

# The Fire of 1851

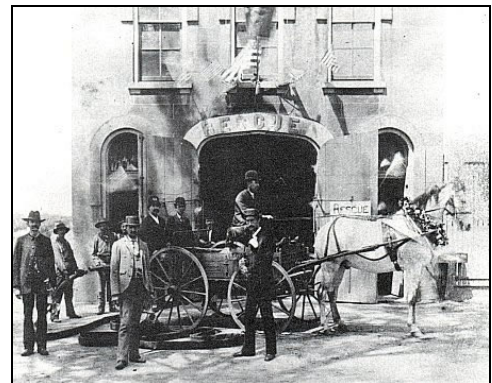
By Michael J. Legeros

## Prologue

This document recounts the circumstances and aftermath of a major fire in Raleigh, North Carolina, in December 1851. The fire resulted in improvements to the city's protection capabilities, and the creation of the first version of the Raleigh Fire Department as it exists today. The narrative is drawn primarily from newspaper accounts, and consists nearly entirely of paraphrasing or direct quotations. References are cited in footnotes. Additional comments are included in the footnotes and appendixes. This is version 1.0 of this document, created September 2010.

## Introduction

Long before its formation in 1912 as a career fire department, the Raleigh Fire Department protected the Capitol City as a volunteer organization. Led by a municipally appointed Fire Chief, along with an Assistant Chief in later decades, the citizen fire companies answered alarms inside and sometimes outside the city. Their apparatus was pulled by hand, and later by horse. Over a number of decades, their equipment included hand engines, steam engines, chemical engines, hook and ladder trucks, bucket and ladder trucks, hose reels, and hose wagons. Segregated by race and working together when called, the companies had such names as Excelsior, Rescue, Victor, Eureka, Merchants, Mechanics, Phoenix, Capital, and Independent. Two took the name of prominent public figures, W. R. Womble (hook and ladder) and L. A. Mahler (steamer).



*Rescue Hose Company, circa 1884.*

When did the volunteer fire companies form? Raleigh was created as a planned city in 1792. Though citizens were solicited to fund the purchase of a fire engine in 1802, the first piece of fire apparatus was not delivered until 1819. A company of citizen volunteers was immediately formed upon delivery of the Philadelphia-style hand engine.<sup>1</sup> In 1843, a second hand engine was obtained by the city, and a second fire company was organized. By mid-century, Raleigh was protected by two volunteer fire companies operating two hand engines. The condition of the apparatus was dubious, the availability of water was scarce, and no single person supervised the organization of the fire companies.<sup>2</sup> Nor did the position of Fire Chief exist. These things changed after the major fire of December 15, 1851, that destroyed 17 buildings on Fayetteville, Hargett, and Wilmington streets.<sup>3</sup>

## Fire Engine.

*The Subscribers to the Fund for purchasing a Fire Engine for the use of this City, are requested to meet at the Court-House, on Friday next, at four o'clock, for the Purpose of giving an Order for the Purchase of the Engine and other Apparatus, (a Sufficiency of Money for the Purpose being subscribed) and for forming a Fire Company.*

*As the Articles of Association will be drawn at this Meeting, and the Officers of the Company elected, it is hoped that a full Attendance will be given. August 16.*

North Carolina Minerva, 1802.

### Looking Back

Raleigh was a comparatively small southern city in 1851, with a size of one square mile and a population of over 4,518 people. It was the fourth-largest municipality in the state by population, behind Fayetteville (4,646), New Bern (4,681), and Wilmington (7,264). The Capitol City seemed even smaller when ranked in population along other southern cities, far below the likes of Charleston (42,985), Richmond (27,570), Nashville (10,165), or Lynchburg (8,071). The population of 4,518 represented 548 families who were living in

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier groups of citizens likely organized to fight fire, but the 1819 company was the first to stay organized and operate for an extended period of time.

<sup>2</sup> Citizen participation in the fire companies was also problematic. In 1826, city officials received the authority to draft members if fewer than forty men volunteered each year. Additionally, all free males were required to bring their buckets and assist at fires. As late as 1867, an invitation for citizens to join the fire companies also noted that they would be drafted if too few volunteered.

<sup>3</sup> The fire of Dec. 15, 1851, was also the last of the city's early conflagrations. Raleigh's first major fire destroyed 51 buildings in the first two blocks of Fayetteville Street on Jun. 11, 1816. Scores of buildings on or near Fayetteville Street were also burned in 1821, twice in 1832, and again in 1833. The original State Capitol was also destroyed by fire in 1831.

547 dwellings and other accommodations. Approximately three-fifths were whites and free blacks, and two-fifths were slaves.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the business of state government, the purpose for which the city was created, Raleigh residents were engaged in a variety of trades. Newspaper advertisements listed merchants of drugs and medicine, clothing and shoes, staple and fancy dry goods, pianos, music, and books. Notices were posted in newspapers of Latin classes for little boys, one-gallon tins of oysters from Virginia, and assorted items of private property for sale.

Craftsmen in the city, as listed in the 1850 Federal census, included five blacksmiths, five coach makers, four tailors, three boot and shoe makers, two saddle and harness makers, two brick makers, a cabinet maker, and a confectioner and baker. Industries included milling, lumber hewing and sawing, and railroad car and engine manufacturing.

Railroad service to Raleigh was ten years old, and the depot was located north of the Capitol near the edge of the city where Halifax and Salisbury streets intersected with North Street.<sup>5</sup> Passengers, mail, and freight could also travel in and out of town by stagecoach.<sup>6</sup> Plank roads were also being planned and laid, based on the success of Fayetteville's plank road system that was started in 1848.<sup>7</sup>

Raleigh was governed by a Board of Commissioners that numbered nine and who were elected from three wards, along with an Intendant of Police. To protect citizens, adult males took turns patrolling the streets as the "night watch." The city also had a constable, James H. Murray, who served 1830 to 1855. He had numerous duties that had expanded over the years of his service, including tax collection for the city, enforcing Market House regulations, and operating as overseer and clerk for the market. With no city jail, prisoners were housed in the county lock-up.<sup>8</sup>

Buildings in the city's business area included many of brick and granite, which had replaced the dozens of wooden structures destroyed by fires over the prior decades. Property

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<sup>4</sup> North Carolina Business History, *North Carolina Cities Population Changes in the 1800s*, web site. [www.historync.org/NCCityPopulations1800s.htm](http://www.historync.org/NCCityPopulations1800s.htm). Date retrieved Aug. 29, 2010; Murray, Elizabeth Reid. *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Vol. 1 – Prehistory Through Centennial*. Raleigh: Capital County Publishing, 1983, 412.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, 245-250.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, 256-257.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, 257.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, 407-408, 409.

owners sought not only fireproof buildings, but structures that were uniform in appearance.<sup>9</sup> Raleigh had banks, churches, public and private schools, several newspapers. The first hospital, however, was some decades away.<sup>10</sup> The Yarborough House, a subsequent Fayetteville Street landmark for several decades, opened in 1850.<sup>11</sup> The new State Capitol was ten years old.

