

The Fire Mark

SPRING | APRIL 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

MICHELLE HANEY-KILEEG, CHAIR

The 2024 Annual Meeting is just around the corner in May, and it is time to turn our thoughts to our 2025–2026 executive and appoint new board members. We have three new volunteers who are keen to join the board, and you will find their profiles on page two. Our Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, May 29th at the Museum, where we affirm through a vote, our new board. At that time, we will say a sad but warm farewell to Rod Simpson, Secretary and Hottest Run founder and organizer. Rod is a committed volunteer, and he's promised to stay in town! I too will be leaving the board after eight years of learning and leaning in. I have a few projects to wrap up that will extend beyond May 29th, and after a recharge, who knows? The dream of opening the doors of the Canadian Fire Fighters Museum is a strong draw.

May is Museum Month – indulge your interests and support your community – visit a museum this month.

One of the jobs as Chair has been pulling together The Fire Mark, and I owe a sincere thank you to Steve Smiley, RGD. His steadfast and gratis design support has been a lifesaver.

SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

This month, CFFM would like to spotlight volunteer Hannah Leblanc for her assistance cataloguing Library and Archive materials, with an initial focus on the artwork in our collections. Throughout the winter, Hannah devoted about 20 hours of her time over five weekend sessions to unpack, describe and organize over 70 individual prints and photos, with more to go. These had not seen the light of day since being packed up for the move out of the old museum and had never been properly organized or displayed. Hannah's work has moved us ahead on the goal of knowing what we have, what we need and don't need, what needs conservation measures and what we might be able to display in our new space. Hannah graduated from Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology with an advanced diploma in Applied

Museum Studies, which she is now applying to the benefit of CFFM.

Thank you, Hannah.

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Learn more about the 1921 American LaFrance

The Library



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CFFM RECEIVES A GRANT FROM THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

We received \$62,300 for a twelve-month project and are excited to share the details at our Annual Meeting. The project will assist with visitor attraction and engagement and with delivering our exceptional collection virtually and physically. Our public recognition event with MPP David Piccini and Ontario Trillium Foundation representatives will be May 22nd at 11am at the Museum.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2025, 6:30PM 206A FURNACE STREET, PORT HOPE

Pursuant to Section 6.9 of the CFFM By-Laws, elections to the Board will be held at the AGM. Board members will be elected by a simple majority vote of the voting members in attendance. Nominations to the Board may be made at the AGM.

CFFM is pleased to introduce three individuals who have expressed interest in the Board of Directors. Voting takes place May 29th, 2025, or via proxy. The membership package will be in your email basket shortly.

VOLUNTEERS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PLEASE MEET:

ROBERT STEELE is retired fire captain from Toronto Fire Department after 30 years of service. Rob has

been a lifelong volunteer in the community and brings a variety of hands-on skills as well as a knowledge of firefighting. He is currently the VP of the Hastings Historical Society.

SHELLEY STEELE is a retired Child and Youth Counsellor and the wife of a retired fire fighter. Shelley has served on many community boards and is an active volunteer in her community. She currently serves on the 100+ Women who Care Northumberland as Membership Support as well as the Friends of the Library, Hastings. Shelley hopes to bring her organizational skills as well as creative thinking to the CFFM board.

TYLER GALLEA lives in Cobourg and has been an advisor to the Board for the past year. His career goal to work as a firefighter was realized this spring, and he has been accepted for the current training program. Tyler has a background in procurement and supply chain management and also brings to the table, his considerable experience in social media. Tyler enjoys golf and walking his dog with his wife.



IT IS OFFICIALLY FUNDRAISING SEASON

We are pleased to invite your participation in one or all three of our fundraisers this spring.

May 11th | Antique and Vintage Show and Sale

June 7th | CFFM Rocks – Music and Dance

June 23rd | 2nd Annual Hottest Run in Town

The **Antique and Vintage Show & Sale** returns, with a twist! The former arena space is starting to fill up as we turn it into a museum, so the show will be held next door at the West Northumberland Curling Club, 206B Furnace Street, Cobourg. But if you buy your entrance fee, you can get a sneak peek at the trucks on our floor.

It all happens for one day only, on Sunday, May 11 from 10 am to 4 pm. Adults \$5, kids under 10 are free!

CFFM ROCKS JUNE 7TH, 7-10:30

Join us for a fun filled evening of entertainment, dancing and schmoozing as we raise money for the museum's accessibility renovations.

Make it a date night, or come to meet new friends, we are shaking things up with this fun filled event

Tickets are \$50, Cash Bar

Visit <https://bit.ly/CFFMparty>



HOTTEST RUN IN TOWN JUNE 22ND

LACE UP YOUR SNEAKERS AND GEAR UP FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENT ON JUNE 22, 2025, IN COBOURG, ONTARIO.

