

Mayhem in Mobtown: Firefighting in Antebellum Baltimore

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Before 1858 there was no professional firefighting force in Baltimore. All fires were fought by volunteer companies who dragged large hand-pump fire engines to the city's frequent conflagrations. In Baltimore, as in other American cities in the two decades before the Civil War, volunteer firemen often fought more than fires. A British visitor to the city in 1855 observed that Baltimore's fifteen fire companies were "jealous as Kilkenny cats of one another, and when they come together, they scarcely ever lose an opportunity of getting up a bloody fight. They are even accused of doing occasionally a little bit of arson, so as to get the chance of a row." By the 1850s these violent firemen were as much a cause for alarm among urban citizens as they were a source of relief at fires. Baltimore's firemen shot one another, burned down their own firehouses, and engaged in riots for more than two decades.¹

This article examines the disorderly history of the Baltimore Volunteer Fire Department, perhaps the most violent fire department in the country, demonstrating the extent of violence in the department and the internal and external efforts to restrain the volunteers. We shall observe the transition in the public's opinion of the volunteers and show how and why the press and citizenry finally decided in the late 1840s, after firemen had been rioting on and off since 1834 without serious condemnation, that the volunteer fire department was a grave threat to public safety. Public behavior and civic order were indeed reconfigured in Baltimore in the last decades before the Civil War.

Historians of Philadelphia and New York have described volunteer fire departments that steadily grew more violent in the early nineteenth century. In both cities, "perfectly respectable" departments were altered by the coming of industrialism and population growth. The departments came under the control of working class rowdies, who engaged in increasingly violent expressions of competitiveness until an exasperated public had no choice but to replace them. Bruce Laurie has written that in Philadelphia in the 1830s "intercompany rivalries were still relatively benign." A decade later they had developed into "brutal clashes between warring white traditionalists." By the 1850s arsonists were burning down rival fire houses, and firemen preferred shooting at one another rather than fighting with more primitive and traditional weapons, like brickbats or fists.²

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The experience of Baltimore's Volunteer Fire Department was somewhat different. Unlike Philadelphia, Baltimore had no Benjamin Franklin to set the tone for its eighteenth-century department, and troubles in Baltimore started earlier than in other cities. Between 1763, when the Mechanical Fire Company was formed, and 1782, when a group of firemen split off and formed the Union Fire Company, there was peace in Baltimore. The motto of the second company, "In union there is strength," quickly became ironic for the department as a whole. According to an early source, "rivalry sprung up between the two companies," and the disaffected met in 1785 to form a third company, which, "with a view of reconciling all the then difficulty," took the name Friendship.³

War-whoops and Conflagrations

By the 1830s Baltimore had earned the appellation "Mobtown" because of its frequent riots, some of which originated within the fire department. Fire company ledgers document serious troubles among the volunteers, including a battle between two companies at the scene of a fire, and other scenes of disorder, among them shootings and arson.⁴

A first attempt at establishing order was made in 1831 when the Baltimore Association of Firemen was formed. In December 1833 a more formal compact was made between the fifteen fire companies then existing "for the purpose of curbing 'irregularities,' as Mayor William Stewart was pleased to term certain acts of the companies."⁵ The charter of the newly formed Baltimore United Fire Department established a convention of delegates with the power of passing laws for the better regulation of fire companies, and with the special task of settling disputes between companies. This convention theoretically provided "the means of checking and keeping under proper control the emulation existing among firemen, which at times has run into excess."⁶

Despite such attempts at control the violence worsened. Although fights seemed always to center around the firehouse, or fire itself, firemen pointed to outsiders as the cause of the violence. Newspaper reports of these incidents also imply that outsiders pretending to be firemen were responsible, not actual firemen. "The alarm of fire sounded to the peaceable citizens as a war-whoop, and the scene of conflagration was the scene of riot, if not invariably of bloodshed. Gangs of disorderly blackguards, adopting the names of some of our fire companies, would marshal themselves under ringleaders, and armed with bludgeons, knives, and even fire-arms, fight with each other like hordes of savages."⁷

In 1834 arsonists torched the firehouse of the Howard Company. The infuriated members recommended to the other companies in the department that they close their engine houses until the city was able to provide them security from the street gangs believed to be responsible for the trouble. During the next year the houses of the Union and Liberty Companies were also set on fire. Riots occurred almost weekly. "When shall we be able to pass a Sabbath day

