

The Clover Fire Department

**“Times of Struggles & Challenges,
Leadership & Progress”**

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The Town of Clover, located in York County, South Carolina, and encompassed today in the greater Charlotte Metropolitan area, sits between the Town of York and Gastonia, North Carolina. According to writer, Jennifer Becknell, the area was settled by “*strong, hardy, and fiercely independent people*” from northern-Ireland and Scotland in the early to mid-1700s. Most of the settlers fought in the American Revolution for their beliefs in political independence and their rights of religious freedoms. These supporters of freedom played prominent roles in the 1780 Battle of Kings Mountain. Among those settling in the Clover vicinity were the families of David and Mary Jackson, Capt. W. Beatty Smith and his three sons (Myles Linden, James Meek and William Paterson Smith).

In the early days of the 1800s, a small community developed basically where Clover is today and was called “*New Center*.” Farming was the primary source of income, and cotton became the most popular and profitable crop. However, the formation of the railroad around 1874 really piloted the creation of the village of Clover in 1887. Legend has it that the village name was crafted from the spillage of water from the water tank used to fill locomotives from which an abundant patch of clover grew.

An article printed (February 5, 1909), in the Yorkville Enquirer, after the founding of the village of Clover, provides some insight to the founding of the Town of Clover. At the conclusion of the Civil War, Capt. Beatty Smith returned to his farm near Yorkville. However, “*Upon the completion of what is now the Carolina and North-Western railroad from Yorkville to Gastonia, Capt. Smith moved his family out to the then unnamed station, took charge of the railroad agency, built a store, put in a stock of goods, and began to tell people he was going to establish a town there. The present town of Clover is evidence of the manner in which he carried out his promise.*” Around the time Capt. Smith moved to the area, now known as Clover, the little settlement was merely a

village of “*only twenty or thirty homes.*” Capt. Smith set about raising funds to build his “*most notable achievement, the plant of the Clover Manufacturing company.*”

The editor of The Herald wrote a letter about the “*little town of Clover*” in the **October 7, 1880**, printing of the paper. “*I made a recent visit to the beautiful little town of Clover in the upper portion of this (York) county. It is progressing rapidly. Messrs. Jackson & Jackson and Messrs. Campbell & Campbell have three large, beautiful and commodious buildings in the course of erection. They will soon be completed. Messrs. Jackson & Jackson are building a large hotel for the accommodations of local boarders and commercial travelers. Clover is composed of courteous, zealous and energetic class of gentlemen. They are wide awake in the continuous of our noble and honest Democratic Government.*”

In just a few short years more houses, stores, other commercial enterprises, a school, and churches sprang up as the population grew. Unfortunately, Clover was like so many other communities, villages, towns and cities of the day which experienced the frequent and dreadful visits from “the fire fiend,” “the devouring element,” “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 Clover was certainly no different, and, out of necessity, these fires brought attention to the need to better safeguard the citizens and properties from the ravages of unwanted fire.

Descriptions of small villages and towns in the first half of the 19th Century often reveal that very primitive means were utilized to extinguish fires, ie. buckets of water, axes, shovels, wet blankets, ladders, pine tops and various other limited techniques. Before church bells could be afforded, the alarm of fire was sounded by crude but very effective measures...firing shots into the air from a pistol, shotgun, or rifle which mainly got the attention of neighbors and signaled trouble, or at least something was amiss. As churches became more flourishing and could afford a bell, a town’s people would employ the constant ringing of 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, fires could be contained and property saved only if caught in its beginning stages. However, more often than not, volunteers recognized their limitations and got to work trying to remove contents of a structure as much as attempting extinguishment. When structures were built close together fires spread rapidly from house to house, store to store. Often a fire break was attempted by tearing down walls, out-buildings, fences, wooden sidewalks, or other wooden structures in an effort to limit the fire's spread.

Prior to the organization of a fire department, it has been said that fire was the greatest enemy for a community. From South Carolina's earliest beginnings, devastating fires have taken its toll in injury, death, and ruin of property. This writer will attempt to 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 Clover Fire Department. The history provided in the following pages is taken verbatim from various newspaper articles and commentaries with an occasional observation of this researcher.

Although there is no clear mention of fire protection during those early days of Clover's growth, this writer can say with considerable belief and confidence that those founders (Jackson, Campbell, Smith, et. al) were likely participants and leaders of an "extemporaneous organization" that responded to alarms of fire equipped with tools in hand. These men certainly had vested interests (financial, personal, and political) in protecting their newly established village from unwanted fires.

The reader of this history narrative about Clover's evolution of fire protection will soon realize that many of the alarms of fire were to incidents occurring in the abundance of cotton, weaving and textile mills that came to establish operations within, or in close proximity of the town. It should be noted also that the mills in those early days plainly invested in basic fire protection which were significantly more advanced than that of the town, ie. waterworks, fire pumps, chemical extinguishers, hose carts, sprinkler systems, etc.

To set the stage for the introduction of fire protection in Clover and the surrounding area, it is interesting to learn just how devastating fires were to the victims impacted by unwanted fires. The media in those days did a justly good job of capturing the drama and tragedy of fire. For example....

In the **February 23, 1871** edition of The Yorkville Enquirer, it was reported *“On last Saturday morning about three o’clock, the barn of Mr. Samuel McCarter, near Bethany, was burned together with all the provender (provisions) it contained and several calves. At the same time, the smoke-house of Mr. McCarter was broken open and a quantity of meat stolen.”* The article also reported that a number of intentionally set fires occurred in the same area about the same time including a field, barns and stables, and a house.

The Yorkville Enquirer of **January 4, 1883** published that *“About 6 o’clock P. M., on Christmas Day, the residence of Mr. S. C. Matthews was destroyed by fire. The fire was accidental and originated in the cook-house, and besides it and the dwelling, Mr. Matthews lost all his wheat and other provisions, his furniture, and nearly all the clothing of his family. Mr. Matthews will rebuild as soon as possible.”*

In the **November 30, 1887** edition of the Yorkville paper, a brief notice said *“About half past 9 o’clock last night a fire occurred at Clover, in this county, destroying the store house of Mr. Zimri Carroll and the drug store of Campbell & Pressley. Mr. Carroll saved a portion of his goods, and nearly all the stock of Campbell & Pressley.”*

The **May 31, 1888** issue of The Herald newspaper reported a shocking update to the fire which occurred in November destroying a store house and drug store. An arrest was made and the perpetrator sentenced to hanging. However, the Governor commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. The article says *“On the night of the 29th of last November the storehouse and its contents of Zemri Carroll and an adjoining building occupied by a medical office were destroyed by fire. When the alarm was sounded those who hastened to the scene became convinced that the fire was the work of an incendiary. There was no clue, however, to the perpetrator, though it was evident that the motive was to conceal a robbery of goods from the building.”*

Note: A detective Farrington of Charlotte was employed to work up the case. A man, James Stowe, was arrested and confessed to the crime.

The Herald of Rock Hill posted on **July 25, 1889** that *“The barn and stables of J. L. Jackson, a farmer living about two and one-half miles East of Clover, was burned about 11 o’clock Wednesday night of last week. A lot of forage and one horse and a mule were burned with the building. Supposed to be the work of an incendiary.”*

Cotton fires seemed to plague the Town of Clover. The Yorkville Enquirer of **November 12, 1890** mentioned that *“In the town of Clover, this county, last Monday night, the house used by Capt. W. Beatty Smith for storing seed cotton as hauled in from the fields, was destroyed by fire. The house contained sufficient seed cotton to make about sixteen bales, only a small quantity of which—three to four bales—was saved.”*

“FIRE AT CLOVER” read the caption in the **October 28, 1891** printing of the Yorkville Enquirer. *“A large gin house belonging to Messrs. Smith and Jackson, of Clover, was destroyed by fire last Saturday. The fire is supposed to have originated from a spark from the engine, and the whole property, including a quantity of cotton and a large supply of fire wood, is a total loss. The property destroyed was worth about \$2,000. No insurance. Captain Smith has our sincere sympathy, especially since fires seem to be an annual occurrence with him. By reference to the files of The Enquirer, we see that on November 10, of last year, he lost a cotton warehouse containing enough seed cotton to make about sixteen bales.”*

Still another cotton fire was reported in the **February 26, 1896** paper of the Yorkville Enquirer. *“There was a cotton fire on the depot platform at Clover yesterday, caused by a spark from the engine of the northbound train. Fourteen bales of cotton were more or less damaged and the loss is estimated at about \$150. Thirteen bales of the damaged cotton belonged to the Augusta Compress company, represented by Mr. J. P. White.”*

The Yorkville Enquirer of **May 22, 1897** stated *“The Clover Cotton manufacturing company is constructing, alongside of the mill building, an immense reservoir which is intended to hold something like 100,000 gallons of*

water. The reservoir is to have a concrete bottom, and the sides are to be walled with granite.”

