

175th Anniversary Schuylerville Fire Department – Changes over the Years

Written by Administrator

Friday, 30 September 2011 14:50 - Last Updated Thursday, 21 June 2012 11:14

Saratogian Article - Monday October 10, 2011

<http://www.saratogian.com/articles/2011/10/10/news/doc4e92596fac837338815180.txt?viewmode=fullstory>

Post Star Article - Saturday October 8, 2011

http://poststar.com/news/local/schuylerville-hose-company-to-mark-years/article_95a8ed7c-f160-11e0-8638-001cc4c002e0.html

Some things never change. Fortunately, others do. While families still get up early in the morning, prepare for school and work, come home to supper and homework completion not everything has remained the same.

In 1836, after deciding that each resident of the village who owned a home would be required to provide himself with two buckets bearing his initials and kept in a convenient place in his home may not be adequate fire protection, on August 15, 1836 the Schuylerville Fire Department was officially organized. Mayo Pond was appointed as captain with a roster of thirty one fire fighters. The President and trustees purchased the first hand pumper for the Village of Schuylerville. In 1837 an Engine House was built on Church St. Around 1870 the village purchased another hand pumper to replace the original one. This equipment was purchased from the City of Albany where it had seen much "action". The hand pumper was built by Button Company of Waterford in 1856 for the Number 4 Engine Company of Albany. The hand pumper was renamed General Schuyler Engine No. 1. Today the hand pumper is known as "Old Betsy". "Old Betsy's" greatest claim to fame was at the Coney Island Muster where the firemen pumped a stream 234' 11" setting a world record. Now, she rests and greets Kindergarten students when they visit in October for their annual fire safety lessons.

Over the years there have been other changes as well. At some point in the 1890's it was felt necessary to have three fire companies. In the early 1900's, after a water system was installed, introducing hydrants to the village, the D.A. Bullard Hose Company was formed in addition to the General Schuyler Steamer Company. Following reorganization, when the companies merged, the company purchased its first motorized fire engine, a 1926 Seldon.

In November of 1953 the company again reorganized and an addition was added to the firehouse to accommodate additional fire apparatus. Fire Chief Leon Mathis was strict

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regarding training which resulted in the achievement of one of the best fire companies in the area. Chief Mathis introduced self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA's), hose master stream devices and a maintenance program for the fire apparatus. In 1960 Ray Zerwick was elected Fire Chief and served in that position for twenty one years. Chief Zerwick was also a firm believer that strict training was necessary for successful fire companies. Ray is still an active member of Schuyler Hose Company and responds to operate the radios when an alarm is sounded. Some things never change.

In late 1978 the new fire station was complete and Schuyler Hose Co. moved all their equipment and apparatus into their new quarters. Since then the apparatus have been upgraded to include a grass fire truck, two engines which can each pump up to 1,250 gallons of water a minute, a ladder truck with a 95 foot bucket, a water rescue boat, and a new 3,500 gallon vacuum water tanker...and yes, "Old Betsy". *Some* things do not change.

The equipment has certainly changed from every home having two buckets for extinguishing fires to an engine that can pump up to 1,250 of those buckets of water every minute. The protective clothing and equipment, which was not existent, now allows fire fighters to enter burning buildings to put out the fires and breathe clean air in a situation where poisonous gases are everywhere. Instead of just putting wet stuff on hot stuff we now have thermal imaging cameras which can locate smouldering fires within walls so that they can be extinguished. Fire fighters now know that venting a roof properly will allow some of the dangerous gases and heat to escape making it safer for them to search out and eliminate fire. Training is now quite different also. Early fire fighters had no formal training. Today, fire fighters must take classes taught by New York state certified fire instructors which last over 100 hours. Follow up classes are offered which can take a well trained firefighter many hundred hours to complete.

The job has also changed. In the beginning, fire fighters only put out fires from the exterior of the building. Now, beside crawling into a burning building to find the heart of the fire so it can be extinguished earlier, thus saving the owner much more of the building and it's contents, they must also be able to remove accident victims from motor vehicle accidents, find the source of a carbon monoxide leak and make the home safe, help injured hikers up from the side of a cliff, reroute traffic when a storm drops trees or electrical wires on a highway, assist emergency responders to remove ill patients from a home, help rescue boaters or fishermen on water or ice, rescue a worker from a confined space they cannot safely get out of, do search and rescue operations when home owners or other fire fighters are in trouble or injured as well as supply water, equipment, as well as personnel to our neighbouring fire companies who have a fire larger than their capacity.

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Today Schuyler Hose has thirty-nine active members with Richard Behrens as President and Brian Myers, Jr. as Fire Chief. Schuyler Hose is still quartered at the fire station at the corner of Green St. and Spring St. The Schuyler Hose Co. provides fire protection for the Village of Schuylerville, parts of the Towns of Northumberland and Saratoga in Saratoga County and portions of the Towns of Easton and Greenwich in Washington County. The members today continue to carry on the tradition and philosophy of our forefathers; providing the community with one of the best fire departments in the area! See, some things will not ever change.

To see those differences side by side, attend the celebration of the first 175 years of fire fighting in Schuylerville. On October 9, 2011 there will be an open house at the fire station from 1:00 P. M. to 3:00 P. M. You will be able to see fire equipment and apparatus from the past as well as the trucks and tools which will be used into the future to keep the community safe. Compare the 1856 Button hand pumper, "Old Betsy" with the 2011 vacuum tanker and pumper just recently purchased. In the upstairs meeting room view the displays of protective equipment from the past and compare it with what is used today.

At 1:15, in the apparatus bay there will be a demonstration of how a firefighter escapes if trapped by fire on an upper floor. That demonstration will be followed at 1:45 with a demonstration of our new vacuum/tanker in operation. Then, at 2:15 we will demonstrate how our tower ladder, T-577, can be raised up to ninety five feet to rescue people from upper floors, as well as give firefighters safe access to structure roofs. That will be operating within a few feet of the 1856 Button hand pumper.

At 3:00 P. M. there will be a more formal ceremony as we take a few moments to hear about our past, present, and future as well as honouring all who have served to protect life and property in the Schuylerville Fire Department service area.

For an educational and inspirational afternoon please join the proud members of the Schuylerville Fire Department as they travel through time from 1836 to 2011.