

# **A GLIMPSE OF THE HAMPTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**-PAST & PRESENT-**

**(circa 1879-Present)**

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## **A Glimpse of The Hampton Fire Department Past and Present**

The story of the Town of Hampton and the eventual evolution of fire protection in this community dates back to the late 1800s. The area's first inhabitants were the Salkehatchie, the Combahee, and the Coosawhatchie Indians. Hampton was initially named "the Town of Hampton Courthouse" and was incorporated in 1879, a year later than Hampton County. The name was subsequently shortened to just "Hampton" when the U.S. Postal Service required more succinctness. As most southerners know, Hampton County was named for General Wade Hampton who later served as Governor of South Carolina.

As the community grew in population, small wooden houses, stores, and other commercial enterprises, a school and churches soon sprang up. The Hampton County Guardian, one of the state's oldest newspapers, went into operation several months prior to the town's incorporation. Most assuredly, Hampton was like so many other communities, villages, towns and cities of that era which also suffered from the frequent and frightful visits from "the fire fiend," "the devouring element," or "the fire king."

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 Hampton 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.

Many small towns in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century utilized very primitive means to extinguish fires, ie. buckets of water, wet blankets, axes, shovels, rakes, ladders and various other limited techniques...even pine tops to stop the spread of woods and brush fires. Before church bells were afforded

and erected, the alarm of fire was sounded by crude but very effective measures...firing shots into the air from a pistol, shotgun or rifle which quickly got the attention of neighbors and signaled something was amiss. As church bells became more common, the town's people would employ the constant ringing of the bells to alert the citizens of a fire or other emergency in the area.

Fire protection in the 1800s was totally dependent on citizen volunteers to respond to alarms of fire. Not unlike today, fire could only be contained and property saved if caught in its beginning stages. However, more often than not, volunteers recognized their limitations and got to work trying to remove the contents of a structure with as much robustness as attempting to extinguish a blaze. Additionally, when structures were built close together, fires spread rapidly from house to house or store to store. Often a fire break was attempted by use of dynamite or tearing down walls, out-buildings, fences, wooden sidewalks, or other wooden structures in an effort to limit the fire's spread.

An article appearing in The State newspaper on May 11, 1911, described very clearly the perils of wood construction and the occurrence of fire. *"So long as wooden houses with shingle roofs shall be built, the only safety from fire is to set them far apart, and that is only a partial safeguard against destruction. When a man erects a frame house, he would as well understand that sooner or later it is going to be burned, and if he builds it close to other houses of the same kind, his home is in constant peril. This is true, even in larger towns having paid and efficient fire departments."*

When Hampton County and the Town of Hampton were established in 1878 and 1879 respectively, a number of the early residents living there were very committed to helping this new community grow and prosper. For example, it is said that George Lewis Hoover gave the land to be

built upon; Major W. H. Mauldin donated lumber for construction of a courthouse, jail and other structures; and Captain A. A. Browning supplied the windmill-powered artesian well for public use (and most assuredly fire protection). Also, Miles Benjamin McSweeney, who later became Governor, established a print shop in the midst of all the new construction and prior to the actual founding of the town.

Although there is no mention of fire protection during those early days, this writer can say with considerable belief and confidence that those early founders (McSweeney, Hoover, Mauldin, and Browning) were likely participants and leaders in an “extemporary organization” that responded to alarms of fire equipped with buckets and blankets. These men certainly had vested interests (financial, personal, and political) in protecting their newly established town from unwanted fires.

Martha Bee Anderson corroborated the above assumptions in her article researched and prepared for The Hampton County Guardian printed on May 3, 1972. *“Before 1932, Hampton property owners were protected from fire only by an eager but meagerly equipped and prepared “bucket brigade.” The author also validated that “Three cracks from a pistol served as a town-wide fire alarm for summoning anybody willing to come out to help fight a fire. Most often it was a losing battle, because of inadequate water force (no town water system) and equipment. With town waterworks, installation of fire hydrants and extended water lines came acquisition of basic fire-fighting equipment by the town, as it could be afforded.”*

This writer will attempt to capture the rich history of the fire department that is available in order to expand on the struggles, leadership, major challenges, and progression of the Hampton Fire Department. The history provided in the following pages are mostly taken verbatim from various newspapers, other resources, and an

occasional personal commentary and observation. So, let's begin.

A Columbia newspaper, The Daily Phoenix, reported on **August 26, 1871** that *"An incendiary fire at Hampton caused a loss of \$5,000."*

**Note: So far, this is the first recorded incidence of fire in the village which later became known as Hampton.**

From the Hampton Guardian dated in early **January of 1880**, *"The house occupied by the Rev. G. A. Hough, at Early Branch, was destroyed by fire on Tuesday night after Christmas."*

The Times and Democrat published on **June 17, 1886** that *"The boiler at the saw mill of Dodson & Co., in Hampton County, exploded Wednesday, killing the engineer, Mr. T. D. Richardson and badly scalding his son."*

The Fairfield News and Herald said on **October 6, 1886** that *"The residence of Mr. W. H. Reid, Hampton, was destroyed by fire last Friday night."*

The Town of Hampton was represented well as Mr. M. B. McSweeney was elected to serve another term as the President of The State Press Association during their 13<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Charleston.

McSweeney was the owner and operator of The Hampton County Guardian newspaper, as noted in the **June 8, 1887** edition of The Watchman and Southron newspaper of Sumter. Mr. McSweeney was also the "Intendant" of Hampton for five terms of office...essentially, the mayor or administrator of the town.

The Manning Times reports on **June 19, 1895** that *"M. B. McSweeney of the Hampton Guardian has our heartfelt sympathy in his deep affliction by the loss of his little daughter, and we sincerely hope the chastening*

*rod, which he has been called upon to pass under, will bring joy to him and his."*

In this writer's hometown newspaper, The Manning Times, there appeared on **June 14, 1899**, a lengthy article about Miles B. McSweeney, *"A Charleston Boy In The Executive Mansion."* The article goes into detail about Governor McSweeney and his early days living and working in Charleston. Interestingly, as a young man in both Charleston and Columbia, he worked in various capacities in the printing business. While living in Columbia he served the prominent Typographical Union as recording secretary. McSweeney held other interests as well and is noted in the Times, *"He was among the first to sign the roll for reorganization of the Pheonix Hook & Ladder Company, and served as secretary of the company for a number of years."* **Note:** This article further establishes this writer's belief that the early founders of Hampton were likely involved in some type of fire protection prior to 1911. Mr. McSweeney was involved in the very active and respected Pheonix Hook & Ladder Co. of Columbia and was selected by its membership to serve at every meeting, training, or other event as their Secretary. More often than not, once firefighting is in your blood, it's difficult to put aside.

