

# The Fire Mark

The Newsletter of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum  
P O R T H O P E , O N T A R I O , C A N A D A • J U L Y 2 0 1 8

## Report from the Chair:

Hello all, hope you are enjoying this summer weather. It's time for another update on the Museum, and although we are closed, there are a few things to report.

I am pleased to say that we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Port Hope Library on June 6th. The date is important because our by-law actually stipulates that the AGM should be held within the first six months of the calendar year. This was not a commitment that we were close to meeting when I first joined the Board as our AGMs were happening in October or November. We have slowly been advancing the date each year in order to get back on track.

Of note from this year's AGM, our membership numbers have remained relatively constant in spite of having to shut down our operation and go into storage. Outreach to attract new members is continuing and you may see John Appleman as well as other board members at the Port Hope Farmer's Market, monthly, selling CFFM memberships and T-shirts.

Treasurer Jane Stephenson reported that we are still operating in the black and have a small nest-egg in our accounts. This is in no small part due to the success of our rain barrel sale and the sales of gift shop items at this year's Ontario Association of Fire Chief's Trade Show. I should also report that all 10 members of the past Board agreed to stand for re-election



Above: Will Lambert, CFFM Chair, dressed as Smokey the Bear, participates in Port Hope's "Float Your Fanny" event as part of the promotion for CFFM's rain barrel fundraiser. The rain barrel sale made about \$1,100 in profit.

and that slate was approved by the members in attendance. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

On the topic of finding a new site, all I can say is that we still don't have one. We have checked out two locations in Cobourg, neither of which were suitable or affordable. The potential development in the Wesleyville area, which we could have been a part of, seems to have run into difficulty. Colbourne appears to be on hold waiting for various approvals before sitting down with us and we have not been able to find a suitable piece of land and/or a building in the Port Hope area. I will be arranging a follow-up with the folks in Stouffville, who are waiting for us to produce some financial forecasts, based on their location which would reflect increased

visitor numbers, but there have been no further developments on that front.

Although nothing has happened with respect to the demolition of the old Museum site, we *did* recently receive word that the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) is finally working on cutting us a cheque for the yellow building that we actually own. I would like to express our appreciation to a couple of members of Council who have been fighting this battle on behalf of the Museum. The amount won't be very significant when compared to the cost of any new property or building, but it will be very nice to finally have the money in our account, where it belongs.

In spite of being dormant, we have decided to add a couple of small but significant, pieces to the CFFM

collection. Two portable forest fire pumps became available from the Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa. One is circa 1920, the other circa 1960 and they are both in immaculate condition. We had nothing like these at the CFFM and they will bolster our forest fire fighting collection.

*Will Lambert, Chair*

## Skeletons From the Closet!

In 2015 the CFFM took over the entire museum collection of the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst, a daunting task comprising about 1500 items ranging from teaching slides, photos, and books, to larger vintage apparatus. As the college needed to dispose of their entire collection on short notice, this turned into a salvage move with neither the time nor the space available to allow for orderly selection and curation at the time.

While some of the larger pieces had documentation with them, and were immediately put on display, others were added to our already challenged storage space; in the process some parts became disassociated, which made them difficult to identify during the initial inventory and accessioning process. Once CFFM's trucks were moved out, there was finally floor space to bring artifacts out of their cramped storage and spread them out for a proper inventory. The relationships of some pieces, unrealized out of context, finally became apparent. As a result, three wonderful old pieces are now back together.

Two five-foot diameter, wooden-spoked wheels, once ornately decorated, were stashed along a back wall, along with a three-sided metal frame. Gradually other pieces surfaced, and using clues such as similar paint colour and levels of wear we were able to associate what are evidently the hose guide bar for the back of the frame, the



*Above Top: Wheels and frame on North Wall    Above: Parts of "new" hose reel, before the axle was found.*

draw bar for the front, and finally the axle, making up most of the "hand drawn hose reel (wooden wheels)" itemized in the Gravenhurst catalogue. The only thing missing is the actual drum to hold the hose. The biggest hose reel in our collection, it likely dates from the mid to late 1800s.

