

THE SMOKE EATER

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**Old Fire Farts of York
County PA**



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK:

It was great seeing all of you that were able to attend our annual picnic and quarterly meeting on July 11th. My sincere appreciation to Darlene and Eddie Schwartz who have so graciously opened their doors to host our annual picnic for many years. Please take an opportunity to thank them for their continuing support of the Old Fire Farts!

During that quarterly meeting, we had quite a bit to discuss. I presented to the membership a resolution of respect that we will present to the family of Richard E. "Dick" Lehr, Jr., who was one of the original members of the Old Fire Farts who passed away recently. Dick was a regular fixture at the York County Fire Museum, a void that will not be easily filled. A lot of historical information about the York Fire Department providing ambulance service was lost with Dick's passing. Rest in peace, my friend.

Ken Buohl, Jeff Stauffer and Kraig Herman gave a detailed report on the progress of our annual muster, to be held on September 26th in Fawn Grove. Ken has since had to resign from the Muster Committee, but Kraig and Jeff assure me we are in great hands for another successful muster. If you are able to help out at the muster, there are plenty of jobs to be done that day. Please contact Kraig or Jeff if you can help out.

Our organization's dynamo, Bob Straw, had a bit of a setback when he suffered a medical emergency while on vacation. After spending a few days in the hospital, Bob has returned home, is taking his time to recuperate, and continues to do what he can while on the mend. Bob has been working on the possibility of us hosting the SPAAMFAA Summer Conference in 2024 in conjunction with the American Truck Historical Society who will be holding their gathering at the York Fair Grounds. Bob has also contacted representatives of the Professional Car Society about possibly joining in as well. I'm sure Bob will have more to report at the next quarterly meeting.

Speaking of the next quarterly meeting, that will be held on October 17th at 1:30 p.m. at the York County Fire Museum at 757 West Market Street. In addition to our normal business, we will need to establish a nominating committee for the elections to be held at our annual meeting at the beginning of 2022. We will also be discussing our annual Christmas Party, which we had to cancel last year due to the pandemic. I hope to see all of you at our next meeting!

I will be doing a presentation for the Red Land Community Library and NEYCHIP via Zoom on September 27th at 6:30 p.m. on the fire service in York County in 1921. I had originally given this presentation at the SPAAMFAA Winter Conference. I will be adding a PowerPoint to this presentation.

Greg Halpin - President



At the Annual Picnic, President Greg Halpin presented \$1,000 checks each to the York Fire Museum and the Hanover Area Fire Museum

Pictured (L to R): Dave Maletz (York Fire Museum), President Halpin and Darlene Schwartz (Hanover Area Fire Museum)

History of Fire Prevention Week

Fire Prevention Week is an endeavour undertaken by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) that began in 1922. In 1925, President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed Fire Prevention Week a national observance. Fire Prevention Week takes place yearly and is held the Sunday through Saturday that the date October 8th falls between. Why October 8th? On October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire occurred killing an estimated 250 people, burning thousands of acres and destroying hundreds of buildings. People began to question how homes and businesses were being constructed, the need for more space between buildings, water supply issues and even early warning signs a fire is starting. Today's fire and life safety codes were born as a result of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and since NFPA's inception 125 years ago, millions of lives have been saved as a result of Fire Prevention Week.

Did you know that there was a more devastating fire that killed an estimated 1500-2500 people, wiped out lumber mill towns and burned 1.2 million acres? The Great Peshtigo Fire began in Peshtigo, Wisconsin and receives little note outside the region because of the Great Chicago Fire. The Peshtigo Fire started on October 7, 1871 whereas the Great Chicago Fire started on October 8th. It is unclear how or exactly where The Peshtigo Fire actually started. However, it quickly spread through towns which was considered one of the largest wood-products factories of the United States. Since most buildings were constructed of timber, each town was a prime fuel for fire. There was a key bridge made of wood which would serve as the main entry and exit into Peshtigo. On October 8, 1871 and without any warning, the town of Peshtigo would go up in flames. Even though there is no evidence to these reports, it has been shared that inside a tavern, 250 people were killed, most likely unable to exit quick enough. Flames spread so quickly that families that were fleeing together, would become overcome by smoke, drop to the ground and die; with some bodies being burned beyond recognition. Others drowned in a nearby river and some even took refuge in a water tank and were boiled to death due to the fire heating the tank. However come October 9th and 10th, the Great Chicago Fire, although smaller, dominated headlines and Peshtigo would be overshadowed, yet killed more people and destroyed more than the Great Chicago Fire.