Fire was the familiar tool for lighting, cooking, and heating. Phosphorous matches were newly invented, as were oil-burning lamps. Gas lights were still several years away, along with later electric lighting. Streets were dirt, with two to pass from the first macadamizing of streets. The availability of indoor plumbing was also still several years away.<sup>12</sup> Telegraph service to Raleigh, however, had just started and was used for regular news reports.<sup>13</sup>

The city possessed a pair of fire engines, one older (1819) and one newer (1843). They were wooden machines, about the height of a person. They were wheeled and pulled to fires by the volunteer firefighters. The make and models of either engine is not known. Each had handles (or brakes) that the firemen pushed and pulled upon, to operate the pump. They were equipped with fire hose, likely a short section of leather hose connected to a nozzle. The engines were also likely equipped with a single fixed nozzle. Water for the engines was likely supplied by buckets, which were filled at the town pumps that were located on Fayetteville, Hargett, and Hillsboro streets. Private wells with pumps were also present in the city.<sup>14</sup>



*Early 19<sup>th</sup> century hand engine.*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 265, 267-268.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 373.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 370.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 332,333

<sup>14</sup> Though suction hose had been developed by this time, it is not known if Raleigh's early engines were equipped with same. Later hand engines, however, were equipped with suction hose that could be dropped into cisterns or wells.



The town hall was the Market House. It was located in the second block of Fayetteville Street, on the east side between the driveways that became Market and Exchange streets. The Market House lot extended back to Wilmington Street. The two-story brick building included a public hall on the second floor. The hall was used for citizens, as well as groups including the city Commissioners, the fire companies, and a "uniform military company."<sup>15</sup> The building was located on Market Square, a lot with elm trees that was fenced to separate the property from businesses to the north and south. The Market House also housed a clock and the town bell in a cupola.<sup>16</sup> In 1849, the Commissioners voted to construct an additional "vegetable market house" that would also include a room for the fire engine and two guard rooms. Though approved, construction of the addition was never started.<sup>17</sup>

## The Fire

At approximately 12:30 a.m. on December 15, 1851, citizens were awakened to the alarm of fire.<sup>18</sup> On the east side of Fayetteville Street, four doors north of Hargett Street, a wooden tenement occupied by the boot and shoe store of H. A. Depkin was aflame. It started in a "sleeping apartment" when "bed clothing" caught on fire, perhaps from a candle or stove. Flames awoke the occupants, who fled the room.<sup>19</sup>

The fire was still small at this time, and likely could have been extinguished with a "few buckets of water." There was a public pump on the opposite side of Fayetteville Street, but it wasn't "in good order." The wood building was soon "wrapt in flames", and the fire was spreading faster than citizens and any arriving fire company mem-

### APPALLING CONFLAGRATION!

About half past 12 o'clock, on Monday morning last, our citizens were alarmed by the cry of FIRE, and the other signals usual on such occasions.—The wooden tenement on Fayetteville Street, occupied by H. A. Depkin, as a Boot and Shoe Store, was found to be in a blaze, but not to such an extent that it might not have been promptly suppressed did we possess the most ordinary water facilities. In a very few moments, the destroying element extended itself, in one direction, to the residence of Wm. White, Esq., and the City Post Office connected therewith, and in the opposite, to the Confectionary Store of Mr. Griffice and the Saddlery Establishment of C. W. D. Hutchins, Esq., and to many small wooden buildings in the vicinity—all of which were entirely consumed. The flames now spread so rapidly as to render any efforts to check them entirely impotent. The large and splendid brick structure on the corner of Fayetteville and Hargett streets, (in which were Harding's Clothing Rooms, Creech's Merchandize Store, the N. C. Mutual Insurance Co., and the Telegraph Offices, and the Odd Fellows' Lodge,) the new and beautiful building of Mr. Ferriss' above the Post Office, the row of small shops on the north side of Hargett St., (with the

*Raleigh Register, Dec. 20, 1851.*

<sup>15</sup> Built in 1840, the Market House was the city's first town hall.

<sup>16</sup> After construction of the Market House, citizens requested a town clock. One was installed in the steeple of the Presbyterian Church. It served there for some years, until citizens complained that the bell could not be heard all the way down Fayetteville Street. The clock was moved to the Market House, and a new town bell was also installed.

<sup>17</sup> Murray, 407.

<sup>18</sup> How was this alarm communicated? Presumably by cries of "fire" and the banging of doors. The town bell at the Market House was also likely used to notify the fire company members and other citizens of fires.

<sup>19</sup> *Star* (w), Dec. 17, 1851.

bers could contain them. Mr. Depkin would lose his entire stock of boots and shoes.<sup>20</sup>

Flames spread in both directions, traveling north and south along the east side of Fayetteville Street. The next building to catch on the north side of Depkin's store was the residence of William White. The two-story wood structure also housed the city post office, which was located on the first floor. Nearly everything in White's home and the Post Office was carried out of the burning buildings and saved, though a bag of mail was mistakenly believed misplaced afterward. Both this building and Depkin's store had escaped harm in several earlier fires.

Flames were also spreading south, first igniting Mr. Griffice's confectionary store, and then C. W. D. Hutchins' saddle shop. Both wood tenement buildings were destroyed, though most of their contents were removed without damage. Several smaller wooden structures in the vicinity were also consumed.<sup>21</sup> The flames were still spreading faster than they could be contained.

Citizens of both races banded together and helped the fire company members fight the fire with whatever they could. Public and private were the sole water source, and bucket brigades the most reliable means of delivery. The city's two fire engines were either partially or entirely out of service.<sup>22</sup>

The flames moving north next ignited the "new and beautiful" residence of Mr. Fentress. Though most of the contents were saved, the brick building was soon blazing. Flames then spread to J. B. G Roulac's residence and store. Many of his goods were also removed, though they were damaged. At that point, demolition was the only solution to save the remaining buildings on the north end of the block. Several attempts to blast the Roulac building had little or no effect, so the structure was instead "literally cut up and pulled down."<sup>23</sup> This action stopped the spread of the fire to the north.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Were these outbuildings located behind the burning structures, or were they the grocery stores along Hargett Street?

<sup>22</sup> No reference of the fire engines being used during the fire is recorded. Based on subsequent accounts of mechanical problems, it is presumed they were out of service.

<sup>23</sup> *Standard* (bi-w), Dec. 17, 1851.

<sup>24</sup> Black powder was likely used to blast the buildings, as dynamite wasn't invented until 1867. This was a common method of controlling large fires. Fire hooks were also used to pull down burning materials or entire structures. They consisted of metal prongs attached to rope or chains, and when carried on apparatus along with ladders originated the term "hook and ladder."

The fire's southward spread continued from Hutchins' saddle shop to an elegant, two-story brick building on the southeast corner of Fayetteville and Hargett Streets. The corner building housed two stores on the first floor: Harding's Clothing Room, which sold ready-made clothing; and John Creech's Merchandise Store. On the second floor, it housed the telegraphic office, the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, and the Odd Fellows Lodge.

Mr. Harding saved all of his goods, and Mr. Creech saved most of his. The contents of both buildings were damaged during removal, however. The insurance company's books and papers were saved by Mr. Partridge, the firm's Secretary. "Seldom has the eye witnessed so awful a spectacle as that large building in one concentrated blaze," reported the semi-weekly *Raleigh Register* on December 17, "with serpents of flame hissing from every window and a vast column stretching upwards from the roof." Other goods, furnishings, and personal effects inside the building were also removed.

As the corner building burned, the flames spread eastward to a series of five small grocery stores operated by Mr. Crocker, David C. Dudley, Jordan Womble, Alexander Adams, and Lynn Adams. Goods were saved from each of the five grocery stores. These wood structures on the north side of Hargett Street were destroyed, but the flames did not spread to the last building on the side of that street. On the southeast corner of Hargett and Wilmington Streets, the Holleman's store and blacksmith shop was spared. The iron door and windows of the brick building did not catch fire. North of Holleman's store, on the west side of Wilmington Street, three brick tenement buildings also burned. Occupied as groceries, these were the last structures consumed.

