

# *The Sandusky Fire Department*

## *“A Look Back At History”*

*1830 - 2002*



## **Dedication**

This publication is dedicated to all those who have in the past, and who now serve in the fire department in the City of Sandusky. Protection of lives and property has been their pledge of service to the community.

## **Acknowledgment**

This publication was made possible by individuals, businesses and foundations in their generous recognition of preserving the history of our city's fire service. A plaque has been placed in the new fire department headquarters acknowledging those who made this and other historic projects possible.

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Fire fighters who have died in the line of duty

Research: Jim Martin, S.F.D. (Retired)

# The Sandusky Fire Department History

It was back as early as the year 1830, and at a time that the town of Sandusky had a population of less than five hundred persons, and when there were not even seventy buildings within its limits, that measures were taken to provide for security against loss by fire. At a meeting of the town council, held in the latter part of February of that year, an ordinance was adopted providing for the organization and discipline of regular fire companies.

For the proper organization, fire brigade the town was divided into two wards, to be known as numbers one and two, being separated by Columbus Avenue. The council, by appointing Henry H. Wilcoxsen as chief fireman.

Each man should provide himself with one substantial bucket, and in case of fire to appear "equipt" with his bucket. This was the original fire and bucket brigade of the town of Sandusky.

During the latter part of the year 1834, the purchase of a more approved and suitable means of fighting fire was under discussion.

James Smith, of New York City, offered to sell the town a hand engine of such pattern as was then in use in his city for the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars. The finances of the town were then in a somewhat reduced condition, and voluntary subscriptions by the citizens of the town were received. This engine was named Ogontz, and the company that manned it was called Ogontz Fire Company No. 1.

In the year 1848 there was organized a new company to be designated as "Buckeye Company, Number 2". In 1853 Hornet Company, Number 3, was formed.

Thus well equipped and organized for business, the city seemed well provided against a severe fire loss. Wells were dug in various parts of the city from which water was to be taken.

In 1865 the council, assisted by the contributions of citizens, made a purchase of a steam engine of the Amoskeag manufacture. Three years later, a Silsby engine was purchased. With this improved apparatus and the purchase of a hook and ladder truck, it became necessary to reorganize the whole department, and the council wisely concluded to make it a paid department. By their ordinance, passed May 27, 1872, it was provided that each engineer should receive sixty dollars per month, the firemen or assistant fifty dollars, teamster fifty dollars, and each minute-man ten dollars per month.

Station locations were:

- Engine House No. 1, foot of Hancock Street
- Engine House No. 2, corner of Market and Lawrence Streets
- Engine House No. 3, corner of Elm and Monroe Streets
- Germania Hook and Ladder Company, No. 1, corner of Market and Lawrence Streets

A series of disastrous fires beginning in 1909, resulted in the City beginning to take steps to modernize the equipment with the first motorized truck being purchased in 1910.

By 1919 the City had for the most part purchased a number of motorized units. With the speed of these units and the phase out of the horse drawn apparatus Fire Station No. 4 opened in 1895 was closed in 1917.

Despite the depression in the early 1930's, the city acquired 3 new fire units including an 85 foot Seagrave aerial ladder trucks. The new pumpers purchased all had the capacity of pumping 1000 gallons of water per minute.

The first fire rescue equipment truck was placed in service in 1945. Built on a General Motors chassis purchased for \$650.00 the unit was completed by the city mechanic.

In 1969, the city purchased a used ambulance and began to operate the first emergency medical service in the city.

In 1970, Station No. 7 opens protecting the West side of the city. Sandusky's first black fire fighter is hired in 1971.

With strong support from both businesses, individuals and foundations, the city's first fire boat is placed in service in 1976.

In 1978 after seeing 73 years of service, No. 5 fire station on Putnam & Tiffin Avenue is closed. Personnel are reassigned to remaining stations.

In 1979, Station No. 3 is relocated to Fifth Street and Causeway Drive.

The fire department expands its medical service with a new paramedic training program in the 1980's.

In 1986, the first female fire fighter is hired.

In the 1990's, the city purchases approximately \$1,200,000 of fire apparatus, in addition to 2 new ambulances.

In January 2002, the new Central Station is placed in operation. Total cost \$3.5 million and came in under budget.

*Chiefs*  
*Sandusky Fire Department*

To make note of those who held a position of responsibility within the fire service, the following list of names is offered. In the early days, the position that today we refer to as "Chief had different titles, but the position and responsibilities are of like stature.

- 1830        **Henry H. Wilcoxsen** - Chief Fireman with James Hollister being the fire warden of # 1 ward, and William Kelly, fire warden of # 2 ward. Other ranking members: Erastus Gregg, Ezra Wells, Isaac Carling, Moors Farwell, Wm. Leonard, Thomas Chesnut, Cyrus W. Marsh, Elias Hand, Josiah W.Hollister, Amos Patterson, John Chesnut, John Mumford
- 1839        **Foster M. Follett** - Chief Engineer. Other ranking members: Ebenezer B. Sadler, Wm. Witherall, Wm. B. Smith (possibly a chief at a later date), Page M. Ring, A.H. Barber, Abner Root, Isaiah Hollister, Christian Zimmerman
- 1858        **F. C. Ford** - Chief Engineer
- 1859        **Foster M. Follett** - Chief Engineer
- 1860        **Enoch Weller** - Chief Engineer
- 1872        **Charles Bang** - on 12 April, appointed Foreman of Relief Fire Company # 4
- 1872        **Richard C. Cuthbert** - Chief; a member of Ogontz Fire Company # 1 from approximately January of 1858.
- 1878        **John Kafferle** -name mentioned briefly.
- 1880's       **Daniel Myers** - Chief Engineer - John Unckrich, Assistant
- 1883        **John Unckrich** - Chief, appointed December 23.  
On December 13, 1891 Chief Unckrich was killed fighting a fire aboard the barge "Schuck." The fire department, now, is a "full-time" department.
- 1884        **Joe Domnick** - named mentioned briefly.
- 1890's       **John Hartung** - Chief
- 1895        **J.G. Horning** - Chief; appointed September 16.

