



**East Greenbush Fire Company  
A Special Company Meeting To Mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fire Company  
Thursday, January 7, 2016**

President Benson Jr. called his first meeting to order inside of 695 Columbia Turnpike, which is the old Duff's Hotel. This is the exact spot that, one hundred years ago to the date, the East Greenbush Fire Company was organized. President Benson stated that Assistant Chief Dick and Assistant Chief Forgea are handling the sprinkler activation at 99 Miller Road (the Comfort Inn and Suites) and will be returning shortly.

The Color Guard, consisting of Luke Palmer, Chris Lavin, and Rich Hendrick marched across the street from the Main Station and entered 695 Columbia Turnpike.

Rich Hendrick (Sergeant at Arms) led us in a pledge to the flag.

President Benson Jr. asked for a moment of silence for our departed members.

District Chief Lehmann acknowledged our invited guests, which included members of the media, Town of East Greenbush Supervisor Jack Conway, and Linda Smith, the proprietor of the bridal shop in which this meeting is taking place.

Fire Company Chaplain, Father O'Brien, led us in a prayer.

District Chief Lehmann called the Company Rolls. 78 members were in attendance this evening.

President Benson Jr. gave his Presidential remarks. He thanks the members for attending this evening and marks this special occasion with the festivities to come and the dinner later on this evening.

David A. Cook makes a motion to set aside a page in tonight's minutes to recognize the original seventeen members who met in this building one hundred years ago. This motion was seconded by Chris Linck. The motion carries.

Past Chief Peter Lehmann gives a history of the Fire Company for all in attendance.  
(*Secretary's note – this script will be attached to the minutes.*)

Past Chief Peter Lehmann presents the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary patch, designed by Rensselaer's Ernie Mann.

President Benson Jr. turns the meeting over to Lieutenant Mark Becker.

Mark expresses his gratitude to the membership for donating the money for internet and Skype access so he could remain in contact with his family (specifically, his wife and new son) during his deployment. Mark presents the Fire Company with a United States flag and a plaque that states that this flag was flown, with honor, over the United States base in Iraq on October 5, 2015.

Past Chief/Past President Tim Boel recited the names and dates of service of all of the Past Chiefs of the East Greenbush Fire Company.

Past Chief/ Past President Mike Benson Sr. recited the names and dates of service of all of the Past Presidents of the East Greenbush Fire Company.

District Chief Bob Lehmann states that we will be taking a picture at the Park Station before dinner is served.

President Mike Benson Jr. asks those members who wish to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Installation and Inspection Dinner to sign up in the firehouses. He also thanks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee for their work for this event.

A motion was made by Tom Kennedy, seconded by Jeff Tooker, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm, and the Color Guard led our members out of the building and across the street to the Main Station.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Tooker  
Recording Secretary



*This page in the January 7, 2016 minutes of the East Greenbush Fire Company is hereby dedicated to the seventeen original charter members of the East Greenbush Fire Company and to their inaugural meeting on January 7, 1916.*

*May their legacy live on.*

*(Secretary's Note – These are the remarks, as submitted by Past Chief Peter Lehmann, on the History of the East Greenbush Fire Company. Past Chief Lehmann read these remarks at the January 7, 2016 meeting.)*

## History of the East Greenbush Fire Company

On the evening of January 7, 1916, a group of seventeen citizens met to organize the East Greenbush Volunteer Fire Company, after a spectacular 1915 fire that destroyed the landmark Hillcrest Inn, where the present Rensselaer Lodge of Elks is now located. The meeting was held in the parlor of Duff's Hotel, which was built in 1802, where we are standing tonight. It was decided that the fire district would be the same as that covered by the school district. Officers elected at this meeting were: President, Charles M. Link; Secretary, John L. Baker; Treasurer, John Duff; Committee on By-Laws, Solon Duff, John W. Trueworthy and Charles B. Story. Meetings we held in the hotel ballroom which became known as Fireman's Hall.

At the second meeting, Charles M. Link resigned as President to be elected the first Captain and Elery D. Smith was then elected President, with Edward Cummings as Vice President and Jesse Van Valkenburg as Lieutenant. Mr. Duff provided the meeting room in an unused portion of the Hotel rent free for one year. Incorporation proceedings started in March, 1916 and the Certificate of Incorporation was received on June 18, 1916. Membership in the Hudson Valley Firemen's Association was granted in August 1916.