After two-and-a-half hours, the conflagration was controlled. A total of 17 buildings on Fayetteville, Hargett, and Wilmington streets were destroyed, though most of their contents were saved. The estimated losses totaled between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Insurance coverage totaled between \$10,000 and \$15,000, as provided by the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company. The remaining wood buildings on the block were ordered removed by a new city ordinance enacted the day after the fire. The same ordinance prohibited construction of new wooden buildings on that block. The Post Office was temporarily relocated to Salisbury Street, west of the Capitol, in a building on the corner of Cook's lot. After



two days of work, the letters and papers removed from the burning building had been "properly arranged and distributed."<sup>25</sup> Every letter was reported as having been saved.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Dec. 20, 1851.

<sup>26</sup> Postage rates for letters as of July 1, 1851:

Domestic under 3000 miles per ½ ounce. Prepaid: 3¢. Not Prepaid: 5¢.

Domestic over 3000 miles per ½ ounce. Prepaid: 6¢. Not Prepaid: 10¢.

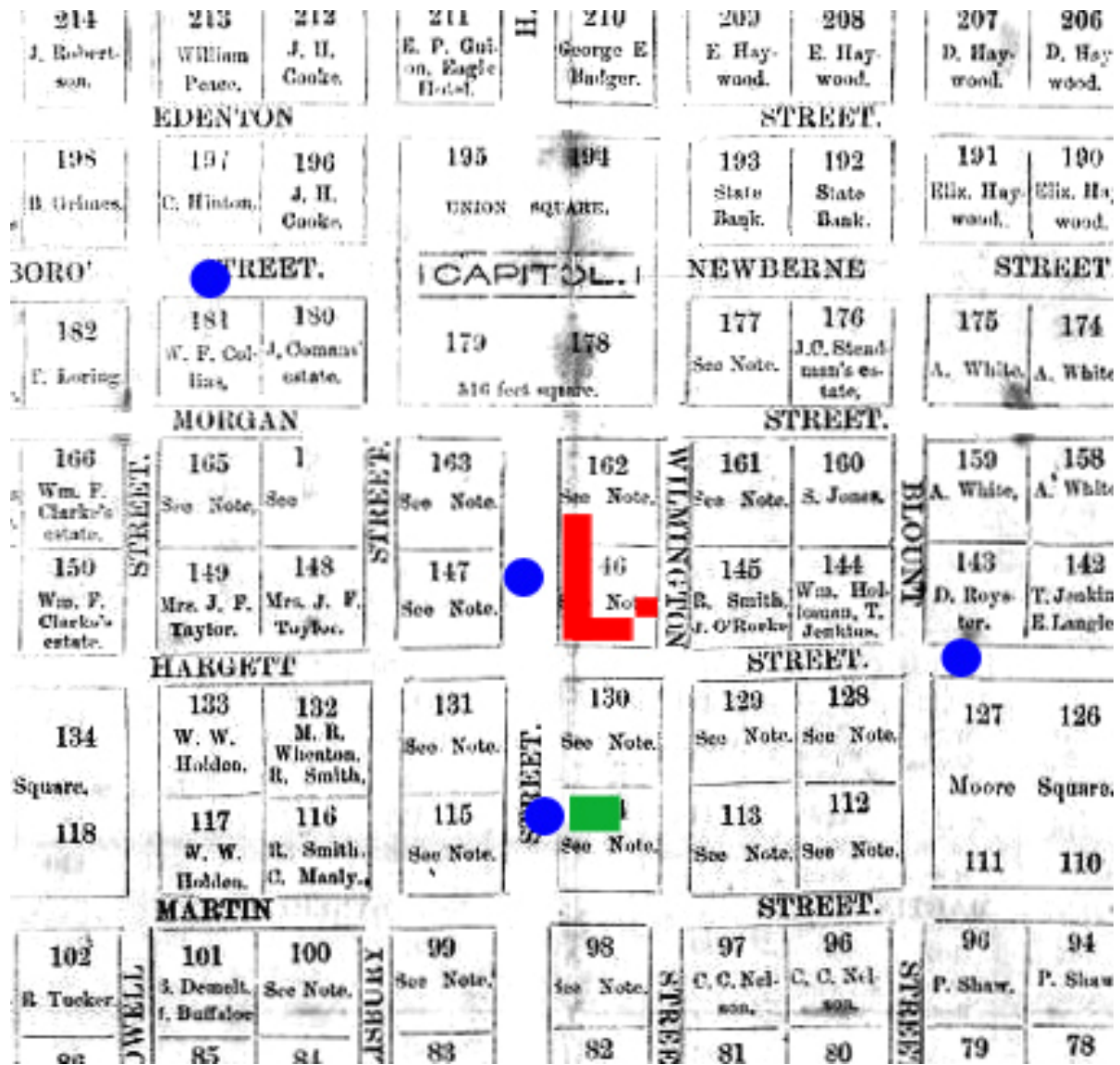
Foreign under 2500 miles per ½ ounce. 10¢ except where otherwise adjusted by treaty.

Foreign over 2500 miles per ½ ounce. 20¢ except where otherwise adjusted by treaty.

Rate for drop letters: 1¢ with prepayment not required and no weight restrictions.

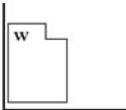
1847USA, *Postage Stamps of the United States First Issued in 1851*, web site. <http://www.1847usa.com/1851.htm>. Date retrieved, Sep. 26, 2010.