The local newspaper printed on **March 9, 1901** that *“There was a cotton fire at Clover last Tuesday afternoon. The cotton was on the platform of the Carolina and North-Western depot, and the fire was caused by a spark from a passing engine. In all 24 bales were burned, and so badly damaged as to be practically worthless. Twenty bales had been placed on the platform by Mr. J. P. White, representative of Charles E. Johnson & Co., of Raleigh, N. C., and the other four bales belonged to the Clover Manufacturing company. As to the question of insurance, or who will suffer the losses caused by the fire, no definite information can be given out at this time.”*

Probably in response to the fire the month prior, The Yorkville Enquirer posted on **April 24, 1901** an interesting admission and appeal to do something about fire protection. *“Clover needs fire protection. We have no water works, no fire company—nothing with which to fight. While we have been fortunate in not having had much serious loss by fire, we could not expect to escape always. If fire should get started in several parts of our town there would be nothing but private wells for water supply. We have not got even a fire alarm. The last fire we had on the cotton platform there were numbers of men within 50 yards of the fire that did not know anything about it until the cotton was all burned over. By all means let us have a fire bell so the alarm can be given and we may know when we are burning up.”* **Note: It is apparent Clover’s citizens and its leaders are now beginning to acknowledge the fire problem must be addressed. The mills in the area have already begun to tackle their fire problem with a reservoir, pumping capabilities, fire brigade, etc.**

The **November 9, 1901** edition of the Yorkville Enquirer noted *“The residence of Mr. C. C. Pursley, three miles west of Clover, was destroyed by fire last Wednesday morning at 3:30 o’clock. The origin of the fire is unknown. Mr. Pursley and family were awakened by the noise of the flames, and only had a short time in which to save a portion of their household goods, including bedding, clothing, etc. The house was a two-story frame structure, worth about \$500 to \$600.”*

*“A cottage belonging to the Clover Manufacturing company, was destroyed by fire on last Thursday morning about 2:00 o’clock,” according to the **October 1, 1902** edition of the Yorkville Enquirer. “The cause of the fire is unknown, but is supposed to have originated by reason of a defective stove flue.”*

According to the Yorkville Enquirer in a later article (August 6, 1912), reference is made about a storm that swept through Clover and did significant damage. *“The **1904** storm came up at about 3:30 o’clock in the afternoon and hail destroyed the crops on about three thousand acres extending from a point west of Clover over to and beyond Bethel. Both cotton and corn were ruined. The hailstones are said to have been as big as goose eggs. There was also destructive hail in the Hoodtown neighborhood the same day.”*

The State newspaper noted on **December 16, 1904** that *“The town of Clover, having over 1,000 inhabitants, has surrendered its old charter and has been incorporated under the general incorporation act. Clover has a citizenship to be envied; they work together for the good of the community and do a large business. Their cotton mill is the pride of the county; is admirably managed and never has to shut down.”*

The Yorkville Enquirer posted on **May 18, 1906** that *“The Town Council of Clover has closed a contract with the Clover Cotton Manufacturing company for street lights. There are to be six arc lights and sixty incandescent. The latter are to be arranged in groups of five, and it is said that each group will give about as satisfactory results as an arc, and at not exceeding half the cost. Lights also will be furnished for places of business, churches and dwellings.”*

*“The two-story buildings in which the Masonic Lodge room at Clover was destroyed by fire at 2:30 o’clock this morning,” according to the Yorkville Enquirer of **July 17, 1906**. “Also a warehouse, which was in close proximity. Both buildings were the property of Mr. W. B. Smith and were valued at \$800. The first floor of the two-story building was occupied by Mr. S. M. Faires, magistrate, as an office and also as a warehouse for grain, feed, hay, etc. The upper room by the Masons, Woodmen of the World and Jr. Order United American Mechanics. The cause of the fire is unknown and is supposed to have originated in the Mason Lodge room.”*

The Yorkville Enquirer printed on **July 20, 1906** about a fire that slightly damaged the depot of the Carolina and North-Western railroad which *“destroyed Capt. W. B. Smith’s property on that morning. The damage to the depot amounted to a few cents more than \$100, and the fact that the property was not altogether destroyed is amazing. Clover has not fire-fighting facilities, but owing to the fact that there was a bountiful supply of buckets and the public well is located within fifty feet of the depot and a bucket brigade was organized and worked faithfully and steadily under intelligent instructions, the depot was saved, notwithstanding the fact that the roof, which is shingle, and the weatherboarding caught fire in numerous places and both had holes burned through. At one time it looked as if the fighters would lose, and those on the firing line were urged to retreat, but they refused to do so and won.”*

Note: This is the first clear mention of Clover having some type of structured group of “citizen volunteers” to attempt to control the spread of fire.

The article continues with an interesting story. *“The fire occurred about 3 o’clock in the morning and the party who first saw it undertook to give the alarm, but being a stranger did not know the ropes sufficiently well to get quick results, however he soon got the proper connection and eventually the whole town was aroused, and was of course more or less excited. There was one exhibition of cool judgement that is worthy of especial mention. Among the first aroused was a couple living on King’s Mountain street, and as soon as possible both husband and wife were on the street. The husband rushed to the scene of the fire and the wife in the opposite direction towards the section in which the negroes live, and when she got there it was not long before she had roused them up and had them on the run, and those same negroes are largely responsible for the good work that was accomplished. The lady then went to the fire, leaving her two children, aged about four and two, at home sleeping, and in blissful ignorance of the tragedy being enacted down town.”* **Note: This is the first indication that the alarm of fire was a bell of some sort. It’s exact location has not been located.**

The State newspaper reported on **March 30, 1907** that *“The roller mill, sawmill and planing mill belonging to G. T. Riddle, six miles east of this place, was completely destroyed by fire at 1:30 o’clock Wednesday night. The cause of the fire is not known.”*

On **January 24, 1908**, The Yorkville Enquirer reported that *“The residence of Mr. M. Linden Smith, on King’s Mountain street, Clover, was destroyed by fire this morning at about 9 o’clock. The fire originated from a stove flue, and although the alarm was given quickly, and the people responded at once with buckets and such other fire-fighting facilities as they had, but little could be done. Fiercely fanned by the strong wind that has been blowing during the past thirty-six hours, the flames made rapid headway, and it was only with the greatest effort that a large part of the town was saved. Several of the neighboring buildings caught and were extinguished.”* **Note: Again, it is becoming more apparent that a fire brigade of sorts, having limited resources, is beginning to gain some confidence and skills in extinguishing fires.**

The Fort Mill Times reported on **February 4, 1909** that *“A barn and stable belonging to Capt. W. B. Smith, at Clover, was destroyed by fire last night at about 9 o’clock. When discovered the flames had already made headway that put them beyond control. The loss includes the building, two horses, two mules, buggies, harness, gears, etc.”*

Puzzlingly, there are town records, not found in any other accounts, that affirm Clover did purchase an interesting and effective piece of fire apparatus on **July 25, 1910** called an Ajax Chemical Fire Engine. A brief mention establishes the apparatus cost \$250.00. Research of the Ajax Chemical Fire Engine reveals this was *“the fast attack mini pumper of its day.”* It would have been a hand-drawn, two-wheel cart on which was a 50-gallon tank containing a mixture of water and baking soda with a container of sulfuric acid which, when released, created sufficient pressure inside the tank to spray a stream of water some 80 ft.

An advertisement for the Ajax engine states *“It should be mentioned that for communities that had no readily available water system capable of supporting the fire streams of a steam fire engine, the chemical fire engine, carrying its own limited water solution, was perhaps the only answer to the community’s fire protection needs at the time.”*

The article on the Ajax engine continues, *“It was overall smaller and lighter than a steam fire engine. The smaller units could be hand-drawn/transported without the need for stabling and harnessing horses. Anyone could be quickly trained to recharge and operate the chemical engine. It only required one or two people to operate. It was reasonably cheap to operate. Its pre-connected rubber hose carried on the cart or wagon could be immediately uncoiled and placed in service.”* **Note: So, the question is...did Clover actually get in the fire protection business informally some sixteen years earlier than confirmed in 1926?**

Livery Stable Fire In Clover,” read the caption in the **December 15, 1910** Fort Mill Times paper. *“A disastrous livery stable fire occurred in Clover Monday morning resulting in a loss estimated at about \$2,000. The burned building, on which there was \$150 insurance, was owned by J. M. Adams & Son, but the greatest loser from the fire was A. J. Quinn, proprietor of the livery business. Nine horses, a quantity of feed, harness, etc., belonging to Mr. Quinn were destroyed. Two other horses were destroyed in the fire, these the property of Dr. M. B. Neil. When the fire was discovered it had gained such headway that it was impossible to get any of the horses from the burning building. Clover has no fire-fighting facilities and nothing could be done to check the flames.”* **Note: The comments above may well reflect the opinion that even though Clover had an “unofficial” fire brigade, a more structured organization was needed.**

The **May 14, 1911** printing of The State newspaper notes that *“The ginnery of McGill Bros., six miles east of this place was burned last night, between 12 and 1 o’clock, together with sawmill, shingle mill and cottonseed oil mill. The origin of the fire is unknown.”*

The **June 2, 1911** edition of the Yorkville Enquirer posted *“Fire destroyed a barn, two mules, a wagon and a lot of feed belonging to the estate of the late Capt. W. B. Smith at Clover, Tuesday night at about 11 o’clock. The barn occupied the site of a barn burned about two years ago.”*

On **August 8, 1912**, The Bamberg Herald posted *“The report sent out on Saturday night as to the damage inflicted by the tornado and hail storm that visited the Clover section that afternoon, was true as far as it went. Owing,*

however, to the inability to get a comprehensive statement of conditions over the telephone and inadequate conception of what is really the greatest disaster that has ever visited this section was conveyed.” The article continues, that the storm “*covered an area of about four miles wide, and eight long, which included a number of the best farms. The greatest individual damage on account of the tornado was suffered by the Clover Cotton Manufacturing Co. Two of the three operating buildings were practically demolished and the third badly damaged. Sixteen tenant houses were either destroyed or badly damaged.*” Estimates of the mill damage were put at \$50,000, while the damage by the tornado and hail combined was estimated at half a million dollars.

