



The History of the Raleigh Fire Department

Presented by Mike Legeros

Last updated August 1, 2025

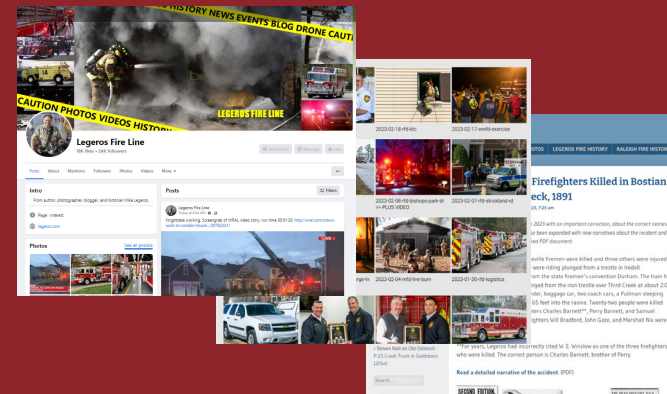


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Presenter Information

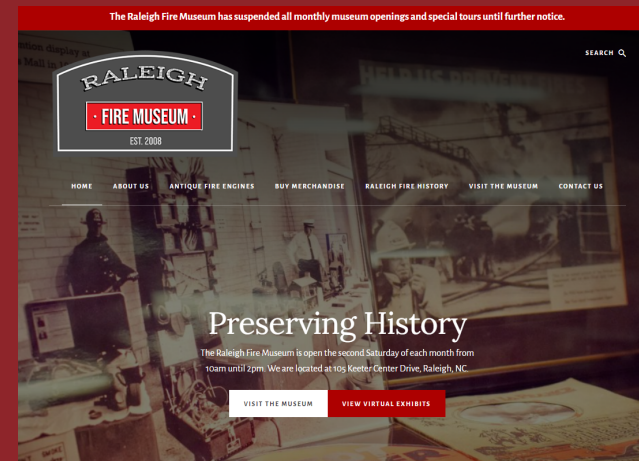
- ▣ Digital marketer by job
 - ▣ Former Raleigh firefighter
 - ▣ Official historian
 - ▣ Incident photographer
 - ▣ Author
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 - ▣ www.legeros.com





Raleigh Fire Museum

www.raleighfiremuseum.org





Today





How did we get here?



Milestones

1792

City of Raleigh created.

1819

First fire engine and fire company.

1852

Fire department organization created.

1912

Fully-paid fire department created.



Going Back in Time



1900s



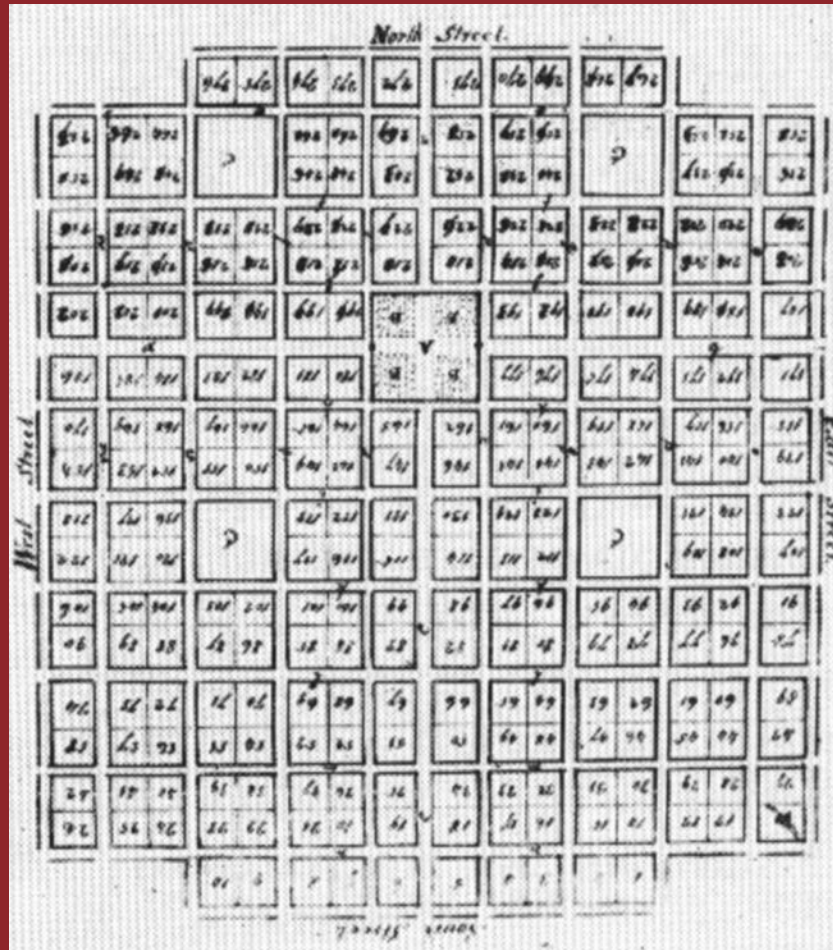
1800s



1700s



1792



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



1792

How to protect from fire?

Prevent fires

Extinguish fires



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.



1802

Fire Engine.

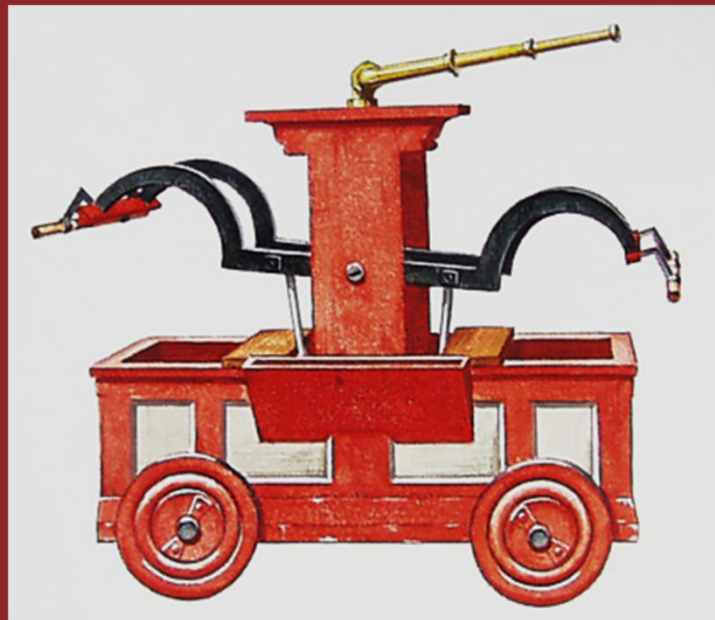
The Subscribers to the Fund for purchasing a Fire Engine for the use of this City, are requested to meet at the Court-House, on Friday next, at four o'clock, for the Purpose of giving an Order for the Purchase of the Engine and other Apparatus, (a Sufficiency of Money for the Purpose being subscribed)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



1802



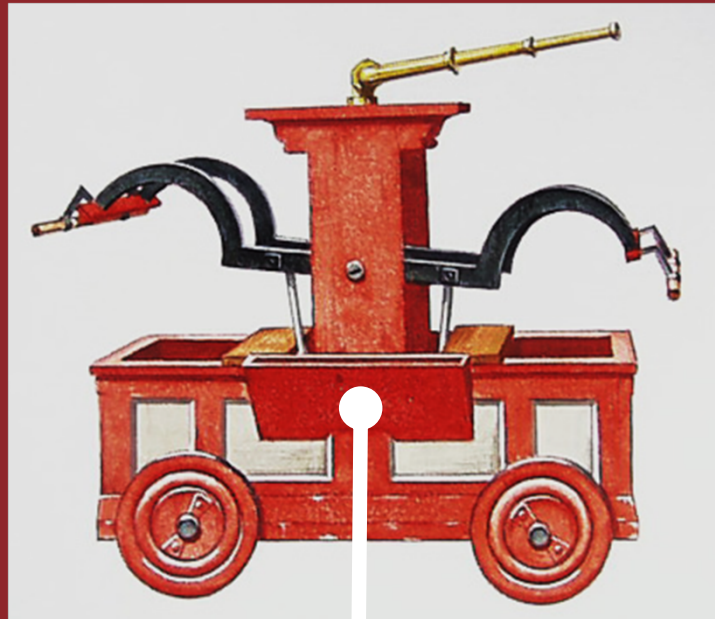


1802

Nozzle that
swivels



Handles for
pumping



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



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 ascendancy as to bid defiance to the scanty means which the Citizens could com-

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



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



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.



1851

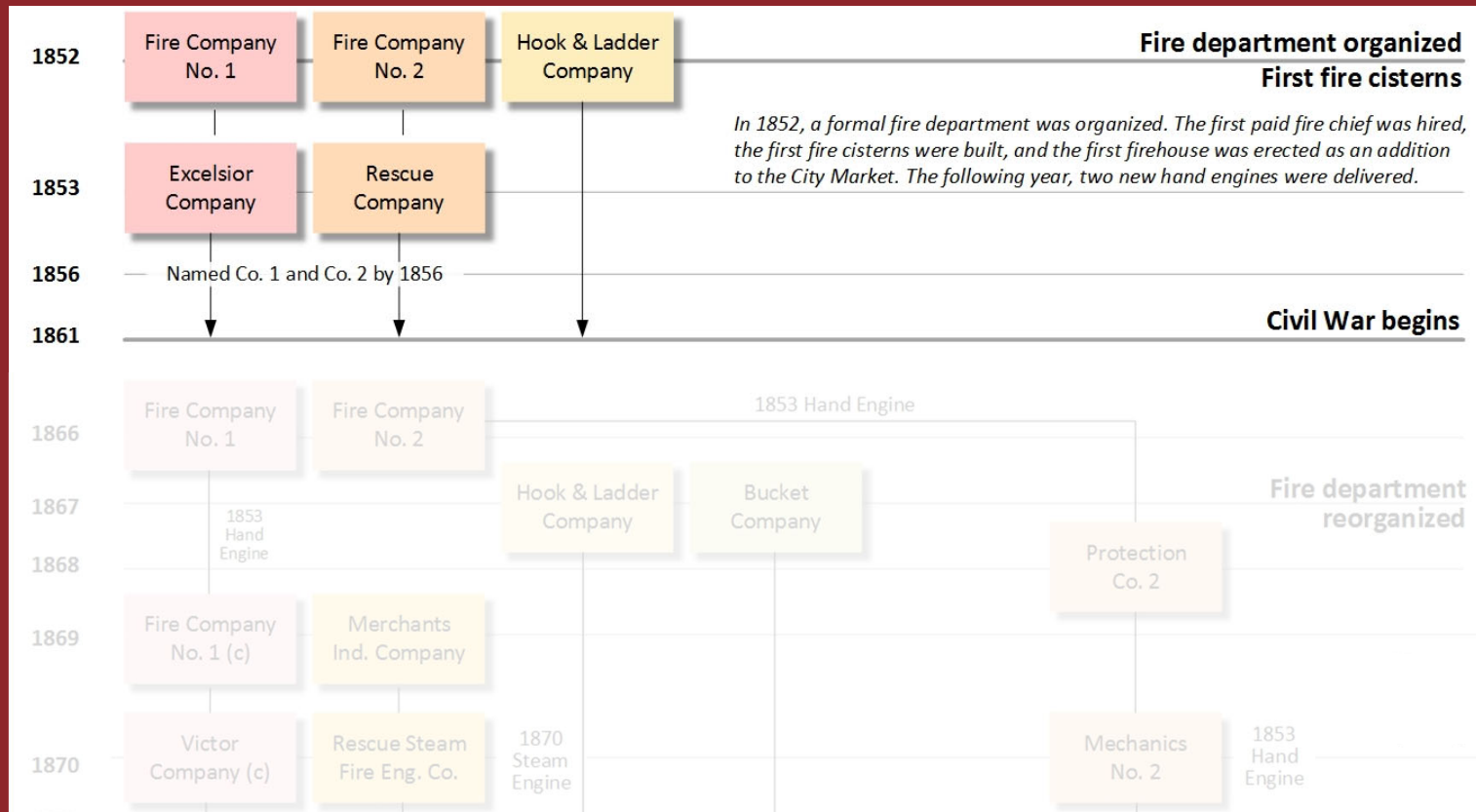
APPALLING CONFLAGRATION!

