

The Back Step

The Newsletter of the Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum

Vol. 8, No. 1

All the News We Feel Like Printing

April 2020

Independent Hose Co. Etching

The etched glass mural that once graced the front of the Firehouse Financial Center in Frederick (the old Independent Hose Co. station on Church Street) has been installed in front of the museum, where it forms a perfect welcome to Firetown USA. Once the mural was donated, and moved to the museum by Emmitsburg Glass Company, work began to design an enclosure for it and to raise funds to build the enclosure. Thanks to numerous donations of money, materials, and labor by many individuals and organizations, and the effort and skill of S&W Construction and Emmitsburg Glass Company, the mural stands in its own brick and steel enclosure, protected from the elements by half-inch Lexan.

The mural, by artist William Cochran, was dedicated on Friday evening, October 5, at the beginning of Fallen Firefighters Weekend, in a ceremony attended by about 150 people. Lighted at night, and protected from errant vehicles by massive boulders donated by Barrick Landscaping, the mural leaves no doubt that this is indeed Firetown USA!



Thank You!

Contractors: John Wantz and S&W Wantz Construction, Emmitsburg Glass Company.

In-kind Donations: Frederick Brick Works (bricks); Todd Wilhide (masonry work); Eric Burriss of Burriss Electric (lighting fixtures and electrical work).

Financial Contributors: the Ausherman Foundation; the Delaplaine Foundation; the Frederick County Office of Economic Development; the Tourism Council of Frederick County; the Town of Emmitsburg; Steve Trout; VFIS.

In This Issue:

- IHC Etching – 1
- Chip Shots – 2
- Museum Leadership – 3
- Apparatus Notes - 3
- Election of Officers – 3
- Humble Beginnings – 4
- New Exhibits – 6
- Here 'n' There – 7
- The Big Ones - 7
- Rig from the Past – 8
- Editor's Angle – 8
- Coming Events – 9
- NFHC News – 9

Chip Shots

As we prepare for the 2020 museum season, we are in a holding pattern due to the Corona Virus. Even so, our faithful editor is again in action and publishing a new edition of the Back Step, the newsletter of the Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum and Preservation Society, Inc. So let's go over some of the changes that occurred and what we hope to be able to accomplish in the future. The National Fire Heritage Center has completed the move out of the building, we now have an additional 1000 square feet to use for exhibits. We are also pleased to announce our newsletter editor, Frank Schmearsal, has agreed to serve as the museum curator.



The return of the United Steam Fire Engine Co. No. 3 infamous 1939 Ahrens-Fox piston pumper is a welcome sight. Old Engine 63, the former Vigilant Hose Co. Ford pumper that was owned by the late John Hollinger, now owned by the Vigilant Hose Co., is sitting next to the "Fox". With a little ingenuity and good driving, we have even been able to keep old B-225, the former military Jeep AND the magnificent Independent Hose Co. No. 1 hose carriage "Romeo" all on display in the apparatus bay.

We also hope to open additional exhibits such as an exhibit donated by Keith Robeson of the USAF AGAR 23 airplane crash in Walkersville. This exhibit was in the former Frederick County Red Cross Museum prior to the Walkersville Red Cross office closing. We also have several parade and uniform hats as well many pictures and collectibles from fire and rescue departments in Frederick County.

We have updated photos of every fire and rescue station in Frederick County that we will be displaying as well as some unique pictures and artistic works related to the fire service. Another project in the incipient stage is a fire service walking tour in downtown Frederick. Todd Johnson and I attended an MSFA meeting in Chestertown where a "Firemen's Walk" self-guided walking tour was available. Todd suggested we consider such a tour of downtown Frederick with the many historical and fire service sites of interest, especially as many visitors to the National Fire Academy wander south into Frederick.

The health and safety of the public and our museum members is a priority. Once we can again leave our homes, we will be working to add the additional displays and artifacts to the museum. We hope we can be open in the next two months and again be able to tell the history of the fire and rescue service of Frederick County.

BE SAFE

CHIP

Copyright © 2020, Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum and Preservation Society, Inc., Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Museum Leadership

President: Chip Jewell

Vice-President: Susie Nicol

Secretary: Kathy Knipple

Treasurer: Paul Stull

Directors:

Tim Ayres

Sharon Botkin

"Doc" Kinney

Rose Marie Ray

Doug Riddle

Ramona Ridgely

Cynthia Ropp

Curator: Frank Schmearsal

The Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum is located at 300B South Seton Avenue (Business Route 15) in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Hours are 12:00 Noon to 4:00 PM, Saturdays and Sundays, April through October.

