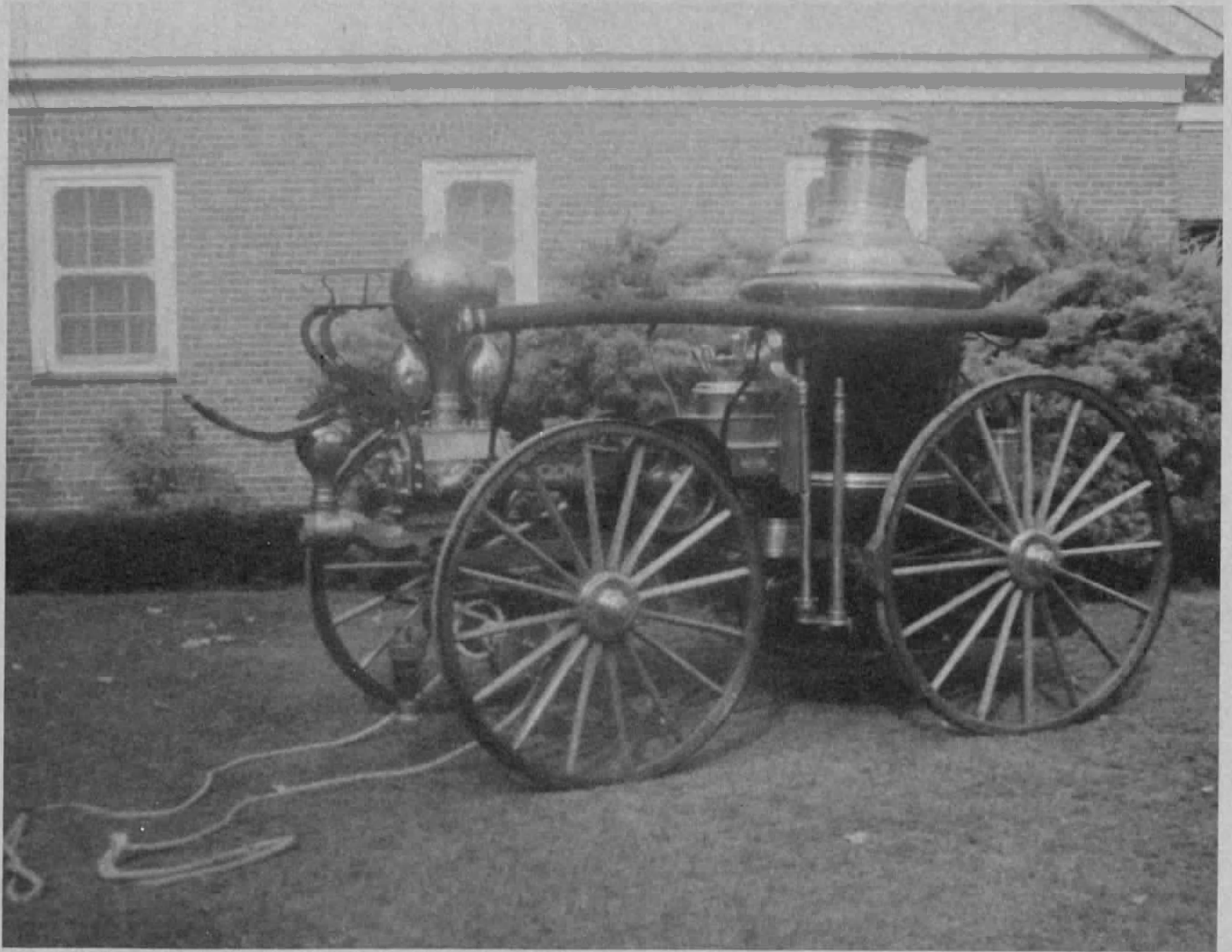


# LONGMEADOW FIRE DEPARTMENT



FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

1923 - 1973



1881 CLAPP & JONES STEAMER

## PROMETHEUS SCORNE



From colonial times down to the twentieth century, fire was a dreaded threat to the advancing American civilization. Fire wiped out farms: time and again, conflagrations leveled whole sections of towns and cities.

But citizens organized fire companies, and they fought back. Proud of their roles and the risks they took, volunteer companies became true fraternities of men. Often a community was served by several different companies, each trying to be the best in town—the strongest, fastest, shiniest. Rivalry sometimes led to brawls and even sabotage.

The shift to paid departments in the larger cities came only gradually. Boston established the first, after a great conflagration in 1679, but for the next 200 years separate volunteer companies survived in most cities.

With their strong fraternal traditions, the volunteer companies resisted change. They fought against relinquishing their place at the tow line in front of the hand pumper to a horse; they fought against efforts to reorganize the companies into a municipal organization.

But inevitably, change came to the fire services. Hand-drawn pumpers gave way to horse-drawn steamers, which gave way to gasoline engine pumpers. Coordinated municipal fire services were established. Fire laws were enacted to give some responsibility for fire control to the citizenry. Technology reduced the risk of major fires.