- 1901 **Dan Hartung** - Chief
- 1914 **Al Hegemer** - Chief
- 1917 **John D. Curtis** - Chief; appointed April 17 and held position until his retirement in 1937. Joined as a "minuteman" April 1, 1894. His career spanned 43 years.
- 1937 **Wilson "Slip" M. McLaughlin** - Chief; appointed May 1 and held position until retirement on February 1, 1959. He joined the department on January 1, 1919. 40 years and 1 month of service.
- 1959 **Paul H. Bing** - Chief; Held position until his retirement in December of 1977. He joined the department on August 11, 1937. 40 years 4 months of service.
- 1978 **Owen R. Reed** - Chief; appointed July 1 and held position until his retirement in May of 1991.
- 1991 **Dan E. Shepherd** - Chief; appointed September 1 and held position the position until his retirement on October 30, 1993.
- 1994 **Robert Varner** - Chief; appointed February 28 and held position until his retirement in December of 1995. Varner was the first person hired into the Chiefs position from outside of the department He had been Chief in Marion, Ohio.
- 1995 **Ken Gilliam** - Chief. Gilliam was appointed after serving as Chief in Noblesville, Indiana



**Chief Wilson McLaughlin at Herb & Myers fire, E. Market Street March 31, 1939**

## Memorable Fires

- 1821 In a letter from James Kilbourne to Zalmon Wildman, the first large fire recorded states, "the block of buildings East of Mr. Marsh's has all been burned down. (Possibly -block now referred to at 400 E. Washington St.).
- 18 Oct. 1872 Woolworth's Handle Factory, loss \$80,000 (located on Meigs St. - just north of present City Building). Loss included \$25,000 to Gilcher & Co., \$5,000 to Les & Moss.
- 25 Nov. 1872 Destruction of Sandusky Wheel Works (W. Water between Shelby & McDonough) and eleven houses; total loss \$105,000 (insured \$37,000). The houses destroyed were 8 on Market, two on McDonough and one on Shelby; owned By John Carr, Calvin Fitzpatrick, J. Cox, Mrs. M. Collie, Mrs. E. Fisher, W.F. Metcalf, M. Ryan, J. Linsky and Mrs. Boyle.
- 8 Aug. 1878 Passenger depot, Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway; \$800
- 17 Aug. 1879 John Hudson Salt & Freight House - foot of Columbus Ave. \$9,000
- 13 Dec. 1891 Steam barge; R.E. Schuck at the B & O dock caught fire. Chief John Unckrich lost his life after falling into the hold of the ship.
- 7 July 1900 Standard Wheel Company (foot of Shelby St.)
- 1901 American Crayon Co.; \$150,000
- 21 June 1904 Booth Fish Company, Gilcher & Shuck Lumber Company, Terminal Inn - located at foot of Jackson to Columbus Avenue; \$150,000. Fire started around 2:00 A.M., with strong West winds. Hose lines burst under pressure.

27 July 1904 Schoepfle & Sloan; \$120,000

26 Jan. 1905 Woolsey Wheel Co.; \$110,000

18 Nov. 1909 Mahala Block - located at Columbus Ave. & E. Washington Row. Four story apartment building along with Sandusky Business College; \$250,000

March 1913 City Hall - located at Fulton St. & Market Place. Known as the "Market House" the lower portion was used to market farmer produce and the upper stories for city offices.

16 Dec. 1914 Bender & Woodward Co., located at the S.E. corner of East Water and Hancock Streets (3-story); \$180,000

12 May 1916 Schmidt Block -200 E. Market Street. Almost the entire block was destroyed when the fire started in an old barn on Wayne Street. \$350,000

Oct. 1920 Hord Color Co.; \$250,000

6 Sept. 1928 Barr Rubber; \$200,000

Nov. 1929 Simplex Radio Co.; \$15,000

21 Feb. 1930 Odd Fellow Bldg.; \$20,000

31 Aug. 1930 Harbauer House - Cedar Point Chaussee; \$70,000

31 Dec. 1930 Boston Store (Market St.); \$100,000

6 Jan. 1931 Matthews Engineering Co.; \$75,000

15 Jan. 1931 R.F. Kriss Restaurant; \$15,000

6 Feb. 1932 Lay Bros. Fish Co.; \$150,000

31 Mar. 1939 M. R. Herb Co. (Herb Myers Fire), started around 4:00 A.M. located on the North side of E. Market Street, between Wayne and Columbus Avenue. Although the origin was never determined it destroyed Herb Co., Sears Roebuck. W.S. Frankel, McLellan Dollar Store, E.B. Ackley, and Stephen's Printing. It took the Sandusky Fire Department, along with five other departments (Fremont, Huron, Bellevue, Norwalk, Berlin Heights) to fight the fire, which burned for three days. Flames were reported as high as the eight story Feick Building, with burning debris flying as far away as Battery Park. It was estimated that 50,000 people came to watch. Over two million gallons of water were used, 100 firefighters, with a loss estimated at \$2,500,000.