# Map of Fire



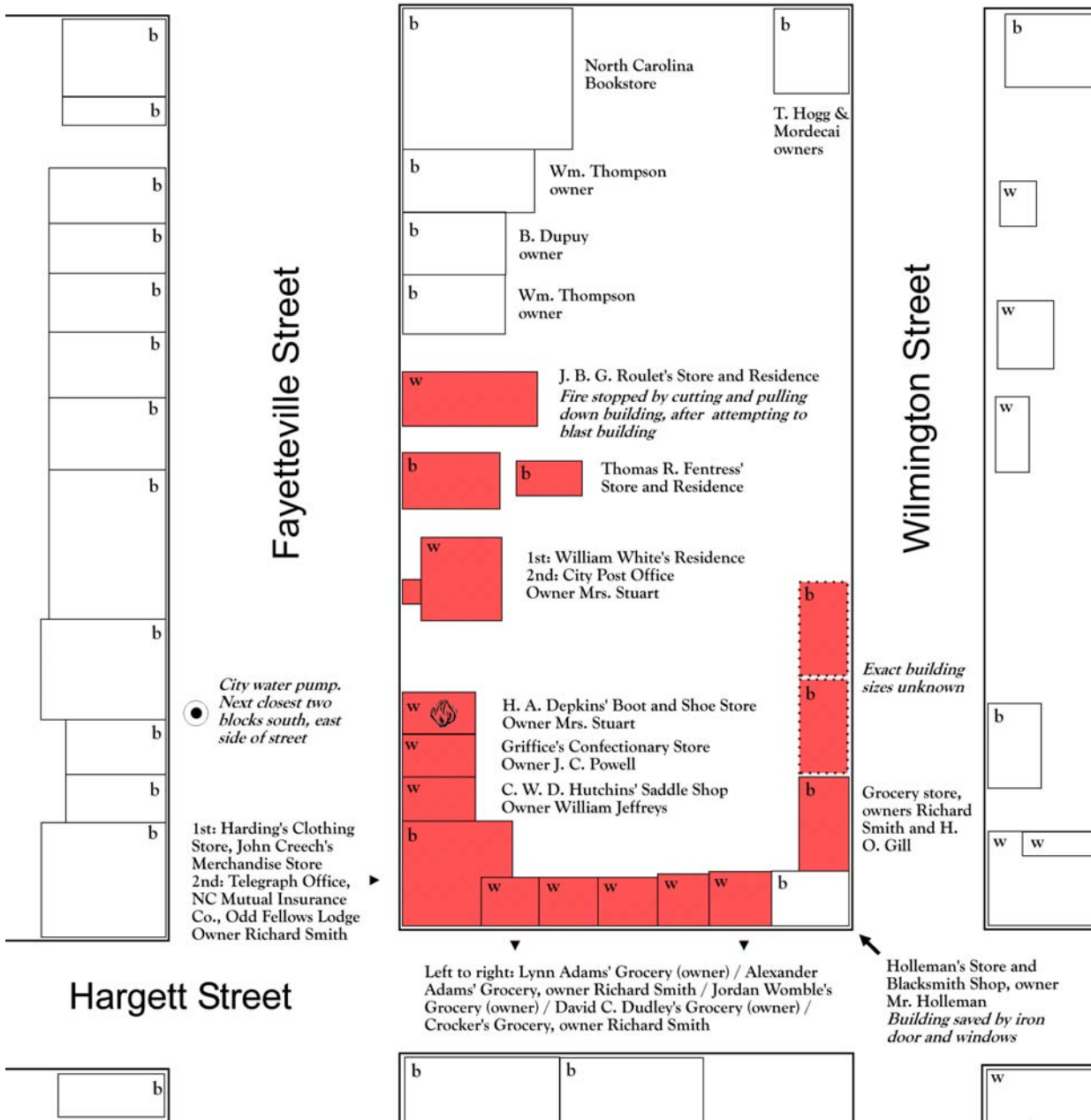
Circa 1867 map printed by Walters, Hughes & Company, Raleigh, NC.

- - City pump
- - City market
- - Fire



# Morgan Street

b = brick  
w = wood



Drawing adapted from 1847 street map surveyed and drawn by J. W. Johnson, and lithographed by G. and W. Endicott, NY.

## The First Editorials

After the fire, Raleigh's newspapers expectedly editorialized about the need for greater fire protection. The *Raleigh Register* on December 17 wrote:

Lesson after lesson of bitter experience as to our total want of security against the ravages of Fire have been disregarded; and now another warning voice speaks to us from the black, smouldering and smoking mass of ruins that deface our city. Shall we remain senseless and indifferent to the admonition they convey? The miseries occasioned by fire transcend all others, as they are sudden and unexpected, and in one moment deprive the sufferers of those comforts which, perhaps, they were in the habit of dispensing to others; and there is no excuse for the blind fatuity that leaves them entirely unprovided against. We need good Engines, an efficient Fire Police, and, above all, WATER! Had it been within reach in any quantity, on Monday morning, the flames could have been subdued, before they had gained even a trivial advantage. We feel assured that any action that our Mayor and Commissioners may take in the premises at their next meeting will be promptly responded to by our citizens. We call upon them to take *some action- to do their duty*. In the meantime, we hope that the sprit of enterprise is not quenched, and that the sound of the hammer and the trowel will shortly be heard from out the midst of the ashes and the ruins.<sup>27</sup>

The *Standard* published these opinions on December 17 along with their account of the fire:

This fire has, we think, conclusively demonstrated two things to our citizens, first, the danger from resulting from wooden buildings in a crowded part of the town; and secondly, the great importance of water facilities and some efficient fire organization. Our citizens, we are satisfied, are willing to do all in their power on such an occasion, to save property; but then what could they do on Monday morning, but fight the fire, as they did, with axes, beams of wood, ropes, and their naked hands? We lack water, and a Chief of the Fire

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<sup>27</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Dec. 17, 1851.

Department, whose duty it should be to direct and control, and to blow up houses, to order hands to different points on pain of fire or punishment, and generally to give tone and vigor to the masses of whites and blacks usually assembled on such occasions. We cast no reflections on the present Fire Company- they did all they could, with the limited supply of water which they had; we are speaking of the importance of some better and more efficient system in itself- a system which we *must* have, coupled with the necessary means, if we expect to prevent for the future a repetition of similar calamities What is an expenditure of even five thousand dollars, for the purpose of ensuring an efficient organization and the requisite means, compared to the inconvenience and discomfort produced by such a fire as that on Sunday night, and to the losses by thousands, incurred by our best and most enterprising citizens? We intended to refer to this matter again and again, in the hope that our citizens will *keep* their present feelings and convictions fresh in their minds, and until something which shall promise good results shall have been accomplished.<sup>28</sup>

### City Commissioners Meet

The concerns of the news editors were echoed by the city Intendant, W. Dallas Haywood, who called a meeting of the city commissioners the following day on December 16. He presented the following suggestions for improving the city's capability for fighting fires:<sup>29</sup>

- Water be brought into the city from a creek or branch, if feasible. To determine the practicality and cost, an engineer should be hired to survey and report on the streams west of Raleigh as soon as possible. If found practical, the plan could be adopted, if the city could bear the cost.
- If the prior suggestion was impractical, the city should consider an Artesian Well.
- In either case of a future water supply, the city should immediately provide for large cisterns or reservoirs of water.

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<sup>28</sup> *North Carolina Standard* (bw), Dec. 17, 1851.

<sup>29</sup> The Intendant, also called Intendant of Police, was the city's chief official. The position of Mayor was not created until 1857. *Wake: Capital City*, Appendix D.

- The city's public wells should be deepened, enlarged, and increased in number.
- Pumps for the wells of sufficient capacity provided, and kept in constant repair, and thus available for any and every emergency.
- A metal pump should replace the present wooden pump.
- A suitable number of fire hooks and ladders should be provided by the city.
- The fire engines should be put in complete order.

Upon a motion, a committee of four members was formed, with one from the Eastern Ward, one from the Western Ward, and two from the Middle Wards. Board members W. W. Holden, John Hutchins, Edward Yarborough, and Thomas R. Fentress were directed to take the matters into consideration and report on their findings at a meeting on December 19. Mr. Holden also offered an ordinance which was unanimously adopted:

Be it ordained by the Intendant and Commissioners of the City of Raleigh, and it hereby ordained by the authority of same, That no buildings of wood shall be erected on the square in said City, bounded on the North by Morgan Street, on the South by Hargett Street, on the West by Fayetteville Street, and on the East by Wilmington Street; nor shall any wooden house be removed from any part of the City, or from any other place, [and be placed] on said square, under a penalty of ten dollars for every week that any such building shall remain thereon, to be paid to the City Treasurer, to be applied for the benefit of the city.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Report is Delivered**

On December 19, the Board of Commissioners assembled and heard the report of the fire protection committee appointed three days earlier. The committee members made seven points in their report, which was unanimously accepted. The provisions of the report were declared as added to the city ordinances.

First, the fire protection committee recommended improving all public wells in the city to “ensure a full supply of water.” The wells should be deepened, and if necessary, wid-

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<sup>30</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Dec. 20, 1851; *North Carolina Standard* (bw), Dec. 20, 1851.

ened. They also recommended that the wooden “forcing pumps” be replaced by metal pumps. They also recommended sinking additional wells, as seen as necessary by the Board. The Intendant appointed a committee to “address these points,” comprised of John Hutchins, T. R. Fentress, and C. W. D. Hutchins.

