



A. E. Crandall Hook & Ladder Company, Inc.
Alfred, New York

ALFRED HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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A paper prepared by

Jean B. Lang, Alfred, N.Y.

THE A. E. CRANDALL HOOK & LADDER COMPANY, 1887--1972

It has been a good many years since the volunteer fire fighters of Alfred, N.Y. sat on coffin boxes to hold their meetings on the second floor of Phil S. Place's undertaker's establishment. The company was formed in February, 1887 with the following officers: Foreman, Milo B. Greene (chief organizer); Assistant Foreman, J. P. Mosher; Secretary, F. A. Crumb; Treasurer, D. H. Rogers. In the early days of the company's existence Almond E. Crandall was a staunch friend and supporter, thus the company's name, A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1. Later this became A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company, Incorporated.

In November, 1887 at a meeting in J. R. Crandall's shop, the firemen decided to take steps to provide themselves with a suitable home. A committee was formed for this purpose and in July, 1889 a lot was purchased from the estate of Elisha Potter on West University Street as a site for the fire hall. The cost of the lot was \$250, \$50 down and a note for one year for the balance.

In October, 1889 the company was incorporated and on June 5, 1890 the corner stone of about one ton was laid for the firehall with appropriate ceremony. A year passed before the building was ready for use. It was built almost entirely by volunteer labor with men working before breakfast, after supper and all night to complete the structure which is still in use. The firemen gave at least 6 days* worth of work each. In the April 30, 1891 Sun we read "A neat weather vane has been put upon the top of the tower of the Firemen's Hall. It represents a fireman ascending a ladder, and the design was made by the Foreman of the Hook and Ladder Company, Milo B. Greene." Not until 1909 was the date of erection cut in the keystone. This was done for \$2.00 by W. M. Wilbur.

The following is a description of the building taken from the Alfred Sun, Ladies' Edition, June 16, 1895:

"Firemen's Hall, erected within the last five years by our firecompany, is a brick veneered, metal roofed building, located on West University Street near the corner of Main. On the first floor, at the right, is the engine room. Back of the entrance hall are a parlor and dining-room with folding doors between. Opening into the dining-room is a spacious kitchen conveniently arranged and nicely furnished. On this floor also is a small room used by the City Fathers as a council chamber. On the second floor is the audience room, 36 x 85 feet, furnished with comfortable chairs, which with those in the gallery will seat about six hundred people. The stage is 18 x 36 feet, supplied with the usual stage furnishings. In this building is held the Firemen's Fair, which is an annual event occurring usually in December, and calling out the entire community. The receipts from these fairs, so liberally supported, have aided largely in building and furnishing the hall."

For years it was the center of most of the social activities of the community. The hall came to the rescue of Alfred University and the Agricultural and Technical College for assemblies, meetings and practice rooms through the years. At times there was a club room with pool table for the firemen and a rifle range in the basement, which also stored cabbages at one period in its history.

An exciting addition to the building came when the bell committee, headed by W. H. Crandall obtained for the tower a thirty-six inch diameter bell in 1898. Made at the Cincinnati Bell Foundry Company and including mountings, stricker, ropes and sheaves, it cost \$100 which was paid by W. H. Crandall. The same year Alonzo Stillman and his sisters, Madelia and Clotilda furnished the Seth Thomas clock which along with the bell are still in the tower and in use. "We have always been far ahead of any fire company in Western New York in the matter of a building, but now we shall be 'out of sight.'" read an article in the March 16, 1898 Sun after the above acquisitions.

Acquired first in 1928, sirens now summon the men to fires. After World War II there was a siren also at Saxon Heights student housing project. This was relocated in October, 1969 new the Alfred University observatories by the village pump house on Pine Hill. The other siren is on top of the pool hall building at the corner of Main and Church Streets. 1951 and 1952 saw the installation of the present telephone system for reporting fires and requesting the ambulance. The phones are answered by volunteers in their homes or places of business so that 24-hour coverage is available.