18 Oct 1942 Schacht Fish Co.; total loss

27 Jan. 1943 Masonic Temple (corner Wayne & Washington Streets) extensive loss

11 Feb. 1943 Klotz Machine (200 blk. E. Water) extensive loss

19 May 1943 Aluminum Magnesium Co. - exploding 55 gallon drums 100 feet into the air were encountered by firefighters.

4 Nov. 1948 Ritter block - extensive loss

17 Nov. 1948 Sandusky Theater - extensive loss

29 Nov. 1948 Gallagher Brothers - extensive loss

24 June 1949 Sandusky Boat Co. - extensive loss

13 Nov. 1950 Herb White Warehouse; \$115,000

12 Mar. 1954 Pennsy Hotel - located between Tiffin Avenue and Venice Road; extensive, with one life lost.

26 July 1954 Gulf Refining Plant (Filmore St); extensive loss, with one life lost.

17 Jan. 1956 Routh Packing Co.; moderate loss

11 April 1956 Campbell St. & Perkins Ave. Gas line explosion

30 Nov. 1956 Russell Boats; \$38,439

15 Jan 1957 Watty's Foodtown (South side of Perkins Ave, btwn. Campbell and Columbus Ave) - extensive loss

9 Dec. 1957 Wilson Plastics - 400 Broadway; \$56,000

30 May 1958 Dutch Lane boathouses (Memorial Day). Alarm received at 7:45 P.M. destroyed 14 boathouses, 3 automobiles, 4 pleasure boats. The fire was said to have originated in boathouse # 3, where the ceiling had been painted earlier. The blaze spread rapidly, fed by exploding gas and oil. The fire spread at the rear of the boathouses, practically burned itself out by 9:30 P.M. Holiday crowds thronged to the vicinity - creating a traffic jam. One difficulty in fighting the fire was the narrow confines of the passage between boathouses on land. \$ 442,526 (Chief McLaughlin)

24 Nov. 1958 Grill Meats, Inc.

5 Jan. 1960 Woolworth Fire - 200 Block of Columbus Avenue (East side) Seven firefighters were injured when they encountered bitter winds and 20 degree temperatures. \$400,000 (Chief Paul Bing)

3 Sept. 1963 Lake Erie Canning Co., warehouse; \$100,000

1 March 1964 Giant Tiger Store -Columbus Ave.; South of Perkins; total loss

31 Mar. 1964 Schmidt Block (200 E. Market Street). Forty-eight years after the block sustained its first major fire, this fire occurred. It started shortly before noon as a small smoky trash fire in a basement. Destroyed; Sandusky Paint, Lombardy Music -a 3 story building. \$500,000 (25th anniversary of the Herb Myers Fire).

18 May 1964 Union Chain Co.; \$160,000

Oct. 1964 Eagles Club; \$52,000

4 April 1967 Market Street apartments; 2 lives lost

11Dec. 1967 Pelican Restaurant (100 blk. Columbus Ave.); \$82,000

13 June 1969 Lake Erie Canning co. \$400,000 -blamed on lightning

29 Aug. 1969 Sandusky Metal Products Co; 4 injured

8 Oct 1969 Chrysler Plastic plant -W. Monroe St. heavy damage

23 Nov. 1969 Volunteers of America Fire - Putnam Street. The fire killed six residents of the boarding house and also killed Sandusky Fire Captain William Bird. Other firefighters were injured, when a smoke stack fell striking Bird and others.

4 Feb. 1970 Stephens Printing Co., W. Monroe - destroyed

July 1970 Town Tavern gutted; W. Washington & McDonough Sts.

27 Jan 1971 Foodland Grocery Store; Hayes & Tyler destroyed

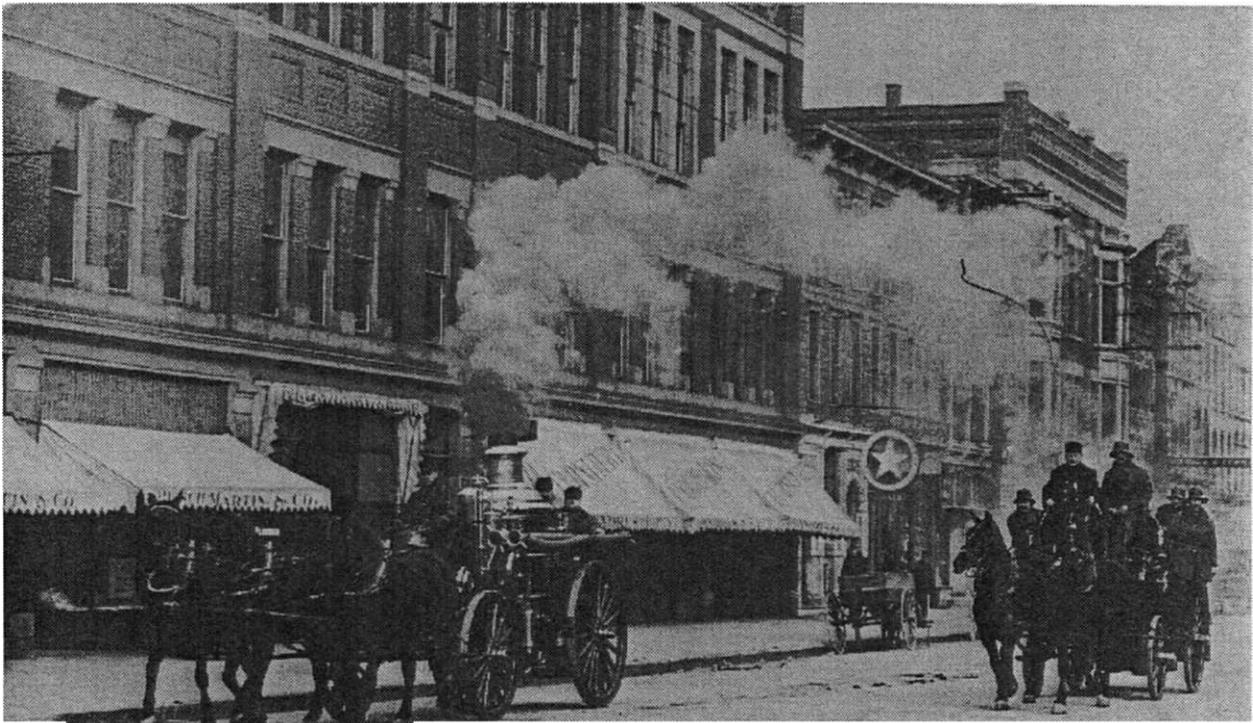
13 March 1971 Hommel Wine Co.; Seneca St. - destroyed

