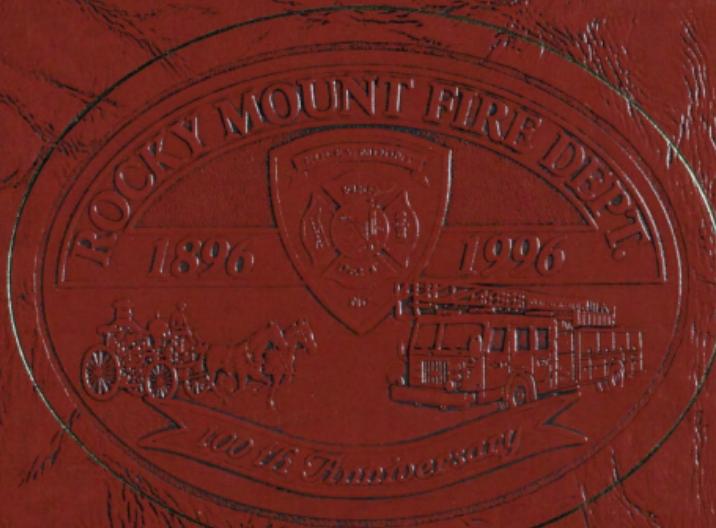


Rocky Mount

FIRE DEPARTMENT



CENTENNIAL

1896 - 1996

**DEDICATED TO THOSE FIREMEN
THAT THROUGHOUT THE PAST 100
YEARS COMMITTED THEIR LIVES IN
SERVICE.**

**TESTED AND TRIED PERSISTENCE
IS THEIR VIRTUE.**

GENUINE CONCERN IS THEIR MARK.

**LOVE FOR HUMANITY IS THEIR
CREED.**

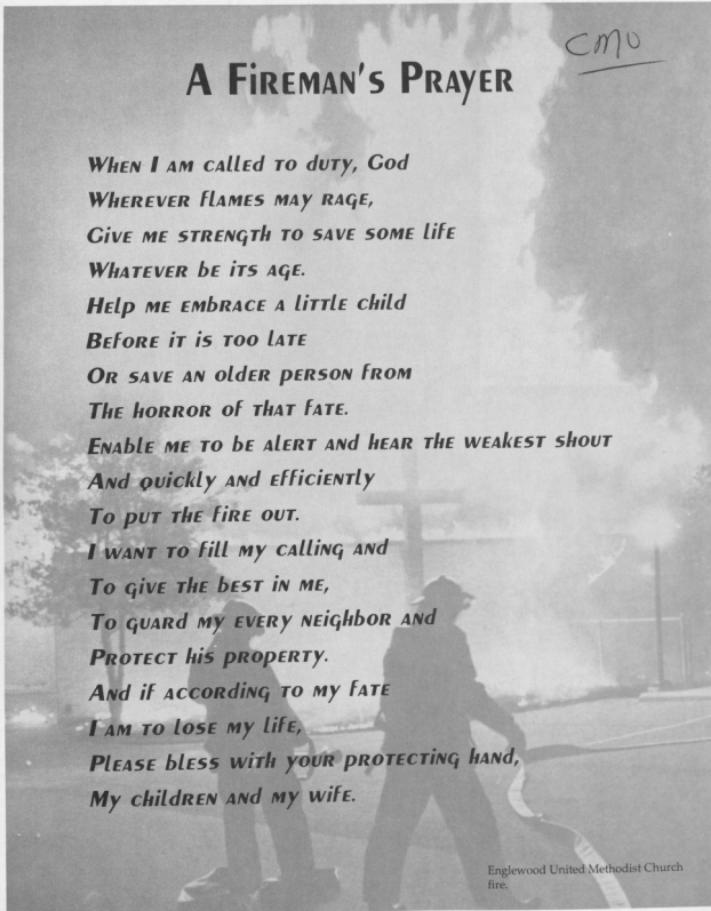
**MAY THIS TRADITION, COMRADEY,
AND VISION ALWAYS REMAIN.**

This inscription, written by Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins, is found on the back of the limited edition Centennial Commemorative belt buckle.

A FIREMAN'S PRAYER

CMV

**WHEN I AM CALLED TO DUTY, GOD
WHEREVER FLAMES MAY RAGE,
GIVE ME STRENGTH TO SAVE SOME LIFE
WHATEVER BE ITS AGE.
HELP ME EMBRACE A LITTLE CHILD
BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE
OR SAVE AN OLDER PERSON FROM
THE HORROR OF THAT FATE.
ENABLE ME TO BE ALERT AND HEAR THE WEAKEST SHOUT
AND QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY
TO PUT THE FIRE OUT.
I WANT TO FILL MY CALLING AND
TO GIVE THE BEST IN ME,
TO GUARD MY EVERY NEIGHBOR AND
PROTECT HIS PROPERTY.
AND IF ACCORDING TO MY FATE
I AM TO LOSE MY LIFE,
PLEASE BLESS WITH YOUR PROTECTING HAND,
MY CHILDREN AND MY WIFE.**



Englewood United Methodist Church
fire.

THE LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL



THE COLLECTION OF
NORTH CAROLINIANA
PRESENTED BY
City of Rocky Mount

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R68f

City of Rocky Mount Fire Department

1896-1996



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

THROUGHOUT THESE WALLS ECHO THE FOOTSTEPS OF MANY MEN
WHO KNOW A JOB WELL DONE...

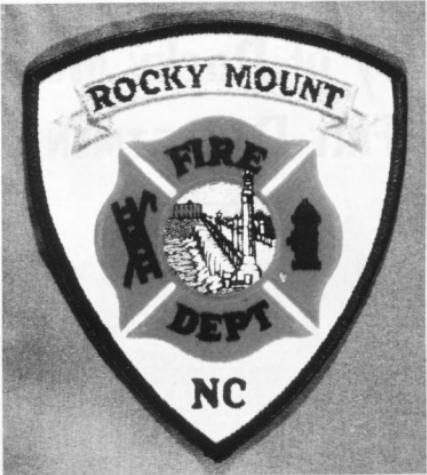


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GIFT, CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT

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This publication was not produced at taxpayer expense.



CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT

FIRE DEPARTMENT

This is a very special time of emphasis for the City of Rocky Mount Fire Department. One-hundred years have passed since the Fire Department evolved from many community minded, totally volunteer organizations to become an organized department within the City of Rocky Mount.

This Centennial Book demonstrates a richness of tradition and history, a willingness to sacrifice, and a devotion to the purpose of preserving life and property. Service to humanity is one of God's charges to mankind. Individual contributions are far too numerous and vast to state. I recognize and acknowledge that many have made their presence known. I commend the many men and women that willingly gave of themselves that others might continue to enjoy life. For those yet to come, I challenge you to respect what has been accomplished and continue to build on a well established foundation.

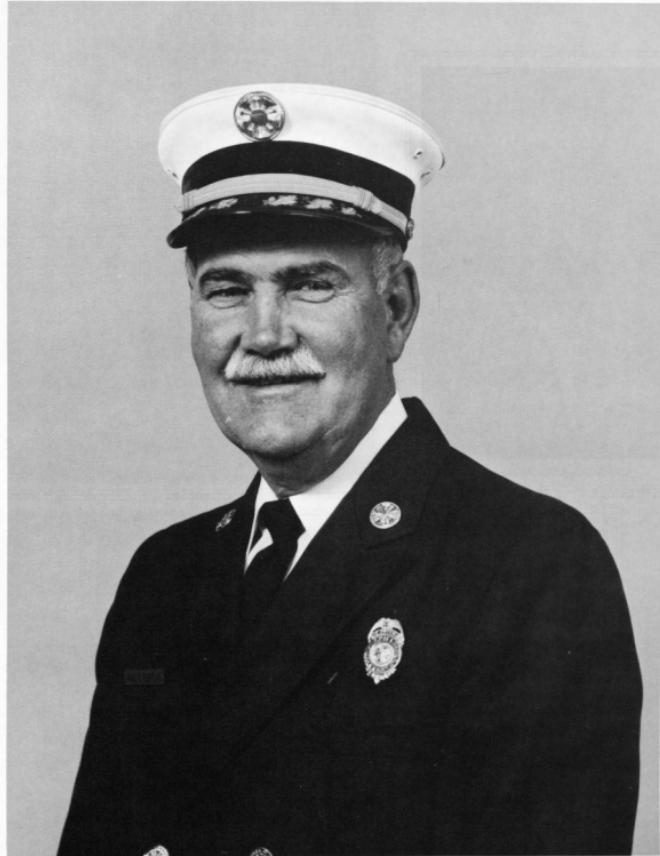
Special appreciation is extended to all City Managers, their assistants, and Council persons for their vision and support given the Fire Department. To the citizens, I speak with confidence and assurance that we remain ever ready to serve you.

A deep sense of appreciation is extended to those that helped preserve history and to those that contributed unselfishly of their time to assemble this book.

We dedicate this book to all who have served and to act as a reminder that service to humanity is truly a mark of greatness.

Sincerely,

J. E. Hawkins
Fire Chief



Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins



City Manager Steve Raper


CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

March 20, 1996

Dear Members of the Rocky Mount Fire Department:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your hard work and dedication as the City of Rocky Mount Fire Department celebrates its centennial. It is with great pride that our community has a Fire Department whose mission is protecting the health and providing emergency assistance throughout our community.

Since 1896, the Fire Department has worked diligently to save life and property from all hazardous situations through suppression operations. The training and educating of our employees and citizens in all elements of fire prevention has also proven invaluable.

Under the capable and steady leadership of Chief J.E. Hawkins I am proud to say the department is one of the best in North Carolina. The services you provide are crucial to our organization and I command you for 100 years of providing excellent service to your fellow citizens.

May the values and principles that guided you in the past be with you as you enter the next century.

Sincerely yours,


Stephen W. Raper
City Manager

One Government Plaza • Post Office Box 1180 • Rocky Mount, North Carolina 27802-1180
Telephone (919) 972-1529 • Fax (919) 972-1522

Assistant City Manager Peter Varney




CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 25, 1996

Chief J.E. Hawkins
City of Rocky Mount Fire Department
P.O. Box 1180
Rocky Mount, NC 27802

Dear Chief Hawkins:

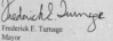
As the Rocky Mount Fire Department celebrates its Centennial, I am pleased to personally, and on behalf of the Rocky Mount City Council, offer congratulations to you and the entire Department for providing 100 years of outstanding service to the citizens of this City. Since 1896, you have made it possible for our citizens to rest securely in the knowledge that the Rocky Mount Fire Department was prepared and stood ready to protect their lives and property.

The Rocky Mount Fire Department has a great legacy for meeting the challenges of growth and change. In 1896, the Fire Department consisted of only one station located on Main Street. Over the years, I have watched it grow to its present size of six stations and I am assured there are plans to relocate some stations to accommodate the expanded boundaries of the City caused by recent annexations.

As Mayor, I find it very rewarding that the individuals who make up our Fire Department are very valuable citizens involved in every aspect of life in this community. Not only are they professionally trained to fulfill their on-the-job responsibilities, but their contributions reflect very favorably on the entire City. For these I am grateful.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to offer my sincere congratulations to you and the entire Rocky Mount Fire Department on 100 years of service to thank you for making our community safe and sound.

Sincerely,


Frederick T. Turnage
Mayor

Mayor Fred Turnage



City Council Members,
back row, left to right:
Helen Gay, James
Hubbard, Walt Wiggins
and Thomas C. Looney.
Front row: Jimmy
Armstrong, John Perry and
Donald Armstrong.

This CENTENNIAL book
is dedicated
TO THOSE
FIREFIGHTERS
of
THE City of Rocky Mount
who laid down THEIR LIVES
in THE LINE of DUTY.

HENRY Mitchel

Henry Mitchel was the first firefighter to die in the line of duty for the City of Rocky Mount. In 1906, Mitchel was participating in a drill for an

upcoming state fireman's competition in Warrenton, N.C. when he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was a member of the Department's Hook and Ladder Company at the time.

Wiley T. May

Wiley May was the second firefighter to die in the line of duty while with the Rocky Mount Fire Department. On December 18, 1920, volunteer firefighter May was fatally injured while attempting to board a departing firetruck. His injuries were so severe that a blood transfusion was administered to try to save his life — one of the first attempts at a blood transfusion in the state of North Carolina.

Stunned by this horrific accident, and deeply saddened, citizens attended his funeral — the largest ever held in Nash County up to that time. The big alarm bell at the Fire Station tolled slowly at 3:00 p.m., as the last rites began at the May homeplace near Red Oak. Shortly thereafter, a stone plaque was placed in his memory at the old firehouse No. 1, then located

on N.E. Main Street.

The real tragedy, however, is the fact that the alarm May was responding to turned out to be a false alarm — a waste of money, time and the needless loss of a young man's life.



SPENCER VANN GRIFFIN

Firefighter Griffin lost his life in the line of duty on January 6, 1970. While driving Engine No. 4 to an oil heater fire on Cokey Road, the fire engine struck a van operated by Carolina Overall Corporation, throwing Griffin from the engine and killing him instantly. Griffin was a four-year veteran of the Department.



"WELL DONE THY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT."

WAYNE B. HAWKINS

On June 11, 1977 Assistant Fire Chief Wayne B. Hawkins became the fourth member of the Rocky Mount Fire Department to give his life in the line of duty. A structure fire at Rocky Mount Mills had the Department working for two hours. Hawkins led firefighting forces throughout the incident. Later that evening, Chief Hawkins suffered a fatal heart attack.



JOHN SYKES

John Sykes began his career with the City of

Rocky Mount as an inspector in the Engineering Division on November 1, 1947 and transferred to the Rocky Mount Fire Department on December 1, 1949. Advancing through the ranks, he was appointed Fire Chief on April 1, 1971.

He was the first local fire chief to become active in the fire service at the state level. He served as president of the N.C. Fire Chief's Association in 1975, and served as an advisor to the larger N.C. State Fireman's Association in 1981. He was appointed by Governor Jim Hunt for two four-year terms to the board of trustees for the N.C. Firemen's Pension Fund.

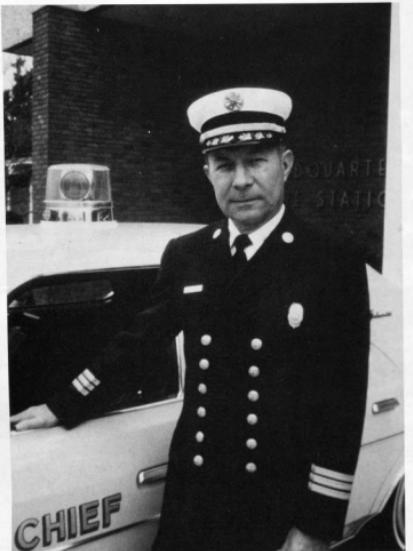
Later, he became the first chairperson of the Fire Science Technology Advisory Committee at Wilson Tech, and was very instrumental in establishing the two-year fire science curriculum for firefighters.

Special recognition and honors were bestowed upon Chief Sykes. He was honored by the Rocky Mount Jaycees and received the Jaycee President's Award in 1975, and in 1978 was named "Boss of the Year". Also in 1978, Sykes was selected as the Fireman of the Year by the N.C. State Firemen's

Association.

John Sykes was very active in civic affairs, serving as vice president of the Breakfast Optimist Club, a director of our local American Red Cross, a director of the United Way, a member of the N.C. Wesleyan College Campaign Fund, and was a long standing member of the First Baptist Church.

In his occupation, he concentrated his efforts in establishing and building an exemplary organization. His keen interest in personnel development encouraged others to train and prepare for the future as well as emergencies. As an individual, he was well respected and highly committed to his profession. He displayed a deep love for the City, the Fire Department and the employees.



Fire Chief J.P. Sykes
1 April 1971-21 April 1983

John always accepted change as a challenge to improve. His leadership was always evident when City functions occurred. His reputation within our community was impeccable. Chief John Sykes propelled the Rocky Mount Fire Department into being recognized as a model department across our state.

Although his untimely death ended a great career, his legacy lives on.

The History Of The Rocky Mount Fire Department

Rocky Mount began at the great falls of the Tar River where the Tuscarora Indians hunted and lived thousands of years ago. Settlers ventured into the area around 1734 and called it the "Rocky Mound". The name Rocky Mount appeared only after the first post office was established in 1816. The town was incor-

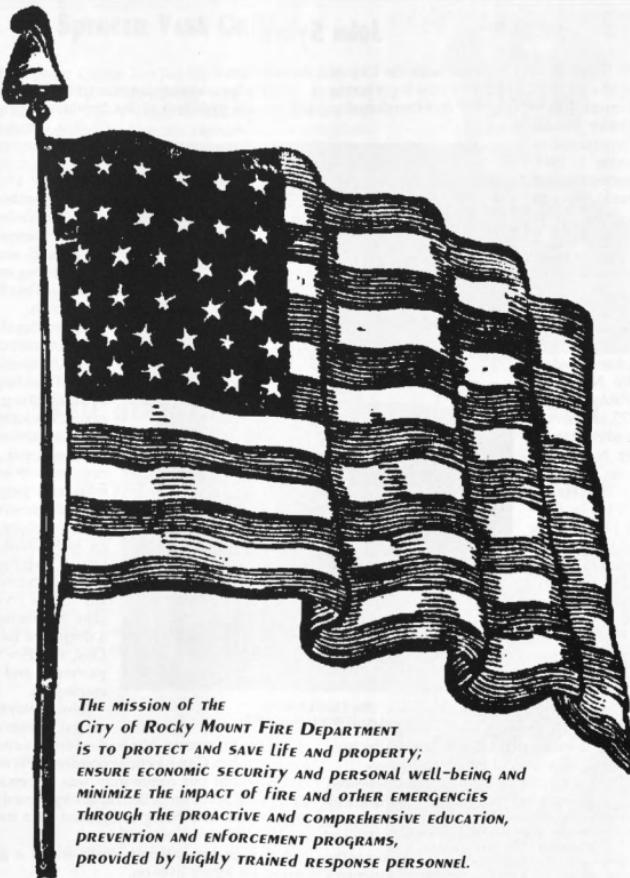
porated in 1867 and at that time the twin-county city of Nash and Edgecombe was divided at the Tar River. It is assumed fires were extinguished by bucket brigades during this time.

On 8 October 1894, Mayor T.H. Battle appointed Town Councilmen H.T. Bauman and J.C. Braswell to "canvass

the town and ascertain if a volunteer fire company could be organized". This is Rocky Mount's first official record of its attempt to form a fire company. The Town's first fire apparatus was purchased on 8 April 1895 by Councilman Bauman. The type of apparatus is unknown, however, it was bought from S.F. Heywood



First Town Council approved Bucket Brigade Fire Company, 11 March 1896. This station was located in the 100 block of East Thomas Street. Left to right, kneeling: Bill Waters and Henry Mitchell. Mitchell died from a heart attack while watching the volunteers go through a routine practice session before going to the North Carolina State Volunteer Fire Department Convention in Warrenton, N.C. in 1906. Standing: Dowell Boseman, unidentified, Ed Sanders, Ed Sessions, unidentified, Louis Taylor, C.C. McIntryre, Alex Malone, Fred Battle, "Toots" Epps, unidentified, Willie Pittman, Walter Holland and Jim Boseman. The remainder could not be identified.





This is a man-powered hook and ladder used by the first fire company for the City of Rocky Mount Fire Department. This piece of equipment is in storage and is still owned by the Fire Department.

and Son in New York, NY for \$355.

On March 11 of the same year, the Town Council approved the purchase of a hook and ladder apparatus. Uniforms for the fire company had been purchased for the fire department at a cost of \$92.84 (CRM Council Minutes). City records show what may possibly be the Rocky Mount Fire Department's first drill muster on 11 December 1895, as the Town Council instructed the foreman of the fire company, "name unknown", (foreman defined: a training officer and one who maintains fire apparatus) be notified to drill between now and until Saturday, 21 December 1895 and to report to the board and discuss rules for governing the fire company (CRM Council Minutes). The fire company for the Town of Rocky Mount was slowly evolving into a complete organization.

On March 11, 1896, the Town Council approved the first black fire company



Being pulled by Rocky Mount firemen is a hook and ladder apparatus. Left to right: Jimmy "Pro" Baines, George "Green Weenie" Walker, Jake Coleman and Capt. Tom Daniel. Man-drawn as it was, firemen were noted as being very quick on the scene.



This picture was taken with the 1896 "Steamer" in front of Fire Station Number One on N.E. Main Street. Left to right, back row: Sam Jenkins, Mike Williford, unidentified, Mr. Soden and J.W. Thurman. Seated: unidentified and E.J. Pitt Sr.



and appointed C.C. McIntyre as foreman. This bucket brigade, comprised of 26 men, was stationed on the 100 block of East Thomas Street. The company was responsible for operating the man-powered hook and ladder apparatus. These firefighters were quick and efficient. Captain E.J. Pitt recalled a fire in south Rocky Mount where the bucket brigade arrived before the other companies could arrive. Captain Pitt explained the speed in the bucket brigade was so fast at this fire that the company had it out before the other equipment could be set up.

On 14 July 1896 the steamer engine the Department currently has was purchased

This 1896 "Steamer," shown here completely restored, was purchased by the City on July 14, 1896, sporting a price tag of \$2,600. Now permanently displayed on its own trailer, the Steamer is located at Station Number Four on N. Church Street.



Tom Jenkins is at the reins on the 1896 Steamer. Tom was a major contributor to the collection and composition of this Centennial book.



