

The Back Step

The Newsletter of the Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum

Vol. 10, No. 1

All the News We Feel Like Printing

March, 2022

Museum Opening April 2

The Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum will open for the 2022 season on Saturday, April 2. As in the past, the museum will be open Saturday and Sunday afternoons from noon to 4:00 PM through the second weekend in October.

While the overall appearance of the building has not changed significantly, it is sporting newly-painted bollards on either side of each overhead door, thanks to the efforts of Doc Kinney. Doc patiently stripped the old paint off each bollard, then primed and painted them – this time bright red, so they would be easier to see. (When cold weather started to interfere, Doc built an insulated, heated enclosure to let the paint on a bollard dry properly!)

Inside the museum, the company displays are being rearranged, in numeric order to make them easier to find. We are gradually updating the station

pictures, using new photos provided by Frederick County DFRS; some of the old pictures were very much out of date, although in some cases they have now become part of the historical display.

The Line of Duty Death wall was moved last year to the back room, where more space was available. In its place in the apparatus bay we are planning a “tools of the trade” display.

Thanks to a grant from Frederick’s Delaplaine Foundation, we have acquired a new computer and monitor for the museum office, as well as a large monitor for display use. We hope to use the old office computer to power another display in the museum, perhaps on fire-related hobbies.

Look for more information to come from President Chip Jewell shortly about work sessions and docent scheduling.



In This Issue:

- Opening for 2022. – 1
- Chip Shots – 2
- Museum Leadership – 3
- Tools of the Trade – 3
- Editor's Angle – 4
- Here 'n' There – 5
- The Big Ones – 5
- Rig from the Past – 6
- Coming Events – 7
- Anita Ford – 8
- Virginia Fire Museum – 8

Chip Shots

As we bring 2021 to a close and turn the calendar to 2022, we all hope we can start to return to some form of normalcy. We were fortunate we were able to open the museum for at least part of the year. We did not have the influx of visitors during National Fallen Firefighters Weekend due to restricted attendance, but we were open during the NFFF weekend and did have several visitors from around the country that have never been to Emmitsburg.

We were able to add some new features and additions to the museum including a rotating computer display of former Frederick County apparatus and a large reproduction of the 1932 Frederick fire apparatus posed at Hood College. We also purchased a new computer and have a new printer. Many thanks to the Delaplaine Foundation and to Curator Frank Schmersal for his work.

As meetings have been sporadic, I hope to get us back on a regular schedule in 2022 after the Omicron virus subsides. I would like to rotate meetings between Frederick and Emmitsburg. We will most likely have our February meeting the afternoon of February 26 and remain open for the Maryland Weekend at the National Fire Academy IF the Maryland Weekend is still held. We will probably also meet at least once in March at the museum on a Saturday to prepare for opening on April 2. Thanks to everyone that helped keep the museum open in 2021. Though the foot traffic was less than previous years, we were able to keep the museum available for the public to enjoy.

We are also working on a downtown Frederick walking tour that will hopefully promote interest in the museum. As I mentioned before, Todd Johnson and I took a historic tour in downtown Chestertown several years ago that provided specific fire service history of the town. "Scuba" suggested the same type of tour would probably be popular in downtown Frederick, especially as many fire academy students venture into downtown Frederick during the weekends of their classes. I am putting together a "Firemen's Walk" in downtown Frederick that will feature locations of former fire houses, big fires and other fire service pertinent locations. We will discuss further, but I would envision this walking tour one Saturday a month.

I am pleased to report we have paid for all 200 books and are now over \$500 profit just on the books purchased by the museum. We will also receive the first "royalties" check from Arcadia Publishing sometime the first quarter of 2022. I am hoping the royalty check will be another several hundred dollars. Increased publicity of the book should help increase sales. The book is now available online at Amazon, Barnesandnoble.com or Arcadia.com, which also pay royalties for sales.

I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday and wish everyone a Safe 2022!

BE SAFE!

CHIP



Museum Leadership

President: Chip Jewell

Vice-President: Susie Nicol

Secretary: Kathy Knipple

Treasurer: Paul Stull

Directors:

Tim Ayers

Sharon Botkin

“Doc” Kinney

Rose Marie Ray

Doug Riddle

Ramona Ridgely

Cynthia Ropp

Curator: Frank Schmursal



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 (pandemics permitting!)

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

Tools of The Trade

by Doug Riddle

This is the second in our series of articles that focus on historic fire tools. This time around we’ve chosen to compare two tools that were made for the same purpose, but the “younger” tool also saw a slightly wider range of application. Both fireman’s bed keys shown in the photos are from the personal collection of one of our members.

