

FIRE DEPARTMENT ★ CENTENNIAL ★

100 YEARS OF VOLUNTEER
SERVICE TO THE GRAFTON COMMUNITY



1896



1958-1973



1973-1996



1996

Grafton Volunteer Fire Department

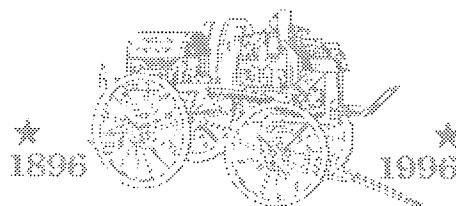
"The History"

It happened in 1896. The exact reason isn't recorded, but it happened in 1896. Was it caused by a rash of fires? Perhaps. Was it prompted by a death or serious injury in a fire? Maybe. The Village of Grafton had incorporated on the third of March. Was that the driving force, since it seemed to be the logical follow-up? We don't know. But, we do know it happened in 1896. The Village of Grafton, and surrounding area finally had a fire department!

The following is based on many hours of reading minutes, gazing at photographs and listening to the recollections of members and former members of the department. The minutes were, in some instances, difficult to decipher due to various handwriting and/or verbal styles. In other instances, they were humorous. Some of these instances have been enclosed within quotation marks in order to share them with the readers.

This, then, is the history of the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed researching and writing it.

Grafton Volunteer Fire Department History Committee



1896

A group of concerned men met on June 26, 1896, in a hall owned by R.E. Schnabel. (The R.E. Schnabel Hall was located on the corner of Eleventh and Bridge, or what is now the rear of the Grafton Bowl building.) A committee was formed to draft a Constitution and By-Laws.

On July 1, 1896, they again met to approve and adopt the Constitution and By-Laws. This, then, was the "birth" of the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department. It was at this meeting, too, that the first officers were elected by the 64 members. They were: William Weber, Chief; Joe Spehn, 1st Asst. Chief; C.C. Doctor, 2nd Asst. Chief; H.N. Krohnke, Secretary; F. Mentz, Treasurer; William Barth, Hose Captain; Andrew Bienlein, Asst. Hose Captain; W. Zimmer, Hook and Ladder Captain; and Otto Just, Asst. Hook and Ladder Captain. (The Chief, William Weber, was the owner of the brewery in Grafton.)

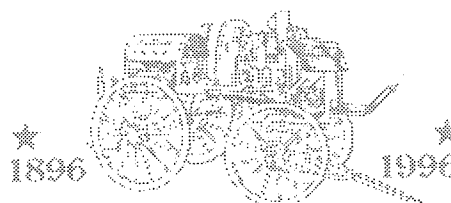
This had to be a very exciting time for the members, what with all the plans and decisions to be made. The uniform would be blue shirt, dark blue regulation cap and red belt with white letters. (At the time, caps cost \$1.79 each while the shirts were \$30.00 per dozen.) Dues would be \$.25 per quarter. The number of spittoons purchased would be six as authorized at the December 11th meeting.

1897

Being only the second year of the new organization, 1897 was again a relatively busy year. At the January 8th meeting, a lengthy discussion was held and several motions were acted upon as to whether the department or the Village should purchase a bell for alerting the firefighters. It was finally resolved that the department would loan money to the Village for the purchase of the bell. It's not recorded in the minutes what the bell cost.

At the February meeting, two fire caps, two pair of rubber boots (size 10), two rubber coats and two pair of gloves were purchased.

March 14, 1897, the department rehearsed for the first time. Two months later, on May 14th, the department joined the Washington and Ozaukee County Firemen's Association by a vote of 19 ayes to 2 nays. On the 28th of May, there was a special meeting held to purchase a "flag and banner of good quality," along with 3 dozen badges, all to be used and worn in a parade in Jackson, on June 20, 1897.



Constitution

Of Grafton Fire Department.

Article I.

The name of this Department shall be Grafton Fire Department. All are members that have signed the constitution and paid the membership fee.

Article II.

The uniform of this company shall be out of

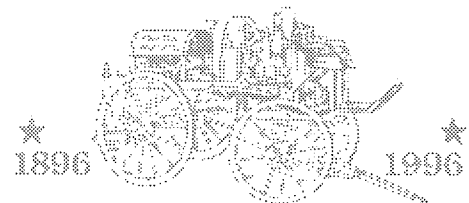
Article III.

The officers of this company shall be one (1) Chief, two (2) assistant chiefs, one (1) Secretary one (1) Treasurer one (1) Hose Captain one (1) assistant Hose Captain one Hook and Ladder Captain one Assistant Hook & Ladder Captain and three (3) Trustees. All officers are elected by the Company for one year by ballot majority of votes rules.

Article IV.

On case of vacancy of officers one will be installed at the next regular meeting to fill such vacancy as may occur by electing by ballot. No one can resign of his position of office with out any good reason.

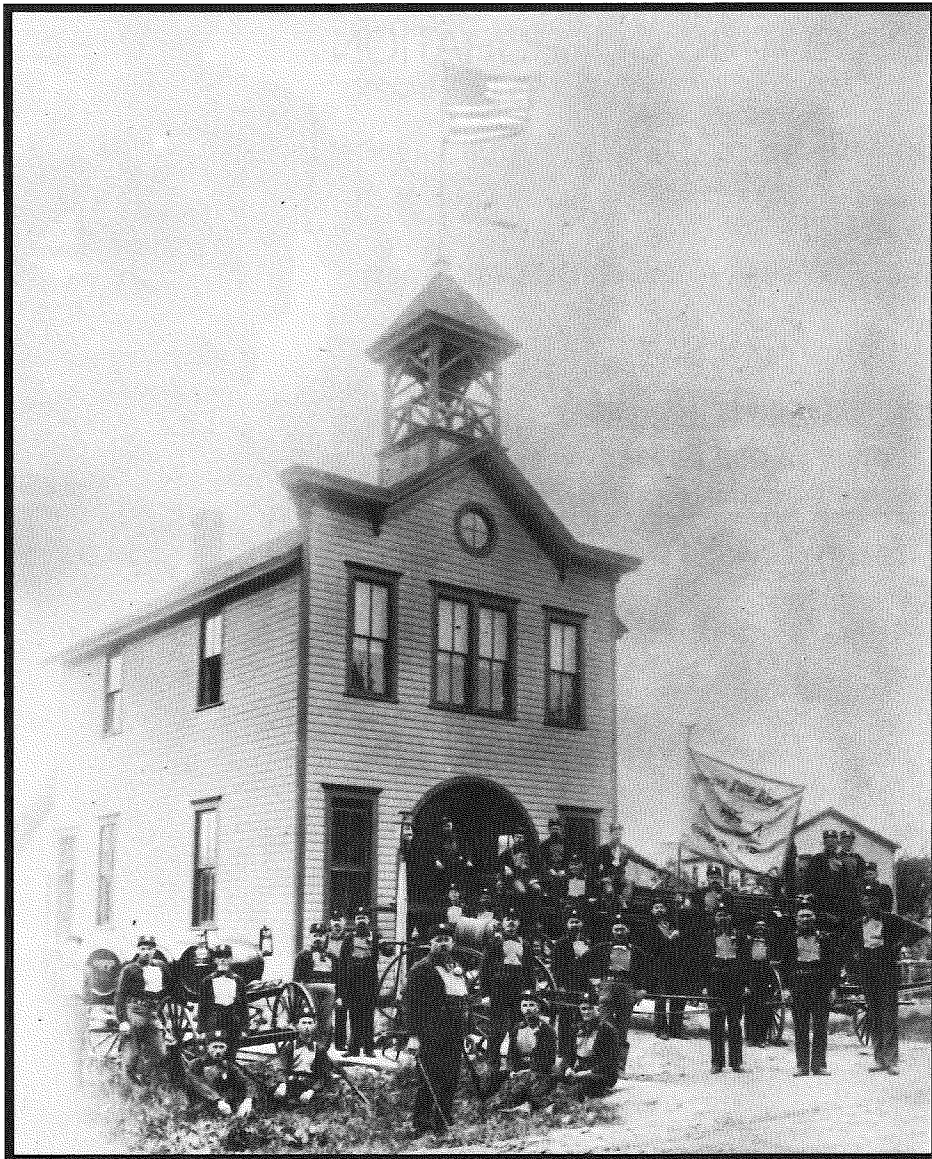
All minutes and records were hand written in the early days. This is the first page of the Constitution adopted by the department on July 1, 1896.



1898

At the meeting on January 14, 1898, Chief Weber reported the Village had agreed to purchase a hook and ladder wagon. At this same meeting, a committee was appointed to receive plans and figures for a chemical wagon. This piece of apparatus was, apparently, extremely important, because when the committee reported back in February that they hadn't had time to investigate the matter, they were discharged. A new committee was appointed and reported at the March meeting that Henry Kohlwey had the low bid of \$42.35. The department authorized the purchase.

On April 8, 1898, Grafton's Hook and Ladder Company was formed. It consisted of 14 men.



Firefighters posed in front of the original firehouse. This firehouse was located south of what is now the parking lot of the Grafton Hotel.

1899

June 18, 1899, saw the Grafton Fire Department hosting its first annual picnic in conjunction with the Washington and Ozaukee County tournaments in Eugene Turner's Park. (This park later became Mill Pond Park and is now Veterans Memorial Park.)

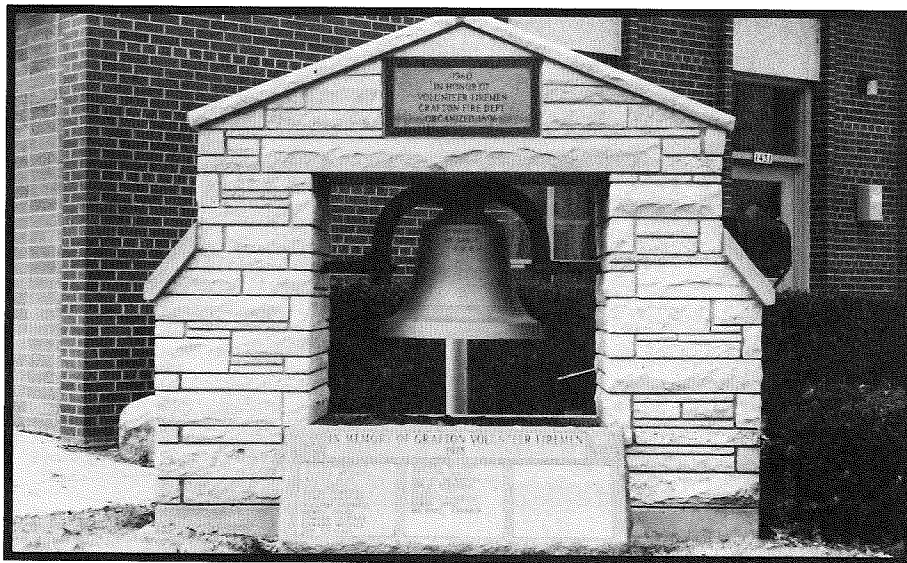
Sometime in 1899, a hook and ladder wagon was purchased and mentioned in conjunction with fees that would be paid for hauling equipment to the fire scenes. The department didn't own any horses. Therefore, the following was set forth. "\$4.00 to the 1st team of horses that hooks on to the Hook and Ladder Wagon with chemical and engine attached. \$1.00 to the next team of horses reported at the fire house. \$2.00 to the first horse to take out the Chemical Barrels Wagon. Teams taking out the apparatus must take the same back to the engine house after the fire."

