



# Deerpark Diary

Town of Deer Park 1863 School House Museum  
Town of Deer Park Historian, P. O. Box 621, Huguenot, New York 12746 (845-856-2702)  
September, 2006

Vol. 3 No. 3

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## History of the Huguenot Fire Company



The Huguenot Fire Company Inc. was organized in March 1868. The founding members felt that there was not enough fire protection available in the Huguenot area in the Town of Deer Park. Fire protection District #3 was formed. The first line and civil officers were: Chief, Paul Heal; 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant, Hank Wagner; 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant, Dick Conklin, Jr.; Captain Pumper, Ken Conklin, Jr.; Lieutenant Pumper, Art Hobson; Captain Tanker, William Lass; Lieutenant Tanker, Ed Trivisono; President, William Lass; Vice President, Hank Wagner; Secretary, George Boos; Treasurer, William Hunt.

At first, there was no equipment available for firefighting. Through fund raisers the company was able to purchase a 1947 Mack pumper from the Yulan Fire Department. This pumper had previously belonged to Excelsior Engine Company #5 of the Port

Jervis Fire Department. Some of the Port Jervis companies were very generous with donations of turnout gear and other equipment that was desperately needed by the Huguenot Fire Company.

From 1968 until 1972 the fire fighters responded from Paul Heal's Auto Body Shop, located on Route 209. In May of 1972 the company moved into its new truck house at the intersection of Big Pond Road and Grange Road. This fire house was built almost entirely by the men of the company and used until 1987. The schoolhouse next to the block building was used for meetings.

After the construction of the new building, the company set out to purchase water tankers. Funds were low and the company purchased used apparatus from the Shohola, Pennsylvania Fire Department. Soon two tankers were in service, a 1954 one thousand gallon tanker and a fifteen hundred gallon tanker purchased from Shields Oil Service. The 1954 tanker was soon replaced with a 1964 two thousand gallon model that was mounted on a retired Orange and Rockland Electric chassis. The Huguenot Fire Company was the only company in the area with the capacity to transport 3,500 gallons of water.

In 1970 the first Fire Police Squad was organized with six men and in March of 1971, a Ladies Auxiliary was formed.

In 1977, after many fund raising efforts, a truck committee was formed for the purchase of a new pumper. The committee members were Ken Conklin Jr., Richard E. Conklin Jr., William H. Lass, and L. Michael Scheivert serving as chairman. Much time and energy went into the designing this equipment as it would be the

first new apparatus ever owned by the company. It would have to last for several years. The committee proposed a truck with a 1,000 gallon per minute pump and a 750 gallon water tank on a short wheel base chassis with cab over engine design and jump seats so the men wouldn't have to ride the back step. The apparatus also had an elevated pump operator's console to keep the operator off the street. This feature was considered "State of the Art" for the time. The new truck was manufactured by Carmar Fire Apparatus on an International cab and chassis and delivered in 1978. It has served the company faithfully ever since and continues to serve as the "first due" engine.

Although no one realized it at first the company outgrew its firehouse. In 1985, a building committee consisting of John Berthiaume, Frank Birch, Richard E. Conklin Jr., Kenneth Conklin Jr., Dick Hallock, and Curt Krieger was organized to erect a new main station. Through the donations of several generous local businesses and with their own labor the company constructed a new firehouse.



In 1987 the company moved into the new firehouse which has four bays and a meeting/banquet hall capable of seating 150 people. The hall is used for fund raisers and is available as a rental for weddings, banquets and parties.

The company has responded to many alarms including several serious fires. Some of the fires were: the Port Jervis Country Club; Hinaman's Restaurant; a house fire where two children lost their lives; Richford Vacuum; and Wickhem Products (explosion). The company has also responded to several fires through the Orange County Mutual Aid System, as far west as Dingmans Township, PA and as far east as Maybrook, NY.

The company was constantly updating the apparatus with newer models as funds were available. No new trucks could be purchased. The upgrades were used vehicles:

A 1961 Ford American pumper purchased from East Brentwood;

A 1967 Ward La France pumper purchased from Port Jervis.

A 1971 Mack 2,800 gallon tanker which had been an oil delivery truck.



Responding to many fire alarms took a toll on the equipment. By the late 1980s the trucks were desperately in need of replacement. It was decided in 1991 that a new tanker and a new pumper were needed. It was estimated that these trucks would cost three hundred thousand dollars or more to purchase and the company was barely making it on the funds supplied by the town board.

The board of directors of the company had a meeting with the town board to discuss the problem. The town board, after careful consideration,

generously agreed to provide twenty-five thousand dollars a year for the purchase of a tanker and twenty-five thousand dollars a year for the purchase of a pumper. It was decided that since the tanker was in the greatest need of replacement, the tanker would be purchased first.