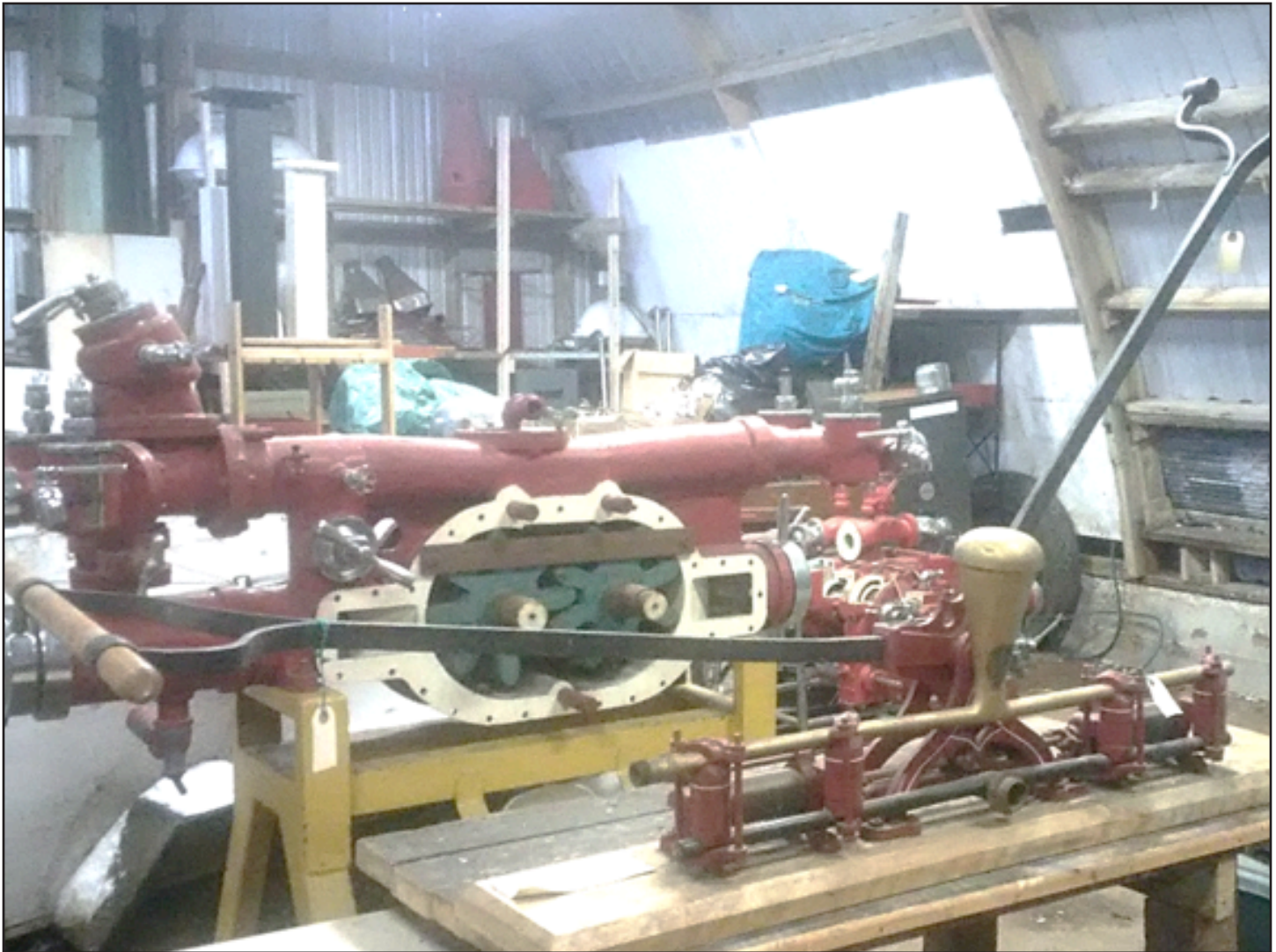
Another piece of vintage apparatus

that came together is a folding wooden hose roller that was used to flatten and drain canvas hoses after use. The front and back elements had been shelved and catalogued separately; it was not until stored items were laid out and sorted that it became apparent they belonged together. This item may have been used in a forest fire fighting context, where

gear had to be easily transported. It has obviously seen many years of wear.

Finally, a small two-man portable piston pump has been reunited with its pumping arms. Again out of context, the arms of the pump had not been identified, but described individually as levers of some unknown type. They fit perfectly into the slots on the pump. A future project could be to restore the pump to operating condition as a demonstrator machine. This little pump originally came from Stratford.

