10 Years Ago

April, 2004 – Good Intent places the American Hose Company’s Squad 72 (1976 Mack CF 1250 gpm/750 gwt pumper) in service as “Engine 11” following the sale of the company’s 1998 E-One 1250 gpm pumper to the New Kingstown Fire Company in Cumberland County.

20 Years Ago


Nozzleman John Conway (Humane) soaks the remains of a mattress and box spring removed from the 2nd floor on Spring Garden St in 1994. Steve Karinch (Phoenix) is in the background.

30 Years Ago

4/27/1984 – Box 55 – 12:58 – 726 N. 13th St; Owner: W. Solan; Cause: Plastic items placed on hot stove; Loss: $50,000.
An unknown passerby pulled the hook on Box 55 – 13th & Mt. Hope Ave – when he/she discovered smoke pouring from the home. Companies arrived with heavy fire showing from the first floor rear and rear porch area of the 3-story, frame stand-alone dwelling. Mr. and Mrs. Sloan – as well as a mail carrier who was in the neighborhood – tried unsuccessfully to extinguish the flames. The main body of fire was knocked-down in 15 minutes. Fire heavily damaged the first floor with extensive heat and smoke damage throughout the rest of the home. Companies were on scene for approximately 1 ½ hours. The home was razed following the fire. A single-story ranch style home now stands on the lot. Mrs. Sloan was transported to the Pottsville Hospital for smoke inhalation. Mr. Sloan suffered a minor burn on his hand.

PREH photo showing the aftermath of the fire on N 13th St in 1984.

4/30/1984 – STILL – 19:10 and 5/1/1984 – STILL – 12:50: Assistance requested by State Police for search and rescue on Sharp Mountain west of Llewellyn; 6 individuals died when their vehicle plunged down an open mine shaft; Chief sent Yorkville R63 (1981 IH/Swab heavy rescue).

**Good Intent Hose, Llewellyn, Photo 1984 Mine Disaster**
35 Years Ago

4/4/1979 – Box 723 – 15:13 – 21 S 21st St; Occupant: Anthony Marasco; Cause: Vapors from drum of glue ignited; Loss: $1,000.

4/25/1979 – Department-wide drill in the 400 block of Railroad St (Progress Ave); “Dynamite truck explosion.”

After a truck laden with “explosives” at right had detonated, mock “victims” lie to the rear of the Pottsville Post Office on N. Railroad St in 1979. Good Will firefighters man a high-pressure booster line off the company’s Engine 41 – then a 1963 GMC/American 750 gpm high-pressure pumper. I believe that might be Keith Zimmerman backing-up the nozzleman.
Walking between Yorkville’s Truck 61 1967 Maxim 1000 gpm quad (left) and Humane Engine 31 1953 Seagrave 70th Anniversary 1000 gpm pumper (right), Fire Chief Todd March arrives to assume command of the drill (pardon the dust from the slide scanner!). Also note the rear of the former Capitol Theater to the rear of Yorkville’s rig.

Yorkville firefighters (now Asst. Chief) Bill Dewald (left) and the late Jack Reinmiller (right) carry a mock victim from the scene of the “explosion.” Fire Chief Todd March and Asst. Fire Chief Ed Donahue (Yorkville) walk with them past Humane’s Seagrave pumper.
40 Years Ago


The owner of the bar was in the 100-year old building with two patrons when, it was reported, a gas heater exploded. There were also two youths sleeping upstairs at the time. All escaped unharmed. Pottsville companies, along with the Cressona Fire Department, arrived to find the building heavily involved in fire. The building was destroyed with only one wall remaining standing when companies cleared before noon.

Interestingly, the owner’s son was charged with murder and aggravated assault for a shooting death that occurred at the bar on February 22. An argument began in the bar, which escalated with the son shooting and killing a Frackville man and wounding an Ashland man.

4/14/1974 – Box 72 – 20:38 – 1944 Mahantongo St; Occupant: Jack Schuster; Cause: Unknown; Loss: $20,277. This one is interesting... This fire occurred on Easter Sunday and was suspected to have been caused by a lightning strike. There was no follow-up article (at least not that I could find) in the local newspaper. Chief Hoke’s notes are also sparse on the fire. Recollections of PFD veterans indicate that the fire may have significantly damaged the 2nd floor and attic area of the home. What’s interesting is that $20k in damage in 1974 indicates a pretty good fire, but there is little information on the fire itself.
45 Years Ago

4/1/1969 – Box 115 – 18:20 – 210 N. 2nd St; Occupants: June Schell and Josephine Joulwan; Kitchen fire; Cause: Unknown; Loss: $2,500. Fire extensively damaged the kitchen of Ms. Schell’s 3rd floor apartment. She suffered minor burns attempting to extinguish the fire.

