

OLDTIME FIRE CHIEFS AND ASSISTANTS—1892

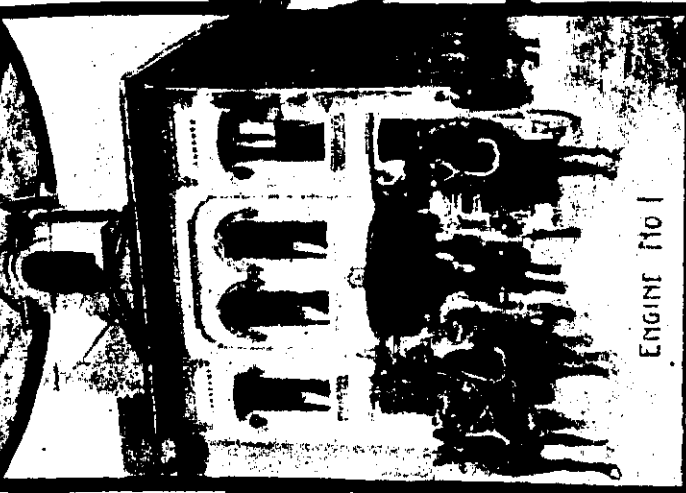
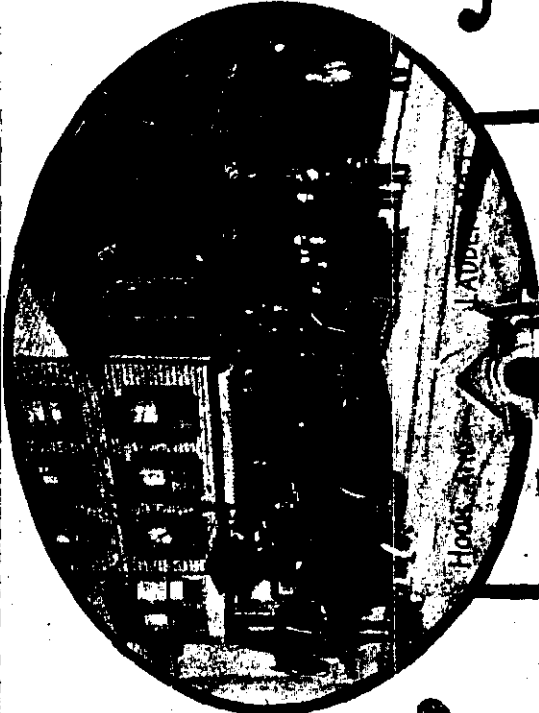
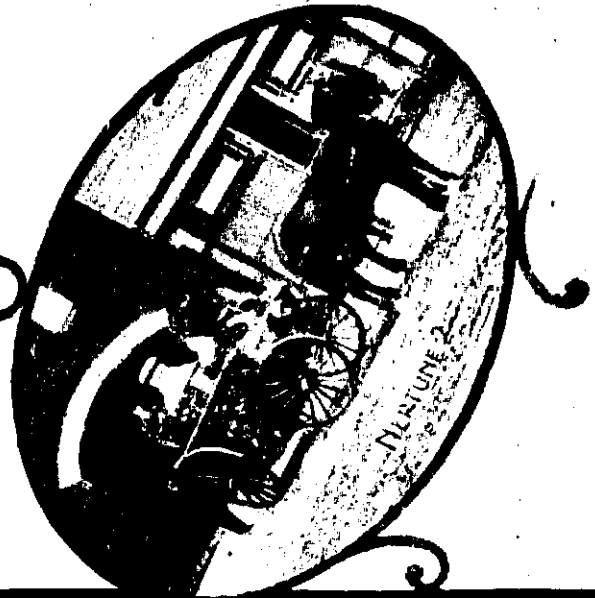
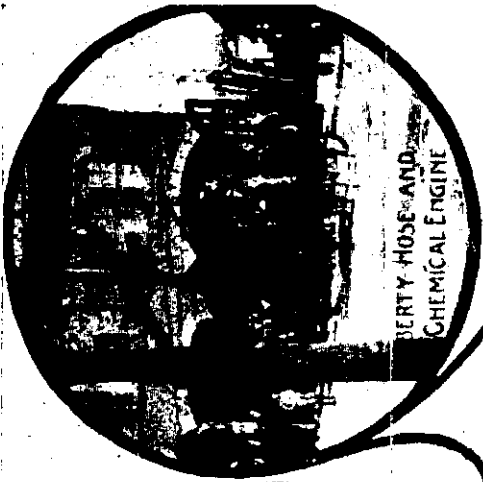
1, Patrick J. Murray; 2, Charles Grunwald; 3, Chief Tooker, Perth Amboy;  
4, William Durham; 5, James Tallman; 6, Henry C. Housell; 7, John Donnelly;  
8, Gilbert Parent; 9, William C. Jaques; 10, Frank Acker; 11, John Harkins;  
12, Milton Ross; 13, John Harding; 14, Andrew Smith

## THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The earliest records of the fire department take us back to the year 1731 when we find the following in the minutes of council:

### AN ORDINANCE TO PREVENT FIRE

Be itt ordained by the Mayor Recorder Aldermen and assistants in Common Council Convened and by the authority of the Same itt is ordained that two or more of the Magistrates of this City whereof the Mayor or Recorder to be always one do appoint two Sufficient persons within this City to be Viewers of the Chimneys and hearths, who shall view the same once in every month and where they find any Defective to give notice that they may be swept or Mended in such Time as in their Discretion they shall think fitt and iff any person shall refuse their Direction herein they shall forfeit for Each offense three Shillings to the Said Viewers and that if any Chimney be on fire so as to blaze out att the top after the Publication hereof the Dweller in such a House shall forfeit for every Chimney so on fire the Sum of forty Shillings for the use of the City. And if the Viewer or Viewers shall refuse or neglect the Duty hereby required shall for each offense forfeit the sum of Six Shillings and another be



THE OLD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

appointed in his or their place. This law shall be Construed to Extend to all the Houses from Lucas Voorhees to Coll Thomas ffarmars.

And be itt ordained by the authority aforesaid that from henceforth no Hay Straw Shingles or Shavings of Wood be laid within Sixteen foot and Six Inches of any Chimney in this City under the penalty of ten Shillings for Each offense.

Be it Ordained by ye Common Council That each Householder within this City from Mr. French's house to Lucas Voorhees's who hath one fire place in his house shall provide one good Leather buckett and all Others who hath two fire places or more in their houses Shall provide two good and Sufficient Leather bucketts for ye use of ye City for prevention of fire and that on or before ye first of June Next.

Whereas Tunis Montanye & James Alleson who were appointed Chimney Viewers at a meeting of the Common Council the 18 January & were served with Copy of ye said appointment ye first Monday in February last not withstanding the said Tunis Montanye & the said James Alleson have altogether Neglected & Refused to Comply with said Order of the Common Council Ordered by the Common Council that ye said Montanye & said Alleson be fined according to the Law of ye Common Council.

Ordered that the Recorder of this City make out his warrt against ye said Montanye & the said Alleson for ye recovery of said fine.

On October 18, 1737, the first notice of an engine is made by Common Council and reads:

Be it Ordained By the Common Council that Garret De Graw is hereby appointed to keep the Ingine in good repair and at the Years End he bring in his Accts to the Common Council and for His Reward for his Several Services

When this engine was bought or what kind of an engine it was is not mentioned in the minutes. The next notice is on November 18, 1747, and is as follows:

It is Ordered by ye Common Council By & with ye Consent of ye following Person's Jno. Wyley, Benj. Van Cleave, Minne Van Voorhis, Francis Van Dyck, Jno. Van Norder Junr., Jacob Wyser, Wm. Harrison, Wm. Reason and Ebenezer Lambson that they & Every of them are hereby made and appointed Trustees and Managers of ye City Injoine to keep ye Same in good Order and fitt for Use and to work & manage the Same in Case any Accidents Happen by fire And so Long as ye aforesaid Persons Continue to perform Such Services are every of them to be exempt from performing Watch & Viewing of Chimneys.

At a later date we find the following:

Be it Ordained by the Mayor Recorder and Aldermen and Assistants in Common Council Convened and by the Authority of the Same itt's Ordained that the Chimney Viewers for the time being hereby appointed are and required to prosecute any person or persons whose Chimney shall be so on fire as above and that within six Days after Such Chimneys hath bin on fire and the said Viewers Shall have ten Shillings for each prosecution; and upon refusal or Neglect So to prosecute as is hereby Derected Shall forfeit the Sum of ten Shillings to be recovered before any Majestrate of this City; and that the said Viewers are hereby ordered to viewe the Chimneys once Every fortnight During the Winter Season.

