

Historical volume of the Winslow Fire Department to honor the dedication, courage, and resilience of the firefighters who have protected their community for nearly 120 years.

Winslow Fire Department History 1907-2026

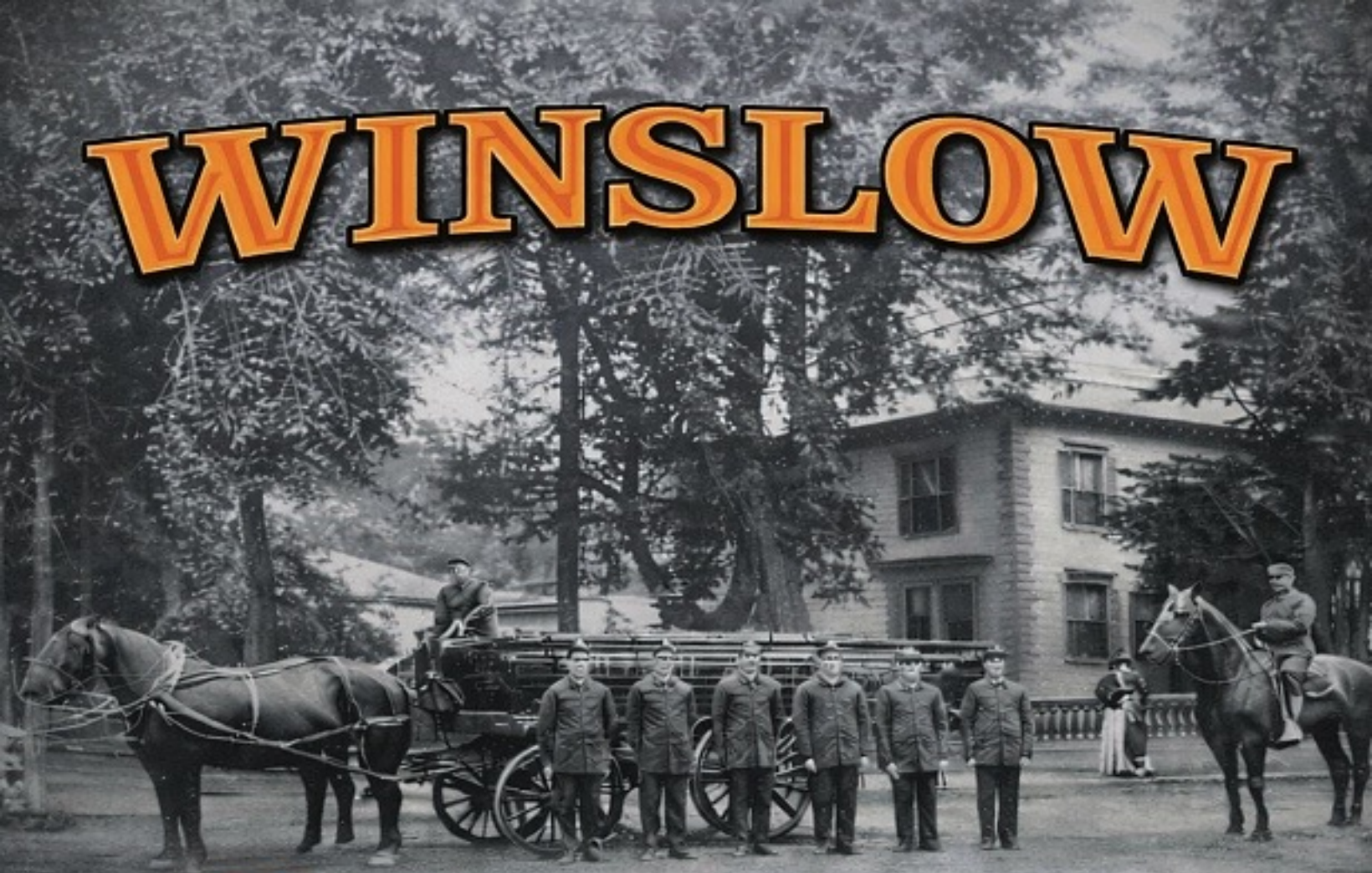
By (Ret) Captain Scott A Holst

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WINSLOW



FIRE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

1907-2026



(Ret) Captain Scott A. Holst

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2026

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HISORY OF FIRE ALARM



The first fire alarm system was invented way back in 1852 by Dr. William F. Channing and Moses Farmer. The system consisted of two fire alarm boxes that each had a telegraphic key and a handle. If a fire was detected in a home or business, someone would have to run to the nearest box and reach inside one of the boxes and crank the handle in order to send an alert about the fire to a nearby alarm station. An operator at the station would then take the message and alert the fire department about it so that they could send help. It was quite a process and required several steps.

For the first time since bringing it up at a meeting in 1906, when the citizens first decided to have it's own fire department, the citizens would discuss the need for a fire alarm system in the town.

