# The History of the Raleigh Fire Department

Presented by Mike Legeros

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1

www.legeros.com/slides

2

## Presenter Information

- Digital marketer, day job
- Former Raleigh firefighter
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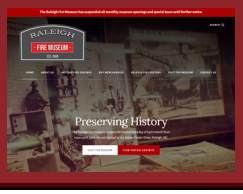
3

## Raleigh Fire Museum
www.raleighfiremuseum.org




4

## Today

Office of Fire Chief

Office of Fire Marshal

Operations

Logistics

Professional Development

5

## How did we get here?

6

## Milestones

1792
City of Raleigh created.

1819
First fire engine and fire company.

1852
Fire department organization created.

1912
Fully-paid fire department created.

7

## Going Back in Time

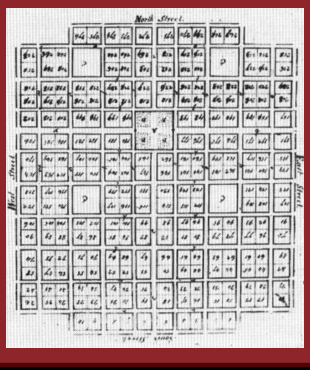
1900s

1800s

1700s

8

## 1792



- City of Raleigh created
- One square mile
- 699 residents by 1803

9

## 1792

**How to protect from fire?**

Prevent fires

Extinguish fires

10

## 1792

Early fire protection measures:

- Planners design **wide streets**, to help prevent fire spread.
- Many **trees** also left intact, to also help.
- No **wooden structures** added to building fronts. Early regulation.

11

## 1802

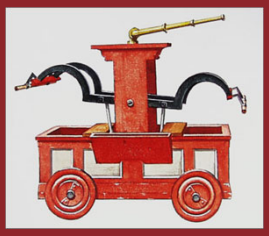
Fire Engine.

*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.

12

## 1802

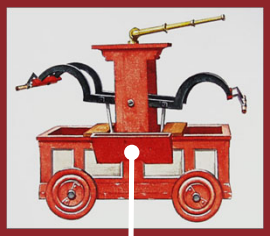


13

## 1802

Nozzle that swivels

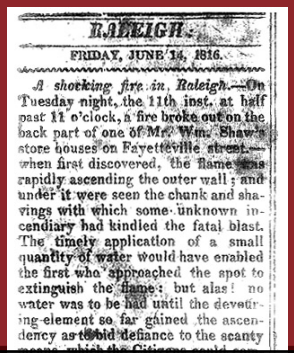
Handles for pumping



Water poured into basin using a chain of buckets (brigade brigade)

14

## 1816



RALEIGH.

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 1816.

*A shocking fire in Raleigh.*—On Tuesday night, the 11th inst. at half past 11 o'clock, a fire broke out on the back part of one of Mr. Wm. Shaw's store houses on Fayetteville street.—when first discovered, the flame was rapidly ascending the outer wall; and under it were seen the chunk and shavings with which some unknown incendiary had kindled the fatal blast. The timely application of a small quantity of water would have enabled the first who approached the spot to extinguish the flame; but alas! no water was to be had until the devouring element so far gained the ascendency as to bid defiance to the scanty

- First major fire
- June 11, 1816
- Dozens of volunteers
- Bucket brigade
- 51 buildings destroyed
- Controlled by blasting
- Fire engine ordered
- Water system attempted (1818)

15

## 1819

A very complete Fire-Engine from Philadelphia, with a Supply Pump, a sufficient length of Hose, Fire-Hooks, Chain, &c

- Joseph Gales, President
- Beverly Daniel, Vice President
- Jacob Lash, Captain
- John T. C. Wiatt, Lieutenant
- William F. Clark, Lieutenant
- Thomas Cobbs, Lieutenant
- Thomas Henderson, Lieutenant
- John Dunn, Treasurer
- John Bell, Secretary

16

## 1819 to 1843

**1821**
Firemen exempt from militia duty.

**1826**
Citizens can be drafted for firefighting.

**1831**
State Capitol burns. Stone and brick for government buildings.

**1838**
Building regulations for fire protection.

**1843**
Second fire engine, second fire company.

17

## 1851

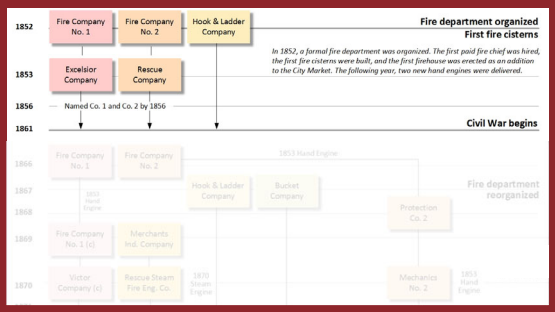
APPALLING CONFLAGRATION!

