

BROADSIDE

FALL 1995

THE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANIES OF WEST WINDSOR: PART I

FIRE!!!

It strikes terror in the hearts of each of us. The thought of our loved ones, our houses, our treasured family possessions going up in smoke is a sobering one. In West Windsor, organized fire companies did not begin until the 1920s. Before that, when neighbors could not cope, fire companies from Princeton or Hightstown were called in. Here is the story of West Windsor's two fire companies:

WEST WINDSOR VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1

Thanks to Wayne Tindall, WW Fire Co. Historian, and Mary Schenck, Ladies Auxiliary Trustee, for their help in writing this history.

A notarized advertisement in the Trenton State Gazette of April 23, 1921 announced a meeting in Dutch Neck to discuss formation of a fire company. At the meeting April 23rd, a committee consisting of: Hiram A. Cook-owner of Dutch Neck hardware-farm supply store; Frank R. Adams-owner of Dutch Neck general store; John S. Mount; Walter F. Conover, Sr.; Walter S. Grover and David B. Bergen was appointed to canvass residents of the township to obtain their sentiments concerning making the proposed fire company a township organization. (con't on page 2)



PRINCETON JUNCTION VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1

Thanks to the following for their help in writing this article: William Manuel, Pr. Jct. Fire Co. Historian, Lorraine Kapp, former Ladies Auxiliary President and James Yates, Emergency Services Director, West Windsor Township.

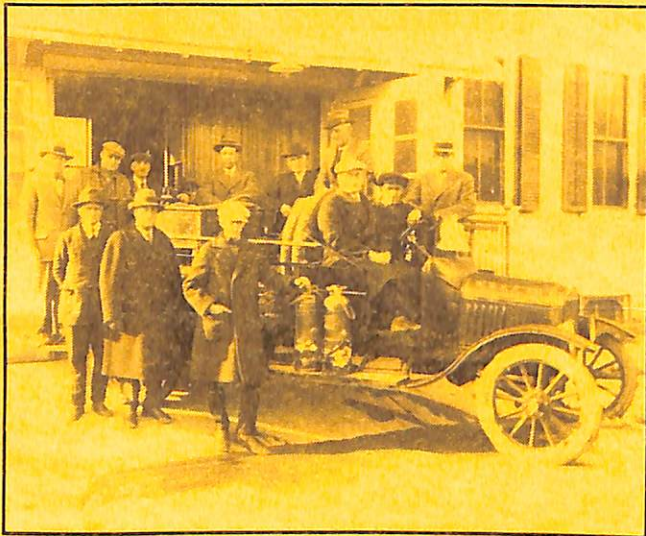
West Windsor began its turn from rural to suburban in the 1920s with the development of Berrien City around the Princeton Junction train station. (See Fall 1992 -Broadside). This influx of population was too much for the existing fire company (West Windsor Fire Co. in Dutch Neck) to handle alone. On June 3, 1926 some men from Princeton Junction and Berrien City met at Barnet Press's farmhouse on Clarksville Road (now the Windsor Chase development) and organized themselves as the Berrien City Fire Company. (con't on page 5)



WW FIRE CO. (con't from page 1)

Since a majority of citizens was in favor of the proposal, a company was formed, to be known as the Dutch Neck Volunteer Fire Department. The officers were elected March 5, 1921. The name of the company was changed almost immediately to the West Windsor Fire Company since it would handle fires in all of the township.

In June 1921 another committee was appointed to investigate buying fire fighting equipment. A Model T Ford was the first fire engine purchased for \$1400 and housed in a rear section of the Town Hall, located at the corner of Village and South Mill Roads, now a small park. This truck was equipped with chemical tanks and water buckets. In November 1922 three fire coats and three pairs of boots were purchased for \$46.50.

