

HISTORY OF THE ENID FIRE DEPARTMENT



DEDICATION

This history is dedicated to all of the men and women who serve, and have served, the Enid Fire Department with a dedication and loyalty that exemplifies the highest ideals of the Fire Service. It is hoped that this history will serve as an inspiration to those who wish to serve the Department in the years to come.

A HISTORY

The opening of the "Cherokee Strip" occurred on Monday, September 16, 1893 at 12:00 p.m. The Cherokee Strip was located in the North central portion of the Cherokee outlet. This land had been given to the Cherokee Indian Tribe, by treaty with the United States Government. Secretary of the Interior, Hoke Smith, divided the Cherokee Strip into seven counties complete with county seats. Enid became the county seat of O County, as the letters of the alphabet were originally selected to designate each of the seven counties.

After the opening of the Cherokee Strip, Enid was settled and established as a permanent city with a population of 2,500 people. Territorial Governor William C. Renfrow declared Enid "a city of first class." A special election was called, and a Mayor and Town Council were selected to conduct the official business of the City of Enid.

Their first meeting was held November 10, 1893 in the Rakeshaw building, located on what is now the southeast corner of Maine and Independence. This is the location of the "Kress" building that is now a part of the Cherokee Strip Convention Center complex.

From the very beginning the City Council of Enid has shown a concern for fire safety. At the first Town Council meeting J.O. Hodges, W. T. Watson and F. P. Webster were appointed to look after the fire protection and water supply problems of the City. The closest supply of naturally impounded water to the newly developing town was Government Springs. The springs were used by trailhands to water the herds of cattle being driven to market following the Chisholm Trail Northward. These springs are now the site of a City park located along East Owen K. Garriott Road in the 400-500 block.

The new City Council was being kept busy organizing the town. During the December 28, 1893, meeting it was moved and seconded that a Fire Warden be appointed in addition to an Asst. Fire Marshall at the same pay as a policeman, for two weeks to look after and inspect flues, chimneys and other matters relating to the safety of the city from fires. The next day the City Council approved the City Attorney to draw up an ordinance requiring the business houses around the public square and on E street to keep a barrel of water at each house for protection against fire. A motion was made and approved that six hand grenades (glass spheres containing carbon tetra chloride) be added to the ordinance.

During the January 11, 1894, City Council meeting, the Committee on Ordinances made a recommendation that an ordinance be passed granting H. Edwards a telephone franchise. A motion was made and seconded by the City Council passing the recommended ordinance.

At the February 23, 1894, City Council meeting, the following resolution was offered by Mr. Hodges and resolved by the Mayor and Councilmen of the City of Enid, "Whereas the Pabst Brewing Company has kindly offered to donate, \$425.00 toward buying a hook and ladder truck for the City of Enid, therefore be it resolved the sum of \$2.33 and the same is hereby appropriated in a warrant ordered drawn on the City Treasurer for the amount to be delivered to the Pabst Brewing Company upon delivery of the said hook and ladder truck in the City of Enid. The said hook & ladder truck be named "The Pabst Hook & Ladder Company". The aforesaid truck to be owned and controlled by the City of Enid." On motion duly seconded, the resolution was adopted by unanimous vote of the council. It was also moved and seconded that the City Clerk be instructed to communicate with the Pabst Brewing Company and their agents informing them that the City Council had accepted their proposition and to have the hook and ladder sent immediately to Enid. Motion carried.

The summer of 1894 was especially hot and dry. Most of the buildings of the new town were built of southern hard pine with only a few painted. Although a night watchman was employed it did little to ease the constant fear of fire since the town still lacked any real fire protection. To provide an early warning, the citizens purchased a large bell weighing some 300 pounds and erected it on a wood frame support on the public square. The improvised belfry was located on the west side of Grand Avenue, south of Broadway immediately west of the old Elks building. The bell was referred to as the "Fire Bell" although its function was to enable citizens to assemble quickly for any emergency. The City Council passed Ordinance #34 on February 27, 1894, regulating the ringing of the Fire Bell and providing penalties for violation of the ordinance.

On August 14, 1894, the Mayor and City Council resolved that, "the pen that was used by the President of the United States (Grover Cleveland) in signing U.S. House Bill #3606, giving to Enid, railroad facilities and which is presented by the Honorable James H. Berry, member of the United States Senate and the staunch and steadfast friend of the citizens of Enid and Pond Creek, be accepted. Resolved that said pen be framed and placed in the custody of the City Clerk and be hung in the City Hall and that the proceeding of this meeting and this resolution be spread upon the minutes."

Mayor Joe Meibergen pulled a switch that illuminated Enid's first electric light during a ceremony in 1899.

By 1900 there were 79,994,575 people in the United States of America. Oklahoma Territory claimed a population of 790,391.

In 1901, Sherman Goltry could not resist the lure of the new horseless carriage and according to The Daily Wave, "all Enid thrilled to see Sherman Goltry's new one cylinder Oldsmobile chugging down the city streets."

