

# Raleigh Fire Department Antique Apparatus

Histories by Mike Legeros

1905 American LaFrance Metropolitan Steamer

1926 American LaFrance Type 75 Pumper

1950 Mack 85LS Pumper

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1961 American LaFrance 900 Series Pumper

1982 Mack CF Pumper



## 1905 American LaFrance Metropolitan Steamer

The first horses of the Raleigh Fire Department were placed in service in 1879. That year, the city provided the Rescue Steam Fire Engine Company with two horses to pull their 1870 Gould steamer. The volunteer firemen had previously pulled the heavy apparatus by hand, and were only occasionally assisted by private-owned horses for parades and some fires. Stationed with the apparatus at the Rescue Company engine house on Fayetteville Street, the horses were soon shared with other city departments. However, they were expected to be returned immediately to the fire station when the city-wide alarm bell sounded.

Horses also pulled the Phoenix Chemical Company engine beginning in 1883, the Victor Company hand engine beginning in 1885, and the Hook and Ladder Company truck beginning in 1890. They also pulled the new hose wagons that appeared in the city soon after the installation of fire hydrants in 1887. Crews could connect their fire hoses directly to the hydrants, and no longer needed steam- or hand-powered pumping engines to fight most fires.

By the early 1890s, the Gould steamer was serving as a reserve unit. By the early 1900s, it was out of service. In July 1905, a replacement steamer was delivered. The American LaFrance Metropolitan cost \$2,000 and could pump 600 gallons per minute. It was operated by the newly formed L.A. Mahler Steam Fire Engine Company, and used primarily at major fires, and for fires outside of the city.

Horses were used until 1915. By that time, the fire department had become both fully-paid and fully-motorized. Two American LaFrance Type 5 combination chemical and hose cars were delivered in 1913, and an American LaFrance Type 12 triple combination pumper was delivered in 1914. The new pumper displaced the last horse team, which operated from Station 3 on East Hargett Street. The motor trucks were also used to pull both the 1905 steamer and the 1890 hook and ladder truck, as needed.

The steamer remained in service as a reserve unit until at least the early 1930s. It later served as an auxiliary pump at the State Fairgrounds. In 1947, the steamer was brought back to the Raleigh Fire Department through the intervention of fire buff Bob Biggs. The teenage Biggs drove the steamer back to the city using a pair of horses from a local college. It remained a parade piece for decades and was last pulled by mules in 1978, before being permanently mounted on a trailer.

On June 16, 2012, the steam engine performed its first public demonstration in decades. It underwent a restoration to operational functionality for the occasion of the Raleigh Fire Department's centennial anniversary. Two months later, Raleigh's 1905 steamer—drawn by horse for the occasion—joined Charlotte's 1902 steamer for a side-by-side demonstration during the South Atlantic Fire Rescue Expo at the convention center.

In 1900, three stations and 90 volunteers protected 13,643 residents and 1.8 square miles.

In 1910, three stations and 127 volunteers protected 19,218 residents and 4.0 square miles.

## 1926 American LaFrance Type 75 Pumper

The Raleigh Fire Department became fully motorized in 1914 with the delivery of an American LaFrance Type 12 triple combination pumper. It was placed in service at Station 1, and later served at Station 3. The six-cylinder, 112 HP engine cost \$8,250 and pumped 750 gallons of water per minute. Four years later, a 1918 American LaFrance Type 45 pumper was delivered. Also that decade, a 1916 American LaFrance Type 12 tractor-drawn aerial ladder was delivered. It also operated from Station 1. These fire engines were all painted white.

The first American LaFrance Type 75 pumper was delivered in 1922. It was placed in service at Station 1. With this delivery, the fire department's three hose companies were each equipped with pumping engines. The city also purchased an American LaFrance Type 14 combination chemical and service ladder truck that year. It was placed in service at Station 1, and operated by the personnel who operated the aerial ladder truck. By this time, the fire department had repainted all its apparatus red.

Another American LaFrance Type 75 pumper was delivered in 1925. It was placed in service at Station 5 on Park Drive when it opened the next year. Two more were purchased in 1926. The pair of 1926 American LaFrance Type 75 pumpers were delivered in March and August. Each of the 750 gallons-per-minute pumping engines cost \$12,500. The first of the two engines was placed in service downtown. It later served as a reserve unit, and was involved in an accident while operating as Engine 6 on November 14, 1952.

