Adams of the Marblehead Fire Department received serious injuries in a bad fall. He fell from the roof to a section of the small fire escape 3 floors below. He was taken to Mary Alley Hospital in Marblehead with internal injuries, contusions of the spine, five broken ribs and in severe shock. He was placed on the Danger List.

Operations continued for days. On Wednesday, January 21st, the Rescue Company was Special Called to the fire scene at 2108 hours with District Fire Chief Haddock to set up lights. The Mayor and Senator Lodge were looking over the building. The portable generator and 3 floodlights were used for 40 minutes, and the Rescue returned at 2155 hours.

On Thursday, February 5th, the Rescue was again Special Called to the fire scene. The company made entry and setup 3 floodlights fed by the generator and operated for 2 hours clearing under the elevator to search and investigate.

An estimated 23 injured people were taken to Lynn Hospital for treatment and fifteen were admitted. Injuries ran the gamut from smoke inhalation and burns to spine fractures, concussions, and extremity fractures. Many were in traumatic shock.

Fireman John Gammett, Lynn Ladder Co. 4 was admitted to Lynn Hospital for treatment of smoke and gas inhalation and placed in an Iron Lung Respirator.

Photo by John Sheehan, Globe Staff

INJURED FIREMAN—John Gammett, 42, of Ladder 4, Lynn, being treated in respirator for gas and smoke inhalation. Nurse is Erma Temple.

Lynn Fireman William Adrien received severe back injuries. Lynn Firemen Rooney and O'Connor of Rescue Company were also treated for injuries. A Revere Fireman, Evans Marden sprained his ankle. It was estimated that 25 people were rescued over ladders. The cause was undetermined.

Lynn Ladder #2 used 300' of ladders at the fire along with their Ladder Pipe. Ladder Co. 2 was absent from quarters 6 hours 55 minutes.
Property loss was estimated at $55,000 1942 USD. That's $987,861.35 2022 USD.

Chief of Department Scanlon was quoted: "We were powerless. There were so many who needed to be rescued and we didn't have enough. They really had to jump."

LYNN FIRE DEPARTMENT 1942 APPARATUS ROSTER

Engine 1 1929 Ahrens-Fox 1000 gpm

Engine 2 1924 American LaFrance 750 gpm

Engine 3 1927 Ahrens-Fox 1000 gpm

Engine 4 1927 Ahrens-Fox 1000 gpm

Engine 5 1928 Ahrens-Fox 1000 gpm

Engine 6 1924 Ahrens-Fox 750 gpm

Engine 7 1919 Ahrens-Fox 750 gpm

Engine 8 1924 American LaFrance 750 gpm

Engine 9 1930 Buffalo 1000 gpm

Engine 10 1930 Buffalo 1000 gpm

Engine 11 1931 Buffalo 1000 gpm

Engine 12 1931 Buffalo 1000 gpm

Engine 13 1936 Buffalo 750 gpm

Ladder 1 1925 White/1909 American LaFrance TT 85 ft wooden aerial

Ladder 2 1925 Ahrens-Fox TT 75 ft wooden aerial

Ladder 3 1934 American LaFrance TT 85 ft wooden aerial

Ladder 4 1925 Ahrens-Fox TT 75 ft wooden aerial

Rescue 1 1930 Maxim

50th Anniversary of the Robie Industrial Park Fire
Wakefield, MA
Article from collection of member David Parr

35 Outside Companies Battle 10-Acre Industrial Complex Fire

BY HENRY T. HANSON
Staff Correspondent

Five buildings were destroyed and six others damaged when a $3-million fire of suspicious origin swept through a 10-acre industrial complex in Wakefield, Mass. The fire was fought by 26 engine companies, five ladder companies, three elevating platform companies and one squad that came from 27 municipalities to help the Wakefield Fire Department.

To protect a population of 26,000, the Wakefield Fire Department has 48 full-time men and 14 call men, four first-line engines, an 85-foot aerial ladder truck a rescue truck and a reserve engine.

During the year prior to the fire in the Robie Industrial Center last February 5, there had been 34 fires of known or suspected incendiary origin in Wakefield. Four of these were in the Robie complex and two of them were in the Continental Chemical and Coating Company, where this fire started on a Saturday night, when no persons were known to have been in any of the buildings. Only two months before, on December 12, 1971, a $4-million fire of suspicious origin destroyed the local high school.

The buildings in the industrial complex, built mostly between 1856 and 1890 by a furniture manufacturer, were of typical mill construction with brick walls, plank on wood joist floors, tar and gravel roofs, and wooden window sash and frames. They were one to four floors high—mostly three and four—with a total of 320,000 square feet of floor area. Additions and extensive alterations had been made during the years.

All the buildings were sprinklered, but they lacked fire department connections. Two 6-inch connections to a looped 16-inch public water main on Water Street fed the yard hydrant system which supplied the sprinklers. The 16-inch main was part of a strong grid network and only about 1000 feet from a 20-inch main. The static pressure at the sprinkler valves was 93 psi, and water flow alarms were tied in to a master box on the town fire alarm system.

