

Fire Dept. -
(Edison History)
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Edison -

The News Tribune, Woodbridge, N. J. — Friday, May 29, 1970

Edison Firemen Began in 1916 with Borrowed Equipment

EDISON — Back in 1916, volunteer firemen attached to Raritan Engine Co. 1 responded to fire alarms with a borrowed horse-drawn wagon and water buckets. Fire alarms were sounded on the bell of the St. James Episcopal Church.

Each man was required to purchase his own pail, pay 50 cents a month dues and faced 25 cent fines for failing to answer to answer fire calls or swearing at meetings.

Along with the wagon borrowed from the Highland Park Fire Co., the embryonic volunteer brigade relied on a fire gong loaned by the Washington Fire Hose Co. of Metuchen to alert them to fires within their territory.

Organized on May 4 as a volunteer fire company by 26 men who met in the old Town Hall located behind St. James Church, the department was structured to provide fire protection for what was the known as the Lindeneau Piscataway, Bonhamtown, Nixon and Stelton areas of Raritan Township. This territory extended from Highland Park line on the west to Metuchen on the east, and from the Raritan River on the south to South Plainfield on the north. This same area is covered today by the company.

Fire fighting equipment was restricted to the horse drawn wagon and pails which were placed in boxes hung on poles at Fox Lane and Woodbridge Avenue, on the grounds of the Piscatawaytown School 3, Piscataway Corner, Old Post and Stony Roads and at Dunham's Hill. When a member answered an alarm, he would bring his own pail or stop and get one from these boxes.

Starting with 42 charter members, the company set to work to acquire better equipment and a firehouse.



H. RAYMOND VLIET
Heads Firemen

An offer of land by the Brundage brothers, Joseph and George, led to an outright donation by the two men who were too old to join the company but impressed and enthused by the men's eagerness to acquire such a site.

The Brundages donated a parcel of land on Woodbridge Avenue. A telephone was installed in the Brundage house at company expense for the sole purpose of answering fire calls.

Later, this telephone was removed to the home of Mrs. Ruth Wales, who also took charge of answering calls and ringing the fire gong, which had been moved to her property.

For his years of service, Mrs. Wales was made an honorary member of the fire company in 1955, the first and only woman to be so honored.

By January, 1917, plans were completed for the new firehouse and built on a bid of \$2,800.

Five other companies sprang up in the 1920s in Edison Township, then known as Raritan.

Anxious to occupy their still-incomplete firehouse, the men held a public election for five Fire Commissioners at Alex Bors' store at Woodbridge and Silver Lake Avenues.

Dedication of the new firehouse fell on Memorial Day, 1917, and the firemen sold chances on a Model T Ford car at Plainfield Avenue and along Lincoln Highway, or Route 27, to purchase the company's first fire truck, a Model T Ford.

In 1923, the company agreed to sell the firehouse, truck and property to the fire commissioners for \$3,800. At this time, the commissioners decided to purchase a new truck for the company, a 1923 model Mack Bulldog combination chemical and pumper. With the addition of this shiny new truck, the horse drawn wagon also went back to the donor.

Toward the end of the Depression, the commissioners built a new firehouse at the corner of Simpson Place and Plainfield Avenue, a two-story structure with three bays.

With the 1923 Ford worn out, the company bought a new pumper in 1948, only to learn it lacked the needed pumping capacity and a second pumper was purchased in 1954. Still more equipment was added in the late 1950s and 1960s, when in 1961 the company boasted the only snorkel equipment in the East.

A new firehouse was built in 1955 and called House II of Raritan Engine Co. 1.

Today, Fire Chief H. Ray Vliet says there are 61 paid firemen on township rolls, along with 175 volunteers. Future plans call for the addition of paid firemen at the Menlo Park firehouse, the only firehouse not manned by paid firemen.

Vliet described the relationship between the township's firemen and policemen as excellent and felt the fire division is in good shape in terms of equipment and training.

Modern electronic fire alarms installed in firemen's houses have been added and the station house boasts the latest in communications equipment.

With the change in Edison's form of government from commissioners to the strong mayor-council system in 1958, the township's fire commissioners were eliminated and the territories retained as five separate fire precincts.

Within the past 10 years, a fire prevention bureau has been formed within the division to investigate fires of suspicious nature. Special public service fire brigade training programs also are conducted at the various industries and hospitals and nursing homes throughout the township.

Histories similar to that of Raritan Fire Co. 1 can be traced for the township's other companies which were organized during the 1920s.

Raritan Engine Co. 2 was organized in 1924 with about 20 men and a Stutz Bearcat holding a chemical tank. The unit's equipment included a 1918-1919 Model T pickup truck, affectionately known as the "peanut wagon" which held a water tank and hose.

Edison Volunteer Co. 1, also organized in 1924 and incorporated in 1926, boasted Thomas A. Edison as an honorary member among the 16 charter members. Equipped with a Model T Ford, the company's first major fire was the old tile factory.