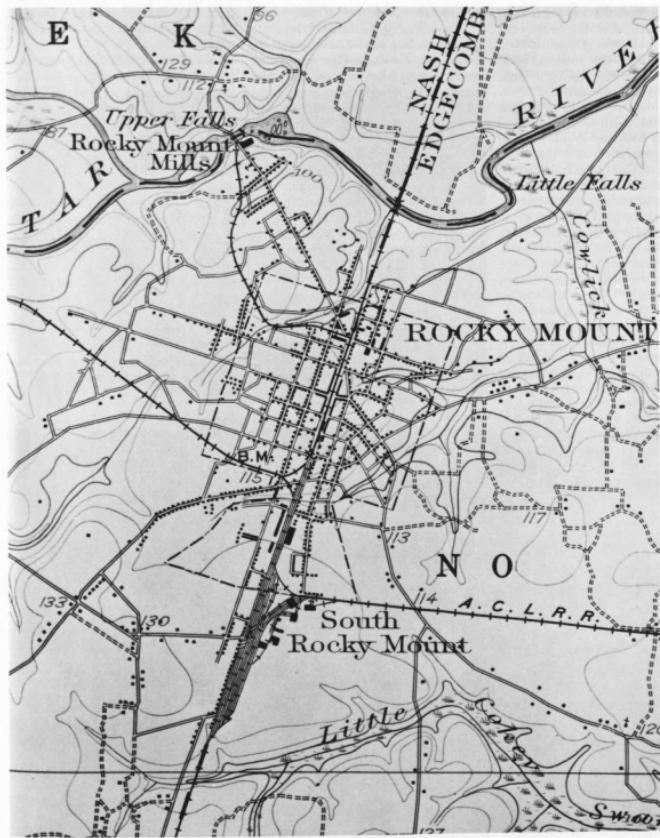
This is the man-drawn hose reel purchased in July of 1896 for \$11. It was on display here at the opening of Station Number Five on Springfield Road in September 1983.



This hand-pulled soda acid extinguisher was inverted to activate the chemical reaction that would create the pressure force the water out of the container.

for \$2,600, along with a hand drawn hose reel for \$11. The first fire station was at the corner of Sunset Avenue and Sorsby's Alley, where Purvis Cleaners was once located. The building, which was owned by J.W. Odom, was rented from Odom for \$12.50 a month. The building was large enough for the apparatus and had a meeting room in the back and also room for a hose drying rack. The building had two horse barns, which provided plenty of space for the mule which was purchased in April 1895 for \$100 (CRM Council Minutes).

Fire house folklore says in this firehouse there was a red ball hanging from a string in the building. The rule was for the first fireman reaching the station, when responding to a alarm, to snatch the red ball dangling from the



City of Rocky Mount area map, early 1900s. The area was then referred to as Rocky Mount, Rocky Mount Mills and South Rocky Mount. As of the printing of this book in 1996, the City encompassed about 35 square miles.

string. The fireman having the highest record of this ritual would be honored annually for his devotion, speed and service to the town (Thomas Jenkins, RMPD Retired). On 14 July 1896 the Town Council appointed J.R. Bissette fire chief. It was on 6 August 1896 when Fire Chief Bissette reported to the Town Council that the fire company had been organized and the following members were approved: Vernon Howell, C.C. Cooper, J.W. Battle, M.J. O'Neil, and M.H. Calcutt. This, along with the black fire company (members' names are unknown), was known as the Rocky Mount Fire Company. The fire company protected the Town of Rocky Mount and provided its service to the Town in a way which made the citizens proud.

Firefighting then, as far as water supplies were concerned, was accomplished by drafting water from wells or cisterns or other static water supplies. Chief Bissette had the Town complete additional cisterns throughout different areas

of Town for the sole use of firefighting. The basic strategy for fighting fire using the steamer engine and hose wagon apparatus was as follows: First, the steamer engine would locate the nearest water source to the fire incident. Second, the hand drawn hose reel would deploy hose from the steamer engine to the fire ground. Third, all connections would be made and once steam pressure was enough to run the rotary gear fire pump, the water would be supplied to the hoses for extinguishment. This was the principal fire ground operation until the gradual installation of water mains and fire hydrants which started in Rocky Mount in 1898 (*Evening Telegraph*, April 1975).

from R.H. Ricks and wife, Tempie, for \$5,500. This property also included the old market house. The building was renovated on 20 April 1905 by D.J. Rose Company. It held the steamer engine, horse wagon and horses, one of which was named "Beauty". Beauty pulled the horse wagon and would know exactly what to do when the alarm sounded (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

The Gibson Hill Fire Company was organized around April 1908 and was located on Bassett Street. This company served what was known as the Gibson Hill area of town and was another volunteer company. Outfitted with a hose reel pulled by the firefighters, Gibson Hill, along with the other companies, had a fire bell and the company foreman was Luther Daughtridge (CRM Council Minutes and Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

Rocky Mount city records show in 1909 the North Rocky Mount Fire Company was organized. Located in the 900 block of Falls Road, the company served



Shown here with the "Steamer" in action are left to right: Bynum "Boo" King, 2nd Sam Jenkins, 8th P.N. Stevens, 10th Soden and 11th W.L. Williford. Seated: Dr. Tom W. Smithson and E.J. Pitt. The others are unidentified.

viced the falls area and the west end of town. Consisting of a reel and supply of hose pulled by the firefighters, this department was partially funded by the

Rocky Mount Mills Company. The company foreman was Mr. Bass. The Atlantic Coastline Railroad also had its own fire brigade and apparatus. Although Atlant-

atic Coastline provided fire protection for its company, it mutually helped Rocky Mount as Rocky Mount helped Atlantic Coastline. During these times the fire company did its job in protecting the Town and providing a much needed service to the town.

On 1 February 1903 Fire Chief Cooper resigned and J.H. Cuthrell was appointed fire chief by the Town Council. The chain of command was: Fire Chief J.H. Cuthrell, Assistant Chief J.J. Battle, and Main Station Foreman D.D. Daughridge.

As the year 1903 progressed, the main fire station was moved from Sunset Avenue to Main Street. In 1905 a light wagon was purchased with the help of members and citizen donations. The wagon, designed for racing in firefighting competitions, was purchased for \$300. Later a gray horse was purchased for the wagon by private donations.

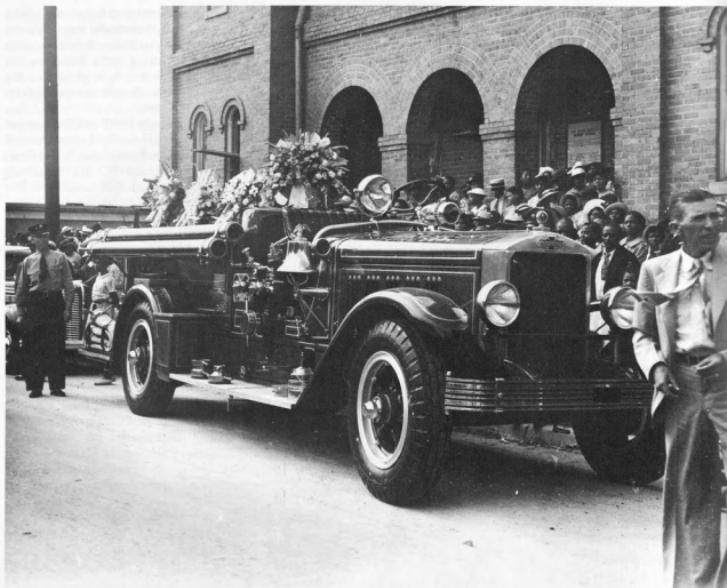
The black fire company competed in many state fireman tournaments and won many awards for speed and accuracy. But it was in 1906 when these activities turned into tragedy. Henry Mitchell, a firefighter attending a practice drill session for a upcoming state volunteer



Site of Rocky Mount Mills, still in operation here in 1996. Fire brigades at this plant are well trained and often extinguish many small fires without ever having to call the Fire Department. Rocky Mount Mills was very instrumental in the building of the community that surrounds the mill site.



Pictured above are members of the Rocky Mount Fire Department in 1905 along with their prize fire horse "Beauty". This also was the racing team. Left to right: George Smithson, Waite Night, Bud Rawls, H.A. Williford, Harry Moore, William L. Williford, Sam Jenkins, J.W. Thurman, John Brooks and Dr. Battle.



Bynum "Boo" King being taken to his final resting place with the help of Engine No. 3 in July 1940, a 1929 American La France nicknamed "Bertha".

fireman's convention in Warrenton, NC, passed away from a heart attack suffered during the drill in 1906 (*Evening Telegram*, 6 July 1976). This marks the first firefighter to die in the line of duty in the history of the Department.

In May of 1903, Bynum King or "Boo" as he was nicknamed, was a jailer for the City police force and transferred to the Fire Department to serve as the caretaker of the horses. He was the Department's first paid driver. King lived in the Fire Department even after the horse drawn apparatus was retired (*Evening Tele-*

gram, 17 May 1967). Firehouse folklore says he was liked and appreciated by all fire personnel and had a great love and respect for the Department.

King lived at the main fire station from 1904 until his death on 31 July 1940, at the age of 97. Prior to his death, King requested a fire truck be used as a hearse in his funeral. He was laid to rest with the help of Engine 3, nicknamed "Bertha", as the hearse. Pallbearers were W.B. Parrish, Captain E.J. Wells, E.C. Crisp, Dr. T.W. Smithson, W.L. Williford, Frank Collins W.B. Bradley—all Fire Department mem-

bers. Firehouse folklore says the Steamer engine also accompanied the funeral procession (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

On 20 April 1905 the D.J. Rose Company enlarged the engine house and market area and the bell tower was made taller. The original fire bell, which is currently at headquarters fire station, was purchased for \$250.12 (CRM Council Minutes). On 7 February 1907 the City Council ordered a bell and speaking tube to run from the central telephone station to the engine house, as outlined by the Fire Department (CRM Council Minutes).

O. P. CROCKER, General Agent,
1309 TRACTION BUILDING.

THE
GAMEWELL FIRE-ALARM TELEGRAPH COMPANY.



W.H. WOOLVERTON
President
WILLIAM GELLATLY
Vice Pres. & Gen. Mgr.

CHAS. W. CORNELL
Secretary
W. W. BOWES
Treasurer



EXECUTIVE OFFICE 19 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

A. H. KNOTT
RECEIVING AGENT

CINCINNATI, O. Sept 15, 1910

Mr. J. J. Battle,

Chief Fire Dept.,

Rocky Mount, N. C.

My Dear Sir:-

Your kind favor of the 12th ordering

- 1 - #4 Tower Bell striker with weights, chains
- lightning arrester and blue print for setting
- same
- 1 - Non-Interfering Manual Transmitting Box
- Battery to operate same
- 5 - Transmitting Box wheels

duly received. The order has been placed in line and shall have our best attention and shipment at the earliest possible moment.

As to the terms, we will give you a cash discount of 2% upon delivery of the goods. Of course if the time is taken on the bill, the notes will bear interest at 6%. This will make a saving of 8% on this bill.

Trusting this will meet with your approval, thanking you for the order, awaiting your further pleasures and commands at all times, I am

GPC:D

Yours truly
O.P. Crocker GEM'L. AGENT

This is an original shipping invoice dated 15 September 1910, from the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company showing the 12th order from the Rocky Mount Fire Department.



Old gamewell fire alarm box.

**LOCATIONS OF FIRE ALARM BOXES
AS OF 10 SEPTEMBER 1910.**

Box #	Location
14	Sunset Avenue and Howell Street
15	Thomas Street and Grace Street
16	Thomas Street and Tillary Street
17	Church Street and Thomas Street
18	Church Street and Falls Road
23	Grand Avenue and Carolina Avenue
24	Atlantic Avenue and Goldleaf Street
25	Washington Street and Tarboro Street
26	Atlantic Avenue and Goldleaf Street
27	Fire Station Main Street
28	Thomas Street and Lexington Street
31	Tarboro Street and Arlington Street
32	Main Street and Hill Street
34	Marigold Street and Raleigh Street
35	Washington Street and Edgecombe Street
36	Clark Street and Edgecombe Street
37	Arlington Street and Bassett Street
38	Clark Street and Redgate Avenue
41	Church Street and Bassett Street
42	Church Street and Nash Street
43	Main Street and Hammond Street
45	Nash Street and Pearl Street
46	Hammond Street and Franklin Street
47	Hammond Street and Grace Street
48	Church Street and Andrews Street
51	Falls Road and Ridge Street
53	Falls Road and Braswell Street
54	Falls Road and Bunn Street
62	Church Street and Henry Street
63	Church Street and Nashville Road
65	Washington Street and Dunn Street

On 25 July 1907 a system was installed so the telephone company could notify the Department of a fire by telephone for those in Rocky Mount who owned telephones. The fire bell would ring as to the location of the fire. This was one of the first emergency calling systems. 17 November 1910 was when the first alarm box system was purchased by the City. On 10 September 1910 the City had invested \$4,305 in the system, which was located in the main fire station and had boxes located in the locations listed in the box at left. (Box locations from: Rocky Mount City Directory 1912-13 and Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

The bell in the bell tower was operated by weights which were in the top of the tower. These weights had to be adjusted ever so often so the bell would operate when needed. To make locating alarms easier, the City was divided into four wards. When a box alarm would come in through the system at the station, a transmitter wheel would be chosen for the box and would ring the bell as per this example: "FIRE IN WARD 1 BOX 37". The bell would ring once, then pause, showing the ward number, then it would ring three times, then a pause "three times as for number three" and seven more times for seven, "hence the number 37".

All firefighters who would hear the bell would know where to locate. This same dispatch procedure would be used if a fire was reported by telephone or by a citizen. The personnel would find the box number nearest the location of the fire and ring the bell for the box. A rope was also attached to the bell so as to override the weight system when needed. This was primarily operated when tolling the bell for funerals. A bell was tolled for members in the Fire Department who passed away. When the funeral procession would pass by, the bell would be rung once every 15 to 20 seconds.

By 1911, Rocky Mount's fire company was characterized as "well manned, well equipped and kept in a high order of efficiency". The Department was 64 members strong and was led by the fire chief, J.J. Battle, and assistant chief, D.D.

Record of Fires

ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT

Number

Date	3/19/20	19
Time of Alarm	A. M. 9:10	P. M.
Box Number	45	Phone Call
House Number	341	Street
Owner	J. H. Hobbs	Occupant
Description of Building	Wood & Frame	Business
Building	Contents	Damage
Value - \$	Value - \$	Building - \$
Insurance - \$	Insurance - \$	Contents - \$
Fire Apparatus Used		
Feet of Fire Hose Used	600	Water Pressure
Ladders Used		
Extinguisher Tanks Used		
Distance to Fire	10 blocks	Large
Cause of Fire	Unknown	Small
Time out	10:50 P. M.	A. M.
REMARKS		

MEMBERS PRESENT

Daughtridge, D. D.	Wakenight, J. H.	Perkinson, Bernard
✓ Thurman, J. W.	Gravely, P. K.	Lindsey, R. A.
✓ Pitt, E. J.	Smith, D. B.	Smiley, C. S.
✓ Soden, Wm. Sr.	✓ Council, J. W.	Duty, G. J.
Brooks, J. B.	Rawls, R. W.	Gay, Joe
Matthews, J. L.	✓ Trueblood, J. E.	Waskey, Harry
✓ Williford, W. L.	Brown, B. W.	Bulluck, Davis
✓ Smithson, T. W.	Harris, R. O.	✓ Lyons, A. M.
✓ Mahry, G. W.	Johnston, E. G.	✓ Arrington, R. L.
✓ August, F. L.	Soden, Willie,	Jordan, P. H.
Capelle, P. R.	Sorsby, J. R.	✓ Huffines, Gordon
✓ Horne, J. L., Jr.	Walb, J. O.	Gravely, J. O. W., Jr.
	✓ Harriss	
	✓ Frazer	

A fire report for March 19, 1920.



This 1914 American La France chemical hose wagon, painted white, was the first motorized fire apparatus purchased by the Rocky Mount Fire Department. Original purchase price was \$ 3,375. Left to right, seated: John Sorsby and E.J. Wells coming out of Station Number One on N.E. Main Street.

Daughtridge

The Main Street Fire Company consisted of R.W. Rawles, foreman; W.S. Moyen, first assistant foreman; and William Soden Jr., second assistant foreman. On October 1912, Chief Battle tendered his resignation to the City Council; Assistant Chief Daughtridge was appointed fire chief and Dr. J.J. Battle was to be assistant chief. Neither firehouse folklore nor official records explain why the two officers "traded titles".

One of the first fire prevention measures was a city ordinance banning fire works of any kind be sold in the city limits as of 17 October 1912 (CRM Council Minutes). On 9 May 1913, the City Council approved a salary for the volunteer fire chief of \$20 a month, making Chief Daughtridge the first paid fire chief (CRM Council Minutes).

On 5 June 1913, a letter was written by the Fire Committee to the City Council in reference to the justification to purchase Rocky Mount's first "auto-drawn combination and chemical hose wagon". The letter explained how the City had expanded to the point where existing fire apparatus had become outdated. The letter explained most of the fire apparatus was man-drawn and many of the firemen were too exhausted to fight fires once they reached the fire scene. The Fire Committee recommended an auto-drawn chemical hose wagon be purchased. This apparatus, upon receipt of a call, could immediately respond and arrive within one-tenth of the time previously consumed.

The letter said this truck could reach speeds of 30 to 40 miles per hour over paved and unpaved terrain, including

fields, much easier. This chemical wagon "as with chemical wagons of that time" could be used as a quick fire-attack vehicle. A lone fireman, once at the fire, could activate the chemical tank and make a quick fire attack with the chemical agent extinguishing a smaller fire quickly. The truck would also be equipped with 1,200 feet of hose which could be used in conjunction with fire hydrants. Insurance companies reported insurance rates for mercantile and residential premiums would be reduced by five percent of the

firefighters of the time thought chemical extinguishers had extraordinary fire killing powers. In reality, though, the speed of the truck to the fire and the speed of putting water on the fire combined to be much faster and more effective, and the chemical extinguishers seemed to be special.

Chemical fire companies had a flawless performance record from the 1870s to the early 1930s. In 1913, the Ahrens Fox Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, came up with a new fast attack idea. The water booster tank was introduced and this invention marked the beginning of the end for chemical engines (*Firefighting Lore*, W. Fred Conway). When the chemical engine was placed in service at the main fire station, the town and local fire enthusiasts alike were proud of what was, for the time, state-of-the-art apparatus.

As time moved on, the Fire Department lost its black fire company, for reasons unknown, but was stated in 19 April 1914 city records as a lack of interest.

History was made on 20 March 1915 when the City Council authorized the chief of the Fire Department be inspector of all buildings in the City and to collect and keep for himself the fees from these inspections. He was required to keep a

complete record of the inspections for himself and the city clerk. According to the record, this event was the first action making the Fire Department directly responsible for fire prevention activities.

On 6 May 1915, J.W. Thurman was elected to the position of assistant chief, replacing Assistant Chief W.D. Moye, who replaced Assistant Chief J.J. Battle upon his resignation on 4 December 1913.

In November 1915, several Fire Department members approached the City Council in hopes that more adequate quarters be built at the main fire station. By December, proposed improvements for the main fire station were being established. By 6 January 1916, the Fire Committee of the City Council approved plans for a new station. On 17 February 1916 the City Council awarded building contracts to D.J. Rose Company for \$10,180, less \$300 for old materials. Heating and plumbing contracts went to O.D. Murray for \$2,550. The main fire station was torn down and the new station was built in 1917 for around \$10,135 (CRM Council Minutes and Thomas Jenkins, RMPD Retired).

On 15 June 1916, the City Council approved the purchase of one triple combination pumper/chemical and motor car-type 75, (pumping 750 gallons at 120 PSI), for \$9,000. The Department had two motorized apparatus ready for service. 6 July 1916, marked the day the assistant chief would be paid for his duties at a salary of \$180 yearly, making Assistant Chief J.W. Thurman the first paid assistant chief. A relief driver was approved to be hired on 4 April 1918. This is the second employee other than King to be hired full time, at a salary of \$75 a month. Rocky Mount's first motorized ladder truck was purchased for \$13,000 on 4 December 1919. The Department had another change of command on 4 December 1919, when Assistant Chief Thurman resigned and Dr. T.W. Smithson was approved to replace Thurman.

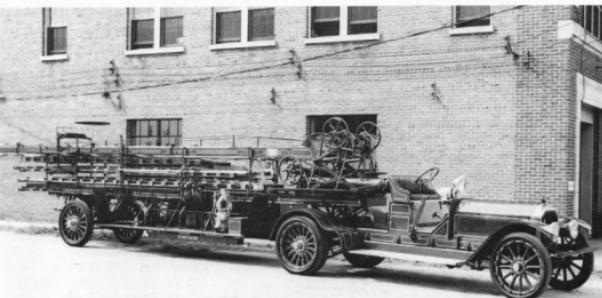
In May 1920, the Department received its new aerial apparatus. The 1919 model American LaFrance was a chain driven 65-foot aerial ladder truck. This truck carried 200 feet of wooden ladders and had a 105-horsepower engine. This appa-



Pat Patterson shows here the 1916 American La France 750-gpm pumper which was then housed at Station Number Two on S. Church Street. This marked the second piece of motorized apparatus the Rocky Mount Fire Department had purchased, and the very first triple combination pumper. Purchase price was \$ 9000.



Showed here again is the 1916 American La France Pumper. This was the first pumper now retired firefighter Tom Jenkins drove. This truck was once sent to Raleigh, N.C. to be painted, which explains the difference in the lettering on the hood. It was eventually sold to the Kill Devil Hills Fire Department on the North Carolina coast.



Featuring a wooden 65-foot aerial ladder and a total of 200 feet of wooden ladders, this chain-driven 1919 American La France motorized ladder truck was purchased for \$13,000 on 4 December 1919.

Being the first of its kind to Rocky Mount firemen, special training was held with American La France factory personnel to master the rear "tiller man" driving. This truck was sold in December of 1960 for a few hundred dollars.



1919 American La France 65-foot aerial ladder truck.

ratus for Rocky Mount was the first of its kind and specialized training from the American LaFrance factory had to be completed. It took some time for the firefighters to adapt themselves to the back, or tiller end of the truck.

During the early 1920s, the Department handled all fires, none of which, according to history, were very large. The fire alarm box system worked well with the public. Some citizens enjoyed pulling the boxes and creating false alarms. This was evident on 16 December 1920, when Mary O'Brien was paid \$100 by the city as a reward to help convict an individual who was turning in false alarms (CRM Council Minutes).

On 18 December 1920 tragedy once again struck the Department as another firefighter was killed in the line of duty. Around midnight, W.T. May attempted to climb aboard a moving pumper leaving the Main Street Station on the way to what was a false alarm. In his attempt to board the apparatus, he lost his footing, fell under the truck and was run over. The driver of the pumper was unaware anything happened and continued on the call. Twelve hours later, firefighter May succumbed to his injuries and passed away at Park View Hospital at the age of 31. A memorial plaque was placed at the Main Street Fire Department in his honor. On 5 September 1922, the Department voted to install a memorial window in the



Behind these two firemen is the memorial plaque erected in the memory of Fireman W.T. May, on the front of Station Number One on Main Street. When this building was torn down, the stone plaque was removed and is now in storage at the headquarters station on S. George Street.