1900

It's not clear what may have transpired between the December, 1899 meeting and the January, 1900 meeting. However, at the January meeting, it was resolved, "That the second team of horses had to arrive in a reasonable time after the first, in order to secure the second price."

At the February meeting, it was resolved to purchase a Stooling Fire Bell weighing between 300 and 350 lbs. A 350 lb. bell was ordered from a foundry in Missouri. The price of the bell was \$.25 per pound.

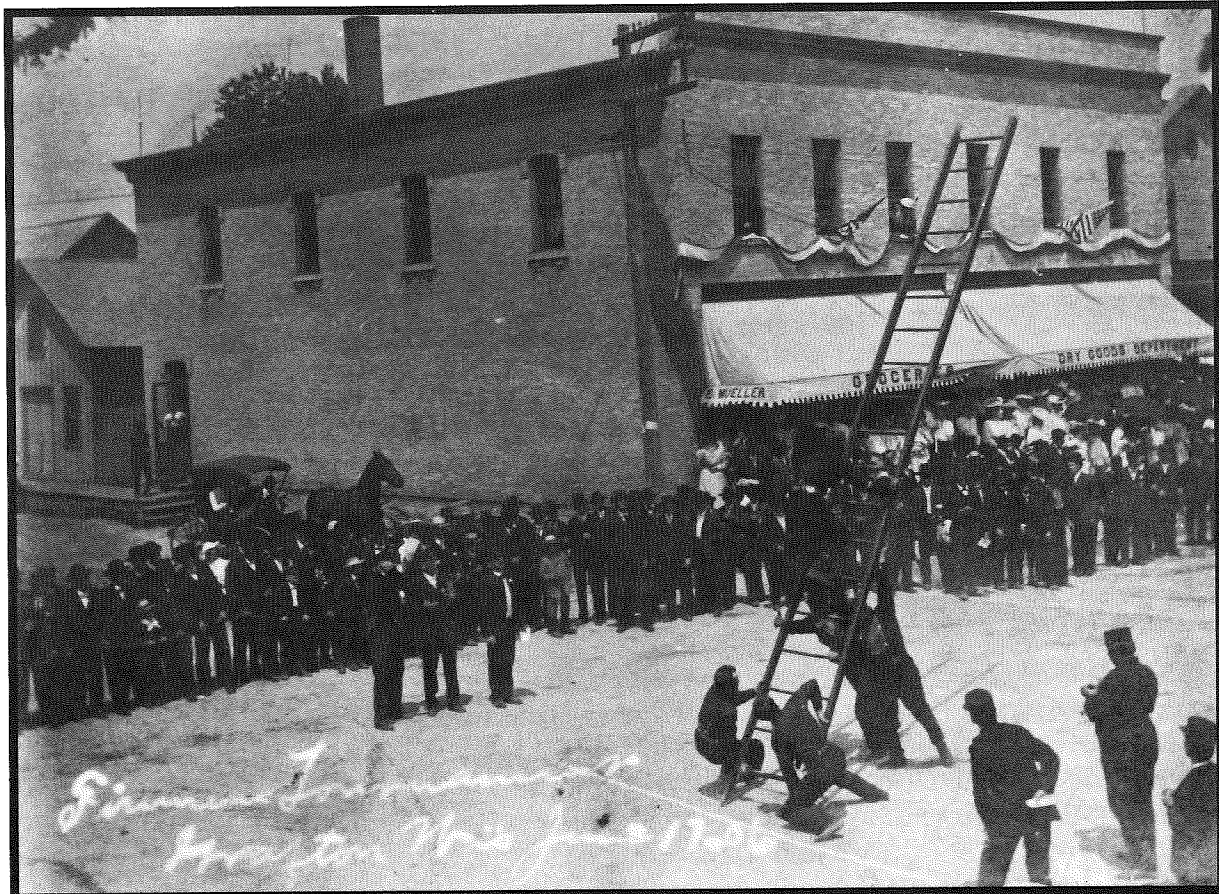
At the May meeting, it was reported that the total price for the bell was \$92.75 less freight of \$1.83, bringing the price to \$90.92. (This bell may currently be viewed in front of the Fire Station.)



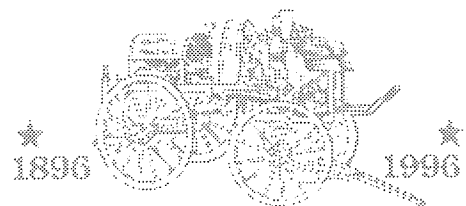
1906

In June, Grafton hosted the Washington, Ozaukee and Northern Milwaukee Firemen's Tournament. These tournaments consisted of events such as one man coupling contests, one man climbing contests and free-for-all races. (It's not known what a free-for-all race may have been.)

The minutes of July 13, 1906, reported that the total expenditures for the previous year were \$38.05. Today it costs much more than that just for the trucks to leave the station for a single alarm.



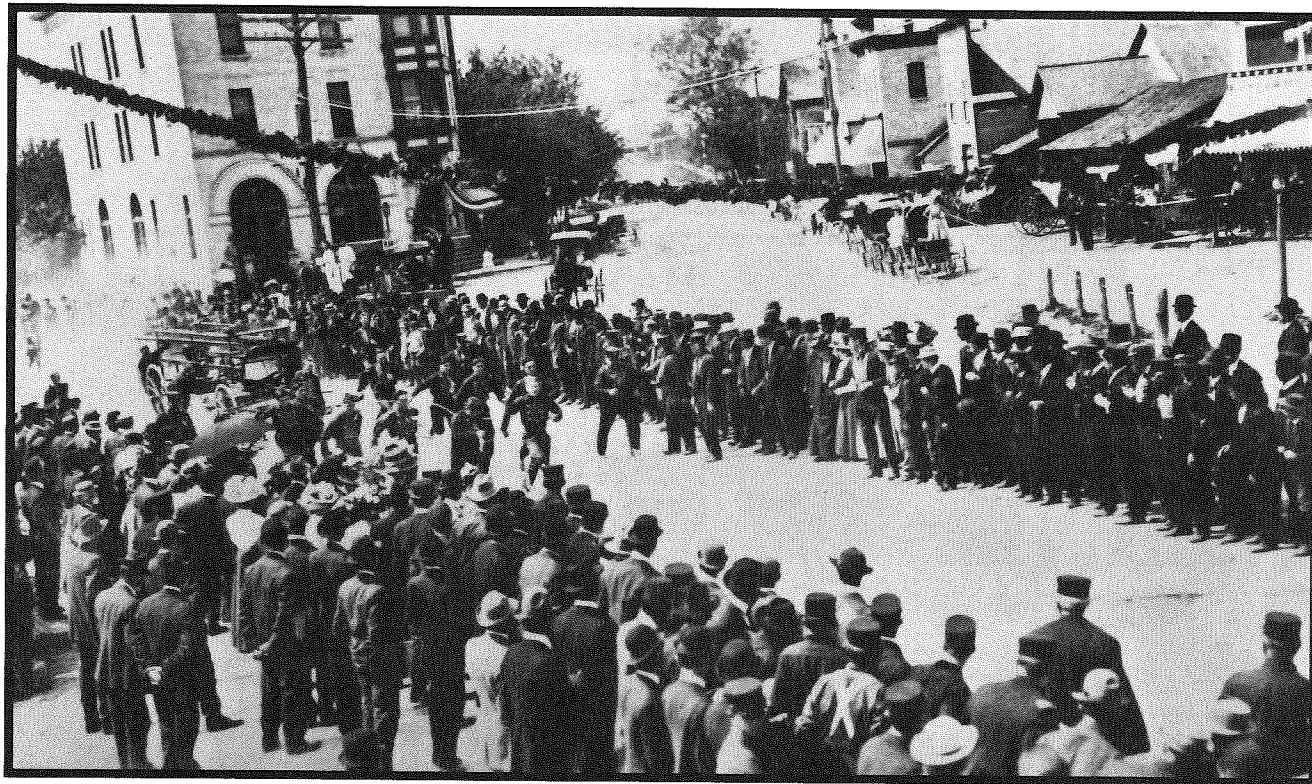
One of the contests in the 1906 Firemen's Tournament was the church raise. It is so called because it is used when there is no wall support for a ladder. This photo was taken at the corner of Twelfth Avenue and Bridge Street.



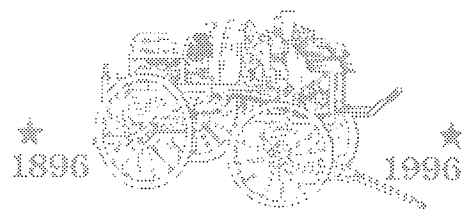
1908

Sometime in late 1907, or early 1908, the department realized the need for a hose cart. At the February meeting, a committee was formed to either purchase a hose cart or remodel the bandwagon.

In March, it was resolved to have Allen Mfg. Co. build a new hose cart for the price of \$107.50. The department also decided to dispose of the bandwagon. It was at the March meeting also that a revised Constitution was adopted.



The crowd is watching firefighters pulling a hook and ladder wagon in the 1908 Firemen's Tournament. Note the view south on what is now Wisconsin Avenue.

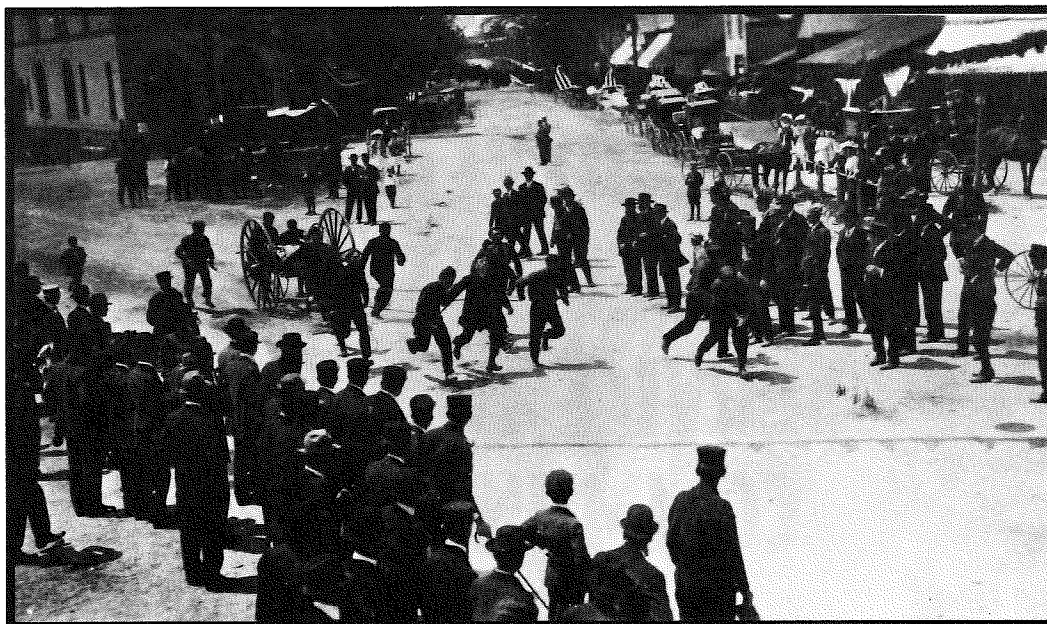


1909

A fire at St. Joseph Church was reported on at the December meeting. It was caused by an overheated furnace and resulted in \$200.00 damage. In December of this year, a new "Neck Yoke" was purchased for \$1.35.