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

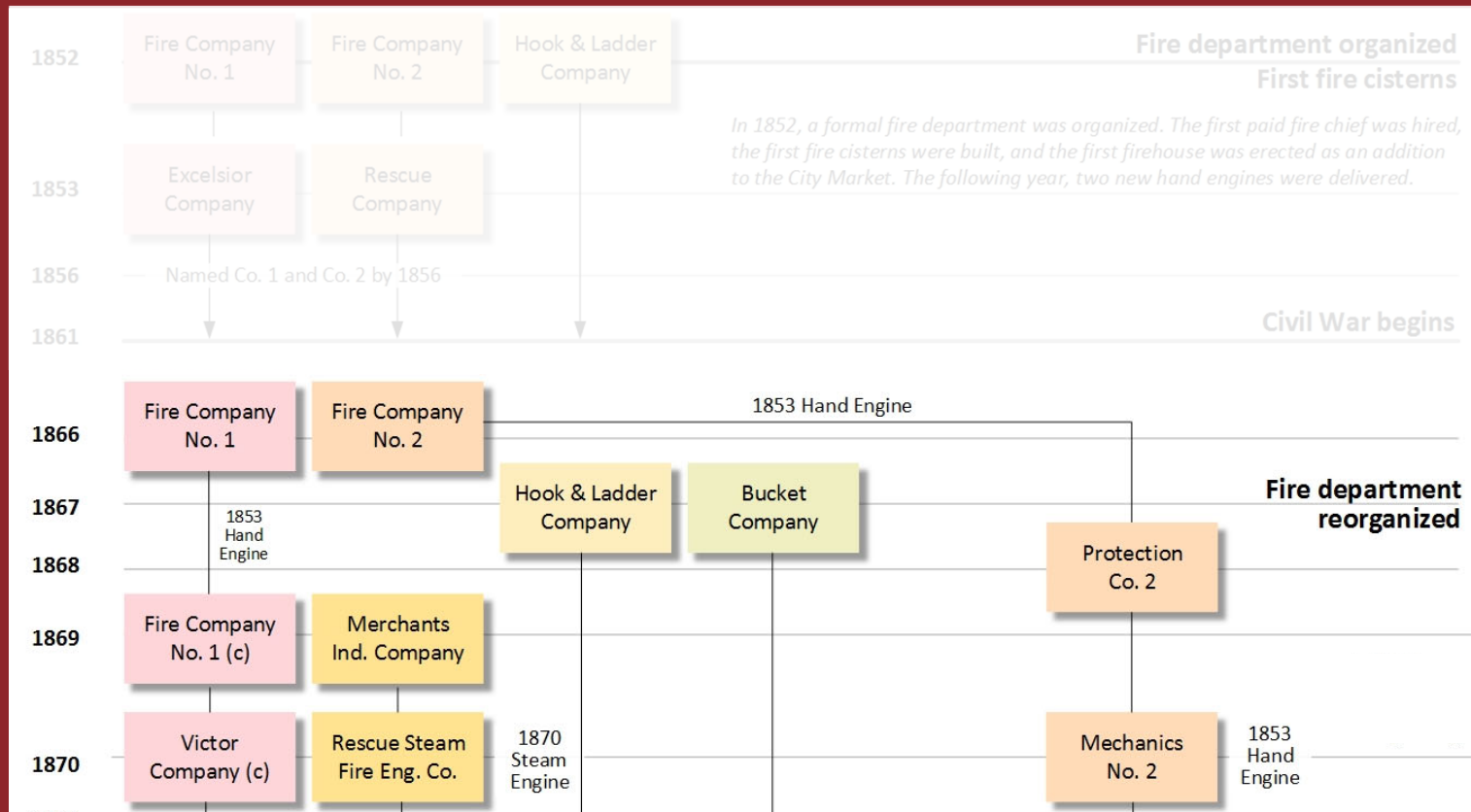


Before Civil War





After Civil War





Let's interrupt our timeline...



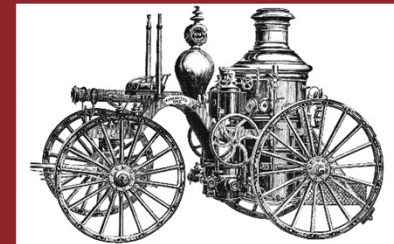
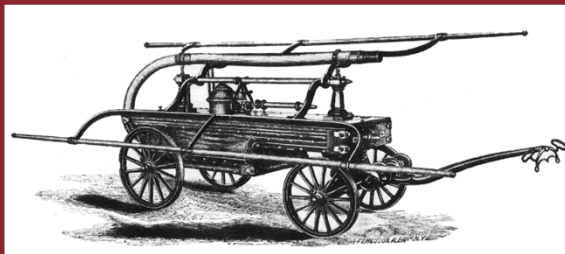
Apparatus



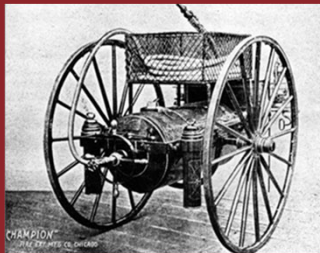
1819 to 1890



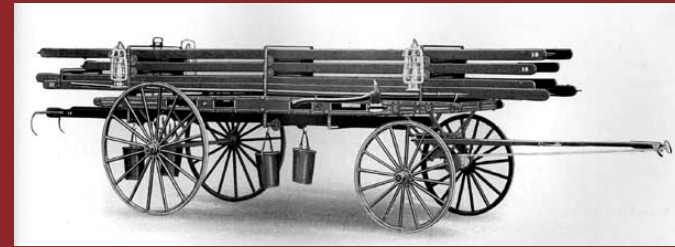
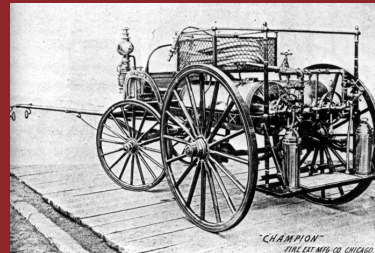
Five hand engines – 1819 to 1873



First steam engine - 1870



Two chemical engines – 1878, 1881



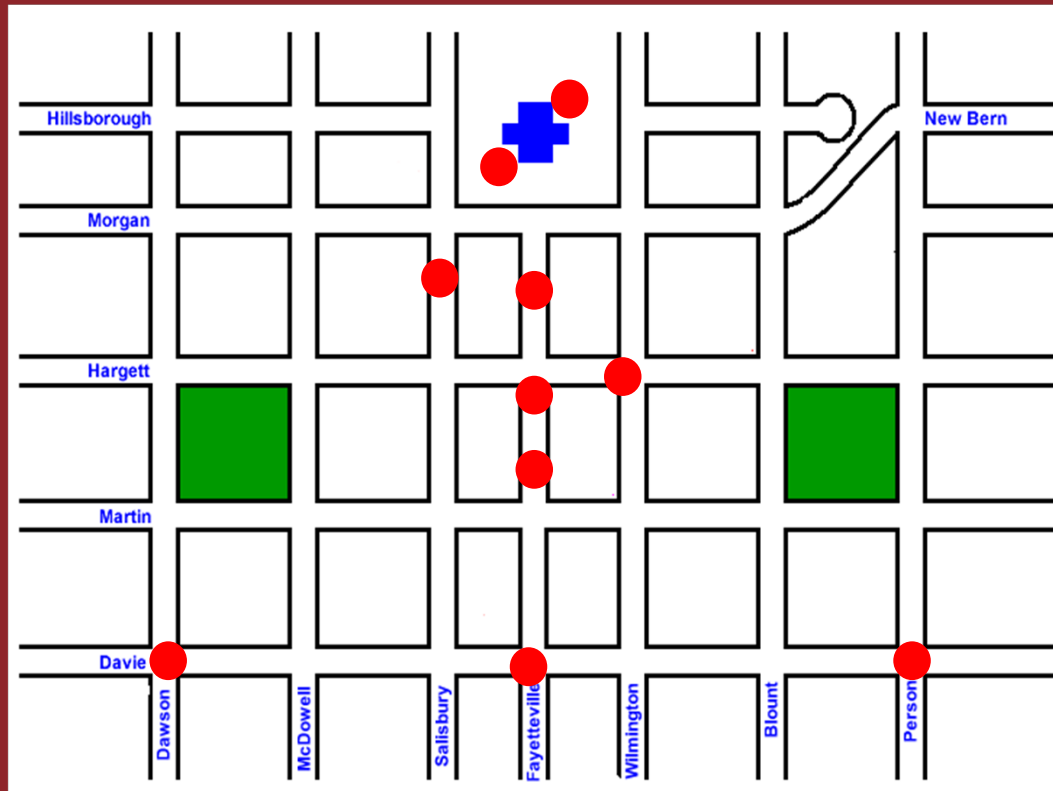
Three ladder trucks – 1852 to 1890



Water Supply



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



1887

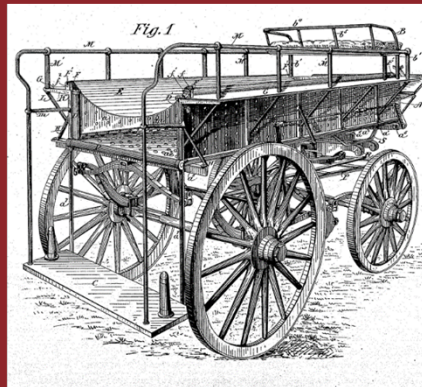


STOCK PHOTOS
NOT RALEIGH

- 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.