On July 12, 1901, a conflagration wiped out the entire South side of the City. It started in the back of a second-hand store in the 200 block of South Grand. By morning, the entire block of businesses was engulfed in flames and the fire was spreading rapidly fanned by a brisk southerly breeze. There was great concern that the flames would skip over Maine Street and head up the east side of the square, but fortunately the brick wall of Gensman's hardware at the corner of Maine and Grand held. The fire burned east from there destroying everything until it crossed a creek and burned out.

Flaming embers blew across the street west resulting in the entire south side of the square going up in flames. The St. Joe Hotel on the west side of South Grand was directly in line with the fire going south. The fires now threatened to spread throughout the rest of the City as well. Enid's only fire protection consisted of volunteers of the moment, a two-wheeled cart with 500 feet of fire hose, and the horse drawn Pabst Blue Ribbon hook and ladder. Knowing that the hotel was doomed, the owners of the St. Joe dynamited the building and the fire was stopped, saving the rest of the town. The editor of "The Daily Wave," forerunner of "The Enid Daily News," suggested, in a highly critical editorial, a return to bucket brigades and urged abandonment of the new hook and ladder with its' undependable horses. The deficiencies of the City's fire protection system were graphically illustrated, to the citizens of Enid, by this major conflagration. After the great conflagration the need for an organized department could not be overlooked. Three days after the fire, the City Council conducted a special session, at the direction of Mayor L.A. Faubion, for the purpose of defining and fixing the fire limits of Enid and to discuss the formation of a volunteer fire department.

Nearly all the businesses were back in operation within the week, mostly in makeshift tents. The blacksmith started to rebuild his shop but the City Council had ruled that wooden buildings could no longer be constructed in the downtown area.

Upon being ordered to stop construction, the blacksmith became infuriated and had to be restrained by the town marshal. Brick buildings soon replaced the wooden structures all the way from Doc McKay's Drug Store on the southeast corner of the square to the Kress building. The Kress building is now a part of the Cherokee Strip Conference Center complex.

On December 6, 1901, the Council appointed Jake Roach as temporary Fire Chief of the fledgling Enid Volunteer Fire Department. Chief Roach made a formal report to the Council on December 20, 1901, recommending the purchase of necessary supplies needed by the Department. The Council referred the recommendation to the Supply Committee.

During the January 17, 1902, Council Meeting, the payment of \$45.00 for Department supplies was approved. The Council also extended a vote of thanks to the "fire boys" for their commendable work at a fire that had occurred on January 10th.

The Council, during their March 7, 1902, meeting approved the payment of a \$325.00 bill presented by the Boston Woven Hose Company. On March 20, 1902, the Council approved the formation of the Enid Fire Department. The Department consisted of two paid firefighters, a Driver, Ike Ostendorf, and an Assistant Driver, Homer Osburn. Both men were hired at a salary of \$45.00 per month. They were paid by City Warrants that local banks would not honor at times because the City had no funds available. Mr. S.J. Edmonson, a local businessman, would cash the warrants for the two fire fighters at 10% discount. Mr. Edmonson would hold the warrants until the City had enough funds available to honor them.

The City also authorized twelve volunteers who were paid \$2.00 for the first hour and \$1.00 for each additional hour of active firefighting. S.U. Jett was Fire Chief at this time and was also a volunteer, appointed by the Council.

On June 6, 1902, an ordinance calling for the establishment of a free public library was read before the City Council. It was moved and seconded, that the rules be suspended and that Ordinance #250 be advanced to its second reading and adopted by title. The ordinance was passed by a 6 to 2 majority and provided for and established a free public library and reading room in the City of Enid. The ordinance also provided for the appointment of a board of directors, defined their terms of office and their duties and provided for vacancies that might occur on the board. On June 28, 1902, the Library Directors reported to Mayor L.A. Faubion that the new Library Commission had met and organized by electing D.W. Eastman, President and B.F. Buffington, Secretary. By lot the term of Mr. Goltry and Mr. West was fixed for one year. Mr. Eastman and Mr. Buffington for two years, and Mr. Fleming and Mr. Watkins for three years. Included in this report was a request to the Mayor and the City Council asking for a levy of 1 mill for library purposes.

An ordinance was passed during the July 18, 1902, Council Meeting requiring persons “who intend to build inside the fire limits be required to take out a building permit.” This permit was to be issued by the City Clerk for a fee of \$2.00.

The town was changing. The East Hill area was no longer the leading residential district. Modern homes began to appear west and north of the square. Electric wiring, plumbing, running water and furnaces were now considered to be standard in all new homes and the first residential telephones were installed. During 1902, the Frisco Railroad, from Tulsa to Enid, was completed and its extension to Vernon, Texas started. Enid was being recognized as the economic hub of Northwest Oklahoma.

The City Council approved a 4 mills Fire and Water supply fund at their July 12, 1902, meeting. Other notable funds approved at this meeting were the Judgement fund with 5 mills, Street Lighting fund with 3.5 mills, Park Fund with 0.5 mills, Sinking fund with 5 mills, and the Salary fund with 1 mill.

