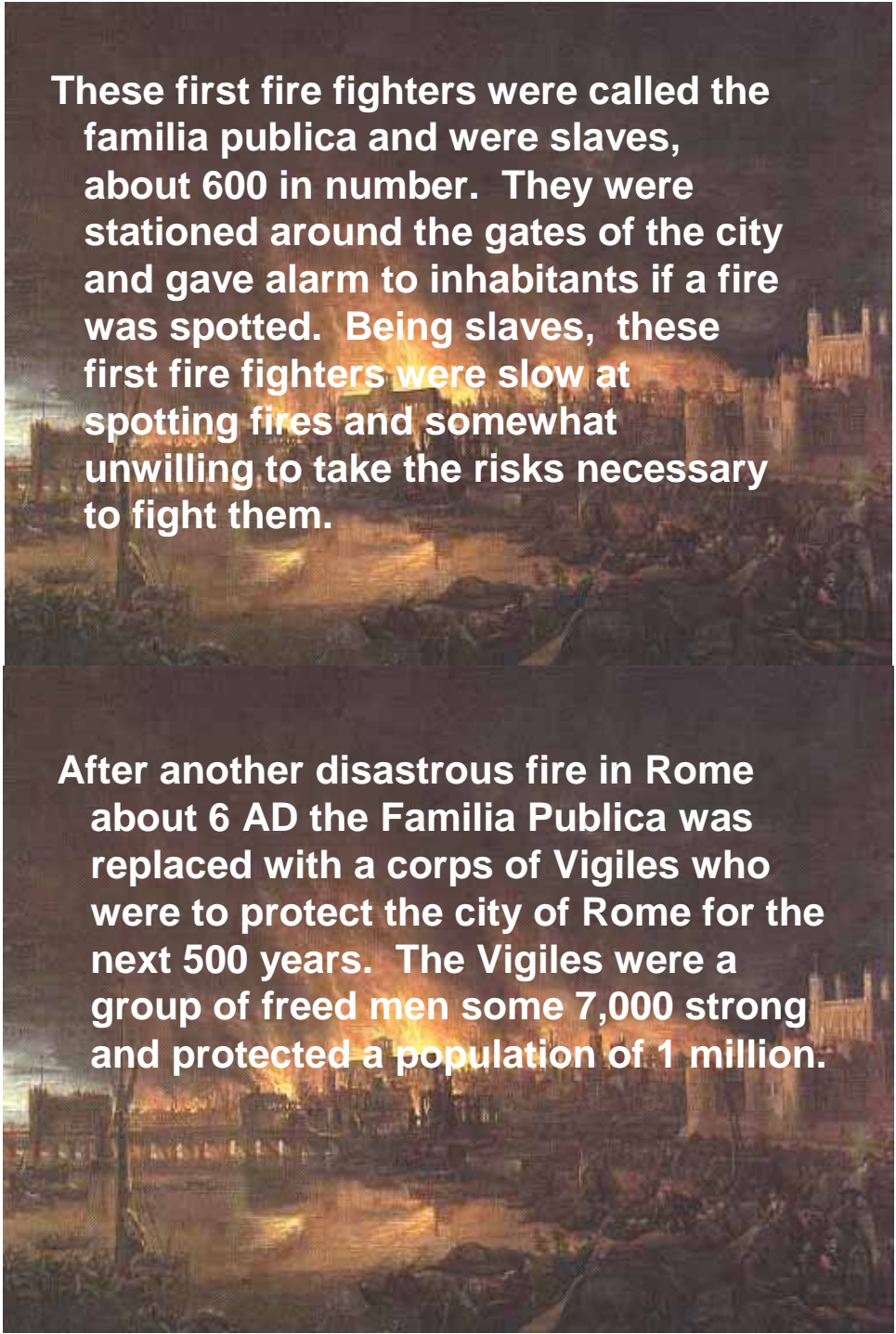




Fire Service History

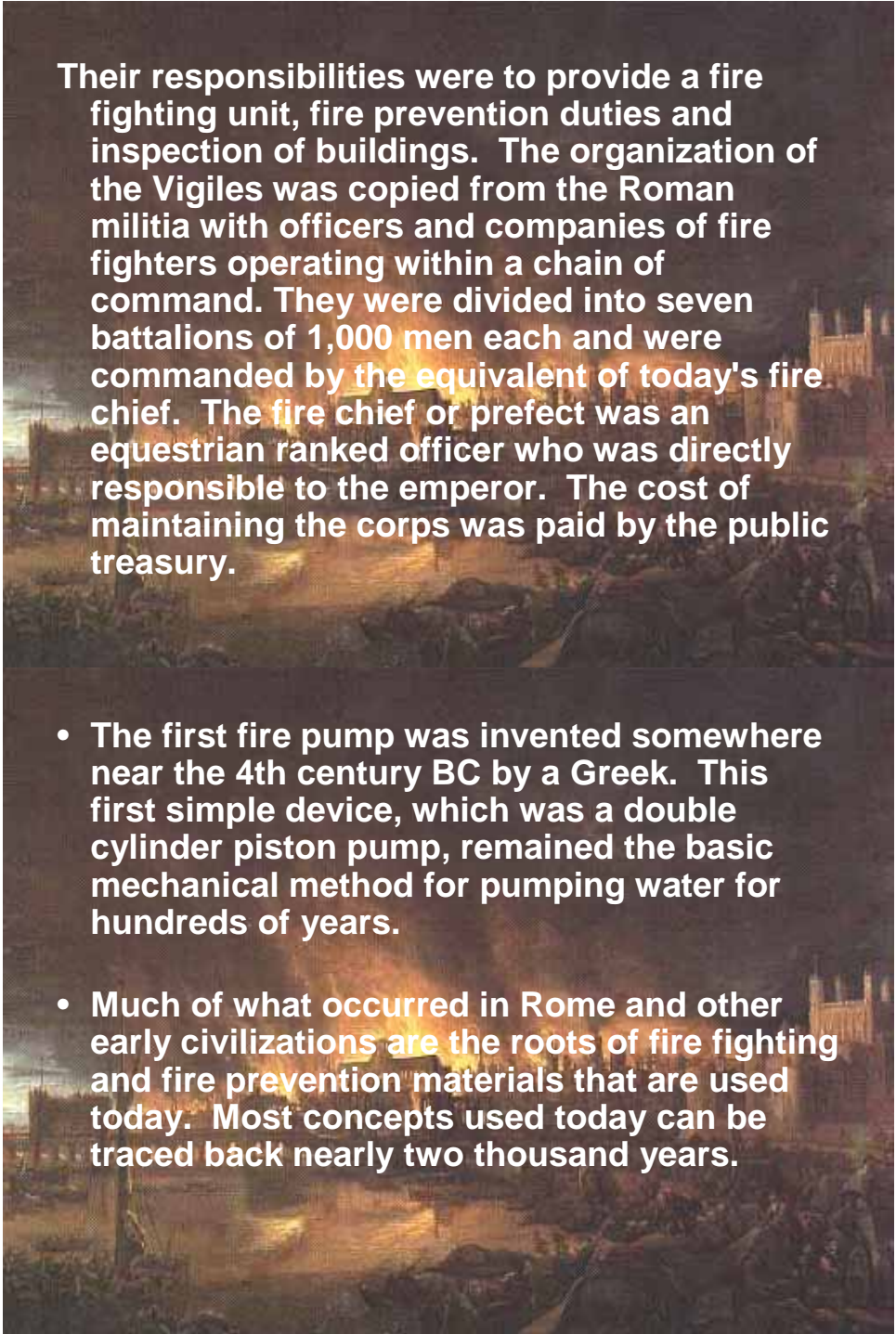
First Brigade

The first organized fire fighting force that can be traced, was established in Rome by Augustus Caesar around 23 BC. They were organized much in the same way as many fire departments of modern time are, in that the organization was created as the result of a major fire with disastrous results.



