

# Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 6, Issue 2

Bainbridge Township, Ohio, 44023

Summer 2011

## Fire Protection in the Early Years

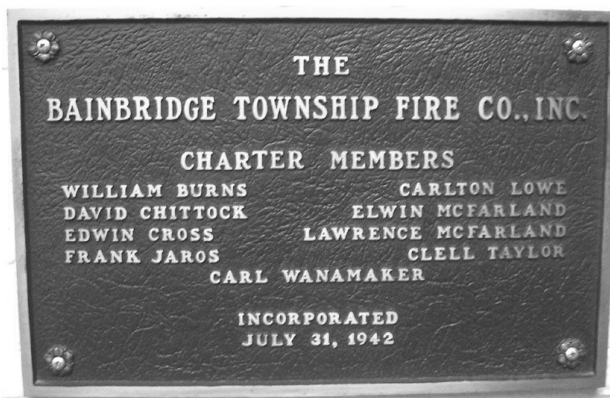
Fires in the early years were always a worry and relied on help from neighbors with buckets if you were fortunate to live within distance. Early in the 1900's there were very few that had phone service and no way to sound an alarm other than to respond to the smoke.

In 1923 Chagrin Falls purchased its first motorized fire engine. As the communities around Chagrin Falls grew in the 1930's, Chagrin Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department formed a non-profit company known as the Chagrin Falls Suburban Fire Department which provided fire protection for the Chagrin Valley area. It included Auburn, Bainbridge, Bentleyville, Chesterland, Hunting Valley, Moreland Hills, Orange, Pepper Pike, Solon and Woodmere. Members were notified by a roof top siren signaling there was a fire.

