

Kingston's Fire Fighting Force

Is One of the Very Best--Its History Back to Time of Volunteer Work--Patrick Devlin An Early Chief.

While other institutions of the city are being reviewed in this edition, it seems only fair and right that something should be said of the splendid fire-fighting force which controls the fires of the city from year to year. Kingston stands today with a fire brigade of which it is justly proud, that pride having been established by reason of the meritorious work done by the members of Kingston's fire force, not only of the present day but of past days.

It was not always, however, that the Kingston fire brigade was equipped as it is today, and it has been only of late years that extensive advances have



FIRE CHIEF JAMES ARMSTRONG

been made in regard to improving the fire-fighting apparatus of the Kingston brigade. This is particularly true since the present chief of the department James Armstrong, came to the city and assumed command.

Recollections of earlier days bring to mind the struggles which the firemen of those times had in their work and no braver men than they have ever fought fires in Kingston. Tales have been told of the work, with meagre equipment and under great handicaps, of these "old timers," battling many a fire, and could they today look upon the splendid equipment which is at the disposal of the present day brigade, they would indeed marvel.

In earlier times the fire-fighting force of Kingston was an entirely volunteer brigade. The late Patrick Devlin, even before 1874 and during that year, was chief of the fire department. In those times the long rope and the willingness and strength of the fire-

men were the means of transporting the reel to the scene of the fire. This same condition continued for a few years after before more modern equipment began to make its appearance. Edwin Horsey took charge of the fire brigade, which was still a volunteer force, in 1878 and held command until 1884, when he was succeeded by Mathew Bateson who was chief from 1884 to 1886. The force was still a volunteer brigade.

The first permanent paid fire fighting brigade in Kingston was in Henry Youlden's time as chief of the brigade from 1886 to 1900. It was decided at that time it would be to the advantage of all concerned to have regular men on the job and that was the first move made in Kingston for a permanent fire brigade which has developed into the present organization of fire-fighters.

It might be interesting to recall one of the finest fighting forces in the history of the fire brigade in Kingston, the force of 1885. They were as follows:

Mathew Bateson (chief), J. Newton, (foreman), W. McCammon, (treasurer), Richard Burke, (engineer), Harry Hunter, A. Baylie, R. Lake, J. Derry, J. Bunt, C. Asselstine, J. L. Davis, J. L. Orr, W. Little, A. E. Elmer, Cooper Lennox, T. Harold, H. Harold, T. James, John Lemmon, J. Smith, P. Moncrief, C. McIntyre, W. Spencer, J. McIntyre, E. Perry, A. Knapp, W. Hall and J. McMaster.

Captain Cockade and John Hall are the two oldest fire-fighters on the present staff. They joined the fire-fighting brigade in 1885 and they are the only two men of that volunteer force, who are now with the permanent fire brigade.

In the history of the fire brigade, there have been many chiefs and each man in his turn held the respect and admiration of the men who served under him. Kingston has always been fortunate in having capable men as head of the department. Some of those who will be remembered are: Patrick Devlin, previous to and including 1874, Edwin Horsey, 1875 to 1884, Mathew Bateson, 1884 to 1886, Henry Youlden, 1886 to 1900, John Elmer, 1900 to 1909, James Armstrong from 1909 to present date.

When Fire Chief James Armstrong, the present head of the department, took charge, when he came here from Port Arthur in 1909, there were fourteen men in the brigade of whom two were call men. Since he took command of the fire department, there have been great changes wrought through his hard efforts and the fire-fighting force in Kingston is a credit to the city and to the chief who commands it.

When he first assumed charge, there

was a Chatham steamer, one hose wagon and Merryweather steamer, a chemical combination hose wagon, one old ladder truck, five ladders and the fire alarm system was controlled by gravity battery cells. There were thirty-two street boxes. Three thousand feet of hose was all that the brigade had in this line.

In 1910 a Waterous steam fire engine was purchased and put into commission on March 18th. A large hose wagon was purchased in the fall of 1910 and by this time a horse and buggy had been provided for the chief. A new ladder truck was added to the equipment in 1911 and a modern storage fire alarm system was put in in 1916. A Reo speed wagon was fitted out as a hose wagon in 1918 and in 1923 a Ruggles truck was put in. In May 1924 an Ahren-Fox pumper was purchased and the Ruggles truck was transferred to the lower station and the Reo truck converted into a motor tractor for the upper station.

The fire alarm system is now on the street signal type and there are eighty boxes in the city. The hose equipment has been increased to 7,000 feet and there are now seventeen ladders, ranging from 14 feet to 65 feet, and several smaller ones for inside work. The two stations have been thoroughly repaired and are in first class condition at the present time.

In December of 1918 the strength of the fire-fighting force was brought up to eighteen men and was divided into two sections, the men alternating for two weeks on day and night duty. This was the first city in Eastern Canada to adopt this system, which had worked out so satisfactorily and the third city in all Canada to make the change.

At the present time there are eighteen miles of outside wiring in connection with the department. The fur-



CAPT. FREDERICK REID

thest box is at Mowat Hospital in the west end of the city and the one at the Tile Works is the farthest away in the north end of the city. There are 325 hydrants in use at the present time and the Utilities Commission is now working on another order for thirty more. The street lighting of the city has been doubled since 1900.