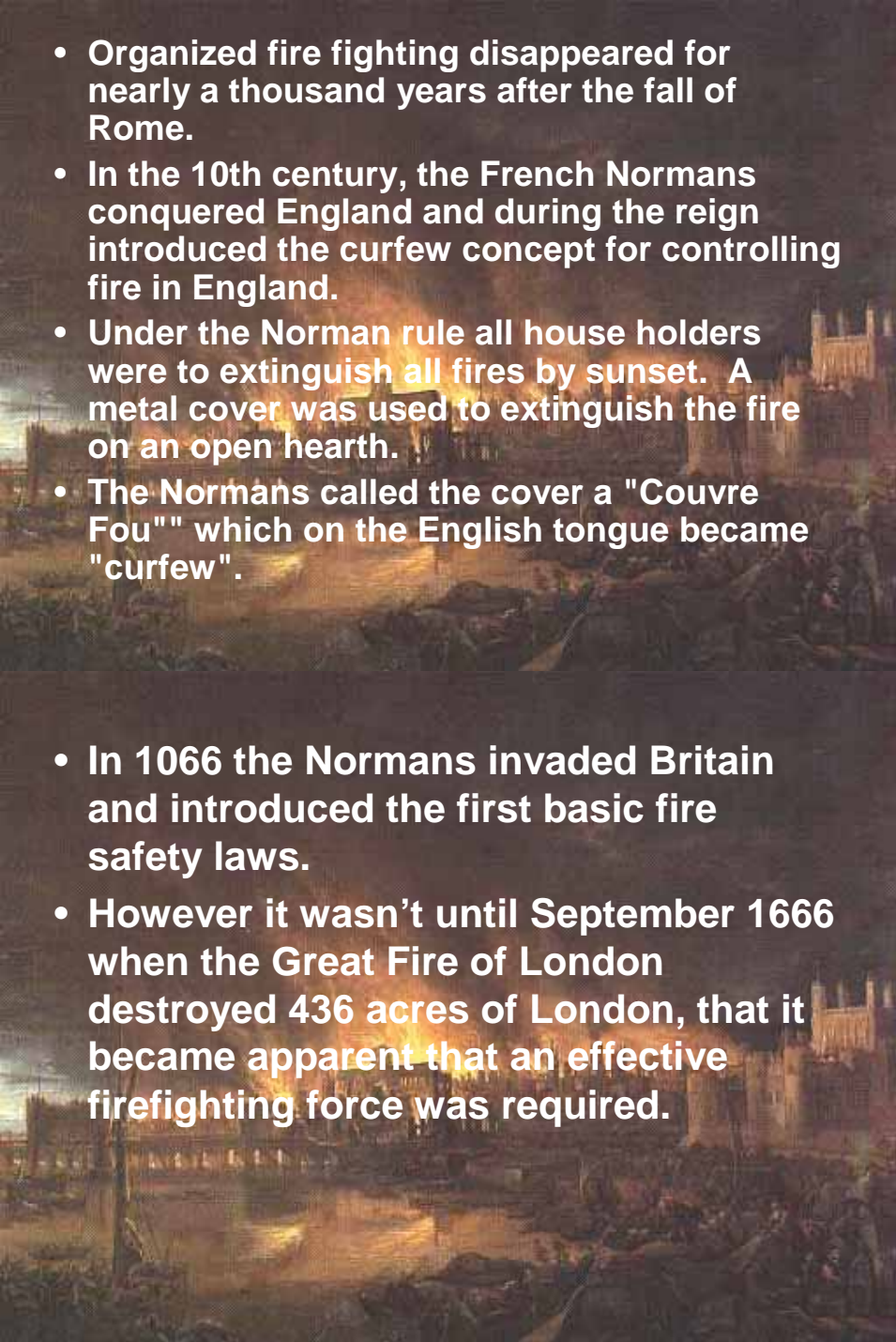
These first fire fighters were called the familia publica and were slaves, about 600 in number. They were stationed around the gates of the city and gave alarm to inhabitants if a fire was spotted. Being slaves, these first fire fighters were slow at spotting fires and somewhat unwilling to take the risks necessary to fight them.

After another disastrous fire in Rome about 6 AD the Familia Publica was replaced with a corps of Vigiles who were to protect the city of Rome for the next 500 years. The Vigiles were a group of freed men some 7,000 strong and protected a population of 1 million.



