

HEADQUARTERS FIRE DEPARTMENT, CITY OF NEW YORK

BUREAU CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT.

NEW YORK AUGUST 22, 1898

General Orders,
No. 5.

By direction of the Commissioner, Eng. Co. No. 68 will be organized to take effect from 8 A. M. on the 23rd instant, equipped with a Steam Fire Engine, Hose Wagon, and H. & L. Truck, and Located on Ogden Avenue near Devoe Street, and assigned to the 13th Battalion, and will perform duty at the same stations formerly responded to by H. & L. Co. No. 19, with all apparatus.

H. & L. Co. No. 19 is discontinued, to take effect from 8 A. M. on the 23rd instant. The Department property will be transferred to Eng. Co. No. 68.

The Company District of Eng. Co. 68 will be as follows: Harlem River at Central Bridge, to Jerome Ave., to 181st St., to Sedgwick Ave. to Fordham Road to Harlem River.

H. & L. Co. 19 having been discontinued, all assignments for that Company will be erased from orders.

Eng. Co. 68 will be assigned to duty as follows:

1st Alarm at stations 2-391, 2-412, 2-431, 2-436, 2-438, 2-452, 2-473, 2-491, 2-492, 2-494, 2-512, 2-514, 2-551, 2-552, 2-554, 2-588, 2-586, 2-615, 2-617, and Special Building signal 3-563 with all apparatus.

Special Building Signals 3-566, 3-565, and 3-571, H. & L. Truck only.

Second Alarm at Stations 2-184, 2-192, 2-195, 2-198, 2-214, 2-216, 2-217, 2-219, 2-223, 2-227, 2-229, 2-232, 2-233, 2-238, 2-239, 2-244, 2-247, 2-249, 2-257, 2-263, 2-264, 2-265, 2-266, 2-267, 2-272, 2-273, 2-274, 2-351, 2-352, 2-353, 2-361, 2-362, 2-363, 2-372, 2-393, 2-394, 2-395, 2-396, 2-397, 2-415, 2-416, 2-417, 2-441, 2-459, 2-462, 2-463, 2-478, 2-479, 2-531, 2-568, 2-569, 2-572, 2-618, 2-631, 2-641, 2-645, 2-655, 2-661, 2-674, and 2-676, without H. & L. Truck.

Third Alarm Stations 2-133, 2-135, 2-136, 2-142, 2-143, 2-151, 2-157, 2-178, 2-268, 2-75, 2-277, 2-279, 2-281, 2-282, 2-284, 2-286, 2-287, 2-288, 2-292, 2-294, 2-295, 2-296, 2-297, 2-298, 2-312, 2-313, 2-313, 2-314, 2-316, 2-321, 2-323, 2-325, 2-327, 2-331, 2-334, 2-336, 2-337, 2-338, 2-339, 2-343, 2-344, 2-346, 2-354, 2-355, 2-356, 2-364, 2-373, 2-376, 2-382, 2-383, 2-481, 2-546, 2-549, 2-558, 2-559, 2-588 and 2-597 without H. & L. Truck.

Fourth Alarm Stations 2-168, 2-384 and 2-365 with out H. & L. Truck.

During the absence of the Engine and Hose Tender at other than first alarms, the H. & L. Truck will remain in quarters with an officer and complement of men to respond to alarms in the territory uncovered.

By Order of
Hugh Bonner
Chief of

Department

The original order placing Engine 68 in service on August 23, 1898,

**100 YEAR OF SERVICE TO THE BRIDGE
ENGINE 68**

Donated to FDNY HOMEPAGE by: Mike Boucher Dispatcher 350 S.I. CO.
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The town of Morrisania located in the southwestern part of the Bronx was first settled in the late 1600's. One of the smaller villages was known as Highbridge. Named after the water bridge that brought water from the Croton Aqueduct to the Bronx. The bridge was built between 1840 and 1848 and the area remained rural for many years. Folks from Manhattan would board ferries and cross the Harlem River to the rugged rocky area and use it as a resort.

On January 1, 1874 all the land west of the Bronx River, which included the Towns of Morrisania, West Farms and Kingsbridge were annexed from Westchester County and into New York City. Volunteers did fire protection prior to the annexation. The Morrisania Volunteer Fire Department consisted of five engines, one hose wagon, and two ladder companies. Highbridge was protected by Cataract Engine 3. Not much is known about this company or the Morrisania Fire Department. New York City placed in service two steam fire engines, four chemical engines and two ladder companies.

