

# **History And Evolution Of The Beaufort/Port Royal Fire Department (circa 1840-Present)**

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The City of Beaufort is located in the heart of the Sea Islands of South Carolina's Lowcountry on what is known as Port Royal Island, just south of the City of Charleston by about 70 miles. The landscape in the area is simply beautiful with its marshes, moss laced live oak trees, and antebellum structures. The coastal area around Beaufort and low-country territory experienced several failed attempts to colonize the region by the Spanish, French and finally the English who later gained a foothold and founded the village in 1711 by two Englishmen, Thomas Nairn and John Barnwell. The village's name is descended from Henry Somersent, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Beaufort, a Lord Proprietor of the Carolinas. Beaufort is the second oldest city in South Carolina.

Prior to, during, and after the Revolutionary War, Beaufort was home to both Tories (supporters of British rule) and Patriots (loyalist to American rule)...turbulent times indeed. After the war ended, the British were forced to move further north, and a more tranquil period followed which allowed for enhanced trading through Beaufort's port; cultivation of indigo and rice on the area's large plantations; and even shipbuilding helped to grow the economy.

As the community grew in population, small wooden houses, stores, other commercial enterprises, a school and churches soon sprang up. With such growth, Beaufort was like so many other communities, villages, towns and cities of that era which suffered from the frequent and frightful visits from “the Fire Fiend,” the “Threatening Demon,” “Devouring Element,” or “the Fire King,” as fire was often termed in that day. The alarm of fire usually came in the form of shouting “FIRE, FIRE, FIRE” in the roadways and streets or firing pistols, shotguns, or rifles into the air, or the ringing of a church bell if one existed.

The author, Nancy Backes said, *“Americans had for many years helplessly watched their little wooden towns burn and be rebuilt and burn again.”* Recorded history reveals that Beaufort was certainly no different, and, out of necessity, the occurrence of unwanted fires brought attention to the need to better safeguard the citizens and properties from the ravages of fire.

Most small crossroad communities, villages, towns and cities of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries often improvised very primitive methods of controlling and extinguishing fires at an interval of time before their citizens were able to afford more sophisticated advances in protection. For example, buckets, well water, wet blankets, ladders, rakes and shovels, and even pine tops were the tools most regularly brought into use to fight fires. Of course, as the population grew and resources permitted, various types of hand-drawn apparatus and equipment were purchased which proved more effective in fighting fires. Building construction in that day was largely of wood, and towns began to adopt basic, uncomplicated building and fire codes designed to minimize and confine the spread of unwanted fire, ie. fire walls, brick chimneys, fire limits, etc.

Prior to the organization of a fire department, it has been said that fire was the greatest enemy for a community. From South Carolina's earliest beginnings, devastating fires have taken its toll in injury, death, and ruin of property. This writer will attempt to unravel and capture the rich history of the Beaufort Fire Department that is available in order to expand on the organization's struggles, leadership, major challenges, and progression. The history provided in the following pages is taken verbatim from various newspaper articles, department records and commentaries along with an occasional observation of this researcher.

One of the earliest mentions of fire in Beaufort was captured by The Charleston Daily Courier posted on **April 30, 1810** that *"On Thursday morning last at 10 o'clock, a fire broke out in the bake-house of Mr. Ward, at Beaufort; the fire was communicated to the house of Mr. Stewart, cabinet-maker, and to the house occupied by Mr. Clark, as the Post-Office, all of which were consumed."*

The **December 21, 1836** edition of The Charleston Mercury noted still another fire *"On Sunday morning, about 12 o'clock, a fire broke out in a kitchen appertaining to the Tan Yard in Beaufort, on the property of the Trust Estate of Mrs. Margaret Wilson, which consumed the kitchen and a large two-story house adjoining. The fire commenced in the inside of the kitchen, from some combustible materials in which some spark from the kitchen fire lodged. Nearly all the inhabitants were at church, so that the kitchen was completely enveloped in flames before assistance was afforded."*

**Note: The assistance likely came from citizen volunteers who were always counted on to come to the aid of neighbors in trouble.**

Printing of the **February 10, 1840** edition of The Charleston Daily Courier noted *"On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> inst., about 1 o'clock, the*

*inhabitants of this town were alarmed with the astounding cry of fire. The clamor of the fire bell, ringing loud and long, aroused all from their beds. The fire broke out in the stable loft of Stobo R. Perry, on the Bay, which soon destroyed the building. The carriage and horses were taken out, before the stable loft burnt through, and thus saved, but the other contents of the stable were destroyed. The fire soon communicated to his kitchen and adjoining outhouses. The neighboring stores and houses were in great danger, and Mrs. Bold's kitchen. The wind was north-east, which blew across Bay street, and threatened the stores on the south side of the Bay. But by having persons on the roof, abundantly supplied with water, to wet them, and wet blankets, they were preserved. Too much praise cannot be given to those who aided by their personal exertions, to arrest the fire."*

**Note: This writer could not find any mention of fire protection in Beaufort prior to the above article in 1840 when mention is made about "the clamor of the fire bell," and strategically placing people on the roof "abundantly supplied with water, to wet them, and wet blankets." However, it is my belief, based on the history of other sister communities in the area that the town had a sizable group of citizen volunteers prior to 1840 who could be counted on to turn out at the alarm of fire to do what they could to subdue a blaze. If they found themselves unable to extinguish a fire, they assumed the role of a salvage company risking life and limb to remove the contents from a burning structure. Of course, in their haste to remove more delicate pieces of furniture, china, linens, and paintings, the contents were more often than not damaged or wrecked beyond repair. Also, shameless looting at fires by sleazy citizens was not an uncommon practice either!**

Again, The Charleston Mercury posted on **January 1, 1845** that "Slawson's store was burnt down last night (Saturday). Nothing saved; the house had a narrow escape—having caught several

*times. Damage done to the dwelling house about \$200. How the fire originated I cannot learn. We learn that the contents of the store were insured in this City for \$4,000.”*

The Charleston Mercury wrote the following on **December 27, 1855:**  
*“We regret to learn of a destructive fire in Beaufort on Bay street, on Friday night last, which destroyed not less than ten or twelve buildings. Among the sufferers we have heard named, Mrs. Cook, Mrs. Porteous, Mrs. Forbes, Capt. Murray, Capt. Fripp, Mr. Gabriel Capers, Mr. Cockroft, Mr. R. J. Adams, (store and portion of contents) and Cunningham and Co’s Drug store. The Beaufort Library was considerably damaged, and the books injured by removal.”*

It should be noted in the mid-1800s, the Beaufort, Port Royal and Hilton Head vicinities of the Atlantic coast became prime locations for federal troops to strengthen operational readiness and to prepare to blockade Confederate ports. With the first shots of the Civil War in Charleston on April 12, 1861, the stage was set in motion to significantly enlarge the garrison on Hilton Head which was designed to become the headquarters for the Union Army and Navy whose mission was to oversee the Atlantic blockades during those war years.

According to research done by Charles McCracken, the garrison on Hilton Head *“was home to a Civil War military garrison and a civilian boom town of more than 40,000 soldiers, residents and entrepreneurs.”* Additionally, it has been discovered that there was a substantial infrastructure consisting of sawmills, barracks, medical facilities used to sustain the military presence as well as *“thousands of formerly enslaved people who sought refuge on the island.”*

The author Tom Bouthillet published an article in 2010 that references a Beaufort hand engine in an 1863 story from the Boston Herald. *“When this place (Hilton Head) was captured by the Federals, an old hand fire engine, which looks as if it might have been constructed to the order of Mr. Noah, for the purpose of extinguishing fires on his ark, was found here. Another was brought down from Beaufort, and two from New York.”*

The story of what we now know as The Beaufort Fire Department can become somewhat confusing due to the frequent formation of fire companies. The Charleston Mercury of **October 5, 1859** reported *“A fire company has, at last, been organized here (in Beaufort), and the purchase of the Eagle engine of your city determined upon. The association has been named the ‘Stuart Fire Company,’ in honor of the President (of the company); a compliment deservedly bestowed on an esteemed and estimable young citizen. The following is a list of the officers: H. M. Stuart, Jr., President; R. R. Sams, Vice President; E. J. Durban, Secretary; J. A. Johnson, Treasurer; D. W. Branch, 1<sup>st</sup> Director; J. V. Fickling, 2<sup>nd</sup> Director; H. W. Bold, 3<sup>rd</sup> Director; W. H. Snediker and W. Clark, Axemen.”*

By good fortune, this writer found an article written for The Charleston Daily Courier on **November 16, 1859** which, in great detail, enlightens the reader to some observations of a recent visit to Beaufort by an unidentified “Correspondent” (only listed as “Marion”) after being away for many years. Of special interest is his account of witnessing the arrival of a new fire apparatus to soon be placed into service. *“This morning the Cecile (a freighter) arrived here, bringing the long-expected ‘Eagle’ for a new volunteer fire company, the Stuart Fire Company, commanded by President H. M. Stuart, Jr., M.D. She was immediately taken up to the Arsenal Yard, put in order, and with over twenty members paraded the principal streets, their engine being highly decorated with garlands, and in*

*front of the Baptist Church came to a stand, and putting their suction-hose down into a well made their first trial of their apparatus, which was rather a failure, she not throwing farther than thirty or forty feet through fifty feet of hose, through an inch nozzle, drawing at the same time as much wind as water. After putting some washers on the suction hose they tried again, with better success, throwing the water on top of the church-tower. They then up the hose and went to their quarters and discussed a collation (banquet) and (downed) a dozen champagne (sparkling wine), after their unusual exertion. The members, with but few exceptions, are new to the work of a fireman, but I have no doubt a little more experience will make them proficient. The sight of this engine seemed to create a lively interest among the citizens here who followed 'der masheen' about in all her peregrinations (traversings). As an old fireman, I also felt a desire to see how the new firemen of Beaufort were going to acquit themselves, and was pleased with their efforts. The old engines they have here are of common make, and do not draw water, so the old 'Eagle' is an acquisition, and they all seemed very much pleased with her." **Note: Reference is made in this article to Beaufort having "old engines" prior to the 1859 account. SO... there is more concrete corroboration that some sort of organized fire department was established a number of years prior to 1859. Also, apparent is the verification that Beaufort donated one of these "masheens" to the garrison on Hilton Head preceding the Civil War in 1861.***

**Several interesting tidbits of information from the above article can be gleaned about the "Eagle" fire engine delivered to Beaufort. For sure the "two old engines" referred to were hand-drawn, hand-pumped apparatus (handtubs) without capabilities to draft water. So, bucket brigades were used to fill their reservoirs, and a large compliment of volunteers would have been needed to pump the "brakes" to discharge a stream of**

water. The “Eagle” fire engine also was a hand-drawn, hand-pump “masheen” which required a much larger crowd of citizen volunteers to pump the brakes in order to draft from a water source (public well, cistern or bay). There is no record of there ever being an Eagle fire manufacturer, so, this writer has reason to believe the apparatus was a used unit with the name “Eagle” colorfully painted, by a previously owned fire company, on the “pagoda shaped decking.” And, most likely this apparatus was purchased used from a northern state, due to the cost of a new one, and arrived already named by the previous owner, ie. Eagle Fire Co. of York, Pa.; Eagle Eng. Co., Middletown, N.Y.; New Hope Eagle Fire Co., New Hope, Pa.; and the Eagle Fire Co., of Mt. Wolf, Pa.

**A final comment: Other than these articles, this writer has found no mention of The Stuart Fire Company nor the Union Fire Company ever existing in any archives. The reader may become confused when reading the names of the various fire companies serving the Beaufort/Port Royal area...often even the newspapers became confounded! Also, the reader should understand that none of the fire companies ever used horses to pull their heavy apparatus. Instead those “masheens” were hand-drawn by significant numbers of volunteer firemen.**

The Charleston Daily Courier noted on **December 14, 1859** that in Beaufort on the 12<sup>th</sup>, *“The torch of the incendiary has been again applied, but, fortunately, without success. The threatened work of revenge has commenced, and the startling cry of fire strikes alarm in our community. To-day, at about eleven o’clock, A.M., the alarm of fire was given, and was found to proceed from the unoccupied dwelling owned by R. Oswald, Esq., and but recently vacated. The fire had made considerable progress, and on account of the combustible material in the immediate vicinity, gave serious*

*apprehension of a destructive fire. We are indebted to the exertion and coolness of our firemen and many active citizens for our preservation from a serious conflagration. Foremost among the most active work we recognize Robert Cockroft, Esq., and Axeman T. E. Scott, of the Stuart Fire Engine Company. Axe in hand, and at the post of danger, they displayed calmness amid excitement, and did good service. Nor must we forget Mr. Joseph Mann, also a member of the Stuart Company, who merits the well done of the community.”*

A notice is found in The Charleston Mercury, dated **August 21, 1860**, that “Application will be made at the next Session of the Legislature for an Act to Incorporate the Stuart Fire Company in Beaufort, South Carolina.

The Charleston Daily Courier printed on **November 21, 1860** that “The Stuart Fire Company celebrated their anniversary on Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> last., and the demonstrations on the occasion were worthy of the known spirit of the Company. In the evening they assembled at the Military Hall, and, with their invited guests, sat to a well go up supper. The greatest enthusiasm existed at the festive board, and stirring speeches were made by President H. M. Stuart, Jr., Captain B. R. Bythewood, Captain J. G. Barnwell, and Dr. J. A. Johnson, all in favor of immediate State action.” **Note: This celebration of the fire company’s anniversary actually evolved into a rally to encourage support for the impending vote of the State’s General Assembly to secede from the Union which took place several weeks later on December 20, 1860, in Columbia.**

The article continues...”From the festive board the Company rallied in the Arsenal yard, where, being joined by nearly two hundred of our most respectable citizens, they proceeded in procession through nearly every street in the town. The firemen bore torches and brilliantly illuminated transparencies, upon which were inscribed

*mottos. During the progress of the procession, calls were made at the residences of many of our citizens...who expressed forcibly and eloquently, in favor of immediate State action. This demonstration was a grand and imposing affair, and exhibited the feeling in our midst. The current of public opinion is sweeping with irresistible force in one direction, and we are proud to say that we are unanimous in the cry—‘South Carolina strike, or be forever dishonored.’*

Local historian and author, Gerhard Spieler, clearly conveys what transpired in Beaufort between 1860 and 1867, especially with fire protection. *“At that time, Beaufort’s native white citizens had fled the Federal occupation of the town and those dwelling in it consisted mainly of Negroes as well as soldiers and civilians of the occupying power. These circumstances may explain the name....apparently the Federal occupiers of Beaufort sought to make over the town to their liking, even to the extent of changing the traditional names of streets.”* Mr. Spieler made note that the name of the original fire company was changed to the *“New York Hose Co. No. 1.”* **Note: Sometime after the Civil War, during the period of Reconstruction, the New York Hose Co., No. 1, “agreed to unite with Beaufort Fire Engine Co. The Co. to be entirely separate in all company affairs and under the charge of the foreman of the Beaufort Fire Engine while on duty.”**

The **March 26, 1864** edition of The Free South, a local publication, announced *“On Tuesday evening about seven o’clock the building occupied as a Regimental Hospital by the 56<sup>th</sup> N. Y. Vols., was totally destroyed by fire. Soon after the alarm was given, the Beaufort Fire Department was in service, but the scarcity of water prevented them from doing much good. The sick, only eight or ten in number were removed and most of the furniture and stores were saved. The building was formerly owned by F. J. Porteus.”*

The newspaper, The Free South, printed on **April 9, 1864**, stated *“On Monday evening last, at the regular meeting of the Company, the following gentlemen were elected officers of New York Hose Co. No. 1: Mr. Samuel S. Roome, Foreman; vice W. H. Hyatt, elected Chief Engineer of the Beaufort Fire Department; Mr. G. W. Pond, Asst. Foreman; Mr. M. J. French, Treasurer.”* After the meeting, the company proceeded to the residence of Mr. Hyatt to congratulate him on his new office. A large number of choice spirits were on hand. Mr. Hyatt was presented during the evening with a beautiful silver horn by Mr. G. W. Pond. The recipient of the appropriate present assured his friends that though unable to make a speech, they should hear from him, on occasion through the horn. An elegant collation was partaken of by the guests, who separated at a late hour fully persuaded that we have a well organized Fire Department in Beaufort.”

According to The Palmetto Herald of Port Royal, dated **April 28, 1864**, *“The members of New York Hose Company No. 1, at Beaufort, gave a most agreeable entertainment to their friends on Saturday evening last, in honor of the opening of their new carriage-house on Sixth street. About forty invited guests sat down to a table spread with the choicest viands which a Southern market affords. In the absence of Mr. Roome, the foreman of the company, Mr. Pond, the assistant foreman, presided, prefacing his duties as carver by a few appropriate remarks.”*

The lengthy article continues...*“He had no doubt that in the hands of Northern men, Beaufort was destined to become a large city—emporium of the south. Already it was rapidly enlarging its boundaries, more buildings having been erected there within the post six months than in any six years previous to the war. The inflammable character of the buildings, however, made a well-*

*organized fire department a necessity; and he hoped that soon a new and splendid engine might be added to it.”* **Note: It is obvious that soldiers of the Union had taken “control” of the fire protection capabilities in Beaufort when occupied by the army. The New York Hose Co. No. 1 bore the name of its home state.**

*An interesting observation followed with “The fire engine found at Beaufort when our forces first occupied that place is now in use at Hilton Head, and in case of fire there the only apparatus the citizens can depend on, is an old, worn-out machine, unearthed at Jacksonville. The civilians of Beaufort will be called upon at an early day to organize an additional fire company.”*

On **August 13, 1864**, The Free South newspaper noted that *“The vacancy made by the resignation of Mr. Hyatt, was filled on Monday night by unanimous election of Mr. G. W. Pond to the position of Chief Engineer of the Beaufort Fire Department. Mr. Pond is an energetic and efficient fireman, has taken an active part in the formation and organization of the Department, and deserves the compliment he has received.”*

The Charleston Daily Courier, on **January 19, 1867**, printed that *“On Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup> inst., at 12 AM, a fire broke out in the large Steam Ginnery of H. M. Stuart, Sen., at Beaufort, S. C., by which the building was destroyed, together with most of its contents. There was about 30,000 pounds of seed cotton in the building at the time of the fire, the larger portion of which was destroyed. Mr. Stuart succeeded in saving most of his machinery, together with eleven bales of ginned cotton. Loss about \$10,000; insurance \$5,000. The fire originated from sparks falling on the roof.”*

Another publication in the area, The Ledger-Enquirer, posted on **March 13, 1867** that *“The special correspondent of the Savannah*

*News and Herald communicates the news of a destructive fire at Beaufort, S. C. Loss estimated at \$200,000. J. G. Thompson & Co.'s hardware store, the New South newspaper office, Hubbard's Daguerrean gallery, the Lincoln House, and a newly finished dwelling, belonging to Mr. Pallitzer, were destroyed. The fire is supposed to have been the work of an incendiary." Note: A Charleston paper wrote "The members of the fire company were having a ball that night, which prevented them from going to the scene as quickly as they might have done, principally because their apparatus was in use to adorn the hall."*

On **January 9, 1870**, The Daily Phoenix reported the following bills from the House (of Representatives) were read...among which were to be sent to the Senate for consideration a bill to incorporate "*the Union Fire Engine Company, No. 1, of Beaufort; New York Hose Company, of Beaufort; Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1, of Beaufort; Washington Fire Engine Company, No. 2, of Beaufort.*"

According to The Charleston Daily News on **January 11, 1870**, the S. C. House of Representatives gave notice that a bill "*to incorporate the Beaufort Fire Company*" (this reference applies to all of the fire companies) *was passed and sent to the Senate.*"

"*Serious Fire In South Carolina,*" read the caption in The Charleston Daily Courier on **March 28, 1870**. "*From Mr. John S. Butler, of this city (Beaufort), we learn the following particulars regarding a serious fire in the woods near Hardeeville Station, on the Savannah and Charleston Railroad. The fire occurred on Tuesday last in the woods; a high wind prevailing it spread with great rapidity, destroying almost the entire fencing of Mr. Butler, as also other fences, negro houses and crops planted. Many families by this conflagration, which extended over ten square miles, have lost all they possessed.*"

The **July 4, 1871** printing of The Charleston Daily News reported that *“Two colored fire companies from Beaufort arrived yesterday evening in the steamer Planter, for the purpose of participating in the celebration today. They were met at the boat and escorted up to the city by delegations from several of the colored fire companies, with the usual accompaniments of fife and drum.”*

The Crescent, another local publication, noted on **January 18, 1872** that *“The Foreman of the companies composing the Beaufort Fire Department, will bring out their apparatus and men for parade and inspection on Tuesday next, January 23, at 4 P.M. Every length of hose belonging to this department will be tested. H. M. Stuart, Chief Engineer.”*

The **January 23, 1872** issue of The Daily Phoenix stated *“A fire occurred near the Baptist Church, Beaufort, last week, destroying the frame building in which it occurred. The property before the war was owned by Mrs. McNeal Cunningham, and at the time of the fire by the United States. It was occupied by five colored families, one of whom, Julia Ann Williams, was slightly injured by falling through the second floor.”* According to another article about this fire published in The Crescent a few days earlier, *“Union Engine, No. 1, was the first on the ground, but the Washington company claim to have been ‘first squirt.’”*

An amusing comment was noted in the *“LOCAL AFFAIRS,”* section of The Crescent printed on **July 10, 1873**. *“No fire crackers in Beaufort on the Fourth; God be praised.”*

The Daily Phoenix, a Columbia newspaper, printed on **January 6, 1874** that *“Three cars were discovered to be on fire at the Beaufort station, Port Royal Railroad, Wednesday last. The fire began in an empty box car, and extended to a car load of wood and one of*

*lumber, both belonging to R. G. Holmes. The box car and wood car were entirely destroyed. The lumber car and most of its contents were saved.”*

The Tribune (another short-lived newspaper) of Beaufort, noted on **December 9, 1874** that *“The Fire Department has been ordered out by H. M. Stuart, Chief, for parade and inspection on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. We hope to see a large turn out of all companies.”* And, in the same edition of the paper is a notice that *Mr. Mayo, Intendant, has re-issued the town ordinance forbidding the sale of fire works within the town limits. This ordinance so long violated is now to be strictly enforced, and property owners will say, amen, although the small boys may ‘reject.’”* **Note: Reference was found where the original ordinance prohibiting the use and sale of fireworks was in 1869. Apparently the old law had not been enforced for a number of years.**

Mr. Spieler discovered that the organization of both the New York Hose Co. and the Beaufort Fire Co. changed in 1875 where *“This association seems to have lasted for five years. Then, there was another change...adopted on January 5, 1875. This association shall be known and distinguished by the title of ‘Washington Steam Fire Engine Company, No. 2 of Beaufort, S. C.’”*

The Tribune printed on **January 6, 1875** announced *“The parade and inspection of the Beaufort Fire Department will take place on Wednesday afternoon, January 18, at 2 p.m.”* And, again from the Tribune dated **January 27, 1875**, *“The parade and inspection of the Fire Department came off Wednesday last, and was a very creditable affair. The playing by the Hand Engine was unusually good, but that of the steamer showed a lack of ability on the part of engineer to handle his engine. The department proved to be in better*

*working order than ever before. The Washington No. 2, took the opportunity while out of getting their picture taken with the steamer.”*

According to writings of the late Ralph Martin, member of Beaufort’s fire company, *“It is known that prior to 1874, there were three fire companies in Beaufort: the New York Hose Co., the Palmetto Steam Fire Engine Co., and the Pioneer Ladder Co.”* But, there were three additional fire companies which were overlooked: The Washington Steam Fire Engine Company, the Union Fire Engine Co., No.1, and the Stuart Fire Company (1859).

