

# Birth of a Fire Department

By Michael J. Legeros

## Introduction

This document details the development of the Raleigh Fire Department in the early 1910s. During this period the first full-time fire chief was appointed, the first fully-paid firefighters were hired, and the first motor apparatus was purchased. The narrative is drawn primarily from newspaper accounts and city minutes, and consists nearly entirely of paraphrasing or direct quotations. References are cited in footnotes. Additional comments are included both in the footnotes and in the appendixes. This is version 1.2 of this document, revised July 2008.

## Part One

### Capitol City

In 1910, Raleigh, North Carolina had 19,218 residents living within 4.026 square miles. There were eleven roads in and out of town, 20 miles of paved streets, 55 miles of water mains, and 1,900 telephones. Motion pictures were playing on Fayetteville Street, Raleigh High School had opened on West Morgan Street, and the first airplane had landed at the old state fairgrounds. Raleigh was evolving into a retail center for eastern North Carolina, and visitors flocked to Fayetteville Street, both for shopping and entertainment, and civic celebrations. The city's diversions ranged from college football at Riddick Stadium to grand opera at Metropolitan Hall. At the same time, East Hargett Street was thriving as the social and retail hub of the city's African-American community. Raleigh's industrial base had over 50 manufacturing plants producing everything from cigars to Coca-Cola.<sup>1</sup>

The Raleigh Fire Department had protected the Capitol City for decades. The department was comprised of five volunteer fire companies. The Rescue Hose, Capital Hose, and Victor Hose companies each operated horse-drawn hose wagons and used hydrant pressure to fight fires. The L. A. Mahler Steam Fire Engine Company operated a horse-drawn, 1905 American LaFrance Metropolitan steamer. It was used at major fires, or for calls outside the city. The Hook and Ladder Company operated a horse-drawn service ladder truck that was also equipped with a chemical

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<sup>1</sup> Waugh, Elizabeth Culbertson. *North Carolina's Capital, Raleigh*. Raleigh: The Junior League of Raleigh, 1992, 171-172; Vickers, James. *Raleigh: City of Oaks- An Illustrated History*. Sun Valley, California: American Historical Press, 1997, 87, 90, 97, 109.

tank. The five companies and their 119 men answered 97 alarms during fiscal year 1910, which ended February 28.<sup>2</sup>

The Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief drew meager monthly salaries. Other paid positions included Drivers, Sleepers, and the Engineer of the Steam Engine. The fire alarm system included 34 alarm boxes and the water system included 170 public and 30 private hydrants. Fire losses for that fiscal year totaled \$9,225 on buildings and \$3,340 on contents, with \$8,420 insurance paid on buildings and \$2,040 insurance paid on contents.<sup>3</sup>



*Fayetteville Street looking north, 1909. Courtesy North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

## **Automobiles**

By February 1911, Fire Chief Lonnie Lumsden was using his personal automobile as a piece of fire apparatus. It responded on all alarms and carried four or more men. His personal observations on motorized equipment were reflected in his an-

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<sup>2</sup> City of Raleigh, *Annual Reports of the Mayor and Officers of the City of Raleigh For the Fiscal Year Ending February 28, 1910*, 38-42; City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen of the City of Raleigh, City Clerk's Office, Municipal Building, Raleigh, May 26, 1911. The Raleigh Fire Department existed as a named organization since at least the Civil War. Fire apparatus was hand-pulled even after the first horses arrived in the late 1870s. See Appendix A for more information. With the installation of the first fire hydrants in 1887, hoses could be connected directly to the hydrants. Hand- and horse-drawn hose reels were first used, with horse-drawn hose wagons appearing a couple years later. These four-wheel wagons had a bench seat for the driver and riders, and an open bed for folded lengths of pre-connected 2 1/2-inch hose.

<sup>3</sup> Fire department salaries the following year were Chief, \$350 per year; Assistant Chief, \$100 per year; Drivers, \$12.50 per week; Sleepers, \$10 per month; Engineer of Steam Engine, \$100 per year; Assistant Engineer of Steam Engine \$50, per year; Fireman of Steam Engine, \$50 per year; Relief Driver, \$116 per year; and Janitor, \$312 per year. City of Raleigh, *Annual Reports*, 1911, 33-37.

nual report to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen: "The city proper is now two and one-half times larger than it was in 1907, and our present equipment is wholly inadequate to meet the demands that are apt to be made upon us at any time, and in consequence of such conditions I would suggest that the city purchase at once three combination chemical wagons, 2,000 feet of hose, one third-size gasoline pumping engine, and one 65-foot aironal [sic] truck, all of the foregoing automobile driven, as it would be quicker and less expensive than the horse driven apparatus we now have."<sup>4</sup>

Improvements to the fire department were also on the mind of Alderman Alexander Webb. This prominent citizen and member of the North Carolina Home Insurance Company was "vitally interested" in the city's fire protection. He also saw a need for motor apparatus as well as a reorganized fire department. In 1911, he started working with Aldermen J. Sherwood Upchurch, William Cooper, and Clarence Johnson, Chairman of the Fire Committee, to move the city in the direction of a motorized and fully-paid fire department.<sup>5</sup>

### Underwriters Report

In May 1911, the National Board of Fire Underwriters presented a report on Raleigh's fire protection capabilities. The report numbered 21 pages and was addressed to Major James I. Johnson. The authors were Board engineers J. H. Howland, T. C. B. Snell, and C. W. Wheelock. The report reviewed the water system, the fire department, and the fire alarm system. It also summarized the city building department, laws and ordinances, and conflagration hazards, among other subjects.<sup>6</sup>

About the fire department it said "the city has now attained a size such that adequate protection cannot be expected from a volunteer fire department; the in-

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Chief Lumsden's auto also carried himself and three firemen to Apex on June 12, 1911, after the Raleigh Fire Department was requested that morning to help fight a devastating downtown fire. As Chief Lumsden made plans to send personnel and apparatus by train, he learned that no water supply was available. No apparatus was sent. *Raleigh Daily Times*, June 6, 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Raleigh Fire Department, *A Historical Sketch of the Fire Department of the City of Raleigh, N. C.* Raleigh, 1944; *Hill's Raleigh City Directory*, Richmond: Hill's Directory Company, 1911.

<sup>6</sup> The National Board of Fire Underwriters was founded by fire insurance underwriters in 1866 to work for fire prevention and loss control. The board helped standardize the fire insurance policy. In the mid-1960s, the National Board of Fire Underwriters merged into the American Insurance Association. In 1971, 30 national and regional rating bureaus merged to form the Insurance Services Office (ISO). Barron's Educational Series, Inc, *Dictionary of Insurance Terms*, 2000, from <http://www.answers.com/topic/national-board-of-fire-underwriters>.

creased congestion of construction and of values demands a promptness of response and concentration of effort during the first few minutes of a fire which can best be obtained through a full paid department. The appointment of chief officers for short terms, instead of indefinitely, introduces opportunities for political interference and incompetent management."<sup>7</sup>

The report also stated "fire[fighting] methods are very unsatisfactory; direct hydrant streams are used exclusively, and with the present very poor [water] distribution system, adequate quantities of water are not available at even fair pressure to fight a moderate fire. The department is practically without discipline, there being little or no control over the individual members, which, together with the lack of drills, has resulted in very low general efficiency."<sup>8</sup>

Under the heading of Conflagrations, the report added "the water supply is inadequate and unreliable, the fire department is extremely weak and inefficient and would be hampered by overhead wire obstructions, and there is very little private fire protection, so that the probability of serious fires is high."<sup>9</sup>

The board's recommendations for changes included water system improvements, additional hydrants, and that "the present fire organization be disbanded and that a full paid department be organized."<sup>10</sup>



*Rescue Company hose wagon in front of Fire Department Headquarters on West Morgan Street. Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*

### New Chiefs

On December 1, 1911, the Board of Aldermen accepted the resignation of Chief Lumsden. His "other work" required "most of his attention" and he requested a salary increase of \$300 per year to remain in the position. Unable to raise his salary past the present \$600 per year, the Board accepted Chief Lumsden's resignation and elected Walter Woollcott as his replacement. Both chiefs had previously served as

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<sup>7</sup> *News & Observer*, May 23, 1911

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

head of the fire department; Chief Lumsden from 1901 to 1903 and Chief Woollcott from 1903 to 1905.<sup>11</sup>

On June 7, 1912, the Board of Aldermen accepted the resignation of Chief Woollcott. He resigned to spend more time on the needs of his dry-goods store. The Board unanimously elected Sherwood Brockwell as temporary chief. Brockwell, a 26 year-old mechanical engineering graduate of State College, was the Rescue Company Foreman. A volunteer fireman for many years, he was one of the members of the 1906 tournament team that broke a "world's record" at the state competition in Asheville that year. His occupation was typewriter repair.<sup>12</sup>

### **Fully-Paid**

Also at the June 7 meeting, Alderman Cooper made a motion that the fire department be placed on a fully-paid basis. Alderman Johnson then introduced a resolution to this effect and it was adopted:

WHEREAS: The equipment of the Fire Department of the City of Raleigh is regarded as inadequate, there not having been any improvement in the equipment since the city had a population of eight thousand, and

WHEREAS: It is deemed absolutely necessary to increase the efficiency of the department to protect life and property;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Fire Department of the City of Raleigh be put upon a full paid basis, and;

RESOLVED FURTHER: That the Fire Committee is hereby directed and authorized to make a thorough investigation in regard to the amount of money that will be necessary to equip the department and

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<sup>11</sup> *News & Observer*, December 2, 1911; *Raleigh Daily Times*, December 2, 1911.