On February 15th, 1909, a petition would be circulated in Winslow, and it would receive many signatures for the installation of a fire alarm system in the town. The petition would ask that an article be inserted in the call for

the annual town meeting to be held on the second Monday in March that a sum be appropriate for the purpose of building the system. The move was a popular one and would receive proper attention from the voters of the town.

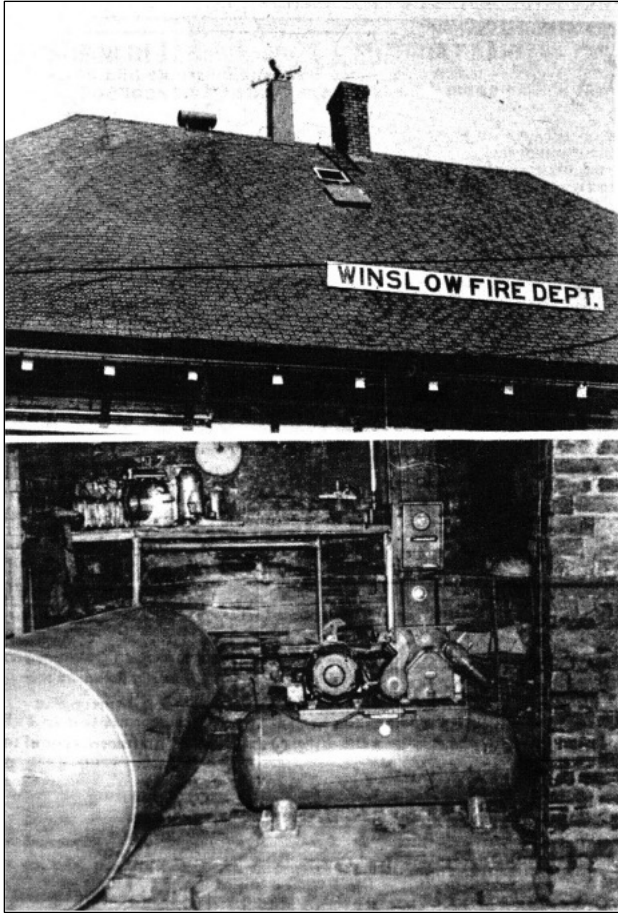
Winslow was well equipped with hose and men, and under Chief Eugene W. Allen some good work had been done at fires , but when a well-equipped hose cart was procured and a house built for it, no more was done and several times the firemen had been called to fire when the flames had secured a good hold and the work has been handicapped by lack of an alarm.

Electricians were now figuring on installing six alarm box circuit in the town. There were 14 hydrants scattered around so the town was well fixed in that way. One box was proposed to be placed near the Congregational church and grange hall on Lithgow Street, another near Mason's store, one at the end of Ticonic Bridge and another to be used by the residents that lives along side the paper mills. A box would be placed on Sandhill and one near the soldier's monument and high school.

It was proposed to have a compressed air whistle placed on the powerhouse of the Fort Halifax Power Company, one that would not fail to awaken any person living in Winslow.