In 1992, a truck committee consisting of Curt Krieger, William H. Lass, William T. Lass, and chaired by George Perry was formed to prepare specifications for a new tanker. Although this was an urgent project, careful attention to detail was given to every aspect of the apparatus. The committee proposed an apparatus with a 1,000 gallon per minute front mounted pump with a 3,000 gallon stainless steel elliptical tank on an international conventional cab and chassis. A new large diameter hose system (5") was also proposed so that the company could lay an above ground water main to areas where water was not available. Some of the features of the apparatus include a 10" quick dump capable of dumping the entire tank in 70 seconds, a 5" direct quick fill to allow the filling of the tank in under three minutes. One again, a "State of the Art" apparatus would be delivered to Huguenot. The tanker was manufactured by Walker Stainless Products of Tavares, Florida and delivered in January of 1993.

Shortly thereafter, the engine on the company's newest pumper quit. It was beyond repair. Because there was little money to have the engine replaced, much less replace the truck, there was only one



choice left to do: have the members replace the engine. That is exactly what they did—all in one weekend.

As soon as the new tanker was accepted and placed into service, the same truck committee with the addition of David Benevides, Richard L. Conklin, and Allen Sauschuck was reorganized to prepare specifications for a new pumper. After re-evaluating the need for fire protection the committee proposed a pumper-tanker with a 1,250 gallon per minute pump and a 1,000 gallon water tank on an International convention four door cab and chassis. The pumper would allow all personnel to ride inside out of the weather. The apparatus was also equipped with an elevated pump operator's control panel. The large diameter hose system, and a feccon around the pump foam system capable of discharging foam out of every discharge. This truck would be the first of its kind in the western half of Orange County. The truck was manufactured by Kovach Mobile Equipment of Nesquehoning, Pennsylvania.

In August of 1993, the company received a call concerning one of the trucks it had for sale. The truck, a 1961 Ford-American pumper, was advertised to be sold for \$10,000. The company needed the money to help pay for the new apparatus currently on order. A call came to Curt Krieger from a Bethesda, Maryland church group in contact with a church in Bosnia. Apparently, the town in Bosnia had its only fire truck bombed. Because of the war and the many fires caused by it, the town was in desperate need of a fire truck. Unfortunately, the church group could only raise \$2,500 to purchase a truck. The matter was brought before the company and after some discussion, the members voted unanimously to sell the truck for \$2,500. The members felt that since the need was so great and the cause so worthwhile, it was the least they

could do.

Wood explained that in the early 1920s, fires in the Town of Deer Park were set intentionally to quickly clear land for planting blueberries.

"In the 30s the conservation department paid volunteers to fight forest fires and many people around Huguenot apparently realized there was money to be made setting fires," he said. "Lately the DEC hasn't been paying, but the tradition of setting them is so ingrained it's the thing to do each spring! One fire here Saturday afternoon off Georgian Terrace blackened about 20 acres and destroyed a pile of well-seasoned ash and hickory wood at the home of George Edwards former Deer Park assessor. The pile, which was next to a field behind the house was engulfed by wind-whipped flames. The home was not damaged."

Wood said fires, especially those intentionally set, cost taxpayers needless money. He estimated as much as \$10,000 a year is spent putting out arson forest and brush fires in Orange County.

He appealed to the public for help. "The only way we can hope to put a stop to these Huguenot fires is to make arrests," he said, "I appeal to the public to report anyone seen setting a fire. We know who they are, but unfortunately we can't prove it...not yet."

Wood said rangers were patrolling the roads and woods around Huguenot Saturday night. Late Saturday, Wood reported that another suspicious fire had broken out near Prospect Hill and Franke Roads, not far from Cuddebackville.

As usual most of the fires were in Orange County. Between 7p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday, 17 brush fires were reported in Orange, nine in Sullivan and seven in Ulster.

It seems to be a tradition that fires are set each spring around Huguenot," Wood said, "a tradition that goes back 50 or 60 years."



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company could do to help brother firefighters overseas.

Since the early 1990s, the company has undertaken several projects. The firehouse has a new forty by forty foot addition which houses a social hall and new handicapped accessible restrooms and a new kitchen, complying with all state and local codes.

The company also purchased another new pumper, which includes a 10,000 watt hydraulically driven generator and a 6,000 watt light tower. Again this is the first pumper to include these options in Orange County.

The fire company has also been installing dry hydrants. These units enable a pumper to access a water supply without leaving the roadway or other hard surface areas.



In 1993 a medical response unit was added. The Huguenot Fire Company responds to medical calls with trained EMT personnel. The most recent improvement in medical equipment is a defibrillator to assist in the treatment of cardiac patients.

Thirty-eight years have come and gone and the spirit of volunteering is alive and well in Huguenot. The company has a nice new fire house and some wonderful new trucks, but the most important thing of all and the one thing the company is most proud of is their willingness to help anyone in need.



