

# **Early History Of The Walhalla Fire Department**

## **1871-1923**

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The story of Walhalla and the ultimate evolution of fire protection in the town, located in the northwest corner of South Carolina in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, actually can be traced back to the early to mid-1800s. The community was founded by a number of German settlers and a few Scots-Irish farmers who eventually named the town Walhalla in 1850, which actually means “Garden of the Gods.” The town was finally incorporated on December 19, 1855, and its population began to grow although somewhat slowly.

We are told the houses were built “with a primitive design” and mainly along what became Main Street. This writer assumes primitive suggests the houses were basic in design and roughly constructed out of wood. If Walhalla was anything like other growing villages, towns, and cities of that day, fire was a common-place occurrence due in large measure to those same construction methods and lack of building codes. Homes and businesses were, of course, made of wood; chimneys and heating appliances were poorly fabricated; and structures were closely built to one another, thus creating extreme exposures during an unwanted fire.

The author, Nancy Backes, said, *“Americans had for many years helplessly watched their little wooden towns burn and be rebuilt and burn again.”* And, Walhalla was certainly no different as evidenced by the stories found in newspapers of that time. The only positive aspect of those frequent fires was they brought attention to the need to better defend its citizens and their properties from the ravages caused by “the fire fiend.”

This writer will attempt to amplify the rich history of the Walhalla Fire Department that is available in order to expand on the struggles, leadership, major challenges, and progression of its long history of service. Much of the history provided in the following pages are taken verbatim from various newspaper accounts and commentaries with an occasional observation by this researcher. So, let's begin!

The **January 25, 1869** edition of The Charleston Daily News briefly reported that *"There was a fire in Walhalla on Sunday morning. It broke out in the schoolhouse, formerly the American Hotel. No harm was done."*

Then, on **September 27, 1869** the same Charleston paper shared yet another brief account of a fire brought about by the crime of arson. *"The barn and stables of John Dowie, some two miles west of Walhalla, were destroyed by fire on the 17<sup>th</sup> inst. Cause, incendiarism."*

From the founding of Walhalla in 1850 and the period of the next two decades, there is no mention of fire protection. However, if Walhalla was like all other settlements in South Carolina and across the nation, there were always citizen volunteers who mustered to do what they could to either extinguish a fire with buckets of water or assist in removing property from a burning structure. Additionally, we know that these citizen volunteers were commonly alerted to a fire or other emergency by firing pistols, shotguns or rifles into the air.

Apparently, fire had been on the minds of the town's citizens and leaders for a while because the Keowee Courier, in their **March 3, 1871** edition of the paper, headlines *"FIRE ENGINE."* The article states, *"Walhalla wants a Fire Engine, and we suppose will have it. We certainly think it desirable. Fire is a hard master, especially among wooden buildings, and as our town is now becoming compact, a single fire might, without some appliance to prevent its spread, destroy much*

*valuable property. We do not mind paying for something which may prove a serviceable friend in distress, and we feel sure this is the disposition of our citizens generally. People do not complain so much at the paying as at the expenditure of taxes. If the public money of a State or corporation is wisely and judiciously applied for the benefit of the citizens, there will be no complaining. We see the Bill incorporating the Walhalla Hook and Ladder Company was passed, so that our town may soon have a regularly organized fire department.”*

In the same paper dated **March 3, 1871**, it is reported that, “At a meeting of the Walhalla Hook and Ladder Company on Tuesday evening, 28<sup>th</sup>, instant, at Ansel’s Hall, the following officers were elected to serve for the ensuing year: President- Wm. Korber, Vice President- Thos. P. Hoyt, Directors- John Dale, 2<sup>nd</sup>- H. B. Schroder, 3<sup>rd</sup>- M. F. Ansel, 4<sup>th</sup>- J. B. Watson, Sec.- S. S. Smeltzer, Trea.- A. Brenecke, Hall Keeper- J. H. Ostendorfe, Axemen- Henry Stucke, Jacob Schroder.”

