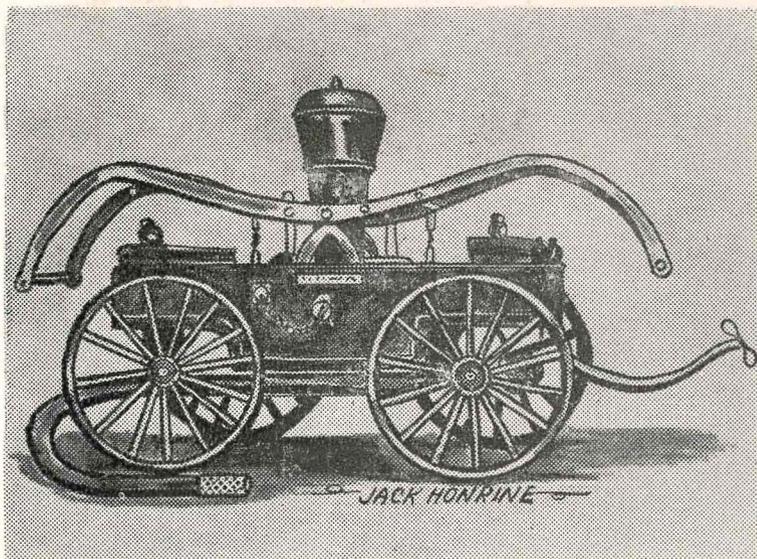
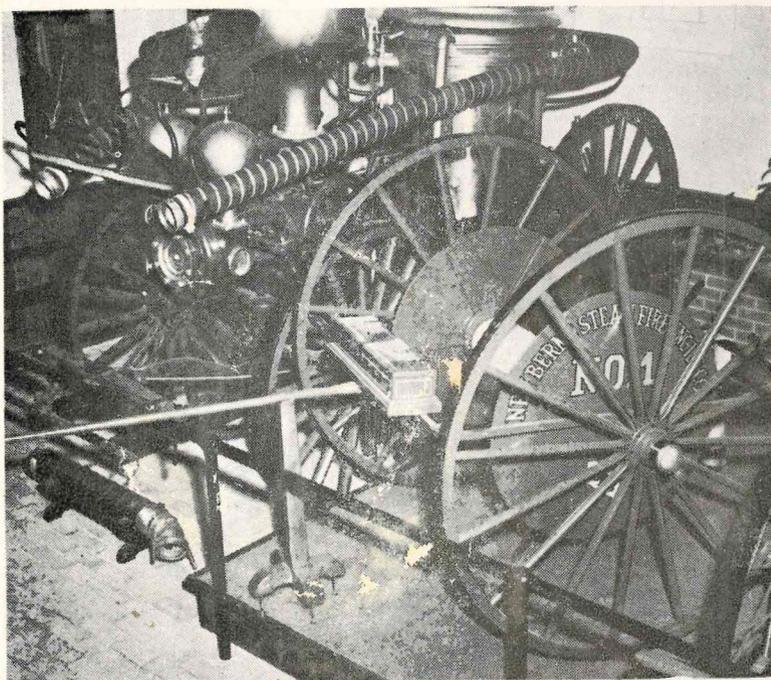


NEW BERN'S FIRST FIRE ENGINE



This sketch was made from an original picture of the old Hand Pumper used by the Union Army during the Occupation of New Bern, 1862-65. At the end of the War Between the States this Hand Pumper was given by the United States Government to the New Bern Steam Fire Engine Company Number 1 organized here Jan. 1, 1865.

BUTTON COMPANY'S SERVICE REEL



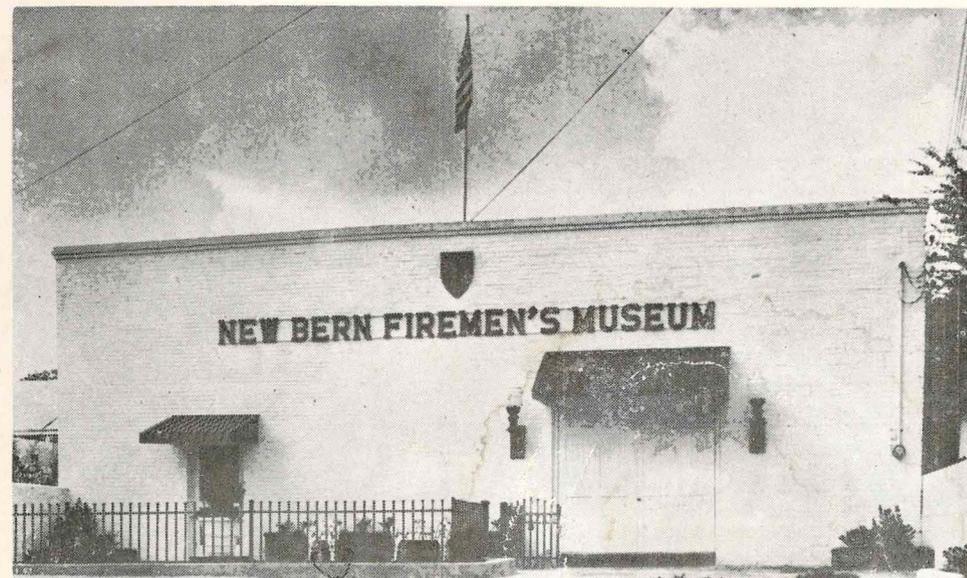
Used for fire service by Button Fire Company, 1885-1901. Sold to Town of Tarboro, N. C., March 7th, 1901. Reclaimed through efforts of Mayor of Tarboro, N. C., April 13th, 1955.

