

The written history of emergency-related stories from the Waterville, Maine, Fire Department highlights the true emergencies that have shaped the department's response.


**Where is the Emergency?
Waterville Fire Department Chronicles**
By (Ret) Captain Scott A. Holst

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Where is the Emergency?

WATERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT CHRONICLES



CAPTAIN SCOTT A. HOLST (RET.)

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Front and Back Cover Photos:

1955 Coburn School Fire
2020 Carey Lane Fire
1978 Interstate 95 Tractor Trailer Crash

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HISTORY OF THE MISUSE OF FIRE

Arson, the deliberate setting of fires, is a serious crime that poses a grave threat to life, property, and the environment. Whether motivated by malice, revenge, vandalism, or even a misguided cry for attention, acts of arson can quickly escalate beyond control, leading to tragic outcomes. Alongside arson, casual or careless playing with fire, especially by children or unsupervised individuals, often results in unintentional but equally devastating emergencies.

Waterville over its existence has had their share of arson fires and fires started by children exploring the world of fire. Many hours of fighting, investigations, and teaching about the misuse of fire has cost the city thousands of dollars.

Preventing arson and fire-related accidents requires community vigilance, proper supervision of young individuals, and secure storage of flammable materials. Schools and parents must emphasize fire safety, while local authorities should invest in arson prevention programs and neighborhood watch initiatives.

Ultimately, fire is a force that demands respect. When used responsibly, it serves many constructive purposes. But when misused, whether through intent or negligence, it becomes a deadly hazard. Recognizing the risks and taking proactive measures can save lives, protect communities, and prevent irreversible damage.

1852 January 5 – Female Burned (Children playing with matches)

On Sunday, about noon, the barn of Mr. John Mason, in the upper part of this city, was destroyed by fire, with a pair of oxen and one or two tons of hay. A couple of cows were saved by the personal efforts of Mrs. Mason, who was considerably burned in the attempt. Mr. Mason was at a meeting. The barn was set on fire by children playing with matches, a fact that affords another warning for the better safe keeping of these dangerous articles. Mr. Mason was a poor man, and the loss was a severe one to him.

1856 March 27 – Barn Fire (Arson)

A barn belonging to Mrs. Howe, and formerly a part of the estate of the late Dr. Thayer, about a mile from the village, was burnt about 2 a.m. There was no other building within a quarter of a mile, and there was no doubt that the barn was set on fire. It contained no hay or articles of value, and the loss was assets at about \$150.

There would be no doubt that within a few years there have been a considerable number of incendiary fires in Waterville, by which a large amount of property had been destroyed. Nearly all such fires occur on Saturday night. In some cases, suspicion has been so direct as to leave little doubt as to the identity of the villain.

1879 May 4 – Gilman Street (Arson)

An incendiary fire struck about 10 p.m., for fire, those who looked for the cause found the western portion of our village glaring under the light of a fire bursting from the roof of the large building known as the Gilman stables.

The engines were promptly on hand, even the old Ticonic, with her trusty crew making their mile and a half run in more than two-forty. But the three engines, with the Hook & Ladder Co., and abundant working forces, could do nothing towards saving the building or its contents. No buildings were near enough to be in danger, except for sparks, which were carried to a great distance. A barn belonging to Mr. Lemuel Dunbar, more than a quarter of a mile north, set fire to the roof and burned a hole, but the blaze caught the notice of the Hook & Ladder boys, and was very soon extinguished.

Of the property consumed in the barn, Libby & Nicholes owned a hay press valued at \$800; H. W. Getchell a wagon, \$60; J. A. Vigue, a wagon on cover, \$10; Jos Richards, sleds, \$26; John Richards, sleds, \$16; Crowell Bickford, mowing machine, \$50, making with some smaller matters, about \$1000.

The barn was a very large and expensive one some fifteen years ago but was somewhat out of repair; and was the property of Mr. George Gilman, now of New York, known as the "Great American Tea Company." Those of our citizens and there were several hundreds of them who attended the great supper and ball given by Mr. Gilman, at the time of its completion, have not forgotten the princely generosity in which they were entertained. Mr. Gilman was a native-born Waterville boy, and probably the wealthiest of all the enterprising sons the town has sent abroad.

The loss would not trouble him, but the crime was nonetheless committed to the villain who set the fire. Suspensions of his identity were freely spoken of, but we forbear further mention of them.

1889 July 6 – High Street (Child playing with matches)

A little before 5 o'clock, a fire was discovered in the loft of the stable adjoining Mr. Munson's house on High Street occupied by John Ellis and Eugene Knights.

The alarm was given and promptly responded to by the fire department. The fire was confined to the upper part of the stable. Some damage was done to the ell of the house by water. The larger part of the furniture was taken out of the house before the arrival of the fire department and was somewhat damaged while being removed from the house. The hay and straw in the stable made a dense cloud of smoke and gave the impression for a few minutes that a large fire was in progress.

A little boy playing with matches was understood to be the cause of the fire.

1896 Jun 4 - Cool Street (Playing with matches)

The department was called to Crommitt's Mills to extinguish a fire in an old barn on Cool Street just before the pumping station just past noontime. The building was owned by H. R. Butterfield and contained two or three tons of hay. It fell in just as the water was put on. The main work of the firemen was in saving several other buildings nearby that caught from sparks.

The stable of W. H. Branch caught on the roof and before the firemen could gather themselves together and re-connect their hoses the roof of the stable and part of the ell were all ablaze. The fire was soon subdued with damage of a few hundred dollars.

The cause of the fire was said to be a combination of boys and matches

1897 October 11 - Silver and Elm Streets (Children playing with matches)

Soon after 5 p.m. on a Monday evening, an alarm was rung in from Box 38 at the corner of Silver and Elm Streets on account of a fire in the stable of Ira Mitchell on lower Silver Street. It was some distance from the dwelling to the Box and as there was some difficulty with the registering of the box number on the indicator at the hose house the firemen did start until the third round had been struck so that the fire had made considerable progress before the firemen arrived on the spot, though Hose No. 2 had responded first to get water on the fire.

When the firemen arrived, it was found that the fire was in the loft of the stable where there was considerable hay which was all ablaze. The fire had broken through the roof and brightly lit up the sky so that it appeared that a big fire was in progress. The fire was soon under control after the firemen arrived, but they would have a hard job to extinguish it as it was burning in the hay, and it was not until after 7 o'clock that the "all out" was sounded.

The stable had a total loss above the ground floor, and the loss would be about \$700. A large hog which was in a pen in a shed adjoining the stable was let out and caused a great deal of sport in the impromptu pig race that followed.

At the fire inquest to decide the origin of the fire in Ira Mitchell's stable, it was decided that the fire was caused by children playing with matches in the stable loft.

1897 December 16 - Appleton Street (Mice and matches)

A combination of mice and matches served to cause an alarm of fire to ring in from Box 58 at 5:25 a.m., to the Elden House on Appleton Street. The flames doing their work in the woodwork between the ceiling of the dining room and the floor of a chamber. The only explanation that could be made of the cause of the fire was the ignition of matches by the gnawing of mice. The house was occupied by the family of Captain Henderson.

The department did not have a very hard job putting out the fire and that with but very little damage to the house or its contents. The sum of \$100 would cover the entire loss.

1901 April 14 - Main Street (Arson)

The fire department was called out about 8 o'clock to attend a blaze in the building at 140 Main Street, owned by O. F. Mayo, and occupied on the ground floor by the Waterville Hand Laundry, S. R. Davis, proprietor, on the second floor by the Main Bindery. The blaze was supposed to have been of incendiary origin. Be that at it may, before the fire was extinguished damages had resulted by fire and water amounting to nearly \$5,000.



fire travelled up under this tin roofing and the buildings being in very close proximity to one another set the firemen at a big disadvantage in fighting the flames.

That the fire was of incendiary origin was evidenced by the condition of things in Mr. Davis's laundry when Chief Engineer Davies entered. He found a large space on the laundry floor burnt over and some of the furniture nearby had been badly scorched. Kerosene had evidently been poured upon the floor. But the real work of the fire bug was disclosed when he stepped along to the dry room door and opened it to find out the cause of the bright light within. Boxes and other stuff had been piled in here along with a box of excelsior in which stood two filming candles, well-consumed. Two large cans of kerosene with open covers were included in the lot and the evident intention of the fire bugs was to blow up things generally thereabouts. The excelsior was damp, so the pile had not ignited when Chief Engineer Davies arrived. But there was evidence that a fire had been started in some paper in the rear of the bindery and this kindled fast, attracting the attention of Officer Martin who rang in the alarm from box 58, corner of Main and Temple Streets.

The laundry would be in full operation right away, and the bindery people expect to get under way again a week. Mr. Dickinson would be put to some inconvenience but would keep on doing business. The buildings would be repaired just as soon as the losses were adjusted.

1901 August 21 - Phoenix Block (Girls playing with matches)

A sudden blaze was started around 3:00 p.m. in the alley way between the Phoenix Block, occupied by The Mail office on the second and third floors and by F. A. Wing, confectioner and G. W. Dorr, druggist on the ground floor, and the Roger Boothby & Company insurance agents on the second floor and by the grocery market of H. C. Haskell and F. A. Fryatt & Company, milliners, on the ground floor.

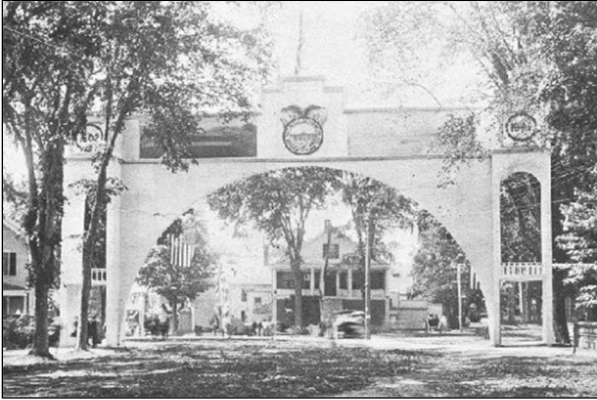
The fire started from wastepaper between the two blocks and was set on fire by two little girls of about seven and eight years of age. The children were seen by Miss Dunbar from the rear window of her store and ordered to leave. They started running up the rear stairway into The Mail office and Miss Dunbar saw smoke rising from the paper. As there was no rear door to Roger's building, she notified H. C. Haskell, and they hastened to the rear of the building. As they came around the corner of the building, they found the entire side of the building in a blaze.

Meanwhile a compositor in The Mail office noticed the flames rising and a boy had been sent to ring in the alarm just as the two children, who were supposed to have set the fire, ran into the room. Their names were known, and their actions would be investigated later. The windows on the north side of The Main office room were all open and before the windows could be closed a solid wall of flame was pouring up by them. The windows and rear door were, however, closed by Foreman Joseph. His prompt action alone saved more serious damage to the office, as flames crept around the door and windows, which were fought by the boys of the office with pails of water.

Haskell rang in the alarm and the fire department soon had three lines of hose stretched and the flames somewhat subdued. The flames, however, had crept under the eaves of Roger's block in a "blind attic" of a most difficult kind of fight. The firemen spread three lines of hose and fought the fire ell. The entire attic was gutted. In drowning out the fire the entire building was flooded. The rooms of C. M. Roderick on the upper story were badly damaged by the fire and water.

The fire was put out in about an hour's time. At 4:40 p.m., however, the flames broke out again but were quickly checked by the use of chemicals.

1902 July 5 – Main Street Fire (Centennial Arch Arson)



At about 1 a.m., it was discovered that the Centennial Arch at the junction of Main and Elm Streets and College Avenue was on fire and an alarm was rung from Box 63.

