

HISTORY OF SAUKVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

A hundred years ago the Saukville Fire Department as it is known today was formed on June 5, 1886, when the Saukville Badger Engine Company and the Saukville Hook & Ladder Company merged together after a disastrous fire destroyed part of downtown Saukville.

However, Saukville's Firefighting organization dates back to 1875. Two separate groups, the Badger Engine Company and the Saukville Hook and Ladder Company were in existence. Charles Schlegel, Foreman of the Saukville Hook and Ladder Company bought the land on Mill Street on August 1, 1881, for the first engine house from John H. Fieber for \$75.00 (signed by Daniel E. McGinley, Justice of the Peace).

These Companies began when a building boom was on in the settlement of Saukville. The pioneers formed a primitive firefighting aggregation, secured ground and built a frame firehouse, one story high with tower and bell at 200 N. Mill St. They also constructed a massive fire wagon to be used for transportation of ladders, hooks, and buckets. The men were trained for ladder climbing and water throwing and it was surprising to note the alacrity with which ladder raising was accomplished as the ladders in those days were one piece, crude, and heavy. Bucketmen were trained at the water source in bucket brigade tactics. For target practice, a human target was selected and prizes promised for the ones making the greatest number of hits.

After a disastrous fire in March of 1886, the citizens had the first fire engine ever built in Ozaukee County, constructed by John Gilson in his little shop on Pier St. in Port Washington. The truck was built by Nicholas Poull. This little hand pump was called upon to fight many fires.

On June 5, 1886, a joint meeting of the Saukville Hook and Ladder Co. and the Badger Engine Co. was held. A committee of three had been appointed at a previous meeting to draft a constitution for a fire department. The constitution was read by the secretary, and after some discussion it was moved and seconded that the Saukville Fire Department be formed. Officers elected that first year were: Chief Daniel E. McGinley; First Asst. Henry F. Lutfring; Second Asst. Walter F. Hoffman; Secretary, Math Lauterbach, and Treasurer, Nic Zimmer. Finance Committee members were Louis Ahlhauser, Joachim Horn, and Joseph Niesen.

In July, 1886, arrangements were made to have a well drilled in the Triangle Park. This work was completed that very same year. On July 4, 1886, the members of the department appeared in a parade for the first time at a picnic held by Nick Wilson. The picnic was held in the Wilson park located near the Wee Go Inn tavern. They appeared wearing firemen's fatigue caps.

On August 15, 1886, the Department held its first parade and picnic. The parade started at the river

bridge, marched up Green Bay Ave. to Dekora St. thence south on Railroad St. to Wilson park. It was a gigantic success and was the most elaborate occasion that has ever taken place in Saukville. The receipts of this first picnic and dance was \$315.92.

In 1912, it became apparent that the hand engine and pump had outlived its usefulness and the community required more modern equipment. It was decided at a mass meeting of the local residents and farmers that voluntary subscriptions be secured and the proceeds applied on nothing less than a motor driven pumper. Consequently, a Howe Motor Pumper was purchased. This unit is presently being restored by Mr. Donald W. Tendick of the Lamplight Farm located on Highway O north of Saukville. This Howe was donated to him under the condition the Fire Department has the right to use it for any specific purpose.

In 1912, the second firehouse was built on the same site as the first. The new firehouse with a hose and bell tower was dedicated on Sept. 5, 1913. This two story building served as the Fire Station until 1962 and today is utilized by The Dept. of Public Works.

In April of 1923, The Fire Department came under the control of the Village Board, but would remain a self-governing unit under the supervision of the Village Board. Members are added as vacancies occur to keep a full quota. The Dept. consisted of a Chief appointed by the Village Board, and an Assistant Chief, two squads of one engineer, an assistant engineer, plus eight men in each squad. Math Mueller was the first fire chief under the new order.

On April 10, 1923, the Saukville Fire Department sold the Firehouse and property to the Village for \$1.00.

