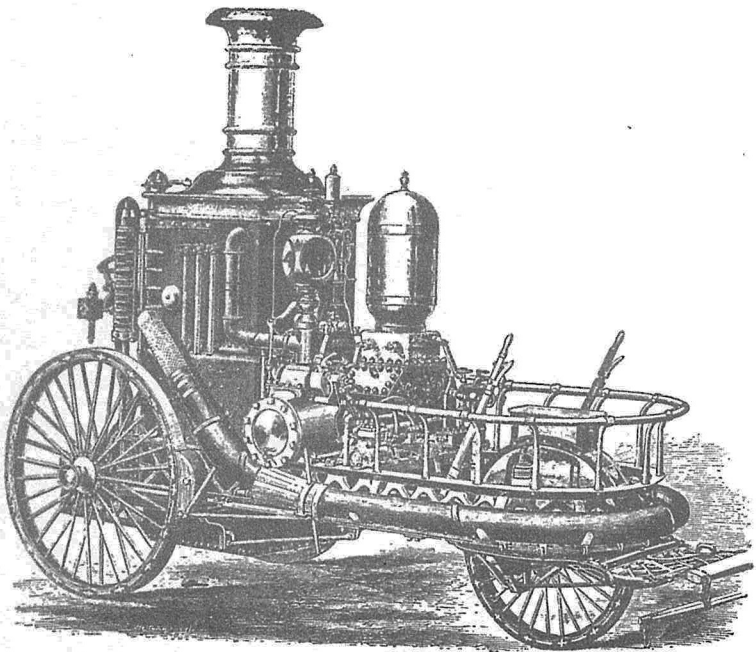


# x History of Fire Protection



City of Greenville, N. C. x

*THIS BOOKLET PREPARED BY  
FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU*

*CITY OF GREENVILLE  
NORTH CAROLINA*

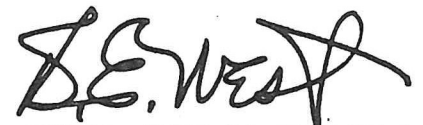
*INFORMATION COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY  
JANE MURRAY*

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**LETTER OF APPRECIATION**

Rough and Ready is a volunteer organization that protected the City of Greenville for many years. These men, who were the original firefighters for Greenville, gave of themselves unselfishly. They were dedicated to the preservation of Greenville and to save the lives of their fellowman. It is with great appreciation that we recognize these people for the services they performed for Greenville before the existence of the Greenville Fire Department.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. E. West". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**MAYOR, CITY OF GREENVILLE**

#### FORWARD

There is always a need for a fire department in every city and county of the United States. The people did not recognize their need for a fire department until the late 1800's. Twelve black men organized the Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Company. From this first volunteer organization stemmed the Greenville Fire Department.

Today Greenville is a leader in techniques of fire fighting, rescue, and fire prevention. Our various departments have motivated themselves to produce a lasting Fire Department for the City of Greenville.

The following pages is a brief history of how the Rough and Ready Fire Company related itself to what is now The Greenville Fire Department. It is hoped that one will see the progress that has been made since the late 1800's.

#### ORIGIN OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Picture in your mind the late 1800's, someone screaming "fire" and twelve black men dressed in everyday clothes coming together to protect Greenville with only a handmade ladder and a small pail. Would you believe this was the beginning of The Greenville Fire Department? I would. These twelve men, under the instruction of Captain Alfred Barnhill, Sr., were known as the Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Company. No one remembers how the name began, but they can tell you these men fought fire - real "fire". This volunteer fire company was the only fire fighting unit until 1896.

On May 27, 1896, Greenville made the first initial attempt in organizing a Fire Department. It would be composed of the original twelve black Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Company and twenty-four white volunteers. A charter was applied for on January 4, 1897 and adopted on June 17, 1897. The new volunteer fire department was to be known as The Hope Fire Company of Greenville. Their quarters would be what is now known as "The Old Town Inn". Their officers were as follows: Foreman, First Assistant Foreman, Second Assistant Foreman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Foreman would preside over all meetings, command the fire fighting tactics and be responsible for all the engines and appliances. Each April these officers would be elected for a one-year term of office. The only requirement to be a member of the Hope Fire Company was to be eighteen years of age and physically capable. A schedule of the bylaws was established and confined only to being tardy, disrespect to the Foreman and a dress code.

