



City of Bozeman

Office of

Bozeman Fire Department

W. G. ALEXANDER, Chief.

S. G. CROCKET, Assistant Chief.

D. E. MOSER, Secretary.

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Brief History of the
Bozeman Fire Department.
Dating from Feb. 22, 1884
to
Feb. 22 - 1909.



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Members Bozeman Fire Dept. and guests,
Gentlemen,

Twenty-five years ago tonight, or
a quarter of a century ago, twenty-four
men met in the office of J. M. Bogert, then Mayor
of Bozeman, and organized a company
to fight fire and protect property and
lives from this terrible demon.

The names of the men who organized
this fire company in Bozeman, Feb. 22, 1884,
were as follows, A. P. Clark, Geo. H. Wilson,
E. J. Owenhouse, A. Honecker, C. A. Sherwood,
John Mitchell, Ed. L. Fridley, David Coerum,
Geo. Mardis, A. L. Elliott, John W. Besserer,
Wm. Fransham, G. J. Steffens, Wm. Nevitt, John Nevitt,
A. S. Clark, Wm. Eastman, Geo. E. Barabry, Ben Clark,
John Martin, Sam Lee, Martin Hocker, John Carroll,
and John St. Dawes.

The only member of that first company
now in active service is G. J. Steffens, now
treasurer of the department today.



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The officers elected at that first meeting were as follows, Chief A. P. Clark, Foreman, H. J. Steffens, Treasurer, Geo. H. Willson, Secretary, John H. Lawes.

The name of the organization was decided on as, "The Bozeman Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1."

Their first request to the city council was for red shirts with black trimmings, with hook and ladder shield across the breast, and belts and caps.

The equipment consisted of an old home-made truck and ladders, and leather buckets, which though not giving high pressure, did good service. A new truck, which is still in use, was received about June 10, 1884, and on its arrival a big celebration and ball was held to celebrate the event.

About this time the company decided on having a new fire bell, what they had



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previous to this time, I am not aware of, and a committee of the following named was appointed to procure one, A. P. Clark, Wm. Nevitt, Geo. Barnaby, G. J. Stephens A. J. Elliott and Geo. H. Wilson. Several bells were acquired during latter years, as Bozeman grew, and spread out of hearing of the alarm, so that larger bells were a necessity.

On Thanksgiving night 1884, the Bozeman Hook and Ladder Co. gave its first annual ball, at which all members attended in full uniform. The records do not show in what hall the dance was held, but it was probably Spieth and Krueger Hall, now known as Macey Hall.

In noting the records of fires, I have copied this one entry, which may be interesting to firemen of today.



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"On Nov. 14, 1884, a frame building on East Mendenhall St. was discovered on fire, the company was out in good time, and did good work by keeping the fire from spreading, and saving the lot. Eighteen members were present." If we firemen of today, were compelled to fight fires with buckets, as they did, it is doubtful if we would even save the lot.

In December 1884 a committee was appointed from the company to interview the citizens in regard to purchasing a hand engine. \$2940.⁰⁰ was raised by popular subscription, with which a hand engine and a four wheeled hose carriage were procured, the carriage still being in possession of the department although ~~still~~ in retirement.

Feb 4, 1885 a hose company, called the Alpha Hose Co. and an engine Co, called the Rescue Eng. Co. were organized.



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Our present Chief Alexander joining the Alpha at this time.

In October 1885, the hand engine and hose carriage above referred to arrived, and the entire department in full uniform, met them at the depot, and pulled the apparatus up town by hand. Great was the rejoicing over this new mankiller. The water supply for the hand engine was obtained by sinking wells on each corner of Main St, and covering them with man-hole covers. When a well ran dry, during a fire, the engine was moved to the next one.

Sourdough creek was also used when necessary. The wells were not filled in until the summer of 1908, when the pavement was put in.

At an election of officers in Jan. 1886, the minutes say that our present city treasurer, Geo. Wilson, declined to act



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as Treasurer of the department, because he was about to become a granger.