To meet changing conditions, needed modern equipment and then motorized equipment was added gradually. In 1923,, a hand-drawn, single tank chemical unit was successfully used on small fires. Then in 1926, the department purchased a two-tank unit on a Model T Chassis. When rural electricity became common, causing an increase in fire hazards, the department advocated modern equipment with booster service attached. This resulted in a September 1937 delivery of the first custom built unit on a GMC Chassis manufactured by the Peter Pirsch & Sons Fire Apparatus Co. of Kenosha, WI. This unit is still owned by the Department and was totally financed by the Fire Department featuring a 500 gpm Rotary Pump.

In 1944 with an increasing number of rural fires becoming prevalent, the department bought an old Dodge Tank Truck and outfitted it for firefighting purposes. This vehicle was in use for about 8 years.

In 1946 the firehouse was remodeled, and the two narrow doors changed to one wide opening. With a new truck delivered in 1951, it became apparent that the
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premises were too crowded, and plans for a larger building were discussed numerous times with the Village Board. In 1951, a new GMC Fire Truck with 500gpm Pump and 1000 gallon Booster Tank was delivered and paid for by the Fire Department. This mammoth piece of equipment soon proved to be an arsenal in itself. This large unit fought many fires and was in service until 1977. To this date the unit is still fighting fires, now in Southern Georgia for a small department there. The GMC unit was built by the Peter Pirsch & Sons Fire Equipment Co., in Kenosha.

The next piece of equipment was a Dodge Panel Truck which was delivered in 1957. The vehicle was purchased due to the fact that an increased amount of equipment had to be carried to fires and emergencies. It was designed to carry coats, boots, and other tools and apparatus. Soon the need for basic Rescue Service developed and these tools and First Aid and oxygen equipment was added to our arsenal. As there was no room in the Firehouse, the vehicle was stored in the Village Garage.

The need for greater efficiency at rural fires yielded the purchase of a heavy truck chassis which formerly belonged to the Gilson Foundry in Port Washington. A 3000 gallon tank was constructed on this chassis by Glander Ornamental Metal of Saukville, in January of 1962. This was the first unit of its kind in the area. On rehearsal night in February of 1962, the tank was being tested when the Port Washington Fire Department placed an urgent call to our department as well as other neighboring departments for assistance. The Gilson Foundry was on fire and water was needed badly as the water mains in that part of the city could not supply all the water needed for this large fire. The not yet ready tanker was pressed into service and proved invaluable hauling water to this fire. The truck that once served Gilson Foundry again proved valuable in another sense this night as it aided in saving other buildings of the Gilson Complex.

With no room left in either the Firehouse or Village Garage, the Tanker was relegated to sitting outside. Later in the year a firehouse with Village Offices was constructed on the site of the former Firmen's Hall on Hwy. 33. This is the present Firehouse and is presently housing 9 pieces of apparatus including 3 Engines, 1 Tanker, 2 Ambulances, 1 Crash Rescue Vehicle, an Equipment and Command Vehicle, and the Grass Fire Truck. This facility is now overcrowded as the Rescue Boat is stored in one of the Village Garages and plans have been finalized for an addition to the station. This addition is to be built in 1988. In 1962, the firefighting and life saving equipment were all paid for by the Department which also contributed substantially to the cost of the new firehouse.

In 1964, the Fire Department purchased a 4WD Grass Fire Unit and outfitted it with equipment and lights for night fires. This vehicle answered many calls and did

much work for the Department during its tenure. In 1983, the Chevy Truck was sold to the Silver Creek Fire Department, where it is now serving their area. In 1967, we took delivery of a brand new 1000gpm Pumper with 1000 gallon tank and outfitted it with all brand new equipment. This unit was the pride of the fleet and set the stage for the Village of Saukville to decrease its Fire Rating by the ISO (Insurance Services Offices) to a Class 6. The ISO rates Fire Depts. and municipalities for Insurance Companies to aid in setting rates for fire insurance. The 1967 unit is still in service today and was built by Pierce Manufacturing of Appleton, WI. It serves our Department as a Pumper/Tanker.