It is said that in America in the 1700’s and 1800’s, the two most valuable possessions to be found in a home were the family bible and the bed (or beds). The bible was prized for several reasons in addition to the religious value. While there were pre-revolutionary war bibles published in German and even in Algonquin, the first “American” English-language bible was not published until after the war. Because most of the English-language bibles came from England, bibles became scarce during and following the revolutionary war. While bibles could be expensive, they were often more treasured because they contained the handwritten record of the family history.

Beds were often the most expensive item in early homes. A typical bed frame was made of wood and the mattress was supported by ropes. The ropes were strung across the wooden frame and tightened with a wooden bed key

(see photo #1). The wooden bed frame was assembled with metal bolts and nuts that attached the headboard and footboard to the side rails. The bolts and nuts were tightened with a metal bed key. The metal bed key or bed wrench became a staple in the fireman’s tool kit in the early days along with a salvage bag. It’s not too hard to make this connection between



the bed key and salvage bag. What did a firefighter need to “salvage” from the family home in the event of a fire? – the two most valuable items – the bed and the bible. Other valuable items were also placed in the salvage bag.

The fireman’s bed key allowed firefighters or salvage companies (more on that later) to quickly disassemble a bed and remove it from the burning

building. The wrench was made so that it could fit different size bolts and nuts (see photo #2). This was accomplished by having a tapered socket (for recessed bolt heads) and a tapered slot (for nuts or lag bolts). Early bed keys were reportedly forged from an iron bar while later versions were cast. The third photo shows both an early forged bed key and a cast iron bed key. Interestingly (at least for fire memorabilia collectors), the cast bed key shows the addition of a flat screwdriver. The later version has



(continued on p. 4)

Angle

Chip's comments about frozen hose lines in the Elks Club article reminded us of our days in the

Potsdam, New York, Fire Dept. (22 miles from the Canadian border) when we were in college in the 60's. The streets were snow-covered all winter long, so after a fire we would drag 50-foot-long logs of frozen hose back to the firehouse behind a truck, lay them out in the apparatus bay, then park the apparatus over them and pack fresh hose into the hose beds. Eventually the hose on the floor would thaw, and we would load it into the Circulair dryer; when it was dry, we would roll it and put it on the storage rack. It was a lot of work, but in the days before synthetic hose, and when the temperature was frequently below zero for days at a time, you did what had to be done!

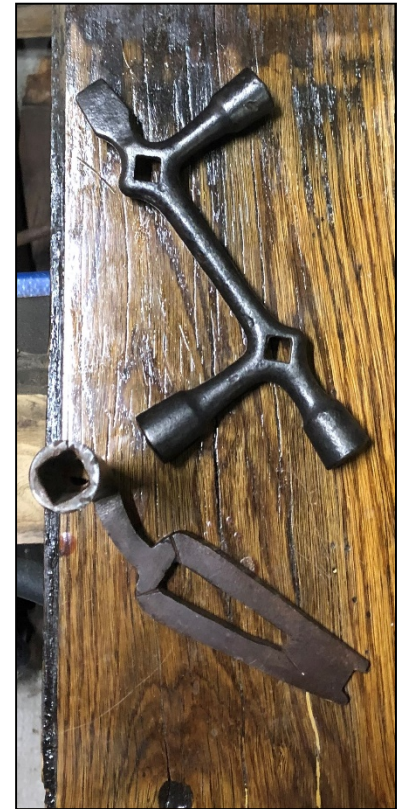
Tools of the Trade (continued)

morphed into a multi-tool with the addition of the screwdriver blade and a wider selection of tapered sockets.

Salvage operations were an integral part of early firefighting and fire companies. It was common to start salvage immediately since firefighting efforts might only consist of a bucket brigade and the likelihood of success might be low. In fact, in the history of the Portsmouth, New Hampshire Fire Department (PFD 2016) it is noted that the United Fire Society was formed on March 17, 1761 and that *"Each man brought two leather buckets, a bed wrench, a large four bushel cloth bag and a long handled mop."*

It wasn't long before separate and independent salvage companies were formed - often by fire insurance underwriters. However, not all salvage operations were held in the highest esteem. According to the history of the Chicago Fire Department in September 1841 the "Chicago Bag and Fire Guard Company" was formed. The Chicago Bag and Fire Guard Company was also known as "The Forty Thieves" (not to be confused, of course, with the "forty thieves" criminal gang formed in New York City in the 1820's).

