

THE IOWA FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Fire-fighting is as old as the human race, for fire has always been an enemy of man as well as his friend and servant. Primitive fire engines have been discovered among the archaeological ruins of ancient Egypt, and the famous *vigiles* of Rome were a well-defined organization of slaves and freedmen whose activities were devoted to fire-fighting. In America, New York passed her first fire law in 1648, providing for periodic cleaning of chimneys, and for the appointment of four fire wardens to make inspections.¹ Boston organized a volunteer fire department as early as 1672.

It is a characteristic of American life that new community activities are usually undertaken by interested individuals, not by government agencies. The initiative in forming volunteer companies was taken by public-spirited citizens and financial support was derived from donations, subscriptions, public benefits, and some governmental contributions. Occasionally a city furnished apparatus and a fire station.

Membership in volunteer companies was sought for a variety of reasons besides the laudable desire to furnish protection against fires. The laws of Iowa exempted members of fire companies from military duty, jury service, and work on the highways on account of the poll tax, and ten years of active service as a fire-fighter excused a man from such obligations "forever thereafter".² Men are also attracted by the dangerous glamor that attends fire-fighting.

¹ David D. Dana's *The Fireman* (2nd edition), pp. 21-23; Herbert Asbury's *Ye Olde Fire Laddies*, pp. 13, 28, 31.

² *Code of 1873*, Sec. 1560.

By joining a fire company a man could satisfy his thirst for excitement while he was also performing a useful service.

The desire to share in the social life of the community was also satisfied by membership in a fire company. The close organization, the esprit de corps, and the spirit of fellowship that prevailed in the volunteer fire departments made them ideal centers for the social life of the community. The firehouse was a clubhouse, being furnished appropriately for serving both functions, and the fire company was frequently an exclusive social organization, membership in which brought highly desirable privileges and contacts. The best people of the community were often volunteer firemen, and a man who became one of the "brave fire laddies" could justly feel that he had "arrived" socially.

The volunteer companies sponsored many activities — parades, banquets, dances, picnics, contests — besides keeping the regular open house for members. The annual firemen's ball to raise funds for the support of the department was considered the highlight of the social season in many Iowa communities.

While these advantages were often stimuli enough for the formation of a volunteer department, it sometimes required a tragic event to impress upon citizens the necessity for organizing a fire company. Such was the experience of Iowa City. The original German company, Iowa City Company Number 1, had been formed in 1855, but during the Civil War it had passed out of existence. When in March, 1872, fire ravaged the famous Clinton House leaving it a total ruin, the citizens were helpless to extinguish the blaze because there was no fire department, and the water supply was inadequate. This tragedy led to the formation of the Rescue Hook and Ladder Company three months later, the leadership being assumed by prominent men in the com-

munity.³ Other cities did not wait for a disaster before preparing to meet it. The municipal police powers conferred the general legal authority for cities to provide fire protection. The charters and acts of incorporation of cities also made specific mention of this function. The charter of the city of Dubuque, for example, empowered the city council "to provide against danger by fire" by organizing "two fire companies not to exceed twenty-five men each".⁴ In 1857, Dubuque, with a population of 16,000, had three volunteer companies totalling one hundred and twenty-eight members.⁵

By the 1870's almost every Iowa community possessed some means of fire protection, either volunteer or paid. There were two other steps in the development of fire fighting in Iowa. One was the formation of a statewide association to integrate the activities of fire departments in the interest of both the communities and the firemen. The other, the transition from volunteer to paid departments, has already been mentioned, and at this point it should be discussed more fully.

There were several important reasons for the transition from a volunteer to a paid system. The steady expansion of government — municipal, State, and national — in the social and economic life of the people, has been noticeable throughout American history. A century ago people seldom thought of looking to government to furnish semi-personal services even when they recognized the need for such protection or assistance. A significant reason why municipal governments had to undertake many of the projects they now carry on was the pressure of an insistent

³ See the *Iowa City Daily Press* for February-May, 1872.

⁴ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1839-1840*, Ch. 84, Sec. 5.

⁵ Roy E. Brown's *Organization and Administration of Fire Departments in Iowa*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1929, p. 64.

popular demand. This demand arises because the service has not been satisfactorily performed previously, because the scope and nature of the service has changed so markedly that public support rather than private effort is needed to handle that service, or because the enlarged social outlook has brought a realization that the service is properly an obligation of government.

All of these factors lay behind the formation of paid fire departments. By the end of the nineteenth century, men began to realize that in the very nature of the case fire protection, at least in the larger cities, is legitimately and practically a service best performed by government. Larger buildings and congested areas made fires potentially more dangerous, and rendered the old fire-fighting apparatus obsolete. The bucket brigade had given way to the hand-pumping engine in some cities in the eighteenth century, and the hand-operated pumper was being replaced by the steamer from the 1850's onward. This engine was much more complicated, and for its efficient operation, special skill and training were necessary. The steamer was too heavy to be pulled by hand, so horse power supplanted hand power.

As other techniques and methods were evolved, people came to recognize that the old volunteer system could not furnish the skill, training, and permanency required in this new era of fire-fighting. Paid departments were more expensive, but people were willing to support them because of the security and more adequate protection afforded by trained, well-equipped firemen who devoted their full time to the business of fighting fires. There was, however, much opposition to the change from volunteer to paid fire departments even in large cities. The volunteer companies had a romantic aura and they surrendered reluctantly to the exigencies of the situation. The New York volunteer

companies wielded so much political influence that they forestalled the inauguration of a paid system in that city until 1865.

Gradually paid departments supplanted the volunteers in all the larger cities. In the towns and villages, however, the volunteers could give satisfactory and economical service and they have continued to function in these smaller communities.

Dubuque purchased its first steamer in 1855, and within five years that city had a paid department of sixteen men.⁶ Other cities quickly adopted the idea. The Twenty-first General Assembly sanctioned this development by authorizing special charter cities to levy taxes up to two mills for the maintenance of paid fire departments. Four years later second class cities were given similar authority, and in 1897 the *Code of Iowa* permitted all cities of more than 5000 residents to maintain a paid department.⁷ Today there are some twenty paid departments in Iowa, and over six hundred volunteer departments. This is a natural circumstance because most Iowa communities are small, and the volunteer system suffices.

But because the majority of firemen in Iowa belong to volunteer companies, one should not labor under the delusion that they are untrained and unprogressive. The remainder of this article will show how Iowa firemen, both volunteer and paid, have worked through the Iowa Firemen's Association and the tournaments sponsored by it, to learn the best and newest methods, to become acquainted with the latest developments, and, in short, to render to their home communities the best fire protection of which they are capable.

⁶ Brown's *Organization and Administration of Fire Departments in Iowa* (thesis), pp. 66, 67.

⁷ *Laws of Iowa*, 1886, Ch. 171, 1890, Ch. 8; *Code of 1897*, Sec. 716.

ORGANIZING THE IOWA FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

While there was undoubtedly some sentiment in Iowa favoring the formation of a State association of firemen, a specific event was required to crystallize these desires. Early in September, 1878, a great firemen's tournament was held in Chicago. Firemen from several midwestern States participated, among them a large number from Iowa. A special train was run by the Northwestern Railroad, and the cities in central Iowa adjacent to this road sent their firemen to Chicago. For the first time the fire chiefs and firemen of widely separated Iowa cities met and talked over their common problems.