Their responsibilities were to provide a fire fighting unit, fire prevention duties and inspection of buildings. The organization of the Vigiles was copied from the Roman militia with officers and companies of fire fighters operating within a chain of command. They were divided into seven battalions of 1,000 men each and were commanded by the equivalent of today's fire chief. The fire chief or prefect was an equestrian ranked officer who was directly responsible to the emperor. The cost of maintaining the corps was paid by the public treasury.

- The first fire pump was invented somewhere near the 4th century BC by a Greek. This first simple device, which was a double cylinder piston pump, remained the basic mechanical method for pumping water for hundreds of years.**
- Much of what occurred in Rome and other early civilizations are the roots of fire fighting and fire prevention materials that are used today. Most concepts used today can be traced back nearly two thousand years.**

- 
- Organized fire fighting disappeared for nearly a thousand years after the fall of Rome.
 - In the 10th century, the French Normans conquered England and during the reign introduced the curfew concept for controlling fire in England.
 - Under the Norman rule all house holders were to extinguish all fires by sunset. A metal cover was used to extinguish the fire on an open hearth.
 - The Normans called the cover a "Couvre Fou" which on the English tongue became "curfew".

- In 1066 the Normans invaded Britain and introduced the first basic fire safety laws.
- However it wasn't until September 1666 when the Great Fire of London destroyed 436 acres of London, that it became apparent that an effective firefighting force was required.

- There is no written record of organized fire fighting for another 200 years and little known and recorded information about fire fighting activities exist until the 17th century.

After the Great Fire of London

- The city organized fire protection companies and required certain amounts of equipment to be on hand for use in combating fires. Equipment included leather buckets, ladders, shovels, and brass squirts.