New Bern Firemen's Museum

ESTABLISHED 1955



SEAL OF NEW BERN
SETTLED 1710



DEDICATED JUNE 24, 1957

NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA



The Purpose of The New Bern Firemen's Museum

The purpose of creating the New Bern, North Carolina, Firemen's Museum is to preserve historical fire fighting relics and records, to arouse and promote the interest of present and future generations in the knowledge of the past, as well as to immortalize those who started and built The New Bern Fire Department.

History of New Bern Fire Dept. Atlantic and Button

In the early part of the Twentieth Century one company of the New Bern Fire Department established three new world records that have remained unbroken to this day. The organization's international reputation had its beginning in the old days when firemen used leather buckets filled with water for dousing fires and those who participated were referred to as the Bucket Brigade.

The first fire alarm bell in New Bern was mounted atop a two-story frame building used for a City Hall. It once stood on the corner now occupied by the Craven County Courthouse. Later the town government moved into a building on Craven street which had been used by a plug tobacco company.

Then a bell was installed in a cupola on top of the City Hall. Some time later a bell was mounted in a steel girded tower at Five Points. The bells were very effective when the wind blew in a right direction to carry the sound. Then someone thought of installing a wildcat whistle on top of the ice plant. That was effective.

The function of the early bell was to assemble the firemen at one point. In the absence of visible smoke they learned the location of a fire by word of mouth. After being relayed by several excited people the facts usually came in badly distorted. The firemen often galloped off with their buckets in the wrong direction and had to return to the station for further instructions. By then the location of the fire could be read in the sky.

The Atlantic Hook and Ladder Company was New Bern's first chartered fire fighting organization. The present original charter shows the organization date as being May 14, 1845. At the outbreak of the War Between the States many of its members volunteered for service in the Confederate Army. The company was more or less inactive for the duration of the war, due to the occupation of New Bern by Union forces.

The New Berne Steam Fire Engine Company, No. 1, was organized here January 1, 1865 by Union soldiers, who later remained on after the war. However, three years passed before the company received its first steam fire engine.

During the war the Union troops had received a hand pump from the North, which they used in fighting local fires.

The contraption reached its maximum output when eight men exerted their weight on each end of the pump's cross beam lever. A 16-man crew pulled the vehicle to the scene of the blaze. The hand pump threw water from one of New Bern's strategically located wells.

The firemen soon knocked themselves out pulling and pumping the Yankee apparatus and prevailed upon the Town Council to buy them a steam fire engine. It is thought the hand pump was used about three years and then given to a colored fire company on Hancock street.

The new steam fire engine arrived in 1868. It was assigned to New Berne Steam Fire Engine company No. 1, and was called the "Amoskeag." It, too, had to be pulled by hand, but was later converted for horse pulling. The engine was New Bern's pride and joy. It was taken to Charlotte May 20, 1875, for the Centennial Celebration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

The Amoskeag was considered ample protection until a big fire broke out in the heart of the town one night. The alarm sounded at 9:00 P.M., January 10th, 1871.

The blaze started in Hahn's Bakery on Pollock street. Some of the sparks ignited the shingled roof of Christ Episcopal church across the street. The flames quickly consumed the interior of the brick edifice and melted the church bell. The bell's metal was salvaged, cut into small pieces and sold as souvenirs to help rebuild the present church.

Fighting the fire on both sides of the street proved to be too much for the Amoskeag and her valiant crew. Town officials and firemen alike, saw the need for two fire engines. However, several years passed before sufficient funds could be raised to buy another engine.