To arrange a special tour for a group, please contact Chip Jewell at 301-676-2285 (cjecc@comcast.net) or Frank Schmearsal at 301-788-5768 (accobonack@aol.com).

Apparatus Notes

The apparatus bay at the museum is filled to capacity, and what a glorious sight that is!

The 1945 Ford/American from Vigilant Hose Company has had a change of ownership. Ex-chief John Hollinger, its owner, passed away in October at the age of 89, but transferred ownership of the Ford to VHC a week before he died. Since then Old Engine 63 has had some much-needed carburetor work done, and there is some minor body work planned for the near future. The plan is for the engine to be kept at the museum, but to be taken out regularly for exercise. Vigilant Hose Co. has formed a Historical Apparatus Committee to take care of the engine. (There is a rumor, which your Fearless Editor denies vehemently, that "Historical" applies to both the apparatus and certain members of the committee!)

Both "Romeo," the 1893 Holloway hose carriage from Independent Hose Co., and Doug Riddle's 1952 Jeep stump-jumper from Lewistown (the old Brush 225), remain in the museum. Now all we need is visitors to appreciate the sight!



Election of Officers

At the meeting on January 9, officers were elected for the coming year. Chip Jewell was elected president, while Susie Nicol was elected vice-president, Kathy Knipple was elected secretary, and Paul Stull was reelected treasurer. Serving as directors for the coming year will be Tim Ayres, Sharon Botkin, "Doc" Kinney, Rose Marie Ray, Doug Riddle, Ramona Ridgely, and Cynthia Ropp.

Humble Beginnings....

The volunteers at the museum, that are of a certain age, don't necessarily view the 1970's as that long ago. Well, perhaps some of us do, but most of us don't think of that time as old or ancient. In fact, the vast majority of us were already active in the fire service in one way or another during that decade. But it's sometimes worthwhile for us to put things in perspective, especially when you're working as a docent at the museum and conducting a tour. A significant number of the people that visit the museum are firefighters under the age of 50 and don't have the advantage of being able to recall what the fire service was like in Frederick County 50 years ago. And those of us that can recall, have to rely on the historic record in order to recount a time before then.

Luckily, if you're willing to spend the time there are quite a few sources of information about the fire service in Frederick County. Notable among these are Chip Jewell's books: **Firefighting in Frederick** and **Firefighting in Frederick County**. The internet is also a source with the web pages of our local fire companies usually containing tidbits on their history. But for the moment we'd like to discourage you from using the internet, since we're hoping you'll try to take a guess or two from the photos provided. Today, most county fire companies are housed in "newer" buildings or are in expanded/updated quarters within and/or adjacent to older stations. We are fortunate that some of our older stations are continuing to be used today and we are able to visit and enjoy their remaining architecture. Take for instance the surviving fire company buildings that are near 100 or more years old and still in use. These include United (1847), Juniors (1913) and Vigilant Hose Co. (1920). But most fire companies started with much more humble quarters in the beginning. Even these 100-year-old buildings were replacements for previous buildings and/or locations. So, let's take a stroll through some of the photos of buildings that served as the first quarters for a few of our fire companies. Some of these, we hope, are surprises to at least our younger audience. In some cases the name of the fire company has been obscured—for obvious reasons.

Photo #1 -

This building served as the first quarters of a fire company that now includes career staff. It is a busy station and responds to more than 1,000 total calls per year.

The building was



donated to the fire company by a local business. The garage/building is no longer standing. Guess the fire company and year.

(continued on next page)

Photo # 2 is another former garage. It is the first quarters of a fire company that responds to about 750 calls per year. You may notice a trend here to use garages. That's not surprising since in the early days, hose carts would easily fit into small buildings. Motorized apparatus was also much smaller than today's rigs and also fit (although sometimes with a few dents and building modifications) into the available small quarters. Can you guess which fire company started here?



Photo #3 - This 100-year-old fire company started in this garage with a hand drawn hose reel. The company responds to more than 1,000 fire calls per year and still retains its first piece of motorized apparatus. Can you guess the fire company?

Departing from the trend to use an existing garage, and as a testament to not only the

ingenuity, but the fledgling nature of early fire companies is Photo #4. Photo #4 is the first quarters of a fire company that was originally formed as a substation. One of this company's hand drawn units is now located at the museum. It also responds to about 1,000 calls per year. Can you guess which fire company started in this barn?



Lastly, Photo #5 depicts the "Firemen's Hall" and the first motorized fire apparatus acquired by this fire company. The fire company owns (and restored) the fire engine shown in the photo. Can you guess which company this is?

A few more hints, and then we'll tell all. Three of these fire companies have something in common. All were officially organized in the 1970's, although this is a bit of a tricky hint. Give up?