*Dennis Waddington*



*Above Top: Portable hose press tool after re-assembly (front and back views) Above: Fully assembled 2-man portable pump from Ontario Fire College, Gravenhurst, formerly from Stratford, Ontario. As the photo shows, the Museum had a lot of items in storage due to the short supply of exhibit space in the public areas. (Truck-mounted pump in background is a huge contrast in scale)*

[The Port Hope Evening Guide: October 23, 1987]

## Special anniversary

Hope twp. volunteer fire department has grown from handful of residents

By Frank Geofreda

If there is one Fire the Hope Township fire department is looking forward to putting out this year, it is the one that will be flickering on the volunteer department's 25th birthday cake.

This month marks the anniversary of the volunteer department originally called the Col. A.G. Giles Fire Company.

The department has no special party arranged, deputy fire chief John Pope said, but the occasion will be noted with the expansion of service that has occurred over the years.

From a handful of co-operative residents and a budget of \$1,000 in 1962, the Hope Township fire department has grown into a 30-member firefighting crew with an annual budget of \$20,000.

Originally called the Col. A.G. Giles Fire Company, the Hope Township fire department was set up to deal with distance problems caused by serving the entire area from Port Hope.

"The original idea," said Pope, "was that there was some concern about the time it took Port Hope (fire department) to get in to cover alarms."

The distance Port Hope had to cover in the township was great, he said. So, a group of residents

look it upon themselves to set up a co-operative to help each member when fire broke out at their properties.

A membership group was the only way to go, Pope said, "because we couldn't become a full-fledged fire department (right away)."

The first piece of equipment was a 1941 pumper truck purchased from the City of Hamilton, Pope said.

"We kept it in Bewdley in winter and George Stapleton's (the first fire chief) in summer," Pope said.

"Then came a Coventry Climax pump on a trailer pulled by a jeep," he added.

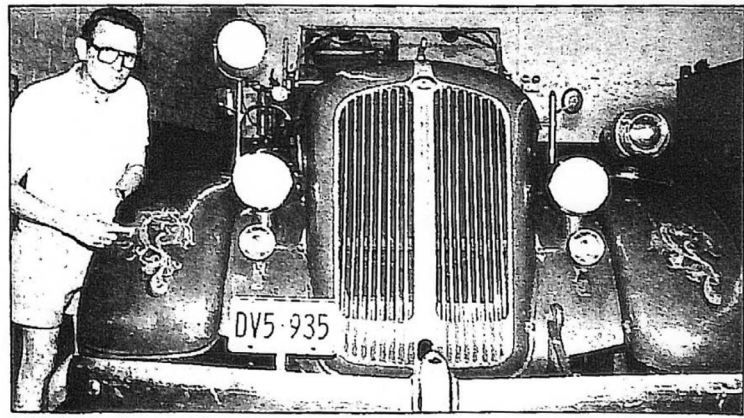
In 1963, with help from other experienced municipalities in the province, the young firefighting group organized to gain status as a municipal fire department.

George Stapleton became the first fire chief, Lloyd Kellogg - the current chief - and John Pope were deputy chiefs.

By 1965, the 17-member co-op had pooled their resources and built their first fire hall, a three-bay building located at the Sylvan Glen property of Col. Giles.

A public meeting followed to increase membership and organize response strategy.

The price of fire protection in



**First investment** — Hope township deputy fire chief John Pope shows the 1941 pumper truck the department started out with 25 years ago and still has in service out at the Welcome fire hall. Photo by Frank Geofreda

those days was an annual membership fee of \$5 per house and \$10 per farm.

With a budget of \$1,004, the new fire department took over that part of the township stretching from highways 106 and 2 in the south to the 7th Line in the north.

Port Hope continued the service as far as Highway 106 until 1966 when Hope Township took over the whole municipality.

The department operated out of the Sylvan Glen Hall until the existing hall in Welcome was built in 1978. And five years later a second Fire hall was constructed in Garden Hill to upgrade service

in the north end of the township.

Between the two halls, the 30-man department today manages a \$20,000-a-year operation with three tankers, two pumpers, two utility trucks and a portable pump, Pope said.

In addition, monthly training sessions are part of the department's routine.

The department answers an average of 30 calls a year, ranging from grass and structure fires to the odd environmental spill on area roads.

To help bolster the ranks down the road, the department has begun a cadet program for anyone under the age of 18 interested in

training.