Back to the early days of the fire department. The firemen held an annual Fair to help to pay for the building and to defray expenses. The first of these events was held in January, 1890 at Bliss Hall, Alfred Centre. Later they were held in the Firemen's Hall and were a great success as attested in an Alfred Sun article of February 20, 1902:

"The main hall looks very inviting with its various booths. The candy booth is perhaps the most striking. This is trimmed with pink bunting and with strung popcorn, which makes a very pretty effect....

"The Rummage Sale is in charge of F. G. Place and E. E. Beckwith who did a good business, especially in old hats....

"On the third floor was found Prof. F. W. Howard with his wonderful talking machine. He did a rushing business.

"The lunch counter in the truck room is in charge of veterans J. H. Place and F. N. Collins.

"In the basement Franz Rosebush raked in the nickles from those who thought they could shoot."

DeForest Truman told how, to help meet expenses, his father would make taffy and pull it in the Firemen's Hall. They would cut it in chunks and wrap it for the children to sell.

The history of the company is filled with problems of rental of the rooms in the hall. In 1914 the village owed them back rent on the Jail Room. The pool room was a constant source of care. In 1923 they decided to charge \$1.00 a year fee to help out when dismantled it in 1924. From 1915 to 1921 the village owed rent for use of rooms by the Village Council. Those were lean years. After that it was to be \$50 per year increasing to \$150 per year in 1929. Over the years interior remodelling has been achieved to accommodate the village offices and also the Police Department.

1913 was a busy year. In that year the department added the land behind the hall to their property and discharged the mortgage. They also installed a movie picture machine in the hall. There was no electricity in the building but that was supplied by generator by Rogers Machine Shop. In 1914 it cost them \$40 for 3 months to rent machine for pictures. At the large fee of Adults 20¢ and Children 10¢, war tax included, Alfredians in 1919 were entertained by such thrillers as DeLuxe Annie with Norma Talmadge and Silent Sacrifice with Alice Brady. According to M. E. Kenyon, Saturday night was movie night with a four reel program.

In 1912 the tower on Firemens' Hall had been ~~damaged~~ by lightening and by 1915 it was being repaired. Apparently there was no need to rush. About the same time a committee was appointed to see about a ticket window for the auditorium and opera chairs for the gallery. On December 11, 1915 the committee was authorized to have the booth placed in the hall and the bill presented to the company. We believe the same booth still is in use. During World War I they rented the hall to college Y.M.C.A. group for HUT for the S.A.T.C. (Student Army Training Corps). Firemen going to war were given a box of cigars.

New scenery was bought in 1925 at the cost of \$386 including the advertising curtain which is still hanging on the stage and was seen by local residents at the time of the Alfred Sesquicentennial Celebration, July, 1957, when an old-time melodrama was staged.

About the 1920's the men considered wiring the building for electricity. Land was purchased on the West side of the building for fire escape and driveway in 1927. In 1929 they voted to cease renting hall in order to ease the problems of upkeep. This is recorded in a letter to Alva Fitz Randolph (Feb. 20, 1929) from the secretary Stanley C. Stillman, asking that the Hall be exempt from taxation as it was not to be rented. In 1935 A. E. Champlin brought up the possibility of turning over the hall to the village but the department did not recommend this action. As the jail, a steel cage affair, was no longer used, it was decided to turn it into a club room for members. In the 1940's and again in the 1960's the firemen sponsored the local Boy Scout troop which used the upstairs room in the hall. A concrete block truck room was added to the rear of the building in 1958 which has two bays and will hold three vehicles and hose drying racks. A barn next to the main building was taken down before this addition was possible.