Red Oak Methodist Church in memory of Firefighter May. A picture of Firefighter May also hung at the Main Street Fire Station and was later given to his first cousin.

Salaries increased for the chief and assistant chief on 2 June 1921, to \$50 per month rather than \$20 for the chief, and \$25 per month rather than \$15 per month for the assistant chief.

On 17 November 1921, the Department and the City Council elected to abolish the Gibson Hill Fire Company for reasons unknown (CRM Council Minutes). On 18 May 1922, the City Council appointed George A. Mabry as Fire Chief, to replace Chief Daughtridge, and W.L. Williford to replace Assistant Chief Thurman.

One of the first noted accidents with fire apparatus was on 9 October 1922. The chemical truck driven by Lotus Wells had a wreck at the corner of Washington and Tarboro Streets. While responding to box alarm number 61, a car turned in front of the chemical truck. The apparatus skidded on wet streets and hit the curbing. A ladder from the apparatus struck a traveling salesman, injuring him.

On 24 April 1924, the City began to receive bids for the construction of Fire Station Number Two. During 1924, the Fire Department had 28 alarm boxes and added an additional 10 boxes to the system; four in Nash County and six in Edgecombe County. Each additional box cost \$125. Fire Station Number Two was built by D.J. Rose, and on 24 December 1924 the Department moved into the new station. Station Two was located at the 400 block of South Church Street and was complemented with two engine companies.

Stations Number One and Number Two had their own company meetings and separate bylaws, but were governed by the fire chief. Station One had 33 volunteer firefighters and four paid members: Captain E.J. Wells, Firefighters J.R. Thomas and L.A. Williamson, Chief Mabry, and Assistant Chief Parrish. Station Two consisted of 16 volunteer firefighters and two paid members, C.P. Ellen and R.A. Hayes. The paid personnel of the Department at this time often went home for meals, thus placing a truck company out of service during meal times (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

The newest 1,000-gallon American LaFrance pumper, along with a 750-gallon American American LaFrance pumper, protected Station Two's area. In the rear of the station, there was a building for the Gamewell fire alarm system. There was also an open-air hose drying rack at the rear of the building which held approximately 20 to 25 sections of fire hose. The hose drying area was originally a shelter and was later closed in and equipped with a blower to dry the fire hose.

At the very back of the station was a place where many fond memories took place for many of Rocky Mount's older personnel. This, of course, was where many of the Brunswick stew meals were prepared. From 1924, and many years after, Vann Norwood "Country" Neal was the chief cook. Stews were cooked several times during the year for special occasions, social events and just good old fellowship among the men and other city officials. The men on duty would always help Country cook the stew. Firehouse folklore says one of the secret ingredients



The Number Two Fire Station on S. Church Street was built in 1924 by D.J. Rose Company. In this picture, with the 1916 American LaFrance 750-gpm pumper and a chief's car, are several firemen which were unable to be identified, dressed in their best for this pose. You might note that there is a house on the right side of the station. This was taken before the building, which was first built for Wood Oil Company, was erected. It is now the Marks Brothers Building and is scheduled to be demolished for the train station renovation project.



W.B. "Bo" Parrish, on the left, with E.J. Wells and John Sorsby on his right, are proud to show this 1916 American La France 1000-gpm pumper on the front ramp at Fire Station Number One on N.E. Main Street.



Soup's on, or rather the stew is! This is one of the famous "stew cookin's" of "Country" Neal behind Fire Station Number Two. Right to left: "Country" Neal, Troy Brown and Jimmy "Pro" Baines. The other gentlemen (who are not identified) were members of the local Jaycees.



Gordon Abbott stands beside the 1923 American La France 1000-gpm pumper, which was Engine No. 2 and was assigned to Fire Station Number Two on S. Church Street when it opened.



Vann Norwood "Country" Neal at another "stew cookin'" behind Station Number Two on S. Church Street. Two very large cast iron pots were given to the Rocky Mount Fire Department, one by Don Bulluck with the request that the Eastern Star Group be allowed to borrow it for their stews, and another from retired volunteer fireman J.R. Moore, deceased. The Department also has a smaller cast iron pot, but its origin was unable to be determined.

of Country's stew might have been cigar ashes that fell into the 75-gallon stew pot.

During 1924, and for the next eight years, Station Two had what the department characterized as its first and only dog mascot — a fox terrier named "Hot Shot". Much time was spent with this stray dog which took residence at Station Two in 1924. Characterized by firefighters of the time as a "well-trained dog for the Fire Service", Hot Shot, on fair-weathered days, would stand his post (lying down) in front of Station Two. The dog

was smart enough to distinguish fire alarm bells from the noon and 6:00 p.m. test bells by looking at the clock when they struck.

According to firehouse folklore, the terrier would eat what was cooked at the firehouse. If he didn't want to eat at the firehouse, he would go over to the hot dog stand at Hammond and Church Streets. Some days he would stand at the bus stop and board the city bus to dine at a cafe in south Rocky Mount. The cafe knew the dog and would give him food

when he appeared.

Hot Shot would sleep in the seat of the pumper at night and would respond to all fires, riding on the hose bed of the truck. It has also been said that if Hot Shot missed a fire call, he would follow the fire trucks to the fire. Hot Shot was well-known in this area of town as being the firehouse dog and was liked by all.

Finally, Station Two received a new fire engine and that evening when Hot Shot climbed into the new truck's seat to go to sleep, a firefighter scolded and threw

THE HISTORY OF THE ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT

ALARM NO. 94
J. W. Cole, Jr.
ROCKY MOUNT, N. C. 12-18-26
Mr. [Signature]
Chairman For Committee.

SIR:
In compliance with your request, I have the honor to submit report of operation of Rocky Mount Fire Department, at fire on [redacted] Street, on the 18th day of December, 1926.
Telegraph, Telephone, verbal alarm was received at 9 A.M. and registered 412 on indicator, box located [redacted]

Was delayed _____ minutes on account of _____

Hydrant on the corner of [redacted] and [redacted] street. Hydrant was found to be in _____ condition. Five first answered in [redacted] building on [redacted] floor and spread to [redacted] - [redacted]

The building was used by [redacted] and was owned by [redacted] and occupied by [redacted]. Value of building \$ [redacted] Value of contents \$ [redacted]

Insurance on building \$ [redacted] Insurance on contents \$ [redacted] Damage to building \$ [redacted]

Damage to contents \$100,000⁰⁰ Number of 2 1/2 inch lines stretched by Co. No. 1 [redacted]
Co. No. 2 [redacted]

Co. No. 1 [redacted] Co. No. 1 [redacted]
Number feet 2 1/2 inch hose Co. No. 2 [redacted] Size of nozzle _____ No. feet chemical hose _____
Co. No. 2 [redacted] Co. No. 2 [redacted]

Number gallons chemical Co. No. 1 [redacted] Co. No. 2 [redacted]
Co. No. 2 [redacted] No. feet straight ladder raised 45' area [redacted] No. feet roof ladder _____

Description of building Frame [redacted] stories [redacted] roof
Brick X

Time returned to quarters 1:30 P.M. time when ready for duty 1:30 P.M. condition of apparatus [redacted]

How extinguished Water Hours engine worked [redacted] No. miles engine traveled [redacted]

Remarks Ward Lumber Co. [redacted] explosion [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

ROLL CALL COMPANY NO. 2 COMPANY NO. 2
Soden, Willis J. Sanders, Julian
Soddy, J. R., Jr. Horse, J. H., Jr. [redacted]
Williford, W. L. Hodgespath, R. L.
Hollbrook, J. S. Utley, A. M.
Collins, F. B. Hatch, J. R.
Holloman, C. E. [redacted]
Collins, W. L. Bullard, D. O.
Smithson, T. W. Thompson, J. C.
Wynne, S. Lee [redacted]
Gupton, S. T. Frazer, R. F.
Timberlake, K. Gardner, F. S., Jr.
Wade, Earl [redacted]
Whitaker, Harry [redacted]
Phillips, W. C. [redacted]

DRIVERS DRIVERS
Wellis, Edgar Thomas, J. R.
Johnson, W. H. Belknap, Frank
Parrish, W. H. [redacted]

HONORARY MEMBERS Pitt, Guy L. [redacted]
Rowles, R. W. Pitt, E. J.
Thurman, J. W. Brooks, J. B.
Trueblood, J. E. Harris, H. L.

Total Present Company No. 2 Total Present at Fire - 44

E. W. Woodson

This is the original fire report for the Ward Lumber Company and Southern Distributing Company fire which occurred December 18, 1926.

Hot Shot out of the seat. Hot Shot insulted and feelings hurt, left the fire station never to be seen at the station again. Hot Shot took up at another residence and met his fate on Cokey Road later on (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

On 18 December 1926, what the Rocky Mount Evening Telegram characterizes as "the worst disaster in the city's history" occurred. A boiler exploded at the Ward Lumber Company and ignited the nearby Southern Distributing Company plant, making both buildings a total loss. Two individuals were killed and 10 were seriously injured when the boiler inside the Ward Lumber Company ruptured into three parts, hurling the ripped boiler 250 feet into the air. One of the pieces crashed through the roof of the Southern Distributing Company, landed on a consignment of matches, landed and ignited a blaze. The other part of the boiler catapulted several hundred feet onto the southbound tracks of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad beyond the freight station. The freight station windows were shattered and a portion of the chimney toppled. The blast was heard all around the City and windows buildings city-wide were broken. A lumber mill employee was discovered missing after the blast and his remains were never recovered.

The total loss estimated by the Fire Department was \$25,000 for the lumber company and \$75,000 for the wholesale grocery company. These two buildings were located on South Church Street just off the corner of Bassett Street (Rocky Mount Evening Telegram, 18 December 1926). According to pictures, it appears the Fire Department utilized every resource possible to render aid at this incident. It is said the wholesale distributing company burned for days until the fire was brought under control.

In 1927, Rocky Mount became one of the first cities in the nation to

THE HISTORY OF THE ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT

List of Members

OUR VERY FIRST ANNUAL BANQUET

MORTON MEMORIAL BLDG. FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FRIDAY NIGHT, JANUARY 21ST, 1927

AT 8 P. M.



AT WHICH WE HAVE AS
OUR GUESTS
THE LADIES

Original program for the "very first" Annual Banquet for the Ladies. Later to be referred to as "Ladies' Night," this first banquet was held January 21, 1927 at 8:00 pm.

COMMITTEE FOR THIS OCCASION

J. W. THURMAN, Chairman
V. B. SLAUGHTER, J. R. SORSBY, L. L. LANIAN, T. W. SMITHSON,
LEE BUNTING, RUDY COLLINS

A list of fire company members inside the program in 1927. Company No. 1 refers to Station Number One firemen, as does Fire Company No. 2 refer to Station Number Two firemen.



From the front ramp of Station Number Two on S. Church is this view of the old Ricks Hotel a short time before it was torn down. Milton Shearins' "Hotel Gulf," as seen here, was across the street from Station Number Two. The Gulf Station, which is now a BP Station, the Marks Brothers Building and Old Station Number Two are scheduled to be torn down soon for the renovation of the train station located behind the Gulf station.

FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL BANQUET
AND LADIES' NIGHT
1896 - 1972

ROCKY MOUNT

Tuesday Night, February 22, 1972
7:00 p. m.

Josh Bulluck's

Rocky Mount Fire Department

ROCKY MOUNT, N. C.

A program for the 42nd Annual Banquet for the Ladies
signifies the last banquet which was held.

CAPTAINS

- C. R. Ellis
- W. T. Brown
- H. A. Melton
- H. A. Marshall
- Herbert Collins
- J. F. B. Barnes
- T. G. Joyner
- M. Price
- G. L. Smith
- K. L. Hale
- T. M. Howell
- D. R. Howell
- W. T. French

LIEUTENANTS

- E. Daniel
- M. May
- W. B. Hawkins
- W. H. Drummond
- J. E. Hartman
- D. T. Buchan
- M. C. Cox
- W. D. Johnson
- E. D. Perry
- W. C. Taylor
- T. C. Robbins
- G. W. Sheape
- C. R. Webb

PERSONNEL

- S. D. Spain
- D. J. Joyner
- A. C. Johnson
- D. C. Hayes
- N. D. Adams
- Nathaniel Battle
- K. L. Spauld
- D. B. Cooper
- W. E. Harper
- E. R. Salter
- J. E. Pittman
- E. H. Barwick, Jr.
- L. R. Reeves
- Lawson Morris
- C. G. Aycock
- C. L. Johnson
- A. S. Atkinson
- D. L. Jenkins
- R. L. Thompson
- L. Herrington, Jr.
- K. L. Ladd
- W. E. Lewis
- D. E. Harper
- T. L. Martin
- R. W. Price

HONORARY

- L. A. Cox
- Elwood Innes
- J. M. Hedgepath
- W. B. Melton
- Bob Woodburn

RETIRIED

- E. Adams
- M. Abbott
- W. A. Anderson
- J. S. Bravwell
- G. C. Bravwell
- J. L. House
- J. A. Clark
- L. Davis
- W. R. Gwynn
- J. E. Grigsby
- W. P. James
- J. C. Harring, Jr.
- W. L. Holden
- J. V. Neal
- Willie Soden
- T. V. Soden
- C. H. Thomas
- Dr. T. W. Smithson
- W. L. Tamm
- P. R. Vaughan
- E. J. Walker
- W. G. Drake
- J. G. Croom

VOLUNTEERS

- E. R. Moore, Jr.
- J. C. Shadley
- J. G. Pace
- J. B. Proctor
- J. C. Plummer
- J. F. Sharpe
- T. Turner
- G. Williams
- J. W. Wootten

Dixie Printing & Publishing Co., Inc. - 1972

Members of the department listed inside the program for the last year of the banquet. The final banquet was held February 22, 1972. The check marks appear to indicate who attended.

adopt a council-city manager form of government. This form of municipal administration renders continuity and stability to programs and plans (*Pictorial History of Rocky Mount*; Barringer, Barringer and Chesson). On 1 February 1929, the department acknowledged the resignation of Fire Chief Mabry and appointed Assistant Chief J. R. Sorbs as fire chief.

The Ricks Hotel was one of Rocky Mount's most modern and finest. The hotel, which opened in 1909, entertained and lodged many visitors who came to Rocky Mount. Around 1921, it had 241

rooms and stood four stories high, counting the basement (*Rocky Mount Centennial Book*). On 30 March 1929, in the early morning, a fire gutted the annex of the structure, which contained 140 rooms and left some 70 guests in shock after losing all their belongings. Rocky Mount battled the blaze with the eventual help of the Wilson and Tarboro Fire Departments. Several firefighters suffered injuries from broken glass and falling bricks.

The fire was discovered around the elevator shaft on the fourth floor. When flames were seen on the roof of the building, Rocky Mount notified the Tarboro

and Wilson Fire Departments, which sent a pumper each and a number of firefighters. A number of businesses located on the first floor sustained heavy water damage. It took several hours for the fire to be confined, using nine fire streams (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

The aerial truck, while responding to this incident, was involved in a wreck. Once there, it was set up on Coast Line Street and could not be used because of bricks falling around the ladder company. It was said a police officer by the name of Powell was shooting out the top



The Ricks Hotel opening in 1909. It was located at Coastline and S.W. Main Streets. In a morning fire on 30 March 1929, it sustained major fire and water damage. There were no life-threatening injuries, but the aerial ladder truck responding to this fire was involved in a wreck. Fire loss was approximately \$217,000. Fire damages were repaired and the hotel did reopen.

windows of the building to help ventilate smoke. Flames could be seen as far away as Franklin Street. The fire was so tremendous that an engine company patrolled through town, putting out small fires caused by burning embers from the huge blaze. The total loss of the fire was \$217,425 (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

Rocky Mount continued to persevere even through the Great Depression of the 1920s. The City even built new public schools, such as Holland, Pope, Battle, Booker T., Bassett and Lincoln. Lincoln, which no longer exists, was the first black school in the state financed by a public bond issue.

Rocky Mount added to its inventory a new pumper in 1929 costing \$13,000

(CRM Council Minutes). This pumper, an American LaFrance 1,000-gallon triple combination pumper, eventually earned the name "Big Bertha". Bertha gave a good service history to the Department and performed its last assignment in 1968 when Peoples Warehouse on Falls Road burned. The City was so proud of this engine that the Department sent this truck to be in the Fire Chief's Convention Parade in Montgomery, Alabama. Bertha was one of the first fire engines in the Department to have the fenders trimmed in gold (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

More apparatus changes came along in the Department in July 1932 when the City purchased the fire chief's car. The 1914 chemical engine had a front-mount pump installed on it to upgrade its

firefighting capabilities.

The beginning of 1933 started with a large fire at the Southern Cotton Oil Company. On 1 January 1933, firefighters tried to contain the blaze, which totally destroyed the seed house. Because the fire was in stored seed, it was hard for fire streams to reach the hidden fires. Cotton seed smoldered for days after the large fire was extinguished. No one was injured, and total damages were estimated at \$60,000 (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

In 1939 the City purchased a 600-gallon American LaFrance pumper. Firehouse folklore says the truck never gave good service. Captain E.J. Wells, the Department mechanic, had to replace two motors in this apparatus. The ladders on

This 1929 American La France 1000-gpm pumper, driven here by Bob Thomas Sr., was nicknamed "Bertha". It is shown on the front ramp of Station Number One on N.E. Main Street. She was one of the first fire engines to have her fenders trimmed in gold.



"Bertha" on the back ramp of the newly-opened headquarters station at 101 S. George Street in 1964.



Shown here is the front of Fire Station Number Two on S. Church Street, built in 1924. Left to right: W.P. "Pete" James and L.A. Williamson on the 1919 American La France chain-driven 65-foot wooden aerial ladder truck. Next are W.B. Bradley and J.R. Sorsby on a 1916 American La France 750-gpm pumper. Then comes the white fire truck, which was the first motorized apparatus purchased by the Rocky Mount Fire Department. It was a 1914 American La France chemical truck and in its seat are Mr. Hayes and C.P. "Percy" Ellen. The fourth truck from the left is a 1923 American La France 1000-gpm triple combination pumper and at its controls are W.B. "Bo" Parrish and J.R. "Bob" Thomas. The last truck on the right has V.N. "Country" Neal and E.J. Wells, showing off the 1929 American La France 1000-gpm pumper nicknamed "Bertha".



This picture was taken on the ramp at Station Number Two On S. Church Street. Left to right: John Sorsby, Red Thomas, W.B. "Bo" Parrish, C.P. "Percy" Ellen, E.J. "Hawkshaw" Wells, unidentified, Bennett Bradley, Pete James, Lou Williamson and Vann Norwood "Country" Neal. This was taken around 1935.





Forty two firemen turned out for this photograph in 1936 in front of Fire Station Number One On N.E. Main Street. Seated is Bynum "Boo" King. Left to right, front row: W.L. Williford, Fab Haskins, Thad Soden, Mr. Lanhan, Mr. Lanhan, Tom Allgood, Willie Soden Sr., Willie Soden Jr., W.B. "Bo" Parrish, J.W. Thurman, Frank Collins, Paul Stevens, V.N. "Country" Neal, "Frog" Anderson, Mr. Campbell and B.M. Strickland. Second row: unidentified, Pete James, Buck Slaughter, Judge C.A. Thomas, Mr. Kanhan, Bill Phillips, unidentified, Francis Patterson, Henry Brooks, Luke Landing, L.S. Braswell, L.A. Cox, E.L. Dudley, L.L. Proctor and C.K. "Ike" Pettit. Back row: C.P. "Percy" Ellen, J.H. Hughes, E.J. "Hawkhaw" Wells and L.A. Williamson.



Taken 3 October 1937, Rocky Mount's finest. Left to right, front row: Ike Pettit, Pete James, J.H. Hughes, W.B. "Bo" Parrish, J.R. Sorby, Bynum "Boo" King, Red Thomas, L.A. Williamson and V.N. "Country" Neal. Second row: Joe Council, W.L. Williford, Mr. Lanhan, J.O. Herring, Henry Brooks, E.C. Crisp, Elmo House, Bill Phillips, Willie Soden, L.L. Lanhan and E.G. Pitt. Third row: Frank Collins, L.Y. Shaw, Tom Allgood, Charles "Red" Thurman, Hubert Overby, E.L. Dudley, Francis Patterson, Mr. Lanhan, J.W. Thurman, Tom Braswell and Francis Gold. Top row: D.M. "Frog" Anderson, B.M. Strickland, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Lanhan and Norman Gold.



Standing here in front of Station Number Two beside a 1939 American La France are, left to right, W.B. "Bo" Parrish and J.O. Herring. Firehouse folklore says the truck never gave good service. Bad motors plagued the truck and the top-mounted ladders kept causing firemen to fall from the tailboard.



J.S. "Happy" Braswell, 1952.



Gordon K. Abbott, 1952.



This was taken in the late 1930s. Left to right, front row: Vann N. "Country" Neal, J.O. Herring, E.C. Crisp, J.H. "Buck" Hughes Jr., W. Bennett Bradley, C.P. "Percy" Ellen, L.A. Williamson, W.P. "Pete" James and W.B. "Bo" Parrish. Second row: L.Y. Shaw, S.T. Gupton, George C. Braswell, W.N. "Bill" Smith, Mr. Lanhan, George Leloudis, Ed Glaskow, Pat Patterson, George May, Troy Brown and B.M. Strickland. Third row: unidentified, J.S. "Happy" Braswell, unidentified, D.M. "Frog" Anderson, Ben Proctor, Bill Phillips, Elmo House, H.S. Campbell, Willie Soden, W. Hubert Overby and L.L. Proctor. Fourth Row: Dan Pitt, L.A. Cox, Francis Patterson, L. Oren Gupton, Fab A. Haskins, Paul M. Stevens, W.L. Williford, Thad Soden, Norman Gold, Henry S. Brooks and Francis Gold.

this truck were on top and extended over the tailboard. Once, while responding to a house fire, Firefighter J.S. "Happy" Braswell was riding tailboard with two other firefighters. The engine ran over a bump in the road, tossing Firefighter Braswell into the ladders. While regaining his mental faculties, the other two firefighters had to hold him on the tailboard and later sent him to the hospital. Firefighter Gordon Abbott also fell from the tailboard of this truck one day on the way to an alarm (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

In 1934, the City of Rocky Mount had a population of 27,000 people. The chief industries were manufacturing and agriculture. The city limits spanned to 4.5 square miles. The Fire Department had 11 paid men (unknown number of vol-

unteers) with two stations and six pieces of motorized apparatus. The value of the Fire Department property was \$65,000. Fire Chief J.R. Sorsby, Assistant Chief W.B. Parrish, and Station Captain V.N. Neal were at Station One. Station Two's captain was W.P. James. The paid men at this time worked 48-hour shifts with 24 hours off duty. The paid members were allowed to go home for lunch and supper from the hours of 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., respectively.