The Tribune posted on **July 7, 1875** that *“The Fourth, or rather the Fifth, passed off without any serious accident in Beaufort. The fire companies were out in force, and the steamer pumped out the hole under the bluff, while the editor of the Tribune was obliged to inhale its greasy smoke as it was wafted into his room where he was wrestling with a first class fever, and unable to chronicle the events of the glorious Day.”*

The Tribune of Beaufort printed in the **July 14, 1875** paper that *“On Saturday Charles Talbird, had been in swimming in the river near the Point, and having done so was overcome by exhaustion or cramps and was drowned. He was a plasterer and bricklayer by trade, and leaves a wife and several children. The funeral next day was very largely attended, the Union Fire Engine Co. and the Hook and Ladder Co. were out in uniform, and the Benevolent Society also attended.”*

According to The Crescent dated **January 27, 1876**, *“The town council met last night. Present: Intendant Williams, Wardens Gage, Boyce, Deas and Washington. The chairman of special committee appointed to examine into the condition of the Washington hand engine, reported that it was in fair condition. Warden Gage moved that the application to turn it over to a company newly organized,*

*should be granted, but in consequence of lack of finance wherewith to make the proper equipments in the shape of hose, etc., the motion was withdrawn.”*

A major fire occurred in Beaufort as reported in the **June 1, 1876** edition of The Crescent. *“On Thursday last the roof of Dr. Stuart’s residence in Beaufort caught fire from the chimney, and so rapidly did the fire gain headway that at one time fears were entertained that the entire building would be reduced to ashes. The new fire company the ‘Phoenix’ was the first to put a stream on the fire, the Union No. 1, with their engine at Waterhouse’s wharf commenced to play, and soon afterwards the steamer, from the same wharf, placed two streams on the fire. The furniture was removed, but in consequence of the excitement prevailing considerable quantities of it were broken up. This was the largest fire that has occurred in the town for several years, and that it was confined to the roof is to be attributed to the strength of the fire department. It was rumored that the steamer was without water in her boiler when the alarm of fire was given, but we ascertained that this was not the case, the delay being occasioned by the engineer receiving no orders when the hose was ready for work.”* **Note: This article provides the only mention found of a fire company in Beaufort by the name of “Phoenix.”**

The **January 4, 1877** publication of The Crescent reported on a big ship, the Harvey Mills, *“lying at anchor was discovered by the men on watch to be on fire. The ship’s bells were rung and in a short time the U.S.S. Sea Weed came alongside with a force of sailors from the fleet, and did everything possible to extinguish the fire. Extinguishers were used but all efforts were fruitless because of the difficulty to find the exact location.”* After many hours of fighting the fire, telegrams were sent to Beaufort for assistance. *“At noon the Washington Steam Engine was taken to Port Royal”* to be placed on a boat to be taken to the burning vessel. The steam fire engine “went

*to work, and they are still engaged in pouring water on the fire which seems to be now under control, although the fire still exists in the cotton underneath the water. The ship is full of water and lies in a very dangerous position and there is danger of her back being broken.”*

The Crescent newspaper of Beaufort, dated **August 2, 1877**, announced “*At the annual meeting of Union Fire Engine Co. No. 1, held on August 1<sup>st</sup>., the following officers were elected. Wm. Mitchel, Pres’t; Edward Walker, Vice Pres’t; M. B. Allen, Jr., Sec’y.’; Wally Green, Treas.; John Jones, 1<sup>st</sup> Director, Reuben Rutledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Director; Jos. Robinson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Director; Hamilton Robinson, 4<sup>th</sup> Director.”*

According to an inspection of the Town of Beaufort by The Sanborn Map Co. in **May 1884**, the fire department consisted of one steam engine, two hand-engines, one Hook & Ladder truck, and 2,300 feet of “*Good Hose.*” The survey maps indicate the town utilized a number of large cisterns located around the business district for fire protection and 8 artesian wells with “*plugs,*” similar to our dry hydrants today. The Hook & Ladder truck was housed adjoining the property of the Beaufort Artillery Arsenal near Calvert and Carteret Streets. The population of the town was estimated to be about 4,000 people.

An interesting piece about the Charleston earthquake, which occurred on August 31, 1886, was found in the Yorkville Enquirer of **December 22, 1886**. “*Steve Bryant, 123 years of age, died from fright at the continued earthquake shocks at Beaufort, S. C. on Tuesday of last week. Bryant had counted the shocks since August 31 and predicted that the hundredth jar would be the summons for judgement day. Beaufort experienced her 99<sup>th</sup> jar on Saturday, and*

*the old man could not stand the suspense of the expected one hundredth and expired in paroxysms (outbursts) of fright.”*

The **December 17, 1888** edition of The Morning News of Savannah reported *“At Beaufort fire broke out Wednesday evening about 6:30 o’clock in the residence of L. M. Roundtree. The Washington fire engine was promptly put to work, and within thirty minutes the fire was under control. This is the first fire since the new Artesian wells have been bored. The fire was not more than one and a half blocks from the well.”*

An article believed to have been composed by Fran Heyward Bollin in **October 1893** provides a glimpse into the horrors of what is known as *“The Great Sea Island Storm of 1893. “On Sunday night, August 27, 1893, the eye of the huge, slow-moving Category 3 hurricane landed just south of Savannah. The great Sea Island storm ripped through South Carolina’s coastal islands with a 10-to-12 foot storm surge on a high tide. Estimates of the death toll ranged up to 3,500. No one could count all of the bodies that washed up in the marshes, drowned in the trees, were killed in their homes and suffered in the aftermath from starvation, dehydration, injuries, exposure and disease.”*

The article continues, *“The Beaufort County’s population was 92 percent black at the time, mostly former slaves, their children and grandchildren. Many on the islands lived in wooden cabins, several with dirt floors. It marked the first time the country realized that a cyclone, as it was called in those days, could kill people on land as well as at sea. The forecasters had no way to notify coastal residents that they might be blasted by a hurricane, except by mailing postcards, flying storm flags from the top of buildings and sending telegraph messages. No one from Savannah to Georgetown escaped the losses from the great Sea Island storm. It destroyed the*

*region's economy. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross was appalled at the state and federal government's indifference to the threat of a famine in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Fortunately, Clara Barton worked on Hilton Head Island during the Civil War. She knew the lay of the land, the creeks and some of the people. She agreed, at the age of 72, to take charge."*

In another researched article entitled "*The Hurricane Forgotten*" by Jeff Rosenfeld and published in 1998 provides even more insight into the disastrous Sea Island Storm of 1893. Little to no details have been found concerning the efforts of the Beaufort Fire Department to respond to calls for assistance during this landfalling storm. However, the author discovered that winds topped 50 mph by 5 p.m. in Savannah, and "*the city's electrical infrastructure began to go haywire. Responding to an alarm, a fireman named Flynn set out in the assistant chief's buggy. At Liberty and Abercorn streets his horse slipped on the asphalt and Flynn was thrown to the ground. He fought the gales on foot only to find two crossed wires had shorted the (fire alarm) circuits—the first of nearly incessant false alarms that would be lost in the wail of wind that night.*" **Note: Research reveals that Beaufort's infrastructure was more than significantly damaged, and there is no factual documentation of the Beaufort Fire Department's actions during or after the storm. However, one can only image the firemen of that time were busy securing their own homes and families from the rising tide, life-threatening storm surge, high winds, evacuations of neighbors, tending to injuries, and thousands left homeless. Since there could be no defined response of the department's members, a lot of "freelancing" was probably the order of the day. One report from Port Royal said "the disaster along the coast passes all precedent. Human bodies lie along the beach, after the receding of the tide, like dead fish. To count them grows wearisome."**

Port-Royal newspaper, The Palmetto Post, made a brief statement in the **January 3, 1895** printing of the paper that *“The fire department responds quickly to every alarm of fire.”*

The Palmetto Post, on **April 18, 1895**, posted notice of a fire in Beaufort. *“In the neighborhood of 3 o’clock, just when sleep is the soundest, in Beaufort, and alarm of fire was sounded, and in a little while many were on the streets, and the engines were soon on their way to the scene of the conflagration. The fire was found to be in the house and home of Mr. G. W. Anderson, a very worthy colored man, of the New South newspaper staff, on King street, between West and Charles. Before the machines could get to work, the fire was well under way; but, by strenuous exertions, it was confined to the one building, which was almost totally demolished. The family were asleep when neighbors discovered the fire in a shed room, but all were gotten out safely as well as most of the furniture. Considering the poor water facilities with which to combat fire, with the lateness of the hour, we think our firemen did well in confining the fire to the one building, and deserve praise for their gratuitous work. We have not heard what the loss is estimated at, nor if the property was insured. The communion set of the colored Presbyterian Church was partially damaged by the fire.”*

The Palmetto Post, a Port Royal newspaper, noted on **October 17, 1895** that *“The alarm of fire in Beaufort last night was caused by the explosion of a lamp in the window of the shoe store of C. C. Boyle. Mr. Boyle came very near being seriously injured while fighting the fire.”*

According to The Palmetto Post, a Port-Royal paper, printed on **January 4, 1896** that a meeting of *“The stockholders of the Beaufort Waterworks Company was held Friday night...work will be started at*

*once...pumps have already be purchased, and the necessary piping will be on hand by the time the wells are driven.”*

The Union Times noted in their **May 29, 1896** edition that “A commission for a charter has been issued to the Beaufort Waterworks Company. The capital stock of the company is to be \$10,000, with the right to increase to \$25,000. The corporators named are, Messrs. Geo. Holmes, F. W. Scheper and C. C. Townsend.”

“Good Advice from a Level-Headed Citizen,” read the caption of a letter To The Editor of the Palmetto Post on **July 29, 1897**. “It is an old accepted maxim that in time of peace prepare for war, a truth as applicable in the warfare against the elements of nature as that of man. To reduce the destructive energies of the powers to its minimum has, as regard that of fire, been accomplished, to some extent at least, in all well regulated communities. An exception to the rule quoted above is the self-contented, non-active Fire Department of Beaufort. Notwithstanding the possession of two Steam Fire Engines and other implements galore there seems to be no organization of men trained in the handling of the appliances. This fact was made evident at the recent fire here. In the first place, valuable time was lost in getting the Engine out of Engine house; nobody seems to have had keys to the doors or knew how to get in. When, at last, the Engine was got out it wouldn’t work until ‘fixed,’ then delay was experienced in getting up steam, then lack of practice in attaching hose to hydrant caused another delay of valuable time, and when, at last, ready to play a stream, the buildings were consumed, and the adjoining houses were saved only by the united efforts of individuals with buckets of water.”

The lengthy letter continues, “It is not the intention to criticize the personnel of the Fire Department; every member thereof present that night did his best, willingly and with alacrity (enthusiasm), but a

*need of organization was apparent, and, in consequence, a lack of strength and usefulness that can only be made effective by discipline and frequent practice and exercise in the duties incumbent upon a fireman when his services are called upon to fight a fire. It is easy enough to find fault, its may be contended, but what feasible plans can be suggested to improve present conditions of affairs might be asked. We concede the difficulties that environs and impedes the efficiency of a voluntary organization, it being a body of men working without compensation for the public good, and as such should be under the fostering care, as it were, of the community which it serves, the more so when it is considered that the Town they are called upon to protect is one whose houses are built of pitch pine, the most inflammable of building material, and for the further reason that there is very little insurance on any property in Beaufort. That being the case, it would seem to suggest itself to every citizen of our Town, without further argument, that an efficient Fire Department is of paramount importance to the Town, that it is our duty to take an abiding personal interest in it either in a physical or pecuniary sense of view, or both.”*

*More to come....”The Town Council especially, as the people’s representative, should take the matter in hand and seek to strengthen the organizations. Both of the Engines should be put in perfect order and kept so; additional hose, if needed, should be obtained. One of the Engines should be turned over to a body of colored men when properly organized as a company, and a competitive spirit fostered and encouraged, and, with that end in view, a substantial reward should be offered to the company who should first be at a fire and throw the first stream, a reward large enough for a refreshment entertainment after each turnout for practice, when should be once a month. Then each employer should encourage one or more of his employees to attend upon the turning out and meeting of their respective companies. It is a*

*lamentable fact that some employers look with displeasure upon the loss of time by their clerks while, as a fireman, they are attending a fire, and instances have been reported where they have been mulcted (docked) for time so lost, and, in one instance, at a recent fire, it is alleged that one merchant would not permit his clerk to go to breakfast because of having helped at a fire the previous night he was a little late at the store the following morning.”*

*And, finally....”Let each company elect proper officers who are known for their efficiency and interest they will take in their respective organizations. Let the young men, the members of each company, be properly and frequently drilled, encourage them in their duties as stated, and make it known to them that their services are appreciated, and we will once more get a Fire Department as efficient as that under the leadership of Mr. E. W. Bailey some years ago which was the best Beaufort has had of recent years.” Signed “Citizen.”*

According to the **November 1899** survey of The Sanborn Map Co., Beaufort and Port Royal combined had a population of around 5,500 people. The fire department was still a volunteer organization with two engine/hose companies (both companies having 30 men each), and one Hook & Ladder Co. with 20 men. The department utilized two-2<sup>nd</sup> class Silsby steamers, three, two-wheeled hose carts having on hand 2,200 ft. of rubber hose *“in good condition”*, and 500 ft. of 2 ½” fibre’ hose *“in fair condition.”* **Note: There is no mention in any of the Sanborn surveys that Beaufort ever owned horses to pull the heavy steamers....no mention of horses being a part of the fire companies. Just imagine scores of firemen pulling heavy, bulky steam engines through dirt and muddy streets to alarms of fire. Apparently the Washington Engine Co. was located on Carteret St., and the Pioneer Co. at the corner of Carteret and Craven streets adjoining the Town Hall and jail (lock up). The**

**Hook & Ladder Co. was housed behind the Pioneer in a long shed or covered structure.**

The town's water facilities consisted of an 80 ft. stand pipe having 100,000 gallon capacity. Water was pumped from a 10" well 120 ft. deep by two McGowan duplex pumps. The system had 4,700 ft. of 8" mains, 3,400 ft. of 6" mains, and 2,016 ft. of 4" mains...and 15 dbl. hydrants.

Again, referencing the Sanborn Map survey of **1899**, Port Royal did not have an organized fire company, however, volunteers are mentioned who manned a hand-drawn, two-wheel hose cart with 500 ft. of 2 ½" hose. The town owned one elevated wooden tank having 50,000 gallon capacity and one steel tank having 40,000 gallon capacity. Port Royal held an annual contract with the Charleston & Western Carolina Railroad for the waterworks system. All of the town's mains were 3" diameter with 12 single discharge hydrants. The town's hose cart was housed in a vacant structure on the corner of Eighth Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Printed on **March 8, 1900**, an article in The Palmetto Post noted "*The alarm of fire in Beaufort Sunday night, between 9 and 10 o'clock, was caused by the burning of a two story frame house on Prince street, near the jail, the property of an old colored woman named Nancy Davis. The house and entire contents was consumed, and a small house adjoining, belonging to Joe Deas, was partially destroyed. The origin of the fire is unknown, Nancy Davis stating that, when she left the house to go to church, she left no fire or light in the building. The loss is a sad one for the old colored woman, who is highly thought of.*"

The State paper printed on **February 27, 1901** that "*An alarm of fire was turned in from Ward 2 at about 11 a.m. today, and investigation*

*proved that a residence at the corner of Craven and Carteret streets, occupied by Mr. Chas. Cohen, agent for the steamer Alpha, and one of a row of four handsome dwellings fronting on Craven street, and belonging to the estate of E. A. Scheper, was on fire. A defective flue is thought to have caused the conflagration. The two steam fire engines of the volunteer fire department were on the scene within ten minutes after the first stroke of the alarm bell, and two streams of water were soon playing on the flames, with good effect.”*

*“FIRE AT BEAUFORT,”* read the caption in the **September 8, 1901** printing of The State newspaper. *“Fire destroyed three dry sheds of the Beaufort Phosphate company at 2 o’clock this morning. By strenuous efforts the contents of the buildings were saved. The loss is estimated at \$2,000, but is thought to be fully covered by insurance. The origin of the fire is a mystery.”*

The **May 4, 1902** printing of the Americus Times-Recorder of Americus, Georgia said *“The secretary of state has issued a commission to the Washington Steam Fire Engine Co. of Beaufort, which is a volunteer organization of fire fighters. David Mittle is foreman of the company.”*

The **February 26, 1903** edition of The Palmetto Post shared that *“The alarm bell, sounding Ward 4, Friday evening, had people running here and there looking for the fire, which was found to be the roof of the Harrison School Building, corner of Scott and Prince streets, which is said to be Ward 3. Prompt steps by those close at hand put the fire out before much damage was wrought. It is fortunate this fire occurred in the daytime, and was early discovered and promptly fought, for, had it been at night, there is no question but what the damage would have been greater to the building, even if the destroying flames had not spread to surrounding houses.”*

According to The State newspaper, dated **April 26, 1903**, *“The engine house of the Beaufort waterworks was accidentally consumed by fire this evening at 7 o’clock, resulting in a loss of \$3,500, without insurance. The speedy arrival of the fire department saved most of the machinery and prevented the spreading of the flames to adjoining buildings. This is the first fire here since Christmas. The fire will not interfere with the usual supply of water.”*

The State newspaper reported on **December 27, 1903** that *“In consequence of the resignation of Mr. W. L. Shotswell as chief of the Beaufort Fire Department, on account of his approaching removal to Savannah, the town council has appointed Mr. J. Albert Kinghorn as temporary chief. The appointment will probably be made permanent at the council’s next meeting. Mr. Kinghorn is regarded as an experienced and intrepid firemen.”*

The State paper printed on **February 4, 1904** noted that *A fire here Sunday afternoon entirely destroyed a cottage belonging to James Albright. An adjoining cottage, owned by Edmund Frazier, was partly burned. The loss sustained by Albright was about \$350 and Frazier \$700. The buildings are located on Washington street, near Bladen, and on account of a brisk westerly wind gained too much headway to be saved before the arrival of the department, which was quickly on the scene. This is the first big fire we have had for over a year.”*

The **February 26, 1904** edition of The State reported *“The destruction by fire of Dr. S. V. Walker’s house at Bluffton on Saturday night is now thought to have been caused by a log rolling from the fire place to the floor of the room occupied by Capt. Jas. McAlpine, the father-in-law of Dr. Walker, while the captain was asleep. He was awakened by stifling smoke, and was painfully burned in the face,*

*hands and parts of the body in the unavailing effort to put out the fire. It is not thought that the burns will result seriously.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted a word of thanks in the **March 31, 1904** printing of the paper. *“We, the members of the Washington Steam Fire Engine Company, hereby tender our thanks for the cordial support given us by the citizens of Beaufort in our efforts to obtain future reliable police protection in the performance of our duties as firemen. For the Committee of twenty-five gentlemen who acted so kindly in our behalf we will take pleasure in cherishing a most grateful remembrance. The acknowledgement is in accordance with a resolution passed at our last meeting. Respectfully, W. H. Ohlandt, Foreman for the Washington Fire Co.”* **Note: Chief Ohlandt was selected by Chief Louis Behrens of Charleston to serve on the committee that came together at fire headquarters in Columbia on May 30, 1905 to organize the S. C. State Firemen’s Association.**

The **June 1905** survey by the Sanborn Map Company revealed the following information: Beaufort had a population of about 5,000 people. The water works consisted of a 80 ft. stand pipe with a capacity of 100,000 gallons. The water was pumped from 10” “*never failing wells, 120 ft. deep. Gravity pressure 43 lbs. 2 ½ miles of water mains with 16 double hydrants (4,700 ft. of 8” mains, 3,400 ft. of 6” mains, and 2,016 ft. of 4” mains).* The water works were constructed in 1897.” The fire department consisted of all volunteers...3 *companies, one white and two colored of 30 men each. 2-2<sup>nd</sup> class Silsby steamers & hose carts, 1,200 ft. of 2 ½” standard hose, one H & L truck.”* The survey also noted that the “*town practically level and streets nearly all macadamized (tarmacked or paved).*” By this time, the city had “*city lights-kerosene oil.*”

According to The Beaufort Gazette on **November 2, 1905**, *“The Washington Fire Company of Beaufort sent a delegation to the State Convention of S. C. Firemen, which met in Columbia last week. These representatives were Chief Lon Brooks, Foreman; W. M. Ohlandt and Asst. Foreman, D. Mittle, by their invitation Senator N.Chistensen, Jr., was present at the consideration of the bill which the convention will offer to the next legislature. Four cities asked for the privilege of entertaining the convention during the next session. Among them was Beaufort, which with Georgetown went into the second ballot. Georgetown won by two votes. Our delegation is to be commended for its efforts on this matter and it is to be hoped that they will be successful next year.”*

The Evening Star newspaper of Washington, D. C., printed on **January 20, 1907** that *“The most disastrous fire in the history of Beaufort occurred this afternoon. The loss is estimated at between \$500,000 and \$700,000, about one-third covered by insurance. The fire originated in the barn and stables of F. W. Scheper on Bay street, and its spread was rapid, as a high wind was blowing. The water supply failed and efforts to fight the flames were fruitless. They only stopped when they had nothing more to feed upon in the direction in which they were blown. Among the losses were the town hall and the market house. The large grocery store of Scheper was destroyed, as was the People’s Bank, of which Mr. Scheper was president. The bank’s funds and papers were saved. The fire leaped across Bay street, consuming the hardware and paint store of N. Chistensen & Sons, half the block behind it. Another jump across the street was made and law offices of Thomas Talbird and a row of stores he owned were destroyed. A number of houses between the city market and the Methodist Church were destroyed. Flying embers ignited a number of residences an eighth of a mile distant. For a time it looked as though the whole town would be destroyed.”* **Note: In an article printed many years later in The Beaufort Gazette, dated**

**August 21, 1975**, it was discovered that the fire bell used in the old fire house *“fell victim to the flames and had to be sent back to the foundry to be recast. It came back bearing the legend: ‘Beaufort, S.C., Jany. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1907 M. C. Shane Bell Foundry Co., Baltimore, Md.’”* Also, most of the records maintained in the city hall were destroyed by the fire and probably significant registers of the fire department.

