

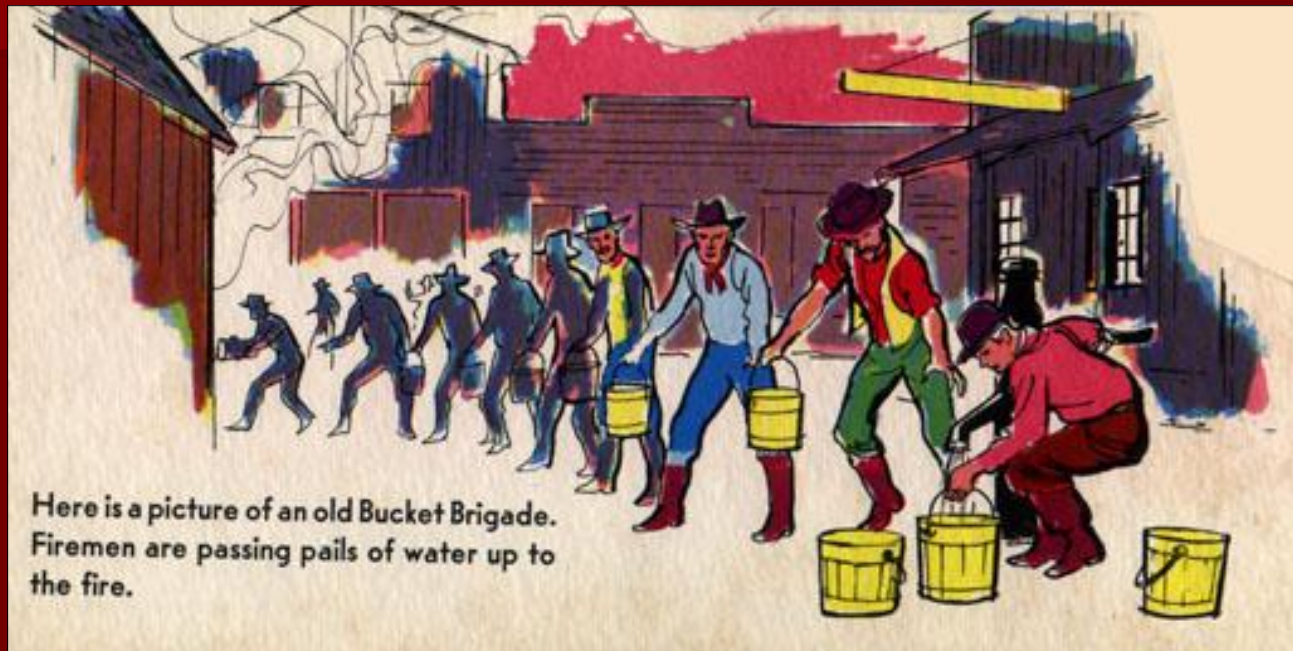
History of the Brownwood Fire Department

By Frank T. Hilton



- September 22, 1883 – In less than two hours nine buildings on the west side of the public square were reduced to ashes, destroying 12 businesses in Brownwood. A general alarm was sounded by bells, whistles and shooting of pistols.
- There were no waterworks, engines or facilities for putting out the fire in Brownwood. The Coggin Opera House, a stately stone structure narrowly escaped. That two-story rock building is still standing today on the corner of South Broadway and Center Streets. (*Brownwood Banner*)

1884



Here is a picture of an old Bucket Brigade.
Firemen are passing pails of water up to
the fire.

- 1884 - Fire bucket brigade

1886

- 1886 – First Brownwood city water system was built while Brooke Smith was Mayor . The City of Brownwood built the Old Dam, located on the Jack Smith place, and built the water mains, and put in the pump station.
- John Kennedy managed the station which was connected to Wash Hall's livery stable, by the only telephone line in the entire county.

