

City of Boston
Fire Department

OBSERVANCE OF THE

Fiftieth Anniversary

of the

Great Boston Fire of 1872



Thursday, November 9, 1922

RECORD

The fire of Saturday, November 9, 1872, originated in the basement of a granite building at the corner of Summer and Kingston streets. The first alarm for the fire was received from Box 52, located at the corner of Lincoln and Bedford streets, at 7.24 P. M.

The report of the commission appointed to investigate the cause of the fire and the efforts made for its suppression states that the fire "raged without control till the afternoon of the following day (Sunday) spreading through the best business portions of Boston, covering 65 acres with ruins, destroying 776 buildings assessed at the value of \$13,500,000, and consuming merchandise and other personal property estimated at more than sixty millions of dollars."

In 1872* the total equipment and personnel of the Boston Fire Department was as follows:

- 21 steam fire engines of small capacity, each equipped with a hose reel;
- 10 hose companies;
- 7 hook and ladder companies;
- 3 "extinguisher" or chemical companies;
- 164 fire alarm boxes;
- 90 permanent firemen;
- 385 call firemen.

In 1922 the Boston Fire Department includes the following:

- 50 pumping engines;
- 3 fireboats;
- 30 ladder trucks;
- 3 water towers;
- 1 chemical company;
- 1 rescue company;
- 1,270 fire alarm boxes;
- 1,394 permanent employees; no call members;
- A good percentage of first-class reserve apparatus.

Eighty-five per cent of the fire fighting apparatus is motorized.

The water system has been practically rebuilt since 1872, and a modern high pressure system has been installed for the use of the Fire Department.

* Brighton, Charlestown, Hyde Park and West Roxbury have been annexed to Boston since 1872.

PROGRAM OF THE DAY

1.30 P. M.

**Parade of the Fire Department, headed by
Hon. JAMES M. CURLEY, Mayor of Boston, and
Fire Commissioner THEODORE A. GLYNN.**

The parade will start at 1.30 P. M. from the corner of Arlington street and Commonwealth avenue and move over the following route: Arlington street, Beacon street, School street, Washington street, Milk street, Federal street, High street, Summer street, Washington street, Temple place, Tremont street, Boylston street to Park square. Reviewing stands: Governor's stand in front of State House; Mayor's stand on Tremont street.

The parade will consist of members of the Boston Fire and Protective Departments; several pieces of the latest types of modern fire apparatus in use in Boston; delegations of firemen from fifty cities and towns in New England, including those which responded to the call for assistance in 1872; entries from the Public Works Department and public service corporations which perform an auxiliary service to the Fire Department; and the surviving veterans of the Fire Department of 1872.

4.30 P. M.

Luncheon to invited guests, First Corps Cadets Armory, Columbus avenue.

PROGRAM OF THE DAY

7.24 P. M.

His Honor Mayor JAMES M. CURLEY will send in an alarm from Box 1431 at the corner of Summer and Lincoln streets, summoning the following apparatus to an imaginary fire at the corner of Summer and Kingston streets, on the site where the fire of November 9, 1872, originated:

Engines 7, 10, 25 and 35,
Ladders 8 and 17,
Rescue 1,
Tower 1,
Deputy Chief Division 1,
District Chiefs, Districts 3 and 5.

The street and roof of the building at the corner of Summer and Kingston streets will be illuminated by electric lights and large quantities of red fire. On arriving at this location the Fire Department will give a working exhibition of its apparatus and the new high pressure system.

NOTE: Box 1431 replaced Box 52, which was the fire alarm box from which the alarm was sounded at 7.24 P. M., November 9, 1872, for the Great Fire.

8.15 P. M.

Illuminated exhibition by the fireboats off Northern Avenue Bridge. The powerful floodlights and searchlights of the department will be used in connection with this exhibition.

All during the evening the fireboat station at Northern Avenue Bridge and the Headquarters Building on Bristol street will be illuminated by a special electrical display.