The Charleston Daily News picked up a story out of The Keowee Courier on **June 5, 1871** which says, “The fire engine purchased by the corporation of Walhalla, from the Independent Fire Company of Columbia, was brought up on the 25<sup>th</sup> ultimo. On Friday it was taken out by the Walhalla Fire Company for trial and performed well. Water was thrown over one hundred feet in height, and considerably above the two story building in which the Courier office is located. Whether it will prove serviceable in case of fires, depends upon what water facilities may be furnished. At present there are none, and without some steps being taken, either by the corporation or private citizens, to secure a supply of water, the engine will be useless.”

It's thought-provoking to think that when this hand-drawn, hand-operated engine was purchased in March of 1871, in seven short months, the thriving City of Chicago would experience one of the most disastrous fires in America’s history.

The lack of an adequate supply of water was a big deal back then, and still is today even with our modern methods of firefighting. The fear of deficient water supplies became a reality as reported by The Charleston Daily News from a story in The Keowee Courier. The story reported on **June 26, 1871** that *“Between 9 and 10 o’clock on Monday night a large plank kiln in the lumber yard of Mr. John Klaufmann, in Walhalla, was discovered to be on fire. The alarm was at once given and the citizens repaired to the place, but the fire had made so much headway that all efforts to save the lumber proved futile. The loss will not exceed \$150. This accident gave to the Walhalla Fire Company an opportunity to test their new engine. It was promptly carried to the point, but could effect but little for the want of water. By means of a temporary tank filled with buckets, they arrested the spread of the fire among the loose lumber in the yard, of which there were large quantities, and extinguished the embers.”* Even a Columbia paper, The Daily Phoenix, printed this story two days earlier.

**Writer’s Addendum:** The story of the acquisition of “The Mountaineer Fire Engine” from the City of Columbia is an interesting account that is a valuable piece of our history that should be passed on to future generations and followers of fire service history. The story actually originates in Charleston around the late 1840s when that city purchased one, and possibly two, hand-pumped, hand-drawn “engine” from James Smith of New York. Smith was probably the most prominent fire engine builder of the day. His shop was located in New York and specialized in a small “New York Style” suction engine which became one of the most popular of all the American designed engines.

The engine purchased by the City of Charleston is a side-stroke, hand-pulled, and hand-pumped apparatus. The engine needed anywhere from 12 to 15 men in order to operate. It could pump between 100

and 150 gallons of water per minute depending on the strength and endurance of the volunteers. The engine could be fed from bucket brigades filling its chambers with water, or with the suction equipment, it could draft water from a creek, stream, well or cistern.

The story continues with the turbulent years of the Civil War. The little hand engine saw a lot of action in Charleston during those many bombardments on the peninsula where fires often raged out of control and threatened to destroy the entire city.

As General Sherman marched on the City of Columbia on February 17 and 18, 1865, much of that city was heavily damaged or destroyed. Among the casualties of that siege were the apparatus of the Columbia Fire Department. It is reported that Sherman's troops lit bales of cotton and important buildings of commerce and government, and while the firemen attempted to extinguish the flames, Union troops devastated their apparatus, equipment, tools, and hose.

As one can imagine, when the War had ended, the reorganization of the fire companies of Columbia was a challenge of monumental proportions. A Captain Stanley, was later appointed Chief in 1866, and sent an appeal throughout the country for equipment to rebuild his fire department. The City of Charleston answered the Captain's call for help by loaning Columbia a used hand-drawn pumper which was purchased five years later in June of 1871 by the town of Walhalla. The little engine now known as "The Mountaineer" is that machine.

Interestingly, "The Mountaineer" is the second oldest hand-drawn pumping apparatus in the State of South Carolina and is a prized treasure and physical representation of our fire service legacy.