Fire had been set at the lower corner on the side toward Elm Street, it spread slowly, and fortunately, everything was damp and neither the cloth nor the wooden framework burned quickly. The fire department soon extinguished it though the electric wire carrying heavy currents through it made it a thing to be handled with a great deal of care.

1903 June 9 - Burleigh Building (Discarded match)

Waterville would have a narrow escape from a disastrous conflagration as the conditions were favorable and for a short time it looked as if there would be one, but the department was finally able to drown it out.

The fire started at the north side of the back end of the Burleigh building, on the outside, from a match thrown down by a man after lighting his pipe. One of two Lacombe boys who saw the act would tell The Eastern Mail reporter their story.

The brothers were in the open space in back of the Armory when they saw this man, whom they did not know, light his pipe and throw down the match. Some loose paper and rubbish on the ground caught, and the blaze spread to an empty box and from that to the boards which enclose the open space under the building. When the man saw what he had done, the boys stated that instead of attempting to put out the blaze or giving the alarm, the man ran to the fence in back of Hanson, Webber & Dunham's store and disappeared on the other side. The boys then ran up to Common Street and gave the alarm.

The department was late in responding as two alarms were rung at the same time from boxes 64 and 62, causing the indicator at the fire station to show 611, which of course gave no hint as to where the fire was. It was not until someone ran to the house that the teams were able to come out. In the meantime, the men who had been wetting down the buildings and rubbish in that vicinity attempted to get a stream on the fire but lacked sufficient hose. A length was procured from the city building but that was no good as the nozzle was plugged in with a piece of wood.

All this time the fire was burning merrily and had reached the inside of the building and was going to the top of the walls and on the outside.

When Hose 1 arrived, more time was wasted on account of the chain across the driveway to the city building, the men apparently trying to break it with their hands instead of unfastening it at one end as was done a little later. But water was soon on after the hose had been laid, both at the rear and on the front of the building. There was a nice little blaze by this time, and it took all the water that three and four lines of hose could furnish for the next half hour.

The rear of Pierce's studio was pretty well cleaned out, and it was not burned being ruined by water. Among other negatives spoiled were several class groups that had recently been taken. Capt. Besse had a large number of photo plates that he had taken in the Philippines which were in the studio the loss of which he was mourning over, but they were not damaged as they were in Mr. Pierce's desk. Outside of the loss on the building and the studio the heaviest loss was on leaf tobacco owned by P. P. Herbst. This was in a storehouse at the rear and was thoroughly drenched with water.

The alarm rang at 3.35 p.m. and the all-out sounded about an hour later. Before the apparatus had left the scene of the fire, a false alarm was rung in from box 64 by some unknown person. Several men of the fire department had just been wetting down the building and rubbish in that vicinity where the fire started but the particular spot, they were unable to reach for lack of hose.

The play at the Opera house was a good one but the fire drew most of the large audience out of the doors.

Another story in regard to the origin of the fire has been told to The Eastern Mail, to the effect that a man was seen to start the fire, kick some boxes onto it and then run but the story as told by the Lacombe boys seems to be the most credible.

There was considerable criticism on the work of the department, many of the men seeming to be unduly excited, but as one member of the department expressed it *"you can't expect a green crew to do the work of an experienced one."*

Fireman Harry Thomas came near being seriously injured during the fire in the rear of the Burleigh building. He was on a ladder which was up against the side of Pierce's studio, when a stream of water came through the big glass skylight from the inside causing the heavy glass to fly in all directions. A large piece came down on Mr. Thomas' head and only the protection

furnished by his fireman's hat prevented a serious injury. Another sharp piece struck Mr. Thomas on the back of his hand, cutting through to the bone.

Mayor Davis telephoned from Boston to say that he had ordered all rubbish removed from the rear of the stores and in addition to the night police force, as steps toward the prevention of fire in this dry time. He was detained in Boston on business matters but was in easy telephone communication with city affairs.

1909 December 21 Ticonic Street (Little Levine boy with matches)



A little boy, four years old, the son of William Levine, was the innocent cause of a bad fire in Mr. Levine's home at 35 Ticonic Street about 12:30 p.m., and the blaze gave the firemen the hardest fight they have had in more than four months, in fact the only one of consequence in that time.

The little fellow, Percy "Pacy" Levine, was in the shed of the home, which was in the upper part of the building at the corner of Ticonic and Maple Streets, playing about. He found, by the way he talked about it, a box of matches, and thought it would be great fun to light some of them. He did so and dropped the little blazing torches into a box containing some rubbish and, in a moment, or two, had a nice little blaze going.

Fearful of the results, should he be caught in mischief, the boy ran downstairs and went to the house of a neighbor. It was about 10 minutes after he went into the shed that Mrs. Levine, going there to get some food, opened the door and was met with a flash of flame while the shed was so full of smoke that it was impossible for anyone to enter.

The woman's first thought was for the safety of her boy and several endeavors were made by her and others to get into the shed, but it was impossible. Meanwhile an alarm for fire had been sounded from Box 46, and help arrived in a few moments from Hose 4, whose house was just opposite the dwelling. Hope of finding the boy in the shed had been given up, but he was soon found on the street, evidently enjoying the sight of the flames and smoke and the movements of the gathering crowd.

The fire had by this time been drawn into the walls and partitions, the kitchen and through the attic above. In a short time, the fire broke through the roof in many places, wind carrying the sparks and smoke to the east endangering other buildings at the rear. Hose 4 laid two lines of hose from Ticonic Street in a very brief time and the men of that company worked like fiends to get better of the fire, before the start had become too great. Hose 1 arrived in quick order and laid two lines from Maple Street. Ladders were put up on the front of the house with one line and went in through the side with the other. One line from Hose 1 was placed at a window and was worked in as quickly as possible, while the other was sent onto a shed on the south of the Levine house to keep down the flames on the roof. It was necessary to move this line once to extinguish a fire that had started on a roof of a house 100 feet or more to the east and several of the buildings in the vicinity were wet down.

There was no great danger at any time of the fire going beyond control, but it had worked into the partitions, closets, and roof in such a manner that it proved stubborn fighting and plenty of axe hook work had to be performed, and much water used. The all-out was sounded at 2 a.m.

1912 December 19 - Main Street Fire (Arson)

About a dozen partially burned matches, two charred bits of paper and a flight of steps soaked with kerosene told the story of an unsuccessful attempt to set fire to the store of the L. H. Soper Company on Main Street.

The Soper building has a basement entrance on Merchants' Court. This entrance was closed by double doors which swing inward onto a platform from which a short flight of steps leads down to the floor level. At night the glass panels in the upper parts of the doors were covered by heavy wooden shutters and the doors were securely locked. But at the bottom the doors have become worn so that there was a small opening between them. This aperture was not large enough to admit a man's hand. In fact, it was so small that it must have been difficult to pour the kerosene through it and to shove after it the lighted matches. The difficulty experienced by the person who tried to set fire to the premises was shown by the fact that a considerable quantity of the kerosene was spilled on the outside of the doors and could be seen standing on the pools of water in the court.

Mr. William O'Connor, one of the clerks in the store, was the first person to go to the rear of the basement and a glance was sufficient to show him that somebody during the night had tried to start a fire. The matches lay near together on the platform. With them were the two charred bits of paper. The flooring was wet with kerosene and its presence was further indicated by a strong odor.

Two kinds of matches were used. Some were of the quick lighting variety, and the others were Portland Star matches. None were burned. Four of the Portland matches had been used in one piece as removed from the card and only one of the four had ignited. It may have been the failure of the matches to burn which prompted the use of the paper. The two pieces had been

twisted and the end of each had been lit but the paper burned no better than the matches. One of the fragments showed printed upon it the name of a brand of cigarettes and appeared to be a label or coupon such as it found in cigarette boxes.

The firebug selected a good night for his attempt. It was rainy and the streets were covered with a coating of ice. It was not a night when many people were likely to be about on the streets and those who were obliged to be out late were hurrying to get under cover.

The case was promptly reported to the police and members of the force and of the fire department inspected the premises, but a few partially burned matches and two bits of paper gave them no clue to the identity of the guilty person. Mr. Soper stated that he knew of no one who was an enemy to him or to the Soper Company, and the case was as great a mystery to him as to the officers.

1913 February 23 - Main Street (Three buildings gutted by fire)

Fire, believed to have been of incendiary origin, practically gutted the small buildings owned by Harvey D. Eaton on Main Street and occupied by the Cliftondale Café and a harness shop owned by Henry Vigue. For some time, the Waterville Steam Laundry building was threatened but by good work the flames were kept within the three small wooden buildings. The fire was held on the north side by the Edith building, a brick structure. Tons of water were poured onto the blaze until it was finally died out. The failure of Box 58 at the corner of Main and Temple Streets to sound the alarm was the cause of the delay. It was only possible last night to gain an estimate of the loss. This was set at about \$5,000 with partial insurance.

The fire was discovered about 8:15 o'clock by William Butler who was passing on that side of the street with his wife. The fire at that time was in the Cliftondale Café and appeared to be in the lower part. He hurried for Box 58 at the corner of Temple Street. He pulled down the lever and only one stroke came in on the big bell and auxiliaries. He released the lever and pulled it down the second time but got no response. He then started for the Central Fire Station and reached there just as the apparatus was coming out, someone had telephoned the station before he got there.

When the department reached the scene, they were greatly handicapped for men owing to the failure of the alarm to work, but the telephones were put into service and alarms were sent in from Box 64 and 59. Men then responded from all parts of the city. The fire appeared to be all about the lower part of the Cliftondale Café and beneath the wooden platform which projects several feet from the entrance to the street. Being of wood the flames had excellent material to feed upon and soon spread into the Vigue harness shop.

Lines of hose were laid from Appleton Street to the front and from Temple Street hydrant to the rear of the buildings. It was one of the most persistent blazes that the firemen have had to cope with for years considering the size of the buildings. The buildings were so peculiarly constructed that firefighting was hard. It was necessary to completely tear away the fronts of the three buildings in order that the flames might be stopped. Other lines were stationed on the top of the laundry building and the flames were cut off there.

Chief Walter W. Berry, who was soon on the scene, realized that the building could not be saved but ordered that the lines be poured into the buildings. Six lines were on the fire and a large amount of water was used. For two hours the firemen worked in the cold with the hose and apparatus covered with ice. The fire was practically under control at 10 o'clock, although a line of hose was left on the greater part of the night.

The small buildings were among the oldest in the business section and they are all damaged beyond repair. The Cliftondale Café was owned by Miss Lula Trask. She would end up saving the cash register and a few books. Her loss would total \$1,200. She has partial insurance.

Henry Cote, who conducted the small harness shop, would suffer a considerable loss; \$2,500. He had partial insurance. Harvey D. Eaton owned the buildings, and his loss was estimated to be \$1,500. These were covered by insurance.

Several of the firemen had narrow escapes from injuries. Two fell through the floor into about three feet of water and mud. They were rescued by a short ladder. The ice on the ladders made climbing anything but safe.

A representative of the Central Maine Power Company stated that the wind must have thrown out this box soon after the curfew sounded. This box was tested only a few days ago and worked properly.

After the fire the proprietors of the Waterville Laundry, in recognition of the fine work of the firemen, ordered a large amount of coffee and doughnuts and took them to the Central station. The firemen appreciated this welcome "feed."

1913 April 21 – Oakland Street (Child Burned by Fire)

Little Miss Rose Moore, a three-year-old daughter of Joseph H. Moore of Oakland Street, was in a serious condition as a result of playing with a fire in the sitting room at her home.