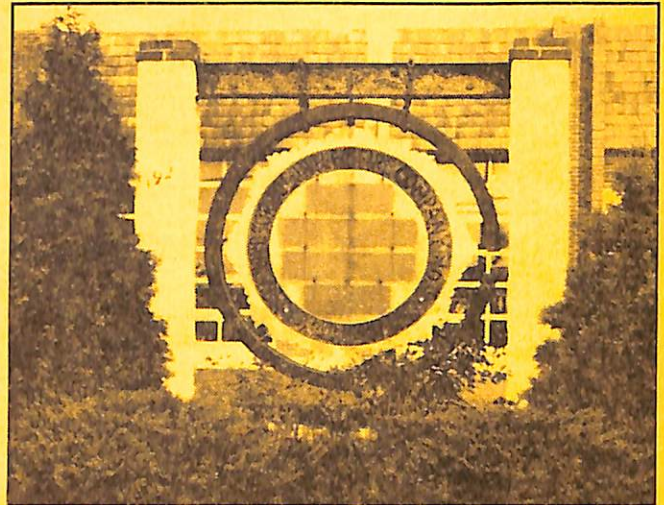


First fire engine, a 1921 Model T Ford. Seated in engine: William Hann, Harvey Applegate. In front: Irving Everett, Frank Adams, Orville Walton. Behind (L to R): Fred Cook, Gordon Tindall, Wyndom Smallbone, Wilbert Conover, Hiram, William, and John Mount. Photo: Elsie Goodrich.

The very first call for the company was a fire at the home of Irving Everett, on what is now Everett Drive. Unfortunately, the farmhouse was unable to be saved, but the surrounding out-buildings and barns were spared.

In 1923 the fire truck was equipped with lights and a self-starter. In spring 1924 the first rooftop siren was installed on the Town Hall in Dutch Neck. Before the siren, fire alarms were given by tapping on a railroad car wheel, the number of taps giving the firefighters the location of the fire.

In 1928, further equipment was purchased, including a Reo chassis for \$2094.60 that was used until 1945. At that time a Mack pumper was bought. In 1952, a 1929 Buffalo field truck was purchased and used until its retirement in 1965. In 1959 an International 1,000 gallon pumper was delivered to the company. In 1965, the company purchased a Dodge Power Wagon and a second 1,000 gallon International pumper.



Railroad car wheel used to indicate location of fire before installation of the fire siren. Photo: Wayne Tindall

In 1952 the West Windsor Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1 moved from Town Hall into their new firehouse. A Building Fund started in the late 1940s and 1950s, as well as a mortgage, enabled the firemen to obtain land from Charles Holman on South Mill Road, across from the church. The majority of the labor on the new firehouse was donated by the firemen, many of whom were builders. In 1962 the mortgage was paid and the company enjoyed a Mortgage Burning Party.

Improvements and additions have been made to the firehouse over the years with funds raised by various activities of the company and Ladies Auxiliary. Some of these events included: variety shows, Donkey Baseball, horse shows, selling chances, carnivals, sale of smoke detectors (before they were common). Today the Chicken Barbecue and an annual mailing to Township residents are the only fund-raisers.

Wayne Tindall reminisces: "A particularly funny event occurred during a Fashion Show when the firemen were asked to model the dresses. The men wore make-up and some smoked cigars. During the show a fire alarm came in and the company re-

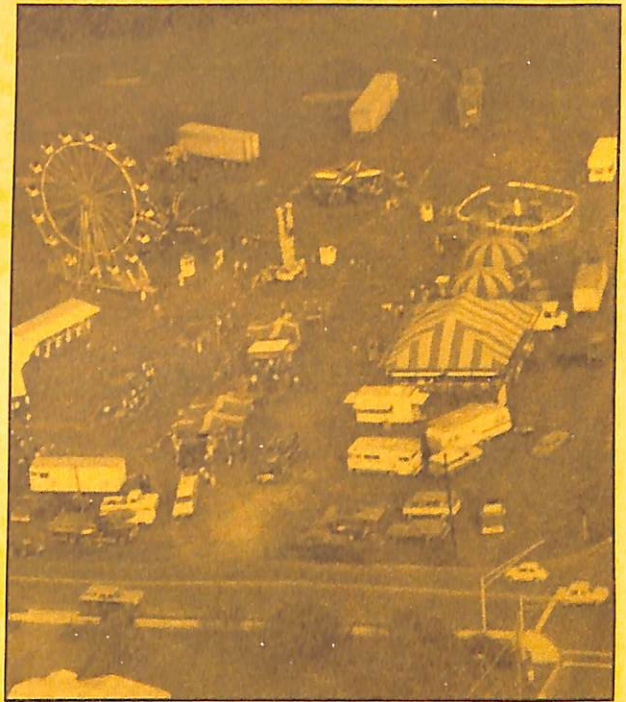
sponded to a fire at a local restaurant. Some of the diners could not help but notice that the firemen were wearing makeup and had dresses showing below their fire coats!

