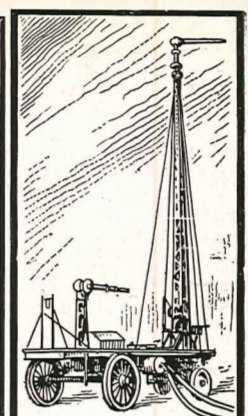


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Vol. LIV.

New York, December 10, 1913.

No. 24



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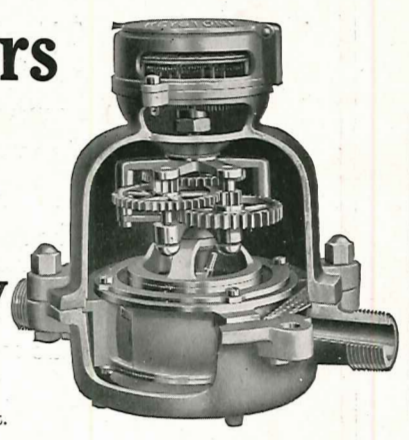
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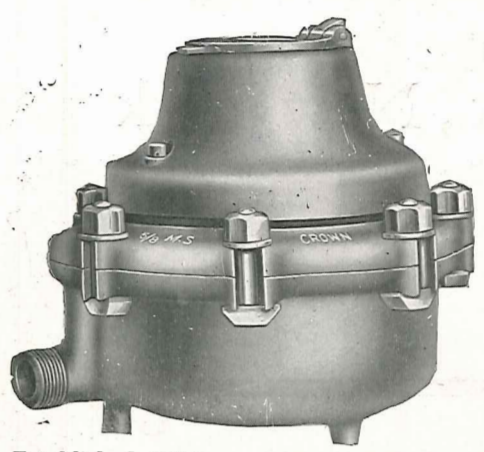
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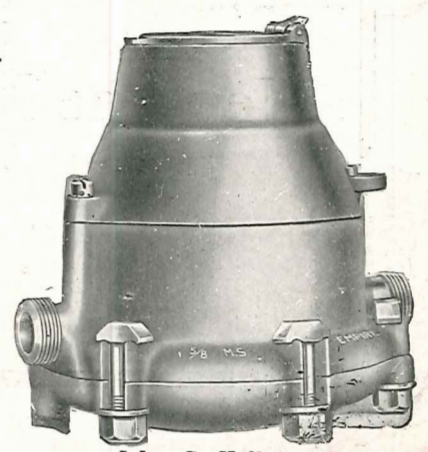
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FIRE AND WATER ENGINEERING.

Established 1877.

Published Every Wednesday at
154 Nassau Street, New York

F. W. SHEPPERD, Owner and Publisher.
JOHN PALMER PRATT, Editor.
VICTOR W. PAGE, M.E.
Author "The Modern Gasoline Automobile" } Associate
JOSEPH B. RIDER, C.E., } Editors.
Author of "The Little Engineer." }
A. V. BENNETT, Chief Engineer } Contributing
H. R. YATES, Chief Engineer } Editors.
H. W. BRINGHURST, Fire Marshal }

Entered at New York as second-class matter.

New York, Wednesday, December 10, 1913

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THE RIGHT OF WAY FOR FIREMEN

The killing of firemen while en route to fires by collisions between their apparatus and some street vehicle is of almost daily occurrence. It would seem that the frequency of these tragedies should result in some plan whereby they may be avoided. Fire apparatus in every city is supposed to have the right of way, but it has often been noticed in this city that trolley-car motormen and drivers of other street vehicles stubbornly refuse to recognize such a rule, and compel the driver of the fire apparatus either to slack his speed or become responsible for a collision. The ordinance which provides that all traffic shall come to a standstill during the approach of fire apparatus should be complied with without equivocation or hesitation caused by mental debate. When fire apparatus were drawn by horses there might have been time for a moment's hesitation, but the speed with which the motor machine goes to a fire in these days leaves little time for meditation on the part of its driver or the driver of other vehicles. It is therefore essential that the fire engine be given the right of way every time and everywhere. The tragic death of two firemen in Akron, Ohio, last week, if reports are correct, was the result of disregard for such rules. The injury to a battalion chief and his

chauffeur in Philadelphia a few days ago came about by the deliberate refusal of a street-car motorman to heed the approach of the chief's car, which gave timely warning with its gong. The motorman was arrested, and an example should be made in his case. All talk about limiting the speed of fire apparatus en route to a fire is absurd when flames are threatening life and property and seconds mean everything. Who, if his property is on fire, insists upon a twenty-five mile speed limit for the fire apparatus?

