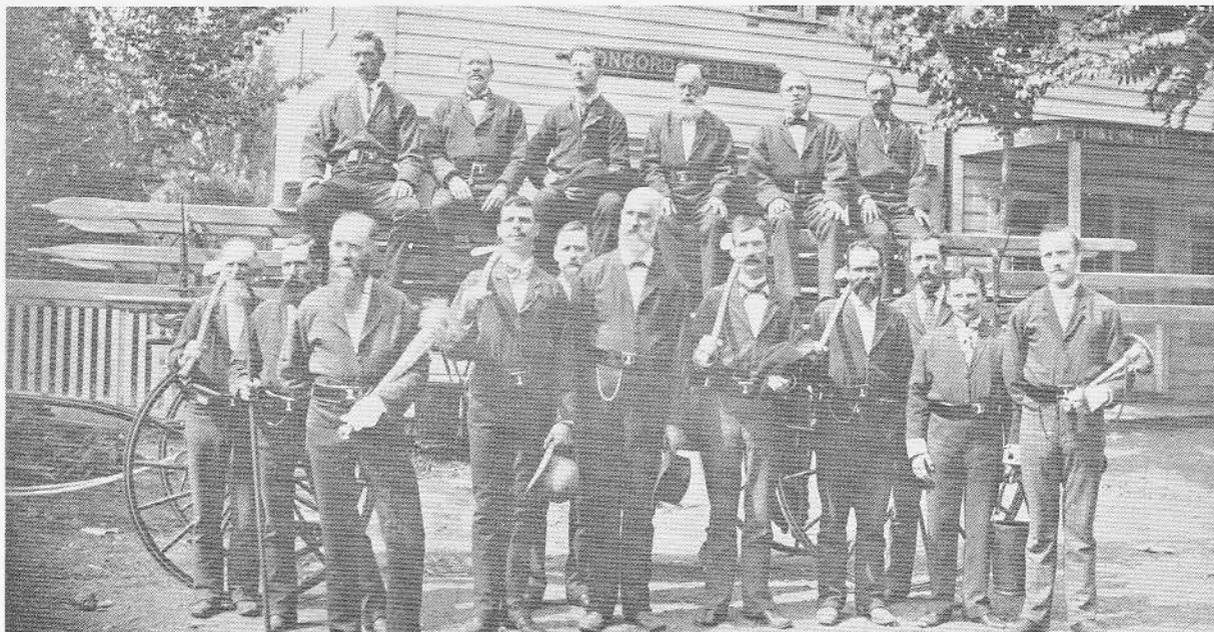


CONCORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 1972



VOLUNTEER FIREMEN ORGANIZED 1879

Top left to right—Henry Ivey, Phillip Klein, Dr. H. G. Thomas, Manuel Sherman, John Stultz, Joe Arrellane. Bottom Row left to right—H. J. Robinson, John Fisher, Justice of Peace John Burke, Thomas Smith, Charles Stultz, Captain Henry J. Nelson, James Sheehan, Frank Charles, Myron Breckenridge, Fred Klein and Joseph Boyd.

HOOK AND LADDER CO. No. 1

Imagine your house on fire and your only defense is a wooden bucket and a horse trough full of water! This was a fact of life in

Concord before April 5, 1879. On that day the citizens met to organize Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 to help fight their dreaded enemy—fire.

The town of Concord was only 10 years old and not many families lived there, but they immediately got 100 members for their volunteer department. They formed a committee to look into buying equipment and subscribed \$135 to be used for it. Henry J. Nelson was chosen foreman; the title today would be Chief.

The organization of course had a continu-

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This issue is principally devoted to the history of the fire department.

Concord now has a present-day challenge related to the fire department—really only incidentally. A fine building, sound structure, strategically located to be an asset in the developing Mall and Plaza, and of graceful Spanish style appropriate to our heritage is to be sold at auction. Will the people of Concord join in the effort to conserve this firehouse for a constructive, useful, and esthetic future?

