

CHAPTER X

FIRE AND POLICE

Sketch of the Beginnings and Development of Two Strong Departments of the Municipality

The city is protected against fire by a large and efficient permanent department of 103 men, assisted by 56 call men, all under the direction of Chief Engineer William C. Davol, Deputy Chief Joseph Bowers, Jr., and Assistant Engineer Edward P. Carey. It is equipped with modern apparatus consisting of six steam fire engines, three chemical engines, four hook and ladder trucks and ten hose wagons, requiring fifty-eight horses, and by prompt and effective action has prevented any large fire losses except in a few unavoidable instances, for many years. The use of chemicals and the still alarm system has grown more and more common in recent years and has been most satisfactory. The municipal appropriations for the department have grown with the needs of the city, and for 1906 were: Salaries, \$117,500; current expenses, \$22,000.

The department was formally established by vote of the town in 1832 and was in charge of firewards elected annually till the adoption of the city charter in 1854, following which it was under control of the Mayor and City Council till the new city charter went into effect in 1903, when a fire commission was established, consisting of three members appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Aldermen. One is appointed annually for a term of three years. The first board consisted of George N. Durfee, chairman; G. de Tonnancour, secretary, and Edward Lynch. Present board: Michael McNally, chairman; Charles B. Woodman, secretary, and Edward Lynch.

The early fire department of Fall River,* as in every small town, was purely volunteer for many years. The first hand fire engine was purchased in 1818 and was what is

known as a bucket engine, not capable of drawing water from a well, but taking it from the tub of the machine, which was filled by water brought in buckets by a line of men from the source of supply, while others manned the brakes and forced the water through the hose. There was also a bucket carriage, equipped with a large number of buckets, to attend the engine, but many of the citizens had their own leather buckets, painted and lettered in an artistic style, which they took to fires on responding to an alarm. It was first located on the south side of Central street, near Inch, later in the rear of the City Hall and afterwards in the old town house on Central street. It was altered to a draught engine soon after the fire of 1843, and remained in service till 1853, when it was succeeded by Mazeppa No. 7.

In 1826 there was another hand engine here, purchased by private subscription, and used without hose. The water was poured into a tub, from which it was forced by a single handle through a goose-neck nozzle direct to the fire. It was located near Bedford and Main streets and was drawn to fires by oxen.

The town purchased another engine, a cumbersome affair known as Hydraulion No. 2. It was first stationed in Stone lane, off Central street, and later removed to the Niagara house on Pleasant street, recently occupied by Mackenzie & Winslow. Cataract Engine No. 3 was bought in 1843 and housed at the corner of Franklin and Rock streets, and Niagara No. 4 the same year and placed in the old Niagara house on Pleasant street, until 1853. It was rebuilt in 1855 and stationed at the corner of North Main and Turner streets, under the new name of Torrent No. 2. Ocean No. 5 was purchased in 1846, and stationed on Pearl street; Niagara No. 4 and the Massasoit in 1853. The lat-

*For much of the detail here given the editor is indebted to Captain Lynch's excellent history of the department.

ter was first the property of the Massasoit Manufacturing Company and on its purchase by the town was named the Mazeppa No. 7. It was stationed successively in town house, the armory, the Court House building in Court Square, and at the corner of South Main and Broadway. The last hand fire engine was the Cascade, No. 1, belonging to the town of Fall River, R. I., which became the city's property on the annexation of the town in 1862. It was stationed on South Main street and later at the Globe Print Works. There were also the Atlantic No. 6, the property of Hawes & Davol, stationed at their machine shops, and the Metropolis No. 7 and the Franklin. The first was a small affair.

The first hose reel company organized in 1843 and located on Rock street. It was followed in 1851 by a four-wheeled hose reel known as Neptune No. 1, stationed at the Cataract engine house, and in 1863 by the first horse hose reel, located in Court Square.

Prior to 1829 the firemen were in charge of ten firewards elected annually, which number was increased in that year to twenty. The compensation of members of the companies varied, but was generally the relief from poll tax and military duty. They were supplemented by several companies organized at the various mills and known as Forcing Pump Companies. They were equipped with hose reels and manned the hose connected with the stationary pumps at the factories. The members received a slight yearly compensation from the town—\$3 each in 1839, for example.

The first steam fire engine belonging to the city, known as Quequechan No. 1 was bought in 1859 and was replaced by new engines in 1871 and again in 1891. The company was stationed in Court Square until the completion of the Prospect street house in 1874. The King Philip No. 2 was bought in 1860 and located in Court Square till it was removed to the Central engine house in 1871. It was succeeded in 1873 by the King Philip, Jr., which went out of commission in 1879. The company was reorganized as a hose company, known as Hose 2, in 1880.

