

# "OLD FORTY" QUILTS FIREFIGHTERS TODAY

## Lieut Thomas B. Flanagan in Harness 40 Years.

### Only One in Boston Service Now Who Fought Big Fire in '72.

Boston's oldest fire department lieutenant, Thomas B. Flanagan of ladder 10, Center st, Jamaica Plain, who is known throughout the fire service as "Old Forty," will retire at roll call this morning after almost 40 years of continuous service. When "Old Forty" started in the fire service a year or so before the big Boston fire he was a mere boy.



LIEUT. THOMAS B. FLANAGAN,  
"Old Forty," Who Retires From Boston Fire  
Department Today.

That Lieut. Flanagan is leaving the fire service is not only keenly felt by all of the men stationed at the Jamaica Plain house, but in other parts of the city by firemen who broke in under "Old Forty."

But few men who have been connected with the fire service can produce the record that Lieut. Flanagan has. He was one of the best laddermen that ever wore the uniform, according to Chief Mullen.

It was back in the days when he was attached to ladder 1 as a private that he was nicknamed "Old Forty." One of his hobbies was using a 40-foot ladder; he always called for a ladder of that length and because of his partiality for that type of ladder he gained the nickname.

The lieutenant is 63 years old and in 1871 began running to fires as a volunteer with old truck 1. With that company he served at the great fire of 1872. After the big fire he continued to serve with the truck until the latter part of the 70's, when he resigned, remaining out of the service until Oct 16, 1882, when he was reinstated and assigned to truck 8, Fort Hill sq.

With that company the lieutenant did some of his best work, making numerous heroic rescues and having many narrow escapes from death. With several companions he was fighting a fire one night on the sixth floor of a building on Charlestown st. Flames prevented Flanagan and his comrades from getting out of the building over the stairway.

The windows of the room in which it seemed as if they were to be cremated were closed with iron bars. The lieutenant and his men tackled the bars with their hatchets, breaking them and then forming a human chain worked their way from the window across an alley to the roof of the adjoining building. That was the lieutenant's closest call.

Jan 7, 1889, Flanagan was advanced to the rank of lieutenant and shifted to ladder 1 again. He acted as junior officer of that company until May 7, 1897, when he was shifted to truck 10. The night that "Old Forty" left truck 1, the company where he made his name, all of the fire department leaders participated in the sendoff that the men gave him.

The passing of Flanagan leaves but one man in the fire service who was a member of the department the night of the big fire in 1872. That man is engineer John Bickford of engine 5, East Boston.

Everywhere that "Old Forty" went he was beloved and he is leaving the fire department today with an honorable record and the good will of every man from the commissioner down. The boys at Jamaica Plain intend to show "Old Forty" just how much they admired and respected him, so his departure is likely to be just a bit ceremonious.

It may be October before Commissioner Daly names a successor for Lieut. Flanagan. At the same time he will name a man to fill the vacant lieutenant's berth at engine 42. These promotions will not be made until the competitive examination system is introduced.