

*the*  
*CITY of PORTSMOUTH*  
*New Hampshire*

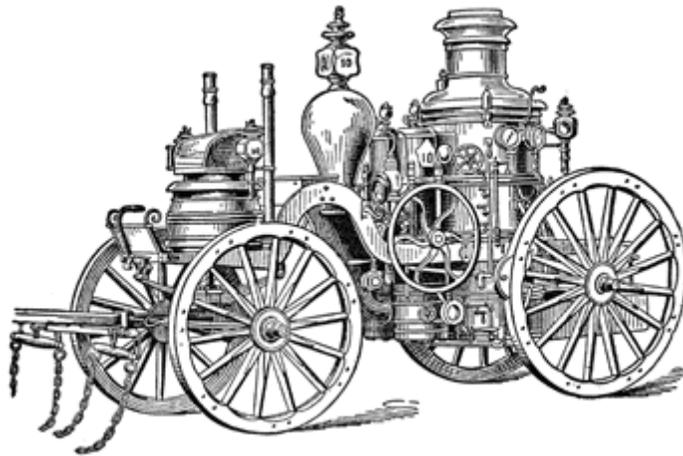
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# **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

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*5<sup>th</sup> Edition*

*Historical Notes of Fires, Firefighters, Apparatus, and Events*  
*June 1696 through December 2015*



*Portsmouth Fire Department*  
*January 2016*

### ***Introduction***

This collection of historical notes celebrates the spirit and traditions of the City of Portsmouth Fire Department. Contained here is the most extensive history compiled on the department to date. Throughout these pages one will explore events, people, circumstances and technologies that when woven together create the rich and remarkable story of the state's oldest fire department. Also included are accounts that speak to the character of the firefighters and the community they have dedicated themselves to protect.

It should be noted that not every event or account of the department is included, and there will be firemen and historians, past and present, that will note absent pieces of the story. Nevertheless, the notes of fires, firefighters, apparatus, and events chronicled within these pages should provide an exceptional historical representation of the City of Portsmouth Fire Department. Unless otherwise referenced, information was obtained through department records and city reports.

*Steven E. Achilles, Fire Chief*

*January 7, 2016*

**1696** June 26 - First recorded fire in Portsmouth. Indians attacked the settlement at Portsmouth Plains and killed fourteen people, burned five houses and nine barns, and took several captives. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1704** October 31- The Rev. Mr. Rogers' house, accidentally took fire in the night, and was entirely consumed together with most of his furniture. Mrs. Ellison, the aged mother of Mrs. Rogers, was so much burnt that she survived but a few weeks. A female infant child of Mr. Rogers, seventeen months old, and a negro woman, perished in the flames. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1728** January 22- The house of Robert Metlin, situated on King's (now Congress) street, accidentally took fire and was entirely consumed, together with a great part of his stock of flour, and the clothing of himself and family. The great exertions of the inhabitants prevented the fire from spreading. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

The dwelling house of Mr. George Walker, accidentally took fire, and was entirely consumed with all his furniture and clothing. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1738** Congress Block – a house occupied by Robert Macklin, the old baker, was destroyed by fire. Soon after the fire a part of the old meetinghouse at the South Mill-dam was removed to this spot and converted into a dwelling by John Newmarch. (*Gurney, 1902*)

**1739** Cities Town Paper IX, 698 request for a law for the inspection of old houses and chimneys.

**1740** The farm house built by Henry Sherburne and Tobias Langdon on Elwyn road was destroyed by fire. Another was rebuilt on the site by John Langdon, father of Governor Langdon. (*Gurney, 1902*)

**1744** January 17 - The ship of war, the Astrea, accidentally took fire and was entirely consumed. The Astrea was a twenty-gun ship, was riding at anchor in the Pool, and taking in a cargo of naval stores, destined for the use of the British fleet at Jamaica. The morning when the accident took place, was severely cold, and her distance from the town, rendered it impossible for assistance to reach her in season. The Pool is a broad sheet of deep still water, situated between the upper end of Great-Island, and the town on the southerly side of the river, with good anchoring ground. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

March 26 - A Committee was established to purchase a “New Inginge”. Twenty Pounds for the purchase were made available through Capt. Eben Wentworth. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1745** The residence of Richard Waldron, Secretary of the Province, at the Plains was destroyed by fire along with the probate court and other valuable records that were in his keeping. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1748** March 25- At the cry of fire, the sexton was to ring the bell as fast as he can for a short while, then tole about 15 strikes, then ring and tole in succession until the fire was out or ordered to stop by the selectmen. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1756** March 25-Voted 40 pounds sterling for a fire engine. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

September 13- A special town meeting was called to consider the best measures “to extinguish and prevent the spreading of fire in any building” and to “regulate the labour and proceeding of people assembled on such occasions.” Voted that the Select Men procure six fire hooks, 12 leather buckets, and six axes “with long helves” and that the Select Men take proper steps in order to have a Law to regulate the Fire Officers. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

The first 12 Fire Officers (Firewards) elected on that date were Major John Hale, John Shackford, Tomas Wibird Esq., Robert Trail, George Marshall, John Sherburne, Coll. Theodore Atkinson Esq., John Griffin, Joseph Alcock, Andrew Clarkson, and James Stoodley Jr.

**1758** May 2 – Joseph Cotton excused from serving as tythingman (early police officer) since he had been taking care of the engine for three years. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

The provincial legislature passed legislation for organizing firefighting throughout the colony of New Hampshire. Towns were authorized to form fire companies and elect officials to oversee these companies. The legislation also established fixed penalties for refusing to comply with impressment by “fire wards” and for looting. (*Sundberg, J., 1983*)

The (Old) State House was constructed in the middle of the parade (Market Square). When first built, the easterly room was appropriated for the Council Chamber, the middle for the House of Representatives, and the west for the Court of Common Law. Afterward the Masons had the eastern chamber and the Fire Companies another room, while the Fire Department was in the lower story, which consisted of one immense room. In the attic were several convenient committee rooms.. (*Gurney, 1902*)

**1760** March 25 – Town meeting; Firewards were required to inspect chimneys suspected to be bad chimneys. Those employed by the firewards to care for the engines were excused from elected offices. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1761** Town authorized Firewards to inspect all buildings for fire hazards and to assess penalties if not resolved or corrected within thirty days. Additionally, each home was required to have a ladder high enough to reach the ridge-pole. If the home was two stories and had a minimum of four fireplaces, the owner was required to posses at least one leather bucket in an easily accessible location. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1761** January 25 – On a Sunday morning a fire broke out in a barber's shop in King's-street, which communicated to the house of Mr. James Stoodly, innholder, and raged with such fury as in two hours to consume his house, barn, and other out-houses. Its progress was then arrested by the exertions of the inhabitants. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

March 17- The United Fire Society was instituted. Each man brought two leather buckets, a bed wrench, a large four bushel cloth bag and a long handled mop. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

**1762** March 25- Another fire engine ordered to be bought, cost not to equal 60 pounds. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

March 25- voted that “there shall be a house built for to keep the new engine in”. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

August 1- Friendly Fire Society formed. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

A barn belonging to the Rev. Samuel Langdon, situated near his house, accidentally took fire and was consumed. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1763** April- The town owned three fire engines: First contained 50 gallons, discharged 50 gallons-37 yards-in one minute. Second contained 120 gallons, discharged 120 gallons-45 yards- in one minute. Third contained 196 gallons, and discharged same-52 yards –in one minute. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

April 3 – On a Sunday night, between twelve and one o'clock, a distressing fire happened, which entirely consumed the dwelling house occupied by Mr. John Wendell, merchant, situated on the street leading over Canoe-Bridge. The noise of the flames awoke him, and he discovered the fire raging beyond the hopes of extinguishing it. By the judicious management of the engines, and the alertness of the inhabitants, the buildings on each side, though not more than ten feet distant, were preserved. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1764** March 26 – As usual, those employed by the firewards to care for the engines were excused from elected offices and also “excused from working upon the high ways. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1767** April 7 – Voted that the Selectmen provide a house for the large engine. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1771** Voted that Capt. Woodbury Langdon, Capt. John Parker and Mr. John Pickering be and hereby a Committee to apply to a general assembly for an act in addition to an act for extinguishing fire, in particular for a penalty for those who refuse to obey Firewards when attending fire. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1773** March 25 – Voted that the Selectmen apply for a law to regulate keeping powder in private houses. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

April 22 – If the province does not build a powder house, the town will do so, to ensure “that the inhabitants of this town may no longer run the amazing resque of losing life and property in case of a fire.” (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1775** March 25 - The town directed the selectmen to purchase a fire-engine at the charge of the town, the price not to exceed forty pounds sterling. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1780** Voted that the Firewards be empowered to see that the engines are kept in good order, to attend at fires, and that they engage a sufficient number of men to take care of the same upon the best terms they can be provided at the expense of the Town. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1781** March 15 -The first great fire in Portsmouth broke out about noon, when the town was alarmed by the cry of fire. The blaze broke out in the barn of Nathaniel Treadwell, situated on Fetter lane. It was kindled by some children, who were playing with fire in the barn. The flames communicated to Mr. Treadwell's house, which was entirely consumed. From his house they extended across the lane, to the gaol which stood at the corner of Prison and Fetter-lane, which was likewise consumed. The stable, wood-house, and other buildings of the honourable Woodbury Langdon, which stood near the gaol, took fire, and together with his dwelling house, were laid in ashes. The gaol, being built of oak timber, made the fire intensely hot; and it was with difficulty, that the engine men could support the heat a few minutes at a time, to prevent Colonel Whipple's house from taking fire. But being frequently relieved, they kept a continual stream of water pouring on the end of the house next to the gaol, and by that means arrested its progress. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1788** March 25 – Voted that the firewards “see that no old ruinous buildings be suffered to stand, which may expose the town to fire...” (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1789** March 6- Federal Fire Society formed. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

March 25 – Voted that firewards “take particular care that no fires be kept in old dangerous buildings...” (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1790** July 13 - On a Tuesday night a wicked attempt was made to burn the town. A box, made of boards, about two feet square, open on one side, filled with birch bark, tar, and other combustibles on fire, was set, the open part against the barn of Oliver Whipple, Esq. in Jaffrey-street. The fire burned nearly through the clapboards and boards of the building, where the box came in contact with it, and the flames ascended to the ridgepole. The fire was soon discovered, and extinguished before it had done much damage. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1795** March- At the Annual Meeting, town authorized selectmen to purchase “a large fire engine of the best construction.” (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1796** The Humane Fire Society formed. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

**1797** March 25 – Committee formed to advise preserving the town against incendiaries. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

The private company – Portsmouth Aqueduct Company – installed one of the earliest underground piped water systems in America. Purchased by city in 1892. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

**1798** March- Voted that \$8.00 be given as a premium to the first Engine Co. who shall first be at a house on fire and work with the engines, to be allowed by the Firewards and an order given by them for that purpose. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1799** March 26 – Town and Directors of the aqueduct agree that the town may build one or more reservoirs and use the aqueduct for fire fighting. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1802** March 12- At half past 2 in the afternoon a fire was discovered in the hay loft of the barn owned by Hon. Judge Pickering in Market street, which consumed the same, and had it not been for the vigilant and spirited exertions of the firewards, engine companies and citizens, together with the great number of country people in town, the fire would have communicated to the adjacent combustible buildings and made the most serious and distressing ravages. (*NH Gazette*)

December 26- Sunday, about four o'clock in the morning, the town was alarmed by the cry of fire; which was discovered in the building, occupied by the New-Hampshire Bank. Before many of the inhabitants could assemble, the fire burst out through the sides of the house, which was soon enveloped in flames. The fire was communicated to the adjacent buildings with such great rapidity, as to render it impossible to arrest its progress, until a large proportion of the town was laid in ashes. Every building on the parade; except the meetinghouse and Court-house, was destroyed. The upper end of Daniel-street was consumed as far as Captain Elijah Hall's on the north side, and Mrs. Hart's on the south, whose houses were preserved. To the northward the destruction was far more extensive. The buildings on Market-street and Fore-street, as high as Mrs. Whipple's, those on Bow-street, as far as Mr. Cutts' store on Church-hill, those on Crossstreet to the top of Dwyer's hill, and those on Ladd-street, except one, fell victims to the devouring flames. The amount of property destroyed was estimated at the sum of two hundred thousand dollars. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

As a result, the NH Fire and Marine Insurance Co. incorporated Jan. 10, 1803

**1803** January 14 - The U.S. Congress decided to contribute to disaster relief in Portsmouth in its first law concerning domestic disaster aid. Just 19 days after the December 26 fire, Congress authorized “the Secretary of the Treasury to suspend, for a limited time, the collection of bonds due to the United States by merchants of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, who...suffered by the...conflagration of that town.” This and an 1807 law would be the earliest case of congressionally-approved domestic disaster assistance to domestic disaster sufferers. (*SEMP, 2006*)

May 5 – On a Thursday night, about ten o'clock, the barn of Isaac Shepard, situated near the pound, was accidentally, but carelessly set on fire, by a traveler who went into the barn with a lantern to feed his cattle. The barn was filled with hay, and was soon enveloped in flames. The fire caught the roof of the dwelling house, which stood near, but by the spirited exertions of the citizens, the house was saved without having received much damage. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1804** December 8 – Incendiary fire to a large barn belonging to Moses Brewster, at the Plains, consumed 15 heads of cattle and 17 tons of hay. (*Brewster, C.W.*)

December 10 – Incendiary fire consumed entire contents of a barn owned by Samuel Sherburne at the Plains. (*Brewster, C.W.*)

December 18 – Another barn owned by Samuel Sherburne was set ablaze, with 15 head of cattle and 30 tons of hay burned. (*Brewster, C.W.*)

Sometime afterwards, efforts were made to burn down a building between Pitt and Buck streets and a barn located on School street opposite the School House. A girl living at 26 Hanover street, named Sukey Nutter, was arrested; but being of great beauty, was not convicted but was required to leave Portsmouth and never return. (*Brewster, C.W.*)

**1805** October 5 - Early on Monday morning the barn of Nathaniel Adams was intentionally set on fire by an incendiary, and entirely consumed, with several tons of hay. Attempts had been made the week previous to burn his dwelling house, and other buildings. Suspicions were strongly and almost universally excited against a certain person, whom the Attorney-General caused to be arrested and imprisoned in the absence, and without the knowledge of Mr. Adams. The person suspected remained in prison until the next Supreme Judicial Court, and was then tried and acquitted. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1806** March 31 - Town meeting expanded the job of the fire wardens; 13 named with 4 chiefs chosen. The Firewards met at the Union Hall (old “Alms House”) on Jaffery (now Court) street until 1835. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

April 12 - At a meeting of the Firewards a vote was passed that “a committee procures Five Dollars worth of Sweated Pot Ashes for the purposes of making the experiment as to its Effects on Fire by Dissolution of the same in water.” *There were no records of the results.*

**1806** May 19 - There was finished and sent out 302 Notifications to the Inhabitants of this Town for buckets and ladders and repairs of buildings by the Firewards. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

December 24 – A conflagration known as the Chapel Street Fire took place in which Queen’s Chapel (St. John’s Church) and fifteen other buildings were destroyed. The fire started in a store owned by Stephen Little. There were five engines in the town, and the Firewards were assigned to inspect them on the first Monday of each month. Four leading citizens “to be a company under the direction of the Firewards to repair to the State House on the Cry for Alarm of Fire, and bring the Hooks, Ropes, and the other apparatus immediately on the Spot and take care of them, and after the fire is extinguished to return them back to the State House again.” The regulations to prevent fires issued by the Firewards were stringent and had to be strictly obeyed. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1807** January 22 - Just 21 days after the 1806 conflagration, Congress authorized “all persons who, being indebted to the United States for duties on merchandise, have given bond therefore, with one, or more sureties, payable to the collector for the district of Portsmouth, in the state of New Hampshire, and who have suffered a loss of property by the late conflagration at that place, shall be and hereby are allowed to take up, or have cancelled, all bonds heretofore given for duties as aforesaid, upon giving to the said collector new bonds, with one or more sureties, to the satisfaction of the said collector, for the sums of their former bonds respectively, payable in twelve months. (*SEMP, 2006*)

**1808** June – The Firewards for the town inform their fellow citizens that they were determined to enforce the observance of the NH law to prevent the keeping of large quantities of gun-powder in private houses and for appointing a keeper of the magazine. The maximum amount allowed was 10 pounds, kept in a tin canister, and properly secured. (*NH Gazette*)

October 6- Daniel Webster was admitted as a member of the Humane Fire Society. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

**1809** April – Voted that no persons... to carry fire from any house or place within the Compact part of the town, unto any House or place within said limits, but in a warming pan or some such safe vessel, well covered. The fine not to exceed 100 cents, nor less than 20 cents forfeit to the Overseer of the Poor. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

There was an axe company of 16 men. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1810** There were five engines and they all had supper at the cost of the town, \$100, and punch \$12. (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1811** July 12- Mechanic Fire Society formed. Members owned black bags for collecting silver, bed-keys to dismantle beds and buckets. Membership was limited to 30 members.

August 13 - About eight o'clock in the evening, the ship *Wonolanset*, owned by Captain Reuben Shapley was discovered to be on fire. She had arrived from sea about an hour before, laden with hemp, cotton, molasses, naval stores and flour; and lay at Shapley's wharf. Alarm was given, and the inhabitants were collected; but a report being circulated, that she had a large quantity of powder on board, they immediately dispersed. A small number only could be persuaded to return and assist in rescuing the property from the flames; notwithstanding the assurances of the master that she had no powder on board. The fire spread rapidly through the ship, and to prevent it from communicating to the other shipping, and to the stores on the wharf, her fasts were cut, and she drifted on sunken rocks. The fire was caused by striking a light in the steerage, near the bulkhead, against which a quantity of hemp was stowed. The loss was estimated at twelve thousand dollars. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1812** April 27- A number of citizens offered the use of a fire engine to the town, which proprietors agreed to keep in order, at their own expense, except that of a house to keep the same in; to be under the direction of the Firewards for the time being; on condition that the proprietors be appointed an engine company, for said engine, with all the privileges and exemptions to which other engine men in the town are by law entitled; to which the town agreed. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

A new engine house was built at a cost of \$127.66 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

**1813** On the 22d December, 1813, Portsmouth suffered a calamity the effects of which it took many years to hide from sight. About half past seven, on that evening, flames were seen bursting forth from the barn of Mrs. Woodward, on the corner of Church and Court streets, where the Stone Church now stands. By the brightness of the light the citizens were soon collected, but all their exertions were ineffectual to subdue the fire, which before eight o'clock, had so spread over every part of the house of Hon. Daniel Webster and Thomas Haven in Pleasant street, between Court street and State street, and to the house of Mrs. Woodward, at the corner of State street and Church street, that it was with difficulty any part of the property was preserved. By eleven o'clock almost every house in State street and on the south side of Daniel street was in flames. The fire acknowledged no other barrier than the shores of the Piscataqua. It was not until five o'clock of the morning of the 23d that it ceased its ravages. That morning presented in the midst of our city fifteen acres of ruins, studded over by hundreds of chimneys, tottering walls and charred stumps of fruit and ornamental trees. There had disappeared in one short night 108 dwelling houses (occupied by 130 families), 64 stores and shops, and 100 barns, &c., making in the whole 272 buildings. From west to east the fire extended one third of a mile and from north to south, the width of the ruins in the widest part was an eighth of a mile. The companies from Exeter and Dover brought their engines, which were very instrumental in saving the south part of the town. (*Brewster, C.W.*)

NH Fire and Marine Insurance Co. fails as a result of the fire.

**1813** The Alert Fire Society formed. (*Box Club of North Church, 1907*)

Engine Houses:

- Pitt street across from the Meetinghouse (*present Court St. east of Pleasant*)
- Prison lane between Jaffrey and Broad streets (*present Chestnut St. between Court and State*)
- Rosemary lane across from Sheafe street (*present Chapel between State and Daniel*)
- School street near High street end (*present High St. between Hanover and Deer*)
- Pleasant street at South Burying Ground – at Washington street intersection  
(*1813 Map - J.G. Hales*)

**1814** January 12 -Soon after seven o'clock in the evening, the rope-walk belonging to Mr. Joseph Akerman, situated on the south road, was set on fire by some incendiary, and entirely consumed, with its contents. The fire was communicated to the yarns at the lower end of the walk, and spread through it with great velocity, so that the whole was in flames in ten minutes. By great exertions the buildings near the head of the rope-walk were prevented from taking fire. The loss is estimated at three thousand dollars. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

April 19, 1814 Portsmouth voted to apply to the Legislature for an act to prohibit the erection of wooden buildings over 12 feet high in the town. Latter the act of the Legislature was passed, authorizing the Selectmen to widen the streets, and prohibiting the future erection of wooden buildings of more than twelve feet in height; but this useful regulation had not been strictly attended to; most of the buildings however lately erected, have been built of brick, and in a superior stile of architecture to those which were burnt. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1815** April 15 – Voted at the Annual Meeting that the expenses for the town include for the repairs and other expenses of the engines (\$200.00) and for the Firewards (\$80.00). (*Portsmouth Town Records*)

May 9 – The Firewards within the town published 10 rules and regulations for the better security of the Town against fire. The articles included 1<sup>st</sup> that no cooper within the town shall fire or burn any cask or vessel except in a sufficient brick or stone chimney; on pain of forfeiting five dollars, 2<sup>nd</sup> no person or persons shall make any bonfire, or set on fire any wood, straw, shavings or other combustibles, in any street or alley: on pain of forfeiting three dollars, 3<sup>rd</sup> that every person hereafter employed in graving or cleaning any vessel, who shall on leaving such vessel, neglect to extinguish all fires... shall forfeit and pay the sum of three dollars, and 5<sup>th</sup> that the occupant of every dwelling house, who shall neglect to cause each chimney in such house, in which a fire is by him or her unusually kept, to be swept or burned once in three months, shall pay a fine of one dollar.

- 1815** August 22 – Notice - The Firewards of the town of Portsmouth hereby require all persons inhabiting the compact part of the town, to keep windows of their barns and stables closed during the time that hay, straw, or other combustible materials are contained within; on penalty of one dollar for each and every week neglect. By order of the Firewards. John Parrot, Chairman, Nath'l March, Secretary. (*NH Gazette*)
- 1817** January 9 - On a Thursday evening, about nine o'clock, a fire broke out in the barn and out houses of George Jaffrey, Esquire, in Daniel-street. The weather, being mild, with little wind, the flames were confined to the buildings in which they originated. Mr. Jaffrey's dwelling house, which was but a few feet from his barn, was saved by uncommon exertions. (*Adams, N., 1825*)
- 1817** March 15 - An attempt was made to burn the town during the night. The incendiary placed a quantity of shingles against a coopers shop in a very retired place, back of St. John's Church, and set them on fire, which had made some progress before it was discovered. There were several wooden buildings contiguous to the shop, which must inevitably have been destroyed, if the flames had not been arrested. The discovery of this fire has been attributed to the sagacity of a little dog, owned by one of the neighbours, who kept the family awake by his incessant barking; and when one of them arose to quiet him, he led the person immediately to the fire. (*Adams, N., 1825*)
- 1818** October 16 - The barn of William Sheafe, Esquire, accidentally took fire between one and two o'clock, and was entirely consumed. The Baptist meeting-house and two other buildings, which stood near it, were saved by the prompt exertions of the inhabitants. (*Adams, N., 1825*)
- 1821** May 21 - The dwelling house of Thomas J. Whidden, situated on the road to Little Harbour, took fire between one and two o'clock p.m. and was entirely consumed. The fire was caused by a spark from the chimney, which fell and rested on the roof. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

May 22 - The dwelling house of Jeremiah Hart, situated on the corner of middle road and Akerman-street, was consumed. The fire broke out about two o'clock, and had made such advances before it was discovered; there was no possibility of saving much of the furniture. It took fire in the cellar, some suppose, from the ashes which were deposited there. By great exertions of the citizens, the neighbouring buildings, some of which stood but a few feet distant, were preserved. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

Fire Wards of the town – John Hill, Joshua Pierce, Robert Neal, Benjamin Holmes Jr., Samuel Larkin, Jacob Wendell, John Underwood, Samuel Fernald, Thomas Neil, John Bowles, Ebeneser Lord, Samuel Sheafe, John N. Sherburne, Robert Rice, Edmund Roberts, John Blunt, Thomas Haven, and John Rice.