Mrs. Moore, after building a fire, went to another part of the house. The child, finding several pieces of paper about the floor, it was presumed, began to ignite them at the front of the stove. Her clothing was soon in flames and when her mother, who

was attracted by the child's screams, arrived in the room the child was suffering terribly. The mother managed to put out the fire. The flesh about the child's face, hands and arms was badly scorched.

Dr. C. W. Abbott was hurriedly summoned and on arrival found that the baby's condition was serious. Only the exposed portions of the body were burned. This included the face and the neck to the shoulders, her hands and arms as far as the elbows. The outer garments on the child's body were destroyed. The child was a popular little tot and the family has the sympathy of all in their affliction.

The fire department was called, but the fire inside the home had been put out by neighbors.

Rose Moore would survive her injuries and would become a beautician. She married Howard Rock in Norfolk, Virginia on December 1st, 1945. She would die on January 24th, 1988, in Virginia at the age of 78.

1913 July 25 – Green Street (Children with Matches)

Fire, which was discovered about 4:45 p.m., at the home of Deputy Marshal George H. Simpson at 10½ Green Street gutted one room and badly damaged another. There was understood that children playing with matches in the bedroom was the cause. The loss to Mr. Simpson and his daughter, Miss Mabel Simpson, would be quite heavy.

When the flames were discovered in the bedroom at the rear of the house, which was known as the "Continental House," they had gained a good headway and very little was saved. Miss Simpson lost practically all her clothing and many articles of value. The flames spread from the bedroom into the kitchen but were checked by the firemen before they had done any amount of damage to the other portion of the house. Considerable water, however, found its way into the other rooms, damaging the furniture.

The alarm was turned in from Box 55 on Water Street, calling the Central Station apparatus and Hose 3. It was necessary to lay a large amount of hose to reach the fire. The firemen did good work in stopping the flames and confining the fire to the two rooms. The house was a large one and was occupied by four tenants. The building was owned by Dr. J. H. Poulin. The loss to the building will reach about \$600, which was covered by insurance. Mr. Simpson's loss will be about \$200.

1924 October 15 – Silver Street (Arson)

A fire, undoubtedly of incendiary origin, was discovered about 11 a.m., at 26 Silver Street, by Deputy Marshal George H. Simpson in the basement of the building occupied by the Waterville Emporium Company of which Alfred Giguere was the proprietor. Oil-soaked mattresses and escalator were found in the basement and there was so much kerosene mixed in that water proved of no avail and it was necessary to use chemicals and to pull the masses of waste out on Engine House hill as the flames could not be killed in the basement. Another pile of waste and chips also bearing traces of oil, was found on the street floor behind some furniture. This was ignited and as a result, several pieces of stuffed furniture were scorched.

Deputy Marshal Simpson and Charles J. Clukey were standing near the emporium, and Mr. Clukey was discussing changes which he proposed to make in the front of the Heywood apartments when the deputy noticed smoke shooting from the cracks in the basement window. He immediately ran to the box at the corner of Silver and Spring Streets, but for some reason this box would not work, although Chief Berry stated later that it was all right.

Mr. Simpson shouted for someone to pull Box 25 on Castonguay Square and William Harding, who was returning to his work at the Sentinel office from lunch, ran back to Main Street and pulled the box.

In the meantime, the deputy got back to the building and Mr. Clukey told him that a man had come out of the basement door and ran down the hill. The officer went immediately to the door, found it unlocked and the fire raging in a pile of material just inside the door.

It looked like a hot blaze when the firemen arrived, the Chemical Company stringing a line from Main Street and Hose 2 hooking onto the hydrant at the corner of Silver and Spring Streets. When Firemen Harding took the line into the basement, he was almost knocked off his feet by the smell of burning kerosene. It seemed that the first flood of water had killed the flames but the kerosene just fed on the water and so the other means had to be used.

The main door was broken open and Chief Walter W. Berry and Assistant Chief Luke Ivers found the small pile of shavings close to the wall, directly over the spot where the fire was burning the fiercest in the basement. On this floor a five-gallon can containing a gallon of gasoline was found.

As the owner of the store had not arrived, Deputy Marshal Simpson went to his home to inform him of the fire and Mr. Giguere arrived just after the fire was put out. He was unable to account for the blaze, declaring that when he left the building shortly before 6 p.m. he had swept the main floor clean, and he also was sure that the basement door had been locked. He stated that he carried sufficient insurance to cover any loss, which would be small.

To make matters worse in the basement, the firemen while pulling over the mattresses, found a crock partly filled with liquid and with a can turned upside down in it. The crock was so hot that it broke as the firemen touched it and so more kerosene was added to the flames.

This was not the first fire this year that has been laid to incendiary. Several of the fire that have occurred near Green Street bore signs that looked suspicious to the firemen, but there was nothing definite enough to pass a clue on. And it was at least a coincidence that the man seen running from the building went in the direction of Green Street.

But the fire was not without its amusing incidents. When the water was first turned onto the Hose 2 line, it was found that the thread of the length of hose to which the nozzle was connected was defective and the firemen were left holding the nozzle while the line twisted and squirmed among the onlookers, many getting a fine soaking before the water could be turned off.

1939 May 18 – Oak Street (Playing with Matches)

For ten sensational minutes the thickly settled residential district on Oak Street extending from Drummond Avenue to College Avenue was threatened by wind battered flames that originated from a grass fire started by a seven-year-old boy.

Seven dwelling houses, the majority of them containing more than one family, covering a distance of over 200 yards, were in flames simultaneously as three alarms were sounded to call every available fireman to the scene.

While damage did not reach major proportions, the circumstances surrounding the fire, the precision of the firemen in carrying out their assignments and the speed the flames traveled, virtually astounded several hundred spectators who went to the scene, some of them to clog the streets in the vicinity and impede the progress of firefighting apparatus.

The fire had its origin in a small tuft of dead grass on the west side of a home occupied by Francis J. Belanger at 27 Oak Street, near a narrow shortcut traveling a triangular route to High Street. Harold Pearl, 14, a student at Junior High School, was one of several who discovered the fire. Pearl stated he was taking the short cut from Oak to High Streets when he came upon two children, a boy and a girl, standing near the grass fire which was sweeping wildly toward a barn at the rear of Belanger's home.

Two other youths, Fred Nash and Robert Nash also came upon the scene, the latter sounding the first alarm from Box 411 as the flames quickly enveloped the barn. Three alarms followed, one which registered from Box 313, but all for the same fire which then had traveled to six other buildings, covering the section from Drummond Avenue to College Avenue. George Parady pulled in a box alarm when he noticed flames pouring from dwelling houses near College Avenue, unaware that the other blazes were underway.

From the first building which was ignited, this being the Belanger barn, the live embers were carried by the northwest gale prevalent at that particular moment, to dwelling houses occupied by Steward Pugsley, 25 Oak, a three tenement building owned by Mrs. Thomas Simpson at 23 Oak, the Peter Welch home at 21, Hugh T. Marsh at 14 and a two tenement house owned by Mrs. Harry Goodwin comprising numbers 8 and 10 Oak, and another three tenement building at number 8 owned by Benjamin Pooler.

Houses with metal or special roofing were not affected by flying embers, but none with cedar shingles escaped at least becoming ignited. One of these, the Marsh place, was protected by a garden hose used by Romeo St. Amen, March's son-in-law, but a portion of the roof on the adjoining barn was damaged by fire.

Fast operating fire department companies undoubtedly prevented a conflagration as groups rushed to carry out specific orders and to cover each outbreak. Six lines of hose were laid and used during the brief period required to place the threatening fires under control.

Young Pearl stated the grass fire had been started by the two children playing near the Belanger home. He stated that it was only a "flash" before the barn was in flames. The triple alarms resulted in a pouring of spectators to the scene. With all apparatus called, the Winslow Fire Department covered Central Fire Station during the time the local force was engaged in nipping in the bud fires which appeared headed for a conflagration.

A stern warning to Waterville people in the matter of starting grass or rubbish fires was issued by Chief Grover D. Lovejoy. In no uncertain terms the chief made it known that starting grass fires are banned, both by his special orders as well as by a city ordinance. Dryness of grass and wooded areas, the chief stated was resulting in serious condition as concerns fires.

People starting fires, regardless of whether or not they were on their property, would be prosecuted, the chief stated. He expressed the hope, however, that such action would not be necessary, rather people would realize for themselves what might result at the present time if an innocently started grass fire rages out of control.

1955 September 26 – Riverview Street (Playing with Matches)

A fire which police stated was set by several boys destroyed a Riverview Street barn, a calf and some rabbits, the blaze having a good start before its discovery. Box 323 was sounded for the blaze at about 10 a.m. and the roof of a large barn crashed in nearly a half-hour later.

The fire caught on a section of the adjacent dwelling of Warren E. Marcoux, local garage proprietor and one-time city councilor. This structure was damaged only to the extent of scorching.

Patrolman Reginald J. Denis, investigating the cause of the fire, stated that four boys were questioned in connection with it. He stated that the fire was started with matches, a pile of hay on the floor of the barn being ignited.

The fire spread quickly through the structure, containing much hay. Cows housed in the barn had been put out to pasture. A huge column of black smoke identified the western section of the city as the center of the blaze and attracted many spectators to the area.

1964 December 15 – Autumn Street (Child severely Burned)



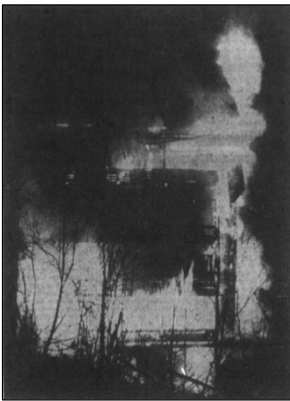
An article was found in the local paper dated December 22, stating that a three-year-old child suffered very serious second and third degree burns of over 50 percent of her body due to her clothing catching fire in her home at 12 Autumn Street.

Brenda Lee Roy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Roy, was burned in an accident at her home the previous week. She would be taken immediately to Sisters Hospital after the accident in which her clothes were ignited, the little girl would then be transferred to the Portland hospital within hours.

Research to find a previous article to see what had happened could not be found, but an article found on January 4th, 1965, stated that a drive to secure 20 pints of blood for planned extensive skin grafting that she was in need of.

No other article could be found on her treatment or condition, but it was found later that she would survive her injuries to live a normal life.

1967 February 22 – Swan Street (Children Playing with Matches)

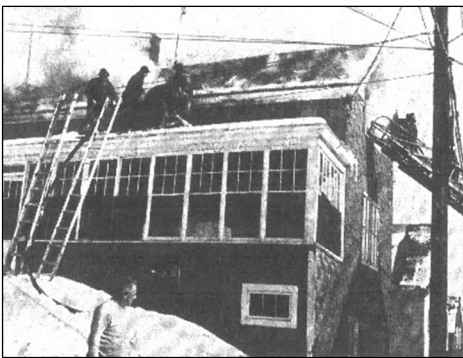


Damage estimated at \$8,000 was inflicted by fire, water, and smoke when flames broke out in a four-family dwelling located at 8 Swan Street. Fire Chief Bernard Larsen would establish the cause to be young children playing with matches, stating the top level of the two and a half story wooden structure took the brunt of the blaze and heavy smoke which originated in a bedroom.

The Box 22 alarm was sounded at 2:20 p.m. located at the corner of Summer and Gray Streets, bringing Engine Company One and Ladder Company One from Central Fire, along with Hose Company Three from Water Street substation.

