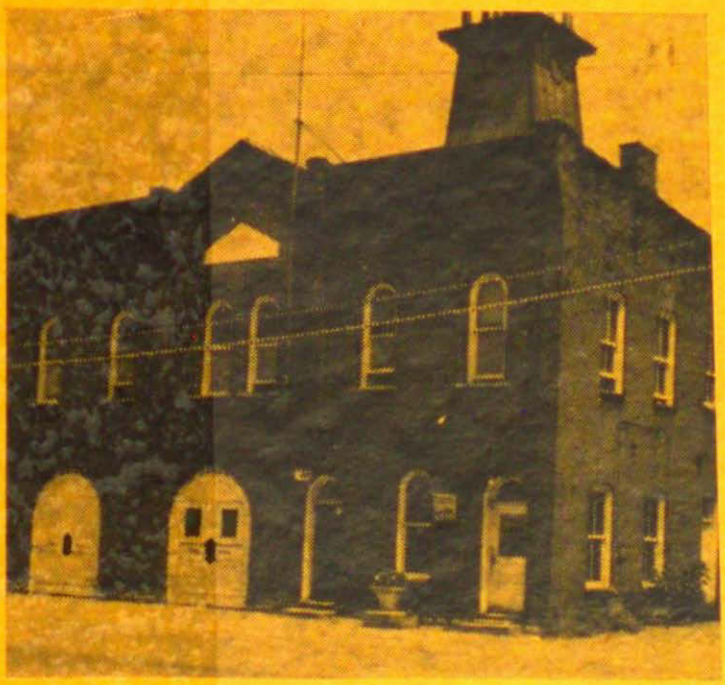
Dresden Fire Department



By Helen Watson Burns

DRESDEN, ONTARIO - JULY 1st, 1954

Dresden Fire Department

When we read about the pioneers of our country and of our town, we glow with admiration for the sterling qualities they evinced of mind and soul and body, enabling them to come into the wilderness and establish homes. But let us not be deluded by the aura of heroism with which time has enhanced their memory. For to them, it was stern reality -- grim drudgery at tasks to which many were entirely unaccustomed, and with no conveniences as we possess them; cold, in their crudely constructed cabins; hunger, with no store near by; sickness and death, with physicians far from summoning; and always fears!! For truly, they realized the delicate balance of their lives, when slight happenings could change to tragedies: the father killed in the woods; the mother taken away in comparative youthfulness; a child straying and lost in the trackless forest; or their home destroyed by fire -- its shelter lost to them, and their possessions gone --. How trivial become our troubles, and how liberal our lot! We somewhat share their fears, yet science has done so much against death and danger, and modern materials and methods protect from fire.

But at the time when Dresden was incorporated, 1872, fire danger had even increased with the building of frame houses, and the many conflagrations which have occurred since must have been to all the cause of much concern. It is an honor and a pleasure to trace the pattern of plans and events, both satisfactory and disappointing from which have evolved the system and the fire company of which we are today so proud.

In the beginning they chose the name of "Defiance" for their company, and that same spirit has since animated them. We rejoiced with them, when in 1951, they were considered worthy to be hosts to the Ontario Firemen's Association, who held their Golden Anniversary Convention in Dresden, from August 3rd to August 6th.

The council of the newly-organized village of Dresden had many problems confronting them, and one of the first to receive attention was the need of protection against fire. In February, 1872, a by-law was passed "for better preventing of Dwelling Houses, Barns, Stables and other buildings from taking fire."

Some of its provisions were:

No one should build any oven or fire-place unless it was properly connected with a chimney of brick or stone at least three feet higher than the building in which it was located; under penalty of two dollars.

No one should enter any mill, barn or outhouse with any light not properly enclosed in a lantern; or with a lighted pipe or cigar.

No one should carry coals of fire except in a safe metal container.

Bonfires should not be

lighted in the street or in a public place.

Ashes should be placed only in metal or brick containers, and not within twenty feet of any wooden fence or building.

Gunpowder for sale should be kept in metal boxes, and no one should sell gunpowder at night.

In order to enforce this by-law, John Scratch was appointed health inspector and inspector of chimneys, and was to inspect all dwellings and door-yards; and to give warning regrading anything deterimental to health or unsafe as regard fire. (John Scratch lived at the north-west corner of Metcalfe Ave. and Sydenham St., with an orchard where Dr. Woods' house stands now, and his barn east of the orchard.)

