

**AVERILL PARK AND SAND LAKE
FIRE COMPANY NO. 1
A HISTORY**

1900 to 2000

**A Century of Service to the Town of Sand Lake, New York
Fire District No. 2**

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to the members of the Averill Park and Sand Lake Fire Company No. 1, its Ladies Auxiliary and the spouses of these members, both past and present, for their unflinching support of this vital entity and the services that it provides.

Prepared for the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Averill Park and Sand Lake Fire Company No. 1, Town of Sand Lake, District 2

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AVERILL PARK AND SAND LAKE FIRE COMPANY NO. 1

A HISTORY

Robert W. Shuey

Introduction

History is created with every passing second of every passing day. As such, this written document is a work in progress. Hundreds of men and women have contributed a significant portion of their existences to the Averill Park & Sand Lake Fire Company No. 1 over the past 100 years. They have served as firefighters, lady's auxiliary members, or commissioners. They further extended themselves as line and administrative officers, contributed their thoughts and opinions as committee members or chairpeople. Each and every one of these individuals has memories, most fond, some unpleasant or even painful, that contribute to the overall fabric or commonality of the fire company. We will touch on but a few in the following text.

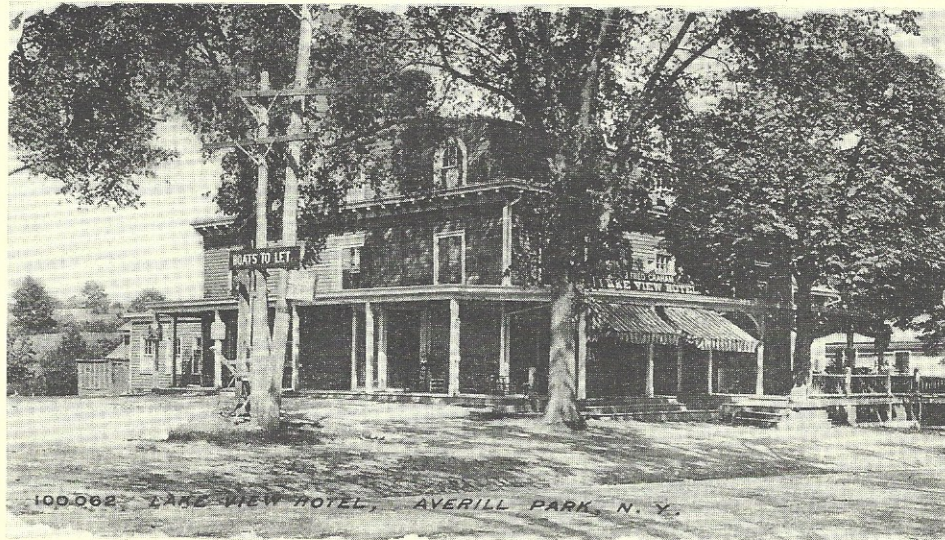
The following paragraph is from a souvenir program for an Averill Park Fire Company Anniversary Fair fund raiser dated February 7-10, 1912:

"Nestling at the foot of the Berkshire hills, almost encircled by a chain of lakes whose wooded shores are dotted by camps and cottages, the resort of thousands, lie the beautiful villages of Averill Park and Sand Lake. Like good followers of Mohamet who turn their faces toward Mecca in prayer, so those who have been so fortunate as to, at some time, breathed its health giving atmosphere always retain for it a warm place in their hearts and a desire to, at some time, retrace their steps and again view the magnificent sunsets, ride over its charming drives and meet again the friends they made in old Sand Lake and its younger sister village Averill Park."

The First Half Century

The earliest record of any form of fire protection in the Town of Sand Lake shows up on a list of items to be sold after the demise of the glass factory in Glass House Village following the fire of 1816. Included on that list is one fire engine purported to have been built about 1790. Perhaps the old engine should not have been sold, because the glass factory was again destroyed by fire in 1853. It wasn't until 47 years later when a bucket brigade was unable to contain a fire at the Metcalf house on Johnny Cake Lane, that several prominent residents of the villages of Averill Park and Sand Lake realized that organized fire protection for the surrounding villages was drastically needed. The mountainous area to the east and the predominantly agricultural area to the south of Averill Park, Sand Lake, and Glass House (Lake) villages were sparsely populated, and fire protection was nonexistent. The West Sand Lake Fire Company had been active since 1873 and was called to assist with fire fighting efforts in its neighboring villages on numerous occasions. This included a fire which consumed Andrew B. Knowlson's hosiery mill on the Burden Lake Road (then Mill Street) during the summer of 1874. After 1876 the frequency of fire calls had escalated proportionate to the increased number of wooden mills concentrated along the Burden Lake Road (Mill Street) that utilized the power of the Wyantskill Creek to run their machinery.

On July 3, 1900 a meeting was held at Gabeler's Hall (Lakeview Hotel) in the village of Averill Park to discuss the possibilities of forming a fire company. At that meeting Alpheus Bailey and John P. Kelley offered to sell the residents of the two villages a hand drawn pumper, hose cart and five hundred feet of hose that formerly belonged to the Town of Poestenkill for the sum of two hundred dollars. Although this old engine, and a much smaller locally built engine, had belonged to the Town of Poestenkill, they were apparently not part of an organized fire fighting effort there. In fact, Poestenkill did not establish a fire company until 1921. The old pumper's original purchaser is unknown. The Bailey and Kelley offer was accepted and a committee was formed to solicit subscriptions to raise the necessary funds. Most of the money needed, however, was raised that evening from those citizens attending the meeting.



The Lakeview Hotel Ca. 1910

Rare photographs of Averill Park's new fire engine suggest that it was of the First Class design, "piano" style hand pumper built by Cowing and Company in Seneca Falls, New York. Cowing & Company manufactured a variety of fire engines between 1840 and 1875. Averill Park's new fire engine was named "Nickwackett", which is believed to be from the Osage word *nickawa*, meaning "river horse". Although the age of the steam fire engine was well under way in America by the turn of the century, Averill Park's new hand pumper would serve the small area villages well until its retirement in the early 1920's.

Nickwackett was similar in design and size to West Sand Lake Fire Company's "Old Joe". The story goes that Old Joe was originally known as "Old Joke" by its former owners who, in 1873, allegedly dumped it into the Hudson River near the Button Fire Engine factory in Waterford, NY. The former owner's displeasure with its performance became West Sand Lake's good fortune after it was retrieved from the river by Button's employees. Old Joe was one of two squirrel tail pumpers built by John Rodgers at the Button plant in 1842, and to this day resides, beautifully restored, in the fire station in West Sand Lake.



West Sand Lake Fire Department – Old Joe ca. 1925

On August 4, 1900, at a continuation of the meeting held the previous week at Gabeler's Hall, a board of nine trustees was elected and a committee of two was named to locate and evaluate all water sources capable of supplying sufficient water to extinguish fires. The committee was also called upon to purchase enough suction hose so that wells and cisterns could be utilized as water sources. This concept had been in use by the City of Troy for many years, and worked very well.

The new nine member Board of Trustees was lead by Alpheus Bailey, President; Jacob H. Warger, VP; Jonathan Huntley, Treasurer; and Dr. E.E. Reichard, Secretary. They were all elected for a term of one year, and called themselves the Averill Park and Sand Lake Fire Association. This group would evolve into the Board of Fire Commissioners in later years. Since most men on this committee were too old to take an active part in firefighting, the group voted to act primarily as a board of directors and another organization would be formed to actually conduct the labors of firefighting. The following week, on August 11, 1900, the new organization, which was to call itself The Averill Park and Sand Lake Fire Company, organized at Tillson's Hall (location of the Methodist "Round" Church of the Covenant) with thirty one charter members (Appendix A). At this meeting the members elected their first slate of officers. They too were to serve for one year. Alfred Carmon was elected as Captain (now the office of chief). par Mr. Carmon, who lived on the Burden Lake Road near the village, was a recognized leader. He had served with the 169th Regiment of New York State Volunteers in the American Civil War, and was president of the local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) after the war. Edmond F. Hack, a local carpenter, was elected to serve as the First Assistant Captain. Other elected officers included George Brownhardt, Second Assistant Captain, D.A. Hageboom, Secretary, and Dr. E.E. Reichard as President.

Dr. Reichard's obituary in the Times Record, February 19, 1941, tells us that he was born in Nassau, New York on March 12, 1866. He began his education in local schools, graduating from the old Averill Park Academy. Because the life of a farmer, to which he had been accustomed in childhood, did not appeal to him, he turned to teaching school, but later decided to enter the field of medicine. His first training was under the guidance of Dr. Boyce of East Schodack. In 1892 he graduated from Albany Medical School. After practicing in East Schodack, Hoags Corners, and Nassau, he settled in Averill

Park around 1896. Soon after he married Charlotte M. Hitchcock (1874-1956) who was originally from Kansas.