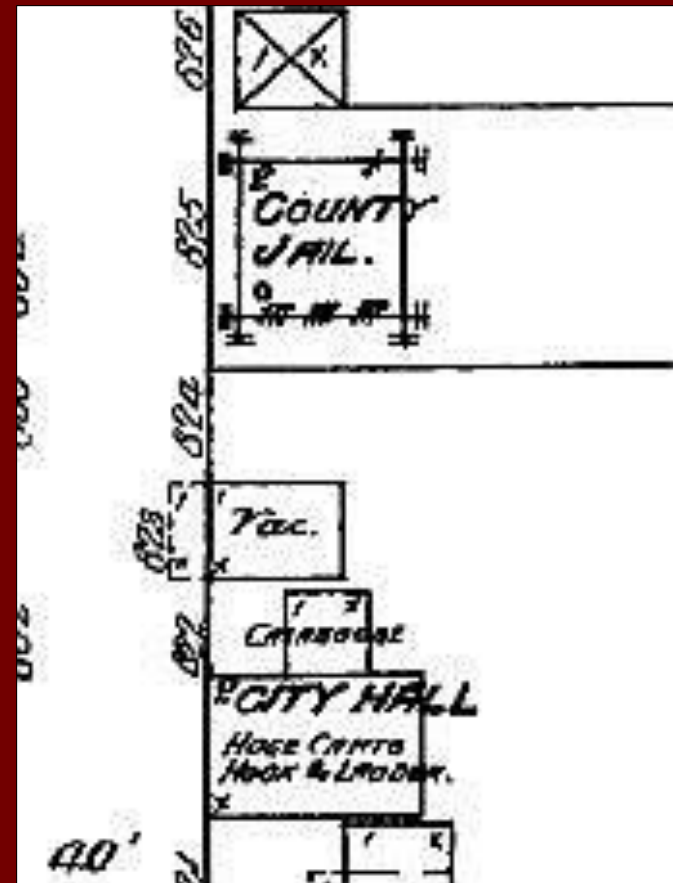
December 9, 1886



- The Brownwood Volunteer Fire Department was organized. Now that the city had a means to get water into the town, it was time to organize a group of citizens to properly fight a fire, using a hose cart.

1888

- By 1888, the City had built a city hall and a place to store their hose cart at 822 Pecan Street near the then county jail.



1889

- Brownwood's Fire Rescue unit was established.



1892

- Hand reel equipment – During the periods of hose cart days Joe Hall had a good pony. When a fire alarm sounded he would throw the saddle on his pony and speed to the fire house on Pecan Street.
- Dashing up to the hose cart, a rope on the tongue of the cart would be thrown over his saddle horn and Hall would gallop away to the fire while volunteer firemen holding on to the cart ran along to steer it in the road and have the hose in readiness.

1899

Brownwood Volunteer Fire Department.

H. J. DECLARK, Chief.

WILL L. TURNER, Ass't Chief.

IRA W. HALL, Foreman.

HOMER MCGARITY, 1st Ass't Foreman.

J. L. BURLESON, 2d Ass't Foreman.

CHESTER HARRISON, President. BYRON NORRELL, Vice-President.

WILL L. TURNER, Secretary. WILL D. MCCULLEY, Treasurer.

ED STRICKLAND. BEN SHROPSHIRE. MILTON DUPREE.

TOM HILL. M. HALL. ED HALL.

M. G. HARGRAVES. ED HENLEY. SAM COGGIN.

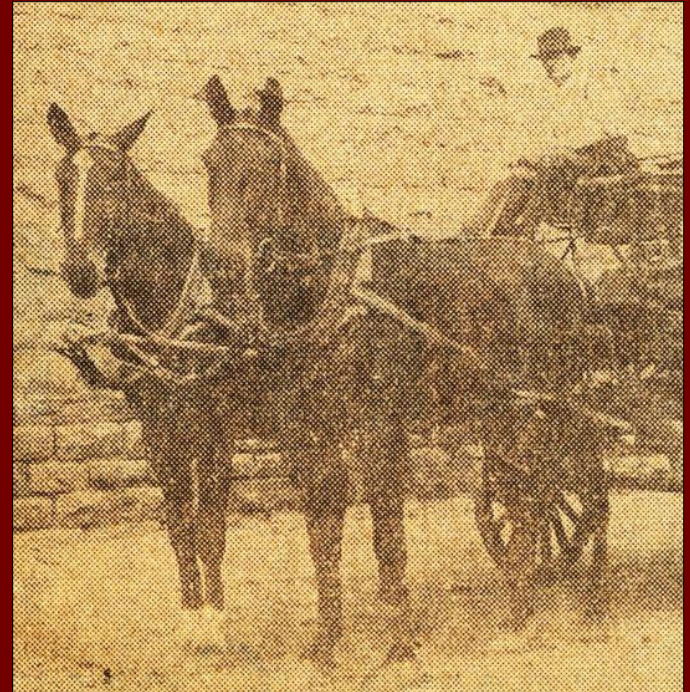
ED SAVAGE. LOUIS BAUMAN. JOE W. HALL.

CHAS. HILL. ARTHUR SMITH.

J. I. CLINGMAN, Ex-Chief.

Ford and Watson

- Henry Ford and Lee Watson were commissioned by the City Council to purchase a team of horses. They made the purchase in Coleman for a horse drawn wagon.
- One was a red roan and the other was an iron gray and the firemen named them Ford and Watson.

