

# The Tale of a Twin City

## WINSTON-SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT

### Eighty-Seven Years of Service

In 1766, a group of people, known as Moravians, immigrated from Germany and settled into a section of North Carolina which they named Salem. A well organized religious group, the Moravians had their own government which observed strict laws used to govern the community, its merchants and the volunteer fire department. The Moravians also kept logs of all their activities. When a fire hazard was found, it was reported to the ruling body of the town and a fine of a dollar a day was placed on the property owner until the hazard was corrected. Wood shingle roofs were the biggest fire hazard in this small community. It was not uncommon for embers from open flame fireplaces to ignite the roof.

In 1849, the community of Winston, the industrial section of the Piedmont, was established just north of Salem. Winston's Volunteer Fire Department faced the same problems as Salem's Fire Department, such as wood shingle roofs and difficulty enforcing fire regulations. Though Winston was not as well organized as Salem, they did possess a similar array of equipment, which included a manual hand pump and bucket brigade.

The year 1913 brought many new changes to the two communities. This was the year the two towns merged, forming the City of Winston-Salem. This brought about

a need for changes in the fire department. The first change was hiring the City's first full-time paid fire chief. R. L. Hooper was selected and served in this position for two years. Another change was the switch from horse drawn wagons to motorized apparatus during World War I. For many years, the Winston and Salem Fire Departments used horses, whose shoes struck sparks from the cobblestone



Reported to be the First Manual Fire Pump



Salem Fire Department Hose Wagon, Collection of Old Salem, Winston-Salem, NC

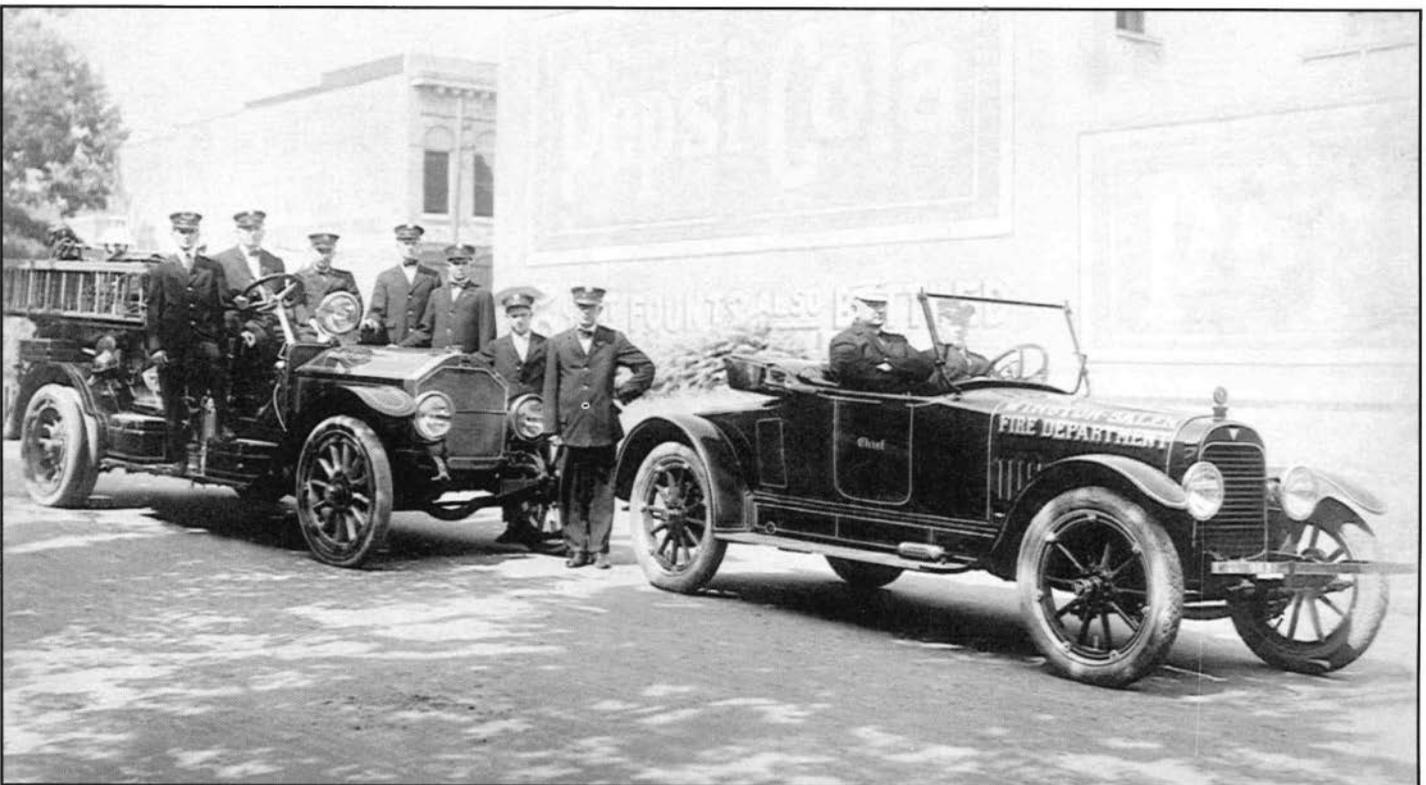


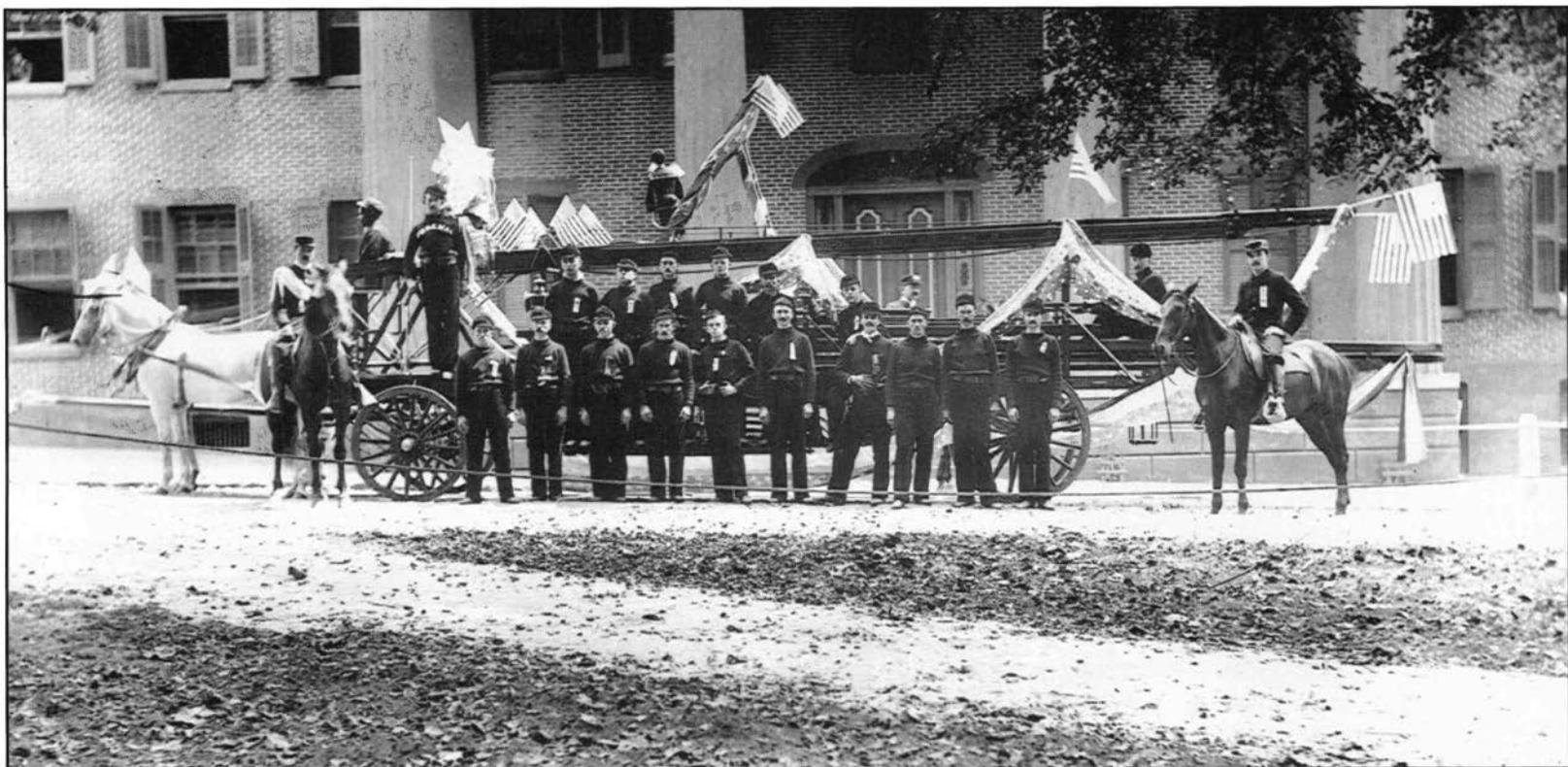
Horse-Drawn Steamer on Liberty Street near the Old Courthouse, collection of Wachovia Historical Society, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

streets as they dashed to fires. Like many other cities, they began to abandon their horse drawn fire wagons in favor of motorized apparatus as World War I approached.

The first motorized fire engine was ordered on August 5, 1912 from the American LaFrance Fire Engine Company. This engine, a Type 12 Triple Combination motor car, was purchased for \$9,000. The city put the

engine into service at Fire Station #2 in the spring of 1913. Engine Company #2 was also the first station to have full-time paid firefighters. Fire fighters worked nine days on duty followed by one day off. Fire fighters were allowed to go home to eat with their families but spent every night at the station. Starting pay for a city fire fighter was \$35.00 per month.