But the risks to firemen themselves have not diminished. They still push themselves to the outer edge of endurance—and sometimes beyond. Even with advances in technology, there still comes a moment when the fireman must turn away from the lashing tongues of fire. The struggle is still there, and it is still a heroic struggle.

Around 1900 the town of Longmeadow started to lay water mains through the town to supply residents with water for human use and for fire protection. The town also purchased it's first pieces of fire apparatus about this same time.

The first apparatus was in the form of hose reels. As the name implies these reels carried only hose, two playpipes, for directing water onto a fire, and a couple of axes and some miscellaneous tools.

From 1900 to 1907 the town purchased about seven of these reels and placed them around town in some of the towns peoples barns. When a fire was discovered those who were near the locations of the hose reels would either pull by hand or hitch to a wagon the reel and take it to the scene of the fire. The only supply of water at this time was from the fire hydrants along the streets. The period between 1907 to 1917 were uneventful except for routine fire department business.

In 1917 the fire department received money to buy a motorized piece of fire apparatus. It bought a Federal cab and chassis for the price of \$1885 and they bought a fire truck body for \$1350. On this piece was a 35 gallon chemical tank, a couple of small fire extinguishers, some hose, and some small hand tools.

1921 was the year that the first talk about starting a regular fire department came about. Until this time firefighting was largely a community effort.

In 1921 Acting Chief of the fire department Richard Warme made the following report to the town.

"It will soon be time to think of appropriate quarters for your fire apparatus. Your town is growing and the time is not far off when you will have to consider the question of establishing some kind of a firefighting squad.

"Permanent or volunteer, they must have a place to meet and to receive instruction in the proper methods of handling fire apparatus, extinguishing fires, and the saving of lives and property.

"Another question to consider is the advisability of having your large piece of apparatus respond to calls for brush fires, etc. It often happens that the apparatus, in getting to one of these fires, drives quite a distance from telephone communication and a serious fire might occur in some dwelling while there, and before the apparatus could be reached, the loss would be considerable." At this time fire apparatus did not have two-way radio communication as is the case today.

A recommendation was made at this time that the town should buy a lighter weight vehicle for fighting these grass and brush fires.



HOSE REEL  
VINTAGE 1900





### ORIGINAL TEN MEMBERS

In June of 1923 the volunteer fire department was formally organized. The sum of \$1300 was appropriated to pay the men for their services through the year. The Chief Engineer was appointed by the selectman as were the Fire Engineers. The Chief Engineer was Cliff Graves and the Fire Engineers were:

Everett Felton	Robert Breck (Capt.)
Robert Allen	Ralph Smead (Lt.)
James Ward (Clerk)	Thomas Quinn
Oscar Baer	William Williams
James Mulvey	

Engine men on reserve were:

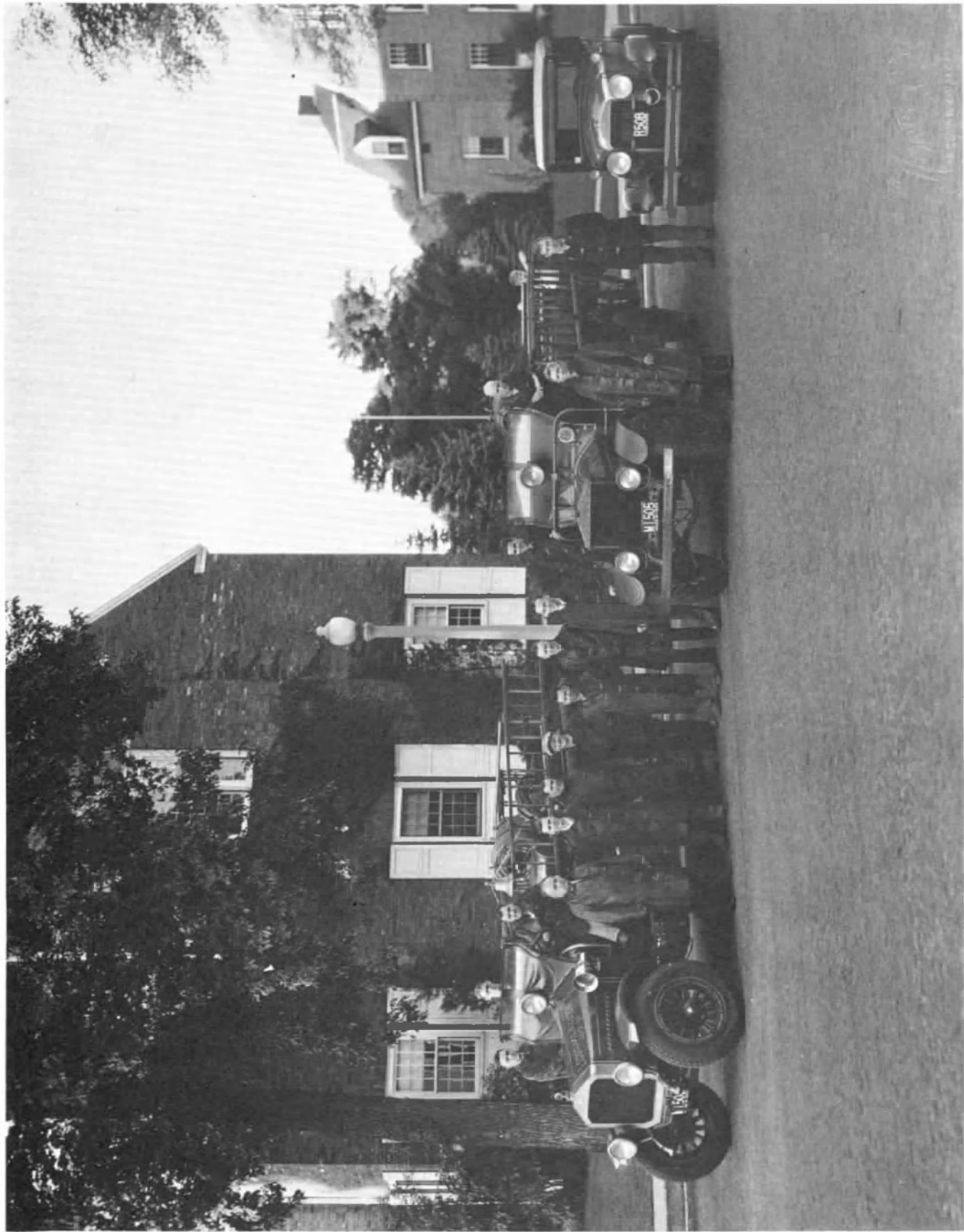
George Bliss	Herbert Porter
Albert Camyre	

