



Deerpark Diary

Town of Deerpark Historian's Office
25 Grange Road, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, NY 12746 (845) 856-2702

Features

- History of Fire Fighting
- List of Major U.S. Fires
- Famous American Volunteer Fire Fighters
- Orange Arts Grant Program
- Then & Now Exhibit

Fire Companies of Deerpark

The Town of Deerpark is fortunate to have people who devote many hours and much energy as volunteer fire fighters. They respond to house fires, automobile crashes, natural disasters and other emergency situations in our community. Their duties are varied and their training is intensive. During the coming year, the histories of the fire companies in the Town of Deerpark will be presented in the *Deerpark Diary*: June issue, Cuddebackville; September issue, Huguenot; December issue, Sparrowbush. The current issue presents background material about the history of fire fighting.

History of Fire Fighting

Fire has been friend and foe since prehistoric times, being both useful and destructive. We have learned to respect its force and how to

March 2006
fight and extinguish it when it threatens lives and property.

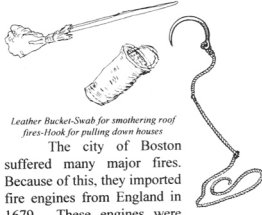
Fighting fires was a hardship for the early settlers in our valley. There were no fire companies. Neighbors, with leather buckets of water, shovels and rakes, helped one another to contain the blaze so that it would not spread and do further damage.

Faulty chimneys built with mortar inside of wooden frames and creosote coated flues were a common cause of house fires. In time chimneys and fireplaces were built with stone which helped decrease the number of homes which were completely destroyed. When fires did occur, people would lend each other a hand. The homes would be rebuilt around the standing fireplaces and chimneys.

In rural areas the danger of fires was not as great as in towns and cities. Buildings in towns and cities were built of wood and were close to one another. This created a constant threat of fire. The smallest chimney fire could become a major conflagration.

The first fire fighting company in New Amsterdam (later New York) was organized in 1658. The colonial governor, Peter Stuyvesant, demanded from every house eight guilders

Vol. 3 #1
with which to purchase "two hundred and fifty leather fire buckets ... some fire ladders and fire hooks; and to maintain this establishment they may yearly demand for every chimney one guilders".



Leather Bucket-Swab for smothering roof fires-Hook for pulling down houses

The city of Boston suffered many major fires. Because of this, they imported fire engines from England in 1679. These engines were simple hand drawn machines, operated by hand pumps and fed by buckets.



Fires and Firefighters

A further advance in fire fighting occurred when some progressive Boston citizens organized the Mutual Fire Society. This was the first volunteer fire company in America.

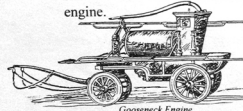
New York did not suffer from as many great fires as Boston. In order to keep this good record, the

common council sent to London for two Newsham fire engines in 1731. Circulars describing these fire engines stated that "Richard Newsham, of Cloth Fair, London, engineer, makes the most useful, substantial, and convenient engines for quenching fires, which carries continual streams with great force." These engines still needed people with buckets to keep the water reservoir full.



Thomas Lote Engine

It was not until 1743 that the first successful pumping engine was built in America by Thomas Lote of New York. It was very similar to the Newsham engine.



Gooseneck Engine

As cities grew, there was a greater need for fire fighting protection. Around 1785 the "Gooseneck" style fire engine, a powerful American design, was introduced.

Water hoses were still a problem as they were made of leather which would rot and spring leaks. In 1808 the riveted fire hose was invented which was an important

development because it eliminated the problems of leakage and bursting caused by the rotted thread in stitched leather hoses.

In 1841 Paul Hodge of New York built the first steam fire engine in America. The steam engine was not readily accepted by the volunteer firefighters, who would rather fight fires with the old pumping engines. They sabotaged the powerful steam fire engines, claimed they were too slow and too heavy to drag through the streets. There were riots against their use.

In 1854, a large and powerful steam fire engine was designed and built by the brothers Moses, Alexander and Finlay Latta. After it was tested the steamer, called "Uncle Joe Ross", was rolled out to fight a bad fire in Cincinnati's biggest warehouse. Some of the volunteer firemen tried to damage the machine, but the local citizens beat them back giving the steamer a clear berth. The steamer shot four good streams at the blaze and knocked it down while the people cheered. After that the Latta brothers became famous and their engines were in great demand, revolutionizing firefighting throughout the country.