“During the Donkey Baseball Games members were asked to hit the baseball, jump on a donkey and run the bases, while the basemen and fielders attempted to tag them out on the donkeys. This event was extremely funny.

“Other than outright donations, the first fund-raisers were variety shows which began as blackface, minstrel shows in the 1940s and ended up as standard variety shows with a TV or Broadway theme.”

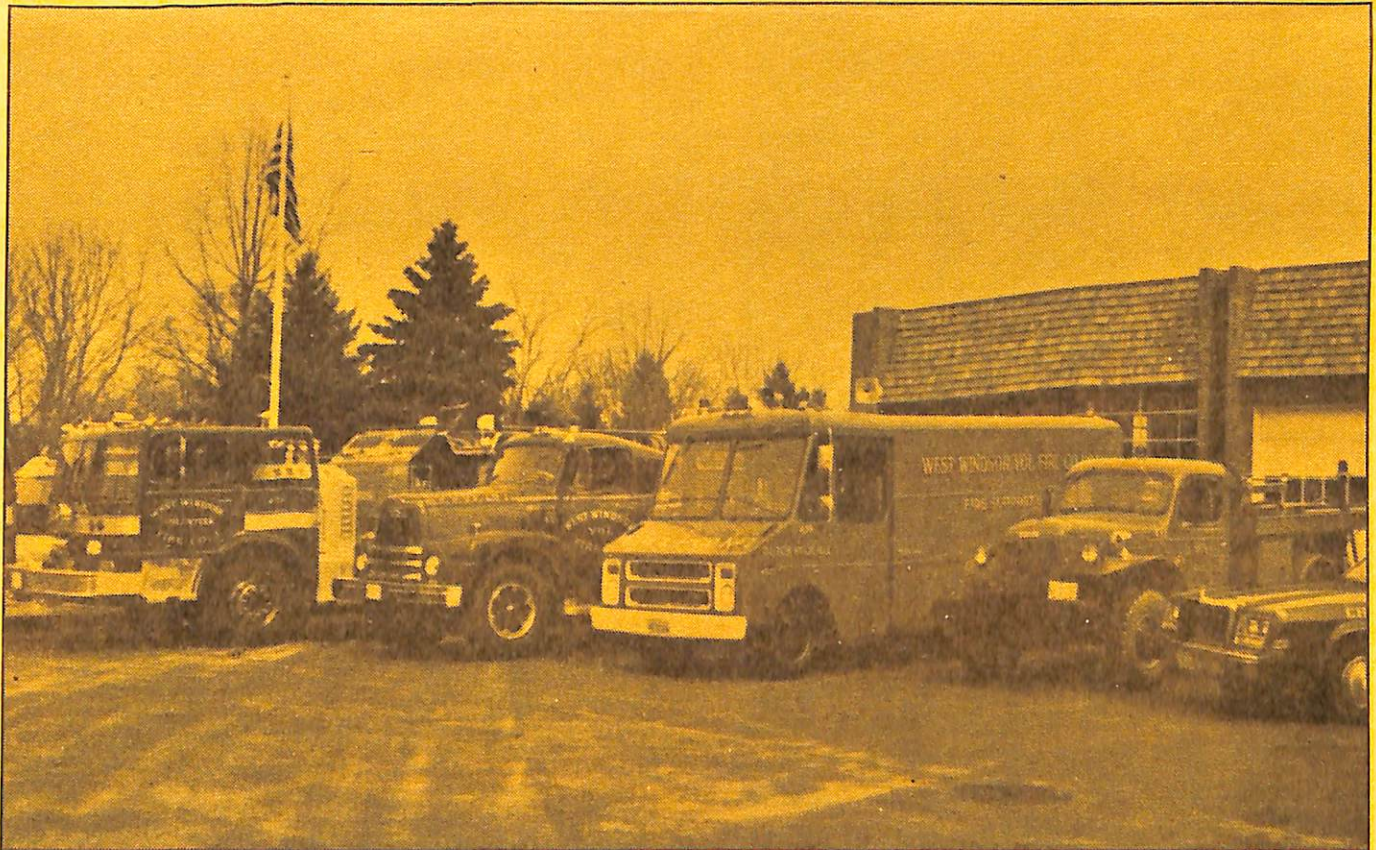
Fire Company Growth - 1960-1980s by Wayne Tindall