The all-out signal would be sounded at 3:27 p.m. About 1,800 feet of two-and-a-half-inch hose and 400 feet of inch and half lines were used in the battle.

1971 November 15 – Water Street (Arson)



Fire swiftly consumed and leveled a large vacant apartment dwelling on a thickly settled Water Street and Fire Chief Bernard Larsen declared the blaze was “definity of suspicious nature.” No injuries were reported. Intense heat generated by the high shooting flames, caused major trouble temporarily for the New England Telephone Company.

The fire came on the heels of a telephone call received at the home of Fire Chief Larsen, who stated the unidentified female at the other end of the line threatened to burn down the four and a half story structure, unoccupied for some time, unless the city removed it.

On the basis of the call, Chief Larsen immediately set to work on plans to have the local public works department knock down the building at 64 Water Street, and send it over the embankment, then have the firemen burn the wreckage. But

before this could be done, the arsonist struck.

A Box 171 alarm received at Central Fire at 6:37 p.m. would send Engine 3 from the Water Street substation and Rescue from Central Fire. Two and a half of the four-story structure were above the road level and two others were below it. Flames originated on the lower level toward the rear.

Chief Larsen also responded to the first call and radioed back for a full alarm, Box 32, eight minutes later. The alarm did not sound on the fire horns, just on the department’s Plectron radio system which alerts many of the firefighters on special receivers at their homes.

Within half an hour of the fire's start, at its height, the building crumpled to the ground with a dull roar, falling over the steep embankment toward the river. Although very close to the street in a densely populated area, the flaming building posed no immediate threat to other property due to lack of wind and the position of fire equipment between it and the other property to keep the blaze from spreading.

State Fire Inspector Robert Judkins would arrive to investigate the fire. Chief Larsen would turn over the name of a teenaged local youth after the boy was seen and identified as running away from the fire shortly after the blaze was discovered. There was evidence of a substance like kerosene at the scene.

No further information could be found on this case.

1973 October 28 – Toward Street (Arson of Old Grist Mill)



A century old grist mill on Toward Street was destroyed by fire, culminating a week and a half of similar sporadic incidents that had plagued the firemen. Fire Chief Bernard Larsen stated upon arrival; firemen found the structure engulfed in flames, with the cause of the blaze apparently of "Suspicious origin."

Shortly after the firemen arrived, the south wall of the wooden storehouse collapsed, bringing with it the roof and part of the north wall. Shortly after, the north and west wall fell in, leaving only the rear wall standing at 9:30 p.m.

Upon arrival, people were evacuated from several homes on Maple Street that bordered the old mill. The evacuation last no longer than 30 minutes, as firemen brought the flames under control.

A crowd estimated close to 1,000 gathered at the scene at one point creating problems for firemen as cars ran over and ruptured two water lines. The all-out signal was sounded at 10:23 p.m. over 7,500 feet of hose had been laid in fighting the smoldering blaze.

Chief Larsen stated that someone had piled off a couple of the plywood boards blocking entrance to the building and the blaze was started inside on the south wall. The building had been destroyed 50 percent by a fire in February 1972.

The fire was set inside the old mill turned storage house with the use of either kerosene or gasoline.

1974 June 2 – Sherwin Street (Arson)

Fire in a vacant two-story apartment house broke out for the fourth major fire in four weeks. Fire Chief Bernard Larsen stated, "*It was definitely set.*" The blaze apparently started outside the building at 27 Sherwin Street.

Assistant Chief Steve McGraw explained that the fire started at the rear of the vacant house, near the first floor. The flames climbed the outside wall of the building, caught on under the eaves, then broke through into the interior, gutting out four rooms, two on each floor.

Crews battled the blaze for more than an hour after 11:45 p.m. Box 244 alarm sounded. Chief Larsen stated the flames had "*a good start*" on firefighters by the time they arrived at the scene.

The Chief stated he could see the flames breaking into the night sky as he sped to the scene. "*When they get that much of a start on you. You're pretty sure they've been set.*"

1974 May 22 – Kelsey Street (Three Arson Fires)

A third fire in as many as three weeks broke out in another Kelsey Street building. From all indications from witnesses at the scene the two-story apartment house appeared to be vacant.

1 – May 7 - Roberts Brothers paint warehouse (Firemen injured)

2 – May 15 - 6 Kelsey - Apartment House

3 – May 22 – 20 Kelsey - Apartment House

In the first two incidents, Chief Larsen stated evidence that a flammable liquid had been used was found.

The third blaze broke out in a two-story vacant apartment house at 9:42 p.m., when owner Donald Jandreau called the Communications Center when he looked out from his residence across the street and saw the building in flames. Chief Larsen stated that the blaze apparently started in the back room of the first floor. Larsen would request inspectors from the State Fire Inspectors Office.



Waterville. Arrested were Douglas Deady, 18, Thomas Butler, 18, Ronald Pomerleau, 20, and Timothy Elkins, 20. Two juveniles were also included in the number of arrests. One had been charged with making threats, and the other was sent to the Men's Correctional Center in South Windham on a charge stemming from an unrelated incident.

1977 November 5 – Butler Court (Warehouse Arson)



Streets so that firemen could run hoses from hydrants in the area.

The building was used by Colonial Distributors Company to hold beer and wine distributed by the firm. The only contents of the warehouse at the time of the fire were some company advertising materials and some racing car parts and tires owned by area stock-car driver Peter Silva.

Before being owned by Colonial Distributors, the building was used as the main plumbing service shop for the railroad. The plumbing, heating and water service for the railroad stations and steam-powered trains were handled at the building. The railroad tracks run alongside it.

On November 7th, Regan B. Gurney, a 19-year-old man and a juvenile companion were arrested on counts of burglary and theft at the Butler Court warehouse by State Inspector Kenneth Quirion and Waterville Police. Gurney's friend would face similar charges in juvenile proceedings.

1979 October 12 – College Avenue (Apartment House Arson)

A Waterville man would narrowly escape death when the College Avenue apartment house in which he was sleeping was swept by fire. The blaze, which broke out at about midnight at 17 College Avenue, had been labeled suspicious by the State Fire Marshal's Office.

State Fire Inspector Kenneth Quirion stated that the current blaze was believed to have been started by Kerosene. "Waterville's definitely got a problem. You don't have three fires on the same street," he stated.

The day before the latest fire (May 22), a caller from the Toward Street area reported through the Communications Center that she had "heard a rumor that two buildings would be burned" in the area. Toward Street was a few blocks from Kelsey Street.

The first fire, at the Roberts Brothers Paint Warehouse, resulted in a loss of \$15,000. The second fire, May 15th, a two-story apartment building resulted in driving two families from their homes at 11:53 p.m. That fire was believed to have started in an adjoining shed. At Box 44 alarm from the recent fire May 22nd, no one was injured or left homeless.

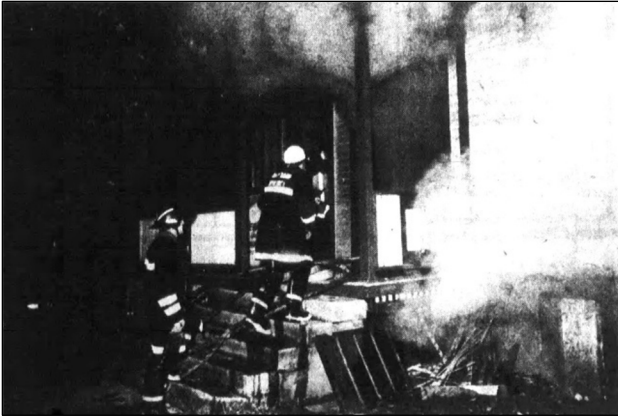
On July 9th, 1974, four people would be arrested for the Kelsey Street arson fires along with many others in

A huge, abandoned warehouse at Butler Court was swept by a fire which officials believed was set. One firefighter was overcome by smoke inhalation during the nearly three-hour battle with the blaze but did not require hospitalization.

Chief Bernard Larsen stated the fire started on the southeast side of the old, two-story building. The Chief stated that there had been more than a half dozen attempts to set fire to the structure over the past few years.

The report of the fire came into the fire station at 6:52 p.m. About 45 firemen were involved in fighting the stubborn blaze, which would gut the interior and destroyed much of the roof.

Chief Larsen stated that several homes less than 100-feet from the west side of the building were not damaged by the flames, which shot straight up from the building on a windless night. Police would close off sections of Chaplin, Ticonic, Alden, and Maple



James Michaud was the only occupant of the eight-unit, three-story building who failed to escape when the fire was first discovered by another resident of the building. Michaud would be discovered unconscious in his first-floor apartment during a search of the smoke-filled structure. Michaud was removed from the building by Officers David Bodge, Everett Kaherl, and fire department rescue worker Dana Rossignol. He would be treated at the scene for smoke inhalation before being transported to the hospital. *"If it had been another two or three minutes before, he was found, we would have lost him,"* stated fire officials.

According to police reports, evidence that a door leading to the basement of the building had been broken into during the night was discovered while some 50 firemen were still battling the blaze. A window on the door had been smashed, and traces of fresh blood

were found on the door.

Also causing suspicion was the fact that a mattress stored against a basement wall had been moved to the center of the room near the main oil burner, where it was later found completely demolished by flames.

Efforts to extinguish the fire were hampered by the fact that most of the flames were confined to spaces behind the walls of the building, burning their way from one floor to another while filling the building with dense smoke. The blaze was completely out by 3 a.m.

1979 November 23 – Chaplin Street (Mardens Warehouse Arson)

A fire swept through a giant warehouse off Chaplin Street that was filled with stock for Marden's Discount Store, destroying most of the contents and the building. Authorities would state that the fire was *"definitely set."*

Later in the day, Waterville Police detectives issued arrest warrants for four Chaplin Street residents, who were alleged to have broken into the warehouse shortly before the fire erupted and to have stolen a variety of goods. Charged with burglary and theft were Bruce Blanchard, 21, Danny Post, 18, Walter McClure, 21, and Raymond McClure, 18. Police stated the four men lived in the same apartment building.

Waterville Fire officials stated it was Blanchard who pulled the box alarm near the warehouse shortly after the fire broke out at about 2:30 a.m.

The fire began at the north end of the approximately 300-by-500 building, near Chaplin Street, and spread nearly to the other side of the structure close to the Upper Main Street railroad crossing.

Chief LaCroix stated the north section of the building, an old Maine Central Railroad freight shop, was engulfed in flames when the fire trucks arrived at the scene. Four pump trucks, one ladder truck and about 60 firemen were sent to battle the fire, with the all-out signal coming in at 6:32 a.m.

State Fire Inspector Kenneth Quirion stated the fire had been set. The Waterville Police detectives came across evidence which led to the warehouse-related arrests while working on another investigation. Detectives were investigating thefts from the Harris Baking Company when they discovered goods that were also stolen from Marden's warehouse.

1980 March 18 – Western Avenue (Old Osteopathic Hospital Fire)

A fire believed to have been set by prowlers swept through the upper floors of the vacant Waterville Manor at 85 Western Avenue.

The former nursing home, closed in December 1979 due to high heating costs, was owned by City Administrator Robert W. Palmer Jr. Palmer stated that the building was up for sale, but that there was a possibility of its re-opening either as a nursing home or a boarding home. Mr. Palmer was attending a City Council meeting when he was notified of the fire.

Police at the scene stated that the first sign of trouble in the area came shortly after 9 p.m., when an anonymous caller reported seeing a prowler entering the building. Moments later, the Waterville Communications Center received several calls that the building was in flames. *"The third floor was completely involved when I got here,"* stated Waterville Officer Lee Gilbert, one of the first on the scene.