Dr. Reichard became a true American "horse & buggy doctor". He made house calls in all kinds of weather, in spite of conditions that often made it painful for him to do so. In addition to his busy life as a doctor, Dr. Reichard's interest in education continued. He pioneered the Averill Park Central School District in 1928, and served on the Board of Education for many years until his death in 1941. He was president of the Rensselaer County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and was responsible for the construction of many homes in Averill Park. Dr. Reichard, the politician, was elected as Town Supervisor in 1906 and 1907, then again in 1924 to 1927. He died at home in Glass Lake Village on February 18, 1941 and is buried at Sand Lake Union Cemetery.

Aaron Hogeboom, the fire company's first secretary, was born April 9, 1864. He was educated at the Averill Park Seminary, and graduated from the Evansville Academy in 1883. Mr. Hogeboom taught in the Averill Park Public Schools for thirteen years, three of which he served as principal. In 1892 he was elected as Town Clerk. He served until his defeat in 1894 by 37 votes. He returned to political life in 1916 when he was elected as Town Supervisor, serving until 1921. Mr. Hogeboom died eleven years later in 1932. He and his wife, the former Flora E. Firth (1870-1934), are buried in the Sand Lake Union Cemetery. (*Anderson pg. 166*)

Now that the new fire company was organized, named and owned a fire engine, the members were confronted with their first real task. They needed a firehouse. Mrs. Averill of Sand Lake Village offered to donate a tract of land for the engine house; however, the Board of Trustees felt that the property was not located centrally enough, so the offer was respectfully declined. About the same time Jacob Warger approached George Brownhart about the possibility of buying a lot from him. Mr. Brownhart agreed to sell a lot big enough for an engine house for fifty dollars. Terms were agreed upon and a lot was purchased on the Averill Park-Sand Lake Road half way between the two villages. A picnic was held at Crystal Lake Park on September 8, 1900 to raise money for the purchase of the land and an engine house to put on it. It is said that almost all the residents of the area came to the celebration. Construction of a twenty-two by thirty-six foot, two story firehouse was begun immediately under the supervision of Edmond F. Hack. By mid March of 1901 the construction crew, which was made up of the firefighters and other townspeople, had the new building so far along that it could be occupied.

On April 15, 1901 the Articles of Incorporation were officially registered with the State of New York and the foundation of the Averill Park and Sand Lake Volunteer Fire Company Number One was complete. One of the first orders of business to be taken up by the new fire company was to borrow money to pay for construction of the firehouse. A mortgage in the amount of four hundred dollars was secured to cover a debt of four hundred and nineteen dollars and fourteen cents. It was to be paid off over two years at an interest rate of 6 percent; a rather stiff rate for that time. Subscriptions were solicited from the townspeople to cover the balance needed to complete the building. Finally in November of 1901 the ceiling was put in, a stove was purchased for heat and the new engine house was finished. The building still stands today at the intersection of Route 43 and Buy Way.

In February 1902 the fire company sponsored a fair at Crystal Lake Park that netted \$737.31. The funds were used to pay off the mortgage and to furnish the firehouse. Many smaller details were attended to during 1902, such as laying down rules that the company was to live by, and the purchase of uniforms. The uniform consisted of a badge, cap, parade belt, single breasted coat and pants coat

with maroon trimming. They were purchased by the individual members at a cost of \$12.25 per uniform. Red shirts were also agreed upon; however, they were never purchased.



Uniforms purchased after 1904, photo taken in 1911

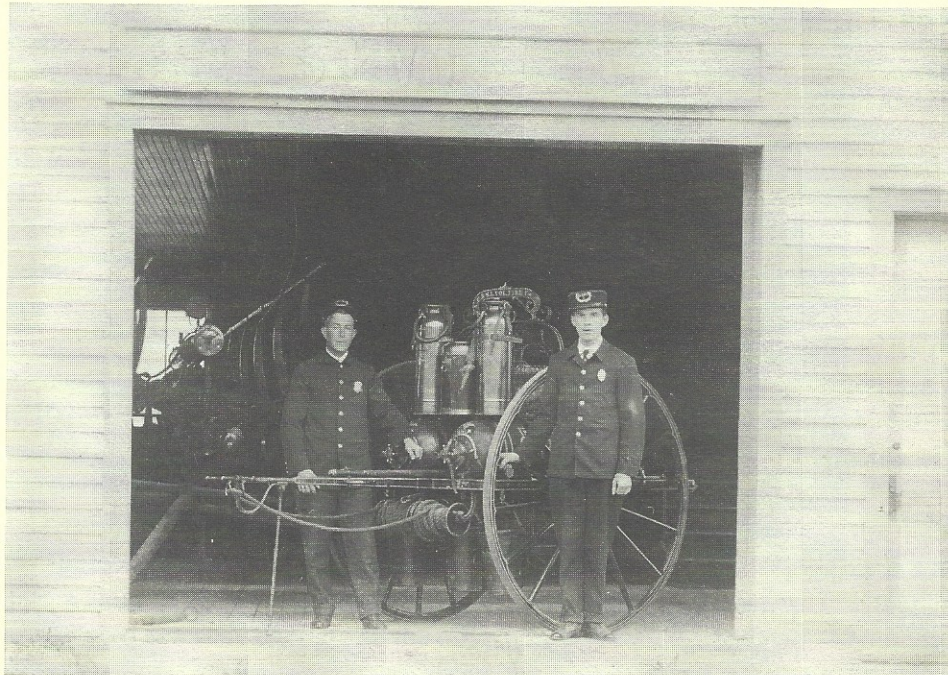
The importance of the individual could not have been stressed enough, and active participation at drills was essential. At least twenty five men were required to operate the hand pump on old Nickwackett and more men were needed to handle the hose cart, hose line and nozzle. This dependency on the strengths of the individual is evidenced by the fact that every man was assigned a position such as "hose cart", "pole on engine" or "suction". These positions were rotated from time to time so that every man had a chance to learn every position. This military style drill was reminiscent of the "school of the gun" taught to artillery crews of the period. Men who missed fire company activities were subject to fines. Some were rather severe considering the average income of the day. Missing a regular meeting could cost a member ten cents. Failure to show up for a "trial of the engine" meant a twenty-five cent fine. Absence at an alarm of fire or a parade ordered by the Board of Trustees dealt the harshest fine of one dollar. If a member opted not to pay the fines, he could be suspended from the company.

Now that the Town of Sand Lake had two organized fire companies, areas of responsibility had to be delineated. On June 2, 1903 fire district boundaries were established as follows:

"...running down Mill Street (Burden Lake Road) to and including the paper mill (Gardner Road), running on Albany Road to Jacob Smoders and including same, running on the Troy road (County Route 45) to William Pohe including same, running on the road leading to the Sand Lake Mountain (Taborton Road) to Philip H. Howard's place and including same, running to the Glass Lake Village to Edward McNary's place including same, running on the road leading to Crooked Lake (Eastern Union Turnpike) to Henry Henkles including same, running on Johnny Cake Lane to the Midnight Place including same, running on the Troy Road (Route 43 & 66) from Glass Lake Village to Kincels including same."

With a fire district this size and the constant addition of new homes and outbuildings, the fire company soon realized that Nickwackett alone could not handle a substantial conflagration adequately.

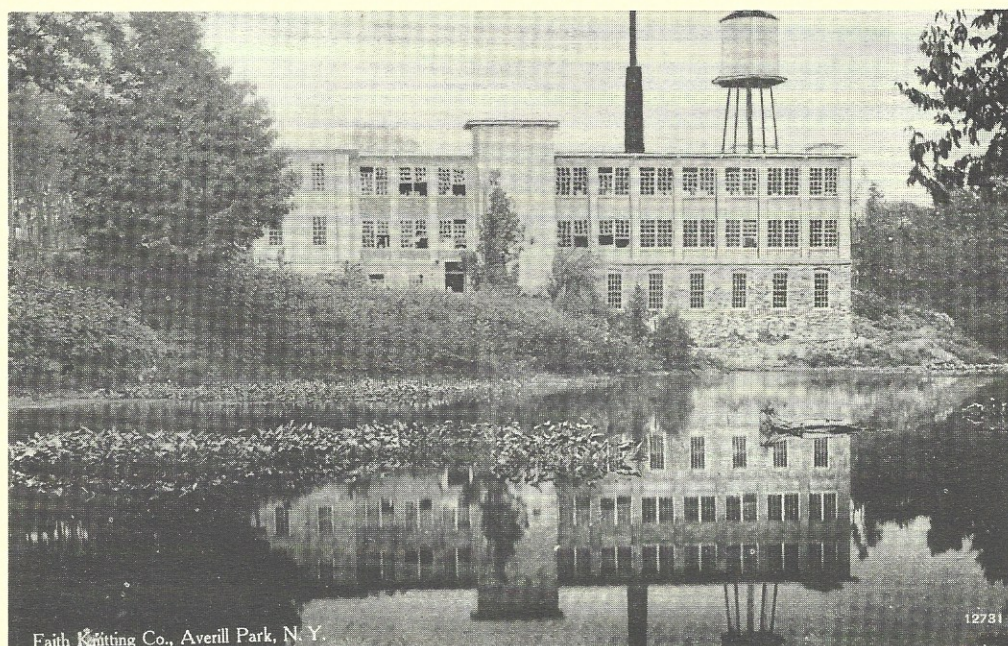
On February 9, 1904 a shiny new two-wheeled chemical wagon was purchased at a cost of \$572.00. The money to purchase the new equipment was raised at another fair held in



1904 Chemical Wagon, Note Nickwackett in the background

February 1903 that netted \$682.85. The hand drawn, soda acid chemical wagon saw good service in the villages extinguishing small interior fires and burning chimneys.