And be it further Ordained by the authority aforesaid that that all the Money now in the Treasury & that shall hereafter be paid into the Same by the money arising from freedoms shall be appropriated & applied to repairing the City Engine and whereas the said Engine is now with Jacobus Turck of New York by the order & Direction of Messrs Dirck Schuyler & Wm Ouke be it further Ordained that the said Messrs write to ye said Turck & know ye Lowest price for which he will put in Proper repair & further that they agree with sd Turk in the Best Manner they can that if possible the Said Engine may be finished & made fitt for service before Winter.

On January 9, 1749, it was:

Ordered by the Common Council that all Such Money As is Justly due to Nicholas Van Dyck for repairing the City Engine Shall be adjusted at their next meeting & that the Said Nicholas be acquainted therewith that he may prepare his account to be layd before them for that purpose.

At the meeting of April 24, 1749:

John Royce haveing produced his Acctt to this board for the freight of the fire Engine of this City from New York to this place and for Carting the Same is allowed and it is ordered that the Treasurer of this City Do pay him the Sum of Nine Shillings & two pence which is the amount of Said Acct.

This is the last mention of anything relative to the fire department until 1764, at which time there was a regularly organized bucket company. In 1776 two engines were bought, and they were known as Upper and Lower Companies. Staats Van Deursen was the head, or what we now call chief, of the department; John Dunham was foreman of the Upper and James Schureman of the Lower Company. On Tuesday, November 22, 1796, it was resolved that two public axes be provided and one attached to each engine; and resolved unanimously that another engine would be useful to the corporation, and that a new fire company, named the Ladder Company, be formed; also resolved that in all alarms of fire, it be recommended to the inhabitants of the city whose age, indisposition or sex might prevent them from giving their personal aid, in extinguishing the same, to place the fire buckets—if any there be in the house—into the street, that the citizens passing by could convey them to the place in danger, and in all alarms of fire on a dark night it was suggested to the inhabitants to place a lighted candle before a window in such position as to cast its light into the street, that confusion would be prevented and misdemeanors easily detected.

The new engine was paid for by subscription, and the announcement was made "that no tax will be necessary." Having a new engine, it was necessary to house it, and permission was obtained from the Episcopal Church to put it on the northeast corner of their lot; also from Miss Molly Harrison to use her lot (now part of Commerce

square). Mr. Bennett's lot was recommended for the "Lower engine." and Mr. Schureman offered part of his garden, if needed.

After a consideration of these sites, Engine No. 2 was located on the northeast corner of the churchyard, and Engine No. 3 on Miss Molly Harrison's lot, adjoining the old market house, in Commerce square. And in October, 1797, it was resolved to contract with Jacob Voorhees to build an engine house, "if he will wait for his pay till the money is in the treasury to pay the same." Common Council failed to make contract on these terms.

In January, 1800, Common Council called a meeting of citizens to raise by subscription money for a permanent night watch. It was resolved that six men be employed and £120 be raised to carry the resolution into effect, naming John Bergen, Capt. Robert Wade, Richard Van Arsdalen, Elisha Cox, Richard Ballard and John Egerton, with salary of £25 per annum. John L. Voorhees was substituted for Elisha Cox, who declined the appointment. That the fear of fire and the efforts to protect themselves against it was fully justified was shown by the announcement that the city had "a calamitous fire." And the fire buckets, the candle in the window, the fire engines and companies, the city watch and the watch tower on top of the market house, with a bell on it, were now supplemented by a new fire ordinance, and under it for better protection the following officers were appointed: Fire engines—John Neilson, John Bray, James Schureman, Dr. Lewis Dunham, Moses Guest, Matthew Egerton, Jr., John Dennis, Dr. Charles Smith, Perez Rowley and Jacob H. Hardenbergh. Speaking trumpets were ordered for the engineers, and they were to be supported by Fire Wardens John De Graw, North Ward; John Fisher, Market Ward; David Voorhees, Middle Ward; Moses Willsons, South Ward, and with two ladder companies, Jacob Voorhees, captain of one, and John J. Voorhees, captain of the other.

On June 30, 1800, Jacob R. Hardenbergh and Perez Rowley, having resigned as fire engineers, Robert Morris and William Paterson were appointed in their places, Mr. Boggs being subsequently appointed in Mr. Paterson's stead.