Councilman Worcester made a motion during the January 16, 1903, Council Meeting to build an addition to the Fire Station. The building was to be large enough to stable two horses with the rear of the building to be built large enough to accommodate seven or eight bunks for the men to sleep in. It was further moved that the building be neat, attractive, and home-like and that there be a purchase of a #1 team of horses and a set of swinging harnesses, that a man “who understands the care of horses and fire apparatus” be hired, at a salary of \$40.00 per month, to stay at the engine house at all times. The motion was seconded and approved. Mayor Faubion was given full power of appointment. A three man committee, consisting of the Mayor, Mr. Ogden, and Mr. Brown were authorized to purchase a team of horses and other supplies.

During 1903 the Council approved such Fire Department related items as having fire hydrants placed at the corner of each block where water mains were laid, providing each Councilman with the authority to select the placing of fire hydrants within their respective wards, the appointment of the Mayor to assist with the testing of all new fire hydrants, the payment of \$1,078.73 to Frank Litson for pipe and a team of fire horses, and the payment of \$1,100.00 to the Anderson Coupling and Supply Company.

On March 3, 1903, Ike Ostendorf was paid his first check of \$40.00 for employment at the Fire Station. E.G. Stubblefield was paid \$105.00 for labor on building the new Fire Station. William Ostendorf was paid \$21.00 for board of the Fire Team (horses). Roy Roach was paid \$22.75 for work at the Fire Station and J.B. Woodward was paid \$3.00 for moving the fire bell.

During the April 17, 1903, City Council Meeting, Long Bell Lumber Co. was paid \$245.80 for lumber for the Fire Station.

An ordinance fixing the salary of the Superintendent of the Fire Department was passed by the City Council on August 10, 1903. This ordinance also fixed the salary of the Chief Engineer of the City Water Works.

Fire Chief Jett tendered his resignation to the Council during the October 7, 1903, meeting. A motion was made and seconded to appoint Fire Superintendent Ike Ostendorf to the position of Fire Chief. The motion failed. Another motion was made and seconded to appoint C.V. Porter as Fire Chief. This motion passed. Moments later a letter of resignation from Ostendorf was read to the Council and accepted.

Soon the equipment for the Department included a Hook and Ladder Wagon, 1500 feet of fire hose, and two beautiful black horses named, "Prince" and "Rocks." Rocks proved to be short-winded and could not withstand the longer emergency runs. A replacement for Rocks, named "Fred," was obtained but could not be depended upon due to temperament. Because of this, Rocks was returned to active duty. Finally, a dependable replacement was found by the name of "Pete." Because of age, Prince was given an honorable retirement and replaced with "Baldy" a few years later.

The City Council on May 20, 1904, approved a motion by W.B. Johnston that the City pay for one telephone at the Fire Station, two for the Water Works, one for the City Clerk, one for the Police Chief, and one for the Mayor. This enabled the Fire Department to contact the Water Works in the event of a large fire and request an increase in the water system's pressure.

Mr. A.S. Vincent was struck by a hose wagon that was responding to a fire in the spring of 1904. Mr. Vincent had been crossing the street and had failed to notice the approaching fire apparatus. The Council approved a sum, "as they might deem just," on June 17, 1904, for the injuries he received. The petition for payment was referred to the City Attorney. This was the Fire Department's first "traffic" accident.

During the October 25, 1904, City Council Meeting, the Fire Chief was directed to draft rules and regulations for the government of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief was further directed to arrange a system of signals so as to locate all fires by ward.

At the November 18, 1904, City Council Meeting, Councilman Messall made a motion instructing the City Attorney to meet with a special committee for the purpose of drafting an ordinance regulating the Fire Department. The City Council approved payment of \$44.94 to the Southwestern Telephone Company for the placing of fire alarms and \$11.00 to Enid Steam Laundry for Department laundry during their December 16, 1904, meeting.

Construction of the new Water Works System was now underway. This project marked a major investment for the City. Construction workers on this project were paid \$0.175 per hour with a man and a team of horses paid at the rate of \$0.35 per hour.

On January 6, 1905, the City Council paid Lee Roach \$56.00 for injuries received fighting the Hubbard House fire. Ike Ostendorf was paid \$50.00 salary for December with Homer Osborn paid \$45.00 salary for December. Water Superintendent C.V. Porter was paid \$75.00 salary for December.

By 1905, the Department was located in a wooden building on the southwest corner of Broadway and Grand, about where the Post Office flag pole now stands, facing North. The Department had grown to the size that the need for permanent, paid officers was recognized. In response to this need, on April 17, 1905 a Council meeting to appoint Officers was held. Sam Goeffert was elected Fire Chief. L.O. Pillsbury was appointed Assistant Chief with C.V. Porter to the position of Treasurer and G. Taylor, to Secretary. On March 8, 1906, L.O. Pillsbury was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Chief Goeffert's retirement.

An ordinance relative to the control and management of the Fire Department was read by the City Council on June 2, 1905, in regard to the number of volunteers, to be incorporated. It was moved by Mr. Howell and seconded that the number of volunteers be established at 14. Motion carried.