One Sunday afternoon in 1879 a Clyde boat docked at the foot of Craven street. A large crowd was on hand to greet her and many of them were firemen. The ship had brought a new Silsby steam fire engine. It was assigned to the Atlantic Hook and Ladder company. A few years later in Winston-Salem, the Silsby engine beat a team from Elizabeth City on quick steam. The late W. O. Saunders, editor of the Elizabeth City Independent, was engineer for the rival outfit.

The city traded the Amoskeag for a
(Continued on next page)

HISTORY OF THE NEW BERN FIRE DEPARTMENT — (Continued)

Button fire engine in 1884. The new engine was for the New Berne Steam Fire Engine company, No. 1. About that time the organization was nicknamed the "Button company." There had been some rivalry between the Atlantic and Button companies up to this time, but it gained momentum when the new engines arrived. The rivalry continued until 1928, when the city housed both companies in a central fire station. The members of the two companies still hold separate meetings. These two were the leaders, but they were not the only fire fighting organizations in New Bern.

For many years there were several companies, both white and colored. At one time the city had a junior fire company made up of young men between the ages of 16 and 18. They were called the Excelsior Bucket and Axe company and upon reaching manhood were absorbed by the Atlantic and Button organizations. Other fire companies were: Mechanics, Fourth Ward, Riverside and the Holden company, named for Governor Holden.

One colored outfit bore a name that sounded like a demolition crew. They called themselves the "Axe, Rough and Ready Fire company." Another was known as the "Independent Colored Fire company," which used a Reliance hand pump.

The Button engine was given a thorough workout as soon as it arrived in New Bern. The firemen moved it in front of the restored Christ Episcopal church and threw a stream of water over the steeple. The steeple towers more than 150 feet above the street. After this test the firemen had something and they knew it.

The steam fire engines answered all fire alarms in the early days and pumped water from the wells as the old hand pump had done years before. The wells were located at the Brinson home, corner of Middle and Pollock streets, Broad and Middle, New and George, Metcalf and Johnson, Middle and South Front, Bern Street, at Five Points and North Craven (Griffith) at Pelletier's Knitting Mill. If the fire was near Neuse or Trent river, water was pumped from them.

For several years the Atlantic and Button companies competed with each other in setting up world records for quick steam. Finally, the Button company got tired of playing football with the title and set two records for quick steam.

In 1900 the Button company broke the world's record at Wilmington when it produced standing quick steam in one

minute and 46 seconds. It also broke the world's record for running quick steam, which was two minutes and 12 seconds. These records still stand. The running quick steam contest was discontinued after that year due to the necessity of shipping horses by rail to tournament cities.

The Atlantic company, in addition to being the state's oldest chartered fire fighting organization has several firsts to its credit, too. At one time it held the world's record for quick steam, until the Button boys took over. The Atlantics were the first in the state to use drop harness for fire horses. The state championship belt for reel racing was won three times by the Atlantics. As a result of an exhibition of drop harness and quick steaming given by the company in Wilmington, the idea of the annual state tournaments had its beginning. At a tournament held in Wilmington in 1913, New Bern firemen won 8 of 10 state prizes. All early records of the Atlantic company were burned in the Kafer bakery fire in 1927.

The Atlantics at one time kept a sign on their fire station door which read: "Stay out or feed the bear." This was to discourage the Buttons.

Thomas A. Green, now deceased, while a member of the Atlantic company became the fourth president of the North Carolina Firemen's Association, after it was organized at Greensboro in 1888. He was president three years and was treasurer for 10 years.

To be recognized as a staunch fireman used to command almost as much respect as being a staunch church man. Some of the early leaders were: Atlantic — Elijah Ellis, J. C. Green, Joe K. Willis and J. C. Scales. Button — Ed Pavie, Dick Hilton, Sam Radcliff and Jimmie Moore. The latter was father of Mrs. Maude Moore Latham, who initiated the restoration of Tryon's Palace here by giving the first trust in 1944.

The members of both New Bern fire companies were continually conducting quick steam experiments with their engines. On several occasions they frightened factory men out of their wits. The representatives wanted no part of a fire engine that showed 30 pounds of steam after 30 seconds of stoking.

In 1904 New Bern firemen took one of their vitalized fire engines to a tournament in Salisbury. They slept with it at night on the railroad flat car. It was so energized that when a firebrand was thrust into the firebox at the start of the contest, the engine jumped a foot off the ground. The judges stood around

HISTORY OF THE NEW BERN FIRE DEPARTMENT — (Continued)

looking bug-eyed, because they had just given the engine a thorough inspection and had found nothing of a disqualifying nature.

