

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## History

I should have gone ahead of Joe, he is going to be a hard one to follow. I wanted to take a few minutes and share some of the history about North Chatham Volunteer Fire Department. I will not have time to provide a detailed growth of the department for the past 50 years in 15 minutes, but did find a lot about the beginning of the FD.

Let's think back to Chatham County in 1968, particularly northern Chatham County Fire District. There was no Jordan Lake, it was all farm land, no Fearington Village, it was a working dairy farm, no Galloway Ridge, it was part of the Fearington Farm, no Carolina Meadows, no Governors Club or Briar Chapel, it was all woods. Highway 15-501 and 64 were 2 lanes, no stoplights on 15-501, Jack Bennett Road was still a dirt road. No Lowes Food, Harris Teeter or Walmart, no Perry Harrison, Margaret Pollard School, or North Chatham School, No Northwood High School, No county water system, No Fire Marshal or Emergency Management, Population of Chatham County was 29,554 and fire district population was less than 2500 people, pretty much all farm and wood land, and the Fire District covers the same district about ¼ of Chatham County,

<b>Cost of a new home:</b>	<b>\$26,600.00</b>
<b>Cost of a new car:</b>	<b>\$2880</b>
<b>Average Household Income:</b>	<b>\$7,743.00</b>
<b>Cost of a first-class stamp:</b>	<b>\$0.05 (\$0.06 as of 1/7/68)</b>
<b>Cost of a gallon of regular gas:</b>	<b>\$0.34</b>
<b>Cost of a dozen eggs:</b>	<b>\$0.53</b>
<b>Cost of a gallon of Milk:</b>	<b>1.07</b>

Bread was 22 cents a loaf

Year End Dow Jones Industrial Average 943

Average Monthly Rent \$130.00

Movie Ticket\$1.50

The Federal Hourly Minimum Wage is \$1.60 an hour

North Chatham Volunteer Fire Department started organizing in early 1968 and the first Board Meeting was June 25, 1968. There was no land purchased, no fire station, and no volunteers.

I would like to Read a Letter sent out by the Board of Directors to residents of the district, remember no email and probably only a few phones.

#### LETTER TO BE READ

At the second Board meeting it was reported to have received pledges of \$5601 of the needed \$35,000 and at that time there was not enough money pledged to start a fire department. The Board wanted to reach out to the churches in the district for their support and interest in congregation making a pledge. Second round of pledges was for \$8887, estimating pledges of \$14,488. The Board decided to continue moving forward with the Fire Department, but keep in mind still no station, apparatus and volunteers. A bank account was established at Bank of Pittsboro, or CCB and now a Branch of SunTrust.

The Board was looking at 2 apparatus a pumper truck from Jack Slagle of the John Bean Equipment Corporation or an apparatus from Darby firefighting Equipment Company, and a truck chassis with water tank to be mounted on the chassis. The water tank would be mounted on a chassis at a later date. A truck chassis was purchased for \$4200 and 2 tanks for \$900. The Board went to visit the high pressure fog apparatus at Hillsborough FD and decided to order from Jack Slagle. Approximate cost of the apparatus was \$25,000 with 2 Scott SCBA and 2 spare cylinders for \$859.02 and the order was placed. Now custom pumpers are around \$550,000 and 1 single SCBA is over \$6000 each.

When the apparatus was complete, the Board sent 5 personnel to Tipton, Indiana for a week long training course. The firefighters were Jim Norwood, Wayne Strowd, G R Farrell, John Horne and Warren Strowd.

Rosemary and Donald Kent offered approximately 1 acre of land at the very site Station 1 is located at today. The land was leased for a \$1 a year, until the land was later deeded to the Fire Department. On one occasion, the firefighters were required to pick up trash on Morris Road to the Kent property.

A John Beam Pumper ordered and a Station location found, next came firefighters. The Board would accept FF applications for a week, with plans to take up to 31 applications and 21 to become volunteer FF and 10 alternates. Training would be at the Bynum Ruritan Club and Randolph Technical Institute would provide the fire training. The firefighting course was 42 hours and Instructor was Julius Thompson from Graham.