On August 1, 1920, the Fire Company held a large field day on the former Mudge property which they had purchased after the house was destroyed by fire on November 18, 1918. The property was located on the corner of State and Hays Roads. One of the barns which remained on the property was used as the fire house. In January 1922, the front corner of the lot was sold to Edward Rysedorph, Sr. who built a large block house which still stands today. His son, Edward Rysedorph, Jr. became years later Chief of the Company. This property has changed hands several times since then and is now owned, once again, by the fire company, which is now our training house. The first fire house served until 1947 when a new building was erected. The mortgage of \$17,500 on the Main Station building was burned on January 7, 1952. In 1959, the building was remodeled and enlarged to house three trucks with meeting room, club room and kitchen upstairs. The firehouse was generously given at the request of the Community Club, Girl Scouts, 4H Clubs and at one period used as a place of worship for the Greenbush Reformed Church while their sanctuary was undergoing renovations.

For the first few years, money was raised by minstrel shows, concerts and field days, clambakes and ice cream socials. It was before the age of radio and television and home talent was enjoyed by everyone, the sociability most of all. Although an Auxiliary was mentioned as far back as 1923, no formal organization was formed, but every fireman's wife cooked and baked for days in preparation for these events. Two of the favorite contests were climbing a pole and chasing and catching a small squealing pig; both pole and pig having been thoroughly greased previously.

The first fire alarm was the bell in the Greenbush Reformed Church – rung in a continuous hurry-up manner. But first, the key to the Church had to be retrieved from Duff's Hotel and later Doran's Store. The second alarm was a hand siren for the truck. At one meeting, a motion was made to fine a person \$5.00 for touching the siren other than going to or returning from a fire. But the more cautious members denied the motion in favor of a warning sign. A larger siren was purchased in 1929 which was turned in on a new one in 1931. A clock was installed so that at 6:00 pm every day an alert was sounded as a test. The county siren test a noon on Saturday came later, as did the call to summon the members for regular meeting nights. The present alarm system was purchased in 1957.

On July 3, 1917, the Purchasing Committee turned over to the Company a tank chassis with hand extinguishers, with the purchase price of \$800.00. A Ford ton truck was bought in 1922 for \$450.00 less trade in of \$110.00. At a special meeting in February 1925, the members bought a Stewart Chassis with Buffalo equipment. Following the formation of the East Greenbush Fire District No. 3, all equipment was purchased by the District with tax funds. A 1938 Mack pumper replaced the Buffalo and in 1944, a Mack truck modified to hold a 1000 gallon tank and a portable pump was placed in service. In 1958, the beloved Engine 68 was purchased and put in service. As of 1958, three trucks served the residents of Fire District No.3. In 1963, a Mack Pumper and a Mack Tanker were purchased to replace the 1938 and 1944 Macks.

The organization played its part also in three wars, always retaining on the rolls the members who were the service of their country – with the exception of one was stricken from the roll for being a deserter. One half of the profits from the field days were donated to the Red Cross with a sign Welcome Home in lights erected for the veterans of WW2.

As mentioned before, in 1923 a Ladies Auxiliary was proposed, but it wasn't until 1955 that the organization was formed with approximately 10 charter members. The first officers were President Irene Griffin, Vice President Betty Rose, Secretary Marcella Helms, Treasurer Kathy Ullman and Historian Sylvia Lenninger. Many cold nights there has been hot coffee waiting at the firehouse for the returning firemen or at the scene of a fire, not to mention the financial, and well as morale building assistance they have given over the years.

In September 1966, the members of the East Greenbush Fire Company looked forward to the growth of the future community and stood ready to serve as they have for the past 50 years. They wrote: "From humble beginnings in small quarters with scarcely any equipment, a well trained organization has developed, with excellent equipment housed in a most modern building." The Company held its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet and Installation of Officers on January 8, 1966 at the Cordial Greens County Club and hosted the Hudson Mohawk Convention on September 15 to 17, 1966 in recognition of the Fire Company's 50th Anniversary.

There has been much history generated since this was written, and many of us have played a part in creating this history, so let's look at some significant events that occurred in the decades leading up to tonight's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

## **1970s**

In June 1970, the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Hudson Valley Fireman's Convention was held in East Greenbush, under the leadership of the East Greenbush Firematic Committee. A commemorative plaque from this committee rests under the flag pole at Fire Company headquarters.

In 1972 the Company entered a lease agreement with the Couse Community Center. A former schoolhouse site the land on Luther Road was sold to the Company by the Community Center. A building was erected with the agreement that the Company would use the remainder of the building, which included kitchen, meeting room and rest rooms. In 1978 the Center decided they no longer needed the use of this building and the Company took full ownership. A new 1972 Ward Lafrance was purchased, the first diesel powered apparatus for East Greenbush and the first dry powder equipped apparatus in Rensselaer County, and housed in what became known as the North Station on Luther Road.

