

This is simply a small taste of a larger composition, *St. Paul Past and Present*; 1888, by Frank C. Bliss and donated to the SPPHS by retired Officer Norm Clark.

This was a male dominated agency at the time this composition was written. Spelling, formatting and punctuation is likewise based on the original publication.

Our Police Department — St. Paul Past and Present: 1888



Chapter XIII

Fire, Police and Health Departments

Origin, Growth and Modern Appliances.

In her early years, St. Paul suffered greatly by fires, and was without any of the modern appliances for extinguishing them. They had, it is true, their pails and their buckets, which they passed from hand to hand along the lines which had been formed, some times extending a quarter or half a mile, while in winter they could shovel snow on the fire, or snowball it, which in one instance they did successfully. But this was slow, tedious work, and the fire usually came off the victor.

As late as December, 1851, one of the papers published here, said;

"St. Paul is entirely destitute of means for extinguishing fire. Measures should be taken at once to form a hook and ladder company. Should a fire occur, let every citizen repair to it with a bucket of water."

The First Fire.

The chapel erected by Rev. Mr. Neill, on Washington street, was burned in 1850, and this was the first building ever burned in this city. In January, 1867, Christ Church, erected on the corner of Fourth and Franklin streets, was destroyed by fire, having been completed but a week or two previous.

Prior to this time, as stated in one of the papers, some dozen hotels had been burned, among which was a large one erected by Daniels & Wasson, near the upper landing, which was laid in ashes in June, 1852; also the Sintomine Hotel, erected by Mr. N. W. Kittson, near the corner of Sixth and John streets, in October, 1854, soon after its completion; also the Winslow House, near seven corners, in October, 1863; and in May, 1866, the Cosmopolitan Hotel, with about a dozen other buildings, was destroyed. In January, 1867, the Mansion House, corner of Wabasha and Fifth, was burned; and a year or two after the large International Hotel, formerly the Fuller House, was laid in ashes. Many large fires also occurred during these years; one in August, 1857, on Third and St. Peter streets, which swept away some twenty buildings and in the same month, another on Robert street cleaned out all the frame buildings between Third and Fourth streets.

In December, 1859, another serious fire occurred, destroying several buildings on Third street; and another still more serious one, in March, 1861, which destroyed most of the buildings on both sides of Third, between Robert and Jackson streets, breaking up, for the time being, about twenty-five business houses. In 1851, a hook and ladder company was organized by some of the young men, and money enough was collected to pay for the few ladders purchased. They however soon fell into disuse, for the members got tired of carrying them upon their shoulders, and, having no trucks or wagons for that purpose, they were laid aside, and at length the company disbanded. In March, 1855, the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company was organized, with twenty-eight members, and a second-hand hook and ladder truck was purchased from a company in Philadelphia.

A small fire engine was also purchased, and was the only fire engine in the city for some two or three years thereafter. It was an old-fashion hand engine.

In 1857, two fire companies were organized; one was called the "Hope Engine Company, No. 1," the other the "Minnehaha Engine Company, No. 2," and in 1858, they received from Philadelphia two new hand fire engines, which had been previously ordered. In August, 1866, the First Steam Fire Engine was received, and assigned to the Hope Engine Company. It was named "City of St. Paul," and the boys had a glorious good time exhibiting the "machine," and testing its capacity. In April, 1867, Hope Hose Company No. 1, was organized; and in the summer of 1873, two more new steam fire engines were received.

Thus, step by step, from an insignificant beginning, has sprung up our present fire department, so splendidly organized, so admirably managed, so thoroughly equipped, so perfectly systematized in all its details, and so effective in its work, as not only to be a credit to our city, but unequalled by the fire department of any other city of its size.

With the rapid growth of the city, the department has been enlarged, and the facilities extended, and improvements made to meet the requirements of the large and high buildings in the business centre of the city, and the extension of the residence districts in every direction.

During the past year, five new engine houses have been erected, and an addition to Engine House, No. 9, the total cost being \$74,868, which includes those built and equipped on Dayton's Bluff, West St. Paul, Hamline, and Merriam Park. All of these buildings are of brick, and of elegant designs, and contain all the latest improvements.

During the past year, there have been purchased three new fire engines, two chemical engines, three hook and ladder trucks, one turn-table hook and ladder truck, one wagon, and ninety-four hundred feet of hose, at the total cost of some \$31,790.

The Apparatus of the Department

There were on the first of January, 1888, in the service of the department.

Steam Fire Engines	10	Fire Alarm Boxes	95
Chemical Engines	9	Registers	11

Hose Carriages	10	Miles of Wires	100
Hook and Ladder Trucks	7	Poles	860
Feet of Hose	25,000	Gongs	7
Horses	93		

Also, 19 Engine houses and 16 Lots.

The Force of the Department.

The force of the department consisted of

Chief Engineer	1	Engineers	9
Assistant Chief Engineers	2	Pipemen	44
Acting Third Assistant Engineer	1	Truckmen	37
Superintendent of Fire Alarm Telegraph	1	Drivers	33
Master Mechanic	1	Blacksmiths	2
Captains	16	Watchmen	15
Lieutenants	23	Linemen	2
		Operators	4
		And others	
Total officers and men		200	

Value of Property.

Personal Property, valued	\$223,204,70
Real Estate, valued	272,350,00
Grand Total	\$495,554,70

Running Expenses.

The running expenses for fourteen months from November 1, 1886, to December 31, 1887, amounted to the sum of \$308,079,18.