The State newspaper informed their readers on **June 4, 1900** that *"The residence of Mr. P. W. Buford of Hampton was destroyed by fire Wednesday morning, May 23<sup>th</sup>. The fire originated in the kitchen stove pipe, no insurance."*

The Lexington Dispatch printed on **September 3, 1902** that *"The large plant of the Hampton Dry Kiln and Blowing Mill Company at Hampton was partially destroyed by fire recently."*

On **December 2, 1902**, The State paper announced the arrival of telephones for Hampton and surrounding area. *"The telephones for the*

*Hampton Telephone company have arrived and will soon be put in. The officers of this company are: W. F. Lightsey of Crockettville, president; e. M. Peebles of Hampton, secretary and treasurer. The capital stock is \$3,000. A good sized switchboard will be put in the central office here. Varnville, Brunson, Fairfax, Allendale and Crockettville will be connected. A good many phones have been taken and the company expects to run on a good paying basis from the first."* **Note: With the introduction of telephones, the notification of fires and other emergencies provided for a much more rapid response for emergency personnel.**

The Bamberg Herald made a big announcement on **April 16, 1903** that made the citizens of Hampton optimistic that a waterworks system would soon be in operation. *"For a number of years the citizens of this town have made various efforts to secure a flowing artesian well. Capt. A. A. Browning, Intendent of the town, and the Wardens, gave consideration to that trite old saying that 'there is no such word as fail.'"* The article continues, *"Mr. J. M. Jennings, of Bamberg, was communicated with and an agreement was made...and went earnestly to work. On Wednesday afternoon last about 6 o'clock, the sound of the whistle was heard and on every side men, women, girls and boys shouted 'we have a first class flowing artesian well'. This well is one of the best in the State and is 818 feet in depth and the casing from top to bottom is of three-inch standard pipe. Hampton's Intendent and four Wardens are determined to push the good work on, and in fact have already adopted a resolution and appointed a committee with full power to act and make a contract for the purchase of the necessary piping, fittings, etc., for a complete system of water works, and there is very little doubt but that Mr. Jennings will remain to complete the work.* **Note: The procurement of a water system for any town was a big deal because it then provided a maturing fire department the availability of water with which to do more in the business of extinguishing fires.**

On **May 12, 1903**, The State newspaper printed *"Information reached here this evening that the large stables of Captain Browning in Hampton were destroyed by a presumably accidental fire last night, involving a loss of \$500."* **Keep in mind that Captain Browning was instrumental in constructing the first windmill to power an artesian well in the town.**

The Anderson Intelligencer reported on **September 16, 1903** that *"The dispensary at Hampton has been destroyed by fire. The loss was about \$2,300 with only \$400 insurance."* A neighboring newspaper, The Keowee Courier, noted that *"The dispensary at Hampton was destroyed by fire on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It is not known just how the fire originated, but it is thought to have been set by rats."* **Writer's Comments: Rats? Rats? Kind of humorous to this writer. Serious focus on fire investigations had not yet come into the picture. Interestingly, dispensary fires were commonly reported throughout the state in many towns and cities...lots of controversial fires to say the least! Also, it was noted that this building was owned by M. B. McSweeney, editor of the Hampton Guardian, and carried no insurance.**

The Bamberg Herald reported on **September 22, 1904** that *"Mr. John Jennings has arrived (in Varnville) with his machinery and corps of assistants, and began work on the 10<sup>th</sup> instant on the corner, nearest the residence of Dr. Vincent, of the lot once used by the town as a park. We hope Mr. Jennings may be successful in obtaining a good flow, and that soon we will have water everywhere in our town, on our street corners, in our houses, in our flower yards and even in our horse lots."*

On **February 22, 1905**, The Keowee Courier wrote that *"Last Sunday night a shanty, near the Okeetee Club, in Hampton county, caught fire while the old folks were at church. There were seven children in the house and they burned to death."*



Greenwood's Evening Index gave a short notice on **November 21, 1907** that *"The Binnicker Hotel at Hampton was destroyed by fire Thursday."* This brief notice is also recorded in the "Manufacturers' Record" of the same date...no details are provided. Additionally, a historic record provided by the S. C. Department of Archives and History simply noted that the hotel was *"built in 1907 to replace an earlier hotel which burned in 1895."*

The Press and Standard in Walterboro printed on **January 29, 1908** that *"One of the most disastrous fires that has ever visited Hampton occurred last night between 10 and 11 o'clock, totally destroying the building presses and nearly all of the material of the Hampton County Guardian, owned by Miles B. McSweeney (former Governor), the offices of Robert R. Sizer & Co., owned by Senator W. S. Smith, two small stores and two small dwellings, all on Lee avenue, the principal street. The loss is estimated at \$10,000. About half of this is covered by insurance. The fire originated in one of the small buildings, and its origin is unknown."* Interestingly, The Times and Democrat of Orangeburg referred to this fire as being *"hit by the fire fiend."* Also, the reader should remember that Mr. McSweeney established the newspaper just prior to the town's official charter.

The Gaffney Ledger, dated **June 5, 1908**, states *"Fire completely destroyed the dwelling and jewelry store of Mr. W. T. Johns and the offices of Messrs. Jas. W. Moore and Dr. R. C. Williams at Hampton. The fire originated in the kitchen of Mr. John's residence and quickly spread to the other buildings. The office of Senator W. S. Smith was saved after a hard fight. All the buildings were partly insured, except that of Dr. R. C. Williams, which was a complete loss."*

*"Ex-Governor McSweeney Dead,"* read the caption in the Edgefield Advertiser on **October 6, 1909**. *"Former Governor Miles B. McSweeney of South Carolina, who had been under treatment at Mount Hope*

*Retreat, in Baltimore, Md., since July 18 last, died at that institution at 1:30 o'clock Wednesday morning. Mrs. McSweeny was present at the time of his death, as also was his son, Eugene B. McSweeney. His body was brought to his old home at Hampton, Thursday and interred there."*

The Evening Index, a Greenwood newspaper, noted on **November 4, 1909** that *"A big saw mill plant valued at half a million dollars was destroyed by fire in Hampton county last Friday."*

According to the **December 1, 1910** edition of The Bamberg Herald, *"Fire destroyed four houses here (Hampton) this morning. The loss is approximately \$4,500 or more. At about four o'clock this morning the citizens of this town were waked from their slumbers by the fire alarm, given in the usual way, the firing of pistols and guns and the ringing of bells. The whole town turned out, as is customary. Four buildings, including three storehouses, were totally consumed, and the Hampton Loan and Exchange Bank building would have burned had it not been for the good work of local fire fighters. The fire originated near the store of Mr. H. W. Cook, in a crowded business section of the town, origin unknown."* **Again, the reader should make note this is the first mention of a "extemporary organization" which the newspaper referred to as "fire fighters."**