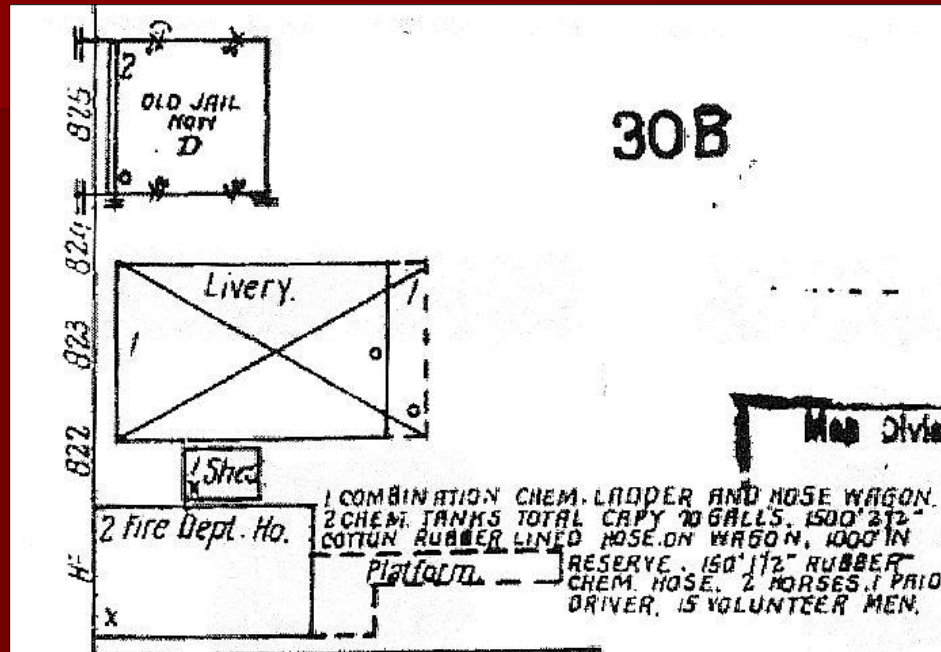


1902



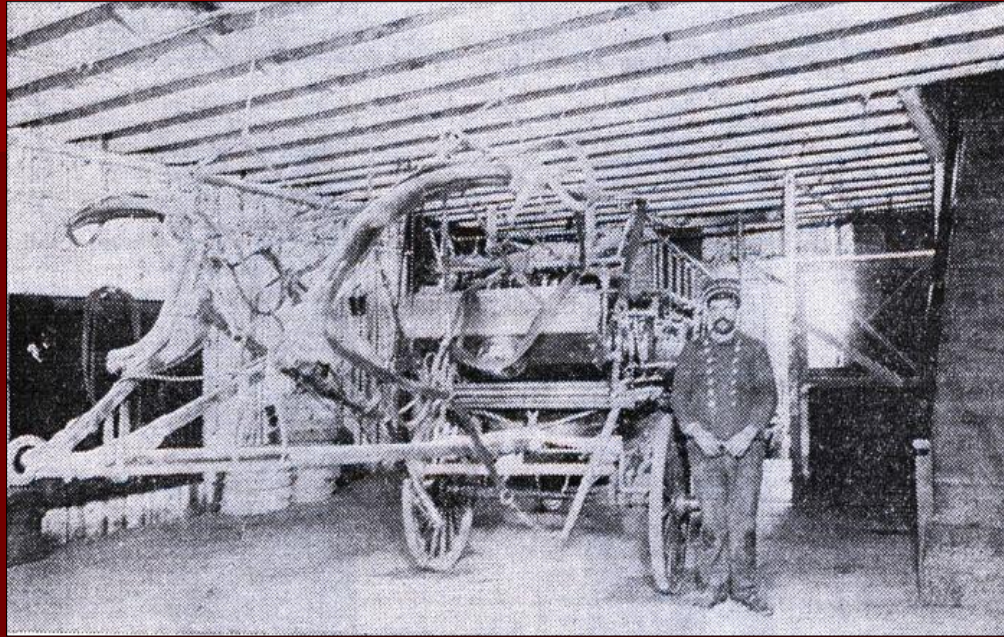
- 1902 - City traded their two hose carts and bought a horse-drawn wagon, with one paid man. John H. Gill was hired to be the driver.

Pecan Street Fire Station



- This Sanborn map of 1904 shows the location of the city fire station on Pecan Street . City Hall had been moved out of the building to East and Bank Street.
- When the fire station was later moved to the 400 block of Fisk Avenue in 1917, the building became a poultry house and was later torn down in the late 1930s.

1904



- John Gill poses beside the hook and ladder fire truck he drove in about 1904. Horse stalls are located on each side of the wagon at the Pecan Street fire station. An automatic switch opened the doors and the horses rushed to the front of the wagon.

July 15, 1909

- Fire originating in a carriage house adjoining Fire station No. 1, on Pecan Street, destroyed the fire station \$1,500.
- Damaged the old city jail from the fire was \$300.
- The Maury Hall next door was consumed, together with thirteen buggies \$5,000.