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

- December 15, 1851
- Over 17 structures
- Ordinances adopted
- Better water supply
- Better fire equipment
- First engine house
- First Fire Chief
- Fire Dept. reorganized

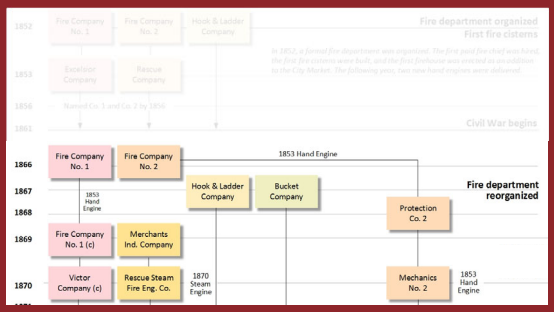
18

## Before Civil War




19

## After Civil War




20

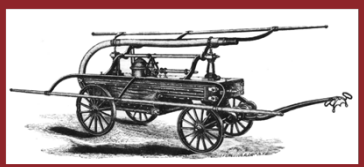
## Let's interrupt our timeline…

21

## Apparatus

22

## 1819, 1873

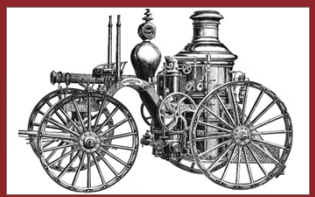


Philadelphia-Style Hand Engine, 1819 (left)

Rumsey Hand Engine, 1873 (right)

23

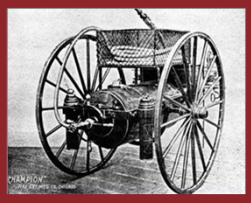
## 1870

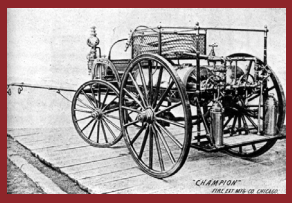


Gould Steamer and Hose Reel

24

## 1878, 1881





Champion Chemical Engines

25

## 1852 to 1890

Hook and Ladder Trucks

26

## 1852 to 1890

"Working" Truck

"Racing" Truck

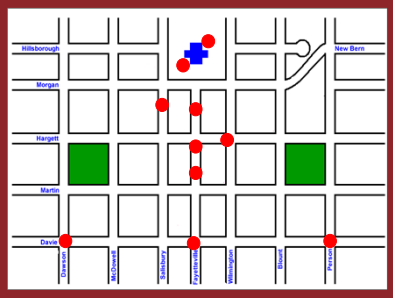
Hook and Ladder Trucks

27

## Water Supply

28

## 1852 to 1887




| Capacity in No. of gallons. | Number of Openings. |
|---|---|
| 40,000 | 2 |
| 7,000 | 1 |
| 7,000 | 1 |
| 7,000 | 1 |
| 10,000 | 1 |
| 30,000 | 2 |
| 30,000 | 2 |
| 40,000 | 2 |
| 30,000 | 2 |
| 30,000 | 2 |
| 30,000 | 2 |
| 50,000 | 1 |
| 50,000 | 1 |

Fire Cisterns

29

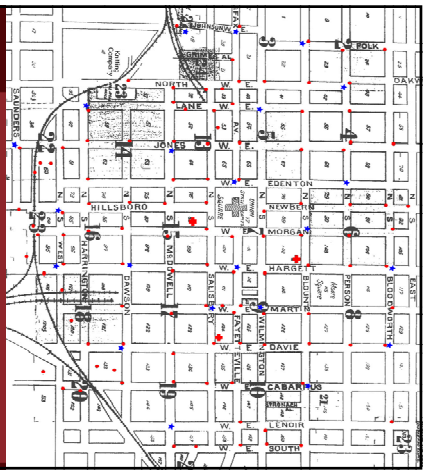
## 1887

STOCK PHOTOS NOT RALEIGH

- Made by Matthews.
- 120 hydrants, double outlets.
- 64 to 80 pounds PSI, 144 to 161 gallons per minute.
- Eight hydrants supplying eight streams.
- Direct pressure on request.