One of the greatest fires to occur in the Town of Sand Lake took place on December 13, 1908. The Faith Knitting Mill that stood on Mill Street (Burden Lake Road) was completely destroyed. Although every piece of fire fighting equipment in the area was pressed into service, the fight was lost. One contributing factor was the fact that the aging pumpers in attendance just couldn't put out the water necessary to extinguish a fire of that magnitude. More change was imminent.

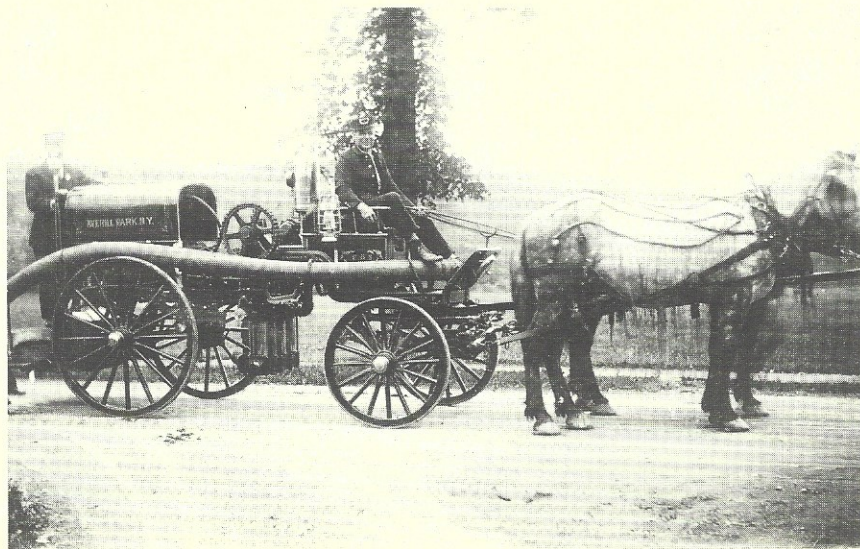


Faith Knitting Mill

After the Faith Knitting Mill was rebuilt before the First World War, several hose houses were constructed around the mill property. In later years these small buildings also contained fire hydrants fed by the water of the Wynantskill Creek. The mill owners also purchased a hose cart and a hand-drawn, soda acid chemical cart. In addition, five hundred feet of hose was purchased by the fire company on May 20, 1909 at a cost of \$500.00. With the added hose on the hose cart, the weight was too much for the men to pull by hand. Art Larkin, uncle of Willis Larkin (a current member of the fire company with over 50 years of service), volunteered the use of his horses to double as fire horses when they weren't pulling the ice wagon around to his customers. The transition from hand-drawn to horse-drawn fire engines had been made.

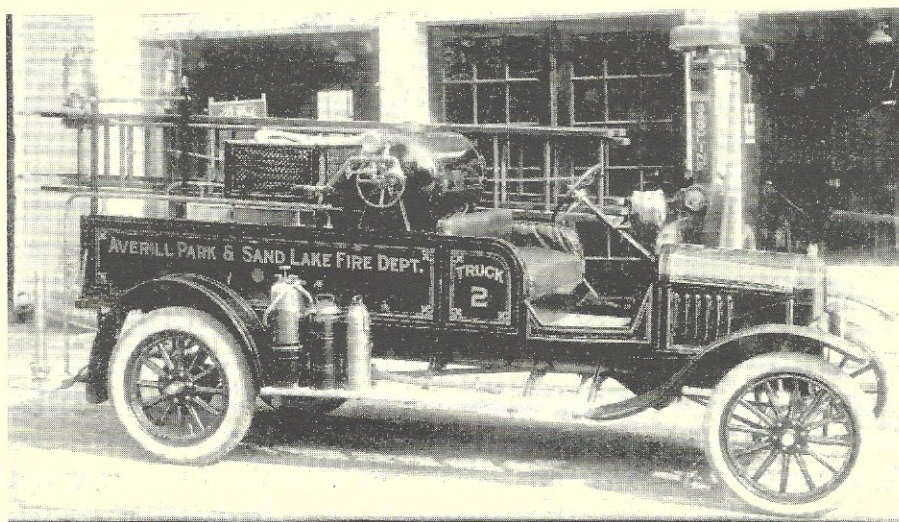
Only two years later another historically significant event took place with the introduction of gasoline power to the fire company. Although the firemen hated to admit it, Nickwackett had seen its day and was near retirement. On December 16, 1911 a horse-drawn pumper was purchased by the Averill Park Fire Company. Although horse-drawn, the pump was powered by a 45 horse power gasoline motor that was capable of pumping forty to forty-five gallons of water per minute through six hundred and fifty feet of a one-and-one-quarter inch hose at a pressure of one hundred and fifty pounds. It could throw a stream of water over the tallest church steeple in the village. The engine was purchased from the Howe Fire Apparatus Company at a cost of \$2000. Art Larkin's horses were now employed to pull the larger, heavier engine at a salary of three dollars per fire. Mr. Larkin lived on the Troy Road (County Route 45) across from the entrance to the Crystal Lake Park; however, the firehouse was situated halfway between the villages of Averill Park and Sand Lake. When an alarm of fire was tolled out on the village church bells, Mr. Larkin ran with his horses toward the firehouse. The first firefighters to arrive at the firehouse pulled the engine, by hand, toward the village. The horses were hitched to the engine at whatever point the two teams met. If the fire was known to be in the direction opposite Larkin's home, he would bring the horses directly to the firehouse. It is said that no matter how quickly the men arrived at the firehouse, the horses were always in sight. No one really understood how Art

Larkin could harness his animals so quickly. The race to the village became very competitive, with Larkin being the more frequent winner. Years later Art Larkin was killed when he fell from the loft of his horse barn.



Art Larkin driving his team by Crystal Lake

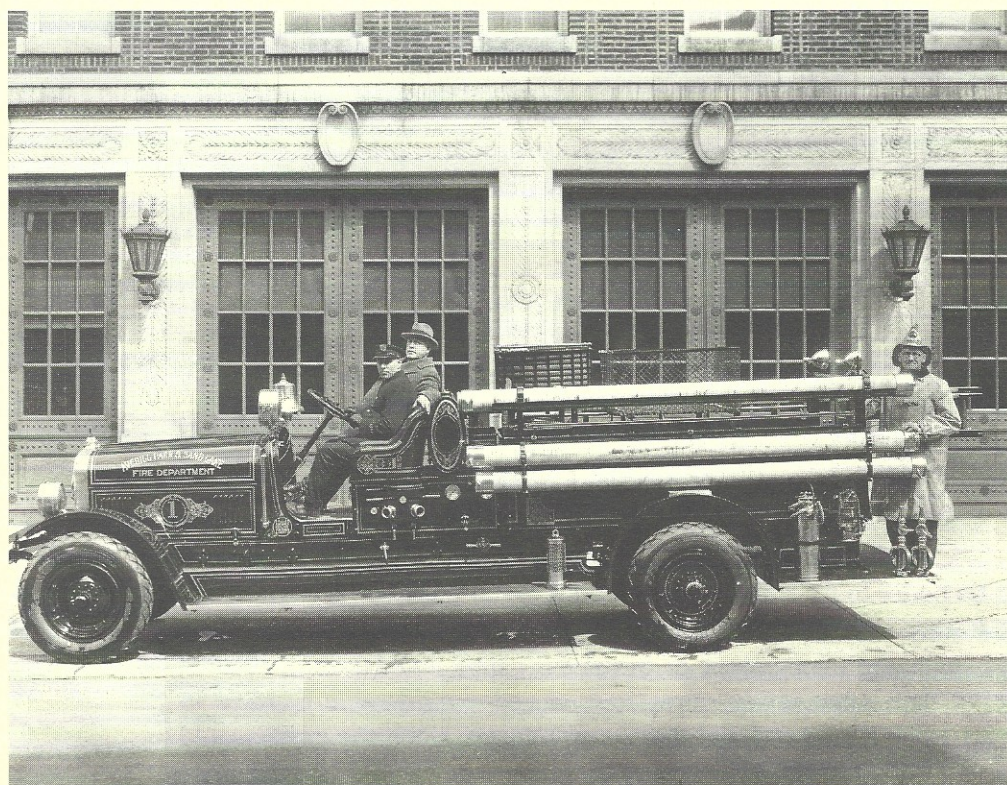
In 1914 the fire company took still another significant stride towards modernization with the purchase of its second gasoline powered vehicle. The difference here was that the gasoline motor powered the vehicle and not the pump. The new chemical truck, which was mounted on a Model T chassis, was purchased from Ed Rendert's Ford dealership in Averill Park. Mr. Rendert, who was a member of the fire company, had his showroom three doors east of the fire station on, what is now, Route 43. This building was used in later years by George Carl as an office for his insurance company, and more recently as the law offices of Conrad Lang, another member of the fire company. The age of horse-drawn fire engines had ended.