On February 2, 1801, Mr. Bray and Mr. Baker were appointed to draft a petition to the Legislature in order to secure "certain privileges or exemption from certain duties" to the firemen in the different towns of this State. In 1802 there was put into the tax budget \$445—for fire protection, \$235; pavements, \$50; new dial for town clock, \$60; contingent, \$100. There was also a census of white male inhabitants made for purpose of service on night watch each year, which rather looks as if each one had to take a turn at it.

September 7, 1804, is the first specific mention of the purchase of fire hose, and before this it seems to have been homemade, and Common Council calls for a list of the members of the fire companies, probably made necessary by the bill to exempt firemen, which they asked the Legislature to pass three years before.

In 1804, \$400 was voted in the tax budget for a new fire engine, and in June Common Council paid for one gallon of spirits furnished the fire engine men at their late fire.

With the growth of the city and increase of fire engines, more wells were needed, and in 1806 four new ones were located; and \$20 reward was offered to convict persons who raised an alarm of fire on Thursday evening, September 28, 1807. New Brunswick was not backward with substantial sympathy for sufferers from fire in other cities, and a petition was circulated for the relief of the sufferers by the late fire in Newburyport, the selectmen of which town acknowledge having received \$206.32 from the citizens of New Brunswick.

February 12, 1813, on account of the late fire (in New Brunswick) the marshal was ordered to examine all the houses within the line of buildings in this city and examine whether the same were supplied with fire buckets, according to existing ordinances, and report to Common Council, and \$15 was appropriated for fire buckets.

On November 12, 1813, the proper site for a fourth fire engine house came up, and the lot belonging to the heirs of Mr. Perkins and adjoining Darby Oram's house was recommended. This lot was not selected, but one belonging to Mr. Letson, on George Street, near the bridge, and adjoining the storehouse of Lewis Carmen, who allowed Common Council to build against one side of his storehouse. This enabled them to put up an engine house for \$69.28 (about the site No. 5 occupied on George Street) where the freight spur of the elevation is now located.

In 1818 more water was needed. There were twenty-five street wells then in twelve streets, and fifteen more were advised. They were estimated at 16 feet deep, and cost to dig \$1.75 a foot. The pumps averaged 21 feet and cost \$1 a foot. And census of night watch gave 549 names of those liable to duty. There are obscure notes in the minutes of Common Council in relation to the "Bagg men." But June 21, 1821, Mr. Van Deursen was appointed to procure five "Baggs" to supply the deficiency and distribute them. These "Baggs" were lettered, and each bag was kept by an official called the "Bagg man," and were for the removal and safe keeping of property at fires. The list is given in 1821, thirteen in all: John N. Simpson, Jehiel Freeman, Henry Outcalt, Peter Vredenburg, David Voorhees,

Samuel Holcomb, Cornelius Van Anglen, George Clark, James Richmond and Francis Conover. This is one of the first, if not the first, record of an effort to salvage and New Brunswick can justly lay claim to the origin of the modern salvage corps.

Peter Dayton, captain of No. 3, reported in 1821 his engine "in a very leaky situation," occasioned by the shrinking of the woodwork; that he had a company of the necessary complement of men, who served with much reluctance, on account of the excessive labor necessary to work her. In 1825 the company was reported as extinct. The "village" of Plainfield desired to purchase the No. 3 engine. It was sold and in 1828 a new No. 3 was purchased, costing \$712.50, and was installed with a company of thirty members.

Hitherto the ladder company had to carry its ladders and hooks to the fires. But on September 6, 1822, Common Council procured a wagon for the purpose of taking the ladders to different parts of the city in time of fire, at the moderate cost of \$32.50. The wagon was also used as a sort of hearse to bury the dead of the poor of the city. And May 30, 1823, the firemen petitioned for fire hats and \$200 was voted for that purpose, and eight additional hats were ordered for the night watch. The hats were received August, 1823—ninety hats, costing \$2 each. Can you imagine the excitement in old New Brunswick when the firemen next appeared? The first parade was held in 1825, at which time a hook and ladder company paraded with its new ladder wagon.

In November, 1825, an examination of the Fire Department showed that No. 1 engine had but eight members, No. 2 but six members, No. 3 was extinct and No. 4 was not mentioned at all. No. 5 engine had but eighteen, and Common Council asked the Legislature to exempt firemen from militia and juries. This resulted in the passage of a bill exempting firemen throughout the State from militia duty, and resulted in an immediate filling up of the engine companies.

