

THE HISTORY OF



History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

In the early 1900's Wantage Township was a farming community. Patchwork sustenance farms dotted the hilly countryside, neighboring more productive dairy farms, apple and peach orchards. Farming was hard, tough work; each season giving its own challenges to the community. In Beemerville several businesses; the Mountain House Hotel, Truex's General Store and Post Office, and Space's Garage and Store, were all in need of fire protection.

Each farm had a barn to store hay for livestock or for produce storage. In the early 1900's there was a rash of barn fires. Everyone burned wood or coal for heat in their homes. Chimney fires were common, possibly wreaking havoc on the wooden structures.

The nearest fire departments were in Sussex or Branchville. Beemerville was six miles away in either direction. There were few paved roads. Most dirt roads were centered with grass. The roads were narrow, winding, and uphill. The only communication was by 'party line' telephone, which was not very efficient. Ten homes were on one party line. For these reasons local Beemerville citizens decided to start a volunteer fire department.

In the spring of 1930 neighbors and friends met at Ralph Space's home to see if they could organize a volunteer fire company. According to notes written by Ralph Space those early members were: Henry Meckert, Charlie Beemer, Bill Bedine, Charlie Longcore, "Doc" Ralph Christy, Sid Kinney, Dennis Phillips, "Mutt" Lawrence Christy, Mike Coddington, George Ayers, Parker Space and Ralph Space. Ralph Space was appointed chief of the infant fire force.

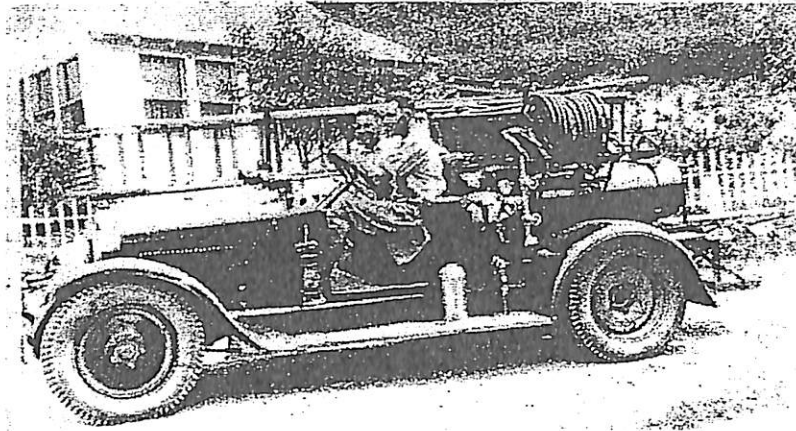
The meetings were recorded with minutes. However, the first page of written meeting minutes available today are from August 8, 1930, written in pencil in Ralph Space's handwriting. Previous minutes of July 25, 1930 had been read and approved. The treasurer's report noted \$73.08. A baseball team was organized with Carl Kepner as captain, "Bucky" Roy Beemer as field manager and John LaForge as booking manager. Fire badges were available to members who wanted them, but the member was "...not compelled to buy them at \$2." Dues were collected, but the minutes do not reflect how much dues were. The minutes of May 2, 1932 show nine members present and dues paid were \$8. Often the dues collected were 50¢ total at any given meeting.

August minutes reveal the group discussed finishing and testing the alarm. The alarm was handmade out of the discarded outer wheel rim of a locomotive engine's drive wheel. An eight inch piece was cut from the wheel. The wheel rim was suspended on chains from a wooden post crossed atop two wooden posts. A hammer to strike the wheel rim was hung on the wooden post. This was the early fire gong. One gong was located on the corner of (now) County Route 519 and Lusscroft Road on the edge of the Mandy Utter (now VanSyckle- Harnett) property. The second gong in Beemerville was located on the corner of County Route 519 and Crigger Road(first the undertaker's, then Skellenger's, recently Space Farms, now Second Home Child Care). These fire gongs could be heard for miles!

Monthly meetings were held in Space's Garage. Ralph Space had donated a 1924 Dodge Roadster. Charlie Longcore, Doc Christy and Ralph Space worked on the truck and converted it to a fire truck. Monies spent to equip it were: 3 tanks and equipment-

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

\$550, two acid containers- \$10, tires and tubes- \$82.50, rebuilding of truck- \$52.50, battery-\$9.40, fenders-\$12, ladders-\$7, irons-\$4, siren-\$15, first aid kit-\$6, and spotlight-\$1.50. The total to transform the 1924 Dodge Roadster into the first North Wantage Fire Truck was \$749.90. The refurbished truck was completed in 1933, but was used for fire calls previous to that date. This truck also had a special tank behind the driver's seat...



1924 Dodge converted fire truck

On April 16, 1931 the founders of the fire department met at the Grange Hall, (on Lusscroft Road), for a special meeting to send current members out to recruit neighbors to attend the May meeting to elect permanent officers.

The original declaration of intent, handwritten in pencil on lined paper, was signed on April 17, 1931. Signed by: George Ayers, William Bauer, Lewis Bidell, Floyd Bross, Fred Beemer, Lawrence Christy, Paul DeGroat, Henry Dickerson, Jack Eelman, Carl Kepner, Dean Haggerty, Russell Haggerty, James L. Hamilton, Henry Meckert and Joe Tice, the original declaration of intent is now missing the bottom third of the page. (The continuation of double columns containing more signatures.)

The declaration of intent read:

"We, the undersigned, desire to form a fire department of not more than forty active members to be between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five inclusive, and such associate members as shall be specified in our by-laws when adopted, said department shall be known as the North Wantage Volunteer Fire Department with headquarters at Beemerville, Sussex County, N.J.

It is understood by this organization that none but those who were in the age limits for active firemen can participate in the Burial Fund of the N.J. State Firemen's Association."

The minutes of the North Wantage Fire Company in 1930 reflect the following members: George Ayers, William Bauer, Fred Beemer, Floyd Bross, Secretary, Linnis Bidell, "Doc" Ralph Christy, Albert DeGroat, Paul DeGroat, Henry Dickerson, Jack Eelman, Dean Haggerty, Russell Haggerty, James Hamilton, Carl Kepner, John Kinsler, John La Forge, Charles Longcore, Henry Meckert, Christian Pittenger, Warren Price, Warren Skellenger, Chief Ralph Space, Arthur Swenson and Joe Tice.

On May 4, 1931, Joe Tice, temporary chairman, conducted the election at the

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

Mountain View Grange Hall. The results were: Chief- Ralph Space, Foreman- Roy Beemer, 1st Assistant Foreman- Jack Eelman, 2nd assistant Foreman- Chester Pittenger, 3rd Assistant Foreman- Charles Price, Secretary- Floyd Bross, Treasurer- Lorenz Christy, and Finance Secretary- Arnold DeGroat. A by-laws committee was formed with members: Henry Meckert, John Kinsler, and John LaForge.

At the next meeting on May 18th, the by-law committee reported that the Sussex Hook and Ladder book would be used as a by-law book by the fire department. Some by-laws were satisfactory and some were to be decided upon. New members were to pay a \$2 initiation fee as of June. Jack Eelmas was voted the chairman of entertainment committee, which would be an important fundraising arm of the budding fire department.

On June 1st Henry Meckert made the motion that the North Wantage Fire Company be changed to the Beemerville Fire Company #1, with the motion carried unanimously.