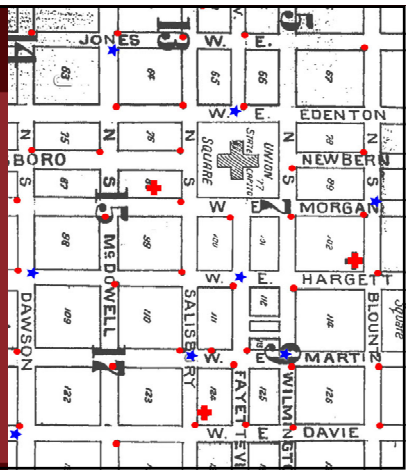
30

1903
Hydrant Map



31

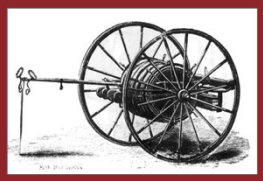
1903
Hydrant Map



32

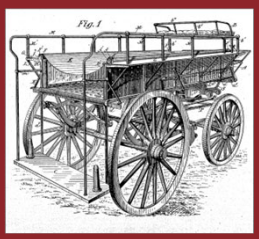
## 1887

Hand-Drawn
Hose Reels



33

## 1890



Horse-Drawn Hose Wagons

34

## Engine Houses

35

## 1870

Metropolitan Hall
Fayetteville Street

Rescue Company Engine House
Fayetteville Street

36

## 1887

Capital Hose Company House
West Morgan Street

37

## 1887

Water tower base

Fireman's meeting room upstairs

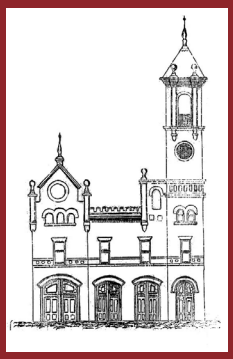
Water company office

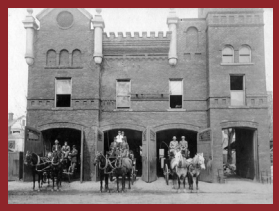
Garage for hand hose reel

Capital Hose Company House
West Morgan Street

38

## 1896





Headquarters
West Morgan Street

39

## 1897

THE FIRE LAST NIGHT

The Victor Engine House is Badly Damaged.

HORSES BURNED TO DEATH

THE FLAMES STARTED FROM AN EXPLODING LAMP.

The Loss is Between $500 and $1,000 --The Victor Reel Was Not Ruined But is Badly Damaged.

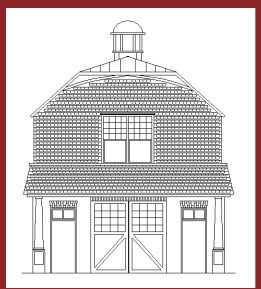
The criminal negligence of Joe Penny, one of the night watchmen at the Victor Hose Reel engine house, cost the city last night upwards of $1,000, to say nothing of what might have proved a disastrous fire and the pitiable spectacle of seeing two fine horses burned to death.

Victor Company
Engine House Burns

South Salisbury and
West Davie Streets

40

## 1898



Victor Company Engine House
East Hargett Street

41

## Fire Alarm System

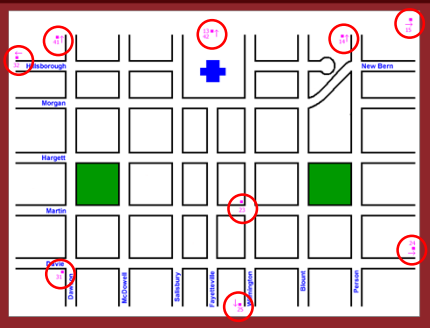
42

## 1888

Street Box - Alarm Bell

43

## 1888




Original locations of alarm boxes

44

Back to our timeline…

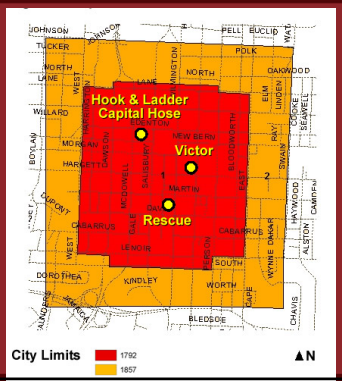
45

## 1870 to 1890

- First steam engine (1870)
- First chemical engine (1878)
- First fire horses (1879)
- First fire hydrants, first hose companies (1887)
- Fire alarm system installed (1888)
- Last hand-drawn apparatus (1890)

