



## Groesbeck Fire Department

*Reprinted with permission of The Coleraine Historical Society; from book "Colerain Township – Revisited" by Ruth J. Wells, first CHS President*

The time is 1931. The place is Groesbeck, OH in rural Colerain Township. Times are rough. Citizens are concerned as the country is in a depression. A group of citizens gather at Ed Honnert's garage on Colerain near Galbraith. They call themselves, "the Groesbeck Improvement Association". A big concern is fire protection. The North College Hill Fire Department will be unable to answer calls in Colerain Township.

The **Groesbeck Improvement Association** (G.I.A.) elects the following officers: Ed Honnert, President; Carl Huber, Vice President; Mrs. Frank Gellhaus, Recording Secretary; Robert Ahrens, Corresponding Secretary; George K. Foster, Treasurer. Ed Honnert appointed George K. Foster the Chairman of the Fire Committee. The first G.I.A. Carnival was held the summer of 1933; in reality, a celebration dedicating Van Zant Road (which is now Galbraith Road). In 1933, G.I.A. purchased a used 1930 Model A Ford Pumper. John Schulte was appointed Fire Chief. The first fire occurred on December 25, 1933 – a barn on the Rocker property (now Burgundy Court and Rocker Drive).

In 1934, the G.I.A. called a meeting, at which it was decided to let the Fire Department re-organize and elect their own officers. It was held at Fielers Garage, where the first engine was housed. **The first meeting of the Groesbeck Fire Department was held on March 6, 1934.** The following officers were elected: Fred Finke, Senior Chief; John Herrmann, Asst. Chief; Ivan Johnson, Marshall; Elbert (Bud) Aston, Captain. The first fire bell was donated by the North College Hill Fire Department. This bell is now at the Galbraith Road Station as part of a memorial to firefighters killed in the line of duty.

In October 1934, a dance was given at Bevis Garage, where a ton of coal was raffled off as a door prize to make extra money. Also in 1934, Colerain Township agreed by contract to pay \$35.00 for each Fire Department run.

In 1937, the new Community Hall and Fire Station was built. In 1939, the Ladies Auxiliary was organized and a Bell Telephone System was installed in the fireman's homes. In 1940, a new Ford Howe Pumper Truck was delivered.

**Cloyce "Corky" Snyder joined the Fire Department in 1948 and served for 40 years.** He was Volunteer Chief from 1958 to 1961. He returned to that post in 1967. He then later became the **first paid Fire Chief.**

**In 1954, the Township Trustees** – William “Bud” Thomas, John Herrmann, and Dale Diefenbacher – **decided to organize a Fire Department in the Dunlap area.** In 1955, 2-way radios were installed in the fire pumpers. In 1957, a jeep was bought and the first grass fire fighting rig was built. Also, it was decided to start a Life Squad. New men were trained and a 1958 Cadillac Ambulance was purchased.

A new fire house was built by the G.I.A. on Galbraith Road to have more room for apparatus. In September 1959, the first meeting was held there. In 1960, Plectrons in Home Radios to call firemen were purchased. In 1962, a new Howe 1000 GPM Custom Pumper was ordered. **Al Zoellner became Fire Chief.**

**On October 19, 1964, the worst fire in the history of Groesbeck occurred** in the Western Cabinet Company at Colerain and Jonrose. Roy Johnson was Chief. The fire started in a paint booth because of a defective exhaust system. Pumpers worked 8 hours and 9 hose lines were hooked up to 2 hydrants. The call came in at 6:05pm and the men returned to the station at 2:15am.

**30 men responded...only 28 returned. Captain Lee Hammitt and Fireman Bruce Price died in the fire.** They were the first Colerain Firefighters to die in the Line of Duty.

**In 1965, the Groesbeck Fire Protective Association, Inc. was chartered by the State of Ohio.** Robert Foster was its first President. Voters passed a one mill Fire Levy. Also the first 4 paid firemen were hired: Charles Frankel, Bill Clark, Dick Baker and Clyde Kohne.

**In 1967, the Groesbeck Fire Department divorced itself from the Groesbeck Improvement Association.** They moved into a new fire station at 3360 West Galbraith Rd. A new 1967 Howe Custom Pumper truck was delivered.

In 1970, Corky Snyder, Chief of Groesbeck and Bud Williams, Chief of Dunlap started talks about a Colerain Township Fire Department. In 1975, the 2 departments formally merged.

## **GROESBECK FIRE CHIEFS**

John Schulte – 1933

Fred Finke, Sr. – 1934 to 1953

Al Forman – 1953 to 1956

Al Zoellner – 1957

Cloyce Snyder – 1958 to 1961

Al Zoellner – 1962

Roy Johnson – 1963 to 1965

Ivan Johnson – 1966

Cloyce Snyder – 1967 to 1975\*\*

**Cloyce “Cork” Snyder** – (\*\*after combining with Groesbeck) **Colerain Chief 1975-1988**

## **CHARTER MEMBERS OF GROESBECK FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Frank Drake

John Herrmann

Ed Bokelman

John O’Shea

Joe Kramer

Ivan Johnson

Frank O’Neal

Louis Kramer

Christ Ruehl

Carl Thole

Fred Finke, Sr.

Harold Harris

Ralph Lockwood

Robert Gauggel

Elbert Aston

John Frey

Henry Fieler

Robert Foster

Carlton Huber

Ed Lockwood

August Wagner



The Groesbeck Fire Department on March 5, 1964, was, from left to right, (first row) Bob Lochinger, Life Squad 1st lieutenant Wes Jones, marshal A. Zoellner, captain Lee Hammitt, chief Leroy Johnson, assistant chief Ivan Johnson, squad captain Armand Clawson Jr., and Life Squad 2nd lieutenant Ed Rapking; (second row) Bruce Prise, Jack Hafer, Lyle Ranson, Norm Parker, Ray Ressa, Stan Kramer, Ed Hansert, Vince Walter, Bruce Haskins, clerk Don Kline, Al Wolk, and Joe Linnemann; (third row) Martin Sherwood, Art Hase, Rob Foster, George Gaiser, Art Addcock, Ed Hirsh, treasurer Joe Kramer, Carl Lierer, Cloyse "Corky" Snyder, Rick Gaiser, and Armand Clawson Sr. Lee Hammitt and Bruce Prise both died in the line of duty on October 19, 1964, in a major fire at Western Cabinet on Colerain Avenue. Lt. Charlie Palm died in a house fire on November 29, 1977. Lt. Robin Broxterman and firefighter Brian Schira died fighting a house fire on April 4, 2008. (Courtesy of the Colerain Township Fire Department.)