

Hydrant Streams > Engine Streams, But When?

11/20/14 375 W, 1 I - + 10 - 5

Everyone knows the short history of fire suppression in Raleigh. First with buckets or blankets or whatever whatever you. Then the first hand-powered pumping engine in 1819. Then the first steam-powered pumping engine in 1870. Then the first chemical engine in 1878.

Then the first fire hydrants in 1887, which directly powered hand streams. Then the first gasoline-powered pumping engine in 1914. Plus accompanying hand- and building-based suppression systems: pails of water or sand, water or chemical fire extinguishers, chemical fire grenades, sprinkler systems, etc.

But when exactly did pumping engine-powered hose streams become the norm? From 1914 forward, arriving firefighters had three choices: "chemicals" (there were chemical tanks on the pumpers and service truck through 1926), hydrant streams, or engine streams.

Here's a chart that helps answer that question. This is excerpted from the yearly "report of fires" ledger book. Each fire call was entered, with details including alarm time, method of receiving alarm, address, owner, occupant, suppression activities, and loss of building and/or contents.

These entries are from October 1931. That year, the form included a section on "How Extinguished" and with options included "With Chemicals," "With Hydrant Streams," and "With Engine Streams."

As indicated, all three options were being used. Thus we can conclude that, as late 1931, "engine pumping" wasn't the exclusive norm. But more data is needed. Such as a review of the entire year, and adjoining years. More to follow... at some point.

Believe hydrant streams fell out of favor that decade, maybe even by mid-decade. The fire report forms in the 1940s were changed and no longer contained that field.

We also need a little more context. Just how frequent or rare were fires, structural or otherwise? How big or small were these incidents? Again, more to follow... at some point!¹

HOW EXTINGUISHED					
Out on Arrival	Citizens or Empl's only	Automatic Sprinklers	With Chemicals	With Hydrant Streams	With Engine Streams
—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	yes	—
—	—	—	—	—	—
yes	—	—	—	—	yes
—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—
yes	—	—	yes	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—

¹Just look through all years, and find the last checked box for "hydrant streams," right? Wish it were that simple. The entries are inconsistent from year to year. In 1931, the Fire Chief (or other recorder) included the suppression details. In other years, those fields are left blank. The details were not recorded.

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

Remember personal info?

Yes
No