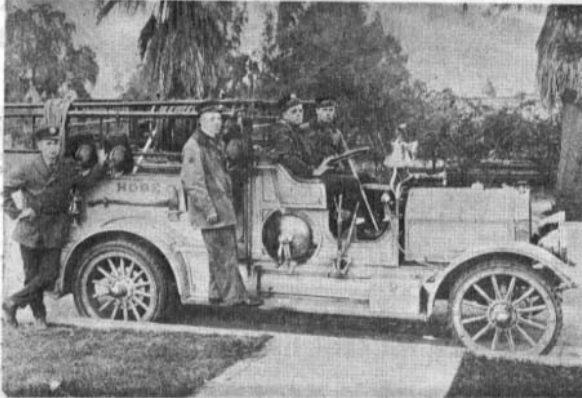


Water Pressure Problem Fire at Hotel Plagued 1908 Firemen



WORK HORSE—"Old Betsy" was the only motor truck in the Alhambra Fire Department in 1905. But she served well when called upon by her proud keepers.

When the gong on the fire house pealed three times across the dirt streets and clapboard houses of the little village of Alhambra, every household had a standing order in 1908: Turn off all yard sprinklers and cease all irrigation of gardens to maintain water pressure.

And, when the first note of the bell rang out, whether it was day or night, members of the volunteer fire department dropped whatever they were doing and raced to the scene of the blaze.

That's the way it was just 45 years ago when Alhambra's only fire protection was "Betsy," a hand-cranked, motor-driven, solid-tired fire truck, a horse-drawn hook and ladder wagon and a handful of volunteers who put out fires for the fun of it.

And that's the way it was as dawn began lighting the east the day before Christmas, 1908, when someone noticed smoke pouring from the third floor of the elaborately-furnished Alhambra Hotel on the northwest corner of Gardfield Avenue and Main Street.

Amid the entries of excited,

ornate wooden hotel and Alhambra's earliest major fire was beyond control. It was an inauspicious beginning for a fire department scarcely two months old, but it did result in the City providing a trailer hitch for the hook and ladder wagon as the time-consuming horse could be dispensed with.

Built in 1887 at a cost of \$32,000 and furnished at a cost estimated at \$10,000 the Alhambra Hotel probably burned down because someone indulged in too much pre-Christmas celebration. But, whatever the cause, there were some sad-eyed males in Alhambra on Christmas Day pawing dejectedly through the still-smoking ruins in search of their monogrammed shaving mugs which had been kept in neat racks in the barber shop on the hotel's first floor.

Loss of the Alhambra Hotel, in all fairness, hardly could be counted as a black mark against the new fire department. Its four men, scarcely an adequate crew for a major fire, hardly had time to become acquainted with their new

first committee on fire protection in April, 1906, the late Frank L. Hilton, who later became fire chief and then the first city manager.

Hilton and his two fellow committeemen, J. F. Hal and S. F. Wuest, proposed a \$12,000 bond issue—which was a lot of money in those days. They were the most surprised men in town when it passed by the heavy majority of 179 to 21.

With this money, the city purchased a lot on north Stoneman Avenue for a fire station, erected the building, bought Betsy, a ladder truck, several alarm boxes and a fire bell—a sad commentary on the present value of a dollar!

C. F. Striffler was appointed as the first fire chief, and his first men included E. M. Woolpert, C. C. Williams and F. J. Bennison. A. F. Hall was appointed assistant chief in May, 1919. Striffler resigned as chief a short time later and Hall was moved up to the top spot. He was succeeded by George L. Yelland, who later was to become secretary of the Board of Education and School District bus-

first engine-propelled trucks this area."

Yelland recalled that such as used for winter drive in the East and North were necessary to give Betsy trac over Alhambra's muddy, unpe streets.

In 1906, fires were extinguished by water charged with soda-sulfuric acid to build up its pressure. "It put out the fires all right," Yelland chuckled, "but it did have a tendency to eat holes in any pipes that got in the way."

A fire alarm was given in 10 days by "two blows struck 3 times on the fire bell with 3 valves of not less than three sec between each two blows," according to the City's first fire ordinance, adopted Sept. 15, 1906, alarm was followed by other 1 of the bell designating the number corresponding to the location.

While the fire chief, or who was closest to the fire station cranked up Betsy, members of volunteer crew dropped what they were doing and raced on auto or horseback to the fire.

The ordinance that set up Alhambra's volunteer fire department finally was repealed by actment of the City's 80-page prevention ordinance. Although old ordinance had dropped disuse and had been supers by other fire ordinances, it had been actually repealed.

The same story goes for ordinance 271, also adopted on 15, 1906, that set the fire chief's salary at \$1 a month, per quarter, and required his post a \$100 bond before he qualify for the honor and a that went with the job.

In 1911, Frank Hilton, v name may be found threads through the history of the fire department, was appointed to a water committee by the Boa City Trustees. That same Yelland resigned as chief and per Pugsley was appointed i place.

Weed cleaning on all v property had long since been quired by City laws, the fire 1907, but fireworks weren't lated here until March 16, Alhambra's small volunteers department just couldn't top longer with the many fires s by the bombs, torpedoes and non crackers synonymous wi Fourth of July when Alha was young.

On July 6 of that year, ju days after Independence Da citizenry voted \$31,000 mo bonds to buy a modern ma-

The Alhambra volunteer fire truck dubbed "Betsy."

17 Friday Evening **17**
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Tickets on Sale at
ALHAMBRA DRUG STORE
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17 Friday Evening **17**
DECEMBER



Our house at 1800 So. Second Street in Alhambra.



Alhambra High School Band in the school patio. I am third from right in back row. Little guy in front row is Terry Sterling who Pop Ulmer, center, stuck in the piano.



My mother's Geisha Girls Sunday School class. Virginia Bosch is in the center sitting and Peggy Lamb is standing at the far right.



The cast of our High School Senior Play, "Growing Pains." Virginia, who had the lead role, is sitting in the dark dress at right of photo. I am standing in the middle of the ascending stairs.



Virginia with baby Rich taken a few days after he was born.



Virginia and me with our first born son Richy. Photo taken by Vultee Aircraft photographer and published in the Vultair Magazine.



Harker/Bahn family gathering. Standing: Cousin Evelyn's husband Carl, my brother Bud and his wife Charlotte. Next sitting: Cousin Charles Bahn, Cousin Evelyn, Aunt Gertrude, Grandma Bahn holding Bud's daughter Carol and our daughter Harriet, my mother and dad and me holding son Jimmy. Front row: Uncle Allen, our son Richy and Virginia.



Foothill Camera Club exhibit. Second photo from left in top row is one of mine.