That same day, companies also extinguished 2 brush fires in the City.


A woman driving along Route 61 noticed flames coming from the 2nd floor windows of the scale office of the Reading Railroad Company, which was vacant at the time. She stopped at a home on S. Second St. in St. Clair and phoned Borough Police. The box alarm bringing all 5 St. Clair fire companies was transmitted. St. Clair companies arrived with the entire top floor of the building fully involved in fire. The Mill Creek Hose Company as well as several Pottsville companies were requested. Flying embers proved to be a significant problem. The fire was placed under control at 00:30 hrs, with the “all-clear” sounded at 01:15.

On a side note, this was the first working fire for the Alert Fire Company’s 1968 Mack CF 750 gpm pumper. This rig, completely refurbished and re-titled in 1993, continues to serve the Alert-Columbia and the Borough of St. Clair today (c. 2014) as Engine 701. This was the first diesel pumper in Schuylkill County.

4/16/1969 – Box 615 – 17:35 – Aetna Steel Company; Fire in paint department; Loss: $3,650.

4/16/1969 – Box 722 – 20:19 – 19th & W. Market Sts; Liberty Oil Company building; Cause: Explosion and fire; Loss: $2,710.

The Pottsville Fire Department hosted the 6-County Firemen’s Association Convention and Parade in 1969. The PFD 6-County Committee was having a meeting at the Yorkville Hose & Fire Company when, a block away, an explosion rocked the Golca Atlantic Gas Station. The owner, Edward Golca, and an employee, Michael Consugar, Minersville, ran from the building with their clothing on fire. Chief Hoke arrived immediately along with Yorkville’s Maxim quad and a very large contingent of firemen. A decision was quickly made to transport the two men to the hospital in Chief Hoke’s vehicle. Charlie Barone and Jerry Brennan (both Good Intent) drove the makeshift ambulance to the hospital. The fire was quickly extinguished. Fire damage was limited to the contents of the building, while all the window glass in the building was blown-out. Both Golca and Consugar recovered from their injuries. This
building, built in 1950 and extensively remodeled, stills stands today and is addressed as 1825 W Market St. It is occupied by Dicello Chiropractic.


Boyer’s Auto Body Repair Shop was located at 57 West Bacon Street in Palo Alto. It was believed that the owner and an employee were engaged in a welding operation that ignited the gasoline tank of the vehicle being repaired. Fire quickly engulfed the building. Palo Alto companies arrived with heavy fire showing. The Good Will Fire Company of Port Carbon also responded. Palo Alto Fire Chief Mike Ferugio had command. The fire was placed under control at 01:00. The building was destroyed.

4/27/1969 – Box 51 – 17:35 – Centre & Laurel Sts; Park Hotel; Fire in closet; Cause: Unknown; Loss: Unknown.

50 Years Ago

April, 1964 – State Fire School conducted in Pottsville.
One of my favorites (and one of which I wish I had an actual print)… PREH photo of ladder training conducted during the State Fire School in April, 1964 at the Tilt Silk Mill Building on N 12th St (currently Ed’s USA Auto Rental and Storage). Left to right: West End 1960 Seagrave 65’/750 gpm quint, Yorkville 1949 Maxim 750 gpm quad, Phoenix 1959 American LaFrance 100’ tractor-drawn aerial ladder.

55 Years Ago

4/1/1959 – Box 35 – 06:30 – 715 Mahantongo St; Occupant: C.J. Teeple; Cause: Unknown; Loss: $10,000.