The company was housed in a converted bungalow on Mon-

mouth Avenue until the existing firehouse was built in 1940 at a cost to taxpayers of \$7,500.

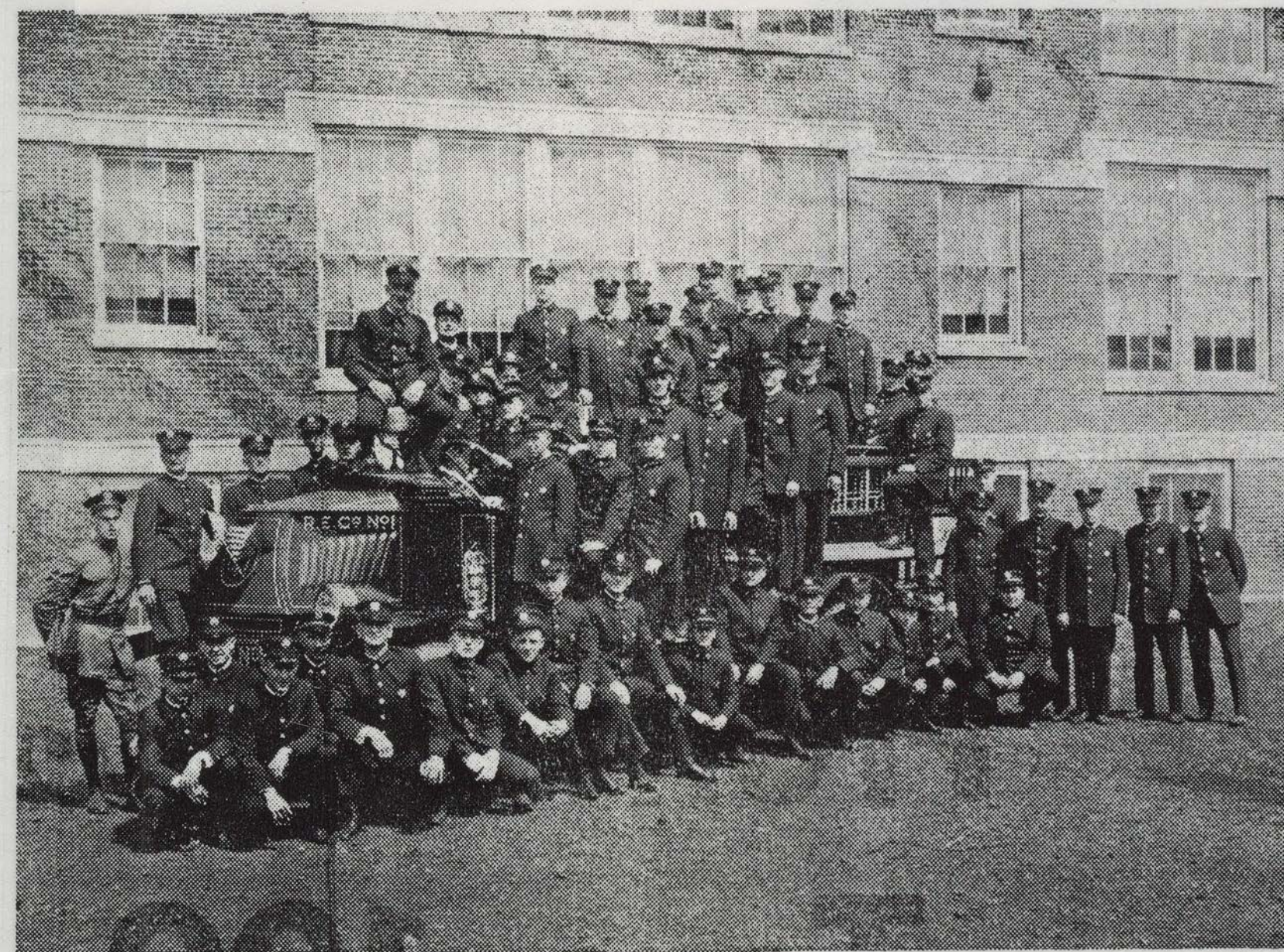
Oak Tree Terrace Volunteer Fire Co., founded between 1925 and 1926, started with 20 members and a 1917 Model T Ford truck. At first the truck was housed in the barn of one of the members.

A short time later, another company known as the North Raritan Volunteer Co. emerged in this area, but was refused a charter from the state which had already granted such jurisdiction to Oak Tree.

In 1927, the two companies merged into what became known as the Oak Tree Volunteer Fire Co. with a membership of 45 men. That same year the fire commissioners purchased property for a firehouse at the site of the existing building. Oak Tree remained a one-truck company from 1928 until 1956 when two more trucks were added.

H.K. Fire Co. was founded in 1925 and incorporated the following year. The company got its name from Henry Kuntz, a developer who donated the land for the company's firehouse.