The cost of all this was being figured by competent men and the results would be presented at the March town meeting.

On March 8th, 1909, the annual meeting of the voters was held and the article calling for the establishment of a fire alarm system took a long time for deciding, Chief Eugene W. Allen was on hand with a petition for the same and stated that the Gamewell Fire Alarm Company would install a system of seven boxes around the Town, and with a tapper in the home of each fireman for \$825. Other concerns whose names were not mentioned would do the work for \$750. This did not include a whistle or bell, and it was thought by the chief that there was sufficient help on hand during the day in all parts of the town to make this part unnecessary and it could be installed another year. This point was well fought out after Mr. Allen had



made a motion that \$1,000 be appropriated for the fire alarm and other needs of the department, and that sum was finally voted to be expended under the direction of the selectmen, the chief engineer and his first assistant.

Material would start arriving at the end of June for the construction of the fire alarm system. Several boxes of stuff began piling in the store of Chief Allen awaiting the arrival of the men from the Gamewell Company of Boston, to which the contract was awarded.

The exact location of the boxes had not yet been decided upon, but they would cover the town very well the Chief stated. There would be no big alarm bell or whistle at the present time, although that equipment may be added later. The Hollingsworth & Whitney Company had their own steam whistle, and the department would intercreate this whistle into the fire alarm system, but it was not hooked up to the system to blow out the Box numbers. The houses of the members of the department would be equipped with tappers, and it should not take long to get the men together in response to an alarm.

About four miles of wire would be strung, and the contract stated for the completion of the system by September 14th, and the hose house near the end of the bridge would be the place where the batteries would be stored.

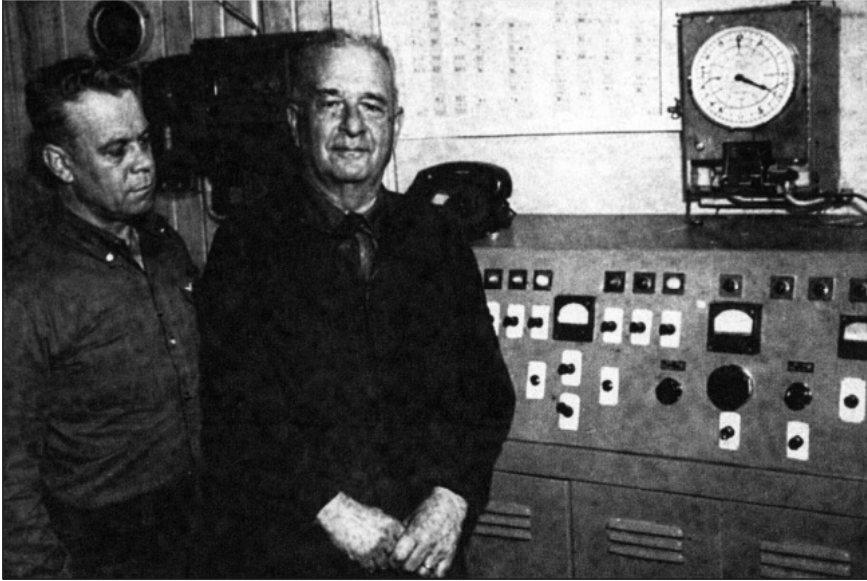
In August 1909, workmen from the Gamewell Fire Alarm Company would begin their work of installing the town new fire alarm system. The men would string the wires upon poles that had already been set as the town, like all other communities, had the use of certain arms upon poles belonging to private corporations. When the wires had been strung, tappers were to be installed in the houses of the firemen and boxes enough to cover the town would be placed where most convenient.

On September 8th, the fire alarm system would be placed in working order and an alarm could now be pulled in from any of the seven boxes scattered about the town. There would be no general alarm for the present, but the houses of the firemen, the driver of the hose team, and the store of Chief Allen were fitted with tappers, and in the hose house on Benton Avenue would be installed the switchboard and the battery room.