The names of the first fire company on record, given April 5, 1796, is as follows: John Bayard, Peter Ten Eich, James Bennet, John Plum, John Hodge, Peter Vredenburg, James Cole, Moses Scott, Robert Eastburn, John Voorhees, John Supp and Peter Vredenburg, Sr.

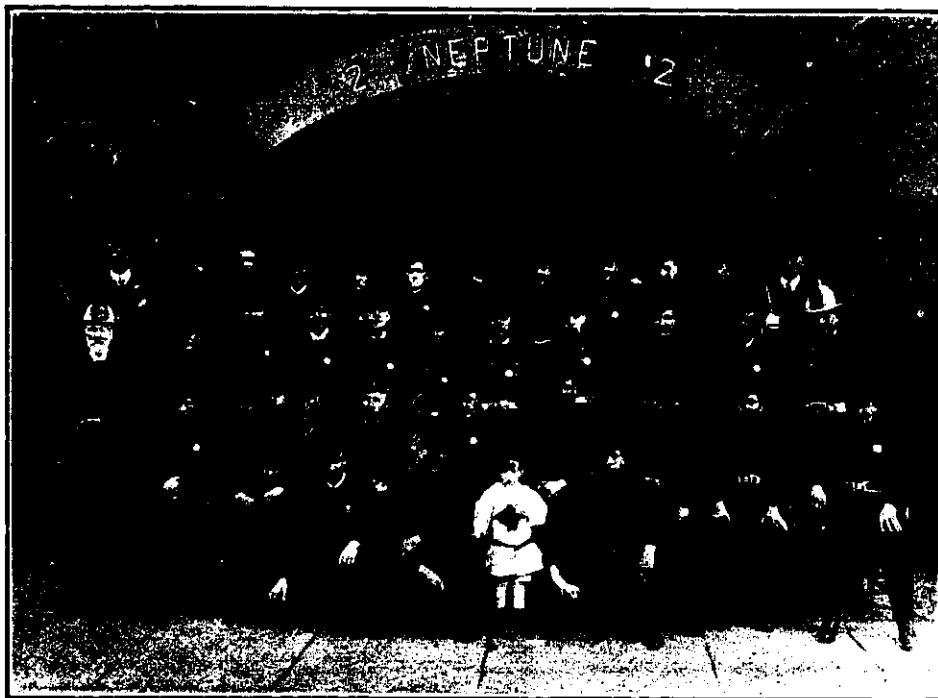
It is difficult to check up on old records, especially when some are missing. The following account is about as correct as can be made:

Washington Engine Company No. 1 was organized October 11, 1795. During the early years of this company they had no apparatus, but the members were each furnished with a large bucket.

Their first hand engine was destroyed in a big fire on the city docks. A second-hand engine was purchased later. In 1867 their first steam

engine, a Brutton, was put in service and was considered the finest in this part of the country. In 1871 this engine won a medal at the Waverly Fair in competition with engines from Jersey City, Newark and Elizabeth. Later the Brutton engine was replaced by a Metropolitan. Washington Engine Company was the first to have horses to draw its apparatus.

Neptune Engine Company No. 2 was organized in 1796, using buckets and hand engines until in later years their first steamer, a Jeffries, was put in service. In 1888 it was exchanged for a La France, and on September 18, 1888, was used for the first time at the



NEPTUNE ENGINE COMPANY No. 2, IN 1908

fire in the First Presbyterian Church, its last service being at the fire in the Union Club, on April 20, 1914.

Phoenix Engine Company No. 3 was organized in 1798. The hand engine used had brakes on the side and a condensing box at one end with a goose neck attachment. It had a six-cylinder and was the largest engine in the city. The company's first steamer was an Amoskeag, which was put in service in 1865 and used for 37 years, being replaced by a Metropolitan in 1902 and in use until July 1, 1914, when the volunteer department was replaced by a paid department.

Raritan Company was first organized as a hook and ladder company in 1795. In 1803 it was reorganized as Engine Company No. 4, having



a hand engine. Raritan was the last fire company to use a hand engine in the city, and in 1882 got their first steamer, a Dennison, but it was not satisfactory, and was changed for a Clapp & Jones; then a La France.

Protection Engine Company No. 5 was organized about 1817, re-organized again in 1852, using hand engines until their first steamer, a Haupt, was put in service. In the fall of 1885 the company got a Silsby.