LIVE MATCH SLIP OF PAPER DEAD RAT

It is a sad but deplorable fact that human lives have to be sacrificed by the wholesale in order that others may be forced to perform the work for which they are compensated. If the reports sent out about the loss of twenty-eight lives in a Boston cheap lodging house are reliable, the blame for that awful tragedy should not be difficult to locate. Because there are three investigations by as many different official departments already under way does not, however, mean that the responsibility will be properly placed. The Asch building fire in this city was "investigated" by more self-appointed organizations than are undertaking to solve the Boston incident, and no one has ever been called to account for the snuffing out of those one hundred and forty-seven human lives. It will be difficult to stifle the conviction that the divided responsibility of inspection under existing laws in Boston is largely to blame. To allow inflammable material to accumulate, as is reported to have been permitted in this instance, points to negligence of the most flagrant sort on the part of someone. Fire Commissioner Cole says that "it is no more than can be expected under the present laws governing cheap lodging houses." The building commissioners who must compel a strict observance of fire safety regulations, and the board of health which must compel property owners to comply with hygienic and sanitary regulations, both claim to have fulfilled their duties to the law's fullest extent. It is plain to be seen then that Boston should at once make new laws and enforce them as well. It is quite assuring, however, that a "conclusion" has been reached as to the origin of the fire. An argus-eyed reporter while rummaging under the sairs found a dead rat with a piece of paper in his mouth—in the rat's mouth—and it is supposed, as there were matches among the sweepings where the fire started, that the rat was the real incendiary. This is looked upon as an important discovery, as it will add impetus to the sentimental talk about "keeping green the memory of the unfortunate victims," and make it unnecessary to "go to the very bottom of the case." All this empty vapor and wild hullabaloo about more rigid laws will have only a temporary quieting effect. It will soon die away, and men in power will go tranquilly about the streets telling what should be done. How about the proprietor of that ill-fated lodging house who permitted the existence of fire escape signs pointing in the wrong direction? The next best thing to do when the blame cannot be placed on a dead man is to place it on a dead rat.

MRS. O'LEARY AND OFFICER PAGE

Volumes have been written about Mrs. O'Leary and her vicious cow whose emphatic gesture resulted in the destruction of more than two thousand acres of buildings, entailing a loss of nearly two hundred millions of dollars to the citizens of Chicago in 1871, and the name

O'Leary has been immortalized into a synonym of conflagration. But Mrs. O'Leary had no more to do with giving ubiquity to her notoriety than Policeman John M. Page had in stemming the honors that were thrust upon him for having sent in the alarm for the big Boston conflagration a year later. Page, who died last week at the ripe age of ninety-one years, had endured for more than forty years with noticeable distaste a notoriety which many others would have coveted. It has never been generally known that in the case of Boston's fire that "there was a woman in it." But there was, and several unruly boys, too. It was on Saturday night, November 9, 1872, while Policeman Page was patrolling Summer street that he was accosted by an aged widow who appealed for protection from several youngsters possessed of more devilish propensities than good sense. With night stick in hand Page gave chase, and when about to close in on the group, one boy—evidently with a twofold purpose—diverted the officer's attention to flames coming from a near-by building. Quickly discerning it as his most important duty, Page left the boys and turned in an alarm. At that time there was a rule which empowered a policeman to send in a second fire alarm when he saw flames above the second floor, and Page sent in another call. Subsequently he was ordered by District Chief John W. Regan to send in a third alarm. On the arrival of Chief Damrell a fourth alarm was sent in and the battle commenced. Policeman Page's connection with the greatest disaster in Boston's history is a bit of unknown record outside of that city.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION JUGGLERY