The question of moving the Fire House was brought before the City Council on December 15, 1905. The question of the new location was referred to a special committee consisting of S.W. Johnson, W.B. Johnston and Wood.

During the January 5, 1906, City Council meeting the charge of \$95.00 for moving the Fire House was approved. The Mayor, during this meeting appointed L.O. Pillsbury, Chief of the Fire Department. Chief Pillsbury came to Enid in 1900 as an electrician for the H.M. Bilsby Electric Construction Company. Shortly after his arrival he joined the Enid Volunteer Fire Department. Chief Pillsbury was instrumental in gaining passage of the Firemen's Pension Law by the Oklahoma legislature. Chief Pillsbury retired in 1924 but continued serving Enid as Electrical Inspector. During this meeting W.R. Hunter was appointed Assistant Chief. It was moved and seconded by the Council to confirm these appointments. Mr. Howell moved that an ordinance relating to the government of the Fire Department be published. The motion was seconded and approved.

The Mayor, during the February 2, 1906, City Council meeting, appointed Homer Osborne to Driver of Fire Wagon and James Olinger to Assistant Driver of Fire Wagon. It was moved and seconded to approve these appointments. In 1906, other members of the Enid Fire Department were Assistant Chief W. L. Hunter, Foreman Alvah J. Thrasher, Fire Police James T. George, Secretary C.V. Porter, Treasurer Sam Reeves, Driver of Fire Wagon Arthur Johnson, Assistant Driver of Fire Wagon S.E. "Friday" James, Plugman S.V. Jett, and Ladderman James Osburn.

A special request was made to the City Council on May 4, 1906. Fire fighters appearing before the City Council requested that they be granted the privilege of using Grand Avenue, from Monroe to Maine, for the purpose of giving a carnival for the benefit of the Fire Department. A motion was made and unanimously approved by the Council.

The Enid Fire Department had two memorable mascots during these early years, "Kate" and "Tramp." Kate was the first. Kate was a bird-dog whose main duty was to accompany the apparatus to the fires and make sure no stray dogs frightened the fire horses as they raced through the streets. Kate would also accompany the Firefighters home to share a meal. "Tramp" came along during the days of the street-cars. (W.L. Spencer was granted a street-car franchise by the City Council during their February 24, 1905, meeting.) Tramp was of doubtful pedigree but endeared himself to the Firefighters of his day by riding the street-cars home with them. The mealtime rides were free to the men and dog alike. Tramp was known to ride the cars alone throughout the City and was frequently seen traveling across town at all hours of the day.

During the August 3, 1906, City Council meeting, Mr. Bradfield made a motion that the Ordinance Committee draft an ordinance requiring the erection of fire escapes on buildings. The motion was seconded and approved by the Council.

After a great deal of agitation and numerous delays, the United States Congress passed the "Enabling Act" on June 16, 1906. This law authorized the Territory of Oklahoma and the Indian Territory to prepare for admission to the Union as a single state.

Oklahoma's first and only constitutional convention began its deliberations in the city of Guthrie, on November 19, 1906.

The Fire Committee presented the following report on the condition of the Fire Department to the City Council on April 26, 1907.

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council of the City of Enid,

Gentlemen: We your committee to whom was referred the matter regarding the condition of the Fire Dept. of the City of Enid with instructions to investigate the same and report such improvements as we might deem necessary, after making an investigation, very respectfully beg leave to submit the following report and recommend that same be adopted.

First, we recommend that the Supply Committee of the City Council purchase 1 arial truck, 1 steam fire engine, 1 combination chemical and hose wagon, and 2,000 feet of new fire hose.

We further recommend that the Fire House now located on the Government Square, be moved to the lots now owned by the City of Enid on East Broadway, formally occupied by the Water Works Dept. and that a first class Fire Engine Department be equipped and operated thereon.

We further recommend that the City purchase or lease a lot on Broadway, west of the square, a reasonable distance from the square and erect thereon a building and equipment the same into a first class Fire Engine Dept.

We further recommend that the Fire Department be reorganized and placed on a metropolitan basis; that is to say, that a number of competent men be employed, a part of which shall be on duty nights and a part of them on day duty.

We also recommend the appointment of a Chief and Assistant Chief.

In making the foregoing recommendations your committee beg leave to state that they have made a thorough investigation of the Fire Department of Oklahoma City and have come to the conclusion that in as much as Enid is destined to be a great city in the near future, that she can only keep stride with the times by having a first class Fire Department.

It is needless to advise the Council that if this report is accepted and acted upon, the price of insurance of the City of Enid will be reduced at least 35%, for the simple reason that the people will then have adequate protection in case of a serious fire. We now have a city of approximately 20,000 people and until we have a paid department of the very highest character, we feel that in case of a serious fire that under present conditions we would be unable to cope with same. A large fire at this time would undoubtedly result in hundreds of thousands of dollars lost, and the Council can by the exercise of good judgment and expenditure of a small amount of money, reorganize the department, place it on a paid basis and have one of the most up to date Fire Departments of any city in the future State of Oklahoma.