The **July 4, 1913** edition of the Yorkville Enquirer told that “*A barn on Mr. Thad Clinton’s place about a mile and a half east of Clover, was destroyed by fire Saturday night as the result of being struck by lightning and two mules belonging to Mr. S. J. Clinton were burned.*”

The Yorkville Enquirer wrote on **September 9, 1913** that “*What was locally known as the Perry Dover dwelling, a two-story frame building, at Clover, and owned by the Clover Cotton Manufacturing Company was destroyed by fire yesterday, the fire being discovered at about 11:30 o’clock, after it had gained full headway. The building was occupied by Mr. W. H. Hagans and family. There was no one at home except Mrs. Hagans at the time and she was engaged preparing dinner, and knew nothing of the fire, which originated in a closet in one of the front rooms, until it burned its way through the weatherboarding and roof and was noticed by neighbors, who gave the alarm. The mill fire department responded promptly and succeeded in extinguishing the flames before the building was entirely consumed. While the fire is charged to ‘rats and matches,’ that explanation is only given because of the lack of more definite information.*” **Note: The whim of rats causing the fire without an actual cause was a common assumption...no scientific evidence exists that can confirm a fire can be started by rats chewing on matches is possible.**

Just before Christmas, an article appeared in The Fort Mill Times on **December 18, 1913** which stated “*So many fires have been started by candles on Christmas trees that in some States laws have been passed*

against this form of illumination. In those States where the practice still prevails a hose or buckets of water should be kept handy to put out any blaze that might start."

According to a piece printed in the Yorkville Enquirer on **May 29, 1914** "A barn belonging to the Clover Cotton mill, was destroyed by fire last Tuesday afternoon. A horse and a lot of feed were burned. Mrs. Robert Wallace, who lives near the barn, was painfully burned while trying to rescue the horse. There was no insurance."

The Yorkville paper announced on **November 30, 1915** that "There was an alarm of fire at Clover last Thursday night on account of a smell of burning cotton in one of the houses of the Clover Manufacturing company. The fire was extinguished, however, before it developed into a blaze and there was no damage." **Note: "The cotton mill fire department was called out and kept the fire from spreading to any adjacent building." (Fort Mill Times-Dec. 2, 1915)**

The Fort Mill Times, dated **February 24, 1916**, noted "Mabel Riley, the two-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Riley of Clover, was seriously and probably fatally burned about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon when her clothing caught fire from a blaze which was being used to heat a washpot. Members of the family had been washing clothes in the yard but had finished the work and gone into the house. The little tot who was playing in the yard got too near the fire and was burned all over her body. Physicians entertain little hope of her recovery."

A major step towards much needed fire protection for the Town of Clover was announced in the State newspaper on **January 26, 1917**. "A contract has been let to A. B. Guran, company of Gastonia by Smith Bros., of Clover to cement the sidewalks in front of their block of store buildings on Main Street. This is a much needed improvement and will improve the appearances of this street very much." However, the really big improvement to the town discloses that "Clover's waterworks commission has let contracts for a large portion of material to be used in the installation of an up-to-date waterworks system. Contracts for deep wells have been let and it is hoped that the contractors will start just as soon as weather permits to boring these wells. A large tank has

been bought and this when placed on highest part of the town will afford enough of pressure to satisfy fire companies.” **Note: This is the first mention of a modern waterworks system to be installed in Clover. Prior to this installation, citizen volunteers had to use water from several public wells to fill their fire buckets, and the “Ajax” hand-drawn chemical cart was not adequately meeting the needs of fire protection.**

On **August 8, 1919**, the Yorkville Enquirer reported that *“Recommendations for an appropriation of Federal aid in the sum of \$10,000 to be used within the corporate limits of the town of Clover for road construction to build a concrete road not less than twenty feet wide through the town. The distance traversed by this cement road is about a mile and a half extending from the southern to the northern limits of Clover.”*

On the same date, **August 8, 1919**, *“A large barn on the Clover road in Gaston county, belonging to the estate of the late J. F. McArver, was destroyed by fire Monday night with a loss of several thousand dollars. The conflagration lighted up the country for miles around and was plainly seen in Yorkville. No animals were destroyed.”*

The Herald of **December 9, 1919** reported that *“About 250 tons of hulls were destroyed by fire yesterday, when the plant of the Clover Cotton mill was damaged by fire. The firemen confined the blaze to the seed house.”* The State newspaper also reported *“About day-break it was discovered that the hull house was on fire. The two hoses at the oil mill were turned on it immediately and soon the fire company arrived with their hose and despite the high wind blowing at that time, the flames were extinguished.”* **Note: This article references the Mill fire department which had a system of mains and hydrants for fire protection.**

The State newspaper on **January 2, 1920**, noted *“Three houses were burned here Thursday morning about 11 o’clock. These houses were just outside of the city limits and it was some time before sufficient length of hose could be secured. It is thought two of them could have been saved had a hydrant been near enough.”*

“Trouble Getting Water,” read the caption in the **September 23, 1921** printing of the Yorkville Enquirer. *“Hard rock which underlies the surface of the earth in the vicinity of Clover is proving a sort of “Jonah” for the well digger who is engaged in boring a fourth well for the town of Clover. Up to Wednesday the contractor had bored to a depth of about 166 feet without finding a sufficient flow of water and there is no indication of when it would be reached. The town’s water supply is derived from a system of deep wells and recently it was found necessary to add another deep well to the system.”*

An article in The Herald paper on **March 12, 1923** stated that *“Fire originating from an oil stove in the bath room whose wick had been turned too high came near destroying the \$20,000 home of M. L. Smith here. When the alarm was sounded the volunteer fire department responded promptly and the blaze was soon under control. The damage is estimated at \$1,500 fully covered by insurance.”* **Note: This is the first mention of an actual organized fire department in the town.**

The State newspaper, dated **May 31, 1923**, stated *“The waste house belonging to the Hawthorn mill caught fire Monday about 6 o’clock, but by quick work the fire department of the mill soon put out the fire and very little damage was done to the house, but quite a good deal waste was consumed and ruined by water.”*

The Gaffney Ledger printed on **May 3, 1924** that *“A house at the Clover Cotton Mill village was completely destroyed by fire Tuesday night about 10:00 o’clock. The house was occupied by a family of Kimballs. Mr. Kimball was at work in the mill and the mother was away from the home and two children, ages 10 and 12, were asleep when the fire started from an unknown cause. The children narrowly escaped being burned to death.”*

The Herald posted on **October 22, 1924** that *“Fire supposed to be due to defective electric wiring, destroyed the home of P. D. Hopper, at Clover on Monday morning. The fire burned with such rapidity that the home and practically all of the furnishings were destroyed. The loss was between \$800 and \$1,000 and no insurance was carried.”*

The Fort Mill Times printed on **April 29, 1926** that *“The street paving program of the town of Clover is now all but completed and is a good job. The town council recently placed an order for a motor driven hose truck for fire purposes. The truck will be equipped with a chemical outfit and will have a capacity for carrying several hundred feet of fire hose.”* **Note: The truck described is similar to what other towns and cities were using in this era. It did not have a water pump but instead it carried one or two 40+ gallon tank(s) containing a mixture of baking soda and water. To activate the solution, a container of sulfuric acid was injected into the tank which created a chemical reaction that produced carbonic acid creating the pressure needed to discharge the water onto the fire...today we have booster tanks having hundreds of gallons of water on our trucks. Clover’s truck also carried an amount of 2 ½” rubber/fabric hose to be directly connected to a hydrant for a larger discharge of water. These trucks were less expensive and desirable for small towns and cities. Since the town had invested in a waterworks system in 1917, the hose carried on the truck would have been connected directly to a hydrant to deliver a larger quantity of water for extinguishment.**

The newly (and “officially”) organized Clover Fire Department was represented at the South Carolina State Firemen’s Association’s 21st annual convention in Charleston. According to the Association’s records, Fire Chief James A. Jackson participated in the event on **June 24 – 25, 1926**. The convention was presided over by President Louis Behrens, the Association’s “Founding Father” since 1905.