Other chiefs of the prior decade were Louis A. Mahler, Frank B. Simpson, and John W. Mangum. Legeros, Michael J., *Raleigh Fire Department History*, <http://www.legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history>.

<sup>12</sup> *Raleigh Times*, June 8, 1912; City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, June 7, 1912; *Raleigh Times*, June 8, 1912; *News & Observer*, June 3, 1953; *Hill's Raleigh City Directory*, 1911.

Both the volunteer and fully-paid members of the Raleigh Fire Department participated in annual fireman's tournaments. During the early twentieth century, members of the white fire companies attended the yearly meetings of the North Carolina State Fireman's Association, and members of the black fire companies attended annual events of the North Carolina Colored Volunteer Fireman's Association.

put it upon a full paid basis, and report to this Board at its next regular meeting.<sup>13</sup>

## Requirements

Having already spent several months investigating their options, the Fire Committee promptly prepared a report on organizing a fully-paid Raleigh Fire Department. The report was presented to the Board of Aldermen on July 12 and included an itemized list of expenses to equip a fully-paid fire department consisting of three motorized fire companies:<sup>14</sup>

Three combination chemical and hose motor wagons	\$16,500
One motor car for chief	1,500
One turret nozzle	500
Twenty fire alarm boxes	4,000
3,000 feet of 2 1/2-inch hose	3,000
600 feet rubber chemical hose	600
Coats, boots, helmets	175
Beds and bedding	400
New house for Company No. 2	3,000
New house for Company No. 3	3,000
Repairs to house for Company No. 1	1,500
Life net	100
Total	<hr/> \$34,275

The three companies would occupy the facilities of the Capital Hose, Rescue Hose, and Victor Hose companies. The report that suggested if Company No. 3 were moved to a location "north of the Capitol," the city-owned Victor station at 135 E. Hargett Street could be sold and the proceeds applied to the total expenses. For the quarters of Company No. 2, the private-owned Rescue station on Fayetteville Street was located on land leased from the county. There were some 47 years left on the 99-year lease. The station could be "remodeled and improved" at a cost of about \$1,500, provided that the Rescue Company was willing. If not, a new location and building would be required. To house Company No. 1 at the city-owned Headquarters Fire Station at 112 W. Morgan Street, that building also required repairs and improvements.<sup>15</sup>

From the total expenses of \$34,275, the Fire Committee expected \$6,000 from the sale of the Victor Company property as well as all of the department's horses,

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<sup>13</sup> City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, June 7, 1912.

<sup>14</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July 13, 1912.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

hose wagons, and related equipment. Thus, the final amount needed to outfit a fully-paid, fully-motorized fire department was \$28,275.<sup>16</sup>

The report acknowledged that their plans were "not as much as were recommended" by the National Board of Fire Underwriters in their report last year. The Fire Committee felt that the expenses were as much as the city could handle at that time, and that the plans would satisfy the underwriters. With motorized apparatus "in the hands of trained men," they believed Raleigh would be "fully protected" and could "congratulate itself upon standing in the forefront of progressive cities."<sup>17</sup>

## Debate

Also at the July 12 meeting, the Board of Aldermen spent the greater portion of their gathering discussing and debating the report. The members saw the need for a modern fire department as "absolutely imperative," noting that the fire insurance companies had delayed issuing their new ratings at the request of Alderman Webb. The companies were expecting immediate improvements or Raleigh would receive a "second-class rating." The rating would increase insurance rates by 30%, which, in a single year, was greater than the proposed fire department expenses.<sup>18</sup>

Their recommendation that the city purchase motorized fire engines was a conclusion drawn from investigating the apparatus used in other cities the size of Raleigh, and larger. Alderman Upchurch noted that the city's fire apparatus was the same as it was 18 years ago. The city had grown, he said, and "those who fought fires now wanted to be paid for it." A "progressive step has got to be taken sooner or later," he added, and now was the time. Alderman George Harden opposed the plan, however, stating his opinion that horses were better than motor vehicles for fire protection.<sup>19</sup>

Alderman Harden "thought it impossible to use motor apparatus in rough weather," but Alderman Johnson cited examples of Richmond and Norfolk, where they were "told that the trucks beat the horses." Alderman Upchurch countered Alderman Harden, stating that "he had never been in a city of over 20,000 people that did not use motor apparatus." Every "good town" was replacing its fire horses with motorized fire engines, he said. Alderman Webb addressed motor trucks by noting that the "four experts" who were here last year to examine the city recommended the purchase of motor apparatus. He added that Asheville used motor apparatus exclu-

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

sively. Alderman Harden stood by his stand and contended that "no automobile truck ever built could travel over streets like those in Raleigh last winter."<sup>20</sup>

The Board members also made it clear that their criticisms of the fire department were not intended to reflect on the various fire department officials. The report was adopted but without a final decision, with Alderman Harding voting against.<sup>21</sup>



*Fire Chief Sherwood Brockwell. Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*

### **First Report**

Also at the July 12 meeting, Chief Brockwell submitted his first report to the Board of Aldermen. Since his appointment on June 8, the department had answered "five regular and three still alarms." Damage was "very slight" at every fire but one, a house on North Street that sustained an estimated \$300 damage. While responding to a fire on June 10, the Rescue and Victor hose wagons collided at the corner of Fayetteville and Hargett Streets. The Rescue wagon sustained a broken tongue and the Victor wagon a broken fender and rail. The two Rescue horses were cut and bruised on their legs, but had completely recovered. One Victor Company member was "injured about the head" after being thrown from the vehicle. He had recovered. Bad brakes on the Rescue wagon were cited as the cause, and the brakes had since been repaired.<sup>22</sup>

The wagons collided about 8:30 p.m., and after the fire at the box location was extinguished, repairs were started on the damaged apparatus. Both wagons were re-

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July 13, 1912.

Still alarms were alarms reported by means other than the fire alarm system, such as in person or by telephone.



turned to service by midnight. There was also a team of horses on duty for the street sprinkler the following morning. Chief Brockwell noted that the fire department furnished the street sprinkler with a driver and a horse team each day. They've been on duty daily except when the streets were already wet from rain.<sup>23</sup>

Since the time of his appointment, he had inspected each piece of fire apparatus and made modifications. The Rescue wagon was modified to lay two lines at once. This would save "three to four precious minutes" when both lines were being laid. He also outfitted each of the three hose wagons, as well as the hook and ladder truck, with a 65-foot length of Manila rope. The rope could be used for life lines, lifting hose up ladders, and other purposes. Chief Brockwell also placed 700 feet of new hose in service that he found in the hose room of the Capital Hose Company.<sup>24</sup>

Chief Brockwell had also started weekly drills consisting of "laying hose, raising ladders, scaling walls, throwing life lines, rope climbing, etc." All the paid firemen participated in the drills, as well as any volunteers that wanted to. He reported on some hydrant maintenance and a recommendation for an additional hydrant at the corner of Tucker and Cary streets. The wooden homes in that area, he noted, were "nearly without water service."<sup>25</sup>

He closed his report with the condition of the apparatus. Except for the steamer and the new "Rescue wagon," he stated, the equipment of the Raleigh Fire Department was in "very poor condition."<sup>26</sup>

### **Victor Company**

During these discussions, the issue of the city's colored firefighters was also being addressed. The Victor Company, which had celebrated their forty-third anniversary the month before, was expected to be disbanded. Though it had been suggested that the fir company be retained as a volunteer organization, the Aldermen had heard were enough objections to the suggestion that they rejected the idea.<sup>27</sup>

