

Partial History of the Dillon Fire Department 1906-1980

The little village of Dillon was established on December 22, 1888 by an Irish settler named James W. Dillon. Located in the Pee Dee Region of northeastern South Carolina, we are told the community was very much secluded and inaccessible for many years because of the countless swamps and rivers throughout that particular area. However, James W. Dillon was challenged by all of those impediments to development and bargained with the Florence Railroad (later to become the Atlantic Coastline Railroad) to construct a rail line through the forty acres he had purchased for the town. The community began to thrive because the fertile soil found there was conducive to growing cotton, tobacco, and allowed for an abundance of timber harvesting.

Businesses and houses began to spring up in that forty-acre tract of land as more and more people saw potential for growth and opportunities to make a living and raise their families. A majority of the construction used in that day was made of wood, and the only source for heating and cooking was, of course, wood. However, in the small town a few merchants were farsighted in building their properties with brick. Unfortunately, fire... "the fire fiend" as it was called in those times... was a frequent visitor to those early entrepreneurs, and the destruction and heartache caused by annoying fires were enormous. The author, "Nancy Backes, said *"Americans had for many years helplessly watched their little wooden towns burn and be rebuilt and burn again."* And, Dillon was no different with its the need to better defend its citizens and their properties from the ravages of unwanted fires.

The Marlboro Democrat, a newspaper published in Bennettsville, reported in their **November 15, 1901** paper the headlines, *"Fire At Dillon."* The article went on to say that *"The Town of Dillon suffered its*

first fire Wednesday morning. A block of business houses valued at \$15,000 was burned; insurance \$6,000.” Also, the Sumter paper, The Watchman & Southron, picked up this story on **November 20, 1901**, and continued, *“The origin of the fire is a mystery, the store in which it started not having been occupied for some time, and the hour at which it occurred precludes the suspicion of foul play.”* This writer is of the opinion that this report was most likely the first fire to be big enough to receive attention from a newspaper.

Just a couple of years later, The Lancaster Ledger printed in the **October 3, 1903** edition of their paper that a *“Fire at Dillon Thursday morning destroyed the cotton seed oil mill. The loss is estimated at \$40,000.”*

While researching the early beginnings of the Dillon Fire Department, this writer was interested in knowing just when the town began to realize its need for increased protection and defense against fire. A quick glance at the Sanborn Maps of South Carolina, reveals that the town had no fire protection in July of 1903, but it had a population of some 1,500 residents.

An article which appeared in The Watchman and Southron on **June 27, 1906** makes reference to the town having no organized fire department but rather a “bucket and axe brigade” when it describes another dangerous fire which occurred on June 21st. *“Dillon came very near having another serious fire last night. Only hard work on the part of the citizens prevented spread of the flames. The alarm was given about 11 o’clock by pistol shots and it was seen that the Emerson hotel was on fire. The town turned out with the determination to stop the progress of the fire at that point, as it might mean destruction to the freight depot and from there would extend into valuable property.”*

The article continues, *“Smoke was issuing from the second floor in the linen closet. The town has no fire department, but the bucket and axe brigade succeeded by hard work in mastering the flames. Mr. Brunson, proprietor of the hotel lost about half of his furniture, damage by removal. He carried insurance amounting to about \$600.”* So, we can presume from this article that the town and its citizens did initiate some sort of rudimentary fire protection by the article’s reference to a “bucket and axe brigade” in 1906. This early method of fire protection is fairly typical of the evolution of fire technology in most villages, towns, and cities throughout South Carolina and the rest of the country. Also, make note that when this particular fire was observed that the alarm of fire was sounded by pistol shots rather than a more efficient method of ringing the church bell.