In May, 1967, the company moved into its new quarters on New Dover Road. Originally the company was housed in a small house on Midwood Avenue before moving to the former firehouse.



First Truck

Members of Raritan Engine Co. 1 (plus one motor cycle patrolman, at left) pose on the first firetruck used in Edison — then known as Raritan Township. Picture was taken about 1924.

Edison: Fire Dept.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1991

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Edison Journal

ASK AT DESK

Friction Over Firefighters' Status



John Sotomayor/The New York Times

The Oak Tree Volunteer Fire Company and the Edison Division of Fire in Edison. A new municipal ordinance was recently proposed that would reduce the authority of volunteer officers at the scene of a fire.

By JAY ROMANO

WHEN a fire alarm rings in this bustling township in Middlesex County, two fire departments respond to the call.

One, the Edison Division of Fire, which usually arrives first, has men on duty 24 hours a day, waiting patiently at their firehouses for just such an event.

The other, which usually arrives just a minute or two later depending upon when and where the alarm is sounded, is one of five volunteer fire companies scattered throughout the 32 square miles of Edison Township.

The men in the Division of Fire receive salaries and paid vacations for their efforts.

The volunteers say they enjoy different rewards: the thrill of firefighting and the satisfaction of knowing they have served their community.

For some Edison Township volunteers, however, the thrill may remain, but the glow is slowly dimming — extinguished, they say,

by their paid counterparts in the Edison Division of Fire.

"It doesn't feel too good being a volunteer when you're being hassled over it," said David Papi, a member of Raritan Engine Company No. 2, one of the volunteer forces. "It's one thing for volunteers to be told, 'Hey everybody, thanks, good job,' and it's another thing to be abused when you're doing something for free."

Mr. Papi, who has been a volunteer firefighter since 1971, said that over the years the volunteers had steadily lost respect and responsibility and that morale had declined as the result of the friction between the volunteers and the paid firefighters.

That tension became even more pronounced recently, he said, after township officials proposed a municipal ordinance that would reduce the authority of volunteer officers at the scene of a fire.

The proposal, Mr. Papi said, has intensified a perception among many of the volunteers that they are considered unprofessional by members of the paid department. "It's demoralizing," he said. "We're all professional

firefighters; it's just that some of us are paid and some of us aren't."

Edison Township, enmeshed in a web of superhighways, has grown since World War II from a quiet suburb best known for its famous resident, the inventor Thomas A. Edison, into a thriving commercial and industrial center with almost 90,000 residents.

Peter J. Lucas, at 79 the township's oldest active volunteer, says Edison has had at least one paid firefighter since 1919. In those days, he said, the township's fire commissioners paid a resident \$15 a week to be on hand to clean the firehouse, maintain the fire engines and drive the volunteers to the scene of a fire.

In the late 1950's, Mr. Lucas said, officials began to expand the paid department to keep pace with the rapidly growing population. Currently, the township has 104 paid firefighters stationed in four firehouses.

The volunteer department, which is made up of 106 firefighters in five companies, shares the four firehouses with the paid firefighters and has one firehouse of its own.

And though the volunteers and the paid

firefighters each acknowledge that they need the other, the paid department has slowly overshadowed the volunteers.

"This building was all ours," Mr. Papi said, referring to the firehouse that the volunteers began sharing with the paid department in 1957. "As the paid men started to flourish, they decided they didn't want us in the back room anymore — that was their sleeping quarters. Then we couldn't go into the kitchen area anymore, because that's where they cooked."

Then, Mr. Papi said, the volunteers were asked to move their quarters temporarily to the attic, while repairs were made to the basement room where they had settled.

"So they threw some cots and some armchairs up there," Mr. Papi said, "and that temporary move has lasted about 15 years now."

But the volunteers say such indignities are trivial compared with the curtailment of their officers' authority by the proposed ordinance.

'Being Arbitrarily Demoted'

"We are being arbitrarily demoted," said Jack Scully, Chief of Raritan 2 and a volunteer firefighter for 20 years.

Under the current system, Chief Scully said, the volunteer chiefs have the same authority as a captain in the paid department, while paid lieutenants are not even included in the chain of command.

Under the new proposal, he said, the paid captain would be ranked above the volunteer chiefs, and paid lieutenants would be brought into the chain of command with authority equal to that of the volunteer assistant chiefs.

"Ultimately, that would give the paid department total control 99 percent of the time," Chief Scully said.

If the paid firefighters' union had its way, he said, things would even be worse.

"The union wanted to put all the volunteer officers down at the bottom — even under the paid firefighters," he said. "And that's just ludicrous."

The paid firefighters do not necessarily agree.