The State newspaper wrote about a fire death near Hampton on **March 28, 1911**. *"Saturday afternoon while fighting a forest fire that threatened Hope-Well Baptist Church about four miles south of Hampton, Homer Goethe met death by a falling tree. Mr. Goethe and several others were working heroically to save the church building and their neighbors' property from destruction from a severe forest fire, when a large pine tree suddenly fell in the direction of the fire fighters. Mr. Goethe would have escaped, but in his effort to do so, he stumbled in a stump hole and the tree fell upon him, killing him instantly. He was*

*buried at Hope-Well Baptist Church Sunday afternoon by Rev. W. H. Dowling."*

On **May 22, 1911** The State newspaper covered a story announcing an "official" organization of a fire department. *"An organization was effected Friday night to be known as the Hampton fire department. E. F. Hammond was elected chief and G. G. Dowling secretary. A committee on by-laws was appointed to draft the rules and regulations governing the department and the meeting adjourned to meet next Tuesday night. Hampton now has two good flowing wells and is equipped with 2 ½ inch main pipes and hydrants, and with a fire engine and pump and all necessary equipment for fighting fire, and this department should be a salvage corps to some extent for future outbreak of fires. The department enrolled with 20 heroic volunteers."*

**Note: The article says the town had a waterworks of some nature with hydrants, a fire engine, and necessary equipment...all prior to the official organization of a fire department. This writer will continue to research the actual date of acquiring fire apparatus and what type (most likely either a hand-drawn, hand-pumped device or a hand-drawn, gasoline pumping engine with a hand-drawn two-wheeled hose reel).**

*"Flames Sweep Lumber Plant,"* read the headlines in The Watchman and Southron (a Sumter newspaper) on **November 29, 1911**. *"At 9 o'clock this morning fire was discovered in the dry kiln of the Hampton & Branchville Railroad and Lumber Company here, and within one hour the entire plant except the saw mill had been consumed. The loss is estimated at between \$20,000 and \$25,000, with no insurance. The origin of the fire is unknown. The telegraph wires were burned and communication with Charleston on the Charleston & Western Carolina railway was delayed for four hours."*

On **March 23, 1912**, The Greenwood Daily Journal reported that a *"Fire at Hampton destroyed the sawmill, lumber and skids belonging to William Cummings. The loss is thought to be about \$10,000."*

The **May 21, 1914** edition of The Bamberg Herald noted a major fire in Varnville. *"Fire completely destroyed property valued at \$70,000 in Varnville, two miles from this place, this morning at 2:30 o'clock. Seven stores and all of the outbuilding appurtenant thereto were destroyed. Insurance amounted to \$23,100 was carried on a portion of the property destroyed. The origin of the fire is unknown. It seems that the fire started upstairs in the rear of the store occupied by Varnville Furniture Company."*

The Greenwood Daily Journal stated on **March 17, 1915** that *"The home of F. W. Browning at Hampton was destroyed by fire."* The State paper also picked up the story and said the house was located at the corner of Lee Avenue and Poplar Street. *"Every effort was made to save the building, but nothing could be done to check the flames until the structure was in ashes. The brick building next door to Mr. Browning's, in which L. M. Sauls conducts a general merchandise store, caught also, and both the building and the stock of goods were damaged considerably. The fire occurred at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon."*

Greenwood's Evening-Index informed the public on **March 11, 1917** that *"One of the most disastrous fires in the history of the town occurred in Varnville at an early hour this morning when practically the entire number of business houses on both sides of Main Street were destroyed, entailing an estimated loss of between \$65,000 and \$75,000, partly covered by insurance. The fire originated in a lot separating the stores of C. W. Taylor and W. O. Guess. A number of banana cartons and a quantity of excelsior (wood shavings) had been piled on this vacant lot, and it is supposed that someone passing by carelessly threw a lighted cigarette on this pile of refuse, igniting it."*

An old postcard, dated **November 17, 1918**, shows terrible destruction from a tornado which passed near the edge of Hampton. *“Early Sunday evening a cyclone of terrific force passed through the western part of Hampton and touched down on the property of Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Thomas about 3 miles east of town. An eight-year old son was killed, and their home, stables, and barns were destroyed. Hampton photographer, Robert Lee Cleland made at least two postal photographs of the devastation.”*

The Fort Mill Times informed their readers on **February 3, 1921** that *“Fire of an unknown origin was discovered in the large frame building occupied by the Hampton Warehouse Company and such headway had already been made that it was not possible to save the building. This building was leased from the town of Hampton, it having been erected a few years ago for county fair purposes and was being used as a warehouse for storing and curing. At the time of the fire the building contained 2,500 bushels of potatoes and 9,000 crates, 6,500 of which were empty.”*

The **November 25, 1924** edition of The State paper headlined with *“Widow of Governor Victim of Flames.”* The article continues, *“Mrs. Mattie Porcher McSweeney, aged 61, widow of the late Gov. Miles B. McSweeney of South Carolina was fatally burned while dressing in her room at the Binnicker hotel here this morning about 7 o’clock and died this afternoon about 1 o’clock. It seems as if Mrs. McSweeney’s clothing became ignited from the fire in the fireplace and before any one could assist her, her clothing was a mass of flames. A Mrs. Ellis, an occupant of the room, was in bed but could do little until others reached the scene it is said. Rufus Belger and E. V. Green, guests at the hotel, heard the screams of the two women. Mr. Belger smothered the flames on Mrs. McSweeney by using a blanket while Mr. Green extinguished those which had spread to articles in the room”*

The Florence Morning News noted on **September 23, 1925** that *“Forest fires which have caused considerable damage in this section throughout the drought period have been checked by rains of the past week. Timber lands covering a large area have been burned and a number of tenant houses destroyed by the flames.”*

The Beaufort Gazette shared a story about plans to upgrade Hampton’s water and sewer system in the **January 31, 1929** edition of the paper. *“Hampton may soon have water and a sewerage system, if present plans pan out. The town council headed by Mayor Fred Parker, signed a contract on January 17<sup>th</sup> with the Jaudon Engineering company of Elberton, Ga., which calls for a preliminary survey of the town for a **complete** water and sewerage system for the town for the purpose of ascertaining the cost of installing such a system. Mayor Parker believes that now, when labor and material are so cheap is the time to go ahead with this work.—Hampton Guardian.”*

The **June 8, 1933** edition of The State newspaper printed a brief story about a *“Fire which threatened to sweep a wide area in this city early tonight was halted by dynamite after it had destroyed an apartment house, the law offices of Hanna and Warren and a nearby residence. Damage was estimated at approximately \$7,500. The Allendale fire department responded to a call for aid but spread of flames had been checked before it arrived.”* **Note: Dynamite was used on occasion to blow up a structure in order to make a fire break and prevent the further spread to other exposures. This method stopping the spread of fire was often used in Charleston during the late 1800s.**