## Hotel Huguenot Fire

The Union-Gazette-Monday November 19, 1979

Hotel Huguenot fire labeled suspicious By Bob Couture, Staff Reporter

HUGUENOT— The vacant Hotel Huguenot, one of the Town of Deer Park's last remaining landmarks, was reduced to ruins early yesterday by a fire of undetermined origin that authorities have labeled suspicious.

The were no injuries reported as a result of the blaze.

The Huguenot Fire Company was the first to be notified that the sprawling four-story wood-frame building was in flames, according to Chief Kenneth Conklin, who said the call was received shortly before 4 a.m.

"The building was engulfed in flames when we arrived with our trucks," Conklin said.

Hook & Ladder Company No. 1, Howard Wheat Engine Company No. 4 and Tri-States Hose Company No. 6 from Port Jervis, along with tankers from the Cuddebackville, Sparrowbush, Westbrookville and Greenville fire companies were called in to assist at 4:22 a.m.

The nearly 100 men dispatched to the scene battled the blaze for more than three hours before bringing the flames under control. They were hampered in their efforts by cold temperatures and a lack of available water at the scene, Conklin said.

Firemen remained at the scene until after 1 p.m. yesterday in continuing hosing down the smoldering remains of the former resort hotel to ensure that the fire did not rekindle, Conklin said.

Even though the hotel, which had more than 50 rooms, had been vacant for more than a year, an Orange and Rockland Utilities crew had to be called out to shut off the power to the building after the fire

broke out.

According to Town of Deer Park officials, the building was owned by the Sonee Equipment Rental and Service Corp. of Kearney, N.J., which at one time had plans to turn it into a retirement home. Those plans never materialized because the corporation was unable to obtain state approval and financial assistance, town officials said.

It could not be learned this morning if Sonee had fire insurance for the property.

Prior to being sold to the corporation, the Hotel Huguenot was owned by the Herman Boerner family, some of whom still live in Huguenot.

The building, which was built at the turn of the century, was more than 70 years old and in its heyday was a popular resort for persons visiting the area from New York City.

Prior to the construction of the hotel, there was a smaller building and a number of cottages at the same site in the days when the Delaware & Hudson Canal was still in operation. The site was also a whistle stop along the now abandoned Port Jervis, Monticello & New York Railroad.

Opinions by fire officials that the fire was suspicious have been confirmed by Sgt. Alfred Dors of the state police Bureau of Criminal Investigation at Troop F headquarters in Middletown, which is handling the investigation of the blaze.

Investigator John Depoffi is checking into how the fire might have started. Possible causes of the fire are arson, spontaneous combustion of the contents—particularly old mattresses or a short in the electrical wiring.

Investigators were expected to return to the scene today to sift through the ruins for clues.



## Firemen have a field day in Huguenot

HUGUENOT—Members of nine area fire companies turned out Saturday to compete in events hosted by the Huguenot Fire Dept. during its second annual field day.

Among the nine companies competing in the pumping contest, bucket brigade and water accuracy test, were members of Howard Wheat Engine Co. No. 4, Tri-State Hose Co. No. 6 and Delaware Engine Co. No. 2 all from Port Jervis.

Also competing for trophies were members of Sparrowbush Fire Dept., Cuddebackville Fire Dept., Mill Rift Fire Company, Greenville Fire Department and a fire company from Unionville and Middletown.

Following the round of events, recognition was given to companies taking first and second place.

First and second place winners in the pumping contest were Tri-State Hose Co. No. 6 and the Unionville Company.

First and second place winners in the bucket brigade were members of the Unionville Company and Sparrowbush Fire Dept.

First and second place winners in the water accuracy test were members of the Cuddebackville Fire Department and Sparrowbush Fire Department.

Recognition was also given to the best overall team in competition. However because of a tie between Sparrowbush Fire Department and the Unionville Fire Company, Unionville received the

trophy and Sparrowbush will receive its trophy at a future date. John Bullis, president of the Huguenot Fire Company said.

"Besides providing community fun, the field day gives the men practice using their equipment and enjoyment when trophies are won."

The field day also provided the Huguenot Fire Department a chance to raise money for their fire truck fund. Bullis said, since the host fire company also staged a line of booths for food and games, requiring money to play.

## Times Herald Record—April 11, 1976, by Al Green

## Rifles of spring are fiery in Deer Park Town

HUGUENOT—The annual spring ritual of brush and forest fires set intentionally in Deer Park apparently is in full swing.

Raymond A. Wood of Stone Ridge, district forest ranger for the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) office at New Paltz, said Saturday that several fires blackening more than 100 acres were fought by rangers and volunteer firemen.

The fires near Huguenot were among dozens of brush and forest fires reported throughout Orange, Sullivan and Ulster counties. Dry conditions brought on by brisk winds and no rain compounded the problems faced by firemen.

As usual most of the fires were in Orange County. Between 7p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Saturday, 17 brush fires were reported in Orange, nine in Sullivan and seven in Ulster.

It seems to be a tradition that fires are set each spring around Huguenot," Wood said, "a tradition that goes back 50 or 60 years."

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