



THE LINE BOX

Volume 10, Number 1

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Welcome Too Box 52's Second Century

Welcome to our second century of the Box 52 Association. Our centennial year was a tremendous success and a fitting cap to our first 100 years! Now, we move forward and look forward to the future, and that future is indeed bright for the Box 52 Association!

Changes to the Line Box

With this issue we welcome Member Michael Boyton to the staff. Mike will be covering apparatus news with in the Interstate 95 belt from the New Hampshire border to the Rhode Island border, including Metro-Fire.

Boston Multiple Alarms May – September 2013

Date	Box	District	Address	Building Type
05/01	2-5234	D-11	16 Easton St.	2.5 story wdfr. dwelling
05/02	2-3375	D-8	22 Gaylord St.	2.5 story wdfr. dwelling
06/16	2-1896	D-7	271-273 & 279-281 Hancock St	Two 2.5 story wdfr dwellings 271-273 vacant
06/17	2-3733	D-12	1149 Hyde Park Ave.	2.5 story wdfr. dwelling
06/29	2-2677	D-12	461-465 Beech St.	2.5 story wdfr. dwelling
07/02	2-221	D-4	492 Tremont St.	7 story brick mercantile/apts
07/07	5-5241	D-11	17 Mansfield St 15,21 Mansfield St 22,26,30 Royal St	3 story wdfr dwelling Two 2.5 story wdfrm dwellings 3 2.5 story wdfrm dwellings
07/15	2-3669	D-8	742 River St.	3 story wdfrm dwelling
08/17	4-2538	D-12	306 South St.	2.5 story wdfrm dwelling
08/20	2-361	D-7	764-772 Blue Hill Ave.	1 story ordinary mercantile
08/21	5-7163	D-6	410 West Broadway	St John The Baptist Church
08/26	2-284	D-12	Rear 31 Hastings St.	2 story wdfrm Barn

There were no multiple alarms during the month of September 2013. The last time that this occurred was in May of 2005.

B.F.D. Doin's

- Deputy Chief of Operations John Hasson has been appointed Acting Chief of Department upon the resignation of Chief Steve Abaira, who has accepted a position with the NFPA.
- The collapse unit (H6) has been assigned the former H3's 1997 Freightliner/Hackney. The 1994 Ford Ultimaster that was previously assigned to H6 has been disposed of.
- The three new 2013 KME Severe Duty 109 foot RMA AerialCat ladders have been placed in service at Ladder Companies 17, 18, 29. On August 19th at the quarters of Engine 39 and Ladder 18 a well attended public dedication was held for the new Trucks.

- Plans are being developed for a new Lighting Plant.
- By the time you read this issue of the GO, the first of the five new KME pumps will start to be delivered.
- Several command staff promotions recently took place: Promoted to Deputy Chief, District Chief Michael Ruggere of District 1. To District Chief, Captain David Walsh Engine 21.
- Engine 52's former 2001 E-One has been re-habbed and assigned to Engine Company 51.



Boston's three newest Trucks, photo by member M. Boyton



Multiple alarm engine companies stretch a big line towards 306 South St. on August 17th four alarm box 2538. Photo by member S. Walsh

METROFIRE NEWS

Belmont and Melrose: are the latest Departments to start providing Advanced Life Support (paramedic level) service to their communities

Braintree: James O'Brien has been named Chief of Department

Burlington: Land has been purchased at the intersection of 10 Great Meadow Road and Middlesex Turnpike to build a new station 2 and replace the present station 2 at Terrace Hall Avenue.

Cambridge: A two alarm fire occurred at the Shops on Smith Place, several support vehicles and apparatus were damaged.

Waltham: The last of the Ford C/E-One's that was assigned to reserve Engine 9, has been disposed of. In 1978 Waltham received the first Emergency-One fire apparatus delivered to the MetroFire District.

FIRE APPARATUS UPDATES

Apparatus updates from member Michael Boyton. If you have any apparatus news you can send it to Mike at webmaster@massfiretrucks.com. All photos, unless tagged were taken by Mike Boyton.