LaFrance Steamer

Being a rural community, the Town of Deerpark did not have any fire companies until Port Jervis grew with the advent of the D & H Canal. Following the pattern of establishing fire companies where there was a concentration of homes and businesses, the need for fire protection became evident. In 1847, the first fire company in Port Jervis was given legal status. Since the village had not then been incorporated, the authority to form a company was granted by the Supervisor of the Town of Deerpark. The company was privately owned and was known as Port Jervis Fire Company No. 1.

The first vehicle was a wooden-decked, hand operated "Gooseneck". It required twelve men to force the handles on either side up and down in order to pump.

Other companies were established in the Village of Port Jervis:

- 1855-Maghogomock Hook and Ladder Company
- 1857-Delaware Engine Co. No. 2
- 1857-Fowler Engine Co. No. 3 - (Fowler Rescue and Salvage No. 3)
- 1870-Neversink Hose Co. No. 1
- 1873-Excelsior Engine Co. No. 1 - (Excelsior Engine Company No. 5)
- 1877-Port Jervis Hose Co. No. 4 - (Howard Wheat Engine Company No. 4)

march06_01.jpg

march06_02.jpg

1890-Tri-States Hose Co. No. 6

During the 20th century, as the population of the Town of Deerpark grew, so did the need for fire protection. Three fire companies, Cuddebackville, Huguenot and Sparrowbush provide this service. Their histories will be told in upcoming editions of the *Deerpark Diary*.

Major Fires in the History of the United States

1608-January 7. Jamestown destroyed by fire. All provisions lost. Many die of hunger and exposure.
1623-November 1. Fire destroys 7 dwelling at Plymouth, nearly ends settlement.
1653-January 14. First of Boston's great fires destroys third of town.
1676-November 27. Fire at Boston destroys large part of North End, including Increase Mather's church.
1711-October 2. "Towne House Fire" at Boston: hundreds of houses burned plus post office and Town House-110 families homeless.
1740-November 18. Fire in Charleston, S. C. All houses and buildings from Broad and Church Streets to East Battery are burned down.
1741-March 18. Fort George on lower end of Manhattan burns. New Yorkers incited to rise against "Negro Plot".
1776-September 21. New York burned. American patriots believed to have "scorched earth" for the British by fire that destroyed 493 buildings.
1788-March 21. New Orleans destroyed by fire on Good Friday. Seven eighths of town burned, over 900 buildings.
1805-June 11. Detroit, Michigan destroyed by fire.
1811-May 31. Fire at Newburyport,

Massachusetts, destroys 250 buildings.
1829-January 11. Fire at Savannah, Georgia destroys 463 buildings, mostly dwellings.
1835-December 16. Great Fire in New York City. Wall Street financial area wiped out; 654 buildings destroyed.
1845-April 10. Great Fire at Pittsburgh; 982 buildings burned, mostly dwellings.
1846-July 13. Fire in Nantucket; 300 buildings destroyed. Brought an end to the town's whaling supremacy.
1849-May 17. At St. Louis a fire destroys 26 big river boats, 418 buildings, and kills 20 people.
1850-July 9. Fire destroys 400 buildings in Philadelphia; kills 39 people.
1851-May 4. The worst of six big incendiary fires that swept San Francisco between December, 1849, and June 1851. This one destroyed almost the entire city.
1860-January 10. Pemberton Mills Fire in Lawrence, Massachusetts; 115 killed.

February 1. Elm Street Tenement Fire in New York City; 20 killed. This fire resulted in laws requiring fire escapes.
1861-December 11. Most of Charleston, South Carolina destroyed by fire.
1866-July 4. Great Fire in Portland, Maine. Firecracker starts blaze that destroys 1500 buildings.
1871-October 8. Great Fire at Chicago; 18,000 buildings burned, over 200 killed.
October 8. Peshtigo Forest Fire; 1500 people killed.
1872-November 9. Great Fire at Boston; 776 buildings destroyed, mostly factory and business.
1889-June 6. Fire at Seattle, Washington, destroys 31 blocks in center of city and along entire waterfront.
1895-February 14. Fire at Lynn, Massachusetts, destroys 300 buildings in center of city, mostly factories.

1900-June 10. Fire sweeps Hoboken, New Jersey water front; 400 killed.
1901-May 3. Fire destroys 1700 buildings in Jacksonville, Florida.
1902-February 8. Fire in Paterson, New Jersey; 525 buildings burned.
1904-February 7. Great Fire at Baltimore; 80 downtown blocks, 1343 buildings.
1906-April 18. San Francisco Earthquake and fire destroy 28,000 buildings; 452 killed.
1908-March 4. Collinwood, Ohio, schoolhouse fire; 175 children and 1 teacher killed.

