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Old-time Dunkirk firehouse razed

By MRS. DON MAYHORN
DUNKIRK — The old firehouse is gone. After almost 100 years as a landmark in Dunkirk, one of the few remaining buildings of its era, it is being torn down by the Marsh View Enterprises.

The building belongs to Pat Reams of Dunkirk and Kenneth Schlatter of Forest, who own Oldaker Corp. The two men purchased the business from Gladys Oldaker after her husband, Harold, passed away. The business manufactures parts for Rockwell Int. of Kenton and Triplett of Bluffton. This was used as a storage building.

According to Guy Kingsbury (1902) who owned and operated The Dunkirk Standard, "The present building was built in 1886 and a modern iron cage with four cells put in. The city building contains the fire engine and equipment, mayors office and council chamber."

He goes on, "Our town has a very good and well organized fire company, equipped with hand engine, hook and ladders and hose truck. This equipment is of the very best and that with the willing workers — and good ones too — the company has saved many hundreds of dollars worth of property for our citizens."

"We have in time had some disastrous fires at all of which the boys did fine work in fighting fire and protecting adjacent property. Thanny Treece is the present fire chief. Adam Neff and Jacob Rinehart each served in that capacity for several years."

"At one time the hook and ladder boys were acknowledged the best in the state. They went all over the state and competed with other companies and invariably brought home the best prizes."

"They reached their climax in the fall of 1887 when they went to a state tournament at Cincinnati and cleverly out-classed everything they met. There are many laughable anecdotes told by the boys concerning the trip."

"They were laughed at from the time they started till they made their famous runs. No one here expected them to have any chance at all for winning a prize."

"They were a source of much comment by the Cincinnatians to whom they probably did appear grotesque. They wore suits which had seen much service and at best were not "dress parade" affairs. The city folks gave them the laugh, called them log rollers, hay makers, etc., but changed their minds and remarks after they had seen them work."

"Our boys made the running stack while most companies stopped to stack. This was all new to Cincinnati people and they had kindly secured permission to have the boys stack their ladders against a near-by building to stack for the climb."

"The Dunkirk boys made their running stack without a falter, the climber never making a mis-step. Climber Ewing was generally halfway up the ladder before it had time to touch the ground."

"When the runs had been made that showed our boys winners of sweepstakes and all they picked up Ewing and hoisted him up on their

shoulders amid the cheers of the crowd. Then Chief Adam Neff was hoisted into the air in a similar manner. He waved his cane and in so doing knocked off his hat, and his long hair disheveled by the wind, pants shoved up above his boot tops in picking him up, he made a laughable picture for the Enquirer reporter.

"The next morning's paper contained his picture and called him the "Wild Man of the West." It also had a fine picture of Ewing just as he had thrown his leg over top of the ladder. The Cincinnati papers gave the boys much credit for their fine work and they brought home several hundred dollars in prize money."

The men loaded the hook and ladder wagon, and equipment onto a flatcar on the old T.&O.C. at Dunkirk and made the trip.

In 1902 Thanny Treece was fire chief; before him was Adam Neff and Jacob Rinehart.

While the building was used as a jail, Calvin "Cab" Gunn lived upstairs, fed the prisoners and took care of the stove. Bums would also spend the night in the jail.

Ed Alexander, who was marshal for a time, and later a railroad detective, stated that Dunkirk was one of the toughest towns on the Pennsylvania Rail Road line.

The hook and ladder wagon had previously been a hand pumper with as high as six men on a side. Cisterns were in the street at almost every corner.

After the water tower was built and water hydrants put in, in 1910-11 the pump was removed from the hand pumper and a hose and ladder wagon was made from this. A water hose could be then hooked directly to the water plugs which had 50 pounds pressure. This was still being pulled by firemen, until autos came into use. It was then pulled by a volunteer.

In 1933-34 a Dodge chassis was purchased. Steve Corbin, Dale Miller and others did the work. Miller did the wood work at his lumberyard on the corner of Walnut and Wayne streets. At the time Bill Day was fire chief.

Steve Corbin, being a mechanic, used the fire house as a garage and maintained the fire truck.