The secretarip report ending Jan. 1886 shows the following interesting items, "The Bozeman Hook and Ladder Co. started into existence with twenty-four men, a hook and ladder truck, 100 leather buckets, \$375.⁰⁰ worth of patent non-muscular fire extinguishers, and twenty-five uniforms. At the end of the first year the department consisted of three companies of seventy-five men, divided as follows, Hook and Ladder Co, 21 men, Rescue Engine Co, 37 men, and Alpha hose Co, 17 men. They had bought during the year, 1000 ft of Eureka four ply hose, at a cost of one dollar per foot." Some of this hose is still in use in the city.

"The loss by fire in 1884 was \$5725.⁰⁰ and in 1885 was \$85.⁰⁰", which shows in plain



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figures the efficiency of the department. In April 1886, a system of ringing the fire bell for fires, by giving ward taps during general alarm, was adopted and is still used.

The department gave frequent dances during these early years to raise funds for maintenance, the prices of tickets being from one dollar and a half to two dollars each. They were also out to drill often, there being much rivalry between companies.

An effort to purchase a steamer, was made in November 1888, and latter Chief Clark was sent east to purchase one.

The engine arrived in January 1889, and is still in good condition, being held as a reserve apparatus.

W. G. Alexander was elected Assistant Chief in January 1889 and on resignation



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of Chief Clark in May 1889, was elected Chief of the department, which office he has held continually since, with the exception of a few months in 1903 and 4.

The first five year exempt certificates issued to active members, who have served five years, were issued April 16, 1889, by Mayor J. N. Bogert in Spieth and Kruegers Hall, to the following members, A. P. Clark, Geo. Barnaby, and W. J. Eastman.

The Omega Hose Co. was organized December 13, 1889, which enlarged the department to four companies. The Bozeman Water Works was also completed about this time.

On May 4, 1890 a delegation consisting of W. G. Alexander, C. A. Backes, E. Ketterer, C. F. Fransham and B. E. Hall, were sent to Butte to attend the organizing of



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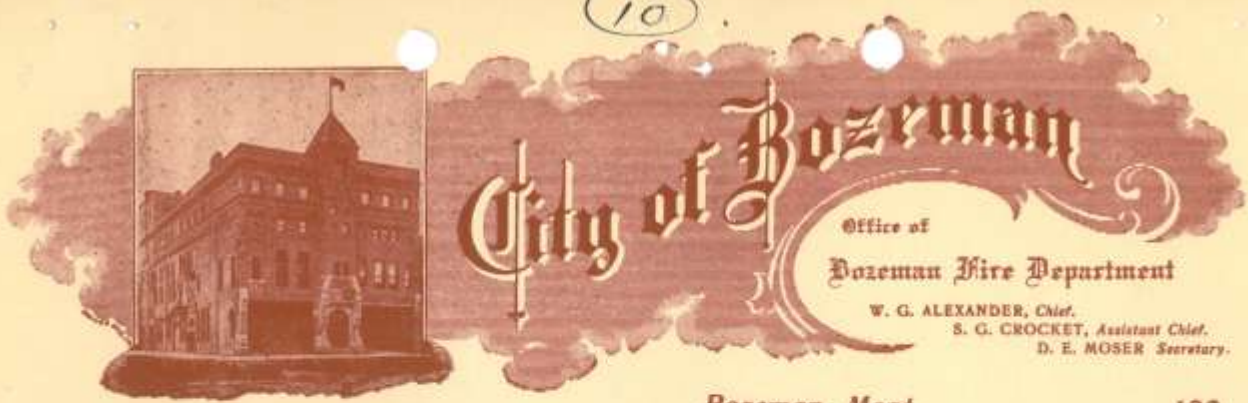
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of the Montana State Firemen's Association. The convention was held in the old Brigade Hall, now known as Court St. Station. Chief Alexander was elected vice president of the state organization.

During the year 1890 the department moved its apparatus from the old frame building on Bozeman St. to its new quarters in the city hall, which ^{are} now the present quarters. The department also opened the Bozeman Opera House when it was completed.

April 8, 1891, Chas A. Backes in a neat speech, in behalf of Alpha Hose Co., presented Chief Alexander with the gold medal which he now wears. The presentation was to show the respect and appreciation which his old company had for him.