'The Issue Is Safety'

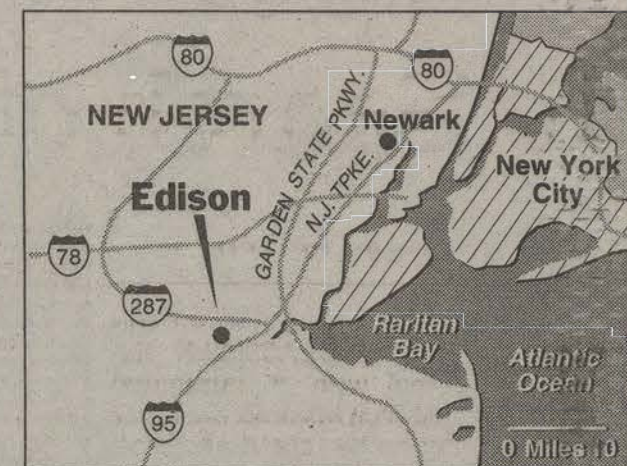
"The issue from our standpoint is safety," said Robert Yackel, president of the Edison firefighters' union. "If one of these volunteers makes an error, and one of my people gets hurt, what's the recourse? None."

But, Mr. Yackel said, if a paid officer makes the same mistake, the paid officer can be held accountable.

"He can be taken to task, or he can be suspended or reprimanded," he said. "Whereas a volunteer can just throw his hands up in the air and say, 'Oh, well.'"

In addition, he said, the paid officers are more experienced and better trained than the volunteer officers. A paid firefighter, for example, cannot become an officer until he has been on the job for 10 years. There is no similar restriction among the volunteer ranks. Officers in the volunteer companies are elected by the members of the company.

"It was never our intention to knock the volunteers or do away with them," Mr.



The New York Times

Yackel said. "It's just that if you have people being paid to do a job, then let them do the job and make them responsible."

Albert Lamkie, Chief of the Edison Division of Fire, said he agreed that the paid officers should be higher in the chain of command than their volunteer counterparts.

"I have volunteer officers out there with varying degrees of educational background and years on the job," Chief Lamkie said. "Whereas my captains all have met the minimum educational requirements and have at least 16 or 17 years' experience. I feel that they should be above a volunteer chief. It's their job, their livelihood depends upon their actions, I see them in my office, and I have better control over them."

In addition, Chief Lamkie said, the issue is not nearly as controversial as some of the volunteers would like people to think.

Indeed, Edward J. Koehler, Chief of the H.K. Volunteer Fire Company, said that none of the men in his company had animosity toward the paid firefighters nor begrudged them seniority on the fireground.

In Different Companies

"We're one big happy family," said Chief Koehler, whose son, Edward, is a paid firefighter at Raritan 2.

And the fact that Chief Koehler would essentially be demoted if the ordinance passes is not a problem, the 26-year veteran said. "There's stuff you have to swallow and stuff you have to smile at."

But Thomas Mahoney, Chief at the Oak Tree Volunteer Fire Company at the other end of the township, was less conciliatory. He said resentment by the volunteers could ultimately have an effect on the quality of the paid fire department.

According to state law, he said, every paid firefighter must be drawn from the ranks of the volunteers; a volunteer must have two years' experience to be eligible to become a paid firefighter. The quality of the paid department, he said, is only as good as the quality of the members of the volunteer department. And the only way to insure adequate numbers of qualified volunteers, he said, is to keep morale high — a difficult task given the current environment.

"When a volunteer's spirit and morale are suppressed," he said, "it's kind of tough being one of the President's thousand points of light."



Joyce Dopkeen/The New York Times

Blue Cross Struggles To Survive

By SANDRA FRIEDLAND

NEWARK

BLUE CROSS and Blue Shield of New Jersey, the state's largest health plan, is struggling to survive in the face of declining enrollments and the biggest deficit of any Blue Cross and Blue Shield company in the country. And unless the New Jersey plan erases its deficit by the end of 1992, it could lose its license to use the Blue Cross and Blue Shield name and insignia.

Company executives say the loss of the license would spell the end of the nonprofit plan, which now pays hospital and medical bills for nearly one-third of the state's residents. Among the policyholders are tens of thousands of people who, because of age, occupation or health, are considered uninsurable by other companies.

Although Blue Cross and Blue Shield cut its deficit to \$124 million in 1990 from a high of \$278 million in 1988, company officials say it will be nearly impossible to meet the 1992 deadline without major changes in the state's health care system and in the structure of the Newark-based company.

The deadline was set under a four-year financial recovery plan imposed by the State Legislature and accepted by the national Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association as a condition for the New Jersey company to keep its name. Four of the 72 other Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans around the nation have deficits, and six have reserves considered inadequate by industry standards.

"We are watching New Jersey with considerable concern," said Preston Jordan, a senior vice president of the national association, which sets standards for Blue Cross and Blue Shield but has no financial ties to the licensees. "Last year we renewed their license on the assumption that their financial recovery plan would be maintained. Now we have some doubts. The rates that they have been receiving from the state are not adequate to build needed reserves."