In 1924 Robert Breck was appointed Chief.

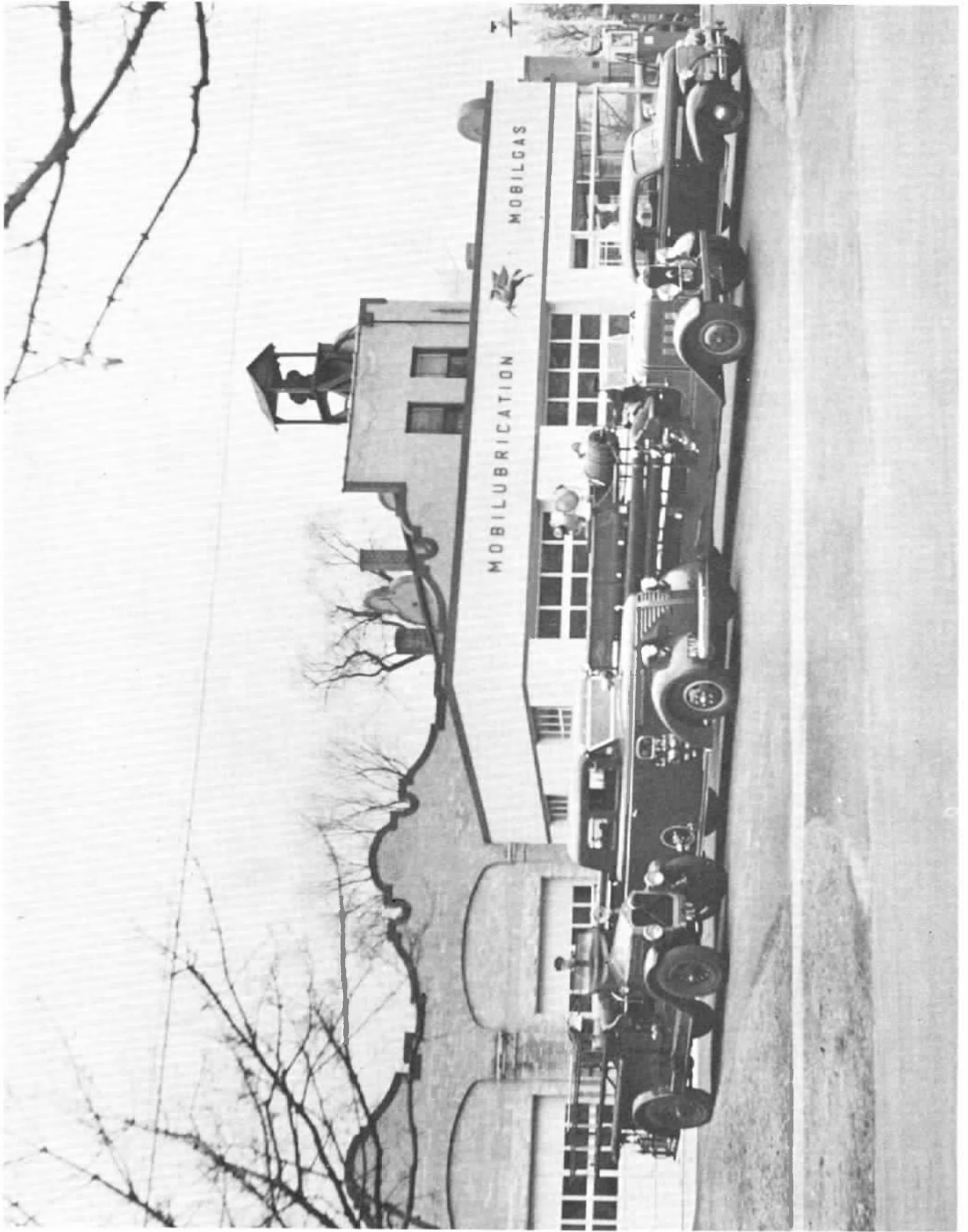
In 1925 the second truck was added to the department. It was a 450 gallon Triple