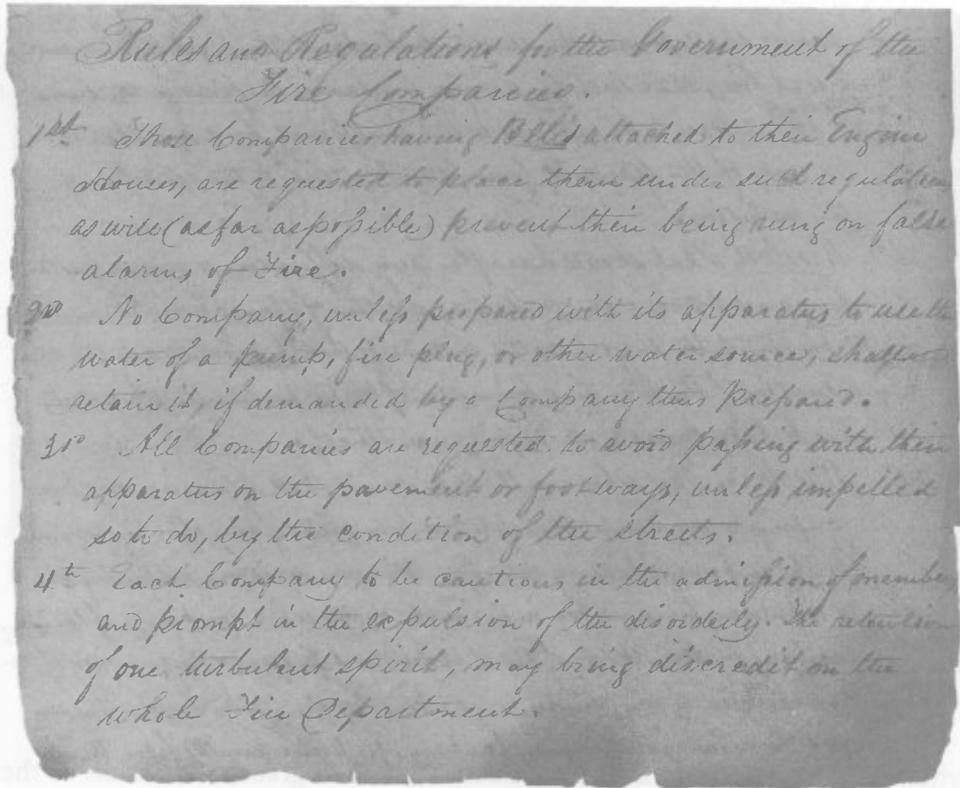


With courage and glory behind them, city firefighters battle the flames. This romantic drawing graced Baltimore Fire Insurance Company policies in the 1840s. (Baltimore Fire Insurance Company Records, MS.1276. Maryland Historical Society.)

without being called upon to record some act of disgraceful violation of the peace, some daring outrage amounting almost to bloodshed?" asked the *Baltimore Sun* after one of these riots. "Not, we fear, until the originators of these riots, the master spirits who excite the evil passions of gangs of thoughtless, unruly boys, and lead them on step by step from simple brawls to riot, arson, and murder, receive their just dues." The *Sun* did not suggest that these master spirits might be firemen.⁸

Firemen maintained that they were blameless in these doings, but nevertheless fire companies began internal reforms. Company members signed pledges that they would discontinue the use of "ardent spirits at fires," would "refrain from giving any cause of offense to the members of any other company," and would always remember "the honour of the company" of which they were members, and the "character of the Firemen of Baltimore."⁹

Much of the problem lay in this concept of "honor." It was unclear whether honor would be better served by fighting or not fighting. The ledger of the Mechanical Company in 1839 commends the Independent Fire Company for attacking the Patapsco Company (the Mechanical Company's particular enemies) because of the latter company's "continued disorderly conduct, and the low character of the man of fellows of which it is composed—a disgrace to the Fire Department of Baltimore."¹⁰ In the eyes of the Mechanical Company's firemen it was acceptable for an honorable company to attack a company made "dishonorable" by its own fighting.



Rules and regulations of the Baltimore United Fire Department, set down in 1833 by representatives of fifteen independent companies, attempted to mediate disputes and bring order out of the rivalry and violence. (Maryland Historical Society.)

