

# HEROES ALL

A History of Firefighting In Jacksonville, Florida

John W. Cowart

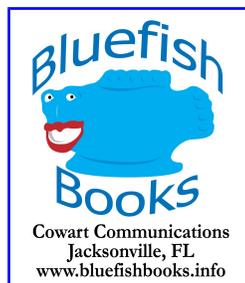
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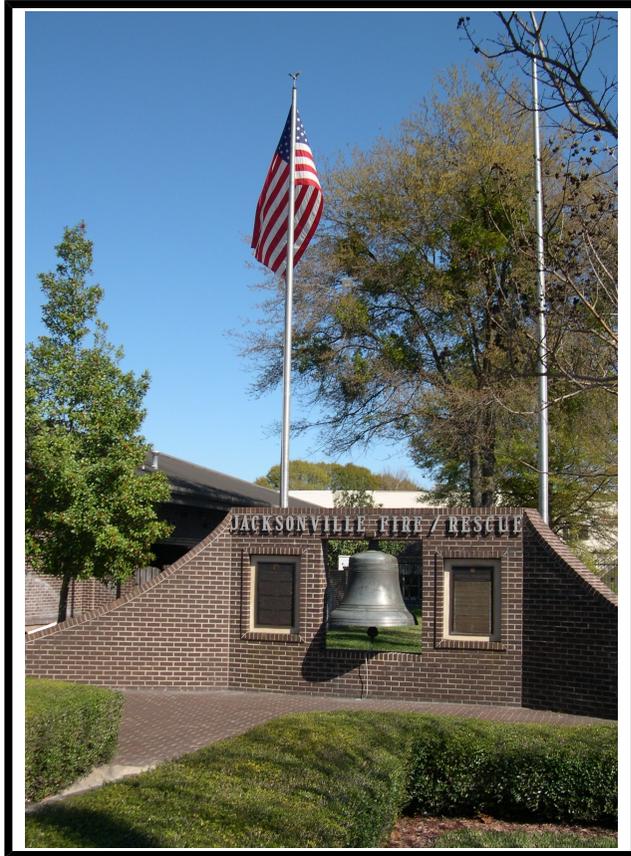
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**N.B.** Author John Cowart is not connected in any way with the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department nor with the city government. This book is sanctioned by neither body. Cowart wrote it out of his admiration for the heroic actions of Jacksonville firefighters over their long and illustrious history. Cowart has edited or written 19 books, several of them related to Jacksonville's history. He is solely responsible for the contents of this book.

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**This book is respectfully dedicated  
to the memory of  
Jacksonville's fallen firefighters  
whose names are recorded on this wall**

**God grant that the list grows no longer.**

**— jwc**

## Acknowledgements

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Lastly, my thanks to my wife, Virginia; After 40 years of marriage, she still lights my fire.

She endured the mess and clutter of stacks and piles of books and clippings all over our house as I wrote this book. I could not have researched and written this book without her encouragement and support. Honestly, Honey, I'll clean up the mess and put this stuff away as soon as the book is published.

-- JWC



## **HEROES ALL: A HISTORY OF FIREFIGHTING IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA**

In 1850, Jacksonville citizens took two crucial steps to protect the city from fire:

First, they dug three strategically located wells.

Second, they chased Samuel Gibson out of town.

The wells stayed dug.

Gibson came back two years later.

He came into town "Armed to the teeth, as if to bid defiance to the people," said a contemporary newspaper<sup>1</sup>.

Gibson was a suspected "Incendiary" as they called arsonists in those days.

He arrived back in Jacksonville on Wednesday, May 26, 1852, aboard the paddlewheel steamer *Florida*—The same ship which was to cause a major Jacksonville fire a few years later.

The docking of the *Florida* was always a major social event because the steamer brought the US Mail from all points north. It also brought news, goods, gossip and strangers into Jacksonville, which was still a small town.

Everyone turned out to see the steamer dock, to learn the latest news, to buy the newest northern goods—And to look over any newcomers.

When Gibson walked across the gangplank, local people recognized him.

They did not welcome him back.

"A warrant was immediately issued at the instigation of numerous members of the Committee of Vigilance..."

Gibson ran to a nearby house.

"Manifesting a determination not to be placed in the hands of an injured and excited people," he climbed a ladder into the attic—Then up onto the roof.

The mob surrounded the house.

The town marshal arrived on the scene.

Gibson refused to descend "No doubt feeling that with the aid of his heavily loaded revolvers he was monarch of all he surveyed."

More people gathered.

The mob threatened to demolish the house.

They chanted, "Bring him down! Bring Him Out! Anyhow! Very Soon! Immediately! Dead or Alive!"

Somebody started shooting.

Having every able-bodied man in Jacksonville, trying to shoot him off the roof "seemed to bring the man to a realizing sense of his situation," the newspaper said.

He surrendered to the Marshal for his own safety's sake.

"Little ceremony was exercised in transporting him to the public lock-up where the bird was safely caged to

await the first means of transportation from the limits of the State," a Jacksonville newspaper of the day reported.

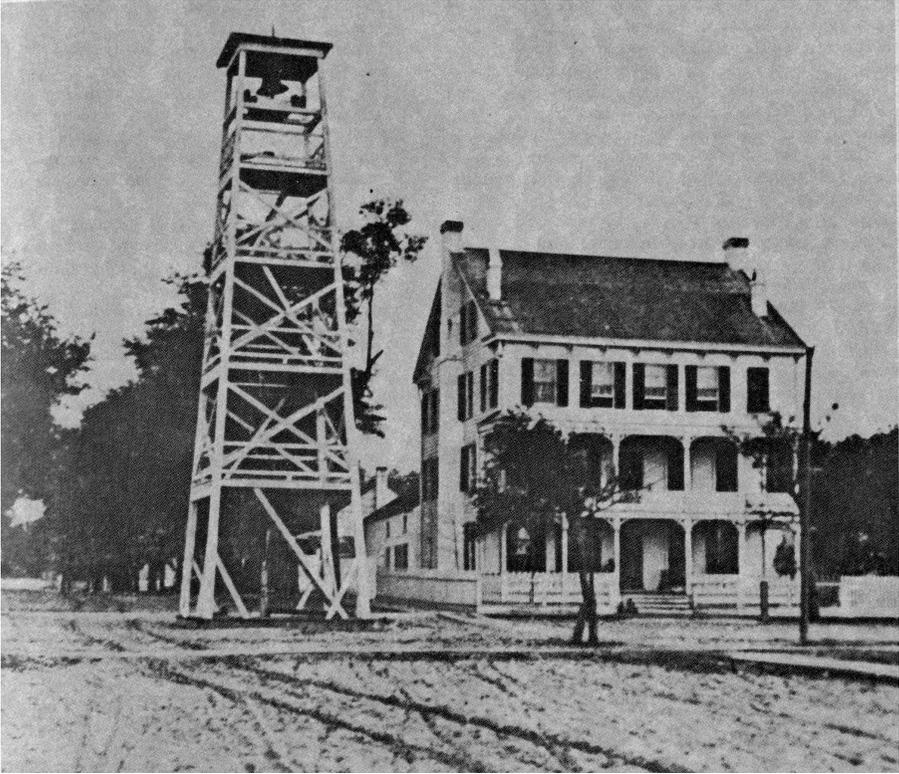
Thus, community effort had saved Jacksonville from the threat of a fire-bug.

Though not as dramatic, the three wells probably saved more lives and property from fire through community effort than did the near lynching of Samuel Gibson.

The three wells were located at the intersections of Washington and Forsyth, Forsyth and Newnan, and Newnan and Adams streets.

In those days, individual homes had their own wells for kitchen and washing, and there were a few public wells.<sup>2</sup>

The wells earmarked for fire fighting had five-story towers with alarm bells beside them with a shed where buckets and ladders were stored.



### **Early fire bell tower at a Jacksonville well**

Once, a 7-year-old girl, Lilla Longston, and some friends climbed one tower to play. When one shouted the police were coming, the children scrambled down—Except for Lilla. She stumbled, pitched between the rails, and fell four stories.

She landed in deep sand at the foot of the tower and survived. But she had learned not to play on fire towers<sup>3</sup>.

In the days of the bucket brigade, the sound of the fire alarm touched off pandemonium. All able-bodied men were expected immediately to drop whatever they might be doing, grab their buckets, and rush to the scene of the fire. Parallel lines formed from the building to the nearest well—or the river—and people passed full buckets toward the fire and empty ones back.

Often, the original site of the fire was given up and the bucket brigade concentrated on wetting down other structures to keep the fire from spreading<sup>4</sup>.

The first fire apparatus arrived in Jacksonville in 1852. It was a wheeled water pump operated by teams of men see-sawing long handles on each side.



**Example of an early hand-operated pump in the Jacksonville Fire Museum**

The new apparatus did not last long.

On April 5, 1854, while Jacksonville was in the midst of a Scarlet Fever epidemic, the *Florida*, a paddle-wheel steamer, docked at her wharf. A spark from the ship's smokestack drifted into nearby hay shed which caught fire.<sup>5</sup>

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The fire "extended with astonishing rapidity in every direction, spreading first along the block of stores on the south side of Bay Street between Newnan and Ocean," reported a local newspaper.<sup>6</sup>

Shop owners threw their inventory into the center of the street hoping to save their goods. Unfortunately, many of these riverfront businesses dealt in Naval Stores.

"The intense heat from the first block was so great that that of itself ignited the squares on the opposite side and on the east and the immense amount of goods thrown from the stores along the whole of Bay Street, formed from the same cause an immense conflagration of spirits, oil, paints, &c... Every exertion was made by the citizens, firemen, and even the ladies, who were

found here and there lending assistance to arrest the fire...

"But the fire became unmanageable, and as the intense heat extended itself, confusion and exhaustion rendered human exertion less efficient. A portion of the fire apparatus unfortunately fell into a situation which brought it in contact with the flames and it was lost," the daily paper said.

The *Florida* pulled to the middle of the river and suffered no damage. But in the city, 70 buildings were destroyed including 23 stores. "All the business portion of the town was in ruins."

Jacksonville rebuilt.

As before the fire, builders favored heart-pine walls with cypress shingle roofs—the most abundant local construction materials.

Everyone heated their homes with wood, and women cooked over massive cast-iron wood-burning stoves. Whale oil burned in lamps provided interior lighting. Incidentally, the yards around private homes contained no grass; people hoed their yards down to bare sand to make snakes easier to spot!

Is it any surprise that house fires were common--Or that the business district burned again in 1856?

The city's original 1822 charter imposed severe penalties for the careless use of fire and mandated regular sweeping of chimneys -- "Always to be done when no ash or ember glowed with the residual red-orange of heats<sup>7</sup>."

But no ordinance or effort could prevent the next fires to destroy Jacksonville; they were set deliberately.

And no one tried to put them out.

## **THE FIRES OF WAR**

War!

Northeast Florida has often seen the fires of war.

Warring tribes of Indians burned each other out before Europeans arrived. French Huguenots on St. Johns Bluff burned Indian villages. Spaniards burned out Indians and French. England's General Oglethorpe burned the Spanish. Roving cattle thieves called *Banditti* burned and pillaged plantations belonging to everybody -- all this happened in the area before there was even a town called Cowford.

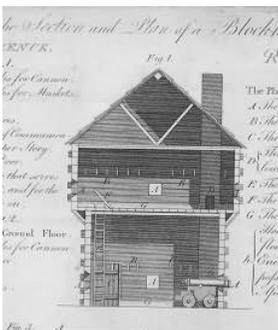
Our town's name was changed from Cowford to Jacksonville in 1822 to honor the great Indian fighter, Andrew Jackson—who never once set foot in the place.

Yet, our city was famous—sort of.

An 1843 visitor quipped:

Start a cow thief where you will;  
He'll bend his way to Jacksonville.

The nature of Jacksonville's citizens can be guessed by observing their voting record. When the issue of statehood for Florida was on the ballot, Duval County voted against it 174 to 31. Citizens in other portions of the state outnumbered the dissidents and territory of Florida became a state on March 3, 1845.



During the Seminole Wars of the 1830s and 40s, Americans burned Indian villages—when they could find them. Seminoles attacked in Mandarin, Switzerland and Baldwin.

Terrified, the citizens of Jacksonville built a blockhouse at Ocean and Monroe streets.

Indians never attacked the city proper, but outlying farms suffered.

When the Rev. Tilman D. Peurifoy, a Methodist circuit rider, returned home to his farm from preaching the gospel of peace, he discovered a horror.

In a letter dated Feb. 12, 1839, he described what he found:

"My precious children, Lorick, Pierce and Elizabeth, were killed and burned up in the house. My dear wife was shot, stabbed and stamped, seemingly to death, in the yard.

"But after the wretches went to pack up their plunder, she revived, and crawled off from the scene of death to suffer a thousand deaths during the dreadful night which she spent alone by the side of a pond bleeding at four bullet holes and more than a half dozen stabs—three deep gashes to the bone one her head, and three stabs through the ribs, besides a number of smaller cuts and bruises.

"She is yet living and O help me pray that she may still live... Pray for me. When I think of the wickedness of the people of this country, the flood of vice that sweeps over the land from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico, I cannot be surprised that it streams with blood; but why this upon my precious family I am not able to resolve<sup>8</sup>."

## **THE FIRES OF CIVIL WAR**

Jacksonville had served as a military supply depot during the Indian Wars and when the Civil War came, both sides realized its strategic importance.

When Confederate forces realized the city would fall to the Yankee invaders, they torched the city, burning any materials they thought the enemy would find useful.

Calvin Robinson, a Vermont native, owned lumber yards, dry goods stores, foundry, and property all over Jacksonville. He sympathized with the yankee invaders. After the war he wrote about his experiences.

As enemy gunboats approached the mouth of the St Johns, Confederate defenders realized that they did not have sufficient fire power to hold the city.

Robinson<sup>9</sup> described what happened:

*A large number of the ruffian portion of the population — consisting of members of the vigilant Committee, men who had little or no property to be burned, insisted on burning the town, and that everybody 'should flee to the country. Now the wildest excitement prevailed. Every sort of vehicle was pressed into service hurrying household goods and merchandise towards the depot, and families . . . were hurrying off in the greatest haste. This panic extended to nearly all of the Southern population; but most of the Northern citizens and some of the large property holders among the Southern people objected to leaving the city, and even drove some of the most sanguine advocates of the burning from the city. But in the midst of all of this excitement there were a few citizens who were particularly unmoved, though threatened with vengeance if they stayed. There was no terror in those gunboats or the Old Flag to them. . . . Oh, did they struggle to keep from shouting aloud for joy.*

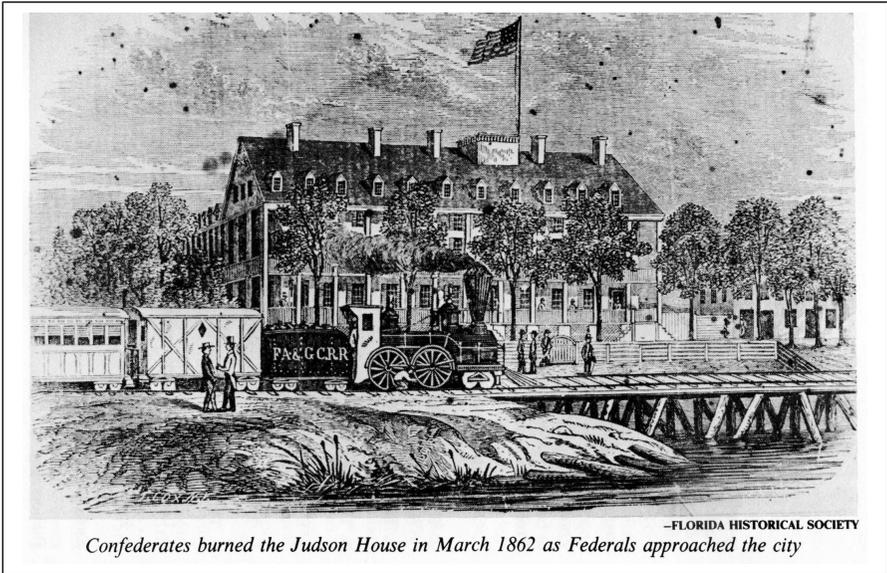
Southern defenders of the city strove to rescue an almost finished Southern gunboat in a Jacksonville shipyard. Historian Richard Martin<sup>10</sup> tells what happened:

*A grim drama was being enacted at the East Bay Street shipyard, where Commander Farrand and his men had been rushing their gunboat to completion. With her machinery newly installed and her decking almost completed, the much-needed gunboat was only three weeks from completion, but because she sat high in her stocks on dry land, there was no way to launch her and try to tow her out of harm's way before the Federals arrived. She would have to be blown up or burned. Waiting until the last possible moment, Farrand finally gave the necessary orders, and around 9 P.M. on March 9, torches were applied to the gunboat's hull.*

*And so the war came to Jacksonville - not with glory or heroics in the face of shot and shell, but with the crackle and roar of a spoiling fire and the silence of retreating troops. These events were to be the harbinger of even worse things to come....*

*The Judson House Hotel...registered an unusual assortment of guests, among them several officers with a "Special Battalion, C.S.A.," that had marched into Jacksonville early that morning with astonishing orders from General Trapier. Their mission: To destroy the strategic facilities and supplies in the city to deny their use to the approaching Federals. Shortly before noon that day, about 500 men of the Special Battalion under command of Major Charles Hopkins, formed a square at the railroad depot, located at the present-day intersection of Clay and Adams streets.*

*There, the troops were briefed on their primary mission, to destroy sawmills and stockpiles of lumber. In addition, the foundries and machine shops at both ends of Bay Street were to be burned, along with the railroad depot. But the men were expressly forbidden to molest civilians or damage properties other than those designated. The briefing took place in full view of (Hotel clerk) Keenes and some of the hotel guests, who were watching from the upper piazza and windows. The railway depot, already a focal point of activity for refugees, now attracted even larger crowds who began to mill about in a state of near frenzy. When it was verified that the soldiers were in town to destroy strategically valuable private property, some of which belonged to Southerners, agitators rose to the occasion, demanding to know why Southerners should lose all they owned and Unionists remain in possession of the town with their property intact?"*



—FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*Confederates burned the Judson House in March 1862 as Federals approached the city*

The Confederate troops allowed civilians 24 hours to gather what possessions they could save and flee.

A wanted man, Calvin Robinson grabbed his wife and children, grabbed a table cloth to wrap bread and what cold cooked provisions that were at hand, and made for a boat. They escaped just yards ahead of the Confederate troops and hid in an abandoned cabin on the South bank of the river..

*Telling of their escape from Jacksonville, he said, An hour or so afterward . . . we were startled by the sudden illumination of the surrounding woods, and on looking out discovered that the Confederates had begun their work of burning the steam mills in the neighborhood of Jacksonville. One, which stood on that side of the river where we had taken refuge seemed to have been first set on fire. There were eight or ten of these mills, with millions of feet of sawn lumber, within sight of where we stood. Soon, all of these were in flames and their light reflected back from the sky, then overcast with heavy clouds, was a fearful sight to look upon. The whole heavens seemed like billows of flames. That was a hideous night!.*

The Confederate troops set fire to the Judson House at 8 p.m. on March 11, 1862.

At 1 p.m. the following day the yankees occupied the city.

But, at 6 a.m. on April 10<sup>th</sup>, the yankee troops and gunboats abandoned Jacksonville taking Robinson and other northern sympathizers with them.

They had occupied the city less than a month.

When the Yankees left, they burned anything they thought the Rebels might need.



**Brick chimneys remain along Forsyth Street after yankees burned the area.**

The city see-sawed back and forth between opposing armies several times.

Dr. Alfred Walton, medical officer of the Eight Maine Regiment, kept a diary during his tour of duty in Jacksonville, the third Federal occupation of the city.

Here is one of his diary entries:

*"Sunday, March 29, 1863: Before we were ready to embark, the boys began to set fire to the city, and soon we had to hurry up for the smoke was getting rather uncomfortable. On my way down (to the wharf) I ran into St. Johns church and groping through the smoke and fire I took from the altar a large guilt-bound prayer book ... Farther down I saw some (soldiers) setting fires*

*and from their songs and shouting they appeared to be having a good time<sup>11</sup>."*

Unlike some yankee looters, Dr. Walton returned the stolen church property after the war.

A correspondent for the *New York Tribune* newspaper viewed the troops' burning of the city from the transport ship *Boston* anchored in the St. Johns:

"From this upper deck the scene presented to the spectator is one of most fearful magnificence. On every side dense clouds of black smoke are seen. A fine south wind is blowing immense blazing cinders right into the heart of the city.

"The beautiful Spanish moss, drooping so gracefully from the long avenues of splendid oaks has caught fire and as far as the eye can reach, through these once pleasant streets, nothing but sheets of flame can be seen, running up with the rapidity of lightning to the tops of the trees and then darting off to the smallest branches.

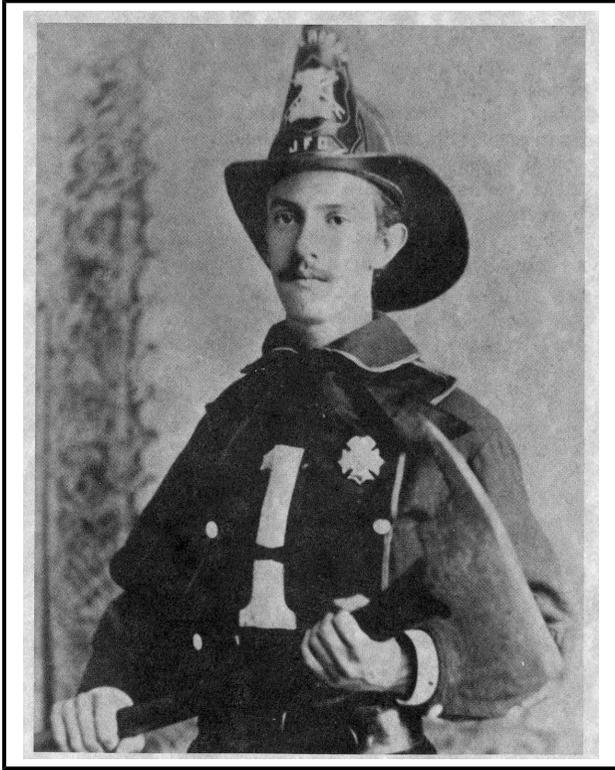
"The whole city is being lapped up and devoured by this fiery blast.

"One solitary woman, a horse tied to a fence between two fires, and a lean, half-starved dog are the only living inhabitants to be seen on the streets.

"Is this not war, vindictive, unrelenting war?"<sup>12</sup>

**MA Y 7, 1861** Our cities and towns have been occupied and sacked, our fields laid waste, our servants stolen and corrupted, our subsistence destroyed, our citizens killed, and the flaming roofs of their homes have lighted helpless women and children on the way to exile and destitution.

THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR



Early Jacksonville Firefighter

## **VOLUNTEERS TO THE RESCUE 1868 to 1886**

Finally the Civil War ended.

Jacksonville started over.

"The general condition of the country coming under the jurisdiction of this post is prosperous," wrote Col John T. Sprague, the yankee military governor of Florida, who was in Jacksonville.

"The freedmen are working faithfully and industriously. There is a large class from the North who are seeking investments in lands and sawmills. The citizens belonging to the city are laboring to obtain a living and to collect what little remains of their property after a desolating war."<sup>13</sup>

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Many of the buildings burned in the war were rebuilt  
—With a difference.

"Bay street was lined a portion of the way with creditable brick stores, two, and in a few cases, three stories high... The principal business was the lumber business... By 1875, three large hotels had been built here and about every fourth house was a boarding house. The railroad accommodations were two incoming and two outgoing passenger trains daily... A lot on Bay Street in the business part of town was valued at \$10 a front foot."<sup>14</sup>

Sailing ships and steamers filled the river. They carried lumber north from the renovated Jacksonville sawmills.

"These vessels usually came South 'in ballast'. This ballast consisted of red brick, field stone or mined granite and river (or lake) ice... The brick were quite hard, dark red, and were used largely for sidewalks and also for a few residences and of course 'downtown' store and warehouse buildings."<sup>15</sup>

Having buildings constructed of brick instead of heart pine improved the city's fire protection; however, as the buildings grew taller, bucket brigades became impractical.

New equipment and better organization was needed to protect the city from fire.

January 10, 1868, brought a new era to Jacksonville firefighting; the Friendship Hook and Ladder Company, the city's first volunteer fire company, was formed.

The Mechanics Steam Fire Engine Co. was organized on February 3, 1870.

They purchased a new steam fire engine capable of throwing a stream of water 200 ft. at a rate of 250 gals. per minute. It was the first piece of apparatus of its type in the state.

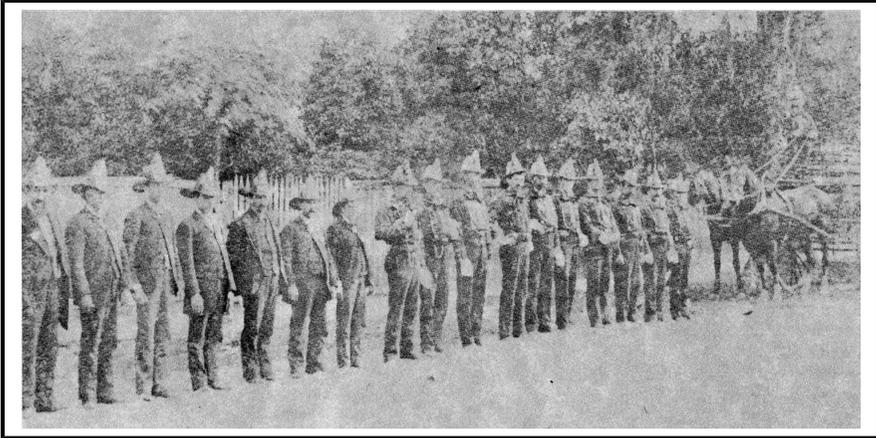
The Mechanics fire house was located on Adams between Main and Laura Streets. The Engine Co. listed

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their officers as Foreman T.E. Buckman; 1st Asst. Foreman, James C. Crews; 2nd Asst. Foreman, C. Mahoney; and Engineer, P.T. Crowley.

On May 5, 1870, the Aetna Steam Fire Engine Co. took over the quarters of the Friendship Hook and Ladder Co. at Forsyth and Ocean streets.



**A Volunteer Jacksonville Company of the 1800s**

Each volunteer company was a separate unit within the umbrella organization of the Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department. They cooperated to a certain extent—But competition was fierce.

In the early part of 1870, there was a reorganization of the volunteer fire department of the city. The new leaders were Chief William Baya; 1st Asst. Chief, A. Zacharias; 2nd Asst. Chief Seymore Hovey; and A.J. Russell, Chairman of the Fire Dept. Board.

The reorganization of the Volunteers failed the test on December 19, 1870.

That night, fire broke out in a wooden building on a wharf off Bay Street. between Pine (now called Main Street) and Laura streets. The building housed a grain and hay warehouse and a mattress factory.

In no time, burning tufts of mattress stuffing and bits of flaming hay and straw carried to other structures.

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The fire gutted several blocks along Bay St. including the offices of the *Florida Union* newspaper, Columbus Drew's Book Store and the hardware stores of S.B. Hubbard and R.T. Masters.

Jacksonville rebuilt.

By 1871, Jacksonville boasted of six volunteer fire companies: Friendship Hook & Ladder Co., Mechanics Steam Fire Engine Co., Aetna Steam Fire Engine Co., Alert Hose Co., Phoenix Hose Co., and the Americus Hook & Ladder Co.

Officers were: A.J. Russell ,Chief Engineer, and Chairman of the Fire Board; T.H. Willard, First Assistant.

Mechanics Steam Fire Engine Co., T.E. Buckman, Foreman; Aetna Steam Fire Engine Co., J.J. Holland, Foreman; Alert Hose Co., Bryon Oaks, Foreman; Phoenix Hose Co., H.A. L'Engle, Foreman; Americus Hook & Ladder Co., Joseph Margych, Foreman; and Mechanics Hose Co., William Margych, Foreman.

The volunteers soon proved their worth as a March 25, 1871, letter from Chief Albert Russel shows:

**Firemen of Jacksonville,**

Your Chief cannot refrain from congratulating, as well as complimenting you upon the heroic and effective manner in which you discharged your duties last night at the burning of Harely & Co's. Mill.

You have established beyond the shadow of a doubt your heroism and effectiveness as a Fire Department, and your City should be Proud of you."

Another undated letter is addressed to the Friendship and Mechanics Fire Company, and the Alert and Phoenix Hose Companies:

**Gentlemen:**

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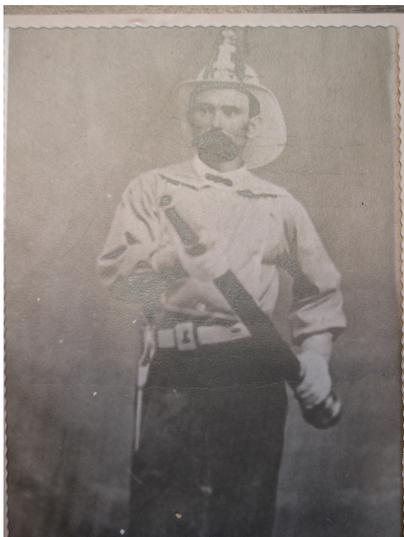
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Allow us hereby to tender you our thanks for the gallant and victorious manner in which you fought the devouring element last night.

By the promptness with which you arrived, over the heavy roads, at the scene of the fire, and the well-directed energy which you displayed, a large amount of property has been saved from destruction, and a feeling of security established in the hearts of our citizens..."

But volunteer fire companies did more than fight fires.

Nationally and locally, membership in a volunteer fire company was a badge of honor and a source of pride. Sons often followed their fathers in the tradition.



Micheal Joseph Slattery (left) served as a member of the Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department between 1890 and 1901.

His son, George Henry Slattery, became a member of the Jacksonville Fire Department in 1903 and served at Station One, Ocean and Adams streets, operating horse-drawn numbers.

Since members paid for their own uniforms and equipment, it took a substantial citizen to afford membership in a volunteer fire company. Some

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companies restricted their membership to the community's leading, most eminent, socially prominent citizens<sup>16</sup>.

The distinctive company names gave members a great sense of identity. You were somebody when you could say you were a member of the Mechanics; at one time, Jacksonville's mayor, chief of police, marshal, and several members of the City Council, all were Mechanics. They owed their political office to the fact that they were!<sup>17</sup>

Every young man aspired to become a member of a volunteer company. Where else could a bank clerk rub elbows with a bank president as an equal?

"Before anybody realized it, the volunteer firefighter had become a uniquely American institution. Nowhere in the world was there anything like him.," said Paul C. Ditzel, author of many firefighting history books.

"The firehouse was his private club. Firefighters carpeted their bunkrooms and meeting rooms, planted gardens, put in libraries, and hung pictures—All the better if these showed the men at their flamboyant best. There were more amenities at the local firehouse than in their drab homes, and the volunteers had all the more reason to congregate there for camaraderie, a few songs, and reminiscences of fires fought...

"Once accepted, he became a member of what would later be called The Establishment. Friendships forged at fires were stepping stones to better jobs, higher social standing, and political office. No longer was a man an anonymous bench worker doing humdrum work in some dingy shop<sup>18</sup>".

Shared dangers in fighting fires, the social atmosphere of the firehouse, the feeling of belonging, all knitted the men into a proud brotherhood, a political force, and a fiercely competing unit.

Companies strived to out do each other.

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They sported resplendent uniforms during annual parades.

On July 4, 1876—The day the United States became 100 years old—Firemen scheduled a spectacular parade.

The Alerts wore blue shirts, white pants, plenty of brass buttons and topped the outfits off with white straw hats. Flowers and a Centennial Flag decorated their hose cart.

They even chained a wild cat to the top!

Crowds lining the parade route cheered and ladies waved white lace handkerchiefs.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

In the middle of the festivities, the fire alarm sounded.

A hotel fire!

Fire companies broke ranks and rushed to the Seaview Hotel, by then a mass of flames.

A 17-year-old girl, Ella Knowles, screamed from a forth-floor window; she was trapped by the flames.

Firemen raised a ladder, but the girl panicked.

"She leaped into space. Her body thudded into the ground before the horrified crowd. Miraculously, she survived her terrible injuries.<sup>19</sup>

Other parades—Though not with such dramatic ends—were just as spectacular.

The makeup of the 1882 parade<sup>20</sup> was:

Americus Hook and Ladder Co.: 16 men marched pulling their brand new truck wearing green helmets, red shirts and black pantaloons.

Next came the Mechanics Steam Fire Engine & Hose Co.: 22 men sporting red helmets, red shirts and black pantaloons. They marched beside their brightly polished Silsby engine and hose jumper.

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"The Silsby engine was of the rotary design as opposed to the piston or reciprocating type pumps used by other manufacturers. This simpler construction was thought to make the engines more trouble-free and produce less friction loss in the hose. The Silsby firm and its successor, the American Fire Engine Co., sold more than eight hundred engines<sup>21</sup>.

Twelve pieces of the Jacksonville Cornet Band marched next in the parade.

The Alert Hose Company, 14 men, followed. They wore red helmets, blue shirts and black pantaloons.

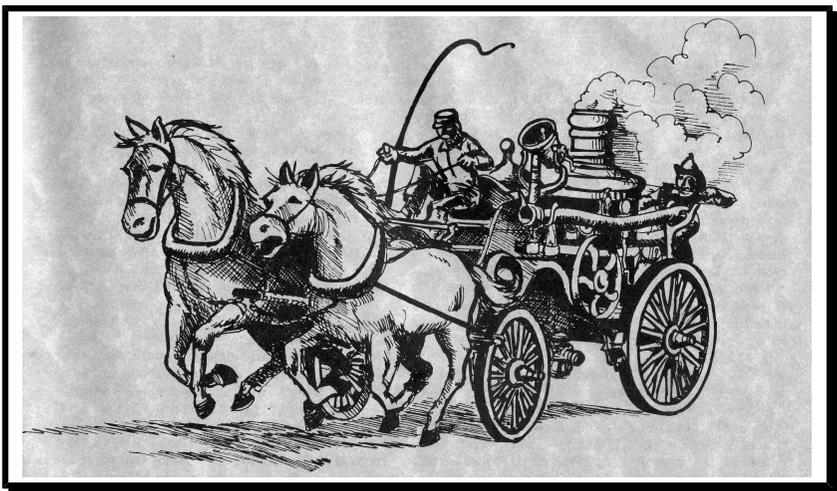
The 16 men of the Aetna Hose Company drew a new Silsby hose carriage.

The 22 black firefighters of the Duval Fire Engine & Hose Company wore red helmets, red shirts and red pantaloons. They drew "an old fashioned hand engine and a nearly-new hose jumper."

Often events at the annual parade included contests of skill between rival companies. Teams of men worked hand pumps with all their might to see which team could squirt a column of water highest, fastest, farthest.

Water was a problem for firefighters in those days.

So were horses.



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"When an alarm was sounded from one of the city's fire bell towers, the volunteers had to borrow horses to pull their equipment before they could respond.

"When there were no horses available, the men had to tug their engines by hand—a procedure that often bogged down in the sand of the city streets.

"Once on the scene, if they arrived in time, the firemen had to find a water source within reach of their hoses... Bucket brigades might be useful as a last resort while the powerful fire engines stood by idly, but hand-hauled pails of water were no longer adequate in a city where multi-storied buildings were becoming standard<sup>22</sup>."

When the newly-built St. Luke's Hospital caught fire, just a few days before it was scheduled to open, firemen faced the same dilemma:

"The first volunteer unit answering the alarm on July 23 (1876), the only horse-powered unit in town, went in the wrong direction and then its engine bogged down in Bay Street sand.

"The horses were whipped to a frenzy in an attempt to pull the engine free. This broke the harness...

"Other volunteer units managed to get to the scene with firemen substituting for horses—Pushing and pulling their engines as best they could...

"Two units did get to the fire in time to play their hoses on it.

"Their efforts were futile.

"It was later explained that even if all the fire engines arrived promptly, only one of the pumpers could have been used since the only source of water was the St. Johns River, and from the point where the hospital stood at that time, it would have taken all the hose of the various companies strung together to reach the river<sup>23</sup>."

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**St Luke's Hospital rebuilt n 1878 on Palmetto Street**

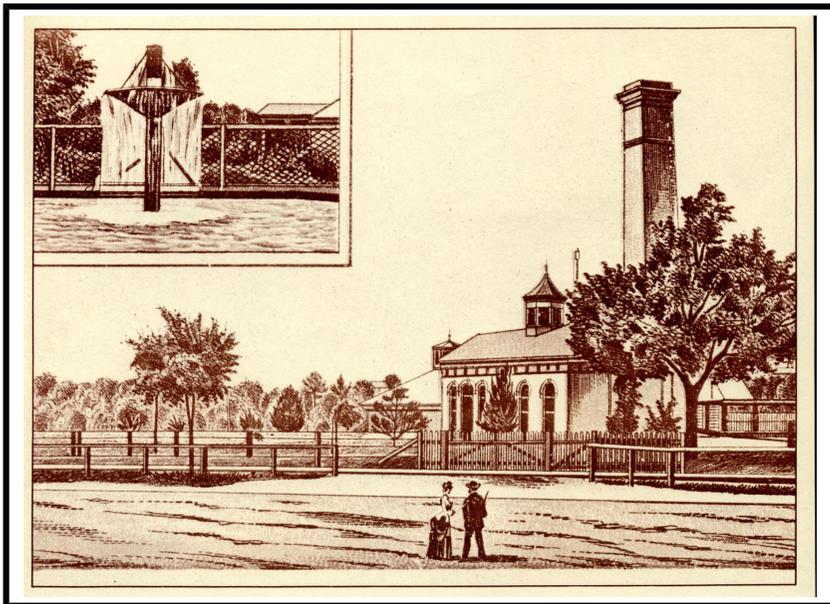
Just about every two or so years, fire continued to wipe out Jacksonville's downtown business district all during the 19th century.

On December 30, 1877, six homes burned to the ground at the intersection of Hogan and Union streets. March 18, 1881, the Post Office, the Federal Court, 250 bales of high-grade tobacco, and a store of dynamite and ammunition, all went up in flames and threatened the entire city. December 2, 1882, the steamboat *Volusia* exploded while docked downtown rocking the city. Hart's Grain Elevator caught fire in November, 1884, and threatened to burn the city. The death of a volunteer firefighter in December, 1885, spurred the city council into creating a paid professional department.

The city finally realized that a water supply was a must.

Jacksonville's Water Works opened on April 26, 1881. The system included 92 fire hydrants, "whereby an inexhaustible supply of creek water was channeled through water works pumps for firefighting purposes during extraordinary emergencies." It was able to supply 1,250,00 gallons of water daily.

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**Springfield Waterworks, Main Street at Hogan's Creek, in  
1881**

Also, the city's first fire-alarm telegraphy system was installed. Six miles of wire connected a 40-cell battery to 15 alarm boxes and eight bells....

But. fire plugs caused trouble.

It was a matter of pride for the volunteers to be the company to get "first water" on a fire.

"One day I was standing near Ocean and Ashley streets when a fire alarm was turned in from the neighborhood. When the fire department arrived, they found a man with his arms wrapped around the fire plug, trying to hold the fort until his company got there!" said William Hawley, a Jacksonville resident of the 1880s<sup>24</sup>.

When an alarm sounded, the biggest meanest man in the company would race to the plug closest to the fire and guard it for his company's use. This happened all over the country and gave rise to a new word in the language—Plug-ugly.

In some places, fights broke out between rival companies battling over use of a plug. While the

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building burned, the firemen slugged it out in the streets.

Bystanders often looted the homes while they burned and the firemen fought each other.

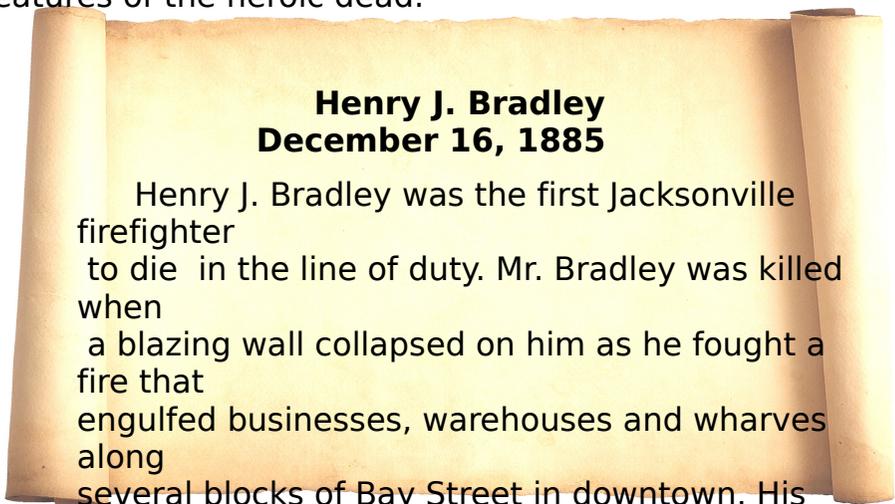
"The insurance companies had a patrol system, or salvage system," Hawley said.

Insurance patrols with wagon loads of tarpaulins followed the fire companies to a blaze. They carried out household goods or merchandise and covered it with the tarps and stood guard while the firemen put out the blaze, he said.

Water did not help with the worst fire of 1882. In fact, water and fire combined in the disaster when the steamboat *Volusia* exploded.

Then, on December 16, 1885, Henry J. Bradley became the first Jacksonville fireman to die in the line of duty. A fire broke out in the downtown area with several blocks of businesses, warehouses and wharves burning. As Bradley fought to save Jacksonville, a blazing wall collapsed on him.

At Bradley's funeral, "Many citizens filed past the casket to look for the last time on the calm and silent features of the heroic dead."



**Henry J. Bradley**  
**December 16, 1885**

Henry J. Bradley was the first Jacksonville firefighter to die in the line of duty. Mr. Bradley was killed when a blazing wall collapsed on him as he fought a fire that engulfed businesses, warehouses and wharves along several blocks of Bay Street in downtown. His death led to a movement among Jacksonville's insurance

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companies

that had suffered losses in the fire to create a paid fire department. On July 15, 1886, the City Council created the Jacksonville Fire Department.



Public sentiment over Bradley's death and pressure from insurance companies forced the Jacksonville City Commission to consider a professional paid fire department. Insurance companies complained about losses and raised their rates a whopping 25 per cent!

*A Times-Union* editorial said:

"The protection of such vast interests as are now imperiled by fire in Jacksonville should not be left to the volunteer efforts of men who are already busy with their own affairs and who have no time to acquire the proficiency that comes alone from discipline and drill...

"Nothing that we have said is to be interpreted as endorsing the insurance company president's attack upon the Jacksonville firemen.

"Everyone who witnessed their efforts on that anxious night admits that they worked with a zeal and energy worthy of a much better reward than any they are likely to get.

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"But we believe Jacksonville has outgrown the period when the protection of its vast property can be safely left to volunteers who get nothing in the way of pay and little in the way of thanks<sup>25</sup>."

Although The Mechanics lingered (mostly as a political/social organization) until their firehouse burned while they were away fighting another fire. That was on August 18, 1891—a store of dynamite exploded at Ocean and Adams and burned all the way down to the river. The colorful day of the volunteer fireman was over in Jacksonville.

## Early Firefighting Equipment



**When thrown at the base of a fire, this glass grenade broke releasing flame retardant chemical.**





**Hook & Ladder # 1**



**Hose Wagon # 2**



**Combination Wagon # 1**



**1806 Pumper**

## **PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS**

Peter Jones, a former six-term mayor of Jacksonville, became the first chief of the paid fire department on July 15, 1886.

Jones lived at Main and Beaver streets. The city had paved Main Street by laying layers of palmetto leaves over the sand. Jones rode a pony to answer alarms; he was so tall his feet plowed furrows through the palmettos!



### **Chief 1886-1891**

**Peter Jones**, a former alderman and six-term mayor, became the city's first chief to lead a professional fire department. Previously, firefighting efforts in the city were

**Chief Peter Jones**  
July 15, 1886-Jan. 22, 1891

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performed by volunteers. Paid \$125 a month, Jones lead a department with 20 officers and men housed in three stations, including one, Station 3, in which all personnel were African-Americans. Jones died of pneumonia, which the newspaper at the time said he "contracted in the direct line of duty."

The total manpower of the division was 20 officers and men divided into three hose companies, one steamer and one hook and ladder. The core city covered approximately 39 square miles.

The companies were located at 100 East Forsyth, Station One (this was the original site of the Aetna Company's fire house); Main & Ashley, Station Two; and in the 500 block of East Bay Street, Station Three.

Chief Jones earned \$125 a month; his assistant chief, \$75. A foreman received \$50 a month; privates, \$45; and substitutes, \$40.

Each man had to buy his own helmet and uniform.

Work demanded that regulars be on duty 24 hours a day with 30 minutes for lunch and dinner. If a man wanted to take a day off, he was responsible for finding someone willing to work in his place.

The new, improved Jacksonville Fire Department even had horses to pull the equipment. Chief Jones estimated that equipment and food for the horses would cost \$2,300 more a year than the salaries of all department personnel.

The first call for the new department sounded on July 21, 1886—A false alarm. The first real alarm came in on August 10th.

The whistle at the water works—Called Big Jim—sounded the alarm for all fires; the number of blasts signaled which section of the city the fire was in. Because there was not normally sufficient pressure in the lines, when Big Jim blew, the water works engineer increased it by 30 pounds.

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Insurance companies arranged a test for the fledgling fire department the year after it was founded. Jacksonville historian Richard Martin described it:

"On April 19 (1887), at the request of representatives of the Southeastern Tariff Association, Springfield Fire and Marine Insurance Company of Columbia, the Southern Board of Fire Underwriters, and the Continental Insurance of New York, the Jacksonville Fire Department staged special exhibition drills.

"An alarm was sent in from Box 23 at the corner of Hogan and Duval Streets at a few minutes past 8 o'clock.

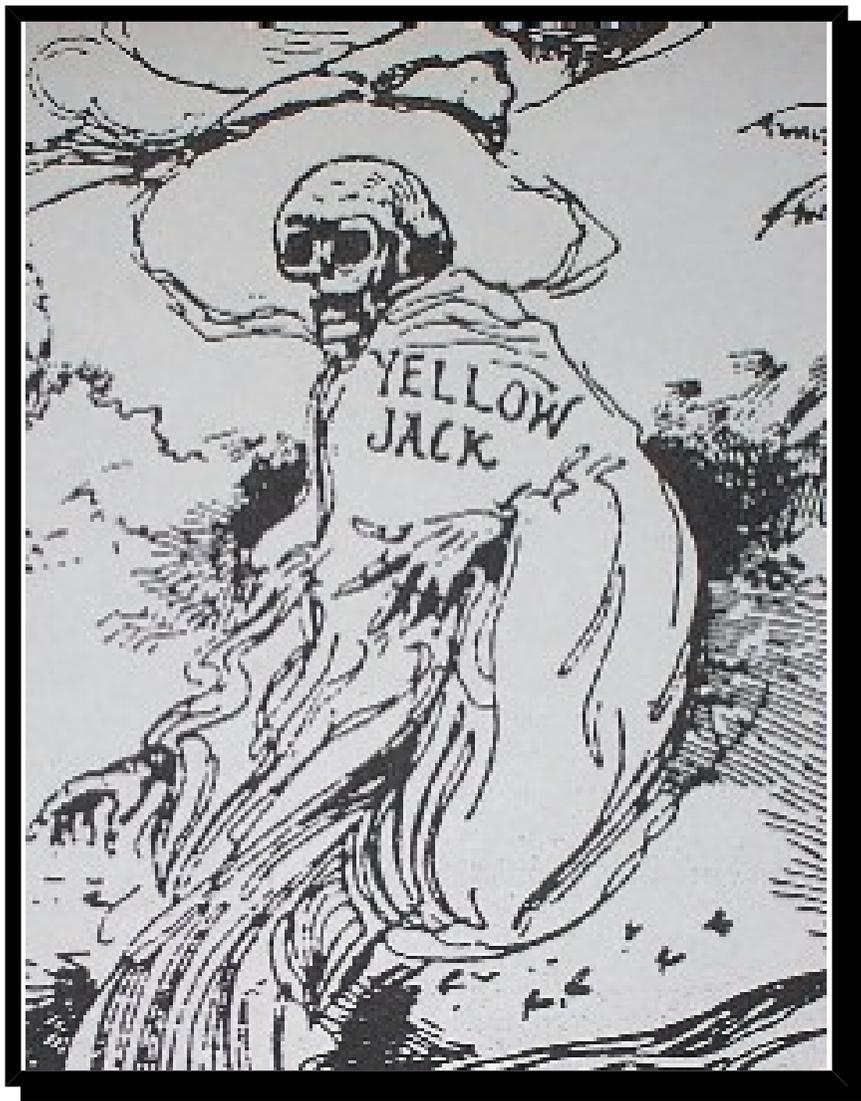
The chief arrived in 35 seconds, the Western Division in one minute and 15 seconds, the hook and ladder truck in one minute and 40 seconds, and the Central Division in one minute and 30 seconds.

"The first stream of water was turned on in two minutes, and the second stream five seconds later.

"The insurance officials expressed unqualified admiration of the department's efficiency and allowed additional rate reductions that amounted to a \$30,000 annual savings to Jacksonville property owners and businessmen<sup>26</sup>." The professional fire department was paying its own way already!

Strange duty faced firemen during the summer of 1888 -- building fires to chase Yellow Jack out of the city.

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**An 1888 Newspaper Cartoon Shows Yellow Jack Hovering Above Jacksonville; he wears a sombrero because people thought he came from Cuba.**

Yellow Jack was the personification of yellow fever. No one living at the time knew what caused the epidemic and people believed that fires purified the air. Barrels of tar were placed on city street corners and ignited. A pall of smoke hung over Jacksonville as over 400 citizens died because of the dread killer.

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One of the first people Yellow Jack killed was a city fireman. Mrs. Caroline P. Standing, matron of St. Luke's Hospital in 1888, described his death:

"One of the most pitiable instances of the epidemic occurred in the morning (of August 25) on Forsyth Street when William Craugh was found sick in the middle of the street, in the last stages of the fever. He was lying prostrate, with his head down; his face red and yellow, showing the marked characteristics of the fever. He was partially delirious and apparently in a dying condition, with symptoms of the fatal black vomit.

