
Sayre Fire Department

Compiled by James R. Nobles
Written by Edward M. Hogan

The era of the water-bucket brigades, quickly mustered to douse fires in

Sayre's founding times, ended in the waning years of the 19th century as building construction grew to meet the burgeoning population.

From 1880 to 1890 the number of people in the community rose from 800 to 3,200. Organized fire protection was desperately needed to conquer flames efficiently and keep losses at a minimum.

The frustration and futility of citizens hurling buckets of water was evident in an 1875 blaze at the first railroad depot and when flames swept through some wooden buildings on Desmond St. in 1880.



Early view of City Hall and Fire Department Building built in 1908 under the direction of C.C. West of the Borough Council. The divided doorway to the bays of the fire department were eliminated about 1930 to accommodate changing needs as were the manure pit and hayloft formerly located at the rear of the building.

In addition to sound fire protection, another need was to fill the social void. The formation of volunteer fire units met both the need for public safety and for dances and parties. In the salad years of most American communities, firemen's conventions were big civic events.

The Sayre Fire Department galloped off to a start in 1886 with the formation of the E.P. Wilbur Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1. Soon afterwards came the Robert A. Packer Hose Co. No. 2.

Others and their debut dates were the Robert H. Sayre Co. No. 3, 1893; the Howard Elmer Hose Co. No. 4, 1897; and the J.E. Wheelock Hose Co. No. 5, 1898.

Both horses and men powered the early fire-fighting apparatus. The Wilbur Hose's horses did double duty. They were used for street repairs and other borough projects. When the fire alarm sounded, the reins were swiftly switched from borough wagons to fire equipment at the municipal building and the horses were off on the race to the scene of the fire.

The Packer Company formed a running team for its hand-drawn equipment. The team, headed by Dr. M.C. Hunter, brought home many awards won at conventions throughout Pennsylvania and New York.

SOURCES:

Albert J. Frank

Edward Nagle

Joseph DeSisti

Sayre Fire Dept. Convention Booklets