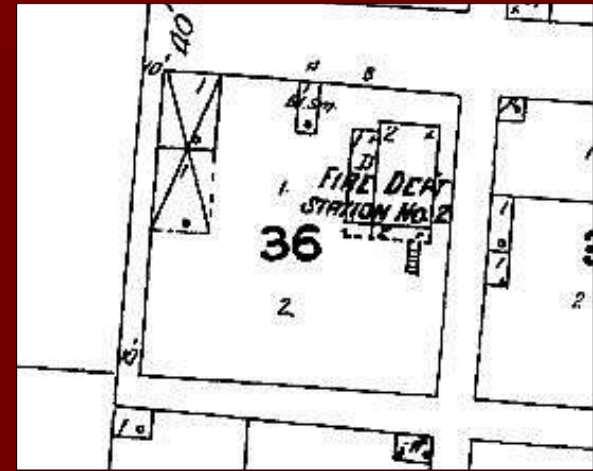
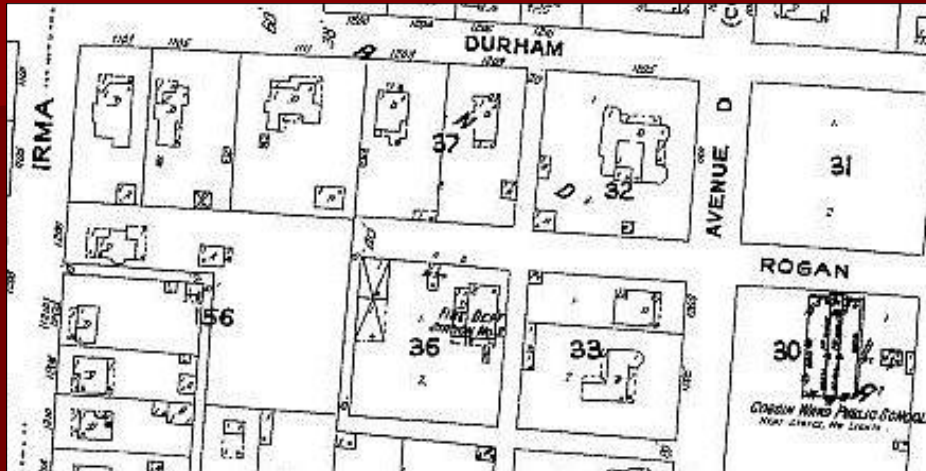
Dallas Morning News

1910



- The City was able to get two horse drawn wagons, one for their fire station on Pecan Street, and one for their new fire station No. 2 on Rogan Street.

January 24, 1910



- Brownwood fire station No. 2 was opened on January 24, 1910. John Gill was secured as driver of the new wagon. It was a framed two story building with an assembly hall and three living rooms for the driver and his family.

April 8, 1916

- The Central Fire Station was burned to the ground on Pecan Street . Two young men faced trial on January 2, 1917, charged with arson in the fire. John Dean confessed and incriminated the other defendant Will Pierce.
- A crowd of about a thousand people gathered in the street near the fire station and watched the flames lick up the wooden building.

Brownwood Daily Bulletin

April 11, 1916

- Following the fire on April 8, 1916, temporary quarters were established in the livery barn next door. The city had lost a large quantity of old hose, hay and some other equipment. A thousand feet of new hose arrived on April 10th, having already been ordered.
- The ruins of the old station were torn down and cleared away.

April 16, 1917

- Excavation work on new City Hall and Fire Station began on April 16th. Construction of the 80x80 foot building was awarded to Hogg and Staggs, Brownwood contractors.
- The new building was completed in the fall of 1917 at the corner of East Lee and Fisk.

Brownwood Daily Bulletin

May 2, 1917



- The city council accepted a bid by Ed G. Hall for a used 1913 Cadillac automobile chassis to be rebuilt by him, and to be equipped with the fire fighting apparatus now carried by the horse drawn wagon.
- The children did not like it as they couldn't chase after the faster moving vehicle.

John H. Gill

- John H. Gill drove the first 1913 Cadillac motorized fire truck. On the second day he chug-chugged rapidly to a fire on Vine Street.
- As he arrived at the fire it looked like he was going to run into another vehicle, but he pulled up on the steering wheel and hollered “whoa” and the calamity was averted.

May 16, 1917



- The city purchased for \$9,000 a LaFrance engine and a second hand Cadillac chemical truck. The truck was to be paid for in five equal payments.
- The truck was to be delivered to Brownwood within ninety days.

September 28, 1918



- Fire Department at their new building. It housed all the city offices and had accommodations upstairs for firemen and their families including bedrooms, baths and lounging facilities.

1920



- 1920 – A Brockway truck was purchased.
- Above: 1913 Cadillac – Another used Cadillac – LaFrance – Brockway

November 2, 1921

ONE LIFE LOST AND SEVERAL MEN INJURED IN HARPER HOTEL FIRE

San Saba County Farmer Overcom By Smoke and Suffocated in His Room; Sheriff Pugh Sustains Serious Injuries in Jumping from Window.