Then followed a ten-year struggle for fire protection, with events always in the same pattern. The ratepayers, perturbed by the ravages of a fire, in some home or place of business, would converge on the council with a petition praying for action in the form of a fire engine and a fire brigade. Whereupon the council would bestir themselves to investigate the subject of fire engines and their performance, and, more important, their price. With sufficient reached the stage of a by-law urging, the matter three times put to a vote; but, when the by-law was defeated, a lull fell upon proceedings, and an atmosphere of gloom prevailed. From this apathy they would be rudely roused by another uncontrollable conflagration, and public opinion began another cycle.

The first petition was presented in December of the village's first year, 1872, and the council began a series of negotiations lasting through 1873 regarding a used fire engine for sale in Chatham. In 1874, they received a telegraph despatch (an innovation) offering them the fire engine for $600, with the hose extra. They countered with an offer of $500. for it, without the hose. Chatham refused to sell the engine without the hose, and offered the whole for $800. complete. The clerk, John Chapple, was then instructed to advertise in the Daily Globe for a used fire engine, and replies were received from Ingersoll, Walkerton and Toronto.

In June of 1875, a letter was read from a company in Chatham, offering a new fire engine and equipment for $3500., but the matter was laid over for future consideration.

Evidently the demon fire had the next word in the argument, for, a month later we read that the Reeve was empowered to call a public meeting to discuss the best means of protection against fire, and the clerk was instructed to record that "this corporation does sympathise for the loss by fire to the business men of Dresden, and that the belief is that the buildings were fired by some person or persons unknown, and that the council offers a reward of $100. to any person who will give such information as will lead to the conviction of such person or

persons for said offence."

This fire (to be described later) roused the populace to prepare another petition to council, asking they procure a fire engine. Said petition being signed by D. D. Williston and 44 others. (D. D. Williston is described as a conveyancer accountant and draughtsman, owning and operating a store in the Union Block, just north of the present post office site.)

In opposition, Robert McWha and 78 others presented a petition, praying the council to defer the purchase of a fire engine. (Perhaps the signers of the second petition did not own as much expendable property as the first group, or perhaps they felt that considerable municipal expenditure had already been entailed in the purchase of the new cemetery, the building of the new school, the moving of the drill shed to Dresden, and the erection of the Town Hall, all since incorporation in 1872.) However, both petitions were laid over.

Action for fire protection was delayed again till 1877, when the council undertook other means to solve the problem. They passed a by-law compelling the owner of every house or tenanted building to furnish ladders of sufficient length to afford easy access to said dwellings. After obtaining information from other municipalities, it was decided to construct two water tanks, 12x20 and 10x18, for fire protection, the site of one to be on the corner of Brown and St. George Streets. A committee was sent to interview Mr. Dale at the foundry, and other manufacturers, to see for how much money they could get a hand fire engine. In April, a by-law to raise $4000 to supply fire protection was submitted to the ratepayers, but was defeated.

The subject was apparently closed for another year, then, in May, 1878, a petition was presented by Hugh Currie and 90 others, asking that the council again submit to the ratepayers a by-law to issue debentures for raising money for a fire engine; engines from Windsor and Sarnia having entered the picture. (Hugh Currie had great lumber interests, and was at first a partner in the present O. & W. McVean lumber mill.)

Two years later, 1880, another letter was received, re the Chatham fire engine, but no action was taken. In January, 1881, the by-law was again voted down. Then, on February 23rd next, a great fire destroyed many buildings, among them the post office on the corner of Main and North Streets.

Public opinion was so thoroughly aroused by the havoc of this conflagration, that the council took action. In February, 1882, they sent to the Legislative Assembly a petition signed by the Mayor and clerk, under the corporate seal, praying that municipal councils might be given the power to raise money for fire protection, if presented with a petition signed by duly qualified electors representing 60 per cent of the assessed value of the rateable property of the municipality.

The clerk was instructed to prepare another by-law for the purpose of raising $5000 to purchase a steam fire engine and necessary equipment, the by-law to be published in the Dresden Times for 3 successive weeks, and the vote of the electors to be taken on said by-law.

This by-law passed by 65 to 37, so a special council meeting was held to make arrangements for the purchase of a fire engine. It was decided that the council, accompanied by a competent engineer, should visit Chatham for the purpose of testing the Silsby steam fire engine for sale there. The clerk was instructed to write for prices of fire hose and other equipment. The report of the engineer on the Chatham fire engine was favorable, so the council purchased it for $2650, this to include two hose carts and "other appurtenances thereto belonging." They also ordered, from Toronto, 1000 feet of the best quality of hose offered to them: rubber, at $1.25 per foot, guaranteed for three or four years. The fire engine was delivered in June, and a committee was appointed to secure an engineer to take charge of it. They accepted the offer of C. W. Wees, to take charge of the engine until an engine house was built, at whatever compensation the council should deem reasonable.

