

Gifts from Davis family gave Idetown its own fire company

By CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

It was in July of 1959, that a group of interested citizens, after several discussions with Sheldon Cave, met at the home of Ben Banks to discuss an offer by Albert Davis, son of Jonathan R. Davis to subscribe to the cost of a new fire truck, then approximately \$15,000, and the Jonathan R. Davis Fire Company was born. Davis also offered to let the citizens use the carriage house on his property for \$1.00 per year.

The type truck was decided on by the volunteers after several meetings in private homes and the first truck purchased was a 1959 Chevrolet pumper with a 750-gallon water capacity.

The volunteers held two meetings at the carriage house, now the site of the fire company, named in honor of the prominent banker whose summer home was in Idetown. The volunteers discussed plans to enlarge and renovate the building to include a kitchen, meeting hall and two bays to house the equipment. Much of the credit for the volunteer carpentry work was given to the late Ernest Fritz.

The November and December meetings were held in the Lehman Fire Hall and on Nov. 18, 1959, an application for a non-profit organization was filed and approved. On December 11, 1959 the charter meeting was held with the following individuals elected: Sheldon Cave, president; Edward Darby, vice president; John Hewitt, secretary; Paul Dorris, treasurer; Ben Banks, financial secretary; Willis Ide, fire chief; Harold Donnelly, assistant fire chief. Directors were Andy Lavix, Ernest Fritz, William Casterline, Harold Donnelly, Albert Sweitzer, Willis Ide, Jim Kenny, Marshall Patton and Lester Hoover.

In 1964, the company added a tanker, the cab of which was a 1964 Ford which was given to the company by Fred Maier for \$1.00. The tank itself was built by the men, who even did the necessary welding. A second tanker was added in May, 1966. In 1987, the fire company purchased a 1987 G.M.C.

Fair

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the midway.

The Lion's had a plot along the midway and decided to put up a permanent building, according to Bob Moyer, who was in charge of construction.

"We have some long term plans for here and so we thought it would be best to get something permanent," he said. "We really look forward to the fair and this is another thing we can do to help it succeed."

Another member of the Lion's Club also praised the fair. "This is something I look forward to all year," said Stanley Wojciechowski. "This is a chance to see old friends and meet new ones. More people should get involved with this great event."

Another group that spends a lot of time at the fair is the Luzerne County Sheriff's Department's Emergency Services Division. This group of people is responsible for the general public's safety and security of the fair, according to Lt. Richard Zeglin.

"We work closely with local jurisdictions to do what is necessary to keep everything safe at the fair," said Zeglin.

He said that the unit is very pleased to be in charge of the new medical facility at the fair. "We will be manning the facility and we will have paramedics and EMT's there," said Zeglin. "In the past all we were able to do was hand out band-aids but now we can apply first aid on

Doris Margellina was named chairperson to form a women's auxiliary for the fire company and it was organized in May, 1960. The auxiliary was a very active one and served many dinners in the upstairs room. In 1973, an addition was built on the fire hall and the upstairs enlarged as well.

The honor roll and flag pole which was originally located at Idetown Corners were moved to the fire company grounds in 1964 and the first horse show was held by the company in 1966. For many years the horse show in July and the Children's Christmas Party were the two big events of the year. Later the company received land across the highway from Mrs. Albert Davis where they held their annual bazaar until 1984.

The company also purchased an ambulance which served Idetown and surrounding areas until 1988, when it had to be retired due to lack of personnel.

The Idetown firemen are now in the process of holding their annual fund drive and need the support of the community more than ever. The volunteer firemen want to remind residents that letters have been sent to the residents requesting a contribution.

Any personal or financial support residents can give the company will be greatly appreciated. Due to lack of support in the past, the company had to retire the ambulance.

The old fire phone number will also be retired in September. The number 639-5336 will be disconnected as of Labor Day weekend after serving the community for 31 years. From this time on, the company will be dispatched by the Back Mountain Communications Center (675-9912). This is being done through the Back Mountain Firemen's Association out of concern for a faster, more organized response. The system has worked well above expectations and will work even better when the 911 system is installed, members feel.

The fire company also sponsors Boy Scout Troop 241, Lehman Township which meets at the fire hall every Thursday. To help raise money to keep the fire company in

the spot if necessary."

Zeglin said that the work of the sheriff's department at the fair is a full-time job. "There is nothing glamorous about this," he said. "We are here to help the public and the fair."

He said that the people on duty will do everything they can to help the public and make sure that things are safe at the fair. But he stressed, "We are not here for a show of force. We want the people of Luzerne County and the visitors who come here to have a fun and safe time." Zeglin added that if anyone violates the rules of the fair the crew will do what is necessary to quickly stop it.

"Sherrif Jagodinski completely supports our efforts and the fair," said Zeglin. "This is something we give back to the county."

The fair begins today with a very special opening ceremony as past chairpersons will be honored.

This year's General Chairman, Hugh Woodward, will be enjoying his last fair as he and his family are moving to Cincinnati. Despite the sorrow that he feels in dealing with his last fair, Woodward said that the fair is an excellent event for the area and is pleased with the way it has shaped up this year.

"It keeps getting better every year and this year things really seem to have come into place for the fair," said Woodward.

existence, the firemen and the auxiliary members have a Bingo every Wednesday beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the fire hall. They also fill swimming pools to raise money (call 675-9912) and rent out the hall and kitchen for weddings, showers, meetings, birthday and anniversary parties. For additional information on hall rental contact B. Casterline at 639-1828.

Total members on the roster presently number 45 but only about 20 are active. Officers include Rich Wentzel, president; Chick Casterline, vice president; Alice Blaine, secretary; Sandy Blaine, treasurer; financial secretary, Bill McIntosh; Fire Chief, Joseph Blaine, Assistant Fire Chief Ken Wentzel; Captain, J.R. Speri; Engineer, Gary Harrison; Assistant Engineer, Robert McLaughlin; Safety Officer, Scott Wentzel.

Becky Casterline is president and Ways & Means chairperson of the Auxiliary and also a charter member of the auxiliary. Joann Rice is vice president; Ethel Wentzel, treasurer; and Shirley Wentzel, secretary. Beth Casterline and Gladys Jennings were also original members of the auxiliary.



IDETOWN FIRE COMPANY - Included among Jonathan R. Davis Fire Company members and its Auxiliary, who take an active interest in the organization are, above, first row, from left, Jim Casterline, Shirley Wentzel holding Rick Jr., Ethel Wentzel, Becky Casterline, Joann Rice, Bill Casterline; second row, Joe Blaine, Jr., Gary Harrison Sr., Chick Casterline, Sam Harrison, Gary Harrison Jr., Mike Crain, John Jones, Richard Wentzel, president; third row, Bill McIntosh and David A. Corby III. (Post Photo/Charlot M. Denmon)



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