In April of 1879, Mr. S. G. Courtney and other citizens of Highbridge petitioned City Hall for a fire company to be located at Ogden Avenue and Wolf Street (169th Street). On March 17, 1880, the FDNY placed Ladder 19 in service with a city service ladder truck and a double tank chemical engine. Both units were located at 1187 Ogden Avenue in a leased building. The owner of this building, the estate of William B. Ogden, set the rent for this building at \$700.00 a year.

The rent was reported to be high for this neighborhood but the City accepted it and started paying the amount. Several years later the owner of the building did not keep up with the maintenance of the building and it started to show it's age. The City started to look for a new lot to build on. A lot measuring 25 feet by 115 feet deep on Ogden Avenue between W. 165th Street and W. 166th Street was purchased on March 3, 1894 for \$3,250.

Instead of placing Ladder 19 in the new house, Combination Engine 68 was placed in service on August 23, 1898, replacing the ladder company. The need for a steam power fire engine was being felt because of the location of Highbridge and the steep hills. Horses could gallop for only about a half of a mile with the heavy steamers and going up the hills was very hard and time consuming. The closest steamers were at Engine 42, at just under 2 miles away at Fulton Street & E. 168th Street or Engine 41, over 2 miles away at E. 147th Street & Courtlandt Avenue.

The company was assigned all new apparatus, a LaFrance 4th size steamer, a Gleason & Bailey 40' roller frame ladder truck, and a Sebastian hose wagon. These Combination Companies were usually placed in the sparsely populated areas of the City. The three pieces of apparatus were under the command of one Captain with a Lieutenant riding on the ladder truck. Engine 68 was painted on side of each rig and could be manned by any member of the company. The response could be all three units or just the ladder truck by itself.

The eleven men crew of Ladder 19, Captain Joseph Moss, Lt. A. J. Peterson, and

firemen R. Nodine, John Wilson, William H. Loreuze, William J. Kealon, John J. See, Adolph Zour, Chas. Callahan, and Jeremiah Kelly, all transferred to the new company. Engineer of Steamer John Chirtore was transferred in for the new steamer.

Engine 68 moved into the new firehouse, at 1080 Ogden Avenue on August 23, 1898. The new building had a single door for the exit of the apparatus. In the front was the housewatch and along each sidewall were three stalls for the horses. In the rear was a one-story building that housed the feed and straw for the horses. On the second floor was the officer's room and sleeping quarters, located in the front of the building. Also on this floor was a large open room for sitting or leisure time between alarms. Behind this was the firemen's bunkroom and bathroom. The third floor had lockers and another open room for sitting. This house was unique in New York City because of the English Tudor design and the only such firehouse to have this look.

The life of a fireman was a hard one, both physically and on ones personal life. A fireman spent 24 hours a day working; with three 24-hour leaves a month off. Plus two 12-hour leaves, which could not be added to the 24 hour, leave. He could go home for meals each day for a total of three hours in any combination of three 1-hour breaks, 2, hour and half breaks or one 3-hour break. The sitting rooms in most of the firehouses had some type of library with books rotating between the different companies in the area. Also in the firehouses were gyms with dumbbells and parallel bars to build their physical strength.

The horses were kings in the fire department during this time. On a cold winter's night after fighting a fire for five or six hours the first thing a fireman would do once back at quarters is take care of the horses. They would be watered, rubbed down, dried down, and fed before any fireman would change his wet clothes. The horses had an ambulance many years before the firemen did. Old time firemen always said the horses could count the bells and knew which ones they responded on.

On May 1, 1904, Combination Engine 43 was placed in service to serve the northern end of Highbridge and the growing Morris Heights section. The new house was located at 1901 Sedgwick Avenue. Ladder 36 was placed in service at Engine 43 on February 15, 1908 replacing both ladder companies at Engine 68 and Engine 43. The Gleason & Bailey ladder truck became a spare piece of apparatus.

As Highbridge began to grow, the needed for a full time ladder company to serve the area was being felt. On December 23, 1913, Ladder 49 was placed in service in a new house at 1079 Nelson Avenue, behind Engine 68 quarters. After World War 2, a study was done on closing firehouses and combining companies into one house. Ladder 49's house was closed and the Ladder was relocated in with Engine 68. Because of this move Engine 68's quarters had to be altered. The apparatus door of the firehouse was squared off to fit the ladder truck. Due to age of the building, it was remodeled again in the sixties. The beautiful English Tudor look was removed along with the front dormer. Even with rebuilding of the house, its age caught up with it and it was decided to build a new house. On September 19, 1979 Engine 68 and Ladder 49 opened a new two story, two bay firehouse at 1160 Ogden Avenue.