With an ever increasing need to carry a variety of Fire and Rescue Equipment, and the increased number of Rescue calls, the Department purchased a new 1970 Chevrolet Step Van. They constructed cabinets in the unit and outfitted it with Fire and Rescue Equipment. This vehicle is still in service today just being rebuilt in 1985 as the Department's Equipment and Command Vehicle. The vehicle replaced the Dodge Van and that truck was used to haul Foam and AFFF Supplies.

In 1973, the Saukville Fire Department entered a new era. The need for increased services arose and we secured Saukville's first ambulance service which offered 24 hour Emergency Medical Services. On January 2, 1973, the Emergency and Rescue Squad held its first meeting and exercise. Paul Albinger, Jr. was appointed as its first Captain and Ted Albert as Lieutenant. Together they trained members after they became certified Instructors and Emergency Medical Technicians registered by the State of Wisconsin, and they also served as the Service's Administrators. It was anticipated that the first year of operation would yield approximately 50 calls. But when the year ended, a total of 99 calls were answered. Today approximately 200 rescue calls are handled annually by the squad of 19 EMT's.

In August, 1973, a new Dodge Medicruiser Ambulance was delivered, and answered its first call the very next day. This ambulance was unique as it was the very first vehicle of its type delivered in the State of Wisconsin. It was purchased with the aid of 50% matching funds from the Department of Highway Safety. The unit is still in service today serving as the back up rig and also handles non-emergency transfers.

1975 brought the end of an era to Saukville. A new alerting system was installed. A paging system whereby each Fire and Rescue member carrying pocket pagers are alerted by radio when a call is received. This eliminated the utilization of the sirens in the village that use to sound when a fire call was received. This also eliminated the many "firetruck chasers" that always followed the Fire Dept. to fire calls. Now the fire sirens are weather alerts only.

1977 brought an array of changes to the Fire Department. First, a new 1000 gpm Pumper with 1000

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gallon tank was purchased from Pierce Manufacturing. This is now our attack truck, the first pumper to respond to fire calls. The Fire Department members bought and paid for a new tanker this year. An IHC chassis was purchased from the State of Wisconsin and a 2850 gallon tank was manufactured by Glander Metal of Saukville. Also a used 1974 Ambulance was purchased to provide backup protection when more than one call was received at one time and also to carry the required Rescue and Extrication Equipment that was being purchased. Finally, a new grass fire truck was put into service as well. With the influx of numerous grass fires along the railroad right of way, many hours were being spent fighting these fires. A 1967 Jeep was secured and outfitted to help in these areas and the new unit and the 1964 Chevrolet grass rig provided a potent punch to handle these nuisance calls.

1978 was the year the "JAWS OF LIFE" Rescue Tool was purchased. This tool which can be used for many types of situations where people trapped in automobiles, farm accidents, or industrial accidents can be removed from the situation safely in a fraction of the time it used to take with conventional rescue tools. This tool has been credited with saving many lives since its delivery. In fact less than a day after it was put in service, it was used successfully in a serious auto accident.

1979 brought some change to the Saukville Fire Department's history. Paul Albinger, Sr., Chief of the Fire Department for 28 years retired as Chief. Paul decided that since he was going to semi-retire from his business as operator of Albinger Pontiac and spend 6 months of the year in Florida with his wife Helen, he would best turn over the leadership at this time. He did retain his membership to the Fire Department and continues to be an active member. Paul retired as Chief on the 15th of October, his 40th anniversary of becoming a member of the Saukville Fire Department.

A search commenced for a replacement. The Fire Department selected Paul Albinger Jr., to be recommended to the Village Board as the new Fire Chief. On December 4, 1979, Paul Albinger Jr. was appointed Chief of the Saukville Fire Department. Thus an era had ended but yet continued. Orville Biever was appointed First Asst. Chief and Wayne Tietzen 2nd Asst. Fire Chief.