On **March 17, 1910**, The Dillon Herald headlined *“Disastrous Fire Visits Dillon.”* The article communicates that *“A fire which started in the frame building of Miss Lou Huggins on East Railroad Avenue and occupied as a grocery destroyed about \$20,000 worth of property Sunday night. The origin of the fire is unknown. The alarm was quickly given and citizens rushed to the scene but despite the most persistent efforts of the fire-fighters the flames continued to gain headway until several stores had been reduced to ashes.”*

The article continues in detail that *“The Dillon Herald and The Herald Book Store burned. This is the first serious fire that has visited Dillon in quite a number of years and it is a singular coincidence that this fire should occur on the same day of the month on which the previous fire occurred—the 13th—said to be the unluckiest day on the calendar.”* So, in 1910, reference is again made to the town’s firefighters which certainly indicates the town had made strides in providing some type of fire protection.

The Dillon Herald printed on **March 30, 1911**, that a robbery had occurred on Tuesday night. *“A very bold robbery was committed on Main Street in the very heart of the business district Tuesday night. A thief smashed one of the large plate glass windows in the front of L. Cottingham’s store and helped himself to various and sundry articles of wearing apparel. The robbery is a strong argument for better police protection at night. The service of the night officer was dispensed with sometime ago, and since then the town has been without protection at night. If the town’s income is not large enough to justify the services of a night officer a small tax should be levied on the merchants to pay the salary of such an official. A town the size of Dillon is taking long chances on fire and robbery when it does not provide police protection at night.”*

On **September 14, 1911**, the Dillon Herald reported that *“Fire Destroys Residence.”* It goes on to say that *“The five-room cottage on First Avenue, between Main and Harrison Streets, occupied by Dr. C. R. Taber, was destroyed by fire Saturday morning about 4 o’clock. The fire originated on the outside near one of the gables and had gained much headway before it was discovered that the ‘bucket brigade’ could not extinguish it.”* The report continues that *“Dr. Tabor has reason to believe the fire is of incendiary origin, as some weeks ago he received an anonymous letter which threatened him with injury.”*

The Dillon Herald reported on a fire Thanksgiving Night in their **December 7, 1911** paper. *“A fire that originated in the store of John Huff, a merchant, destroyed two brick buildings in the rear of the Price-Court Inn Thursday night about 10 o’clock. One of the stores was occupied by Mr. C. F. Newman as a bakery. Huff had insurance to the amount of \$1,000, but Mr. Newman had no insurance. For a time the Price Court Inn was in danger of being destroyed, and was only saved by the prompt action on the part of the fire fighters. Mr. Newman saved part of his goods and fixtures. Mr. Newman requests The Herald to*

thank his many friends for the valuable assistance they gave him during the fire."

Once again, this writer researched the Sanborn Maps of South Carolina to determine if any significant upgrades had been made to the town's fire protection. Interestingly, some improvements were either being made or had already been made in **August 1913**. I found the population of Dillon had grown to about 2,200 citizens. The streets had not yet been paved, but the town did have public electric lighting. Changes had been made to alerting the town's volunteers to an alarm of fire by using a church bell to make notifications. An early attempt to control and enforce building and fire codes was in place by establishing a "fire limit" in the downtown business area (from Main to Washington and Calhoun Streets to 5th and 6th Avenues). The fire limit dictated the type construction that could be used in that central part of town to limit the spread of fire. Additionally, the Sanborn Company pointed out that *"At present fire department not organized...to have two hose reels and 1,500 feet of 2 ½" hose."* Also, there was an electric light plant and water works which oversaw 4 ½ miles of 4" to 8" mains and 35 double hydrants in the downtown area. So, progress is being made for sure.