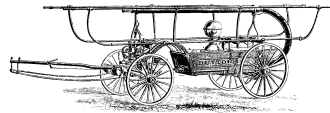
The three fire companies from the 1970's are as follows: Photo 1 is the Urbana Volunteer Fire Dept.'s first donated quarters. It was formed in 1973. Photo 2 is the first quarters of the Lewistown District Volunteer Fire Dept. which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Photo #4 is the first quarters of the "Jefferson Station of the Braddock Heights Fire Company". The

(continued on next page)

Jefferson Volunteer Fire Company become a standalone entity in 1970, but its roots date back to 1901 when the town purchased two hand-pulled fire extinguishers. Photo #3 is the quarters of the Walkersville Volunteer Fire Company. The 1909 Hose Cart and the 1940 Ford Howe engine were stationed here. Photo # 5 is of Company 5, the Brunswick Volunteer Fire Company. The photo is believed to be from 1928 and shows the company's 1922 American LaFrance 750 gpm engine.

More information and history is available from each of these company's websites. Photos 1, 2, and 5 were obtained from the websites. Photos 2 and 4 are excerpted from Chip Jewel's book: *Firefighting in Frederick County*.

- Doug Riddle



New Exhibits

With the departure of the National Fire Heritage Center, space has been freed up for some new exhibits in the museum. In particular, we now have wall space available, something that was in short supply before.

The Line of Duty Death exhibit, assembled several years ago by Joy and Jim Deater, has been moved to the west wall of the main exhibit room. This gives us space for additional honorees, which is important because more deaths from years ago are being recognized as having happened in the line of duty.

The space formerly occupied by the LODD exhibit is being earmarked for a "Tools of the Trade" exhibit, in which we will highlight some of the tools used by firefighters in earlier times. Because our current collection of tools is not very large, we are asking that companies and individuals having old firematic tools consider loaning or donating them to the museum for this exhibit. We're looking for things like pry bars, older axes, strange-looking spanners, etc.

On the east wall of the exhibit room, where the NFHC Hall of Legends, Legacies, and Leaders was mounted, we're planning a photo exhibit of early Frederick County apparatus. Again, the assistance of companies and individuals is requested to provide photos of each company's early apparatus. We will scan the photos and return the originals to their owners; we will make prints, mat them, and mount them on the wall.

Along with this, we have rearranged some of the large objects in the exhibit room, and are rearranging some of the company-specific exhibits as well. All of this has given the curator plenty of material for plotting and scheming, measuring and figuring, but more importantly, it will give the museum a fresh new look when we finally reopen for the 2020 season.

Here 'n' There

"Doc" Kinney has been working on the water-motor gong that was originally part of the Gamewell system at the Ox Fibre Brush factory in Frederick. While it will not be operational, Doc has been cleaning it up in preparation for mounting it on a (reinforced) wall in the apparatus bay.

Three names have been added to the LODD wall recently: Michael Powers of Libertytown, who died last year; Thomas Chew of Co. 3, who died in 1934; and Rufus Earl Derr of Co. 1, who died in 1948. We need photographs of Firefighters Chew and Derr, in case anyone happens to know of any.

While we no longer have the Gamewell box and gong available, we still can make lots of noise for visitors. Doug Riddle brought in a watchman's rattle to show how firefighters were alerted in the days before sirens and pagers. It usually can be found on the window ledge next to the clock (which seems to be working, at least for the moment!)

The Big Ones

(With this edition of **The Back Step**, we will begin a new history column called "The Big Ones" that will highlight large Frederick County fires in the past. The first article will be of the Great Creagerstown Fire of 1914.)

The northern Frederick County community of Creagerstown was initially settled in 1750. John Kreiger (original spelling) laid out the town before the Revolutionary War. The town was originally at the junction of the Baltimore and Pittsburgh Road and the Washington and Buffalo Road. Buffalo Road still exists along the eastern border of Frederick County and was part of the original road that led to Buffalo, NY.

The fire broke out about 9:30 in the morning of June 2, 1914 and was said to have started in the engine room of the Monocacy Valley Creamery. The first buildings lost in the fire were the Monocacy Valley Creamery, a house belonging to Mary Kreepz, the Town Hall and a house owned by B. F. Bell. The fire jumped the street and consumed the barn, wagon shed, corn crib and house of George Stevens. Ogle's Store and dwelling and all stock were destroyed, as well as houses owned by Mrs. John Grinder, Isaac Hankey, Barn Freeze, Louis Miller and George Hann. Other houses were slightly damaged.