The following were the numbers of the boxes and their locations:

1. Box 14 – Corner of Pine and Water Streets, near Protor & Bowie Store
2. Box 16 – Corner of Benton Avenue and Stobie Street, opposite Club House
3. Box 18 – Opposite house of Perry Simpson, Benton Avenue
4. Box 23 – Corner of Pine and East Maple Streets, Sand Hill
5. Box 24 – Birch Street, near the Soldier's Monument
6. Box 26 – Opposite Mason's Store
7. Box 24 – Near residence of George Marcoux, below Grange Hall, River Road

An alarm like that of Waterville would strike the number of the box four times. The key box on the front would have a glass that when broken, the key already inside the door would be ready to turn to strike



the alarm. The house bells would strike out loud and clear and were operated by springs and needs no batteries.

On November 17th, after a few months of working on designing a run card on how the new fire alarm system would work, Chief Allen would issue cards bearing on one side a list of fire alarm boxes and the other were the instructions as to the proper method of the sounding of alarm of fire.

Two long blasts of the Hollingworth & Whitney Mill whistle, repeated five times, would

call the Winslow Fire Department. Two slow blows would mean the fire was out or under control. Three bells, repeated twice, all members of the department would report at once to the hose house.

As the town was not equipped with a big bell alarm, and the only bells on the circuit were those in the houses of the firemen, those outside were not likely to hear the alarm sounding, but the Chief hoped to have an outside alarm as soon as possible, but in the meantime the whistle was utilized.

It would not be until January 4th, 1910, that the first alarm for a fire would be reported on the new fire alarm system. An incipient blaze was discovered early morning in the store of Shenson & Jobvitz on Sand Hill. A young man named Geoch, who was doing deliveries for the Morning Sentinel, found the store full of smoke and flames. He notified the neighbors and the fire was stopped by a bucket brigade.

An alarm was sounded on the new fire alarm system, but for some reason, the bells did not work. The failure was blamed on the overnight snowy windstorm which was thought to render the system useless.

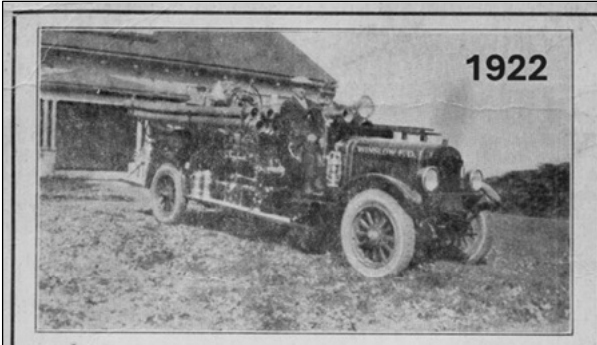
In 1918, an entirely new wiring of the alarm system needed to be done in order to connect bells to the new members of the department. The batteries at the Hose House were also in poor order and needed to be renovated.

On February 5th, 1925, at the request of the town, Mr. Germond of the Gamewell Fire Alarm Company, would come to town to consult the selectmen, Chief William D’Nardi, and Frank Cole, Chief Engineer of the Hollingworth & Whitney Company in regard to making improvements in the fire alarm system.

At the town meeting held at the Grange Hall on March 8th, Chief William D’Nardi would recommend that the town purchase an automatic steam fire alarm, which he stated would increase the efficiency of the fire department as immediately the company would know the exact point at which the alarm was rung.

The new whistle was a step toward greater protection, and with the permission that was granted by Mr. Nivison, the system would be installed at the Hollingworth & Whitney Company’s new boiler room roof.

In May of 1925, the department would install a new fire alarm whistle that they believed would better serve the purpose than the old, small siren. The new whistle would be attached to the boilers of the Hollingsworth & Whitney Mill and would be at all times supplied with a full head of steam. It was automatically connected with the fire station and the town’s alarm system and would be better heard in all parts of the town.



1922

Winslow Fire Department

LOCATION OF BOXES.