The month of January of 1915 started off with a bang for the town's fire department and its citizens. The Anderson Daily Intelligencer reported on **January 6, 1915**, that *"Fire Destroys Dillon Church." The Dillon Methodist Church, erected at a cost of \$40,000, was totally destroyed by fire early this morning. The fire was discovered at 1:15 A.M. and rapidly consumed the large building. It originated in the region of the pastor's study, although its exact origin can not be ascertained. The building is insured in the sum of \$7,000. The fire department, although at once on the scene, was practically helpless as only two streams could be directed on the flames."*

Then the following day, **January 7, 1915**, the same Anderson newspaper printed *"Store At Dillon Badly Damaged By Fire."* *"On last Friday night the store of I. I. Fass of Dillon was very badly damaged by fire. But for the excellent work of the fire department there would possibly have been a \$200,000 fire loss in the block in which this store is located. The fire department unquestionably saved the most valuable block of buildings in the town."*

An interesting article was found in The Bamberg Herald dated **September 14, 1916** which disclosed *"The Holliday Sale and Feed Stables in Dillon were destroyed by fire Saturday night. Several horses were burned to death and five automobiles housed in a garage adjoining the livery stable were also burned. The total loss aggregates several thousand dollars, partly covered by insurance."*

Apparently by 1917, the Dillon Fire Department had become an active member of the South Carolina State Firemen's Association which qualified the organization to participate in the Firemen's 1% Fund. The Manning Times reported on **May 16, 1917** that *"the following amounts are to be paid to the trustees of the Firemen's Insurance and Inspection Fund in the towns named: Dillon-\$103.11, Marion-\$114.95, and Mullins-\$85.89."*

The Williamsburg newspaper, The County Record, picked up a story dated **September 13, 1917**, in which it was reported *"\$25,000 Fire At Dillon."* *"At 3 o'clock this morning the stores occupied by William Buck and Alec Courie were found to be on fire. These stores were in the middle of one of the main business blocks of the town."* The article continues *"for a time it looked as if L. Cottingham's store would go, but the work of the fire fighters kept it from catching into a blaze. The total loss is estimated at about \$25,000, all parties partially covered by insurance."*

Then, on **March 28, 1918**, The Dillon Herald posted this: *“Fire Alarm Tuesday Morning”...“The fire department promptly responded Tuesday morning to a call from Mr. J. R. Regan’s residence. Upon investigation it was discovered that the building was filled with smoke coming from a leaking joint in a chimney, and that no part of the building was ablaze. Practically no damage resulted.”* The article posted a comment from the fire chief...*“Chief Blackwell requests the Herald’s aid to urge upon property owners the importance of remedying such defects in their chimneys and flues.”*

Another newspaper, The Edgefield Advertiser, published an article on **November 27, 1918** which said, *“Fire Cost Dillon Man Forty Thousand Dollars.”* It seems that *“R. M. Jackson, a successful and wealthy farmer of this county, lost by fire Saturday night 100 bales of cotton, 14,000 bushels of cotton seed, a large ginnery and all machinery connected with the plant. His estimated loss is \$40,000. He had no insurance on any of the property.”*

The Dillon Herald printed a rather lengthy article about the fire department in the **July 24, 1919** publication which contained a bit of humor. The headline read, *“All Smoke—No Fire.” “The Fire Truck and the Crowd Arrived on Time but Fire Didn’t Materialize.”* The commentary said, *“There is an old saying that ‘Where there’s smoke there’s fire’ or something to that effect, but this time-honored maxim didn’t work out Monday night. There was everything on the spot except the fire. The fire truck was there and the crowd with the usual suggestions as to how the firemen should go about the business of checking the flames, but the fire played them a trick—it failed to keep the appointment. Somebody—they couldn’t be found in the crowd—saw smoke ascending from the roof of Murphy Bros. store. It came in gentle waves and drifted over the roof of Morris Fass’ store toward the Coast Line Freight station. The total of the buildings was shrouded in the blackness of a very black night and it took a pretty keen pair of eyes*

to detect the drifting smoke clouds. A train came in from the south and the reflection from the headlight brought the smoke clouds into full view. Panic seized the spectators. The fire truck was summoned and firemen went through scuttle holes and groped around in the darkness between ceiling and roof. The clouds of smoke continued to ascend. By this time the crowd had reached big proportions. One spectator saw a tiny blaze between roof and ceiling; another could distinctly smell the burning timbers. The firemen were powerless; it was one of those mysteries that baffle the most resourceful. There were cries of 'cut out the ceiling!' 'Run for Murphy!' 'Get a stream in the ceiling and roof!' 'If something is not done the whole block will be in flames!' It had got on the spectator's nerves. Just as all hope was about to be abandoned a small boy ran through the crowd with the news that Mr. Murphy said it was only some paper burning in a stove. The fire truck returned to headquarters and the crowd melted away."