This race between horse drawn fire engines in the 1910 Firemen's Tournament used the same route that is used today for virtually all fire calls on the north end of the village. The flag pole in the left background was the firehouse.



Here, firefighters are pulling a hose cart in a race during the 1910 Firemen's Tournament. The view is looking south on what is now Wisconsin Avenue.

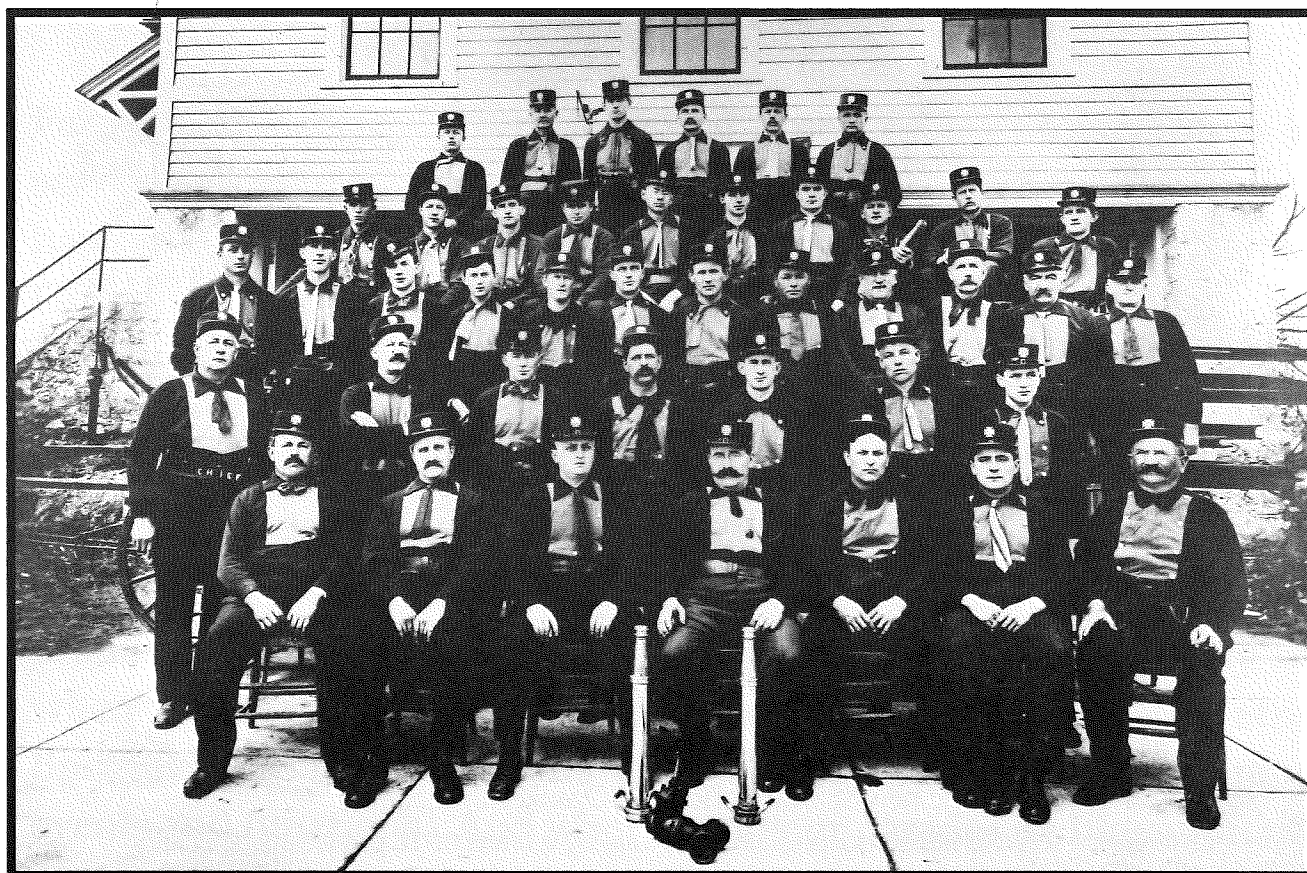


In this 1909 photograph, the firefighters are pulling a hose cart west on Bridge Street. The Grafton Woolen Mill can be seen in the distance.



1911

The earliest photo of the department membership was taken on May 30th. (The date shown on the photo is April 11, 1911.) Each fireman was to be in uniform for the photo. The February minutes read that the clerk was to "notify each and every good standing member at least one week in advance by postal card."



This 1911 photo is the first taken of the department. The members shown here are:

Front Row: Nick Hollrith, Martin Blank, Charles Melkers, Louis Spehn, John Tiegs, Charles Rilling, Henry Vey

Second Row: Chief William Weber, Joseph Niesen, Clem Tillman, Sr., Wechter, George Habich, Sr., Gustav Clausing, William Vey

Third Row: Henry Wegner, Herman Wegner, Al Schiltz, William Hilgart, Andrew Habich, Adolph Pleger, Otto Frymuth, Oscar Spehn, Andrew Schiltz, Valentine Hartman, Robert Schnabel, Ed Mueller

Fourth Row: Charles Tillman, Charles Wegner, John Woltring, Walter Heuer, Louis Neuhouse, Robert Zahn, William Aberwald, Otto Just, Lambert Van Langen, William Roebken

Back Row: Nick Shanen, Charles Tierman, William Hinz, Fred Mintzlaff, Matthew Hollrith, Sr., Ernest Clausing



1912

At a March meeting, there was a discussion regarding the water supply and apparatus. It was decided that both were inadequate and that the chief should call it to the attention of the Village Board. Also at this meeting, the department received a check in the amount of \$15.00 from the Saukville Fire Department and a letter of thanks for assistance at one of their fires. This money was divided equally among the "three owners of the teams who took the apparatus to the Saukville Fire." (These were teams of horses.)

1913

In April, it was moved to purchase a new fire whistle, possibly steam, to be installed at Weber's Brewery. The purchase was made in May at the cost of \$24.00. (The brewery was located on the east side of Twelfth Avenue between Spring and North Streets.)

1914

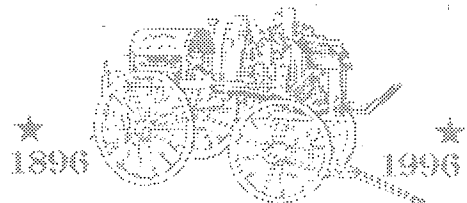
In January, it was moved that the fire inspector was to be compensated \$.30 per hour to inspect and make reports. An annual salary of \$10.00 was allowed to the Secretary at the July meeting. The department attended picnics at Random Lake on July 12, and Saukville on August 2 and 14. All members who attended in uniform were allowed \$2.00 out of the funds of the department.

1915

Apparently the water shortage for fighting fires hadn't been resolved. A committee was formed to meet with the council regarding the construction of a cistern in the northern part of the village.

In July, the minutes report that, "It was moved and seconded that each member participating in a fire or rehearsal, assisting at stringing up the hose in tower or taking same down, etc. be allowed \$.25 per hour out of the treasury till the fund received from the state as 2% insurance premium is exhausted when application shall be made to the village board."

In November, Chief Weber reported on a fire at Schanen's Saloon. The extent of the damage is not known. However, twelve men were paid for 2 hours at \$.25 per hour.



1916

In July, the annual salary for the Chief was set at \$20.00. The annual picnic showed receipts of \$389.14 and disbursements of \$284.65 for a profit of \$104.49.

1918

At the June meeting, the Secretary was instructed to correspond with neighboring departments in order to form an association. This seems to be the first mention of mutual aid. The departments contacted were Thiensville, Saukville, Newburg, Belgium, Random Lake, Port Washington and Waubeka.

1919

August of this year saw the department rejoining the Badger Firemen's Association.

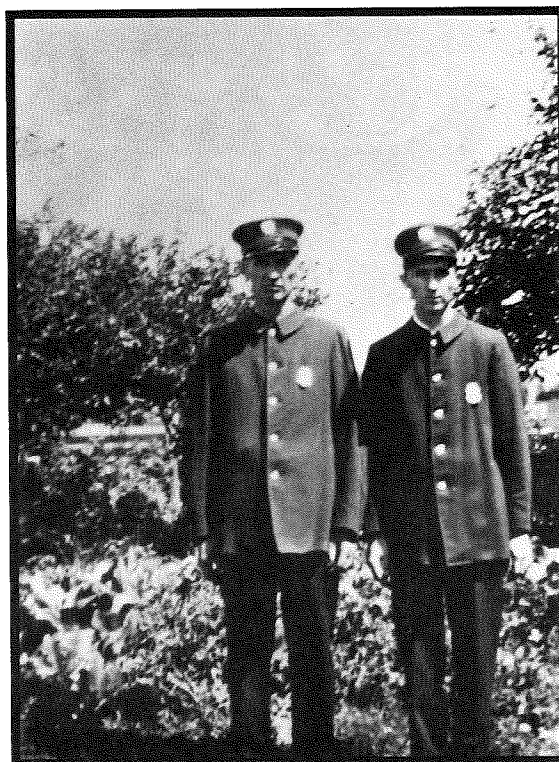
1920

At the December meeting, "It was unanimously agreed the Fire Company at its next rehearsal flood the ice and prepare skating for the young people."

1921

On March 6th, the department held a card party for which the proceeds would be set aside as a fund for suits. The department would buy the coats and the members pay for the rest of the suit. At the November meeting, it was resolved that it was the duty of each member to provide himself a navy blue regulation cap and a navy blue coat. The member paid \$5.00 toward the cost of the coat and the department paid the balance. After three years of "faithful service", the member was reimbursed the \$5.00.

Also in November, there was a fire at E. Clausung & Sons. (Located on the northwest corner of Twelfth and Washington.) It was apparently fairly sizeable as the departments from Saukville, Cedarburg and Port Washington were called in to assist. \$35.00 was sent to them for their assistance.



The new uniforms worn in 1921 are modeled by John Woltring, on the left, and his son Elroy.

1922

In June, the Grafton Military Band hosted a community dance with the proceeds of \$85.35 going to the fire department.

In July of this year, the Grafton Fire Department hosted the Badger Firemen's Tournament. The department showed a net profit of \$955.91 from this tournament.

Also in July, the chief's salary was increased to \$50.00 per year. The first mention of an electric siren was in November of this year.

1923

In January, it was decided that the cost of electricity, phone lines and the complete siren system was too expensive for the members at that time.