April 12. Great Fire at Chelsea, Massachusetts, burns down 3500 buildings.
1911-March 25. Triangle Shirt Waist Company Fire in New York; 145 killed. This fire aroused the public and labor against sweat shops and child labor.
1916-March 21. Fire at Paris, Texas, burns 1440 buildings, nearly entire town.
March 22. Fire at Nashville, Tennessee, burns 648 buildings, mostly dwellings.
March 22. Fire at Augusta, Georgia burns 682 buildings in center of town.
July 30. Black Tom Pier Fire and Explosion.
1917-May 21. Simultaneous fires destroy 1938 buildings in Atlanta, Georgia.
1918-October 12. Minnesota Forest Fires; 15 townships destroyed, 559 killed.
1920-September 16. Wall Street explosion; 40 killed.
1922-December 8. Astoria, Oregon. Fire destroys 30 blocks in the center of town during a rainstorm.
1923-September 17. Brush fire roars into Berkeley, California and destroys 640 dwellings.
1928-Fire burns 107 factories and business blocks in Fall River, Massachusetts.
1929-May 15. Cleveland Clinic Fire, 125 killed by poisonous fumes from burning X-ray films. Resulted

in laws requiring safety film in places of public assembly.
1930-April 21. Prison fire at Columbus, Ohio; 320 convicts killed.
1934-May 19. Chicago Stockyards Fire.
September 8. SS Morro Castle fire at sea; 134 killed.
September 17. Nome, Alaska, fire destroys 20 blocks in center of town.
1942-November 28. Coconut Grove night club fire in Boston; 492 killed.
1944-July 6. Circus Fire at Hartford, Connecticut; 168 killed.
1946-June 5. Fire in Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Ill; 62 killed.
December 7. Fire in Hotel Winecoff, Atlanta, Georgia; 119 killed.
1947-April 16. Ship fire and explosion at Texas City, Texas; 468 killed, including entire membership of volunteer fire department.
October 23. Forest fires in Maine; 12 buildings burned, 16 killed.
1953-August 13. Factory fire at Livonia, Michigan; \$35,000,000 damage the largest fire loss ever under one roof.

in laws requiring safety film in places of public assembly.
1930-April 21. Prison fire at Columbus, Ohio; 320 convicts killed.
1934-May 19. Chicago Stockyards Fire.
September 8. SS Morro Castle fire at sea; 134 killed.
September 17. Nome, Alaska, fire destroys 20 blocks in center of town.
1942-November 28. Coconut Grove night club fire in Boston; 492 killed.
1944-July 6. Circus Fire at Hartford, Connecticut; 168 killed.
1946-June 5. Fire in Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Ill; 62 killed.
December 7. Fire in Hotel Winecoff, Atlanta, Georgia; 119 killed.
1947-April 16. Ship fire and explosion at Texas City, Texas; 468 killed, including entire membership of volunteer fire department.
October 23. Forest fires in Maine; 12 buildings burned, 16 killed.
1953-August 13. Factory fire at Livonia, Michigan; \$35,000,000 damage the largest fire loss ever under one roof.



Stories Told by Rocks

Welcome to Deerpark Museum Sunday Afternoon Programs-2006

The Town of Deerpark Museum received a grant from Orange County Tourism/Orange Arts and the County of Orange to create and publish nine illustrated companion booklets for the art murals depicting Deerpark's history, which were created by Susan Miller.

Special museum programs will celebrate the completion of each publication. The schedule for these programs is as follows:

- 1863 Huguenot Schoolhouse 25 Grange Road Huguenot, New York 3:00**
March 26 - Geography The story rocks tell
- April 23 - Ice Age** The Age of the Giants
- May 21 - Paleo Indians** Stone Age
- June 25 - Lenni Lenape Indians - Native People**
- July 16 - European Settlers** Huguenot and Dutch Settlers

August 13 - Border War/French and Indian War The War Between NY & NJ

September 17 - Joseph Brant Raids on our Valley during the American Revolution

October 15 - Founding of Deerpark The Beginning of our Town, 1798

November 19 - Early Industries Logging, quarrying, rafting, farming



Then and Now Photo Exhibit

In 2005, The Orange County Citizens Foundation brought together a group of photographers and historians to chronicle Orange County history through black and white photography. The exhibit, entitled *Then & Now: A Black & White Photographic Essay of Orange County*, will be on display at Café Roxanna, 79 Pike Street, Port Jervis from May 3rd through May 31st. An open reception will be held on May 6th from 7:00 to 9:00 on May 6th. For additional information, please call 856-4010.

march06_03.jpg

march06_04.jpg