The Volunteer Fire Department Standing Committee also considered honor a legitimate reason for fighting. "It will not be maintained that any company should remain quiet and permit itself to be taunted, insulted, or mistreated," the committee stated.¹¹ In fact, members of the committee were not above such concerns themselves. According to fire company notes, in 1840 a fracas was instigated by one of the members of the committee whose "taunts and vociferous noises," were sufficient to start a riot on a "most beautiful and moonlit night!"¹²

Tacit recognition of the need to fight explains in part the great number of disputes brought before the standing committee. In the highly charged and competitive world of antebellum firefighting, insults were in abundant supply. The first years of the committee, between 1834 and 1840, saw an astounding array of cases, from relatively minor infractions involving racing, or one company throwing water upon another, to serious threats, bludgeonings, stealing, and "general outrages by firemen." The United Fire Company ran its hose carriage into the Washington Company's engine. Was it deliberate? Unclear. Was it reason for a fight? Yes. Was the threat "to split your head open" made by a member of the Colum-

bian Company simply high spirits, or an insult to the member of the Deptford Company against whom it was made?¹³

The committee members' failure to curb violence is attributable in part to ambivalence. They recognized that sometimes fighting was justified, and they were firemen themselves. They rarely reached any conclusions. Subcommittees were often appointed to look into disputes, but evidently did not report back. Even when evidence was forthcoming, the committee was loath to lay blame within the department, or pronounce any serious punishment, perhaps out of concern for the department's public image. The same parties appear and reappear with similar complaints. The New Market company, generally considered to be a "bad lot," was accused of "using implements and carrying clubs and weapons not required by their duties, and frequently applied to purposes subversive of the public peace." In a particularly vicious battle against the Union Fire Company in 1838, New Market members (or their "runners") killed two men. Yet no punishment was meted out, and the firemen continued fighting. The committee wailed:

It was reasonably expected that two victims were sufficient to sacrifice to the demon of misrule and disorder, and that the melancholy fate of these two gentlemen would have calmed the violence of the most turbulent spirits. But the hope, reasonable as it appeared, was fallacious. Riots, turbulence, disgraceful conduct and personal violence have since repeatedly occurred. The name of the fireman has almost become a badge of obloquy, and an emblem of disorder.¹⁴

Even firemen who condemned "disgraceful" companies took lurid pleasure in the violence of others. "The Patapsco and Friendship came in collision and ended in a glorious fight," the secretary of the Mechanical Fire Company wrote in 1840.¹⁵

Far into the 1840s the press refused to name the source of rioting among the firemen. Perhaps the otherwise capable job they were performing at a series of large fires allowed them some degree of absolution. In 1835, during an enormous riot occasioned by the failure of the Bank of Maryland, in which a mob attacked its social and economic superiors, firemen were actually a major force in controlling the riot. On several occasions during the two-day confrontation the firemen were attacked by the mob while trying to save the property of the mayor (also a director of the bank) and other distinguished citizens. Afterwards the firemen volunteered their services as watchmen or temporary police officers.¹⁶

So firemen took on the public persona of dispellers of riots, a role naturally incompatible with their own riotousness. In 1838 the *Baltimore Sun*, in an attempt at exoneration, suggested a different source of the troubles, elaborating and expanding on the favorite excuse of the firemen. About the weekly riots plaguing the city, the newspaper wrote that:

It would be perhaps a matter of some difficulty, to arrive at the true causes. For a long time . . . the jealousies existing between the fire companies of the city, were supposed to be the active causes which led to the many and disastrous results. This opinion, however, is nearly exploded. . . . We say the cause is this: Baltimore City, like all other large places, contains some five or six dozen flash fellows—fancy rattlers—men who are a sort of half and half—who dress with more ease than grace, and now and then with more grace than ease: a species of nondescript, being neither professional men, mechanics, or laborers—a something, nothing, a kind of wandering beings.

After elaborating on the details of these “Confidence Men,” the article revealed their fiendish intentions. Intent upon fighting, “according to their own conception, a sort of civil drubbing, which some particular man, or set of men, has, in some way earned,” their intention is, via rumor, conveyed “to the various engine houses (at most of these in the evening are collected large gangs of half grown boys), they hear of the coming battle with the greatest joy, and off they scamper to the battle ground.” The writer concluded that it was the responsibility of parents and masters to keep children and apprentices at home late at night, and that no one under the age of twenty should be allowed to collect in gangs or at engine houses.¹⁷

So firemen escaped for a time the charge of inciting riots, as well as the equally serious charge of corrupting youth. It is true that outside agitators helped incite firemen’s riots at this time and in later decades. According to fire company minutes, individuals in the crowd would shout inflammatory things at the firemen, or throw bricks and stones at them during or after fires. Often fights originated in political disputes between Whig and Democratic political clubs which met at the privately owned firehouses or at taverns near the firehouses. Still, firemen were not the innocent victims of rowdiness and political difference. “Disgraceful fights,” in which “axes, torches, knives and pistols freely used,” were attributed by firemen to their brethren, as well as to “rowdies” who might or might not be connected to the department.¹⁸

Disgraceful rioting. . . . The Vig[ilant] carriage was seized by a party of rowdies, who threw their hose in the Falls. The Columbia Carriage was likewise seized and partially destroyed. Beautiful Conduct!! Brick bats flew like hail, pistols were fired in every direction, there is now no safety for those that are well disposed, something must be done or the department will be in the hands of these rowdies completely!¹⁹

“What Can the Matter Be?”