### **Objection Withdrawn**

At the next meeting of the Board of Aldermen on July 19, Alderman Harden "stated he would withdraw all opposition" to the Fire Committee's report and "moved that the report be adopted." The adopted motion was accepted without a

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *News & Observer*, July 19, 1912; *Raleigh Times*, June 26, 1912.

dissenting vote and it empowered the Fire Committee to "act at once toward carrying out the provisions of the report."<sup>28</sup>

## Demonstration

On July 30, a demonstration was conducted of a motorized American LaFrance chemical fire engine. At the gate of the Centennial School on Fayetteville Street, a pile of boxes and crates was lit. At 9:17 a.m. the driver was signaled to start. The apparatus "shot away smoothly and quickly," traveling up Fayetteville Street to the Capitol. With its 75 HP motor "running without a muffler," it turned onto Morgan, Wilmington, Edenton, Salisbury, and back onto Fayetteville Street. Wagons, trolleys, and other hazards were dodged with "perfect ease." The engine's bell was clanging and would have cleared the streets were they not already lined and jammed with spectators.<sup>29</sup>

During one single-block stretch, the engine attained a speed of 58 miles per hour. The speedometer did not drop until the truck reached Cabarrus Street. It made a "beautiful stop" at the school gate and the riding firemen leapt into action, activating the chemical tank, and promptly extinguishing the fire. The total time of the run, from when the engine pulled away until the first stream, was three minutes and fifty-eight seconds. The time was considered a "remarkable record" considering the route that was traveled. That evening, the truck was shipped to its final destination of Orangeburg, S.C.<sup>30</sup>



*Raleigh Times, 7/30/12*

## Finance

At the August 2 meeting of the Board of Aldermen, it was reported that one of the three fire engines and the fire chief's automobile were eliminated from the Fire Committee's list of recommended items by the Board of Audit and Finance. Only two fire engines would be purchased and the chief would instead likely "use a motorcycle" to respond to fires. The remaining requested expenses were backed by the Board of Audit and Finance. Also that month, the Raleigh Police Department ordered its first automobile patrol wagon. The eight-passenger Knox truck, built in Springfield, M.A., cost \$3,100.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *News & Observer*, July 20, 1912.

<sup>29</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July 30, 1912.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *News & Observer*, August 3, 1912; *Raleigh Times*, August 10, 1912.

At the September 3 meeting of the Board of Aldermen, the bid amounts for a combination chemical hose wagon automobile fire truck were announced: White, \$5,000; Seagrave, \$4,950; Knox, \$4,850; Webb, \$5,000; American LaFrance, \$4,900; Boyd, \$4,885 to \$5,100. The contract was awarded to American LaFrance for a pair of vehicles at a cost of \$9,800. The apparatus was described as a "beautiful piece of machinery" that could travel more than 60 miles per hour. It could also tow the steamer "with little or no difficulty." Chief Brockwell pronounced the pending machines "satisfactory." The fire companies would be twice as efficient, it was noted, by the simple addition of the two trucks. The fire engines could travel the same distance in "less than half the time" as when pulled by horses. They could also climb over any hilly street in the city.<sup>32</sup>

### Other Business

Also at the September 3 meeting, the Board of Aldermen voted to give Chief Brockwell a paid leave of absence for three or four months to attend the New York School of Instruction for Firemen. They also instructed Chief Brockwell to sell the "old fire engine" to the best advantage of the city. The make and model of the old fire engine was not specified, but likely referred to the 1870 Gould steamer.<sup>33</sup>



*Rescue Company in front of their Fayetteville Street fire station. Courtesy Raleigh Fire Department.*

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<sup>32</sup> *News & Observer*, September 4, 1912.

<sup>33</sup> City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, September 6, 1912.

The 1870 Gould steam engine was a reserve apparatus in 1891, four years after the installation of fire hydrants negated the need of the steamer for most fires. By 1903, it was a reserve apparatus that needed repairs. By 1905, the Gould steamer was "out of repair." That year, a replacement steam engine was purchased from American LaFrance. Legeros, Michael J., *Raleigh Fire Department History*.

## Part Two

### New York City

Once a year, the New York City Fire Department conducted a three-month "school of instruction for its thousands of firefighters." The firemen were instructed by "prominent and experienced men in the art of firefighting." With "influence of Alderman Webb and other members of the Fire Committee, permission was obtained for Chief Brockwell to attend." Outsiders were seldom allowed to attend the school and Chief Brockwell was the "first southern man to take a course with the New York City fireman."<sup>34</sup>

During the day Chief Brockwell attended class and during the night he acted as a "regular member of the New York City Fire Department." He was part of the probationary class for the first twelve days, under the charge of Battalion Chief Thomas Larkin. At night, he was assigned to Engine 20. After the first twelve days, he spent "every day except Sunday and Columbus Day reporting to Captain James J. Henry, in charge of the engineer's school at the repair shops." Chief Brockwell received "regular instructions on steam and automobile fire apparatus." This was done during the mornings.<sup>35</sup>

In the afternoons, Chief Brockwell reported to the "fire college at the department headquarters" and attended drills. Around 5:00 p.m., he returned to the quarters of Engine 20 and responded to all alarms as a member of the engine company and all second alarms with the searchlight company. He also responded to some third alarms "independent of Engine 20" and "worked under the direction" of Chief of Department John Kenlon or Acting Chief of Department Joseph B. Martin. He was never "absent from the company quarters" at night.<sup>36</sup>

On Sunday mornings Chief Brockwell visited hook and ladder companies No. 3 and No. 9 and assisted with raising ladders. He also "assisted with raising Water Tower No. 2." On Sunday afternoons he "assisted with raising the ladders of Hook and Ladder No. 20." Upon his return to the Engine 20 quarters in the evening, Captain Joseph M. Biggers "asked him various questions relative to the day's instruction" and found that he "had paid strict attention to his course work."<sup>37</sup>

When the company was at a fire, and when "the occasion presented itself," Captain Biggers "always called Chief Brockwell's attention to how fire would spread if not carefully watched, such as up through pipe openings, belt shafts, elevator shafts,

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<sup>34</sup> *News & Observer*, September 8, 1912.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*; *Raleigh Times*, October 21, 1912; *News & Observer*, October 29, 1912.

<sup>36</sup> *News & Observer*, October 29, 1912.

<sup>37</sup> *Raleigh Times*, October 21, 1912.

and dumbwaiters." He also called attention to "the careful method in overhauling, the different methods of cutting up a roof, techniques for putting a cellar pipe to work, standpipe lines," and such. He gave him "all the information he possibly could relative to extinguishing fires and the precautions against fire, and found him very efficient in every respect and a man with a great knowledge of mechanics."<sup>38</sup>

### **Magazine Article**

Chief Brockwell's adventures were also chronicled in *New York World Magazine*, under the headline "BROCKWELL AND HEAP BIG FIRE DEPARTMENT - New York World Describes Raleigh Chief's Enthusiasm at Big Blaze - Discipline and Fearlessness Are Characteristic - Companies Scuffle to Get Hose in First - They 'Know How to Lick a Fire'." The article was reprinted in the *News & Observer* and appears in Appendix C.<sup>39</sup>

### **Arrested**

At the time of one alarm, Chief Brockwell was getting a haircut at a barber shop. Leaving the shop, he headed to the fire station to retrieve his coat and helmet, as "no fireman was allowed to respond to a fire without them." He was met by a crowd of people who were bringing him his garb. Not wanting to don the helmet and coat at that time, he "dashed down the street" with a group of kids chasing after him. A policeman observed Chief Brockwell running with the items and "thought he had stolen the fireman's outfit and arrested him." One of the citizens, who spoke little English, rushed up to the policeman and shouted "he's chief." The policeman then recognized Chief Brockwell and allowed him to "proceed to the fire."<sup>40</sup>

### **Return to Raleigh**

Chief Brockwell was "well pleased" with his stay in New York and thought he gained "as much knowledge of modern firefighting as he could." He also passed the "required mental and physical examination" of the New York City Fire Department and could have been hired there. He "made many friends and met nearly every company captain and deputy chief." Chief Kenlon and Chief Larkin "showed much interest in his work" and promised to visit him in Raleigh, to see "how much he had benefited from his visit." After finishing with the fire school, Chief Brockwell traveled to the American LaFrance plant in Elmira, N.Y., at the company's expense. He worked for a week "assembling motor fire trucks and doing other work to learn the automobile repair trade." He returned from New York on October 27.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *News & Observer*, December 8, 1912.