1914 Ford Chemical Truck in front of Rendert's Garage

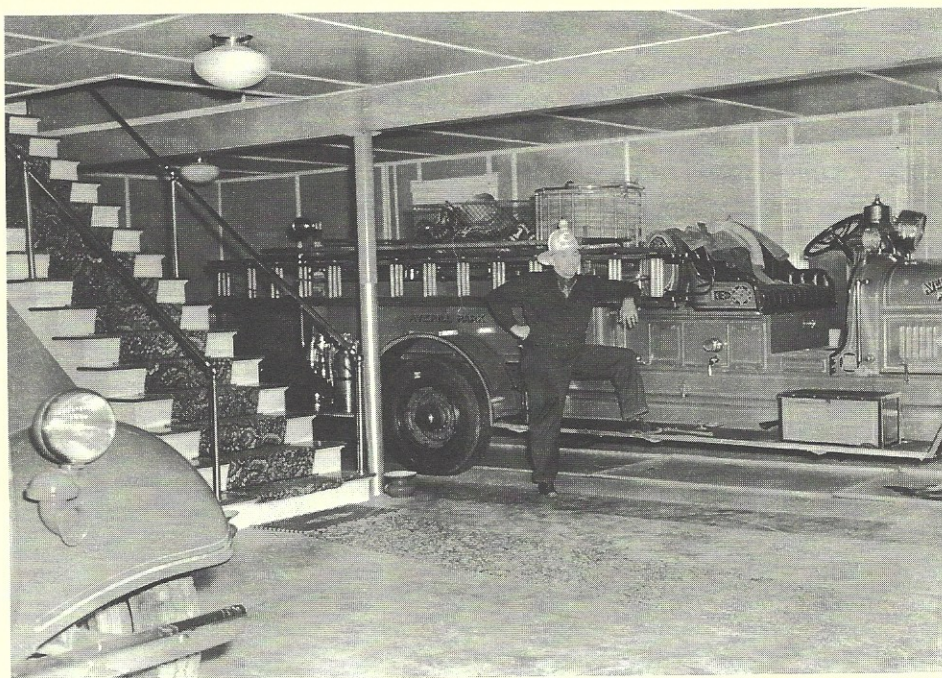
This new piece of apparatus was excellent for extinguishing smaller fires by means of its sodium bicarbonate chemical tank; however, the firefighters still had to rely on the more powerful pump of the Howe pumper at larger fires. For over ten years the old horse-drawn Howe engine and hose cart were drawn to the scenes of fire behind the Ford chemical truck. But, the winds of change were again blowing strongly down the roads and across the fields that surrounded the villages.

With the invention of the automobile, and its increasing popularity in the rural areas of Rensselaer County, the small villages began to grow at a much greater rate. This, of course, put more demands on the capabilities of the fire company. In 1926 a Seagraves Triple Combination Pumper was purchased. Triple combination refers to the fact that the engine carries hose, ladders and is capable of pumping water, thus eliminating the need for an additional ladder wagon and hose reel. This engine rivaled any of the modern apparatus being used in the cities, and set Averill Park apart from most small town volunteer organizations of that time.



*1926 Seagraves Triple-Combination Pumper
in front of Troy Fire Department's Central Station*

By this time the firehouse had been expanded to facilitate two pieces of apparatus (three in a pinch), and a hose tower was added to the rear of the building. The age of motorized fire apparatus was here to stay, and in 1935 Averill Park purchased its second engine: an open cab 1935 Ford. The new fire engine housed a 500 gallon per minute Seagraves pump and carried 100 gallons of water in



Engine Room Ca. 1940

its tank. With two fire engines capable of supplying large volumes of water to a fire scene, thoughts turned to the existing water sources located around the town. Were they adequate?

HOOLEYS LAKE

On July 6, 1937 a committee consisting of William J. Casey, Edward Rendert, Dr. Frank Walsh, Frank P. Bentley, Henry L. Carl, Frank Hack and Frank Hooley was appointed to check into the matter of fire protection for the Sunset Terrace area of Averill Park. The question that was raised was whether it would be better to try and get water from Crystal Lake and Kane's Pond or try to build a small dam in the swampy area near the terrace in order to create a reservoir? Several years before, the fire company, with the cooperation of the Averill Park Land Improvement Company, had planned to construct a dam after several fires had caused considerable damage in the area. This idea was abandoned when it was realized that several homes along the creek would have been flooded by the project.

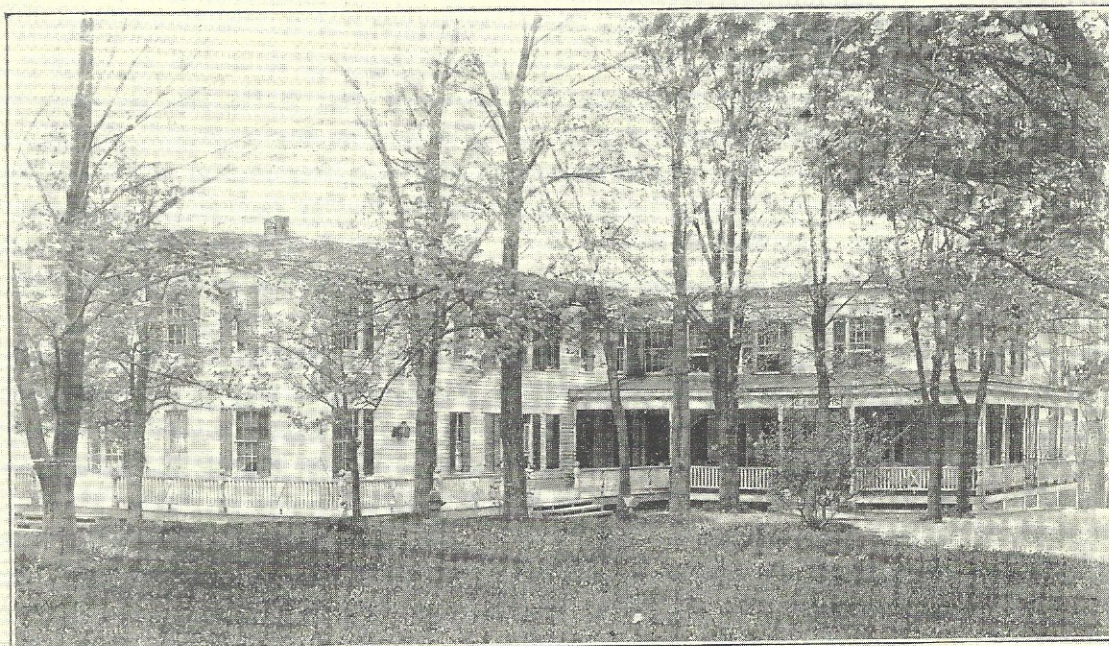
The committee contacted David Plum of the Averill Park Land Improvement Company and presented their idea to him. Mr. Plum arranged for a survey of the land to be made by Joseph Hayden, an engineer. After the survey was completed, Mr. Plum donated the needed land and his services in the construction of the dam to the fire company. In appreciation, the fire company elected Hayden as an honorary member on November 9, 1937. The land was cleared and the dam built. Soon the springs in the low area turned the swampy land into a lake almost five acres in area.

This not only provided fire protection for about fifty buildings in the area, but also provided a recreational area for the residents of the town. Several thousand fish were provided by the New York State Conservation Department and a road was constructed by the Land Improvement Company from the Averill Park and West Sand Lake Road (Route 43) to the Burden Lake Road.

After completion on August 2, 1938, the lake was named Hooley Lake in appreciation to Frank Hooley who had done so much to make the project possible. The name never really took hold, and the

lake, to this day, is referred to as Firemen's Pond. The total cost of the project was \$493.13 which the fire company borrowed from the National City Bank of Troy. The project was completed at no cost to the town's taxpayers.

