

By BARBARA FINKELSTEIN
ALLEDALE — "The Silk Stocking Boys" will come to life again on May 14 when the Fire Department's 50th anniversary blowout brings back the days of the Allendale Fire Association, and with them, the memories of a tragic Christmas morning fire, the smell of burning onions and horse races through the center of town.

Few, if any, of Allendale's firemen can recall those early days, but preparations for the big shindig have led to the un-

earthing of the story of how and why the department first came to being.

It took a Christmas morning fire in 1909, which destroyed the buildings of Max Scholz and William J. Kornhoff on Myrtle Ave., to stir a group of men to forsake their usual New Year's Eve parties and hold a meeting instead.

A Helpless Town

That tragic Yule fire reminded residents of other fires that could not be stopped, with the memory of one particularly

strong. The story goes that in 1893, a blaze destroyed the property of Henry J. Appert on Cottage Pl. at a time when his store was full of onions. The smell is said to have lingered for weeks.

At that time, fire victims could rely only upon neighbors who fetched pails of water from artesian wells, or upon the benevolence of a fire company in a nearby community. Usually, the fire had passed the point of no return before help arrived.

So, with these factors uppermost in their minds, 52 men met

in the Archer ME Hall and a few weeks later the borough's first fire department was organized.

The Rev. H. B. Leach was chosen chairman and John Yeomans secretary, and a committee was named to consider a course of action.

During the next three weeks several meetings were held and by Jan. 24, 1910, a constitution had been adopted and incorporation papers filed for the Allendale Fire Association.

The first officers were William Dewsnap, president; R. W. Steele, chief; C. N. Elliot, secretary, and J. M. Christopher treasurer, and one of the four charter members still living. Site and equipment committees were appointed on Jan. 27 and the first fund drive launched shortly afterwards.

Tires For Alarms

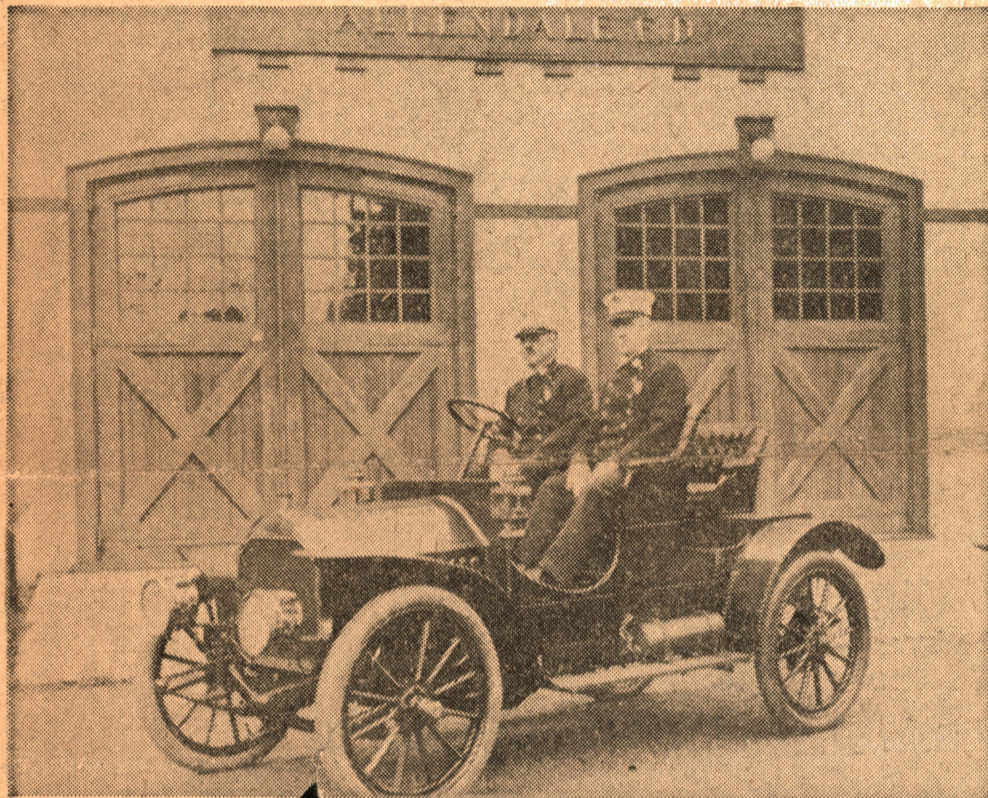
Three chemical extinguishers and eight iron tires, purchased from the Erie Railroad and installed as fire signals throughout the borough, constituted the association's first equipment. When \$588 in subscriptions was reported at the first quarterly meeting in March, the organization ordered a \$955 hook and ladder truck, but it was delivered too late.

On March 15, the Allendale Fire Association was confronted by its first fire, a \$25,000 blaze which razed the East Allendale residence of Albert L. Zabriskie, who later was to serve for many years as vice president of the department, taking office in 1927.

July Fourth of the first year of its existence, the young department journeyed to Ridgewood to participate in their first parade, and it was then that they earned the nickname that stuck for many years. Dressed in white duck trousers, white shirts, black belts, black shoes, black bow ties and white straw hats, gloves and canes, they were immediately tagged "The Silk Stocking Boys."

Fire-Bound Horses

The new truck finally arrived on Aug. 18, 1910, and was housed in V. J. Braun's barn behind the Allendale Hotel. In the beginning the men pulled the truck with ropes, but later town merchants agreed to lend teams of horses to haul it. A special harness, donated by Dr. Harry M. Archer, honorary medical officer of the New York City Fire



Early fire chiefs in Allendale had their own car. Behind the wheel is Val Braun, first chief to serve the borough. In the middle is V. J. Brower, third chief, and in the front is his immediate predecessor, Val Braun. The photo was taken in 1914, the year after the department built its fire house.



Allendale's main street in the early part of the century. The residences of Max Scholz and William J. Kornhoff, on Myrtle Ave., which were destroyed in a Christmas morning fire in 1909 and hastened the formation of a fire department, may be seen at the upper right.

Department, was hung from the ceiling of the firehouse and could be lowered on the horses as they backed into position.

Full of ideas for giving the borough faster service, the association voted in 1912 to pay \$5 to the owner of the first team of horses reaching headquarters after an alarm. A lumber company and two groceries were the main rivals and it was common to see the three teams run a close race through town in pursuit of the prize.

New Quarters

The association still lacked

adequate quarters, and on Oct. 12, 1912, Mrs. Margaret Yeomans donated a lot on Park Ave. and the Erie Railroad granted a right of way to the lot, which bordered its property along the tracks. Blueprints were donated by Dewsnap, association president, and on April 5, 1913, the cornerstone for the present fire house was laid.

By this time, the firemen had to their credit the saving of endangered nearby dwellings when a fire destroyed the mansion of Assemblyman George Cook early in 1913. An odd fea-

ture of that blaze was that it ignited a cellarfull of coal which smoldered for weeks.

Finally, on Sept. 23, 1914, the volunteers voted to give control of the association to the borough council and a month later Mayor Gustave Nadler signed an ordinance creating the Allendale Fire Department.

That same year, the department won its first of many trophies in parade competition at Spring Valley, N. Y.

These are some of the memories that have meaning to the Allendale firemen, but especially

to four men who will be riding in a place of honor in the May 14 parade — J. M. Christopher, Gary Quackenbush and Ingram Roswell, all of Allendale, and Charles Johnson, now of Lakeland, O. — the only remaining charter members of the department.