In the mid-1960s the fire company realized that the building needed to be expanded. A Meeting Room/Office was added to the rear in 1969. In September 1974, the fire company added a major addition to the north side of the building to house three more fire engines, a Radio Room, Chief's Office, Engineer's Room and much needed storage space.



Aerial view of carnival at Coward tract in 1976.

This addition also has enabled the fire company to install a hose drying facility and turn out gear racks. (Turn out gear is the set of fire hat, coat, pants and boots which stand ready for the fire fighter to leap

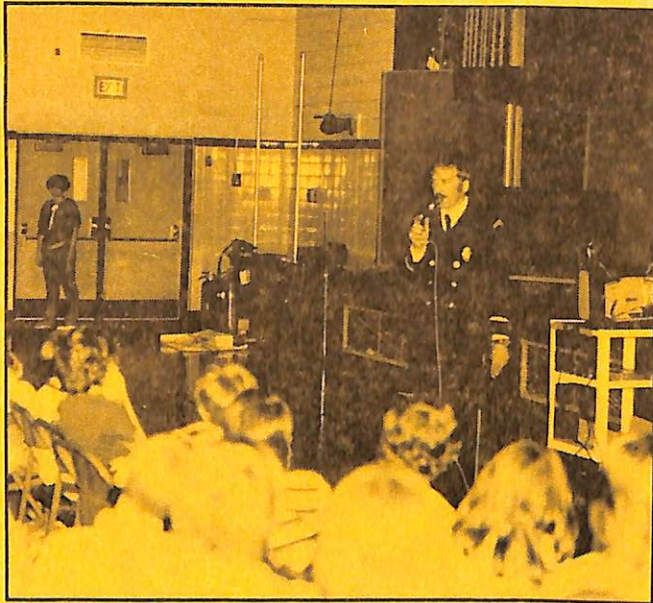


WW FIRE CO. (con't)

into at the sound of the fire alarm!) The high ceilings enabled the taller fire trucks developed at the time to fit into the building.

The 1974 addition necessitated the fire company to buy, sell and move the ranch house that had been located next to the fire house. The house was moved to Grovers Mill.

The fire company equipment currently consists of a rescue boat and six fire trucks: (1) Brush 43-a 1965 Dodge power wagon used for brush and field fires. (2) Engine 434-a reserve pumper purchased in 1974. (3) Engine 435-2,000 gallon per minute pumper with large diameter hose. (4) TAC 43-4 wheel drive, full size pumper that can respond to fire through deep snow or mud. (5) Special Services 43-heavy rescue truck designed to support all fire company activities at accidents and fire scenes with rescue lights, tools, air supply and medical equipment. (6) Telesquirt 43-acquired in 1994, a high capacity pumper with a 75 foot ladder mounted on top. This apparatus is used first on most fires.



Wayne Tindall speaks at a Fire Prevention Assembly, 1976.

Special Programs

Until five years ago, members of the fire company gave lectures and tours of the fire house to school children from nursery school through grade school during Fire Prevention Month. Today the Township Emergency Services Department handles these activities.