46

## 1900




**Demographics**

1.8 square miles

13,643 residents

Three fire stations

90 members

47

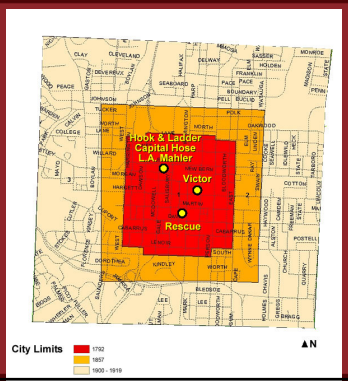
## 1905

New American LaFrance Steamer

New Steam Engine Fire Company

48

## 1910




4.0 square miles

19,218 residents

Three fire stations

127 members

49

## 1912

RALEIGH WILL HAVE
A PAID DEPARTMENT

First Class Fire-Fighting Apparatus to Cost Less Than $35,000 Will Be Installed By Capital City at Early Date

Fully-Paid Fire Department

Fire Chief Sherwood Brockwell

50

## 1912

First Full-Time Firefighters

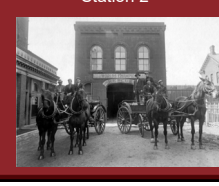
51

## 1912

Station 1

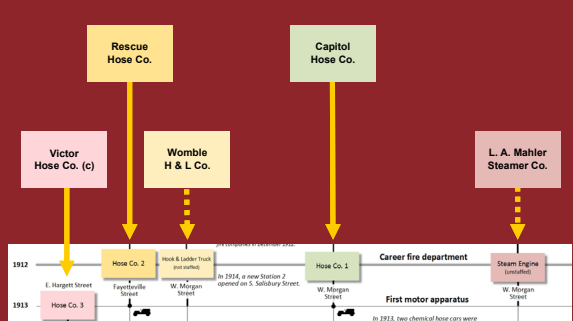
Station 2

Station 3



52

## 1912




53

## 1913

FIRE WAGONS
ARE ENROUTE

Automobile Trucks Expected to Reach Raleigh By Tomorrow

Fire Chief Sherwood Brockwell has received information from the manufacturers that the two automobile fire trucks ordered for Raleigh have been shipped and the chief is expecting them tomorrow. One of the trucks will be placed in the Capital Hose Company quarters, and the other in the Rescue quarters.

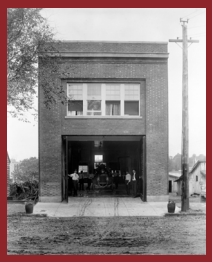
With each truck will be 1,000 feet of hose, the 24-foot ladders, a forty-gallon chemical tank, a roof ladder, turret pipes, axes and other paraphernalia. Chief Brockwell will drive one truck and Assistant Chief Farmer the other until the regular chauffeurs are trained for the work.

The headquarters of the Victor company has been fitted up for service as a hosewagon and team will be stationed there. Chief Brockwell has his men at work every day.