The Workmen's Compensation Act is a broad, humanitarian measure, and, as its name implies, is primarily an act for the benefit of no other class, calling or profession, but the workmen engaged in hazardous trades. It is designed to place personal injury cases upon something like a scientific basis of settlement. At the present time it is driving more legislators in every State to the gymnasiums than to the halls of legislation. There are good reasons why a Senator or Assemblyman should incline toward both factions—for and against the measure—and when it comes up for final action the officeholder who cannot throw a double somersault will land either in the good graces of the victorious side or in a padded cell. Next to Ohio the measure proposed by the Governor of New York calls for higher compensation than the same measure does in any other State—sixty-six per cent. of the average weekly wage. In this respect the bill is a departure from the usual practise in those States which have lately put workmen's compensation into effect. It is asserted that while the workmen in the hazardous trades will derive the benefits of the new law, those in non-hazardous occupations will be forced to sue for damages as heretofore. Members of the last New York State Legislature were very antagonistic to the workmen's compensation bills, which were less radical than will be proposed at the coming session, if the Governor has his way. The Foley-Walker measure, framed with the aid of the life insurance department, was constructed on relatively conservative lines and passed both houses, but Governor Sulzer vetoed it. That the one proposed will render the manufacturers of New York unable to compete with those of other States where this law is less onerous, is scarcely believable, but that argument will be used as a blackjack in the hands of those who oppose the measure as at present constructed.

Twenty-eight Lives Lost in Boston Lodging House

Twenty-eight men lost their lives and 20 were injured in a cheap lodging house fire in Boston on December 2. The holocaust took place at 2 o'clock a. m. in the Hotel Arcadia, a 15, 20 and 25 cent all-night lodging house at 1202 Washington street, corner of Laconia street, in the center of the South End tenement section. The building was constructed of brick, five stories high, with a mansard roof and covers 3,900 square feet of ground, with an 80-foot frontage on Washington street and an L in the rear. It has one wooden spiral stair case in front and one balcony fire escape on its rear end. There were accommodations for 243 men. On the fatal night 148 men had registered. The rear end of the building is on an alley; the street floor is occupied by a saloon, shooting gallery, bootblack

At the time of the fire 19 occupied 25 cent beds on the second and third floors, 40 occupied 20 cent beds on the fourth and 80 15 cent beds on the fifth floor. The hotel was conducted by the Lyons Hotel Company, which has eight other similar hotels in Boston and many in other large cities. The building was provided with chemical fire extinguishers, but none were used. The only means of reaching the fire escape on the second and third floors was through a small bathroom. On each floor was a sign with the words "Fire Escape" with an arrow pointing in both directions, and a red light was over each sign. These signs proved to be snares, as neither of the arrows pointed in the direction of the fire escape and some were probably lured to their death by them. There were no fire escapes on three sides of the building.

The fire started in a small closet under the stairs, in which waste and a refuse barrel were kept. It is supposed to have been caused by spontaneous combustion. It was discovered by a man in the reading room, who did not have money enough to obtain a bed. He notified the night clerk and watchman, who were talking in the office. They gave the alarm and claim to have sounded the house fire alarm, but the lodgers declare that no alarm was sounded on that system. All the lodgers were aroused by the clerk and watchmen. A citizen passing on the street sent in the regular city fire alarm. The flames, fanned by a draft from the street, swept up the stairway to the top of the building, where most of the deaths took place. Not much damage was caused by fire, the stairs being only scorched. Most of the deaths were due to suffocation. All was over in 10 minutes from the time the fire was discovered. On retiring the lodgers were compelled to lock their clothing in a box at the foot of their beds, and most of them had no time to dress. Nearly all of those rescued and those whose lives were lost were naked or nearly so. Only 21 of the dead have so far been identified. Only the top floor had a means of escape. The flat roof of an adjoining building, on which many crowded, had a skylight,

but this was fastened, so they could not enter the building. A number jumped across an alley to reach the other building and fell into the alley badly injured. Lack of fire escapes was the principal cause of so many deaths.

