

Pottsville Fire Department

Looking Back

July

Mike Glore

10 Years Ago

07/27/2002 – STILL – 03:07 – Rear 96 Water St., New Philadelphia; Good Intent (E11) and Phoenix (L21) responded; 5 single-story garages gutted.

15 Years Ago

A busy start to the weekend for Asst. Chief Mistisshin (American Hose):

07/25/1997 – Box 39 – 20:13 – 514 Howard Ave.

A fire erupted in the rear first floor kitchen of the 2 ½ story end-of-the-row dwelling of Bonnie and John Mason. Mr. & Mrs. Mason were not at home when the fire began, but their children, Dawn (18), Michele Stoudt (8), Malinda Stoudt (8), and Cassandra (5) were home. Neighbors across the street, Robin and Dennis Kerney, heard screams and looked out to see smoke pouring from the Mason home. Mrs. Kerney led three of the Mason children to safety, but was unable to reach Dawn on the 2nd floor. Companies arrived with fire showing from the first floor rear of the home. As companies began to knock-down the fire, firefighters from the Humane entered the home and rescued Dawn from her bedroom. She was transported to Pottsville Hospital where she was treated for smoke inhalation. The fire was quickly knocked-down. The first floor kitchen was heavily damaged with the remainder of the first floor suffering heat and smoke damage. There was minor extension to the 2nd floor bathroom directly above the kitchen. The vacant home next door at 512 suffered some smoke damage.



A view of the rear kitchen area of the home at 514 Howard Ave. Fire originated just inside the rear door.

07/26/1997 – Box 35 – 03:26 – 706 Mahantongo St.

Fire erupted in the ceiling of the first floor apartment occupied by Dave Eckert, former Pottsville City Councilman and Director of Public Safety. Eckert was not home at the time of the fire. As the fire and smoke spread through the ceiling and void spaces, Elizabeth Hamilton was awakened in her second floor bedroom at 708 Mahantongo by the strong odor of smoke. Upon investigating, she discovered the fire in Eckert's first floor apartment. Companies arrived with heavy smoke showing from the apartment building. The fire was controlled in 15 minutes, but extensive overhaul was necessary to expose the void spaces in both 706 and 708 Mahantongo. Eckert's apartment was heavily damaged. The second floor apartment, which was vacant, was also slightly damaged. Hamilton's home at 708 suffered smoke damage. The cause of the fire was electrical in nature.



Humane E33 (right – 1980 Seagrave 1250 gpm Pumper) and West End L51 (left - 1992 E-One 75' quint) operate at 706 Mahantongo St.

20 Years Ago

7/25/1992 – Box 553 – 11:01 – 800-17 N. 2nd St; Kitchen gutted; Cause: Gas stove.

Another funny personal story with this one...

I was out with Chief Engineer Marvin Davis driver training on Good Intent's 1988 Hahn pumper that Saturday morning. We were actually heading out East Railroad Street when the Box was transmitted. We stopped the rig and did a quick "Chinese Fire Drill," switching positions in the cab. We arrived quickly with smoke showing from the 2-story middle-of-the-row dwelling in the Pottsville Housing Authority complex. A 1.5" line was stretched through the front door and made quick work of the fire that gutted the 1st floor rear kitchen of the home. The remainder of the home suffered heavy heat and smoke damage. The cause of the fire was a faulty gas connection at the stove.



West End L51 and Good Intent E11 operate at 800-17 N. 2nd St.

25 Years Ago

07/25/1987 – Box 25 – 13:27 – 529 S. Centre St; Basement fire in an occupied multiple dwelling.

Temperatures were at 95 degrees that hot and humid July afternoon when a fire erupted in the basement of the 2-story occupied multiple dwelling of ordinary construction. Companies arrived with smoke showing from the first floor. A handline was quickly stretched up the long flight of steps to the front door of the home and then to the basement via the interior stairs. The fire in the basement was knocked-down quickly, but had extended into the bump-out on the south (B) side of the building. Extensive overhaul was necessary, which quickly depleted the firefighters on scene.



