

PROTECTIVE PROPERTY AT FIRES.

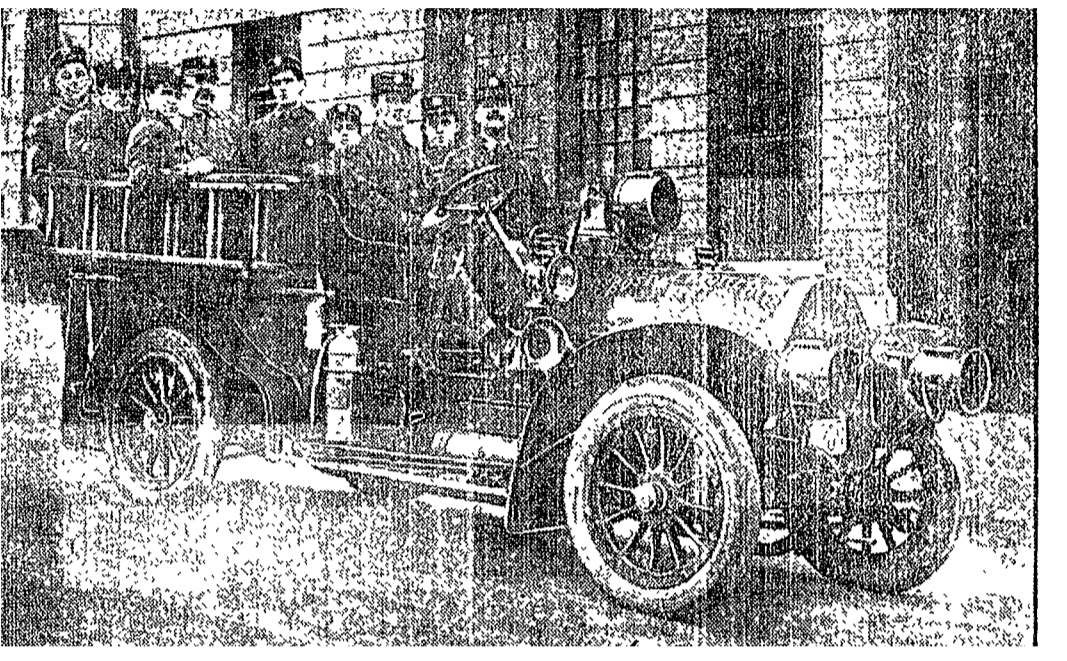
Work of the Boston Protective Department.

Work at Fires of the Boston Protective Department, Which Has a Force of Sixty-One Men, a Superintendent, Three Captains, Six Lieutenants and Thirty-Three Permanent Men—Necessary Essentials for Appointment to the Force.

THE public spirit indicated by the maintenance of the protective departments of our large cities by the cooperation of the insurance companies is a benefit to the community that is second to nothing done by private enterprise. The work done by this department is broad and impartial. The department consists of a corps of men with suitable apparatus intended to save life and preserve property at or after a fire, and for these purposes they are empowered to enter any building on fire, or which is exposed to or in danger of taking fire from other buildings, to protect or to remove property. They have the same right of way when responding to alarms as the fire apparatus. The department is maintained by the incorporated insurance companies doing business in the city,

to Ladder 2 in East Boston and to Ladder 9 in Charlestown responded to 374 calls. Both wagons of this busy company are horse drawn and besides much other equipment carry two 18-foot extension ladders and 25 covers. When more covers are needed the wagons can carry about 50 at a load. Company 1 is commanded by Capt James T. Fitzgerald. He has been a member of the force since May 11, 1885, and has been a captain since Aug 9, 1906. During his 26 years of service Capt Fitzgerald has worked at all of Boston's worst fires, and has had many escapes. For 20 years he escaped with minor injuries, but during his 21st year of service he was four times severely hurt. In one, bad fall at a fire his arm was dislocated and he was otherwise badly hurt. On one occasion the

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PROTECTIVE COMPANY 3, ROXBURY ST.

each of which companies is entitled to one representative at the annual meeting when the maximum expenditure for the coming year is fixed by vote, and elections to the Board of Directors are made. This board consists of nine men, three of whom retire every year. Their term of office is for three years.

Each insurance company is assessed in proportion to the amounts of premiums returned as received. Premiums received for insuring buildings are subject to but one-half the assessment laid on premiums received to insure other property.

The force consists of 61 men. A superintendent, three captains, two first and four second lieutenants, 33 permanent men and 18 "auxiliaries." For appointment to the force a candidate must be under 27, able to read and write English understandingly, be a citizen of good moral character, have no record of crime against him, give references for the last five years, pass a rigid medical examination and his appointment must receive the approval of the fire commissioner.