In the 1830s, and into the 1840s, times of violence as extensive as any in the history of Baltimore’s department, firemen generally escaped condemnation for

rioting. John Thomas Scharf, in his *Chronicles of Baltimore*, published in 1874, alluded to the 1838 riot but asserted that rioting by Baltimore firemen started in 1847. Firemen played no role in his scathing critique of the various riots of the turbulent 1830s and early 1840s,²⁰ perhaps because firemen of this period were rarely identified in reports of riots at fires and false alarms.

On the infrequent occasions upon which arrests were made, the criminals were reported to be “youths not believed to be firemen” and unidentified belligerents.²¹ Clearly, many of these individuals, arrested or not, were firemen. An especially disgraceful fight occurred on Easter Sunday in 1844, after a false alarm. The ledger of a fire company commented that on this occasion an “Easter morning trial of apparatus turns into a fight in which members of all companies participated.” The *Baltimore American* stated conservatively that its reporters “observed a general melee going on, but as to who was at fault, or who were the belligerents, we could not ascertain.”

The city government continued to look for a solution. An ordinance passed in 1838 made the intentional injury of a fireman a crime punishable by a month’s imprisonment.²² In 1844 further legislation attempted to reform conditions by banning minors from the companies, limiting provisions to the companies, and placing the power of forming new companies in the hands of the mayor and city council.²³ The companies again attempted internal reforms, agreeing among themselves not to riot, nor to steal or destroy each other’s equipment, and proposing to drive boys away from the engine houses. They also continued to petition the mayor for the presence of more police officers at fires.²⁴

A combination of internal reforms and the new “minor law” worked to banish the boys, and the riots, for a time. Between 1840 and 1844 the Fire Department Standing Committee investigated ten major cases a year; from 1845 to 1850, when the committee stopped functioning, the number dropped to between one and four cases a year. This may mean that firemen stopped bringing grievances before the ineffective board, but reports of fire riots are also far less common in the *Baltimore Sun* in 1845 and 1846, and in fire company ledgers as well. The secretary of the Mechanical Company commented with some amazement in April 1845 that the recent legislation “is found fully to effect the object for which it is designed—scarcely a boy is seen with any of the Reel Suctions. . . . A most admirable regulation and calculated to do away with the broils and riots which have disgraced the Fire Department for so long past.”²⁵ Two fire company ledgers reported no riots at all in 1846.

The summer of 1847 saw a renewal of difficulties, “riots, and constant rows between the Independent and New Market companies,” apparently originating in a trial of machinery between the two companies. The mayor, taking quick action, closed the two houses in June for two months. The virus was not containable, unfortunately. The Mechanical Company’s secretary commented a few weeks later that, although “the rioters are within the New Market, United, Watchman and Independent [Companies] . . . the Independent and

New Market apparatus are now locked up, but it does not appear that this fact has much effect in stopping disturbances."²⁶

In September the Mechanical Company decided to accept minors into the company again because of the "failure" of the minor law. "It is in the power of each company to regulate the conduct of its members, and to prevent altogether the running of improper persons to fires with its apparatus . . . sufficient to effectually prevent the recurrence of scenes, which at most every fire, or alarm of fire, so disgrace our city and cast opprobrium on the character of volunteer firemen." Perhaps it was only a coincidence that later that same month rioting had become "so bad that it is dangerous for peaceable persons to go to fires, for fear of being shot, or knocked down by a brick."²⁷

After the two-year hiatus in disorder of 1845–1846, the Baltimore press became far less sympathetic to the firemen. In an article titled "Firemen's Riots—What Can the Matter Be?" the *Baltimore Sun* scorned the excuses it had accepted two years before.