Another water supply had been built by the Gabeler in Averill Park village during this period. A pump house was built behind Gabeler's Hall that pumped water into a holding tank behind the hotel. In addition, a water line was laid from the pump through the center of the village terminating at a hydrant situated in front of Tillson's Hotel.



AVERILL PARK HOTEL, AVERILL PARK, N. Y. CHARLES HARRIS, PROPRIETOR

Tillson's Averill Park Hotel

(Note the fire hydrant next to the tree left of center)

THE SECOND HALF-CENTURY

The beginning of the second half of the century saw a dramatic increase in the emergency services available to residents of the Town of Sand Lake. The Taborton Fire Department, District #3, and Sand Lake Ambulance, Inc. were both organized in the early 1950s.

In 1950 a third Ford fire engine was packed into the tiny firehouse. As in the past, this new fire engine was paid for with funds raised at a field day. Not just another fund raiser, however. On August 12, 1950 the fire company's 50th Anniversary Field Day was held. It was the first of what was to be an annual event. Because this first field day was a particularly special celebration, the fire company went out on a limb by raffling a new 1950 4-door Ford automobile as first prize. This was at a time when the annual budget of the fire company was \$1200. Using a borrowed flatbed truck obtained from the Faith Mill, Ben Gauch and his committee hauled the new car all over the capital district, wherever they could get an audience that would buy raffle tickets. The event was a huge success and the funds needed for the new engine were realized.

Soon the floor of the firehouse began to sag under the weight of the newer and much heavier pieces of firefighting apparatus. Activities in the lower level of the fire station ceased due to the danger from above. Along with the hazardous situation within the firehouse another had developed on

the outside. As the years passed, more members were responding to the firehouse in automobiles. Since there was no parking area adjacent to the firehouse, cars had to be parked on the narrow shoulder in front of the Wagner and Rendert residences. The old firehouse had clearly outlived its usefulness, but funds were not available to even consider building a new fire station.

The year 1952 saw the introduction of a county-based dispatch system, although it would be another six years before the system was fully implemented. The new base station was located in the Rensselaer County Jail at 5th Avenue and Ferry Street in Troy. Prior to this time there was no radio communication between units and dispatching was done by a telephone system within the town. The town dispatchers included Dottie Budesheim, wife of another ex-chief in Averill Park, Hattie Wagner and later Brook Wagner, and Marty Butler at his Sunoco Station at the corner of Eastern Union Turnpike and Route 43. The phone system in town lasted for many years after the new dispatch system was set up in Troy under the belief that the rural nature of the town required a dispatcher who was familiar with the town landmarks. Since houses were not numbered, locations such as the twin lion, Boyce's Hill, the pillars or the pond past the dike road and the like were all that were frequently given by a panicked caller. To complicate matters, Bauer Road intersected Bower Road, and there was a multitude of East Shore, East Lake, Lakeview, Eastview and similarly sounding road names. This was all straightened out by the introduction of the 911 system in the late 1990s.

By 1958 the annual election of officers had become...well, political. Telephone campaigns brought members, who hadn't been seen since the previous year's election, out of the woodwork to cast their votes. Robert Willey and Orrin Galbraith thought that the time was right to revisit the old point system that had fallen by the wayside over the years. Now the intent was to document the participation of each member by awarding points for attendance at meetings, drills, fires and other events, such as parades and wakes, called by the chief. The resulting points counted towards one's eligibility to vote for line and administrative officers. The system, which is in effect today, puts the power of the vote in the hands of those it affects the most.

On April 13, 1960 an alarm of fire was transmitted for a grass fire along the power line on the Brookman property west of Crooked Lake on the Methodist Farm Road. Anthony Schepis was one of those who answered that alarm. What was not known to the firefighters initially was that the fire had been started by a fallen power transmission line, now laying concealed in the grass. Anthony Schepis donned an Indian tank and entered the field along with the other firefighters to extinguish the fire. Then the unthinkable happened. Mr. Schepis' foot came in contact with the live electrical wire fatally electrocuting him. Willis Larkin, without regard to his own safety, rushed to Mr. Schepis, and was able to separate him from the live wire using a pike pole, but it was too late. Anthony Schepis is the only firefighter to die in Averill Park in the line of duty. He was 42 years old. The fire company's annual firefighter of the year award is named the Anthony Schepis Memorial Fireman of the Year award in his honor.

The 1926 Seagraves pumper had been replaced in 1950 with another Ford/Seagraves fire engine with a larger 750 gpm pump. Averill Park's 1935 Ford/Seagraves pumper remained in service until the 1970's when it was replaced by a 1970 Ford/Thibault pumper. In 1960 still another Ford was added to the fleet of fire fighting equipment. This 750 gpm pumper, which was built by the Howe Fire Apparatus Company, served the district for over twenty years. About this same time the fire company expanded its scope of emergency service with the addition of a rescue squad. The first rescue unit was a 1959 Ford station wagon that carried some basic first aid supplies and an oxygen inhalator. This was soon replaced by a 1963 Chevrolet panel truck from funds raised by the firefighters at the 1963 Field Day. The new unit was capable of providing light rescue as well as basic first aid. It was designated Rescue 22 and was in service until 1975 when it was replaced by a Chevrolet/Olson

rescue van that was redesignated soon after by Rensselaer County as Rescue 1.

By the mid 1960's it had become obvious to the firefighters that, with the expanded emergency services and increased demands on the fire company, yet another significant step forward was necessary. The new fire engines were much larger and heavier than their predecessors. They even had to be ordered without roof-mounted revolving lights because they wouldn't fit through the doors of the firehouse. On January 7, 1966 an ad hoc committee including Lawrence Malone, Richard E. Seuffert, and Ronald J. Johansson presented a plan to the Town Board for the construction of a new firehouse. The four acre plot of land located on Town Barn Road (Eastern Union Turnpike) had been purchased from Walter Teal, with the help of Robert St. Germain, several years prior to 1966 for \$5000.00. Ground breaking was July 10, 1966, and by 1968 a new, modern, and much more spacious fire station was completed on Eastern Union Turnpike outside the village of Averill Park. The building was designed by Ronald Johansson, an architect and member of the fire company, and built by Zandri Construction Company of Cohoes. Total cost, nearly \$120,000. This is the present home of the Averill Park-Sand Lake Fire Company No.1, Town of Sand Lake Fire District No.2, Rensselaer County Fire Station No.1.

In the fall of 1968, shortly after the new station was occupied, Walter Teal's barn burned to the ground. The barn, which was located a stone's throw south of the firehouse, was set on fire by several youths who were allegedly smoking in the barn. As a token of his appreciation for the efforts of the firefighters in the vain attempt to save his barn, Mr. Teal donated a strip of wooded land between his property and the fire company property. This would be the scene of many annual field day fund raisers until they were discontinued in the early 1990s.

A funny thing happened on the way to....

For many years the Willowbrook Motel and Restaurant stood on Route 43 next to the Sand Lake Middle School (the old high school). By the late 1970s the motel portion of the business had fallen into disrepair and was no longer used. The owners of the property contacted the fire company and asked if the small cabin-like structures could be burned for drilling purposes. The fire company agreed. During the mop-up operation, after the buildings had been leveled, Hal Shoemaker and Bob Shuey were wetting down hot spots in the rear of one of the structures. Suddenly Hal disappeared into the darkness and the hose line dropped straight down. He had fallen through the rusted top of an abandoned septic tank and sunk into its contents up to his waste (no pun intended). It was a particularly difficult rescue because no one could stop laughing long enough to lend a hand. After he was retrieved from the odorous container, it was discovered that his boots contained much more than just his feet and legs. Hal was subjected to an indignant hosing down and forced to ride on the tailboard, alone, on the trip back to the firehouse. Awarding the Hal Shoemaker award for service beyond the call of "doody" became a tradition at the annual installation dinners held each May.

Emergency Medical Services

During the 1960's, fire departments across the nation realized that the dramatically increased demand put on both paid and volunteer ambulance services could be alleviated by developing initial response teams within the fire service. The Averill Park Fire Company was no exception.; although the Board of Fire Commissioners who represent the fire company to the town, were often heard to say, "we fight fires, we're not doctors". Firefighters are, however, able to get to the scene of an emergency more quickly than an ambulance because there are more of them and they tend to be in closer proximity to an event when it happens. Although APFD did have a primitive program in place around 1960, the training and equipment left a lot to be desired. Between 1960 and the early 1970's

the Averill Park Fire Company's EMS effort was limited to light rescue, first aid at accidents and "oxygen calls". During the 1970's a cooperative EMS program was developed in the town with the Sand Lake Ambulance and the West Sand Lake and Taborton fire departments. The Town of Sand Lake was the first Town in Rensselaer County to have such an EMS program in place at that time. Since then both West Sand Lake and Taborton have acquired rescue unit, thus advancing the programs even further. Personnel from all four groups have received training as New York State certified first responders, emergency medical technicians, advanced life support technicians, SCBA divers and extrication specialists. Along with the additional EMS training came the acquisition of state-of-the-art rescue equipment including a Hurst hydraulic extrication tool, pneumatic lifting bags, and cardiac defibrillator to name just a few.

