

# **100th Anniversary Booklet**

**1878 - 1978**

SPECIAL THANKS to everyone who made this book possible, especially to:

Tom Berner - research and writing (Town Council, History of the Company, Fire Chiefs, Marching Club);

Jim Whitehead, Sr. - research and writing (History of the Company);

Marlin Schuetrumpf - research and writing (Ambulance);

Connie Zizelmann - research and writing

# History

## From the Reliance Hook and Ladder . . . to the American Hose Company

The Tamaqua Fire Department grew out of a hand-drawn fire engine operated by six men and supported by a bucket brigade that carried water from the closest stream or well. In 1852 borough officials purchased a hand-drawn hose carriage and in 1879 Town Council erected a fire house for the predecessor of today's Citizens Fire Company--the Perserverance Hose and Steam Fire Engine Company. In 1875 the first steam fire engine in town was purchased.

In between the hand-drawn hose carriage and the town's first steam engine, the American Hose Company had its beginnings as the Reliance Hook and Ladder Company, which began in 1860 and lasted until 1878 when it became the American Hose. It is from that year that the present Company dates its origin. A year after its start the new Company had 36 members.

By 1881, Tamaqua historian S. R. Beard records, the Company was "in good hands and the members are rapidly perfecting their arrangements for making their services effective in the case of fire." In September of that year the Company appointed a police force "to do duty at fires by caring for furniture and other personal property carried from a burning building, and to keep the crowd within a certain distance from the scene of the action."

Quoting an old edition of The Evening Courier, which was then a weekly just purchased by Robert Harris, the Tamaqua historian's "Bits of Tamaqua History" column of half a century later says: "Many articles have been stolen at fires in this town, we hope that this move of the American Hose will have an effect of stopping such thieving."

A new building followed the fire police by four years. As desired by Town Council, the building was to be made of brick, two stories high, 25 by 54 feet with pressed brick fronts on Mauch Chunk Street. "The cellar will be divided so that it can be used jointly by the hose company and the borough and the interior will be arranged to accommodate a hose carriage, hook and ladder truck (which is now being built in Reading for the American Hose) and room left for a steamer in case the borough or hose company should ever feel rich enough to purchase one."

And while council wanted the main entrance on Mauch Chunk Street, it also wanted the building arranged "so that the fire apparatus can run out at the Pine Street entrance with equal facility." The upper story was for Company meetings and council promised to furnish it "neatly and substantially."

From the beginning there were annual balls, the Company's social event of the year. Even the old Reliance, grateful to Town Council for providing meeting space, showed its appreciation by "giving a grand ball in Seitzinger's Hall."

The New Years Eve ball of 1888-89 had a chairman and a seven-member committee to get it started. And once it was moving, there were three floor managers to keep the peace.

The annual event was popular and in the words of Mrs. Frank Behr, who attended them in the early 1920s. they were "jammed" because "at that time dancing was all the go." Tickets were sold through the community and the firemen wore their uniforms, a practice that ended years before the balls became a thing of the past.

Funerals were also the source of a Company turnout. In May 1892 the Company purchased four dozen funeral badges. Costing a total of \$10.25, the badges were sold to individual members for 20 cents apiece, which means that if every badge was sold, the Company received \$9.60, taking a 65-cent loss.

However, such generosity did not extend to a new ballot box, which the members refused to purchase until early in 1895 when they paid W. Bischoff \$2.50 for one.

In preparation for the annual parade of the State Firemen's Association in Hazelton, the Company decided to sell shirts to members at three dollars apiece and to buy two dozen ties at 35 cents apiece. The Company also purchased one faucet and one dozen glasses, suggesting either that all two dozen ties didn't parade or didn't indulge.

An attempt was made in December to hold meetings in the parlor (site of the present day bar), but that motion lost, while a motion to meet in the backroom (which disappeared in the renovations of 1974-75) carried. Seven months later Tamaqua council was given permission to use the backroom for its meetings.

The Company began the new year of 1893 by agreeing to invest \$200 in borough bonds and a meeting later fined its janitors of the previous meeting 50 cents for neglect of duty. In May two members, one of them a foreman, were fined \$1 each "for lying around the Hose House in an intoxicated condition contrary to Article 5 of the bylaws."

There was more bond investment in 1893 when in October the trustees, following the wishes of the members, purchased \$500 worth of Pottsville borough bonds.

The voting record of the Honorable Warren T. Follweiler was being questioned in late 1893 and reports were circulating that he had voted against the firemen's interest. But member John Breish presented copies of the legislative record showing the reports were false and "on motion the same was ordered to be spread on the minutes."

On May 2, 1894, Frederick Krell, a member, was burned in an explosion and was in serious condition when the Company met two days later. The Company's relief committee had already employed Moses Morgan, also a member, to attend to Krell and asked the Company to sanction the action. The members did, authorizing the employment of Morgan at \$1.25 a night "to continue as long as necessary." A month later Krell was reported improving.

Not wanting to go unheard in Harrisburg in 1895, the Company circulated petitions in favor of a new firemen's bill and paid Hirman Springer, president, \$1, "the amount expended by him in canvassing the town to procure signatures to the petitions . . ."

Bond investment continued to put some money in the treasury. In April the company received \$3 in interest on county bonds and \$4.50 in borough bonds, a year later. A year earlier, the Pottsville bonds had paid the company \$10 in semi-annual interest.

