

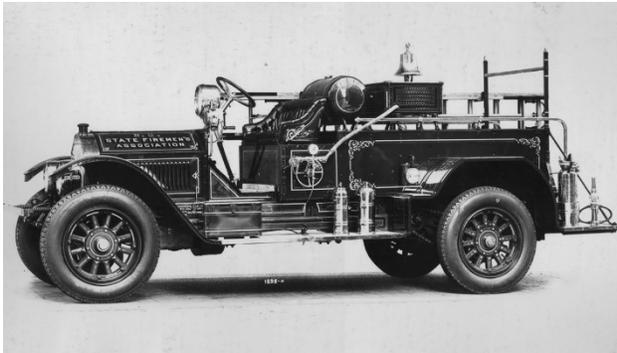
# North Carolina State Firefighters Association History

## History of the Motor Truck

Research notes compiled by Mike Legeros

Last updated July 12, 2019

Note, all dates refer to events occurring at the annual convention, unless otherwise noted.



### Pre-History

#### 1916 - Raleigh

Tournament held on July 19, 20, 21. Consists of hand- and horse-drawn apparatus, which have been the traditional contents since the original tournament. Though motor trucks have arrived around the state, beginning about 1910, they are not part of the annual tournament. It's also the last tournament held during World War I. (p168-170)

#### 1917 - Morehead City

No tournament, presumably due to war conditions. Convention was originally planned for Asheville, and with a "big and perhaps final tournament." Due to the war, however, they decided to wait, and meet in Morehead City instead, and they "eliminated" the tournament. (1918, p31)

#### 1918 - Wrightsville Beach

No tournament, presumably due to war conditions.

#### 1919 - Asheville

President notes that the city was originally planning a "big Peace jubilee and [fireman's] tournament" but that was "found to be impossible" as the railroads were still being operated "under war conditions" and the Association couldn't make any arrangements to get their "usual reduced rates, much less any transportation privileges", which was required for departments to bring their hand- and horse-drawn apparatus to a tournament. (p49)

Membership "unanimously instructed" President James McNeill to reinstate the tournament as part of the annual conference. (1920, p11)

## Motor Contest Added

### 1920 - Fayetteville

President McNeill reported that after “quite a volume of correspondence” with the member departments [which in 1920, represented 83 cities and towns], he found it impossible to restart the tournament as it was done before. He could get only four wagon teams and maybe three reel teams to [commit to] attend. And such a small number would have made it impractical, to go to the expense of [having] the “grandstand” and other “things necessary to pull off a respectable tournament.”

Therefore, he formulated a “set of rules” for a motor contest, and tried them with his fire department [Fayetteville], and when the Executive Committee came to town, he had them watch a couple of the practice runs.

He then personally visited “quite a number” of departments and “personally coached them on the details.” This was well-received and he quickly had over 20 accepted invitations. However, a number of them have since cancelled, and also “so many” of the Eastern departments have failed to respond (p10).

He “used every argument that I could” with the Eastern towns other than Kinston, but they wanted to wait until next year, and after seeing the results of this year’s contest. (1920, p11)

New Rules for Motor Contests were approved, and the speed of the participating trucks was increased from 20 to 25 mph. (1920, p33).

Tournament was held on August 11, with two motor contests. One for fastest water, with 17 teams competing, and the other for fastest chemicals, with 13 teams competing. On a following day, a Consolation Contest was held, though the winners were not entitled to a prize. Seven teams for water, and seven teams for chemicals competing. There were also contests for “coupling breaking” and a “100 yard dash” with a hand reel. (1920, p43-45)

## Early Motor Contests

### 1921 - Gastonia

Tournament on August 25, with 17 teams (motor truck) and eight teams (hand reel).

### 1922 - Morehead City

Tournament on July 27, with 11 teams (motor truck) and four teams (hand reel). (1922, p78)

### 1923 - Durham

Request by a member to lower the speed of the motor apparatus race from 25 to 20 mph.

Sanford member: You buy an apparatus and you pay anything from \$8000 on up, and put a man on there, and load the apparatus to its capacity, and hurl it through space at a rate of 25 miles an hour, the rate of an express train. I think that is wrong. The fire department is suppose to save property, not destroy it.