Hose wagons reached their greatest popularity after the city installed a water system. The Button company set a record in Charlotte May 19, 1911, that still stands. Ben Hurst was the horse pulling the hose wagon and the world's record read like this: Ran 300 yards, laid 288 feet of hose, connected to hydrant, screwed on nozzle and showed water in 26 2/5 seconds.

The first fire horses owned by New Bern merchants who used them in their businesses. The moment an alarm sounded the animals and the drivers became servants of the fire department. At the turn of the century the city bought several horses to pull garbage carts. Then when the alarm went in the driver unhitched his horse and raced for the fire station.

February 22 used to be a big day for firemen in New Bern. The occasion was marked by a big parade which featured the New Bern firemen's band. They not only observed the father of our country's birthday, but they honored his record as one of the nation's greatest firemen. George Washington joined the Alexandria, Va., fire department when 17 years old and remained an enthusiastic member until his death in 1799. The celebration continued here until about 1890.

The New Bern Fire department has kept abreast of the city's growth. The town's streets were paved with oyster shells when the steam fire engines came. The driver's seat was equipped with leather straps to keep him from being thrown off when the engine struck a hole in the street.

It is believed paving of the streets with brick was delayed until a water system could be installed. Then contract was let for running water and the installations made just prior to 1900. This put the firemen in a better position to fight several destructive fires that came a few years later.

One of the old time fires started in Scott's livery stable, near the present First Baptist church July 8, 1903, at 10 p.m. The blaze spread to Mitchell's stable and the Planter's tobacco warehouse. Several shanties in Church Alley caught fire. The firemen had 15 streams of water on the blaze at one time. The New Bern Daily Journal office on Middle Street was threatened for a while. The reporter covering the incident gave the

firemen this plug: "Everyone expressed admiration at the fire laddies' work." The editor put in this word: "Due to the confusion arising from the fire the Friday edition of the Journal will probably not be issued."

The old Button and Atlantic fire engines were replaced by motorized trucks in 1914 and 1915 respectively. The Button truck arrived on Thanksgiving Day and the fellows were forced to forego their annual hunting trip. The hose wagons went out about the same time. Old timers claim the trucks took the glamour out of fire fighting and they also contend the hose wagons could show water first.

In its more than a century of colorful history the New Bern Fire department has suffered only two casualties in the line of duty. Johnnie J. Gaskill died November 6, 1904, as the result of being kicked by a fire horse. Edgar D. Elliott was drowned June 10, 1931, while fighting a riverfront fire.

Which fire company reached a blaze first used to be more important to New Bernians than damage done or whose house burned. Each company had its following of enthusiastic fans. If one of the engines happened to dash out of the station with its whistle blowing, that became the piece de resistance for future arguments about quick steam.

The Atlantic colors were pink and white. The Button's were blue and white. Enthusiastic mothers of that era showed their preference for a fire company by dressing their babies in its colors.

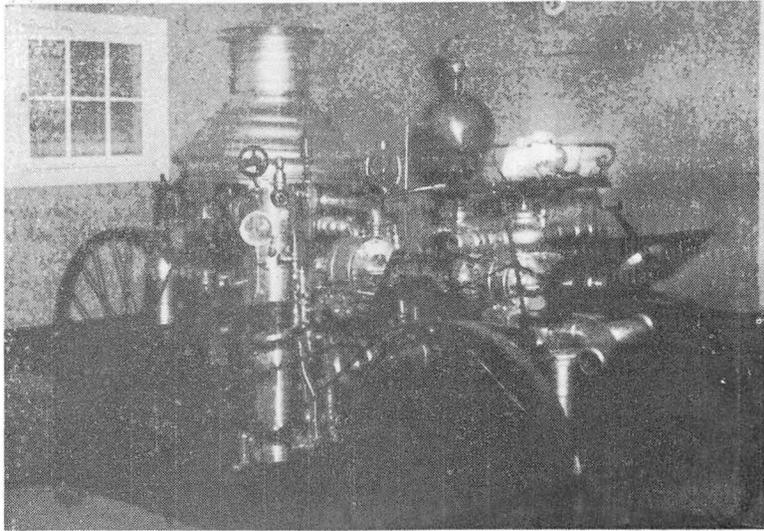
The New Bern Fire department has remained a volunteer organization throughout its history. This may have had something to do with a custom New Bernians started more than 50 years ago, which only gratitude could have kept alive. After each fire a card of thanks appears in the local newspaper. These ads of appreciation to the firemen are paid for by the unfortunate victims and usually run two columns wide.

Early firemen were called upon for many prefatory duties. They led parades, escorted the militia, presided at banquets and made many welcome speeches. Their uniforms attracted the ladies and they usually married earlier than less conspicuous men.

