



Cridersville Fire Department

A History of Service

Since its founding in 1856, the people of Cridersville, like those in every town, had to depend on each other for fire protection. Firefighting was a very spontaneous and loosely organized activity in the early days. When the word, "**FIRE**" was heard in town, every able-bodied man dropped his work, grabbed his best pail and ran to help with the bucket brigade.

It was not until after the "Oil Boom" brought growth and prosperity to Cridersville in the late 1880's that thoughts turned to better fire protection. In 1889, the village installed fire cisterns along Main Street to provide a more dependable source of water.

In January of 1890, a new "fire engine" was purchased by the village from the Aaron Morris Company. This hand pumper cost \$249.75, and was shipped into town on the C.H. & D. Railroad. The freight was \$11.75. Cridersville can be proud that after more than 120 years this hand pumper remains at the current Fire Department.

On April 24, 1890, the village council passed an ordinance providing for the construction of a Town Hall on North Gay Street. This new building was to contain space for the fire pumper, jail and meeting room on the ground floor and a music hall upstairs. While the Town Hall was being constructed, the hand pumper was stored in a barn leased from Jenny Baumgardner for \$9.00 per month. The fire bell for the tower of the Town Hall was purchased in November 1890 for \$50.80 from the Sidney School Furnishing Company. This new facility and equipment served the village well.

On May 2, 1918, the fire bell sounded at 3:00 pm for a fire that started in a barn behind the Stepleton General Store in the 100 block of East Main Street. A young sales clerk had gone out to bum trash when the wind blew the fire into a nearby barn. A combination of a windy day, dry weather and wooden buildings with wood shingle roofs soon spread the fire from building to building and to both sides of the street.

The hand pumper was unable to keep up. This was no ordinary fire. Fire companies from Lima and Wapakoneta came to assist with the blaze. By 6:00 pm, 32 buildings – store, homes and barns – were totally destroyed. Fifty people were left homeless. This was undoubtedly the worst fire in our town's history to date.

In January of 1936 the village council appointed Harold Frazier the first official Fire Chief of Cridersville. There was still no organized fire department, but Mr. Frazier was to be in full charge at the time of any fire. The village continued to use the hand pumper. Twenty-four men were needed to operate it. Instructions were given by the few with experience. The others learned by doing. Mr. Frazier was also paid \$.40 per hour for working on the fire equipment.



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It was in August of 1939 that the Cridersville Volunteer Fire Company was organized. Charles Meffley was chosen to be president. The newly formed organization offered to the village council a used motorized fire truck they had recently purchased from Elida, Ohio. Council accepted. The new fire company was given permission to hold its meetings in the Town Hall. In February of 1940, Walter Bayliff was elected fire chief, a position in which he served for more than 25 years.

The village purchased an electric fire siren to replace the old Town Hall bell in December of 1944. This new siren cost \$286.15 from the W.A. Darley Company. The retired bell now holds a place of honor in front of the fire station.

March of 1947 saw the village council accept the bid of \$6992 from the American Fire Apparatus Company for a new 800-gallon Dodge pumper-tanker. This new truck was financed through notes issued by the village in the amount of \$7000 to be paid off over a period of nine years. This was the first modern piece of equipment the village had purchased.

Between 1951 and 1953, a new fire station was constructed at 100 East Main Street on the site of a building destroyed by the Big Fire of May 2, 1918. Money to construct the new building came from fire department fund raising activities and \$6000 in local contributions. All labor and many materials were donated. In the fall of 1954, the siren and all equipment were moved to the new station.

Another great improvement for firefighting in Cridersville occurred in 1952 when the village installed a municipal water system with fire hydrants.

As Cridersville continued to grow throughout the 1950's and 1960's, it became necessary to make an addition to the fire station. This was completed in 1974. Also, during this time, in 1971, Darrel Chapman was promoted to the position of Fire Chief. He served in this position for 30 years. In 1976 emergency rescue service was added by the Cridersville Volunteer Fire Department. This was made possible through the passage by local voters of a 2.0 mil Fire & Rescue Levy. Tax monies from the levy are used to purchase fire and rescue equipment and operate the volunteer services. Voters continue to be supportive in the renewal of this levy today.

In 1979 Cridersville Fire Chief Darrel Chapman was chosen to represent all of Ohio's volunteer fire departments on the State Fire Commission.

Throughout the 1980's and into the 1990's, the Cridersville Volunteer Fire Department has continued to improve and expand its facility, equipment and service to the community. The recently remodeled and expanded station now provides more than 7000 square feet for engine rooms, offices and training facilities. It is recognized as one of the finest and best equipped in the state.



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Some but not all of the more recent improvements to the Department have been:

- Advancement of our EMS Services, Composed of Basic, Advanced and Paramedic level Service.
- 2016 The addition of a new Genesis Cutter/Spreader, Ram and Honda Power Unit on the first out Engine.
- 2017: The addition of a New Heavy Rescue Vehicle combining 2 Vehicles still providing a Cascade System for filling firefighter air bottles on scene.
- 2018: Replacement of our Grass Fire Engine with International 4x4 Chassis and Skid Unit.
- Addition of rescue airbags and vehicle stabilizer struts to our Heavy Rescue.
- 2018: Having 95% of our Firefighters at the Level 1 or Level 2 training level for Firefighter.
- Over 15 Years holding the Certification of our facility as an accredited EMS Continuing Education Center by the State of Ohio Department of Ohio Department of EMS.

The Village water system has been upgraded with a second water tower to make the total water storage 575,000 gallon of water. With all these improvements, The Village of Cridersville proudly hold an ISO fire rating of 4.

When the fire tone and siren sound in Cridersville today, a dedicated, trained, and well-equipped Fire Department, spring into action to protect property and help save lives in the Village of Cridersville and vicinity.