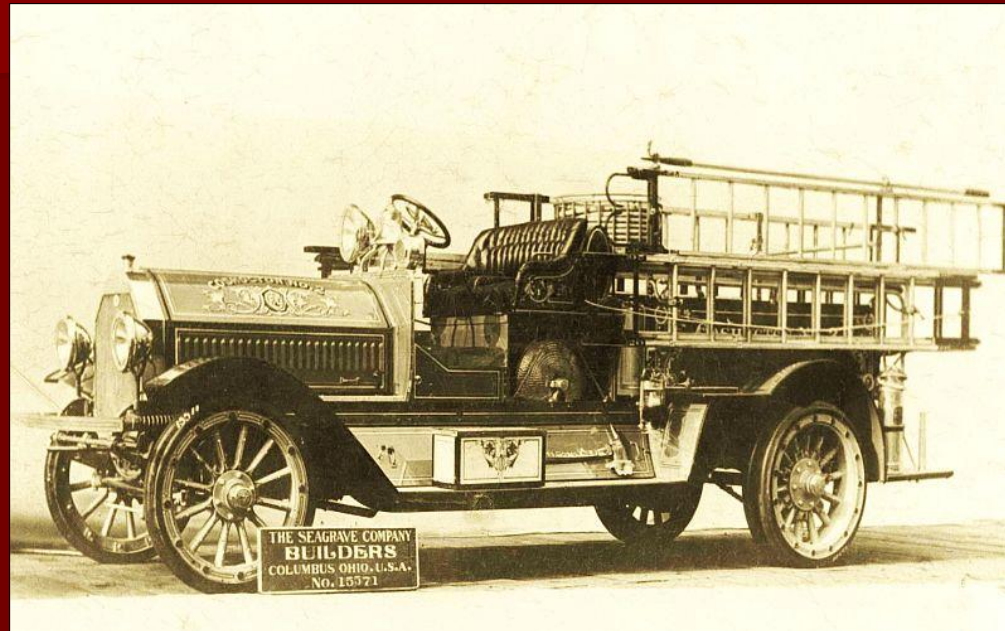
ONE MAN lost his life, four others were more or less seriously injured and property damage amounting to about \$10,000 was caused early this morning when the Harper Hotel on South Broadway was gutted by fire of an undetermined origin. Due to the prompt and efficient work of the Volunteer Fire Department the blaze was confined to the two-story stone hotel building. Those injured were taken to local surgical institutions for medical

PUGH'S CONDITION BAD.

The condition of Sheriff R. B. Pugh, who was injured in the Harper fire this morning, was regarded as critical at 3 o'clock this afternoon. At about 2:30 he was conscious and appeared to be rallying splendidly, but thirty minutes later attending surgeons were alarmed by an apparent re-

- One life was lost and several men injured in the Harper Hotel Fire. W. P. Reavis, of Locker, San Saba County, overcome with smoke, died in his room.
- Sheriff R. B. Pugh was seriously injured when he had to jump 15 feet out of his second story room to escape the fire. He suffered burns and fracture of his skull. (*Brownwood Bulletin*)

1923 Seagrave



- 1923 - A Seagrave truck was purchased similar to the one pictured above.

1925



- The Fire Department racing team won a \$500 first prize in Denton in 1925. Races were very popular among fire departments.

1929



- A 1929 Studebaker Chemical truck was added similar to the one pictured above.

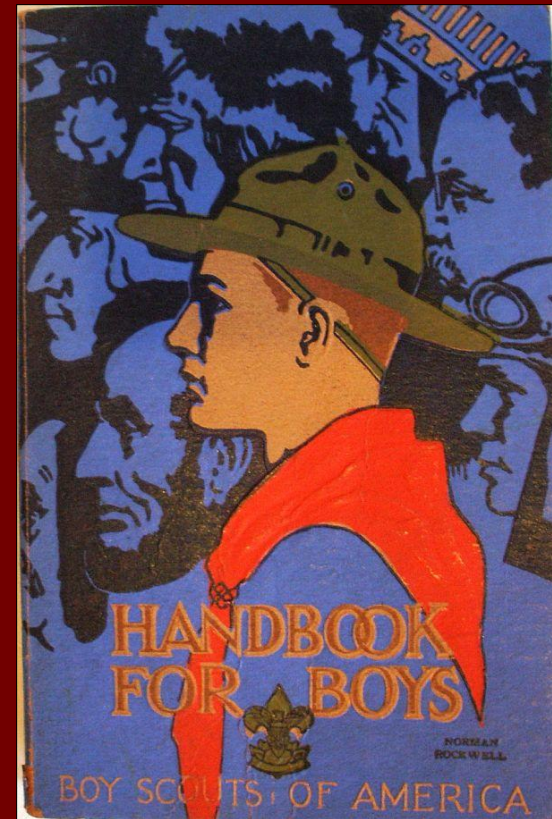
Three Stations by 1931



- Station No. 3 was added in 1931 and was located on West Baker.
- This station was closed in 1968 after the Central Fire Station was moved to Main and Austin.