"He was a fireman at the Central Station ...

"Feeling the increase of the fever, he endeavored to return to the station for help...<sup>27</sup> "

Craugh died the next morning.

A *New York Times* correspondent, trapped in Jacksonville, described life inside the quarantined city:

"The streets are silent and deserted. Every store is closed and a person might walk a dozen blocks without meeting two white persons. The very stillness in the midst of so much seeming life is very oppressive, and a sense of loneliness and sadness will creep over one as he walks through the city...

"On such a day as this Jacksonville resembles a city of the dead more than of the living. The immense big oaks, with their great branching limbs draped in funeral moss, seem like gaunt specters guarding the habitations of the dead... the desolation that prevails is overpowering....

"A number of deaths were reported up to noon and the condition of a great number of the sick was very unfavorable. The circle is gradually narrowing on those of us still left here unscathed and every morning as the little circle of friends and acquaintances greet one another, the first question is "Who now has gone"?...

"Bay-street was covered anew with lime to-day...<sup>28</sup>"

There follows a death roll of 74 names for the 24 hours ending at 6 p.m., September 16<sup>th</sup>.

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Yellow Jack controlled Jacksonville until the first freeze of the winter killed city mosquitoes, the—then unknown—vector of the disease.

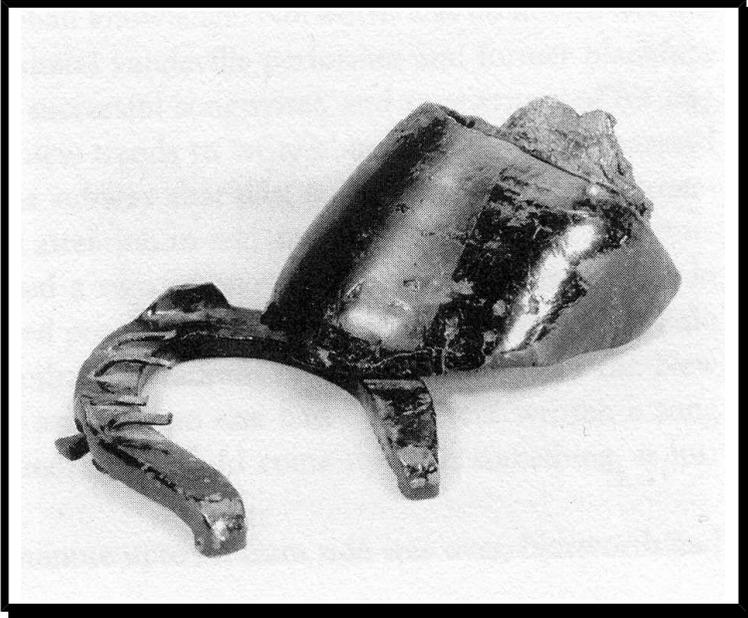
Chief Peter Jones died on January 22, 1891; John H. Stephens replaced him.



Chief J.H. Stevens  
Jan. 22, 1891-Sept. 5, 1892

### **Chief 1891-1892**

**John H. Stephens** resigned a year and seven months into his job as fire chief to take a better paying job as a contracting agent with the Florida Central and Peninsular railroad. He had previously worked for the Savannah, Florida and Western railway. As fire chief, he was credited with taking the department to a higher state of equipment and discipline



**The severed hoof of Fire Horse # 12**

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## A Valiant Horse

On March 28, 1890, news came out of Washington, D.C. that touched the hearts of firemen in Jacksonville and all the nation—News about a nameless fire horse, known only as Horse # 12.

It was called Horse 12 because it was hitched to Post 12 at District of Columbia Fire Department's Engine Company Three.

At 1:30, a.m. a house fire broke out at the home of Richard Hayne, 1011 Sixth Street Southwest between K and L streets. A policeman rang the alarm in from Call Box 415.

Fireman at Engine Company Three harnessed the teams to the steam pumper engine and to a hose carriage to respond. As they raced to the fire, at a railroad crossing, the pumper and the hose wagon sideswiped each other.

The pumper filled with water and breathing steam, ran over the foot of Horse # 12 severing the horse's hoof.

Horse # 12 raced on, pulling the wagon filled with essential fire hoses for another half a mile.

Horse #12 ran over the cobblestone streets on three legs and bone protruding from the bloody stump of its forth.

Firemen deployed their hoses and stopped the blaze with only one person killed.

Then they realized what Horse #12 had done.

As the horse suffered terribly, District of Columbia Fire Department Chief Parris ordered it put down.

“Never since I have been in the fire department, and I have seen twenty-five years' service, were my sympathies so appealed to as last night when I ordered



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that horse killed. Truly he had more grit and sagacity than any horse I ever saw," he said.

In memory of Horse #12's courage and devotion to duty, the D.C. Fire Department entered the horse high on its Roll Of Honor.

Someone at the scene recovered the severed hoof, It is on display at the National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.<sup>29</sup>



## **A PROGRESSIVE DEPARTMENT LEADER**

On September 9, 1892, Capt. Thomas W. Haney came from the Atlanta Fire Department to become Jacksonville's third chief.

He ushered in a new era.

At night, the windows of Jacksonville homes glowed with the soft warm flicker of kerosene lamps. While they improved lighting; they increased danger.

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Chief T.W. Haney  
Sept. 5, 1892-Jan. 1, 1926

## Chief 1892-1926

**Thomas W. Haney** left the Atlanta Fire Department, where he was a captain, to become the department's third chief. Haney led an effort to acquire a better alarm system for the town as well as an improved water works system. He said in 1895 that if a fire started in Jacksonville and got a good headway, "ten chances to one, it would sweep everything in its path." Haney was still chief when the Great Fire of 1901 burned the city to the ground. He wasn't blamed and remained chief

for another quarter of a century. At one point he was the highest paid official in the city, earning \$2,400 a year, twice that of the mayor and police chief. In 1913, he was elected president of the International Association of Fire Engineers.

Headlines in the Sunday, March 31, 1895, *Florida Times-Union* read:

**QUEER CAUSE OF FIRE  
THREE BUILDINGS BURNED BECAUSE OF PETTY ROW  
ONE YOUNG MAN THROWS GASOLINE AT ANOTHER  
DURING THE FIRE \$1,300 IN COLD CASH WERE  
STOLEN  
CHIEF HANEY & MEN DO A SUPERB PIECE OF  
WORK.**

Horseplay started the fire.

Tom Imus was filling a gas (kerosene) can when Gene Hernandez hit him with a stick.

Tom threw gas at Gene's stick.

Gene set a match to the stick to use it as a torch to tease Tom. He set his own arm on fire and dropped the stick in a pool of gas on the floor.

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Both boys ran.

The work shop caught fire and ignited buildings on either side.

Bystanders ran into one of the houses and threw furniture out the windows—

They also "threw out" \$1,000 in bills, \$300 in twenty dollar gold pieces, a diamond ring, and a gold watch.

Nobody bothered the furniture.

"An alarm was turned in from box 24 to which the department responded promptly, and when it arrived on the scene all three buildings were aflame and the fire was burning briskly, while great clouds of smoke rolled straight up in the air.

Chief Haney and his men soon had lines of hose out, and in a very few minutes had the flames under control.

It was a superb piece of work on the part of the firemen and words of praise for them could be heard on all sides...

The magnificent residence of J.S. Fairhead and Leopold Furchgott were both in danger, and flames were licking so close to them at one time that they appeared to be doomed, but neither was so much as scorched," the newspaper said.

Why is this incident important to Jacksonville firefighters today?

A few days after the fire, the following headline appeared in the newspaper :

### **FOR THE BOYS**

"Mr. Fairhead sent Chief Haney a \$50 check as a token of his appreciation of the fine work of the fire department. Chief Haney says... that the money (will) be made the nucleus of a relief fund. The boys have been talking of a protective association among themselves for some time..."

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This donation formed the foundation for a fireman's relief fund.

But, not all Jacksonville homes were mansions like Mr. Fairhead's.

John Thomas, his wife, and their two children died when their home collapsed.

"The Thomas's and the children were suffocated by the saplings and the tons of dirt and palmetto leaves which were thrown over the shack to keep out the cold," the Feb. 11, 1895, newspaper said.

Chief Haney had progressive ideas for equipment as well as men.

"If a fire should start in Jacksonville today," he said on February 9, 1895, "And get a good headway in a thickly settled portion of the city, ten chances to one, it would sweep everything in its path."

"I am not discounting the efficiency of the fire department, but no matter how alert and energetic and skilled your men are, they can't fight fire without water—And that's just what we have not got!"<sup>30</sup>

Chief Haney campaigned for an improved water works system.

Until that could be done, he wanted more powerful pumpers.

"In fact, with two good fire engines, it would make but little difference to the department what the condition was at the waterworks," he said.

He campaigned for anything which would increase fire safety—Such as paved streets so engines would not bog down in sand.

Soon Bay Street was paved with cypress blocks.

Each fire station was equipped with Hale's Patent Swinging Harness. The huge fire horses could be hitched up in seven seconds!<sup>31</sup>

Here's how it worked:

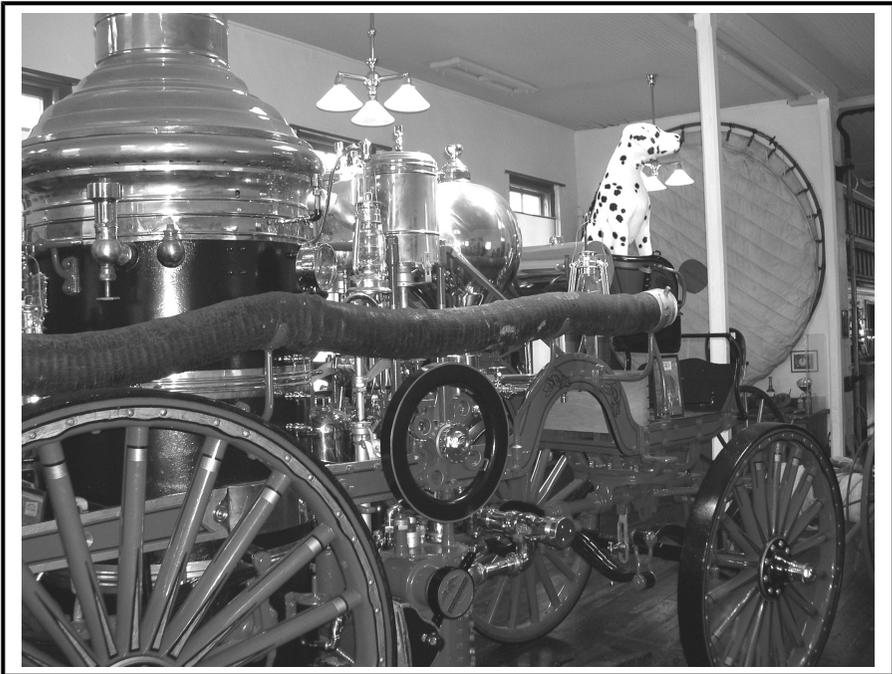
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At the sound of the alarm, men tugged on their boots, pulled on their heavy coats, strapped on their helmets, and slid down the brass pole. Horses trotted into place beneath the spread-out tackle which dropped from the ceiling onto the animal's backs in an instant.

While some of the men pushed the station's massive double doors open, drivers cinched the girth straps. As the pumper dashed through the door, firefighters grabbed rails and swung aboard.

The massive pumper billowed clouds of smoke as it raced through the streets. A stoker fed coal to work the steam pump which forced water through the hoses onto the fire<sup>32</sup>.



On February 15, 1898, the United States battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor, Cuba.

The death of the 264 U.S. sailors aboard triggered the start of the Spanish American War. President McKinley called up 125,000 volunteers to fight.<sup>33</sup>

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As a staging area, about 30,000 troops encamped in Jacksonville's Camp Cuba Libre—The site of present-day Confederate Park on Hogan's Creek.

An epidemic of typhoid fever broke out in the camp. More soldiers died in Jacksonville's epidemic than on the battlefield.

When health officials finally figured out that flies spread the disease, they mandated that privies and house windows be covered with screen wire, thus making Jacksonville nearly free from typhoid.

Chief Haney spearheaded a drive for a better fire alarm system. His 1898 Annual Report revealed that the city's alarms were wired in a single circuit; any interruption of power stopped the whole system.<sup>34</sup>

He got a new system. The March 17, 1898, *Florida Times-Union* tells about it:

"The electrical connections of the town clock on the city building with the fire alarm system have been completed, and Chief Haney tested it yesterday afternoon by "pulling" the alarm at the corner of Forsyth and Main Streets. Everything worked satisfactorily. He failed to notify the police that he intended to pull the alarm, and in accordance with their duties the patrol wagon responded to the alarm."

Well, almost everything worked satisfactorily.

Haney's devotion to improving the department brought Jacksonville firefighting into the modern age.

But the department could not keep pace with the city's growth. Jacksonville's population increased from 15,000 people in 1891 to 30,000 people in 1901 -- 50% in just ten years.

By May 3, 1901, the fire department consisted of 36 permanent men.

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## **THE GREAT FIRE OF JACKSONVILLE**

Just before Easter, 1901, the March 13th *Florida Times-Union* carried these five items:

- It takes the dears to make a stag party what it really ought to be.
  - The burning out of a flue in the United States Hotel at 5:55 o'clock last night caused the entire fire department to be called out. Smoke was seen issuing from the hotel at that time and an alarm was sent in from box 16, corner Bay and Newnan Streets. There was no damage.
  - A small shed and a pile of weeds at the foot of Hogan Street... was destroyed by fire shortly after 5 o'clock yesterday morning. An alarm from a box corner of Bay and Cedar streets called out the entire department and the flames were extinguished in a few minutes. The loss will amount to \$25.
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- An absent-minded drug clerk was asked the other day if he kept Lent and he replied: 'No, but we have something just as good'.
  - All fire alarm boxes in this city are now in working order and the system is complete. This announcement was made by Chief Haney last night. Six new boxes being of the Keyless pattern have been added to the number already in use. These are on Bay Street. With the addition of these new boxes there are fifty-two in service and every portion of the city is covered by them.

Alas, all the technological advances Fire Chief Thomas W. Haney had instituted proved to no avail. The new boxes all burned six weeks later in the Great Jacksonville Fire on May 3, 1901.



When that day was over 2,368 buildings had burned; 466 acres covering 140 city blocks smoldered; 10,000 homeless people camped out; and at least seven bodies were found.

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Witnesses reported that the flames could be seen as far away as Savannah, Georgia, and the smoke plume as far as Raleigh, N.C.

### **An Odd Aside:**

The evening before the fire started, prominent grocer Charles R. Armstrong shot his wife, Jessie, four times in front of her mother's home.

She was 24 years old and had borne Armstrong seven children. The couple had married when she was 12 years old.

"There, by G--! I guess that'll kill her, and I dare anyone to touch me, either," read the lead on the Page 1 story in *The Florida Times-Union and Citizen* the same morning the city was destroyed.

The paper said Armstrong put the smoking gun in his pocket, called for his son to bring him his hat, and slowly walked down Adams Street to Clay. He was arrested there by a policeman who had heard the shots. He did not resist and admitted the shooting.

Armstrong was taken to the city jail, but by noon the next day, the jail along with the rest of the city including Armstrong's grocery store and his family's home were ablaze.

Jailed prisoners were rushed to safety as fire roared through the city. Armstrong's world, already crumbled, now was ablaze.

He would teeter on madness; indeed, they said he fell.

Only the Great Fire kept the Armstrong slaying from being the biggest story of 1901.

Two weeks before Christmas, a jury found Armstrong not guilty by reason of insanity triggered by indiscretions of his wife.

He walked into a rebuilding city a free man, his deed obscured, his past rent from his future, in the aftermath of the great fire<sup>35</sup>.

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## Hero of The Market Street Horror

While Armstrong may have been the villain of the day, Will Clark died as a hero in what was called The Market Street Horror.

“Jacksonville streets were packed with shrieking swarms of humanity seeking any kind of shelter. They thronged inside the brick-structured Windsor Hotel, only to pour out again as the heat became unbearable. They packed into the courthouse and armory buildings and soon were fleeing those sturdy structures, peering back through the smoke only minutes later to see the tall, massive armory walls racking like eggshells...

“Crowds pushed south on Market to the St Johns River edge where they clamored for boats. At this moment, the mammoth wall of flames was pushed by winds into a deadly arc southward, and horror engulfed the waterfront scene. Many leaped into the river or tried to swim to boats further out which could not reach the flaming shoreline.

“The scene intensified when the great heat mass formed with strong air currents to form a huge waterspout, a fire tornado. The steamboat *Irene*, moving in to attempt rescue, was caught up by the spout and capsized like a cork. Several of the known fatalities occurred near this scene, such as that of young Will Clark who was busy helping others escape. Last seen carrying a Mrs. Follett to safety, his burned body was discovered floating at warfside”<sup>36</sup>.

As heat from the fire created that fire tornado and waterspout on the river, the statue of the Confederate Soldier in Hemming Park glowed red hot and its concrete column cracked.

## Explosions

The cypress paving blocks on Bay Street burned—Moisture in porous bricks turned to steam and exploded them.

*A New York Times* reporter said:

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“Once the fire got started on Main Street, the closely adjoining buildings went one after the other. Paint shops with barrels of oil in stock were plentiful in this district and they caught on fire one after the other. The flames rose hundreds of feet high and quickly set the other buildings across the street on fire.

“The Hubbard Hardware Store caught fire and people scattered when they saw what had happened. Hundreds of pounds of powder and dynamite were stored in this building. Ten minutes passed when suddenly there was a roar and the building collapsed like an egg shell.

“The dynamite and powder had exploded. The firemen at this time were working in great danger. Cartridges began to explode and bullets began to fly around so the effort to fight the fire at this point for a time had to be abandoned.”

“The Fire Department began to use dynamite to blow up the houses a block from the fire and thus preventing the flames from spreading.

“So fierce was the blaze, however, and so strong had become the wind that millions of sparks and flying shingles spread over five or six blocks, setting the roofs of the houses on fire in advance of the department”<sup>37</sup>.

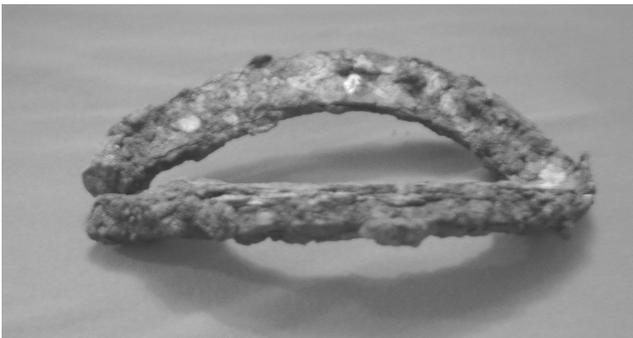
The fire burned until it was done, more than a half mile north and south, almost 2 miles east to west.

In the morning 2,368 buildings were ash. Only three buildings in the fire area still stood. Seven people died.

Untold hundreds of animals perished—dogs, cats, horses, cows. Military companies poured into the city.

Martial law was declared.

**This heat-twisted, partially-melted horseshoe**



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## **testifies to the intensity of the 1901 fire and to the animals that died in the blaze.**

Saturday morning dawned on a city of ash—And on a future to be seized.

On May 3, 1901, the Great Jacksonville Fire destroyed 146 city blocks. More than 2,000 buildings burned; almost 10,000 people were left homeless. Mere figures belie the devastation.

At least seven bodies were recovered and many more people went mad. Fortunes were lost - and fortunes were to be made. It was the worst fire ever to visit a Southern city<sup>38</sup>.

### **Experiences In The Great Fire**

Everyone who lived through that day remembered it. Here are some of their experiences:

#### **Fire Chief Haney Said:**

On May 3d at 12:39 p.m. this department received an alarm by telephone that there was a fire at the Cleaveland (sic) Mattress Factory...

The Department responded promptly, and immediately upon my arrival at the fire I sent out a general alarm calling all the apparatus in the service; the Department was put to work on the east, south and west sides of the fire...

After some very hard work, the Department had the fire under control in the blocks adjoining the one in which it started, when to my surprise and, I might say, horror, I was told that there was a fire at the corner of Bridge and Church streets.

I immediately sent a hose company and the hook and ladder company to this fire.

From this time it was one report after another that this house or that one was on fire from one to five blocks away.

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I sent the hose wagons back to the houses for more hose with instructions to return to the fire farthest east and make a stand...

I then called... Mr. B.F. Dillon...with a request to telegraph for all the assistance that he could get possibly get as the city was doomed.

The Department was making the best fight possible, but with the wind against it and the light material that was burning, and a large number of the buildings frame structures with shingle roofs, their best efforts were of no avail.

About three o'clock in the afternoon I became overheated and had to be carried home.

After resting a while I returned to the fire, to again become so faint I could not keep up, and was again taken home where Dr. Durkee came and gave me the necessary medical attention.

After a short while, and against the wishes of the doctor, I again started for the fire, but my strength gave way and I was taken home again, and then sent word to the assistant chief that he must take charge.

From what I saw before I became incapacitated, and have learned from the citizens of this city, there was never a more noble or braver fight made than was made by the little band of men that constitute this Department.<sup>39</sup>

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**The Fire at 2:55 p.m.**

**E.J. Wendt, Mattress Factory Foreman, Said:**

We made fiber from the palmetto leaves and also made excelsior, cured feathers and moss for making mattresses and upholstering...

The day of the fire I had shut down the machinery and after the help... had lunched as usual, they lay down somewhere in the fiber, moss or near the cotton gin to nap.

I was lying down on a couch in the office resting when the yard foreman gave the fire alarm. I ran for the first fire hose just outside the office door but had to drop it and run along the shed to wake up the (workers)...

The burning moss was rolling in waves like ocean combers.

The whole factory force had to jump down the trash hole near the back of the factory...

The fire started about 12:30 from a spark from one of the houses on Beaver Street on the south. It started near the ramp and rolled toward the factory and in the

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doors and windows where we had bags of feathers and horse hair hanging from the ceiling drying."



**Burning moss rains down on Jacksonville**

**Mrs. Clarence Maxwell Said:**

We ate our dinner and Mr. Maxwell returned to town while Reba and I returned complacently to our sewing. We could hear explosions and from the window see flames leaping above the tree-tops. I suggested that we get our hats and go to it.

As we walked over to Riverside Avenue we met a colored man who said 'Madame, the whole city is burning up and these two children and few clothes is all I got left. I'm going to the woods...'

The whole avenue was lined with vehicles loaded with goods and people. Private carriages were piled high and rushing in all directions...

We hastened on, appalled at the spectacle. flames were enveloping everything on all sides. The fire advanced as rapidly as a person could walk.

Women were even seizing vehicles standing on the streets where they had been hauled out of stables for protection and loading them up themselves and then getting between the shafts and pulling them.

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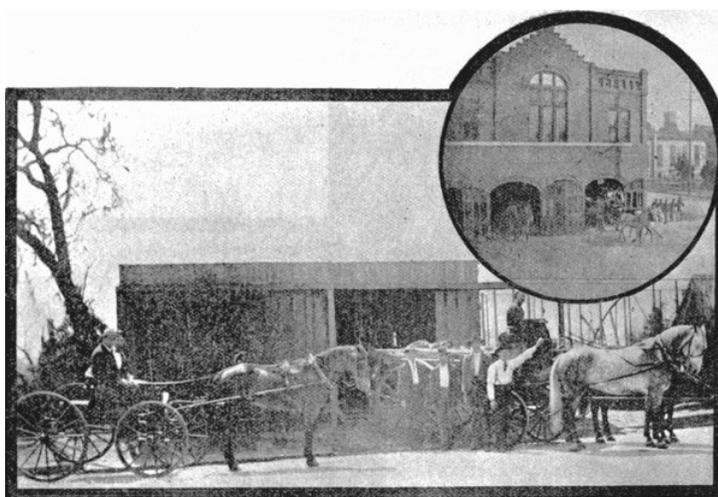
Little children were fleeing, some with dolls in their arms, some with cats or bird cages. I saw one woman leading her cow up the middle of Bay Street.

Inside of five minutes the places we had just left were a seething mass."<sup>40</sup>

**Fireman W.G. Smedley Said:**

I was eating lunch in a boarding house down the street from the No. 1 fire station when the alarm came in at 12:35 p.m.

I ran back to the station and caught the end of the wagon just as it went out the door.



OLD AND NEW HEADQUARTERS OF FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Nobody had any idea, of course, of what we were in for...

Moss being dried at the fiber factory had caught fire. A sudden wind blew up out of the west on what had started as a calm hot day.

We thought we just about had the fire under control when the wind blew burning moss onto the tops of about two dozen houses along the street...

I looked down the street (Jefferson) and couldn't see anything but a wall of flame.

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The fire zigzagged from Beaver Street to Bridge Street. It went on to Adams and along the north side of Adams to Laura. With the exception of a small blacksmith shop, everything east of Laura to Hogan's Creek burned..

I saw a woman running down the street carrying a bird cage. The cage was empty...

I saw another woman frantically stuffing newspapers into a trunk. She must have been so excited she didn't know what she was doing.<sup>41</sup>

### **Fireman Stephen A. Weeks:**

When Chief Haney's telegram calling for help reached Savannah, firemen there loaded their engine onto a railroad flat car and speed south "122 miles per hour on 60-pound rail".

Stephen Weeks was a stoker on a steam fire engine from Savannah.

When his crew got here, Jacksonville resembled a city under bombardment. Escaping refugees got in the way of firemen trying to get into the city.

"Horses with wagons burning like comet tails behind them panicked and ran blindly through the streets...

"Bricks used to pave the streets leaping 10 or 15 feet in the air to burst into countless fragments in the heat...

"It was so hot that fire hoses burned off at hydrants with water running through them," he said

Weeks helped evacuate a new orphanage—"They had just dedicated it at 12:30, about the same time the fire broke out," he said.

Some fire units from other cities which came to help, got lost in the city and were boxed in by the flames and had to abandon their equipment to escape.

"Some departments, which sent every bit of equipment they had, lost it all that way," Weeks said.

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Only seven lives were reported lost. Weeks believed there were many more.

"The number lost will never be known but to God. It was impossible to determine how many were burned or drowned in the river where they fled for safety," he said.<sup>42</sup>

### **Schoolboy Richard D. Oldham:**

First-grader Richard Oldham had just come home from school for lunch when the fire started; in later years, he recorded what happened:

"We were real scared.

"The sparks were everywhere.

"Sparks were all over the place.

"My mother was just praying.

"I guess, my father was at work helping people downtown," he said.

His father owned a livery stable. His drivers were picking up furniture from homes and stacking it in a vacant lot where they hoped it would be safe.

A driver brought in a piano and one of the crew sat at it and over and over played "It's a Hot Time in The Old Town Tonight".

"I think there were two ships in port, the *Comanche* and the *Apache*, and they put the ships out in the middle of the river to keep them from burning," Oldham said.

"We had a great big 10-room house and we kept people. We had to help because they had nothing. All their clothes were burned and everything else, see. They lost everything...

"After that, I didn't go to school for a long time, about a year and a half or two years," he said.

### **Attorney David Mitchell Said:**

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I had been over in town in the morning, and as I left to catch the boat across the river where a dray awaited me to take the trip to Alexandria Villa, I passed the fire station (Central)...

The alarm sounded and Chief Haney streamed out in the big red go-devil of a fire truck, drawn by the two handsome bay horses of the fire department...

I went home -- four miles from the Jacksonville Ferry, and as dinner was being served, I said to the butler, 'Pearson, what makes it so dark? Is there an eclipse of the sun?'

He went to the north window and looked across towards Jacksonville and rushed back with a tense face -- 'Fore God, Master David, It sure looks like the end of the world! Come Look!'

There was a clump of imported bamboo at least forty feet high growing on the lawn ... and above that was a sheet of flames from the burning Jacksonville, lurid and roaring, fanned by a high wind, and above that a pall of black smoke that obscured the sun and make it dark as night at our place.

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Mitchell took the ferry boat back into Jacksonville to see about his Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Root.

He saw, "That wharf -- filled with precious belongings of Jacksonville citizens, who hoped in vain to gain transportation to the south side of the river. There were family portraits, clothing, bric-a-brac, baskets of silver, trunks filled with heirlooms and precious documents and papers, and the people with their panic-stricken faces as the fire leaped by bounds to the water's edge, destroying the wharf itself!"

He fought his way to the Root house.

"From there I saw two hotels—the Windsor and the St. James—flames shooting from every window, flames high in the air from the roofs, a million dollars going up in flames, but what a magnificent sight the two big

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buildings made as they yielded their greatness to the fire!"<sup>43</sup>

### **A Fireman's Heroic Wife:**

Six-year-old Erma Zoller's father served as assistant fire chief during the Great Fire. Years later, she told about what happened.

The Zoller family lived on Church Street.

Her mother had her firefighter husband's lunch ready when she heard Big Jim blow that day.

"Well, we better sit down and have dinner because he's going to be late coming on account of the fire," Mrs. Zoller said.

The daughter remembered, "She fixed his meal and put it on top of the stove to keep warm. The little warmer oven was there. I guess about an hour later we heard the whistle blow again about three or four times...

"Mother said, 'Oh, my goodness, he's going to be very late getting home now. They must have a tremendous fire someplace. They're calling help.

"After a while, people started running through the street hollering, 'The city's on fire!'

"We went out on the porch and we could see just big clouds of smoke going up, and everybody was hollering and telling everybody they'd better pack up and get out because the city was burning up. So Mother had a large trunk and she started to pack what valuables that she had in the trunk.

"We went out again and watched. When we saw the Immaculate Conception Church a block-and-a-half or two blocks from our house burning, Mother said, 'Well, this is serious. I'll see if I can't get somebody to move the trunk down.'"

Mrs. Zoller had to pay a man \$25 to carry her trunk down and set it in the middle of Church Street.

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"I was terribly frightened. My mother was frightened. We were worried about my father because we heard people telling all kinds of things, that Chief Haney was dead, and the other chiefs were dead, and they were overcome in the streets, the fire hoses were burning up in the streets, and they couldn't make any headway. Oh, we heard all kinds of reports, don't you see..."



Mrs. Zoller, her daughter and her 3-year-old son stood in the street watching their house burn.

"She took me by the hand and my brother. He was younger than me. I had a little dog on a string, a little fox terrier on a string and we stood over on the corner and we were watching the trunk to see whether anybody would take it off..."

No one would help the fireman's wife move her trunk of valuables.

"And so we saw the house burn and Mother said, 'Well, we better move on before you get a spark in your hair and set your hair on fire.'

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"She saw the trunk burned up in the street.

"She didn't cry.

"She just took me by the hand and we just started walking.

"After we saw the house go, we were worried about my father. We didn't let the house worry us too much, but Mother was so afraid that something had happened to him."

They walked blocks and blocks following the crowds away from the fire.

"All along the way, we asked people, inquiring about the fire department. Was anybody hurt, did they hear of anybody, the chief or the fire chiefs. A lot of people said no, they didn't hear and some people -- well, they'd tell us some weird stories...

Exhausted, they arrived on Talleyrand Avenue. They asked at stores and homes if they could rest.

No one would take them in.

"Everybody told her they were full up and my mother said, 'Well, I simply can't sit in the street with my two children'....

"So the lady said, 'Well, all I can do is rent you a chair.' So Mother rented a chair from her, a rocking chair...

"We spent the night there. I just sat on the floor and rested my head against my mother's knee."

The next day, an uncle found Chief Zoller; he had been overcome by smoke and was in a home across the city from where his family was.

The uncle "took us to where Dad was on the other side of town. Oh my lands, we were so happy to see Poppa.

"Mother finally broke down and cried.

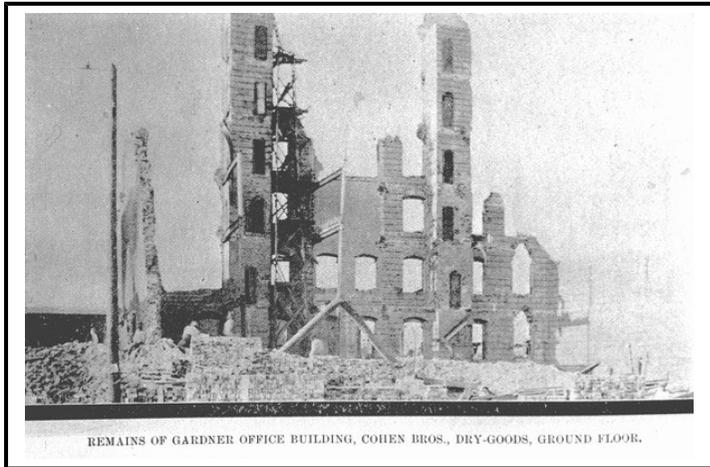
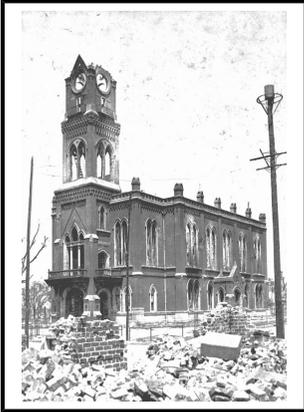
"And she thanked God that we were reunited again."<sup>44</sup>

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# THE GREAT FIRE'S AFTERMATH







## **After The Fire**

Jacksonville rebuilt.

Mayor J.E.T. Bowden said, "The loss of Jacksonville is greater than was ever before inflicted by fire upon a city of the South, but her best wealth survives in her people and through them she will soon sit resplendent once more with increased glory as the metropolis of the state."<sup>45</sup> "

Chief Haney issued the first building permit—For a grocery store—within days of the fire.

The U.S. Government sent tents to house thousands of homeless people.

Five days after the fire, the city issued 49 marriage licenses. The newspaper said, "Evidently many young men who found their sweethearts without a home thought it best to provide for them."

A barn served as a temporary fire house. Other cities donated their used equipment to make up for the engines and horses Jacksonville had lost.

A newspaper editorial exonerated the Jacksonville Fire Department, "Fire Chief T.W. Haney is a good commander, as has been demonstrated a thousand

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times here. The firemen did all that human beings could do under the circumstances but had to give up. "<sup>46</sup>

Local newspaper accounts said:

"Funds poured in from all over the United States and thousands of dollars soon went to the relief of the stricken.

"None of the larger cities declined to lend a helping hand...

"Many trains and steamboats brought supplies to us from all over the United States, as well as large sums of money..."

One out-of-town newspaper man saw the relief effort a bit differently:

H.L. Mencken covered the aftermath of the fire for the *Baltimore Morning Herald*.

"When I arrived by train," Mencken said, "There seemed to be nothing left save a fringe of houses around the municipal periphery, like the hair on a friar's head.

"Only one hotel was left standing, and, so far as I could discover, not a single other public convenience of any sort, whether church, hospital, theatre, livery-stable, jail, bank, saloon, barber-shop, pants-pressing parlor, or sporting house<sup>47</sup>."

The buildings had burned. But by and large the people were fine. Everyone had lost property. Everyone had been excited. Everyone had been scared. But virtually no one had been seriously injured.

In the beautiful May weather (temperatures in the mid to high 80s), everyone was camping out, eating in the open, swapping tales, swimming in the St. Johns.

Instead finding the gaunt disaster victims he came to write about, Mencken found that Jacksonville resembled a giant community picnic!

Bigger disappointment confronted Mencken—"Not this scene of desolation, but the imbecility of public effort to aid its ostensible victims. In every American

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community of Christian pretensions, North, East, South and West, busy-bodies began to collect money and goods for their succor the moment the first bulletins came in, and by the time I reached what was left of the Jacksonville railroad station the first relief shipments were on the way...

"The boys at the Pimlico race-track had contributed 100 second-hand horse blankets ... the saloonkeepers of Baltimore had matched them with 100 cases of Maryland rye...

"The Mayor was amused, but not surprised, for he had telegrams on his desk showing that many other Northern cities were even more idiotic than Baltimore.

"St. Paul, it appeared, was sending a couple of bales of old fur coats, and Boston was loading a car with oil-stoves. Even some of the nearby towns, though they should have known better, had contributed supplies almost as insane. Thus a large box of woolen mittens had come from Montgomery, Ala., and Winston-Salem, N.C., had sent a supply of the heavy, sanitary red underwear for which it was then famous."

Mayor Bowden and the reporter discussed hiding the rye under the 100 horse blankets. The one thing Jacksonville needed less than any of the other stuff was liquor.

A new telegram came from Baltimore—Another boxcar was on the way "loaded mainly with medical and chirurgical(sic) materiel(sic), including a bale of splints, five gallons of sulphuric ether, half a ton of bandages, a crate of wooden legs, and twenty Potter's Field coffins...

"Inasmuch as... survivors were in robust health and excellent spirits, this shipment seemed somehow irrational," Mencken said.

The Mayor told him that since the State Militia—from the Everglades—was on the scene, they "would undoubtedly begin shooting one another anon, and it

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would be handy to have the splints and coffins, if not the wooden legs".

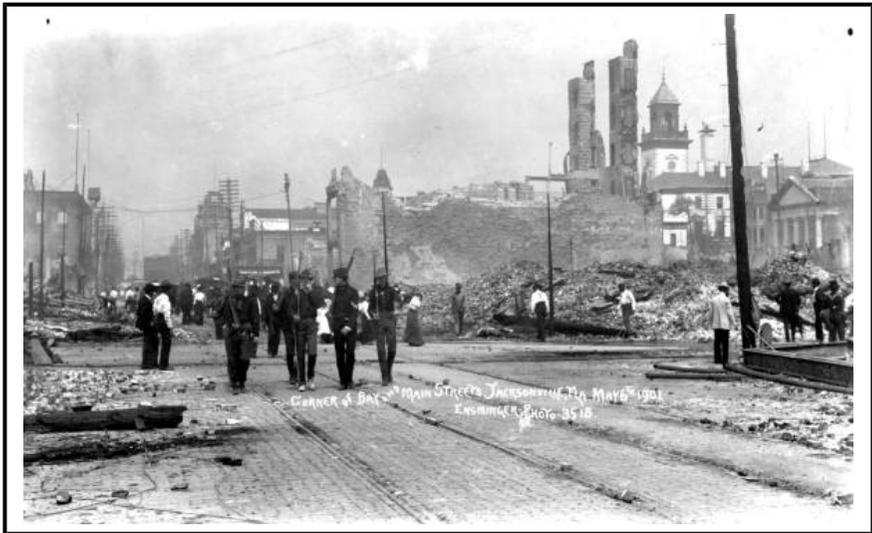
That night Mencken camped underneath a grand piano to sleep. State militiamen guarding the smoldering ruins of a nearby bank thought they saw something and opened up with a machine gun.

"With the sounding-board of the piano directly over my head, I got the full force of the reverberation," he said.

After days of looking for the shipment from Baltimore, Mencken finally found the cars on a siding.

"I spent the next morning writing a long piece describing the grateful gloats and sobs of the starving and shivering Jacksonville populace as the cars rolled in, and the supplies were distributed," he said.

The reporter really felt "The fire had been the luckiest act of God in all Jacksonville's history."



**After The Fire, Near Bay & Main Streets**

## **Finally, A Year Later...**

Near the corner of Bay and Market, stood an old feed company warehouse with a cellar packed tight with wheat, corn and oats.

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After the warehouse burned, the fire ate underground into the compressed grain.

For months and months after the Great Fire, the pit full of grain continued to smolder and break into flame periodically.

At 12:30 p.m. on May 3, 1902 -- one year to the minute after the fire started, Chief Haney ordered a pumper and hose down there again.

He told the men to start pumping and not stop until that cellar was full to the top.

That's what they did.

The Great Fire of Jacksonville was finally out.

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## 20th CENTURY FIREFIGHTING

Jacksonville rebuilt -- again.

Rudolph Grunthal took out Building Permit #1 the Monday morning after the Great Fire; it was for a temporary shack at State and Main streets. Porcher L'Engle was building the first brick building, at Adams and Broad, within three weeks.

"The rebuilding of Jacksonville began within a few days of the fire. Many businesses destroyed by the blaze were soon operating out of tents and temporary wooden structures. Architects, builders, and entrepreneurs flocked to the stricken city.

"Seven months after the fire, buildings underway in Downtown equaled nearly half the number destroyed by the fire. Within three years, the number of new buildings constructed exceeded the number which had been burned...

"The fire brought unprecedented urban renewal. Jacksonville had the unique opportunity to build a modern city, based on 20th Century technology and design. Where the majority of the buildings burned were of wooden construction, the new city that rose from the ashes was made of stone, brick, concrete, and steel.

"Ordinances required fire-proof construction, resulting in metal, tile, slate and gravel-covered roofs replacing the former wooden ones.

"The development of steel-skeleton framing, reinforced concrete, and the electric elevator in the late 1800s allowed the construction of skyscrapers"<sup>48</sup>.

Before the fire, residences clustered amid downtown businesses; the fire influenced many people to build their homes a bit further out. Suburbs like

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Springfield and Riverside flourished around the downtown core. Each extension of the city limits increased the Fire Department's sphere of responsibility.

Before 1902 was over, new fire stations—replacing the ones burned in 1901—were at Ocean and Adams streets, and at 12 Catherine Street.



Among the businesses to perish in the Great Fire was the Windsor Hotel; it was also among the first business to be restored after the fire. It reopened on February 15, 1902.

Its predecessor had perished in moments of horror with much of the rest of the downtown Jacksonville that once was the tourist Mecca of the Southeast.

From the first hint of spring 1902 through the early 1950s the sprawling hotel on the Hogan Street side of Hemming Park was a downtown landmark.

The chairs on its spacious veranda offered vantage over much of the city's history. Alone of the city's major

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hotels in the first half of the century, it occupied a city block of its own, a solid heart in an evolving downtown.

On February 12, 1902, the hotel attracted the Liederkrantz Society of Cincinnati, 200 musicians and singers who arrived a couple of days early so the hotel eschewed a formal opening and just let them in.

A couple of days after the Liederkrantz party arrived, and just prior to the arrival of the Concatenated Order of Hoo Hoo, many of whose members came all the way from Palatka and Live Oak, little Miss Natalie Newell raised the Stars and Stripes above the hotel and the opening dinner was served—oysters, prime rib, turkey and wild duck. The flag was lowered after dinner and replaced by a white, blue-bordered standard bearing the single word **WINDSOR**.

Natalie's father, Frank V. Newell, was the architect of the building that even the impartial deemed "the finest all-year-around hotel in the South."

From the beginning, the Windsor rose over Hemming Park in period majesty. Where its predecessor had been flanked by the magnificent St. James Hotel, the Windsor stood alone, the St. James lot to lie fallow for another decade before the Cohen Bros. department store occupied it with a St. James Building of its own.

"The building is a mammoth one," said the *Florida Times-Union*. "This idea is only gained by traversing its halls and corridors and looking into the various rooms.

"The coloring of the hotel also is a decided attraction to the eye, the yellow-tinted brick, the snow-white trimmings and the rich red of the Spanish tile of the roof making a picturesque appearance."<sup>49</sup>

Build-out of the city to pre-fire level was reached in 1903. Gala Week and Trades Carnival in November marked the rebirth.

"The resurrection of the city has been nothing less than wonderful," The *Florida Times-Union* said at the 10th anniversary.

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More than 11,000 buildings had gone up, bright, substantial and modern.

Biggest gap in the new city smile was the empty lot north of Hemming Park, where once stood the luxurious St. James Hotel.

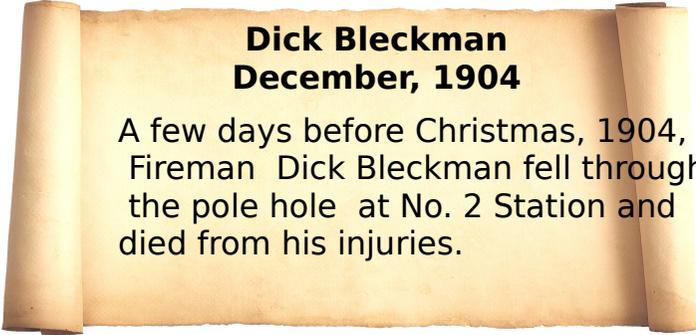
Tent preachers, traveling shows, the medicine man, and the dog-and-pony show made the empty lot their home.

It was a fallow reminder of the great conflagration. And there, in 1912, opened the St. James Building, the exclamation point that ended the era of the rebirth and the beginning of the rest of the 20th century for downtown Jacksonville.

The lights went on up Laura Street that fall. Cohen Brothers department store moved into the Henry Klutho building that would become Jacksonville's City Hall, a monument to the rebirth of the city<sup>50</sup>

1904 was the year of the Great Fire Of Baltimore; Jacksonville then repaid her debt to her sister city.

Reporter Mencken said, "When, in 1904, Baltimore itself had a big fire, Jacksonville proposed to send up enough oranges (some of them almost fresh) to supply 500,000 people for 100 days, but Baltimore authorities declined them<sup>51</sup>."



**Dick Bleckman  
December, 1904**

A few days before Christmas, 1904, Fireman Dick Bleckman fell through the pole hole at No. 2 Station and died from his injuries.

Jacksonville installed a high-pressure water system in the downtown district in 1909.

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Good thing!

On Thursday afternoon, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1909, people poured into the streets as spectacular fire destroyed the Gilkes block, on Forsyth street between Laura and Main.

Panicked memories of the Great Jacksonville Fire surged with the blaze.

Firefighters fought for 18 hours keep the city from being destroyed as it was May 3, 1901.

“Only heroic work by the fire department saved the city,” said The Florida Times-Union.

Businesses and homes emptied as people rushed to see the fire. Pandemonium closed a prominent embezzlement trial under way at the Courthouse just blocks away.

As firemen desperately sought to save the city, and as thousands looked on in dire anticipation, three pickpockets worked the crowd as people’s attention was on the firefighters.

The three men arrested for picking pockets from the crowd at the Gilkes block fire were released from city jail after promising to leave the city immediately.



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During Jacksonville's rebuilding after the Great Fire, the city's street car trolley line was extended north and at its end was built a park named *Phoenix* to mark the reconstruction.

In ancient mythology, the phoenix is a magic bird which bursts into flames once every hundred years, only to be reborn from its own ashes. For years Jacksonville adopted the phoenix as its symbol.

Lightning once struck a trolley car on Main Street. It burned a hole in the roof. Therefore, on June 10, 1910, Engine Co. # 2 became the only Jacksonville fire company to ever put out a trolley car.

## **Fireproof Buildings**

CONTRACT LET FOR SKYSCRAPER ON LAURA STREET, the headline of the March 13, 1911 Florida Times-Union said.

Architect Henry J. Klutho designed the ten-story building between Forsyth and Adams Streets.

"It was the intention at first to erect a seven-story building, but realizing the wonderful growth and development of the city, it was decided later to add three more stories," the contractor said.

"The building will be absolutely fire-proof, and will contain every modern convenience.

"It will contain two high-speed passenger elevators, and will be provided with the most modern system of plumbing."

After 1901, "fire-proof" buildings made more and more sense in the light of new building codes.

Years later, after the Roosevelt Hotel, a supposedly fireproof building, burned, Lt. F.V. Herlong said:

"You can build a building today that is fireproof in every respect, but the minute you start moving in furniture and equipment, then let people in, that building is no longer fireproof."

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"People themselves are not fireproof -- they carry matches, many of them smoke, and some of them are careless<sup>52</sup>."

Chief Haney continued his technological crusade to make Jacksonville safe from fire: New improved alarm systems. high-pressure engines, new fire stations, more and better trained men, a motorized department.

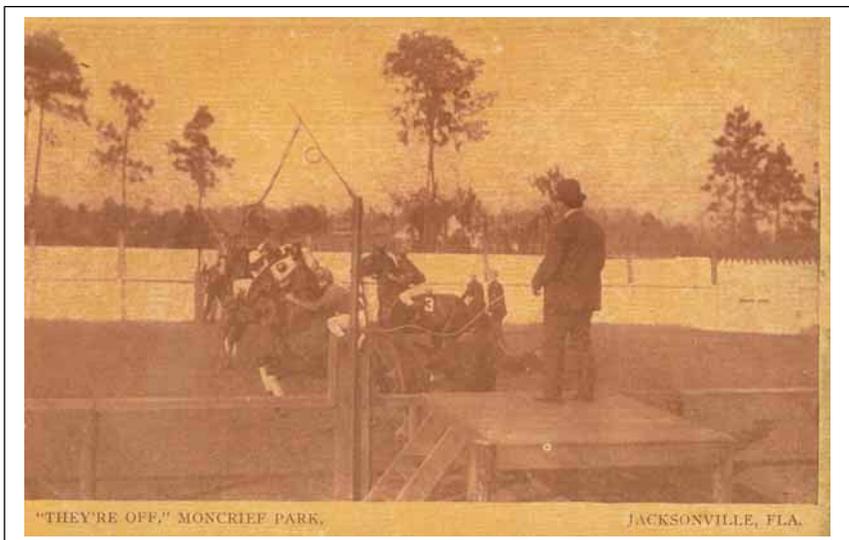
## **Any Bet What Caused The Fire?**

On May 18, 1911, the grandstand of Jacksonville's famous horse race track, Moncrief Downs, burned<sup>53</sup>.

The cause of the fire was undetermined.

Oddly enough, shortly before the race track burned, the state legislature, with speeches of moral outrage, had banned all horseracing in Jacksonville.

Here's a 1911 photo of the track taken shortly before that fire:

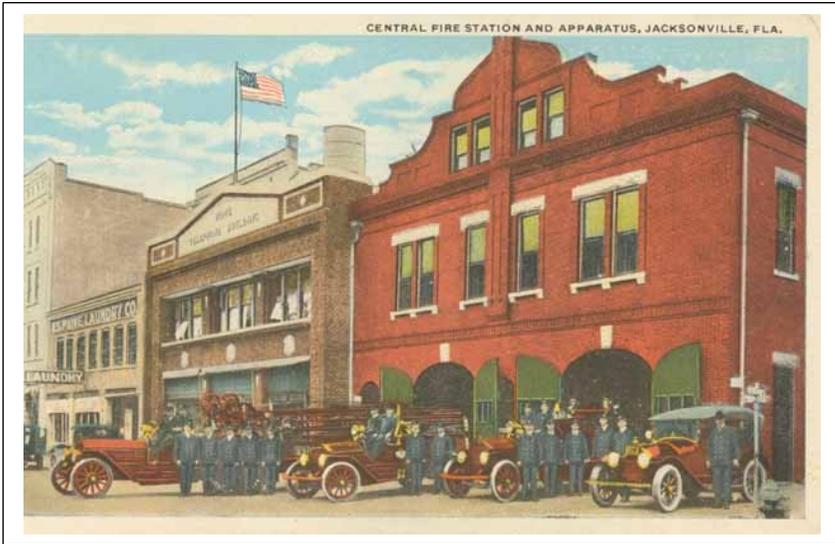


The same day the race track burned, the newspaper reported, "Parties unknown left an infant on the doorstep of a family on Winter Street with a note that the child be delivered to the family of a Jacksonville fireman. The fireman said a woman telephoned him at

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the station some weeks before and asked where he lived and if he had children but hung up when he asked her name”.