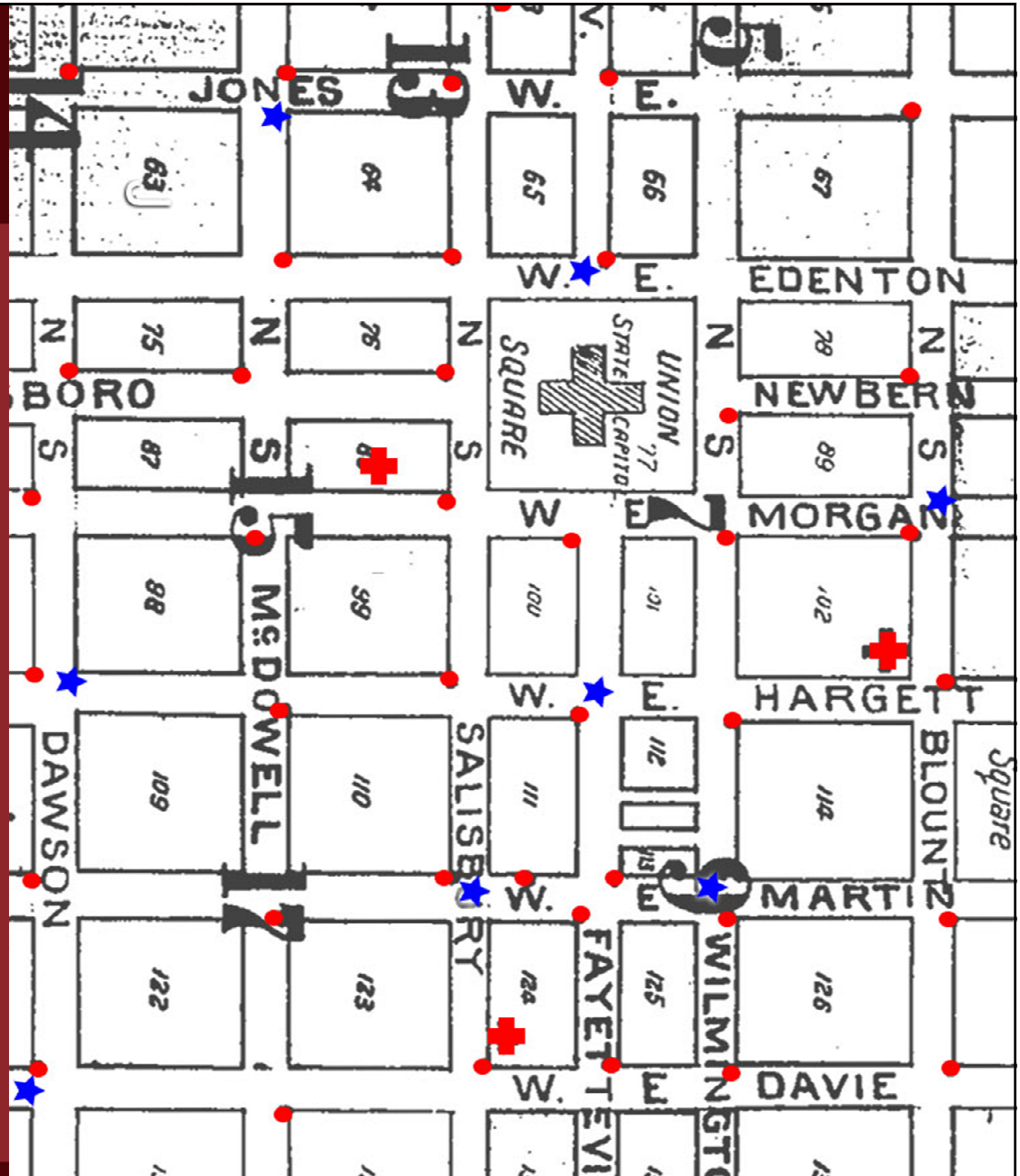
1887, 1890



Hand Reels in 1887
Hose Wagons in 1890



1903 Hydrant Map

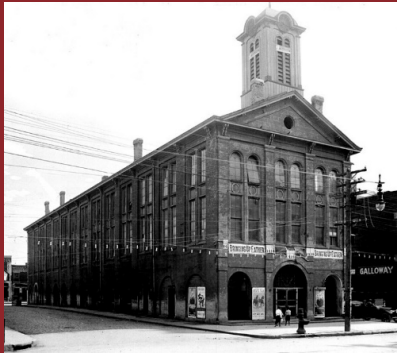




Engine Houses



1870-1898



1870



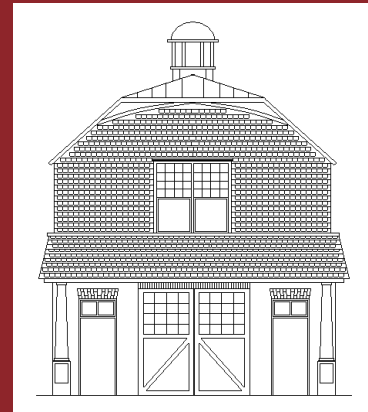
1870



1887



1896



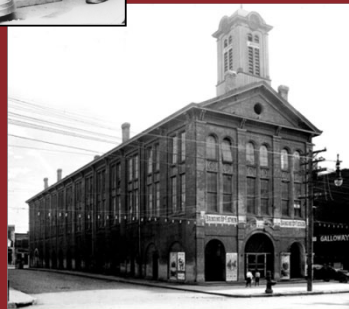
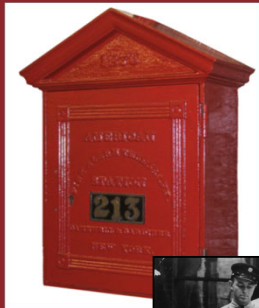
1898



Fire Alarm System



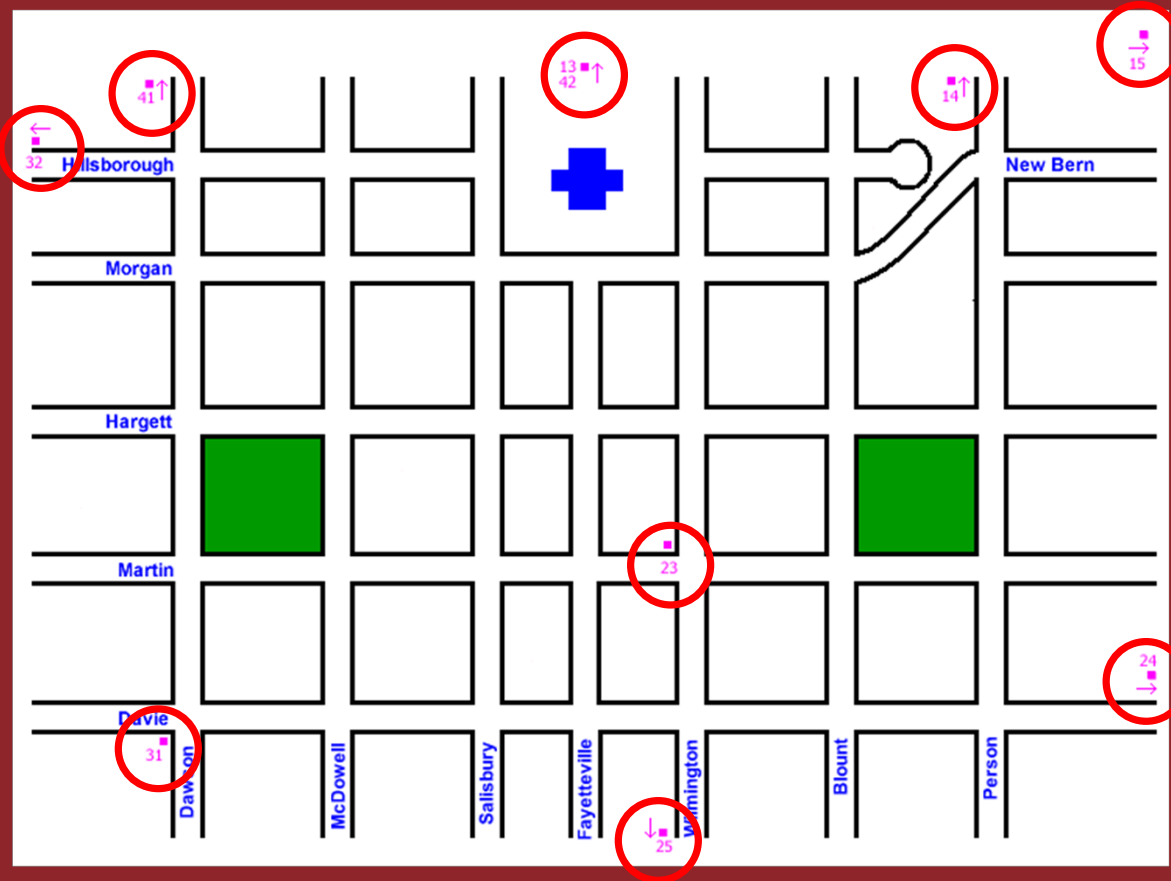
1888



Street Box - Alarm Bell



1888



Original locations of alarm boxes



Back to our timeline...

