

Located two blocks off

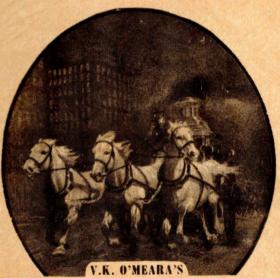
N.W. 79th Street at the
corner of Hialeah's E.

10th Ave. and 27th
CORAL.
Street.



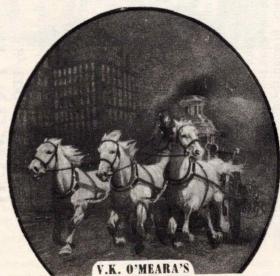
Hialeah Fire Engine Museum
E. 10th Ave. and 27th Street
Hialeah, Florida

# MUSEUM GUIDE BOOK



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#### WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM



#### Dear Visitor:

We welcome you as our guest to this museum of the memories of our firemen. It is a pleasure to have you visit us and to share our interest and feeling for the firemen who have safeguarded our communities for many years gone by and who are our guardians of today against this age old enemy. We know you will enjoy your tour through the museum and it is our sincere hope that you will come again, and again, and bring your friends. It has been our desire and policy to make this museum available to all without charge, and also our desire to constantly improve and enlarge the museum so that its service to you, our neighbor and visitor, would be the best it is possible to provide. If you do enjoy the museum, and would like to help us in this work to perpetuate the memory of our firemen, your donation when you visit the museum will be sincerely appreciated and will greatly help in this project.

We extend to you our personal good wishes.

Anita and Vincent O'Meara Sole owners and operators

# FIREMEN By EDGAR A. GUEST

and wait for an alarm to ring and see them gallop out. loved the horses The horses There are squads thrill to see the although I'm the red brick fire house and I know I loved the men was just a little are no in their stalls and used to stand about showing signs of all the for longer, and the engine smokes hremen when they're lad of eight and nine starting on a run. years have done and ten no more,

Still we look to them for courage; Oh I never hear the siren, as some building starts to burn has changed all fire equipment and it's changed that boy of ten altered all the The pumper has a motor and the hook and ladder, too, But the self-same fellows man them as the ones that once I knew And I never see them passing but I hail them for I know They're as brave when duty trait of valor in the breasts methods, but grave occasions which we didn't have before still they calls them as the men of long ago of all survives. changed the men bravely risk their lives

Without hoping every fireman to his quarters will return



#### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSEUM

The Smoke and Flames of a hundred thousand fires have cleared, the years have passed by and the horses are gone, and a lot of the old engine houses are gone too. The veteran firemen's ranks are growing thinner, but the memory of it all remains in minds of the oldtimers. The romance of the old days and the wonderful excitement of turning out the firemen of yesterday for an alarm of fire can still be recaptured by a visit to the nation's only large Firemen's Memorial Museum at Hialeah, Florida. Known as the Hialeah Fire Engine Museum, this project of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent K. O'Meara of Hialeah, Florida has grown from a modest beginning of an eleven year old boy's hobby to an Institution of a size unbelievable to the visitor who stops in for a look at the history of one of our great American developments, the Fire Department.

Fire Departments as we know them are an American development and the systems; apparatus, methods, and general fire department functions have long been copied by European and other foreign agencies charged with the same task of protecting their populations against fire. Vincent O'Meara starting his collection of material relating to the American Fireman over 25 years ago had no idea, at that time, that his efforts would many years later, continue to mushroom into a nationally known display that would challenge the imagination of historians and educators, and prove to be the leading museum dedicated to the memory of Firemen, in the nation, and probably the only extensive effort of its type in the world.

O'Meara has gathered under one roof, an array of fire engines that easily tells the story of two hundred years of progress in fire protection, fire wagons of every description and design, actual fire engines that fought the battle in heat and cold, day and night, from villages and towns all over the United States all the way from Benjamin Franklin's day to the present.

Hand drawn fire engines and hose carts, hand drawn chemical engines and ladder trucks, a complete set of the type of equipment that was the beginning of fire department service in America, is on display and most of it still in good operating condition.

This basic, wheeled equipment follows an even more basic, protective system; the ancient bucket brigade, when long lines of people passed water filled buckets to the fire and returned the empties by the same method to the well or stream where they were refilled and passed again. Many of these old leather, hand stitched buckets have been located in remote corners of the country, found in rotting buildings and some just turned up in attics, but an unusually large group has been gathered together for the museum. These are varied in type of construction and material and show vividly the hand work of our early craftsmen who made everything the colonists needed for their role in building a new world. These old hand sewn water buckets, made of hides, were the foundation of our fire protection, and the fine examples on display here are part of the plan of the museum, to start at the beginning and tell the complete story of fire protection in America.