In 1912, the department bought its first motorized equipment, two engines and a 65-foot aerial ladder truck.

## Many False Alarms

Movies and film-makers came to Jacksonville, then Florida's largest city, and Jacksonville appeared destined to become the nation's film capital. In 1908 Kalem Studios selected Jacksonville to shoot Florida's first movie, *Lost In The Everglades: A Florida Feud*. It became a national favorite.

By the peak year of 1916, more than a hundred film companies shot scenes in Jacksonville.

These scenes caused problems for the Fire Department as well as ordinary citizens<sup>54</sup>.

One movie studio brought in 1,380 extras for a mob scene that destroyed two downtown buildings. Film makers staged car crashes on Main Street. Speeding cars splashed off the ferry dock. Film makers staged bank robberies without telling anyone it was just a movie.

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And when they wanted excitement in a street scene, they turned in false alarms to bring out the firemen.

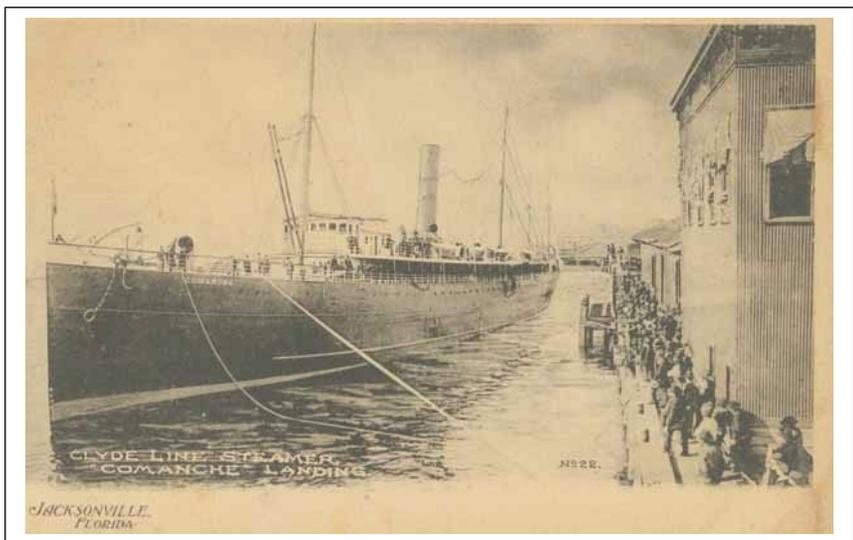
Outraged citizens, sick of movie fraud and disruption, voted out Mayor J.E.T. Bowden, who supported the film industry. Jacksonville's new political structure chased the movie-makers west to Hollywood, which richly deserves them.

## **The 1917 Easter Fire**

The United States entered World War I. Perhaps one of the first acts of hostility occurred in Jacksonville.

At the time the Clyde Steamship Line maintained a waterfront terminal between Washington and Newnan streets. Pier One stood at the eastern end of the terminal where passengers and freight landed and departed from Jacksonville.

President Woodrow Wilson signed the declaration of war against Germany and less than 48 hours later, on April 8, Easter Sunday, 1917, fire destroyed the Clyde terminal.



Rumors of sabotage, anarchy and infernal incendiaries spread faster than the flames.

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"The firemen said they never saw a fire gain such intensity so rapidly," *The Florida Times-Union* said.

"The wind continued to rise until it sent sheets of fire across the railroad tracks to the rear of buildings fronting Bay Street . . . Frequently firemen fell to the ground, rendered almost insensible by the heat and the smoke."

Destroyed with the pier were the steamship line's passenger offices and waiting rooms, three wooden lighters with cargoes of crossties, and a large quantity of lumber waiting shipment north.

Every able-bodied citizen joined the firemen to check the destruction which threatened to spread throughout the city.

A band of Boy Scouts, who were attending a ceremony at the Armory, raced to the scene.

"The splendid action of these little shavers filled with pride the hearts of older persons," the newspaper said.

"The Boy Scouts worked like men. They wielded axes, dragged hose and carried water in buckets as ably as did anyone. Clad in their uniforms, the little figures could be seen working beside the firemen and policemen in the greatest points of danger...."

"People risked their lives repeatedly. Men in small boats rowed out under the docks, dragging hose through the water behind them and fighting the fire from beneath the wharves."...

"The fire created a feeling of uneasiness throughout the city because of the international situation," *The Times-Union* said<sup>55</sup>.

A German steamship in the St. Johns at the time aggravated this sense of uneasiness.<sup>56</sup>

On March 20, 1917, Jacksonville Port Commissioners place the *Freda Leonardt* under restriction and removed it from a downtown wharf to Commodore's Point.

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The German crew aboard the steamship boasted that on the outbreak of war, they would blow up Jacksonville's electric plant.

The ship was seized and the crew imprisoned in New Orleans. But over the course of the war, numerous fires destroyed war-related industries in Jacksonville.

"The Huns did it," became the cry.

Soldiers guarded municipal plants from such suspected sabotage.

## **Spanish Lady**

But Jacksonville, the nation, and the world faced a more deadly enemy than the Huns — Spanish Lady.

On September 18, 1918, Spanish Lady, the tag name given to the world-wide influenza epidemic, was first reported in Jacksonville.

By October 13th, there were 40 people dying of the disease every day. Whole families all died within a few days of each other. By the end of the month, city health officials estimated that 30,000 people in Jacksonville were sick and 464 had already died<sup>57</sup>.

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, all Jacksonville schools closed. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, the City Commission closed all theaters, cinemas, pool halls, dance halls, soda fountains and cigar stores. Attendance at funeral services were limited to immediate family. That weekend churches and synagogues canceled services.<sup>58</sup>

An observer said, "There was no place to escape it. A dreadful hush hung over the community... a resignation to our inability to combat the spread of the disease"

"Business thoroughfares of the city looked deserted, and many stores were closed with a sign ALL SICK hanging on their doors... The precautions recommended (by health officials) had no effect.. The rattle of the death carts of 1888 (Yellow Fever

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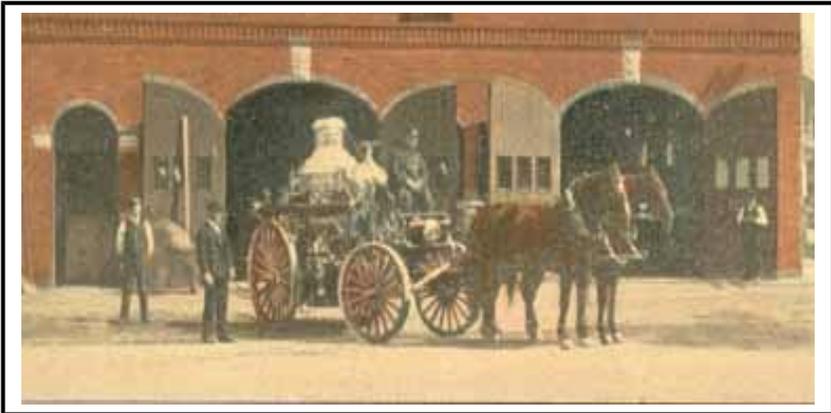
epidemic) was supplanted by the whirl of the motor in 1918 as the trucks took their loads away <sup>59</sup>".

Spanish Lady contributed as much to end World War I as any battle; she devastated countries around the world before finally running her course and burning out. With the end of that war and disease, Jacksonville emerged from her stupor.

In 1919, the city limits expanded in residential areas to the north and west thus increasing the territory covered by the Jacksonville Fire Department at a time many men released from the Army, shipyard or war work struggled with unemployment.

Jacksonville firefighters joined the International Association of Fire Fighters, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. They went on strike and City government fired the union head and members of the grievance committee. *Times-Union* editors called it "a strike against the people, bordering on treason".

After an investigation, the City Council concluded the firemen were right and reinstated the men as the strike ended.<sup>60</sup>

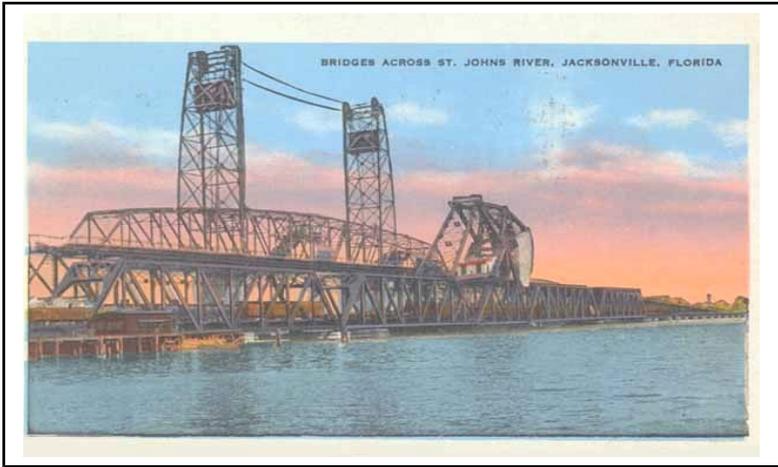


On December 17, 1921, Rock and Sanko, the last two fire horses in Jacksonville, retired from Station 7 on Kings Avenue.. The horses achieved the dream of all retiring firemen — they were put out to stud.

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## Expansion



Also in 1921 the St Johns River Toll Bridge, known as the Acosta Bridge, opened linking the city of Jacksonville with the town of South Jacksonville.

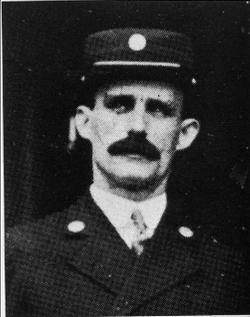
Before this, the only way across the river was by ferry and even with Jacksonville's first bridge, two ferryboats, the *Fletcher* and the *Jackson*, continued to run.

The Jacksonville Fire Department now consisted of 125 men and motorized equipment.

### **Chief 1926-1933**

**Chief McMillan** fought the Great Fire of 1901 as a foreman assigned to Station 4. Firefighters saved the station, but MacMillan lost his house on Monroe Street to the flames.

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Chief T.A. McMilliam  
Jan. 1, 1926-Sept. 1, 1933

During his tenure as fire chief, beginning in 1926, he oversaw the opening of five new fire stations as the department expanded its service into South Jacksonville.

The discovery by Howard Carter of King Tut's (Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamun's) nearly intact tomb in 1922 created a sensation.

Egyptian jewelry, hair styles, furniture, and party themes swept the nation. At Jacksonville Beach a new restaurant, King Tut's, opened on the ground floor of the Ocean View Hotel..

The restaurant kitchen caught fire about 1 a.m. on Thursday, July 29, 1926. Winds from a hurricane just off the coast acted as a billows intensifying the fire at the Ocean View Hotel

The blaze quickly consumed the 60-room hotel, King Tut's restaurant and entertainment emporium, the Adams bathhouse, and a clutch of concession stands.

Mrs. John Hawkes, telephone operator, was the hero of the night, staying by her post wakening more than 50 hotel guests.

She sounded the alarm, called firemen from South Jacksonville and downtown, summoned electric linemen. Unfortunately the area's only telephone exchange was located inside the burning hotel. Mrs. Hawkes stayed doing her duty till flames consumed her switchboard.

"Residents of the beach awakened by the light of the fire and the clang of the fire engines forsook their

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beds to watch," The *Florida Times-Union* reported. "Many motorists seeing the glow more than 18 miles away from Jacksonville were attracted to the scene.

"Only valiant work by the Jacksonville Beach volunteer fire department and firefighters from South Jacksonville and Jacksonville saved the whole city from being devoured by flame".

Blazing Fire? Driving Rain? Hurricane Wind?

Three weeks later the beaches hosted a party inviting all the firemen. The newspaper announced, "Southeastern Play Week is coming off as scheduled, come hell or high water<sup>61</sup>".

Now, even with the Acosta Bridge, Jacksonville's two ferryboats continued to ply back and forth between a dock at the foot of Main Street and a dock near Treaty Oak Park in Southside.

The ferryboat *Jackson* caught fire midstream on July 10, 1929.. It went up like a torch in the middle of the river, at 4 o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon. Horrified crowds gathered on both banks of the river to see passengers jump in the river to escape the flames.

The *Jackson* just had left its Southside pier for its 4:15 scheduled crossing with 15 to 20 passengers aboard—no one really knew how many—but six cars and two trucks were later salvaged from the wreck.

The *Jackson's* Chief Engineer, John Oliver, said the first indication something was wrong came when the ferry engine stopped. When he checked to see why, he saw it was on fire.

Oliver said flames spread so rapidly he was not able to start a second diesel engine to provide power to the water pump. He used a fire extinguisher, but the flames forced him from the engine room.

Ferry skipper L.E. Rocher sounded four blasts of distress. Two deckhands rolled out lifeboats.

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Jacksonville and South Jacksonville fire departments raced to the shore. The sister ferry *Fletcher* stood by to rescue passengers. The fireboat *Callahan*, ( which had come into the Jacksonville Fire Department in 1922) placed its brow against the burning ship and nudged it to the Southside shore.

The *Jackson* was grounded 100 feet out. The passengers were saved. The fire was put out.

## **Prohibition And Depression**

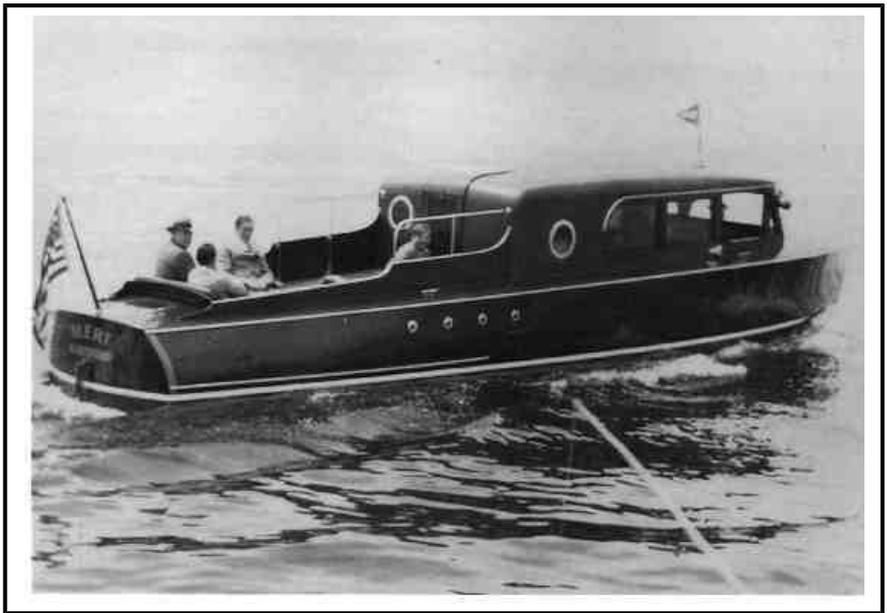
The 1920s brought two national phenomena into Jacksonville's culture: Prohibition and the Great Depression.

On January 16, 1919, this amendment, Number 18, was ratified in the United States Constitution:

*After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.*

When the entire United States went dry, Demon Rum became illegal everywhere in the country... but Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Bahamas lay with in the range of speedboats which operated out of Jacksonville.

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### **Al Capone's Speedboat *Flying Cloud***

In 1928, notorious underworld figure Al Capone bought a 32 foot powerboat, *Flying Cloud*, in Jacksonville. He used it for parties and possibly rum running. In 1933 Capone was put in prison for tax evasion and his boat was put up for sale in 1937 to satisfy his debts.

Local and federal revenue agents fought the illegal importation of liquor.

When smugglers saw revenue cutters approaching, they dashed for shallow water and threw cases of whiskey overboard attached to marker buoys.

But if the revenuers saw the buoys, they'd confiscate the liquor.

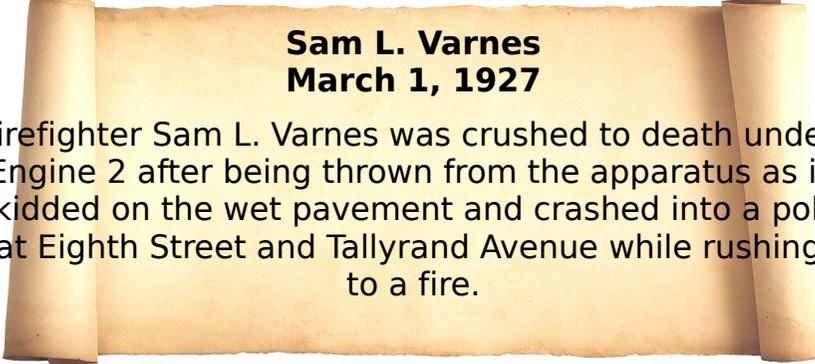
So, when they threw the liquor overboard, the criminals anchored their buoys with heavy bags of salt.

In a few hours, after the revenuers left, water dissolved the salt, the buoy floated to the surface, and the smugglers would retrieve their cargo...

Until the sheriff learned that slick trick<sup>62</sup>.

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In spite of the Law's best efforts Jacksonville remained soaking wet while legally dry.



**Sam L. Varnes**  
**March 1, 1927**

Firefighter Sam L. Varnes was crushed to death under Engine 2 after being thrown from the apparatus as it skidded on the wet pavement and crashed into a pole at Eighth Street and Tallyrand Avenue while rushing to a fire.

The beginning of the Great Depression in the United States is associated with the stock market crash on October 29, 1929, a day known as Black Tuesday.

Thousands of companies went bankrupt and closed throwing millions of people out of work. Inflation soared. Work and money disappeared.

Within a year, 24,000 people in Jacksonville faced starvation. Men turned to begging in the streets till city government banned all beggars except for "cripples who sell newspapers".

The city tried public works projects to hire the unemployed. Pay for unmarried men was a dollar a day; married men earned a dollar and a half per day.

To keep hoards of job seekers from the north at bay, Jacksonville stipulated that only city residents could work for these wages.

To give as many people as possible a chance to earn a living, hours for all city employees were cut; first to 30 hours a week, then to 24 hours. One crew would work Monday to Wednesday; another from Thursday to Saturday.

Firefighters held on to their jobs by the skin of their teeth.

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By December, 1932, city government turned Camp J. Clifford R. Foster into “an unemployment, relief and concentration camp”. A thousand unmarried men were gathered there.

Jacksonville Mayor John T. Alsop said, “Jobless men who have been begging on the streets will be given an opportunity to enter the camp...If they do not want to... they will be sent to the city prison farm”<sup>63</sup>.

Remember the opening scene of the movie *King Kong* when Fay Wray fainted in the soup line?

That scene could have been filmed in Jacksonville.

But even though soup kitchens opened here to keep people from starvation, in August, 1931, ten thousand destitute people in need of immediate assistance marched on city hall demanding a chance to work. A Welfare Federation report said:

*Reports of suffering in many homes throughout the city are on file at Federation headquarters. There are hundreds of undernourished children... A number of workers for the Federation have heard children at night crying for food. In many homes, babies have not been given milk for more than four weeks. In other homes, families are existing on bread and water alone for month after month*<sup>64</sup>.

One person who responded to this dire need was Eartha White .

She said that we can demonstrate the love of Jesus by, “Doing all you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, for all the people you can — While you can”.

In 1928, at the start of the depression she established the Clara White Mission. Here work continues to this day. The Mission’s website<sup>65</sup> says:

The spirit of the Clara White Mission began in the late 19th century when Clara White served free hot soup indiscriminately from her back door to the hungry and homeless in Jacksonville. Clara was a former slave and worked as a stewardess aboard

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luxury steamships that cruised the St. Johns River at the century's close. Her daughter, Eartha Mary Magdalene White, expanded the activity and officially established the "mission work" as an agency in 1904. Clara and Eartha had a loving relationship and worked together to improve the condition of the poor and helpless people in Jacksonville....

In 1928, eight years after the death of Clara White, Eartha White established the "Clara White Mission" as a memorial to her mother.



Inspired by the dedication and love her mother had for other people, White used her skills as a business woman, Educator, and Philanthropist to serve humanity. The Mission relocated from White's home to the Globe Theater building (historic LaVilla, 1932) and became the base for all of her community service activities. The Mission operated a myriad of programs throughout the city, including the "Old Folks Home", Mercy Hospital, and a program for youthful offenders, "The Boys Improvement Club." In many cases, the Mission was the final resort for abandoned children, the elderly, and the mentally and physically handicapped.

During the Depression, The Works Progress Administration (WPA) used the Mission for a base of employment and as a base for cultural activities. The WPA Sewing Project provided African American women with jobs as Seamstresses. Many of these women were the only wage earners in their families.

Even in those hard times, Jacksonville did not lose its sense of humor. A popular joke of the day ran:

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Hobo — “Say Mister, do you have a nickel for a cup  
of coffee?”

Business Man — “No, but I’ll get along somehow”.

As the Great Depression played out, building permits began to be issued and jobs began opening up<sup>66</sup>.

One of the construction projects undertaken to provide job relief during the Depression was building the Main Street Bridge over the St. Johns. The new bridge, linking Jacksonville with the city of South Jacksonville, was not opened till 1941. But, to better serve the expanding city, as early as in 1932, the City had annexed South Jacksonville, and Engine Co. No. 12 was placed in service.

**Harry L. Graves**  
**June 30, 1933**

Fireman Harry L. Graves was killed when the Station 4, Hook and Ladder Co. No. 2 truck on which he was riding was broadsided at Davis and Church streets by Fire Engine No. 7 rushing to the same fire. Mr. Graves, riding on the right running board, was directly in the path of the engine as it crashed.

Six other firemen were injured, three seriously, in the department's worst crash in its history.

**Jerman J. Williams**  
**March 21, 1934**

Fireman Jerman J. Williams was shot and killed while attempting to flag down a driver to keep him from running over a fire hose that was providing water to a house fire at Johnson and State streets.

Ironically, Mr. Williams, the son-in-law of Fire Chief W.Q. Dowling, had taken the place of fireman Harry Graves (killed in action, 1933) on Hook and Ladder Co. No. 2 at Station 4, rode in the same seat and even used his same locker.



Chief W.Q. Dowling  
Sept. 1, 1933-May 6, 1943

**Chief 1933-1943**

**William Q. Dowling** spent 42 years in the fire department, his last 10 as chief. He lived in a house adjoining Central Station. Under his leadership, the department became a model for efficient management, equipment and personnel, and the city's insurance rates were extremely low.

He was a member of the International Fire Chiefs



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Association and one-time president of the Southeastern Fire Chiefs Association.

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## Chief Thomas W. Haney's Death



At the age of 78, on July 19, 1939, Chief Haney died.

His obituary<sup>67</sup> said: "He retired in 1926 at the age of 65 having seen his department grow from a small organization with a central station and three sub-stations to one of the finest in the country..."

"Haney was chief during the period when there was more romance, less science, to fire fighting than there is today. Hardly a boy lived in Jacksonville during the first half of the century who didn't want to be a fire chief 'like Chief Haney is' when he grew up."

Among the Chief's last words were these, "If any firemen attend my funeral, have them do so in uniform."

Chief Haney's obituary ran with a photograph of him holding a brass speaking trumpet while directing firemen. The photo caption notes,

Jacksonville "Firemen no longer use speaking trumpets, or dash to fires in swaying horse-drawn wagons. Radios and loud speakers have supplanted the trumpet, and sleek trucks and automobiles have taken the place of



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the wagons."

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## World War II

In Jacksonville, World War II appeared to start in the same place and in the same way as World War I — with sabotage and fire at the Clyde Line Docks at the foot of Market Street.



At 9 a.m. on June 8, 1941, six months before Pearl Harbor, hellish flames erupted on the piers of Jacksonville's best shipping terminal. Three hundred workers and passengers ran for their lives as first one pier then another caught fire trapping the liner *Seminole* between them. The ship's captain had lines cast off and pulled to the middle of the river channel with both sides of the ship scorched and a fire on board.



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Incidentally, many Clyde Line ships were named after Indian tribes; and many streets in Jacksonville's Riverside and Ortega sections were named after the ships rather than the Indian tribes per se.

Anyhow, Big Jim, Jacksonville's municipal whistle, blasted the fire alarm call. Virtually every unit of the Fire Department responded. Every firefighter, as well as soldiers, sailors, the American Legion, Boy Scout troops, Coast Guardsmen, customs officers and civilian volunteers rushed to the docks. Had the fire spread from the docks, the entire downtown area stood in danger. That danger mobilized everyone.

Station Five on Riverside Avenue was manned by the Neptune Beach Fire Department freeing local firemen to respond to the crisis at the docks.

By the end of the day two of the three shipping terminals had been destroyed; 15 firefighters were hospitalized at St. Vincent's Hospital; and over 200 volunteers fighting the blaze were treated in a field hospital brought in from Camp Blanding.

Fortunately no one died from their injuries.

"Jacksonville was thrust sharply into the limelight as the latest scene of apparent sabotage that is sweeping the country," wrote S.E. Lorimier of *The Florida Times-Union*.

That Jacksonville posed a prime target for the enemy is borne out by the fact that during the war, shipyard workers here constructed and launched 82 Liberty Ships. Each one 441 feet long with a carrying capacity equal to 300 boxcars. Liberty Ships transported thousands of troops overseas and 2/3 of all cargo that departed the United States<sup>68</sup>. Besides these, numerous Victory ships, mine-sweepers and Torpedo boats also were built here.

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**Launch ways at St Johns River Shipbuilding Company. during World War II where 82 Liberty Ships were constructed.**

Right after the Clyde Dock Fire, the Jacksonville Civil Defense Council called for a volunteer fire brigade of men 21 to 35 physically fit to do the job. Second Assistant Fire Chief J.B. Chancey cited the threat of multiple arson dividing the firefighting force. More than 500 men responded to that call.

The City Commission called for \$6,000 a month for watchmen. The City Council concurred, with the caveat that watchmen only be "men trusted and true, of good character and patriotic verve".

"We cannot be too careful in the selection of these men to protect the city's property against acts of saboteurs," said Councilman Lee Booth.<sup>69</sup>

One of those guards was Army Private O.C. O'Conner.

**The War's First Casualty**

Private O.C. O'Conner became Jacksonville's first homefront casualty only five days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

The St Johns River Bridge, better known as the Acosta Bridge, the first automobile bridge across the river, provided a vital link for traffic through Florida.

The old bridge came over from Southside to end in a T at the north end on a viaduct over railroad tracks.

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One arm of the T ended lead to Broad Street; the other to Riverside Avenue.

Many industrial buildings, including the 666 Monticello Drug Company, a foundry, and the Educator Biscuit Co. nestled within the arms of that T underneath the roadways.

A strategic spot.

In the cold night of December 12, 1941, close to midnight, Pvt. O.Conner guarded the bridge approach from the roof of the Educator Biscuit Co.

The *Florida Times-Union* newspaper reported:

*From out of the sky, without warning,  
an automobile fell on top of Pvt. O'Conner.*

*No wailing siren.*

*No blazing searchlight.*

*No ack-ack of protecting artillery.*

*No Zeros, no dive-bombers...*

*Just, KA-BAM!*

*All of a sudden Pvt. O.C. O'Conner was under a car.*

*The good news was that he suffered only a broken ankle.*

Firemen from Station Five on Riverside Avenue responded as did military and police units.

When all was sorted out, it was determined that Pvt. O'Conner's post on the roof of the biscuit company overlooked the vital railroad tracks. His post lay 13 feet below the roadway of the viaduct and in a straight line from the bridge roadway.

A drunk driver, an insurance salesman from Marietta, Ga., drove straight off through the T, crashed through fence and guardrail, sailed through the air and landed on all four wheels right on top of the unsuspecting guard.

The belligerent drunk fought first responders but was overwhelmed and jailed on a number of charges.

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At dawn, military and civil authorities increased security about vital targets such as Jacksonville's hospitals, power plants, schools, bridges, shipyards and railroads.

A fresh guard was stationed atop the Educator Biscuit Company.

Such precautions proved necessary.

## **Sub Attack**

On April 10, 1942, thousands of helpless spectators gathered in the dark along the boardwalk at Jacksonville Beach to watch an enormous fire just off shore.

Kapitanleutenant Reinhard Hardigan, commander of the German submarine *U-123*, had used the lights of the Jacksonville Beach boardwalk to silhouette his target, the *SS Gulfamerica*.

On her maiden voyage the tanker carried 90,000 barrels of aviation fuel. From Texas, she rounded the tip of Florida and hugged the coast northward. The torpedoes exploded in the ship's starboard side at 10:42 p.m. as she was just four miles off Jacksonville Beach.

A massive firestorm erupted.

But the tanker was slow to sink in Gulf Stream water only 60 feet deep.

The German submarine surfaced and shelled the stricken, flaming tanker with her deck gun and machinegun fire.

Even though several boats from shore attempted rescue, 19 of the 48 crewmen and officers aboard the tanker were killed in the torpedo explosion, shot, or drowned.

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**The SS GulfAmerica burned for days and finally sank on April 16<sup>th</sup>.**

**The wreck is now a fishing reef<sup>70</sup>.**

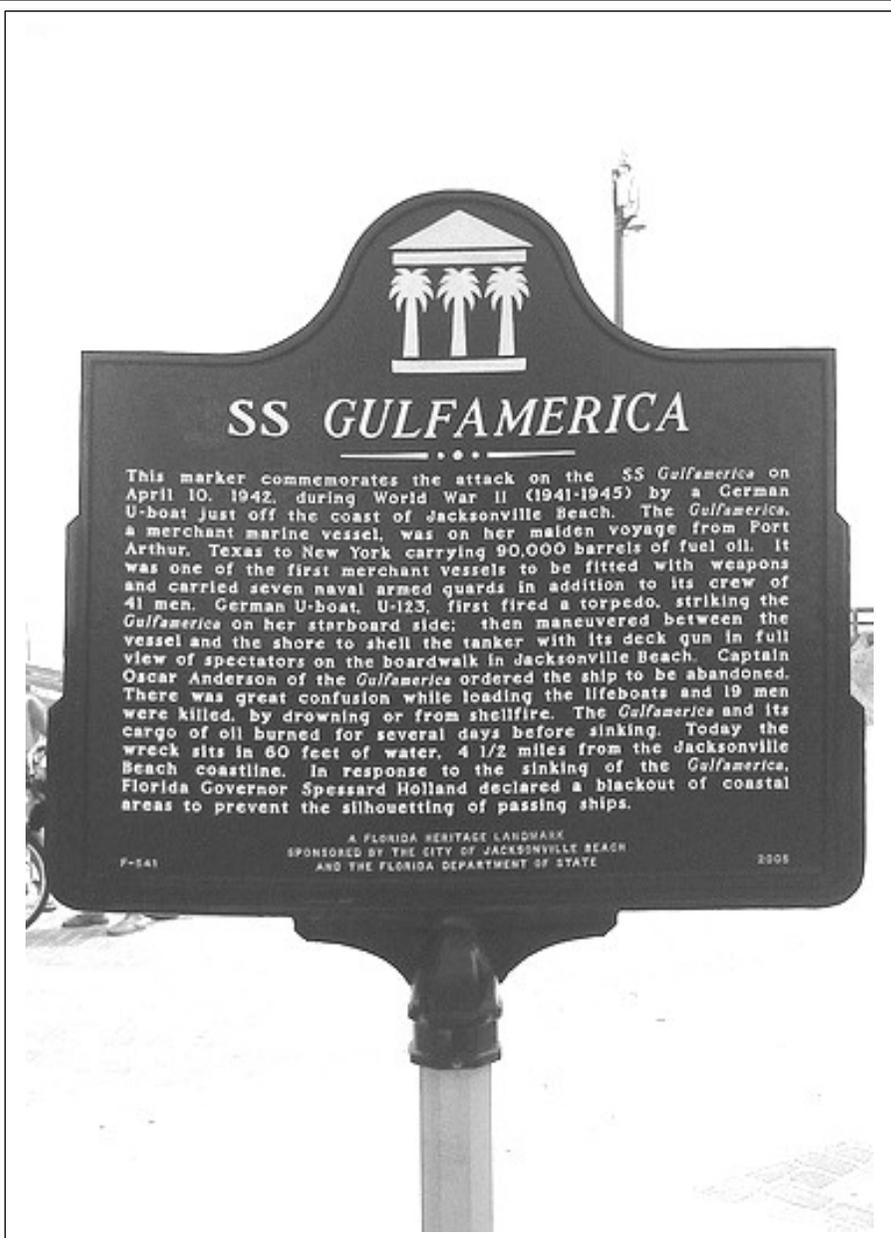
Two months after the sinking of the GulfAmerica, another German submarine, *U-584* landed a team of spies with water-proof boxes packed with explosives on Ponte Vedra Beach just before dawn on June 17, 1942.

Their mission: to explode bombs in crowded places, movie theatres, bus and railway terminals, department stores.

They carried fake writing pens filled with sulphuric acid, an incendiary device with timer to break a glass capsule and ignite intense fires. The team hid their equipment in the sand and made their way to Jacksonville before dispersing on their mission.

An informant tipped off the FBI. This team and another which had landed in New York were arrested within seven days. They were tried on July 8<sup>th</sup>, and electrocuted on August 8<sup>th</sup>.

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### **A historical marker commemorating the sinking of the GulfAmerica**

That summer the FBI conducted 67 raids capturing enemy sympathizers in and around Jacksonville.

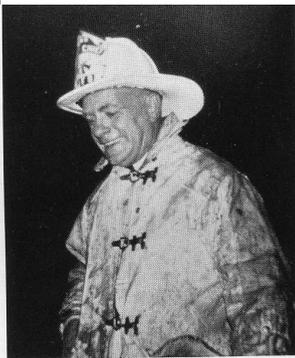
"At least two of those arrested were described by the FBI as dangerous," The *Florida Times-Union* reported.

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"One was reported to have in his possession seven rifles, dynamite and 150 rounds of ammunition. Another had a short-wave receiving set he attempted to conceal after learning of possible action by the FBI."

"The raids netted 32 guns, 30 cameras, 20 radios, 290 rounds of ammunition, eight dynamite caps, German propaganda, maps and charts and assorted blackjacks and knives, the FBI said."

### **Chief 1943-1952**



Chief G.E. Hare  
May 13, 1943-Nov. 16, 1952

**George E. Hare** spent 43 years in the fire department until retiring at the then-mandatory age of 65.

He served as deputy chief for 10 years before being appointed chief.

He joined the department in 1909, at a salary of \$60 a month, when all the equipment was horse drawn and steam pumps were used to create the pressure needed to send streams of water onto fires.

### **William E. Holloway Dec. 24, 1943**

Fireman William E. Holloway was killed in a collision with another automobile at Church and Ocean streets downtown as he was driving Fire Chief George E. Hare to a church fire. The collision caused the department vehicle to veer into a heavy pole, and Mr.

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Holloway,  
the chief's chauffeur, was pinned inside. Chief  
Hare  
also was injured in the accident.

## **Action Overhead!**

The United States Army constructed a mock city of Jacksonville on the 50 yard line of the Gator Bowl and three waves of Air Force planes bombed it with incendiary bombs.

The Jacksonville Fire Department put the fire out.

This happened on January 26, 1943, as part of a civil defense demonstration called Action Overhead. More than 21, 000 people filled the stadium to learn the effect bombs would have on the city when the enemy attacked.

“You will learn what to do and what not to do in dealing with different types of bombs in case the enemy should strike here,” the newspaper said.

. "Don't think for a moment it can't happen here."

The stadium was blacked out except for lights inside the mock houses when the first wave of planes streaked in from the northeast dropping incendiary bombs.

As firefighters rushed to extinguish the blaze, a second wave of bombers appeared from the north dropping explosives. A third wave of planes attacked “Jacksonville” immediately.

Firefighters and civil defense workers darted back and forth amid the flaming ruins squelching fire, rescuing mock victims, evacuating survivors from a bombed hotel.

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Twelve female volunteer firefighters fought flames from the magnesium bombs with sand and pumps.

Spectators left the stadium educated, solemn and silent. The warning echoed in their minds, . "Don't think for a moment it can't happen here."

Partially as a result of the Action Overhead demonstration, 35,000 pounds of scrap tin cans were collected to be salvaged for the war effort and The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) recruited 900 women through its Jacksonville office.

On July 20, 1944—the same day Hitler's own staff tried to assassinate him with a bomb in the Fuehrer's headquarters—two U.S. Army fighter planes collided in the air over Jacksonville.

"Hardly a structure on the north side of Post Street, from 2845 Post to 2935 Post, where Willow Branch Avenue intersects, escaped the flaming, bouncing, crashing planes as they zoomed to destruction," said the July 20, 1944, *Jacksonville Journal*.

"Poles and trees were felled, roofs caved in, walls were shattered and tangled debris was hurled within a radius of five blocks."



The P-51 Mustangs exploded in midair and crashed in Riverside damaging three apartment houses, three garage apartments, and 12 homes.

The crash killed both pilots and one

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person on the ground. It was Jacksonville's worst air disaster up to that time.

Jacksonville fire fighters responded to the emergency at Post and Cherry streets.

Mrs. J.P. Morris, a resident, said "The brick garage apartment behind the main building apparently was hit directly by a plane. For a while it was on fire. I saw firemen drag a child from the debris."

Live wires dangled from trees and sheared off poles making firemen's rescue work hazardous. One wire, "sputtered and spattered sparks everywhere sending on-lookers scurrying for cover."

Well they might because the midair collision ruptured the fuel tanks of the aircraft and sprayed it all over the neighborhood.

One lady, "badly shaken, told of having stepped out of the bathroom door when a motor came crashing through the bathroom, ripping a hole in the outside wall and demolishing everything in its wake."

Three alarms had been sounded and virtually all available fire equipment and men were on the scene. But once the fires were extinguished, the job was not over:

"Firemen poked at loose bricks and removed dangerous hazards (such as a plane's loaded machine gun from a burning garage) as policemen roped off areas and pushed the excited crowds back. Everywhere there seemed to be efficiency, kindness, and aid blended with pitiful bewilderment as Red Cross workers from the Motor Corp (sic) helped the shocked and injured..."

Oddly enough, although the Mustangs were on a training mission out of St. Petersburg, one of the pilots was a graduate of Lee High School; his parents lived just a few blocks from where he crashed<sup>71</sup>.

## **An Eventful Day**

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A few months after those Mustangs crashed in Riverside, a Marine Corsair fighter crashed in Southside near Philips Highway and Belfort Road.

While working another job nearby, a team of Jacksonville firemen saw the pilot parachute from the plane and rushed to aid.

They found no fire at the crash site.

What they did find was two young men from the neighborhood trying to steal the machineguns from the wreckage.

They stopped these fine citizens and called police.

*The Jacksonville Journal* newspaper's February 25, 1945, account of the crash said only "something went wrong." with the airplane. The pilot landed in nearby woods. He suffered only bruises.

Fire Lt. C.W. DuBose said parts of the plane landed near the home of Mr. and Mrs. B.C. Brooks, near Route 1. Plane fragments were strewn over a wide area. Wreckage tore off the Brooks' front porch, Lt. DuBose said. Brooks, ill and helpless in a bed near the porch, escaped injury but was splattered with mud from the yard.

A fighter plane crashing, guys running around with machine guns, fire engines wailing and lights flashing—Mr. Brooks thought the war had come to his front yard.. No one was injured in the incident.

That same day's issue of the *Journal* reported other war news:

On Iwo Jima, Marines of the 28th Regiment, Fifth Division, hoisted the American flag atop the volcano Suribachi after battling the Japanese to the top of the crater..

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On a lighter note, in home-front news, in that same issue, the *Jacksonville Journal* reported, “Bert Marwell of Berkeley, Calif, America's best-known bird-whistler, has scheduled a performance tonight at the George Washington Hotel”. It’s good to know that on that eventful day Jacksonville’s wild nightlife went on in spite of the war.

## Jacksonville Fire Stations In The 1940s

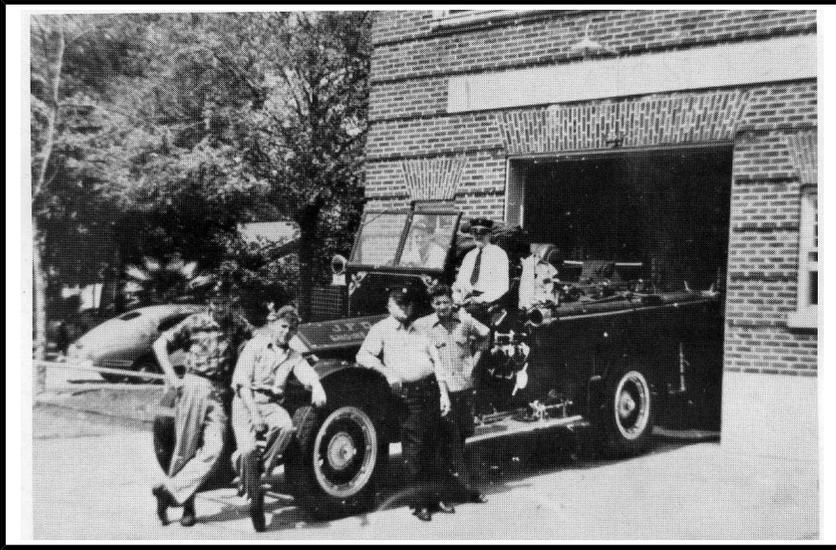


**Station 4 in 1948**



**Station 5 in 1948**





**Station 9 in 1948**



**Station 10 in 1948**



## Chief 1952-1953



Chief J.B. Chancey  
Nov. 16, 1952-Apr. 20, 1953

**Joseph B. Chancey** joined the fire department during the horse-drawn era in 1907. He served eight years as deputy chief and a short tenure as fire chief before reaching mandatory retirement. He served as president of the Florida State Firemen's Association in 1927-28 and in an advisory role helped organize the fire fighting system in Orlando in 1936. He also helped organize the Florida State Fire College.

## Chief 1953 - 1963



Chief F.C. Kelly  
Apr. 20, 1953-Aug. 14, 1963

**Frank C. Kelly** spent 43 years in the fire department, including 10 years as chief, before mandatory retirement at age 65. Known for maintaining strict discipline, Kelly avidly promoted the department and is credited with upgrading its equipment. At the time, he was the only man to be promoted through all department ranks under the civil service system.

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## Firefighting In the '50s

Cockroaches in lots of 100 each were flown into Jacksonville Naval Air Station from Pensacola, Memphis, and Charleston, S.C., to test NAS stocks of chlordane-based pesticide.

The Navy said it suspected local roaches had developed an immunity to their insecticide.

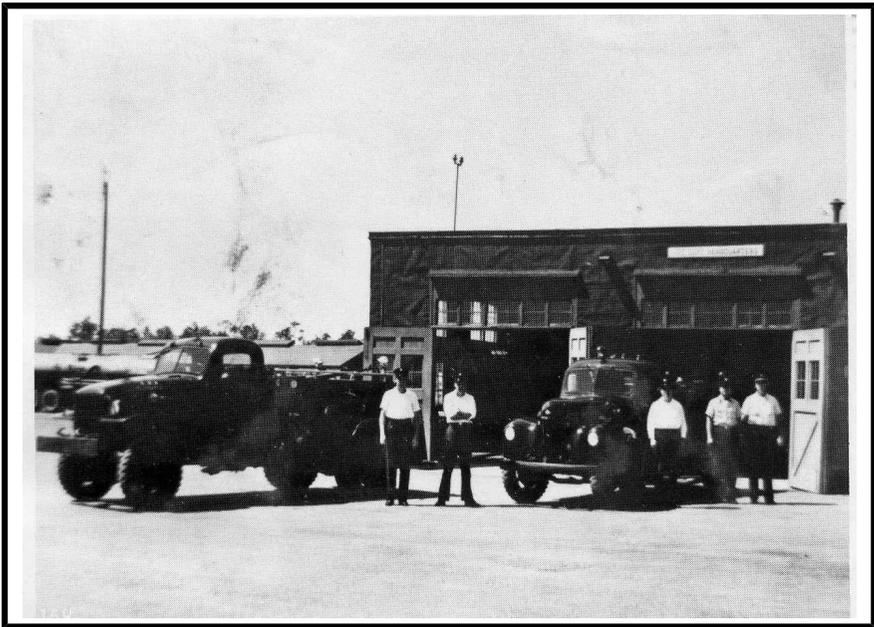
The Navy was sure right about that!

Imported roaches!

Just what Jacksonville needed!

The shipment arrived before Christmas—on December 21, 1955.

That was the day of Jacksonville's first commercial airliner crash at Imeson Airport.



**Station 16, Imeson Airport**

Seventeen people died in the crash; firemen recovered 18 bodies. Eastern Airline Flight # 6423, was transporting a coffin from Miami containing a person to be buried up north.

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Twenty-two Jacksonville passengers intended to board the Lockheed 749C-79-12 Constellation when it landed at 3:40 a.m.

As the four-engine airplane descended through the foggy night, it clipped a stand of pine trees about a half-mile from the runway and plowed into the ground

Dove Etna of 202 Jericho Road, whose home was closest to the burning plane, said she looked out the window and "all I could see was a ball of flame."

"I just knew my house was going, too, and I called the fire department as fast as I could<sup>72</sup>."



### **Jacksonville's Imeson Airport in the 1950s**

City firefighters and several county volunteer fire departments battled the flames until dawn.

Firemen removed the last of the 18 bodies at 6:40 a.m.

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**Wreckage of Eastern Flight 6423**

## **A NEW ERA ON THE ST JOHNS**

In 1946, the Jacksonville Fire Department added two portable iron lungs and two resuscitators to the equipment carried on chiefs' cars.

New equipment was added as it was needed and as technology made it available.

One piece of equipment which proved its worth was the fire boat *John B. Callahan*

In 1946, lightning struck a gasoline tanker, the *Homestead*, unloading aviation fuel at the Standard Oil Terminal on Talleyrand Avenue. Three men were killed.

The fireboat and land-based equipment fought the fire for eight days before bringing it under control.

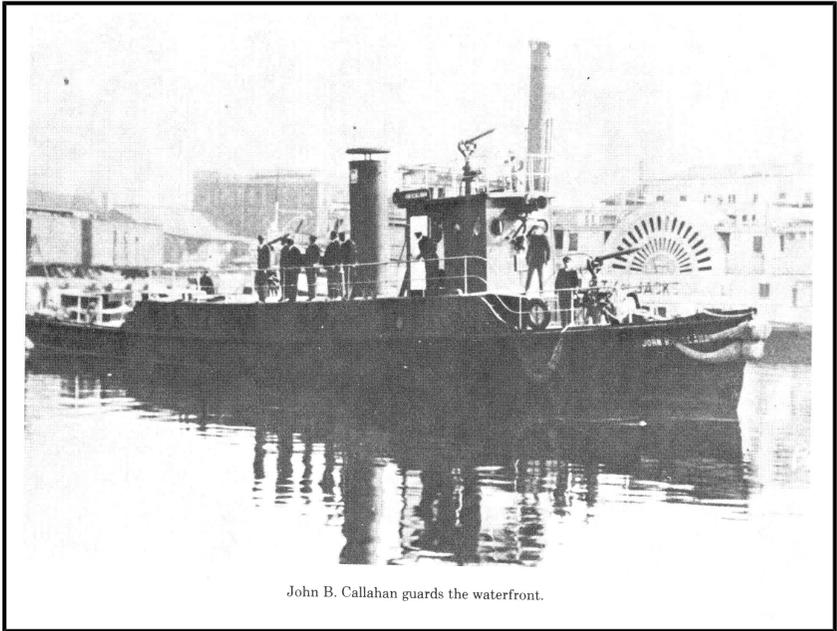
One of the Chief Haney's innovations had been bringing a fire boat to protect Jacksonville's waterfront.

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*John B. Callahan* joined the fire department in 1922; Chief Haney had lobbied for a fire boat for years. The *Callahan* was a converted 110-foot subchaser used in World War I.

The *Callahan* cost \$100.



The city got its moneys worth; the *Callahan* worked on the Jacksonville waterfront for 41 years. The "temporary" fireboat station where the *Callahan* docked was in service for at least 42 years<sup>73</sup>!

On April 30, 1951, the *Richard D. Sutton* came into the department. It served for 20 years, then was cannibalized for parts.

In 1972, Jacksonville Shipyards converted a tug into *Jax No. 1*, a 75-foot, 136 ton vessel with two water turrets capable of pumping 2,000 gallons a minute.

The pumps, turrets and an emergency radio were all salvaged from the *Sutton*<sup>74</sup>. The steel cabin of the *Sutton*<sup>75</sup> ended up as a deck on top of a building at 8063 Buffalo Avenue—it's still there.

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The *Eugene Johnson* came into service in 1971. It originally cost \$240,000. It has three turrets, each capable of spraying 2,000 gallons a minute.

In September, 1985, the *Eugene Johnson* fought a fire caused by an explosion aboard the *Balder Strand*, a 400-foot ship at Blount Island. The Johnson laid lines to the dock to supply water to ground units battling the ship fire.

In March, 2007, Jacksonville Fire Rescue's biggest, fastest and newest fireboat made a splash on the St. Johns —Marine One. The 1,700-horsepower, jet-propelled fireboat is named for Jacksonville's former mayor, Jake Godbold.

At the fireboat's dedication Godbold said, "It's a big thrill to see this boat and see my name on it going up and down the river. I love the river. I love the fire department and I love Jacksonville, so it's a great partnership".

JFRD Chief Larry Peterson said, "Jake means a lot to the history of this fire department. He brought this fire department to one of the top fire departments in the nation, so the only reasonable thing to do was to honor him with his name on this boat".