Fire Wards Office, old brick school house (in State Street), upstairs. (*Portsmouth Directory, 1821*)

**1822** September 8 – On a Sunday afternoon, about four o'clock, the house of Mr. Samuel Gerrish, in High-street, took fire. The house was entirely consumed, and also most of the furniture which was in it. Mr. Simeon Stiles' house, which stood about four feet from the shed, was saved by uncommon exertion. During the fire, many persons stood idle spectators of the scene. The firewards should compel every person present to assist in extinguishing fires, or removing the property exposed. These officers are necessarily vested with great power on such occasions, and they should be men in whom the greatest confidence can be placed. They ought to be chosen by ballot, and when a good man is once introduced into office, he should be long continued, that the public may have the benefit of his experience; and but few of the board should be changed at a time. (*Adams, N., 1825*)

**1827** Engines: No. 1 Pitt street, No. 2 Pleasant street, No. 3 School street, No 4. Broad street, No. 5 Islington street. No. 6 Mill street, No. 7 Court street. (*Portsmouth Directory, 1827*)

**1830s** Washington No. 2 was the first suction engine. The men not knowing what the suction was for, it lay about the house useless and at fires they filled the engine from water buckets. One day some one accidentally found out what the suction was intended to do and thereafter the firemen devoted to its proper care. *Col. William H. Sise, ex-Mayor, fireman, engineer of Portsmouth*

**1834** April 11- The following were chosen as “first and second directors of the several engines”: Cataract No.1, John Locke and Levi Moses - No.2, Charles Gotham and Edward F. Sise - Niagara No.3, James Bartlett and Oliver J. Kennard - No.4, Gideon W. Walker and James Coffin – Sagamore No. 5, Ira Hazelton and Joseph D. Pillow – Franklin No. 6, Orlando Yeaton and Andrew H. Jones. (*Portsmouth Directory, 1834*)

The town had six fire engines (hand-tubs): Prison Lane: Engine Nos. 1, 4, and 6, On Pleasant street near Eben Wentworth's, Esq.: No.2, North School street: No. 3, Near the jail: No. 5

Fines of \$3.00 were deducted from the bounty of any company going to a fire without full equipment and suitable number of buckets.

**1836** Pumps for the use of the Firewards located in Pond, Islington, High, Sheafe, Daniel, Jefferson, Austin and Pitts streets, also on The Parade, Theater avenue, near S. Peaves and at Christian Shores.

**1838** March 25- It was recorded at the Firewards meeting that “this meeting of dry subjects be now dissolved, and we move into Mr. Coburn's Temperance Hall to taste his venison and sip his nectars.”

November 19- A bounty of \$9.33 paid to 28 men from Engine Co. No. 5 for fire at Mr. Lake's

**1839** 23 Firewards - City divided into five wards, with a committee of five men governing each ward. Additionally there was an executive committee, a standing committee for examining bad buildings, a committee for the care of aqueduct stops, and a committee for the care of hose in time of fire. (*Portsmouth Directory, 1839*)

29 Directors - Each ward had an engine company assigned (one had two). The companies were under the direction of the Firewards, who annually chose two directors from their ranks for each engine company. Company directors were responsible for monthly examinations of the engines and the “superintendence and management” of the engine and its’ company at monthly meetings and fires.

Additionally there was one director for each of the thirteen pumps, two directors of the hook and ladder company, and one director for each of the two axe companies.

Fire company members were required to be 18 years of age or older. Their duties included the control of the apparatus at fires and restoring the equipment to good order afterwards.

There were six fire engine, one hook and ladder and two axe companies.

General inspections of buildings, fire buckets and ladders were performed annually in May.

A badge of office was required to worn by fire companies when on duty.

Between October and January, of \$1.50 was spent on exhibiting and cleaning Sagamore Engine No. 5.

**1839** The rent for lot of land for Eng. house, North st. for year ending 31 Dec. 1839 - \$2.00.

Fire Societies: These Societies are private associations, unconnected with the Board of Firewards; their objective is to secure and take care of each others property in case of fire-each member is provided with two buckets and a bag. In case of an Alarm of fire the members are to repair with their buckets and bags to the place, and if the house, store, or property of any member is in danger, use their utmost exertions to remove his effects, (under the direction of the Wardens and sufferer) to some secure place, until the danger is over, then to see them returned. (*Portsmouth Directory, 1839-40*)

List of Fire Societies: United Fire Society, No. 1, Federal Fire Society, Mechanic Fire Society

**1840** July 6- Sundry expenses to Boston as Committee appointed by the Selectmen to purchase engine, agreeable to vote of town - \$21.16. Cost of new engine -\$737.26. (*Portsmouth Town Report, 1940*)

December 28- an Engine House at the corner of State and Summer streets was under construction. (*Portsmouth Town Report, 1940*)

Axe Boxes:

- No.1 located on Chestnut street nearly opposite of No. 5. Andrew H. Jones Captain, number of members 16,
- No. 2 located on Pleasant near the Engine Cataract. Josiah G. Hadley Captain, number of members 16.

The companies attached to the Axe Boxes, and the Hook and Ladder Co., were volunteer companies and were not exempted from military duties.

**1842** April 15- During the morning a Stable, barn, and some small out buildings situated on Hanover Street were consumed by fire. Fortunately there was very little wind and the other buildings were quite damp, otherwise there must have occurred a very destructive conflagration. (*NH Gazette*)

**1845** May 4- On Sunday morning, at 20 minutes before one o'clock, a fire was discovered at the west end of a small wooden dye house in the rear of the hat store on Market street occupied by Daniel Knight & Co. The conflagration spread rapidly to Hanover street, where four dwelling houses were destroyed, on the south side, and all the buildings in the rear to, but not including those in Ladd street. All the buildings on the west side of Market street (being brick and four stories), from the store of Mr. Charles W. Clark to the McIntire block (excepting the store of Mr. S J. Dodge) were consumed. On the east side of Market street, the fire communicated with the store occupied by S. Rowe & Co, and consumed the stores at the corner of Bow and Penhallow streets, all four stories; and a three story brick block on the west side of Penhallow. Three engines from Newburyport arrived by rail to assist, along with the Officers and Company from Fort Constitution with an excellent fire-engine. (*Portsmouth Journal*)

**1845** Selected Expenses by the Board of Firewards:

- Prior to 1845; 2 years rent of a lot for engine house corner of State and Summer streets - \$14.00 (through December 31, 1843)
- March 1, Use of horse, to fire State street, \$1.00
- August 31, Assist Eng Co. 3 at fire, point of Graves

**1850** Portsmouth becomes a City.  
Water Supply -Reservoir at Market Square and nine wells.

**1851** June 5-“Laconia No. 2 (#424) hand-tub delivered. Manufactured by the William Hunneman Co. of Boston.

The Fire Department of Portsmouth had under their charge six engines, five of them suction with apparatus complete, and about 2000 feet of hose.

It was reported that Franklin No. 6 was the first hand tub to be hauled by a horse. It was hired at Charles H. Royce’s stable.

**1852** City Ordinance No. 21 established the duties and powers of the Board of Engineers, Chief Engineer, Assistant Engineers, Clerk, organization and duty of fire companies, and policies governing members and apparatus. There was no mention of any pay rates.

He (the Chief Engineer) shall also cause all the fire apparatus, so far as practical, to be marked with the words “City of Portsmouth, in legible letters.

The Fire companies shall be composed of such a number of men, of not less that eighteen years of age, as the City Council may determine.

No part of the apparatus of the Fire Department shall be carried out of the city without the permission of the Chief Engineer, or in his absence, of the Mayor; and the same shall be for no other use than the extinguishment of fires.

**1854** January 17- “Granite State No. 1” (# 499-Hunneman) received.

January 18- “Atlantic No. 6” (#500 –Hunneman) received.

**1857** November 9- “Gov. Langdon No. 3” (#609-Hunneman) received.

**1858** February 25- The Portsmouth Fireman’s Relief Association was organized.

**1861** Chief Engineer Charles E. Main. Assistant Engineers – John H. Moran, Samuel Rowe, Thomas P. Dennet, William B. Grogan, William H. Cornelius, Benjamin M. Parker, Enoch F. Wiggin, William S. Howells.

City Ordinance No. 61 – Relating to Fire Police:

The mayor and Chief Engineer of the department are hereby authorized to accept the services of a volunteer company of Fire Police ...provided such company is fully organized with proper and competent officers, and with a large badge to distinguish the members while on-duty. Said company shall repair to the place of every fire and report to the Chief Engineer; and under his direction shall attend diligently to the preservation of the public peace, the removal and protection from the loss and destruction of property, and the preservation of thefts. Said company shall not in any way interfere with the duties of the regular police.

**1863** February 21 – Fire at Cotton’s stable, Fleet street.

May 3 – Fire at Ira Hazelton’s house on Marlboro street

November 18 – A pile of old sleepers near Concord railroad engine house destroyed by fire.

New Hook and Ladder carriage in service, cost between \$600.00 and \$675.91

There had been erected east of the Courthouse, a new building for the use of the Hook & Ladder carriage, engine, & c. Cost of new Hook and Ladder house - \$3558.81

Services of the Department: Three Fires, one False Call

**1864** July 18 – The largest conflagration in years, at least since 1845, occurred about noon, commencing on Penhallow street and extending chiefly on that street and back to Linden. The total loss was estimated from \$30,000 to \$50,000; and although the fire was located in a comparatively cheap portion of the city, a number of our busiest men were burnt out, and several families suddenly turned out of their homes. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*)

December 30- The first steam fire engine in Portsmouth, the Sagamore, was received for a cost of \$5000.00. It was met at the depot by the members of Laconia Company No. 2, who wore their uniforms for the first time and were led by the Portsmouth cornet band. They hauled it to their house, which had been prepared for its reception, and afterward took it to the parade where it was worked for about two hours by J.B. Johnson of Portland, ME, its builder, with five hundred feet of new hose. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*)

Fire Companies and Organization:

- “Granite State No. 1” – Pleasant Street, 40 men
- “Laconia No. 2” –Court Street (east of Pleasant), 40 men
- “Gov. Langdon No.3” – Court Street, 40 men
- “Atlantic No.6” –State Street / corner of Summer (Chestnut), 40 men

The Federal and Mechanic Fire Societies were still active.

**1865** Friday June 30- The steam fire engine “Dearborn” received for a cost of \$4500.00. Built by Campbell, Whittier and Co. of Roxbury MA. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*) These machines did not become very popular and but three were made, two sold to Roxbury, and were known after annexation to Boston as Tremont No.13 and Dearborn No.14. The other went to Portsmouth. (*King, W.T. 1896*)

On July 3 the new steam fire engine was exhibited and tested on Pier Wharf between 10 and 11 o’clock - with salt water, on account of the temporary scarcity of fresh water in the city. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*)

**1865** November 30- One of the most disastrous fires which we have been visited for years broke out on Thursday morning soon after 4 o'clock, in Congress Block: and in a few hours the whole three-story brick building – one of the handsomest and best blocks in the city – was in ruins. There was a great delay caused in giving the alarm after the fire was discovered, from the fact that the night watch had gone to their homes, (as usual at 4 o'clock, as it is said), and the key of the church kept at the Station House could not be obtained! Axes were procured, but not even the heavy doors of the North Church presented strong resistance. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*)

Pumps for use by fire engines were located on Pond, Islington, High, Shafer, Daniel, Jefferson, Austin and Pitt Streets. Three others on the Parade (Market Square), Theater Ave and Christian Shores.

**1867** February 25- About half past 8 o'clock the fire alarm bells were rung and a brisk fire with plenty of smoke was seen making progress in the central store of the old Bell Tavern Block. And though the fire department was soon on hand at work, the fire extended to the store on the east and that to the west. The tenements above were destroyed and nothing but a blackened shell remains of the stores below. (*Portsmouth Morning Chronicle*)

Fire Companies and Engine Houses:

- Dearborn Steam Fire Engine (S.F.E.) No. 1 – Court Street
- Sagamore S.F.E No.2 – Lower Court Street
- “Granite State No.5” – State Street
- “Gov. Langdon No.3” – Court Street
- “Atlantic No. 6” – Elm Street

**1868** November 25 – A fire at the Grimshaw Block on Bridge and Hanover streets completely ruined three tenements and the old bowling alley at the rear of the block that was occupied by five families. The store at the corner of Hanover and Bride streets was saved by flames by the liberal use of water. A series of disgraceful fights took place after the buildings were destroyed, between some of the patriots of that section of the city, resulting from the recent elections and a too frequent resort to the beer barrels. The firemen worked as they always do, with a will, and took no part in these discords. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

**1870** June 20- The new steam fire engine “Kearsarge” with the hose carriages, built at Amoskeag Machine Co’s. factory in Manchester, arrived in the city. A large crowd assembled on Market square two days later at noon to witness a trial of her speed, which proved entirely satisfactory to the city officials and all present. “The engine is of a superior model and makes a fine appearance, weighing about 5,000 pounds, having a double cylinder, with extra composition cylinders to use in place of iron ones when salt water is to be used, for which \$200.00 extra was paid, the whole cost being \$4000.00. The fairy-like hose carriage costing \$600.00, with rich painting etc, is a specimen of work, endowed, we should say, with “the power of endurance” of the hardest usage. *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*

**1870** November 6- Pfeiffer, Haven and Cheever Blocks Fire. (Waldron Block). Shortly after one o'clock fire was discovered in the building of No. 58 Congress street, occupied by Mr. David Rodrick on the lower floor and the Free Will Baptist Young Men's Christian Association in the second story. From the commencement, the fire burned rapidly and but a few minutes elapsed before the building burned to the ground. The fire communicated to the adjoining buildings, east and west, and for a time disorder reigned supreme. The total loss by fire was about \$9000.00. The water in the reservoir at Haymarket Square gave out but the fire was got under by the engines stationed elsewhere. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

**1871** June 13 – Destruction of the Sagamore House at Frost Point by Fire. About 15 minutes after 10 o'clock, our citizens were startled by the appearance of Mr. Bart Holland, who dashed about Market Square, hatless, his hair streaming in the wind, shouting "Fire" with all the strength of his lungs. He had ridden from the Sagamore House, where the fire was discovered. The bells were rung and the firemen quickly responded; Mr. R.H. Beacham at once hitched a pair of horses to steamer No. 3, which was immediately turned back by orders of the Chief Engineer on the grounds that persons on the roofs of the highest buildings in town declared that the Sagamore House had burned to the ground. (*Portsmouth Chronicle*)

September 6 and 7- There occurred one of the largest and most successful firemen's muster held in New England. A total of 27 steam fire engines, 32 hand engines, and 11 hook and ladder trucks from NH, ME, MA, RI. At one time 1300 were seated at the clam bake being held on Pierce Island.

November 17 – The Gov. Langdon Engine Co. No. 5 had a social gathering and oyster supper at their engine house. These firemen's suppers are gotten up in good style, and besides furnishing a pleasant evening of entertainment they serve to increase the friendship of the different companies of the Fire Department for each other. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

June 13 - Shortly before 10 o'clock a fire was discovered at the Sagamore House on Sagamore Road. When discovered the fire got so far underway that all attempts to smother it were unavailing and Mr. Holland, the only man about the house, was sent to the city to give the alarm. The bells were rung and the firemen quickly responded; Mr. R.H. Beecham at once hitched a pair of horses to steamer No. 3 which immediately started but was turned back at the orders of the Chief Engineer on the grounds that persons on the roofs of the highest buildings in town declared the building burnt to the ground. All engines except for No. 5 were also ordered to return to their houses. *Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*

**1871** November 27 – St. Mary’s Church and Parsonage Burned. At a little past one o’clock a fire was discovered in the Catholic church on Summer street, and in an hour after the whole building, with the residence of the pastor, was in ashes. The fire was undoubtedly the work of an incendiary, and those who first saw the flames are of the opinion that the fiend must have poured kerosene on and about the alter inside, as the whole seemed to be one mass of flames. (*Portsmouth Daily Evening Times*)

A “pair of horses be kept in close proximity to steamers, with harnesses on at night (if thought necessary), as a few moments delay in reaching the fire might result in a severe conflagration” *Chief Engineer*

Fire Companies, Apparatus and Engine Houses:

*Dearborn Steam Fire Engine No.1*, House on Court Street, Company number 26 men. This Engine built by Messrs. Campbell & Whittier of Roxbury MA. Put into service in 1865. It had one steam cylinder, nine inches in diameter, and one double acting pump, 5 ½ inch in diameter and a 12 inch stroke. The weight of the engine, when drawn to fires, was eighty hundred (8000) pounds.

*Sagamore Steam Fire Engine No. 2*, House on Lower Court Street, Company number 52 men. This engine was built by the Portland Co. in 1864. Sleeve pump, 4 ¾ inch in diameter, 10 inch stroke.

*Kearsarge Steam Fire Engine No. 3*, House on Court Street, Company number 27 men. This Engine built by Amoskeag Manufacturing Co. (#340). Put into service 1870. It had two double acting plunger pumps, lined with brass, 4 inches in diameter and 8 inch stroke, with rubber valves and brass valve seats. It had two steam cylinders, 6 7/8 inch diameter, with 8 inch stroke worked upon the same piston rod with pump. The weight of the engine, when drawn to fires, was six thousand four hundred (6400) pounds.

*Governor Langdon*. Hand Engine No. 5, House at State Street, Company number 40 men.

*Granite State*. Hand Engine No. 4, House on Pleasant Street, 1 man (Steward)

*Atlantic*. Hand Engine No. 6, House on Elm Street, Company number 40 men

*Garibaldi*. Hook & Ladder, House on Court Street, Company number 30 Men

**1872** July 12- About 7 o'clock on a Friday evening, Messrs. Geo B. and Samuel W. Came, the well-known carriage builders, heard an explosion in their paint-room while they were sitting in their office of their new manufactory on McDonough Street. Hardly had they reached the door when the building seemed all aflame, and they dashed in opposite directions to escape. An alarm was quickly given but before the engines could possibly arrive the flames had full possession. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

August 6- The Martin planing mill near the Eastern Railroad track, Green Street, caught fire. Considerable delay occurred in spreading the alarm, but the hand engine on Elm Street was speedily manned. When the steamers arrived the building was nearly consumed, the old planning mill next east was on fire and the three story dwelling house south was beginning to burn. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

November 10- The Great Boston Fire. A little past midnight, I was aroused from a sound sleep by a loud peremptory ringing of the front door bell. It needed no second summons to thoroughly awaken and bring me to a window overlooking the hall door in front of which stood a police officer who had just come from the station with a telegram addressed to the "Mayor of Portsmouth". Hastily tearing open the envelope, I read "Fire in Boston beyond control. Come immediately to our aid." Hatch, Supt. Eastern Railroad, Boston." In reply I wrote "Coming with steam fire engine and forty veteran firemen. Portsmouth, NH." As soon as the Kearsarge boys had mustered at their station the foremen of the other assembled companies told off four men each. One blast of the whistle and the Portsmouth firemen were off to aid the dauntless fire-fighters of Boston who were desperately struggling to save their city from utter destruction. The southern sky was all aflame with the light from the raging conflagration and we need no lanterns to guide us on our way to the Dover street side track. The Kearsarge was speedily entrained and two hours later, we skidded the Kearsarge and hose carriage off the freight car at the Eastern railroad station in Causeway street, manned the prolongs and started a quick time pace through the fire-lighted streets of the North End for the scene of strenuous action that awaited us. (*Marvin, T.E.O., 1916*)

It was not until I passed up by School Street on Washington that I realized daylight had come. The Transcript building was all burned out, but the walls were still standing and the flames still flickering in the windows. Where I had left the powder-blowers, a single steamer was sending up a column of black smoke that silhouetted against the glow a world of flame. The Old South had evidently been through a drenching, and as I stepped across to ask the enginemen where he hailed from, I read "Kearsarge, Portsmouth, N.H.", on the boiler plate. A tall fellow, who claimed to have been "raised down Portsmouth way", said that the steamer had come in the nick of time. Two or three streams were playing from the street, when a brand from the Transcript blew across and lodged on the belfry. The slats were soon smoking, the streams fell short, and there were no ladders at hand. As the Kearsarge came up Washington Street her fires were lit, steam was up, and the men reeled off the hose with a will. There was great excitement in the crowd when the first water came at the nozzle, and as the stream soared higher and higher men fairly stood on tiptoe. Then the water broke through the slats and out we the fire." (*Murdoch, H. 1909*)

**1873** March 16 – On a Sunday morning about four o'clock, the bank watch, Messrs. Anthony F. Newell and George Raynes, discovered that the eating saloon of Timothy H. Chellis, on Congress street, was on fire. The alarm was promptly given and responded to by the Fire Department, but the building was consumed with its contents. The building was connected to the Mechanic's reading room by staircase; and was owned by the Mechanic's Association. The reading room was badly damaged. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

July 4 – For the second reception of the sons and daughters of Portsmouth and residents abroad the engine-house building on Court street was handsomely dressed. A large arch of spruce stood near the sidewalk, and was ornamented with flags and a shield, and a big eagle on top. The front of the building was draped with flags; No. One's door was ornamented with flags and wreaths, as was also No. Three's; and over the latter was a row of small flags, and an arch bearing the word "Welcome", with the most solemn looking stuffed owl on top. (*Portsmouth, NH. 1873*)

**1874** January 30 – Shortly after 5 o'clock in the morning, fire was discovered by the night watch and an alarm was sounded, flames being then issuing from the second story of the Melcher Block, on the corner of Congress and Chestnut streets. The fire department were speedily on hand, but before a stream could be put on the fire, the wooden block was hopelessly aflame, together with Larabee's harness shop and store. The firemen worked magnificently and their labors were ably directed by the Chief Engineer and his competent corps of assistants, and to their praiseworthy and determined endeavors we may place credit of the city's escape from a more serious disaster. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

December 21 – At half past three in the morning, two watchmen in Bridge street discovered flames in the direction of Raynes' shipyard. Some incendiary had set fire to the mould-loft formerly used as a spool factory, and the wind blowing heavily made the building a roaring mass of flames. Clouds of sparks were blown across the North mill-pond and beyond Dover street, the light clouds throwing back a reflection that caused people to swarm to the scene by thousands. The extinguishers saved the ship "Chocorua", which was ready for launching, but the vessel was badly scorched by the flames being driven directly toward it. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

**1875** April 25 – Fire was discovered in the lumber shed attached to Call's lumber yard in the north end, and before anything could be done the flames gained such headway that only a small portion of the contents were saved.

**1875** August 1- The largest fire that occurred in the city for sometime commenced in a woodshed of J.W. Sowerby's Bakery on South Meeting House Hill about half past three in the morning. At one time during the conflagration there were ten buildings on fire, roofs of three houses on Hunking street catching from the falling cinder flakes with which the air was filled. One cause of great delay in arousing the Fire Department may be attributed to an accident that happened to the North Church bell. Just after three or four strokes had been struck, the rope slipped over the wheel and the ringing ceased, leading many to think it to be a false alarm, and it was not until the rope was readjusted that a general alarm was given. Upwards of three-quarters of an hour elapsed between the cry of fire and the arrival of the steamers. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

**1876** April 18- Shortly after noon, a fire was discovered on the roof of the Concord & Portsmouth Railroad depot. An alarm was sounded by a locomotive whistle, the firemen rallied too quickly, and the burning building saved, the three steamers being located in the school-house yard on Hanover street, and throwing immense volumes of water from the reservoir. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

July- The steam fire engine "Moses H. Goodrich" received for a cost of \$4230.00. Mfg by S.S. Nichols & Co., Burlington, VT. Housed at the Hanover street engine house, once the old Lord Chapel

December 24 - Old Temple fire on corner of Chestnut and Porter streets. At half past five o'clock in the evening a gentleman passing the Temple saw the fire and hurried to Cochrane's stable with the alarm, and Mr. Cochrane got his horses harnessed and over to the engine house on Court street before any one commenced to play at giving a general alarm. The engine horses had all they could do to haul the machines into position for service, and it was presumed that snow-shoes for the wheels would be procured. Engines Nos. Three and Four were stationed at Haymarket square, and No. Two at Market square. The fire was well managed by the Department, and was confined to the Temple, Mr. Pierce's stable and the Kearsarge House being little harmed. After its destruction, the Music Hall was built on the site. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

Organization: The fire department consisted of 122 men.

The Fire Companies and Engine Houses:

- Dearborn S.F.E No. 1: No. 42 Hanover Street
- Sagamore S.F.E No. 2: Lower Court Street
- Kearsarge S.F.E No. 3: Court Street
- Moses H. Goodrich S.F.E No. 4: No. 42 Hanover Street
- Extinguisher Co. No. 5: State Street
- Extinguisher Co. No. 6: Elm Street
- Garibaldi Hook and Ladder Co.: Court Street
- Supply Wagon and Horse Hose Co.
- Two Hand Engines: Arsenal on South Street
- One Hand Engine: City Farm on Myrtle Street
- Hose Tower and Hose Room at Court Street Station (Central)

**1877** August 4 – “Sad Accident at Straw’s Point”. A fire broke out in the stable belonging to Dr. E.M. Tubbs, of Manchester, and before it could be checked, destroyed the stable and Mr. Tubbs cottage was destroyed, along with that of Benjamin A. Kimball of Concord. The loss of the property was not the worst; Mr. Kimball was badly burned while saving articles from the fire; and Henry Grove, a young man about twenty-two years of age was burnt to death assisting to save furniture in Mr. Kimball’s cottage. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

December 20 – At about nine o’clock in the morning a fire was discovered in the National House and the alarm promptly given. The Fire Department was quickly on hand – under the circumstances, for the only horses at hand were those assigned to Steamer Two, and they had to haul both Two and Three to the Market square reservoir. It would not be until after four hours of hard work that the fire was put out. The firemen worked like beavers and against great odds. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

The Steamer Sagamore, which had been in use twelve years, has been thoroughly repaired by her builders and is warranted in every respect as good as new. Two thousand feet of first quality leather hose and a new hose carriage have been bought. The new hose-tower with its conveniences adds much to the efficiency of this important department. (*Hon. John H. Broughton, Mayor*)

**1878** Organization:

- Chief Engineer, Samuel S. Fletcher.
- Assistant Engineers, Thornton Betton, James F. Shannon,
- Willard Sears, John S. Whidden.
- Clerk of the Fire Department, James L. Parker.