METROFIRE

Arlington – Engine 2 – 2013 E-One Typhoon 1250/530

Braintree – Tower Ladder 1 – 2013 E-One Cyclone II 95' RMA

Burlington – Engine 1 – 2013 Pierce Quantum 1500/500/30F. Engine 3 – Returned from Pierce Refurb – 2002 Pierce Quantum 1500/750 (former E-1)

Cambridge – Ladder 3 – 2013 Pierce Arrow XT 105' RMA, Engine 2 – 2013 Pierce Saber PUC 1250/500

Newton – Ladder 1 – 2013 E-One Cyclone II 100' RMA

Quincy – H-2 Special Hazards – 2005 International/Hessco

Wellesley – Engine 2 – 1991 Pierce Lance 1250/500 – Acquired From Cambridge Former E-5 & E-11



Arlington Engine 2,



Cambridge Ladder 3



Burlington Engine 1



Quincy H-2 , photo member M. Worley

EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS UPDATE

Avon – Engine 1 – 2013 E-One Typhoon EMax 1500/1000/30F
Berlin – Ladder 1 – 1990 Pierce Arrow 1250/300/40F – Former Nashua L-3
Clinton – Ladder 1 – 2013 E-One Cyclone II 110' RMA
Essex – Ladder 1 – 1997 Seagrave 1750/300 100' RMA
Gloucester – Ladder 2 – 1999 Pierce Dash 1250/500 75' RMA
Groton – Engine 1 – 2013 Spartan/4-Guys 1500/1000/20F
Milford – Engine 4 – 2013 E-One Typhoon 1750/510/20F
Millis – Ladder 1 – 2012 Smeal Sirius 1750/480/20F 105' RMA
Nahant – Ladder 31 - 2013 Sutphen 1750/400/20F 100' MMA
Norwood – Ladder 1 - 2013 E-One Cyclone II 110' RMA
Plymouth – Ladder 2 – 1997 Simon Duplex/LTI 1500/500 75' RMA – Greenwood Rehab
2013
Raynham – Engine 3 – 2013 E-One Cyclone II 2000/1010/20F
Sherborn – Engine 5 – 2013 Ford F-550 4x4 200/292/8F
Topsfield – Squad 1 – 2013 Ford F-350 4x4 125/250
West Bridgewater – Engine 2 – 2013 E-One Typhoon 1500/780
Westminster – Engine 3 – 2013 KME Predator 1500/1000/30A/20B



Berlin Ladder 1



Milford Engine 4

OUTSIDE DISTRICT NEWS

Concord: A private citizen has donated \$ 198,000.00 for the purchase of a second ambulance.

Palmer: The Town of Palmer has received a 1.5 million dollar grant to study regional Dispatch for four Towns: Palmer, Ware, Monson, Warren (If these Towns sound familiar.....they should, we visited them all on our June bus trip). The dispatch center is to be located in the new Palmer Police Station. Now Under construction.



Boston Ladder 18 and Tower Ladder 3 operating at a recent four alarm fire in Quincy
On Hancock St at the old YMCA. Photo by member S. Walsh

2nd Annual Open House

Sunday September 22nd saw another open house for Box 52. The event was well attended and enjoyed by all! Photos by Members Alan MacDonald & Robert Fitz





Check out our website at www.box52.org for photos of all our Centennial events!

This is a re-print of a report that was presented to the membership in 1993. It was prepared by late member L. Murray Young, we hope that you enjoy it!

CONFLAGRATION OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1973

L. Murray Young
I.S.O., NERO, Boston, Mass.

Chelsea is a city of 2.4 square miles located adjacent to Boston, separated by the Mystic River and Chelsea Creek that becomes part of Boston Harbor. It is one of several communities that make up what is known as Metropolitan Boston.

Of this 2.4 square miles, only 1.82 square miles, or about 80% is built upon with a population of approximately 31,000 people. The city has industrial and residential occupancies. More than likely, the most common commercial activity is salvage of waste materials.

There are many businesses in recycling useable materials, mostly in what is known as the "rag shop" area or district. This district is located in the northwest section of the city covering about one - fifth of the city.

Conflagrations are not new to Chelsea. Chelsea's history dates back to the 1600's. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, structural conditions grew to a point of being "ripe for conflagrations" because of mainly a lack of building and fire prevention codes.

These structures were mostly of wood frame and some were brick or ordinary construction, anywhere from one to three stories and some even five stories. Most of these frame structures were the "three decker" type tenements or dwellings only 6 to 10 feet apart in most areas.

With these types of structural conditions in existence, the occupancies also began to be a problem with a wide range of rag shops, scrap metal and waste businesses being operated in many of these "three decker" dwellings, having moved to Chelsea from Boston after the Great Boston Fire of November 9, 1872. The revision of the Boston Codes prohibited the rag districts to rebuild so they easily took the Winnisimmet Ferry across Boston Harbor to Chelsea. In Chelsea, the dwelling type buildings were not designed, to accommodate the contents that flourished during this period.