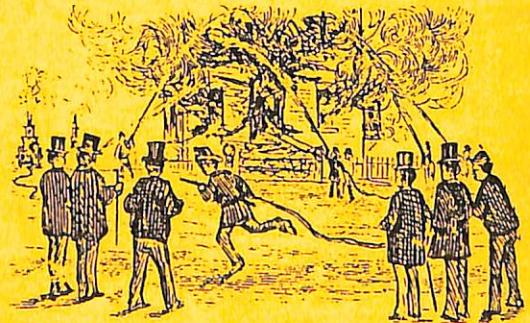
Raging barn fire at a drill held in Mercer Country park in 1972. Photo: Wayne Tindall

Fire Fighters Training & Competitions

Volunteers of the fire companies must go through stringent training courses in fire fighting and handling other emergency situations, such as car accidents, floods, etc. They also attend courses for fire fighters given at Mercer County Community College.

The members of the fire company have found their "other" professions (electrician, plumber, etc.) useful in dealing with emergencies such as flooded basements, car fires and car accident extrications.

The West Windsor Fire Company has won many prizes in competitions with other fire companies held by the Mercer County Fire Chiefs. The company won the majority of the trophies in the six events held during "Firemen's Field Day." The Ladies' Auxiliary also won many awards during the "Powder Puff Bucket Brigade." 🐦

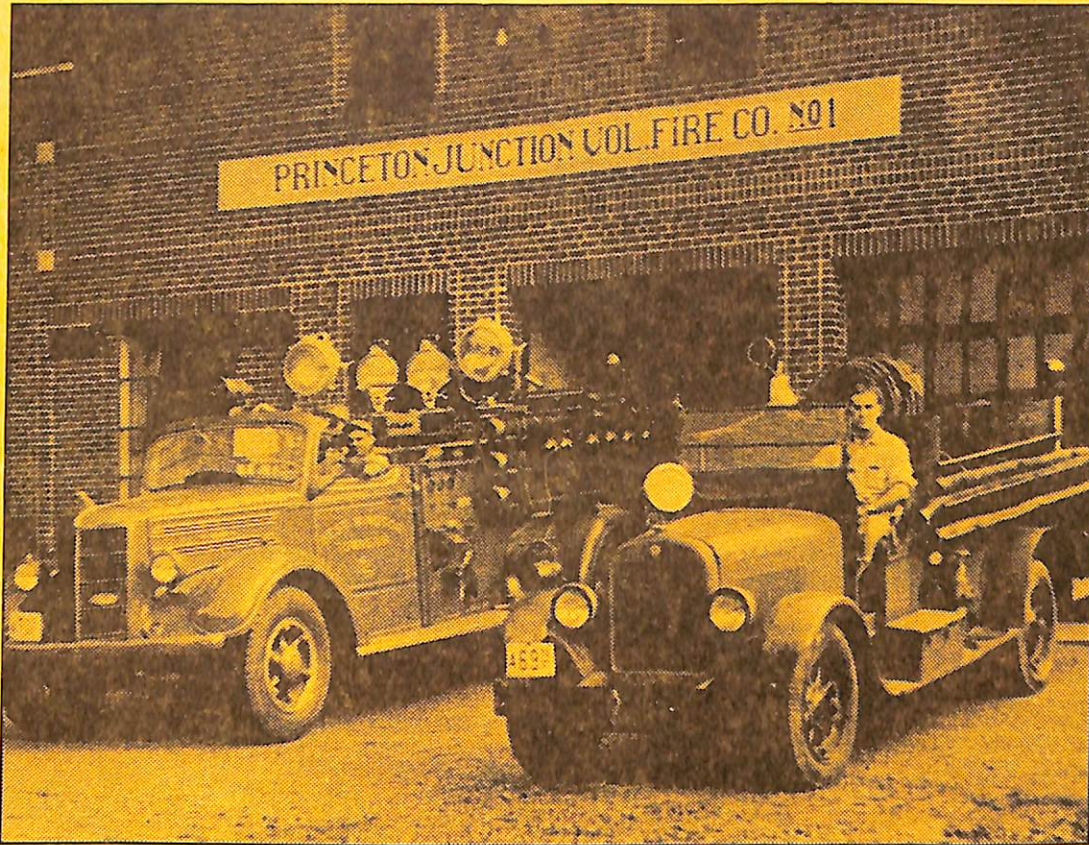


To be concluded - Spring 1996

PRINCETON JUNCTION VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1 (con't from page 1)

Their equipment reflected the locales in which they fought fires. They had a pumper (there were no fire hydrants) and a "brush" truck to handle field fires.

