

FIRE FIGHTERS OF OLD NO. 18

Distinguished Men With Lafayette Engine.

Quincy, Amory, Wigglesworth Were Some Who Ran With the Machine.

It is a far cry from these days of highly developed fire prevention and swift motor apparatus to the time 80 years ago, when the leading citizens, pouring out for every fire, turned to and helped in the operation of the old-fashioned handengines.

Of all the firefighters who have given their services to the city of Boston, there was never a more enthusiastic and zealous corps than Engine Company 18, which served the city faithfully for more than a score of years and numbered among its members such well known city fathers as Mayor Josiah Quincy Jr, Robert Lyon, Isaac Adams, William Barnicoat and Thomas C. Amory.

Formed in 1825 under the name "The Associated Fire Engine and Hydraulion Company," they later became known as the Lafayette Engine Company 18, taking their name from that given to their engine.

A printed memorial relating briefly the history of the organization and a few reminiscences of the company's experiences was produced by the surviving members of the company on Jan 1, 1849, when John P. Bigelow was Mayor.

The organization of the company, it appears, followed the inception of a more liberal governmental policy toward provision of fire apparatus than had existed before 1825. The events of those days are best described by a quotation from the memorial mentioned above.

"In the year 1826," it says, the Mayor (Josiah Quincy) and Aldermen voted to procure from Philadelphia an engine, a hydraulion and a quantity of riveted hose. In December the engine arrived with some hose and was placed in a barn on Beacon st. which stood near where the northwest corner of the Tremont House now stands. The engine was called the Philadelphia and was built by Merrick & Agnew.

"The first fire to which the engine was carried and worked was the burning of Collamore's crockery ware store, situated at the corner of Washington and Franklin sts, Dec 29, 1825.

"Although the Mayor and Aldermen had appointed 60 men to take charge of the machine, there was no duly organized company in existence at this fire,

but the engine was worked under the direction of George Dorracott and Thomas C. Amory. The first fire at which the engine was worked by a regularly organized company was that of the dwelling house of Mrs Lummins, in Elliot st, Jan 23, 1825."

A list of the officers and members of this first company, the Associated Fire Engine and Hydraulion Company, is appended. From 1825 to 1829 William Barnicoat was foreman, while Thomas C. Amory was second foreman and Almorán Holmes third foreman. Other officers elected in 1825 were Norman Seaver clerk and Charles M. Domett and Samuel Lawrence, stewards.

The list of 60 members includes representatives of many old families, of which these are a few notable ones: Henry Timmins, William Tyler, Edward Wigglesworth, Francis Skinner, Lyman Reed, Solomon Cotton, Francis L. Brigham and William Almy.

In 1826, it is related, the Hydraulion arrived and 60 more members were appointed. Then in 1836 a new suction engine built by William C. Hunneman of Roxbury was added, and the name of the Philadelphia changed to the Lafayette.

When friction between the authorities and the department developed the company threw up their commissions, but subsequently there was a reorganization "under the paid system," and a company with these officers formed: William H. Foster, foreman; Oliver Ayers, assistant foreman, and Ira P. Rankin, clerk.

It was this company which had the honor of receiving through the hydrant at the corner of Hanover and Cross sts the first Cochituate water used for fires. This was Nov 9, 1848.

From the building partially destroyed at that time was preserved wood which has been used to frame the memorials sent out by the company. Charles C. Henry was foreman at that time.