In its latest rate request, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey failed to obtain state approval for a 57.5 percent average increase in its premiums for nongroup policyholders — people who pay for their own insurance, rather than receiving it as an employee benefit. Opponents successfully argued that so steep a rise would

Continued on Page 15

The diversity of Rockland County's ethnic makeup was reflected in a food checkout line in Spring Valley, N.Y.

Changing Face of a Neighbor to the North

By JAMES FERON

IT'S not the city and it's not the country," Craig Firestone said of Rockland County last week. It was 19 years ago that he moved with his parents from Mount Vernon, a Westchester city on the Bronx border, but he still finds Rockland "a good centrally located spot."

Of course, Mr. Firestone, who lives virtually in the shadow of the Tappan Zee Bridge, which transformed Rockland from a sparsely settled rural retreat to a home

interesting and diverse. Hispanic residents account for half of Haverstraw village's population, blacks for nearly half of Spring Valley's.

Hasidic Jews, dressed in the centuries-old style of Eastern Europe, continue to flow from Brooklyn's Borough Park and Williamsburg neighborhoods to the spacious homes and similarly dense setting of Monsey. Rockland's 265,475 population includes an estimated 55,000 Jews.

The county's Asian population has more than doubled, to 10,753 from 4,300. Roger Pellegrini, the Supervisor of Orangetown, said: "More and more Asians

once fixed directly southward, toward New Jersey, which represented jobs and shopping as well as access to both in New York City. The attention of Rockland and its neighboring counties along the New York State Thruway was rudely diverted eastward, to Westchester, with the opening of the Tappan Zee Bridge.

A recent study conducted by the Westchester County Department of Transportation showed that 9,800 drivers crossed the bridge each day, headed for jobs in the Interstate 287 corridor, known as the Platinum Mile because of its corporate wealth. Of that number, 5,400 drivers, or more than half, are Rockland residents. Many

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EDISON
UNIFORMED FIRE
DEPARTMENT

WHO HAVE SERVED THE RESIDENTS
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HONOR AND INTEGRITY



BUILT IN THE LINE
OF DUTY

OFFICERS

WILLIAM LATHAM, CHIEF
EDISON FIRE DEPT. 1971-1978
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, SR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.

FIREFIGHTERS

JOHN LINDQUIST, SR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.
JOHN LINDQUIST, JR.

Monument honors Edison firefighters

Review 6/1/90
**Captain's death
provides spark
for memorial**

By Kathy Hall

EDISON — The idea of a monument honoring the township's dedicated firefighters had been buzzing around the Edison Uniformed Fire Department for years. The Police Department has one as does the Volunteer Fire Department, but the plan for a third was never given priority until 1984, when Capt. John Lindquist Sr. died in the line of duty at age 47.

On Sunday, the 11-foot Edison Uniformed Firefighters Monument was officially dedicated and the American flag raised over the completed granite memorial.

"Until now, there was no way of honoring our comrades," said retired Chief Richard Latham. "After Johnny died, Capt. Smith came into my office with an idea

about a monument. ... Painfully, we got the ball rolling."

The name of Latham's father, late Chief Arthur Latham, is also included in the monument. "I have always been proud of my father," he said. "The idea of a monument is great."

Firefighter Peter Anselmo, who did much of the monument's foundation work, remembers the night Capt. Lindquist died.

"He was my captain, and I worked with him that night," he said. "We went to the fire together, but he never came out."

Today, a bell is mounted atop the center stone of the monument — the bell from the fire engine that drove in the late captain's funeral procession six years ago.

The monument is the result of the combined efforts of the firefighters and four local companies — Barton Landscape Service, Clayton Block Co., Heller Construction Co. and Mobil Chemical — which

(Please turn to page A-10)

—Photo by Ray Bailey

The death of Capt. John Lindquist Sr. in the line of duty six years ago provided the impetus for Edison's paid firefighters to plan and construct the Edison Uniformed Firefighters Monument. The memorial was dedicated Sunday.

Monument honors firemen

(Continued from page A-1)

donated time, money and materials to the project, which took about five years of planning and more than two months of construction to complete. *Review 6/11/90*

Latham, who was actively involved in the project, said that their biggest obstacle was inflation. "About a year and a half ago, I thought we weren't going to make it," he said.

The 114-man department set up a committee to organize fund-raising activities and oversee construction.

Although the project was financially challenging — the stone alone cost \$13,290 — most of the money was contributed by the firefighters. Barton contributed shrubbery for the landscaping that encircles the monument, Clayton supplied the concrete tile that forms the walkway from the stone to the sidewalk, and Isaac Heller donated cement as well as money. Firefighters were asked to contribute \$260 each and any time they could spare for labor.

Located outside the entrance at town hall to the police and fire departments — "So that anytime anyone comes in, they pass it," according to Fire Capt. Robert Campbell — the area is 18 feet wide and the stone is 11 feet high. The surrounding area, formerly a lawn, now contains 20 azalea bushes, 16 rhododendrons, a cherry tree, six holly trees, two red maple trees, two blue spruces, and two evergreen trees.