On **April 8, 1927**, The Herald, made mention that *“Members of the Rock Hill fire department expect to go to Clover tonight to assist with the organization of a volunteer fire company there. Clover which has never had an organized fire fighting unit before, has just received modern fire fighting apparatus. Chief T. O. Flowers, John Davis and James P. Poag of the local company are to attend the Clover meeting.”*

A brief notice was given in the **February 4, 1929** edition of The State newspaper about *“Members of the Clover fire department had a supper at the City Hall last Thursday evening. The town council, the rural policemen of the county, T. T. H. Williams and S. D. Youngblood were additional guests.”*

*“Fire Bell Frozen, Clover Is Visited By \$10,000 Blaze,” read the caption in The Greenville News on **February 22, 1929**. “Fire apparently originating from defective wiring in the Carolina theatre here, early today destroyed that building, the buildings of the Southern Public Utilities company, and the Gore Jewelry store, with a total loss of between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Firemen had to be called at their homes by a telephone operator, because the fire bell was frozen and the emergency whistle also out of order due to an ice covering.”*

Note: This is the first mention of the town having its own designed fire bell to sound the alarm of fire. Prior to this, the town’s people rang the bells at the different churches in town to alert its firemen.

The **March 7, 1929** printing of the Yorkville Enquirer said *“York firemen fearing further rapid spread of the flames under the wind called upon the Rock Hill, Gastonia and Clover fire departments for assistance. The Clover department arrived just as the blaze was being brought under control while the Rock Hill firemen were stopped at Tirzah and the Gastonia contingent at Clover.”* Sam J. Matthews was Fire Chief at this time. **Note: This is the first mention of the fire department having “mutual aid” agreements between neighboring departments.**

The Herald on **May 8, 1930** reported *“A small fire at the Clover Cotton Oil plant Tuesday night about ten o’clock did about \$100.00 damage to the Oil Mill building. A small hole was burned through the floor and some insulators were damaged. The loss was covered by insurance. The quick work of the Clover fire department quickly got the fire under control with the very small damage.”*

The heading of The Herald newspaper of **June 17, 1930** told of a serious fire on Sunday the 15th. *“Stock and fixtures of the W. M. Pendleton Grocery here were damaged by fire Sunday afternoon to the extent of between \$500 and \$600. The blaze was said to have originated under a counter in the store and was believed to have been started by rats. The fire was extinguished by the use of garden hose before the hose of the fire department was connected. While the stock was considerable damaged by heat and smoke, the building was practically unhurt.”* **Note: During the 1800s and early 1900s the cause of many fires was blamed on rats gnawing on matches. However, there is no**

scientific evidence that this was even possible. In many cases the actual cause was due to an incendiary act or other means of ignition.

York's courthouse caught fire on **November 30, 1933**, according to The Charlotte News. *"The structure was badly damaged in a disastrous blaze Monday night, when the combined efforts of the Rock Hill, York and Clover fire departments were required to extinguish the fire."*

The Herald newspaper related on **December 14, 1940** that *"Santa Claus arrived in Clover Friday afternoon. The Clover high school band headed the parade in full dress uniform. Santa followed riding in the town of Clover's new fire truck."*

"Fire Breaks Up Matinee Show," read the caption posted in The State newspaper on **February 12, 1942**. *"A fire of undetermined origin that swept behind the screen of the local theater this afternoon while the matinee performance was in progress caused damage estimated at between \$1,000 and \$2,000. The crowd filed out in orderly fashion. There was no panic and no one was injured. One excited woman fell to the floor but, when asked if she was hurt, replied: 'Not at all. I only want to get out of here.' Damaged by the blaze were the walls, the motion picture screen, the ceiling and the air conditioning room behind the stage. It will be some time before the theater will be open again."*

The **June 5, 1947** edition of The Herald made notice that the *"Carolina Fire Works Manufacturing Co., C. C. Braswell owner, has now under construction two of several buildings to be used by them for a local manufacturing plant. Mr. Braswell recently purchased a site just to the south of Clover on paved highway for this new plant. The concern does not sell fireworks at retail but manufactures them and ships them all over the United States. They will make small firecrackers, sparklers, rockets and what is commonly known as the safe and sound series."*

According to The Herald of **October 30, 1948**, *"The Clover Fire Department, a volunteer organization, was recently re-organized, with William Thomasson as fire chief. Other members of the department are Shannon Murphy, assistant chief; Paul N. Boyd, and S. A. Sifford, assistant chiefs; Lyle Putnam, inspector;*

Hoyle Maxwell, Buck McCall, Robert Sifford, Robert Pursley J. Allen Robinson, S. Guy Neil, Adam Darby, James Camp, firemen; and L. Walter Pursley, fireman and water Maintenance. Chief Thomasson has requested that in view of the accident possibility, only authorized department personnel ride on the fire trucks."

*"Clover Child Is Burned Seriously," stated the heading in The Herald of **April 27, 1950**. "Fire early Tuesday morning completely destroyed the four-room home of Mrs. Minnie Hoyle and seriously burned her 13 year-old son, Lloyd. The blaze was discovered about 1 a.m. by David 'Shorty' Joye, who was returned from work. Joye kicked down the door and awakened the family. Neighbors described how Joye came out of the burning house with one small child under each arm, and how Corporal John Blitch of the Highway Patrol also dashed into the smoke and flames to rescue a frightened girl who refused to come out. The girl would not let go of the mattress on which she had been sleeping, and Blitch was forced to carry the mattress as well as the girl out into the open air. Clover's volunteer fire department battled the fire for nearly an hour and a half, but were unable to save the building. 'They were lucky to save the neighboring houses...If the wind had been a little stronger, it would have been too bad,' " said Police Chief Cliff Burrell. "Lloyd came outside before he got burned," said Jane Adams, a neighbor. "But, he must have been scared or confused by the fire, because he ran back into the house and got back into bed in spite of the fire. An automobile ran over Blitch's leg during the confusion but he was back at work the next morning."*

*The Herald of **August 17, 1950** stated "A \$10,000 fire early Wednesday morning burned a Clover paint warehouse to the ground despite the fire department's efforts to extinguish the blaze. Henry Brown's paint storehouse located on Valley Avenue behind the First Methodist Church, caught fire at about 3:45 a.m. Wednesday morning. Night police radio operator Dee Ford heard the fire crackling and sounded the alarm. Brown told Fire Chief Bill Thomasson that he had only the day before received a \$2,000 paint shipment which he stored in his warehouse."*

*The **December 15, 1952** edition of The Herald noted "The interior of a house occupied by the Rev. Ben Sprouse of Oak Street, Clover, pastor of the Church of God, was badly damaged by fire yesterday about noon. In addition, most of*

the furniture was ruined. Only Sprouse's son was home when the fire broke out. Young Sprouse, who was asleep at the time, was awakened by neighbors and escaped injury. The Clover Fire Department answered the call and had the fire under control in about half an hour. Fire Chief Roy Brooks said the origin of the fire had not been determined but that it was thought that an oil stove was the cause."

According to the Herald of **January 3, 1955**, "A family of five was rendered homeless yesterday when a chimney fire spread through an entire five room structure near Clover. The house, occupied by Andy Collins, his wife and three children, burned to the ground. The fire began about 2:30 p.m. The Clover Fire Department answered the call near the Harvey School. However, in the midst of the blaze it was reported the truck had to leave to replenish its water supply. The family was able to save some household furnishings. This was the second disastrous rural fire in the Clover area in two weeks. On Dec. 19th a fire destroyed the Paul McClure home killing two small children."

The **July 27, 1955** printing of The Herald reported that Roy Brooks, Clover Fire Chief and superintendent of water and streets, was admitted to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Columbia yesterday. He has been ill several weeks."

The Florence Morning News of **November 3, 1955** reported "Fire today burned out Sams Shoe Shop in the business district. Slight damage was done to adjacent establishments, Carolina Theater and a barber shop. Fire Chief Guy Neil said the fire started near a sewing machine, indicating an electrical short circuit."

"Clover Firemen To Meet Today," read the caption in the **October 27, 1955** printing of the paper. "The Clover fire department will meet at 6:30 p.m. today at Charlie's South End Café, Chief S. Guy Neil announced. Included on the agenda is action to replace four members of the department who resigned last week. Some of those who resigned said their action was protest of the firing of former Chief Roy Brooks. Brooks was discharged by the town council earlier this month."