The Union Times noted on **January 25, 1907** that *“A fire in Beaufort last Saturday resulted in \$150,000 damage to property. The city had to be guarded by militia, for fear of an uprising on the part of the colored people. At one o’clock Sunday morning a negro, William Bennett, was shot and killed by a guard. This precipitated the trouble between whites and blacks.”*

The Keowee Courier, dated **February 27, 1907**, reported that *“The steamer, Marion, plying between Charleston and Beaufort, took fire this morning at Young’s Island. The flames got beyond control of the crew and the steamer was sunk. Four passengers were drowned. Their bodies have not been recovered. The boat was about two years old and a small river steamer.”*

The **March 10, 1907** printing of The State newspaper noted *“At a meeting of the Washington Fire Company held at the arsenal Tuesday night the following letter and accompanying check was reported: ‘As a token of appreciation of the splendid work done by the fire company during the recent fire in Beaufort, the ladies of the Civic League voted the sum of \$15 to be used in buying fire caps for the company. The gift was received with thanks and expressions of appreciation. It was voted to contribute \$10 of the company’s fund toward the payment of lawyers’ fees in the case now before the courts whereby the insurance companies hope to have the firemen’s relief fund law declared unconstitutional. The annual election of*

*officers was then held, resulting as follows: W. K. Ohlandt, foreman; William Kinghorn, assistant foreman; Frank Rickes, treasurer; Douglas Gant, secretary; and Messrs. F. A. Kinghorn, H. E. Scheper and N. Christensen, Jr., trustees of the fund in bank.”*

The Beaufort Gazette of **July 15, 1909** told “At the annual meeting of the South Carolina Fire Insurance Agents held in Columbia last month, Mr. F. H. McMaster made a very readable address. Mr. McMaster ridiculed the American way of spending millions on fire fighting equipment and at the same time permitting people to erect fire traps. Beaufort woke up to the necessity of regulating the construction of buildings with a view to minimizing the fire risk after the town had suffered from a disastrous conflagration. It is hoped her officials will see that these instructions are vigilantly carried out in every particular. The town council is being commended for ordering certain deserted buildings to be taken down. That showed a sense of the vigilance that is needed for our protection.” **Note: Mr. F. H. McMaster was the great nephew of the current Governor, Henry McMaster and who helped craft the legislation of the State Firefighters’ Association now known as our 1% Fund.**

The Gaffney Ledger printed on **July 16, 1909** that “Fire has destroyed almost the entire business portion of the village of Yemassee. W. D. Sanders’ general store, Weeks’ drug store, Litchfield’s store and the post office were burned to the ground. The railroad station was saved by the exertions of the railroad night force. The fire, the cause of which is unknown, started at 2 o’clock and burned fiercely until 5.”

The Beaufort Gazette, dated **March 24, 1911**, noted “At a meeting of the Washington Fire Engine Company, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst., the following officers were elected: David Mittle, Chief; G. W. Kinghorn, Assistant Chief; A. L. Gage, Engineer; T. H. Harms, Jr., Foreman; Alex Levin, Assistant Foreman; W. P. Jay Treasurer; J. D. Parlor, Secretary.”

According to The Beaufort Gazette of **June 23, 1911**, *“At a special meeting of the Washington Steam Fire Engine Company, held at the Council chamber Wednesday evening, the following delegates were elected to represent the company at the annual meeting of the State Firemen’s Association, which convenes in Columbia on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week: Messrs. Douglas Gaunt and Alexander Levin; alternate, A. L. Gage, Mr. David Mittle, chief of the Beaufort companies, is a member of the association by right of position and will also attend the convention. At the meeting Wednesday, Chief Mittle told of a recent talk he had had with Mr. Louis Behrens, Chief of the Charleston Fire Company, and president of the State Firemen’s Association, in which Mr. Behrens urged that the Beaufort Company be represented at the association.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted on **July 7, 1911** that *“The Chief of Beaufort fire department, David Mittle, appeared before Council and requested that new hose be purchased. There is only about 1,000 feet of hose that will stand a rigid test. Council decided to award bids for hose on August 7.”*

The **October 27, 1911** printing of The Beaufort Gazette noted *“Coincidentally with his other fire, Mr. Campbell suffered another loss last Sunday morning. The rear of the dwelling occupied by Mr. Campbell and owned by N. Christensen & Sons at nine o’clock in the morning was seen to be on fire. The alarm was quickly sent in and was promptly responded to, otherwise the building would have been beyond saving. It is impossible to accurately accredit the cause of the fire. The re-organized Pioneer Hose Company, the negro fire company of Beaufort, did a yeoman service; it responded promptly to the alarm—as did the Washington company—and assisted in all the multitudinous duties that a fireman is supposed to do.”*

*“BEAUFORT TO RECEIVE INSURANCE PREMIUMS,”* read the caption in The Beaufort Gazette on **November 10, 1911**. *“The Beaufort fire department is to be benefited from a recent Act passed by the Legislature; it is to receive one per centum of all the premiums that are collected in Beaufort for the fiscal year ending December 1. A circular letter is being sent out to fire insurance companies throughout the State by Commissioner F. H. McMaster, giving the names of the cities and towns which will come in for a share of the ‘refund’ money. This Act, which was passed in 1910, allows any town or city in the State which has a regularly organized fire department and which passes an ordinance adopting the Act, 1 per cent of all the fire insurance premiums collected in that city or town, this money, however, to be used only for the benefit of the fire department of the said city or town. The last year twenty-eight cities in the State adopted the ordinance. The total amount distributed from this source amounted to \$10,768. Thirty-seven cities have adopted the ordinance this year and the total amount will be increased.”* **Note: Chief Ohlandt served on the committee that crafted this legislation, and State Insurance Commissioner F. H. McMaster who helped lead the charge for this benefit was our current Governor’s (Henry McMaster) great nephew. Today the 1% Fund generates over \$35 million dollars for the benefit of the 490 fire departments in South Carolina.**

The State newspaper of Columbia posted on **December 8, 1911** that *“The building occupied by the Beaufort Printing and Publishing Company, and which published The County Democrat, with all of its contents was destroyed by fire early this morning. No insurance was carried. The loss is estimated at \$3,000. Adjacent buildings were saved only by the splendid work of the firemen. The origin of the fire is unknown, but it is supposed to have caught from a defective flue.”*

The Beaufort Gazette printed on **December 15, 1911** that *“An alarm of fire was turned in about nine o’clock Tuesday night. It was found to be on Bay Street, in the Beaufort House annex in room number 5. Quick work with five fire extinguishers and the prompt response of the fire company soon had it out. The fire is supposed to have originated from the explosion of a lamp, as the bureau on which it sat, was almost entirely consumed. Other furniture in the room was ruined and much done to walls and ceiling.”*

A letter from the editor of The Beaufort Gazette on **January 12, 1912** pointed out the need for an improved method for alerting the fire companies within the town. *“The occurrence of a large fire in Columbia, coming as it did near the anniversary of Beaufort’s large fire of five years ago, makes one feel uneasy, and wonder whether we are really in danger of another such occurrence. We hope not; but fires will occur. The one that destroyed the ‘Democrat’ printing office a month ago, and the one a month or two earlier in the same block, when Mr. Campbell’s bakery was burned, and the stores near by threatened, both occurred in a very dangerous situation. Only the energetic work of the fire fighters prevented a great disaster.”*

The letter continues...*“So it will always be. We can not get on with out fire. Occasionally the flames will get beyond our control and destroy property and endanger more. It is only by our preparedness at all times that disaster from this can be averted. We have only praise for the self-sacrificing way in which our young men of both races respond to the call of the fire alarm, and often at considerable risk to themselves do all in their power to stay the conflagration. On the whole the town authorities have shown themselves alive to the danger, and have provided liberally with the weapons necessary, so that part of the town covered by the water mains is pretty well protected. But in such a fight time is of the greatest importance. Five minutes at the start is worth more than a fire engine after the blaze*

*gets under way. Give any fire a good start and a strong breeze and it may defy all our apparatus and all the human effort we can summons. It will go on until there is nothing in its path to devour.*

*There's more..."The greatest need is some quick way to spread the alarm. Now if a fire starts at night some one has to run several blocks to ring the bell. Perhaps the fire is almost beyond control before the first tap of the bell warns a sleeping town of its danger. What else can be done? To be sure there are phones spread all over town, but what if one rings up 'Central?' 'Central' has no way of ringing the bell. When Mr. Fitts applied for a telephone charter one of the endorsements he offered was contained in the promise to arrange some electrically operated device which would ring the fire bell from the Central office of the telephone exchange. Whether it is part of Mr. Fitt's obligation to supply this device or not, it ought to be installed, even if the town has to do...far greater importance it would be to arrange matters so that the occurrence of fire in any part of town could be instantly communicated by phone to 'Central,' and by pressing a button or turning a switch the bell ring in a fraction of the time it would take a messenger to travel across town to accomplish the same thing. We do not claim to know enough about electrical apparatus to describe just how this should be installed, but we have no doubt whatever that this could be put in without great expense; and feel no doubt that it would prove of great value, and probably pay for itself at the time of the first fire."*

A survey by the Sanborn Map Co., completed in **March 1912**, revealed the fire department was all volunteer with only "two paid engineers. There were two fire stations with three companies, one white and two colored, of 30 men each. One chief, one assistant chief. All apparatus drawn by hand. Fire alarm by bell. Two 2<sup>nd</sup> class Silsby steam fire engines. Three hose reels. 900 ft. 2 ½" hose each. Two hook & ladder trucks, 600 ft. 2 ½" hose in reserve in good

*condition. Streets shell paved. Public lights electric.” Also, the survey revealed that several 11,000 gallon capacity cisterns were still available, and the town had 2 ½ miles of water pipes with 15 double hydrants. The water works system was constructed in 1897.*

The State newspaper, printed on **December 24, 1914**, stated “*A large warehouse owned by the C. E. Danner company, wholesale grocers of this city, was totally destroyed by fire early yesterday morning. When the alarm was rung in at about 3:45 o’clock the entire building, which is situated a mile from the town, was wrapped in flames and by the time the engines reached the scene it had collapsed. All that the department could do was to save the other buildings around it, the nearest being the depot. A railway car standing on the track by the warehouse was burned also. The origin of the fire is not known. The value of the building is \$5,000 and the value of the stock, which was composed of boxes of all kinds of groceries and the like, is \$25,000, which is only partially covered by insurance.*”

“*Small One-story Building Damaged by Flames,*” read the caption in The State paper on **January 19, 1916**. “*An alarm of fire was rung yesterday about 8:30 o’clock. On arriving at the scene the fire department, which responded quickly to the fire, found that a small one-story building adjoining the dry goods store of Morris Levin on the one side and a large dwelling on the other, owned by M. S. Epstein, was on fire. The quick work of the firemen soon had the blaze under control and the building, while badly damaged, was saved from total destruction. A crowd gathered near the spot to watch the fire, as the building is situated on Bay street in the heart of the business district of the town. The fire is said to have been started by the explosion of a can of gasoline in the place, which was occupied by a barber.*”

The Beaufort Gazette published the Constitution and By-Laws of the Washington Fire Co, of Beaufort in their **February 11, 1916** edition of the paper. This writer includes the details of that document in full, primarily to point out some interesting descriptions about rank, discipline, membership, etc.

#### **ARTICLE I.**

**Sec. 1.** There shall be a company known as the Washington Fire Company, the purpose of which shall be the fighting and preventing of fires in the city of Beaufort, S. C.

**Sec. 2.** The Washington Fire Company shall consist of twenty-five (25) men to be divided into two sections known as the Chemical section and the Hose section. Five (5) men shall constitute the Chemical section and twenty (20) men shall constitute the hose section. These sections shall be appointed by the Foreman.

#### **ARTICLE II.**

**Sec. 1.** The officers shall be FOREMAN, ASST. FOREMAN, SECRETARY, AND TREASURER.

**Sec. 2.** The foreman shall be in direct charge of all apparatus and in direct command of the members of this company in the event of a fire. He shall call and preside at all meetings of the company. The Asst. Foreman shall assist the foreman and act in his place when he is absent. The Secretary shall keep a true record of all proceedings of the company. The Treasurer shall keep the funds of the company and render an annual report to the company.

**Sec. 3.** There shall be three Trustees elected at the same time as the officers of the company.

#### **ARTICLE III.**

**Sec. 1.** It shall be the first duty of every FIREMAN to respond to all fire calls, reporting at the engine house and assisting in getting the apparatus to the scene of the fire, and to act under orders from his superior officers at the fire, unless he can give a valid excuse such as sickness, absence from town, or any other good excuse.

**Sec. 2.** No fireman may be excused from a fire until all apparatus has been collected and returned to the engine house, except by the Chief or Asst. Chief of the Department, or the Foreman or Asst. Foreman of the Company, but he must first report to the foreman.

Sec. 3. The Secretary shall call a roll of the company after each fire, and any member not answering this roll call and who has not been regularly excused shall be dealt with as hereinafter provided for.

#### **Article IV.**

Sec. 1. All penalties shall be imposed and excuses acted on by the Foreman and Asst. Foreman and the Chief of the Department, with the right of appeal to the Company.

Sec. 2. Any member failing to respond to fire call without a valid excuse shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined or dropped by the committee aforementioned, after due investigation.

Sec. 3. Any member failing to answer the roll call after a fire and who has not been regularly excused shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined or dropped by the committee aforementioned.

Sec. 4. Any member dropped shall lose all privileges and benefits derived from being a member of the company.

#### **ARTICLE V.**

Sec. 1 Any man is eligible for membership and after his name is presented to the company endorsed by two members he shall be elected a member by two thirds (2-3) vote of the members present.

#### **ARTICLE VI.**

Sec. 1. Officers shall be elected at an annual meeting which shall be held on the third Monday in December or as soon thereafter as possible, and shall hold office for two (2) years.

Sec. 2. Any officer may be recalled by three fourths (3/4) vote of all members of the company, for cause.

#### **ARTICLE VII.**

Sec. 1. These bylaws may be amended by two thirds (2-3) vote of members present.

Adopted by the Washington Fire Company at a meeting held on the nineteenth day of January, 1916. **Note: To serve as a volunteer fireman during this time in history, strict guidelines of performance were required. When a member failed to participate in drills, fire calls, parades, funerals, etc. without a good excuse, that member was placed on what was called a “Defaulters List.”**

The Beaufort Gazette provided a report from then City Manager, Otis, to city council about the fire department on **March 3, 1916**. *“Beaufort’s Fire Department is one of which any small city might well be proud. Being composed of volunteer companies whose members work without any pay are subject to call at any time. It has established a record for efficiency that entitles it to the unstinted (abundant) praise of the whole city. The results achieved and the splendid esprit de corp are in no small part due to the ability and efforts of Chief David Mittle, aided by his assistant Will Kinghorn. The personnel is of a remarkably high class and both white and colored companies are composed of representative men. The membership in the companies is decided by the companies themselves and is limited. Washington company has pruned its roll to twenty-five while each of the negro companies has twenty members. The Company rolls follow:*

#### **Washington Company**

*H. T. Danner, Foreman; M. D. Werner, Asst. Foreman; W. P. Jay, Treasurer; E. W. Fripp, Secretary; E. B. Rodgers, A. L. Gage, J. W. Logan, F. H. Christensen, H. S. Rhett, J. C. Wallace, Hal Wallace, R. W. Cohen, Geo. Waterhouse, W. H. Ohlandt, W. M. Morrall, L. E. Bishop, Sam Levin, Eli Schein, J. A. Kinghorn, Alex Levin, J. F. Morrall, W. L. Carson, Geo. Watson, T. H. Harms, Jr.*

#### **Pioneer Company**

*Geo. Morrison, Foreman; Joe Grant, Asst. Foreman; H. F. Singleton, Sec.; A. G. Brown, Engineer, Ben Green, Nat Bryan, Fred Robinson, Ben Brown, Harry Colty, Joe Jackson, David Brown, Geo. Jenkins, H. G. Fisher, J. S. Blocker, Alex Meyers, Stephen Grayson, Henry Wallace, Caesar Brown, Robert Ford, Medacus Green.*

#### **Hook and Ladder Company**

*P. Gantt, Foreman; J. S. Mulligan, President; S. N. Morrison, Secretary; E. W. Mitchell, Treasurer; M. Meyers, H. Deyloin, E. M. Scott, D. Jenkins, E. Meyers, A. Riley, Geo. Moody, Jr., M. McCall,*

*Glen Simuel, Sam Washington, Jr., Jos. Green, Jas. Riley, Jr., Allen Counts, Allen Gantt, R. G. Wallace, Theo. Menett.”*

According to the **August 25, 1916** printing of The Beaufort Gazette, *“The fire engine formerly assigned to the Pioneer Fire Company and stationed in the 6<sup>th</sup> ward has been fully repaired at a cost of \$430, carefully tested and transferred to the engine house at the corner of Craven and Scott streets. The Washington Fire Engine Company, which originally had charge of this engine, is once more detailed to care for and operate it in case of fire. J. W. Logan has been appointed engineer. The Hook & Ladder truck goes to the ward 6 engine house.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted in the **December 15, 1916** edition of the paper that *“No fireworks are to be sold in Beaufort earlier than December 18<sup>th</sup> nor later than January 1<sup>st</sup>. No fireworks shall be used in the city except during these two weeks, and even then, they shall not be used on public streets nor in the fire district.”*

The **February 14, 1919** printing of The Beaufort Gazette noted a request for funding from the Washington Fire Company. *“The following communication was received from the Washington Fire Co.: ‘We, the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Co., realize the necessity of more efficient fire fighting apparatus and offer to Council \$900 as part payment on a motor driven combination chemical and hose wagon with junior pump, the City paying the balance and equipping the same.’”* The Council responded *“The City wishes to express to the Washington Fire Co. their appreciation of their offer to improve the fire fighting conditions and appointed the Mayor and the City Manager as a committee representing the City Council to confer with the Fire Co. and the Trustees of the Fire Fund to secure all the information they can along this line and report their findings at the next meeting.”*

The articles continues, *“The City Manager was directed to advertise for bids for high pressure motor driven fire pump. The following bids were received for meters:*

*The Neptune Meter Co.-Price \$11,610*

*The National Meter Co.-Price \$11,250*

*Hersey Mfg. Co.-Price \$10,650*

*Pittsburg Meter Co.-Price \$10,750*

*Keystone Meter Co. \$12,900*

*After discussion it was decided to accept the Neptune Meter proposition. The Manager was directed to close the deal at once with them and proceed with the installation.”*

New equipment for the fire department, says The Beaufort Gazette in the **January 23, 1920** printing of the paper. *“A considerable amount of additional fire fighting equipment will be purchased by the Beaufort Fire Company, in accordance with action taken at the meeting of this company last week. Included in the new equipment will be rubber coats, hats, smoke helmets and a number of other articles needed to complete the fire fighting equipment.”* It is noted that an earlier article announced that *“an additional supply of 750 feet of hose was purchased by the fire department.”*

The **February 20, 1920** edition of The Beaufort Gazette announced that *“The Beaufort Fire Department is making some splendid improvements in it fire fighting apparatus. The new fire truck, which was put into use for the first time on Monday, will be equipped with chemicals and ladders. With this new addition and several others that are being planned by the Beaufort Fire Department this city is one of the best equipped of any town in the state of its size. The citizens of Beaufort should point to their highly efficient fire department, of which Mr. H. T. Danner, Jr., is chief, with much pride.”*

**Note: The new motorized fire truck described suggests it may**

have been a standard chemical and hose apparatus having no water pump. The truck would have two 40-gallon soda/acid tanks which when mixed with bicarbonate of soda and sulfuric acid created sufficient pressure to send a stream of water some 60 ft. through a 1” rubber hose. The remaining bed of the truck would have carried several hundred feet of 2 ½” hose. Fire hose when deployed would have been connected to the nearest hydrant for water supply from the pressurized system.