The *Jake Godbold* is 50 feet long and weighs more than 50,000 pounds. Built in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, the construction took 6-months. With a top speed near 50 mph the two C18 Cat engines deliver 1700 HP and power for a 10 KW generator. The 4 nozzles spout more than 6,500 gallons of water a minute. And the *Jake Godbold* is equipped with a night vision camera. <sup>76</sup>

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... The *John D. Callahan*, Jacksonville's first fireboat, had been taken out of service in 1963—the year of the Roosevelt Hotel Fire.

### **Chief 1963 - 1966**



Chief G.R. Cromartie  
Aug. 14, 1963-Jan. 3, 1966

**George R. Cromartie** joined the fire department in 1927.

He served as an assistant chief for 11 years and deputy chief for two years before his appointment to fire chief.

He was Chief from 1963 to 1966.

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## Jacksonville's Worst Fire

Smiling and waving to cheering fans, Miss America, 21-year-old Donna Axum of El Dorado, Arkansas, appeared during half-time festivities at the 1963 Gator Bowl Game.



The North Carolina Tar Heels defeated the U.S. Air Force Academy Falcons.

After the game, winners celebrated and losers consoled each other late into the night.

Many people, including Miss America, football team members, sports reporters from out-of-town, and many fans in town for the game, stayed at Jacksonville's luxurious Roosevelt Hotel.

At 7:45 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 29, a fire started on one of the lower floors; dense smoke rose through ventilator shafts to the upper floors of the packed hotel.





"When I woke up (I) heard a screeching siren extremely loud, said hotel guest Ernest Prevatte<sup>77</sup>. "I popped up in bed and said to my wife that someone was having a wild party in the place or there is a fire.

"She sprang up and said, 'MY God, is it us?'"

"The question didn't need answering. Smoke was filtering under the door, just a slight trace. I opened the door and smoke burst into our fourth floor room in great volumes...

"Like everyone else we began tying sheets together to make a rope... tying the sheets to the bed... But we didn't have to use them.

"About 8:30, firemen got a ladder to us from the roof of another building... we made it down.."

Not everyone was as fortunate as the Prevattes.

Another guest later said, "I saw a woman trying to climb down from a 12th floor window on a rope sheet. She fell past our window and landed on the street beneath us. I think the sheets broke."

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**Tied bedsheets proved futile.**

A spectator on the ground said, "Firefighting equipment was arriving fast. Some ladders were up and the people in the windows were shouting for them. Sheets dangled helplessly from most of the windows. In some cases they seemed like surrender flags..."

"When I got there that morning there was bed sheets hanging out, people hanging off the bed sheets, people holding hands lowering each other from floor to floor., said Fire Chief Miles Bowers who was already a veteran firefighter in 1963. "I remember it very vividly. It's something that is etched in my mind and it will be there forever".



Since department ladders were not long enough to reach above the seventh floor of the 13-story building, firemen took two measures:

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First they called in Navy helicopters to rescue victims from the roof. "It was horrible," said airline stewardess Carol Faulk, "We tried to get off the 11th floor down the stairs and the smoke was so bad we couldn't get through."<sup>78</sup>

Up was the only route. Miss. Faulk, her roommate and 15 other people were hoisted from the roof by the helicopter.

At the same time the call went out for the helicopter, teams of firemen were climbing the dark smoke-filled stairwells to lead victims out.

"HE DIED TRYING TO SAVE OTHERS" read a *Jacksonville Journal* headline the next day. The newspapers often have used this same headline to describe fire department heroes over the years.

"Assistant Fire Chief James R. Rometry, 49, was doing his job—saving lives—when he lost his own," the paper said.

"We were breaking open doors getting people out of their rooms," said Capt. N.E. Hagen. "The Chief said he had too much smoke and headed downstairs; the eight floor was one of the worst.

"He stopped to rest a moment then headed back up".

"I met him on the sixth floor working my way up," said Private Bill O'Neal. "We went up to the 10th floor or 11th and he stood inside the back stairwell..."

The pair directed four other trapped guests down the stairs and Rometry collapsed—victim of an apparent heart attack. Rometry had been a fireman for 22 years.

**Asst. Fire Chief James R. Rometry  
Dec. 29, 1963**

Asst. Fire Chief James R. Rometry died of a heart attack while attempting to rescue

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trapped  
guests from the 10th and 11th floors during  
the Roosevelt Hotel fire. Twenty one guests  
died in Jacksonville's deadliest fire, while  
479 were  
rescued from the smoke-filled hotel.

That Sunday morning, the pastor of Snyder Memorial Methodist Church was preaching on Philippians 2 -- "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God... took upon him the form of a servant... He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The pastor cut his sermon short and opened the church as a refugee center for fire victims.

"Rescue operations had swung into full gear and there was no stinting," the newspaper said.

"Firemen risked their lives. Policemen risked their lives. Helicopter pilots risked their lives. Just plain people risked their lives. The nerve and muscle of Jacksonville was strained toward one objective—Get those people out of that hotel!

"While firemen grimly battled to douse the blaze inside the dark, smoke-filled lobby, others worked on the outside taking people down 100-foot steel ladders from the windows to safety... All of the heroism shown this day will never be completely recounted for. It seemed to be commonplace."

Officers on the scene estimated that about half those rescued were brought down ladders extended from the fire trucks.

The manager of the downtown May Cohens opened the store and supplied clothing and shoes to dress fire victims. Many had escaped with only blankets wrapped around them.

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Of the 500 guests registered at the hotel that night 21 died but firemen rescued 479 people. A hundred people including 20 firefighters were treated for injuries, most of them for smoke inhalation.

When a fireman finally lead Ned Huffman's family down from their 12th floor room, a reporter asked how long they had been trapped up there?

"About three years," Mr. Huffman said, "It was about three years."

News reports said, "Among the jam of police cars, emergency vehicles and fire trucks parked in front of the hotel was Miss America's 1964 white convertible. She was taken to Baptist Memorial Hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation."



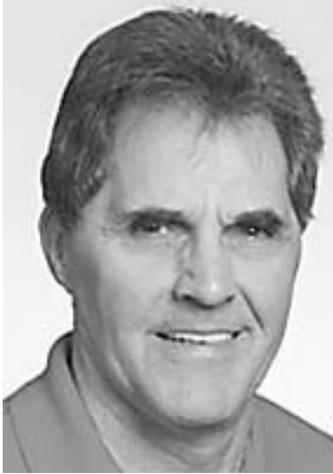
**Miss America Donna Axum**

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## The Roosevelt Hotel Fire Remembered

The morning of the Roosevelt Hotel fire, Robert C. Sorensen had only been a firefighter for three years. Thirty years after the disaster,, as part of an Oral History Project, Fire Captain Sorensen recorded his memories of that fire<sup>79</sup>:



**S**ometimes when we kicked the doors open there'd be dead people in there laying on the floor or the bed or over by the window or whatever.

Sometimes there'd be firemen already in the room giving mouth-to-mouth. You know back in those days we didn't have CPR that's known today.

And we would do that until we were just wore out and another fireman would relieve us, or an officer would come by and pronounce people dead. Then, four or five of us would carry

that person downstairs.

Of all the people, the dead ones that I came across, three of them in particular just remain ingrained in my mind. One of them was a real large man that was lying across the hallway. He apparently had left his room - he must have weighed 300 pounds - and he apparently got disoriented and finally just passed out. And he was laying across the hallway.

When I came up to him, one of the officers said, 'Ignore him. He's already dead. Go help somebody else.'

So throughout the day on that floor, we stepped over that fellow. Later on that day, I think, four or five people carried him out. I can still see him laying there . . . it was an eerie sight for a young man.

And, another one I remember was . . . I turned in one room and there were a couple of fellows that had just finished doing mouth-to-mouth on this little girl - well, I say little girl - she was about 20 years old. And she had on powder blue, baby-doll pajamas laying there and looked like she was asleep and they said she was dead. But I looked at her . . . I couldn't believe she was dead. She looked like she



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was Sleeping Beauty waiting for the prince to come to kiss her and wake her up. I stood there and just stared at her. And finally I left and went to another room.

I think it was on the seventh or eighth floor, I came down one door and turned in. There's four or five firemen there standing in a line while one was working mouth-to-mouth on the guy on the floor. I thought: Well, they have enough so I'll leave, and I started leaving and the lieutenant said, 'Stay here, get in line. This is our chief.' And so I looked down and recognized it was Chief Romydy.

And so I waited until my turn came, and I was finally next to give mouth-to-mouth. Then a doctor came in the room and examined him and pulled a pocket knife out of his pocket and did a tracheotomy on the site.

And I had never seen that before.

Like I said, I was a rookie.

And he took a pocket knife out and cut a little slit in his neck and pulled his windpipe out and worked on him for three or four minutes and finally he said, 'He's dead.'

And that kind of stuck in my mind. I had never seen anything like that before. The rest of the dead people were just blank faces to me, but those three people - still to this day - remain vivid in my mind."

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## **BACKTRACKING To THE '50s AND '60s**

Was the Roosevelt Jacksonville's worst fire?

Lt. Mose Bowden, curator of the Jacksonville Fire Museum, fought the fire at the Roosevelt and at the Triangle Tank Farm Fire.

"There's no such thing as a good fire," he said. "Every fire is bad. Any one you respond to could be the worst."

Lt. Bowden said the 1950s brought a new era in firefighting.

When Station 17 opened in December, 1950, a newspaper said: "After the firemen get their petunias out and the rest of the landscaping done, they will have one of the handsomest stations in town."

During the 1950s and '60s, the men of the Jacksonville Fire Department more and more often found themselves fighting fires characterized by the era's new technology. New building materials which produce toxic fumes, industrial products, and dangerous chemical compounds confronted firefighters more and more often.

Better trained men with specialized equipment met the challenge.

For instance, on March 16, 1953, Apperson Chemicals Inc., 2903 Strickland St., exploded. The 8:39 p.m. fire drew huge crowds of spectators.

More than a hundred 55-gallon drums of various chemicals blew up periodically as seven engine companies and two hook and ladder companies fought the blaze.

When asked what chemicals the blazing plant contained, a plant official said, "Just about everything!"

Fire Chief J.B. Chancey later determined the tanks held sulphuric acid, alcohol, carbon, acetylene gas, carbide, ammonia, etc.

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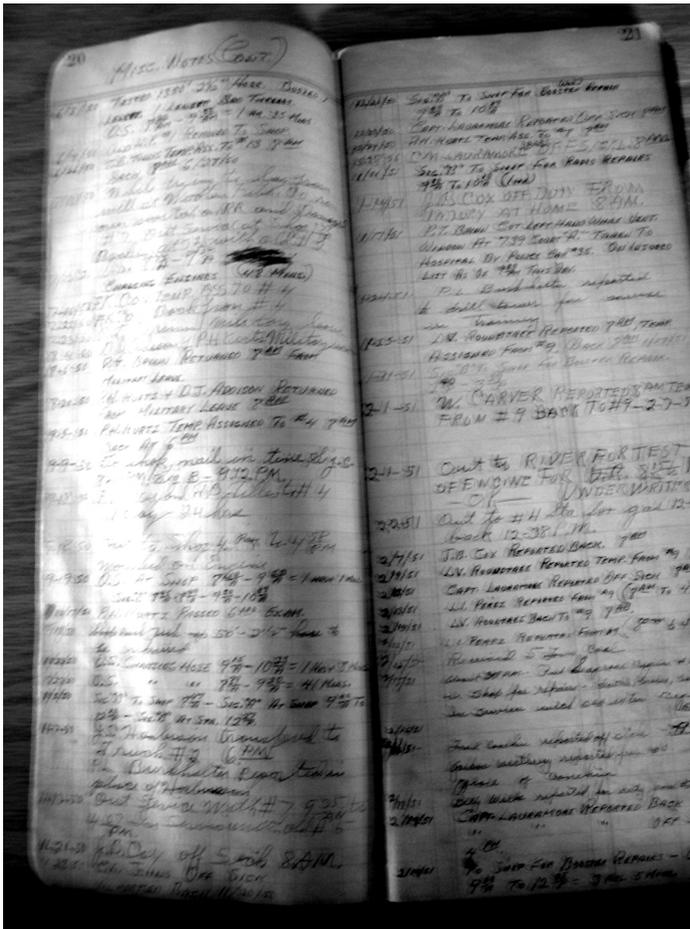
They popped according to their individual contents and temperature. The barrels scooted like rockets, plowing furrows along the ground amid the fire fighters.

"High pressure oxygen and acetylene tanks with steel a quarter of an inch thick were ripped apart like flimsy paper," a newspaper said.<sup>80</sup>

As tanks and drums exploded, firemen and spectators alike jumped for cover underneath the fire trucks. The blasts sent steel tanks hurtling hundreds of yards away from the site..Firemen 250 yards away from the plant "worked amid a shower of steel, metal and glass that fell around them like shrapnel on a battle field," the paper said.

The newspaper does not tell how the petunias were doing that soft Spring night.

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## 1950s Incident Report Ledger In Jacksonville Fire Museum

How do buildings catch fire?

Incident report ledgers from the 1950s in the Jacksonville Fire Museum contain entry after entry with the note **D.K.** — meaning witnesses on the scene swore they didn't know how the fire got started.

It's like the old joke about the drunk who denied that he was smoking in bed; he swore, "It was on fire when I lay down on it".

## Jacksonville Fire Stations In The 1950s



High Pressure 4 1950

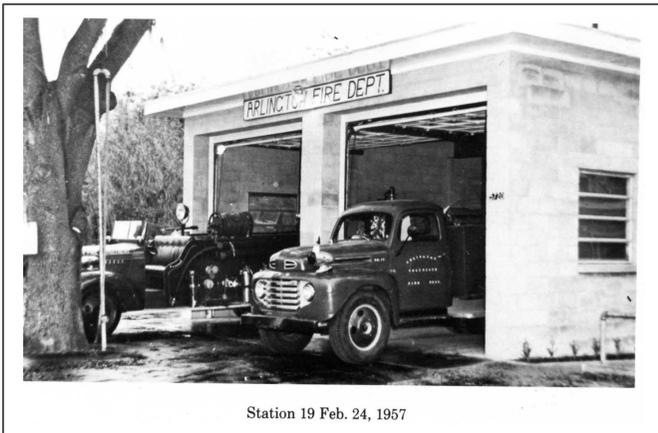


Ladder 10 Davis St. 1950



Engine 7 1950

Station 15 — Engine 6 1950's



In other news from the '50s, on June 10, 1954, the Jacksonville City Commission raised salaries. After that

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date all city firemen earned a minimum wage of 90 cents an hour for a 72 hour work week.

In 1957, Jacksonville's 345 firemen answered 2,949 in-town alarms and 143 out of the city. Their equipment included seven 1,000 gallon-per-minute pumper engines, a 100-foot aerial ladder truck, two 75 and two 65-foot aerial trucks, two high-pressure trucks. Hose inventory included 4,650 feet of booster hose; 10,900 feet of 10-inch hose; 43,000 feet of 20 inch; and 6,600 feet of 3-inch hose.

## **AX-HANDLE SATURDAY**

In his book *Hanna Fish*, police officer Jim Mangels tells the story:

A crowd watched as Sheriff Dirge and Deputy Jeremy Tingle arranged the noose for the first public hanging of a woman in the town.

Hannah Fish, a slave woman, chopped her master, Jacob Henly, to death in the field with a potato hoe; she was sick of him raping her.

“The first blow caught him in his left arthritic kneecap, shattering it in a half-dozen places...Swinging with all her might, Hannah brought the full swing of the hoe into full contact with Jacob’s head...The corner of the hoe entered his head just behind the left eye cutting all the way through the socket”.

“I did it,” she testified at her trial. “I did it. I killed the son of a bitch. He’ll never rape a slave again. Never! Never! Never!...I kilt Jacob Henly... He needed killing and I done it”.<sup>81</sup>

This reputedly happened in the late 1700s or early 1800s, the exact date remains lost, but at the time Jacksonville was still called Cowford.

During the Civil War, many yankee troops invading Jacksonville were former slaves. Tradition says they raped and looted and pillaged and murdered white southerners. My Grandmother said they killed white children and fed their bodies to hogs.

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From those long ago days to the present, hard feelings persist. Racial tensions and conflicts crop up again and again in our history.

Such tensions came to a head on August 27, 1960—later called Ax Handle Saturday—as people, black and white, struggled to gain civil rights and adjust to integration.

That hot August brought sit-in demonstrations to downtown Jacksonville. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, a group of about 30 people from an NAACP Youth Council at a Presbyterian church went to the W.T. Grant store on Main Street; another group went to Woolworth's on Hogan Street.

They sat at the stores' lunch counters and were refused service.

At the same time, a group of about 200 whites, some armed with ax handles, gathered in Hemming Park.

As youth council left the stores, a confrontation erupted.

"I really did not think adults would attack children with baseball bats and ax handles," said Alton Yates, youth council vice president. "That was particularly unreal to me. It was an horrific thing to watch."<sup>82</sup>

A *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper reporter said, "Whites were looking for any black. They would surround him, knock him down, kick him, whack the hell out of him".<sup>83</sup>

Members of a black gang called the Boomerangs joined the fray. Police officers intervened. Common practice dictated that fire hoses spray the scene to quell hot tempers.

The violence of Ax Handle Saturday injured 50 people; police arrested 62 others.

A *Times-Union* report 40 years later said, "Within weeks after the clash, white and black committees started meeting to discuss how to integrate the city's private and public establishments. In April 1961, ... the

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NAACP's youth council secretary, Marjorie Meeks, ate lunch for a week at Woolworth's white counter to prepare segregationists for the evolution to integration".<sup>84</sup>

## FORGIVENESS

On Ax Handle Saturday, when he got off work and headed home, a 17-year-old cafeteria worker at Morrison's on Monroe Street across from Hemming Park, was beaten about the head and shoulders.

He ran to a policeman for aid; the cop brushed him off saying, "Get out of town before they kill you".

Years later, the people of Jacksonville elected that same young man, Nat Glover, as our first black sheriff since Reconstruction days.

In 1999, as part of an oral history project, Sheriff Glover made an audio recording<sup>85</sup> in which he told about an experience he had at a community meeting:



A gentleman approached me and asked if he could talk with me. I told him: 'You certainly may,' but I had to finish what I was doing at the time. I can remember he was standing off on the side waiting patiently to speak to me. Somehow it was clear in my mind that he wanted to be the

last one to speak to me,... He didn't want anyone to hear what he had to say.

And he did diligently wait, and he came up afterward . . . everybody had pretty much left, and he said that he had read in the newspaper about my account of the incident when I was a student, a 17-year-old youngster at Morrison's cafeteria and the confrontation I had at Woolworth's that day. And that he had been a part of that mob that day.

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And he wanted me to forgive him. I think as he stood there with tears in his eyes and obviously emotionally distraught as a result of it, my response to him was that if any way my forgiving you would vindicate you from this emotional trauma you are feeling as a result of being a part of that . . . I wanted him to know that I forgave him.

And he left. And that was rather traumatic for me emotionally as well.

But I have to say to sit here as sheriff of my hometown, a city which I love and have been a resident of all my life, it's truly been a blessing. And as I reflect on that incident and where I've been able to come from to where I am now, I have to think that somehow God allowed me to experience that day so that I can be here this day as sheriff of Duval County, 'cause certainly it allows me to have the sensitivity in having experienced those . . . the type of incident that I experienced. It makes me a better, more sensitive sheriff.'

## **OTHER RECORDS FROM THE 1960s**

By 1960, the Jacksonville Fire Department fielded 495 men and went on the three-platoon system. In November the department shifted from a 72 hour work week to a 56 hour work week. Thus, 93 new firefighters were hired and 83 veterans promoted.

Materials from the Jacksonville Fire Museum Archives compiled by Curator Linda Treadwell<sup>86</sup> record events of the 60s Decade:

**June 10, 1960** A Sinclair Refinery Company Truck and a F.E.C. freight engine collide on San Marco Boulevard causing a gasoline fire and severely injuring five men. Damage is estimated at \$93,000. Four of the five injured died as a result of their injuries.

**September 24, 1961** Six persons burned to death and another 10 suffered severe burns when a one ton stake-body truck overturned at Lee and Bay Streets. Leaking gasoline ignited causing an inferno.

**June 5, 1962** The Jacksonville County Commission approved a contract with the Seagrave Corporation for the purchase of seven new fire engines. The total price: \$127,855.

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**June 22, 1962** In what as seen as the first steps towards providing EMS to the citizens of Jacksonville, Assistant Fire Chief James Dowling Jr. appeared at a special meeting of the State Committee On Trauma hosted by the American College of Surgeons. At this meeting, Dowling blasted Jacksonville's ambulance companies, citing that they were more interested in getting people to funerals than to the hospital.

**June 9, 1963** Smoke and heat felled 26 firefighters at a spectacular waterfront fire at the Jacksonville Warehouse Company next to the Acosta Bridge. Eighteen Firefighters were treated and released while eight others were admitted to local hospitals. Damage: \$60,000.

**1963** was also the year of a blaze at the Duke Storage Company, a warehouse where candy was stored—lots of candy. Years after he retired, Walter Taylor, who fought that fire, said, "It looked like an atomic bomb! That was a mess! We were up to our waist in hot water and melted chocolate<sup>87</sup>".

**September, 1965-** The high pressure system originally placed in service in 1909 was equipped with a new system. The new system cost \$155,000. These pumps have a capacity of 3,250 gallons per minute at 175 psi each. The station can be operated from Fire Communications by remote control. Three engineers are assigned to the station at all times, with one always being on duty at Fire Headquarters at all times.

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## Chief 1966 - 1968



Chief W.A. Jackson  
Jan. 3, 1966-Aug. 1, 1968

**Wingate A. Jackson Jr.** spent 40 years in the Jacksonville fire department. During his two and a half years tenure as chief, he oversaw the formation of the city's emergency rescue service, acquisition of more modern fire fighting equipment, and advance planning for the

department under the new consolidated city government.

**February 15th, 1967-** The Jacksonville Fire Department begins to respond to Emergency Medical calls after private companies refuse to answer police calls as a protest against people who wouldn't pay for the service. The calls are being handled by five Fire Department station wagons with three firefighters trained in first-aid. Riding out of Station 1 is Assistant Chief Dowling, considered the Father of Rescue in Jacksonville, along with David Baxter and Bill Murray.

### **Dillard D. Pinkston** **May 22, 1967**

Fireman Dillard D. Pinkston died of an apparent heart attack while reeling in a hose after extinguishing a garage fire on Mackinaw Street in Woodstock Park.

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**October 31, 1967** Twenty firefighters were injured at the Frito Lay Plant. A liquid chemical known as AROCLOR was released and fell on a boiler. The liquid turned to gas, exploding the boiler and creating a fire.

**November 9, 1967** The Jacksonville Fire Department, starting at Noon, will handle emergency ambulance calls throughout the City of Jacksonville. The city charges \$17.50 for an emergency run.

**December 22, 1967-** A two-alarm fire at The Apperson Chemical Company, 2903 Strickland Street, releases deadly chlorine gas fumes, sending 17 firefighters to the hospital.



Chief J.J. Hubbard  
Oct. 1, 1968-Feb. 16, 1971

**Chief 1968 - 1971**

**John J. Hubbard** joined the department in 1927 on the same day as former chief George R. Cromartie.

Hubbard led the department's expansion of services following

consolidation.

**January 12, 1968** Bobby Claxton named 1967 Fireman of the Year. Claxton, of Ladder 4, rescued a 5 year old boy from a burning home.

**April 1, 1968** The first box-type rescue unit was delivered to Jacksonville and placed into service at Fire Station Number 5.

**Arthur W. Hutt**  
**May 1, 1968**

Arthur W. Hutt, a 15-year-old junior fireman with the Mandarin Volunteer Fire Department, was killed when he and a large sign he was holding down were blown off the back of a

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Mandarin Volunteer Fire Department truck on State Road 13. Firemen were taking the 4-by-6-foot sign advertising the department's annual fund-raising barbecue to the intersection of State Road 13 and Beauclerc Road.

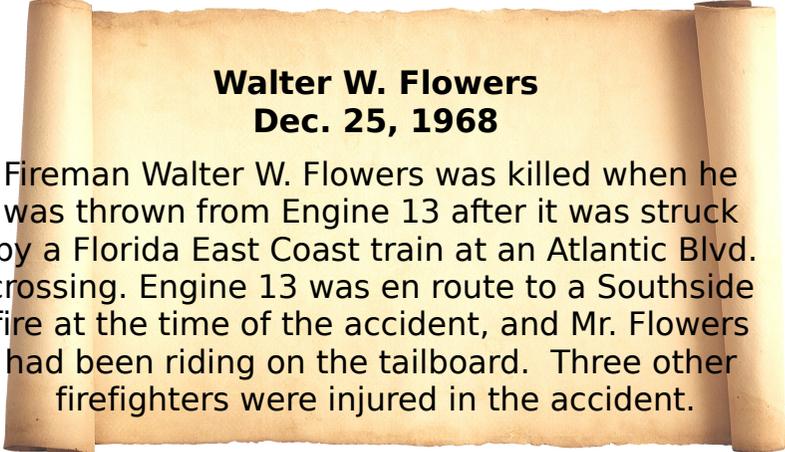
**July 1968** The Jacksonville Fire Department's Rescue Division received a federal grant for \$2,275,495. In its first seven months, the Rescue Division has logged 2,932 calls.

**July 1, 1968** The old Gamewell Fire Alarm System is replaced by a telephone reporting system.

**October 1, 1968** The City of Jacksonville consolidated with Duval County. The Jacksonville Fire Department merged with the Duval County Fire Department. John Waters was appointed as the Public Safety Director. The Jacksonville Fire Department and the Duval County Fire Department merge to become the Jacksonville Fire Division.

**October 21, 1968** The first city ambulance is placed into service in a former county fire station, operating out of Fire Station 22 at 2032 Jammes Road.

**November 29, 1968** Rescue 10 collided with a police car at the intersection of Park and King Streets in Riverside.



**Walter W. Flowers**  
**Dec. 25, 1968**

Fireman Walter W. Flowers was killed when he was thrown from Engine 13 after it was struck by a Florida East Coast train at an Atlantic Blvd. crossing. Engine 13 was en route to a Southside fire at the time of the accident, and Mr. Flowers had been riding on the tailboard. Three other firefighters were injured in the accident.

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**May 2, 1969** George H. Smith becomes the first African-American firefighter hired by the Jacksonville Fire Department since April 1st, 1905.

**June 6, 1969** Lightning struck a #360,000 gallon gasoline storage tank on Commodore's Point. Nine firefighters are injured.

## **HALLOWEEN—1969**

Trouble started—again—when a white man parked his truck at 900 Florida Avenue (later named A. Philip Randolph Boulevard).

When the driver returned to his truck, some stuff was missing. He accused a 20-year-old black man of stealing it. An argument ensued.

The driver pulled out a gun and shot the young man.

By-standers rioted.

People smashed windows, looted stores, stole tv sets, threw bricks, shot guns, overturned cars, and set fires.

"A racial disturbance here began with gunfire and erupted into flames, first with an overturned truck as Florida Avenue near First Street became congested with cars, rioters, policemen and firemen on a rainy Halloween afternoon and night," the *Times-Union* reported the next day.

"Three vehicles were burned. Two people were injured by gunfire and a policeman was struck by a brick".<sup>88</sup>

The riot went on for several days.

Lt. Mose Bowden, later curator of the Jacksonville Fire Museum, earned the Lieutenant Joseph F. Stichway Firefighter Of The Year award for his acts of bravery

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saving lives and protecting property during the riots that Halloween.

## **CONSOLIDATION**

When the wind blew from the wrong direction during the early 1960s, Jacksonville reeked.

Pulp mills, paint factories, chicken processing plants and a host of other factors polluted the air and made the city stink.

Not only that, but Jacksonville women lost their hose!

“Sulphuric acid droplets in the air began to disintegrate nylon stockings on women on the streets of downtown Jacksonville<sup>89</sup>”.

Jacksonville waters ranked worse than the air in pollution. State board of health officials said McCoy’s Creek, flowing near downtown, “is so badly polluted that it is just a big open sewer”. They also condemned Trout River, Ribault River, Moncrief Creek, Long Branch, Hogans Creek, Fishweir, Cedar River, the Ortega River — practically every body of water in Jacksonville — as unsafe and dangerously polluted. Only 20 to 25 percent of all raw sewerage from Jacksonville was treated before being dumped in the St. Johns; over 15 million gallons of raw sewerage flowed into the river every day.

Garbage clogged Jacksonville streets. Garbage men “left about as much garbage and litter at the pick-up sites and along the streets as they collected”. Citizens resorted to illegal dumps or open burning.

Race relations festered.

Mayor Haydon Burns described the downtown waterfront as “Probably the worst eyesore of any major American city.”

Jacksonville’s school system ranked last among 67 in Florida. And in 1964, the Florida Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools stripped Jacksonville schools of accreditation.

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Accusations of political corruption abounded<sup>90</sup>.

Communities adjoining Jacksonville in Duval County fared just as poorly as the city itself. Fire and police protection lagged. Local agencies duplicated each other. From Baldwin to the beaches people expressed dissatisfaction over the inefficiency of the existing system

Yet with all this going on, Duval was one of the fast growing counties in the nation. Population grew from 304,029 in 1950 to 525,000 by 1965 — an increase of 73% in only 15 years.

Something had to change.

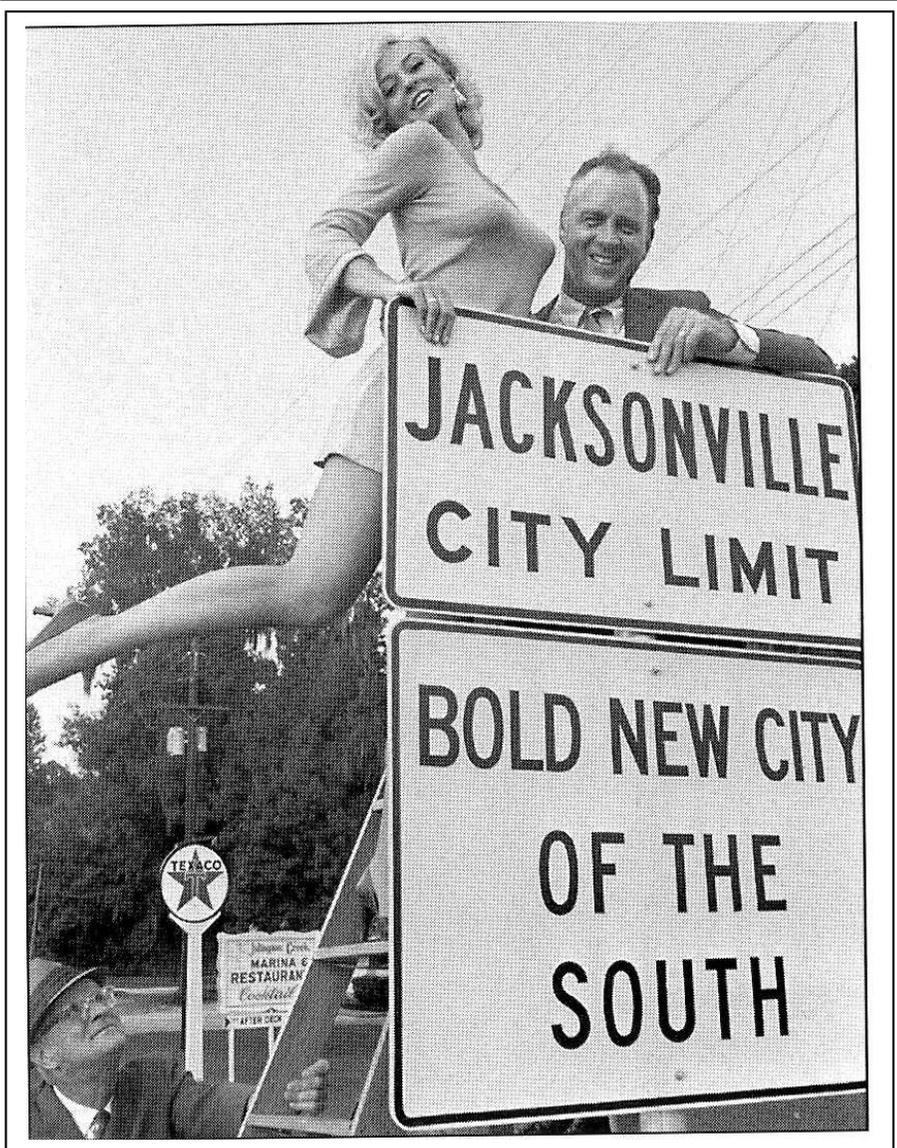
On August 8, 1967, Jacksonville and Duval county voters approved a consolidation referendum. Duval County voters approved consolidation by a margin of two to one — 54,493 votes for and 29,768 votes opposed.

This vote combined the local governments of Jacksonville and surrounding communities and created, as far as land area was concerned, the largest city in the United States.

The expanded city adopted a new slogan:

Jacksonville: The Bold New City Of The South.

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**In 1969, actress Lee Meredith helped Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler post a new city limits sign while the helpful, happy gentleman holding the ladder...Er, reads the sign.**

Before 1968, volunteer firemen served areas outside the city limits. When the city government consolidated with the entire county that year, the Jacksonville Fire Department became responsible for protecting 840 square miles. Its previous area had covered just 26 square miles.

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This caused the greatest spurt of growth the department had seen since the Great Fire of 1901. It initially increased personnel to 759, while equipment increased to 43 engines and 14 rescue units.

The City's website says:

In 1968, the Jacksonville City and Duval County governments consolidated. Today, the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department provides fire and emergency medical services to a metropolitan, suburban and rural area that encompasses an area of approximately 840 square miles with a population of more than 850,000. Notable accomplishments of the JFRD are:

1. Establishing one of the first Advanced Life Support (ALS) service in the nation;
2. Establishing the first Hazardous Materials team in 1977;
3. Becoming the first fire department to successfully extinguish a fully involved petroleum tank fire.

Today, the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department is one of the largest fire and rescue departments in Florida. It is comprised of six divisions:

- Operations,
- Rescue,
- Training,
- Fire Prevention,
- Administrative Services
- Emergency Preparedness.

These divisions control the functions of 56 Fire and Rescue locations including two marine companies, a Special Operations and Technical Rescue team, two Hazardous Materials Teams, 30 Advanced Life Support transport units, 25 Advanced Life Support engine companies, a USAR team, and other specialty teams.

The department has a professional career force of approximately 1,200 diverse men and women of different ethnicities, religious beliefs, economic and educational backgrounds. JFRD is one of the premier fire organizations in the country.<sup>91</sup>

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## **TO THE RESCUE**

Jacksonville firefighters have a long tradition of doing just a little bit more than the job requires. When fire damaged the Clara White Mission in 1944, Jacksonville firemen not only put out the fire but contributed time, labor, cash and goods to rebuild the mission.

As far back as anyone can remember Jacksonville firefighters, out of their own pockets, have donated cash, clothing and goods to fire victims to help them get back on their feet. They have collected tons of toys for needy children around Christmas time.

Since 1957, they have filled their boots with money collected from motorists at intersections raising funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association over Labor Day. And, when requested, a Jacksonville firefighter will come to your home and install a free smoke alarm.

And, since July 1, 2000, Florida law #63.0423 allows people, who are overwhelmed with caring for an infant, to leave the baby at any fire station (or hospital) and the firefighters will take the child in safely.

Yes, Firemen care.

Firefighters care on many levels.

As far back as June 22, 1962, Assistant Fire Chief James Dowling Jr. appeared before a special meeting to the State Committee on Trauma of the American College of Surgeons. He said that Jacksonville ambulance companies were in "vicious competition and some are more concerned with getting funerals than getting injured persons to the hospital."

At that time, funeral homes used hearses as ambulances to respond to accident calls. The city covered just 39 square miles then and they divided the city into zones.

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When there were several people injured in the same incident, it was not uncommon for the different funeral home ambulance drivers to fight over getting the more severely injured person to transport, figuring they'd have the edge to get the funeral business if the person died.

"Competition was so bad then... that funeral homes were fighting over bodies in the ditch<sup>92</sup>."

In April of 1967, local funeral homes and private ambulance companies discontinued answering emergency alarms due to a financial dispute with the City of Jacksonville over subsidies. "An Ad Hoc Committee, composed of area physicians, a police official, a fire chief, and other involved parties, was appointed by the Mayor to provide a workable solution to the problem. During the interim, three fire chiefs cars, staffed with a chief and two firefighters, were placed into service as emergency medical transport vehicles.

This continued for six weeks, then the private companies resumed answering emergency calls.

On November 9th, 1967, after an attorney for the private ambulance companies had tried to negotiate for subsidies from the City of Jacksonville, an edict from the Mayor was issued:

Beginning at Noon on November 9th, 1967, the Jacksonville Fire Division is to assume the responsibility for emergency care to the residents of Jacksonville. The edict was quickly followed by Jacksonville City Ordinance #GG-75 and Bill #GG-92, confirming the service. There would be no subsidy for private systems.

Thus the Rescue Division, as it is known today, was born.<sup>93</sup>

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### **A 1958 Volunteer Rescue Unit**

James A. Dowling Jr., who retired as the city's rescue chief at the end of 1978, had tried since the end of World War II to get more people trained in first aid.

As a paratrooper, Dowling had seen friends die during the war in Europe because of a lack of adequate first aid. When he returned to his job as a Jacksonville firefighter, which he'd begun in 1937, he also became the volunteer director of first aid for the American Red Cross here and, over the next 39 years, taught first aid and CPR to thousands of people.

Dowling, who was considered by many to be the father of Jacksonville's rescue system, set about getting firefighters trained to respond to medical emergencies<sup>94</sup>.

Then-City-Councilman Jake Godbold recommended to Mayor Hans Tanzler that the city ambulance service be placed with the Jacksonville Fire Department. and the mayor put emergency ambulance service in the care of the Jacksonville Fire Department.

When this went into effect in November, 1967, "The fire department was plunged in with one phone call from the mayor's office and 55 minutes later we were answering out first call," said Jay Crawford of the Public

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Safety Department.. "We started with one red fire chief's station wagon.. and borrowed stretchers."



**Chief W.A. Jackson (left) and Mayor Hanz Tanzler look over Rescue 1, Jacksonville's first fire rescue unit, on March 22, 1968.**

The city's first modular rescue unit that cost \$9,000 and was equipped with the latest in emergency medical equipment. Five more units were soon placed into service. They were manned by 36 firemen round the clock. Each unit was equipped with two-way voice communications that allowed each radio contact with hospital emergency departments, law enforcement agencies, and base stations at all times. As the modular units were placed in service, the station wagons were phased out.

In 1970, the city's rescue department captured first place as most outstanding performer in a competition involving 42 rescue squads from across the country. And *Medical World News*, one of the medical professions leading publications, said the Jacksonville Rescue Service is "generally considered to be the best ambulance service in the country."

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"It's the yardstick by which all other systems are measured," James Mills, former president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, told *Reader's Digest* for a story on the rescue service.<sup>95</sup>

Word of Jacksonville's successes spread quickly.

The Florida Legislature lauded Jacksonville's rescue service as a model for the state. And in 1973, the Legislature passed the state Emergency Medical Services Act based on Jacksonville's system; it required all ambulance services to be licensed and set standards for equipment and training.

Workers on the ambulances soon noticed that calls to help heart attack victims came proportionately more than any other call.

In the 1970s, because of Rescue's outstanding record, Jacksonville gained the reputation of being the safest place in the nation to have a heart attack.

Jacksonville firefighters developed a new concept in emergency medical care. This new concept included sending combat apparatus on emergency calls in conjunction with the Rescue unit because of their close proximity.

This system of sending first response combat companies and Rescue units necessitated the increased training of firefighters in Basic Life Support (BLS) and stabilization of the acutely ill or injured patients and assisting Rescue crews on the scene of emergencies. The system paid off in the saving of many lives and showed the obvious need for having a high number of first response rescue crews.

Veteran *Times-Union* reporter Jessie-Lynne Kerr<sup>96</sup> said, "A fire engine equipped with Advanced Life Support capabilities has an average response time of 4.5 minutes, while one of the city's 32 rescue units has an average response time of 5.5 minutes...."

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“Of the department's more than 100,000 emergency runs it makes each year, a little more than 80 percent are calls for medical help.

“Physicians who specialize in emergency medicine long have adhered to the concept of the "Golden Hour," meaning that victims of trauma or incidents such as strokes have greater chances of survival if treated within the first 60 minutes.

“That's why people will often see a fire engine responding to a medical call. It is a simple case of supply and demand because the city has more fire engines than rescue units.

“All of the rescue units and 30 of the department's 56 engines are equipped for Advanced Life Support and staffed by trained paramedics. That means they can administer medications, start IVs and provide advanced airway management by doing endotracheal intubation on patients with severe breathing impairment.... The only difference between an Advanced Life Support engine and a rescue unit is that the engine does not contain a stretcher to transport the patient to a hospital.

“All the rest of the department's firefighters are certified as EMTs, or emergency medical technicians, and provide Basic Life Support. They can provide life-saving CPR, stop hemorrhaging from wounds and assist a patient's breathing until a rescue unit arrives”.

As the trend began to change from rapid transportation to field stabilization, additional training courses were designed for the rescue crew members. The training included instruction in necessary skills for handling medical emergencies, extrication methods from all types of transportation, and 50 hours of training in hospitals under physician supervision.<sup>97</sup>

The City's website<sup>98</sup> boasts:

The Rescue Division saves lives every day in Jacksonville by providing 24-hour emergency medical service throughout 840-square miles of territory. The men and women of the Rescue Division

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respond to about 7,700 EMS calls per month and transport patients to hospital emergency rooms in more than 53 percent of those cases.

Jacksonville has been at the national forefront in the development of the modern rescue service since 1967, when then-Mayor Hans Tanzler ordered the fire department to begin providing emergency ambulance service in the wake of a city dispute with the private ambulance companies and local funeral homes that had been providing that service. Working with area doctors, the department began the unprecedented step of training Rescue crews in advanced emergency medical procedures, developed and equipped the modern rescue vehicle so common on the streets today, and became a national model for advanced life support units.

Today, the Rescue Division has 30 Advanced Life Support transport units strategically placed throughout Jacksonville. EMS training consist of advanced cardiac life support, basic life support, CPR, advanced airway management, stroke and myocardial infarction training and more.

On every emergency medical service call, the department sends fire apparatus and a rescue vehicle. All fire fighters are qualified emergency medical technicians and 30 fire engines are furnished with advanced life support equipment and have at least one paramedic assigned to the unit. The department's goal is to begin emergency treatment as quickly as possible.

The Rescue Division is home to the **S.W.A.T Medic** tactical operations team that works in conjunction with the Jacksonville



Sheriff's Office S.W.A.T Team. Tactical Medical team members are all certified reserve police officers trained for inner perimeter and entry cell operations. The division is also home to the **Bike Team**, which provides emergency medical services in areas unreachable by motor vehicle, and the **JFRD Honor Guard**, which serves at funerals of fallen fire fighters.

## **Bicycle Emergency Response Team**

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The JFRD Bicycle Emergency Response Team began when three fire fighters rode bikes through the crowd to provide emergency medical assistance during the city's New Year's Eve celebration in 1999. Since that time, the team has grown to more than 30 members and provided emergency responders for Super Bowl XXXIX and other events with large crowds.

The Bike Team, as the unit is commonly called, enables emergency personnel to respond faster through large crowds and congested areas than if they were in a Rescue vehicle. Typically, the team works outside Alltel Stadium during football games such as Jacksonville Jaguars home games, the Gator Bowl, ACC Championship and Florida-Georgia. The team also works at Metropolitan Park during large concerts or events. And the team provides emergency medical response during the River Run, other races and any large event.

The Bike Team is equipped with all medications carried on Rescue vehicles as well as an automated external defibrillator. All team members are emergency medical technicians or paramedics. They also are all certified for wildland and urban search and rescue.

### **More Rescue Division History:**

The Jacksonville Fire Museum Website<sup>99</sup> says:

In 1969, the Life Pak III was demonstrated, bringing with it space-age technological telemetry that was introduced as a new concept in pre-hospital care. Training in these new systems was organized in conjunction with the use of drugs and medications in pre-hospital care. Drug boxes were placed aboard rescue units. However, only a physician, when present on scene, had the authority and technical knowledge to use them.

By late 1969, a new title for qualified ambulance attendants was authorized by the National Department of Transportation. The new title, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), was adopted by the Jacksonville Rescue Division and a test was developed to designate a crew supervisor as an EMT via civil service examination. However, since the term of EMT designated a level of competency which was to be a goal of all fire-rescue personnel. The Supervisor's title reverted to Fire-Rescue Lieutenant. Ten officers were promoted, one

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for each Rescue unit and one for vacation/relief. Under the new supervision, the units continued to deliver more advanced stabilization of the sick and injured.

Because of the increasing responsibilities of the Rescue Division and its personnel, it was determined that more supervisory personnel were needed. The first Captain's examination was given in 1974, allowing each rescue unit to fall under the command of a Captain who was responsible for the company, with a Lieutenant in charge of each shift.

A new concept in rapid inter-county hospital transfers was introduced to the system in 1974. Eight helicopter transports were made in coordination with regional military systems. This proved to be a valuable tool in emergency pre-hospital transportation and has also proved to be essential in rapid transportation from emergency scenes.



Jacksonville Fire Rescue established the first Advanced Life Support service in the U.S and, in 1977, established the first Hazardous Materials Team.

Also in 1977, the State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services scheduled the first Paramedic state exam, with 5 Jacksonville Firefighters becoming the first State of Florida certified Paramedics.

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Rescue units added 14 new cardio-pulmonary machines at a cost of \$45,000 in May, 1979. At that time, Rescue Units were responding to an average of 16 heart attack victims a day.

The 1990's saw The JFRD Rescue Division expand even more, with the addition of many rescues. A new style of rescue unit came into service with the introduction of the Freightliner Rescues. EMS makes up over 75% of the emergencies responded to by the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department. The number of Paramedics is increased. Advanced EMS services are expanded outside of the rescue division as several engines are now designated as Advanced Life Support engines. The JFRD now also starts to offer EMS services through the Special Events office.



As the JFRD Rescue Division moved into the 21st century, so did the service it delivered. Division Chief of Rescue Charles Moreland assumed command of the Division in 2003 and, at 32, became the youngest Division Chief in the history of the JFRD. Within his first three years, four additional rescue units are added (17, 21, 57, 58) with Rescues 49 and 59 placed in service October 2006 and January 2007 respectively. The JFRD

takes delivery of several new 4-door rescue units and steps up training with special classes on drug doses and effects. A third Rescue Chief, Rescue 105, is added to accommodate the expanding division. Moreland is instrumental in the formation of the JFRD SWAT Medic program and increases the number of Advanced Life Support Engines in the city.

A bonus for members assigned to the Rescue Division starts October 2005 and the incentive for paramedic is also increased. In April of 2006, the drug *Clonidine* is now issued to Advanced Life Support Companies.

From the 1970s to this day Jacksonville remains the safest city in the world to have a heart attack.

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## RACE, UNION AND HAIR



Chief W.E. Smith  
May 14, 1971-Feb. 9, 1974

### Chief 1971 - 1974

**W.E. Smith** battled fire fighters over restrictions on hair length and dealt with racial tensions during his tenure as chief.

A special mayor's citizens committee recommended long and short-range goals be set for hiring more black firemen. Nine were hired under a federal court order in 1972.

Reading yellowed old newspaper clippings stored in cardboard boxes at the Jacksonville Fire Museum. makes you think hair was a burning issue for firefighters during the early '70s.

"The City is going to start firing and laying off firemen unless the board changes its policy on hair style," says one article. "The Civil Service Board reversed itself and voted 5 to 1 that it did not have jurisdiction over the matter of firemen's hair length," said another.

"Baseball caps with the JFD insignia on them are being ordered and will be made an authorized article of uniform," said another.

On April 27th, 1973, four firefighters were suspended for three days for having a hair style that did not conform to rules set by the Fire Department.. And in September, 1973, a United States District Judge ruled that the Jacksonville Fire division can require employees to maintain short hair lengths, mustaches, and sideburns.

But more than hair was going on during the '70s

On January 20th, 1970, Fire Station 4 is struck by fire bombs. And on January 10, 1973, while responding to a fire in the 1500 block of West 31st Street, Chief R. P. Rosinski



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and J. W. Batton were shot at by three men using a shotgun and two pistols

During times of racial unrest, police officers protected firefighters as they put out fires.

A March 22, 1971, paper announced, "Circuit Court Judge Major B. Harding signed a consent order restraining the city of Jacksonville from negotiating with or commencing negotiations with or in any manor officially discussing or bargaining with any person or association other than Local 1834 of the International Association of Firefighters".

"Paul Dinkins, vice president of the fireman's union, predicted massive suspensions unless the Civil Service Board does something to liberalize the fire department's hair code. Fire Chief W.E. Smith argued he is worried about safety saying, 'Hair that is stringy, fuzzy or bushy is much more susceptible to catching on fire,'" said another newspaper.

A June, 1971, paper announced, "A special mayor's and citizens' committee is recommending that long and short-range goals be set for hiring more black firemen."

"The first nine blacks hired under a federal court ordered policy aimed at increasing the number of blacks in the fire department began their fire academy training today," said a January 17, 1972, paper

The boxes full of clippings at the Jacksonville Fire Museum contain many similar articles—but even in those troubled years, the main business of fire fighters continued to be saving lives and property from fire—even at great risk, even the ultimate sacrifice.

**Lt. Newton Eugene Johnson**  
**Aug. 6, 1970**

Lt. Newton Eugene Johnson was overcome by heat and smoke and died when the roof of an A&P Supermarket at San Juan and Hershel streets collapsed while he was fighting

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a fire inside. It was his first day as a roving officer assigned to Engine 14. Lt. Johnson was posthumously honored as the Fireman of the Year.

Eighteen shoppers browsed in the aisles of the A&P Supermarket at San Juan and Hershel streets on a July afternoon in 1970. They left their buggies and scurried for the door when a stock boy ran from the back of the store shouting fire.

It was Lt. Gene Johnson's first day at Station 14; he was a roving officer who filled in for vacationing, sick or injured officers at which ever station he was needed.

The fire was in an open space between the ceiling and the roof of the store. "The roof caved in before we could really attack it," said one fireman. Lt. Johnson and a team of firefighters worked at the rear of the store.

The collapsed roof at the front of the store "produced a great quantity of flame and black smoke which completely filled the closed-in area at the rear... It was so dark that we had to shine our flashlights on the fire hose to find our way back to the door".