The Iowa firemen learned something about the activities of firemen in other States and discussed the various State associations. The Chicago tournament taught them many things about new methods and apparatus for fire fighting, and the excitement of a competitive gathering heightened their interest in establishing a similar institution in Iowa. These chiefs and firemen must, indeed, have reached an informal understanding about an association and a tournament, for they lost no time in translating these purposes into action.

On September 18, 1878, a meeting of the chief engineers of the fire departments of several Iowa cities took place in Cedar Rapids, with the object of forming a State association of firemen.⁸ Thirty-two men were in attendance. Promptly at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Chief C. W. Eaton of Cedar Rapids called the meeting to order. Then Chief Joseph Morrison of Muscatine took the chair, with George W. Barnes of Waterloo acting as secretary.

The committee on the constitution was composed of Fireman W. McFaddon of Council Bluffs, Fireman G. W. Barnes of Waterloo, and Chief Eaton. The constitution

⁸ *Cedar Rapids Times*, September 26, 1878.

and by-laws presented by this committee were adopted.⁹ The name of the organization was the "Iowa Firemen's State Association". The officers — president, three vice presidents, recording and financial secretaries, and treasurer — collectively constituted the executive committee and the board of control. Later, the custom developed of moving the vice presidents up one step each year, so that the third vice president became president four years hence. The president presided at all meetings and signed all orders, and his compensation was fixed at fifty dollars a year. The financial secretary collected money and turned it over to the treasurer who made disbursements.

The annual tournament sponsored by the Association was to be held in June, the site being chosen by the members of the Association, or by the board of control. By 1886 an amendment was adopted fixing the date of the annual business meeting on the third Wednesday in November, and it was held on that day until 1922. Membership in the Association was open to any member of a regularly organized fire department, and good standing was conditional on payment of annual one dollar dues. A member for fifteen consecutive years was placed on the Honorary Roll and exempted from further payment of dues. Delegates present at the meetings could cast the full vote to which their respective departments were entitled. With minor amendments this constitution remained in effect until the Association was reincorporated in 1935, when a new document was written to embody the changes that experience had proven necessary.

On January 20, 1886, the Association was incorporated in Des Moines under the laws of Iowa, taking the name of the "Iowa Firemen's Association".¹⁰ The purposes of

⁹ The constitution was printed in the official programs of the association.

¹⁰ The articles of incorporation are to be found in the annual programs of the Association.

the organization, as set forth in the Articles, were: to protect and promote the interests of Iowa firemen, to collect information about the different systems of organizing fire departments, to examine and evaluate fire apparatus, to promote fellowship, and to encourage progress in fire-fighting. The emphasis was placed on volunteer departments. Seven trustees were to be elected annually on the third Wednesday in November. As an incorporated body, the Association had the usual rights to hold property, sue and be sued, and to make by-laws.

THE FIRST TOURNAMENT

One of the prime objects of the Association was to sponsor an annual tournament. Until proper rules, adapted to the peculiarities of Iowa fire departments, could be formulated to govern the contests, the tournament rules of the Illinois and Michigan associations were adopted with modifications.

The first great tournament and business meeting was held at Cedar Rapids June 10-12, 1879.¹¹ During the winter, plans had been evolved by the officers of the Association who drew upon their experience in Chicago and upon their knowledge of contests which had been held occasionally in various Iowa cities. Cedar Rapids was enthusiastic. The citizens and the "city fathers" gave freely of their time and money to provide a hearty welcome for the visitors, and to ensure the success of the tournament.

The streets were gaily decorated; a platform for the judges and distinguished visitors was constructed at the intersection of Park Avenue and Washington Street; a

¹¹ A complete report is to be found in the *Cedar Rapids Times*, June 12, 1879. The following account is derived from this source. Later, despite protests that the athletes' freedom of movement might be restricted, the tournament rules were amended to stipulate that the uniforms must not expose the person above the knee.—Tournament Rules, Number 17, in the official programs.

huge arch spanned Iowa Avenue in front of the Grand Hotel, with a large "Welcome" sign suspended from it. Deputations of local notables met the visiting firemen at the train, escorted them through the crowded, festive streets, and did everything possible to make them feel at home.

The spirits of the celebrants were so high that even the rain which fell on the second morning failed to dampen their ardor. And Fortune smiled, for the rain ceased about mid-morning, and the sun burst bright and hot through the clouds. The only change in plans was the postponement of the parade until six o'clock in the evening, after the contests of that day had been held.

The first event was the steamer competition, in which the object was to raise steam from cold water within the allotted ten minutes and then to throw a stream of water as far as possible. The Cedar Rapids team attained a mark of two hundred and twenty-seven feet, four feet farther than Burlington's record but failed to win because they had failed to reach the one hundred foot mark inside the minimum allotted time. Burlington needed only nine minutes and forty seconds, and came off with the one hundred dollar prize. In the hand-engine contest the team of huskies from Independence threw water one hundred and ninety-seven feet and five inches, and went home the richer by seventy-five dollars.

After these events, the grand climax of Wednesday, June 11th, was the parade. In all, there were some seven hundred firemen "of fine physique and noble appearance, marching in perfect time to the inspiring music of the various splendid bands in the procession". Firemen have always gloried in parades and displays, and the tournaments afforded splendid opportunities for indulging in those luxuries. "Never before had any city of the great

state of Iowa witnessed anything in the way of a parade which could in any particular approach this one for grandeur and elegance." All the uniforms were brilliant, but those of the Rescue Hook and Ladder Number 1 of Muscatine excelled the others, and that company was adjudged the best in appearance. Firemen have always enjoyed banquets and celebrations, and the entertainment given during the evening met with their hearty approval.

The contests were resumed the next day. A large crowd came early, lining the sides of Iowa Avenue along which the races were to be run. A preliminary argument, which became quite heated, delayed the start of the contests. There were objections to the immodesty of some participants' uniforms, but the board of control ruled that firemen might dress as they pleased. The *Cedar Rapids Times* then insisted that an undershirt, drawers, and stockings could not be called a uniform. Later, despite protests that the athletes' freedom of movement might be restricted, the tournament rules were amended to stipulate uniforms that would not expose the person above the knee.

After the board had made its decision, and the objectors had subsided, the races were begun. The hose cart race was run over a course of two hundred yards¹² to a hydrant where the attachment was made. Then one hundred and fifty feet of hose must be laid out, the coupling broken, and a nozzle attached. The cart alone was to weigh at least five hundred pounds. The fastest time, forty-eight seconds, was made by the Hopes of Marshalltown, but they were disqualified on the ground that their cart was too light. Later it was found to weigh five hundred and five pounds.

¹² In 1913 the distance was fixed at one hundred and fifty yards for the championship races, and at one hundred yards for all other hose cart races.—“Minutes of the Business Meeting”, for 1913, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1914.

The first prize was awarded to the Bluff City Number 2 of Council Bluffs, with a time of fifty seconds.

