
DEDICATION
WESTFORD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
EST. 1982

“Westford can be proud of its newly organized Volunteer Fire Department, its personnel, equipment, and plans for a safer future for the town. It was not always so, not that the town’s unorganized fire fighters didn’t do heroic service over the years.

In 1916 the “fire department” was any person within earshot of the church bell’s frightening “clang, clang clang,” or a party line telephone; “pumpers” were strong armed men endlessly dipping Brown’s River water, draining brooks, small ponds and springs into pails, passing them to the first man in the line of “hose” that ran uphill, likely as not, to the fire, to the roof of the hotel, for example, via ladders. Kerosene lanterns, not searchlights, had bobbed their way on buggies, wagons, sleds, sleighs, all horse drawn, at the horses’ top speeds.

Firefighters, organized or instant, are a manifestation of “good works” to which the late Jennie and Albert Miller would have added “faith.”

These words are excerpts from an article written by Irene E. Allen that appeared in the 1983 Westford Town Report. The year prior, in May of 1982, the people of Westford voted by referendum to establish their own volunteer fire department. Concerned residents believed it was time to have their own organized emergency response capability as the passing of years and “progress” had brought the number of fires and car accidents in town up from around two a year to at least two per month.

Establishing our fire department was no small undertaking. We started with nothing but a dedicated group of residents ready to do the work and a town community that was equally dedicated to supporting their efforts.

Our original 10 volunteer members proved to be quite resourceful. Meetings were held in the Westford Grange Hall on Brookside Road and one of the bays in the town garage was made available to house equipment. The first active duty fire engine was borrowed from the St. Michael’s Fire Department and the first tanker truck was obtained through Civil Defense at no charge.

An open cab 1955 Peter Pirsch pumper truck was purchased from the Swanton Fire Department. This truck was completely rebuilt by members of our department. Special mention was given to Bill Fay in the 1983 Town Report for the many hours he put into rebuilding the truck’s pumping system. The large tanker from Civil Defense was soon replaced by two smaller tanker trucks, one donated and the other sold at a reduced

cost, from McEwing Fuels. Some of the other equipment, hoses, nozzles, coats, boots, helmets, airpacks, etc., was donated by a number of fire departments throughout Chittenden and Franklin counties as well as from the IBM Fire Department. Early training and organizational assistance was provided by St. Albans Fire Chief Roy Parah.

Within a couple of years, the department had quickly outgrown its one bay in the town garage, and the road crew desperately needed the space back, so a three bay addition was built (our current fire station) primarily with volunteer labor from department members and people throughout our community.

Many donations were received from people in town and a lot of hard work went into fundraising events like Chicken BBQs, dances, etc.

The Westford Fire Department Auxiliary formed in the spring of 1984 and supported these fundraising efforts, in addition to running raffles, the Westford Craft Fair, etc. to help the department purchase needed equipment. When the need has arisen, our auxiliary has always been there to ensure our caffeine and blood sugar levels kept pace with the challenges we have faced at big fires. We can not thank them enough for their support over the years.

A second pumper, which was donated to Westford from the IBM Fire Department, was put into service in January, 1986.

Starting in 1989, we began replacing some of our original trucks with the purchase of our first new truck, Engine 710, which continues today to be our primary attack truck. Since then, the remainder of our donated trucks have been replaced with the purchase of a new tanker and water supply pump truck. We now eagerly await the delivery of our new air-utility-rescue truck, which was approved at our last town meeting, replacing a 1989 truck the department purchased and customized for this purpose.

Many people in town have served on the department over the years for various periods of time. Bill Fay is a founding member of our department and today is our department's Assistant Chief. Bill has served the department in just about every capacity there is and we are deeply indebted to him for his hard work and dedication. Bill was awarded with a plaque for his 25 years of service at our spring annual banquet.

There are a number of other groups that should be mentioned for their assistance over the years: The Westford Road Department, the Underhill Jericho Fire department for their mutual aid assistance and primary response coverage of Westford's Route 15 corridor, and our other mutual

aid fire departments: Essex Town, Fairfax, Cambridge, Essex Junction, Milton, Williston and Colchester Center.

We have installed dry hydrants in 10 locations throughout town over the years. We would like to thank Green Mountain Excavation and Drinkwine Excavation for their assistance in these projects, often having donated their time and materials.

We would also like to thank the Westford residents who have given us access to their land to install dry hydrants or who have donated structures to us for training purposes.

Additionally, we extend our appreciation to the Westford School for allowing us to visit them each October, during fire prevention week, and giving us the opportunity to interact with the students discussing fire prevention. This is an activity we especially enjoy and is equally rewarding for us as we hope it is to the student body.

We have achieved a great deal in the years that have brought us to the passing of the fire department's 25th Anniversary. In a way though, our achievements are not so surprising. Who we are as a fire department is a testament to who we have been and are as a community. Whether we are talking about Westford in 1916, 1982 or 2007, we as a community have always taken great pride in our small town in the northeast corner of Chittenden County and have always come together in times of need and challenge and achieved great things. Our fire department is but one example.

And so, we confidently look forward to our years of service to come, ever mindful of the hard work, sacrifices and support of those who have gone before us that established the foundation upon which we will continue to build and fashion to meet our ever evolving emergency response requirements, and with the knowledge that the Westford community, as it always has, stands with us as an equal partner in our proud service.

Thank you for your support!
