

**Wellfleet Fire Department**

**Historic Chronology**

**Wellfleet Fire Department  
Historic Chronology**

**Table of Contents**

Apparatus .....9  
Chiefs .....12  
Career Firefighters .....12

## Wellfleet Fire Department Historic Chronology

- Pre 1870 Bucket brigades and able-bodied volunteers of all ages are called on to extinguish fires.
- 1870 Railroad service arrives in town creating a new fire hazard, flying sparks from trains.
- 1875 A committee planning for Town Hall is ordered to procure all necessary information regarding hooks, ladders, a chemical engine, and extinguishers.
- 1879 Town records indicate that fire apparatus such as, ladders, ropes, axes, etc., and a shelter for them are procured.
- 1882 A similar reference is made. These may be follow-ups, or the previous articles may have failed.
- 1911 \$500.00 is authorized for the purchase of fire apparatus.
- 1912 A town meeting article appears for \$1000.00 for the purchase of fire apparatus.
- 1927 The town acquires its first piece of motorized fire apparatus when a Guptil pump, some hose, and a small tank are purchased and placed on a model T Ford for the Forest Fire Department to use on the fires started by trains.
- 1928 A fire tower is built.
- 1930 The town purchases its first fire engine, an American LaFrance costing \$5750.00. It has a 500gpm pump, an 80 gallon tank, and could pump a stream of water over the Congregational Church. A vote is taken to extend and enlarge the fire warden's facilities and install a heater so that the apparatus will be ready for immediate response. The facility was on Commercial Street opposite Bank Street. It had previously been occupied by the Moth Department.
- 1934 On February 12th The Wellfleet Fire Department is officially established with the acceptance of Ch.48, sections 42, 43, 44, and 45 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Forest Fire Department remains a separate entity.  
A board of Fire Engineers is appointed consisting of Dr. C.J. Bell, Cyril Downs, Edward B. Lane, Fred Howard, Benjamin Paine, and Clarence Hicks. From that group, Edward Lane is appointed Chief, Fred Howard 1st Asst Deputy, and Cyril Downs 2nd Asst Deputy.  
The Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association is formed.  
The Chequessett Inn burns down on July 19<sup>th</sup>.
- 1935 The American LaFrance's pump is overhauled until it produces three streams. Before the overhaul it only produced one. A Ford truck with about a 1000 gallon tank is bought and the department members hold a whist party, picture show, and dance, raising \$110.60 which is used to pay for department expenses.  
The department has fifteen members who drill once a week. The State Fire Drill School opens in North Truro with a ten week session; five members of the department graduate with honors, each receiving a diploma.  
There are 19 brush and grass calls including one 14½ acre fire where the town's moth sprayer is utilized.  
Three hydrants are installed on Main Street with a fourth added in later years. A pipe leads from the hydrants to Squire's Pond.  
A siren is donated by the Old Home Week Association and placed atop a school house at the corner of Rider Court and Main Street.  
The number of siren blasts indicates a fire's location.

- A single blast is sounded daily at noon.
- If there is no school a single blast is sounded at 7:15 a.m.
- Two blasts indicates a fire or emergency downtown.
- Three blasts indicate the south part of town.
- Four blasts the north part.
- Five blasts indicate the fire is out of town.
- Six blasts are sounded for an emergency forest fire.
- A single blast is sounded to let people know when the fire is out.

Some years later the siren is moved to a tower on Howland Lane.