The membership of the Department numbered 132 men, divided as follows : Chief Engineer and four Assistant Engineers, Clerk of Fire Department, three Steamers' Companies, consisting of 21 men each, two Extinguisher Companies of 10 men each, one Hook and Ladder Company of 21 men, one Hose Company of 3 men, and Supply Wagon, 3 men, four Steam Engineers, four Steam Firemen, two Drivers, six men on Relief Steamer.

There are 7400 feet of Leather Hose in the Department, 4000 feet of which are good, but the remainder is in a poor condition and 1000 feet of Linen Hose is worthless. I would recommend the purchase of 1000 feet of Leather Hose, to make up for the wear of that in use. The Engine Houses are all in good condition. I would recommend that a suitable house for the Hook and Ladder Truck be built, or some suitable place provided. *Chief Engineer Samuel S. Fletcher*

**1879** May 8 – A fire broke out in a building at the rear of the Franklin block just before 5 o'clock in the morning. The fire department turned out promptly, and worked hard to confine the fire to the place it was first seen, but without avail, a brisk northwest breeze blowing the flames around in all directions. It was not until the Franklin block and a number of wooden structures were destroyed and several other buildings more or less injured, that the fire got under control. A second alarm was sounded around 6 o'clock, and was promptly answered by a steam fire engine and a company from the navy yard. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

At the Franklin block fire steamer Dearborn broke down at the most critical moment, and upon examination it was thought best not to repair her; therefore she was condemned, and a vote of the city councils authorized the purchase of a new steamer. This has been done, and the Manchester Locomotive Works were contracted with to build a second-class engine of the Amoskeag pattern, the price agreed upon being \$3,000 and the old steamer Dearborn. When received, the new engine will take the place and number of the Sagamore and the latter will be placed in the house formerly occupied by the Dearborn. The steamer Goodrich, to make her what she should be, needs some alterations; at my request the Manchester Locomotive Works have examined her, and agreed to make the necessary improvements for \$800. (*Hon. William H. Sise, Mayor*)

The Steam fire engine "Col. Sise" received and put in service. Mfg. Manchester Locomotive Works. The total cost for Steamer No. 2 was \$3000.00

During the past year, Steamer Dearborn No. 1 was sold and the Sagamore No. 2 put in the place of it. A new Steamer named Colonel Sise, No. 2 has been bought and put in the house formerly occupied by Sagamore, No. 2. Steamer No. 4 was rebuilt by Messrs. Critchley and Whalley was rebuilt for a cost of \$800.00. *Stephen L. Martson, Chief Engineer*

**1880** April 23 – Fire at the Creosote Works, Nobles Island

October 20 - Henry Stoddard's farm house and buildings on Newington Road near the Hon. Frank Jones' place was destroyed by fire. Four cows which were in the barn were burned and all farming utensils destroyed. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

December 4 - The Kearsarge Mill, a six-story cotton mill and formerly the Portsmouth Steam Factory, was destroyed by what was reported as the worst public calamity since the Great Fire of 1813. The Pearl street church also suffered damage largely due to water. A number of other buildings some distance from the conflagration, including the Baptist church on Middle street, were set aflame by the flying embers, although most were extinguished immediately.

**1881** There are 6100 feet of leather hose in the Department and 2250 feet of cotton hose, all in good condition. By order of the Board of Aldermen 2000 feet of old hose, iron kettles, etc. were sold for \$214.85.

The engine houses are in good condition, thorough repairs having been made on the house of Nos. 3 and 4 during the past year.

The reservoirs are thirteen (13) in number and are in good condition.

Fires and Alarms: The fires and alarms from January 1st to December 31st. number ten.

**1882** October 30 – The house and barn of Col. Jerome C. Butler, corner of Lafayette and South roads, were destroyed by a fire that broke out in the early evening. The fire was first seen in the barn and word was telephoned in from Alderman Caswell's residence; the alarm was sounded and the department mustered, but the flames spread with such rapidity that the buildings were quickly engulfed. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

November 28 – A fire at D.J. Lynch's grocery store, 44 Market street, broke out during the morning and caused a \$13,000 loss of stock and fixtures. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

Membership: The Department now numbers one hundred and thirty-two (133) men; Chief Engineer and four Assistant Engineers, Clerk of Fire Department, three Steamers' Companies, consisting of twenty-one men each, two Extinguisher companies of ten men each, one Hook and Ladder company of twenty-one men, one Hose company of three men, four steam engineers, four steam firemen, three drivers, six men on relief steamer, and three men for supply wagon.

Apparatus: The apparatus of the Department consists of three Steam Fire Engines, with hose carriages attached, and one Steamer in reserve, two Extinguishers, one Hook and Ladder truck, one Supply Wagon, two horse Hose Carriages, and two Sleighs.

- Steamer No. 1 was built by the Portland Company; put into service in 1864.
- Steamer No. 2 was built by the Manchester Locomotive Works: put into service in 1879.
- Steamer No. 3 was built by the Amoskeag Company; put into service in 1870.
- Steamer No. 4 was built by B. S. Nichols & Co.; put into service in 1876; rebuilt by Messrs. Critchley & Whalley in 1879.

The Steamers and Extinguishers are in good condition and reliable. The Hook and Ladder truck is not reliable, and I would recommend that a new one be bought, to be drawn by horses. I would also recommend the buying of a new hose carriage for Steamer No. 2, as their carriage is in a poor condition, but not worth repairing.

**1883** July 23 -. Gibson House and Stoddard's stable fire on Vaughn street. Stoddards stables were in charge of a night watchman when the fire broke out in the rear end of the hayloft. Twenty-four horses were burned, along with the harnesses, robes, sleighs, and several carriages that were in the shed. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

During the past year \$1600 was appropriated for a new Hook & Ladder truck, the old one having been pronounced only unserviceable but unsafe ; and the apparatus of our Fire Department, after receiving the same, will be in excellent condition. The Vaughan street fire fully demonstrated the efficiency of the department, and that the care which the city has ever had for its firemen was not misplaced, for had it not been for their almost superhuman exertions the central portion of our city would to-day be a blackened ruin. That their efforts are appreciated no one who has heard the encomiums passed since that conflagration can have a doubt. *John S. Treat, Mayor*

A new Hook and Ladder Truck built by Ryan Bros, to be drawn by horses, has been added to the Department during the past year; also a new Hose Carriage for Steamer No. 2, from the same firm has been purchased. *Williar Sears, Chief Engineer*

The fires and alarms from January 1st to December 31st number thirteen.

**1884** September 27- "The Rockingham House Burned." Shortly before 5 o'clock in the morning a fire was discovered in the cellar of the hotel near the large boiler. The guests were aroused while the alarm of fire was shouted and when the bell was shortly sounded, the fire department quickly turned out, steamer four having a stream on the fire in seven minutes after the general alarm. The fire was in the basement was soon checked, and but for the elevator-well the building would probably have been saved; but the flames had rushed up the well to the roof, under which they spread the whole length of the house The loss was estimated at \$150,000.00. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

The Fire Companies and Engine Houses:

- Sagamore S.F.E No. 1: Lower Court Street
- Colonel Sise S.F.E No. 2: Lower Court Street
- Kearsarge S.F.E No. 3: Court Street
- Moses H. Goodrich S.F.E No. 4: No. 42 Hanover Street
- Extinguisher Co. No. 5: State Street
- Extinguisher Co. No. 6: Elm Street
- Hook and Ladder Co. No 1: Court Street
- Supply Wagon and Horse Hose Co.
- Hose Tower and Hose Room at Court Street Station (Central)

**1885** May 23 – The Gamewell system was introduced into this City by Mr. Edwin Rogers, last May, at an expense of \$2860, and has never failed to respond on any occasion since it was put in. In the construction of the line, six and three-quarter miles of wire was used, upon which are eleven signal boxes, one automatic bell striker, one indicator, one gong and two me- chanical tappers, charged with 24 cups of battery, all of which are in an excellent condition. The boxes are of the latest make and equipped with all the modern improvements. The alarm now consists of a whistle at Eldredge's brewery, and a striker in the tower of the North Church ; a ten inch gong has been placed at the Portsmouth brewery, and an auto- matic machine for blowing it has been ordered. The whole apparatus is carefully inspected and tested every month, and Cambridge time is struck each day at 12.30. *W. I. Trafton, Sup't Fire Alarm Telegraph*

Location of Boxes and Keys:

- Box 7.—Corner Dennett and North Streets. Keys at Philip E. Woods, 16 North Street, Daniel D. Waldron, 13 North Street, Cox & Newman's store, corner Dennett and North Streets, Solomon Seymour, 6 Dennett Street.
- Box 14.—Corner Market and Russell Streets. Keys at Junkins & Co's store, and Benning Moore's house over said store, Concord Railroad wharf.
- Box 17.—Police station. Key at Police station.
- Box 19.—Corner Water and Court. Keys at M. J. Ryan's. corner Court and Water, Mrs. Annie J. Dixon's house, opposite corner, H. C. Russel's store.
- Box 24.—Corner Gates and Washington Streets. Keys at J. F. Adams,
- 27 Washington. Dennis II. Trefethen, 3 Gates, P. M. Spinney, 31 Washington.
- Box 26—Haven School-house. Keys at W. G. Snow's. 3 South School Street, John Sullivan, 4 South School Street, Oliver H. Locke, 11 South.

Location of Boxes and Keys:

- Box 32.—Middle Street Church, corner State and Middle. Keys at C. H. Clough, 89 State, Dr. Jones, 102 State, corner Middle, Dr. Sherburne, 91 State.
- Box 35.—A. F. Rand's store, Middle Street. Keys at Rand's store, H. W. Oxford, 52 Middle, J. P. Morse, 54 Middle, D. E. Leavitt.
- Box 38.—Eldredge's brewery, (private). Key at brewery.
- Box 43.—Corner Cabot and Islington. Keys at J. W. Moses, 39 Islington, corner Cabot, H. C. Locke, 54 Islington, corner Cabot, Charles A. Green, 45 Cabot.
- Box 46.—Corner Hanover and Pearl. Keys at Portsmouth Machine Shop office, John E. Locke, 3 Pearl, corner Hanover, A. W. Bartlett, 2 Pearl, Walter S. Gray, 73 Hanover.
- Also, keys will be found in the hands of the Engineers, and the regular police.

Municipal, tax supported fire service in place.

**1885** Hook and Ladder No. 1 Housed on Court Street. The property maintained by Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 included:

- the carriage and fixtures - \$1400.00
- 1 drop harness and 2 horse blankets- \$156.00
- fifty feet of rubber hose and 4 rubber coats - \$22.00
- 2 canvas coats, 1 whiffle tree, and 2 shovels - \$12.00
- Oil can, badges, and extension ladder: \$161.00
- 3 chairs, axe, table, and roll board: \$13.00

Property in City Stable belonging to Fire Department.

- 2 Harnesses - \$15.00
- 1 Blanket -\$3.00
- 1 Horse - \$425.00

**1886** April 5 – Box 17 was sounded just after one o'clock in the morning and was shortly followed by a second alarm for a fire that broke out in the tenement No. 6 Church street. The tenement was an ell of the large building situated between the North church and Warren street, and although the department responded quickly, the ell was destroyed and the roof of the upper stories of the main building burned off before the fire was put out. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

Organization and Apparatus: The department consisted of 123 operating 4 Steamers (Sagamore in reserve at Court Street), three Hose Wagons, one Carriage, one Hook and Ladder and two Sleighs.

The fires and alarms for the past year number thirteen. The amount of loss, as far as could be ascertained, was \$11,670. During the past year a new Hose Wagon has been purchased at an expense of \$400.00 and can be said to be another improvement to the department.  
*Herbert Marden, Chief Engineer*

**1887** In compliance with Sec.3, Chap. 13 of the City Ordinances, the first annual parade of the department occurred on Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, and I have no doubt that the members of the City Councils, as well as the citizens, generally believe it was a wise expenditure, bringing the department as it does into more social relations with our citizens. *Herbert Marden, Chief Engineer*

The new Hose Wagon purchased last year and attached to Steamer No. 4, I find works much better than the hose car-riages, and I would recommend the sale of the two spare hose jumpers and hose carriage used formerly in connection with Steamer No. 4, and the purchase of another Hose Wagon.

**1887** Steamers No. 4 and No. 2 were sent to Manchester, the former to receive a new boiler at an expense of over \$900, and the latter a new dome the expense of which was about \$100. Steamer No. 4 has also been supplied with a new set of suction hose complete, and is now apparently in as good condition as when new. More or less repairs have also been required on the other apparatus of the department and it is all now in good condition.  
*Chief Engineer Marden*

The fires and alarms for the past year number eleven

**1888** Kearsarge Steamer No. 3 was sent to Manchester and thoroughly overhauled and repaired at an expense of 752 dollars, and Steamer No. 2 was furnished with a new set of suction hose costing 110 dollars; also anew cart was built for the department's use costing 125 dollars.

Organization: The department numbered 126 members, viz: Chief Engineer, 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Engineer, 3 Assistants, Clerk of the Fire Department, Sup't of fire Alarm Telegraph, and the members of the several companies.

The number of fires and alarms the past year number 13 and the loss as far as could be ascertained amounted to \$11,825. The appointment of Assistant Engineers independent of the companies was in my opinion a very wise and judicious move and has proved advantageous to the department. *Chief Engineer Marden*

**1889** September 8 – Shortly after 2 o'clock on a Sunday morning Mr. Joseph Spinney, driver of a city express team, and living at 73 Maplewood avenue, was aroused by his wife, and looking out the window saw the barn, which was connected to the house, enveloped in flames, which were bursting through the roof. The barn was nearly consumed and the house in a blaze from sills to ridgepoles when the fire department arrived. (*Portsmouth Chronicle*)

November 17 – The alarm of fire about quarter to ten o'clock in the evening was occasioned by the burning of the ice house on South road. About twenty-five minutes past eleven a second alarm was given, this time for the barn of Mr. Samuel H. Hall on nearby Sagamore road. When the second fire broke out, engine No. 2 was still at the ice house pond, just reeling hose. The barn took fire on the roof, as was supposed from a spark from the ice house fire. (*Portsmouth Chronicle*)

The roster of the department contains 126 names the same in number as for some years past, and I feel proud to say that there never was more interest shown in the department by the members than at the present time, and certainly the promptness and willingness with which they ever respond when called to duty, must convince you as well as the public generally, of the truth of what I here assert. *Chief Herbert A. Marden*

**1890** December 13 – The Sagamore steamer, manned by the Kearsarge engine company whose engine was undergoing repairs in Manchester; the supply wagon, the hook and ladder truck, and extinguisher No. 5, were sent to an alarm of fire at 11:15 o'clock at night at the Russell house on Sagamore road. Upon arrival the house was nearly consumed. Water was put upon the barn and bowling alley which were saved. (*Portsmouth Daily Chronicle*)

Eagle Chemical Engine Co. No. 5 received. Manufactured by Holloway of Baltimore, MD

Sagamore No.1 on reserve. The new chemical engine take(ing) (the) place of two small chemical extinguishers No. 5 and No. 6, proved itself to be very valuable acquisition to the department. *Herbert Marden, Chief Engineer*

It seems to me at this time some measures should be taken to give better fire protection to the people and large property interest at the west end of the city, in the vicinity of the shoe factory. *Edmund S. Fay, Mayor of Portsmouth*

**1891** September 17 -Agreeable to city ordinance, the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Parade took place with the visual success that has attended similar occasions. This occasion has now become an annual visitor, looked forward to as the regular holiday of the year and participated in and enjoyed by all alike; firemen and the people in general. *Chief Engineer Herbert A. Marden*

The New England States Veteran Firemen's League established. The purpose of the organization was to "make the playing out of the old hand engines for glory and prizes one of the cleanest kinds of sports". Chief John D. Randall of Portsmouth serves as president in 1909.

**1892** The apparatus consists of four steam fire engines (one being kept on reserve), one hook and ladder truck, one chemical engine, one wagon for carrying supplies, three hose wagons, two hose carriages and two sleighs. All of the above apparatus is in good condition. Steamer No. 2 was sent to the Manchester Locomotive Works this past year and received a new boiler and other needed repairs. The new Hook and Ladder Truck, purchased for \$2095.58, is also now in good condition, the few needed repairs which I recommended in my last report having been made. When the high service is completed and the hydrants are in permanent working order, some changes should then be made in transporting the hose. Lighter wagons should be provided and located differently than at present. During the year there have been 19 alarms, two of which were calls for assistance outside of the city, one for a fire in Raymond and one for a fire in Kittery, to both of which assistance was rendered. The total loss by fire in this city during the year amounted to about \$10,270. *Herbert A. Marden, Chief Engineer*

All alarms (of fire) were sounded from the North church bell, the steam gong at Electric Light Station, also the whistle at Eldredge's brewery, and repeated three times.

**1893** The engine houses are in good condition with some exceptions; the house on Hanover street requires to be painted the coming year, the house on Court street occupied by the Hook and Ladder Truck and Steamer No. 3 has been very much out of repair for a long time, and is not large enough for the accommodation of the two companies; a new house has been recommended for several years past, to be built on the site of the present engine house and old court house. *Chief Engineer Marden*

Apparatus: Four steam fire engines (one on reserve,) one hook and ladder truck, one double tank (sixty gallons each) Chemical engine, three hose wagons, two hose sleighs, one supply wagon, two second hand hose carriages, and one hook and ladder truck which needed some repairs.

Fires and Alarms: 18 alarms; two of which were still alarms responded to by the Chemical and one was for a call for assistance outside of the city at Exeter.

**1894** The present membership of the department is 115, and I feel proud to say, that for efficiency and promptness to the call and execution of their duties they could hardly be excelled. The apparatus consists of four steam fire engines ( Sagamore No. 1 in reserve with no Company attached), one hook and ladder, one double tank (sixty gallons each), Chemical engine, three hose wagons, two hose sleighs, one supply wagon, all in good condition, two second hand hose carriages, (and) one second hand hook and ladder truck. *Chief Engineer Marden*

Fires and Alarms: 9 Box Alarms, 7 Still Alarms

**1895** September 21-Earnest Demand for Better Fire Protection. A subject exciting much interest among tax payers at this time is that of protection against fire at the west end of the city. In this uncovered district are the great industrial establishments of the Portsmouth Shoe Company, the Frank Jones and the Eldridge brewing companies and the Morely Button Factory. (*Portsmouth Times*)

The expense of hiring horses to haul the apparatus is very large, the department owning but two horses (used on the chemical). The department should own at least two more, for use on the Hook and Ladder, as at present we are obliged to depend on the street department for horses. I would recommend the purchase of two horses, and the building of an addition to the Hanover street stable to keep them in. They could be used nights in case of fire on hose four, and during the day haul the Hook and Ladder. I think this recommendation would tend to greatly improve the efficiency of the department at no great extra expense. *Chief Engineer John D. Randall*

**1896** March 28- “Fire Fiend Visits Portsmouth – One of the Worst Conflagrations Our City has Suffered for Years”. A fire that began in the Universalist Church on Pleasant Street, which was totally destroyed, spread across Pleasant street, thence to Whidden, Gates, Hancock, Washington, Manning, Wentworth and Melcher streets, to Meeting House Hill – where flames were checked. At least forty houses burned or seriously damaged – firemen worked with desperation – assistance summoned from the Navy Yard – a day of great alarm and excitement. (*Portsmouth Times*)

The engine house occupied by Kearsarge No. 3 and the Hook and Ladder truck (now undergoing alterations for the quick hitch), will, when completed, be what the city should have had years ago—the ability to get to fires in their early stages, for minutes at the beginning are worth thousands of dollars oftentimes.. *Chief Randall*

Organization: The department consisted of one hundred and ten men; Permanent force, two men; one chief, four assistants, one clerk, one superintendent of fire-alarm telegraph, four engineers, three stokers, six drivers, and eighty-eight hose and ladder men.

The “quick hitch” had a call pretty soon after it was established, and when the (n)ewness of everything – gear, horses and men – was taken into consideration, it was conceded that the new arrangement made a very credible showing.

**1897** February 6 – Shortly after midnight fire was discovered in the Wendell block, corner of market and Green streets. The building, a three-story structure, was soon a mass of flames. When it burst fourth it spread so quickly that some of the occupants of the block had great difficulty in getting out and several were partially overcome with smoke and had to be assisted from their rescues. (*Portsmouth Times*)

March 1- “Alarmed at Midnight – West End Hotel (Columbia Court) Damaged by Fire-Apparatus was Quick to Respond to the Summons – Loss of about \$3000.00” Soon after 1230 the residents of the city were aroused by an alarm sounded from box 37, and those in the vicinity of upper State street looked out to find the air filled with smoke as heavy as fog. (*Portsmouth Times*)

November 24 -“Veteran Firemen’s Association Scores a Success” The Veteran Firemen’s association held their first annual concert and ball at Philbrick’s Hall. The hall with its handsome decorations of flags and bunting presented a fine appearance.

Apparatus: Four steam fire-engines (one on reserve), one double-tank ( Holloway) chemical engine, three hose wagons, two hose sleds, one hook and ladder truck, one supply wagon, two second-hand hose reels, and one second-hand hook and ladder truck.

Horses: The department owns nine horses. Two were purchased last June to replace the black pair used on the chemical, they being condemned for fire service. They are worked by the street department for their keeping—but always subject to the call of the chief engineer in case of emergency.

**1898** May 3 – A serious fire broke out in the Pickering block at the corners of Market and Daniel streets during the night. The alarm was rung in at 1:05 o'clock from box 58 at the police station. For a time smoke poured out in dense clouds and at one time four streams of water were being thrown onto the building. Driver Eugene Hoyt and Assistant Willard E. Ferland, of the chemical, who entered the building, were overcome by smoke, and while the later succeeded in getting out unassisted, Mr. Ferland was taken out in an unconscious condition, and had to be worked upon for some time before regaining consciousness. (*Portsmouth Times*)

The department at the present time consists of men as follows : Permanent force, six ; one chief, four assistants, one clerk, one superintendent of fire alarm telegraph, four engineers, three stokers, six drivers, sixty-seven hose and ladder men. I feel safe to say, with the present force and one quick-hitch arrangement, (which every fair minded tax payer will say has been a very successful improvement and should never be done away with,) together with our hydrant service, we shall be able to cope with any fire which may occur. *Chief Engineer John D. Randall*

Fires and Alarms: The department responded to 16 regular alarms, one being a double alarm from box 58, on May third, for the Pickering block fire, eight still alarms and two militia calls.

**1899** September 14- "Parade of Gorgeously Decorated Machines This Morning – Clambake and Band Concerts, Grand Ball This Evening". The thirteenth annual field day of the Portsmouth Fire Department takes precedence over all other occasions of the kind, and everyone knows that the local fire ladies have carried out some very successful celebrations in past years. All conditions today have been favorable to a most satisfactory time.

June 13 - A still alarm called the chemical to a fire in Wendell's woods on Sagamore road, but the chemical could not subdue it, and Steamer 3 and Hose 2, with a detail of men, were sent and soon had the fire out

The City purchased a new ambulance wagon for the Police Department at a cost of \$512.00. That same year the Patrol and Ambulance were called into service 15 times. The Police Department would provide this service until 1945.

**1900** April 1 - At 5.05 p. m. a call by telephone for assistance was received from Newburyport. Col. Sise engine with hose wagon and men responded.

July 5 - At 8.50 A. M. a telephone message was received from the Hotel Wentworth asking for assistance in fighting a- large woods fire that was threatening property in the vicinity of the hotel. Col. Sise engine with hose wagon responded

**1900** December 27 a still alarm was received at 1.20 p. m. for a fire at the residence of Mrs. Charles H. Garrett on Deer street, where a sad and fatal burning accident occurred to Mrs. Garrett, her clothing taking fire from sparks from the furnace and death resulting before assistance arrived.

The new engine house on Bartlett street ought to be finished as soon as the finances would permit. It was also recommended by the Chief Engineer that the S.F.E Sagamore be housed at the new station, in reserve, with a hose company of ten men.

Organization: The department consisted of 99 men: Six permanent, 93 Call that included: 1 chief engineer, 4 assistants, 1 superintendent of fire alarm 4 steam engineers, 3 stokers, 6 drivers, and 70 hose and ladder men.