To be a fireman in the old days was to be somebody. The Atlantic engine's sparkling nickel trim and the Button's highly polished brass merely added luster to the office of fireman.

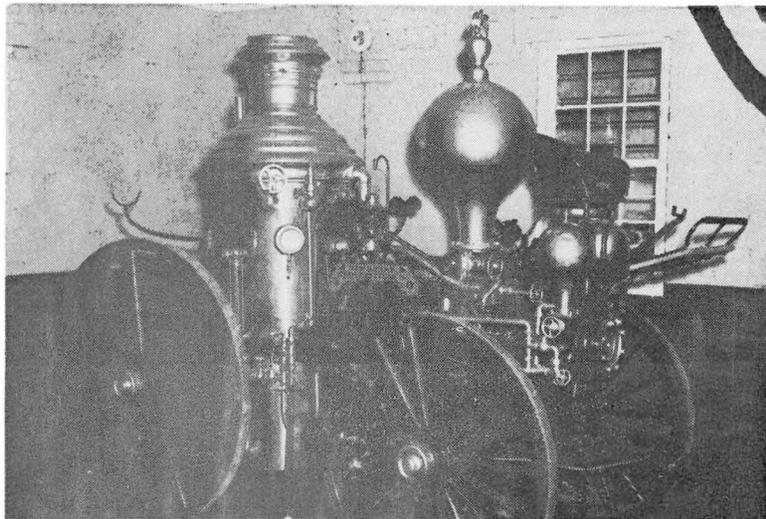
BY JACK HONRINE

ATLANTIC STEAMER
Built 1879



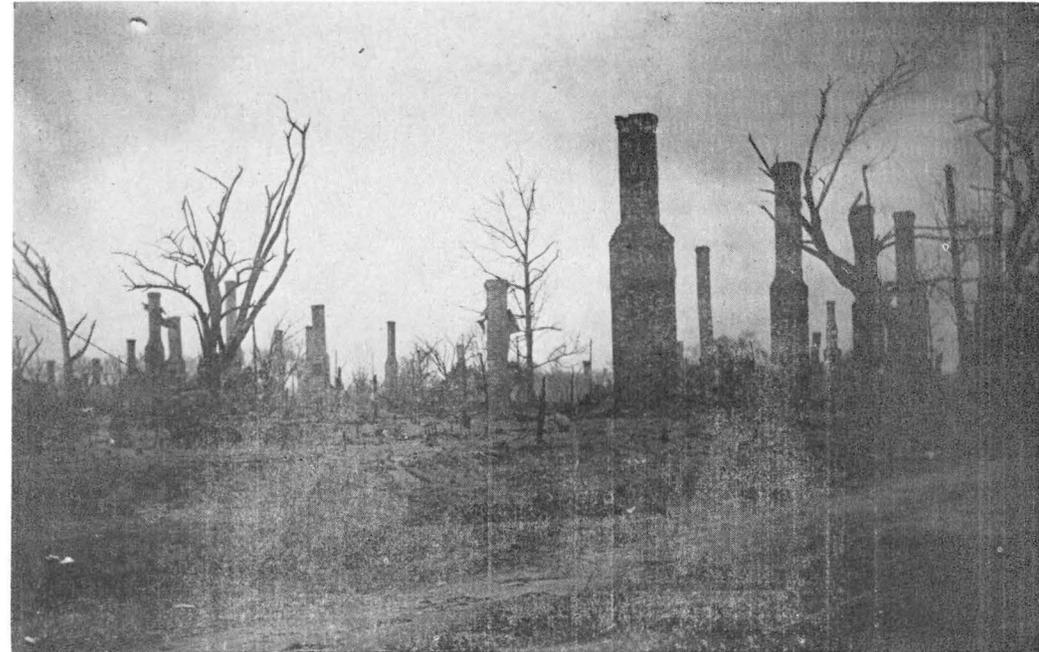
The Atlantic Steamer, built by the Silsby Company, was unloaded from the Clyde Ship Line in 1879, and remained in continuous service until 1915. It was named for Elijah Ellis, a staunch member and benefactor of the Atlantic Company. Shortly after 1879 it was in contest with the Elizabeth City Team and won in quick steaming. On May 18, 1911 at the State Firemen's Tournament held at Charlotte, it won first prize in quick steaming in the time of 2 minutes 59 $\frac{3}{5}$ seconds. Charlotte the only competitor was over 6 minutes. In the long distance test it won second prize.

BUTTON STEAMER



Built by Button Fire Engine Works, M. L. Button, founder, Waterford, N. Y. Purchased by City of New Bern. 1884. Assigned to New Berne Steam Fire Engine Co. No. 1. World Record, Wilmington, N. C., 1900. Standing Quick Steam one minute 46 seconds; running quick steam, two minutes 12 seconds.