Early that Wednesday morning, a fire erupted in the front room of the third floor apartment of the 3-story duplex. The occupant ran to alert his neighbors and gather his family. After being alerted to the fire, the occupant of the second floor apartment ran to 9th & Mahantongo Street and pulled the hook on Box 35. Pottsville Police arrived quickly and helped remove three children from the building. Chief Hoke and the companies arrived to find heavy fire showing from the third floor. Several lines were stretched over ladders and via the interior stairwell to knock-down the main body of fire. The fire was placed under control by 07:00 with companies leaving the scene at approximately 08:00. Interestingly, fire extended to a tree located between
the fire building and the “B” (left) exposure. The third floor of 715 was gutted with the lower floors suffering smoke and water damage. The other half of the duplex at 717 suffered varying degrees of smoke and water damage. When I was Asst. Fire Chief, I had an unattended cooking fire in the first floor rear apartment of 717. The Box for that fire was transmitted immediately after a car fire on Mauch Chunk St was dispatched.


60 Years Ago


70 Years Ago


   Box 53 – 6th & Minersville Sts – was pulled for a fire that gutted the basement of the Adams Café building. The upper floors of the building suffered heavy heat and smoke damage. 3 – 2 ½” lines and 2 booster lines were used to battle the fire, which was placed under control in 1 hour. The building had been remodeled following a fire that caused significant damage only a few years prior: 04/20/1940 – Box 53 – 04:55 – 7th & Minersville Sts. Occupant: Ray Adams. Cause: Fire started in kitchen in back of refrigerator. Loss: $3,044.

75 Years Ago

4/12/1939 – Box 51 – 01:55 – 448 N. Centre St; Bartlett Apartment; Occupants: Mr. D. Smith and Mr. Harrison; Cause: Fire started in kitchen of 2nd floor apartment; Fire burned through to 3rd floor; Loss: $2,000.

   There were three occupied apartments in this building that generally stood in the area of the Post Office today. The first floor was occupied by the Pottsville Stove Repair Company. The apartments were located in the basement and on the second and third floors. The occupant of the third floor apartment awoke to a heavy smoke condition. She roused the other occupants of the building. The female occupant of the second floor apartment suffered smoke inhalation. She was transported to the Warne Hospital. Companies arrived with heavy fire showing from the rear of the building along Railroad St (Progress Ave). The front (A side) on Centre St presented as 3 stories while the rear (C side) off Railroad Street presented as 4 stories. Fire venting from the 2nd floor rear auto-exposed the third floor windows and extended into that apartment as well. Several 2 ½” lines were placed in service to knock-down the heavy exterior fire in the rear. Additional lines were placed in service on Centre St. Firemen were given high praise for their work in preventing the fire from extending to other buildings in the block which, at the time, was densely packed. The fire was placed under control at 03:00. Fire Chief Smith had command. One firefighter from the Humane suffered a hand injury.
SCHS photo of construction of Rt 61 (then-Route 122) through Pottsville. In the center right is the 400 blk of N. Centre St. One gets a good idea of the fire potential in this section of town prior to “Urban Renewal” of the 1960’s. Also note the white smokestack of the steam heat plant (see below – 1934) in the upper left of the photo.

80 Years Ago


The Steam Heat Plant, at the time, supplied 230 homes and businesses in the downtown district with heat. Fire erupted that evening in the area of the coal elevator tower and surrounding woodwork. Fire Chief Smith assumed command as fire also spread to the offices along Minersville Street (generally Laurel Blvd today). Soon, fire broke through the roof and flames licked the huge smokestack that towered over the area. As word spread of the fire, crowds gathered. Someone – for whatever reason – again pulled the hook on Box 51 – Centre & Minersville Sts. This caused great confusion. Chief Smith directed three companies from the scene to investigate the surrounding area. No other fire was found. The roof was largely burned-away and the interior of the 3-story building was heavily damaged. The first floor of the office portion was gutted and the 2nd floor heavily damaged. Thankfully, however, the boiler department was largely undamaged, resulting in no interruption of service.

A similar fire 35 years earlier (1899) almost took the life of Pottsville Fire Chief George Powers. He fell through a shaft while battling the blaze. He was rescued by William Stevenson of the American Hose – who would go on to become Pottsville Fire Chief in 1916.
This is another photo from the 1979 drill showing the American Hose arriving with the company’s 1975 American LaFrance 1000 gpm pumper – Engine 71. Behind the pumper, at the corner of Railroad & Laurel, is a portion of the steam heat plant. In the foreground is former City Councilman and Good Intent Life Member Joe Brahler.

4/18/1934 – Box 18 and Box 51 – 03:42 – Railroad & E. Race Sts; Occupant: Sheeler Garage and Liederkrantz Hall; Cause: Unknown; Night watchman found in building overcome by smoke, died: Joseph Grace; Loss: $2,500.