Fire Companies and Apparatus: Sagamore Engine, No.1., Col. Sise Engine Company, No. 2., Kearsarge Engine Co., No. 3., Moses H. Goodrich Engine Co., No. 4., (Eagle) Chemical Engine, No. 5, W.J. Sampson Hook & Ladder Co., No. 1.(mfg Gleason & Bailey of NY), 4 hose wagons, 1 supply wagon, 2 hose reels, 2 hose sleighs, 8 horses

Engine Houses: Col. Sise Engine House on lower Court Street, Central Engine House Hanover Street Engine House

Fires and Alarms: 15 bells and 19 stills.

*Fire Alarm System: Instruction to Key-Holders and Citizens (excerpts)*

Upon discovery of a fire, notice should be immediately communicated to the nearest fire alarm box. Keys are generally found at the houses nearest the box.

Also keys will be found in the hands of the engineers, and the regular police.

Never signal for a fire seen at a distance. Don't give an alarm for a chimney fire.

All alarms will be sounded from the North Church bell, the steam gong at the Electric Light Station, also the whistle at Eldredge's Brewery, and repeated three times.

One blow will be struck each day at 8:30 A.M. and 12:30 P.M. from Fred L. Martin's store

*Rules for Exercising Horses:*

It shall be the duty of the drivers of Engine No. 3, Hose N. 3, Chemical Engine and Hook and Ladder Truck to exercise the horses every day, weather permitting, except Sundays ... In exercising, care must be taken to avoid colliding with other teams. In approaching corners, crossings, street car tracks, and in going down grade, the speed of the horses must be checked. Any driver violating these rules will be liable to suspension or discharge.

**1901** January 18 – Just before seven o'clock in the morning, the people in the vicinity of (the) Jones Brewery were startled by a muffled roar and a flash of light from the big storage or grain building of the plant. A moment later an alarm from box 37 rang out over the city. Men, women and children mingled in the wild rush, and before the second round of the alarm had ceased the chemical dashed up Hanover street, and as it turned into the brewery yard the Kearsarge, or quick hitch, tore into the shoe factory. It was at once seen that the fire was not a fierce one, but a stubborn one to handle. It was found that the fire was occasioned by an explosion in the hopper that grinds the barley. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

February 16 – A fierce two alarm fire in the big wooden block of 95 and 97 Market street left the building a complete wreck. The building was occupied by Henry L. Garrett and Son, dealers in groceries and ship stores. The firemen worked like tigers and poured an immense amount of water into the blazing mass, while earnest, well directed efforts prevented the spread of flames to the next block. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

September 26 – The various engine houses were the center of attention as firemen kept busy decorating their engines, tying up great bouquets of beautiful flowers, fastening flags and ribbons, and giving the last polishing touches to the glittering machines" in preparation for Firemen's Day. The following day the fourth annual meeting of the New Hampshire Firemen's State Relief convention met in the city. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

November 23 – Five alarms of fire within a little over an hour was quite a record for Portsmouth, and as the fire bells and gongs rang or whistled off the numbers, the entire population was aroused in anticipation of a bad conflagration. It was just 2:30 a.m. when the first alarm sounded and box at the Kearsarge house was pointed out on the indicators at the fire houses, and sounded out from the North church bell and brewery whistle. Two alarms would be rung from box 58 before 4 o'clock. As the people were recovering from the excitement of the first, two alarms from box 19 down on Water street followed one another. This fire was confined to one story and a half barn of teamster Dennis Shea. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

During the past year steamers Kearsarge and the Col. Sise have been thoroughly repaired at the Manchester Locomotive Works and are now in first class condition. By the accidental turning over of No. Three's hose wagon in responding to an alarm from Box 14 in January it was necessary to send it to Concord for repairs. The hook and ladder truck also met with an accident on returning from an alarm at Box 51, in attempting to turn one of the rear wheels was completely wrecked, and the body of the truck badly twisted, besides the breaking of 1 60 foot extension and 1 25 foot ladders. The repairs to the truck were made here in the city, and new ladders purchased to replace those broken. *John D. Randall, Chief Engineer*

**1902** February 2 - A fire destroys Times Publishing Building: Shortly after 7 o'clock in the evening, an alarm of fire was sounded by Box 58 that the Times Publishing Company at 74-76 State Street was ablaze. At the height of the blaze sixteen streams of water were played into the building. By morning the loss of the building and the entire contents exceeded \$25,000.00. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

April 9 – Box 58 got away from itself and started on a blowing time – along with the wind – to see how many people in Portsmouth could be awakened at one o'clock in the morning. And it succeeded in that purpose, for a lot of familiar faces of business men were seen out in the storm. The cause of all this excitement was a slight blaze in the bowling alley on Court street, back of the hotel Merrick. The entire building was a total loss. It was a great time for the fire cranks, who are always on hand at fires, and everybody seemed mad with themselves on the homeward trip, all wet through, for the rain made up for what the fire failed to do. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

April 24 - Box 58 got at it again on the afternoon about ten minutes to six, and before the first round had been sounded fully two hundred people were gathered at post office square. Men just from the supper table and women with baby carriages were all there with worried looks. Two alarms were rung in for a fire in the building owned by Garner J. Greenleaf on Church street, just back of the post office. The fire started in the paint shop of Charles Hoyt and by the time the fire department arrived the fire had a good headway. The building was gutted at a loss of about \$2000.00. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

July 1 – At a meeting of the committee on Fire Department held on Friday evening, Mayor Daniel W. Badger and Chief Engineer John D. Randall urged upon the committee the need of an automobile combination wagon to afford better fire protection from fires. (*The Portsmouth Herald*)

The buildings occupied by the fire department need a great deal of repairing, especially those occupied by Engine 3 and Hook & Ladder, and the M. H. Goodrich, No. 4. The latter building, in particular, should have immediate attention, for it is fast going to pieces for want of repairs. Again, I wish to call attention to the heating apparatus in this house, which is one of the most unsatisfactory and most costly in regard to waste of coal (especially at the price coal is at present) that we have, and a great saving in expense could be secured to the city by an immediate change.

The building occupied by Engine 1, on Bartlett street, is a new one and in first-class condition. An addition should be built on this house large enough to keep a pair of horses, which would increase the efficiency of this company, it being situated in a section of the city containing much manufacturing business and where a great many buildings are being erected. The building occupied by Engine 2 should have a few minor repairs made to it. *John D. Randall, Chief Engineer*

**1903** February 20 – The double alarm of fire was sounded from Box 39 at 12:45 o'clock for the Spaulding schoolhouse at the Creek (Bartlett street). The fire started in the basement from an overheated furnace. The flames immediately mounted to the roof and ten minutes after the alarm was sounded, the belfry was a mass of flames.

December 25 – Busy Firemen Respond to Four Alarms Within 24 Hours. Stubborn blaze at Canney's Music store on Congress Street. Fires on Hanover and Charles Streets – slight blaze at Church of Immaculate Conception. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

The city has been fortunate as to losses by fire during the year just closed. There have been twenty-nine (29) bell alarms and thirty (30) still alarms. October 25th, a telephone message was received from the New Hampshire Traction Company, Haverhill, Mass., asking for assistance at Hampton beach, where a serious fire was in progress, Moses H. Goodrich S. F. E. Co. responding, and on their arrival the fire was under control and the company returned home.

The department owns eight horses, seven of them being in active service and one being loaned to the street department. I would recommend the purchase of a horse to take the place of the one now used on No. 3's hose wagon and the present one sold, not being fit for fire duty. *Herbert Marden, Chief Engineer*

**1904** January 4 – With the thermometer at 10 below zero the fire department was called out at 12:45 at night for a fire by an alarm sent in from box 23 for a fire in the grocery store at the corner of State and Washington street occupied by W.H. Alvin & Co. The building as it stood the day after was gutted from bottom to top. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

February 1 – Fire was discovered in the three-story wooden building known as the Glebe block on Pleasant street during the night. The department was on time and got to work quickly. The men were considerably delayed in reaching the upper floors of the building because the hook and ladder truck, which met with an accident. In coming out of the fire station the truck swerved to one side and the pole struck the end of the building with much force, breaking it in two. Another pole was used and the truck finally got to the fire. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

November 17 - "One of the Most Stubborn and Dangerous Fires" occurred at the Frank Jones's Brewery. The fire started in the kiln room of the malt house where eleven barrels of oil and a quantity of hard coal was stored. Box 36 was struck shortly after two workers discovered the fire. Upon arrival of the firemen – the blaze was confined to the fire room, but was impossible to keep contained. After ten minutes a second alarm was sounded. Help was summoned from the Portsmouth Naval Ship Yard, Dover and Newburyport. At the height of the fire the great malt house presented the appearance of an immense furnace with flames bursting out of every window and through the roof. (*The Portsmouth Herald*)

**1904** The four steamers are in good condition, with the exception of No. 4, which is at the Manchester Locomotive Works being repaired, and when completed will be practically a new Amoskeag steamer. The supply wagon has been put in thorough repair, which was very much needed.

The city has been fortunate the past year in regard to losses by fires, with the exception of the fire at the Frank Jones Brewing Co. There have been twenty-eight (28) bell alarms and thirty-two (32) still alarms. March 7th assistance was asked for from Newburyport. Col. Sise S. F. E. Co. responded ; after getting- ready to leave word was received countermanding the order. July 28th assistance was asked for at the Navy Yard, for fire at the coaling station. Col. Sise S. F. E. Co. responded and rendered good service. At the fire at the Frank Jones Brewing Co. on Nov. 17th, assistance was asked for from Dover, Newburyport and the Navy Yard ; all responding and rendering good service. *Herbert Marden, Chief Engineer*

**1905** March 23 - At 10.55 a. m. House on Lang's road, owned by Est. J. C. Murphy, and occupied by Patrick Mahoney and Eugene McWilliams was destroyed by fire, the cause being a defective chimney.

April 21- "Fire Laddies Celebrate Return of Their Steamer". The members of the Moses H. Goodrich SFE Co No. 4 celebrated the return of their engine from the American Locomotive Works of Manchester, NH with a banquet attended by the mayor. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

July 15- The department received a telephone call, asking for aid for a lively fire in the woods on Boatswain's Hill, back of Hotel Wentworth, in New Castle. Steamer No. 4 with hose wagon and men responded. Box 8 was sounded the following day for the same as the fire restarted.

July 23- At five o'clock p. m., Box 8 was sounded for a large woods fire on the Wentworth Road in the Town of Rye, which was endangering a large amount of cut wood and several buildings in close proximity to it. The Steamer Col. Sise with hose wagon and men responded, stopping the spread of the flames with comparatively small loss, arriving back about 9.30 p. m.

October 4 - the Franklin Pierce Veterans Firemen's Association organized with Horace W. Gray as the first President and Foreman. The "Engine House" next to the North Cemetery on Elm St. (later Maplewood Ave) began as the "Extinguisher Co., No.6" -- it was last occupied under that name in 1886. After that that Engine Co. moved into the Hanover St. fire house near Bridge St. and the old building seems to have been turned over to the Franklin Pierce V. F. Assoc. "organized 1885" according to the 1910 city directory. It is on the street list as the Assoc. in 1905. (*Thomas Hardiman, 2013*)

**1905** Addition built on to Bartlett Fire House for a Ward Hall that soon became the community center of the neighborhood.

The Steamer Moses H. Goodrich, No. 4, has been practically rebuilt by the Manchester Locomotive Works, making “a new” Amoskeag steamer. The contract for this work was made in 1904 and the steamer was received back by the city in 1905. The cost was \$3,100. *John D. Randall, Chief Engineer*

Organization: 104 call men and 6 permanent firefighters.

Fires and Alarms: 24 Bells and 30 Stills.

**1906** Salaries of the Department:

- Chief Engineer - \$400.00, Four Assistant Engineers - \$400.00
- Supt. of Fire Alarm - \$600.00
- Sagamore Engine Co., No. 1 - \$970.00,
- Col. Sise Engine Co., No. 2 - \$970.00
- Kearsarge Engine Co., No. 3 - \$950.00
- M. H. Goodrich Engine Co., No. 4 - \$970.00
- Hook & Ladder Co., No. 1 - \$1,030.00
- Supply Wagon - \$240.00
- Men for extra duty - \$201.25
- Men for washing hose - \$70.87
- Permanent men - \$3,721.74

Charter of the City of Portsmouth: Sect. 12. The city council shall annually on the first week day of January choose by viva voice vote on roll call by majority vote a city clerk, and shall annually on the second Thursday of January choose by viva voice vote on roll call by majority vote a street commissioner, a chief engineer of the fire department and assistant engineers, ... When any vacancy shall occur in any of said offices, it shall be filled by the city council in like manner.

**1907** July 23 – Fire was discovered in the rear chimney of the kitchen of the Rockingham Hotel at 11: 25 o’clock. Large volumes of smoke were seen pouring from the chimney at that time, and in less than 15 minutes the entire building was filled with smoke and it was with great difficulty that the firemen reached the roof of the ell where the blaze was located. It would take an hour before the three alarm fire was under control. (*The Portsmouth Times*)

August 15 - Long parade of Veteran Firemen with old hand tubs was held.

- 1908** Revised City Ordinances establishes pay rates, staffing levels, vacation and leave coverage, inspections, along with duties and policies governing members and apparatus.

Call men substituting for any regular man, shall receive one dollar for an alarm or two dollars for a fire, this pay being deducted from the pay of the absent member for whom the substitute serves.

Fires and Alarms: 12 Bell Alarms, 44 Still Alarms

The city has been extremely fortunate in regard to fires this year, while we have had many disastrous fires all around us, both in buildings, lumber and forest fires, we have escaped them. We have had a number of fires started in dangerous localities and on windy days, yet owing to the prompt response of the department, serious fires were stopped. On Jan. 27th, assistance was asked from Portland, Maine, for a large block on fire. M. H. Goodrich Co., No. 4 Steamer and Hose Wagon responded and rendered excellent service, working eight hours at the fire. On Sept. 15th, a call was received from Saco, Maine, for help, as they had a number of buildings and a large pile of lumber on fire. Sagamore Co., No. 1, Engine and Hose wagon responded although the fire was under control when the Company arrived, so the apparatus was not taken from the cars. The Company rendered valuable aid and relieved the tired firemen of Saco. *Chief Engineer D. Junkins*

- 1909** March 10 – The stable of the Portsmouth Coal Company on Market street was destroyed by fire shortly after midnight, and it was due to good judgment of the fire department that the fire was confined to the stables. The building was a roaring mass of flames before the apparatus arrived and as soon as Asst. Engineer W.F. woods arrived he ordered and second alarm. (*Portsmouth Daily Herald*)

May 6 –The home of Mr. and Mrs. William Pendergast of Stark street was invaded on Wednesday evening by the members of the Sagamore Steam Fire Engine Company, of which the newly made groom is a member. Shortly after eight o'clock the company, headed by Chief Engineer Randall, and the Veteran Firemen Fife and Drum corps, marched to the home, lighting their way with lots of red fire. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 26 –The record breaking high tide started a dangerous fire in the lumber yard of John Broughton, at the foot of Daniel and State streets. The tide when it was high entered the building on the wharf end of the lot of State street in which was stored the lime, and this started the fire which broke out around 11:30. An alarm was sent in from box 19, at the corner of Court and Water streets and as soon as Chief Randall arrived he ordered another alarm from the same box. The apparatus, considering the heavy snow fall, made good time, but the flames had broke through the roof. The firemen got several streams onto the fire and after an hour work had drowned it out. The tug Piscataqua assisted at the fire and had a stream from the dock. (*Portsmouth Daily Herald*)

**1909** There has been built for the department, the past year, an exercise wagon; and sets of canvas coats for members of Col. Sise Engine Co., No. 2, and Kearsarge, No. 3; 1000 feet of fire hose, and a life net, have been purchased. *Chief John D. Randall*

**1910** April 5 - First time in history of the general organization that Engineers had assumed appointing power of all officers and individual members of the different companies. Since the department was established the custom had been that the different companies to elect their own officers and fill the vacancies by their own votes.

April 5 - Box 8 was sounded for a large woods fire on the property of the Frank Jones estate on the Wentworth road. Engine No. 4 with hose wagon and men were detailed.

October 19 - Box 8 was sounded for a large fire in the woods belonging to Charles E. Hodgdon and others on the Gosling road. Members of Sagamore Company No. 1 responded.

October 21 - Box 8 was sounded again, the fire in the woods of Mr. Charles. E. Hodgdon breaking out anew and spreading to other property. Members of Sagamore Company No. 1 were detailed, and with the help of volunteers from Newington the fire was extinguished.

The apparatus consists of four steam fire engines, one hook and ladder truck, one double tank (30 gals, each) combination chemical engine, four hose wagons, one supply wagon (in active service) one hose reel, two hose sleighs, and one exercising wagon, which are in fairly good condition. The department owns seven horses. *Chief John D. Randall*

Since my last report the Hook & Ladder Truck has been installed on the quick hitch system, with a permanent driver and horses at the house at all times, this affording promptness at all fires with our ladder service. I would recommend that the question of purchasing a modern up-to-date hook and ladder truck be considered the coming year. The one now in use is too heavy, as some of the runs are for a great distance, and hard on the horses, especially in rough traveling. The steam fire engines must soon have an overhauling to warrant them for first-class work. They should be kept up to a high grade of efficiency at all times and to obtain this result something should be done with them the coming year. *Chief John D. Randall*

Fires and Alarms: 23 bell alarms and 29 still alarms.

**1911** April 8 – Heavy Fire Loss – The stock of the American Cloak Co. at No. 7 Daniel street was almost a total loss from a fire that was discovered shortly after 8 o'clock in the evening. The chemical engine company made fast time and with them Chief Randall and as soon as he saw the fire he ordered a general alarm from box 58. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1911** April 30 -The old Eastern wharf and coal pocket on Noble's Island, belonging to the Boston and Maine railroad, was completely destroyed by fire. The fire was discovered shortly before five o'clock and an alarm was rung in from Box 14 by an officer in the west. The fireboat Penacook was summoned from the navy yard and the tug boats Piscataqua and M. Mitchell were pressed into service. (*Portsmouth Times*)

May 20 - About 9 o'clock a. m., a serious fire started on the New Road, near the Haven Springs Pumping Station, and burned over a large territory, consisting of valuable standing timber and cut woods, extending to property in Newington. *Chief John D. Randall*

July 8 -For the second time within a week box 51 called the fire department to Bow street to fight one of the worst fires that had occurred in that section of the city for years. The blaze started where two mechanics were engaged in making repairs to an automobile in the machine shop of Chadwick and Trefethen. The flames spread so rapidly through the oil soaked building that the interior was wrapped in flames before the first piece of apparatus arrived. One of the mechanics, Winfield Gray, was badly burned on the arms, neck and head. (*Portsmouth Times*)

August 11 -Two distinct explosions caused by spontaneous combustion in the brew compartment of the Portsmouth Brewing company precipitated a fire and a consequent damage of \$10,000 to the brewery and stock. (*Portsmouth Times*)

December 21 - The skids for the fire department to be used in loading fire apparatus on railroad cars will be located in the building occupied by the veteran firemen on Maplewood avenue in order that they may be handy to the railroad for out of town calls. (*The Portsmouth Herald*)

Apparatus: Four steam fire engines, one hook and ladder truck, one double tank (30 gallon each) combination Chemical Engine, four hose wagons, one supply wagon (in active service), one hose reel, two hose sleighs, and one exercising wagon. The department owned seven horses.

\$5000.00 dollars was identified for a new Automobile Chemical and hose wagon.

Engine No 3 should have a general overhauling at an estimated expense of \$1000 to \$1200. The following is some of the work which ought to be done: New tubes, possibly new boiler, new valves and springs in pumps, new brake and springs, set up tires, reset several new spokes, part of one feed pump replaned, new centre of dome, and parts to be re-nickled, water tank repaired, also repainted and revarnished. *Chief John Randall*

**1912** April 8 – Wentworth Ice House on Wentworth road destroyed by fire. The entire fire department made the road to box 86 at the corner of Little Harbor and Sagamore, but when it was learned that the fire was on the Wentworth house road, the chief ordered all apparatus back with the exception of the chemical and Col. Sise engine. (*Portsmouth Times*)

June 21 – New Auto Combination Chemical and Hose Wagon arrived and was installed at the Hanover Street House. The Auto Combination Chemical and Hose Wagon was built by the Pope-Hartford Mfg. Co. and had a four-cylinder engine capable of developing 50 horsepower. (*Portsmouth Herald*). The Auto-Chemical, put in commission in June, has fulfilled all that was claimed of it, both in upkeep and time saved in reaching the location of fires, especially long distances and the city has a valuable piece of fire-fighting apparatus in this machine. *Chief Engineer John D. Randall*

Recommendation for a “modern and up-to-date engine house” be built to replace Central Station on Court Street.

**1913** May 31 – Fire at 6 Dover Street. Just as the Memorial Day parade started, box 43, sounded and the crowds started to break and run. Duncan Cameron, driver of the Central Station engine, drove the horses through the enormous crowd without injuring a person, deserves great credit for his able handling of the horses. Upon arrival of the department, the entire roof was ablaze, but by the quick work of the firemen, the blaze was soon under control. (*Portsmouth Times*)

December 30 – It was reported that only through the superhuman efforts of the Portsmouth Fire Department that the entire Times building, a four story brick structure on State street, was saved from being totally consumed by fire, when in some unaccountable manner the woodwork in the boiler room became ignited. The firemen made record time to the scene and the moment Chief William F. Woods arrived he perceived the seriousness of the blaze and ordered a second alarm to be sounded. (*Portsmouth Times*)

**1914** November 23 - Two of the worst fires for years in the city broke out within a few minutes of the other. The first coming from Box 43 at the corner of Cabot and Islington streets, calling the department to the railroad yard where there was a fire in the machine shop connected to the round house and this was completely destroyed and the sparks blown by the wind threatened that entire section of the city. While the fire department was engaged at this fire, fire was discovered in the wooden block occupied by the Peabody Music Company, Downing’s restaurant, Dondero’s fruit store and Dolan’s cigar store, and this was the most stubborn blaze the department had to contend with for years. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1915** September 29 and 30 – The 18<sup>th</sup> Convention of the New Hampshire State Fireman's Association was held in Portsmouth. The program for Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> included a short automobile ride around the suburbs for the delegates, a demonstration of a gasoline pumping engine at the Christian Shore bridge, and a complimentary dance given to the visiting firemen. A parade was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> followed by a clam-bake and band concert at the Playgrounds off Rogers Street.

The department answered 97 calls, twenty of which were bells. Out of the 97, only two were more than started before they were extinguished. One was an ice-house on South road owned by Mr. Bates. The building was more than half destroyed before the alarm was sounded. The other was a barn on the Hayes Farm on the Greenland road which was a total loss. There was also a bad forest fire at the pumping station on the City Lot. *Chief Engineer William F. Woods*

**1916** February 7 – With the wind blowing almost a gale and the thermometer flirting in the neighborhood of zero, the department was called out at 5:40 o'clock in the morning to fight a fire on New Vaughn street which for a time had a very threatening aspect and had it reached the mill property of Sugden Bros., there is no telling where it would have been checked. The blaze originated in the building belonging to Benjamin F. Canney, used for curing hams, and communicated to the large frame stable belonging to Mr. Canney. In all five buildings were ablaze when the department arrived. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

The Department has answered twenty-five bell alarms, including one double alarm and one from Box 8 for the fire at York Beach. Engine No. 2 was hitched behind a truck and 1,000 feet of hose was loaded on another truck and sent over the road. The Steamer reached York Village and the hose reached the Beach but was not unloaded. Nineteen of the twenty-five bell alarms were needless. They should have been still alarms, thus saving the City great expense. The Auto Combination has answered fifty-one still alarms, including two out of town calls, one at Rye and one at Greenland. Owing to the wet season, forest fires have been few and of little consequence. *Chief Engineer William F. Woods.*

**1917** Only two fires of any great importance occurred during the (past) year. The first one took place February 5th, in the storehouse and office of the Rockingham County Light and Power Co. It had gained such headway that the fire was coming through the roof before it was discovered and the alarm given. The fire was extinguished soon after the arrival of the Department. The second fire was that of the Y. M. C. A. building, December 31st. The fire started from some unknown cause in an air-shaft between the two fire places on the second floor and spread rapidly to the blind attic that the air-shaft led to. This, with the dense smoke, made the fire a very difficult one to locate and extinguish. The firemen kept the blaze confined to the attic and air-shaft where it started. They were greatly hampered by the zero weather. *Chief William F. Woods*

**1918** The department added a combination chemical and hose wagon made from a 1913 Cadillac touring car at a cost of \$1200.00

Two fire of any importance were those of Silas Pierce Co. and Holmen's Garage. The fire at Silas Pierce occurred on June 5. The damage was to the building was very small, but the smoke damages the vast amount of provisions in their warehouse. The fire at Holmen's destroyed a few autos and a great many supplies. The vast amount of inflammable materials stored there were responsible for this. *Chief William F Woods*

**1919** July 19 – City Council gave authorization to move forward with plans to build new Central Fire Station. (*Brighton, R., 1973*)

September 12 and 13 – Site selected for new station on site of old Court House. Resolution to move Court House and that it may be used by the war societies. The new station will be constructed of brick, have two stories, have six doors, and will house all the apparatus except for the Sagamore Company. The upper floors will be used for the sleeping quarters for the permanent firemen, the company lounge room, and a club room for members of the various companies. The plans do not include any place for horses. (*Brighton, R., 1973*)

October 13 – The cornerstone was laid for the Central Fire Station. The stone, containing a copper box, was presented by a local gravestone maker H. Dowd and Company. The box contained a complete listing of the members of the department, copies of newspapers, coins of the year, and the names of the members of the city government. (*Brighton, R., 1973*)

**1920** We have answered 23 bell alarms and 62 still alarms. There were only three fires during the year that caused any great destruction of property. Charles Hodgdon's barn, struck by lightning September 18th, was one of these. The entire barn was practically burned before the alarm was given. Another bad fire was that of a three-story wooden building on Russell Street, unoccupied, and owned by Sam Tawbe. The third fire was on Newton Avenue, in a wooden building owned and occupied by Morris Fleigal. This fire started in some hay under the piazza. The building burned very rapidly. The Department was handicapped by not getting water from the hydrant as soon as they should. A stream from the new triple combination soon extinguished the flames. We have added one triple combination to the Fire Department this year. This piece of apparatus will deliver 750 gallons of water a minute. It takes the place of one hose wagon and two steamers. It was purchased from the L. H. Shattuck Co. at a very reasonable price. *Chief Engineer W.F. Woods*

The only horse-drawn piece of apparatus was the old Hook & Ladder Truck.