Get Ready for the Second Annual Canadian Fire Fighters Museum Charity Run!

After a blazing success in our inaugural year, we're thrilled to ignite the excitement once again.

Choose your challenge:

 **5K RUN** – Push your limits and race to the finish line.

 **2.5K RUN/WALK** – Perfect for families and participants of all ages.

 **BUNKER GEAR CHALLENGE** – Step into a firefighter's boots (bring your own bunker gear).

Register at: CanadianFireFightersMuseumRun.org



MYSTERY SOLVED WITH A PIECE OF PAPER

Our 1921 American LaFrance combination pumper / chemical car has been part of CFFM's collection for a long time. We knew it had originally served with the Toronto Fire Department before being transferred to a private collector and ultimately to CFFM. When we accepted the later donation of our 1914 ALF Type 12 chemical and hose car (ex Stratford), some of our thinking was that it would be interesting to see the two side by side to compare the configurations and equipment over a 7-year time span of what we thought was the same basic truck.

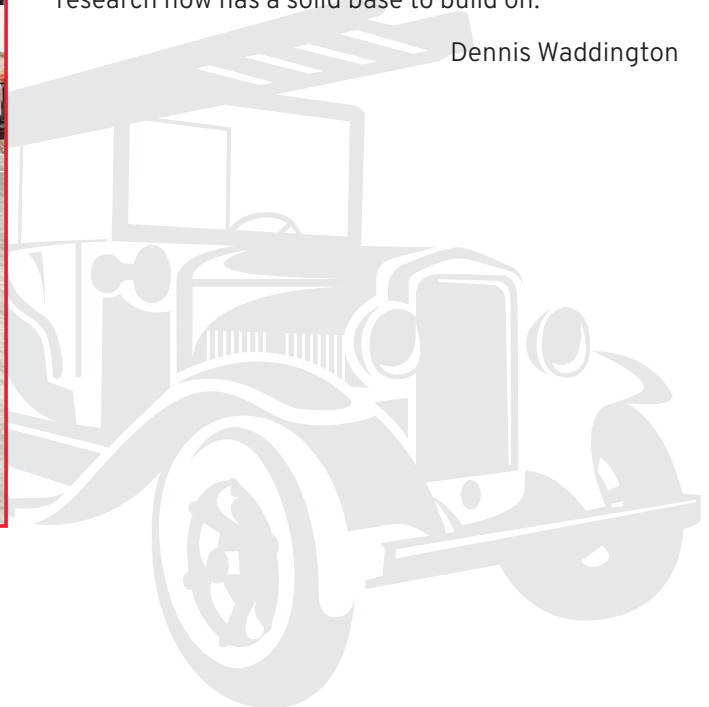
Late last year we started to move trucks out of storage and onto the arena floor at our new site and we finally got the 1914 and the 1921 side by side. And that lead to some questions about obvious differences, apart from one being equipped with a pump and the other with chemical tanks. The shape of fenders, the number of spark plugs and the 1914's lack of an obvious starting decompressor lever were a few.



The present board had inherited little institutional knowledge about the 1921. We had a serial number (3461) but couldn't find it in online ALF databases. Shortly after the museum closed its old site, a storage area had undergone renovations and a critical box of files that included the existing records of all our pre-closure vehicles disappeared. After extensive searching by museum volunteers and our landlord, it was ultimately and sadly considered permanently lost. Well, earlier this year we got word that the missing file box had been discovered. Great relief in general but particularly because buried in the file on the 1921 ALF was an article outlining Toronto's early ALF fleet, including our truck.

And that is when a big reason for differences became clear. The 1921 truck from Toronto was a Type 45, not a Type 12. This distinct type was a product of seven years of improvements on the basic Type 12 water cooled, gas engine truck design at ALF. Diversification of functions had resulted in multiple new model number designations. Ours also reflects any customization requested by Toronto Fire for their growing fleet of Type 45 apparatus and any subsequent in-service modifications. Future study and research now has a solid base to build on.

Dennis Waddington



OUR SERIES – HOW I BECAME A FIREFIGHTER FEATURING:**VANNETTA TUSTIAN**

Vannetta Tustian has been a firefighter with Toronto Fire Services for twelve years. While she feels like it is her calling now, as a woman, it never occurred to her that she could become a firefighter. Growing up Tustian was athletic. She was always doing track and field, and she was a dancer for most of her life, even landing a brief stint as a professional ballet dancer at Vancouver's Goh Ballet, but a physical job like firefighting was never advertised to her as something she could pursue. It wasn't until she began her career in the corporate world that she decided she needed a shift and after attending a seminar about firefighting, she was convinced that she had found her place in the world. Here is a conversation with Tustian about what it means to be a woman in the fire service:

When did you want to become a firefighter?