Then came this historic day of Palm Sunday, April 12, 1908, when a fire occurred in this rag shop area. The fire was first seen in the area of Carter and Summer Streets in the northwest section of the city. With the strong winds that prevailed during this dry period, the fire swept over about 275 acres or one-fifth of the city and across the Chelsea Creek into a section of East Boston. This fire killed 19 persons and left 17,000 homeless, destroying 3,500 buildings.

Over a period of 65 years with these lessons long forgotten, except that wood shingled roofs had disappeared for the most part, the same conflagration conditions were allowed to rebuild with the same occupancies.

Some people were concerned about the hazard of fire and a local fire prevention council was set up in the 1920's, with a fire prevention bureau established in the Chelsea Fire Department.

Over a period of years, many of these waste occupancies installed sprinkler systems. Some of the frame buildings were metal clad, hoping to afford some protection from the exterior against the spread of fire.

During recent years, some of these shops and residential tenements had fires and many of these never rebuilt. Others became vacant, and frequently the scene of incendiary fires. Fires became too common in Chelsea. It is known that in 1968, Chelsea had more building fires per 1000 population than any other city, covered by the National Fire Protection Association's annual survey.

Then the salvage business began to decline and in 1970, the city adopted the 1970 A.I.A. fire prevention code and the 1970 BOCA building code. One Deputy Chief and one inspector were assigned full time to fire prevention but conditions were too severe for two men to control.

With the waste trades barely existing, an urban renewal plan was developed that would revitalize this blighted area. This took a few years to develop and be approved and funded. Meanwhile, all these hundreds of buildings in the rag shop area, including closely built tenements, some in dilapidated condition and for the most part, vacant, become conflagration potential.

Since the fire of 1908, fire department changed, without doubt, from the three steam engine pumper companies, each with a separate hose wagon, and also one hose company, one chemical engine, one combination hose company and one ladder company with 21 paid firemen and 56 call men, to the present day, 5 engine companies and 2 ladder companies with a full paid department consisting of approximately 112 firefighters. Automatic aid is provided on some first alarm boxes and all multiple alarm fires. Firefighters work a 42 hour work week with an average of 3 men per company of on-duty strength.

Chelsea has a Class A fire alarm system with the present equipment installed in 1935 in a separate 1-story building of fire-resistant construction at the corner of Chestnut Street, City Hall Ave., and Washington Ave. Chelsea had a coded fire alarm system dating back before the turn of the century. There are approximately 135 coded fire alarm boxes in the city on seven box circuits. The fire alarm system is operated and maintained by the city Electrical Department with usually one fire alarm operator on duty at all times.

All box and still alarms are announced over the vocal alarm system and radio simultaneously as all apparatus is dispatched by this procedure. All boxes are beeped over the radio - a "beep-tone" with each stroke of the tapper bell. Chelsea has an excellent radio procedure.

The radio communications operates on the Chelsea fire frequency of 154.325 Mhz with all apparatus and fire department vehicles, including portable radios, having dual control for not only the Chelsea frequency, but that of Civil Defense Fire District 13 (the Greater Boston area) frequency of 154.220 Mhz. for mutual aid communication. Twenty-five out of twenty-six communities, including Logan International Airport have base stations with some apparatus on this mutual aid frequency with the Central Dispatch Control Center located in the City of Newton Fire Alarm Headquarters.

A report based on the survey conducted by the Municipal Survey Service of Insurance Services Office from the Home Office in New York City, during August and September, 1972, contained a dramatic statement that was to become quite true to life. *"SEVERE SWEEPING FIRES ARE PROBABLE IN THE WASTE TRADES DISTRICT AND INCLOSELY-BUILT WOOD FRAME TENEMENT SECTIONS"* will never be forgotten!

On Sunday, October 14, 1973, a mild fall day with the temperature around 68° mark and the wind blowing from the Northwest with gusts of 40 - 60 M.P.H., a fire from an unknown cause began at the rear of 122 Summer St.

With little rain during the past month, the ground was exceptionally dry. With the tremendous gusts of wind and the dilapidated condition of many of the buildings, their close proximity to one another, as well as the thick growth of brush and all the heavy accumulation of trash around almost all buildings, and topped off with a conflagration's best friend, the delayed alarm, it soon became.... "CHELSEA ON FIRE!"