Lt. Johnson never made it out. The fireboat *Eugene Johnson* was named for the fallen firefighter.

### **Puke Yellow Trucks**

On April 6, 1973, the city displayed the first of 13 new diesel pumpers in front of City Hall. Authorities said the color was more visible than the traditional red. Jacksonville schoolboys universally called the new color "Yucky Puke Yellow".

The city retained at least one red truck—Ladder 1, a 55-foot, 44,000 pound fire engine—So big it required a "tillerman". That's a second driver who steers the rear end of the long rig.

This reminds me of an old joke:

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An excited man phones the fire department yelling, "Help!. Help! My house is on fire!!!"

The fireman says, "Where do you live?"

The man replies, "I am too excited, I can't tell you the exact address."

The fireman asks, "If you don't know the address, How do you expect us to get there?"

The man replies, "What do you mean 'how'? Use the big red truck."



**Chief 1974 - 1981**

**Russell Yarbrough**

joined the department in 1942 and worked his way up the ranks to assistant chief in 1971. He was named Chief in 1974.

**Chief Russell Yarbrough**

**Feb. 9, 1974 - Dec. 13, 1980**

**In other events of the '70s decade:**

Mrs. Kenneth LaRue donated a 1912 American LaFrance ladder truck to the Fire Department Museum.

Marine Two sank in the St. Johns while battling a fire at the Jacksonville Port Authority Warehouse.

Two people died and three others were injured when Tanker 24 collided with another vehicle at Moncrief Road. and Edgewood Avenue.

Jacksonville Fire Division took delivery of the first of 13 pumpers powered by diesel fuel..

A fully loaded Union 76 gasoline tank truck slid off Interstate 95 and burst into flames. Spilling 8,100 gallons of gasoline into a ditch while additional gas was pumped into other trucks.

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Florida Junior College unveiled an Emergency Medical Technician program for Rescue.

The Jacksonville Fire Division begins to use video tape as a method of training.

The State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services scheduled the first Paramedic state exam, with 5 Jacksonville Firefighters becoming the first State of Florida certified Paramedics.

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## And more Firefighters died in the line of duty:

### **Capt. Leon J. King Sept. 3, 1975**

Capt. Leon J. King Jr. died of an apparent heart attack at the scene of a kitchen fire on Lotus Road. After the fire had been knocked down, King took off his mask and went back inside to help with overhaul work. He then walked outside and collapsed.

### **Glen A. Miley Dec. 18, 1975**

Volunteer Fire Private Glen A. Miley was killed when he struck his head on the pavement after losing his balance and falling off a fire truck as it made a turn at Rebault Scenic Drive and Forrest Hills Road. Firefighters were responding to a minor heater fire on Ramsgate Street at the time.



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**Ronald H. Jones**  
**Sept 18, 1976**

Volunteer fireman Ronald H. Jones was struck by a car and killed as he walked back to his car after helping extinguish a woods fire off 103rd Street.

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## The Burning Barge

"Black. Pitch black, hot and smoky ... a tangled maze of wires, plumbing and noxious fumes." Thus an eyewitness described the interior of the burning barge in Jacksonville Shipyards on May 25, 1979.

A gas line ruptured and a welder's torch ignited the fuel. Nine men were reported trapped in the hole.

Jacksonville firefighters went down to bring them out; Lt. Joseph Francis Stichway died trying to save others.

"With his final act of heroism, he gave up his life for his fellow man," read a *Times-Union* editorial. The following year, the 100-foot aerial ladder truck he had served on was named in his honor.

### **Lt. Joseph F. Stichway May 25, 1979**

Lt. Joseph F. Stichway was killed while attempting to rescue workers trapped in the hull of a burning oil barge at the Jacksonville Shipyards. Overwhelmed by gas fumes, Lt. Stichway fell off a 40-foot ladder as he was rushed to reach the workers and lead them to safety.

He was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal, the Fire Department's highest honor.

Twenty one firefighters and six barge crewmen were injured in the fire.

At the memorial service, the department received two variable height stretchers donated by an anonymous Jacksonville businessman whose life had been saved by City Rescue personnel.



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At the time, the \$1,000 stretchers were the largest donation the department had ever received from a private individual. They represented a solid technological advance. Others were soon to follow.

As far back as 1971, Department officials were looking at systems to change traffic lights in favor of fire apparatus. They chose Opticom.

Emergency vehicles were equipped with an emitter, or high intensity pulsating light. A detector located in the traffic signal causes the light to change to green in the direction of the advancing vehicle<sup>100</sup>.

Our men and equipment kept pace with the times.



## **HAZMAT**

In January, 1977, The Jacksonville Fire Rescue Division's Hazardous Materials Team (HAZMAT) became operational; it was the first team of its kind in the United States.

The JFRD Website says:

In the late 1970's Jacksonville Fire Chief Russell Yarborough and Captain Ron Gore saw the need to deal

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with hazardous materials responses in a trained and organized manner.

Jacksonville was the "Great Shipping Center of the South." Railroads had major operations in the city and there was significant military activity in the area involving nuclear materials.

Yet no one had taken an organized approach to hazardous materials response before. Yarborough and Gore believed a specialized team was the best approach and that 15-20 volunteers would be needed from the firefighting ranks to form the nucleus of the new hazardous materials response team.

The initial request for volunteers produced more than 50 firefighters wishing to become team members, There was no additional pay for being on the hazmat team.

Gore looked for personnel who had experience with chemicals. There were firefighters who had worked for the gas company, some with military experience, and others who had experience with various chemicals.

As with anything new, there was distrust and resistance to the new hazardous materials team from officers and firefighters alike. The members were referred to as the "Clorox team" and the "Bleach Drinkers" by other firefighters in those early days.

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## **Rid-A-Bug**

The Hazardous Material Team was just getting cranked up on June 7, 1979, when the Kenco Chemical and Manufacturing Co. caught fire.

The plant made Rid-A-Bug insecticide.

The fire caused the evacuation of a four-square-mile area and sent 44 people to the hospital.

Toxic wash-off from the fire killed millions of fish in the Cedar River the next week.

The HAZMAT website says:

In the early days, there were no response procedures in to follow; tactics were developed as the team responded to incidents. Sometimes they worked and sometimes, not. The team developed procedures and equipment following incidents where members saw the need for something that would have helped them during an incident. Little hazmat equipment was available commercially, so much of what the team used was created in the shop by the Chief of Maintenance. Many of

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the early members learned to deal with hazardous materials through trial and error.

The Haz Mat Team was first housed at Fire Station 9, located at 24th Street and Perry, chosen for its strategic location near Interstate-95 and the 20th Street Expressway, which gave the team quick access to all parts of the city, including industry to the east and railroad yards to the west. The team was later moved to their current home on Division Street. They have maintained their easy access to Jacksonville's Highway system.

The 1980's saw the JFRD Hazardous Materials team respond to major incidents. In August of 1984, a huge blaze erupted at the Triangle Oil Refinery. In January of 1985, The Haz Mat Team played a crucial role in suppressing a fire at the Rex Box Plant. The team neutralized a major LP gas leak and extinguished a burning liquid paraffin fire. Haz Mat Team Lt. R.P. Morphew is also named Firefighter of the Year for his actions.

The JFRD Hazardous Materials Team made history when in 1993, the JFRD battled a fire at the Steuart Petroleum Tank Farm Fire. The Department became the first in the world to extinguish an oil tank of this kind.



The terror attacks of September 11th, 2001, began the dawn of a new era for the Jacksonville Hazardous Materials Team as it began to train more on domestic terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. All Jacksonville Firefighters received Level "A" suit training. Many firefighters signed up for chemical, explosive, and radiological classes and traveled across the nation to attend these classes.

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November of 2001 saw the team go on hundreds of false calls as the nation went through an Anthrax hoax (See page 182)..

With the increase in domestic preparedness training, along with the continued strain of Hazardous materials response, and the City of Jacksonville increasing its population on an exceedingly fast level, the JFRD Hazardous Materials team expanded to include Fire Station 21 in the Lakewood section of Jacksonville. Station 21 can serve the Southside independently as its own hazmat team or combine with Station 7 to respond as a complete department team.

While Station 7 houses an Engine, Rescue, and Hazardous Materials response unit, Station 21 houses an Engine, Ladder, Rescue, and Hazardous Material response unit. All team members receive a 160 hour Hazardous Materials Technician course.

Today, the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department responds to 700-800 hazardous materials calls a year and remains one of the most proactive hazardous materials team in the nation<sup>101</sup>.

Today, JFRD Haz-Mat is recognized across the nation as a leader in the field.

Every day, 16 firefighters serving on two Haz-Mat teams stand ready to respond to any type of chemical, biological or radiological incident involving anything from a vehicle accident resulting in a fuel spill to large events such as train derailments, aircraft incidents or other major calls.

In 2005, the JFRD Haz-Mat team responded to approximately 500 Haz-Mat incidents ranging from simple petroleum releases like diesel fuel to toxic gases such as Chlorine. Also that year, they worked with the FBI on countering potential terrorist attacks in preparation for the 2005 Super Bowl. In January 2006 the Haz-Mat team responded to an explosion involving radioactive krypton gas at a local facility.

All Haz-Mat team members have achieved the 160 hours of training required to become a state certified Haz-Mat technician. The department boasts 150 Haz-Mat technicians

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across the ranks, and includes 27 members who deploy statewide in emergencies outside Duval County<sup>102</sup>.



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**JFRD, ALWAYS ON TOP OF THINGS  
— or at least always up a ladder**











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## HAZARDS AND ADVANCES IN THE '80s



### **Chief 1981 - 1984**

**Marshall Dean Gunn** worked his way up through the ranks of the fire division, serving for a time as planning officer and coordinator of the city's volunteer fire services. He spent 36 years in the department before retiring.

**Chief M. D. Gunn**  
**Feb. 13, 1981 - Sept. 22, 1984**

When labor pangs hit Deilliah (sic) Williams on December 13, 1980, her first baby was two weeks overdue.... A rescue unit from Station 10 responded to her call for help.

An inexperienced man helped carry her out on a stretcher for transport to the hospital—Governor Bob Graham was in Jacksonville for a "Workday" as a firefighter.

One big fire and a lot of "fires" that were not fires characterized the actions of the Jacksonville Fire Department during the early '80s.

Hazards and advances marked the decade.

For instance, the 80's was a bad decade for schools<sup>103</sup>.

Station 10 firefighters could see Lee High School, just two blocks away, on fire before they left the station. Flames fully engulfed the third floor of the school by the time they arrived to fight the fire. That was on December 9, 1986.



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The next month, Station 2 firefighters could see the smoke rise from Kirby Smith Middle School on Hubbard Street. An arsonist had set not one, but two, fires in the school causing \$45,000 in damage.

In a more serious incident in March, a school bus flipped over on its way to Moncrief Sixth Grade Center. JFRD transported 42 injured children to area hospitals. And, In June, fire caused a million dollars damage at Chappell III Child Development Center, on Baycenter Road.



The teacher asked students to write a compound sentence.

To impress his teacher Johnny wrote: "The fireman climbed up the ladder into the burning building and when he climbed down he was pregnant".

"Johnny," she said. "You don't even know the meaning of that word. Do you"?

"Sure do," he said. "Mama told me it means *carrying a child*".

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The '80s Decade also saw great advances for JFRD in communications, technology, and heroism.

Seven Jacksonville firefighters earned the Silver Medal Of Valor for their heroism during a fire at the Rex Box Plant. This extremely dangerous fire involved LP gas and burning liquid paraffin. Lt. Richard P. Morphey was named Firefighter Of The Year 1985 for the heroism he displayed fighting this fire.

That same year, a pilot program was established for hiring new firefighters. Hiring criteria considered was a State of Florida Minimum Standards certificate, certification as an Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic, and prior firefighting experience.

In 1986, JFRD changed the specifications of its SCBA bottles to be made of metal spun-wrapped nylon, a change from the then-current composite metal.

### **Chief 1984 - 1988**



**Miles R. Bowers** joined the fire department in 1946 after returning from the service in World War II. In his first term as chief, he took charge following a critical grand jury report and guided the department through some difficult years. He was named one of

the top five chiefs in the United States by *Fire Chief Executive Magazine*.

**Chief M.R. Bowers**  
**1984 - 1988**

1986 also saw the opening of Jacksonville's first Advanced Life Support Engine at Fire Station 48 on Blount Island. The next year saw Engine 43, Maxville, also upgraded to provide Advanced Life Support.

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There was no fire, but the fire department rushed to the scene when a forklift punctured a single 55-gallon drum of paranitraniline at P\*I\*E on May 12, 1986. Again the Hazardous Material Team proved their worth as 21 people were hospitalized and over 50 decontaminated, yet no one died.

City Hall may not always agree with firefighters about pay and such, but City Hall employees were glad to see the Hazardous Material Team on December 4, 1986. That day a pair of tanks of anhydrous ammonia—used to make blueprints—sprang a leak on the eighth floor of our 15-story City Hall. Firefighters evacuated about 150 City Hall employees.

During the 1980s JFRD also made strides in communications.

CATS, Cable Access Training System, was placed into service in 1986. Using it, firefighters could tune into a weekly cable television training show. In 1986 also Fire Prevention and Training become their own Divisions. Soon, Florida Community College of Jacksonville instituted a Paramedic training program, and construction began for a new regional Fire/Rescue Training Center.

Jacksonville's Emergency Operations Center moved from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to JFRD Headquarters at 107 North Market Street in 1987. And, in 1989, The Fire/Rescue Communications center moved from the Fire Services Division to the Fire Operations Division, then split into two parts, combat and rescue, with separate dispatchers for each.

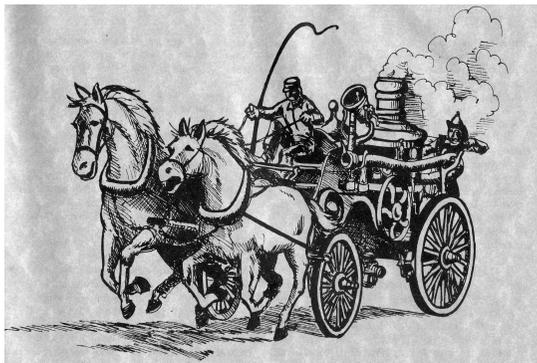
Jacksonville firefighters enjoyed Christmas day in 1989 by responding to over 2,000, motor vehicle accidents and treating over 500 injuries — Three inches of snow fell in Jacksonville that day and ice closed all but one bridge.

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On October 3, 1982, the Jacksonville Fire Museum opened in old Station #3 on Catherine St. It is one of the few fire museums in the country and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Exhibits preserve the heritage and traditions of Jacksonville fire fighters through the decades.

The late museum curator, Lt. Mose Bowden, won the 1969 Fireman of the Year award from the F.O.O.F. for heroism during the race riots of that era. He was an accomplished artist and when the Fire Museum published John Cowart's book, *Men Of Valor: A History Of Firefighting In Jacksonville*, in 1986, he drew the cover picture which



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was latter reproduced on the breast of Firefighters Credit Union tee shirts.

Yes, all during the early '80s, new training and new equipment kept the JFRD abreast of the times.

In 1986, the 9-1-1 emergency telephone system went into effect.

That year the Public Safety Department began to use computer terminals for dispatch. "Under this mechanism, we were able to dispatch nine pieces of equipment in seven seconds," one official said<sup>104</sup>.

Seven seconds—that's the same amount of time the firefighters of the 1890s took to hitch up a horse with the Hale's Patent Swinging Harness!...A set of the harnesses is on exhibit in the Fire Museum.

JFRD could have used computers, engines, foam—all the king's horses and all the king's men—to fight the biggest fire of the Eighties.

**SAD NEWS:  
FIREFIGHTER SHOT AFTER KNIFING**

An off-duty fireman who suddenly attacked and knifed another firefighter on emergency call was killed Friday by shots fired by two police officers, a police spokesman said. Randy Turner, 23, a member of the Jacksonville Fire Department since July, was struck "several times" by shots fired by the two policemen, police Sgt. Charley Hill said. The other firefighter, Fred Foskey, 37, was in good condition at an area hospital after being treated for knife wounds.

Published on April 21, 1984, Page 6A, *Miami Herald*

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**After fighting the Triangle Tank Fire for hours, these weary men rest on a twisted melted stairway on the side of a tank.**



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## **THE JACKSONVILLE TANK FARM FIRE**

A severe thunder storm moved through the city on the afternoon of August 18, 1984.

At 4:14, p.m. a lightning bolt struck Tank 16 at Triangle Refineries' Ocean Terminal, 2470 Talleyrand Ave.

Tank 16, a bulk storage tank with a double-layered floating roof, contained 1.9 million gallons of premium unleaded gasoline<sup>105</sup>.

A tremendous explosion rocked the area. The blast lifted off more than half the pontoon's top cover exposing half the roof's cells which were quickly infiltrated by burning fuel.

Responding apparatus immediately reported heavy involvement of the tank and requested two special foam units.

In the first attack on the fire, the foam blanket appeared to smother the flames, but suddenly the pontoon roof shifted and sank.

Flames broke out worse than before.

Division Chief G.F. Keys Sr. assumed command.

He called for more foam from the Navy and Jacksonville International Airport through the Inter-Agency Hazardous Materials Agreement.

He requested three additional engines and ordered the recall of 50 additional firefighters from off-duty shifts.

"The integrity of the tank appeared to be deteriorating minute by minute. Steel above the level of the product was glowing bright red and appeared in some places to be transparent, even in the face of

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thousands of gallons of water being poured onto the sides... The tank turned red hot like a fireball, then became so white it seemed to be transparent. The steel buckled in a number of places, and only the wind girder seemed to hold the plates erect."

The tank ruptured!

A ditch eight feet deep and 25 feet wide surrounded the tank. In 30 seconds, the fire spread to the entire dyke area and filled the ditch.

The *Miami Herald* reported:

### **Jacksonville Fire Melts 60-Foot-Tall Gas Tanks**

A massive gasoline fire which melted a fire truck and forced the evacuation of a 10-square-block area was doused by firefighters Sunday 22 hours after it started during a lightening storm, officials said. Then, the flames flickered back to life ... around 7:45 p.m. in another gasoline tank at the Triangle Refinery. But fire officials had remained at the site and had regained control of the blaze again by 8:30<sup>106</sup>

"The gas was overflowing, and the dike area around the tank was filled with water," said Chief Rom Alderman. "You had burning gas running across that water. It was a problem putting it out without too much of it spreading to other tanks."

*Times-Union* reporter David Nichols, who was on site covering the fire, ran out of his brand new shoes escaping the spreading oil; when he returned to the newsroom, he wrote his fire story in his stocking feet.

Flames three-stories high rolled across the four lanes of Talleyrand Avenue.

One tank exploded near dawn. A wall of flame chased firefighters. "It almost got us all right then," said District Fire Chief D.F. Fullwood.

The fire covered 24 acres -- the equivalent of seven city blocks!

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At 6:41 a.m. the command post called a general alarm.

The Buckman Street Sewerage Treatment Plant lay near by. At one point, gasoline got into sewer lines under neighborhood streets; fear of a massive underground explosion prompted a hurried evacuation.

Shortly after 7 a.m., it appeared as if the worst had passed, but as the smoke cleared, firefighters discovered a rimfire burned on Tank 14, a 45,000 storage tank fully loaded with unleaded gasoline.

Finally, the fire was declared under control about 20 hours after it began — leaving everyone exhausted.

More than 250 firefighters using 22 engines, four ladders, four crash trucks, two special foam units, three tankers, and six rescue units fought the blaze. The help of Navy personnel and volunteers also proved invaluable.

The Triangle Tank Fire cost the city \$300,000; damage to the tank farm ran into the millions.

The fall of 1984 marked the beginning of a new era of management in the Public Safety Department in general, and the Fire Department in specific. Dale T. Beerbower and Miles R. Bowers were appointed Director of Public Safety and Deputy Director/Fire Chief, respectively. And the Jacksonville Fire Department was renamed the Fire/Rescue Directorate.

Engineer Bret Thomas Pickett was named Firefighter of the Year on January 30, 1985, at a ceremony hosted by Mayor Jake Godbold<sup>107</sup>.

During the Triangle Tank Farm Fire, Pickett managed to start the department's \$250,000 hazardous materials fire truck as flames threatened to engulf it.

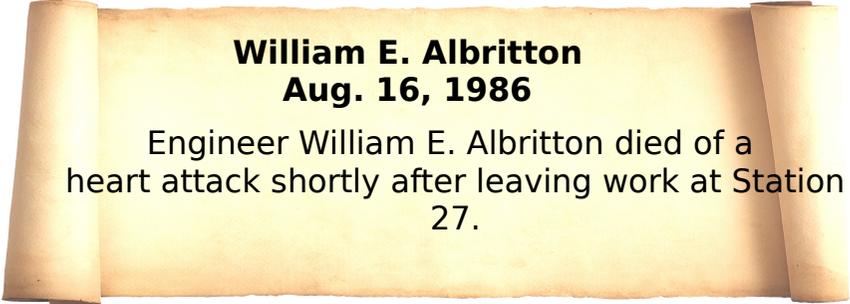
When Tank 16 ruptured and everyone retreated, the truck would not start. With a sea of flame rolling toward him, Pickett leisurely babied it a bit—then got the hell out when it finally started.

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Pickett also won the American Legion Statewide Firefighter of the Year Award for 1984. He was the first Jacksonville Firefighter to win this award.

## 1986



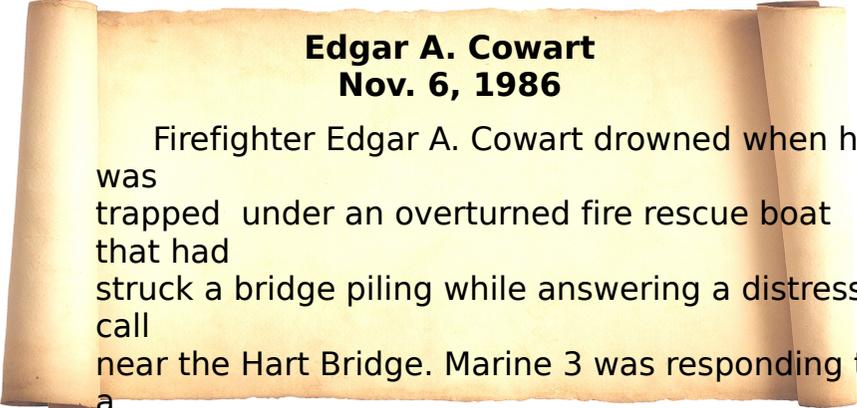
**William E. Albritton**  
**Aug. 16, 1986**

Engineer William E. Albritton died of a heart attack shortly after leaving work at Station 27.

A November, 1986 newspaper headline once again said of a Jacksonville firefighter, "He gave his life trying to save others."

The newspaper story told of Engineer E.A. Cowart who drowned when Marine 3 capsized answering a distress call near the Hart Bridge.

On January 13, 1987, Engineer Cowart was posthumously selected as the 1986 Fire Fighter of the Year. He was the first person to be honored as Fire Fighter of the Year twice — in 1972, "Cowart, while fully clothed, dove into the St. Johns River to save a man who was drowning".



**Edgar A. Cowart**  
**Nov. 6, 1986**

Firefighter Edgar A. Cowart drowned when he was trapped under an overturned fire rescue boat that had struck a bridge piling while answering a distress call near the Hart Bridge. Marine 3 was responding to a

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call for help from a tugboat at the time of the accident.

## **Red Lights — Red Faces**

Documentation is hard to come by for this incident, but as best I can tell, it happened on the Saturday night before Christmas, 1987—but some say it happened years earlier, maybe in 1957. Either way, veteran Reporter Bill Foley wrote about it long, long afterwards...

It seems that on that Saturday night, two sailors, stationed aboard the destroyer *USS Hanks* in Mayport, got commode-hugging drunk in downtown Jacksonville.

That same night a sprinkler went off in the May Cohen's Department Store. Cohen at the time was Jacksonville's largest store; it occupied the entire St. James Building (Now, City Hall).

Huge crowds of Christmas shoppers gathered at Cohen's windows all season long to view the annual elaborate animated window displays.

More crowds packed inside the store, so when the sprinkler went off, an alarm went in, and Hook And Ladder 1, biggest fire truck in Jacksonville, rushed up, siren howling, red lights ablaze.

Cops also came by the carload., sirens howling, red lights ablaze (Police cars also sported red lights back in those days).

Firemen rushed into the store as cops blocked the streets and hundreds of onlookers clustered to watch.

The two blotto sailors joined the crowd.

Firemen, cops and crowd paid intense attention to the possible fire (there wasn't one). But nobody paid attention to Jacksonville's largest fire truck. No body except the two drunk sailors — They stole it.

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They headed down Duval Street, one drunk in the driver's seat, the other in the tiller seat.

Cops on the scene laughed at the expression on firemen's faces as they called in the stolen fire truck to dispatch.

A police dispatcher, trying seriously to do this with a straight face, put out a Signal 10—stolen motor vehicle—dispatch. It went something like this:

"Be on the lookout for a Signal 10, City Hook and Ladder No. 1, large, red vehicle, city license tags, believed traveling east on Duval Street toward the Gator Bowl ..."

But the Cops had to swallow their snickers — two police officers working further down Duval Street had not heard about the stolen fire truck, but they saw it having difficulty. They asked the driver (who wore his white uniform and a stolen fire helmet) where he needed to go. He pointed toward the Gator Bowl and yelled, "We're headed thataway".

The helpful officers hopped in their patrol car, darted ahead of the fire truck, giving it escort! Red lights and siren going full blast the cops escorted the stolen fire truck — till it crashed into a street sign.

Then the other Cops caught up. And the angry firefighters arrived — one threatened the sailors with a fire ax yelling something about capital punishment. One drunken sailor complained, "We would have turned on the siren. But we couldn't find it."

Even more policemen arrived. Even a few State Trooper joined the scene. Officers J.P. Branch and R.W. Wollitz made the arrests.

Bill Foley's report<sup>108</sup>. says, "Several Duval County patrolmen stopped by, too, ever eager to help and to lend as much moral support as they could while holding their sides and laughing until they got all red in the face and tears ran down their cheeks and they had to put

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their heads down on the top of their patrol car and slap their hands up and down on the roof.”

Sailors. Firemen. Cops — there were a lot of red faces in Jacksonville that Saturday night just days before Christmas.

### **Chief 1988 - 1989**



#### **Chief Gary F. Keys**

joined the department in 1960, was an original member of the first rescue units in Jacksonville in 1968 and served as chief of operations and chief of fire services during his 29-year career. A former president of the firefighters union, he left the department after about seven months as fire chief to become the union business agent.

## **THE 1990s A Good Decade For Bad Fires**

For JFRD, the 1990s started with a bang.

Harold Hollander became Chief of the Rescue Division. Rescue 23 went into service in Ortega, and Rescue 7 on Division Street. The Command van went into service at Station One.

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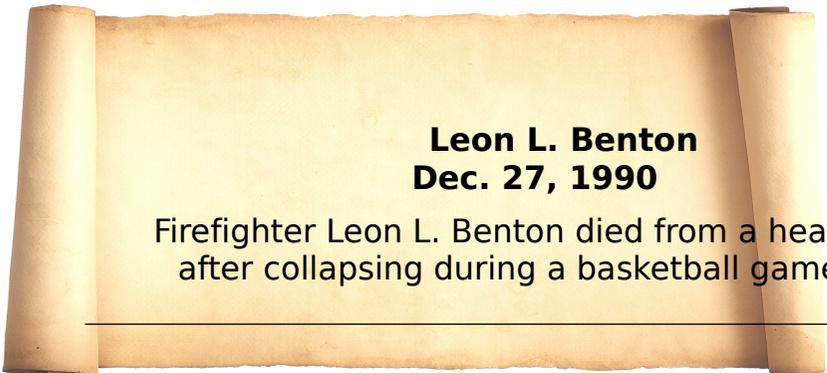
On June 18, 1990, an irate customer entered the GMAC office and gunned down 13 people. He killed nine and wounded three others. Then he killed himself.

My landlord was in the GMAC office at the time; "It was horrible. Just horrible," he said. "I'll never forget it. But I just can't talk about it".

**Chief 1989 - 1991**

**No  
Photo  
Available**

**Chief Daniel Ingle** was a 21-year veteran of the fire department when he was named fire chief. Previously, he served as chief of operations. Ingle's brief tenure coincided with a change in mayors



**Leon L. Benton  
Dec. 27, 1990**

Firefighter Leon L. Benton died from a heart attack after collapsing during a basketball game at Fire

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Station 1.

Benton, who played on the department's basketball team, was working overtime at the time training for a state basketball tournament for fire department teams.

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### **Chief 1991 - 1995**



**Charles D. Clark** spent 34 years as a city fireman. He was the city's first fire chief to also serve as director of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department. Previously, the post was divided, and most directors had been physicians. Clark left the department to become director of the State Fire Marshal's Office.

### **Chief 1995 - 1995**



**Randall W. Napoli**, who was chief of the Fire Training Division, served as interim-chief while newly elected Mayor John Delaney searched for a new fire chief. He left to head the state fire college and eventually become director of the State Fire Marshal's Office. In that role, he won "The Firefighters' Hero Award" for his efforts to pass a law strengthening safety rules for firefighters.

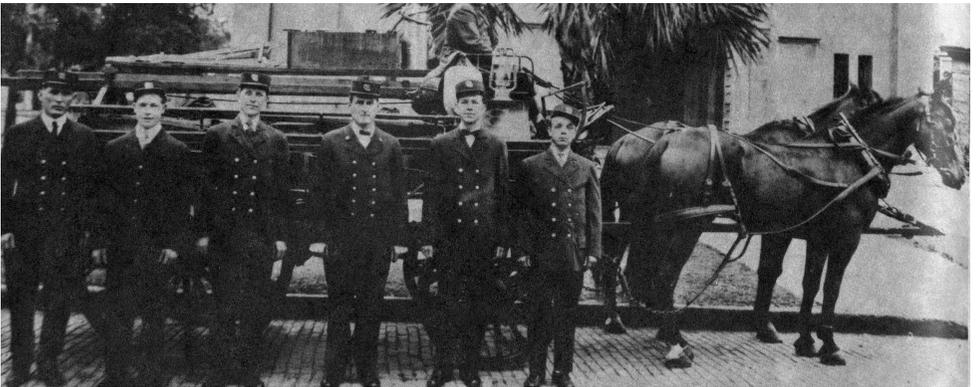


### **Chief 1995 - 2003**



**Rayfield Alfred** became the city's first African-American fire chief when Mayor John Delaney lured him from Washington, D.C., following a national search for a new chief from outside the department. A 30-year veteran firefighter in Washington, including five years as chief, he oversaw plans in Jacksonville to build new fire stations and replace aging equipment.

## **JFRD — Constant Progress**





## **Steuart Petroleum Fire**

On January 2nd, 1993, units from the Jacksonville fire and Rescue Department were dispatched to the Steuart Petroleum Plant. A car had crashed into an oil storage tank.

Firefighters arrived on scene shortly after 3 a.m. to find heavy fire coming from Tank 22. The tank had an internal roof which had collapsed into the tank.

Product from this tank had overflowed, ignited, and was impinging on neighboring Tanks 21 and 23. Fire outside of the tank covered nearly one acre and exposed above ground pipelines and manifolds.

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Over the course of the next six days, Jacksonville Firefighters would attempt to extinguish this tank farm fire several ways.

The fire burned for 115 hours.

Finally, on January 6th, a final foam attack was made on the tank. The tank was extinguished within an hour, making history in the process<sup>109</sup>.

Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department is first fire department in the world to extinguish this type of tank fire.

While over 900 firefighters fought this fire, only two were injured.

## **More Fires In The '90s**

In 1994, JFRD bought the old Federal Reserve Building at 515 North Julia Street to house the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department Administration, Duval County Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Operations Center, Fire and Rescue Communications Center and the Prevention Division.

In April, 1997, "the Pentagon launched the \$6.5 million Chem-Bio Quick Response Force aimed at

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training police, doctors and fire officials in 120 cities to react to attacks by weapons of mass destruction”<sup>110</sup>.

On a local level, firefighting proved more prosaic.

For instance, on December 13, 1997, in Springfield, "We had four fires within six blocks of one another in about an hour," said fire department Battalion Chief John Dunn. "Every one is of suspicious origins." <sup>111</sup>

In August on the Westside, a fire attributed to careless smoking killed a 47-year-old mother and her 4-year-old son even after she had called for help.

A burglarproof door and burglar bars on windows trapped the two inside and locked firefighters out.

The key to the locked door was found near the woman's body.

Fire department spokesman Ted Holmes said the fire caused \$33,000 damage to the single-story brick home and was started by discarded smoking materials. The metal burglar bars on the windows prevented firefighters from quickly entering the house.

"Firefighters had to smash the bars on a side window to enter. They actually dove through the window to get in," Holmes said. "Keys to door and window bars that lock from the inside should be kept in an accessible place so they can be opened quickly in an emergency," he said.<sup>112</sup>

In June, 1997, the burning ceiling of the Dollar Ware Store at the Paxon Shopping Center collapsed trapping four firefighters.

"It just kept flaming and flaming and flaming. It was going crazy. Then the next thing you know, the window popped out and the flames kept going up. With all the popping and cracking, it sounded like firecrackers going off,." Said one eyewitness<sup>113</sup>.

Other firefighters pulled the men out by climbing under the 2-foot space between the collapsed ceiling, which was partially suspended by the furniture, and the floor. The men weren't burned but were admitted to Baptist Hospital to be checked for neck, head and back injuries. Another injured firefighter hurt his knee in a fall.

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## Wild Fires Of '98



“A Celebration of Heroes: No Fire Can Match Their Courage”

That’s what they called it when over 2,000 people gathered in the Gator Bowl **and cheered for Jacksonville’s firefighters as bands played.** *God Bless America and God Bless the USA.*

About 300 men and women from the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Division, the state Division of Forestry, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other agencies marched in and sat in the center of the crowd.

Yes, on August 1, 1998, Jacksonville hosted a celebration for the firefighters who fought the Wild Fires Of 1998.

Firefighters earned this acknowledgment and acclaim.

Jacksonville may boast of being the largest city in the United States as far as land area is concerned, but truth be told, scrub oak, pine flats, swamp land, marsh and sawgrass covers a lot of that area.

For days in the summer of 1998 temperatures rose to 100 degrees, once reaching 105. No rain had fallen for weeks. Drought conditions prevailed. Leaves wilted. Grass crackled when stepped on.

Then, in June a lightning bolt hit a tree in Charlton County, Georgia.

Soon other forest fires raged in Duval County, in Nassau County, in Baker County, in Columbia County, in St. Johns County — anywhere in south Georgia or north Florida where grass grew.

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Smoke closed Interstate 10, Interstate 95, Highway 301, and U.S. One. **One fire after another threatened homes in almost every part of Jacksonville. Firefighters rushed from one fire to another as blowing embers ignited new fires as fast as the old ones had been put out.**

**As team from Station 36, Edgewood Avenue, fought a woods fire on Halsema Road, their truck broke down when a throttle cable parted and immobilized it.**

**The 35-mile-per-hour winds shifted in the direction of the truck and Capt. Shawn Acosta with his three-man crew.**

**That's when they ran out of water.**

"I've been in tough situations before but never without any water to fight the fire with," Acosta said. "Fortunately, we found a window in the fire and went through. We were inside the burn. That's not a pleasant place to be. It's very hot. But it sure beats being in the fire."

When the flames moved, fire truck 25 broke through and saved the truck from Station 36 which was now burning.

"Otherwise we would have lost it," Acosta said.

"I've been doing this for nearly 30 years and this thing is more vigorous than any fire I've ever seen," Acosta said.

"You don't have time to be scared while it's happening — But afterward, that's a different thing."<sup>114</sup>



At times flames came to within 13 feet of homes.

One homeowner said, "The smoke was just tremendous! It

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makes you think the world is coming to an end or something”.

One lady said, “I was scared to death. I started moving everything I had — TVs, stereos, computers, anything of value”.

Some homeowners wet down their roofs with garden hoses..

Water pressure dropped.

One homeowner holding his garden hose said, “I feel like an old man who’s run out of Viagra”.

Even with all that, not a single home within the Jacksonville City Limits burned.

**JFRD kept at least 250 firefighters — 750 in three shifts — in the field 24/7 all during the crisis. Over a hundred volunteers, Navy firefighters, National Guard, Florida Division of Forestry, and units from other parts of the state all worked together to save lives and property. “Our goal is to save structures and save lives,” said Chief Ray Alfred. “From that point of view . . . this has been a very successful operation”.**

Mayor John Delaney said that Duval county had an advantage because of Consolidation; here, one large fire department battled the many scattered fires rather than a number of smaller departments.

"If we were a pocket of a lot of smaller departments, this fire would be much harder to fight," Mayor Delaney said. "But, this department is one of the biggest — and the best — in the country."

At the Gator Bowl's *Celebration of Heroes*, Mayor Delaney thanked the firefighters, saying, “They always knew what they were doing. There was no fear. They weren't going to let a building burn down in Duval County....I can't say enough good about our firefighters.”

No big deal.

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Just another day in the Inferno.

One fireman said, "All we do is put the wet stuff on the hot stuff".

Concerning the *Celebration Of Heroes* and people's outpouring of thanks to Jacksonville firefighters, Fire Chief Ray Alfred wrote in a *Letter To The Editor*:

In all of the years I have been privileged to serve with municipal fire services, I have never seen such an outpouring of support from one community.

The citizens of Jacksonville should be tremendously proud of their efforts. They have shown they can overcome any opposition that stands in their way.

During some of the most desperate times during the firestorm of '98, when our firefighters felt weak or tired, all they had to do was look around and see our residents who gave them the inspiration needed to see their way through this most trying time.

The citizens of Jacksonville were there with us every step of the way to lend a hand in any way possible. Whether it was a cool drink or a pat on the back for a job well done, this shared experience will not soon be forgotten by all those who experienced it. I know the entire department was truly awestruck by this overwhelming support.

Heartfelt thanks go to our corporate community, which quickly came forward to meet any and all of our needs. Whether it was direct support to the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department or assistance to the citizens and non-profit organizations, it was all very much appreciated...

Thank you, Jacksonville.<sup>115</sup>

## **A Raging Chemical Fire**

While the 1998 wild fires burned in the woods, a dangerous chemical fire forced the evacuation of over a hundred Eastport residents in June.

Canisters of toxic chemicals exploded at Confederated Specialty Associates on Faye Road. Among the chemicals at the plant at least four were categorized as "extremely hazardous" by the environmental officials. The company owner, reported

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to firefighters arriving at the scene three of those: dimethyl sulfate, methyl mercaptan, and phenol.

But after firefighters had been fighting the flames for half an hour, the owner also advised them that two other potentially dangerous chemicals were being stored at the plant—sodium cyanide and bromine.

Fire Chief Ray Alfred pointed out that the fire department's hazardous materials team works up "pre-plans" for factories like Confederated. More than 170 companies have similar plans, which list all the chemicals being stored and map out strategies for dealing with emergencies.

So when a passing fire battalion chief spotted the fire from the Mathews Bridge on Thursday, he knew firefighters would be in for a long night.

"There's a lot of chemicals in there. We knew coming in if there was any fire, we had a mess on our hands," Alfred said<sup>116</sup>.

## **Church Arson**

Woods fires and chemicals plants were not the only things burning in Jacksonville in 1998—churches were also.

Halloween night two small fires were set in the Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church at 5545 Firestone Road. Investigators found a satanic pentagram drawn on the floor of a shed on the church's property and someone had also tried to set the shed on fire.

A rash of church burnings—eleven in two years—gave birth to the Northeast Florida Church Arson Task Force.

The task force originally formed in January, 1996, in response to what federal officials labeled a near epidemic of African-American church arsons in the Southeast. Task force members came from the FBI,

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State Fire Marshal's Office, Jacksonville Fire & Rescue, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, State Attorney's Office, U.S. Attorney's Office, and U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

The task force in Duval County solved six of the eleven local cases, 73 per cent of the church arson cases, more than twice the 35 per cent national average for that year.

"We're here to say we will not tolerate burning any church of any kind.' Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights and that's why we have created this task force," Fire Marshal Bill Nelson said during a news conference at the FBI office on Arlington Expressway<sup>117</sup>.

## **1999**

In the cold first two weeks of January, 1999, JFRD responded to 17 house fires—several blamed on faulty heating units as people tried to stay warm.

The month of May found 125 firefighters saving homes along Normandy Boulevard as shifting winds twisted flames among the dry pine needles.

Such conditions pointed up the need for better communications between firefighters and other agencies. And in August, the city inaugurated the First Coast Two-Way Radio System connecting over 6,000 digital radios through ten new antennas throughout the city, and serving 28 channels through computer call routing.

Before this innovation there had been only one interagency channel; the new system allowed JEA, JFRD, Police, Navy bases, and the Duval County School Board to talk directly with each other to cope with emergencies.

## **Y2K Didn't Happen**

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On the upside, by January 1, 2000, Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department was the 14<sup>th</sup> largest fire department in the U.S., answering over 110,000 service calls.

On the downside of January 1, 2000, a City audit appeared to uncover lax procedures in the JFRD storeroom, where rescue equipment, clothing, and drugs were kept. The audit also highlighted billing problems that cost the city almost \$318,000.

“A city review of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department's emergency services has turned up systematic problems with missing drugs, haphazard inventory practices and sloppy paperwork that cost the city nearly \$318,000 last year,” the auditors said.

When the calendar turned to the new millennium, some people feared that all computers would crash, planes drop out of the air, and life on earth would end. But Y2K, the Millennium Bug, never happened.

Planes still flew. Computers still worked. Birds still sang and trees still grew — especially in Mandarin. Ancient oaks line Mandarin Road producing a hauntingly beautiful ambiance.

Indians may have hidden behind some of these same trees in 1841 when warriors—dressed in Shakespearian actors' costumes—attacked and burned the village of Mandarin (See Appendix Three).

In 1867, novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe established a home in Mandarin. Before the Civil War, her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* so inflamed passions in both north and South that when he met her, President Lincoln said, “So, you're the little lady who started the war”.

In an 1872 letter Mrs. Stowe described her Mandarin home site:

“I found a hut built close to a great live-oak tree twenty-five feet in girth, and with overarching boughs eighty feet up in the air, spreading like a firmament, and all swaying with missy festoons..”

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“Our (house) had to be built around the trunk of the tree, so that our cottage has a peculiar and original air, and seems as if it were half tree, or something that had grown out of the tree...<sup>118</sup>”.

Back in the 1800s Mandarin settlement existed entirely apart from Jacksonville. Plantations there exported oranges, originally from China, hence the name. The Great Freeze of 1899 killed Mandarin’s orange industry.

But the stately oaks still shaded the streets.

In 1967, communities from Mandarin to Maxville to Mayport consolidated joining with Jacksonville to become the largest American city as far as land area was concerned. This gave Mandarin residents access to city services including fire protection.

One problem — Those beautiful centuries-old trees have roots.

An April 28, 2000, *Times-Union* article said, “Efforts in the past to install city water mains along Mandarin Road have been fought by residents, who claimed the

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digging could damage the century-old oak trees that line it”.

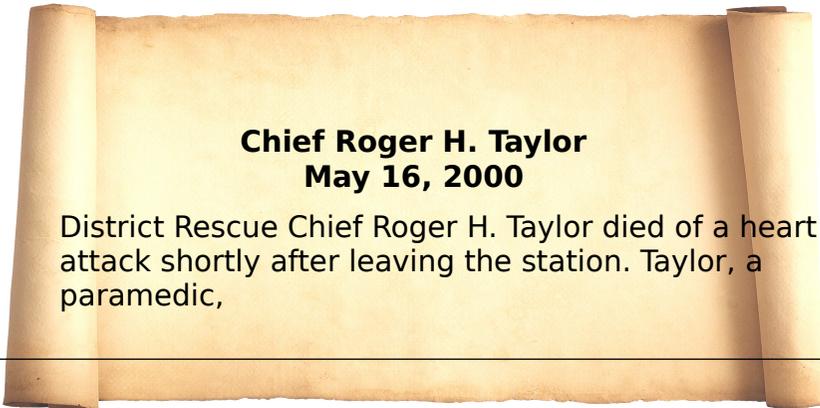
Two days earlier, the 120-year-old Mandarin home of Gray and Karen Mason burned to the ground. Firefighters could not stop it. There were no hydrants or water mains along Mandarin Road.

The home caught fire about 11:30 p.m. It was fully engulfed when the first dozen firefighters and their two fire engines, ladder truck and a rescue unit got there from Fire Station 42, a mile away. But their on-board supply of 4,000 gallons was exhausted quickly. It took 25 firefighters and 10 units about two hours to contain the blaze.

Mrs. Mason said, “They had to run relays with their tanker trucks, and every time they repositioned, the fire got a new hold and took off, because it took anywhere from six to eight minutes to reposition the tanker trucks...They couldn't access the river or pool, and had to go somewhere down the street to get a fire hydrant, since we don't have fire hydrants, either.”

Lorin Mock, chief of operations, said that drawing water from the home’s swimming pool was not an option; one truck which tried got scorched because the pool was so close to the burning house. Drawing water from the St Johns was not an option either because in Mandarin the river banks are too steep for a pumper to get close enough.

In two hours, although all residents escaped, fire reduced a hundred and twenty years of history to ash.



**Chief Roger H. Taylor**  
**May 16, 2000**

District Rescue Chief Roger H. Taylor died of a heart attack shortly after leaving the station. Taylor, a paramedic,

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was a member of the first class of firefighters to complete training after Jacksonville and Duval County consolidated governments.

**Lt. Glenn A. Rodgers  
July 3, 2000**

Lt. Glenn A. Rodgers died of a heart attack shortly after leaving work at Station 22.

**Lt. Nolen A. Sauls  
Aug. 7, 2000**

Rescue Lt. Nolen A. Sauls died of a heart attack shortly after leaving work at Station 28.

## **Fire kills 2, leaves 4 in hospital**

That was a headline in the August 16, 2000, *Times-Union*. As a result of a tragic fire on West 17<sup>th</sup> Street in Springfield. Terri Ann Leath, 31, and Brian Leath, 9, died of smoke inhalation at Shands Hospital.

Other residents of the house, Thomas Williams, 51, and Grace Sutton, 86, his mother, were in serious condition at Shands, Gainesville.

Michelle Sutton, 10, and Ernestine Leath, 5, were treated for smoke inhalation at Baptist Medical Center.

Thomas Williams and Terri Leath had planned to marry soon.

When neighbors saw flame, they tried to warn people inside, ringing the doorbell, shouting and

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knocking on windows. They attempted to break windows and even tried to remove an air-conditioning unit to help people inside escape. But heavy smoke and iron security bars prevented anyone from getting in or out of the burning house. Witnesses said they could hear trapped people scream for help.

"I could hear what sounded like a little girl, or a little boy screaming," said a would-be rescuer who lived down the street. "And I could hear someone near the front door calling, 'Daddy.'"

The home's burglar bars proved to be an obstacle.

Firefighters were eventually able to remove the house's front door and carry out the victims, but JFRD Lt. Glenda Hopkins said the bars substantially interfered with their efforts. "Even a small amount of time lost can make a big difference in a fire," she said.

Fire codes require that a residential sleeping area have two exits, which typically include the door to the room and a window. If a window exit has security bars on it, those bars must be equipped with a "quick-release mechanism" that allows an occupant to open the bars without using a key or other tool.

From his hospital room, Williams spoke through an oxygen mask to tell about his experience. He said he was instantly engulfed in a wall of heat and smoke. "It hit me like a Mack truck, it knocked me full force and it went over the house in a split second. I'd been in that house for 27 years, and I didn't know what room I was in. All I could hear was my kids hollering for me, and our neighbors outside, hollering for us."

District Fire Chief David Mattox. said temperatures in parts of the house could have exceeded 2,000 degrees—more than hot enough to melt lead. In those conditions it is not uncommon for someone familiar with a building to quickly become disoriented.

"Can you imagine that heat and that smoke?" Williams asked. "Can you imagine hearing your little

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one screaming and hollering? You don't know where your momma is, your fiancée.

"The last thing I saw was Terri, the look in her eyes. She was standing in the hall and she had my mother. My mother looked so sad, and Terri looked so sad. It's that look in their eyes I'll never forget. I looked away for a second and they were gone."...

There was no smoke detector in that house.

Two days after the 17<sup>th</sup> Street fire, dozens of firefighters went door to door throughout the neighborhood installing free smoke alarms to anyone requesting them. "If we can, through this effort, just save one life . . . then the whole thing is worth it," Chief Alfred said.

Lt. Chip Drysdale estimated that half of the houses he visited did not have smoke detectors. He said that in his 17 years as firefighter, he has never responded to a fatal fire where the house had a working detector.

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## **2001—A BAD YEAR, A VERY BAD YEAR**

It's hard to know where to start. I suppose it's best to take the events of 2001 in chronological order:

In January the city bought 15 new American LaFrance pumpers at a cost of \$260,679 each.

They didn't work.

The drive shafts had to be replaced, the anti-lock breaks didn't break, and the tires were not supposed to be driven at more than 55 miles per hour—too slow for emergency run trucks. In addition, there problems with the radios, firefighting gear, and drug lockers.

Various personnel spent months getting that mess straightened out.



**In February a suspicious 2-Alarm fire burned an empty wooden warehouse on the old Jacksonville Shipyards site near the Gator Bowl. Jacksonville Riverfront Properties, which owned the site, planned**



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**to spend \$900 million to convert the former shipyards into park space, homes, boat slips, offices, and retail space over the next 10 to 12 years<sup>119</sup>.**

### **More Trouble:**

In May, Fire Rescue lost radio contact when a water-filled manhole on Julia St. outside the communications building overflowed into the basement shorting out the system and cutting off all 911 calls.

Ingenious dispatchers rigged a patchwork system to include police communications channels, unit-to-unit radios, and internal communications to route calls. They parked a command van at the top of the Acosta Bridge to relay messages.

Although this event should never have happened, dispatch's actions prevented any delay in response to calls for emergency aid.

In June, the city began installation of a computerized radio system which allows firefighters and police to communicate with each other and all other city agencies. The system uses ten antenna interconnected with fiber optic cables and backed up by satellite which allows over 6,000 digital radios to communicate.

The new system is built to withstand hurricane force winds — and water from overflowing manholes.