We find bonfires built in some remote section of the city, merely to cause an alarm and draw the firemen together for the purpose of a fight, and have seen the apparatus of certain companies taken out when there was no alarm and run into a section of the city where a collision was most likely to take place. The apparatus on these occasions were drawn by men, full-grown men, partially equipped, and we have heard words of defiance and insult belched forth through the horns of directors. When a collision occurs, however, we have every assurance given that those who participated in them are half-grown boys, and not members of the companies.²⁸

The article went on to recommend that the mayor "exercise every power with which he is vested, to put a stop to these scenes of riot and blood-shed." Another article noted skeptically that "it certainly seems strange that these rioters, if not members of the companies they run with, should be allowed to take out their apparatus."²⁹

Apparently public opinion was turning as well. The Mechanical Company Collecting Committee decided in December 1847, for the first time, not to request funds from the neighborhood, due to "the impression which may have been made on the public, by the rioting of several Companies in the city." Instead, they "had better defer it until peace and harmony was restored."³⁰

Baltimore fire officials, who had convened in special sessions in September 1847 to discuss the riots, declared finally in late October that "nothing less than an entire and thorough change in the organization of the whole Fire Department will effectually remedy the evil and prevent entirely the recurrence of the disgraceful scenes which have so recently disturbed the peace and quiet of the city."³¹ By late 1848 another person had died, and at least five observers

had been injured by the flying bricks, missiles, and bullets, which marked the firemen's battles. The mayor again closed a number of the most troublesome houses, but found the members of the companies unwilling to return to work on the occasion of a tremendous fire, producing more bad press and bad feeling for the volunteers.³²

Expressive and Recreational Rioting

Press reaction aside, the period of peace of 1845–1846 in Baltimore, “when arrests of minors were made, all rioting among firemen ceased, and there were not near so many fires as now,” as one fireman put it, offered Baltimoreans a breathing period in which to reexamine their assumptions about the rioting that was endemic to their city.³³ There was much to contemplate: a *general* pattern of rioting dating back to the 1830s. There were frequent riots that did not involve the firemen, some staged by unhappy segments of the population to protest ills in society. Such rioting was both expressive and recreational, to borrow Michael Feldberg's terms. The Bank Riot of 1835 and two other riots in a two-year period clearly expressed the protesters' sense of economic or political injustice. An 1840 attack by “a large party of rowdies with the New Market and United companies . . . on a crowd of Whigs assembled at the Patriot office,” offers another example of expressive rioting. “Several pistols were discharged by the Whigs but no one was killed . . . great political excitement between the Whigs and Democrats, threatening riot and bloodshed.”³⁴

Other rioting in Baltimore involving rowdies (and sometimes firemen) appears to have been recreational, in that it reinforced the solidarity of groups but did not express any larger dissatisfaction with the status quo. Those riots in which the firemen took part (according to their own records) were therefore easy for the public to blame on other troublemakers, and the confidence man or outsider figure served this purpose well. Firemen could not be expected to be in control in an environment where no one was in control. If boys ran with the fire machines and knocked each other's heads in with bricks, well, they might have done as much elsewhere just as easily. The firemen blamed the police for not keeping order and in fact had to act as police to protect public order during the Bank Riot. It was difficult for the public to sort out blame when police failed to arrest participants in riot after riot.³⁵

Starting in 1846 there is evidence of a dramatic decline in the number of riots not related to firefighting. Virtually no reports of riots without firemen can be found in the newspapers of the late 1840s. The link between riots and the firemen probably became clearer in the period of relative fire department calm (1845–1846). As a result, all later riots were more easily attributable to the firemen, and solutions to the general problem of rioting were perceived as relating to the fire department.³⁶

In fact, rioting among firemen had only marginally worsened. Individual riots

of the late 1840s in Baltimore were particularly violent, and for a period in 1847 firemen battled each other weekly, but there had been especially violent battles in 1835 and 1840, and extended series of battles throughout the two decades. Rioting appeared to Baltimoreans to be worse in the late 1840s, not necessarily because it *was* more serious, but because there was no longer a background of lawlessness to blur its edges. "Mobtown" may have been an appropriate description of Baltimore in the 1830s, but by the late 1840s, Baltimoreans were looking for a more dignified sobriquet.