- 12 — Cor. Cushman and Lithgow Sts.
- 14 — Cor Proctor & Bowie's Store
- 15 — Bay St. Near Tobey's Store
- 16 — Benton Ave. Opp. Club House
- 17 — Cor Herd St. and Benton Ave.
- 18 — Benton Ave. opp. John Murray's
- 21 — Clinton Ave. Opp. Kidder St.
- 22 — Birch St. Opp. Church
- 23 — Clinton Ave. and South Maple St.
- 24 — Birch, Opp. Monument
- 25 — Clinton Ave., near Marcou St.
- 26 — Kendall & Ramsey Store
- 42 — River Road near Geo. Bassett's

SPECIAL CALLS.

- 1 blast repeated five times calls Winslow department to H. & W. mills.
 - 21 calls out additional apparatus
 - 161 in Waterville calls Waterville department to H. & W. mills.
 - 171 in Waterville calls Winslow department to Waterville.
 - 222 repeated three times in Winslow, calls Waterville Dept. to Winslow.
 - 2 test, fire out, or under control.
 - 3 all members report at once at hose house.
 - 4 no school. Blown at 7.30 or 11.30 A. M.
 - 6 general alarm. Calls special members to duty.
- To give a telephone alarm, call 716-W (Fire Station), or 716 R. Unless you have immediate responce, call 70, H. & W. Co., and watchman will sound alarm. (Three blows.)

Winslow Fire Department

Members	Telephone
WILLIAM DINARDI, Chief	716-R
FRANK MORRILL, Assistant Chief	1124-W
FRED McMULLEN, Captain	1128-W
JOHN JONES, Lieutenant	
NELSON GALLANT, Electrician	1131-W
HERBERT THING, First Pipeman	
FRED ROY, Second Pipeman	
RALPH WYMAN, Third Pipeman	1238-M
FRANK NELLIGAN, Fourth Pipeman	526-M
ROBERT LASHUS, Hydrant	1083-W
JAMES POULIN, Hoseman	1452-W
NAPOLEON POOLER, Hoseman	1452 W
PLACID GAGNE, Hoseman	
WILLIAM DOLLY, Hoseman	

CALL MEMBERS

FRANK BUNKER	HARRY S. GRINDALL 1465
LESLIE YORK	FRANK COLE 994-M
CECIL HIGGINS	CECIL BLAKE 651-W
CHARLES BLANCHARD	GEORGE MOORE 1138-W
ISRAEL WEED	PETER LIBBY
PERHAM FOTTER	FRANK MARCIA 531-W

SELECTMEN OF WINSLOW

G. A. CHAMBERLAIN	585-6
R. H. WEEKS	546-Y
H. L. SIMPSON	197-W

Learn the location of alarm box nearest your home or place of business.

To give alarm, go to the box nearest the fire; break glass in front of box; turn key; open door; pull hook to bottom of slot once and let go.

If you have no response from the small bell inside the box, go to the next nearest box and repeat as before. Remain by the box until department arrives.

Never give an alarm for a fire seen at a distance.

Never pull the hook a second time without orders from the Chief Engineer.

Anyone tampering with alarm boxes in any way unless to give an alarm for fire, shall be punished according to law.

The firemen should be called immediately upon the discovery of a fire, however small. The Chief would rather make an unnecessary run than to find a large fire caused by delay.

(over)

257-3

Because of the efficiency of the department's equipment, the rate of insurance had been changed so that the town would now be rated a Class C instead of Class D. This was much appreciated by those interested in the department's work and the earnest support of all residents of the town was requested to help in keeping a high standard of effectiveness.

The fire chief would emphasize to those putting in an alarm, that care should be taken so as not to unnecessarily put in a double alarm. There was no intent of disorder when such alarms come in but it was a case of where the box was left open when an alarm was sounded, and another person comes along and pulls a second alarm. Reliable information should be provided before anyone should ring in a double alarm.