1 Feb. 1972 Bimini boathouses (West side) \$750,000

July 1972 Vermilion Foam Products Warehouse, 1200 blk Cleveland Rd.

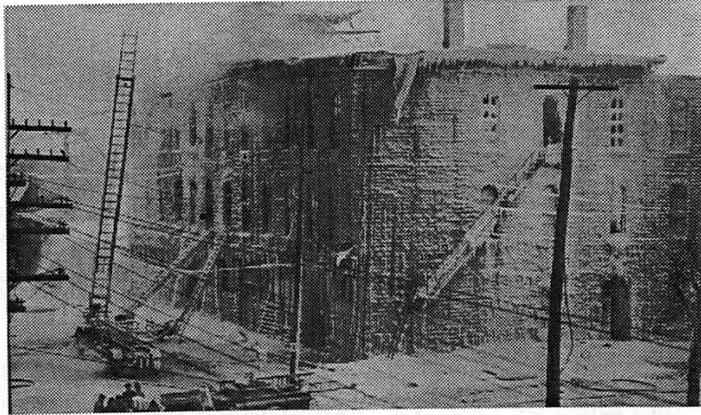
- Dec. 1974                      Season's of Art - 147 Columbus Avenue. Firefighters received the early morning alarm and were met with smoky conditions and temperatures at 16 degrees. The fire was said to have started in an electric kiln (pottery). Smoke and water damage were also sustained to Burns Jewelers, Sandusky Travel, Maus Shoes, City News, Marv Byer and American Beauty Florists. \$200,000
- Dec. 1977                      Ohio Motor Lodge - 609 W. Washington Street. In the early morning hours firefighters received the alarm of fire in the four story building. The location of the motor lodge being only two blocks from the central fire station easily made the firefighters . aware of the situation, with the sky a glow! Occupants were hanging out of windows for rescue in the 26 degree snowy weather. Cause was later determined to be arson. \$200,000
- 15 July 1978                  200 Block of Jackson Street - gas built up in manholes caused a series of explosions and the evacuation of the Erie Care Center, with occupants being carried out by firefighters. Five people sustained injuries.
- 17 May 1979                  vacant warehouse -old winery - 400 block of W. Madison Street
- 30 July 1979                  American Hoechst Corp. (Plastics) warehouse located at 400 Broadway St. Around 3:00 A.M. the alarm was received with loss estimated at \$1,000,000
- 3 Dec. 1985                  Boathouse rooming house at 326 Tiffin Avenue. Three people died in this fire. Believed to have started when a portable electric heater was used in a second story apartment.
- 17 Oct. 1988                  Point Retreat - condos under construction at the East end of the Cedar Point peninsula. Believed to have been arson.
- May 1989                      Universal Electric - E. Water & Hancock -heavy damage
- 17 Mar. 1992                  Otto's Refrigeration 500 Blk. E. Adams. \$100,000

- 18 Mar. 1992 Bimini Boathouse fire (East side). Forty summer and year round boathouses, boats and 4 automobiles were destroyed in the 8:43 p.m. fire. Heavy smoke with strong Northerly winds and snow. Narrow streets and construction style of the boathouses helped to spread the fire. By 11:00 p.m. the entire East side (except for a double structure at the North end) had burned. A few of the boats were estimated to have valued at \$800,000. Total loss was estimated at \$12-\$ 15 million. Chief Dan Shepherd.
- 16 Jan. 1999 Curren St. boathouses—Est. loss in excess of \$1,000,000.
- 23 Mar. 2002 Catalina Drive Boathouses—estimated loss \$400,000. Perkins Township, City of Huron and Margaretta Township departments assist at fire scene.