As the fire department forged ahead with their newly acquired “engine”, the firemen of the day were developing some comradery among their volunteer members. In an article published in The Camden Journal on **April 4, 1872**, we notice that an ACT of the General Assembly “*approved on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January A.D. 1872*” officially incorporated the “*Mountaineer Fire Engine Company.*” We know the newly acquired hand-drawn engine purchased the year before was obtained by the town in the name of the Walhalla Fire Company. We also know there are few references to the Mountaineer Fire Engine Company and that the town was interested in purchasing a hook and ladder truck, and eventually did get one. So, we might assume that there were multiple fire companies at one time during the evolution of fire protection in the town.

The Daily Phoenix, a Columbia paper, printed on **March 1, 1873** that “*The dwelling formerly owned by Mrs. Baker, on Little River, was consumed by fire on Sunday last. The fire was accidental. The occupant of the premises, Mr. Gabriel Hughes, saved most of his effects.*”

“*FIRE IN WALHALLA*” was the headline in The Charleston Daily News on **April 4, 1873**. “*A fire broke out on Tuesday morning in the store of Mrs. Knee in Main Street, Walhalla. The fire spread to the store of Mr. S. Vandiver, thence to the store of Mr. Fisscher, (Jeweller,) all of which were entirely destroyed, together with the entire contents of the two first. Mr. Fisscher saved a portion of his stock. Mrs. Knee was uninsured, but it is said Mr. Vandiver’s stock was partially insured. The buildings were uninsured. There was not a breath of air stirring—had there been the destruction of property would have been immense, as nearly the entire town is built of wood. Vandiver’s loss was \$5,000. The total loss is about \$20,000. ( A subscriber kindly informs us that the Wahalla Fire Engine Company worked desperately to quell the flames. It was due to that company that the loss was no greater.)*”

The Edgefield Advertiser published about the above fire on **April 10, 1873**, and said, *“The fire was caused by the accidental breaking of a kerosene lamp in the 2<sup>nd</sup> story of Mrs. Knee’s dwelling.”*

Nearly two years later the Orangeburg News and Times mentioned briefly about a fire in Walhalla with a familiar name as one of the owners. The paper was published on **June 26, 1875**. *“On Thursday night of last week the dwellings of Mr. Keels Maxwell and Mrs. Knee, in Walhalla were entirely destroyed by fire.”*

A truly interesting commentary about a recent fire and the observations made concerning the town’s readiness to cope with fires was printed on **March 6, 1879** in The Keowee Courier. *“About 9 o’clock last Friday morning, the cry of fire was heard in the streets of our town, and soon the shouting of the people and ringing of the bells assembled the entire population of the town. It was found that the roof and upper story of the dwelling of Mr. John Ansel, on Main Street, was in a blaze and beyond hope of saving the property. The building was a large two-story frame, within about fifty feet of Biemann’s Hotel and in about eighty feet of the store of Mr. A. Fischesser. A light wind was blowing from the East, pressing the flames toward the store of Mr. Fischesser and Mr. Vandiviere, just above the latter. For a time it was believed these buildings would be burned, and with the aid of the large crowd the goods and household effects were removed from both buildings. In the meantime, the strongest efforts were made to save those buildings and also to prevent the Hotel East of the burning building from being lost. If the building of Mr. Fischesser had caught, that of Mr. Vandiviere could not have been saved; while on the other hand, the burning of the Hotel would have necessarily resulted in the destruction of eight or ten houses East of it and so near to each other as to have left no hope of saving them. The wind blowing lightly to the West enabled the people, with the efficient aid of the fire engine, to confine the fire to the house where it originated, though the Hotel was on fire a time or two. The*

*loss to Mr. Ansel will amount to \$2,000 or more. There was no insurance on the building. The most of the contents were saved. Mr. Fischesser and Mr. Vandiviere sustained losses by the breaking of furniture, crockery, etc., in the removal, to a considerable amount."*

Then the article turns its reporting to "THE FIRE ENGINE" and continues by saying the engine *"Did efficient service, and all must admit that without its help, the fire must have spread East and Westk, consuming from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars' worth of buildings including the heart of the town. We are satisfied the town by the work of last Friday has been amply repaid for all the money expended for the engine and the buildings of the water tanks on Main Street. We think the Council each year should build one or two additional tanks, until we have ready access to water all along the street."*

