THE VOLUNTEER FIREMEN.

Interesting Facts-The First Fire Organization in Philadelphia-The History of its Formation-The Firemen Before the Revolution-The Companies in Existence Prior to the Declaration of Independence-How and When they were Organized.

Everything connected with the Volunteer Fire Department is of interest at this time, and particularly is this the case with its early history. It is an old institution dating away back of the Revolution, at which time there were nearly twenty companies in service. The first company organized in Philadelphia was

THE UNION FIRE COMPANY. In speaking of the causes which led to the establishment of a Fire Department in Philadelphia, Thompson Westcott, in his History of Philadelphia, which is now being published serially in the Sunday Dispatch, says: -

"The increase of fires in the city as the houses became more numerous and closely built had been for some time a matter of consideration, and the minds of citizens were gradually prepared for the adoption of some better system of extinguishing them than had yet been possible under the authority of the corporation. This was done by the establishment of a voluntary association of citizens on the 7th of December. 1736, which was called the Union Fire Company." The first essay upon the subject of fires and the best means of acting on such occasions appeared in an article published in the Pennsylvania Gazette on the 20th of December, 1733. This article, which most probably induced future action, was followed by another in the same paper on February 4, 1735, in which the plan of a fire company was clearly described.

The writer says, "As to our conduct in the affair of extinguishing fires, though we do not want good hands or good will, yet we seem to want order and method, and therefore I believe I cannot do better than to offer for our imitation the example of a city in a neighboring province. There is, as I am well informed, a club or society of active men belonging to each fire engine, whose business is to attend all fires with it whenever they happen, and to work it once a quarter and to see it kept in order. Some of these are to handle the fire hooks and others the axes, which are always kept with the engine, and for this service they are considered in an abatement or exemption in the taxes. In time of fire they are commanded by officers appointed by the law called Firewards, who are distinguished by a red staff five feet long, headed with a brass flame of six inches. \* \* \* And disobedience to these officers in anything at such times is punished by a fine of forty shillings or ten days imprisonment. These officers, with the men belonging to the engines, at their quarterly meetings discourse of fires-of the faults committed at some and the good management in some cases at others -and thus communicating their thoughts and experience, they grow wise

This idea was carried into execution, and of it Beajamin Franklin in his autobiography says: -"The utility of this institution soon appeared, and many more desiring to be admitted than we thought convenient for one company, they were advised to form another, which was accordingly done; and this went on, one company being formed after another, until they became so numerous as to include most of the inhabitants who were men of property, and now at the time of writing this, though upwards of fifty years since its establishment, that which I first formed. called the Union Fire Company, still exists, though the first members are all deceased but myself and one who is older by a year than I am."

in the thing and know how to command and to

execute in the best manner upon every emer-

gency. Since the establishment of this regula-

tion it seems there have been no great fires in

that place, and I wish there never may be any

here.

In order to show the objects and methods of operation by this fire company, which gave rise to the Philadelphia Fire Department, we subjoin some extracts from the articles of associa-

Articles of the Union Fire Company of Philadelphia, originally formed Dec. 7, 1738. I. That we will, each of us, at his own proper charge, provide six leather buckets and two bags; the bags to be made of good ozenbergs or wider linen, whereof each bag shall contain four yards at least, and shall have a running cord near the mouth, which said buckets and bags shall be marked with their names, respectively, and company, and shall be kept ready at hand, and shall be applied to no other use than for preserving our own and our fellow

citizens' houses, goods, and effects in case of fire as aforesaid. II. That if any of us shall neglect to provide his buckets and bags as aforesaid, or when so provided shall neglect to keep them ready for the uses herein mentioned, or shall apply them for any other purposes, he shall forfeit and pay into the clerk for the time being, for the us the company, the sum of one-eighth of a dollar for each bucket or bag misapplied or wanting,

except any of them happen to be lost at a fire. III. That if any of the buckets or bags so marked as aforesaid shall be lost or damaged at any fire, the same shall be supplied or repaired out of the stock of the company within four months after such loss or damage

