

Fire Department in South Bend one of the Most Efficient in Country

Until 1853 South Bend depended on a bucket line for its fire protection.

In 1913 South Bend has one of the most modern and best equipped fire departments in the country.

The intervening years were years of progress.

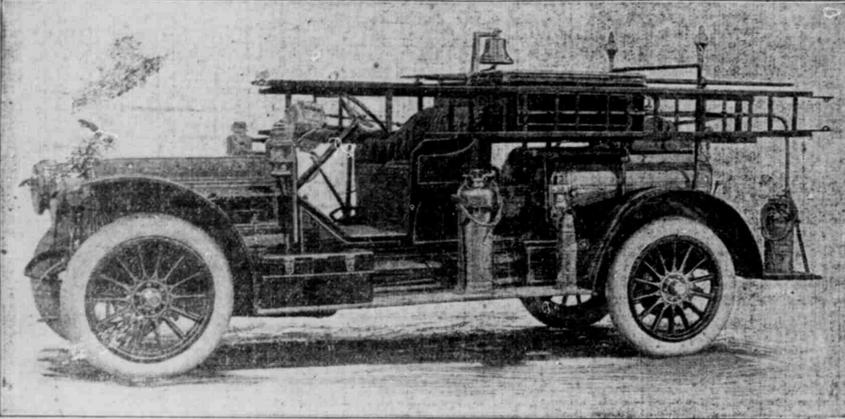
Primitive means for the extinguishment of fires are now interesting only as a matter of history and comparison. The purpose of this article is to show how South Bend is now equipped for defense against fire and to convince those whose interests are now located here and

on different occasions two military men were at the head of the volunteer force.

Capt. Edwin Nicar was the first chief of the organized and equipped volunteer fire department, and he was succeeded by the late Col. Joseph Turnock. Both were soldiers in spirit and by experience and disciplinarians of the true military type and they made of the untrained men of the department what the drill masters of the nation made of the volunteer soldiers, a high class fighting force. What these two men left in the volunteer department is retained today in South Bend's paid department.

hicles to power wagons. This transformation is now progressing so rapidly that in the near future there will not be a horse in the department. There are now four auto machines at the central station, the chief's car, the chemical engine No. 2, a 50-foot city service hook and ladder truck and No. 1 hose truck. In addition the central station has a three-horse hook and ladder truck.

Within the next six or eight months two more power vehicles will be added to the department. This will



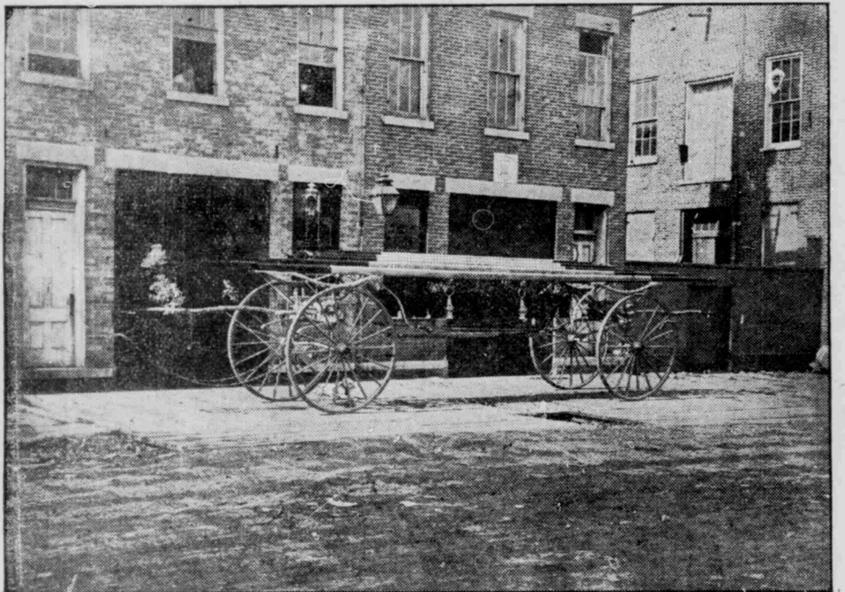
ONE OF THE MODERN AUTO CHEMICAL TRUCKS NOW USED BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

those whose interests may be established here in the future that ample protection is and will be at their service. The tabulated form gives the summary at a glance. The text gives the information in detail and draws comparisons.

