

Big celebration marking Scottsburg Volunteer Fire Department's 100 years of service set Saturday

Written by Marty Randall

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Scottsburg volunteer firemen are planning a big party on Saturday afternoon, September 11, and everyone is invited to come.

The Scottsburg Volunteer Fire Department is celebrating its 100th year of service to Scottsburg and Scott County with a shindig offering music, refreshments, children's activities and a display of firefighting equipment, trophies, photos and memorabilia collected during the department's first 100 years.

Activities will begin at 1 p.m. that day at the department's oldest firehouse, located at the corner of Cherry and South Railroad Streets in Scottsburg.

As a safety precaution, streets in the area will be cordoned off, so that everyone can walk around and see what makes the Scottsburg department one of the best-manned and best-equipped in the state.

At 1 p.m., there will be a dedication at the firehouse of a new monument created by Fewell Monument Company listing every one of the department's members since its inception in 1910. The monument will rest where the original Scott County War Memorial once stood on the east side of the Scott County Courthouse on the downtown square. After that dedication, Holly Stewart, a fifth generation member of the Stewart family which has been active with the department since its origin, will sing. Then, folks can enjoy a brief parade of antique firefighting equipment, some of which will be pulled and some ridden. The parade route will be north on S. Railroad St. to State Road 56 (McClain Avenue) and then east to the courthouse square to South First Street, passing the new monument, and west on Wardell Street back to the firehouse.

Scheduled are displays of Scottsburg city and Indiana State Police patrol cars, exhibits by the Sheriff's Department and Scott County EMS and a line-up of antique fire trucks. Two medical helicopter teams are also scheduled to be on hand, barring emergencies.

Firemen and their ladies' auxiliary are preparing lots of food to feed visitors to the event. Stage entertainment is also planned as is a cornhole tournament.

Youngsters will be delighted with a visit to the Dalmatian dog bounce-and-play house that will be set up for the afternoon. Children will also be invited to go through the department's safe house. To be manned by the fire station's Junior Firefighters, the safe house teaches children life-saving tips should a fire occur.

All in all, it should be a fun-filled anniversary party for both the department and the public.

According to old documents saved in the department's files, Scottsburg citizens were advised as early as 1883 to have their ladders and buckets readied in case a fire should occur in the community. That valuable suggestion became a town ordinance in 1885, which more or less required all people to have fire-fighting material at hand at all times and be ready to assist their neighbors.

In 1886, the town's first bucket brigade was formed. In 1904, the Town Board ordered hooks to be made and attached to poles in sections of Scottsburg so that they could be grabbed and used to fight fires. In 1905, more organization was apparent, since the steam whistle on what was the Hardy Mill was used to sound the community's fire alarms.

In 1910, the fledgling department was organized with ten men who were given \$1 for each run that they attended. Up to 12 men could join, it was determined, and the department got its first real piece of equipment, a man-pulled, 50-gallon tank mounted on two wheels. That tank was displayed at the Scott County Heritage Center and Museum until 2009 when it was returned to

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the fire department for permanent exhibit in the department's own museum located at the S. Railroad St. firehouse.

Wilbur "W.A." Montgomery became the department's first elected fire chief in 1910. He served for ten years.

The first recorded run "out of town" took place in 1911 when the department assisted at a fire at the Red Man Lodge building in Crothersville. Members were originally not only responsible for the Town of Scottsburg but also covered initial runs to out-of-town fires for many years until townships set up their own departments.

In 1918, property on North First Street off S.R. 56 was purchased as the department's first firehouse. After the department moved, that building was put to use to house the Scottsburg Police Department. It is still standing and is now owned by Ralph Randall.

The first motorized fire truck was put into service in 1924. The Hardy Mill steam whistle was replaced by a new electric siren installed above Town Hall. New fire trucks were added in 1933 and 1935, and a firemen's auxiliary was formed in 1942. Those members were charged with responding if wartime air raids or similar emergencies arose. In 1948, two new Mack trucks were received, each fully equipped and capable of carrying 500 gallons of water. The Town of Scottsburg paid for one of the trucks and the other was purchased for the staggering sum of \$9,163 by the firemen. The town truck carried a 50-foot extension ladder.

In 1970, the fire department moved to new headquarters at Cherry and South Railroad Streets. A milestone was reached in 1986. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) rated the city's fire service classification as a 5 on a 10-point scale, improving it – and insurance rates paid by Scottsburg citizens – from a rating of 7.

In 1990, the department completed construction of the children's safe house as a way to teach youngsters safety and life-saving tips. Its ladder truck was added in 1991, and in 1994, the department's newest station, located on South Lake Road North, was completed.

Rescue service was instituted in 1995, with such equipment as the Jaws of Life purchased from firemen's funds.

The department's newest truck, its 1250 GPM fire-rescue unit, was placed in service in 1996. A training tower was constructed behind the newest firehouse in 2001. This unique facility provides a way to give on-the-spot training to volunteers.

The department's First Responder service began in 2003, and it added the Junior Firefighters group in 2008. That was also the year that the auxiliary was officially organized.

To this day, the Scottsburg department responds when calls for assistance are made. One of the farthest runs was recorded in 2009 when the nearly-renovated Jefferson County Courthouse in downtown Madison caught fire from the spark of a workman's welder.

The roll call of men who have served as fire chiefs includes W.A. Montgomery, 1910-20; Bill East from 1921-23; Bill Goben, 1924-1930; East again from 1931-32; Ralph East, 1933-37; Goben again in 1938; Newell "Shorty" Stewart, 1939-47; Foster Stutsman, 1948-50; Haskell McNight from 1951-53; J. Baker Hardy, 1954-79; Raymond W. Jones, 1979-94; Dick Kern, 1995-2007; and James Richey, 2008 to the present. Incidentally, Chief Richey is one of the youngest, if not the youngest, fire chiefs in Indiana.

The Scottsburg department is a 24-hour, seven days-a-week operation with 32 active members, six Juniors; and several auxiliary members, including some of the best cooks in the city.

Anyone who wishes to attend the celebration is more than welcome to come.

And, it should go without saying, that anyone who sees a volunteer firefighter should

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congratulate him or her on their willingness to serve the community, keeping the lamp lighted on one of Scottsburg's greatest traditions of unselfish service.