The two story building was owned by Jacob Post and occupied on the first floor by the Sheeler Garage, and automotive repair facility. Joseph Grace was employed by Sheeler and often slept in the office area. The second floor housed the Liederkrantz Hall.

Grace, who was sleeping in the office, was evidently awakened by heavy smoke and soon discovered a fire burning in a portion of the office, just under the interior stairwell. He ran to the area where the automobiles were washed to get a pail of water in an attempt to extinguish the fire. As he returned, he collapsed in the smoke. From Centre St, Pottsville Police Sgt. Blankenhorn noticed smoke pouring from the building and transmitted the alarm from Box 51 – Centre & Minersville Sts. Almost simultaneously, two residents of the William Penn Hotel, out to pick-up the morning paper, also noted the smoke. They pulled the hook on Box 18 – Centre & Market.

Fire Chief Smith arrived with the companies to find heavy fire showing from the first floor windows of the office area of the garage. The flames were burning the overhead electrical wires on East Race Street. Several lines were quickly placed in service and the main body of fire knocked-down. Firefighters entering the building
located Grace in the wash area of the garage partially under an automobile. He was quickly removed to the Warne Hospital, but was then pronounced dead. Grace was found with a wash bucket next to him, which led investigators to believe he was attempting to extinguish the fire when he collapsed. The first floor office was gutted and 2 of 8 automobiles in the garage destroyed. The others suffered varying degrees of damage. The Liederkrantz Hall suffered heavy heat and smoke damage. I believe that this is the building that currently houses Progress Cleaners at 301 Progress Ave.

What may well be the site of the fatal fire at the Sheeler Garage in 1934.

85 Years Ago

4/2/1929 – Box 514 – 02:55 – 1508 Minersville St; Occupant: W. Petrosky; Cause: Defective flue; Loss: $2,550.

Box 514 was pulled early that morning summoning the fire department to 15th & Mt. Hope Avenue. Good Intent Chauffer Eisenacher (aka “Knocker”) arrived on scene first and removed two Petrosky children from the home. He carried them to the home of a neighbor. Heavy fire was showing from the 2nd floor rear of the home, fanned by high winds. As companies placed lines in service, fire soon had possession of the frame home. As the roof collapsed, several firefighters were injured. The most serious of which was William Curtier of the Humane who suffered a head injury and lacerations. The home was completely destroyed. The fire was placed under control in 1 hour, with companies remaining on scene with extensive overhaul.
4/9/1929 – Box 26 – 02:35 – Railroad & Union Sts; Occupant: E. Bergan; Cause: Unknown; Loss: $4,000.

Herman Guench of Port Carbon was a brakeman on a Reading Railroad shifting crew. Early that morning, he spotted flames coming from a building just off the railyard. As he phoned City Hall, Pottsville Police Patrolman Scheithauer also noticed the fire and pulled the hook on Box 26 – Centre & Howard. Companies arrived to find 2 frame buildings heavily involved in fire. The buildings were owned by the Reading Railroad and pre-dated the Civil War. They were occupied as an automobile repair garage by T.D. Bergen. James Workman, who was employed by Bergen, occupied the upper floor of one of the buildings. He escaped unharmed. 6 – 2 ½” lines were run directly from nearby hydrants. No pumpers were placed in service. The fire was placed under control in a little over half an hour with companies remaining on scene throughout the night. In addition to the two buildings, 6 autos, 2 trucks, and 4 pleasure cars were destroyed. Fire Chief Stevenson had command.

90 Years Ago

4/24/1924 – Box 64 – 11:30 – 316 Prospect St; Occupant: Robert Horn; Cause: Defective flue; Loss: $100.

120 Years Ago


Also, the Phoenix Fire Engine Company # 2 is officially designated by Borough Council as a “hook and ladder company,” then utilizing the company’s 1889 Hayes 65’ horse-drawn aerial ladder truck. Borough council divided the company’s hose between the other fire companies. Phoenix sold their hose carriage to Palo Alto for $150.

135 Years Ago

4/23/1879 – The old Mt. Carbon Rolling Mill was entirely destroyed by fire.

145 Years Ago

4/15/1869 – Two incendiary fires: One at Candy’s store on Railroad St, and one at the Ten Pin Alley, rear of Town Hall.