The clerk was instructed to advertise that anyone having for sale a site suitable for a fire hall should put in a tender to the council. Three tenders were received, and it was decided to purchase from A. Weldon, for $350, a lot on St. George Street, the site of the present fire hall.

N.B.: The Kent County Almanac of 1883 says, "In 1854 - 55 was erected Dresden's first common school — a small frame one — located on the lot on which the corporation is now erecting the new fire hall." The south school is mentioned several times in the minute book, as a polling place, as early as 1873, and as late as May 11th, 1882; but on June 8th, 1882, voting was to be in Lewis' wagon shop, on the northwest corner of Lindsley and St. George Streets.

The council decided to employ a competent architect to draw up plans and specifications for an engine house, cost not to exceed $1000. The clerk was to notify the parties in the house on the site to leave, and a Property Committee was appointed by Mayor Alex Trerice to get the building moved off.

The fire hall was to be a 2-storey frame building with a tower, so tenders were called for its erection. In September, 1882, the council accepted the tender of Oscar French, for the sum of $750, provided he would substitute stone for brick, at an extra cost of $15. In three weeks he had commenced to place stone and other material on the ground for the foundation of the fire hall. On December 12th, the Property Committee presented their report on the completion of the hall, at a cost of $769, and recommended payment for same.

In May, 1883, the Property Committee advised that a tight fence be built along the front and north side of the fire hall lot, and that a lean-to, 12 feet wide, should be built behind the hall for wood, and coal and the coal cart. The council accepted the report and also empowered the committee to have the name "Defiance Fire Hall" painted on the front of the fire hall, in large letters, at a cost of $3.00. In August, H. Cole was paid for building the addition to the fire hall, $110.; and O. French, for lumber, $76.20. Other improvements later made to the fire hall were: the doors of the engine house were changed to swing outward, and a plank floor was laid in the coal house.

In March, 1886, the Fire, Water and Light Committee was instructed to procure an estimate of the cost of constructing a tower with tank, for the purpose of cleaning and drying the hose after being used. Plans and specifications were presented by John Dowswell, and tenders were called for its construction. Tenders presented were: T. Windover, $263; H. Cole, $259; J. M. Graham, $325; O. French Co., $265; and Laird Bros., $385. Apparently the council considered the cost prohibitive, because the building of the tower was laid over. At the next council meeting, it was decided to get an estimate of the cost of erecting a derrick for drying the hose.

In June, 1882, a public meeting was called by the Mayor, and a fire company was organized: Defiance No. 1. The members were listed as follows: Foreman, William Waterworth; 1st assistant, L. H. Corners; 2nd assistant, J. A. Wannamaker; Secretary, William Rudd; assistant secretary, R. Winter; Treasurer, C. Livingstone; Foreman Hose Co., Thos. Bingham; 1st asst., Thomass Weston; 2nd asst., J. W. King; Engineer, C. W. Wees; assistant, Thos. King; Branchmen, John Gough, Jehiel Smith, Philander Gillespie and J. W. Norton; Axemen, Noah Waffle and Edmund Ainsworth; Foreman of coal tenders, Fred Hildreth.

According to the minute book, the position of engineer was held by Thomas King for six months, for which he was paid the sum of $25. He resigned in January, 1883, and the council accepted the application of J. C. Ward for the position, at $100 per annum.

The council now had to equip the fire company for work, and purchased for their use: 4 heavy brass speaking trumpets, 2 fire axes, and a quantity of waste for cleaning the engine. Two dozen wrenches, at $3 per dozen, were purchased from Eli Turrill, who had a blacksmith shop on Camden Street. Alex Trerice supplied coal for the engine for $11.80, from his mill, west of the bridge.

At a council meeting in February, 1883, the committee of Fire, Water and Light recommended the purchase of various articles for the use of the firemen, including 35 firemen's jackets and hats; and that each fireman be allowed $3 per year, and the

remission of his poll tax. The report was accepted with the exception of the jackets, and the proviso that the $3 for the men not be paid till the end of the year, on their presenting a certificate from the secretary of the fire company.

Bills for these articles were duly presented to the council for payment, and they are interesting to quote, because they can tell so much of the people, places and prices of the era. In April, 1883, we read these: J. W. Grece, insurance for fire hall, $8.50; R. Tiffen, for stove and zinc, $10.75; E. J. Roche, Chatham, firemen's hats, $51.; Corp. of Chatham, for coal cart, $25.00; J. Killam, rubber coats, $18.00 (Killam's block was located just south of Dresden Service Station, and is now occupied by Manderson's Hardware and the Oliver farm machinery agency.)