The Metacomet No. 3 was bought in 1865, placed in Court Square, and used till 1871, when it was replaced by another, which was located at the Central house and remained in service till 1891, when the present No. 3 was bought. Niagara No. 4 was bought in 1868, stationed first in the Niagara house on Pleasant street and subsequently removed to

the Plymouth avenue house. It was followed by the present No. 4 in 1893. Massasoit No. 5 was bought in 1873 and quartered at the Freedom street house till 1895, when a new machine took its place. Anawan No. 6, bought in 1874, was stationed on North Main street till 1879, when it was dispensed with and a hose company organized. Pocasset No. 7, also bought in 1874, was stationed at the Pocasset house till 1895, when it was replaced by the present machine.

The early hook and ladder trucks were diminutive affairs. The first was bought in 1826, stationed on Pleasant street and drawn to fires by hand. A hose truck followed in 1844, kept in the town house, and another in 1857, also quartered in the town house; then for a time in a livery stable, in 1858 in Court Square, and in 1862 in the old armory on Bedford street. It remained in service till 1871, when it was stored in the Ocean house and broken up in 1894. Another, first known as Truck No. 1, was bought in 1871 and was first pulled by hand, then altered for one horse. It was stationed first at the Central and then at the Niagara house.

Another, No. 2, was bought in 1873, located on Bedford street and subsequently on Pleasant, where it was known as No. 4. It went out of commission in 1896. It was replaced in commission in 1899, equipped with two 30-gallon tanks and known as No. 3. It was stationed on North Main street and is still in service. Another truck, No. 1, the first in the State to be equipped for three horses abreast, bought in 1885, was placed at the Central house. No. 2, on Bedford street, was bought in 1890, and No. 4, stationed in the Pocasset house, in 1895.

A repair shop, located at the Central engine house, was established in 1895.

Of the more important engine houses, the first was a stone building, still standing, on the south side of Pleasant street, between Second and Third, and erected by the town in 1838. It was known as Firemen's hall and later as the Niagara house, and was sold in 1877. The Cataract house, on Rock and Franklin streets, was built in 1843; the Ocean house, on Pearl street, in 1845; the Court Square house, formerly Cranston Almy's livery stable, now the Central police station, was purchased in 1857 and occupied by the police and fire departments till the firemen removed in 1875. The Central house was built in 1870 and enlarged in 1896, the North Main, Pleasant and Freedom street houses in 1874, the Quequechan

house, in Prospect street, in 1874, and the Niagara, on Plymouth avenue, in 1878.

The Cascade house was erected in 1898, to replace an old structure built by the town of Tiverton in the 50's.

The first horse hose reel, bought in 1863, and stationed in Court Square, was placed in charge of a regular company, No. 2, in 1880, and stationed at the Central house till 1882, when it removed to the Cataract house, on Rock street, and in September, 1884, to the Bedford street house. In August of that year it was given the first hose wagon owned by the city, which had just been purchased.

Hose Company No. 6 was organized in 1879 and stationed on North Main street, and No. 8, the Cascade, in 1874. It was supplied with a reel till a wagon was bought in 1890.

The first chemical engine was bought in 1872 and stationed on Rock street till the company disbanded, in March, 1876, and machine disposed of. A second engine, now known as Chemical No. 1, was secured in 1893, and placed in the Bedford street house, and No. 2 established on Pleasant street in 1896. Chemical No. 3, bought in 1896, was first stationed at Hose No. 6 house; afterward removed to the Central engine house on Pocasset street.

The beginning of a permanent department was made in 1860, when Clark Whipple was appointed driver of steamer No. 1, on Court Square. His sleeping quarters were over the old city stables, and on an alarm it was his duty to take the two horses, used by the highway department during the day, drive to the engine house for the engine and then proceed to the fire. He received \$66 a month. Two more drivers, Nathan Chace and Philander Curry, were appointed in 1865, and shared Whipple's quarters, taking turns at highway work with their teams. Eight years later the three drivers and their horses were placed permanently on duty at the engine house. Permanent engineers were appointed in 1874 and a captain and a hose-man in 1886. In 1894 the captains of all companies were made permanent. The Gamewell fire alarm telegraph system was established on January 7, 1870, to succeed the old method of bell ringing. The first alarm was given from box 16 on January 27.

