

*Fire Dept.  
 Beams 5/7/81*



The Fire Patrol Company # 1 is the last of the Line Companies to be formed in the Babylon Fire Department. Its Charter Meeting was held on January 5, 1931 when seven interested and concerned men formed a unit that would provide a greater measure of safety, survey, and surveillance at fire scenes.

This "new kid on the block" inherited a "hand-me-down" truck from the Electric Hose Company which was used by our Company to transport men and equipment to emergency scenes and any other duties delegated by the Officers of the Department. In 1935 a Diamond "T" truck, fitted with flood lights and a portable generator was delivered. At this point, the present character and purpose of the Patrol was established. This apparatus served our Company and the BFD well for the next twenty years during which our members provided lighting, crowd and vehicular control, and a watchfulness for the safety of fireman and civilian alike.

From 1953 until 1979 a Ford Motor Company flood light truck was used which provided powerful lighting, smoke exhausting equipment and general auxilliary tools for more effective appraisals and attacks at fires.

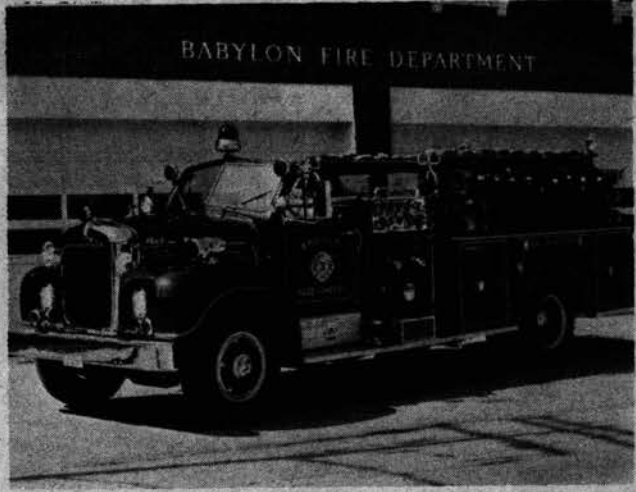
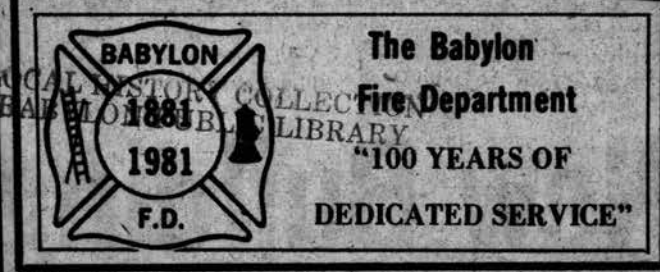
Two years ago, in 1979, the Patrol petitioned and defended successfully our belief that a new truck was needed and deserved. We presently have what is probably the finest truck for its purpose and size on all Long Island. It is a 4 wheel drive Chevrolet lighting and utility truck with all the satellite equipment to deal with most emergencies. Its central location at fires permits a wide range of mobile services which include emergency refills of air tank bottles.

Recently, some volunteer members within our volunteer Company have begun responding to night-time motor vehicular accidents when our Rescue Unit is called to such a scene. These men reasoned that often times Rescue-Teams are dangerously exposed to passerby traffic while treating and transporting injured and that lighting and traffic direction by the Patrol would reduce their hazards.

The members of the Babylon Fire Patrol # 1 are justly proud of their fifty years of service to the Village of Babylon and to the Babylon Fire Department.



Fire Patrol # 1 Grumman Floodlight Truck.



Argyle Hose Co. # 3 Mack Pumper

The Argyle Hose Company No. 3 was organized on February 4, 1899. The first meetings were held at the stables of the Argyle Hotel. The charter members were: E. Albin, W. Biggs, A. Davis, E. Davis, E. Day, J. Grohs, N. Grohs, W. Holbrook, P. Jommes, L. Miller, E. Pearsall, S. Pearsall, W. Smith, and E. Taylor.

As the company expanded the need for a building was acknowledged. On September 15, 1900, the company borrowed \$250.00 (a lofty sum in those days) from William T. Smith. This purchased the property on Little East Neck Road and High land Place. Funds to repay this "mortgage" were derived from dances and box socials. A building was obtained from the defunct South Shore club. This was enlarged to its present size in 1923.

The company's first piece of equipment was a two wheeled jumper. This was built by A.J. Weeks at a total cost of \$55.00. Today, the company operates a 1000 G.P.M. Mack Pumper that was placed in service in 1959.