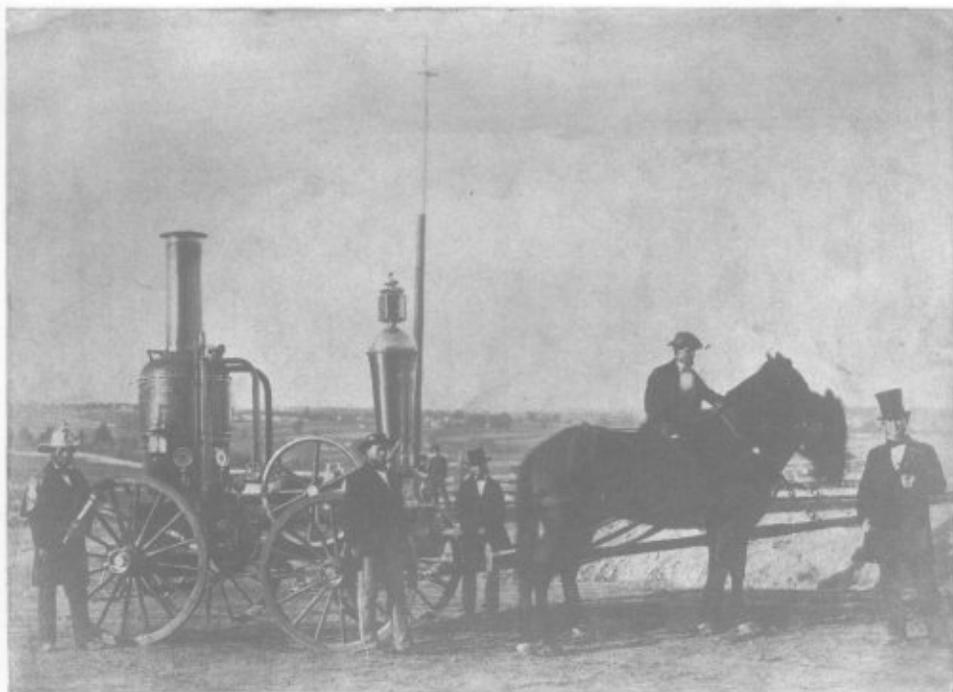
Firemen were also perceived to be rioting more often because they were more likely to be identified as rioters in newspaper reports in the late 1840s. Fights involving firemen were labeled "riots" more often than in earlier years. "A Riot and Brutal Murder," in 1849, is actually the story of a barroom brawl involving perhaps four people, all of whom unfortunately belonged to fire companies, and one of whom was stabbed to death.³⁷ A post-fire disturbance a week later was saved from becoming "a riot of considerable extent" by the "efficient and extraordinary efforts" of the police.

The companies passed up Baltimore Street, where several collisions took place, participated in by men who were with the above companies, who all stopped at the corner . . . when a brick was thrown by a man alongside of the Watchman suction . . . striking a member of the United company, named Theodore Hindes, and inflicting a severe wound on the back part of the head. . . . Andrew Reed, of the United was also struck with a hose pipe, on the forehead by a man with the Watchman suction. . . . The very moment that manifestations of disorder appeared, [the police] were on the spot amidst the uproarious crowds that filled the street, and regardless of danger or injury promptly arrested the offending parties.³⁸

This event would hardly have merited a paragraph in the 1830s, but back then the police would not have taken preemptive action, and the melee would have taken its own course, either dissipating, as such events often did according to fire company records, or developing into a full-fledged riot.

What is clear from this passage is the new interest and demand for order in Baltimore, focused on preventing disorder, not simply controlling it, and enforced in Baltimore, as in other cities, by growing numbers of professional police. Police expenditures in Baltimore more than doubled between 1850 and 1855, and by 1856 an expanded and centralized Baltimore police force was on the streets in uniform, reflecting and legitimating their growing semi-military status in the city. In 1849 the mayor of Baltimore divided the city into fire wards to which the individual companies were then assigned. They could leave their designated wards only with permission of the mayor.³⁹