The article continues with bringing to light another issue with the fire company and its volunteer firemen. *"The Fire Company, we understand, has almost died out from want of interest among our people, or from a feeling of security. The necessity of having such a company was well illustrated last Friday, and the great service it rendered shows the importance of keep it up. When we have a fire all become alive and active to its importance, and untrained hands try to do what they should know before hand. It is too late to pray when the devil comes, is a true saying, and well applies to this thing of keeping up our Fire Company. Prepare for war in times of peace is also a wise maxim; so we think to prepare by thorough organization to check the spread of fire in a town is the part of true wisdom. If we never have a fire, to be prepared for it can do no harm, while if it breaks out such organizations are capable of great good."*

The writer, most likely the editor, of the paper resumes the editorial by talking specifically about "FIRES" and what should be done to better organize the fire company and ways to make the town's fire protection

more efficient. *“Fires of late years have become more frequent than in our early recollection. In Walhalla, in 1873, three stores were burned, including Mrs. Knee’s, Vandiviere’s and Fischesser’s. Since then the large dwelling and storeroom of Mr. G. K. Maxwell were burned, besides a number of smaller buildings in town. Newberry has been severely scourged by fire four times, while Abbeville, Greenville, Honea Path and other towns have suffered heavily. It behoves us, where most of our buildings are wooden structures to be thoroughly organized against fire. We believe that the Fire Company should have at least fifty members, and that all able bodied citizens should join it. We then should have a Hook and Ladder Company, well supplied with all needed appliances, and then a company whose duty it should be to look especially to the removal and preservation of property from buildings in cases of fire. These three organizations should be properly officered and should move only by order of their officers and with regularity and precision. One-half of our available strength is exhausted in shouting and excitement, without benefit to any one. Everybody wants to command and in the multitude of orders, the removal of furniture and property is its destruction. Discipline, coolness and strict obedience to a clear head will accomplish more with twenty men in an hour than a yelling, excited crowd can accomplish in two hours. If all able bodied citizens were enrolled and divided off according to their fitness for the respective duties mentioned, and then properly ordered much property might be saved in case of fire. Whenever a fire occurs all our citizens, white and black, do all they can to save property and to check the fire. They have the will and no one can gainsay (dispute) their readiness to do any and every kind of work, but they need organization.”*

Wow...that editor has made some really interesting observations and suggestions for sure in the above editorial. Think about it...he/she is saying the town needs an adequate engine company to get water to a fire; a hook and ladder company to gain access to fires with the proper tools, ladders, etc.; a salvage/rescue company to protect belongings,

contents, and occupants. The editor is also suggesting additional water tanks to increase adequate supplies of water; and then, finally, he/she points out the need for better organization, recruitment of volunteers, and a command presence to run the show. It is kind of farsighted and progressive thinking from an objective observer if you ask me!

Again, The Keowee Courier reports on **May 11, 1882** that *“The people ought to be proud of the Walhalla fire company and its band that offers such days of sport and amusement as Tuesday. We feel better that we lived Tuesday and hope all who were there have the same feeling.”*

This writer researched the collection of Sanborn Maps of South Carolina to determine if there any mention of fire protection Walhalla may have had in **1884**. I found the notation that the town’s population was about 800 that year, and the town had a hand-engine, 900 feet of 2 ½” fire hose, three fire cisterns of 5,200 gallon capacity each, and the fire engine headquarters was located in the middle of Main Street.