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The Montana State Firemen's Association held their Convention and tournament in Bozeman Sept 23-24, 1891. This was the largest attended convention ever held before or since, fully 500 delegates being in attendance. In the tournament races, Bozeman lost the championship race, after having it won, by being blowed off the hydrant. Every man in the team had all the money he could scrape together on this race, so confident were they of winning. Chief Alexander won the Chiefs race easily. Few of us in these days are aware of what a speedy man our Chief was in his younger days.

The department raised \$1500.00 from citizens to entertain the visitors, \$1000.00 of which was given in prizes, besides which the real estate men of Bozeman



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gave lots of prizes to winners of various races. The convention ended in a large banquet at the Hotel Bozeman.

The State Association was again entertained here in 1899, Chief Alexander being President of the Convention, having been elected the previous year in Macon. He was also presented with a gold medal by Chief Sawyer of Butte, in behalf of the Association, at this convention.

On January 15, 1895 occurred the great Butte disaster, when nearly the entire Butte fire department was blown to pieces at a fire. Fifteen members of this department were sent to Butte to attend the funeral on Jan. 18, 1895.



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The present blue uniforms were adopted in May 1897. The hose tower was also completed about this time.

July 8, 1901, a committee consisting of M. Langohr, Joe Mungler, Thos. McDaniel, and Chas. Shears, was appointed to make a demand on the city council for a team and wagon, as the town having spread out so much, it was getting impossible for the department to cover all parts of it by dragging their apparatus, and do efficient work when they got there.

The council seemed to ignore the demand at first, and on July 17, the department decided to go on strike if they did not receive any suitable answer in regard to the wagon.

The council finally advertized for bids in Feb 1902. The wagon was



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received in November of the same year, and the efficiency of the department has increased to such an extent as can only be shown by the Chief's report which he has prepared for this occasion.

On Feb 19, 1903. The department responded to a call from Logan, where a fire was threatening the town. The steamer and hose was taken down on a flat car, in a special train. The citizens of Logan headed by W.A. Roland donated \$100.00 to the department, in appreciation of their services.

Nov. 9, 1903. Chief Alexander resigned as Chief, M.J. O'Connell being elected to succeed him. Mr. Alexander was again elected Chief in May 1904.

The plans which now occupies the department rooms was won by



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the department in a contest with other organizations of the city in Feb. 1904.

The 20th Anniversary of the department was celebrated Feb. 22, 1904, and ended in a grand banquet.

The rooms now occupied by the department were secured about May, 1904, when the Free Library moved to its new quarters in the Carnegie Building.

On Nov. 9, 1906 the department entertained the ladies of the dept. by a banquet. This is the only time that is on record where the boys did this gallant act.

The first Sweet Pea Carnival was held August 22, 1907. The fire department doing its share of entertaining by making an exhibition run on Main St. in the evening.



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The run was four blocks, lay 300 feet of hose and get water. The time of this run, as stated by officials of the Bozeman Chronicle, was one minute fifty seven seconds.

The Mont. State Firemen's Association met in Annual session at Bozeman on Sept 2-3 and 4th 1908, this being the third convention held in Bozeman. The convention was held during the Sweet Pea Carnival and Inter-State Fair. The department kept open house during the three days, and made many friends by their hospitality.

The department today is composed of one company, all four companies being merged during the year 1905. They are now well equipped to handle fires, but as Bozeman grows it will soon be necessary to add



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more apparatus and men.

From four to five men besides the driver are on duty in the house at night, receiving three dollars per fire and their lodging for their services. The Chief and driver being the only paid men on duty.

The present quarters are now very comfortable, though more room for sleeping apartments would be an advantage.

This brief history of the department can not be called completed without mentioning the faithful fire team, "Nig" and "Brownie", both of whom have been in service since 1902, and are the pride of the department. Few cities in the state can boast of a better team.



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Our twenty-fifth anniversary finds us in better shape than ever before, and it is hoped that each year of the future will bring more improvement both in efficiency and equipment.

The Bozeman Fire Dept. stands today the oldest volunteer department in the state.

In closing I would like to ask the older members of the dept. that they be not too severe in criticizing this effort of mine to write a history of the department, as no doubt I have omitted many important events which would interest those present this evening, but not having a complete record, I am unable to do so.

Thanking you for your kind attention
D. E. Moser
Secy.



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