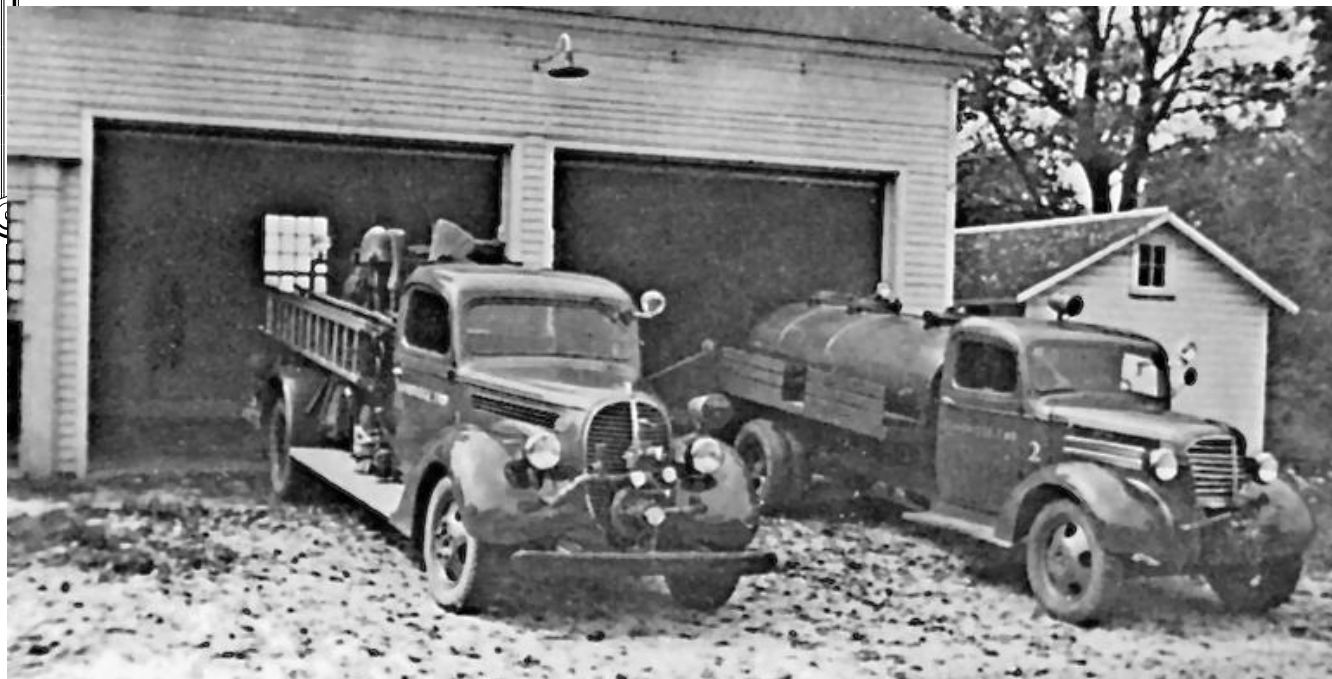


One of the notable members of the Chagrin Volunteer Fire Department, Dave Chittock, was also instrumental in the forming of the Bainbridge Volunteer Fire Department. Dave moved to Bainbridge in 1942 and was also Chief of the Chagrin Volunteer Fire Department. His services with Chagrin extended from 1937 to 1959 and he served as chief from 1942 to 1945 when he resigned and turned his services over to Charles Hern who was also a Bainbridge resident.

In 1940 a group of civic minded men got together to discuss the possibility of forming a volunteer fire department in Bainbridge Township. At this time, the Township had an agreement with neighboring Chagrin Falls Volunteer Fire Department for fire protection services. With the ever growing expansion of the community and the demand for adequate fire protection, it became obvious that the existing arrangement was not sufficient. There was definitely a need for a fire department within the township, one they could proudly call their own.



The township trustees agreed that the building previously used as a town hall, church, basketball court and even a courtroom be renovated into the first fire station. The wooden floors were removed and replaced with concrete, two overhead doors were installed on the street side of the building and a tower was erected on top for the drying of hoses. On July 20, 1942, the township installed a siren at the top of the hose tower. This siren would be used to alert firemen of emergency requests for 47 years as well as a civil defense warning during the second world war. This fire station would be utilized until 1969. It later became the Burns-Lindow Bldg.



First Fire Trucks in Bainbridge

On July 31, 1942, the dream became a reality with the incorporation of the "Bainbridge Township Fire Company" and nine charter members. By September 14, 1942 there were 19 members total and the Chief and Line Officers were established.

It was decided to initiate a fundraiser to purchase fire equipment on October 5, 1942. The firemen went door to door obtaining scrap metal, desperately needed for the war effort and valuable enough to provide much needed monies for the fire equipment. On January 26, 1943, the first fire truck was delivered. The Ford truck had a front mounted pump and a tank capacity of 300 gallons and was painted traditional red. An old milk truck chassis was sold to the fire department about the same time. On that chassis was mounted a 1000 gallon tank from a Standard Oil Company delivery truck. This truck was also painted traditional red and a front mounted pump was installed. This was the first water tanker truck.

The Bainbridge Township Fire Department had a genuine interest in first aid training early on. A local resident and Battalion Chief for the Cleveland Fire Department volunteered to teach the "First Aid Course" to the Bainbridge firemen in June of 1943. Following the completion of this training, the fire company purchased a first aid kit to be carried on the pumper. Fire Company members from that time on were instrumental in training the other departments in the area these same skills.



50 Chevy Rescue Vehicle

On July 17, 1947, a resident in Bainbridge Township was fatally burned after an explosion occurred in his residence while trying to light a hot water heater in his basement. Because of the lengthy wait for an ambulance coming from a funeral home in neighboring Chagrin Falls, the firemen began to consider strongly the option to purchase an emergency rescue vehicle of their own.

A 1950 Chevrolet Station Wagon was purchased on February 12, 1950. The equipment for this new vehicle consisted of a stretcher, two-way radio, resuscitator, drag lines for use in drowning and first aid kits.



Willard Franks, Lloyd Adams and Howard Eggleston with new Chevy rescue vehicle.

This vehicle was the first volunteer rescue squad in Ohio.

Money for equipment was always a problem for the volunteer company. Door to door solicitations, scrap drives, pancake breakfast, parties, dances and donations were the main source for the purchase of equipment.