Meetings after that varied between Chief Space's garage and the Mountain View Grange Hall, depending upon the time of year, (heat). LaForge sent a telegram to Darley and Co. in Chicago for information on a chemical outfit for the donated truck's conversion. Ralph Space found signers for a bank note in order to purchase the chemical outfit. The arrangements were: deposit of \$100, \$250 to be paid within 60 days. Future minutes reflect the \$3 payments on this bank note. The surrounding community was also canvassed for donations by Space and Christy.

The minutes of 1933 also reflect a question as to the record keeping of the treasurer, with a motion requesting all entries to be made in ink! This motion was made and carried for the next two meetings. By the fourth meeting a new treasurer is noted. Something must have been amiss!

In March of 1933 a telephone line for the fire department was installed in the home of Ralph and Elizabeth Space. The fire department line was to have a special ring. The by-laws were adopted.

At a special meeting of the Beemerville Fire Department on March 30, 1933, the firemen had a financial problem. The payment of the note for the three tanks and equipment was overdue at the Branchville Bank. A hat was literally passed around the roomful of members for an emergency collection. The members present donated \$8. \$5 was paid on the note.

A land committee is mentioned for the first time in May of 1933. Mr. Meckert reported that the vacant lot across from Space's belonged to nobody. If they could get the consent of the Wantage Township Committee, the firemen could build on it.

A resolution was adopted regarding cooperation between the Ladies Social Club Auxiliary and the B.F.D. and attached to the by-laws also in that year.

The Beemerville Fire Department held their first clam bake. Silverware, cups and plates were borrowed from the Branchville Fire Department- keep in mind there were no paper plates in the early 1930's. Plank boards were borrowed and returned to the Branchville Lumber Co. for tables and seats.

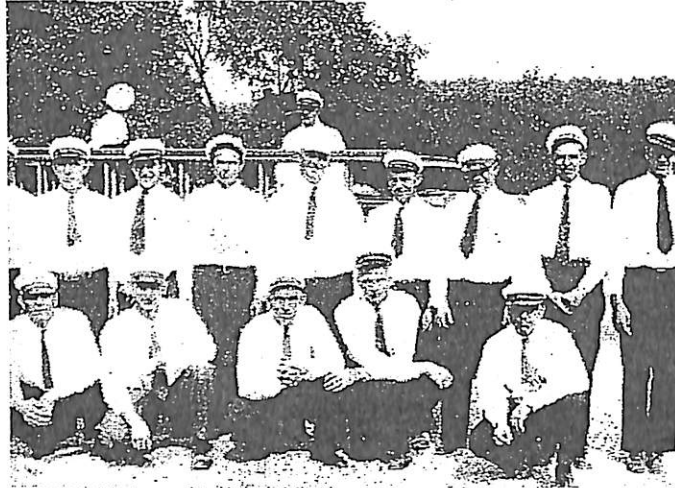
This activity greatly aided the coffers of the Beemerville Fire Department. The first clam bake brought in \$339.75 boosting the treasury from \$25.41. This allowed the fire department to increase the amount paid on the monthly note to a whopping \$10.00. This was a lot of money during the Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 until 1940.

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

The fact that the Beemerville Fire Department was founded during this time is a testament to the determination, fortitude, and dedication of its founders.

The new fire department also bought more rope, pike poles, acid siphons, gloves and a crowbar to help in their fire fighting.

The minutes of 1933 also recorded a number of firsts for the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department. The Sussex County Firemen's Association held a meeting in Beemerville at the Mountain View Grange Hall. In September the firemen attended their first parade. Dues to participate were \$2 in this the first parade of many to come.



Original firemen at first parade in Sparta

In 1935 the treasurer's report reflected the first \$100 donation from Wantage Township. This helped, as the treasury had dropped to \$31.97.

The bimonthly firemen's department meetings were changed to once a month in 1933. Meckert also mentioned in the minutes that the land was owned by William Van being 60' by 54' lot, the 54' being on the county road. In 1934 a building committee was appointed.

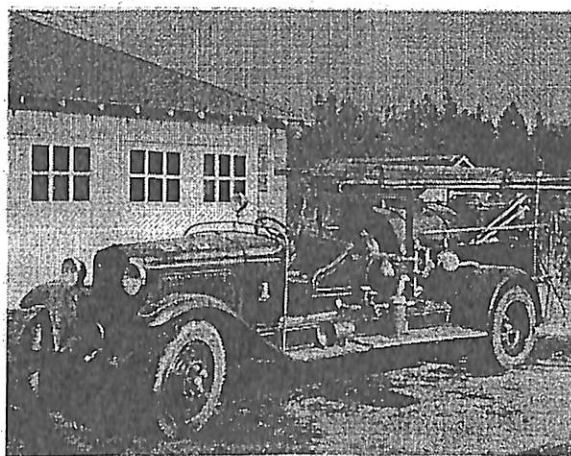
The minutes from 1935 reflect the adoption of the by-laws and the request that the by-laws be mimeographed. Chief Longcore was to get the by-laws accepted by the State Association. Six water pails purchased by Sid Kinney were to be painted red by Jim Gorman. Note: dues were recorded at 30¢, 20¢ and 10¢, given at this meeting.

With the help of living historian Fred T. Space: "In 1935 construction was started on a firehouse. A long abandoned carriage barn on a lot across from the church was where the fire house was built. Terra cotta tiles-[2' by 1' with four hollow sections]-left over from the construction of the new Rutgers Experimental Station or State Barns were used. (The original Turner barns transferred to Jarvie had also suffered a fire.) Gravel was hauled, shoveled by hand into a truck and brought from Warren Haggerty's gravel bank in Plumbsock. The entire department helped build, before or after work, whenever possible. The building was a 24 X 24 foot, two stall garage, with a small meeting room. The entire firehouse was the size of and is the current kitchen area. One stall had a gravel floor where the Sussex County Road Department kept a snow blower. The snow blower was built on a WWI tank, built by Holt (now Caterpillar). The snow blower was kept in

Beemerville because there was more drifting snow in this area due to the terrain.” Author’s note- the County paid \$30 a year for use of the fire hall. A fire zone was established in front of the firehouse.

Electricity came to Beemerville in the early 1930’s and the new firehouse was wired for electric in 1936. The firemen were busy! The minutes reflect they were buying cement and 2X4s to start the floor of the firehouse.

“In 1936 a Model A Ford 1929 fire truck was purchased from North Haledon for \$200.00. It had a 150 GPM pump, a 150 gal tank and 250 feet of 1 ½ inch fire hose. Howard Lescheck made the purchase. I remember riding from North Haledon with Howard. I was eight years old. The old Dodge converted fire truck/moonshine deliverer was sold to Mr. Wyman at the Nursery Farm on what is now Lusscroft Road. A second transmission was installed. The original fire truck was used as a farm tractor until the late 1940’s,” states Fred T. Space.



Model A Ford fire truck from North Haledon N.J.

The fire department performed many community services, for minimal charges. In 1939 the firemen moved an outhouse at the baseball field at Howell’s farm. Chimneys were cleaned for 50 ¢ and farm cisterns were filled with water. If a hand-dug well became polluted with dead animals or became foul, the B.F.D. would pump it out for a \$3 charge in 1944.

1940 brought a number of changes to the fire department. A siren committee was formed to collect monies for a siren. The first amateur show was organized and 160 folks were present to watch 22 contestants. The net profits were \$55.60, including donations from Mr. VandenHeuvel and Mr. Westfall.

