

The Convention of 1889

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Last updated March 15, 2021

The second statewide meeting¹ of the North Carolina State Firemen's Association opened in Raleigh on August 13, 1889. The first fire company to arrive in the Capital City was New Berne's Atlantic Company, accompanied by the New Berne band which marshaled them with "gay music." Upon their arrival, the visitors were conducted uptown and served a "splendid array of refreshments" provided by the Raleigh Fire Department. The two-day event began at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 13, with staging for a fireman's parade on Fayetteville Street at Davie Street. Marching orders were given at 10:30 a.m. and the companies proceeded up Fayetteville Street to the Mayor's office, where Mayor A. A. Thompson delivered a welcoming address.² C. D. Benbow, President of the fireman's association, responded for the firemen. Raleigh's Capital Hose Company, as represented by J. N. Holding, then presented a hose wagon as a gift to the city. W. R. Womble, Chairman of the Committee on the Fire Department, accepted the wagon.³

"You ought to see our fire brigade in its full dress uniform. Raleigh must be wide awake next week, or our boys will not come out second best this time." Greensboro North State, August 8, 1889, "The Durham Fire Department is looking forward to having a grand time [and] they are basing more expectations on the hand reel contest than on any other."

Durham Globe, August 8, 1889.

The convention contests started in the afternoon, with the steamer contests commencing at 1:30 p.m. at the corner of Fayetteville and Davie streets. Goldsboro, New Berne, Raleigh, and Winston entered the steamer contests. Goldsboro won for distance and New Berne won for quickest steam. The Championship Reel Race commenced at 3:00 p.m., with the competing companies reporting to the judges at the head of Fayetteville Street. The contest was entered by Durham and two Raleigh companies, and won by Raleigh's Capital Hose Company. The day's last event, the horse reel race, took place after 5:30 p.m.

¹ This document previously labeled this event as the first annual meeting, which is confusing, as the event was retroactively renumbered in later decades as the second annual meeting.

² The parade was under control of the Chief Marshal, R. E. Lumsden, and Assistant Marshals C. D. Benbow of Greensboro, J. T. Thaecker of Winston, Joseph E. Robinson of Goldsboro, H. A. Reams Jr. of Durham, J. S. Correll and H. F. Smith of Raleigh, and H. J. Lovick of New Berne. Order of the parade: Platoon of Police, Maj. C. D. Heart, Chief; Chief Marshal and Assistants; Raleigh Cornet Band; Governor's Guard; Mayor City of Raleigh, Committee on Fire Department, Officers of North Carolina State Firemen's Association, Mayors and Chiefs of visiting departments in carriages; Phoenix Hook and Ladder Company, Columbia, S.C.; Phoenix Reel Company, Columbia S.C.; Atlantic Steam Fire Engine Band; Atlantic Steam Fire Engine Company and Reel, New Bern; Winston Steam Fire Engine and Reel, New Bern; Goldsboro steam fire engine and reel, Goldsboro; Greensboro steam fire engine and reel; Hornet Reel Company, Charlotte; Dick Blacknall Hose Company with horse reel, Durham; Dick Blacknall Reel Company with hand reel, Durham; Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, Raleigh; Rescue Steam Fire Company No. 1 with steamer and two reels, Raleigh; Phoenix Chemical Engine Company, Raleigh; Capital Hose Company No. 3 with wagon and reel, Raleigh; Independent Hose Company No. 4, Raleigh.

³ An advertisement noted the segregated nature of the convention, inviting "every volunteer white fire company" to attend. *News & Observer*, April 20, 1889.

at the corner of New Berne Avenue and Person Street. Durham and two Raleigh companies participated, and the contest was won by Raleigh's Rescue Reel No 5.

Wednesday, August 14, opened with an exhibition by Raleigh's Phoenix Chemical Company on Fayetteville Street at 9:30 a.m. This was followed by an exhibition by the Phoenix Hook and Ladder Company of Columbia, South Carolina at 11:30 a.m. and also on Fayetteville Street. The exhibitions were followed by foot, wheelbarrow, and other races. The foot races were entered by runners from Charlotte, Columbia, Durham, Greensboro, New Bern, and Raleigh and won by William Pittman of Columbia who raced 100 yards in 10 3/4 seconds. Tom Daniels from New Berne took second place with 11 seconds.