The chief engineers since the adoption of the first city charter have been: 1854, Asa Eames; 1855-56, Jonathan E. Morrill; 1857, Chester W. Greene; 1858-59, J. E. Morrill; 1860-69, Southard H. Miller; 1870-

72, Thomas J. Borden; 1873-74, Holder B. Durfee; 1875, Thomas Connell; 1876-81, William C. Davol; 1882-83, John A. Macfarlane; 1884-1898, William C. Davol; 1898-1901, James Langford; 1901 to the present time, William C. Davol.

Aside from the fire of 1843, which has been elsewhere noted, the worst fire in the city's history was the Granite mill horror on the morning of September 19, 1874, when 20 lives were lost and 30 persons injured. The flames were discovered in the mule room on the third floor at ten minutes before seven, and spread so rapidly that escape through the only entrance, a tower in the centre of the mill on the Twelfth street side, was cut off, and though many reached safety by the fire escapes or suffered only minor injuries by jumping, those on the sixth floor under the barn roof had no escape except by jumping, as there were no fire escapes that reached them and the department's longest ladder was too short. Many jumped to almost certain death and others perished in the mill. The pecuniary loss was \$247,000, fully insured.

Other notable mill fires were the Massasoit, November 2, 1872; the American Linen, June 29, 1876; the Border City No. 1, November 2, 1877; Chace's thread mill, November 29, 1878; the Flint mill, October 28, 1882; the Sagamore, April 24, 1884; the Globe Print Works, December 5, 1867, and the American Print Works, December 15, 1867.

The steamer *Empire State*, of the New York line, was burned at her dock here on the evening of January 13, 1849, but was rebuilt, and on July 25, 1856, when off Point Judith, suffered a boiler explosion which caused at least fourteen deaths. She returned to this city, where the wounded were cared for, and was destroyed by fire at Bristol May 14, 1887.

The burning of the Micah Ruggles house, which stood where the County Court House now is, on the night of January 24, 1857, was attended by the fatal injury of three men—Gibbs Earle, William H. Buffinton and Miles Daley, who were struck by a falling chimney. Mayor Buffinton was injured by the falling debris, but only slightly. It is recorded that at this fire three barrels of cider, found on an upper floor, were used as an extinguisher, "with most gratifying results, albeit with genuine regret."

Alphonso Borden, a member of the department, was killed while responding to an

alarm with the Cataract engine, November 15, 1864, by being run over by the machine while it was descending Elm street. He was on the tongue and had been left alone to guide the engine after it had attained so much speed that the other members of the company were obliged to abandon their efforts to check it. In a somewhat similar accident Timothy Dwyer, a temporary driver in charge of Truck 1, while the regular man was at supper, received fatal injuries while descending French's hill in response to an alarm December 12, 1895. The horses got beyond control on the icy hill, and in attempting to avoid an electric car at the foot the truck collided with a telegraph pole, throwing Dwyer to the frozen ground.

H. J. Langley's loom harness factory, on County street, took fire following a boiler explosion, which killed four persons, June 14, 1895, and was destroyed.

The Firemen's Relief Association, known for a brief period as the Firemen's Burial Society, was formed in 1883, and incorporated under the State law June 12, 1892. The first president was Joseph Bowers; Secretary, Albert J. Pember; Treasurer, James Sutcliffe. The fund is about \$13,000. Present officers: W. C. Davol, president; Joseph Bowers, Jr., secretary; James Sutcliffe, treasurer; Board of Trustees, Daniel Shay, Michael Sweeney and Michael Powers.

The Firemen's Memorial Sunday, the second Sunday in June, has been observed since 1893.

Two veteran firemen's associations have been formed, the Fall River in 1890 and the Defiance in 1900. Musters were held here in 1878 and 1899.

The police department is first mentioned in 1835, when, on April 13, it was voted that the town authorize an application to the justices of the peace and the selectmen to establish a night watch, but it was not until July, 1844, that such a force was established, consisting of six men. In April, 1846, it was voted that the watchmen should keep the engine houses in repair and maintain houses in them, and in April, 1848, a room was fitted up for the use of the officers in the west end of the market. The expenditures of the department in 1845, 1846 and 1847 were \$2,400 a year, reduced in 1848 to \$2,000 and in 1849 to \$1,500, around which they remained till 1853, when they had increased to \$2,700.

