



Bethlehem Area Public Library

Local History Collections

Finding aid for Records of Central Fire Company, No. 1

Creator: Central Fire Company No. 1 (Bethlehem, PA)
Title: Records of the Central Fire Company No. 1
Dates: 1894-1940
Extent: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)
Location: Bethlehem Room
Language: English

Abstract: The records of the Central Fire Company, No. 1 consists of Constitutions and bylaws for 1894 and 1921; minutes, reports and notes for 1900-c. 1930; roll books and membership rosters 1898-1939; correspondence predominately 1920-1930; financial statements 1920-1940; foreman's reports 1924-1940; and a few materials relating to fireman's associations including the Bethlehem Firemen's Relief Association.

Access to materials: This collection is open for research.

Conditions for Reproduction and Use: Copyright held by n/a (Borough of Bethlehem). Contact BAPL staff for additional information. Materials may be reproduced without permission under the provisions of fair use as per U.S. copyright law.

Preferred Citation: [Item], Records of Central Fire Company, 1894-1940. Bethlehem Area Public Library Local History Collections, Bethlehem, PA.

Historical Note:

Bethlehem had the first hand fire engine in the United States, imported from London in 1763. Over the years there were various volunteer companies.

The Bethlehem Town council voted to construct a central fire station April 21, 1890. A special 1925 edition of the Bethlehem Daily Times lists the Central fire company as having been organized June 7, 1892 and located at 45 East Broad St. An Article for the Bethlehem Times of January 10, 1893 states: "At noon today the old volunteer fire department virtually went out of existence. Town council yesterday adopted a set of resolutions disbanding all companies, except the Fairview, and inviting old firemen to join a new organization to occupy the new Central Fire Station. Later in the same article it states "As soon after 12 o'clock noon today as possible a dozen or fifteen firemen held a meeting at the new station and organized a new department temporarily. Chief Van Horn called the meeting at the new station and reorganized a new department temporarily. Chief Van Horn called the meeting to order.....The meeting adopted a resolution calling a general meeting for tomorrow night to perfect a permanent organization." From articles of January 11 and 12, this move was not without controversy.

According to the Preamble of the Constitution and Bylaws adopted May 29, 1894: "Whereas We the undersigned actuated (sic) by an ardent desire to assist our fellow citizens when in danger of Fire have organized ourselves into a Fire Company to be known under the name and Title of Central Fire Company No. 1 of the Bethlehem Fire Department, and believing to the accomplishment of our object we have adopted the following Constitution and Bylaws for our government, each member pledging himself for the strict support of the same."

Scope and Content:

The records of the Central Fire Company No.1, while not complete, offer insight into organization and functioning of turn-of-the-century fire departments, as well as materials extending into the 1940's. As such they provide a window into an interesting time period in the gradual change-over from volunteer to governmentally supervised fire protection.

The records are primarily administrative in nature, and include: Constitutions and bylaws for 1894 and 1921; minutes, reports and notes for 1900-c. 1930; financial statements 1920-1940; foreman's reports 1924-1940 (detailing specific fire calls); and a few materials of a general nature relating to firemen's associations including the Bethlehem Firemen's Relief Association.

Names:

The Records of the Central Fire Company No. 1 are indexed under the following Public Library catalog:

Central Fire Company No. 1

Subjects:

Bethlehem (Pa.)- Fires and fire prevention.
Central Fire Company No.1 (Bethlehem, PA)
Bethlehem (Pa.)—History

Related Materials:

1. Clipping File: Heading Fires and Fire Protection
 - a. Postcard showing a view of the Central Fire Station
 - b. "City Firefighting History" Mourning Call July 5, 1991. On side 2 of 3, photograph of a pumper parked in front of the Central Fire Station.
 - c. "Almost ready" Mourning Call January 7, 1972. Bethlehem's new Central Firehouse should be ready for occupancy next month...
2. Bethlehem Times/Globe/Globe/Globe-Times microfilm
 - a. "The March of Improvement," Daily Times April 22, 1890 1:6
 - b. "Through Reading spectacles from the Reading Herald," Daily Times May 1, 1890 1:4
 - c. "Goodbye, old fireman...!" Daily Times January 10, 1893
 - d. "The Central Fire House..." Daily Times January 12, 1893 1:6
 - e. "May it all be peaceful...!" Daily Times January 12, 1893 1:6
 - f. "City Market, Central Firehouse may be sold on auction block," Globe-Times August 17, 1965 13;2
 - g. "Old Central Firehouse coming down for the car lot," Globe Times November 15, 1973 13:1
3. The Bethlehem Globe. Relating to the historical, educational, religious, musical and material advancement of the city of Bethlehem, since it was founded 1741 to the present year, 1925. Special edition. Page 23. Available in Bethlehem Room, and on microfilm.
4. Well, Lorna F. Fire fighting in early Bethlehem. Bethlehem, PA: Oaks Printing Company, 1991. Available in the Bethlehem Room.
5. Borough Council minutes, available on microfilm.