According to the Sanborn Maps of South Carolina dated **February 1935**, the Town of Hampton had eight dbl. hydrants on 6” mains located in the business district. The waterworks consisted of covered concrete reservoir having 100,000 gallon capacity. In addition, there was an elevated tank with 75,000 gallon capacity. The pumping station utilized

one Fairbanks Morse 100 gpm pump connected to a 10 hp electric motor, and one Fairbanks Morse 500 gpm pump connected to a 40 hp Chrysler gasoline motor. The waterworks was located West First Street. **Note: Sanborn Maps are detailed maps of U. S. cities and towns in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The maps were created to allow fire insurance companies to assess their total liability in a community. These maps were the precursor of what we know today as ISO.**

The Columbia Record noted in the printing of their paper on **September 8, 1937** that *"Sunday morning at about 2:30 o'clock, the town of Hampton was aroused by the screaming of the fire siren, calling volunteer firemen to save a carload of cotton which stood on the tracks just opposite the C. and W. C. Railway station. The origin of the fire, which did unestimated damage to the boxcar and 22 bales of cotton loaded in it was unknown. An old woman, living nearby the gin, gave the first alarm when she saw the tiny flames creeping through the car."*

The State noted on **November 30, 1940** that *"Approximately \$900 worth of rosin and raw gum was destroyed by fire Monday morning at the turpentine still on the outskirts of Varnville, owned by L. B. Moody. Thought the fire raged for a couple of hours, menacing the school building it did not spread beyond. Origin of the fire is unknown."*

On **March 24, 1941**, The State paper reported that *"T. G. Stanley's Drug Store and C. B. Parker's Grocery store were totally destroyed by fire early this morning. The building, which housed both firms, was owned by Mr. Stanley. The flames were not discovered until they had practically consumed the building at 6 a.m. The volunteer fire department succeeded in saving neighboring buildings. Mr. Stanley said that he would rebuild at once and in the meantime will find some suitable quarters for carrying on his prescription business."*

*"Fire Destroys Hampton Building,"* according to The State paper on **December 23, 1942**. *"The building owned by R. H. Hampton was destroyed by a fire here Saturday morning with a loss estimated at \$3,800. The files and records in the town office located in the building were destroyed. The Andrew Thomas grocery located in the building was also burned to the ground."* **Note: This may explain why there is little archived material of the town during the decades after its inception in 1879.**

*"School At Furman Destroyed By Fire."* The Times and Democrat reported on **November 24, 1948** that *"Students of the Furman High School gathered for classes in the Baptist and Methodist churches of this Hampton County town today because fire last night destroyed their \$50,000 school building. Supt. R. F. Causey of Hampton County schools said nothing was saved from the large brick building in the line of equipment, records or furniture. Fire equipment from Hampton and Estill answered the alarm. According to Fire Chief H. C. Mixon of the Hampton volunteer fire department, the Estill firefighters had the flames under control before Hampton's trucks arrived, but the water supply in the truck tanks gave out and it was necessary to dig into a nearby ditch to get water. The pressure was low and by the time the hose could be replayed on the building the fire was out of bounds again. Hampton's department could do little, Mixon said, except to prevent spread of the fire into the school's coal supply bin."*

*"Old Home Burns,"* stated in the **December 2, 1948** edition of The Greenville News. *"One of Hampton's fine old homes was charred rubble today and three families were homeless. The blaze, fought for more than three hours by Hampton Volunteer firemen, early yesterday destroyed the home of Tillet Carter. Fire Chief H. C. Mixon said the cause of the blaze had not been determined."*



*“\$5,000 Blaze Hits Hampton Coca-Cola Plant.”* The February **16, 1951** edition of The State paper reported that *“Fire at noon today threatened total destruction of a two-story brick building housing the Hampton Coca-Cola Bottling company plant. Members of the Hampton volunteer fire department fought swiftly and effectively to control a stubborn and partially smothered blaze which started in the first floor furnace room and swept through a wall of the entire plant. Damage to the building was conservatively estimated at \$5,000. Owners of the company are Richard L. Hatcher and Philip Hatcher. It has not been determined definitely what caused the blaze. Company employees were at lunch at 12 noon, and the fire, apparently smoldering in the closed building during that hour, was not discovered until Philip Hatcher returned to the plant.”* **Note: This writer takes personal privilege to acknowledge knowing Philip Hatcher for a number of years prior to his death. His son, Jerry, was a long-time firefighter in Hampton.**

*“Neighbors Pitch In, Help Hampton Victim of Fire,”* read an article in The State newspaper on **September 1, 1952.** *“In an early Sunday morning fire last month the market operated by Marvin Kinard in the West End business section was destroyed by fire completely. There was no insurance coverage. On Friday the young man reopened his store in the same location, having rebuilt immediately. Aiding were a dozen or more volunteers, friends and customers of Kinard’s who wanted to have a part in helping the store owner get back on his feet. Various merchants of the town also supplemented well wishes by presenting him with checks befitting the size of their respective businesses.”* In an earlier article it stated that *“the Hampton fire department arrived at the scene about 5:45 a.m. Varnville volunteer firemen joined the Hampton men in the fight to control the flames, which threatened to spread to other buildings in the block. This is one of the worst fires in the Hampton business district since one which destroyed the Stanley building in 1940.”*

Sad news was reported in the **December 2, 1952** edition of The Columbia Record. *“A fire here yesterday afternoon brought death to Richard Davis, 5, a son of Junior Davis and Lovelle Davis. The Davis home caught fire at about 3 o’clock, and burned swiftly, the flames aided by a stiff wind. A child rushed in the house to try to rescue the boy, but was overcome by smoke and had to be taken from the house.”*

The State provided a brief account about Hampton’s Fire Department on **December 5, 1952**. *“Fire fighters of Plywoods-Plastics Corporation, Westinghouse subsidiary, and members of the Hampton Volunteer Fire Department were guests of the plant at a dinner at Micarta Lodge last Wednesday evening.”*

According to The State newspaper published on **May 31, 1954**, *“A smoldering fire caused heavy damages to the bodyshop of Brunson Pontiac Company, Hampton, Thursday. The building was damaged heavily, and four automobiles demolished by excessive heat, on car being a new sedan.”*

On **March 12, 1955**, The State newspaper wrote that *“South Carolina Forestry Commission personnel in Hampton County caught a breather today as the critical forest fire situation in the county eased up slightly. County Ranger J. D. Peebles said there were only two new fires and these were relatively small ones.”* The story continued a few days later when it was reported that *“Hampton volunteer firemen and equipment have answered two calls Saturday and Sunday to aid in controlling woods fires in town near residences.”* Greenwood’s Index-Journal reports *“Nearly 10,000 acres have been destroyed by forest fires in Hampton County during the past two weeks...the hardest hit sector is in the Savannah River Swamp.”*

On **May 7, 1955**, The State newspaper reported that *“A Hampton County Farm Bureau hot supper slated here tonight turned out to be a*

*little too hot. The American Legion hut barbecue shed behind the hut where the bureau's supper committee was barbecuing meat for tonight's event caught fire and burned to the ground. The Hampton Volunteer Fire Department answered the alarm and prevented the fire from spreading to the hut and nearby homes but the Farm Bureau's barbecue was barbecued to a crisp and tonight they will probably eat hash, according to County Agent C. W. Thompson."*