The firehouse garage building was rented out in 1941 to W. Price for \$4 a month and was then cut to \$1. In the same minutes W. Price was hired as a janitor for the firehouse for \$1 a month. Fred Space remembers hearing talk around his family’s kitchen table. Country store items were being sold out of the firehouse and someone was sleeping there on a cot. They were in direct competition with Space’s Country Store across the street. This angered Ralph and for a while Ralph Space had nothing to do with the fire department.

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

The first siren was purchased in 1941 and it was put in a temporary position on the State Barns. Judd DeGroat installed the siren and switch boxes. The Rutgers Experimental Station donated two Indian Fire Pumps. Wantage Township paid \$100 toward the purchase and installation of the siren.

The siren was moved from the State Barns after N.J. Power and Light gave permission for the siren to be put on a telephone pole by the firehouse. A surplus Civil Defense siren was installed at the firehouse pole and the small siren from the State Barns was installed at Lusscroft. Three switches were installed: one at the firehouse, one at Space's store, and one at Mrs. Eby's. The estimated cost of wiring was \$50. Claude Eby suggested that the siren be blown two cycles repeated three times for fire and once daily at noon for a test. The siren was also to be blown for fire drills, meetings, Civil Defense drills (air raids and blackouts) and other emergencies. With the new siren, the fire gongs were not used. It was voted to donate one fire gong to Stillwater Fire Department in 1942. Mrs. VanSyckle, however, did not want her fire gong moved.

The first telephone was installed in the firehouse- number 2F85 for daytime and 3F67 for nights in 1942. Wantage Township donated \$1,000. Wantage Township would donate every year thereafter. Cigar smoking members donated 55¢-total. The first beer license applied for was \$5. Six more Indian Fire Pumps were purchased at \$13.15 each.

A new Ford chassis was purchased from Sales and Service. In 1944 the firemen decided to purchase a new commercial truck and equipment. The firemen invited representatives from the Ward La France NJ Fire Engine Co., and the White Chassis N.J. Fire Engine Co. to compare prices and options.

During World War II the War Production Board (WPB) was in control of all U.S. products and services. The WPB converted peacetime industries, allocated resources, and prioritized materials and services for the war effort. 'Priority' points were established for a fire department to get new equipment and trucks. An application to the WPB was made to purchase a Ward La France chassis with a 750 gallon pump. The priority points for the B.F.D. were not high enough to get a new fire truck. George Ayers, Ed Shuart, and Ralph Donadio investigated to see if the priority points could be improved and get B.F.D. moved up on the list.

Records beginning in 1943 kept track of which firemen were at which fire.

In 1944 the governor of the state of N.J. requested the local Civil Defense Council to select forest fire fighting service members in this area. Mr. Eby turned in the names of the entire B.F.D. for protection in our area.

In November of 1944 the Beemerville Fire Department was re-incorporated as a Volunteer Fire Company. Ten trustees had to sign: Ed Shuart, John Kasmarek, Willis King, Jack Prout Sr., Thomas Dyer, Warren Haggerty, Paul Ross, George Ayers, Brice Clark and Theodore Beemer. The first oil heater was installed in the firehouse at the cost of \$50, and James Bird painted the fire house for \$22.50.

The sound that every school child loved to hear started in February of 1945. On snowy days, when school was cancelled, the siren was to be blown one short blast!

The WPB granted the priority points for the firemen to purchase a new fire truck. "Two letters were read from J.J. Adgate and N.Y. Bjorck indicating that chrome plating is still limited because of the scarcity of chromic acid and nickel," state the July minutes in 1945. By that November the firemen were ready to buy the fire truck they had waited

years to purchase. The new truck cost \$7,000.00. The firemen had saved an amazing amount during WWII. A resolution was made to borrow the remaining balance of \$2,000.00 for the Ward LaFrance Fire Truck Model 47 T from Jack Prout, Sr. at 4% interest. The new fire truck carried 250 gallons with a 500 gallon per minute, two stage pump.



1945 Ward LaFrance fire truck in front of original firehouse

The firemen participated and won a tug-of-war contest at the [Branchville] Farm and Horse Show Fair. Pumping demonstrations were given at Colesville for the benefit of Port Jervis Fire Company. Harold Haggerty reported in the minutes that the firemen had paid off the loan from Jack Prout, Sr. on the truck in July of 1946.

The County Fireman's Association was held at the Grange Hall in November of 1946, with the Ladies Auxiliary continuing to help with the refreshments.

The first record of a fire school was at the Sparta Municipal Building in 1946. All members of the B.F.D. had to attend.

In 1948 the inside of the firehouse was plastered. The firemen called a special meeting for the purpose of buying the lot next to the firehouse. Their goal was to buy the lot with a clear title for \$200. By June of '49 the department had clear title and deed for that lot.

Now that the firemen had more land available to them they started discussions on expanding the firehouse. Fred Hockenbery said the township would help. Fred Space would dig the foundation and George VanSyckle would do the electrical work.

A Fire Police group was organized in 1950. The term was for 5 years. The first fire policemen were: Russ Ayers, Fred Space, George VanSyckle, Paul Ross, Nelson Struck and Tom Dyer.

Russell Ayers suggested, the firemen voted, and carried the placing of a blackboard on the front of the firehouse for better communication. That blackboard is still in place today.

Before a new addition to the firehouse could be built, all land titles had to be cleared. A lawyer was consulted by Chief Dyer. Chief Dyer then took the deed of land on

which the firehouse stands to have Judge Hunt clear the titles. He ruled that the original owners had to be contacted.

According to Fred T. Space: "A mortgage was needed. A clear title to the land was necessary. The abandoned carriage barn and lot belonged to the parishioners of the church. (When you purchased a local farm you also purchased a stall in the carriage house in which to park your horses and carriage while attending church.) It was difficult to find all the past lot owners. One was in Michigan and another as far away as Nevada. After a long search, we finally received a clear title to the property."

William VandenHeuvel was put in charge of getting the proposed fire house land deeds cleared. Mrs. Helen VandenHeuvel signed over the deed to the firemen for Sadie VandenHeuvel's house (William's mother), located next door. Ralph Space donated a parcel of land needed to straighten out the deed lines of the building lot. The entire legal process to gain the deeds from the original owners in order to expand took five years!

In 1955 the minutes reflect obtaining cinderblocks for the new fire hall. Fred Space, Chet Longcor, Roy Rohel and Elmer Longcore hauled cinderblocks on their trucks. Bids were taken for the cost of building materials.

The minutes are missing from July of 1955 until January of 1956. This is the period of time when the four truck bay section of the firehouse was built. According to living historian Buddy Haggerty: "Our gravel pit was visited by the entire fire department. Gravel was shoveled by hand into the back of the firemen's [personal] trucks, and hauled to the firehouse. Freddy [Fred Space] dug the foundation. Ike Rome was the general contractor on the project. I was there every day, just about lived there."

"It was a hot summer, we all worked hard. Harold Haggerty, Jr. was a big help, he was there every day. All of the firemen chipped in with the work when they could. I enjoyed the project," says Ike. "I remember that Jim Burse fell off the scaffolding, and scraped his back on a cross brace on his way to the ground. I sent him to Gramma, [Elizabeth Space]. She put some medicine on his back. When Jim came back across the street he said the medicine stung worse than the scrape on his back!" chuckles Ike.

