

Concord's Gamewell Diaphone Fire Horn

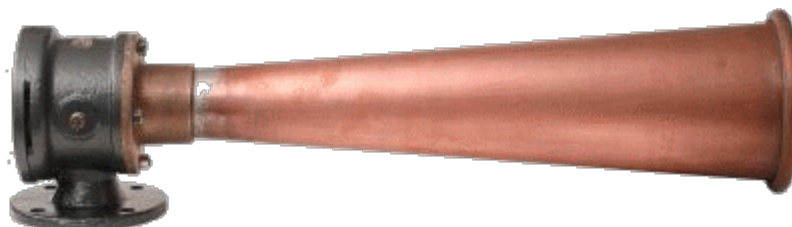
01/16/11 386 W, 1 I - + 9 - 8

Here's an [earlier story from firehouse.com](#) about efforts by the [Concord Fire Department](#) to restore their decades-old Gamewell Diaphone fire horn. The 80-year-old apparatus was originally used to signal the locations of fire alarms. The number of blasts and their tone indicated the incident type and location. It could be heard a couple miles away, and stopped working two decades ago. The horn was also used during World War II to signal a warning of air raids. (There were no such raids in North Carolina, of course. But many cities and towns conducted tests and even full-scale blackout drills. [See this picture of a blackout drill advertisement](#) from Raleigh.)

How did the horn operate and what equipment was connected to same? We can perhaps infer a little bit. Being of Gamewell brand, it was probably connected to a Gamewell fire alarm system. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps through 1936¹ do not indicate the presence of alarm boxes, so a couple things might have been happening. Boxes might have been installed in more recent decades. Or the fire alarm system used "virtual boxes."²

The latter involves designating a number of intersections and locations with numbers. When someone reports a fire by telephone (or even in person), the appropriate number of blasts are sounded. Different tones may have also been used, perhaps to indicate, say, fire versus wreck. ([Here's a picture of Wake Forest's old alarm transmitter](#) and their [corresponding box locations](#). They also had another number used to signal "outside of town" responses. Concord may have used something similar, with metal disks clicking out the corresponding "box" number.)

There's an entire web site on the subject, www.gamewelldiaphone.com. There's historical information, technical information, pictures, movies, and even ringtones! And you thought Mr. Blogger was a geek for this stuff!



www.gamewelldiaphone.com photo

¹See Sanborn Maps for Concord through 1921 [at this site](#). They're listed under Cabarrus County. Prior to the horn, an electric-activated bell in the courthouse tower was utilized.

²Concord's first fire company was organized in 1887. Fire protection was established as a function of the town's government in 1900, creating the first version of a unified Concord Fire Department. A combination of paid and volunteer personnel was utilized through at least the 1940s.

is thier anyone out there that can machine a style 2 reed piston ?

tom dasilva ([Email](#)) - 02/15/12 - 18:05

Name: (real name
preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?
Yes
No