1798 – Direct Tax records show 5 ropewalks at Common, 3-5 at Beacon Hill, and 3 at Allen Street, most of west Ridgeway Lane owned by J& B Austin, ropemakers. Wm. Taylor & Eliz. Carnes have ropewalk lots abutting “New” Street [South Russell]. Carnes has a structure on his walk.

By 1715, Boston had six “Engine Companies” to battle fires, but they were of little use against the large fires that swept the ropewalks. Fire destroyed not only the ropewalks downtown, but also on the Charles River at least three times between 1795 and their removal in 1824. The sparks from open flames under the tar vats were a constant threat to the flammable hemp fragments, and the resources to combat the fires were inadequate to subdue the flames once the wooden walks caught fire. Two men operated his little colonial hand engine - one on each end of the handle, but a bucket brigade using leather buckets was required to keep the tank full.