Many cities and towns who shared boundaries and ran a special "no school" signal for school closings on their municipal fire alarm system, and at times would have had issues with the alarm being misheard. This would happen on January 17th, 1927, when parents of pupils of the Myrtle Street School in Waterville mistook the Winslow fire alarm whistle for the Waterville "no school" alarm.

Winslow Fire Alarm Boxes

- 12—Corner of Cushman and Lithgow Sts.
- 13—H. & W. Co. (Private)
- 14—Corner Proctor and Bowie's Store
- 15—Bay St. oppo. Gulf Oil Corp.
- 16—Benton Ave. oppo. Club House
- 17—Benton Ave. corner of Herd St.
- 18—Benton Ave. corner of Barton St.
- 19—Benton Ave. oppo. Roderick Rd.
- 21—Clinton Ave. oppo. Kidder St.
- 22—Monument St. oppo. Church
- 23—Clinton Ave. corner LaSalle St.
- 24—Mortument St. corner Halifax St.
- 25—Clinton Ave. corner Marcou St.
- 26—Bay St. corner Halifax St.
- 27—Halifax St. oppo. Hallowell St.
- 42—Lithgow St. near Norman Marcia's Home
- 43—Cushman St. corner Stuart St.
- 44—Frawley St. corner St. James
- 141—Bellevue St.
- 142—Halifax oppo. Poulin St.
- 143—Charland St. and Rancourt Ave.
- 51—No. 5 and No. 6 Log Piles
- 52—No. 7 Log Pile
- 53—Head Gate and No. 1 and 3 Log Piles
- 54—South of No. 4 Log Pile

SPECIAL CALLS

- 31—Augusta Road
- 32—Cushman Road
- 33—China Road
- 34—Garland Road
- 35—Clinton Avenue
- 36—Benton Avenue
- 37—Albion Road
- 121—Calls out Additional Apparatus
 - 2—Test, fire out, or under control
 - 3—All members report at once at Hose House
 - 4—No school, blown at 7:30 or 11:00 A. M.
 - 6—General Alarm, calls members to dutyTo give a telephone alarm, call TR 2-6512 (Fire Station) or TR 2-6655. Unless you hvae immediate response, call TR 3-3251 (H. & W. Co.) and Watchman will sound alarm (Three blows).

The Winslow alarm sounded at 7:30 a.m. for no school and parents in the vicinity of the Myrtle Street School believed that it was the Waterville alarm and therefore did not send their children to school. The direction of the wind had much to do with this, it was believed.

Many of the parents telephoned Superintendent C. E. Glover who informed them that it was the Winslow signal. It was a known fact that with a wind it was impossible to hear the Waterville whistle in many parts of the city. The Winslow alarm sounded very clearly in the upper section of Waterville.

The reason Winslow sounded the no-school alarm was due to eight regular teachers calling out sick.

In the Spring of 1932, the department would place a siren on a pole near the Proctor & Bowie corner to pre-warn the drivers in that area of the oncoming fire apparatus when a fire alarm had been sounded.

The siren would be operated from the fire station on Benton Avenue and plans were to turn it on 15 or 20 seconds ahead of responding fire trucks to alert motorists to clear the way. It was to only be used immediately before the passage of the fire appartus.

It was the hopes the presence of the siren would reduce the chance of traffic accidents with fire equipment on this busy artery. The cost of this device was \$101.22.

In the summer of 1946, the Telephone Company would install new telephone poles in the town, and the department would work on installing new alarm wires to these poles at the same time at a cost of \$363.35.

In 1947, with the State dealing with the worest forest fires in the state, Winslow VFW would offer their services to the department. Chief DiNardi would set up a special box number if their help were needed. A call of three sixes (666) would be sounded on the fire alarm system.

On July 26th, 1955, a sound that would resmble the noise of a foghorn, coming from the Winslow side of the Kennebec River, was the new fire alarm signal.

The signal had just been installed by Chief William D'Nardi and some of his men and was blown for a fire for the first time the same day. The horn would replace the

whistle that had been used since 1925 and was operated by steam from the boilers of the paper mill.