After the bucket brigades, and the extensive display of hand drawn and hand operated equipment, the visitors to the O'Meara Collection will see an interesting group of apparatus that shows the horsedrawn fire department that protected growing America from the 1850s to the early 1920s. The famous horsedrawn steam fire engines in all their glory of polished brass and nickle, high wheeled and ponderous, weighing over four tons. The engines in the museum are in remarkably good condition, being veterans of many years of hard use in their respective cities, and are good examples of the "built to last" construction that was a part of growing industrial efforts in the American scene. Other horsedrawn units complete an unusual group that brings back memories of towns and cities of fifty years ago.

As the horses were replaced with the noisy motor engines and a change came over the whole country as a result of the Automo-

bile, the fire protection that had been limited to the city and town areas was now available to rural areas, and the Model T Ford fire truck was to become a part of our history. Among the many pieces of motor apparatus on display in the museum are examples of the famous Model T Ford which brought the first fire protection to large farming areas.

The collection of motor fire apparatus on display here is the largest such group in the world and is the only attempt that has been made to preserve this equipment that revolutionized our fire departments. Among this group are such unusual units as a Ruggles ladder truck, Brockway Chemical Engine, Hudson hose car, Cadillac Chemical engine, as well as the more commonly used fire engines manufactured by such companies as American La France.

As the visitor goes through the large displays of actual fire engines he is helped in his understanding of the various equipment by the many small scale models, diagrams, drawings and actual photographs of the equipment in use and in action. Many of these photographs are old, dating back to the beginning of photography and the days of Matthew Brady. Thousands of items of small equipment, much of it showing the years of service behind the various items, tell a parallel story, and show the visitor the advance of ideas and equipment through the years. Helmets and uniforms, well displayed on lifelike figures, form an interesting group and may be seen scattered throughout the museum. Alarm equipment and an unusual display of early telephone units are also an attraction. The toy section which shows fire engine toys over a hundred year span is of interest to all.

Like all extensive museum displays it takes a long time to see all of the V. K. O'Meara collection, visitors are urged to leisurely tour the building and study the material on display, but the museum is so set up that even a hurried inspection will be pleasurable and will leave in the mind of the visitor a lasting impression of the part the Fireman played in developing the America we know today.



Shown above is Chief Newton L. Wheeler of the Miami Fire Department and Mr. and Mrs. Vincent K. O'Meara with an old hand engine of the museum collection. Close cooperation of the members of the Miami Fire Department and the museum has been largely responsible for the rapid growth of the collection and its ever expanding service to the firemen and the community. The generous assistance of Chief Henry Chase, now retired, and of Chief Newton L. Wheeler, present head of the Department has been of great encouragement and the friendly feeling between all personnel has made the project a pleasant experience for all concerned.

#### No. 1. 1852 Hunneman Endstroke, Hand Pump Fire Engine, Handdrawn, Manufacturers No. 448



Built in Boston, Massachusetts in 1852 and sold to the town of Exeter, New Hampshire, this is a hand drawn and hand pumped fire engine of the first type produced in quantity in the United States. Though over 104 years old at this date, this fire engine is still in perfect operating condition and similar machines have been known to throw a stream of water over 200 feet from the nozzle. Everything on this engine was made by hand including the intricate hand wrought iron work. The leather fire hose was hand cut and fastened with copper rivets. The main tank is made of copper and the pumps can pump out of this tub or be shifted over to draw water with a suction hose from a well or pond.

#### No. 2. Fire Chiefs Buggy, Period 1870 to 1910

This nicely refinished buggy was specially built as a fire chiefs buggy and has special features for fire department service. Most departments in larger towns had buggies for the chiefs convenience in visiting his outlying stations as well as going to fires. The top was kept down in good weather but was available, along with side curtains and storm aprons for inclement weather. They usually had hand lanterns, gongs, and fire extinguishers in case a small fire was encountered.