A few of the fires at which the Crandall Hooks played a part must not go unmentioned. The State School barns seemed fated. One barn burned before it was completed in 1910. The replacement barn burned down but not completely in 1960, despite mutual aid from Andover, Almond, and Hornell. Labor Day 1970 the new hay barn on the Belmont Road was lost to fire. In 1911 the Allen home burned. Button's Meat Market and George Stillman's shop burned in 1913. This left a cellar hole which was turned into Prexy's pool next to Carnegie Hall on the corner of E. University St. and Main St. At a loss of \$50,000 Alfred University's Babcock Hall was lost on Feb. 19, 1929. Later the University lost Burdick Hall on May 30, 1959 and a storage barn on Jericho Hill on Jan. 15, 1972.

There were also several church fires. A fire on May 7, 1891 which left three families homeless and destroyed the Saunders studio, the drug store and the Greene homestead also ruined the sheds of the First Alfred Seventh Day Baptist Church which housed the old band wagon. The church itself caught fire on Saturday November 30, 1929. Almond and Andover were called to help and the building was saved, However the memorial windows were gone, the piano and organ ruined and the new oak floor burned and chopped. The historically interesting Harsville Hill Church was lost on August 15, 1966.

At other incidents the company has been more successful, saving the home of A. B. Kenyon, Nov. 2, 1891; the Grade School (Kanakadea Hall) in 1908; Alfred University Infirmary in 1928; the Brick Women's Dormitory in 1932; South Hall research laboratory in 1952 with \$10,000 damage, the Fire Hall itself in 1955, and of course many homes and businesses.

An amusing item from The Fiat Lux (Mar. 9, 1943) reads "Tech Hens Have Hot Time In Old Town...."

"At the ungodly hour of 6:30 a.m. the siren blasted sleepy residents from their slumbers.... The sleepy firemen dashed down the road anticipating a delicious breakfast of fried chicken a la Kentucky.... Imagine their disappointment when they discovered that the fire was smoldering in the abandoned caretaker's home.

"Despite the withering heat, none of the old hens withers were withered and the blaze was extinguished with only the loss of sleep and a few bags of grain."

With little change over the years the qualifications for membership according to the By-Laws are:

"Any person, of at least 18 years of age, who is physically fit, of good character, is a resident of the Town of Alfred or is employed in the Village of Alfred, shall be eligible to membership."

Although the company does not have a ladies auxiliary, as do many volunteer fire departments, it was recently thought advisable for the ladies answering the fire phone and a nurse or two to belong to the company as "firemen." The honor of being the first "lady fireman" goes to Margery Sands (Mrs. Richard), elected on June 10, 1968.

Active firemen are required to attend practices (there are two each month) and monthly meetings. They also have to take courses in firemanship given by the County Fire Instructor who is trained by the State of New York Division of Fire Safety. Certificates are awarded to each man completing a course.

The story of the A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company would not be complete without including the cooperation with the Alfred Station Fire Department. Both departments respond to almost all local fires together. The annual "get-together" with the Alfred Station firemen was started in 1929 with a tureen supper and dance.

The equipment used for fire fighting over the years has changed radically. Alfred's changes have taken place partly due to mechanical progress and partly due to the increased size of the college facilities they have under their protection. Unfortunately there is not a great deal of discussion or description of equipment in the company's minutes of the earlier equipment, but from pictures and descriptions by the older citizens the following information was gathered.

One story tells of a hold up in a bucket brigade from Kanakadea Creek up Jericho Hill, when a teacher in the line-up stopped to inspect the bucket to see how it was made! In April, 1887 the firemen obtained a chemical truck which was equipped later with a hook and ladder; P. S. Place making the ladder. At the Grade School fire in 1908 they had a man-drawn four-wheel pumper. Later the frame was bought and made into a farm wagon at the blacksmith shop by Wm. H. Thomas. In 1912 we know they had a hose cart and obtained 400 feet of new hose from the village. There was also a separate hose company. This was really part of the C. A. Crandalls but the two-wheel hose cart was kept in a shed-like building which belonged to Dr. Coon, the dentist, and was located on N. Main St. approximately in the vicinity of the McLane Gymnasium. This was called the Garrione Hose Company, according to Roger Thomas, a former chief.