The mill whistle would be placed in reserve and the boxes in the mill would be switched onto the new alarm system. The three blast from the mill signal that had been in the past tested at 12 noon, would be discontinued. The usual test blasts on the town's system would be heard at 12:30 p.m., with a signal blast for curfew at 9 p.m. These test blast would continue until they were discontinued in ther middle 1990's.

The new siren would be placed on the roof of the fire station on Benton Avenue, and would consist of three horns, one with a 10-inch bell, pointed south, one with a bell of 8-inches, pointed west, and the third with a 6-inch bell, pointed north. Each horn would have a different tone and the three would blend into a sound not unlike that of a diesel locomotive.

The signals would be operated from the 21 fire alarm boxes scattered through the town and suburbs. The signal could also be operated manually and from the gatehouse of the Hollingworth & Whitney mills.

Chief William D'Nardi stated that the change from the steam whistle in the mill to the new style on the firehouse was made necessary because the old whistle needed repairs with parts that had become unobtainable.

The chief stated the cost to complete the system was \$2,100, which was quite a bit below the sum estimated by the fire alarm companies. This was due to several firemen and mill workers assisting with labor.

The sirens on the firehouse were operated by air from a tank in the basement which generated a pressure of 175 pounds. There was an auxiliary tank under the roof and close to the sirens which would provide 120 pounds pressure.

The horns were made by Clark-Cooper, and the compressors were from the Worthington shops. Telephone calls made to the fire station were automatically heard on Chief D'Nardi's line, or the mill gate house maybe called in case of fire and the alarm communicated to the men of the department.

Once the new system was up and running, new cards listing the fire alarm boxes in Winslow would be prepared by the Hollingsworth & Whitney Company and were distributed to the townspeople by the department so that each home a card. This way when the horn from the fire alarm system sounded, they could look at the card to see where the emergency was located.

On September 30th, 1957, a crazy story would be told from an eyewitness stating a Partridge was killed in flight from the sounding of the fire alarm system on top of the fire station.

The roof of a fire station would become a highly hazardous spot for a healthy partridge to land. It was observed that one bird tried it with disastrous results.

The partridge was apparently enjoying the afternoon sun atop of the Winslow Fire Station when the fire alarm sounded at 8:30 a.m. Being terrified by the sound, the partridge flew wildly into an adjoining garage and was instantly killed by the impact.

The witness to this horrifying event retrieved the bird and gave it a proper burial.

On November 19th, 1960, a new fire alarm system would be installed. The system was a two-circuit Safa Model 72-volt DC system with controls switches and pilot lights provided for each circuit and meter test switches allowing current measurement of each line. The current supply consists of a solution Type Multi-Tape Transformer feeding an oversize disc-type selenium oxide rectifier. The system was equipped with a time clock that would blow two blasts at 12:30 p.m. and at 9 p.m., for curfew, thus relieving the watchman at Scott Paper Company from the responsibility of seeing that these two signals were sounded.

The system replaces the switchboard and battery 40-volt system which was installed in 1927, and which Chief D'Nardi recalls, was secondhand at that time. In 1927, the town had 11 fire alarm boxes, six firehouse bells and about five miles of wiring.

In March 1960, there were 30 fire alarm boxes, 14 firehouse bells and over 15 miles of wiring. A new system would be authorized at the town meeting and would cost \$2,800.

The members of the department would install over 11,000 feet of copper wire to replace the old iron wire which was used when the fire alarm system was first set up in town in 1909.

Two new Boxes would be installed, Box 121 at Boston Avenue School and Box 122 at the Winslow High School. Boxes were already placed at the Grand Street, Halifax and St. John the Baptist Schools a few years prior.

Besides the fire alarm boxes, there were special calls for seven of the country roads and 10 special calls for various departments at Scott Paper Company. There was a no-school signal which was four blasts blown twice at 7 a.m. or at 11 a.m. A Civil Defense calls was eight blasts, while the National Guard call was 10 blasts of the whistle.