**Sandusky Fire Units from Station No. 1 on W. Market Street.**

## SANDUSKY MEMORABLE FIRES



**Bender-Woodward Fire - E. Water St. Dec. 1914**



**Herb & Myers Fire - E. Market St. March 31, 1939**



**E. Market St. Fire - 1970's**

**Sandusky Fire Department -Time line**  
**A Historic Look at Fire Stations**  
**When they opened - When they closed - Where they were located**

<b>STATION NO.</b>	<b>DATES</b>	<b>LOCATIONS</b>
Sta. 1	1834 opened	Foot of Hancock & East Water Streets
	1890 moved to	W. Market; between Jackson St. & Columbus Ave (south side)
	1915 moved to	W. Market & Lawrence Sts.*
	<b>2001 moved to</b>	<b>600 W. Market St.</b>
Sta. 2	1848 opened	W. Market & Fulton Sts.
	1876 moved to	W. Market & Lawrence Sts. (Rebuilt and became #1 sta. in 1915)*
Sta. 3	1867 opened	foot of Jackson Street
	Date unknown When moved to Possibly 1884	Elm & E. Monroe Sts.
	1894 moved to	Meigs St. & Sycamore Line
	<b>1979 moved to</b>	<b>Fifth St. &amp; Cedar Point Drive</b> <b>..formerly Causeway Dr.</b>
Sta. 4	1867 opened	Camp St. & Tiffin Avenue
	1889 moved to	Central Ave. & W. Osborne St.
	1917 Closed	

Sta. 5            1906 opened            Tiffin Avenue & Putnam St.  
                         1978 closed

**Sta. 7            1970 Opened            3816 Venice Road**

**Bold print** represents "active stations" at this time.

**Station numbering note:** There is no record of a "number 6" station. When the # 7 station was opened, it was designated as "# 7" by Fire Chief Paul Bing. He was said to have remarked, "this will make all stations odd numbered."

\* The number 2 station, located at the N. W.C. of Lawrence & W. Market Street was of red brick. In 1913 the City Building, which was located on Fulton at Market Place, burned down. City offices were transferred to the Fire/Police Station, which was located on the south side of W. Market, between Columbus Avenue and Jackson Street. Soon the fire department out grew itself and was moved to the # 2 station. It had been reported that some of the limestone from the old City Building, was used to rebuild the # 2 station when it became the # 1 or Central Fire Station in 1915 (November 22).



Sandusky Fire Steamer responding on Central Ave.

## **Sandusky's Fire Service**

In February of 1830, with a population of approximately 500 people, Sandusky, now consisting of 70 buildings, organized its first fire companies. The town was divided by Columbus Avenue, creating two fire districts. *"Providing for the organization and discipline of regular fire companies, (as understood at that day) whose experience and knowledge in the proper course and conduct to be pursued in case of fire - will render their assistance highly important and useful."*

### **ORGANIZATIONAL TIME LINE**

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1822 | 300 permanent residents in the village of Sandusky; 25 house, stores and other businesses.  |
| 1824 | the village incorporated  |
| 1826 | ordinance passed -required each residence to keep one bucket convenient for use - to put out fires  |
| 1830 | February, organization of first fire companies. Mayor appointed a Chief fireman or foreman, captains and other firemen. * "fireman" was to provide himself with a substantial bucket and in case of fire; to appear "equipt" with his bucket.   |
| 1834 | Opened # 1 Station at the foot of Hancock & E. Water Streets<br>The first engine "Ogontz" was purchased in Sandusky for \$750.<br>This was a hand pump, in which a long bar (brake) was located on each side of the vehicle. Men would pump the brake, thereby increasing the pressure within and expelling water through leather hose. A witness; Jim Gibeaut claimed the name "Ogontz" was appropriate because Ogontz was a Tire water Indian" and the Ogontz was a "fire water engine" too! <i>Ogontz Fire Company #1.</i> |

EARLY LOCATIONS of Sandusky fire stations -probably 1830's or 1840's -were located at the foot of Hancock and the foot of Jackson Streets. (NOTE: What is presently known as Shoreline Drive -was named Railroad Street, which didn't exist until 1840's-50's when the area was filled in. So "Water Street" at this time was the Northern most street along the waterfront.)

- 1840's Wells were dug in various parts of the city, so as to provide water for hand engines. Approximately, eight cisterns of 900 cubic feet in size, holding approximately 6,700 gallons of water were also available for firefighting. (Note: these were patched and made useable during World War II).
- 1848 Buckeye Company # 2 is established. Other companies eventually would follow. Not long after this, the first hook and ladder company was formed.
- 1850's There were now FIVE fire companies in existence; mostly German and well disciplined. The reason for the large number of Germans in this area, was due to the relatively cheap cost of steamboat travel from the Buffalo, New York area.
- 1853 Hornet Company # 3 is formed.
- 1855 September 24, 1855 - Sandusky's first volunteer Fire Department was organized, and was known as "Rescue Fire Company No. 2" adopted to. *"protect the property of our citizens from destruction by fire, and to promote sociability, kindly feeling and good fellowship."* Approximately 80 men belonged to this company, with an initiation fee of twenty-five cents.
- In case of fire, the first man who arrived at the engine house took command until the officers of the company arrived.
- In 1862, over one-half of the original company membership had enlisted in the war, which necessitated new recruits .
- 1865 Sandusky's first steam engine arrived. Built by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company of Manchester, New Hampshire. It too, was named the "Ogontz" and weighed 4800 pounds and cost approximately \$4,400.
- It was reported that at its test at the foot of Columbus Avenue, that 3 minutes after smoke appeared at the top, the pressure started to build. At 22.5 pounds, water came from two nozzles at the ends of three sections of hose, until it reached 60 pounds when the hose burst, and every few minutes another section of hose burst,

until the crowd had become pretty well drowned out. The Council thereafter ordered a lot of substantial hose.