When the fire alarm sounded in the early days all available manpower helped pull the trucks to the fire scene. When people in town acquired "horseless" trucks they tried to hitch to the fire truck to drag it, but that wrecked the fire trucks as the motor truck drivers would go too fast

and tip over the trucks they were dragging.

In 1919 the company had a chemical engine. The chemical tanks of about 75 gallon capacity, were of the soda acid type, the pressure of the acid being added to the soda and water forcing the water out the hose. The acid was hard on the hoses, rotting the cloth if spilled on them and they were then apt to explode. They got a Ford chassis to mount the chemical tanks on in 1922. According to a picture in the Sun of March 20, 1924, the Crandall Hooks obtained a new Hudson chemical and hose truck.

Next we hear that there is a need to improve the equipment in order to keep down the insurance rates. This becomes a familiar cry. From Forness Garage in Olean, N.Y. in 1936 they bought a chassis and motor (Diamond T, Model 244, 163 3/4" wheel base) for \$1383 and the rest of the truck equipment from the Caysler Manufacturing Corporation of Buffalo for \$2900. On October 12, 1941 the truck committee reported they had signed a contract from Caysler to buy a new truck, a 1940 Chevrolet emergency truck.

The firemen in 1942 voted to dispose of the Hudson fire truck, but still had it in 1944 when they decided to loan it and their Office of Civil Defense equipment to the Alfred Station Fire Company.

By 1951 the big white 1940 Chevrolet emergency truck, acquired in 1941, was ready for replacement and a 1942 Cadillac ambulance was purchased for \$1395. It should be noted that firemen had been in the emergency rescue business for some time. Those firemen with advanced first aid training manned the ambulance.

In 1954 the truck bought in 1941 was sold to the Diahoga Hose Co. #6 at Athens, Pa. for \$575 and a new 1953 model truck was purchased from Young Fire Equipment Company with a 300 gallon tank to enable them to carry water out of the village. This is Engine #53. This was about the time the Allegany County radio system was started for the purpose of mutual aid between companies and for civil defense. All pieces of equipment recieved designating numbers and were equipped with two-way radios.

In 1957 the ambulance situation was critical and the firemen with the help of the League of Women Voters of Alfred solicited the village and town for funds. This was met by ready contributions and a white Buick Super ambulance was purchased for \$1084.20 in March from Hornell Buick Company. In County Fire Control terms the ambulance is called "2 Rescue #1" (the 2 standing for Allegany County in the State numbering system).

The Spring of 1963 saw a new pumper in the fire hall from Howe Fire Apparatus Company, "2 Engine 5". This carries 300 gallons and pumped at the rate of 750 gallons per minute. After that the old Diamond T was sold to the Sparta, N.Y. Fire Department for \$250.

Due to the Underwriters' specifications, after an inspection of town and village and the fire equipment, a 75 foot, 1949 Seagraves aerial ladder ("2 Truck 5") was purchased from Dunkirk, N.Y. fire department at about \$2200. This truck arrived in Alfred, its bell clanging, on a bitterly cold Sunday afternoon in December, 1968 to a welcoming committee of firemen, wives and children.

Still working to meet specifications the company obtained "2 Engine 56", a Ward LaFrance 1000 gallon per minute pumper with 250 gallons pf water capacity, from Buffalo, N.Y. for \$750 in August, 1971. For the first time since the 1940's Alfred firemen turned out for a few parades, driving this latest acquisition decked out with posters calling attention to the 1972 convention of the

Allegany County Volunteer Firemen's Association to be held in Alfred.

In the meantime the 1957 ambulance was failing and another finance drive, headed by Bob Clinger, quickly raised the necessary monies for a new one, which was purchased from Superior Coach Corp., Rochester, N.Y. This red and white 1969 Cadillac, equipped to carry four patients was delivered in December, 1969 at a cost of about \$16000.

In November, 1971 the truck committee had been busy again, and brought back "2 Engine 57" a new Ward LaFrance 1000 gallon per minute pumper with 750 gallon capacity, which was purchased from the factory in Elmira, N.Y., with a Ford engine and chassis.