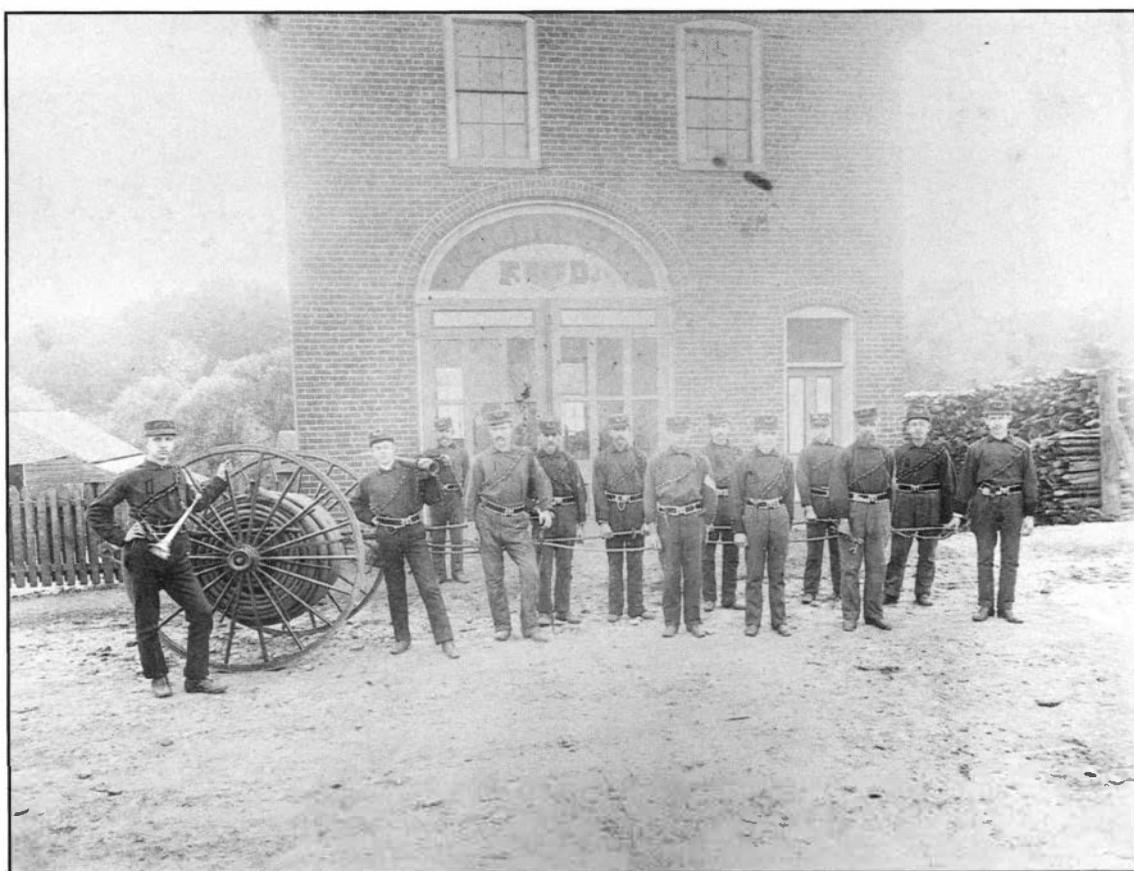


Winston Fire Department Hook and Ladder #2, Collection of the Wachovia Historical Society of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

As the City of Winston-Salem continued to grow, the ever changing needs of the fire department had to be addressed by the young City Government. The need for fire protection in the black community was met by the organization and implementation of several new volunteer fire companies. John Hancs organized a hook and ladder company to service the needs of Salem and Columbia Heights. Its first members included Aaron Moore, Henry Neal, T. M. Hairston and H. Seward. Volunteer fire companies continued to operate in Winston-Salem until 1923 when the Board of Aldermen authorized a full-time fire department. Salem and Columbia Heights were now protected by Hose Reel Company #1 and #2. Personnel included Captain John Smith and Lieutenant Henry Elam as the officers and Irvin Scales, Harvey Clanton, Odell Clanton, Archie Scales and Charles Rorie as the first fire fighters.

In 1915, Engine Company #1 was made a full-time paid

company. At the time, the company used both a steam engine and a horse drawn hose wagon. During the day, the horses were used to pull garbage wagons. If a fire call came in, an alarm was sounded by a bell in each station's fire tower. No matter where they were, the driver would immediately unhitch the garbage wagon, leap onto the horse, and gallop back to the station. He would then lead the horses into the engine bay and drop a harness over their backs. After hooking them up to the steam



Rough and Ready Fire Department, Archives of Moravian Church, 4 E. Bank St., Winston-Salem, North Carolina

engine pumper, he lit a fire in the boiler and away they went. Next to actually extinguishing the fire, the most important objective for a fireman from any station was to beat all other companies to the scene. Some of the horses, Jim, Henry, King and Prince, became locally famous for their speed, though no one ever imagined that Old Henry's speed would later cost him his life.

Farmer's Warehouse in 1911. On July 14, 1915, David Kiser became the first paid Winston-Salem Fire Department firefighter to be killed in action. Kiser was twenty-two years old and a member of Engine Company #2. An alarm came in shortly after 8:30 p.m. from the box at the courthouse square on the corner of North Liberty and West 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. The fire had been discovered



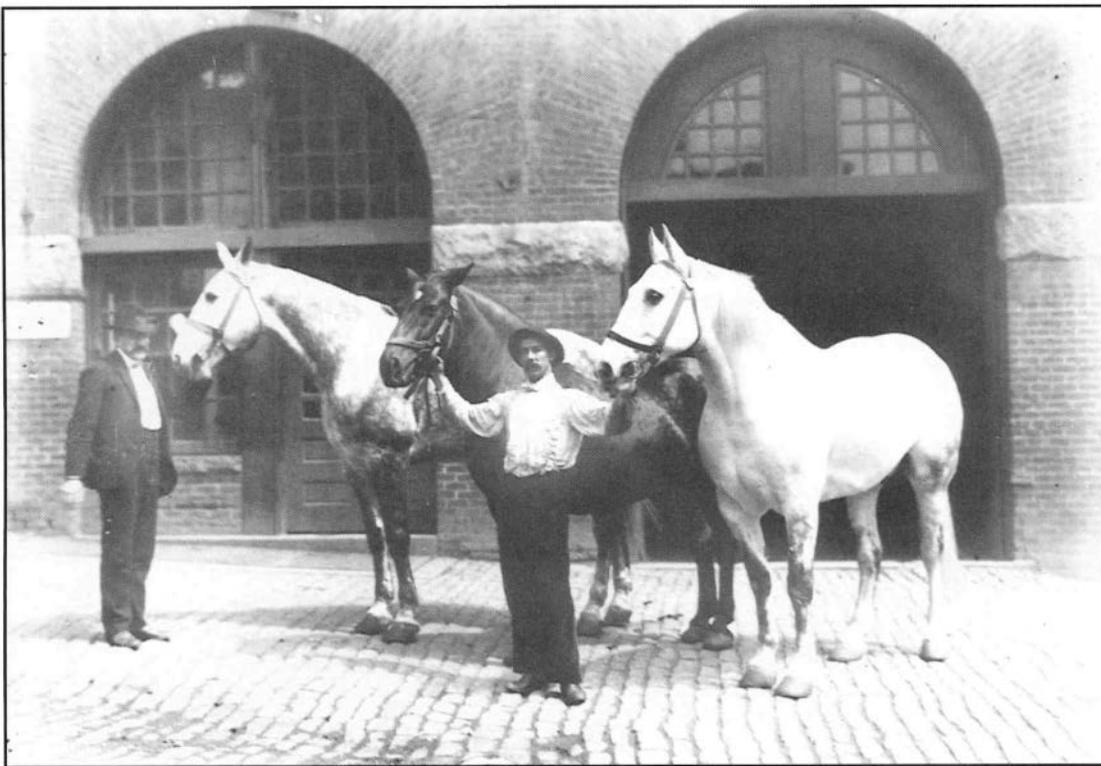
Training on Salem Square, courtesy of Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

All fire alarms in the city were received by a single telephone located at Engine Company #1. Winston-Salem had thirteen alarm boxes throughout the city, which would send calls to this telephone. One problem the fire department encountered was that if a fire alarm cleared the station of all fire personnel and there was another fire in the city, there would be no one at the station to receive the incoming call.

Joe Whitlow was the first fire fighter to be killed in action as a member of the Winston-Salem Volunteer Fire Department, when a brick wall fell on him at the Old

at Miller's Tailor Shop in the Paramount Theater Building. After it was knocked down and extinguished, the cause of the fire was determined to be a hot iron that had been left on an ironing board. In an attempt to turn the iron off, Kiser came in contact with an exposed wire and received an electrical shock which killed him instantly.

In 1916, Engine Company #3 was established as a volunteer fire station at 1508 North Liberty Street. The building housed Volunteer Fire Company #3's horse-drawn fire engine, as well as the City Market. This station was a gathering place in the neighborhood because



The Last Three Horses used in the Winston-Salem Fire Department, Jim, King, Prince

mothers could take their children to see the fire trucks and do their grocery shopping at the same time. The station remained a volunteer company until March of 1919, when six men were placed on salary.

In 1920, the early pumpers used solid rubber tires which often caused great difficulty in maintaining traction on the wet cobblestone streets. Each of these pumpers had a twenty-gallon soda acid tank, called a chemical tank. Its 2-1/2 inch smooth bore nozzle hose was the primary attack line. An attack was made from the unburned side of a building, and if done correctly, washed out to the opposite side.

On July 14, 1920, D. L. Reavis became the second member of the Winston-Salem Fire Department to be killed in action. Reavis was assigned to Engine Company #1 and died as a result of injuries received in an accident on North Liberty Street. Engine Company #1 was responding to an alarm from Box #14 at the old City Hospital on Brookstown Avenue when the accident occurred. At 11:45 p.m., just north of the Government Building on Liberty Street, the horse-drawn steamer was heading south on Liberty Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. As the steamer approached Fifth Street, a car dashed from

