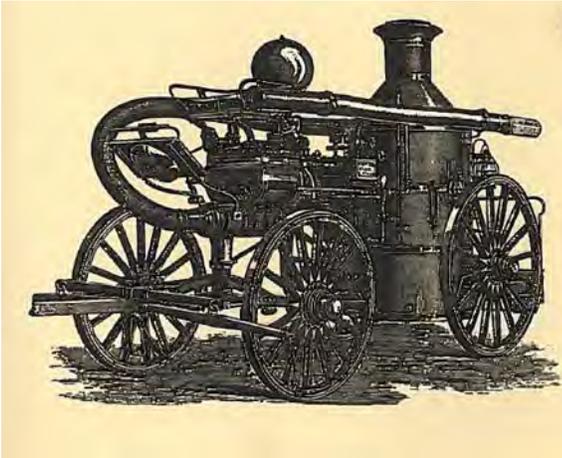


Fire Services History

Oshawa fire services started on February 4, 1856, as a volunteer department under Chief Engineer Mr. P. Thornton by order of By-law 33. The first piece of firefighting equipment was an old one-handed operated pumper cart. Other Chiefs to serve Oshawa after Chief P. Thornton included Robert Strong, James Pellow and John Mellows – the last of the volunteer Fire Chiefs (“Chief Engineers”).

On July 20, 1868, the Oshawa Fire Department was incorporated as a full time department by By-law 142. The first full time Chief was Patrick Thornton. He was responsible for 50 men with the Fire Company and a further 15 men with the Hook and Ladder Company, plus 1 engine, some ladders and numerous hose lines.



In 1875, Chief Thornton obtained a Ronald Steam Pumper from the U.S. to replace the old hand pumper. Water was provided by water storage cisterns throughout the village. A new town hall was erected in 1877 at the south-west corner of Duke (Richmond) and Simcoe Street North, in part to serve as a fire station. John Kellow was the Chief in 1905. He had 20 volunteer fire fighters including officers and four of these volunteers were required to sleep at the station.

In 1916 Angus Cameron became Chief of the Fire Department and he took delivery of its first motorized fire apparatus, a Chevrolet Hose Tender. Angus Cameron was the Chief when Oshawa became a City in 1924.

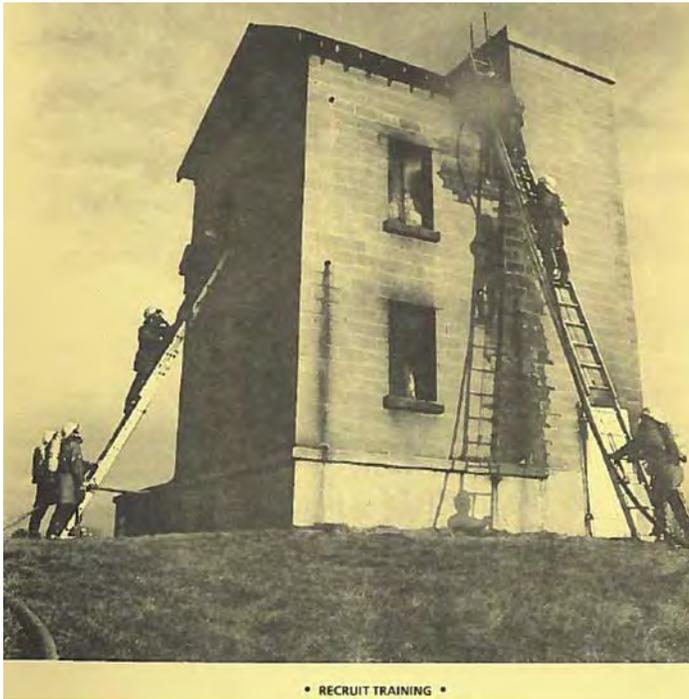
On January 1, 1926, Chief Angus Cameron received the first four permanent full time firefighters. That same year he was presented with a new Bickle equipped G.M.C. Fire Pumper by R.S. McLaughlin, Founder of G.M. Canada and an Oshawa resident.

In 1927, the Oshawa Fire Brigade resigned en-mass thus opening the door for a new era. In January 1928, Chief Cameron resigned and was replaced by Wesley R. Elliott and the permanent force was increased to 16 men. The volunteers were phased out over the following two years.