Combination Pumper made by the Maxim Motors Co. of Middleboro, Massachusetts. It has worked out satisfactorily in every way, living up to its reputation in every way. Also during this year the old Federal Truck, which was nine years old, has been completely rebuilt by putting in a new power plant. Also accomplished this year was the equipping of the men with boots and coats. The assessors valuation of property damaged by fire for the year was \$40,500 and loss on this property only \$2702.

In 1926 there was a total of 54 alarms. In 1926 the first outside fire alarm was installed. It was a wailing type siren that would sound a high shrill noise and then stop abruptly. A special code was set up to designate certain areas of the town. This has helped to make more men available at the fire sooner.



LONGMEADOW FIRE DEPT. — 1933



DEPARTMENT APPARATUS 1940

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In 1934 the Board of Fire Engineers recommended the need of replacing the old combination truck, which was almost twenty years old, to be replaced with a ladder truck. In 1935, for a price of \$8500, a new city service ladder truck was purchased. This truck came equipped with several hundred feet of ground ladders, a small pump, two large flood lights and assorted small firefighting tools.

For 1940, the Board of Fire Engineers have requested an appropriation of \$9500 for a new 750 gallon per minute pumping engine. This would be used to replace the pumper bought in 1925. The board also recommended that the siren fire alarm be replaced with an up to date horn. The siren is not loud enough to be heard by many of the callmen and is sometimes not distinctive enough to be able to count the box number. The board recommends an appropriation of \$4000 for a new fire signal.

As of December 31, 1940 the department had the following apparatus:

750 Gallon Pumper	Purchased 1940
Ladder Truck	Purchased 1936
450 Gallon Pumper	Purchased 1925

In 1941 in cooperation with the Albert T. Wood Post American Legion an auxiliary firefighting force has been formed which will assist the regular force if the need arises.

The installation of the new fire alarm signal was completed on October 1, 1942. The signal is very distinct and easy to count. This horn is used in conjunction with the magneto phones. These are phones placed in the homes of the callmen and activated by a base phone at the fire station or the chief's house. During 1943 there were several practice alerts and all men answered the alarms faithfully. The alerts were sounded using the new fire alarm signal and were at different times of the day and night.

In September 1946 a new 600 gallon per minute Triple Combination pumper was delivered to the town. The cost of this truck was \$7500. It had a three hundred gallon water tank and carried 1000 feet of hose. It also carried a ladder and other fire department tools.

On December 16, 1946 the first of two disastrous fires struck the First National Store at 408-410 Longmeadow Street. This fire did extensive damage to the whole block and totally destroyed all of the contents of the food store. The fire apparently started from an over heated hot plate used by the employees to make coffee.

On March 23, 1947 in the early morning hours, 2:45 A.M., a spectacular fire destroyed the Turner Park Hofbrau on Williams Street. This club was a big attraction in this area, as it was operated like a New York night club. The blaze was discovered by Albert Natolini an employee who lived at the park. He woke up to see a large glow coming from the main ballroom. He immediately alerted the other people who were there and then drove two miles to the fire station to report the fire. Firefighting operations were hampered by the lack of fire hydrants in the area. Water had to be pumped out of the pond to combat the fire. Although firefighters played water onto the fire it was of little use as the building was almost totally involved in fire upon the fire departments arrival. After pumping water for a while the pumper suddenly lost its water pressure. Upon checking they found that the strainer on the end of the suction hose had plugged up with bullheads. During the height of the fire liquor bottles could be heard exploding and the main floor of the dining area fell into the cellar. Despite the huge glow in the sky only a small crowd viewed the fire. The fire inspector listed the probable cause as a smouldering cigaret. The loss was estimated to be about \$100,000.