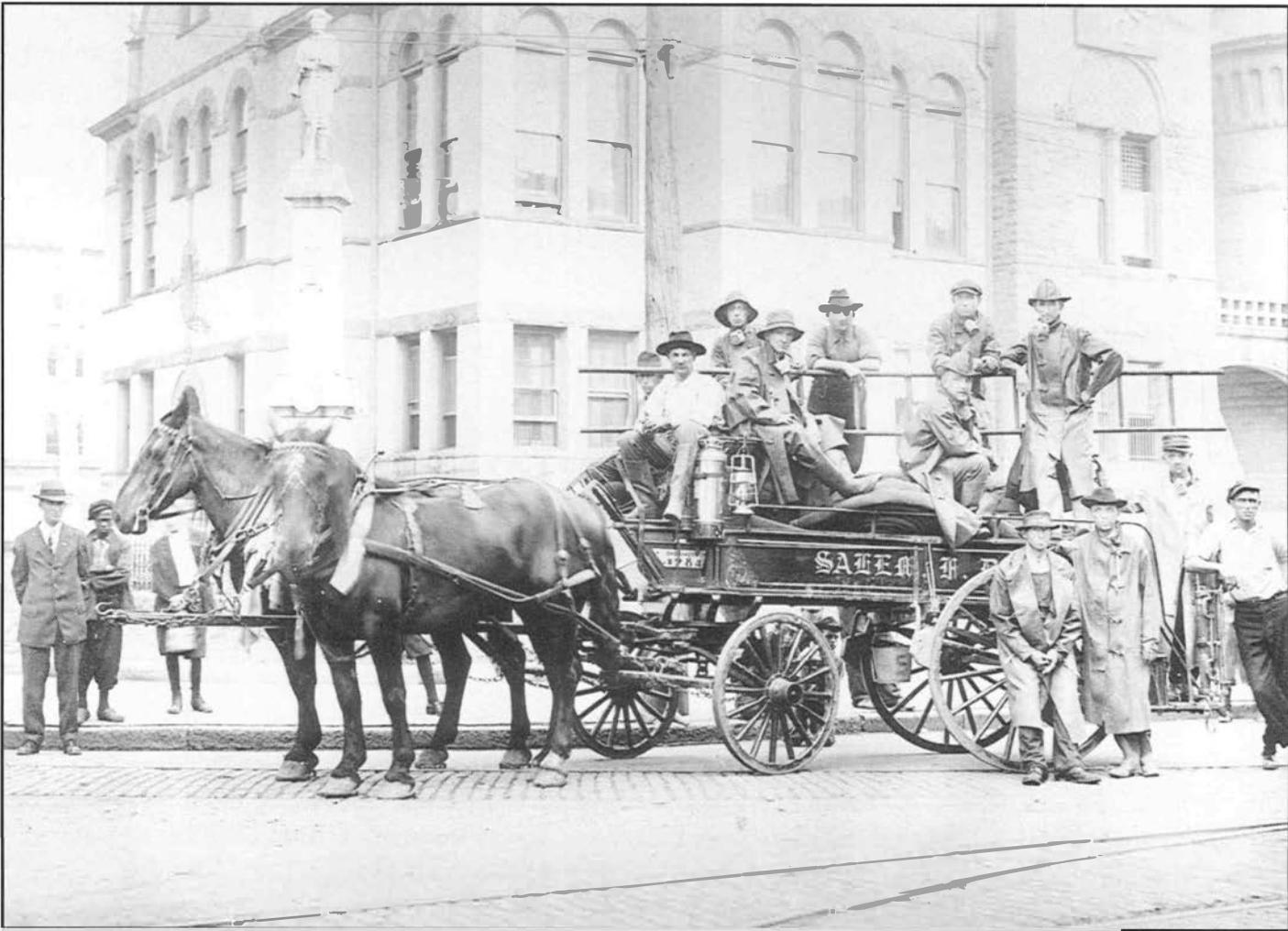
Liberty towards Fifth. A street cleaner had just cleaned the area, causing it to be very slippery. The steamer spun completely around, throwing the complement of three firefighters off, before crashing into a store. All three men were taken to City Hospital where their injuries were treated. D. L. Reavis later died from severe internal injuries. J. D. George was admitted to the hospital with injuries and wounds to his legs, while W. H. Eaten was checked out completely and returned to duty later that night. Reavis was twenty-seven years old and had been serving with the fire department for only two months at the time of his death. Old Henry, the horse who had been pulling the steamer, also lost his life that night.

Due to his speed, he failed to make the turn at West Fifth Street and Liberty Street, crashed into the building, and had to be put down as a result of a broken leg.

Trying to extinguish a fire in the early days proved to be quite an art. When an alarm came in, firefighters would start a fire in the boiler of the steam engine and stoke it while the horses were being harnessed. By the time the steamer left Fire Station #2, which was located near the



"Old Betsy" 1923 Fire Truck at Engine Co. #3. Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library.



Rough and Ready Fire Department, Third Street and Liberty in front of the old courthouse, collection of Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina



Salem Rough and Ready Fire Department, Collection of Wachovia Historical Society

freight depot, and reached the courthouse square, there would be enough pressure to sound the whistle. The fifteen horsepower pumper was quite an elaborate piece of equipment for its day. It delivered 550 gallons of water a minute. The Salem Rough and Ready Fire Department bought the steamer in the late 1890's at a cost of \$3,500. It was used for many years before it was finally relegated to the back room of Old Fire Station #3 at 1508 North Liberty Street, and used as a reserve whenever it was needed.

Tragedy struck on November 28, 1932 when Fire Chief Harry E. Nissen was killed in an automobile accident. Chief Nissen became the third member of the Winston-Salem Fire Department to be killed in action in the line of duty. The accident occurred at the intersection of Cherry Street and Sixth Street. Chief Nissen and his driver, George Jenkins, were en route to a building fire at the Neely Hairston Drug Company, heading east on Sixth Street, when his car collided with a bus heading north on Cherry Street. The car struck a light pole, knocked the front door off and threw both men from the car. Chief Nissen died from injuries received in the accident. He was fifty-eight years old and had served the department for eighteen years. Fire fighter Jenkins suffered a skull fracture, as well as other internal injuries. As a result of the accident, Fire fighter Jenkins lost sight in his left eye. Jenkins had been trained in the area of fire truck maintenance by Ward LaFrance in Elmira, New York, and had worked in that field prior to the accident. After recovering, Jenkins returned to his work in the maintenance facility as a mechanic. The bus driver involved in the accident was later charged with manslaughter. After Nissen's death, William G. Hobson was appointed fire chief on December 1, 1932, by the Board of Alderman.

On February 10, 1934, the Winston-Salem Fire Department had its fourth fire fighter killed in action when Lieutenant G. W. Kimball died as a result of injuries sustained from a fire the previous day. Lieutenant Kimball and Fire fighter Franklin Griffin of Engine Company #6 responded to a building fire at the corner of Country Club and Bitting Roads. Upon arrival, they found a fully involved garage fire. While inside fighting the fire, the heavy rafters of the roof collapsed and trapped the two men inside. They were rescued and taken immediately to Baptist Hospital. Fire fighter Griffin was treated for shock, cuts and abrasions. Lieutenant Kimball was treated for shock and injuries to his hips and back, however, he died the next day. Lieutenant Kimball had served the department for twelve years at the time of his death.

The last alarm that the Salem Rough and Ready's only remaining horse-drawn steamer ever received came from

the Black Mule Harness Company on the morning of August 26, 1922, at 3:00 a.m. A raging fire threatened to burn down the entire business district and the old steamer was pressed into service. On November 24, 1937, it took its place among other pieces of the city's history in the Wachovia Museum in Old Salem. Captains E. M. Dixon and M. G. Brown, who once worked on the pumper, presented it as a gift to the museum.

On September 16, 1938, death came unexpectedly to Fire Chief William G. Hobson while he was on duty at Fire Station #2. This veteran of the fire department became the first Winston-Salem fire fighter to die while on duty when he suffered a heart attack. Hobson was a well liked chief who had risen up through the ranks; he had held the position of fire chief for six years upon his death. In 1912, he began his career as a firefighter and went on to serve the department for twenty-six years. The Board of Alderman appointed M. G. Brown to become the new Fire Chief on October 1, 1938.

In 1949, the starting pay for a fire fighter was \$184 a month, with a ten dollar raise at the end of a six-month probation period. On each employment anniversary date, a fire fighter would receive a merit raise until the day he reached a top pay of \$245.

In the 1950's, more changes occurred in the Winston-Salem Fire Department. A Fire Prevention Bureau was formed with Captain Harold Gibson as the supervisor, and the city adopted the National Fire Prevention Code as its own. A Training Division was also established and L. C. Williams was appointed to the position of Training Officer. The work week was reduced from seventy-two hours to fifty-six hours.

In 1951, Reverend Kenneth Williams, the only African-American Alderman among the eight who held that position, questioned the board as to why a fire station in an African-American neighborhood did not have any African-American fire fighters. After discussing the matter, the Board of Aldermen voted to hire the city's first African-American fire fighters. Four thousand dollars was allotted for the care and maintenance of the Dunleith Avenue Fire Station, and it was turned into a company comprised completely of African-American fire fighters. When the city's new policy became known, sixty-three men applied for eight positions. All the men hired had high school educations, and some had achieved college degrees. Raphael O'Hara Black, Willie James Carter, Lester Edward Ervin, Jr., John Henry Ford, Robert Lindsay Grier, John Franklin Meredith, Jr., George Waddell Penn, and John Roy Thomas became the city's first African-American Fire Company. On March 1, 1951, these men reported for duty to the Dunleith Avenue Fire Station and began receiving a salary of \$192 a month during



Winston-Salem will soon have African-American firefighters, Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library.

their six weeks of training. On May 15, 1951, these eight men ended their six weeks of preparation with a demonstration of firefighting techniques and a written examination. Four of the men made a perfect score on the written examination, the average score being a 93%.

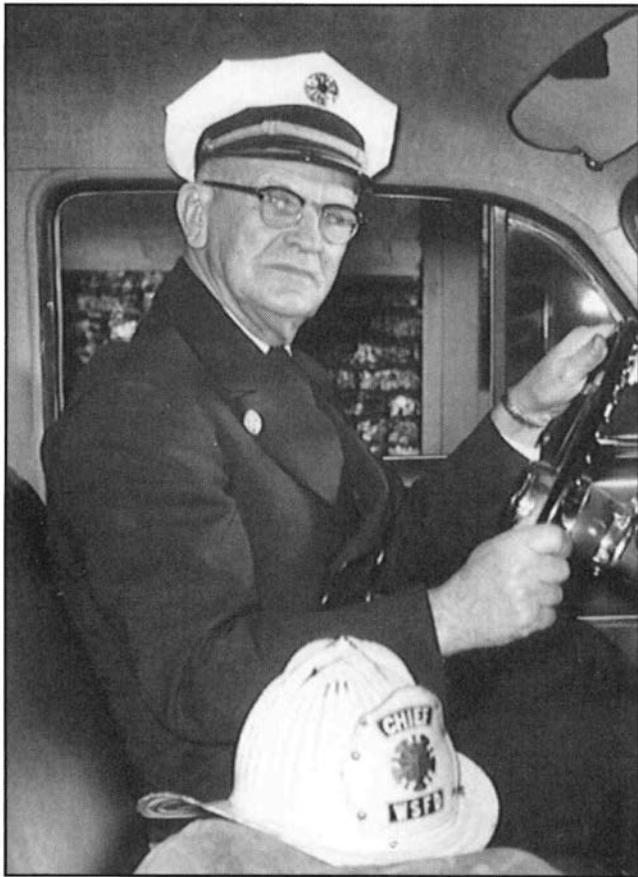
City laws decreed that African-Americans and Whites had to have separate sleeping quarters and kitchens, so the city spent \$10,000 to renovate the station to provide separate facilities. However, the African-American and the White fire fighters ignored these regulations. They worked as a team; they slept and ate together as well. Captain Raymond A. Overby was named the top ranking officer at the station. Holding the rank of Sergeants and Drivers at the station were J. A. Cecil, Jr., S. T. Ervin, T. W. Holcomb, H. M. Shields, and E. M. Vestal. The company was limited to fighting fires in the African-American neighborhoods until June 2, 1951, when three of the eight African-American fire fighters broke the color barrier as their company was called to assist at the Wood Finishing Products Company Plant #652 on Waughtown Street. Lester E. Ervin, Jr., John F. Meredith, and J. Roy Thomas joined four other fire fighters from the department to help keep the flames from spreading throughout the entire plant. Captain Overby praised the men by saying, "They stuck in there like veterans." These eight men paved the way for other African-Americans in the department. By November of 1967, the Winston-Salem Fire Department was totally integrated.