On September 20, 1927 the first fire truck was ordered at a cost of \$3,900. It was a 1928 Foamite Chemical truck with four 35 gallon chemical tanks on a 1-1/2 ton Reo chassis. The equipment was stored in many different housing facilities, including a private garage on Berrien Avenue and a brick building on Station Drive.



The 1945 Mack Pumper and 1926 Reo — from Princeton Jct. 50th Anniversary booklet

In 1930, the company was reorganized as The Princeton Junction Volunteer Fire Company No. 1. By 1931, its two-bay firehouse on the corner of Alexander Road and Scott Avenue was built. In 1960 two bays were added, and in 1970, a third. In 1986 the roof of this bay was raised to handle taller equipment, and in 1994, it was lengthened to fit the Telesquirt and ladder trucks.

When space was needed for expansion of the fire house, a house, owned and rented out by the fire

company on the corner of Scott Ave. and Alexander Road, was moved to North Post Road, where it stands two houses east of the railroad bridge at Alexander and North Post.

A kitchen was installed where the first two bays had been and used for various events. The rest of the space was used for meetings. It was also the home of the Senior Citizens Center from the early 1980s to 1989 when the Senior Center at the Township Complex was opened.

To raise funds during the Depression, Bingo was introduced in June, 1938. It continued until the early 1980s when Bingo games in Pennsylvania began to offer prizes of \$1,000 which New Jersey law forbade.

During the war years a First Aid and Civil Defense station (see *Broadside Summer/Fall 1988*) was maintained at the Alexander Road firehouse. Also for a time, one of the firehouse bays was rented to one of the local post offices.

The war did not affect too many volunteer fire fighters since many worked for the railroad, an essential industry.

In December 1944, the "specs" for the first postwar engine were drawn up: a 1945 Mack 500 gpm pumper. This pumper was in service until 1969 when it was sold for \$1 to East Windsor Township to help start their fire company. They returned it for retirement in 1975, after 30 years of faithful service.



PRINCETON JUNCTION VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1 (con't)

In December 1948, the first Annual Fund Drive was held. In the 1950s, the company sponsored a Little League baseball team. They also sponsored an Explorer Troop of the Boy Scouts, which joined the company as junior fire fighters and went through fire fighting training.

The company also brought in the Hoxie Brothers Circus which was held at the Coward tract in the 1970s. An annual Roast Beef Dinner was also held. A yearly fund drive to the West Windsor community is at present the only fund raiser for the fire company.



Hoxie Brothers Circus

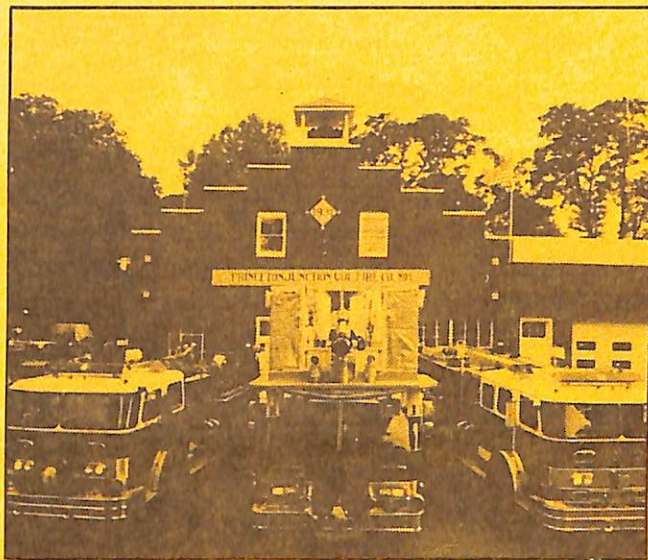
In the 1970s, women volunteered to drive fire engines and assist at fires. Among the drivers were: Ann "Nancy" Blaney, Shirley LaBeur, Sandy Radcliff and Anneta Zinetti.

On its 50th Anniversary in 1976, the firehouse was undergoing complete renovation. At that time the company consisted of 45 men and women. Their equipment included: 1973 Hahn pumper; 1974 Pierce mini-pumper; 1969 LaFrance attack pumper; 1955? Mack 1500 gallon tanker/500 gpm pumper. Another fire truck, a Dodge Utility Truck was built by the members in 1961.