PARK HOFBRAU — 1947

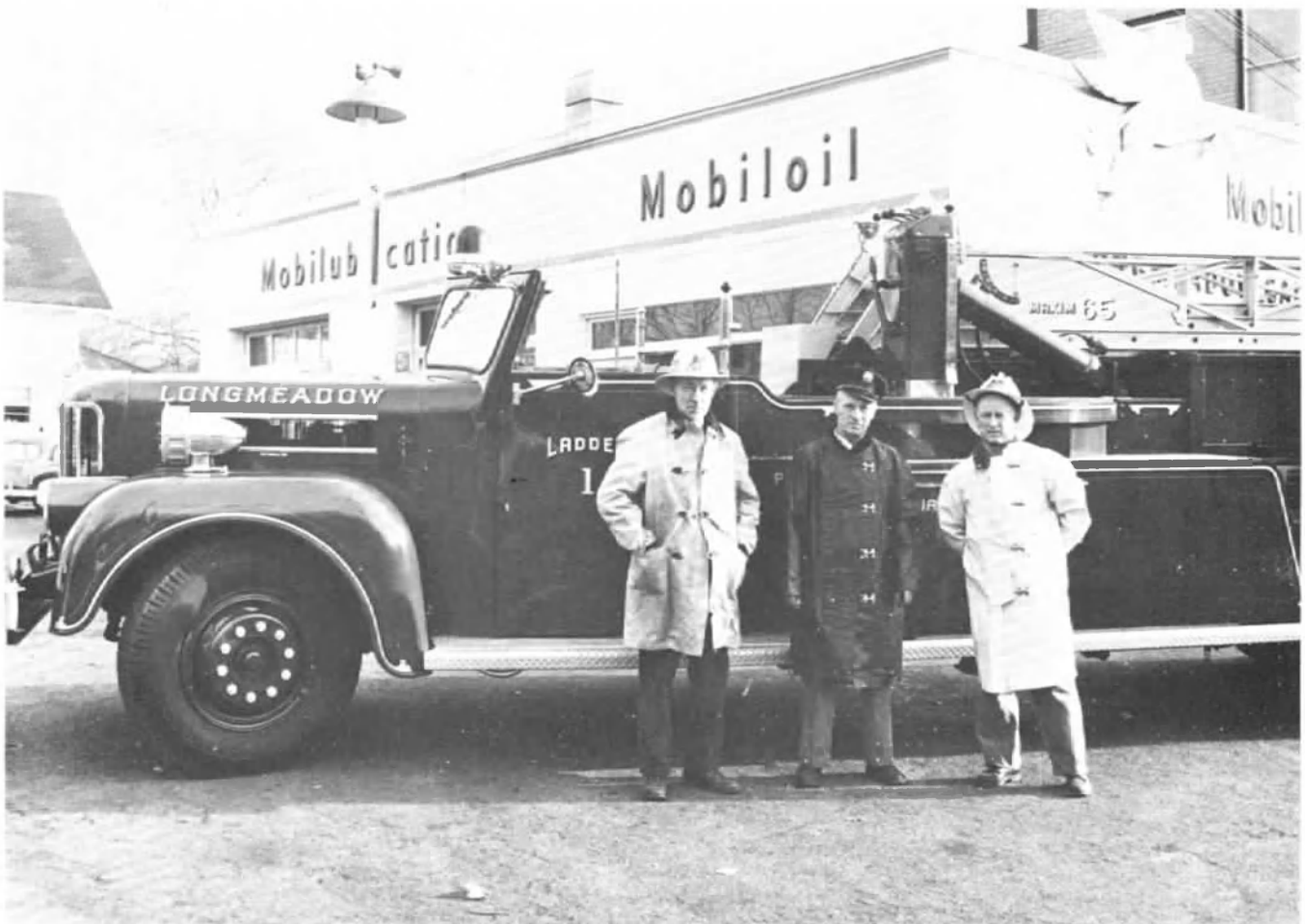


On February 21, 1954 a second fire struck at the First National Store at 408-410 Longmeadow Street. This fire took almost three hours to bring under control and did about \$50,000 worth of damage. During the height of the firefighting operations one fireman fell through the floor into the cellar. Another fireman who was standing nearby put a hose line down into the hole to keep the fire away from the man in the cellar. A feverish search by the firemen and policemen could not find the man who had found his own way out of the cellar. The only injury he had was a cut hand. Firefighters poured water into the structure for

about ten hours after the fire was brought under control.

In 1955 the Board of Fire Engineers requested an appropriation of \$34,000 to replace the old ladder truck with a new 65 foot aerial ladder truck. The City Service Truck was 21 years old.

In September 1956 a new Maxim Aerial Ladder was delivered. In October a fire exhibit and demonstration was presented at the Bliss Road ballfield. The new piece of apparatus was displayed along with all the other town firefighting apparatus.



CHIEF BRECK — PVT. CHAPMAN — DEPUTY CHIEF KEITH



**CHIEF BRECK – DEPUTY CHIEF KEITH – FIRE ENGINEER KING**

LONGMEADOW FIRE DEPARTMENT — 1960

In 1958, with about 35 years in the fire department, Chief Breck retired. At this time the town decided to organize a permanent department with round the clock coverage at the fire station. The opening for fire chief was widely advertised and several applications were received from the local area. In the mean time the Board of Fire Engineers created four full time positions. There were two shifts of two men each working 24 hours a day every other day.

The appointment of the new fire chief came on December 1, 1959. The new chief was James E. O'Brien of Haydenville, Massachusetts.

In 1958 a special town meeting approved an appropriation of \$235,000 for construction of a new fire and police department building. The building to be located on Williams Street.

