

Pottsville Fire Department

Looking Back

25 Years Ago – November 2, 1993

Mike Glore

11/2/1993 – Box 36 – 14:37 – 205/207 Howard Ave; Cause: Electrical short.

That Tuesday afternoon, companies arrived to find heavy fire showing from the 2nd floor of a 2 ½ story duplex of ordinary construction. A classic firefighting example of, “what you see is NOT always what you get.” First-arriving Good Intent Engine 11 – 1988 Hahn 1000 gpm pumper – utilized the wagon pipe to knock-down the exterior fire while awaiting additional personnel. Firefighters then stretched a 1 ½” handline via the interior stairwell to the 2nd floor of the 205 side of the duplex. With heavy smoke throughout, firefighters noted the “glow” at the end of the hallway and advanced toward it. Arriving in the front bedroom, they noted sunlight coming through the undamaged windows in an undamaged bedroom. Turns-out, the house was converted into one dwelling with the adjoining wall removed at the top of the interior stairs on the 2nd floor. Crew simply crawled down the wrong side of the interior wall that previously separated the two homes. The fire was caused by an electrical cord overheating under a wicker laundry basket. Voters at the nearby polling place at St. Joseph’s Church noticed the fire that Election Day and transmitted the alarm.

A funny story with this one... Bob Piccioni (Good Intent/PFD Photographer) and I were both working at the State DPW office, then located at 2nd & W. Norwegian St. Gary Witmier (Good Intent) was the Duty Chief that day and was at the Good Intent firehouse a half block away. When the box was transmitted, I left the office and glanced backward as the address of fire was only 2 blocks away. The office buildings and Mahantongo parking deck on the west side of 2nd Street screened the fire area. I didn’t see a thing. As he was passing with the Chief’s vehicle and I put my palms up, shook my head, and shrugged my shoulders in a “nothing showing” gesture. He looked at me with wide eyes and a distinctly “you’re nuts” expression. “Wonder what’s with him?” I thought. As I wheeled the Hahn pumper out of the firehouse to go south on 2nd Street, I quickly found-out. It looked like a thunderstorm over the Mahantongo parking deck! He had a much clearer view of the fire area from the east side of 2nd Street. After he and Kevin Sibbett (American Hose)

operated Engine 11's deck gun, Bob Piccioni transitioned back to PFD Photographer and snapped most of the pics below.



Good Intent firefighter and PFD photographer Bob Piccioni and Kevin Sibbett (American Hose) utilize the deck gun on Engine 11 – 1988 Hahn 1000 gpm pumper – to knock-down the second floor fire. PREH Photo.



Hoselines are stretched and ladders are thrown as IC Gary Witmier (foreground) surveys the scene. Note the tiller cab sliding door of the Phoenix American LaFrance tractor-drawn aerial ladder truck in the upper right.



A general view of the scene after the bulk of the fire had been knocked-down.



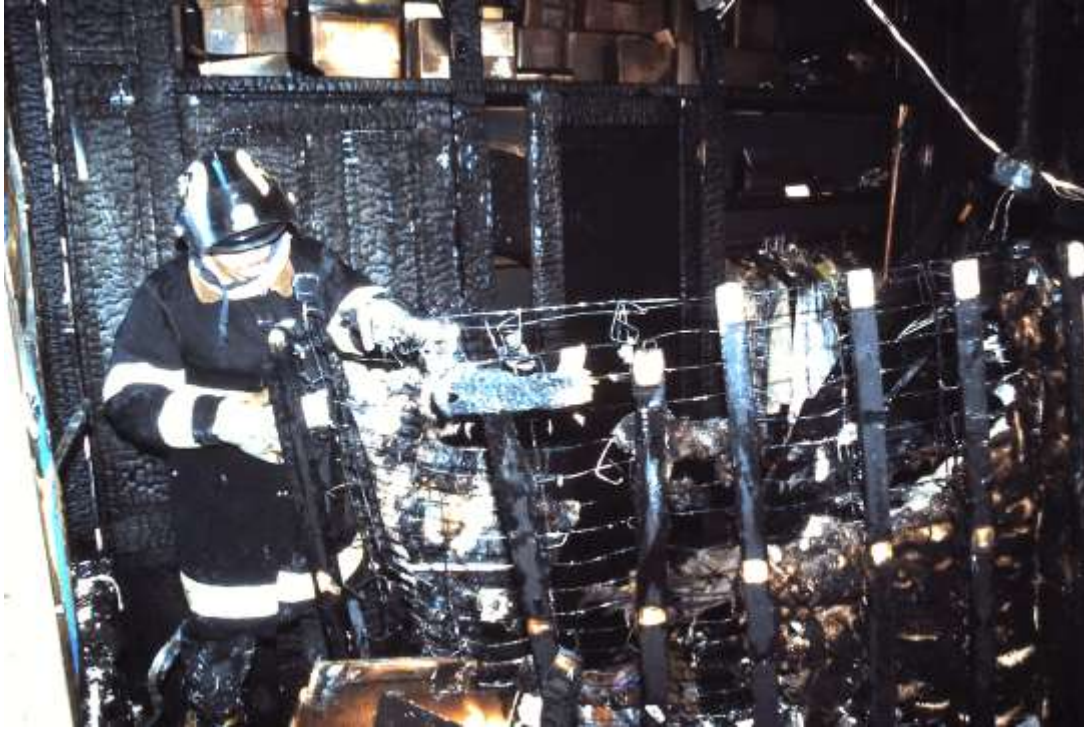
At first glance, this would have the appearance of two separate homes.



Veteran Engine 11 firefighter Andy Bernetskie surveys the gutted front bedroom in the home.



Veteran Engine 11 firefighter Dennis Fehr (left) and Lt. Mike Glore (right) in the 2nd floor hallway in this view looking down from the attic stairs. Crews prevented the fire from extending into the attic area.



Lt. Mike Glore assisting with the origin and cause investigation.