President McNeill notes the origin of the motor race, and that North Carolina is the only state with “this mode of racing.” In the horse days, the speed was 18 to 25 mph. The motor test rules he designed were

set at 20 mph. The members last year [actually, in 1920] voted to increase to 25 mph, he reminds them. He says he will ask the Secretary to bring this up at the next [annual?] meeting. (1923, p63)

#### 1923 - Durham

Tournament on August 9, with 15 teams (motor truck) and five teams (hand reel) (1923, p108-109)

#### 1924 - High Point

Tournament on July 17, with 18 teams (motor truck) and six teams (hand reel). (1924, p105)

#### Association Acquires a Motor Truck

#### 1925 - Asheville

Proposal for acquiring an American LaFrance Type 10 motor truck, to be owned by the Association for use in the motor truck contests. Secretary has been asked to present this, because the tournament is "very hard" on the apparatus that departments bring. Want to see about their own truck, and at no expense to the Association [if possible]. Committee to be formed. Approved. (1925, p75)

Tournament on July 16, with 24 teams (motor truck) and five teams (hand reel).

#### 1926 - Morehead City

Report on committee appointed at last year's convention, to "secure a fire truck" for the Association. They acquired an American LaFrance Type 40 combination chemical hose car, valued at \$8,500 (p79), and donated by Mr. P. O. Herbert, southern manager of the American LaFrance Fire Engine Company. Truck to be placed in a centrally located city, with a "capable mechanic" to "look after," and can be loaned to any city or town that has an apparatus accident, etc., and to be known as the James D. McNeill car. Motion also adopted to get Mr. Herbert, the donor of the fire truck, an "expensive souvenir" in appreciation (p66-67).

Discussion of where the Association truck will be housed. One person [Chief of CHFD?] suggests that it be housed in Chapel Hill. Decision for placement "will reside" with Executive Committee (p78-79).

Tournament on August 19, 1926, with 16 teams (motor truck) and six/seven teams (hand reel).

#### 1927 - Greensboro

President mentions that James McNeill passed away [that year], his funeral was attended by the Executive Committee and many firemen, and his body was carried to the burial by the Association's fire truck, which was given to the Association in 1926, and is named for him. (p31-32)

Report that that an American LaFrance fire truck was presented to the Association in 1926, at the Morehead City convention, by Mr. P. O. Herbert of Atlanta, to be used at tournaments and conventions. (p58) Story of acquiring the truck on page 63-64. In 1919, after three years without a tournament, McNeill vowed to bring it back. But horse-drawn apparatus "had passed" so he pledged that, if the convention met in his town, in 1920, he'd have a "motor truck test [contest]" ready. The new rules included that each host city supply a truck, etc., for the contest (p64).

At the 1925 convention, "the boys" concluded that it was time for the Association to own its own truck for the contests. A committee was appointed and they decided on American LaFrance [as the brand], and had [the truck] at the Morehead City convention for acceptance. Purchase was approved, but Pat

Herbert would not accept payment. He presented it as a personal gift, and as a testimonial of the “personal interest he always felt,” attending meetings “in the welfare of the Association”.

So they [Executive Committee, select officers?] traveled to Atlanta in 1926, and presented Herbert with a special book/brochure, with extracts from the proceedings about his donation, etc. (p65-66).

Tournament on August 25, with 17 motor teams and seven reel teams. (p?)

### Carrying Captain McNeill

Retired Fayetteville Fire Chief and longtime past NCSFA President (and charter member) James D. McNeill died on February 9, 1927. He was 76 years old. He was buried on February 11, with the Association fire truck that bore his name carrying his body from St. John’s Episcopal Church to its final resting place.

The Fayetteville Observer that day said the funeral was the largest in the city’s history, with the exception of that of McNeill’s beloved father, Rev. George McNeill, who died in 1861. “As the funeral procession wended its way to the cemetery, sirens moaned and a bell in the city tolled slowly,” reported the March 9, 1927, issue of “Fire Engineering” magazine.



### Subsequent Tournaments

1928 - New Bern

August 9, with 17 motor teams and six reel teams. (p117)

1929 – Hendersonville

July 18, with 15 motor teams and five reel teams. (p?)

1930 - Morehead City

August 21, with 14 motor teams and five reel teams. (p?)

1931 – Statesville

August 27, with 11/9 motor teams and three reel teams. (p148)

1932 – Hamlet

August 4, with 11/9 motor teams and three reel teams. (p139)

1933 – Salisbury

July 27, with nine motor teams and five reel teams. (p139)

1934 – Charlotte

August 16, with 12 motor teams and three reel teams. (p135)

1935 – Wilmington

[Find tournament info](#)

1936 – Raleigh

[Find tournament info](#)

1937 – Greensboro

[Find tournament info](#)

1938 - New Bern

August 11. No reel teams, seven motor teams.

1939 - Carolina Beach

August 9 [?]. No reel teams, seven motor teams.

1940 - Salisbury - August 29

No reel teams, six motor teams. (p133)

1941 – Asheville

No competing teams for tournament. (p142)

1942 – Greensboro

No competing teams for tournament. (p146)

1943 - No convention due to war conditions.

