

LUDLOW FIRE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

The Ludlow Fire Department has a long and unique history dating back to the late 1800's.

The first fire brigade in the town of Ludlow was operated by the Ludlow Manufacturing Company

around 1880, primarily to protect company and employee property. The Ludlow Manufacturing

Company was the largest employer at the time and still stands today as the Ludlow Mill Complex.

The Ludlow Mills stands along State Street and is known for its tall clock tower still operating

today. The village of the Ludlow Manufacturing Company extended from as far north as Howard

Street to North Street at the western end (now known as Center Street or Route 21) to Franklin

Street to the east. The fire brigade equipment consisted of hand-drawn hose carts along with

portable ladders. This equipment was kept in hose houses located throughout the village around

the Ludlow Manufacturing Company; there were six to eight of these hose houses. These hose

carts would respond to any fire call activated by the mill whistle, many of the men of the Ludlow

Manufacturing Company were firefighters and would hand pull these carts to answer the call.

The fire brigade's first concern was of company property however with no other fire protection

in town would answer the call elsewhere.

The Springfield Water Department in 1895 installed four hydrants on North Street giving the

town its first source of water to combat fire. In 1896 the town made its first step toward its own

fire protection by purchasing a hand-drawn hose cart stored in the rear of the A.H. Bartlett house

on North street (now known as Center Street around Joy Street). The town of Ludlow now owned

a piece of firefighting equipment but still had no fire department so it still depended on the Ludlow

Manufacturing fire brigade to operate this equipment.

Within several years water mains extended off of a thirty-six inch main running from the Ludlow

Reservoir allowing for many more hydrants in the town. In 1903 a hand drawn hose cart equipped

with five hundred feet of hose was purchased by the town. This equipment was stored in what was

known as Little Canada in the area of Stebbins Street. In 1907 a fire alarm system was established

to protect the Manufacturing Company and through the years expanded through the village. Ludlow

was now fairly well equipped however faced a problem, the Little Canada hose cart was located too

far from the mill complex to depend on the fire brigade to operate the equipment.

Therefore in 1910

the townspeople approved the appointment of twelve volunteer firemen to man and operate this equipment. This group was called Hose Company number 8 and their equipment was housed at North and Mero Streets with Lois Demers as the Chief of the company. This company later became known as the Veteran Firemen's Association. This company soon added a horse drawn hand pumper with the horses being stabled at the Demers barn located at North and Stebbins Streets. The association sponsored a fife and drum corps with a compliment of seventeen young men who appeared at many local firemen's musters.

In 1910 a month after company number eight was organized the selectmen appointed Edward V. Stone as fire chief. Chief Stone was the Chief of the Ludlow Manufacturing Company and also served time as a firefighter in the city of Boston. Chief Stone's role was to be in charge of all fire related duties in the town of Ludlow except for duties at the Veteran Firemen's Association.

This left Ludlow with two separate fire departments, Chief Stone with Ludlow Manufacturing and Chief Demers of Hose Company 8. In 1913 three years later hose company 8 was dismembered and its quarters were placed on a rental basis. A new volunteer fire company was established limited to twenty-five men to replace the original members of Hose Company 8. These volunteers were placed under the command of Chief Stone who was town Fire Chief and Chief of Ludlow Manufacturing Company.

In 1918 the Ludlow Manufacturing Company donated all its fire equipment to the town. As new technology advanced into motorized fire apparatus the town purchased an automobile fire truck from Knox Motor Company of Springfield Massachusetts. This new fire truck was garaged behind the former Ludlow Hospital. The firemen and Chief Stone lived in the apartment block just behind this on East Street and had alarm bells in their rooms in the event of a fire response.

Although the Ludlow Manufacturing Company donated its equipment to the town in 1918 it wasn't until 1924 that the town adopted the provisions of the sections of Chapter 48 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth which regulated the formation of a town fire department. In 1924 after the establishment of the town run Ludlow Fire Department operated with fifteen callmen equipped with a Packard pumper and the Knox fire truck.

In 1930 the Ludlow Fire Department was called to assist Chicopee in battling a fire at the Spalding

plant. Chicopee had been engaged fighting the fire for four hours before Ludlow arrived extinguishing it in seven minutes. The success of the Ludlow Department was the use of a foam generator purchased by Chief Stone, this incident brought wide publicity to the Ludlow Fire Department.

In 1947 Chief Stone retired and Chief Rene Dubois was appointed as the new Chief of the Department. Chief Dubois operated with a small full-time crew including fifteen volunteers. They were equipped with two motorized pumpers and a city service ladder truck along with a small brush fire truck and a Desoto squad car. In 1949 a Oren-Roenoke one thousand gallon per minute pumper was purchased. In 1958 a Maxim 75 foot aerial ladder was also purchased. These purchases advanced the technology of the department however the department was running out of room to store these in the small firehouse built in 1913 to originally store the Knox Fire Truck, throughout the years space was added however space was still limited. Chief Rene Dubois under his command expanded and modernized the fire alarm system and incorporated sprinkler and other detection devices in schools, town hall and the Ludlow Hospital. One school in particular in 1972 was saved after a fire was held in check by the sprinkler system installed under the command of Chief Dubois, this was the Cole Building. In 1958 the Ludlow Fire Department also joined the Hampden County Fire Mutual Aid Association to help or be helped in the event of a large scale incident.

Chief Rene Dubois retired in 1962 and his son Homer Dubois was appointed as Chief to replace his father. In 1967 a larger fire station was constructed at the corner of Chapin and Center streets. This Station was now both the fire and police headquarters now known as the Ludlow Safety Complex. Under Homer Dubois command the department consisted of twenty-one permanent privates, four captains, this allowed one captain, a dispatcher and five permanent men to be on duty at all times to answer and respond emergencies. In 1973 the department was equipped with four pumpers, a seventy five foot aerial ladder, two forestry trucks, a station wagon and a chemical truck. This chemical truck was purchased by Baystate Gas Company and is equipped with dry powder in the event of an emergency at the plant. This truck is in service today after being refurbished in 1999.

Emergency Medical services before the early 1980's consisted of a firefighter and a police officer to respond to the emergency with an ambulance housed at the fire station. They would arrive at the emergency and transport the patient to the hospital, it wasn't until the early 1980's that the Ludlow Fire Department took full control over the emergency medical service. In 1977 an emergency medical technician

class was held for the department certifying several members.

In 1988 Chief Homer Dubios retired and Chief Jarvis was appointed as Chief of the department.

In 1995 the Ludlow Safety Complex was renovated and a fifth bay was added to store apparatus. In 1997

the Department made a huge advancement to serve the town's ambulance service. The town began to establish advanced life support with intermediates and paramedics.