I am thinking of other notable fires that occurred over the years that killed hundreds of people and none of them compare to the Great Peshtigo Fire and the destruction it left behind. As I noted, 250 people died while in a tavern in Peshtigo compared to 250 total died in the Great Chicago Fire. It would be years later and hundreds of more people dying in fires that led to what we know today as Fire Prevention. Yet the worst fire in American history is seldom known or even less talked about.



Time to prepare for the 8th ANNUAL YORK FIRE MUSTER

Event is returning to Fawn Grove, Pa. at the Old Tyme Days Park!
September 26, 2021

HOWE



OREN



GRUMMAN

Scheduled Events:

7-8- Registration at Southeastern High School on Rt. 851 Static Apparatus Displays, Photo Opportunities .

8-8:30- Motorcade to the Muster Site and placing of equipment.

9:30 – Opening Ceremonies

8-3 - Recorded music as well as Live Bands and Singers.

8-3- The Fire Flea Market

1-2:30 – Pumping

11-3 - Fire Prevention Activities, Safety Displays, and Mascots.

3-4 Awards

8-4 Great Food by the Citizens V. F. C.

Other things to do and see:

* **Fire Flea Market** will be held with all types of fire items and memorabilia for buffs and collectors.

* **Equipment Appearance** judging for 16 trophies for: **Best Hand Drawn Pumper**, **Best Hose Reel/Wagon**, **Best Motorized** by year (1900-1920) (1921-1940) (1941-1950) (1951-1960) (1961-1970) (1971-1980) (1981-1990) (1991-1996) **Longest Distance**, **Best in Show Privately Owned**, **Best in Show Organization Owned**. **Special Awards for Featured Apparatus.**

* **Pumping Awards** 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th

* **Modelers & Lego Builders** with scale models of Fire Apparatus

* **Safety Displays** from local 1st Responders and other safety agencies.

The Old Fire Farts of York County PA will be holding our 8th York Fire Muster and invite all fire buffs, collectors, and SPAAMFAA members and their families to join us. All proceeds from this year's event will go to support the preservation of fire history in York County and to support our First Responder's Scholarship Program.

For more information email Kraig at AlwaysReady1853@outlook.com or visit our Facebook page "Old Fire Farts of York County PA" or our website www.oldfirefarts.org

******Muster Meeting Wednesday September 1, 2022, 7pm at Fawn Grove Fire Station******



Help will be needed the day of the Muster! Contact Jeff or Kraig for an assignment!

Members Attend Carlisle Truck Show and Pump Primers

As things are getting somewhat back to normal, several members have been enjoying taking their toys to events across Central Pennsylvania that included Pump Primers in July, Carlisle Truck Show in August.



"Pierce"



"The Gray Ghost"

"The Pipeline"



"Seagrave"

Old Fire Farts Representing at Pump Primers



Congratulations Old Fire Fart Mike Whitzel on your award for Bracket Pumping at Pump Primers!



Congratulations Old Fire Fart Chuck Strouse on your award for Apparatus History Display at Pump Primers!



Congratulations Old Fire Fart Department Member Lincolnway FC on your award for Best Appearing Fire Dept. Owned Pumper 1979-1996



Congratulations Old Fire Fart Gibney Family on your 1st place award Best Appearing Privately Owned 1966-1978

\$40,000 Loss in Fawn Grove Fire

Sewing Factory Destroyed, Fire Hall Damaged, Bank Threatened

The Gazette and Daily
Saturday, April 11, 1936

Cause Not Determined

The building housing the Fawn Grove Manufacturing Company was burnt out with only the bare walls standing, and the apparatus house of the Citizens' Volunteer Fire Company, an adjoining structure, was badly damaged by a fire which menaced the entire central section of Fawn Grove early last evening. The total loss incurred before firemen from nine companies in York County and Maryland brought the flames under control is conservatively estimated at between \$45,000 and \$50,000.