A short article appeared on **June 23, 1887** in The Anderson Intelligencer which says, *“Last Tuesday morning, at 3 o’clock, the office of the Keowee Courier and the law offices of Messrs. Keith, Verner, Gibson and Dendy, at Walhalla, were destroyed by fire, nothing being saved except a few books from the office of Maj. Dendy. There is evidence that the fire was of an incendiary origin.”*

The Abbeville Press and Banner, dated **July 6, 1887** went into more detail about the previously mentioned blaze. The headlines read, *“LAW OFFICES AND PRINTING OFFICES GO DOWN BEFORE THE DEVOURING FLAME.”* It goes on to say, *“Incendiaries, with Hearts Desperately Wicked, Assail the Character of Good Men and Women, and then Apply the Torch to Uninsured Property—Interesting Particulars of a Fire Which Will Become Historic.”* The commentary goes on, *“The citizens of the town, the fire company, and a number of colored men and women who*

*faithfully carried water, deserve great praise for their efforts to save the property and to prevent the spread of the fire. There was no fire well near, and the fire company could not effect the good it generally does in fires, but all was done that could be. In fact, the four buildings were doomed before any one reached the fire, as they were near together and dry as tinder.”*

When fire departments began to come on the scene in South Carolina during the late 1700s and early 1800s, firemen from across the state enjoyed coming together to participate in competitions and tournaments. Fire companies from many towns and cities across the state would travel great distances to take part in races in order to attain bragging rights and win prize money. The Anderson Intelligencer, dated **June 14, 1888**, talks about one such tournament in which Walhalla participated. The article is headlined, “*THE FIREMEN’S TOURNAMENT*” and goes into some detail about the festivities. “*As we go to press Anderson is alive with firemen and visitors, and we are just in the midst of the Firemen’s Tournament, the grandest demonstration that has ever occurred in our prosperous little city.*”

The article continues, “*Tuesday morning dawned beautiful and bright. At a few minutes before nine o’clock our firemen assembled at the C. & G. depot to meet the Mountaineers from Walhalla. These were composed of about twenty men, with Capt. V. L. Norman, Commander. Walhalla is not behind in this great time of progress. She has a number one fire department, and the Mountaineers are fine fellows, not hard to get acquainted with. They are heartily and warmly welcomed by our city, and escorted to headquarters. The Mountaineers, of Walhalla, were the last on the programme. They were a handsome team, and wore white close-fitting tights. In the reel contest they, too, missed connection with the engine, but made on of the best runs of the day. They did not enter the grab contest.*”

An interesting mystery is revealed in The Newberry Herald and News dated **January 17, 1889**. *“A fire in Walhalla on January 11<sup>th</sup>, broke out yesterday afternoon on Main Street in a building owned by Mr. John Rose, but now occupied by Mr. Pullom Gully. It is the same house in which the man Campbell was killed a few days ago. But very little damage was done, as our efficient fire department turned out promptly and extinguished it before it had made any headway.”*

It seems that Walhalla and its firemen enjoyed visitors and having a good time. The Anderson Intelligencer, dated **May 9, 1889** reports that *“The Pioneer Fire Company and the Independent Hook and Ladder Co. (Anderson) have received invitations to attend the annual picnic of the Walhalla Fire Company on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup>.”*

According to the **July 1889** copy of the Sanborn Maps, Walhalla still had possession of the hand-drawn, hand-pumped engine the town had purchased in 1871. The population had grown to approximately 1,000 people. Five years later in **1894** the population remained unchanged at 1,000 residents. The fire company continued to operate the hand engine but had added two chemical extinguishers (probably 40 gallon soda/acid chemical carts), and had constructed or purchased a Hook and Ladder apparatus.

The Anderson Intelligencer revealed in the **March 9, 1898** issued of their paper that *“Walhalla was visited last night by a serious conflagration, the Brennecke house and an adjoining dwelling going up in smoke, a total loss of building and furniture. Origin unknown. Mr. Herman Busch, one of the firemen, was struck on the head by a falling hook from the roof and his skull fractured. Chances for his recovery are very slight.”*

The **October 13, 1898** Keowee Courier announced that *“The Firemen’s annual Blowout took place Tuesday night last. A large crowd took part in the festivities and greatly enjoyed the evening.”*