Robert H. Fickies became the fire company's first official photographer about 1976. New equipment and new members means more training. It was Bob's task to document emergencies and drills on film, so that the images could be critiqued afterward.

The fire company's land holdings increased by an additional 33.98 acres after the death of Carl Beck who owned the block of land immediately north of the fire station. Mr. Beck's widow, Maria, sold the land to the fire company for \$55,000 on August 28, 1995. All but 6.27 acres of the property were sold to the Town of Sand Lake for \$55,200 on April 9, 1997 to be used for the construction of a new town hall, library and state police sub-station; however these facilities were ultimately built elsewhere.

Since its inception, the fire company has continued to modernize. Over the years, six additional replacement pumpers and two rescue vehicles have been purchased and housed in the new fire station. The three most modern of these engines and a rescue unit purchased in 1993, are presently in service offering the residents of the fire district the finest and most modern firefighting capability available anywhere in the State of New York. As this text is being written, studies are underway to assess the need to expand the existing fire station to accommodate newer and larger fire apparatus in order to meet the needs the of the fire district in the next century and beyond.

"Don't waste life on doubts and fears. Spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for hours or ages that follow it." *Emerson*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Lasting memories of friendships and experiences are something common to members of the fire service; however, not a great deal of thought, or homage, goes to the old "veterans" that make a firefighter a firefighter. Where did all of the old fire engines that provided so much service to the residents of Averill Park-Sand Lake Fire District #2 ultimately wind up after they retired?

Nickwackett - The first hand pumper was used into the early 1920's It was later sold to the Greenwich Fire Department in Washington County, New York, where it was used for parades. In the early 1950's it was damaged by a fire in the barn in Greenwich where it was being stored. Unfortunately, it was never repaired, even though the damage was not extensive, and was subsequently sold for scrap.

The **1909 Chemical Cart** disappeared, as did the hose cart. Speculation exists that they were sold to the Faith Mills on Burden Lake Road, but early photographs show that they are not the same pieces of apparatus that stood vigil at the mill for many years.

The **Faith Mill Hose Cart and Chemical Wagon** still exist. During the late 1980's both pieces were purchased by George Bedell, a past chief of the Averill Park Fire Company, and have been restored. The hose cart was borrowed from the hose house at the Faith Mill, where it had been stored for many years, and partially restored by fire company members for the bicentennial celebration in 1976. The chemical cart was discovered chained to a tree on the lawn of a camp on the west side of Burden Lake several years later.

The **1911 Howe** horse-drawn pumper was retired and stored in a field near the south end of Glass Lake. It is reported to be at the bottom of that lake; however, efforts in the 1970's to locate it came



1912 Howe pumper in front of Chris Crape's hotel

up with nothing except a wagon wheel hub and axle sticking up from the bottom of the lake. Some cotton fire hose (without couplings) was also found in the area, which probably had been used, at some time, as dock edging.

The **1914 Model T Ford Chemical Truck** was sold to Westmere Fire Company in the Town of Colonie, New York as their first fire engine.

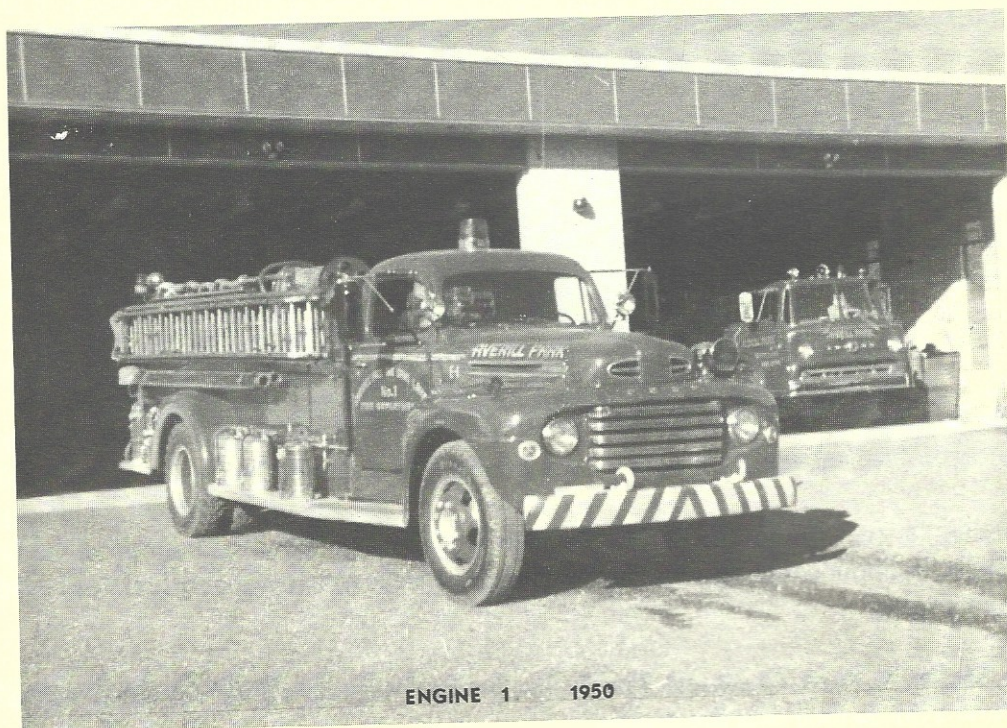
The **1926 Seagreaves** became a permanent fixture in Art Ferguson's mother's barn on Route 45 in Defreestville after its retirement. In the early 1970's it was sold to, and restored by, the Middleburgh Fire Department, Schoharie County at a cost of over \$11,000. It carried 80 gallons of water and had a 500 gpm pump.

The **1935 Ford/Seagraves** conjures up many fond and funny memories. It was in active service as Engine 2 (E-2) until 1970 when it was sold to Art Dell of Defreestville, New York. It had a 500 gpm pump and a 100 gallon tank, and was utilized more as a portable pump on wheels, and as a competition truck in its later years. The rear fenders had been replaced after broken snow chains had shredded the

originals as Lou Hoffman responded, with his crew, to the West Sand Lake Methodist Church fire in 1962. Near the end of its life, the electrical system on the old fire engine was shot and it usually had to be started by pushing it out of the firehouse and jump starting it as it rolled down the driveway.

Because it had an open cab, the driver was exposed to the biting cold of winter. This resulted in an unusual injury to Robert E. Willey at the Burden Lake Casino fire in 1957. Bob had been accidentally sprayed with water from an open valve on the pump panel during the blaze. After the cold drive back to the firehouse he was taken to a local hospital where he was treated for frostbite to his butt cheeks. Soon after sheepskin coats were ordered for the driver and co-pilot. Old E-2 is stored in Dell's garage in Defreestville at this writing.

The motor in the **1950 Ford/Seagraves** blew up in 1974 and could not be replaced because of a limited production design, which made parts or a replacement engine unavailable. In addition to a limited production motor, it had an unusual 600 gpm pump. The pumper was sold to John Basault in Denault's Corners, Town of Nassau, New York and was later scrapped. It was replaced by an "off the lot" 1974 Ford/Bean 750 gpm pumper.



1950 Ford/Seagraves

On August 16, 1959 it was involved in an accident near the mill in West Sand Lake while responding to a mutual aid fire in that village. It was being driven, at the time, by Clarence Wagner, father of another ex-Averill Park chief, Robert Wagner. After the accident, the fire engine sat behind the firehouse for several months before it was eventually repaired in Quincy, MA. During its time in the shop the fire company borrowed a used pumper from a local fire engine dealer who had taken it in on trade. That pumper later became Hoosic Valley Fire Department's first fire engine. Old Engine 1 (E-1) is often remembered by its yellow and red striped bumper that was added during George Kern's term as chief. It was the first Averill Park fire engine to have a county radio installed in it about 1958.

A 1950 Series 30 American LaFrance pumper was purchased from the Hunter Volunteer Fire Department in Greene County, NY during the early 1990's. It was officially designated Engine 2 and was to serve as a reserve pumper, although unofficially it was a competition truck. It was sold to a private collector from Ohio in 1998.



1950 American LaFrance

The 1959 Ford Rescue Car, which was originally owned by Chief Ed Guy, was sold to Chief Art Ferguson, who used it until it had to be scrapped...actually past the point at which it should have been scrapped.

The 1960 Ford/Howe, Engine 3 (E-3), was sold to Lou Hoffman of Averill Park in 1982. Lou was a long time member of the fire company who lived on the Burden Lake Road. He later sold the pump to Zwack in Stephentown who installed it in Taborton Fire Department's Engine 37-6. The truck itself is believed to have been scrapped around the time of Lou's death.