According to Sgt. John Jacques, a door on the east side of the building had been forced open, but as of later Tuesday there was no information on the alleged intruder's identity. Another police officer accompanying Jacques on a search of the lower



portions of the building was injured when he slipped on an icy outside stairway. Alan King was transported to Mid-Maine Medical Center, Thayer Unit, where he was treated for a fractured finger.

Traffic on Western Avenue was closed from Burleigh Street to Messalonskee Avenue as firemen battled the blaze. Heavy smoke filled the area, and a large crowd braved the chilly wind to watch the spectacle.

The fire was confined to the second and third floor of the building, raged for about three hours as firemen fought to bring it under control. An aerial ladder was used to gain access to the second floor, and from there, firemen would spread out in all directions to combat the fire.

A little over 2,300 feet of hose and a deluge gun were used to extinguish the fire. The all-out signal would be sounded at 12:25 a.m.

The 29-bed nursing home was purchased by Palmer and his wife, Sylvia, almost three years ago. Previously, it served as the Lakewood Manor Nursing Home and before that as the Waterville Osteopathic Hospital.

After closing down the nursing home for the winter, Palmer placed it on the market for sale as either a boarding home or apartment building.

The building was found to have started by human element, but no one was ever convicted of the fire.

1981 February 8 – Sturtevant Street (Arson)



A house fire dominated what proved to be a busy weekend. Box 432 was sounded at 8:26 p.m. for a fire at 3 Sturtevant Street, to fight a blaze which according to fire officials started on the first floor. The house was vacant at the time of the incident. The all-out signal would be sounded at 9:08 p.m. with the building reported to have sustained extensive damage. A fire spokesman stated the blaze had been contributed to an electrical cause.

On November 11th, 1981, a Sturtevant Street house which was already gutted by fire, was hit by flames again. Later in the day, two male juveniles were apprehended by fire officials in connection with the fire.

The fire, which was reported at 12:29 p.m., was the second to hit the two-story house in eight months. The all-out signal would be sounded at 1:02 p.m.

Two youths were apprehended following a routine house to house check. Chief Brown stated the pair admitted entering the house through a broken window upstairs, and throwing firecrackers around, which eventually ignited some of the

dry material in the attic. Because electrical power had been turned off since the last fire, this fire would immediately look “suspicious.”

On February 22nd, 1982. Detective Thomkins and Fire Inspector Quirion would arrest and charge a 14-year-old, Scott Cogswell, on felony arson charges. Cogswell was charged with setting fire to the Sturtevant Street house. The Sturtevant fire was originally classified as accidental and blamed on children playing with firecrackers.

1981 April 12 – Main Street (Waterville Hardware)

A fire of undetermined origin gutted the former Waterville Hardware and Plumbing supply store on Main Street. Although the building had been emptied for two years, fire broke through a fire wall and badly damaged six apartments in the adjoining building owned by the family of William Levine.

All tenants were able to get out with assistance from fire and police personnel shortly after the fire broke out before 10:45 p.m. The fire was believed to have been going for some time before it was discovered. Chief Brown stated the fire began inside the north wall.

The first notice of the fire was received at the Waterville Communication Center when one of the tenants ran over to report it. Engines 1, 3, Ladder 1, and Rescue responded. Shortly after arrival, Winslow Fire’s ladder truck would be requested and another to stand by at Central Fire.



One of the problems in fighting the fire was that the building had been heavily boarded up in the rear making it difficult to vent. The old structure with its tar and gravel roof, double ceilings, and many additions gave firefighters problems in getting the fire extinguished.

Two businesses located on the ground floor of the Levine building, the Maine Made Shop and Creative Kitchens, were untouched by flames but received extensive smoke and water damage.

1981 May 3 – Chaplin Street (Carl O. Beck & Sons)



A fire believed to have been deliberately set destroyed a Chaplin Street warehouse, a one-story structure owned by Linwood Beck and used to store roofing material, smoldering for more than two hours before the fire was discovered at 3:33 a.m., according to Chief Brown. He stated that the fire started at the rear of the building, noting that a door had been forced open by an intruder.

The flames spread quickly when firemen entered the building, and efforts to bring the fire under control were hampered by large amount of tar paper and other volatile roofing materials.

Approximately 50 firemen were at the scene for more than two hours before the blaze was brought under control, with the all-out signal sounded at 6:55 a.m.

1981 May 17 – Pearl Street (Arson)



An unoccupied three-story house at 10 Pearl Street was gutted by flames, the latest target in a rash of arson fires in recent weeks. The blaze was reported to the Waterville Communications Center at 1:09 a.m., with Engines 1, 3, Ladder 1, and Rescue responding. Shortly before their arrival, an explosion ripped through the wooden frame structure, blowing out the windows and engulfing the entire house in flames.

The severity of the fire, as well as the closeness of two adjoining houses, prompted Chief Brown to summon Engine 2. The Winslow Fire Department would then be requested to cover Central Fire Station.

As firemen hurried to direct water onto the homes near the burning structure, the heat of the fire had already begun to melt the vinyl siding on both homes. No further damage resulted, as hoses were kept trained on the adjoining structures for the duration of the fire. The battle to bring the flames under control lasted for over an hour. The all-out signal

was sounded at 2:54 a.m.

This fire was the sixth case of suspected arson in which vacant building had been either extensively damaged or destroyed.

1981 May 25 - Water Street (Arson)

An apartment building at 31½ Water Street was marked as the 14th suspected arson fire in Waterville since March 4th and came less than a week after Mayor LaVerdiere's public plea for an end to the string of suspicious fires.

Waterville Fire Chief Fred Brown stated the recent investigation into the fire failed to determine how the blaze started, but he did state the fire was probably set in the middle of the garage on the structure's north side.

Circumstances surrounding the fire indicate that it might be connected with a number of other suspicious blazes.

According to Brown, Waterville Fire equipment and personnel responded to the scene at 10:23 p.m. The Chief stated the garage was totally engulfed upon their arrival, with flames reaching as high as 150 feet into the sky.

Noting that the garage had been used for motorcycle repairs, Brown attributed the fire's flare-up to oil and other flammable materials in the building.

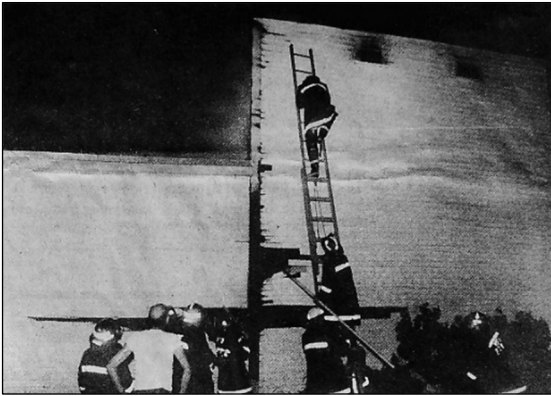
Brown stated firefighters went into a "blitz attack" and attempted to water down the garage fire to keep it from spreading to adjacent buildings. He added that firemen were forced to knock down ceilings and walls in the adjoining apartment house in order to contain the blaze.

The fire department would remain at the scene until after midnight in order to water down both buildings. The apartment house and garage were owned by Ron Toulouse and was insured.

Brown believed the blaze was connected to the other suspicious fire and he pointed to the choice of vacant buildings in areas where quick escape from the scene was possible as similarities which link the incidents together. Brown stated, *"I was wondering when it would come to a building attached to an occupied apartment building."*

Investigating the fire was State Fire Marshall's Office Lt. Ronald Evans and Waterville Fire Investigator Robert Pelletier.

1981 May 30 – Chaplin Street (Main Gas Arson)



Another, in a long string of deliberately set fire broke out in a Maingas Warehouse on Chaplin Street at about 9 p.m. The building was reportedly filled with various appliances, most of them in cartons. Damage to the structure itself was not severe, except for the portion of the building, which had to be cut away during the battle.

Chief Brown stated that there were no nearby buildings, so firefighters did not have to be concerned with the spread of fire. Deputy State Fire Marshal Ronald Evans stated that there was "no question" the fire was connected to several others in the city since March 4th. Although as many as 17 fires had been of suspicious origin, at least some of them may had been set "by kids" and were not considered part of the serious arson problem.

Maingas and Appliances Vice-President stated that the fire department had done an "excellent job using salvage covers to cover much of the inventory" to prevent damage.

Chief Brown stated that one problem in fighting the fire was the design of the structure itself. He described the building as a structure "built around a box" of cement. The building was originally used as a meat packing plant. Flames got between the original and newer walls as well as spreading under the false roof.

The all-out signal would be sounded at 10 p.m.

1981 June 29 - Green Street (Arson)

Investigators at the scene of a suspected arson fire at a six-unit apartment located on Green Street had not determined the cause, but Deputy State Fire Marshall Ronald Evans stated he would not classify the fire with several other cases in the city now under investigation.

Firefighters were called to 9 Veteran Court for a small blaze in the cellar and it was quickly extinguished. This fire was the first time that a deliberately set fire had broken out while several people were in the building.

The blaze began on a third-floor stairway leading to the roof. Two apartments on that floor were unoccupied at the time. Fire damage was concentrated on the third floor while apartments below were damaged by smoke and water.

According to Captain Donald Pooler who was in charge at the scene, it was necessary for the firefighters to vent the roof before crews were able to get inside. One of the problems at the scene was keeping flames away from a large apartment building which nearly touched the burning building.

Firefighters used an exposure line to wet down the facing walls. Although the fire spread through a crawlspace, the quick response by 40 or more firefighters made it possible to knock down the flames in 45 minutes.

Witnesses claimed to have seen smoke coming from the area for quite some time before realizing that the building was on fire.

1981 August 18 - Water Street (Lockwood Mill Arson)



A fire believed to have been set in two separate locations swept through a portion of the former Lockwood Mill.

Firemen from Waterville and Winslow found the north wing of the L-shaped structure ablaze in both the basement and second floor when they arrived at the scene at about 10:45 p.m.

Waterville Chief Fred Brown immediately sounded a second alarm, summoning all local units, and also called in an engine and ladder truck from Winslow to help knock down the flames.

Standing outside the brick structure as firemen began entering through windows and doorways with air tanks and hoses. Brown stated the fire was “definitely suspicious.”

Traffic on the Ticonic Bridge was closed to all eastbound traffic, while cars crossing over from Winslow were allowed as far as Front Street. A crowd of well over 100 people gathered on the bridge and watched as firemen fought to contain flames shooting from windows facing the river.

By 11:15 p.m., firemen appeared to have the blaze under control, although several speculated that they would be on scene into the night. There were no reports of injuries.

First reports that Lockwood, long feared as a possible arson target, was on fire came from Waterville Police Officer Everett Flannery and Alan King, who were northbound on Water Street when they noticed smoke coming out of the building.

The 80-year-old structure was recently purchased from a New York Company by discount store owner Harold “Mickey” Marden.

1981 September 7 – Silver Street (Knights of Columbus Arson)



An early morning fire seriously damaged what used to be a governor’s mansion and was most recently the home of the Waterville Knights of Columbus. It was the 24th case of arson hit the city since March 4th.

The predawn blaze at the Silver Street structure was believed to be the work of the same arsonist who has haunted the area since early spring officials stated.

According to Waterville Fire’s arson investigator Robert Pelletier, the fire started outside the basement window on the house’s north side. The basement suffered the most damage, though the flames did reach a section of the second floor, he stated. The rest of the 14-room house suffered smoke and water damage.