Today, as in 1899, the spirit of the company is fire prevention and community service.

The Sumpwams Hose Co. # 2 was organized in November, 1895, by some very prominent men of the Village of Babylon; among them Dr. William Deale, Gustave Fishel, Charles Siegel, W.H. Terry, J.C. Robbins and Richard Higbie. The company was formed to provide a more prompt response to the downtown business section of the Village of Babylon.

The origin of the name is not clearly known, but the name could possibly come from the Indian name for Babylon. The original name for Deer Park Avenue was Sumpwams Path.

The first piece of apparatus to be used was the Old Phoenix Jumper, a hand drawn rig. This apparatus was housed for a short time in the rear of the Old Fishel Office building on Montauk Hwy. Later the apparatus was housed in the Seamens Building on the West side of Fire Island Avenue and the rental was an expensive \$5.00/mo. At about the turn of the century a four wheel hose wagon was also obtained.

In 1915 the Village Board granted the sum of \$1500.00 toward the purchase of the first motorized piece of apparatus. Fire fighting in the Village of Babylon took a giant step forward.

In 1916 tragedy struck the Babylon Fire Dept. when this equipment was struck and destroyed by a Long Island Railroad train. This accident resulted in the loss of two of Babylon's finest, Richard Higbie an original founder and Leon Petit. The equipment was replaced by the railroad, but the memory of these men live on.



#### Sumpwams Hose Company 1948 American La France Engine

In 1924 an American La France was purchased and then replaced by a 1939 Mack. The Sumpwams Hose became a dual engine co. in 1948 with the purchase of a 1948 American La France which is still in service today. It serves as a pumper as well as for application of foam.

In November 1964 a new Mack pumper was purchased. At this time the 1939 Mack retired. The new Mack was a 1000 gal./min. pumper with 500 gal. booster tank. At present the 1948 American La France and the 1964 Mack are housed at the Main House on the corner of Carl and Montauk Hwy. These two trucks plus Babylon's finest fire fighters help protect the Village of Babylon as well as the Beach areas.



#### Sumpwams Hose Company 1964 Mack Engine

Safety Note - Every floor should have a smoke detector if possible, but if not at least one in every home.

Blacm '81

Babylon  
Fire Dept

# Putting Out Fires In Babylon Village For 100 Years



*Chief Pettit, killed by a train while driving the department's first 'motorized apparatus' in 1916*

Hotel. The fire was discovered inside the ceiling between the first and second floor, some 15 to 20 feet from any flue or chimney, which leads to the theory that mice were gnawing on matches . . . Had it not been for the efforts of the firemen, the fire would have laid one-half of the village in ashes. The hotel was a century old. Famous guests included Daniel Webster, Joseph Bonaparte, ex-King of Spain, Commodore David Porter and others."

1887. "The first attempt at arson was found in a Prospect Street house in 1887 where an oatmeal

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*Battling a fire at the Fischel office building on Main Street in the early 1970s*

### By George DeWan

**I**N 1872, the general feeling around the community of Babylon was that fires were getting to be a problem. But the residents couldn't even agree on a plan to purchase a few ladders and buckets. Babylon's first attempt at forming a fire department was a failure.

As was the second and the third. In 1873 someone suggested forming a police department, and then giving each policeman a fire extinguisher. An interesting idea that got nowhere. A year later, the Babylon Fire Brigade was formed, leading to the creation of Hook, Ladder and Bucket Company No. 1. The company dissolved before any apparatus was purchased.

It took a good fire to get the villagers to change their minds. "The J.B. Ireland residence was destroyed in April, 1881," the original fire department records read. "As a result of this fire, a definite effort will be made to organize an engine company."

By the end of the year, the Babylon Fire Department had been formed, with Joseph H. Cummin as its first chief engineer, or chief. On Aug. 8

the community will celebrate the centennial of the Babylon Fire Department, making it one of the oldest departments on the Island, although not nearly as old as the Sag Harbor Department, the oldest in the state, which was founded in 1803. The Babylon department now has 175 members, six companies, 11 vehicles and answers about 200 fire calls and 1,000 ambulance calls a year.

A recent compilation of the fire department's early history, based on minutes of meetings, historians' notes and other documents, gives the flavor of the times:

1881. "The report of the chief included a fully formed hook-and-ladder truck, one hand engine manned by 25 men and equipped with 500 feet of new cotton rubber-lined hose. Land and structure purchased for the sum of \$300-\$400 in members' funds and a \$700 mortgage."