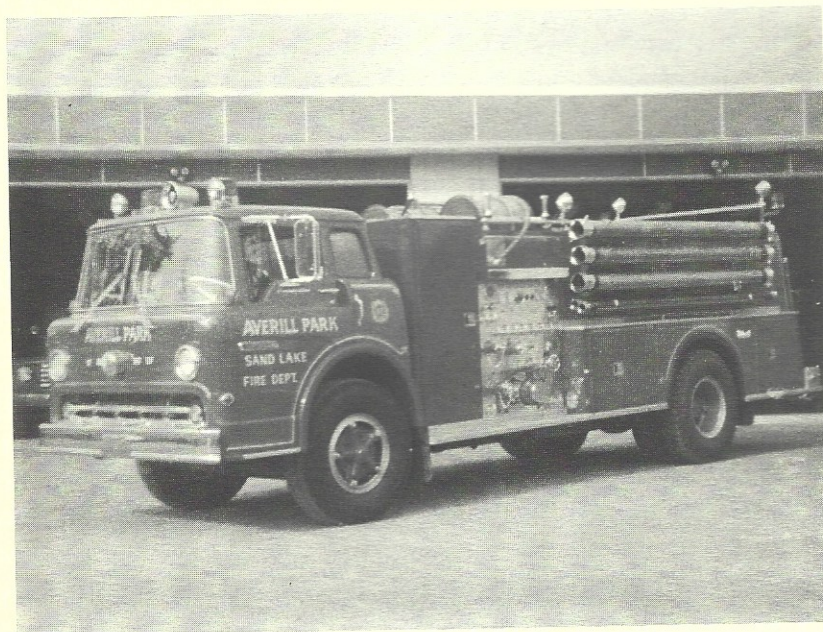
1960 Ford/Howe

The **1963 Chevrolet Rescue Series 10 panel truck**, which was purchased with the proceeds from the 1963 Field Day celebration, was sold in 1975 and converted into a camper. It was destroyed soon after in an accident at Routes 4 & 43 in Defreestville.



1963 Chevrolet, Rescue 22

The **1970 Ford/Thibault** was purchased from the Thibault company in Quebec, Canada. After its retirement in July 1996, it was sold to West Rutland, Vermont. Although it broke down in Brunswick on its trip to West Rutland, it was placed into service immediately upon its arrival, and was used at a mutual aid fire in the town even before the name had been changed on the sides of the cab.



1970 Ford/Thibault

The **1974 Ford/Bean** was sold to Pilot Knob Fire Department in 1986 for \$7000 more than Averill Park Fire Company paid for it.



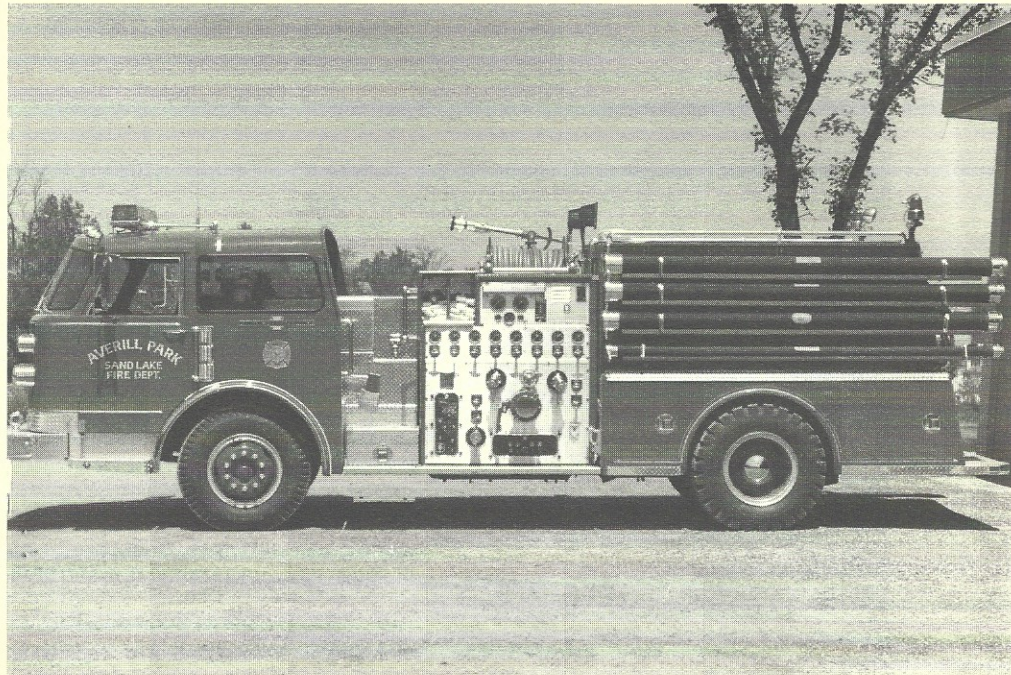
Art Ferguson and Clark Boyer working the Bean

The **1975 Chevrolet/Olson Van (Rescue 22)** was sold to the East Durham Fire Department in Greene County, New York in 1993, where it was put back into service as a rescue unit. This unit was also sold for more than APFD paid for it; a credit to good preventive maintenance and inflation.



1971 Chevrolet/ Olson Van – Rescue 22, Later changed by Rensselaer County to Rescue 1

The **1981 American LaFrance** was sold to Moria Fire Department in 1997 and painted YELLOW shortly thereafter.



1981 American LaFrance

The twin **1986 Hahns**, purchased during Ed Dings term as chief, are still in service today (2000). They each carry 1000 gallons of water and have a 1000 gpm pump. The pumper/tankers cost about \$150,000 each, and a significant portion of the purchase price was raised by fire company and ladies auxiliary fund raisers.

A **1993 heavy rescue truck**, recreational vehicle mounted on a Chevrolet chassis is also in service (2000). It is fully equipped for EMS and rescue, and is a designated mass casualty incident (MCI) response unit for Southern Rensselaer County. It was purchased for \$92,000 with funds raised by the fire company and ladies auxiliary.

A **1999 Luverne Pumper**, which was built on a Spartan chassis, is in service at this writing. It too carries 1000 gallons of water and has a 1250 gpm pump. It was purchased for \$197,000, including \$57,000 from fire company fund raising efforts.

1999 Chevrolet Tahoe Command Vehicle, Averill Park Car 1, was purchased by the fire company members under the New York State contract with General Motors early in 1999 and is in active service.

The **Hover Craft** water rescue vehicle was purchased in 1994 with funds raised by the family of Barbara Molitor after her death from exposure on Burden Lake. Although the noisy contraption is quite affective as a rescue vehicle on the town's many ice-covered lakes, it has been plagued by break-downs. Encounters with objects that it was not intended to go over or through have been too frequent because of the difficulty in stopping it.



Hover 1

THE BIG ONES

The thoughts of any firefighter are punctuated by memories of the "big one". "There I was..." or "remember when....", can be heard at any gathering of two or more firefighters and whatever audience may be captive. Faith Mill, Tillson Hotel, Chris Crapes Hotel, Totem Lodge, The Berlin disaster, Ackner Fuel, Kays Restaurant, Maple Grove Hotel, Crooked Lake Hotel, Tremont Lumber, The Lakeview, Victors Lane, West Sand Lake Methodist Church all conjure up memories that get the juices flowing inside frequently aging brains. Only one "big one" will be discussed here, because, after all, it was the birthplace of the Averill Park & Sand Lake Fire Company.

Hermans Lakeview Hotel – March 3, 1980

A new Lakeview Hotel now stands near the intersection of Routes 43 and "old" 66 in the center of Averill Park village. It occupies the same spot where Joseph H. Gabeler ran his hotel well before the turn of the 19th century. Coincidentally, the Lakeview Hotel, which was originally known as Gabeler's Hall, was the building in which the Averill Park Fire Company was first conceived 80 years earlier. Arthur Herman had purchased the aging watering hole six months prior to the fire. He had added three apartments over the bowling alleys and 11 more were under construction. A hundred years of needed repairs to the bar, kitchen and dining areas were also under way. Under the new management, the landmark would continue to be the center for many community activities and social gatherings.

On March 3, 1980 at about 6:15 in the morning all the reasons for fire company drills and preplanning became a cold hard reality. Shortly after 6:05 AM Scott Berner, who lived in one of the apartments in the building, was awakened by his dog Mickey. At about the same time a passer-by, Mark Southard, saw smoke and began alerting other residents in the building of the fire. All were evacuated safely.