The New Central Station opened at a cost of \$85,000.00 and replaced Hanover St, Court St. and the Old Central stations.

For small fires call the Chemical by telephone 525 (*Portsmouth City Directory*)

**1921** June 20 – Alarm of fire was rung in from Box 43 at 6:56 a.m. was caused by the Round House of the B&M RR being on fire. The fire got a good headway on account of the firemen was obliged to lay hose from Dover and McDonough Street across the tracks. There being no hydrants in the B&M RR yard, but by hard work the fire was soon under control. Four locomotives was badly damaged. *W.M. Gray, Clerk*

The number of alarms this year outnumber all of the preceding years of any record that has been kept, although our loss by fire has been remarkably small. There has been this year only five fires of any importance, these being as follows: The Boston & Maine Round House, Walter Laskey on Whidden street, The Catholic Church, and a Dwelling house on Cutts street owned by Raphael Paola.

All motorized department. The department consists of the Chief, 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Chief, 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Chief, Clerk, 7 permanent firefighters, and 62 call firefighters. We have also dismissed the firemen and engineers of the steamers and cut twenty-two men to half pay, these men answering second alarms only, thus saving the city a good sum annually. The only thing the Department needs is hose. As I have stated many times before, the Council should buy 500 feet of hose every year, thus taking care of the hose that goes bad and keeping the supply up to normal. *Chief Engineer W.F. Woods*

Seagraves City Service Truck with truss ladders in service; \$9,500.00.

Apparatus and Fire Companies:

- Combination No. 2
- Combination # 5: assigned call men
- Hose and Steamer Co. 1
- Hose and Steamer Co. 3
- Hose and Steamer Co. 4
- Ladder No.1
- Supply Wagon

**1922** January 28 – Alarm of fire was rung in from Box 52 at 4:50 a.m. was caused by a fire in the dry good store of M. Saldon 155 Congress Street. The fire extended to a store that was vacant and also the store occupied by Charles A. Robbin as a lodging house. The weather was down below zero. (t)he hose was coated with ice so it made hard work for the firemen to handle it so the Chief had a second alarm (pull) in for the rest of the dept' to help out. (a)fter hard work the fire was under control. *W.M. Gray, Clerk*

The Department is in first class shape and has some fine apparatus. The only piece that is a little out of date is the old Pope Combination. This piece of apparatus does about 80 per cent of the work of the Department and owes the city nothing. The disadvantage is: no starter, no electric lights, and is of an old design, thus making it hard to get away quickly. We have added to the Fire Department this year a new branch under the name of Boy Scouts Forest Fire Brigade, which has proved itself a valuable addition.

**1922** There are about 30 of the boys ready at any moment to respond to a call to fight forest fires without pay or any complaint whatever, thus saving the city a good amount of money and property. *Chief Engineer W.F. Woods*

**1923** April 18 – Alarm from Box 24 at 2:30 a.m. for a fire in the Phelan Block on Daniel Street. Occupied by Laundry, Café and Studios. Considerable damage to main floors. *Willis M.. Gray, Clerk*

August 4 – Alarm from Box 52 at 10:35 p.m. for fire in Block on Vaughn Street occupied by G. Silakos as restaurant. M. Jacques as saloon and upper stories as lodging house. The restaurant was gutted. The roof of George Oultons blacksmith shop was damaged. *Willis P. Gray, Clerk*

Expenses:

- Salary of Chief Engineer and Assistants - \$925.00
- Salaries Permanent Men - \$10,600.00
- Payroll Call Men - \$5,735.00
- Equipment - \$ 350.00
- Fuel- \$1,200.00
- Supplies - \$450.00
- Lights - \$175.00
- Repairs - \$300.00
- Telephone - \$125.00
- Auto expense, (including gas and \$100 for Chief's auto) - \$350.00
- Water- \$80.00
- Hose- \$575.00

Fire Alarm:

- Salary Superintendent- \$600.00
- Blowing steam whistle- \$100.00
- Furnishing time service 18.00
- Telephone - \$25.00
- General repairs- \$400.00
- Electric power- \$175.00

**1924** July 5 – Alarm of fire was sounded from box 24 at 2:20 a.m. calling the department to a house on Daniel Street. Owned and occupied by Max Gelman. With a tailor shop on the first floor. Mrs. Gelman was suffocated to death. The fire was one of the hardest the dept. had for some time. Some of the men were badly overcome from smoke. *Perley D. Hersey, Clerk*

The apparatus consisted of 2 triple combinations (chemical, pump, and hose), 2 combinations (chemical and hose), and 1 ladder truck. All of which were up-to-date, motor driven, and in first class shape. We also had some horse drawn apparatus which I recommend disposing of. *William F. Woods, Chief of Department*

**1925** July 7 – Alarm from box 15 at 5:30 p.m. for fire in stable on Maplewood Ave, owned by Valentine Hett and occupied by Fred Hett. Caused by lightening. Partly destroyed. Two horses died in the fire. *W.M. Gray, Clerk*

July 13 – Ed Carroll of 321 Jones Avenue, Portsmouth purchased Kearsarge No. 3 from the fire department for the sum of sixty dollars. Chief Engineer William F. Woods signed the receipt on behalf of the city.

The Fire Companies identified in the Roll of P.F.D for 1925 are listed as Combination No 1, Ladder Co. No. 1, Sagamore SFE Co. No 1, Col Sise No. 2, Kearsarge No. 3, and M. H. Goodrich No. 4

Chief Woods established the tradition of repairing and renewing toys to be given at Christmas to underprivileged children.

Fires and Alarms: 13 Bells and 116 Stills.

We added one Seagraves triple combination pump, hose, and booster tank to replace the old Pope and Hartford combination. That engine was put out of commission answering a call for a truck fire on Lafayette Road. The connecting rod broke and smashed the engine all to pieces. The tanks were worn out from 14 years of hard service. *Chief W.F. Woods*

Apparatus: 1 hose and chemical on Cadillac chassis, 1 American La France pump and hose, 1 Seagraves ladder, and 2 Seagraves triple combinations capable of delivering 850 gallons per minute.

**1926** January 15 -Special appropriations of \$12,500.00 made by the City Council for a Combination Fire Pump(er)

March 2 - A General alarm fire on a Tuesday night at the Maplewood Garage on Vaughn Street near Hanover claimed the life of Harold Haddock and threatened the business section of city. Mr. Haddock was asleep in his car close to where the fire started and was burnt to death. The building was a mass of flames and spread to surrounding buildings. It was reported that the flames lit up the sky for miles and could be seen as far away as Wells, Maine. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Organization: One chief, one first assistant chief, one second assistant chief, seven permanent men, and fifty-two call men.

**1927** Our largest damage this year was the fire on Lafayette road (April 4), the burning of a barn and two outbuildings known as the “Main Farm.” Not being able to get any water, the firemen were helpless, but some of the small buildings were saved by the Chemical Tank. The next fire of any amount was on the Tug Boat Mitchell Davis, which started from a back-fire of the boiler. This fire did considerable damage before it was extinguished. *William F. Woods, Chief of Department*

**1927** 12.30 p. m., Cambridge time, one bell is sounded. No school signal; two blasts, repeated four times. Militia call, four blasts, repeated twice. Three blasts, fire out.

**1928** December 11 – An alarm of fire was sounded from Box 16 calling the Department to a hay barn on Myrtle Ave. On arrival the fire had such a start that it was useless to try and save any part of the building or contents so it was thought advisable to burn up clean. A stream of water was played on the ruins enough to keep the flames from the electric wires which were directly overhead. *Geo E. Cox, Clerk*

The Fire Apparatus consists of three Triple Combinations, 1 Ladder Truck, and 1 Combination Hose and Chemical of the latest type and in perfect condition. Our supply of hose and other equipment are up to the standard.

Our total number of alarms were 143, as follows: Bell alarms 26, still alarms 117 (this including 6 out of town calls. North Kittery 1, Greenland 1, Newington 3, Wallis Sands 1).

We have been very fortunate the past year with our losses, considering we have answered more calls than any previous year, excepting 1926, which was the largest year in the history of the department, there being a total of 169 alarms.

*William F. Woods, Chief of Department*

**1929** June 5 – At 5:06 box 35 was sounded for a fire on Marcy Street. Upon arrival of the department it was discovered that an old building used as a Fish House was on fire and almost destroyed before the alarm was sounded. *Geo E. Cox, Clerk*

The Fire Alarm system is at present in good working condition, and we have this year replaced two of the older type street boxes with the latest Gamewell Peerless succession box, with quick action doors, now making a total of seventeen of this latter type in service. A few of the older boxes should be replaced each year until the balance is completed. The Storage Batteries at the Central Fire Station used for operating the system are in bad condition and will have to be replaced in a very short time. *H. E. Trafton, Superintendent of Fire Alarm*

**1930** April 27 - A boy and a girl burned to death after an airplane crash beside the Portsmouth Country club. The dead were Geneva Brockett, fourteen, of Suffield, Conn, and Bruce Heffier fourteen of Greenland. The pilot, Clyde Robinson of Exeter, was seriously burned. The plane broke into flames as it fell after hitting a wing against a tree. The children were taking their first airplane ride. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1930** November 9 – The fire which started around noon swept through Building No. 6 at the Atlantic Gypsum Products Co. plant at Freeman’s Point, caused damage estimated at upwards of \$100,000,00 and caused one of the most spectacular fires in that section in a long time. Immense clouds of smoke poured up from the building throughout the afternoon and brought a large number of automobilists to the scene from various parts of Maine and New Hampshire, and even Massachusetts, as it was feared in places where smoke could be seen that a major conflagration was in progress in the heart of the city. As the fire gained in proportions aid was summoned from the Kittery, Eliot, York, and Hampton fire department(s). The tug Penacook was sent to the fire and rendered great assistance. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Apparatus: Combination Numbers 1, 2, 3 and Ladder Co. 1.

Fires and Alarms: 227 Total Alarms; 203 Stills and 24 Bells. 46 over the previous year

**1931** May 5 -McIntosh Block Fire Congress at Fleet Streets. A fire that was discovered around 2 o’clock in the afternoon in the McIntosh Building, caused one of the most disastrous fires in years and the entire section of the city from the business district through the North End was threatened with destruction, as there were more than 20 roof fires underway and considerable damage was caused to property in the North End. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1932** March 22 – The Glory Hotel on Cutt Street was destroyed by a fire that broke out in the center of the building around 11:20 p.m. The building which was built in 1903 when the Colonial Paper Co. was built contained 43 rooms. It was a wooden structure and once the flames got started they made rapid headway and the building burned like tinder. There were three families living in the building at the time of the fire but they escaped without trouble. The building had not been occupied as a hotel since 1922. A still alarm was first called the firemen, after which a general alarm was sent in with a later call for extra apparatus being made. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1933** February 5 – A still alarm at 9:50 p.m. called combination #1 to a Dwelling House on Bartlett Street owned by Harry Cohen and occupied by Barnard Doherty. The fire started from a lamp exploding. It was extinguished with a Chemical Stream with small damage on the Building. After the smoke cleared away Mr. Doherty was discovered on the bed burnt to death. *John Trefethern, Clerk*

April 10 - At 1:15 a.m. Still alarm was sent in for a fire on Albany Street. On arrival of the Department, a lively blaze was in progress in a Wooden building once used as a Bottling House for Frank Jones Brewery. Owing to the nature of the building and the dangerous locality, it was thought advisable to sound a Second Alarm. This leaving no apparatus in the Station, Kittery and Rye came in and covered. After about an hour (of) hard work, the fire was brought under control. Box 45 was sounded for this fire. *John Trefethern, Clerk*

Organization: 1 Chief, 2 Asst Chief, 1 Clerk, 14 Permanent, 44 Call, 1 Fire Alarm Superintendent

**1933** Fire Companies and Stations: Co. No. 1 at Bartlett Street Station and Central Station on Court Street

**1934** A special meeting at this office at 7:30 p.m. was called by Chief W. Woods. To arrange the new Board of Engineers as elected by the New City Government and was as follows: W. Woods, Chief, Edwin Weeks, 1<sup>st</sup> Asst., John Trefethern, 2<sup>nd</sup>. John Trefethern was elected Clerk of the Board.

May 18 – There was plenty of activity in the fire department Thursday night and into the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> when the apparatus responded to a still alarm and three bell alarms. The first alarm was tuned in from Box 42 for a fire in an empty steel box car in the Boston and Maine yard. The second alarm was sent in from Box 25 just after midnight for a fire in the Liberty Bridge Laundry. Engine 1 previously answered a still alarm for the same blaze. The last was a false alarm from Box 412 at the high school. Engine 1 at the Marcy street blaze, responded to that alarm with the other apparatus and was struck at the intersections of Pleasant and State streets by an Atlantic Express Co. truck hauling a trailer. The fender, radiator, and one light were damaged on the engine, which continued on to the high school. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

May 28 – At 4:35 p.m. Box 47 was sounded for a fire in the Malt(sp) House on Islington Street. It was impossible to get at a lively blaze raging on the second floor and it was seen that the building was doomed. A second alarm was sounded and help was summoned from Kittery, Kittery Point, Navy Yard, Eliot, York Village, York Beach, Rye Beach, and New Castle. Tons of water was poured on the building for two hours with no effect. The best the firemen could do was to check the blaze in this building and save it from spreading to other properties. \$20,000.00 damage. *John Trefethern, Clerk*

**1935** At 2:35 a.m. Box 46 was sounded for a fire in a wooden building on Bartlett Street owned by Stella Stokel; unoccupied. On the arrival of the Department a lively fire was discovered in the upper part of the building which had been burning for a long time before it was discovered. This building was formally used as a School House, but was made over into a Tenement House. After one and a half hours – hard work the fire was brought under control. *John Trefethern, Clerk*

Department Salaries:

- Chief Engineer: \$2,100.00
- 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant: \$200.00
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant: \$200.00
- Clerk: \$25.00
- 8 Permanent Men @ \$1,700.00 each
- 44 Call: 36 @ \$100.00 each, 8 @ \$105.00 each

The Annual Financial report of the City Auditor for year ending December 31, 1935 notes that the under the Police Department, \$338.85 was spent on “remodeling of ambulance”.

**1936** May 19- A communication of the fire chief relative to the installation of a fire alarm box was received by the city council. This would cost \$175.00. The money was transferred from the contingent fund. The box was to be installed between Union street and Ward's corner on South street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Engine Houses: Central Fire Station on Court Street, Company No. 1 on Bartlett Street

**1937** January 8 – The first general alarm fire of the year was turned in at 4:40 a.m. from Box 54 and was a costly blaze at 193-195 Market street in a building occupied by Theodore Schultz and Carl Bettcher under the name of the New Hampshire Provisions Co. The fire was discovered by a taxi driver who noticed smoke coming from all parts of the wooden structure. The blaze was just eating it's way through the roof when the firemen arrived. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1938** January 24 – A Portsmouth police officer was attracted to smoke coming from the shoe store of William Hirshberg on the street floor of the YMCA building on Congress Street and turned in an alarm from Box 52. Although handicapped by dense smoke the department succeeded in stopping the blaze on the second floor after 3 hours of hard work. Twenty years prior on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December the same building was totally destroyed by fire on one of the coldest days on record – 18 degrees below zero. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July 6 – A spectacular two-alarm fire causing between \$20,000 and \$25,000 damage gutted a large section of a warehouse at the corners of Cass and Albany streets occupied by the Margeson Furniture Co. and the Montgomery Ward Co. The building was formerly part of the Jones brewery plant. The fire was reported to have started on the roof where workmen were spreading coal tar. The fire moved rapidly through the six-story wing of the large building. In addition to Portsmouth, apparatus was summoned from Kittery, the Navy Yard, and North Hampton. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

August 5 – The 47<sup>th</sup> official New England States Veteran Fireman's League Muster held in Portsmouth. Twenty-five old time hand tubs competed in a playout at the playground. Parade began at 11 a.m.

November 28 – The new piece of apparatus for the fire department arrived at noon from the Seagraves Co. at Columbus Ohio. The Seagraves pumper was a model 80.E.10, serial # 92610, and was completed on November 14, 1938. On December 7 the new Engine 1 was placed in commission. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1939** February 20 – At 8:20 p.m. box 42 called the department for a fire Diamond Match Co on Rock St. and spread to Brooks Motor Sales and Sussman Dryer Plant. The wind carried the sparks to roofs of dwelling houses on Hill, Hanover and Bridge St. This proved to be the most disastrous fire since the McIntosh Block in 1931. On the arrival of the dept. it was seen that the fire was beyond control. Outside help was called from Kittery, Kittery Point, Navy Yard, Elliot, North Hampton, and New Castle. *Frank E. Amazeen, Clerk*

**1939** Chief George T. Cogan blamed spontaneous combustion for a fire that leveled three large buildings and threatened an entire section of the city from Hanover Street to the Piscataqua River. The blaze started within the Diamond Match Co. Plant, ripped through the Sussman Cleaning Plant, and burned into Brooks Motor Sales. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1940** February 4 – At 6:50 p.m. a Still Alarm was followed by two Bell Alarms from Box 52. Called all the dept. for fire in a business block on Vaughan St. owned by Portsmouth Saving Bank and occupied by Albert Woolfson, Raymond Pepin, Peter Maroussis, Atlantic Pacific Tea Co, and Ernest Goon. Damage \$13,860.00. *Frank E. Amazeen, Clerk*

According to Chief George T. Cogan Portsmouth had one of its smallest fire losses in years. The value of buildings in which fires took place was high but losses were confined to small amounts. No outside help was called during the entire year and there was only one serious fire; the two-alarm fire that damaged the A&P Supermarket. A spectacular but not serious fire took place at the Coal Co. wharf. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Fires and Alarms: 16 Bells and 216 Stills, 41 which were out of town.

**1941** February 3 - Portsmouth Firefighters battled a General Alarm Fire at the Exchange Block located at 21 Pleasant Street on Sunday February 2, 1941. Five occupants were rescued over ladders that were thrown both at the front and rear of the buildings. Hampered by the lack of an aerial ladder truck, firemen had to wait for the fire to burn through the slate roof before any significant progress could be made in extinguishing the flames. Later that year, the department would purchase an 85' Seagrave Aerial Truck. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 27 – One man was killed, two others injured, and several firemen overcome by smoke in a \$50,000 fire that destroyed all but one section of the Boston and Maine roundhouse that broke out around midnight. Three locomotives and a gasoline car were damaged. Even before the flames lighted the still night sky a few minutes before midnight the screams for help from Ovah Oliver, had attracted nearby residence to the scene, as the night hosteler ran from the roundhouse a living torch, his clothes aflame. He collapsed just across the tracks. Oliver was taken to the Portsmouth hospital in the police ambulance and died at three o'clock in the morning. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

November 18 – Three Portsmouth persons were saved from death by a fire that broke out at the Piscataqua Apartments located at 93 Bow street. Chief Cogan summoned the Portsmouth Police ambulance to take one of the victims, Miss Marion Davis, who suffered serious burns to the hospital. Hundreds of residents turned out for the bell alarm. Quick work by the firemen confined the fire to the front section of the 150 year-old three story brick structure. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

November 25 - After a long campaign to secure funding from the city council, a new Seagrave 85' aerial truck was delivered to the Portsmouth Fire Department; serial number A8955. Within a week the aerial truck was tested on the North Church in Market Square and it was noted that when fully extended the ladder reached nearly nine feet above the clock. It was determined that the height would be sufficient throughout the city.

**1942** January 13 – Still alarm at 4:10 p.m. and a bell alarm at 4:17 p.m. for a fire in Dwelling on Aldrich Rd. Occupied by Clarence Gross and owned by Richard Anderson. Mr. Gross lost his life. *George Cogan, Clerk*

February 24 – Alarm from Box 53 at 3:32 a.m. for a fire in block occupied by Atlantic Pacific Tea Co, Star Lunch (Peter Maroussis), Raymond Pepin, and Ernest Goon. Damage \$6,514.81. *George Cogan, Clerk*

March 16 – All members of the Portsmouth Auxiliary fire department who had not taken a 10-hour first aid course were urged by Fredrick Crompton, auxiliary chief, to attend the Air Wardens course that night at the Junior High School auditorium. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Salaries:

- Board of Engineers - \$6525.00
- Permanent Men - \$15,200.00
- Call Men - \$4540.00
- Fire Alarm Superintendant - \$900.00

Special Items:

- New Hose - \$925.00
- Painting Ladder 2 - \$130.00
- Partial Cost of Inhalator - \$113.06

A new tapper was installed at the police station and a new whistle was installed at the Central Fire Station

**1943** March 15- A Flaming inferno described the scene at the height of an early morning blaze which left a five-store Portsmouth block a mass of twisted wreckage. Destroyed were the Portsmouth Hardware & Plumbing Supply Co., Hubbard's, Shaines', and Katherine G. Connors and Louis' Men's Shop. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July 23 – The city Council passed, through three readings, an ordinance raising the required department permanent staff from 9 to 10. Also, a \$200.00 wage jump for city firemen was approved. This raised the annual salary of the fire chief to \$2500.00, the first and second assistants to \$2200.00 and permanent men to \$2100.00. Call firemen received \$100.00 a year; an additional \$5.00 for the call captain and clerk. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

October 14-Two alarms were rung in when a Boston-bound passenger train that had just left the Portsmouth Depot ran through an open switch and crashed into a gasoline tank car of the Boston and Maine Railway, causing an explosion that destroyed two tank cars, the locomotive of the passenger train, one passenger coach and three section houses near the tracks. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1944** June 15 – A man, identified as Kenneth E.W. Manson, died and several other persons fled in their night clothes as flames swept the top floor of a rooming house at 35 Bow street shortly before midnight. Several hundred persons gathered at the scene of the blaze and were kept behind fire lines by Portsmouth police. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

October 1 – Bell alarm from Box 56 at 7:50 .m. called the department for a fire in a house on Deer St. occupied by Albert Lacross who lost his life from suffocation. *Fredrick Crompton, Clerk*

October 19 – At a meeting of the City Council held October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944, it was voted to recommend to the board (of engineers) the appointment of Eugene Williams as ambulance driver. *Edward J. Hopley, City Clerk*

The city purchases a new ambulance sometime between 1944 and 1945. According to the 1945-1947 Annual Report, the Police Department was equipped with two radio cars, a patrol car, and an ambulance.

**1945** February 9 – Hundreds of persons spent the night in buses, trains, businesses, and city offices as Portsmouth and surrounding towns were crippled by the worst storm in decades, during which a total snowfall of 14 ½ inches was reported. During the morning a fire broke out a Carpenter’s Hall on Ladd and High streets. Fire Chief Cogan reported firemen were forced to lug hoses by hand through unploughed streets from Congress street and Market square. The fire, believed to have caused by a faulty heater, broke out around 6 and spread quickly through two stories. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

May 1 – Fire Chief Cogan wants four more permanent men. Presently there are 12 men plus the chief. They work 48 hours on and 24 hours off resulting in a 120 hour work week. According to the chief, 4 more men would allow for a 2- platoon system of 24 hours on and 24 hours off; resulting in a reduction of the work week to 84 hours. Several months later the City Council passed an ordinance creating a two-platoon system which increased the personnel from 13 to 17. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Apparatus: 1 Ladder, 2 Engines, 1 Ambulance.

Fire and Alarms: 355 Bells and Stills, 37 which were out of town

Fire department ambulance service began with 367 trips, 131 out of City of Portsmouth.