The firemen worked through the hot summer to build the new firehouse addition. Before snow flew the firehouse project was completed. Four truck bays were the feature of the new firehouse. The original terra cotta tile firehouse was still used as meeting area, for storage and kitchen. The minutes of January 1956 reflect the building was completed and extra lumber was to be taken back to Decker and Simmons. In February the firemen took out a mortgage for \$4,000.00 from the Farmers National Bank to finish the interior of the building. Electric was done by Mel Wilson. The kitchen was outfitted and rest rooms installed.

The firemen were busy building, but still fought fires. Buddy Haggerty recalled a methane fire at the State Barns. The hose reel was taken off the Model A and a portable pump was put in its place. The Model A pumper was to be used to pump out wells or cellars. For fires, the pumper was to be hooked up to the fire engine. The last \$1000.00 payment for the Ward LaFrance truck was paid to the Farmer's National Bank in 1957. Tables were bought for the firehouse and minimal charges for the use of the firehouse were established for organizations other than the Ladies Auxiliary, Beemerville Presbyterian Church, Beemerville Recreation Committee and Mountain View Grange.

The original siren in place on the State Barns was moved during this time and

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

hooked up at Lusscroft Farm on the horse barn. Later in 1972 that original siren was moved to Plumbsock, under the supervision of Bill DeGroat, Carroll Klimas and Neil DeYoung.

In July of 1958 \$1,050.00 was paid on the mortgage for the addition to the firehouse.

Always looking for ways to improve the fire department, in 1958 the firemen decided to brick face the firehouse. Ed Link donated his time and services and recruited three other bricklayers. An estimated 5,200 bricks were needed. Paul Ross and Chet Longcor brought bricks from Port Murray at a cost of \$234.00. Longcor also picked up one ton of white sand for the brick facing project. Harold Haggerty delivered other items as needed.

The 1959 minutes reflect the brick facing completed and the extra bricks were to be sold off at 5¢ each. The kitchen floor was tiled. A juke box was placed in the firehouse, the profits split 50/50 with Elmer Longcore and the fire department. A special "clam bake cooker" was made. Ted Dunn and Anson Ayers were appointed to the Fire Police for five years.

Cooperation between the fire department and the Beemerville Church continued. Sunday School was held in the firehouse in the winter months as the Community House had no heat. A Sunday nursery school was held in the firehouse during church. The Sunday School had over 100 children at that time, according to Helen VandenHeuvel, Sunday School Superintendent.

In December of 1959 the firemen voted to pay off the remaining note of \$1,020.00 of the mortgage. A celebration was planned. Author's note: It must have been one heck of a party because the minutes are missing from the next ten years!

The firemen bought another Ward LaFrance Model 85 Cab-Over Fire Engine in 1965. The fire truck held 750 gallons of water. Its Hale 2 stage pump would pump 750 gallon per minute. The cost, with add-ons and upgrades was \$23,500.00. This fire engine was purchased from Philip Cherry in Port Jervis, N.Y. Chief Bob DeGroat recalls the firemen were only short \$1000.00 on the cost of the new fire engine and had to borrow the money from the Farmers National Bank in Sussex. The fundraising efforts of the volunteer firemen are to be commended.

Anson Ayers chaired a committee to put another addition on the firehouse in 1969. A meeting room was added and restrooms were moved.

Another fund raising event was established in 1971. Mini-bike, snowmobile and ATV raffles continue until this day.

The firemen were practical. After discussions in 1971 it was decided not to spend more money fixing up the Old Ward 45 pumper. Neil DeYoung contacted fire engine companies looking for a good used truck. The Committee for the new truck was Ted Dunn, LeRoy Little, Anson Ayers, Neil DeYoung, Chet Longcor, W. Haggerty and Russ Ayers.

In 1972 a new Ford Utility Truck was purchased for \$6,000.00. It was a tanker truck. The Tanker was converted to a Utility truck in 1992 for \$18,600 and is called Utility #645. It holds 200 gallons of water, and carries brush fire equipment.

In 1979 a new Ward LaFrance fire truck was purchased by the B.F.D. for \$110,000. It held a thousand gallons of water and had a two stage Hale pump. It was

refurbished in 1997 with the cost of refurbishing split between Wantage Township and the B.F.D. Longcor Trucking helped bring Engine #644 from Lee's Emergency Equipment in Tuckertown, N.J. after the engine was refurbished. This fire truck was retired from service in 2007 and sold to the Hansville, Fire Department in Pierce County, Ga. The Georgia firemen were thrilled with their new truck and give a standing invitation to the B.F.D. to visit.



Fire truck and Ladies Auxiliary at parades

In the early 1980's the firemen and Chief Butch Wagner, decided once again to improve their facility. Chief Willis Card continued the project. In the spring of 1982 the firemen broke ground on a new addition. A large banquet hall was added to the east side of the firehouse.

The minutes from 1973 to 1988 are missing. Joe Dalrymple recalls that Joe Lynch, Ted Dunn, and he were chairmen of the building committee. Clarence Synder, Butch Wagner, Jim Rienknecht, and Fred Space were also on the committee. Joe Lynch did the legwork getting permits, bids, and secured a mortgage. "Joe Lynch was the driving force behind the new construction project," remembers Dalrymple.

Wantage Excavating prepared the land and Bootsma Concrete Wall Construction poured concrete for the footings of the new addition. Both Wantage Excavating and Bootsma Concrete Wall Construction completed their projects at reduced rates. Kithcart Construction from Unionville was the main contractor. A banquet hall of 100 ft. by 50 ft. was built. The rest rooms were remodeled. A walkway entrance was established coming from the parking lot. A wet bar was initially installed by the kitchen and then moved to the rear of the banquet hall for ease of traffic flow. The new addition banquet hall was completed before fall of '82. Sadly, building committeeman Ted Dunn passed away in December. Memorial contributions donated in Ted's memory allowed for central air conditioning in the hall. Central air was something Ted was adamant about but funds were not available. Ironically Ted got his wish.

A 1972 Ford Tanker was purchased from Pochuck Fire Department in 1989. It carried 3000 gallons of water. In 2001 the tanker was sold to the Sussex County Fairgrounds.

A grant from the Forest Fire Service contributed two Scott Air Packs and a 1,000 gallon fold-a-tank liner to the amassed firefighting equipment in 1988. Beemerville is at the base of the Blue Ridge of the Kittatiny Mountain Range, which is Stokes State Forest. The N.J. Forest Fire Service gave demonstrations and instructions to the firemen on how

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

to fight a forest fire. The B.F.D. volunteers attended these trainings on a regular basis.

In 1988 the firemen formed another building committee to add a truck bay and meeting room on the back of the firehouse. This addition was on the original plans from 1982. Joe Dalrymple, Joe Lynch, and Chris VanderGroef, were on the building committee. Amazingly, 80% of the mortgage for the 1982 addition of the dining hall had been paid off in the previous six years! The cost of the new truck bay and meeting room addition would be added to that mortgage. The tanker truck is now stored in that additional truck bay.

Also in 1988 a reorganization was started within Wantage Township. The Beemerville Fire Department and Colesville Fire Department would merge as one. The Wantage Township Fire Department would have two companies: Beemerville Fire Department was designated as Company #1 and Colesville Fire Department was designated as Company #2. Meetings with Beemerville, Colesville and Wantage Township clarified each company's responsibilities. The two companies would alternate the Wantage Township Chief position. This merger enabled the previously separated companies to secure township funds for new equipment and fire engines. Until the merge, the Beemerville Fire Department kept its own records. After the merge, the minutes reflect man hours, LOSAP and NIFER reports to the township and state.