The local volunteer company has long been affiliated with larger volunteer firemen's associations. The earliest one which they joined was the State organization. On July 25, 1892, the company held a special meeting and applied for membership in the Firemen's Association of the State of New York and appointed Milo B. Greene delegate to the State Convention. The framed Certificate of Admission is dated August 5, 1892.

In September, 1893 the Crandall Hooks received a communication from Wellsville for delegates to attend a meeting to assist in forming a County firemen's organization. Such a group was formed and in November of that year they joined the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Allegany County. In 1908 they joined both the Five County Association and the Seven County Association. On June 13, 1913 they voted to join Southwestern Association of Volunteer Firemen of New York. They also belong to the Allegany County Chief's Association and send delegates to the Allegany County Fire Advisory Board.

The County organization got the firemen out to parades and conventions in fine style. Up until the 1940's the Crandall Hooks usually had drill captains to keep the men in parade shape and they put on uniforms and competed with the other volunteer companies. For example in 1898 at the convention in Andover they won \$20 in the Hook and Ladder Race and \$12.50 for their prize drill team. In Wellsville in 1899 the drill team won a banquet lamp and the hook and ladder race team got \$35 as first prize.

When the Crandall Hooks' turn to hold the annual meeting and convention came up in 1922, as A. E. Champlin was president of the County Association, they had a mass meeting to discuss whether or not they should host the group, Alfred being such a conservative town. It was decided that they should and this precluded much preparation, including painting the hydrants and getting uniforms for the men. The latter were located and loaned by the Phoenix Hose Co. of Addison due to the efforts of Leon Sisson and W. H. Bassett. The company thanked Addison for this aid by sending them a picture of themselves in the uniforms along with a box of cigars.

The account in the Alfred Sun (July 26, 1922) entitled "County Firemen Capture Alfred, Entire Village Surrenders to Forces of the County Association" recounts the affair as a grand success.

"...no prettier place has been selected and no more pains taken to make the meeting a success than has been the case with the Alfred firemen and the village of Alfred."

Sixty-two people sat down at the delicious banquet. The local boys even captured second prize in the Hub and Hub Race, one of the events.

Perhaps further information from the Sun article is of interest as in July, 1972, after fifty years, Alfred will again be "captured" as Walter Lang of the local company is president of the Volunteer Firemen's Association of Allegany County.

"Thursday was of course the big day and cars began to roll in early in the forenoon, until it was estimated that some 2500 people were in town. The Hornell Erie band was on hand about 10 o'clock and gave a concert in the park that was greatly enjoyed as they have one of the best bands in Western New York....

"Soon after 1:30 the parade started headed by Chief Sisson of the local department, and E. S. Richardson, the veteran chief of the Belmont department, and it was witnessed by the large crowd, who were much pleased by the appearance of the various companies....

"Archie Emerson, the local trapeze performer and general all around juggler, did his share in entertaining the crowds at various times during the day, and his work was of the best.

"Main street from Church to West University was closed and used as the midway, which had the usual fakers stands that follow this kind of a show.

"The merry-go-round, located west of the Brick, did a good business and pleased the kids and some of the older ones."

At the firemen's convention in Whitesville in July, 1971, Nathan Tucker, who has been in the Alfred Company since 1938 and active in County firematics, was presented the Fireman of the Year Award for his faithful services.

Throughout its history the A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company has been supported by the Village and Town of Alfred, Contributions from Alfred University, the State University of New York Agricultural and Technical College, the United Fund and the citizens of the village and town. Its district is the Village and Town of Alfred with the cooperation of the Alfred Station Fire Department and at times has had Fire Protection contracts with adjoining towns such as the Town of Ward. It also is a member of the mutual aid system of Allegany County.

As this "goes to press" the company is contemplating building new quarters as the old building is in need of repair and the size is inadequate (for example the aerial ladders project through a hole in the wall and rest on the kitchen sink) for the present equipment.