In February, the chief was instructed to purchase three dozen pair of wool mittens and a helmet for the driver of the "Fire Engine Truck."

1924

Something goes unexplained in the minutes this year. In July, Henry Wegner was elected chief. He chaired no meetings. In August, he was appointed to a committee to approach William Weber to be chief again. And, at the September meeting, Mr. Weber accepted.

In the October minutes, it's reported the Jungers Stove and Range Company had a fire. (It was located on Eleventh Avenue.)



This photo was taken after the Schanen Hotel fire on January 18, 1924. The building burned again exactly 40 years later.

1925

In October of this year, the department asked for, and received, permission from the Village to take the engine out of the village for fires in surrounding towns.

1926

In October, the fire zone was extended (limits to be decided later). "And that all beyond the present limits and within the new limits be taxed \$15.00 for every five years of protection. Those not members being without protection. All those outside said territory be taxed \$75.00 for driving out and \$25.00 per hr. for service after the first hr."

1930

The Gilbert Shoe Factory had a fire. (Located in Thiensville.)



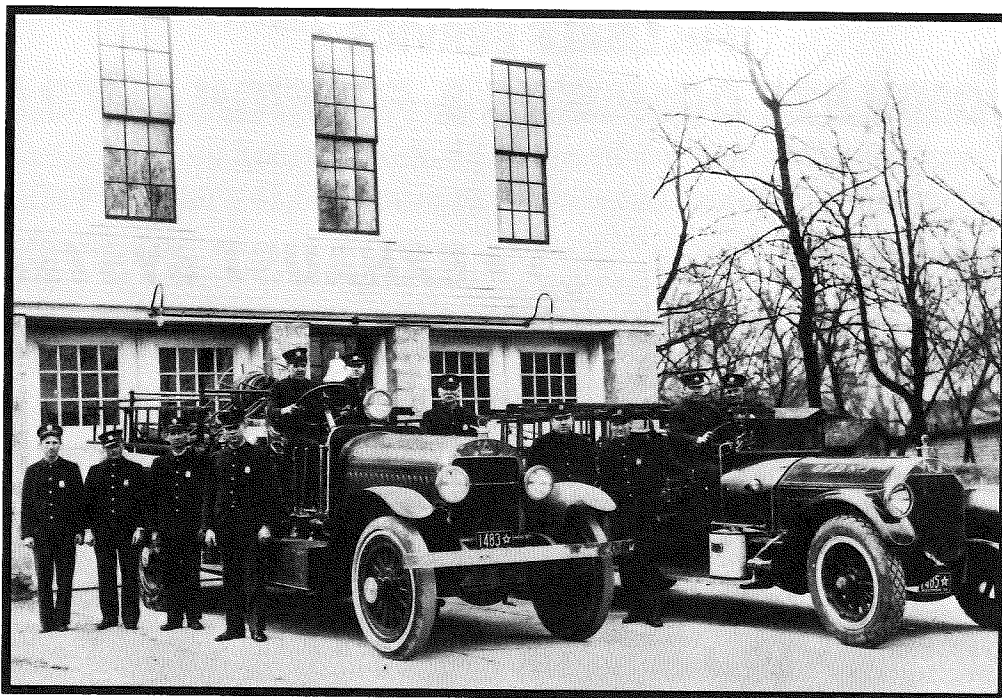
This is the Grafton Fire Department's 1930 racing team. These were the men that pulled the hook and ladder wagon and hose cart in the tournament races.

1933

The rate for fire service to the town was raised and set at \$100.00 per fire or \$750.00 for the year. Also, in December, the department reported receipts of \$131.05 from a minstrel show.

1934

Fires at Jungers' and School District #4 were discussed at the March meeting.



Here are Grafton's first two motorized fire engines. On the left is a Stutz, and on the right is a Pierce Arrow.

1937

In November, the department billed the Town of Mequon \$100.00 for a fire at Albert Peters'. They also billed \$100.00 for the Sander's fire. Then, in December, they donated profits from a dance to the "basketball boys uniforms or jackets."



1938

Signs were purchased to restrict parking in front of fire hydrants.



These firefighters were rightfully proud of their new 1938 International-Harvester tanker truck.

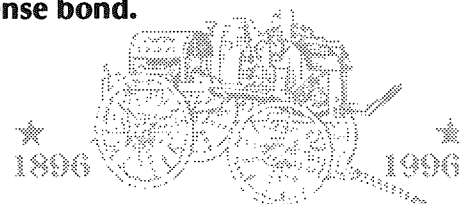
1939

As another public service, the department watered Ben Grob's lawn at a July rehearsal. In August, Roy Harms joined the department. Killed in action during World War II, he was later honored when his name was added to that of the legion post to form Rose-Harms Post 355.

1941

An indoor lavatory was installed at the firehouse in September. In November, the department showed a net profit of \$993.38 from the annual firemen's picnic. Also, at this meeting, it was decided to have rehearsals on the first and third Thursdays of each month, as they are today.

At the December meeting, just five days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the department spent \$740.00 to purchase a \$1,000.00 defense bond.



1942

In April and May, some first aid equipment was purchased. It consisted of 2 arm splints, 2 leg splints and a stretcher.

In June, the department published a notice in the county paper about parking cars at fire scenes. At the same time, extra deputies were put on to penalize anyone parking within 500 feet of a fire.

At the July meeting, it was decided that anyone missing three consecutive meetings or rehearsals was automatically out as an active member. Two Indian pumpers at \$18.00 and one siren at \$7.95 were purchased. The siren was for the equipment truck. The net profit for the annual firemen's picnic went over \$1,000.00 for the first time this year.

1943

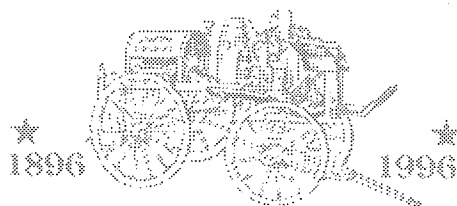
World War II and rationing were in everyone's thoughts. Because of this, a committee was appointed in May to find out if meat rationing points would be available for the meat and other food for the upcoming picnic. Even though the sale of picnic tickets was discontinued, there was a picnic on July 24th and 25th. \$1,470.97 was raised at the picnic. \$740.00 of the picnic profits were used to purchase a \$1,000.00 war bond. Also this year, \$31.86, belonging to the 1942 running team, was deposited in the general checking account, "to be withdrawn after the war for a party and refreshments."

1944

World War II was still being fought, and the department once again assisted by purchasing another \$1,000.00 war bond. Rationing, caused by the war, was still ever present, as the department had to "apply" for two tires for the panel truck.

1946

At the September meeting, the following bills were allowed: Electric Service Bill, \$5.80; Schanen's Tavern, \$3.00; The General Detroit Corp., \$3.80. At the same meeting, it was announced that the picnic showed a preliminary profit of \$4,000.00. It was announced at the December meeting that the department would receive \$1,000.00 per year from the village. A bill was sent to the Town of Grafton in the amount of \$150.00 for a fire call.



1947

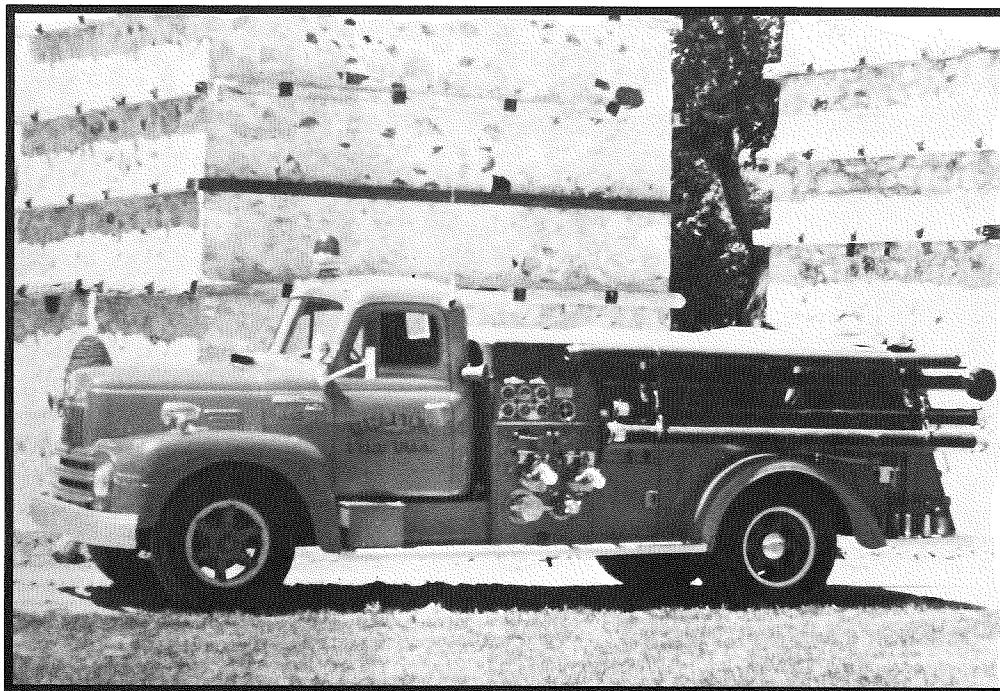
The department purchased 500' of 2-1/2" hose, "coupled on 50' lengths, at a cost of \$1.58 per foot." During this time, organizations could apply for, and receive, a liquor license for their picnics in the village parks. The profits from the picnic dropped to \$2,820.71 this year. In October, a 36' wooden ladder was purchased.

1948

A new fire truck (pumper) was purchased for \$10,000.00. It was announced in July that the department would receive \$600.00 per year from the Town of Grafton. In addition to that, they would receive \$100.00 per call, after the fourth call of the year.

1950

A letter was sent to the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad in September to advise them that twenty men and three trucks answered the alarm at Highway C and the tracks in the Town of Mequon. In November, a bill was sent to the railroad in the amount of \$100.00. Charges for fire calls on the highways was set at \$50.00 for under one hour and \$100.00 for an hour or more. This was requested by the Town Chairman at the December meeting.



This 1950 International-Harvester featured a 500 GPM pump.

1951

A committee was appointed in June to purchase a hose dryer. In December, the department continued to purchase more of the equipment that was needed to fight fires, including two dozen pair of wool mittens, one dozen pair of plastic mittens and one smoke mask.

1952

An alarm box was installed at the firehouse in January. In May, the department purchased one 10 pound CO2 fire extinguisher and two new face pieces for the gas masks. Three dozen folding chairs with padded seats were purchased in July. The picnic showed profits of \$4,302.04 this year.

1953

A bill in the amount of \$660.00 was sent to Port Washington in December. There had been a fire at Smith Brothers'. This amount was based on the department having sent 38 men for 5 hours, 2 pieces of equipment for 5 hours and one piece of equipment for 4 hours. It was at this December meeting that a standard fee of \$2.00 an hour for each man and \$20.00 per hour for each piece of equipment was established.