All the fire departments in the Boston area were busy with the usual brush fires on such a mild, dry, windy day. Chelsea, too, was busy - but nothing like what was to come. Firefighters from the Stations of Engine 5 at Everett Ave. and Fourth Street which was also the temporary station of Engine 4 while their new station was under construction spotted smoke rolling across the roof tops of the brick tenements across Everett Ave. The crew of Engine 5 "stilled themselves out" to investigate the smoke at about 1555 hours. Two youths playing near the corner of Arlington and Third Streets also saw this smoke several blocks north and pulled fire alarm Box 215 at Arlington and Third Streets at 1556 hours. Many people reported seeing this smoke but no one thought to sound a fire alarm.

Engine 2, out on a still alarm, reported "heavy smoke showing", upon receipt of the box alarm over their radio, even though they were some distance from the fire location. It was difficult at first to determine the exact location or even where the origin of the fire was, due to the heavy volume of smoke and fire in the area of Summer, Maple, Third and Carter Streets. The usual response of 3 engines and one ladder was sent, with Engine 3 being special called in place of Engine 2.

Deputy Chief Coyne reported a working fire at Third and Maple Streets. At 1557 hours, Fire Alarm received a pulling on Box 228 at Second and Carter Sts.

At 1558 hours, Chief Coyne requested a second alarm on Box 228. Since Fire Alarm had not transmitted Box 228 as of yet, and in advising Chief Coyne of this, Chief Coyne requested the third alarm, which was transmitted in Box 215 at 1559 hours, skipping the second alarm.

The initial attack was made with 2 ½ hoselines and eventually with deluge guns and ladder pipes. At 1605 hours, Chief of Department, Herbert C. Fothergill, reported heavy fire in a two block area containing congested one- two- and three story frame buildings. At 1606 hours, Chief Fothergill requested a fourth alarm on Box 215. This fourth alarm was transmitted at 1607 hours.

At 1609 hours, Chief Fothergill requested the calling back of all off-duty members. At this point, it was attempted to hold the fire at Third Street but this was not successful. Hand lines were not effective anymore, not even the master streams, as there was not enough water available to supply master streams.

At 1610 hours, the Chief of the Department requested five additional engine companies and two minutes later indicated a possible conflagration, with the fire out of control at 1613 hours. At 1615 hours it was requested to open the emergency water mains immediately. At 1618, five more additional engine companies were requested.

By this time, the mutual aid frequency with Newton Fire Alarm Headquarters as the control center was handling most of the requests for the extra companies, plus covering companies. At 1622, four more engines were requested.

At 1627 hours, Chief Fothergill notified Newton control that this fire was a CONFLAGRATION - and to get any help they could get (*this was the first time in history that notification of a conflagration was sent by radio*). At 1628, the Chief asked Newton for five or six more pumpers, that they were going to try to make a stand at Everett Ave.

The fire was also spreading down Second Street to Spruce Street and it was requested that an additional five more engine companies be sent to this area at 1636. At 1641 hours, the Chief requested all available police from the State, Metropolitan District Commission, and several towns to evacuate residents and to keep spectators out of the area. Also since the Mystic River Bridge lower ramp was closed due to repairs, it was ordered opened for fire apparatus only.

At 1644, Chief Fothergill again ordered all available apparatus into Chelsea through Newton Control. The fire had now spread to Spruce and Fifth Streets area where there were large four and five story waste warehouses, fully sprinklered. Command and control problems were developing. The fire had become so large that the Chief could not see all the important areas of it. In walking from point to point, the Chief could not keep up with the spread of the fire and as a result could not exercise effective control. At 1652, the Chief was advised that a State Police helicopter was available and arrangements were made for its utilization. With all Chelsea Chief Officers having portable radios, the Chief, through several helicopter observation rides, could maintain contact with his officers and could get command of the fire situation much more readily.

At 1704, more available help was summoned through Newton Control for the areas of Arlington, Spruce and Fifth Streets.

Companies coming from great distances began arriving in Chelsea and some would go to work on their own, while others went to Chelsea's headquarters fire station. Then they would be dispatched from there to wherever needed - some staying only a few minutes before being sent to a fire location.

During the evening companies were at work in narrow streets in close proximity to the fire. One of these engine companies, Medford Engine 6, was destroyed by the fast sweeping fire. They were using a reserve 1946 Mack pumper at the time, as their 1956 Mack pumper was out of service for repairs. Other apparatus had to be pulled out hastily because of the progress of the fire.