The fire also consumed two hotels then located in the town; the Valley Hotel and the Creagerstown Hotel. Both hotels and associated outbuildings were destroyed with a loss of both buildings deemed \$11,000.

Plant Wire Chief Park W. T. Loy of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company was able to summon assistance from Frederick. Mayor Fraley of Frederick summoned the steamer from the Independent Hose Co. No. 1 to respond to the aid of Creagerstown. The steamer was transported by freight trolley of the Frederick and Hagerstown Railway to Thurmont where it was to be unloaded. A team of four horses awaited the arrival to pull the fire engine to Creagerstown.

The trolley from Frederick was delayed due to a derailment. Additionally, the road between Thurmont and Creagerstown was in very poor condition. While awaiting the arrival of the Independent engine, the residents of Creagerstown were instructed to dam up a small stream to provide sufficient operating water for the steamer. Unfortunately, by the time the steamer arrived in Thurmont, it was decided it would be of little use and it was never unloaded. The fire burned up to the Lutheran Church before dwindling out.

The article in the June 2, 1914, *Frederick News* also noted Lewis R. Dertzbaugh, assistant foreman of the Junior Fire Co. No. 2 and Guy Motter, also a member of the Junior Fire Co. No. 2 were en route to Emmitsburg and heard of the conflagration and responded to aid. The fire essentially burned itself out with only the community to try to fight the fire and remove property from threatened buildings. The fire burned freely without any fire engines or fire companies to assist. In the book *Frederick County Chronicles*, Mrs. Mildred Stine was quoted, "The fire was a terrible thing. It was such a nice little town."

Research for this article was taken from the June 2, 1914 edition of the *Frederick News* and the book **Frederick County Chronicles, The Crossroads of Maryland**, by Marie Anne Erickson.

Rig from the Past



The 1952 Ford pumper shown above was purchased by the Ridge Volunteer Fire Department in southern Maryland from the Glenn D. Culbert Co. of College Park. Originally just a hoze and booster wagon, the rig became a pumper later with the addition of the front-mount 500 GPM pump. The engine was sold to the newly-formed Libertytown Vol. Fire Dept. in 1964, becoming Libertytown's first engine. Does anybody know where it is now?

In the next issue: an early rig from Graceham Volunteer Fire Company No. 18.



Angle

Editor's

In case you hadn't noticed, we follow a strict sequence in our "Rigs from the Past" feature – we go according to company number, so there can be no complaints of favoritism. Once we get to Company 30, we will start over again. Given our less-than-stellar publishing record, that will allow for a whole new generation of old rigs to be considered!

Speaking of publishing schedules, now that we are the Archivist Emeritus of the Heritage Center, we will have more time to work on the newsletter. ("Emeritus" is Latin for "out to pasture!") Doug Riddle has offered to help with the newsletter, so if there is something you'd like to see published, let us know. Doug's first offering is "Humble Beginnings" starting on Page 4. Thanks, Doug!

Thanks also to Chip Jewell for our new "Big Ones" column, which we hope to see in every issue. Rumor has it that Chip is taking advantage of the current Stay at Home order to start work on a new book!

National Fire Heritage Center

As of February 1, the headquarters of the National Fire Heritage Center is no longer located in the museum. The museum board of directors voted to not renew the NFHC's lease when it came up for renewal on February 1; instead, the museum will use the NFHC space for additional displays.

For the time being, the NFHC archive is in storage at the Vigilant Hose Co. activities building on Creamery Road (the former Station 26.) A new archivist, Dick DeVore, has been appointed to replace Frank Schmersal, who retired. It is unknown where or when the NFHC will relocate to permanent quarters.



Coming Events

(Note: As of press time, the following events are still scheduled to take place, depending upon how long the Corona Virus restrictions remain in place.)

- June 6 Chesapeake Antique Fire Apparatus Association 51st annual muster, Pleasant Valley Fire Co., Pleasant Valley **(postponed to October 4)**
- June 9 Museum committee meeting, Junior Fire Co. No. 2, 7:00 PM
- July 11 Pennsylvania Pump Primers muster, Harrisburg PA
- July 12 Museum committee meeting at the museum, 2:00 PM
- Aug. 9 Museum committee meeting at the museum, 2:00 PM
- Aug. 15 SPAAMFAA national muster, Rochester NY
- Sept. 10 Museum committee meeting, Junior Fire Co. No. 2, 7:00 PM
- Sept. 29 Old Fire Farts of York County muster, York PA
- Oct. 2-4 Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend, Emmitsburg. Museum open 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM Friday, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM Saturday, Noon – 4:00 PM Sunday.
- Oct. 8 Museum committee meeting, Junior Fire Co. No. 2, 7:00 PM