

Minerva Fire Department & Rescue Squad History

The Minerva Fire Department was formed in 1950 by a small group of dedicated men from the community. Two years prior, a fire had struck the residence of a local family, destroying the home, and the ongoing discussion about the need for a unified fire team heightened. At the time, the community was covered by the Barton Fire Company from North Creek. Town Supervisor Francis Donnelly sent invitations to each family in town, inviting them to attend a meeting at the Mountain View Hotel to discuss the need further.

After a standing-room-only meeting, it was agreed that a fire company was needed. A second meeting at Minerva Central School was held to appoint the officers of the newly formed firefighting team. Normal Hall was the first fire chief and served as such for ten years.

The first problem to face the new fire company was a total lack of funding and lack of equity for securing a loan. The Town Board and Supervisor Donnelly received permission to set up a fire protection district and enter into a contract with the new fire department for fire protection for \$2,000 per year. On August 9, 1950 the fire company was incorporated. That same year the Olmstedville fire house was built by Ross Winch on land donated by Helen Barnes Keenan. Originally the fire house had a flat roof. The following year, on April 30, 1951, the first fire truck to serve the department arrived, a 1951 Ford.

To thank the community for their support, the firemen held a beach party in August 1950. A few bushels of clams and an iron kettle were the start of a 53 year tradition. The beach party, which later became the Minerva Fire Department ClamBake, was the leading fundraiser for the department each year. Music, games, and food made up the agenda, but it took a community working together to execute. As support dwindles, the decision was made to discontinue this annual event, making the 2003 ClamBake the last. For many years, the beach party fireworks display was dedicated to an outstanding community member or supporter of the fire department. In 1975 the display was dedicated to Supervisor Francis Donnelly for his dedication over the first 25 years of operation.

Along with the annual ClamBake, another event that was a staple in the community was the Spring Dance. This fundraiser was also a time to introduce the community to the newly elected fire/rescue officers and recognize volunteers for their dedication. Each year a firefighter, rescue squad responder, and auxiliary volunteer would be awarded 'Member of the Year' for each respective category. Due to the lack of interest, the last Spring Dance was held in 2005. Now, volunteers are lauded at a Firemen's Banquet, an annual dinner to thank the volunteers and their families.

One of the most significant fires struck the community Sunday, May 26, 2002, when a fire was reported at the Mountain View Hotel, only a few miles away from where Minerva firefighters were extinguishing a small brush fire. Multiple fire companies were called to assist the Minerva crew. In addition to the eighteen fire companies that responded, three ambulances stood by on scene while one ambulance transported an injured firefighter to the hospital, his injuries not life-threatening. A Pottersville fire truck was also damaged while trying to control the blaze. Emergency lights on the truck were melted off. Fire Chief Ed Sharrow directed nearly 150 firefighters who were fighting the blaze. In the days following, firefighters would be called back to extinguish multiple 'hot spots.'

In 2004, a new fire engine, which is now housed at the Olmstedville fire house, was purchased. This engine holds the JAWS of Life and has an extended cab that may also act as a command center on the fire scene. After the new engine had been placed into service, it was time to begin the process of replacing the brush truck - a 1956 Dodge Power Wagon. Eventually, in 2008, the Power Wagon (the second fire truck to serve the company) was replaced by a Ford Quick-Attack Brush /truck that came with an interesting history, as it served for a short time as a fire truck at the Daytona International Speedway. The 1956 Power Wagon was in service and responding to fire calls for over 50 years. It was sold to a man who later restored it.

Today, the fire company is led by Fire Chief Greg Wright. The monthly meeting date remains the same, and the volunteerism still runs deep. A wilderness rescue trailer/ATV has been placed into service for off-road emergencies. Interior firefighters have received updated apparel to ensure safety in fires and a new fire truck is being designed to replace the 1989 Mack that is currently serving as the company's engine tanker. The firefighters are also staying busy attending two or more drills each month.

Fire Chief

Kerry Killon 1985-1991; 1993-1998; 2004; 2009-2014

Robert Mueller 1992; 2007

Edward Sharrow 1999-2003

Bill Meehan 2005

Keith Dubay 2006

Greg Wright 2015-current

President

Lawrence Pratt Jr. 1985

Joseph Gonyo 1986-1989; 1993

J Michael Leddick 1990

Brian Davis 1991-1992

Stephen McNally 1994-1999

Phillip Wilson 2000

Jack Green 2001-2002

Henry Bariteau 2003-2004

Jack Demers 2005-2006

Harold Shaw 2007

Keith Dubay 2008-2009

Gregory Wright 2010-2013

Michael Corey 2014-2015

Patricia Warrington 2016-2018

Brandon Dunbar 2019-current