



# THE LINE BOX

Volume 9, EXTRA

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*Celebrating 100 years 1912-2012*

## BOX 52 CENTENNIAL

**"ADVANCING AND PROMOTING THE INTEREST IN FIRE PREVENTION AND THE EXTINGUISHMENT OF FIRES WITHIN THE CITY OF BOSTON AND THE SO-CALLED METROPOLITAN DISTRICT"**

### Preamble of the Constitution

An informal meeting took place in the office of the Boston Fire and Police Notification Company at the corner of Summer and High Streets (a favorite gathering place for a small group of sparks). When the plan was outlined to William E. Dolan and Frank M. Kelleher by William F. Lehman, they became enthusiastic supporters of the project. These three men began the actual work of framing the Association. an informal meeting took place in the office of the Boston Fire and Police Notification Company at the corner of Summer and High Streets (a favorite gathering place for a small group of sparks). When the plan was outlined to William E. Dolan and Frank M. Kelleher by William F. Lehman, they became enthusiastic supporters of the project. These three men began the actual work.

A meeting for the purpose of organizing the Box 52 Association was held on November 14, 1912, with the following committee on organization being appointed: Nelson Whitney, John Decrow, Ralph E. Morrison, D. Arthur Burt, William F. Lehman, William E. Dolan, and Harry N. Haven.

The first meeting took place on December 5, 1912, William E. Dolan was elected President; he immediately resigned, and Harry N. Haven became President for the year 1912-1913.

### The charter members of the Association

Nelson Whitney	William E. Dolan	John W. Decrow
Theodore Grant	George Y. Berry	D. Arthur Burt
George W. Austin	Frank Kelleher	George W. Lord
William F. Lehman	Harry N. Haven	Harry Gilman
Guy W. Merrill	Ralph E. Morrison	

The organization took its name from Box Number 52, the Fire Alarm Box that was sounded for the Great Boston Fire on November 9, 1872. Membership consisted of those persons from all walks of life who were interested in fire prevention and fire protection, although the Association did not partake in actual firefighting operations.

On October 12, 1913, the newly formed Association received its first official recognition when members were appointed to the personal staff of Chief of

Department John Mullen and participated in the Columbus Day parade. The Association functioned well, holding meetings with speakers drawn from the ranks of the fire service; also, the club made it a point to be the first to get the latest fire films as they were released.

From these humble beginnings, now, one hundred years later almost to the day, Box 52 is celebrating our Centennial. We still are living up to the Preamble of our constitution. And we still hold meetings with speakers drawn from all ranks of the fire service.

Here's to another great 100 years Box 52!

## **EXTRA DOWNTOWN AREA AFIRE!**

William Blaney, a sober and systematic man was in charge of the boiler in the basement of a five story granite building at the corner of Summer and Kingston Streets. He tended the boiler, which was showing 10 pounds of steam, with a low fire. He made sure that all grates and doors were closed. He left at 5:20 PM assured that all was in order.

Saturday November 9<sup>th</sup> 1872 was a cloudless mild Indian summer evening with a glorious moon. By 6:00 PM the entire wholesale district was deserted. The main shopping area along Washington Street was bustling with people. A glow was visible through the basement windows from the Tebbetts, Davis & Baldwin Building, the very building that Blaney had left some forty minutes earlier.

Charlestown Police Officers William Brown and Thomas Sargent were tending the Prison Point drawbridge. They had just helped a schooner through the draw so that it would not delay the outbound 7:10 PM Eastern Railroad passenger train. They had all but finished when Brown commented "there is a fire in Boston". He had just noticed a small, distant barley perceptible glimmer.

John S. Holmes, a Boston lawyer chatting with a friend on Washington Street at Summer Street, saw smoke and ran towards it, shouting "Fire". It appeared to Holmes that a fiery globe was burning in the Kingston Street end of the basement while thick smoke poured from the third floor.

Daniel Marden, foreman of Engine 7 the *T.C. Amory* started his Company before the alarm. A passerby had rung the station bell and reported a fire on Bedford Street. As he arrived his men had recruited the crowd to push the steamer and hose carriage into South Street, where they immediately set to work, as of yet no alarm had been sounded.

In the weeks before the fire, a flu like disease called the "Epizootic" had affected nearly all of the horses in Boston. The disease, while rarely fatal, had horses sick in their stalls for a week to ten days. This was to have a tremendous impact on the mobilization of the Department to fires. In fact, on October 28 the Board of Fire Engineers had reduced the first alarm running card from six steam engine companies to one engine on all of the downtown fire alarm boxes. These factors were to play a major role as the Boston Fire Department responded to the largest fire in its history!