- 1868 & 69 Silsby steam engines purchased.
- 1870 Ordinance passed, which provided for Policemen and Night watchmen.
- 1872 On April 12, 1872 the citizens of the Fifth Ward organized a new fire company named "Relief Fire Company No. 4"
- May 27, 1872 the fire department was put on the payroll, with monthly salaries as: engineer \$60, firefighters \$50 and minutemen at \$10.
- 1873 One of the earliest recorded mutual aid calls to another department was an engine sent to Toledo using the railroad to transport the engine.
- 1875 On August 5, 1875, the laying of water pipes began with the initial water intake located at Battery Park. The Water Works was located where the present City Building (200 blk. Meigs St.) now stands.
- In 1894 a high pressure system was installed throughout the city increasing the hydrant pressure, so that the fire department needed the steamers only when large fires were encountered, or long distance lays of hose required more pressure.
- The water was pumped into a metallic standpipe 100 feet high and 25 feet in diameter. In June of 1924 it was leveled by a tornado.
- 1876 Fire station # 2 built. Located on the N.W. corner of Lawrence and W. Market Streets. (Torn down in 1914 and the new Central Station was relocated to this corner).
- 1883 On December 23, 1883 all volunteer hose companies were abolished by City Council. Sandusky established a paid; full-time department under Chief John Unckrich, and started an expansion program, which in the next 20 years saw the erection of four stations, the purchase of two 750 gallons per minute Knott steamers, two hook and ladder rigs and four hose carts, along with the Gamewell fire alarm system.

- 1884 An ordinance provided that the fire department consist of 3 hose companies and 1 hook and ladder company. The manning of each would assign 6 men to each hose company, and seven to the hook and ladder company. Salaries: plugman \$45 monthly, teamster \$45, minutemen \$10.
- 1888 The department made 42 runs, covering 40 miles of travel. There were four fires with losses each of more than \$10,000.
- 1889 66 fires were reported, with miles traveled about 65. Three fires of more than \$10,000 each were recorded.
- Fire station # 4 was built. Located at the North East corner of Central Avenue and W. Osborne Street. (Deactivated in 1917).
- 1880's & 90's During this era the department consisted of approximately 60 men, including minutemen (volunteers/on-call).
- 1890 Only 33 fire runs were reported. Three fires with losses of more than \$60,000 each were reported.
- On September 30, the new Central Fire Station, located on W. Market Street -just West of Columbus Avenue (South side) was completed. At a cost of \$40,000 it was a 3 story stone structure, and the city now had three fire stations.
- 1891 On December 13, 1891, the steam barge R.E. Schuck, lying at the B & O dock, caught fire and the Relief Hose Company No. 4 was called out. While at work, Chief John Unckrich lost his life by falling into the hold of the boat.
- 1892 The department made 31 runs, covering about 60 miles. The average loss ranged from \$200 to \$300. The only fire of note was Kuebeler's Brewery on Tiffin Avenue, which took place on April 7, involving a loss of \$26,000.
- 1893 The department made 85 calls during the year.
- 1894 The department made 59 runs, with the two largest fires being Michel Bros. Cooper shops on Townsend Street (\$1,500) and the L. Koegle's grocery on Monroe Street (\$2,000).

Fire station # 3 was built. Located at Meigs and Sycamore Line. (Deactivated in January of 1979).

High pressure water system installed to increase hydrant pressure.

1895 The department made 84 runs, the largest fire of the year being the Sandusky Tool Company Warehouse (\$5,000).

1895 The department had 34 men, plus the trained minutemen who responded by means of a whistle on the roof of the water works.

The station locations were as follows:

#1 In the City Building on West Market, just west of Columbus Avenue on the south side of the street and housed one steamer, one hook and ladder, one hose cart and six horses.

#2 Was located on the S.W. corner of West Market and Lawrence Streets and housed one hose cart.

#3 Was located at Meigs Street and Sycamore Line and housed one hook and ladder and one hose cart.

#4 Was located at the N.E. corner of West Osborne Street and Central Avenue and housed one steamer, a hose cart and the chiefs horse and buggy.

1896 The Gamewell Fire Alarm system had been adopted: 4 loop; 35 miles of wire; battery, 100 cells, 5 indicators and 1 repeater. There were 52 Lowrey hydrants located in the central, or business portion of the city, and 231 post hydrant in outlying districts, all of which were high pressure, and in case of fire are connected with hose, which provides ample service in all parts of the city.

Sandusky Fire Alarm Signals -number and location of boxes (1896)

12 Water/Warren	53 Monroe/Putnam
13 Pumping station	54 Jefferson/Clinton
14 Huron Ave./Jefferson	61 Seneca/Clinton
15 Adams/Perry	71 Fulton/Fox
16 Columbus/Water	72 Monroe/Central
17 Hancock/Water	73 Camp/Barker
18 Wayne/Huron Ave.	74 Vine/Tyler
19 Columbus/Jefferson	75 Camp/S. Depot
20 Hancock/Monroe	78 Hayes Ave/Filmore
21 Central Fire Station	81 Hayes Ave/Tyler
22 Water/Decatur	82 Campbell/W. Osborne

34 Central/Decatur	85 Duroy Wine Co.
35 Monroe/Decatur	91 Columbus/E. Park
36 Washington/Decatur	92 Hancock/Scott
41 Water/McDonough	95 Bauer Bros.
42 Market/Lawrence	112 Warren/Neil
43 Washington/Shelby	113 Third/Erie
45 Adams/Lawrence	114 Hodgman M'fg Co.
46 Madison/Shelby	115 Hodgman M'fg Co. Mill
51 Pearl/Tiffin	116 First/Ogontz
52 Monroe/Clinton	118 Fifth/S. Ogontz

The Gamewell System consisted of RED BOXES. This system existed until the 1960's. The system was referred to as "box alarms" where the fire department would respond to the location of the box. When the box or alarm was activated, it would "tap out" the respective numerals: I.E. Box # 82 would ring eight bells in the stations, a pause, followed by two more bells. Simultaneously, the respective numbers would be punched out on a tape. Therefore, if a doubt as to the number of bells sounded, this could be verified on the tape. Trucks would then be dispatched to the location of Box # 82 "Campbell and W. Osborne Streets." The response was being made to the "location" of the box, with no knowledge as to the situation at hand.