Thousands of small relics are on display throughout the museum, representing the various tools of the firemen's trade and showing his uniforms, badges, personal decorations, insignia and jewelry as well as the more utilitarian items such as the leather buckets, speaking trumpets, nozzles, axes and other accessories. Illustrated above are a bucket of the early 1800's, a Chief's trumpet used in calling orders to his men, a rotating nozzle used to fight fires in cellars, a model of the first horsedrawn fire wagon in Miami and an early cast iron toy fire engine. The model was built by Vincent O'Meara while on duty in the fire department.

#### No. 3. 1904 La France Steam Fire Engine Horsedrawn, Manufacturers No. 496



Built in Elmira, New York in 1904 for the City of Greensboro, North Carolina. It is a double engine, piston pump steam fire engine with a capacity of 700 gallons per minute at 120 lbs. pressure. This steamer could raise steam from cold water in 3 minutes but this unit is equipped with attachments so that it can be used with a stationary boiler in the fire station so that it can have live steam in the boiler 24 hours a day without having a fire in its own boiler. This connection automatically snapped off when the engine was driven out. The machine weighs in excess of 4 tons and is equipped with iron tires on the wooden wheels which stand five feet high on the rear, four feet high on the front. It was pulled by two horses and is equipped with a rotary gong, and steam whistle.

No. 4. 1890 Selle Gear Company Hose Wagon Horsedrawn



Built in Providence, Rhode Island and originally used by the Providence Fire Department prior to 1890 this hose wagon was later sold to the Oaklawn Volunteer fire company which is now part of Cranston, Rhode Island. While in use in Oaklawn it was pulled by hand until the election of the local grocer as Fire Chief at which time it was fitted with shafts and the Grocers horse assumed a new position as town fire horse. Note the unusual front and rear springing which made it a very good riding wagon on the rough roads of the town. It was necessary to have such a wagon accompany each steam fire engine as a hose tender, and engine companies usually consisted of a steamer and a hose wagon.

#### No. 5. 1905 American La France Metropolitan Steam Fire Engine, Horsedrawn, Manufacturers No.3246



Built in 1905 for the City of Pensacola, Florida this machine is also a relic of Confederate Interest as it bears on the Smokestack a nameplate lettered "Mallory" this engine was named for Stephen R. Mallory who served as Secretary of the Navy for the Confederacy during the War between the states. Mr. Mallory was living in Pensacola at the time of this engines purchase and it was to honor him that the plate was attached.

It was built in Elmira, New York and was of the famous Metropolitan pattern which was so popular in all the cities of large size. The New York City department used a great many engines of this particular model, usually having three horses due to the great weight of the engine.

#### No. 6. Hanging Harness on Steam Fire Engine

This display illustrates how the horsedrawn equipment was kept in the fire station with the harness suspended from the ceiling and using the hinged collars so that the horses could be quickly snapped into their harness and a rapid response of the fire company made possible. Horses were usually stabled in the back of the same room with the engine, backed into their stalls with their head out. A gate or chain across the stall with an electrical release kept them in the stalls until an alarm was sounded when, simultaneously, the lights would come on, bells would ring, and the chains or gates would open and the horses then would trot to their places beneath the suspended harness. The firemen had only to snap the hinged collar and a snap on each side of the bit, which the horses were wearing, and the hitch was complete taking by actual timing less than 30 seconds in most cases.

## No. 7. 1906 Wood Block Floor from Miami's Old Fire Station

Wood blocks were popular for paving of streets and also in buildings wherever horses were used and it gave a good footing which was easy on the horses hooves. These blocks were obtained when alterations were made in a section of the original fire station built on Flagler Street in Miami in 1906. This building designed and built by Chief Dan Hardy was the first reinforced concrete building built in Miami and cost only \$13,500. It still stands and is as sturdy today as when first constructed.

#### No. 8. Sleigh or Pung, Horsedrawn about 1890

Built and used in Indiana in the 1890's.

Many fire departments used Pungs, bob sleighs and other equipment on runners during icy spells and when there was enough snow on the ground to make it logical to use this special equipment. Even steam fire engines were mounted on runners and could be taken through otherwise impassable roads. There is one city which still uses fire horses with a hose sleigh, a ladder sleigh, and a pump unit mounted on a sleigh in the winter months. This is St. Johns, Newfoundland, in Canada.