In the 1980s the fire company demonstrated fire fighting techniques during Fire Prevention Month. Fire company members attend State Fire School classes in New Jersey and other states, where they

are trained in fire fighting techniques. This training can take over 100 hours. Demonstrations of fire fighting techniques are also held by the company.

The company competes in various county fire fighter's events. Their proudest moment came in 1978 when the company brought home a trio of trophies from the 50th anniversary parade of the Middletown Township fire department. They won prizes for Best Appearing Pumper Fire Engine; Best Fire Company Color Guards and Best Overall Chief's Trophy for Marching Unit of the Day. Today the company continues to win trophies. In 1995 they won First Prize for "Best Appearing Squirt." ☞



Princeton Junction Fire Company - today



To be concluded - Spring 1996

WEST WINDSOR VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1

LIST OF CHIEFS:

1921-22-Harvey D. Appelgate
 1922-24 Walter S. Mount
 1924-32-William N. Hann
 1932-33-Harvey D. Appelgate
 1933-37-Orville A. Walton
 1937-41-George R. Hulick
 1941-44-Jacob H. Walton, Jr.
 1944-45-Harold W. Terhune
 1945-49-Matt Mathes
 1949-54-Malcolm S. Tindall
 1954-56-Elmer Malsbury
 1956-60-K. Allen Roszel
 1960-80-Vernon E. Roszel
 1980-1991-Charles Appelgate
 1991-95-Gary B. Tindall

LIST OF PRESIDENTS:

1921-32-Hiram A. Cook
 1932-1938-Walter F. Conover, Sr.
 1938-45-Charles W. Holman
 1945-46-John S. Mount
 1946-47-Harold W. Terhune
 1947-48-Herman Schielke
 1948-49-Lester Reed
 1949-50-John F. Robbins, Sr.
 1950-51-Matt Mathes
 1951-52-Russell B. Post
 1952-53-Herman Schielke
 1953-54-Howard T. Bord, Sr.
 1954-56-Walter F. Conover, Jr.
 1957-58-John F. Robbins, Jr.
 1958-60-Charles G. Tindall
 1960-61-Frederick R. Gething
 1961-62-Charles L. Rue, Jr.
 1962-63-T. Alvin Carson
 1963-64-D. Ronald Everett
 1964-65-Oliver O. Hilpot
 1965-66-John F. Robbins, Jr.
 1966-67-Wesley F. Holman
 1967-69-C. Drew Holman
 1969-71-David O. Wright
 1971-74-Harry J. Channing
 1974-76-Paul Conover
 1976-78-J. Paul Laselle
 1978-80-James M. Greschak
 1980-83-Fred Kohlhepp
 1983-85-J. Paul Laselle
 1985-86-Kevin Tindall
 1986-87-Tammy J. Krueger
 1987-90-Robert Webb
 1990-95-Kevin Tindall