**1946** January 30 - The Federal Works Agency approved a project for the construction of a new sub fire station at the Portsmouth Plains. The plans were for a colonial brick structure that would house two pieces of fire apparatus on the lot occupied by the abandoned Plains School. *The station was never constructed.*

**1946** February 3 – Eleven persons were driven to the street in near zero temperatures as flames swept through the three and a half story wooden Hislop Block at 171-181 Fleet street. One fireman, Eliot Staples, was injured by falling roof slate. Fireman Staples was taken to the Portsmouth hospital, where by the next morning he was reported as “getting along fine”. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

October 9 – During the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Engineers, the following letter from the Call men of the Department was received: Whereas the pay of the callmen of the Portsmouth Fire Department has not been increased for over twenty-five years; and Whereas the number of alarms has more than doubled in that period; -- We, the undersigned, do petition that the pay of each callman be increased one hundred (\$100) per year. W.H. Goodwin, Clerk. Motion made and seconded to approved the increase.

December 25 – Box 7 was put in at 5:25 p.m. to call out the Boy Scouts to help find Bradley Sharman who had been missing since early morning – later found in the movies. *Fredrick Crompton, Clerk*

New roof on the Fire Station.

**1947** January 11 – The First Universalist Church, also known as the "brick church, was destroyed by fire. Chief Cogan sounded a general alarm and summoned aid from Kittery and the Portsmouth naval base upon his arrival at the scene. He said he was amazed by the rapidity of the spread of the flames. The alarm sounded shortly after 2:30 a.m. and within three quarters of an hour the roof had fallen in and the bell had plunged from the steeple. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

April 3 -As a result recent incidents including a disastrous woods fire that required fire chiefs to contact each community from which they might want aid, a formal Mutual Aid system, known as the Interstate Emergency Unit, was formed at the Portsmouth Central Station. The Portsmouth Fire Department was 1 of 34 original communities. The department served as the “control center” with direct radio communications with the Dover Fire Department.

September 14 – Fire of undetermined origin destroyed a building on Portsmouth’s waterfront, caused heavy damage to another and menaced two tug boats and the Shoals boat at the foot of Ceres street shortly after midnight. A general alarm was sounded from Box 54, while firemen were extinguishing a minor fire at the Star lunch, on Vaughn street. According to Chief Cogan, persons in Market square noted flames shooting up from the roof of a tire retreading shop operated by Frank D. Perkins at the waterfront. When firemen reached the scene the building was enveloped in flames. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

First Annual Portsmouth Firefighter’s Relief Association Ball is held.

The City Council voted to purchase uniforms for the permanent men.

**1947** The Kearsarge Steam Fire Engine found on a farm in Stratham on Heights Road – James Breslin owner of farm formerly known Chase Farm and Runlen Farm.

**1948** January 12 - Thick black smoke could be seen for miles as firemen fought the stubbornly burning stockpile of rubber contained in the Frank D. Perkins tire recapping plant at 117 Market Street. It was tough going for the firemen as they battled in zero degree weather against the flames and heavy smoke that roared from the building. Those that attacked the fire from the rear of the building found themselves sheathed in the frozen spray from the Navy Yard's fireboat. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

January 17 – Two firemen were injured as Portsmouth's second disastrous fire in week swept through Kray's women's apparel shop at 110 Congress street. The blaze which started in the basement of Kray's was discovered shortly after 9 p.m. and threatened four adjacent establishments. Injured were Earl Barnaby from Ladder 1 who was overcome by smoke and Daniel McCarthy who suffered a leg injury when he slipped and fell on the ice-coated street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

September - A two-way radio system worth more than \$2200.00 was being installed in the station and in three of the fire trucks. The FCC licensed the station as WQWK.

Services of the Department:

- Bell Alarms Answered 23
- Still Alarms Answered 263
- Total Fires 286
- Ambulance Calls 498

**1949** December 16 – Mal's ballroom, a 21 year old landmark on Lafayette road, was destroyed by fire with an estimated loss at more than \$15,000. Driven by a high wind and roaring unchecked in the early minutes while firemen sought water, the fire spread from the kitchen in the rear of the structure into the main building. The building had previously been known as Foye-cliff, Merriam's tearoom, the Dragon, and Ham's. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 17- An early morning blaze caused extensive damage to the 338 Pleasant street market operated by Joseph Levitt. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 19 – “Your Christmas tree is a Frankenstein, capable of turning on its creator to bring Christmas tragedy instead of Yuletide joy”, Fire Chief George T. Cogan warned as he advised on decoration of the tree. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department: Total Alarms Answered 317, Ambulance trips 591

**1950** August 19 –Wind-lashed flames destroyed the L.V. Regan storage warehouse at 319 Vaughn street at dawn causing an estimated loss of \$100,000. As firemen from Kittery, Newington and the Portsmouth naval base assisted the local department, huge billows of smoke poured from the grey and white building and swept over the entire North End. Flaming embers bounced threateningly from roof to roof. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 19 -The department took delivery of a Mack 85LS Triple Combination Pumper. The engine boasted a 750 gallon per minute pump, came fully equipped, and included a two-way radio. The engine went into service as Combination 1. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department:

- Bell Alarms Answered 35
- Still Alarms Answered 345
- Ambulance Calls 648

**1951** January 1– Smoke filled the Kearsarge Hotel and poured out into Congress and Chestnut Streets during a multiple-alarm fire. The blaze was believed to have started around 9 o'clock at night in the kitchen of the Blue Goose Restaurant which serves as the hotel's dining room. In addition the restaurant and hotel, Theodore Bosen's Hat Shop and Candy Store on Chestnut Street sustained smoke and water damage. During the blaze, close to 700 movie-goers of the nearby Civic Theater were also evacuated, albeit a number only after the second alarm was rung in. Firemen who fought the two-alarm blaze in near zero temperatures and braved clouds of thick black smoke to enter the building were credited with holding down the fire loss and preventing a major conflagration. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 8 – The mill and carpenter shop of the Littlefield Lumber company at 21 Green street was badly damaged by a \$50,000 fire which threatened the entire lumber yard and nearby homes and business establishments. The first alarm was sounded at 1:20 and the second at 1:24 a.m. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 9 – The second mysterious fire within 24 hours swept through two business establishments along the waterfront early in the day, causing estimated at \$200,000. Threatening the entire area, the five hour blaze ruined part of the C.E. Walker, Inc., coal firm at 3 Marcy street and the nearby Portsmouth Fish and Lobster company. Assisting were firemen from both Kittery and the naval shipyard. The navy's fireboat, Tuscola, crashed into the draw of Memorial bridge, but was kept on scene until the blaze was extinguished. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

October 7 – State and local officials pressed their investigation into the mysterious origin of a double alarm fire which swept through Littlefield Lumber on Green street. A storage building and two others were badly destroyed before the fire was brought under control. The fire broke out just after 3 a.m. and the all-out was not sounded until the afternoon. It was the second time within four months that the fire was seriously damaged by fire of unknown origin. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1952** November 25 – Hampered by thick smoke pouring into the fog-filled darkness, Portsmouth firemen battled a stubborn, four-hour blaze in a furniture warehouse near the corner of Cass and Albany Streets. The fire was discovered just before midnight. The firemen were forced to smash their way through the heavy locked doors at the front and rear of the building, a former ice house owned by the Badger Rand Ice Company. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Organization: 19 regular and 30 call firefighters.

The department purchased a new ½ ton Chevrolet pick-up truck, 500 feet of 2 ½ inch double jacket hose, two 10ft. lengths of 4 ½ " hard suction hose, and replaced 14 tires on some of the equipment.

The emergency phone number for the department was 525, business number 526

**1953** May 1 – A four hour fire that broke out at 1:59 A.M. destroyed the famed 117 year old VFW building on Parrott Avenue. The fire started in the boiler room of the old building and shot up an air shaft. Firemen, who rushed to the scene from the station 75 yards away, appeared to have the fire under control shortly after the alarm was turned in, but hidden in the attic, the flames gained force. By 6 in the morning only a smoldering, charred, and roofless shell remained. The building was steeped in Portsmouth history. Built in 1836 as the Rockingham County Courthouse, it was moved in 1920 from its location on Court Street to make room for the new Central Fire Station. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 25 – Seventeen persons were forced to flee from their beds into the pre-dawn chill when fire swept an apartment on the third floor of the Glebe Building at 16 Pleasant Street. As soon as she arrived, Chief Crompton turned in a general alarm when he saw flames breaking through the upper part of the wooden structure. The apartment where the fire broke out was badly charred, while apartments and business establishments on the first and second floors were damaged by water. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Organization: 21 Permanent and 45 Call-Men.

Services of the Department:

- 371 Fire Calls
- 695 Ambulance Trips
- 47 Miscellaneous
- 14 Mutual aid
- 9 Calls for the inhalator
- 2 Calls for the all purpose masks

**1954** April - The fire department's brand new red and gray ambulance went into service. The modern ambulance replaced a vehicle that clocked up 55,371 miles before rounding out its career of answering emergency calls. The new ambulance had an emergency generator that supplied 110 watts of electricity when the engine was idling.

The department took delivery of a Seagrave 750 GPM triple-combination pumper for a cost of \$17,833.00.

**1955** March 29 – A two-year-old girl perished when a divan caught fire in her parent's second story apartment at 2059 Lafayette Road. Jack O'Dea, an employee of Dawson's Paint Store located on the ground floor of the building, rescued the child and her mother from the smoke filled apartment. The child was transported by William Dawson, the proprietor of the store, and Mr. O'Dea to the hospital where she died of second and third degree burns. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department: 467 Fire Calls, 660 Ambulance Calls

**1956** January 1 - Smoke filled the Kearsarge Hotel (Chestnut and Congress) poured out into Congress and Chestnut Streets during a multiple-alarm New Year's Eve fire. The fire was believed to have started around 9 p.m. in the kitchen of the Blue Goose Restaurant which serves as the hotel's dining room. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 29 - A two-alarm fire destroyed the upper two floors of the Jarvis Block on Congress Street broke out just before 6:30 p.m. The \$300,000.00 fire in the 90 year-old landmark also damaged five nearby business places. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

A Ford Ferrara 500 GPM triple combination pumper with a 500 gallon tank and a 1955 Ford sedan were purchased by the department.

**1957** October 21 – A three alarm fire raced through the NH Provisions Co. building on Islington Street. The brick building was constructed in 1884 and used to be part of the Frank Jones Brewery complex. Firefighters laid nearly a mile of hose and poured close to 780,000 gallon of water in attempts to extinguish the blaze. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

A new fire alarm system was installed that was tied into 83 fire alarm boxes. A new "watch room" was also constructed at the Central Fire Station in the old fire alarm battery room. In addition, a taller antenna was mounted for the 2-way radio and an inter-communication system was installed.

**1958** January 12 – A 54-year old South End woman was rescued by fireman Eugene C. Hersey after she was trapped in her 46 Atkinson Street upstairs bedroom when an oil burner exploded in the kitchen, spreading oil throughout the room and over the stairway. The woman suffered first and second degree burns and was taken to the hospital in the Fire Dept. ambulance. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1958** April 15 – “Four Killed in Bomber Crash Here”. Four young men were killed in the crash on takeoff of a B47 jet bomber at Pease AFB. The scene of the fiery crash was at a point several hundred yards beyond the end of the runway on the grounds of the old Portsmouth Country Club near Route 101. The impact of the crash was felt downtown while towering burst of flames and smoke were visible as far away as Exeter. The night was filled with the scream of sirens as firefighters from the base and from Portsmouth, the naval shipyard, Greenland, Kittery and Kittery Point rushed to the scene. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

September 20 -Central Fire Station Firefighter’s Association Local No. 1313 chartered.

Phone number for department: GE-6-1127

**1959** July 28 –Two New Harbor, Maine men suffered burns in a fire and explosion aboard a fishing boat tied to a wharf at the Portsmouth Fish Co. Both were taken to the hospital in a police cruiser. Firemen, responding to the call from box 24 at the corner of Bow and Daniel streets at 11:30 fought the flames for more than an hour. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department:

- 363 Stills
- 59 Bells
- 17 False
- 34 Miscellaneous
- 661 Ambulance
- 11 Mutual Aid

**1960** June 14 – A two-alarm fire swept through the upper floors of the M.J. Whalen Company’s crating building causing damage that totaled as much as \$50,000.00. Firemen battled the stubborn blaze at 973 Islington Street for more than four hours before sounding the all-out at 12:45 a.m. The building was part of the old Jones Brewery. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 14 - A raging general alarm blaze, fed by icy 20 mph winds completely destroyed the top two floors of the four-story Pierce Building located at High and Ladd Street. More than 100 firefighters from eight towns battled the stubborn blaze for more than seven hours. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department:

- Bells -78
- Stills-360
- Ambulance-613
- Miscellaneous-40
- Mutual Aid-18

**1961** September 5 – A Portsmouth fireman was felled by smoke inhalation fighting a two-alarm blaze that swept the top floor of the Kearsarge Hotel. The injured fireman, Louis Hardy, was taken by ambulance to Portsmouth Hospital where he was treated and held overnight. The fire, believed to have started in a fourth floor back store room, poured out heavy smoke and flames as firemen attached from an aerial ladder and from a fire escape near the rear of the building. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Department Budget: \$177,899.00

**1962** March 8 – Smoke billowed from radio station WHEB on Lafayette Road shortly after a fire broke out about 11:45 A.M. The fire was touched off by a spark that flashed the studio where wiring was being installed for a new telephone. Shoppers at the nearby Lafayette Plaza stood by watching as firemen fought the outbreak. Two high plumes of smoke rising from the station could be seen more than a mile away. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 12 – Three persons, including a sailor and his wife, perished when a fire destroyed a mobile home at the DesFosses Trailer Park off Lafayette Road. The fire was discovered by a neighbor about 2:30 A.M. Some residents attempted to reach the victims trapped inside the blazing mobile home but they were forced back by the intense heat. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July 1 - Five additional permanent men were appointed. This was done to reduce the work week of the present force from 74 hours per week to 63. (Annual Report)

Services of the Department:

- Total Calls Answered: 1122
- Bell Alarms 71 (29 false)
- Still Alarms 336 (16 out of town)
- Miscellaneous Calls 94
- Ambulance Calls 621

**1963** January 24 - Firefighters faced icy winds and during an early morning fire at Ladd's Ice Cream on Sagamore Avenue. Dense smoke billowed from the building for close to an hour during the stubborn blaze while cans of ice cream created numerous small explosions. Flames and sparks also emanated from a transformer at the rear of the structure hampering firefighting efforts until the power was shut off by the utility company. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 19 – Christ Episcopal Church at 120 Madison Street was virtually destroyed by a late afternoon fire. The 81 year old English type fieldstone and wood edifice was a roaring inferno of flame as firemen battled the blaze, which was fanned by a brisk south-east wind. More than 1000 sightseers rushed to the area, somewhat hampering the firemen's work, and a drop in hydrant pressure was reported before the second alarm was sounded. The flames at one point threatened the nearby parsonage when they burst through the church's west side windows. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1964** March 13 – A two –alarm roaring fire tore through one of downtown’s oldest business blocks and at its height threatened to spread into the adjacent Colonial Theater. The fire broke out shortly after 11 o’clock behind the Clipper Restaurant on Congress Street and spread from a covered alleyway into the upper floor and roof area of the building. A blast of undetermined origin tore through the structure as firemen fought the blaze, and showered a crowd standing on Congress Street with flying glass from two store fronts. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Six overhead doors were installed at the Central Fire Station at a cost of \$2100.00.

**1965** June 6 – A blaze destroyed the Barn Restaurant on Lafayette Road shortly after 9:30 at night. Flames shot more than 100 feet into the air at the height of the blaze and could be seen for miles around as the fire devoured the big building, which was 100 feet long and 35 feet wide. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 8 -A new Howe 750 GPM pumper was delivered and put in service.

November 4 – Driven by gale-force winds, a brush fire raged out of control between Sagamore Creek and Little Harbor, destroying property as it went, including two houses at 781 Sagamore Road. The fire started at the Jones Avenue Dump, raced along the banks of the creek, jumped the road just north of the Sagamore Creek Bridge, and traveled unchecked into the area of Little Harbor. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1966** September 20 – A Seybolt Oil Company truck burst into flames as it began to unload about 1,800 gallons of fuel oil at Iafolla Construction Company on Peverly Hill Road. The driver, a 46 year-old Portsmouth man, was seriously burned and two Portsmouth firefighters were injured at the scene. Firefighters battled the blaze and continually kept water running on the huge asphalt tank located by the burning truck. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

November 2 – About 25 firefighters battled a fire at Radio Station WBBX which was reported to the fire department at 12:45 a.m. by a man who drove by and saw flames shooting through the roof of the structure. Located off of Islington Street, the building was destroyed, but the station was expected to be back on the air sometime the next day. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

A new sub-station was being built on Lafayette Road to house a tank truck and reserve engine.

There were 133 fire alarm (signal) boxes in the city.

Organization: 1 Chief, 2 Deputies, 1 Fire Alarm Superintendent

- 4 groups of an average of nine each
- Hours of duty: 24 on, 24 off for four days, then have 3 days off.

Apparatus: 6 Engines (three 750 and three 500 GPM.), 1 Ladder (85’), 1 Ambulance, 1 Pick-up and 1 Chief’s Car.

**1967** September 25 - The New "Sub Fire Station" on Lafayette Road was completed and manned for a cost of \$78,500.00. Engines 3 and 5 were transferred from the Central Station to the Sub-Station. The Station was manned by two shifts of one lieutenant and four privates each shift. The flagpole was donated by Miss Alice Marden in memory of Chief Herbert Marden (1903-1904). *Fire Chief Ernest Weeks*

November 11 – A two-year-old baby died in bed from smoke inhalation and his 11-month old brother was hospitalized with burns following a kitchen fire of an apartment on Russell Street. Fire Chief Ernest Weeks said the kitchen was well alight on arrival of the firemen, who succeeded in preventing flames from spreading to the other parts of the house. The children were alone in the house when fuel from a leaky oil burner in the kitchen caught fire. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

A Ford Maxim 750 GPM / 500 gallon tank was purchased. Also a new  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton was purchased to replace the Chevrolet pickup which was turned over to the Wire and Pole Inspector.

**1968** March 6 – Flames swept through the office building at the Iofolla Construction Co. on Peverly Hill Road. By 2 o'clock the flames seemed to be under control, but there was an intense smoke inside the building requiring firemen to use their air-packs. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July 15 - A new Superior Coach Ambulance on a Pontiac Chassis was delivered to the department at a cost of \$10,497.00. (*Annual Report*)

December 28 – A spectacular \$250,000.00 fire destroyed the Rockingham Electric Supply Company. The two-alarm blaze ripped through the firm's large one story main structure at the corner of Court and Washington Streets and quickly engulfed two adjoining buildings – one used for a warehouse and the other a combination warehouse and office. Some 60 firefighters from Portsmouth were aided by firemen from Kittery and the Naval Shipyard, as they sought to extinguish the fire through the pall of heavy smoke and flying embers. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

There were seven deaths by fire during the year. Five children died in a fire at 765 Islington Street on December 22 and two men died in a fire at 31 Sudbury Street on March 23.

**1969** November 27 – Fire Department officials said that the Thanksgiving Day fire at the Mark H. Wentworth Home on Pleasant Street that claimed the life of former City of Portsmouth tax collector J. Warren Somerby was caused by smoking materials. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1969** December 11 – The Dolphin Hotel and adjoining Red Coach Grill were destroyed by a spectacular fire. Fire Chief Ernest Weeks said the men of his department and neighboring departments deserve the highest praise for their success in keeping the raging flames from even touching adjoining buildings. Without such prompt action, the whole of downtown could have been destroyed. The Dolphin was formerly known as the National Hotel. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department:

- Bell Alarms 100 (47 False)
- Still Alarms 311 (12 out of town)
- Ambulance Calls 818
- Miscellaneous Calls 269
- Total 1,498

Because of crowded conditions, an additional office was built next to the Office of the Chief. Also, a fourteen foot plastic boat, trailer, and all equipment necessary for rescue work had been secured. *Fire Chief Ernest Weeks*

**1970** January 22 –Fire and smoke engulfed the top story of the McIntosh Building; 62 Congress St. while firefighters from the Portsmouth Fire Department attempted to swamp it. Firemen struggled to hoist fire hoses up to the third and fourth stories to kill the fire. Adding to their difficulties were the temperatures –which hovered around zero-and gusts of wind. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

August 1 - new 80' 900 Series Aero-Chief, American LaFrance snorkel delivered. Cost: \$65,000.00; 1 of only 171 built by American LaFrance. Reg.# 12-1-2090  
During the year an intensive training program was undertaken under the directions of Captains Glenn Smith and Eugene Hersey.

December 5- A smoky and stubborn fire in the Old Warehouse on Market Street kept firefighters busy for most of the evening and early morning. Firemen had three pumpers and a ladder truck at the scene and Kittery Fire Department also sent a pumper. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department: 1917 Total Calls of which 935 were Ambulance Calls.

**1971** November – City Council voted not to sound alarm (fire) on false alarms.

December – The City Council accepted recommendation that a tone-alert system for fires be denied and the present whistle system be continued.

The emergency telephone number for the fire department was 427-1127

**1972** April 1 – Fourteen new call men were added to the department, bringing the total to 28. All call members were put through a 10 week training course under the direction of Captains Smith and Hersey.

Department Activities reported from January 1, 1971 through June 30, 1972 were:

- Bell Alarms – 148
- Still Alarms – 510
- Ambulance Calls – 1502
- Inspections – 381
- Miscellaneous - 266

Budget: \$645,780.00

Employees: 46

**1973** February 1 - A pre-dawn fire engulfed the Fisherman's Pier Restaurant on State Street. The first alarm was called in at 5:21 a.m. with the area box alarm ringing in two minutes later. The first firefighting companies were faced with heavy fire consuming the river end of the building with concerns of flying sparks endangering the waterfront area including Strawberry Banke. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 25 -On a bitterly cold Saturday night, flames engulfed the Dondero Elementary School in Elwyn Park, destroying the building and leaving more than 500 school-age children classrooms. Cause believed to be electrical or some other type of accidental cause. The school was rebuilt. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

An American LaFrance 1500 GPM pumper was delivered to the department. After delivery it was found to have been in a flood and there fore returned to the company. A new 1000 GPM would arrive in May or June of 1974.

**1974** April - The Portsmouth Fire Department assisted in the formation and became a charter member of the Seacoast Chief Fire Officer's Association; a regional fire mutual aid organization of NH seacoast fire departments.

The hours worked by the firefighters were reduced from 63 to 48. As a result, 14 firefighters were added to the force. These recruits were indoctrinated to the fire service as they hammered out three weeks at the 1<sup>st</sup> NH Firefighter Recruit School held at the NH Technical College in Portsmouth.

First Opticom® traffic pre-emption system installed in collaboration with Portsmouth Police Department.

**1975** January 21 – Portsmouth Firefighter Edmund G. “Big Ed” Gwizdala dies of a heart attack. Firefighter Gwizdala was on duty at Station 2 and not feeling well, was transported by the crew to the hospital where he died a short time later. In his obituary dated, Fire Chief Donald Lane said that his death was on the department record as “died in the line of duty”. He is not listed at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial, but is with the International Association of Firefighters Line of Duty Death Database.

December 1 – Three firefighters were hospitalized for smoke inhalation from a blaze that gutted a three-story apartment building at Patriots Park on Lafayette Road. Seven fire departments battled dense black smoke and towering flames which erupted from the roof. The fire came in as a still alarm at 1:24 p.m. and the first truck arriving at the scene called back the box alarm at 1:29 p.m. a general alarm was sounded 20 minutes later.  
*(Portsmouth Herald)*

Twelve members of the department were working on a degree in fire protection offered by the N H Technical Vocational College.

A new Auxiliary Generator was installed in the Central Station

Services of the Department:

- Bell Alarms 135
- Still Alarms 523
- Total number of fires 272
- Structural fires 109
- Non-Structural fires 110
- Transportation fires 53
- Ambulance Calls 1,433
- Misc Calls 400
- Out of Town Calls (Mutual Aid) 11

**1976** January 10 – A stubborn fire gutted Smith Office Equipment Co. and an adjacent residential structure on Islington Street. Eight firefighters suffered minor injuries during the five hour long battle. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

National Registry Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program taught to members of the department for the first time.

An American LaFrance Aerial was delivered at a cost of \$132,500.00. It was ordered in October 1975 and was specified to have a four section, steel aerial ladder, hydraulically operated.

The department received a Type I, Class I modular ambulance for \$24,000.00; an Excellence ambulance on a Chevrolet C-30 chassis.

**1977** Chief Long established the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Control. Deputy George I. Pierce was hired to head the bureau.