It was a bit of a journey because I worked in the corporate world before this. I knew pretty much Day One that I didn't want to do a desk job, but I hadn't been given a lot of other options as a woman. No one had ever really spoken to me about becoming a firefighter or a police officer. I'm not tall but I have always been athletic.

I ran into a firefighter who mentored people while they were becoming firefighters. He mentored mostly men at the time, but I remember asking him 'are there women firefighters.

I knew they existed but from a societal perspective, they didn't seem to be a norm, so I asked if there were good women firefighters, and he gave me a neutral answer that I appreciated. He said, "There are good women firefighters and there are bad women firefighters and there are good men firefighters and bad men firefighters."

He was saying that it didn't matter what your gender was, it's about what you brought to the job.

When you started looking into becoming a firefighter and looking into the process, were you intimidated by it?

I was slightly intimidated by the process, but I was mostly intrigued. My biggest hurdle when I was doing my research was physical testing. It wasn't that I wasn't up to it, obviously, it was more the unknown of it. With a lot of physical testing, they don't allow you to try it out first, so when you go and do it, you're going blind. I think that would be hard for anyone going in but especially for someone who was consistently told that they were going to have a harder time because I was one, female and two, smaller.

When I was in the process, I found a supportive network that had quite a few women in it and that really helped, and now we are all successful firefighters.

For the most part I felt like the evaluation was quite fair.

The largest hurdle I faced was after I got hired. When I got hired, there was still a stigma that anybody who was a female or a minority were somehow tested at a lesser standard which was not true and had not been true for a long-time.

What did that legacy mean for the working conditions?

It means that when you go into the work area, people question your being there. I never really noticed it at any other time of my life, but I noticed it a lot more when I joined the fire service. But I have to say, I have had a very positive experience working for the fire service. There are a lot of people who do not have that mindset. Unfortunately, we live in a world where 80 people can be amazing but then you run into one person with a different perspective, and it colours things sometimes.

Did you find that the stigma you have felt affects things with your crew and how you work?

It can. Honestly, I was pleasantly surprised with my first crew. They were a group of eclectic guys that were supportive, they gave me the opportunity to demonstrate that I was there to do the job, and we all got along well. I felt very comfortable and really welcomed and it made for a fantastic experience.

Did you find that even if you didn't have that external pressure from your team, did you still feel internally like you needed to prove yourself?

I have that feeling every day, but I feel like a lot of my male counterparts also question themselves. There is a certain standard that people uphold and sometimes we can get critical of ourselves and our teammates because life is at stake. We are in life-or-death situations and there is a level of critiquing to keep us focused on the job that we're doing. So, yes, I do feel like there are extra eyes on me, being female and being smaller stature. Every time we are with a new crew (which happens in our service, sometimes we are moved to different stations), I must build trust with that crew. But I've seen the same thing happen with my male counterparts, it's more about making sure that we are all up for the job.

Was there ever a time in the field where you felt unsafe or judged for being a woman?

In terms of safety, there was never anything apart from the job, which has elements of danger to it already, aside from maybe one patient's partner at a medical call who was agitated but I've never been put in a situation where I was worried about my safety in that sense. As for judgement, sometimes I get imposter syndrome, and I worry that sometimes people don't see me and are judging me in a way that I don't see myself.

Do you find that the discipline that came with being a professional dancer helped with becoming a firefighter and being a firefighter?

Absolutely. You work through things. You're trained to put a smile on your face even if you don't feel like smiling. There are foundations and building blocks. It's very similar to when you're becoming a firefighter. There's discipline behind the execution.

Since you began 12 years ago, have you noticed that more women are wanting to join the fire service?

I would like to say that there are more but when I look at the recruitment classes, it doesn't feel like the percentage has changed in a real way. I believe our percentage is still around four per cent for female operations with the Toronto Fire Services which was similar to when I joined.

I was on the Board of Directors of an organization called Fire Service Women Ontario about four years ago and their job was to make sure we are doing all we can to support women who are in the fire service. Like giving them the training they desire. It was very motivating to be in a large group of women who were serving in the fire service

What would you say to any woman who wants to join the fire service?

If you want to do it, do it. Ask questions and make sure you know what you're getting into. Try not to get intimidated by those who question you. Make friends, 24 hours is a long time to hang out with someone you don't like.

Jemma Dooreleyers

CFFM'S RESEARCH LIBRARY COMING TOGETHER

The CFFM Library and Archive has existed from the Museum's earliest days. It is highly specialized and functions as a research library and archive only. As such it serves primarily the needs of the Museum's curatorial staff though controlled access may be provided to external researchers.

