



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Historical Perspective: Brighton's Altruistic Fire Department (Part 3)

With the purchase of the first motorized fire engine, the Ford in 1920, a plan to pay the fireman was instituted soon after. Fireman received one dollar per alarm and two dollars for calls over an hour. In prior years, most public servants were volunteers. Clippings tell of a fire on November 21 which "considerably damaged" the Odd Fellows Hall at 422 West Main.

Within the next several years the village saw the paving of Grand River Road and Main Street (1924), its organizing into a city (March 9, 1927), and the building of a new school (1928) at 125 S. Church Street. Insurance for the firemen and equipment against traffic and other accidents connected to fire fighting was authorized January 18, 1927.

In July 1926, a partnership of area farmers and resort owners purchased a new REO fire engine for \$5,900. Fifty dollars per call was charged to those not in the partnership. In 1936, the partnership released the worn out REO to the village. The loss of the Wilson farm near Hartland in 1928, another farm three months later near the GM Proving Ground, three cottages at Island Lake in March 1929, and the Nesbitt home on Spencer Road may have influenced their decision. A sense of dissolution on the part of the partners was evident. They wanted no part in purchasing a replacement due to the Depression.

During the 1930s the nation was immersed in a financial crisis. Many were in need as hard times got worse. Members of the Fire Department would place 100 ducklings into the millpond in the spring and feed them during the year. A *feather party* was

held at Thanksgiving and families received a duck for their dinner. Some ducks were raffled to raise funds. On November 1, 1931, Fire Chief Adolph Marten hosted a department chicken dinner at Weiss Barbecue (101 W. Main). Memories of old Brighton school days account for the camaraderie .

In 1936, Harold Jarvis Sr. was Fire Chief. Although the old REC engine was carefully maintained, it was deemed wise to purchase a second. January 7, 1937, bids were let for this equipment. Discussion ensued several years earlier of the need for a better alarm system. The bell which had served since 1883 atop the city hall (202 W. Main) was replaced with a fire siren for \$485 on March 4, 1937. A bell had also hung at the Hyne grain elevator (501 W. Main) in 1883, in response to West Side residents' concerns. On May 6, the new engine, an American LaFrance unit on a GM chassis, (\$4,142) arrived.

In 1938, the department received a charter from the City of Brighton becoming the Brighton Fire Department . At that time a limit of 20 active, able-bodied men was instituted. Other regulations required a minimum age of 20 and a city resident. A *Standing Committee* to inquire into the character of candidates was incorporated. Charter members of the BFD were Harold Jarvis Sr., Al Cole, A.I. O'Dell, Lee Bidwell Sr., Lloyd Pearsall, Gerald Morgan, Mel Skeman, and Fred Hyne as Chief.

To be continued... Compiled by Marieanna Bair from news clippings, Bill Pless' writings, and Ned Seger's 1944 History of the Fire Department. Add./corrections requested. 810/229-6402.