The first mention of the Company receiving 'rewards' was not recorded until the Company was 18 years old, although that does not mean that custom did not begin sooner. On March 6, 1896, the Company received a half barrel of beer total (for unrecorded reasons) from two men and in September it accepted \$3 from David Bensinger "for services at the fire." The members agreed to spend the \$3 on refreshments and appointed a committee to carry out the motion.

By now the Company had something of a parade uniform and to ensure all were well maintained, periodic inspections were agreed to. Strangely, the first recorded inspection was not easily decided upon. Meeting on the first day in 1897, the members voted against inspection at the next meeting but voted for inspection on February 22, a Monday, at 2 p.m.

A more easily understood motion was passed in May when the Company agreed to purchase six spittoons.

So moved were the members by a special sermon given on November 28 for firemen by the Rev. W. T. Nichloss, pastor of the Primitive Methodist Church, that the company adopted a resolution of special thanks, which in part said: "In such an able upright pure pleasant and agreeable way. That we will ever endeavor to imitate the example of a good fireman as he defined him always ready to sacrifice our life for that of others no matter what creed, color or race all fellow man alike with the courage and promptness in case of fire. We also desire to thank the choir for their extent singing." The members also had the resolution published in any town paper that would do it for free, and it can be found at the bottom of page one in a later edition of The Evening Courier.

In December the members were again concerned with the plight of a member. Micheal Harbig, who broke his leg "while not yet off duty" in August. The relief committee, which proposed paying 13 weeks of benefits to Harbig said, "he will never be able again to follow his usual occupation." Although not mentioned in newspaper accounts, Harbig probably was injured when a fire destroyed the Eagle Wagon Works, on August 10-11, 1897.

Twice in 1899 the Company agreed to circulate a petition to have the Hose House made a polling site on election days. (in 1915 the Schuylkill County commissioners were told by the members to find another polling site.)

Later the membership fee was lowered--for one year--from \$3 to \$1.50.

And as the 20th century began, another attempt to change the site of Company meetings to the parlor lost, 22-18. At the same meeting (February 2, 1900) the anniversary committee was given an extra \$10 to hold the annual event because "\$25 would not see them through."

Allowing council to meet in the backroom had its drawbacks and in March the members appointed Victor Green "as policeman to keep the people who attend council meetings from climbing all over the apparatus."

In April a two-man committee was appointed to tell council what kind of water closet the company wanted, which followed by 18 months a membership decision to allow the trustees to decide where to locate the water closet. By May of 1900 there was some sentiment for getting council's meetings moved from the Hose House, but a motion to do that lost.

Still it was the water closet that stirred more interest and in August it was proposed that anyone who was not tidy when using the water closet and urinal room would be fined \$100 for the first offense. A second offense would cost the offender \$500 and his membership. But company records do not show if there was a second to the motion by J. M. Steward or if there was, if the company voted.

In October the Company agreed to pay death benefits of \$75. (They had been \$50 as early as 1892.)

The new century also meant new equipment and while the members were agreeing to send a photograph of the horse-drawn hose carriage to the 1901 State Firemen's Convention and to clean the carriage and take it by rail to the Philadelphia event, they were also voting to solicit the townspeople for money to purchase a chemical engine.

Another concern of the Company was disease and the members' response was to tell the Tamaqua Board of Health not to return small pox paraphernalia to the Hose House (a borough owned building) for storage.

In 1907 the company had a deficit of \$252.48 and bills of \$560.71 for which the trustees had to borrow to pay. That was in early May. In March the members had agreed to "take up the sprinkle wage to sprinkle the streets" and one of those May bills was \$315.20 for a sprinkling wagon. In late May a new initiation fee schedule was drawn up, charging new members between 18 and 25 years of age \$5; 25-30, \$7; 30-35, \$10, and for every year over 35 an additional \$2.

By June there was a \$30.24 balance in the treasury and the members, apparently concerned their investment in the sprinkling wagon could dry up, agreed to find alternative sources of water in case the borough water supply ran short.

In July there was a \$134.56 deficit; in August, a \$137.74 balance.

With a decision made to purchase a new team of horses "suitable for heavy work that is required for them to perform," the Company sold its team for \$395 and purchased a new team for approximately \$600. Then members posted a notice on the stable door telling persons to stay out.

By July 3, 1908, more than a year after concern had been raised about the water for the sprinkling wagon, the Company decided to build a dam in Smoke Hollow at the upper end of Pitt Street and to lay pipe from the dam "to some convenient point to supply the sprinkler."

With a sprinkling contract, a wagon, a new team of horses and an alternate water supply, there was still another problem, as recorded in the January 15, 1909 minutes: "Trustees reported that the Elks Lodge refused to pay for sprinkling done."

Still on the outlook for more ways to make money, the Company agreed on August 20, 1909, to invest \$800 in the Tamaqua Building and Loan Association, bringing the total investments to date to 31,600. In December the treasurer could report a balance of \$5.25 and an investment of \$1,600.

Then the Company began some real estate transactions, first instructing the trustees "to purchase the Old Farley property on Mauch Chunk Street at the best figure and to sell the George House." That was in April 1910. In May the Company purchased the property of Adam and Mary Sastosky on Mauch Chunk Street for \$6,000, borrowing \$4,000 from the First National Bank of Tamaqua. Nine months later the Company paid \$42.80 in property taxes. The property was sold in 1920 to Anthony Andrukitus for \$8,000.

The Company also purchased a team of horses for \$575 from Mike Domin of "Coal Dale."