According to the **October 13, 1956** edition of The Herald, *“Fire caused damages estimated at \$10,000 in Clover during the last year, Fire Chief S. Guy Neil said today. The Clover Volunteer Fire Department answered 55 calls inside the city and went to 44 rural fires during the 12-month period ending August 31. Two homes in the city and several near Clover were destroyed and others were damaged. The September-November period was the worst for fire damage. Firemen answered 11 calls in town and six rural calls. Damage in the town was estimated at \$7,700.”*

On **December 6, 1956**, The Herald noted *“An oil delivery truck driven by William Jackson, of Clover, caught fire and burned yesterday near Barnett Mountain. Truck tires, cab and outer paint were damaged extensively. Clover firemen controlled the flames and the oil cargo did not explode or burn. Jackson was not injured.”*

The Herald of **November 5, 1957**, wrote *“A tenant house burned and another dwelling was saved yesterday when the Clover Fire Department answered three calls. The home of the Billy Tate family at Clover, Rt. 3, was destroyed about 3 p.m. when no one was at home. The fire was too far advanced by the time the firemen were notified for them to prevent destruction of the building. At 7 p.m. another call was put in concerning the same location. A second fire run prevented damage to nearby woods. At 9:30 a.m. a barn near the Bowling Green home of Robert Green was reported on fire. The volunteer crew saved part of the barn and protected a nearby house from damage.”*

Again, The Herald, on **November 8, 1957**, wrote *“Damage estimated at \$4,500 resulted from a fire Wednesday morning at the home of Dee Anderson, 110 Marion Street, Clover. The fire which began in a closet and spread to the attic, was quickly extinguished by firemen. Fire Chief Guy Neil said firemen had to puncture the roof to put the fire out. Mrs. John Dixon who helped remove some of the furniture, turned in the alarm.”*

The **September 9, 1957** edition of The Herald reported *“A fire at the residence of Mrs. J. E. Adams, Ridge Road, Clover, was quickly put out yesterday by the Clover Fire Department. Cause of the fire was paper stuffed in a flue, temporarily blocking an opening left by damage from a recent storm. Mrs. Adam’s maid, not knowing about the paper, lit a fire which, in turn, set aflame*

the paper in the flue. Minor damage was caused to electrical wiring and other parts of the house near the flue. Volunteer firemen responded to the fire call about 12 p.m.”

On **January 13, 1958**, The Herald posted “*Lindsay Howard (Bill) Youngblood, 57, of 203 Forest St., Clover, died early Sunday morning as a result of burns received while cleaning an automobile engine Saturday afternoon. The car was on a wash rack in an auto shop in Clover. A cleaning material known as gunk was being used to remove mud and grease from the engine. The car’s battery exploded, setting nearby inflammables on fire. Youngblood’s clothes caught on fire and he was rushed to York County Hospital about 1:30 p.m. The Clover Fire Dept. put out the blaze. Youngblood died at the hospital about 12 hours later.*”

The **March 13, 1958** printing of The Herald reported that “*A short circuit apparently started a blaze which caused approximately \$3,000 in damage to the office the Clover school superintendent this morning. The fire was discovered about 6:30 a.m. by Clover police on their regular rounds. It began at a plug near a receptionist’s desk, scorched walls, cracked a glass wall near the door and soiled furnishings. Clover firemen extinguished the blaze.*”

The Herald’s headlines of the **August 27, 1959** edition of the paper read, “*Thunderstorm Takes Heavy Toll.*” “*It looked like a ball of fire coming over the hill top and striking the tower. That’s the way an eye-witness described the lightning bolt which struck Bethel Consolidated School last night, touching off a blaze that burned the building to the ground. The elementary school was a mass of flames by the time firemen arrived on the scene, just 4 miles east of Clover in the Bethel community, part of Clover School District No. 2. Principal Lindsay estimated that it would cost about \$100,000 to replace the school building. Marvin Grisson, a service station operator at nearby Five Points, two miles from the school, turned in the first fire alarm. Grisson was passing the school about 9:05 p.m. when he first noticed flames shooting from one of the classrooms near the front of the school. He went to a nearby home to phone firemen. The phones were dead. Grisson then drove the five miles into Clover to call firemen. Clover firemen notified other rural fire departments of the blaze. Clover fire fighters, who first received the call, were in trouble. The fire truck refused to start, Fire Chief S. G. Neal said. The Clover truck finally*

started and the crew arrived at the school some ten minutes after York firemen, at 9:45 p.m. More than 100 firemen from Clover, York, Oakdale, Newport, Hickory Grove, Lesslie, Sharon and McConnells departments fought the blaze until 2 a.m. Fire fighters were hampered by lack of water at the site. Trucks carried water from Clover some 4 miles away.”

The **January 2, 1960** edition of The Herald noted *“An early morning fire today caused an estimated \$2,000 damage to a residence on Claremont St. in Clover. The blaze was reported to have started in the kitchen of the house. The exact cause of the blaze had not been determined. The occupants ran to the house of a neighbor to report the fire at 6:35 a.m. The family managed to salvage most of their clothes, a couch, a chair and a television set.”*

According to Clover Fire Chief, Guy Neil, *“Saturday was our busiest day since last spring.”* This was reported by The Herald on **March 28, 1960**. *“Seven calls came in during the day, mostly to grass and woods fires. One tenant house, on the Joe Caldwell farm about four miles from Clover, was destroyed by fire early Saturday.”*

The **December 26, 1961** edition of The Herald noted that *“The Bob Walker residence on Clover’s Main Street was damaged heavily, according to Clover Fire Chief Robert Adams. The Christmas Eve fire was reported to the department at 5:30 p.m. Adams said the family was at home at the time of the fire but that the location of the original blaze was not known. He said it apparently started in the back of the four-room house in the kitchen area. The back two rooms of the house were burned.”*

“Rash Of Fires Leaves Score Homeless; Firemen Answer Calls Night and Day,” was the caption of The Herald on **December 18, 1962**. *“Four fires in Western York County Monday left 20 people homeless.”* The article states that the home of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Biggers was completely destroyed; Fire was also reported at 6:10 p.m. and the York, Clover and Hickory Grove fire trucks answered the call; the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wade Wright and their three children burned to the ground about 3 p.m. yesterday; at the same time the Wright house was burning, York and Clover fire departments were fighting a fire at the home of Jake Palmer, between York and Clover; and a number of other fires in the area were being fought in Rock Hill, Lesslie, Oakdale and

Newport. *"A South Carolina Law Enforcement Division arson investigator, George W. Taylor, and a fire insurance investigator arrived to investigate."*

Chief Robert Adams of Clover, reported to the Fire Commission the department's annual report as noted in the **January 10, 1963** of The Herald. *"Adams reported 114 fires. They included 67 grass fires, nine automobiles, a tractor, 14 house fires, three overheated furnaces, a washerette, seven trips to the town dump, and two turkey house fires. Total savings was estimated at \$38,000."*

The Herald reported on **April 2, 1963** that *"The Clover Fire Department won the battle but lost the war Monday. The fire truck caught on fire after firemen had extinguished two fires in the same vicinity. The truck answered a call and put out a house fire on W. H. Stowe's farm Monday afternoon, Robert Adams, Clover fire chief said. A faulty gas line on the truck had broken and set the truck on fire."*

A follow up to the above story appeared in the **May 30, 1963** edition of The Herald. *"A Clover fire truck that was badly damaged in a fire April 1 was put back into operation Wednesday. Proud volunteer firemen drove the truck to the fire station almost eight weeks to the day fire from a broken gas line destroyed its cab as the truck was attempting to put out a grass fire near Clover. The Clover Fire Department had to order a new cab and chassis, but the pump and most of the fire equipment were saved. The 500 gallon pump, 800 gallon tank and auxiliary equipment, were taken off the old cab and joined to the new cab by volunteer workers. Chief Robert Adams had high praise for two men who assisted in rebuilding the truck, Tom McLean and Mack Stewart, also volunteer firemen."*

The Herald of **October 5, 1963**, provided its readers with the names of the firemen serving the Town of Clover...all volunteers. *"Chief Tom McLean, Lee Roy Knight, Robert Sifford, Buck McCall, Bobby Norman, Jack Whisenant, Alan Darby, Bob Kale, Robert Adam, John M. Pursley, Robert Pursley, Ray Robinson, Howard Crawford, Jesse Brayham, Mack Stewart, Olin Killian and Howard Sams."*

“Fires Destroy Two Homes Sunday Morning In Clover,” headlined in **October 21, 1963** edition of The Herald. *“Two residential homes, one vacant, were completely destroyed by separate fires here Sunday morning. Fire of undetermined origin swept through the empty Bethel Street home of the late Jeff Harvey at 6:45 a.m. Sunday. The Clover Fire Department, which was alerted by a passing motorist, said the flames were out of control in the six-room frame house by the time they reached the scene. Some five hours after the first alarm, firemen received a call on Trinity Street. Paul Wallace residence on Trinity Street. According to the owner of the house, E. L. Adams, the fire started while oil was being poured into a cook stove in the kitchen. Though the four-room frame house was leveled, some furniture was saved. The department, at the scene over an hour, had to return later in the day when the flooring burst into flames again.”*

On **December 5, 1963**, The Herald reported that *“A fire that apparently started in a closet adjacent to a chimney destroyed the six-room frame home of John Lee Johnson, near here Wednesday afternoon. The Johnsons, who were keeping five children, barely escaped with their lives. Johnson suffered slight burns on the side of his face.”*

An article appeared in the **December 31, 1963** edition of The Herald which stated *“A retired mill worker and his wife narrowly escaped death early today when their five-room frame house caught fire while they were sleeping. Haskell Jenkins and his wife were wakened at 3 a.m. by their son, Johnny, who noticed fire in an adjoining room when he returned home from work. Clover fire chief Tom McLean said the couple would have died. The back room had nearly caved in from the fire. The Clover fire department was not immediately notified because the Jenkins house, six miles west of Clover, had no telephone. The department was able to save an out house, smoke house and two automobiles.”*

The Herald printed on **March 10, 1964** *“A fire of undetermined origin gutted a two-story frame house on Calhoun Street at noon today. Flames, whipped by 25 mile an hour gusts, threatened other homes in the area. A family of six was left homeless with a few possessions. Thomas D. Powers, an American Thread Company employee said he was resting in the bedroom when his wife noticed the smoke and flames had spread completely through the house. Powers, his*

wife, father and three small children escaped without injury. York and Clover fire trucks were called to the scene.”

