

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Our current exhibit at the CoBACH Center, located on Main Street in Brighton next to the Millpond is entitled, "Brighton Fire Department." This is an extensive display of the role the fire department has had in Brighton which continues to this day. The display runs September through November. We hope you will visit the CoBACH Center and see the history of Brighton's Fire Department.

Brighton's Altruistic Fire Department

Following the donation of property by the Robert Grahams in 1948, a 40'x60' cement block building, located on the south side of 209 W. Main, was constructed by 1950. Members of the department donated labor equal to half of the \$60,000 cost. The engines and other equipment were on the ground floor with a kitchen and dining room on the lower level. All this was at no charge to the city's taxpayers.

In 1951, the Jr. Auxiliary was reorganized. Instruction in the use of ladders, hose lines, first aid and resuscitation (the resuscitator had been purchased previously) were given to 20-40 boys, ages sixteen to twenty years old. In addition, each applicant had to pass the physical. The vision test was the most stringent; through thick smoke, fire and a masonry wall, the fireman must be able to see his civic duty.

Throughout the 1950s, in addition to the many events arranged by the firemen, a fire prevention program was inaugurated and an extension to the rear of the fire hall was built. The purchase of tankers for an improved water supply, in combination with high pressure pumpers utilized the enlarged fire hall.

1960 brought many improvements in communications between fire dispatch, identification and location of apparatus.

In 1962, the opportunity was seized to purchase land on West Grand River as a site for recreation. Many baseball games were played on Firemen's Field. By 1966, Firemen's Field was outfitted with lights for after dark events.

In October 1965, a Fire Prevention Week parade was sponsored by Farmington, Michigan. Gene Felty, Fred Muller, Leo Sutfin and Terry Watts brought home a blue ribbon for the oldest vehicle, the 1936 fire truck.

The city hired Ivan 'Ike' Damon to service the equipment full-time on January 13, 1969. He was the first paid member of the department and took great pride in work he'd already been doing. Also, service awards were given to twenty-two volunteer firemen.

The spring of 1969, a very dry one, kept all area fire departments on the run. On March 17, a spark from a passing train near the 700 block of Advance Street set off a blaze. High winds pushed the fire through the Mt. Brighton area and north to I-96. In its path, over 10,000 seedlings, owned by the Michigan Landscape Nursery (located north of Cross Street), were destroyed.

That year, Harold Jarvis, Jr. retired after fourteen years as fire chief, having followed his father's term of 1940—1954. John Dymond, who joined in 1943, became chief until 1972 followed by Mel Sanch.

New Year's Eve, 1971, will be remembered as the day 431 W. Main (Wolverine Brush) was consumed by fire. Even with the help of about 50 firemen from five departments, it took five hours to bring it under control.



OUR COMMUNITY HEROS

(This is a reprint of a story previously published in Trail Tales and was compiled by Marieanna Bair from press clippings; and 'From Settlement to City—Brighton 1932-1945'.)