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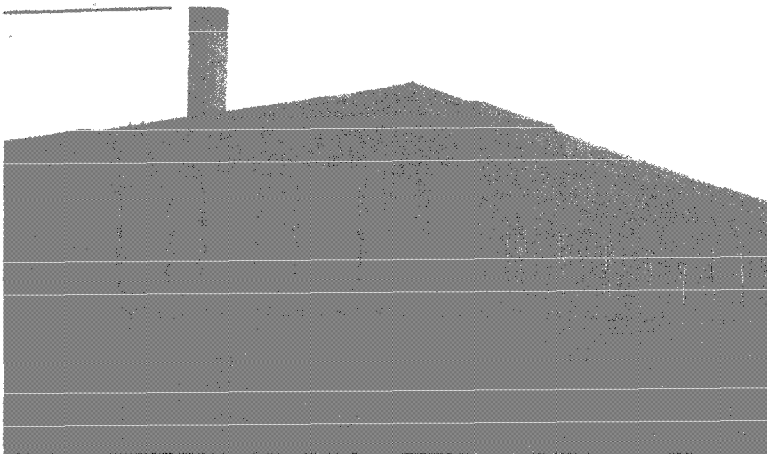
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Editor: Kelley Webb

History



Much of the history of our fire department lies in the minds and experiences of the men and women who have gone before us. They saw the first volunteer Fire Company put into service, they were one of the 54 men that started a paid Asheville Fire Department and served under Chiefs like A.L. Duckett who did amazing things for our fire department. And then there were the fires. These men and women worked jobs like the Harness Shop

fire when it was 14 below zero. They fought hard at the Emporium fire on Pack Square in the middle of the day with hundreds of civilians watching them. They tried to contain a very large fire at Highlands Hospital that claimed the life of the wife of a famous writer. They witnessed Asheville's line of duty deaths at the Susquehanna Antique Shop and West Asheville Baptist Church.

Our department started as citizen bucket brigades, passing water from hand to hand in an attempt to extinguish fires. In February 1882, a fire broke out in a residence late at night. As the bucket brigade formed and began to fight the fire, one of the members noticed a woman on the third floor. She had become trapped within the smoke and flames. The brigade had no ladders tall enough to assist in her rescue. After this woman's death, several citizens approached the city alderman and demanded that the city better equip its all volunteer brigades. A hand drawn wagon carrying a 35 foot ladder was purchased and Ladder Company #1 was organized that same February.

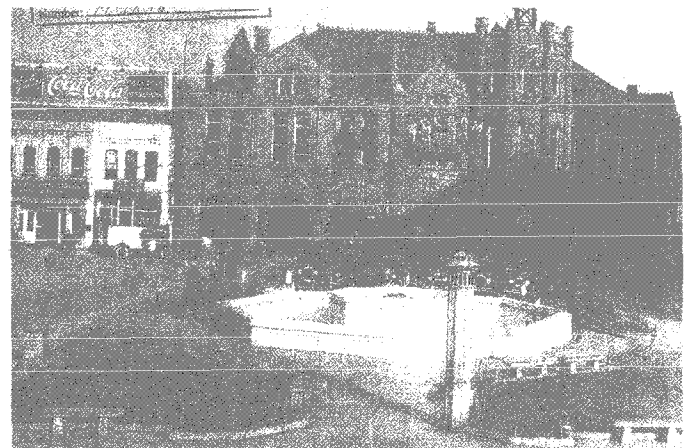
Ladder Company #1 was a welcomed addition for the citizens of Asheville, but a larger problem existed. No water works existed in the city at this time so most fires were still fought from wells, rivers, streams and creeks using buckets. In west Asheville, that same spring, the Sulphur Springs Hotel burned. This hotel was a tourist attraction and a proud landmark to the people in West Asheville. It was the first hotel in the South to have an electronic passenger elevator. Since there was no water supply the structure burned without any attempt to extinguish it. A renewed effort to establish a water works began shortly after this fire. We know that this project was completed sometime between 1882 and 1884 when the Sulphur Springs Hotel burned a second time in late 1884. Fire Company #1 was formed shortly after the second Sulphur Springs fire. This company was equipped with a hand drawn wagon carrying hoses and nozzles. After the water works were complete, the pressure in Asheville's system was so great that pumping at a fire was not needed. Volunteer Chief Clarence Sawyer led both companies during these times.

By 1890 Asheville had already begun to grow very rapidly. Downtown was developing into a thriving business district. Whether out of a sense of civic duty or preservation of their own interests several Asheville business people became volunteer firefighters. In 1894, Asheville built a new city hall on east Pack Square which housed the police department, fire department, court rooms and all city staff.

At this same time our fire department made a very dramatic shift in how it transports men and equipment to fires. All hand drawn equipment were replaced with horses. Since it took the abilities of large numbers of men at each working fire, the addition of horses allowed those efforts which used to concentrate on pulling all hand drawn wagons, to be focused on fighting the fire. A more efficient fire department was beginning to emerge.

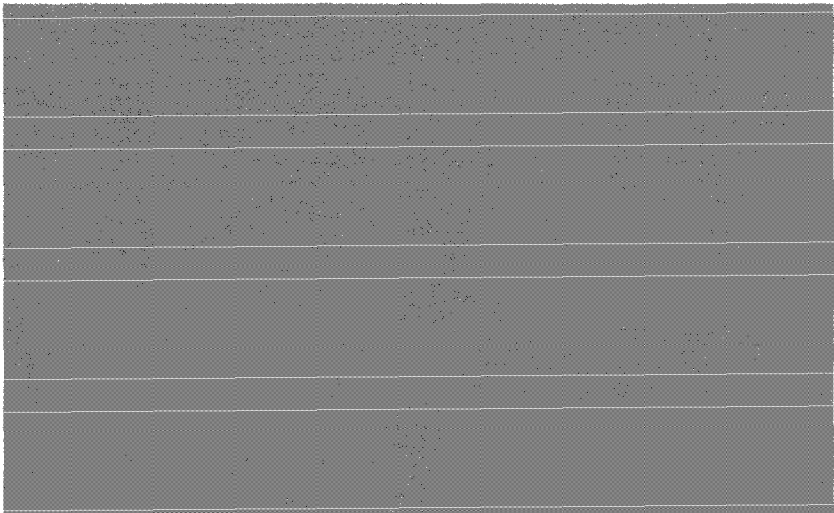
Along with the new city hall building the alderman approved expenditures for new hose wagons, ladder wagons and several new horses to assist in city fire protection.

Firefighters looked at the horses as their equal when it came to their jobs. They spent several hours a day training and caring for these animals. It showed when the alarm rang. As the gong sounded each horse was trained to move from its stall to the front of its respected apparatus. The men would lower the harnesses and fasten them to each horse. The bay doors would open and each apparatus would race through the streets.



The crews became so proficient that they were able to hook up the horses, race to the scene, lay lines from the hose wagon and hydrant to the fire scene and have the lines charged in under 30 seconds.

The volunteers in the early 1900's were just as amazing. They dedicated long hours to training, fire fighting and equipment upkeep, not to mention the livelihoods and families they needed to support as well. They were very dedicated to the fire service. One man showed strong commitment and desire in the year 1905. John Brooks became the first African American member and driver in our department's history. In this year Mr. Brooks was appointed driver of Hose Company #1.

