

Fire Department History



In 1910 a group of concerned citizens held a meeting in the Koehler's blacksmith shop in the town of Oswego. Their town was growing in size and population to the point where some means of fire protection was becoming essential. That night the first bucket and ladder brigade was formed to provide protection for the newly-incorporated City of Oswego. The volunteers included Chief George Miller, Edgar Davidson, William Cook, George Prosser and Arthur "Red" McVey. "Red" was the first fire department secretary, logging all fire calls and recording all pertinent information for many years.

The primitive brigade equipment consisted of a two-wheeled, hand pulled hose cart and ladders and buckets that were mounted on posts and buildings throughout the city. A school bell purchased from the City of Portland served as the alarm system. It was mounted on a steel water tower that was donated by John F. Bickner who was a member of Oswego's first City Council.

Oswego's first City Hall was built on A Avenue in 1926. A siren on it's roof replaced the bell which was preserved by "Red" McVey. He proudly displayed the bell on his front lawn for years and later donated it to the city. It was during this year a 1923 GMC was purchased. It had to be hand cranked to start. After volunteers responded to the wail of the siren, the first two firefighters to arrive would start the truck; one would stand up on the throttle and the other one would crank the GMC to get it going. The original fire engine was restored after damage from the flood of 1964 and is presently on display in the lobby of the Main Fire Station located at 300 B Avenue.

By the mid to late 1930's, there were as many as thirty volunteers in the department. In 1949 the City of Oswego hired the first paid firefighters. Bob Montgomery became the first paid Fire Chief and Hueston Reynolds and Marvin Fredericks were hired as firefighters.

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