By early 1912 the members began discussing ways of finding money to buy a steam fire engine (which Town Council had left room for when it designed the building in 1895) and in October 1913 the trustees were instructed to get a price on a sliding pole. (The trustees, of course, had many duties. In addition to deciding where to place the water closet and the like, they were once instructed to have the Company's piano tuned and fixed.)

More importantly, a new fire alarm system was coming to Tamaqua and toward the end of 1913 it was partially installed. By May 15, 1914, installation was completed when the American Hose purchased a new whistle for \$50.

Further modernization of the Company came in 1914 when the members purchased a Boyd fire truck with one tank. It cost \$5,595, of which \$4,000 was borrowed. Dr. Kate Freudenberg capped off the purchase by buying a siren for the truck.

On June 18, 1915, the Company paid its first telephone bill--\$1.58 to United Telephone Company.

But even as the alarm system was completed in Tamaqua, there were indications of a greater alert--World War 1--and in 1916 the Company agreed to exonerate from dues all members "doing duty at the border." And on the same day (April 6, 1917) the Company was agreeing to attend the South Ward Fire Company's annual ball, Congress declared war. A month and a half later death benefits were raised from \$75 to \$100. In 1918 the Company's patriotic fervor included a \$15 donation to the War Chest, which was paid out of the pool table fund.

The initiation fee was changed in December 1917. First proposed as \$3 for anyone between 18 and 30 and \$5 for anyone between 30 and 35 with \$2 for each additional year, the proposal was modified to: 18-25, \$2; 25-30, \$3; 30-35, \$4; 35-40, \$5, and \$1 for each year over 40. (in the early 1970s it was 18 through 25, \$2.50; 26 through 30, \$5; 31 through 35, \$8, and \$6 for each year over 35 with an age limit for beneficial members of 45 years.)

There were large problems and small problems in 1918. Just as the Company had had earlier problems with the people who attended council meetings, there were problems with other groups that used the building. Thus the members voted to inform the Red Cross Society "to keep children out of the meeting room" because one of the Company's pool balls was missing.

The larger problems concerned the various service contracts the Company held. In February the members discussed buying a new sprinkler, but decided to have their present one fixed. In March the Company gave Town Council two days' notice it would no longer haul garbage, and the trustees were instructed to sell the three horses.

Later the members agreed to get out of the coal business and sell the horses and a month later they agreed to advertise for sale the sprinkler they wanted to replace and the horses. In December the hay and straw that was left in the stable was given to George Sandrock for cleaning it out.

A new chemical truck was in the fold. It ran on gasoline and was supported by tires. The times were changing. In May 1919 the wagons and harnesses were sold. Seventeen months later the Company members discussed buying an aerial truck and in March of 1921 an American LaFrance Type 31 with front wheel drive and a 75-foot extension ladder was purchased for \$15,850.

Women began appearing on the scene, although not with the membership's blessing. One unknown member or members brought women in the House Hose in 1922 and a committee was formed to find out who had violated the male dominion. But the culprit or culprits were never found out and the committee was discharged with the usual vote of thanks.

Children were also a concern and it was once proposed that they (actually 11 small boys) be kept out of the hose house, a motion that was modified to permit them in only when accompanied by their parents. Another time members voted to keep all children away from the Company picnic.

And even if council was sometimes less than welcome to meet in the Hose House, both the United Mine Workers and the Carpenters Union were allowed to meet there. The move paid off for on May 1, 1925, the UMW sent a \$100 check to the Company to help pay for remodeling costs.

By now the Company had its first ambulance, rules were being written and the members were thinking of ways to keep the ambulance fund's balance healthy.

At the start of 1927 membership was apparently stagnant and the Company agreed to "make a drive for 25 young members." Then, to make the new members feel more welcome, a special meeting was held to ballot on them so they could belong to the Company in time for the 50th anniversary celebration on February 21. Fourteen new members joined the Company in time for the banquet.

The new members were later able to take advantage of something else--the cellar, which was being improved by members. The Company took over the cellar in 1928 and advanced \$200 to get it started. In March the cellar committee was told "to investigate the prices of beverage and to purchase where they get the best price."

Also new to the Company was a GMC four-tank chemical truck, which was purchased in 1928 and which arrived on March 15, 1929.

In between there were minor problems. "On motions of Frank Behr and William Weston all members taking chairs out on the pavement after using them should take them away from in front of the trucks or in the cellar;" the June 20, 1928 minutes report. And in December 1929 there was a motion "that the men that made any remarks about chancing turkey off to be notified to appear at our next meeting." In May of 1930 one member was "notified that the key for the Hose Co was for himself and not to be loaned to anybody or he would be expelled . . ."

The telephone became a problem in 1931, which is best told by quoting the Company's minutes. "On motion of Walter Hockstetter and Charles Sweeney that the trustees see the manager of the Bell Telephone Co. and find out if we are paying for a private or a two party lines and if it a private line why is their another party on it and we would like to be reimbursed for the different from the time the other party was connected on."

Just as the telephone continued with the American Hose so has the bar. No sooner had Prohibition been repealed late in 1933 when the Company decided to purchase a liquor license. The first one cost \$60 and was paid on November 19, 1934. On March 1, 1935, the trustees reported doing \$678.74 in social room business in February with expenses of \$441.41. The steward was owed \$118.78; one new beer dispenser cost \$125; the expense for a new trench tub, lining and plumbing was \$31.28; building two tables cost \$5.55; painting the social rooms and beer bar, \$30.58; and one new board for the bar cost \$10.32. A balance of \$250 was turned over to the Company. (The figures don't add up.)