With the incoming of the city government

in 1854 a police department was formally established, with William Sisson, chief constable, and Daniel Child, Bowen L. Pierce, Edson V. Chace, Philip Durfee, James E. Watson, Spencer Macomber and Samuel V. Bliffins, assistants. The night police consisted of Jeremiah Clarke, captain, and Abel Segur, Benoni T. Chace, Job Simmons, Lewis W. Carpenter, Jacob B. Dunham, Nicholas Taylor, and Gardner Morse. By order of the City Council July 13, 1857, the title of chief constable was changed to City Marshal. The pay of chief constable was at first \$1.50 a day, later advanced to \$1.75 and in 1858 made \$600 a year. Various changes were made, until, by July 2, 1867, it had reached \$1,000 a year. His assistants had at first \$1.25 and the captain of the watch \$1.83. The ordinary men in 1855 received \$1.50, a figure frequently changed and falling to \$1.25 in 1859 and by 1872 advanced to \$2.50. By this time the force had grown to 28 men, 22 of whom were on night duty. Eighteen men were added during 1873, and the following year a further increase was made, bringing the number up to 70. A reorganization went into effect July 1, 1874, by which the city was divided into four districts instead of one, quarters at the north, east and south occupied, and the schedule so arranged as to prevent leaving three hours without any patrol, as had been formerly the case.

The occupying of the three auxiliary stations greatly relieved the crowded condition of the Central station. In the early days, before the establishment of a regular department, cells were provided in the town house, and after the erection of the City Hall in the basement of that structure. Removal to the present central station was made soon after its purchase by the city in 1857. The building had been erected soon after the great fire for the stable of the Richardson house, and was occupied as a livery stable by Cranston Almy, Kirby and others till it became city property. The west end was then occupied by the highway department for its stable, with hay lofts where the court room now is. The police occupied the east end of the building, with six cells in the basement and the court room on the second floor, while fire apparatus was stored in the present guard room. After the removal of the fire engines in 1875 and the city barn in 1879, the building was remodelled, and further changes were made after the police commission was established, when the building on the north side of Granite street was

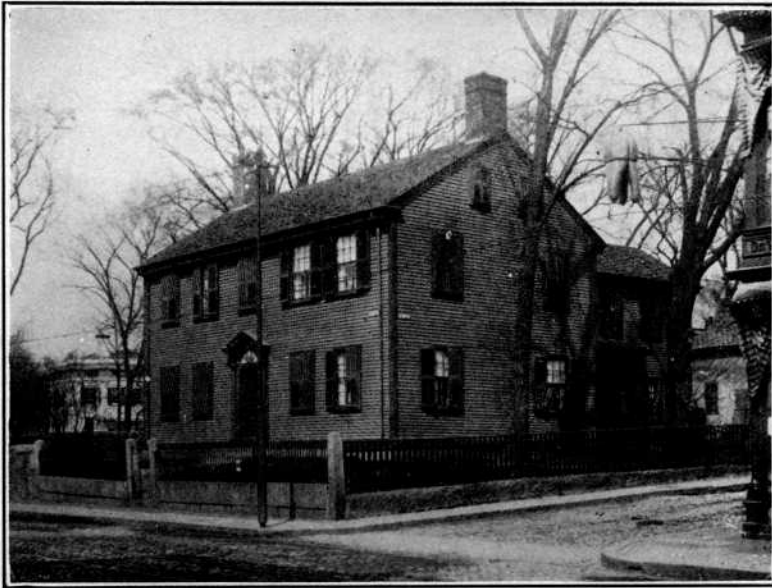
erected for the patrol wagon and sleeping quarters for the men.

Previous to March 5, 1883, when the tenure of office bill went into effect, the men had been appointed each year. The patrol wagon system went into effect in 1890, and the first call was answered January 12. The box system was established at this time. The only man to be retired on a pension was George Dougherty, a patrolman, with eight years' service, who had been injured in the line of duty and was pensioned on one-half pay—\$1.31 a day—May 21, 1901. He died in March of the following year.

A radical change in the control of the department took place in 1894, when at the solicitation of a number of local citizens the Legislature passed an act, approved May 7, by which the police and the liquor license power were taken from the city and given to a commission of three legal voters ap-

pointed by the Governor. The first board consisted of Thomas J. Borden, Joseph Healy and John Stanton. Mr. Borden was chairman until the expiration of his term, and Messrs. Healy and Stanton were commissioners until 1901. Bradford D. Davol was chairman of the board from 1897 to 1903, Rufus W. Bassett from 1903 to 1905, and James Tansey, the present head of the commission, has held that office since his appointment in 1905. Mr. Bassett had succeeded Mr. Healy on his death in 1901. The present board consists of James Tansey, William Moran, who has been a member since 1901, and James M. Morton, Jr., a commissioner since 1903.

The last annual report shows 136 men and two matrons in the department. Seventy-six signal boxes were in use, with three horses and two wagons. The total expenditures in 1905 were \$146,965.70.



The Old David Anthony House, formerly at the corner of North Main and Pine Streets