<sup>40</sup> *News & Observer*, October 29, 1912.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*



*Fire Department Headquarters on West Morgan Street, c.1900. Courtesy Raleigh Fire Department.*

## Reorganization

At the November 1 meeting of the Board of Aldermen, Chief Brockwell was formally elected Fire Chief. His salary was \$1,500 a year, and he was instructed to "reorganize the fire department at once." At the end of the month, the Fire Committee offered a report on the progress of the reorganization. They were working diligently at the task, the committee reported, and were looking toward completion by the time the motor apparatus arrived. They were expected to arrive in December. Most of the other equipment had been ordered. For the improvements at Headquarters Fire Station, they had plans designed by Frank B. Simpson. Construction bids had been advertised and they were expecting to award a contract around December 10. They were also planning to make appointments to the fire department around that date, following examinations for the positions and after adopting of rules and regulations for hiring, and general duties and conduct.<sup>42</sup>

The committee recommended that 23 men be hired: an Assistant Chief, three Captains, two Lieutenants, and 17 firemen. They would earn three-quarters pay and, if they passed probation, they would receive the remaining quarter pay plus their full salary. They planned to organize the personnel into "five separate companies," with two stations having two companies each and the third station having a single company. For salaries they recommended that the privates be paid \$55 per month for the first year, and \$60 and \$65 per month for the second and third years, respectively. For officer's salaries, they recommend Lieutenants be paid \$70 per month, Captains \$75 per month, and the Assistant chief \$1,000 per year. Except for the Chief and Assistant Chief, all personnel would serve 60 days probation. The As-

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<sup>42</sup> *News & Observer*, November 2, 1912; City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, November 29, 1912.

sistant Fire Chief would be elected by the Board of Alderman, and the other members would be appointed.<sup>43</sup>

### **Help Wanted**

Within days of that meeting of the Board of Aldermen, this employment notice was printed in newspapers:

#### Regulations Regarding Applications for Membership of Raleigh Fire Department

Each applicant must be between the age of twenty and thirty-five years, and must not be less than five feet seven and one-half inches tall, and must weigh not less than 146 pounds.

Each application must be signed by three well known citizens of Raleigh, who must state their opinion of applicant, and also state the length of time each has personally known applicant. Each application must bear the signature of a reputable physician stating that the physician is of the opinion that applicant is in sound, healthy condition. The physician must also state that the applicant is absolutely free from any tubercular or kindred diseases, or heart disease.

All applications must be in the hand-writing of the applicant, and must state name, in full, place of birth, age, weight, height, previous occupation and address, address of residence, and whether married or single.

All applications must be mailed to the chief of department.

Applicants upon being appointed would report in person to chief of department and will then be examined as to physical condition regarding health. Applicant will then be given mental examination, consisting of ordinary questions which every citizen should know and elementary arithmetic. Applicant will then report for examination to determine strength and fitness and will, if successful in foregoing examinations, be appointed a probationary fireman.

The probationary fireman will be put through drills, fire department work and be quartered in fire houses, and attend fires and do routine work of a fireman, and will draw three-fourths pay from the day he becomes a probationary fireman until he has gone through the trial period, which is sixty days.

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<sup>43</sup> *News & Observer*, November 30, 1912.

At the end of the sixty days, if accepted, he will become a regular fireman and will draw the one-fourth pay for the preceding sixty days, and then will go on at full pay. The applicant will release the city of Raleigh from liability for any accident or injury he is liable to receive during the trial period.

Fireman will have one day (24 hours) off each 8th day and one hour for each meal each day.

Scale of pay: Firemen 1st year, \$55.00 per month; Firemen 2nd year, \$60.00 per month; Firemen 3rd year, \$65.00 per month; Lieutenants, \$70.00 per month; Captains, \$75.00 per month.

Application shall be in hands of chief of department not later than noon, December 10th, 1912.

Address all communications to Sherwood Brockwell, Chief of Fire Department, Raleigh, N.C.<sup>44</sup>

## Updates

At the December 6 meeting of the Board of Aldermen, Charles D. Farmer was elected Assistant Chief, with his duties beginning December 9. His salary, set at a prior meeting, was \$1,000 per year. Chief Brockwell also presented his monthly report and noted the equipment received for the reorganized fire department: "1,000 feet of Paragon hose and one Bowser gasoline storage outfit. Same are temporarily stored in the Municipal Building." He reported on other issues including that the fire department had "served notices on several business firms in this city that were violating city fire ordinances, and in each case the proper steps have been taken by the owners of the property." He presented comments on the school buildings in the city and noted that he inspected various hydrants in the city in the company found them to be "in satisfactory condition." He also cited a pair of recent serious accidents involving elevators and requested that the Board "pass an ordinance requiring that all elevators are properly guarded." He also requested that the Board not allow any "dry cleaning establishment to be erected or maintained within the fire district."<sup>45</sup>

## School Safety

Also at the December 6 meeting, Chief Brockwell presented recommendations for fire safety to the School Committee. Based on inspections of the various public school buildings in the city, he suggested regular fire drills using outside fire escapes

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<sup>44</sup> *News & Observer*, December 4, 1912.

<sup>45</sup> City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, December 6, 1912; *Raleigh Times*, December 7, 1912.



and stairs. He suggested the addition of electric gongs as fire alarms, the equipping of each school with chemical extinguishers, and use of metal trash cans. He cited fire escapes that needed improvements, outside doors that should be kept open, and the need for automatic sprinklers in furnace rooms. The cited schools were Garfield, Murphey, Thompson, Washington, and Wiley.<sup>46</sup>

### False Alarm

On December 8, the new fire engines were expected to arrive that week. They were white and the horse-drawn wagons would be painted to match them. One week later, Chief Brockwell received a letter from American LaFrance informing that the fire engines would not be shipped until January 10, and would arrive about January 15.<sup>47</sup>

### Fire Horse Killed

On December 21, three firemen were riding a Capital Hose Company wagon when they struck a streetcar near the intersection of Martin and Blount streets. They were exercising the horses that morning, going north along Blount Street from Davie Street, when the accident occurred about 9:30 a.m. Driver T. B. Castleberry saw the coming collision and tried pulling the horses to the left. His wagon struck the trolley sideways and he was thrown to the pavement. Hubert Horton was thrown into the trolley car through a broken window, while the third fireman, Peter Welsh, was not injured.

The operator of the trolley was thrown back into the cabin and suffered a dislocated arm. The two passengers in the car were not injured. The force of the collision pushed the car off the tracks and also broke the tongue of the fire wagon. George, one of the horses pulling the wagon, suffered a broken foot. Considered one of the department's best horses and having served for twelve years, he was "rendered useless" by the injury. He was examined by veterinarian Dr. Rudolph, who was then ordered by Chief Brockwell to put the animal down. The doctor injected "six grains of strychnine" into the 17 year-old animal's jugular vein. George dropped to the ground and died within minutes.



*News & Observer,*  
12/22/12

<sup>46</sup> *Raleigh Times*, December 9, 1912.

<sup>47</sup> *News & Observer*, December 8, 1912; *News & Observer*, December 14, 1912.

Castleberry, a Relief Driver hired only two weeks ago, was hospitalized with cuts and bruises.<sup>48</sup>

### Part Three

#### In Service

On December 23, the reorganized Raleigh Fire Department was placed in service. Career personnel took over the apparatus, equipment, and facilities of the volunteers. Only the fire alarm system was left in control of another city department. The apparatus consisted of three horse-drawn hose wagons carrying 1,000 feet of 2 1/2-inch hose each, a horse-drawn combination service ladder truck with a ten-gallon chemical tank, and a third-size, horse-drawn steam engine in reserve.<sup>49</sup>

#### Meet the Men

By December 28, fifteen firemen had been hired. No others would be added until after the motor apparatus arrived in January. They had been on duty a few days and were "acquiring much knowledge in the art of fighting fires." Every man was described as an "enthusiastic worker." The heaviest fireman weighed 225 pounds and the lightest 145. On that day, Chief Brockwell had them practicing "lifting hose from the ground to the tops of buildings." The drills were being done at Fire Department Headquarters. Using a small apparatus called a hose roller, a rope was rapidly lowered to the ground, fastened to the hose, and dawn to the top of the building. With this method, firemen could hoist hose to the top of the tallest building in a few seconds.<sup>50</sup>



*Raleigh's first full-time firefighters, c.1913. Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*

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<sup>48</sup> *News & Observer*, December 22, 1912.

<sup>49</sup> *Raleigh Times*, July 15, 1916.

<sup>50</sup> *Raleigh Times*, December 28, 1912.