Second, that a subcommittee should be appointed to investigate how quickly and practically cisterns or reservoirs could be built as an additional “safeguard against fire.” They recommended that this subcommittee return with a report as quickly as they could. The Intendant appointed W. W. Holden, C. B. Root, and W. H. McKee to “attend to that matter.”

Third, that the two fire engines be immediately repaired and kept repaired.

Fourth, that additional fire equipment “be immediately procured,” including ladders, hooks, axes, and additional fire hose. They also recommended that kegs of blasting powder be kept on hand and ready for use. The Intendant was requested to “personally attend to those matters.”

Fifth, that a “combination engine house and guard house built of brick and fire-proof” be immediately erected on Market Square. Once built, the fire engines and all fire equipment should be kept there. They also recommended that the “fire department be more efficiently organized,” and that a Chief of the Fire Department be appointed by the Board each year, with a salary of \$100. The Fire Chief would be in “charge of the engine house, the fire engines, and everything pertaining to the fire department.” His duties would also include “seeing that the fire engines were kept in order, and that fire equipment was always on hand.” John Hutchins, Edward Yarbrough, and C. W. D. Hutchings were appointed to “handle these matters.”

Sixth, that another new committee investigate sinking an Artesian Well, as well as piping water into the city. T. R. Fentress, W. H. McKee, and C. W. D. Hutchins were appointed to that committee.

Seventh, that the Board immediately borrow \$1000 to reach these objectives. City Treasurer W. H. Holden was directed to complete that task.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Raleigh Register* (w), Dec. 24, 1851.

## The Editors Speak

The next day, the weekly *Standard* offered opinions on the city's plans:

The late destructive fire has impressed every one with the importance of making such arrangements as will prevent, if possibly, the occurrence of similar losses for the future. Various plans have been suggested; but while prompt action is demanded, it is also important that the authorities should move only after due consideration, and should do nothing which would not promise as much benefit as practicable from the necessary expenditure involved. Every guard thrown around property—every provision made to protect it against fire, enhances its intrinsic value, and thus adds to the wealth and facilitates the progress of the City. Our City is steadily growing; and its prospects, under the influence of Rail Road improvements and the like, are destined to get better and better. The Corporate authorities must keep pace with the advances thus made by the citizens; and while the streets and sidewalks are improved, and a strict police kept up, it is of the *first* importance that the best arrangements should be adopted to guard against fire, and to arrest and extinguish it, whenever and where it breaks out.

Our wells should be enlarged and deepened—metal forcing pumps should be substituted for the present wooden ones; and the number of wells should be increased. In addition to this, brick cisterns might be constructed in various parts of the City, and kept filled by the rain-water from the houses, thus doubling the chances for water in case of fire. An Artesian Well has also been suggested, as well as plans for conveying water from some stream into the City; but these are questions which cannot be decided upon at once. Before any step could be taken in relation to the first, it would be necessary to ascertain—from someone competent to examine and pronounce a reliable opinion—the geological formation and nature of the earth, or other substances to be bored; and in regard to the latter proposition, it could be indispensable to have a survey and a well-considered estimate of the cost.

These are matters, therefore, for consideration, but not for immediate adoption. Something must be done *now*. But water will be of little benefit if our engines are too small, or out of order, or if the organization of an efficient



fire department should be longer delayed. We just have good engines, a plentiful supply of water, and a prompt, strong-willed, and determined head of the fire department; and then the officers and members of the Fire Company or Companies will have some heart to work, because they will feel and know that they can accomplish something for the protection and good of the community.

There is one fact, by the way, which ought to be borne in mind when our present scanty supply of water is spoken of. It is this: during the last six or eight months, from some cause or other, the water in this locality has sunk from four to five feet; and the consequence has been that our wells have been drained of much of the water in them when first dug. The market-house well, for instance, held some six feet of water when first sunk, and gravel was thrown in it to fill it up to the requisite depth, so as to prevent stagnant water; now, the gravel has been taken out, but the water has gone so low that it is difficult if not impossible to obtain a supply water from this pump for the neighborhood about it. And we know of another instance, in which a gentleman sunk his well nine feet deeper, and still obtained no water.

We have made these remarks and thrown out these various suggestions, from a sincere desire to advance the interests of the City. At a time like this every citizen, however humble, is under obligations to the community to present his views; and every one has a right to be heard. We have spoken not only as a citizen, but as a member of the Press, called upon by many to express their views upon the occasion."<sup>32</sup>

### Opinions of Artesian Wells

The *Star* opined on the subject of Artesian Wells on the day before Christmas, citing an article from the *Boston Med. and Surg. Journal* and its recount of a well sunk in Kessengen, Bavaria. The well, which required boring 2,067 feet, produced a column of water 4.5 inches in diameter and 98 feet high. The resulting quantity of water was calculated at 6,000,000 pounds per year. They also offered their views of the need for a "complete fire organiza-

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<sup>32</sup> *North Carolina Standard* (bw), Dec. 20, 1851

tion," which should consist of well-trained and well-equipped fire companies. They added "the city should have at least two companies, each furnished with a large and efficient Engine. The one that we now use, is not worth the name, and is a disgrace to the city." They also offered suggestions that "some provision should likewise be made for a *commander* in cases of fire." They noted "we have heard it suggested that the best plan to secure discrete and efficient managers in case of fire, would be to appoint a person in each ward to be known as a Fire Warden, to be clothed with the property authority for giving direction and concert to the efforts of hands on such occasions."<sup>33</sup>

### **Another Editorial**

The editors of the *Raleigh Register* closed the year with additional opinions on the need for improved fire protection capabilities on December 31:

The fire in Raleigh tho' disastrous, was not to the extent previously anticipated. There were some fifteen buildings consumed, and the entire loss is estimated at from twenty to thirty thousand dollars. There was insurance upon houses and goods to the amount of ten or fifteen thousand dollars which is sustained by the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company.

Now that the calamity is over, and the damage is done, the Raleigh papers, very much on the principle of locking the stable door, after the horse is stolen, are crying loudly for a re-organization of the fire department. The *Register* calls upon the Commissioners to do their duty, and take some action, declaring that it will be promptly responded to by the citizens.

The *Star* states that the fire might have easily have been arrested at several points if there had been water and a suitable engine. The *Standard* casts no reflections upon the present Fire Company; they did all they could, with the limited supply of water which they had; but demands some better and more efficient system in itself, and thinks that an expenditure of even five thousand dollars for the purpose of ensuring an efficient organization and the requisite means would be judicious economy.

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<sup>33</sup> *Star* (w), Dec. 24, 1851

This is the old experience, and sounds very natural. After a fire of any extent takes place, it is discovered that the Department is wretchedly organized, that the engines won't work, or the horse is out of water. People gaze upon their doomed property or its charred and blackened remains, and then when the loss is sustained, an excitement is gotten up which dies away with the sense of returning security. A bucket or so of water or one of Phillip's Fire Annihilators<sup>34</sup> would have prevented all the mischief. We trust our Raleigh friends will profit by their disaster, and that efficient means for the preservation of their property may be adopted for the future. And in all sincerity, and in view of the importance of the subject, we commend their action to the consideration of our own Commissioners, lest hereafter, when thousands of dollars are in ashes at our feet, we too will exclaim, "What a miserable humbug our Fire Department is; the wretched engines, they were out of order, and the hose as usual misplaced."<sup>35</sup>

### Letters to the Editor

The citizens of the Capital City also expressed their opinions in letters printed in the *Spirit of the Age* on the day after New Year's, such as this citizen's response:

As the period appointed by law for the election of our Municipal Officers is at hand, permit me through the columns of your paper, to ask the citizens of Raleigh if they mean to allow the present inefficient state of affairs to continue? I am aware there are reports in circulation of Fire engines to be purchased, wells to be deepened, fire ladders and buckets, and in fact, all that is necessary to form a perfect and efficient fire apparatus, to be procured without delay. If such be the fact, it is only a wise and prudent resolve; but allow me to suggest that all these preparations are useless, if we have not a proper organization to bring them into effective play, when a necessity arises for their use. The late disastrous fire must convince the most prejudiced, not on-

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<sup>34</sup> The Phillips Fire Annihilator was a piston-driven fire extinguisher that sprayed aerated water. The *Daily Southern Cross* on March 12, 1850 described its dimensions about 16 inches long and 10 inches in diameter and weighing nearly 40 pounds.