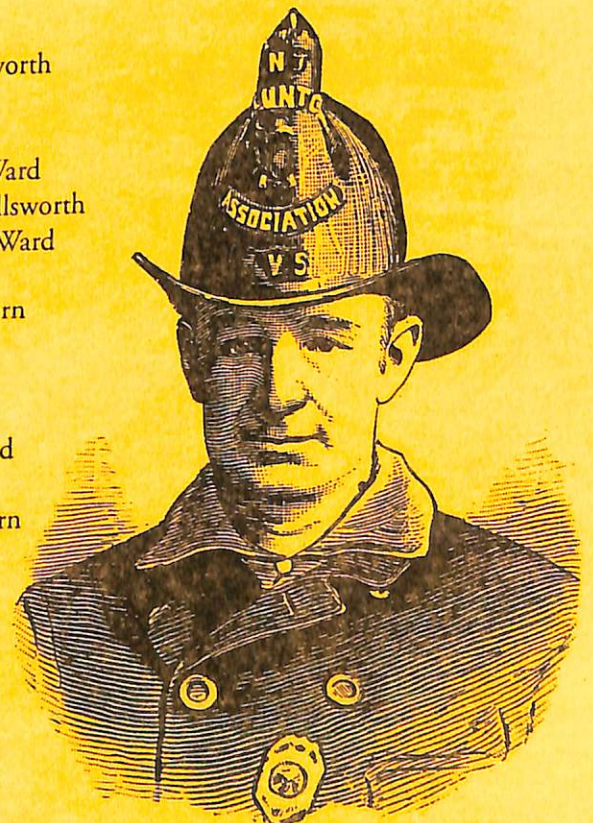
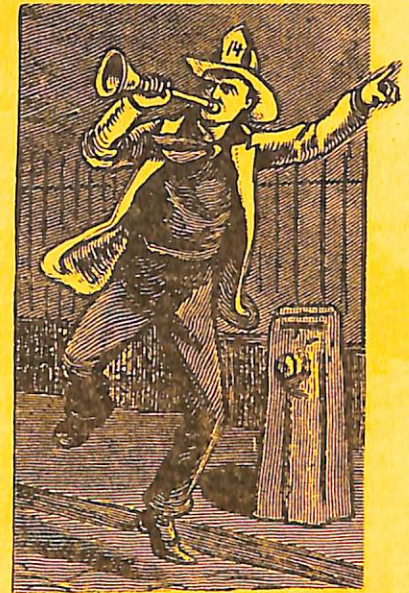
PRINCETON JUNCTION VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. NO. 1

LIST OF FIRE CHIEFS:

1926-W. M. Rodeweller
 1927-36-Ersilio Pocino
 1937-39-Herbert Mershon
 1940-42-Charles Jackson
 1943-44-Frank Borosko
 1945-48-Henry Schafer
 1947-William Beck
 1948-49;1952-Robert Servis
 1950-Franklin Herbert
 1951-54; 56-Walter Ellsworth
 1955;58-59-Roger Holmes
 1957-James Cooper
 1960-63-Robert Servis
 1964-71-Gordon Beecher
 1971-76;86-Joseph Zuccarello
 1976-87-Richard Rodefled
 1988-1992-Stanley Rodefled
 1993- Steven Kidd
 1994-1995- David Gayley

LIST OF PRESIDENTS:

1926-30-James A. Courtney
 1931-42-John J. Ward
 1943-Jacob Haulenbeek
 1944-45-William Beck
 1946-Martin Caples
 1947-48;50-Walter Ellsworth
 1949-Louis Rieger
 1951-George Werner
 1952-58;68-Gerard A. Ward
 1953;56;62-64-Walter Ellsworth
 1954-55;65-66-Richard Ward
 1959-James Cooper
 1960-61-Richard Dearborn
 1967-69-Walter Brown
 1970-72-David LaBeur
 1972-Earl Smith
 1973-77-Robert Redmond
 1978-79-Lawrence Boyer
 1980-81-Richard Dearborn
 1981-84-George Ford
 1985-90-Lawrence Boyer
 1990-Debbie Gayley
 1991-Allen Patterson
 1992-Ernie Schirmer
 1993-Dennis Huber
 1994-William Osterman
 1995-Michael Yeh





HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

At the Castle, Sunday, December 10, 1995 from 1 to 5 p.m. Room Guides are still needed. Call Joan Parry at 452-8598 if you are able to help.



Happy Holidays from the HS of WW!

Broadside is the publication of the Historical Society of West Windsor. Design and layout by Christiana Parry.

HS OF WW MEETINGS - 1996

January 8 • March 11 • May 13
September 9 • November 4

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings take place at 7:30 p.m., at the "Castle", 96 Bear Brook Road, in Princeton Junction.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Unless your label is marked "1996", all members now owe dues for 1996. Membership dues remain the same: Family-\$12; Individual-\$8; Senior Citizen-\$5; Student-\$5. Senior Citizens over 80 years of age pay no dues. Be sure to let us know when you reach 80 so we will not remove you from the list for non-payment of dues.

Please send your check to: Kay Reed, Treasurer, Historical Society of West Windsor, P.O. Box 38, Princeton Jct., NJ 08550. Thank you!

**Historical Society
of West Windsor**

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