At some point of time, "ghost boxes" or "phantom boxes" were established, where a designated number would represent a geographical location within the city.

A call signal for minute men was located on the roof of the engine house of the water works.

- 1910 The first motorized piece of equipment is purchased for fire use. It was a Clydesdale Rig, combination hose cart, chemical and booster rig.
- 1913 The City Building, which was located at W. Market Place and Fulton Street - burnt down. Some of the offices were relocated to the Central Fire and Police Station - located on W. Market Street, just West of Columbus Avenue (South side).
- 1914 The # 2 station, located at the N.W. corner of W. Market and Lawrence Streets is torn down. A new Central Fire Station is to be built on this location.

An American LaFrance motorized fire engine is purchased. The vehicle has solid rubber tires.

- 1915 On November 22, the new Central Station (N. W. corner of W. Market and Lawrence Streets) is opened and occupied.
- 1918 Flu epidemic; department has 8 men. Chief Curtis states, "he has more horses than men on the department."
- 1919 The two platoon system is adopted. Twenty-four hours on, followed by twenty-four hours off. Every eight days.
- Horse drawn equipment was used, until March, when the department became FULLY MOTORIZED.
- 1950's Up until Perkins Township formed its own fire department, (established in 1951 and operational on January 1,1953) the Sandusky fire department would answer calls throughout the county. Areas, such as White's Landing and the Mason Roads areas were responded to.
- The Sandusky Fire Department now had 34 men: A chief, 2 assistant chiefs, 4 captains, 4 lieutenants and 23 firefighters. The men worked 24 hours on duty, 24 hours off duty and every 8 days received a "kelly" day (a scheduled day off). The term "kelly" has been referred to as originating in Chicago, using the mayor's name.
- 1960's Sandusky became one of the first cities to adopt the "911" system of alarms.
- 1969 The department now includes an ambulance. Prior to this, ambulance service was provided by a simple station-wagon type of vehicle belonging to the Sandusky Police, or private ambulance service provided by area funeral homes.
- 1970 In January, the new # 7 fire station, located at 3816 Venice Road is opened and fully manned. Four fire stations now exist throughout the city. With additional men hired, the department now has 54 men.
- 1971 Sandusky's first black firefighter is hired.
- 1975 On September 25, keys to a 32' "fireboat" are received as the newest addition to the department. The boat, a 32' was built by Inland Seas Boat Company in 1967. It was built as a high speed run runner for

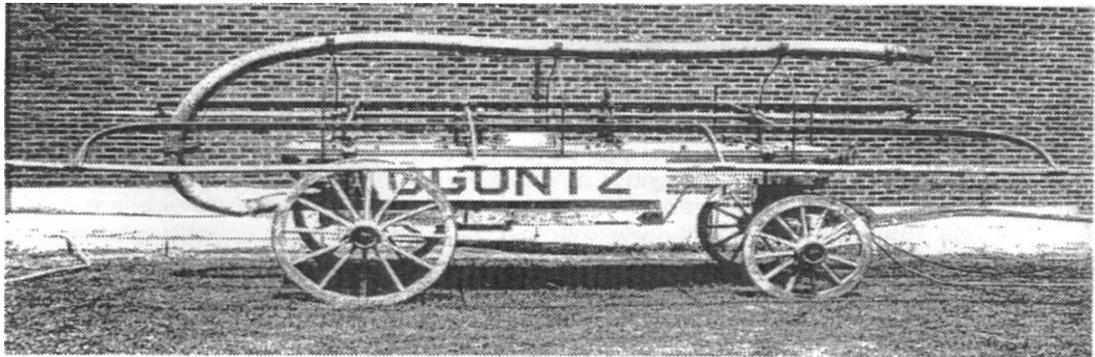
the Ohio Department of Liquor. It has twin 320 horsepower engines. A fire and rescue committee was formed after a large coal dock fire. With donations from the public, the boat would later be fitted with a 1,000 gallons per minute pump. Eventually, named the "SAFIRE." Safire being the combination of Sandusky Fire. In the 1990's the name would be changed to the *William O. Bird*, in recognition to a fire captain who was killed in a 1969 fire.

- 1976 On October 2, the fireboat was dedicated for service.
- 1978 The number 5 fire station, located at Tiffin Avenue and W. Jefferson Street is closed, so that manpower can be re-distributed.
- On August 1, 1978, *emergency medical technician (EMT)* training is started within the department.
- 1979 On January 15, the new number 3 fire station, located at Fifth Street and Causeway Drive (now Cedar Point Drive) is opened and manned. The old # 3 station on Meigs and Sycamore is deactivated.
- 1980's Three additional firefighters are hired, bringing the total department strength to 57 men.
- Firefighters riding the tailboard of the engines are discontinued, due to not only safety reasons, but for better communications between the man and the officer. The man now rides in a "jumpseat" located behind the officer.
- The fire department expands its service to include a paramedic program. Intensive, additional training above firefighting provides for a "dual status" for many men and a new era of emergency medical services (EMS) is established within the department.
- 1986 The first female firefighter is hired.
- 1990's Major purchases of vehicles; engines that cost around a quarter of a million dollars, an aerial truck that approaches a half million dollars. A new ambulance that cost almost \$120,000.
- Around 1996 discussion starts on the plans to build a new *Central Fire Station*.

