

Father, son shaping history

Their books document the history of Scranton firefighters.

BY BRIAN CLARK
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For centuries, fathers taught sons their craft.

Mark Boock was never a firefighter, but he grew up in a South Side home sandwiched between a fire chief's house and a station. Always at fire scenes, he became the department's historian and took so many pictures he published two books — one in 1988 and a second in 1996.

Families researching their ancestors would visit Mr. Boock to search through old photographs in hopes of finding a familiar face. And firefighters stopped by the house regularly to chat.

That can make a strong impression on a young boy, and Mr. Boock's son Bill grew up to be a firefighter.

He took over the book business, too.

"Duty is Our Pride: 150 Years of Firefighting in Scranton, PA" is Bill Boock's first venture into writing but not his first foray into his father's collection of fire history. That's been there his whole life.

"In a way, (the book is) a dedication to him," Bill Boock said. "He guided me through this and through life. It's something we did together and something that'll always be with me."

Mark Boock brought Bill and his brother Gregory to



MICHAEL J. MULLEN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Boock, left, and his son, Bill, hold the book they put together on Scranton Firefighters.

To buy the book

What: "Duty is Our Pride: 150 Years of Firefighting in Scranton, PA," by Bill Boock.

How much: \$25.

Where to buy: Cooper's Seafood, 701 N. Washington Ave.; Anthracite Museum at McDade Park; Scranton Hobby Center, 517 Lackawanna Ave.; Lackawanna Historical Society, 232 Monroe Ave.

fires as the boys grew up. The family began to videotape fires. It was a family activity. Watching fires crackle and

men risk their lives to help others pushed Bill Boock to the fire academy. He joined the Scranton Fire Department in 2002. He was tinkering with his father's old books within a year. There were new chiefs, new engines and the first female firefighter. There were nine years of new fires to include.

Other information was updated and corrected. Past versions of the book listed eight firefighters dying in the line of duty. Bill Boock's research found a ninth. John H. Davis suffered a heart attack while fighting a fire in 1947. He died several days lat-

er from that heart attack. Mr. Davis was left off earlier lists because the city fought the family about whether Mr. Davis died in the line of duty, Bill Boock said.

He also chose new pictures from his father's collection, which Mark Boock said contains between 3,000 and 4,000.

"There's just so many more facets to the fire department than putting water on (a fire)," Mark Boock said. "I think you (follow the history) because you respect what they do."

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