IV. That we will all of us, upon hearing of Fire breaking out, immediately repair to the scene with at least one-half of our buckets and bags, and there exert our best endeavors to extinguish such fire and preserve the effects of such of us as may be in danger. And if more than one of us shall be in danger at the same time, we will divide ourselves, with the remainder of our buckets and bags, as nearly as may be to be equally helpful. And to prevent suspicious persons from coming into or carrying any goods out of such houses as may be in danger, two of our members shall con-stantly attend at the doors until all the goods and effects that can be saved are packed up and carried to a place of safety. And upon hearing the cry of FIRE in the night-time, we will immediately cause sufficient lights to be distributed in such parts of such of the houses of our company as may be thought in danger, in order to prevent confusion and enable their friends to give them more speedy and effectual assistance. And, moreover, as this association is interested for a general benefit, we do further agree that whenever a FIRE breaks out in any part of the city, though none of our houses, goods, or effects may be in apparent danger, we will, nevertheless, repair thither with our buckets and bags, as before mentioned, and give our atmost assistance to such of our fellow-citizens as may stand in need of it, in the same manner as if they belonged to this company.

The remaining article provided that there should be eight meetings during the year, at which each member was to pay three shillings for his share of "the reckoning of the evening."

XI. That upon the death of any of our company, the survivors shall, in time of danger as aforesaid, be aiding and assisting the widow of such decedent during her widowhood, as if the husband had been living—she only keeping her buckets and bags in repair, and causing them to be sent to every fire aforesaid. The chief officer of the company was the

clerk. In this situation each member served owner in the district. Levi Budd was a man of one month, during which time it was his duty to inspect the condition of the buckets, bags, ladder, and engine, and report to the company at the next meeting. The company was not to consist of more than thirty members. The regulations, with a list of the names, were required to be kept hanging up in the dwelling of each member near his fire buckets. These regulations were the models upon which the articles of the fire companies which succeeded the Union were formed.

Mr. Westcott further states that, besides Benjamin Franklin, the following citizens were members of the Union Fire Company, viz., Isaac Pascal, Philip Syme, William Rawle, and Samuel Powell, and that there is reason for a belief that the house where this engine stood was in Grindstone alley, above Market street. In a later number of the Dispatch Mr. West-

cott save:-"In our chronicle of events we gave such particulars as are now known in relation to the establishment of the Union Fire Company, the first voluntary association of that character formed in the city, and probably in the world. The example afforded to citizens by the creation of such a company had its effect in creating

"The number of members to which the Union Fire Company were restricted was thirty, and this complement being filled up in about a year, a second company was formed, and its institution dated March 1, 1738. This association was named the

FELLOWSHIP FIRE COMPANY.

"In 1748 the members of the Fellowship Fire Company were thirty-three in number. The fire engine belonging to the company was placed in a house on Second street, on a lot belonging to the Friends' Meeting. The ladder was kept under the caves of the butchers' shambles, on the south side, near the meal market. There were seven other ladders in various other places.

"On the 1st of March, 1742, the third fire company was formed. This company was

HAND-IN-HAND. "The fourth volunteer company, established February 22, 1743, was called the HEART-IN-HAND.

"The fifth company, named the FRIENDSHIP FIRE COMPANY, was founded July 30, 1747.

"The fire companies established after the Union slightly increased the number of their members. The Fellowship had thirty-five members; the Hand-in-Hand, the Heart-in-Hand, and the Friendship, each had forty mem-

THE BRITANNIA FIRE COMPANY was probably established in 1750 or 1751. The only trace that we have of its existence is in an advertisement which gives a list of some articles lost belonging to that company; this advertisement appeared in April, 1753.

"All of these companies, with the exception of the Britannia, were in service until the Revclution, when the latter, possibly in consequence of the unpopularity of its name, was discontinued. In the year 1791, the Union, Felloxship, Hand-in-Hand, and Heart-in-Hand were in full service, and made return of the condition of their apparatus, including engines, buckets, ladders, bags, baskets, and "hauses" (hose). Of the latter, the Union had one of eighty feet, and the Friendship one of one hundred and twenty feet. Each of these companies had one engine, except the Friendship, which had two. The same company also had two hundred and forty buckets, a number only equalled by that in possession of the Union."

THE OTHER COMPANIES PRIOR TO THE REVO-LUTION.

In a still later publication of the Dispatch Mr. Westcott says:-"The six fire companies which were in existence in the city in 1750 were reinforced by several new associations established between the latter year and the time of the Revolution. They were as follows:-

"Hibernia Fire Company, founded February 20, 1752, located on the corner of Second and Walnut streets.