On **November 27, 1919**, The Dillon Herald posted this article: *"A five room cottage belonging to Mr. J. H. Reaves was destroyed by fire early Thursday afternoon. Mr. Reaves' residence next door caught fire several times and was saved from destruction by the arrival of the fire truck. The cottage caught between the ceiling and roof and the volunteer firemen were unable to check the blaze with buckets. The fire alarm at the power house was out of order and it was some time before the fire truck arrived. The cottage was a total loss."*

Once again, the Dillon Herald reported on yet another fire in the **January 8, 1920** paper. *"a small-frame building in the rear of G. L. Seals' store on Railroad Avenue was destroyed by fire Thursday night. The prompt arrival of the fire department saved adjoining buildings from destruction."*

On **March 4, 1920**, The Dillon Herald notified the subscribers that "City Council has elected Mr. R. C. Couch fire chief to succeed Mr. Sam

Blackwell who moved to Maxton the first of the year. Mr. Couch is dividing the town into wards and the ward number in which a residence phone is located will be placed on the phone. This will enable the fire department to locate the ward in which the fire occurs without losing much time." The article describes an early method of mapping the community to better locate the address which may need the services of the fire department. Whether this system was effective and streamlined the notification of an emergency is not to be argued over. The point is that the department's leaders were exploring ideas of improving their delivery of services and desired a more rapid response from its volunteers.

Believe it or not, even The Keowee Courier in the upstate carried a story from Dillon in their **November 17, 1920** paper. *"Big Cotton Fire At Dillon."* The story explains that *"last night (Nov. 13th) between 10 and 11 o'clock fire destroyed A. K. McLellan's gin house...there is not the slightest doubt it is said, as to the fire being incendiary origin."*

The **June 16, 1921** edition of The Dillon Herald talks about a new fire apparatus for the town. *"We have bargained to buy a Ford truck for our fire department. It will be equipped with ladders, chemical engine, and one thousand feet of new fire hose. We still have on hand all of the old fire hose which the town had, but it is getting old and is not dependable. This is especially true if we increase our water pressure."* The article says the *"water system is to be upgraded to two fire pumps, bore 8 inch well with concrete reservoir having 250,000 gallons and extensions of water and sewer lines."* From the description of the fire truck to be delivered, the truck was a "chemical engine" ...one which has no pump but rather a tank of about 40 gallon capacity holding a mixture of soda with water and only activated when a bottle of sulfuric acid is mixed in. It was capable of delivering a stream of water about 60 feet and its contents lasted maybe 10 to 15 minutes. It carried 2 ½" fire hose, nozzles, axes, ladders and other tools.

The Dillon Herald printed an account of a fire on **November 10, 1921** about a school house blaze. *“The Industrial School building in the western suburbs was destroyed by fire at an early hour Thursday morning. There were several families living in the building and some of them had a narrow escape and lost most of their clothing and household goods. Flames had completely gutted the building before the arrival of the fire department.”*

Sumter’s newspaper, The Watchman and Southron, reported on a *“Fire At Dillon”* in the **December 3, 1921** edition. *“Fire broke out last night (November 29th) in the White garage on the Bracy block, and except for the rapid work of the fire department the whole block would have been consumed. This building and contents of auto shop and paint department and several automobiles were burned. The shops in the building adjoining suffered the loss of the roof, and the adjacent building of the machine shops was barely saved from the flames. The loss is estimated at \$10,000.”*