Returning from a fire call, the 1926 pumper overturned on Lewis Farm Road at Brooks Avenue. Driver Vernon J. Smith was the most seriously injured of the five firefighters on board. He underwent 29 operations before his death on March 10, 1956. His was the first line-of-duty death in the history of the Raleigh Fire Department. The accident was blamed on a broken brake lever and the City Council immediately approved funding for a new pumper, and to retire the other 1926 reserve pumper as soon as possible. The other four firefighters recovered from their injuries.

The second of the two 1926 American LaFrance Type 75 pumpers was placed in service at Station 4 on Jefferson Street, which opened that year. It subsequently served at Station 6 and later as a reserve unit. After retired from service, it was used as a parade piece. In 1987, the pumper was restored by Bob Biggs, now a retired Air Force Colonel, and members of the Raleigh Fire Department. In 2005, it was returned for the first time to its original quarters on Jefferson Street, for the occasion of a neighborhood historic homes event. Capt. Gary Amato and Col. Biggs operated the apparatus.

In 1920, three stations and 30 members protected 24,418 residents and 6.9 square miles.

In 1930, five stations and 56 members protected 37,379 residents and 7.6 square miles.

## 1950 Mack 85LS Pumper

During World War II, the infrastructure of the Raleigh Fire Department was impacted by wartime restrictions. Unavailability of building materials prevented the building of a new Fire Station 1. After the demolition of Old Station 1 on West Morgan Street in 1941, a replacement site was immediately purchased on South Dawson Street. Though a small building to house the equipment of the fire alarm system was completed the next year, construction of the replacement fire station was delayed until the early 1950s.

The city was also unable to purchase newly manufactured fire apparatus during the war years. To expand the fire department fleet to accommodate the expansion of the city limits, and to help train the volunteer auxiliary firefighters who were recruited during the war, a used 1919 American LaFrance Type 75 pumper was bought at auction in 1942 from the Farmville Fire Department. The 750 gallons-per-minute fire engine was placed in service as Engine 6 upon the opening of Station 6 on Fairview Road in 1943.

After World War II ended, the first pair of modern pumpers was purchased in 1949 and 1950. Engine 4 received a 1950 FWD F-75-T pumper on March 3, 1950. The 750 gallons-per-minute engine cost \$13,023 and later served as Engine 2, and Engine 8. It was sold as surplus in 1976. Also in March, Engine 6 received a 1950 Mack 85LS pumper. The 750 gallons-per-minute engine cost \$13,000 and served exclusively at Station 6 until placed in reserve status in 1975. It remained a reserve unit into the 1980s.

New apparatus was again ordered in 1951 and 1953, with four American LaFrance 700 Series pumpers delivered during those years. These units served during a robust period of growth in the fire department. During that decade, a new Station 3 opened on South East Street, a new Station 1 opened on South Dawson Street, a new training tower was built off Highway 1 South, the Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad was organized, two-way radios were installed in all fire stations, the 1939/1916 aerial ladder was replaced, and Station 7 opened on Glascock Street in the northeast section of the city.

In 1950, six stations and 67 members protected 65,679 residents and 10.88 square miles.

In 1960, seven stations and 123 members protected 93,931 residents and 33.67 square miles.

## 1953 Rescue Boats

The Raleigh Fire Department received water rescue equipment in 1953, with the creation of the Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad. Two 14-foot wooden boats and a trailer built by squad members were housed at Station 1. They were pulled by Rescue 1, a 1954 GMC panel van. The boats were used for recovery operations primarily in the city and within Wake County.

The rescue squad was organized that year by a group of firemen and civilian volunteers. They formed after the fire and police departments were criticized for a delay in extricating a driver pinned under a truck on Hillsboro Street. There was also criticism after a drowning in the Neuse River several miles from Raleigh. The body was not recovered for a week, until City Manager W. H. Harper asked Capt. Jack Keeter to help. Keeter and Asst. Chief Lee Matthews, fire department friend Bob Biggs, and future police officer Andy Povlosky borrowed a boat and recovered the body.

On August 27, 1953, the rescue squad received its state charter. Organizational meetings were held, and rules and regulations were established for operations and levels of service. A Red Cross first aid course was taught to some twenty-five firefighters and civilians. Money from the city and the county Civil Defense office was provided to purchase a panel truck, along with two boats and motors. Rescue squad members built furnishings for the truck, and constructed a boat trailer. Local businesses donated money and materials, and several citizens also contributed money and equipment.