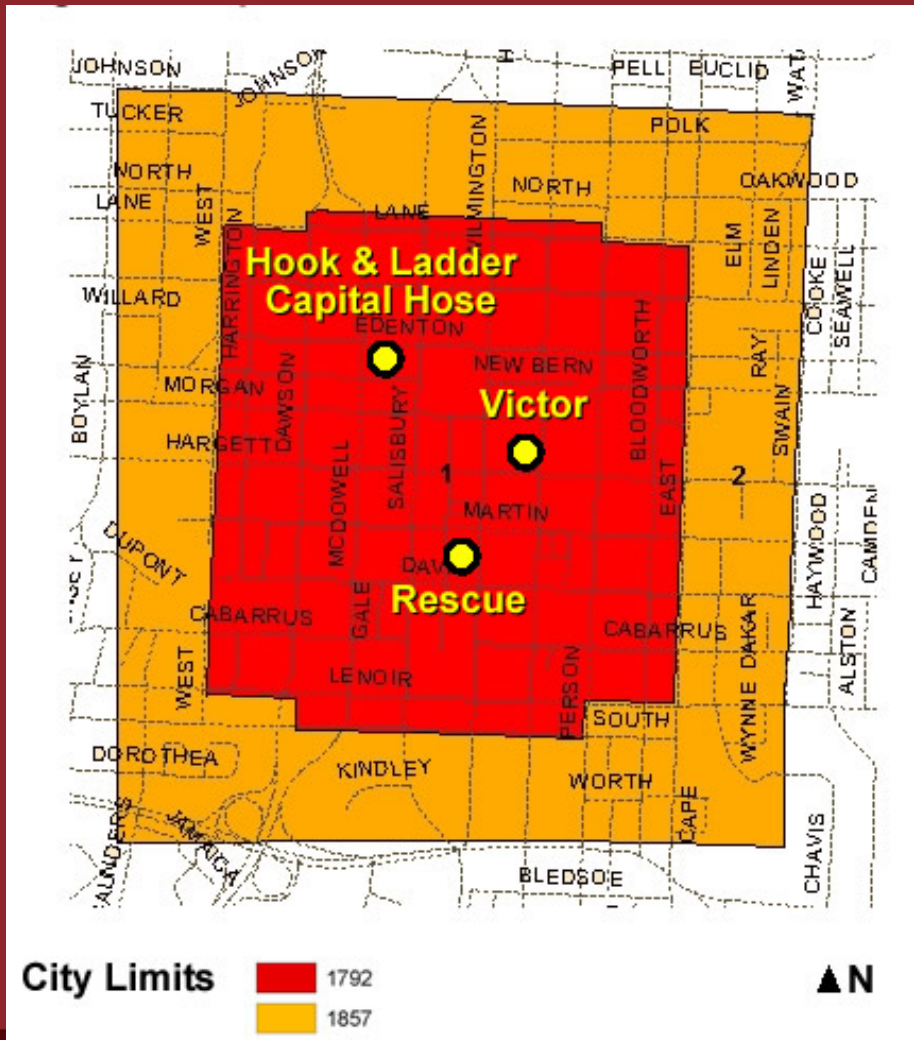


1870 to 1890

- 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)



1900



Demographics

1.8 square miles

13,643 residents

Three fire stations

90 members



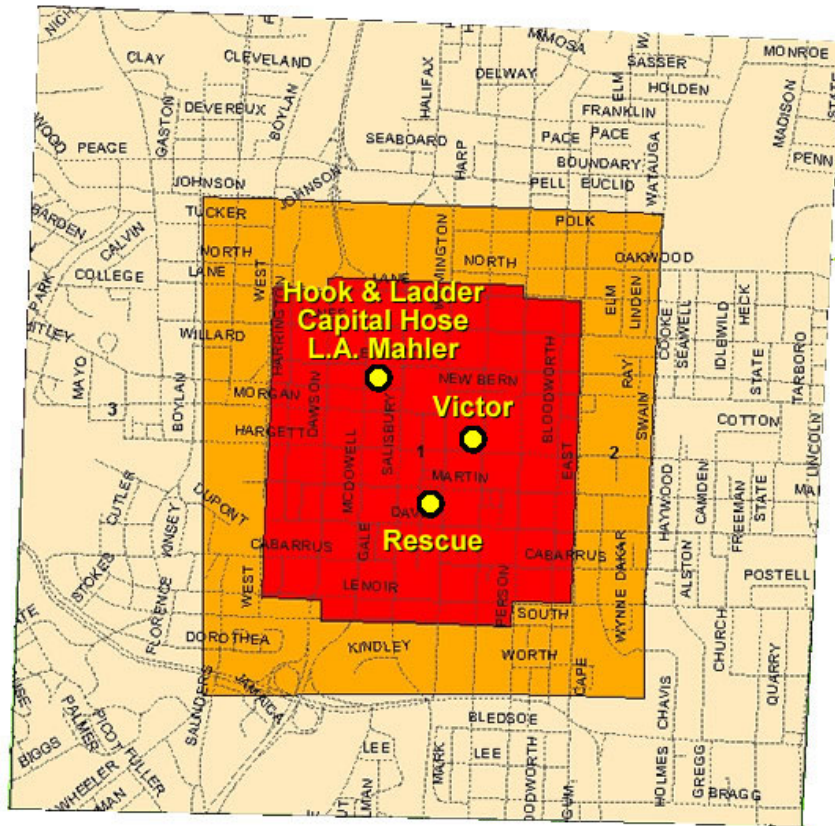
1905



New American LaFrance Steamer
New Steam Engine Fire Company



1910



City Limits

1792
1857
1900 - 1919



4.0 square miles
19,218 residents
Three fire stations
127 members



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





1912



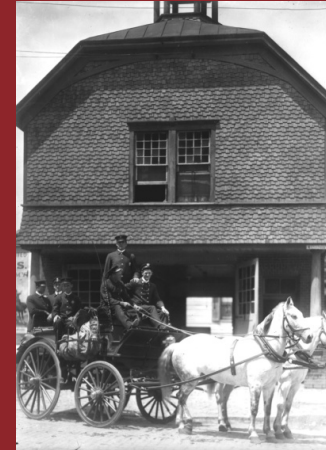
First Full-Time Firefighters



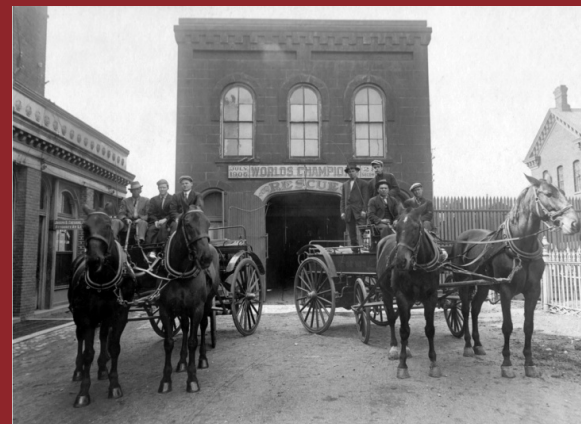
1912



Station 1

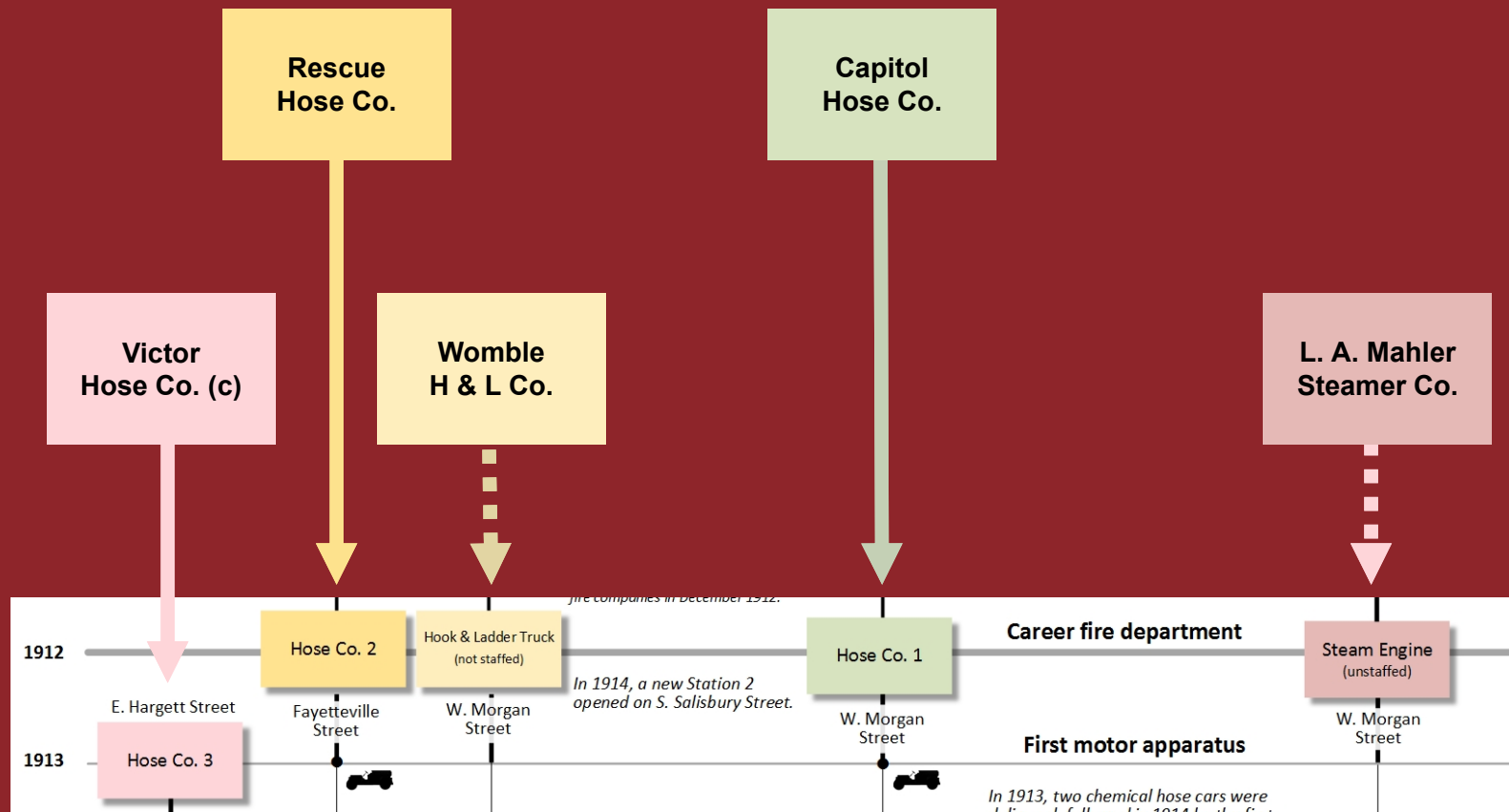


Station 3





1912





1913

FIRE WAGONS ARE ENROUTE

**Automobile Trucks Expected
to Reach Raleigh
By Tomorrow**

Fire Chief Sherwood Brockwell has received information from the manufacturer 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