It was decided that the sum of $4 should be paid to the person who, with his team of horses, first got to the fire hall in event of a fire; provided he took the engine to the fire. and returned it to the fire hall after the fire was put out, on producing an order from the chief of the fire company. In the minutes we read that William Drewery was paid for hauling the fire engine, $8, on one occasion. and at another time, $11 (some of which may have been for practice runs.)

In July, 1884, the Fire, Water and Light committee was instructed to ascertain the cost of a suitable fire alarm; and at the next meeting, they reported they could purchase, for $25, a bell weighing 190 pounds. This bell was purchased, but was returned, and the next larger size ordered. The second bell was also returned, it having proved of no use as a fire alarm either. No details are given of their final purchase, except two bills presented to the council for payment: "John Dowswell, freight on bells, $4.68," and "McVean and McVean Hardware, for bell, oil, etc., $55.

When Dresden's new fire engine was acquired, equipped and housed, another problem was very obvious—the need of a water supply for the use of the engine, so it was decided to build water tanks in various locations where the water of the river could not be utilized; though, no doubt it was necessary to fill these tanks with water from the river. These were to be located as follows: for the South Ward, on the corner of Cross and Robinson Streets, and at the corner of North and Sydenham Streets; North Ward, at the corner of James and Trerice Streets.

Later, pumps were placed on the tanks for public use. The bill for which was: Sanford Sager, for three pumps. $16.50; (Sanford Sager built wooden pumps in a shop on the south side of the river, about at the west end of Queen Street.)

A well was put down at the fire hall, with a lift pump in it, for filling the engine boiler. The accounts presented to the council were: "Campion, well for fire hall, $17.50;" and "Carscallen Bros. Hdwe., for lift pump, $61.17."

In order to pump the water from the river to fight a fire, it was necessary to build a dock at the water's edge, on which the fire engine could be run; so several of these fire docks were constructed at the foot of various streets. Some locations were: at the foot of Victoria Ave., in the South Ward; and at the foot of James St., in the North Ward. Later, one was built at the foot of Lindsley Street, and one between the bridge and the North Dresden planing mill. The dock at the Green Mountain Hotel, by the bridge, was repaired and widened; and in time, another fire dock was built at the foot of Talbot Street, in North Dresden.

For the position of engineer of the fire department for the year 1884, three applications were received from: Messrs. Ingram, Ward and King. The council voted to call for tenders for the position, after deciding the duties of the engineer.

His duties were to be: to act as engineer, to sleep in the fire hall, to provide his own bed clothing, to keep the engine clean, to attend all practises and fires, and to perform all duties to the satisfaction of the council and captain of the fire company. An amendment added to these duties, that of furnishing an assistant and having him posted to attend and run the engine in his absence. The tenders to state the name of the proposed assistant.

This notice was published in the Dresden Times, but no tenders were received, so it was decided to hire James Ward and his assistant at the salary they had asked in their previous application, $140.00 per year.

Two fires occurred shortly after this, so the committee again tried to make arrangements for the engineer to sleep in the fire hall. It was decided to pay James Ward 30c a night for doing so, until plans and estimates could be drawn up for erecting a cheap dwelling in connection with the fire hall, for a residence for the engineer; he to pay rent for same, or receive less salary. The house was not to cost more than $400,, and to be two stories high, and the council arranged to have plans drawn for it.

By this time it was 1885, and an engineer was needed for that year. They hired the only applicant, Thomas King, and his assistant, at a salary of $160., though he would not sleep in the fire hall, and could not keep fires on in the daytime, as he would be at work at the foundry. He was re-engaged in 1886, at the same salary; but no further mention is made in the minute book of the engineer's residence, which had been planned.

The question of uniforms for the members of the fire company was another problem encountered by council, and it grew into a prolonged campaign, with many sorties.

Early in 1884, Messrs. William Watterworth and Eli Turrell presented to council a petition, on behalf of the fire company, asking the grant of a sum of money for uniforms, cost to be about $6. each. It was moved that they be grant-

ed $200, but action was deferred until the finance committee had brought down their financial statement.

In June, the Fire, Water and Light committee reported that the fire company had resigned, and did not hold themselves responsible in the future. The committee recommended that council grant the sum of money required, so that the fire company could be formed again. A minority report suggested hiring just five men, in addition to the engineer and fireman, they to be paid up to $2 each for one practise a month, and $5 each for each fire; which plan would cost less than the uniforms. However, both reports were laid over till the next council meeting.