The fire department was alerted at 6:13 a.m., after an unknown caller notified the Waterville Communication Center that a fire was in progress at the Silver Street building. Responding firemen smashed the basement windows of the house to get to the blaze. They also spread water through the upper floors, to prevent the fire’s spread. According to Chief Brown, the fire could have been burning for an hour and a half before the flames were first spotted.

He agreed with Pelletier that the fire was the work of an arsonist, possibly the same one who’s been frequenting area vacant buildings since March. Though the house was vacant, it was also furnished, unlike the buildings previously hit by arson.

Pelletier, who has drawn up a map pinpointing all the fires, noted the Knights of Columbus fire was in the same general vicinity as the others. The last fire occurred August 19th at the old Lockwood Mill, the 80-year-old abandoned building recently purchased by Harold “Mickey” Marden.

The house once belonged to Gov. William Haines, a Waterville man who served as chief executive of the state in 1913.

1981 December 4 – Myrtle Street (Schoolhouse)



A suspected arson fire roared through the old Myrtle Street School in Waterville, the 25th suspicious fire in the city since last March of 1980.

More than 60 firemen battled the two-alarm blaze in the unoccupied three-story red brick building at the end of Myrtle Street, in the city's North end. One fireman was injured slightly.

The first alarm was sounded at 9:08 p.m. When firemen arrived, the inside of the old schoolhouse already was red hot, and flames were pouring out of windows. The building apparently had become a storehouse for used tires, as the smell of burning rubber filled the night air. Thick black smoke choked the streets around the burning building, a block west of College Avenue.

"It's hotter than hell in there," stated a fireman taking a breather. *"You can't walk in there through all those tires. And those tires really heat up."*

At 10:15 p.m., the fire broke through the roof, shooting flames 20 feet and more into the clear night. That's when Fire Chief Fred Brown broadcast the second alarm, calling in a third engine company, increasing his force to over 60 men.

At 11:30 p.m., most of the flames were extinguished, though small fires continued to spark throughout the structure. Brown stated the fire appeared under control, but the building was all but lost. Firemen still were at the scene after midnight.

The fire would burn for more than 49 hours. Old tires that filled the building would continue to smolder. Thousand gallons of water and snowstorm had failed to do the job.

Brown stated the fire apparently started in the rear of the building's first floor. Asked if arson was suspected, Brown stated, *"It looks that way right now."*

The fire was called in by Bob Steward, at 12 Abbot Street. His living room faces the building. He and his roommate, Karen Daigle, were home when Karen spotted the blaze. *"I looked out and saw an orange glow, and I thought, 'Oh my God,' I called Bob. 'I walked over to the window closest to the building,'* stated Steward. *"The flames were coming right out, flowing up the side of the building. I went right to the phone and dialed 911."*

Hundreds of people surrounded the burning building to watch firemen fight the blaze. A great gasp came from the crowd when the fire broke through the roof. But as the night chilled, and hundreds of gallons of water turned the area around the building into a muddy morass, the crowd thinned.

The only fireman injured was Roland LaCroix, whose cheek was cut by a piece of shattered glass. He sat for a while in the rescue wagon, blood trickling down his cheek.

At the time of this fire, there was an \$8,300 reward for information leading to the conviction of the city's arsonist. Myrtle Street School was built prior to the turn of the century and housed elementary students in kindergarten grades through six until the later 1960's. The building was phased out as a public school after construction of Brookside School in 1969.

1982 January 17 – Water Street (Chez Tavern)

A minor fire would do damage to the Chez according to Chief Brown who stated the two-alarm blaze, which was first reported at 6:45 a.m., consisted of three fires set in different areas of the building, which monopolizes two street corners. The Water Street dancing and drinking spot connects to a house on Sherwin Street.

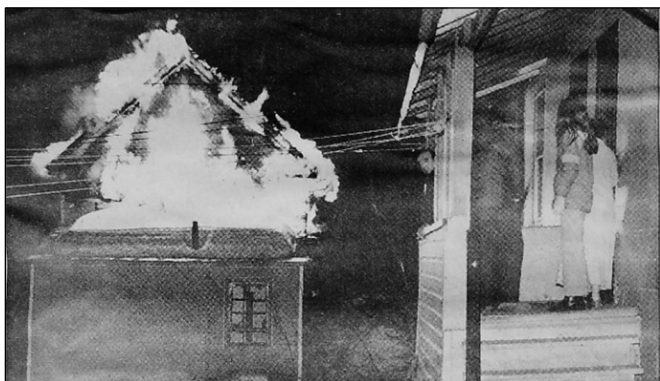
Two fires had been set outside the house on Sherwin Street and a third was fire was found going in one of the doorways inside the Chez. The arsonist would also poured gasoline on the stairs leading up from the Chez to the apartments, but that fire would burn itself out.

The Chief stated that he blamed the "bandwagon effect" for the arson that had plagued the city. *"More people just keep getting into the act. I wouldn't say the person who set the fire at the Chez was necessarily the same person responsible for those other fire,"* he stated.

At the time of this fire, five tenants were living in apartments about the Chez, and the band playing there was staying in the Sherwin Street house. No one was injured, which was under control by 8 a.m. and out by 10:17 a.m.

The fire damage was mostly cosmetic, but the Building Inspector Fred Prescott would declare the Chez "unfit to inhabit."

1982 March 17 – Healy Court (Arson)



For the third and most likely the last time, the twice burnt building at 1½ Healy Court had been set on fire. This one was one that the firefighters were dreading the most due to the fact that it sat so close to other structures in the area and could have cost lives. Chief Brown stated the fire had started on the west side of the second story.

Waterville Police Sargent John Jacques stated that when he arrived at the scene “it was very hot” and he ordered evacuation. Several families stopped only long enough to gather up babies, family pictures, and purses before rushing out into the street.

Upon arrival the fire department, using a “blitz attack,” knocked down the flames quickly and none of the nearby

buildings were damaged except by the water which firefighters poured on the back of the building with a “deluge gun.” Families were let back into their homes about 10 minutes later.

Chief Brown stated that the building would hopefully be torn down. He stated he would see if it was possible for the city to claim it for demolition.

Arson was an unnecessary blow to the city’s budget, the chief stated, as approximately 48 men responded, and each of them would be paid \$4 for the two hours they worked.

1982 July 7 – Sanger Avenue (Warehouse Arson)



A three-alarm fire, believed to have been set by an arsonist, destroyed a warehouse on Sanger Avenue and was threatening a nearby oil storage yard.

The blaze at the former Waterville Fruit Company was reported at 10:16 p.m. and was raging out of control when the first crew arrived. Chief Brown would quickly sound two more alarms, and later called for help from Winslow, Fairfield, and Oakland.

Houses in the vicinity of the building were evacuated, and police lines were set up by police from Waterville, Fairfield, Oakland, the Kennebec County Sheriff’s Office, the Maine State Police, and Colby College Security to keep hundreds of onlookers away from the fire.

Being suspicious of arson Chief Brown stated as the flames shot 75-feet into the air, “*They’ve tried this one three times. Now they’ve finally done it.*” It has been targeted twice before, and both times the fires were quickly contained with only minor damage.

From the moment the firefighters arrived, they focused their efforts on preventing the flames from spreading to the Spring Brook Ice and Fuel Company located adjacent to the building. Standing within a few hundred feet of the fire were two oil storage tanks, each with a capacity for approximately 12,000 barrels, as well as four smaller tanks.

Also causing concern was a string of 12 Maine Central Railroad tank cars parked on a spur directly behind the burning building. A check with the railroad company showed the cars empty, but a group of firemen was nevertheless dispatched to keep the fire from spreading to the cars, some of which could be seen smoking from the intense heat.

In addition to all Waterville fire apparatus at the scene, Engine 2 from Winslow was at the scene. Sixty firefighters would keep the flames from spreading.

1982 January 21 – Waterville Arson Probe Completed

The State Fire Marshal’s Office stated it had completed its investigation of the 1981 Waterville arson spree; while this year’s first city arson at the Chez Tavern had turned up a number of suspects, including a 16-year-old boy who fits the arsonist “profile.”

These disclosures were made in separate interviews with Deputy Fire Marshal Ronald Evans, in charge of the Waterville arson probe, and with Bryant White, a State Trooper assigned to the Waterville investigation since September 1981, who was investigating the Chez case.

Evans stated, "the book" on the Waterville arson was "all done," and it would be handed over to Kennebec-Somerset DA David Crook. "The book" contains all the evidence uncovered in the Waterville probe, on 20 arson fires, and eight others still classified as "suspicious," that occurred between March 4th, and December 4th, when the old Myrtle Street School was torched. It lists "several" suspects.

"The book" was "four inches thick," and its contributors would include members of the Fire Marshal's Office, State Police, Waterville Police, and the Waterville Fire Department.

"I think, for the most part, the investigation has resolved the problem in Waterville," Evans stated. "You're not getting the fire like you used to, one a week."

Now it would be up to DA David Crook to come up with the number of arrests and indictments as a result of the book, as everything had been turned over to him.

1981-1982 - Reward for Arson Tips, Arrests, and Convictions



On May 17th, 1981, state and local officials emerged at a two-hour conference at Central Fire Station offering an award of up to \$1,000 for information on an arson spree that has hit Waterville for three months. The money was being made through the Maine Arson Information Program. This reward would get as high as \$4,000 as the search for answers dragged on.

Concerns had heightened in recent days to the proximity of two blazes, on Pearl and Water Streets, to occupied buildings. It was sooner than later a fire in a vacant building was going to spread to one that was occupied.

Mayor Paul R. LaVerdiere called for the end to the series of suspicious fires that have broken out around Waterville in recent months. "I ask that we put a stop to the senseless and needless property destruction going on in or City." LaVerdiere started during a morning news conference. "Someone may get hurt, especially if a fire spreads to an occupied building."

All of the fires were under investigation by state and local officials, although no arrests have yet been made. Noting that the severe injury or death of a fireman would be "a pretty heavy burden to have to bear," LaVerdiere urged anyone who may be involved in the arson spree to seek help before it is too late.

Any individual deciding to come forward "would be guaranteed his full rights as applied under the Constitution," he stated.

On July 2nd, 1981, according to Captain Raymond Rancourt of the Waterville Police Department, Ashton L. Moores, 34, of 27 Green Street, was charged with arson, with State Fire Inspector Kenneth J. Quirion and Waterville Det. Richard Tompkins making the arrest. Rancourt would not comment on whether Moores might be later charged in connection with any of the other fires of suspicious origin which have occurred since early March.

Moores was charged with the June 29th, Green Street fire as well as one which leveled a garage and caused serious damage to an attached apartment building at 31½ Water Street May 24th, and two fires in a trash dumpster behind the Green Street house May 10th. Each charge of arson was a Class A crime, which carries a penalty of up to 20 years. Moores had lived in the Waterville area since February.

The Morning Sentinel would learn that Moores was released from the Maine State Prison at Thomaston about two years-ago having served part of an 8-to-20-year sentence for admittedly burning a home in Orono.

Moores was charged in 1972 with murder in connection with the death of a 76-year-old man who died from burns suffered in a fire which Moores later admitted he had set. The charge was later reduced to arson, and Moores pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 8 to 20 years in June 1973.

Moores would be arraigned at the Waterville District Court and was held in the Kennebec County Jail.

This was the first major break in the arson case, but Detective Tompkin's stated that Moores did not resemble the composite drawing of an arson suspect circulated by investigators earlier.

On July 3rd, 1981, Ashton L. Moores would enter a no plea on four counts of arson and would be ordered to be held at the Kennebec County Jail in Augusta in lieu of bail, set at \$50,000 sureties or \$5,000 on the four counts.