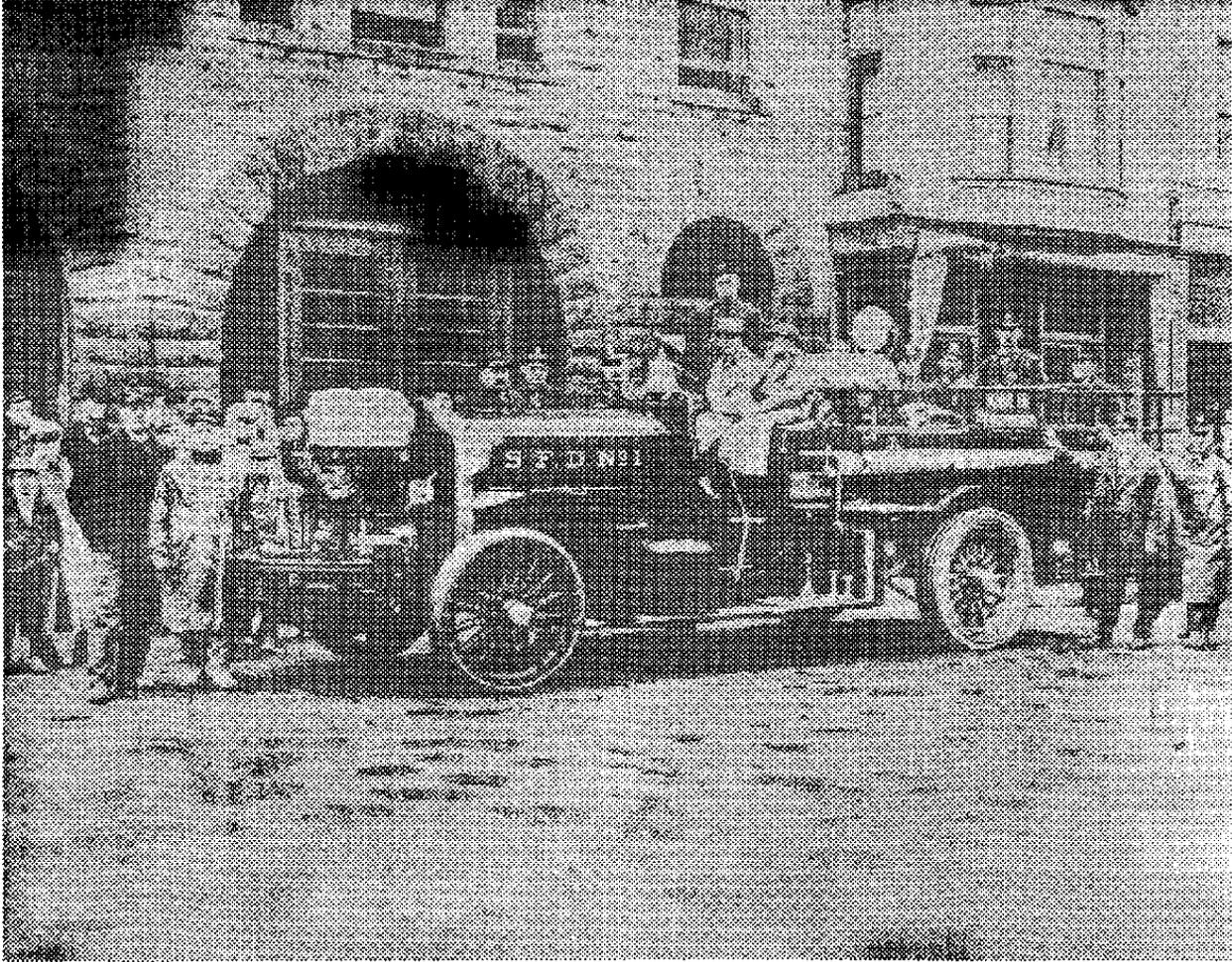
- 2000 Plans for the new central fire station are approved, with the location to be on "Market Place" - located between Decatur and Fulton Streets.
- 2001 On January 23 ground is broken on the site of the new central fire station. With an estimated cost of \$3.35 million, construction is expected to take 10 months.
- 2002 The city's new Central Station is placed in operation on January 15<sup>th</sup>.  
  
Open House for the new station is held on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Community support from individuals, businesses and foundations provide funding for creation of historical photographs, a history room and television record of the historic displays.  
The city fire department awaits the delivery in late fall of a new type of elevated fire equipment called a "Snuzzle".



**Sandusky Fire Rescue Pumper built by Ferrara Co.**



**Sanduskv Fire Dept. Oaontz Fire Co. Hand**



1913 Ahrens – Fox pumper was the city's first motorized pumper.



**Sandusky Fire Dept. Establishes Ambulance Service - 1969**



**Fire Dept. Advance Life Support Ambulance**

**The Sandusky Fire Department provides Emergency Medical Service to the Community, operating 3 EMS units in the city.**

# *Last Alarm*

**Sandusky firefighters who died in the line of duty in the  
protection of lives and property in the city**

John Unckrich 12-13-1891

Adam E. Hartung 3-23-1908

Fred Rudolph 1-13-1914

Cornelius O'Neil 10-29-1914

Henry Rudolph 2-23-1917

Michael P. McLaughlin 2-8-1934

William T. Hayes 1-25-1935

Roscoe A. Klepper 9-1-1966

William O. Bird 11-24-1969