The early Ford Fire truck with the 300 gallon tank was limited to what it could do and it was decided to purchase a new 1951 Chevrolet pumper with 800 gallon water capacity and capable of pumping 500 G.P.M. and booster reels and a lo-band radio. They took delivery of their first new vehicle, a 2 ton Chevrolet chassis. This truck cost \$5,676.00 with associated equipment and was purchased to replace the existing water truck.



51 Chevrolet Pumper

The Fire Company purchased another rescue squad vehicle in 1958 with funds from the Annual Spring Ball and a traveling circus. The new Pontiac Station Wagon had several advantages over the original 1950 Chevrolet Station Wagon. Lack of adequate room, poor handling and a poor electrical system were a few of the problems that prompted the new purchase. The fire Company has been using a two squad system ever since.

The rescue service first responded as a Paramedic Service in 1978 with the graduation of two members from paramedic school. This enabled the department to give life saving medications prior to arriving at the hospital. This was a significant step for the department in treating injured and ill patients.

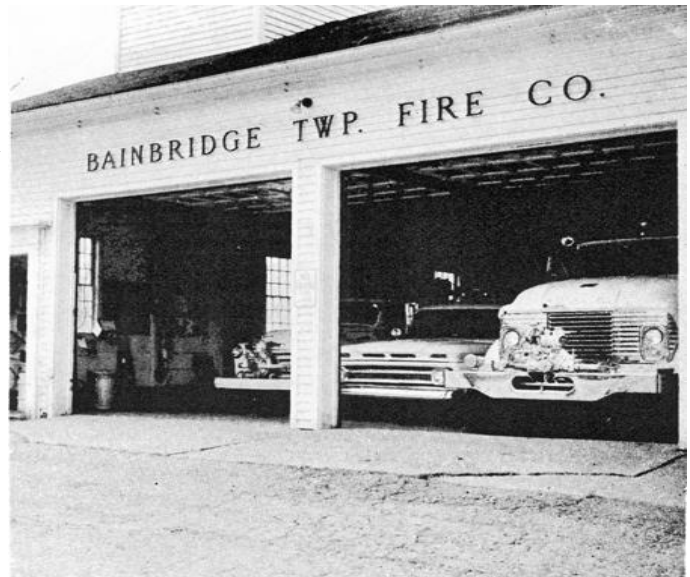
With lack of daytime help at times it was decided to try adding junior members 16—21 years of age. A resolution was passed to limit junior members to eight and have their parents or guardians consent and were not permitted to drive fire equipment on the highways. The junior program proved to be very successful. Many of the juniors became line officers and fire chiefs. Jerre Flynn and Jim Davidson both achieved the rank of chief during their careers with the fire department. This program came to an end in the 90's, when the State of Ohio would no longer train 16-17 year olds to become firefighters due to the liabilities involved.

As time passed and the building on of two additions to the fire station, an overcrowded situation still existed. With the rapid growth of the township, the fire Company had practically outgrown the old converted town hall. President Jerre Flynn indicated that a new tanker and another pumper should be added to the fleet of Fire Company vehicles. President Flynn went on to say "There is no room to expand the present Fire station and with the population growth in the area we will need additional room."

A new Fire Station was erected in 1970 at a site 300 ft. from the original station. This building costing \$150,000 was over 7,000 total sq. ft. and able to house the newly purchased pumper and tanker unable to fit in the old station. Featured in this station was a locker room, chief's office, kitchen and training room.



New Pontiac Delivery—L-R, Assistant Chief Calvin Lommler, Rescue Squad Cat. Rudy Bielert and Fireman Leonard Eames



Old fire station with center truck parked behind the door post.



Chief Jerre Flynn and Fire Company's new \$23,000.00 high pressure pumper

### Flynn assumes role of new Fire Chief

Willard (Dutch) Franks retires as chief of the Bainbridge Fire Department after 25 years of service and passes on the duties to Jerre Flynn.

Dutch was Asst. Chief 1943-1944 and Chief 1946-1969.

