

Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum

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June 2025
Volume 1, Issue 1



The Firehouse Chat

Message from Mike Snyder, Vice Chair

We're excited to launch this new newsletter as a way to connect with our visitors, members, donors, and fellow enthusiasts of historical fire apparatus, antique toys, and firefighting history. Our museum is home to one of the largest collections of its kind in the world. Each exhibit tells a story—from rare tin toys and models to authentic fire trucks that once served proudly in many of our Great Lakes Bay communities.

In each issue, we'll share behind-the-scenes updates on restorations, spotlight new acquisitions, provide historical insights from our archives, and keep you informed about upcoming events and ways to support our mission. Whether you're a lifelong collector, a retired firefighter, or simply a fan of living history, we hope this newsletter brings you closer to the heart of our collection and the people preserving it.

Thank you for being part of our growing community—and welcome aboard!

Status of the Washington Street Fire Station

The Washington Street fire station was designed by Bay City architecture firm, Pratt & Koeppel. It was first occupied in 1890. The 2nd story included housing and a hayloft. The Washington Street fire station housed the following:

- ⇒ Hose Company #3—Rescue
- ⇒ Hook & Ladder Company #1
- ⇒ Reserve Steamer
- ⇒ Chief's Buggy
- ⇒ Full battery back-up to Gamewell Fire Alarm System
- ⇒ Twelve men, including 2 Captains

The fire station was in service through 1917 and never saw a motorized apparatus!

Phase II of the Washington Street fire station is starting in July 2025 with a focus on the 3rd floor and staircases. If you're interested in supporting the continued renovation of this project, please see page 6 for more details.

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Fire Station Number 3 - Pen & Ink
from *Fire & Water Magazine*

Features of the Patterson Rd Museum



Located at 3456 Patterson Rd, Bay City, Michigan, the Patterson Rd museum is the home to over 60 fire apparatus, over 3,000 collectable toys, and scores of stories to share.

We also have a global attraction of the FDNY Super Pumper. A "Super Pumper" is a specialized, high-capacity fire truck designed to pump water at extremely high rates, often exceeding 10,000 gallons per minute. These trucks are used to combat large fires, especially in industrial settings where massive amounts of water are needed quickly.

"Our collection tells the story of how regular people addressed fire fighting and fire safety challenges to serve their communities."

The museum also features STEM Education ranging from hydraulics to fire alarm technology. Both locations are an economic development for the Tri-County area.

We are a volunteer-run, seasonal operation (May thru October). Marine and special exhibits are made possible through our local partnerships.





Original Horse Drawn Photo from Bay City HQ Fire Station. Station #1 was built in 1883.

A Journey Through Time: Looking Back at the Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum

by Jeff Foisel

As I walked through the doors of the Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum, I was immediately struck by how much had changed since my first visit five years ago. The air was filled with a sense of nostalgia, but there was also a freshness that hinted at the exciting transformations the museum had undergone.

One of the things I noticed was the enhanced display of fire trucks. The museum has shifted its focus to highlight these magnificent machines, showcasing a range of models, each telling its own unique story. I remember a time when the first truck section felt more like a garage parking lot; now it commands attention, drawing visitors into the rich history of firefighting.

Also looking at the trucks, I am thrilled to see how many are now drivable in parades and events. Only a couple were capable of that when I first toured and now there are well over a dozen. These vintage vehicles, once merely for display, are now part of an interactive experience that provides an opportunity for both children and adults to climb aboard and imagine themselves as firefighters. The joy on the faces of the little ones as they climb into a piece of history is an awesome sight to see.

Even the lighting has been a remarkable upgrade. Where once the displays were dimly lit and somewhat difficult to appreciate, they are now illuminated with bright lights that highlight the intricate details of each toy and truck. This thoughtful enhancement not only brings the exhibits to life but also creates a welcoming atmosphere, drawing visitors deeper into the museum's offerings.

Organization has always been an important aspect of any museum, but I found the layout here to be significantly improved. The exhibits are becoming more themed and thoughtfully arranged. This helps to focus on the subject until moving into the next area.

Reflecting on my experiences, the Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum has transformed into a must-visit destination. The changes over the past five years have not only enhanced the visitor experience but have also deepened our appreciation for the rich history that these toys and trucks represent. I always look forward to my next visit, excited to see how the museum continues to evolve and inspire future generations.