# No. 9. 1926 American La France Type 75,750 GPM Triple Combination Pumper, Manufacturers No. 5578



This was the second fire engine purchased for the City of Hialeah, Florida. It was delivered early in 1926 and had service during and after the 1926 Hurricane which devastated the Miami area. After the storm it pumped into the city water mains to furnish water to the city and pumped continuously for a period of 48 hours without being shut down. This engine served Hialeah from 1926 to 1956 when it was presented by the City to V. K. O'Meara's Hialeah Fire Engine Museum. This engine is in good operating condition and will still pump its 750 gallons per minute. Note the original Boyce Motometer, lights, nameplate and bell.

#### No. 10. 1926 American La France 750 gal. Per Minute Pumper, Manufacturers No. 5555

This pumper, still in good operating condition, was built for Pompano Beach, Florida and was used in active service from 1926 to 1956. The engine is a 6 cylinder, double ignition, 5 1/2 inch cylinder with a six inch stroke. The pump is solid bronze rotary gear and rated at 750 gallons per minute at 120 pounds pressure. Preservation in the museum was made possible by the city officials of Pompano Beach, Florida.

#### No. 11. 1925 American La France 50 Foot City Service Hook and Ladder Truck, Manufacturers No.5198



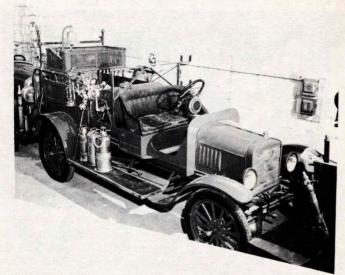
Built in 1925 for Miami Fire Department and used at Ladder Company No. 4 on South Miami Avenue. Longest ladder is a fifty foot Extension with supporting poles. Presented to the Museum by Chief N. L. Wheeler in August 1956 as an historical relic of the Miami Fire Department.

#### No. 12. 1920 Model T Ford Hose Truck Ford Motor Company, Detroit, Michigan



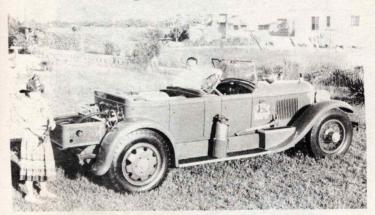
This hose truck is built on the ordinary Ford car chassis and is typical of early Ford fire equipment which made its appearance in every small town and farm community around the early 1920's. These Ford fire engines brought the first sign of relief to the rural communities from the almost certain distruction of any building when fire struck. There are still some model T Ford fire trucks in Service in remote locations. Note the unusual auxiliary springs which were added as an accessory.

No. 13. 1920 Model T Ford - American La France Combination Hose and Chemical



This unit was built on a Ford 1 Ton Worm-Drive truck, by the American La France Fire Engine Company of Elmira, New York. Originally having two 35 gallon Soda-Acid Chemical tanks, and a 1000 ft. hose body. The entire body was built of wood and is an excellent example of the type of bodies used on early motor equipment. The truck is still equipped with old tires marked "Barney Oldfield", has the original seat upholstery, two original large nozzles, and the original Ford coils for ignition. This apparatus, still in good usable condition was presented to the V. K. O'Meara Museum by the City of Safety Harbor, Florida, where it saw service for over 25 years and is credited with saving more property than any fire engine that city has had before or since.

## No. 14. 1926 Cadillac V-8 Chief's Car and Chemical Engine



This converted touring car was originally the Chief's Car for the First Fire Chief of Miami Beach, Florida, J. S. Stephenson. It is a V8 Cadillac with Aluminum body. Later on it was equipped with the two 40 gallon Chemical tanks which were removed from the two original pumpers of Miami Beach Fire Department purchased in the early 1920s. This unit saw long service in Miami Beach and then was used as the only apparatus of the Surfside, Florida fire department and this town presented it to Vincent K. O'Meara for his historical collection in 1952.

#### No. 15. 1926 Hudson Super Six Hose Car Built By The Firemen of Hollywood, Florida

Originally designed as a Chemical and hose combination this unit was built on a new Hudson chassis by the Hollywood firemen. It was presented to Vincent O'Meara by Fire Chief Holloway Cook of the Hollywood Fire Department.

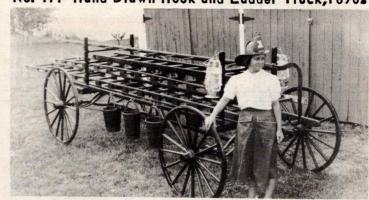
#### No. 16. 1890 Model Hand Drawn Boyer Chemical Fire Engine 80 Gallon Capacity



This is an 80 gallon Chemical engine, with two 40 gallon tanks being operated by a patented bottle breaking device to mix the chemicals. This was patented in 1879 and was built in several sizes to be drawn by hand or by horses, by the Boyer Fire Apparatus Co. of Logansport, Indiana.