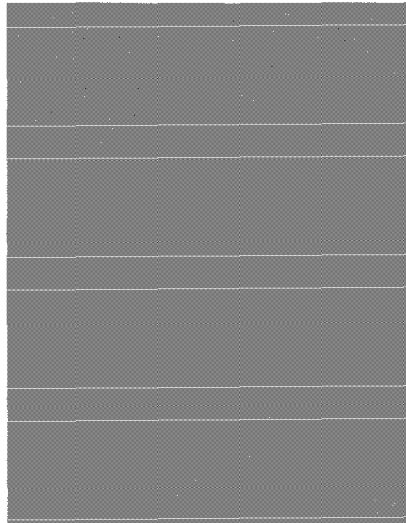


In 1909 another change to how Asheville firemen did their job was in the making. A major event that assisted in this change was the Kenilworth Inn fire on April 15, 1909. At around 2:15am that morning an alarm was sounded for a small fire at the Inn. The fire had started from loose embers from the Inn's chimney igniting a bird's nests near the eaves of the structure. That night the Inn was playing host to thirty guests and most all of them were undoubtedly asleep for the night. When the firemen arrived they found a four story structure heavily involved in fire. The volunteers worked hard to rescue the guests and contain fire spread. Not one guest or employee was lost in this fire. However, many of the citizens who watched this fire from a nearby hill were influential business people of Asheville. Many complained that the fire was very small when the fire department was called and that the large amount of time it took for the first arriving units to get on the scene led to much greater destruction. Many went to the city alderman and requested that the department's horses be replaced with motorized equipment. Many cities around America had already left horses behind and purchased motorized wagons, Asheville was soon to follow. In 1913, much to the chagrin of the volunteer firefighters, the city purchased their first motorized apparatus. Many of the long time volunteers left the city's fire service after this change came about. The horses had been like one of the men to the volunteers. They worked side by side and spent many long hours together fighting some of the city's worst fires to date.

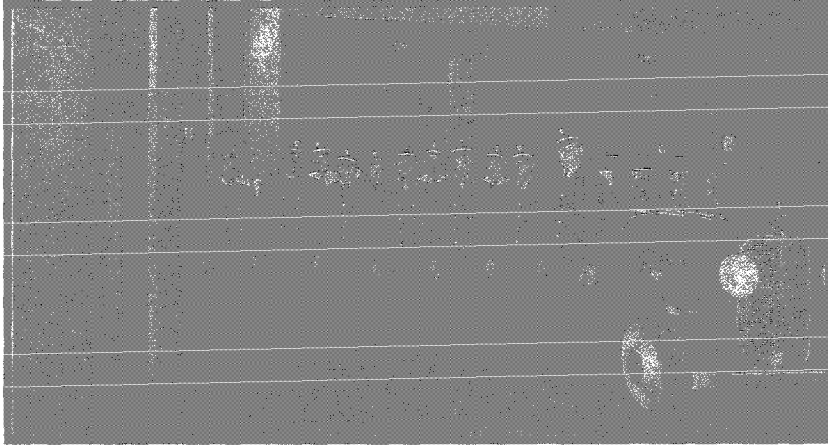
It had become a very emotional time in our department's history. As with many events in all of history, the catalyst for such changes can often be pinpointed to single events. Two major fires stand out as these catalysts for a major change that was to take Asheville from volunteers to a paid, career department.

On the morning of November 16, 1917 an alarm came in for a structure fire at an address near South Charlotte Street and Max Street, then the Catholic Hill School. It was a school day and the firemen knew there would be several teachers and children in the building, in fact there were over 300 at the time of the fire. The building was constructed out of brick and was three stories tall.

The fire was believed to have started in the furnace room. Wooden floors and large, open stairwells running from basement to the top floor assisted the fire spread. The volunteers worked hard that day and saved several young lives. However a few of the children panicked when the school began to fill with smoke. Six children ran together to the top floor into room 3-B in an attempt to flee the smoke and flames and became trapped. Later, as firemen started overhaul, they found the bodies of those six children in room 3-B. Another child's body was found outside the room near the stairwell along with two nuns at the entrance to the third floor. This became one of the worst civilian casualties the department had experienced to date. After this fire, the Stephens-Lee School was built and still serves the Asheville community today.



John H. Cathey was Asheville's mayor in the early 1920's. He is credited with overseeing the design and construction of the Asheville City Hall. This was a very progressive and costly project at the time. The firemen at the time also knew that with such progressive leadership that it wouldn't be long until our fire department went to a fully paid staff. The event that pushed this concept to reality happened on a summer day in July, 1923. The Emporium was a large retail store on south Pack Square. This fire was very spectacular because the smoke could be seen for miles around and it occurred in the middle of the day. As the volunteers fought this fire several hundred Asheville citizens looked on. The damage to the building was estimated at over one hundred thousand dollars. Less than one year after this incident, on April 2, 1924, the Asheville City Fire Department became a fully paid, career department.



The Asheville Citizen newspaper reported on March 30, 1924 that 54 men would start the paid department and the current volunteers would not disband, but form a club. It is unclear as to what function this volunteer club would serve.

Chief A.L. Duckett became Chief on January 23, 1920 after 23 years on the line. He fought at most of the fires that defined the department at the time. He was Chief when Headquarters moved from Pack Square to the Municipal Building in 1925 and was a strong advocate of fire prevention. He was instrumental in starting the North Carolina Fire School and the department received four major awards from the NFPA for fire prevention. He also saw the opening of Stations 4 and 5.

On December 9, 1938 Chief Duckett retired with forty three years of service to the city of Asheville. He died less than a year later at the age of 62. He received full honors as the bell atop City Hall tolled once for every year of his age.

J.C. Fitzgerald was promoted to Chief on December 9, 1938. Like Chief Duckett, Chief Fitzgerald had been a member of the department for 22 years prior to his promotion. He had fought the hard fires and seen many dramatic changes the department experienced. He was well seasoned and an excellent fireman.

One fire that was particularly hard on Chief Fitzgerald happened in the early morning on March 10, 1948. Highland Hospital located on Zillicoa Street was originally named "Dr. Carroll's Sanatorium" and was used to treat patients with mental and nervous disorders. All of the windows had bars on them and all the doors had steel slabs. When the crews arrived shortly after 1 am they found that the four story building was already heavily involved. Crews went to work immediately pulling lines and attempting to forcibly enter the structure to rescue patients and staff. Due to the bars on the windows firefighters at the scene reported later that they had to watch patients die in front of them while they tried in vain to remove the bars to gain access. Nine patients died in this fire. Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of classic author F.Scott Fitzgerald, was one of those casualties.

Chief Fitzgerald retired from the Asheville Fire Department on December 31, 1962 after 47 years of service. At the time of his retirement party he warned the men to be careful of some of the older buildings downtown. The old Chief didn't know it at the time but he was foreshadowing Asheville's first Line of Duty death less than one year later.

Chief D.B. Dover was appointed Chief on January 1, 1963 after the retirement of J.C. Fitzgerald. At the time of his appointment, Dover was 64 years old and had served the department for 39 years. Chief Dover had the misfortune to be in command during Asheville's first line of duty death.

On December 9, 1963 at 4:30 pm the department dispatcher received a call for the smell of smoke in a building. The address was 23 Biltmore Avenue, the Susquehanna Antique Shop. Engine 1 was dispatched under the command of Lt. George House. Upon arrival Lt. House reported heavy smoke showing coming from the basement stairwell. The call for a regular alarm was transmitted by House. Chief Dover soon arrived on the fire scene and noticed that by now the entire basement area was on fire. A second alarm was called in by Chief Dover.





Gus Werhan was called into service and advised by dispatch to go to Station 7 and pick up the reserve engine. He then asked the dispatcher if he could go directly to the fire instead of stand by. His request was granted. Lines had already been laid from the hydrant in front of the Plaza Theater. Werhan, Lt. Mitchell and George Honeycutt took control of the nozzle on these lines and advanced them into the antique shop. Crews continued to operate well into early evening. As night approached, firemen on the scene reported hearing what sounded like an explosion. After this sound, Capt. Joe Diggs began going from crew to crew and taking accountability. He explained that the front of the building had collapsed and they wanted to make certain everyone was accounted for. It was determined the Gus Werhan was missing. It took firemen on the scene two hours to pull him from the collapse. Werhan was rushed to the hospital, but later died from his injuries. This death weighed very heavily on Chief Dover and he retired shortly after this fire.

Asheville's next Chief would rise through the ranks as they had done for decades. Powell Ball was appointed on September 1, 1970. He had already served the city of Asheville for twenty years before earning his promotion to Chief of the department. Under Chief Ball's tenure no new fire stations were built. However, stations 2, 3 and 5 were relocated to their current locations. In addition, our department moved from two shifts to its current three shift system.