During the 1950's, there were four major improvements in the fire service, one of which was the portable ventilation fan. The fans were kept on the assistant chief's cars and on the aerial trucks. These fans were designed to rapidly clear smoke from structures. Not only did the fans decrease smoke damage, but they also made it possible for the fire fighters to search the building with greater ease, making life saving much less difficult. A second improvement was the introduction of the S.C.B.A. Scott Air Paks were showing up much more frequently on fire scenes, although most of the time they were used as a place to sit. The third major improvement to the fire service was the introduction of the 1-1/2 inch hose, and an improved fog nozzle, which took the place of the large smooth bore nozzle.

With the city growing as more annexation took place, Winston-Salem opened two new fire stations. Fire Station #7 was built in 1951 at the corner of Country Club and Arbor Roads. Fire Station #8 was built in 1957 near Wake Forest University on Reynolda Road. Chief M. G. Brown retired in 1955 and E. M. Dixon was promoted to Fire Chief by the Board of Aldermen.

In 1956, the National Board of Fire Underwriters raised Winston-Salem from a Class 10 insurance rating to a Class 3 insurance rating. Winston-Salem was one of only 179 major cities in the United States with a rank above Class 4.

On October 29, 1956, Chief J. B. Goforth became the fifth Winston-Salem fire fighter to be killed in action. An



Fire Chief M. G. Brown, 1938,  
courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library

alarm was received from the box on 14<sup>th</sup> and English Streets at 5:30 p.m. Upon arrival, Engine Company #1 found a two-story brick apartment building with a fire in an upstairs apartment. Chief Goforth and his driver, James L. Parham, arrived shortly after the pumper. Chief Goforth was on the balcony and ordered Fire fighter Charles H. (Charlie) Adams to cut a hole in the floor. After the hole was cut, Fire fighter Adams came out of the apartment and found Chief Goforth lying at the bottom of the stairs. Parham and Adams tried several times to resuscitate the chief, but when their efforts proved useless, they loaded him into the command car and rushed to the City Hospital. Chief Goforth died on the way to the hospital as a result of a heart attack. The cause of the fire was later determined to be “children playing with matches”.

In 1957, a new breed of fire fighter arrived in Winston-Salem with the establishment of the Fire-Police Program, first implemented at Fire Station #8. A total of fourteen men were assigned to the program, with six of the men going to work at the station as firemen. The remaining eight men received both police and fire training and worked from their patrol cars. The men assigned to the station worked a twenty-four hour shift, while those assigned to the car worked an eight hour shift. These men were to work in an assigned territory doing police work until a fire alarm came in, at which time they would respond as firemen.

In the 1960's, the equipment, the manner in which the



Fire-Police Herb Thomas

department handled its training, and even the uniforms took on a new look. In 1962, Chief Dixon retired from the fire department after forty-nine years of service, and Lester C. Williams was promoted to Fire Chief. Winston-Salem abandoned the Fire Alarm System and switched to a telephone system engineered by Bell Telephone Company in 1964. The telephone boxes were located at 195 intersections throughout the city. White shirts and ties were added to the day uniform and the eight-pointed hats once employed by the department were replaced by round ones.

Engine Company #3 was relocated from the 1500 Block to the 2900 Block of North Liberty Street, and construction of Engine Company #9 on Ogburn Avenue was begun. Also in 1964, Winston-Salem purchased its first snorkel – an articulating aerial truck. An additional snorkel was purchased in 1969 and immediately put into service. In 1966, the Winston-Salem Fire Department won an award from the National Fire Protection Association after participating in a fire prevention contest. This award was followed by a second in 1969.

On November 2, 1967, a disastrous racially-charged riot taxed the resources of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. The department answered over one hundred fire calls in a 12 hour period. Greensboro and High Point Fire Departments sent men and equipment to assist the city. The heavy call load also brought in all volunteer fire departments under contract to assist the city in fire protection. That November will always be remembered, but not only because of the numerous call received by the Department. During a time of need, courageous men and women came from areas around the county to lend their support to the fire personnel of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. An example of cooperation and comraderie, the incident represented all the best qualities of those in

the field of Fire Service. In December of the following year, Chief L. C. Williams retired with forty-two years of service to his credit, and Paul Crim was promoted to Fire Chief.

The 1970's were very productive years for the Winston-Salem Fire Department; a comprehensive inspection program was begun, and the city was divided into Fire Demand Zones. Each fire company was responsible for carrying out inspections in one area of their home territory. This program significantly reduced the number of household fires, as well as reduced the amount of damage caused by commercial and industrial fires. Fire prevention activities included the new Physically Challenged and Tot Finder programs, which have since prevented the loss of many lives. In 1971, the fire department abandoned the traditional red fire trucks and began a transition towards lime yellow equipment. In 1970, an eye doctor, who was

also a volunteer fire fighter, undertook a study of the importance of fire truck coloring. In his study, the doctor concluded that a lighter color was more visible during the night, so the Winston-Salem Fire Department changed their standard red trucks to lime yellow.

In 1973, the City of Winston-Salem began the Public Safety Officer Program. It included both fire and police training, and lasted fifty-two weeks. After the graduation of the first class, the training was then reduced to twenty-six weeks. Once they completed the program, trainees would ride with a training officer for eight weeks and then be assigned to a police beat. While working the beat, the trainee had many duties which included answering calls such as shootings, domestic violence, and traffic accidents, as well as serving warrants. The public safety officer would carry his turnout gear in the trunk of the car until a fire call was dispatched; he would then respond, dress out and assist

the engine company. Most officers were police oriented and did not like the idea of fighting fires. The public safety officers worked for the police department, but their pay was fifty dollars more a month than that of a police officer. In 1973, Sandra Waldron, a public safety officer, became the first female to be hired by the Winston-Salem Fire Department.

Five fire stations were constructed during the 1970's. Central Fire Station was built to consolidate Fire Stations #1 and #2. This station was later renamed the "Arnold B. Bullard Fire Station" after the death of Fire Chief A. B. Bullard. Fire Stations #5, #10, and #11 were constructed in 1974 and Fire Station #12 was constructed in 1977.

On August 5, 1977, Fire Chief Paul Crim placed two pieces of the department's history in the front yard of the new Fire Station #1 — the old bell and one of the brass poles from old Fire Station #2. The old bell weighed 1000 lbs., and had been cast by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore in 1895. Used by the fire department as an alarm for more than a quarter of a century, the old bell served two purposes: to give the horses an alert so that they would return to the station, and also as a code to let the fire fighters know where to go. The brass poles had been used thousands of times by fire fighters to slide down from their dormitories to the engine rooms.



Training at the drill tower.

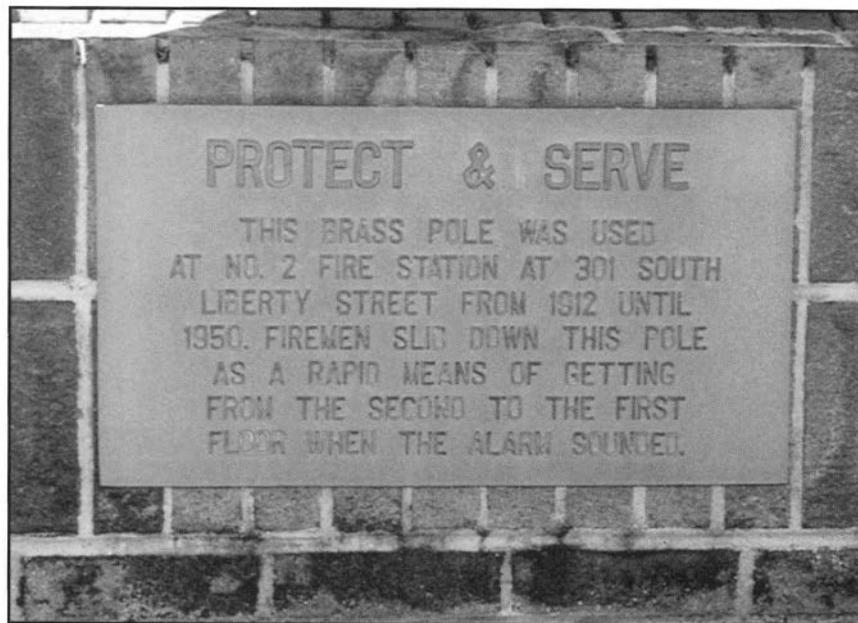


The Old Fire Bell.

On December 18, 1976, Winston-Salem purchased its first 85 foot aerial platform from Sutphen Fire Equipment for \$168,000. This aerial is still in use today as Reserve Unit #1100. Two years later, in 1978, Chief Crim retired from the fire department after serving for thirty-eight years, and Arnold B. Bullard was promoted to the position of Fire Chief.

In October of 1979, thirty-seven fire fighters with the Winston-Salem Fire Department became the first in the nation to be certified as fire medics under a program sponsored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the State of North Carolina and the Federal Government. Winston-Salem served as a model for over 15,000 programs in the United States. The program took two years to complete and required 2,000 hours of in-service training. Trainees put in clinical time and worked closely with members of EMS and local hospital emergency room staff.

On July 6, 1980, Chief Arnold B. Bullard became the second firefighter to die while on duty. Chief Bullard collapsed while at the city's Public Safety Training Center. CPR was initiated within minutes of the heart attack, but proved unsuccessful. A medical team led by Dr. Lew Stringer joined the fight to save Bullard's life, but despite all efforts, he was pronounced dead at 5:25 p.m. Chief Bullard was a dedicated fire fighter and a truly humble person. He rose up through the ranks and finally fulfilled



his dream of becoming Fire Chief in 1978. One of his main objectives as chief had been the Fire Medic Program. Bullard envisioned all of his men and women responding to medical calls and having EMS squads in every station. With the tragic death of Chief Bullard, Lester E. Ervin, one of the first African-American fire fighters hired, made history by becoming the first African-American Fire Chief in the state on July 21, 1980.

With the growth of the city came a corresponding growth of the fire department. Four new stations were constructed in the 1980's. Fire Station #4 was relocated from Dunleith Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. This station was later renamed the Lester E. Ervin Fire Station in the honor of the past chief. Fire Station #14, which is located on Shattalon Drive, was constructed in 1982. Fire Station #16 was constructed in 1983 and Fire Station #15 was constructed in 1985.

On May 17, 1983, Fire fighters T. K. Mabe and L. D. Holloman were given approval by Deputy Chief F. E. Harless to coordinate the implementation of the Winston-Salem Fire Department Honor Guard. The selection of members for the Honor Guard was completed on June 6, 1983. The initial members were Captains V. E. Berrier, W. J. Branch and R. A. Willard; Engineer J. W. Gist, and Firefighters T. K. Ashburn, W. H. Green, L. D. Holloman, G. F. Key, M. C. Livengood, T. K. Mabe, T. L. Osborne, and S. G. Waldron. The original function of the group was to honor deceased fire fighters at funerals, however the task of posting colors at different events was later added to their duties.