American LaFrance
Chemical/Hose Cars

54

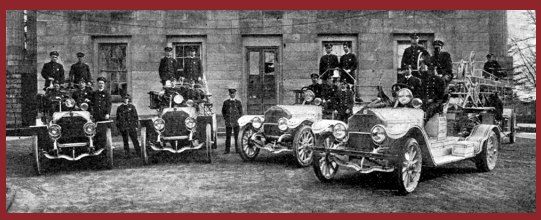
## 1914



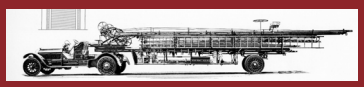
Station 2 – South Salisbury Street

55

## 1914, 1916

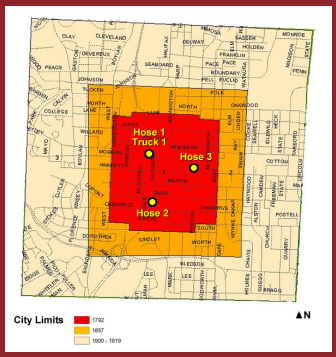


1914 ALF Pumper,
1916 ALF Aerial Ladder



56

## 1920




6.9 square miles
24,418 residents
Three fire stations
~30 members

57

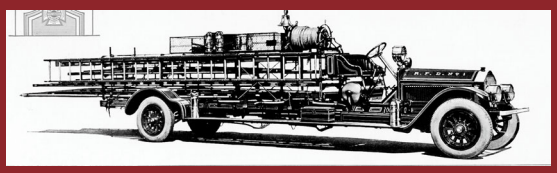
## 1920s

Station 4 - 1926
Jefferson Street

Station 5 - 1926
Park Drive

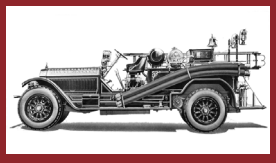
58

## 1920s



1922 American LaFrance
Service Truck

1926 American LaFrance
Pumper



59

## 1924

### Two Platoons Created

| | |
|---|---|
| Day Watch | 0800 to 1145 |
| | 1145 to 1530 |
| | 1530 to 1900 |
| Night Watch | 1900 to 2230 |
| | 2230 to 0130 |
| | 0130 to 0430 |
| | 0430 to 0800 |

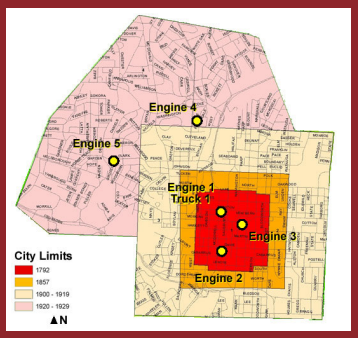
60

## 1910 to 1929

- April 24, 1913 – News & Observer building
- March 25, 1914 – Tompkins Hall, A&M College
- April 10, 1926 – Insane Asylum
- **July 3, 1928 – Yarborough Hotel**

61

## 1930

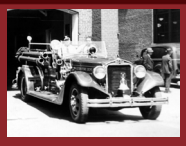



7.6 square miles
37,379 residents
Five fire stations
56 members

62

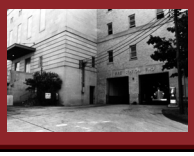
## 1930s

City Auditorium, Burned 1930



New 1936 Pumper

Station 2 at Memorial Auditorium, Opened 1932



1939 Tractor for 1916 Tiller

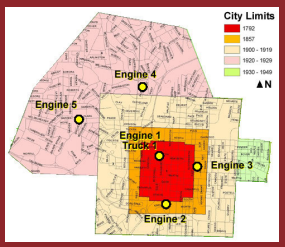
63

## 1930s

- 1935 – Civil service protection gained.
- 1938 – Local 548 of IAFF chartered.
- 1959 – Ceased operations after state ruling.
- 1968 – State ruling overturned by feds.
- 1969 – Local 548 re-chartered.
- 1986 – Local 548 re-chartered again.

64

## 1940




10.88 square miles
46,897 residents
Five fire stations
~56 members

65

## 1941

- Station 1 on Morgan Street closed.
- Engine 1 moved to Old Station 2 on Salisbury Street.
- Aerial ladder and service truck moved to Station 2 at Memorial Auditorium.
- Engine 2 moved to Station 1 on Salisbury Street.

66

## 1941

World War II

Civil Defense
Air-Raid Drills
Auxiliary Firefighters
Materials Restrictions

67

## 1940s

Station 6

Opened 1943
2519 Fairview Road

Moved 1949
2602 Fairview Road

68

## 1940s

1948 Ford Auxiliary Truck

1919 American LaFrance

Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

24 Hour Shifts

69

## 1949

1949 FWD Pumper
1950 Mack Pumper

70

## 1949

Fire Prevention Bureau Formed

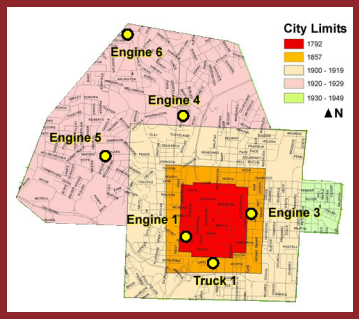
71

## 1930 to 1949

- March 25, 1935 – Efird's Department Store
- May 18, 1939 – Norfolk Southern Railway Shops
- January 7, 1943 – Wake County Group Home
- **December 29, 1943 – Bellas Hess Clothing Store**
- February 1, 1948 – Carolina Country Club

72

## 1950




10.88 square miles

65,679 residents

Six fire stations

67 members

73

## 1950s

New Station 1

1951 ▶

◀ 1953

American LaFrance Pumper

Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad

◀ 1953

1958 ▶

American LaFrance Aerial Ladder

74

## 1950s

Station 3

Ladies Auxiliary

1954 ▶

◀ 1951

Training Tower

Station 7

◀ 1951

1959 ▶

75

## March 10, 1956

Line of Duty Death – Lt. Vernon Smith

76

## April 23, 1959

*Robert L. Battle:*

**Wake Night Jailer Is Drowning Victim**

SANFORD — Robert L. Battle, Wake County's night jailer, drowned Thursday in the Cape Fear River while helping in a search for the body of a missing farmer.