### **Fire Museum Dedication**

The month of May also saw a parade of antique fire engines from around the state to celebrate the re-opening of the Jacksonville Fire



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Museum. The 1902 firehouse had been moved from its Catherine Street location where it became a museum in 1973. It was relocated to Metropolitan Park and refurbished in 2001.

## **A Can Of Worms**

In June, 2001, *Florida Times-Union* reporters Steve Patterson and Paul Pinkham published the results of their months-long investigation into JFRD's Fire Prevention Division. The full series of *Times-Union* articles the investigation generated can be read on line at <http://jacksonville.com/learningcenter/fireinspectors/>

Fire Prevention Division is responsible for inspections and enforcing fire codes to insure the public's safety.

In a nut-shell, periodically for months the two reporters and a photographer surreptitiously followed fire safety inspectors and found many were goofing off while on the clock and not doing their jobs.

Some spent whole days shopping, visiting friends, going home, running personal errands, and knocking off hours early. Some filed false reports about their daily activities. The newspaper said some inspectors spent less than a third of their on-the-clock hours actually working.

The reporters' secret surveillance involved 80 hours over the three-month period.

Next, the newspaper said, the reporters reviewed fire department inspection report files for several hundred buildings to see how often and how carefully buildings were being checked. They also examined inspectors' daily logs on laptop computers. "A City Hall representative was present while the reporters reviewed inspection files".

The reporters interviewed some fire prevention employees. "A representative from the Mayor's Office

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attended those interviews and most conversations the reporters had with Fire Prevention Division Chief Robert Huntley, Fire Chief Ray Alfred, and Mayor John Delaney to discuss the findings. The representative said the administration wanted the mayor to be informed about what questions were being asked to prepare him to respond”.

Mayor John Delaney said, "We feel like we need to do a clean sweep". He said every employee below the rank of captain would be transferred out of the division within six to 10 months.

The head of the division retired within the week. Some agency employees were transferred and others suspended without pay while a decision was made about firing them.

Chief Alfred undertook to oversee the division personally while deciding who should fill vacancies the scandal generated. He announced plans to install GPS systems in inspectors' city cars so they can be located in an emergency.

In all fairness, the newspaper reported that not all inspectors were lax, and an article cites the example of Emanuel Porter as a bright spot in the Prevention Division.

“When Emanuel Porter left his office late in the morning on Feb. 6, he spent five hours completing assignments: he checked an alarm problem at an office building, inspected two newly remodeled buildings and installed a smoke detector at a house in Oceanway. When he stopped for lunch, it lasted just 22 minutes. The only stop not related to work was a two-minute visit to a credit union,” the newspaper said..

The mayor said he planned to hire an accounting firm, Ernst & Young, to audit thousands of inspection records at the division and compare those against computerized records of inspectors' work.

## **A Tragic Accident:**

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In a driving rainstorm at dusk on July 22, 2001, a 911 call requested medical assistance for an elderly man in Springfield. By the time an engine from Station 2 arrived at the address, the man had somehow ended up laying somewhere in the street.

As the engine hunted for him to help him, it moved at about two miles per hour.

The right rear tires rolled over his head and chest as he lay in the street by the curb.

“There was nothing else they [the fire crew] could have done,” said Jesse Caldwell, who saw the accident from his porch. “The only thing they could have done was not to come. And it was their job to come.<sup>120</sup>”

“My sister was hollering and telling them he was under the truck, but they just couldn't hear her,” he said. “And there's just no way they could have seen him. There was nothing else they could have done.”

Station 2 Fire Captain Donald Powell and others on the scene said there was no doubt the crew had done all they should. “They went on their best effort to help someone, and it just didn't turn out as expected,” he said. “There's no blame. Just a tragic outcome.”

## **THEN CAME SEPTEMBER 11th**

Suicide terrorists hijacked Eastern Airlines Flight 11 and crashed it into the North Tower of New York's 110-story World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m. on September 11, 2001.

At 9:03 a.m. another team of Muslim extremists crashed United Airlines Flight 175 into the Trade Center's South Tower.

On any given day, media experts estimated that as many as 50,000 people might have been inside the Trade Center. Ultimately, New York authorities filled 2,750 death certificates.

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While trying to rescue people from the attack, 60 New York police officers and 340 emergency personnel and firefighters died.

The massive pile of debris smoldered and smoked for 99 days<sup>121</sup>.

When a call went out to Jacksonville firefighters for a hundred volunteers to go help in New York, 105 volunteered within minutes. At different times a number of teams from Jacksonville went to the Trade Center site both to help out and to learn.

Practically everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard of the terrorist attack.

### **A Few Pages From My Own Diary:**

For over 25 years I have kept a daily diary recording everything from what I was doing, who I talked to, jokes I heard, prayers I prayed and my daily activities. Some of these diaries are published at [www.bluefishbooks.info](http://www.bluefishbooks.info) under the titles *A Dirty Old Man Goes Bad* and *A Dirty Old Man Gets Worse*.

Here are a couple of my own diary entries:

**Tuesday, September 11, 2001:**

I spent the day driving my friend Barbara here and there; grocery shopping, library, bank, etc.

About 1 o'clock a friend of hers told us that several air planes have crashed into buildings in New York and Washington, D.C. The car radio said that four air liners were hijacked by terrorists and deliberately rammed into the World Trade Center and into the Pentagon. The Whitehouse and Capital have been evacuated.

President Bush is running the country from a command center aboard Air Force One. The attack is deliberate. but we are not sure which bunch of assholes, there are so many in the world, set it off.

I got Barbara back home, phoned Ginny, put gas in the car (prices in some areas have jumped from \$1.49 to over \$5 per galleon (see what I mean about assholes), and I drove home.

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Ginny's building, a telecommunications center, had been evacuated and Gale gave her a ride home earlier in the day.

We watched coverage on tv all evening.

We expected the Red Cross to call us up but have not heard from them so far. Jennifer and Eve called to check on us. Gin called her parents; I called Fred and John in D.C. — all are ok.

Newscasters estimate that 266 people died aboard the airplanes; several hundred more inside the Pentagon; and as many as 50,000 people work in the World Trade Center's three buildings that collapsed.

The terrorists timed the attack so that police and firemen who responded to rescue victims of the first crash, were caught in the second explosion (a common terrorist practice in other countries); over 300 firemen died just after they arrived on the scene.

The President gave three short speeches today and Congressmen who were still in D.C. stood on the Capital steps while leaders voiced their support of the President.

The most extraordinary thing was that at the end of the speeches, someone started singing "God Bless America" and more and more senators and representatives joined in until the whole congress were rag-tag singing with tears in their eyes. That was one of the most amazing things I've ever seen on tv.

Somebody somewhere is going to catch hell for this outrage. If we don't use nuclear bombs for this, what would we use them for?

**Wednesday, September 12, 2001:**

Gin went in to work as usual.

I followed the tv coverage of rescue attempts all morning. I cut the tv off and wrote a little more on the history of Jacksonville book.

When Gin came home, we discussed whether or not we ought to call Red Cross about volunteer work but decided to keep ourselves in reserve for Hurricane Gabriel, expected to strike this weekend.

In D.C., the Executive Office Building and the U.S. Capitol building were both evacuated because of bomb threats during the day.

The terrorists have established a no-fly zone over the entire U.S. and no flights other than military are allowed.

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Hurricane Gabriel approaches Florida's gulf coast and is expected to cross the state from Tampa and turn north through Jacksonville.

**Thursday, September 13, 2001:**

I gave up on even trying to work and watched tv coverage of the disaster all day. Rumors and counter rumors fill the air ways. Great speculations on all news programs.

**Friday, September 14, 2001:**

Between eminent threat of war, general weariness, and vile weather, Ginny stayed home from work today.

President Bush has declared war on terrorism, Hurricane Gabriel should come ashore any second now, and my clear cut Christian duty today is — putting Barbara's cat into a bag and taking the damn thing to the vet!

Barbara wanted her car back today so I drove through driving rain (over 8 inches in the past few days) captured the lovely little kitten and drove her and it to the vet. She brought me home, visited for a while, then left.

Gin & I spent the day making storm preparations, following news programs, watching the storm approach and the rain pour, and reading murder mysteries.

Since the Red Cross has not called us up, we decided to continue life as she is lived here in this place.

All indications are that (as I've observed in other disasters and special occasions) there is an overflow of volunteers swarming driven by the general excitement of the situation. These wonderful folks, caught up in the panic of the moment, run on nervous energy. Compelled to be part of the action, they burn out all too quickly having jumped in with little idea of long-term commitment. God bless them, they labor intensively during the crisis, but drift off when the real work begins.

I went through all that back in the D.C. riots at King's assassination — Wow, that was exciting. But I've learned to let others do their thing — say, serve Thanksgiving dinner at the mission — while I try to serve the other 364 days of the year. Some good-hearted folks don't realize that the poor need to eat more than once a year.

Of course, I suspect that all of us do-gooders do good out of some internal need of our own which has little, if anything, to do with serving God or our fellow man.

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Or maybe those thoughts merely justify my sitting on my ass at home, warm and dry watching tv instead of being out there on the firing line.

Gin commented that there has never been a hurricane threat when I did not spend the worst day of it on the road driving somebody else somewhere because of their lack of planning.

I realized that that is true of practically all holidays too!

Being a Christian is sometimes a pain in the ass.

Anyhow, the cat got to the vet and I survived.

President Bush declared today a National Day Of Prayer and Mourning. Gin & I watched — and cried and prayed — during the service from National Cathedral. Billy Graham, appearing feeble but speaking with power, delivered the sermon. A touching service of worship and patriotism.

All evening people have lite candles, waved flags, delivered flowers to the crash sites. etc. some folks fall back on meaningless rituals because of the urge to do something, yet they have no direction as to what to do.

They gather in groups, shed tears, wear ribbons and sing songs of feel-goodism but there is no substance to their actions.

It's sad.

**Saturday, September 15, 2001:**

Super heavy rain all morning. Our street and yard are flooded but we have missed the worst of the storm.

**Sunday, September 16, 2001:**

We picked up fallen branches, cleaned a ton of leaves out of the pool, followed the news, borrowed Scott's car for grocery shopping, and got ready to resume the work of the coming week.

The New York/D.C. disaster continues to compel my attention. I motivate my self to work by reminding myself that I do not know a single soul who ever worked in the World Trade Center. I know no one killed by terrorists. I have never seen a plane crash...

IN FACT, were it not for the tv telling me about it, I would never have known this happened!

So why am I so caught up in the event?

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It's just the world doing what the world does.

Wars and rumors of wars.

Following the news so intently is just a distraction from my plain Christian duties. Even if the world starts a nuclear war, dinner still needs cooking, the baby still needs changing, the cat still needs a vet, and my books still need writing. Anything which distracts us from our own personal duty is something less than the will of God.

Damn terrorists caused the NFL to cancel all football games today; we ought to nuke 'em!

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## Firefighter Heros

On Friday, September 28, 2001, in *An Open Letter To The Editor*, Battalion Chief Terry Dennis wrote:

By the conclusion of Firestorm '98, thousands of homes and businesses had been saved. The governor declared Florida firefighters heroes. Even though filled with pride at the outstanding effort, we were very uncomfortable with the hero title.

From the first time we pin on our badge as a rookie, we assume that there are risks in protecting the public. All we have to do is look at the long line of American firefighters who have died in the line of duty. People have greatly overused the term "hero." It is a very small group.

If in the definition of hero you can find us ordinary firefighters, then realize that we find the names of our heroes on the Fire Rescue Memorial Wall at 611 Liberty St. and on the National Fire Memorial in Maryland.

Their names can be found among the over 350 New York firefighters who answered their last alarm and will be eternally assigned to the World Trade Center fire. They can be found among the firefighters who will be killed in the following days protecting the public somewhere in this country.

There is a strong bond between America's firefighters. We will grieve and attempt to cope. We will be sad and angry like everyone else. But you can rest assured that when the bell sounds, we will respond. We will be prepared to do whatever it takes to keep you and your family safe.

With the example set by our heroes, how could we do any less?

God bless America and all of our people.



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## Firefighters Pray At World Trade Center Site



Photo courtesy of Wendy Norris, Chaplain, National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service



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Seven days after the World Trade Center attack, two United States Senators, Tom Daschle of South Dakota and Patrick Leahy of Vermont, received mail contaminated with anthrax spores.

At the same time five more anthrax letters were received by *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *NBC News* television stations and by the *New York Post* newspaper in New York City, and by the *National Enquirer* at American Media Inc. in Boca Raton, Florida.

At least 22 people developed life-threatening anthrax infections. Five of them died of inhalation anthrax<sup>122</sup>.

Stations filled the nation's tv screens with images of workers in full-body Tyvek HAZAT suits cautiously decontaminating mail and buildings. Reports on the deadly nature of anthrax spore were broadcast constantly. News anchors hourly explained what it meant to weaponize anthrax.

Scary stuff.

During this time anyone who watched the news felt as though we were walking on eggs.

"It was so scary at first, I immediately thought: I live near the Mayport Naval Station, President Bush was just in town, there's a nuclear submarine base nearby—just all these reasons we could be a target," said Wanda Wynn, president of the Heckscher Drive Community Club.



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Eight-year-old Sean Boucher, a third-grader at Chimney Lakes Elementary School, feared terrorists would attack any minute. He said, “Those crazy guys stole planes from the most secure airports in America. If they could do that, then they could strike Florida, Jacksonville, and Argyle”<sup>123</sup>.

Rumor spread that anything in your mail box—even your Publishing Clearing House Entry—might be contaminated if it had been handled by post office machinery that had also handled an anthrax terrorist letter targeting someone else.

Two days after news of the anthrax attack on the senators, white powder calls flooded Jacksonville’s 911 call center. “Monday and Tuesday, dispatchers fielded 86 calls from people concerned about contact with hazardous biological agents. By yesterday morning, 103 calls had been logged”<sup>124</sup>.

To respond to the swarm of calls, the HAZMAT team split into three groups. Chief Alford said the department had over a hundred technicians trained to deal with hazardous materials; and that each department is equipped to identify biological agents at the scene.

Jacksonville Sheriff Nat Glover said that in 35 years of law enforcement, he had never before seen a bomb squad with a backed up of calls!

But, he said, “We need to be very vigilant. Things that were routine are no longer routine”.

Mayor John Delaney said city residents should not be fearful and that emergency workers have trained to respond to a bioterrorism threat.

Not a single sample of suspect material collected in Jacksonville and examined by the Florida Department of Health tested positive for anthrax.

Even with all these official assurances some Nervous Nellies still worried ... For instance... ME.

**Here’s another note from my diary:**

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I went outside to find a brown paper package tied up with strings in my mail box. Heavy strapping tape sealed the package.

Foreign postage stamps showed that it had been mailed in Indonesia—the most populous Moslem nation on earth.

Whoa! What is this? Who do I know in Indonesia?

My first thought was that I keep a daily blog, an online diary of sorts, at ( <http://www.cowart.info/blog/> ). According to Webalizer statistics, an average of 522 people from 89 counties visit my site every day.

Not everyone loves what I write and on rare occasions I've found hate mail in my e-mail inbox.

Could it be that Moslem terrorists have targeted me?

What should I do? Call a JFRD Hazmat unit? The Sheriff's Office? The FBI?

I certainly did not want to take this thing into our house and risk exposing Ginny to whatever the strange package contained.

Girding my loins with courage, I carried the package to the far corner of the backyard. I carefully cut the strings and tape so as to not disturb any white powder that might be inside.

The package contained a book—Some Christians in Indonesia have translated a book I wrote on prayer a couple of years ago into their national language and they've mailed me this copy.

It is not poison.

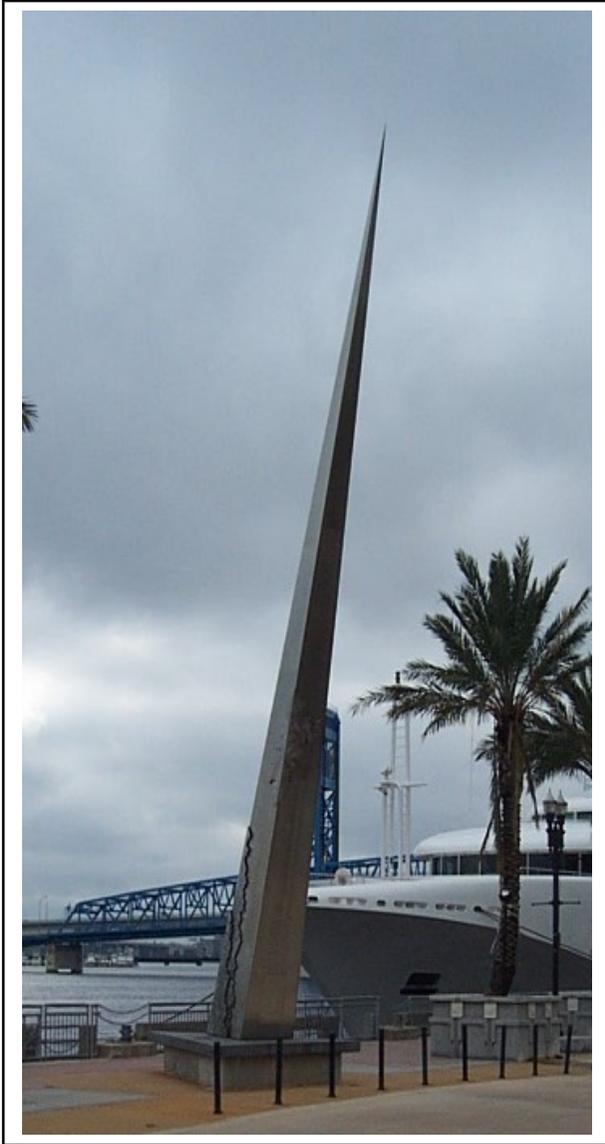
My book may bore readers to death—but it's not poison.

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In English the title is *I'm Confused About Prayer* ([www.bluefishbooks.info](http://www.bluefishbooks.info)).

## **1901 Great Fire Memorial Spire**



On May 3, 2001, the unveiling of this spire at the foot of Market Street — site of the Market Street Horror (see page 39) during the 1901 Great Fire Of Jacksonville — coincided with the reopening of the Jacksonville Fire Museum in Metropolitan Park.

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## **2002 – Year Of The Camera**

If nothing else, the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center motivated fire departments all over the country to emphasize anti-terrorism training, Mass Causality Protocols, advanced rescue techniques, and biohazard response in addition to the normal demands on firefighters. The tragedy of 9/11 increased vulnerability awareness and security measures.

It also spurred fire departments all over to update equipment.

JFRD pursued a program of systematically phasing out older equipment and supplying state-of-the-art technology to firefighters.

As far back as 1997, Jacksonville was earmarked as one of 27 cities to receive a federal grant to prepare for a weapons of mass destruction attack. These funds bought decontamination trailers and other equipment and paid for interagency training and communications to connected fire, police, and other emergency services with workers in hospitals, utility services, and public health.

A year to the day after 9/11, the Jacksonville City Council approved purchase of 30 Thermal Imaging Cameras at a cost of \$9,700 each. Instead of following lengthy procurement procedures which could tie up acquisition for months, the Council authorized immediate purchase for the department.

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Thermal Imaging Cameras detect differences in temperature and help firefighters locate people in dark, smoke-filled buildings. The camera senses long-wave infrared rays invisible to the naked eye. It can locate heat sources inside walls or rubble. It helps find victims disoriented by smoke. With this hi-tech apparatus in the arsenal, JFRD's effectiveness increased even more.

### **Naughty, Naughty**

Thermal Imaging Cameras did not take the hottest pictures to circulate around one Jacksonville firehouse—which shall remain unidentified in this book.

Now, everyone knows that all Jacksonville firefighters are strong, brave, handsome, and pure-hearted...

But somehow in 2002, some pictures began to show up on the Internet...

They revealed identifiable JFRD equipment as background while a young lady posed.

She was not wearing a full-body HAZMAT suit.

Heck, she wasn't even wearing HAZMAT pasties.

When the photos of this young lady appeared on the World Wide Web — 3,973 of them— eyebrows went up, an investigation launched, and questions raised:

Who was responsible?

Was this an appropriate use of City equipment?

Was the young lady old enough to vote?

Were these photos taken by someone on the clock?

Oddly enough, while the *Times-Union* decried this new potential fire department scandal, the newspaper also published the names of the websites and web addresses so interested parties could view the photos for themselves and be shocked on their own.

But, when a JFRD investigation was launched, someone immediately removed the racy photos from the offending web sites.

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I know they were removed.

I have diligently searched the web— purely in the name of historical research and accuracy, you understand—and I can't locate a trace of a single one of them.

Drat!

## **HEAVY RESCUE**



### **HEAVY RESCUE 4**

The JFRD Special Operations Team recently placed in service Heavy Rescue 4. The Rescue has a 2006 Pierce Dash 2000 chassis. It seats 6 firefighters and reaches a top speed of 74 miles per hour. The overall general weight of the Heavy Rescue is 24,000 lbs. The new rig will take the place of Utility Four, a pick-up truck with additional storage space for carrying equipment.

Heavy Rescue 4 comes with many amenities, among those being an on board 10kw PTO generator,

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portable 3500kW Honda generator, Night Scan Powerlite tower, and four 1500 watt lights with a 15 foot maximum vertical boom. Heavy Rescue four also has a 9,000 lb winch, which is attachable on all sides. Every side of Heavy Rescue Four also has 9,000 lb anchor points.

Heavy Rescue Four also holds equipment for all major operations, most notably confined space and high angle rescue, structural collapse, and trench rescue. Some of the specialized equipment carried by the Heavy includes the Con Space communication system, concrete chain-saw, Paratech struts, coring drill, Snake-Eye Optical Remote Viewing System, and Paratech air shores<sup>125</sup>.



### **Chief 2003**

**Miles R. Bowers** served more time on the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department than anyone before retiring after 57 years of service. His second term as head of the department was a brief one as interim chief until Mayor

John Peyton could fill a campaign promise to replace Ray Alfred.

### **JFRD MISSION STATEMENT**

To minimize the loss of life and property resulting from fire, medical emergencies and other disasters through prevention, education, fire suppression, emergency medical service and emergency preparedness.

This will be accomplished in the most cost-effective manner with maximum utilization of available resources, never sacrificing the safety of our members.

**Call Nine—One—One**

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The winter of 1885/86 proved to be one of Jacksonville's coldest ever. The Jacksonville Signal Office, a forerunner of the weather bureau, recorded temperatures ranging between a low of 15 and a high of 23 degrees. The Signal Office received a telephone report of six inches of snow in Tampa and frost in Cuba.

Ice coated and broke telephone lines—yes, there were telephones in Jacksonville back then, the first was installed in 1859—so the Signal Office could not issue up-to-date reports but printed bulletins as soon as information became available.

National news reports of the day covered:

- Chief Geronimo and his band of Apache Indians daily eluded capture by the U.S. Army's 4th and 10 Calvary units.
  - Popular French novelist Victor-Marie Hugo, author of *Les Miserables*, died. His funeral generated news coverage in 1885 like Princess Diana's did more recently.
  - A sex scandal during Grover Cleveland's campaign. The President admitted that he "had once formed an illicit connection with a woman, and a child had been born and given his name... although there was no proof that he was the father since other men had been involved".
  - A Philadelphia Federal Court's decision in a patent infringement case brought by Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the
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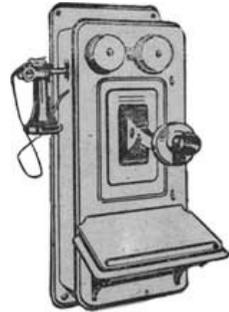
telephone; the court found in Bell's favor and awarded him one dollar in damages.

But weather dominated Jacksonville's local news:

“Several pigs and fowls were found frozen in their pins around the city yesterday... John Long left a barber shop late Saturday night for home and was found frozen dead Sunday morning not a quarter of a mile from where he started... A large number of water pipes split during the night allowing water to escape, which soon afterward froze solid...”

Yes, in January, 1886, pigs, plants and pipes concerned Jacksonville newspaper readers, but soon a telephone rate increase bumped these things from the headlines.

The first phone had been installed in Jacksonville in 1859. By 1885 the city had 170 telephones. As leader in the 1880s communications industry, the *Florida Times-Union* boasted of having two telephones!



The Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company had entered Jacksonville in 1880. The company leased telephone instruments to customers for \$51 a year—payable in advance.

But, in May 1885, Southern Bell announced a price increase of \$9 a year. This was during a time when people earned less. Lower prices reflected lower incomes; back then, quality blue jeans sold for 60¢ a pair and men's dress shirts cost only 47¢. The phone company's rate increase represented a considerable dip into people's wallets.

The telephone company's rate increase galled people.

A local businessman complained that everybody in Jacksonville was being "contemptuously treated by a scornful small agent of an autocratic monopoly".

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Jacksonville residents refused to pay.

Southern Bell wrote an open letter saying “ The rate has been universally raised from \$51 to \$60 in all the cities in the company's territory. **There is not the slightest prospect that the company would lower its rates if the whole city of Jacksonville withdraws its patronage...** The company is better prepared to lose the whole of (Jacksonville) than to lose the \$9 per annum per box in those other cities.... **The telephone company is willing to part regretfully with any subscriber who does not care to pay the company's rates”**.<sup>126</sup>

Jacksonville still refused to pay the outrageous increase.

Southern Bell began removing all telephones from Jacksonville.

Jacksonville knuckled under and paid the phone bill —with a twist; the Board Of Trade (forerunner of the City Council) imposed a tax on the phone company and used the funds for street repairs.

By 1910, Southern Bell had 6,367 Jacksonville customers and people were constantly discovering new uses for their telephones:



A 1912 issue of *Life Magazine* said, “If anyone desires to select the right kind of wife, one should never see the lady, but should first talk with applicants over the telephone... A woman’s voice is a certain indication of her character. Selfishness, sympathy, shallowness, cultivation, reserve, strength, control, and the capacity to bore - all these things and much more are revealed in a woman’s voice; therefore, make a list of girls... call them up on the telephone and select the voice you want. Never mind how she looks, she will always look well to you if you

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can listen to her with constantly increasing enjoyment".<sup>127</sup>

In 1937, emergency services in Great Britain instituted the idea of using a single phone number, 999, to call for help in any emergency. By 1967, that concept came to the United States. The first 9-1-1 call was placed in Haleyville, Alabama, on February 16, 1968.

At first, 9-1-1 operators had no information but what the caller told them. Now, computers and monitors tell more; the Enhanced 9-1-1 system displays the phone number of the caller, the address and apartment or lot number and the name of the telephone service subscriber.<sup>128</sup>



In 1985, Melody Benson of BellSouth instituted Florida's state-wide 9-1-1 service. She was a project manager to implement the emergency service across the state's municipalities. Although 911 had been in service in other states since 1968, through Ms Benson's efforts, Florida became one of the first states with a seamless 911 service across all 67 counties. "What really makes it work are the people who answer the calls, and the law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel who respond to them. They truly are heroes and I consider it a privilege to have worked with many of them over the course of my career," she said."<sup>129</sup>

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In 2007, JFRD operators handled 20,835 emergency calls involving fires; 92,875 requests for emergency medical service; and 14,287 non-emergency calls<sup>130</sup>.



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## CodeRED

With the selection of the CodeRED Emergency Notification System, a large number of county residents can be notified in a very short period of time. CodeRED employs a one-of-a-kind Internet mapping capability for geographic targeting of calls, coupled with a high speed telephone calling system capable of delivering customized pre-recorded emergency messages directly to homes and businesses, live individuals and answering machines, at the rate of up to 60,000 calls per hour. Notification of evacuations can be made in minutes versus hours. The system can also be used for notifying neighbors about missing persons, hazardous materials incidents and non-emergency information. CodeRED has the capability of storing calling lists of key individuals for important messages and information. Those individuals who do not have access to a home phone can elect to have their notifications sent directly to their cell phone.

Multiple agencies have access to CodeRED. The CodeRED system was used successfully during the T-2 Chemical Plant explosion notifying specific residents to stay inside until the all clear was given. Missing persons have successfully been found using the system.

## **NAWAS System**

The State of Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) provided the equipment and installation for a complementary communications system called National Alert and Warning System (NAWAS). This system will complement the current satellite based equipment used to link the local jurisdictions with the Florida DEM State Warning Point. Local jurisdictions will have the capacity to talk directly with each other as well as to the State. This system will also be used as a tool to conduct statewide conference calls between the Emergency Management Offices and the National Weather Service or National Hurricane Center.

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The state-provided system was installed in the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Communications Center as it is the county's 24-hour Warning Point. An additional system was purchased by the Emergency Preparedness Division to extend the capability of the system into the EOC.<sup>131</sup>

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## **Jacksonville Association Of Firefighters**

On February 14, 2002, the Jacksonville Association of Firefighters launched its public information web site: [www.jfrd.com](http://www.jfrd.com). This site quickly become popular, drawing over 50,000 hits in its first year.

The website's home page says:

Jacksonville Association of Fire Fighters staff one of the largest and most progressive fire departments in the nation, the Jacksonville Fire-Rescue Department. Our Firefighters respond to a variety of emergencies. These consist of building fires, wildland fires, automobile accidents, hazardous material incidents, marine emergencies, confined space incidents, aircraft incidents, public safety and education, fire prevention, and emergency medical services. We are the men and women you see on the streets everyday.

The Jacksonville Association of Fire Fighters is also the sole bargaining representative for the fire fighters you see on the streets everyday. Local 122 negotiates fire fighter contracts and assists with any grievances that are filed with the city on behalf of fire fighters.

We are also the political wing for the fire fighters. We help politicians that are "Public Safety Friendly" to attain political office. We supply signs and go door to door to ensure the public gets optimum public safety. We also fight the city government on a vast array of issues such as opening and closing of fire stations, equipment that works, and adequate staffing personnel to provide the best services possible. We lobby to make sure that when the budget needs to be slashed, it is not taken from your safety<sup>132</sup>.



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## **2002 Equipment Theft**

On December 29, 2002, thieves stole over \$10,000 worth of equipment from Wesconnett Station 25. They got away with 11 helmets, two pair of fire safety pants, boots, flashlights and a bunch of other items.

Just before that theft, a similar one occurred at Station 10 on McDuff Avenue.

And just before that, in November, \$16,000 worth of protective clothing and gear were stolen from a Green Cove Springs fire truck.

“I hope it’s just some low-level hoodlum and not terrorists, though everything, of course, goes through your mind”” said one of Station 25’s neighbors<sup>133</sup>.

In the two years following Nine-Eleven, the threat of other terrorist attacks loomed large in everyone’s minds.

“Today, when firefighters approach large fires or any other crisis that may have the potential for a large number of victims, they are more wary and now must ask themselves if the situation was intentionally created,” said Jacksonville fire Chief Rick Barrett. “It (Nine Eleven) brought the awareness up for everybody and they needed to start thinking, Why?”<sup>134</sup>

On April 20, 2002, JFRD had fought a massive generator fire on Talleyrand Avenue; the fire blacked out the entire City of Jacksonville for several hours. Citizens feared that it was an act of terrorism.

## **2003 — FORGING AHEAD**

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### **Chief 2003 - Present.**

**Richard A. Barrett** has been with the fire department since 1973. Since taking office, he has emphasized training and upgrading the department's aging equipment and facilities.

Prior to his appointment as fire chief, he served as a battalion chief for more than eight years and as chief of the Fire Prevention Division for three.

### **JFRD VISION**

To move into the next century providing the finest in fire and EMS services by operating from modern facilities, utilizing the most effective vehicles, tools and equipment, providing our highly trained firefighters with state-of-the-art gear/clothing and creating a work environment conducive to the highest standards of morale, safety and professionalism.

The Nine Eleven attacks sparked the creation of a state-wide Regional Domestic Security Task Force system.

Members of the JFRD focused more and more on training to handle massive disasters. Special Operations Units were established.

Assistant Chief Mark Bowen of the Homeland Security and Special Enforcement unit in the Sheriff's Office, said 63 potential terrorist targets have been identified and that advanced plans and strategies to respond to emergencies at these locations are in already place<sup>135</sup>.

In May, 2003, John Peyton was elected mayor over his opposing candidate Sheriff Mat Glover.

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Mayor Peyton was inaugurated on July 1<sup>st</sup>. And on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Battalion Chief Miles R. Bowers was named Interim Fire Chief of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department. During his tenure, he placed an order for two new fire boats.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Peyton appointed JFRD Battalion Chief Richard Barrett as Director/Fire Chief of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department.. Randy White was named Deputy Director/Fire Chief. And Charles Moreland, at age 32, became the youngest Division Chief in the history of the JFRD as the Chief of Rescue.

### **Disaster Drill**

In June, 2003, the author of this book lay dead blocking a stairway in the Gator Bowl (sometimes called Aw Hell Stadium).

I was part of a disaster drill involving a thousand volunteers to act as victims for Fire Rescue personnel to practice on.

In this scenario, huge explosions blasted the stadium and the football crowd evacuated; (many stepped over my dead body). Dozens of people played the part of injured victims as about 800 first responders arrived in the parking lot.

Firefighters set up a heavy waterfall spray to send victims through for decontamination measures. And mock victims were taken to Shands Jacksonville for treatment.

Then, another a large bomb was discovered the stadium. A bomb squad member, draped in a huge protective suit, honed in to defuse the bomb—but he was shot and wounded by a sniper.

A SWAT team rushed to his rescue in an armored truck and took out the sniper about 20 yards away in a tower.

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All this was set up for all local agencies to be coordinated by the Northeast Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force.

I survived.

In a real disaster An estimated 800,000 people in Duval County would rely on about 6,000 first responders—fire, police, health care, disaster and utility workers—to deal with an attack. Another 5,000 volunteers, including about 2,000 from medical fields, could be needed in the aftermath.

In April, 2003, new communications protocols, Safety Cast, encryption technology, etc. went into effect.

“The encryption technology comes as part of the renovation of a radio system that has been in the works for three and a half years at a \$41 million cost for towers and equipment. Between 8,000 and 10,000 radios are part of the new system, including about 4,000 that will be given to police and corrections officers. Installations have been completed or are being finished in JEA and city vehicles, and in Jacksonville Fire and Rescue units.”<sup>136</sup>

In September, the *Times-Union* said, “Federal dollars trickled down to city rescue squadrons, and the unit filled up a trailer of new equipment that can blast through concrete pillars in seconds, support an unstable building before collapse and shore up caved-in trenches at a construction site.”<sup>137</sup>

In a major emergency the city can also override cable television service and distribute mass phone messages targeted to any specific neighborhood.

## **PREPARING FOR TERROR**

“The pace of preparations to deal with possible terror attacks increased in 1997, when the city became one of 27 municipalities nationwide to receive a series of federal grants to prepare for the possibility of a

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weapons of mass destruction strike,” Emergency Preparedness Director Chip Patterson said.

“Most of the \$1.3 million was used to buy equipment, antidotes and vaccines that might be needed. Joint training connected fire, police and other emergency agencies with hospitals, utility service and public health officials,” he said.

The city has mass decontamination trailers that would be used to wash people who came in contact with chemicals. Decontamination equipment has been supplied to hospitals along with protective suits that health-care workers would wear.

“Emergency workers, who would respond to a scene first, have specialized suits available to protect them against poisons such as military nerve agents,” Patterson said. “In addition, the city has sophisticated equipment to detect the poisons and agents that are beyond the normal industrial chemicals and toxins emergency workers more regularly encounter.”

## **MOLDY STATIONS**

It wasn't terrorists but mold that chased firefighters from Station 28 on Hogan Road off Southside Boulevard, one of Jacksonville's busiest stations. In August 2003, firefighters stationed there had to move into a mobile home because mold overran the station.

To save money, back in the mid-1980s, the city had converted a former vehicle inspection station into a firehouse, Station 28.

"You can't keep getting by on the cheap. This is what happens," said Councilwoman Suzanne Jenkins, whose Southside district includes the station.<sup>138</sup>

Problems with physical facilities were not unique to moldy Station 28. Crews at Station 31 on Jacksonville's Westside responded to more than 7,600 calls—almost one an hour—during 2002, according to *Firehouse* magazine. The national trade publication said Station

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31 on the Westside was 53rd in the United States for activity that year.

Yet the station's roof leaked so bad water pooled on the floor, drywall peeled, and diesel smoke hung in the air so thick crews felt in danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Station 31 was built in the mid 1960s and originally housed only two volunteer firefighters.

"Few of the city's 52 fire stations are in compliance with Jacksonville's own fire and building codes," according to a report released by TriData Corp. of Arlington, Va., a consulting firm hired by the city.

"Many of the city's stations were not designed to house today's fire apparatus and lack adequate office, work and living space needed by 24-hour career firefighters," the national firm said. "Fire apparatus specifications for Jacksonville have been limited by the size of the station that the apparatus will be assigned to rather than being the optimal choice for operational needs."

In April, 2002, the city council had approved a \$10.2 million dollar bond issue earmarked to upgrade or replace existing fire stations and build seven new ones.

### **A Cabbie Earned The 2003 Carnegie Medal For Heroism**

On October 21, 2003, cab driver Richard R. Patey, who drove for Gator City Taxi, rescued an elderly woman from her burning home near Mayport.

He noticed the fire while driving to pick up a fare. He parked, broke open a sliding glass door, and called to anyone inside.

Hearing Ana S. Hernandez respond, Patey crawled down a smoke-filled hall, forced open her bedroom door, and carried her to safety.

Patey said at the time of the fire that Hernandez, who spoke little English, started fighting him when he

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picked her up from her bed. "She was struggling to stay inside and grabbed the door frame," he said .

For his heroic actions, in 2005, after the JFRD documented the incident, Richard Patey was awarded the Carnegie Medal from the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission.<sup>139</sup>

## **2004—A Stormy Year**

Here is a 2004 chronology offered in the archives of the Jacksonville Fire Museum:

**January 1st, 2004-** Two hundred forty one (241) Jacksonville Firefighters officially retire from the department as part of the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP). Among those are 57-year JFRD Veteran Battalion Chief Miles Bowers and 52-year veteran District Chief Romulous Alderman.

**January 15th, 2004-** The Jacksonville Association of Firefighters pledges their continued support for the Florida/Georgia Blood Alliance with the dedication of the Firefighter Blood Mobile.

**January 24th, 2004-** New Station 33 on New Kings Road is dedicated. It replaces the dilapidated and condemned building crew members previously worked in.



**February 2004- Fifty firefighters battle blaze at Worth Contracting Warehouse.**

**February 10th, 2004-** A Two-Alarm fire guts a warehouse on Jernigan Rd. in Fire District 21.

**March 19th, 2004-** The new *Marine 2* is dedicated at the Jacksonville Landing.



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**March 20th, 2004—** The Jacksonville Beach Fire Department received a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for 18 firefighters to train and be equipped as a Type 4 Urban Search and Rescue Light Technical Response Team.. Their training includes heavy industrial and vehicle extrication, rope rescue in confined spaces, and excavation.

Florida divides search and rescue teams into four categories with a Type 1 and 2 team being called in because of the collapse of a high-rise building or structure, a Type 3 team for an emergency with a cinder block or concrete structure, and a Type 4 team for a wood frame structure. The Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department has one of just three Type 2 teams in the state,.

**June 2nd, 2004-** Ground was broken for Station 58, on Joeandy Road.

**June 11th, 2004-** A two alarm fire destroyed three buildings at the intersection of 6th and Walnut streets.

**July 11th, 2004-** Lightning ignites a building in the Southbrook Apartment complex in Fire District 28. Engine 21 arrives on scene first to find heavy fire coming through the roof of the structure. Three apartments suffer fire damage while an additional four suffer from smoke and water damage.

“Florida is known as the lightning capital of the world, and the fiery flashes are the major cause of wildfires in the state. From 2000 to 2003, lightning accounted for more than 268,000 acres burned statewide, according to statistics listed on the Florida Division of Forestry Web site. In 1998, when the area was under the grip of severe drought, lightning caused more than 401,600 acres to burn across the state, with high fire concentrations here in North Florida. The second major cause of wildfires in the state is people disposing of cigarettes carelessly”.<sup>140</sup>

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## Hurricane Season 2004

**August 10th, 2004-** Jacksonville Firefighters are dispatched to Port Charlotte Florida to assist with relief efforts from the ravages of **Hurricane Charlie**.

**August 12, 2004-** A tornado spawned by **Hurricane Bonnie** damaged over 160 homes; FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) opened a mobile recovery center on Edgewood Avenue.

**August 21, 2004- Hurricane Charlie** About 26 people from Jacksonville Fire and Rescue returned after a weeklong stint in the middle of the state. The crew took fire trucks, service vehicles, rescue units and brush trucks to DeSoto and Charlotte counties. While engaged in hurricane relief, they often worked 21 hours a day.

**September 4th, 2004-** Jacksonville is side-swiped by **Hurricane Frances**. There were massive power outages and several fires. The Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department never discontinued service during the event.

**September 7th, 2004-** Fifty (50) Jacksonville Firefighters staff the telephones at the Jacksonville Electric Authority after **Hurricane Frances** struck. Firefighters arrived to find a skeleton crew assisting customers. Firefighters quickly alleviated the logjam of calls.

**September 16th-19th, 2004-** Jacksonville Firefighters were dispatched to the Florida Panhandle to assist with Fire and Rescue duties in the wake of **Hurricane Ivan**.

**September 28, 2004-** During **Hurricane Jeanne**, about 150 extra firefighters were on duty, responding mostly to calls about downed trees and power lines. One engine company alone, Engine 22, responded to 23 alarms in a two-hour span.

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A wind-blown limb crashed the windshield of Ladder 30 shattering glass fragments in the faces of two firefighters. Their eyes were flushed at a local hospital and the two returned to work that same night<sup>141</sup>.



As Jacksonville firefighters helped hurricane victims and observed conditions in other parts of the country, it became evident that in a disaster, people need to take responsibility for their own well-being.

“In a major, major disaster it may be 72 hours or even longer before first responders can get to your neighborhood,” said Jennifer Stagg, Emergency Preparedness Division Planner/Program Manager.

“When a wide-spread disaster such as a hurricane, terrorist attack, or tornado strikes, it may take several days before emergency services can reach local neighborhoods”, she said..

The Jacksonville Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program grew out of such observations.

Regardless of the event, disasters have several key elements in common:

- They are relatively unexpected, with little or no warning or opportunity to prepare
  - Available personnel and emergency services may be overwhelmed initially by demands for their services
  - Lives, health, and the environment are endangered.
  - In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, needs will be greater than professional emergency services personnel can provide.<sup>142</sup>
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To address such needs, expert instructors from JFRD's Training Division teach CERT volunteers in 25 hours of class room studies followed by a mock disaster drill at the JFRD Training Academy.

Training includes small fire suppression, Start Where You Stand triage techniques, light search and rescue, basic disaster first aid, and incident command structure.

JaxCERT training provides Duval County residents basic disaster-response skills necessary to address the urgent needs of their community when professional first responders and emergency personnel are not immediately available..<sup>143</sup>



Once trained, JaxCERT members are able to provide the following services to their neighborhoods:

- Increase their neighborhood's disaster preparedness
- Assess damage after a disaster
- Extinguish small fires and teach fire safety
- Perform light search and rescue operations
- Perform triage and provide minor medical service to the injured
- Organize as a team

“JaxCERT training provides residents basic disaster-response skills to address the urgent needs of their own families and their neighbors until professional first responders and emergency personnel arrive. A CERT team is your neighbors and business colleagues who, following training, initiate neighborhood or business teams whose actions make a difference”.<sup>144</sup>

As of May, 2004, there were 450+ CERT Teams, functioning in 129 CERT Programs covering 50 counties in Florida. Local fire departments, law enforcement

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agencies, county emergency management offices and others sponsor the state's CERT program<sup>145</sup>. FEMA FY02 Supplemental Grant funds are used to start-up programs in counties and locations without programs and to expand current programs.

### **An Odd Death—October 2004**

Shortly before Halloween, in October, 2004, firefighters encountered a strange death.

"I've never heard anything like it," said Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department spokesman Tom Francis. "There's no smoke. There's no smoldering embers. There's nothing."

An 86-year-old woman's body was found near the door of her Gardens At Lakewood apartment off University Boulevard.

She may have been dead for several days.

Apparently a fire had burned a sofa and blistered the walls of her apartment; it smoked up the door—then went out on its own.

Fire investigators had not found what caused the fire, nor had they determined what put it out, Francis said.

"When they opened the door, they immediately noticed there was some fire damage," Francis said. "Otherwise, the scene was cold. The fire had somehow been snuffed out as if it lost fuel or oxygen"

"Other than that, it beats the heck out of us," he said.

The victim's neighbors who were home that Wednesday night and Thursday morning had not noticed anything out of the ordinary<sup>146</sup>.

### **Four Generations**

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In November, 2004, Pam Ramsdell graduated from the fire training academy becoming the fourth generation Jacksonville firefighter in her family.

Pam's father, Herb, a captain in Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department's training division, took his oath of office in 1972

James A. Dowling Jr., Pam's grandfather, became a firefighter in 1937. He became known as the "Father of Rescue" in Jacksonville, helping establish an emergency medical services program in the late 1960s

Her great-grandfather James A. Dowling Sr. joined the department in 1908 when horse-drawn equipment was still being used.

**December 2004-** Ground was broken for Fire Station 57. And JFRD placed in service three new 100-foot aerial tiller ladders from Pierce. They were assigned to Ladders 4, 10, and 30.

With all this new equipment coming in, what happened to the old?

"If they are not needed in our area, I would rather see them go somewhere else rather than sit in our yard and rust away," Assistant fire chief Randy White said.

JFRD ended 2004 by donating six surplus Freightliner FL60 rescue units to the Dominican Republic to become the core of that impoverished country's new emergency health care system.

Before this donations, heart attack victims in the Dominican Republic were often transported to area hospitals in hotel vans<sup>147</sup>.

## 2005

In 2005, JFRD responded to 98,282 incidents:

- Fire 1,068
  - EMS 83,405
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- Good Intent / Service / Other 13,809

**Karl "Kliff" Kramer  
May 19, 2005**

Firefighter recruit Karl Kramer, 22, collapsed at the Fire Academy during a training exercise. Several hundred people, many uniformed firefighters, attended his funeral with fire apparatus from as far away as Brevard County.

A Jacksonville dispatcher broadcast:  
"Attention all stations, this is the last alarm for firefighter recruit Karl 'Kliff' Kramer."

# JFRD ROLL OF HONOR



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**February 2nd-7th, 2005-** The Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department shined as it worked during the Super Bowl XXXIX festivities. Planning for the event goes well, with no major events occurring. The department comes in under budget on overtime and staffing. The New England Patriots defeat the Philadelphia Eagles in Jacksonville's first go around as Super Bowl host.

**On March 16, 2005,** two contractors got stuck in an elevator, six stories up on the outside of a 365-foot tall smokestack at JEA's Northside Generating Plant—in a lightening storm.

Firefighters from Ladder 30 popped an external hatch on top of the elevator, fastened the trapped men in safety harnesses and guided the tower ladder to the ground.

Nobody got hurt—thrilled but not hurt.



Also, in March, 2005, Tammi Reyes earned the position of combat captain in JFRD. She joined Captain Geenda Hopkins in earning this high rank.

She said, “It shows that if you love what you're doing and work hard, you can keep moving up. I never thought I'd get this high, not because I'm a woman, but because there are so many

amazing people who work here”.

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She added: "Yeah, I'm a woman, but I got where I'm at because I worked hard on this job just like all the guys."

In 1983, Lt. Cynthia Williams had become Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department's first female firefighter.<sup>148</sup>

## Jacksonville Firetruck Burns Up On Interstate



That was the August 23, 2005, *Times-Union* headline.

No problem.

Three engines from St. Johns County stations came to the rescue.

They put out the fire on I-95 west of St Augustine.

The JFRD tower ladder truck, valued at \$750,000, was returning to Station 34 near Dunn Avenue and Lem Turner Road after being worked on at the American LaFrance facility in Sanford.

No one was injured in the fire which apparently started in a wheel well and melted tires, wheels and metal plating...."This is embarrassing," JFRD spokeswoman Bennie Seth said. "I have people calling from around the state asking, 'Did you have a firetruck burn up?'"

### Stormy Times:

**August 29th, 2005-** Over 100 Jacksonville Firefighters are on the ground in Mississippi just hours after

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**Hurricane Katrina** makes landfall. They staged in the Florida Panhandle prior to Katrina making landfall.

**August 31st, 2005-** Jacksonville Firefighters in Katrina-affected areas give their food and water to residents who have lost everything. Firefighters call home for assistance.

**September 1st, 2005-** JFRD and the Jacksonville Association of Firefighters call for donations to fill one tractor trailer truck of food, water, and supplies to send to hurricane stricken areas.

**September 2nd-8th, 2005-** In an amazing show of support by the citizens of Jacksonville, firefighters sent not one, but 28 tractor trailers loaded with much needed supplies to Katrina-affected areas.

**September 11th, 2005-** The Jacksonville Association of Firefighters Local 122 answers the call from the International Association of Firefighters to assist fellow firefighters in Mississippi and Louisiana. For the next two weeks, Jacksonville Firefighters joined firefighters from all over the country in aiding shell-shocked firefighters and helping them get back on their feet.

**October, 2005-** for the first time in almost a decade, (since 1996 the city had only replaced existing stations), JFRD added a new station; Station 57 on Westside's Beaver Street . This station—9,000 square feet with three bays and room for a dozen firefighters—was the first of four stations scheduled to open within 18 months.

## **2006**

**On Februray 21, 2006, Mayor John Peyton mailed the following letter:**

Dr. James B. Crooks  
Chairman  
Jacksonville Human Rights Commission  
4044 San Clerc Road

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Jacksonville, Florida 32217

Dear Chairman Crooks:

As you are undoubtedly aware, there was an incident last Friday, February 17, 2006 at Fire Station #4 in which two African American firefighters arrived at the station for duty to find nooses on their firefighting gear. Since this incident, another firefighter has reported having a noose tossed at his feet during a training exercise last summer. I have also become aware that possible additional incidents of this nature may have taken place in the recent past.

Harassment of this kind is morally reprehensible and I will not tolerate it in an employee of this city government. These additional reports, however, lead me to believe that incidents of this nature may not be isolated. I want to make sure there is not a culture of discrimination within the department.

To assure that both this particular incident and other reported incidents are fully investigated and the offending parties disciplined to the fullest extent of my authority as mayor, I am writing to ask the Human Rights Commission fully investigate this matter and present your findings to me personally. I also request your assistance in taking proactive measures to improve race relations within the department.