Firefighters responding to the station recall seeing the black plume of smoke rising straight up from the center of the village into the cold winter sky. Within seconds after the alarm, Chief Robert Wagner notified the county fire dispatcher, from his driveway about ¼ mile away, that the flames were through the roof and that he was requesting additional units to the scene. In addition to the Averill Park Fire Company, firefighting units from seven other local fire companies including Taborton, West Sand Lake, Poestenkill, Wynantskill, Hoags Corners, Defreestville, and a ladder company from Clinton Heights helped battle the fire in sub-zero temperatures. Ambulances from Sand Lake, Poestenkill, North Greenbush and Hoags Corners also stood by at the scene. The ambulances and Averill Park's Rescue 1 became warm havens for tired and frozen firefighters to thaw out a bit before returning to the task at hand. Five additional fire companies were put on stand-by to cover empty firehouses.

It warmed up to 6 above zero later that morning. Frozen pumps, hose lines and fingers never slowed down the battle. Holes were cut into the thick ice on Crystal Lake behind the Lakeview to obtain an adequate water supply to fight the fire. Another water supply was established on the bridge on Eastern Union Turnpike. Fire engines which froze up were quickly replaced by others standing by in warm firehouses. Frozen engines and firefighters were sent to Averill Park's fire station to be thawed out, only to return to the fire scene later when another frozen pumper had to be replaced. The entire inventory of dry gloves was purchased from Eastman's Variety Store, across from the blaze. Many other local businesses sent a never-ending supply of coffee and doughnuts to the cold firefighters. Bunker coats became stiff with a thick layer of ice, and icicles hung from helmets and moustaches. Earlier, the heat from the blaze was so intense that power poles adjacent to the burning building burst into flame, cutting electric power to much of the area. The Averill Park High School sent students home for the day because of no power and many businesses were forced to close. For a short time Harry O'Donnell's liquor store, situated immediately east of the Lakeview Hotel, was showing the effects of the radiant heat. This Averill Park landmark, built in 1815, was soon out of harm's way as water supplied by a 1-3/4 inch hose line protected this critical exposure. Although a valiant effort was

made to attack the fire from inside the Lakeview, it soon became apparent that the fire was gaining momentum. The order was given to clear the building and a defensive position was established. Not long after the evacuation order the building collapsed in on itself leaving little for firefighters to do but drown the burning remains.

It was estimated that 250 firefighter participated in the Lakeview fire in one capacity or another. While the actual cause of the fire was never determined, it is believed to have started in a trash bag containing a smoldering cigarette placed in a hallway behind the bar near the rest rooms. Although the firefighters couldn't save this landmark, their heroic efforts prevented the fire from spreading to other close by wooden structures and consuming the entire village.

Other "Big Ones"

Glass House Glass Works - Glass Lake Road west of the spillway - 1816 & 1853

Gersham Tabor's tannery - Burden Lake Road - burned out 5 time in the 1850's & 1860's

Cornelius Schermerhorn's satinet mill - Burden Lake Road - 1860's then again in the fall of 1870

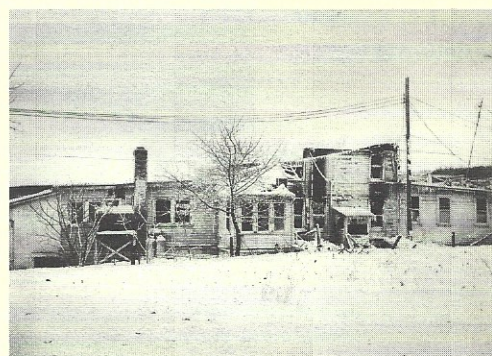
Kidder & Aken Hoisery Mill - Burden Lake Road - 1871

Faith Knitting Mills - Burden Lake Road - 1908

Traveler's Rest (Winter's Hotel) - southeast corner, Eastern Union Turnpike & Route 43 -
March 2, 1930

Tillson Hotel - site of Averill Park "round" Methodist Church of the Covenant - 1930's

Burden Lake Casino - Burden Lake Road on the 2nd Burden Lake - January 19, 1957



Burden Lake Casino

Averill Park Methodist Church - Burden Lake Road south of the IOOF Hall - November 5, 1959



Averill Park Methodist Church

Ben Silberg's Drug Store - Averill Park Village (where Jerry Lewis worked) - July 4, 1960
West Sand Lake Methodist Church - Route 150, West Sand Lake Village - March 10, 1962
Berlin propane tanker explosion and fire - Town of Berlin - July 25, 1962
Glen Royal Hotel - east side of the 3rd Burden Lake - July 30, 1965
Totem Lodge - Totem Lodge Road on 3rd Burden Lake - January 8, 1966
Tremont Lumber - Orient Avenue
Crooked Lake Hotel - June 10, 1967



Crooked Lake Hotel

Stackrow's Maple Grove Hotel - Burden Lake Road on the 1st Burden Lake -
January 16, 1968, burned again in 1986
Bon Acre Store - Route 43 by the Averill Park High School - June 3, 1971
Douglas Kelly residence - West Sand Lake - May 25, 1972 (accidental) and again on
July 25, 1972 (lightning)
Alps Nursing Home - Alps Village, Town of Nassau - November 23, 1972
Hoags Corners Casino - northeast corner Route 66 in Hoags Corners Village, Town of Nassau -
September 29, 1979

Eaton residence - Teal Road on the hill behind Gifford's IGA - March 11, 1979
 Eugene Elnor barn - Roasier Road - May 29, 1979
 Alps Baptist Church - Alps Village, Town of Nassau - October 15, 1979
 Lakeview Hotel - center of Averill Park Village - March 3, 1980
 Ken Martin barn - Schuman Road - May 4, 1981
 House - Victors Lane and Route 43, two firefighters hurt - December 4, 1981
 Irish's Maple Grove - northeast corner Burden Lake Road & First Dike Road - Winter 1983
 Ackner Fuel - center Glass Lake Village, Route 43/66 - December 10, 1988
 Kays Restaurant - Second Dike Road - March 2, 1991
 Gifford's IGA - corner Teal Road and Route 43/66

Averill Park & Sand Lake Fire Company's Charter Members:

Harry N Patchin
 Arthur Hack
 Edmond E. Hack
 George Brownhardt
 Orin French
 Stephen Keeler
 Fred A. Shoemaker
 Charles A. Smith
 Alfred Carmon
 Albert Knapp
 Fred Kelsey

Andrew Shoemaker
 Arthur Larkin
 Robert Snyder
 Peter Shoemaker
 Harry Crape
 William Warger
 Sylvester Vickery
 Norman Vickery
 Thomas F. Kelsey
 George Schrinier

Howard Lester
 Charles A. Crape
 John E Martin
 D.A. Hagaboom
 Harry Tillson
 Jacob Warger
 Henry Lockwood
 E.E. Reichardt
 William H Gardiner
 Elmer Brownhardt



AP & SL FD in 1914

Past Chiefs:

Alfred Carmon 1900
 John E Martin 1901-1904
 Harry N. Patchin 1905-1906
 Charles A. Hall 1907-1913
 Arthur Hack 1914-1916
Unknown 1917-1923
 John Debler 1924-1930
 Frank Hack 1931-1950
 Edward Guy 1951-1960
 Ernest Hoffman 1961-1965

Arthur G. Ferguson 1966-1972
 George Kern 1973-1977
 Robert C. Wagner 1978-1981
 Arthur G. Ferguson 1982-1983
 Edward Dings 1984-1986
 Steven Robelotto 1987-1993
 George Bedell 1994-1996
 Robert E. Blaauw 1996-1997
 Steven Robelotto 1998-present (1999)

Past Presidents:

Edmund E. Hack 1900
 Elmer E. Reichard 1901-1902
 Harry N. Patchin 1903
 Arron D. Hageboom 1904
 Marvin W. Kittle 1905-1906
 Arthur E. Warger 1907-1914
 Willard E. Vanderzee 1915-1916
 ? 1917-1921
 Pierce D. Kane 1923-1928
 James B. Wynn 1929-1930
 Pierce D. Kane 1931-1938
 William Rendert 1939-1946
 Charles Raver 1947-1948
 Frank Bullis 1949-1954
 Richard Seuffert 1955-1959
 Dennis Burrett 1960
 Larry Malone 1961
 Conrad Lang 1962-1963
 Joseph Landrigan 1964-1965

William E. Cutcliffe 1966
 Leland Hilt 1967-1968
 James O'Donnell 1969
 Robert J. Stackrow 1970-1971
 John Wright 1972
 Robert Budeshiem 1973
 George Bedell 1974
 Willard G. Schauble 1975
 David O. Barnum 1976
 George Bedell 1977-1979
 Ken Hungerford 1980
 Robert Brown 1981
 Robert L. Fickies 1982
 Robert J. Stackrow 1983-1985
 Robert Budeshiem 1986
 Robert Blaauw 1987-1991
 David O. Barnum 1992-1993
 Thomas R. Lilly 1994-1995
 Philip J. Ryan 1996-present (2000)