On a special “Red” system, all alarms coming in ring in three places, the firehouse on Benton Avenue, at the office of the watchman at Scott Paper Company, and at the Herd Street home of Chief D’Nardi.

At the town meeting held in January 6th, 1987, the council would give its first reading to an order to spend up to \$15,000 for replacing the antiquated alarm board. According to Town Manager Edward Gagnon, the board was currently inoperable because of the difficulty in finding parts for it.

The board was currently hooked to 24 alarm boxes scattered in various parts of town, but town official had attached “out of order” stickers to each one advising the user to dial the emergency “911” number instead.

Officials stated that the town originally had 32 boxes, but the number had been pared down over the past couple of years. The town planed to continue using the remaining boxes, most of them located near schools and other vital structures, despite infrequent use.

“We’ve had very, very few calls from those boxes during the past two or three years, but we look at them like we do insurance. You hope you never need them, but they’re there if you do,” Gagnon stated.

At the January 12th, meeting, Councilor would approve spending the money to replace the fire alarm board. Only Councilor Peter Ward voted against the expenditure, stating the board represented an unnecessary duplication of existing services, mainly the 911 emergency telephone number of which 98 percent of all fire calls were reported.

But Councilor Roy Strahan would point out that the board would also be tied into the school’s sprinkler system and heating sensing systems. He stated that if they were activated in the middle of the night, the fire department would be warned of the fire and that this would not happen with the 911 system.

“If a single house or life is saved by the board, I think it’s worth it,” Manager Gagnon stated.

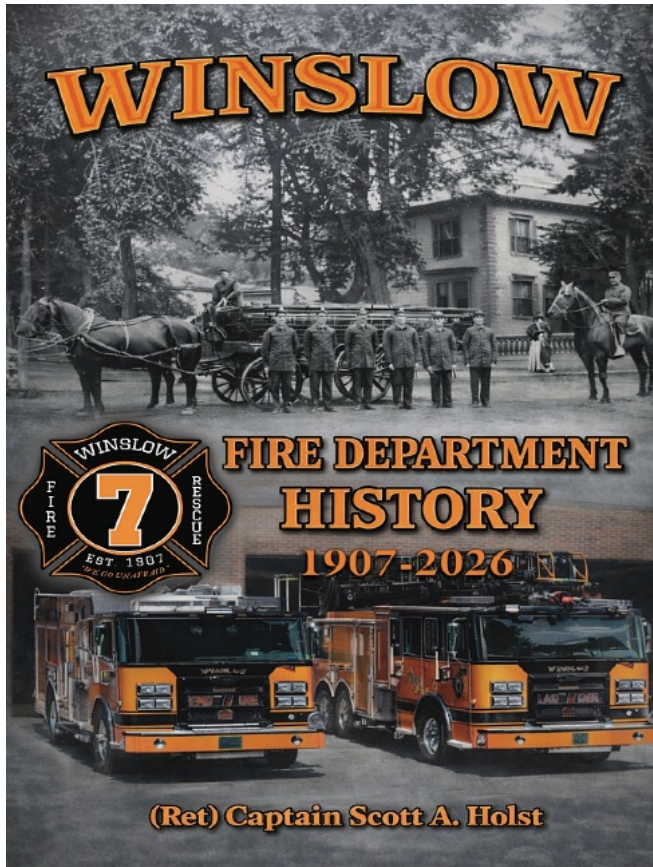
In 1996, all Gamewell Fire Alarm boxes throughout the town would be discontinued, except those boxes that would be connected to the town schools. All fire alarm wires would also be removed from the poles.





2023

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Lt. Eric Chamberlain, Captain Jonathan Beringer
Michael Greenberg



Historical volume of the Winslow Fire Department to honor the dedication, courage, and resilience of the firefighters who have protected their community for nearly 120 years.

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By (Ret) Captain Scott A Holst

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