*"Hampton Firemen Have Busy Spell," stated an article from The State newspaper on **January 13, 1956**. "As far as the Hampton Volunteer Fire Department's work goes on weekends it's usually a 'dum de dum dum' routine, but lately it's shifted to a ding, ding, dinging routine, averaging three alarms to the day. Normally, the town averages one, or less, alarms a week. Last weekend in Hampton there were seven calls for help and all were woods or brush fires threatening homes. Weekend before last, in addition to a couple of woods fires, the Hampton firemen answered an SOS to Brunson to help firemen there battle a warehouse-workshop-fire threatening the residential section."*

The Columbia Record on **April 24, 1956** reported "A 6-year old boy is in critical condition at Hampton County Hospital from burns received in a fire which took the life of his two-year-old brother. The children were burned when the older boy tried to throw kerosene on a fire in their home Saturday morning. The kerosene can exploded. The dead boy was listed as Edward Dobson. Matthew Dobson, Jr. is hospitalized with severe burns."

The Press and Standard of Walterboro reported on **June 21, 1956** that "Wendell Bishop of Islandton, suffered serious burns of the arms and hands in an explosion in the parts department at Hampton Motor Sales Co., Inc., here today shortly before noon. The accident happened while Bishop was welding. A spark from the torch fell into an empty paint thinner drum nearby, causing it to explode."

**June 21, 1956**, The Gaffney Ledger reported that *“Town officials are pondering over whether or not to take an apparent ‘step backwards’ to advance the welfare of the Hampton Volunteer Fire Department. A periodic outburst of false alarms from scattered fire alarm boxes has many Fire Department volunteers demanding a return to the old system of telephoning in fires. Mayor William F. Speights is lending a sympathetic ear to the firemen. ‘We can’t afford to hire a large number of men to sit in hiding and watch the offenders of the alarm system. Possibly our only solution will be placing outlying boxes out of service. Naturally, we would have alarms on main street in commission.’ The mayor emphasized that the majority of Hampton residents have easy access to telephones. Red stickers, with the department number, have already been sent to telephone owners.”* **Note: From about 1946 until this article appeared, the town utilized two sirens located on each end of town to be used by citizens to alert the firemen of a fire in the general area.**

The **August 19, 1956** edition of The State newspaper revealed that *“Lightning striking in timber rich woodlands of this county caused havoc here in recent weeks, according to Hampton County Forest Ranger, J. D. Peeples, of Early Branch. Ranger Peeples said numerous alarms have been answered by forest fighting crews of Hampton County, called to small woods fires which spread rapidly through dry woods as a result of a tree being set afire by lightning.”*

*“Hampton Court Crier Dies in Home Fire,”* announced The State paper on **November 28, 1957**. *“A 90 year-old Hampton County man, Sam Jackson, county court crier for a number of years, died in a pre-dawn fire that destroyed his home between Cummings and Varnville between 5 and 6 a.m. today. Hampton volunteer firemen answered the call to the Jackson house in order to help officers remove the body.”*

**January 2, 1958**, The State newspaper reported that *“The home of Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Rowe of Hampton was destroyed by fire Monday night in this community’s first holiday tragedy. The fire, spotted and reported by George Mitchum, a neighbor, had filled the concrete block home with thick smoke when discovered. By the time the Hampton Volunteer Fire Department was summoned, it had made considerable headway. Firemen were hampered by a faulty hose when first fighting the fire. All furnishings were lost. Cause of the fire was not established, but it was presumed a heater started it. The Rowe family was away from home at the time.”*

The State newspaper noted on **February 28, 1958** that *“A barn burned Saturday apparently after a sow kicked over a light. Firemen from Estill and Hampton fire departments prevented a spread to other buildings on the farm of Eugene Connelly in the Hopewell section. Hampton Fire Chief H. C. Mixon said Connelly was using an electric light on an extension cord to help keep a mother hog and her pigs warm during extremely cold. The hog apparently pulled the light into the hay and it caught fire.”*

The State newspaper noted on **December 3, 1958** that *“A roaring fire destroyed one of Hampton County’s largest, busiest super markets before dawn Tuesday. The Hampton Winn-Dixie store was gutted by fire of uncertain origin about 4:30 a.m. It smoldered throughout the day. The Hampton Fire Department led by Fire Chief Jacob Rivers, assisted by Clyde Jarrell, confined the blaze to one building. Morray Jewelers, divided only by a one-foot alley, and the adjoining theater soda shop and Palmetto Theater narrowly escaped. The Estill and Varnville fire departments answered the calls from Hampton. The fire, at one time threatened all of the lower Lee Avenue. The blaze leaped to tree top height and was visible for eight miles. Hundreds of persons, roused from bed when the town fire alarm system wailed for the third time in an effort to summon more help, were downtown in all degrees*

*of dress and nightdress. It was Main Street's worst fire since 1940, when the Stanley Drug Company corner was leveled by flames."*

*"\$50,000 Fire Guts Home At Hampton," read the caption in The State newspaper printed on **January 20, 1959**. "Fire swept through the home of one of Hampton's leading businessmen and caused \$25,000 worth of damage before it could be brought under control by firemen before dawn Monday. The Henry C. Brunson home on Willard Street, an attractive brick veneer ranch-style home valued at \$50,000 or more, suffered heavy losses from fire, smoke and water. The interior was almost burned out, leaving brick walls like a shell. Fire originated in the furnace room, where the central heating system was, and traveled rapidly through ducts in the attic. Mr. and Mrs. Brunson were awakened by the smell of smoke about 6 a.m. The Hampton Fire Department, headed by Fire Chief Jacob Rivers, battled the blaze for two hours, doing everything possible to stop its progress. Freezing temperatures (it was 22 degrees outside) made work harder. As water from hose sprayed shrubbery surrounding the house, plants were crushed with ice and stayed that way until later in the morning."*

*"Hampton Has Fire School," reported The State on **August 20, 1959**. "Hampton Volunteer Fire Department members are learning improved methods of fire fighting in a week-long fire fighting workshop being conducted here."*

The State paper announced on **October 13, 1960** the arrival of a new fire truck. *"The Town of Hampton Fire Department grew out of its quarters this week, with the arrival of a shinning new \$15,000 fire truck. Mayor William F. Speights said a new concrete block garage to house the new fire fighting equipment is being built on town property, adjoining the waterworks pump house. Townspeople are being welcomed to Town Hall to make public inspection to the department's latest addition."*

The Times and Democrat of Orangeburg note on **July 2, 1961** that *"The Hampton Watermelon Festival parade was thrown into confusion Saturday when a float caught on fire. The town fire truck carrying about 12 youngsters in the parade pulled out of its place in the procession with siren screaming raced to extinguish the flames. The excitement occurred on the Coburg Dairy Float carrying Margie Schachte, Miss Charleston; Jackie Harbeson, Miss North Charleston; and Billie Robinson, Miss Folly Beach. The three girls, dressed in short shorts, were tossing lighted firecrackers off the float when sparks ignited bunting. No one was injured."*