We trust that this report will be accepted in the spirit in which it is offered.

Very respectfully submitted,

George Emrick

H.D. White

F.L. Wilkins

After studying the report, the City Council on August 12, 1907, approved Ordinance #483, to vote \$25,000 of bonds to purchase fire apparatus to extinguish fires.

On September 17, 1907 the voters of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories ratified the constitution that had been written in Guthrie. Following the ratification by the voters, the constitution was presented to Congress and the President for approval. On November 16, 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt issued a proclamation admitting Oklahoma as the forty-sixth state of the Union. The first pavement in Enid was laid on North Independence in 1907. During this year, a new high school was erected on North Independence. Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley schools were also constructed at this time.

In 1908, city fathers determined it was necessary to build a new station to accommodate the growing Department. J.J. Reardin was given the contract to build a new Central Fire Station in the 200 block of South Independence. The new station also housed the new Gamewell Fire Alarm System that was a sophisticated, state of the art, fire reporting system for its time. The test board is currently on display in Oklahoma City at the Oklahoma State Firefighters Museum. Although the new station was not completed, the Department moved in on August 31, 1909. The front apparatus doors had not been hung and the heating equipment would not be installed until Christmas. Equipment purchased for the new station consisted of an automobile valued at \$500.00, a steamer pumper valued at \$5,000.00, and an aerial ladder apparatus valued at \$5,000.00. The remainder of the Department's equipment consisted of 1 hose cart, 3 teams of horses with harness and fittings, furniture and fixtures, the alarm system, hose and couplings. This inventory was estimated at a total of \$51,391.00. The strength of the Department was increased to 12 paid men. There were also purchased at this time 20 Gamewell Fire Alarm Boxes installed at strategic points within the City. This station was remodeled several times over the years and served the Department until July 1984, when it was decommissioned.

In the early days of the Oklahoma Fire Service, annual firefighter tournaments were held. Firefighters would compete against each other in foot races, hose coupling contests, ladder climbing exhibitions and pumper races. The best team of horses from the various departments were hitched to light wagons and raced for 3/8 of a mile in a "Hub to Hub" race. These tournaments evolved into the Convention of the Oklahoma State Firefighters Association proceedings, and these competitions were the high point of many a convention.

At this time the Enid Fire Department had 3 teams of horses: "Nig" and "Red," the aerial team, and "Pete" and "Baldy," the hose wagon team. At the June 6-7-8, 1911, convention hosted by the Department, the team of Ned and Jack, driven by S.E. "Friday" James won the "Hub to Hub" race with a time of 50 seconds.

The field consisted of teams from: Duncan, Purcell, Mangum, Blackwell, Guthrie, Sapulpa, Chandler, Oklahoma City, and Fairview. This winning team became known throughout the State and continued to win many more events in the following years. The Driver of this team, "Friday" James, was also recognized by many as one of the better men in the individual events. "Friday" James and the team of Ned and Jack made a significant contribution to the Enid Fire Department's reputation among the leading fire departments of the State during this era.

In 1911, C.V. Cessna, a local aviator, finally succeeded in taking off from a primitive runway in an aircraft of his own design. This marked Enid's first manned aerial flight. Mr. Cessna later moved to Wichita, Kansas and founded the Cessna Aircraft Company, building the first monoplane with a full cantilever wing without struts or braces.

During these early days of the Department, the men worked 7 days a week with no days off. The men were free, however, to go and come with relative freedom, as long as sufficient personnel were on hand to man the equipment and to tend to the daily station duties. Gradually, the old fire horse teams were phased out and the Department became more mechanized as did the rest of society. The City continued to grow and by 1920 the Department had grown to a strength of 18 men.

On July 17, 1928, the citizens of Enid passed a bond issue to build additional fire stations. The amount of \$53,000 was approved by this election. The construction of these new sub-stations enabled a faster response time to fires and other emergencies.

In 1930, financing for the Department became difficult for City government as the community suffered thru "The Great Depression" which had engulfed the entire nation. The Department was not immune to the financial difficulties of the times. By 1930, the Enid Fire Department had grown to include Central Station, 2 Sub-Stations, and 31 assorted officers, drivers, and firefighters. But soon, due to the economic pressures of the times, the Sub-Stations were closed and salaries reduced. For example, in 1932, Mayor I.M. McGill issued a salary cut of 10% in March, a \$10.00 across-the-board reduction in April and a 12-1/2% reduction in July.

This downward trend continued until by 1940 the Department had declined in strength to a total of 22 firemen and officers compared to the 31 that had been working a decade earlier.

The Department suffered a tragic training accident in 1930 which resulted in the death of I.E. Kersbergen, age 33, and severe injuries to Clyde Lawter, age 31. Kersbergen was an Assistant Chief with 9 years of service to the Department and Lawter was a "rookie" Firefighter with 1 year on the Department at the time of the fatal accident. The two men were using life belts and descending a rope secured to the top of the Central Station when the rope broke. The resultant fall killed Kersbergen and inflicted serious injuries to Lawter from which he never fully recovered. This has thankfully been the Department's only fatality.