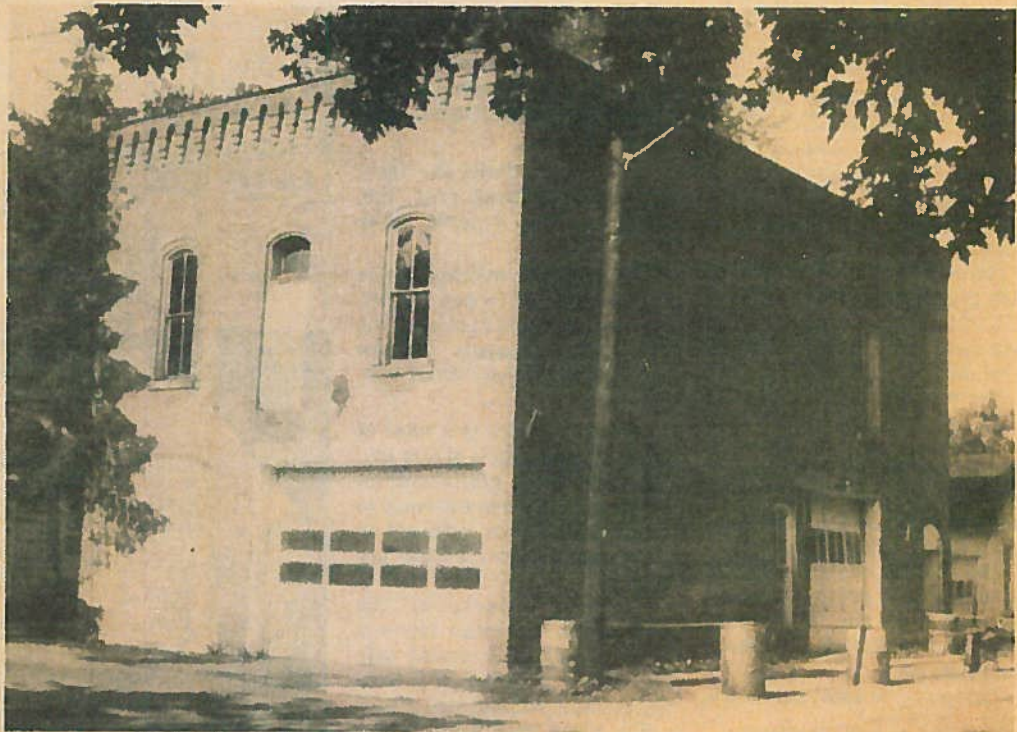
About this time, Corbin died and the firemen acquired the use of the bottom floor.

In 1953, a Ford truck was purchased at Suptens which pumped 500 gallons per minute. It was too large for the north entrance so the men took out the jail cells, moved the stairway and opened a large door in the east end.

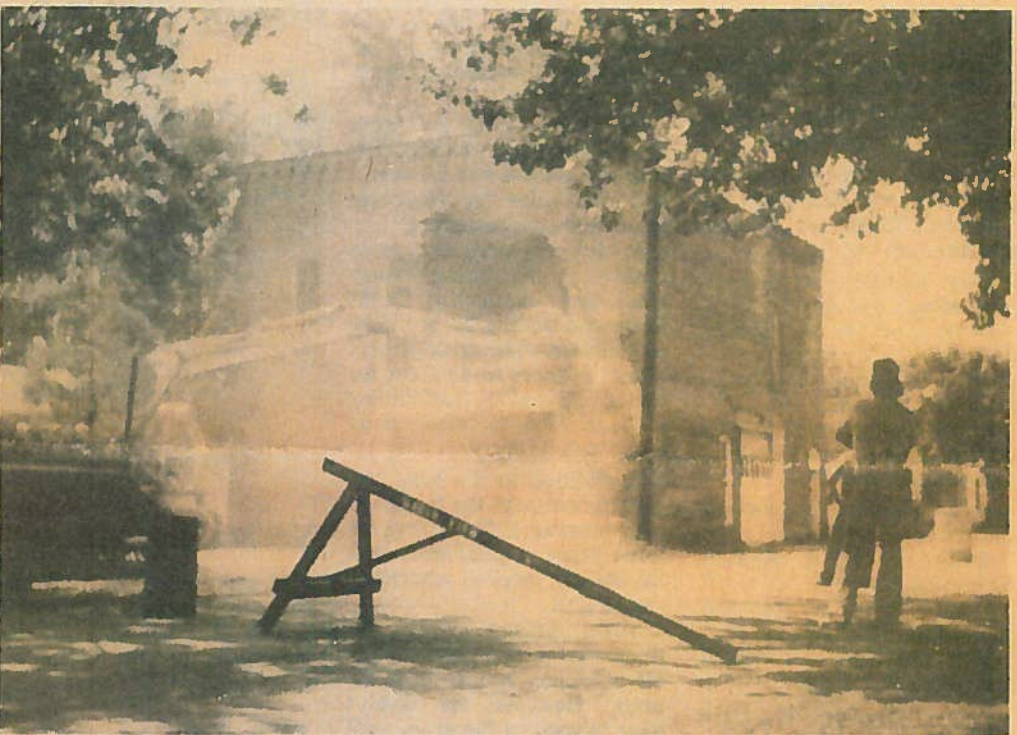
The firemen's meetings were held by the stove beside the truck. Later they remodeled the upstairs where the meetings were held, and firemen and families had get-togethers.