These moves against the firemen in 1849, one by the police at a disturbance,

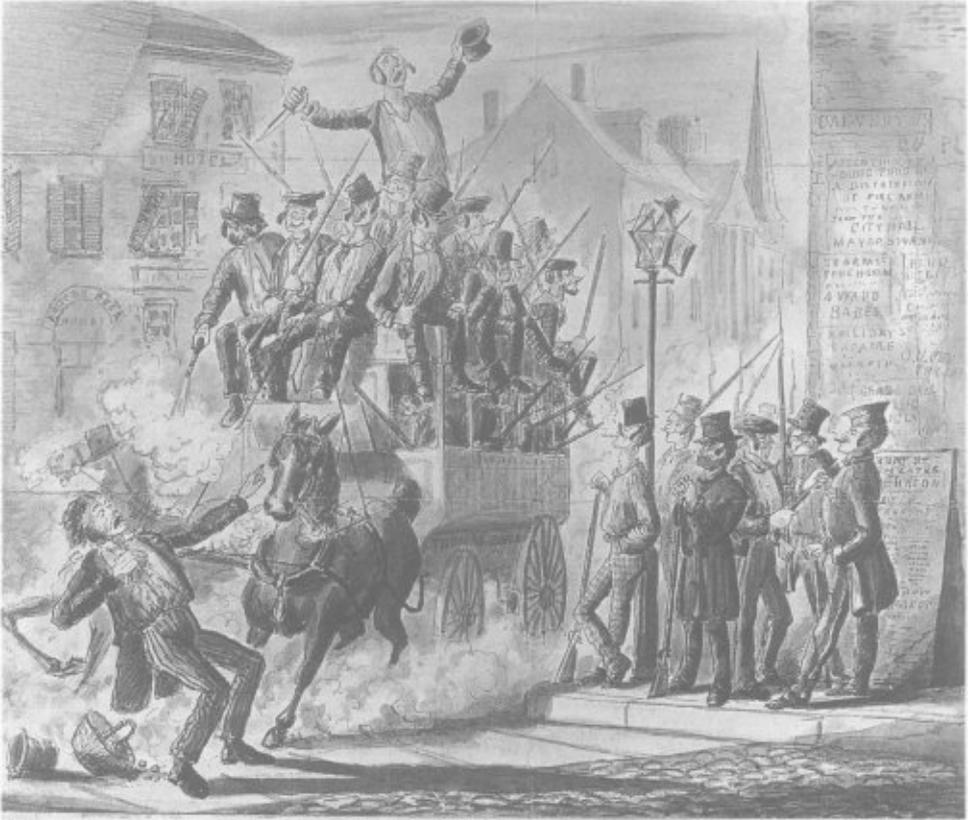


The Comet, 1858, owned by the Vigilant Fire Company and purchased with funds raised by neighbors. The following year the city organized a paid fire department, and the independent companies disbanded. (Maryland Historical Society.)

and one by the mayor, helped convince the public that a non-violent fire department was non-violent because it was externally controlled, not because of any internal restraints. In fact, the police were utterly unable to control a truly riotous crowd, whether made up of firemen or others, as was made clear in the election riots of 1856–1859, perhaps the most violent election riots in United States history. The perception that the police alone could provide control helped them to widen their own sphere of influence and to legitimize, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, ever increasing numbers of police and expenditures.⁴⁰

There is no evidence of any firemen's riots or other major public disturbances by the firemen from 1850 to 1855, although there were a great number of false alarms and fires, averaging almost one of each per day in 1851. Two or three minor attacks by one company on another are documented in the company ledgers, but these events do not seem to have resulted in major injuries or to have attracted the attention of the newspapers.⁴¹

Still, this does not seem to have improved the standing of the fire department because the public viewed them as having come under greater police control; that they were more orderly reflected increased police effectiveness. The press portrayed it this way, commenting, when a serious riot broke out in



A cartoonist's version of Know-Nothing political violence in the municipal elections of 1858. Although thugs and rowdies participated, many members of the Know-Nothings or American Party were young businessmen. (Maryland Historical Society.)

August 1855, that for some time "there has been every indication of a serious struggle between them [the New Market and Mount Vernon companies], though they have been kept in check by the police, who were always on the watch, in consequence of the anticipated rupture. Notwithstanding their vigilance, however, they have, at last, succeeded in their disgraceful designs." The results were indeed disgraceful—one fireman killed by a member of his own company (who was attempting to kill a policeman), a young bystander and former fireman killed with a shot to the breast, three other men injured, and the crowd at large, "armed, and for the most part, incessantly firing."⁴²

Two further riots closed out the violent career of the Baltimore Volunteer Fire Department—on election days in 1856 and 1858. The years 1856 to 1859, a period of Know-Nothing party hegemony in Baltimore, saw a renewal of violence in the form of election riots which neither political party was willing or able to stop. The reputation of the fire department had sunk so far by the time of these riots that a complete reversal of reporting is evident. While in the

1830s and early 1840s firemen were often above suspicion in melees in which they played a leading role, their final years were marked by riots in which their role was exaggerated. In the mayoral election riot of 1856 the New Market Company played primarily a defensive role in one battle of what was actually a series of simultaneous riots, all fought with firearms, all across the city. Members of two Know-Nothing political clubs, the "Rip-Raps" and "Plug-Uglies" attacked the house of the Democratic New Market Engine Company for two or three hours "unchecked and unheeded, by apparently any efficient show of police force," with "muskets, shotguns and blunderbuses." "It was a most surprising spectacle for a civilized community," stated the *Baltimore Sun*. Two men died in this battle, and at least five others in the riots which occurred in other parts of the city. The New Market Company was highlighted in the *Sun*'s coverage of the riot.⁴³