Enid became a "home rule" city with the framing and adoption of a city charter. Home rule cities, of course, have the right to determine their own form or plan of municipal government. In this and other respects, they differ from statutory cities that are organized under a format established by the State Legislature. The Charter was passed by a vote of the people and approved by the Governor.

On May 10, 1930 at a special election by a majority vote of the people an Amendment to the Enid City Charter was adopted creating a Fire Department Civil Service Commission. Governor William J. Holloway approved this Amendment on May 19, 1930. At the time of the Charter Amendment passage, Jesse Butts was Mayor and the Department had 26 active members.

At the first meeting of the Fire Civil Service Commission these same 26 members were accepted as members of the Fire Department with designations of one Fire Chief, one Assistant Chief, one 2nd Assistant Chief, one Secretary, one Chief Inspector, one Master Mechanic, one Superintendent of Fire Alarms, three Captains, three Lieutenants, thirteen Firemen, and one Extra Fireman. At that time the pay was \$200.00 per month for Chief, \$160.00 for Assistant Chiefs and Specialty Officers, \$150.00 for Captains and Lieutenants, and \$140.00 to \$120.00 for Firemen.

Retired Assistant Chief Earl B. Woods, stated on April 23, 1962, that he helped in the preparation of the Fire Department Civil Service Amendment to the City Charter. This was because prior to 1930 appointments and promotions were by the Mayor and City Commissioners.

Another retired Assistant Chief, P. Irvin Grunau, stated, years later during an interview, that the general purpose and objective of the Amendment, "was to have a fire department that the citizens of Enid could rely upon without having a change of personnel every time we had an election."

The Fire Civil Service Commission has many duties. The Commission was created to enforce all provisions of the Civil Service charter, to ascertain the merit and fitness of all persons seeking positions in the Department, and to carry into effect the provisions of the Charter. The Commission also enforces all rules for the classification of the officers, places, and employments in the Fire Department, and for the appointments and promotions therein and examinations thereof. The Commission is also charged by City Charter with the enforcement of the rules and regulations of the Department.

The Fire Civil Service Commission is composed of three citizens of the City, one of whom shall be a member of the Department and who shall act as Secretary, and two civilians, all of which shall be appointed by the Mayor and the City Commissioners. The purpose of the Commission has not changed since the passage of the 1930...the unbiased selection of the most qualified candidates for appointment and promotion based on competitive evaluations, to provide security of employment, to conduct fair and impartial hearing of charges, and to insure that the citizens of Enid have a fire force that they may rely on in times of emergency.

Economic conditions throughout the State began to slowly improve in the 1940's. On January 1, 1940, voters approved a \$52,500 bond for the purpose of improving the Department's fire equipment. The working conditions of the Department began an upward swing during the forties that saw many changes brought about by the war years of World War II. Unfortunately, wages continued to lag behind.

In 1943 the salary of the Chief of the Enid Fire Department was \$175.00 a month, which was the same as it had been in 1929 prior to the Great Depression era.

The Navy, due to the experience gained from fighting ship-board fires, was a leader in firefighting tactics during this time and is generally credited with the introduction of fog nozzles to the civilian fire departments of the day. The Enid Fire Department adopted the use of fog nozzles and used the steam conversion, which they create, in extinguishing structural fires. The Department also experimented with filtration masks and rebreathers during this period but found these early models impractical for general use. Because of an absence of practical breathing apparatus, the men continued to be "smoke eaters" for several years to come.

The work schedule for firemen in 1949 was a system of split shifts that consisted of 10 hours and 14 hours a shift with one day a week off. By the early 1950's, the manpower of the Department had returned to the 1930 level of 31 men and officers and salaries were again on the rise. The two sub-stations, previously closed during WW II, were reopened and staffed with men and equipment.

Enid had come through a 20 year period of adverse economic conditions and the Department had maintained an admirable fire loss record, due largely to the dedication and aggressive firefighting style of the firefighters and officers. Fire had consistently been confined to the building of origin and losses held to a minimum.

In 1952, twelve new men were hired and the workweek was shortened to 70 hours. The next 10 years from 1950 to 1960 showed an increase of 22 men and one new sub-station. Additional equipment was also added as the Department continued to grow and expand. In September of 1951 Roy V. Kelley became the Department's first Drill Master or Training Officer as the position is now termed. Drill Master Kelley, after leaving the Department, served as the State Fire Marshal.

The Enid Fire Department added a new sub-station located at 2205 West Owen K. Garriott Road. This sub-station was opened in 1960 and was constructed by the P.C. Davis Company. The Department had by this time grown to a strength of 53 officers and men.

In 1962 sub-station #2 was relocated to 702 West Willow, a point farther North in the City, to provide better protection to this rapidly growing section of the community. Substantial improvements in equipment were also being achieved. The most notable, were the improvements to the protective clothing worn by the firemen and the use of self-contained breathing apparatus or S.C.B.A.s. These innovations allowed the firemen to enter areas of burning structures that had been impossible to survive in before. The era of the "leather lungs" was finally brought to an end.