A retirement party was held in Paul and Helen's honor attended by the members of the Saukville Fire Department, as well as many past SFD members, friends, fellow businessmen and firefighters and Chiefs from over 20 departments. Over 400 people attended the event and presented the couple with a substantial cash gift going towards a long desired trip to Hawaii as well as a Gold Chief's Badge.

1980 started off the new decade with some trying times. The village was in serious financial straits. Only

\$8775.00 was available from the Village of Saukville to operate the Fire Department. With the help and inspiration of John Harvey of Freeman Chemical, he and Chief Paul Albinger, Jr., set out to raise \$6500.00 from the local businessmen and industries through contributions to the Fire Department. The response from not only business and industry, but through some homeowners as well proved thoroughly satisfying as over \$10,000.00 was raised to purchase fire equipment and over \$3000.00 of it was used to purchase a new pumper the following year. With the donations as well as a good deal of personal time and money from the members of the Department, the Fire Department continued to operate efficiently.

1980 also brought the first Junior Firefighters Program in the county to reality. Members from within the department take freely of their time and spend it with youths of the community ages 12-18, teaching them basic firefighting tactics. This program, much like that of a Scout Troop give youths the chance to assume responsibility and take pride in their community while becoming an active and vital part of the Fire Department. The program also serves as a recruitment tool when the youths reach age 18, they are eligible for membership in the Fire Department, and this helps to keep new blood and ideas coming into the department.

In 1981, efforts were put into full swing to bring the ISO Rating Classifications down. First the 1937 GMC 500 gpm pumper was found to be no longer acceptable and reliable as age had taken its toll. Since just facing a budget crunch and having overcome its obstacles a new pumper could not be afforded. An indepth search commenced for a suitable replacement. A 1966 Custom Pirsch 1500 gpm pumper rebuilt in 1979 was found in Niles, IL. Negotiations began and with a \$3500.00 contribution from the Fire Department, and \$13,500.00, from the budget, the unit was purchased. After delivery and placing the unit in service, the rating bureau was contacted and Saukville was scheduled for re-rating.

1982 was a hallmark year for the SFD. First and foremost after extensive testing by the ISO, the long awaited rating change came to pass. However, a goal was set to reduce the rating in the Village from a Class 6 to Class 5; and in the town from Class 9 to Class 8. Due to the indepth training and modernization of equipment, Saukville received a Class 4 rating in the Village and a Class 7 in the Town!!! Thus Saukville became only 1 of 4 Volunteer Fire Departments in the state to attain such a rating, one that some fully paid departments do not have. Fire losses in the Village and Town also totalled only an estimated \$9,000.00.

1983 was a year of planning. A long term capital equipment purchasing program was developed, setting a schedule for the replacement of apparatus. The first acquisition also took place this year. A Crash Rescue Vehicle (CRV) was purchased from Marion Body Works. Mounted on a 1984 Chevrolet 1 ton chassis, this

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vehicle carries all the heavy duty Rescue and Extrication Equipment as well as specialized Rescue Equipment and a good deal of firefighting equipment as well. This vehicle serves as a 1st response unit for the Chief Officers. The first Chief Officer arriving at the Fire Station, responds to all fire calls with this unit and provides time for the Chief Officer to evaluate the situation before apparatus arrives. The Fire/Rescue Vehicle besides performing its duties will save the Village \$55,000.00 in 5 years as the Rescue Equipment will not be carried on an Ambulance as before. Smaller, less expensive Ambulances will be purchased in the future and with this purchase the 1973 unit will not have to be replaced until 1992. This vehicle was put in service on November 23, 1983. The group of firefighters working that evening were just washing up when an alarm came from Freeman Chemical. When the Fire Department arrived, flames were showing from the maintenance building. A tank wagon was laying on its side full of material. An explosion and fire occurred when a leg of the tank wagon collapsed onto a welding cart piercing the acetylene tank. The acetylene tank's vapors were ignited by the furnace's pilot light causing the ensuing explosion and fire. Thus the new CRV responded to its first call just after it was readied for service.