*"Blast Rips Club Roof At Hampton,"* read the headline in The State paper on **September 7, 1961**. *"A gas explosion at the Hampton Country Club Wednesday afternoon at 4:30 knocked down walls and blew the roof off the kitchen-bar section of the clubhouse, heavily damaging that end of the building. A General Gas Corp. employee, Burl Lee, of Varnville, was being treated in the Hampton County Hospital for first, second, and third degree burns of the head, face, neck, chest, and arms, his physician said. No golfers were in the club house at the time. Law enforcement officers were patrolling the property until it could be secured and gas lines cut to prevent leaking gas and fire danger the Hampton fire department was on hand in case of emergency."*

Notes from a fire department logbook describes a house fire which occurred on **January 15, 1962** on East Walterboro Hwy. in which the structure and contents were a total loss. Unfortunately for the fire department, the new Chevrolet fire truck *"was parked too close to the fire and had the right door glass broken, paint blistered, and red light dome on top melted from heat."*

Also found in fire department records is an entry noting that Hampton firemen responded to Brunson on **July 9, 1963** to a warehouse fire at

11:30 P.M. where 1,500 bales of cotton were destroyed at an estimated loss of \$30,000.

Fire department logs indicate on **February 7, 1964** a new alarm system was installed by the local telephone company designed to allow the dispatcher *“to dial a certain phone number, and the phones at all the firemen’s homes would ring one long, steady ring. The dispatcher would then tell what kind of fire there was and where it was located in town. Then as now, all firemen would come to the fire shed to get the truck and then go to the fire.”* Brief mention is made in another entry of a department log about a fire on **February 21, 1964** at the pumping station on Berry Avenue. Apparently two town employees were burned. One of those employees died the next day.

A footnote found in fire department records reveal in **1967** a new fire station was built with 2 full-time firemen on duty around the clock and in **June 1968** one more full-time fireman was added.

The State newspaper reported on **December 20, 1968** that *“Two former fire chiefs and a retired police chief were honored here recently at the Hampton Fire Department’s annual Ladies’ Night Banquet. Receiving plaques of appreciation were H. C. Mixon, who served as Hampton Fire Chief from 1941 to 1968; D. Mack Cain, the town’s first fire chief; and R. V. Still, Hampton police chief for the past eight years. Still retired in September.”* **Note: According to an article appearing in the May 22, 1911 edition to The State, Mr. E. F. Hammond was elected to serve as Hampton’s first Fire Chief.**

Again, notes found in fire department history logs uncovered that *“In 1969, the Town of Hampton purchased several fire helmets and coats. In **December 1969** the rest of the helmets and coats were purchased. This gave each member of the fire department his own helmet and coat. At the time there were twenty firemen on the department.”*



The State newspaper reported on **May 18, 1970** that *“Hurley Clifford Mixon, 74, died Sunday in a local hospital. Mr. Mixon was born in Hampton County and was the retired fire chief and chief of police of the town of Hampton. He was a veteran of World War I.”* Mr. Mixon served as Hampton’s fire chief from 1941 to 1968.

Apparently, on **July 1, 1970**, the Town of Hampton finally addressed the issue of out-of-town fires. Department notes state *“The Town of Hampton set up a rural fire system. Anyone living in a five mile radius of the Town of Hampton fire shed could get fire protection for \$100.00 per year.”*

*“Hampton Man Dies In Fire At His Home,”* read a special to The State newspaper on **February 6, 1972**. *“A 53-year-old Hampton man died in a fire which heavily damaged his frame home near here Saturday morning. Jacob Rivers, Chief of the Hampton Voluntary Fire Department, identified the victim as George Williams, an employee of the Hampton Sanitation Department. Rivers said the blaze broke out about 10 a.m. and the firemen brought the blaze under control before it destroyed the building. The fire was believed to have started in the kitchen.”*

The Hampton County Guardian told of the tragic deaths by fire of four children in the **April 8, 1972** edition of the paper. *“In one of Hampton County’s worst fire disasters years, four children ages one, two, three, and four, perished in a blaze which gutted their small frame home on Holly Street, Hampton, shortly after 9 o’clock Saturday night. Hampton Volunteer Fire Chief Jacob Rivers, described this as one of Hampton’s worst fire tragedies in his 18 years of service to the department. He said the children’s bodies were charred beyond recognition, three of them found huddled together underneath what remained of one bed, and the fourth child on top of the remains of another bed in another room.”*

*“Inquest Planned In Fire Deaths”* noted the article printed in The State newspaper on **“April 10, 1972.** *“Hampton County Coroner J. L. Holland said Sunday he will hold an inquest into the deaths of four children under the age of six who died Saturday night when fire destroyed their frame home. Dead were the children of Mrs. Lizzie Drayton—Doretha, 4, Dorothy, 3, Kevin, 2, and Isaiah, 1. Hampton Volunteer Fire Chief Jacob Rivers said the fire on Holly Street was one of the town’s worst fire disasters.”* Several days later, the Hampton County Guardian reported that *“A Hampton County Coroner’s Jury has ruled that their mother, Lizzie Drayton, be held for neglect of the children. Dead as a result of the fire which totally destroyed their home, in which they were reported left alone at the time.”*

The **May 3, 1972** edition of the Hampton County Guardian presents a wonderfully researched article by Martha Bee Anderson concerning the history of the Hampton Volunteer Fire Department. The author begins her story of fire protection prior to the department’s commonly accepted date of organization of 1932. However, this writer’s research reveals that The State newspaper published an announcement on May 22, 1911, stating that Hampton’s fire department was organized with E. F. Hammond being selected as Fire Chief. The article dated 1911 can be explained because the records and files of The Hampton Guardian were destroyed by fire in January 1908, and the files and records of the Town were destroyed by fire in December 1942 when housed in The Hampton Building. Both of these fires destroyed decades of those records and fabulous stories about the evolution of fire protection which now have been lost to time and new generations.