## Two Stations Staffed

On January 4, 1913, Chief Brockwell made the official announcement of the location of the three fire stations and the personnel at two of them. Company No. 1 was housed at the Headquarters Fire Station on West Morgan Street. The building was being enlarged to meet the "additional requirements" of the reorganized department. The station would be equipped with one of the new fire engines. It would also house two hose wagons in reserve and the hook and ladder truck, which would be drawn by the motor truck when needed. Company No. 2 was housed in the Rescue Company engine house on Fayetteville Street. The station would be equipped with the second of the two new fire engines. It would also house the steam fire engine, which would be drawn by the motor truck when needed. Company No. 3 would be housed in the Victor Company engine house on East Hargett Street.<sup>51</sup>

The reporting newspaper also listed the names of the firemen hired to date:

Company No. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• T. G. Welsh, Captain</li><li>• S. H. Horton, Lieutenant</li><li>• W. M. Niblock</li><li>• M. J. Martin</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• W. B. Barker</li><li>• E. J. Lassiter</li><li>• R. M. Simmons</li><li>• D. B. Jones</li></ul>
Company No. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A. A. Doolittle, Captain</li><li>• H. C. Joyner, Lieutenant</li><li>• B. B. Parrish</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• O. K. Hester</li><li>• W. K. Justice</li></ul>
Company No. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not yet announced<sup>52</sup></li></ul>	

## Assets

On January 10 at the Board of Aldermen meeting, a request from the Victor Fire Company was presented. The fire company, now retired, requested reimbursement

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<sup>51</sup> *Raleigh Times*, January 4, 1913.

The reporting newspaper also noted that the fire department "now begins its existence on the paid basis." This contradicts both earlier and later accounts. Chief Charles Farmer, writing in the *Raleigh Times* on July 15, 1916, cited December 23 as the date the fire department was placed in service. Some decades later, a Raleigh Fire Department historical pamphlet stated the first week of December as the time that the full-time department was organized. *ibid*; Raleigh Fire Department, *A Historical Sketch*.

<sup>52</sup> *Raleigh Times*, January 4, 1913.

Many of the names are spelled differently in later accounts. See Appendix B for more information.

for a \$65 structure built by the company and \$126 of hose and other equipment. The request was referred to the Fire Committee.<sup>53</sup>

## First Fire

On January 13, the new fire department battled its first real fire. About 6:00 a.m., after smoke was seen seeping from the floor of the dining room of Giersch's Hotel at the corner of Fayetteville and Hargett streets, a fire was discovered in the basement furnace room. Raleigh's new firemen were soon fighting the most "stubborn blaze in many years." The flames were "confined almost entirely to the ceiling of the basement." As the lower level was divided into several rooms and passageways, firemen found it impossible to move through the basement.<sup>54</sup> Some 25 guests had been asleep in the hotel and were roused from their rooms by the hotel clerk and the porters. Some rushed from the building "clad only in night clothes," while "others took time to dress." The Lieutenant-Governor was staying at the hotel and appeared on the street wearing only his trousers.<sup>55</sup>

The "lack of winds and the heavy atmosphere" kept the dense smoke close to the building and this hindered the firefighters. More than one fireman was pulled from the basement "nearly overcome with smoke." After the fire "broke through the flooring of the main cafe," crews were able to get the blaze under control. Five lines were laid and they poured into the building for at least four hours. Direct pressure was requested from and provided by the water company from "shortly after the alarm until the fire was under control." The pressure was estimated at 1,250 gallons per minute. It was 11:00 a.m. before the fire was finally extinguished.<sup>56</sup>

Fire damage was confined to the basement and the cafe on the first floor. Smoke damaged all three stories of the structure. Water was also left standing "to the depth of five or six inches" in the basement of the adjoining Heller Brothers shoe store and Alderman's Toy and China Company. Damage was estimated at \$2,000, with the loss fully covered by insurance. No injuries were reported and all of the guests

**FIRE INJURES  
GIERSCH HOTEL**

**Wipes Out Commissary And  
Puts Dining Room Service  
Out of Commission**

**STARTED AT FURNACE**

Blaze Discovered at 6 O'clock Yesterday Morning, and Before It Could Be Put Out Had Done Over \$5,000 Damage—Sleeping Quarters Again in Use, But Dining Rooms Will Not Be Opened For At Least Ten Days—Guests Make Hurried Exits.

Fire that originated in the furnace room of Giersch's hotel, corner Fayetteville and Hargett streets, early yesterday morning, practically ruined the first floor of the building, destroyed the kitchen furniture, ruined the commissary in which was stored much foodstuff, smoked all three stories of the property and drove the guests from their rooms. The damage was estimated at between \$5,000 and \$8,000, covered

*Raleigh Times, 1/14/13*

<sup>53</sup> *News & Observer*, January 11, 1913.

<sup>54</sup> *News & Observer*, January 14, 1913.

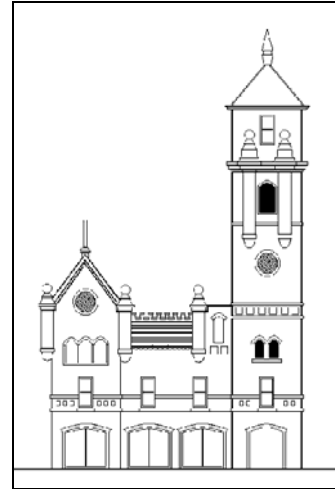
<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

escaped safely. Chief Brockwell and his men, however, later nursed "swollen and inflamed eyes" from the smoke. A rumor soon circulated regarding the cause of the fire. The day before the fire, the owner discharged an "insulting waiter." The dismissed employee hit the owner on the head and then "fled to avoid arrest." The employee was rumored to have started the fire, but the actual cause was suspected as a hot pipe that ran from a water heater in the furnace room to the flue at the side of the building.<sup>57</sup>

### Visiting the Station

On January 15, a reporter visited Station No. 1. The moment he entered the fire station, Chief Brockwell "sounded the alarm." Upstairs, in the men's recreation room, the sound of piano playing was heard. At the clang of the station gong, there was a "quick change." The horses dashed from their stalls and positioned themselves in front of the hose wagon. The firemen came running and "sliding down the big brass pole." They harnessed the horses and climbed onto the four-wheel wagon. They were seated and ready to roll within 27 seconds. "All right!" called Chief Brockwell. The firemen smiled at the reporter and clambered down from their apparatus. They unsnapped the harnesses and the horses went back to the stalls. Chief Brockwell commented "The horses knew it was not an outside alarm. They are well posted. They saw me hit the gong."<sup>58</sup>



Station No. 1. Drawing by  
Mike Legeros.

Going upstairs to the recreation room, the reporter observed the "automatic piano" that the firemen had installed. Books were also present, as each fireman also had a Raney Library card. In the sleeping room, the "beds were neat." In the electric room, equipment processed incoming alarm signals. Received alarms were transmitted to both the city bell and each fire station's gong. The equipment in this second floor electric room would soon be relocated to the first floor, to a fireproof addition under construction.<sup>59</sup>

The new addition to the station would also house a machine shop for repairs. Other planned enhancements included a heating plant in the basement to prevent the gasoline engines of the new apparatus from freezing. A new recreation room was also planned. The exterior of the fire station would not be modified, except for the

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid*; *Raleigh Times*, January 14, 1913.

<sup>58</sup> *Raleigh Times*, January 16, 1913.

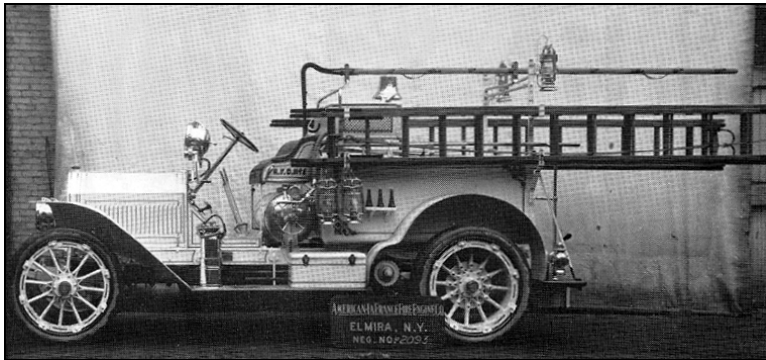
<sup>59</sup> *ibid*.

hose tower. Its height would be increased, with ladders added inside, so the tower could be used for drills.<sup>60</sup>

Chief Brockwell noted that the firemen were on probation for thirty days. If they passed, they would be issued uniforms. Chief Brockwell said he was "much pleased" by the performance of his personnel at their first fire a few days earlier. The volunteer fire companies were no longer on any sort of duty, and no longer answered calls. They would be formally disbanded by the Board of Aldermen in a few days.<sup>61</sup>

### Automobiles Arrive

On February 5, Chief Brockwell received word from American LaFrance that the two automobile fire trucks had been shipped. Each of the Type 5 combination chemical and hose cars was equipped with "1,000 feet of hose, a 40-gallon chemical tank, a 24-foot ladder, a roof ladder, turret pipes, axes, and other paraphernalia." Chief Brockwell and Asst. Chief Farmer were expected to drive them until the regular drivers were trained. The two trucks would be housed at Stations No. 1 and No. 2. The trucks were painted white and trimmed with blue stripes and nickel-plated metal. Though Raleigh was not the first North Carolina city to purchase motor apparatus, it was the first city in the state to purchase two such trucks at once.<sup>62</sup>



One of the two American LaFrance Type 5 chemical hose cars delivered in 1913. Courtesy North Charleston and American LaFrance Fire Museum and Educational Center.