The Department initiated a trial plan in 1984 and studied the options available to improve its radio communications. During this time, the main base radio gave up the ghost and was not feasible to repair. A new Base station on the low band frequency was installed. Also the options of switching to the high band frequency continued to be studied. The low band frequency is the band that the Ozaukee County and Washington County Fire Departments utilize. All Saukville's Fire Department vehicles are radio equipped as well as the Department's Officers.

X In 1985, the study continued and a decision was reached to convert to the high band frequency when it was economically feasible due to the improved communications that could be realized. In 1985, the 1974 IHC Ambulance was scheduled to be replaced. In September a new 1986 Mobile Medical Type III Ambulance on a Ford chassis was delivered and put into service. The 1974 IHC was sold to our neighbors, the Waubeka Fire Department, who is using this vehicle as their Rescue Squad. Late in the year, our Emergency and Rescue Squad became one of the first Squads in the state that began training in a pilot program known as EMT-D. EMT-D stands for Emergency Medical Technician-Defibrillator. People serviced by our squad are able to receive a form of Advanced Life Support for Cardiac Care. Under the protocol set up in the program our EMT-D's are able to Defibrillate (Anti-Shock) a patient's heart on the emergency scene when it is necessary. This treatment previously could only be performed in the hospital. Countless hours of extra training were required to be certified in this program

and bi-monthly retraining is required. However the members of our Squad are dedicated to providing the best patient care available and they have vowed to carry out the mandates required of the program.

Finally, 1986 comes around and our Department is 100 years old. The department has come a long way. The members are well trained and are dedicated not only in maintaining their level of expertise, but improving it. Our equipment is modern and we feel second to none. In January, our EMT's completed their EMT-D Training and Certification. All of our active members have completed Basic Firefighting Training. Over 60% have completed Advanced Firefighting. Our pump operators have completed Motor Pump Operator Training (MPO) through the VTAE. Over 80% of our Department has completed Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Training. The list goes on.
goes on.

The Fire Department membership also helped to supply funding for the conversion of our Radio System from low band to high band. Since its conversion, radio communications have been improved dramatically and the equipment purchasing is more reasonably priced. The Department also help to fund a Video Equipment Program whereby fire and training sessions are videotape thereby providing our personnel with a means to improve their skills by seeing what they do right as well as the mistakes, thereby being able to correct errors they see themselves make.

The Saukville Fire Department is proud to be involved in many Firefighting Organizations including: The Wisconsin State Fire Chief's Assn., Wisconsin State Firemen's Assn., The International Assn. of Fire Service Instructors, The Wisconsin State Fire Instructors Assn., Wisconsin State Fire Inspector's Assn., The Badger Firemen's Assn. and the Assn. of Ozaukee County Fire Departments.

The Saukville Fire Department has formal Mutual Aid Agreements with the Port Washington, Newburg, Grafton, Waubeka, Fredonia, Cedarburg, Thiensville, Belgium and Mequon Fire Departments. We would like to formally thank all these Departments for their help in the past and feel the mutual cooperation among all these Departments has and will continue to save lives and property. We salute you for your help and pledge the same infinite support to you at any time.

On June 6, 1986, at 6:00 P.M., the actual anniversary of the Fire Department's beginning, the Village's sirens were sounded commemorating the event and honoring all those that have served and all those serving the Saukville Fire Department. The Centennial Celebration of course is culminated by the Gala Celebration August 7, 8, 9, 10, 1986. We hope that all who attended the celebration enjoyed themselves and we thank all of you for helping make the celebration a success and being part of it. The Saukville Fire Department thanks you for your support and it will continue to be an excellent Fire Department dedicated to saving lives and property.