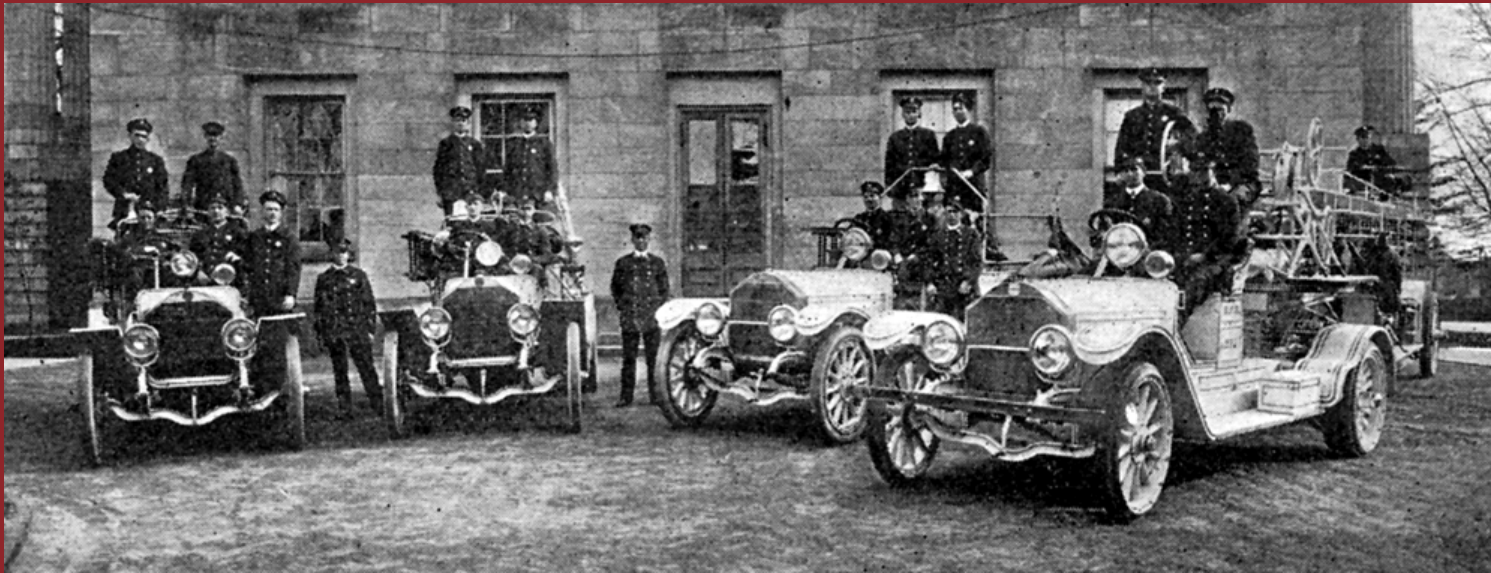
1914



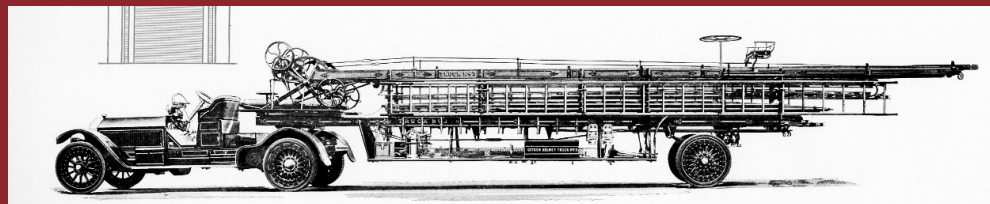
Station 2 – South Salisbury Street



1914, 1916

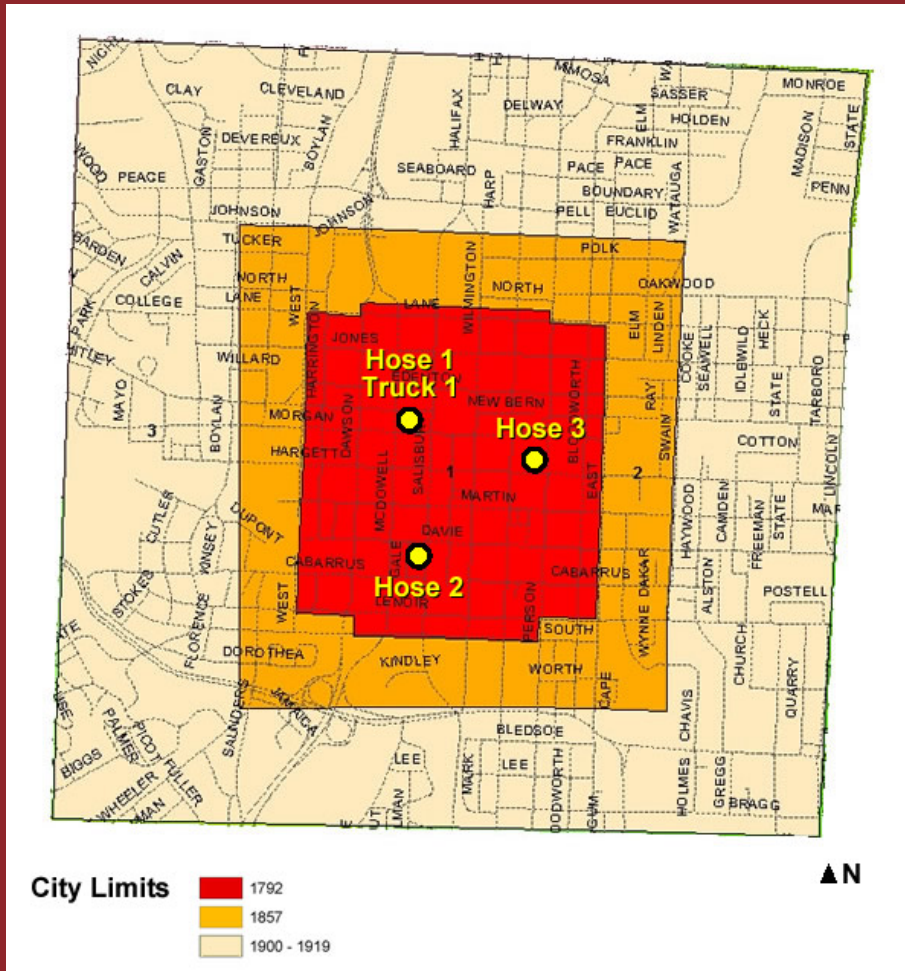


1914 ALF Pumper,
1916 ALF Aerial Ladder





1920



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



1920s



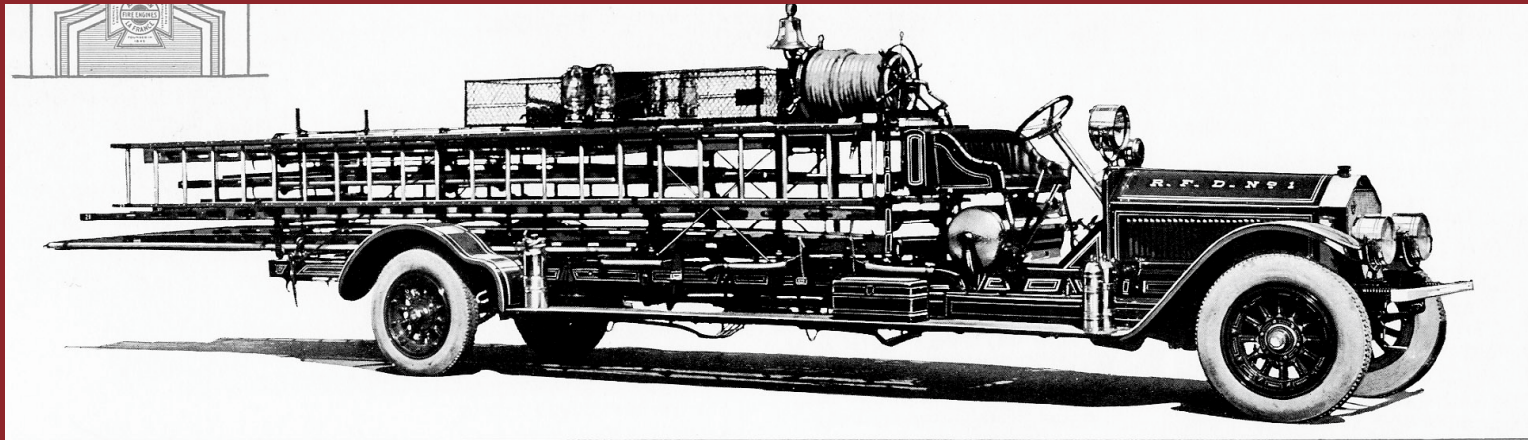
Station 4 - 1926
Jefferson Street

Station 5 - 1926
Park Drive



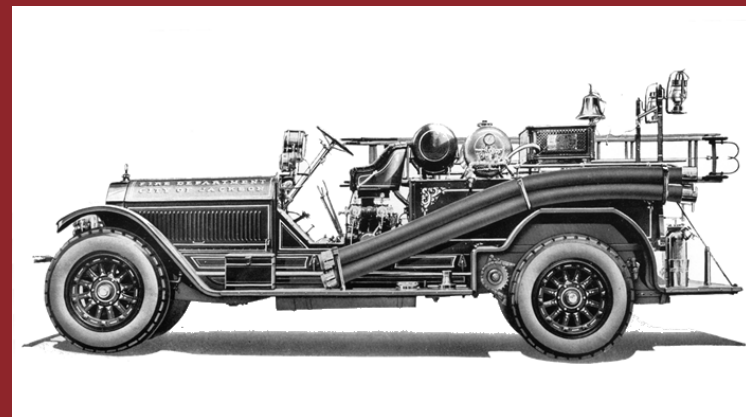


1920s



1922 American LaFrance
Service Truck

1926 American LaFrance
Pumper





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



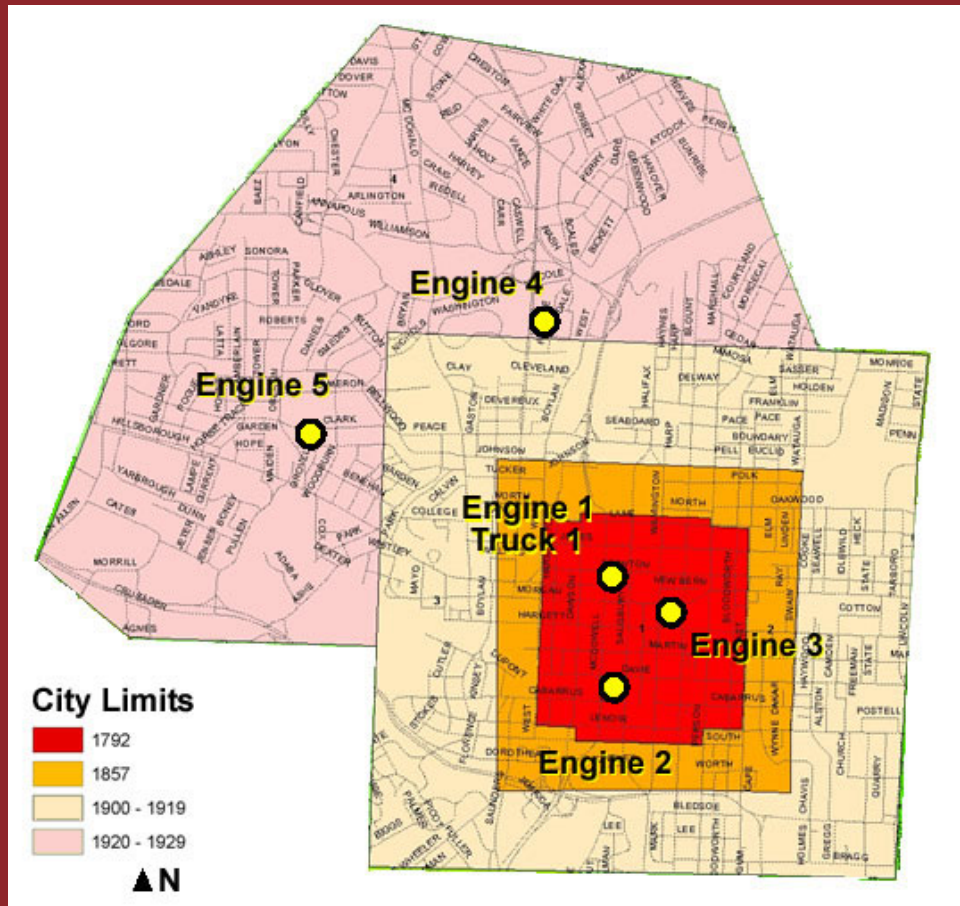
1910 to 1929

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





1930



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



1930s



City Auditorium, 1930

Station 2 at Memorial Auditorium, Opened 1932



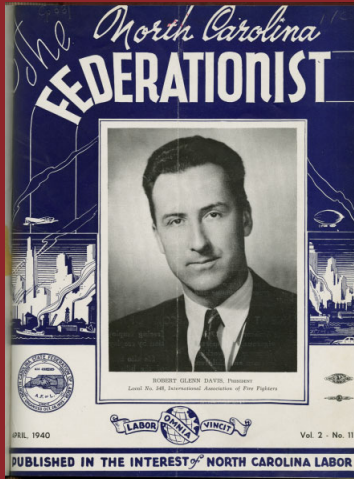
New 1936 Pumper

1939 Tractor for 1916 Tiller





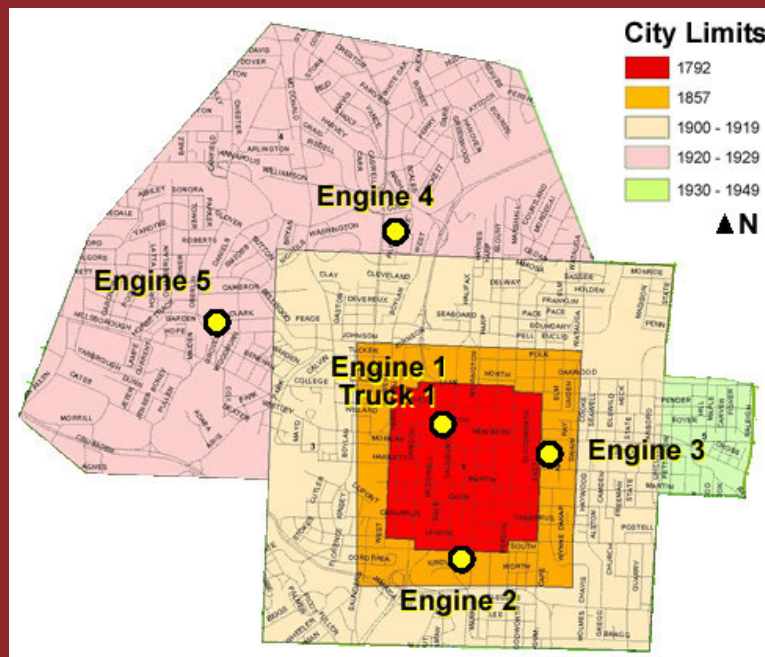
1930s



- ▣ 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.



1940



10.88 square miles

46,897 residents

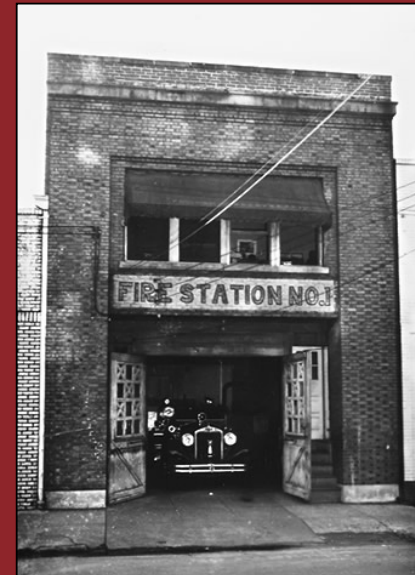
Five fire stations

~56 members



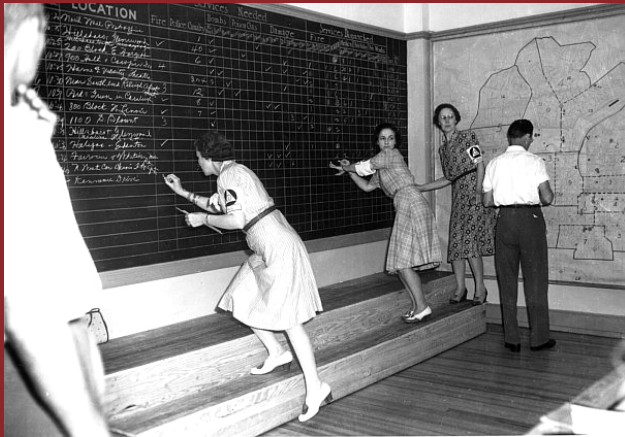
1941

- ▣ Station 1 on Morgan Street closed.
- ▣ Ladder trucks moved to Sta 2 at Memorial Auditorium.
- ▣ Eng 1 moved to Old Sta 2 on Salisbury Street.
- ▣ Eng 2 moved in with Eng 1.





1941



World War II

Civil Defense
Air-Raid Drills
Auxiliary Firefighters
Materials Restrictions





1940s

Station 6



Opened 1943
2519 Fairview Road



Moved 1949
2602 Fairview Road



1940s



1948 Ford Auxiliary Truck



1919 American LaFrance



Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)