"It was a lot bigger than we expected," said Campbell, who worked on the landscaping. "We had two truckloads of

shrubs, and some ideas on where to put them."

During construction, the men had some problems with an underground electrical wire and had to relocate a tree as well. "It took time, but we finally got things to work out for us," he said.

For Campbell, the best part of his contribution to the monument is watching people notice and admire it.

"Last Sunday, I saw a busload of people going down to Atlantic City, and the bus driver slowed down in front of the monument," he noted. "It really makes me feel good to do something like this."

Members of the department plan to maintain both the monument and the landscaping. The shrubbery will always be kept colorful "because you get tired of green," said Campbell.

The department left room for more names on the monument, but Campbell said, "We don't want to add any more."

The firefighters named on the stone are: Chief Arthur Latham, Assistant Chief William Fisher, Assistant Chief Harold Drake, Capt. John Galaribos, Capt. George Zigre, Lt. Joseph Horvath, Capt. James Colletto, Lt. Eugene Berlinski, and Firefighters Francis Colletto, Edward Kashtock, Harold McGorvin, Steven Mozsgae, David Jensen, Daniel Jordan and Kenneth Kozma.

The center stone is dedicated to the memory of Capt. John Lindquist Sr., whose death in the line of duty became an "impetus to beginning the project at all," Campbell said.



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Roseanne Barr: "She-Devil" as career woman.

A video bull market

(Continued from page A-7)

demon of vengeance when her husband leaves her for a gorgeous romance novelist. The untalented director Susan Seidelman, continuing the decline that began with *Making Mr. Right* and *Cookie*, overplays her hand by casting Roseanne Barr as the housewife and wimps out at every critical juncture. Weldon's story of a lifelong patsy in search of absolute power over others ("I want to be loved and not love in return," she declares at one point) has been watered down: instead of Weldon's surrealistic finale, in which the triumphant housewife literally remakes herself into the image of her enemy, we get ka-ka doo-doo snot jokes and a smiley-button conclusion in which Everyone Becomes A Better Person. TV personality Barr is listless and dispirited throughout: Seidelman alternates between making fun of her pudgypot appearance and presenting her as a wronged feminist heroine. As the romance novelist, Meryl Streep's amateur night hamming will bring comfort to many an acting school dropout. Those with cable should scan the Arts & Entertainment channel schedule for the BBC television production of the same novel: it's made with style to spare and blows this sorry mess right off the screen. With Ed Begley Jr., Sylvia Miles and Linda Hunt. Screenplay by Barry Strugatz and Mark R. Burns. Orion Home Video.

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—Photo by Jeff Tarentino

A police officer watches as members of the Edison fire department battle a blaze which began shortly after midnight December 18 and gutted a building at the Millbrook Village

Apartments. Since 1916, the township has had its own firefighters responding to such emergencies.

Edison: Fire Dept. Township fire department got start in 1916 with borrowed equipment

By Tricia Campbell

EDISON — No history of the township could be complete without the inclusion of a report on the Edison Township Division of Fire.

It is known today, formally, as the Division of Fire rather than the more tradition appellation of Fire Department because it is a division within the township's Department of Public Safety.

By any name, however, its is a history filled with brick and mortar growth, acquisition of apparatus, training and more training, expanding roles and responsibilities and steady progress in the science of fighting fires.

Underlying all this progress is the day-to-day courage of the community's firefighters. Any call — no matter how "routine" — draws on the training, strength, creativity and coordinated effort of Edison's team of paid and volunteer firefighters.

Today's Division of Fire operates six stations throughout the township. They are staffed by 114 paid firefighters and approximately 120 volunteers, and the firefighters operate 10 engine companies, two truck companies, a Fire Prevention Bureau and a Training Bureau.

According to the division's 1989 annual report, Edison's five fire precincts produced 2,095 fire alarms to which the division responded.

At this time, its equipment includes "13 pumpers, one snorkel, one aerial ladder, one brush truck, 13 cars and five vans. These vehicles are used by the Fire Suppression Force, the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Training Bureau," according to the report, which indicates that a new 1,000 gallon-per-minute pumper is on order.

The beginnings of the department perhaps were less imposing in terms of apparatus, number of calls answered and scope of service, but no less in dedication to the community.

The fire department began, according to many accounts, in 1916 — with borrowed equipment.

Twenty-six men met in the old Town Hall behind St. James Church, Woodbridge Avenue, on the Edison Commons. They hitched their own horses to a pumper borrowed from the neighboring Highland Park Volunteer Fire Department and rode into town to extinguish a demonstration bonfire to show the need for a department to protect the Lindeneau, Piscatawaytown, Bonhamtown, Nixon and Stelton areas of the township.

Metuchen's Washington Fire Hose Company loaned the fledgling crew a fire gong to alert the volunteers for fire duty, and Jacob Becker was elected the first fire chief.

