

Improvements in Apparatus

The amount of money that Indiana Borough paid for its 1834 hand-operated pump wouldn't buy tires for one of today's IFA trucks. Now some of the truck's in service cost more than a half-million dollars.

From the association's early hand engine and hook and ladder wagon, the IFA's equipment steadily increased in efficiency and cost.

Minutes from the association's meeting and old news stories mention many new pieces of equipment added to the department over the years.

- ◆ "Little Giant" Engine was acquired in 1876.
- ◆ In 1914, council authorized the purchase of a fire truck not to exceed \$3,500.
- ◆ The first motor truck, a Federal, was purchased by the borough in 1915, and a Packard truck was added in 1918.
- ◆ About 1920, the fireman recommended to council the purchase of a 750-gallon-per minute LaFrance pumper for about \$12,000.
- ◆ About 1927, council authorized the purchase of a combination pumper and ladder truck to cost about \$12,000.
- ◆ On Dec. 6, 1933, the "75" truck, a 1928 American LaFrance pumper was on its way to a chimney fire when it was involved in a collision with an automobile at Eight and Water streets.
- ◆ In 1937, the firemen purchased a pickup truck and mounted a pump on the front to serve as the out-of-town alarm vehicle.
- ◆ In 1939, council approved the purchase of "Big Bertha," a 1,250 gallon-per minute (gpm) pumper with a V-12 engine, 1,500 feet of 2½ - inch hose and a 200 gallon water tank. It had seating for four personal, had no power steering and mechanical brakes. This was a very big piece of equipment for this time. The truck cost \$14,500.
- ◆ In 1942, a Chevy truck was acquired and converted into a rescue truck. It was one of the first covered rescue trucks in the nation.
- ◆ In 1943, the fireman took receipt of a pumper from the government.
- ◆ An 85-foot aerial ladder truck was ordered in December 1948 at a cost of \$23,500.
- ◆ The sale of the company's pickup truck to Glen Campbell for \$250 in April 1950 marked the beginning of a fire company in that community.
- ◆ "Old 75" became a reserve engine in 1950, but continued to respond to general alarms.
- ◆ By 1957, all IFA trucks except "the old Chevy" and the rescue truck had radios.
- ◆ A new 750 LaFrance pumper was received in the fall of 1961 for \$39,965. The truck had an open cab, no heater and no power steering.
- ◆ In 1963 the IFA purchased through donations, a 1963 Ford with Seagrave pump for \$15,108.

"Big Bertha," the 1,250 gpm pumper from an earlier era, was retired in 1966 and replaced with a 1,250 gpm American LaFrance for \$27,277.

As the 1960's ended the members began to have concerns about the new high-rise structures in their service area. Three new eight-story buildings prompted the firemen to ask for a new aerial truck.

- ◆ The members of the IFA decided in April of 1977 that they needed the joint flexible arm snorkel to fight fires in high-rise dormitories. An 85-foot snorkel was purchased for \$162,000. The association maintained this vehicle until it was sold to Leechburg.
- ◆ In April of 1991 the IFA purchased an aerial/platform truck for \$525,000. The truck was equipped with a basket which could lift two firefighters 110 feet in the air and allow them to direct 2,000 gpm of water onto a fire. It also had seating to carry ten firefighters. The truck was sold to Mount Pleasant fire department in Iowa when they purchased a replacement in 2007.

- ◆ An engine was purchased in March of 1996 for \$272,000. It was equipped with a 1,250 gpm pump and 750 gallons of water. The engine was used primarily as the first engine to respond to fires in White Township, first to respond on vehicle accidents and used to assist neighboring departments. It was sold to Marion Center VFC in 2007.

The department now has 10 vehicles. Some of the additions include:

- ◆ In 2001 a tanker was purchased for \$275,000. It is equipped with a 1,000 gpm pump and carries 1,000 gallons of water. It also can dispense foam from an onboard tank.
- ◆ Recently the IFA purchased its first of two quints in 2006. These are basically engines that also have a ladder on top of them. It is a 75-foot ladder equipped with a 1,500 gpm pump and a 500 gallon tank. This piece of apparatus is stationed at the central station located in Indiana Borough. It was purchased for \$590,000.
- ◆ The second quint was purchased in 2007 for \$670,000. It is a 105-foot ladder equipped with a 2,000 gpm pump and 500 gallons of water. It has been stationed at the White Township station.

The IFA currently has about 28 engineers, members who are qualified to drive the department's trucks and operate all their equipment.

The association's chief engineer's train other members who want to be engineers. It's a process that can take a year or more. It is also their responsibility to make sure all the trucks are running properly. They frequently respond directly to the fire scene to begin assessing where and how to position the fire trucks to reach nearby hydrants and attack the fire.

Although not a requirement by the state, the IFA requires its engineers to have a commercial drivers license (CDL). Engineers practice is held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. The sessions include driving the trucks, flowing water, flowing foam or aerial operations.

Some of the trucks were built from the ground up, with a truck committee studying what the department needs in a vehicle. It can take a year for the committee to prepare specifications for a new truck, and another year to have it built and delivered.

Before writing specs and ordering a new vehicle, the truck committee members sometimes visit equipment expos to help them decide what accessories on a truck will best suit the IFA's needs.

The trucks have changed tremendously over the years. They provide more safety and comfort for the firemen and automatic transmissions make them easier to drive than the trucks from the previous years.