History of New Bern's Worst Fire



Looking Towards Northwest from Corner of George and Queen Streets

The most devastating fire ever to occur in New Bern claimed one life, left 3,000 homeless and did over two million dollars worth of property damage. The residents will long remember Friday, December 1, 1922. It was a beautiful balmy day, but a hell on earth from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. The conflagration was really two fires in one.

The first fire on that ill-fated day in December started about 8 o'clock in the morning at the Rowland Lumber company in the northern part of the city. The flames consumed the sawmill, dry kilns, lumber shed and two million feet of lumber. The loss was estimated at more than \$250,000. Sixty men were made jobless. Some of them lost their homes in the second fire.

It was about 9 o'clock in the morning of the same day that a fire broke out in the home of Henry Bryan, a Negro residing on Kilmarnock street in the Five Points section of the city.

This was the fire that caused the destruction of 1,000 homes, business houses and manufacturing plants and covered an area of 25 city blocks. It broke out before the firemen had time to subdue the sawmill blaze about a mile away.

The conflagration claimed its only victim when a 105-year-old Negro woman residing on Cedar street burned to death in her home. During the excite-

ment she was evidently forgotten by those about her and left to her fate.

During the fire it was found necessary to hook the city mains on with the river water supply. For several days after the big fire, residents boiled tap water to make it safe for human consumption.

Chief James S. Bryan of the New Bern Fire department was assisted by firemen and equipment from Kinston and Washington. The latter equipment was rushed to the city on a railroad flat car.

When news of the destructive fire hit the front pages of the nation's newspapers, letters and telegrams began to pour into Mayor Edward Clark's office. Notably among these was a telegraphic message of sympathy and condolence from President Warren G. Harding.

Immediately following the conflagration, when it was realized that more than 3,000 persons were homeless, Harry M. Jacobs, president of the New Bern Chamber of Commerce, called a mass meeting of citizens at the court house and explained the situation which confronted the city. Within half an hour a relief fund of \$14,000 was raised.

Senator F. M. Simmons came to New Bern immediately upon learning of the destruction. He and Mr. Jacobs contacted General Bowley at Fort Bragg and

(Continued on next page)

HISTORY OF NEW BERN'S WORST FIRE — (Continued)

got through an emergency requisition order for tents, cots, mattresses and blankets. The general dispatched the supplies the same day. They arrived in New Bern accompanied by two officers and 12 soldiers. Similar supplies were shipped from Camp Glenn.

In just a few hours a new housing development sprang up in New Bern. It soon acquired the name, "Tented City." It became a picturesque city a few days later when a heavy snow fell.

As the fire began to spread more drastic measures became necessary. Three demolition crews were organized in the afternoon and they were under the supervision of L. R. Tucker. The first house was dynamited about 4 o'clock. The high explosive was placed in the fireplace on the second story.

The plan proved very effective in checking the spread of the blaze which had been fanned all day by a high wind. A Norfolk Southern switch engine, by means of a heavy cable yanked down

six houses in a row. This checked spread of the flames near the railroad yards.

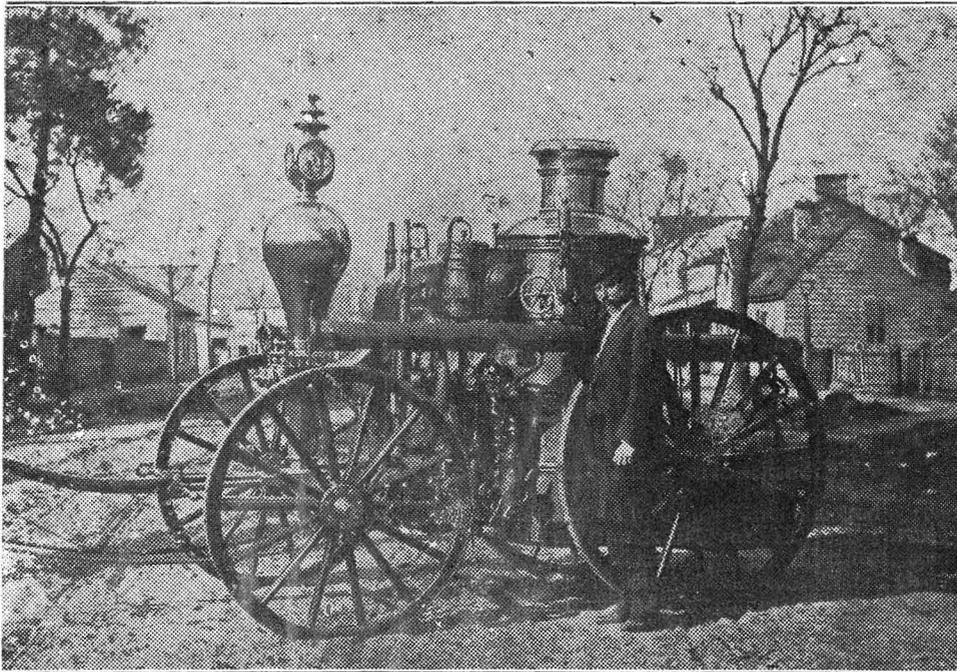
Many residents who had lost their homes in the fire slept in Cedar Grove cemetery the first night. While the fire raged along George street countless numbers moved their household goods to the cemetery. They remained with what was left of home throughout the night.