Headquarters Station
1928

During Chief Elliott’s term many improvements and additions were made to the Department; a GMC Bickle Pumper, a Chevrolet truck equipped as a combination chemical and hose truck, plus replacement of an assortment of dilapidated hose were acquired. On June 21, 1930, Chief Elliott took delivery of a new ladder truck fully equipped with 412 feet of ladders of various lengths.



Chief Elliott implemented a full-scale Fire Prevention program and the Oshawa Fire Department was presented with an award by the Province of Ontario for its program in 1930. Chief Elliott guided the Fire Department through the thirties and the great depression. He replaced the old rubber helmets with new leather helmets and purchased two new all service gas masks. Chief Elliott also acquired a new 1934 Chevrolet Chassis with 100 GMC Bickle Pump with a booster pump. The first Chief's car was purchased by the City for Chief Elliott in April 1937. He also took delivery of a new Bickle Pumper with an 800-gallon capacity centrifugal pump on June 14, 1939.

Additional new pumpers were added to the Department in 1943 and 1944. Until 1946, a single fire station located in the downtown area had protected Oshawa. In December 1946, a 2nd station in the south part of the city (Cedardale) was officially opened. This hall was designed to house three pieces of apparatus and twelve men.

A new headquarters' station on Simcoe Street North opened in 1951 replacing the antiquated hall in the old municipal complex. In April 1953, the Oshawa firefighters began operating the Oshawa Ambulance Service from the new headquarters, which continued for 20 years, answering over 35,000 calls.

One of the biggest challenges in the Fire Department's history was October 15, 1954 when Hurricane Hazel arrived in Ontario. The Fire Department responded all available equipment to 32 alarms during the night and miraculously no fatalities were noted.

Chief W. R. Elliott resigned on August 1, 1955 and was replaced by H. R. Hobbs. Station 3 (located on Somerville Street) was opened under Chief Hobbs' term on October 15, 1955. Chief Hobbs successfully increased the Fire Department's manpower to 96 firefighters on October 1, 1957 and he introduced a new concept in firefighting to Oshawa called "water fog".

Many changes occurred in the 1960's: a reduction in the workweek from 48 to 42 hours, the first alarm room cadets in 1966, the removal of all street alarm boxes in 1967 and the installation of a new alarm board in the Dispatch Centre with direct hookup to factories, commercial units, medical



buildings, etc.

In 1967, E. R. Stacey took over as Chief upon the untimely death of H. R. Hobbs. In 1967, Chief Stacey opened a fourth station for the Department, on King Street East named after Chief Hobbs, and he expanded the staff by 24 men. By 1970, the total staff complement was 159. It was under Chief Stacey's term in 1970 that the Oshawa Fire Department appointed its first Training Officer, Wm. Tweedie.

1973 saw the end of an era in the Fire Service when the Oshawa Civic Ambulance Service, operated by the Department since 1953, was transferred to the Province.

By 1981, all four existing fire halls were relocated to their present locations to facilitate faster response times and more effective coverage. In 1982 Chief E. Stacey retired and was replaced by W. A. Forsythe. Under Chief Forsythe, Oshawa became the first fire department in Canada to implement a computer aided dispatch system to improve vehicle response. Chief Forsythe retired in 1985 and Gary J. Hooper was appointed Chief.

In 1987, Oshawa lost its first firefighter in the line of duty.

Highlights of changes in the 1990's include the implementation of a new 9-1-1 system and the new firefighter curriculum, and the development of a new Communications Division. Chief G. Hooper retired in April 1995, and Chief Milt Wilson filled his position.

In 2002 Milt Wilson retired and was replaced by Chief Steve Meringer who continued as Chief until his retirement in 2016. Shane Caskanette was named Chief in 2016 but left in January



2017. In the interim, Deputy Chief Derrick Clark stepped up until his appointment as Chief in March 2017. Chief Derrick Clark remains at the helm of Oshawa Fire Services today.

We have come a long way from our first hand pumper and bucket brigade in 1856 to our modern, well-educated and trained Oshawa Fire Services of today, thanks to the dedication, wisdom and plain hard work of numerous past and present firefighters.