

A History of Franklin Fire Department

It could be said that an interest in fire fighting for Franklin goes all the way back to December 7, 1736 with Benjamin Franklin. In addition to many other accomplishments, he co-founded the "Bucket Brigade", also known as the Union Fire Company, which was the first formally organized all volunteer fire company in the US colonies. According to the Connecticut State Firefighters Association in 2016-17, there are 26,800 fire fighters in Connecticut and 22,350 of these are Volunteer.

According to the Town of Franklin History written by Marjorie Robbins, "The handling of fire outbreaks had always been a problem and involved much risk. In 1922 it was voted to enter into an agreement with the Selectmen of the Town of Norwich whereby the Yantic Fire Engine Company would respond to all calls within a radius of one mile from its fire hall and all calls beyond this limit would be at the discretion of the Foreman of the Company. The Town of Franklin would pay the Town of Norwich the sum of \$30.00 for all calls responded to within its limits. This was an equitable arrangement and was adhered to for several years." Today, we continue to participate in Mutual Aid with our surrounding fellow volunteer departments. We train together, we support one another and we enjoy this camaraderie.

In the early 1950s, there was a particularly challenging barn fire at the Beckwith residence. Nathaniel "Deac" Manning met with several others around a kitchen table to discuss the need for creating a fire department in Franklin... and they took the initiative to make it a reality. The Franklin Volunteer Fire Department was founded by Nathaniel "Deac" Manning, Percy Adams, Walter Miller and Donald Wood on April 5 1954 after a barn fire for the purpose of "fire prevention and fire-fighting service whenever needed or called for".

The call counts in 1959 included 20 fire calls, 2 mutual aid, 6 receipt of mutual aid. The fire calls were: 6 grass fire, 1 shed fire, 1 car fire, 1 garage fire, 2 chimney, 1 fireplace, 3 barns, 1 flooded oil burner, 1 truck fire, and 3 house fires.

"Woody" Wood and Tony Carboni set up the first fire house in the 2 bay foundation where town hall now exists. Initially, the fire department consisted of a 1937 Chevy Pumper with a 250 gallon per minute pump and a 1941 Mack

converted oil tanker for water transport. By 1960, the Ladies Auxiliary raised money to purchase a brand new firetruck, a 1960 Chevy.

David D Wood started the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program in Franklin and then went on to become Chief after his father. In 1970-'71 emergency ambulance service had been established with Lebanon. In 1972, the town hall building on Meetinghouse Hill Road was built to include the Fire Department and its equipment at a cost of \$140,000.

The Fire and Medical Department of Franklin has been noted as one of the best in the state for its size. The Department has grown from a few neighbors and family banding together using rebuilt apparatus in 1955 to the present department neighbors, families, friends in Franklin and surrounding towns, using four pieces of equipment and an ambulance.

The call counts in 1995 included 205 calls for the year (67 Ambulance, 51 Motor Vehicle Accidents, 14 Fire Alarms, 11 Hazardous Materials, 7 Structure Fires, 7 Outside Fires, 6 Mutual Aid Ambulance, 6 Mutual Aid Fire Calls, 5 Car Fires, 5 Standbys, 3 Trees Down, 3 Service Calls, 2 Chimney Fires, 1 CO2 Alarm, 1 Fire Police Mutual Aid).

The Franklin Fire Department is still a "Bucket Brigade" with our all Volunteer membership. We include many highly trained and certified Emergency Medical and Fire Response members as well as Fire Explorers (us young folks) and supportive Social Members. We are always looking for new members and ways to improve our service to the community of Franklin, Connecticut.