Flynn started as a Junior member of the department in 1954. Regular 1955, VP 1959-1967, President 1967-1969 & Chief 1969-1972, 1 Asst Chief 1972 & retired 1979

**There is much more history of the fire department from the 1970's and on to present that may be presented at a later date.**

*Thank you to the Bainbridge Township Fire Company 50 Anniversary Edition and Bainbridge Twp. Bicentennial history for the information and pictures.*

## MEMORIALS

### We owe them so much !!!

Many people sacrificed their personal lives and available time dedicating themselves to ensure the safety of our precious community. This wonderful organization would never be what is is now without their efforts. Here are just a few of these members to be recognized:

#### **Lawrence McFarland (Assistant Chief)** Died December 2, 1946

Lawrence McFarland was one of the original Charter Members of the Fire Department serving from 1942 until his death in 1946 when he was fatally injured while working at a sawmill. He served as an original Fire Co. Trustee from 1942-1945 and an original Asst. Chief 1942-1946.

#### **Edwin Cross (Secretary & Treasurer)** Died February 2, 1959

Edwin Cross was an original Charter Member of the Fire Dept. who served as the Fire Co.'s first secretary and treasurer from 1942-1943. He became an honorary member in 1944 when he resigned for health reasons.

#### **Carl Wanamaker (Chief)** Died August 8, 1960

Chief Wanamaker was one of the original Charter members of the Fire Department and our first Fire Chief from 1942-1946. He also served as Fire Co. President and Vice President and remained on the department until he suffered a heart attack and passed away at work in 1960.

#### **Donald Ramer (Assistant Chief)** Died March 5, 1968

Donald Ramer joined the Fire Department April 13, 1964. He served as Fire Co. Trustee in 1966 and 1967. He became 3rd Assistant Chief in 1967 and served in that capacity until his death. He suffered an apparent heart attack during a Fire Department Building Committee meeting which he was chairman.

#### **Robert LaRue (Chief)** Died December 16, 1975

Chief LaRue joined the Fire Dept. as a junior member in 1956. He served as Fire Co. Trustee from 1959-1964. He was the Rescue Squad Lieutenant from 1961-1963. He served as Assistant Chief from 1963-1972. He was Chief for 3 years from 1972 until his sudden death in 1975.

**William Burns (President)** Died March 10, 1988

Bill Burns was a Charter member and original Fire Co. President serving in that capacity from 1942-1957. Mr. Burns also served his community as a Township Trustee for 6 years and a Geauga County Commissioner for 23 years while remaining involved with the Fire Department.

**Williard Franks (Chief)** Died February 19, 1997

Chief Williard "Dutch" Franks joined the Fire Dept. in September of 1942. He quickly became Assistant Chief from 1943-1944. He became chief in 1946 and served in that position for 23 years until 1969 being the longest single person to hold that position. He served as Fire Co. Trustee from that time until his retirement in 1974. He also served his community as a constable for the Township prior to the establishment of a Police Department. He worked for the local telephone company where his wife ran the switchboard from his residence.

**Edward Plomske** Died February 14, 2002

Chief Edward Plomske joined the Fire Dept. in 1962. He was responsible for originally setting up our Advanced Life Support services in 1980 and was one of the first Paramedics in Geauga County. He served in the capacity of Fire Company Trustee, Lieutenant, and Assistant Chief before becoming Chief in 1979. He was very involved in the Geauga County Chief's Association as well as his community. Chief Plomske remained very active with the department until his retirement in 1998 as chief for 19 years.