The industrial complex has been altered to suit the needs of small industrial tenants. Other areas were used for storage and some of the less desirable space was vacant.

First-alarm response

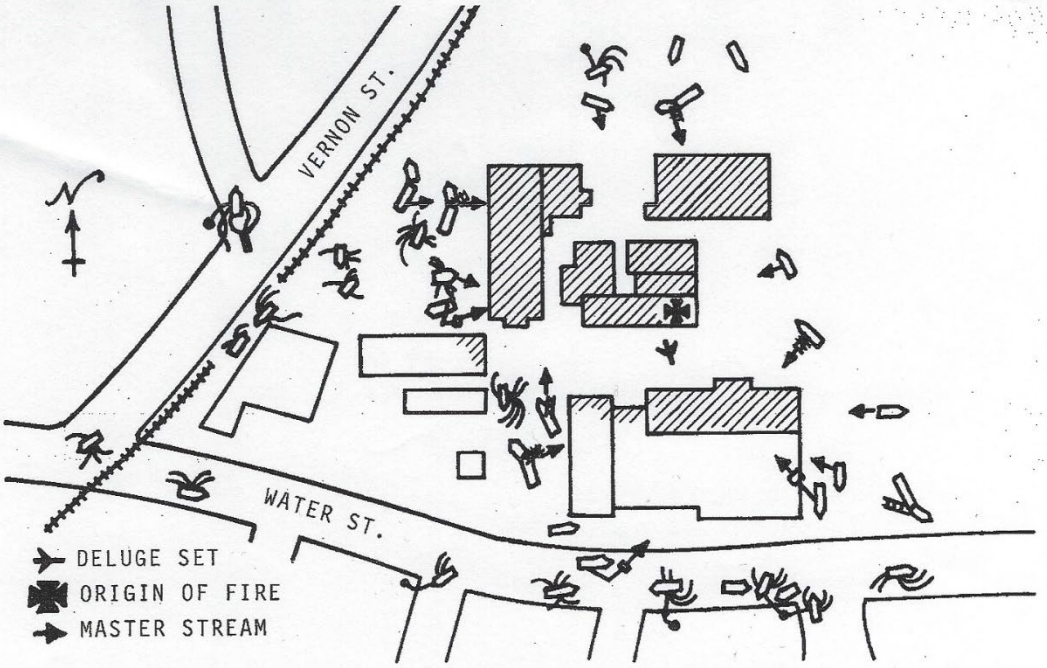
The first alarm was from Box 31, the master box in the industrial complex, at 7:18 p.m. The initial response was Engines 3 and 4 and the ladder truck from the Central Station, which is about a quarter mile from the scene, and Engine 2 from Station 2, nearly 2 miles away. There was a 40-mph wind, gusting to 50 mph, and the temperature was 12 degrees with a chill factor of 38 below.

Captain Donald C. Jacobs, the first officer on the scene, saw an open door in the Continental Chemical Company building and smoke was coming from basement and upper floor windows. He also noticed that the sprinklers in this building were not operating. The fire investigation determined that the main valve for the water supply to this building was closed and that the master box had been tripped by fire traveling through an underground passageway to the next building and activating the sprinklers.

Cans and drums explode

The captain immediately ordered two 2½-inch lines laid from Engine 3, which was hooking up to the nearest yard hydrant. He ordered a second alarm, recorded at 7:21 p.m., which brought in Wakefield Engine 1 and Rescue 1, Reading Engine 2, Wakefield Chief Walter V. Maloney, Jr., all off-duty men and all call men.

As two preconnected 1½-inch lines were advanced into the chemical plant, cans and drums of flammables began exploding. The men were driven out of the building as the explosions increased in intensity and frequency,



blowing out windows and spreading fire into the upper floors. Engine 3 had to be unhooked from the hydrant and moved to safety or it would have been lost.

Maloney ordered a third alarm at 7:23 p.m., bringing in Stoneham Engine 5, Melrose Engine 2 and Wakefield Reserve Engine 5. The third alarm is the limit of automatic mutual aid response on the fire alarm telegraph net connecting Wakefield, Melrose, Stoneham and Reading. All movements beyond the third alarm are special calls.

The chief then special called Reading Ladder 1 and Melrose Ladder 1. At 7:28 p.m., he called Lynnfield Engine 2 and North Reading Engine 2 and ordered a general alarm over the police teletype which activated the Newton Fire Control Network, which covers the territory to the south and the Essex County Fire Control Network in Haverhill which covers the area to the north as far as the New Hampshire border.

Passageways link buildings

At 8:00 p.m., flames driven by the high winds were roaring through all floors of buildings 2, 28, 28A, 4, 5, and 1A, B, C and D. All the buildings that did not have a common dividing wall were connected by overhead enclosed catwalks and underground tunnels. The fire was driven through these passageways by the high winds like a blowtorch. Floors of some of the buildings were dropping, breaking off sprinkler lines. This lowered the pressure in the yard water main system so much that the sprinklers in buildings not yet fully involved were ineffectual.

