

A Brief History of the Midland Fire Department

The Midland Fire Department was established in 1883 under Volunteer Chief Ruby and 15 men. The first piece of apparatus was a hand-drawn manual pump on wheels, located at King and Elizabeth Streets where Super Save now stands. The firefighters were summoned by a siren on top of the building on a ward system, such as two blasts on the siren for Ward 2. The siren was in service until March 9, 1979.

In 1888 Chief Stafford became Chief. He was instrumental in obtaining a steam boiler pump which was horse-drawn. The Chief's main job was to ensure a quick fire in the boiler by spreading shavings around the fire box. By the time the horse team was hitched, the boiler had enough steam generated to pump water.

A water tank was erected in 1904, on Dominion Avenue where it still stands. Sixty-one fire hydrants were then installed throughout town.

Chief Tool became Chief in 1906, until N.K. Wagg took over in the roaring 1920's. In 1917 Midland took delivery of its first motorized vehicle, a 1917 Ford hose tender. Then in 1926 M.F.D. received its first motorized pumper, a 1926, 800 gallon per minute Bickle front mount pump on a Godferson chassis, which is now a showpiece in Toronto.

In 1926 P. Grigg who became Chief was the first man to become permanent Chief in 1928 at a salary of \$2,000 a year. In 1955 to 1957 the Fire Hall moved to the corners of Bay and Queen Streets where the L.C.B.O. now stands. The equipment was a 1947 and a 1951 hose tender that Doug Hebner now owns.

Arnold Tippen took over as Chief in 1956 with three permanent firefighters. The fire hall moved to Dominion and Second Streets, its present location. The pumpers and equipment began to get more sophisticated between 1958 and 1976.

The pumpers are a 1958 American Marsh 625 g.p.m. midship pump on a Mercury chassis, a 1964 tilt cab Ford with an 840 g.p.m. midship pump, a 1972 Ford tilt cab 840 g.p.m. midship pump, and Midland's first rescue truck which doubled as a hose tender, a 1976 Ford Cube Van. The fire service started a new era in rescue vehicle extrication. Although the men had taken different courses in extrication, we didn't have the proper tools and equipment.

The Midland Jaycees saw a need for specialized equipment, and undertook a campaign called Save A Life. The Jaycees managed to collect enough money to fully furnish our rescue truck with the most modern equipment such as Jaws of Life, come-along kits and spreaders. In 1980 Midland had its first fully-equipped rescue rig.

In 1976 Chief Miller took over the department and got the go-

ahead to purchase an aerial truck. So Chief Miller purchased a 100-foot King Seagrave with an 840 g.p.m. midship pump and a 740 g.p.m. nozzle.

Jim Lemieux took over the job as Chief in 1979, with 13 men. That was the year of the go-ahead for an expansion to facilitate the aerial ladder. Just as the expansion was to be completed, tragedy struck. The upstairs of the municipal building was ravaged by fire totally gutting the municipal offices, which left the fire department temporarily homeless. The Corporation decided to move it to the Civic Centre until the municipal building was repaired.

Terry Lethbridge took over as Chief in 1979. March 31, 1982 was the year that layoffs occurred in the Midland Fire Department. Council decided to lay off three permanent firefighters in an austerity program. The three men came back on the job, but only through retirements and the untimely death of Mickey McIntaggart.

Chief Harold Belfry took over the top job in 1983, with eight men and Deputy Chief Moreau. Auto extrication came into heavy demand, so Simcoe County decided to purchase five rescue trucks and strategically place them throughout the county. Midland received one such vehicle, a 1983 Ford Rescue Van fully equipped with modern rescue tools. The cutting of any boundry problems that municipal fire departments are now saddled with was the reason for buying the trucks.

The fire service has come a long way since 1883. With this equipment it has become more sophisticated. The town now has 293 hydrants and two water towers. As new recruits come into the fire service there is a need for in-depth training. That is why there is a need for a training manual, and training. We are professionals so the training makes us look like professionals, the fire chief says.

In August, 1985 a new 1050 pumper was purchased from Superior Fire Trucks of Red Deer, Alta., putting to rest the 1958 pumper that had served Midland for 27 years. The department's extrication equipment has been updated.

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