To accomplish these goals, I request that the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission:

Investigate historical discipline practices at the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

Identify better policies and procedures for receipt and handling of grievances and complaints

Review recruitment, hiring and advancement practices in the department

Institute and manage a diversity training program for all management and supervisory personnel effective

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immediately; as well as making diversity training part of the overall curriculum utilized by the department

Recommend best practices for management that will promote a meaningful, productive and effective work environment for all.

I also request that the Human Rights Commission and its staff review prior grievances and receive and process current and future grievances from members of the Fire Department. The Commission is uniquely positioned to analyze the department at multiple levels and make recommendations to me for any necessary changes.

Your attention to these very serious matters would be most appreciated and I will look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience. My office will make any needed resources available to you upon request. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter.

Thank you in advance for agreeing to oversee this matter.

Sincerely,

John Peyton  
Mayor

On March 3, 2006, a jury determined that four white fire lieutenants were denied promotions by Ray Alfred, Jacksonville's black former fire chief, because of their race. The jury awarded them back pay after six years of litigation.<sup>149</sup>

Former chief Ray Alfred said, "I've spent 37 years of my life protecting lives and property," he said, "And to have anyone accuse me of discriminating against anyone for any reason, I reject that. I resent it. It hurts."<sup>150</sup>

Throughout 2006, local media offered extensive coverage about race relations, discrimination, reverse

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discrimination, promotional policies, and related problems in JFRD.

**--2007--**

## **LUCKY THE FIRE DOG**



On April 5, 2007, fire destroyed the Humane Society's animal shelter. Over 70 firefighters battled the blaze and tried to save the more than 200 cats and dogs trapped in locked cages as flames more than 30 feet high shot through the roof.<sup>151</sup>

"We had upgraded assignments, extra rescues, extra engines, extra ladders, and extra chiefs... We're used to dealing with one, maybe two pets in the house," said Lt. Michael Biladeau. "At this fire, we had multiple animals, multiple kennels, multiple rooms, and locked doors."

"Three hours into it, we're tired, and we take one last effort of walking through this building.---And there he was under the caved in roof!

"He was the only puppy alive three hours into the process. We find him soaking wet, battered, and charred."

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The crew from Station 28 immediately adopted Lucky the fire dog as station mascot.

Only 78 animals, mostly dogs, survived the fire.



## **Beckman Plaza**

Other dogs, search dogs, showed their stuff in the collapse of the Beckman Plaza Parking Garage on December 6, 2007.

About 6 a.m., the six-story parking garage under construction at 500 Bay Street (Berkman Plaza II

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construction site) collapsed while workers were pouring concrete on the uppermost floor. The northern two-thirds of the structure collapsed. Fourteen people were transported by JFRD and local EMS to area hospitals. An additional eight people were transported by JTA to Shands Hospital.

One person, Willie Edwards III, 26, was killed in the collapse. He was trapped in the rubble on East Bay Street and found two days after the collapse.

The EOC was activated to Level 3 and transitioned to on-site emergency management.<sup>152</sup>

**Here is an excerpt from my daily journal written the next day:<sup>153</sup>:**



At 5:58 a.m. yesterday a building in downtown Jacksonville, a parking garage for a luxury condo, Beckman Plaza II, a 23-story condominium, collapsed.

The radio said the building was under construction and workers were pouring concrete on an upper level. The disaster struck right as workers were changing shifts so no one was sure how many people were trapped beneath the rubble.

Six stories of the structure fell in an instant, each floor compressing floors below. One witness described it as a stack of pancakes

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Right Now, this morning, Jax Fire Rescue Division is still in the midst of search and recovery operations so the facts and figures are still sketchy

At least 23 people were hospitalized and many more injured were treated on site. No one know how many are trapped beneath the rubble or, indeed, if all the people inside made it out.

That Beckman place is on the river right across the street from police headquarters; within two minutes of the collapse, police, fire, ambulance, rescue workers and volunteers responded

If nothing else, having spent a couple of years researching and writing our fire department's history, I've gained a layman's appreciation of what a great job they are doing right now this morning.

Every Jacksonville firefighter receives an extra 50 hours a year training in mass causality protocols and urban rescue techniques As I've listened to radio news and watched tv reports, I see this training show up in spades.

These guys are good.

In responding to the building collapse they are using everything from Halligan bars and search dogs to thermal imaging cameras and Hurst Extraction Tools (Jaws Of Life) to locate and rescue any victim.

It's amazing to see in action tools and procedures I've only read about during my research. I come to a deeper appreciation of firefighters every day.

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OHSA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration) officials are investigating. It's too early to say for sure exactly why this building collapsed, but as an amateur historian, I could hazard a guess.

Before the 1950s the St. Johns River was much wider with mud banks along the edges. Construction projects dumped fill dirt on top of the mud making the river narrower and narrower, then a crust of asphalt topped the fill dirt and buildings went up.

The water used to be right at Bay Street, now two city blocks of structures lie between Bay Street and the water. All these new things stand on a foundation of squishy river mud being constantly undercut by the river's flow.

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There was a day when a man standing on Bay Street could shoot alligators. It's a wonder to me that more buildings along the river bank haven't collapsed. What foundation can there be underneath? Already parts of the Northbank Riverwalk built just before the 2005 Superbowl have fallen into the river.

The wise man builds his house upon the rock, the foolish man builds his house in Florida.

But, who am I to criticize the foundation another man builds on?

After all, I'm the guy who build my entire adult personality on the foundation of Froggy and his magic twanger.

So, what spiritual lesson is there in all this for me?

First thing that comes to mind is that Jesus said, "Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost... lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it..."

But, He also warns me against crowing about other people's flubs.

In speaking of a construction accident in His day, He said, "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell ye, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish".

But I'm getting far afield here.

The main reason I'm mentioning this present disaster is that it brings me a deeper appreciation of Jacksonville Fire Rescue Division. Seeing them in this kind of action certainly motivates me to get back to work writing their history. Seeing them do their job makes me want to do mine better.

Here are two First Coast News photos of search dogs in the rubble:

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**T-2 Chemical Plant Explosion**

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"The damage is really almost hard to comprehend," Mayor Peyton said on December 19, 2007, at the site where over a hundred firefighters responded to an explosion at T-2 Labs on the Northside.

"You see power lines have snapped overhead. All of the buildings surrounding this facility have experienced some type of damage. Windshields have smashed, the walls are caved in.," he said.

The JFRD Incident Report said:

Four people were killed and 15 transported with injuries from a chemical plant explosion at the T2 Labs on the Northside. Multiple fires burned as a result of the explosion and local assets responded.

The EOC activated to a level 3 on December 19, 2007, supporting on -scene operations.

Due to the unknown nature of the air emissions, an evacuation of the surrounding area was ordered as a precaution and a shelter was opened at Oceanway Elementary School.

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**The plume of smoke from the T-2 Labs explosion rises over the JEA's Northside**



### **Generating Plant**

Once air monitoring was negative for toxins, the evacuation was cancelled.

Because of the nature of the incident, state and federal resources joined local law enforcement to investigate the scene. Investigation into the cause of the accident could take one year.<sup>154</sup>

In response to the T-2 Explosion, local hospitals instituted their Hospital Incident Command System (HICS) which goes into effect whenever there is a mass trauma event..

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Under HICS, hospital personnel wear colored vests to signify what their job is. At the scene of the T-2 Lab fire, rescuers decided decontamination on-site would not work best.

At Shands Hospital a decontamination tent was set up in the north parking garage. Patients brought in from the explosion went through the decontamination process before being admitted into the hospital..

"They'll come in off the ambulance, we'll cut their clothes off, then they'll go through literally a tent with spray nozzles and water, and that water just douses them and by doing that we remove 95% of the contaminants that could have potentially been on them," a Shands spokesman said.



After inspecting the T-2 Lab site Mayor Peyton said, "Nothing there resembles a building. It's amazing when you see the scene that there wasn't more loss of life."

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## HEROS ALL



The following Jacksonville Firefighters have earned Lieutenant Joseph F. Stichway Firefighter of the Year Award. Where possible, a brief description of their heroic acts is provided<sup>155</sup>:

In 1968, **Bobby Claxton**, Ladder 4, rescued a 5 year old boy from a burning home

For his actions during Jacksonville's race riots, **Mose Bowden** was named 1969 Fireman of the Year.

**Lt. Newton Eugene Johnson** was overcome by heat and smoke and died when the roof of an A&P Supermarket at San Juan and Hershel streets collapsed while he was fighting a fire inside. It was his first day as a roving officer assigned to Engine 14. Lt. Johnson was posthumously honored as the 1970 Fireman of the Year.

In the middle of a dark night, **Edgar A. Cowart** jumped fully clothed from a fire boat into the St. Johns River to save a drowning man. He was named 1972 Fireman of the Year.

And, On January 13, 1987, Engineer Cowart was posthumously selected as the 1986 Fire Fighter of the Year. He was the first person to be honored as Fire Fighter of the Year twice.

Mayor Hans Tanzler presented the Certificate of Merit award to JSO **Patrolman L.H. Sweeney** citing him for, "outstanding performance the morning of April 29th, 1973, which resulted in the



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prevention of serious injury or death to several firefighters<sup>156</sup>". Sweeney commented, "I just didn't want to write any Signal 7 reports."

That year, **EMT Kenneth R. Ivey** was named 1973 Fireman of the Year by the Jacksonville Jaycees. His rescue vehicle was in a head-on collision with a passenger car. Though injured himself, Ivey pulled trapped victims from the burning car and administered first aid.

Fire privates **Paul Porter** and **Larry Sloan** received letters of commendation at the same time. Porter suffered second and third degree burns rescuing an unconscious person trapped in a burning building.; Sloan voluntarily climbed into a gas-filled storm drain to stop a gas leak.

In 1975, Mayor Tanzler presented awards to **Capt. Gary F. Keys, Lt. Morgan Kraan** and **Lt. Carl R. Hough**<sup>157</sup>. Keys rescued two workers from a broken window-washing conveyor 165 feet above the ground on the control tower at Jacksonville International Airport. Lt. Kraan helped police capture two auto thieves. And Lt. Hough rescued a 2-year-old from a burning mobile home.

In September, 1976, **Lt. George W. Fitts** received the Fireman of the year Award from VFW Post 6922 for his efforts in promoting fire safety programs in hospitals and nursing homes<sup>158</sup>.

That same year, Mayor Tanzler presented a Fireman of the Year award to volunteer fireman **Randy White** who saved a 2-year-old child from drowning. And, **R.L. Mosier** received a Silver Life Saving award for his efforts atop a 100-foot ladder preventing a woman from jumping from a building<sup>159</sup>.

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The 1977 Fireman of the Year award went to **Capt. Ronald G. Gore** for his efforts organizing the Hazardous Material Team.

At the same ceremony, **Lt. E.M. Holsenbeck** and fireman **J.D. Clemons** received Gold Medals for saving the lives of two men trapped under a six-foot pile of wood chips at Alton Box Co.

When workmen were digging a hole at 8th and Talleyrand, the walls collapsed burying them in mud. Rescue **Lt. Herb Sellers III** got into the hole and held one man's face above the mud for over an hour while they were being dug out.<sup>160</sup>

Seventeen other Fire Department Heroes were recognized in the 1977 ceremony.

On October 24, 1978, **Harry "Gil" Mixson** was named Fireman of the Year. A man on a boat stranded on a sandbar near Talbot Island had a heart attack. The Coast Guard cutter responding to the distress call drew too much water to get close. Mixson swam through crashing waves and undertow to the stranded boat, tied a line from it to a jeep on shore, and the fishing boat was winched to land. Awards Committee chairman M.M. Hendrix Jr. said the rescue, "reflects and upholds the highest traditions of fire service"<sup>161</sup>.

The 1979 Gold Medal went posthumously to **Lt. J.F. Stichway**, who died in a fierce barge fire; 22 other firefighters were recognized for their actions in that same fire<sup>162</sup>.

A van loaded with a family ran off the Main Street Bridge over the Trout River a few days after Christmas in 1979. Responding to the 4 and 53, firefighter **Andrew Graham** found that two civilian passers-by had pulled some of the victims from the van.

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Graham leaped into the icy water, and standing atop the submerged van, with water up to his chest, Graham performed CPR on a child till she could be lifted to a rescue unit on the bridge.

"I thought there was no hope," he said. "No. I take that back about no hope. We always try, no matter what we think."

Bold City Jaycees named Graham 1979 Fireman of the Year.<sup>163</sup>

In 1980, **Lt. Howard A. Davidson** was named Fireman of the Year by the Bold City Jaycees when he rescued a mother from a house fire at 4801 Moncrief Road. When other firefighters could not get inside the children's bedroom because the window was too small, Davidson rescued first the mother then went back inside for her two children. When he brought them out, both were already dead.

Fireman of the year for 1982 was **Rick Darby**, Station 10.

"When there's a fire, everyone is running away from it. Except us, we're always the ones running right into it," Darby said.

A 1,000-gallon liquid propane tank at Anchor Hocking sprang a leak; a vapor cloud surrounded the tank. Darby's citation said, "He voluntarily exposed himself to almost certain death. He went into a vapor cloud without protection. His actions prevented a major fire<sup>164</sup>."

In a Fireman of the Year citation read at a luncheon of the Association for Independent Insurance Agents, **Parender Farmer** was honored. During a mobile home fire near Mayport, Farmer broke through a back window to rescue one of two brothers trapped inside.

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"The heat was so bad, my equipment was smoking," he said. "I was disoriented but I found the boy lying on the floor next to the bed. I handed him out the window and kept looking for the other boy, but I couldn't find him."<sup>165</sup>

Engineer **Bret Thomas Pickett** was named Firefighter of the Year on January 30, 1985, at a ceremony hosted by Mayor Jake Godbold<sup>166</sup>.

During the Triangle Tank Farm Fire, Pickett managed to start the department's \$250,000 hazardous materials fire truck as flames threatened to engulf it. When Tank 16 ruptured and everyone retreated, the truck would not start. With a sea of flame rolling toward him, Pickett leisurely babied it a bit—then got the hell out when the truck finally started.

Pickett also won the American Legion Statewide Firefighter of the Year Award for 1984. He was the first Jacksonville Firefighter to win this award.

On December 16, 1985, Mayor Jake Godbold awarded Firefighter of the Year honors to **Lt. Richard P. Morphew** for keeping fire from igniting a 1,200-gallon propane tank<sup>167</sup>. at the Rex Box Plant. In January of 1985, the Haz Mat Team played a crucial role suppressing that fire. The team neutralized a major LP gas leak and extinguished an extremely dangerous liquid paraffin fire.

Mayor Godbold honored six other firefighters, **R.E. Daniels, J.R. Williams, M. Johnson, T.J. Yost, M.W. Keane and T.P. McCrone** for their bravery in Rex Box Plant fire—which a newspaper editorial described as "a flaming gas leak that had great potential for creating a disaster and killing or maiming them"<sup>168</sup>. They received the Silver Medal of Valor.

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A November, 1986 newspaper headline once again said of a Jacksonville firefighter, "He gave his life trying to save others".

The story told of **Engineer E.A. Cowart** who drowned when Marine 3 capsized answering a distress call near the Hart Bridge. On January 13, 1987, Engineer Eddie Cowart was posthumously selected as the 1986 Firefighter of the Year. This was the second time he had been cited for bravery; he also won 1972's award.

In 1990, **Clarence Dieas** won Firefighter of the Year for disarming a violent, knife-wielding patient who threatened to kill herself and anyone who came near her.

1992's Firefighter of the Year, **Robert O. Tarkington**, Engine 18, confronted a man with a rifle who threatened to blow the brains out of anyone came near him. Tarkington persuaded the gunman to drop the rifle, then positioned himself between the man and rifle to keep everyone safe.

In 1993, the entire Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department was recognized as Firefighters of the Year after their spectacular job extinguishing the Steuart Petroleum Oil Tank Fire, January 2nd-8<sup>th</sup>. A car struck the tank, igniting the contents. JFRD became the first department ever to extinguish this type of oil tank blaze.

In 1995, **Andrew Graham**, Firefighter of the Year for 1979, and **Mike Strickland** were both award Firefighter of the Year awards for pulling two children from a burning home on Kings Road. Upon hearing a scream, Graham and Strickland moved to the area of the scream and removed one child from the burning house. They then re-entered the house and removed a second child, who was not breathing.

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The 1996 Firefighter of the Year, **Richard Lundy**, used a ground ladder to make entry into the second story of a house at 759 Church Street. Lundy went into the second floor without a hose line and conducted a search of a bedroom on fire. He located a man who was near death and removed him from the superheated room. The victim was removed from the house and lived.

**Timothy Culpepper** and **Bruce Hedrick** won 1998 Firefighter of the Year awards when they responded to a two story house fire on Clay Street. They forced entry into the structure and performed a primary search of the first floor, where they found an unconscious victim in a back bedroom. Culpepper and Hedrick removed the victim from the house. The victim was taken to the hospital and survived.

On September 16th, 2000, **Robert O. Tarkington**, 1992 Firefighter of the Year, won his second award. On Ladder 18, he responded to a call for a man trapped in a hole between stacks of metal stock. Tarkington was able to get near the patient and place airbags around him to help lift the metal. He then crawled under the trapped victim, placed a rescue harness on him, and assisted with pushing the victim out of the hole.

In 2001, JFRD honored those 343 members of the **Fire Department of New York** who died in the line of duty at the horrific World Trade Center terrorist attacks of September 11th.

**Lt. Robin Gainey**, Engine 5, Riverside, became 2002 Firefighter of the Year when he jumped into the water to save an entire family that was drowning.

In 2003 **David J. Smith** was honored for his actions at a house fire, where he rescued a trapped victim.

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2004 Firefighter of the Year **Laurence Washington** sustained several injuries when he dove into the water to rescue the driver of a van that had run off the road and was submerged.

On October 26, 2005, the 73-year-old Southside Business Men's club honored two firemen of the year. Chief of Rescue Charles Moreland presented the club's awards to firefighter **Jason Platas** and fire rescue division **Capt. Kevin Kotsis**.

Moreland said Jason Platas, Fire Station 1 downtown, was noted for being a great firefighter who saved the life of a child in a smoky house fire in Springfield on Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

"Imagine coming off the truck and being told there is a child in the house," Moreland said. "Jason made his way into the billowing black smoke with no availability of water at the time, since the engine hadn't made it. He went into the home, got as low as he could, felt around, and was fortunate to find the child."

The chief said Kevin Kotsis, in charge of the rescue unit at Fire Station 21, Southside, "is a very good leader" and good family man. "...I rewarded him because of those skills. He is willing to give and go any extra mile. He does more than what you ever ask of him and I appreciated that," Moreland said.

"He has specialized in urban search and is on the hazardous material team, plus on the tactical medical team working with SWAT. Those are all time-consuming and he has always stepped up to the plate and lived up to this." <sup>169</sup>

**Lt. Mark Johnson** and Firefighter **Andrew Sallette** were awarded the 2005 Firefighter of the Year award. They were at the Motor Pool getting repairs made to Haz Mat 7 when the jack holding

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the apparatus up gave way, trapping a Motor Pool worker underneath. Sallette and Johnson called for an extrication assignment and repositioned the jack to raise the Haz Mat. Johnson then slid under the apparatus and pulled the victim out to safety. Just seconds after removing the victim from under the Haz Mat, the floor jack gave way a second time.

### **This Record Of Heroes Is Not Complete.**

Ask any firefighter about his deeds of bravery, and he's likely to say, "Just doing my job. All I do is put the wet stuff on the hot stuff".

In the face of such modesty, detailed records of heroism sometimes get lost. The annals of the Jacksonville Fire Museum list other firefighters who won the Lieutenant Joseph F. Stichway Firefighter of the Year Award. But, neither the museum, nor Google, nor the JFRD Public Information Office, nor the Awards Committee, nor the Jacksonville Association of Firefighters could supply me with more information than this bare list of names.

Other award winners include: 1971- Arnold Haddock; 1974- Lt. Lindy Jackson; 1975- E.E. Wood; 1981- Sam R. Pratt; 1987- Wayne Doolittle; 1988- Mark S. Chambers; 1989- Ronald L. Fridell; 1991- Reginald S. Thompson, Jr.; 1994- Steven D. Lee; and 1999- Mike Lesniak.

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## **Y'all make me shine!**

In February, 2008, a ceremony was held at the Local 122 union hall to honor JFRD heroes. Fire officials also recognized those outside the department who acted heroically<sup>170</sup>.

They included: A crane operator who helped firefighters pick through the debris in the Berkman Plaza collapse with a victim still trapped; Latavisa Bell, 17, who broke through burglar bars with a hammer to save a family from a burning house; and JSOe officer Folin Christmas for pulling a driver who fled from him out of a car fire after the vehicle crashed.

The union also presented awards to firefighters who rescued about 80 animals from the Humane Society shelter fire.

That night **Lt. Mark Kruger** won a bronze medal for bravery for pulling two teen-aged girls from a flipped-over car that was on fire.

Lt. Kruger also won silver medal of valor himself for his actions in a Pearl Street blaze in February 2007 after a room suddenly flashed over with flames and caught his gear on fire trapping him and giving him 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns.

For saving Lt. Kruger at great risk, carrying him outside and putting out flames on his melting bunker gear, **Lt. Michael George**, earned a medal for valor.

As he accepted his award before the crowd of his fellow firefighters, Lt. George, a 16-year JFRD veteran from Station 28, said:

"Y'all make me shine! ... Pulling Kruger out, I need to thank God for that. He put me in the right place at the right time."

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## **Heroes All**

On June 29, 1987, Mayor-elect Tommy Hazouri helped dedicate the new Station One and the Fallen Fire Fighters' Memorial.

During the ceremony, Deputy Director/Fire Chief Miles R. Bowers struck the 1½ ton brass bell in the memorial 14 times— tolling once for each of Jacksonville's 14 fire fighters who have died in the line of duty.

No memorial—no book—can record all the acts of bravery of Jacksonville fire fighters over the years.

Perhaps the words spoken by a Fire Chief<sup>171</sup> back in 1908 express this bravery best:

"Firemen are going to be killed right along. They know it, every man of

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them ... Firefighting is a hazardous occupation; it is dangerous on the face of it, tackling a burning building. The risks are plain ... Consequently, when a man becomes a fireman, his act of bravery has already been accomplished".

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**Escape**  
**A Personal Meditation**  
**By**  
**John Cowart**

According to tradition, in early June, 1859, a wagon train bound for the promised land of the Oregon Territory departed from St. Louis, Missouri, Gateway to the West. During the weeks that followed, these pioneers battled hostile Indians, forded swollen rivers and crossed barren deserts. Some of their number died from diphtheria; some grew discouraged and turned back; some were massacred in a predawn Indian attack. The survivors continued trudging across the vast grasslands of the great American prairie.<sup>172</sup>

One morning when they had been on the trail for only a few hours, one woman glanced back



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and screamed at a shocking sight—smoke on the horizon. The prairie grass blazed behind them.....

And the wind was at their back.

Their first thought was that the Indians had set the fire. But what had really happened was that they had not completely put out their own campfire from the night before.

The little fire they had started themselves caught the surrounding shoulder-high grass and now menaced their lives.

The pioneers urged their teams onward, attempting to outrun the flames, but the wind blew faster than the ox teams could run. The fire would catch up in a matter of hours.

They frantically beat their teams into a lather and began to toss supplies out of the wagons to lighten the load. But by now they could actually see flames in the distance, and windborne ash began to fall around them. The fire was traveling faster than the covered wagons. They could not possibly outrun it. There was only one thought in anyone's mind: "How can we escape? What can we do to get away from this fire we've started? How can we escape?"

The Bible tells us that in a way we have each started our own wildfire—sin. St. Paul said, "All have sinned" and "The wages of sin is death".. We have sinned, and we know that it is only a matter of time before our sin will catch up with us. The Scripture says, "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands... Their sword shall enter into their own heart".

Like the pioneers, who were threatened by their own fire, we are menaced by our own sin. Moses said, "Be sure your sin will find you out". And, like those pioneers of old, we also wonder, How can I escape? Is there any out? Is there any hope?

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On that grassy prairie one pioneer thought of a solution to their dilemma. Grabbing a flint and steel from his pouch, he raced ahead of the lead wagon. Kneeling in the dry grass, he struck flint and steel together, causing sparks to fly. Soon the grass ahead of the wagons was blazing, and the wind, still blowing in the same direction, moved the new fire forward, burning off the grass ahead of them.

To escape from the wildfire they had started themselves, all they had to do was move ahead to where the new fire had already burned. There they were safe.

God used a similar tactic to allow us to escape from our sin. Jesus died for us. Then He arose from the dead, demonstrating that He is Lord of life. He suffered the penalty of our sin. "For God hath made Jesus to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". Thus we see that the wrath of God fell on His beloved Son.

The ground at the foot of the cross is already burned over.

That is the place of safety.

There is no other.

Unlike the pioneers, we have no way to build a fire out front. We must rely on what Jesus has done. We must trust Him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved".

Here's the way I think it works:

We need to agree with God that we have sinned, and we need to take responsibility for what we have done.

Then we need to turn around, repent. It makes no sense to keep going on a road that's taking you where you don't want to go, does it?

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Act on the belief that what God's Word says concerning sin and concerning what Christ has done about sin is true, simply ask Jesus to forgive and to take control of your life.

Trust Him to do exactly what He says He will do. Jesus promised, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out".

Then it's time to make an incident report; to tell God and others that Jesus is your Lord.

Come to Jesus now—today.

The Scripture asks, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation" ?

--John Cowart

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# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Text and graphics by  
**Cliff Williams**

Simsbury<sup>173</sup> Connecticut<sup>1</sup> Volunteer Fire Company

Fire Service has evolved significantly since the days of bucket brigades, as our job no longer involves simply putting the *wet stuff on the red stuff*. Today's modern firefighter must be knowledgeable and proficient at handling a wide spectrum of emergency situations and the challenges they present. To help us complete these difficult tasks, many different types of tools and equipment are utilized, some have been developed specifically for use in the fire service.

While there are many tools of the trade in the fire service, some of the more prominent items, which we use frequently in our duties, include protective clothing, **helmets, self-contained breathing apparatus, axe and Halligan, thermal imaging camera, and extrication tools.**

## TURNOUT GEAR

Without a doubt, no equipment is more important than the gear which is used to protect firefighters from the many hazards they confront. Dependant upon the nature of the emergency incident, firefighters always utilize some level of *Personal Protective Equipment* to help shield themselves from injury.

*Personal Protective Equipment* refers to any clothing, helmets and equipment, such as self-

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Cliff Williams for permission to use this material. While some of the information in this chapter is local to Simsbury, the firefighting tools he explains are universal — jwc.



## John W. Cowart



contained breathing apparatus, which is worn to protect firefighters from injury.

The coat and pants used for structural firefighting are commonly referred to as *Bunker Gear* or *Turnout Gear*, and are designed to protect the wearer from the hazards of fighting fires and other dangers that may be encountered. **National Fire Protection Association** standards require all turnout coats and pants to incorporate three protective components: an outer shell, a moisture barrier and a thermal barrier.

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**The outer shell and inner liner of a turnout coat.**



**Typical personal protective equipment consisting of turnout gear, helmet, hood, gloves, boots and SCBA.**

Depending on the properties of the material it is constructed from, the outer shell can offer many protections. It's first and foremost job is to protect the firefighter from injury due to direct contact with flames and heat. The fabric of the outer shell also helps to



**Reflective trim is designed to be highly visible even in poor lighting conditions.**

protect against cuts and abrasions and may provide a limited amount of water repellency.

The moisture barrier and thermal barrier are usually incorporated into a common liner which fastens to the

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inside of the outer shell. The moisture barrier serves to keep water, steam, blood and vapors from entering and making contact with the firefighter while still allowing heat and perspiration to be released. The thermal component of the liner must also allow moisture to be expelled, but it's primary job is to protect the wearer from high levels of heat.

A fourth component that is required for all turnout gear is reflective trim which helps to provide visibility and identification under many conditions. Turnout trim usually incorporates a fluorescent component for daytime visibility and a reflective component to catch light during nighttime and low visibility conditions such



**Today's modern fire helmets provide protection against many hazards. Flip-down eye shields however, are not considered adequate eye protection.**

as a smoke-filled room. Different color trim is usually utilized to help easily differentiate firefighters from officers.

## HELMETS & SHIELDS

Like turnout gear, helmets are designed to provide the firefighter with many protections.

The primary function of any helmet used in the fire service is to provide impact protection to the head. Helmets designed for structural firefighting also provide

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protection against heat with their liners and earflaps. The brim of a structural helmet should prevent water and embers from finding their way inside the coat around the neck.

Many structural helmets have some sort of eye or face protection incorporated into them that can be lowered into position when needed.

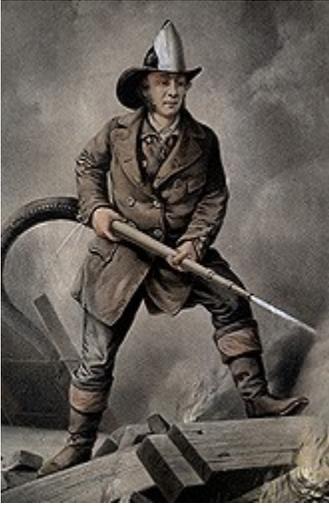
These devices serve only as secondary protection and do not negate the need for wearing approved, primary eye protection such as goggles or safety glasses when the situation requires them.

While modern fire helmets are generally constructed of composite materials and come in many different models, the classic shape of the fire helmet dates back to 1836 when it was constructed of durable leather.

Today, both composite and leather models of the classic shape are available. Regardless of construction, all helmets must be designed to meet the same National Fire Protection Association standard.

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## John W. Cowart



**An early era fire helmet with front piece is depicted in this Currier & Ives lithograph from 1858 entitled "The American Fireman - Facing the Conflict."**

The creation of that leather helmet in 1836 is credited to Henry T. Gratacap, who owned a business producing ocean transit luggage from specially treated leather that offered superior durability and withstood wetness without rotting. Being a volunteer firefighter in New York City, he was aware of firefighter's need for better head protection, so H. T. Gratacap developed a helmet and named it the "New Yorker".

Shortly thereafter, two brothers named Cairns who operated a Metal Badge, Button, and Insignia business in New York, came up with the idea to mount an identification badge to the front of Gratacap's helmets.

Hence the first front piece (or shield) and holder were born. The two companies cooperated until H. T. Gratacap's retirement in the mid 1850's, and the Cairns & Brother legacy of fire helmets began. Although the New Yorker has been re-engineered throughout its lifetime, it is still produced today by CairnsHelmets, a division of Mine Safety Appliance Co. (MSA).

The use of the eagle on the helmet as a holder for the shield has an equally long history.

Around 1825, an unknown sculptor did a commemorative figure for the grave of a volunteer

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fireman in Trinity Churchyard in New York City<sup>2</sup>. It depicted the hero issuing from the flames, his trumpet in one hand, a sleeping babe in the other, and, on his hat, an eagle.

No firefighters were wearing eagles at the time as it was a flight of pure fancy on the sculptor's part, but as soon as the firemen saw it they thought it was a splendid idea, and since every fire company in those days designed their own uniforms, it was widely adopted at once.

The eagle has remained on fire helmets ever since, in spite of the fact that it has frequently proven to be a dangerous ornament. The older style of the eagle as a shield holder sat much higher than its modern-day counterparts, hence the name "high eagle". Its beak caught on window sashes, wires and everything else. It was always getting dented, bent and knocked off. Every so often some realist would point out how much safer it would be to do away with the eagle, but traditionalists always refused. Today, the eagle, and other styles of shield holders, sit much lower on the helmet, but they still manage to catch on things and get dented just as their predecessors did.



**Helmet with a high eagle.**

A firefighter's helmet is a very personal item, and as unique as the individual. While most departments issue helmets made from a composite material because of their lower cost and weight, many firefighters choose to purchase their own leather helmet out of love for one of the fire service's oldest traditions.

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A casual observation of a helmet may tell you much about the firefighter, and maybe even a little about the person. The color of the helmet usually signifies the rank of the firefighter :

Chief's helmets are almost always white.

In Simsbury, a red helmet denotes a Junior Firefighter

Regular firefighters, Lieutenants and Captains wear black.

Usually you can find many decorations on a fire helmet, commonly in the form of decals. American flags, shamrocks and memorials to fallen firefighters are all very common.

Sometimes you can also learn about some of the firefighter's qualifications such as if they are an engineer for an apparatus, and what level of hazardous materials or medical training they have.

Not surprisingly, many of the firefighters who choose to buy their own helmet also buy a custom shield for it. Shields also can indicate many things including rank, station, service number and organization or municipality.

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1 Excerpts on the history of the leather helmet used with permission from Mine Safety Appliance Co.

2 Excerpts on the history regarding the eagle adapted from *The New Yorker Magazine*, June 14, 1930

## SCBA & PASS

The Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus is another essential component of a firefighter's *Personal Protective Equipment* as it provides crucial protection to the user's lungs, respiratory tract, eyes and face. Without its protection, a firefighter could be seriously injured and quickly incapacitated from dangerous atmospheric conditions such as oxygen deficiency, elevated air temperatures, smoke and other toxic components. Its use is mandatory anytime a firefighter might encounter a hazardous atmosphere such as while fighting a fire, investigating for carbon monoxide, operating at a hazardous materials incident or performing a below-grade rescue.

The SCBA provides clean, breathable air to the user from a cylinder of compressed air which is attached to the SCBA harness and worn on the firefighter's back. Contrary to a very popular belief, firefighters do not carry oxygen in their bottles. It is simply the normal everyday air that we all breathe which has been filtered and compressed for SCBA use.



**SCBA harness with  
attached air  
cylinder.**

When the firefighter inhales, a negative pressure is created inside their facepiece which the regulator senses thus triggering air flow. The high-pressure air travels from the cylinder to the pressure reducer where it is reduced to a pressure slightly greater than atmospheric pressure (14.7 psi), and is then delivered to the facepiece for inhalation. When the firefighter ceases their inhalation, the regulator detects this and stops the flow of air to the mask.

Even after air flow to the mask stops, the pressure inside the facepiece remains slightly greater than the atmospheric pressure on the outside. Known as positive pressure, this guarantees that should the facepiece develop a leak or become slightly dislodged, air will flow out of the facepiece and prevent any contaminated atmosphere from entering in.

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In 1997, the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company formed a committee with the mission of exploring replacement of our aging Scott 2A SCBA's. After an intensive investigation including hands-on testing of all major manufacturers' products, a recommendation was made to the Fire District to purchase the Scott Air-Pak Fifty 4.5 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. The Scott Fifty's offered many advantages and several add-on safety features were chosen when the air packs were purchased.



**The Scott Air-Pak Fifty 4.5 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus with facepiece, carbon fiber cylinder and integrated Pak-Alert SE Personal Alert Safety System.**

Probably the most notable attribute of the Scott Fifty SCBA is its weight, or lack thereof. By using the 4,500 psi carbon fiber cylinder which is rated for 30 minutes of work time, the entire SCBA weighs-in at just over 18 pounds.

These lighter-weight packs help to reduce firefighter fatigue and injuries. While the weight-reduction provided by the carbon fiber bottles is a great advantage, extra care must be afforded to them because of their specialized construction.

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**Cutaway of a Scott carbon fiber cylinder, and a close-up of damage resulting from the dragging of a cylinder across a concrete floor during a training evolution.**

These cylinders consist of an aluminum alloy inner shell, with a total over wrap of carbon fiber, fiberglass and epoxy resin.

The over wrap is not as durable as metal cylinders and excessive wear of the over wrap can force the cylinder to be taken permanently out-of-service.

Simsbury's SCBA's are equipped with the Emergency Buddy Breathing System. By use of a quick-disconnect in the low pressure line between the pressure reducer and the mask-mounted regulator, a firefighter experiencing either a malfunction or low air condition can connect their regulator to another SCBA.

A supplied airline accessory also allows the SCBA to be supplied from a remote low pressure source providing virtually unlimited service time. *Tower 12's* platform has supplied air connections for this purpose.

For optimal firefighter safety, Simsbury chose to equip their Scott Fifty's with the Pak-Alert SE integrated Personal Alert Safety System.

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Firefighters are required to utilize PASS devices anytime their duties require a SCBA. Unlike stand-alone PASS devices which require the firefighter to physically switch them on for use, the Pak-Alert SE turns on when the firefighter opens their SCBA cylinder for use, negating the need to turn the PASS on manually and safeguarding against the danger of forgetting to do so.



**Two firefighters can simultaneously breath from the same air cylinder with the Emergency Buddy Breathing System.**



**Integrated PASS device with air supply gauge.**

Through their audible and visual warning signals, PASS devices assist rescuers in locating firefighters in distress. The PASS device functions by sensing motion. Should the firefighter become motionless, after approximately 30 seconds the PASS will begin to emit a loud, shrieking alarm accompanied by a pulsating light.

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Firefighters who become trapped or disoriented can also activate their device manually.

Simply put, self-contained breathing apparatus are essential and we couldn't perform our duties without them.

Recognizing this, the Fire District stipulated in the purchasing contract that we become a Scott-authorized in-house repair facility, certified to perform all levels of repair up to and including full overhaul.

For a volunteer department this is a unique capability and has proven to be a significant cost savings to the Fire District, especially since OSHA has mandated annual flow testing of all SCBA's.



Located at the **Weatogue Station**, the SCBA maintenance and repair shop is equipped with a Scott test bench, a Biosystems Posi-3 dynamic test stand, and tools and spare parts. Except for hydrostatic testing of the air cylinders which is completed by a third-

**A SCBA being tested on the Biosystems Posi-3 dynamic test stand (L), and the Scott test bench (R).**

party vendor, virtually all SCBA maintenance and testing is performed by three firefighters who have received factory training. This in-house ability provides an additional advantage of significantly decreasing the down-time when a unit must be taken offline for maintenance and repair.

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The flat-head axe and the Halligan Bar are undoubtedly the two most-used hand tools in the fire service as they are utilized in a wide-variety of applications. They can be found on most apparatus and are commonly carried



**A "married" set of Irons.**

paired-together with the fork-end of the Halligan fitted over the head of the axe, and the two handles secured to each other with some kind of fastener. When carried together in this manner they are commonly referred to as "The Irons" and are said to be "married".

The flat-head axe serves as both a cutting tool and a striking tool, and has many useful purposes. The flat-head axe can be used to cut holes in walls, doors, floors, roofs and even laminated automotive windshields during extrication operations. As a striking tool, it is commonly used drive the Halligan and other prying tools for forcible entry operations.



**Useful for a wide-variety of applications, the Halligan Bar is commonly used for forcible entry.**

The Halligan Bar or Halligan Tool, is a multipurpose prying tool, designed in the 1940's by Hugh Halligan, a First Deputy Fire Commissioner in the New York City Fire Department.

One end of the bar contains the fork, commonly used to force inward swinging doors. The other end of the Halligan consists of the adze and pick. The adze is useful for forcing outward swinging doors. The pick can be used for punching the locks out of automobile doors

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## John W. Cowart



and trunks, and it can be inserted into the shackle of a



### **The Halligan Bar used to create anchor points.**

padlock, and struck with an axe or sledge hammer to break the shackle free from the lock.

A Halligan can be driven into the ground to create anchor points, such as to keep a master stream device from creeping. In the absence of a bombproof anchor. The Halligan can also be used in conjunction with other pry bars and webbing to create an anchor point for high-angle rescue called a "picket system".

Axe and Halligan are carried together because they are so often used together. Anytime the Halligan is needed for forcible entry, the flat-head axe is used to drive the Halligan into the opening.



**The flat-head axe and Halligan Bar being used to create a "purchase point" in a vehicle door so hydraulic spreaders can be inserted to pry the door from the Nader Bolt.**

Search and rescue teams often carry a set of Irons because of their many uses. Personnel often have to force a door or window to gain entry, and they may

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find locked interior doors which also need to be opened.

During a search, a firefighter can use one of the tools for extended reach to probe for victims in closets and under beds, and to check the floor ahead for dangers such as unseen holes in a smoke-filled room. As teams search a structure, it is common for them to remove the glass from the windows to help ventilate the building. An axe or Halligan is a great tool for this application, among many, many others.

## **THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA**

Also known as the thermal imager, the thermal imaging camera is about the size of a hand-held camcorder, and has become a very valuable tool in the fire service since its introduction.

Instead of operating in the visible light spectrum like a camcorder does, the TIC senses long-wave infrared light which is in the electromagnetic spectrum, and invisible to the human eye.

At ordinary temperatures, all objects emit heat, and the warmer they are, the more IR energy they emit. The TIC detects infrared energy through its front-mounted sensor, and the internal pyrometer reads the temperature difference of objects and then translates this into an image on the video display with hotter objects appearing white, and cooler objects appearing dark.

The TIC is used for a wide-variety of applications in the fire service. Smoke is more transparent to infrared than to visible light, so the TIC is useful in a smoky environment. It helps firefighters navigate through the smoke, and find victims and fire obscured by sooty darkness.

In the absence of smoke, the TIC is still a useful tool. The camera can be used to look for heat sources

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## John W. Cowart



or fire extension in hidden areas such as inside walls and ceilings, finding "hot spots" during the overhaul phase of firefighting, checking for overheated electrical equipment such as wall outlets and switches, motors and light ballasts, and for searching for victims who



**A ISG Thermal Systems K-90 Thermal Imaging Camera.**

may be lost, disoriented or disabled outside.

The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company uses the ISG Thermal Systems K-90, and is fortunate to have these imaging cameras on *Tower 12*, *Rescue 14* and *Rescue 15*. The K-90 features a Digital Direct Temperature measurement providing an on-screen, numerical reading in one degree increments of an object's temperature.

A few options were added to the K-90's that were purchased including a video overlay. Through a separate front-mounted lens that operates in the visible light range just as a camcorder, an image is gathered with the available ambient light and then superimposed over the infrared image. Depending on the conditions, this can sometimes greatly enhance the image in the viewfinder.

Other options included on our K-90 models are a removable pistol grip, and a sizable sling which fits

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comfortably over a firefighter's turnout gear and self-contained breathing apparatus, both of which assist greatly in carrying and using the TIC. The K-90 also has the ability to transmit its image out to a receiver for remote viewing. This feature is valuable for training, documentation, and recon at different incidents.



**The child in this bed is hard enough to distinguish even in good light conditions but a TIC can help find him quickly.**

This wonderful technology does have few limitations.. TICs can not see through glass or water, and this can lead to operators misinterpreting what they are seeing. Operators must realize that the camera does not provide them with x-ray vision. A victim laying hidden behind a wall or couch will most likely go undetected by the camera.

In such a situation such the heat source must be hot enough to force heat through the object to produce a noticeable temperature signature that the thermal imager can detect.

Firefighters must learn how to properly use TIC's and be mindful of their limitations during emergency incidents. The thermal imaging camera is not a substitute for sound search techniques in a smoke-filled

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environment. While thermal imaging cameras have proven to be a significant addition to the firefighter's tool box, firefighters must not forget to utilize all of the other skills and tools that they have in their arsenal.

## EXTRICATION

Extrication refers to the removal and treatment of victims who are trapped by some type of man-made machinery or equipment such as an automobile or a wood chipper. The most common incident involving extrication that fire departments respond to is the motor vehicle accident with entrapped victims.

While the goal is to remove the victim so that they can be transported to a hospital for emergency care, rescuers must be very careful throughout this process as the victim may have suffered significant injuries. An ever-looming concern is injuries that may be undetectable at the incident, such as a cervical spine injury. Personnel always take great care to treat, package and handle any victims so as not to aggravate any injuries they may have suffered.



**Removing the vehicle from around the victim before removing the victim from the vehicle.**

To prevent contorting the victim during their removal and aggravating any injuries, rescuers first remove the vehicle from around the victim before removing the victim from the vehicle,

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This provides the greatest degree of safety to the patient. The firefighter's tool box contains many tools



**Rescue units usually carry wooden cribbing in a variety of sizes.**

to assist with this process, and this section unfortunately covers only some of the more well-known items.

A priority at a vehicle extrication is to stabilize the vehicle to maximize the amount of contact between the vehicle and the ground. This is done to prevent movement of the vehicle which might further injure the victim, or possibly rescue personnel. Stabilization helps support the vehicle at key points.

As the vehicle is further compromised during the extrication process, movement might occur as the frame may begin to sag or contort.

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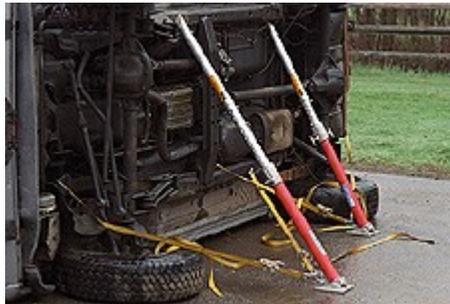


**One section of a vehicle cribbed. Wedges provide solid contact between vehicle and cribbing.**

Wooden cribbing built up in a box formation is commonly used to stabilize a vehicle, especially when the vehicle is in the upright position. Wedges are generally used as the top tier to ensure a solid contact between the vehicle and the cribbing. When built correctly, the vehicle's weight is

transferred off of its suspension and onto the cribbing, taking any bounce out of the vehicle.

In reality, vehicles involved in accidents are not



**Airshore vehicle stabilization struts. Ratchet straps secure the struts to the vehicle and help prevent the bases from kicking out.**

always found sitting on all their tires. Righting a vehicle with victims still inside is not an option as the potential to cause more harm than good is very high. Vehicles found in precarious positions must be stabilized in-place and extrication initiated as is.

Another method of stabilizing a vehicle is the use of adjustable stabilization struts. Whether a vehicle is on

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its roof, side or somewhere in between, these supports, secured with ratchet straps, can be used to create horizontal or vertical stability.

High and low-pressure air bags are generally used for lifting vehicles and other heavy objects.

Air bags can also be utilized to help stabilize a vehicle when other, more traditional, methods of stabilization are inadequate or not feasible. While more stable than nothing at all, airbags still allow for some movement in the vehicle once they are in place.



Depending on the situation, several forms of stabilization may be employed simultaneously during an incident, and even in conjunction with one another.

Cibbing, stabilization struts, airbags and other forms of stabilization are also used for other scenarios such as trench rescue, building collapse, lifting and supporting heavy objects such as a water main, etc.

Once stabilization has been accomplished, extrication can begin.

Commonly known as “Hurst Tools” or the “jaws of life,” hydraulic rescue tools are powered by either a portable or on-board power unit, and are capable of producing considerable pushing, pulling and cutting force, something which is frequently needed at extrication incidents. While many companies produce hydraulic rescue tools, Hurst Performance Inc. was the first to develop them in the early 1970’s for use in the race car industry.

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The Door-pop is the most common extrication procedure at an MVA.



**The Hurst ML-32 spreaders produce 16,000 lbs. of spreading force at tips. This tool can also be used to lift and pull.**

That involves creating a “purchase point” with the



**Using the spreaders to pry a car door from the Nader Bolt.**

axe and Halligan between the door and the panels, inserting the spreaders and separating the door from both hinges and the Nader Bolt that secures it.

The spreaders also produce considerable pulling force. For instance, chains can be attached to the spreaders’ extended arms, and to the chassis and steering wheel of the vehicle. The spreaders are then

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retracted, pulling the steering wheel away from the victim.



**The Hurst X-Tractor cutter's 38,000 lbs. of cutting force can sever most body and frame components of a vehicle.**



**Making a relief cut so the vehicle's roof can be folded back**

In some cases the roof needs to be removed either partially or totally. This is accomplished with the cutters which are used to separate the roof from its posts.

The cutters are also used to create relief cuts such as in the roof so it may be folded back instead of completely removed, and in the bottom of the door frame so the dash board and steering wheel can be pushed back off of the victim. The cutters are capable of slicing through most frame and body components of a vehicle.

To perform a dash displacement or “dash roll,” the front door is removed, the ram is placed in the door frame and then extended to push the dash and steering wheel away from the victim. Usually a ram is placed in the door frame on both sides of the vehicle and extended simultaneously during a dash displacement. When performing a dash displacement, it is critical that the vehicle be appropriately supported as this operation usually compromises the frame significantly. Rams can be used not only for pushing, but for pulling, shoring, stabilizing and supporting objects as well.

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A firefighter is performing a "dash ram." The largest of the multiple tools to be used continuously connected to the same power unit. The air chisel does an excellent job of cutting through the body of a vehicle. The three Hurst rams generates 15,700 lbs. of pushing force.

Besides the heavy hydraulic tools, there are several other tools available that are frequently used for extrication including small, hand-powered hydraulic cutters for severing the steering wheel ring and foot pedal columns. Common tools such as a hacksaw or an electric or battery-operated reciprocating saw with metal-cutting blades are commonly employed. Pneumatics such as cut-off saws and air chisels excel at cutting through sheet metal, and impact wrenches make quick work of nuts and bolts. Air tools can be powered by portable or on-board compressors, and even SCBA bottles.

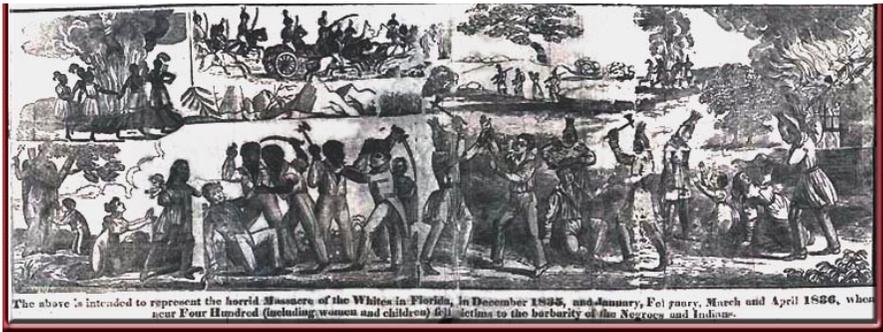
These are just a few of the tools of a firefighter's trade.

## Appendix Three

# The Burning Of Mandarin

by

John Cowart



## **An 1836 Engraving Showing Massacres In North Florida**

Indian warriors—some still dressed in costumes as Shakespearean actors—attacked and burned Mandarin at 1 p.m. on Monday, December 20, 1841.