"Northern Liberty Fire Company, founded May 1, 1756; located on the northeast corner of Cable

lane and Callowhill street. "Vigilant Fire Company, founded January 2, 1760; supposed location, east side of Second street, below Vine.

"King George III, afterwards Delaware, founded March 21, 1761; supposed location, on Water street, below Arch.

"Queen Charlotte, afterwards Fame Fire Company, founded Maych 29, 1764; located on north side of Cherry street, below Fourth street. "American Fire Company, founded before De-

"Sun Fire Company, founded February 28, 1765; location not known. "Crown and Beaver Fire Company, founded

cember, 1764.

before March, 1765; location not known. "Cordwainer Fire Company, founded before February, 1769; location not known.

"New Market Fire Company, founded March 1, 769; located at the north end of the market at Second and Pine streets.

"Amicable Fire Company, founded August 7, 1769; located on Fifth street, above Market. Neptune Fire Company, founded January 17,

1774; located on Race street, below Third. THE HIBERNIA FIRE COMPANY. "The Hibernia Fire Company was founded at a meeting, held at Evans' tavern, by Hugh Donaldson, Randle Mitchell, Walter Shee, Samuel Wallace, Abram Usher, William Henry, Plunket Fleeson, William West, John Johnson, John Fullerton, Robert Taggart, Benjamin Fuller, George Bryan, James Fullerton, James Mease, James Haldane, James Hunter, Blair McClenachan, John Mitchell, George Fullerton, George Campbell, Samuel Duffield, Sharp Delany, Edward Batchelor, William Alison, William Burrall and William Miller. To these members were added, before 1776, James Caldwell, John White, Henry Hill, John Mease, John Boyle, Francis Nicholas, John M. Nesbit, James Crawford, David H. Coryngham, George Hughes, Michael Morgan O'Brian, Robert Morris, John Brown, and John Nixon. Nearly all of these gentlemen were merchants or tradesmen, and several of them afterwards became conspicuous

THE NORTHERN LIBERTY FIRE COMPANY. "At a meeting, called to form the Northern Liberty Fire Company, Levi Budd was president and William Coates was secretary. The other original members were Charles West, John Stellwagen, Henry Woodrow, Adam Stricker, Martin Nolle, Joseph Cannon, Joseph Rush, James Worrell, Reinard Cammer, Richard Mason, Seymour Hart, Thomas Gilbert, Henry Stonematz, Thomas Felton, William Biddle, Samuel Pryor, John Scattergood, George Leib, Elias Lewis Triechell, James Nevell, John Williams, David Rose, Thomas Britton, Jacob Weaver, Isaac Jones, John Britton, Joseph Cowperthwait, and Thomas Scatterhood. These centlemen were inhabitants of the Northern Liberties. William Coates was a large land-

in public affairs, especially during the Revolu-

means. Seymour Hart was a lumber merchant at Callowhill street wharf. William Biddle lived in Front street, above Callowhill. George Leib was the father of Michael Leib, once a very infinential politician. Richard Mason afterwards became a manufacturer of fire engines. Martin Nolle, Adam Stricker, and Elias Lewis Triechell were inn-keepers. The company met for some time at Triechell's tavern. sign of Noah's Ark, Front and Noble streets. VIGILANT FIRE COMPANY.

"The original members of the Vigilant Fire Company were: - Edward Drinker, W. Moulder, Charles Lyon, Joseph Connell, John Elton, John Gill, Jeremiah Smith, John Biles, Isaac Cathrall, Peter Thompson, William Davis, John Cameron, Martin Ashburn, Nathaniel Brown. Henry Shute, William Gua, William Barnes, Joseph Warner, Henry Rigby, Israel Cassell. Nicholas Hicks, Samuel Robbins, William Williams, Samuel Hastings, Bradford Roberts, James Cassell, William Wayne, Bowyer Brooke, James Wood, John Cassell, and Jeremiah Smith. Edward Drinker, who leads off among the members, was noted among Philadelphians as having been born upon the site of the city upon Dock creak, in 1680, two years before the landing of Penn. He was at this time eighty years old, and lived at the House, corner of Front Drinker street and Drinker's alley. William Moulder was at one time a schoolmaster at Callowhill street and Cable lane, and was afterwards a justice of the peace. Bowyer Brooke was a surveyor, related to the Coates and Brown families of the Northern Liberties. Peter Thompson, in the year 1760, kept store at the sign of the Hand and Pen, in Race street. Nathaniel Brown was a whipmaker, afterwards a surveyor, and also, during the Revolution, a wagon-master, and a wagon-major la the Quartermaster's Department. After the Revolution he kept the Leopard Inn, on Market street. and, subsequently, the Hunting of the Fox, on Arch street, above Sixth. Jeremlah Smith kept the famous tavern on Front street, above Arch, known as the Queen of Hungary. Charles Lyon was a merchant. Martin Ashburn kept the upper ferry at Arch street wharf. Abram Carlisle became a member before the Revolution, and suffered during that contest the fate of a