A great view looking down from 529 S. Centre St. PFD rigs in the photo include (right to left): West End 1977 Seagrave 100' quint, Good Intent 1975 Hahn 1000 gpm pumper, Phoenix 1978 American LaFrance 100' tractor-drawn aerial ladder, Good Will 1982 Ford/FMC 750 gpm pumper).

30 Years Ago

07/28/1982 – Box 57 – 23:28 – 622 N. 2nd St: Occupant: Jane Kopina; Cause: Unknown; Loss: \$21,350.

Ms. Jane Kopina and her daughter, Jane, were asleep in the second floor bedroom in the three-story brick occupied multiple dwelling when they awoke to the smell of smoke. Attempting to flee, they discovered the rear stairwell blocked by heat and smoke pouring up from a fire on the first floor. They proceeded to their bathroom and escaped via a doorway that led to a front stairwell in the building. Companies arrived with heavy fire showing from the first floor rear. The fire was placed under control in half an hour and companies began clearing the scene at 01:00. Fire originated in the 1st floor living room of Ms. Kopina and gutted that room and the kitchen. The 2nd floor bedroom and bathroom were also heavily damaged. Four other occupants of

the apartment building escaped unharmed. The building was owned by Harry T. Dolan, Schuylkill Haven. This building still stands on N. 2nd St.

35 Years Ago

07/04/1977 – Box 512 – 23:13 – 10 Sunnyside Gardens; Occupant: Lucille Sorge; Cause: Careless smoking; Loss: \$500.

07/26/1977 – Box 42 – 13:50 – 719 W. Market St; Apartment building; Cause: Electrical short in lamp cord; Loss: \$15,000; Four people rescued from 2nd floor by Phoenix Fire Co.

Mrs. Emma Shoemaker and Mrs. Hannah Smith lived in the second floor apartment in the 3-story occupied multiple dwelling of ordinary construction. That morning, they were hosting visitors: Mrs. Leona Boyer of St. Clair and Kirk Freed, age 13, son of building owner Gerald Freed of Auburn. The first floor apartment was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Breslin. Mrs. Breslin discovered smoke coming from the couple's rear bedroom. Her husband had just arrived home and she alerted him to the condition. The smoke was becoming heavier as Mr. Breslin tried to crawl to the back bedroom toward the glow, but was unable to do so. Soon, the box began to bang-in at City firehouses. Companies arrived with heavy smoke showing from the building and fire extending from the rear of the first floor. The occupants of the 2nd floor apartment appeared at the windows in need of rescue. Phoenix arrived with their 1959 American LaFrance 100' tractor-drawn aerial ladder and went in service. The occupants were safely removed by Phoenix firefighters over the aerial ladder and over a ground ladder. Firefighters quickly knocked-down the fire in the first floor apartment. The first floor rear was gutted with the remainder of the building suffering varying degrees of heat and smoke damage. The occupants of the third floor, Mr.& Mrs. Paul Wetzel, were not home at the time of the fire. Two firefighters were injured: Asst. Chief Earl Blum (West End) suffered a cut finer; Firefighter Al Murray (Humane) suffered an eye injury. Again, the West End's aerial ladder truck – normally only a few blocks away - was not in service as the 1960 Seagrave 65' quint had been sold and the company was awaiting delivery of their 1977 Seagrave 100' quint.



Phoenix has the aerial ladder in service as well as ground ladders to the 2nd floor of 719 W. Market St.



Firefighters overhaul the first floor rear bedroom in which fire originated at 719 W. Market St. Left: Harry Reed (West End); Center: Jack Messner (West

End); the Asst. Chief in white may be Earl Blum (West End); Unknown (Good Intent).

07/28/1977 – Box 67 – 12:50 – Rt. 61 & Mill Creek Ave; Seitzinger Ford Dealership; Cause: Gasoline vapor explosion; Loss: \$65,000.