The township trustees gave the volunteers an old 1950 dump truck in approximately 1955 which was lengthened and an old tank donated by Marathon Oil Co. of Findlay, was made into a water tank truck by the firemen.

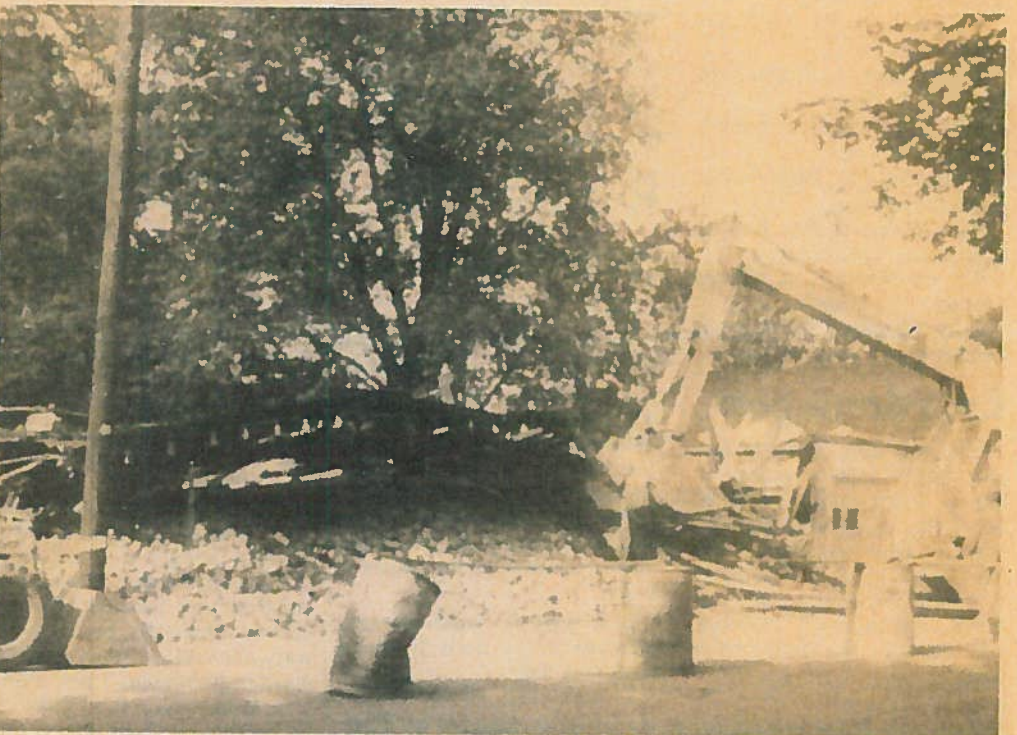
By this time Tranco cement mixers were being made in the (Tran-Co) lumberyard where Dale Miller had been. The men used the facilities to sand, weld, and paint the truck.



Before ...



...during



...after (Mayhorn photos)

On Dec. 18, 1963, the movie and Jones building burned. The firemen helped tear down the debris, and later helped build the new firehouse where they stood, at the present site. In 1966, the new firehouse was

dedicated.

After Chief Day served many years, Don Hinebaugh Sr. and Frank Kindle served the village as chief. At present Don

Mayhorn is chief, and has been for 25 years.

The old firehouse is gone, but will linger in the memories of the old timers forever.

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