For April the social club reported a \$239.38 profit; \$119.69 paid to the steward, and a balance of \$190.13. In November the the social room had receipts of \$780.95 and expenses of \$663.54.

With business apparently doing well, the Company accepted R. Becker's \$1,542 bid to remodel the second floor of the building into a new social quarters and a new meeting room. Becker's bid did not include painting, wiring, and plumbing. At the same meeting, November 6, 1936, the Company also agreed to purchase a second-hand elevator from Hoppes, and two weeks later decided to seek a club liquor license the following year.

Before the club license was received, the Company ordered more improvements to the social room. For the back bar and front bar tile drain, Samuel Whetstone charged \$950; Wesley Kale charged \$539 for refrigeration; Elcelsio Machine Co. of Reading charged \$285 for the under bar, and for toilet fixtures, William Reed charged \$54.75.

Then, to make it all fitting and proper, the members rescinded the rule that forbade drinks and amusements on the second floor. They also agreed to buy a freight elevator and repair the steps, and on August 20, 1937, they agreed to purchase a payroll book as recommended by the "Internal Revenue Department."

Lastly in the social room's beginning, Ira Reinhart, the secretary, who was also a beer distributor who sold beer to the Hose House, was forced to resign his Company post because of a Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board rule against "interlocking of relationship." As secretary, Reinhart also signed the Company's application for the liquor license and his signature also appeared on the license as a Company officer.

In between the extended birth of the social room, the Company purchased a 12-cylinder 500 gallon Seagraves for \$8,044.10 and agreed to sell the Boyd. But after the Seagraves arrived in February 1937, it was "out of service unless a second call" was issued because its license had not been received. The members also agreed to charge \$25 for any demonstration of the new truck.

Women had finally broken the men-only barrier, but it was a questionable rupture. On August 4, 1939, the members voted against fixing up the women's restroom, then turned around a meeting later and approved bids on remodeling the social room and held a special meeting to select furniture for the social rooms.

Tradition was falling everywhere. In November 1938, the once popular annual ball was suspended in favor of a New Year's Eve party, a decision reaffirmed a year later when the ball's revival was discussed, but not acted upon.

Naturally enough, with a social room, the members set up a social membership, establishing dues at \$3 a year. Late in 1939 they also agreed to have different colored membership cards to distinguish beneficial members from social members. In June 1940 there were 328 active members, 21 pensioned and 16 social.

In January 1941 women again were recognized when at a Company meeting it was decided to include wives and sweethearts to the Anniversary Banquet and charge 50 cents per member.

Another war was coming and an old war was remembered. While the members were being asked by Spanish-American War veterans if they could use part of the company's yard to erect a monument, Arthur Hess was submitting his resignation as ambulance director to join the Army. And there were defense bonds; the Company had \$5,920 in such bonds on hand as of March 20, 1942. On June 5 the Company agreed to purchase a service flag with sufficient stars for members serving in World War II.

In April 1943 a letter was received from Charles Nicholls, who was stationed in Africa, and the Secretary "was instructed to write a letter about recent affairs at the Hose Co."

At the same meeting the Company closed its charter "on account of war conditions." In September the secretary was authorized to buy four Victory Bonds.

The war cost the Hose House three members--George Mock, Walter Hochstatter, Jr., and Robert Seligman.

When the war was over, new members flocked to the Company. Forty-six of them were initiated on May 3, 1946, and were known as the Mock-Hockstatter-Seligman Memorial Class in honor of the war dead.

The influx of new members perhaps is reflected in this September 19, 1947 entry in the minutes: "The secretary was instructed to compile a list of all members under twenty one years of age for the use of the steward at the bar."`

New members or not, a month later "the steward was instructed to devise means of creating interest to increase the attendance of our meetings." It reached its lowest point on February 20, 1948, when the lack of a quorum forced cancellation of a regular meeting.

In September it was decided to meet at 7 p.m. "on nights that the High School football team played in Tamaqua." And in March 1949 "it was decided to turn around the slot machines and keep the bar closed during our regular meetings."

The death benefit was increased to \$200 on October 7, 1949.

Back in 1941 the Spanish-American War veterans had asked to use part of the Company's lawn for a war monument. There is no record of a reply to that request. But on January 19, 1951, the members decided the Company's lawn was no place for a monument, although they agreed the Company would not refuse any veterans' group request.

Later that year the Company received a new Seagraves fire truck, for which it paid \$12,635.

On November 7, 1952, the Company that had 50 years earlier sent a committee to tell council what kind of water closet it wanted, voted a \$125 donation to the community comfort station drive.

In 1953 the Company filed its first protest against removal of crossing watchmen and the substitution of automatic signals at the Reading Company railroad crossings. That, of course, was a losing battle, what with the railroad declining and the mines a year away from shutting down. In 1957 the Company protested again--to no avail.

Social-related business continued to be heavily discussed by the members. The 1953 picnic was cancelled because of "stringent rules" by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. In October the steward was told to eliminate unnecessary noise in the social rooms and the captain was instructed to do the same in the engine room and the cellar.

In 1954 a family picnic was held, with 300 in attendance.

Social room business was so good that the trustees were told to purchase an additional french frier for the kitchen at the cost of \$98.

Early in 1955 Fire Chief Frank Behr, a Company member, informed the membership that another exit was needed from the social rooms and a committee was appointed.

In May 1955 the Schuylkill County Firemen's Association was formed and Fire Chief Frank Behr was elected their first president, and in October the first Schuylkill County Firemen's parade was held in Tamaqua.