On **January 21, 1965**, the Florence Morning News noted “A one-story brick building housing two businesses at the Town Square was gutted by a Wednesday fire eventually contained by 50 firemen and a dozen trucks. A can of solvent used in tire recapping exploded in the back of Paul Boyd’s Tire and Appliance Store. Clover Fire Chief Tom McLean said no one was hurt. Also burned out was McCall’s Barber Shop. Firemen kept the blaze from spreading to a service station on one side and a two-story hotel and restaurant building on the other. Both were blackened by smoke, however.”

The **June 27, 1967** edition of The Herald reported “Fire destroyed the one-story frame residence of Mrs. Charlie Wells, one mile south of Kings Mountain State Park about 10 a.m., Sunday. Elmer Biggers, Bethany Fire Department Chief, said the fire was out of control when the fire truck reached the residence on Highway 160. The Clover Fire Department also was called to the scene. Tom McLean, Clover fire chief, said that very little furniture was removed before the house was leveled. Both fire chiefs explained that the call was received too late for either department to be able to accomplish anything. Cause of the blaze was undetermined.”

According to the **November 4, 1967** edition of The Herald, “Fire broke out in a warehouse of the Macintosh Spinning Mill in Clover yesterday and officials estimated that damages would run into the thousands of dollars. The Clover Fire Department reached the warehouse about 3 a.m. yesterday morning and began a four-hour battle against flames which they said were shooting through the roof in one corner of the brick building. Firemen said that the blaze was contained to a small area of the building, but that it caused extensive damage to the roof and to sample cotton and machinery stored there.”

The Herald wrote on **August 31, 1970** that “Fire in the kitchen area of the home of police sergeant Jimmie Gardner on Rt. 3 did an estimated \$2,000 damage Saturday morning. A fire at 2 a.m. Sunday destroyed the home of Walter Meeks at 104 Dye St.”

The Herald reported on **July 5, 1975** that *“The Clover volunteer Fire Chief was electrocuted Thursday afternoon as he attempted to check an electrical substation for fire damage at the Bowling Green Spinning Co. Robert Norman, 45, was found clinging to the electrical substation fence minutes after he told friends that he would check the station. Norman was pulled from the fence and rushed to the Gaston County Hospital in Gastonia where he was declared dead on arrival. He was manager of the Duke Power Co. office in Clover. The fire department was called to the Bowling Green Spinning Co. plant two miles outside of Clover at 5:15 Thursday to extinguish a warehouse fire.”*

“Clover Man Dies In Fire,” a caption in The Herald of **December 3, 1976** says. *“Robert O. Turner, 51, of 204 Winthrop St., died Thursday in an early evening fire at his home. The Clover fire department received the call at about 8:15 p.m. The house was engulfed in smoke by the time the police and fire truck arrived. Turner was dead when responders arrived. The fire apparently started from an open fire place, according to Eddie Mac McCarter, Clover Fire Chief.”*

“SLED To Investigate Clover Fire,” noted The Herald in the **November 8, 1979** edition. *“State Law Enforcement Division agents will investigate Thursday’s fire at Coltex Inc. on old North Main Street. Clover Fire Chief Eddie Mack McCarter said he wants SLED agents to investigate because of the \$2 million loss of property. McCarter, who led firefighters from nine volunteer fire departments against the early morning blaze, said he wasn’t aware of any foul play. The fire apparently began in an elevator shaft about 5 a.m. Thursday.”*

According to records of Mr. Ed L. Stewart, *“On Wednesday, **September 24, 1980**, fourteen classrooms and the office area at Clover Junior High School were completely destroyed by fire. The fire started in the fluorescent lighting between the office and the teachers’ lounge. From there the fire traveled down the entire hallway. Classes were discontinued for two days. For the remaining school year, classes were set up in mobile units in the parking lot and in areas of the school that were not burned.”*

The Florence Morning News reported on **August 27, 1981** that *“A fire has destroyed a \$285,000 yarn processing plant here despite the efforts of firefighters from five York County fire departments, according to Clover Fire*

Chief Eddie Mack McCarter. Clover firefighters got the call to Cherry Finishers Inc. about 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.”

The Herald on **December 15, 1982** announced that “*Clover Fire Department Gets 5,000-Gallon Tanker.*” The article continues, “*That’s some piece of machinery. ‘What it is, is security, says Clover Fire Chief Eddie Mack McCarter. It’s a big, floating reservoir.’ The tanker, York County’s largest, ended up at the Clover department thanks to several providers. York County’s rural fire commission bought the tank for \$2,500. Clover’s town council kicked in another \$3,500, and the Clover fire department put \$10,000 in the till for the chassis. This tanker is going to be a big asset to Clover, especially in the outer edges of town where there aren’t hydrants.*”

Noted in The Herald of **October 21, 1983**, is an article which notes that “*School and fire officials were meeting this morning with State Law Enforcement Division staffers at Clover Middle School, scene of an early morning fire Wednesday. SLED is checking for signs of arson at the request of Clover Fire Chief Eddie Mack McCarter. The fire damaged the school’s main office, principal’s office and a work area. Water damaged some adjoining areas. The school’s fifth and sixth graders missed classes Thursday and today but are scheduled to return to the school on Monday.*”

The Herald, of **October 8, 1984**, reported that “*A Sunday morning smoldering fire that threatened a shirt manufacturing company here was quickly extinguished by local firefighters after a Clover policemen answered an alarm. Klear Knit Inc., which employs about 450 people from Clover, York, Sharon and Hickory Grove, was overflowing with smoke around 9:15 a.m. Sunday morning when patrolman Robert Rainey made a building check after a burglar alarm at the plant went off at the police station. Suspecting a break-in, he found smoke. Rainey said he could tell it wasn’t a forced entry and checked the doors. I smelled something burning, got out the car and looked. Smoke was coming from between the cracks in one of the back door and I called the fire department crew. In less than a minute, Eddie McCarter was here and then the rest of them arrived in a couple of minutes.*”

According to the **May 7, 1986** printing of The Herald, “*Clover and Bethel Volunteer Fire Department members fight a house fire on St. Paul Church*

Road, about two miles southeast of Clover. The blaze occurred about 6:15 p.m. at the one-story brick home owned by Steve Stanton of Clover.”

Yet another fire death in Clover is reported by The Herald in the **May 17, 1990** edition of the paper. *“A 33-year-old Clover man died of smoke inhalation early Wednesday when his Brown Street home was engulfed in flames that may have been caused by smoking a cigarette in bed, authorities said. William Ted Barnette of 113 Brown St., was pronounced dead on the scene after firefighters and rescue personnel searched for his body in the rubble that used to his and his twin brother’s home.”*

The Herald, of **June 26, 1992**, reported *“A vacant mobile home on Rhyne Road west of Clover was destroyed by fire early Saturday, a Clover fire official said. Firefighters were called to the blaze about 3:30 a.m. No one was living in the unfinished mobile home. The investigation was turned over to the York County Fire Marshal.”*

According to The Herald, dated **February 11, 1994**, *“An unidentified man burned beyond recognition was found dead inside the ruins of a vacant mobile home on South Main Street consumed by fire early Thursday afternoon. The remains of the victim were found by Clover volunteer firefighters in a back part of the mobile home after they had put out the fire that was reported about 2 p.m. York County Coroner Jim Chapman ordered an autopsy to determine the cause of death. Examiners also will be asked to look into trying to identify the man through dental records, if any can be found. The origin of the fire had not been determined. The mobile home, owned by Frank Stanton of Clover, had not been occupied and nobody knew there was anybody in it until the firefighters stumbled on the body. The alarm was sounded by an anonymous woman who reported the fire. It was hit by fire about a year ago.”*

The **July 26, 1995** edition of The Herald posted a significant honor to three of Clover’s volunteer firefighters. *“Three Clover volunteer firefighters who braved smoke, heat and fire to rescue an elderly man from a burning house in December will receive awards Saturday night from a state organization. Capt. David Green, Gary Love and Jeff Sanders will be recognized for their heroic efforts by the S. C. Firefighters’ Association. Jerry Williams, a Lesslie firefighter who is president of the association will make the presentations at a banquet*

Saturday night at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center. The three donned special gear and, backed up by other Clover volunteers, fought their way into a burning house at 103 Carroway Lane on Dec. 22. William Powell, 73-year-old retired Clover school custodian, was unconscious and suffering from severe burns when the rescuers found him under a bed and pulled him to safety. After emergency treatment at the scene, Powell was airlifted to Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte where he stayed for five or six weeks recuperating. He is now back home with no ill effects."