The reel races commenced after 2:30 p.m. at the head of Fayetteville Street. Companies from Charlotte, Columbia, Durham, Greensboro, and Raleigh entered the competition. Raleigh's Capital Hose Company No. 3 won the first race in 30 seconds, requiring running 150 yards and throwing water after attaching to a hydrant. The Greensboro team won the second race in 24 seconds, requiring running 150 yards, grabbing the rope of the reel while running, carrying the hose to the hydrant, and flowing water.⁴

The grand finale was a foot race between first and second place winners William Pittman and Tom Daniels. The race took place at 7:00 p.m. and was won by Daniels, after which he was "borne vicariously on the shoulders of his adoring companions up and down through the crowd while the air was rent with cheers for a half hour." There was also a hundred-dollar stake on the race. In addition to the contests, the firemen also conducted meetings during the two days and elected new officers: Raleigh Fire Chief E. B. Englehard as President, H. J. Elma of Greensboro as Secretary, and T. W. Blake from Raleigh as statistician.⁵

Also during the tournament, the Raleigh Fire Department presented a gold medal to the State Fireman's Association. Measuring eight inches long and four inches wide, it featured a series of "bars of scrolls of different color gold, surrounding an oval centerpiece," encircled by a wreath and featuring an enameled hose-reel monogram. The \$150 medal was de-

Planned discussion topics:

1. Should not a special tax be levied on insurance companies for the benefit of firemen, and should not the State make an appropriation?
2. What is the danger from electric wires, and how best remedy the trouble?
3. What class of men are best suited to make good firemen?
4. What are the advantages of shut-off nozzles, and relief valves on fire engines?
5. Which is the best hose-- considering strength, durability, cost and care in handling, and what style of nozzle is best suited for fire service.
6. Should there not be an officer in every city whose duty shall be to inspect all buildings and to examine into the causes of all fires?
7. How best shall firemen protect property from water damage?
8. What are the benefits of a chemical engine, and how best utilized?

News & Observer, April 17, 1889.

⁴ The reel race results were later contested and in December, three people decided "1. The run of the Rescue reel, No. 1, was not properly timed, and that reel [shall] be required to make another run. 2. That the Capital Hose, No. 2, are entitled to a run. Chief Englehard is instructed to appoint a day for the race." *News & Observer*, December 4, 1889.

⁵ *News & Observer*, August 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 1889.

signed and largely made by L. A. Mahler. Named the State Championship Medal, it would be raced for under the following rules and conditions:

"None but the regular organized companies, which have been recognized as such for at least sixty days previous to the annual tournament, and whose officers are members of the North Carolina State Fireman's Association can contest for the championship medal. Companies are allowed the use of any two or four-wheeled hose cart or carriage to be drawn by hand, the same not to weigh less than five hundred pounds, and any cart or carriage weighing less than five hundred pounds shall be weighted to the required weight. Companies shall furnish weights to judges previous to race. All companies competing for prizes to be required to use a screw coupling three full threads. Distance to be run shall be two hundred yards to hydrant, attach and lay one line of hose three hundred feet from hydrant, break coupling and attach pipe ready for water, all connections to show *three full threads*. Each cart or carriage to carry not less than three hundred and fifty feet of stand 2 1/2-inch hose, reeled in one consecutive line, all couplings made. Couplings must be broken with the hands or with the use of spanners, and couplings shall be made within twenty feet of the three hundred foot line. Plug must be closed at time of starting. When the couplers have completed the coupling they shall drop the play pipe on the ground and time shall be taken by the timekeepers when it touches the ground, and if couplers touch pip or couple after dropping same it shall be declared foul and no time shall be allowed. There shall be three judges, to be appointed by the association, who shall have entire control of the race. They shall appointed one timekeeper, who shall start and stop the watch only, and the judges shall decide the time made and assignment of it. They shall appoint all other help necessary. The 'Championship Medal' shall be competed for annually, and shall not be the property of any company until it has won it three times. Prize: Gold Medal, value \$150, won first time by Capital Hose Team, Raleigh, NC, August 13th, 1890. Presented by the Raleigh, NC, Fire Department to the NC State Fireman's Association. The medal is to be delivered to the foreman of the company winning it each year, who is to give a receipt for its delivery, in the same condition as when presented to the president of the association ten days previous to the annual tournament."⁶

From data presented at the convention, the estimated population of cities and towns in North Carolina with organized fire departments was 135,808. The apparatus in the state consisted of 18 steamers, 13 other engines, 16 hook and ladder trucks, 51 hose carriages and wagons, 1,468 active members, 30 horses, 39,700 feet of serviceable hose, 23 non-electric alarm systems, 3 electric alarm systems, and 50 alarm boxes. The water supplies included 713 hydrants and 81 miles of pipe. These numbers were based on reports from 31 locales, though 5 reported no fire protection at all.⁷

⁶ *News & Observer*, February 25, 1890.

⁷ *News & Observer*, August 24, 1889.