This allowed every member one hour each for lunch and supper. This action twice a day, would take a truck out of service. The paid members received no extra compensation for working holidays. The base pay for a recruit firefighter was \$120 per month.

The Carolina Theater caught fire on January 1942. The Fire Department was notified about 1:05 a.m. and responded



Removing the ladders from this 1939 American La France, which was much different than any other apparatus at the time. Left to right: Bill Parrish, "Uncle" Vernon Melton and V.N. "Country" Neal.

with four pumpers and the aerial truck. It took the department three hours to put out the blaze, which started on the second floor in the projector room. Firefighters had to brave 8-degree weather and freezing fire hoses. The aerial truck, which was used to ventilate the frozen roof, could not be recovered for days because icicles had formed from the tip of the ladder to the ground. No one was injured in the fire, which had an estimated fire damage of \$6,000.

It was discovered the theater attendant who noticed the fire tried to call the Fire Department by phone but could not because the fire burned through the telephone line. The attendant then ran to the fire alarm box #32 at the corner of Main

and Hill Streets. The theater had just let out the last of the patrons at 12:30 a.m., which was about the same time the fire started. The picture they had been watching was "Blackout in Shang hi" (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

7 December 1941 marked the beginning of the United States involvement in World War II. The Atlantic Coastline Railroad was the parting place for many of Rocky Mount's sons and daughters who would leave and not be seen again. The Fire Department lost some of its paid and volunteer members to the war. Those who returned home were welcomed with open arms and the firefighters inherited their old jobs back. While the war raged in Europe and the Pacific, Rocky Mount

Fire Department continued to provide the City with fire protection which was second to none.

On 2 March 1944, the Department suffered another traffic accident involving a responding fire truck. Shortly after 10:00 a.m., a pumper leaving the Number Two Station was responding to a box alarm. The engine company was responding to a box alarm number 15 for a fire at 922 Star Street for hot coals smoldering on a wet heath.

Upon reaching the intersection at Church Street and Sunset Avenue, a city transit bus failed to yield for the apparatus driven by E.G. Croom. Croom hit the bus and then a light pole. This action threw Firefighter J.S. "Happy" Braswell



Christmas during the War, World War II that is, meant it was holly pulling time at the fire house. This photo shows the upstairs at Station Number One on N.E. Main Street. Left to right: Buck Drummond, Steve Gupton, J.W. Thurman and V.N. "Country" Neal.

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Holly pulling was a time for fellowship at the fire house during the Christmas season. To this day the Fire Department still uses the old wooden barrels for egg nog. Left to right: Henry Brooks, Dorsey Daniels, unidentified sailor, Pete James, Willie Soden, L.M. Hedgeseth Jr., Francis Patterson, "Bo" Parrish, Mr. Williamson and Paul Stevens.



During the Christmas holiday season, firemen would often send out Christmas seals. This was taken in Station Number One on Main Street. Clockwise: Ed Glasgow with pipe, Dick Adams, "Uncle" Vernon Melton, J.R. Sorby, Pat Patterson, Russell Womble and J.W. Tharman.

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This board and flag honored the members of the Rocky Mount Fire Department who were serving their country in the "big" war. (WWII)



Shown here in front of the 1919 65-foot aerial ladder truck are W.B. "Bo" Parrish, John R. Sorsby and E.J. "Hawkhshaw" Wells.



44



Left to right Pat Patterson, "Uncle" Vernon Melton, Ed Glasgow, Hubert Bland and Bill Crumpler are listening close to the radio for the war news of the day.

over the hood of the truck, injuring him slightly. A lady riding the bus suffered a fractured collarbone. Witnesses stated the bus advanced forward with the green light when the fire truck entered the intersection.

The City was involved in a lawsuit over the accident and it is unclear what the outcome was. The fire engine had extensive damage and, because of the war, it took a long time to be repaired and readied for service (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired, and Rocky Mount Evening Telegram).

A dramatic rescue was performed on

27 November 1944 when the Universalist Church caught on fire. At 1:40 p.m., upon the Fire Department's arrival, heavy smoke was showing from the structure. Firefighters were told there was a church day care in operation and children were in the structure. A rescue effort was led by Captain W.T. Brown and, upon a search, six children were recovered unconscious. Once moved to safety, the children were revived. Assistant Chief Parrish cut his hands and fingers and was sent to the hospital. The fire started in the boiler room of the church (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

On 1 September 1947, The City Council approved the members to work 24 hours on and 24 hours off, provided they didn't go home for meals. This also kept the engine companies in service which was what the men wanted. After this change took place, holiday pay, kelly days, and vacation days were given to Fire Department personnel. A kelly day was an extra day off after working every 10 days.

On 4 March 1948, the City purchased from Orin Fire Apparatus Company of Roanoke, Virginia, a 1949 Ford Pumper, Engine Number Six. The truck was pur-

This March 2, 1944 accident sent Fireman J.S. "Happy" Braswell over the hood, slightly injuring him. Driven at the time by E.G. Croom, this 1923 American La France pumper received major damage. The fire truck first struck a safety transit bus that failed to yield, and then struck this utility pole.



The safety transit bus on the Williford town run didn't fare much better than the fire truck. A passenger on the bus received a fractured collar bone in the accident. The engine company was responding to a box alarm for what turned out to be hot coals smoldering on a wet hearth.



Members of the Rocky Mount Fire Department posed for this picture on 8 October 1944, at the old headquarters station site on N.E. Main Street. Left to right, front row: Vann N. "Country" Neal and W.B. "Bo" Parrish. Second row: J.S. Braswell, W.C. Phillips, W.L. Williford, D.M. "Frog" Anderson, C.A. Rawls, Thad Haskins, J.L. Davis, Thad Soden and Frank Collins. Third row: Willis Carmichael, R.E. Adams, Herman Drake, Willie Soden, J.N. Barnes, R.S. Winstead, M.L. Clack, T.R. Vaughan, H.D. Bland, L.Y. Shaw and Troy Brown. Fourth row: E.J. Wells, G.K. Abbott, E.G. Croom, W.P. "Pete" James, L.M. Hedgepeth Jr., W.R. Womble and W.V. Melton.



Fire alarm boxes in Rocky Mount were just like the one here that J.R. Moore is leaning on. Recognize Nelson-Page Jewelers? Probably not, because J.R. and Troy Brown were in Charlotte at a fire school for this picture.



Purchased from Orin Fire Apparatus Company of Roanoke, Va., this 1949 Ford is displayed in front of Station Number One on N.E. Main Street. This truck, when new, cost just over \$5,000. Comparison of Ford versus American La France...The 1916 American La France cost \$9,000 in 1916. Quality vs. cost? Standing for the pose with this truck are W.C. "Hot Rod" Taylor and Charlie Adams.



chased for \$5,382. On 13 September 1948, at 8:15 a.m., the Department was called to a fire in the attic of Park View Hospital. The fire started in a faulty electrical junction box located between the top floor ceiling and the bottom attic floor. Firefighters battled the blaze and it was brought under control within 45 minutes. Twenty five patients were evacuated before firefighting took place. The building received approximately \$40,000 damage, mostly done by water used to extinguish the blaze. Hospital officials praised Fire Chief Sorsby and the Department for the quick and proficient service provided.

After the war came, many new innovative firefighting tools which changed firefighting in Rocky Mount. The fog nozzle was first used in the Department after the war. This appliance greatly helped reduce water damage at fires. The Department suffered an unexpected loss on 28 March 1950 when Fire Chief J.R. Sorsby Jr. died of a heart attack on his birthday. He was 50 years old. Chief Sorsby entered the Department June 1918 as a volunteer. He was promoted to assistant chief in 1922 and fire chief on 1 February 1929. Firehouse folklore says he was a chief



Fire safety education classes were very realistic when taught by Bob Thomas, who is seen here in the burning bed. He and Junie D. Pearce, at the head of the bed, taught this class to many of the nursing staff at Parkview Hospital on Falls Road.



J.R. Sorsby, Fire Chief from 1 February 1929 to 28 March 1950.

who stood up for his men and he was sorely missed by those he left behind. Chief Sorsby's father once said he wished he had enough money to buy his son a fire truck. This statement was a reflection of the dedication and love his son had for the Department.

After the death of Chief Sorsby, Assistant Chief W.B. Parrish was promoted to fire chief. Captain V.N. "Country" Neal was promoted to assistant chief in May of 1950. The salary for the fire chief as of April of 1950 was \$320 monthly. It is not clear when, but some time between the 1940s and 1950s, the Department expanded to two assistant chiefs — Assistant Chief W.P. James and Assistant Chief V.N. Neal.



This aerial view of Rocky Mount, thought to be taken around the late 1940s, shows what was then referred to as "Tobacco Town."

The 1951 American La France Foamite 750-gpm triple combination pumper, shown here by Steve Gupton in front of Number Two Station on S. Church Street, was purchased by the Fire Department on December 21, 1950 for \$14,880.50. Notice the pump panel was located on the right side of the truck. This truck was also "wedge shaped," meaning the rear of the truck was about a foot wider than the front.



Men met for this photo shot in 1952 in front of Station Number One. Left to right, front row: Troy Brown, Dick Adams, Elwood Inscoe, Steve Gupton, Russell Womble, Pat Patterson, W.P. "Pete" James, Buck Drummond, Dan Pitt, Dick Plummer, Tom Jenkins, Tom Daniel and Lonnie Blackburn. Second row: Emmitt Pate, Horace Carmichael, John Worsley, Joe Lawrence, John P. Sykes, "Uncle" Vernon Melton, L.M. Hedgepeth Jr., Gordon Abbott, E.G. Croom, Willie Soden and J.R. Moore. Third row: W.P. "Bo" Parish, Eddie Harper, Francis Gold, J.O. Herring, Bill Crumpler, Herman Drake, Ray Vaughan, Henry Brooks, Oren Gupton, Herbert Bland, Jarvis Moore, James Barnes, W.S. Pleasant, Vann N. "Country" Neal, Linwood Clack, Bob Williams, Thad Soden and Mr. Vestal.



Left to right, front row: Ed Pitt Sr., E.A. Glasgow, Troy Brown, Tom Daniel, Buck Drummond, Herbert Collins, Ervin Hayes, Steve Gupton, Vernon Melton, Pat Patterson, Dan Pitt, Randolph Gardner, Red Ward, David Whitley and "Pete" James. Second row: "Bo" Parish, "Percy" Ellen, James Leloudis, Milton Shearin, Billy Gupton, Lee Y. Shaw, Eddie Harper, William Taylor, John Sykes, Lonnie Blackburn, "Happy" Braswell, Willie Soden, Grady Sharpe, Bob Thomas, Bill Crumpler and E.J. Wells. Third row: V.N. "Country" Neal, L.O. Gupton, Emmitt Pate, Ray Vaughan, B.M. Strickland, L.M. Hedgepeth Jr., Herman Drake, Thad Soden, Gordon Abbott, Tom Jenkins, Russell Womble, E.G. Croom, James Barnes and Elwood Inscoe. Circa 1951.



7 October 1954 was the delivery date for this 1955 Seagrave 750-gpm pumper, Engine No. 8. Several fire trucks delivered to the Department arrived by Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) train and unloaded at the freight depot that was located on West Bassett Street.



After delivery on this 1955 Seagrave 750-gpm pumper, the polishing began. Tom Daniel polished this truck more times than he would like to remember. When this truck was sold in 1986, most of the paint on the hood had been rubbed off!

In the early 1950s, the Department bought and installed television sets for both fire stations. On 21 December 1950, the Department purchased a 1951 American LaFrance Foamite 750-gpm triple combination pumper for \$14,880.50. The engine was numbered engine seven (CRM Council Minutes).

It was 17 March 1952 when the Atlantic Coastline hospital caught fire at 9:55 a.m. The blaze origin was in the south end of the building, directly over the operating room. A defective flue was the cause for the blaze, which was confined



The second motorized aerial ladder truck purchased by the Rocky Mount Fire Department was this 1956 American La France 85-foot ladder. When new, firehouse folklore says that personnel were only allowed to drive the truck during the early morning hours to become familiar with it.



This appears to be a training exercise at the headquarters station on N.E. Main Street beside the Chamber of Commerce. These firemen seem to be wearing a lot less protective equipment than those today. The pumper is a 1949 Ford and in the station is the new 1956 American La France 85-foot aerial ladder truck.

in the attic. It took three engine companies, the aerial truck, and 30 firefighters to bring the fire under control within 45 minutes. One hospital patient was overcome with smoke and was sent to Park View Hospital. Water damage was heavy. The hospital was grateful for the job the Fire Department did, considering the hospital burned down completely in 1921. One firefighter sustained minor cuts and all patients escaped harm from the fire (Rocky Mount Evening Telegram).

On March 13, 1953, two-way radios were installed on every engine company and in the chiefs' cars. The Department, on 7 October 1954, purchased a 1955 model Seagrave 750-gpm pumper for \$17,096. This pumper was known as Engine 8. On 3 February 1955, the Department sold its 1916 American LaFrance pumper to the Kill Devil Hills Fire Department for \$1,251 (CRM Council Minutes). On 21 June 1956, the Department purchased its second aerial truck. The 1956 model American LaFrance was an 85-foot ladder truck. Firehouse folklore says the men assigned to the truck were to drive the truck at early morning hours to get used to handling it. The 65-foot aerial truck was sold for several hundred dollars on 1 December 1960.



Men gathered together for yet another group photo, which were regularly taken by the Police Department for records. Left to right, front row: George Braswell, Ben Richardson, Tom Daniel, Herbert Collins, James Leloudis, John Sykes, "Uncle" Vernon Melton, Ervin Hayes, W.B. "Bo" Parish, David Whitley, Randolph Gardner, Buck Drummond, E.D. Ward, Troy Brown, E.A. Glasgow, Vann N. "Country" Neal and W.P. "Pete" James. Second row: John Michan, C.P. "Percy" Ellen, Willie Soden, L.M. Hedgepeth Jr., Ray Vaughan, Nelson Jeans, Milton Shearin, Bill Phillips, Grady Sharpe, Tom Jenkins, Bob Winstead, Emmitt Pate, Dick Plummer, Thad Soden, Elliott "Crogan" Adams, W.C. "Hot Rod" Taylor and L.Y. Shaw. Third row: J.S. "Happy" Braswell, Richard Clack, Oren Gupton, Tom Smithson, Gordon Abbott, John Worsley, Linwood Clack, Lonnie Blackburn, E.G. Croom, Dan Pitt, Herman Drake, unidentified, C.D. Cumbia, James Barnes, Billy Gupton, J.R. Moore, "Flat Top" Rose, Elwood Insoe, Bill Crumpler and D.M. "Frog" Anderson.

Rocky Mount battled another large fire on 5 May 1957 when the Tar River Lumber Company burned. Located on Nash and Hammond Streets behind Rocky Mount Senior High School, Chief Parrish was quoted as saying, "All we



Now retired, Grady Sharpe was proud of this 1955 "4 hole" Buick Century convertible. Notice Montgomery Ward store and the old train signal tower in the background. This picture was taken on Main Street downtown.



Fire consumed this building belonging to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad on 17 January 1958. This building was located on Bassett Street.



An inside view on the Atlantic Coast Line freight depot building shows most of the roof burned away. Using today's modern building methods of truss systems could a building withstand this much damage and still remain standing? 17 January 1958.

could do was protect the property surrounding the building", and "The fire was too far gone to think about putting it out". This was one of three buildings which had burned down in the past. The fire, which started around 2:00 p.m. on a Sunday, created a lot of entertainment for Rocky Mount citizens who flocked to the fire. The Department had trouble arriving because of traffic. One firefighter was injured, and the cause of the fire was undetermined (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram* and Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

From all indications in the records, the Department suffered its most fatal fire on 30 January 1957. A house fire at 220 Nashville Road claimed the life of five occupants. Three adults suffered fatal smoke inhalation and burns and were dead at the scene. Two others, one of which was a 13-year old, died days later as a result of their injuries. A taxicab driver noticed flames coming from the home shortly before 5:00 a.m. The Department was notified immediately. Once the Fire Department arrived, the fire was under control within five minutes. Firefighter E.J. Wells was injured while trying to remove a victim. The cause of the fire was undetermined (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

On 17 January 1958 the Department fought another large fire at the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Freight Depot. The fire gutted the structure. It took four engines and 60 department members, along with mutual help from Stony Creek Volunteer Fire Department, to bring the blaze under control within a hour. No one was injured during this incident (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

The Department expanded once again as the new Fire Station Number Three was built and completed on 4 October 1958. Station Three had two bays and housed one engine company. Station Three was located in the 2600 block of Sunset Avenue. In 1990 the station was relocated to Winstead Avenue. The old Station Three was converted into the current Fire Prevention Bureau and Training Division.

The year 1962 marked the year the City began to look at the construction of



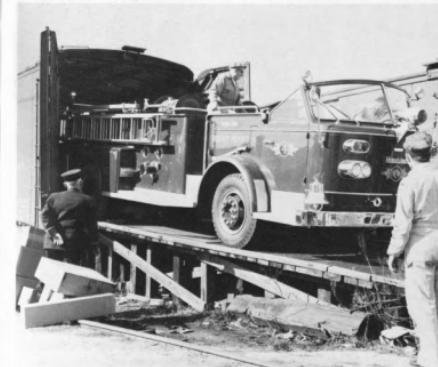
Engine No. 8 found its way to the newly opened Station Number Three located on Sunset Avenue. If front of her, left to right, "Country" Neal, "Bo" Parrish, "Pete" James, Bill Crumpler and Troy Brown.



Fire Station Number Three opened in the 2600 block of Sunset Avenue in October 1958. The high windows were changed and made larger some years later. This building was used as a fire station until 1990, when a new Station Number Three was built on Winstead Avenue. This old station was then renovated into an office complex for prevention and training divisions.



Pictured in uniform and ready in front of the 1949 Ford pumper and the 1929 American La France, "Bertha." Left to right, front row: Bill Crumpler, Ervin Hayes, E.J. "Hawkshaw" Wells, W.B. "Bo" Parrish, E.A. Glasgow, Ben Richardson and George Leloudis. Second row: W.P. "Pete" James, "Uncle" Vernon Melton, John Sykes, Jim McLemore, J.R. Thomas St., William Soden IV, Tom Jenkins Jr. and Vann N. "Country" Neal. Third row: W.C. "Hot Rod" Taylor, Charlie Adams, Grady Sharpe, E.R. Gardner, E.G. Ward, Charles Ellis and Russell Womble.



Being delivered in April 1959 is an American La France 1000-gpm pumper, Engine No. 4. This truck was, as others, delivered by means of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.



Street class time at headquarters. Picture was taken upstairs in old Station Number One. Left to right, front row: Bill Crumpler and W.C. "Hot Rod" Taylor. Middle row: Billy Joyner, Grady Sharpe and Tom Jenkins. Back row: "Bo" Parrish and Charlie Adams. Seated at desk is E.J. "Hawkshaw" Wells. Exact date was unavailable but the time was 2:26.



Inside the engine room of Station Number One on Main Street in January 1964 is John Sykes polishing up Ladder Truck No. 9. Engine No. 10, on the left, is a 1960 American La France 1000-gpm pumper.



Fire Station Number One, Headquarters Station. This is thought to be one of the last pictures taken before its demolition in 1964.



New headquarters, Station Number One, 101 S. George Street. Digging the footings for preparation for the tall beams later to come, 1963.



Station Number One on S. George Street halfway up! 1963.

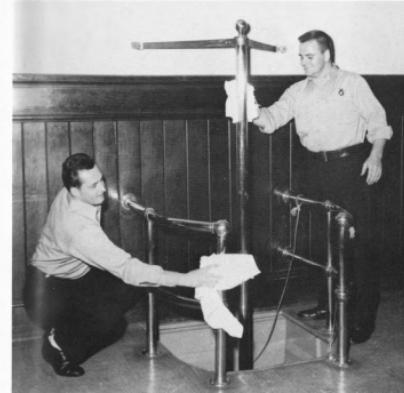




E.J. Wells and Harrison Gay in new headquarters station dispatch office. During these days, this station received and dispatched all fire calls. Using the "ticketape" alarm system, they were also able to send out a "box alarm" by putting the correct "wheel" on the alarm panel, shown to the right of the picture. This box alarm system was donated to the Rocky Mount Children's Museum and is currently on display.



John Sykes shows off the patio area on the roof over the engine room. This patio was accessible from the dormitory, which was also over the engine room. This patio area was removed in 1988.



Firemen Joe Proctor and Marvin Reams polishing the old brass pole at Station Number One on N.E. Main Street, probably just before this station closed and relocated to the new station on George Street. Marvin came to work with the City in July 1963 and this station was torn down in 1964.



On the back ramp at new headquarters station in April of 1964. The vacant lot in the background is where the present Post Office is located. Notice the size of the "wonderful" magnolia tree next to the fence.



This is how the dormitory upstairs in Station Number One looked when the station opened. With the introduction of women to the fire service, partitions were added for privacy to make individual rooms with three beds to a room, one for each shift. The same beds are still in use.



1964 and in a brand new station, these firemen were ready to go.

The bell from the old Station Number One was removed and put in storage until its placement in front of the new headquarters station sometime later.



The old Fire Station Number One landmark had to fall in the name of progress. The white painted section to the right side of the tower housed the Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce for many years. That section was originally the City Market, where meats and produce were sold from individual stalls. This section later became the home for City offices, courtroom, Police Department and even the jail.



After moving into the brand new headquarters station on S. George Street, Fortson Wrecking Company of Wilson, N.C., had the task of demolishing the old headquarters station. The bell had to be removed first.