The new century arrived to find that Walhalla continued to experience some rather serious and deadly fires. The Keowee Courier talks about a tragic fire in their **January 22, 1902** paper with the headlines, *“ANOTHER FIRE IN WALHALLA.”* *“On Monday night last the guard house in Walhalla was burned. About five o’clock in the afternoon Alfred L. Bellew, white, was arrested by Marshal J. A. Keaton on the charge of disorderly conduct, and in default of bond, he was confined in a cell in the northwest corner of the building. The marshal returned about seven o’clock and gave Bellew his supper. About ten o’clock the alarm of fire was given, and when parties first got there, the fire had gained such headway that it was impossible to open the cell door. It seemed that the fire originated in the cell in which he was confined. An inquest was held over the dead body Tuesday afternoon by Coronor W. L. Harbin and a jury, with M. Nicholson as the foreman. The testimony of several witnesses was taken, and the verdict was that Alfred L. Bellew came to his death from the effects of burns by a fire which originated in the cell in which he was confined. No blame attached to any one.”*

The article goes further into this sad story. *“It is thought probable that deceased had struck a match and started a fire in the cell with a view of getting out. He was very much under the influence of liquor when committed. Being in this condition he would not consider the consequences as a prudent man, and in this way brought about the deplorable accident.”*

Sadly, and unfortunately, there’s more. *“At one time during the fire it looked as if the Lutheran church was doomed. A stiff northeast wind was blowing and this drove the flames and smoke directly toward the church. The roof caught fire twice, but water was thrown on the blaze*

*just in time to put it out and save the building. Thus the little hand engine paid for itself again. But it becomes more and more apparent that Walhalla stands sorely in need of adequate facilities for fighting fire. The hook and ladder equipment was destroyed by the fire. Total loss, about \$800. No insurance."*

Again, this write refers to the Sanborn Maps of South Carolina to determine any progress made to fire protection within the town. Notation is made in the **July 1906** map that the population of Walhalla was around 1,500 people, and the fire department had to rely on public fire cisterns and private wells for water supplies. Also, the fire department consisted of 25 volunteer firemen, one "hand brake engine", 700 of 2 ½ inch hose, one hook and ladder truck, and two chemical extinguishers.

The Keowee Courier reports sad news in the **February 27, 1907** edition of the paper. *"DEATH OF MAYOR, JAMES THOMPSON."* The article says, *"Mayor James Thompson died at his home last Thursday evening at 7:50 o' clock. He had been sick about three weeks, suffering from an attack of grip, which developed into typhoid pneumonia. His death is deeply mourned by the citizens of Walhalla, whom he had served acceptably as Mayor for three years."* The obituary continues with a brief tribute to Thompson for service in the town's fire department. *"As a red-shirted lad he led the hose reel team of the old Mountaineer Fire Engine Company; organized and carried forward to a career of usefulness the Walhalla Hook and Ladder Company."* The mayor was born on October 29, 1870...he was 37 years old at his death.

This writer once again references the Sanborn Maps of South Carolina in order to obtain an update on any progress or changes to Walhalla's fire protection. The **September 1911** published work reveals that the town's population had increased to about 2,200 people. A special note indicates that a "fire department not organized." The notation denotes

that the town continues to operate with one hand engine and one hook and ladder (even though the hook and ladder “equipment” was destroyed in a 1902 fire.) The streets are unpaved, but Main Street is lighted by some electric lights.

The Keowee Courier published an account of a major fire loss in their **December 3, 1913** paper. The headline read, “WALHALLA AGAIN VISITED BY A DESTRUCTIVE FIRE.” The article continues, *“The handsome residence of R. T. Jaynes, Esq. destroyed Wednesday of last week, causing loss of at least \$20,000... It was realized almost from the very first that any attempt to save the massive structure would be futile, but crowds gathered and worked heroically for the short time that it was possible to venture into or near the building.”*

A very interesting advertisement appeared in the **March 25, 1914** printing of The Keowee Courier which says in part, *“Will you be at the Court House tomorrow (Thursday) evening at 8 o’clock? You should be, if you are interested in what is to be done in the future in the way of securing both electric lights and water-works.”* So, we know Walhalla had no water system before 1914 and had to rely on cisterns located around the town to supply their hand-pumped engine.