Our Library collection includes published books and periodicals related to all aspects of fire fighting and fire science. We also have a related collection of rare technical material such as operators' manuals and product catalogues extending back to the late 19th century. Complementing this material, we have a collection of trade literature which contains items such as promotional pieces by manufacturers of fire fighting products.

Some of our technical and trade literature collections relate to items in our collection. Taken together they paint a picture of the evolution of the technology and organizational approaches to fire fighting, mainly but not exclusively in North America.

Beyond that we have an archival collection of material which was not mass produced and which largely contains individual and some corporate records. Such collections include records of the service of individuals in fire departments such as the Corps of Canadian Overseas Firefighters or course material from the former Ontario Fire College. This material is co-located with our Library but catalogued separately.

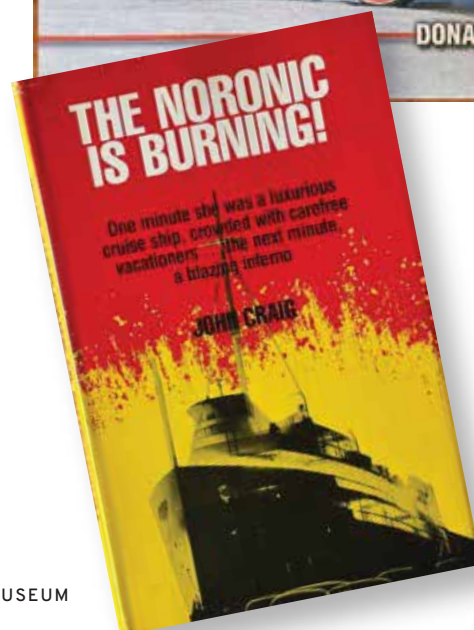
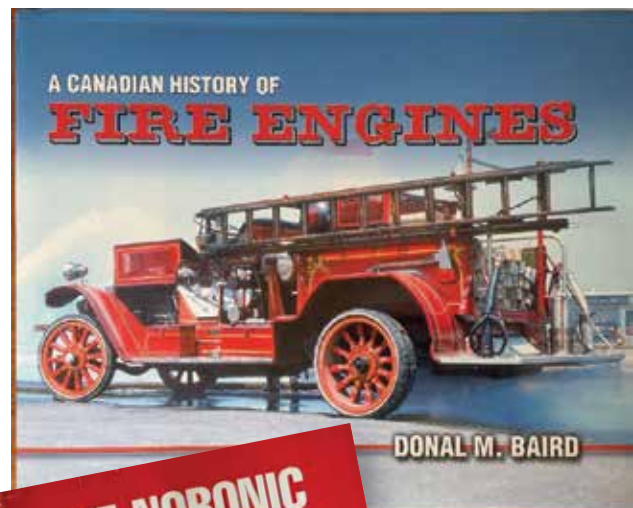
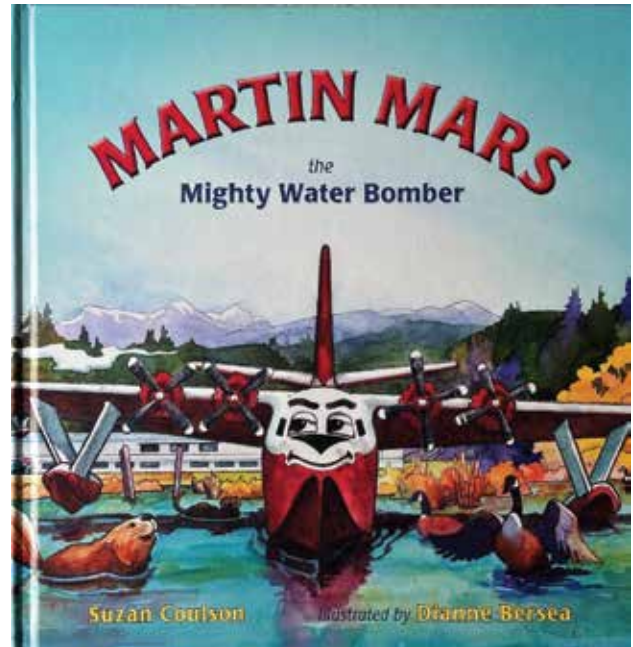


Our collections include many unique and rare items. Select items of consequence are treated conceptually in the same way as artifacts. They will never be sent for disposal in a library sale. One of our prize possessions is the original factory invoice and "as built" record for our 1914 American La-France Type 12 fire truck (or car as it was then called). It arrived in a collection of legacy material donated to the CFFM quite separately from the actual vehicle. Also in that collection we discovered similar factory specifications for "Patricia", the 1913 American LaFrance Type 12 fire truck that was destroyed in the 1917 Halifax explosion and later re-built.



We are very close to being able to store, organize and catalogue our Library and Archival collections properly for the first time in many years once their new home in the arena is completed.

Chris Terry & Dennis Waddington



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