

Raleigh Fire Department, Established When?

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From the Raleigh Fire Museum on Facebook, which was posted yesterday. Writing style looks a bit familiar don't you think?

RALEIGH FIRE DEPARTMENT, ESTABLISHED WHEN?

Easy question, right? Yes and no.

The career fire department that protects that Capital City was organized in 1912. It was placed in service in December of that year.

In 2012, the Raleigh Fire Department celebrated that centennial anniversary in ways ranging from special logos on shirts and trucks, to special events in June (fireman's day) and November (fireman's ball).

But what about the volunteer fire department, that existed before 1912?

That entity—as a properly organized and supervised city service—was created sixty years earlier. In February 1852, city officials passed an ordinance that resulted in the first fire house, the first salaried fire chief, construction of fire cisterns, and reorganization of the volunteer fire companies.

Thus, a “proper fire department” has been serving the city since 1852.

But what about the fire companies before 1852?

Good question. They comprised what was also called a “fire department,” though with looser and less organization. In fact, the city's first fire company was organized in 1819. That means we've had nearly 200 years of organized fire protection in Raleigh! Not bad for a city that's 223 years old.

Nice answers hot shot, but here's another question. Didn't the volunteer fire companies also have numbers, like Company No. 1? Doesn't that mean that today's Engine 1 is over 100 years old, and maybe way over 100 years old?

Correct. Take a look at this chart, created by Raleigh Fire Department Historian Mike Legeros, <http://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history-chart.pdf>

When the career fire department was created in 1912, they had two (and soon three) hose companies. Hose Company No. 1 was housed on Morgan Street. They occupied the former quarters and used the former equipment of the Capital Hose Company. That hose company was called Capital Hose No. 3., as shown in a chart at the top of this page:

<http://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/timelines/1910-1919.shtml>

Unfortunately, the volunteer company numbers didn't match with their subsequent career station numbers.

- Rescue No. 1 became Hose No. 2 at Station 2 on Fayetteville Street.
- Victor No. 2 became Hose No. 3 at Station 3 on Hargett Street.
- Capital No. 3 became Hose No. 1 at Station 1 on Morgan Street.

In the early 1920s, the hose companies were renamed as engine companies. Thus, we can say that Engine 1, Engine 2, and Engine 3 each had their beginnings before 1912. Should you connect the dots based on their number, or which engine house they occupied? Your call.

Questions, comments? Add yours below.

For more information and dates, see these two documents:

Career company histories - <http://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/data/company-histories.pdf>

Volunteer company histories - <http://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/writing/volunteer-histories.pdf>