*"Fire Department Moves Across Street to New Station," reads the caption in The Herald on **October 1, 1999**. "Fire Chief Mack McCarter said the town's new fire station is more than just a place to park fire trucks. McCarter and 23 volunteer firefighters moved into the \$625,000 fire station at 115 Bethel St. on September 18 and will officially open the station Sunday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The fire station sits right across the street from the older, modest fire station built in 1918. 'It's just a nice, well-built building,'...He should know. He helped save the town more than \$300,000 by using a little of his own elbow grease."*

The Hardee's of Clover suffered a bad fire, according to the **May 22, 2000** printing of The Herald. *"A late night fire at Hardee's closed part of Main Street in Clover as firefighters from the York and Clover fire departments fought the blaze Sunday night. The back room of the fast food restaurant was fully involved when firefighters arrived. Little damage could be seen from the outside, but the fire did heavy damage to the cooking area and caused smoke damage throughout the building."*

The Clover Fire Department took to the streets after the 9/11 attacks to raise money for the families of first responders who lost their lives during that terrible day, according to The Herald on **September 29, 2001**. *"After the day was done, the fire department had collected \$4,600 for this worthwhile cause, and we were very pleased, thanks to the people of Clover. We were also asked by the South Carolina Firemen's Association to have a boot drive. Thanks again for your generosity, and the old saying that love is in the middle of Clover has been proven once again."*

The Herald printed an interesting article on **May 28, 2002** recognizing one of Clover's volunteer firefighters. *"Clover resident Lewis Curry is a man on the go. When he is not spending time with his family or working two jobs, the 47-year-old is a volunteer firefighter. While firefighting is often a thankless job, Curry recently was recognized by The United Men's Club of Clover for serving the community. In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the group wanted to recognize the only African-American firefighter in Clover."*

The Herald printed on **October 16, 2003** captioned "Clover's New Fire Chief A Familiar Face." *"The town of Clover has a new fire chief and assistant fire chief. Town leaders have tapped Charlie Love, the former assistant fire chief, to head up the Clover Volunteer Fire Department. Mark Geouge, recently chosen as public works director, will serve as assistant fire chief. Love, 44, has served as interim fire chief since Eddie 'Mack' McCarter died in August. McCarter served as fire chief and as the town's public works director for more than 30 years. Geouge, 37, also a Clover native, said he worked for the town under McCarter's direction for 18 years. For the past 15 years he has served as a volunteer in the fire department."*

The Herald posted a tender and emotional article on **April 14, 2005** about the retirement of one of Clover's most passionate and dedicated volunteers. *"Mack Stewart doesn't fight fires anymore. Gone is the pager that once summoned him to fires and the gear that protected him from intense heat and orange-red flames. The 83-year-old Clover volunteer firefighter battled fires for more than five decades. He fought his last fire in January and retired days later, but the fire department is still home. Every time he walks in the door, we ask him if he wants his fire gear back, said Mark Geouge, assistant fire chief. He always responds, Better not. Stewart would like nothing better than to reclaim his gear and hop back on his fire trucks." According to Geouge, "There's not another gentleman that I know who can give the service and the time this man has given to the department. Whatever service we needed of him, he was here."*

The **April 30, 2005** edition of The Herald reported good news for citizens in and around Clover. *"Residents and business owners should see a drop in their insurance rates thanks to Clover firefighters. The Insurance Services Office*

rating for the Clover Volunteer Fire Department has dropped from a 7 inside the city limits and an 8 outside of Clover to a 5 for the entire 44-mile district."

In The Herald dated **January 24, 2007**, an article said *"The CloverTex textile plant has returned to a normal schedule after a fire early Tuesday shut down operations for about four hours. No employees were injured when a fire broke out in the plant's ductwork around 4 a.m. Tuesday. Fire Chief Charlie Love said the fire started when wire became caught in a filter machine and began to spark. The sparks caused flames to break out in some of the mill's ventilation ductwork, sending smoke throughout the building."*

The Myrtle Beach newspaper, Sun-News, told on **February 20, 2007**, that *"One downtown Clover corner was forever changed early Sunday as a fire destroyed a decades-old landmark that had become a symbol of the community. Rick Ford Inc., a car dealership was gutted by a fire that began around 3 a.m. Clover Fire Chief Charlie Love said, 'The fire started in the upper end near the showroom, traveled north along the roof and consumed the whole workshop.'" A follow-up to the above story, reports that "Investigators don't believe arson was the cause of the Sunday morning fire that destroyed Clover's Rick Ford car dealership. Authorities began investigating Wednesday afternoon and Clover Fire Chief Charlie Love said the cause is still unknown, but investigators have not found any reason to suspect arson."*

"Clover Mill Blaze Lasts Into The Night," read an article in The Herald on **February 26, 2008**. *"Firefighters worked late into the night Monday to battle a pesky blaze at a textile mill near downtown Clover. The fire started around 8:30 p.m. inside an air duct at the CloverTex plant near First Presbyterian Church on Guinn Street. The plant caught fire last year, as well as in 2004. Teams of firefighters from Clover, York and Bethel fire departments were expected to stay at the scene past midnight. Firefighters attacked the blaze in patient, methodical fashion, not wanting to risk missteps in the dark."*

"Clover Fire Damages 4 Apartment Units," reported The Herald on **May 28, 2008**. *"Stonegate Apartments' newest tenant was displaced Tuesday by a fire that scorched his apartment and left three other units with minor water and smoke damage. Residents of Building 600 were evacuated, and no one was injured in the blaze that occurred around 6 p.m. The fire may have started*

around the stove and quickly spread throughout the bottom floor Unit 605, causing substantial damage.”

The Town of Clover and its fire department were saddened by the death of Mack Campbell Stewart on **April 7, 2011**. According to the obituary posted by M. L. Ford & Sons Funeral Home, Mr. Stewart served as a member of the Clover Fire Department for 56 years and was a member of the Clover Police Department for many years.

On **December 28, 2011**, The Herald printed that *“Investigators spent all day Tuesday sifting through the remains of a house on Christmas Tree Lane that was destroyed by fire Monday night. The body of Staci Butler, 43, was found inside the house. An autopsy was completed Tuesday afternoon, but York County Deputy Coroner David Chambers couldn’t confirm cause of death. Officials worked in the rain Tuesday to sort through the wreckage. Though the exterior brick siding on the front of the home seemed intact, the fire weakened the roof and destroyed an outbuilding.”*

“Clover Backs Volunteer Firefighter Rules,” says The Herald in the **January 3, 2013** printing of the paper. *“After months of debate, members of the Clover Town Council have reaffirmed a decision to limit Clover firefighters from volunteering in any other first responder capabilities. Clover Fire Chief Charlie Love who leads the all-volunteer department of 24 active firefighters, said the issue arose because a few of the volunteer firefighters were interested in joining the Clover Police Department’s new volunteer reserve officer program. Love said he doesn’t believe volunteer firefighters could handle more than one first responder volunteer position, because of the steep requirements they must meet to remain active.”*

The heading of The Herald noted in the **January 15, 2014** printing of the paper read, *“Western York County Loses 2 Ex-Fire Chiefs.”* The article continues *“In just the past few days, two former leaders of those brave volunteers have died. Smyrna, the smallest department in York County, lost Ronald Mitchell, 64, who was chief from 1981 to 1986. He died Monday. A former Clover fire chief, Robert Adams, died Friday at 86. In Clover, almost everybody knew Robert Adams ran a garage for decades and was, during the 1970s, fire chief at the Clover Volunteer Fire Department.”*

On **August 28, 2014**, The Herald printed that *“A Clover teenager was arrested last week in connection with a house fire earlier this month in Clover. Clover Fire Department officials were called to a house fire on Colonial Road on August 8. A seventeen-year-old and three minors were seen entering the residence at night. Once inside, they started fires inside the house intending to burn it down. They were charged with arson and burglary, both third degree. The minors were petitioned to family court and released to their guardians.”*

