



Left: The Original Fort Monmouth Fire Department as It Looked 23 Years Ago. Right: Part of Fort Monmouth's Modern Fire Department Lined Up for Inspection on 23rd Anniversary

Fort Monmouth Fire Department Celebrates Its 23rd Anniversary

In January, last, the Fort Monmouth Fire Department celebrated its 23rd anniversary. Since it was established in January, 1926, the department has given an impressive account of itself, both in expansion and operations.

Starting unimpressively with only one piece of apparatus and a chief's car, with headquarters in an old wooden shed, the department now has a modern brick headquarters, with eight pieces of modern equipment, organized in six operating companies under the direction of Lt. Col. William C. Holley, Fire Marshal, and Harry T. Litts, Fire Chief, whose home is Rumsen, N. J.

Three of the department's companies are situated on the Post proper and one each is located at Evans and Coles Signal Laboratories and Camp Wood. In addition, as a member of the Monmouth County Fire Association, the department automatically covers adjacent Oceanport, and is prepared at all times to assist companies of other communities on request.

Reviewing activities of last year, Chief Litts reports only one major fire out of the 94 alarms received, 34 of which were false or accidental. The one fire that spoiled the otherwise impressive record was in a double mess hall, which was completely destroyed.

Contributing to the department's record of accomplishments is the policy adopted by Chief Litts of placing experienced men in charge of fire districts. The Chief has had wide experience himself, having organized the first U. S. Army Fire Department in 1917 at Camp Sevier, Greenville, S. C. He has been with the Army ever since, having occupied the post of fire chief at Camp Funston, Fort Riley, Fort Dix and Fort Monmouth as well as serving as fire-prevention and protection field engineer of the Association of American Railroads.

Assisting Chief Litts is Edmund S. Crelin, Sr., formerly chief of the Red Bank, N. J., Fire Department. In charge at Evans Signal Laboratory are Charles J. Wesson, formerly Chief of the Fair Haven, N. J., Fire Department, and Irving S. Van Brunt, formerly chief at Eatontown, N. J. Jerry McConvey, in charge of Coles Signal Laboratory and Camp Wood Fire Departments, is another ex-chief of the Red Bank Fire Department.

Fort Monmouth's firemen go in for extensive fire service training. During the last war, 128 fire fighters were trained for overseas duty. Assistant Chief Crelin assists Chief Litts in pre-

sending the training course, which is held five days weekly and consists of lectures in the morning and practice in the afternoon on all firemanship subjects, from the care and use of hand extinguishers and operation of motorized apparatus to the chemistry of fire and handling of forest fires. There are now sixty-two enlisted men and five civilians in the department.

Another factor which has held the Fort Monmouth fire losses to the minimum is the dividing of the area, which incidentally has a total of 1097 buildings, some of wood construction, into twenty-four fire districts, each with its own fire marshal. Daily inspection is made of all fire equipment in the buildings in each district and a written monthly report is submitted to the office of Chief Litts, where a record is kept on a card index. During 1948 a total of 19,486 inspections were made. Fire drills are held monthly in each organization and every sixty days in each theatre during a performance, as well as an inspection of every assembly hall following an exhibition. Demonstrations are given every three months in the Special Services School and twice yearly for the entire post. Several times yearly an inspection is made from the First Army Headquarters, Governors Island, N. Y.

Two hundred and eighty-five hydrants were installed on the properties, as well as 85 fire-reporting telephones connected directly with the switchboard in the dispatcher's room at fire headquarters. All alarms are transmitted in code to all fire stations.

No report on the Fort Monmouth Fire Department would be complete without mention of "Spot," the Dalmatian mascot. Now only three months old, "Spot" is being trained in his "important duties" and seems to be bearing up well under the responsibilities. He replaced "Smoky," who was with the department for six years, and was accidentally killed by one of the trucks responding to an alarm last spring.

Improvements Cut Burlington's Insurance Rate

Fire insurance premiums on real and personal property in Burlington, N. J., will be reduced following the city's reclassification as a Class "D" municipality, based on installation of a modern fire alarm system and other improvements, it is revealed by Walter B. McLean, Burlington fire alarm engineer.



Fire Chief Harry T. Litts, "Spot" and Assistant Chief Edmund S. Crelin, Jr., at Wheel, Respond to Alarm on 23rd Anniversary of Fort Monmouth Fire Department