

# False rumour leads to Fire Brigade preservation

A false rumour that the Township of Wilmot was planning to dispose of surplus fire trucks in storage got the ball rolling to 25 years later and a 25th anniversary celebration.

After hearing the rumour, Blain Bechthold organized a meeting of former Baden firefighters who decided to form the Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades (WHFB) and ask the Township of Wilmot to turn over the ownership of the trucks with the intent to preserve them. Slated for restoration were the 1940 Fargo/Bickle pumper, the 1956 International/ American Marsh pumper, the 1936 Bickle pumper, the 1939 GMC/Bickle and the 1879 Chatham steam fire pumper, which was on loan to Doon Heritage Village (now, Waterloo Region Museum in Kitchener).

Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades became incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in August 1996. A lease arrangement was made with Wilmot Township for the former 'Bell' building on Bell Drive, Baden, for the



*Good as new, this 1956 International American Marsh pumper is part of the Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades' collection. Photo courtesy WHFB*

storage of the vehicles. A former portable classroom was purchased and moved to Baden, allowing Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades to display some of their collection of photos, documents and firefighting equipment and uniforms. While there is a host of artifacts that cannot be displayed now, it is the plan to preserve these artifacts and display them in a new building.

WHFB collection includes eight fire trucks (1936 to 1991), a horse drawn hand pumper, a hand drawn hand pumper (both operational), two hand pulled hose reels, firefighting equipment, dress uniforms, documents, photos,

maps and thousands of other fire department related artifacts. WHFB has been searching for a larger more suitable site for the museum.

A 25th anniversary is being planned for 2020 to inform the public of Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades and to ask the public to join or support their efforts, so future Wilmot residents will have this history preserved for their enjoyment and education.

Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades is open year round on Wednesday nights 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday mornings, June to Labour Day weekend, 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

Visit [www.wilmotfiremuseum.com](http://www.wilmotfiremuseum.com) or Facebook –Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades.

*Submitted by: Blain Bechthold the former District Fire Chief of the Baden Fire Station and current treasurer of Wilmot Heritage Fire Brigades).*