1882. "In April, a forest fire of 1,200 acres threatened the village. The loss to villagers was some \$1,600, and only through the efforts of the department was the Argyle Hotel saved."

1883. "A serious fire broke out Monday 4 June resulting in the total destruction of the American

box filled with wood and oil waste was dumped on the back stoop. The culprit was apprehended and sent to the Middletown Asylum."

1891. "In 1891 there was a decline in interest throughout the entire department. This was shown at the Patchogue Tournament where only 20 poorly clad men were in line. This is most deplorable and an awakening is earnestly hoped for."

1897. "One fall night in 1897, night watchman Dinota sounded the alarm of fire. Upon investigation it turned out to be aurora borealis. Considerable editorial comment was made of the incident. However, Wm. Dinota is a wide-awake individual who took no chances."

1912. "June 14. Boyne's Hotel destroyed. Cook burned to death in bed. Lindenhurst F.D. brought Storm Engine back."

1915. "July 9. Higbie Lane Inn destroyed following Polish wedding."

1916. "The 5th of February was a tragic day for the department. Chief Pettit and Captain Higbie, while answering an alarm on Park Avenue, were hit by the morning express. Both men were instantly killed and the vehicle destroyed. L.I.R.R. will replace the vehicle."

1928. "February. Ricketts whip factory destroyed. Was schoolhouse from Civil War days until 1893. Hendrickson Ice Cream manufactured there until 1903, when David Ricketts purchased it for whip factory."


1938. "February. Harwein Feed Building on John Street destroyed. Possible arson by car cleaner found in ruins. \$30,000 loss."

1945. "September 13. Burned pot of prunes causes general alarm of fire on Deer Park Avenue."

1946. "Jan. 3. Deep-fat fryer fire in Babylon Hotel destroys \$40,000 landmark."

Three years ago the Babylon Fire Department got itself embroiled in a well-publicized battle with the owner of a private museum in Baltimore. All over a hand pumper built in the 1830s that the department had bought secondhand in 1882 for \$300. Displaced by the fire hydrant, the pumper lay around in a state of general disrepair until it was given years ago to the Islip department. It later ended up—refurbished and worth more than \$10,000—in the museum.

The department threatened a lawsuit to get the pumper back, but now they have given up. But Babylon will see the 150-year-old pumper one more time. The museum has agreed to lend the pumper to the Babylon Department for its Aug. 8 celebration. /II



**The Babylon**  
**Fire Department**

"100 YEARS OF  
 DEDICATED SERVICE"

The Electric Hose Company # 4 of the Babylon Fire Department has been providing continuous service to the residents of Babylon for 79 years. Founded on April 4, 1902 the company's name was based on its location next to the old electric company on Cedar Street. Since its inception, the Company has been quartered in three different stations on the same site, the most recent being erected in 1961.

When the company was organized, it had twelve members and Irving E. Smith was elected its first foreman. In 1919 the term "foreman" was changed to captain. Today the company consists of 30 men with James F. Sterling, Captain, Charles H. Aldrich II, 1st Lieutenant, Alexis C. Smith, 2nd Lieutenant. It has also had the honor to have five of its members - John Graft, Charles Vollmer, John Hornel, Wallace Rogers, and Malcolm Lewis - serve as Chief of the department, while William Froehlich is currently serving as the 2nd Asst. Chief.

Initially the property, firehouse, and apparatus of the company were owned by the company and not the Village. Residents living north of the railroad had to pay a special rent in order to keep the company operational. After several years, the company deeded all of its property and assets over to the Village, thus removing the need for the special rent.

Up until about 1910, all of the company's apparatus was hand drawn. Teams of horses were then used exclusively until the first motorized hose wagon, a RCO, was purchased in 1922. The first motorized pumper was an American LaFrance purchased in 1931. Currently, the Company operates a 1000gpm Ward LaFrance pumper and a 750 gpm International pumper.