The fire department moved into its new home on January 15, 1960. The first run out of the station was to a washing machine fire on Robin Road. In 1960 the fire department operated as a semi-permanent organization.

There were two men on duty at all times and there were six permanent men plus the chief. Each firefighters tour of duty was 24 hours a day, three days a week; for a total of 72 hours per week. The chief filled in during vacations and sick leaves besides his regular daytime duty. In January of 1960 the hours worked were reduced to three twenty-four hour tours every other day followed by forty-eight hours off. The men had been working 72 hours on their short week and 96 hours on their long one or a continuous 24 on—24 off. Throughout the year the chief and the men spent many hours modernizing procedures using very little funds from the town. The engines were set up with preconnected lines for speed for putting water on a fire with as few men as possible.

In December 1960 a devastating fire gutted the Bemis Estate in Glen Arden. The fire apparently started in a first floor library and spread quickly through the house. The tenants were awakened by the fire and managed to escape out a rear 2nd floor window. They then made their way through the snow to a neighbors house to report the fire. All of the towns fire apparatus responded and a special call was sent to Springfield Fire Department to lay another hydrant line for more water. They were then sent back to cover our station in case of another fire. Many antiques and paintings were lost in the fire which caused about \$135,000 damage. Ice and snow covered ground made firefighting difficult throughout the fire. Neighbors from the area brought out coffee and food through the night and their services were greatly appreciated by all.



Chief — James O'Brien



Donald Keith



Richard Passineau



Alfred Chapman



Walter Sokol



Harry Howe



Thomas Barry

In 1961 all ranks below chief were abolished and the rank of Lieutenant was established. The Lieutenants exam was given on April 25, 1961 and one Lieutenant was appointed to work days with the chief.

In 1962 a second Lieutenants position was created and filled. The age limit for volunteers was lowered from 21 to 18 to draw younger men who were interested in firefighting onto the fire department. During fire prevention week the Junior Fire Marshal plan was introduced to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades at all schools. Over 800 home inspections were made, under fire department guidance by the junior fire marshals. The children who participated received a red helmet and a badge for their efforts.

The rank of Lieutenant was reclassified to Captain to be more commensurate with the responsibility of the position. Also the rank of Lieutenant was established in the call department. This was done to establish a strong chain of command and to guarantee continuity of service should any emergency arise.

At the town meeting in February 1963 an appropriation of \$25,000 was voted to purchase a new pumper for use by the fire department. The delivery date to be in early 1964. On February 1964 the town took delivery of a 1000 gallon per minute pumper. Upon its delivery a factory representative gave an intense training course on all operations of the truck. This truck was unique in the sense that it had a built in foam system. This was a 35 gallon tank for a foam concentrate to be mixed with water for certain flammable liquid fires. This truck also carried 500 gallons of water as compared to 300 on our other pumper. It carried 1500 feet of hose and had two aluminum ladders. It had preconnected lines built into it at the factory.

The New England Fire Rating Bureau surveyed the town departments during the summer of this year and made reports to the Board of Selectman. At this time due to our new pumper and our new water system we were moved up from a class 6 to a class 5 for our insurance rating.

A tone alerting system was purchased this year to replace the old magneto phone system. A total of twenty-five radios were bought and placed in homes of firefighters. These radios are activated by a control head at the fire station. On receiving an alarm at fire headquarters the dispatcher pushes a button which activates all the home radios and gives the location of the fire.

During 1965 Engine 1 which is 18 years old was completely overhauled and is in very good condition at this time. A total of 995 man hours were spent in training firemen during the year. Thirteen men have completed a First Aid training course.

In 1966 another 1000 gallon per minute pumper was ordered and delivery is expected around March 1st, 1967. The appropriation for this pumper was \$30,000 as compared to \$3,200 for the pumper purchased in 1917.

In 1967 we took delivery of the above mentioned pumper. It was purchased from the Maxim Motors Co. This truck was basically the same as the 1964 model. A few of the changes were the adding of power steering, air brakes, and a new design in preconnected lines called "Matty Dales." This feature makes hose handling easier for firefighters. It also carries 500 gallons of water, has two ladders and a 35 gallon foam tank. It has 1500' of 3 inch hydrant line and preconnected 2½" hose.

Because of the strict laws set down by the Lower Pioneer Valley Air Pollution Control District the fire department was responsible for the control and extinguishment of fires at the dump. There were 63 fire calls to the dump. Several hundred feet of hose was lost through damage at the dump and several personal injuries were sustained, none serious. Our training officer was sent to the Central Massachusetts Fire Training Academy for a two week training course and has been certified by the State Department of Education.

In 1968 the firefighters work week was reduced from 56 hours to 48 hours a week. Due to the numerous discoveries of and the manufacture of many synthetics, high rise buildings, and other general fire hazards, firefighting has become a very technical and specialized field. At Springfield Technical Community College they have started a college degree program for firefighters. It is a 60 credit course for an Associates Degree in Fire Protection Engineering. It is designed to bring the firefighter up to date on all the latest firefighting techniques. Many of the department members have enrolled in these courses.

