



History of the Fire Department

Fire Department in Howard Grew From Original Bucket Brigade
reprinted from Green Bay Press Gazette April 8, 1963
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Growing from a bucket brigade to a full-fledged volunteer fire department, the Village of Howard Volunteer Fire Department will soon be moving into its own permanent quarters on Glendale Avenue.

The department, growing with the community, was little more than a handful of men with buckets and hand fire extinguishers protecting a population of 1,000 when the original fire truck was purchased in 1945.

Now with a population of 4,000 and village status, the department has grown to two fire trucks and 43 men that takes its fire-fighting seriously.

Board Studies Plans

The Village Board is now studying plans for a new building just east of the present Village Hall on Glendale Avenue. The original Town Hall built in 1874 was razed to make room for the one story fire station which will house two fire trucks, another village truck and a room for training sessions.

The Howard Volunteer Fire Department was organized by Chief John Vander Walle from a handful of volunteers under the supervision of Ralph Drum, who was then Green Bay fire chief.

The Town Board purchased the first truck in 1945. It was government surplus, had a pump and was stationed in a Brown County Highway Department shed where it has been operating from since.

Chief Stepped Down

Vander Walle remained as chief for two years and then stepped down and Phillip (Pinky) Wescott was named chief and has served for 20 years. Vander Walle is still a member of the department.

The department grew and established a regular training period of the fourth Monday of every month, assisted by Green Bay firemen.

In 1952, the Town Board staged a firemen's picnic and raised funds to purchase a new truck. A year later, a second picnic was held and a second truck was purchased. The original truck was sold to Oconto Falls.



Two New Trucks

With the two new trucks, the department was organized into the Howard Volunteer, Fire Department. Officers were elected and regular training sessions scheduled. As the village budget grew, provisions were made for additional equipment. The 43 volunteers were fitted out with helmets, raincoats and boots. Additional equipment was added to the department and each truck was fitted with 800 gallon tanks. The truck pumping operations are adapted for direct hydrant pumping or from streams or ponds.

Forrest Elsner, president of the department "It is our goal to train every man in the use of every piece of equipment. We are aiming at 100 per cent efficiency at all times",

Had 83 Fires

Other officers are Elmer Oryall vice president, who is also assistant chief; Gerald Pamperin, treasurer and Pat Salscheider, secretary. "We had 83 fire runs last year, which was a department record." Wescott said "the biggest fire in the village since we have been organized was the Hartman Lumber Co, fire ten years ago It was also the biggest loss because of the amount of lumber that was burned." Fire calls in Howard go directly to the Brown County Highway Department which is manned on a 24-hour basis. The siren, located at the county shed, is the major alarm. All volunteers report to the shed at the siren. The first two arriving take the trucks. Volunteers early enough to follow the trucks do so. If they're too late, the location. of the fire is posted in the shed, Each volunteer keeps his personal equipment in his car.