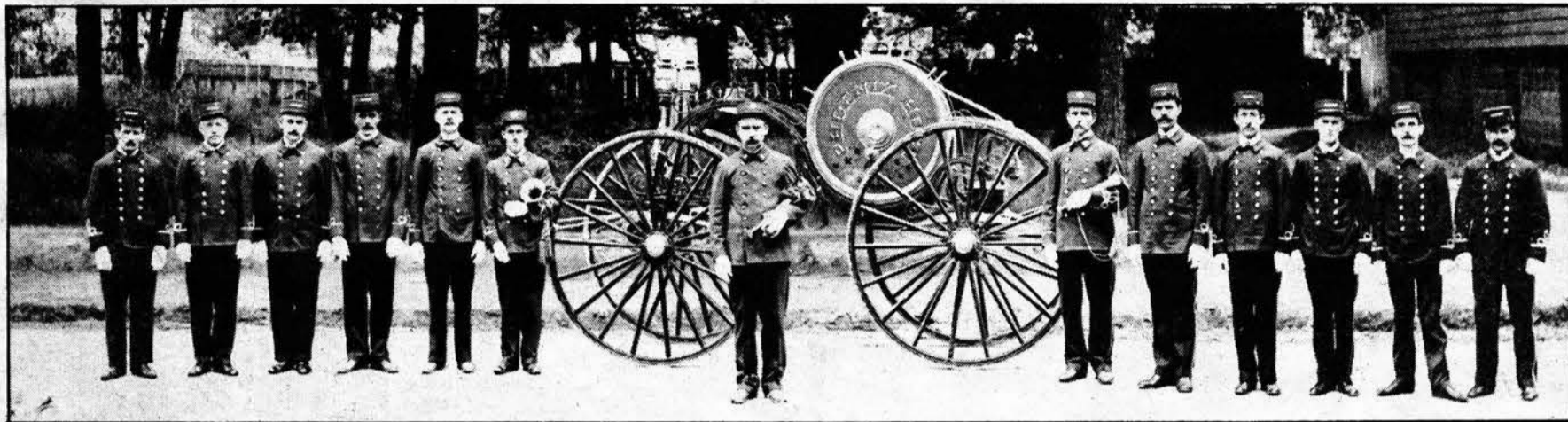


**Electric Hose Co. Ward LaFrance Engine**

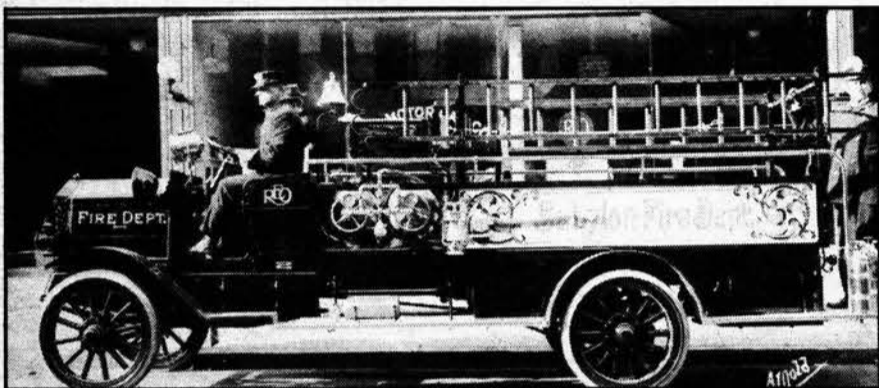
One of the major responsibilities of the Department is to provide fire and rescue protection to the various beach communities in the Town of Babylon along the ocean causeway. The Electric Hose Company is one of the primary response companies for all beach alarms and has some specialized equipment for handling these fires. Engine 1-2-4 is a custom-made pumper that has four-wheel drive capabilities. Its pump is located in front of the cab to increase its ability to pump off the end of jetties, or it can be driven right to water's edge to secure a supply of water so vital for firefighting purposes.

The Electric was not an all-work, no-play company. Almost from its inception, the company was noted for its fine racing team. From 1906 on, the Electrics were one of the premier competition teams on the Island and captured scores of trophies and championships including several statewide titles.