The Keowee Courier provided an interesting glimpse into the fire department in their **July 1, 1914** printing. *“Fire alarms are becoming quite common of late in Walhalla. On last Friday another alarm was given. And it was found that a tenant house belonging to C. G. Jaynes, on Spring Street, to the north of Grant’s stable, was on fire. A number started at once for the fire and rendered what assistance they could give at the moment. Harry R. Huges, however, jumped into his automobile and headed for the engine house, where an entrance was forced, a number of tools and the chemical engine moved out of the way, and with the assistance of others, hitched his car to the old fire engine and yanked it down-town faster than it had ever made a trip*

*before. The old 'water wagon' worked like a charm, too, giving a splendid stream from a Main Street cistern that had the fire out in short order. The roof of the house was almost destroyed over the kitchen, but otherwise slight damage was done. The automobile turned the trick that saved the building and possibly others."*

Once again, The Keowee Courier shared with their readers about a fire in the **May 1, 1918** edition of the paper. *"A small fire, though a costly one to T. Joe Todd, of Walhalla, occurred last Thursday evening about 7 o'clock. The small stable building used by Mr. Todd for sheltering stock was found to be on fire and the alarm was given, citizens responding promptly, but being unable to save the building, which was far gone when firefighters arrived on the scene. The building was a part of the Verner property on Klatherine Street, just off Main, and was located next to the large livery stable, which fortunately, was prevented from taking fire. Mr. Todd lost a cow, a calf and a hog in the blaze, his loss amounting to about \$125."*

The fire department was not mentioned in a **December 21, 1921** printing of The Keowee Courier, but a "bucket brigade" was noted. *"Last Saturday morning the fire alarm was given about 1 o'clock and citizens awakened were given a view of a brightly lighted sky line to the northern section of town. The fire originated in a small dwelling in what is known as 'Moccasin Bend,' and before the flames could be stopped three tenet houses belonging to T. E. Alexander had been razed to the ground. A fourth took fire, but this was saved by the work of a few moments on the part of a 'bucket brigade'."*

The Greenville News had an interesting article published on **December 12, 1923** which provides a glimpse of fire protection in Walhalla. The headline reads, *"Walhalla Fire Loss Over \$15,000; Little Insurance"*. *"SENECA FIRE DEPARTEMENT RESPONDS TO CALL TO FIGHT EARLY FIRE."* The article picks up with, *"A general fire alarm was sounded*

*Sunday morning at 4 o'clock, when it was discovered that the store of Moss & Ansel on Main Street, in the heart of the business section of town was on fire. The flames had made some headway when the firemen arrived, and it was impossible to determine whether the origin of the fire was in the store or in the overhead ceiling."*

*More on the fire is reported, "Although it was an unseemly hour for a fire, yet each and every member of the volunteer fire company responded, and in less than twenty minutes after the alarm was given, the flames were under control. This is the first time Walhalla's fire pumps have been called into use. The pressure from the mountains was also turned on. The citizens generally of the town are today congratulating the fire company for its splendid work. It is freely stated that the system of waterworks and the firefighting apparatus paid for themselves last night when a repetition of the fire of 1898 was avoided. Walhalla appreciated the prompt response of the Seneca Fire Department."*

This writer chooses to table further research of the Walhalla Fire Department at this point because recent history is more easily found from printed materials than in earlier days. This writing has been an interesting project indeed for it has allowed me to uncover some of this department's stories and legacy which may have been lost through time or even forgotten by past generations. The story of the Walhalla Fire Department is very similar to other departments in our state...its beginnings, struggles, leadership, and, of course, the fires. However, its history is a bit more unique in that the town and its fire department has captured a major part of our history in preserving that little hand engine built over 170 years ago by its famous builder, James Smith, that became known as "The Mountaineer." Hopefully this work will be shared with many whose interest and love of the fire service will kindle a desire to keep our legacy alive and quite possibly pick up where I left off to put to pen the rest of this department's rich history.

History doesn't stop...it is created with each passing day.

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