

## HISTORY OF THE FANWOOD FIRE COMPANY

At a meeting on October 6, 1890 at the office of George Kyte, the formation of a fire company was proposed, "for the mutual protection in case of conflagration or otherwise, if necessity should demand it." Temporary officers were elected and a committee formed to confer with the Central New Jersey Land Improvement Company. The committee was to ascertain what firefighting equipment could be expected from the Land Improvement Company.

The Fire Company was incorporated one week later, on October 13, 1890, a full five years before the creation of the Borough of Fanwood. The twelve charter members to sign the incorporation documents were Frank B. Anderson, Alfred D. Beeken, A.P. Downer, Walter Force, George F. Hamlin, E. M. Kempshall, George C. Miller, F.W. Quereau, Harry P. Robinson, Harry Robinson, Charles Richardson and C. W. Smith. This group of dedicated men sought to protect their community with a hand-drawn cart, loaded down with shiny buckets.

According to the minutes of an October 28, 1890, meeting the Central New Jersey Land Improvement Company (a subsidiary of the Central Railroad of New Jersey) donated the first firefighting equipment to the company. It consisted of the following: 1 hand-drawn cart, 1 gong, 1 reel and drag rope, 4 hook poles, 10 buckets, 4 brass lanterns, 1 bull's-eye lantern, 1 pull-down hook - pole rope and chain, 2 combined axes and picks, 2 combined sledges and picks, 2 side ropes, 3 ladders and 1 crank. This equipment was initially sheltered in private sheds.

Within the first six months of the formation of the company, a horse-drawn "converted farm wagon" replaced the cart. A voluntary subscription was used to pay for this wagon, with fifty-two individuals or companies having donated to the cause.

A hose, donated by a local manufacturer, was added to the wagon, and large water tanks replaced the buckets. Most of the horses belonged to the Fanwood Land Improvement Company, and when one was not available, the firemen pulled the wagon with ropes. In later years they were sometimes fortunate enough to hook the wagon to the back of an automobile. This apparatus was in use for about thirty-two years before the first motor-driven fire engine was acquired. The town's main social organization in the 1890s was the Fanwood Club on South Avenue. The Fire Company applied to the club's trustees for permission to use its grounds for fire headquarters and storage facilities. The Fanwood Club agreed to build an addition to their clubhouse and rent the first floor to the volunteers. A five-year lease was drawn up, and the facilities were rented to the Fire Company for fifty dollars a year.

In June 1891, the Land Improvement Company offered the Fire Company the use of some hose to be kept at the firehouse



*A fire company picnic was a major social event in 1897.*