The Beaufort Gazette, dated **February 11, 1921**, appeals to the public for cooperation and reminds them of local ordinances. *“In a town like Beaufort where the Fire Department is purely volunteer, there is bound to be considerable interest manifested by the citizens generally, in the event of a fire. The Beaufort Fire Department recognizes and appreciates the interest, but would call attention to the following facts: The Department is entirely capable, and respectfully requests that citizens, not carried on Fire Company rolls as active members, remain as passive onlookers, until such time as their assistance is requested. Do not crowd the firemen nor give any orders. This only hampers them and causes confusion. If you drive a car, your attention is called to the City Ordinance which gives fire apparatus the right-of-way while responding to an alarm. If you hear the fire bell, or the siren which is on the truck, or both, and have any idea, whatsoever, that the truck is coming down the same street on which you are driving, the ordinance requires that you pull to the side of the road. Failure to do so is punishable by a fine.”*

The caption in the **April 21, 1922** issue of The Beaufort Gazette read *“Fire Department Receives Donation.”* The letter is written to Mr. William Ohlandt, Chief of the Fire Department. *“Dear Mr. Ohlandt, will you kindly express to your Fire Company, and any others who helped, our appreciation and thanks for the splendid effort made to save our home Wednesday night, April 5<sup>th</sup>. As we know constant*

*repairs are needed for equipment, we send the enclosed check to help meet that expense...Very Sincerely Yours, Mrs. Harriet L. Waterhouse.”*

The **March 2, 1923** circulation of The Beaufort Gazette noted *“The Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department has once more demonstrated what intelligent, unselfish, devotion to duty and fearless effort on behalf of their fellow citizens can accomplish even against great odds. When the Enterprise Ice Plant near the depot burned last week the flames had gained such headway before the alarm was sounded and the apparatus could be moved to the scene that it seemed inevitable that the westerly gale would carry the fire across the track to our warehouse. The heat was so immense and the exploding tanks scattered sparks and fire brands all over and about the building. In fact the building caught in two or three places. When it is considered that there are no water mains at the point and the fight had to be carried on with buckets, fire extinguishers and any thing else that could be used at the moment it is astounding that the property was saved.”*

The Beaufort Gazette published a follow up article of a massive fire in downtown Beaufort on **February 7, 1924**. *“The origin of the fire that swept the row of frame buildings occupied by the Gazette, the Beaufort Salvage Co. and Hirsch’s Dry Good Store on Thursday is pretty well established to have been around one of the flues which probably became overheated during the cold weather that morning, and once ignited, the flames ran like wildfire throughout the narrow space, between the ceiling and the low tin roof. The high wind fanned the flames and it looked as if the whole of that side of Bay street would be wiped out. But the three fire companies here proved what they could do in such an emergency and by almost utter disregard of personal safety they checked the flames just before they reached the Epstein Building. Meanwhile an eager band of*

*volunteers were helping carry out the contents of Lipmans and Hirschs Stores the stocks of goods of Sparks 5 & 10 cents store, and of D. Schein.”*

*The article continues...”Across the street Mrs. McGee had her household effects packed and ready to go, the Beaufort Bank moved its valuable papers and records into the vault, the Fashion Shoppe was all packed up and Kinghorns and Danners were ready to retire to the waters edge in case the flame should jump across Bay street. Just before the flames were finally put under control a company of Marines which Col. Lyman had dispatched from Parris Island and who were under his personal command...but it was impossible to get any of their fine fighting apparatus on the boat but they brought axes, etc. to help tear down walls and a gang of electric linemen to handle the wires. The steam engine of the local company was fired up and stationed on the Waterhouse wharf where it sent a strong stream of salt water on the blaze which played a large part in subduing them.”*

Further along in the narrative, more insight is provided. *“The fire was out about 1:15 and a band of volunteers was soon busy carrying back the stock of the merchants which had been removed for safety. The Boy Scouts played a prominent part in this and an observer was reminded of a string of ants going in one way laden and coming out empty for a new load. In an incredibly short time everything was back in place except the stocks of those occupying the burnt buildings which were moved elsewhere on the Bay. Schein’s Department Store estimates a loss of approximately \$2,000, caused by loss and damage by moving stock out and back during the fire.”*

Records reveal the City of Beaufort received their second motorized apparatus on **December 25, 1924**, *“fulfilling the department’s Christmas wish for a shiny, new, red fire engine. This engine replaces*

*the steam engines that Beaufort had used to pump water onto burning buildings. Those steam engines had to be towed by volunteer firefighters. **Note: The engine is an American LaFrance pumper...many years passed and the engine was named “Big Jim” after former Chief Jim Darby. Big Jim fought fires until the late 1940s before being stored away for an occasional use and later restoration.***

*On **May 26, 1925**, The Columbia Record, wrote “Fire early today did damage estimated at \$50,000 to \$75,000 in the main business section of this city, destroying three buildings and partly damaging a fourth before being brought under control. The guests of the Riverview Hotel were forced to leave the building before it was destroyed in the blaze. Marines from Parris Island summoned to the aid of the local fire fighters did splendid work, several of them suffering minor injuries. The blaze was discovered about 3:15 a.m. in the apartment above Austin Grocery company. A defective electric stove is blamed for the start of the fire. Making rapid headway the conflagration destroyed this building, the Riverview Hotel and the store occupied by Lenglick Department store. The Aman building, containing offices was partly damaged.” **Note: The fire department jumped to an assumption on the cause of the fire...turned out it was arson...doesn’t pay to guess!***

*The **July 9, 1925** edition of The Beaufort Gazette noted that “Representatives of the Beaufort Fire Department are invited to attend a school for firemen to be conducted at the University of South Carolina this month. The invitation was issued in letters from John J. McMahan, state insurance commissioner. Each representative will be charged actual expenses of \$11 for the five or six days in training, and the instruction will consist of actual approved fire practices. Chief Ohlandt, when questioned on the matter today, said it would be a good thing to send several of its*

*members to the university institute, and he was of the opinion that it would be money well expended. It will be a source of pride in the future for a town to have the record of being represented at the first school for firemen held in the state. You remember the appreciation shown at the State Firemen's Association for the four members who stood as having been present at the organization of that association twenty years ago. The First School for Firemen will be held in Columbia, Monday, the 13<sup>th</sup> instant."* **Note: Although held at the USC, the school was co-sponsored by the S. C. State Firemen's Association. Although the school was billed as the first annual school, the ball was dropped but started once again in 1935 and continues even today as the Fire Service Improvement Conference. A photograph of the participants of the 1935 school is on display at the current Association offices. Included in the photograph is a fireman, Jesse C. Johnson, who later became South Carolina's first State Fire Marshal.**

*"JAIL YOUNG MAN ON ARSON CHARGE,"* read the caption in the **July 24, 1925** edition of The State newspaper. *"Charged with arson, L. M. Austin, young fire insurance underwriter of Beaufort, was arrested this afternoon by Sheriff J. E. McTeer. The affidavit says that on or about the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1925, on L. M. Austin did wilfully and wantonly set fire to and burn a two-story frame building which said building of Mrs. W. P. Roberts was insured against loss by fire. The fire referred to in the warrant occurred at Beaufort in the early morning of May 26 and destroyed almost a block of buildings on the river side of Bay street between Scott and West streets causing an approximate loss of \$75,000. The fire originated in the apartment occupied by L. M. Austin with his father and mother over the store operated by the father under the firm named of the Austin Grocery company. At the time of the fire the Austin family had a narrow escape, having to be taken from the burning building down ladders. H. H. Austin had his hair and eyebrows singed. No cause was given*

*for its origin at the time of the fire.”* The article noted that the River View Hotel, the department store of E. E. Lengnick, and the three-story frame building of Claud M. Aman, attorney, was badly damaged. Also, it was noted that *“Marines from Parris Island were summoned to the aid of the local fire fighters did splendid work, several of them suffering minor injuries.”*

The **January 14, 1926** printing of The State newspaper made a significant announcement. *“The Legislative Committee of the Suth Carolina Firemen’s Association, composed of 14 members, headed by A. McC. Marsh, chief of the Columbia fire department, as Chairman, met in Columbia yesterday to complete arrangements for a bill which provides for the enactment of a law whereby it will be required that all hospitals and schools in towns having a central fire alarm station be equipped with fire alarm boxes.”* Among those members on the Legislative Committee was W. H. Ohlandt, chief of the Beaufort fire department.

*“BEAUFORT THREATENED WITH A DISASTROUS FIRE MONDAY MORNING,”* read the headlines in the **March 25, 1926** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *“Monday morning, about 1:30, the fire bell began its distressing sound to notify the people that fire was raging in the city. In a few moments you could see lights turned on in every home and men and women beginning to make a rush for the reflection which could be seen to be on Bay street. When it was reached it was found to be in the warehouse belonging to Mrs. W. F. Sanders at the foot of Scott street. When the firemen arrived it looked as if they had one of the most disastrous fires to combat that they had went up against recently. The wind was blowing at a tremendous rate and the building was a large frame structure, which was almost joining on the other frame buildings. But with the well organized firemen, both white and colored, they soon had the fire under control. These men are to be congratulated, and Chief Ohlandt is to be commended on*

*the efficiency of every man in his company. The people of Beaufort should feel proud of these men, for with a little carelessness on their part, with the wind raging like it was, no doubt it would have been one of Beaufort's worst fires. The company at Parris Island, by permission of General Harry Lee, was in readiness to come to our assistance at once in case it got beyond our control, and the people of Beaufort feel very grateful to him for his cooperation."* An interesting follow up to the story...a Mr. Damon was working in the warehouse and decided to take a nap leaving an electric light on sitting atop of a box having combustible materials inside. Apparently the light tilted and overtime ignited the box which spread throughout the building.

A public notice appeared in The Beaufort Gazette on **April 1, 1926** which states *"This is to notify all merchants and property owners on Bay Street that they must clean all boxes, trash or rubbish from behind the buildings on Bay Street. This is being done to protect the property from fire. Otherwise, I will be forced to docket a case against those who do not comply with this order. W. H. Ohlandt, Chief of Fire Department"*

Beaufort Fire Chief Ohlandt was interviewed about his perspective on fire safety in the **June 16, 1927** printing of The Beaufort Gazette. *"In reviewing measures now being taken by the International Association of Fire Chiefs to combat the appalling loss of life and property by fire in the United States, Chief W. H. Ohlandt points out that one of the most effective ways to reduce the fire danger is to give such buildings as we erect the highest degree of non-combustibility. He says it would be impracticable, of course, to build an all-fireproof structure. So preventing fires is just as important a part of the fire department's work as fighting fires, and along with the thousands of other fire chiefs throughout the country, he is actively co-operating with the IAFC in its great '1927 Fire Prevention Year'*

*movement which it is hoped will acquaint the public with means for reducing the annual fire toll.”*

Sumter’s newspaper, *The Watchman and Southern*, dated **December 3, 1927**, announced that *“Tuesday morning about 4 o’clock fire was discovered in a small house on the Port Royal road two miles from Beaufort, but it was too late for those who arrived to do anything but wait until it died down. It was soon discovered that Katherine Singleton, 85-year-old woman, and Rosa May Singleton, 4 years old, had lost their lives in the fire.”*

Once again, the “Threatening Demon”, as its often called, imperiled the downtown district of Beaufort, according to the **February 16, 1928** printing of *The Beaufort Gazette*. *“Sunday morning, about 10 o’clock, just about time for the young, as well as older people were on their way to Sunday School, ‘Big Bob’ (reference to the fire bell) sounded the distressing alarm of fire. It was only a few moments until smoke was discovered coming from the flat above Schein’s Department Store on Bay Street. This has been the residence of the Schein family for the past fourteen years. Upon the arrival of the fire department, very shortly six streams of water were playing on the building. In a very short time the Epstein building was found to be burning. Members of the company were transferred from the Schein building to this building. During this time the Schein building was still burning, when it was noticed that the Junker building had caught on the outside on the wood work.”*

“During this time the colored company had arrived, carrying strings of hose to the rear of the building; many of the men going to the roof of each building, cutting through in order to get water into the ceiling. In about one hour’s time it was felt by all that the fire had been put under control. It is stated that an oil heater in the bath room of Mr. Schein’s home which is over his store, exploded,

causing the fire to spread very rapidly. At first appearance of the fire, it looked as if the entire block was in danger of being swept out. Mayor W. R. Bristol called Parris Island and asked for assistance in case the local company could not get the fire under control. He was notified that one company was standing in readiness at his call. **Note: In the another article, credit is given to Sheriff Ed McTeer who not only served as chief law enforcement officer, but also served as an active fireman for the fire company and worked tirelessly at this fire.**

According to The Beaufort Gazette on **April 19, 1928**, *“The Beaufort Volunteer Fire Company will put on a picture, the Fire Brigade, at the Ritz Theatre, Wednesday and Thursday, April 25 and 26. Mr. Murphy has consented to let the company have his theatre for just the actual running expenses. Every ticket bought by the people is helping the boys who are your only protection.”*

*“GREATER FIRE SAFETY,”* captioned the declaration in the **October 25, 1928** issue of The Beaufort Gazette. *“Through the co-operation of the City Fathers and the members of the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department a ‘Great Sterling Siren’ will shortly take the place of the old fire gong high above the city hall. This is another of the many progressive steps being taken in a forward direction by Beaufort these days. For years, long before our day, the fire alarm has been sounded by the large bell at the corner of Carteret and Craven Streets. Many are the citizens who have tugged at the rope to swing the large gong high in the tower above. Right well had the old bell performed.*

The commentary continues...*“Time marches on bringing about changes. Due to the growth of our city, stretching out more and more along the northern shore of Beaufort River, the officials have decided it would be best to divide the city into more fire districts, each*

*district to embrace less territory than heretofore. By co-operation with the agents of the Inter-State Machine Products Co., Inc., of New York, a survey has been made of the city from which it has been found practical to divide the area into fifteen sections. Cards will be issued to all owners of homes in the district designating their number in case of fire, making it possible for the firemen blocks away to instantly know the exact spot of the threatening demon. This insures greater efficiency.”*

*More clarity explains...”The central station will be operated from the office of the Beaufort Telephone Co., under the direction of the operator at the switch board. As we are advised the party advising of a threatening fire is to give the number of the building, and the section. The corresponding code wheel is placed on the panel and the lever is pulled. Then the mighty siren will take up the task and soon all citizens, day or night, will be advised of the danger apparent, and urged to hasten to the locus to assist in checking the danger.*

*“Through the splendid work of the local volunteer department Beaufort has suffered very little damage from fires. Recently a big loss was suffered, but the alarm was late in being sounded giving the flames too great a headway to be checked, though adjoining was saved. As soon as the lever has been pulled by the operator the alarm will sound forth for miles immediately advising of the danger, leaving no doubt as to whether the call for help has been made.”*

The Beaufort Gazette in the **August 22, 1929** edition revealed that apparently the new plan for alerting the fire department of an alarm of fire with an electric siren was not working. *“Notice To The Public!” We wish to take this means of notifying all the people throughout the City of Beaufort that the electric siren has been discontinued, therefore you will disregard fire alarm card that was placed in your*

*house. Hereafter in case of fire you will notify telephone operator the ward number in the same manner as previous to the installation of the siren.”*

The Beaufort Gazette made note in the **May 15, 1930** of the quick action of the fire department. *“One of the most creditable and quickest pieces of work ever accomplished by the Beaufort Fire Department was made Wednesday morning. The fire alarm sounded its sign of fire and in less than five minutes the firemen were arriving at the little bungalow on the Point which was covered with smoke and flame. The fire was soon under control. The fire had got considerable headway, but the furniture and front rooms were all saved except from damage by water. The stove room and rear of the house will have to be rebuilt.”*

The **May 29, 1930** printing of The Beaufort Gazette highlighted Fire Chief Ohlandt’s family business. *“W. H. Ohlandt is the third member of his family to operate a grocery store on Bay street and at the same old stand. J. E. Ohlandt was the first, J. H. Ohlandt was the second and W. H. Ohlandt, who is now doing business at the same old stand, is the third member of the family. This firm has always been noted for its high grade staple and fancy groceries. They carry nothing but the best. During the hard struggle of 1926, when the great bank failure hit Beaufort, Mr. Ohlandt had a number of customers who were heavy losers, but he carried them on and let them have groceries, and today, is still carrying several who have never recovered from their losses.”* **Note: It’s always interesting to learn about volunteer firefighters, their work, families, and ethics. Chief Ohlandt and E. A. Ricker of Beaufort were founding members (only 19) in the establishment of the State Firemen’s Association and were exemplary leaders of his day. On May 30, 1930, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organization of the Firemen’s Association, an unveiling of a bronze memorial tablet was**

**placed in the office of Columbia's Chief May...the tablet is now displayed in the conference room of the Association's office.**

Former Beaufort Fire Chief W. H. Ohlandt provided a history lesson about the Washington Fire Engine Company which appeared in The Beaufort Gazette on **June 5, 1930** as part of the program for the S. C. State Firemen's Association Convention held in Beaufort. *"The Washington Fire Engine Company of Beaufort, is one of the oldest volunteer fire fighting companies in the state today. It was organized during the year 1874, and has continued faithfully to serve the citizens of the city. Previous to 1874 the city was protected from fire by a unit of the Fifth Army Corps of the United States Army of Occupation in this section at the time. A special detail from the army corps, training as firemen, supplied with first class fighting apparatus of that period performed the duties now assigned to the members of the local company. It was about the period of 1874 that the army of occupation was withdrawn from Beaufort. As a measure of self-protection and preservation the young men of the city of that time formed a fire fighting company, securing the old apparatus used by the soldiers. It is understood that good records of the early days of the company were kept but these have been destroyed by fire many years ago, possibly at the time of the big fire of 1907. From private records it is known that the following were members of the original company: John Boyce, James Boyce, Joseph Collins, Joseph DuPong, James Friend, J. A. Emmons, William Wilson, Al Williams, J. C. Mayo, Al Thomas, J. H. Clancy, F. W. Scheper, E. A. Scheper, J. E. Ohlandt and Dr. H. M. Stuart."* **Note: A friend of this writer has recently acquired an original "Certificate of Membership" to the Washington Fire Engine Company presented to George Waterhouse (Waterhouse Warf) and signed by John Boyce (mentioned above) as Asst. Foreman on May 1, 1869.**

The article continues....*"From other private records it is understood that the following served as chief of the department from 1874 to date: Dr. H. M. Stuart, James DeVine, John Brodie,--?---McGrath, William Kressell, Sylus Wright, J. H. Harrison, J. N. Wallace, E. W. Bailey, W. L. Shatswell, A. H. Johnson, J. A. Kinghorn, Lon Brooks, William Kinghorn, Dave Mittle, H. T. Danner, Sr., W. H. Ohlandt and H. T. Danner, Jr."*

More history is revealed...*"The original company acquired the old fighting apparatus of the army corps it having been left here when the soldiers were withdrawn. The members had two large hand pumpers which were the pride of the outfit. It is understood that thirty men were required to man the pumps. The old was forced to the new. The company acquired one of the Silsby steamers, which is still in use. The old hand pumpers were abandoned, later being sold for junk at the price of \$50. In addition to the old Silsby steamer the company now boasts of a 750 gallon American LaFrance Combination Hose Wagon Pumper and Chemical, a small hose wagon, several thousand feet of 2 1/2 inch hose and several other modern tools and implements used in fire fighting."*

More insight...*"The members of the company have been forced to fight some very big fires, several of which wrought great damage to property. During the 1875 or 1876 the young company performed great service at Port Royal in saving a large vessel of the Harvey Mills Co. As a reward for their services in salvaging this vessel the owners presented the company with a large sum of money which is known as the Harvey Mills Fund. The interest derived from this fund and a small part of the principal supplemented with funds from the city, have been used to purchase equipment for the company. The greatest of the fires faced by the men of the company was that of 1907 which practically swept the eastern portion of the city. Lon Brooks was chief at the time. More than sixty houses, stores and*

*small buildings were wiped out at that time. Due to the valiant battle by the men the fire was turned from the main business section of Bay street. Several other large fires have given the boys a bad time, but their undying efforts succeeded greatly in holding down the damage wrought. Messrs. E. R. Ricker and W. H. Ohlandt, of the Washington Fire Engine Company were among the charter members of the South Carolina State Firemen's Association. Mr. Ohlandt is a resident and business man of Beaufort; Mr. Ricker died some years ago."*

The Beaufort Gazette, printed on **June 12, 1930**, headline the paper with the following: "State Firemen's Convention Opened Here Monday." The large announcement states "The twenty-fifth annual convention of the South Carolina State Firemen's Association, marking their silver jubilee convened here Monday morning, with the fall of the gavel, at 10:30 o'clock, by President Louis Behrens, of Charleston. Sixty Chiefs, eight-nine delegates and one hundred and five visitors and officials registered at the hour of convening. In calling the convention to order Chief Behrens introduced Rev W. P. Peyton, of Rock Hill, the Chaplain of the Association, who delivered the invocation. Beaufort's Mayor W. R. Bristol was introduced. The members present joined in the singing of 'America,' led by Rivers I. Varn, a member of the Washington Fire Engine Company, of Beaufort. The morning session, which was held in the Community Club, was marked with addresses of welcome, responses, the selection of committees, seating of delegates and depositing of questions in the question box. Hon. Calhoun Thomas, a member of the Washington Fire Engine Company addressed a few words of welcome on behalf of the company. Mr. J. H. (Uncle Jack) Clancey, the only surviving charter member of the Washington Fire Engine Company was presented to the visitors." **Note: Besides taking care of the business of the Association, the convention also held tournaments/competitions among departments desiring to**

**enter. There were motor car races, hand reel contests, grab reel races, and foot races. Prize money amounted up to \$125 for 1<sup>st</sup> prize.**

*“TWO PERSONS DIE IN BEAUFORT FIRE,”* according to the **October 29, 1930** issue of Walterboro’s The Press and Standard. *“Two members of a prominent Augusta, Ga., family who came to the South Carolina coast seeking rest found death today in the flames which destroyed their cottage. The two were Edward Barnes and his sister, Annie Barnes, who was well advanced in years, retired a few months ago after more than forty years’ service with the Augusta Post Office. They rented a cottage a week ago from Miss Mary Rice. Early today Miss Rice heard the cry of ‘fire’ and saw the structure burning. Hours later the two bodies were taken from the cooling ruins. A coroner’s jury which sat at an inquest held by Magistrate L. A. Bette returned a verdict that the two came to their death while sleeping from flames of an unknown origin.”*

A card of thanks for the fire department was shared in the **September 24, 1931** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *“We take this method of thanking the Beaufort Fire Company for the wonderful work they did at the fire in Riverside Candy Kitchen last week, and the saving of our building. We will always feel very grateful to every member of the organization, and also to others who rendered valuable assistance. Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Roberts”*

The Beaufort Gazette announced in the **April 21, 1932** edition of the paper that *“FIRE MADE MANY PEOPLE HOMELESS.”* This headline concerns the fire in Ridgeland. *“The fire which destroyed the big lumber plant in Ridgeland last Wednesday night, was a heavy blow to the people of that thriving little city. Many people are out of work from the effects, while thousands of dollars are lost to the owners. A call was sent from Ridgeland to Savannah and Beaufort for*

assistance.” It is reported that the Savannah Fire Department sent seven men and two fire engines at 9:35 Wednesday night and Chief Harry Danner of Beaufort sent nine firemen and the LaFrance fire truck at 10 o’clock Wednesday night.

*“LETTER FROM THE MAYOR OF RIDGELAND,”* was included in the **May 5, 1932** Beaufort Gazelle. *“Honorable Sir...The willingness of one community to respond to the needs of another is one of the best sings of the times. Your hearty and efficient response to our urgent need for help in our recent disastrous fire is one thing we not only appreciate but are proud of. Had it not been for your generosity our little town would probably have been wiped out and our distress and loss unbearable. Please hand to your Fire Department the enclosed check as a small token of our appreciation for their prompt and efficient help and be assured we shall always deem it a privilege to help you in any way we possibly can. Respectfully, S. W. Ellis, Intendent, Town of Ridgeland, S. C.”* A copy was sent to Mr. Harry Danner, Chief, Beaufort Fire Department.