Mr. Boyer continued to manufacture these tanks and use them on motor trucks and the famous Reo-Boyer fire trucks were a well known form of protection throughout the country in the 1920s. This company has been in continuous operation since 1879 and is now producing some of the finest equipment available for municipal rural and industrial use. The Universal Fire Apparatus Corporation is the present name of this company at Logansport, Indiana. Special displays of Boyer equipment are to be seen throughout the museum donated by Mr. Harry T. Armington who is the manager of Universal Fire Apparatus Corp.

#### No. 17. Hand Drawn Hook and Ladder Truck, 1890s



This is the type of hand drawn apparatus many villages had that didn't have any water supply. This fire wagon carried ladders, hooks, axes, lanterns, and other hand tools, and also buckets which were the only means of getting water on the fires. This type of ladder truck was used from about 1800 to the time of World War I.

#### No. 18. Deluge Chemical Engine, Hand Drawn

Built by the Prospect Fire Engine Company of Prospect, Ohio. This engine dates about 1900 and was probably the first apparatus for Homestead, Florida.

#### No. 19. Badger 40 Gallon Chemical Fire Engine, Hand Drawn, about 1900

A soda acid chemical engine purchased originally to protect the U. S. Government Plant Introduction Station at Perrine, Florida. Built by the Badger Fire Extinguisher Company of New York.

#### No. 20. 1921 La France-Brockway-Torpedo Chemical Engine



This handy little fire truck was built originally for the city of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, after being used there for six years it was sold to the City of Opa-locka, Florida. Opa-locka used it from 1927 to 1954 at which time the little truck, still in perfect operating condition was presented to the V. K. O'Meara Collection to be preserved in the memory of the Opa-locka Firemen. This engine is particularly a memorial to the late Fred Arnold who served as one man fire department in Opa-locka for many years in addition to his duties as city clerk. This was a favorite of his and he showed great affection for the old truck and was very helpful to Mr. O'Meara in securing this and other equipment from the city to be preserved in the museum. The truck carries three 40 gal. Chemical tanks and ladders and tools. Built by the American La France Company at Elmira on a Brockway chassis built in Cortlandt, N. Y. and powered by a Buda 4 cylinder engine manufactured in Harvey, Illinois. Still in operating condition continuously since 1921.

#### No. 21. 1926 American La France 750 Gallon per Minute Pumper, Manufacturers No. 5634

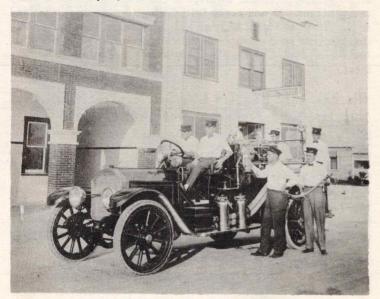
This pumper was purchased in 1926 for the Number Six station in Miami Fire Department. It served as Number Six engine for many years and then was used as the Drill College engine until presented to the V. K. O'Meara Museum in 1954. It is still in good condition and is a good example of the Pumpers used by Miami during the boom years. A gift to the Museum by the Miami Fire Department.

#### No. 22. 1923 Ruggles City Service Truck Built By Ruggles Motor Truck Co., Saginaw, Michigan



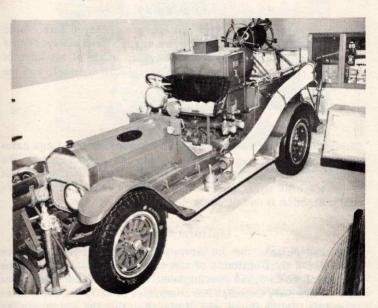
Purchased in 1923 by the Coral Gables Company and later deeded to the newly formed City of Coral Gables, this unit was the first fire apparatus for the Coral Gables Fire Department. It originally was a short wheelbase truck equipped with two chemical tanks and a hose body and later was built into its present style by members of the fire department. It was presented to V. K. O'Meara as a memorial to the Coral Gables Firemen by the city officials. Driving the truck is A. D'Arcy O'Meara, brother of V. K. O'Meara.

