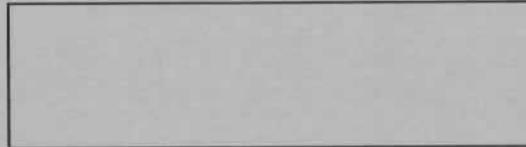


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Historical Perspective: Brighton's Altruistic Fire Department (Part 7)

The Wolverine Brush fire, 431 W. Main (December 31, 1971) forced the recognition that fighting such major conflagrations required more than the local fire department. The several departments in Livingston County began seriously considering how to more efficiently do the job. By March 1972, the Livingston County Fire Fighter Association came into being. In June, the Brighton Area Fire Advisory Board, promoting the continual improving and upgrading of the quality of fire fighting, bought a rescue squad truck. Three years later, the Brighton Township Fire Department was formed and built a fire-house on Old 23, south of Hyne Road.

Following John Dymond's service as chief (1970-1971), Mel Sanch (who joined in 1964) became chief of the Brighton Fire Department on January 26, 1972.

During the 1970s, festivities related to Independence Day were each on a larger scale and more well done than the previous year. The 1976 Bicentennial event was most memorable. A four-day celebration included a carnival, parade, battle of the bands, motorcar exhibit, athletic events and plenty of fire works. The 1936 American LaFrance pumper, which had been in use during the '40s and '50s, was completely restored in time for exhibition. Local businesses donated to cover expenses and about 4,000 hours of labor were contributed to its restoration.

The 45th annual Fourth of July parade and festivities included the new pumper purchased in April 1977, for \$102,000.

The 1980s saw much activity. After 30 years, the station at 209 W. Main was sold. August 3, 1982 was one of those special days: ground breaking for the new fire hall at Firemen's Field

on West Grand River. It was the well-deserved honor and privilege of Charles Bidwell and Chief Mel Sanch to throw the first shovel of dirt. Upon completion of the new hall the old bell, which had been originally placed in the Old Town Hall in 1883 and carefully stored following its removal from the belfry, was installed for display in front of the new fire hall. Also, in 1988 Dick Shinske was appointed full-time fire chief.

On May 30, 1991, the popular eating spot, Lynn's Café at 415 W. Main, burned down. Lynn's Café is presently at 180 N. First Street.

The 51st annual Halloween party hosted 1,226 costumed children in 1992.

In 1994, following Dick Shinske's retirement, Charles Bidwell served as chief until the hiring of Larry Lane on January 16, 1995. By now, the job of Chief includes the establishment of formal training programs, long-range planning of equipment replacement, working with other departments of the area, etc. Public education programs have been promoted and emergency and disaster preparedness programs have been developed. The Livingston County Fire Fighters Association continually reviews its recommended procedures regarding the qualifications of personnel hired/appointed to various positions.

In October 1997, Chief Larry Lane and Brighton Township Fire Chief, Roger Young, began a discussion relative to a merger of the two.

Compiled by Marieanna Bair from clippings. Additions/corrections requested. (810) 229-6402