The Independents Number 1 of Cedar Rapids were last with a mark of sixty-one seconds. The Woodburys were disqualified for lacking one section of hose. According to the *Times*, this was a deliberate subterfuge. The Woodburys had a wide reputation and were afraid of losing it in this race, so they lightened their cart and shortened their hose, hoping that the omission would go unnoticed. If challenged, they planned to claim that the missing section had been stolen. In general, the race was marked by many poor couplings and the exhaustion of the runners, indicating a lack of practice.

The hook and ladder event, in which four teams entered, was won by the Relief Number 1 of Muscatine in fifty-three and three-fourths seconds. The rules governing this contest limited the team to a maximum of twenty-five men, and prescribed a cart weighing at least fifteen hundred pounds. The race was run over a course of two hundred and fifty yards, then a twenty-four foot ladder must be raised at an angle of not less than forty-five degrees and a man must ascend to the top.¹³ Of the remaining events, the exhibition drill was won by the Muscatine Hook and Ladder Company, and Cedar Rapids won the water-throwing contest.

The tournament was considered a grand success, and the Iowa firemen were justly proud of their showing. Both the people of the State and the newspapers had given much attention to the affair, and the various cities represented had been generous in the moral and financial support they gave to their heroes. With such an auspicious beginning,

¹³ In 1901, all but the championship hook and ladder races were reduced to one hundred and fifty yards, and in 1912 the championship race was also limited to that distance. See the "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1900 and 1911, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1901, 1912.

the permanency of the Association and the tournaments sponsored by it seemed assured.

THE HEYDAY OF THE TOURNAMENTS

During the next thirty years the major activity of the Association centered around these tournaments. It was not until after the first decade of the present century that the Association became interested in such matters as firemen's pensions, fire prevention, funeral aid, and formal schooling for firemen. But it must be remembered that the tournaments did serve as training schools in which firemen became acquainted with new methods and the latest developments in fire apparatus.

Shortly after the first tournament, a set of rules was adopted to govern the contests.¹⁴ The general rules provided for the organization of the tournament. The executive committee constituted the board of control for tournaments, and it took charge of the distribution of prizes, the appointment of officials, and the settlement of all disputes. To prevent unfair competition, all participating departments were to be composed of at least five members who had been bona fide members of the department for at least sixty days and residents of the city for six months prior to the tournament. Despite these precautions, efforts to pad the roster with professional runners were not unknown. In 1909 a professional was defined as one who had received pay for running in other than hose company races.

Entrance fees of two per cent of the total prize in the respective event were exacted, but the bulk of the prize money came to be furnished by the city playing host to the tournament. By the turn of the century this sum usually amounted to a little more than \$3000, but the businessmen and citizens who contributed the funds felt amply repaid

¹⁴ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association, 1900.*

by the additional business the tournament fans brought them, and by the prestige a city acquired when the tournament came to it. In addition, the host city paid for the printing of one thousand copies of the official program, of which two hundred copies went to the financial secretary of the Association. The cost of the program was met, in the last analysis, by the subscriptions of the advertisers — local merchants and companies who manufactured fire-fighting equipment.

Each contest was governed by its particular set of rules. Those for the hose cart and hook and ladder contests have been mentioned. The coupling event consisted of two parts — a standing event in which the couplers had only to break the coupling and attach a nozzle with three full threads. There were to be at least ten feet of hose on either end of the coupling. In the running event, the coupler had to dash fifty feet before breaking the coupling.

For steamer events, the four classes of steamers were to use two hundred and fifty, two hundred, one hundred and fifty, and one hundred feet of hose respectively, and the maximum head of steam permitted was one hundred and twenty pounds. The team had ten minutes to plan after selecting its position. Time was to be counted from the first appearance of smoke through the stack until water was thrown one hundred feet horizontally through one hundred feet of hose. Water throwing for distance was not a race against time. With chemical engines, the contestants were to play the stream through fifty feet of hose, and time was not to be taken until the fire had burned for ten minutes.

The growth of the Association was steady, and the interest in the tournaments increased even more rapidly. By 1881 the Association had a membership of one hundred and seventy-six, representing thirty-four fire departments and sixty-seven companies. It was debt free, and owned seven

hundred feet of hose for tournament use. The prize money for the tournament held at Council Bluffs totaled nearly \$3000, and on June 7th "several thousand" marched in the parade which lasted three hours.¹⁵

The tournament of 1882 gave proof of the improved performances. The hook and ladder race was won by Atlantic in forty-six and one-half seconds. The Rescues of Muscatine won the hose race in forty-three and one-fourth seconds, but were disqualified for using professional runners and were expelled from the Association. The Champions of Muscatine, who had won second prize, supported their brother firemen, refused to accept the prize, and withdrew from the Association.¹⁶ A year later a new championship belt had to be purchased for this event because the Muscatine Rescues refused to surrender the one they had won in 1882.

An illustration of the support given the teams within their respective communities can be drawn from the history of the Iowa City Sawyers.¹⁷ Fred Sawyer purchased the uniforms for this company of twenty men who were recruited from the fastest men in existing companies. The uniform consisted of red stockings, blue trousers, white shirts, skull caps, and regulation running shoes. In order to finance the trip to Waterloo in 1883, a ball was planned, the proceeds going towards the expenses of the trip. In subsequent years the city council sometimes made an appropriation to help the team.¹⁸ At Des Moines in 1884 the Sawyers won the hose cart contest, competing against

¹⁵ *Iowa City Daily Republican*, May 5, June 9, 1881.

¹⁶ *Iowa City Daily Republican*, June 16, 17, 1882.

¹⁷ *Iowa City Daily Republican*, May 29, 1883.

¹⁸ In 1886 the council voted \$2.25 for each man and \$75 for the band's expenses.—*Iowa City Daily Republican*, June 7, 1886. In arguing for the appropriation, the *Republican* pointed to Cedar Rapids whose council contributed \$1400 to pay their firemen's expenses to Dubuque.

Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Red Oak, Davenport, and Newton.¹⁹ For the next few years the Sawyers were among the leading running teams of the State, compensating Mr. Sawyer for his generosity by the satisfaction and pride their performances brought to him.

A new event was added to the program in 1885 when a prize was awarded to the best appearing company. The first winner was the L. F. Walker team of Waterloo. This team continued to rate at the top in this event until the 1890's when the B. F. Mentzers of Marion displaced them from the first rank. The remarkable Mentzers had been organized in 1886 and adopted the name of the sponsor who lavished several thousand dollars on their uniforms and equipment. With their white helmets topped by large white plumes, white jackets crossed in front by blue bands and gold buttons, white gloves, blue trousers bearing a gold stripe down each side, and not least of all, "handlebar" moustaches, the Mentzers presented a striking appearance. Their performances as a drill team matched their appearance. They were captained by E. E. Parsons who served as president of the Association in 1903-1904, and as recording secretary from 1905-1928.

