

Conway Fire Wagon

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Here's something for (or from) the history books, as found by exploring photographer [Lee Wilson](#) this week in the small town of Conway, NC. That's in Northampton County. Population under a thousand. Parked (or displayed) behind the fire station at 113 White Street is what looks like a hand-built wooden fire wagon. Could be circa 1951, based on the formation date of the fire department, from their [Facebook page](#). Could be earlier. Here's my guess on the thing's history...



Lee Wilson photo

Many decades ago, the town installed fire hydrants. This allowed the connection of hoses with nozzles and thus fire suppression at any location within the town limits or the water system service area. This also necessitated the transport of hose et al to the scene of such fires. In days of old, when jakes were bold, such hose was hand-pulled on reels. Or wagons, depending upon the time frame. In more modern times, a town with a new hydrant system might employ pick-me-up trucks as hose wagons. Like this first fire truck for Rural Hall, NC. See [prior posting](#):



Rural Hall Fire Department photo

Heck, the same thing was done here in Wake County. The first fire engine in Knightdale was a 1 1/2-ton truck that firemen equipped with hose, ladders, and equipment at a cost of about \$1,500. [Read that history](#). Other Wake County used hose reels both hand- and vehicle-pulled. If memory serves, Wendell firefighters at one time towed the hose reels behind private vehicles. [Here's a picture](#) from 1952 of the Wendell gang, with one of the old (or maybe still in service at the time) reels:



Back to Conway, looking closely at their wagon, it seems entirely functional for what was needed to provide basic (or primitive) structural fire protection. Long bed for storing hose. Box for nozzles and spanners and what have you. Axe mounted on the side. Roof ladder hanging on the side. Pike pole laid across the top. The bare necessities, but enough for basic fire combat.

How long was the thing used? No idea. Long enough, probably, to work and get people interesting in approving or raising money for a vehicle, and/or pumping engine. Maybe one of their readers will come across this post, and share some stories they've heard from the thing's history. See larger versions of Lee's photos: [View #1](#), [View #2](#), [View #3](#).



Lee Wilson photo