Heavy electric power lines strung along the sides of the buildings were arced and dropped into the yard, creating an additional hazard to the men. Drums and cans of flammable liquids exploded and flew out of windows. Fiery brands carried by the high wind showered over the area to the eastward. Fortunately, this area was comparatively sparsely settled. Stoneham Engine 1 and Wakefield Ladder 1 were detailed to stand by and to guard against these falling brands, some of which were the size of a football.

Despite the fact that at times around 10,000 gpm of water were being used, there were no problems with water supply. This must be attributed to the judicious placement of engines on the largest mains, which were some distance from the fireground, even though it meant using two or three engines in relays. Except for the first couple of lines, no dependence was placed on the yard hydrant system, as it consisted mainly of old, unlined, cast iron pipe which must have been badly tuberculated.

Ice, debris hide valves

In years past, most of the post indicator valves on the yard system had been removed to facilitate the movement of trucks. These post indicators had been replaced with flush street-type gate boxes, which could not be located under the ice and fire debris. This precluded the possibility of shutting off water to some of the buildings that had collapsed, so water simply went to waste. After the fire, there was only 3 feet of water in the town reservoir.

At 8:15 p.m., less than an hour after the first alarm, Maloney had ordered all men and apparatus out of range of any of the tottering walls and told the men to concentrate on the use of the heaviest master streams possible. Over 20,000 feet of 2½ and 3-inch hose were used. Chelsea Engine 4 and Malden Engine 6 each laid 700 feet of 4½-inch supply line.

Eleven men were treated for minor injuries and burns. The radiant heat burned the paint off one side of a Wakefield engine and 1500 feet of hose were lost.

Fire watch maintained

The first out-of-town company to be relieved was Brookline Engine 1, which started to take up at 2:49 the following morning. The last out-of-town company to leave was Boston Engine 32 at 9:15 p.m. Sunday, 26 hours after the first alarm. Details remained on the scene, wetting down, until the third day after the fire. Recall was not struck until 5:05 p.m. Tuesday. Of the 225 men directly involved in the operations, most were from fully paid departments.

Ironically, tenants in the industrial complex hired a watchman service after the high school fire but dropped it two weeks before their own fire because they could not agree on how to share the cost. □ □

Robie Industrial Park Fire
Wakefield, Mass. Feb. 5,1972
BOX 31

First Alarm 7:18 PM
Second " 7:21 PM
Third Alarm 7:23 Pm Recall Feb. 8,1972 @ 5:04PM.
In addition to the Wakefield 5 Engines Ladder 1 & CD Rescue & Chief

Enging Companies

Andover 2
Boston 32, 39, 52, xx
Brookline 1
Cambridge 1
Chelsea 4
Danvers 4
Everett 3
Hanscom Air Base 11
Lawerence 2
Lynnfield 2
Malden 4-6
Medford 6
Melrose 2
Middleton 1
No. Andover 1
No. Reading 2
Peabody 1
Reading 2
Revere 4
Saugus 1
Somerville 2
Stoneham 1-5
Wilmington 5
Winchester 3
Winthrop 1
Woburn 3

Ladder Companies

Boston 17
Concord Snorkel
Lynn Tower 2
Melrose 1
No. Reading 1
Saugus 1
Woburn Snorkel
Everett 1

Covering Companies

Arlington 4
Boston 21
Waltham 2
Medford 3
Wilmington Lad. 1

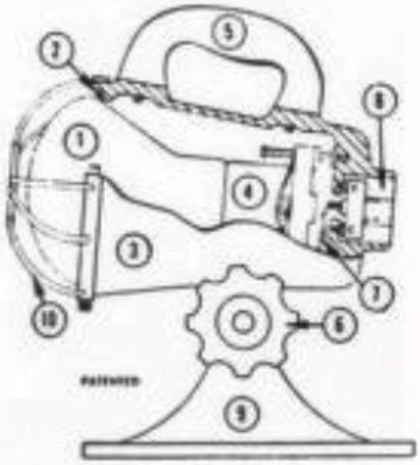
xx Boston 39 & 52 arrived the next day to take up pumping assignments for final extinguishment.

Boston also sent a fuel truck to supply the many units during the fire.

CIRCLE D®
Rides The Leaders

Leading Apparatus Builders Furnish CIRCLE-D-LIGHTS

1. Shock and Ice Water Test proves **CIRCLE-D LAMPS** can take it.
2. Silicon Gasket cushions lamp — withstands heat, remains soft and pliable.
3. Full depth housing for complete lamp protection.
4. Spring mounted socket — absorbs shock, pulls lamp against gasket, can't shake loose.
5. Plastic handle — comfortable to hold, resists heat and cold.
6. Friction clutch elevation adjustment — just position, stays put.
7. Fiberglass insulated wire — withstands heat and cold.
8. Twist lock cord connection — can't pull loose.
9. Large anti-tip base.
10. Rugged spot welded lamp guard.



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