In the **November 17, 1932** copy of The Beaufort Gazette, an article appeared which revealed that the Beaufort Fire Department had a busy week. *“Too much praise cannot be given to Beaufort Fire Department for work they accomplished here in the past few days. It has been some time since the old siren had sounded a warning that fire had been discovered, but it broke loose last week for the first fire. On Thursday the alarm was given and the fire was at the warehouse and office of the Beaufort-Savannah Line, which did little damage, but the firemen were quickly on the job. Saturday the home of Mr. C. E. Blume was discovered on fire, which had made a good start, as the wind was blowing pretty strong. The boys were soon on the scene; the furniture was carried to safety and the fire soon under control. Monday afternoon the home of Policeman W. W. Brown*

*caught fire but was quickly put under control by the members of the company, but still the room in which the fire started was damaged.”*

*“FIREMEN NOW HAVE NEW MEETING HALL,” is the caption in the **May 18, 1933** run of The Beaufort Gazette. “The Beaufort Fire Department now has a beautiful hall which has just been completed which is located in the building where all trucks and engines are kept. The work was done by R. F. C. labor. The club room is second story of the building which was originally a one-story building. The second was made by placing of timbers for the floor; a stairway was built on the inside and nice porch has also been built in front of the hall. Large sliding windows in the rear and door with windows in front will furnish plenty of ventilation to keep it cool and pleasant at all times. All meetings will be held by the firemen in this hall and is large enough for their banquets which they have during the year.”*

The Beaufort Gazette, dated **December 21, 1933**, reported that the firemen held their annual dinner at the Gold Eagle Tavern. *“One of the finest social events of the season was that of the annual Firemen Dinner, served at the Gold Eagle Tavern Friday evening under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Wilder. The members of Washington Fire Engine Company, Beaufort’s volunteer fire-fighters, look with pleasure each year to the annual gathering made possible by friends of the ‘boys.’ The toastmaster of the evening was Mr. Calhoun Thomas, secretary of the company. In his able and capable manner he presided over the festivities. During the evening short talks were made. Fire Chief H. T. Danner spoke briefly of the work by the company during the past year. Mr. W. H. Ohlandt, one of the surviving charter members of the State Firemen’s Association, and for a long time a member of the local company, spoke of the sacrifices made by the ‘boys.’ Mr. Calhoun Thomas called to the attention of the gathering the absence of a charter member of the company and of the State Association, Mr. J. H. ‘Uncle Jack’*

*Clancey. A letter from Mr. Ignatius Duane was read advising of his resignation as a member of the company because he will shortly leave Beaufort. The toastmaster expressed the regrets of the company to lose this fellow member, and promised that though he may go far places he will ever be remembered by the boys who shall miss him and his inimitable wit. The firemen, and their guests, assembled in the Tavern next where they enjoyed themselves immensely as a half dozen new members were put through a prescribed initiation. The younger couples enjoyed several hours of dancing, music being furnished by the members of the Marine orchestra from Parris Island.”* **Note: Amazingly this writer discovered he worked with Ignatius “Iggie” Duane in 1973-1975 at the Office of State Fire Marshal where we were Deputy State Fire Marshals. I never knew he had served as a volunteer with the Washington Fire Engine Company. He is fondly remembered for his keen wit and personality.**

Still another brief note of thank you appeared in the **August 23, 1934** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *“Mr. Fred Hudelmeir, policeman of Port Royal, stated that the city officials and people of Port Royal expressed their appreciation to the Beaufort Fire Department for their quick response at a small fire in their town on Wednesday afternoon. He said that in ten minutes from the time the alarm was sent to Beaufort, the members and machine were on the spot. The fire was soon out in a residence and too much praise could not be given to the boys from Beaufort.”*

The Beaufort Gazette posted on **November 21, 1935** about a meeting of the Washington Fire Engine Company. *“One of the most interesting meetings held in a long time by the members of the Washington Fire Engine Company of Beaufort was that special meeting of Thursday evening. This meeting was held in the club rooms of the company in the fire house. Foreman Roy Fyfe presided,*

*and stated that the purpose of the special meeting was to honor the living past chiefs by presenting to them certificates as evidence of their official connection with the company, and that they might have some record to keep for future reference of having served in the capacity as chief. Mr. Calhoun Thomas, secretary of the company, made the presentation, with appropriate remarks to the following past chiefs, to-wit: J. A. Kinghorn, W. H. Ohlandt, D. Mittle, W. L. Shatswell and G. W. Kinghorn. To each was also presented a small silver badge with the emblem of the company.”*

The article continues...”Chief Harry Danner spoke of the splendid record of the company, the low fire loss, and the result that fire insurance companies speak with praise of Beaufort and its company. Mr. Thomas called to the attention of the group that the Beaufort company had been honored by the State Firemen’s Association by electing Chief Harry Danner as one of the three members of the State Firemen’s Advisory Committee.”

The Beaufort Gazette again reported on **January 2, 1936** that “*Mr. F. W. Scheper, Sr., of Port Royal, says that he cannot express his appreciation too highly to the members of the Beaufort Fire Department for the assistance they rendered to the people of Port Royal on Tuesday morning, December 24, when the house which was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. G. P. Gay was destroyed by fire. The Beaufort boys responded to the call and rendered all assistance possible in trying to save the house, but were handicapped by not being able to get heavy streams of water until the house was practically gone, but they did save most of the household goods and other building adjoining.*”

The funeral services for a former Beaufort Fire Chief were announced in the **January 16, 1936** publishing of the Beaufort Gazette. “*Funeral services for Mr. W. H. Ohlandt, who died in a*

*Savannah hospital last Friday (Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>) afternoon, were held at St. Helena's Episcopal Church Saturday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock. Mr. Ohlandt had been ill only a short time and his death came as a surprise to his many friends. Mr. Ohlandt was born in Beaufort and had lived all of his life here. He identified himself with the business and religious life of the town...He was a Mason and Shriner and past chief of the Beaufort Fire Department, which office he held for many years."*

The Beaufort Gazette posted on **June 17, 1937** that "*Chief Harry Danner and family left Wednesday afternoon to attend the state Firemen's Convention which convened in Columbia today. Mr. and Mrs. Calhoun Thomas and children went up Sunday. Mr. Danner and Mr. Thomas are representatives from Beaufort fire department."*

A brief notice was provided in the **September 1, 1938** edition of The Beaufort Gazette telling of a fire in The Sea Island Hotel. "*The Sea Island Hotel, one of Beaufort's old landmarks caught fire Wednesday night about eight o'clock in the roof of the building but by good work of the Beaufort Fire Department, the building was saved except damage to the roof. The Hotel is operated by Mr. and Mrs. N. M. Polk. At no time was the guests of the hotel in any danger and things soon quieted down. We could not learn the cost of damage from the fire and was heard."*

"*Beaufort Fire Company Elects New Officers,*" read the caption in the **December 6, 1938** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. "*New officers of the Washington Fire Engine company were elected at the meeting of the company Tuesday night: Roy W. Fyfe, foremen; W. W. Aimar, vice-foreman; Calhoun Thomas, secretary; W. E. Nelson, assistant secretary and treasurer. The following other officials were nominated and will be recommended to the city council: Harry T.*

*Danner, fire chief; R. P. Lubkin, first assistant chief; Paul Schwartz, second assistant chief; and C. C. Haigh, chief engineer.”*

The Beaufort Gazette announced an “**AIR RAID WARNING**” for the city in the **December 18, 1941** paper. “*One continuous unbroken blast of the fire siren followed immediately by the ringing of church bells and the sounding of the fire truck sirens. During the night all street lights will be extinguished. All clear signal will be: Continuous ringing of the fire bell for at least one minute. What to do: Extinguish all lights in your home; Stay where you are...if in your car park immediately, put out all lights and seek shelter; Do not under any conditions follow a fire truck to the scene of a call; Don’t get excited. A practice alarm will be held Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. Hours unknown.”*

For unknown reason very little is written about the fire at the Gold Eagle Tavern on **January 29, 1942**. The Gold Eagle Tavern was located on the site of the home of William Henry DeSaussure (at the dead end of Bay Street) who was appointed by President George Washington in 1794 to serve as the second Director of the U. S. Mint. According to local lore, Mr. DeSaussure developed the idea of the Revolutionary “gold eagle dollar,” struck in 1795, while he was living in the home. The home is said to have been built around 1770. In the late 1920s, Kate Gleason, a business entrepreneur and developer, remodeled the old structure and made it into a popular hotel and restaurant. Gleason added a unique round tower which promoted its character as a desirable place for locals as well as many celebrities and famous people, ie. Clark Gable. After the fire in 1942, the structure was rebuilt and continued until it was demolished in the 1960s.

“**BANQUET GIVEN MEMBERS,**” featured the caption in the **April 2, 1942** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. “*Tuesday evening, half a*

*hundred members of the Washington Fire Engine Company were the guest of Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Wilder, owners of the Gold Eagle Tavern as their dinner guest. The members enjoyed a typical Gold Eagle dinner. January 29, 1942, fire materially damaged the old or back part of the Gold Eagle Tavern. Splendid work on the part of the members of Beaufort's volunteer fire department saved the famous hotel from complete destruction. Work has already started on rebuilding that part destroyed. The main or central part of the Tavern was not damaged by the fire. As a token of appreciation to the members of the Washington Fire Engine Company for their good work Mr. and Mrs. Wilder tendered this splendid dinner."*

*"FIREMEN WILL ACCEPT ANY GIFTS," read the caption on page 1 of The Beaufort Gazette, dated **April 30, 1942**. "The headquarters for the Beaufort Fire Department upstairs over the engine department have been cleaned up and remodeled, and the members state that anyone who has chairs, tables or any piece of furniture that will add to the comfort of the boys, will be appreciated by them as they have no money to buy the things that will help to make a neat appearance in the hall and at the same time be comfortable."*

The **March 23, 1945** edition of The Beaufort Gazette reported that *"Beaufort suffered the worst fire since 1925 Tuesday morning when that section of West Street between Bay Street and Port Republic as far south as Willie Levin's law office was entirely destroyed by flames. The old Ricker home located on the Northwest corner of West and Port Republic Streets was also consumed by the blaze. The fire was discovered and alarm given at 4:45 a.m. and had gained such headway before it was discovered that it was impossible to save the buildings. The fire began at the warehouse owned by Mr. Morris Rosenthal. The cause of the fire has not been established. It was the great heat that prevented the volunteer firemen, military personnel and other workers from adequately combatting the*

*flames. Only seven fires have occurred in Beaufort since January 1 of this year. This fire is said to be the worst one since 1925 when the Old River View burned.”*

According to The Beaufort Gazette on **September 17, 1948**, *“Harry T. Danner, chief of the Beaufort fire department, has been named electrical inspector for the city, under provisions of an electrical code recently passed by city council.”*

The **June 2, 1949** printing of The Beaufort Gazette said *“The Beaufort Hotel, located on Port Republic Street, suffered damages from fire on approximately \$2,500 on Wednesday morning of last week. It is thought to have been caused when a bed was ignited from a cigarette in the hands of a woman guest. The Beaufort Fire Department responded quickly to the call. The owner was particularly appreciative of the manner in which she said they covered the furniture for its protection against water damage. The damage was confined to the attic and upper story.”*

On **December 8, 1949**, The Beaufort Gazette noted *“The effectiveness of the Beaufort Fire Department’s new alarm system, which operates through the local telephone exchange, was demonstrated last Sunday morning when fire damaged the home of Eloise Kennedy located at the corner of Wilmington and Boundary Streets. Although the customary siren signal was not sounded, approximately 15 firemen answered the call which came about 5:30 A.M. The new system consists of two ‘crash alarms’ installed by the Central Carolina Telephone Company, for use by the fire department, which enable the operator on duty to contact as many as 20 firemen by telephone in the same length of time it would take to complete two ordinary calls.”*

The Beaufort Gazette published on **March 16, 1950** the account of a fire at the Mather School. *“Parris Island and Naval Hospital fire departments answered an emergency call from the Beaufort Fire Department last Friday and for 2 and one half hours battled the blaze which destroyed a dormitory building of the Mather School in Beaufort. After trying for an hour to bring the flames under control, the Beaufort Fire Department sounded the call for help. It was answered by two engine companies from Parris Island and one from the Naval Hospital, from which an ambulance was also dispatched. Upon arrival at the scene, the water supply problem became extremely acute because the 6 inch city main could not carry enough water to supply all engine companies.”* **Note: To provide the amount of water necessary, the visiting firemen had to lay 3,050 ft. of 2 ½” hose to the Beaufort River. A Parris Island fire truck then relay pumped more than 105,000 gallons from the river to the Recruit Depot and the Naval Hospital engine companies combating the blazing inferno.** *“Due to the headway made by the fire engulfing the interior of the building, the combined effort of the three fire departments was unable to prevent the two story brick structure from being completely gutted by the fire.”*

*“BEAUFORT FIRE COMPANY SERVES WITH EFFICIENCY,”* reads the heading on **July 6, 1950** of The Beaufort Gazette. *“Through improved methods of fighting fire, frequent drills and use of special equipment, the efficiency of the Beaufort Fire Company has been considerably increased, and remarkable interest in its work has been noted. Members of the Company express their interest by their attendance at the meetings and at fires. The long waiting-list of applicants is evidence of the feelings of those not connected with it. The average attendance of Department members at fires is 18. Everyone having a telephone in or near his home makes the alarm alert. Note: The fire department answered 75 calls during the year (1949-1950).*

The article continues by listing the members in the respective positions: *“Fire Chief H. T. Danner; Assistant Chief, J. W. Logan, Jr.; Chief Engineer, Herbert Bunton; and Assistant Engineer, Sim Beverly; Foreman, Elbert L. Sweat; Assistant Foreman, W. D. Blackmon; Secretary, Calhoun Thomas; and Treasurer, W. E. Nelson. Active members: F. V. Harvey, J. W. Logan, Jr., A. B. Lubkin, Allan Mustard, E. L. Sweat, Calhoun Thomas, H. T. Danner, W. D. Blackmon, Marion Bowers, Herbert Bunton, Sim Beverly, Joe Kearse, H. M. Williams, Jake Terry, Paul Schwartz, Wilson Anderson, Riddick Martin, M. F. Miller, Jr., Harold Blocker, Henry Steinmeyer, J. P. Darby, and V. L. Davis.”*

Honorary and Life Members: *“Roy W. Fyfe, Sr., G. W. Kinghorn, E. B. Rogers, R. W. Cohen, A. O. Christensen, Sam Levin, C. C. Haigh, W. J. Dvane, Arthur Barnwell, W. E. Nelson, J. W. Logan, Sr., Bob Jones, C. H. Von Harten, A. D. Coclin, Irby Gunter, and W. L. Carson.”*

On **May 31, 1951**, The Beaufort Gazette printed *“Fire destroyed the projector room and a large quantity of film and equipment at the Beaufort Drive-In Theatre Saturday night, May 26. Damage was estimated by Fire Chief J. W. Logan, Jr., as between six and seven thousand dollars, with not insurance. Although outside of the city limits, the Beaufort Fire Company answered the call about 11:30 p.m. and confined the flames to the projector house. The fire started during the last show when some film caught fire.”*

The Beaufort Gazette, on **August 21, 1952**, reported *“Fire of as yet undetermined origin early last Thursday morning completely destroyed the unfinished home of Harold E. Trask, which was under construction on South Hermitage Road, Battery Creek. The house, being built of old brick in the French Provincial architecture at an estimated cost of \$40,000 to \$45,000, was about 80 per cent*

*complete. The loss was understood to be covered by insurance. It was the second new, unoccupied home to burn here in recent weeks, the other being a home in Beaufort Shores.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted in the **September 25, 1952** edition that *“Sterling Harris, president of Blue Channel Corporation, said this week that ‘full credit’ should be given Roy Fyfe, who had been with the firm since it started operations in Beaufort in 1938, for the development and construction of a new oyster shucking machine now in operation at the firm’s Port Royal plant. Mr. Fyfe’s skill, imagination and efforts have made it possible. Mr. Fyfe has been active in various civic affairs, especially with the Beaufort Fire Department of which he has been a member for over 20 years.”*

The caption on the front page of The Beaufort Gazette, dated **November 13, 1952**, read *“FIREMEN’S BALL, TOY DRIVE ASSURE BRIGHT CHRISTMAS FOR NEEDY.”* *“Beaufort’s first annual firemen’s ball and the toy collection and repair program sponsored by the local firemen and Boy Scouts are expected to bring cheer to the unfortunate children of this area come Christmas.”*

The State newspaper printed on **September 14, 1953** that *“Howard Hall at Mather School caught fire Saturday night. No one was injured and the fire department’s quick response limited damages to charred wood work, walls and floor on the second floor, and water damage to floors and equipment. A grand piano was saved.”*

*“Ed Beamer, 51, resident of Frogmore, was burned to death when his home was destroyed by fire last Saturday night,”* reported in The Beaufort Gazette on **December 15, 1955**. *“Beamer’s mother was burned to death at the same house last year when she fell head first into the stove apparently as the result of a heart attack. The woman’s burning clothing set fire to the room at the time and the*

*inside of the house was charred but the building was saved. Beamer's wife had gone to a neighbor's house about 7 o'clock and looking towards her home she saw that it was in flames. Carried to the Lamar general store at Frogmore, she gave the alarm. Beaufort Fire Department responded quickly but arrived too late to save the house, which was 10 miles from Beaufort. Beamer's wife said her husband was having trouble with their wood stove. The coroner surmised that Beamer may have used kerosene to stimulate the stove, resulting in an explosion."*

The Beaufort Gazette posted on **December 22, 1955** that *"The Beaufort Fire Department was unusually busy during the past week and Fire Chief J. W. Logan, Jr., yesterday urged extra caution during the Christmas season while Christmas trees and ornaments are being used. Considerable damage was done to the home of Norman Bruin, at 1408 Green Street, on Tuesday when a fire resulted from an improperly installed heater flue. Other calls for the week were as washing machine fire, chimney fire, trash fire, overheated heater, and a truck crash."*

The Beaufort Gazette of **December 13, 1956** reported *"A fire of undermined origin, at the rear of the A&P store, was extinguished within about 29 minutes Tuesday evening by the fire department. The fire occurred in a small shed used by the store for the storage of empty cartons and paper. Officials of the fire department reported that this was the third or fourth time they had been called for similar fires since occupancy by the A&P of its present building. Only slight damage to the shed was reported."*

The **February 14, 1957** edition of The Beaufort Gazette in the comments section of the paper that *"It was indeed a sight to see last week when three Beaufort Fire Department engines, two from the Washington Fire Engine Co. and one from the Pioneer Fire*

*Company roared to the corner of Duke and Charles Street to put out the big fire—and one fireman came lightly from the house carrying the fire in one hand—a pot of burning chicken.”* **Note: A January 24<sup>th</sup> article said “The Pioneer Fire Engine Co., located on Prince Street is possibly one of the oldest Negro fire companies in existence in our state. An interesting point is the fact that all ladder work is done by the Pioneer firemen,”** according to J. W. Logan, Fire Chief over both fire companies.

Beaufort Gazette printed on **January 2, 1958** reported that “An early morning fire last Saturday completely destroyed two buildings at the corner of North and Charles Streets. Destroyed in the blaze, first reported at 5:00 a.m. and finally extinguished two hours later, was the commercial building at 416 Charles occupied by Hendricks Furniture Company and the two-story residence at 1006 North Street, owned by J. H. Williamson and occupied at the time by Mr. and Mrs. Henderson Carruthers and their son. The Carruthers narrowly escaped when they were awakened by Joe Linen, city police officer, who spotted the fire while on his way toward the police station. He roused the occupants of the house and then reported to the station, whence the fire alarm was turned in.”