The first alarm was at 2.05 o'clock, followed by a second at 2.10 and a third at 2.12. Engine company No. 3, Captain M. Boyle, was the first on the scene, followed by Truck 3, Capt. Wm. Coulter. Both companies are located in the same station on Harrison street in the rear of the burning building, and approached the fire through Laconia street. The firemen saw the lodgers trying to escape before they reached the fire, and got their jumping nets ready while en route. These were spread and saved many lives. Inside of a minute Truck 3 had three ladders raised on the Washington street end of the building, and a minute later two more ladders were run up on the Laconia street side. Engine company 3 worked

its way with a line of hose up the burning stairway, extinguishing the fire as it went, and with Engine 22 and other companies which responded on the first alarm, made short work of the fire. Deputy Chief P. F. McDonough and District Chief J. T. Byron, whose headquarters are close by, were among the first to arrive. Much credit is given the fire department by the press and public for its excellent work in saving lives and extinguishing the fire, in which the police rendered much assistance. For the first time canvas sacks for lowering bodies at fires were used by the department.

This is the worst holocaust in the annals of Boston. Its next largest was the great fire in 1872 when 10 firemen and four citizens were killed. At the recent fire a heavy rain caused the dense smoke to settle about the building, which hampered the firemen in their work. There was also some delay in shutting off the power of the elevated street railway opposite the building on Washington street. Many rescues were made by firemen climbing ladders and passing rescued men down. Several investigations by the grand jury, the building, health, and other city departments are now in progress.

Fire Fatalities Among Children

December's issue of Fire and Water of London contains some interesting data on a subject that has been discussed in these columns from time to time during several years past. It says:

Dr. W. A. Brend discusses in the Lancet, of November 8, the causes of the mortality among children from burning. Quoting from the registrar-general's returns he gives statistics showing the relative number of fatalities among boys and girls. The figures cover the years 1906 to 1911, and are as follows:

| Ages. | Boys. | Girls. | Ages. | Boys. | Girls. |
|--------|-------|--------|---------|-------|--------|
| 0 to 1 | 214 | 234 | 3 to 4 | 580 | 729 |
| 1 to 2 | 443 | 466 | 4 to 5 | 368 | 775 |
| 2 to 3 | 840 | 623 | 5 to 10 | 389 | 1,427 |

It will be seen, as he points out, that there is a very marked difference between the mortality of boys and girls. In the case of boys the figures rapidly increase up to the age of three years, drop nearly as quickly to the age of six, and then continue decreasing more gradually. The mortality of girls continues to increase up to the age of five, and then declines, though not nearly to the same extent, as among boys. From these facts Dr. Brend considers that the style of dress is largely responsible for the variation. Up to the age of three years boys are dressed in the same way as girls. From three to four they are put into male attire, and there is an abrupt and marked fall in the mortality from burning. With girls it is not until the age is reached at which they are better able to take care of themselves that the figures show a decline, though even then, and for later years, they remain much higher than the figures relating to boys. He quotes Miss Synge's admirable book on children's clothing to show that the children of the poor wear an excessive number of garments, badly shaped and badly fitting, and including various items of flannelette. "Probably," he adds, "no more inflammable arrangement than this, consisting of layers of flimsy material separated by air, could be devised. The corner of a pinafore has only to become ignited, and in a moment the little victim is a mass of flames. Considerable agitation has been directed against the use of flannelette, which is very largely worn, and undoubtedly the cheapest varieties are to be avoided. But this material is inexpensive, and it would probably be difficult to substitute anything for it among the poor. The foregoing figures show that it is not so much the material as the style of clothing which leads to the loss of life." With this last assertion we do not entirely agree, for it has been shown frequently that flannelette, whatever the form of garment, is very much more easily ignited and burns with greater rapidity than woolen or even calico garments, while the burns occasioned are more dangerous. Dr. Brend opines that the reason for the higher mortality of boys as compared with girls, between two and three, may be due to boys at this age being rather more vigorous and enterprising than girls. This is probably so, but here again flannelette plays its part, for many fatalities among young boys are attributable to the wear-