The rescue squad was housed at Station 1 and responded both in the city and the county. It carried equipment for rescues, drownings, and basic first aid. Though not intended to compete with ambulance services, the rescue squad proved helpful in the early 1970s, when area funeral homes stopped providing patient transport and private ambulance services started operating. The rescue squad's early equipment even including diving gear. Members were photographed in 1962, assisting with a vehicle recovery at Longview Lake.

Though the rescue squad was organized as a volunteer agency, Capt. Keeter persuaded the city to designate two firefighters as rescue officers. Harold Jones and Roma Wilder were appointed and sent to a rescue school in Maryland. They worked on opposite shifts and drove the rescue vehicles. If they needed a second person, they pulled a firefighter from one of the companies at Station 1. The volunteer members were subject to call, but primarily participated in body recovery efforts in local lakes and rivers.

Wake County also provided \$100 a month for the rescue squad. Both vehicles and the boat trailer were stored at Station 1. By 1972, the number of assigned firefighters had expanded to four and the rescue squad was operated exclusively by the fire department. In 1974, a second rescue unit was placed in service at Station 9. They were also utilized to transport firefighters and their family members to hospitals. After the formation of Wake County EMS in 1976, the rescue units served as back-up when no county ambulances were available.

In 1975, the wood boats were replaced with two 14-foot aluminum models, along with trailers donated by Jeffries Auto & Marine Service. The lightweight boats were easier to deploy than the wooden ones, which required six people to load and unload, or ten people to deploy in hard-to-reach areas. The boats and trailers were stored with two rescue units at Station 1 and Station 9.

## 1961 American LaFrance 900 Series Pumper

The city continued to purchase American LaFrance fire apparatus through the 1950s and 1960s. Four Series 700 pumpers were delivered in 1951 and 1953. Five years later, a 1958 American LaFrance Series 700 tractor-drawn aerial ladder arrived. The new Truck 1 was equipped with a hydraulically lifted, four-section metal aerial ladder.

Five pieces of American LaFrance 900 Series apparatus were delivered between 1958 and 1968. They consisted of a 1960 mid-mount aerial ladder and four pumpers of model years 1958, 1961, 1961, and 1968. The pumpers were each equipped with 1,000 GPM pumps, and water tanks of 250 or 300 gallons. They were all open-cab apparatus, though some were outfitted with fiberglass roofs in later decades.

This 1961 American LaFrance 900 Series pumper, serial number is 6-2-8391, is owned by the Raleigh Fire Museum. It was one of two delivered to the city of Raleigh on March 2, 1961. The purchase price was \$23,208.06, not including equipment.

The pumper was placed in service as Engine 1 in May 1961. It later served as Engine 8 beginning in 1974, and was placed in reserve in 1982. Later that year, it was sold to Stem Fire Department in Granville County. It was subsequently purchased by a private owner in Alamance County.

In May 2012, old Engine 1 was purchased by the Raleigh Fire Museum. Active, retired, and former firefighters donated nearly \$4,000 for the purchase. Fleet Maintenance personnel assisted with mechanical work. The engine made its first public appearance on June 16, driven by Capt. Jan Chamblee in the fire department's centennial parade.

## 1982 Mack CF Pumper

Fourteen Mack CF pumpers and an aerial platform were delivered to the city of Raleigh between 1970 and 1982. This pumper, serial number 2198, was one of two delivered that year. The apparatus cost \$108,000. They were the last Mack fire trucks delivered to the Raleigh Fire Department.

The apparatus arrived on April 19, 1982. It was placed in service as Engine 3, and later served as Engine 9, Engine 14, and Engine 21. Its designations as a reserve apparatus included Engine 31, Engine 103, and Engine 123.

It was originally delivered with a single roof beacon and an electronic siren. They were replaced a decade later with a light bar and a mechanical siren. Two racks for cross-laid hose were also later installed above the pump panel.

In July 2006, the fire department's last Mack CF pumper was retired. In February 2009, the second 1982 Mack pumper was sold. It was relocated to Wisconsin, where it was disassembled and its parts removed by a company that recycled fire apparatus.

Learn more about the history of the Raleigh Fire Department at [www.raleighfiremuseum.org](http://www.raleighfiremuseum.org)