On October 21 an aerial truck was purchased. The old one was eventually sold for scrap for \$275.

In 1956, 14 months after Fire Chief Behr had talked about needing another exit from the social rooms, a report was made indicating that the state would require a fire proof ceiling in the engine room, a fire wall in the ambulance room, and fire doors-- "a large expense running into thousands of dollars" --and the matter was dropped.

On January 3, 1958, the membership was told that the property next door was available but the Company declined to buy it because the price was too high, according to the appraisal. Ten years later the Company purchased the lot for \$4,000, a price that had been negotiated down from \$10,000.

The family picnic was an annual affair for many years. But each year finding a grove to hold it in was getting harder and harder to find, so on July 3, 1959 the picnic committee requested the Company look into the matter of securing a grove of our own.

A month later it was reported that a site for the picnic grove had been found in West Penn Township. Carl Dreisbach was appointed chairman of a committee to have charge of improving the grove. Some money was needed to get things started, so the "Cellar Gang" donated \$249 to the Company to get things moving.

The four fire companies of town who work together at fires also work together in other ways, as shown in this item from the minutes of April 20, 1962, "The Company was advised that Oliver Steigerwalt, Captain of the Citizens Fire Co., had done, this Company a service in some replacement work on the 1937 Seagrave for which he would not accept any pay and on the motion of Wm. Long and Marlin Schuettrumpf a personal letter of thanks be sent to him and one-half barrel of beverage be sent to the engine room crew of the Citizens Fire Company."

In 1974 the social room underwent a great change. Gone were the big arched windows, the high ceiling and the old drafty meeting room. The long bar was gone too, so was Slim, Bud, Squire and Ronnie.

In 1977 the Company turned over the adjoining lot to the Community Ambulance Association and the Tamaqua Borough, to construct a building to house the two ambulances and the borough's new aerial truck.

At the present time the Company owns a 1951 Seagraves and a 1971 Mack.

The Company has been active in many things other than fire fighting. They sponsor a Little League Baseball team, for quite a few years, and they have a softball team. They have also had a basketball team and three bowling teams.

Presently the membership consists of 448 Beneficial members, 52 Pensioned members, 50 Active members, and 79 Social members.

# Marching Club

## A Chance To Strut, A Time For Fun

A trophy case proudly stores their triumphs and a bulletin board announces their future challenges. On parade day some gather at the Hosie earlier, their uniforms laundered and their white shirts and gloves clean. Others pack their families into cars and are off. It is a big day . . . the county convention . . . six county . . . maybe the state. A chance to strut, a time to have fun. Flowers for each uniform's lapel are distributed at parade time and the men are arranged--the tallest up front.

The Marching Club is on it's way.

Virtually as old as the Company itself, the Marching Club has been a fun side of many a fireman's life. But it's also been a competitive outlet and members of the Marching Club have been known to prepare for stiff competition weeks in advance, making sure their uniforms were in order and their marching mates were aware of the parade and had a ride. Talk at the bar easily turned to the next march, and after it was over, talk at the bar continued, this time on the way it was.

But where today Marching Club members are merely informed of a parade, in the early years they were ordered to march. And in those days, when the American Hose was but 18 years old, the entire Company was ordered into the parade lineup.

In preparation for the State Firemen's Association Parade in Hazleton in 1892, a committee was appointed to make arrangements such as procuring a room "in which to store Company property after the parade" and taking care of dinner.

The trustees were sent before Town Council, which granted the Company permission to take its hose carriage to Hazleton.

The parade committee then ran into a problem when it reported that the going rate for a band in those days was \$2 a man and expenses. The membership defeated a motion to hire a band at that rate.

A meeting later the Company decided to buy enough canvas to cover the carriage on its Hazleton trip and to send one man with the carriage to take care of it. The Company also agreed to pay him a day's wages.

The secretary was told to write to the state secretary for 200 ticket orders for the use of the Company and "it was decided that the committee try to collect at least \$25 towards defraying the expenses of the band."

To get to Hazleton, the members agreed to go by train on a Philadelphia and Reading special at the rate of \$1.17 a person, provided the company guaranteed a minimum of 100 tickets. The Company decided it would charge \$1.25 a person, with the railroad's approval, and it also decided not to buy the canvas for the carriage, but to borrow it.

Lastly, in an effort to advertise the excursion, the parade committee was instructed to see if the band would give a concert in Tamaqua. (There's no record of what happened with that proposal.)

A year later the Company again was ordered out for a Fourth of July parade. As part of those festivities, John Krater was appointed to represent the American Hose in the trumpet contest. Three days after the contest, the Company held a regular meeting at which a vote of thanks was tendered Krater for giving the trumpet--which he had won--to the Company.

In 1894 the members began discussing the purchase of uniforms, but after receiving a report on prices and seeing samples of uniforms, the members postponed further discussion.

A year later, at a special meeting, the members agreed to purchase 50 belts and caps and to provide regulation shirts to members who did not have them in time for the annual parade in Reading.

In 1897 the members decided to purchase more complete uniforms--"of the long coat style" with pants and regular hats. The uniform eventually was described in the minutes as thus: "Coat to be as follows, double breasted with rolling collar, two rows of buttons on breast 8 in a row, three small buttons on each sleeve, six buttons on shirt, 3 on each side. Two outside pockets with flaps. one inside breast pocket, strap seams. Coat to measure 12" from the floor to the bottom of the shirt. The whole to be lined with good Serge throughout. Hat of lightweight regulation style."