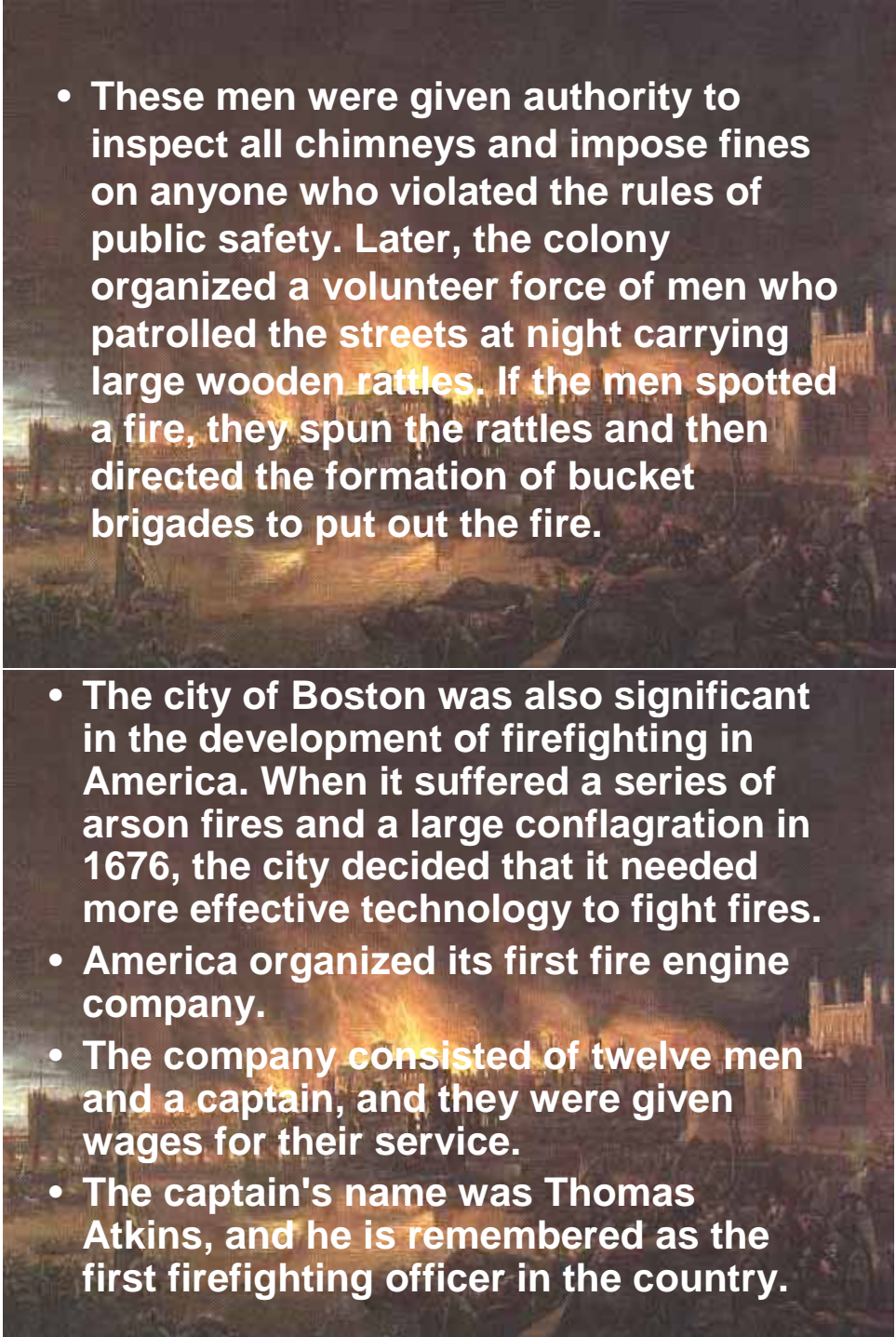
After the Great Fire of London

- The city organized fire protection companies and required certain amounts of equipment to be on hand by all residents for use in combating fires. Equipment included leather buckets, ladders, shovels, and brass squirts.
- At this point, fire marks were introduced. People would fix these lead or copper insignia to the wall of their houses to show which insurance company they were with.
- When a fire broke out all the fire brigades would rush to the fire, if the house did not have their company's fire mark they would stand back and wait for the rival company's firefighters to turn up.
- If the house did not have a fire mark and there was more than one company on the scene, a fight often broke out as the competing companies tried to get the householder to sign up with their company.