In January 1975 the Fire District No. 2 merged with Fire District No. 3, thus the Fire Company merged with Sherwood Park Fire Company, thereby gaining members and another firehouse, located at 11 Michigan Avenue, Sherwood Park.

In Bicentennial year 1976, Assistant Chief Dennis Kennedy's helmet was painted Red, White and Blue.

In September 1978, a new FMC Pumper was placed in service at the Main Station, numbered for the County's new apparatus identifying protocols as 42-11-1. Originally it was going to be Engine 51 like the popular TV show at the time, *Emergency*. This did not come to pass.

In 1979 the East Greenbush Emergency Communications System began dispatching the Fire Company. Until that time, dispatching was performed by the Turnpike Telephone Exchange located behind Duff's Hotel. The transition from KEE 773 to WNLC 502 had begun.

In the 70's, the Fire Company purchased land on Greenwood Drive for the purpose of providing land to build a new Main Station. In 1981, the Fire Company sold the land on Greenwood Drive to the United States Post Office to build the new East Greenbush Post Office.

## **1980s**

In 1981, the Fire Company hosted the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Hudson Mohawk Convention, with the theme *More Fun in '81*. As with the 1966 Hudson Mohawk parade, the line of march ended at the East Greenbush Airport, what was to become the last Fire Company event at that site as it was sold to become a housing development. The Airport was the site of the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks events held during the 60s and 70s.

Before too long it became evident that the Sherwood Park building was inadequate and in need of upgrading. In the interest of the Company it was decided that a new Park Station should be built. Land on Phillips Road was donated to the company by the George Witbeck family, and the new Park Station was completed in 1983. Also on the grounds is The Frank H. Becker Memorial pavilion and facilities used for outdoor events.

In 1987, two Hahn Fire Apparatus were purchased and placed into service in the Main and Park Stations. These were the first four door cab apparatus in Rensselaer County. One replaced the 1963 Mack and the other replaced the Fire District No. 2 Ford/Ward LaFrance.

The historic October 4, 1987 snowstorm saw the EGFD respond to provide the inundated residents assistance in East Greenbush and round the clock coverage in the firehouses.

In February, 1988, the first ever Fire Company flag football game was played in the mud at Citizen Genet field.

In 1989, the first Chief vehicles, Dodge Rams, were purchased and placed in service.

## **1990s**

On February 2, 1991, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet and Installation of Officers was held at Herbert's Banquet House.

In 1991, The Fire Company built the addition on the North Station to house the newly purchased LTI aerial ladder truck, Truck 11.

In 1991, to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Fire Company hosted the 64<sup>th</sup> Hudson Mohawk Convention, this time under the theme, *Much More Fun in '91* with the parade termination and trophies at the new Park Station grounds.

In 1993 in Saratoga and again in 1995 in Lake George, the Fire Company won the coveted Best Overall trophy at the Hudson Valley Fireman's Convention.

In 1993-1994, Tennessee natural gas transmission lines were installed adjacent to the Park Station, and our lot behind the Park used as a staging area for the equipment.

In June 1997, the Fire Company hosted the 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Hudson Valley Fireman's convention themed *"It will be Heaven in '97"* under record 100 degree heat and high humidity.

Days after, two new Pierce Engine/Tankers were placed in service, 117 and 118 in the Main Station and North Station respectively, replacing the Ward Lafrance and the FMC apparatus.

## **2000s**

The first Life Member's Day was organized and held in September, 2000.

A major building project was undertaken which resulted in a \$2 million addition to the Park Station, upgrades to the Pavilion and paving of the parking lot.

In 2006, a new KME Engine/Tanker arrived at the Park Station, replacing the 1987 Hahn.

In 2009, a new HME Rescue truck was secured and placed in service at the Main Station, replacing the other 1987 Hahn.

## **2010s**

A new Spartan Engine Tanker was dedicated in June, 2015 to the memory of Chief Charles M. Link, with his daughter, Eva, playing an integral role in the dedication of the new apparatus. The truck went in service on June 30, 2015.

On January 7, 2016, the Fire Company celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the same building and room as the charter 17 community minded individuals did on Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

As were the members in looking forward to the growth of the future community and stood ready to serve as they have for the past 50 years, we too look forward to serving the community as we have for the last 100 years.

We should all be very proud of our accomplishments as members of the East Greenbush Fire Company.

*Revised January 10, 2016*