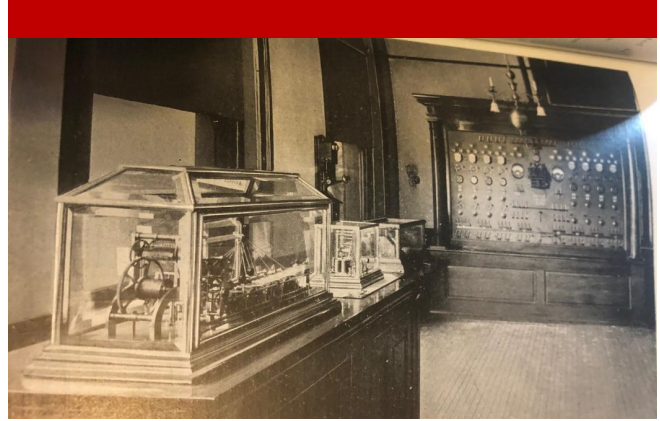
Bay City's Fire Alarm Telegraph System (1876—1957)

Public use of Samuel Morse's telegraph began in 1844, revolutionizing communication before the telephone. The fire alarm telegraph system used this technology to send coded signals with the alarm box number to fire stations, ringing gongs and teletype registers to identify the alarm's location.

Firefighters cross-referenced the box number on a map to confirm the location, significantly improving response times. Bay City's first fire alarm telegraph system, introduced in 1876, started with 14 "Ponds Patent Fire Alarm" street boxes. In 1890, a more reliable Gamewell system replaced it, ultimately expanding to 150 boxes.

Both Bay City and West Bay City used the Gamewell system until it was replaced by a Michigan Bell telephone system in 1957.

Our most famous fire alarm street box, Box 65, was the first to sound the alarm for the Bay City Conflagration on July 25, 1892, which destroyed 40 blocks and resulted in one death.



"Preserving our history through restoration and education."

The Important Role of Wooden Water Mains

Wooden water mains have a rich history that dates back centuries, often overlooked in the evolution of urban infrastructure. Initially favored due to the abundance and cost-effectiveness of wood, these mains were crafted from hollowed-out logs or fabricated staves, meticulously joined to form continuous conduits for water delivery. This method was crucial when more sophisticated materials like iron were either too costly or unavailable.

A significant chapter in this history involves Wyckoff Pipe, manufactured by the Michigan Pipe Company in Bay City, Michigan. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Wyckoff was a prominent producer of wooden pipes, critical for the development of local and regional water distribution systems. Their products helped provide reliable access to clean water and fire water supply, critical for public health and urbanization.

As technology advanced, the transition from wooden to iron and later modern materials (like steel and plastic) reflects growing public health needs.

Nonetheless, the era of wooden water mains, exemplified by the Michigan Pipe Company, highlights the ingenuity of early municipal engineering.

Wooden water main samples were uncovered from excavations in the Mid-Michigan area and were donated for display at the museum.



History of Tonka Toys

Tonka Toys was founded in 1946 in Mound, Minnesota, originally as Mound Metalcraft, a manufacturer of garden implements. The company shifted focus to toy trucks after noticing the success of their first toy vehicle, a small steam shovel.

Renamed Tonka Toys in 1955, the company became synonymous with durable, metal construction vehicles. Using heavy-duty steel and high-quality materials, Tonka earned a reputation for producing rugged toys that could endure rough play, appealing to children with its “Tonka Tough” slogan. Alongside its famous dump trucks, Tonka introduced a popular line of fire engine toys, which captivated young audiences with detailed, sturdy designs that fueled imaginative play. Iconic models like the Mighty Dump Truck, introduced in 1965, helped cement its status as a leader in the toy industry.

Hasbro acquired Tonka in 1991, continuing the brand’s legacy while adapting to modern materials and markets. Today, Tonka remains a beloved symbol of childhood play and durability.



Paul Glocksine and The Valley Firetruck Company Bay City, Michigan

VALLEY FIRE TRUCK CO.
39 TUSCOLA RD. PHONE TW 3-3601 BAY CITY, MICHIGAN



NAUGHT CHAMPION BASIC SPECIFICATIONS
Mounted on Willys 4-Wheel Drive Chassis—118" W.B.—113 H.P. Engine—Full Cab—500 G.P.M. Triple Action Pump—150 PSI Class—"N"—200 Gal. Water Tank & Reel—100'—1" Hose—Flow Rate Capacity 300' at 2 1/2" and 200' at 1 1/2"—Ladders, Axe and Poles—4 Equipment Compartments—Complete Fire Bells—also as Pictured—8 lengths of 4" Surface Hose—Write for Complete Specifications and Prices.

IDEAL FOR MANUFACTURING PLANT FIRE PROTECTION
(capable of going down narrow aisles as it is only 8 1/2 Ft. wide and 21 Ft. long.)

**THE CHAMPION WILLYS
4-WHEEL DRIVE
SPECIAL FIRE TRUCK**

500 G.P.M. Triple Combination Pumper Mounted on Willys' 4-226, 4-Wheel Drive Special Heavy Duty Fire Truck Chassis.

Here is a Fire Fighting Truck that will do everything that a large one will do, and can go places and fill the need that others CAN NOT. Powered by the famous Super Hurricane, 8 cylinder, 115 H.P. engine the Champion looks like big fire trucks.

