

The first chief of the Sayre Department was J.W. Bishop, a member of the Wilbur Hook and Ladder company. The department's companies sponsored social events held in the hall of the Eighmey Opera House on Desmond St.

At first the Wilbur and Packer companies met in various halls until they moved into the new borough hall completed in 1908. The Sayre unit erected its building on Thomas Ave. with Lewis Eighmey as first president.

The Howard Elmer Hose Co. had a station in an abandoned chapel on Maple St. donated by Mrs. Howard Elmer who had it constructed for non-sectarian services, a purpose which failed.

The Wheelock Hose Company was organized in the John Watkins barn in Milltown. Land was donated by the company's patron, Joseph Wheelock, and a building was constructed by the firemen.

A heated dispute between the Department and the borough fathers which seriously weakened fire protection within the borough flared in 1915. The Department had pleaded for funds to support the two outside companies, Howard Elmer in West Sayre and Wheelock's in Milltown.

The Borough Council turned a deaf ear to the appropriations request. Many angered firemen went on strike. They sat on a fence to watch a fire that hit the East Side School. At a hurriedly called Department meeting, Chief Harry Zeller dissolved the Wilbur, Packer and Sayre hose companies. Survivors were the Howard Elmer and Wheelock companies.

This precipitous action on the part of the fire department sparked a special executive session of the Borough Council to fill the fire-



Albert J. Frank, longest tenured Fire Chief

fighting gap. The Council authorized purchase of a modern pumper, the first gasoline-driven vehicle in the fire department, dubbed "Old Huldy" and used for 23 years. It cost \$2,000. Also provided was a borough dormitory for volunteers to handle "Old Huldy" at local fires during this troubled transition period.

In order to solidify the crews for the pumper, a fire company, known as Engine Company No. 1, was organized on May 5, 1926 by a group of citizens including members of the former Wilbur H. & L. Company.

"Old Huldy" bowed out in 1938 with the purchase of the "Quad" (four-fold purpose) truck. The new fire-fighting vehicle carried ladders up to 50 feet, a booster tank with a 500-gallon-per-minute pump,

and a bed for 1,400 feet of 2-1/2 inch hose. It served until 1966 when an 85-foot American LaFrance aerial (Quint) was purchased.

Other apparatus changes included new pumpers for both J.E. Wheelock and Howard Elmer Hose Companies in 1941 and replacement of these in 1956 and 1959 respectively. Their present engines are a 1976 Ward LaFrance for Wheelock's and a 1981 Pierce for Howard Elmer.

As with all successful volunteer fire companies, the Sayre Fire Department is competitive among its three companies, utilizes the latest in fire fighting equipment, stays abreast of modern fire fighting techniques and emphasizes training and safety first to serve Sayre best. ❁

CHIEF ALBERT FRANK

The Sayre Fire Department had many chiefs but the man who served the longest was Albert Frank who had joined the department in 1927. He was named assistant chief in 1935 and chief in 1937 and re-elected numerous times to the top leadership. He retired after 30 years as chief or assistant chief, a career which saw him putting his life on the line in many a battle to tame disastrous fires in the borough.

Chief Frank had been identified with the Wheelock Hose Company. Two other chiefs with long tenures were Donald Saxe from the Howard Elmer Hose Company No. 4 and Elwood Schrader from Engine Co. No. 1.

By 1916 a paid driver for the fire truck stationed at the Borough Hall was hired. This tax-supported position was filled by a series of drivers. Then in 1941 Herman Nobles was appointed, holding the post for 35 years until his retirement.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

In 1948 the Sayre Fire Department inaugurated an ambulance service answering a host of valley-wide mercy calls. Membership in the ambulance corps increased through the area. By 1990 the ambulance service was transferred to its own non-profit organization.