After team drills became a part of the tournament program in the 1880's the Mentzers regularly won that event, taking first prize in State events fifteen times between 1887 and 1909. They also won firsts at the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1892, the Omaha Trans-Mississippi in 1898, the Omaha National Tournament in the same year, and the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, when they earned the plaudits of President Theodore Roosevelt.²⁰ Their maneuvers were complicated, and when executed with precision, were a marvel of coördination. They were paced in quick time accord-

¹⁹ *Iowa City Daily Republican*, June 13, 1884.

²⁰ *Davenport Daily Times*, August 4, 5, 1909.

ing to the prescribed order, and without drum or music. The twenty-five movements had to be performed in the prescribed order, and had to be completed within fifteen minutes.

During the 1890's the character of the tournaments began to change. As the larger cities began to form paid departments, using horse-drawn wagons instead of the former hose carts and hook and ladder trucks pulled by hand, the firemen from these cities lost interest in the tournaments, for there were no events in which they could compete. Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, Clinton, and other larger cities, where paid departments were established, began to drop out of the tournaments, though they maintained their affiliations with the Association. In 1891 the tournament was held in Cedar Rapids, and again in 1900. In the interim the tournament was not held in any city having a paid department.

The tournament thus came to be largely a contest among volunteer companies. That is why the leading teams in the tournaments during this decade represented the smaller cities like Atlantic, Iowa City, Iowa Falls, Storm Lake, Marshalltown, Vinton, and Harlan, among others. As the paid departments dropped out of the tournaments, the steamer contest was necessarily eliminated. Even with this restriction the tournaments flourished. Each year the parade became larger, and each year the newspaper accounts advertised the tournament as the largest ever.

Just at the turn of the century, an addition to the tournament program was made which brought the paid departments back and raised the interest in the tournaments to heights never before attained. This event was the horse race in which trained men and intelligent, fast horses from paid departments collaborated in performances emphasizing skill and speed that were little short of miraculous.

From its hesitant introduction in 1897, and its first real place on the program in 1902, the horse race came to occupy the center of attention. For the next decade this event was the feature attraction, and during this period the tournaments returned to the larger cities and enjoyed their golden age. In 1902 the tournament was held at Davenport. With the exception of Red Oak in 1910, the tournament site was shifted about among Des Moines, Sioux City, Clinton, Council Bluffs, and Davenport for the next decade.

When the motor truck began to displace the horses, interest in the tournament again declined, and the tournament once again became an exclusively volunteer competition. The last horse race was held at the DeWitt tournament in 1916. It must have raised a lump in the throats of the old horsemen who saw only three teams entered in the race. With the advent of the motor and the consequent demise of the fire horses, an era ended, and the heyday of the tournaments passed.

The first of these horse races was held at the Iowa City tournament of 1897 as an added feature attraction.²¹ The contestants were Cedar Rapids and Clinton. The rivalry was intense, and both competitors exerted all their efforts to win. The event was a half-mile run from a standing start, with a coupling to be made at the end of the run. Clinton had a light, fast team which the Cedar Rapids partisans asserted were not fire horses at all, but "hurdlers", that is, race horses. After much dispute, the distance of one-half mile was agreed upon, although the Clinton team was thereby placed at a disadvantage because it could not stand the pace for more than a quarter of a mile. Clinton supporters later ascribed their defeat to this cause, as well as to the favoritism which they charged the starter with showing towards the Cedar Rapids team. The respective times were

²¹ *Iowa State Press*, June 9, 16, 23, 1897.

one minute, twenty-six and four-fifths seconds for the winner, and one minute, twenty-eight and two-fifths seconds for the loser. The Clinton horses faltered badly in the stretch. So Cedar Rapids won the prize of one hundred and twenty-five dollars.

A similar event was held at the Muscatine tournament in 1898, and Cedar Rapids retained her supremacy, this time against the challenge of Iowa City.²² The winning time was one minute, twenty-four and four-fifths seconds. The next day the teams raced again. Both contestants displayed true chivalry. One of the Cedar Rapids horses being unable to run, the Iowa City men loaned one of their extra horses as a substitute. Cedar Rapids then won the race, but turned over the prize money for this race to Iowa City, so everyone was happy, and people went home praising the sportsmanship of the competitors.

The horse race did not appear on the program again until 1902, when six teams were entered at the Davenport tournament.²³ Clinton won the first prize of two hundred dollars with a time of one minute, twenty-five and two-fifths seconds. On the next day, September 4th, Sioux City eclipsed all previous marks, winning the free-for-all race with a time of one minute, sixteen and one-fifth seconds. The prize was four hundred dollars.

During the winter a set of rules was prescribed to govern this contest which was now to be a permanent part of the tournament program.²⁴ From the beginning it was the feature attraction. The paid department contest was open only to Iowa paid departments, and the men, horses, and equipment must belong to the respective departments. The free-

²² *Iowa City Weekly Republican*, June 22, 1898.

²³ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1903.

²⁴ "Tournament Rules", in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1904. Except where otherwise indicated the data on specific races are taken from the official programs for the respective years.

for-all race was to be open to the world, although none but Iowa teams ever entered. This was because no other State tournament prescribed the bunk hitch and firemen from other States were not trained to compete.

The bunk hitch was used in Iowa only after 1903 when these rules went into effect. The wagon was to weigh at least eighteen hundred pounds. The "team" consisted of four men, who were required to ride on the wagon throughout the race, and, of course, the two horses. If a man failed to get aboard the flying wagon as the horses dashed out of the bunk house, the entry was disqualified. The men participating were to be in their bunks, dressed, with shoulders on the mattress. At the sound of the gong they slid down the pole, hitched the team in the bunk house, raced one-half mile, laid one hundred and fifty feet of hose, broke the coupling, and attached the pipe ready for water.

A temporary bunk house was constructed quartering on the track, in order to simulate a real fire station. One of the horse races was a hub and hub straightaway dash of one-half mile from a flying start. The term "hub and hub" indicates that the competitors raced in pairs. Another paid department event was the hitching contest performed by a three-man team, time being taken from the sound of the gong to the time when the front wheels crossed the finish line one hundred fifty feet from the station house.

With so much general interest in the paid department events, it is not difficult to imagine the enthusiasm which the participants themselves displayed. The competition was so keen and the rivalry so intense that the cities which entered these events spared no efforts to secure the best teams possible. A glance at the records made in the races indicates how rapidly the performances improved. In 1904, Des Moines Number 2 posted the fastest time in the bunk hitch race with a mark of one minute, twenty-three and

four-fifths seconds, and the same team won the straight-away event in one minute, six and two-fifths seconds.

About this time people began to speak, not of Des Moines Number 2, but of Jack and Jack, or of Corbett and Sullivan of Sioux City. This terminology indicates the esteem in which the horses were held. The animals were all clearly endowed with individual personalities. In 1905, Jack and Jack won the free-for-all in one minute, fifteen and two-fifths seconds, and henceforth, a team that could not do the half mile bunk hitch race in less than one minute, sixteen seconds stood very little chance of winning.