This old station and the "good ol' times" would really be missed.

a new fire station. This building would replace the old headquarters Number One station on Main Street. The new headquarters station was built on the corner of George Street and Cokey Road (CRM Council Minutes). The station was completed on 11 February 1964 at a cost of \$260,066.75. Firehouse folklore says the last night the men stayed in the old headquarters station, Epstein's store sent the Department a cake. The cake was decorated with an aerial truck and a note saying "We are glad you have a new headquarters fire station, but we are going to miss seeing you and the trucks making the corner at our store". This reflects the relationship the Department had with the businesses and the public in general. The aerial truck on the cake is in the trophy case at the current headquarters fire station (Thomas Jenkins, RMFD Retired).

Fire Chief Parrish died on 29 January 1966. His death was sudden and unexpected. Assistant Chief W.P. James was promoted to fire chief with Captain J.P. Sykes being promoted to assistant chief.

On 12 August 1967, Tarrytown Mall was heavily burned, damaging several businesses. The city manager at the time, William H. Batchelor, was quoted as saying "It's the worst fire we have had in Rocky Mount in a long time". The De-



The first mall in eastern North Carolina, located in Rocky Mount, burned August 12, 1967, causing major damage to most of the businesses.

partment arrived on the scene shortly before 7:30 a.m. Captain Tom Daniel on Engine 3 arrived first. "Captain Tom", noted for his fireground composure, assessed the large free-burning fire and called on the radio by saying "I reckon you better send me some help". The dispatcher asked the Captain what help he needed and what was on fire to which he

responded, "The whole damn place and all you've got".

Fire had already vented through the roof and out of the doors of the Pickwick store. Nearly 200 firefighters from the Department and surrounding county departments battled the blaze for two hours before gaining some control of the fire. Fire Chief James said the fire was nearly under control until the east side wall collapsed and caused the fire to burn out of control again. Firefighters were immediately ordered to fight the fire from the aerial ladder, and then later improvised by using cherry picker trucks. Some firefighters remained on the more substantial areas of the roof. Many stores received smoke and water damage. Some stores such as Montgomery Ward, Roses, Kerr Drug and Mason's escaped serious damage.

On April 4, 1968, around 11:00 a.m., a small fire was discovered in the rear of Peoples Warehouse by the floor manager. Before the manager could return to the office to call the Fire Department, flames spread throughout the building, nearly trapping the floor manager and his secretary. The fire was brought under control around 1:00 p.m. Two firewalls



This is the fire truck on top of a cake sent from Epstein's to the firemen at old fire Station Number One on Main Street, as a farewell gift. It is still on display in a glass case at headquarters station on George Street.



Inside views after the fire looked very grim for the businesses which remained. Montgomery Ward, which is the only store still located at the mall, escaped serious damage. Roses, Kerr Drug and Mason's Stores were also lucky. August 1967.



Left to right: Wayne Hawkins, Grady Sharpe, "Hot Rod" Taylor, W.C. Varnell, "Hawkshaw" Wells, Dwight Wilson and Bernie Moss enjoy their new kitchen facilities in the new headquarters station in 1964.



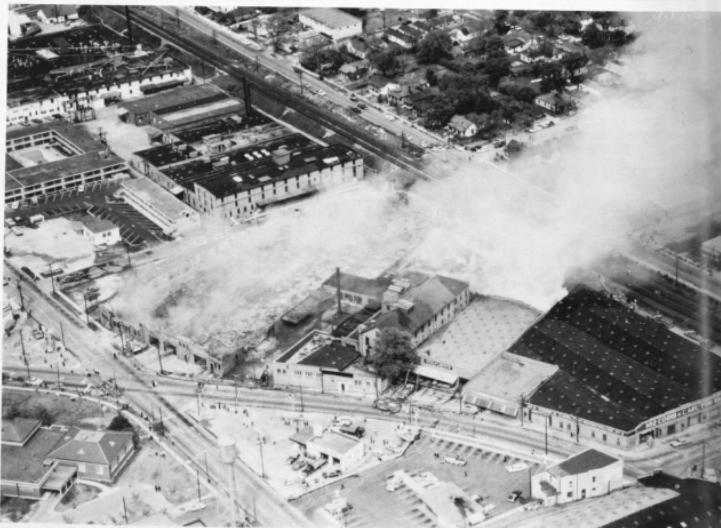
The intersection of Falls Road and N. Church Street became a congested area around 11:00 a.m. on the morning of 17 April 1968. A small fire was discovered in the rear of the Peoples Tobacco Warehouse, which quickly spread over the entire building.



Crowds of onlookers stood by as the Peoples Warehouse burned, seemingly out of control. The fire was brought under control about two hours after it started. Notice the original Hardee's Hamburger Restaurant in the background.



J.P. Sykes with his daughter, Dianne, in 1965.



This aerial view of the Peoples Warehouse fire in April of 1968 shows the mass destruction of the building.

W.P. "Pete" James became fire chief in February of 1966 when then-Chief W.B. Parrish passed away. He remained chief until his retirement, at which time he and Assistant Chief Vann N. "Country" Neal were both treated to a retirement dinner.



This elevated shot shows the complete destruction of the Peoples Warehouse in 1968.





Station Number Four, N. Church Street, 1996.

kept the fire from entering the Cobb Carlton number two warehouse and Daniels Grocery Store. The Goldleaf Street Amoco caught fire, but it was quickly extinguished. Minor brush fires were also evident up and down the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. Once again the volunteer departments of Sharpsburg, West Mount, Stony Creek, Battleboro, Red Oak and West Edgecombe assisted in fighting the fires.

On 6 November 1969, Fire Chief James procured another pumper apparatus for the Department. A 1970 American LaFrance pumper was purchased for \$37,222.50. This pumper, "Engine 12", still exists in the Department as a reserve unit. Once again the fire protection needs of the City broadened with the purchase of a lot for Fire Station Number Four. The Number Four lot was purchased from the Eastern Warehouse Corporation for



Engine No. 12 was purchased in 1970. This piece of apparatus was used as a front line pumper until 1992, when it was put in reserve status.



The aftermath in December of 1972 at Stallings Oil Company fire.



"The Yellow Bowl." Left to right: "Uncle Vernon" Melton, unidentified, "Country" Neal, "Pete" James, Bill Batchelor and unidentified. The yellow bowl on the table is known to have been in the Department in 1965. It's still here!

\$12,600.

The Fire Department suffered the death of another firefighter on 6 January 1970. Firefighter Spencer Vann Griffin was killed while responding to a hot oil stove fire. The accident occurred at the intersection of Cokey Road and Marigold Streets. A Carolina Overall truck collided with the engine, fatally wounding Firefighter Griffin, who was driving Engine 4. Other members of the engine company received minor injuries. Firefighter Griffin was the third firefighter to give his life in the line of duty. Firefighter Griffin left behind a wife and a son. A Memorial Educational Fund was established for the collection and distribution of educational loans to children of deceased firemen.

On 5 February 1970, a 1970 model Mack fire engine was purchased to replace the total-loss engine involved in the accident. This engine



A tribute to Fireman Spencer Vann Griffin, who was killed while enroute to a fire on 6 January 1970. This new pumper, a 1970 Mack fire truck, is being dedicated here in the memory of Griffin. Mrs. Griffin is shown with then City Manager Russell Buxton and Fire Chief W.P. James, placing the plaque on the truck.



March 1996. Now in reserve, "The Mack" often has been referred to as "A Real Firetruck".



Southern Mattress Company fire on January 12, 1970, then located on Norfolk Street.

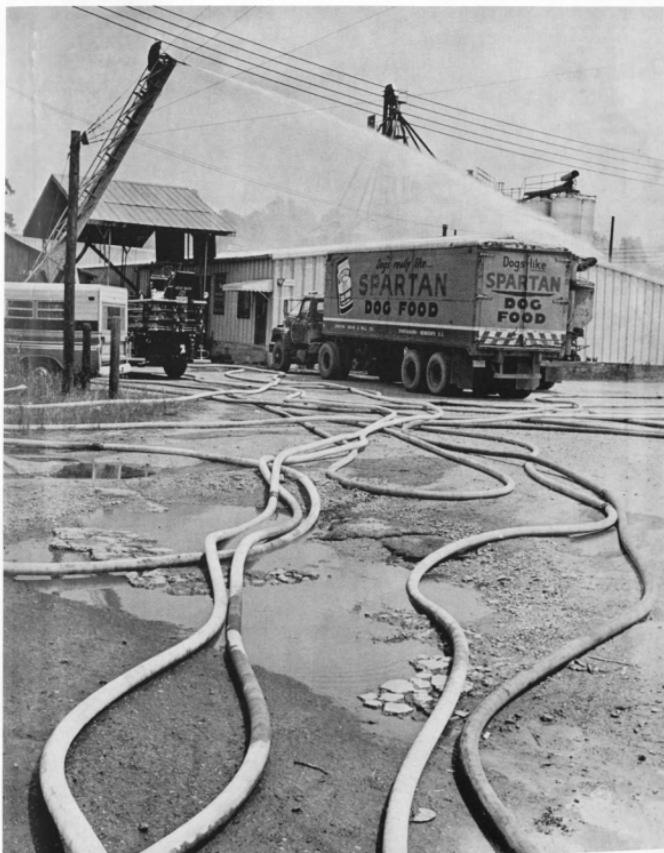


In 1972, Murray's Tire Retread Service Company on S. Franklin Street was the scene of this working fire.

Chief J.P. Sykes. Appointed to this position on 1 April 1971.



Sexton & Sons store was located on the corner of Falls Road and Gay Street during this fire in 1971. The business is now located at 218 N. Church Street.



Scene of Daughtridge Oil Company fire in 1973.



Engine 8, a 1955 Seagrave, and the Steamer in front of Station Number Three on Sunset Avenue in 1975.



Originally Truck No. 4, "The Flying Squad", a 1974 Chevrolet van, served the Fire Department very well. This picture was taken just three days before being replaced by a new International squad truck. This truck was retired 5 April 1993.

was dedicated in honor of Spencer Griffin.

On 1 April 1971, Fire Chief W.P. James retired from the Department with 45 years of service. Assistant Chief J.P. Sykes was appointed fire chief.

In December of 1972, an early afternoon gas leak and explosion occurred at the Stallings Oil Company located on Ridge Street. The leak started as a truck driver pulled away, his truck still connected to a main tank. A vapor cloud slowly emerged as the Fire Department was notified. The Department arrived as the vapors found their ignition source and ignited. The ignition source was a heating plant pilot light in a house across the street from the incident. Pressure relief valves on the truck tank and the 30,000-gallon storage tank immediately activated. The Department controlled the incident and was congratulated for a job well done. No injuries were reported (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

Another of Rocky Mount's most notable LP gas explosions happened in the spring of 1973. An LP gas explosion and fire killed one employee of the Daughtridge Oil Company. Extensive damage was done to the plant as a result of the fire.

The City's fire insurance rating was revised from a class 5 to a class 4 in March of 1973. Fire Chief Sykes pointed out the rating change was due to manpower additions and improved water facilities. The rating also measures a city's fire prevention and firefighting capabilities. Chief Sykes and the City were very proud of this accomplishment.

In 1974, the Fire Department bought a 1974 Chevrolet stepvan for \$5,507. The van was converted into an equipment truck carrying specialized firefighting tools and apparatus for many different incidents. Once the truck was completed, it was valued at over \$10,000. The unit was manned with three firefighters, all certified North Carolina Emergency Medical Technicians. The squad, or "Flying Squad" as it was originally named, was designed to carry personnel and equipment to a fire and stabilize emergency medical calls until ambulance crews could arrive. Firefighters riding in



Truck No. 4, here with Cy Brooks and Firemen J.D. "Big Time" Joyner and Grady Sharpe. Grady is demonstrating the newly-added air cascade system used to fill S.C.B.A. bottles on the fireground.



jump seats could don (put on) self-contained breathing apparatus while en route to a fire and be immediately ready to fight once on the scene. This was the only apparatus at this time with self-contained breathing apparatus mounted upright on the wall by the riders' seats.

The squad company or Truck 4, as it was officially known, was the company to be assigned to. This company saw more firefighting action than any other truck. Members on the truck were considered "well trained and seasoned", and it was a honor to ride or be as-

These fine firemen were promoted in January of 1975. Rocky Mount Fire Chief Captain Wayne B. Hawkins, who was promoted to assistant chief. Other firemen receiving promotions are, left to right, A.L. "Woody" Herrington, H.L. Pierce and Norman Matthews.

signed to Truck 4, especially to rookie firefighters. Truck 4 was one of only a few in the state at the time.

On 1 January 1975, the Department created an additional work shift, bringing the total to three shifts: A, B and C. This new shift of firefighters was led by Assistant Fire Chief Wayne B. Hawkins who was promoted from captain upon the new shift addition.

In 1976, the Junior Women's Club of Rocky Mount was authorized by the City to paint many fire hydrants Revolutionary War heroes. The project was known as the "Plugs for Patriotism". Fire hydrants gave sidewalks and street corners a new look. Some hydrants kept their revolutionary identity well into the early 1980s.

In the same year, the Department also purchased a 1976 American LaFrance

1250-gallon pumper. By the fall of 1976, the Department had 22 certified Emergency Medical Technicians and old fire station Number Two was being relocated from South Church Street to South Grace

Street. The department moved into the new station in 1977.

The second most fatal fire the Department has seen happened on 27 November 1976. At 2:00 a.m. the Terminal Hotel



Engine No. 6, a 1976 American La France 1250-gpm pumper.



Promotions in 1976 included these firemen. Left to right: Phil "Colonel" Wood, Charles "Donkey Earl" Ehr ridge, Tommy Gay, Chief John Sykes and David "P-Nut" Bradley.



Captain Troy "Nimp" Winstead at the panel controls testing this new 1976 American La France pumper, Engine No. 6.



The second most fatal fire in the history of the Rocky Mount Fire Department was this fire in the Terminal Hotel on November 27, 1976. The hotel was located beside the bus station on S. Washington Street.



Fire Station Number Two, in the 400 block of S. Church Street, closing down. This station was closed in 1977 when the new station on S. Grace Street opened.



New Fire Station Number Two, open for business in May 1977.



Lum's Restaurant, formerly located on Hwy. 301, where the Honda Motorcycle dealership is now, was the scene for this fire in 1977. The building was completely engulfed in flames when the firemen arrived.



Platform No. 1 on the scene of this fire at Planters Oil Mill on Cockey Road in 1983. Still in service now at Station Number Six, this truck is a 1979 Oshkosh Snorkel with a 85-foot articulating boom, equipped with a 1,250-gpm pump. This truck replaced the 1956 American La France 85-foot ladder truck.

on Main Street erupted into flames. The hotel's manager notified the Department at 2:05 a.m. Twenty-five firefighters and several engines placed the fire under control within 30 to 45 minutes of their arrival. The 20-room hotel was initially thought to be fully occupied, and it is unclear how many individuals were present. Four fatalities were found during rescue operations and no other firefighter or occupant injuries were recorded. The cause of the blaze was ru-

mored to be occupants smoking in bed. Rocky Mount Mills caught fire on 11 June 1977. It took two hours to contain the fire. The fire originated in the picker machines and then spread through the ventilation system into the spinning room. The Department was once again reminded of how dangerous the job of firefighting is. Assistant Fire Chief Wayne B. Hawkins suffered a heart attack, which proved to be fatal, following the fire. Assistant Chief Hawkins was

the fourth firefighter to lay his life down in the line of duty. In July 1977, Captain J.E. Hawkins was promoted to assistant chief to fill the late assistant chief's position (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

In 1978, the Department purchased a 1979 Oshkosh Snorkle elevating platform truck. The truck had a 1,250-gpm pump and was equipped with an 85-foot articulating boom with a bucket payload rated at 900 pounds. The truck was named Platform 1. Platform 1 was purchased to



Rocky Mount Fire Department personnel assembled for this photo in 1977 in front of the First Baptist Church at 200 S. Church Street. Left to right, front row: Assistant Chief Charles Ellis, Assistant Chief David Whitley, Assistant Chief J.E. Hawkins, Assistant Chief E.A. Glasgow and Fire Chief John Payton Sykes. Second row: William "Hot Rod" Taylor, Troy Brown, A.D. "Pete" Perry, Tom Daniel, Grady Sharpe, James "Mule" Pittman, John Buchan, Bill Soden, Tommy Gay, Doug Matthews, Troy "Nimp" Winstead. Third row: Donald "Fig" Howell, H.D. "Woman" Joyner, Phil Wood, Jim Atkins, T.L. "Lightning" Marks, Marvin Reams, Al Price, Charles "Donkey Ear" Ethridge, Jimmie "Pro" Baines, Tommy Daughtridge, J.D. "Big Time" Joyner, Kenneth Mullen, Aubrey Farmer, Ed Barwick, Roy Price and Herbert Collins. Fourth row: Mike Doss, Brent Manning, Isaac Battle, L.W. Farmer, Herbert "Bumble-Bee" Barnhill, Donald "Cat" Cooper, David "P-Nut" Bradley, Dennis "Root" Womble, Ben Burgess, Mike Hinton, Mike Winstead, Jake Coleman, George "Green Weenie" Walker, Richard Strickland, Dennis Strickland and John Falkner. Fifth row: Ronnie Weaver, Bobby Stevenson, Wayne Rhodes, Tommy Peele, Johnny Dew, Alvis Battle, Lee McQueen, Bill Lowe, Mike Calhoun, Jerry Tharrington, J.R. "Howdy" Shearon, Rodney Pridgen, Kent "Kemo" Curtis, Greg Dawes and Pete Worrell. Back row: Lee Thompson, Tom Hinesenberg, Steve Bragg, Jim "Paco" Upchurch, Rudy Johnson, Gus Whitaker, Ted Rackley, Jimmy Page, Bobby "Bird" Landis, Al Asby and Allyn "Fresno" Smith.



The 1960 American La France pumper, Engine No. 10, being refinished in 1979.

This is the huge bell that hung in the old tower over old Station Number One on N.E. Main Street from 1910 until 1964, when the station was torn down. Here in 1977, thanks to Burlington Industries who financed the project, is the bell completely restored and displayed in front of headquarters station. After the bell was taken down from the old station, it was stored in "old" Station Number Two on S. Church Street. Pictured here for the dedication are Chief J.P. Sykes and a representative of Burlington Industries.

November 1979 was the time when all members of the Fire Department were working on the restoration of the old 1960 American LaFrance, saving the City taxpayers \$80,000.



December 1979 was the time for the annual "fixing up" of bicycles for needy children. Pictured are the members involved. Left to right: Ronnie Weaver, Tommy Joyner, Al Asby, Tommy Daughtridge, Phil Wood, Brent Manning, John Buchan, Woody Herrington and Speedy Battle.



ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA
AND NASH TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
WELCOME THE FIFTY-SECOND ANNUAL

NORTH CAROLINA FIRE COLLEGE AND PUMP SCHOOL



JUNE 16 - JUNE 19, 1980

SPONSORED BY
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COOPERATING AGENCIES

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CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT

NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

N. C. DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

NASH COUNTY FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

EDGECOMBE COUNTY FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

June 16-19, 1980 brought the North Carolina Fire College and Pump School back to Rocky Mount for another session. The old look of the Hardee's Food System building in the background was changed a few years later with the look of black glass, which is still in place.

replace the veteran aerial truck 9.

A decorative addition was added to headquarters fire station. The original fire bell from the old headquarters station once located on Main Street was refinished. Personnel worked many hours restoring the bell to its stately finish. The bell stands handsomely in front of fire headquarters. The bell was purchased in 1910 for the Department (*Talk of the Town*).

The Kaiser Agricultural Chemical Company was nearly destroyed on 8 August 1978. Nearby residents were evacuated from the area. The fire, which produced dangerous ammonia nitrate fumes, started around 6:20 p.m. Twenty firefighters were sent to the hospital for smoke inhalation. The fire was characterized by Fire Chief Sykes as "the biggest [fire] in terms of size of the buildings since the big warehouse fire in 1968 or 1969". The warehouse also had a sprinkler system which had been shut down years earlier. Mutual aid was provided by Sharpsburg, Stony Creek, West Edgecombe and Tarboro fire departments (*Rocky Mount Evening Telegram*).

On 1 October 1979, the Fire Department saved the city tax payers \$80,000. This was done by renovating an older pumper the Department owned. The 1960 American LaFrance 1000-gallon pumper was embarking on 20 years of service. Twenty years is generally when automotive fire apparatus is replaced. A new pumper would have cost the City \$90,000. With the help of Department members, under the direction of Captain Sharpe, the truck was completely restored for the cost of \$10,500. Renovations included replacing the old gasoline engine with a Detroit 6V53 diesel engine, replacing the booster tank and a new paint job. The engine "Engine 10" was presented as a new truck 18 January 1980. Engine 10 gave the Department another decade of service before it was sold.

Standard Operating Procedures were developed in 1981. The SOP, as it is identified, gives direction and instruction for the overall operation of the Department. During this time the Fire Department dispatch procedures were changed. Under the old system, a citizen would dial



The 2nd Annual Fire/Police Day Tug-O-War Competition on 20 May 1982. Held for seven consecutive years, the Police Department won four of the challenges.



Members of the Tug-O-War team in 1982. Left to right: "Mule" Pittman, "Bubba" Jones, Aubrey Farmer, Al Asby, "Nimp" Winstead, Edward Joyner, "Bo" Webb, "Colonel" Wood and Rudy Johnson. They ended up in the mud this year.

446-5151 to report a fire in the Rocky Mount city limits. This phone number placed the caller to the headquarters fire station dispatcher. The dispatcher (a firefighter) would take down information and dispatch engine assignments by radio or telephone. The new dispatch system located at the newly-built City Hall had the nationwide emergency phone number of 911. The caller talked to trained telecommunicators for fire and police units; then the dispatcher would call the appropriate engine assignments. In May of 1982, the Department once again updated its fire protection class from class 4 to class 3. The Insurance Services Office of North Carolina granted the rating based on fire equipment, training and water distribution facilities.

History was made in the Department on 9 June 1982. On this date the first female firefighter was hired by the Department. Joan Cummings was the City's first female firefighter.

On 12 January 1983, an explosion oc-



Retiring here in 1982 are, left to right, Captain John Buchan, Assistant Chief David Whitley and Fire Prevention Captain Billy Soden.