This department is under the management of a Board of Fire Commissioners, now composed of the five following named gentlemen: Reuben Warner, president; J. C. Prendergast, vice-president; C. N. Parker, George W. Freeman, Paul Martin; Wm. O'Gorman, secretary.

Officers of Fire Department.

John T. Black, Chief engineer; John Jackson, first assistant chief engineer; M. F. Keleher, second assistant chief engineer; Wm. M. Kellogg, acting third assistant chief engineer; Isaac R. Jenkins, superintendent fire alarm telegraph.

The chief engineer, John T. Black, is a most competent, reliable and energetic officer. He is a gentleman of large experience, having been in active service for several years. The other officers and men are veterans in the service, obedient to orders and reliable.

Our Police Department.

The city is blessed with a good police as well as fire department. Prior to 1861, the small police force numbered but four men, and was unable to cope successfully with the large number of thieves, roughs and ruffians that had congregated here, and crimes, from murder down to petty larceny, were of daily occurrence. A vigilance committee was organized, and special policemen appointed to patrol the city at night, to protect life, guard property, and keep the peace.

The state of affairs was such that it became absolutely necessary to increase the regular police force, and consequently, during that year, eight more were added, making twelve policemen in all. This was deemed sufficient at the time, quiet and peace were in a great measure restored, and crime materially lessened.

In 1875, the Entire Police Force of the city numbered only twenty-four men, including officers and patrolmen. From time to time since then, the force has been increased as the growth of the city demanded.

On the first of January, 1887, they numbered in the aggregate, 110 men. Chief [John] Clark, in his annual report of that year, set forth that this force was entirely inadequate, and consequently a bill was passed during that session of the legislature authorizing the city council to add to the force thirty patrolmen, three new captains, two lieutenants, four sergeants and two detectives. Many of these appointments were made by the mayor.

The Police Force at Present:

Chief – John Clark			
Senior Captain	1	Driver Workhouse Van	1
Captains	3	Clerk	1
Lieutenants	5	Sub-Stations	4
Sergeants	8	Police Alarm Boxes, with Telephones	12
Chief Detective	1	Police Alarm Boxes, without Telephones	24
Detectives	4	Mounted Police	9
Patrolman	124	Horses in Police Department	21

Drivers of Patrol Wagons	5	Patrol Wagons	4
Jailors	4		
Bailiffs Municipal Court	2		
Pound Masters	3		

Four new sub-stations have been opened*, and the city divided into five districts, and returns are made to the various stations and the old central station. Chief John Clark is a most competent and experienced officer, and the department is now composed of a splendid body of efficient and vigilant men, who look sharply to the interests and protection of the city. The chief has asked for additional detectives and patrolmen to meet the wants of the largely increasing territory of the city.

The Health Department.

By an act of the legislature to re-organize the health department of our city, it made it consist of a commissioner of health, the chief of police, the corporation attorney, and other assistants therein named. By the act, the commissioner was to be appointed by the Mayor, on or before the second Monday of March, 1887, and to hold office for four years. He was to give a bond of \$3,000, and his salary was to be \$2,500 per annum. He was to appoint an assistant at a salary of \$1,500, seven health officers, two meat and one livestock inspectors, with salaries of \$840 each; also with power to increase the force, if necessary.

The health officer has the general control over all city sanitation, and his jurisdiction extends over all lakes and water-courses in Ramsey county. The corporation attorney is his counsel, and the chief of police is required to execute his orders. The department is well organized, and now composed of the following officers: Henry F. Hoyt, M. D., commissioner of health; A. P. Hendrickson, assistant commissioner ; John Clark, chief of police; Wm. P. Murray, corporation attorney. Health Inspectors - P. H. McManus, J. R. Storr, W. G. Henke, A. L. Robinson, J. B. Green, John Fitzgerald. Meat Inspector-Geo. Lamb. Stock Inspectors-Thomas Conway, John Gottscheimer. In charge of Infirmary-Emile Wichart. Contagious Diseases-Henry Meyerding.

This city has the lowest death rate of any city of its size in the country. The following statement in tabular form shows our population and death rate for a period of six years last past.

Year.	Estimated Population.	Total No. Deaths.	Death Rate.
1882	80,000	1,322	16.52
1883	90,000	1,304	14.40
1884	100,000	1,567	15.67
1885	111,397	1,346	12.08
1886	125,000	1,519	12.15
1887	150,000	1,918	12.78

The death rate of 12.78 for the year 1878, is predicated upon an estimated population of 150,000. This estimate is considered too low by many, who contend that the estimate should be based upon a population of 175,000. If this had been done, the annual death rate for 1887 would show the low figure of 10.94. The death rate of Syracuse, N. Y. , for 1886, was 14.93; of Indianapolis, Ind., 15.05; of Erie, Pa., 15.70; of Richmond, Va., 17.32; of Providence, R. I., 18.32; of Brooklyn, N. Y, 21.59; of Newark, N. J., 28.59; of Chicago, Ill., 18. 70; of Boston, Mass., 22.40; of New York City, 25.53; of New Orleans, La., 26.57. There are no large cities, either in this country or in Europe, which can compare with St. Paul in the matter of healthfulness.

* Please note that the fire department had 19 outlying engine houses at the time, also providing shelter for the policemen when necessary. Please also note that although the city had a separate Health Department with its own health officers, the chief of police was required to execute the orders of the commissioner of health.