Boston Patrolman John M. Page of Station 4 heard yelling and ran after what he thought was a group of boys. As he turned the corner of Summer and Bedford Streets. He was shocked to see fire streaming from a building that he could not see. He was standing beside Box 52, he unlocked the door and sounded the alarm. Page remembering his orders issued a week before by the Fire Department for building fires during the Epizootic, "Any building fire with fire above the third floor, then a second alarm shall

be sounded". Page sounded the second alarm from Box 52.

Above City Hall, in the Fire Alarm Office the box started to tap out. The operator looked out the window and saw flames. Box 52 was relayed to the stations at 7:24 PM November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1872. It was more than 15 minutes since Charlestown Patrolmen Brown & Sargent had noticed the fire.

Engine Company 4 the Barnicoat had now arrived, drawn by exhausted men. The Firefighters set to work beside Engine Company 7. As other Companies arrived, all drawn by gangs of exhausted men and boys, Chief John S. Damrell arrived on scene. In his 25 year career he had never seen such a sight. More serious fire had been reported from Box 52 in a 25 year span than any other fire alarm box in the City. Chief Damrell ordered the General Alarm. The Fire Alarm office transmitted the alarm, it was 7:45 PM.

The request for assistance went out of telegraph at 8:00 PM. Chief Damrell was requesting all the aid available be sent to Boston at once. Special Trains, who had clearance over all other trains on the line, highballed to Boston with fire apparatus of flat cars and men riding in coaches. These trains brought aid from Biddeford, Maine, Portsmouth and Manchester, New Hampshire, Worcester, New Bedford, Fall River. From the south came apparatus from Providence, Rhode Island, New Haven and Norwich Conn.

Local communities had all ready dispatched apparatus. The first to arrive was Cambridge Engine Co. 3, the *Niagara* at 8:15 PM. And the last was New Haven, CT. Engine 2 the *H.M. Welch* which arrived just before mid-night. Wakefield Firefighters had dragged their hand tub some 12 miles to Boston. Other companies arrived on scene from Charlestown, Somerville, Brookline, Medford, Malden, Watertown, Newton, West Roxbury, Hyde Park, Waltham, Salem, Lynn, Reading, Lawrence, Charlestown Navy Yard, Watertown Arsenal, Haverhill and Taunton. Mutual Aid for the fire was 45 steam engines, 4 hand tubs, and 52 hose companies.

Thirteen persons were killed including Captain William Farry and Lt. Daniel Cochran both of Ladder Company 4. In addition two Cambridge Firefighters were killed. The body of Cambridge Firefighter William Frazier of Hook & Ladder 1 was never recovered. 776 buildings destroyed, property loss of seventy five million dollars.

## **50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Parade of the Great Boston Fire Thursday November 9, 1922**

Three divisions paraded through the area of the fire and the Downtown area on Thursday afternoon before thousands of spectators.

### **Order of March**

Boston Police Mounted Unit  
101<sup>st</sup> Infantry Band Massachusetts National Guard  
Color Guard  
Mayor James Curley  
Fire Commissioner Theodore Glynn  
Fire Chief John Tabor

### **Division One**

BFD Divisions and Districts with Companies of men  
BFD Drill Squad  
Boston Protective Department  
Veterans of the Great Boston Fire  
Boston Fire Alarm Division  
Wire Division  
Bureau of Supplies and Repair  
Engineer of Motor Apparatus  
**Box 52 Association**  
High Pressure Wagon 1  
Boston Fire Apparatus  
City Hospital Ambulances with Doctors  
Water Service Division Trucks  
Boston Consolidated Gas Company  
Edison Electric Illuminating Company  
Boston Elevated Railway Company  
New England Telephone & Telegraph

### **Division Two**

Cambridge Fire Department: Men and four pieces of apparatus.  
Somerville Fire Department: Men and three pieces of apparatus.  
Chelsea Fire Department: Men and Chief's Car.  
Malden Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus.  
Revere Fire Department: Men and one piece of apparatus  
Quincy Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
Winthrop Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
Medford Fire Department: Men, two pieces of apparatus  
Lynn Fire Department: Mayor, men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
Peabody Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Lowell Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Lawrence Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Brockton Fire Department: Chief's Car  
Salem Fire Department: Chief's Car  
Melrose Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Reading Fire Department: men and one piece of apparatus  
Arlington Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Watertown Arsenal: Detail of soldiers with engine  
Watertown Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Portsmouth, NH Fire Department: Men and Chief's Car  
Nashua, NH Fire Department: Mayor and Chief of Department  
Berlin, NH: Mayor and Fire Commissioner