This improvement came partly as a result of the increased skill of the men who, by diligent practice, could shave seconds from the time by becoming smooth hitchers and rapid couplers. The emphasis, however, was placed upon fast horses who could also endure the strain of pulling the wagon at top speed for half a mile. By 1906 the time in the straightaway race had been reduced to one minute, two and three-fifths seconds. But speed was not the only requirement. The horse had to be steady at the hitch, yet a lightning starter, and withal, intelligent and coöperative. The horses were bred, therefore, with other things than mere speed in mind. Courage, strength, and intelligence were also weighty factors in selecting fire horses. Much care was exercised in their breeding.²⁵

The best horse was the offspring of a coach horse sire and a standard bred dam. Horses for hook and ladder trucks had to be heavier, so a Percheron replaced the trotting mare in this case. Jack and Jack of Des Moines were sired by a French coach horse, with a standard bred strain in the dam. They weighed 1250 and 1300 pounds each.

²⁵ Undated newspaper article from the scrapbook of Harvey Brown of Des Moines. The article was written either in 1904 or 1905. Mr. Brown was a member of the Des Moines fire department during the period under discussion.

Corbett and Sullivan of Sioux City were of the famous Morgan strain. Bonny and Beauty of Clinton were sired by Oregon Dutch, a famous runner, and they had a standard bred mare for their dam. Their inheritance showed up in their frequent skittishness during the hitch. In many respects, the ideal fire horse was similar to a cavalry horse, combining speed, courage, strength, endurance, and intelligence, with steadiness at the hitch and the ability to start fast. A thoroughbred would have been too high-strung to hitch well with not enough endurance to last the race out.

The first of the famous Iowa teams was Jack and Jack of Des Moines. After seeing these horses perform in the Council Bluffs tournament of 1905, Chief Hale of the Kansas City fire department remarked, "I don't believe there is a town on the map which will produce a team that will lower the world's record made by Jack and Jack during the recent Iowa firemen's tournament."²⁶ It will be seen that his prophecy was false.

Chief Hale's enthusiasm prompted him to add, "That team is too good to be pounding away on regular fire department work in Des Moines. The world wants to see them, and their fame is spreading to the ends of the earth. I have seen them. Their work in Des Moines was most wonderful." Chief Hale thought the horses should be exhibited at Madison Square Garden.

But Jack and Jack were only the first of a series of famous Iowa fire teams. In 1908 Paddy and Prince of Sioux City surpassed the record at Clinton with a time of one minute and fifteen seconds flat. The race at Davenport in 1909 was the most thrilling ever held. The beautiful Clinton mares, bay Bonny and black Beauty, turned in a remarkable performance of one minute, fourteen and one-fifth seconds, but Paddy and Prince came back thirty min-

²⁶ Clipping in Harvey Brown's scrapbook.

utes later with a time of one minute, thirteen and three-fifths seconds to eclipse all existing marks.

The greatest rivalry was between Lou and Herb, the dun-colored speedsters from Council Bluffs, and Clinton's famous Bobs. Lou and Herb were faster on the straightaway. Their time of fifty-eight and four-fifths seconds made at their debut in 1909 was equaled only by their own record in the 1913 tournament at Perry. The Bobs did not appear together as a team until 1910, when Lou and Herb had already been racing for two years, but both teams reached their peaks about the same time. In 1909, Lou and Herb were sixth in the paid department race with a time of one minute, seventeen seconds, and they were second in the free-for-all, with a mark of one minute, fifteen and three-fifths seconds. They still had to learn to hitch. The straightaway race of 1910 was their first direct competition with the Bobs. Lou and Herb were first in one minute and one second, and the Bobs fifth in one minute, three seconds.

Bob and Bob were declared the champions in the great tournament of 1911 held at Des Moines. In both bunk hitch events they nosed out Lou and Herb, winning the paid department race in one minute, thirteen and four-fifths seconds, and the free-for-all in one minute, fourteen and one-fifth seconds. In both events the Bobs hitched perfectly, Lou and Herb badly. But the Council Bluffs team earned some consolation by winning the straightaway race in which the Bobs took third. At Sioux City in 1912, the times were slow. In both bunk hitch events the Bobs ran past their collars, the hitch was delayed, and Clinton was out of the running. Lou and Herb won the paid department race for Iowa teams in one minute, sixteen and two-fifths seconds while Fred and Mack of Des Moines took the free-for-all with a time that was one and three-fifths seconds faster. Bad weather prevented the running of the straightaway

race. In 1913 the teams divided the races. Lou and Herb won the paid department race and the straightaway; the Bobs won the free-for-all, and took second in the dash.

In 1914 Lou and Herb came into their own. At the Maquoketa tournament they established a bunk hitch record that was never officially equaled. They were clocked in one minute, twelve and four-fifths seconds! Then to prove their superiority they won the free-for-all in one minute, fourteen seconds, beating the Bobs by two-fifths of a second, and they also nosed out the Bobs in the straightaway dash. During the following winter Council Bluffs installed motor trucks, and Lou and Herb were sold to Marion, South Carolina. They were brought back to Iowa City to give an exhibition at the 1915 tournament, but they suffered from unskillful handling and were no longer a match for the Bobs who now had no one to dispute their supremacy among Iowa fire horses.

The Bobs won all three races in 1915, and they repeated in 1916, the last tournament in which horses competed. In this year their times in the two bunk hitch races were one minute, thirteen and two-fifths seconds, and one minute, fourteen seconds. The Bobs held the fastest unofficial mark. At an exhibition in 1912 they were clocked in one minute, twelve and one-half seconds, the fastest time ever recorded for the bunk hitch race. On the basis of the actual competition between the two teams, however, the award must go to Lou and Herb.

THE PASSING OF THE TOURNAMENTS

Although the horse races of the paid departments received most attention during the heyday of the tournaments, the majority of the contestants remained volunteers, and most of the events were for them. The tournament, even when it was dominated by and held in the larger cities,

was still an attraction for the volunteer firemen. Most of the officers of the Association likewise came from towns having only volunteer departments. This was but natural, because only a relatively few departments in Iowa were paid, full-time organizations. Since the beginning of the tournaments new events for the volunteer departments had been added from time to time. By the 1890's prizes were awarded for the best appearing, the best drilled, and the largest companies. A flag race had also been inaugurated. This was a contest between teams of eighteen men, divided into two lines of nine men each, with the lines fifty yards apart. The runners then shuttled back and forth until each man had carried the flag across the intervening space. This was purely a speed contest. There were also tugs of war, foot races, and ladder climbing. The hose cart race was divided into sections and classes, and there were special contests for amateurs, that is, firemen who had never before participated in a tournament.

The location of the tournament was a decisive factor in determining the representation of the towns. When Council Bluffs or Sioux City played host, most of the volunteer contestants came from towns in the western part of the State, such as Onawa, Atlantic, and Neola. When Davenport or Clinton sponsored the tournament, then eastern towns, such as Grand Mound, West Liberty, Wilton, or Calamus, predominated.

The times made in the various volunteer events were as truly remarkable as those in the horse races. Couplers had to do their work in less than five seconds if they expected to place. The hose cart races were run off in times of approximately thirty-five seconds for the two hundred yard events, and the hook and ladder races were won by marks of forty-five seconds or under for the two hundred and fifty yard distance. Every runner on the team had to be fast, and

just as important, the runners had to pull together. The ladder climbing and coupling events demanded skill and precision as well as speed.