On September 28, 1986, James A. (Buck) Beshears became the third person to die while on duty. Beshears was an Engineer at Engine Company #10 and had driven a reserve pumper to Salem Lake to test the pump. He was followed by Captain Von "Bud" Berrier and Fire fighter Bobby Adams in the first line pumper, with both

vehicles scheduled for pump tests. Beshears hooked up the 2-1/2 inch hose, while Berrier and Adams hooked up the hard suction. They noticed that Beshears was sweating profusely as he attempted to put the truck into pump gear but was unable to do so. Beshears collapsed as he got out of the truck. Berrier and Adams helped Beshears to the tailboard of the truck and then called for EMS assistance. Beshears later died of a massive stroke. He had served the department for twenty-seven years.

In the fall of 1987, the Fire and Police Departments began phasing out the Public Safety Officer Program. This action left many empty spaces, which affected the Department's ability to function. In order to make up for the loss of manpower within the department, two rookie classes of thirty recruits each were graduated in one year.

On December 12, 1989, Lester E. Ervin retired as Fire Chief with thirty-eight years of service to his credit. On April 4, 1990, Fred E. Harless succeeded Ervin as fire chief. The 1990's brought many changes to the Winston-Salem Fire Department; the passing of bugles to three new chiefs, the building of three new fire stations, the return of red fire trucks and the re-instatement of medical services provided by the department. On January 1, 1990, the Winston-Salem Fire Department organized the Hazardous Materials Response Team, which was temporarily quartered at Fire Station #12. The Hazardous Materials Response Team is now housed at Station #17, on old Greensboro Road, and was completed in 1991.

A new study on the effect colors have on people contradicted the results of the previous 1970 study, and on June 1, 1991, red fire trucks returned to the streets of Winston-Salem. After an absence of over twenty years, Engine Company #1 received a red fire truck built by

Spartan Quality Manufacturing Company of Talladega, Alabama.

Fred E. Harless retired in October of 1993 and Otis Cooper, Jr. was promoted to the position of Fire Chief on November 29, 1993. Also during that year, Fire Station #18 was constructed on Peace Haven Road. In April of 1995, the Winston-Salem Fire Department participated in the first Fire fighter Combat Challenge competition in Charlotte, North Carolina. Since the organization of the team, they have represented the city in over twenty competitions throughout the United States, and have been ranked as one of the top teams in the nation.

On May 16, 1996, Engine Company #6, the oldest fire station in the city, was torn down to make room for a new station. The old station had served the Ardmore community for over seventy-three years, but eventually outlived its usefulness. The new station, better able to accommodate the larger trucks, was completed in May of 1997 at a cost of 1.3 million dollars, including the purchase of new equipment.

The City of Winston-Salem applied for and received a grant from the Department of Commerce to integrate new technology into the operations of the department in an effort to enhance the service provided to the community. These changes enabled the fire department to purchase computers and install them into every truck, making directions and incident information available to fire fighters while en route to a call. This project, titled the "Integrated Network for Fire Operations (INFO)", included training fire department personnel in the use of mobile data computers, as well as new pre-fire survey software. Fire department members who participated in this project were Carolyn E. Bailey, Edward J. Duffield,



Fire Station #6, 1926 - 1996

J. C. Higgins, Jennene Kirkland, Roger L. Kirkpatrick, Sandy L. Shepherd and Steven L. Williams.

On June 15, 1998, Otis Cooper Jr. resigned as Fire Chief of the Winston-Salem Fire Department and moved to Durham, North Carolina, where he assumed the position of Fire Chief of the Durham Fire Department. On that same day, John W. Gist was promoted to the position of Fire Chief.

On August 27, 1998, Winston-Salem experienced the fire of the century when the R.J. Reynolds Plant #256 ignited. The plant, built around 1925, covered one full city block. Over 125 paid fire fighters and more than 50 volunteer fire fighters participated in the fight to tame the fire. Other volunteer firefighters manned the fourteen fire stations which continued to serve the remainder of the Winston-Salem community. Only three stations remained manned by city employees during the fire. With thirteen pumpers and five ladder trucks on the scene, the fire was under control in nine and a half hours. A rain of gray ash blew across Business 40, causing several brush fires in the area. Over 732 inmates of the Forsyth County Jail had to be evacuated due to the fire. The R. J. Reynolds fire prompted changes in the department's training, staffing and the purchasing of new equipment.

On February 9, 1999, the Public Safety Committee of the Board of Aldermen agreed to purchase defibrillators for the Winston-Salem Fire Department. All fire department personnel are slated to receive training to the EMT-D level or higher.

On March 31, 1999, the Winston-Salem Fire Department received a gift from the Ardmore Neighborhood Association — a Scott Thermal Imaging Camera. This was made possible through the efforts of Mrs. Dottie Hill. Mrs. Hill spearheaded a fund-raising campaign to purchase the camera with money raised from local businesses in the Ardmore area, in addition to



funding received from Forsyth Medical Center, Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, and the Winston-Salem Professional Fire Fighters Association. Through Mrs. Hill's efforts, \$17,000 was raised towards the purchase of the Thermal Imaging Camera.

While working with fire fighters on the Thermal Imaging Project, Mrs. Hill learned of the fire department's efforts to provide Emergency Medical Services to the citizens of Winston-Salem. She educated herself as to the benefits of early defibrillation for patients in cardiac arrest, and then began educating the community of Winston-Salem. Mrs. Hill spoke to members of the Board



of Aldermen and emphasized the importance of integrating medical response services into the fire department. She played an important role in the move towards emergency medical certification for Winston-Salem fire fighters.

In June of 1999, Captain Ed Duffield and Tom Kureczka of Information Services exhibited the INFO Project at the Global Bangeman Challenge Technology Competition in Stockholm, Sweden. The INFO Project competed against technology programs from all around the world. The project won first place in its category, and the King of Sweden presented the award to the City of Winston-Salem.

On July 1, 1999, the Winston-Salem Fire Department put a 104 foot Sutphen Aerial into service. Prior to this, the tallest aerial had been only 85 feet tall. The cost of

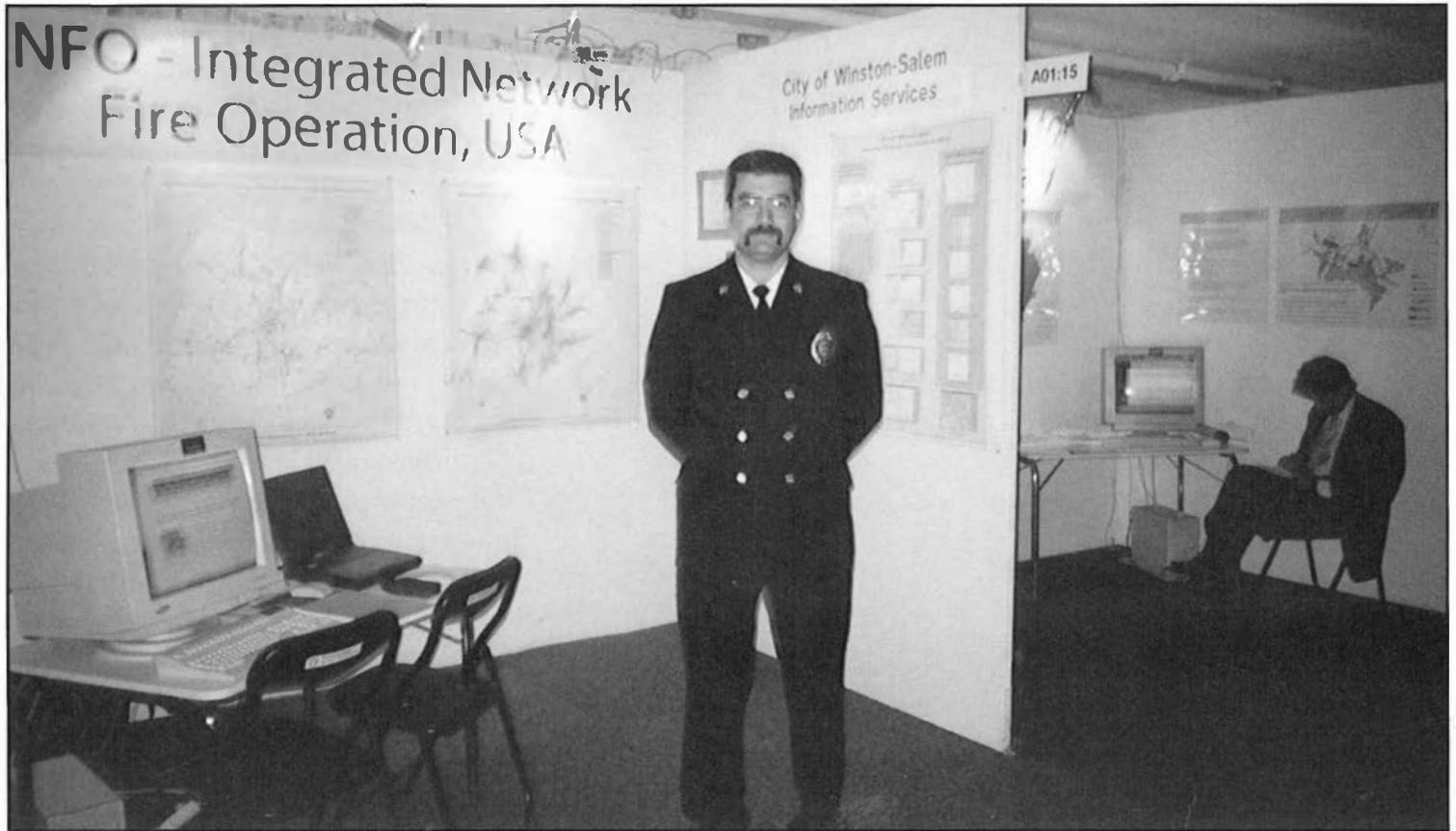
the new truck was \$463,000. The Sutphen aerial, along with the addition of eighteen new employees, were just a few of the changes made as a result of the R.J. Reynolds fire in 1998.

On November 1, 1999, the Winston-Salem Fire Department returned to answering medical calls. The department first started answering medical calls during the years when A. B. Bullard was Fire Chief in 1979; the service however, was abruptly discontinued after his death in 1980. Eleven of the department's seventeen stations went into service in 1999 after taking part in the revived medical training program, with the remaining six fire stations beginning service in July of 2000. The cost of the first eleven defibrillators, plus one spare unit, came to \$30,253. The remaining six defibrillators were purchased using money from a grant awarded to the department by the Medical Center Foundation of Forsyth Hospital, at a cost of \$26,250.

