

North Carolina's Early American LaFrances... Still Beautiful After All These Years

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Guest column by Bay Leaf firefighter and American LaFrance antique owner George Mills.

North Carolina fire departments, including career, combination, and volunteer organizations, have a rich history of service to their communities. Many of these departments have or are striving to retain a piece of their history by preserving or restoring their original or early motorized apparatus. Of particular prominence is the famous brand of American LaFrance.

Beginning in the 1910s, the Elmira, NY, company supplied motorized hose cars, combination hose and chemical cars, triple combination pumpers, combination service ladder trucks, and aerial ladder trucks to dozens (hundreds?) of cities, towns, and institution in North Carolina. (Search the [John Peckham database](#) for information on these trucks.)

Raleigh, Greensboro, Louisburg, Newton, Winston-Salem, to name just a few, each have early-era American LaFrance engines that are still capable of making appearances in community parades. Some departments, like those in Oxford and Williamston, are in various stages of fundraising to restore or complete the restoration of their early rigs. Still others have rigs that are awaiting their destiny with history, either hopefully restored or lost in neglect.

The City of Hickory has three of their early American LaFrances that are keeping each other company. They include a pair purchased in 1924 with sequential purchase order and serial numbers. One is a Type 75 triple combination and the other is a Type 14 service ladder truck. Below are a photos and information about some of these trucks.



Raleigh's 1926 ALF Type 75 triple (#5629). Housed at Station 28 along with the city's other antique apparatus.



Louisburg's 1921 ALF Type 75 triple (#3682) is named "Maude" and is shown in a Christmas parade.



Newton's 1937 ALF Type 475CB (#L-887) is housed at Station 3 in Startown and waiting for room at the Catawba Fire Museum.



Newton's first rig is waiting for some loving, a 1921 ALF Type 40 triple (#3371).



Hickory's diamonds in the rough, all three seen in this picture: 1919 ALF Type 75 triple (#2714), 1924 ALF Type 75 triple (#4698), 1924 ALF Type 14-6 combination service ladder (#4699)



Closer views of the ladder truck, click above photo to enlarge.



Hickory's first fire engine, a 1914 ALF Type 10 combination hose and chemical car (#484).
Presently privately owned by a collector in Granite Falls, NC.

More Information

[See this blog posting](#) from December 1913 titled Oldest Motor Apparatus in North Carolina, with a list of known surviving rigs dating to 1930,

and links to photos.

Addendum

Data by Mike Legeros

[John Peckham American LaFrance database](#) contains 403 entries for "early era" rigs delivered to North Carolina, with 217 trucks shipped to 108 cities, towns, and institutions between 1912 and 1939.

The most popular models?

Type 75 triple - 74

Type 45 triple - 11

Type 12 triple - 11

Type 14 ladder truck, including combination - 10

Type 10 combination - 10

Top delivery destinations?

13 - Charlotte

11 - Raleigh

8 - Greensboro

7 - High Point, Wilmington

6 - Asheville, Rocky Mount, Winston-Salem

5 - Hickory

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