Plans were made to purchase motorized apparatus and a lot on which to erect a firehouse, and at the department's second meeting, held in May 1916, 16 new members signed up for duty. The department was now staffed by 42 men.

Each one was "responsible for the purchase of his own fire bucket which was to be with them at all times in case of fire." According to an early published history of the department, "the company also bought buckets which were placed in boxes and hung on poles at the corners of main streets." The report continues, "Going to fires, the men would pick up the company buckets on their way."

The firefighters were alerted to calls by the bell in the steeple of St. James Church being rung repeatedly.

Early bylaws of the newly formed department indicate that fines were levied against members for various infractions of the rules. Members were fined 25 cents for not answering calls and 25 cents for swearing at department meetings.

The first large fire that the department was called to was one at the Gun Metal Works, Mill Road, in March 1917. Records show that this fire was fought for two days and nights with "the water being pumped from the Works' own wells until it was completely extinguished."

In April 1917, the fire alarm gong was moved to the front lawn of Ruth Swales' home. She would receive all the calls — on a phone dedicated to that purpose — and then go out and sound the gong.

Mrs. Swales performed this duty until 1922, when an air-horn was installed atop the fire station. Mrs. Swales, it should be noted, was the first and only woman to be made an honorary

volunteer member of Raritan Engine Company No. 1.

In May 1917, the members dedicated a new fire station at the intersection of Plainfield and Woodbridge avenues. A Model-T Ford was purchased at the time and served for many years as

the company's only motorized apparatus. In 1923, a new Mack Bull Dog chemical and pumper truck was purchased.

With the two trucks and the new air-horn alarm system in place, the horse-drawn pumper was returned to the Highland Park Volunteer Fire Department and the gong alarm was returned to the Metuchen Fire Department by a grateful Raritan Engine Company No. 1.

The 1923 Mack is still in Edison and used in parades and on special occasions. It serves as a link to the department's past.

Another milestone was reached in 1926 when the department's first paid member was hired as a driver. Today's Division of Fire is composed of both paid and volunteer firefighters.

One of its companies — the Menlo Park Fire Company — is made up of an all-volunteer force, and it is the one that can boast of having Thomas A. Edison as an honorary member. It was in one of the inventor's garages that the company stored a hook-and-ladder apparatus, and each year the fire company places a wreath at the Edison Memorial Tower to honor Thomas Edison on the anniversary of his birth — February 11.

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Raritan Engine Company No. 2 was organized in 1924 "with about 20 men and a Stutz Bearcat holding a chemical tank." The unit's equipment included "a 1918 Model T pickup truck, affectionately known as the 'peanut wagon' which held a water tank and hose."

Oak Tree Fire Company, founded in 1926, started with 20 men and a 1917 Model-T truck. The truck was housed in the barn of one of the members.

In early department histories, reference is made of a North Raritan Volunteer Company. The reports indicate that it merged with the "Oak Tree Terrace Volunteer Fire Company" after North Raritan was refused a state charter to operate.

Many residents of Edison question how the H.K. Fire Company got its name. The company owes its name to Henry Kuntz, a developer who donated land for the company's firehouse, which originally was located in a small house on Midwood Avenue. H.K. was founded in 1925.

Always at the forefront of maintaining a large, modern fleet, Edison purchased a snorkel truck in 1961. It was known as the only community in the East with such equipment.

A few years later, a second snorkel truck was purchased, and Edison is thought to have been the only community in the country to have two such vehicles.

The original snorkel has been retired and was replaced by a Seagrave, three-axle aerial ladder platform rig.

Today, many of the township's firefighters hold college degrees in Fire Science programs, and the Division of Fire maintains a computerized records and maintenance program. In addition, it regularly holds training and educational programs for the public.

The charter of Raritan Engine Company No. 1, dated June 14, 1916, states, "The object of the association is to protect life and property from fire by the usual means of fire companies." Township residents can thank the foresight of those men who, in 1916, incorporated the department out of a sense of duty and commitment to their community.

Today's firefighters capably carry out that legacy of dedication to the protection of lives and property.

Tricia Campbell is co-founder and vice president of the Edison Township Historical Society. This article is one in a series by society members on the history of the area.



KHIA M. O'BRYANT

Edison girl, 7, is pageant finalist

EDISON — Khia Monique O'Bryant, 7, daughter of Paula and Nelson O'Bryant Jr. of Edison, has been selected as a finalist in the 1990 Miss New Jersey National Petite Pageant to be held August 6-17 at the Ramada Renaissance Hotel, East Brunswick.

Contestants will be judged on personal interview, talent, poise and personality. The winner will receive a savings bond, tiara, sash and trophy and a round-trip flight to the national pageant to compete with other state winners for the title of Miss National Petite of 1990.

The national pageant will be held in Florida in November.

Khia is sponsored by Samuel Lak, Esq.; Francis Lutz, Esq.; Hannah Williams, The Beauty Bazaar; Eva Masango; Holly-Nu; and family and friends.

