

Volunteer Firemen at Morrisville Ready For Action With New Truck - 1956

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Raleigh Times story from March 14th, 1956. Plus inset photo from the North Carolina State Archives, courtesy of the *News & Observer*. Story by Trow Ford about Morrisville's first fire engine, a converted "war surplus tank truck" that had been placed in service the prior week. Was housed in a "small garage behind Jones and Sears store." They also installed an "air raid siren" the week before. It was donated to the fire department by "Civil Defense."

The truck was purchased for \$175 last spring. They moved the 750-gallon tank "farther back on the chassis" and "rearranged the pumping system." They purchased \$1,500 of equipment for the rig, including hoses, ladders, and lights. The truck was equipped with 500 feet of 1 1/2-inch hose, and 400 feet of 3/4 inch hose. That was the minimal county requirement. "Skirting" was done by Parrish Body Works for \$500. Painting was done by Neville Paint Shop for \$23. Everything else was done by firefighters or townspeople. Total expenditure, \$2,500.

The fire department was organized one year earlier. They had 17 active members by the time of the story, plus one honor member, Willie Hester, a local blacksmith who did the welding on the truck. Click **once or twice** to enlarge:

64 site. South Wilmington Street. He said it no longer pays for a year.

Volunteer Firemen at Morrisville Ready for Action With New Truck

By Trow Ford
Times Reporter

MORRISVILLE — The volunteer fire department here put its first fire engine in service this week, climaxing a community project of almost a year's duration.

However, Morrisville's fire-fighting problems are just beginning. The department is now planning to build a fire house, which will be financed by interested citizens and built by firemen handy with tools.

Dr. R. P. Hamilton, co-ordinator of the organizers of the department, said three sites are being considered for the fire house. Local citizens have offered two sites reasonably priced near the center of town. However, more serious consideration is being given the lot on which the truck now rests.

War Surplus Truck

The fire truck, a converted war-surplus tank truck, is being kept in a small garage behind Jones and Sears Store.

The property is owned by the Southern Railway Co., Hamilton said. If the town can get a long lease on the property, it is quite possible the fire house will be built there, he said.

"Someone is almost always in the store — an essential item to effective rural fire fighting," he said. "You have to have someone to answer the fire call if you expect to get the truck to the fire."

Air Raid Siren

An air raid siren, which will get many a fireman out of bed in the future, was installed last week. It was donated to the department by Civil Defense, he said.

Morrisville is also hoping to obtain another truck, Hamilton added.

The present truck was purchased from war-surplus for \$175 last spring. "We moved the 750-gallon tank farther back on the chassis and rearranged the pumping system," he said.

The department bought \$1,500 worth of equipment—hoses, ladders and lights—for the truck. "We have met necessary county requirements of a volunteer fire department for some time and have been receiving \$100 a month from the commissioners," Hamilton said.

The truck is supplied with 500 feet of 1 1/2-inch hose and 400 feet of 3/4-inch hose, the minimum county requirement.

The painting and skirting of the truck was the only work done by outsiders. Parrish Body Works charged \$500 for skirting and Neville Paint Shop \$23 for the coats of fire engine red.

Residents Contribute

"We spent, in all, \$2,500 for a truck, which would cost from 12 to 14 thousand dollars to buy," Hamilton said. "Almost all the money was contributed."

"The department was organized about a year ago," Hamilton said. Bob Elder of the Cary department said his department would train any Morrisville residents interested in forming a fire department.

"About 60 men turned out last spring when we asked for volunteer firefighters," Hamilton said. "We now have 17 active members and one honorary member—Willie Hester. He's a local blacksmith who did the welding on the truck — for nothing."



Carl Light and Morrisville's new fire truck