Before any action was taken on the matter, two fires occured while the fire company was still disbanded. One was the burning of the aforementioned Killam block, then of frame construction, south of Dresden Service Station, and on July 4th, 1884, a fire in the Baptist Church did considerable damage.

At the next council meeting, the F. W. and L. committee announced that a number of choice men had been spoken to, who were willing to form a good fire company, if the council would grant $200 for uniforms. After considerable discussion, it was voted that the grant would be given when a fire company of 20 or 25 men had been formed.

In August, the committee reported that a fire company had been enrolled, and recommended payment of the promised grant of money. In response to this, council decided that the $200 should remain in the hands of the town treasurer, C. P. Watson, and that orders from the secretary of the fire company should be paid to above amount; bill of articles bought to accompany each order.

This was unsatisfactory to the fire company, so, on September 2, the motion to keep the $200 in the treasurer's hands was rescinded. It was then moved that the council grant an order of $200 to the captain of the fire company, John Fretz, the order to be payable in October of that year; but this motion was lost.

Further dissension followed, and at the next council meeting, the same motion was made and carried, though one councillor gave notice that he would, at the next session, move to have it re-considered. However, on October 21st, the same motion was again passed, but John Fretz had apparently resigned from the position of captain of the fire company, as Jacob French was now named as the holder of that office.

Victors in these hard-fought battles, the fire company received their grant and purchased their uniforms; conducting themselves admirably at subsequent fires — one being the burning, in the early part of 1886, of the school for coloured children, which stood east of the Catholic church, on the site of Mr. George Duff's house. At the next council meeting, a letter was read from R. M. Stuart,

chairman of the public school board, asking for the use of the town hall for the coloured school, till the end of June.

Turning back to the council, we find them in the early part of 1886, as having solved all their apparent problems in regard to fire protection, except the building of a tower or a derrick for the purpose of hanging the hose to dry after being used. They had obtained plans of a tower from an architect, John Dowswell, and had five tenders for its erection, but found the cost prohibitive. Time passed and nothing was done, except that on October 12th they ordered payment of John Dowswell's account for drawing up the plans and specifications. However, in a month's time, this small problem was suddenly and painfully solved by a calamity beyond imagination.

To explain this, it is necessary to give a description of the places and circumstances involved, as the local scene was somewhat different then, nearly a lifetime ago. Perhaps to us, the most interesting feature was a large roller skating rink, which stood across the street from the fire hall, and is well remembered by some of our senior citizens. This rink was owned by Mr. George Barton, and is mentioned in the second minute book, in February, 1885, when a letter was read in council from Mr. Barton, offering free use of the roller skating rink, for an entertainment for the benefit of the poor. The council accepted with thanks, and appointed a committee to arrange for an entertainment. In April, the committee reported having given $5.00 to several indigent persons, from the total proceeds of $46.50 from the charity carnival in the rink.

We find amusing the next mention of the rink, when, in the summer, the council instructed the clerk, John Chapple, to notify Mr. Barton that the noise from the rink disturbed the council when in session. (With the windows opened on account of the heat, no doubt.)

On the corner where the Massey Harris lot and shop are today, stood Lewis' blacksmith shop and Robinson's wagon and carriage shop; and south of them was the Horning (later Queen's) Hotel, the Webster brothers now have their garage business. To the south of the skating rink was the large, wooden, Hare's Hotel (formerly Asa Chase's).

To the south of the fire hall was Sam Arnold's furniture shop, a frame building which Fosters later moved south-east on Lindsley St., to use for their poultry business. North of the fire hall were some dwellings, including that of the Grandmother Parkes; and on the Presbyterian Church corner was a small store, with dwelling attached, run by James Hazzard.

About 2.30 on the morning of November 5th, 1886, Mr. George Horning, of Horning's Hotel, discovered a fire near him, and lost no time in giving the alarm, as the flames were making fearful progress. In a short time, the willing firemen, with a number of citizens, were on the ground,

ready for action, and found that Messrs. Lewis and Robinson's blacksmith and carriage shops were enveloped in flames. A portion of the Dresden Roller Rink, opposite the fire hall, had begun to burn, and before the firemen could get the fire engine out, the upper and middle portions of the fire hall caught fire from the intense heat.

