

HAMBURG HISTORY

A special section contributed by Mr. Daniel Barr on behalf of the Hamburg Historical Society

Hamburg Fire Department

With October being recognized as Fire Prevention month, I thought I would tell you a little about our fire department. On December 16th 1909, the broom factory located on Newton Ave. (Wallkill Ave.), burned to the ground and did extensive damage to the Reeve Harden Companies, and almost burned the railroad station of the NYS & W. At that time there was no fire protection on the northern end of Hardyston. Hamburg at that time was governed by Hardyston Township. After that fire, more than 100 people gathered to discuss what action the town could take. From that meeting, 2 committees were formed, Finance, and Equipment. On December 23rd 1909 the Hamburg Fire Department was formed under the control of the Hardyston Township Committee. The Finance Committee reported raising \$748, and the Equipment Committee reported that negotiations had been started with the S.F. Hayward Co. of New York for the first piece of equipment. That was a hand drawn hook and ladder with 24 rubber buckets, which arrived in March, 1910. A public demonstration of the new apparatus was held on March 5th, 1910. On April 6th 1911, the Fireman's Relief Association was formed. In 1913, a chemical cart with a single soda acid tank was added, and in 1917 they added a four-man hand pump from the Hawthorne Fire Dept. The equipment was stored in the basement of the Hardyston National Bank on Main St. and the meetings were held in the lodge hall on the third floor of the Chardavoyne Building, (now Hamburg Pediatrics / Rite Aid site). In 1918, the department purchased its first motorized vehicle. For \$760 a Ford Model T truck was purchased and the chemical tanks were installed.

The first officers elected in 1909 were: Chief, Frank E. Smith; Ass't Chief, J.C. Coleman; Foreman Jonas S. Woods; Ass't Foremen, Richard E. Drew and Abram B. Rude; Secretary, Arthur G. Watt; and Treasure, Robert L. Martenis.

The Hamburg Fire Dept. incorporated on April 1st 1915, and the Adams Garage on Wallkill Ave. was purchased for \$1500. The building still stands across Wallkill Ave. from the old Church of the Good Shepherd. 5 commissioners were elected to run the department. The department would continue to be governed this way until 1932 when it was taken over by the borough which incorporated in 1920.

In 1920, the first meeting of the Sussex County Fireman's Association was held in Hamburg. The first Sussex County Inspection parade was held in Hamburg on October 2nd 1920.

In 1927 a water & hydrant system was completed throughout town completing a project that had begun 17 years before. Prior to 1928, alarms were sounded by banging on old railroad tire rims which were at the corner of a few roads in town. Then a more modern type siren was installed.

Over the years, other organizations connected to the fire department have been formed. The Exempt Fireman's Association was formed in 1926, and the Ladies Auxiliary was formed in 1946 with 55 members.

Some of the larger fires that have been fought in Hamburg are: The Idle Hour Theater in 1933; The Baptist Church in 1935; the papermill, (which was completely destroyed except for the smokestack which still stands), in the '30's; and most recently the Gov. Haines Mansion in 1985, and the plaza in 1995.

Today the department still thrives with new equipment being purchased every few years. What started as a seven member department has grown to more than 70 members. Our newest truck was purchased 3 years ago. Our Current officers are: Chief, Dan Shane; First Assistant Chief, John Haig; Second Assistant Chief, Angelo Cocchiara; and Lieutenants Kevin Decker and Jamie McCurry; and Fire Commissioner, Dan Barr.

