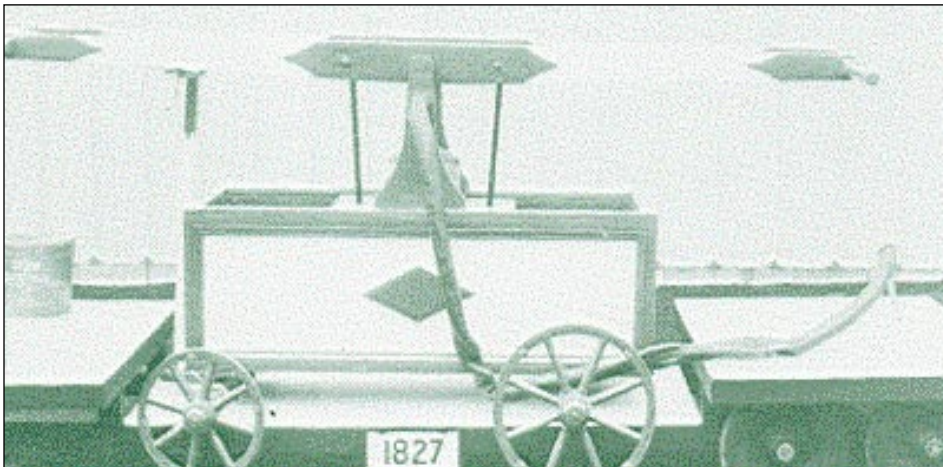


The History of the Whitby Fire Department



1827 - Spenger Hand Pump

The first piece of “modern” fire fighting equipment used in Whitby was a manually operated hand pump built in Port Whitby by Mr.H.Spenger. This pump was used to protect the grain elevators, at what is now known as Port Whitby Harbour & Marina.

The first organized fire protection, for the Town of Whitby, was a privately operated company, established by Mr. Nathaniel Ray in 1851. In 1857, two years after Whitby was incorporated as a Town, a fire brigade and a hook & ladder company were formed under a by-law, passed by the Town Council. The Fire Chief and Assistant Engineers were chosen by the Town Council and the Fire



1885 - Whitby Fire Brigade



1863 - photo of damage to N/W corner Brock & Dundas following 1857 fire

Department came under jurisdiction of the Council's Fire & Water Committee. The engine company consisted of 25 men and the hook & ladder company, 20 men. As water supply was a problem, the Town Council provided equipment for the Fire Fighters to dig three wells in the centre of Town. In those early days the Fire Fighters not only dug their own wells, they also were expected to pay \$5.00 each for their uniforms!

Whitby Fires

In 1857, the Town was in a panic, over a series of mysterious fires. Was an arsonist on the loose? Two fires destroyed large sections of the downtown business area. On Halloween night, one of these suspicious fires broke out. A rider was sent to



1885 - Merryweather Steam Fire Engine



1885 - Merryweather Steam Fire Engine

the village of Oshawa to obtain that community's fire engine service. The rider was unable to locate the Reeve of the Village, who held the only key to the fire engine. The fire loss was extensive, causing damage amounting to \$40,000.00.

The late 19th century saw many serious fires in Whitby. In June 1864, Perry's Block, one of the major business blocks of the Town, was destroyed. The critical need for a new fire engine was proven very clearly in August 1868 when the Brown and Patterson foundry burned down. The fire engine in use “failed in everything except wasting water”, the local press reported. The fire loss was \$25,000.00. By December 1871, the Town Council had decided to act on the matter by purchasing a steam fire engine from England but, before it arrived, two large hotels were both lost to flames. The Town had suffered several severe fire losses and public complaint required the Town



Hall 3 - Brock St., 1947 - Whitby Fire Department

Council to act on the matter. In October of 1872, the long awaited Merryweather Steam Fire Engine arrived, from London England.

The Merryweather weighed 2,500 pounds and cost \$3,000.00. It was frost proof, and specially made for the Canadian climate. It was able to pump water through 800 feet of hose from a well at the Four Corners and shoot a stream 15 feet over the steeple of All Saints' Church

at Dundas St. West and Centre St. North. Only a month after it arrived in Whitby, the Merryweather proved its worth by saving Downtown Oshawa. At last, Whitby was able to pay Oshawa back, for all the help rendered in the past. The Merryweather served the town faithfully for 54 years.

The worst fire, in Whitby's history, occurred on October 16, 1877, when a lamp burst in Thomas



1) 1951 - Brunton Lumber Yard before & during fire



1924 - Reo

Lawler's store. Almost the entire east side of Brock Street from Dundas to Colborne was destroyed. Many businesses were gutted, with the total loss amounting to \$150,000.00. The Merryweather and the Oshawa fire engines pumped the Town wells dry that day.