The engine was finally brought out, but part of the hose, etc., had to be removed from the back way. The engine in a few minutes would have been counted in the loss. It was some time after the alarm was given before water was played on the flames, which, by this time, had gained great headway. The rink was half gone, and Hare's Hotel and the fire hall past saving, when the engine was ready for action. The citizens were at fault in their backwardness to lend a helping hand in shifting and carrying the hose, when called upon to do so, by Chief Dowswell, who did more than his share of the work, and who should not have needed to touch his hands to anything outside of giving orders. However, a large number of citizens did good service in assisting to remove goods, etc., and in carrying water.

We are indebted to the 1886 file of the Dresden Times for the major portion of the above account, as taken from an extra published especially to cover the fire. It gave a list of the losses which were: Hare's Hotel, Mr. G. Barton's rink, Lewis' blacksmith shop, Robinson's carriage shop, the fire hall, Hazzard's store and several dwellings, Reid's being mentioned by name. Thus, all the buildings on both sides of the block were burned, except Arnold's cabinet shop, south of the fire hall. Mr. Hare lost everything except his family, the clothes on his back, his gun, and nearly $200 in cash. One hose reel and 75 feet of hose were burned, and the fire chief had the misfortune to fall and break his speaking trumpet. The Dresden Band had been accustomed to practise upstairs in the fire hall, so, both their drums, an alto horn and music stands were destroyed.

The reflection of the burning buildings was seen by those aboard the steamer Byron Trerice, tied up at Wallaceburg, and the boat made a rapid trip up the river.

Apparently, as so often happens, there was afterward some criticism of the fire company, and the Dresden Times extra attempted to defend them by explaining their difficulties with the engine and the unfortunate mishaps which seemed to frustrate their efforts. One reason given was that the boiler on the fire engine was leaking, allowing the water to run on the fire, making it difficult to get steam up and keep it up. Then, when the hose was most needed, it gave way, causing a delay of a few minutes. Also, when the water was turned on, a team of horses tied to a tree, with harness attached, ran away as some spray from the hose struck them, causing a great scattering among the crowd. And, as before mentioned, the firemen did not receive the

help they might have from the bystanders.

We could not fail to acclaim the firemen as deserving of thanks for the courageous efforts they made, when we consider the circumstances — called from their beds in the middle of the night, to find the fire so far advanced; the fire hall burning; their engine defective; and to work without a modern light system, as electric lights were not even considered till two years later. To this, add some looting, as Mr. James Hazzard reported the theft of his goods, including two beds, bedding, dishes, and shoes replaced by a worn out pair.

So, after a night made horrible by the roaring and flames of another triumph of the demon fire, many, with sad hearts, turned back to their homes, to finish their interrupted slumbers, while the firemen still kept watch.

It is understandable that this calamity brought many perplexities to the town fathers. At the next council meeting, on November 9th, it was decided to meet the next morning to examine the town hall and arrange a temporary shelter in it for the fire engine. Later, we find this account presented for payment: "Thos. Windover, $28.00, for fixing town hall for fire engine."

Other repairs necessitated by the fire were indicated by other accounts: "Thos. Hart, repairs and replacing hose cart, $45.00; Rudd and Co., repairs on sprinkler, etc., $24.50; Graham and Brown, repairs to fire engine, $11.-50." Thos. Hart had a blacksmith shop on Water Street; Rudd and Co. had a carriage factory on the site of the old bowling green and Dr. Ruttle's house; and Graham and Brown ran a foundry on Metcalfe Street, where Gordon Clark's storage sheds are today.

At the same council meeting, Mr. W. H. Windover gave notice that he would introduce a by-law to establish fire limits in Dresden, to include St. George and Main Streets. This by-law was prepared and read in council three times, and was passed at the last council meeting in 1886. It made specification that buildings in the fire limits should be of brick or stone, with roofs covered with metal or with shingles set in mortar. One of the first persons to ask for a permit for a building within the fire limits was Dr. Pomeroy, who erected an office building east of the Clifford House, and had his living quarters in the hotel itself. In 1890, William Pulver was heard in council respecting a lime house (which he was operating) within the fire limits. It was voted that Mr. Pulver be allowed to let the lime house remain where it was (west of the bridge on the south bank). This lime house or kiln burned in the flood of 1904. Mr. Pulver was a builder, and his name appears on the cornerstone of Glen Wicks' store building, dated 1887.

T. B. Anderson and others presented a petition asking for repairs to the side walks in the area of the recent fire. A by-

law was passed to fix a place in the centre ward to hold elections, instead of in the fire hall. The council also had to prepare a room in the town hall for the council meetings. Two accounts in this connection being: "Dines, glazing, town hall, $1.00; and Wm. Bodkin, stove, pipes, etc., $16.73."