In May of 1969 the town was presented with a light duty rescue/service truck as a gift from the firefighters association. The funds to buy this truck came from the Associations Annual Christmas Tree Sale and from donations rendered for services performed during the year. The truck is a one ton Dodge with a utility body. It carries a large assortment of tools and equipment used for



firefighting or rescue work. It also has a 200 gallon water tank and a pump so that it can be used for fighting grass and brush fires and also other incipient fires, if needed. During its first year in service the rescue truck responded to 35 building fires, 42 non-fire calls, and 12 grass and brush fires.

Also in 1969 the Board of Fire Engineers, who were overseers of the fire department, were abolished. Chapter 48 Section 42 of the laws of Massachusetts were accepted to establish the administration of the fire department under the direction of the chief of the department who in turn was directly responsible to the Board of Selectmen. This has proved to be a very satisfactory method.

During 1969 the permanent members of the department voted to organize a local union and affiliate with the A.F.L.-C.I.O. International Association of Firefighters.

There was only one major fire in 1971, that being the fire that ravaged the home at the corner of Harwich Rd. and Dover Rd. The fire was discovered in the morning around 9 o'clock and had been burning undetected for some time. The residents of the home were on vacation in California at the time. At the height of the blaze, the living room floor collapsed into the cellar. As there is normally a manpower shortage problem at this time of the day, the North Thompsonville Fire Department was called in to assist at the fire and the Shaker Pines Fire Department covered our fire station.

1972 brought the first of our members to graduate from the college. He had started in the original class and spent many long hours of study. He now has an Associates Degree in Fire Protection Engineering which in the future will be required for many chiefs jobs and also may be required for entrance to individual departments.

On September 25, 1972 a slight tremor shook the department. An application for the call force was received from a girl. A GIRL!?! Yes but this girl was different. Her husband was a member of the call force and she had an impressive background in the fire service already, without really being on any fire department. Although the report did not come out until 1973, the Presidents Commission on Fire Prevention and Control recommended that girls be trained in certain areas of the fire service. Radio dispatching, fire inspections, and public relations, and other non firefighting duties were recommended. Her appointment has met with mixed emotions from department members but most don't mind her around. She has actively

participated in our monthly drill programs and has shown quite a flair for firefighting. She has also done some public relations in the form of giving fire prevention talks to children in the towns grade schools.

There were 353 fire and emergency calls and 225 non fire or service calls for 1972. The buildings and properties involved in fires are valued at \$7,375,700 and the actual fire loss is estimated at \$55,975.

This year, 1973, marks the 50th anniversary of the organization of the fire department. At this time we have 16 full time firemen, including the chief, and 15 call firemen, including a girl. There are 4 captains on the regular force and three lieutenants on the call force.

The department has the following apparatus:

600 Gallon per minute pumper	1947
1000 Gallon per minute pumper	1964
1000 Gallon per minute pumper	1967
65 FT. Aerial ladder truck	1956
1 ton Rescue/Service truck	1969
1881 Clapp and Jones steamer	1972
1900 Hose reel	1968
12' Aluminum Boat	1965

We presently work a 48 hour week with a reduction to 42 coming in July of 1974. Drills are held daily for the duty shift and department drills are held once a month.

At least three men respond to all calls, day or night, and are supplemented by call men or off duty permanent men when needed. We also have radio communication with all but one municipality in Hampden County and we have a Mutual Aid agreement with five departments in Connecticut.

The Firefighters Association has been able to purchase an antique steamer and through the efforts of all department members have restored it to like new condition. The old hose reel has also been restored and when put side by side they make a very impressive display that the department is very proud of.

The original purpose of the fire department was to extend a community effort to one of an organized community effort by a few selected, trained personal.

Over the years because of rising costs the fire department finds it more difficult to extend services of a non fire nature. The establishment of a pay system for duties performed, the professionalism now apparent in the department, recent laws and policy changes which allow firefighters to reside out of town; all of these things under the heading of progress are changing