"We're getting to the point where we have good equipment at both stations," Pope said. "And we have a good crew that's hard working and conscientious."

"We've reached a level of good standard," he said, "now the idea is to maintain that and improve as the need arises."

## The Colonel Giles Fire Company. A Bit of a Mystery.

*Reader note: We are always doing research into aspects of fire fighting in Canada. The Colonel Giles Fire Company was a private fire service that existed several decades ago in the former Hope Township. The Giles fire truck, not a part of the Museum collection, currently resides at the Hope Agricultural Heritage Club in Canton, Ontario.*

According to this 1987 article from the Port Hope Evening Guide, the "Colonel Giles" firetruck is a 1941 Bickle Seagrave pumper acquired from the City of Hamilton, Ontario. Unfortunately the exact model number and history before coming to the Township of Hope are unmentioned.

This 1987 article shows the truck to be in a lot better condition than it

is presently. Today it looks like it has updated amber plastic turn signals up front, which might be replacements of older in ones shown in the 1987 photo but it is no longer in anything close to operating condition. The truck never belonged to CFFM but for a few years it was on display in the CFFM truck gallery. It is not known where the 1987 photo was taken.

The article implies that the Colonel Giles Fire Company morphed into the Township of Hope Fire Department and the truck became part of the township's "modern" equipment sometime in the 1960s. Other sources have suggested it merely closed up shop when the township formed its own fire service.

Unexplained in the article is why the doors are today painted in the Colonel Giles markings if it served the Township of Hope actively. Perhaps it was retired and re-badged back to the original for parade and display purposes. It is

believed that it may still be owned by the Giles family.

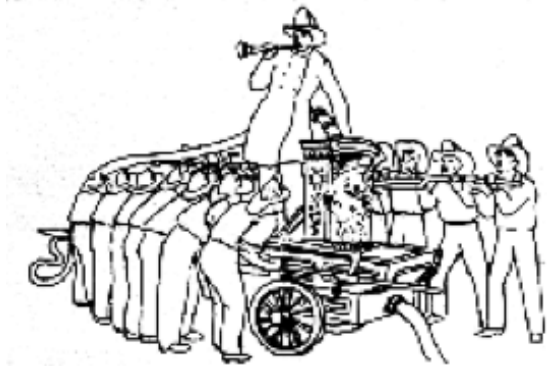
July 1, 1987 was one of the Port Hope fire truck musters the truck attended, and the newspaper picture was taken later in the same year. So maybe it had been brought out of retirement for parade and display purposes by then and maybe had to have the new signal lights installed to get road licensed sometime later? The license plate on it now is different from the newspaper photo, so we know it was on the road some time after 1987.

As you can see, there are still unknowns surrounding the Colonel Giles Fire Company as a private fire service and how it contributed to the formation of the Township of Hope fire service. We're still researching this topic and are interested in completing the history of the Colonel Giles Fire Company. We welcome any new information that can be provided.

## Fire Engines 1.0

Early firefighters needed to put water on flames but often could not get close enough or high enough to throw it on by hand with buckets. Inventors who understood pump technology from centuries of dewatering mines, bailing out boats etc. stepped in to help. Thus were born, sometime in the 18th century, the first “fire engines” — hand-powered pumps sometimes known as “handtubs”.

Two common designs of these pumps are described in a comprehensive article by the Aurora Regional Fire Museum in Illinois, that can be found on the internet. Earlier models were able to “push” water out of their reservoirs (the “tub”) but were not designed for suction. These tubs had to be kept filled by bucket brigades before the engine designs improved to add suction capability or pressurized municipal water systems were developed to feed them from hydrants. There is a lot of interest in restoring these old engines and holding competitions and demonstrations of their operators’ prowess.

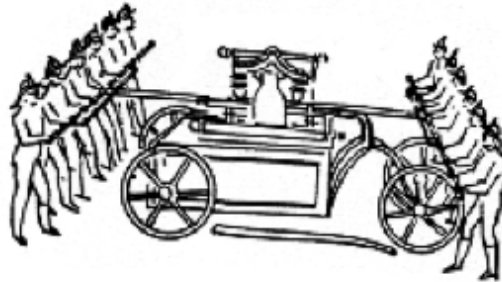


Above: A “New York” style, side-stroke engine with a goose-neck discharge.