At the dawn of the new millennium, Chief John Gist manages a department comprised of 285 employees, and covering an area of 107.5 square miles. The Winston-Salem Fire Department serves a population of over 173,530 people, and operates seventeen fire stations and one maintenance facility. The department faces a number of new challenges in the coming years. Medical emergencies and related calls make up one third of the emergency workload handled by fire companies. The department's services are constantly being re-evaluated to ensure they

meet the needs of the citizens. Hazardous Materials services continue to expand, and Technical Rescue, which includes vehicle extrication, high angle and confined space rescue, has emerged as a specialty service.

The implementation of the INFO Project has set Winston-Salem's Fire Department ahead of most fire departments in the area of communication. The department's greatest challenge will be the installation of an 800 megahertz or higher trunking radio system, which will enable all Public Safety Agencies to communicate with each other as needed. Another endeavor which the fire department is undertaking is the construction of a new training facility which will meet the needs of the City and County Fire Departments. The addition of a new aerial, Aerial Company #5, is planned for Winter of 2000. Both land annexation and a growing population will



World Finals Info Project, First Place awarded to Winston-Salem Fire Department

greatly affect the role of the fire department in this new millennium. Station #19 will be built in the Sedge Garden area, and plans for building Station #20 in the Northwest section of the city are being finalized. Renovations are currently underway at Station #14 and are planned for Stations #2 and #18.

The Winston-Salem Fire Department looks forward to continuing to provide medical service, as well as fire protection to the citizens of Winston-Salem. As a new era dawns, the Winston-Salem Fire Department continues to be **ONE OF EXCELLENCE**.



A.E.D. Training at ConEd

\* Killed in action means going to, while at, or returning from an alarm



**Jimmy Gauldin on the Job, First and Northwest Boulevard**



**Fireman Frank, Fire Maintenance Supervisor.**



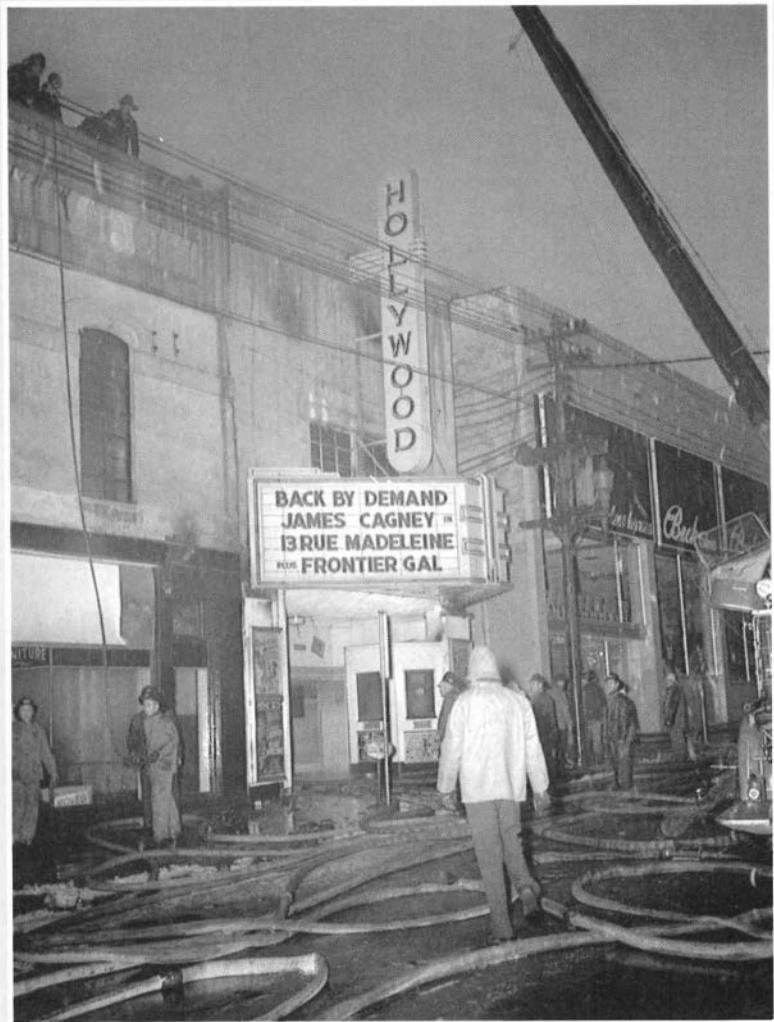
**Just look at those faces.**



**Tools of the Trade, Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library**



**Gold Leaf Supper Club, Stratford Court, April 23, 1971, Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library.**



**Hollywood Theater, Liberty and Fourth Street, Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library.**



**Dogwood Inn Fire, Five Below Zero**



**Old Number Two, Cemetery and Main**



**Southern Furniture Company, Liberty and 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Courtesy of Forsyth Co. Public Library.**



**Taylor Brothers Tobacco Warehouse, Liberty Street at Patterson Avenue, courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library**