Off the road fire fighting, no other can follow the Willys Champion Fire Truck. You may pump and move fire truck in water. Pump is also front-proof and can not freeze.

This WILLYS CHAMPION, 4-WHEEL DRIVE, all purpose fire truck is suited for Villages, Cities, Townships, as well as Industrial and Commercial Fire Protection.

Priced to sell. Direct from manufacturer to you.

VALLEY FIRE TRUCK CO.
39 Tuscola Rd. Phone TW 3-3601 Bay City, Michigan

Paul Glocksine became an auto dealer in 1924. In 1940, Glocksine became the Michigan representative for W.S. Darley Fire Apparatus & Supplies (Chicago, IL). Also in 1940, he established the Hampton, Bangor, Portsmouth Township Fire Department. Paul served as Chief. The original truck was a 1940 W.S. Darley Pumper on a Chevrolet Chassis. In 1947, Townships formed their own Fire Departments. The fire equipment was sold to Bangor Township.

Following World War II, Glocksine became the Willys Jeep Dealer for Bay City. They started converting Jeeps to Firefighting Service in the late 1940s, using Front Mounted Pumps. They were generally equipped with W.S. Darley Hardware & Pumps. Valley Fire Truck Company focused on rural, off-road, and industrial applications. In 1957, Jeep introduced the FC (Forward Control) 170 Model. About 25 units were produced with this cab. Paul died in December 1962. His son, Robert, continued business until 1965, when it was closed. Less than 100 trucks, overall were manufactured.



Support the Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum



The Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum operates with a passionate team of dedicated volunteers who give their time, talent, and energy to preserve firefighting history and share the joy of vintage toys with our community and visitors from across the nation. We receive no public funding—**your generosity keeps the museum running.**

Every dollar you give makes a difference. Whether you're helping us acquire new historic fire apparatus, restore our buildings, or keep the lights on, your support is vital.

We invite you to direct your contribution to one of the following priority needs:

Capital Campaign—Historic Fire Station #3

Help us upgrade this Victorian Fire Station to meet modern safety and accessibility standards, engage in year-round educational activities, and share joy in reinvigorating downtown Bay City.

Patterson Road Welcome Center

Be part of our future. Support outfitting our new Welcome Center, offering enhanced visitor services, STEM exhibits, and educational outreach at our main museum campus.

FDNY Super Tender—Acquisition & Transportation

Help us bring an authentic FDNY Super Tender from New York to Michigan—adding a rare and powerful piece of firefighting history to our collection. This will reunite, for the first time in decades, the two centerpiece trucks of the legendary FDNY Super Pumper System, creating a one-of-a-kind display that honors a legacy of firefighting innovation.

Where Needed Most

Prefer to give us flexibility? A gift to this general fund helps cover everyday operational expenses like insurance, maintenance, and outreach.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Contact Us

Email: info@toyandfirehousemuseum.org

Website: www.toyandfirehousemuseum.org

Facebook: Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum



Mission and Governance

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit governed by a board of directors.

2023-2024 Achievements

- * Patterson Rd facility upgrades
- * Apparatus restorations
- * Expanded website and Facebook presence to National audience
- * 60% attendance increase!
- * Recruited additional volunteers to build partnerships that share our Vision
- * Finalized plans for use of Bay City's 1888 Fire Station #3
- * 9-11 Ceremonies

**Our Mission is to
Preserve & Celebrate.**

1. Celebrate the fire services.
2. Preserve regional fire history.
3. Honor first responders.
4. STEM education.

Support the Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum



You may use this portion of the newsletter to direct your donation toward the following priority need(s):

- ☐ **Capital Campaign—Historic Fire Station #3**
- ☐ **Patterson Road Welcome Center**
- ☐ **FDNY Super Tender—Acquisition & Transportation**
- ☐ **Where Needed Most**

Please make checks payable to:

Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum

Mail donation and this form to: PO Box 742 Bay City MI 48707

- ☐ I would like to receive future editions of **The Firehouse Chat** newsletter.
- ☐ I would like to volunteer with the museum. *Please contact me!*

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Contact Us

Email: info@toyandfirehousemuseum.org

Website: www.toyandfirehousemuseum.org

Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn: Antique Toy and Firehouse Museum

Our museum foundation is a qualified charitable 501(c)(3) organization. Your donation is tax deductible.
EIN: 37-1468256

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- Use camera to scan QR code
- Open website pop up
- Select DONATE button
- Enter amount of payment
- Submit payment to PayPal



Bay City Central Station at McKinley & Adams (Moved from Old HQ near Washington & 4th)