Once again, The Dillon Herald reports of three fires which occurred during the week in their **December 8, 1921** printing of the paper. *“A fire that originated in the closet room of the sixth grade did between \$1,500 and \$2,000 damage to the Dillon Public School building Sunday afternoon. The origin of the fire is unknown, but the presumption is that it was caused by spontaneous combustion. The fire department responded promptly, but the fire was confined to the space between the ceiling and roof and the firemen had difficulty in reaching it. There was no school Monday but school opened at the usual hour Tuesday morning and will continue until the holidays when the fire damage will be repaired.”*

The article continues with another account of a fire. *“There was a small fire at Jackson Bros. Company’s plant Thursday night, but it was discovered before the flames had gained much headway and very little*

damage was done.” Then, a fire occurred two days later: “There was also another small fire at the Dillon Mills Saturday night but the watchman discovered it and the flames were extinguished before they gained much headway.”

The fire department had little activity during the months of January and February, but that tranquility was the quiet before the storm. The Watchman and Southron reported on **February 25, 1922** in the headlines, *“Several Stores Destroyed Causing Loss Of At Least \$125,000.”* The story continues, *“About 3 o’clock this morning (February 21st) fire was discovered in the dry goods store occupied by David Fass and before the fire department could make any headway the entire two-story building was gutted.”* The article says the fire spread to a number of adjoining buildings.

Fast forward a decade, and we find in The Florence Morning News dated **September 18, 1932**, the headlines: *“Fire In Dillon Damages Cotton.”* *“Two hundred and seventy five bales of cotton were damaged by fire and water in a fire that partially destroyed the cotton platform of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company here this morning. Owing to the excellent work of the Dillon Fire Department the bales were kept from greater damage, and cotton buyers estimate the total loss at between \$5 and \$6,000 reported fully covered by insurance. What threatened to be a disastrous conflagration of railroad property and nearby property of private citizens was averted by three things: the expert fire fighting of the local fire department and the splendid fire fighting apparatus, and the abundant supply of water furnished by the municipal water plant.”*

The Sumter Item reported in their **November 12, 1932** paper that *“A fire of unknown origin which originated in the Model Bakery at 2:00 A. M. this morning was still burning seven hours later despite the efforts of*

Dillon's fire department. At 9:00 o'clock the flames had destroyed the Masonic Lodge above the bakery and Gibson's Barber Shop next door."

A few years passed, and a Greenwood newspaper, The Index Journal, reported on a fire which occurred on **March 18, 1941**. *"4 Buildings Guttled In Dillon Fire."* The article stated that *"An early morning fire gutted the second stories of four buildings on Main Street here, and another was damaged by fire and water. All occupants of the second floor apartments were trapped. Some came down ladders placed at the front windows by firemen after the flames blocked the rear stairway. Damage was estimated at \$60,000."*

The **February 5, 1942** printing of The Item, a Sumter newspaper, stated that *"A \$30,000 loss was suffered here (Latta) yesterday when fire destroyed the cotton platform of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The fire discovered about 2:00 P.M. spread so rapidly that the Latta Fire Department was unable to save the platform and cotton on it. The Dillon Fire Department was called on for aid, and nearby buildings were saved."*

An article appeared in the **April 20, 1948** edition of The Florence Morning News which headlined *"Fire Damages Rowland Plant."* *"Fire of unknown origin did considerable damage to the lumber plant at Rowland early this morning. Discovered at 3:30 A.M., Rowland and Dillon firemen were called on and together they had the fire under control in three hours."*

An historic event for Dillon is captured in the **September 21, 1949** copy of The Florence Morning News. *"Dillon Fire Department Rescue, First Aid Crew Is Organized And Chartered."* The announcement states *"The Dillon Fire Department Rescue and First Aid Crew has been organized and was chartered under the laws of the State of South Carolina on September 5th with a nucleus of 16 charter members."* It goes on to say

that *“Dillon is the first community in South Carolina to undertake a project of this kind, and the success of this effort will be a criterion for other cities and towns to be guided by.”*