The Concord Historical Society thinks so and is spearheading the project—making tomorrow's history start today.

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ing need for money, primarily for equipment. Dues of 25 cents per month were charged to the members and this was supplemented by many fund raising activities. Suppers, dances, and entertainments were held to raise money. As a result the volunteer fire department became an important part of community life. The annual Fireman's Ball was a big affair.

The volunteer firemen busied themselves with training in the care and use of equipment to fight fire, in improving the water supply, and in developing a warning system for early response. Great pride and esprit de corps developed. The quickness of response to the alarm was a measure of efficiency.

Competition between towns was not unusual and was often an exciting feature of Fourth of July celebrations. Equipment was kept highly polished. Speed in getting hose cart teams to a fire and laying hose from the available supply was one of the principal events.

Only four years after its formation, the Concord Fire Department had contrived enough money to erect a fire house. In November, 1883, bids were received for a handsome two-story building which was built facing the Plaza on the west side. The second floor was used for socials and dances.

The firebell hung in the cupola at the front where the bell-rope could be pulled to ring the bell. For years, this bell was used by George Rogers to sound Concord's curfew. The bell is now in the custody of the Concord Historical Society.

The fire house was moved to Willow Pass Road just to the south in 1911 where it still stands. The top floor has been condemned due to termite damage and it is hemmed in tightly on both sides. Its physical condition, its location, and its unsuitability for continuing use have contributed to its lack of recognition and decreasing importance in Concord.

A fire district was formed in 1923 to finance the operation equitably and facilitate purchase of equipment. Allen Vargas became a paid fireman but for another 30 years or so the fire department depended on volunteers to respond to emergencies. It was in 1939 that the fire district built the Fire Station on Willow Pass and Grant Street that is now scheduled for abandonment.

The district is now a part of the Contra Costa Central Fire District with its dozens of trucks and highly trained professionals located throughout the central part of the County.

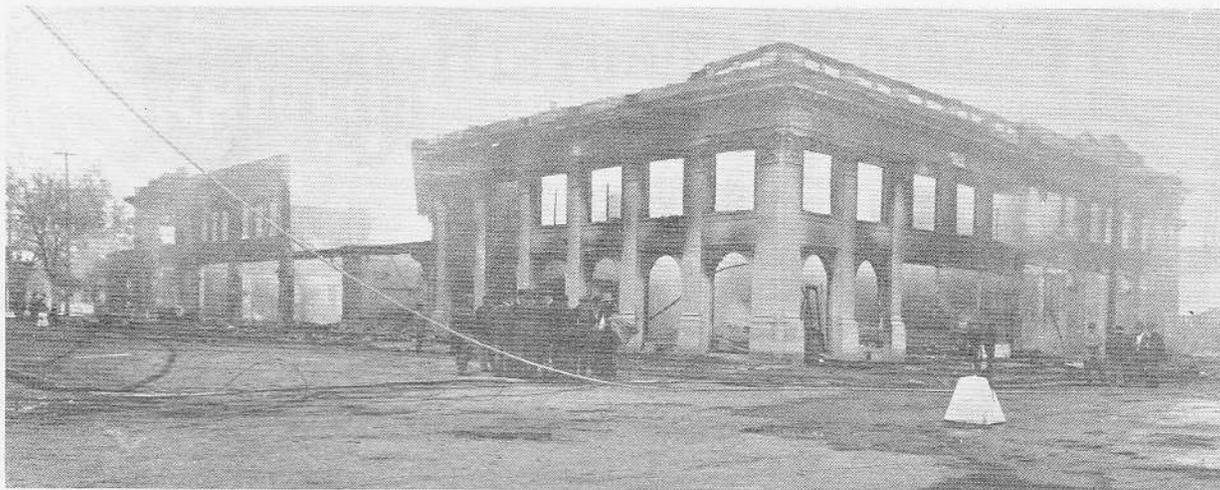
They display the latest in skills, they man the finest in equipment, they coordinate efforts and communicate with sophisticated gear and they are highly effective. But they can never exceed the zeal displayed by the early fire company volunteers.