The first known dress code began in the early 1900's. Their uniforms were blue shirts with white shields containing the letter "H". They had hats and belts to match.

#### *FIRST RECORDED MEETING*

Foreman F. M. Hodges was present at the first recorded meeting of The Hope Fire Company on June 8, 1896. It was at this time a committee was formed to ask the council for lanterns and rubber suits; however, something happened that was not recorded and the volunteers did not receive these items. To announce drill practices, a white cloth was used stenciled with the words, "Hope Fire Company meets tonight for drill".

#### *EQUIPMENT OF EARLY FIRE DEPARTMENT*

1916 marked the first fire engine bought for Greenville. Later two other trucks were added. Among the first fire engines was the Reo which was bought and paid for by the members of The Hope Fire Company and The Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Company. The truck only had a 200 gallon capacity for water and the siren was hand cranked. A hose was used on the Reo but it only contained one pressure gauge. There was never any breathing apparatus. The volunteers would go into houses and the only means of ventilation would be at the end of the hose where water was coming out or staying next to the floor. Not until 1940 was the leather helmet used. There were only a couple sent to Greenville, so whoever was there first got to use the helmets.

#### *FIREMEN'S PAY*

Prior to 1930 The Rough and Ready Fire Company and The Hope Fire Company were not paid. Most of the time someone would give them a free dinner or maybe the day off if you were real lucky for fighting fire. One year the City of Greenville gave these men their city tags and paid their poll tax. Later around 1932 or 1933 these men were paid seventy-five cents an hour for fighting a fire and no pay for a false alarm.

The first paid man was George W. Gardner who later became the first Fire Chief. Jasper L. Jones was the second paid man. He retired six years ago. A. B. Sumerell who retired in 1969 as Senior Assistant Chief was the third paid man hired by the City.

During the 1940's, Jesse R. Smith (better known by his friends as Ray), a mascot for the Department since age eight, was hired as the fourth full paid fire fighter. Jesse R. Smith is the present Fire Chief of the City of Greenville.

#### *MOST REMEMBERED FIRES*

John Outterbridge and George Myers reminisced about one of the hottest fires which was the J. J. Perkins Lumber Yard in 1948. John Outterbridge commented that, "they went into all the schools even East Carolina to get the larger boys to help fight that fire". "We had hose strung out all over the city," Mr. Myers noted. "I will always remember the Ladies Auxiliary helping us out," Captain John Bizzell emphasized. "Those ladies served us during and after the fires," he also commented.

#### *LADIES AUXILIARY*

The Ladies Auxiliary was chartered in 1960 at the suggestion of Mr. Leroy Barnes. Their first president was Dorothy Barnes with only seven members. At present Mrs. Maggie Hymond is serving as president with twenty-one members. Their motto is, "Help where ever we are needed".

The Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Department is still in operation under the direction of Captain John Bizzell. They are called upon if needed by the Greenville Fire Department.

## *GREENVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT*

Greenville has progressed very successfully. We now have a main station and two substations. All three stations are equipped with the latest fire fighting techniques and equipment. Our fire department has six pumpers, an aerial truck, and the snorkle. The snorkle has the greatest mobility of any equipment that is used in the Greenville Fire Department. It has the greatest capability of fighting fire from the top of the building, for the snorkle will reach approximately nine stories high. All of the trucks are equipped with numerous size hoses and nozzles. They contain axes, crowbars, dry chemical fire extinguishers, pikes, extra water, and draft hoses.

### *TRAINING OF PERSONNEL AND THEIR CLOTHES*

The men are as well equipped as the trucks they ride and drive. Each man is trained in all phases of fire fighting. The fireman, after a six month trial basis, can take over and do anyone's job. Before he graduates from his six month training course, he must know where all the streets and hydrants are located. He is ready in less than fifty seconds to go to a fire call.

The fireman's clothes have radically changed. Their fire-retardant, insulated canvas-like coat and trousers are worn to a fire. A helmet is furnished to each man and also a set of gloves. He must wear heavy-duty rubberized boots to protect his feet. On the fireman's back, he carries a tank of air weighing approximately thirty pounds. When all this equipment is put on, he is then ready to fight a fire. After a fire, his work has only begun. The fireman must then clean up any water or anything that he has damaged during the fire.