All the contests emphasized the work that a fireman would perform in his regular line of duty — a rapid start and a quick dash to the fire, endurance, speed and skill in laying out the hose, making couplings, and climbing ladders. The tournaments therefore served to keep the firemen in the best of trim. They practiced diligently in preparation for the competition, and this practice proved of great benefit in enabling the firemen to extinguish fires rapidly and efficiently. The spirit of competition aroused by the tournaments intensified interest in fire departments, and elicited more generous support for local departments from their home communities.

At the tournaments themselves, the firemen learned new methods, became acquainted with new apparatus, and made many valuable contacts with other firemen with identical interests. The State Association business meetings served the same purposes, and cannot be dissociated from the tournaments as factors in the improvement of Iowa fire-fighting. The tournaments were a vital part of the Association, holding it together and increasing the interest in it.

But by 1919 the tournament was dying out. The withdrawal of the horse teams deprived the tournaments of their major attraction, and from this severe blow recovery was impossible. The cessation of the gatherings in 1917 and 1918 due to the war made it difficult to revive the interest which had declined during these two years. In 1919 the last tournament was held at Marion. The contestants were entirely volunteers, and there were comparatively few of them. Only towns in the immediate vicinity, like Toronto, Calamus, Ames, Marion, and Belle Plaine were represented.

This disappointment led to the discussion of the advisa-

bility of holding future tournaments. At the November meeting of 1919, the decision was left to the board of control.²⁷ Nothing in the minutes indicates what the board's decision was, but it apparently was in the negative, because the tournament was discontinued. The cessation of the tournaments accelerated the decline of the Association which was already entering on its darkest days.

The paid departments adopted the attitude that if they did not attend the tournaments there was little benefit in belonging to the Association. With the demise of the tournaments, something reminiscent of the good times people enjoyed at the turn of the century, and something of the glory of the old "brave fire laddies" departed with them. The volunteer firemen and their Association continued to exist, but only as pale reflections of the glorious tournament days when the spirit of friendly competition, and the enthusiasm it engendered were highlights of the Iowa scene. It was not until the middle 1920's that the Association undertook new activities that attracted the attention of firemen, and began to revive.

CIVIL SERVICE AND PENSIONS

The prominence of Iowa firemen and the prestige of the Iowa Firemen's Association is shown by the national repute which they had earned by the time the National Firemen's Association was organized, on January 17, 1898, when firemen from four midwestern States, including Iowa, met in Chicago.²⁸

The immediate purpose of the meeting was to protest a

²⁷ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1920, p. 26.

²⁸ Bert Fisher's "History of the National Firemen's Association, Its Beginnings, Its Purposes, and Its Accomplishments" in the *Convention Review*, National Firemen's Association, Chicago, 1918, p. 33. Subsequent references to the National Association are drawn from this source.

Congressional measure that provided for the establishment of a National Bureau of Insurance and the abolition of State taxes on foreign insurance companies. This bill was opposed because it would deprive firemen of their share in the proceeds from such taxes. At this meeting F. A. Wood of Cedar Rapids was elected chairman of the organization. At the third convention, in Milwaukee, E. I. Alderman of Marion was elected president. Iowans played a prominent part in the early history of the national organization, but they could not continue to do so as other States joined, because the larger cities naturally tended to dominate. By 1918 thirty-nine States were represented in the organization, with midwestern firemen in control.²⁹

About this time the interests of the Iowa Firemen's Association began to broaden in scope to include the promotion of desirable legislation, fire prevention, and pensions, partly as a result of the lead taken by the National Association.

But for several years there was nothing spectacular in the activities of the Iowa Association. Amendments to the constitution and the tournament rules constituted one item of interest on the agenda of almost every meeting, but the amendments were never important enough to effect any essential change in the organic laws and rules. In 1901 the date of the tournament was changed from June to any time the Association or the board of control should decide.³⁰ This action was the result of sad experiences with rainy weather which was more prevalent earlier in the summer. In 1919 salaries for officers were abolished because the dis-

²⁹ Fisher's "History of the National Firemen's Association, Its Beginnings, Its Purposes, and Its Accomplishments" in the *Convention Review*, National Firemen's Association, Chicago, 1918, pp. 33, 39.

³⁰ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1901, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1902.

continuance of the tournaments had been a financial blow to the treasury.³¹

In 1922 the time of the business meeting was moved up to September because of more favorable weather conditions in the earlier month. This indicates increased travel by automobile and the handicap of muddy roads.³² Section IV of the constitution, relating to tournaments and meetings, was struck out entirely in 1931.³³

The first dozen years of the new century witnessed a new development in attitudes towards the responsibilities and functions of government. This involved more extensive government participation in social and economic life, to aid the underprivileged and to alleviate economic inequalities. Specific means for accomplishing these aims included two measures that would benefit firemen. These were the introduction of the civil service or merit system in the organization of fire departments and retirement or disability pensions. The pension laws for police and firemen were the first laws enacted by the State of Iowa to provide pensions for public servants, and the civil service system in municipal government was first applied to police and fire departments.

The first civil service law in Iowa was enacted in 1902. It provided that a board of police and fire commissioners should appoint policemen and firemen in cities of more than 60,000 inhabitants, but it applied only to Des Moines. In all other cities, therefore, the old system prevailed whereby appointments were made by the mayor and the department head. In 1907 this law was broadened to include cities

³¹ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1919, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1920.

³² "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1922, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1923.

³³ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1931, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1932.

under special charter, and cities larger than 20,000 having a mayor-council type of government. The appointment of the fire chief was transferred from the council to the commissioners. Removals could be final only after a hearing before the civil service commission. In 1921 the name was changed from police and fire commission to civil service commission. This method of appointment was made compulsory for cities of over 15,000, and optional in cities from 2000 to 15,000.³⁴

The *Code of 1924* made a civil service commission obligatory in all cities of more than 8000 inhabitants having a paid department, and optional in smaller cities.³⁵ The board gave examinations and certified the ten highest scoring candidates to the fire chief who then made the appointments from this certified list. If the roster contained fewer than three names, the chief might make a temporary appointment until such time as another examination was held.

There is no indication from the records of the meetings of the Firemen's Association that the organization did anything to promote this legislation for a civil service system; the Association was still composed primarily of volunteer companies for whom such legislation was little more than an academic question. Nor did the Association display much more interest in pensions for firemen, again because the paid departments were in a minority. Moreover, the salaries of firemen were so small that many resented having to contribute to a pension fund, even when it was designed for their own welfare.

The first pensions for firemen were provided in New York City in 1857; by 1915, of the two hundred and four cities in the United States having more than 30,000 inhabi-

³⁴ *Laws of Iowa*, 1902, Ch. 31, 1907, Ch. 29, 1921, Ch. 216.