Interestingly, Ms. Anderson captured some truly remarkable facts that should appeal to every reader, especially firefighters. She noted that *“The Town of Hampton’s initial investment in fire protection for its citizens was one 200-foot hose and a two-wheel hose-winding cart.”* She quotes the late Chief Cain who recalls just two or three cars in town

that were capable of pulling the cart to fires. *“Finally, the long-time mayor of Hampton, the late Jim Holland, adept with cars and machinery, rigged an old Model-A Ford to motorize Hampton’s lone fire-fighting equipment for the first time.”*

Ms. Anderson continues her reporting that *“Only in 1946, was the Town of Hampton financially able to purchase its first legitimate fire truck. It was a fireman-red Ford truck with a 200 gallon water tank. It was the pride of Hampton.”* When electricity was finally installed throughout the town, Ms. Anderson described that two fire sirens were mounted in two central locations, downtown and West End. When this writer talked with current Chief, Lewis Ramsey, he remembers vividly the sirens on each end of town and how residents could push the button/switch to sound the alarm. However, this old system was modernized when the town and the United Telephone Company contracted for a new fire alarm system designed to improve on fire notifications in 1964. *“By special electronic equipment, home telephones of the department’s 20 members were connected in such a way the resident fireman on duty (hired in 1976) at the fire house could dial on number to ring all 20 phones simultaneously.”*

Ms. Anderson noted that a new town hall and fire house were built in 1954, on the corner of First Street and West and Walnut. In 1960, the town purchased an American LaFrance pumper having a 500 gallon booster tank with a capacity of pumping 750 gpm. According to Ms. Anderson’s article, the town added a third pumper in 1969, a GMC with a 750 gallon booster tank.

On **July 4, 1972**, The State paper reported that *“J. F. Wyman, Inc., of Estill, one of Hampton County’s leading farm supply and produce dealers, suffered heavy fire losses early Monday morning when a blaze thought to be deliberately set roared through the company’s main*

*office. The Estill Volunteer Fire Department worked for two hours to bring the blaze under control."*

Found in the pages of both The Hampton County Guardian as well as The State newspaper around **April 28, 1972** are found similar articles which *"Brag About Its Volunteer Firemen"* and tells their readers that the *"Hampton Fire Department is a Source of Community Pride."* Noted in the articles is evidence of the department's leadership and progressive thinking when it is documented that Hampton participated in the department's first state certified training program. The training was held late last fall (**1971**) and was conducted by the late W. I. "Billy" Peek of the St. Andrews Fire Department. *"For three months there was almost 100 per cent participation by firemen here in a 42-hour course of instruction in the most modern firefighting techniques."*

According to an article written for the Hampton County Guardian by Wayne Zurenda, a new fire truck was delivered to the fire department on November 21, 1977. The report noted that the truck *"is an impressive sight to behold. The \$59,500 American LaFrance (Pioneer) diesel sports 1,250 gallon-per-minute pump with a storage capacity of 750 gallons. It will now be the town's number one truck for in-town fires."*

In a follow-up article written a week later (**January 18, 1978**) is found an interesting story about Hampton's firemen. *"Of all the rescues Hampton's Fire Department has effected in recent times, the most unforgettable present members can recollect is that of a trunk. After a fire had burned to the ground a small, frame shack in which an elderly woman lived. She rushed up to firemen afterward, begging them to rescue her trunk. She pointed to a smoldering bedframe and showed them remains of a trunk underneath. They hosed it down to cool it, hauled the remains out and found inside a large but undisclosed amount of money. Greenbacks had been tightly rolled up in old bread bags and*

*stashed away inside dishes which had been packed in the trunk. The Greenbacks were singed but redeemable, so the old lady making a trip to the bank with her life savings for safer keeping after that."*

Notes found from fire department records reveal many interesting facts. For example, the department's Ladies' Night Banquet on **December 5, 1978** recognized "The Family Connection". At the time there were many family members who comprised the fire department. Father/Son: Phil Hatcher/Jerry Hatcher; Ruddy Kring/Mike Kring; Clyde Jarrell/Clyde Jarrell, Jr.; Billy Ramsey/Lewis Ramsey....Father-in-law/Son-in-law: Harold McMillan/Buddy O'Quinn....Brothers: Richard Hutto/Larry Hutto; Buddy Phillip/Jimmy Phillip....Brother-in-laws: Ray Wingler/Jerry Thomas....Cousins: Wade Freeman/Tommy Brown/Wayne Zurenda.

Fire department records reveal that in **1980**, Phil Hatcher and his son, Jerry Hatcher, both members of the department, donated an old Coca Cola truck to the fire department. This truck was painted red and turned into an equipment truck.

The State printed in their **June 6, 1985** edition of the paper that *"A fire Wednesday night spread through a block of buildings in the small Hampton County town of Estill, apparently destroying a dentist's office and damaging several other structures. Firefighters from at least five departments brought the blaze under control, about 9:45 p.m. according to a dispatcher at the Hampton Fire Department.*

The Index-Journal of Greenwood reported on **June 30, 1986** that *"As Hampton County's firefighters and rescue personnel were being honored at a beauty pageant, Estill Fire Chief John Rhodes died of an apparent heart attack while he was helping fight a fire at a furniture store. Rhodes, 64, was helping fight a fire at Farena Furniture Store in Hampton when he died at about 8 p.m. Saturday."* The Columbia

Record quoted Hampton's Fire Chief, Wade Freeman as saying *"The fire, which burned the 22,000 square-foot, one-story furniture store to the ground, was reported at 6:53 p.m. as a severe thunderstorm swept through the town. Freeman didn't know how the fire started, but said that 'we're ruling out lightning right now.'"*

An entry was found in the fire department logs that *"During the years from **1977-1988** firefighting classes have been taught. Starting in 1988 all members of the fire department had to take a course by the S. C. Fire Academy. This course is in three levels: 1111, 1121, 1131. The 1111 is a general course on fire behavior; 1121 is a basic firefighting course, and 1131 is an interior firefighting course. By law all new members have to have the 1121 course to fight fires and stay on with the department."*

On **September 21, 1989** Hurricane Hugo made landfall between Sullivan's Island and McClellanville, South Carolina, as a Category 4 hurricane. At the time, Hugo was the strongest hurricane to make landfall on the continental U.S. since Hurricane Camille in 1969. The storm surge at McClellanville was recorded at 20.2 ft. As the storm moved inland, the winds did not lose significant strength as most because its center of circulation moved over Lakes Moultrie, Marion and Wateree which allowed it to maintain nearly 125 mph winds. Clarendon County as well as many others in the Midlands and Pee Dee areas received widespread and almost catastrophic destruction. The Clarendon County Fire Department lost two of its fifteen stations, its radio system, and other equipment. One of the members of the Hampton Fire Department, Bob Lybrand, was a former resident and member of the Manning and County Fire Departments. He helped muster a number of Hampton firefighters to load chain saws, trucks and trailers, a front-end loader, and other equipment to head to the aid of his old friends. To make a long story brief, the work the Hampton firefighters did was amazing and lasting friends were made. **Note: This**

**writer will always be indebted to the Hampton Fire Department for their help. I served as both city and county chief during this event, and recognize the major contribution these made to the restoration of our County.**

In the Metro/Region section of The State newspaper on **May 7, 1991**, the article noted *"Convoy of Nine Firetrucks Bring Hampton Countywide Fire Service."* The article went on to say that *"When nine firetrucks pull up to a courthouse with sirens blaring and red lights flashing, it's a safe assumption there is trouble somewhere. But that scene inspired pride rather than panic Monday evening as Hampton County residents welcomed the birth of countywide fire protection with the arrival of \$1.1 million in new firefighting equipment. The trucks will go into service immediately, said County Fire Chief Gene Rushing, who said he hoped to implement a countywide communications system for the fire services this summer."*