Eventually, a stand was held at north side of the fire along the railroad tracks. To the west, a line was held on Second Street. During the fire, a fire storm developed in addition to the gusting winds that carried heavy burning materials to all areas of the city in the direction of the wind. Walking was extremely difficult. Flaming trash, rags, paper, and brush were carried by the wind to adjacent properties where they ignited accumulated trash and stock and structures. The fire spread also by direct radiation.

The heavy body of fire seemed to be contained around 2130 hours but additional companies were still required to relieve tired crews and fuel-short apparatus on the fire ground. Many spot fires were extinguished. One fire caused by flying brands, ignited the attic of Chelsea City Hall where it required ladder companies from Boston, Wakefield, Southboro, Cambridge, with the Woburn Snorkle and the Framingham Aerial Tower, as well as several engine companies, to extinguish the fire with 2 ½ inch hand lines stretched over all the aerial ladders and elevating platforms (*this fire required the transmission of a second alarm-ed.*).

The final progress of the fire was halted at Arlington and Fifth Streets through the determined efforts of the Lynn Tower Ladder and Arlington Ladder 2, and several engine companies from several communities. This stop was the determining factor in the control and containing of the entire fire in the area shown on the accompanying map. Protection was set up around the Williams School, at one time the largest grade school in the Commonwealth, on Arlington Street. This brick school with its open yard and the expressway to the Mystic River Bridge made a gap to assist the fire companies in this area of Arlington and Fifth Streets to stop the progress of Chelsea's second conflagration.

It would be an almost impossible task to undertake the responsibility to gather an account of the apparatus that responded to the fire, either to cover the stations or to work at the fire. But fire buff David Proctor of the Box 52 Association completed this lengthy and tiring task with complete cooperation from the Chelsea Fire Department and the following statistics are now factual: 93 municipal fire departments, as well as Logan Airport and Chelsea Naval Hospital apparatus, responded for a total of 95 fire departments involved, including Chelsea. Of all these fire departments involved, there was a total of 145 engine companies, 20 aerial ladder companies, 1 snorkel, 2 aerial towers, 4 rescue companies and 3 miscellaneous pieces of fire apparatus. Of this total amount, Boston sent the most - 10 engines and 3 ladder companies.

Apparatus came from as far away as 40 miles to the north, 35 miles to the west, and 35 miles from the south. A total of approximately 1500 firefighters were at the scene. It should also be noted that Civil Defense Fire District 5 (the northeastern section of Mass. beyond the greater Boston area to the New Hampshire line) with the city of Haverhill as the control center, handled the dispatching of apparatus from this area, even though Chelsea is not assigned to this radio mutual aid frequency of 154.070 Mhz. The water supply is obtained from the Metropolitan District Commission Water Division, with an adequate supply but the arterial and distribution system within the Chelsea city limits is generally small and tuberculated to provide adequate strength. This water supply is obtained from the Northern Low and Northern High Services of the M.D.C. The Chelsea High and Low Service has a number of emergency connections to the M.D.C. High and Low Services. An emergency connection to the M. D. C. Northern Low Service at Second Street and the Everett city line is opened on all second alarms in the western portion of the city.

All pipe is cast iron. Mains installed since 1945 are cement-lined and older mains are tar-covered.

Even though most of the commercial properties were sprinklered, the arterial water system was not sufficient enough to afford proper protection to the properties. The use of so many hydrants as the fire progressed, "robbed" the sprinkler systems of their water supply. Also, as these sprinklered buildings were destroyed, the debris broke sprinkler risers and water in large volumes flowed endlessly as there was not anyway to shut off the OS & Y valves or the street valves until the fire had been contained and cooled down.

The structural conditions in the fire area had a required fire flow of 6000 G.P.M. at 20 p.s.i. for the area of Second and Carter Streets. Flow tests revealed only 2100 G.P.M. available at 20 p.s.i. during the September 6, 1972 flow tests.

As far as records can indicate, a total of 301 mercantile and industrial buildings were destroyed including 50 which had sprinkler system. There were also 59 dwellings destroyed. All this was over an 18 block area, with about 1100 people being driven from their homes.

Chelsea's Apparatus Fleet in October of 1973. All photos by member F. San Severino





Tidbits For The Buffs

It's that time of year again.....the Hallmark Fire Engine Christmas ornament. This year's model is a 1941 Ford COE pumper. Its available at your local Hallmark Store for \$ 19.95



For the Matchbox collectors, (like your editor) a new casting has been announced to go along with its Seagrave 70th Anniversary pump. It will be a closed cab B Mack pump!