The year 1970 found the Enid Fire Department with a combined strength of 63 men and officers, housed in one Central Station and three sub-stations. In 1973, the work-week hours were cut to 56 hours, scheduled with a four day break between cycles.

On March 25, 1974, Everette Brewer became Fire Chief of the Department and Terry Turner was promoted to the position of Assistant Chief. Fire Chief Brewer served as Chief for 13 years, while Assistant Chief Turner served for 11 years as Assistant Chief of the Department. Under this leadership, a comprehensive vehicle replacement program was initiated. A basic physical fitness training program was implemented to reduce job injuries, as well as a 10 year study to relocate sub-stations as indicated by local statistical analysis.

On November 17, 1971, Lieutenant David Lawver was promoted to Master Mechanic. Master Mechanic Lawver initiated modern preventative maintenance procedures, standardized equipment checks, and initiated the use of computers to develop databases of Departmental equipment repairs and replacements. Master Mechanic Lawver retired in 1994 after 27 years of service. Assistant Mechanic Jerry Hoffman promoted to fill this vacancy on September 1, 1994.

During this time the Prevention and Inspection Division of the Department, under the direction of Fire Marshal Kenneth Olson and six Inspectors, was responsible for the enforcement of codes, public fire education, commercial building inspections, fire cause determinations and arson investigations. Fire Marshal Olson retired in 1983 after serving the Department for 34 years.

Lieutenant Floyd Klein was promoted to the position of Fire Marshal on July 1, 1983, and served in this position for four years before retiring in 1987. Fire Marshal Klein expanded the investigative skills of the Prevention and Inspection Division with the certification of inspectors.

The 1980's brought a continuation of change to the fire service and the Enid Fire Department. In 1980, a new sub-station was opened to replace the aging Station #3 located at 16th and Randolph. The new Station #3 was built on the Southeast corner of 30th and Randolph.

During this period the City enjoyed a financial boom due to increases in the production of oil within the area. The population grew and the City continued to grow to the Northwest. In response to this building trend the #5 sub-station was constructed at 1306 North Garland Road. This station opened in 1983 complete with a new American LaFrance triple combination pumper and a GMC grass fire unit. The old Central Station, which had seen the age of horses and steam-powered pumpers was proving too small to house the equipment and men of the 80's. In 1984, a new Central station was opened at 410 West Owen K. Garriott Road and the old station that had served for so long was torn down to make way for yet another change within the community, the construction of the Cherokee Strip Convention Center complex.

In 1987, with the retirement of Fire Chief Everette Brewer and Assistant Chief Jim Sowle, the leadership of the Department once again changed. Deputy Chief Duane Doney was appointed Fire Chief of the Department and Captain Cecil Smith was appointed to the position of Assistant Chief.

Chief Doney directed the development of a Hazardous Materials response unit, the continuation of the Emergency Medical Technicians program, the implementation of a Safety Program for employees, a vigorous smoke detector program, and a public fire education program coupled with an excellent Prevention and Inspection Division. Fire Marshal D.W. Lang was appointed on September 16, 1987. The position of Assistant Fire Marshal was created on February 1, 1988, and Lieutenant Bill Presley was promoted to fill the position. Assistant Fire Marshall Presley also served as the Department's first Safety Officer and also held the position of Public Information Officer.

During the late 1980's Chief Doney initiated continuing medical health physicals for the Department's Hazardous Materials Technicians. At Chief Doney's direction, Training Officer Eldon Henderson developed a comprehensive infectious disease control program, in response to the nationwide epidemic of HIV (AIDS) and HBV (Hepatitis). Chief Doney retired on January 31, 1996, after serving the Department for 28 years.

Assistant Chief Philip Clover was appointed Fire Chief on February 1, 1996, and Captain Darrell Bundy was appointed Assistant Chief. Chief Clover began his fire service career on September 16, 1977, as a Firefighter. During his career Chief Clover has served in the ranks of Firefighter, Driver, Lieutenant, Captain, and Assistant Chief.

Chief Clover, in 1996, expanded on the medical services provided by the Department. All Suppression Division personnel received training in the use of automatic external defibrillators (AED). Following the purchase of six AEDs and after AED certification was completed; the Department received licensing from the Oklahoma State Department of Health as a First Response Agency. In June of 1996, the Oklahoma Emergency Medical Technicians Association selected the Department as the "First Response Agency of The Year".

The firefighters of the Department, to better secure improved wages and benefits, voted to unionize in 1996. A Certificate of Affiliation was issued to Local 3722 on December 4, 1996, by the International Association of Fire Fighters. Local 3722 is also affiliated with the Professional Fire Fighters of Oklahoma. Members of the local have been actively involved in such community based programs as MDA and Christmas In April.

Chief Clover, working with the Enid City Council, Fire Service Training/Oklahoma State University, Autry Tech, Representatives Voskul and O'Neal, Senators Long and Milacek, and Governor Keating, secured a regional firefighter training facility for Northwest Oklahoma. The facility, located southwest of Autry Tech., includes a burn building, training tower/skills building, confined space rescue module, and classrooms. This was the first OSU training center to be constructed off-campus in Oklahoma.