Carter Taylor, Red Cross official, came to New Bern immediately following the great conflagration to take charge of Red Cross Relief work. The organization did a magnificent job of providing household necessities for the victims and relieving suffering in general.

With the memory of dense clouds of heavy black smoke sweeping low over the city and the crack of dynamite heard at frequent intervals, the people of New Bern will always be grateful to their valiant fire department.

BY JACK HONRINE

OLD AMOSKEAG



The Amoskeag, first Steam Engine ever brought to New Bern. It was purchased in 1868. When Christ Episcopal Church and other buildings in the vicinity on Pollock Street were burned in 1871, it did practically all the fire fighting. From being hand-drawn apparatus, it was converted into horse-drawn. In 1884 it was traded in on the Button Engine.

History of The City of New Bern



New Bern was settled in 1710 by a native of Switzerland and is the second oldest town in North Carolina. It is the county seat of Craven, one of the original precincts of the Lord Proprietors.

The county was named for William Lord Craven, who was by a morganatic marriage the husband of the Queen of Bohemia. He was one of the eight cavaliers to whom Charles II granted the province of Carolina. The name came from the coins struck off during the King's reign, which were called "carolus."

In 1710 Queen Anne of England granted ten thousand acres of land to Christopher deGraffenried, of Berne, Switzerland. He came over with 1,500 of his countrymen. There were also 650 German emigrants in the expedition.

DeGraffenried landed his colony at the confluence of Neuse and Trent rivers. The site was named New Bern, after his hometown in Berne, Switzerland. The Swiss nobleman was said to have been very handsome. He was so popular with Queen Anne, a widow, her ministers became uneasy. Naturally they wholeheartedly approved his plans for an American colony. They thought it one way to break up a sure-fire romance. "Ye Baron," as he was usually called, remained in Carolina about two years.

During the time, he and a close friend, John Lawson, were held captives five weeks by Indians. The friend, being of bad temper, was tortured to death. The savages released the Baron after he showed them a gold insignia, which led them to believe he was a king.

Upon being released by the Indians deGraffenried became disgusted with life in the province. As a result he mortgaged his entire estate to Col. Thomas Pollock. He left almost immediately for Switzerland, never to see Carolina again.

For the next 13 years New Bern grew and prospered. It was incorporated in 1723 and was long known as "The Athens of North Carolina."

The first printing press in the province was set up in New Bern by James Davis in 1749. His press ran off the first book, pamphlet and newspaper in North Carolina.

British rule was ended in New Bern in May of 1775. On that date patriotic citizens drove out Josiah Martin, the Royal governor.

In 1774 the first assemblage of representatives of the people of North Carolina, independent of royal authority met in New Bern. The meeting was called to look into the encroachments of England

(Continued on next page)

HISTORY OF THE CITY OF NEW BERN (Continued)

upon the rights and liberties of America. It was called by John Henry, speaker of the House, and is known as the "Provincial Congress."

New Bern Academy, the first incorporated school for the province, was started here in 1764.

The provincial capitol was located here in 1766 by Royal Governor William Tryon. His palace is now being restored in New Bern.

Cedar Grove Cemetery contains the grave of William Gaston, jurist, orator and composer of the State anthem. Also buried there is William Hughes, the gifted artist who painted the famous Masonic portrait of President George Washington.