George Meyer, age 59 of Pottsville, was employed by the Seitzinger Ford Dealership as a service technician. With a vehicle on the lift in the service bay, he was working on an issue with the fuel gauge unit when gasoline dripped onto a trouble light that he was using, igniting instantly. Meyer was quickly engulfed. Shop Foreman Roy D. Eiler and his son, City Police Patrolman Roy J. Eiler, had just entered the service area when the accident happened. They, along with other employees, rolled Meyer on the floor to extinguish the flames. He was transported to Good Samaritan Hospital with 2nd degree burns about his face, arm, hand, chest, and leg. Roy D. Eiler suffered burns to his hands while assisting Meyer. Responding companies had a good column of smoke on the approach and arrived with heavy fire from the service area. The fire was largely contained to the service area. The roof was vented and a foam line established as well. This building stood in the southwest corner of Route 61 & Mill Creek Ave. (around the area of the Dairy Queen today).

45 Years Ago

07/06/1967 – Box 32 – 19:30 – 404 Schuylkill Ave; Occupant: Fran Capella; Cause: Unknown; Loss: \$375.

Box 32 at 4th & Schuylkill was “hooked” for this fire that damaged the rear porch and shingles of the home. Firefighter Larry Davidson (West End) suffered a sprained ankle.

July 22, 1967 – The Mill Creek Hose Company’s house siren could now be activated by Pottsville City Hall. An open-line phone – like the “red phones” that used to be in each City firehouse – was also installed from City Hall to the Mill Creek Hose Co. Residents of the Mill Creek section of East Norwegian Township were advised to call 622-1234 in the event of a fire.

Additionally, 8 new fire alarm boxes were installed in the City: 2nd Ward: Pomeroy’s (Centre & Mahantongo) – Box 221; 4th Ward: 9th & W. Market – Box 413; 5th Ward: Schuylkill County Prison – Box 515; 6th Ward: Prospect & Pine – Box 622; 7th Ward: 17th & Mahantongo – Box 731; 18th & W. Norwegian – Box 732; 19th & W. Norwegian – Box 733; 21st & W. Norwegian – Box 734.

Three new “Phantom Boxes” were also put in service for the then-new Forest Hills annex.

07/24/1967 – Box 722 – 19:31 – 19th & West End Ave; Sam Jaffe warehouse; Cause: Lightning; Loss: \$100.

07/31/1967 – Box 14 – 03:15 – 116 W. Market St; Famous Restaurant; Cause: Undetermined (Suspicious nature); Loss: Unknown. See 1947 as well...

50 Years Ago

07/18/1962 – Box 78 – 10:00 – 2257 W. Market St; Occupant: Fred Krause, Jr; Cause: Boy had lighted candle under bed; Loss: Unknown.

60 Years Ago

The refrigerator issues continued in 1952...

07/20/1952 – STILL – 08:40 – 221 S. Centre St; Occupant: Charles Dewald; Cause: Hot motor on refrigerator in apartment on 2nd floor; Lots of smoke; Loss: \$200.

...and if it wasn't the refrigerator...

07/21/1952 – STILL – 18:22 – 2027 W. Market St; Occupant: L.K Stoner; Cause: Lightning struck roof, no fire; Loss: \$100.

07/21/1952 – STILL – 18:52 – 209 N. 20th St; Occupant: Joseph Dautlick; Cause: Lightning struck roof of house, scorched ledge at roof; Loss: \$150.

65 Years Ago

07/19/1947 – STILL – 04:50 – 116 W. Market St; Famous Restaurant; Cause: Fat on overheated coal stove caught on fire, set fire to kitchen; Loss: \$2,741.36.

Mrs. Leona Shultz of 124 W. Market St. looked out the rear window of her apartment early that July morning and saw flames in the kitchen of the Famous Restaurant. She phoned City Hall. Fire Chief Smith had the Humane and Good Intent dispatched. The fire was confined to the kitchen and was controlled with two booster lines. The likely apparatus response would have been Humane with their 1929 Buffalo hose & booster truck and Good Intent

with their 1937 Ahrens-Fox model VC 500 gpm pumper. The Famous Restaurant was located in what is today the "Roma Pizza" complex.

70 Years Ago

07/15/1942 – Box 77 – 10:50 – 1804 Mahantongo St; Occupant: Warren Williams; Cause: Spark from chimney set wood shingle roof on fire; Loss: \$300.