Hibernia Engine Company No. 6 was organized in September 14, 1865. The company started with a hand engine, which was re-



RARITAN ENGINE COMPANY No. 4, IN 1908

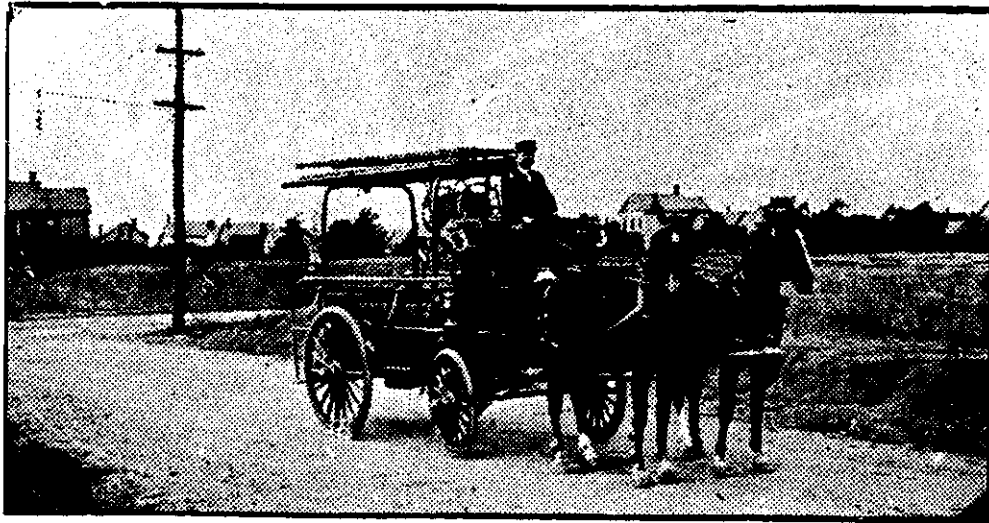
placed by a steamer, a Dennison, in 1871. Later a La France was placed in service and used by the company until the volunteer department was disbanded.

The Hook and Ladder Company was organized in 1835. At first the company was a bucket brigade, later procuring a truck, which was used until 1860. In 1867 a new truck was procured. In 1896 a larger truck was placed in service and used until replaced by a Robinson Motor Truck.

Liberty Hose Company was organized July 31, 1853, first using an old hose carriage formerly used by Phoenix Hose, and then a new carriage was procured in 1867, being kept in service until 1895, when a horse-drawn wagon, the first in the city, was put in use. In 1902 a

larger horse wagon, using a team of horses was secured. In April, 1914, the hose wagon was replaced by a Waterous motor apparatus and the name Liberty Hose was changed to Engine No. 7. This apparatus was a pumper, also carrying hose, chemical tanks and ladders. This apparatus was used for a time by the paid department.

The volunteer department was composed of 493 men. Fifty men to each of the six engine companies 20 to each of the hose companies attached to the engine companies; 40 to the truck company, and 30 to Liberty Hose, with a chief and two assistants.



LIBERTY HOSE IN 1908

Formerly the members of the six engine companies, truck company and Liberty Hose received \$10 each per year for their services. The hose boys received nothing. Later the firemen were given \$12 a year. At one time there was also an exemption of taxes on \$500 worth of property, which was granted to those members in the department holding property.

Several members of the Volunteer Department were killed in the fire service. Among them were William Van Arsdale, of No. 3; William Robotham, of No. 1; James Fisher and John Thomas, of Liberty Hose. Chief John Pierce, of No. 2, was taken sick from fire service and died after serving as chief only four months.

March 29, 1912, steps were taken towards the formation of a paid department, with the appointment of Harry J. Francis, as the first full paid official, and Louis Sass, as assistant chief on part paid time. On January 13, 1913, Thomas J. Murphy, captain of Truck Company, was appointed as the first full paid fireman, and a few weeks following, January 26, 1913, the first motor apparatus, a Robinson City Service Truck, was placed in service.

Engines Nos. 2 and 4 were attached to C. J. Cross tractors and placed in service in May, 1914. A Waterous Triple Combination apparatus was placed in service in 1913.

The facts related above were the preliminary steps towards the installation of a paid department, for on July 1, 1914, the volunteer and part paid departments stepped out and the paid department made its initial appearance, with Chief Francis and Assistant Chief Sass in command.

On January 16, 1920, the two platoon system went into effect at 8 A. M. The fire alarm system was installed in 1891.

The lists of chiefs follow in their order :

1860-1862—Henry Smith.

1862-1870—Fred Staat.

