



Firefighting in Charlotte

Shawn Royall

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The story of firefighting in Charlotte is a tale of explosive growth and change that dates back to its humble beginnings in 1887. The city of Charlotte credits expansion to several events, including the gold rush of the 1830s, the railroad expansion of the 1860s, and the textile boom of the 1880s. During the textile boom, the volunteer firefighters protecting Charlotte and Mecklenburg County could no longer adequately protect the growing city. Thus the Charlotte Fire Department was born. The Roaring Twenties brought in the auto age and along with it motorized fire trucks. Race tensions of the 1960s and the financial boom of the 1990s also figure in the fire department's history. Returning to her roots of growth, Charlotte is now a bustling financial and transportation hub of 650,000 residents protected by more than 1,000 firefighters living in 38 firehouses. Firefighting in Charlotte provides a photographic road map of how fire protection

developed from horse-drawn engines of the 1800s to the state-of-the-art apparatus of today. Fire trucks, firehouses, and the firefighters are depicted in images obtained from personal collections, newspapers, archives, and museums.

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