

Lower Fire Rates Envisioned

By Norm Singleton
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When Dover's fire department was organized in the 1870's there were about 30 volunteer members.

Handdrawn equipment consisted of a hose reel and a 4-wheeled hook and ladder wagon that carried ladders, a number of heavy rubber buckets, axes, oil lanterns and torches, and long poles with hooks on one end, known as pike poles.

There was no city water system at the time and a number of cisterns were built to provide a water supply. All these

Salt Business Had Big Boom

One of Dover's most important industries in early days has long been forgotten—the manufacture of salt.

Before the Ohio Canal opened in 1830, neighbors in the town saved until they had pooled \$8 and then paid one of their number to make a horseback trip to Steubenville, Cleveland or even Wheeling to buy a bushel of salt.

One bushel cost \$5, and the trip to get it took at least 2 days. When the canal opened, salt was shipped into town and its price dropped to about \$1.35 a bushel.

The Pennsylvania oil boom in the 1860's resulted in the start of the local salt industry. Drillers struck salt water at about 1,000 feet, and the first salt plant, known as Goshen Salt Works, was built on Saltwell Road.

The Dover Salt Co. was formed in 1866 and struck a brine pool east of Dover on what is now Route 8, between the town limits and White Bridge. From as strong vein of salt at about 900 feet, some 70 barrels of salt a day were produced and a large supply of bromine.

Three years later, the Sugar Creek Salt Works was erected, after David Thomas drilled a 550-foot hole in a search for ore for the Dover blast furnace. The well was sunk further to 900 feet and an abundance of salt water was found.

The Sugarcreek Works, located near Red Hill Road bridge, was the most successful, carrying on until after 1885 under Charles W. Bodey, a skilled chemist. Associated with Bodey were Judge Joseph B. Dardorff, Nicholas Weinsz and Andrew Deis.

have been covered with the exception of one, which is located in the park at the southeast corner of Public Square.

Since that first department nearly a century ago, the department has progressed to the point where Chief Clarence Shilling tabs it "the best equipped department in the county."

But Shilling, who became the department's sixth full-time firefighter June 1, 1927 and chief in September, 1947, upon the retirement of Byron Bose, doesn't let it go at that.

He has long nursed the ambition of seeing Dover's fire insurance rate lowered. And the time may not be far off, according to the Chief.

"After we get this million gallon stand pipe up in the east end of town (where water pres-

sure is lowest) and a snorkel or aerial fire truck, we shouldn't need much more," he explains.

"I think, with that, we stand a good chance to get the city into a lower fire insurance rate classification. Then we'll call in the Ohio Inspection Bureau (which suggests rates for insurance companies) and rerate the town."

When the chief speaks of a new aerial or snorkel truck, he's talking in terms of approximately \$60,000. He contemplates putting the figure on his 1966 budget. It would replace the 1939 Hanley truck, the only one the department has that carries ladders.

If a rate reduction could be effected Chief Shilling figures

the truck would pay for itself in a couple of years. That is to say, property owners would save that much in insurance.

And if the city gets that new fire truck and when the stand pipe project is completed, it will be the latest plum for a city whose fire protection rates high.

The current 13-man complement of personnel, in addition to Shilling, and their appointment dates include: Capt. Curtis Reed (April 1, 1941); Wilbur Bitticker (Oct. 1, 1941); Lts. George Bair Jr. (April 16, 1952) and Jay Springer (Aug. 1, 1960); mechanic Walter Miller (Nov. 1, 1942) and regulars, Robert Catcott (September, 1947), Sam Dunfee Jr. (Feb. 1, 1954), Tom Dean (Aug. 1, 1956), Gerald Ulrich (April 1, 1959), Donald Kendle and Jerry Dupler (Jan. 1, 1962) and Emmett Braglin, (Sept. 1, 1962).

Bill Jones, Don Little and Jerry Warner serve as night firemen alternating each night to serve with 4 regulars, to give the department 5 men on duty at all times. In addition there is a highly active volunteer organization.

They are successors to Dover's first firefighters, a group of men whose first steam pumper, a horse-drawn vehicle, wasn't purchased until 1880.

Some years later a second steamer was purchased and in 1905 the third one was bought and used by the department until 1925. The latter sat idle a number of years, but was used to pump out the basin at the foot of W. 5th St. during the 1935 and 1937 floods. In 1952 it was sold by the city to the Western Mutual Fire Insurance Co. and is on display in their office building in Columbus.

Dover's first motor-driven fire truck was purchased in 1919. An American La-France, it was equipped with solid rubber tires and chain drive rear wheels, had a right hand steering position, but was without cab or windshield.

It had a 40-gallon soda acid chemical tank with 50 feet of one inch hose, but no pump. It carried 1,250 feet of 2½ inch hose which was connected to the hydrant at only city water pressure, and there was no pump to boost the pressure at a fire when more was needed. Other equipment consisted of ladders, pike poles, axes and several portable fire extinguishers.

That first truck was replaced in 1940 by a 16-cylinder Hanley (the one the hoped for snorkel truck would replace), which was



'36 FIRE DEPARTMENT. This was Dover's Fire Department as it looked in 1936 with the majority of those pictured being volunteers. From the right they are present-day chief, Clarence Shilling, the '36 chief, Byron Bose, Henry Richards, Bert McMerrell, Sam Carl, Bill Geib, Raymond Heid, Adam Herman, Jim King and Thurman Keppler. The other 3 individuals are unidentified.

ped truck. It's still in service, but is only used as a second truck at factory and business section fires or occasionally grass fires.

There have been other additions in the equipment department since then, including a 1943 Dodge, a one-ton Chevrolet panel body truck used mainly in answering rescue and resuscitator calls, the chief's automobile, a 1961 Ford fire truck.

Personnel - wise, about the time of World War I, the department had 5 full time fire fighters while the remainder consisted of volunteers.

Henry Geib was Chief, James King, engineer of the steam pumper and also master mechanic, and regular fire fighters were Sam Carl, Adam Herman and Byron Bose. All are deceased except ex-Chief Bose, who with his son William, operate the Clendening Lake Boating Concessions.

Following the death of Chief Geib, Adam Herman served in that capacity for a short period, after which was Bose appointed to the post. He served in that capacity until his retirement and subsequent replacement by current Chief Clarence

Shilling. Filling the vacancy left by Geib's death was Raymond Heid.

After the retirement of King as master mechanic in 1929, Byron Dessecker was appointed to the department. He retired in 1956.

Seventh man to be appointed on a full-time basis was William Geib who joined the department March 1, 1933. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1939 and following the retirement of Capt. Heid in 1947 was promoted to the rank of captain. On Jan. 9, 1954 Geib accidentally shot himself while fox hunting near Ragersville.

To fill his vacancy Dunfee was appointed. The remainder of the force is the same as previously mentioned.

The last 3 members added to the department, Kendle, Dupler and Braglin, came as the result voters approval by a 2-1 margin of a work week trimmed from 63 to 56 hours. It has also provided more men on duty at all times.

The former fire station, a part of the City Building, was moved into new quarters in 1957 when it was discovered the former station was in need of extensive repairs.



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