Making history with the Rocky Mount Fire Department. Joan Cummings, the first female firefighter with the city of Rocky Mount, receives her badge from Fire Chief Sykes in June 1982. Other rookie firefighters pictured are Weldon Beck, Larry T. Hill and Ray Randolph. There have been four female firefighters employed with the Fire Department, but at the present time there are none employed with the City.

curred at the Planters Oil Mill, doing heavy damage. The explosion, which occurred at 8:04 p.m., was heard by headquarters department personnel according to Assistant Chief J.E. Hawkins. Once the Department was on the scene, three more separate explosions occurred. During one of the explosions, the top vent blew off of the 38,000-gallon hexane container. This, according to Fire Department officials, may have prevented a more serious explosion from occurring. Hexane vapors had to be hosed down, along with fire suppression activities. An evacuation within a four-block radius of the fire was executed, with residents being sent to the YMCA. Approximately 150 firefighters from the City, Stony Creek and West Edgecombe battled the blaze in windy sub-freezing temperatures. Five firefighters were transported to the hospital for smoke inhalation, exposure and minor injuries.

New leadership was established on 21 April 1983. Fire Chief J.P. Sykes died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Assistant Chief J.E. Hawkins was appointed to fire chief. In February 1983, a new fire station was opened for service. Fire Station Number Five is located at 900 Springfield Road. The station is built in a residential-style fashion to be compatible with the neighborhood. An open house for the public was on 11 September 1983.

A new program within the City was initiated. The program is called "Teams of Employees Advising Management", or T.E.A.M. The Department has two team groups. The captain's T.E.A.M. named "The George Street Gang" and the firefighters/engineers T.E.A.M. is named "The Fearless Ten". The two Fire Department teams tackle issues of safety, work procedures and nearly any other problem existing in the work place. During the year, the fire training ground was named after the late Fire Chief Sykes. Chief Sykes had a strong commitment to and was honored by naming the training ground in his memory.

For the second time in 1983, on 23 August, the Planters Oil Mill caught fire. The warehouse burning did a estimated damage of over \$100,000. Seven



Captain Billy "Skinny Man" Joyner 27 July 1983.



Fire Chief John Payton Sykes
1 April 1971-21 April 1983.



Fire Chief John Ervin Hawkins
21 April 1983-present.

The scholarship awards firefighters who pursue their college education to acquire their Fire Protection Degree. Philip W. Davis was the first recipient to be rewarded the scholarship.

Two new Ford pumpers from Emergency Equipment Incorporated (EEI) were purchased in 1983 and 1985 to replace Engine No. 10 and Engine No. 11.

On 29 January 1986 a mandatory physical fitness program was started in the



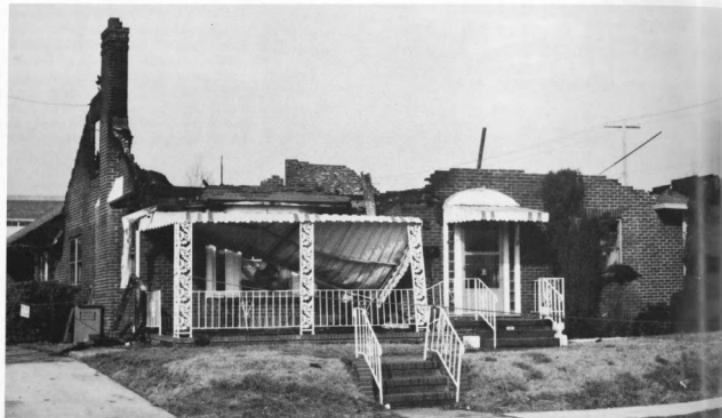
Planters Oil Mill was the scene for this fire, the second for the plant, in August 1983.



View from Cokey Road of the fire at Planters Oil Mill in 1983.



Planters Oil Mill 1983.



This house, or what is left of it, was probably the first house fire that Platform No. 1 was used on.



1985 Ford 1,000-gpm triple combination pumper. This is the third and last Ford purchased to date. With the entrance of this truck was the exit of truck numbers.



Showing off their trophy for winning the Annual Fire/Police Day Tug-O-War in 1984. Left to right, front row: Steve Barnes, Aubrey Farmer, Jimmy Page, Mike Stallings, James Mercer and Kenneth Mullen. Standing: J.E. Hawkins, "Speedy" Battle, Glen Rackley, "Bo" Webb, Toby Wiggins, Mike Winstead, Larry Knight, William Proctor, "Bubba" Jones and Thomas Lancaster.



1967 American La France. Engine No. 11 with its newly-added white top.



Always Ready...

Firefighter Wiley Lewis with one of the last photographs of the Chevy equipment truck in service.

Department. Every member participates and physical fitness tests are conducted semi-annually. The Department keeps a keen eye on physical performance for its personnel.

Fire damaged the Douglas Building on 14 December 1988. The building, located on the corner of Thomas Street and North East Main Street, started burning around 10:15 p.m. Three engine companies, Platform One and a squad company battled the blaze for three hours. The building had been occupied by vagrants; no injuries were reported. The building suffered a roof collapse as flames engulfed the second floor.



This fire at the old Helig-Meyers Warehouse was started by accident when a fork lift struck some shelving units, breaking loose a hose connected to the propane tank on the forklift.



Nothing here to smile about! This fire at the old Helig-Meyers Warehouse on Riverside Drive was actually called in to all stations by Squad Four crew in 1990. Will McBride's voice ever be the same?



This picture of a house fire on Hawthorne Road in 1990 was taken seconds after a backdraft explosion which removed most of the bricks from the house.



1990 headquarters crew in front of the Mack. Left to right: J.F. Lancaster, Mike Watson, Pete Weaver, Pete Perry, Stephon Smith, Bobby Landis, Herman Bulluck, Gerry Wood and Jerry Tharrington.

As the City grew in size, fire protection services had to grow with it. A Fire Department reorganization was devised in order to cover important issues concerning the further effectiveness of the Fire Department in Rocky Mount. In March 1990, the two district concept was enacted. This concept provides a reduction in response time to each area of the City and offers a plan for future expansion of the Department. District I (east of the Tar River) includes Headquarters, Number Two Station and Number Five Station and operates with a total manpower of 60 men manning four fire engines, one squad truck and one district chief's car. District II (west of the Tar River) includes Fire Stations Number Three, Four and Six. These stations have the total manpower of 57 men manning

Firefighters Toby Wiggins and Jay Dornseif on the job at the Hal Orr's Motel fire in May of 1991.





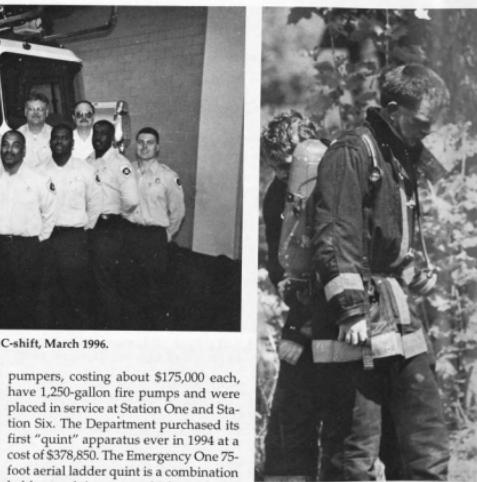
Headquarters crew, C-shift, March 1996.

three fire engines, one platform truck, one squad truck and one district chief's car.

The assistant chief of operations is Assistant Chief Kenneth G. Mullen. Assistant Chief Mullen is responsible for all operational forces in the fire suppression, fire training and maintenance divisions. Along with the addition of Fire Station Number Six, the Department hired the largest number of rookie firefighters known in its history. Nineteen recruits were hired to help man the new fire station which is located on Rowe Drive.

The Department purchased a 1989 model American Eagle 1,250-gallon pumper known as Engine 6 and a 1989 Chevrolet Utilimaster squad unit known as Squad 2. As the retitling process went on, Squad 4 in district one, was retitled to Squad 1. Engine 6, Squad 2 and Platform 1 were located and manned at the new Station Six. Fire Station Number Three was relocated to South Winstead Avenue. The old Fire Station Number Three was remodeled into the current Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Training offices.

In 1993 the Department purchased two more pumpers to replace the 1970 Mack pumper and the 1969 American LaFrance pumper. The two 1992 Emergency One



Johnson helping "Scooter" Hedgepeth at a training fire on Elm Street in 1992.



Fire Chief Hawkins showing off the cake presented to retiring Assistant Chief Charles Ellis in January 1991.



Squad No. 2. Purchased in 1989, this new utilimaster truck was completely equipped with an on-board air compressor S.C.B.A. Filling Station. Purchase price was about \$145,000.



A-shift - Squad Company No. 2. Wiley Lewis, Bo Webb and Brett Skinner, March 1996.



1991 training fire on Elm Street featured this crew, left to right, front row: Steve Johnson, Richard Oxendine, Earl Williams, David Wooten, Danny Allen and Doug Johnson. Second row: Lonnine Hedgepeth III, Bo Clark, Russell Osborne, Kenneth Mullen, Bobby Connie, Pete Worrell and William Proctor. Third row: Larry E. Hill, Ron Clark, Bo Webb, Gary Batts, Al Price, Tim Hill and L. Dungan.



The 1994 version of the Fire Department raft was much lighter than its predecessors. Every year this team entered the race, they won the 1st place trophy for originality & design, as the raft was always the favorite for the crowd with its flashing red lights, smoke bombs, sirens and spraying water.



Station Number Three, Winstead Avenue, 1996.



Station Number Six at 105 Rowe Drive.



1993 International 3-D squad truck. Squad Company No. 1 was stationed at Fire Station Number Two on S. Grace Street.



1994 E-One quint.

ber One. This truck, being the first of its kind in the Department, was featured along with the steamer on the Fire Department's centennial belt buckle.

From a bucket brigade to a 85-foot elevating platform; from well water to chemicals; from volunteers to salaried firefighters; from one horse drawn 1,000-

gpm steam engine to eight engines and one aerial truck capable of pumping 9,750 gpm; from a company of 35 volunteers to a present all-paid staff of 129; from sitting

Downtown blaze



Firefighters battle a Monday morning blaze at the Douglas Building

Fire guts abandoned building

By J. Eric Eckard
Associated Press editor

Fire gutted an abandoned building Monday morning in downtown Rocky Mount, and investigators are still unsure what caused the blaze. Sparks were shooting out of the roof and windows of a building on the Douglas block around 11:25 a.m. Monday when firefighters arrived at the scene.

Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins said it took firefighters about 20 minutes to put out the blaze, which could have prevented major damage to the structure.

"When we got there, we put in a full alarm and called in off-duty firefighters," he said. "We went through the rear and got a good knockdown on the fire."

"It was fixing to be a tremendous fire, but (the firefighters) did an exceptionally good job of knocking it



Telegraph/Chuck Beckley

Flames flicker from above building's nameplate down."

The blaze, which destroyed parts of a building on East Thomas Street, did spread to two other vacant structures on Main Street and caused minor damage.

Hawkins said this morning that fire investigators have not been able to get inside the building to determine what caused the fire because of the structural damage.

"It was in need of repair," he said of the building.

Police reports said that there had been reports of fires in the building in the past, and it was possibly an accidental fire caused by a homeless person.



Raft race trophies.



Mrs. Tilley's retirement with a farewell hug from Chief Mullen July 1, 1994.

THE HISTORY OF THE ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT

in front of the fire station waiting for an alarm to a more professional role studying, training, educating, conducting inspec-

tions, involvement with programs and classes in addition to fighting fire; the Rocky Mount Fire Department has

grown to be one of the finest fire departments in the state of North Carolina.



ROCKY MOUNT FIRE DEPARTMENT 1991

Rocky Mount Fire Department in 1991. Only the second picture to be taken of all the Fire Department members in one place since the opening of Station Number Three in 1958. This picture was taken on the steps of the First Baptist Church on S. Church Street. This church will soon be torn down. Left to right: front row: R.E. Strickland, J.F. Lancaster, H.L. Pierce, A.W. Price, J.E. Hawkins, A.L. Pittman, A.L. Herrington and K.G. Mullen. Second row: A.D. Perry, J.L. Tharrington, E.R. Osborne III, D.L. English, C.R. Webb, H.D. Joyner, F.M. Doss, C.E. Ethridge, J.E. Pittman, W.E. Proctor Jr., A.A. Asby, D.R. Bradley, T.L. Gay and N.D. Matthews. Third row: W.E. Jones, W.P. Wood, A.S. Smith, P.W. Davis, W.C. Beck, S.F. Hedrick, R.V. Pridgen, T.W. Winstead, J.W. Page, D.W. Womble, R.B. Worsell, T.G. Joynor, K.R. Johnson Jr. and J.M. Stallings. Fourth row: K.T. Peele, A.B. Manning, M.T. Reams, J.L. Carpenter, W.W. Rhodes, G.D. Pridgen, J.H. Daughtridge Jr., B.O. Burgess, J.A. Baines, J.W. Upchurch Jr., G.M. Batts, S.M. Cary, A.D. Lassiter and J.R. Faulkner. Fifth row: L.W. Farmer, M.L. Tillery, J.A. Farmer, W.D. Williams Jr., T.J. Marks, R.L. Brown, J.G. Pittman, G.A. Tharrington, M.A. McBride, W.H. Davis, L.M. Hedgepeth III, J.D. Joyner, M.F. Watson and R.A. Raper. Sixth row: J.A. Whitman, W.R. Chadwick, F.T. Parker, J.W. Anderson, S.G. Johnson, C.A. Garrett, H.R. Walker Jr., A.R. Smith, I.T. Hill, G.R. Walker, R.G. Rackley Jr., S.L. Smith, B.M. Connis and L.E. Hill. Seventh row: J.E. Hughes, T.K. Alford, B.K. Bottoms, F.T. Mayo, S.R. Jones, G. Harris, E.W. Joyner, M.P. Weaver, R.D. Clark, H. Balluck Jr., R.E. Oxendine, T.S. Hill, W.W. Lewis, J.R. Clark and C.D. Johnson. Eighth row: E. Williams Jr., A.W. Booth, L.T. Joyner, D.A. Strickland, C.L. Burgess, J.A. Parks, D.L. Wooten, D.L. Winstead, T. Wiggin, R.E. Coleman, A.J. Doniseff, R.B. West, J.O. Taylor, T.E. Perry and R.H. Landis. Ninth row: E.B. Skinner, K.G. Mcgee, G.B. Wood, M.L. Varnell, J.A. Eatmen, R.M. Tate, T.L. Lancaster, J.E. Ricks and D.O. Allen.



CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT

FIRE DEPARTMENT

JOHN SYKES SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Don Wilhalf and Joe Nelson, two area businessmen, have had a long-standing relationship with the City of Rocky Mount and always had a special interest in the Fire Department.

Through the years, they maintained contact and often inquired as to what was going on. Eager to assist and always complimentary, they rendered support to past and present Fire Chiefs. In April 1983, Fire Chief John Sykes suffered a heart attack and died. Don and Joe decided to assist a devastated department in their own way. Don and Joe discussed with the new Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins how to might honor Fire Chief John Sykes. The decision was made to rename the Rocky Mount Training Ground to "The John Sykes Training Center".

In addition, establishment of the John Sykes Scholarship Fund occurred. These two men contributed and helped raise funds and went on to serve on the Board of Trustees for the scholarship fund until this day.

Since 1983, twenty scholarships have been awarded to City of Rocky Mount firefighters resulting in a better prepared workforce to direct operations of the Fire Department. Our hats are off to Don and Joe for being there, supporting and performing a community service that resulted in an improved Fire Department.

History is written daily and it is only when we look back do we realize the important contribution that individuals like Don Wilhalf and Joe Nelson have made.

The City of Rocky Mount, the Fire Department, and I thank you for all you have done and acknowledge that you made a difference.

Sincerely,

J.E. Hawkins
Fire Chief

One Government Plaza • Post Office Box 1180 • Rocky Mount, North Carolina 27801-1180
Telephone (919) 972-1111 • Fax (919) 972-1232



Trustees for the John Sykes Scholarship Fund, left to right:
Captain Jim Atkins, Joe Nelson, Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins, Don Wilhalf and District Chief J.F. Lancaster.

VOLUNTEERS

Like many of the fire departments throughout the United States, the volunteer firefighters still are the largest firefighting force known in the country. Rocky Mount's volunteers served the city from its conception in 1896 until the early 1980s. Throughout the first 50 years of history, the volunteers remained the backbone of Rocky Mount's firefighting force.

In the early years, these loyal and unselfish individuals would render immediate service to Rocky Mount citizens at the sound of the fire bell. The volunteers were sometimes injured at fires, and others made the supreme sacrifice to the city.

The volunteer firefighters would meet once a month at the Fire Station, along with "paid members", to discuss the business of training and social activities within the Department. The Fire Department

did make special allowances for the volunteers, such as having their clothes cleaned after fires and replacing any lost or damaged personal effects such as glasses, watches, etc.

The policy for becoming a member of the volunteers was stringent, and prior to World War II an individual could not join the Department if he was married. This rule changed soon after the end of the war, but applicants were required to be between the ages of 21 and 31.

Procedures for applying would be:

- (1) Obtain and complete an application from the secretary;

(2) Have their employer sign a permission statement allowing the individual to leave work to respond to a fire during working hours;

(3) Supply at least three volunteers'

paid member's recommendations.

Once these application steps were completed, a background investigation would follow, and at the next meeting the applicant would be voted on. Voting was accomplished using the "black ball" method, meaning that if an applicant received three or more black ball marbles in the voting box, he would be denied membership.

Once a candidate was voted into the Department, he had to adhere to a written list of by-laws which governed the volunteer organization. Members were required to attend 50 percent of all meetings, one-third of all fire calls and attend at least 50 percent of all training drills.

Any volunteer who dropped below these requirements would be dismissed from the Department.



C.H. "Red" Thurman



R.C. "Dick" Plummer



Joe Davis



R.A. Clack



D.M. "Frog" Anderson



Elliott "Crogan" Adams

VOLUNTEERS



J.S. "Happy" Braswell



Willie Soden Jr.



T.R. Vaughan



L.M. Hedgepeth Jr.



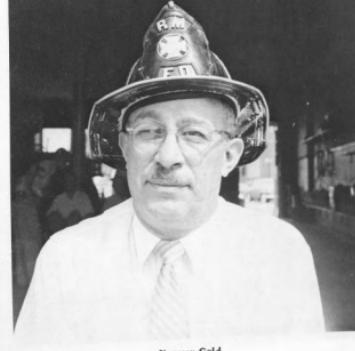
L.Y. Shaw



Thad Soden



J.R. Moore Jr.



NORMAN Gold

VOLUNTEERS



HERMAN DRAKE



H.S. BROOKS



GEORGE BRASWELL



E.J. PITTS SR.



BILL PHILLIPS



L.O. CUPTON

Once the telephone system was installed in the station, some volunteers elected to have a fire bell installed in their homes. This bell would ring in the same manner as the large outside bell at the fire station, to expedite response to the fire incident. Several bachelor volunteers lived in the station and would respond immediately with the paid members or stay at the firehouse to notify other volunteer members of the call.

An engine company would respond to a call through town, some volunteers would flag down the fire engines and board them on the way to the fire. The volunteers were a strong brotherhood of men. They cared for each other and their

families, and would often, at times of death, stay with the mourning family through the wake of a funeral for support. Honor guards and other support for the firefighters would be given among the paid as well as the volunteer. This form of service to the City has set the tradition and standards which make the Rocky Mount Fire Department a well trained and highly efficient department.

On 1 September 1953, Fire Chief W.B. Parrish told volunteers that the big fire bell would from then on be rung on large fires only. The term "silent", which is still used today by older members, meaning the need for one engine company, evolved from this action as the fire bell would

only ring when more than one engine company was needed to control a fire situation.

Records indicate that throughout Rocky Mount Fire Department history, the volunteer and paid members fought fires and operated together as a team, setting a precedent for others to follow. The Rocky Mount Fire Department appreciates and remembers its late, retired and honorary members as we celebrate our 100 year anniversary.

The photographs in this section represent only a few of the many volunteers who served the Rocky Mount Fire Department in 1952.

Old Steamer No. 1

Old Steamer No. 1 is probably the most popular piece of apparatus the Rocky Mount Fire Department has ever owned. Purchased on 14 July 1896 for \$2,600, it is a proud piece of apparatus that the Department still values today. Although it was retired years ago, it is still in service for the Department as a fire education tool. In the younger days of its retirement, the steamer was pulled in many fire prevention parades. The steamer would bear the sign of "I've done my part, you do yours". The apparatus, in its working years, was a prize-winning piece of apparatus well-known throughout the state.

Back in the days of fire department steamers, the State Firemen's Association would offer steamer competitions statewide. The Department would usually enter every year. Back in those days, Rocky Mount was noted for being a fire company that was hard to beat. Unknown to most of these people, the Department had some secret weapons used to ensure a win at the steamer competitions. A fine steam (or stream of water from a fire hose nozzle) produced by a steamer within 30 minutes of arriving at a fire was considered to be an excellent response.

In those days, because of response time and equipment, fires were mostly fought from a defensive stance. A defensively fought fire usually saved the adjoining structures located around the building where the fire was burning.

The annual state firemen's convention would host drill competitions with departments across the state competing for a cash reward. The cash and prizes were usually provided by the local entertainment committee of the host town. Rocky Mount volunteers would always take good care to qualify for some of the win-



nings. One event was held to determine which steamer would be able to build 100 pounds of pressure and launch a stream of water the farthest distance through a nozzle. The first team to accomplish this would win the prize. Each of the competing steamers' pressure gauges were inspected by judges to ensure they were tested airtight and untampered. All equipment, such as hoses and nozzles, had to be the same size to keep the competition fair and even. Rocky Mount's gauge, produced by Atlantic Coastline Railroad Shops, contained a hidden peg to stop the needle internally at a 100 PSI reading. This gauge was exchanged just before the competitions began. The advantage with this gauge was that: while every one of the other steamers had to make a fire stream at 100 pounds of pressure and hoped their stream reached the farthest, Rocky Mount, "because of its gimmicked pressure gauge", was actually pumping more than 100 pounds of pressure, making the stream spray further than anyone else's while giving the

appearance of only 100 pounds of pressure. Rocky Mount, being a railroad town, had volunteer firefighters who were railroad employees working as machinists and in other railroad jobs.

