FIRE PLUGS
(Derivation of the term)

With the inception of the use of hollowed-out wood log pipes for water transmission in the late 1700's - early 1800's, their availability as a source of water to fight fires became apparent. When a fire occurred, the firefighters (volunteers) dug down, found the log pipe, and augered a hole through it. [Note: In some early water systems, such as Philadelphia - followed soon thereafter by systems in New York and Boston - wood plugs were installed at specific locations (mid-block, etc.) with the main, so that the firemen would know where to find a plugin advance.] Water would fill the excavation, forming a wet well to either get buckets of water from, or serve as a reservoir for pumps to pull water from.

When the fire was out, the hole in the pipe would be sealed by driving a wood (oftentimes redwood) plug - similar to those shown here on - into it. The plug's location was often noted and marked before the pipe was covered over, so the plug could possibly be used as a source the next time - instead of creating a new hole. This procedure is the basis of the term fire plug, a name which is often still applied to modern day fire hydrants.