1954

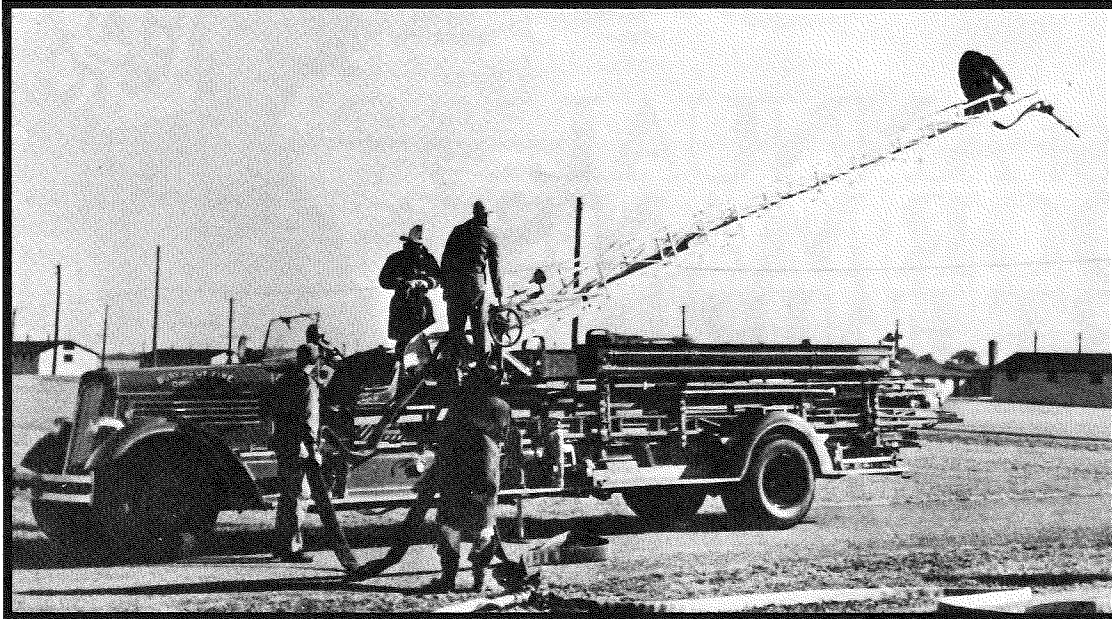
There must have been some discussion about the members who helped at the Smith Brothers' fire being paid, because at the March meeting it was decided that "this is a volunteer department and to keep it as such." A committee of five was appointed in December to meet with members of the Milwaukee Fire Department to study our need for an aerial ladder.



1955

A new siren, an STL 10 horsepower 220/440 volt 3 phase, was purchased. At the same time, a new push button siren switch was installed at Wegner-Hinz Co.

1957



This 1947 Mack ladder truck was purchased from Dover, Delaware. It was the first ladder truck in Ozaukee County.

An ordinance was passed in March that fined any person that "started a fire and was unable to control such."

In April of this year, the first aerial ladder truck in Ozaukee County was purchased. This 1938 truck, originally manufactured by Mack Truck Company, was purchased from Dover, Delaware and delivered in November, at a cost of \$6,500.00. Several members volunteered to travel to Dover in order to drive the truck back. It was decided, however, to hire an outside company to deliver (drive) it to Grafton. This, as it turned out, was a wise decision. Not only did the truck have an open cab (remember, it's November), but it developed engine trouble in Pennsylvania. After repairs, it ultimately arrived in Grafton. The ladder was raised and lowered hydraulically, but the turntable was operated manually. One firefighter recalled that the truck had "more axes and ladders than the rest of the department."

A typewriter was purchased for \$35.00 in November.

1959

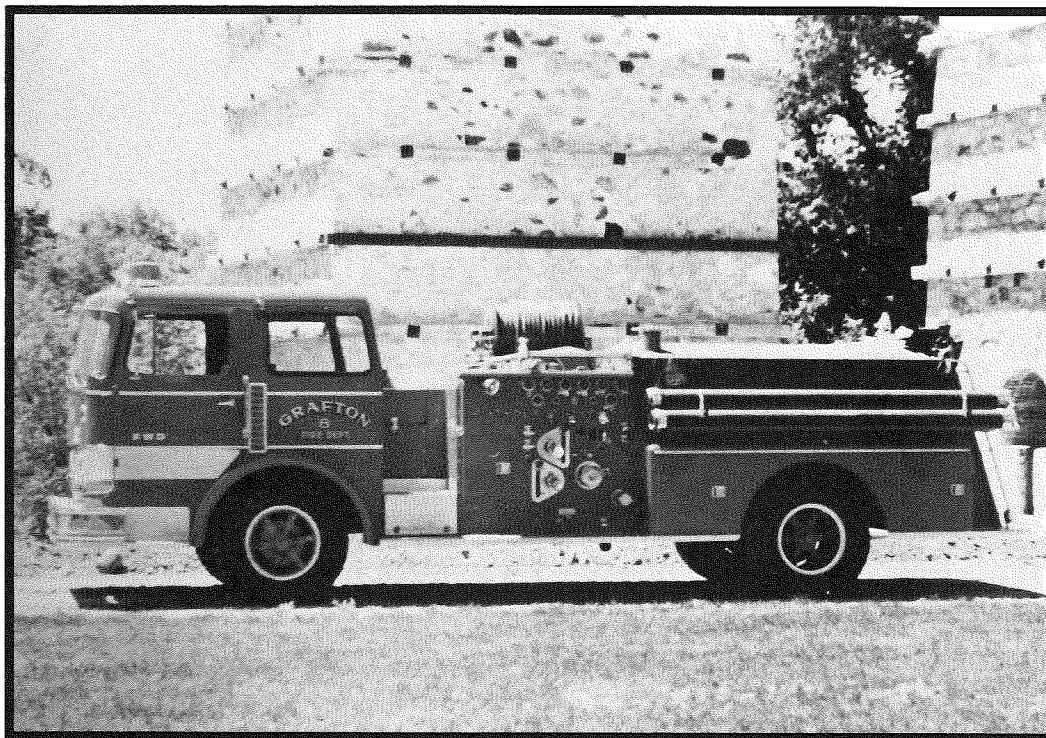
In October, it was decided that three blasts on the fire whistle would be for the rescue squad. Also this month, 227 children toured the fire house during Fire Prevention Week. In December, the monument that stands in front of the fire house was designed. It includes the old fire bell that was purchased in 1900.

1960

The Stutz truck was sold in January to a Sheboygan real estate man for \$780.00, and in June a new truck was ordered from FWD for \$18,842.00. A 1,000 gallon per minute pumper, it was to be delivered in January of 1961. The picnic in August grossed over \$11,000.00.

Apparently, the rescue members were being called by phone for night calls, because in September, Chief Wegner reported the siren would be used at night only if rescue members could not be reached by individual phone calls.

Fires in December of this year were a chimney fire, a grass fire at Twelfth and Falls and a farm tractor fire on Highway 57, north of Grafton.



1960 FWD, 1,000 gallon pumper.

1961

In May, the need of a stretcher for the rescue squad was discussed. It was decided at the June meeting that there was no need for a stretcher until there was a vehicle to carry victims. At the same meeting it was decided that the official department necktie would be black.

In July, there was a fire at Schmit's Cabins. (Schmit's cabins were located south of what is now McCormick's II. At the time, that building was Schmit's Pavilion.) The fire was extinguished by the owners. There were some personal injuries as a result of the fire. In August, the department purchased 12 new coats and 12 new pair of boots.

In October, the department cashed in its last \$1,000.00 war bond, because it was no longer paying interest.

1962

As in all organizations, such as the fire department, all purchases must be approved by the membership. That's why this year it is seen in January, the purchase of a coffee pot and in August, the purchase of an ambulance-type vehicle.

A "fire phone" was installed at Norm Bulgrin's home. At the time, he shared responsibility for answering the fire phones with Wegner-Hintz Garage, Schanen's Grafton Bowl, and Jeannie Schanen. There was someone at one of these locations at all times.

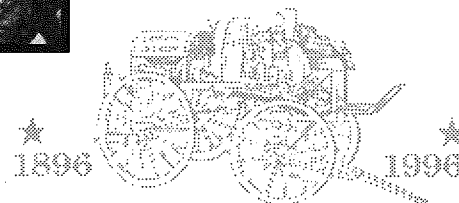
A radio was ordered for the new rescue vehicle in November. Also at this meeting, the charges for rescue transportation were set. They were \$10.00 for Grafton Village and Town residents and \$15.00 for non-residents.

1963

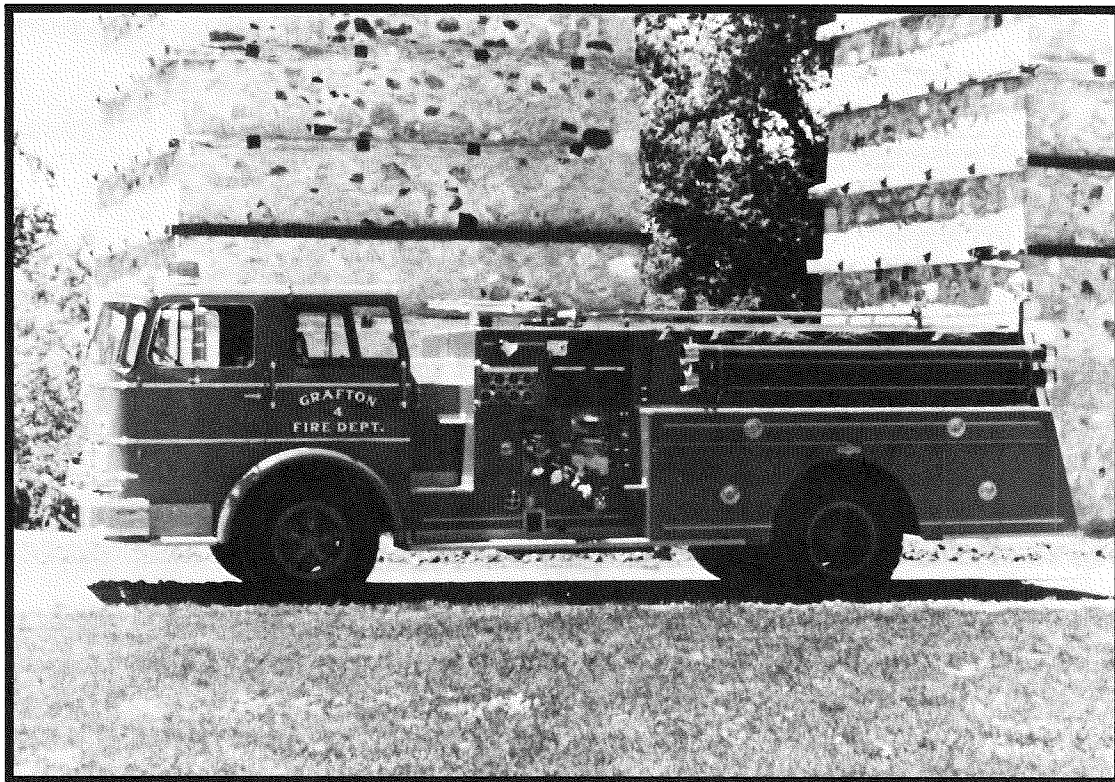


A formal photograph of the department was taken in January. The rescue squad made a major purchase in April of this year. It was the department's first Resusci-Anne. This, of course, is the tool used for learning and practicing CPR. In May of this year, three new sirens for alerting members were also purchased.