Eleanor Phelan heading auxiliary

METUCHEN — Eleanor S. Phelan has been installed as president of the women's auxiliary of the Columbian Club of Metuchen, St. Francis Council 3272, Knights of Columbus.

Mrs. Phelan assumed her post during a May crowning and installation ceremony May 9 at the council hall in Edison. Also installed were Agnes Guinane, vice president, and Regina Suppa, secretary-treasurer.

Three township residents to perform with orchestra

EDISON — Three students who live here and attend school here will perform in Central New Jersey tomorrow evening with the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra.

The performance begins at 8 p.m. in the theatre at Raritan Valley Community College, Branchburg. The program will feature the overture and selections from *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, under the direction of Joseph Primavera.

Among the 11 New Jersey representatives in the orchestra are Edison residents Elke DeLaCruz, Danielle Kline and Laurel Pacquiao, all violinists.

Elke, who recently performed with the Orchestra of St. Peter by the Sea in a benefit concert for the Valerie Fund. She will graduate from Edison High School next month and has received scholarships from the University of Miami and the Shenandoah Conservatory.

Danielle, a junior at John P. Stevens High School, also has played for the Orchestra of St. Peter by the Sea and is concertmistress of the school's orchestra.

Financial planning seminars on tap

EDISON — Seminars for financial planning before retirement are being offered at the local office of Dean Witter Reynolds, 333 Thornall Street.

The seminars will be held today at noon and 6:15 p.m., plus tomorrow at 10 a.m. They are designed to help business owners and corporate employees who will retire within the next three years.

Topics being covered are retirement planning, tax-free investments, tax-deferred investments, financial planning and estate planning. All three seminars are being taught by M. Leonard Kuker, who published a Wall Street investment letter for 20 years.

Reservations may be made by calling 632-8464.

A member of the French League and French Honor Society, she was one of five juniors at JPS chosen to attend the Teen Leadership Institute at Columbia University.

She also participated in the Miss New Jersey Teen USA pageant.

Laurel, the junior class president at Edison High School, is a member of the school's varsity tennis team, treble choir, concert choir and French Honor Society. She participated in the "Battle of the Classes" at EHS.

The concert Saturday is the orchestra's 1989-90 season finale and a tuneup for its planned tour Soviet Union tour this summer. More than 100 musicians are in the orchestra and their ages range from 14 to 21.

To get to Raritan Valley Community College, take Route 287 North to Route 22 West in Bridgewater. Go past the Bridgewater Commons for about four miles until you reach Olympia USA and the United National Bank. Turn right onto Orr Drive and follow the signs.

Admission is \$12.50 for the general public, \$10 for students and senior citizens. For reservations, call 725-3420.

births

METUCHEN — Amy and Donald Slobodien are parents of a son, Brook Alexander, born April 24 in Columbus, Ohio. The father is a former resident of Metuchen and now lives with his family in the Ohio city. Brook weighed 7 lb. 13 oz. at birth and joins a brother, Benjamin David.

Maternal grandparents are Hannah Marie and William Schrader of Freesoil, Mich. Paternal grandparents are Sally and Howard Slobodien of Metuchen.

Middle school library week

EDISON — John Adams Middle School Library Week April 23-27 with DeSarno, school librarian.

Each morning a new question to the student body, and the resources of the library to answer.

More than 116 pupils participated daily winners and received free drawing at the end of the week.

Elizabeth Choi, a 6th grade student, day and won the grand prize of \$100.

Other daily winners were Ka Huang, Monique Johnson, Anja Salarki, Paras Shah, Marisa Sh Pranav Vyas and John Witiuk.

St. Peter's reunion slated for Edison

NEW BRUNSWICK — The Class of 1970 from St. Peter's High School has scheduled its 20th anniversary reunion for Thanksgiving weekend.

The reunion will be November 23 at the Victorian Manor, 2863 Woodbridge Avenue, Edison. Those who have not heard from the committee should write to the St. Peter's reunion committee at 456 Remsen Avenue, New Brunswick, 08901.

JCC carnival starts on Monday

EDISON — The Jewish Community Center of Middlesex County, 1775 Oak Tree Road, will hold its annual carnival beginning Monday.

Hours are 6 to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 to 11 p.m. Saturday, May 26; and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, May 27. The carnival will be closed Friday, May 25, for the observance of the Sabbath.

All food served will be kosher and all activities are being supervised by volunteers. No alcoholic beverages will be served.

Anyone who wants to volunteer for the carnival should call the JCC, 494-3232, and leave a message for Mrs. Aidelbaum.

Oops!

Our May 2, 1990 Middlesex Shopper Coupon should read 5-19-90 expiration date

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Sunday, May 20, 1990 12:00 to 5:00



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- Free hourly Doll Drawings
- Grand Prize Drawing
- Doll Appraiser—Modern & Antique
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