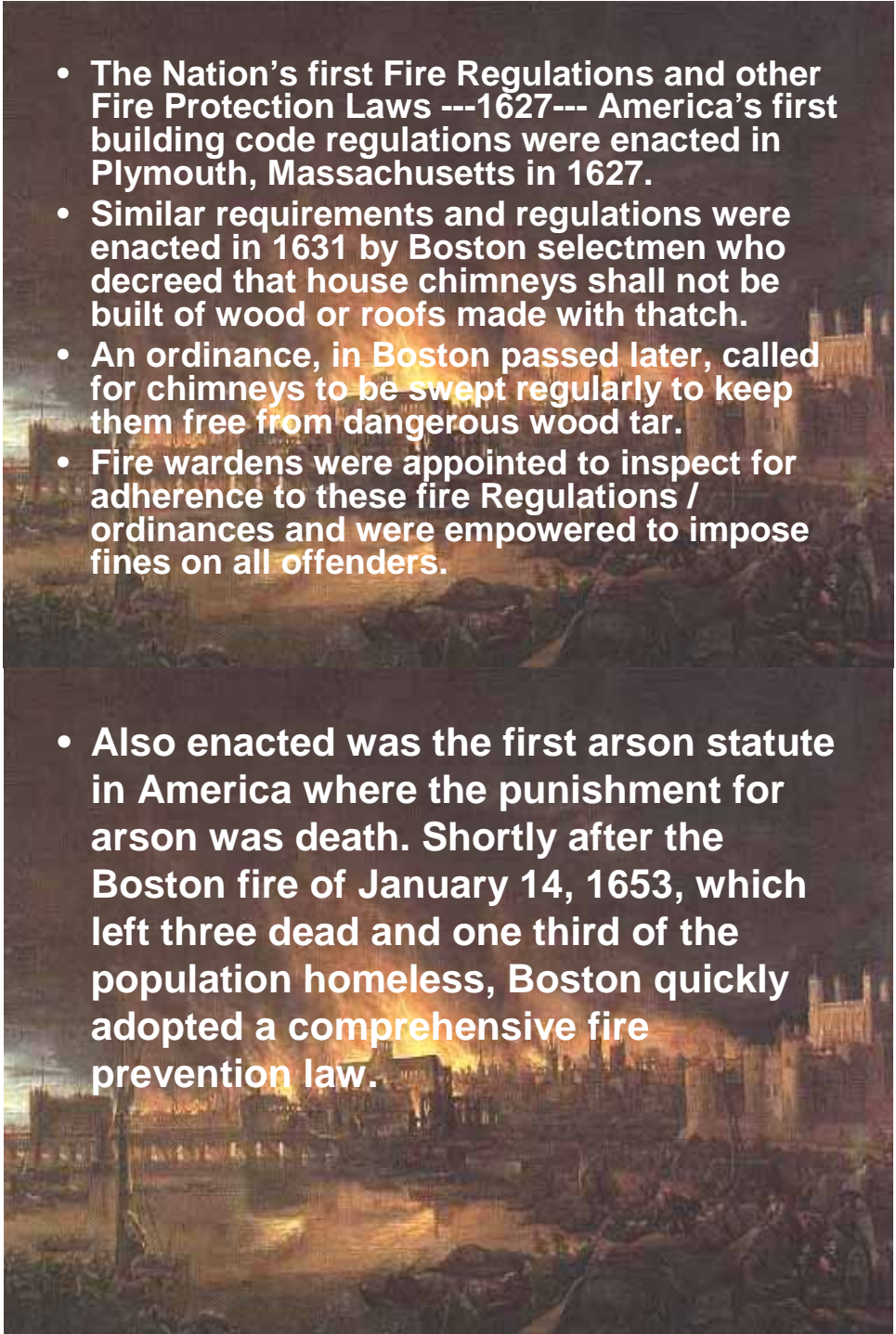
A HISTORY OF FIREFIGHTERS IN AMERICA

- **The noble service of firefighting began in the early days of colonial America in Jamestown, Virginia. In January 1608, a fire spread through Jamestown, destroying much of the colonists' homes and provisions.**

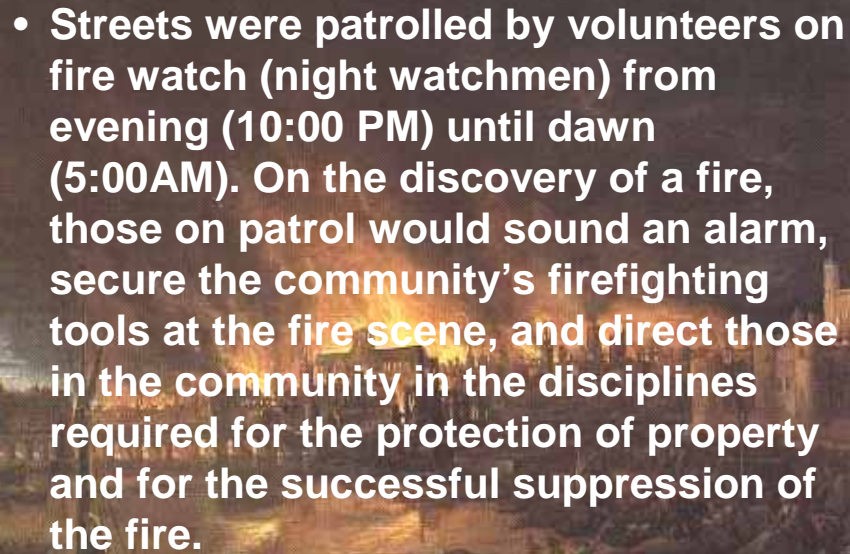
- **As the colonists populated the New World, they often faced the threat of fires. In 1648, the colony of New Amsterdam (later New York) established practices that would become the first steps to organized firefighting in America. First, Governor Peter Stuyvesant appointed fire wardens over the city.**