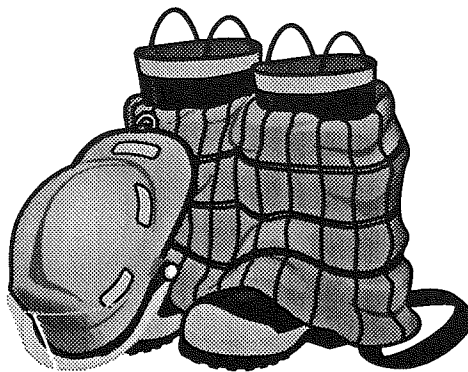
The late Arthur Fiedler, Boston Pops conductor and fire engine buff, sits behind the wheel of Grafton's ladder truck during a 1963 visit. Beside him is Ralph Zaun.



In September, a new pumper arrived. It was to become #4 (later 864) and cost \$23,500.00. It carried 1,000 gallons of water and pumped 750 gallons per minute. It would later be the last red truck the department owned. Also in this year, it was decided to provide complimentary rescue services at athletic events in the village and town. There were plans in the making for an addition to the fire station. In December, ten yellow and two white coats were purchased for \$27.00 each. Also purchased were 12 pair of boots and 12 helmets, as well as splints for the rescue squad.

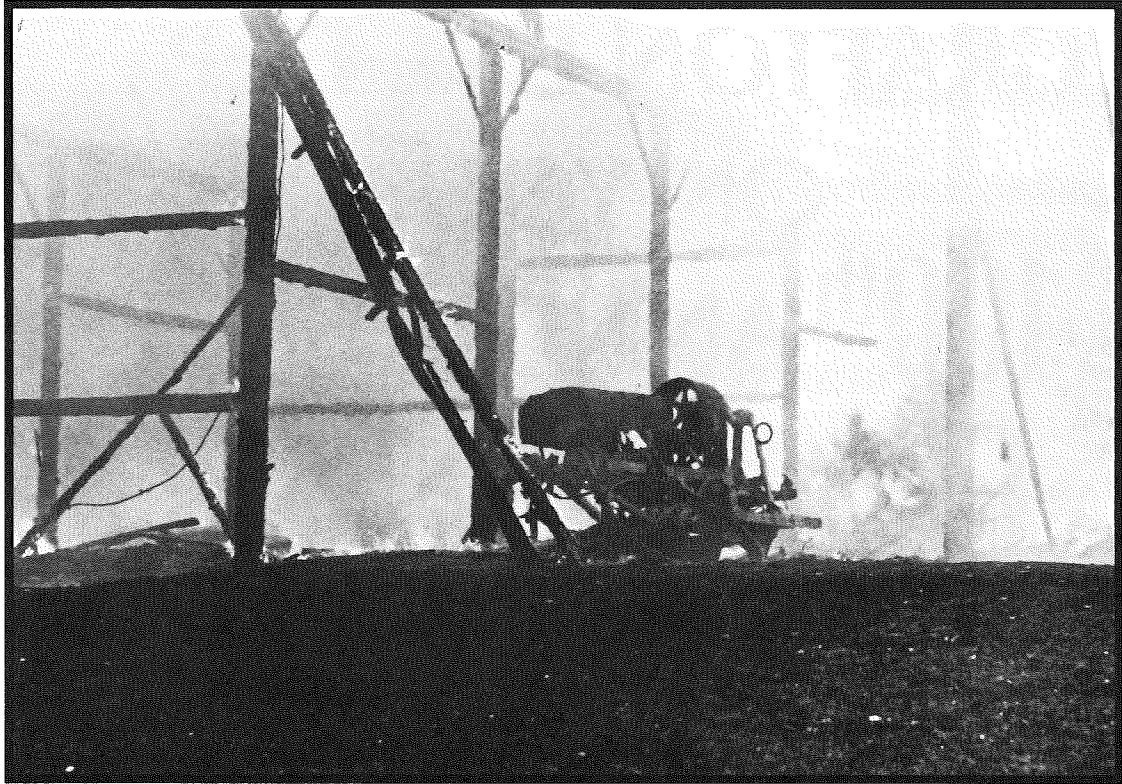


This 1965 International-Harvester engine could pump 750 GPM from its 1,000 gallon tank.



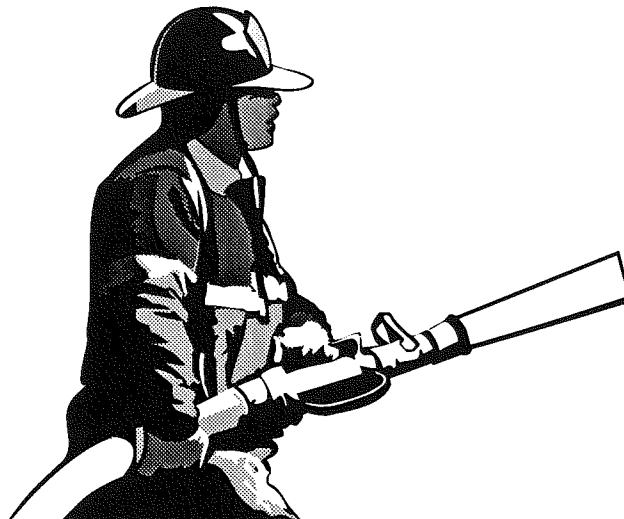
1966

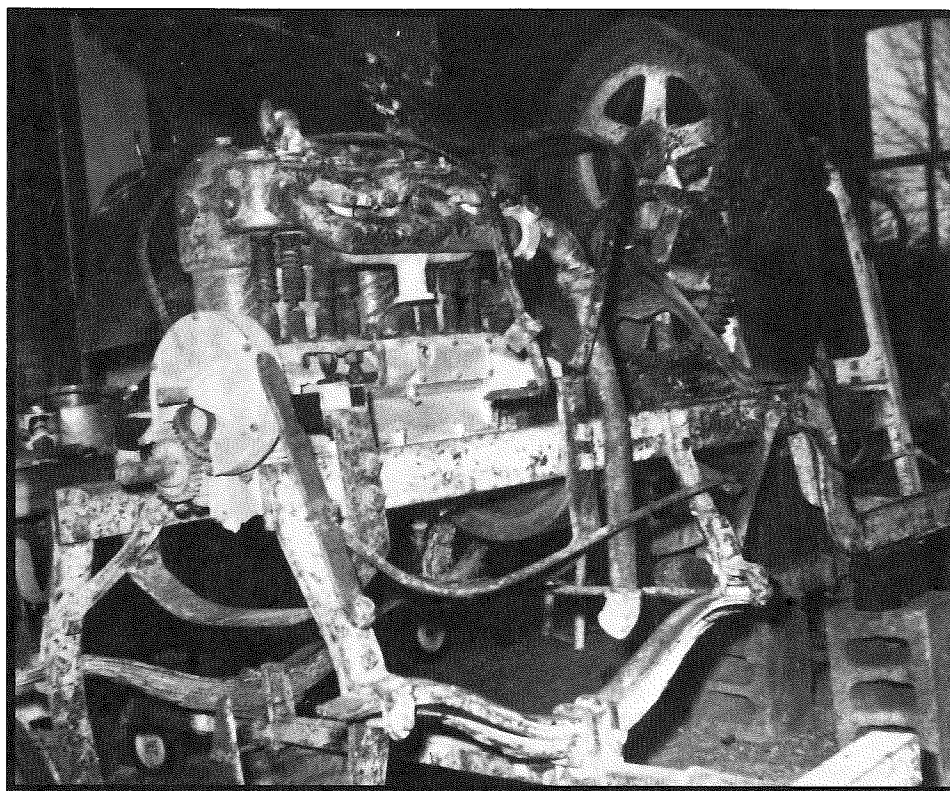
An 1,800 square foot addition was approved for the police and fire station. At the time, both the police and fire departments shared what is now the fire station. This year marked the end of the annual firemen's picnic.



Through the smoke of the White barn is seen the department's horse drawn fire engine.

The department stored all of its memorabilia in a barn on Highway D owned by the White family. In 1967 the barn burned to the ground. All memorabilia, except the department's original horse drawn fire engine, were lost. The engine was in shambles. In 1968 the engine was restored.

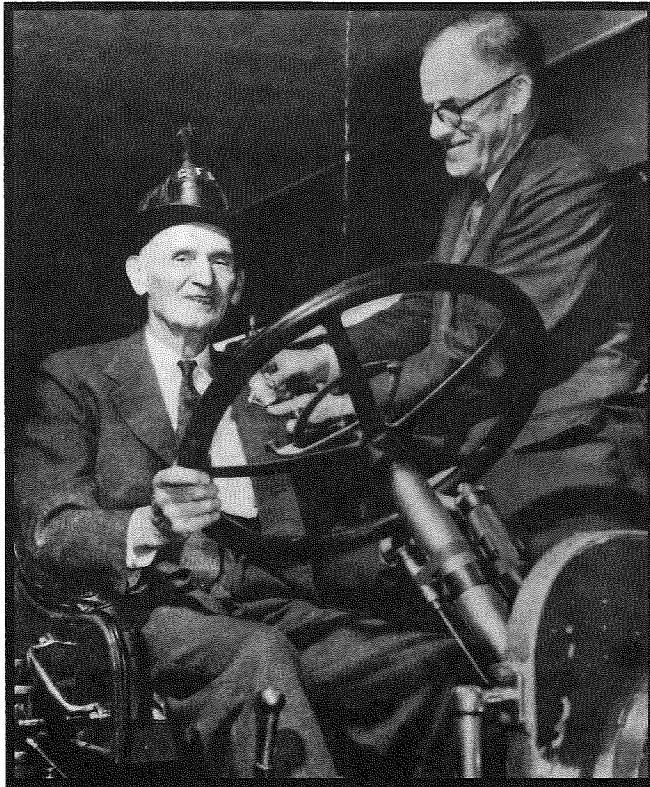




Much of the fire engine was burned or melted. This is a close-up of the actual engine.



Ray Tiegs, of the department, has spent many hours restoring the engine to its original shape.



1968

In March of this year, John Woltring was presented with a plaque honoring his 60 years of service with the department. (Mr. Woltring's granddaughter, Carla Jaffke, is currently a member of the department.)

Behind the wheel of the 1923 Stutz fire engine is John Woltring. He's being honored for 60 years of service with the Grafton Fire Department. Doing the honors is John Long.

1970

This year brought a new Seagrave 100 foot aerial ladder truck to the department. The trucks and engines were still red at that time.



This Seagrave 100 foot ladder truck, originally red, was repowered and painted lime-yellow in 1979.

1972

In January, it was decided that the most active members be issued their own firefighting boots, coat, and helmet. Until that time, they would take whatever was hanging on the trucks. This, of course, meant the turnout gear was shared by all, making it difficult to find gear at times.