Fire was discovered in the roof area of the Williams home at 1804. A neighbor ran across the street and pulled Box 77. Companies arrived with fire showing from the roof itself. The wooden shingles on the Williams home were destroyed. Those on the other half of the double at 1806 suffered little damage. The attic area of the Williams home suffered some smoke and water damage.

This was the first box alarm following the change in the sounding of the "Bull" whistle (Gamewell diaphone). The practice of blowing the ward in which the fire was located was discontinued during the World War II years. Only one long blast of the horn was sounded for fires so as not to cause confusion with the air raid alarm.

07/22/1942 – Box 67 – 20:40 – Nichols St; Spur Gas Station; Cause: Filling gas tanks, fumes in metal building ignited when light switch was turned-on; Loss: \$150.

A blackout/air raid drill was scheduled to begin in Pottsville at 21:00 hrs. Shortly before, Al Dunning of Philadelphia had just got done topping the 10,000 gallon gasoline storage tank at the Spur Gas Station along Nichols St. from his tanker truck. He went to a corrugated metal outbuilding behind the gas station – under which the tank was located - and turned on the light switch. An explosion followed, throwing Dunning from the building. Thankfully, he was not seriously injured and suffered only minor burns. He quickly drove his gasoline tanker a safe distance away. The box was transmitted at 20:40 hrs. Companies arrived to find the metal outbuilding destroyed and some of its contents still burning. The fires were quickly extinguished. It was discovered that gasoline vapors had accumulated in the metal outbuilding and were ignited when the light switch was turned on.

There was much confusion among the Pottsville Air Raid Wardens as they had thought that the drill had begun when the alarm for the fire was sounded.

75 Years Ago

07/21/1937 – Box 72 – 16:45 – Rear 2162 W. Market St; Adolph Hauptly store;
Cause: Overheated stove set ceiling on fire; Loss: \$100.

07/25/1937 – Box 66 and 67 – 19:15 – Near Mamies Ave. out of City limits;
Occupant: Fred Tray; Cause: Unknown (fire started under front porch); Loss:
\$140.

80 Years Ago

07/27/1932 – Box 61 – 09:30 – 617 N. Centre St; Occupant: John Muraski;
Cause: Fat on stove boiled-over; Loss: \$400.

90 Years Ago

07/01/1922 – STILL – 17:00 – 628 Edwards Ave; Occupant: R. Harman;
Cause: Lightning; Loss: \$100.

07/17/1922 – STILL – 08:05 – 1003 W. Market St; Occupant: W. Boland;
Cause: Matches; Loss: \$200.

95 Years Ago

07/24/1917 – The Good Intent purchased a White combination hose and
chemical car to compliment the company's Robinson triple combination
pumper.

07/18/1917 – Box 51 – 03:00 – 414 N. 2nd St; Occupant: A. Pretzel Company;
Cause: Bake Oven; Loss: \$1,025.29.

100 Years Ago

07/03/1912 – Box 64 – 17:00 – 415 N. Centre St; 2-story frame dwelling owned
by Charles Reed and occupied by John Keaveny; Cause: Spark got on ironing
cloth; Loss: \$16.70.

07/05/1912 – Box 51 – 01:13 – 438 N. Centre St; 2 ½ story frame store and dwelling owned by William Buechley and occupied by Carmen Tucci; Cause; Unknown; Loss: \$450.

125 Years Ago

07/04/1887 – 15:50 – Fire at the Philadelphia House, Railroad St; House occupied by Hattie Duncan.

135 Years Ago

07/24/1877 – 22:30 – Fire destroyed the barn of Ephraim Phillips, on Bare Field.

140 Years Ago

07/04/1872 – In the morning, Henry Rosengarten's warehouse was gutted by fire; In the evening of the same day, Galland's store was on fire; The goods were considerably damaged by smoke and water; during the day, there was an alarm from the "Mortimer House" on Centre St. and one from Church Alley caused by fireworks.

07/05/1872 – 21:00 – The 2-story frame house owned and occupied by Bernard Reilly situated on the rise of the hill, on Port Carbon Road, beyond the big bend.