

Colerain Township Fire Department

GROESBECK FIRE DEPARTMENT

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 pumps. 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. Pumps 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.



The Groesbeck Fire Department on March 5, 1964, was, from left to right, (first row) Bob Lochinger, Life Squad 1st lieutenant Wes Jones, marshall 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 Price, Jack Haker, Lyle Ranson, Norm Parker, Ray Ressa, Stan Kramer, Ed Hansert, Vince Walter, Bruce Haskins, clerk Don Klme, Al Wolk, and Joe Linnemann; (third row) Martin Sherwood, Art Hase, Rob Foster, George Gaiser, Art Addcock, Ed Hirsch, treasurer Joe Kramer, Carl Lierer, Cloyce "Corky" Snyder, Rick Gaiser, and Armand Clawson Sr. Lee Hammitt and Bruce Price 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 Brosterman and firefighter Brian Schirs died fighting a house fire on April 4, 2008. (Courtesy of the Colerain Township Fire Department.)



DUNLAP FIRE DEPARTMENT

In 1954, Colerain Township Trustees began making plans to form a fire department for the northern half of the township. Prior to this the northern area was covered by the Groesbeck Department assisted by neighboring departments – Fairfield, Ross and New Baltimore.

On October 18, 1954 the first officers were appointed. The Trustees appointed the officers for the first year; thereafter to be elected. Dick Bowman was chosen Chief; Gene Taylor, Asst. Chief; Ray Walters as Marshall; and George Matt to serve as Captain. Availability of fire equipment was discussed – Trustees saying that bids would have to be advertised for several weeks; and, after bids, it would take 90 days for the truck to be equipped. A committee was chosen to mail cards to the residence owners in the territory for the purpose of locating water supplies such as cisterns, wells, creeks, lakes, etc. George Matt's old garage sign was repainted to read Dunlap Fire Department. A committee was chosen to draw up a constitution and by-laws. The department was established with the Township purchasing and owning the equipment and the membership owning the station. With this in mind, it was necessary to hold fund raising events to buy the "extra" items needed to maintain the Fire Department.

Approximately 100 people attended the first 2 meetings where it was decided how to raise money for the department. The first fund raiser was a raffling off of a rooster netting about \$450. Future fund raising events would include the carnival and yearly turkey raffle. The Ladies Auxiliary was formed to help raise money for the department. They worked tirelessly to provide extra equipment and furnishings for the firehouse. They went to fire scenes, in many cases, to provide water and refreshments for the working firemen.

The site chosen for the Dunlap Fire Department was at the corner of Kemper Road and Colerain. In February 1955, the department membership was set at 40 with 10 substitute firemen. In March a tower to mount a siren and hang hose was planned. A block tower was erected at a cost of \$250. Also the Township purchased a John Bean pumper.

The first 2 fire calls were received on July 17th. They were received at the station. There were 4 phones located in neighboring residences and a fifth located at the fire house. When an operator received a call for the Fire Department, all 5 phones would ring – "we guarantee an answer because someone will be at one of these residences at all times". When it was clear as to the location of the fire, the siren would be activated by the one receiving the call merely by pressing a button next to the phone. When a minimum of 2 firemen were available, a pumper would leave for the scene of the fire. Any additional firemen who came to the firehouse, looked at the call board and responded to the fire in their personal vehicles.

The Call Board was located in the alarm room. Next to it was a filing bin which held cards with the addresses of all residents in the area. Every piece of property in the area was registered with the department. On the registration cards was information such as: the main power switch to the house, water supplies, and other information that might help or hinder the department while fighting a fire. On this card was also a map of the shortest route to the property. The cards were filed by property numbers. Smaller bins were also located by the call board and were placed alphabetically by property owner names. This system was used to check and double-check so mistakes were not made in response.

Upon arrival of the new pumper, drivers were assigned and crews were made up for each driver. Dates were set up for each driver to take his crew on practice runs. These crews were set up regarding day or night availability.

In January of 1956, it was announced that the Trustees had located and purchased a 1953 GMC cab-over, engine cab and chassis. From then until completion, the members hand built the compartments, tank, and apparatus onto the truck making it the first Dunlap water tanker. This was a 1200 gallon capacity tank.

Later in 1956, the members of the department took the Ohio State Department of Education training program, completing it in October. At this time the Dunlap Fire Department received its Class "A" rating. This was a first for a rural Fire Department in Hamilton County; as at the time there were only 10 Class A fire departments in the State of Ohio. This was quite an accomplishment given the short time the Fire Department had been in existence.

Each unpaid volunteer was supplied with a metal fire helmet, a rubber rain coat, and a pair of rubber boots for personal protection in fighting fires. In 1957, a two-way radio was acquired to make response to a call in the shortest time possible. In the following years, the Plectron notification devices were provided to all active members. This notification system was changed to calls to Hamilton County dispatcher and replaced the previously described phone system.

In 1962, the original one bay station was enlarged, additional space was built for a meeting room, kitchen and indoor plumbing. In 1963, a Peter Pirsch pumper on an International chassis was ordered and 2 more equipment bays were added to the east end of the firehouse.



Accolades

In 2018, Colerain Township Department of Fire and EMS was recognized as Ohio's EMS Agency of the Year by the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Division of EMS for its commitment and innovative efforts in improving the quality of life in the community through fall prevention and QRT risk reduction.

Colerain Township was first to develop the Quick Response Team or QRT. A cooperation of the Colerain Township Department of Fire & EMS, the Colerain Township Police and the Addiction Services Council – the "Team" consists of a firefighter/paramedic paired with a police officer and member of the council, who work as a team to offer drug intervention and assist with admission to rehabilitation and recovery facilities.

Chief Cook's vision is to keep the department progressive and attuned to new techniques that provide enhanced safety to both our firefighter/paramedics and the citizens of Colerain Township.

TODAY *Pictures*



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