<sup>35</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Dec. 31, 1851

ly of the want of such organization, but also of the imperative necessity of a thorough and radical change in our city government.

Five years experience ought to convince the citizens of Raleigh, that there is great wisdom in the Republican Principle of Rotation in Office. Let them, by their votes at the next election, show their disapprobation of the conduct of those to whom, for so many years, the care of their city has been entrusted, and to whose mismanagement the late destruction of property is in a great measure to be attributed, by their neglecting to have a proper supply of water, even for the daily use of the citizens. Any man can satisfy himself of the truth of this statement by examining the condition of the various pumps throughout the city."<sup>36</sup>

### **Progress Report**

By the end of January 1852, the Board of Commissioners received a report from Intendant Haywood on the progress of improving the city's fire protection:

- One fire engine was now in complete working order.
- The other fire engine was awaiting repairs.
- Additional hose had been procured.
- The hose and the repaired engine were in the possession of the Captain of the fire company, whose duty by law was to ensure that "care be taken of the Engine, hose, ladders, and other apparatus belonging to the city."
- Ladders, fire hooks, and axes had been ordered to be made, and would be ready soon.

The Intendant had nothing to report on improvements to the water supply, nor on the recommended construction of a combination engine house and guard house. He had not received reports from those committees.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Spirit of the Age*, Jan. 2, 1852.

<sup>37</sup> *Raleigh Register (sw)*, Jan. 28, 1852.

## Water Supply

On February 7, 1852, the Committee on Fire and Water made their report to the Board of Commissioners. They investigated their options and reported that an Artesian well would not succeed if sunk in the city. They also concluded that water could not be brought into the city from any nearby streams, except at a cost far greater than the city could bear. Thus their recommendations were confined to extending and improving the present facilities:

- Rebuilding the public wells at these locations:
  - Fayetteville Street at the Cape Fear Bank
  - Fayetteville Street at the Market House
  - Fayetteville Street opposite the old Post Office
  - Hargett and Wilmington streets
  - Hillsboro Street near McDowell Street
- Open each well with a minimum 12-foot diameter at the bottom.
- Sink each well to a depth that produces a minimum average of five feet of water.
- Supply each well with metal forcing pumps, and with connections for attaching fire hose.
- Procure 1,000 feet of leather hose, pipe, etc. for this purpose.
- Construct four underground reservoirs, or cisterns, upon Fayetteville Street.
- Locate each cistern under the sidewalk.
- Build each cistern of brick laid in Hydraulic Cement, and with a minimum capacity of 3,000 gallons.
- Construct a one-story, 18 by 40 foot brick building on the Market Square for use as an engine house and guard house.
- Appoint a general Superintendent of the Fire Department, who "shall have charge of all matters pertaining to this Department, shall exercise all powers now vested in the city authorities in case of fire, shall receive a fair compensation for his services and shall be responsible to this board for the faithful performance of his duty."

- Immediately reorganize the fire department, and that their committee should submit to the Board at their next meeting any ordinances needed to "carry this resolution into the effect."

The Committee on Fire and Water estimated the cost of their recommended measures under \$2,000. Their recommendations were all approved by the Board of Commissioners.<sup>38</sup>

### **First Fire Chief**

On February 14, the Committee on Fire and Water appointed committee member Commissioner Seymour W. Whiting as Superintendent of the Fire Department. Effectively Raleigh's first Fire Chief, Whiting was paid \$100 a year. The position existed for only a couple of years. By 1854, changes to the city ordinances deleted all references to the Superintendent of the Fire Department and substituted the text "captains of the several companies." The position wasn't reinstated until January 1868, when City Commissioners adopted a new code of ordinances concerning the Superintendent of Fire Department, and subsequently elected Joseph Backalan to the position.<sup>39</sup>

### **City Ordinance Adopted**

Also on February 14, the Committee on Fire and Water presented an ordinance to the Board of Commissioners. It was adopted and ordered published in three of the city papers:<sup>40</sup>

That the Intendant shall forthwith (and hereafter during the month of January in each and every year) take the necessary measures in pursuance of the Act of the General Assembly for 1826-27, for organizing three fire Companies. Two of the said Companies to consist of forty men each, and the other of twenty. The first two to be known as Fire Companies No. 1 and 2, and the other as the Hook and Ladder Company.

It shall be the duty of the said companies to meet at such time and place for

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<sup>38</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Feb. 11, 1852.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, 410- 411; *Sentinel* (d), Jan. 15, 16, 1868; *Register* (sw?), Jan. 17, 1868.

<sup>40</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Feb. 18, 1852.

exercise and inspection as may be directed by the Superintendent of the Fire Department, who shall give notice thereof to the Captains of the respective Companies, [and] whose duty it shall be to cause notice to be given to their respective members; and in case any officer shall fail to give such notice, or to appear at such time and place without a good or sufficient excuse for such failure, he shall be subject to a fine of ten dollars for every such default, and in case of failure by a private member to appear, he shall be subject to a fine of one dollar.

It shall be the duty of the said companies upon the alarm of fire, to proceed at once to the Engine House and thence, with their respective machines, to the fire, where they shall be under the entire control and direction of the Superintendent of the Fire Department, and in case of Fire, if any of the officers of the said companies shall fail to appear, or appearing shall refuse to obey any order of the Superintendent or shall absent himself from his duty for his company shall be discharged by the superintendent, he shall be subject to a fine of Twenty dollars for every such default, or if [the absent person is] a private member [they will be subject] to a fine of five dollars for every such default, and if [the absent person is] an officer [they] may be removed from his office by the Board of Commissioners.

It shall be the duty of the Captain of each Company to keep a roll of the members of his company, [and] which roll shall be called whenever the company may be ordered out for exercise, and also at every fire, after [the time that] the Superintendent shall have discharged the Companies from duty. And it shall be the duty of the Captains to return to the Superintendent a list of the members absent, or who being present refuse to perform their duty, [and] which [as a] report, together with a list of absent officers, the superintendent shall lay before the Board of Commissioners, [and] who shall cause the delinquents to be notified, and unless good and sufficient excuses are rendered, shall confirm the fines herein before named, and direct the same to be collected at their next regular meeting thereafter, and to be paid into the City Treasury.

It shall be the duty of the Superintendent to be present at each meeting of the Companies for exercise, and at every fire; and to take the entire charge and direction of said Companies at such fire; to inspect the Engines, Hooks and Ladders, etc., and report to the Board any neglect, injury or abuse of the same; to recommend such alteration or repair as he may deem necessary to the Board of Commissioners; and especially to see that there is at all times a full supply of water as far as the means of the city will permit. The Superintendent of the Fire Department shall be appointed by the Board of Commissioners and shall receive an annual compensation of one hundred dollars, and may be removed from office at any time for incompetence or neglect of duty.