No different than today, the marchers needed money to parade and the Company agreed to circulate a subscription paper to raise funds to take a band to parade in Wilkes-Barre.

In preparation for the State Firemen's Convention in Philadelphia in 1901, the Company purchased new uniforms from S. Loso, whose \$13.32 bid per uniform was the lowest of five. The total bill was \$532.80, which paid for 40 uniforms.

Band costs were also up and to secure a band for this convention, the Company had to pay \$5 a bandsman plus expenses. In addition, the Company had agreed to pay the fare for band members who did not live in Tamaqua.

For this trip, the railroad agree to send the hose carriage a day ahead of the marchers for free. Two Company members were sent with the carriage and paid \$2 each.

The marchers, meanwhile, traveled in two decorated railroad cars. For their troubles, they were paid, with the Company's paymaster drawing \$300.75 in advance to cover that expenses.

Eight years later the Company purchased new uniforms again, this time paying \$1,118.25, which at \$10.65 for a uniform figures to a purchase of 105 uniforms. That was 65 more than had been purchase in 1901.

And there was also a new style. The Company purchased a single-breasted coat with a low-cut collar that had a mongrarn on the left sleeve. The military style cap had a drop peak and on the plain pants with five pockets (two side, two hip, one watch), there was a half-inch braid. The uniform was to be made of the best 16-ounce middlesex cloth.

Members with old uniforms were allowed to keep them.

For the next parade, which was in Danville, David Ribold, the foreman, "ordered that white shirt laydown collar and small black tie be worn with the uniform."

In getting a band for this parade, the Company at first accepted the P. C. Band with 25 men for \$135, then reconsidered and awarded the band duties to the Citizens with 30 men at a cost of \$167.40.

The mascots--the young children who march with Company--apparently came about formally in 1910 when Jacob Sinn asked if the Company had any objections if he took his sons to the next parade (in Shenadoah) in uniform. There is no record of the foreman's decision.

With new uniforms and growing ranks, the Company moved to ensure the uniforms were well kept. To that end, a bylaw was adopted requiring members to appear at the Company every Memorial Day between 8 am and 9 am for roll call and general inspection. Members who missed inspection and did not have "a good veritable excuse in writing either from his employer or his doctor" were subject to a \$1 fine or the loss of the uniform.

The uniforms, of course, served other duties. When the South Ward Fire Company invited the American Hose to its annual ball, the members agreed to turn out in full uniform.

During World War I, members who were in the armed services were required to turn in their uniforms and the Company agreed to purchase new ones for them when they returned.

It was also during World War I that the first recorded mention of mascots was made when the Company ordered "the foreman be instructed to notify all the young mascots to turn out in full uniform at the funeral of young Krell." (Not so long before that, the Company had discontinued the rule requiring members to wear their uniforms at funerals.)

The Company's first ambulance, purchased in 1925, was taken to a parade in Hazleton and received a special prize of \$25.

The marchers did not go without recognition. Naturally they were thirsty for the honors bestowed on them by the parade judges. But no doubt they were equally thirsty in September 1941 when "it was decided to present a half barrel of beer to the men who participated in the Lansford parade, same to be used at the captain's pleasure."

In 1948 the Company decided to charge each member \$15 on new uniforms, then it purchased new ones, going back to the double-breasted style it had abandoned in 1909.

Uniforms became so important that a uniform committee was named annually and in 1956, when at a regular meeting there was a discussion "on the method of handling the distribution of the five small uniforms for children," the matter was left to the uniform committee to decide.

The "little kids" that march up front always got a big hand from the crowd, but in 1958, at the Schuylkill County Firemen's Convention in Shenandoah, they were given a \$25 special prize. It was decided that Bud Lutz would distribute \$5 to each boy at a little party to be held for them.

In 1973 eighty new uniforms were purchased, they followed the same style as the old ones with one exception, the silver braid was changed to blue.

From the time the Marching Club was formed to the present day, they have been honored with many awards. From the first trumpet won by John Krater in 1893, which is proudly displayed in our trophy case, to the recent trophies won in the 70's. There are too many trophies and cash awards won throughout the years to be mentioned here, but next time you're in the social room walk back to the trophy case, there you will see the pride of the Marching Club.

# Fire Chiefs

Before Tamaqua got its first fire chief in 1916, the captains of the two fire companies worked together at fires. Frank Behr remembered that some of them were like two bulldogs and working together was the exception.

And even after the town got a fire chief and grew to four companies, the former chief remembered there were still problems and the competition was detrimental to the fire-fighting abilities of the men.

"One company would hit the plug," Behr recalled in an interview in June 1973, "and the other would take the hose off and put their own on. They were doing that when I took over" in 1925.

The first recorded mention of the desire for a fire chief is in the Company's minutes of April 7, 1911. Members proposed then that Town Council instruct the Citizens to appoint a committee of three to work with a similar committee from the Americans on electing a fire chief. A month later the man who was to become the community's first fire chief, Henry Wittich, was proposed for membership in the American Hose.

By 1913 he was a trustee and in 1914 he was a member of a committee that met with the Citizens to discuss a fire chief. Two years later Town Council passed a fire marshal ordinance to which the Company proposed that to be eligible either for fire marshal or assistant, the firemen had to be "steadily employed in town during his term in office." That was in March. In April Henry Wittich was nominated as the community's first fire chief.