The **March 6, 1958** printing of The Beaufort Gazette notified subscribers that “*approximately three weeks will be required to repair the damage done by last Friday’s fire to the Lady’s Island bridge, it was estimated yesterday by G. H. Rowe, highway department electrician, during which time it will be manually operated. A mid-morning fire, thought to have been caused either by the wiring system or an oil burning heater, destroyed the cab in the center of the bridge occupied by the bridge operators and did extensive damage to the electrical equipment.*”

*“COURSE IN FIRE FIGHTING COMPLETED BY BEAUFORT VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT.,”* read the caption in the **April 10, 1958** printing of The Beaufort Gazette. *“A five night instruction course in fire fighting was given members of the Beaufort volunteer fire department, known as the Washington Fire Engine Company. H. B. Wells, state fire instructor with the South Carolina Firemen’s Association and the Vocational and Trade Department was the instructor of the three-hour night courses. Friday certificates were presented to the department members who attended four out of five lectures. Mr. Wells presented a certificate to the department which was accepted by C. C. Haigh, fire chief.”* **Note: H. B. Wells was hired by the S. C. State Firemen’s Association in 1954 and traveled the state teaching basic firefighting to large and small departments. He often journeyed to departments with a small camper to stay in while away from home. The State Association started statewide training in 1935 before there was a State Fire Academy. Mr. Wells was a skilled and motivating instructor who taught thousands of firefighters the essentials at a time when many fire departments, especially volunteers, had no standardized training opportunities. Mr. Wells retired in 1966.**

It was announced that *“A resuscitator, purchased by the Beaufort Jr. Chamber of Commerce, has been donated to the Beaufort fire department and will accompany the fire truck on all fire calls in the future. The Beaufort Gazette reported this on **May 14, 1958**.* Additionally, *“The resuscitator was described as effective in encouraging recovery of victims of smoke suffocation, electric shock, heart failure, poisoning with fumes or chemicals, industrial accidents, gas or drug poisoning, asphyxia of new born babies and others needing artificial respiration.”*

*“Okeetee Club Destroyed By Early Morning Blaze,”* read the story in The Beaufort Gazette, dated **December 4, 1958**. *“Fire destroyed the*

*Okeetee Clubhouse early Thursday morning, November 20, despite the concerted efforts of firemen who sped to the blaze from Beaufort, Ridgeland and Hardeeville. The 100-room lodge was owned by a group of wealthy sportsmen from New York and New Jersey, including Andrew Mellon. It was founded in 1894 and membership is inherited.”*

Sad news in The Beaufort Gazette on **January 22, 1959**. *“Fire claimed its third victim in less than three weeks here Saturday night when John Boykin, 22-year-old, construction worker, died in the charred ruins of his apartment at 911 Duke St. A 3-year-old and an aged woman, perished in similar tragedies in the same area on Dec. 30 and Dec. 31. Fire Chief C. C. Haigh said all three deaths were caused by wick-type heaters or sheet iron heaters, already outlawed in major cities of this area.”*

A City of Beaufort organization chart appeared in the **April 30, 1959** edition of the paper. Listed below are members of the Pioneer Fire Co.: *“George Lawton, Israel Dottery, Harold Brown, Sam Williams, George Morrall, Sam Simmons, Medicus Green, Al Schencks, James Smalls, Sam Goodwater, Franklin Middleton, Morris Myers, John Pete, Tom Meyers.”* The article continues by listing the member names of the Washington Fire Engine Co.: *“Clarence C. Haigh, Chief; Paul Schwatz, Asst. Chief; J. P. Darby, Foreman; J. W. Logan, Jr., Asst. Foreman; Wilson Anderson, Chief Engineer; V L. Davis, Asst. Engineer; Julian Levin, Sect; John M. Griffin, Treas.; Laurie Atkins, Charles Aimar, Sims Beverly, Marion Bowers, Herbert Bunton, G. H. Campbell, Harry Connelly, Talmadge Griffin, John Hariott, Joseph Lopatka, Dick Hoog, Waldo Martin, H. L. Taylor, Al Wilhelm, Joe Waters, Mills Black, Clayton Cooler, Fred Horton, Legree Breland.”*

*“A warning to merchants and other advertisers,”* was issued in The Beaufort Gazette in the **January 21, 1960** printing of the paper. *“A warning was given concerning an organization calling itself The S. C. Firemen’s Directory this week by Beaufort Fire Chief C. C. Haigh. Haigh said he was acting at the request of David H. Gillam, Jr., secretary-treasurer of the S. C. State Firemen’s Association. Gillam notified Haigh that an investigation of the proposed directory indicated that it was not a legitimate undertaking. Gillam said the matter is now under investigation by postal authorities.”*

The Beaufort Gazette reported on **December 22, 1960** that *“Death marred the Christmas season here yesterday morning when postal employee Clifford Henderson, 36, suffocated in his burning home at 103 Pine Cove. Firemen and police found his body on the floor within three feet of the front door when they burst into the house shortly after neighbors turned in the alarm at 5 a.m. He was alone in the house. Fire Chief C. C. Haigh said the blaze apparently started in a bedroom.”*

In the editorial section of The Beaufort Gazette on **September 20, 1962**, a correspondent to the paper wrote the following description of the Beaufort Fire Department. *“Beaufort’s Fire Dept. is a strictly volunteer organization comprised of the Washington Fire Engine Co. and the Pioneer (colored) Co. When a fire is reported, the dispatcher at the Police Station punches a button that rings 30 telephones simultaneously. Twenty-seven of these are our citizens who have taken on the extra job of protecting our homes and property. They are trained—regular monthly drills and special instruction—and ready at the first ring. According to Fire Chief “Chink” Haigh, average attendance at a fire is 17.5 firemen. That last fraction must be the fellow who cranks the siren.”*

The article continues, *“To list the professions of the fire fighters is like counting buttons on a boy’s shirt—‘doctor, lawyer, Indian Chief’. Proof that it is considered an honor and a privilege to belong to the force is found in the fact that usually there are more applications than vacancies. Other than the Chief (Fire, not Indian) those high up on the ladder are Assistant Chief Jim Darby, Foreman Jay Logan, Assistant Foreman Wilson Anderson, Engineer Sim Beverly, Assistant Engineer John Harriott, Secretary Waldo Martin and Treasurer John Griffin.”*

Additional information provides insight... *“Equipment of the Department includes a 1955 American LaFrance with a 750 gallon per minute pumper, a 1940 Ford American LaFrance that pumps 500 gallons per minute, a 1941 International crash truck that carries its own water supply, a 1940 Dodge fire truck, and the 1924 parade truck that is still on active duty. On order for fall delivery is a new fire truck that carries a 500 gallon water tank. City taxes pay for the equipment. Consequently when the fire fighters answer a County call they are required to charge a fee. The City also pays the Fire Dept. \$10 for every fire—certainly not enough to cause them to turn arsonists. At the end of the year the sum is divided among the Volunteers according to a point system. The man who got to the most fires the fastest and fought the most diligently gets the better booty. Chief Haigh has headed the Dept. for the past five years. Worst fire in his memory, dollars, cents, and weather wise, was the Mather School blaze some 10 years ago.”*

According to The Beaufort Gazette on **December 20, 1962**, *“J. W. Logan, Jr., city water superintendent, has been named chief, succeeding C. C. Haigh, by city council who has resigned effective January 1 in order to devote full time to his new duties as county road supervisor. Naming of Mr. Logan to the post was in the form of council approval of an earlier action by the Washington Fire Engine*

*Company, whose members had elected him for consideration as a successor to Chief Haigh. Mr. Logan has been a volunteer fireman for 29 years and Mr. Haigh, who will continue as a member of the company, has been fire chief for six consecutive one-year terms.”*

The Beaufort Gazette announced on **June 13, 1963** that “*James W. Logan, Jr., 48, died unexpectedly Saturday while laying pipe for a water line at Bon Aire Estates. Mr. Logan was Chief of the Beaufort Fire Department for the last six years.*” **Note: According to the previous article, Chief Logan’s tenure as Chief is in error.**

*“A big brush fire on Lady’s Island Saturday afternoon”* was reported in The Beaufort Gazette on **December 12, 1963**. *“The fire required the fire fighting abilities of the Beaufort Fire Department, the Forestry Department, and six teen-agers from Beaufort. A woman was burning trash and lost control of the blaze, which threatened to destroy six houses.”*

A brief notice appeared in The Beaufort Gazette on **July 11, 1963** about a fire chief’s appointment. *“Mr. J. W. Logan retired as the superintendent of the water department and chief of the fire department. Jim Darby has been approved as the new fire chief by the council. Mr. Darby moved up from assistant chief.”*

The **May 21, 1964** edition of The Beaufort Gazette states *“Countywide Controversy Arises Over Referendum.”* The lengthy article continues about *“A rural fire district referendum, originally intended to offer fire protection to outlying districts, has mushroomed into one of the most controversial issues ever to be put before voters in Beaufort County. Chief opposition to the plan stems from several articles in the bill giving broad powers of taxation to a group of commissioners not elected by the voters. The act goes*

*before the people of Beaufort County in a referendum in the June 9 Democrat primary.”*

The Beaufort Gazette announced on **October 8, 1964** that “A *lifetime pact, in conjunction with National Fire Prevention Week, was signed here by Air Station Commanding Officer, Col. Thomas V. Murto, Jr., and F. W. Schepe, Mayor of Beaufort. The Mutual Fire Fighting Assistance Agreement between the Air Station and the City of Beaufort provides additional ‘Fire Insurance’ for the Air Station and Beaufort.*” The article noted that Beaufort Fire Chief James P. Darby was also on hand for the signing. **Note: A similar agreement was signed in February 1963 with the Naval Hospital and Port Royal as well as Beaufort.**

The **January 20, 1966** issue of The Beaufort Gazette wrote “A *raging fire swept through a small frame house here Monday night taking the lives of two persons. Firemen from the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department answered the call about 8:45 p.m. Monday. When they reached the Ribaut Road dwelling near the city limits flames already had engulfed the building and walls were caving in. Two trucks were dispatched. Chief James P. Darby said there was no chance of saving either of the two victims or the house. He said the fire apparently started when a fuel oil stove became overheated and exploded.*”

A brief mentioned of a spectacular fire was found in The Beaufort Gazette of **February 23, 1967**. “*Members of the Beaufort Fire Department were seen carrying a hose to the second floor of a multifamily dwelling at 1403 Duke Street during a spectacular fire early Saturday afternoon. The blaze, which was visible as far away as the Lady’s Island airfield, was confined to the upper floor of the building by the quick action of men and trucks of the Beaufort*

*Volunteer Fire Department and the Pioneer Fire Department. The blaze was apparently caused by a fuel oil heater.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted on **February 15, 1968** that *“Two private dwellings were completely destroyed by fire and a third suffered heavy damage this week, according to Beaufort Fire Chief James Darby. Early Sunday morning a single story frame house owned by Nathaniel Johnson of Lands End burned. No determination has been made as to the cause of the blaze. Another single frame house at Rt. 1 Dulamo Rd. in Frogmore burned at 1:30 a.m. Monday. Chief Darby said the blaze was believed to be caused by a wick type oil heater.”*

*“Raging Fire Claims \$90,000 In Damages,”* was the caption in The Beaufort Gazette paper on **May 16, 1968**. *“Last Thursday night fire raged through the premises of Mitchell Brothers Contractors and the Beaufort Supply Company...the largest blaze in Beaufort in over three years. The alarm was given at 9:30 p.m. and although fire department trucks were on the scene promptly the fire was blazing with such fury that by the time it could be controlled and put out the destruction to the facilities was almost complete. Fire Chief Jim Darby said the fire must have been smoldering for some time by the way it was burning when his men arrived on the scene. In an investigation Friday SLED agents reported that no evidence of arson could be found.”*

In the same article, it is reported that *“The Beaufort County Courthouse escaped serious damage from an electrical fire due to the quick action of the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department May 8<sup>th</sup>. Fire Chief Darby reported firemen quickly found access to the deserted attic where the fire was located and extinguished the blaze in short order. Chief Darby stated it was fortunate the fire had been discovered early, as it was nearly closing time in the courthouse, if left undetected for much longer a major fire could have resulted.”*

The Beaufort Gazette noted on **May 23, 1968** that *“A midnight blaze at the former Teacherage on Bay Street Tuesday caused extensive damage to the rear of the Board of Education’s building. Beaufort Volunteer Fire Chief Jim Darby said it appeared that water and smoke damage as well as fire damage was quite extensive. Chief Darby stated arson was suspected, probably by throwing gasoline on the building. SLED agents would be here to investigate the cause of the blaze.”*

The **September 19, 1968** edition of The Beaufort Gazette noted *“A fire, presumably started by a kerosene cook stove, partially destroyed the home of Mary Harris in the 1200 block of Green Street. Beaufort Volunteer Fire Chief Jim Darby said the woman told us she put something on the stove to cook and went next door to visit and the next thing she knew the house was on fire. Chief Darby warned the public that kerosene cook stoves are very dangerous, especially the ones with the bottle that sits next to the cooking unit. These stoves become a real menace when people mix gasoline with the kerosene.”*

The Beaufort Gazette printed on **December 19, 1968** that *“Critically injured in a fire last Saturday was 9-year old James Smalls Cartright of 1002 Church Street. According to investigating officers, young Cartright had poured kerosene into a hot wood stove and his clothing caught fire from the resulting explosion. The youth then ran to his mother, Mrs. Lillian Cartright, who also had her clothing set ablaze when she tried to extinguish her son’s burning garments. Both victims were taken to the emergency room of Beaufort Memorial Hospital. The boy was later transferred to a Charleston hospital where his condition was listed as critical.”*

*“Blaze Destroys Two Local Firms,” declares an article in The Beaufort Gazette on **April 3, 1969**. “A fire Sunday which completely gutted a building on Bay Street containing two businesses and costing an estimated \$100,000 was reminiscent of a blaze in exactly the same spot nearly 50 years ago. According to a local source that fire occurred about 1922 and destroyed a two-story building on the same site as the building containing the Lamp Post Restaurant and Mickey’s Bootery Shoe Store. Firemen and more than 200 volunteers battled Sunday’s blaze for more than two hours. There was the continuous danger during the fire that it might spread throughout the business district, Beaufort Fire Chief John Harriott said.”*

Walterboro’s newspaper, The Press and Standard, printed on **September 4, 1969** that *“A Beaufort couple was found dead in their fire-gutted home shortly after 5:30 a.m. Friday by members of the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department. Firemen found the body of George Duffie Kindard, 46, crouched in the bathtub and his wife’s body was on the floor of the bedroom.”*

The Beaufort Gazette submitted a lengthy article about the Beaufort Fire Department and its status in the **March 5, 1970** edition of the paper. *“The Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department, a division of the city’s department of public safety, is made up of 35 volunteers and four paid members. Chief of the department is James Hariott. The Beaufort Fire Department has four pumper trucks and one hose and ladder truck which is operated by the Pioneer Volunteer Fire Department located on Prince Street. It is the duty of the chief to supervise the apparatus and to see that the equipment is in good repair. The chief inspects, not less than once every three months, each fire company. The assistant fire chief is Dick Hogg whose duty is to aid the chief. There are six other officers who are elected by the members of the department.”*

The article continues, *“It is the duty of the company foreman to carry out the orders of the chief; to command their respective companies; to have custody of the apparatus and to report any acts of insubordination by any member of the companies. It is the duty of the company engineer to keep his fire engine, tools and other implements in good condition for immediate use. He must also attend all fires or supply a substitute, approved by the chief. Two of the members are on duty 24 hours a day to answer all fire alarms.”*

Explanation of the fire alarm system is said to be *“one of the best systems in the state. When a fire is reported, the radio dispatcher in the police station answers the phone which is also monitored by the firemen on duty at the fire station. The dispatcher immediately sounds the crash alarm—a warning system connected to each fireman’s home phone. The chief explained that the volunteer firemen are divided into two platoons. When the fire is reported, the platoon nearest the fire immediately goes to the fire while the other platoon reports directly to the fire station. The chief added that a fire truck is always on duty in case another fire is reported at the same time.”*

In conclusion to the article, Chief Harriott explains *“Property has already been purchased for a new fire substation on Mossy Oaks Road and construction is expected to begin in the near future. The Pioneer Fire Department on Prince Street consists of 14 members who assist the Beaufort Fire Department at many emergencies. President of the Pioneer department is Sam Goodwater. Medicus Green is the Chief and Joseph B. Linnen is the assistant chief. Drivers of the hook and ladder truck are Linnen, Greene, Steven Brown and Charles Middleton. Assistant Chief Linnen explained their main duties are to connect the fire hoses to the hydrants and to see that the hoses are properly laid.”*

According to The Beaufort Gazette, dated **April 8, 1970**, *“Sometime Sunday morning the top floor of the L. Schoenberg and Sons Lumber Co. on Prince Street was extensively damaged by fire. The blaze was spotted by two passer-bys about 3:10 Sunday morning. An attempt was made by the pair to rescue a man trapped inside but the two were overcome by smoke. Police officer Joe Lennin arrived on the scene minutes later and brought the two to safety. The elderly man trapped upstairs jumped from the second story window and was taken to the Naval Hospital.”*

The **July 2, 1970** edition of The Beaufort Gazette displayed a photo of the groundbreaking for a new fire station. It showed Beaufort Fire Chief John H. Harriott putting his foot to the shovel during the ceremonies for the new fire station on Mossy Oaks Road. The building is expected to be completed in about three months.

The Beaufort Gazette noted on **August 20, 1970** that *“City firemen were called to the Robert Smalls school about 9 p.m. Thursday and found a blaze in one of the buildings. Fire Chief John Harriott said he believes it was a definite case of arson. He said firemen found a matchbook on the floor beside a lawnmower with the gas cap removed. Chief Harriott said Deputy Fire Marshal Ignatius (‘Iggie’) Duane has made a preliminary investigation and the State Law Enforcement Division has been summoned to investigate. This is the third time in recent years that Robert Smalls School has suffered fire damage.”*

The **October 8, 1970** printing of The Beaufort Gazette announced *“The Beaufort Fire Department now has a complement of six paid engineers who are on duty on shifts around the clock.”* A photo show *“three new engineers with three ‘veteran’ engineers: Elmer Hudson, O’Dean Strickland, Ralph Martin (new), Stephen Brown (new), Michael Harriott and Gerald R. Burris (new). Martin and Brown were*

*formerly members of the volunteer firefighters.”* **Note: This is the second mention of the city hiring career (paid) firefighters as engineers.**

Again, The Beaufort Gazette reported on **October 22, 1970** that “An early fire Monday resulted in the death of Mrs. Charles H. Frame and destroyed her South Hermitage Road residence. Neighbors turned in the alarm at 7:18 a.m. and the Beaufort Fire Department responded with two trucks, 15 volunteers and four paid firemen. Dr. R. R. Kearns, a neighbor, saw Mrs. Frame’s body through a window, Assistant Fire Chief Richard Hogg quickly put on an emergency breathing apparatus and entered the house. However, prior to reaching the bedroom where the body was seen, Hoog was overcome by smoke leaking into the face mask. James Palmer of the Beaufort City Police saw Hoog fall, climbed in the window and pulled him to safety, then went back through the window and assisted other firemen in removing the body.”

“Coburg Route Man Wins Acclaim For Heroic Action During Fire,” was the header in the **November 26, 1970** printing of The Beaufort Gazette. “A route man for Coburg Dairy was honored Tuesday night at the regular meeting of the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department for his heroic deed in rescuing an unconscious man from a burning house. B. H. ‘Chuck’ Kitts received a certificate of appreciation presented by Fire Chief John Harriott. The rescue took place last Saturday morning at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Armstrong on Laurel Bay Road. Nearly overcome by smoke himself, Kitts managed to get the man out of the building. He administered artificial respiration and had Armstrong conscious when the ambulance arrived to take him to the hospital.”

The Beaufort Gazette, printed on **July 5, 1974**, announced “This weekend Beaufort is host to visiting members of S. C. Firemen’s

*Association, holding their 69<sup>th</sup> annual convention. **Note: This writer attended this convention and enjoyed the time spent in Beaufort. The meetings were held in the armory where there was no air conditioning, but the food provided the visiting firemen was delicious at every event. A fond memory was the afternoon during a conference break, “J. J.” Lyons and Ralph Martin drove “Big Jim” (1924 Am. LaFrance pumper) to the Lord Carteret Motel to pick me up to return to the conference session.***

The Beaufort Gazette printed on **July 23, 1975** that *“Beaufort City Council approved payment of the balance of \$6,165 owed the Pioneer Fire Co. since 1974 for volunteer services rendered as a back-up force to the city’s regular professional force.”*

*“Final Tribute To City Fireman Tuesday,”* read the caption in the **March 1, 1976** printing of The Beaufort Gazette. *“The alarm came in a 9 p.m. Saturday, but the city’s most zealous fire fighter did not respond to the call. Usually, the first fireman on the scene was Assistant Chief Ralph Martin. His presence Saturday was sorely missed by fellow firemen. Rushing to an apartment complex, they took time to think of his absence. The city’s young assistant chief, 27 years old, was already a 12-year veteran in the Beaufort Fire Department. He was almost born into the job. As a child he grew up looking at the fire station across the street from his home. No doubt, the excitement was planted in his mind early as he watched his father and an uncle, both volunteer firemen, jump to the sound of an alarm. At the age of 16, he picked up the reins with fervor. He became a volunteer fireman, rarely missing a call even outside his own district. But Martin was unaware of Saturday’s alarm. It came as news was filtering into Beaufort that the young fire fighter had just died in a Charleston hospital.*

The lengthy and touching article continues...*”Earlier in the week he had undergone open heart surgery for defective arteries. He died at 7:30 p.m. in the Medical University. Firemen throughout the county will pay their last tribute tomorrow at funeral services at Carteret St. Methodist Church. Pallbearers will consist of at least one fireman from every district in the county. Fire Chief John Harriott recalled a meeting 12 years ago in which Beaufort firemen decided to allow Martin to become a volunteer. ‘I was the only person to vote against him,’ Harriott said. ‘Thought he was too young for the job but he turned out to be the best fireman we’ve ever had.’ His ardent desire for the job led Martin to become a qualified instructor, inspector, and investigator. ‘He was the most dedicated man I’ve ever known. I don’t know what I’ll do without him,’ Harriott said. ‘We had a discussion with the city manager and had just about made up our minds that we were going to put on a salaried chief, and there was no doubt who would have gotten the job. It would have been Chief Ralph Martin.’”* **This writer was friends with Ralph Martin. I attended his funeral and observed the procession, with his casket riding on top of the engine, and hundreds of firefighters and friends lining both sides of the street.**

The **January 28, 1981** edition of The Beaufort Gazette reported that *“Beaufort Fire Chief Jack Marcil has submitted his resignation, City Manager Ed Duryea announced Tuesday. Marcil will leave the Beaufort Fire Department Feb. 6 to return to the Sea Pines/Forest Beach Fire Department. Marcil could not be reached for comment on his resignation today, but Duryea said Marcil wanted to return to a more operation-oriented job rather than continue in administration. Marcil came to the Beaufort Fire Department in March 1978 as the department’s first full-time chief. ‘He’s done an outstanding job as fire chief and has made many significant improvements in the fire department,’ Duryea said today. The city will begin advertising this week for Marcil’s replacement.”*

**Note: When Jack Marcil resigned as Beaufort's fire chief, a search for his replacement was begun by council. Capt. Wendell Wilburn was asked to serve as assistant chief. Joe Best was later appointed Beaufort's chief in December of 1981, but resigned a few months later to take the vacant position of chief at the Hilton Head Fire Department.**

The Beaufort Gazette announced a new program for the Beaufort Fire Department in the **June 9, 1982** printing of the paper. *"The Beaufort Fire Department is ready to begin a system of medical 'first responders' adopted Monday by the Beaufort County Emergency Medical Services Commission. The Burton Fire District is interested in all aspects of lifesaving but has no plans to train firefighters as first responders at this time, said Fire Chief Jack Abraham. The Sea Pines department has operated a first response program for seven years, and there's nothing in there we can't comply with, said Capt. John Oram."* **Note: Burton's Chief Jack Abraham started his career at N. Myrtle Beach F.D., later hired as Chief Clemson University, City of Anderson F.D., President of the S. C. Firefighters' Association (1993-1994), and now a college professor.**

The **June 22, 1982** edition of The Beaufort Gazette noted *"A fire at Apartment 16-B, Spanish Trace Apartments, did an estimated \$3,000 to \$4,000 damage to the contents and structure, according to Wendell O. Wilburn, acting fire chief of the Beaufort Fire Department. The fire, which began about 7 p.m., started when clothing or rags were put next to a hot water heater in the apartment and ignited. A smoke alarm in the residence alerted the occupants, enabling them to move to safety until firefighters arrived."*

According to The Beaufort Gazette of **July 7, 1982**, *"The City of Beaufort has promoted within to replace its fire chief. Wendell*

*Wilburn, 28, a Beaufort native with 13 years experience as a firefighter, has been named fire chief. The previous fire chief and community development director left for other jobs in December. Alfred Wyatt, 32, will be promoted to captain and training officer. Wyatt and Wilburn will share the duties of fire inspector. Wilburn has nine years experience as a paid fireman. He was the first firefighter hired by Sea Pines-Forest Beach Fire Department on Hilton Head Island. He was captain in charge of the department's Sea Pines fire station when he left to join the Beaufort Fire Department seven years later. He was promoted to assistant fire chief by then Fire Chief Joe Best in 1981. Wilburn said he has been an emergency medical technician for six years and a fire training instructor at the S. C. Fire Academy for seven years."* **Note: Chief Wilburn served as President of State Chiefs' Association (1987) and President of the S. C. State Firemen's Association (1992-1993).**