### Still Training

On February 6, the *Raleigh Times* reported an update on the fire department. A newsman spent some time watching drills at Station No. 1 with Chief Brockwell and others. The exercises included using scaling ladders to climb the structure and lifting charged lines from the ground to the roof to attack an adjoining building. Chief Brockwell told the visitor that the names of the remaining new firemen would

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

The city fire alarm bell was later installed at the top of the tower, relocated from the clock tower at Metropolitan Hall.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Raleigh Times*, February 5, 1913; Raleigh Fire Department, *A Historical Sketch*.

be announced soon, that measurements for uniforms were going forward, and that the men on probation were "making good." The new apparatus was also arriving within days, but would not be unloaded until the "delivering engineer" arrived.<sup>63</sup>

### Company Three

On February 10, it was announced that Company No. 3 would occupy their quarters at 135 E. Hargett Street that week. The inside of the former Victor Fire Company station was being painted in preparation for the occupancy. Company No. 3 would consist of a Captain and six men operating a horse-drawn hose wagon.<sup>64</sup>



*Fire Company No. 3 in front of East Hargett Street fire station. Pictured left to right: (in the back) Charles F. Gaston, Luther C. Thompson, and W. Ernest Holland; (in the front) Eugene E. Jones (standing), Henry N. Parrish, and Matthew J. Barker (driver). Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*

### Murphey School

On February 14, the school safety recommendations of Chief Brockwell were proven useful when the Murphey Graded School at the corner of Person and Polk Streets caught fire. Caused by an overheated furnace, the fire was discovered about 10:20 a.m. The alarm was sounded after smoke was spotted, and the school was evacuated in record time. Within a minute, all 415 children—ages six to fifteen—had exited the building in an orderly fashion. The fire department was notified from Box 14 and rushed to the scene despite six inches of snow. They arrived quickly and extinguished the blaze before the first floor could be damaged. The "horses beat the machines" that time, though the children beat the firemen and were outside the structure at the time the fire engines arrived. One of Brockwell's recent recommendations required that school fire escapes be kept free from snow in bad weather. The very day before the fire, Principal Miss Pearle Cross instructed the school janitor to clear the fire escape steps of snow. The janitor obeyed, though he

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<sup>63</sup> *Raleigh Times*, February 6, 1913.

<sup>64</sup> *Raleigh Times*, February 10, 1913.

personally saw no need for the task. Those same stairs were used the next day and caused no injuries or delays as the result of slippery steps.<sup>65</sup>

### Quick Run

On February 17, the fire department received praise for their work at a house fire on North Person Street. Reported from Box 13 at the corner of Person and Franklin Streets, the fire was confined to the woodhouse of the home of Charles J. Parker. The fast response of the motor trucks was credited at preventing further damage. As the signal tolled through the city and the crowds rushed from the stores to watch the fire engines respond, the motor trucks were already "well on their way to the scene." The difference in the response times of motor- versus horse-drawn apparatus was "very noticeable." Mr. Parker was notified of the fire as the same time the alarm sounded. He "secured an automobile" and rushed to his residence as quickly as possible. When he arrived he was surprised to see the fire department already there, and playing two streams upon the fire. He had no idea that the fire-fighters could respond so quickly.<sup>66</sup>

### Organization Complete

By February 22, the new organization of the Raleigh Fire Department was complete. All personnel had been hired, and all three stations were staffed. The twenty-four men consisted of the Fire Chief, Asst. Chief, three Captains, two Lieutenants, and nineteen Firemen. They operated two motor fire engines and a horse-drawn hose wagon. The hook and ladder truck and the reserve steam engine were also on the roster and could be towed by the motor trucks as needed.<sup>67</sup>

Company No. 1 at 112 W. Morgan Street:

- |                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| • B. C. Joyner, Captain        | • Eugene A. Lasater |
| • Hubert H. Horton, Lieutenant | • Lewis F. Hicks    |
| • John D. Jones                | • Andrew J. Martin  |
| • William M. Niblock           | • Roscoe M. Simmons |

Company No. 2 on Fayetteville Street:

- |                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Archie A. Doolittle, Captain | • Oka T. Hester     |
| • Henry N. Parrish, Lieutenant | • D. Clarence Lloyd |
| • Edward W. Blake              | • William W. Hill   |
| • W. Lee Justice               | • Samuel A. Nichols |

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<sup>65</sup> *Raleigh Times*, February 14, 1913; *News & Observer*, February 15, 1913.

<sup>66</sup> *News & Observer*, February 18, 1913.

<sup>67</sup> *Raleigh Times*, February 22, 1913.

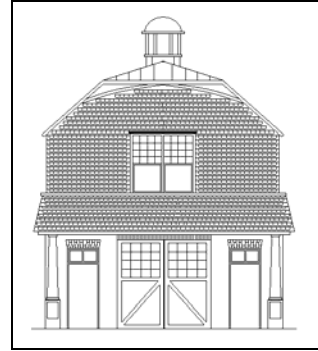


Company No. 3 at 135 E. Hargett Street:

- Peter G. Welsh, Captain
- Eugene E. Jones
- Matthew J. Barker
- W. Ernest Holland
- Robert B. Maynard
- J. B. Gaston

## Horses

Also that month, Chief Brockwell admitted that he was "perplexed over an unusual situation" at the quarters of Company No. 3. That company was stationed in the old Victor Company house. These were white men who had displaced black men and the horses were not pleased. They were not becoming friendly with Captain Welsh, and his men, and were making their feelings known. They missed their colored driver and kept the current firemen awake at night with "neighing and other disturbing noises." Chief Brockwell stated that he would be compelled to keep a black man at the firehouse for a "week or two" until the horses became more friendly with the firefighters.<sup>68</sup>



Station No. 3. Drawing by Mike Legeros.

On March 7, the Board of Aldermen discussed what to do with four older horses no longer needed by the fire department. Alderman George Harden suggested that they keep the horses for the purpose of helping the motor fire engines "when they broke down." He also reminded the group that on one recent occasion a horse team beat the motor apparatus to a fire. Chief Brockwell defended the machines and their value for Raleigh's citizens. He stated that the trucks had not "encountered any danger of stalling" anywhere in the city. The Board instructed the Fire Committee to dispose of the four horses to the best advantage of other city departments.<sup>69</sup>

## Volunteers Disbanded

Also on March 7, the Board of Aldermen passed a resolution that declared all volunteer fire companies out of commission:

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *News & Observer*, March 8, 1913.

Also at the March 7 meeting, the Fire Committee presented a proposition by the Rescue Company to sublease their engine house at the rate of \$60 per month. The request was referred to the "City Attorney and committee" with the power to act. *ibid.*

Be it ordained by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Raleigh

Section 1 - That on and after this date all Volunteer Fire Companies and all members thereof are hereby put out of commission; and no Volunteer Company or member thereof shall be allowed to respond to any alarm of Fire, as an organization of the Fire Department of the City of Raleigh, or as a member thereof; no Hose Wagon, Engine, Hand Reel, or other Fire apparatus of any Volunteer Fire Company shall be allowed to use the streets of the city in answering any Fire Alarm; nor shall any Volunteer Fire Department or any member thereof, or any person whatsoever not a member of Raleigh Fire Department connect any hose or other fire apparatus to any Hydrant, stand-pipes, or other hydrant connections in the city; that no Volunteer Fire Company or any member thereof shall be allowed to use any Engine-House, Fire Station, or other building used by the Raleigh Fire Department; provided that the above ordinance shall not apply to factories, cotton mills, manufacturing plants, schools, or any organizations who may organize their own private fire department for the prevention of fire in their own buildings and shall keep their apparatus on their own premises and shall at all times be under the supervision and direct control of the Chief of Raleigh Fire Department.