- 1941 A new three bay fire station is constructed for \$2500.00 at the site of the previous station and on lands previously owned by the Methodist Church and Lydia Scott. Four wells are driven in the Pleasant Point area for use in fire control.
- 1952 Dial telephone service comes to town replacing the old operator based system which had previously handled all of the town's calls, including fire calls. The second floor of the fire station is remodeled into an apartment to accommodate a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Palmer, who are hired to answer the telephone and man the fire department's siren system. This becomes the only emergency call-in location on the lower cape with twenty four hour coverage.
- 1953 Fire Chief Charles W. Huntley recommends that the town seriously consider a town water system. No system is installed.
- 1956 A 1946 Chevrolet oil truck is converted into a fire engine with the installation of a new body, Engine 2 (92). A Dodge/Maynard fire pumper is bought as Engine 3 (93).
- 1957 An addition is added to the first floor of the fire station costing \$4809.00. A 20,000 gallon water tank is installed at the Wellfleet High School for fire protection. The department does 57 fire calls and 17 rescue calls, a total of 74 calls.
- 1958 The Wellfleet Forest Fire Department and the Wellfleet Fire Department merge. A Ford/Maxim engine is bought as Engine 4 (94).
- 1960 The Wellfleet Town Hall is destroyed by fire during a March blizzard. A unified emergency dispatch center is established for the police and fire departments on the second floor of the fire station. Offices are created for the police and fire chiefs next to the apartment where a married couple continues to handle the dispatching duties.
- 1961 The police department assumes control of the emergency dispatch center and a new couple moves in to the apartment. A larger fire siren is obtained from Camp Wellfleet and put into operation.
- 1962 A Rescue Squad is formed as part of the fire department. Lower Cape Ambulance serves Wellfleet as well by providing out of town transportation services. Members of the department refit a 1953 Cadillac ambulance chassis, retired from the military in Fort Drum, NY, with a body from another 1953 Cadillac and put it into service. The Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association funds the project.
- 1964 Tone controlled radio receivers are put into service.
- 1965 A lightning strike causes a fire atop the belfry of the Congregational Church. Department members climb to the belfry through the inside stairway carrying ropes and hand tools. From under the belfry

dome they use the ropes to pull up a hose line and extinguish the fire. The nearest ladder truck, which responds from Harwich, arrives after the fire is under control.  
Raymond Dundas is hired to be on duty at the fire station during the day in the summer.

- 1966 The Wellfleet Police Department moves from town hall and begins to share the second floor of the fire station.  
Town meeting authorizes the formation of a committee to explore the possibility of building a new police or fire station.
- 1967 An article at the annual town meeting requests that the voters rescind the action taken at the town meeting in 1934 that created the fire department. The article loses.
- 1968 The Emergency Dispatch Center changes away from using married couples and hires dispatchers on an hourly basis.  
An article at the annual town meeting again requests that the voters rescind the action taken at the town meeting in 1934 that created the fire department. The article loses again.
- 1970 A Dodge Power Wagon is bought for use as a brush truck, Brush Truck 90 (later Forestry 90)
- 1971 In an attempt to control air pollution a new state law goes into effect banning most forms of open burning.
- 1972 A potential disaster is averted when a fire is extinguished at the Lema's Market/Pharmacy building on Main Street.  
The department does 38 fire calls, 130 rescue calls, and 11 other calls, a total of 179 calls. It does 69 inspections.
- 1974 Another Ford/Maynard is bought for Engine 5 (95).
- 1975 Fire Chief Warren Dyer is hired as the department's first career employee. The department has four qualified EMT's and ten more in training, 26 members total.
- 1976 The Penny Patch fire on Main Street destroys two storefront buildings.  
The sub-station (Station Two) on Route 6 in South Wellfleet is completed and placed in service for an appropriated cost of \$20,000.00.  
The department has one advanced EMT, or paramedic, and one Life-Pac V cardiac monitor/defibrillator.
- 1977 A new class one ambulance is bought with state funds. With the funding comes the responsibility of the department running its own ambulance service; ending Wellfleet's affiliation with Lower Cape Ambulance. The previous ambulance is kept as a back up.  
An acre of land between Gross Hill Road and Lawrence Road is taken by eminent domain for a future fire and police station.
- 1979 A set of the "Jaws of Life" are donated by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association.  
It takes 300 hours to become a Paramedic, 100 hours to become an EMT, and 54 hours to become a First Responder.
- 1981 The second floor of the fire station is declared unsafe and the police department moves to temporary quarters in a rented house on Route 6.
- 1982 The Selectmen become authorized to establish fees for ambulance services and to place the proceeds in an ambulance replacement fund.