In March, 1887, a committee was appointed to consider building a brick fire hall on the old site, and a plan was prepared and submitted to the council, by whom it was approved. A by-law was drawn up by the clerk, John Chapple, for the purpose of borrowing upon the credit of the municipality of Dresden, the sum of $7000, for building a fire hall, and constructing a sewer on St. George St. But, on being submitted to the electors, it was defeated by a majority of ten votes. Whereupon, another by-law, to raise only $2000, was put through the necessary formalities, and was favorably received by the ratepayers.

Tenders for building the new fire hall were received from Steeper, for $2620.; and from A. E. Dowswell, for $2549. The second tender was accepted, provided that Dowswell should complete the fire hall before the 1st of January, 1888, and could give satisfactory security for the completion of the work. Charles McIntosh was appointed to oversee the construction at a salary of $25.00.

The hall was completed and put in charge of the Fire, Water and Light committee, who later made minor additions and improvements aimed to promote in every way the efficiency of the fire company; and adequate insurance on the hall was provided by a policy drawn up by Simeon Wallace. It was also necessary to furnish the council chamber and the firemen's hall, in the fire hall, and accounts as presented, name for us some of the business men of that period: R. McConnell, for chairs; N. A. Merrill, window blinds; John Robinson, hooks; and Ripley, for oil.

The fire docks also received attention, with repairs to the one at the head of Main Street, and a bumper on the one at the foot of Lindsley Street. A grant of $35.00 was made to Laird Bros., to help them build a fire dock on lot 79, in N. Dresden. In 1890, the F. W. and L. committee advised a fire bridge west of the bridge, and, in 1892, another fire dock halfway between the one west of the bridge and the one at James Stephens, at the foot of Victoria Street. The committee later was given a grant of $40 for extra work, repairing fire docks damaged by the river overflowing its banks in the flood of 1892. The firm of French, Wells and Burnie was paid $125.88, for lumber. Later, the old City Dock (formerly Watson's) was rebuilt, to be used as a fire dock, John Gordon paying half the cost.

The accounts mentioned in the minute books give a record, though perhaps incomplete, of the fires that occured during the early years when the fire department was more

under the supervision of the council than at present. For 1888, in January, for hauling the engine to fires, Drewery was paid $9.00, which would indicate three fires; and in March, Drewery and Myers. for hauling the fire engine, $5.00. On August 28th, Kenmel Sager, for cleaning and drying the hose, $3.00; and on November 20th, Charles Shaw, Alex Brackett and A. Badgely, $1.00 each for cleaning and drying hose, "after late fire."

In 1889, we see indications of fires in these accounts; April 9th, Charles Shaw and others, cleaning hose, $3.00; June 4, D. G. Huff and Co., for cleaning hose, $3.00; and on August 27, Alex Brackett and others, cleaning hose $3. The last named fire was at McVean's; McWha's Restaurant, on Main Street, was paid by the council "for refreshments for the men at McVean's fire." Also, extra men employed to assist at the fire, were paid $14.00.

In 1890, we read in February of Trerice's fire, when Alex Trerice's large brick residence was burned. This house was built in 1882, in the centre of the square now fronted by the homes of the late William McVean and that of Miss Eva Aiken. Some accounts in the minutes are; D. G. Huff, cleaning hose. $3.00; C. Peate, watching fire, $1.50; Kenmel Sager, ditto, etc., $2.25; William Moore, loss of time through accident at Trerice's fire, $8.00; Mrs. Shaw, nursing William Moore. $5.00. The firemen received a bonus of $15.00 for their outstanding service at the fire.

Another fire occurred on the night of July 27th, 1890, when some one set fire to the buildings of S. G. Smith and Turner; and council offered a reward of $100 for the apprehension and conviction of the guilty party It was necessary to replace Mrs. Horning's ladder, which had been burned in this fire; and King Bros. foundry was paid $112.10. for repairs to fire engine. Thomas Mead also suffered loss from fire in 1890.

In 1891, the only mention in the minute book of fires is the account: "August 4, James Sager, for hauling fire engine, $2.00; and John Robinson, repairs to hose reel, water tank, etc., $4.25."

For the year 1892, we find only the account of a major fire, when on January 27th, the Oddfellows' block was burned out. The Dresden firemen apparently met with considerable difficulty, so that it was necessary to call on the Chatham Fire Department for help. They complied very promptly, for which the clerk was later instructed to send them a letter of thanks.