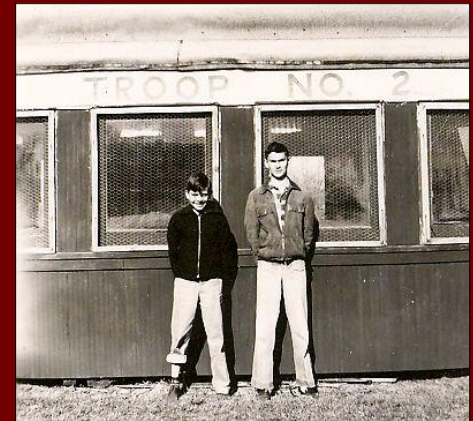
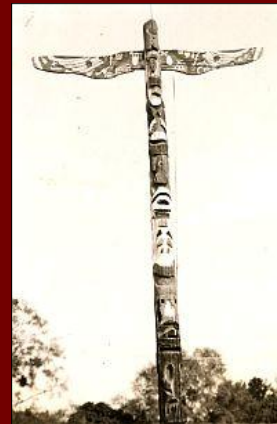
Fire Department Sponsors Troop 2

- On June 2, 1932 a Boy Scout Charter was issued to the Brownwood Volunteer Fire Department for Troop 2. Scoutmaster was Dan Gill.
- Assistant Scoutmaster was Richard D. Sallee who worked as a Shipping Clerk at Armour & Co.
- The Boy Scout Troop met at the #1 Fire Station on Friday nights up until 1939.

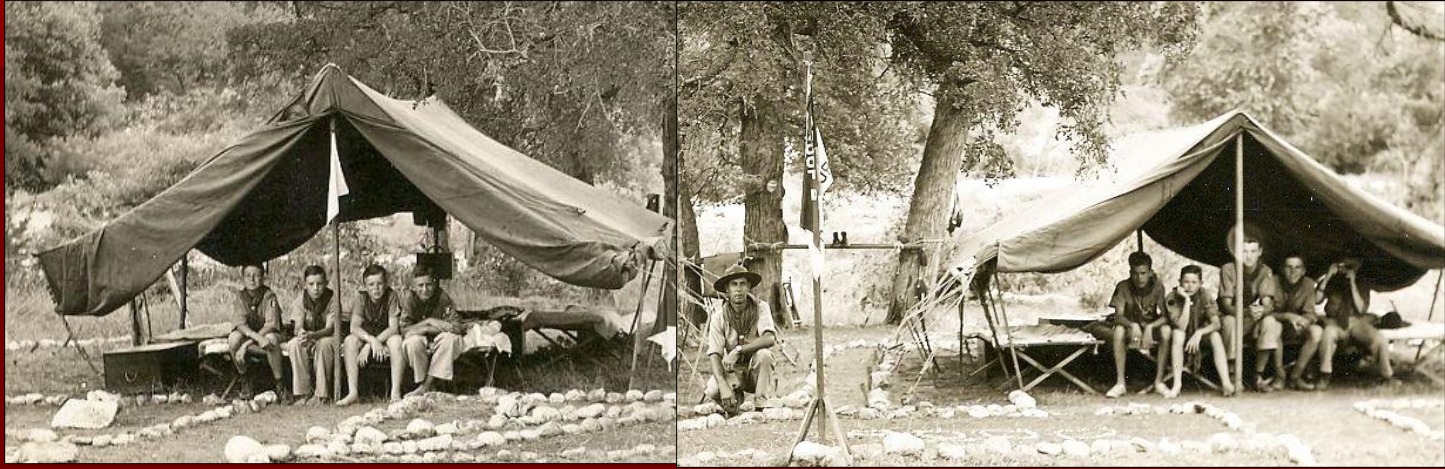


Troop 2 Met in Railroad Car

- The fire department acquired an old railroad coach, 53 by 9 feet, in the summer of 1939 and was moved to a lot at the old No. 2 fire station on Rogan.
- The troop met in that car for many years. The old fire station is now gone, as is the railroad coach.



Troop 2 at Camp Billy Gibbons



- Here is a photo of Troop 2 at summer camp at Camp Billy Gibbons.
- The troop was sponsored by the fire department for over 36 years, until 1968.