# RECRUIT CLASSES



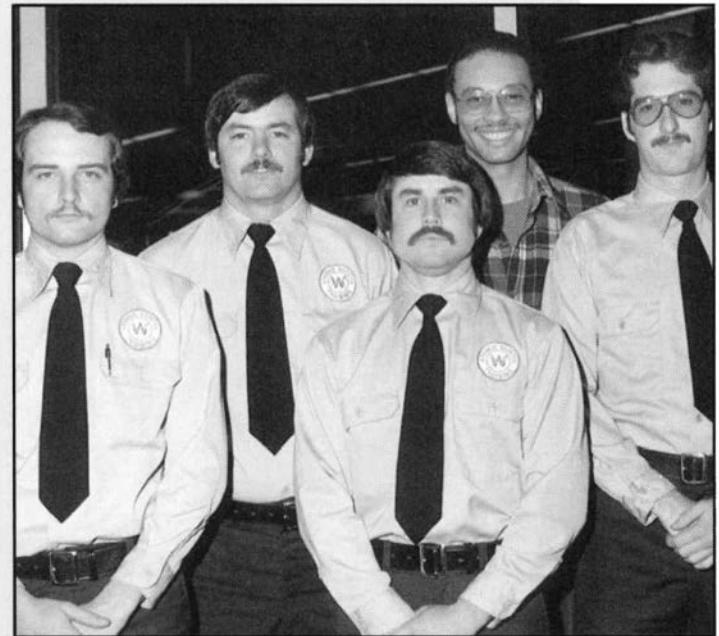
Class of '68



Class of '70



Class of '73



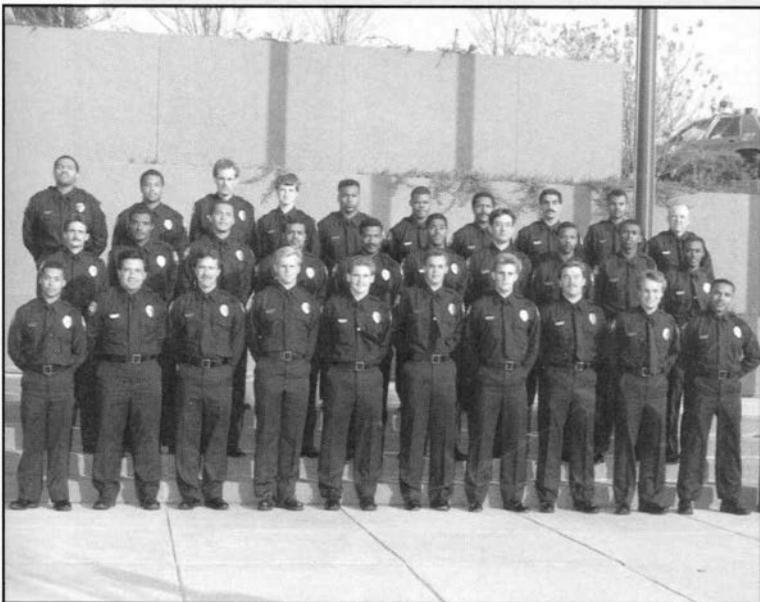
Class of '78



Class of '80



**Summer Class of 87**



**Fall Class of '87**



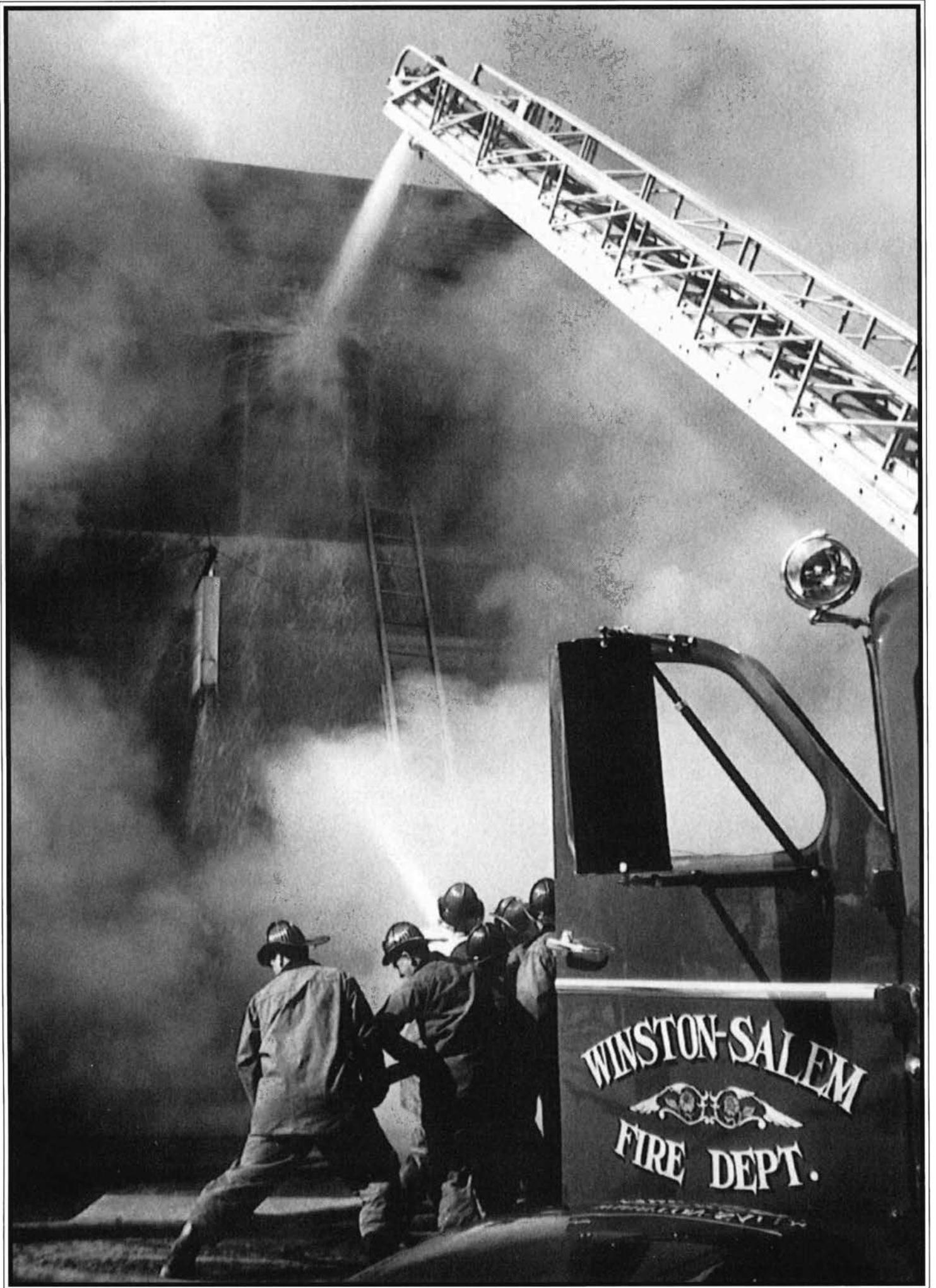
**Class of '89**



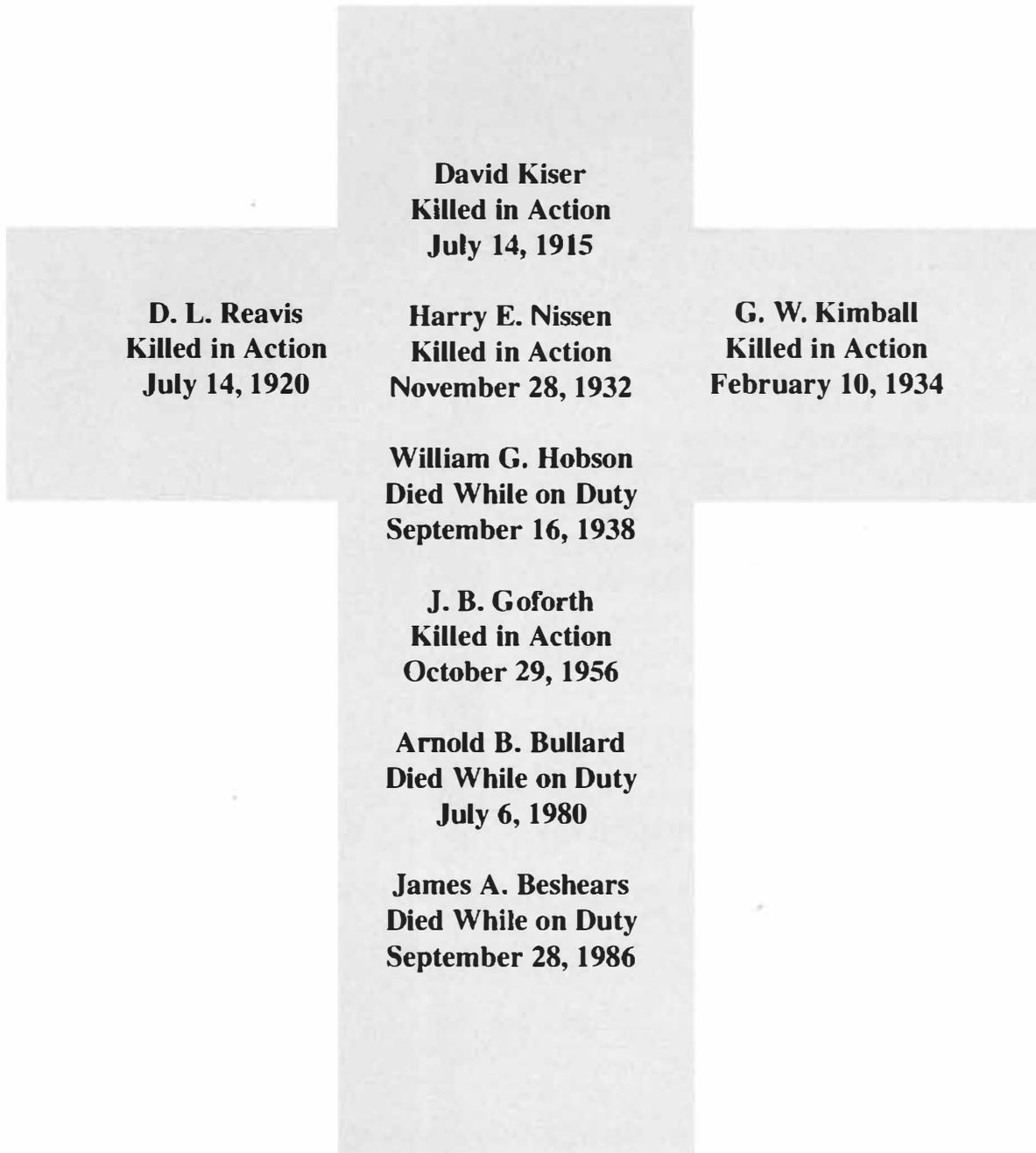
**Spring Class of '99**



**Winter Class of '99**



# LAST ALARM



**THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALL  
WINSTON-SALEM FIRE FIGHTERS**

**PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

# **FIRE CHIEFS OF WINSTON-SALEM**

## **1913-Present**

<b>R. Lee Hooper</b>	<b>1913 - 1914</b>
<b>Harry E. Nissen</b>	<b>1914 - 1932</b>
<b>W. G. Hobson</b>	<b>1932 - 1938</b>
<b>M. G. Brown</b>	<b>1938 - 1955</b>
<b>E. M. Dixon</b>	<b>1955 - 1962</b>
<b>Lester C. Williams</b>	<b>1962 - 1968</b>
<b>Paul M. Crim</b>	<b>1968 - 1978</b>
<b>Arnold B. Bullard</b>	<b>1978 - 1980</b>
<b>Lester E. Ervin</b>	<b>1980 - 1989</b>
<b>Fred E. Harless</b>	<b>1990 - 1993</b>
<b>Otis Cooper Jr.</b>	<b>1993 - 1998</b>
<b>John W. Gist</b>	<b>1998 - Present</b>

## **R. Lee Hooper 1913 - 1914**



On January 6, 1911, the Board of Alderman appointed Lee Hooper to the position of Chief of the Winston Fire Department. On May 16, 1911, Chief Hooper was elected by the board to serve as Fire Inspector for a term of one year. At this time, it was policy for the city to combine the positions of Building and Fire Inspector with the position of Fire Department Chief. During his days serving in this position, the city purchased an American La France Type 12 Triple Combination Motor Car Fire Engine. Chief Hooper became the first chief of the Winston-Salem Fire Department when the two cities merged. In August of 1914, Chief Hooper resigned.

## **H. E. Nissen 1914 - 1932**



H. E. Nissen was appointed Chief of the Winston-Salem Fire Department on September 1, 1914. Chief Nissen was the first fire chief for whom the city bought a car — a Buick 4 Cylinder Roadster. Chief Nissen also became the

first paid fire chief in the city's history. On November 28, 1932 while en route to a fire call, Chief Nissen was fatally injured in a motor vehicle accident which occurred at Sixth Street and Cherry Street.

## **W. G. Hobson 1932 - 1938**



W. G. Hobson joined the Department in 1912, prior to the merging of the Winston and Salem Fire Departments. Two years later, Hobson was promoted to Lieutenant at Station #2. Hobson held this position for one year until he was promoted to the rank of Captain serving at Station #1. W. G. Hobson became Fire Chief on December 1, 1932. After serving for only six years, Hobson suffered a heart attack from which he never recovered. He died on September 15, 1938 at 10:35 p.m. W. G. Hobson had been held in high regard by all members of the Department. Always seeming more a friend than a boss, Hobson's men affectionately referred to him as "Daddy".

## **M. G. Brown 1938 - 1955**



M. G. Brown was appointed to the position of Fire Chief of Winston-Salem in 1938. A resident of Yadkin County, Chief Brown earned a reputation as a very tough man during his term as chief. He was well liked among the Department, but also took pride in his notoriety as a rugged and formidable Chief.

### **E. M. Dixon 1955 - 1962**



E. M. Dixon joined the Fire Department on January 17, 1913. Dixon was initially hired as a horse-drawn steamer driver, and worked at Steamer Company #1. Known as "Dickie Bird", E. M. Dixon was promoted to the position of Lieutenant on April 3, 1915. Four years later he was promoted to the rank of Captain. On October 1, 1938, Dixon continued his rise through the ranks by assuming the position of Assistant Fire Chief, and finally on February 1, 1955 attained the highest rank of all, that of Fire Chief of the Winston-Salem Fire Department. Chief Dixon's records boasted a term of service which spanned forty-nine years.

### **L. C. Williams 1962 - 1968**

L. C. Williams joined the Fire Department on May 1, 1925. Williams was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on October 1, 1949. In July of 1952 he was again promoted, this time to the rank of Fire Prevention Inspector. By 1955 Williams was playing the role of Captain, as well as Training Supervisor, and was promoted again the following year to the position of Assistant Chief. His final ascension was to become Fire Chief on February 1, 1962. Chief Williams, an ex-marine, was known throughout the Department as a stern but fair chief. He emphasized a more formal appearance for the department, and thus a



change in the uniform was adopted during his term. Prior to Chief Williams, members of the Department were allowed to wear blue jeans and t-shirts while on duty, but this practice came to a halt upon the appointment of L.C. Williams to the position of Chief. The new uniform consisted of white button-down shirts, dress pants and ties. Chief L. C. Williams retired on December 1968 after serving the Winston-Salem Fire Department for forty-two years.

### **P. M. Crim 1968 - 1978**



P. M. Crim joined the Department in 1940. Crim received his first promotion, to the position of Sergeant, in 1952. A slew of promotions in a relatively short time followed: Lieutenant in 1957, Captain in 1959, and Assistant Fire Chief in 1961. Upon Chief Williams' retirement, Crim was appointed Fire Chief. He organized the first fire-police patrol units in the city's history. During Crim's term as chief, he opened three new fire stations, Stations #5, #10, and #11. He also asked that a new truck be placed in each

of the new stations. Chief Crim will also be remembered as the first chief to hire a female firefighter. In 1978, after thirty-eight years of serving the Fire Department, Chief P. M. Crim retired.

### **A. B. Bullard 1978 - 1980**



A. B. Bullard joined the Fire Department in 1946 as a fire fighter. He was promoted to Sergeant of the Aerial Company in 1951, Lieutenant of the company on November 1, 1963, Captain of Snorkel Company in 1964, Assistant Chief in charge of training in 1965, assigned to Fire Suppression Division in 1967, Deputy Chief in 1972, and became Fire Chief on November 20, 1972. Chief Bullard was very attuned towards the lives of his fire fighters. One of his pet projects was the Emergency Medical Training Program. In 1980, during an exercise at the training facility, Chief Bullard collapsed due to a massive heart attack. Fellow fire fighters and paramedics performed CPR in an effort to revive Chief Bullard, but were unsuccessful. The county's medical director, Dr. Stringer, responded to the scene and pronounced him dead within a few minutes. Chief Bullard had served the Department a total of thirty-four years at the time of his death.