Thomas A. Ferreira is hired as the department's first career Firefighter/Paramedic and works Monday through Friday from 9a.m. to 5p.m.

- 1983 The Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association donates a fully equipped 20 foot Sea-Ox fiberglass rescue boat (Marine 92) which is kept docked at the town pier.  
Two articles seeking to reorganize the administration of the department are indefinitely postponed at the annual town meeting.  
The department does 76 fire calls, 581 rescue calls, and 34 other calls, a total of 691 calls. It issues 422 permits.
- 1984 The fire department moves out of the station on Commercial Street into a modern public safety facility on Lawrence Road. The new station houses the fire department on the lower level and the police above. The fire station portion consists of four double deep apparatus bays, two offices, and rest room facilities.
- 1988 An advisory committee formed to study communication issues between The Board of Fire Engineers and the town completes a preliminary report recommending a more formal study of the fire department. The result is The Bennett and Shaw Report, which evaluates the operation and structure of the department and issues 35 recommendations.  
Fund are appropriated for six underground water tanks to be installed around town for use in fire suppression  
Staffing consists of a full time fire chief, two full time firefighter/paramedics, and 24 call members.
- 1990 A used 1962 Ford/Maxim 75 foot ladder truck is acquired as a gift from the Nantucket Fire Department (Ladder 97).  
The Cole's Neck water system goes into operation. Its mains are too small to support fire fighting operations.  
A fatal fire occurs in May.
- 1991 Roger Henson of California is hired as the first fire chief from outside the department.
- 1992 Articles attempting to eliminate the Board of Fire Engineers and replace them with a "strong chief" system of administration are indefinitely postponed at the annual town meeting.
- 1993 The department does 131 fire calls, 548 rescue calls, and 54 other calls, a total of 733 calls. It issues 455 permits and does 65 commercial inspections.
- 1994 The Wellfleet Professional Firefighter's Association, representing the department's career firefighters, settles its first contract with the town and is formally organized as an adjunct of Eastham Local 2975 within the International Association of Fire Fighters.  
The Enhanced 911 phone system is implemented allowing the dispatchers to automatically know the address from which a call originates. All properties are assigned street numbers for the first time.  
New rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures are implemented and a dispute resolution process is undertaken to address management and communication problems within the department.  
A single hydrant standpipe system is installed between Squire's Pond and Main Street. The system installed in 1935 having long since disappeared.
- 1995 Staffing consists of a career chief, a 35 hour a week secretary, 3 career firefighter/paramedics, and 21 call members. The station goes unmanned from 1a.m. to 8a.m.  
The Board of Fire Engineers brings concerns regarding inadequate and substandard facilities in the main station to the town's attention citing increasingly stringent infectious control requirements.
- 1996 After two years without an official chief the Board of Fire Engineers is abolished and the "weak chief" model of organization is replaced with a modified "strong chief" system written into the town charter.

A preliminary study is approved for an addition to the main fire station.