"The Indians assailed the houses, yelling most furiously, and shot the inmates as they, frantic and confused, ran for the main road," said Indian fighter, Brevet Captain John T. Sprague, 8th regiment, US Infantry.

"Two men, two women and an infant were killed. The dwellings were plundered, then burnt, and for sixteen hours these savages danced around the smoldering remains and mangled corpses of the slain," he said.

This was the second major attack in the Mandarin area.

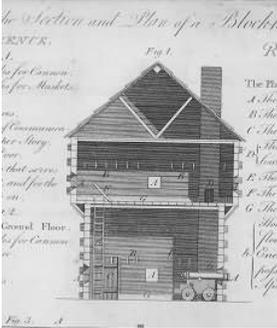
Back in 1812, when Florida still belonged to Spain, the Indians burned the plantation of Judge Francis P. Fatio Jr. on the south bank of Julington Creek<sup>174</sup>.

As their home burned, the judge, his wife, two slaves, and seven children scrambled into a rowboat and rowed out into the St. Johns to escape. The Indians followed along the riverbank shooting at them. For days, the Fatics stayed on the water just out of bullet range from shore. Finally they rowed all the way to the mouth of the river and north to St. Marys, Ga.

## John W. Cowart



When Spain ceded Florida to the United States (1821), the Fatio family returned to live in New Switzerland.



The Second Seminole War began about 20 years later. In 1835 frightened citizens of Jacksonville built a blockhouse at what is now Ocean and Monroe streets downtown. Local business leaders planned railroad line would have linked Jacksonville with Lake City and the north, but fear of Indian attack kept the railroad from coming to Jacksonville for years.

Early in the war, a fight brought national attention to the area. There was a blockhouse on the farm of James McCormick, between Jacksonville and Baldwin.

McCormick's grandson told what happened:

"My grandfather was out on the range looking after his stock when he found an Indian woman with two children picking blackberries.

*At that time the Government was taking up all Indians and putting them in the fort at St. Augustine preparatory to sending them west. My grandfather took up the squaw and children and when the bucks returned and did not find them, they suspected my grandfather had picked them up, so they went to his place before day and hid themselves until he came out on the porch to kindle a fire with flint, steel and tinder box.*

*Just as he made a spark, they opened fire, sticking bullets in the wall around him.*

*He quickly got inside, unscathed, and barred the door. His wife and daughters loaded the guns while he and his sons shot at the Indians through the port holes in the wall. The guns were muzzle-loaders with loose powder and shot, taking considerable time to load and*

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*prime. They were able to keep the Indians off, and when the sun rose the bucks left, striking out to the west to the home of Berry Johns, two miles east of where Baldwin is now, and shot him from ambush.*

*Mrs. Johns dragged his body to the house and barred the door; but they battered it down and shot her, took off her scalp, set the house on fire, raised the war whoop and left. She was not dead, however, was just able to crawl out into a pond near the road, where she lay in the water all day. That afternoon she was picked up by Samuel Waggoners and taken to the fort and cared for by my mother and her sisters.*

The scalped Mrs. Johns survived and became a national celebrity, traveling to Washington and having her portrait painted to hang in the Capital building.

Greed. Encroachment. Betrayal. Retaliation. Revenge. Death.

Such were the times.

Jacksonville became the jumping off place for American troops on their way to fight Indians.

Soldiers were quartered in the Duval County Courthouse, and the major army supply depot was located here.

But usually the soldiers had to travel for miles to see an Indian. Most of the fighting was far to the south.

In fact, citizens complained that U.S. soldiers did more damage in Jacksonville proper than the Indians did. The city petitioned Congress:

*"Whereas, from the destitute and ruined situation of the county of Duval in consequence of the Indian war, which renders it altogether unable to raise money by taxation, and whereas, the court house having been taken at divers times by military companies in the service of the United States and used as quarters, and from the causes aforesaid the said court house has become so much mutilated and broken that it is almost useless to the Territory of Florida, therefore..."*

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## John W. Cowart



Therefore, Jacksonville wanted \$5,000 in federal funds to repair the court house.

As the war plodded on over seven years, one by one, Indian chiefs were captured and deported to the west. Sporadic fighting went on here and there, with small bands of Indians picking off isolated farms and travelers.

Fear and frustration made Florida citizens demand relief and the government responded by bringing in 33 "Peace Hounds" from Cuba. These attack dogs were bloodhounds which had been trained to track runaway slaves.

Many American citizens objected to the use of the animals, to no avail.

A contemporary newspaper said, "The bloodhounds were intended by the people, at whose insistence Governor Call imported them, to worry, to hunt, to bite, to tear to pieces all the red devils they can catch."

On January 18, 1840, the army turned them loose to hunt Indians

The dogs' presence escalated the war.

In May of that year, a bizarre incident occurred;

Mr. Forbes Company of Shakespearean Players traveled overland from Picolata for a performance at the opera house in St. Augustine. For protection on the road, they joined a line of government supply wagons.

Indians attacked the wagon train, killing three actors and a clarionet (sic) player.

They looted the wagons, breaking open the actors' trunks.

Shortly after this, the *Niles Weekly Register* newsletter carried this information:

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"Indians are prowling about the Mandarin settlement on the St. Johns River -- About 30 Indians, belonging to the party that attacked the theatrical company near St. Augustine came to Fort Searle immediately after the attack, dressed in actors' dresses, and danced all around the place, challenging the soldiers to fight..."

Eventually, the Indians sporting their Macbeth, Othello and Pluck costumes, left the neighborhood for a time and the Indian threat seemed over.

In fact, by February of 1841, things seemed so safe that the residents of Mandarin felt secure enough to incorporate as a town.

The fifty families living in Mandarin could well believe they were safe. The St. Johns River protected them on three sides and an army garrison at St. Augustine on the fourth.

Besides, reports circulated that the Second Seminole War was almost over. Everyone thought the Indians had been pushed back into the swamps.

The *Florida Herald* newspaper for December 31, 1841, describes Mandarin as "a happy and prospering community... unconscious of danger."

But the newspaper also noted that the Indian marauders were still "hovering for some days in the neighborhood of the settlement" observing the comings and goings of the people.

The Christmas attack on Mandarin was led by Seminole chiefs Powis-fixico (Short Grass) and Hallack-Tustenuggee, both notorious for other slaughters of Florida settlers.

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## John W. Cowart



Captain Sprague describes Hallack-Tustenuggee as a man "savage by nature, without a virtue either of head or heart to redeem his character... Yet he was a man with physical and mental qualities far above his contemporaries."

Powis-fixico, Sprague called, "the most active and cruel of any of the Indians.

In preparation for Christmas, most men in Mandarin had organized a hunt to bag fresh venison or wild turkey for the holiday dinner.

When the Indians saw the armed men leave for the hunt, they moved in.

First, they captured an elderly slave. They robbed him of \$300 and under torture, forced him to disclose information about the settlement. He tricked them out of attacking the main village by saying that soldiers were stationed at the general store.

His lie saved the center of town but the Indians, seeking gunpowder for their flintlocks, crept toward nearby homes.

Mrs. William Hartley was sitting by her fireplace nursing her baby and chatting with William Malphus and Domingo Acosta. The Indians fired through the door of the home killing her and Acosta instantly and injuring Malphus who ran toward the woods.

A warrior caught him thirty yards from the house.

The Indian slashed the wounded man's forehead and inserted his fingers in to the gash and peeled the victim's scalp back, leaving the white bone of his bare skull exposed.

Malphus did not die until the next morning.

The first gunshots alerted the rest of the village.

Leaving their possessions, families closest the river fled to the safety of a schooner anchored in the St. Johns. Others barricaded their doors and spent the

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night crouched with rifles pointed out the windows. They were "ready to meet the destroyer should he approach," the *Herald* said.

The raiders destroyed the homes of three different Hartley families and plundered the homes of the Sloan, Acosta, Sedwick, James, Flynn and three different Hagan families.

The Flynn's turned their "Peace Hounds" into the yard to delay the attackers while the family escaped to hide all night in a swamp.

The savages slaughtered livestock, pillaged and burned homes, and hacked down the groves of orange and mulberry trees which accounted for Mandarin's prosperity.

They returned to burn Mrs. Hartley's home where the attack had started.

"Her infant child was still alive and perished in the flames, still clinging to the breast of its murdered mother", the *Herald* reported.

The Mandarin raid supplied the Indians with pounds of gunpowder which they needed to continue fighting. One Seminole had declared, "Let us alone and we will not attack you... but if you make war on us we will fight as long as our ammunition lasts and, when this is gone, we will take to the bow and arrow."

At dawn, dazed Mandarin residents saw the smoldering ruins and anticipated another attack. Some gathered what was left of their belongings and fled to Jacksonville.

In a letter dated Jan. 1, 1842, Jefferson Belknap, a mulberry planter, said, "This is the third time I have been obliged to abandon my place and sacrifice time, money, and everything but my life."

Everyone questioned where the army was at when the Indians attacked.

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## John W. Cowart



The Christmas Eve issue of the *Herald* warned, "Protect yourselves, for the war authorities are not protecting you."

The *Herald* portrayed the army as sitting around the barracks singing a ditty: "We could whip the Injunes— If we could find 'em."

Sprague said, "Washington had serious doubts whether the Florida army had not been in a state of enjoyment and repose, instead of in the field in pursuit of the enemy."

Fifty-one citizens of Mandarin petitioned Col. W.J. Worth, Commander of the Army of Florida:

"We now most humbly pray that you will allow us a mounted force for our protection... If not, the whole settlement will be abandoned... as there can be no possible security until the last Indian is hunted out of Florida."

Smarting at these aspersions on his soldiers, Col. Worth replied, "It is to be regretted... that some of the fifty-one signers... had not been found to give some account of so despicable a foe. Nevertheless..."

Nevertheless, Col. Worth dispatched Company K, 2nd Infantry to capture Hallack-Tustenuggee's band.

This mission lasted six months and stretched the length of Florida. The Indian chief crossed and recrossed the St. Johns. He doubled back through swamps where the supply wagons of his pursuers bogged down to the axeltrees.

Sprague summarized the chase:

"Tracks seen. Fields destroyed. Country waded. Troops exhausted. Indians gone."

Besides the terrain, yellow fever, malaria, unseasonable rains, and homesickness, great depression added to the troops' problems.

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One earlier Seminole fighter wrote, "The misery of soldiering in this place was certainly very great, yet under all circumstances let us never despond but keep our hearts lifted up to God. He can save us and, in His own good time, give deliverance. We now lost one of our first lieutenants, who in his despair, forgetting that God ruled all things, fired his pistol into his mouth and thus blew out his brains, hurling his soul to perdition."

Perdition well describes the situation and terrain of the chase.

When the Secretary of War inquired about the delay in punishing the Indians, Col. Worth replied, "At present the secretary does not see how a band of Indians could penetrate so far north as Mandarin settlement, commit depravations, and return south, unseen and unmolested by the troops; nor will the honorable secretary make this discovery until (which God forbid) he becomes more intimately acquainted with this country."

Finally, the army captured Chief Short Grass's son and used him to lure his father out of the swamp. Sprague said, "The band was well armed with rifles, selected with care from among the citizens murdered... and provided with ammunition in the same manner... These were the most active participators in the attack on Mandarin.

The pursuit of Hallack-Tustenuggee continued until he and two of his wives rode into Col. Worth's camp to discuss peace terms. The army captured him under his flag of truce. He was one of the last Seminole chiefs to be taken.

Sprague, who took part in the chase and capture, reevaluated his enemy: "Whatever sins may be laid to the charge of this Indian chieftain, or however diabolical the instinct of his nature, his land was dearer to him than life. For it he had fought boldly and unceasingly... If this trait in the savage be patriotism, Hallack-Tustenuggee's name should stand eternally side by side with the most distinguished of mankind."

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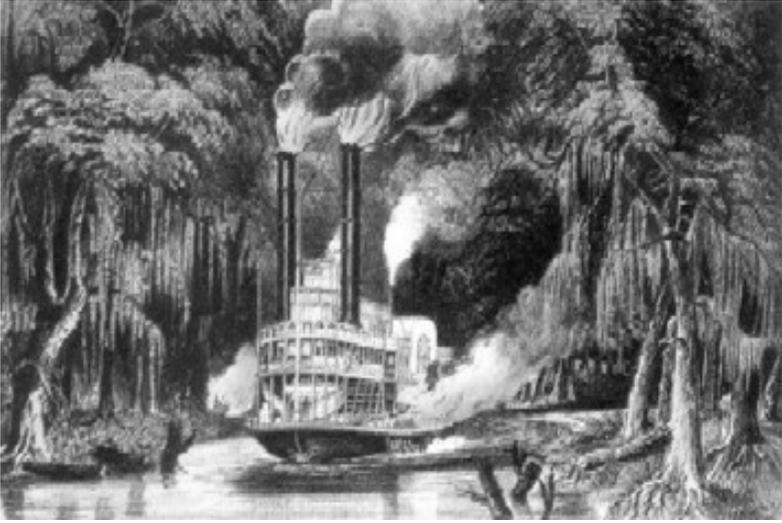
## John W. Cowart



As for the settlers at Mandarin Sprague said, "Large numbers re-occupied their plantations, free from danger, and after the lapse of a short time, were surrounded with every comfort."

## THE BURNING WHEEL

by  
John Cowart



### **Gory Horror On The St. Johns The Wreck of the *City Of Sanford***

Thus read Jacksonville newspaper headlines.

At 4 a.m. on April 24, 1882, the stern-wheel steamboat *City Of Sanford* burned to the waterline off Point la Vista within sight of downtown Jacksonville.

Nine burned and battered bodies were recovered after what the *Florida Daily Times* newspaper—a forerunner of the *Florida Times-Union* called “One of the most shocking catastrophes that has ever happened on the St. Johns”.

The water was only three feet deep at the wreck site and survivors were able to wade to dry land which was only 60 away from where the ship ran aground.



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“There was no necessity of anyone drowning in three feet of water,” said William H. Roberts, the Sanford’s captain.

A coroner’s inquest investigating the tragedy the following week revealed the horrible way victims died.

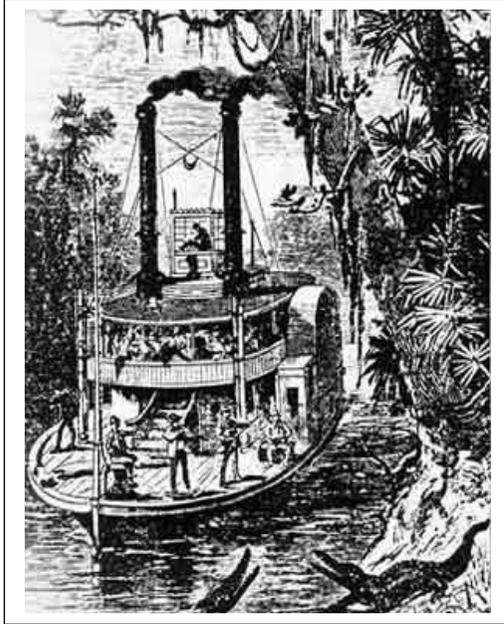
The *Times* printed the first extra in the paper’s history to report the disaster. Crowds clustered at the *Times* office at Bay and Ocean streets, and fights broke out between men anxious to read the headlines: **Shocking Calamity... Women & Children Roasted To Death... Stories of Terror and Despair.**

In the 1880s more paddlewheelers plied the St. Johns River than any other river south of the Hudson. Passengers, crammed aboard the riverboats, could speed along the St. Johns at up to 15 miles per hour.

Competing steamer lines vied for business. Companies extolled their own boats as floating palaces sporting Italian musicians or steam calliopes that tooted *Where, Oh Where, Has My Little Dog Gone?* Rival companies hinted that a competitor’s boats were inferior and dangerous and that bunks in their staterooms were “about the dimensions of a poor-house coffin”.

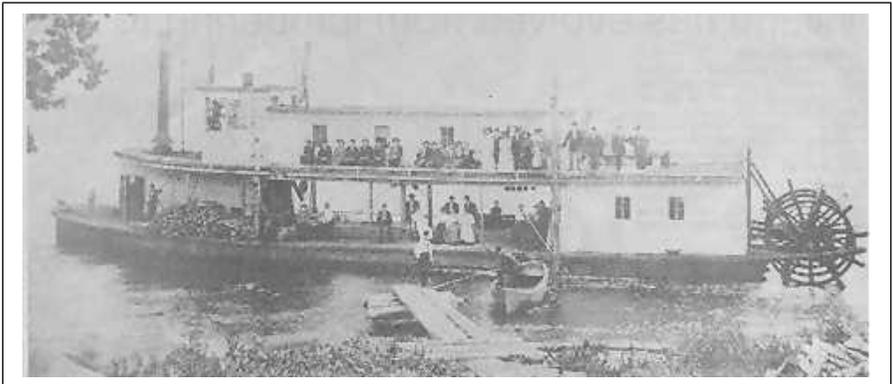
Riverboats steamed roundtrip between Jacksonville and Sanford twice weekly. Armed crewmen perched on the bow to shoot at alligators to keep the reptiles from tangling in the paddlewheel.

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**Riflemen in the bow shooting gators**

The furnaces of the boats consumed vast amounts of wood. Crews replenished the wood bunkers from caches along the shore twice daily. Clouds of smoke marked the progress of the boats around the curves of the river.



**Paddlewheeler with wood fuel being loaded forward**

The riverboat *City Of Sanford*, a vessel of 145 tons, was built in Jacksonville by the Thompson & Chase Shipyard; she was launched on November 24, 1880. Only one week before the ship met disaster, the Florida State Supervisor of Steamboat Inspectors had

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examined the ship and passed it as meeting all safety standards.

In the two years she was in operation, the *City of Sanford* had made 137 trips between Sanford and Jacksonville.

On the night of the wreck the *Sanford* departed from Palatka at 10 p.m. on a Sunday carrying 21 crewmen, 11 salon passengers, and an uncounted number of deck passengers. She carried so much cargo that sacks of cabbages had to be piled on deck and lashed to the railings.

Midway down the river, at Georgetown, the crew had packed the bunkers with fat pine logs oozing turpentine. The captain and most of the crew went to bed leaving a watchman, H.B. Means, in charge.

About 3:30 a.m., as the *City Of Sanford* cruised 150 yards off shore, Means saw a tongue of flame flash in the fuel bunker. He ran for the captain, awoke passengers, and spread the alarm.

Chief engineer F.E. Smith ran for the ship's water pump.

"When I got there, the flames were about six feet high extending above the boilers. I judged that the flames were about two feet from the hose and injector. I then made up my mind that the boat would burn in spite of everything as the fire had gained such rapid headway... I do not think it was more than eight minutes from the time the fire started," Smith said at the inquest.

Curtains and carpets in the saloon ignited. Paint blistered on the woodwork. Trails of flame raced up the rope rigging. The fire enveloped the ship less than 15 minutes after it was first spotted.

A witness on shore said it looked as though "a match had been put to a stack of dry hay"!

Pulling on his pantaloons, the captain rushed to the pilot house. Seeing the extent of the fire, he steered

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hard right, hoping to beach the vessel so that people could escape in shallow water.

"I climbed to the hurricane deck where the pilot house is," Captain Roberts said, "I headed her for the shore just as quick as it could be done and I ran her at full speed trying to beach her so high that she couldn't swing around and drift off. The tide was flooding and the wind was with the tide".

The flaming *Sanford* grounded in three feet of water about 60 feet from dry land.

"I did not ring to stop the engines and they were kept running purposely to keep the steamer against the bank," Captain Roberts said. "If the engines had stopped she would undoubtedly have sung off into the river".

The impact of the ship's grounding threw some of the people on deck overboard.

Others jumped deliberately.

Others stayed on deck and burned.

When flames engulfed the pilot house, the captain raced to a cabin occupied by Mrs. Annie Keep and her eight-year-old son, Brandon.

"I took them aft," said Captain Roberts, "And getting there found two other lady passengers. I told them to jump overboard as the water was shoal and the boat aground. One of the ladies, a Miss Ireland, then jumped overboard. But I saw she would get sucked under the wheel and jumped over after her telling the others to follow me".

The other women refused to jump.

Captain Roberts waded ashore carrying Miss Ireland, whose hands and face were burned and all her hair singed off. Then he waded back aboard. "When I got to the place where I had left the ladies and children (it) was in a blaze. They had disappeared. I never saw them again".

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Miss. Ireland's father, mother and sister were also on board the Sanford. Her father later said that when they left their stateroom, " We were met by a wall of flame which seemed to enclose us completely. My little one darted back in the flames again followed by my wife - the last I saw of either of them".

Mr. Ireland stayed searching for his family until his whiskers caught fire. When he jumped overboard, the churning paddlewheel caught his foot and jerked him upside down before dropping him in the river.

W. A. Brooks traveled with his young son and his 16-year-old nephew.

The blare of the ship's whistle woke them and they ran on deck. "Immediately as the boat touched land," Brooks said, "I handed my boy down to my nephew on the saloon deck. I said, 'Here, Pete, take him and get overboard!' He replied, 'All right, Uncle Bill, I've got him'. And he jumped overboard with my boy".

Then Brooks leaped into the water.

"The current and the wheel water was so strong I thought I would be swept out... I'm certain I was the last man on the boat. I did not find my little boy".

The huge paddlewheel, which had propelled the boat, kept turning; it now dredged up mud from the river bottom.

"I'd kept the engine working to hold her to the bank," Roberts said at the inquest. "The fore part of the boat was afire before she struck the shore. She was head on, but the wind sheered her around".

During the cruise the boiler pressure had been 85 pounds. In the run for shore the captain increased it to 110 pounds; but when the ship grounded, the heat of its burning intensified the heat of the furnace so that the pressure increased to 200 pounds - the paddle blades turned faster than ever before.

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When people jumped into the shallow water, the wheel's suction drew them back into the churning blades or thrust them past the stern into deep water.

Another steamer, the *Charles M. Bird*, rushed to the burning wreck and launched lifeboats to pluck survivors out of the water.

H.L. Cable, purser of the *Bird*, said, "She was a sheet of flame from stem to stern... The upper works of the *Sanford* seemed to collapse (sic) and fell in and the smoke stack went overboard with a tremendous (sic) crash... The piercing cries of the people in the water were heard calling, 'Help! For God's sake. Come'. At one moment the gurgling cry of a drowning man was distinctly heard".

One man swam to a lifeboat clutching his large traveling bag as he tried to save his possessions. Rescuers found he was naked and urged him to dress because of the ladies passengers. But when he opened his bag he realized that he'd unpacked in his stateroom; his bag was empty except for one collar button and a pair of socks!

Residents on shore, awakened by the bells and whistle of the wounded craft as she rushed toward the bank, waded out to help survivors stagger ashore.

Finally the churning wheel itself caught fire. The paddles ignited as they emerged from the water, blazed in a half circle, then hissed into the water on the other side.

Fire chewed through the hull and water gushed in, setting off a white-hot shower of steam, sparks and popping cinders.

"The passengers," said one riverboat captain named Forester at the later inquest, "were terrified at the sight of that wheel revolving and lashing the water into foam. And the sight of Mrs. Ireland and other people being pounded to death kept them from making the leap which might have saved them. ... Everyone of them might have been saved but for that wheel".

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Captain A.L. Rice, who also testified, said, "If that wheel had been stopped, there would not have been a life lost... It was the water wheel that did it".

The *Charles M. Bird* brought the survivors the remaining few miles to Jacksonville. As the news spread a flotilla of small craft raced from the city to comb the river around the wreck for bodies.

With a sensitivity for which news media are still famous, the April 24, 1882, *Daily Times* reported:

"The body of Mrs. Keep, with the head burned off, has been removed from the wreck. Her little boy was burned to ashes...

"The poor charred remains of Mrs. Keep, Mrs. Ireland and their two children were found just about amidships....

"Towards evening other parts of bodies were taken from the wreck, but whether they were portions of the bodies of Mrs. Ireland and the children were not determined".

"About noon yesterday, the crew of the burned steamer while searching the submerged wreck, brought to the surface the charred trunk of a man to which bits of burned clothing still adhered. The head, arms and limbs were gone. The body was, of course, badly roasted but not so nearly consumed as the others...

"It was identified ... by bits of the half consumed clothing still sticking to the charred trunk and thighs."

The newspaper continued, "An examination of one of the supposed human bodies found in the wreck Tuesday evening has proven to be a saddle of venison. It will not be given a Christian burial".

Looters took to their boats looking for plunder; they salvaged thousands of cabbages floating near the wreck.

But the newspaper warned, "If any of those cabbages are put upon the market, there will probably

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be another victim to bury - the victim of an outraged community”!

While authorities were able to identify nine bodies, the revolving paddlewheel had so mangled and minced the people it caught that no one was ever sure how many people had died in the wreck.

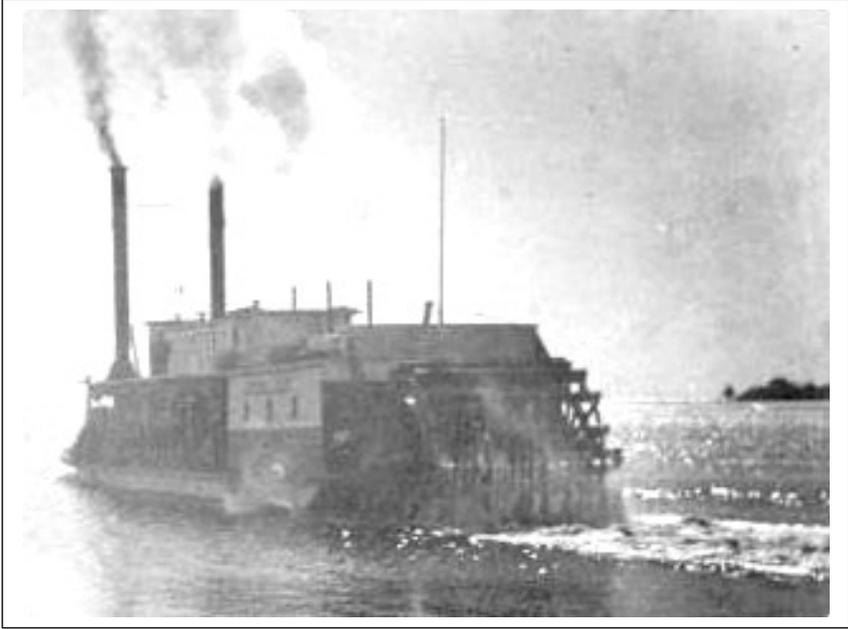
A week after the disaster, a *Daily Times* reporter visited the site:

“I saw, lying under the bluff, a great black hulk with broken rods and steam machinery heaped red and ruined in the center of the wreck,” he wrote.

“Far around, the water was strewn with cinders and charred wood... floating masses of dead embers and spoiled cargo,” he said

“As the most conspicuous feature of the dismal wreck stood the wheel, the great guilty ally of the fire, which, like a wheel of fate, had whirled down to death the flying fugitives from the flames”.

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**Note:** For an overview of Northeast Florida riverboats, see *Paddlewheelers on the St. John's* by Virginia M. Cowart. At [www.cowart.info/Monthly%20Features/Paddlewheel/Paddlewheelers.htm](http://www.cowart.info/Monthly%20Features/Paddlewheel/Paddlewheelers.htm)

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## Appendix Five

### The Firefighter's Soul

by

**Wendy Norris,**

**Presiding Chaplain at the  
2007 National Fallen Firefighters' Memorial  
Service,  
In Emmitsburg, Md.**

Wendy Norris runs Firefighter Ministries, a nonprofit organization that cares for the social service needs of emergency service workers. Her husband, John, is a Captain/Paramedic with the Houston, Texas, Fire Department Both are also firefighters for the Forest Bend Volunteer Fire Department. Wendy's firefighting Blog can be found at [http://adoptionandfire.typepad.com/the\\_firehouse\\_journal/](http://adoptionandfire.typepad.com/the_firehouse_journal/) .Her essay *Soul of a Firefighter* appeared in the May 9, 2007 issue of *Firehouse Journal*.

As this book goes to press, she and her husband are deployed to Galveston, Texas, helping in body recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike.

The soul of a firefighter is a complicated thing. Of course the soul of anyone is a subject that is filled with wonder, questions, and confusion. I think though, that the spiritual being of a firefighter, their very soul, is even more complicated because of everything they face.

The average citizen does not see or experience in their lifetime what a firefighter does in a shift or a day or even a week.

Everyone knows that Joe Public doesn't call 911 to invite a firefighter to a party or to celebrate some lifetime achievement. Joe Public calls 911 because



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something crappy is happening in their life at that moment. Sometimes perception is everything, and those crappy moments aren't really that bad. But sometimes those crappy moments are really, really bad and guess who is there to straighten it out and clean it up? Ding, ding, ding! You are right! That would be firefighters, EMS, and police! At least, for the most part, firefighters or EMT's don't get shot at on the job.

Although, we are see that happen more and more often.

Getting your hands dirty by trying to clean up the mess of death, trauma, fire, disasters, kids getting hurt, and the evilness of some humans is enough to cause even the most devoutly religious persons to question their faith at some point in their career. For those of us that are Christians, we rely on a God who is sovereign. But sometimes we end up wrestling with God because we just don't understand the why's.

Why did that mother kill her 5 children? Why did that hurricane just destroy 90,000 square miles? Why did those people fly a plane into the building? Why did that man shoot all of those Amish children? Why did that drunk driver kill those kids in the other car but he got to live. In anguish we cry out sometimes.

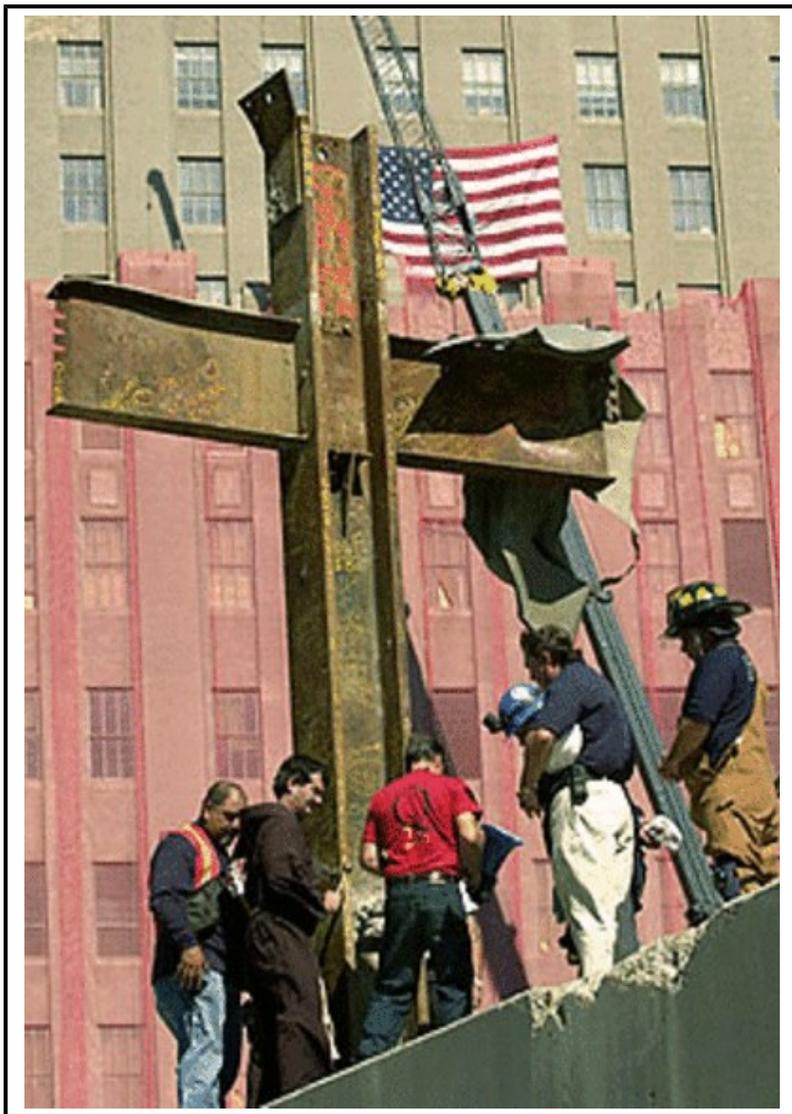
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Most firefighters have some sort of belief system. What that belief system is, is another story. But there are quite a few Christians and Jewish people in the fire service. Even the most dedicated Christian firefighter can have a hard time with church. Not only are they mixing in the work schedules and personality of a firefighter (which is a whole other post) but they are mixing in a spirituality that is molded and carved out by the experiences they have working the streets.

Most emergency service workers have a difficult time connecting to organized church. What they are exposed to in their daily work causes them to develop a different worldview than those sitting next to them in church. The firefighter may see God's actions with His people far differently from someone who does not face death and loss on such an intimate basis. And the firefighter might be reserved in sharing with others their views for fear of traumatizing others or shattering their faith. The very sources that could offer encouragement and refreshment instead often cause additional stress. This could effectively separate a firefighter from the church and sometimes from God.

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There are many firefighters who are successfully part of a church body or have healthy spiritual lives. Having a solid faith can help a firefighter to acknowledge and appreciate God's presence during times of crisis and disaster. Those individuals who are pretty solid in their faith are often the individuals that encourage the others who are struggling.. Sometimes firefighters with strong faith end up becoming chaplains.

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Because church can be a difficult thing for whatever reason, sometimes a fire chaplain can offer guidance, advisement, prayers or other spiritual assistance. A fire chaplain is someone who can relate to the special spiritual and emotional needs that firefighters face and be able to walk them through difficult situations.



I have often wrestled with God over things that I have seen. I very much have the firefighter personality. It's hard for me to relate to Bible study groups, especially women's groups, because of the work that I do. However, John and I both have been blessed with a church small group that loves us for who we are and they are not judgmental. And they enjoy our stories. They have helped us grow tremendously in our faith. And I also have a mentor in my life who keeps me on the straight and narrow. Ed Stauffer, with the Federation of Fire Chaplains, has been guiding me for the last few years. And then my parents keep me pretty connected to my faith.

Not every firefighter is lucky enough to have church groups that accept them, or mentors, or family and

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friends that understand the work you do and still try to nurture your soul.

As a firefighter, my soul is being nurtured by some wonderful people who keep me connected to God.

I couldn't do this work, as a firefighter or as a fire chaplain without my soul being cared for.

For many firefighters, finding God at the base of two mangled beams was their source of soul comfort during the many hours of recovery operations at Ground Zero.

For those of us working body recovery during Katrina, we leaned on each other and the small, dirty Bible we carried with us in pants.

For others, it could be anything. But the soul of the firefighter has to be taken care of, if not, they can burn out and/or get jaded quickly.

The soul of a firefighter is a complicated thing—But it should never be forgotten.

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**All you Can Do  
Is  
All You Can Do.**

It is not the critic who counts...  
The credit belongs to the man in the arena,  
Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;  
Who strives valiantly...  
Who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions;  
Who spend himself in a worthy cause;  
Who—at best—knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,  
And who—at worst—if he fails....

At least he fails while daring greatly.

—President Teddy Roosevelt.



**Removing A Victim... mid 1950s**

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# Index

**Index entires in bold print or capitals are chapter headings. Information about JFRD Fire Chiefs is found in the boxed text with their photographs.**

- 1868 to 1886.....12
- 1999...128, 146, 195, 271,  
346, 347
- 2001—A BAD YEAR, A  
VERY BAD YEAR.....202
- 2002 — Year Of The  
Camera.....219
- 2002 Equipment Theft. 231
- 2003 — FORGING AHEAD  
.....231
- 2003 Carnegie Medal For  
Heroism.....236
- 2004—A Stormy Year...237
- 20th CENTURY  
FIREFIGHTING.....65
- 9-1-1.....173, 226
- 911.....203, 206, 215, 226,  
325, 348
- A Valiant Horse.....33
- accreditation.....135
- Acosta Bridge...77, 79, 92,  
130, 203
- Action Overhead!.....98
- Advanced Life Support 138,  
143, 144, 145, 148, 170
- Advanced Live Support 147
- Aetna Steam Fire Engine  
Co.....14, 15
- Air bags.....301
- airliner crash.....106
- Al Capone.....81
- alarm bells.....3
- Alert Hose Company.....19
- American LaFrance...152,  
202, 248
- anthrax.....214, 215, 347
- Apperson Chemicals Inc  
.....121
- Assistant Fire Chief James  
Dowling Jr.....130, 139
- audit.....196, 205
- AX-HANDLE SATURDAY.126
- axe.....279, 293, 294, 295,  
302
- BACKTRACKING To THE  
'50s AND '60s.....121
- Battalion Chief Terry  
Dennis.....212
- battleship Maine.....38
- Bay Street 5, 9, 10, 13, 14,  
20, 23, 28, 37, 41, 43,  
49, 74, 253, 254, 256,  
257
- Beckmam Plaza Parkiing  
Garage.....253
- Beckman Plaza.....253
- Bicycle Emergency  
Response Team.145, 146
- Big Jim.....28, 54, 91
- black firefighters.....19
- Burning Barge.....156
- Call Nine—One—One...222
- Can Of Worms.....204
- Capt. Thomas W. Haney. 34
- Celebration of Heroes 190,  
192
- Chief Albert Russel.....15
- Christmas day.....171
- Church Arson.....194, 347



---

City Council 17, 24, 76, 92,  
219, 225  
City Hall 68, 151, 171, 179,  
204  
Civil War... 8, 12, 126, 196,  
332, 342, 345  
Clara White Mission 83, 84,  
139  
Cliff Williams..... 279  
Cliff Williams,..... 10  
Clyde Line Docks..... 90  
Clyde Steamship Line..... 73  
CodeRED..... 228  
Cohens..... 116  
communications. 142, 170,  
171, 195, 203, 219, 224,  
228, 234  
Communications 130, 171,  
188, 229  
CONSOLIDATION..... 135  
Corsair fighter crashed 101  
Cowford..... 7, 126  
cribbing..... 299, 300  
daily diary..... 207  
David Mitchell..... 51  
decontamination 219, 233,  
235, 261  
Deferred Retirement  
Option Program (DROP)  
..... 237  
Depression... 80, 82, 84, 85  
diary..... 13, 207, 215, 216  
diary entries..... 13, 207  
disaster drill..... 233, 242  
Disaster Drill..... 233  
Dominican Republic..... 244  
Donna Axum..... 112, 117  
Door-pop..... 302  
Duval Fire Engine & Hose  
Company..... 19  
E.J. Wendt, Mattress  
Factory Foreman,..... 47  
eagle on the helmet..... 284  
Early Firefighting  
Equipment..... 25  
Eartha White..... 83, 84  
Emergency Medical  
Technician. 146, 153, 170  
Emergency Operations  
Center..... 171, 188  
EMTs..... 144  
encryption technology. 234  
epidemic 5, 30, 31, 39, 75,  
76, 194  
Erma Zoller's..... 54  
Escape..... 275  
Eventful Day..... 100  
Expansion..... 77  
exploded... 25, 38, 43, 44,  
94, 99, 121, 122, 176,  
193  
Explosions..... 43  
Extrication..... 298  
FBI... 95, 96, 97, 161, 194,  
195, 216  
Ferry..... 52, 79  
ferryboat..... 79  
ferryboats..... 77, 79  
fighter planes..... 99  
fire boat..... 108, 263  
Fire Chief Haney..... 45  
Fire Chief J.B. Chancey. 92,  
121  
Fire Chief Miles Bowers 114  
Fire Chief Ray Alfred... 193,  
194, 205  
Fire Chief Russell  
Yarborough..... 157  
Fire kills 2, leaves 4 in  
hospital..... 199  
Fire Prevention Division  
..... 204, 205, 232  
fireboat 80, 108, 109, 110,  
111, 151  
Firefighter Blood Mobile 237  
Firefighter Heros..... 212  
Firefighter of the Year. 160,  
177, 178, 263, 267, 268,  
269, 270, 271

---

---

Firefighter Of The Year	134, 170
Firefighter's Soul.....	325
Firefighting In the '50s.	106
Fireman of the Year....	132, 172, 263, 264, 265, 266
Fireman Stephen A. Weeks .....	50
Fireman W.G. Smedley...	49
fireman's relief fund.....	37
Fireproof Buildings.....	70
FIRES OF CIVIL WAR.....	8
FIRES OF WAR.....	7
Florida Department of Health.....	147, 153, 215
Four Generations.....	243
Friendship Hook and Ladder Company.....	13
funeral homes....	139, 140, 145
Gator Bowl...	98, 112, 146, 180, 190, 192, 202, 233
George E. Hare.....	97
Geronimo.....	223
Gilkes block.....	69
GMAC.....	183
Gory Horror On The St. Johns.....	315
Governor Bob Graham.	168
Great Fire...	35, 42, 45, 54, 64, 65, 66, 68, 70, 77, 138, 217, 218, 332, 345
GREAT FIRE OF JACKSONVILLE.....	40
GREAT FIRE'S AFTERMATH .....	58
H.L. Mencken.....	61
Hale's Patent Swinging Harness.....	37
Hallack-Tustenuggee. .	309, 310, 312, 313
Halligan Bar.....	293, 294
HALLOWEEN—1969.....	134
Harriet Beecher Stowe.	196
Hazardous Materials Team .....	147, 157, 160
HAZMAT	157, 159, 215, 220
HEAVY RESCUE.....	221
helicopters.....	115
helmets....	18, 19, 38, 231, 279, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286
Henry J. Bradley.....	23
Heroes All.....	273, 342
Homeland Security.....	232, 239
Horse # 12.....	33
Humane Society's.....	252
Hurricane.....	79, 208, 209, 228, 240, 249
Hurricane Season 2004	240
Hurst Tools.....	301
in Basic Life Support...	143
Incident Report....	123, 259
Incident report ledgers.	123
Indians 7, 8, 223, 275, 276, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313	
Indonesia.....	216
International Association of Fire Fighters.....	76
International Association of Firefighters.....	150, 249
Iwo Jima.....	101
Jacksonville Association Of Firefighters.....	230
Jacksonville Beach. 78, 79, 94, 239	
Jacksonville Fire Museum 5, 6, 10, 121, 123, 129, 134, 146, 149, 150, 172, 204, 218, 237, 271, 332	
Jacksonville Fire Stations In The 1940s.....	103
Jacksonville Fire Stations In The 1950s.....	123
Jacksonville Firetruck Burns Up On Interstate—....	248

---

---

Jacksonville Human Rights Commission.....	249, 250	Market Street Horror....	43, 218
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office .....	171	Mass Causality Protocols .....	219
Jacksonville Shipyards	109, 156, 202	Mayor Hans Tanzler....	137, 141, 145, 263
JACKSONVILLE TANK FARM FIRE.....	175	Mayor Haydon Burns....	135
Jacksonville's Worst Fire .....	112	Mayor J.E.T. Bowden.	60, 73
James L. Whyte.....	10	Mayor Jake Godbold...	177, 267
James R. Romyedy.....	115	Mayor John Delaney...	185, 186, 192, 205, 215
jaws of life.....	301	Mayor John T. Alsop.....	83
JaxCERT.....	242, 332, 348	mayor, Jake Godbold....	110
JFRD MISSION STATEMENT .....	222	Melody Benson.....	226
JFRD — Constant Progress .....	186	Memorial Spire.....	217
JFRD VISION.....	232	Men Of Valor.....	172, 332
John B. Callahan...	108, 109	Miles R. Bowers. .	170, 177, 222, 233, 273
John H. Stephens.....	32	Miss America.....	112, 117
John Peyton	222, 232, 249, 251	modular rescue unit....	142
Joseph F. Stichway.....	134, 156, 263, 271	MOLDY STATIONS.....	235
Judson House Hotel.....	10	Moncrief Road.....	152, 266
Katrina.....	249, 330	More Fires In The '90s.	188
kerosene lamps.....	34	Mrs. Clarence Maxwell...	48
King Tut's,.....	78	Muscular Dystrophy Association.....	139
leather helmet...	284, 285, 287	Nat Glover.....	128, 215
Lee High School...	100, 168	National Hurricane Center .....	228
lightening.....	176, 190, 247	National Weather Service .....	228
lightning.	13, 108, 175, 239	Naughty, Naughty.....	220
Lightning.....	70, 134, 239	NAWAS System.....	228
Local 1834.....	150	NEW ERA ON THE ST JOHNS.....	108
Lt. Linda Treadwell.....	10	Niles Weekly Register...	308
Lt. Mose Bowden. .	10, 121, 134, 172	Nine-Eleven.....	231
LUCKY THE FIRE DOG...	252	Northeast Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force.....	234
Mandarin	7, 132, 196, 197, 198, 304, 305, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 347	Northside Generating Plant .....	247, 260
Many False Alarms.....	72	Odd Death—October 2004 .....	243
Marine One.....	110		

---

---

OHSA.....	256	Roosevelt Hotel....	70, 111, 112, 116, 118
Opticom.....	157	S.W.A.T Medic.....	145
oral history.....	128	SCBA's.....	289, 292
Oral History Project.....	118	Schoolboy Richard D. Oldham.....	51
OSHA.....	292	schools.....	75, 94, 135, 168
OTHER RECORDS FROM		Second Seminole War	306, 309
THE 1960s.....	129	Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus.....	287, 289
P-51 Mustangs.....	99	Seminoles.....	7
paddlewheel...1, 316, 320, 323		SEPTEMBER 11th.....	206
paddlewheelers.....	316	Silver Medal Of Valor....	170
parade.....	18, 19, 203	Simsbury, Connecticut,..	10
PASS devices.....	291	Southern Bell.....	224, 225
Peace Hounds.....	308, 311	Spanish American War...38	
Pearl Harbor.....	90, 92	Spanish Lady.....	75, 76
Pentagon.....	188, 207, 208	Springfield22, 29, 66, 189, 199, 206, 270	
Peter Jones.....	27, 32	SS Gulfamerica.....	94
Powis-fixico.....	309, 310	St. James Hotel.....	67, 68
PREPARING FOR TERROR		St. Luke's Hospital..20, 31, 332, 345	
.....	234	stabilization struts	300, 301
PROFESSIONAL		Standard Oil Terminal...108	
FIREFIGHTERS.....	27	Station One....	28, 181, 273
PROGRESSIVE		steamboat..21, 23, 43, 315	
DEPARTMENT LEADER.	34	Steuart Petroleum Fire.	187
Prohibition And Depression		Sub Attack.....	94
.....	80	T-2 Chemical Plant	
Puke Yellow Trucks.....	151	Explosion.....	258
RACE, UNION AND HAIR	149	Talleyrand Avenue56, 108, 176, 231	
Raging Chemical Fire...193		telephone45, 78, 133, 173, 223, 224, 225, 226, 228	
rebuild.....	139	terrorists....	206, 207, 208, 210, 211, 215, 216, 231, 235
Record Of Heroes Is Not		The 1917 Easter Fire.....	73
Complete.....	271	their Hospital Incident	
Red Cross...100, 141, 190, 208, 209		Command System.....	260
Red Lights — Red Faces		thermal imaging camera	
.....	179	.....	279, 295, 297
Rescue Division History	146		
Richard D. Sutton.....	109		
riverboat City Of Sanford			
.....	317		
Riverboats.....	316		
Riverside....48, 66, 91, 93, 99, 101, 133, 269			
Robert C. Sorensen.....	118		
Rock and Sanko.....	76		

---

---

Thermal Imaging Cameras	219, 220
Thomas W. Haney. .35, 41, 88	
Three alarms.....	100
TO THE RESCUE.....	139
tower.....	4, 222, 233, 247, 248, 257, 264
Tragic Accident.....	205
Triangle Tank Farm Fire	121, 177, 267
Triangle Tank Fire.	174, 177
trolley car.....	70
turnout coats.....	280
turnout gear.	281, 282, 297
typhoid fever.....	39
Volunteer Fire Department	14, 132
volunteer firemen.....	137
VOLUNTEERS TO THE RESCUE.....	12
Volusia exploded.....	21, 23
War's First Casualty.....	92
water system.....	68
Water Works.....	21
wells.....	1, 3
Wendy Norris.,	10, 213, 325
Westside....	189, 235, 249, 347
White Powder Days.....	213
Wild Fires Of '98.....	190
William.	14, 15, 22, 31, 86, 97, 178, 310, 316
Windsor Hotel.....	43, 66
Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.....	99
World Trade Center....	206, 207, 208, 210, 212, 213, 214, 219, 269
World War I.	73, 76, 90, 109
World War II....	90, 92, 141, 170
Wreck of the City Of Sanford.....	315
Y'all make me shine!....	272
Y2K Didn't Happen.....	195
yankees.....	12
Yellow Jack...	29, 30, 31, 32

---

---

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John Cowart's Daily blog can be found at  
[www.cowart.info/blog/](http://www.cowart.info/blog/)





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<sup>155</sup> Much of this List of firefighter of the year awards came from:  
[http://www.jacksonvillefiremuseum.com/firefighters\\_of\\_the\\_year.html](http://www.jacksonvillefiremuseum.com/firefighters_of_the_year.html)

<sup>156</sup> *Times-Union*. May 12, 1973.

<sup>157</sup> *Times-Union*. Nov. 5, 1975.

<sup>158</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. Sept. 4, 1976.

<sup>159</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. Dec. 6, 1976.

<sup>160</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. Oct. 13, 1977.

<sup>161</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. Oct. 24, 1977.

<sup>162</sup> *Times-Union*. Sept. 13, 1979.

<sup>163</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. March 27, 1980; and *Times-Union*, March 28, 1980.

<sup>164</sup> *Times-Union*. March 18, 1983.

<sup>165</sup> *Times-Union*. Feb. 9, 1984.

<sup>166</sup> *Jacksonville Journal*. May 24, 1985.

<sup>167</sup> *Times-Union*., Dec. 17, 1985.

<sup>168</sup> *Times-Union*. Dec. 18, 1985.

<sup>169</sup> Scanlan, Dan. "Firefighters... honored" *Times-Union*. November 5, 2005.

<sup>170</sup> Murphy, Bridget. "Lt. Michael George..." *Times-Union*.. February 16, 2008.

<sup>171</sup> Smith. op. cit. p. 146.

<sup>172</sup> Cowart, John W. "Escape" *Young Ambassador*. March, 1980.

<sup>173</sup> <http://www.simsburyfd.org/SVFC/SVFC.htm>

<sup>174</sup> Spencer, Donald D. *Historic Plantations Of Northeast Florida*. Ormond Beach, Fl. Camelot Publishing co. ©2003. p. 141 f.



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