85 Persons Thrown Out of Work

With the destruction of the three-story brick structure in which the manufacturing company, makers of men's outerwear, such as overalls, overall jackets and work trousers, conducted its operations, Fawn Grove saw its only industrial plant go up in flames. The firm employs 85 persons and has a weekly payroll of between \$800 and \$900.

The three partners of the business A. H. Morris of Fawn Grove, and Joseph Sussman and Paul Rosen, of Baltimore, said last night that they expect to try to resume operations as soon as the insurance adjusters complete their task, and it is possible for them to secure other quarters and machinery. Whether or not the building would be replaced at the present time was not yet determined they said.

Fire Co. House Damaged

It was estimated that the loss to the manufacturing plant will be between \$40,000 and \$45,000. The damage to the structure owned by the fire company, used as an apparatus room and as a meeting place for the company, its ladies auxiliary, the Fawn Grove Grange and Fawn Grove band, was estimated at upwards of \$2,500. The entire roof of the building was burned off and the second floor gutted. Considerable damage was done to the first floor by water.

A. H. Morris, a member of the firm whose building the blaze had its origin, said last night that he could only guess as to the cause of the fire. However, he believed that it may have been due to a defect on one of the motors used in operating the sewing machines. He said he had been told after the fire by one of his employees that she had experienced some trouble with one of the machines yesterday.

Sound Alarm

First discovery of the fire was made shortly before 6 p.m. within an hour after the main force of employees had concluded work for the day and also for the week. It is believed that Joseph Herbert, Fawn Grove youth and John Ruff, employed as a book-keeper at the First National bank of Fawn Grove, were the first to discover the fire. They were standing diagonally across the street at Devilbiss's store, when they saw smoke coming from the windows of the second floor of the factory. They walked closer to investigate and became certain that a fire was in progress. In the meantime, they had called the

attention of Miss Mary Wise, daughter of Mrs. Jane Wise, a nearby resident, to the smoke, and she told her brother, who in turn sounded the fire siren on the engine house.

At the time the siren sounded, two of the employees of the company were still at work in the plant. Howard Brown, a presser, and Adolph Dollinger, an office worker, were in the basement preparing goods for shipment when they heard the sound of the siren. They said that shortly before, they noticed the electric light they were using had flickered and one of them remarked that he "didn't believe that bulb would last much longer." They also heard a noise on the floor above them but thought it might be someone cleaning up the factory.

Valiant Work Of Firemen

It was only through valiant work of the firemen, particularly those of the Fawn Grove and Stewartstown companies, that other structures in the vicinity were saved. Although the flames had spread to the Fawn Grove fireman's hall before a hose line could be strung, the flames were halted there.

The new building which the First National bank has been occupying for the past eight or nine years directly adjoins the fire company's home. On the other side of the manufacturing plant, separated by an alley 12 feet wide, is located a frame dwelling owned by James Fletcher. All the bank furnishings, and records not in the vault and the equipment of the Masonic lodge, which uses the second floor as a meeting room, were removed. All the furniture was also taken from the Fletcher property.

The Fletcher property escaped the fate of its neighboring building for several reasons. The heavy brick wall of the factory protected it against the direct intense heat of the fire the wind blowing the flames in the other direction, and the Fawn Grove firemen stationed themselves by its wall and used chemicals to extinguish the flames whenever they caught.

Bank Building Saved

The bank building was in more danger. Had the fire engine house continued to burn, the large glass windows of the bank, it is believed, would have cracked and melted quickly allowing the flames unrestricted means of ingress into the structure. However, several agile firemen, among them Cyrus Dixon, "Doc" Aberman, Richard Brown and Norman Grove, of the Stewartstown company, climbed up a cornice of the bank building, using projecting ornamental brickwork as handholds, hauled up a hose line and played a stream from the top of the bank building on the flames in the fire engine house.

Bucket Brigade Formed

Other dwellings in the vicinity were menaced by the sparks carried by the easterly wind. Huge patches of burning cloth were carried as far as half a mile away. Home owners in the menaced area quickly formed bucket brigades and kept close watch on roofs to extinguish sparks. The other companies on the scene used water from their booster tanks to good advantage in this part of the work of fighting the flames.