June and August of this year saw the department modernize its communications. Five hand held radios, at the cost of \$2,300.00 were put into use in June, while August saw electronic pagers issued to the firefighters. Now, they could be alerted to an emergency 24 hours a day, as long as they were within a few miles of Grafton.

1973

In February, Allen (Skip) Eemisse and Harvey Holzer designed a new patch/emblem, for the department. It was approved and worn as part of the uniform through 1995.

July brought new short sleeve white dress shirts to replace the long sleeve blue shirts that had been worn for a number of years. The United States flag on the right sleeve became a part of the uniform.



1974

This was the year the department purchased its first lime - yellow fire engine. It has been proven to be more visible than the traditional red. This color, which the department still uses, has caused some good natured ribbing around the area. Those that have stayed with the traditional red, say, "The Grafton trucks should be left in the sun to ripen." The Grafton firefighters, of course, wonder when the red "primed" engines are going to get their finish coat of paint.



The 1974 Pierce 1500 GPM pumper shown here was Grafton's first lime-yellow engine.

1975

Fires at the Nancy Lynn Farm and the Badger Worsted Mills were reported at the April meeting. The fire at the farm caused the deaths of several horses.

This was also the year the Milwaukee River overflowed its banks on Palm Sunday. The department members worked alongside the citizens of the community, filling, delivering and stacking sandbags. It was backbreaking work. Stern's Sentry store donated sandwiches for all the workers.

The department needed to purchase a new rescue squad. There were several fund raisers during the year. A dance was held at Circle B. Ben Grob donated a parcel of land at Thirteenth and Broad Street to the department, which was then sold. The rescue squad was purchased at the cost of \$23,637.00.

1978

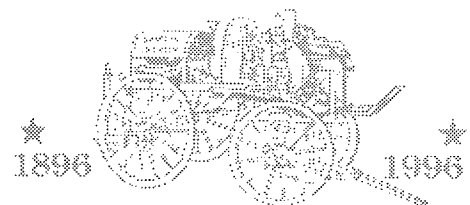
February of this year saw a committee formed to study the feasibility of a 9-1-1 system. In March, the department ordered its first "Jaws of Life." Unfortunately, the delivery was delayed due to a coal strike. In November, it was decided to put a diesel engine into the aerial, and at the same time, have it painted lime-yellow.

In August, the department received new 863. It had a top-mounted pump panel to give the engineer a better view of the fire scene. It was a new design, and when personnel from the New York City Fire Department saw it at Pierce, they immediately ordered several for their department.



This 1978 Pierce 1,500 GPM pumper featured a top-mounted pump panel. One of the first of its kind, it was copied by the New York City Fire Department.

This year brought great sadness to the department. On July 15, Timothy A. Schrameyer was killed in the line of duty while responding to a fire call that turned out to be a false alarm.

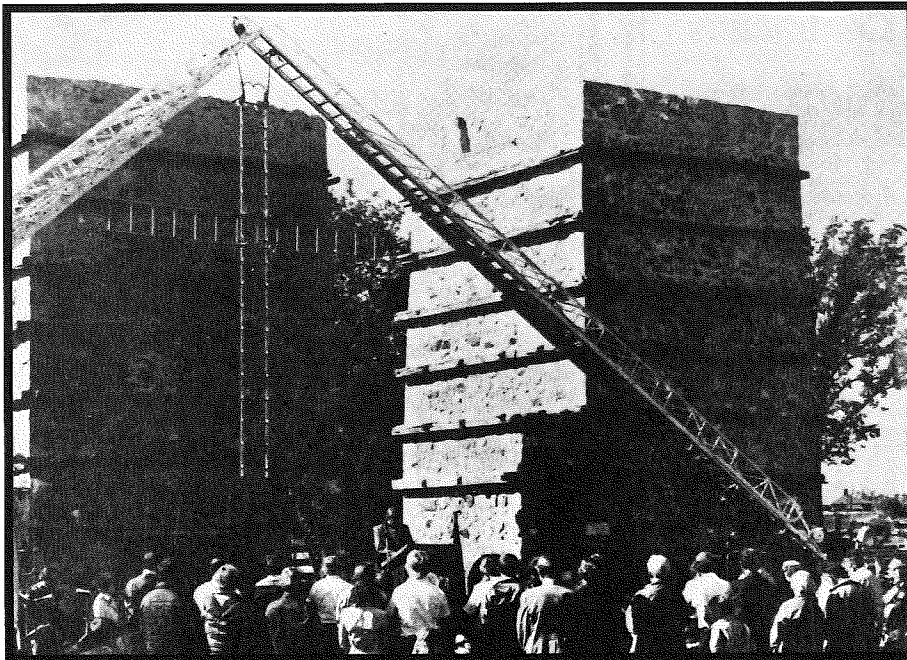




Timothy A. Schrameyer (10/16/56 - 7/15/78)

1979

Members were issued red lights to be used while responding to fire and rescue calls. Although these courtesy lights don't give members the authority to violate any laws, they are, in effect, asking citizens to please pull over in order to help them get to the firehouse a little quicker.



On October 5, 1980, an Ecumenical memorial service was held at Lime Kiln Park. The two ladders forming the cross were suspended from Grafton and Cedarburg's ladder trucks.

1983

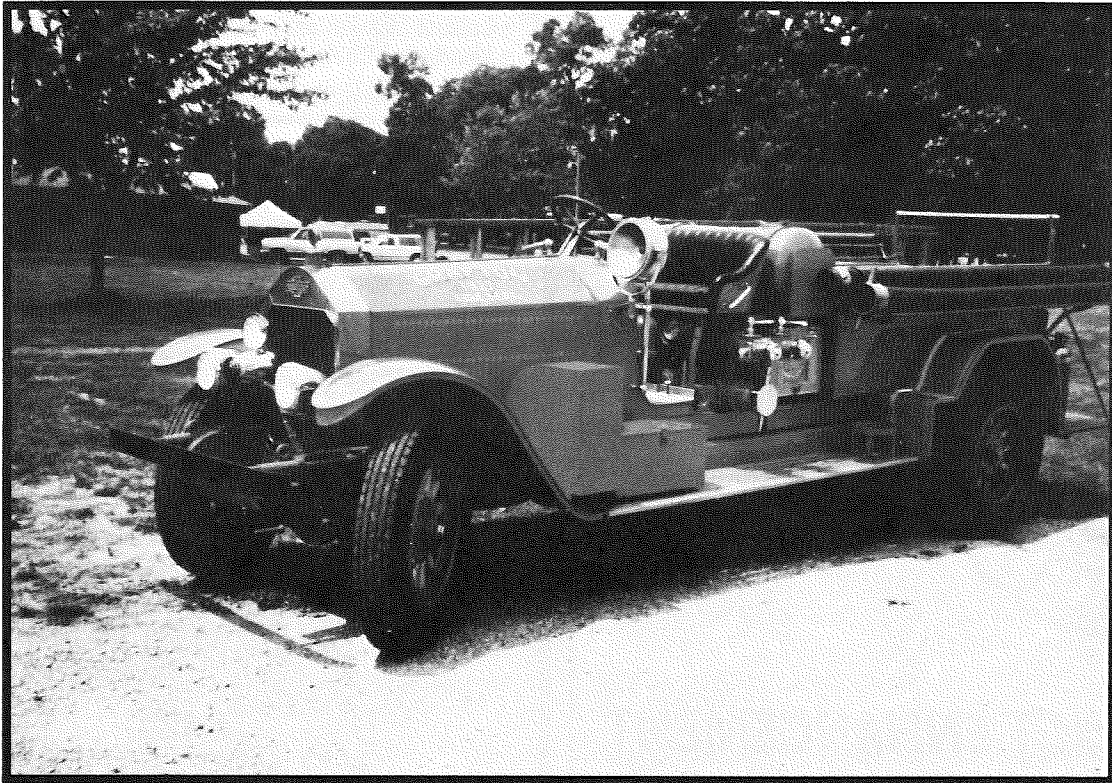
In February, the department purchased the property on Mole Drive between Ninth and Tenth Avenues in order to build the training tower that presently stands there.

1985

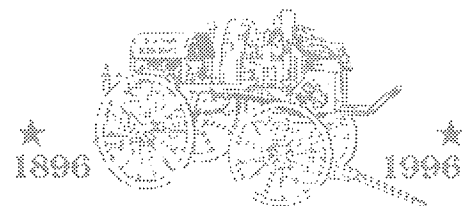
This year brought new lightweight composite fresh air tanks to the department. They are approximately 10 pounds lighter than the old steel tanks. This is a substantial weight saving for the already burdened firefighters.

1986

For safety purposes, firefighters were no longer allowed to ride the tailboard of the engines at anytime. "So long to the best seat in the house."



In 1987, Dan Doerr, of Leeson Electric, donated this 1927 fire engine to the department.

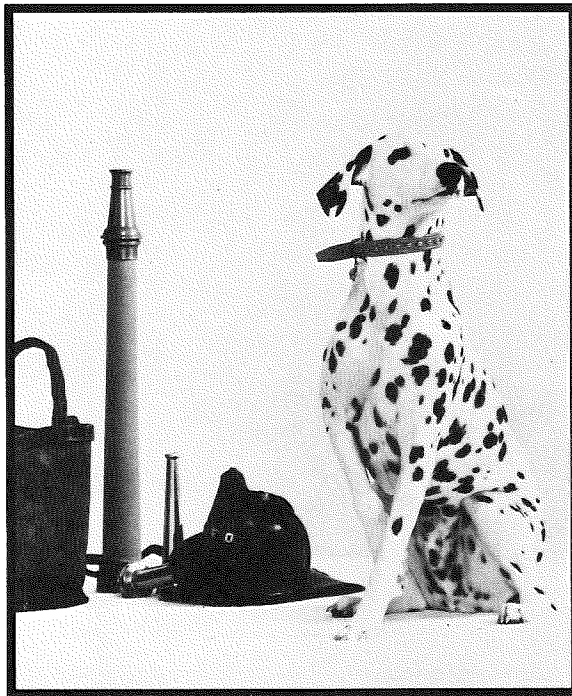


1990

An "Adopt a Hydrant" program was started in order to have the citizens of the village help keep hydrants free of snow. A new rescue squad was received this year, new #851. The department held a car wash in order to make a contribution toward the Veterans Memorial in Port Washington.

1991

This year, the department sold the last of its red fire engines while obtaining a state of the art rear engine, front wheel drive Pierce Javelin. The pumper is currently numbered 864.



Flame joined the fire department in June of 1974, at the age of two months. While a member, he faithfully marched in many parades in Grafton and Cedarburg. He greeted literally thousands of people, over the years, at the annual Open House. One of his other duties was visiting the schools during Fire Prevention Week. He loved the children as much as they loved him. Flame passed away on October 6, 1992.

1993

It was voted in February to purchase a new 105 foot aerial ladder truck from Pierce of Appleton, WI, at the cost of \$422,795.00. The expected delivery date was December 13, 1993.

Changes to the Constitution and By-Laws were approved by the department in April. These changes bring the department into compliance with the current state statutes.

This year, the department purchased equipment for, and became proficient in, confined space rescue.

In August of this year the new rescue squad #852 was purchased for \$80,000.00 and was delivered in August 1995.