ARCADIA LODGING HOUSE, BOSTON, AS IT LOOKED AFTER THE FIRE. NOTE THE ABSENCE OF FIRE ESCAPES.

stand and a tobacco store. The four upper floors were occupied as a lodging house, on which \$5,000 was recently expended for improvements. The one entrance to the lodging house is on Washington street. The next building north is also a lodging house, and the Grand Opera House is next. A broad flight of stairs leads to the office, a small room on the second floor. Back of the office is a reading room, and the rest of the space on this floor and the two floors above contain small rooms with flimsy partitions of matched boards which reach only part way to the ceilings of the high studded rooms. Two beds were in each of the small rooms. The fifth floor was one big dormitory filled with double-deck iron beds, located as close together as it was possible to have them. The 15 cent lodgers occupied this floor.

The patrons of the Arcadia were men who had poorly paid jobs, many of them derelicts who were transients and registered under false names.

ing of flannelette nightdresses, coupled, of course, with unguarded fires and matches left within the children's reach. We have before us the statistics of 25 fire fatalities recorded during the first 12 days of November, in which children of eight years and under lost their lives, and in no fewer than 15 cases the children had been left alone with unguarded fires, and in 10 cases flannelette clothing—mainly in the form of nightdresses—was mentioned as a contributory cause. Celluloid toys thrust into the fire caused the

company as president for a short period. Frederick W. Lauer is one of the prominent members still, and has filled many positions of trust in the company's history. John H. Laucks, one of the older members, has been a member since 1859. He served in the Civil War and also served two terms in the State Legislature, and for 16 years was the secretary of the company. Among the very oldest living members is Henry Kerper, now 86 years old, who was one of the '49ers to go to California for gold. The membership of