In case of fire it shall be the duty of the Intendant of Police to attend and take charge of the Police Department. In case of the removal or exposure of property, he shall detail a sufficient number of citizens, not members of the Fire Department, who shall constitute an auxiliary police force, whose duty it shall be, under direction of the Intendant, to guard all exposed property, and detain all suspicious and disorderly persons, and do whatever may be lawfully done to protect the rights of citizens and preserve the public peace.

### **Forming Fire Companies**

On February 18, the *Register* noted their hope that the recommended reorganization of the fire department would succeed. In particular, they expressed their wish that "the requisite number of names to make the Companies complete will be immediately volunteered, and that the Intendant may be spared the necessity of resorting to the compulsory process designated by law." The necessary number of volunteer did not present themselves, however. At the end of the month, the City Commissioners and Intendant resorted to drafting citizens to complete the ranks of the volunteer fire companies.<sup>41</sup>

Fire Company No. 1 was organized on the afternoon of Saturday, February 28, 1852, with the election of officers for the year:

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<sup>41</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Feb. 18, Mar. 3, 1852.



- D. Royster Jr., Captain
- W. D. Ashley, First Lieutenant
- E. S. Ligon, Second Lieutenant
- D. C. Murray, Third Lieutenant
- William White Jr., Secretary
- Lynn Adams, Treasurer

Fire Company No. 2 was organized around the same time, and with likely similar ranks of officers. The Hook and Ladder Company, the first such fire company in Raleigh, was organized on March 3, at a meeting held at the court house. T. H. Snow was called to the Chair, and J. D. Cameron was appointed secretary. The Secretary announced that a quorum was present and the participants proceeded to elect officers:

- T. H. Snow, Captain
- Mr. Ruffin, First Lieutenant
- Isaac Proctor, Second Lieutenant
- J. D. Cameron, Secretary and Treasurer

They also appointed a committee to draft by-laws and rules for the fire company. The committee members were J. D. Cameron, Isaac Proctor, T. H. Briggs, and Ira Beckwith.<sup>42</sup>

### **Engines and Fires**

As the city's three fire companies took shape, the question of acquiring two new fire engines was raised at the March 6 meeting of the Board of Commissioners. The city's existing engines were older. They had been delivered in 1819 and 1840, and both required repairs to make them operational. The Fire and Water Committee was directed to "correspond and consult as to the propriety and probable expense of procuring two good new fire engines." The city subsequently placed an order for a pair of new engines.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, Mar. 6, 1852.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, Mar. 10, 1852.

On April 16, 1852, a fire in the office of the Supreme Court destroyed two tables and a couple of chairs. The fire was discovered by the watchman about 2:00 a.m. The books and papers upon the table were also destroyed, though they could be "replaced without difficulty." The cause of the fire was believed accidental.<sup>44</sup>

On April 27, 1852, fire destroyed the residence of L. O. B. Branch on Hillsboro Street. The "large and elegant" structure was discovered ablaze about 1:30 p.m. The origin of the fire was believed to be a candle. A portion of Mr. Branch's furniture, clothing, and other property was also destroyed. There was no insurance on the recently built home or its contents.<sup>45</sup>

Fires from this period were recorded in the newspapers. In the absence of official records, however, the total activity of the volunteer Raleigh Fire Department during this time is not known.

### **Call for Volunteers**

The annual reorganizing of the volunteer fire companies was repeated in February of the next year. This notice appeared in the February 18, 1853 edition of the semi-weekly *Raleigh Register*:

Fire Companies!

The citizens of Raleigh are hereby invited to enroll their names as members of the City Fire Companies: Two of said Companies are to consist of Forty men each, and the other, Twenty men. The first two to be known as Fire Companies Nos. 1 and 2, and the other as the Hook and Ladder Company, in accordance with the provisions of an Act of Assembly entitled "An Act for the better protection of the City of Raleigh from losses by fire."

Persons disposed to volunteer as members of the same will furnish the City Constable with their names, on or before Saturday the 26th day of February, 1853, [and] on which day, if the prescribed number (one hundred) have not previously volunteered, a draft will be made from the whole number of citizens to supply the deficiency. Members of the Fire Companies are exempt by

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, Apr. 21, 1852.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, Apr. 28, 1852.

Act of Assembly from Military duty during their term of service, except the country should be at war.

Wm. Dallas Haywood, Intendant, Feb. 11, 1853

### **The Engine Arrives**

The first of the new fire engines ordered the prior year was delivered in March. The hand engine was named the Excelsior. Members of Fire Company No. 1 met at the railroad depot on Friday, March 5, to receive the new engine. The apparatus had just been delivered from the manufacturer. Though inclement weather prevented any formal reception, the members "exercised the engine" in the street. The editors of the *Raleigh Register* added their opinion that the "handsome model" was still "entirely too small [...] unless associated with others." The fire company soon adopted the name of the engine, and called itself the Excelsior Fire Company. The second engine was delivered by August of that year. It was named Rescue, and the city's second engine company adopted its name.<sup>46</sup>

The two engines were described decades later by Fred A. Olds, who remembered them as "each rather like a long box, gaily painted, with hose known as suction hose, which was let down into a street cistern or into a shallow well, while the firemen took hold of the rods on either side which worked the pumps, raising these and pulling them down with a swing altogether; sometimes other firemen standing on the machines and in this way giving their weight, so that there were two rows on the ground and two on the machine." He also recounted "it used to be a great sight [...] to see the men run to a fire, in day time or at night. The long lines of rope, gay with colored cords and tassels and handholds of knots every few feet, were pulled out from the little reel in [the] front [of the engine] and away the crowd went, sometimes through mud knee-deep, any citizen was very proud to lend a hand, and the engine being as big an attraction as the fire itself."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Mar. 5, 9, Aug. 27, 1853. The name Rescue Company was used over a decade later by the Merchants Independent Fire Company, which was renamed the Rescue Steam Fire Engine Company No. 1 in 1870.

<sup>47</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July 6, 1914. Frederick Augustus Olds (1853-1935) was a historian, newspaper columnist, lecturer, and editor who lived in Raleigh. He contributed greatly in the preservation and dissemination of North Carolina history, and was the founder of the state archives. In the late 1880s, he started collecting legal documents, as well as portraits and photographs of governors and other notable citizens. The items were first stored in the State Library, and then moved to the old Supreme Court building. By 1930, it contained an estimated 30,000 items. The Fred A. Olds Hall of History and a public school in Raleigh were named for him and his work. Fred A. Olds biography, *Documenting the American South* web site, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/wwi/olds/bio.html>, retrieved July 11, 2010.

By mid-century, hand engines were manufactured in five sizes. The largest were first-size, operated by as many as fifty firemen, and delivering about 150 gallons per minute at a rate of 40 to 60 strokes per minute. The smallest, fifth size, required a minimum of four men, and pumped about 30 gallons per minute. The specific sizes of Raleigh's hand engines delivered in 1853 are not known. One more hand engine, a side-stroke apparatus built by Rumsey and Company for \$1,500, was delivered in 1873 for the Victor Company. This was the fifth and last hand engine used in the Capitol City.<sup>48</sup>

## Procession

On July 4, 1853, members of the fire companies participated in a Fourth of July church service along with city and state officials, and others. This notice appeared in the semi-weekly *Raleigh Register* on July 2:

### FOURTH OF JULY

National Salute and ringing of bells before sunrise  
At sunrise, Divine Service at the Presbyterian Church

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### ORDER OF PROCESSION

[ To be formed at the Court House, 10 o'clock, and march in the following order in the Western entrance of the Capitol, and enter in reversed order. ]

Music,  
Sons of Temperance,  
Fire Companies,  
Citizens,  
Strangers,  
Intendant of Police and Commissioners,  
Governor and Heads of Department,  
Judges of Supreme Court,  
Committee of Arrangements,  
Clergy,  
Chaplain,  
Orator and Reader.