No. 23. 1917 American La France 350 Gallon per Minute Pumper, Manufacturers No. 1784



This triple combination pumper was built in Elmira, New York in 1917 for the city of Lake Worth, Florida. The above picture shows it about a year after delivery with members of the Lake Worth Fire Department. In 1927 it was sold to the City of Opa-locka, Florida and used until 1951 and then presented to the O'Meara Museum by the City Officials of Opa-locka. It is still in good operating condition and may be seen in the museum with its original solid rubber tires still intact. This truck has one of the famous Holloway Chemical Tanks invented by the famous Chief Holloway of the Baltimore Fire Department.

# No. 24. 1916 American La France Pumper, 750 Gallons per Minute, Manufacturers No. 1130



This engine was built in 1916 for Lakeland, Florida and was a replacement for a horsedrawn unit. This apparatus was in bad condition when brought to the museum and is a good example of the restoration work that is done to make these old machines appear as they did when first purchased and placed in service.

#### The Village Fire House

This room is set up to represent a small village fire house with its hand drawn hose carts, buckets, tools, ladders, and other equipment as a village might have in the 1890's.

#### Toy Display

Toy fire engines of all types and ages are displayed here. Some are modern, some are old. Toy fire engines have always been a favorite and here may be seen all types, made of all kinds of materials ranging from wood to glass, plastic to steel, and the old fashioned cast iron.

#### **Badge Collection**

Displayed in the area outside the uniform room are five large cases of the more ornate and unusual badges and ribbons used by the firemen during the past one hundred years. Also included in this group are solid silver and gold coat and cap badges. This individual collection is one of the largest on display in the country.

#### Uniform Room

Here may be seen the uniforms of the firemen of years ago, the colorful red shirt uniforms of the old fire companies, the brass helmets of the European Fire Brigades, and the old flat top leather hats of the Early Colonial fire companies in early America. Displayed on lifelike figures and displayed so that the visitor can see for himself how the uniform looked as worn, this room will hold the attention of young and old. This is probably the best display of fire department uniforms in the country and is being improved all the time by a program of constant research and addition of authentic material. Also displayed here are telephones, alarm equipment, hose and nozzle equipment, leather buckets, the oldest of fire axes and antique fire extinguishers.



Mr. and Mrs. O'Meara look over some of the relics in the museum. Mrs. O'Meara holds one of the many Chiefs Trumpets which are on display.

#### Special Photographic Displays

Many of the excellent photographs of early fire apparatus have been given to Mr. O'Meara by manufacturers of fire engines whose company history goes back many years. Outstanding among these special photographic displays is that of the Peter Pirsch & Sons Company of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Mr. W. R. Pirsch, President of this well known company has been particularly generous in making old time company material available to the museum. The Pirsch company built horsedrawn apparatus for many cities including Chicago and continues to produce heavy duty apparatus for all major cities in the United States and throughout the world. The visitor is directed to this interesting special display near the front entrance.

#### A Chicago Steamer Company of about forty years ago



#### Pictures in the Museum

The V. K. O'Meara Historical Collection includes thousands of pictures and photographs, drawings, diagrams and various catalog material which tells a complete story of the development of fire fighting equipment in this country. The collection includes the largest fire protection library in the Southeastern States and many priceless documents are included in this extensive collection. Hundreds of these pictures are on display and the visitor is invited to look these special displays over carefully and note what unusual material is available here for the student of mechanics, and history.



V. K. O'Meara with some of the buckets in the museum. The rubber bucket (2nd from right) came from a hand drawn ladder truck bought in 1874.

#### **BUS TOURS TO THE MUSEUM**

THE OUTSTANDING SIGHTSEEING BUS TOUR
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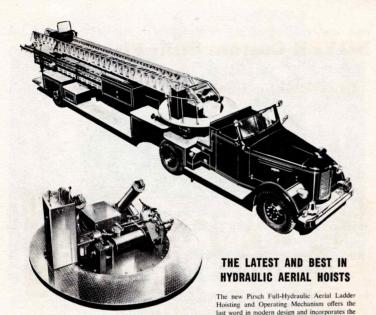
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LOGANSPORT INDIANA



Displayed in cases in various parts of the museum may be seen many accurately constructed models of types of fire apparatus no longer in use. These models are built by Vincent O'Meara from old photographs and catalog drawings and are mostly scaled 1/2 inch to the foot. These models have been displayed many times for the public prior to the opening of the museum and have been shown on television several times in recent years. The visitor is particularly referred to models such as the one of the first fire engine built in America by Thomas Lote of New York in 1743 and the Silsby Steam Fire Engine of 1867.