Wildlife Protector A. G. Godwin of Sanford recovered the body around 10:30 and it was returned to Raleigh.

Deputy Sheriff H. A. Farrell Jr. of Chatham County, who was also aiding in the search, reported that one of the rescuers drowned after swimming out to investigate an overturned boat. Lee County Deputy Britt Kelly identified the drowned rescuer as Battle, who was taking part in the search as a member of a Raleigh rescue squad.

**Rescue Unit.**

Half a dozen rescue units were participating in the search for the body of Isaac Barker, 33, of Fuquay Springs, Rt. 1, who apparently drowned Wednesday when his fishing boat overturned in turbulent water two miles or so above Buckhorn Dam. A. Lee Tilley, also of near Fuquay, who was on the fishing trip with Barker, was rescued at Buckhorn late Wednesday.

Farrell said a Wildlife Commission plane being used in the search spotted an overturned boat late Thursday afternoon in the river near Battle Dam, some five miles below Buckhorn Dam. An object on the back of the boat was identified as a life jacket. Battle swam out to investigate and, Farrell said, was unable to make it back to shore.

Battle had a rope around his waist when he swam out, members of the rescue squad reported, but it wasn't long enough to reach all the way and he requested those on shore to let it go. When he became exhausted

See DROWNING, Page 5b.

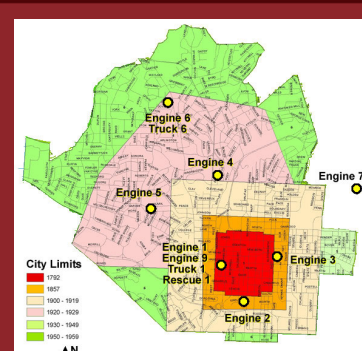
ROBERT L. BATTLE

Line of Duty Death

Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad Volunteer Robert Battle

77

## 1960




33.67 square miles

93,931 residents

Seven fire stations

123 members

78

## 1960s

1969

New Station 2

New Shop at Station 2

New Station 4

New Station 5

1961 ▶

◀ 1963

79

## 1960s

Station 8

◀ 1960

1963 ▶

Station 9

1963

80

## 1964

Smokehouse

81

## 1960s

American LaFrance Pumpers

American LaFrance Aerial Ladder

GMC Service Truck

GMC Tankers

82

## 1960s

Foam Trucks

83

## 1950 to 1969

- March 3, 1952 – K&W Motor Company
- July 28, 1958 – Edenton Street Church
- September 5, 1962 – Hayes Barton Church
- **February 22, 1965 – Pullen Hall at State College** ▶
- April 1968 – Civil unrest

84

## 1963 to 1964

First black firefighters hired in 1963 and 1964:

- Larry Gene Williams
- Welton Jones
- E. Louis Stephens
- James L. Giles
- James Greene Jr.
- Norwood M. Peacock
- Richmond Davis Jr.

85

## April 20, 1965

At Blaze

**Fireman Dies on The Job**

Raleigh fireman Paul A. "Pallie" Mimms of 215 Georgetown Rd. died early Tuesday from what was believed to be a heart attack as he helped fight a fire at 1908 Hillsboro St.

Fire Chief Jack Keeter said Mimms, 41, fainted as he was operating a pumper on a fire truck and was pronounced dead on arrival at Rex Hospital.

The fire chief said the examining physicians suspected a heart attack. Keeter said he expected them to make further studies as to the cause of death.

The fire was in the basement of Norden Laboratories Inc. and was discovered about 12:35 a.m. Mimms had driven the pumper truck to the fire scene from Station No. 5 where he was assigned.

Started in Wiring

Assistant Fire Chief F. M. Burnette said the fire apparently started from wiring in the basement of the Norden firm, which handles veterinary drugs and supplies.