On July 28th, 1981, probable cause hearing, Judge Willam S. Brodrick ruled that there was sufficient evidence for Mr. Moores to be brought before the grand jury on October 5th on the arson charges.

In early February of 1982, Kennebec-Somerset District Attorney David Crook stated that the Waterville Police and the State Fire Marshal's Office would erase another arson case by obtaining confessions from two young children for the fire at Healy



Court on April 12th. Crook stated the fire was accidental and the children would not be charged. He stated, *"Because of their ages, 7 and 9, we are not considering prosecuting. There has to be an alternative to prosecuting a 9-and 7-year-old for act they did when they were 6 and 8."*

The children were questioned in the presents of their parents and the youngsters admitted stealing a book of matches from a store. They stated they then went into the vacant building at 1½ Healy Court, a 1½-story apartment house burned and abandoned after a fire on March 22nd, 1981, a yet unsolved arson case.

They stated they dropped the lit matches on an old rug, which flashed into flames. They tried unsuccessfully to stomp it out and then ran out of the building.

The Healy Court fire was reported to the fire department at 1:59 p.m. in a vacant house and was reported out prior to the arrival of firemen. The building had already been burned but would be investigated.

On February 22nd, 1982. Detective Thomkins and Fire Inspector Quirion would arrest and charge a 14-year-old, Scott Cogswell, on felony arson charges. Cogswell was charged with setting fire in the Valley Distributors Warehouse on Allen Street and a subsequent blaze at a Sturtevant Street house. The Sturtevant fire was originally classified as accidental and blamed on children playing with firecrackers.

On May 6th, 1982, Ashton Moores would plead guilty and was sentenced to eight years in prison by Kennebec County Superior Court Judge Louis Scolnik.

On May 12th, 1982, following an eight-hour suppression hearing on Scott Cogswell, Judge Courtland D. Perry II would rule that the alleged confession made by Cogswell would not be inadmissible evidence, and not to be included in the youth's upcoming trial.

The judge ruled that Cogswell had not sufficiently understood the Miranda warning before he made the alleged confession and had thus unknowingly waived his constitutional rights.

On May 28th, 1982, Judge Ronald D. Russell would find Scott Cogswell guilty of arson in connection with the November 10th, 1981, fire in an unoccupied Sturtevant Street house.

A friend of Cogswell would testify that he and Cogswell entered the vacant building, found some firecrackers and lit them off. Then they proceeded to another room where pink-colored insulation was hanging down. The friend stated that it was in this room where he saw Cogswell setting the insulation on fire with a lighter, he had. It would be later they would come up with the story of just playing with firecrackers so as not to get into trouble.

While upholding the arson charge, Judge Russell dismissed three other charges connected with the case, burglary, aggravated criminal mischief, and failure to report or attempt to control a dangerous fire. He would also dismiss the arson charge stemming from the fire at Valley Distributors, instead Cogswell pleaded guilty to failing to report a dangerous fire.

On June 11th, 1982, Scott Cogswell would be given three years' probation by Judge Russell. The judge would warn Cogswell that any violation of his probation terms would land him in the Maine Youth Center for an indeterminate period of time. Cogswell was to continue to receive counseling with his parents and must attend school unless ill or out of town with his family. His summer curfew was from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. and his curfew during the school year was from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Any changes in curfew times must be preceded by court approval.

These would be the only two convictions that were settled on the arson fires. A thorough search was done to find any further information, but none could be found.

1983 November 2 - Chaplin Street (Marden's Discount Warehouse)



Arson would be suspected for a fire which destroyed a warehouse owned by Marden's Discount Store. The one-story wooden building stood at 251 Main Street, off Chaplin Street, and at one time was a railroad building before being converted into a warehouse. There would be little, or no merchandise stored in the 100-foot-long building at the time of the blaze. Waterville Police Officer Gary Moen was on patrol when he spotted the smoke at 12:56 a.m.

Because of the degree and size of the fire, a second alarm was sounded at 1:14 a.m., which brought more fire equipment to the scene. The building was quickly engulfed in flames.

On December 13th, 1985, James A. Dearborn, 16, would plead guilty to charges of armed robbery and theft of a firearm in connection

with a November 21st, 1983, robbery of the Elm Street Market & Deli, and he would also plead guilty to arson charges involving a fire that destroyed Marden's Discount Store, and was sentenced to "an indeterminate period" at the Maine Youth Center in South Portland although he would spend a minimum of nine to 12 months there, according to Kennebec County DA David Crook. Dearborn could be held until his 21st birthday depending on his process.

During his convenience store robbery, Dearborn reportedly used a loaded handgun police believed was stolen from a parked car at John Martin's Manor Restaurant. Dearborn supposedly held the .32-caliber revolver to the head of an employee and fired a warning shot into the ceiling of the store.

Previously on November 2nd he would set fire to Marden's warehouse, destroying the building, although no one was hurt.

An attempt was made to try him as an adult but based on an evaluation by the psychologist at the Maine Youth Center and a report by Waterville juvenile officers, it was decided he should be tried as a juvenile.

1984 August 29 – Water Street (Apartment Building)



A fire that raced through an apartment building at 35 Water Street, was thought to be the work of an arsonist. The residence of five apartments fled as the blaze spread from a vacant first-floor room shortly before 1 a.m. One tenant, Kevin Dyer, 26, suffered two broken feet when he leaped from a second-story window to escape the smoke and flames. Fire Marshal Kenneth Quirion was called in to investigate and he stated, *"It is very suspicious."*

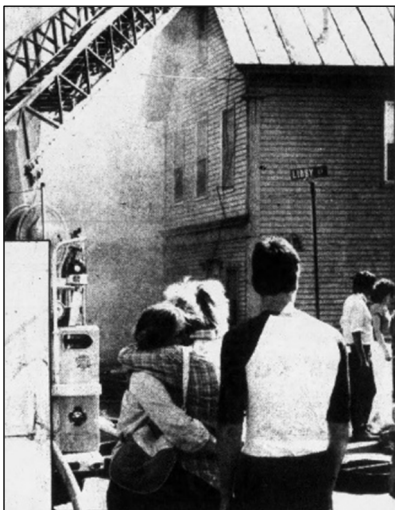
The blaze broke out in an unoccupied first floor apartment and raced through all three floors of the six-unit building. *"When I came out, I could see the fire coming right out, and it was coming up bad,"* stated Frand McAdoo. *"All of a sudden it just went up, right up the side of the wall. You could feel the heat."*

The flames were already coming from the building when firefighters arrived, just minutes after the fire was reported at 12:57 a.m. Chief Brown stated that while still on his way to the fire, he heard a radio report that the building was, *"completely involved, really totally involved."*

Chief Brown gave an order for a "condition blitz," usually used when a fire was too hot to allow firefighters to enter the building. As the fire burned, the building's aluminum siding melted, dripping onto the pavement. After cooling the structure with the initial blast of water, firefighters were able to enter the building. They would remain on the scene until 3:30 a.m.

On September 1st, 1984, fire officials would confirm that the fire was arson, and a full criminal investigation would be conducted.

1986 July 11 – Water Street (South End Café and Apartment)



A three-alarm fire, which the police stated was set by juveniles, swept through two buildings on Water Street, leaving dozens of residents homeless and most of their belongings destroyed.

Firefighters worked feverishly to keep flames from spreading beyond the two buildings at 109 and 113 Water Street. Their three-hour battle was hampered by thick smoke, strong winds and over curious spectators.

Waterville Police Chief David J. Veneziano stated three neighborhood children, aged 4, 6, and 7, set fire in the former South End Seafood Café at 113 Water Street. The restaurant had been closed for several years and was boarded up. Chief Veneziano stated each had been charged with arson. He stated the fire began with a lighter, then fueled the fire with lighter fluid.

The fire was reported at 2:54 p.m. by a resident living next door to the abandoned restaurant, who stated he smelled smoke and walked next door to investigate. *"We were just sitting watching TV, and I looked out the window and I thought I saw smoke. I went over to the South End Café and opened the door and the whole thing was up in flames,"* stated Gary Bennett.

By the time the department arrived on scene, fire had broken out of the north wall from the Café and flashed over into the apartment building. The flames burned through the walls of the apartment building and into the attic. Within 30 minutes, two additional alarms were sounded and a fire unit from Winslow was called to assist.

It took the firefighters until 5 p.m. to get the fire fully under control. Swirling winds filled the neighborhood with dense smoke.

1988 July 10 – Pleasant Street (Dwelling Arson)



Fire “of suspicious origin” destroyed much of a home at 39 Pleasant Street while its owners were on extended leaves from the city. The fire, believed to have started in the back of the approximately 90-year-old structure, quickly spread throughout the two-story home owned by Thomas and Cythia Longstaff.

The blaze apparently began in multiple locations throughout the house and was being investigated as a fire of “suspicious nature,” stated Stephen W. Dixon Sr., an investigator with the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

The raging fire also damaged the south wall of the garage attached to the 41 Pleasant Street home of Lionel and Evangeline Tardif, owners of L. Tardif Jewelers, 62 Main Street.

The fire that reached the Tardifs’ garage, in which a classic 1963 Buick Riviera was parked, charred the wall and its eaves, but firefighters were able to extinguish the flames preventing their spread to other parts of the garage or home.

Thirty-three firefighters battled the blaze for more than 90 minutes. The fire was reported at 4:54 a.m. by a woman who lives on Park Street. She called the fire in as a possible garage fire after spotting the flames through her backyard.

While battling the fire three firefighters suffered heat exhaustion and were taken to the hospital where he was treated and released.

1998 November 4 – Water Street (Playing with Lighter)



Chief Fournier stated an early morning fire on Water Street was started by a young boy playing with a cigarette lighter.

Firefighters responded in timely fashion to a fire at 152 Water Street and quickly extinguished it. None of the three people who were in the two-story building were hurt, and damage was confined mostly to the second floor. Chief Fourier stated units were at the fire at 10:07 a.m., just two minutes after the call was sounded and firefighters had the blaze under control by 10:25 p.m. Heavy fire would be found in a second floor in the middle of a four-bedroom area of the home.

“The fire was started by a juvenile and at this time, our investigators are working with the family and hoping they will participate in the juvenile fire-setter’s program we have at the fire department,” Fournier stated.

Zachary Varney, owner of the building, stated the child and a guest, J.J. Cornette, were in the building when the fire began. *“I couldn’t breathe,”* Cornette stated. *“It was really hot, and I couldn’t breathe. I jumped out onto the roof and onto the ground.”*

Mrs. Varney, downstairs at the time, was unaware of the fire until Cornette went around the building and yelled at her. Varney spoke while holding the boy, whose hair was slightly singed by the fire. The child was 4 years old and Chief Fournier stated the boy admitted to him that he was playing with the lighters.

The response time was crucial in a neighborhood where the houses were so close together. Winslow firefighters would also respond.

2000 September 6 – Pleasant Street (Arson)

Two boys, one of them just 10-years-old, were arrested on a felony charge of arson after allegedly setting fire that destroyed an old barn and garage at 85 Pleasant Street. Police Detective Jeffery Bearce stated it would be up to juvenile authorities at the Office of Kennebec District Court to determine how to proceed with the charges. The other boy charged with the crime was 13.

The fire was reported in the abandoned, wood-frame structure at about 4:30 p.m. The barn was located behind an abandoned former shop, which in turn was behind the house at 85 Pleasant Street. The house and garages, all of which were boarded up, were part of the YMCA parcel of land on North and Pleasant Streets.