The firemen continued to update their fire trucks, firefighting equipment and firehouse. Two new pumps, an Echo and Robinson, were purchased to replace the pump on the 645 fire engine in 1989. Safety bars were installed on the jump seats of the 643 and 644 model fire engines.

A heliport was installed in the lot next to the firehouse in 1993. This would enable the severely injured from fire, car crashes or other accidents to be Life-flighted to Morristown Hospital.

A tandem 1977 R model Mack cab and chassis was purchased at cost from Wantage Excavating in 1994. The cab and chassis was taken to A&M Trucks in Matamoras, Pa.. A 3000 gallon tank was installed and the new fire truck was painted fire engine red! This truck was retired in 2001 after finding cracks in the frame.

Early in 1995 the first fire engine was purchased by Wantage Township for the Beemerville Fire Department. Prior to that date, the Beemerville Fire Department had funded purchases of fire engines solely through fundraising efforts. The new fire truck is an International pumper, holding 750 gallons of water with a 1250 gallon per minute, two stage Darley Pump.

A "Wet Down" celebration was held in 1995. A Wet Down is held to celebrate a fire department's ownership of a new fire engine. The new fire engine is parked by the home firehouse. Neighboring fire departments bring their fire engines and trucks. The goal of the home fire department is to keep their new fire truck dry. The goal of the neighboring fire departments is to wet down, (hence the name), the new fire truck. The home fire department was Beemerville Fire Department. The B.F.D. defended their new fire truck. The Wet Down was fueled by refreshments, music and cheering from the community supporters that attended the event. The defense was as aggressive as the offense. However no one was seriously hurt.

The B.F.D. retired the 1965 Ward LaFrance fire truck in 1998.

In 2000 Wantage Township purchased a Mack Tanker that holds 3,500 gallons,

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

has a 500 gallon per minute pump and three way dump valves. It was put in service in October of 2001 as Tanker #646.

An International Tanker was built by Beemerville Fire Company for \$120,000, in 2001. The tank was removed from the 1977 Mack and remounted on the International chassis with a three way dump valve on the rear of the tank. This truck was put in service on January 1, 2002 as Tanker # 647.

A sand strainer (type of fire hydrant) was installed on the side of Ayers' Pond in 2001. This gave the firemen access to debris free water to fill their tanker trucks.

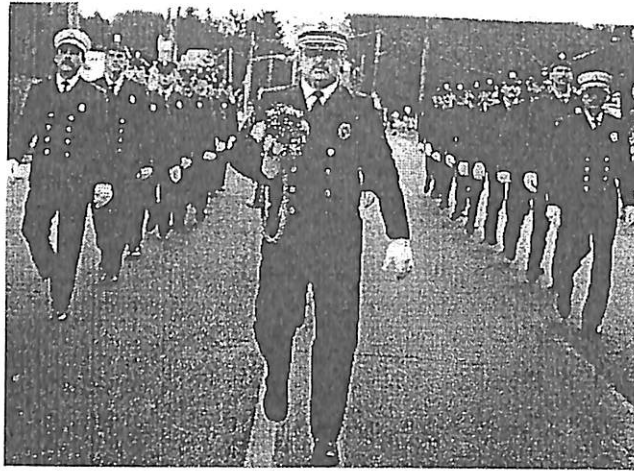
By 2004, with the help of the Ladies Auxiliary, the Beemerville Fire Department paid off the truck loan balance from Tanker # 647.

The Beemerville Fire Company worked with Wantage Township and purchased a new K.M.E. truck in November of 2007. The fire truck holds 1,000 gallons of water and has a two thousand gallon per minute, two stage pump. Wantage Township paid \$200,000.00 and the B.F.D. contributed \$125,000.00.

The firemen have constantly improved and updated their firefighting equipment and firehouse. A new well was drilled in 2003, 500 feet deep. Jeff Dolittle, Ben and Carol Cosh, Wantage Excavating, and Dunn & Dunn contributed time and effort toward the project. Trees and landscaping were installed to beautify the parking area. A gazebo was placed on the grassy area next to the firehouse and is a favorite spot for weddings. Diesel exhaust systems were installed the firehouse in 2004 with the help of a firefighter's grant. A new roof was put on the fire house in the summer of 2008. A Firematic office was established upstairs with internet connections. The truck bays were painted by S.W.A.P.. The kitchen lighting was remodeled. Fire alarms were installed and the area around the firehouse was re-paved. All contractors contributed at reduced rates.

The Beemerville Fire Department has a long, colorful history, full of characters shaped by their times. Founded in the Great Depression on nickels and dimes, the Beemerville Fire Department has evolved into an amazing community service. The Beemerville Volunteer Firemen undergo extensive training with state and county organizations. Their continuing dedication to the community and its safety is praiseworthy and commendable.

The history does not stop here... it will be continued by the brave men and women who serve the Beemerville Fire Company #1. All of the courageous Beemerville volunteer firefighters, some third and fourth generation, will carry on the history for years to come..



Firemen at a parade 1987

Community Support

In order to create and successfully run a volunteer fire department the entire local community lent support. Finances were needed to build the firehouse construct additions, and to buy trucks, firefighting and safety equipment. Man- hour time with hard physical labor was volunteered to build the early department. Building the firehouse, mechanically constructing the first fire trucks, digging fire pits for ox, chicken, or clam bakes, organizing dinners, and the procuring of menu items all took time and manpower.

The early firemen's wives were members of the Ladies Social Club Auxiliary, later simply referred to as the Ladies Auxiliary. The Ladies Auxiliary worked with the firemen to plan, prepare and serve delicious dinners at the Beemerville Fire House.

Early funds were raised by the North Wantage Fire company in various ways in order to purchase the items needed to convert the first fire truck. The minutes of August 8, 1930 reflect the department paid \$30.86 for shells and targets for a shooting match. According to Ralph Space, the first outing was held in Charlie Christy's meadow, now the fire department's parking lot, netting a profit of \$7. Each contestant paid fifty cents to participate; the profits were split 50/50 between the fire department and the winner. The next shooting match was held in Bill Coddington's Apple Orchard, (now between the Coddington's farm house and Harold Burse's house) . Box lunches were sold at these events. The fire department made a profit of twenty cents on each boxed lunch. Helen VandenHeuvel recalls pulling traps as a young girl for the trap shoots in her family's meadow (Christy's).

The shooting matches continued, making a profit for the fire department and creating community social outings. Shooting matches were held behind the fire department, at Coddington's Orchard and also in Judd Howell's field, (behind what is now Sytsema's equipment barn).

Refreshments at the shooting matches and ball games were available. The early minutes constantly reflect that Charlie Longcore was in charge of supplying two milk cans of lemonade. Charlie Longcore and Ralph Space were good buddies. Fred T. Space recalls the ten gallon tank behind the front seat of the converted 1924 Dodge had a sign that read "Flammable, DO NOT USE". Ralph Space used this not-so-secret tank in the original converted fire truck to deliver 'moonshine' liquor to customers. The fire truck

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

was housed in Space's garage. The Prohibition era existed in the U.S. from 1920 to 1933. Exactly what type of liquid was in the milk cans of lemonade is not clear, but is the only written record of refreshment served.

Plays, written by Hester Eby, used local community members as actors and actresses. Mrs. Eby's plays, card parties and dances were held at the Mountain View Grange Hall, occasionally splitting the profits with other fire departments. Square dances were also held in Ayers's barn (now the Moyle farm on Crigger Rd.) and Dr. Brownell's Sawmill, (now Cecchini's L&M Properties on the corner of Rt. 565 and 628) The Ladies Auxiliary Social Club was formed in the fall of 1933, and assisted the firemen with all activities. The ladies donated their profits on a regular basis.