In 1997, The College of Fire Engineering/Oklahoma State University was authorized by Chief Clover to perform a study of the Department. Elements of this study included number and types of emergency calls, location of fire stations in relation to population densities, age and type of equipment, quality of training, manpower levels, and fire prevention services.

The purpose of the study was to improve the total quality of services delivered by the Department. The study also formed the basis of the Department's medium and long range planning objectives for the next few years.

During the summer of 1997, Chief Clover accepted delivery of an Emergency One fire engine as part of the Department's scheduled replacement program. This 1500 GPM pumper replaced a 20 year old Boardman and was assigned to Central Station. In July of 1997, the 1974 American LaFrance 100' aerial ladder truck failed the National Fire Protection Association's required structural integrity certification testing. Chief Clover immediately notified City Manager Bill Gamble, Mayor Mike Cooper, and Commissioners Evelyn Angleton, Jerry Allen, Paul Outhier, Marion Mackey, George Stover and Bill Bickerstaff. The Board of Commissioners declared a public safety emergency. Chief Clover was directed to immediately begin emergency purchasing procedures to secure a new aerial apparatus. On August 29, 1997, Chief Clover accepted delivery of a Pierce 1500 GPM 100' aerial platform. The aerial platform has a 1500 GPM capacity and carries a full complement of ground ladders. The acquisition of this versatile "quint" apparatus dramatically increases the Department's rescue and fire extinguishment capabilities.

Chief Clover received the Oklahoma State Fire Chiefs Association's "Fire Chief of The Year Award" in 1999 and was commended by Governor Keating for this distinction. This prestigious award was in acknowledgement of Chief Clover's accomplishments as a leader in the Oklahoma fire service.

Working with an excellent Prevention and Inspection Division headed by Fire Marshal Sam Schafnitt, and aided by Division personnel, Chief Clover has increased pre-fire planning and inspections. Fire Marshal Schafnitt, assisted by the Fire Inspectors, reviews building plans for new construction and remodels, inspects buildings for code violations, and provides home safety inspections upon request. Monthly building surveys are assigned by the Fire Inspectors and performed by the Suppression Division.

The Suppression Division is the largest division within the Department and is comprised of three shifts, each commanded by a chief officer. Assistant Chief Darrell Bundy is assigned to C-Shift, Deputy Chief Doug Brintnall to B-Shift, and Deputy Chief George Fry to A-Shift. Suppression Division personnel respond to all reported emergencies and are quartered at five fire stations strategically located within the City. All stations are equipped with computers and use incident reporting software and e-mail. Base station radios capable of alerting personnel should the primary alert system fail are also installed.

All Suppression Division personnel are certified as either Emergency Medical Technicians or Emergency Medical First Responders. In addition they are certified as either Hazardous Material Technicians or Hazardous Material First Responders/Operations Level .

Suppression Division personnel are also certified by International Fire Service Accreditation Congress to at least the Firefighter I level. Monthly essential firefighting courses are assigned by the Training Division to maintain basic skill levels. Monthly single company and multi-company exercises are performed to assure that practical skills are maintained. During 2000 over 2,000 hours of training were accomplished.

Specialized courses are also offered such as vehicle extrication, fire cause, arson detection, rope rescue, and wildland firefighting tactics. The Suppression Division performs routine station and facility maintenance as well as participating in public education events and activities.

The Fire Department also includes a modern Mechanics Division under the direction of Master Mechanic Tim Dowers. Master Mechanic Dowers was promoted to this position on February 1, 1998. This Division is responsible for the preventive maintenance and repair of all Department equipment and vehicles. The Division utilizes a computer to evaluate all SCBA regulators and assure their proper operation. Two Assistant Mechanics aid the Master Mechanic.

Training Officer Eldon Henderson directs the Training Division. This Division coordinates all Department training activities, maintains the training, medical, and injury records of all personnel, and is responsible for the fire incident reporting system.

Training Officer Henderson was promoted on October 1, 1988, following the retirement of Training Officer Leland Davis. Training Officer Henderson also presently serves as the Department's Infection Control Officer, Respiratory Protection Officer, and Safety Officer. Additionally, the Training Officer is responsible for the Department's EMS program, and the Department's computer systems and network. The Fire Service Instructors of Oklahoma named Training Officer Henderson "Instructor of The Year" on November 15, 2001.

From its humble beginnings protecting a "land run" community of tents and wooden structures to its current status as protector of a modern city, the Department has continued to set an example for other departments within the State to follow.

A history of dedicated service and a progressive spirit is the legacy left by the many individuals who have faithfully served the Department in protecting the lives and property of the people of Enid. Since the disastrous fire of 1901 that gave birth to the Department, no fire has been allowed to progress to the point that large areas of exposures have become involved. In over 90% of the fire calls made, the fire has been confined to the building of origin.

This is an exemplary record that the Enid Fire Department pledges, to the citizens they protect and serve, to uphold and continue.

