

Muscle vs. Fire

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Laos Scott #1139, 1993 Buckets and branches beating back a brushfire.

Whole villages turned out to fight fires, often forming bucket brigades to pass water hand-to-hand from the nearest water source to the fire. Records show that fire extinguishers, or 'syringes', first appeared as early as the 1500's and were the first step toward firefighting machines.



United States Scott #971 Postmasters issue shows American settlers forming a bucket brigade to fight a fire.



Left: Mongolia Scott #970 1977 A bucket brigade from a stream to the fire.

Right: Austria Scott #1367 1986 An early syringe fire extinguisher.



It wasn't until the 1700's that some of the earliest hand pumped fire engines appeared. Englishman Richard Newsham is credited with developing one of the earliest successful pumps in 1721. Still powered by men's muscle, it was a first step towards mechanizing our firefighting efforts.

Above: Cambodia Scott #1604 1997 Newsham hand pump.

Right: Germany 1922 'Notgeld', from the City of Langensalza, shows firefighters operating a hand pumper.