The first fundraiser clam bake was held in 1933. Supplies for the clam bake included: 80 lbs. chicken, 75 lbs. fish, 60 lbs. sweet potatoes, 400 ears of corn and 5000 clams. The clam bakes and ox roasts became excellent fund raising opportunities. According to Fred T. Space: "Real in the ground clam bakes and ox roasts were first held at the ball field behind Judd Howell's flat (now Bill Sytsema's). Then they were moved to the Packing Barn (white barn) at Wyman's Nursery Farm, [now Space's on Lusscroft Rd.]. A hole, four foot deep and eight foot long, was dug. Logs were set afire in the hole, for a big bonfire the night before. The next morning, when the logs burned to coals, they were covered with green grass, layers of clams, chicken, and corn (still in the husk). Another layer of green grass, then dirt over the top completed the process. The ox roast was done about the same; chunks of meat were seasoned and marinated in hard cider donated by Denny Phillips. Cider left over was consumed by the firemen. This was usually put in by 5 a.m. and left for 8 hours. By 1 p.m. everything was stewed... including the firemen!"

1934 brought many changes to the Beemerville Fire Department. The clam bakes, oyster supper, baseball games, card parties, plays and square dances made profits supporting the fire department. A building committee was appointed. One ton of coal was donated by Lillian Skellenger to be raffled off. 1000 tickets were printed to sell at 10¢ each or 3 for 25¢ as a building fundraiser. Coal was used as heating fuel in many homes. It was a gamble, but during the Depression it was a bargain- if you won.

When WWII started, members of the Beemerville Fire Department were to take a compulsory Civil Defense course at Wantage School under County Chief Trudgeon. First aid, police work, identification of airplanes by shape and sound were part of the course work. Airplane Spotters also learned how to determine altitude and direction of an airplane. This was the plan from Civil Defense Council in case of attack on U.S. soil. Loretta Space Dunn remembers watching with her sister Edna Space Niebanck during daylight for foreign airplanes. Adults manned the 10'X10' building at night. A telephone, airplane shape identification cards, a single light bulb and two chairs completed the watch station. While interviewing living historians about the watch station, this author noticed every interviewee had a chuckle and a twinkle in their eyes. They were teenagers at the time, but not one would tell tales! All agreed their watch station time was fun, but took their responsibilities seriously.

Defense Bond Stamps were raffled for 10¢ at chicken dinners, dances, barbeques, clam bakes, card parties, various plays, and the turkey shoot. Historical note: when you filled up a Defense Bond booklet you could trade it in for a Defense Bond, which was

similar to today's savings bonds. Women working the occasions were given their dinner gratis.

Gas rationing during WWII caused some dances to be cancelled, or held closer to Beemerville. In 1943 a \$12 donation was given to USO. Members of the B.F.D donated 25¢ each to the United War Fund and also collected donations from the community. Service men and women were admitted to dances for free and only charged half price for any meals served. Dance tickets during WWII were sold at 40¢ each.

Once again, ox roasts, square dances, contemporary dances, clambakes, and chicken bakes were the social outings of the era. For instance, 302 tickets were sold for the ox roast of 1944, and 277 for a square dance. The community knew the firemen were trying to buy a new truck and supported the fire department by attending functions. (Author's note-remember there were no TV's, computers, or Facebook and you didn't dare say much on the party line phones!) The Ladies Auxiliary was always in charge of the menus.

Poison Pete's, (near Culver's Lake), was the site of a roller skating party held by the Ladies Auxiliary.

According to Fred T. Space: "In the early 1950's there was an article by Cornell University in a farm magazine on how to raise money for your organization. I was chief then. I sent to Cornell and got the info on "Chicken Barbeque". Nobody had heard of a 'barbeque' around here. The Beemerville Fire Department decided to try it. We had the first chicken barbeque in the area. We bought live chickens at 35 cents each. Frank De Vries had a chicken plucker. I remember a big fire in front of the old firehouse, to boil the water to dip the chickens. Then the chickens were put in the chicken plucker. The women: Gramma Lizzie Space, Mrs. Eby, Grace Ross, Hazel Ayers, Elsie Phillips and Lenore Rome (to name a few), would pluck the pin feathers. (The firemen could see no sense in that process because the pin feathers would burn off during the barbeque, but the women insisted. Just a note.) We would then wash each Chicken in salt water. The plucked, washed chicken was put in the walk-in cooler at the State Farm Creamery (now the waterfall room at Space Farms). The first barbeque was at the Wyman Nursery Farm packing house on Lusscroft Road. \$1.50 bought you all you could eat. The next year the firemen decided to raise their own chickens. We bought day old chicks. The first batch were raised in the Red Barn at the Nursery Farm. Afterwards we raised chickens in George Van Syckle's chicken coop. One year a raccoon got in and ate all the chicks. After that we bought already grown, killed, and plucked chickens."

Auctions of useable wares were held as fundraising events. In 1958 Elmer Longcore donated a 1914 Autocar truck. The truck was in operating condition but carried no guarantee that it would pass state inspection! Also in the press release for that auction was a mountain lion contributed by Space Wild Animal Farm. (Author's note: Possession of a wild animal was legal back then.) A goat and cart, sundry items, farm livestock, household goods, antiques, machinery, furniture and other miscellaneous items were also mentioned. The proceeds were to be used to complete the exterior of the firehouse. Auctions combined with rummage sales were an annual fundraiser for many years.

The firemen created the first ball field at the site of what is now Frankford Park. Gravel and sand came from Haggerty's gravel and Space's sand banks. The firemen also hauled sand and prepared a beach at Ayers' Pond for the Beemerville Recreation

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

Committee. In the early 1960's many local children took swimming lessons at Ayers' pond and played community ball games in the Frankford Park, including this author.

The Ladies Auxiliary contributed \$4,000.00 toward the truck purchase fund in 1965, to help pay for the new Ward LaFrance 750-gallon pumper truck. The Ladies Auxiliary has worked hand-in-hand with the B.F.D. raising funds since its inception.

The descendants of Elmer Longcor, Scott and 'Dispatch' are honorary members of the fire department. Chet Longcor was also a chief in 1961-1962. Longcor Trucking has contributed time, trucking vehicles and mulch for landscaping around the firehouse.

With all of the fundraising events taking place at the firehouse, the fire trucks needed someplace to go. Until the building of the new banquet hall, the B.F.D. fire trucks were stored at Dunn's Bus garage while functions were taking place in the firehouse. The chalkboard on the front of the firehouse read "Trucks at Dunn's" just in case the firemen needed the truck for an emergency.

The establishment of the banquet hall in 1982 allowed the firemen to expand their fundraising opportunities. The B.F.D. previously had hosted the Fireman's County Association meetings, delicious dinners, square and traditional dances. The larger dining hall would hold larger private parties, funeral luncheons for former B.F.D. and Beemerville Church members, pancake breakfasts, and joyful weddings. Some functions were given by the firemen; others were fundraising events. Bingo started in 1978, according to Joe Dalrymple, and continues to support the fire department. Firefighter Ben Cosh started the first Comedy Night at the Beemerville Firehouse in 2007. The recent additions of venison dinners and comedy club nights have increased the community support received by the firemen. The community supports the firemen's efforts by attending functions that were fun, entertaining and local social outings.