24 Hour Shifts



1949

Raleigh, N.C., Chooses



Raleigh—like hundreds of other communities—selects FWD because of the added protection this equipment offers. Mounted in Raleigh's F-238, 735 g.p.m., at 150 lbs. pressure, 122 gal. booster capacity, FWD 2-stage water-control centrifugal-type pump. Also has mounted above pump, 200 lb. at 50' booster tank. —The 1949 FWD engine is 3-1/2 inch bore and 4-1/2 inch stroke fire fighting engine. Side capacity, 1,200 lb. at 25' hose, 300 lb. at 175' hose.



YOU, YOUR MEN AND YOUR COMMUNITY Should Have These FWD Exclusives

Traffic experts know that FWD four-wheel-drive traction means less time on the run and far less danger for crews, equipment and other vehicles. Equally important—FWD engineering also delivers extra action and dependability at the blaze. Write for full facts on this exclusive combination of advantages.

This is Why You Need FWD EXTRA-TRACTION



AVOID HAZARDS ON THE STRAIGHT-AWAY

Start faster. Positive driver control permits greater speed. Avoid collisions—four-wheel-drive assures superior steering.



REACH OUT-OF-THE-WAY HYDRANTS

Get through to water supply in hard-to-reach sections. FWDs drive over terrain that stops conventional fire trucks.



FULL CONTROL ON SNOW OR ICE

With front wheels pulling and back wheels pushing—drive swiftly, safely over icy or snow-blocked streets.



DEEP GRADES, MUD, SAND NO OBSTACLE

Drive full deep through sand or mud. Pull up steep, slippery grades without losing speed. Save precious minutes.

Built by the Makers of America's Foremost Heavy-Duty Trucks
THE FOUR WHEEL DRIVE AUTO CO., CLINTONVILLE, WIS., Canadian Factory: KITCHENER, ONT.

