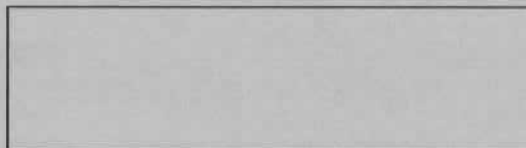


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Historical Perspective: Brighton's Altruistic Fire Department (Part 4)

1938 proved to be a year of 'firsts'. Besides officially being chartered as the Brighton Fire Department in February, the first annual Firemen's Ball was held.

Due to the Great Depression and attendant tight money, it had been some time since the Brighton Fire Department could afford to continue with the annual "... aerial pyrotechnic display" to celebrate Independence Day. Somehow or other, funds were acquired and the show went on, over the millpond, as in previous years. Donation boxes were distributed around town encouraging support. In addition, arrangements were made for a carnival show, which took place on West Main between the city hall and the Brighton State Bank, with a Merry-go-round in front of the city hall. It was also promised the High School band would "... assist in giving everyone a good time." Spirits of the local population needed boosting.

At the annual meeting, January 1941, Harold Jarvis, Sr. was re-elected as chief for the year, the constitution and bylaws were reviewed and updated along with the department's incorporation as a non-profit organization. Jarvis served through 1954 as chief. A Chevrolet fire apparatus with a John Bean high-pressure pump was purchased in 1941. At the end of WW II this was traded in for a new, improved version also with a John Bean pump.

That October the town's first Halloween celebration was organized by the fire department, the Brighton Business Men's Association and the School District. A bucket brigade c. 1836, an exhibit including the hand pumper of the 1890s, the first motorized fire engine and those of 1926 and 1937, helped provide entertainment. A parade of costumed youngsters began the

party, followed by games, a movie, races, cider and donuts, and prizes given for costumes. This event is an entity that continues still.

December 22, 1941, the Brighton Argus reported, "Brighton experienced one of its largest and most hardly fought fires here Monday evening, when fire, caused by an overheated stove pipe, broke out in the Karus Electric Shop on West Main Street shortly after nine o'clock." The wood structures, about 70 years old, that had housed the businesses of E. J. Keehn, Gus Karus, Harold Jarvis and A.C. Stewart & Son, were destroyed. Hartland and Howell fire departments were called to assist.

December 8, 1941, the U.S. declared war on Japan. It was a scary time. Throughout the war years the firemen on the home front did not neglect the responsibility they had assumed in regards to assuring local children that Santa's visits would continue. To bring some semblance of normalcy to the many children of families in serious financial situations, the fire department proceeded with its plans for Christmas. Funds were solicited for toys, a Christmas tree, candy and peanuts for distribution. To those children too ill to come to the party, Santa made personal deliveries via the fire truck. War or not, July 4, was annually celebrated with the parade, prizes to the best floats, vaudeville acts, ball games, concerts and fire works. The Feather Party, in time for Thanksgiving, also was held, as was the annual Ball in February.

To be continued. Compiled by Marieanna Bair from newspaper clippings; Ned Seger's 1944 History of the fire department and the 1997 City of Brighton Fire Department History by Mike Kennedy. Additions/corrections requested. 810/229-6402.