ROMERIA

JOHN MARSH HOME
MARSH CREEK ROAD

SUNDAY, MAY 14
11 A.M. - 6 P.M.
Admission Free





Concord's Sad Day

Fire! Fire! Run across the street and ring the firebell! This was the cry in the early morning of April 25, 1917 when a cook discovered a fire in the Concord Inn at 2:00 a.m.

In spite of the efforts of zealous firemen, fire is often the winner in their perpetual competition. And this was true in this case.

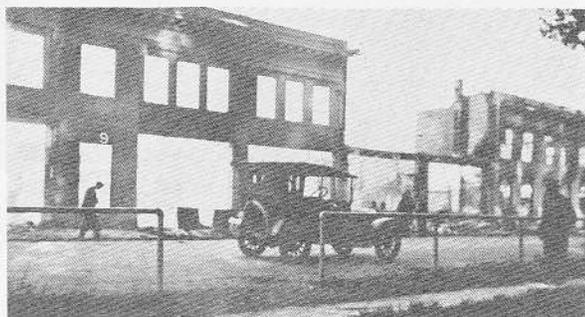
An entire business block was wiped out in downtown Concord on the west side of the Plaza. Included was the Concord Inn, only five years old; the Bank of Concord, eventually the Bank of America; the Post Office; the Concord Mercantile Co.; B. Neustaeder's store; offices of Louis Martin D.D.S., Edward E. Johnson M.D. and Attorney A.S. Shirlock

This is a fund raising program and those attending will be encouraged to become members of the John Marsh Memorial Association. Come and enjoy the various booths selling historic papers and pictures, barbeque chicken, beer, soda pop, home-made bakery goods, lemonade, and hand-made crafts at the Country Store.

This will be a fun day with no political speeches or formal program. So, if you like California history, come and talk to one of the Marsh descendants or a historian who will be there just to answer questions and talk of the "good old days."

and apartments over the bank; Meehan's Hardware Store; and Mrs. S. A. Fletcher's Modiste.

Assistance was sent from Martinez, Antioch, Avon, Cowell, Walnut Creek, and Oakland.



The 25 guests of the hotel escaped in their night clothing. Firemen, led by hotel clerk Guy Berger, rescued two waitresses who were trapped in their room and overcome by smoke; Nettie Dean and Beatrice Arthur were carried out unconscious.

The loss to the owners, many only lightly covered by insurance, was catastrophic, and the fire was a great blow to the town of Concord. The hotel, pride of the area, was never rebuilt and the scars of the fire remained for many years.

—Spike Fink

NOTICE!



MEMBERSHIP MEETING

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
Civic Center

WED., APRIL 26, 1972

8 P.M.

Homemade Refreshments

A special suprise program related to old Concord buildings so be sure and join us and bring a friend. We will also discuss progress of the Fire House preservation.

MAKE IT YOUR SPECIAL PROJECT — GET A NEW MEMBER

To become a member of the Concord Historical Society please fill in the information below and forward with a check for the correct amount to the Concord Historical Society. You will be contacted.

Name.....

Address..... Zip.....

Phone..... Type of Member..... Amount Enclosed \$.....

Please remove and return to:

CONCORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Post Office Box 404, Concord, California 94520

MEMBERSHIPS

Student	\$3.00
Individual	\$5.00
Family	\$7.50
Life	\$100.00
Contributing	\$10.00
Supporting	\$25.00
Donors	\$50.00

POUVA, the PAUPER,

BY THE

CONCORD

AMATEUR

DRAMATIC CLUB



FOR THE BENEFIT OF

Concord H. & L. Co. No. 1.

—AT—

CONCORD HALL,

March 1, 1888.