1944 – Charlotte

No tournament.

[Selling the Truck](#)

1944 – Charlotte

Disposition of the Association motor truck is discussed. The tournament used to have races with wagons and horse-drawn trucks. Then the railroads “decided” they would have to charge for transporting the horses and equipment. So it [the tournament] was ended. About that time, the auto fire engines “came into use,” so new contests were set up (p84). But some FDs wouldn’t send their motor cars to compete, so the NCSFA obtained a “second hand auto,” which was used. For the past few years, however, no races “have been had.” And “the car is sitting in Greensboro.” Recommend disposing of the truck, and putting the money into the fireman’s [relief?] fund. Approved. (p84)

1945

No convention due to war conditions.

On June 21, 1945, the Executive Board met in Salisbury and passed a resolution postponing the 1945 convention. Also reported the sale of [the association's] fire truck (p5).

#### Two More Contests

1946

No convention due to unavailability of meeting place.

1947 - Morehead City

No tournament.

1948 – Fayetteville

Motor contests again held, on August 12. [Find tournament info](#) First races since 1941. (p117)

1949 - Carolina Beach

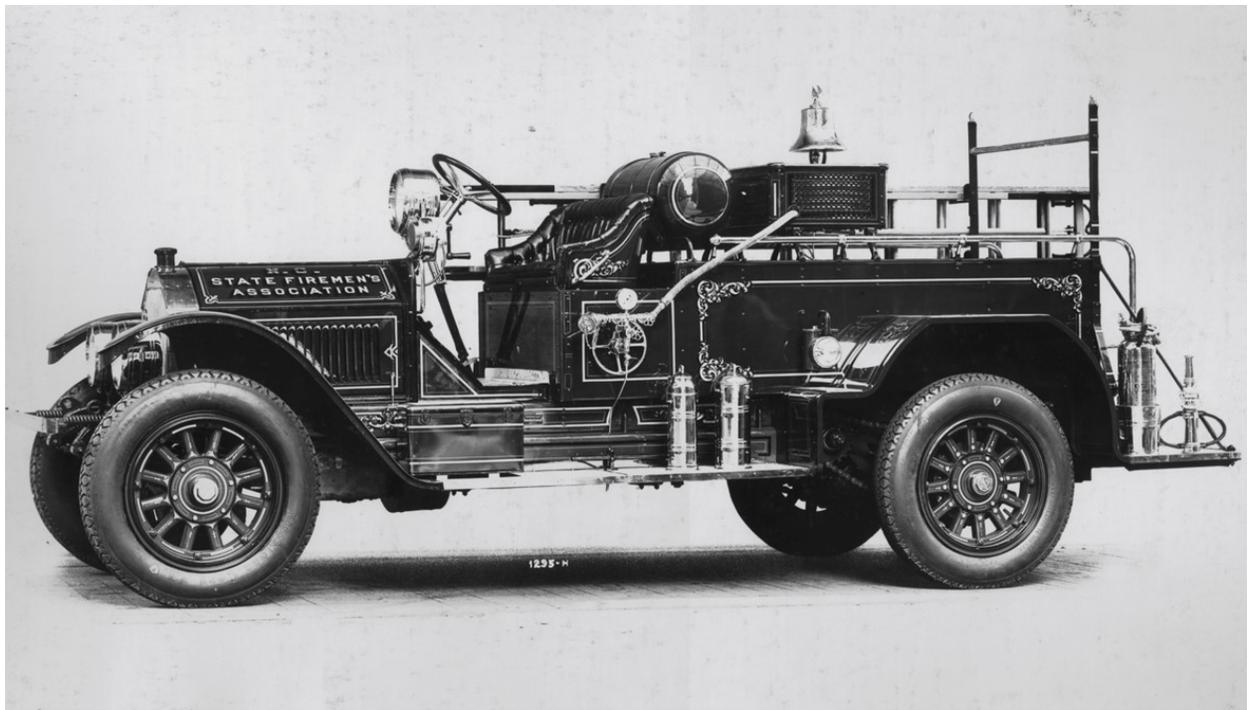
Motor contests again held, on August 20. [Find tournament info](#) No more conducted after that year .

