

Raleigh Firemen Who Lived at the Fire Station

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Last month [we presented a list](#) of Raleigh firefighter names as listed in the Raleigh City Directory of 1963. Let's look at some other city directory volumes, for names of some firemen who lived at the fire station:

- 1931 - Collins Dempsey D, hosemn Engine Co No 3 r 135 E Hargett [Sta 3]
- 1931 - Higgins Grady W, capt Engine Co No 2 r 412 S Salisbury [Sta 2]
- 1931 - King Linwood C, nozlemn Engine Co No 2 r 412 S Salisbury
- 1931 - Strother Stanley, hosemn Engine Co No 5 r 1914 Park dr [Sta 5]
- 1932 - Strother Stanley, hosemn 110 W Morgan [Sta 1]
- 1935 - Caudle Durwood E city firemn 110 W Morgan
- 1935 - Kelly Jas C city firemn r135 E Hargett
- 1935 - Mills Clyde D city firemn r505 Jefferson [Sta 4]
- 1949 - Blake, Jasp capt Eng Co No 4 City Fire Dept r505 Jefferson
- 1950 - Beacham Frank A city firefighter r2601 Fairview rd [Sta 6]
- 1950 - Gates, Thos O city fire fighter City Fire Dept r505 Jefferson
- 1950 - Strickland, Jas C city fire fighter r2601 Fairview rd
- 1963 - Williams, Larry G city firefighter r735 Fayetteville st [Sta 2]

Wait, firemen lived at the fire station? As in, their primary residence? Correct. This piece of history was raised in [last month's posting](#) about old discipline records.

Reader "AP" noted "I once worked with now retired Captain J.C. Munns and he described to me once that during his early years at RFD, he was assigned to St 3 and lived at the station back when they only had two shifts. As you noted, he even received his regular mail at the station, which I think was common practice. He noted on his off day, he would hop on the engine if a house fire came in."

I've queried a few folks and learned these details about "living at the fire station":

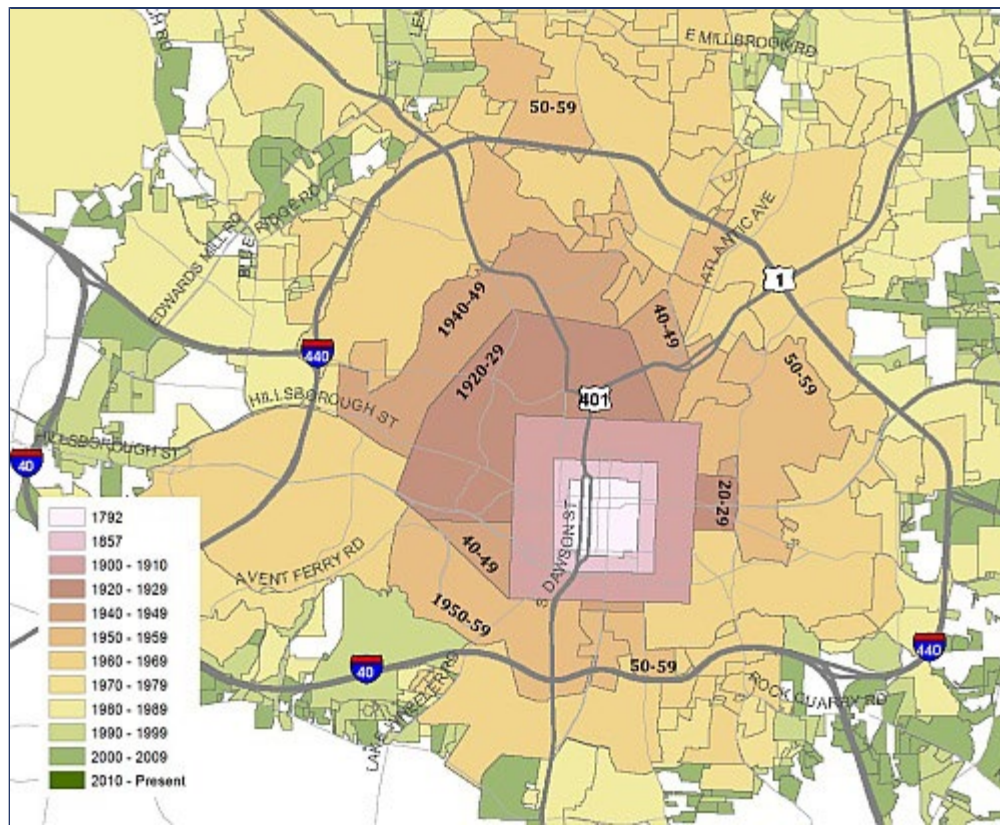
- Back in the day, in the 1960s and 1950s and earlier, there were only two shifts.
- Since 1946, they worked twenty-four hour shifts.
- Those who were single or divorced "slept and ate at the station."
- Was much cheaper than renting a room or apartment.
- They could also ride the city busses for free.
- Most or maybe all had second jobs. They'd spend the day working and then return to the station for supper and sleep.
- But if there was a call (or maybe just a fire), they had to hop on the truck.

Couple factors to consider here. First, their salaries weren't terribly high. One retiree recounts trying to buy a \$12,560 house in the newly developing Woodcrest community. This was the early or mid-1950s. He made \$73 a month, including city taxes and insurance. The bank said sorry, he didn't make enough money. He returned in 1957 after his salary was higher and bought the house.

There was also a residency requirement. Firemen had to live within the city limits, and the city limits were considerably smaller. Here's an annexation showing the significantly smaller city size. Thus, their housing choices were limited by geography. As each decade passed, the city grew. New subdivisions were developed by builders and they were annexed by the city. Firemen had more choices of places to live.

The residency requirement was expanded in February 1969, to anywhere within Wake County. Provided they lived on a paved road and that their telephones were "connected to the Raleigh exchange." The restriction was further expanded to a road mile distance. What was it, then thirty-five, then fifty?

Need reader input here. Both on the residency requirements, and any additional "living at the station" details that people have heard. Click to enlarge:



Postscript. Visit my [fire department timelines](#) and you'll see progressive annexation maps, per-decade. But... they don't match this map. Who's right and who's wrong? Probably my bad.

From a retiree who was hired in 1970. He remembers two firefighters living at their fire stations, at that time. It was the on-duty officer's discretion if they would answer calls, if a call was received while the off-duty fireman was at the station. If the company was "short", say, a three-man company that day, the off-duty "live in" member would also likely answer the call.

Legeros - 04/23/17 - 11:22

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