1937 Ford Booster Truck



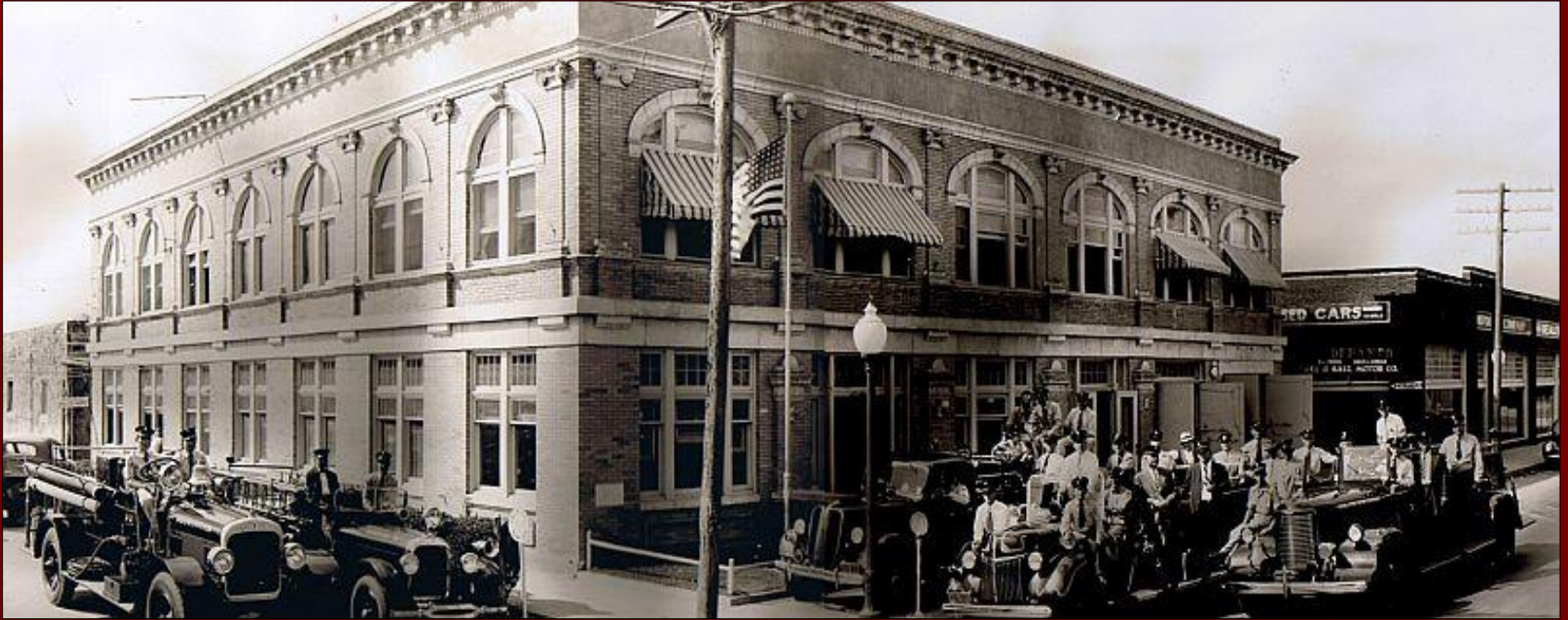
- During 1937, the City of Brownwood added a 1937 Ford Booster Truck to its fleet similar to the one above.

1938



- Fire Station No. 2 was moved to 1200 Third Street in about 1938. It was constructed by the WPA. It was used until a new station was build at 1500 Indian Creek Dr. in 1972. The building is now used as a residence.

1944 In Front of Fire Station



- 1944 Fire trucks on display in front of Station No. 1 with all their fire trucks. In the background is the former City Hall and Fire Station No. 1.

Camp Bowie Fire Department



- During World War II, Camp Bowie had their own fire department.

1944 Mack Fire Truck



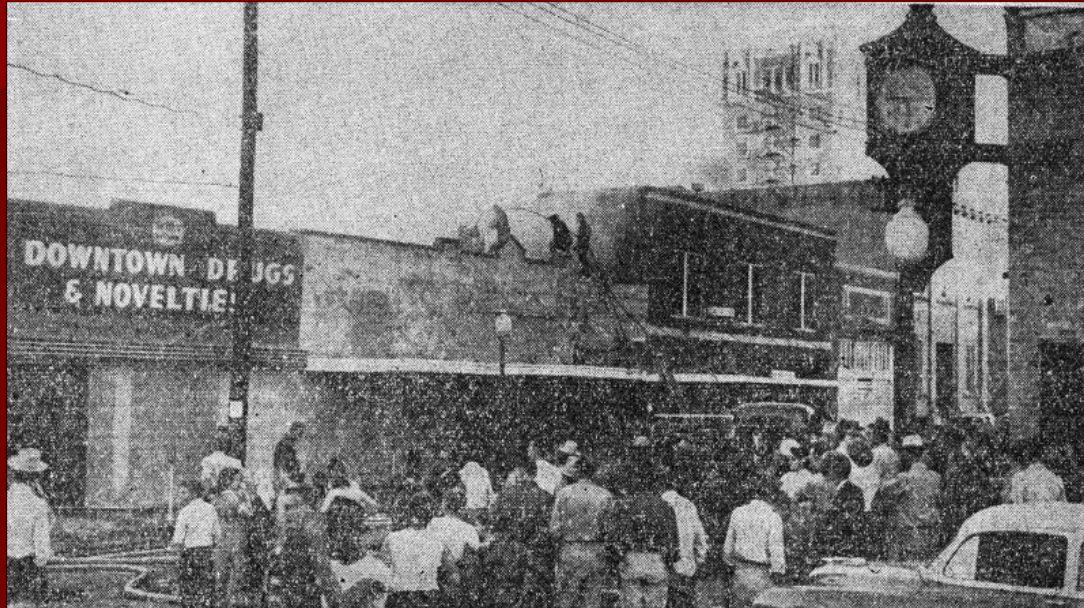
- The city purchased a 1944 Mack fire truck, similar to the one above, to add to its fleet.