Container Listing

| Folder Title | Date | Box | Folder |
|---|-------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Constitution and bylaws | 1894 | Box 1 | Folder 1 |
| Constitution and bylaws | 1921 | Box 1 | Folder 2 |
| Minutes | | | |
| 24 Apr 1900-18 May 1906 | 1900-1906 | Box 1 | Folder 3 |
| 26 Jul 1910-2 Feb 1916 | 1910-1916 | Box 1 | Folder 4 |
| Miscellaneous reports and notes | 1920-1930, undated | Box 1 | Folder 5 |
| Committees | 1902 | Box 1 | Folder 6 |
| Roll book | | | |
| Active members | 1898-1913 | Box 1 | Folder 7 |
| Active, contributing, and horary members | 1913-1917 | Box 2 | Folder 1 |
| Membership | | | |
| Rosters | 1939, undated | Box 2 | Folder 1A |
| Nominations | 1923-1938 | Box 2 | Folder 2 |
| Membership transfers | 1923-1929, undated | Box 2 | Folder 3 |
| Correspondence | | | |
| Correspondence - 1920-1929, 1940 | 1920-1940, undated | Box 2 | Folder 4 |
| Correspondence - City Clerk | 1920-1928 | Box 2 | Folder 5 |
| Correspondence - City Clerks to fire officers | 1928-1930 | Box 2 | Folder 6 |
| Financial statements | | | |
| 1920 | 1920 | Box 2 | Folder 7 |
| 1922 | 1922 | Box 2 | Folder 8 |
| 1923-1925 | 1923-1925 | Box 2 | Folder 9 |
| 1927 | 1927 | Box 2 | Folder 10 |
| 1928-1929 | 1928-1929 | Box 2 | Folder 11 |
| 1930-1931 | 1930-1931 | Box 2 | Folder 12 |
| 1932-1933 | 1932-1933 | Box 2 | Folder 13 |
| 1934-1935 | 1934-1935 | Box 2 | Folder 14 |
| 1936-1937 | 1936-1937 | Box 2 | Folder 15 |
| 1938-1939 | 1938-1939 | Box 2 | Folder 16 |
| 1940 | 1940 | Box 2 | Folder 17 |
| Foreman's Report | | | |
| Eckley, Frank A. | 1924 | Box 2 | Folder 18 |
| Dietz, F.J. | 1925 January 14-Dec 22 | Box 2 | Folder 19 |
| Barclay, David | 1926 Jan 28-Oct 16 | Box 2 | Folder 20 |
| Detwiler, Paul | 1926 Dec 30- 1927 Feb | Box 2 | Folder 21 |
| Wilmot, Harry | 1927 Feb 6- 1928 Jan 30 | Box 2 | Folder 22 |
| Phillips, Thom. M. | 1928 Dec- 1929 Feb | Box 2 | Folder 23 |
| Grant Wilbur | 1929 Feb 29- Dec 19 | Box 2 | Folder 24 |
| Christian, Clarence | 1933- 1934 Nov 25 | Box 2 | Folder 25 |
| Hadden, George | 1937 Jan 9- Dec 25 | Box 2 | Folder 26 |
| Merritt Michael | 1938 Jan-Dec | Box 2 | Folder 27 |
| Hein, George | 1939 Feb 8- 1940 Jan 19 | Box 2 | Folder 28 |
| Weiner, R.W. | 1931, 1940 | Box 2 | Folder 29 |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------|-----------|
| Unidentified | 1934, n.d. | Box 2 | Folder 30 |
| Evans, Truman | undated | Box 2 | Folder 31 |
| Remaly, Reymond | | Box 2 | Folder 32 |
| Firemen's Association of PA | 1920-1925, 1933 | Box 2 | Folder 33 |
| Four County Firemen's Association | | Box 2 | Folder 34 |
| Bethlehem Firemen's Relief Association | | Box 2 | Folder 35 |
| Advertisements | | Box 2 | Folder 36 |