Notes found in fire department archives reveal that in *"In **1993** the members of the fire department started making plans for a new shed. After a year of planning and getting the approval of the Town Council, a new shed was to be built. The new shed is located on the block across from the old shed. It was started in May of 1994 and completed in November 1994. The shed has 4 drive through bays, training room, kitchen, weight room, storeroom, communications room, chief's office and assistant chief's office, and rest rooms. The bay area is 85 ft. by 100 ft."*

On **March 15, 1995** The State paper published the death notice for Jacob Henry Rivers. *"Mr. Rivers, 67, died Monday, March 13, 1995. He was a Navy veteran of World War II and retired from Westinghouse Corp. He was a former fire chief and council member of the Town of Hampton and a trustee of Hampton United Methodist Church."*

Also, found in department records is the notice of a new engine for the department. In **October 1995** *"A new fire truck was purchased for the town. This truck is a 1995 E-One truck and has a 6 man enclosed cab, top mount pump panel with a 1,000 gallon tank and a 1,250 gpm pump. As of this time (1995), the Hampton Fire Department consists of Eng. 51 (the new E-One), Eng. 52 (the 1978 American-LaFrance, Eng. 59 (the equipment truck, Car 1 (a 1986 Chevrolet station wagon, the County truck Eng. 55 (Pierce), and a rescue truck."*

*"Fire Hits Hampton County Infectious-waste Incinerator"* reads the headline in the **June 2, 1997** edition of The State paper. *"Firefighters controlled a fire Sunday at a commercial infectious-waste incinerator, a spokesman for the state Department of Health and Environmental Control said."* Also, a major news story was headlined in the **June 5, 1997** edition of The Hampton County Guardian. *"Safety Disposal System, Inc., a medical and special waste incinerator plant in Hampton was heavily damaged by fire Sunday afternoon, June 1. The cause of the fire is being investigated but foul play is not suspected, said Hampton Fire Chief Wade Freeman."*

The State paper published on **November 13, 1998** the death notice for John Phillip "Phil" Hatcher. *"He was the retired assistant fire chief with the Hampton Fire Department, retired general manager and president of Hampton Coca-Cola Bottling Company, where he was affectionately known as 'Mr. Coca-Cola.'"*

On **November 10, 2010**, The Hampton County Guardian reported that *"Greg Cook, the former assistant fire chief, was promoted at Hampton Town Council's Tuesday meeting."*

The Hampton County Guardian announced on **February 3, 2011** that *"After 47 years of service, Wade Freeman retired on his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday as his longtime assistant Greg Cook became the new chief. 'Fighting fire is*



*a young man's game,' Freeman once joked. 'It's been a service to the community that I have enjoyed. But we've got a good department and it's time for me to step down.' A plaque proclaiming the fire station's training room as the 'Wade Freeman Training Room' was unveiled Sunday afternoon amidst family, friends, and fellow firemen, and the departing chief received a coveted bronze helmet."*

In **2012**, Greg Cook resigned as Chief to accept the position of Chief of the Hampton County Fire Department. Longtime member and officer, Lewis Ramsey, was then appointed in February to serve as Chief of the city department.

TV station, WTOG 11, reported on **February 20, 2013** that *"The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation in Beaufort gave the Town of Hampton's Fire Department an imaging camera Tuesday. The camera sees through the smoke and shows firefighters where in a building there is a fire, and helps find victims. This is the department's second camera of it's kind, and it's worth more than \$8,000. 'The other one is a bigger camera and had a different thermal heat index,' Hampton Fire Chief Lewis Ramsey said. 'This one is smaller, individual type of thing that one person can really use it to see and get into burning buildings quicker.'"*

The Hampton County Guardian paid tribute on **January 3, 2017** to Hampton County Fire Chief, Gene Rushing, who passed away on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016. *"Instrumental in the creation of the Hampton County Fire Department in 1990, Eugene 'Gene' Rushing passed away at his home in Estill last week after battling an extended illness. During his time as chief, Rushing became a mentor to many young firefighters who have since taken the torch lit by Rushing and continue to strive to provide state-of-the-art fire safety measures to the residents of Hampton County."* **Note: This writer valued a long-time friendship with Chief Rushing and appreciates all he and his family have contributed over the years. Both his son and son-in-law serve in the**

**fire service, and his granddaughter, Brook, is employed by the S. C. State Firefighters' Association.**

*“Young Firefighters Presented Medal of Valor,” read the headlines of the **August 29, 2018** edition of The Hampton County Guardian. “Their nightmare began with a howl of wind, then a micro-burst of energy that sent the metal roof crashing down around them. With water rising in the building, the five likely-terrified civilians took refuge in rear bathroom and dialed Hampton County 911 Dispatch. This was the scene at a Hampton shopping center around 6:24 p.m. on June 20, when, during a severe thunderstorm, a reported ‘micro-burst’ struck in the area of the shopping center, causing extensive damage to the local Badcock furniture store and to multiple other commercial buildings in the area. Hampton Fire Department Engineers Austin Causey and Connor Hutto braved heavy rain, high winds and lightning, entered the furniture store, and delivered the five trapped employees to safety. One of them had to be carried out.” On August 21, the Hampton Town Council and the Hampton Fire Department honored this act of bravery and bestowed the HFD’s Medal of Valor to the two young firefighters.”*

Since those early days of the department’s inception, during the last decades of the 1800s, the Hampton Fire Department has overcome many obstacles, struggled with others, but, in the end, the department has emerged as a progressive delivery system of fire protection and community risk reduction. Today the department is led by a group of talented public servants and a team of dedicated and well-trained volunteer firefighters. The department operates under the direction of Chief Lewis Ramsey who is supported by the following officers: Alan Terry (Deputy Chief), Dylan Brabham (Battalion Chief), Marshall Murdaugh and Scott Jarrell (Captains), and Phillip Ellenburg (Lieutenant).

Both the career and volunteer members operate out of a modern and efficient headquarters facility which houses a 2005 E-One pumper, a 1995 E-One pumper, a 2001 KME rescue, and a 2013 Squad truck and other support vehicles equipped with the most modern equipment to meet the needs of the city's citizens.

The institution of the fire service as we know today may look a bit different in the future as technology advances, a demanding community, health and wellness, societal changes, and simply a more complex response system. Whatever the future holds, and based on the department's history and ability to adapt, the City of Hampton's Fire/Rescue services will remain the central focus of service to the community.

It has been a true pleasure to conduct this research on the Hampton Fire Department. I wish to thank Chief Ramsey and all of those on the department and in the community who helped in providing information to make this research as complete as possible. However, remember that history is made every day, and it's someone's responsibility to capture that history for our descendants to enjoy and appreciate.