The report on the fire, as given at the next council meeting, was as follows: The engine was in good repair and carried more pressure of steam than at any previous fire. The difficulty was, first, that the engine was not placed close enough to the edge of the fire dock, and the suction pipe had to draw water 22 - 25 feet; and, second, the dock was too high for the low water, even when the engine was placed at the edge of the dock, which did not give the

power needed in such cold weather. Then, almost as soon as the engine began to throw water, a link of hose burst, and, while it was being replaced, the water in the hose had a chance to freeze. The engineer and firemen were exonerated from all blame, and T. Steeper and O. Merrill were recommended to continue as fire engineers; they having held the position since 1887, when Thomas King resigned, having purchased the foundry from Adam Graham. A heater for the fire engine was ordered on trial, which proved unsatisfactory. A second one was ordered later.

The annual grant to the Defiance fire company had been $2.00 or $3.00 annually to each member in good standing, but in 1890, it was voted to grant to each fireman, the sum of $8.00 per year; with the company limited to 20 men and the two engineers. Thereafter, the management of the fire department was to be left with the company as regards rules and regulations concerning membership and general affairs. Various purchases were made for their comfort and efficiency, such as: Robt. Aikin, for boots and coats for fire dept., $12.28; a new bell for a fire alarm; a new suction hose; 2 ladders and a pole hook, etc. R. H. Prebble was engaged to keep the engine clean and in order at $1.52 per month.

For 1892, the officers for the fire company were: Chief, John Robinson; first assistant, W. H. Clapp; second assistant, Charles Shaw; treasurer, Richard H. Prebble; secretary, H. J. French.

So, in the same pattern have the years gone by, with the Defiance Fire Company ever ready in time of need, meeting that great adversary, Fire; sometimes with success and sometimes with saddening reverses; but never with failure, for no one is a failure if he has the heart to try again. They learned to profit by their mistakes, and to be better prepared the next time, no matter how soon it came; with new methods and new equipment to aid them.

With the passing of time, the personnel of the fire company has changed, but the spirit has remained the same. The old steam fire engine gave valiant service, but it too was retired following the great fire of Christmas eve, 1910. After that, water was obtained from the river through two suction lines, one by the bridge and one by Bresett's mill, drawn up by steam pumps, located in the back of what was the old hydro-electric building and is now the police office. With the coming of hydro-electric power in 1889, the steam pumps were later replaced by electric ones. The hose carts were pulled by hand to the scene of the fire, and the hose attached to the nearest hydrant. This system, too, has been put in the background by the erection of the water tower and the drilling of several wells.

During the early part of the present century, the valiant men of our volunteer fire company have rushed to action against many fires. Some of the more serious were: Cragg's Hotel; The

Clifford House, 1908; the Main Street fire, Christmas eve, 1910; the Union block, 1920; the Maple Leaf Mill, 1921; and the Queen's Hotel.

Some men who have held the position of Dresden's fire chief at various times are: William Watterworth (foreman), 1882; John Fretz, (captain); Jacob French (captain); John Robinson, 1892; John Dowswell, John Jackson, Tom Warner, Noble Law, and Rufus Law, now in his 16th year in the office.

Modernization of the fire department began in 1943. when a new pumper was bought. A scrap drive was held to collect money to help in the first attempt at raising funds for an arena. When this attempt was unsuccessful, the money realized from the scrap was used to buy a new chemical truck. Other new equipment was acquired, including an aluminum boat for rescue work on the Sydenham River. A cement floor was laid in the hall and a fire siren was installed. Last year, a new two wheeled trailer pumper was purchased.

The present fire company consists of 21 men and a junior force of 10 younger members, who will be added to the senior group whenever a vacancy occurs in its ranks. The firemen hold a monthly practice in fire fighting, undergo an annual examination; and twice a year inspect the business premises of the town, also any dwellings that might constitute a fire hazzard.

In competition with other fire companies, Dresden has always ranked high, and the annual firemen's convention was held here in 1941, and also in 1951.

The present members of the Dresden Fire Company are: Rufus Law, chief; Dalton Misselbrook, assistant chief; Goldie Oliphant, Harold Oliphant, Don Oliphant, Hugh Latimer, Tom Houston, Bill Martin, Ormond Farnsworth, Eugene Huff, Bill Hawgood, Bill Dawson, Howard Misselbrook, Art Lennon, Allan Law, Ford Newman, Roy Whitson, Gordon Wilson, Elwood Clark, Ray Kalar and John London.

Our fire company will, in three years, celebrate its 75th anniversary — 75 years of fortitude and heroic service. We are proud of them! May they have success in all their endeavours.