1945 Easter Sunday Fire

- Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945, fire broke out in a Sunday school room on the fourth floor of the educational bldg. of the Coggin Baptist Church and destroyed the church.

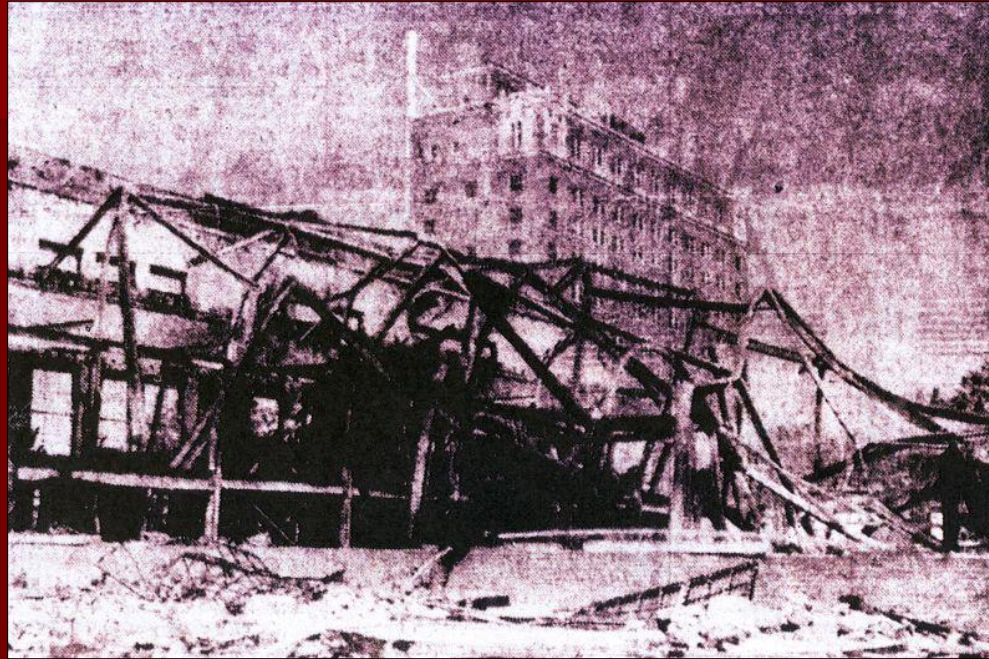


January 25, 1953



- This was one of the costliest fires in the history of Brownwood. Three buildings in the 200 block of Center Avenue were destroyed by fire.

May 26, 1960



- Flames destroyed the Brownwood Memorial Hall that late Thursday. The fire was believed to have been started by a bolt of lightning during a thunderstorm.

1983 Old Main Burns



- Old Main, on the Howard Payne University Campus, burned. It was a great loss to both the students and the University.

Brownwood Fire Department

- Brownwood Fire-Rescue is now an all career Fire Department and the only Fire Department in Brown County with paid firefighters.
- The department has 30 shift personnel with a Captain and a Lieutenant on each shift.
- It is led by a Fire Chief and one Assistant Fire Chief with an administrative staff consisting of a part time Secretary/Receptionist.
- A Fire Marshal Office is comprised of one full time Fire Marshal and one part time Fire Inspector.

What They Respond To

- The department responds to calls from two fire stations. Brownwood Fire-Rescue response area includes the City of Brownwood and Brown County covering over 900 square miles. The department responds to all structure fires, vehicle accidents, hazmat emergencies, wild land fires, and rescue emergencies.
- The department also provides Medical First Response for medical emergencies within the City of Brownwood.

"A" Shift



- Today's Brownwood Fire Department is divided into three shifts. This is "A" Shift.

"B" Shift



- This is the "B" Shift of the Brownwood Fire Department.

"C" Shift



- This is the "C" Shift of the Brownwood Fire Department.

Central Fire Station



- Central Fire Station was built in 1964 at the corner of Main and Austin Avenue. It will be replaced by a new fire station in 2014.

Fire Station No. 2



- Fire Station No. 2 was built in 1972 replacing the station on 3rd Street.
- The flag pole came from the former Boy Scout/Red Cross office on Adams Street.

New Fire Station



- The new central fire station should be completed by the end of the summer of 2014 and is located on East Adams/Lee Streets across from the Martin and Frances Lehnis Train Museum.

We salute
the
Brownwood Fire Department!

The End