The first minutes of 1930 reflect organizing a baseball team. Ball games between the Sussex and Branchville fire departments were popular entertainment. "Booking and Business" of the first base ball team was handled by John LaForge. Bats and masks were purchased from Ralph Space's general store in the early 1930's. The famous Babe Ruth was known to frequent the Beemerville area. The 'Babe' did attend one of the Harvest Home Dinners at the Beemerville Presbyterian Church. Whether Ruth came to one of the local baseball games is not known.

Former Chief Chet Longcor recalls early softball games including the firemen and their families. By 1978 the Beemerville Fire Department team was official, firemen only - complete with uniforms, scheduled games, and a playoff series between the fire departments.

"The best thing about the softball teams was you got to know the firemen from other companies. You knew people, could call them by name when you were at fires. I remember when Culvermere burned down, Newton had the ladder truck, multiple companies were at the same fire. It made communications easier. You could holler to the next fireman by name, 'Hey, Mike, got an axe?' If you just point at the guy, you might be pointing at a number of men, you can see that it would be confusing especially when time is of the essence," states Eric Space, member of both the B.F.D. and the softball team. "Besides, the games were competitive, good games, and fun. The hosting firehouse would serve refreshments afterwards". Author's note: once again the type of refreshments served was not specified! But all agreed the softball games were a good time. The B.F.D.

is a sponsor of a Sussex-Wantage Little League Team.

The firemen also developed team sports with other fire departments. The first mention of a bowling team was in the 1960's. The first bowling trophy was brought home to the firehouse in 1966. The B.F.D. bowling team won many awards, and a special bowling trophy was given to fireman Dayton DePue.

Dairy farming in Sussex County is on the decline, so the firemen rarely fill farm cisterns anymore. Nowadays, for a donation, the firemen are filling swimming pools!

When the firemen need to update skills or practice, Beemerville Auto Wrecking donates junk cars. The salvage cars are cut apart with the Jaws of Life in the back of the Space Farms' parking lot. The firemen run drills honing their skills in extraction in order to save lives after automobile crashes. Eventually the Jennings truck the cars away in pieces. Gordon Jennings also helped the firemen by towing the 1945 Ward LaFrance. The aged fire truck had been retired to the Space Farms Museum for storage. The firemen decided to spruce up the old fire truck for use in parades and special occasions. Beemerville Auto Wrecking towed the elderly truck back to the firehouse. The firemen buffed and shined the old firefighter to new glory. The antique 1945 Ward LaFrance is a big hit at parades.

Gordon Jennings also helped Elmer Longcore pick up washing machines, refrigerators, dryers and other large equipment. The trash tag team would then bring the "junque" to Stanley Keesler's mother-in-law for storage in her chicken coop. For the next auction, the items were brought back to the firehouse and sold to benefit the B.F.D.

The Jennings have long been a fire department family. They certainly knew where to go if they needed help. Gordon Jennings had a couple of old cars on his tow truck in October of 1968. One of the cars caught fire. He sent out the alarm, and then took off for the firehouse with his tow truck, fire and all. At the firehouse he was met by the B.F.D. men who promptly put out the traveling car fire.

Many local businesses contribute yearly to the annual tricky tray, a great fundraiser for the Ladies Auxiliary and the B.F.D..

Santa Claus joined the Beemerville Fire Department years ago. Every year the Ladies Auxiliary and the B.F.D hold a Christmas party for the community's children. Santa Claus is always 'on call'. In 1993 Santa climbed aboard a fire truck and waved to children as Santa was driven from house to house. This new tradition continues to this day.

"Originally," according to Arlene Keesler "the Christmas and Halloween parties were held in the Grange Hall, sponsored by both the B.F.D. and the Mountain View Grange. During the 1950's the population of children in the area had increased and the parties were held in the firehouse."

Halloween parties are also popular, contestants of all ages receiving prizes for the best costumes. Fred Space remembers dressing up like Big Foot, covered in strips of brown burlap sacks, adding large wooden feet to scare the children. No one knew who Big Foot was... until now.

Memories of Our Former Chiefs

Chief Chet Longcor remembers one remarkable barn fire at the Aukema farm, (old Space Farm, Aukema, VanderGoot, now Kelly's) on Beemer Church Road. "The

family had taken a ride to the Hawks Nest after the Easter Sunday service. Passerbys saw the smoke and alerted the fire department. The barn was on fire, and we had trouble getting the cows out. When we shoed them out, they would run back in the barn, as cows do. We finally got them out. Some of the cows horns were melted right off!" Longcor recalls with a chuckle, "But we saved the barn."

"Joe Klecha's barn burned down while I was chief," says Chief Fred Space. "It was Christmas Eve morning. The barn and the cows were lost. Afterwards the local dairy farmers all donated one cow, and bales of hay. The community got together and built a new barn. I remember specifically because a volunteer got hurt. I had to testify that the volunteer was fighting fire under my orders as chief. A chief in those days could commandeer help, like the police or F.B.I."

A N.J. Herald report supplied by MaryAnn Klecha Davidowski, stated that Dorothy Klecha ran a mile to the closest neighbor to get to a phone to call the B.F.D. at 2:30 a.m., Christmas Eve morning. John Klecha had tried to shoo the cows out but was



Beemerville Fire Department at a barn fire 1980

driven back by the flames. Both the Beemerville and Sussex Fire Departments tried to put out the fire. Fifty eight cows, the barn, and milking equipment were reduced to rubble in the fire. The firemen did however prevent the fire from jumping to other farm buildings and the Klecha farmhouse.

In 1980 a tornado destroyed part of the Space Farms Museum main building. One-hundred-fifty volunteer firemen from the Beemerville Department, surrounding fire departments, and the Sussex County Emergency Management Department came to assist. The firemen helped move hundreds of valuable antiques. The antiques were rescued from exposure to rain. Many of the items were valued at thousands of dollars. Afterwards an inventory was taken of the items. "Not one of the antiques was missing, thanks to the honesty of the Sussex County volunteers," comments Fred Space.

"The silo fire at the State Barns is memorable to me," says Chief Buddy Haggerty, "It was a silo full of silage they were drying with machines. Somehow a spark ignited the whole silo. Dr. Otto Phau was in charge of the State Barns then. It was a big fire. Pigeons were on fire when they flew out of the silo." The spark of excitement still shines in the

former chief's eyes as he told the story.

"Parades were a source of pride, a time to strut your stuff and show off your equipment," claims Chief "Hop" Cassidy. "We always had a good time whether we won or not. I drove more than a few men home from the after parade parties!"

The Beemerville Fire Department has been manned by local families for generations. Chief Buddy Haggerty's younger brother Wendell Haggerty also became chief in 1972. Chief Wendell recalls a fire when the two brothers worked together at Dr. Brownell's Sawmill, (at the corner of County Route 565 and 628). The sawmill had piles of sawdust that went up in flames.

"We took the old Model A pumper truck and put it in the stream nearby. The Sussex Fire Department was also there, but they did not have a pumper. The Sussex Fire Department, well, I think they were a little jealous," said Chief Wendell.

Fire phones were installed in strategic places in the community. The fire phones were in the home of Fred Space, Roy Little, Bob Bartch, and two businesses; Space Farms and Dunn's Bus Service. One night, in December of 1991, Chief Roy Little received an emergency call on the fire phone.