Again, The Florence Morning News reports in the **April 21, 1954** paper that a *“Fiery Crash Leaves Debris, None Injured.” “The Atlantic Coast Line’s ‘The Everglades’ rammed a tractor-trailer and then ripped up 200 yards of track in a spectacular accident just before 8:00 A.M. today...by coincidence, the accident occurred a year to the day after the Atlantic Coast Line’s crack ‘Champion’ piled up south of Dillon, killing four.”*

The Florence Morning News reported a fire in the **October 20, 1955** paper. *“Walter Jackson Residence Burns.” “The home of Walter Jackson, building contractor of the Floydale community was destroyed by fire today with total loss of all contents. The loss is estimated at around \$10,000. The Dillon Fire Department responded to the call but the fire had made too much headway to be controlled.”*

Four months later, yet another tragic fire took place with noted injuries, and the story is told in the **February 25, 1956** edition of The Sumter Item. *“Two Burned Critically In Dillon Fire.” “Two Dillon men remained in critical condition today, victims of the fire that destroyed the Dillon Motor Company building here yesterday.”* The article says the two men suffered *“extensive flesh and third degree burns.”* The fire officials who gave the preliminary damage estimates of \$250,000, said a barrel of paint thinner apparently exploded.

Two years later, The Florence Morning News printed a brief notice of a fire in their **December 30, 1956** printing. It says, *“Raging fire sweeps through block of warehouses, destroying five buildings, injuring three Dillon firemen and causing nearly one million in damage.”*

A happy day for the Dillon Fire Department and the entire town when a new fire engine was finally delivered. The Florence Morning News reported the event in the **November 17, 1957** edition of the paper. *“Dillon Fire Department was proudly displaying a new fire truck this week. Driver Joe Keith pointed out that the American LaFrance has a 500 gallon tank, and can pump 750 gpm. One of the features Joe says he likes about it is the electric rewinding hose reel.”*

In the same paper located in the feature section called “The Pee Dee Rambler” written by Robert Raymond is a neat story about Fire Chief Pate. It goes like this, *“A few doors down from the Dillon Fire Department, Fire Chief C. W. Pate is opening up what might be the first indoor drive-in laundrette in the state. Customers drive in at the front door and out at the back, leaving their laundry on the way. Mighty handy in case of rain.”*

Dillon’s firemen are featured in an article of The Florence Morning News, dated **December 6, 1957**. The headline reads, *“Dillon Firemen Study In Special Training.”* *“Members of the Dillon Fire Department are attending a special training school in their clubrooms here this week. Conducted by H. B. Wells, the training school is being sponsored by the South Carolina Firemen’s Association. The nineteen members of the local department are devoting much of the nightly two-hour sessions to the practical study of the latest methods of firefighting with special emphasis on the use of the most modern equipment and devices, and handling of fire involving new developed flammable materials.”*

The Florence Morning News dated **January 7, 1959** reports that Dillon has a new Fire Chief. *“Along with the new year, Dillon has a new Fire Chief—Marion L. Reaves, who took over January 1.”* The article says Chief Reaves is a veteran firefighter of 18 years; he succeeds Chesley Pate who resigned after 25 years of service to the department; Reaves is a businessman; a member of the City Council; and a member of the

Rescue Squad and past president of the S. C. Association of Rescue Squads.

May 29, 1959 was a special day for Dillon County, as reported in The Florence Morning News headline. *“Rural Fire Department Passed For Dillon County.”* *“A bill establishing three rural fire stations in Dillon County has been passed by the General Assembly and awaits the governor’s signature to become law...Marion L. Reaves, Chief of the Dillon Fire Department has been named Director of Rural Fire Prevention and Protection in the county.”* The announcement states that the three communities to have rural capabilities are Dillon, Latta, and Lake View.