1949 FWD Pumper

1950 Mack Pumper





1949



Fire Prevention Bureau Formed



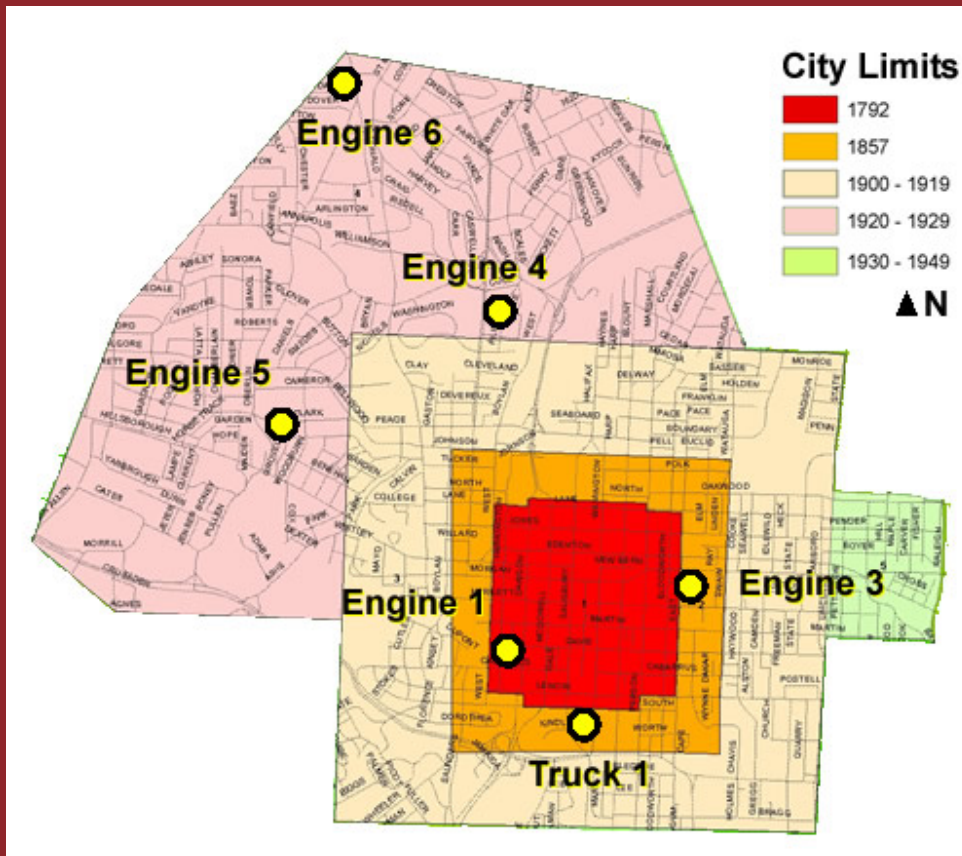
1930 to 1949

- ▣ 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





1950



10.88 square miles

65,679 residents

Six fire stations

67 members



1950s



New Station 1

1951 ►

◄ 1953



American LaFrance Pumper

Raleigh Emergency
Rescue Squad



◄ 1953

1958 ►

American LaFrance
Aerial Ladder





1950s



Station 3

Ladies Auxiliary



1954 ►

◀ 1951



Training Tower

Station 7



◀ 1951

1959 ►



March 10, 1956



Line of Duty Death – Lt. Vernon Smith



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 Six.



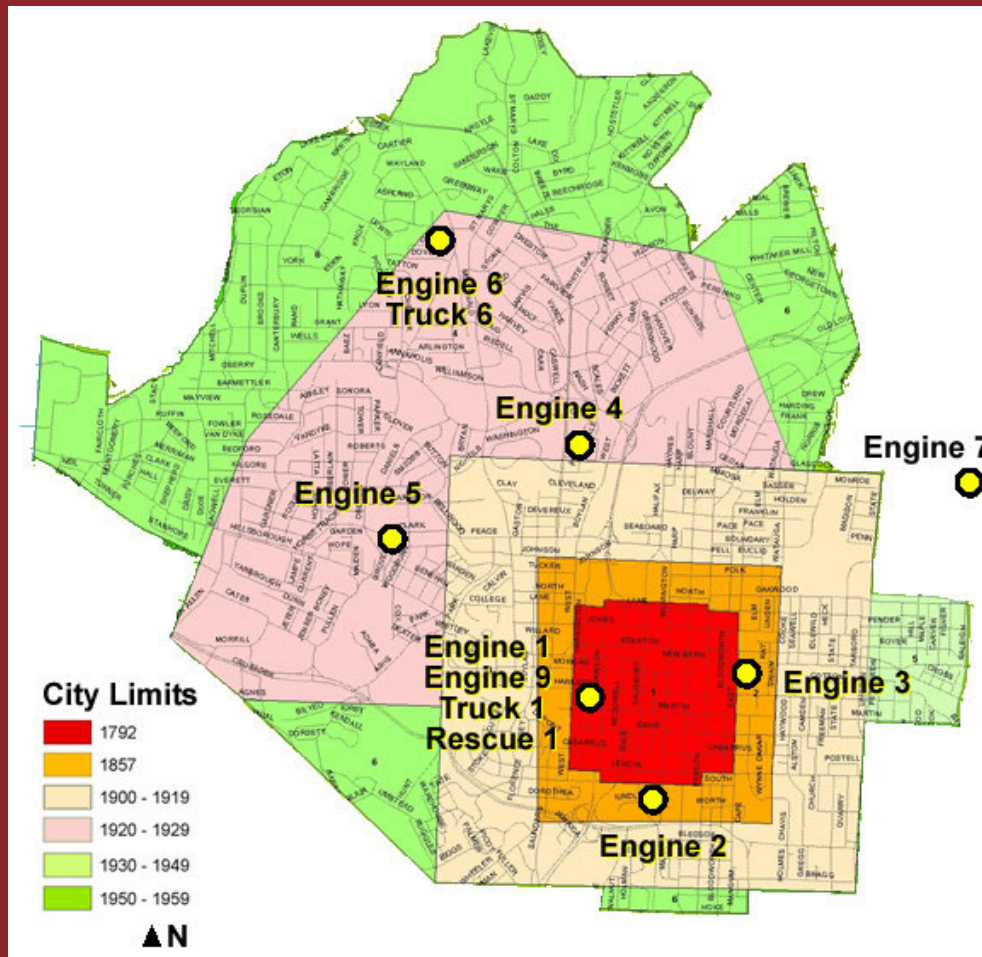
ROBERT L. BATTLE

Line of Duty Death

Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad Volunteer Robert Battle



1960



33.67 square miles
93,931 residents
Seven fire stations
123 members



1960s



1969



New Station 2

New Shop at Station 2

New Station 4

New Station 5



1961 ►

◀ 1963





1960s



Station 8

◀ 1960

1963 ▶



Station 9

1963





1964



Smokehouse



1960s



American LaFrance Pumpers
American LaFrance Aerial Ladder



GMC Service Truck
GMC Tankers





1960s

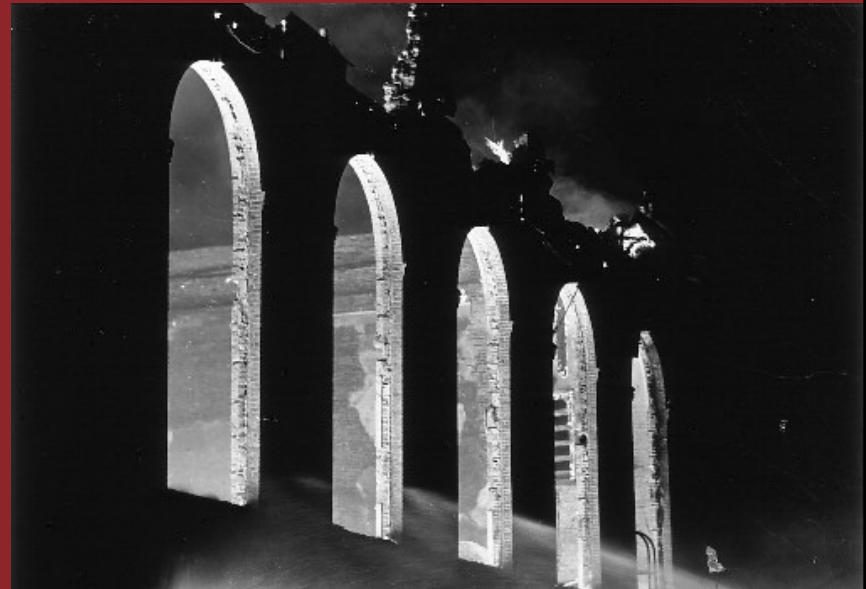


Foam Trucks



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





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.





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 12:15 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.

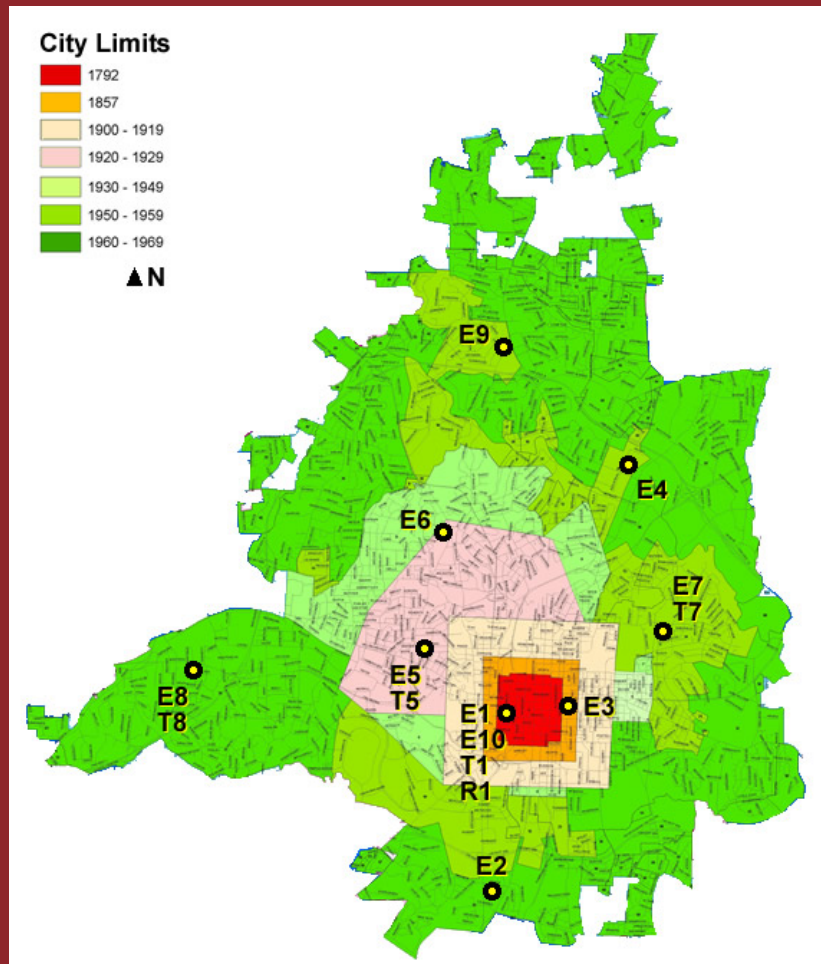
The blaze was confined largely to the basement area, firemen said, but burned through the floor of the drug firm and through the floor of the adjoining College Court Billiard Parlor.

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



1970



44.93 square miles

122,830 residents

Nine fire stations

196 members



1970s



Station 10

Station 14



Station 11

Station 15



Station 12

Station 16



1971 – 1971 – 1974 – 1974 – 1974 – 1979



1970s



Mack Fire Apparatus



1970s



Chevy service truck

Chevy rescue squad



Mack aerial platform

Mack tractor





1970s

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





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!

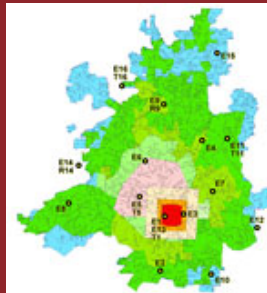


1980 to 2009

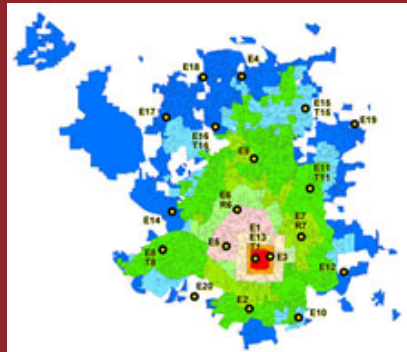
Now we go faster...