Section 2 - Any ordinances and clauses of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section 3 - Any person violating this ordinance shall be subjected to a penalty of \$25.00.<sup>70</sup>

### Civil Service

On March 8, the Raleigh Fire Department was placed under the protection of Civil Service. As ratified into law by the General Assembly, the amendment to the City Charter protected each member's position from being opened to "another and more favored person." No member could be discharged without "good and sufficient causes." The legislation also required new members pass a "rigid physical examination" before being hired.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, March 7, 1913.

<sup>71</sup> *News & Observer*, March 11, 1913; N.C. General Assembly, *North Carolina Private Laws*, 1913.

## Further Adventures

So began the second era of the Raleigh Fire Department. There were further developments in the months and years that followed. The downtown fire district was extended in October. Station 1 added a monkey as a member in November. The first motor pumping engine was ordered in June 1914. The county reclaimed the land that Station 2 occupied, requiring the building's demolition in July 1914. Chief Brockwell resigned to become the state's first Fire Marshall in August 1914. And the last horse was retired from duty in early 1915.<sup>72</sup>

There were more big fires. The *News & Observer* building on Martin Street burned on April 24, 1913. The Leonard Building at Shaw University burned on November 8, 1913. The repair shops at Glenwood Yards burned outside the city on December 20, 1913. Jenkins Memorial Chapel burned on March 3, 1914. The Textile Building at A&M College, also outside the city, burned on March 25, 1915. Brooklyn School on North Boylan Street burned on August 11, 1914. And Wake Forest Machinery & Hardware Company, which took Raleigh's first motor pumper on a very long run, burned on June 30, 1915.<sup>73</sup>

But those are stories for another day.



*Postcard view of News & Observer building on Martin Street, April 24, 1913. Courtesy David Bass.*

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<sup>72</sup> Legeros, Michael J., *Raleigh Fire Department History*.

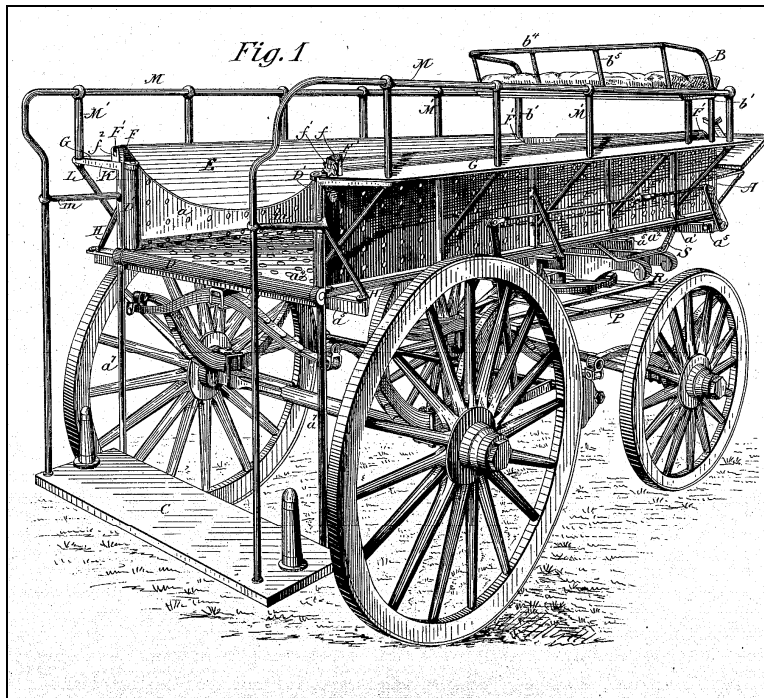
<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*



*Early Raleigh Fire Department officers. Pictured from left to right are (sitting) Asst. Chief Charles D. Farmer and Fire Chief Sherwood B. Brockwell; (standing) Capt. Henry N. Parrish, Capt. John D. Jones, Capt. Archie A. Doolittle, and Capt. Hubert H. Horton. Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*



*Firefighters conducting drills behind Station No. 1 on West Morgan Street, circa 1913. Courtesy North Carolina State Archives.*

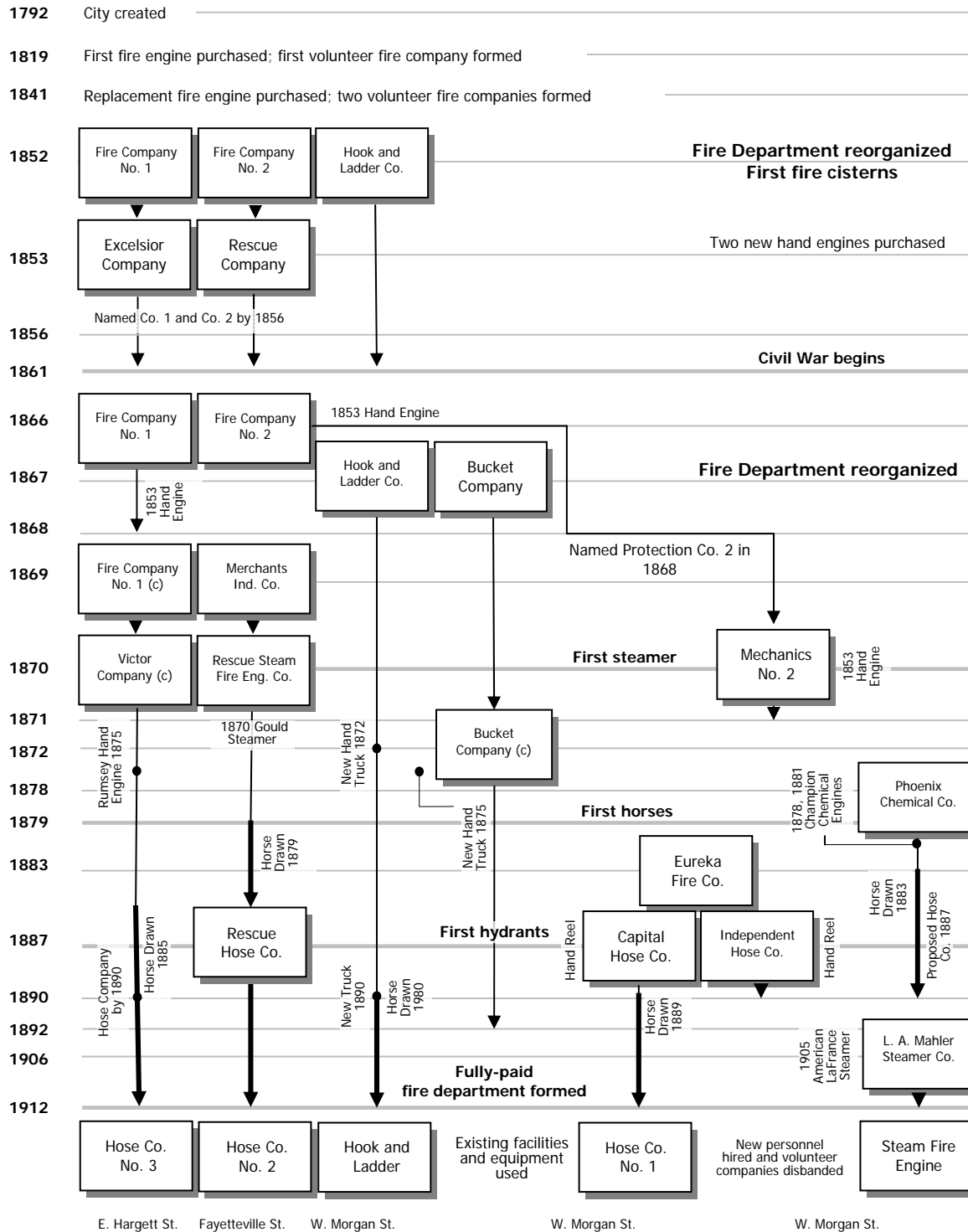


Patent drawing of a horse-drawn hose wagon, 1885. Courtesy United States Trademark and Patent Office.