In the early 1980's the fire department underwent an intensive study by the Management Improvement Corporation of America, a private consulting firm. The results of this study provided the path for much of the department structure we have today. Firefighters were provided with a career ladder, division chiefs were put into place to manage three new department divisions; Administration, Fire Suppression and Fire Prevention. Equipment was to be brought up to OSHA standards, education of the members became more of a priority as money would allow, and he established a first responder program with many members becoming EMT certified

Powell Ball also experienced Asheville's second line of duty death. On May 26, 1982 a fire started at the West Asheville Baptist Church after lightning struck the steeple and set the attic ablaze. A full alarm was struck and Engine Company 6 was one of the first due at 926 Haywood Road. Shortly after making entry and fighting the blaze, the steeple, weakened by the lightning strike and ensuing fire, collapsed trapping and killing Raymond J. Flowers. Flowers had been a member of the department for a little over one year. He was given full honors at his funeral. The entire membership of the department, along with several hundred others, followed the procession on foot from headquarters to Riverside Cemetery.

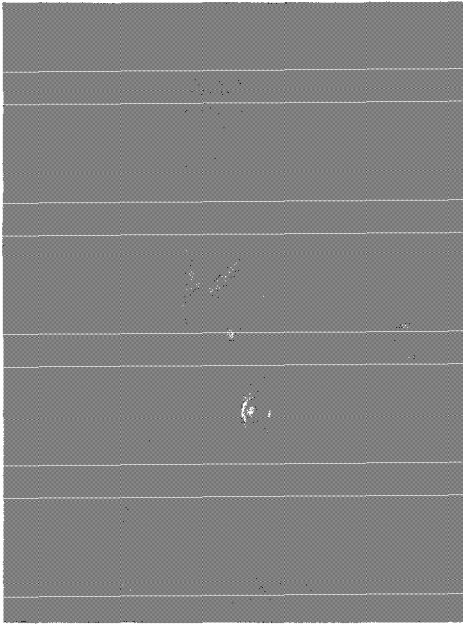
After serving 16 years as Chief of the Asheville Fire Department, Powell Ball retired on July 1, 1986. Chief Ball was a very progressive chief and instituted many changes that are still in place today.

After Powell Ball's retirement, Asheville City Manager Doug Bean conducted a search for a new fire chief. After all the testing and assessment centers were completed another first in the Asheville Fire Department occurred. John David Rukavina from St. Paul, Minnesota was appointed chief on November 10, 1986. This was the first time in history that a chief was chosen from outside the fire department. Chief Rukavina served until 2000 when he resigned to take a position at the Wake County Public Safety Division.

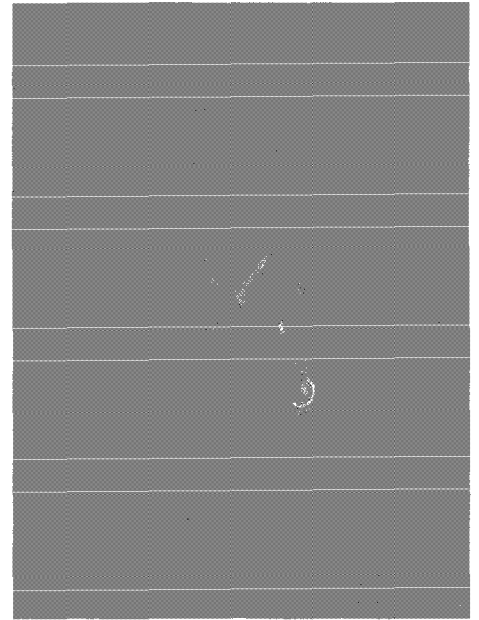
Assistant Chief Robert Griffin stepped in as interim Chief from May 2000 until the end of October 2000. On November 1, 2000, Greg Grayson from the Burlington Fire Department was appointed as the new Fire Chief for Asheville Fire Department. Chief Greg Grayson still serves as Chief for Asheville Fire & Rescue today and has accomplished many goals for the department, most notably would be earning status as an International Accredited Fire and Rescue Agency received on March 30, 2005.

In history, "firsts" are a good point on which to build an understanding of where one comes from or where the tradition of an organization begins. In the fire service, history and tradition are an important part of how and why we do our job. It fosters an appreciation for the seemingly mundane tools and procedures we use everyday. It also instills a high degree of respect for people like Gus Wharhan and Raymond Flowers who have gone before us and paid the ultimate price. Many fires have been fought and many more still lie ahead. A very solid foundation has been laid for us by our past brothers and sisters who served the Asheville Fire Department. We will continue to build on this foundation and pioneer new "firsts" in our future.

Fire Chief Greg Grayson



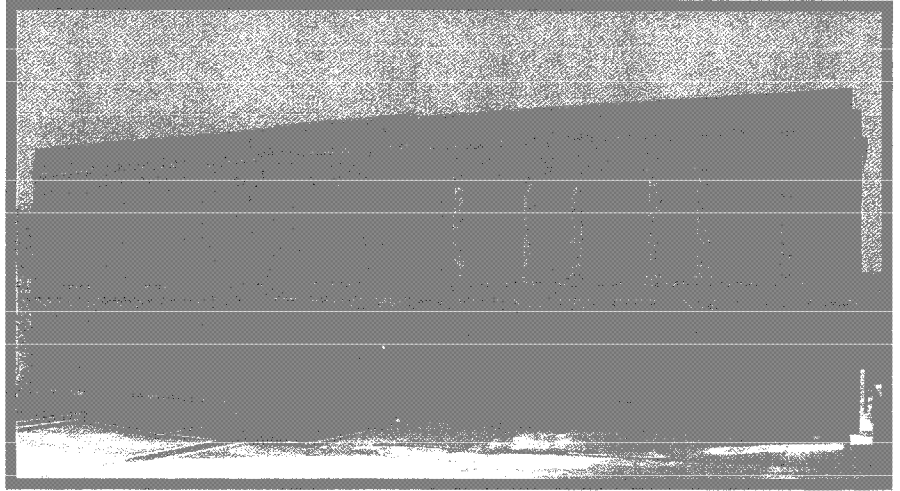
Deputy Fire Chief Robert Griffin



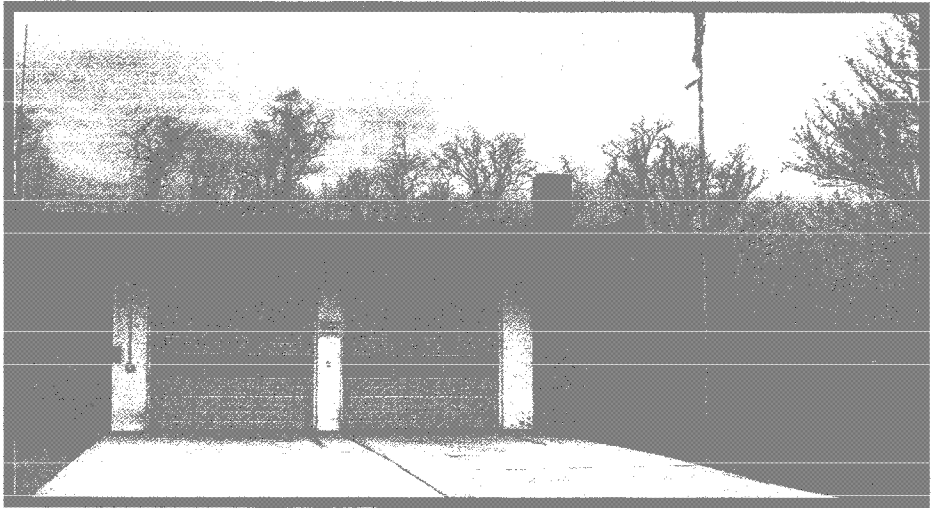
2000-2005 Message from the Fire and Rescue Chief:

In the past five years, Asheville Fire and Rescue has grown and developed by leaps and bounds. I had the great opportunity to join Asheville Fire and Rescue as Fire and Rescue Chief in November, 2000 following Deputy Chief Robert Griffin who served as Interim Chief for six months. We initially focused on reorganizing the department and conducting a series of promotional processes to correct long-term out of class situations. About 10 months into my term as Chief, on September 11, 2001, we were all brought to the grim terms of a different world that we now live in and we began to become better prepared to deal with the new challenges that now face the fire service. Our department was fortunate enough to receive much new equipment for our hazmat team along with additional training and a new state owned hazmat tractor-trailer. Following September 11, we also went through difficult budget times as a result of a damaged economy. However, those challenges did not keep us from progressing. Over 100 members of our department have been competitively promoted. With the city's and department's strong commitment to formal education, many of our members have earned their college degrees in fire protection, with some aggressively pursuing advanced degrees. Our department has replaced four fire engines and two ladder trucks with top quality fire apparatus during this period. We have added a new quick response vehicle with a compressed air foam system - Tac 1 as well as a new Tac 8 quick response vehicle. We have also replaced all three heavy duty command vehicles as well as 12 small support vehicles. We created a stand alone heavy rescue company - Rescue 1 and one totally new ladder company - Ladder 4. We have replaced all of the portable radios within the department with common equipment and will soon have portable radios for every firefighter position. We have also completely replaced our self contained breathing apparatus to the most modern Scott brand units. We also have secured funding and begun the construction process for Fire Station 6 relocation and procurement of land for a new fire station in the Brevard Road area. Furthermore, we have conducted major renovations and remodeling to stations 3, 4 and 8. We have initiated an advanced firefighter program incentive throughout the department and created a completely new promotional level within the department - Lieutenant. We have bolstered our Fire Marshal's Office by creating an innovative career ladder and focused trained staff on higher quality code enforcement. In addition, we have implemented a creative "FM10" program to give Fire Marshal support to the operating shifts that has received national recognition. As the "topping" on the many successes of the Asheville Fire and Rescue Department in the time period of 2000-2005, the department earned accredited agency status from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) for the time period of 2005-2010. We became the first such agency in Western North Carolina, the eighth in North Carolina and the ninety-seventh in the United States. I am very proud to have had the opportunity to have served in the capacity of Chief in the past five years and look forward to continual improvement and positive growth with increased professionalism in the next five years. It is truly an honor to serve with the many dedicated men and women that comprise the Asheville Fire and Rescue Department. Thank you for your continuing contributions, support and cooperation that has lead to our department's outstanding success!

Fire Headquarters is located at 100 Court Plaza and is home to all Fire Department administrative offices, Car-1, Engine 1, Ladder 1 and Rescue 1. L-1 also operates Tac-1. The Municipal Building was opened in 1924 and has shared the 4-story facility with Police Headquarters since that time. In 1998, major renovations began. After completion in 2000, the fire companies have enjoyed their new living quarters and offices at one of Asheville's Historic designations.



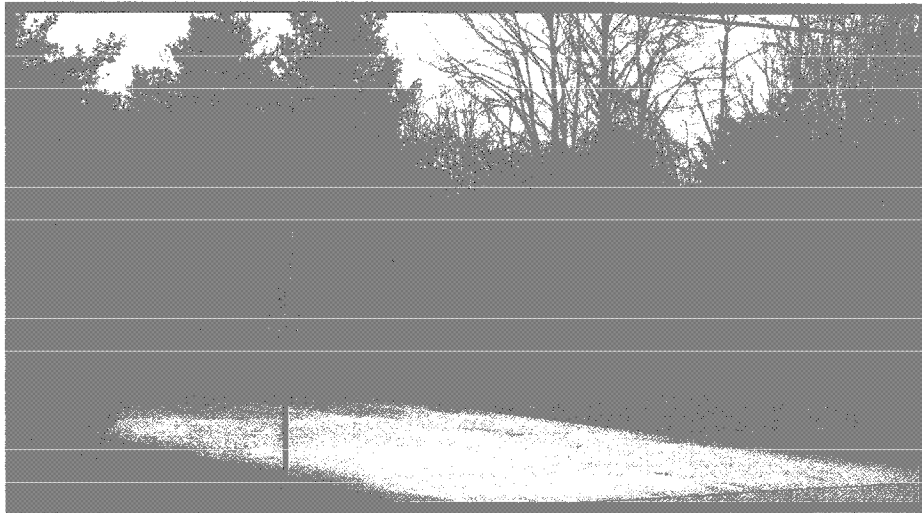
Fire Station 7 was built in 1958 and is located at 37 East Larchmont. Engine 7 covers the north end to the city limits. Their response area includes the massive Grove Park Resort and Spa and a very busy commercial corridor (Merrimon Avenue). They are also the second due engine to the north side of the central business district. Tanker 7 (1200 gal) is also housed with E-7.



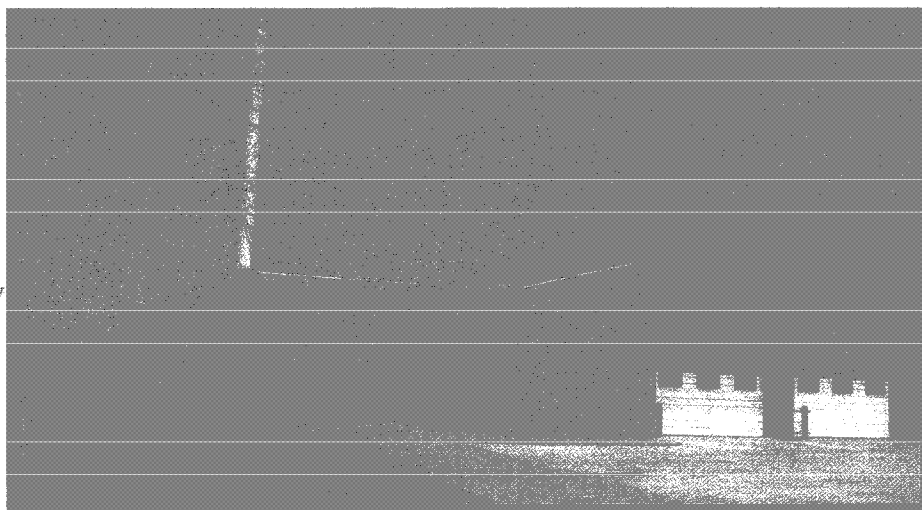
Station 8 was built in 1966 and is located at 904 Tunnel Road. In 2003 major improvements were made to the fire house to better accommodate 2 fire companies. Engine 8 and Ladder 8 protect the Veterans Hospital, the Asheville Mall and the Super Wal-Mart complex on Swannanoa River Road.



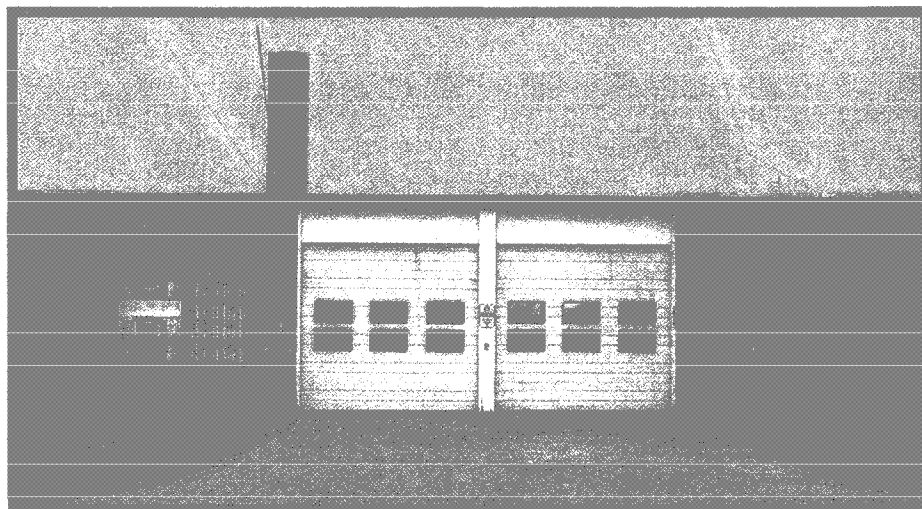
Fire Station 2 was built in 1975 and is located at 315 Livingston Street. It was originally located on Bartlett Street and was the last of the Fire Houses that operated horse drawn apparatus. Operations were moved to the present station in the early 1970's. Along with Haz-Mat responsibilities, E-2 also is first in at the massive Mission-St Josephs Hospital system, several large apartment complexes and is second-due engine in most of the central business district. District 2 Commander, Car-2, is also housed at Station 2.