TRAGEDY ON DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1967



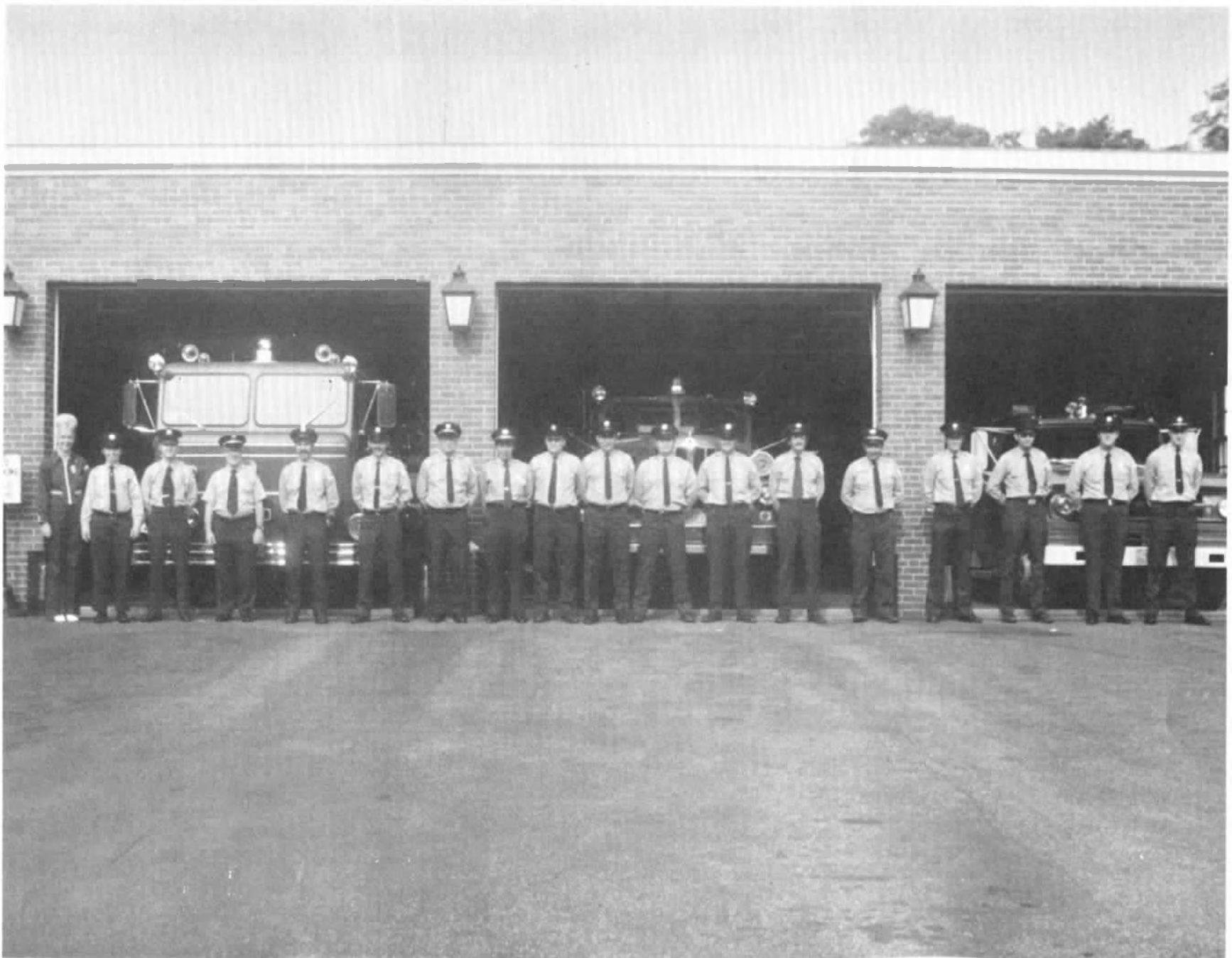
COMING OUT FOR  
A BREATH





**CHIEF JAMES E. O'BRIEN**





**LEFT TO RIGHT: K. SHAYEB, P. GUERNSEY, W. O'MALLEY, R. CLARK, D. CORDIS, R. ATHAS, D. CLARK, V. SHAYEB, L. MORSE, R. MEZZE'TTI, T. GRIMALDI, J. HARLOW, M. FEDE, T. DAVIDSON, R. SIANO, R. SABIN, A. SALE, R. MICKELSON.**

MEMBERS LONGMEADOW  
FIRE DEPARTMENT  
1973

PERMANENT MEN

CHIEF — O'BRIEN, JAMES E.

CAPTAINS — CLARK, DONALD M.  
FORSYTH, DAVID C.  
PHANEUF, ROBERT W.  
DAVIDSON, TIMOTHY W.

PRIVATES — GUERNSEY, PETER W.  
HOLBROOK, ROBERT T.  
MORSE, LOUIS F.  
GRIMALDI, THOMAS J.  
MAGILL, NEAL D.  
SPURLOCK, MICHAEL L.  
ATHAS, ROBERT E.  
CORDIS, DOUGLAS F.  
MAZZETTI, ROBERT  
HARLOW, JEFFERY D.  
FEDE, MICHAEL L.

CALL MEN

LIEUTENANT — CLARK, RAYMOND  
SHAYER, VICTOR  
MICKELSON, NICK

PRIVATES — CIRELLE, ANGELO  
GABAURY, NORMAN  
HURLIN, JAY  
MEYER, JOHN  
O'MALLEY, WILLIAM  
SALE, ALLEN  
SIANO, ROBERT  
HOLBROOK, AUTHUR  
SHAYEB, SANDRA  
DEMARAIS, RENE  
HAMMETT, CHARLES  
SABIN, ROBERT

FIRE DEPT. TELEPHONE  
NUMBERS

TO REPORT A FIRE  
BUSINESS PHONE

567-3357  
567-0098