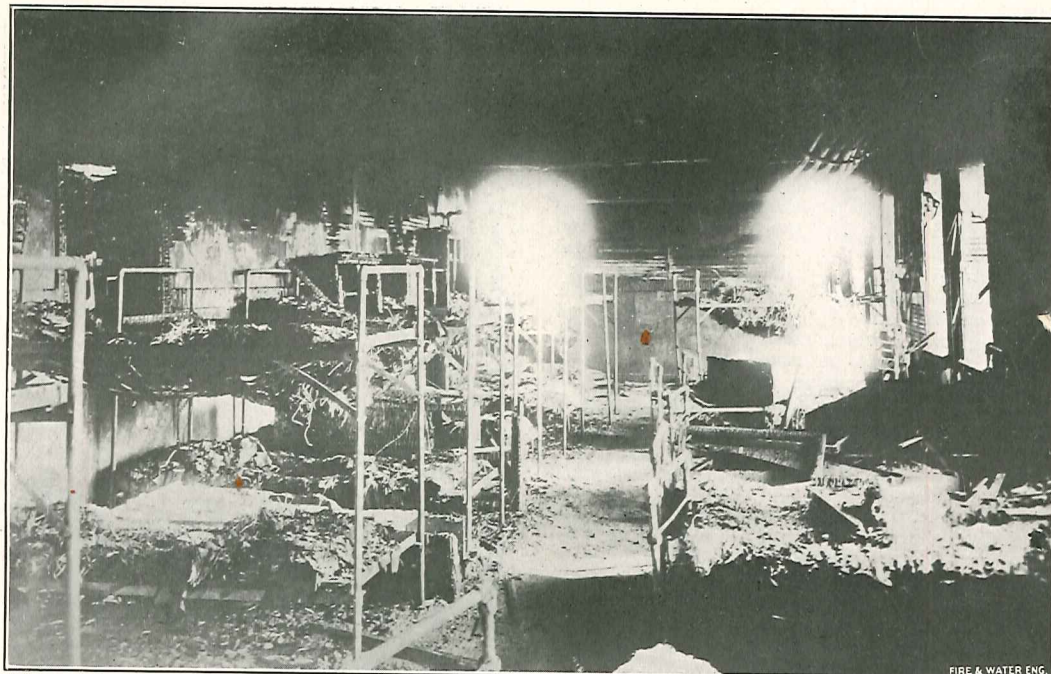
Reminiscences by Ex-Chief Nevins

As noted in these columns a few weeks ago, ex-Chief Thomas F. Nevins, of Brooklyn, has just passed his 75th birthday anniversary. In conversation with some newspaper men a few evenings since, he said:

"Yes, we had a lot of close calls and I have had my share. There were many disastrous fires in my time. The Brooklyn theater fire was one of the worst. Kate Claxton was playing there in 'The Two Orphans.' There was a slight fire on the stage, and it was supposed that this was put out, but it got into the flies and into the loft overhead. The flames traveled clear over the ceiling and down behind the galleries. The people who were killed were not burned. They were suffocated, and most of the victims were in the galleries. When I reached the theater the firemen were working in the orchestra. It was a terrible scene. I took a man with me into the cellar, and there we found a large number of bodies. The man who went into that cellar with me turned gray before the night was over, for the next morning his hair was white. One of the incidents that the newspapers made a lot of at the time was that the bell on City Hall, which usually sounded the alarm, did not ring.

"Unquestionably the most remarkable fire in the history of the city was that of November 23, 1891. The water supply of the city was cut off at the time, owing to a break in the conduit. Any fire that might occur was liable to sweep over the city, and this was realized, but there was no way to secure water to fight the flames. Fire did break out in two four-story dwellings at 237 and 238 Carroll street, but it was extinguished by the use of water from artesian wells. The buildings 260 to 264 Court street also took fire later in the day, and had no sooner been responded to than fire was discovered on Union street."

Chief Nevins faced a serious situation which demanded immediate and decisive action. Two lines of hose, each 3,600 feet long, were run down to the East River and connected with the fireboat Seth Low. Doubt was expressed as to whether a stream could be sent that distance, but it was a time to take chances. While Assistant Chief Dale was running a third line to the river he discovered still another fire at 63 Union street, and brought this stream of water to bear on this point. This third line from the Seth Low (fire boat) was 1,000 feet long. The attempt to throw water drawn this distance proved successful, and all the fires were put out with a minimum loss, thus saving the city from a calamitous conflagration. Aid was asked from the Manhattan fire department, but before the apparatus from across the river responded the fires were under control. This was the driest time Brooklyn ever experienced, as the lack of water compelled people to use seltzer in making tea and coffee, during the interval required for repairing the conduit.



DORMITORY IN BOSTON LODGING HOUSE WHERE INMATES WERE SUFFOCATED.

ignition of the child's clothing in three instances. It may be observed that in 12 of the 25 cases the little victims were from one to three years of age; seven of these were girls and five boys.

