

Fire Loss in Winnetka Held to Minimum, Statistics Show

A great majority of residents of the village have very little accurate knowledge of what the village government does, and what services it performs. Many of our residents have moved out to Winnetka comparatively recently, and are, to a large extent, unacquainted with the village government. It is our belief that the people of the community will be interested in knowing more of the details of the village activities. With this thought in mind, we have prepared a series of articles on the work of the different departments of the village government, and with the co-operation of the WINNETKA TALK, except to publish them from time to time. It is our hope they will prove interesting and serve to stimulate interest in village affairs. The articles will cover the subject of police, fire protection, municipal water and light plant, health department, public works department and other matters.

—Henry F. Tenney, president.

THE WINNETKA FIRE DEPT. By Henry F. Tenney

America's fire loss has reached the proportions of a national calamity and we as a nation are becoming a criminally careless people. Burning four or five hundred million dollars' worth of property every year has ceased to be a matter of no concern. Our increasing fire loss stands as a serious indictment of the American people. There is a prevailing opinion that fire insurance companies in some mysterious way make good our loss by fire. The proceeds of a fire insurance policy may reimburse the individual for the financial loss he has sustained, but no amount of money can compensate for the loss of natural and created resources involved. When a fire occurs everybody loses.

Many of us recall a very impressive cartoon by McCutcheon published several years ago depicting a burning dwelling, with the owner and his family disconsolately watching the firemen at work, and remarking, "There go letters, pictures, heirlooms and treasures that insurance cannot replace, advertisements cannot recover or hope restore. They are gone forever."

Provide Best Protection

With the foregoing considerations in mind, the Village Council believes it to be important that Winnetka should maintain a well manned and equipped fire department, not only for the purpose of controlling fires after they occur but also to prevent them.

The cost of operating the Winnetka Fire Department is approximately \$27,000 per year, or \$2.55 per capita as compared with \$3.05 per capita for all United States cities in 1925. It is not believed that this is an unreasonable expenditure to protect our homes and business establishments from serious fire loss.

The fire department is operated, as one of the administrative departments of the Village, under the general supervision of the Village Manager, responsible to the Village Council. The department is under the direct supervision of a full time fire marshal or chief, with six full time firemen and ten volunteers or callmen. The full time organization is operated on the double platoon system, under which the men are on duty twenty-four hours and off duty for the same period.

The chief of the department is Mr. George M. Houren, formerly assistant chief of the Oak Park Fire department, a man of long experience in fire fighting work. Under his direction, the department is drilled in modern methods of fire fighting, including handling of ladders, connecting and laying of hose and other technical matters pertaining to fire extinguishment.

In order to keep abreast of the best modern practice, the chief attends the course in fire fighting and prevention given each summer by the University of Illinois.

The Winnetka Fire department is now well equipped with apparatus to cope with all fires in the Village, short of a general conflagration. We have one 750 gallon per minute triple combination pumper, equipped with chemical apparatus, 1,250 feet of fire hose and minor auxiliary equipment. Last year the Village added a second 750 gallon per minute pumper with hose and chemical equipment, and also equipped with a total of 235 feet of ladders, including 50, 35, 28, 24 foot extension ladders, 20, 16, 12 foot roof ladders and two single piece 25 foot ladders, as well as minor equipment. A Dodge roadster was also provided for the use of the chief. With the addition of the second pumping truck, the department is now provided with much needed ladder equipment, without which it was formerly very much handicapped, and in addition, the second pumper serves as an auxiliary unit, ordinarily held at the station in readiness for second calls.

The fire department is now housed in one of the most efficient and attractive fire houses in the country, located at Ash street and Ridge avenue. The station, which was remodeled from the old Village hall at a cost of approximately \$40,000, fronts on the new through traffic highway, giving quick access to all parts of the Village. This station is large enough for the needs of Winnetka for many years, and with high speed apparatus and direct well paved routes, it is believed that additional fire stations will not be required in the Village for a long time to come.