#### Factory Record

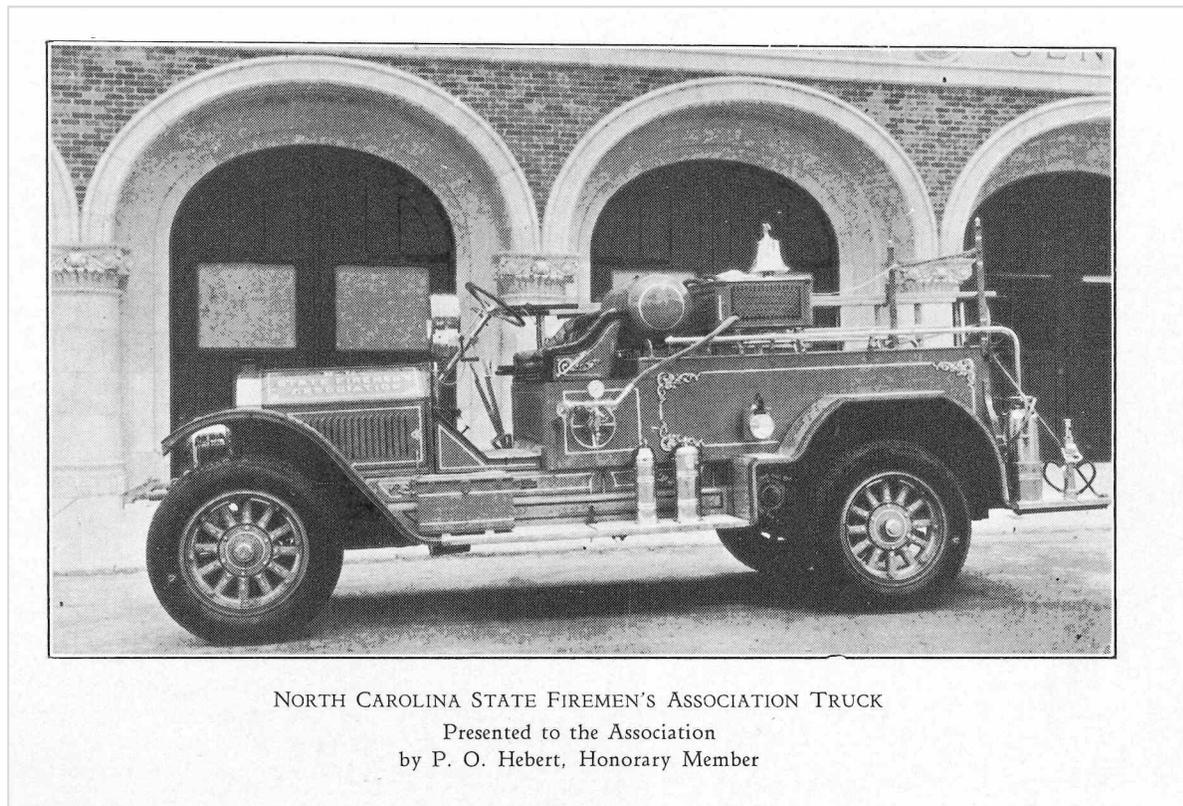
Reg. No.	City	State	Country	Type Style	Ship Order	Ship Date	Neg. No.	Remarks	Add. Notes	Manufacturer
5694	MOREHEAD CITY	NC		40 COMB.	1708	7/30/1926	6779	NC FIREMANS ASSN.		ALF

Source: <http://www.spaamfaa.org/resources/peckhams-american-lafrance-search/>

Pictures



Factory photo



From 1935 program

## MOTOR CONTEST

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Water		Chemicals	
Seconds		Seconds	
1920—Statesville	12	Mooreville	17 1/5
1921—Statesville	10 2/5	Statesville	8 4/5
1922—High Point	9 2/5	Asheville	9 2/5
1923—Statesville No. 2	9 2/5	High Point	9
1924—Thomasville	10 2/6	Sanford	8 1/5
1925—Statesville	8 4/5	Albemarle	8
1926—Fayetteville	9 4/5	Fayetteville	8 1/5
1927—Fayetteville	9 3/5	Lincolnton	8 3/5
1928—Thomasville	10	Lincolnton	8
1929—Sanford	9 2/5	Lincolnton	8
1930—Canton	9 4/5	Lincolnton	7 4/5
1931—Sanford	10	Lincolnton	7 2/5
1932—Lincolnton	9 1/5	Lincolnton	8 2/5
1933—Lincolnton	10 1/5	Sanford	8 2/5
1934—Morganton	8 4/5	Sanford	7
1935—Lincolnton	9 2/5	Sanford	7 2/5
1936—Badin	10 1/5	Gibsonville	7 4/5
1937—Albemarle No. 1	9	Lincolnton—(Tie)	8
1938—Albemarle	10	Sanford	8
1939—Albemarle	9 2/5	Lincolnton	9
1940—Albemarle	9	Gibsonville	7 4/5

From 1942 proceedings