The Beaufort Gazette, dated **June 21, 1983**, shared the caption "*Beaufort's fire protection dates to 1863.*" The article starts off with "*If there was an organization for fighting fires in antebellum Beaufort, we are not aware of it. Beaufort's first volunteer fire fighting company was organized Nov. 4, 1863 under the name 'New York Hose Company No. 1.'*" **Note: The article written is an interesting one and factually correct but for one thing. Records uncovered while researching the department's history, starting on page 5, reveals a fire company was created officially in October 1859 (known as the Stuart Fire Company). However, this writer believes sufficient evidence is available to say Beaufort's fire protection began even earlier in the late 1830s or 1840s with citizen volunteers and two hand-drawn, hand-pumped "mashens."**

The Beaufort Gazette covered a fire drill conducted at the County Jail in the **September 8, 1983** printing of the paper. "*A fire drill at the Beaufort County Jail went successfully and without problems. The*

*drill, held Tuesday afternoon, involved the jailers, the Police Department, Sheriff's Department and the Beaufort Fire Department. It took about two minutes to evacuate the jail and about two minutes and 30 seconds for the fire department to set up attack lines. About 41 prisoners were in the jail at the time of the drill."*

The **September 13, 1983** edition of The Beaufort Gazette tells that *"The Beaufort Fire Department and Burton Fire District are holding fund-raising events to raise money for their departments. The Beaufort department Ladies' Auxiliary is sponsoring a drawing to raise money for any expenses that may come up with the new fire station, according to Linda Edgeley, secretary of the auxiliary. The Burton Fire District is trying to raise money for the equipment and training they need to become involved in the first responder program with the Emergency Medical Service."*

The Beaufort Gazette printed an article about the Beaufort County Chiefs' Association in their **November 10, 1983** paper. *"Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn was re-elected to a second term as president of the Beaufort County Fire Chiefs' Association Wednesday night. Marine Corps Air Station—Beaufort Fire Chief Hugh Rahn was elected vice president of the association and John J. Harter, deputy fire chief at Sea Pines Forest Beach Fire Department was elected secretary."*

*"Beaufort's Firefighters Move To New Station,"* announces The Beaufort Gazette on **December 29, 1983**. *"After years of planning and a two-month delay in completion, the Beaufort Fire Department has moved into its new station on Ribaut Road. The department moved from the old station downtown behind the Beaufort County Library to the new one on Dec. 19. A grand opening for the station has been tentatively scheduled for Jan. 14, according to Beaufort*

*Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn.” Mention is made in separate article that the “Old fire station was built as a meat market. The building was built in 1911 as a meat market. Located at 706 Craven St., the building is considered by historians to be part of an area that is the remains of a historic town square.”*

The **October 15, 1984** issue of The Beaufort Gazette wrote *“Four firefighters escaped with only minor injuries as they fought the blaze that engulfed the Sans Souci on Boundary Street early Sunday morning. Two of the men were cutting a hole on the roof of the building, to allow some of the intense heat to escape, when they were overcome by heat exhaustion and fatigue, according to Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn. The other two were injured by falling debris from the ceiling. As smoke poured out of the building filling the street, firefighters from Beaufort, Burton and Lady’s Island/St. Helena fire departments battled the blaze. About 60 men were involved in the effort, not only fighting the fire but also manning the stations to maintain coverage for the area.”*

*“New Fire Rating To Cut Premiums,”* touted the headlines in the **November 9, 1984** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *“The city of Beaufort fire insurance rating has been lowered from a Class 6 to a Class 2 which will mean big savings in fire insurance premiums for city residents and business owners. When Chief Wendell Wilburn became fire chief in 1980, there were 13 paid employees and 18 volunteers. Now there are 25 paid firefighters and 30 volunteers. The district has also started a program with the Beaufort Police Department to train police officers to fight fires. About 22 Beaufort police officers are participating.”*

The **December 3, 1984** issue of The Beaufort Gazette told of a special drill for area firefighters. *“A smoke-filled Beaufort Junior High School provided a testing ground for more than 100 firefighters and*

*emergency workers Saturday morning during a countywide mock disaster. The exercise was developed by the Beaufort County Fire Chiefs Association and Beaufort County Emergency Preparedness office to test a new system for controlling major disasters. Beaufort's Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn said this is the first time we've tried it in Beaufort County and it has proven to work very well. Being able to work with all the different chiefs is quite an accomplishment."*

The Island Packet of **August 19, 1985**, printed that *"On the job is the wrong place for firefighter training, according to Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn. Although the request made by the Beaufort County Fire Chiefs' Association to renovate a building as a countywide training facility was rejected by the Beaufort County Council, the chiefs say they will pursue their goal. If that building and land is a problem, then we are going to have to seek other alternatives, said Burton's Fire Chief Hampton Shuping."* **Note: "Hamp" Shuping served under the mentorship of Jack Abraham at the North Myrtle Beach F.D. then to North Charleston District F.D., Burton Fire District, and served 14 years as Horry County's Fire Chief. Shuping served as President of the Firefighters' Association (1991-1992).**

*"Two 911 Staffers Are Promoted,"* according to The Island Packet dated **March 12, 1986**. *"The Sea Pines-Forest Beach Fire Department has promoted two members of the 911 emergency dispatch center staff. Chief David A. MacLellan said Linda K. Wilburn of Beaufort has been promoted to captain and Sheri H. Phillips of Hilton Head has been advanced in rank to lieutenant. The 911 center has a nine-member staff that dispatches for more than 35 emergency, utility and other government agencies on Hilton Head, Bluffton and other Beaufort County communities south of the Broad River. The 911 center is in the fire department station at Shipyard Plantation. Emergency work is a way of life for both the*

*Wilburn and Phillips families. Mrs. Wilburn's husband, Wendell Wilburn, is fire chief for the City of Beaufort and Mrs. Philips is married to Firefighter 111 Donnie Phillips of the Sea Pines-Forest Beach Fire Department."* **Note: The names mentioned in this article bring back many fond memories. Chief MacLellan became the 1<sup>st</sup> Chairman of a new State Fire Commission, and helped strengthen the Firemen's Association's legislative agenda for several years.**

The Beaufort Gazette noted in the **May 16, 1986** printing that *"Beginning next week the Beaufort Fire Department will take on an extra life-saving task. Trained firefighters will respond to heart attacks, strokes, stabbings and other life-threatening situations that may occur near their station. Chief Wilburn stressed that the First Responder program is a joint effort, with the fire department and EMS working together to provide the best possible help to Beaufort residents."*

*"Chiefs Return To Beaufort,"* was the caption in the **August 17, 1988** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *"For the second time in three years, the Beaufort Fire Department has been selected to host the S. C. State Fire Chiefs' annual conference. About 250 state fire chiefs are expected to attend the 44<sup>th</sup> annual conference scheduled for September 14-178 at the Holiday Inn on U. S. 21. Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn, who was the association's president in 1987, said it's an honor to be selected as the host site again."*

In the same edition of the paper, the headline reads *"Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn has been elected statistician (4<sup>th</sup> VP) for the S. C. Firemen's Association and has an opportunity to become president of the association in 1992. Wilburn, who has been with the Beaufort Fire Department since 1980, said he hopes to be able to get*

*the association more active in legislative affairs over the next four years.”*

The Gazette printed the annual report of the fire department for 1989 in the **May 22, 1990** paper. *“Fiscal year 1989 was a busy year for the Fire Department, who responded to 672 calls. The City of Beaufort is proud to maintain its Class 2 Fire Rating. To accomplish this, two new pumpers were purchased and operate out of Headquarters and the other out of the Mossy Oaks Station. The department now has the following equipment: 1989 Pierce Lance 1500 GPM pumper, 1988 Pierce Lance 1500 GPM pumper, 1977 American LaFrance 1250 GPM pumper, 1962 1250 GPM pumper, 1970 American LaFrance 1000 GPM pumper, and one 1973 Imperial 100’ aerial ladder truck. The squad carries the ‘Jaws of Life’ as well as having portable air for filling self-contained breathing apparatus. There are 3 sedan vehicles as well as another squad for emergency responses.”*

The Beaufort Gazette posted about consolidation issues in the **October 13, 1991** paper. *“The mere mention of fire consolidation in Beaufort County is like shaking a wasp’s nest, stirring up conflicting views that could leave a bitter sting to those involved. The idea has been kicked around by county officials for years inconclusively, and always with staunch opposition as well as some favorable views. No one involved knows exactly what consolidation would mean for the 220-plus professional, paid firefighters in the county, how long it would take, whether it would be phased in or brought on all at once. Taken to its extreme, consolidation would bring all 10 of the existing departments in the county under the umbrella of a county fire marshal, with funding being provided by the county each year. The present fire chiefs would be considered assistant chiefs, and each board of commissioners would be reduced and consolidated to function as a countywide advisory board. A potential step towards*

*limited consolidation came this summer in the form of an annual contract between the City of Beaufort and the Town of Port Royal.”*

According to The Beaufort Gazette of **November 22, 1991**, *“Two Beaufort men were arrested Thursday evening in connection with the burglary and arson of a Beaufort County Sheriff’s deputy’s residence that morning. Donald Brown, 44, and Calvin C. Sharpe, 38, both of New Castle Street, were charged by the Police Department. The fire caused an estimated \$30,000 damage to the residence of deputy Lee Harris, who lives at 1114 Washington St. with his brother, according to Capt. James Colwell of the Beaufort Fire Department. Neither was at home at the time of the break-in. Two engines and 33 Beaufort firefighters responded and were able to confine the blaze to one room in the house.”*

The **December 29, 1991** issue of The Beaufort Gazette wrote *“Arson is suspected in a Thursday night fire that caused heavy damage to the workplace of a prominent local sign maker. Lillian Nilsson’s Classic Signs and Designs office at the intersection of Depot Road and Hay Street was engulfed in flames at about 10:45 p.m. The old building was once a distribution center for Gulf Oil Co. and later American Oil Co. Beaufort Chief Wendell Wilburn said he suspected arson because firefighters found a door on the building’s south side open when they arrived on the scene. Capt. J. C. Colwell of the Beaufort Fire Department said Saturday no new information was available in the ongoing investigation.”*

The **December 30, 1991** printing of The Beaufort Gazette noted *“An early morning fire off Mossy Oaks Drive was a small task for the Beaufort Fire Department, but officials said it could have been tragic. Firefighters responded to a blaze at 905 McTeer Circle at about 8:45 a.m., said Lt. Bruce Kline, and quickly doused the flames, which burned a couch and end table. Kline said an investigation*

*showed the fire started when the family's 2 ½-year-old child got hold of a lighter. The parents were asleep at the time, he said, and the house had no smoke detectors.”* **Note: Lt. Bruce Kline later became Chief of the Lady’s Island-St. Helena Fire Department and was elected President of the State Firemen’s Association from 2001-2002. He continues to remain active in leadership roles with the Association.**

The Beaufort Gazette on **October 16, 1992** reported *“Fire Threatens Businesses.”* *“An electrical short is believed to have caused a fire Thursday that had the potential to destroy three downtown businesses. No one was injured, and none of the businesses in the Kinghorn Building at the corner of Bay and Scott streets lost merchandise in the blaze. Damage to the building, however, was estimated at between \$20,000 and \$25,000, according to Capt. Sammy Breland of the Beaufort Fire Department. Within two minutes of getting the dispatch call at 11:24 a.m. the Beaufort Fire Department was on the scene, said Chief Wendell Wilburn. More than two dozen firefighters responded with two engines and a ladder truck that was put up in case firefighters needed to get into the building’s pitched roof.”*

The Island Packet printed on **June 18, 1996** that *“Beaufort firefighters Monday night were investigating the cause of a fire that gutted an abandoned house at the intersection of Duke and Hamar streets. Smoke and flames from the two-story structure behind Beaufort Elementary School could be seen for several miles as firefighters battled the blaze Monday afternoon. Police blocked off traffic in the immediate area and about 25 firefighters from Beaufort, Port Royal and Burton were called to help extinguish the fire, Beaufort fire officials said the house, built around 1900, had been vacant and without power since at least 1983 when another fire engulfed the structure.”*

The **February 26, 1998** edition of The Beaufort Gazette shared a story about the seventh-grade at Lady's Island Middle School trying to raise money to restore "*Big Jim*," Beaufort's second motorized fire truck, a 1924 American LaFrance pumper named for former fire chief Jim Darby. The reporter noted "*For now, Big Jim lives at the Beaufort Fire Department station on Ribaut Road.*"

A wonderful and well written article about the history of the Beaufort Fire Department was printed in the **October 18, 1998** issue of The Beaufort Gazette by Cheryl Graffo. Its content is too lengthy to post in this research, but there is one tidbit which should be revealed. The reporter noted that "*A bell's clanging once meant fire in the small town of Beaufort, the sound followed by the sight of firefighters dragging a cast iron and steel steam engine behind them.* **Note: This validates this researcher's findings that throughout the department's history there is no mention of horses being used to pull the early fire apparatus, just firefighters. Only twice were there remarks about horses "if they were available."**

The Beaufort Gazette noted on **March 3, 2000** that "*A Beaufort man was critically injured while burning debris in his backyard on Tuesday. Derrick Englehart, 22, of 2611 North Royal Oaks Drive, was taken to the Medical University of South Carolina after a fire official spotted smoke billowing from the man's back yard. Englehart was burning debris in his yard but did not know someone else had thrown a flammable liquid on the debris, causing the fire to flash. Englehart was in stable but critical condition with severe burns on more than one-third of his body.*"

"*BFD Gets Bulletproof Vests*," announced the article in The Beaufort Gazette on **September 2, 2000**. "*Beaufort Fire Department firefighters will don another piece of equipment when they race to a*

*fire: Bulletproof vests. The vests for firefighters are a first in the state, according to Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn. The new purchase is in response to a trend toward violence against emergency personnel throughout the country. Because of quick response times, firefighters may arrive at a crime scene before a criminal has time to flee. The vests cost about \$350 each. The seven vests mean that at least two vests can be kept on emergency vehicles from Beaufort and Port Royal fire departments.”*

The **November 19, 2001** printing of The Beaufort Gazette shared “As areas north of the Broad River have grown in population, fire departments have had to update their policies to give more effective coverage to residents. One of those policies utilized by departments is an automatic aid agreement. The agreement sets up policies that allow fire departments in neighboring districts to send units to calls that occur on jurisdictional boundaries, according to Beaufort Fire Department Assistant Chief James Colwell. In recent months, the Beaufort Fire Department has entered into an agreement with the Lady’s Island/St. Helena Fire Department that covered automatic aid. As part of the agreement, LISH provides primary fire protection to annexed areas on Lady’s Island. The Beaufort Fire Department also has an automatic aid agreement with the Burton Fire Department.”

The Beaufort Gazette of **February 24, 2002** reported “A guest was injured in a fire that consumed the cottage where he was staying at the Beaufort Inn early Saturday. The guest suffered burns to his feet and is in stable condition. Shortly after midnight several people reported the blaze and said the Beaufort Inn or one of its additional buildings was on fire. Five fire trucks, including the department’s aerial truck and more than 30 firefighters arrived to find the second floor of a two-story cottage on fire, located about 50 feet from the Inn itself. The cause is still under investigation.”

The Island Packet, dated **September 20, 2002**, noted *“U.S. Naval Hospital Beaufort saw a changing of the guard for its fire service earlier this month with an agreement designed to help the Parris Island Fire Department meet its staff requirements. The Beaufort Fire Department now will respond to the Naval Hospital in an attempt to meet Marine Corps requirements for two engine companies on base. The Port Royal Fire Station, part of Beaufort Fire Department, is about a quarter-mile from the hospital.”*

*“Veterans Fill Many Emergency Positions,”* according to the **November 11, 2002** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *“For some local firefighters, service has been a lifelong career. While many people think of firefighters toting hoses and air packs, many of those firefighters have toted rifles as well. Nearly 70 percent of the firefighters at the Beaufort Fire Department have also served in the military, said Beaufort Fire Department spokesman, Dan Byrne. Of the 34 career firefighters of the Beaufort Fire Department, 21 have served in the armed forces, and have participated in campaigns and operations from Vietnam to Enduring Freedom, some have even been decorated. Firefighter Jack Mathison served two tours with the Marine Corps in Vietnam, receiving two Purple Hearts, and went on to serve in the Marines for 20 years before joining the department. Firefighter Scott Robinson served in the Marines for eight years as an infantryman, and saw action in both the Gulf War and Somalia. Beaufort firefighters have served on land, air and sea, and for one particular firefighter, under the sea. Firefighter John Robinson served in the U.S. Navy and was assigned to nuclear submarines, where he served as a sonar tech and rescue swimmer. ‘You learn a lot about team work in the military, and the need to put others above yourself, said Lee Levesque, volunteer firefighter, who served as an Army paratrooper with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.’”*

The Beaufort Gazette posted the caption “*Fire Marshal Retires After 30 Years*” in the **May 2, 2003** paper. “*Thursday marked the end of a 30-year career at the Beaufort Fire Department for Samuel “Sammy” Breland. Breland, 47, started with the department in 1973 where there were no paid firefighters. Since then, he’s seen the number of emergency calls grow from 200 to nearly 2,000. Breland was around firefighters for much of his life growing up. His father was a volunteer firefighter with the department and his uncle, John Harriott, was the fire chief. Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn said he will miss having Breland around. The former fire marshal was someone he could always depend on. After a two-week rest, Breland also will be working for the city in the codes enforcement department.*”

The Beaufort Gazette of **January 29, 2005** wrote an article about fire crews in Beaufort County training together. “*About 90 firefighters from five Beaufort County fire departments trained at the burn building at Parris Island. Beaufort County’s fire departments are some of the best in the state at working together, said Ed Roper, Superintendent of the South Carolina Fire Academy. The article noted under a statewide mutual aid agreement, many of Beaufort County’s firefighters were activated during the Graniteville train wreck and chlorine spill. Beaufort played a major role in this last mobilization, and that teamwork is improving every day.*”

The Beaufort Gazette wrote on **February 20, 2005** that “*Stephen Brown wasn’t looking to advance the cause of the city’s black community when he became the Beaufort Fire Department’s first black firefighter in 1970. He had just always wanted to fight fires. As a child in the ‘50s and ‘60s, Brown would accompany his father, Harold, to the all-black Pioneer Fire Department’s station on Prince Street. There, he would spend countless evenings listening to the volunteer force talk shop, and it stuck with him. His lifelong passion for firefighting led him to become a vanguard of desegregation as the*

*first black firefighter to be hired in 1970. The black department backed up the volunteer and paid white firefighters, and neither department could get the job done without the other. The white department could initiate the attack and we'd connect the hydrant and lay a hose line into their engine. If there was a two or three-story fire, we'd all get together"*

*The article continues...."Brown said he didn't recall any instances of overt racism between white and black firefighters, but other things made the job hard for the black firefighters. When the white department received a new engine in the early '60s, the Pioneers were given a secondhand engine from the '40s, and expenses were often paid out of the black firefighters' own pockets. In 1970, an offer came from then-Fire Chief John Harriott to join the all-white department. That changed with Fire Chief John Harriott. He told me, Brown, I'm going to hire you because of who you are and what you can do, not the color of your skin. Brown worked for the fire department until 1979, when the Parris Island Fire Department made him leave the city fire department. These days, Brown is fulfilling another dream as an operator for the Richard V. Woods Memorial Bridge, another ambition that came to him as a child growing up downtown on Newcastle Street."*

The **March 5, 2006** issue of The Beaufort Gezette reported "The Beaufort Fire Department was dispatched to Beaufort Memorial Hospital's basement cafeteria at about 7 p.m. Saturday after a convection oven caught fire. Beaufort Fire Marshal Dan Byrne said. Smoke filled the basement and traveled to the fifth floor, and that patients in the first floor radiology department had to be evacuated. The fire was put out quickly, but firefighters remained on scene for almost two hours, removing smoke from the building and making sure the fire did not spread through vents in the ceiling."

According to an article in the **April 5, 2006** edition of The Beaufort Gazette, *“The majority of local female firefighters spend 24-hour increments sharing everything from station duties to showers and bunk rooms with their predominantly male counterparts. But most don’t think twice about any lack of privacy because they said gender seems to play little, if any, role in how they’re treated at their jobs. Each of the four fire departments in northern Beaufort County have two full-time female firefighters, and are at least seven volunteer female firefighters total. Firefighter Vanessa Dominguez of the Beaufort Fire Department said she feels included, and if firefighters at other departments seem apprehensive of her while joking around at training, her co-workers step in. They say, ‘She’s just one of the guys. And, that makes me feel good.”*

*“Beaufort Shops Urged To Invest In Automatic Sprinklers,”* read the caption in the **July 8, 2007** edition of The Island Packet. *“A fire smoldering within the walls of Plums’ kitchen in historic downtown Beaufort was caught by an employee opening up for business in January, and the damage forced the restaurant to close for a few months. However, if the employee hadn’t been there to see the smoke, more than Plums could have been closed for business. Beaufort Fire Marshal said, ‘If it happened at 2 a.m., we very likely could have lost Bay Street.’ Plums, like several downtown Beaufort businesses and historic buildings, doesn’t have a sprinkler system. To encourage downtown business owners to undertake what can be a costly retrofitting of older buildings for fire sprinklers, the Beaufort Fire Department is trying to find money to begin a program that would hook up owners of small businesses and historic buildings with low-interest loans to install sprinklers.”*

The Beaufort Gazette printed on **December 9, 2007** that *“Three Beaufort firefighters were honored Saturday night by their peers at the annual awards banquet. Firefighter Ray Murphy and volunteer*

*firefighter Nancy Boysworth received the Jennings J. Lyons Firefighter of the Year Award...given in memory of 'J. J' Lyons who volunteered for more than 30 years. The Joe Robinson Career Achievement Award was bestowed on firefighter Joe Whalen, who has served with the department for 24 years."*

The **March 8, 2008** edition of The Beaufort Gazette reported on a lightning fire that destroyed a downtown house. *"Julie Lightsey was fixing her lunch at the Baptist Church in Beaufort on Friday when she heard the crack of a nearby lightning strike. A co-worker, Luis Rivera, also saw the lightning bolt. The lightning started Beaufort's first major fire of 2008, striking a tree and small house in the 600 block of West Street. The blaze destroyed the one-story, wooden structure located behind a larger house at 605 West St. A 55-year-old man who lived in the smaller house was inside when the fire started and was taken to the hospital after suffering smoke inhalation."*

The Beaufort Gazette posted a notice about residential sprinklers in the **July 4, 2008** paper. *"Residents can learn firsthand about residential sprinkler systems between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., July 12, at the Habitat for Humanities home projects at the intersection of Prince Street and Hamar Street. The Central Savannah River Chapter of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers is installing the systems in the homes free of charge. City of Beaufort officials will answer questions about residential sprinkler systems."*

A lengthy and well-written article on Chief Wendell Wilburn's upcoming retirement is found in the **April 4, 2009** edition of The Beaufort Gazette. *"Port Royal police officer Lt. John Griffith hates to think what might have happened if Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn had not responded to his call for help August 1, 1999. Griffith was shot in the head. Officer Bill Eustis lay in the line of fire, bleeding from gunshot wounds to his arm and abdomen. Both were*

*pinned down by a sniper holed up in a Port Royal mobile home.” The article continues how Sheriff’s Deputy Grant Hall and Fire Chief Wilburn crept to a vehicle and pulled Eustis to safety. Officer Eustis later said “If Wilburn hadn’t showed up I would have bled to death.”*

The commentary tells of Chief Wilburn’s work history starting out with the Sea Pines-Forest Beach Fire Department as their first paid employee. During Wilburn’s time with the city, he “oversaw construction of the firehouse on Ribaut Road in 1984 and negotiated an agreement between Beaufort and Port Royal in 1991 to allow the city to manage the town’s fire service. Wilburn once hired many of those now serving as fire chiefs in other jurisdictions, including Lady’s Island-St. Helena Fire District Chief Bruce Kline, Burton Fire District Chief Harry Rountree and Sheldon Fire District Chief Buddy Jones.” Chief Wilburn gives praise to his wife, Linda, and daughters Christine, Melissa and Lacy for their support and encouragement.