One member of Engine 68 has paid the Supreme Sacrifice with his life. Fireman William H. Thompson was killed on April 27, 1915 while responding to Box 2-433. The engine was responding down Ogden Avenue to W. 162nd Street, the location of the alarm. It was raining out, the roadway was wet, and Thompson tried to stop the heavy steamer to make the turn on 162nd Street. Thompson could not stop the engine and it skidded down Ogden Avenue to W. 161st Street. Crossing on W. 161st Street was a trolley car filled with passengers. The engine with three horses slammed into the side of the trolley. Two of the horses were killed and Fireman Thompson was crushed between the steamer and trolley. Seven passengers on the trolley were also injured.

Engine 68 entered the motor age on October 18, 1921, one of the last three companies in the Bronx to receive a motor driven rig on that day. A new American LaFrance 700 gallon per minute pumper replaced the 1898 horse drawn steamer. Since that day all of Engine 68 pumpers have been Macks except for a 1931 Seagrave and 1954 Ward LaFrance. The Macks have been a 1947, 1958, 1971, a used 1971 in 1975, a used 1972 in 1977, a 1978 and 1985 model. The current rig is a 1997 Seagrave 1000 gpm pumper that was received on May 16, 1997.

Engine 68 has been serving the citizens of New York City faithfully for 100 years. No matter what the call is a roaring inferno, food on the stove or EMS the folks of Highbridge can count on Engine 68 to be there when the alarm is sounded.

"IN THE NEWSPAPERS"

August 23, 1898

It is a Tuesday and very hot with thundershowers in the afternoon.

Twenty-six horses are running in the Futurity Horse Race at Sheepshead Bay racetrack. The purse of \$40,000 is the largest purse of this year so far.

Teddy Roosevelt's RoughRiders are part of the 100,000 men being sent home from the Spanish American War.

Spanish troops are getting ready to leave Puerto Rico. Spanish General Macias is bringing his troops to the Capital for their return to Spain in a couple of days. The local residents of San Juan are returning to their homes relieved the war has ended. This past Sunday all the saloons were closed. The first public Protestant religious service was also held on Sunday.

Jack Downey and Danny McBride fight to a draw after 25 rounds at Coney Island. The fighting bout was sponsor by the Greater New York Athletic Club.

Grocery prices at Siegel Cooper & Co. located on 6th Avenue between 16th and 15th Streets; Chuck Steaks \$.08 a pound, Jersey Sweet Potatoes \$.40 for a bushel basket, butter 5 pound pail \$1.00, can ripe tomatoes \$.09 a can, cocoa \$.35 a pound, fresh lemon crackers \$.05 a pound, NY State picked pea beans 10 pounds for \$.25, Old Crow Whiskey \$.73 a bottle, and Cook's Rye Whiskey \$1.80.

N.Y. Giants are in 5th place 60-44; the Boston Braves are in first place with a record of 69 - 36. Today is a travel day for the Giants to Cleveland.

The State Democrats are getting worry over the growing popularity of Colonel Teddy Roosevelt to run for Governor.

President McKinley has written a letter expressing his thanks for the excellent treatment given to the sick and wounded soldiers at Bellevue Hospital.

While bathing in Prince's Bay, Staten Island, Charles E. Doone, 22 years old, was badly bitten on the left leg by a shark. He is recovering in the New Brighton Infirmary.

Lewis Washington died in Omaha, Nebraska yesterday. He claimed to be 130 years old and the oldest person in America. Some people believed that he was one George Washington slaves, which Lewis claims he knew.

This morning the Battleships Oregon entered the Brooklyn Navy Yard to be placed in dry dock for repairs. The Iowa will enter dry dock this afternoon for repairs.

The steamer "BELGIC" arrived at San Francisco with news that on August 12 the Hawaiian flag was lowered for the last time. The Stars & Strips were raised for the first time as Hawaii is annexed into the United States.

The Hotel St. Lorenz, 72nd Street and Lexington Avenue has fully furnished apartments. Pallor, bathroom and one to five bedrooms, \$50 to \$160 a month. Add \$10.00 for adults and \$8.00 per child a week for complete meals.

Apartments for rent at 102 W. 93rd Street, elegant apartments overlooking thePark, "L" station, marble halls, hallman, steam heat, and hot water for \$40.00 to \$60.00 a month.