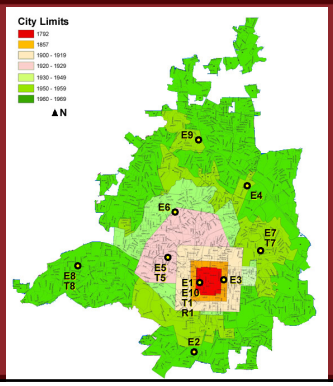
The blaze was confined largely to the basement area, fireman said, but burned through the floor of the drug firm and through the floor of the adjoining College Court Billiard Parlor.

Firemen had to evacuate the College Court Apartments on the second floor of the building because of the smoke. One woman took refuge from the smoke on a small balcony on the second floor of the apartment. Chief Burnette said, and was taken down by ladder.

Line of Duty Death – Lt. Paul Mimms

86

## 1970




44.93 square miles

122,830 residents

Nine fire stations

196 members

87

## 1970s

Station 10

Station 14

Station 11

Station 15

Station 12

Station 16

1971 – 1971 – 1974 – 1974 – 1974 – 1979

88

## 1970s

Mack Fire Apparatus

89

## 1970s

Chevy service truck

Chevy rescue squad

Mack aerial platform

Mack tractor

90

## 1970s

- 1972 - City/county emergency communications center.
- 1973 - Fire alarm boxes removed.
- 1973 - Replaced by telephone boxes.

91

## 1970s

- Third platoon (shift) added (1970)
- First two battalions (districts) created (1971)
- **EMT training starts (1976)**
- Third battalion (district) created (1977)
- First recruit academy* (1978)
- First female firefighters hired (1978)

* Mike, explain that asterisk!

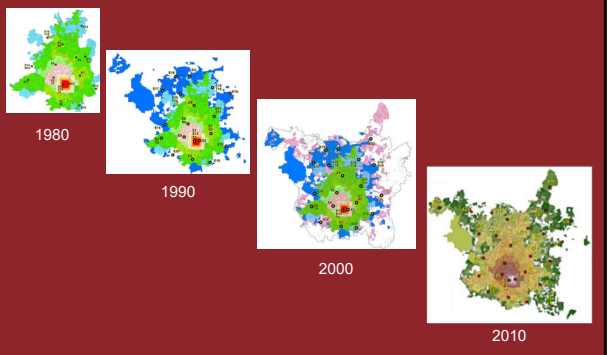
92

## 1980 to 2010

Now we go faster…

93

## 1980 to 2010




94

## 1980 to 2010

95

## 1980 to 2010

Mack – Pirsch – EEI – Pierce – Quality – ALF – Pierce

96

## 1980 to 2010

Seagrave – Pierce – American LaFrance – Spartan – Simon - Quality

97

## 1980 to 2010

Special Units

98

## 1980 to 2010

EMT / Rescue / USAR

1980s First-responder goes city wide.
Haz-mat.

1990s EMT- D program.
Confined space and trench rescue.
High-level rescue.

2000s Swift water rescue.
NC USAR Task Force 8.
NC helicopter rescue team participation.
NC regional haz-mat team to Raleigh.

99

## 1980 to 2010

1980s

- Keeter Training Center
- Fire investigation team.
- First mobile air unit.
- Explorer post.
- Honor guard.

1990s

- First Division Chief
- First closed-cab apparatus.
- Fire safety house.
- Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT).

2000s

- Fourth battalion.
- Bike team.
- Full time investigators.
- Thermal imaging cameras.
- Eighth ladder company.

2010s

- Fifth battalion.
- Squad companies.
- Heavy rescue company.
- Second air truck.
- Ninth ladder company.

100

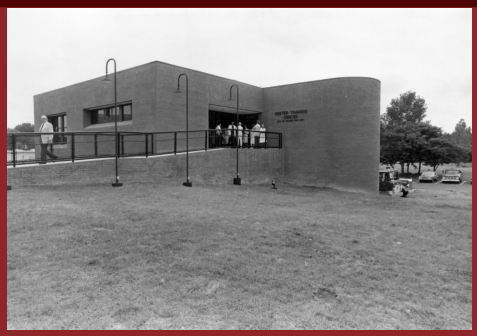
## 1981

**July 7, 1981**
**Mangel's Building**

- 124 Fayetteville Street Mall
- Built 1890-1900
- Two-story, wood-frame
- 24,940 square-feet
- 100+ firefighters including 21 recruits
- 30 with injuries

101

## 1982



Keeter Training Center

102

## 1988

North Raleigh tornado

103

## 1992

STOCK PHOTOS NOT RALEIGH

Fire Protection Engineer

104

## 1993

EMT Defibrillator Program

105

## 1996

Hurricane Fran

106

## 2003

North Carolina Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Task Force 8
Raleigh – Cary – Chapel Hill – Durham

