

History of the Lowell Area Fire Department



Established in 1860

The Lowell Fire Department may have started around the late 1850's. What is known is that on July 16, 1861 the new Village of Lowell paid for a used hand pumped engine, a hose cart, and 500 feet of fire hose from the City of Detroit. On July 21, 1861 the City of Detroit council, disbanded eight of the twelve hand engines companies, one of them coming to Lowell. On July 23, 1861 the village re-appointed for one more year the chief engineer, and the East and West Fire Warden. The fire chief was called a chief engineer; the assistant fire chief was called the fire warden. Fire wardens were appointed to the east and west side of the flat river. The fire trucks that were used in this time were hand engines that were pulled by horses, and pumped by the Protection Fire Company No.1, there were 49 members. During this time the fireman receive a certificate stating them as a fireman, and that they did not have to pay taxes, most all of the fire man were business men of the village. In 1867 the fire companies had uniforms that were made from red flannel, with black velvet cuffs and collars four inches wide for the Fire Company and Blue velvet for the fire hook and Ladder Company. Mills built in this time had fire pumps attached to them for in the event of a fire in the village.

An ordinance past in 1887 for the Lowell water company to couplet a reservoir, water mains, and fire hydrants for the Village, a steam powered pump of forty five horse power could pump one million gallons a day. In the 1900 the fire man were paid \$2.00 a month and a fine of a dollar for not going to a fire, and a fifty cents fine for not going to a fire meeting. The Village marshal attended all fires in order to keep away suspicious and disorderly persons, all able-bodied men that were by the fire had to help put out the fire or be fine or taken to jail.

The first hand engine was purchased on July 18, 1861. The first steam engine was purchased Dec. 26, 1884 form the Mansfield machine works. The first gasoline powered fire truck was a 1923 Chemical engine. The first fire truck that the pump was powered by gasoline was a 1935 Reo by the Seagrave fire equipment. It had a

500 GPM pump with a 250-gallon booster tank. The truck cost \$3,813.07. The new truck purchased July 28, 1935.

There were many fires that were disastrous in Lowell. Jan 18, 1884 About eight o'clock Saturday morning fire broke out in the second floor of the Somerby building east of the post-office, and although discovered early the flames rapidly spread beyond control and it was at once evident that many more building must go with it. The fire also reached over the bridge and burned four wooden building on the south side, making in all 20 building destroyed. Help was asked early from Grand Rapids and No.2. Steam fire engine, but the run to Lowell was made in 25 minutes. The Lowell flouring Mill was seriously threatened and had it not been for the mill's force pump and hose the mill would have burned, and with it the east portion of union block. With is the North side of the 100 block of Main St. some of the building still stands today.

1945 fire destroyed all of the three stories of the Gamble store in the Hosley building at 220 W. Main St.. In 1958 a fire in the 100 block of E Main St. destroyed seven stores. Fire departments from eight departments help to fight the fire. Then a 2nd fire of the year, in the Ralph Townsend store is on the south side of the 200 block of W. Main St. with six fire departments responding to the call. 1988 fire destroys the historic Keiser's Kitchen in the 500 block of W. Main St., on the North East side of Main & Amity.

March 1909 the Village reorganized the fire dept. to eleven men including the fire chief, firing all of the fireman. Two months later the firehouse is destroyed by fire. The engine house is moved to the new City hall at 301 E. Main St. were it stays there in tell 1990 were the new Look memorial fire station at 316 S. Hudson. 1974 the Lowell Police Dept. started doing vehicle extrication with a electric Hust tool, It was called Lowell 838. On Oct. 1984 the fire dept. took over doing vehicle extrication.

April 11, 1905 A disastrous fire on the Negonce block it consumed all most all of the block on the north side of main St. between the river and Monroe St.. The fireman found a fearful task before them, with eight or ten different building in flames at once. At one time it look liked as if the entire east end of the town would be destroyed, an engine from the city of Grand Rapids fire department arrived, they were delayed in Ada an other train having the right of way.



March 7, 1943 the King Milling company was destroyed by fire with mutual aid coming from City of Ionia, Grand Rapids and the county road commission fire truck out of Ada.



Jan 2, 1958 a fire in the 100 block of E. Main St. destroyed seven stores, fire departments from eight departments help to fight the fire.



Feb 1, 1990 the new Look Memorial fire station was built on 316 S. Hudson.