KING GEORGE III FIRE COMPANY. "The King George the Third Fire Company originally consisted of the following members: William Fairles, Isaac Coats, Charles Lawrence, Conrad Beech, Richard Wood, Joseph Hill, Jacob Bright, Andrew Shaffer, Robert Elton, Matthias Abel, James Cooper, Thomas Brookes, Francis Forster, William Bywater, Christopher Ludwick, George Button, Rudolph Bonner, John West, Jonathan Biles, Griffith Vaughan, Benjamin Worthington, Robert Tatnall, Henry Casdorp, John Whiteall, William Wells, William Palmer, Henry Bunner, Lane Naylor, David Cawthorn, John M. Nill, John Browne, and William Salsbury. These were all respectable business men. Christopher Ludwick, a baker during the Revolution, obtained the soubriquet of Baker-General, from his services in supplying the army with bread.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE FIRE COMPANY. "The Queen Charlotte Fire Company was originated at a meeting held at William Clampfer's, at which Jacob Maag was President and John William Hoffman was clerk. The original members were Thomas Meyer, George Adam Gaal, Philip Ulrich, Casper Graff, Louis Weiss, Matthew Labolt, David Shaffer, Jacob Graff, Jacob Chrystler, Barnard Lawerswyler, Martin Fisher, Philip Will, Dietrich Rees. The original number of members was thirty. The company obtained ladders previous to the year 1769, when a new fire engine was bullt by Richard Mason. It was placed in a house on the north side of Cherry street, 'between the Lutheran schoolhouse and Thomas Tuston's,' which was east of Fourth street. The names of the members of this company are all German, and, from the fact that they obtained ground adjoining the Lutheran school-house, it is probable that most of them were members of Zion or of St. Michael's Lutheran Congregation.

NEPTUNE FIRE COMPANY. "The Neptune Fire Company was formed at the house of Mrs. Krider, in Third street. The first meeting noticed was held on Monday, January 17, 1774. All the members were present on that occasion, to wit:-Andrew Geyer, Jacob Kehmlee, George Forepaugh, Charles Bitters, George Wert, Andrew Bachman, Charles Miller, William Sheaff, Lawrence Sickle, Andrew Epple, George Honey, Jr., Hilary Baker, Jr. At the time of the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, the company had no engine, the members being supplied with buckets."

THE GERMANTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT. "In January, 1764, citizens of Germantown held a meeting at the Town Hall, in order to consult together in regard to the means of protecting themselves from the ravages of fire. They were situated at a considerable distance from the fire apparatus of Philadelphia, and the roads at the time were frequently so bad that no assistance could have been derived from the city fire companies. It was therefore resolved to form three separate fire divisions in Germantown and its neighborhood, and the fire companies which were formed were called the Fellowship, of the Upper ward; Fellowship, of the Middle ward; and Fellowship, of the Lower ward. Subscriptions were taken up to purchase apparatus, and money enough was collected to send to England for three hand fire engines, but by some misfortune the order was not fully completed. When the engines arrived, one was sent to Germantown; but of two others, one went to Bothlehem and the other to Frankford. The companies afterwards received their apparatus, however. In subsequent years, the names of the three companies were changed as follows:-That of the Upper ward, instituted March 1, 1764, was named the Franklin Fire Company; that of the Middle ward, instituted March 5, 1764, was named the Washington Fire Company; and that of the Lower ward, instituted February 20, 1764, was named the Columbia Fire Company.'

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