

The Yakima Fire department was begun as a volunteer organization in the early 1880's when buildings were being moved from the present site of Union Gap to the location which was to become North Yakima. It was first organized simply as a bucket brigade. However, the growth of the community led to a study and considerable work on the part of the three Simmons brothers (Their first names are unknown but a 'J. Simmons' is listed as a member of the department). This resulted in the organization in 1886 of the North Yakima Volunteer Fire Department. This department ran a small steam engine, a hook and ladder rig and a hose cart manned by a full complement of 20 men.

In 1889 the city council passed what was known as "Ordinance 99" which reorganized the department and established formal rules and regulations. F. E. Rowe was Yakima's first Fire Chief. Membership in the department was, while limited in number, not at all difficult of requirement. A man had to be "18 years of age, an American citizen, and be able to converse 'understandingly' in English."

Through the years the record shows that the department gave a veritable series of balls, dances, celebrations and other social functions, all aimed at raising money for the department. The department's early history is one of financial crisis and of neglect by the city council. The first dance recorded in the department minutes was held on St. Valentine's Day, 1890. After disbursements the department realized \$46.50, and the whole affair was considered highly successful.

In September, 1890, Will R. White was elected Chief but for some reason served only a month before the chair was assumed by John Reed. In May of that same year a painter named Charles M. Hauser was accepted for membership on the department. Eight years later he was to become Chief of the Department and eventually was Yakima's first paid chief.

In March, 1891, an entry describes the uniforms of Hose Company 1. These uniforms were purchased for parades, dances and other "fancy occasions". The shirt was red with wine cuffs and collar. A wide black patent leather belt completed the uniform. Although a description is not given, the uniform caps of the day are seen as visored caps with a low bell crown. The department did not at that time wear badges. A running suit was also provided for more strenuous activities such as hose competition and races. This running suit closely resembled an old fashioned union suit with buttons up the front and no collar. Trousers to be worn with uniform were at the option of the wearer. Some members of the department are shown wearing a woven cloth belt with a large clasp similar to the type used as boxing belts in those days.

A succession of chiefs directed the department until Hauser was elected chief in 1898. Tom Redmon was chief from June, 1893, till January, 1894; Ed Farmer, January, '94 to June of the same year; John Reed was elected

chief again in June of '94 and served until May 13, 1897, except for a period of May and June in 1896 when a small group of members attending the election meeting placed J. J. Backer in the chair. In May of 1897 Ed Farmer was elected chief and served until Hausers election.

Many names familiar to present day residents of Yakima were found in the old roll call pages. Some of these include E. E. Card, Volney Taft, Joseph Bartholet, Edd Slavin, T. J. Redman, J. J. Bounds, Peater Eschbauch, H. S. Coffin, M. T. Donaldson, S. E. Bunce, C. C. Coombs, and John Lemon.

Because of a lack of concern on the part of the city council and an alleged lack of support, the members of the department voted on March 28, 1904 to resign in a body unless the city council pledged further support and recognition. Such recognition did not materialize and so, on May 3, two days before the threatened walkout, the last meeting of the North Yakima Volunteer Fire Department was held. A dinner which cost \$35 was given for the membership and the funds of the department was divided among the active members. Each man received \$19.35.

The city council tried desperately, but too late, to give Yakima fire protection through a reorganized department of volunteers. This group, however, lacked direction and was in operation only a little over a year. Then, on September 14, 1905, the North Yakima Fire department made its first run. With Charles Hauser as Chief, this department included five paid men and ten volunteers. Quarters were on front street in what was later to become the city hall.

The reorganization was made just ~~XXXXXX~~ ten months before the largest fire in the history of young North Yakima struck on May 5, 1906, at 10:12 P. M. The fire involved 14 buildings, and firemen blamed poor water pressure and "a lack of saws" as factors contributing to the devastation.

The paper of the day records that "skeleton walls, smouldering embers, and twisted iron marks the spot where five of the biggest warehouses in the city and the Northern Pacific depot stood." Destroyed completely were the depot, Coffin Brothers warehouse, the J. M. Perry Company, Yakima Produce Company, and the Yakima Hardware warehouse.

On May 8 the city council, spurred by a report from Councilman Linbarger and his fire committee, voted the expenditure of \$3200 for needed fire equipment. The paper states that the satisfaction of the spectators was manifest by a loud cheer which came up from the assemblage.

On June 13, 1908, fire hit the "red light district" of the city on South Front Street. Besides the Home Comfort Livery stable and 14 horses stabled there, the fire involved the "444", the Little Club, the Exchange, the Teddy Bears, Our House, and the Brick, all somewhat notorious in their day.

On January 8, 1911, the temperature fell to 18 below zero. Fire chose this time to strike the U. S. Land office. At the time of the fire 43 persons

were lined up at the Land Commissioner's office to sign up for homesteads on the Tieton. The paper relates that these people were taken downstairs in the elevator where they lined up outside the building while firefighting operations were under way so as not to lose their place in line. They returned to the building even before the smoke had cleared, so great was their desire to obtain this newly irrigated farmland.

In 1912 the North Yakima Fire Department was the only completely motorized department west of the Mississippi. The new 75 aerial ladder was used for the first time on February 18, 1913, when a fire involved the Clogg Building at Third Street and Yakima and eight other occupancies.

On March 14 of that year and old landmark, the North Yakima Milling Company was destroyed. The mill was originally built in 1881 by funds raised through public subscription. Alexander Miller was operating the mill at the time of the fire. "Yakima Best" flour was milled there for domestic use and another brand, "Yakima Kite" was milled for export. Fifteen thousand barrels of flour ready for shipment to Japan were destroyed in the fire.

On July 26, 1924, the disastrous Holtzinger fire occurs. While local custom refers to this as the "Holtzinger fire" the greatest damage was actually sustained by the Roche Fruit company in its original location. The fire involved 11 premises on Fruit Row. This fire resulted in a wave of public concern for the obvious lack of the department's ability to cope with such a fast running fire. The department itself was not blamed, but the paper took the public to task for "false economy" and failure to meet an obvious need. This year of 1924 was a bad year for the department, there being listed six major fires during this period, several of them suspected as incendiary.

The Pacific Fruit Company fire on August 13, 1924, marked the end of an era. It was at this fire that a steam pumper was used for the last time. The pumper was brought into service after two of the regular line pumps were put out of commission early in the fire. The old engine originally had been purchased to thaw hydrants. The paper described the delight of several children who were at the fire but had never before seen a steam fire engine working.

In the 55 year history of a paid department in Yakima there have been only five Chiefs: Charles Hauser, 1905-1906; Edward Dawson, 1906-1919; Harry Hawkins, 1919-1930; Ray Hare, 1930-1942; and from 1942 to present, W. K. (Pete) Moore.