Another time, the steamer was loaded onto the train and sent to New Bern, NC, for the annual fireman's convention and competition. Once again, the volunteers' ingenuity was displayed. The drill was described as the first steamer to build a fire hot enough to start the fire pump turning and make water spout first from the nozzle wins. Each fire company was given the same amount of wood and kerosene to ensure an even, fuel for each steamer's boiler. Once the pistol fired, the engineers would begin to build the fire necessary to produce steam power for the fire pump. Once again, unknown to the judges and anyone else, Rocky Mount Steamer No. 1 had hung within its boiler a balloon filled with wood alcohol. Once the alcohol doused the flames, the heat rush reaction would immediately boost the steamer pressure. This, in turn,

would activate the fire pump. According to the source of this information, being less honest was a way of competing in those days.

All competing fire departments from time to time were caught with their award winning tools and were disqualified. It appears that sentiment among the departments about this was light. Fire departments back in those days often originated from humble surroundings. Money to buy equipment and operate was tight. Winning prize money at these competitions greatly enhanced the winning department's operating budget.

The man-drawn hose reel was another piece of apparatus that accompanied the steamer. Pulled by hand through the rugged and muddy streets of Rocky Mount, the hose reel was vital to firefighting. In later years the hose reel was replaced by a horse-drawn wagon. The horse-drawn wagon could carry more hose and respond to a fire much quicker.

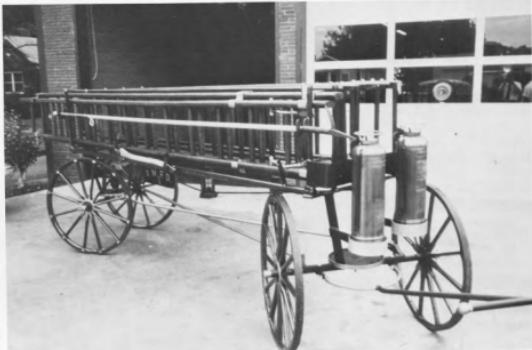
Along with the steamer competitions come hose reel competitions. Elements such as teamwork, speed and equipment meant the difference between winning or losing. According to city records, the Department's first hose wagon was just that: a standard made (dray) or wagon that had a bed in it suitable for loading firehouse. The wheels on this wagon were the standard metal-lined wheels, made for hauling and not speed. The Department, realizing these facts, never entered its hose team into an annual competition.

In 1905 the Department, desiring to compete in the annual races, bought a light wagon. The wagon, which cost \$300, was purchased by contributions from volunteer firemen and generous citizens. A gray horse was also purchased in this year by donations. The light wagon was exactly that, built lightweight to increase speed, and had hard rubber lined wheels which made the wagon roll easier. The wagon, painted red, had a fire helmet

with fire axe and pike pole under its seat. The words "Rocky Mount" were painted on both sides of the wagon with a stylish decorative finish. The gray horse, named Old Bell, was a very fast horse trained to pull the wagon. Out of all the horses and mules Rocky Mount had at the time, Old Bell appeared to be the favorite. Old Bell was the only horse ever used in the multi-departmental competitions.

The drill that the departments would compete in was executed in this way: Upon the start signal, hose wagons and crews would race a 300-yard dash. Near the end of the dash, firefighters would dismount the wagon as it sped to the finish line, running with it so its speed was not broken. Many sacrifices resulting in injury were made by firefighters to ensure that the hose wagon kept moving. Once at the end of the race, firefighters would lay out fire hose and make the proper connections as fast as possible.

Rocky Mount won the state champion hose team a number of times. Old Bell, actually a young horse, seemed to be born to pull fire apparatus. According to the late retired Fire Captain E.J. Pitt, the Department's other horses would give what would be today's equivalent of "engine trouble". The temperamental horses, became a nuisance to their new owners, as tools, packages and other items would be strewn along city streets as the horses raced to the firehouse. Citizens knowing about the horses' origin were amused when this situation happened again and again. In another way, though, it was kind of sad as the dedicated animals would run across town to the firehouse, expecting to be hooked up to the apparatus that was then old and obsolete. The loyalty and dedication of these animals will always be cherished in the Fire Department's archives.



FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

The Fire Prevention Bureau is charged with coordinating programs that encompass an overall plan to reduce life and property loss due to fire through building plan review, code enforcement, educational programs, data collection and fire cause determination activities.

With the harsh reality that fire is the only weapon of mass destruction that is freely available for anyone—man, woman or child to use—the Fire Prevention Bureau was established. On 1 September 1957, Fire Chief W.B. Parrish appointed Firefighter J.R. Thomas as the first full-time director of fire prevention. Captain Thomas was responsible for all fire prevention programs, inspections and fire education programs. At that time the Fire Prevention Bureau was established, but the state had no official fire prevention code. In 1960 the City adopted the American Insurance Association Fire Prevention Code. This was the code of standards that was enforced at this time. Captain Thomas was noted for his interest in the fire education field. From showing

hospital personnel how to extinguish beds on fire, to children's puppet shows, Captain Thomas was truly ahead of his

time. He instituted the Department's very first "Sparky the Fire Dog" and recruited the late Assistant Chief Wayne B.



Richard E. Strickland
District Chief Prevention
23 Years Service



Linda Ammons
Administrative Clerk
10 Years Service



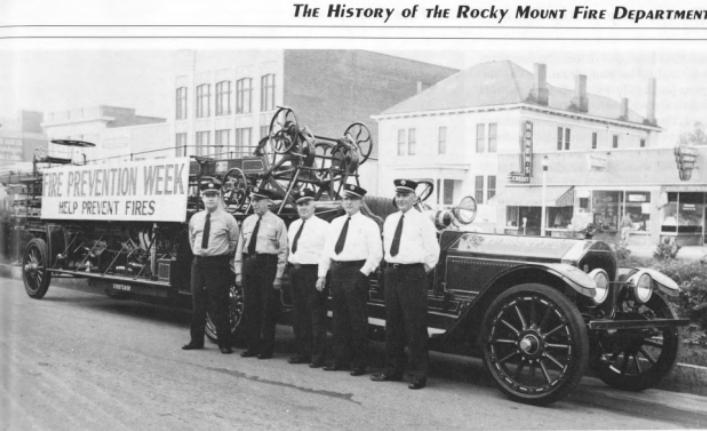
Wildon C. Beck
Prevention Specialist
14 Years Service



A. Stephon Smith
Prevention Specialist
11 Years Service



Robbie M. Pate
Prevention Specialist
12 Years Service



Starting off Fire Prevention Week, displaying their equipment are, left to right: E.A. Glasgow, E.J. Wells, V.N. Neal, W.B. Parrish, W.P. James; 1919 American La France Aerial Truck.



Junior Guild members and puppets. Left to right: Mrs. Fred Parker, Mrs. L.O. Vickers, Bob Thomas (of the Fire Prevention Bureau), Mrs. Thomas Battle, and Mrs. John Dowdy, February 1958.



Second edition of R.M.F.D. Puppet Company No. 1.

Hawkins to play the part.

Assistant Chief Hawkins was quoted as saying, "I can't remember just now who made the Sparky outfit I wore, but it was a good job and I enjoyed playing the part". In 1957, Captain Thomas started the junior fire patrols in area schools. This program, still in effect today, teaches school age children fire safety, education and prevention disciplines. On 2 February 1958, Captain Thomas sought out the talents of the Rocky Mount Junior Guild, which had been presenting puppet shows since 1949, to make a show featuring fire education. The Guild, civic minded as they were, agreed to create a show. Two puppets kits, called "The Little Match" and "The Three Little Firemen Who Saved the Day", were created. The skits, including a song, were written by Mrs. Elizabeth Dove.

The puppet show was played to all the area schools, city as well as county. It was also played for the well baby and exceptional children clinics at Christmas. The shows, very popular with the public, were

aired on local television. Captain Thomas was taken away from the Department on 12 July 1964, when he and his family were killed in an automobile accident. Fire Chief Parrish then appointed firefighter J.H. Anderson to be the director of the Fire Prevention Bureau on 15 July 1964. Firefighter William Soden IV was promoted as Captain Anderson's assistant.

Keeping the fire prevention activities ongoing, Captain Anderson and Fire Inspector Soden began to expand in their roles. In 1969, the bureau instituted the Engine Company Home Inspection Program. This program ran seasonally from 1969 through 1986. This program was beneficial in that the Department could interact with the citizens. The citizens would learn about fire prevention and education practices, while engine companies would learn more about the neighborhoods from a fire protection standpoint.

In April 1971, Captain Anderson resigned from the Fire Department. Fire Chief Sykes promoted Fire Inspector William Soden IV to lieutenant on 11 June 1971. On 18 August 1972 Lieutenant Soden was promoted to captain. On 10 August 1976, Chief Sykes changed Captain Soden's title of captain to Director of Fire Prevention. The Fire Prevention Bureau doubled in size with the promotion of Firefighter Danny Glover to Fire Inspector.

In 1976 the City once again upgraded its Fire Prevention Code by adopting the American Insurance Association Fire Prevention Code standards. In April 1976 Firefighter Richard Strickland was promoted to fire inspector. In 1977 the De-

Firefighters, left to right: Arnold Lee Pittman, Kearney T. Peele, W. Barnes, and Al W. Price leading the Fire Prevention Parade held in October of 1971. *Note in the right side of this picture wearing a white shirt is Lynwood Joyner with his son, Todd, who is now a Rocky Mount fireman.



Charles Ellis and his family in 1964 learning how to call for help in the event of an emergency.



Firefighter Frank preparing another fire education class for children.



partment created the Arson Investigation Unit. This unit, headed by the Director of the Fire Prevention Bureau, is comprised of Fire Prevention and Training Division personnel, which are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to respond immediately when needed. The arson investigation unit works in cooperation with the Rocky Mount Police Department.

On 26 November 1980, Fire Inspector Strickland's title was changed to assistive fire prevention supervisor. On 1 December 1981, Captain Soden retired from the Fire Department with 26 years of service. Chief Sykes promoted Assistant Supervisor Strickland to captain and fire prevention supervisor in 1981. In 1982 the bureau displayed a new fire education vehicle named Puppet Company Number One. Puppet Company Number One was modeled after the Sesame Street fire safety program. The puppet company has given countless shows throughout the years to children of all ages. The lead character, "Firefighter Frank", and his company of fire education puppets play out skits on match safety; stop, drop and roll; crawl low in smoke; fire drills and reporting fires using the 911 system. Many parents who saw these shows as children, now have children of their own learning from the puppet company.

As the City expanded and more demands were placed on the bureau, the Fire Department created another inspector position within the bureau. In the 1980s came a new product added to the Department's credit. A book was compiled which gives factual information and guidance for victims of fire. The book, entitled "After the Fire is Out", is a tool produced by Inspector J.K. Harris. The book covers post-fire subjects such as information on how to fill out insurance claim forms, developing inventory lists, temporary housing, replacing important documents, records and damaged money. Also included are sections on saving food items, removing smoke odors from clothing and helpful hints on products for cleaning walls, floors and furniture. Also included is a reference directory of various services that may be

needed. This book, which facilitates good public relations, was and still is a credit to the Department.

After a fire, engine company personnel give this book to property owners as a free guide for them to use. In 1985 the City adopted the 1982 edition of the National Fire Protection Association Number One, or NFPA #1. This was a more extensive and up-to-date fire code.

The year 1977 is remembered as the time that engine companies would assist fire prevention in inspecting businesses throughout the city limits. Each fire station was responsible for its response area and had to inspect every business in its area once every year. Like the home inspection program, this program not only provided businesses with fire inspections, but allowed the engine companies to perform pre-planning for potential fire operations. This program stayed in force until 1991, when the state Fire Prevention Code was enacted. In 1988 the Department reclassified job titles in some of its divisions. The Fire Prevention Bureau was affected totally. The title of captain and fire prevention supervisor was changed to district chief of fire prevention. The assistant fire prevention supervisors were titled fire prevention specialists. In 1990, upon the relocation of Fire Station No. 3, the Department remodeled the old No. 3 fire station and created new offices for the Fire Prevention Bureau and the fire Training Division. These two offices were originally located in Headquarters fire station.

In 1991 Fire Prevention Specialist Davis was promoted to district chief of training. The statewide mandatory Fire Prevention Code



This book, entitled "After The Fire Is Out", a production of then Inspector J.K. Harris, has proven to be a valuable public relations tool.



Gerry Wood and Bobby Connie demonstrating how to give the proper information when calling 911.



Fire Engineer Michael McBride showing a student the proper method to extinguish a grease fire.



was in force on 1 July 1991. Volume 5 of the State Building Code became legislated as the State Fire Prevention Code. Under this code, fire inspectors had to be certified under these standards. All inspectors in the Bureau had to be certified by the North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board. Before the state fire code was adopted, any fire department personnel could perform legal fire inspections. This was because they would be enforcing local and municipal ordinances rather than state law. The fire chief and district chief of fire prevention decided to adopt a firefighter inspector program. This program, in place, would enlist the help of six firefighters from the operations division. These firefighters would become certified state inspectors



Old Fire Station No. 3 on Sunset Avenue, remodeled to house the offices of Fire Training and Fire Prevention.

and would inspect businesses while on duty.

The year 1995 was a strong year for the bureau's fire education program, when Smatty the Fire Clown, the Fire Safe

House and Pluggy the Fire Hydrant were born. Smatty the Fire Clown was created by Firefighter L. Todd Joyner. With the backing of the Fire Prevention Bureau, Smatty was an instant success. Smatty

blends in a combination of magic tricks,

comedy, fire safety and educational mes-

sages to help children and people of all

ages learn while they laugh.

The fire safety house was constructed



C.B. George and son doing their part for fire prevention. George retired in 1995 from old Station No. 2, leaving with Captain Tommy Gay's shoes and pants. George often visited Station No. 2 on S. Grace Street when least expected.

with monies donated by the Rocky Mount Junior Guild and Rocky Mount Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary. Construction materials were donated by the Rocky Mount Home Builders Association, Brigadier Industries of Nashville and

others in the community. This mobile trailer was assembled by Fire Department personnel and was completed in 1995. The Fire Safe House is designed to show children fire safety methods on how to escape a smoke filled house. Non-

toxic smoke is pumped into the trailer while the children observe how smoke normally behaves in a residential setting. Once the nontoxic smoke has filled the house, children, by direction of fire department personnel, learn to remain calm and escape safely. These children also learn how to crawl low in smoke, and report a fire via telephone to an actual dispatcher.

Pluggy the Fire Hydrant is a sophisticated fire education tool operated by remote control. Firefighters controlling Pluggy can talk through it to children and deliver important fire safety messages. With these innovations, The Fire Prevention Bureau has, and will continue to serve the citizens of Rocky Mount well.



Smatty, Pluggy, and a "new" Sparky along with the newest edition of Puppet Company No. 1 in the background.



This "Fire Safe House" was made possible by the generous donations of the Rocky Mount Junior Guild.



The Rocky Mount Fire Prevention Bureau started out small, but has grown into one of the Fire Department's most progressive divisions.

FIRE TRAINING

The Fire Training Division is charged with developing, implementing and coordinating programs and activities to ensure that personnel are equipped with the skills, knowledge and training to safely accomplish the mission of the Rocky Mount Fire Department.

The Fire Training Division of the Fire Department has been respected and admired for many years as Rocky Mount is known for its in-depth, innovative training. This training consists of preparing new recruits for their jobs as firefighters. This division is responsible for training existing personnel in the latest techniques of firefighting.

Other responsibilities of the training division include preparing monthly train-

ing and fire call reports, keeping up to date training records on all employees, and many other various duties. Each member is required to have a minimum



Phillip W. Davis
District Chief Training
13 Years Service

of 240 hours of training in the Department each year. This requires each firefighter to have approximately two hours of class per workday.



Charles Ellis and Billy Webb, training (?) 1965.



Jackie Bell
Administrative Clerk
6 Years Service



E. Russell Osborne
Fire Training Specialist
18 Years Service



The first training officer for the Rocky Mount Fire Department was H.E. Inscoe. Inscoe was appointed to the training division as a captain in the early 1950s and served as such until 1956, when he accepted a position with the N.C. Department of Insurance Fire and Rescue Training Services Division. T.W. Rose was then appointed to captain of training for the Fire Department. Rose served in this capacity until 1 October 1962. He then accepted a position in the Arlington County, VA Fire Department.



Serving as a fire captain in 1962, David Whitley was promoted to the rank of captain of the training division. Whitley served in this position until February 1966, at which time he was transferred back to the position of fire captain in suppression. Whitley was promoted through the ranks to retire from the Fire Department as an assistant chief of fire operations.



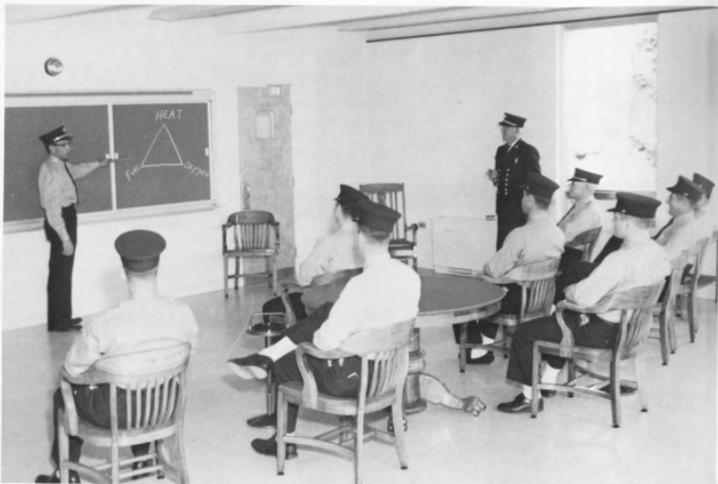
Bobby Wooten, left, and Ervin Hayes working with early models of S.C.B.A. (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus)



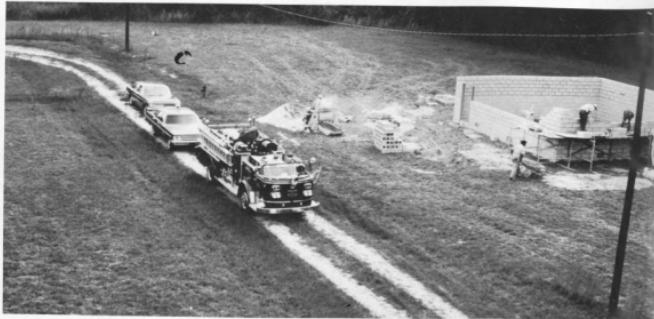
John Sykes practicing life saving methods at Station No. 1 on Main Street.



Phillip C. Riley would be the next captain of training and would serve in this position from 29 July 1966 until 15 August 1969, at which time he accepted a position with N.C. Department of Insurance Fire and Rescue Training Services Division. Fire Chief W.P. James then appointed B.M. Griffin as captain of the training division. Griffin served in the position until his tragic death 30 September 1972. Fire Chief J.P. Sykes then appointed J.F. Lancaster as lieutenant of training in November 1972. He served as lieutenant of training until his promotion to captain of training in December 1973. He then served as captain of training until 10 March 1982, when he was promoted to assistant chief, (which was reclassified to district chief of operations on 9 July 1988) and is presently serving in this position.



These firemen were having class in their new Station No. 1 on S. George Street in 1963.



The beginning of the training ground development with the construction of the "Smoke House".



The Fire Department training grounds, "The John Sykes Training Center", is available for S.C.B.A training, and even sometimes for S.C.U.B.A. training!



Front row, left to right: J.F. Lancaster, Wayne row; J.R. "Howdy" Shearon, Phil Wood, Glen Barwick, Richard Strickland, Wayne Hawkins. Back row: Anthony Allen, Dennis "Root" Womble, Ronnie Weaver, Kenneth Mullen, Tommy Daughtridge, James Pittman, Eddie Harper, Jerry "J.T." Tharrington and William "Hot Rod" Taylor.



"Rookies" attending Wilson area fire school. Front row, left to right: Joe Parks, B.K. Bottoms, William Battle, D/C J.K. Harris, Steve Jones, Travis Alford, John Hughes, Taylor Mayo, and Lewis Smith. Second row: Matthew Tillery, T. Matthews, Charles Garrett, Bo Clark, Pete "Square Head" Weaver and B.J. Wooten. Third row: L.Dungan, Tim Turner, J. Robinson, Gerry Wood, A. Eatmon, J. Taylor, J. Andrews, Ron Clark, Tim Hill, Mike Varnell, Brian West and J. Dornseif.



"Rookie" group of 1992. Left to right: F/T/S E.R. Osborne, Travis Mayo, Tim Sherman, Mo Horton and D/C Phillip Davis.



E. Russell "Oz" Osborne III, fire training specialist

Mullen to assistant chief of operations, the position of district chief of training was filled by J.K. Harris on 19 August 1989, and Harris served in this position until he was promoted to his current position of district chief of operations in October 1991. With the promotion of Harris, P.W. Davis was promoted to district chief of training and currently holds that position. The Rocky Mount Fire Department has been a leader in this state for the excellent training of its personnel.

Sometimes even training fires seem to get out of control.



FIRE APPARATUS MAINTENANCE DIVISION

The fire mechanic's duties were to perform maintenance on all engines, cars, trucks, generators, electrical tools and appliances within the Department. The men responsible for maintaining this equipment included E.J. "Hawkshaw" Wells, Grady Sharpe, Gary Batts, Tommy Daughtridge and many others who have assisted with these duties.

Rocky Mount Fire Department has had a long tradition of proud mechanics who have been respected statewide. These

men have kept equipment ready to respond when necessary.

In 1984, when the fire mechanics position changed to fire apparatus maintenance supervisor, all duties remained the same, with the addition of a few more. The new duties are: maintaining compliance with NFPA 1901, writing specifications for new apparatus and many other job-related tasks. There have been several fire mechanics in the Department over the years, one of whom was



TOMMY DAUGHTRIDGE
Fire Apparatus Maintenance Supervisor
22 Years Service



Tommy hard at work?

Hawkshaw Wells. Hawkshaw started with the Department on 5 November 1922 and served as mechanic until he retired 15 November 1965.