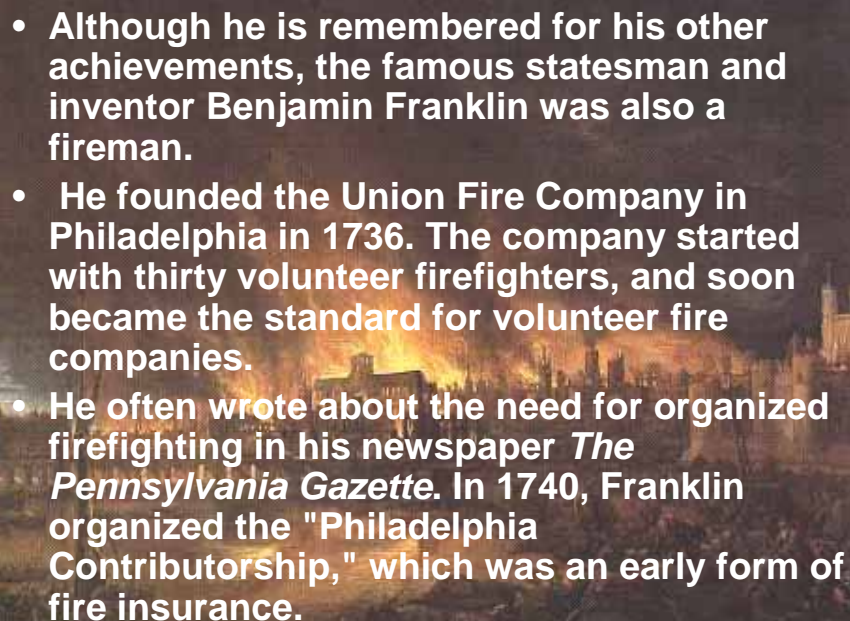
- 
- These men were given authority to inspect all chimneys and impose fines on anyone who violated the rules of public safety. Later, the colony organized a volunteer force of men who patrolled the streets at night carrying large wooden rattles. If the men spotted a fire, they spun the rattles and then directed the formation of bucket brigades to put out the fire.

- The city of Boston was also significant in the development of firefighting in America. When it suffered a series of arson fires and a large conflagration in 1676, the city decided that it needed more effective technology to fight fires.
- America organized its first fire engine company.
- The company consisted of twelve men and a captain, and they were given wages for their service.
- The captain's name was Thomas Atkins, and he is remembered as the first firefighting officer in the country.

- 
- The Nation's first Fire Regulations and other Fire Protection Laws ---1627--- America's first building code regulations were enacted in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1627.
 - Similar requirements and regulations were enacted in 1631 by Boston selectmen who decreed that house chimneys shall not be built of wood or roofs made with thatch.
 - An ordinance, in Boston passed later, called for chimneys to be swept regularly to keep them free from dangerous wood tar.
 - Fire wardens were appointed to inspect for adherence to these fire Regulations / ordinances and were empowered to impose fines on all offenders.

- Also enacted was the first arson statute in America where the punishment for arson was death. Shortly after the Boston fire of January 14, 1653, which left three dead and one third of the population homeless, Boston quickly adopted a comprehensive fire prevention law.

- 
- Streets were patrolled by volunteers on fire watch (night watchmen) from evening (10:00 PM) until dawn (5:00AM). On the discovery of a fire, those on patrol would sound an alarm, secure the community's firefighting tools at the fire scene, and direct those in the community in the disciplines required for the protection of property and for the successful suppression of the fire.

- 
- Although he is remembered for his other achievements, the famous statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin was also a fireman.
 - He founded the Union Fire Company in Philadelphia in 1736. The company started with thirty volunteer firefighters, and soon became the standard for volunteer fire companies.
 - He often wrote about the need for organized firefighting in his newspaper *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. In 1740, Franklin organized the "Philadelphia Contributorship," which was an early form of fire insurance.

Other famous Americans who served as firefighters included:

- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson
- Samuel Adams
- John Hancock
- Paul Revere
- Alexander Hamilton
- John Jay
- John Barry
- Aaron Burr
- Benedict Arnold
- James Buchanan

The Story of the Maltese Cross

- As the crusaders advanced on Jerusalem, The Saracens pelted them with glass bombs full of naphtha and then threw down flaming torches. Hundreds of knights were burned alive while others risked their lives to save their kinsmen from painful fiery deaths. Thus these became the first firefighters. Fellow crusaders, who awarded them with a badge of honor similar to the cross firefighters wear today, recognized their heroic efforts.

The Story of the Maltese Cross

- Since the Knights of St. John lived nearly four centuries on the island of Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, the cross came to be known as the Maltese Cross. The firefighter who wears the cross is willing to lay down his life for others, just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago.

+