October 7 – Two alarm fire at the Dexter Shoe Factory Outlet on Congress Street. The fire was discovered shortly before 4 a.m. by Captain Carl Ward of the Portsmouth Police Department who had just stepped out of the station and saw smoke and a glare in the sky near the downtown area. A box alarm rang in at almost the same time and brought two engines and the ladder to the scene. A second alarm was quickly struck by Lieutenant John Downs. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December - The department took delivery of a 100' American LaFrance Ladder Truck at a cost of \$133,500.00.

Services of the Department: 912 Fire Calls, 1048 Ambulance (emergency) and 167 Ambulance (non-emergency)

The standard on protective gear for firefighters was established and all firefighters were issued eye shields.

All newly appointed firefighters are assigned to a 5 day work week rather than shift work so as to better expose for orientation and indoctrination. They are assigned to a regular shift when they have met the requirements satisfactory. *Chief Paul G. Long*

**1978** June – The City Council voted to do away with the 8:30 A.M. and 9:00 P.M. fire whistle. They did vote to blow the fire horn every day at noon.

July 1 – The hours of duty worked by firefighters were reduced from 48 to 42.

July 26 - Firefighters were called to two separate fires Wednesday evening at Ricci Supply Company located at 105 Bartlett Street. About thirty stacks of lumber were damaged in the first blaze, while the second flare-up caused minor damage to a single pile. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

“All firefighters and officers have taken a 104 hour “firefighting” course from the NH Fire Standards Commission”. *Chief Paul Long*

All Personnel were required to participate in CPR training every six months. EMT refresher was 24 hours. Three new EMT's had completed a 101 hour course.

**1979** April 14 - The businesses of the Webb Oil Co. and Callahan Oil Co. at 3000 Lafayette Road were destroyed during a two alarm. The fire was the result of a suspected safe robbery in which the would-be burglar's attempts at opening the safe with a torch went terrible wrong. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1979** June – The City Council voted 6-3 to award the bid to Maxim Industries, Inc, for a new 1500 GPM. pumper for the Fire Department in the amount of \$82,571.

July 12 - Atherton's Furniture on Islington Street was leveled by a three-alarm fire. A towering column of smoke was visible from many parts of the city soon after the alarm was turned in around 8:40 p.m. The first fire truck arriving on scene was narrowly missed by flying debris as part of the storefront exploded. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1980** February 3 – “Blaze at Model Upholstery located at 230 Maplewood Avenue leveled building”. The first box rang in at 8:03 p.m. and shortly thereafter the first truck wheeled up to the scene to find heavy fire and smoke conditions. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

March – The City Council held a public hearing on an Ordinance amending Firemen's Residency Requirements and voted to pass.

October 13 - A three-alarm fire raced through the six-story McIntosh Building on Congress and Fleet Streets destroying the upper two stories and forcing residents to abandon their belongings as they evacuated. (*Portsmouth Herald*)  
Department takes delivery of the Maxim pumper.

Services of the Department:

- Total Number of Fire Alarms (All Causes): 1044
- Ambulance Emergency Calls: 1212
- Non-Emergency Calls: 323

**1981** January 20 - Howard Johnson's Restaurant at the Portsmouth Traffic Circle was extensively damaged by a fire. Intense heat caused the orange roof to collapse, as firefighters fought to bring it under control. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

January 30 - An FB 111A bomber from Pease AFB crashed into multiple units in Seacrest Village (known presently as Spinnaker Point) in a ball of flames. The plane went down in a thunderous explosion, setting one building on Circuit Road completely aflame and starting fires in others. In what authorities are regarding as a near miracle, there were no reported serious injuries. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 16 and 17 – Fires at a riverfront building and a religious school kept firefighters busy within a 24-hour span. The first was an early morning blaze at a brick and wooden structure that housed the Oar House at 55 Ceres Street. A second alarm was struck and according to Chief Long the restaurant received heavy smoke and water damage, while Salamanders Glass above (143 Market Street) received moderate damage. The second fire was discovered by Portsmouth policemen at 1:35 AM on February 17 at the Bethel Christian Academy, formerly the Atlantic Heights School, on Bedford Way. That fire destroyed the two-classroom west wing of the building. (*Portsmouth Herald*).

**1981** According to Deputy Chief George Pierce, the largest fire loss in recent history occurred during the 12 month period from July 1, 1980 through June 30, 1981. Claims for the fiscal 1980 year exceeded 2 million dollars, obliterating the previous record of \$874,000.00 set just the previous fiscal year. There were 21 working fires from July 1980 to June 1981. Those with the most financial impact were: The McIntosh Block (accounting for \$750,000.00), Howard Johnson's, Salamandra Glass, The Oar House Restaurant, Atlantic Heights School, and Shop and Go Market.

**1982** October 6 - Department took delivery of a new, "chrome yellow", 1982 Mack model CF686, triple combination, 1500 GPM custom pumper for a cost of \$118,875.00.

The Safety Committee recommended the purchase of the Cairns Metro #600 fire helmet which has been approved by N.I.O.S.H. and O.S.H.A. The first five helmets have been received and will be established as a standard for the department.

The inventory of equipment maintained during the period from July 1, 1981 to June 30, 1982 consisted of five pumpers, two aerials, two ambulances, one fire alarm service truck (aerial) and three utility vehicles. Additionally included was miscellaneous equipment such as gasoline powered generators, rescue saws, out-board motor and small tools. Two new vehicles were placed in service during the same period; a 1982 Ford Utility Van and a 1981 Ford Wheeled Coach Ambulance.

"The new ambulance has thus far presented few maintenance problems with a resulting saving in down time and repair costs. The 1976 Chevrolet Excellence ambulance is now operating in reserve status." *Captain Edward Tully, Maintenance Officer*

**1983** July 15 – A Three alarm fire severely damaged a complex of buildings that once housed the Frank Jones Brewery between Islington and Albany Streets. The fire began on the upper floor of a warehouse owned by Smith Office Supply and spread through the roof into the adjoining NH Provisions Company. The massive blaze erupted in the early afternoon and kept firefighters busy for more than five hours. Four hours into the fire, a towering column of thick black smoke hung over the scene, obscuring the flames shooting from the roof of the elevator tower. It was reported by one witness that the smoke could be seen as far away as Rye Beach. Fifteen fire departments in the Seacoast either had crews at the scene or covering city stations. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

September 14- Chief Paul Long purchased a white 1984 Chevrolet Impala to replace a 1977 Dodge Wagon to serve as the fire chief's car.

September 16 - Fire broke out Friday, at 11:23 p.m. on Hill Street and quickly went out of control, and razed an entire city block. The bakery was reduced to a pile of debris, and tenements at 35 Autumn St, and 299 Hanover St, also were destroyed. Residential structures at 126 Hill St., 83 Tanner St., 317 Hanover St., and 319 Hanover St., sustained varying amounts of damage. Seven buildings damaged, destroyed; more than 100 are evacuated. The blaze was believed to be an arson fire that started in the bakery, a 100 year-old structure fronting Hill Street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1983** November 6 - A three alarm fire destroyed the roof and eight classrooms in the older section of the New Franklin Elementary School just off Dennet Street. Over sixty firefighters from eight communities battled the blaze which was reported just after 8 o'clock in the evening. Arriving fire crews were met with heavy flames blowing out of five windows in the rear of the first floor. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 20- Fire raced through a two-story house at 31 Pine Street Tuesday night, claiming the lives of four children in the worst fatal fire the city has seen in more than a decade. An alarm was received from Box 161 at Stark and Thorton Streets at 7:15 p.m. and a telephone call was received just as fire crews manning two engines and a ladder left the central station. According to Deputy Pierce the house was fully engulfed in fire when crews arrived. Firefighters made numerous attempts to get into the 2 ½ story house at the height of the early evening blaze but were driven back by the flames and intense heat. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1984** February 13 - The first female firefighter, Kathleen Nelson, appointed to the department.

Services of the Department (Fiscal Year 1984):

- Total number of fire responses 684
- Structural 284
- Non-Structural 200
- Transportation 192
- Mutual Aid 8
- False Alarms (Malicious) 88
- Faulty Alarms (due to weather, malfunction, or accidental) 175
- Medical Aid Response Calls 168
- Ambulance Emergency Calls 968
- Non-Emergency Ambulance Calls (transfers) 154
- First Alarms 6
- Multi Alarms 4

Permanent Department

- 1 Fire Chief
- 2 Deputies
- 4 Captains
- 4 Lieutenants
- 44 Firefighters
- 1 Administrative Clerk
- 1 Clerk Typist

Call Department

- 3 Captains
- 3 Lieutenants
- 14 Firefighters

**1985** May 5 - The Kearsarge Steam Fire Engine Historical Association, Inc chartered, as a non-profit organization to the preservation of the rich history of firefighting in Portsmouth. Seven years earlier an anonymous benefactor donated a leather fire helmet which ignited the interest of many members to form the Portsmouth Firefighters Historic Commission.

December 18 – A steel-framed storage shed at Grossman’s Lumber on Lafayette Road was declared “almost a total loss” following an early morning fire discovered around 4:30 a.m. Deputy Chief George Pierce said that when the fire trucks arrived at the scene, the 40 by 100 foot structure was fully involved.

**1986** June 10 - A stubborn three alarm blaze severely damaged a 185 year old vacant structure at 44 High Street. In an attempt to get ahead of the fire and protect exposures, the standpipes of the adjacent parking garage were employed by firefighters. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

October 11- Two people died and a third was seriously injured in a 3 a.m. fire that turned a three-story apartment house at 314 Islington Street into an inferno. The spectacular blaze gutted the gray, six-unit building, and part of the roof caved in. Damage was especially evident at the rear where porches had collapsed and the walls badly charred. Fire Department Captain Ralph DiBernardo said that on the arrival of firefighters, the building was fully engulfed in flames and the houses on each side of the tightly packed area were threatened. Both a second and third alarm were called in on the fire. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

The City Council authorized four additional firefighters and a fire prevention “person” to be added to the department; bringing the organization to a total of 60 firefighting personnel. Twenty firefighters are Emergency Medical Technicians and all others are Red Cross Advanced First Aid qualified with additional training in patient assessment, oxygen therapy and vehicle extrication. All newly assigned personnel were trained to the EMT level.

**1987** January 16 – a new 1986 Ford E 350 XL van ambulance manufactured by Wheeled Coach Corp. was put in service. The new ambulance cost \$34,950.00

March - Portsmouth Fire Commission approved by city vote. In 1988, the first commissioners were appointed by Mayor. After 1990, the citizens of the city elected the members. The Commission was charged to work on policy and administrative matters within the department, being a level between Fire Chief and City Council.

April – A new Mack pumper ordered with an expected delivery date of December.

Services of the Department: 1345 Fire, 1285 Ambulance with 8 transfers.

**1988** January 1 –Fire Commissioners Raimond Bowles, Shelia Loch, and William Keefe begin their first term. All three were appointed by Mayor Keenan for two years. All future commissioners would be elected by the citizens.

January 28 - The fire department demonstrated new breathing apparatus at the Public Hearing on the Budget. The current bottles were 33 lbs and made of steel where the new bottles were aluminum / wrapped in fiberglass and weighed only 22 lbs. The new apparatus also had three sizes of face masks available.

February 5- A 1987 E-One Hush II Custom Pumper on a Federal Motors Chassis (Serial number 5503) with a 1500 GPM Hale pump is received by the department. The department leased the vehicle and paid 3 equal installments of \$44,679.28 that was paid off on January 8, 1990.

November 28 – Two engines and a ladder were dispatched to a report of a fire on the tugboat Eugenia Moran that was tied up off Ceres Street shortly after 1:45 a.m. The fire was contained to the boiler room where firefighters battled the blaze with foam.  
*(Portsmouth Herald)*

**1989** January 8 – An elderly woman perished in a house fire in the city’s South End. The woman died at approximately 10 a.m. when a fire of unknown origin ripped through the kitchen of her 19<sup>th</sup> century, 2 ½ story Salter Street home. More than 50 firefighters responded to the two-alarm blaze after the woman’s backyard neighbor Raimond Bowles, who serves as fire commission chairman, contacted the department after he spotted the fire from his bedroom window. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

July 23 - A five alarm fire broke out at 1:45 am at the Standard Plumbing and Heating on Market Street. Upon arrival, firefighters found both the second and third floors heavily involved at the 126-128 Market Street location with fire extending the adjacent 116-118 addresses. At the height of the fire, crews pumped water from the Piscataqua River to supplement the large volumes required to contain and extinguish the blaze. The building was used for storage prior to the fire. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

November 6 - Fire destroyed the Rug Merchants and former Softworks stores at Deer Street Depot at 165 Deer Street. The location was the former B&M freight shed.  
*(Portsmouth Herald)*

**1990** June 13 – A three alarm fire at the Schultz Meat Specialties plant located at 698 Islington Street caused extensive damage but no injuries at a building that has suffered at least two previous fires. More than 100 firefighters from the Port City and 15 area departments surrounded the former Frank Jones building. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

Emergency telephone numbers: 436-5000 (Fire), 436-1127 (Ambulance)

**1991** January 25 – Two firefighters received minor injuries when a three-alarm blaze seriously damaged a building at Beechstone Luxury Apartments. Three apartments were destroyed and five others were heavily damaged. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 4 – A new red and white 1990 Medtec SQX-B type I ambulance on a Ford F-379 chassis received by the department at a cost of \$59,890.00.

February 16 – Police treated the death of an elderly couple in a fire at Mariner’s Village (today’s Spinnaker Point) as a double homicide. The fire was discovered by a security guard who spotted smoke at 74 Rockhill Avenue and called the fire department at 1:32 a.m. Some 42 firefighters from Portsmouth, Kittery and Rye extinguished the two-alarm blaze by 2:36 a.m. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

May 3- A five-alarm fire destroyed Ricci Lumber and Hardware Supply Co. and caused an estimated 2 million dollars of damage. Two firefighters received minor injuries battling the blaze. During the fire, a series of small explosions near the entrance sent debris flying towards firefighters. At its height, balls of flames burst through the roof some 50 feet into the air. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 1816, Ambulance Calls: 1419

**1992** June 13 – Fire ripped through a 200 foot long, two-story building at the site of New England Homes Inc. on Freeman’s Point (adjacent to I-95 and Atlantic Heights), destroying the building and igniting piles of huge logs on the ground nearby. The building, which was a warehouse and offices, was fully engulfed in fire when crews arrived at the scene about 9:10 p.m. Within a few minutes, plumes of flame and smoke shot 50 to 60 feet into the night sky. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1993** Department opens Station 3 at the former Pease Air Force Base’s structural fire fighting station. It closes in 1995 for three years and then re-opens.

Fire dispatching duties were transferred to a combined Fire and Police “Central Dispatch” center at the Portsmouth Police Station.

The department established a second staffed ambulance.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System implemented.

Rehabilitation efforts began at the Central Fire Station

**1994** May 16 - The Firefighter Monument, created by blacksmith Peter Hapney of Portsmouth, was dedicated at Station 2 on Lafayette Road.

Department received two Central States “quints” on International 4900 chassis

**1995** April 7 – A man firefighters dragged from his still smoldering apartment at 69 Prospect Street was rushed by ambulance to the hospital in critical condition suffering from smoke inhalation and burns. Firefighters rescued the man shortly after the blaze began, about 9 p.m. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

March 15 – A new 1995 Type III F 350 Ford ambulance delivered.

August 8 - The vacant three-story wooded and brick house next to Kline's Furniture was destroyed in five-alarm arson blaze which started around 3 a.m. The suspected arsonist walked into the police station around 4 a.m., carrying a can of lighter fluid, and turned himself in as the fire was ripping through the vacant home at 33 Islington Street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

EMT-Intermediate level service provided by department.

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2157, Ambulance Calls: 1844

**1996** September 20 – An early morning second alarm fire that swept through a Broad Street apartment claimed the life of a man, but firefighters rescued his wife who suffered smoke inhalation. Chief Plummer said several rooms on the first floor were destroyed in the fire and the second floor sustained smoke damage. (*Fosters Daily Democrat*)

December 3 – It took 35 firefighters and eight fire vehicles about 45 minutes to get a two-alarm blaze under control at a vacant 2 story duplex at 56-58 Maple Drive on the Pease Tradeport. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 5- A new 1995 Ford Type III red and white ambulance was in service.

The department replaced the 100' American LaFrance ladder truck with a new 110' aerial with a 1500 gallon per minute Hale® pump. It was built by Central States on a HME chassis.

**1997** March 20 –A smoldering coal fire on the cargo ship Andreas A. that was docked at

October 17 – A two-alarm fire that broke out at 5:58 a.m. ripped through a residence at 736 Middle Street. Arriving units were met with heavy fire upon arrival. The fire was under control in about an hour and a half. Two firefighters suffered minor injuries and were transported to Columbia Portsmouth Regional Hospital. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 15 - The department responded to a three alarm blaze that destroyed the top floors of 383 Maple Avenue. Two firefighters, along with a friend of the family who rescued an occupant were injured in the blaze. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1997** Portsmouth Hazardous Material Technicians became key members of the Seacoast Chief Fire Officer's Association START (Seacoast Technical Assistance Response Team) Hazardous Materials mutual aid response group.

Renovation of second floor at Station 1 (Central Station) eliminated the "large hall" and created individual bedrooms, while also updating utilities, environmental systems, and living spaces.

**1998** August 4 –The Portsmouth Fire Department reopened Station 3, moving in staff, a multipurpose engine and ambulance after a three-year absence. The station, at the intersection of Rye Street and International Drive, was staffed around the clock by one lieutenant and two firefighters. The three responded first to calls at the tradeport and in the northwestern section of the city. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

September 11 - A two-alarm fire roared through an abandoned building on Corporate Drive at the Pease International Tradeport. The building is one of several that served as quarters for Air Force officers and their families at Pease Air Force Base before the buildings and the base were closed in 1989. A similar fire ripped through another building in this area back in June, at 117 Rye St. Fire Chief Plummer said there have been five fires in the general area in the past two years. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

September – The department was awarded \$32,000 from the Foundation for Seacoast Health and \$71,000 in city funds so five city firefighters could begin an intense, two-year course to become EMT- Paramedics; the five were Todd Germain, Rick Condon, Brian Lulek, Bob Hunsaker, and David Burns.

November 3 - Firefighters knocked down a fully involved blaze in an abandoned four-unit home at Pease International Tradeport during the night. "All available hands" were summoned shortly after 8 p.m. when flames were reported coming from the two-story, wood-frame building at 74-80 Spruce Drive. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**1999** March 3 – Ambulance 1, a new red and white Type III 1640SD ambulance manufactured by Marque, Inc of Goshen, IN was delivered.

June 13 - Four Alarm fire at 2821 Lafayette Rd across from White Birch Plaza. A vacant large 2.5 story colonial house was heavily involved on arrival of the Station 2 companies.

Shift Staffing: 52 for three stations. 3 Chief Officers, 1 Fire Marshal

**2000** January - Five Portsmouth firefighters completed a one year Paramedic Program and soon after Paramedic level Ambulance service begins. By October the department boasted a total of 11 paramedics.

April 24 - Portsmouth Professional Fire Officers Association Local 4039 of the IAFF chartered.

May 20 through 24- The Department participated in Exercise TOPOFF (Top Officials) 2000, a congressionally mandated, "no-notice" national exercise designed to assess the nation's crisis and consequence management capability by exercising the plans, policies, procedures, systems, and facilities through local, state, and Federal responses to geographically-dispersed terrorist threats and acts.

July 1 - An early morning fire at 49 Dennett Street left one person dead. Evelyn Jaburek, 62, was killed when she ignited a fire while smoking in bed, according to the state fire marshal. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July - Department purchased first thermal imaging camera.

August - The Call division of department discontinued.

November 9 - Firefighters from all around the Seacoast battled a three-alarm blaze that destroyed Antiques Etc., located on Albany Street. Curious onlookers began gathering at about 10:30 p.m. when the building was smothered in white smoke. A few minutes later, flames burst forth from the front of the structure, sending cinders into the night sky. At 10:50 p.m. a deep, throaty alarm rang out to warn anyone that may have been inside the buildings to get out. Firefighters positioned themselves on all sides of the Antiques Etc. building and on the roof of a structure just across the street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

E-One Sentry 1500 GPM rescue-pumper purchased -in service at Station 1 as Engine 1. Manufactured by E-One of Ocala, FL.

Organization: 56 Shift, 3 Chief Officers, 1 Fire Marshal

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2735, Ambulance Calls: 2546

**2001** May 2 - Fifty firefighters from 13 Seacoast departments battled a five-alarm brush fire into the evening Wednesday on a remote strip of woodlands adjacent to Ocean Road. Portsmouth Fire Chief Ricky Plummer said it will be nearly impossible to pinpoint the origin of what can only be considered a suspicious fire. The first alarm sounded at 3:30 p.m. and consumed nearly six acres before firefighters were able to steal its breath. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2001** August 15 - A suspected arson fire at Portsmouth High School destroyed a first-floor office and caused smoke damage throughout the gym and a locker room. A passerby reported the blaze just before 3:30 a.m. Portsmouth firefighters arrived quickly and extinguished the flames within a half-hour. (*Portsmouth Herald*)  
Services of the Department: Total Number of Fire Alarms (All Causes): 2640  
Ambulance Calls: 2611

**2002** January 29 – A new Type III 2001 Ford F-450 Road Rescue “Ultramedic” ambulance received for a cost of \$98,235.00. Purchased from Specialty Vehicles of North Attleboro, MA.

February 19 – Eleven tenants were left homeless Tuesday night when a two-alarm fire consumed a four-unit building located at 46 and 48 Columbia Street. The fire crept up into the walls and stretched into the ceilings and roof, forcing firefighters to take a defensive operation — an aerial attack from Portsmouth's ladder trucks. After knocking down the fire, crews went inside to battle smaller pockets of fire. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

August - Scott Air-Pak 50 SCBA purchase completed for a cost of \$100,000.00

December 10 - An early morning, three-alarm fire consumed a two-story antique barn and nearly engulfed two other adjacent buildings at the Urban Forestry Center Tuesday. No one was injured in the blaze, which completely devastated the wood-frame storehouse. The fire destroyed the contents of the barn. At 5:27 a.m., the Portsmouth fire department received an emergency 911 call from the caretaker reporting a fire in progress at 45 Elwyn Road. Upon the arrival of Ladder 2, firefighters observed heavy fire on the second floor and the rear of the building, according to Deputy Fire Chief Steven Achilles. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2003** January 8 – A Type III Ford F-450 AEV “TraumaHawk” ambulance delivered to department at a cost of \$98,244.00

March 24 - Flames rose more than 40 feet in the air above 1039 Islington Street early Monday. A passerby reported heavy smoke at 1:20 a.m., and an engine arrived on the scene in less than three minutes. Even with the swift response, all the offices inside were damaged by smoke, water or fire. The two-alarm fire brought more than 50 firefighters from Portsmouth, North Hampton, Hampton, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Kittery, Rye, Exeter, Newington and Dover. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2004** February 6- The department received and installed 24 Motorola® Astro model digital capable mobile radios in all apparatus as part of the state-wide interoperability initiative. The funds were made available through State of NH Homeland Security Grant.

December 21 - An early morning fire gutted an apartment at the Gosling Meadows housing complex Tuesday, forcing one resident to jump out of a second-story window to escape the heat and smoke. It took firefighters 50 minutes to get the fire under control as smoke gushed from the roof and eaves of the building. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2005** May 12- An E-One 75' Ladder "Sidestacker" Quint on a Hurricane Chassis boasting a 2000 GPM Hale® pump received by department. Cost \$566,627.00. Sold to department by Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, Inc of North Attleboro, MA.

October 7 - An early morning blaze on Madison Street at Lovell destroyed two condominiums that were under construction and threatened a third. The two-alarm fire destroyed the shell of future townhouses valued at more than half a million dollars each. It took firefighters about 40 minutes to get the fire on Madison Street under control. One three-story building was destroyed and the second was severely damaged. Flames and smoke could be seen from as far away as Mill Pond, according to a few witnesses. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

October 30 -Firefighters battled an afternoon fire at a multiple family residence at 389 Broad Street. The fire raged for about 45 minutes as crews fought the flames and smoke from both inside and atop the home. The first company found heavy smoke and fire on the second and third floors, Chief LeClaire said. To release the intense heat inside the building, two firefighters straddled the roof, hacking away with an ax and chain saw. Smoke poured from the windows, broken by firefighters inside. "The first crew took a beating, but they did a good job," according to LeClaire. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2270, Ambulance Calls: 2513

**2006** May 16- The department received 58 Motorola® XTS 2500 i digital capable portable radios as part of the state-wide interoperability initiative which were made available through a State of NH Homeland Security Grant.

July 3 – At 2:38 a.m. the department responded to 132 Middle Street after receiving a call reporting a fire at that location. When fire crews arrived, they found one man dead in the first-floor apartment of the eight-unit building. They also discovered another man trapped a second-floor apartment and were able to rescue him by ladder unharmed. Units from North Hampton, Newington and Kittery, Maine, also responded to the two-alarm fire, which was contained to one apartment on the first floor and was under control by 3:47 a.m. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

July 16- An E-One "Typhoon" Rescue Pumper with a 1500 GPM Hale® pump manufactured by Emergency One of Ocala, FL received by department. Cost of vehicle \$384,431.00 and was sold to department by Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, Inc of North Attleboro, MA.