Wittich had been a member of the New York City Fire Department before he came to Tamaqua to become a brewmaster at the Liberty Brewery, Behr recalled. Because of Wittich's background and desire, Behr gave Wittich a lot of credit for organizing the fire department in Tamaqua.

It was Wittich who imposed a limit on the number of men on the trucks--twelve on the big one and six on the small one. "The rest ran to the fire," Behr recalled.

It was a difficult situation because insurance companies would refuse to pay claims if an overloaded truck was in an accident. Behr remembered holding a truck at the doorway until he counted the men, telling the extras to get off.

Early in 1922 Chief Wittich died, in his honor the aerial truck was taken to the Five Points where its bell was sounded as the funeral cortege passed by. In addition, the fire alarm was sounded six times while the cortege was on its way to the cemetery. Six members of the company served as uniformed pallbearers according to Wittich's special request. (He had been sick and hospitalized almost three months before he died and the Company's minutes of that period carry reports on his condition.)

In accordance with the policy of rotating fire chiefs from company to company, Irv Bright of the Citizens became the next chief until 1925 when Frank Behr began a thirty year tenure in that post-- the longest in Tamaqua history.

Behr joined the Company in 1917 when the Company was getting away from horses and using motors to power its equipment. He remembered five horses being kept on the Pine Street side of the building and there was a hayloft where the kitchen is today.

The horses were acquired by the Company because it hauled the garbage and sprinkled the streets in Tamaqua. When there was a fire, the driver would unhitch them and ride one while the other followed back to the Hose House. They were placed in stalls and went under drop harnesses (as they had been trained) then pulled the chemical and ladder trucks to the fire.

"They knew their job," Behr said, and his wife, the former Louise E. Bischoff, said, "Oh, they were beautiful."

They had no trouble pulling the equipment up the hills because the apparatus in those days was just frames and tanks and ladders.

Still there were drawbacks because the horses had to return to the Hose House for the equipment, which took time. Behr remembered losing up to twenty minutes between an alarm and responding because the horses were in some distant corner of town.

One early alarm system in Tamaqua was the whistle at the Philadelphia and Reading shops. To alert firemen, a railroader sounded one long blast on the whistle then followed that with a prearranged number of blasts that indicated in which ward the fire was. Behr remembered that one of the railroaders who sounded the alarm was Guy "Skeet" Rhubright, a fireman in the boiler room and a member of the American Hose.

The retired fire chief counted fire alarm system that replaced the P & R whistle as one of the improvements in the department over the years. He also counted the South Ward and the East End companies, relatively new to the department, as assets, and he said the fire school at Lakewood was another improvement.

Three of the worst fires during Chief Behr's tenure were at Dreher's Lumber Yard, the Baskin Knitting Mill, and Miller's.

The Baskin Mill on West Cottage Avenue was lost mainly because there was no water, the chief said. The mains under Cottage Avenue and Mahanoy Street were rusted half shut. Later the department lost four houses in a row on Mahanoy Street because there was no water.

Among the retired chief's mementos was a clipping from an Evening Courier of 1954. It showed that the total fire lost for that year was \$376, the lowest of his career, and that the second lowest loss was \$800 in 1932.

"To be a good fireman," Behr once said, "it almost has to be born in you. I saw kids chase trucks and they later became good firemen."

Perhaps that explains why the sons of Frank and Louise Behr (herself the daughter of a fireman) became firemen and why one of them, Paul, eventually rose to fire chief of Tamaqua, a post he took over in 1972.

# Ambulance

On September 5, 1924 the first ambulance committee was formed with the purpose of selecting an ambulance to best serve the town, the committee consisted of Jacob Sinn, Louis Pfeil, Ray Blewitt, Charles Nahf, William Miller, Charles Dintaman, George Little, Charles Morgans, Harry Houser, Cliff Rarick, and Norman Wagner. Four weeks later they recommended the purchase of a "Cadillac chassie type V63 ambulance," at a cost of \$2075, with \$75 being paid in luxury tax to the government. The arrival of the new ambulance from Beilo Body Works was cause for a celebration, a parade was held with refreshments afterwards for those who attended the housing.

Soon after the ambulance arrived a committee was formed to make rules and regulations for the use of the ambulance. On May 1, 1925 the committee submitted the following: "To the officers and members of the American Hose Company. Gentlemen we hereby present the following rules and instructions governing the use of the ambulance;

First: We agree to serve the public to the best of our knowledge with the use of the ambulance in the jurisdiction where we have collected funds to purchase same, gratis Tamaqua including East Broad Street to the last house, Hometown, Reevesdale, Atlas Powder Company, Clamtown, Reynolds to the area of the storage dam. In Owl Creek to the old reservoir, in New England to Claud Mantzs, and to our members in Seek.

Second: We agree to furnish the ambulance to the sick, injures and disabled free of charge to the following hospitals: Coaldale, Ashland, Hazleton, Schuylkill Haven, Palmerton and any hospital in Pottsville.

Third: We agree to charge 50 cents per mile loaded after the first 25 miles to any hospital that the patient desired to go to providing the patient lives in the locality where we solicited funds.

Fourth: We also agree to give service to any locality outside of where we solicited. Charging them 50 cents per mile from the time the patient is secured until they reach their destination.

Fifth: All ambulance drivers to be drivers from the Bulletin Board of the Company and get only one member of the Company to assist him, and in the case of an emergency call is the driver permitted to answer the same.

Sixth: The chauffeurs will not be permitted to take the ambulance out for repair, refueling or trial trips, or purchase material for the same unless first consulting the chairman or his assistants.