Again, The Florence Morning News dated **February 23, 1963** reports that *“A new telephone alarm system, purchased recently is to be installed for the Dillon Fire Department in the immediate future.”*

We all know the crime of arson has always been a menace to fire departments, and The Florence Morning News reported on such a crime on **April 23, 1964**. *“Dillon Fire Nets Charges of Arson.”* *“Fire damaged a residence at 103 S. 9th Ave. here late Thursday night and charges of arson were filed in the case Wednesday.”*

Sad news for Dillon reported by The Florence Morning News in the **May 16, 1971** paper. *“Chesley W. Pate, Former Fire Chief, Dies.”* The article says, *“he died Saturday in a Mullins hospital after a short illness. He was 60.”* Pate was Fire Chief for 10 years and served the department a total of 25 years.

A brief article in The Florence Morning News dated **June 28, 1971** mentions that a large and dangerous line of thunderstorms moved across South Carolina which did significant damage. *“In Dillon, firemen*

fought a lightning-caused blaze for five hours at the Dillon Co. Warehouse.”

The Florence Morning News announces the death of yet another former Fire Chief in the **August 27, 1971** run of the paper. *“Fire Chief of Dillon Dies At 61.” “John Press Eagerton, veteran Dillon Fire Chief and organizer of the Dillon Rescue Squad, died Thursday after a short illness. Mr. Eagerton had served as Dillon’s municipal fire chief for 35 years.”* This writer is of the opinion that Mr. Eagerton served as a member of the fire department 35 years rather than its Chief.

Still another death of a former Fire Chief is recorded by The Florence Morning News dated **September 21, 1975**. *“Prominent Dillon Businessman Dies Wednesday Night.” “Joseph Columbus Wood, 75, retired president of Caro-Maid Ice Cream Company died Wednesday P.M. following a short illness...he served as a member and Chief of the Dillon Fire Department for 25 years.”*

One more death of a Dillon fireman is found in The Florence Morning News dated **August 4, 1976**. *“Marion L. Reaves, 57, a prominent building contractor, died Tuesday morning in the Veterans Hospital in Fayetteville, N. C. after a long illness.”* The article continued to list Mr. Reaves’ many accomplishments: a veteran of WWII; graduate of Latta High School and Clemson University; former City Councilman and past president of the Dillon Rotary Club; instrumental in organizing the Dillon Fire Department and Rescue Squad; served as Dillon Fire Chief, Director of Civil Defense, Captain of Rescue Squad, and with S. C. State Fire Marshal’s office.

A noteworthy fire was reported in The Index-Journal, a Greenwood paper, on **November 10, 1980**. *“Fire caused an estimated \$1.5 million damage to the J. V. Martin, Junior High School here early Saturday, authorities said. The blaze destroyed the main portion of the 68 year*

old, three-story structure. An auditorium and gymnasium suffered only water damage. The cause had not been determined Sunday."

Finally, an article by Carley Wiggins of The Dillon Herald, published in **October 2013**, notes that *"On Sunday afternoon, **October 6**, the City of Dillon Fire Department celebrated a milestone in the history of the department with 100 years of service to the citizens of Dillon."*

"Officially" and "accurately", 2013 is the fire department's centennial year of celebration. However, this writer believes, with some noted references as evidence, Dillon had initiated a rudimentary citizen's volunteer fire team as early as 1906, some seven years earlier.

This writer chooses to suspend research of the Dillon Fire Department at this point because more current history is easily chronicled from 1980 forward. It has been an interesting project indeed to uncover some of this department's stories and legacy which may have been lost through time or even forgotten by more current generations. Hopefully this work will be shared with many whose interest and love of the fire service will kindle a desire to keep our legacy alive and quite possibly pick up where I left off to put to pen the department's rich history from 1980 to the present time. History doesn't stop...it is created with each passing day!

Researched and Written By:

Carter H. Jones

Special Projects Coordinator

S. C. State Firefighters' Association

August 21, 2020

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**Research & Written By:
Carter H. Jones
Special Projects Coordinator
S. C. State Firefighters' Association
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