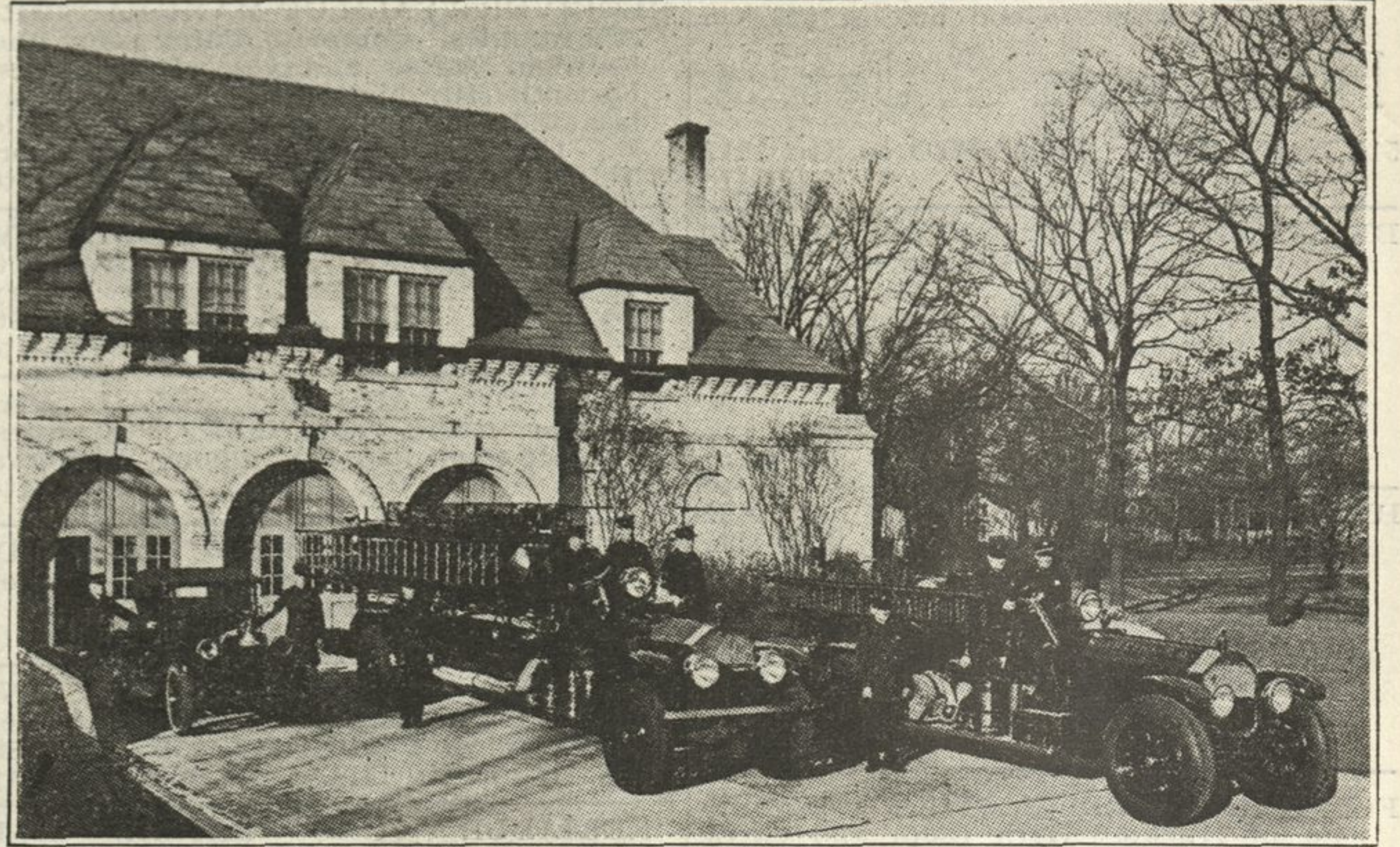
The improvement in fire-fighting facilities in Winnetka during the past decade is shown by the fact that in 1917, the department had no pumping equipment, and no full time chief or firemen were employed, the Village depending only on the efforts of volunteers. The changes which have occurred since that time have naturally added to the expense of operating the department, but it is believed that this expense is well justified in the results secured.

Employ Modern Methods

Modern fire departments operate with certain well defined principles in mind, and these principles govern the activities of the Winnetka department. In fire-fighting, great stress is placed on early arrival at the fire with an adequate number of trained men to proceed with the work; second, to bring the fire under control as promptly as possible, with a minimum of loss, not merely from fire itself, but from what is frequently more important, water damage. The action of the fire department in carrying out these methods is frequently much less spectacular from the spectators' standpoint, than in the old days, when firemen stood outside the burning building at a safe distance and deluged the roof and interior of the building with large quantities of water. The usual method now is to get into the building at the seat of the fire, with smoke masks if necessary, and usually with portable chemicals or chemical hose from the truck, in order to extinguish the fire at its source with a minimum of water damage.