³⁵ *Code of 1924*, Sec. 5689.

tants, one hundred and thirty-one had pension systems for their firemen and ten years later, seventy-nine per cent had established pensions.³⁶ The first firemen's pension law in Iowa was not passed by the General Assembly until 1909, but the Firemen's Association had shown some interest in the subject several years earlier. In 1906 a committee on pensions had been formed which held discussions during the tournament at Clinton. In the fall business meeting at Des Moines a committee on pensions was formed, under the chairmanship of James Agnew of Dubuque. The minutes of the previous committee were made a matter of record, and a circular was issued asking funds for the support of a drive for pensions.³⁷

There is, however, nothing beyond this in the records of the meetings of the Association, and when the movement got under way in the General Assembly in 1909, the Association showed little interest and gave no support. There was no lobby of firemen to promote the scheme. The action taken by the legislators was in large part due to the work of two men who, though not firemen, were interested in the affairs of fire departments. These men were Representative Henry H. Boettger of Davenport, and Senator C. G. Saunders of Council Bluffs. The pension law passed the House by a vote of 94-0, and the Senate by a majority of 42-1. In 1911, an amendment was adopted by unanimous votes in both houses.³⁸

The bill of 1909 made a pension system optional for cities having volunteer departments, but compulsory in cities

³⁶ Brown's *Organization and Administration of Fire Departments in Iowa* (thesis), pp. 218, 219.

³⁷ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1906, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1907.

³⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1909, p. 1368, 1911, p. 1294; *Journal of the Senate*, 1909, p. 871; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 31, 1911.

with paid departments.³⁹ The latter cities were to levy an annual tax of one-half mill for a pension fund, which was to be supplemented by contributions by the firemen of one per cent of their annual salary, and by other receipts from gifts, devises, and donations. The trustees of the fund were the fire chief, the city attorney, and the city treasurer. The disability pensions went to firemen injured or killed in line of duty. If permanently disabled, a fireman could retire at one-half his regular pay; if he died, his widow or parents (if no widow survived) were to receive twenty dollars a month, and each child under sixteen was to get six dollars a month, but in no case were these amounts to exceed one-half the regular salary.

The retirement provision was that after twenty-two years of service, or at the age of fifty-five, a fireman might apply for retirement and receive a retirement pension equal to one-half the salary he was receiving before retirement. If the fund was inadequate to pay the full obligation, then the amount was to be pro rated. In 1911 the law was amended to permit retirement at the age of fifty.⁴⁰ For their services in securing this legislation, Messrs. Boettger and Saunders were voted honorary life memberships in the Iowa Firemen's Association.⁴¹

Subsequent amendments increased the widow's pension from twenty to thirty dollars per month, and dependent childrens' from six to eight dollars. In 1924 commission cities of over 125,000 persons (meaning Des Moines) were permitted to levy an additional one-half mill tax, and manager cities larger than 35,000 (Dubuque) could levy an extra mill. A year later any city of more than 35,000 was

³⁹ *Laws of Iowa*, 1909, Ch. 61.

⁴⁰ *Laws of Iowa*, 1911, Ch. 50.

⁴¹ "Minutes of the Business Meeting" for 1911, in the *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1912.

allowed to levy an additional one-half mill, and in 1927 cities over 25,000 could levy a total tax not to exceed two mills for firemen's pensions. This pension system was elaborated in the *Code of 1931* to provide that all cities with an organized fire department *shall* levy an annual tax not to exceed one-half mill, for a firemen's pension system, and cities over 25,000 *may* levy an additional two mill tax.⁴²

Although this system worked well, there was a feeling that it should be reorganized on an actuarial basis, for with the passage of time the number of members eligible for pensions would increase. In 1934, therefore, a new system was established for firemen who were appointed after that year.⁴³ The old system included only those firemen already covered by it. The new law applied to all cities whose departments were under civil service and new firemen were required to participate.

The board of trustees for this fund (which was to be maintained separately from the earlier pension fund) was to be composed of the fire chief, two firemen, the city treasurer, the city attorney, and two citizens appointed by the mayor. There was to be a medical board of three doctors, and an actuary was to set up the rates according to which firemen were to contribute. The retirement section allowed a fireman to retire at fifty-five, and he had to retire at seventy. His annuity was to be computed on the basis of his contributions, his latest rate of pay, and his years of service. The minimum pension was to be one-fourth of his last rate of pay, and a disability pension was to equal two-thirds of his regular pay. Benefits to survivors might be lump sums or annuities. In case of death in line of duty the survivor's annuity was to equal one-half the man's pay.

⁴² *Laws of Iowa*, 1921, Chs. 30, 31, 1924, Extra Session, Ch. 12, 1925, Ch. 142, 1927, Chs. 165, 166; *Code of 1931*, Sec. 6310.

⁴³ *Laws of Iowa*, 1933-1934, Extra Session, Ch. 75.

While the Association cannot be given credit for the establishment of these pension systems, the consideration of them is relevant to any discussion of the Firemen's Association. For after the systems were organized, firemen were quick to appreciate the great benefits which they conferred in providing for their old age, and in ensuring an income to dependents in case of an accident incurred in line of duty.

The interest of the Association in promoting fire prevention campaigns was encouraged by the establishment of the office of State Fire Marshal in 1911.⁴⁴ The Fire Marshal was to emphasize the necessity for and benefits of fire prevention, and his office has served as a unifying agency in this movement. By distributing information among citizens and in the schools, the Fire Marshal aroused public consciousness. Soon the Firemen's Association took up the work also and the Fire Marshal was a welcome speaker at the Association's business meetings. The Fire Marshal and his aides made periodic investigations of fires and fire hazards and made necessary and useful recommendations. They also inspected fire departments and fire-fighting equipment, pointing out defects and suggesting remedies.

The close coöperation between the Fire Marshal's office and the Firemen's Association was demonstrated in 1925, when a four-day short course was inaugurated at Iowa State College under the direction of Rolland S. Wallis. Emphasis in the courses, which have been held ever since that time, is placed upon salvage methods, training of firemen, new types of equipment, new techniques in fire fighting, and fire protection. In 1937 a State law was passed empowering municipalities to pay the expenses of firemen to encourage attendance at these schools.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Laws of Iowa*, 1911, Ch. 128.

⁴⁵ *Laws of Iowa*, 1932, Ch. 182; *Annual Report of the State Fire Marshal*, 1939, p. 25.

By this time the attendance had grown so large that district schools were held at various cities in the State in addition to the regular spring short course at Ames. In 1941, 141 municipalities sent 443 firemen to the Ames short course in May, and 153 municipalities sent 831 firemen to the district schools held in ten different communities.⁴⁶ Most of those in attendance were volunteer firemen. This emphasis upon training and fire prevention is a healthy indication that Iowa firemen are not content merely to extinguish fires, but that they and their Association are eager to strike at the heart of the fire menace by directing their efforts at fire prevention.

THE RECENT HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION

It has been suggested earlier in this article that the Association came on dark days after the discontinuance of the tournaments. The records relating to the membership and the financial condition of the Association prove the truth of this statement. In 1899 there were 109 members in good standing; the total receipts of the Association for the preceding year had been \$3,024.03, and there was a balance of \$189.89 in the treasury. A decline took place during the next two years, for dues received were only forty-eight dollars in 1902, indicating a paid-up membership of only forty-eight men. By 1912 paid-up dues were \$116, indicating 116 members, exclusive of honorary memberships. In 1915 the receipts reached their zenith for the period before the 1920's, with total receipts amounting to \$5,453.98, and one hundred and twenty-five paid-up members.⁴⁷

The first World War and the discontinuance of the tour-

⁴⁶ *Annual Report of the State Fire Marshal*, 1941, p. 20.