A new patch/emblem was designed and adopted to commemorate the department's centennial.



When the men that formed the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department met in 1896, their goal was to protect the lives and property of the people living in the Village of Grafton. During the past 100 years that the department has served the community, there have been many highs and lows affecting the firefighters and their families as well as their friends and neighbors. Heroic rescues and devastating losses have all been part of the past 100 years. The history of the department does not end here; it simply pauses to reflect on the past. One certainty does exist, the men and women of the Grafton Volunteer Fire Department will continue to answer the calls for help throughout the community for many years to come.

Grafton Volunteer Fire Department History Committee

Don Kenner, Carla Jaffke, Joel Fonder, Dave Schecher,
Tom Bulgrin, Garrett Grissom & Todd Kaul

With Special Thanks To, Debbie Buchholz

Grafton Fire Department Chiefs

William Weber 7-1-1896 to 7-14-1899, sometime in '03 or '04 to 7-8-04, 7-12-07 to 7-14-11, 7-11-13 to 7-13-17, 11-11-21 to 7-11-24, and 9-12-24 to 7-10-25.

C.C. Doctor 7-14-1899 to 7-13-1900

Joseph Spheer 7-13-1900 to sometime in '03 or '04, 7-8-04 to 7-13-06

August Ploeger 7-14-05 to 7-13-06

Gust. Clausing 7-13-06 to 7-12-07

M.P. Hollrith 7-14-11 to 7-11-13

Otto Just 7-13-17 to 7-9-20

Charles Tillman 7-9-20 to 11-11-21

Henry Wegner 7-11-24 to 9-12-24

C.O. Melkers 7-10-25 to 7-9-32

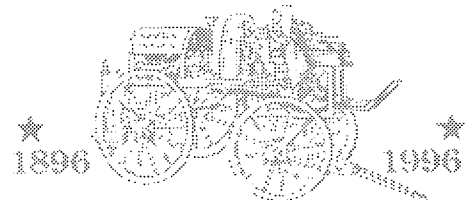
William Weiss 7-9-32 to 7-8-38

William Hilgart 7-8-38 to 7-12-61

Carl Wegner 7-12-61 to 12-9-87

Richard Bulgrin 12-9-87 to 12-14-95

Lawrence Williams 12-14-95 to present



Grafton Fire Department Chiefs



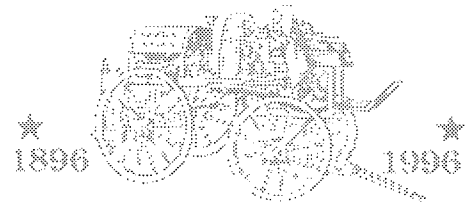
William Weber was the first chief of the department. He served as chief at various times between 1896 and 1925. Chief Weber also owned the local brewery.

1896-1925



William Hilgart served as chief from July 8, 1938, until July 12, 1961. Chief Hilgart also founded Wm. Hilgart & Sons Excavating Contractors.

1938-1961





Carl Wegner served as chief from July 12, 1961, until December 9, 1987. Chief Wegner was co-owner of Wegner-Hintz, the local Chrysler/Plymouth and International-Harvester dealer.

1961-1987

50 Years of Service

Harold "Poly" Habich received his gold badge for 50 years of service with the department.

The presentation was made by Chief Carl Wegner.



History of the Chiefs

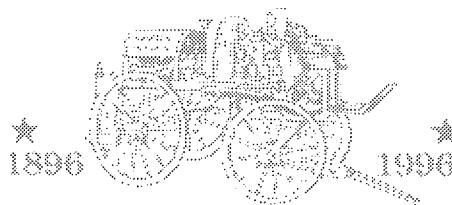


1987-1995

Richard Bulgrin served as chief of the department from December 9, 1987 until December 14, 1995.



Lawrence Williams is presently serving as chief of the department.



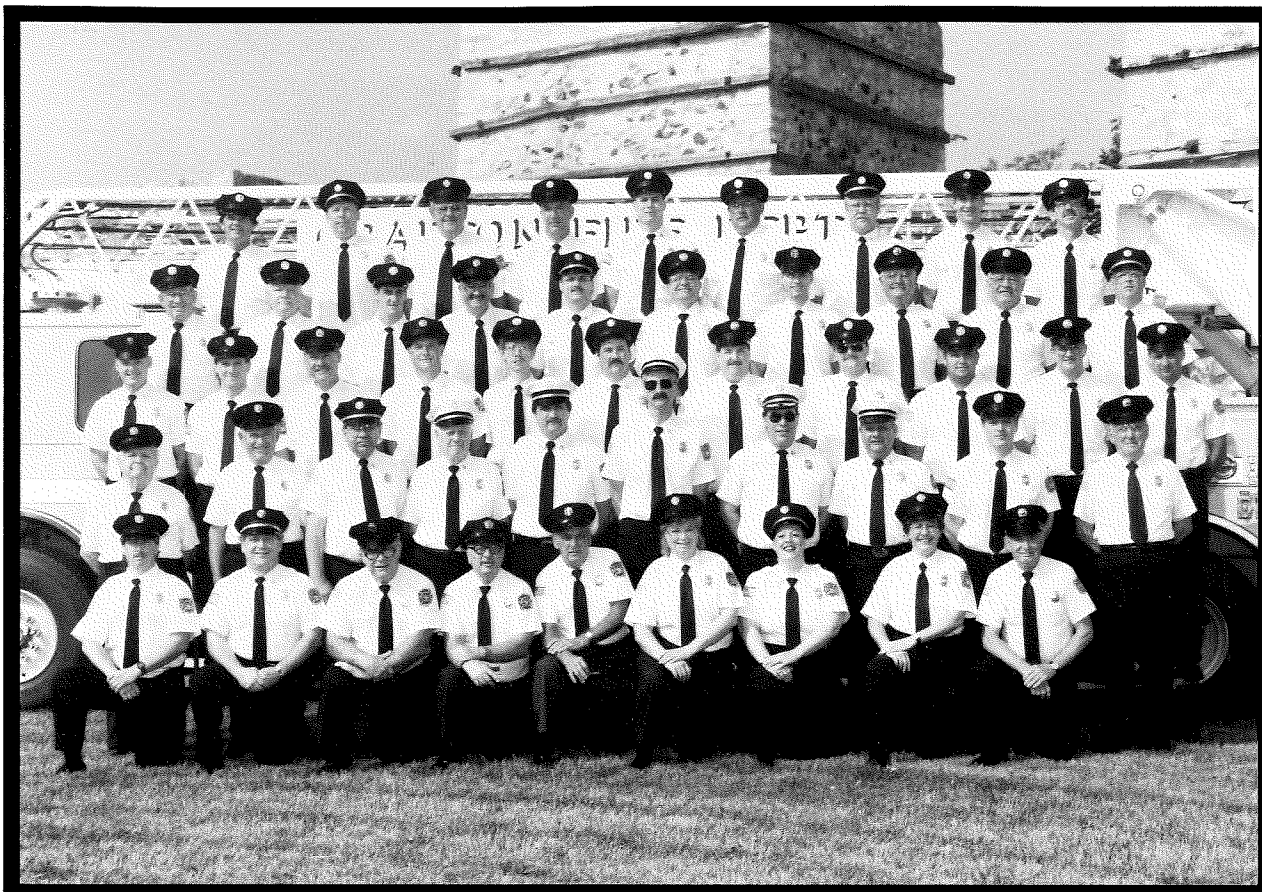
Grafton Volunteer Fire Department

We have proudly served this community for 100 years

Did You Know.....

- **That the department currently has 80 volunteer members who spend approximately ten hours a week, 52 weeks of the year as firefighters and EMT's. That's 41,600 hours of volunteered (non-paid) service to the community.**
- **That the department responded to 138 fire calls in 1995.**
- **That the department responded to 480 rescue calls in 1995 (Note: rescue calls are increasing approximately 8% per year).**
- **That the department performed 964 fire inspections (including re-inspections) inclusive of the Village and Township in 1995.**
- **That the department has 36 available training sessions for firefighters annually. Only 16 of 36 sessions are required.**
- **That the department has 12 available training sessions for EMT's annually. Only 5 of 12 sessions are required.**
- **That the Engineers (MPO's - Motor Pump Operators) meet a minimum of two times a week to ensure that all equipment is ready to respond to the next call.**
- **That to become a volunteer Firefighter / EMT or both for Grafton, you need to be 18 years of age, able to pass a physical and background check, and willing to go to school. Schooling is as follows - 20 weeks for Firefighting and 18 weeks for EMT training. Classes are offered in the evenings.**

Our TEAM of Firefighters and EMT's is looking for long lasting, dedicated people to join the TEAM. If this sounds like you, and you're interested in joining, give us a call at: 375-5314



Grafton Volunteer Fire Department

Front Row: David Malkowski, Dennis Stern, James Herian, Norbert Feih, Raymond Tiegs, Wendy Schuette, Penny Kelly-Williams, Carla Jaffke, Norman Wegner

Second Row: William Goetz, Claude Wollner, Thomas Bulgrin, Carl Wegner, Charles Schmalz, Steve Solymossy, Richard Bulgrin, Lawrence Williams, Peter Knauer, Harold Gentz

Third Row: Charles Race, Dean Proefrock, Michael Meier, Michael Wendorf, Ronald Prom, David Harvey, Timothy Kloety, Timothy Oberst, Wayne Merkle, Todd Kaul, David Schecher

Fourth Row: Robert Eernisse, Donald Kenner, Kevin Jacoby, Harvey Holzer, Thomas Peterson, Neal Schuette, Nicholas Holzer, Allen Eernisse, Alvin Giese, Lawrence Bowen

Fifth Row: Michael Lederer, Eric Johnson, Neal Jochims, Thomas Wamser, John Place, David Hoffmann, Robert Buchholz, Garrett Grissom, Michael Parchim

Not Pictured: Steven Bakos, Jason Brandenburg, Walter Eernisse, Thomas Faltersack, Joel Fonder, John Forbes, Pamela Forbes, Donald Gibson, Elroy Giese, Sandy Harmon, Gary Helm, Andrew Holzer, Michele Howard, Robert Kloety, Christopher Kueker, Ralph Laubenstein, Kevin Marks, Robert Quinn, Blake Reichgeld, Elroy Scheer, Richard Scheer, Mark Schrameyer, Richard Smith, Terry St. Louis, Todd St. Louis, Glenn Wollner.

Grafton Volunteer Fire Department - Honorary Members

An honorary member is a member with 25 years of service or more. This list represents over 675 years of firefighting experience.

Kenneth Arentz
Richard Bulgrin
Thomas Bulgrin
Paul Conwell
Allen Eernisse
Robert Eernisse
Walter Eernisse
Donald Engelbrecht
Harold Gentz

Alvin Giese
Elroy Giese
William Goetz
George Habich
Harvey Holzer
James Herian
Eugene Heuer
Kenneth Janke
Ralph Laubenstein

Gordon Lucht
Joseph Meunier
Earl Rilling
Elroy Scheer
Erwin Stern
Raymond Tiegs
Carl Wegner
Claude Wollner