To operate these pumps, large crews were required. One source suggests a pumping rate of 60 strokes a minute was needed to provide full pressure and flow. If a dozen men at a time were needed, as shown in the above illustrations, and if each man had to be relieved for a break after a matter of mere minutes of hard work, the size of the fire company rosters

should come as no surprise.

Until it closed in 2017, the CFFM displayed one of the side-stroke engines as part of its Horse and Hand collection, on loan from the City of Orillia, shown below. When the Museum vacated its site at 95 Mill Street South, after over 30 years, the engine went back home to Orillia where it will be loved and cared for and perhaps even restored.



Above: End-stroke style hand engine with a crane-neck.

When the young Town of Port Hope established its first official Fire Brigade in 1846, it likely grew out of a short-lived “Hook and Ladder Company” that had been formed privately a few years earlier. The brigade’s strength was reported to consist of 60 men, 50 buckets and three “engines”. The first of these engines was named “Rescue.” It was purchased in 1849 from T. Snook in Rochester for \$750 and was operated by the Rescue Fire Company. “Union” was purchased in 1853 and “Victoria” was purchased in 1856.

W. Arnot Craick, in his 1966 book on early Port Hope described the fire brigade’s early structure, apparently after Rescue had been purchased but before Union and Victoria had been added, as follows,

*“The fire brigade of that day was composed of three companies – Rescue Fire Company No. 1, which operated the engines; Juvenile Fire Company No. 2, which formed a bucket brigade; and Alert Hook and Ladder Company whose special function was to tear down buildings*

*to stop the progress of fires. All were provided with dress uniforms to wear on parades and other special occasions and it was considered quite the thing to be a fireman.”*

In 1934, one end-stroke engine appeared in Port Hope’s 1834-1934 Centennial parade as a tribute to the 1846 Fire Brigade formation. It is assumed it was one of the three original engines but there was no identification accompanying the photograph found in the Port Hope Archives (next page). Another unidentified photograph in the Port Hope Archives (next page) is clearly marked as “Union,” come back to life as a restored engine cared for by enthusiasts. Initial guesses as to the photo’s date suggest it was likely taken in the 1960s.

The unit in the 1934 parade looks very similar to Union except for the design of the wheels. Also, the parade unit seems to have one suction pipe and a wooden bar to fit into the pumping arm stowed on the side, whereas Union seems to have two suction pipes mounted (unless the wooden bar is stowed inside the lower suction pipe?)

Port Hope finally installed a pressurized waterworks in the lower town in 1874 that supplied 14 fire hydrants. W. Arnot Craick wrote of this development in his 1966 book,

*“For the operation of the waterworks at fires, the Extinguisher Hose Company was formed. While the novelty lasted its members got a good deal of amusement out of practices. On Dominion Day, 1875, they put on a show for the benefit of the many visitors to town and similar displays became a feature of other holiday celebrations. Port Hopers were indeed proud of their latest acquisition.*

*Their pride reached its peak when on June 21, 1881, upwards of 50 of the leading citizens of Peterborough arrived to inspect the system. Extinguisher Hose Company was called out and the hose was attached to five hydrants on Walton Street; 1150 feet of hose were then attached to*

one hydrant and it was shown that it was of equal force to one of 100 feet. All were highly satisfied with the efficiency of the system and went home determined to secure similar work for Peterborough.”

And in 1901, W. Arnot Craick wrote in his earlier book, “Extinguisher Hose Company was formed with a strength of about twenty men, and soon after two Chemical engines were placed at the east and west ends of the town and companies formed to operate them. These latter companies continued in existence until about 1891 when they were disbanded and five men from each added to the Hose company. On Jan. 1st, 1901, the strength of the Hose Company was reduced to fifteen men, and a well-trained team of horses added to the equipment.”

With the installation of the pressurized hydrant system and the purchase of chemical engines the original hand pumps apparently came to the end of their useful life sometime in the late 19th century and disappeared into the mists of time except for the historical sightings mentioned earlier.

If anyone out there knows where one or more of these early Port Hope engines is now we would surely like to hear from you.

*Dennis Waddington*



Above and Below: From the collection of the Port Hope Archives. Accession #: 2003-23-1939 & 2016-32-12



Above: Side stroke “piano-box” engine, CFFM collection on loan from the town of Orillia.

The Fire Mark is the Newsletter of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum.  
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