SOURCES

Alfred Sun: May 20, 1890; Ap. 30, May 7, 1891; Mar. 16, June 16 (Ladies' Ed.), 1898; Feb. 19, 1902; June 17, Dec. 16, 23, 1903; July 6, 1910; Jan. 17, 1912; Feb. 21, 1921; July 26, 1922; Feb. 2, Dec. 5, 1929; Jan. 14, 1937; Jan. 4, 1940; June 2, 1955; Oct. 3, 1957.

By-Laws. The A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company, Inc., 1887 and amendments (inc. in First book of minutes); 1913, 1950, 1958, 1971.

Clawson, Cortez R. History of the Town of Alfred, New York From the Earliest Times to the Present, Alfred, N.Y., 1926.

Fiat Lux: March 9, 1913 (Alfred University student paper).

Kenyon, M. Elwood. Alfred Village--1913, Alfred Historical Soc. Mono. #9, Feb., 1971.

Minutes. A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Co., 1887-1911; 1912-1911; 1911-1968.

A. E. CRANDALL HOOK AND LADDER CO.
LIST OF CHIEFS, FOREMEN, AND PRESIDENTS

CHIEF	DATE	FOREMAN OR PRESIDENT	DATE
W. H. Crandall	Nov. 8, 1887-1892	Milo B. Greene	1887-1892
Milo B. Greene	1893	Frank A. Crumb	1893-1894
J. F. Langworthy	1894	W. H. Crandall	1895-1896
W. C. Dunham	1895	C. D. Reynolds	1897
W. F. Burdick	1896	W. F. Burdick	1898
P. S. Place	1897-1899	Lyle Bennehoff	1899-1900
Grant Hubbard	1900	W. H. Bassett	1901-1902
N. W. Vincent	1901	Frank Sisson	1903-1907
E. E. Beckwith	1902	E. E. Beckwith	1908-1909
C. B. Stillman	1903-1906	D. H. Rogers	1910-1911
P.S. Place (resigned in March)	1907	F. W. Stevens	1912-1913
F. A. Crumb	1907	L. S. Beyea	1914
Leon Sisson	1908-1913	W. H. Thomas	1915
Frank G. Place	1914-1916	E. A. Gamble	1916
J. Leon Sisson	1917-1918	James Evans	1917-1918
W. F. Burdick	1919	R. A. Armstrong	1919
H. C. Greene	1920	L. C. Vars	1920
J. L. Sisson	1921-1928	C. L. E. Lewis	1921-1925
George A. Coon	1929	DeForest Truman	1926-1929
H. C. Greene	1930-1937	S. C. Stillman	1930-1932
R. S. Thomas	1937-1938	R. S. Thomas	1933-1936
H. J. Thomas	1938-1939	(March, 1935 voted to have elections in April instead of December)	
R. S. Thomas	1939-1943	Philip B. Post	1936
R. M. Glover	1943-1948	George A. Coon (Pres.)	Aug., 1936-1938
Wm. Evans	1948-1951	C. H. Webb	1938-1939
Stanley Butts	1951-1955	L. L. Langworthy	1939-1941
Samuel Scholes, Jr.	1955-1957	D. W. Truman	1941-1942
Harold Dickenson	1957-1961	E. F. Hildebrand	1942-1944
Stanley Butts	1961-1963	N. F. Tucker	1944-1945
Peter Finlay	1963-1972	C. L. Wheaton	1945-1947
Richard Sands	1972-	R. S. Thomas	1947-1948
		C. W. Merritt	1948-1949
		C. C. Post	1949-1950
		Weldon Cook	1950-1951
		William Evans	1951-1955
		Walter C. Hinkle	1955-1956
		Herman Sicker	1956-1958
		Roger Thomas	1958-1961
		Peter Finlay	1962-1963
		Richard Sands	1963-1964
		Roger Thomas	1964-1967
		James Herrick	1967-1968
		Walter I. Lang	1968-1971
		Walter Friend	1971-1972
		Peter Finlay	1972-