107

## 2005 to 2006

Old training tower demolished in 2005.
New training tower built in 2006

108

## 2006 and later

USAR training area

Training props

Shelters and storage

Modular classrooms (not shown)

109

## 2006

Bike team created

110

## 2006

Construction Division Added

111

## 2007

February 22, 2007
Pine Knoll Townes

- Six alarms
- 19 engines 6 ladders
- 10 relief companies (8E/2L)
- 11 FDs covering from Wake Co. Durham Co.
- 27 homes destroyed, 11 damaged.
- 12 four-unit structures involved
- 29 families, 72 people displaced
- $4 million damage

112

## January 22, 2008

Line of Duty Death – Lt. Herman Jones

113

## 2010

Fire Prevention Division / Office of Fire Marshal

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FY70 | 6 | FY80 | 5 | FY90 | 7 | FY00 | 13 |
| FY71 | 6 | FY81 | 5 | FY91 | 8 | FY01 | 13 |
| FY72 | 6 | FY82 | 5 | FY92 | 10 | FY02 | 13 |
| FY73 | 6 | FY83 | 6 | FY93 | 12 | FY03 | 13 |
| FY74 | 6 | FY84 | 6 | FY94 | 12 | FY04 | 13 |
| FY75 | 6 | FY85 | 6 | FY95 | 12 | FY05 | 13 |
| FY76 | 6 | FY86 | 7 | FY96 | 13 | FY06 | 13 |
| FY77 | 6 | FY87 | 7 | FY97 | 13 | FY07 | 21 |
| FY78 | 6 | FY88 | 7 | FY98 | 13 | FY08 | 25 |
| FY79 | 5 | FY89 | 7 | FY99 | 13 | FY09 | 25 |
| | | | | | | FY10 | 25 |

114

## 2014

Rescue pumpers for
Squad companies

*"Coffin compartments" on top!*

115

## 2015

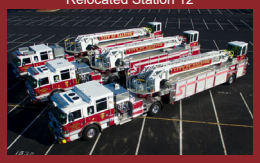
Station 29
Second Tiller
Ninth Ladder

116

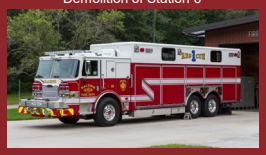
## 2016 to 2019

Relocated Station 12

Demolition of Station 6



Third Tiller



New Heavy Rescue

117

## 2016 to 2019

Shop
Lifts

e-Hydraulics

118

## 2020

Chief of Department
Herbert Griffin

September 8, 2020

119

## 2020

Renovated Station 11

Fire Protection System Simulator

Dashboard

Decon

120

## Line of Duty Deaths

Asst. Chief of Training
W. Keith Tessinear
August 29, 2019

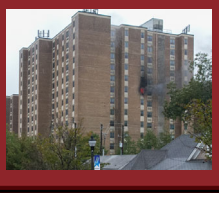
Lt. Brent Upton
March 17, 2021

121

## Major Incidents

Metropolitan
2017

Civil Unrest
2020



Glenwood Towers
2018

122

## 2021

Rebuilt Station 6

Relocated Station 14

Short Academy + Long Academy

High-Water Rescue

123

## 2021-2022

Incident Safety Officer

Apparatus Orders

New Hope Coverage

Relocated Station 22

124

## Today

Office of
Fire Chief

Office of
Fire Marshal

Operations

Logistics

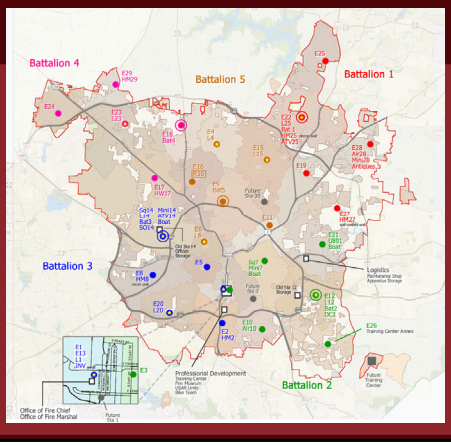
Professional
Development

125

## Today

28 Fire Stations
29 Engine Companies
2 Squad Companies (rescue pumpers)
9 Ladder Companies
1 Rescue Companies
5 Battalion Chiefs
626 Uniformed and Civilian Personnel

126




127

Questions?

128

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www.legeros.com/slides

129