Applications for the first firefighters at North Chatham Volunteer Fire Department were

Carroll Burnette  
Lawrence Burnette  
Lee Burgess  
Earl Cotner  
James Dixon  
Dale Dollar, Captain  
Jerry Ellis  
G.R. Farrell  
Jessie Fearington, Sr. Captain  
Jessie Fearington, Jr.  
John Horne  
Kenneth Horton  
Tim Hubbard  
Rob Laney  
Harold McCoy  
Clarence McGHee  
Britt Norwood  
Jim Norwood, Captain  
Ross Norwood  
Steve O'Daniel  
Floy Oldham  
Jack Roberson  
Jimmy Roberson  
Warren Strowd, Chief  
Wayne Strowd, Asst. Chief  
John Henry Tripp  
H.S. Williams  
Arthur James Womble  
Bryan Yates, Captain

The Board looked into worker compensation for the volunteers and selected N. C. Farm Bureau Insurance for a cost of \$93.00 a year which included \$10,000 in case of death, \$5000 for loss of limb, hospital bill to be paid in full and \$35 a week while recuperating. Today our worker comp for volunteers and staff is \$55,260

Next was to build a Fire Station, which consisted of a large meeting room, restrooms, kitchen and 3 bays about 2700 square feet, which this area is still used today at Station 1. Cost of the building bid was \$17,632. They deleted \$550 cost for painting the bay floors red.

Cost of insurance for the building was \$91 a year and a 3 year policy was \$162.00. Today no special rate for 3 years. Cost of 1 year of insurance on equipment, apparatus, stations, liability, and umbrella policy is \$71,929

So apparatus, personnel, training and a Station were underway, however money was needed to be raised to pay for expenses. A pony was donated by Tom Hudson to raffle off and proceeds to used as fundraiser. The first chicken supper was April 25, 1970 and would be at the new fire station, followed by a membership drive of \$25 per person to be a voting member of the fire department, money was also raised by going door to door asking for donations, turkey shoots and horse shows.

The first real budget shows receipts of	
Cash on hand	4381
Received from Chatham Co	1200
Received from 2 benefits supper	9150
Fund Raisers	3846
Donations	7418
 Total	 \$25,997

The total tax evaluation of the North Chatham Fire District of the Williams and Baldwin Township was \$8,805,127 and now current evaluation of the district is

\$5,779,008,392

And 1 penny brings in \$561,428

The first year firefighters responded to 27 calls. You may be wondering how firefighters were notified of an emergency, no pagers, no siren at the fire station, no 911 communication center, no viper radio system and no vhf radio system. There was a phone system, so when a call was received as an emergency all the firefighters home phones would ring continuously until someone picked up, then someone would need to stay on the line until someone else picked up to pass on the message. If you hung up then no one would no where the call was at.

In 1979, the Fire Department asked a for a fire tax vote. There were 2400 eligible voters in the Baldwin and Williams Township and 501 residents turned out to vote. The vote was 255 for and 246 against, and tax was approved by 9 votes.

Fire Stations 2, 3 and 4 were built to provide better coverage throughout the district.

First career Fire Firefighter was hired in 1991, North Chatham Station 2 was rebuilt in 2000 for expansion of personnel and housing additional apparatus. Fire Station 16 was built on Hwy 64 in 2004, Stations 18 on Hollands Chapel Road and Station 19 on Seaforth Road were built in 2013 and 2014 to provide 5 mile coverage and lower of homeowners insurance.

The North Chatham Fire District today in comparison to 50 years ago  
205 square mile fire district in Chatham and 30 square miles in Orange County

We have several major developments with Fearington Village, Governors Club The Preserve of Jordan Lake and Briar Chapel. We have Jordan Lake with thousands of visitors a year, 4 schools, 3 more under construction, multi assisted living centers, with new Central Carolina Community College satellite campus, and additional planned growth along 15-501 and Mann's Chapel area.

There are 7 fire stations in North Chatham Fire District, all have 24 hour personnel with 58 career personnel when fully staffed, 21 volunteers and 4 part time personnel. We respond to 2000 calls a year, 35 apparatus from Aerial, to Engines to squads, 4 boats, swift water equipment, dive equipment and trench rescue equipment.

We have a dedicated staff and volunteers to make North Chatham a combination fire department with a class 6 fire rating which saves you about 40 percent on your homeowner policy in the 5 mile district. We install smoke detectors, we have trained child safety technicians on daily for child safety seats installation, and provide fire prevention at schools and community year round.

Most important you made all this possible through your donations years ago and your support today. As the Board of Directors stated back in 1968, this is Your Fire Department and we need your support to keep it going and maintained.

Another very important factor not to overlook is the strong partnership built with automatic aid departments, with county staff such as the fire marshal office, em office, communications and Law enforcement in Chatham and Orange County, to include County Management and Commissioners support. Truly a family and Team effort from for the commitment of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and their families, I say Thank You.