*Closer view of Fire Company  
No. 3 hose wagon. Courtesy  
North Carolina State Archives.*

## Appendix A - Early History of the Raleigh Fire Department



*Notes: The first fire engine was suggested in 1802. Funds were solicited, but the apparatus was apparently never ordered. The fire companies in 1853 took their names from the newly delivered engines. Fire company organization during the Civil War is not known. Before the Rescue Company received a dedicated horse team in 1879, they used private horses or the city horses for parades or at some fires, in the years before 1879.*

## Appendix B - Personnel Details

This chart lists the original twenty-four members of the Raleigh Fire Department at the time of the reorganization. The chart includes former occupation and fire company affiliation where known, and alternate spellings of the names as encountered in other documents.<sup>74</sup>

Name		Rank	Former Occupation	Former Affiliation	Alternate Spellings
1	Barker, Matthew J.	Fireman			W. B. Barker
2	Blake, Edward W.	Fireman	Painter		
3	Brockwell, Sherwood B.	Chief	Typewriter repair	Rescue	
4	Doolittle, Archie A.	Captain	Electrician	Hook & Ladder, Rescue	
5	Farmer, Charles D.	Asst. Chief	Plumber	Capital Hose	
6	Gaston, J. B.	Fireman			
7	Hester, Oka T.	Fireman	Insurance salesman		O. K. Hester, O. T. Hicks
8	Hicks, Lewis F.	Fireman			
9	Hill, William W.	Fireman			
10	Holland, W. Ernest	Fireman	Carpenter		

<sup>74</sup> City of Raleigh, *Annual Reports*, 1910, 38-40; City of Raleigh, *Annual Reports*, 1911, 33-34; *Raleigh Times*, January 4, 1913; *Raleigh Times*, February 22, 1913; City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, January 1, 1917; City of Raleigh, Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, January 1, 1918; Raleigh Fire Department, *A Historical Sketch*.

Name		Rank	Former Occupation	Former Affiliation	Alternate Spellings
11	Horton, Hubert H.	Lieut.	Tinsmith	Capital Hose, Hook & Ladder	S. H. Horton
12	Jones, Eugene E.	Fireman	Woodworker		
13	Jones, John D.	Fireman	Tinsmith		D. B. Jones
14	Joyner, B. C.	Captain			
15	Justice, W. Lee	Fireman	RFD Driver		W. K. Justice
16	Lasater, Eugene A.	Fireman	RFD Driver	Hook & Ladder, Rescue	E. J. Lassiter, E. A. Lassiter
17	Lloyd, D. Clarence	Fireman	Hospital attendant		
18	Martin, Andrew J.	Fireman			M. J. Martin, W. J. Martin
19	Maynard, Robert B.	Fireman			
20	Niblack, William M.	Fireman			W. M. Nibblock
21	Nichols, Samuel A.	Fireman	Police		
22	Parrish, Henry N.	Lieut.			B. B. Harish
23	Simmons, Roscoe M.	Fireman			
24	Welsh, Peter J.	Captain		Rescue	T. G. Welsh, P. G. Welch, P. G. Welsh



## Appendix C - Magazine Article

The following *New York World Magazine* article was printed in the *News & Observer* on December 8, 1912:

### BROCKWELL AND HEAP BIG FIRE DEPARTMENT

New York World Describes Raleigh Chief's Enthusiasm at Big Blaze - Discipline and Fearlessness Are Characteristic - Companies Scuffle to Get Hose in First - They "Know How to Lick a Fire"

Now for the higher education of a sterner kind. New York has her Columbia and New York universities, her College of the City of New York and her Fordham. But in the College of Fire and Smoke her students brave peril and excitement in daily tasks and her campus is the vast city, where the flames are busier every hour than any other place in the world.

The Empire city saps the vitality of sister cities by absorbing their most talented men, but in this case New York gives out the fullness of her riches. The underwriters have declared that the post-graduate [school] for firemen maintained by the metropolis yearly saves the cities and towns of the United States untold wealth by teaching the chiefs the high standards and proficiency gained here through superior experience.

Strategy tells. They know tactics here. The battle brings out the greatest generals. So to get where actual service counts most, the out of town fire commanders have taken the exhausting course in our colleges, and that is why there are several today working as no other student must work.

Captain Biggers of [Engine] 20 on Lafayette Street doesn't look like a professor. He is not spectacled and grave and he does not have that air of being detached from the world so familiar in less strenuous halls of learning. But he is one of the expert tutors in our unique university.

"Break in firemen here? You mean break in chiefs of other cities, don't you?" cried Biggers. "Got one here. Sherwood Brockwell— queer name for a fireman— chief of the Raleigh, N.C., department, and he"—

The crash of the alarm rang out. The man never lived who has outgrown the emotion that surges through him when he hears the thrilling call. Nerves tingled as the men sprang into action. With ease and grace the tough-fibred firemen sped down the brass pole from three stories above. One was at the wheel of the big motor in an instant, another had whirled the crank, still another had dropped the chain at the doors. The crew swung to positions on the truck. Out it screeched and roared across Lafayette Street, headed for West Broadway.

And there among the privates in the ranks was the eager Brockwell. Not chief now, but one to take orders and work, work, work.

The papers next day told of the dash of Sherwood Brockwell into the furnace. Nobody dared more than he. But all the time Brockwell's keen eyes were taking in the details of the methods used by the learned professionals in quelling that stubborn blaze.

"That certainly was a stiff fire," said Brockwell— he is twenty-six and the youngest chief in the United States— when at 1 o'clock in the morning he rolled in with the crew. He was caked with black grime. Gleaming teeth sparkled against the ebony background and his eyes flashed with the joy of battle. The student had been hours at his lesson.

"That blaze would have been a monster in our town," continued Brockwell, speaking in the soft, slurring accent of his birthplace. "But these here boys just took that beast by the horns, yanked him out and hit him right in the face. These boys certainly do know how to lick a fire."

The practical lesson in the college curriculum had been a splendid one. The fire had been in a six-story factory at No. 495 West Broadway. The roaring flames had dodge and twisted, slyly breaking out suddenly here and pretending to be crushed there. Two alarms had been necessary; the firemen had to stretch their hose across the elevated tracks.

That's the kind of laboratory New York provides for the students. The apparatus is of the most varied and complete kind and these are some of the courses Sherwood Brockwell is taking:

General fire fighting.

Use of apparatus and tools.

Engines and boilers.  
Use of high pressure systems.  
Marine fires.  
Care of horses.  
Care of hose.  
Sapping and mining.  
High tension electric current.  
Combustibles and explosives.  
Gasoline motor engineering.  
Fire alarm telegraphs, including  
auxiliary systems.  
Auxiliary fire apparatus.  
First aid to injured.  
Discipline and administration.

This is why many cities have been sending their chiefs and captains here, where a helmet and a rubber coat are the cap and gown. Hartford and Springfield, Mass., and Patterson, N.J., have recently gained thereby, and Chief May, of Charleston, S.C., is now taking his course. Captain William J. Cunningham, of Troy recently finished.

"My opinion," said Chief Brockwell, as, after the big fire, he finished washing the grime away, "about the New York fire department? There can be but one opinion. It's the greatest in the world. I knew that before I came here, but still you don't think there was such a class of men on earth as you've got. This isn't enthusiasm, it's fact."

"I didn't think any human being could stand smoke the way they do. They rush into it and work in it. They follow their captain's lantern, and what's more, they fight among themselves to see who'll be in first."

"Same way with getting the hose in. I've seen companies scuffle to see which would get in first. Their rule is 'save a life, even if you lose your own.' That, sir, is an unwritten law in your department."

"Take these boys here. When that alarm rings and they rush out, there isn't one of them certain that he'll return alive. But they follow orders and risk death or injury. Each does what he's ordered to do until he drops, and if you praise him he'll think you're kidding. That's the makeup of the New York fireman, and when we fellows see them in action we're just naturally swept off our feet."

"There's another thing I can't get over. That is, how the men get along with so little sleep. Why, some nights they're out at fires three and four times. No sleep at all, you might say, night after night. And of course there's little sleeping here in the day time. No, sir, all day long the houses are open for inspection. The department is on a strictly military basis. The men are always on duty except for their weekly leave of absence."

"Look at them now. Wouldn't you think they'd be in bed after fighting that fire for three hours? But they take their time about going upstairs."

"Another thing I want you to put in strong," said the young chief, "say that they treat us strangers with open hearts and willing hands— that's the phrase, 'Open hearts and willing hands.'"

"And," he laughed, "I took the 'initiation' and seems to me they gave it to me good. I was put 'under the blanket' and joined in 'the long-distance butting contests' all right. I wish I could tell you about it, but that's a secret and I want the next fellow to get his. The boys in this company call the initiation 'Instructing in Fire' but it's all fun. There's no danger in it as there sometimes is in college initiations."

"And now," said the chief, "I'll try to get some sleep and when I get back to Raleigh I'll try to make its department just as much like New York's as I can."

## Appendix D - Bibliography

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## Appendix E - About the Author

Mike Legeros is the official historian of the Raleigh Fire Department. A former member, he is currently employed in the software industry.