Most major cities had emergency salvage operations. The New York Fire Patrol (FPNY) was a salvage corps created by the New York Board of Fire Underwriters in 1839 which operated as Local I-26 of the IAFF until 2006. Baltimore had the Fire Insurance Salvage Corps of Baltimore which was incorporated in 1886 and located at 27 North Liberty Street. Today salvage operations have come full circle and are back with the fire departments and fireman's bed keys are an interesting footnote in fire service history. If you happen to come across a bed key - we'd love to have one for the museum!



Here 'n' There

Uniteds' 1939 Ahrens-Fox has been undergoing some engine repairs in the apparatus bay, made necessary by an unfortunate incident on the way back from Frederick last fall.

Because of the repairs to the Fox, the 1945 Ford/American from Vigilant Hose, old Engine 63, has been spending the winter at the Co. 6 activities building. Work is under way to have it pumping in time for the June 4 Chesapeake Muster in Pleasant Valley.

And Romeo (the 1893 Holloway hose carriage from Co. 1) spent a week in Florida, where it was on display at the SPAAMFAA winter convention in Kissimmee (and won Best in Show!) This is the second SPAAMFAA winter convention for Romeo – it also was displayed at the 2012 convention in Gettysburg.

Doug Riddle's 1952 Jeep brush buggy, formerly Lewistown Brush 225, also is in Florida. Doug has moved it to his winter headquarters to do some work on it.

The Big Ones – The 1970 Elks Club Fire

By Clarence "Chip" Jewell

It was the middle of the night on January 22, 1970, when my Regency "blue box" fire monitor began blaring with a lot of noise about a fire at the Elks Club. The radio transmissions woke me up as I listened to more and more conversation about getting water, entering the building and calling for more help. I was only 16 and had just joined the United Fire Company the year before. I had a black coat and plastic MSA helmet and headed downtown to a mass of smoke, fire and ice. As the sun came up, I realized I needed to get back home quick as I had to be at mid-term examinations at St. John's High School. The Sisters of Notre Dame would probably not accept my being at a fire as a legal excuse to miss exams, even for one of the biggest fires in Frederick history. I was pleasantly surprised when the sisters allowed Bion Winpigler, who was a member of the Independent Hose Company, and me to reschedule our religion exam to go back to the fire.

Not only was the Elks Club one of the biggest fires in Frederick history, it was also one of the coldest. The Frederick News-Post reported the low overnight was 5 degrees in Frederick and below zero many other locations in the environs of the county. Fortunately, the winds, which were gusting over 40 miles per hour the night before the fire, were relatively calm. The calm of the night assisting in maintaining the fire to the building of origin and not becoming a major downtown conflagration.

West Second Street and almost all surrounding streets were ice rinks. Any water that escaped from loose hose couplings or hydrants instantly froze. Even the warm water that ran out of the fire building was soon refrigerated and frozen. The 1939 Ahrens-Fox pumper of the United Fire Company was hooked to a hydrant in front of city hall, now Brewer's Alley. Leaking water provided a winter scene, with icicles hanging off the building, the fire engine and even the engine driver, Charles "Moose" Miller. The scene closely resembled a page from the children's book about old Engine No. 9.

Turnout gear became solid ice. You needed another firefighter to crack the ice off the metal clasps to open your coat. Then, since the coat was coated with ice, you would crunch the ice as you tried to remove your arms. One firefighter was frozen to the roof of Maas Optician's where he deployed a 2½-inch master stream into the seat of the fire. As Frederick only had one ladder truck, a ladder truck from Hagerstown was special called to the scene, a 25-mile one-way trip. A tape recording of the actual dispatch of Hagerstown Truck 4 stated the truck would respond "as soon as the chains are dropped."

Hose line could not be shut down. As soon as water ceased to flow, the water would freeze inside the hose lines. The hose lines would turn into 50-foot toothpicks, unable to roll up to move. My classmate Bion Winpigler was able to get a flatbed truck from his family business, C. Edward Winpigler Construction, to the scene. We loaded the solid hoses on the flatbed and took them to the United Fire Company quarters that had an apparatus bay big enough to unload the hoses.

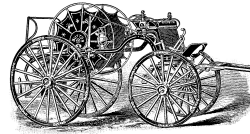
I recall being in Porter's Grill, a small hamburger shop on North Market Street, with firefighters, police officers and other individuals that were helping

fight the fire, control traffic and assist with other utilities. A hot cup of coffee was one of the most desired drinks of the morning.

The building was a total loss. The Elks Club bought the old Seventh Day Adventist School on Waverly Drive. The club is still active and located there today. The location of the fire building is now called Maas Park, a small “pocket park” located on West Second Street next to what was Maas Opticians, a building that was amazingly saved. Though I have fought many winter fires since 1970, I can honestly say I have never been as cold as the morning of January 22, 1970.