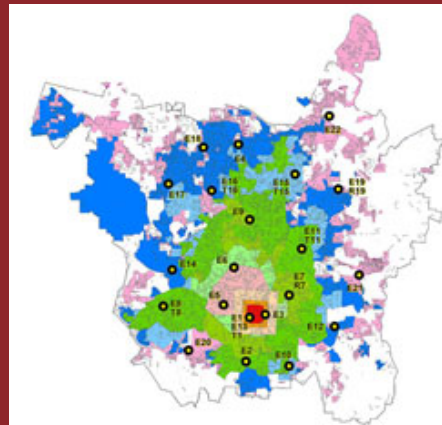
1980 to 2009



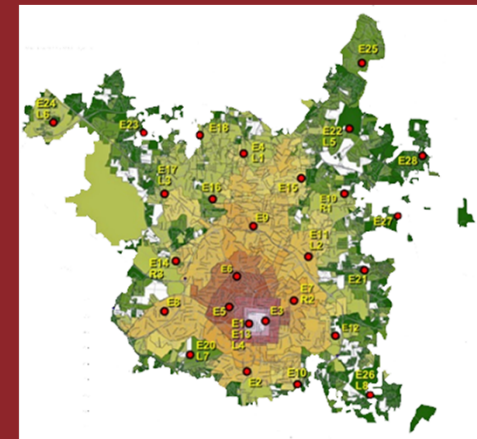
1980



1990



2000



2009



1980 to 2009

1980s



1990s



2000s





1980 to 2009



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



1980 to 2009



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



1980 to 2009



Special Units





1980 to 2009



Rescue





1980 to 2009



Mobile
Air





1980 to 2009



Haz-Mat





1980 to 2009



Mini Pumpers
Foam Trailer





1980 to 2009

1980s First-responder goes city wide.
Hazardous materials response.

1990s EMT- D (defibrillator) program.
Confined space rescue.
High-level rescue.

2000s Swift water rescue.
NC USAR Task Force 8.
NC HART (helicopter aquatic rescue) program.
NC Haz-Mat Regional Response Team 4 to Raleigh.

"ALL-HAZARDS"



1980s

1980s

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





1980s

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





1980s



North Raleigh Tornado – November 28, 1988



1990s

1990s

- First Division Chief
- First Fire Protection Engineer.
- First closed-cab apparatus.
- EMT-D program.
- Fire safety house.
- Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT).





1990s



Hurricane Fran – September 5, 1996



2000s

2000s

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





2000s



NC USAR Task Force 8 – Organized 2003



2000s

USAR training area

Training props

Shelters and storage

Modular classrooms
(not shown)





2000s



Construction Division Added – September 2009



2000s

February 22, 2007 - Pine Knoll Townes

- Six alarms
- 19 engines 6 ladders
- 10 relief companies
- 11 departments covering
- 27 homes destroyed, 11 damaged.
- 12 structures involved
- 29 families, 72 people displaced
- \$4 million damage





January 22, 2008



Line of Duty Death – Lt. Herman Jones



2010 to 2025

Now we go faster...



2010 to 2025

Rebuilt



Expansion



Relocated



Renovated





2010 to 2025





2010s



Rescue Resources
Reorganized - 2013



e-Hydraulic rescue tools



Ninth Ladder
Company - 2015



2010s



Metropolitan
2017



Glenwood Towers
2018



2010s

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



2020s



Chief of Department
Herbert D. Griffin
September 8, 2020



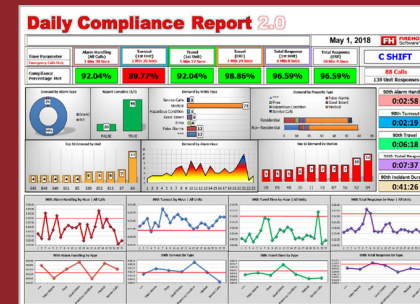
2016 to 2025



2010s



COVID
2019



Dashboards



Civil Unrest
2020



Decon



Line of Duty Deaths



W. Keith Tessinear
August 29, 2019



Brent Upton
March 17, 2021



Nathan Burgess
November 12, 2023



2016 to 2025

High-Water Rescue -
2021



New Ladder 22 - 2023



Incident Safety Officer - 2021

Short Academy + Long Academy - 2023



2016 to 2025



Chaplain Program - 2021



Psychologist Fire Department - 2022



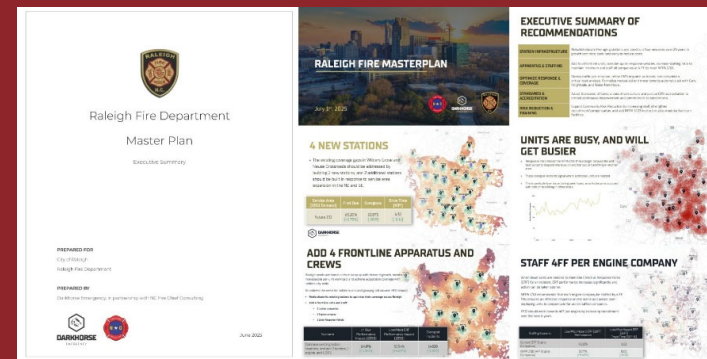
Rehab 12 - 2024



2020s

RALEIGH FIRE DEPARTMENT FLEET UPDATE - DEC 2023 MAY 2024 2024		
Pierce Enforcer, 2008/500/187 New Ladder 23 Delivered		In service
Pierce Saber, 1500/1000 New Engine 23 Delivered		In service
Spartan Motors, 2000/900 New E2 E4 E1 E16 Delivered		In service
Freightliner/Pierce New Air 13 Delivered		In service
Pierce Saber, 1500/1000 New F21 E26 E27 E28 Early Summer 2024		2 completed, 1 nearing
Pierce Enforcer, 2008/750 New E1 E2 E13 E20 Early Summer 2024		acquiring completion
Pierce Enforcer, 1508/300/187 New Ladder 14 Early Summer 2024		nearing completion
Pierce Enforcer, 2008/300/187 New Ladder 15 Spring 2024		

Big Fleet Upgrade – 2024/25



New Master Plan – 2025



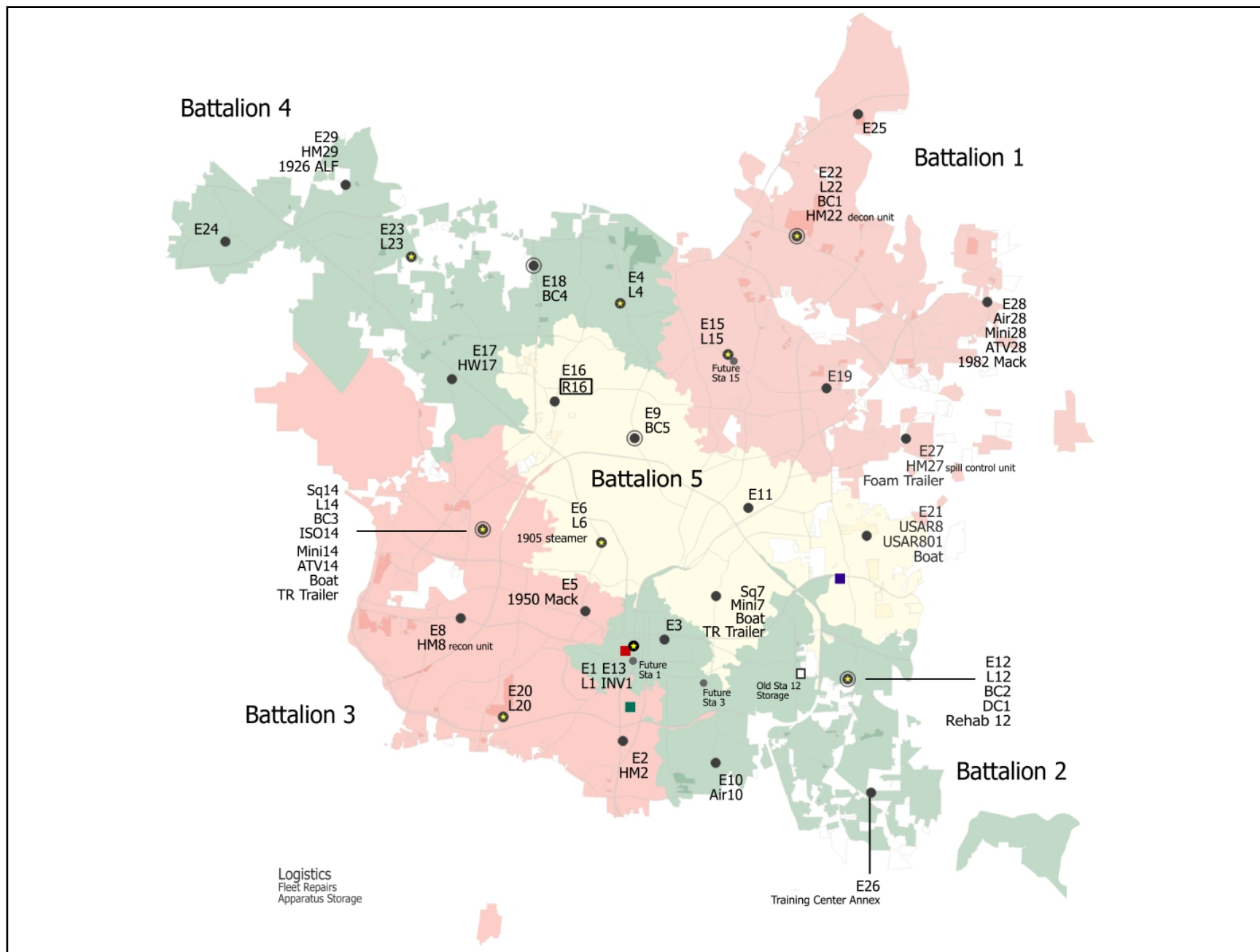
Today

- 28 Fire Stations
- 29 Engine Companies
 - 2 Squad Companies (rescue engines)
 - 9 Ladder Companies
 - 1 Rescue Companies
 - 5 Battalion Chiefs
- 632 Uniformed and Civilian Personnel (FY25)



Today







Questions?



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