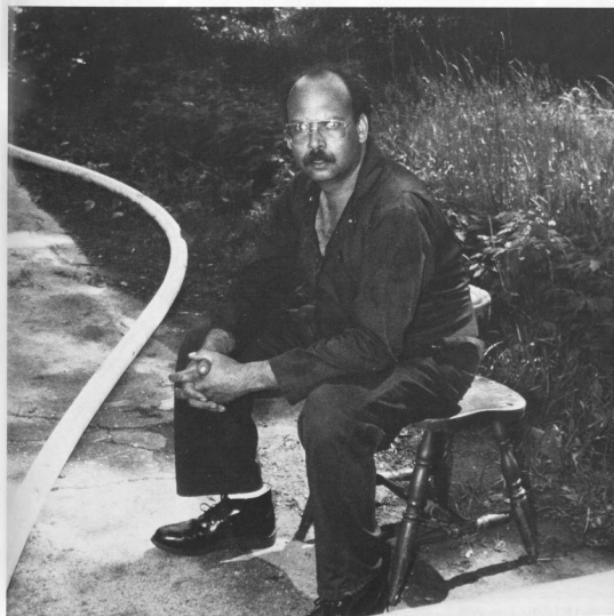
Grady W. Sharpe started his career with the Rocky Mount Fire Department on 16 May 1953. In 1965, after the retirement of Wells, Grady, who was serving as a firefighter, was appointed to the position of fire mechanic. In January 1972, Sharpe was promoted to lieutenant and to captain in February 1973. During

this time he continued to serve as fire mechanic. In 1984, Sharpe was promoted to fire apparatus maintenance supervisor and held the position until his retirement on 31 October 1986, with 33 years of service.

On 21 February 1987, after Sharpe retired, Gary Batts was promoted from firefighter to fire apparatus maintenance supervisor. At this time, the fire apparatus maintenance supervisor's hours and to captain in February 1973. During

administrative hours, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Batts served in this position until 1 January 1994, when he retired with 12 years of service.

J.H. "Tommy" Daughtridge was promoted from firefighter to fire engineer. In January 1994, Daughtridge was promoted to fire apparatus maintenance supervisor. Without these individuals, our equipment could not have stood ready to serve 24 hours a day, seven days a week...a job well done!



GARY BATTS 1991.
In 1989 Gary chased down and stopped a suspect fleeing the scene of a fiery car crash. Through his quick action, and as he said, "doing what he was supposed to do", the fleeing driver was charged with DWI and felonious auto larceny. Gary received a \$200 reward, which he contributed to the John Sykes Scholarship Fund.

Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Rocky Mount Fire Department began in October 1961 with 60 charter members. Monthly dues were 35 cents, while selling dishcloths was an ongoing fundraiser. The Ladies Auxiliary's foundation is based on dedication and support to all members of the Rocky Mount Fire Department and their families.

Over the past 35 years, the Ladies Auxiliary has contributed funds to support many special needs of our community. These include the John Sykes Memorial Scholarship Fund, the American

Red Cross, the Burn Center of Chapel Hill, the Carolyn Webb Fund, the Amanda Lowe Kidney Transplant Fund, and the Jason Strickland Trust Fund.

In addition, the Ladies Auxiliary has furnished steaks to all fire stations to commemorate National Fire Prevention Week, promoted education by donating fire prevention videos to our local schools, and provided refreshments and meals during long, enduring emergency incidents.

The Ladies Auxiliary is a major gift contributor during each Rocky Mount

Fire Department Annual Christmas Banquet. The Christmas season is also marked by aid to needy families who, without the presence of such a fine organization, would not experience the true meaning of Christmas — giving!

Major fundraisers include dances, yard sales, bake sales, dishcloth sales, picture sales, wood raffles, doughnut sales and the publication of the Ladies Auxiliary cookbook. Treasurer Madeline Brown has served the organization for its entire 35 years. She continues to do an outstanding job, and no one wants to try to follow



Julia Weaver signing a \$12,000.00 contract for the printing of this book, without a dime in place for payment! Thank you Julia.

such an impressive record.

Past presidents are Dora Jenkins, Ann Moore, Claudia Whitley, Joyce Wooten, Annie Joyner, Carolyn Webb, Sandra Cary, Debra Harris, Sheila Webb, Mary

Grace Daughtridge, Sylvia Landis, Teresa Rackley, Phyllis Carpenter, Julia Farmer and Delby Manning.

These members, plus many more, have diligently extended many hours of hard

work to bond Fire Department, family and community so that all may know the true gift of caring for thy neighbor all year long.



Julia Farmer



Carolyn Lancaster



Louise Gay



Sheila Webb



Delby Manning



Janette Brown



Madeline Brown



Claudia Whitley



Valoria Peele



Linda Erinridge



Annie Joyner



Mary Grace Daughtridge

FIRE ADMINISTRATION

THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT IS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S RESOURCES, WITH EMPHASIS ON PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A CHANGING COMMUNITY.



Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins
32 Years Service



Vickie Price
Administrative Secretary
2 Years Service



Fire Department "Staff", 1996. Left to right: Captain Charles "Bo" Webb, Assistant Chief Kenneth Mullen, District Chief Training Phillip Davis, District Chief Prevention Richard Strickland, Fire Apparatus Maintenance Supervisor Tommy Daughtridge, Fire Chief J.E. Hawkins, District Chief A.L. Herrington, District Chief A.L. Pittman, District Chief H.L. Pierce, District Chief A.W. Price, District Chief J.F. Lancaster and District Chief J.K. Harris.



Kenneth G. Mullen
Assistant Chief Operations
22 Years Service



HENRY L. PIERCE JR.
District Chief Operations
28 Years Service



J.F. LANCASTER
District Chief Operations
27 Years Service



Al W. Price
District Chief Operations
24 Years Service



A.L. HERRINGTON
District Chief Operations
30 Years Service



J. KEITH HARRIS
District Chief Operations
17 Years Service



Arnold L. PITTMAN
District Chief Operations
27 Years Service

FIRE OPERATIONS

THE PURPOSE OF THE OPERATIONS DIVISION OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT IS TO EXTINGUISH FIRES AND MITIGATE OTHER EMERGENCY INCIDENTS WITH A MINIMUM LOSS OF LIVES AND PROPERTY THROUGH THE EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY RESPONSE OF PERSONNEL, EQUIPMENT AND PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY.



T.K. Alford
Firefighter
6 Years Service



D.O. Allen
Firefighter
5 Years Service



A.A. Asby
Captain
21 Years Service



J.W. Atkins
Captain
25 Years Service



B.O. Burgess
Engineer
27 Years Service



C.L. Burgess
Firefighter
7 Years Service



J.L. Carpenter
Engineer
18 Years Service



S.M. Cary
Engineer
16 Years Service



J.A. Baines
Engineer
30 Years Service



H.A. Barnhill
Firefighter
30 Years Service



A.W. Booth
Firefighter
9 Years Service



B.K. Bottoms
Firefighter
6 Years Service



W.R. Chadwick
Firefighter
15 Years Service



J.R. Clark Jr.
Firefighter
6 Years Service



R.D. Clark Jr.
Firefighter
6 Years Service



R.E. Coleman
Firefighter
10 Years Service



B.T. Bowen
Firefighter
1 Year Service



D.R. Bradley
Captain
22 Years Service



R.L. Brown
Engineer
12 Years Service



H. Bullock Jr.
Firefighter
13 Years Service



B.M. Connie
Engineer
9 Years Service



W.H. Davis
Engineer
18 Years Service



T.D. Dettman
Firefighter
2 Years Service



F.M. Doss
Captain
21 Years Service



D.L. English
Captain
15 Years Service



C.E. Ettridge
Captain
24 Years Service



L.G. Falk
Firefighter
10 Months Service



J.A. Farmer
Engineer
24 Years Service



T.S. Hill
Firefighter
6 Years Service



M. Horton
Firefighter
4 Years Service



J.C. Hopkins Jr.
Firefighter
6 Years Service



K.R. Johnson Jr.
Captain
21 Years Service



L.W. Farmer
Engineer
27 Years Service



C.A. Garrett
Firefighter
6 Years Service



T.L. Gay
Captain
27 Years Service



G.A. Harris
Firefighter
11 Years Service



R.L. Johnson Jr.
Captain
10 Years Service



S.G. Johnson
Firefighter
5 Years Service



S.R. Jones
Firefighter
7 Years Service



W.E. Jones
Captain
17 Years Service



L.M. Hedgepeth III
Engineer
16 Years Service



S.F. Hedrick
Captain
17 Years Service



L.E. Hill
Firefighter
14 Years Service



L.T. Hill
Firefighter
14 Years Service



H.D. Joyner
Captain
22 Years Service



J.D. Joyner
Engineer
24 Years Service



L.T. Joyner
Firefighter
8 Years Service



T.C. Joyner
Captain
27 Years Service



R.H. Louis
Firefighter
19 Years Service



A.D. Lessister
Captain
13 Years Service



W.W. Lewis
Firefighter
10 Years Service



V.T. Lynch
Firefighter
2 Years Service



R.E. Overdine
Firefighter
5 Years Service



J.W. Page
Captain
21 Years Service



J.T. Parker Jr.
Engineer
13 Years Service



J.A. Paris
Firefighter
7 Years Service



R.G. Lyon
Firefighter
2 Years Service



A.B. Manning
Engineer
19 Years Service



T.J. Marks
Engineer
28 Years Service



T.W. Mayo
Firefighter
4 Years Service



K.T. Peele
Engineer
26 Years Service



A.D. Perry
Captain
30 Years Service



T.C. Perry
Firefighter
10 Years Service



J.E. Pittman
Captain
30 Years Service



M.A. McBride
Engineer
14 Years Service



K.M. McGee
Firefighter
4 Years Service



C.C. Mercer
Firefighter
2 Years Service



J.B. Moss
Firefighter
1 Year Service



J.G. Pittman
Engineer
9 Years Service



G.D. Pridgen
Engineer
12 Years Service



R.V. Pridgen
Captain
21 Years Service



W.E. Proctor
Captain
16 Years Service



R.G. Rackley Jr.
Firefighter
13 Years Service



R.A. Rader
Firefighter
4 Years Service



M.T. Reams
Engineer
33 Years Service



W.W. Rhodes
Engineer
22 Years Service



E.D. Summerlin
Firefighter
1 Year Service



D.A. Taylor
Firefighter
2 Years Service



J.L. Tharington
Captain
22 Years Service



M.L. Tilney
Engineer
6 Years Service



J.E. Ricks
Firefighter
13 Years Service



J.R. Shearon
Engineer
22 Years Service



T.K. Sherrod
Firefighter
4 Years Service



E.B. Skinner
Firefighter
7 Years Service



T.N. Turner
Firefighter
6 Years Service



J.W. Upchurch Jr.
Engineer
20 Years Service



M.L. Yarnell
Firefighter
6 Years Service



J.C. Vaughan
Firefighter
2 Years Service



A.R. Smith
Engineer
21 Years Service



S.L. Smith
Firefighter
6 Years Service



J.M. Stallings
Captain
14 Years Service



D.A. Strickland
Firefighter
21 Years Service



G.R. Walker
Firefighter
23 Years Service



H.R. Walker Jr.
Engineer
11 Years Service



M.F. Watson
Engineer
13 Years Service



M.P. Weaver
Firefighter
6 Years Service



C.R. Webb
Captain
30 Years Service



R.B. West
Firefighter
6 Years Service



L.D. Whitsker
Firefighter
7 Years Service



J.A. Whitman
Firefighter
11 Years Service



T. Wiggins
Firefighter
13 Years Service



E. Williams Jr.
Firefighter
5 Years Service



W.D. Williams Jr.
Engineer
17 Years Service



B.W. Wilson
Firefighter
7 Months Service



D.L. Winstead
Firefighter
4 Years Service



D.W. Wessie
Captain
21 Years Service



G.B. Wood
Firefighter
6 Years Service



W.P. Wood
Captain
23 Years Service



C.A. Woodard
Firefighter
1 Year Service



R.B. Worrell
Captain
19 Years Service



Billy Davis, Michael McBride and Alvin Asby.

Retirees



ISAAC BATTLE
10/24/77 - 2/1/84



GARY BATTS
12/13/82 - 1/1/94



TROY BROWN
8/3/37 - 8/1/79



John Buchan
1/1/54 - 1/1/82



RICHARD CLACK
4/1/47 - 3/15/77



Bobby Clay
10/1/60 - 7/1/91



HERBERT COLLINS
12/1/52 - 12/1/82



DONALD COOPER
5/16/56 - 3/1/91



Tom Daniel
9/1/47 - 3/27/85



Joe Davis
6/6/44 - 6/6/75



Charles Ellis
12/1/54 - 1/1/91



E.A. Glasgow
11/1/38 - 2/1/83

Retirees



Lonn M. Hedgepeth Jr.
11/14/40 - 10/15/45
Honorary Member



Elwood Inscoe
9/1/47 - 3/15/58
Honorary Member



Tom Jenkins
11/5/40 - 1/1/75



Doug Matthews
9/23/66 - 4/30/95



R.C. Plummer
5/16/50 - 4/7/81



Ted Rackley
1/26/76 - 6/1/89



Grady Sharpe
5/16/53 - 10/31/86



Milton Shearin
3/3/50 - 3/3/81



William Soden IV
4/1/55 - 12/1/81



William Taylor
12/1/52 - 7/1/82



Joyce Tilley
10/1/74 - 7/1/94



Ronnie Weaver
3/29/74 - 5/1/84



David Whitley
11/1/51 - 1/1/82



R.G. Williams
6/7/42 - 6/7/72



Bobby Wooten
4/16/58 - 10/17/85

JUST THE FACTS

Station	Address	Constructed	Cost	Vacated	Moved/ Opened	Square Footage
Fire Station Number 1	100 Block NE Main St.	1917	\$10,135	1964	-	-
Fire Station Number 1	101 South George	began 13 Mar 1963	\$260,066.75	-	11 Feb 1964	16,782
Fire Station Number 2	400 Block South Church St.	1924	-	1977	-	6,469
Fire Station Number 2	824 South Grace St.	1976	\$223,058	-	1977	8,300
Fire Station Number 3	2621 Sunset Ave.	began 14 Jan 1958	\$53,637	-	4 Oct 1958	5,068
Fire Station Number 3	900 South Winstead Ave.	1989	\$270,500	-	-	4,660
Fire Station Number 4	3041 North Church St.	-	\$106,438	-	15 Jul 1971	5,068
Fire Station Number 5	900 Springfield Road	1982	\$223,901	-	-	4,524
Fire Station Number 6	105 Rowe Dr.	1989	\$754,356	-	-	14,184
Apparatus/ Description		Year/Model	Make	Cost	Delivered/ In Service	Other
1896 Steamer		1896	American Fire Engine Co.	\$2,600	-	-
Chemical hose wagon		1914	American LaFrance	\$3,375	14 Dec 1914	-
Triple combination 750 gpm pumper		1916	American LaFrance	\$9,000	-	sold 3 Feb 1955 to Kill Devil Hills Fire Dept. for \$1,251
Chain-driven 65' aerial ladder		1919	American LaFrance	\$13,000	May 1920	sold 1 Dec 1960 to Harrold Minges
1,000 gpm chain-driven triple combination pumper		1923	American LaFrance	\$13,250	19 Jul 1923	
Engine No. 3 1,000 gpm pumper		1929	American LaFrance	\$13,000	-	
Engine No. 5 600 gpm pumper		1939	American LaFrance	\$6,310	Apr 1939	traded in on Engine No. 11 for \$1,500 credit
Engine No. 6 500 gpm pumper		1949	Ford	\$5,382	4 Mar 1948	
Engine No. 7 750 gpm pumper		1951	American LaFrance	\$14,880.50	21 Dec 1950	
Engine No. 8 750 gpm pumper		1955	Seagrave	\$17,096	15 Feb 1955	
Truck 9 tractor-drawn 85' aerial truck		1956	American LaFrance	\$36,939	21 Jun 1956 28 Jun 1956	sold to Wilmington, NC movie company
Engine No. 4 750 gpm pumper		1959	American LaFrance	\$19,868	9 March 1959	destroyed 6 Jan 1970
Engine No. 10 1,000 gpm pumper		1960	American LaFrance	\$23,361.97	14 Dec 1960	refurbished and later sold to Pungo River Volunteer Fire Department

JUST THE FACTS

Apparatus/ Description	Year/Model	Make	Cost	Delivered/ In Service	Other
Engine No. 11	1967	American LaFrance	\$25,525	9 Mar 1967	sold to Pungo River Volunteer Fire Department
Engine No. 5 1,000 gpm pumper	1970	Mack	\$35,051	5 Mar 1970	first diesel fire apparatus now in reserve status
Engine No. 12 1,000 gpm pumper	1970	American LaFrance	\$37,222	1 Jan 1971	now in reserve status
Truck No. 4 step van	1974	Chevrolet	\$5,507	1974	replaced in 1992
<i>PRESENTLY IN SERVICE</i>					
Apparatus/ Description	Year/Model	Make	Cost	Delivered/ In Service	Other
Engine No. 3 1,250 gpm pumper	1976	American LaFrance	\$69,790	28 Sep 1976	
Platform No. 1 snorkel 1,250 gpm 85' platform	1979	Pierce-Oshkosh	\$195,203	March 1979	
Engine No. 5 1,000 gpm pumper	1983	Ford	\$77,640	25 Jul 1983	
Engine No. 4 1,000 gpm pumper	1985	Ford	\$86,541	31 May 1985	
Engine No. 2 1,250 gpm pumper	1989	Spartan American Eagle	\$124,789	31 Oct 1989	
Engine No. 6 Emergency One Protector 1,250 gpm pumper	1992	E-One	\$174,519	15 Jul 1992	
Engine No. 1 Emergency One Protector 1,250 gpm pumper	1992	E-One	\$172,862	17 Nov 1992	
Engine No. 10 Emergency One Protector 1,250 gpm pumper/75' aerial	1994	E-One	\$378,850	22 Mar 1994	first quint apparatus
Squad 2 Utilimaster	1990	Chevrolet	\$125,127	24 Jul 1990	
Squad 1 3D	1992	International	\$73,086	16 Jul 1992	

WHAT IS A FIREMAN?

He's the guy next door.



Todd Joyner, 1977.

He's a man's man with the sharp memory of a little boy who never got over the excitement of engines and sirens and smoke and danger.

He's a guy like you and me with warts and worries and unfulfilled dreams.

Yet he stands taller than most of us.
He's a fireman. He puts it all on the line when the bell rings.

A fireman is at once the most fortunate and the least fortunate of men.

He's a man who savors life because he has seen too much death. He's a gentle man because he has seen too much of the awesome power of violent forces out of control. He's a man responsive to a child's laughter because his arms have held too many small bodies that will never laugh again.

He's a man who appreciates the simple pleasures of life...hot coffee held in numbed, unbending fingers...a warm bed for bone and muscle compelled beyond feeling...the camaraderie of brave men...the divine peace of selfless service and a job well done in the name of all men.



Gerry Wood.

He doesn't wear buttons or wave flags or shout obscenities and when he marches, it is to honor a fallen comrade.

He doesn't preach the brotherhood of man...

He lives it.



"Jake" Joyner, 1993.



Brent Manning.

LIFE AT THE FIREHOUSE



"The Ten Men" left to right: Pete Weaver, Capt. Eddie Jones, Michael McBride, Richard Oxendine.



Left to right: D/C J.K. Harris, Tobias Wiggins, Wayne "W.W." Rhodes, Capt. David "P-Nut" Bradley, and "Troy" Todd Joyner.



Now this looks like the way to wash windows at, Station No. 1 on N.E. Main Street.



HOOOOOOOOO! Mrs. Tilley, or "Firehouse Mama" as she liked to be called, was the very first female to work for the Rocky Mount Fire Department.



The "Beauty" of it all. Jack Henderson crowns the new Miss Flame in 1977, who also bears the resemblance of Kenneth Mullen, and beside him is someone you may better know as C.R. "Bo" Webb.



Jerry's' Kids.



Our fearless leader "Ronnie Reagan" Hawkins.



Left to right: Steve Cary, Jamie Moss, Capt. William Proctor, Mike Varnell, David Winstead.



"The Good, The Bad, The Ugly." You figure!



Mullen thinking of McBride.



Engine Company No. 1, 1996 "A" Shift. Left to right: Corey Mercer, Lonnie "Scooter" Hedgepeth III, Capt. Jimmy Page, John "Huggy" Hughes and Alan "Slim" Whitman.



Headquarters Station - "B" Shift 1996. Left to right: D/C J.F. Lancaster, Jamie Vaughan, Bobby Wilson, Charles Garrett, Bobby Connie, Capt. Dennis Womble, Capt. David English, Howdy Shearon, Gerry Wood and Danny Allen.



Bird



Square Head . . . being Square Head.



Time out for a Diet Coke ? 1991.



Captain Pete Perry 10-17 from Headquarters.

Acknowledgments

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO:



Charlie Killebrew, 1955.



Lonnie Hedgepeth Jr.



Tom Jenkins

Acknowledgments

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
THE CENTENNIAL BOOK COMMITTEE

Michael McBride, Chairman

L. Todd Joyner

M. Pete Weaver

Lonnie M. Hedgepeth III

Dennis W. Womble

Gerry B. Wood

Steve G. Johnson

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Killebrew Studios - Charlie Killebrew

Killebrew Studios - Bill Nichols

Barringer Studios - David Chicelli

Barringer Studios - "Bugs" Barringer

Bill Soden - R.M.F.D. Retired

Weaver Photography - Pete Weaver

McCrimmon Photography - Oris McCrimmon

Rocky Mount Fire Department Members

HISTORY

L. Todd Joyner

Tom Jenkins - R.M.F.D. Retired

Lonnie M. Hedgepeth Jr.

Steve Johnson

Julia Farmer

N. Doug Matthews - R.M.F.D. Retired

City Clerks Office - Jean Bailey, Lynn Camp, Dot Joyner

Chiefs of the Rocky Mount Fire Department

Chief J.R. BISSETTE	6 AUGUST 1896 - 10 May 1897
Chief C.C. COOPER.....	10 May 1897 - 1 FEBRUARY 1903
Chief J.H. CUTHRELL	1 FEBRUARY 1903 - 6 May 1909
Chief J.J. BATTLE	6 May 1909 - 1 OCTOBER 1912
Chief D.D. DAUGHTRIDGE	1 OCTOBER 1912 - 18 May 1922
Chief G.W. MABRY	18 May 1922 - 1 FEBRUARY 1929
Chief J.R. SORSBY JR.	1 FEBRUARY 1929 - 28 MARCH 1950
Chief W.B. PARRISH.....	28 MARCH 1950 - 29 JANUARY 1966
Chief W.P. JAMES	29 JANUARY 1966 - 1 APRIL 1971
Chief J.P. SYKES.....	1 April 1971 - 21 April 1983
Chief J.E. HAWKINS	21 April 1983 - PRESENT



A job well done!

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THE NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION