

## The Evolution of the Raleigh Fire Helmet

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For your Friday enjoyment, let's look at early fire helmets in the Capitol City. During the volunteer era, a few firemen had helmets. Such as this Carnes High Eagle owned and photographed by a collector in Wake Forest. It dates to perhaps the 1900s. [We blogged about these before.](#) They appear in photos as late as the 1920s, the odd helmet sitting on a truck. Haven't found any photos of them worn in pose, or on scene. Click to enlarge:



What did city firefighters wear? Dress caps, which were worn at fires from the 1910s through the late 1940s. Then the plastic helmets arrived with leather shields. This one was assigned to Firefighter Joe Allen, who served from 1922 to 1963. The shield numbers were assigned by order of start date, we think. The Allen family took this photo. Click to enlarge:



In later decades, the plastic helmets added a clear visor, and a newer shield design. Below is the newest addition to Mike's man cave. The maker is MSA, and the visor is labeled plectron. There's a leather chin strap, and a neck flap with a secondary chin strap. The presence of Velcro dates the flap to the 1960s or later. Underneath are the initials CTK, which suggest the owner was Firefighter Clyde T. Leonard, who served in the 1980s.



Fiberglass helmets replaced the plastic helmets in 1984. They were color coded by rank for a few years, captains wearing yellow, truck companies wearing black, engine companies wearing red, and rescue personnel wearing blue. Our last helmet was issued in 1989 to one M. J. Legeros. The maker is Cairns and the model is N660C Metro. It's missing a decal that was affixed to the front. Same was melted and removed after the helmet's owner's first fire. Duplex on Appleton Lane, off North Bend Drive. The helmet was retired a couple years later, when the

future blogger moved onto other pastures. It hasn't smelled of smoke or sweat in a long time.



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