The less bloody but still shocking election riot of 1858 was singular in that firemen appear to have had nothing to do with it despite the assertions of some historians since. Perhaps a form of Promethean justice is served by the volunteer firemen receiving credit for one last riot in their final year, after so many years of discord.⁴⁴

NOTES

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6. Cassedy, *Firemen's Record*, 13-17; Forrest, *Official History*, 57.
7. John Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County from the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 1:243.
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9. *Mechanical Fire Company Records, 1823-1839*, December 11, 1834, MS. 584, MdHS;

Union Fire Company Records, vol. 3, January 9, 1835, MS. 856, MdHS.

10. *Mechanical Fire Company Records, 1839–1845*, September 15, 1839, box 4, MS. 584, MdHS.
11. *Records of the Baltimore Volunteer Fire Department Standing Committee*, vol. 1, 1837, MS. 101, MdHS.
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23. Forrest, *Official History*, 66.
24. *Union Fire Company Records*, vol. 3, April 1, 1842, MS. 856, MdHS; *Independent Fire Company Records, 1838–1847*, vol. 2, January 29, 1842, February 14, 1842, September 2, 1842, MS. 478, MdHS.
25. *Mechanical Fire Company Records, 1839–1845*, April 13, 1845, box 4, MS. 584, MdHS.
26. *Independent Fire Company Records, 1838–1847*, vol. 2, April 19, 1847, June 29, 1847, MS. 478, MdHS; *Mechanical Fire Company Register of Alarms and Fires, 1846–1865*, June 23, 1847, June 29, 1847, box 5, MS. 584, MdHS.
27. *Mechanical Fire Company Register of Alarms and Fires, 1846–1865*, September 2, 1847, September 29, 1847, box 5, MS. 584, MdHS.
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30. *Mechanical Fire Company Register of Alarms and Fires, 1846–1865*, December 2, 1847, box 5, MS. 584, MdHS.
31. Forrest, *Official History*, 76.
32. *Mechanical Fire Company Register of Alarms and Fires, 1846–1865*, October 22, 1847, box 5, MS. 584, MdHS; *Independent Fire Company Records, 1838–1847*, vol. 2, September 27, 1847, December 10, 1847, MS. 478, MdHS; Forrest, *Official History*, 77.
33. *Baltimore Sun*, September 23, 1847.
34. *Mechanical Fire Company Records, 1839–1845*, November 3, 1840, box 4, MS. 584, MdHS.

35. Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 55–83. Other major “expressive” riots in Baltimore in 1834 included an earlier “first” Bank of Maryland riot in March 1834, and a Whig-Democratic political riot in April of the same year, neither of which involved the fire department. See also Carl E. Prince, “The Great ‘Riot Year’: Jacksonian Democracy and Patterns of Violence in 1834,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (1985): 1–19.
36. Scharf mentions a riot between rowdies and the *Baltimore Clipper* in 1848, after the result of the election for sheriff had been ascertained. *Chronicles of Baltimore*, 528.
37. Based on an examination of riot reports in the *Baltimore Sun* from 1834 to 1858; *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1849.
38. *Ibid.*, February 12, 1849.
39. Forrest, *Official History*, 67. In 1850 the police cost the city \$110,102, in 1855, \$232,629; Gary L. Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 156, 210. On uniforms see “The Re-Organization of the Police and Night Watch,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 29, 1956. The nineteenth-century expansion of police and their duties has been well documented by historians. See Rodger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston 1822–1885* (New York: Atheneum), 1975; Eric Monkkonen, “From Cop History to Social History: The Significance of the Police in American History,” *Journal of Social History*, 15 (1982): 575–591.
40. Baker, *Ambivalent Americans*, 133. Baker points out that the police stood by passively at election riots.
41. *Union Fire Company Records*, vol. 4, 1850–1855, MS. 856, MdHS.
42. *Baltimore Sun*, August 20, 1855.
43. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1856; Cassidy, *Firemen’s Record*, 43–45; Scharf, *Chronicles*, 570–571; Baker, *Ambivalent Americans*, 129.
44. Forrest, *Official History*, 78–79. That “the elections year after year became less and less free from intimidation and terror,” as Forrest claims, cannot be attributed to the firemen.