"I remember I had just walked in the door as the phone was ringing. I picked up the phone and heard, 'This is Fred Space and my house is on fire!' CLICK. Uncle Fred hung up the phone. That was all I needed to know, and I put out the alarm," says Chief Roy Little. The B.F.D. responded to lifetime department member Fred's home, three doors up from the firehouse. The fire was caused by an electrical spark igniting termite dust. "We made an excellent stop on it, [stopped the fire] before it did major damage. It wasn't a surround and drown."

A fire raged on Sunrise Mountain during Chief Chris VanderGroef's term. "The coolest part of that fire was up on the Appalachian Trail. We were making a fire line between the Lookout on Sunrise and Crigger Road. A couple of Sussex Fire Department guys were working with us. They had never seen a bear before. A young bear, about seventy-five pounds came from the other side of the mountain. The bear cub was petrified, just running around on the ground, bothering no one. One of the firemen from Sussex climbed a tree. We had a hard time getting that fireman to come down," chuckles Chief Chris. "We had to drag him out!"

Chief Ben Cosh was Township Chief 1999-2000. He recalls a particularly bad car crash on Myers Road in Frankford. "The kid was really messed up. He lost a leg, but came back to the firehouse a couple of months later to thank us. Most don't. It does feel nice when someone says thank you, makes it worth all the bullshit," Chief Cosh says. Chief Ben also recalls that when he was new on the fire department force, Nathaniel Bartsch, 6 years old at that time, was lost. Living on the north end of Beemerville, the Bartsch family and the firemen searched for little Nathaniel for hours in the nearby woods and fields. Eventually, Nathaniel was found asleep in the back seat of the family car in the garage.

"A happy ending to that story," smiles Ben.

Some memories are recollections of the adrenaline and excitement that pumped along with the water. The loss of lives during a fire or car crash is more emotionally poignant. Chief Parker Space recalls the day his step-brother John and sister-in-law Audrey were in a bad truck crash on Route 23 in Montague. Beemerville Fire Department

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

was called to the scene. Parker climbed into the wrecked truck and held Audrey's hand, while reassuring John. Chief Parker stayed inside the totaled pickup truck.

"My sister-in-law was in bad shape. I stayed with her until an ambulance came to take her to the hospital. She passed away on the operating table. It was a tough day."

In 2001 Chief Parker Space rallied the firemen for a slightly different cause. A doe had fallen into a well casing on Haggerty Road. After crawling into the well, Parker administered a shot of anesthesia to calm the deer. The firemen came to the rescue of the doe, hauling her out with rescue straps. The doe groggily trotted off into the bushes. The firemen had successfully rescued 'Jane Doe'. Chief Parker is a third generation firefighter, grandson of founding member Ralph Space.

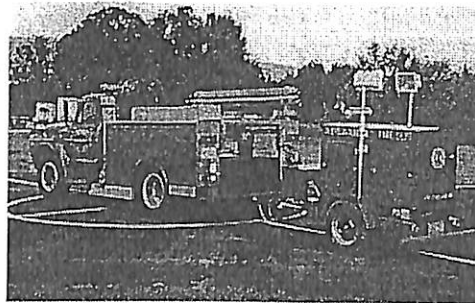
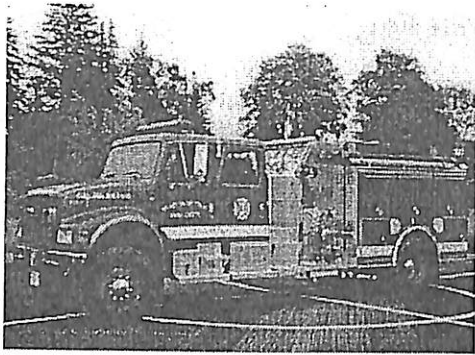
During Chief Scott Haggerty's term an arsonist was setting fires. "The arsonist started small fires, first in a hay round bale and soon escalated to abandoned structures, a residence and finally an occupied residence," he recalls. "The arsonist was seen waiting in a parked car at the Colesville Fire Company #2 before the alarm went out. The State Police investigated and found out the arsonist was a member of the Wantage Township Fire Department. The State Police interrogated him, put him on the hot seat so to speak, and he confessed." Chief Scott is also a third generation firefighter. His grandfather Harold Lane Haggerty and great uncle Warren Haggerty were founding members of the fire department.

The 1980 Ward LaFrance fire truck was retired in 2007. Chief Charlie Rokosny was chief in 2008 and put the fire truck up for sale on a website.

"We were contacted by a fire department in Hansville, Georgia. They bought the truck and were thrilled with it. Four guys came to pick up the truck, portable pumps and other equipment. They were friendly guys. We decided to donate some of our old turn out gear. We got to be good friends with them and have a standing invitation to visit," smiles Chief Charlie. "Someday we'll get there."

The volunteer firemen that work close to Beemerville often leave their jobs to attend a fire. Local businesses recognize the life saving importance of the men that volunteer to fight fires or attend and clean up car crashes. The hours the firemen spend out on fire calls are NOT deducted from their pay. One can tell when a fire or a car crash was a particularly upsetting due to injury or death, by the distressed demeanor of the returning volunteer firemen. The firemen have had to witness the worst of physical injury, put that emotional impact aside and complete the work at hand. It is not a volunteer position that is always fun. Being a firefighter is a commitment to the safety of the community, a community forever grateful.

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department



The Beemerville Fire Department is very proud of it's fleet of trucks.

Written by Lori Space Day

Computer graphics and cover design by Doug Day

Edited by Jean Ann Jaeger

This history is written to the best of our knowledge with the assistance of the minutes of the Beemerville Fire Department and the living historians mentioned within. Many thanks are given to all who participated.

History of the Beemerville Volunteer Fire Department

Chiefs of the Beemerville Fire Department

1930 -1933	Ralph Space	1969	Leon Kantenwein
1934	George Ayers	1970-1971	Stanley Keesler
1935	Charles Longcore	1972-1973	Wendell Haggerty
1936	George Ayers	1974-1975	Lewis Price
1937-1939	Tom Dyer	1976-1977	Earl "Hype" Ayers
1939	Linn Dyer	1978-1979	Harold Burse
1940-1942	George Ayers	1980-1981	James "Butch" Wagner
1943-1945	Paul Ross	1982-1983	Willis Card
1946-1948	Merrill Crowell	1984-1986	Gary Crawford
1949-1951	Tom Dyer	1987-1988	Scott Sargent
1952-1954	Fred Space	1989-1992	Roy Little*
1955-1956	Harold "Buddy" Haggerty	1993-1994	Chris VanderGroef
1957-1958	George Clark	1995-1996	Clifford VanEtten
1959-1960	Russell Ayers	1997-2000	F. Parker Space
1961-1962	Chester Longcor	2001-2002	Scott Haggerty
1963-1964	Carroll Klimas	2003-2006	Charlie Rokosny
1965-1966	Robert DeGroat	2007-2009	Don Slate
1967-1968	Leon "Hop" Cassidy	2010-2011+	Jon Morris

Ben Cosh was promoted directly to Wantage Township Chief in 1997-1998, after rising to Assistant Chief of Beemerville.

*After Beemerville Fire Department's merge with Colesville Fire Department the Wantage Fire Department was formed. The two companies alternate as to which Department's Chief, Beemerville Company #1, or Colesville Company #2 is the Chief of Wantage Township Fire Department. When one company's Chief is Chief of Wantage Township Fire Department, the other company's chief is titled Assistant Chief of the Wantage Township Fire Department, while acting as Chief of their home company.

This information is from the minutes, our living historians and is to the best of our knowledge.