Christ Episcopal Church is one of the oldest in the state of that denomination. The church's silver communion service

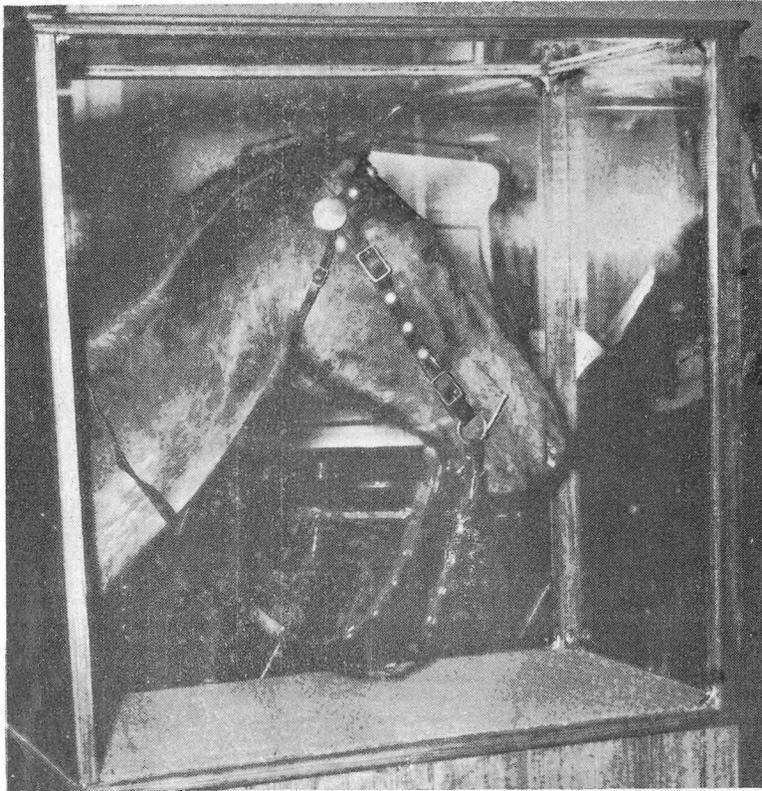
was a gift from King George II of England.

The First Presbyterian church is another historic edifice. It was built in 1822 from plans which Sir Christopher Wren drew for a New England church. St. Paul's Roman Catholic church, located here, is the oldest church of that faith in the State.

New Bern's prominence in colonial affairs is evidenced by the graves of three early North Carolina governors. Across Trent river are buried Richard Dobbs Spaight, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., and Abner Nash. A boulder on the court house square commemorates their memory.

The greatest New Bern attraction for tourists is its colonial homes. The architecture of these homes ranks with the finest in colonial America.

ATLANTIC HORSE "FRED"



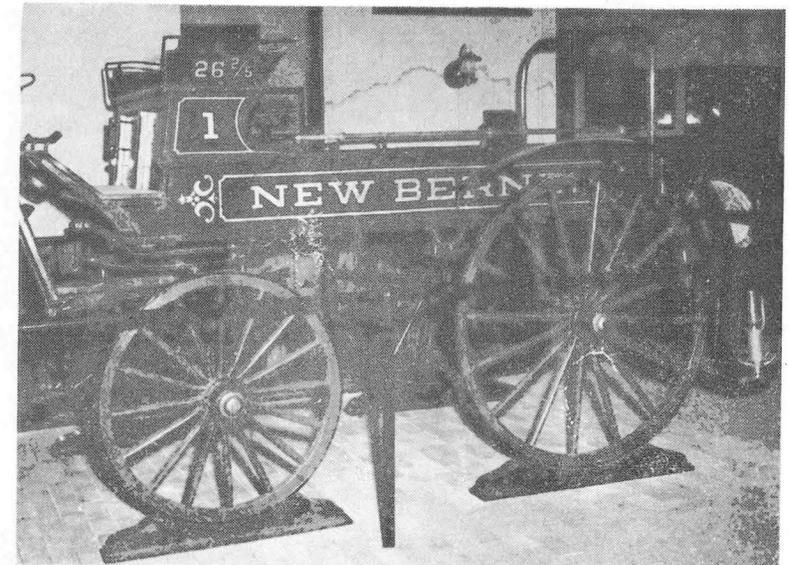
The horse, Fred, was bought from Thomas Craig, Gastonia, in 1908, he pulled the Atlantic hose wagon to alarms for about 17 years, driven by John Taylor, colored. In 1916 the Atlantic hose wagon pulled by "Fred" tied the Button team in the contest at 29 seconds. This horse fell dead answering Box 57, a false alarm in 1925. It was said he knew a number of the locations of the most frequent used boxes.

ATLANTIC HOSE WAGON



This hose wagon was built by the G. S. Waters Buggy Works of New Bern around the turn of the century. It was pulled to all alarms by horse "Fred" for 17 years. There were many races at the State Tournaments in which it made competition with "Fred."

BUTTON HOSE WAGON



Purchased by members of Button Company, 1909. In service until 1928. Used in race at Charlotte, N. C., May 19, 1921. Official time 26 2/5 seconds.