After more than ten years of service it was requested by the ambulance director that a committee be appointed to secure prices on a new ambulance. And on December 6, 1935 that committee recommended the purchase of a Buick ambulance from S. A. Seligman to replace the old Cadillac.

The ambulance ran smoothly throughout the years with the ambulance director elected each year from the Company. Expenses for the operation of the ambulance was also absorbed by the Company. Money for the purchase of a new ambulance was received from donations collected through a canvas of the town.

Operation continued as above until the incorporation of the ambulance in 1962. Approval was granted on September 1, 1961 for the incorporation of the ambulance through the motion of Neal Yost and Gordon Pfeil that ". . . we proceed with the application for a charter."

The ambulance procured the services of Attorney Sparks Reese for help in the matter of drawing up a constitution and by-laws to regulate service. Reese provided his legal services and advice free to the ambulance up until the time of his death.

The ambulance committee reported on April 20, 1962 that their application for charter of incorporation for the ambulance association had been granted by the courts of Schuylkill County. Charter members are: Paul Warner, President; Junior Zehner, Vice-President; Guy Deininger, Secretary; William Long, Treasurer; Marlin Schuettrumpf, Director; Neal Yost, Director; and Willaim Dunkelberger, Director.

The charter members got advice from Lehighon Fire Company on the operation of their ambulance association. After a few minor changes the members adopted the present system.

Even though the ambulance became a separate organization from the American Hose Company, the two continue to operate together in many endeavors and in offering aid and assistance, as noted by these notes from the minutes. In 1963 the Hosie offered the use of the building for an air horn to summon drivers in case of an emergency. The Ambulance Association later declined due to the cost of purchase and installation (\$700) and decided to continue with the present system of two blasts of the bull whistle. Then later in 1971 the Company donated the fire radio from the discarded 1937 Seargraves to the Association for use in the Ford Van ambulance. With the turn of the decade into the 70's, ambulance service grew and there became a

need for a second ambulance, a Ford Econoline Ambulance was purchased on April 3, 1970 for \$5950.

The Association is now in operation with two ambulances, a 1975 Cadillac and a 1975 Dodge Yankee Coach. The rise in the cost of ambulances could be noted here, the first ambulance purchased in 1925, a Cadillac V63, cost \$2075 while the latest one, a 1975 Cadillac Superior, cost \$16,243 with a 1971 Cadillac trade in.

Presently the Association is entered in agreement with the Borough of Tamaqua for a new building being constructed for the ambulances and the borough aerial on the lot that adjoined the Company. Cost is expected to run about \$30,000 to the Ambulance Association, a long way from the \$6500 set aside on November 7, 1924 to purchase an ambulance and to run it.

## **Ambulance Directors**

1926 - 1932

Fred Woodring

1933-1934

Ira Reinhart

1935

Ed Schlosser

1936

Jesse Kershner

1937 - 1940

Thomas Krell

1941

Harry Bankes

1942 - 1943

Amandus Lutz

1944 - 1945

William Clemson

1946

Amandus Lutz

1947 - 1948

William Dougherty

1949 - 1950

Paul Behr

1951

John Rhubright

1952 - 1953

Frank Weston

1954

David Koch

1955 - 1956

Robert Richards

1957 - 1958

Charles Fritz

1959 - 1960

Richard Hadesty

1961 - 1962

Marlin Schuetrumpf

1962

President - Paul Warner

Vice-Pres. - Junior Zehner

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - William Long

Directors - Neal Yost, Marlin Schuetrumpf, Bill Dunkelberger

1963

President - Paul Warner

Vice-Pres. - Junior Zehner

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - William Long

Directors - Pal Boettger, Neal Yost, Clarence West

1964

President - Donald Hadesty

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Directors - Harry Barron, Bud Lutz, Clarence West

1965

President - Harry Barron

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Directors - Elwood Darker, Bud Lutz, Donald Hadesty

1966

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Directors - Harry Barron, Bud Lutz, Robert Fritzing

1967

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Directors - Robert Gill, Bud Lutz, Robert Fritzing

1968

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Guy Deininger

Treasurer - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Directors - Robert Gill, Bud Lutz, Robert Fritzing

1969

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Richard Hadesty

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - George Pfeil

Directors - Robert Gill, Bud Lutz, Richard Bennett

1970

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Robert Gill

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - George Pfeil

Directors - Richard Hadesty, Bud Lutz, Richard Bennett

1971

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Robert Gill

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Richard Hadesty, Bud Lutz, Richard Bennett

1972

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Robert Gill

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Richard Hadesty, Bud Lutz, Richard Bennett

1973

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Edward Kester

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Richard Hadesty, Royal Towle, Robert Gill

1974

President - William Keich

Vice-Pres. - Mahlon Kachelries

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - James Barron, Royal Towle, Edward Kester

1975

President - Jim Barron

Vice-Pres. - Mahlon Kachelries

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Ken Moyer, Glenn Wehr, John Linder

1976

President - Mahlon Kachelries

Vice-Pres. - Jim Barron

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Ken Moyer, Jim Connely, John Linder

1977

President - Mahlon Kachelries

Vice-Pres. - Richard Bennett

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Ken Moyer, Jim Connely, Bob Richards, Jr.

1978

President - Bob Richards, Jr.

Vice-Pres. - Richard Bennett

Secretary - Marlin Schuetrumpf

Treasurer - David Hadesty

Directors - Jim Connely, Charles Connely, Joel Essington