**CHARTER MEMBERS**

**William Burns**, President, Secretary Died 3/9/1988

**David Chittock**, Trustee Died 1/25/1994

**Edwin Cross**, Secretary, Treasurer Died 2/2/1959

**Frank Jaros**, Trustee Died 1970

**Carlton Lowe**, Trustee Died 12/28/1953

**Elwin McFarland**, Trustee Died 1962

**Lawrence McFarland**, Asst. Chief, Trustee Died 1946

**Clell Taylor**, Trustee Died 4/21/1969

**Carl Wanamaker**, Chief, President, Vice Pres., Trustee Died 1960

**CHIEFS**

**1942-1946 Carl Wanamaker** Served 1942-1960 Died 1960

**1946-1969 Williard Franks** Served 1942-1974 Died 2/19/1997

**1972-1975 Robert LaRue** Served 1956-1975 Died 12/22/1975

**1979-1998 Edward Plomske** Served 1962-1998 Died 2/14/2002

**PRESIDENTS**

**1942-1957 William Burns** Served 1942-1978 Died 3/9/1988

**1957-1959 Carl Wanamaker** Served 1942-1960 Died 1960

**1959-1967 Fred Lindow** Served 1943-1973 Died 1995

**1977-1981 Charles H. Giles** Served 1950-1980 Died 1985

Officers 2011

**President**  
Karl Kuckelheim

**Vice President  
&  
Program Chairman**  
Donna Yuse  
543-3199

**Secretary**  
Harriet Novy

**Treasurer**  
Bruce Chittock

**Membership Chairman**  
Marge Cook  
440-338-5375

**Editor & Publisher**  
Bill Takacs  
440-543-4991

**Proof Reading**  
Harriet Novy

**Meetings of the Bainbridge Township Historical Society are held the second Wednesday of the month (September through June) at 7:30 p.m. in the Burns-Lindow Building at the corner of Route 306 and Bainbridge-Solon Road.**

**Bainbridge Township Historical Society  
P.O.Box 23363  
Bainbridge Township**



Town Hall—Circa 1914  
Now—Burns Lindow Bldg

Everyone enjoys the refreshments at our meetings so remember when the refreshment sheet gets passed around to be sure to pick a convenient date and add your name to the list. It will make the job of our Refreshment Committee much easier. Barb Phan and Lois Little are our chairmen and will save them time calling around to find volunteers. Please call **Barb Phan, 543-7972**, if you can help.

Thank you to the following for hosting the refreshments at meetings.

February—Elinor Harris & Marge Cook

March—Rolene Murphy, Harriet Novy and Barb Phan

April—Lois Little, Janet Novak and Barb Phan

**Welcome New Members**

Pat (Miller) Scotland

Gilbert True

Mary Knopf

**Notice**

**Those who have not paid since 2009 will not receive a newsletter. New members who joined after May 2011 will be carried to September 2012.**

**Dedication of Heritage Park and Celebration of the old Settlers'**

Saturday, October 1st from 2:00-6:00 pm has been chosen to celebrate the Old Settlers' Bicentennial 1911 to 2011 and to dedicate the new Bainbridge Township Heritage Park consisting of the Veterans' Monument, the Bissell-Tucek House Museum and the Pavilion.

The Historical Society is now in a position to accept your donated artifacts, both large and small and we'd certainly appreciate any time you can give to work towards this dedication, even an hour or two. If you do not wish to donate an item, please share it with the community by lending it to the museum. Photos can be scanned into the computer and returned.

Please contact us at [BTHS1811@gmail.com](mailto:BTHS1811@gmail.com) or you can phone Dick or Julia Newton at (440-543-9592). Your contribution will be appreciated.

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\* **Just a Reminder—Annual dues are payable in September but no later than December—\$10.00 for singles, \$20.00 for family. Life Membership—\$100.00. Make checks payable to *Bainbridge Township Historical Society*. Pay Marge Cook at the meeting or mail to her at 116 Leaview Ln., Chagrin Falls, OH 44022.** \*  
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Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter  
P.O.Box 23363  
Bainbridge Twp.OH 44023-0363

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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**DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY**  
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## **2011 Meeting Schedule**

September 14th 2011– Sylvia Wiggins talking about old schoolhouses.

October 12th 2011– Marion Howard, speaking about the Howard Family

November 9th 2011 – Deiter & Nancy Huth-will show slides and speak. Deiter Huth, a native of Germany, will speak about the "Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Amish in Europe

December 14th 2011 – Christmas Party

**Check out our web page [www.bainbridgemory.org](http://www.bainbridgemory.org)**