Previous to May of this year, the fire brigade responded to calls in the county but owing to the trouble that had arisen as a result of this being done, orders were issued that no calls outside the city were to be answered by the department with the exception of calls from Mowat Hospital, Rockwood Hospital, the Penitentiary, Calderwood and the Royal Military College, the Government having made the necessary arrangements for having calls answered to these institutions.

The chief of the Kingston fire department is secretary of the Dominion Fire Chiefs' Association and has held that office since 1915. He is one of the original members of that organization. He is also the first vice-president of the International Association of Fire Engineers and in the ordinary course of events, will be the next president at the convention which is to be held in September at Louisville. He will be the first Canadian-born chief to hold this position. Chief Benoit of Montreal and Chief John Thompson of Toronto were presidents of this Association, he being given that honor in 1922.

The present officers of the Kingston fire department are as follows: Chief, James Armstrong; captains, Fred Reid, William Cockade; electrician, John Hall; motor mechanic, Henry Pollic.

Engagement is rumored of Lenore Uiric, actress, who starred in "Kiki" and Sidney Blackmer, actor.

Grandson of Henrik Isben is en route from Hollywood to Norway after study of motion pictures.

Former wife of George Jay Gould is reported to have won \$100,000 in gambling at a French resort.



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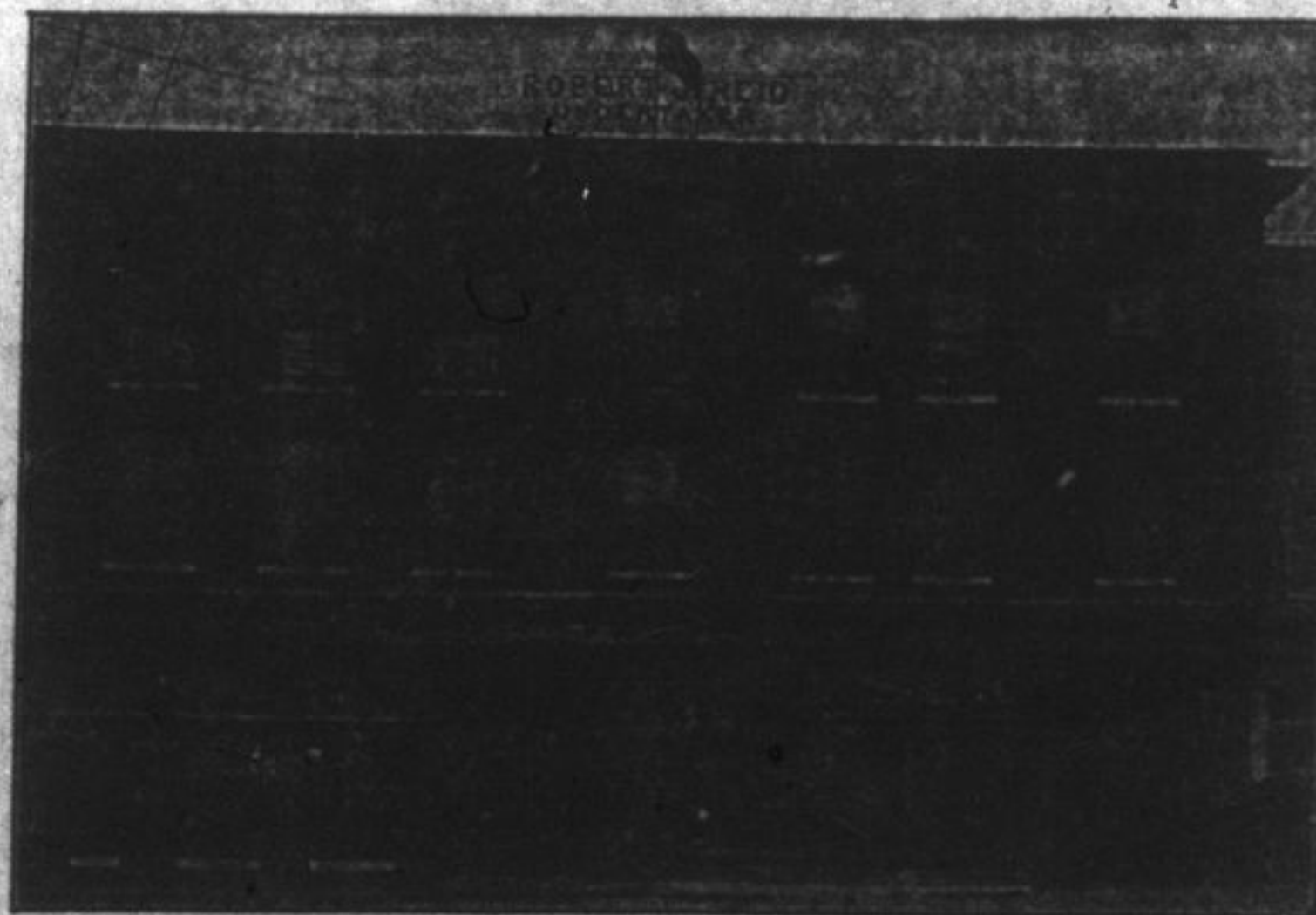
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