It is only by comparison that progress can be indicated. South Bend is proud, not afraid of its comparisons.

Following the bucket brigade the history of the rise of the department may be briefly sketched. With the first regular organization in 1853 a hand engine was purchased and a company formed with Edmund P. Taylor as foreman and John Caldwell as assistant. This company was named St. Joseph, No. 1. No. 2 was formed soon after with Lot Day, Jr., as foreman. In 1857 Union, No. 3,

be the beginning of the transforming of the outside hose companies from horse to gasoline power. In all there are eight hose companies outside of the central station and all are now equipped with horse-drawn hose and chemical wagons, each carrying 2,000 feet of the best quality of hose. There are 25 men, including the chief



FIRST HOOK AND LADDER TRUCK USED IN SOUTH BEND—HAND PROPELLED.

Personal recollection in only a few instances can reach back to the period when citizens of the village turned with their drinking water pails and horse buckets to defend the property of their neighbor, when the only water obtainable was in the river or in private wells and it was a slow and laborious process of bringing water into contact with the flames. Nor are there many now alive who can recall the first organized resistance to fire in the formation of a bucket brigade.

was organized and a second hand engine purchased.

To supply water for the engines cisterns were excavated at street intersections and eventually 30 of these were put in. They were deep enough to draw their water from seepage and six feet in diameter, and it was the boast of the town that a steam fire engine could not perceptibly lower the water. These came the period of steam fire engines. The first was purchased in 1868 and the company that operated it was known as Young Hoosier, No. 4.

Previous to this, in 1867, a citizens' committee was appointed by the city council to report the best means of fire protection adaptable to South Bend. The appointment of this committee foreshadowed the construction of water works and the establishment of a paid fire department some years later. The water works were constructed in 1873, the standpipe system being adopted. The standpipe system is still in use, but the larger part of the service is supplied by direct pressure as set forth in the instructive article on the city the city waterworks printed elsewhere in this issue.

For these details the written history of the city must be consulted, but communication from mouth to mouth has made current the stories of the struggles of the first settlers and the expedients resorted to to save their homes and their places of business. They tell of the dread alarm in the night, of the frenzied shouts of the villagers to arouse their neighbors, of the marshaling of the small force of fighters and their almost hopeless fight. They tell of the daring of the young men, the feeble efforts of the aged and the heroism of the woman, and they give pictures of roofs adjoining the fire covered with saturated rag carpets and bed clothing to save them from ignition, and of the pitiful little pile of household effects saved from the charred and smoking ruins of the house.

Before the establishment of the paid fire department and the installation of the Gamewell fire alarm system, in 1886, the volunteer department was composed of seven hand hose companies, one steam fire engine drawn by horses and one hook and ladder company. All of these companies were equipped with the best apparatus in the market and it was unhesitatingly said of them at the time that they rendered better service than many paid departments. They had comfortable houses and club rooms and attracted to their membership the best young men of the city. The excellence and completeness of its equipment is evidenced by the fact that it cost only \$9,000 to convert it into a paid department.

The efficiency of the department has steadily increased with the addition of equipment and men and the transformation from horse-drawn ve-

It was a labor of love and of patriotic duty the members of the old bucket brigade performed, and in these they found sole compensation for their services until in the gratitude of its heart the community granted the volunteers release from their poll taxes and to a certain amount on their property tax. This means of rewarding the volunteer firemen was continued until the establishment of the paid department.

The spirit of loyalty and self-sacrifice, of devotion to duty and recklessness of reward was passed on from the volunteer to the paid department by the considerable number of members of the former who became members of the latter, and it involved a militant spirit imparted to it by the fortunate circumstance that

and his assistant, at the central station and each of the hose companies has five, with the exception of No. 3, which has a force of six men. The total number of men in the department is 85, and they are all men of experience.

All this speaks of force and equipment. It is also significant of efficiency, but that quality is best attested by results. Statistics show that losses by fire in South Bend in proportion to the number of fires are smaller than those of any other city of the same class in the country. In fire department circles and among insurance authorities the South Bend department enjoys an enviable reputation for efficiency. Its success is due to speed in jumping fires before they get a start, in knowing what to do when it reaches a fire, and in having the facilities to do it with.

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