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<sup>48</sup> Ditzel, Paul C. *Fire Engines, Firefighters-The Men, Equipment, and Machines, from Colonial Days to the Present*. New York: Rutledge Books, 1976, 108.

☞ Citizens are earnestly request to *department from their usual custom* and join  
in the Procession!

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### Exercises in the Commons Hall

Music – Prayer – Music

Reading of the Declaration of Independence by H. S. Smith, Esq. : Music :  
Oration by Fred C. Shepard, Esq. : Music : Benediction.

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At 8½ o'clock, in the evening, there will be a display of Fire Works.

SEATON GALES, Marshal

Assistants

W. S. Bryan,	D. W. Cameron,
J. A. Halsey,	Jas. T. Marriot.

### Engine House

The city's first building for housing fire engines was completed by August 27, 1853. The combination engine house and guard house was built of brick and located on Market Square. The square was located on the east side of the second block of Fayetteville Street, between two driveways later known as Market and Exchange streets. The square extended east to Wilmington Street.<sup>49</sup>

The engine house served for at least 15 years, until the Market House was destroyed by fire on December 15, 1868. The fire was believed to have started in the kitchen attached to the restaurant of David Lewis, which was located at the corner of Fayetteville Street and Market Square. Flames spread to the restaurant, as well as the adjoining store of watchmaker and jeweler T. V. Muss. By the time the alarm of fire was sounded, both stores were “wrapped in flames.”<sup>50</sup>

Despite the efforts of firefighters, the flames spread to the wooden cupola of the Market House. The three buildings were destroyed, with nothing remaining but “smoking ashes and desolate walls.” Also lost was the town clock and bell. The firemen were credited with

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<sup>49</sup> *Raleigh Register* (sw), Aug. 27, 1853; Murray, 410.

<sup>50</sup> *Sentinel* (d), Dec. 16, 1868.

preventing the spread of the fire to the other buildings on Fayetteville Street. No damage to the engine house was reported.<sup>51</sup>

Plans for a new Market House were soon under way. A three-story municipal building was planned, and would occupy the center of Market Square. It would extend to Fayetteville Street on the east end, and to Wilmington Street on the west end. The building included space for the City Market, as well as a performance hall and dressing rooms, an office for the Mayor and others, a guard room and jail, and a hall and engine rooms for firefighters. It was also equipped with a clock tower, and a new city bell that served as the fire alarm.<sup>52</sup>

The 1853 engine house on Market Square was removed at some point early in the construction of Metropolitan Hall.<sup>53</sup>

## **Water Supply**

The underground cisterns that were built beginning after the 1851 fire were described decades later as "reservoirs in the streets ... built of brick and cement, with stones over the top, and the water ran into them from buildings nearby, through special pipes." In the city's annual report of 1884, the smallest cisterns were listed with a capacity of 7,000 gallons each. There were three of these and they were located on Fayetteville Street. The next largest cistern at Hargett and Wilmington streets had a capacity of 10,000 gallons.

The remaining cisterns were substantially larger, between 30,000 and 50,000 gallons. The city's cisterns were likely enlarged after the purchase of the first steam fire engine in 1870. The steamer could pump 600 gallons of water per minute, and thus likely would quickly drain the smaller capacity cisterns.<sup>54</sup>

The cisterns were the city's primary source of water for fighting fire until 1887, when the first fire hydrants were installed. The completion of this municipal water system also changed the equipment of the fire department. Hydrant pressure was sufficient for extin-

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. After another Market Square fire on December 25, 1868, the *Daily Standard* published an editorial calling for improvements to the city's firefighting equipment. "Raleigh ought to have at least one Steam Fire Engine" they wrote.

<sup>52</sup> *Sentinel* (d?), May 17, June 14, 1870; *North Carolina Standard* (d), Aug. 9, 1870; *News & Observer*, Mar. 10, 1938.

<sup>53</sup> Metropolitan Hall also caught fire during its construction. Flames from a chimney flue were discovered and quickly extinguished on February 8, 1870, reported the next day's daily *Sentinel*.

<sup>54</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July \_\_, 1914; Murray, 411; City of Raleigh, *Annual Report of the Mayor and Offices of the City of Raleigh*, NC, 1884, \_\_\_\_

guishing most fires, and hose reels and hose wagons soon supplanted hand engines and the steam engine at fires.<sup>55</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The fire of December 1851 compelled the creation of the first version of the Raleigh Fire Department as it exists today. Within two years of the conflagration, the city had its first salaried Fire Chief, its first engine house, two new fire engines, three fire companies, and plans for expanded water supplies. The volunteer fire department was effective in protecting the Capitol City even as it expanded its corporate limits for the first time in 1857. The city size would nearly triple, expanding from 0.625 square miles to 1.757 square miles. As the Antebellum period ended and a civil war neared, the city faced new challenges for its fire protection forces. But those are stories for another day.

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<sup>55</sup> After the introduction of hydrants, the cisterns were considered a resource in the event of water system failure. One was utilized on April 24, 1913, when the *News & Observer* building on Martin Street burned. Firefighting efforts were impacted by a water main break. Fire Chief Sherwood Brockwell directed the 1905 American LaFrance steam engine to the intersection of Fayetteville and Davie streets, where it was supplied by an old cistern. *News & Observer*, Apr. 25, 1913.

## Appendix - Raleigh Fire Department Milestones, 1851 to 1912

- 1851 Major fire compels changes to city fire protection.
- 1852 Fire department reorganized with two engine companies and hook and ladder company.  
First Fire Chief appointed.  
First fire cisterns constructed.
- 1853 Two replacement hand engines delivered.  
First engine house constructed on Market Square.
- 1854 City ordinances revised to remove position of Fire Chief.
- 1861 Civil War begins. Fire department status during war years unknown.
- 1867 Fire department reorganized with two engine companies, hook and ladder company, and bucket company.
- 1868 City ordinances revised to restore position of Fire Chief.  
City Market and other buildings on Market Square burn.
- 1869 First colored fire company.
- 1870 New City Market building opens, Metropolitan Hall. Includes fire engine rooms, fireman's hall, and clock tower with fire alarm bell.  
Rescue Company engine house opens on Fayetteville Street.  
First steam fire engine delivered.
- 1875 Last hand engine delivered.
- 1878 First chemical engine delivered.
- 1879 First fire horses placed in service.
- 1887 First fire hydrants installed.  
First hose companies organized.  
Capital Hose Company hose house opens on West Morgan Street
- 1888 First fire alarm boxes installed.
- 1891 Fire alarm boxes unlocked.
- 1896 Headquarters fire station opens on West Morgan Street.
- 1897 Victor Company engine house destroyed by fire.
- 1898 Victor Company engine house opens on East Hargett Street.
- 1905 Replacement steam fire engine delivered.
- 1912 Fully-paid fire department formed.  
Volunteer fire companies soon removed from service.



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## Appendix - About the Author

Mike Legeros is the official historian of the Raleigh Fire Department.