### **Division Three**

Roxbury Post 44 American Legion Band  
Newton Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
Brookline Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Dedham Fire Department: Men, two pieces of apparatus  
Worcester Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
Millbury Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Saugus Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Biddeford, Maine Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Belmont Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Milton Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car  
Woburn Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Pittsfield Fire Department: Mayor, Men, Chief's Car  
Pawtucket, Rhode Island Fire Department: Men and Chief's Car  
Marblehead Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
Swampscott Fire Department: Men, and one piece of apparatus

Cohasset Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
 Lexington Fire Department: Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
 Billerica Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
 New Bedford Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
 State of Massachusetts Forestry Department: Men, four pieces of apparatus  
 Everett Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
 Hingham Fire Department: Men, Chief's Car, one piece of apparatus  
 Ashland Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus  
 Fitchburg Fire Department: Men, one piece of apparatus

**Parade excerpt from the Boston Evening Globe Thursday November 9, 1922**

“The Box 52 Association held an honored place in the line of paraders, for among these enthusiastic amateur fire fighters are some few who remember the battle of 50 years ago tonight. Their association gets its name from the box from which the alarm for the big fire was sounded.”

“One of the most interesting features if the procession was an old fashioned Amoskeag steam fire engine Number 2 of Newton, which was being drawn by a truck, as no horses were available, It was out in commission in Newton in 1871, and was worked at the Boston Fire in in 1872.

Steam fire engine Number 3 of Cambridge, the first piece of out-of-town apparatus to arrive at the Boston fire when the call for out-of-town help was sent out, was also in the parade with a newly equipped tractor and is in commission every day in Cambridge at present.”

**Response to the Great Boston Fire November 9, 1872 Box 52**

Arrival	Company
7:26 PM	Engine 7
7:28	Protective 1, Engine 4, Hose 2
7:31	Truck 1, Extinguisher 1, Hose 1, 8
7:35	Hose 5
7:38	Engines 8, 10
7:44	Engines 6, 3, Hose 3, 7
7:47	Engine 9, Truck 4
7:55	Engine 11, Hose 9, Truck 5
7:57	Hose 4, 10, Engines 1, 13, 14
8:03	Engines 21, 12, 15
8:12	Cambridge Engine 3
8:15	Engine 2, 17, Truck 7
8:22	Charlestown Engine 1, Hose 4 Cambridge Engine 2
8:40	Engine 18, Chelsea Engine 1, Hose 3
8:55	Engine 16, 20
9:00	Cambridge Engine 4 Somerville Engine 1
9:12	Engine 5
9:30	Engine 19, Medford Engine 1 Tug Boat <b>Louis Osborn</b> (equipped 1,400 gpm pump)
9:40	Jamaica Plain Engines 1, 2 Truck 1 Cambridge Truck 1
10:13	Charlestown Navy Yard Engine 1
10:30	Brookline Hose 1, Truck 1, Hand Engine 1
10:43	Hose 6, Truck 2 Malden Engine 1
11:00	Hyde Park Hose 1,

	Reading Hand Engine 4
11:30	Newton Engine 1, Malden Hose 3
11:45	Wakefield Hand Engines 1, 2
11:50	Lawrence Engine 3

**Sunday November 10**

12:00 AM	Lynn Engines 1, 2 Salem Engines 1, 2, Hose 5 Charlestown Navy Yard "Monitor" Engine
12:35	Worcester Engines 1, 3
12:40	Providence, RI Engines 1, 4
3:30	Worcester Hose 3
4:30	Watertown Engine 1
5:15	Portsmouth NH Engine 3
8:00	Melrose Hose 2
9:30	Watertown Arsenal Engine
10:15	Waltham Engine 1
10:30	Stoneham Engine 1
3:00 PM	Providence RI. Engine 6
4:43	Manchester, NH. Engine 1, Hose 1, Horseless engine
5:00	Fall River Engine 4
6:00	New Bedford Engine 4 Biddeford ME Hose 2
10:15	Norwich Conn, Engines 1, 5, Hose 1
10:30	New Haven Conn Engine 2