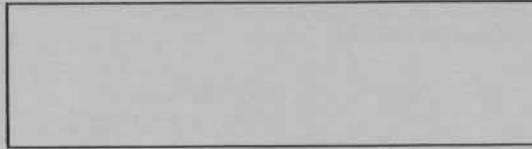


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BRIGHTON'S ALTRUISTIC FIRE DEPARTMENT (Part 2)

Consisting of a group of volunteers, the first unofficial Brighton Fire Department was organized, to become the first line of defense against fire for Brighton Village residents. The council of the newly incorporated Brighton Village, March 25, 1867, responded by providing some equipment: hook and ladders, and later a fire extinguisher and buckets, to assist these early fire fighters. By July 4, 1876, in their new uniforms, the BFD participated in the Centennial parade and celebration in Brighton.

Three years later, with the construction of the town hall by builder James Collett (who also built St. Paul Episcopal Church in 1881), the fire fighting equipment had a central storage facility. This building also provided a meeting site, upstairs, for the village council, court hearings, and elections. (For many years township voters, those outside the village limits, also voted here.)

Rubber coats were provided the firemen in May, 1881. More equipment came a year later in the form of a hand pump fire engine #23 seven inch brass cylinder, two inch caliber, suction hose 3 1/2 inch caliber, two streams, "... to be delivered to Detroit for \$700.00 from the Rumsey Company of Seneca Falls, New York". This fire engine was pulled by the men with a long rope.

July 3, 1882, "... Mr. Newkirk, representing the house of C.H. Carleton of Chicago, offered to furnish the village with one \$150.00 hose cart, 600 feet of rubber hose, one of Allen's patent No. 12 Nozzle, and to organize and drill a fire company, all for the sum of five hundred eighty dollars." Village officials voted affirmatively to accept the proposal. (These several pieces of equipment were probably delivered by the railroad.) A piece of equipment of this size would have been pulled by a team of horses for a faster response. The first teamster to hitch up was paid (by 1911) \$1.00.

With all that equipment all that was needed was a handy, reliable source of water. September 11, 1882 the council voted to build ten cisterns throughout the town from which to pump water. Some sources speak of the issues which arose as to these cisterns' location. Everyone wanted one in their neighborhood.

Men, equipment, horses and water are on hand. One more need was that of a means of sounding an alarm. To remedy that, the village fathers, August 28, 1883, ordered a 100-pound bell to be placed atop the village hall. The \$80.00 bell, from the Buckeye Bell Foundry, was installed in the belfry by December 11, 1883.

Following these many major expenses, the village found itself, as well as the rest of the country, unable to continue with these kinds of costly improvements. It was, in fact, in debt. The nation-wide building boom promoted by the excessive railroad construction resulted in an inflated economy. This resulted in a pulling back by the railroad companies, precipitating a national economic depression for the next 15 years. This resulted in a severe reduction in all civic improvements well into the early 1900s.

The first motorized fire engine, a Ford, purchased from a St. Paul concern in 1920, meant the resignation of the old hand pumper. As often happens, progress is not always welcomed by all. The department's older veterans had a difficult time parting with the hand pumper they had used for about 40 years.

(To be continued. Compiled by Marieanna Bair from press clippings; 1880 History of Livingston County; Ned Seger's 1944 History of the fire department. Additions/corrections requested. 810/229-6402.)