

LISTENED FOR FIRES 64 YEARS

Samuel Abbott Retired as Head of the Boston Protective Department on 40th Anniversary Of His Appointment as Superintendent

Samuel Abbott, who last Thursday celebrated his 40th anniversary as superintendent of the Boston Protective Department by retiring on half pay, closed one of the longest and most brilliant records of any fire-fighter and property saver in the city.

Of the 74 years which passed since "Sam" Abbott first saw the light of day in South End, 64 of them, with the exception of the time between 1862 and 1866, when he wore the uniform, have been spent with one ear open all the time for the sound of the fire alarm.

"Sam" was about 10 years old when he was officially appointed torchboy for old Union Hose 2, of which his father was assistant foreman. From that time his civilian life was wrapped up in fire-fighting being appointed a regular fireman after returning from the war and rising to the rank of district chief, when he was drafted by the insurance interests to take over the Boston Protective Department.

He once refused appointment as Fire Commissioner of Boston, in order to remain and build a department of real value.

Growth in 40 Years

The work of his men is little known to the rank and file of citizens, and only those who make a business of attending fires, know its value.

While this department is supported by the insurance companies, each company paying a percentage of their premiums for its support, the question is never raised by the officers in command of a company of this department, whether or not the owner or occupant of the building is insured.

The first work of these men is to cover all the goods not directly in the reach of the flames with big rubber covers, move valuables to places of safety, and after the firemen finish pouring water onto the flames and putting the fire out, start their dirty, hard work of cleaning the place up so that if possible the occupants of a dwelling house will find it fit to again live in, and if a business establishment, the business man may continue his work.

One of the most prized legacies that Supt Abbott left the members of his department was a salary list that exceeded the salary paid the officers and men in the regular fire department.

On July 1, 1880, when he took over the Boston Protective Department it consisted of two companies manned by 11 permanent men and 14 call men. The permanent men were attached to the stations in which the two companies were housed, while the call men were attached to different companies of the regular fire department, carrying on the trucks a couple of covers, a bucket, panga, shovel and other appliances for doing their work.

On July 1, 1920, the department consisted of three companies, with nine of-

spread at fires which caused a loss of \$2,581,065.15, against a loss in 1880 of \$860,619.33.

The number of miles covered by the apparatus of the department in 1880 is not recorded, but in 1919 the fleet of machines traveled more than a distance around the world—to be exact, 31,056.3 miles.

The apparatus does not stay in quarters until a fire alarm on the tapper, but also responds to verbal still alarms, Boston Automatic alarms, A. D. T. alarms, sprinkler breaks and sprinkler

Bay, South End and the greater part of South Boston.

These two companies each have two machines, but only one is manned during the day when the business houses are open. Both companies have two full complements of men during the hours when the business houses are closed, rights, Sundays and holidays. The second machine is always equipped and if necessary in the day time, a man can return to quarters and bring the machine with its load to the fire.

Tuesday the Worst Day

The No. 3 company is located on the top of Norfolk House Hill, on Roxbury st, and keeps two machines ready and manned both day and night, as the territory under its jurisdiction is practically all residential and consists of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury, Hyde Park, Dorchester and Brighton, as well as all the Back Bay south of Massachusetts av.

No. 1 company is commanded by Capt E. Abbott and Lieuts A. F. Swift and J. J. Carty. No. 2 is commander by Capt S. A. McDonnell and Lieuts George E. Blakley and W. N. Phelps. At No. 3 company, Capt James T. Fitzgerald is assisted by Lieuts M. J. Gleason and R. J. McTernan.

The records compiled by this department are very complete. The records for the year 1919 show that the greatest number of alarms was sounded during the month of February, when 638 were received with Tuesday the heaviest day of the week; 628 alarms were sounded on Tuesdays. The hours between 5 and 6 o'clock in the morning brought the most alarms, the total for the year being 332.

There were 25 causes of the fires for which alarms were sounded, while cause 27 is listed as "unknown." The largest number of alarms were sounded for fires caused by "matches," 490, rubbish and litter resulted in 963 fires; 481 were needless alarms; smoking resulted in 34.

Founder of Memorial Sunday

Abbott was one of the best-known men connected with this "game" in the country. He was one of the leaders in the old veteran associations and is the founder of "Firemen's Memorial Sunday." This day has since become Nation-wide.

Mr Abbott was born in Boston and educated at the old Quincy School. His father, Samuel Abbott Sr, was a prominent officer in the Fire Department. At the age of 14 he shipped for a cruise before the mast to Europe and South American ports. After serving in the army and navy during the Civil War he was appointed to the Fire Department on Aug 1, 1856, as a call member of Eagle Steam Fire Engine Company. In February, 1874, he was appointed captain of Engine 4, and three weeks later promoted to assistant engineer, or as is now known, district chief, and given charge of a hazardous downtown district.

In 1880, he was appointed to the position from which he retired last Thursday, and in 1887, refused the appointment as Fire Commissioner. He was one of the organizers of the Massachusetts State Firemen's Association in 1881, was its first treasurer, later secretary and was re-elected president, an honor seldom bestowed.



SAMUEL ABBOTT

retired After Being 40 Years Superintendent of Boston Protective Department

officers and 65 privates, all under the command of Supt Henry E. Thompson, himself a veteran of 34 years in this department.

Traveled 31,056 Miles

The apparatus, which consisted of two light wagons when Supt Abbott took charge, has grown to a fleet of 15 powerful high-speed motor trucks; the number of alarms responded to last year totaled 5673, against a total of 600 in 1880. Last year, 4484 covers were

troubles of all kinds, as well as water breaks which threaten to flood buildings.

The hours of service put in by the men during the past year totaled 4,726.35. These were divided into 2,730.40 at fires; 123.74 protecting merchandise after fires, and 1,872.21 as details of privates after fires. These men are left as watchmen for the insurance companies.

Companies 1 and 2 are located in the downtown section of the city. No. 1 is on Purchase st, in the heart of the wholesale district, while No. 2 on Appleton st, responds to all alarms from the business district, and also protects the residential districts of the Back