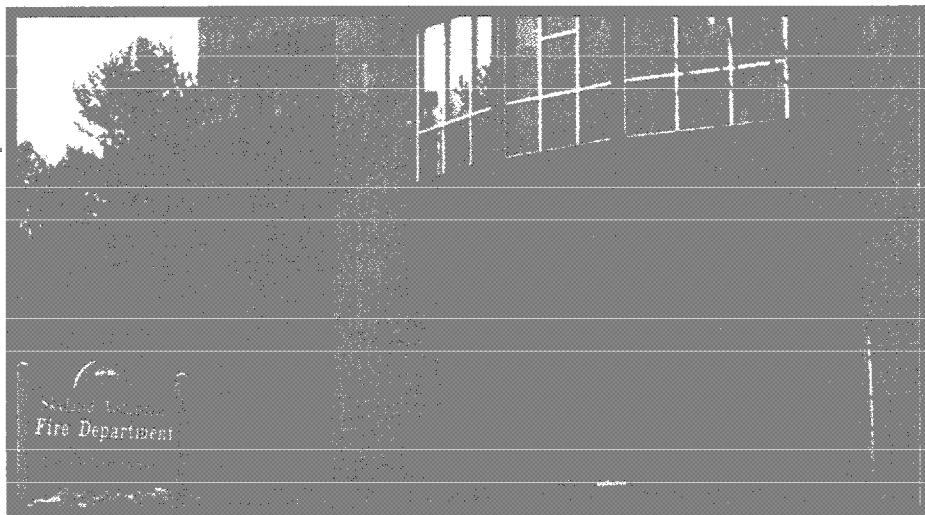
Fire Station 3 is located at 50 Oregon Avenue (West Asheville). Companies include Engine 3 and Ladder 3. Originally located at 421 Haywood Road , E-3 responds to the eastern most part of West Asheville and along with L-3 protects one of the most heavily traveled commercial strips in Asheville (Patton Avenue).



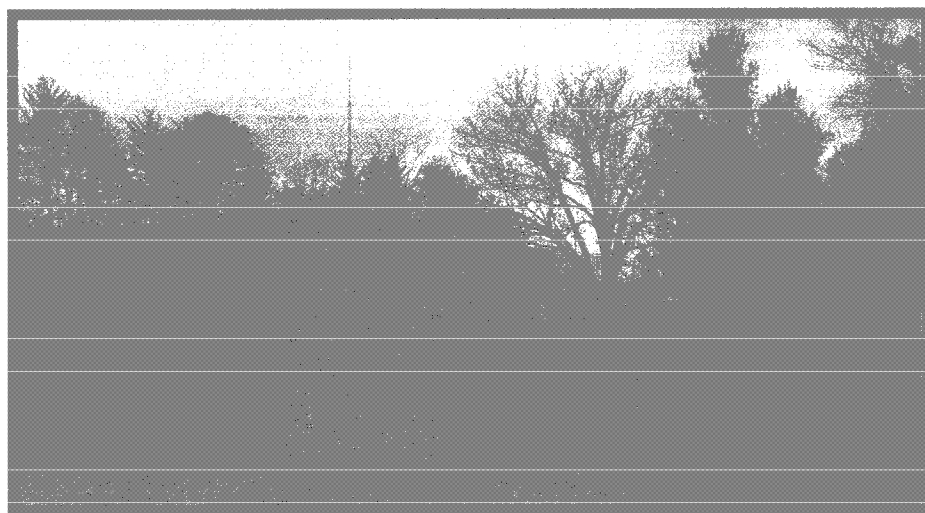
Fire Station 6 is located at 970 Haywood Road. Engine 6 covers West Asheville to the city limits. Because of the expanding limits in their first response district, E-6 will be re-located to a new station more centrally located in their still response area. E-6 responds to a large geographic area and handles a large number of mutual aid responses to several County Fire Departments.



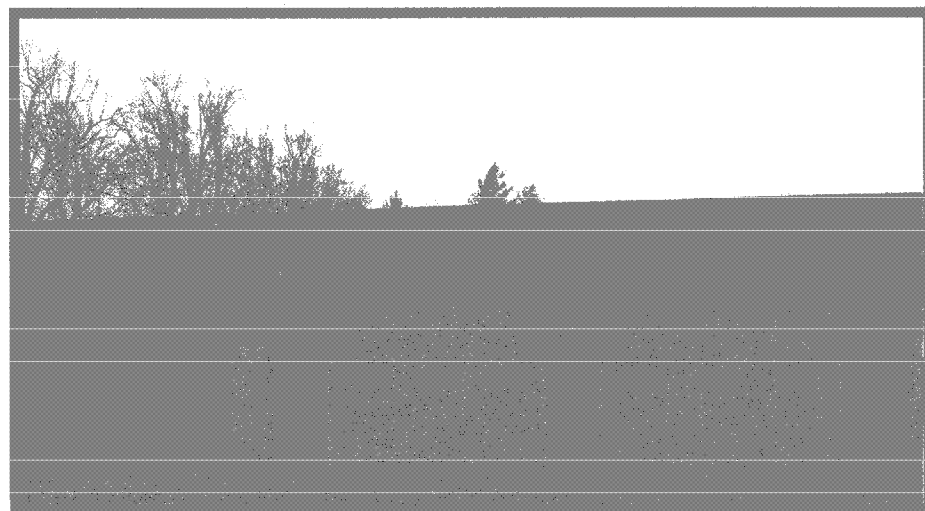
Fire Station 4 was built in 1997 and is located at 6 Miller Road. This South Asheville location was necessitated with the continued expansion of the city limits. With the first Skyland annexation Engine 4 was re-activated at Station 5 to cover the additional area added by the expansion of the city limits. The second phase of annexations necessitated the move to Station 21 (Skyland). The new facility included specific space added to accommodate both Engine 4 and the addition of Ladder 4.



Station 5 is located at 1030 Hendersonville Road. Engine 5, Ladder 5 and District 3's commander (Car 3) cover the south area of Asheville. This includes a contract to provide fire and rescue services to Biltmore Forest and one of the country's premier tourist sites the Biltmore House.



Station 9, located at 749 Fairview Road houses Engine 9 and also the department's mobile Communications Center. They are located in close proximity to the I-40/I-240 interchange and respond with District 3 on regular alarms. Engine 9 responded from Old Station 5 (Biltmore Village) when they were placed in service in 1969.



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The Hazardous Material Team is the department's oldest specialized team. The team began training and equipping in the early 1987. Our first apparatus was a beverage delivery truck donated by Pepsi. Since those early days a lot of change has taken place.