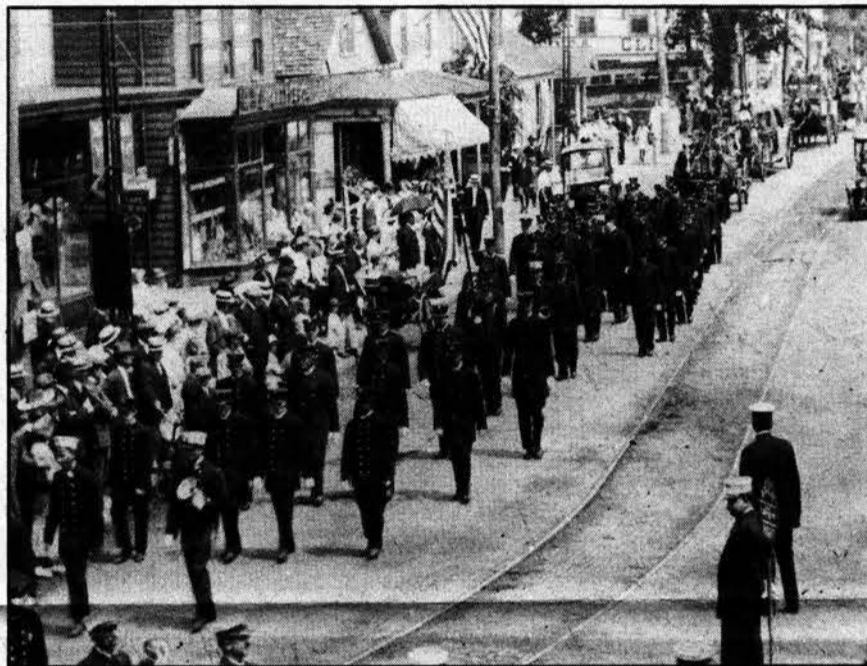




*Members of the Phoenix Hose Co. pose with their hose-hauler, called a 'jumper'.*



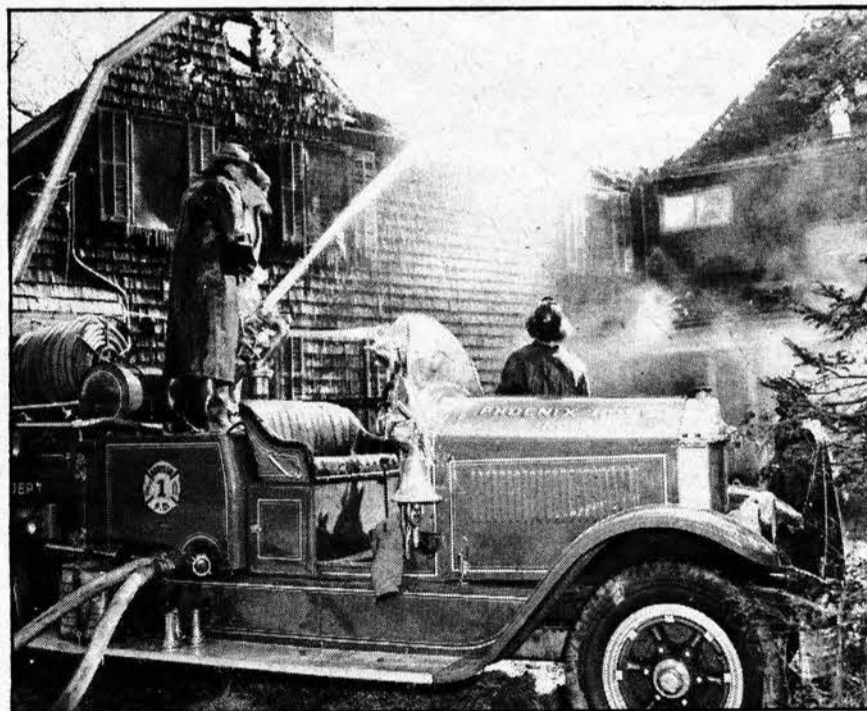
*A firetruck, circa 1915.*



*The company's annual parade, taken in the early 1900s*



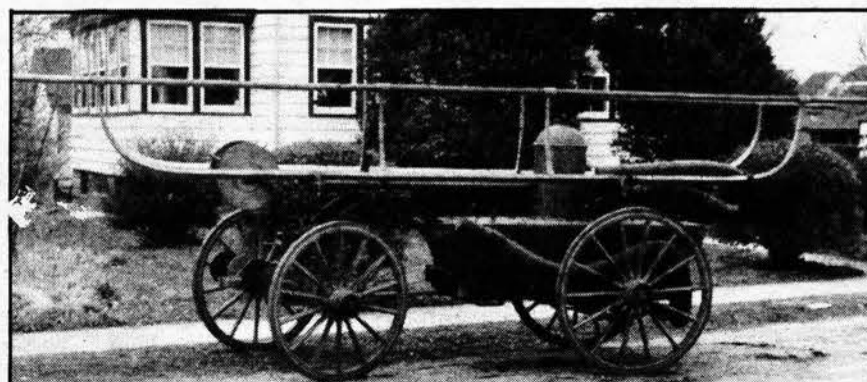
*Argyle Hose Co. building, on Little East Neck Road, is still used.*



*Battling a fire at the Tappen mansion in Babylon on a chilly February day in 1950*



*Volunteer horses, which in civilian life were used by a moving-and-storage firm, pulled the hook-and-ladder vehicles.*



*The 'Storm Engine Hand Pumper,' now in a Baltimore museum.*