Water From Swimming Pool

The most serious handicap under which the fire fighters labored was lack of water. Fawn Grove has no water system, drinking water being secured from wells. Before a stream could be turned on the fire, a hose had to be laid to bring water from the swimming pool and a pond at Spring Valley park. Hose of the Stewartstown and Delta companies were strung together to make the connection. The pumper of the

Delta company was used first to force the water to the scene of the fire but later, and when the magneto of that engine was burned out, the Stewartstown pumper took over the task.

Equipment Delayed

By a strange quirk of fate, the blame for the spread of the fire may be attributed to the delay in the shipment of several additional pieces of equipment for the Fawn Grove apparatus. The company had seen its need and ordered a combination booster tank and pumper, some time ago; the booster tank to have a capacity of 600 gallons of water and the pump capable of throwing a stream of between five and six hundred gallon per minute. This equipment was billed out of Chicago last Monday, members of the company said last night, and is expected soon.

Officials of the Citizens' company, Fawn Grove, said that had this equipment been installed the flames could have been checked on the floor of the factory where they had their origin. The apparatus of the company at present, is equipped with chemical tanks with a capacity of 120 gallons. The firemen said they had the fire nearly under control when the chemical supply was exhausted and it became necessary to recharge the tanks. When this operation had been completed, the flames were beyond control of chemicals.

In the meantime, Fawn Grove firemen had laid 1,300 feet of new hose, purchased to be used with the new equipment but failed to reach the water supply by several hundred feet. When the Fawn grove firemen found themselves outstripped by the racing flames, calls were sent to all neighboring communities. Fire companies on the scene, in addition to Fawn Grove, Stewartstown and Delta, were from Jarrettsville and Bel-Air, Md., and New Freedom, Shrewsbury and Red Lion, in York County.

Minor Casualties

Two minor casualties were reported. William Kunkel, of the Stewartstown company, was slightly injured when he fell or was struck by the nozzle of the hose line he was carrying. He was knocked out of breath for a moment but recovered and continued to assist the fire fighters. Dr. Vallie Hawkins, who had been called to treat the Kunkel boy before it was known that the latter's injuries were but minor, fell and slightly injured his shoulder.

Built 30 Years Ago

The two buildings which were damaged by the flames were erected about 39 years ago by the late W. R. Webb. The building which the factory occupied originally housed a barber shop and restaurant in the basement floor, Mr. Webb's undertaking establishment in the first floor and a room for public meetings on the third floor. After the death of Mr. Webb, about 19 years ago, the building, which came to be known as the "town hall" was purchased by A. H. Morris, who operated a sewing factory there. Up until last December, Mr. Morris operated the factory as a commission house. After forming the partnership, the firm cut, manufactured and sold their own goods.

The other building was the first home of the First National bank. The fire company purchased it in 1927, after the bank built a new home, remodeled it, and used the upper floors for a meeting room and the lower floor as the apparatus room. The paraphernalia of the Fawn Grove grange and the Fire company and its auxiliary, as well as all of the band instruments and music stored therein, were saved.

Traffic Snarled

The fire attracted an immense crowd and as the location of the building is at the intersection of the highways in Fawn Grove, all vehicular traffic became snarled. It was estimated by Borough Officer Porter Jones, of Stewartstown, that the crowd numbered between five and six hundred persons. Borough Officers Ross McCullough, New Freedom; Raymond Bollinger, Glen Rock and Ervin Hall, of Shrewsbury, together with Officer Jones policed the scene. Patrolman C. W. Lutton, of the York sub-station of the state highway patrol, was also on the scene. Members of Troop No. 27, Boy Scouts of Stewartstown, assisted police officers in establishing fire lines and general traffic work.

Appeals For Aid

Late last night, Edward Brooks, president of the borough fire company, issued a public appeal for contributions to assist the company in rebuilding its fire engine house. He pointed out that the company is a volunteer organization and is dependent on the goodwill of the community for its existence. The organization had only liquidated the final debt on its apparatus last summer, he said, and the purchase of the equipment a short while ago had eaten deeply into its financial reserves.

Fawn Grove chemical truck, seen in downtown York at the Anderson Motor Company on East King Street a South Queen Street



Photo from the Greg Halpin collection