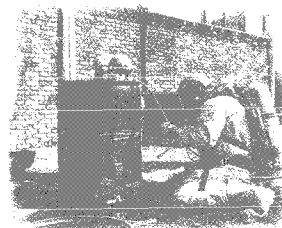
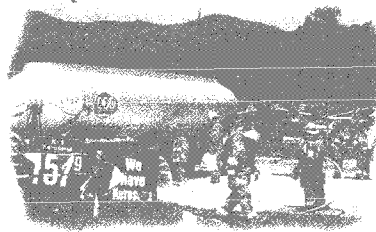
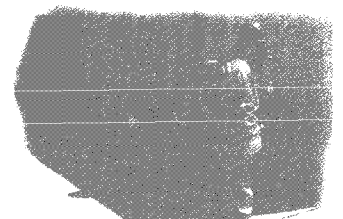
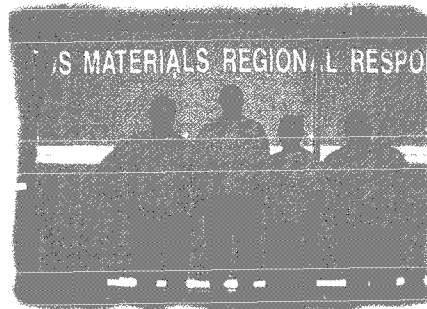
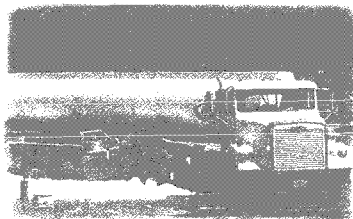
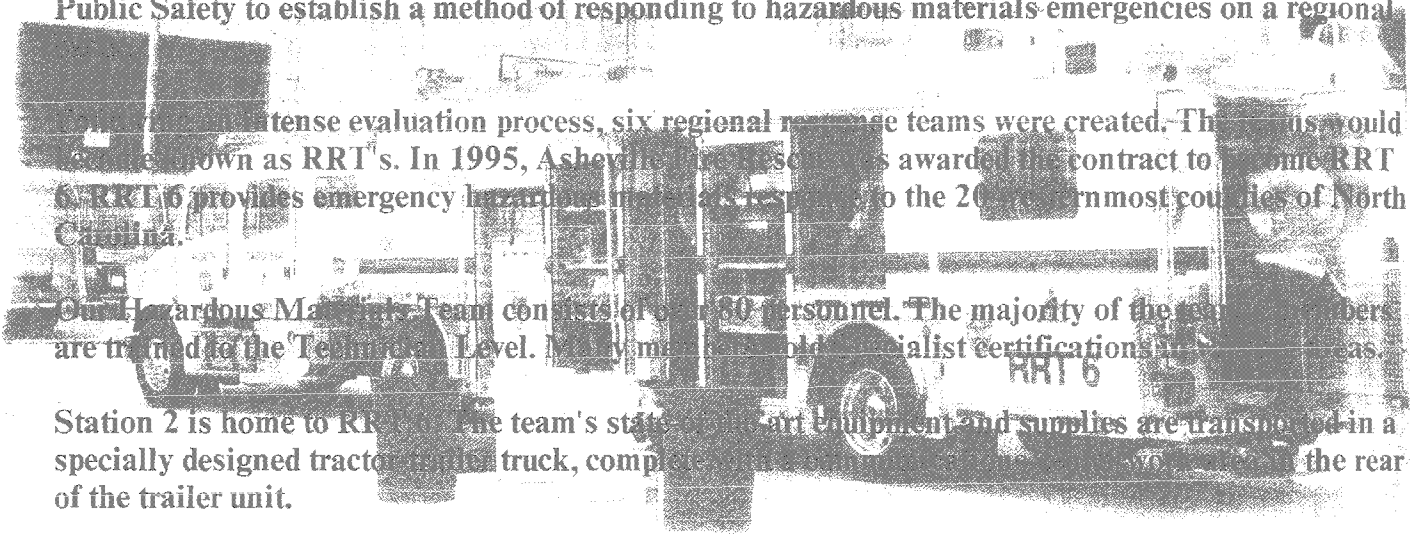
In response to the ever increasing possibility of accidents involving hazardous materials, the North Carolina General Assembly in 1994 passed legislation directing the Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety to establish a method of responding to hazardous materials-emergencies on a regional

basis. Through an intense evaluation process, six regional response teams were created. These teams would be known as RRT's. In 1995, Asheville Fire Services was awarded the contract to become RRT 6. RRT 6 provides emergency hazardous materials response to the 20 westernmost counties of North Carolina.

Our Hazardous Materials Team consists of over 80 personnel. The majority of the team members are trained to the Technical Level. Many members hold specialist certifications in various areas.

Station 2 is home to RRT 6. The team's state-of-the-art equipment and supplies are transported in a specially designed tractor-trailer truck, complete with a crane. We are located in the rear of the trailer unit.

In 2002 a second haz mat unit was placed into service. Decon 4 is primarily staffed by Ladder 4 personnel. The unit's mission is to respond with RRT 6 and provide all facets of decontamination. Decon 4 is equipped to provide gross, technical and mass decontamination.



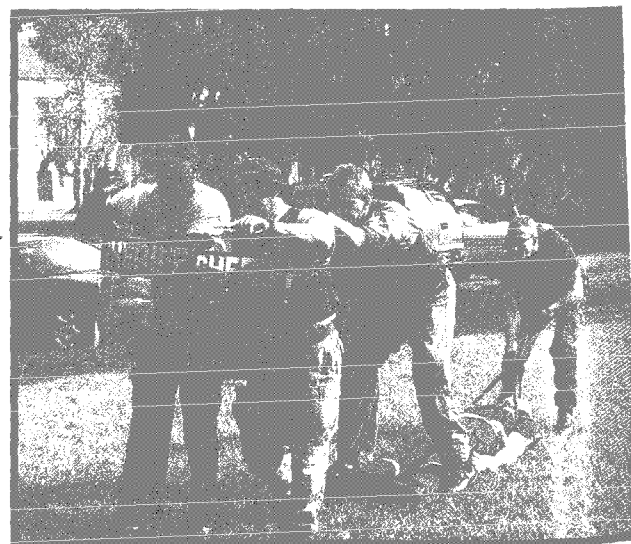
Buncombe County Firefighter's Honor Guard

The Buncombe County Firefighters Honor Guard was formed in late 1999 to represent the Fire Service of Buncombe County during firefighter/ emergency services personnel funerals and other events associated with the Fire Service. Currently, 18 members represent 10 different departments. The Honor Guard provides full military type services for funeral details and also provides a Color Guard detail for various community events and functions. The Honor Guard is very active in training and assisting other Honor Guard units across the state. It participates in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland yearly and has participated and placed in the top 5 for two years in the National Honor Guard Competition held in Indianapolis, Indiana.

In 1992, the Asheville Police Department approached the Fire department with a need for assistance of a medic to respond with their S.W.A.T. Team, which stands for Special Weapons and Tactics. The program first started off with one medic, but by the next year it was up to four.

Firefighters attended their first training school, the CONTOMS School in Washington, D.C. instructed by the United States Park Police. Upon completion of this course, the firefighters then attended a basic S.W.A.T. class. These firefighters are now officially part of the S.W.A.T. Team itself and train with the team every month on skills such as fire arms, building clearing, motor vehicle stops, bus rescue, woodland search, drug warrants and many more. The firefighters who are part of the S.W.A.T. Team are on a on call list and are paged out with the team. Upon call out, the team meets at the police station in order to be briefed on the call and overview actions to be taken. Current 2005 team members are Brent Silvers, Michael Russell, David Cutshall and John Eldreth.