Waterville Fire Investigator Jim Roy stated the blaze got a 20-to-30-minute head start on the fire crew. The barn was tucked away and was overgrown with brushes and trees. He stated it appeared that no fuel was used to ignite the blaze and there was no electrical power connection to the building and no heat source.

City fire investigators recovered empty petroleum containers and two cigarette lights in the woods. The boys had allegedly soaked a skateboard ramp in an empty lot, then soaked another board and took it to the barn that eventually burned.

The 10-year-old charged with arson had similar charges already on his record. Detective Bearce stated that both boys had been released from police custody. The State Corrections Officials stated there was no place in Maine to incarcerate a 10-year-old.

2000 November 17 – Front Street (Male Sets Himself on Fire)

A Waterville man walked into the city's police department off Front Street and set himself on fire in full view of a police officer and an overnight radio dispatcher.

Paul Coffey, 56, told police he doused his nylon jacket with lighter fluid and then struck a wooden match. His clothing burst into flames, singeing his hair and face. *"He was completely in flames from like the torso up,"* dispatcher Rebecca Graham stated. *"He was like a torch."*

The incident, which brought police, fire, Rescue, and ambulance personnel to the police station in the basement of City Hall, came about 7:30 p.m. as patrons poured across Front Street for a concert by "up With People" in the Opera House upstairs.

Coffey stated he poured the fluid on his jacket outside the building in the City Hall parking lot, then walked into the hallway, where he lit the match. A wall and a reception window separated Coffey from the interior of the communications center.

Police Sgt. Daniel Ames, who rushed into the hallway with Officer Jared Austin and a fire extinguisher, stated Coffey was experiencing mental problems. Coffey "flapped" the fire out with his arms and the fire extinguisher was not used.

He was handcuffed for his and other personnel protection. *"It's my feeling he came to the police station for help,"* state Ames.

Coffey, whose face was drained of all color as Rescue workers escorted him to a waiting ambulance, stated he had planned to do such a thing "for a long time."

2004 July 13 – Forest Park (Molotov Cocktail Arson)



A fire that officials stated teenagers devising a Molotov Cocktail apparently caused a fire that destroyed a house at 22 Forest Park and left five people homeless.

Firefighters were called to the two-story, four-bedroom home of David Doane and Lydia Sy at 10:28 a.m., but the large house in the upscale neighborhood off First Rangeway already was engulfed in flames. *"We were able to put a gun in it, knock it down, and go in and make an offensive attack,"* Captain Dave Lafountain stated. About 30 firefighters from Waterville and Winslow battled the blaze.

Captain Lafountain stated that youths were trying to see how a Molotov cocktail worked, so they threw on into the garage. *"It spilled, but it didn't ignite, so they tried to clean it up. The end up trying to burn off the residue, and when they did, the flames went over to a gas can and it was all over at that point,"* Captain Lafountain stated. He stated the youths were forthright and readily offered information to the authorities about what

happened.

Officials from the Fire Marshal's Office were called to the scene and were working with the Waterville police to investigate the fire.

Doane and Sy had three children, two of whom, a 17-year-old and a 13-year-old, were at home when the fire broke out. Officer Caron stated two other friends were at the house.

Linda Hogan, who lived across the street, stated she overslept and opened her door to get the newspaper, and it all appeared normal. *"In less than two minutes, smoke was completely covering my front picture window. It was very sudden. I called 911,"* she stated.

On July 15th, Waterville Police Detective David Caron stated that he mailed his report to Alan Kelley, Kennebec County District Attorney and on September 13th, Kennebec County District Attorney Evert N. Fowle stated that no charges would be

filled. The juvenile case worker reviewed the case and determined that the three boys should not go to court as they did not intentionally destroy the home. The boys also tried to put the fire out when it started, he stated.

The boys would be involved in community service work, counseling and some restitution. Of, for any reason, the boys were difficult or do not meet their obligations, officials could petition to bring the case up again.

2011 September 20 – Water Street (Apartment)



Fire crews were called to 25 Water Street Monday night around 7:00 p.m. for flames showing on the first and second floor porches. The building was an apartment house with four units inside.

Fire Captain Rodney Alderman stated a woman, and her teenage son were able to make it out of the home safely.

Crews from Winslow and Fairfield helped the Waterville fire department put out the flames. The fast-moving fire that destroyed the three-story apartment building would be ruled arson. Sgt. Timothy York of the State Fire Marshal's Office stated the fire was intentionally set by two juveniles.

Barbara Dow and her son, Tony, were the only tenants in the four-apartment building and got out with help from some good Samaritans, according to Beverly Busque, who lives next door.

Busque stated that before the fire started, there were youths outside her house, messing around. *"I heard windows crashing, I was watching TV,"* she stated. *"I came out of there screaming her name, Barbara! Barbara! A whole bunch of people went in and got her out of there. I swear to God, they were angels. I don't even know who they are."* Firefighters escorted Dow, who was visibly shaken, down the sidewalk.

The apartment building at 25 Water St. was located across Water Street from the Hathaway Creative Center, where spectators peppered the parking lot, taking photos with their cell phones.

The owner of the building, Roger Moody, of Sidney, stated he has owned it 10 or 12 years. He got a call from someone, telling him his building was on fire, and he rushed to the scene.

Scott McAdoo, 29, who lives off Water Street, stated he was watching television and listening to a police scanner when he heard about the fire. He walked out the door and down the hill, he said. *"All I saw was fire. The whole front end of the building was engulfed in flames."*

According to eyewitness Therese Wilbur, two boys riding on one bike, stopped outside the apartment building and one of them lit a match and set two books on fire. They would then toss them at the front of the building. The burning books would land on an old mattress on the porch and flames shot up.

"They thought it was hilarious," she stated. *"They thought it was a joke and as soon as it ignited the mattress, they seemed so happy about it, and the rode off."*

State Fire Marshal Sgt. York stated two juveniles had been apprehended and would likely be charged with arson.

2011 August 9 – Oak Street (Discarded Cigarette)

A fast-moving fire would destroy an Oak Street home, leaving a family of four homeless. Tracey Bragdon, 22, stated she had just left her house with her three children and was walking down nearby Ticonic Street when her next-door neighbor chased her down the street to tell her the house was on fire. *"We weren't even gone, like, two minutes and we flew back, and the house was almost gone,"* Tracey stated.

Neighbor Steve Nye stated he called 911 at 9:01 a.m. when he realized the two-story house was burning. *"I was sitting on the front porch and saw smoke and went over and the flames just burst right though,"* he stated.

About 40 firefighters rushed to the house, but the 10-room house was already engulfed in flames.

When the fire broke out, Donald Zaltzberg and Jim Trott were painting the outside of a house diagonally across the street, he also stated he called 911, ran to the building and kicked in the front door, yelling at anyone who might be inside. He then ran to the side of the house and kicked in the glass of a door. Bragdon's 1-year-old dog, a brown Australian Shepherd-Bull Terrier mix, Chaos, was still inside and he reached inside to get him out.



As firefighters worked at the scene and neighbors stood watching. Chief LaFountain stated firefighters from Waterville, Fairfield, and Winslow were at the scene and Oakland firefighters stood by at the Waterville station. Two firefighters were treated for dehydration.

The following day, Sgt. Kenneth Grimes of the State Fire Marshal's Office stated the fire started in a first-floor bedroom caused by improper disposal of smoking materials. *"The remains of cigarettes were disposed of in a trash can, and the materials in the trash can ignited,"* Grimes stated. *"It's an accidental fire."*

2016 Aug 10 Belmont Street (Apartment)

Rick Mahew was sitting at his kitchen table Wednesday night when he began to smell burning plastic. He looked out the window and saw his landlord's boat, garage and truck were on fire outside and told his wife to quickly call 911.

Deanna Butcher, Mahew's landlady, and her husband, Robert Butcher, were also home in their downstairs apartment at 5 Belmont Avenue at the time. *"There were a bunch of people around who called 911,"* stated Butcher. *"As soon as we came outside, we saw the boat, the truck, the garage, all of it, engulfed."*

Waterville Fire Chief David LaFountain stated firefighters and Waterville police were investigating the cause of the garage fire, first reported around 9 p.m., and couldn't immediately say what might have caused it.

Butcher stated she believed the fire was suspicious but didn't know who would set her family's garage on fire or why. *"I asked if they were going to investigate it,"* she stated. *"They said 'yes' and I said, 'Good.'"*

The garage and its contents, including a large boat, were largely destroyed, and the siding on the back of the 5 Belmont Avenue house also melted in the fire.

The fire blocked traffic on Belmont Avenue and part of Western Avenue for at least an hour Wednesday night and drew several downtown spectators to the street.

Tammy Brown and Lauren LePage, who were sitting outside on nearby Silver Street, heard a loud sound like an explosion followed by flames and called 911, they stated. *"There were a lot of booms, and it sounded like some kind of explosion."*

On August 16th, arson would be stated as the cause of the fire according to the Office of Maine State Fire Marshal. The fire was set intentionally and originated in or around the garage at 5 Belmont Ave., according to Sgt. Ken Grimes, of the fire marshal's office. He stated the fire remains under investigation.

The garage was destroyed, along with a 2006 Dodge pickup truck and a boat. An antique half-ton military vehicle was damaged, and the fire melted the vinyl siding of the house.

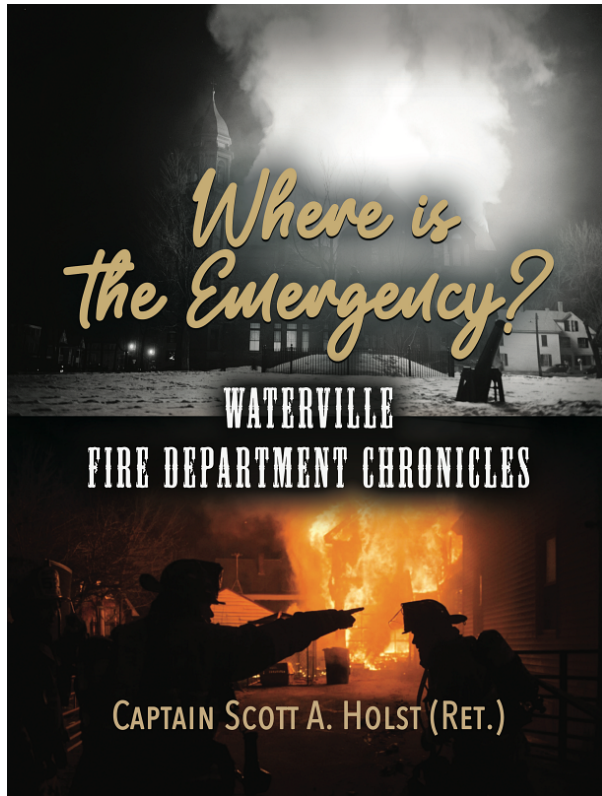
To this day the case would remain open as no suspect would be found in this arson case.





Whitney Draper photo

Curling iron catastrophe: Waterville Firefighters remove smoldering boards after extinguishing a fire Saturday night that caused extensive damage to the second floor and attic of a home owned by Paul and Alice True, 15 Gray St. The fire, reported at 8:08 p.m. by a family member, is believed to have been caused by a hot curling iron left on a bed in a second floor bedroom, according to Capt. Roland LaCroix. No injuries were reported, and a damage cost is not yet known.



The written history of emergency-related stories from the Waterville, Maine, Fire Department highlights the true emergencies that have shaped the department's response.

**Where is the Emergency?
Waterville Fire Department Chronicles**
By (Ret) Captain Scott A. Holst

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