- 1997 With the addition of a new firefighter/paramedic the career staff is increased to four and twenty-four hour station staffing is implemented.
- 1999 Engine 95 is replaced with an HME/General engine with class A and B foam capability. An engine and personnel are sent to Worcester as part of the Cape Cod Task Force to help the city recover from the tragic loss of six firefighters in the Worcester Cold Storage Warehouse fire.
- 2000 Marine 92 is turned over to the harbormaster and a cooperative agreement is reached regarding transport to emergencies in the harbor. A thermal imaging camera is acquired with state funding spurred by the 1999 Worcester tragedy. The Wellfleet Employees Association begins its first contract with the town representing all nonunion town employees including the call firefighters and the department's secretary.
- 2001 Ladder 97 and Engine 93 are replaced by a second hand ladder truck from Florida (Ladder 93). After 45 years with the department Engine 92, the 1946 Chevrolet, is donated to the Children's Museum in Boston and converted into a shuttle used to drive museum visitors through the "Big Dig" to satellite parking areas. The September 11th terrorist attacks, and the following anthrax attacks, cause a brief but intense statewide increase in hazardous material calls relating to white powder in the mail. No anthrax is isolated in Wellfleet, or the rest of the state.
- 2003 A third ambulance (97) is added to the fleet when two new Type III Ford Wheeled Coach ambulances are purchased. The second ambulance replaces one purchased in 1997 (98), and the other 1997 ambulance (99) is retained as a back up. The department does 184 fire calls, 848 rescue calls, and 131 other calls, a total of 1163 calls. It issues 583 permits and does 127 commercial inspections.
- 2004 Mary Lou Wood becomes the department's first female career firefighter/paramedic as staffing reaches eight and two career members are assigned to each shift. There are approximately fifteen call members. The town's fireworks display ignites on the ground while being set up at Indian Neck Beach on July 10<sup>th</sup>. An extensive renovation of the police/fire station is investigated but ultimately deferred in the interest of pursuing a stand alone fire station on a new site.
- 2005 A management study, The Jacobs Report, identifies areas of the department's administrative structures and systems which need improvement. A special town meeting shows strong support for replacing the main fire station but the issue is left unresolved when a plan to acquire the parcel of land across the street from the existing station appears to fail. Further negotiations eventually result in the parcel's acquisition. It takes 110 hours of training to become an EMT and more than a year of classes and clinical time to become a Paramedic.
- 2007 Voters at a special town meeting in December approve the construction of a new five bay fire station to be built across the street from the current station at the corner of Lawrence Road and Route 6. A Chevy Silverado extra cab flatbed pickup truck replaces Forestry 90, the 1970 Dodge Power Wagon, after 37 years of active service.

*Sources:*

*Capecodfd.com, Britt Crosby, 2008*

*The Cape Codder, various articles*

*Wellfleet Remembered, Past to Present in Pictures, Vol. 4, R.E. Rickmers, 1984*

*Wellfleet Town Reports, 1972–2006*



## Apparatus

1927 – 1939	Model T with a small Guptil pump and tank used for forest fires
1930 – 1958	American LaFrance fire engine, 500gpm pump, 80 gallon tank, cost \$5,750.00 (Engine 1)
1935 – ?	Ford tank truck, approx.1000 gallon tank
1940's – 1950's or 60's	The town may have owned an unknown forest fire truck during this period
1952 – Present in 1976	Ford/Farrar or Dodge/Maxim fire engine, 500gpm pump, 1000 gallon tank, cost \$9700.00
1956 – 2001	1946 Chevrolet oil truck converted into a fire engine with the installation of a new body, 500gpm pump, 600 gallon tank (Engine 2, later known as Engine 92), donated to the Children's Museum in Boston in 2000
1956 – 1979	Dodge/Maynard fire engine, 600 gallon tank, cost \$2550.00 (Engine 3, later known as Engine 93)
1958 – 2001	Starcraft aluminum rescue boat and trailer donated by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association. A 9hp engine was donated a year later in 1959.
1958 – 1990	Ford/Maxim fire engine 750gpm pump, 500 gallon tank, cost \$14,835.00 (Engine 4, later known as Engine 94)
1957 – 1962(?)	Panel truck rescue truck purchased from Civil Defense by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association.
1962 – 1966(?)	1953 Cadillac ambulance, retired from the military in Fort Drum, NY. A "good body" from another 1953 Cadillac was refitted onto the chassis by members of the department. Project funded by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association.
1966 – 1974(?)	A later model ambulance, acquired by Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association
1970 – 2007	Dodge Power Wagon (Brush Truck 90, later known as Forestry 90)
1971 – 1980	Cadillac Superior ambulance, (originally known as 95) paid for with a federal grant of \$6,750
1974 – ?	Dodge Power Wagon Providence Body type I (truck front/box rear) ambulance/heavy rescue, (97) 4x4, carried the Jaws of Life, portable generators, lighting and other tools.
1975 – 1999	Ford/Maynard fire engine, 500 gallon tank (Engine 5, later known as Engine 95)
1977 – 1985	Dodge type II (van) ambulance, (Rescue 99) purchased with state funds
1978 – ?	1953 Dodge ¾ ton military weapons carrier obtained from Civil Defense and converted into a hose truck carrying 2200 feet of four inch hose.
1979 – 2001	Ford/Pierce fire engine, 1250gpm pump, 1000 gallon tank, (Engine 93)