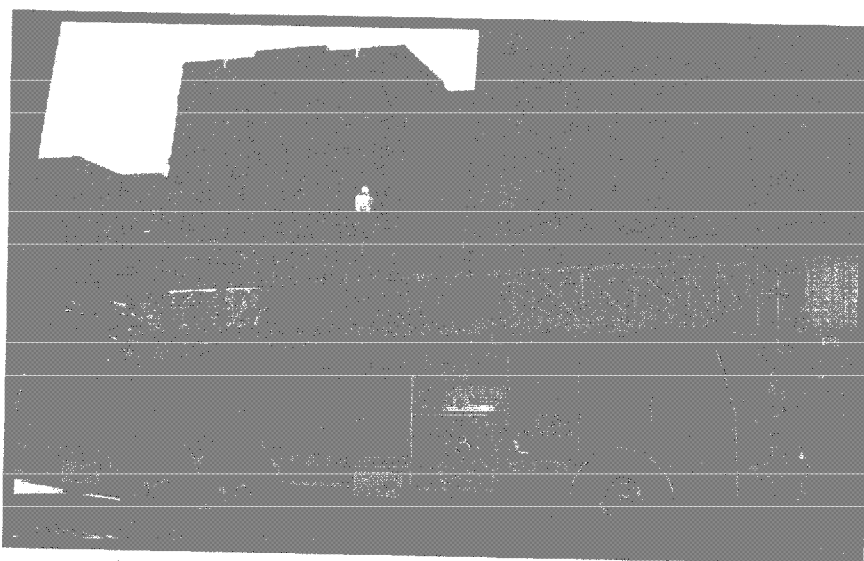
Police Emergency Response Team





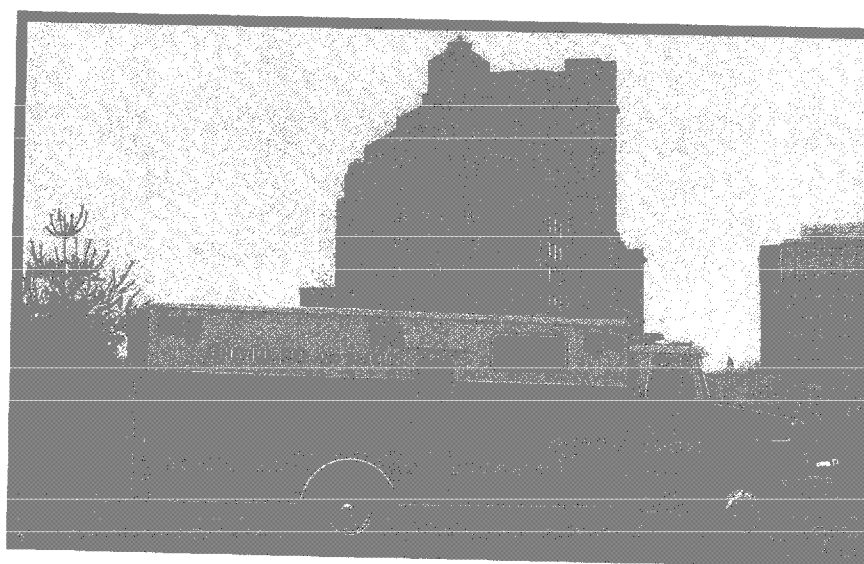
ENGINE 1

2005 Pierce
Holds 750 gallons



LADDER 1

2001 E-One
102" Aerial
Holds 300 gallons



RESCUE 1

1994 Volvo/White
Used for Heavy
Rescue

ENGINE 2

2000 HME
Holds 750 gallons



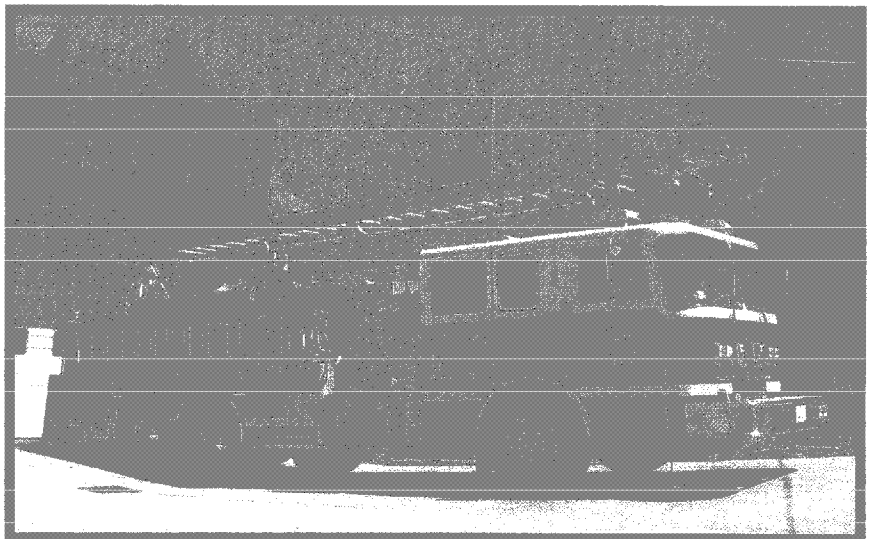
ENGINE 3

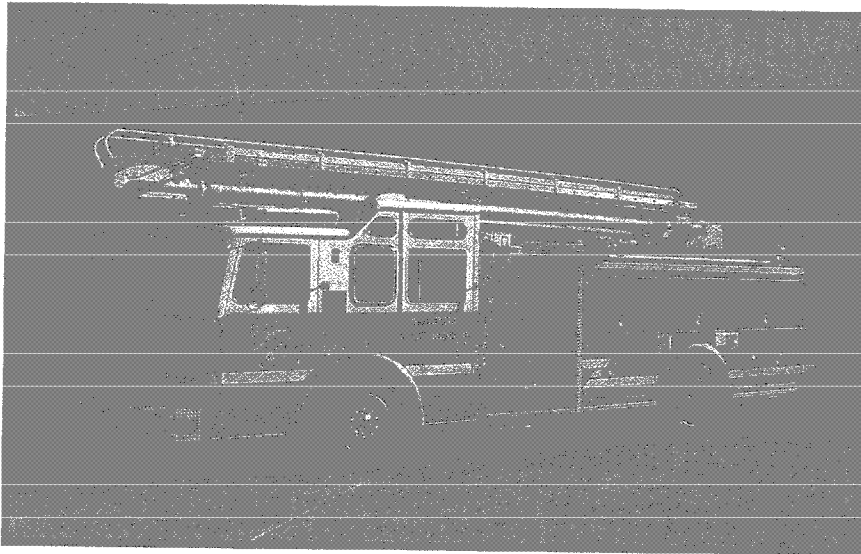
1995 Freightliner
Holds 1000 gallons



LADDER 3

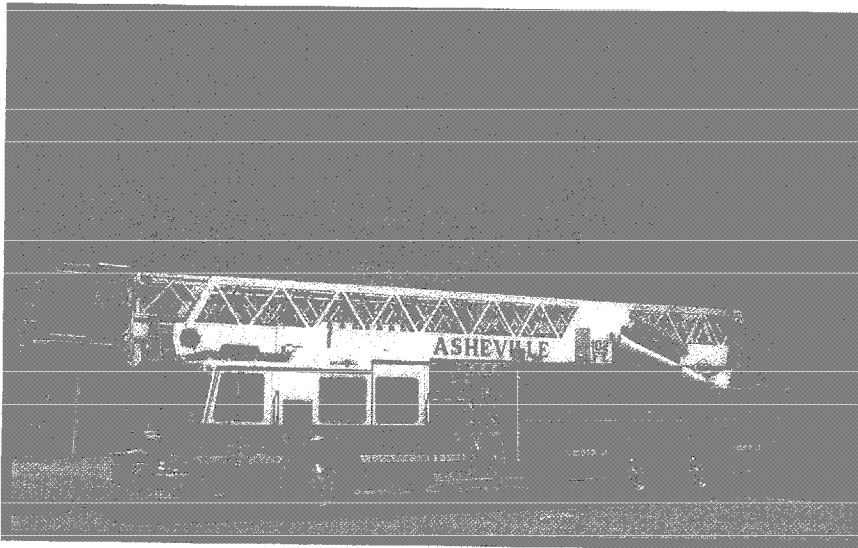
1993 KME
75' Aerial
Holds 500 gallons





ENGINE 4

1997 KME
55" Tele-squirt
Holds 500 gallons



LADDER 4

1992 Grummin
102' Aerial
Holds 200 gallons

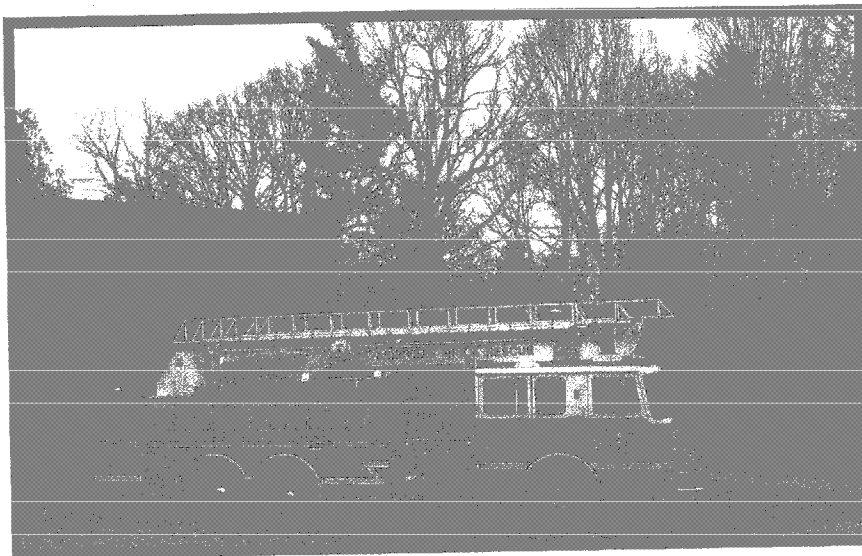