## *FUNCTION OF THE RESCUE SQUAD*

1947 marked the first attempt to have a Rescue Squad. The squad was nothing more than a station wagon with one or two people operating as rescue workers. Through diligent work our Rescue Squad is now operating with the most modern equipment available. It successfully operates two rescue trucks twenty-four hours a day. The people who work the rescue squad are highly specialized in their field.

### *OPERATION OF THE FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU*

Our Fire Prevention Bureau has been in existence for some time. This bureau is dedicated to the prevention of fire. The beginning of this year marked a new emphasis for the Fire Prevention Bureau. We are now reaching out to the schools to educate children as well as adults to the different hazards that are in homes and establishments. As in the Fire Department, the Fire Prevention Bureau is rapidly changing. We now have the first female in our Fire Prevention Bureau. She is associated with the school system teaching the first Fire Prevention course.

### *EPILOGUE*

As one can see fire fighting, along with trucks and equipment, is changing constantly. A week does not go by that something has not been changed or improved. Greenville has come a long way since the beginning of The Rough and Ready Volunteer Fire Company. All departments will continue to change as long as there are new techniques to be known, new materials made available, or more modern equipment and trucks to be used.

GREENVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFF

Jesse R. Smith	Chief
Jenness S. Allen	Assistant Chief
Joseph P. Nethercutt	Assistant Chief
Harvey R. Case	Captain
Claude H. Christopher, Jr.	Captain
Joseph B. Meeks	Captain
Harold W. Smith	Captain
J. Z. Garris	Lieutenant
Linwood O. Green	Lieutenant
James K. Hathaway	Lieutenant
Caroll W. Jordan, Jr.	Lieutenant
William E. McKinney	Lieutenant
Herman D. Mills, Jr.	Lieutenant
Walter R. Yarrell	Lieutenant
Roger L. Page	Lieutenant

FIRE FIGHTERS

Kenneth W. Beaman	Norman E. Hill
John W. Billmyer	Billy W. Loftin
James M. Branch	Kelly L. Jackson
Johnny C. Brown	Johnny E. Long
Jonathan Brown	Carl L. Miller
Tony Buck	Jerry S. Mills
Tony B. Burton	Jerry T. Morris
Raymond L. Carney	King D. Nelson
Kirby A. Coward	Ralph P. Rogers, Jr.
William E. Dixon	William J. Stancill
Robert L. Gorham	Raymond E. Williams
Carl E. Harris	William M. Turner, Jr.
Thomas W. Harris	William R. Yarrell
William W. Harrison, Jr.	
Herley A. Jones	Typist
Jesse J. Jones	Mechanic
William L. Woolfolk	Clerk-Dispatcher

PART-PAID

Delma Culbreth	Bonnie R. Hardee
Hubert K. Leggett	Lynwood J. Owens
Jennings Hill Patton, Jr.	Harold Ross
James E. Tyndall	James R. Whitley

VOLUNTEERS

Pat Bundy	Roy Hardee
Vernon Leggett	Dawson Nethercutt
Stuart Savage	Billy Tripp
Gordan Edwards	Wayne Ross
Russell Whichard	

RESCUE DEPARTMENT

George H. Brannon	Captain
D. R. Daniels	Captain
Robert E. Briley	Rescueman
Robert H. Coggins, III	Rescueman

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Jerry L. McLawhorn	Captain
James G. Smith	Lieutenant
Jane C. Murray	Inspector I



*ROUGH AND READY FIREMEN*

John H. Bizzell	Captain
Alfred Barnhill	Financial and Corresponding Secretary
James Barnhill	Treasurer
Aaron Leary	Chaplin
James Holiday	Ernest Eaton
Noal Spain	John N. Corey
Curtis Simpson	Jesse L. Grimes
Lee Adams	James Cherry

*NOTES*

*HONORARY AND RETIRED MEMBERS*

T. J. Wooten	Hillard Murrell
Filmore Bell	Edward Laughinghouse
George Myles	George Streeter
John H. Corey	William Eaton
John L. Cox	