BE SAFE

CHIP



Rig from the Past

The first squad at Brunswick Volunteer Ambulance Company No. 19 was this early 1970's GMC light rescue. Built on a pickup truck chassis, it was the predecessor to the current Squad 19, a 2009 Spartan/Marion heavy rescue. While today's squad carries almost every tool imaginable for almost every kind of rescue scenario, the first Squad 19 carried enough gear to get the job done around Brunswick and along the river for many years. Does anybody know where it is today?



Coming Events

(Note: These are some of the events that, as of press time, are scheduled to take place within a reasonable distance of Emmitsburg. Because of the ongoing pandemic, we strongly suggest that you check Anita Ford's list, and perhaps even call ahead, before you jump in the car!)

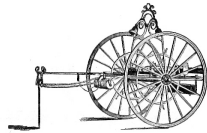
- April 2 Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum opening, noon - 4 PM
- April 3 Mt. Airy Fire Dept. flea market, Mt. Airy (MD) FD carnival grounds, 9 AM - 2 PM
- April 24 Allentown, PA memorabilia and equipment sale, 9 AM - 3 PM
- April 29 Old Dominion Historical Fire Society Apple Blossom muster, 9 AM - 2:30 PM, Winchester VA, followed by the Apple Blossom Firemen's Parade at 5:30 PM
- May 7 Fire Museum of Maryland Steam and Hand Apparatus Show, Lutherville MD, 10 AM - 2 PM
- May 14 DCFD 150th Anniversary parade and muster, Constitution Ave.
- May 14 Goodwill Fire Co. No. 1 Flea Market and Static Apparatus Display, Myerstown PA, 8 AM - 5 PM
- May 15 Mack fire apparatus show and picnic, Manheim PA, noon - 8 PM
- May 20-21 FireEXPO, Harrisburg Farm Show Complex, 10 AM - 5 PM
- June 4 Chesapeake Antique Fire Apparatus Assoc. muster, Pleasant Valley FD, Pleasant Valley MD, 9 AM - 2 PM
- July 9 Pennsylvania Pump Primers muster, Harrisburg PA, 10 AM - 3 PM
- August 7 Cradle of Liberty Antique Fire Apparatus Assoc. annual muster and flea market, Pennsauken NJ
- August 27 Tri-State Antique Fire Assoc. muster and flea market, Monongahela PA, starting at 9 AM
- Sept. 10 Fire Museum of Maryland motor muster, Lutherville MD, 10 AM - 2 PM

Who the Heck is Anita Ford?

Whenever we need firematic event dates, we refer to the ultimate authority: **Anita Ford's Best on the Web**. Anita maintains a list of all musters, parades, flea markets, shows, etc., of interest to the fire world; you can find it on the Chesapeake Antique Fire Apparatus Association web page, www.cafaaa.net. (There is also a link from the SPAAMFAA web page.) Organizations all over the country send Anita information about their events, which she posts to her list on a regular basis.

Anita and husband Bob travel all up and down the East Coast attending musters and other events, sometimes three or four on a weekend! Their other passion is covered bridges, so their trips frequently include visits to both firematic events and covered bridges. They're so dedicated that they've even been known to go to deprived areas where WaWa coffee is not available!

So when you're travelling this summer, be sure to check Anita's list before you go, to make the most of your trip. Whether you are headed for Upstate New York in June (fire truck show at Lawtons VFC in North Collins on the 11th) or Missouri in September (annual Jefferson County Fire Engine Rally in Herculaneum on the 24th) or anywhere else in the country, Anita's list will have something interesting for you to do.



Virginia Fire Museum Update

We reported in the last issue of the **Back Step** that there was a new fire museum possibly forming down in the Roanoke area. Well, perhaps that was an understatement! While they still don't have a formal museum building, the Virginia Fire Museum does have a large storage building, and they have been busy acquiring and repairing apparatus at a great rate. Their collection is up to about 75 rigs at this point, most all of them built and/or used in Virginia. As you might expect, they have a large collection of Oren apparatus, which was built in Roanoke, but they have plenty of other brands as well, and sizes ranging from a World War II trailer pump to a 100-foot tillered aerial. In addition to working on apparatus, the VFM crew participates in parades, musters, and car shows throughout central Virginia.

Right now, in addition to acquiring still more apparatus and getting it parade-ready, the crew at VFM is working on getting a building to properly display their collection. They hope to make an announcement very soon about the acquisition of a museum building, as well as the dates for a grand opening and muster.