ENGINE 5

1992 KME
55' Snozzle
Holds 750 gallons

LADDER 5

1994 KME
75' Aerial
Holds 750 gallons



ENGINE 6

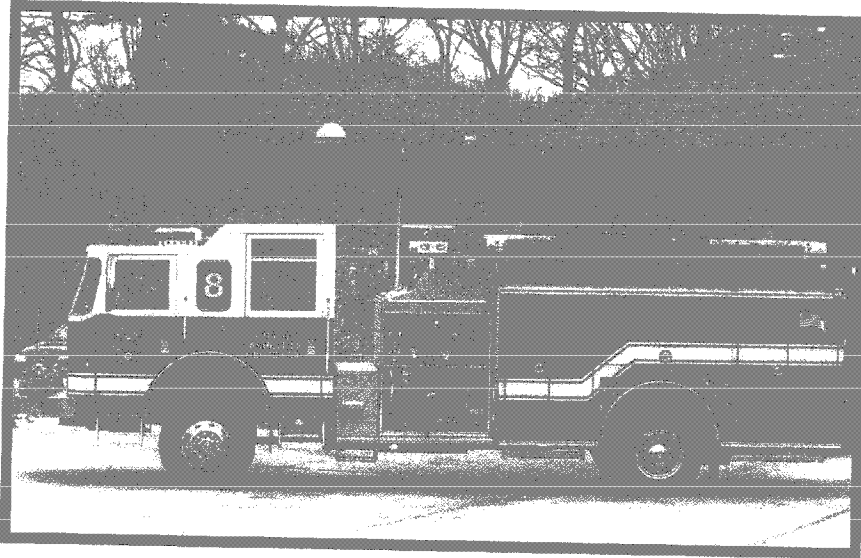
2004 Pierce
Holds 750 gallons



ENGINE 7

2002 Pierce 4 X 4
Holds 750 gallons





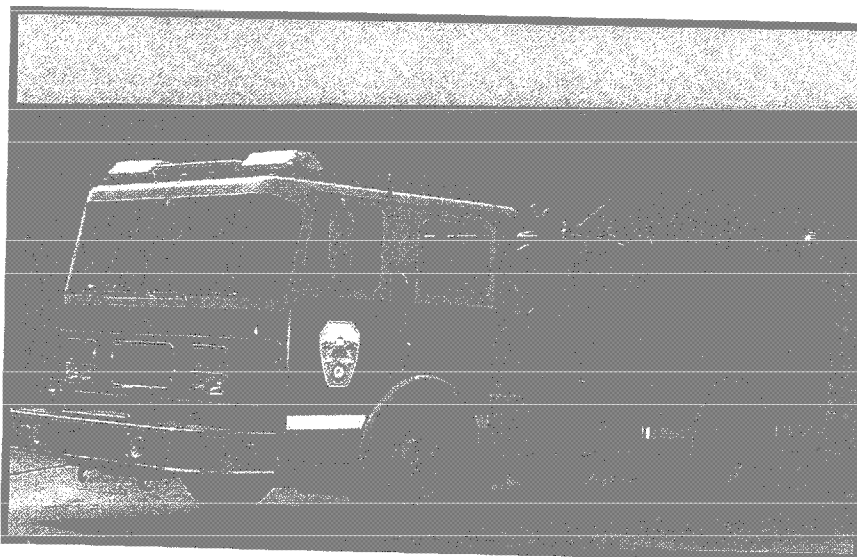
ENGINE 8

2002 Pierce 4X 4
Holds 750 gallons



LADDER 8

2002 Pierce
85' Aerial
All steer
Holds 350 gallons

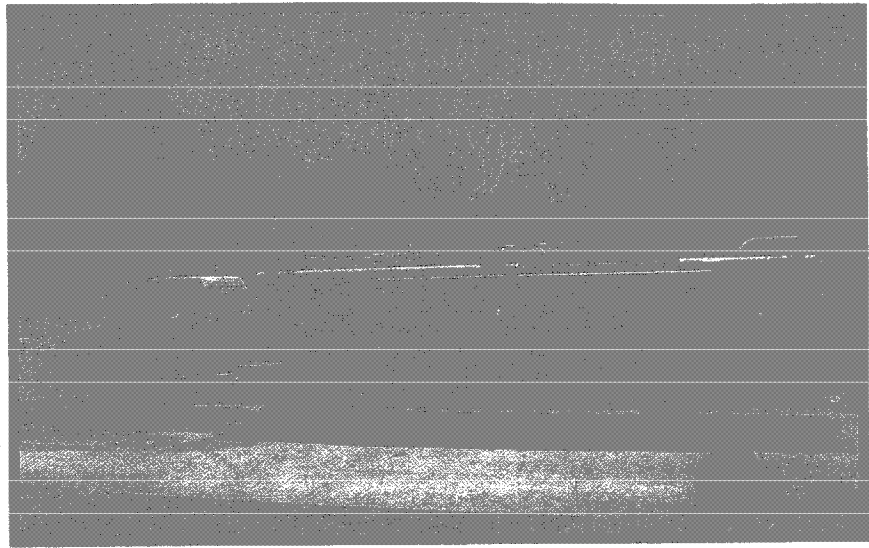


ENGINE 9

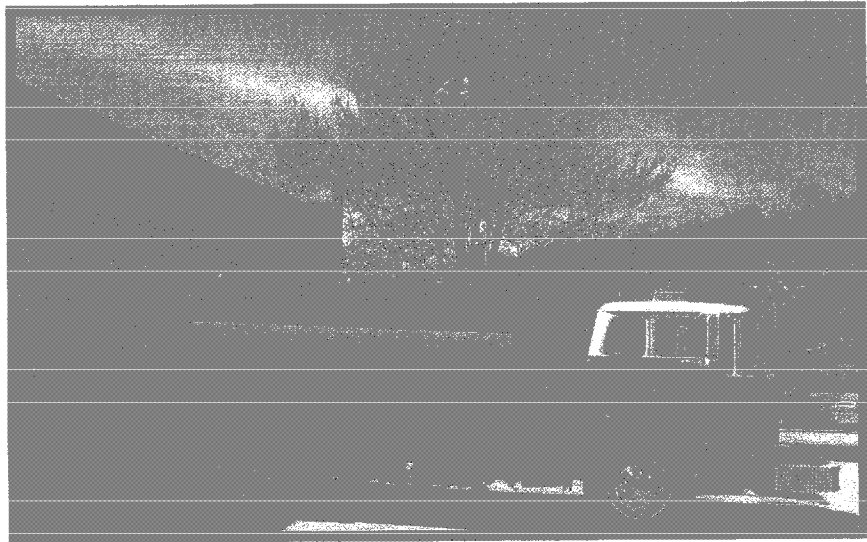
1987 FMC
Holds 750 gallons

RRT - 6

2002 Hackney
Boxtrailer



TANKER 7
1983 Ferrel
Holds 1500 gallons



TANKER 1
2000 International
Holds 3500 gallons

COMMAND BUS
1982 Blue Bird Bus
Rehabilitation unit