The Herald reported on **March 9, 2015** that *“Authorities are investigating the causes of two house fires that began around the same time and on the same street Sunday morning. Clover and Bethany fire departments responded around 5:20 a.m. to find a house ablaze on the corner of Calhoun and Smith streets in Clover. Once on the scene, firefighters soon noticed smoke coming from a house next door to the other fire on Smith Street. Firefighters from the York Fire Department were then called in to assist in containing both fires. Firefighters quickly were able to contain the fire at the second home, limited the damage to what the chief estimated to be about \$40,000 to \$50,000. Love said the fires appear to have started separately, and it was not a case of a fire in one home spreading to the other.”*

“16-Year-Old Charged In Clover Fires,” read the caption in The Herald on **March 17, 2015**. *“Police have charged a 16-year-old Clover boy with setting fire to his own home, along with two other houses in the city. A series of Clover house fires were investigated last week, beginning March 8 and continuing through Saturday.”*

“Volunteer Firefighter, Passerby Rescue Clover Woman From Fire,” noted the caption in the **May 19, 2015** edition of The Herald. *“A volunteer firefighter and a passerby were the first to respond to a house fire near Clover last week, helping a woman escape from the burning house. A 62-year-old woman inside the house suffered burns and had to be airlifted by helicopter to the Baptist Health Burn Center in Winston-Salem, N.C., said Clover Fire Chief Charlie Love. Before any fire engines arrived, volunteer firefighter Luke Caldwell left his home on Ridge Road and drove his car to the house. Along with another man, Charlie Kennedy, who stopped to help, Caldwell went into action to save the woman. The volunteer firefighter moved around the exterior of the house*

to check a window, when Kennedy told him he could see the woman through the smoke on the floor. Caldwell, who already had on his fire gear, made the decision to go inside. Caldwell said he pulled the woman out of the home and got her into the yard just as other first responders were arriving. Flames soon moved into the area where she had been.”

*“Rotary Installs AEDs In Town Parks,” stated the headline of the **October 25, 2016** edition of The Herald. “The Clover Rotary Club, in partnership with the town of Clover, Family Trust and Clover Community Bank, received a matching grant of \$2,500 from the Rotary Foundation to place five Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) at town parks. The Clover Fire Department will train town of Clover personnel and staff in the use of the AEDs.”*

The **March 31, 2017** edition of The Herald reported *“Man Dies In Accidental Fire From Burning Debris Near Clover, Officials Say.”* The article continues, *“A man died overnight in a fire near Clover that apparently began with a blaze to burn debris, York County officials say. The man who died was identified as Jerome Hamer, 71. The fire happened on a wooded property at 2763 Kingsbury Road, southeast of Clover. The fire appears to be accidental from burning debris. Deputies talked to three people who said they heard an explosion and went to check on Hamer, who was found deceased at the scene.”*

The **February 27, 2019** edition of The Herald reported that *“Preparations are being made to keep fire service active in Clover should volunteer firefighters leave, though town and county officials are hopeful it won’t get to that point. Clover Town Council on Monday night called a special meeting to discuss hiring a new fire chief. A public meeting followed with a packed house. Clover fire department volunteers said they’d leave it if a new chief is hired instead of long-time volunteer Chief Charlie Love. Allison Harvey, town administrator, said Tuesday she has been working to keep Clover covered with fire protection. Clover leaders decided to bring on a chief and firefighter as the first paid positions within the department. Love had been a volunteer chief for 16 years and applied for the paid position. The town instead went with former Gastonia, N.C. and Crowders Mountain firefighter Billy Thompson. Chief Love’s commitment and dedication to the Clover Fire Department, its members and this community is beyond reproach, said Harvey.”*

In the **March 13, 2019** printing of The Herald, the caption read *“Purely Politics: Clover Council Reverses Decision To Hire First Paid Fire Chief.”* The article continues, *“Clover isn’t bringing on a new paid chief after all. A lengthy Clover Town Council executive session Monday night led to a reversal of course on hiring a new chief.”* According to Mayor Greg Holmes, *“The pressure from the citizens, I do believe it weighed in on some of our decisions as council members.”*

According to The Herald of **October 24, 2019**, *“Mr. Tom Erwin McLean, Sr., 95, of Clover, passed away Tuesday. Mr. McLean founded McLean’s Garage in 1957. He was a member of the Clover Volunteer Fire Department for many years, eventually becoming Chief in the 50s and 60s.”*

A story about the Clover Fire Department was covered on **August 1, 2022** by **WBTV**. *“Growth in Clover, S. C. means more homes and people that might need firefighters to come help them in an emergency. That is why the town fire department is recruiting more volunteer firefighters to help respond. This place used to be fully volunteer, but three years ago the town was growing so much, the town council decided they needed a paid staff. Two firefighters are the only people on the payroll at the Clover Fire Department with a third person on the way. The volunteers though fill in the gaps.”* According to Assistant Chief Fred Taylor, *“The town is growing. Chalotte is expanding. Lake Wylie is expanding and it’s all moving this way. So it’s making it tougher and tougher for the volunteers we do have. Since this time last year, there have been almost 100 more times we have to respond. Compare that to this year’s 470 calls and growing. Most of the volunteers help after 5 when they get off from work. The department has 20 volunteers and wants to recruit 10 more. We’ve got a long road ahead of us and we can’t do it without the volunteers, according to Taylor.”*

The **May 22, 2023** Clover Town Council special meeting had on its agenda a discussion and agreement item about the proposed fire department substation design build facility. According to the minutes of the meeting *“A request for proposals (RFP) was issued on March 27, 2023, for design-build services for the Fire Substation. The Town received five (5) responses. A review committee consisting of Chief Love and other firefighters reviewed the proposals and short-listed two (2) respondents: Leitner and Progressive and*

JM Cope and Stewart, Cooper, Newell. Following another meeting with the review committee, Chief Love, or his representative, has a recommendation to present to Council during Executive Session.” A follow-up to the article reveals that Leitner and Progressive contractors received the successful bid.

The Clover City Council minutes of **July 8, 2024** reveal that the “*Staff recommended the approval of the purchase of Holmatro forcible entry tools from Spartan Fire and Emergency Apparatus in the amount of \$42,655.07 for the engine that will be located at the new Fire Department Substation.*” The recommendation was approved unanimously.

This writer would be remiss if I did not conclude this research project by providing some personal thoughts about the 100 + years of service this department has given to the Town of Clover. The history of the Clover Fire Department since its founding to the present time is one of annual growth. Good people have served as officers and in the ranks. Improvements in the department are due in large part to the expansion of the town and the demands of service placed on this organization by its citizens. Since the department’s “official” organization in 1925, marked changes have noticeably occurred due to technological advances as well as regulatory standards. Its efficiency from the beginning has permitted the department to build a reputation of professionalism and dedicated service, an achievement for which all first responders strive.

Service to the community is the source of success for this department, and the leadership of its chiefs and officers over the years is evidence of that commitment. Listed below are the names and duration of position of those individuals who have served as Clover’s fire chiefs:

James A. Jackson (1924-1927)
Adam Darby (1927-1928)
J. Sam Maxwell (1928-1934)
J. Lander Maxwell (1934-1948)
William Thompson (1948-1951)
Roy L. Brooks (1951-1955)
S. Guy Neil (1955-1961)
Robert Adams (1961-1963)

Tom McLean (1963-1969)
Robert L. Norman (1969-1975)
Mack E. McCarter (1975-2004)
Charlie Love (2004 to present)

The leadership of all those listed above was, and is, important for sure, but the teamwork of the department's firefighters has always been just as vital. Listed below are the current members of the Clover Fire Department, twenty-one of whom are all volunteer, and four are career:

Jordan Austin (Vol.FF)
Jacob Blackmon (Vol. FF/Secretary)
Lamar Brown (Vol.FF/Lieutenant)
Leah Cardenas (Vol.FF)
Jay Dover (Vol.FF)
John Ervin (Vol.FF)
Bob Fredrickson (Vol.FF)
Mark Geouge (Vol.FF)
Josh Gosselin (Vol.FF)
Alan Graber (Vol.FF)
Lou Jarvis (Vol.FF)
Michael Joyner (Career FF/Training Officer)
Charlie Love (Vol.FF/Chief)
Don Love (Vol.FF)
T. C. McGee (Vol.FF)
Scott Moses (Vol.FF)
Johnny Neelands (Vol.FF/Captain)
Richard Palmer (Career FF)
William Petrea (Vol.FF)
Garrett Quinn (Vol.FF)
Fred Taylor (Career/Asst. Chief)
John Whitely (Vol.FF)
Zachary Corbin (Vol.FF)
Johnthan Gohr (Vol.FF)
Stephen Arnette (Career FF)

On September 27th, 2025, the department will be expanding its footprint to the citizens it serves by dedicating a new substation built by Leitner Construction Co., Inc., located at 121 Sandy Rock Road. This new facility will quarter a growing staff as well as apparatus to respond more quickly to alarms of fire and other calls for assistance.

So, congratulations to the Clover Fire Department on this 100th Anniversary; and to the City of Clover and its citizens who are the beneficiaries of the work rendered by the brave men and women, past and present, who nobly perform their duties of protecting lives and property. My God bless...and stay safe out there!

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