⁴⁷ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1900, p. 20, 1903, 1913, p. 22, 1914, p. 35, 1916, p. 25. The total receipts in any given year included the year's new income and the balance brought forward from the preceding year.

naments caused a sharp decline both in membership and assets. In 1917 only twenty-eight firemen attended the business meeting and there were only seventy paid-up members. During the next year membership fell off to forty-one, and a constitutional amendment was passed to the effect that no officer was to receive a salary unless a tournament or some other means of replenishing the treasury could be devised. This was the nadir of the Association's fortunes.

It was about this time that the Association began to shift its emphasis to fire prevention and legislation promoting the interests of firemen. The programs of the business meetings were dominated by speakers emphasizing fire prevention, and in 1919 the first of the regular committees on legislation was appointed. Henceforth, the reports and recommendations of this committee occupied an important part of the programs.

In the early 1920's the Association began to lift its head, the members having discovered that a tournament was not essential to the existence of the Association, and that the volunteer firemen could support it without the aid of the paid departments. In 1923 there were one hundred and thirty-eight paid-up members, and ninety-two attended the banquet at the business meeting.⁴⁸

In 1925 an important step was taken, largely at the suggestion of Secretary E. E. Parsons of Marion. This was the establishment of the Funeral Aid Association.⁴⁹ This new activity gave great impetus to the recovery of the Firemen's Association. The object was to provide funeral aid immediately upon the death of a member. Membership was contingent upon good standing in the Firemen's Asso-

⁴⁸ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1923, financial report for 1922.

⁴⁹ See *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1925, p. 30, for the articles of the Funeral Aid Association.

ciation, and this provision guaranteed the growth of this organization side by side with that of the Funeral Aid Association. The officers of the Funeral Aid group were to be the Board of Control of the Firemen's Association. Dues were one dollar for the Firemen's Association and one dollar for the Funeral Aid fund. Upon the death of a member, each participant in the Funeral Aid Association was assessed one dollar, but the amount paid to dependents was not to exceed five hundred dollars. Only members of the Firemen's Association could participate in the Funeral Aid program. This connection gave the Firemen's Association new life. In 1926-1927 it had 239 members; in 1927-1928, there were 452.⁵⁰

This measure was of special interest to volunteer firemen, since they were not beneficiaries of the State pension laws. In 1935 the Funeral Aid Association was reorganized as the "Mutual Aid Department". New members had to be under forty years of age, but existing memberships in the old Funeral Aid Association were transferred to the new department.⁵¹

In 1928 the business meeting was attended by some four hundred and fifty volunteer firemen. An important change in the official personnel occurred when Paul A. Soener of Independence was elected secretary, replacing Mr. Parsons who had served the Association as vice president, president, or secretary ever since 1903. Mr. Soener continued to serve as secretary until September, 1942, when he became fourth vice president. The date 1932 was memorable as the year of the largest membership in the Association's history. There were 924 members in both the Association and the Funeral Aid, and 1128 men belonged to the Associa-

⁵⁰ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1927, pp. 48, 49, 1928, pp. 62-64.

⁵¹ See *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1939, for the articles of incorporation.

tion.⁵² The treasury was so prosperous that the assessment on the Funeral Aid was omitted.

Now that the prosperity of the Association had been regained, the members began to think of tournaments once again. In 1932 the contests were revived in conjunction with the annual September business meeting. These were not on the same scale as the tournaments of old which had attracted thousands of visitors to the host cities, and had packed the stands in the fairgrounds where they were held, but the new contests were well attended. In 1935 at Oelwein, there were 160 contestants, and a crowd of 4000 spectators watched Atlantic win five of the eight events. The contests included ladder climbing, ladder raising, and coupling. The most exciting was the water fight in which four-man teams competed in pairs, each team attempting to direct its stream of water so effectively as to drive a steel barrel out of the neutral rectangle marked on the ground, and into the territory of the opponent.

In 1935 the Association reorganized, adopted a new constitution, and reincorporated under the laws of the State. The articles of incorporation were to be in force for fifty years.⁵³ They differed little from the previous ones, for the name remained unchanged and the purposes were the same. The constitutional changes required more detailed consideration. The officers — the president, five vice presidents, and the secretary-treasurer — collectively constitute the board of directors and are elected annually. The legislative committee promotes legislation in the interests of firemen, and opposes laws that might have deleterious effects. The annual convention and business meeting is held on the third Wednesday in September unless otherwise de-

⁵² *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1932, p. 49.

⁵³ See *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1939, for the text of the articles of incorporation.

cided, and the president may call additional meetings, with the approval of the directors. Votes must be cast in person, although the voter may cast his ballot through the proxy committee if he has registered his attendance at the convention.

On August 1, 1941, just before the United States entered the war, the Iowa Firemen's Association had 1924 members, and 1715 firemen belonged to the Mutual Aid Department.⁵⁴ The former had a treasury balance of \$1,203.67, and the latter had a balance of \$16,685.26. In every way, therefore, the Association was prospering, and it was on harmonious terms with the Iowa Fire Fighters' Association, an organization founded nearly twenty years before to consider the problems of the paid departments.

But the war is now casting a pall upon the Association, not because the interest in or the necessity for it has diminished, but because the war has affected civilian life so profoundly. The first paragraph of the story of the 1942 convention, appearing in the *Tipton Advertiser* for Thursday, September 17, 1942, summarized the hardships the Association faces: "The handicap of war regulations and tire conservation was felt at the 65th annual state convention of the Iowa Firemen's Association which was held in the city of Tipton, Wednesday. The attendance of visitors was limited to state officers of the organization and a few visitors from eastern Iowa, for the most part. Instead of the hundreds of visitors who had planned last year to be guests of the Tipton firemen, less than a hundred could arrange to be here this week. All exhibitions and contests were dispensed with until after the close of the war."

Thus history repeats itself. The business meeting was held as planned, however, and the following officers were elected for the year 1942-1943: Lester Willey, Denison,

⁵⁴ *Official Program of the Iowa Firemen's Association*, 1941, p. 109.

president; E. E. McCollum, Eagle Grove, first vice president; C. A. Tuchs, Des Moines, second vice president; Thomas C. Nolan, Emmetsburg, third vice president; Paul A. Soener, independence, fourth vice president; Dean Rogers, Corning, fifth vice president, and Harry C. Reinholdt, Manning, secretary-treasurer.

The Association has survived difficulties in the past, however, and it will doubtless be in existence after the present war has ended, because it serves useful purposes and fulfills certain needs. The Association was formed seventy-four years ago, with two ideas in mind. Through its tournaments and meetings it would be a school for firemen, and it would also have a social function. With the modern emphasis upon adequate training for firemen, the first purpose has come to outweigh the second. But the social aspect can never be ignored, for firemen have not changed essentially during the last three quarters of a century. Their primary duty is to fight fires, and the Association emphasizes this point, but good fellowship is also important.

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