



Valentine Braun, first Allendale fire chief, depicted on the flap of a cigar box.

**Marsha Stoltz**

ALLENDALE — When the Allendale Fire Department celebrates its 75th anniversary Saturday with a parade through town, it will pass the site of the Max Scholz home at the corner of Myrtle Avenue and High Street where a Christmas morning fire in 1909 led Borough citizens to form a volunteer fire-fighting group.

Starting with an overturned Christmas tree, the fire destroyed two homes, with the La Conte family barely escaping death. Recalling an 1893 fire at the home of Henry J. Appert on Cottage Place where an onion-filled store burned and the neighborhood reeked for weeks afterward, the citizens decided a more organized approach had to be taken to fire fighting. The department constitution was formally adopted Jan. 24, 1910. There were 24 civil, 32 active and one honorary member on the force. Among members was Max Scholz, who

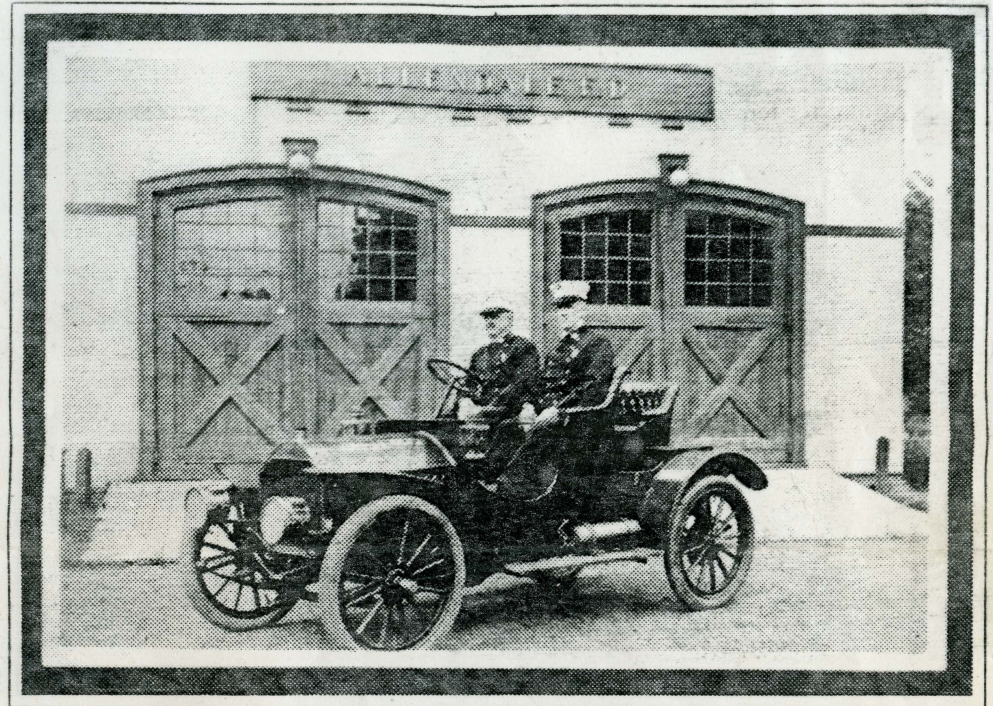
The hook-and-ladder truck arrived in August of that year and was stored at V.J. Braun's barn behind the Allendale Hotel. At first the truck was pulled with ropes by men to the scene of fires. Then merchants agreed to lend horse teams to haul the trucks. To encourage the availability of these teams, the association offered \$5 to the owner of the first team of horses reaching headquarters after an alarm, a practice which led to some heated races between teams owned by a lumber company and two grocery stores.

Margaret Yeomans donated a lot on Park Avenue for a firehouse, Oct. 12, 1912, which was dedicated the next year. The large size of the firehouse made it a site for dances, minstrel shows, parties and games. However, "turkey trotting" was forbidden in the hall.

The firemen had been noted for their particular attention to appearance, winning the nickname of "Silk Stocking Boys" at their first parade for wearing

# Allendale Volunteer Fire Department

## 75 Years of Dedicated Service



Fire Chief Braun, right, and Sam Brower in the chief's car.

white duck trousers, white shirts, black belts, black shoes and bowties, plus white straw hats, gloves and canes. In 1914 they won their first prize in a parade competition in Spring Valley, N.Y.

By the 1930s, the department had a new 750-gallon pumper, the original hook-and-ladder truck attached to a motorized chassis and a hose truck with chemical tanks. The first two were kept at the firehouse, but the last was kept at a barn behind the Allendale Hotel as a precaution in case a train blocked the main equipment from reaching a fire — apparently in the days before track underpasses were erected on West Crescent and West Orchard. The

commemorative book on the department lists 45 active members, 44 associate members and two life members. By the 50th anniversary in 1960, there were 42 active members, 82 associate members and six life members. Today there are 46 active members, 38 associate and life members.

In 1963, the second floor of the 50-year-old firehouse caught fire and was a total loss. A new one was constructed on the same site for dedication in May 1964. An American LaFrance 1,250-gallon pumper was added to the equipment in May 1967.