July 25 - Eight city firefighters were injured fighting a Tuesday morning fire inside a new ash containment facility at Public Services of New Hampshire's Schiller Station. Four of the firefighters received first- or second-degree steam burns, and the others were treated for heat exhaustion. The fire was contained inside PSNH's new "bag house," built to catch and contain particulates released during wood and coal burning, and part of Schiller Station's new \$70 million plant upgrade. *(Portsmouth Herald)*

**2006** July 28 – A fast moving electrical storm with high winds destroyed part of a new spire on the North Church. The storm also toppled trees and downed wires throughout the city. One of the numerous lightning strikes sparked a small fire at the new Tyco Visitor Center on the grounds of Strawberry Banke. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

December 19 – The department took delivery of Fire Boat 1; a 33’ FireStorm Fire Boat with a 1740 GPM Darley pump at a cost of \$350,000.00. The boat was Mfg by Metalcraft Marine, Kingston Ontario and was purchased through NH Homeland Security Grant.

**2007** June 6- The department took delivery of a 2007 Ford E450 LifeLine ambulance at accost of \$131,787.00

September 28 - Fire Boat 1 was christened “Sagamore” by City Councilor Joanne Grasso at Prescott Park.

December 18 - For parishioners at the city’s historic South Church, the Portsmouth Fire Department became “The Grinch” who stole their Christmas trees. On Monday, church officials were advised the two large trees that stand in their sanctuary — and that have stood there every Christmas for a number of years — had to be removed by order of the Fire Department. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Completion of 5-year program to update and replaced fire alarm system city-wide – cost of \$150,000.00

City Council approved bonding of new District 2 (Lafayette Road) Station.

Fire Stations: Station 1 (Central Station): 170 Court Street, Station 2: 2700 Lafayette Road, Station 3: 127 International Drive

Apparatus:

- 4 Engines, 2 Ladders, 3 Ambulances, 1 Rescue
- 1 Fire Boat, 1 Forestry
- 3 Chief Officer Vehicles (SUV), 1 Inspector Vehicle
- 1 Pick-up, 1 Bucket / Alarm Truck, 2 Trailers, 2 Support vehicles / cars

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2595, EMS Calls: 2332

**2008** February 15 – A Ferrara 100’ Mid Mount Aerial Platform on an “Inferno” chassis delivered with a 2000 GPM. Hale® pump. Cost \$824,990.00

March 1 – An elderly man died in a fire that engulfed the interior of a 25 Clinton St. home late Saturday afternoon. Portsmouth Fire Chief Chris LeClaire said firefighters arrived at 5:13 p.m., six minutes after receiving the initial call, and were confronted by heavy smoke. The fire was put out by 5:45 p.m. and did not spread to adjoining houses in the neighborhood. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2008** May 8 - All permanent members issued a unique identification number based on their position within the chronological list of all permanent department employees since 1891. All members will maintain their identification number throughout their employment with the department.

August 2008 – City purchased land at 3000 Lafayette Road for site of new District 2 fire station.

September 28 – Renovation project to raise and widen the Station 1 apparatus bay doors began. Project included replacing the doors with energy efficient, historically accurate overhead doors that represent original 1919 design. Color of the doors: Essex green. Project cost \$280,000.00.

November 10 – The city council approved an additional \$1.5 million for the construction of the new District 2 fire station.

December 11 through 14 -. An estimated 200 to 500 thousand people in Maine and New Hampshire lost power as a result of the ice and rain storm that snapped trees and branches, littering roads and taking down power lines. In Portsmouth, a majority of the city is left in the dark, prompting a State of Emergency to be declared and a shelter opened at the high school. The fire department responds to over 250 calls over the three day period, including a structure fire at Camp Seawood on Banfield Road, a partition fire at City Hall, and a partition fire at 1345 Islington Street. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2009** January 13 - Six people were displaced by a quick-moving four alarm fire that caused heavy damage to an apartment building at 827 State Street. The fire broke out around 4 a.m. on a porch at the rear of the building and quickly extended through the upper floors and roof. Two firefighters, one from Portsmouth and another from Newington, were injured after slipping on ice formed when water used against the fire froze. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 23- Portsmouth Firefighting, a book authored by Assistant Chief Steven Achilles and published by Arcadia Publishing, was released.

March 25 – Construction began on the new Fire Station 2 at 3010 Lafayette Road.

October 15 - The 14½-foot-tall monument “Vigilance” was unveiled in front of more than 200 people at the Central Fire Station on Court Street. The art work depicts two firefighters standing on either side of an archway as orange water representing fire flowing down steps between them. The fruit of years of fund raising, planning and the work of well-known Canaan, NH artist Emile Birch was dedicated at a ceremony featuring members of the department both past and present.

December 1 – The fire department, along with National Wrecker Service of Portsmouth, began the restoration of the department’s 1950 85LS Mack Pumper.

**2009** December 21 – The department received a new 2009 AEV Type III ambulance on a Ford E-450 chassis for a cost of \$141,943.00. The unit was sold to the city by Professional Vehicle Corp of Rumford, Maine and came equipped with a Stryker Power Pro Cot stretcher for an additional cost of \$12, 575.00.

**2010** February 15 – Lethal levels of carbon monoxide that leaked inside the Hilton Garden Inn on Hanover and High Streets from a hot water heater exhaust vent malfunction sent 11 people to the hospital. A level one MCI was declared bringing in 8 area ambulances in addition to the departments 3 engines, ladder, and 3 ambulances. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

February 25-26 -A Thursday night rain storm, driven by 60 mph winds, knocked trees into homes, snapped poles, killed power and exhausted emergency responders. Cleanup continued throughout Friday when more than half the city was without power and officials were warning it could take days to restore it. The fire department responded to over 88 calls from 10 o'clock Thursday night through 1 o'clock Friday morning. As the storm was winding down, Tower 5 and Engine 1 were dispatched to a five- alarm conflagration at a block containing the Surf Hotel on Hampton Beach. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

May 13 – The department moved operations from Station 2 at 2700 Lafayette Road to the new station at 3010 Lafayette Road.

June 2 – A 5 alarm blaze at the Beechstone Apartment Complex destroyed apartments in units 15, 16, and 17. The fire broke out around 3:20 a.m. and quickly went to multiple alarms. The fire displaced 50 residents and three firefighters were injured. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

June 19 – Members of the city council, the city manager, the fire commission, and the public celebrated at the open house of the recently completed 3010 Lafayette Road fire station.

August 18 - A Manchester-area developer secured the highest bid for the former Fire Station 2 property and said he plans to treat the property as an investment opportunity. The 0.908-acre parcel of land at 2700 Lafayette Road went for \$550,000.

December 6 – The new Station 2 at 3010 Lafayette Road receives recognition as a Career Notable Design in the November issue of Fire Chief Magazine's 2010 Station Style Design Awards.

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2677, EMS Calls: 3102

**2011** February 1 – Three Alarm Fire at Schiller Station. No one was hurt after friction in a wood pellet crushing machine at Public Service of New Hampshire's Schiller Station set multiple floors of conveyor belts, chutes and ducts ablaze during a three-alarm fire. It took about 1 1/2 hours Monday afternoon to get the flames under control after a worker noticed a fire in one of the lines that grinds woodchips in the station's wood processing facility, according to Portsmouth Assistant Fire Chief Steve Achilles. (*Foster Daily Democrat*)

September 29 – The department took delivery of a 2011 E-One Rescue Pumper on a “Typhoon” chassis for a cost of \$434,858.00. The new engine has a 1500 GPM Hale® pump, 500 gallon water tank, a 30 gallon foam tank, and a 10 K generator. The vehicle was manufactured by Emergency One of Ocala, FL and sold to the department by Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, Inc of North Attleboro, MA.

November 1 – Firefighters from ten communities battled an early morning two-alarm fire early that caused significant damage to the home of city firefighter Sam Chase. A smoke alarm on the third floor of Chase’s two and one-half story, five-bedroom home woke Chase’s son and fiancée who were sleeping there at the time, said Chase. When he went up to check on their apartment, fire was “rolling across the ceiling” and a couch was in flames, he said. Assistant Fire Chief Steve Achilles said firefighters responded to the 604 Lincoln Avenue home at 2:58 a.m. and when the first firefighters arrived, flames and smoke were coming from a front window on the third floor. Two Portsmouth engines, a ladder truck and two ambulances were dispatched and attack lines were stretched from the second-floor porch, up to the third floor, he said. The second alarm was struck around 3:18 a.m. and brought in Hampton, New Castle, Kittery, Maine, Newington, North Hampton, Hampton, Dover, Rye and Exeter. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2012** January 2 – Due to an anticipated shortfall of close to \$150,000.00, the Fire Commission on the recommendation of Chief LeClaire reduced the on-duty staffing from 13 to 11; in essence closing Station 3 on International Drive. This short fall was a result of a FY 12 budget that failed to fund the department at the level requested by the Fire Commission and fire chief.

January 31 - Martha Laszlo, a 63-year-old homeowner of 214 Union Street died early Tuesday morning in a fire investigators say was caused by improper disposal of smoking materials. The fire started in the living room and was reported by a neighbor at 12:58 a.m. Crews arrived on scene at 1:01 a.m. to find heavy smoke and fire coming through the windows of the first floor. Achilles said firefighters from Engine 1 and Ambulance 1 were first on scene. He said the firefighters entered the residence before water was applied and located the victim in the living room area. “They put themselves in harm's way to affect a rescue,” Achilles said. The victim was still breathing when pulled from the burning home, but died of smoke inhalation later while at the hospital. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2012** February 6 - \$150K to open Fire Station 3 wins approval. It took nearly three hours of public comment and debate Monday night, but the City Council voted 6-3 in favor of a \$150,000 supplemental appropriation from the city's undesignated fund balance to provide the Fire Department funding to keep Station 3 at Pease International Tradeport operational. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

May 23 – Portsmouth Engines 1 and 3, Ambulances 1 and 2, Chief 2, and another company of four responded to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to assist the PNSY Fire Department in extinguishing a hazardous blaze on board the USS Miami; a Los Angeles Class submarine. The fire broke out around 6 p.m. and swept throughout the forward compartment. It was a 13-hour battle inside the USS Miami, a fight that required 100 or more firefighters working in shifts to put out the toxic blaze.

May 30 – Kearsarge Steam Fire Engine 3 Returns to Portsmouth. The fire department purchased the steamer from Bill Ruger, Jr, of Newport Falls, Newport, NH (a collector of antique fire engines) for the sum of \$95,000.00. The steamer was in the process of being restored by Andy Swift of Firefly Restorations of Hope, ME. Chief Christopher LeClaire and Assistant Chief Steven Achilles traveled to the Owl’s Head Transportation Museum in Maine to pick up the steam fire engine. Funds for the purchase were made available through a trust left to the fire department by the late Doctor Lloyd M. Horlick of Portsmouth.

**2013** February 1 – Five-alarm blaze hits Bow Street condos. Fire ripped through a riverfront condominium building at 135 Bow St. Friday night sending flames high into the air and smoke billowing through much of the downtown. The fire, which broke out around 6:30 p.m., sent flames through the third floor of the large brick building, through the attic and up to the roof. No one was injured in the blaze, but an elderly woman walking in the area at the time slipped on the ice that formed as a result of the fire hoses. Chief LeClaire said the blaze destroyed the center portion of the roof of the building and caused extensive damage throughout the inside of the entire structure. The fire was believed to have started in a chimney and spread into the ceiling, LeClaire said. (*Portsmouth Herald*).

June 7 – The department received a new 2013 AEV Type III ambulance on a Ford E-450 chassis for a cost of \$146,607.00. The unit was sold to the city by Professional Vehicle Corp of Rumford, Maine. This is the first red and white ambulance purchased since 1999.

June 12 – The department took delivery of 40 Scott Air-Pak 75s with Pak Alert. Total cost including spare cylinders and RIT packs was \$269,449.00. Sold to the department by Industrial Protection Services of Wilmington, MA.

**2013** June 30 – Three-Alarm Fire Hits Downtown. A three-alarm fire on a congested section of Daniel Street destroyed several apartments late Sunday afternoon, leaving the residents there at least temporarily homeless, Fire Chief Steve Achilles said. A firefighter suffered a minor injury fighting the fire at 38 Daniel St., underneath the hot sun and in oppressive humidity, but no one else was injured. Firefighters arrived to "heavy smoke in the second- and third-floor windows," of the four-story building, which sits immediately adjacent to two other buildings on either side. But they were able to bring the fire under control by 6 p.m. (*Portsmouth Herald*).

November 7 –At the annual meeting of the Federal Fire Society, Fire Chief Steven Achilles was unanimously voted in as a member.

November 18 – The department took delivery of a 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe for \$37,994.00 and a Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD LT 4WD crew cab pick-up for \$28,393.00.

**2014** February 14 - The city's newest cinema on Lafayette Road was temporarily closed Friday after a fire broke out in a heating unit on the rooftop of the new movie theater. Fire Chief Steve Achilles said crews were dispatched to Southgate Plaza around 5:40 a.m. after a plow driver noticed flames coming from the rooftop of the Cinemagic Stadium 10 Theater, which opened in late January. "They made access using the ladder truck and found that one of the rooftop heating units was fully involved in fire," he said. The fire then began to spread to surrounding roofing materials, but Achilles said crews were able to knock down flames using dry chemical extinguishers. An initial investigation into the fire indicates it was caused after a significant snow load began to build up against the unit, pulling the natural gas piping from the heating unit. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

July 15 - The Portsmouth Fire Department was awarded a \$15,000.00 Grant from the "Our New Hampshire Charitable Foundation", a fund of Northeast Auctions of Portsmouth and an advised fund within the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, towards the restoration of the City's steam fire engine "Kearsarge".

October 23 – The department took delivery of a 2015 Chevrolet Silverado LT 1500 crew cab 4x4 pick-up for \$31,000.00. The truck replaced a 2002 Ford Explorer.

**2015** February 15 - A Valentine's Day snowstorm, which dropped about 15 inches of snow on Portsmouth, led to the partial collapse of two roofs in Patriots Park and the evacuation of approximately 215 families. Firefighters were called to the Patriots Park apartment complex at 1:15 a.m. and determined that part of the roof over the third floor of building No. 4 at Patriots Park had partially collapsed under the weight of snow. At approximately 10 a.m., another partial roof collapse took place at Building 1 and the property management company made arrangements to shelter these residents. This storm was the most recent of many that had blanketed the region with close to 8 feet of snow in the last month. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

**2015** February 17 - The department received a new 2014 Horton Type I ambulance on an International TerraStar chassis for a cost of \$198,500.00. The ambulance was sold to the department by Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, Inc of North Attleboro, MA.

May 12 - A 51-year-old man was rushed to the hospital with life-threatening injuries following a fire on Islington Street. The fire was reported shortly after 7:30 p.m. at 1253 Islington Street. Portsmouth Fire Chief Steven Achilles said firefighters arrived to flames showing from the building's front and a report of a man inside. Achilles said firefighters made an aggressive entry into the home and rescued the man. (*Portsmouth Herald*). The man, Lawrence Duzynski, was transferred by helicopter from Portsmouth Regional Hospital to Mass General Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries 2 weeks later.

October 24 and 26 – Two fires in two days. The first fire broke out on October 24 at 3:06 PM at 42 Cutts Street. Shortly after arrival of Engine 1, heavy fire broke out a third floor window of the 3 –story, 4 unit residential structure. A second alarm was transmitted based on the size, age, and construction of the building. The fire was brought under control with an aggressive interior attack .The second fire occurred at 107 Stark Street on October 26 at 11:36 PM. Initial companies found heavy fire engulfing the back deck and rear outside wall of a single-family, 2-story home under renovation. A 2 ½” hand-line was stretched to the rear and quickly knocked down the bulk of the fire. The building required extensive overhaul.

November 11 – The department took delivery of a 2015 E-One Rescue Pumper on a “Typhoon” chassis for a cost of \$455,314.00. The new engine has a 1500 GPM Hale® pump and a 750 gallon water tank. The vehicle was manufactured by Emergency One of Ocala, FL and sold to the department by Greenwood Emergency Vehicles, Inc of North Attleboro, MA. The engine replaced the 1987 E-One “Hush” Pumper and went into service as Engine 3 at Station 3 on December 21.

December 9 – “Four-alarm fire burns through 1880 Portsmouth landmark.” A four-alarm fire at the Portsmouth Gas Light Co. building brought area fire departments, along with 60 to 75 firefighters, to battle a blaze that started in the first floor restaurant and burned through the roof, said Fire Chief Steven Achilles. The fire caused significant damage to the 1880 building, located at 64 Market Street. No one was injured and that a firewall between the Gas Light Co. building and adjacent buildings prevented the fire from spreading. According to the fire chief, the fire was first spotted at 10:08 a.m. by a fire crew training on the city's fire boat in the Piscataqua River. The crew radioed that heavy black smoke was seen coming from the area and all on-duty companies responded while at the same time multiple 911 call were received. The first firefighters on scene reported seeing heavy smoke at the rear of the building bordering Hanover Street. Firefighters who entered the restaurant from the Market Street side encountered flames on the first floor, near a chimney, in the kitchen. Firefighters then went to the roof, where flames were burning near the chimney. (*Portsmouth Herald*)

Services of the Department: Fire Calls: 2707, EMS Calls: 3316

***Chief Fire Wards / Chief Engineers***  
*1806 to 1853*

Austin, Daniel: 1806  
Boyd, William: 1807-09  
Storer, Clement: 1809  
Parrott, John F.: 1810  
Boyd, William: 1811  
Harris, Abe: 1812  
Storer, Clement: 1813  
Parrott, John F.: 1814-17  
Larkin, Samuel: 1817-25  
Rice, John: 1825-29  
Ladd, Alexander: 1829  
Wingate, Francis: 1830  
Bartlett, James: 1831  
Neal, Robert: 1832-34  
Goodwin, Ichabod: 1834  
Lord, Sampson B.: 1835  
Hadley, Josiah G.: 1836  
Goodwin, Ichabod: 1837  
Wendell, Jacob: 1838-1840  
Cotton, Leonard: 1840-46  
Ayers, Oliver: 1846-1850

***Chief Engineers / Fire Chiefs***

First City Chief Engineer: March 1850  
*Compensation 1850 to 1906 - \$100.00 per annum*

Ayers, Oliver: 1850 – 53	Marden, Herbert A.: 1891-95
Trundy, John: 1853-54	Randall, John D.: 1895-1903
Bufford, Marcellus, 1854-55	Marden, Herbert A.: 1903-04
Joy, Alfred T.: 1856	Randall, John D.: 1905
Norton, Thomas: 1857	Junkins, David E.: 1906-1908
Hadley, Josiah G.: 1858	Randall, John D.: 1909-1912
Cotton, Leonard: 1859	Woods, William F.: 1913-1927 *
Hadley, Josiah G.: 1859*	(*Call Chief Engineer)
Maine, Charles E.: 1860-61	Woods, William F.: 1927-1938**
Moran, John H.: 1862-66	(** <i>Permanent Chief Engineer</i> )
Grogan, John H. : 1867	Cogan, George T.: 1938 – 1952 (Last to have title of Chief Engineer)
Waterhouse, James A.: 1868-69	Crompton, Fredrick R.: 1952-1967
Marston, Stephen L.: 1870-73	Weeks, Ernest W. 1967-1973
Seymore, Ira C.: 1874-75	Lane, Donald: 1973-1976
Marston, Stephen L.: 1876	Wool, Louis T.: 1976 ( <i>July to August</i> )
Fletcher, Samuel S. : 1877-78	Long, Paul G.: 1977-1987
Marston, Stephen L.: 1879-82	Sage, Randal P.: 1987-1996
Sears, Williard: 1883	Plummer, Ricky A.: 1997 -2001
Marden, Herbert A. 1884-89	LeClaire, Christopher J.: 2002 – 2013
Shannon, J. Frank: 1890	Achilles, Steven E.: 2013 - present

***Members of the Board of Fire Commissioners***

Bowles, Raimond: 1988 Appointed by Mayor Keenan. Elected 1992-1995

Loch, Shelia: 1988 Appointed by Mayor Keenan. Elected 1990-1993

Keefe, William: 1988 Appointed by Mayor Keenan. Elected 1990-1991

Pantelakos, Laura: 1990-1993

McDonald, Joseph: 1994-1997

Devine, William: 1994-1997

Remick, George: 1996-1999

Gamester, Richard: 1998 - present

Wentworth, Paul: 1998 - 2013

Hughes, Michael: 2000 - present

Jennifer Matthes: 2014 - present

***Steam Fire Engine and Hook & Ladder Names***

*Sagamore Engine No. 1 (2):*

Town records indicate that as early as 1838 there was a “Sagamore No.5” fire-engine company. It is reasonable to believe that it was named for Portsmouth’s Sagamore Creek. The first steam engine for the city must have been named based on the previously known Sagamore No. 5.

*Dearborn Engine Co. 1:*

To be originally named the Portsmouth, the department’s second steamer was named for Jonathan Dearborn, Portsmouth Mayor 1862, 1867. Jonathan Dearborn must also have been a member of the fire department in Portsmouth prior to 1863. In the 1840 *Receipts and Expenditures of the Town of Portsmouth* there is an entry that on January 1, a Jonathan Dearborn was paid \$10.00 for “Attending fires in Engine House No.5, and work in the same for self and Shillaber 5 days and 5 nights”.

*Col. Sise No. 2. Motto “We’ll Try”*

Fifth Portsmouth steamer. Named for Colonel William Sise: Fireman and Engineer, Mayor of Portsmouth; 1878-1881.

The Colonel Sise Company was a continuous organization beginning in 1802, but under different names. It was originally the Laconia, then the Sagamore, and afterwards the Col. Sise. It was quite probably that this is the oldest company in New Hampshire.

*Kearsarge Engine Co. No 3: Motto “Always on the Alert”*

Third Portsmouth steamer. Named for the famous USS Kearsarge, a Mohican-Class Sloop of War, built and launched at the Portsmouth Naval Ship Yard

*Moses H. Goodrich Engine Co. 4*

Fourth Portsmouth steamer. Named for Moses H. Goodrich of Portsmouth, N.H. Mayor of Portsmouth, 1874 and 1875. Member of New Hampshire State Senate 24th District, 1885-86. Moses Horoe Goodrich was the last owner of the Goodrich Tannery located on North Mill Pond and retired at the age of 80 in 1895.

***Steam Fire Engine and Hook & Ladder Names***

*W.J. Sampson Hook and Ladder No. 1. Motto "Never Get Left"*

Named for Willard J. Sampson who was a member of Kearsarge Co. 3 from 1870 to 1876, and a member of Ladder No. 1 from 1882 to 1888. It is reported that he served as an assistant engineer in the fire department, while his profession was that of a sign painter. He died at age 47 in 1894. See Garibaldi Hook and Ladder.

*Garibaldi*

Portsmouth's first hook and ladder company was most likely named Garibaldi after the famous Italian military hero who personally led many of the military campaigns that brought about the formation of a unified Italy. That designation was changed to the Willard J. Sampson Hook and Ladder Company #1 sometime after 1884. This may be in part to the purchase of a new hook and ladder in 1883.

***Hand Tubs of Portsmouth***

*Granite State No. 1:* Pleasant Street - Hunneman 1854 #499 Portsmouth, N.H.  
6" cylinder

*Cataract No. 1:* Prison Lane (1834)

*Washington No. 2:* unknown location.

*Laconia No. 2:* Lower Court Street - Hunneman 1851 #424 Portsmouth, N.H.

*Niagara No. 3:* North School street (1834)

*Governor Langdon No. 3:* Court Street -Hunneman 1857 #609 Portsmouth, N.H.  
6" cylinder. This engine was renamed Shawsheen (MA) and now resides in Southwest Harbor, ME (since 1905). Last used in 1944(5) Causeway Golf Club for VE or VJ Day in Southwest Harbor, ME.

*Piscataqua No.:* Elm Street

*Sagamore No. 5:* State Street – near the jail (1834)

*Atlantic No. 6:* State Street - Hunneman 1854 #500 Portsmouth, N.H. 6" cylinder

*Franklin No. 6:* Prison Lane (1834)

**Muster/Display Apparatus Only**

*Franklin Pierce:* Hunneman 1854 #522 Portsmouth, N.H. 7" cylinder.  
Delivered to the Navy Yard at Kittery, ME., saw service at Navy Yards in Norfolk, VA. & Pensacola, FL., in 1905 it was purchased by the Portsmouth, NH VFA and in 1909 sold to Messers. John Foden & Arthur Berry., scrapped in 1948

*Eureka #1:* Button 1872 #600 Portsmouth, N.H. 10" delivered to Hudson, MA. Sold to Portsmouth, N.H. in 1907 for \$660, still there. Motto - "Get Busy"

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