1870-1874—William S. Strong.

1874-1878—Henry C. Housell.

1879-1880—Andrew Smith.

1881-1882—John Harkins.

1883-1884—Milton Ross.

1884-1885—John Lawrence.

1885-1886—Edward C. Kelly.

1886-1888—William C. Jacques.

1888-1890—John Donnelly.

1890-1892—Frank Acker.

1892-1894—Patrick J. Murray.

1894-1896—Charles Greenwald.

1896-1898—William Durham, Jr.

1898-1900—John Banker.

1900—John D. Pierce (served four months in 1900. Died in office July 25, 1900. The only chief to die while holding office.)

1900-1902—Charles M. Banks.

1902-1904—James F. Kidney.

1905-1906—John F. Norton.

1907-1908—John V. Puerschner.

1909-1910—Harry J. Francis.

1911-1912—Louis Sass.

On March 29, 1912, Harry J. Francis, first chief of the paid department, was appointed.

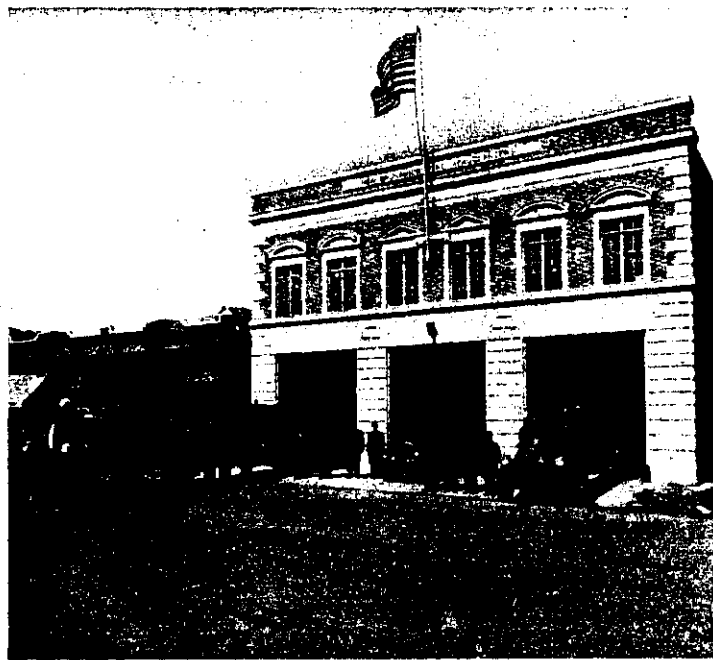
The Exempt Firemen's Association was organized in May, 1905, and incorporated in October of the same year. Henry C. Housell was elected the first president, Joseph P. Kelly, vice-president. The other



IN THE DAYS OF THE RED SHIRTS. THIS WAS "EDDIE" KELLY'S PARADE.

original officers included Harry P. McKeag, financial secretary; William C. Jacques, treasurer, and John Harding, Charles Dodge and John V. Puerchner, trustees.

The charter members were: John Greenewald, Benjamin Reed, James White, William Latham, Charles Morris, William H. Price, Louis Sass, A. Spille, Jacob Whitfield, Harry Williams, L. C. McAvoy, John Banker, Walter Church, Frank Boudinot, William P. Robinson, Charles Greenewald, Allen Bennett, C. Groben, Garret Dreier, William Leach, Edward Phillips, James F. Kidney, Harry Solomon, William Puerchner, John T. Bradley, Jerry Rule, Harry B.



FIRE HEADQUARTERS

McKeag, Stephen Van Derhoef, Terrence P. Lyons, Schuyler C. Van Cleef, John F. Norton, Thomas Reames, J. N. Terrill.

David Beatty, Andrew Smith, George Jacques, John Smith, Peter Dunn, Edward Tallman, Charles H. Elias, M. McKune, William Dunham, H. R. Slaback, S. D. W. Ownes, W. W. Worle, Morris Bauer, Ira C. Voorhees, William Faulkner, James Houghton, Thomas Murphy, Sr., William C. Jacques, John Lawrence.

Milton Ross, George H. Parsell, Theodore Seaman, Alfred Y. Van Dyne, Matthias Knause, John T. Max, Walter Ryno, John Harkins, S. J. Shuck, Edward Finnegan, Henry C. Housell, Joseph P. Kelly, John Harding, Charles Dodge, John V. Puerchner, Richard Ladley, Chris Monaghan and Charles Monaghan.