In 1879, the fire engine was kept at the Town Hall building at Brock and Colborne Streets. A bell on a tower behind the Town Hall was rung whenever a fire alarm was turned in. When the bell sounded, anyone within hearing distance would unhitch his team of horses from his wagon and race to the Fire Hall. The first team to arrive pulled the Merryweather to the fire and received a reward of \$7.00. The second team was rewarded with \$5.00 and had the duty of hauling the ladder wagon. The last wagon to go earned \$3.00 hauling the hose reel.

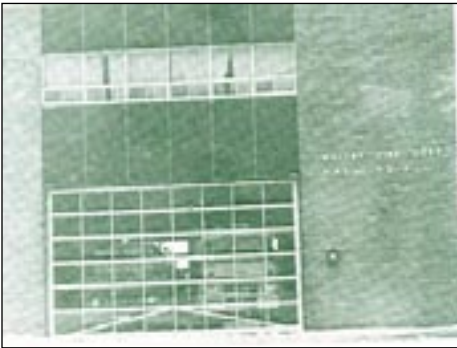
Through the years, Whitby suffered many other less serious fires. The Town lost its curling and skating rink in 1888, its Catholic Church in 1901 along with a hardware store, and a school in 1920.

In 1926 the Merryweather was replaced with Whitby's first motorized fire trucks. These were a Godfredson Pumper and a Chevrolet Chemical Truck, purchased by the Town at a cost of \$10,200.00.

In 1931 the Department was reorganized by the Town Council, with



Brooklin (Hall 1)



Manning & Thickson Roads (Hall 2)

the implementation of a number of regulations to improve fire service.

In 1931, a siren was installed on the roof of Town Hall replaced the fire bell. In 1932 the old market building south of the Town Hall was remodelled for use as a Fire Hall. It was the main Fire Hall until 1965, when the present Fire Hall, on Brock Street South (Hall 3), was built.

There was a second Fire Hall, for many years, on Watson Street in Port Whitby. It had a hand operated hose reel until 1946 when the Chevrolet chemical truck was sent to Port Whitby, after a new LaFrance pumper was purchased for the main Fire Hall.

One of the worst fires in recent history was the burning of the Brunton Lumber Yard at Port Whitby in 1951. Fire Fighters were unable to save the building, which burned in sub-zero temperatures of Febru-

ary. Arson was suspected but never proven.

In 1968, the amalgamation of the Town and Township of Whitby, brought together two other Volunteer Fire Departments with the Town Department. The Whitby Township Fire Department, located in Brooklin, was formed in the 1920's. The first truck purchased by this Fire Department was the 1924 Reo still in service as a showpiece for Town of Whitby parades. A Volunteer Fire Hall still exists today, in Brooklin, on Vipond Street (Hall 1). The other department to join was the Garrard Road Fire Brigade, formed in 1953. The 1924 Reo, obtained from Brooklin in 1955, served as this departments first vehicle.

In 1965 the Garrard Road Fire Brigade built the Fire Hall located at Manning & Thickson Roads (Hall 2). In 1976, another Volunteer Fire Hall was opened, on Myrtle Road East (Hall 4).

In 1969 the Town of Whitby began to hire it's first full time staff for the Whitby Fire Department, Fire Chief Ed Crouch. In 1970 the first 5 fire fighters were hired. This was the end of 120 years of completely volunteer service.

In 1972 The Canadian Underwriter's Association gave recognition to the Whitby Fire Department's Full Time Division, which resulted in the reduction of building and content fire insurance premiums.

In 1973 the Department purchased a MACK 100' Aerial Pumper truck. This timely acquisition was put to good use on December 1st, 1973, when a fire broke out at the Ontario Ladies College.



1973 - Ontario Ladies College fire

As emergency services evolved over time, the Whitby Fire Department strived to continue serving it's community with excellence. An exciting piece of technology, introduced to the Department in 1978, was the "Hurst Jaws of Life".

This tool, still in use today, helps to extricate victims trapped in motor vehicle collisions. By 1984 all personnel had been trained in CPR. In 1991 a new 100' Pierce Platform Aerial was purchased. In 1996, with Community support, the equipment and skills necessary to defibrillate cardiac patients, was available to full time members of the Fire Department. In 1998 the Fire Department underwent a name change to Whitby Fire & Emergency Services, reflecting it's current mandate.

Our very successful Junior Fire Department, began in 1973. 1974 saw the introduction of an Adult Fire Prevention Program directed towards house-wives and husbands to familiarize them with hazards around the home and to educate them on how to combat small emergencies if they should arise. In 1979 during Fire Prevention Week, the "Open House" concept was introduced.



1978 - "Hurst Jaws of Life"

Today, Whitby Fire & Emergency Services consists of 97 full time staff, 2 part time staff, and 16 volunteer fire fighters. Our new Fire Services Headquarters, located on McKinney Drive, opened in 1995. This building includes Administration, a Fire Hall (5), Communications Centre, Training Room, and a Public Education Room. In the year 2000 Whitby Fire & Emergency Services, broke ground for a new Fire Hall on Dundas Street West.