### **L. E. Ervin 1980 - 1989**

L. E. Ervin joined the Fire Department in 1951 as one of the first African-American firefighters in the Department. He was promoted to Sergeant and then to the position of Lieutenant in 1955. He attained the position of Captain in 1957. Ervin was then named Assistant Chief in 1967 and Deputy Chief in 1978. He was named Fire Chief in 1980 by City Manager Bill Stuart. Chief Ervin viewed



his work as a combination of managing resources and giving direction to Fire Department Personnel. Ervin implemented the reorganization plan which entailed the consolidation of the four fire districts into three, each managed by a district chief. The District Chiefs would handle administrative responsibilities and serve under the deputy chief. Three district commanders were assigned to each district to supervise the actual activities of the firefighters. These District Commanders also oversaw the six fire suppression companies belonging to each district. The final element of the reorganization plan instituted by Chief Ervin entailed the remaining Captains and Lieutenants assuming the title of "Platoon Supervisors". Chief Ervin retired in 1989 with thirty-eight years of service to his name.

### **F. E. Harless 1990 - 1993**



F. E. Harless joined the Winston-Salem Fire Department on November 4, 1963. On June 1, 1964 he was assigned

to the Fire-Police Unit. On March 16, 1973 Harless was moved up to the position of Driver/Engineer. March 20, 1978 signaled his rise to the position of Fire Lieutenant and finally to Fire Platoon Supervisor on July 21, 1980. The following month, Harless was once again promoted, this time to the role of Deputy Fire Chief on August 18, 1980. F. E. Harless became Fire Chief on April 4, 1990 and held this position until his retirement on November 30, 1993. He served the Department for a term of thirty years. During his term as Fire Chief, Harless introduced the "Cluster Concept". Each station's territory was divided into three clusters, thus distributing the workload between the three platoons.

### **Otis Cooper Jr. 1993 - 1998**

Otis Cooper joined the Department on October 10, 1977. His first assignment as a fire fighter was to Engine Company Nine on June 23, 1980. Cooper was promoted to Fire Engineer on July 5, 1982, and then to Fire Platoon Supervisor on March 12, 1984. The position of District Fire Chief followed on April 9, 1990 and then Fire Chief on November 29, 1993. During his time as Fire Chief for the



Department, Cooper attempted to revive the Emergency Medical Program. However, a general lack of support caused the plan to fall through. After resigning from his position as Fire Chief on June 15, 1998, Otis Cooper assumed the role of Fire Chief of the Durham, North Carolina Fire Department, where he still serves today.



Fritt's Motor Company, Brookstown Ave. and Burke Street.



### **J. W. Gist 1998 – Present**

John W. Gist joined the Fire Department on October 10, 1977. His first assignment as a fire fighter was to Engine Company Number Five on May 1, 1978. Gist was promoted to the position of Engineer on April 26, 1982, Captain on March 12, 1984, Battalion Chief on July 15, 1985, District Chief on April 9, 1990, Deputy Chief on November 29, 1993 and finally Fire Chief on June 15, 1998. John Gist received a B.S. degree in Health and Physical Education from Winston-Salem State University in 1976. This degree was followed by a degree in Fire Science from Guilford Technical Community

College in 1989, a third degree in Municipal Administration from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer's Program, and a degree from University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Public Administration. After only two years of service as Chief of the Department, John Gist has revived the EMS program, making every Engine Company in the city able to respond in the capacity of EMTs. He has also been instrumental in reshaping and restructuring the department, obtaining pay increases for personnel, and offering educational opportunities to all members of the WSFD.

# FIRE STATIONS

## A. B. Bullard Public Safety Fire Station One 651 N. Marshall Street



Central Station was built in 1976 in response to a growing downtown. It took the place of two stations, old Number One, which was located on Eighth Street, and old Number Two, which was located on South Main Street just north of Old Salem. Engine One and Engine Two responded from Central Fire Station until the new Engine Two was built on Griffith Road. The building which once housed old Number Two is still in use today as a piano store, while old Number One has been demolished. This station is currently home to Engine One, Aerial One, Truck 32 and Command One, who serves as Battalion Chief for District One. Truck 32 is an air resource truck used to deliver additional air bottles to the fire scene when needed. Two Captains, one Engineer and seven Fire fighters are assigned to this station each shift. Bullard Fire Station was named for Fire Chief A.B. Bullard who died while serving the department as Fire Chief in 1980.

## Stratford West Fire Station Two 2050 Griffith Road



Fire Station Number Two was constructed in 1980. This station was built to provide fire protection for the city as it grew westward. Engine Company Two was moved from central station and placed in operation at its new facility. This territory is currently experiencing some of the most rapid economic development ever seen in the area. One Captain, one Engineer, and two Fire Fighters are assigned to each shift.

## Liberty North Fire Station Three 2995 N. Liberty Street



Fire Station Three was built in 1964 and replaced "Old Number Three" which had been serving the community from 1508 N. Liberty Street since 1908. This station covers the area in and around Smith Reynolds Airport and serves a mixture of industrial and residential areas. Fire Station Three is not only home to Engine Three, but also to Command Three, who is the Battalion Chief for District Three. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters serve at this station.

## Lester E. Ervin Fire Station Four 290 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive



Fire Station Number Four was built in 1980 as a two bay station and replaced the old one-bay station which was located on Dunleith Avenue. The old station currently functions as a church. Engine Four's members include one Captain, one Engineer and three Fire Fighters per shift, and also serves as a home for the Battalion Chief for District Two. This station covers the area around Winston-Salem State University, Bowman Gray Stadium and the Business 40/ Highway 52 interchange. The station received its new name in a dedication on May 19, 1997 in honor of the city's first African-American Fire Chief Lester E. Ervin. Ervin's career began in the original Fire Station Number Four.

**Palmer Lane South Fire Station Five  
771 Palmer Lane**



Fire Station Number Five was built in 1974 as a two bay station. It replaced the one bay station which was located on Devonshire Street near Highway 52. This old structure is now an apartment building. Engine Five and Aerial Two share the station, and serve the citizens living in the south side of Winston-Salem. Station Five also has the added responsibility of maintaining and testing all the breathing apparatus used by the members of the department. Two Captains, one Engineer and six Fire Fighters call this station home each shift.

## **Ardmore Fire Station Six 1717 West Academy Street**



Fire Station Number Six, built in 1997, sits on the original site of old Station Six, which was constructed as a one bay station in 1926. Engine Six serves the Ardmore community with a staff of one Captain, one Engineer, and two Fire Fighters. It is the first Fire Company to have an on board thermal imaging camera for use during emergency incidents. The members of the Ardmore Neighborhood Association may be thanked for making this possible.

## Buena Vista Fire Station Seven 100 Arbor Road



Fire Station Number Seven was built in 1951. The station was home to Engine Seven and Aerial One for many years but is currently home to Aerial Company Four. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters man the station each day. It also houses an educational center, which is used for intradepartmental and extradepartmental training. The Captains of Aerial Four are also responsible for coordinating all recruit training.

**Wake Forest  
Fire Station Eight  
2417 Reynolda Road**



Fire Station Number Eight was built in 1957, and was home to the Fire-Police Program. Engine Eight serves Wake Forest University, from which its name was taken. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters man the station each day.

**Ogburn Avenue  
Fire Station Nine  
4685 Ogburn Avenue**



Fire Station Number Nine was built in 1964 in response to an ever growing Winston-Salem. It serves the citizens of the Ogburn Avenue area each day with one Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters.

**Country Club West  
Fire Station Ten  
4700 Country Club Road**



As the city expanded west, so did the area which the Fire Department was responsible for serving. Fire Station Ten was built in 1974. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters man Engine Company Ten each day. The personnel of this station also man the Fire Department's only brush unit, which serves the entire city when needed.

**Parkview  
Fire Station Eleven  
2745 Waughtown Street**



Fire Station Eleven, built in 1974, serves the Parkview and Waughtown Street areas of the city. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters man the station.

**New Walkertown Road  
Fire Station Twelve  
3620 New Walkertown Road**



Fire Station Twelve was built in 1977 in response to the city's expansion towards the Walkertown area. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters serve the areas of Highway 311 North and Carver School Road. Members of this station also serve as a Hazardous Materials Support Team, assisting Engine Seventeen when necessary.

**Shattalon North  
Fire Station Fourteen  
5754 Shattalon Drive**



Fire Station Fourteen was built in 1983 in order to serve the citizens living in the northernmost portion of the city. Station Fourteen is home to Engine Fourteen and Aerial Three. One Captain, two Engineers and four Fire Fighters serve at this station.

**Old Town  
Fire Station Fifteen  
4548 Shattalon Drive**



Fire Station Fifteen was built in 1986 in the Oldtown area. Each morning one Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters arrive and serve at Engine Fifteen. The members of this station are also in charge of ordering and supplying the department with medical supplies for its EMS program.

**Southwest  
Fire Station Sixteen  
1701 Pope Road**



Fire Station Sixteen went into operation in 1984. It serves the citizens of the West Clemmons ville and Ebert Street areas. One Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters are assigned to Engine Sixteen.

**Old Greensboro Road  
Fire Station Seventeen  
4295 Old Greensboro Road**



Built in 1991 in response to the city's expansion towards the Linville Road area, this station is home to Engine Company Seventeen and the Hazardous Materials Response Team. The fire fighters that staff this station not only provide fire protection for the Old Greensboro Road and Linville Road areas, but also function as the city's primary hazardous materials and confined space response units. Engine Seventeen is the only city fire station with the responsibility of serving both the city as well as Forsyth County. One Captain, one Engineer and three Fire Fighters man this station.

**Peace Haven Road  
Fire Station Eighteen  
1505 Peace Haven Road**



Fire Station Eighteen, first occupied in 1993, was built to serve the rapidly growing populations of Peace Haven and Robin Hood Road. The station houses Engine Eighteen, and its crew consists of one Captain, one Engineer and two Fire Fighters.

## **Public Safety Center 725 N. Cherry Street**



The Fire Department Administration is located in the Public Safety Center at 725 N. Cherry Street in downtown Winston-Salem. All administrative offices and personnel work from this building and oversee and operate the administrative functions that enable the Fire Department to save lives and property each day.

## **Fire Maintenance Facility 761 Palmer Lane**



The fire apparatus maintenance shop is located in District Two beside Fire Station Number Five. The Fire Maintenance Shop is responsible for maintaining and repairing all of the fire apparatus in the Fire Department Fleet. The maintenance shop is also responsible for keeping all records of fire apparatus maintenance, pump testing and repairs. They also design the specifications for all new equipment.