An "eligible" reports for duty at 7 p m. If his services are not required he is at liberty. An "auxiliary" reports at 7 p m and remains till 6 a m, and is on duty at such other times as may be required.

First-Grade Man.

A fifth-grade man serves a probationary period of six months, and if his conduct and ability are satisfactory he then passes a year in each of the other three grades. His pay, off duty, privileges, sick and death benefits are then equal to that of a city fireman.

Every applicant must pass through each of these classes. The insurance companies want good men, and the property interests involved necessitate a careful weeding out process. The department is liberal. A first-grade man receives \$1200 a year.

The service differs from the Fire Department in that there is less chance for advancement, and for that reason many of the men train for the regular fire force. As Supt Abbott naively remarks, "Few die, and none resign." The work is hard and dangerous, and injuries are frequent. Several of the protectives have been killed on duty.

There are three protective stations maintained in Boston. Company 1 and 2 are single during the day and double at night. Company 3 is double day and night. Each company has two pieces of apparatus. Their vehicles consist of three horse drawn wagons and three powerful automobiles. The department is steadily growing, and it will not be long before all its apparatus will be motor driven.

In addition to the fully manned companies, three detailed men respond with ladders 2, 5 and 9, in East Boston, South Boston and Charlestown respectively, as the protective companies respond only to boxes in the dangerous parts of those districts.

Supt Samuel Abbott makes his headquarters at the house of Company 1, stationed on Purchase st. He is aided by an office force in his voluminous clerical duties and assumes charge of the operations of his department at all large fires. He has been in command since July 1, 1880, and previous to that served 14 years in the fire force, in which when he retired he held the rank of chief of the 4th Fire District.

Company 1 covers the territory to the north and east of a line drawn from the West Boston Bridge, through Cambridge, Anderson, Plinckney, Joy, Beacon, Park, Tremont, Bedford and Summer sts, including East Boston and Charlestown.

Water Damages.

The work of the protectives is principally that of preventing unnecessary water damage, and for that purpose they spread 18x12 rubber covers, weighing from 35 to 45 pounds, over the goods and furniture on the lower floors of buildings on fire. They also use several other appliances to prevent damage and carry off water. When roofs are endangered they spread large "roof covers."

The headquarters house of the protective department is that of Company 1, stationed on Purchase st. This company is an exceptionally busy one. The number of runs for the last year responding to the regular city box, still, automatic and American District Telegraph alarms totaled 1067, during which 2230 covers were spread and 3237 hours were spent on duty connected with fires in addition to the large amount of work done in quarters. The privates detailed

arteries of his wrist were severed by falling glass, and he was saved from bleeding to death only by Lieut Lane's prompt application of a tourniquet. On yet another occasion he was kicked across the street by a fallen horse which he was trying to release, and received injuries that disabled him for a long time.

Narrowest Escapes.

One of his narrowest escapes occurred at a wool warehouse on Congress st, two years ago. He had just taken his company from the cellar of the building on fire, and had entered the next building, when every floor of the building on fire crashed into the street, sending smothering clouds of smoke into the cellar in which he was at work.

Strikingly typical of the dangers amid which the protective men work were several incidents that occurred during the great fire on Thanksgiving Day, 1880. Seeing that a line of hose had been taken into a building, Capt Fitzgerald entered with several other men and spread covers, but as the line of hose was empty, and the heat and smoke in the building too much for men to bear, they believed that the attempt to save the building had been abandoned, and withdrew; but the four men who had taken the hose up into the upper floors of the building had not left it, but had been suffocated and were lying round the nozzle dead. It was never definitely known who ordered Murnan, Brooks, Loker and Buckley into that untenable place.

During the same fire Capt Fitzgerald assisted in the rescue of Edward E. Whiting, an ex-fireman who had volunteered his services. District Chief Byron was trying to save the building when the opposite wall crashed down through the building in which they were working. Everyone escaped but Whiting, who was so completely buried that nothing but his arm projected from the heap. While part of the men kept back the fire, Capt Fitzgerald and several others extricated Whiting and carried him out. He was still alive, but soon died. The two medals that were awarded for this rescue went to men who appeared after Whiting had been extricated.

Capt Fitzgerald was working at the fire on Canal st, Nov 25, 1886, when District Chief Egan was overcome by smoke, and in attempting to get out of the place pitched head foremost down the stairs. He was carried across the street and revived. It was then learned that Ladderman W. H. Flavel was still in the building. Capt Fitzgerald assisted in the recovery of Flavel's body from the blind passage into which he had wandered when trying to escape, and in which he had been suffocated before he could return.

His Injuries.

First Lieut John P. Lane of Company 1 has been a member of the department since Jan 1, 1894. He has charge of all the assignment books and running cards and is responsible to the superintendent for their correctness. His worst injuries were received at a fire a few years ago when his leg was so badly crushed by the fall of a huge iron block that he was unfit for duty for nearly a year. Lieut Lane had just stepped into the place previously held by Lieut Abbott when he was struck by the block.

Second Lieut Arthur F. Swift joined the protectives Nov 15, 1894, and since then has probably received more injuries than any other man in his department. At a fire in South Boston he plunged down through a burnt floor and in addition to multiple other injuries broke both ankles. At another fire his arm was broken, and at yet another he was so badly out by falling glass that he nearly died from blood poisoning.

The permanent men assigned to Co 1 are George E. Blakely, Frank J. Cadigan, Walter N. Phelps, John R. Griffin, Gustavus Arnoldson, John E. Silva, James E. Capeless, William J. Gallagher and Edward J. Twigg. Thomas J. Mooney looks after East Boston and Samuel H. Wheelock Charlestown. Nine "auxiliaries" are on duty from 7 p m to 6 a m, during which time both wagons are in service.

The second protective district lies south and west of the boundary lines of District 1, and extends to a line drawn from the Charles River through Massachusetts av, Southampton st and Andrew sq to the water front, including that part of South Boston not included in District 1.

The second protective company is sta-

tioned on Appleton, near Tremont st, and is under the command of Capt Henry E. Thompson, who has been a member of the department since Oct 13, 1886. He is the acting superintendent, and assumes charge of the department in the absence of Supt Abbott. First Lieut Samuel A. McDonnell has been a member of the force since Feb 29, 1892. Second Lieut Daniel Gleason since Jan 1, 1894. The permanent men attached to this station are W. E. Hart, J. C. C. Mollesstrom, J. S. Weir, W. L. Mc Morrow, W. F. Bowers, F. J. Sauer, T. J. Talbot, J. J. Gaffney, W. H. King, T. Mc Andrews and J. A. McCabe. Nine auxiliary men are on duty from 7 p m to 6 a m. The company during that time has one auto and one horse-drawn wagon in service. This com-

pany responded to 1003 alarms last year and spread a total of 1877 covers. Lieut S. A. McDonnell and W. L. Mc Morrow of this company are now the only two men in the department who survived the accident of July 4 1903. They were part of a number of men detailed to Company 3 to man an extra wagon, one or more of which are put in service on July 4. They were responding to an alarm from a box that took them across the railroad tracks on Freeport st. The team dashed through the open gates just as an express rushed round the curve and struck the wagon square on the side, demolished it, cut driver Thomas V. Duffey completely in two and hurled the other men in all directions. Lieut McDonnell was standing on the step of the wagon and dropped off a second before the crash came. The escape of Mc Morrow was still more remarkable, for he was sitting beside the man that was killed. Michael Daly, another survivor, is now a Boston policeman.

Origin in 1859.

The Boston Protective Department had its origin in 1859. Its beginnings were small, and the value of its work was for many years appreciated by few, yet previous to its inception the destruction of property by water was nearly as great as the damage to it by fire. A few oilcloth covers were at first kept in an insurance office on State st, and those interested ran down there and got them out when they heard an alarm. In 1861 six covers were allowed to be carried on Ladder 1, and a little later the same number on Ladder 3, and these the firemen spread whenever they could spare time.

Oct 1, 1868, the underwriters organized the first protective company and put Assistant Engineer William A. Green of the Fire Department in charge. The driver was then the only permanent man, and an old milk wagon housed with Engine 8 on North Bennet st carried the covers. The active members were enrolled as firemen so as to authorize them to enter buildings on fire. The system proved so advantageous that a proper wagon was bought Sept 1, 1870, and a company housed with Engine 4 on Bulfinch st, and still another with Engine 7, and in a short time quarters of their own were obtained on Franklin st.

For many years the superintendent was also the fire marshal. The work of the protective men was paid for by the persons whose property was protected, there being a regular scale of prices fixed for spreading covers, and for the services of the men left to guard the premises. Today the work is done for the benefit of all, and the superintendent has all that he can do to attend to his rapidly developing department.

The present board of directors consists of Pres Augustus S. Lovett, Vice Pres Horace H. Soule and directors George W. Hinkley, Shepherd M. Crain, W. B. Henderson, Charles F. Simmons, A. B. Gilmore, H. H. Whitney and E. Winchester. The treasurer is Edward Spaulding and the medical officer Dr. William F. Ayer, jr.