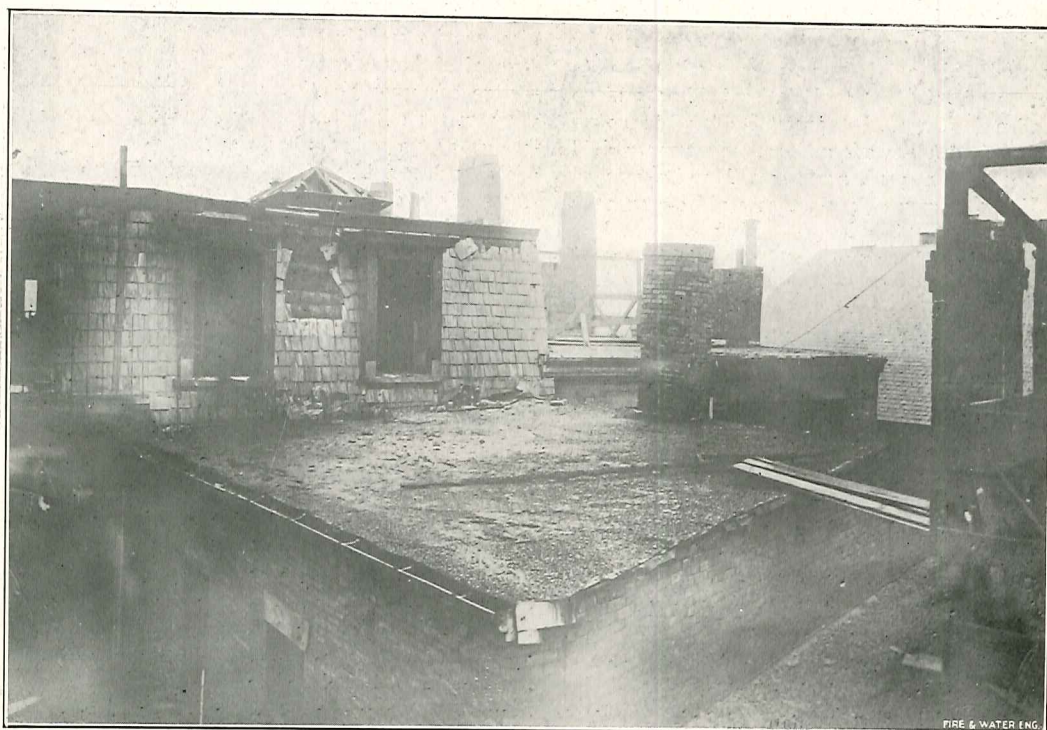
Reading Firemen Observe Anniversary

Junior Fire Company of Reading, Pa., observed its 100th anniversary on Dec. 2, and among the 13 volunteer fire companies the Junior is next to the oldest. The senior company is the Rainbow, organized in 1773. The Junior Company started as a bucket brigade, and had few members, but as every home had some of the buckets then used at fires, there were always lots of volunteers. It was some time before the members could purchase an engine, and when they did it was considered such an improvement over the bucket apparatus that it was kept in use for several decades. The engine was one of the old style. The endless chain of volunteers with leathern buckets, starting at the nearest pump, filled the box or tank of the machine, and others manning the long levers on the machine, which accommodated six to eight men, pumped the water out of the pipe into the fire, if they could reach it. When steam engines came into existence, the company was prompt in getting one of the first engines, and to-day it is using its third steamer, quite modern, but is about ready to make way for an automobile engine.

The Junior's first big fire to fight occurred on May 5, 1820, when six business places on Penn street were destroyed. The first president was Dr. Philip Marshall, and he was succeeded by David Stoudt, Sr., who became the first chief engineer of Reading's fire department at large. Richmond L. Jones, one of Reading's well-known lawyers, served next, followed by Frederic P. Heller, who was the company's president in 1879, and who joined the company 63 years ago. He is at present one of the members of Reading's Water Board. Heller was succeeded by John H. Ruth, who held the position for 30 years, and who only a few years ago refused to accept another nomination, when John Luigard succeeded him for two years, and then George W. Reed, the present president, was elected. General George de Benneville Keim, who moved from Reading to Philadelphia, when he accepted office under the Federal Government, also served the

this association to-day is 700. The present officers of the company are: President, George W. Reed; vice-president, George A. Markert, Jr.; secretary, John M. Schroeder; treasurer, I. J. D. Keffer; trustees, Samuel N. Zerr, William L. Beard, William N. Brison; librarian, A. Mintzer; chief engineer, H. W. Hartman; assistant engineers, William H. Goodman, George O'Reilly, Howard Gorgas, Edwin Peiffer, James Curry, Henry Raezer.

The centennial celebration embraced a banquet in Rajah Temple, an entertainment, a dance, open house on the second day of the anniversary, to receive visitors and members of other companies at its home, and a parade, with all its apparatus, ancient and modern.



ROOF OF BOSTON LODGING HOUSE. NOTE THE PLANKS OVER A 15-FOOT APERTURE BY WHICH 20 MEN ESCAPED.