The Beaufort Gazette, on **April 8, 2009**, printed “Town of Port Royal officials say they’re confident a wave of retirements in the Beaufort Fire Department won’t affect the town’s fire service. Amid concerns from residents that the retirement next week of Beaufort Fire Chief Wendell Wilburn and the January retirement of Assistant Fire Chief James Colwell would negatively affect the town’s fire service, town manager Van Willis sought reassurance from Wilburn and city manager Scott Dadson. Both Chief Wilburn and the city manager reassured us this transition in leadership would not affect the number of firefighters necessary to fulfill our contract with the city. Since 1991, Port Royal has paid the city to manage the town’s fire service and will pay more than \$600,000 in personnel costs alone in the upcoming fiscal year. The town also pays a portion of the salaries of the department’s administrators, including the fire chief, fire marshal and training officer. The town will be watching closely as

*Dadson looks to name a replacement for Wilburn, who served as the city's fire chief for 28 years."*

The **July 21, 2009** printing of The Island Packet noted that lowcountry firefighters were honored at the S. C. State Firefighters Convention in Myrtle Beach. *"The Beaufort Fire Department received the Richard S. Campbell Award for excellence in public fire safety education. Lt. Darren Vaughn, an MCAS Beaufort firefighter and a Burton Fire District volunteer firefighter, was named Instructor of the Year. The Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District's six-member auto extrication team won first place during the conference's auto extrication competition. The LISH district's Heidi Charest won first place in the women's division of the Firefighter Challenge and join Holly Nourisat from the St. Johns Fire Department to win the tandem division of the Women's Firefighter Challenge. The Firefighter Challenge consists of five tasks that participants must perform in sequence while wearing full protective gear."*

The Beaufort Gazette reported *"Firefighters Stretched Thin During Storms,"* in the **August 13, 2009** paper. *"A strong thunderstorm Wednesday afternoon forced the Beaufort Fire Department to call in off-duty firefighters and put a reserve fire engine into service as firefighters answered calls of lightning strikes in Beaufort and Port Royal."*

The Island Packet of **April 24, 2010** reported *"A crowded hotel can be a firefighter's worst nightmare. With Beaufort area hotels packed weekly with families of recruits graduating from Marine Corps Parris Island and the summer tourist season looming, the Beaufort Fire Department met with more than 40 local hotel managers and staff members for the first time Friday in hopes of turning them into a legion of 'Auxiliary Firefighters.' The Beaufort hotel employees gathered Friday at the Paris Avenue fire station in Port Royal for an*

*hour-long presentation on the history of hotel fires, fire safety and fire codes. That was followed by a half hour of hands-on lessons on using a fire extinguisher and escaping a smoke-filled room.”*

The **September 1, 2010** printing of The Beaufort Gazette noted *“The Beaufort Fire Department announced Tuesday that John Robinson, a 10-year veteran of the city’s fire service, will be its new training education officer. Robinson, who will be promoted from lieutenant to captain, will present fire and safety education programs to the public and other firefighters. Robinson is helping replace longtime fire marshal and safety educator Dan Byrne, who resigned last month in part over concerns about the direction of the department’s public education programs.”*

*“Beaufort Fire Downsizes Truck Fleet,”* read the caption in the **May 15, 2011** issue of The Beaufort Gazette. *“When it came to retire three vehicles from the Beaufort Fire Department’s fleet, conventional wisdom told Chief Sammy Negrón that the large trucks should be replaced with new pumper trucks. But he says the \$1.4 million price tag to replace all three trucks—not to mention the city’s low incidence of structure fires and high volume of medical calls—gave him pause. In a move that raised eyebrows, the city reduced its inventory of large fire trucks and purchased one new pumper truck and two smaller all-purpose vehicles that can respond more efficiently to medical calls. Negrón said the purchase made economic sense and will reduce wear and tear on the city’s three pumper trucks and its larger ladder truck. Instead of paying \$1.4 million to replace all three pumpers, the city paid \$675,000 for the new Class A pumper truck and the two all-purpose vehicles, all three of which arrived last month.”*

Both the Island Packet and The Beaufort Gazette printed on **June 21, 2011** a story about a Beaufort house being destroyed by fire. *“A fire*

*destroyed a home Monday in Beaufort's Mossy Oaks neighborhood, despite efforts by local firefighters. When crews from the department, assisted by the Burton Fire District, arrived at about 5:30 a.m. at the 2600 block of Broad Street, 75 percent of the \$180,000 house was engulfed in flames, Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negron said. Two adults in the house escaped safely, but their belongings, whose value was estimated a more than \$30,000, burned. The Beaufort County Fire Scene Investigation Team ruled the fire an accident, possibly caused by an improperly discarded cigar. About 35 firefighters from the Beaufort Fire Department, which also includes the Port Royal fire department, and the Burton Fire District helped fight the blaze."*

The Beaufort Gazette reported on **December 31, 2012** that "A family escaped, but their small dog died after a fire broke out in the attic of their Beaufort home on Newcastle Street early Sunday morning. Firefighters arrived at 3:50 a.m. to 814 Newcastle St. as winds stoked the flames that had burst through the roof. Four people in the home at the time of the fire escaped without injuries. A total of 10 people –three adults and seven children—were living in the home. Both Burton and Beaufort fire departments contained the blaze before it could leap to a neighboring house just 15 feet away. Investigators say the fire started when a tree limb fell across power lines to the home, knocking out power. The homeowner tried to reset the breaker and later saw smoke coming from the wall behind the electrical panel."

The **May 22, 2013** issue of The Beaufort Gazette noted "A fire believed to have been caused by electrical wiring damaged LaNopalera in Beaufort early Tuesday. No one was in the Mexican restaurant on Ribaut Road at the time. A passerby reported that flames were shooting from the restaurant and the Beaufort Fire Department responded at 2:38 a.m. The fire began in a shed behind

*the restaurant but spread to the eaves and roof. Flames were shooting as high as 30 feet when firefighters arrived. The fire melted and ignited an outdoor gas meter and caused firefighters to allow it to burn freely to prevent an explosion. Firefighters worked to protect the building from the fire while waiting for an SCE&G crew to arrive and close the valve on the utility line.”*

News from The Island Packet dated **October 17, 2015** reports of a Beaufort retirement. *“Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Chief Sammy Negron will retire in January, the city of Beaufort announced Friday. Negron has been fire chief a little more than five years after four years as a volunteer. He is retiring to spend time with his family as he battles multiple sclerosis, which he was diagnosed in 2005. Before firefighting, Negron served 12 years in the U.S. Marine Corps where he served during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and involvement in Somalia and Bosnia. He was named Volunteer Firefighter for Beaufort in 1998 and Career Firefighter of the year in 2006. In 2003 he earned the Firehouse Magazine Medal for Valor and Courage and the U.S. Congressional Fire Service Institute Award for Dedication and Valor. Negron is a native of Puerto Rico.”*

The **November 4, 2015** edition of The Island Packet announced a new fire chief for Beaufort. *“Veteran Beaufort firefighter Capt. Reece Bertholf was named Fire Chief, Sammy Negron’s successor and will take over as chief of the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department early next year. Bertholf, a firefighter in Beaufort since 2000, will take over as fire chief on Jan. 15.”*

*“Fire Guts Black Chamber Building,”* read the caption in The Florence Morning News on **November 13, 2016**. *“Investigators in South Carolina are looking into the cause of a fire that gutted the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce building, which had been the target of vandals in the past. The blaze broke out early*

*Saturday morning and took about two hours to get under control, Fire Chief Reece Bertholf said. According to Larry Holman, Chamber CEO, the fire could set the \$2.2 million project back at least a year. It was to be completed in December. The building included a commercial kitchen, art gallery and office space for entrepreneurs.”***Note: A later article in the News reports that authorities have ruled out arson. Local, state and federal investigators were involved...ATF agents took over the investigation.**

The Island Packet told of a crash that damaged a Beaufort fire station in the **January 20, 2016** printing of the paper. *“The driver of a sport-utility vehicle was injured after crashing into the Port Royal Fire Station Sunday afternoon, damaging the building. About 2 p.m., firefighters heard the sound of an engine growing louder before a black Ford Escape slammed into a pillar on the station’s front porch on Paris Avenue. Savannah television station WSAV reported the driver had suffered a seizure and was treated and released.*

According to The Island Packet, dated **October 4, 2019**, *“If firefighters are a family, Linda Edgerley was somewhat of a Beaufort matriarch. As the top administrative official for the city fire department, she was one of the first people new firefighters saw, walking them through paperwork and handing out necessary equipment. After that, she’d become someone they turned to for advice on careers or relationships. Edgerley, 74, died on Monday. She had been diagnosed several years ago with a chronic lung disease, said former fire chief Wendell Wilburn. Edgerley worked for the fire department from 1982, when the agency operated in a makeshift mobile home headquarters downtown, until she retired in 2009. Firefighters called her ‘Mrs. E’ or ‘Mom,’ and she continued her role after her only son died almost 30 years ago. **Note: This writer knew Mrs. Edgerley during those years she worked for the fire***

**department. I remember her so fondly when calling the department...she knew my voice immediately and always asked about our family. A good lady indeed!**

The **November 21, 2019** edition of The Island Packet published *“Some dogs get a treat when they do something good. Curly isn’t just ‘some dog.’ He’s a lifesaver. Curly, who alerted his owner that their Beaufort home was on fire last month by nudging him with his nose until the man woke up, was honored at a ceremony on the steps of Beaufort City Hall on Tuesday evening. City of Beaufort/Port Royal Fire Department Chief Reece Bertholf and City of Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling presented Curly with a lifesaving medal, a certificate and a bag of brand new tennis balls as a crowd of supporters and about 20 four-legged friends watched.”*

According to The Island Packet of **July 19, 2021**, *“A boat docked a marina in Downtown Beaufort was damaged after it caught fire Sunday morning. The City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department responded to a call about a fire around 4:20 a.m. Sunday. When they arrived, they found a fire had started on a 22-foot boat. Firefighters were able to get a handle on the blaze within 5 minutes of arriving.”*

The Island Packet posted on **August 13, 2021** that *“Tim Ogden has been selected as the new chief of the City of Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department. Ogden is currently the deputy chief of operation. He joined the department in 2016 as fire marshal. Previously, he was deputy state fire marshal for Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton, and Colleton counties. Ogden replaces Reece Bertholf. Ogden, 44, who grew up in Yemassee, joined a junior firefighting program when he was 16 which sparked his interest in firefighting. In 1995, he was hired as the first professional firefighter for Yemassee. The fire*

*department has a staff of 64, including 53 full-time and 9 part-time firefighters with an annual budget of \$5.4 million.”*

The Island Packet, dated **August 21, 2021** reported *“Lightning struck an apartment building in Beaufort late Thursday, sparking a fire and displacing three families. It was one of two fires in 12 hours that the City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department responded to Thursday and early Friday. At 5:15 p.m. Thursday, a fire was reported at Bay South apartment homes off Mossy Oaks Road. Assistant Chief Ross Vezin said lightning sparked the blaze in the attic. The second fire was reported 2:30 a.m. Friday on Old Jericho Road in Beaufort. On arrival, firefighters found a tow truck fully involved and endangering a residential structure.”*

The Island Packet printed on **October 18, 2021** that *“The Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department has a new custom-built pumper truck that city officials say will improve public safety with more pumping capacity and the ability to carry vital equipment such as the Jaws of Life and a defibrillator. ‘It was custom built, literally, to the final piece,’ Fire Chief Tim Ogden said. The 33-foot long red and black rig, which cost \$800,000, replaces a 14-year-old truck and is the department’s fifth in-service pumper (there are two reserves). The new pumper truck was purchased from Spartan Emergency Apparatus in Summerville, but Pierce Manufacturing in Appleton, Wis., which custom builds fire trucks, built it.”*

The **February 5, 2023** edition of The Island Packet reported that *“County Administrator Eric Geenway announced the hiring of a new assistant administrator Friday. Beaufort native and longtime firefighter John Robinson was named to be Beaufort County’s assistant administrator of Public Safety. Robinson, currently the deputy chief of administration for the City of Beaufort’s fire*

*department, will oversee several departments, including EMS, Corrections Center, Animal Services and Mosquito Control.”*

*According to The Island Packet dated **May 4, 2023**, “The Beaufort – Port Royal Fire Department has added a new pumper truck to its fleet of firetrucks at a cost of \$948,928 which includes the equipment. The truck was paid for with City of Beaufort fire impact fees, a one-time charge to builders for new construction. The truck will replace a 2011 Pierce Pumper that will move to reserve status.”*

*The Island Packet of **March 19, 2024** printed about a life-saving award given. “It was 1:15 a.m. and Marine Lance Cpl. Jayden Pearman gasped for air as he lay on the ground in a Port Royal apartment complex parking lot. Moments before, a bullet had ripped through his chest and lodged in his lung, creating a sucking chest wound. The 23-year-old Marine with a wife and newborn would die without immediate help. But lucky for Pearman, he had the right kind of neighbors in Matt Domanski and Julia Dale. Those two, who lived in the same complex, rushed outside to investigate. It so happens that Domanski is a paramedic with the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department. And, Dale is an emergency room nurse at Beaufort Memorial Hospital. Pearman had rushed outside and confronted suspects stealing his pickup. His car was not stolen but he was shot during the struggle. To save Pearman’s life Domanski poked a needle between his ribs and through his chest wall. That relieved air pressure that was making it difficult for Pearman to breathe. The procedure is known as a ‘needle decompression.’ Domanski and Dale then got IVs into both arms, to assist with the blood loss before he was rushed to the hospital. Then enroute, Aaron McIntyre, another Beaufort paramedic, performed a second needle decompression to relieve additional pressure. The Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department, Port Royal Police and Marine Corps Air*

*Station handed out awards for those involved in saving Pearman before a packed house at the Port Royal Town Council.”*

The Island Packet printed on **January 3, 2025** that “A space heater is being blamed for a Port Royal fire Sunday that heavily damaged a home and sent a woman to the hospital with burns that have been reported as non-life threatening. Firefighters arrived at 12:30 p.m. to find smoke and flames shooting from the one-story residential house in the heavily wooded area on Ritter Circle. Rescue crews made a coordinated interior attack of the flames. According to Ross Vezin, a spokesman for the fire department, crews remained on the scene for 3 ½ hours extinguishing hot spots. A woman who lived at the home was taken to the South Carolina Burn Center with burn injuries. The fire remains under investigation but the likely cause was a space heater.”

The Island Packet shared a post in the **February 23, 2025** about a break-in at the fire department. “After a break-in at their headquarters early Thursday morning, officials at the City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department are using the incident to spread the word about free smoke alarm installations. Nothing in the firehouse appeared to be damaged or missing, but the post encouraged about 10 residents to reach out about its free smoke alarm services. As of Friday morning, it was unclear if any arrests had been made in connection with the break-in.”

In the **March 5, 2025** edition of The Island Packet, we are told “A crew from the City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department is helping contain the spread of massive wildfires in the Myrtle Beach area. The wildfire is the state’s largest fire covering over 2,000 acres. The crew from Beaufort/Port Royal would work as a ‘strike team,’ protecting a specific neighborhood from the fires impeding on that area, said Deputy Chief of Administration Ross Vezin. They would

*work alongside of other first responders from North Charleston, Clarendon and Horry counties.”*

## **Conclusion**

The research provided in these pages represent only a small portion of this department’s rich and remarkable history. Working on this project has provided this writer great satisfaction while reminiscing about personal relationships and experiences with so many of the characters mentioned in these pages, ie. John Harriott, Ralph Martin, “J. J.” Lyons, Ignacious “Iggie” Duane, H. B. Wells, Mills Black, David Gillam, Jack Marcil, Wendell Wilburn, Jack Abraham, John Oram, John Harter, Jennings Lyons, Hamp Shuping, David MacLellan, Jeannine Kline, Linda Wilburn, Sheri Phillips, Donnie Phillips, James Colwell, Bruce Kline, Dan Byrne, John Robinson, Sammy Breland, Harry Rountree, Buddy Jones, Sammy Negron, Reece Bertholf, Linda Edgerly, Tim Ogden, and Ross Vezin...and, so many more.

Over the years the Beaufort Fire Department has distinguished itself by producing a number of remarkable leaders who have made a difference, not only to the local department and its community’s safety, but also to the state’s advancement of its fire service. For example, Chief W. H. Ohlandt and E. A. Ricker were among the nineteen Charter Members of the S. C. State Firemen’s Association in 1905. Then, four members of the department and community went on to become Presidents of the State Firefighters’ Association: Wendell Wilburn (1992-1993), Bruce Kline (2001-2002), Harry Rountree (2005-2006), and Will Vaigneur of Lady’s Island-St. Helena Fire District (2014-2015). And, today, Ross Vezin, Assistant Chief of Administration, serves as the Association’s 4<sup>th</sup> Vice President and is set to become President in 2028.

Uncovering some of the department's stories and legacy hopefully has revealed new history which could have been lost through time or else forgotten by present generations. Since the beginning of the department's rudimentary formation dating back to before 1840, marked changes have noticeably occurred due to technological advances as well as regulatory standards. Its efficiency from the beginning has permitted the department to build a reputation of professionalism and dedicated service, an achievement for which all first responders strive. We must remember that history never stops...it is created with each passing day.

Listed below are the names of at least thirty-one (31) individuals who have served as Beaufort's fire chiefs, Presidents or Chief Foremen, all leaders of the various fire companies:

H. M. Stuart, Jr., M.D. (President)  
Samuel S. Roome (Foreman)  
William Mitchell (Foreman)  
David Mittle (Chief/Foreman)  
E. W. Bailey (Foreman)  
W. L. Shatswell (Chief)  
J. Albert Kinghorn (Chief)  
W. H. Ohlandt (Chief/Foreman)  
Lon Brooks (Chief)  
H. T. Danner, Sr. (Chief)  
James P. Darby (Chief)  
Dr. H. M Stuart, Sr. (Chief)  
James DeVine (Chief)  
John Brodie (Chief)  
\_?\_ McGrath (Chief)  
William Kressell (Chief)  
Sylus Wright (Chief)  
J. H. Harrison (Chief)

J. N. Wallace (Chief)  
A. H. Johnson (Chief)  
William Kinghorn (Chief)  
Harry T. Danner, Jr. (Chief)  
J. W. Logan, Jr. (Chief)  
Clarence "Chink" Haigh (Chief)  
John Harriott (Chief)  
Jack Marcil (\* 1<sup>st</sup> Paid Chief)  
Joe Best (Chief)  
Wendell Wilburn (Chief)  
Sammy Negrón (Chief)  
Reece Bertholf (Chief)  
Tim Ogden (Chief)

Listed below are those fire companies which were known to have been established and their tentative dates of organization. Several of the fire companies apparently merged at some point with other existing companies and their legacies faded away.

Unknown Name of Fire Company (circa 1840)  
Stuart Fire Co. (1859)  
New York Hose Co. (1864)  
Union Fire Co. (1870)  
Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1 (1870)  
Washington Fire Engine Co. No. 2 (1870)  
Palmetto Fire Engine Co. (Unknown)  
Pioneer Fire Co. (Unknown)  
Phoenix Fire Co. (Unknown)  
Beaufort Fire Co. (1874)

An article which appeared in The Beaufort Gazette on **December 7, 1982** gives some clarity concerning the various fire companies which served in Beaufort. Keep in mind that this writer discovered,

while researching this history, three (3) possibly unknown fire companies which existed prior to 1874...but, there still are some mysteries of dates yet to be resolved. The article gives the following account: *“Prior to 1874, three fire companies existed in Beaufort: the New York Hose Co., founded by homesick Northerners during or shortly after the Confederate War; the Palmetto Steam Fire Engine Co. and the Pioneer Ladder Co. (made up of black fire fighters). In 1874, another company, the Washington Steam Fire Engine, was organized. The companies united into two companies in 1915, the Washington Fire Engine Co. and the Pioneer Ladder Co. (located on Prince Street). In 1965, the Washington Fire Engine Co. changed its name to the Beaufort Volunteer Fire Department, while retaining the spirit of the Latin motto of the Washington Steam Fire Engine Company No. 2, “Nos Non Noblis”...meaning “Not For Ourselves”... from Psalm 115:1...”Not unto us, O Lord, but to your name give glory.”*

Leadership of all those listed above was, and is, important for sure, but the teamwork of the department’s firefighters has always been just as vital. So, congratulations to the Beaufort Fire Department, the City of Beaufort, and especially to the citizens who are the beneficiaries of the work rendered by the brave men and women, past and present, who nobly have performed their duties of protecting lives and property. May God bless...and, stay safe out there!

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**“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin  
And culture is like a tree without roots.” (Marcus Garvey)**