Another important duty delegated to modern fire departments is the prevention of fires, particularly in congested districts. The Winnetka fire department carries on a routine inspection of all buildings in the busi-

Headquarters for Our Fire-Fighters



ness district, and during the present fiscal year 248 such inspections have been made. The department also is glad to cooperate with residential owners in eliminating fire hazards and makes numerous inspections on request for the purpose of removing the cause of fires. In addition, numerous fire prevention talks have been given in the public schools and elsewhere.

Citizens of Winnetka should be interested in the results which have recently been accomplished in reducing our annual fire loss. For the fiscal year ending March 31, 1927, the last full year for which reports are available, there were 148 fires in the Village with a loss per fire of only \$137.26 or a loss per capita of \$1.93.

Fire Loss at Minimum

The results for the first eleven months of the present fiscal year have been even more gratifying, with a total fire loss of \$9,310, which is \$101 per fire or only 80c per capita. If the fire loss for March is held at a minimum, our records this year will be the lowest in the history of the Village, and one of the lowest records established for the entire country. The small number of fires this year is a direct measure of the adequacy of fire prevention work and also of the co-operation of citizens in observing fire prevention suggestions, and the low loss per fire is an indication that fires, once started, are promptly brought under control with small fire and water damage.

Many people in the Village do not understand the status of Winnetka with respect to fire insurance rates. All municipalities in Cook county are graded as to their fire protection facilities by the Chicago Board of Underwriters, under a standard method of grading established by the National Board of Underwriters. Under this grading schedule, the Village of Winnetka is now rated in the fifth class, which, as far as residential buildings are concerned, places Winnetka in the same class as Chicago, Evanston and Oak Park, and gives us the lowest possible insurance rates on residential property. With reference to business buildings, Winnetka is in the same class as LaGrange, Chicago Heights and Wilmette, suburbs of medium size with reasonably good fire protection facilities. By making certain recommended additional improvements in the fire department, such as the installation in the business district of additional hydrants and an automatic fire alarm telegraph system, the Village could be placed in the fourth class with some reduction in insurance rates on business buildings. With the limited amount of business property in Winnetka, there is considerable question as to whether the saving in insurance rates would justify the addi-

tional expenditure by the Council to provide the facilities required, at the present time.

It is hoped that the foregoing discussion of the organization and activities of the fire department will be of interest to our citizens and will serve to show that Winnetka has a department of which it can well be proud and one which justifies a feeling of reasonable security against fire loss. I wish to take this opportunity of appealing to our citizens to continue the fine cooperation which has been shown during the past year in reducing the number of fire calls to a minimum, but observing ordinary precautions against permitting hazardous conditions to exist. In conclusion, I wish to invite all interested persons, especially those who have recently come to the village, to pay a visit to the headquarters of the Fire department and believe that they will be well repaid by what may be seen there.

Lighting of House Needs Variations for Best Effects

In making the lighting arrangement for a home it is necessary that the scheme should be architecturally correct. The effect attained must be subordinated to and harmonious with the architectural composition of each room or group of rooms.

Nearly everyone nowadays can recognize the various period styles of furniture and decorations, and these can readily be matched in the lighting.

There are needs from the standpoint of scale or proportion which should also be borne in mind. Lighting fixtures are fixed decorations that are not easy to shift around from room to room, and therefore the question of their fitness is important.

Anyone who stops to think about it will realize that there must always be variation in the lighting of a home. All rooms should not be flooded or dimmed with light in exactly the same volume. Neither should all parts of any room be of equal light intensity. If they were the general effect would be flat and tiresome.

Without light and shade, each meeting and mingling with the other—as smoke imperceptibly loses itself in the air—there is no relief. Radiator—which should attract no attention to itself—vies with carved mantel; footstool with Ming vase, all demanding equal attention. A portrait shows one side of the face light and the other in shadow not because the artist could make his light fall only on one side of an object but because the contrast of light and shade is more pleasing.