1979 – ?	A 600 gallon tank truck procured from Civil Defense with the intention of replacing the tank with a larger one
1982 – 1992	Dodge Custom 300 utility body pickup truck (Truck 80)
1982 – 1990	Ford type II (van) ambulance, (Rescue 98)
1983 – 2000	20 foot Sea-Ox fiberglass rescue boat, 90hp engine (Marine 88, later known as Marine 92) donated by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association
1983 – ?	Ford Bronco 4x4 utility vehicle, (91) donated by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association
Present in 1984	1953 Dodge Reo brush truck, 6x6, ten wheeler
1985 – 1990	Type III Class I Ambulance
1986 –	Ford/Firovac tank truck, 3000 gallon tank (Tanker 96)
? – 1994	1986 Ford Crown Victoria command car, an ex-police cruiser (Car 91)
1992 – 2005	Ford F350 utility body pickup truck (Squad Truck 80, later known as Squad Truck 1)
1990 - 1997	Ford/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Rescue 98)
1990 – 1997	Ford/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Rescue 99)
1990 –	Pierce Dash D-8000 fire engine, 1250gpm pump, 1000 gallon tank, (Engine 94)
1990 – 2001	A 1962 Ford/Maxim 75 foot ladder truck acquired used from the Nantucket Fire Department for \$1, donated to the Barnstable County Fire Rescue Training Academy in 2001 (Ladder 97)
1994 – 2002	Jeep Cherokee command car, 4x4 (Car 91, later known as Car 1)
1997 – 2003	Ford E350/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Rescue 98)
1997 –	Ford E350/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Rescue 99, later known as Ambulance 99)
1999 –	HME/General fire engine, 1500gpm pump, 750 gal tank, class A and B foam capability (Engine 95)
2001 –	A Duplex/LTI 15000 ladder truck, 1500gpm pump, 400 gallon tank, purchased used from Ocala Florida (Ladder 93)
2001 –	14 foot soft bottom inflatable Zodiac rescue boat (Marine 92) donated by the Wellfleet Firemen's Relief Association
2002 –	Chevrolet Tahoe 4x4 command car (Car 1)
2003 –	Ford E450/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Ambulance 97)

- 2003 – Ford E450/Wheeled Coach type III (van front/box module) ambulance (Ambulance 98)
- 2004 – Kristi enclosed utility trailer (Special Hazards Trailer)
- 2005 – Chevrolet Silverado 2500 pickup truck, 4x4, Omaha utility body, (Squad 1)
- 2007 – Chevrolet Silverado 3500 extra cab flatbed truck, 4x4 (Forestry 90)

## **Chiefs**

1934 – 1940	Edward B. Lane
1941 – 1947	Edwin P. Handy
1948 – 1952	Lester C. Taylor
1953 – 1955	Charles W. Huntley
1956 – 1968	Albert M. Rose
1969 – 1972	Norman W. Gill
1973 – 1982	Warren F. Dyer
1983 – 1991	William M. Berrio
1991 – 1995	Roger R. Henson
1997 – 2005	Alan S. Hight
2006 –	Daniel Silverman

## **Career Firefighters**

(with highest rank)

1982 –	Capt. Thomas A. Ferreira
1986 – 2005	Chief Alan S. Hight
1989 – 1991	Adam Houk
1992 –	Lt. George White
1997 –	James Willis
1997 –	Lt. Joseph A. Cappello Jr.
2000 –	Paul Finn
2002 –	Lt. Shawn Clark
2002 – 2003	Jeffery Sturdevant
2004 – 2005	Edward Dalbec
2004 –	Mary Lou Wood
2005 – 2006	Sean Giangregorio
2007	Brian Dunton
2007 – 2008	Scott Hansson