

Records of Central Fire Company, No. 1 (Bethlehem, PA)

Creator: Central Fire Company No. 1 (Bethlehem, PA)

Title: Records of the Central Fire Company No. 1

Inclusive Dates: 1894 - 1940

Extent: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

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 firemen's associations including the Bethlehem Firemen's Relief Association.

Access to Materials: The collection is open to researchers in the Bethlehem Room .

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Preferred citation: [Item], Records of the Central Fire Company No. 1 (Bethlehem, PA), , The Bethlehem Area Public Library Collections.

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 on 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 from the Bethlehem Times of January 10, 1893 states: "At noon today the old volunteer fire department of Bethlehem virtually went out of existence. Town Council yesterday adopted a set of resolutions disbanding all companies, except the Fairview, and inviting the 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 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 to the Constitution and Bylaws adopted May 29, 1894: "Whereas We the undersigned acuated (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 the 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."

The Central Fire station which the company occupied was replaced by a new Central Fire station in 1972, and torn down in 1973.

Further materials in the Bethlehem Area Public Library:

1. Clipping file: Heading Fires and Fire Protection.
 - a. Postcard showing a view of the Central Fire Station
 - b. "City Firefighting History" Morning Call July 5, 1991. On side 2 of 3, photograph of a pumper parked in front of the Central Fire Station.

- c. "Almost ready" Morning Call January 7, 1972. Bethlehem's new Central Firehouse should be ready for occupancy next month.....
- 2. Bethlehem Times/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 firemen...!" Daily Times January 10, 1893 1:3
 - d. "The Central Fire House..." Daily Times January 11, 1893 1:4
 - 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 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 in 1741 to the present year, 1925. Special edition. Page 23. Available in Bethlehem Room, and on microfilm.
- 4. Weil, Lorna F. Fire fighting in early Bethlehem. Bethlehem, PA: Oaks Printing Company, 1991. Available in Bethlehem Room.
- 5. Borough Council minutes, available on microfilm.

Collection Scope and Contents:

The records of the Central Fire Company No. 1, while not complete, offer an insight into the organization and functioning of turn-of-the-century fire departments, as well as materials extending on 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; roll books and membership rosters 1898-1939; general correspondence from the City Clerk to the fire companies of Bethlehem concerning general fire department matters predominantly from 1920-1930; 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.

Index Terms

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

Names:

Central Fire Company No. 1 (Bethlehem, PA)

Subjects:

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

Container Listing

<u>Container</u>	<u>Title</u>
Box 1, Folder 1	Constitution and bylaws, 29 May 1894
Box 1, Folder 2	Constitution and bylaws, 1921 Minutes
Box 1, Folder 3	24 Apr 1900 – 18 May 1906

Box 1, Folder 4	26 Jul 1910 – 2 Feb 1916
Box 1, Folder 5	Miscellaneous reports and notes, 1920s-1930s, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 6	Committees, 1902
	Roll book
Box 1, Folder 7	Active members, 1898 – 1913
Box 2 Folder 1	Active, contributing, and honorary members, 1913-1917
	Membership
Box 2, Folder 1A	Rosters, 1939, n.d.
Box 2, Folder 2	Nominations, 1923-1938, n.d.
Box 2, Folder 3	Membership transfers to other fire companies, 1923-1929, n.d.
	Correspondence
Box 2, Folder 4	1920-1929, 1940, n.d.
Box 2, Folder 5	City Clerk, re. general fire matters, 1920-1928
Box 2, Folder 6	City Clerk to fire officers, 1928-1930
	Financial statements
Box 2, Folder 7	1920
Box 2, Folder 8	1922
Box 2, Folder 9	1923-1925
Box 2, Folder 10	1927
Box 2, Folder 11	1928-1929
Box 2, Folder 12	1930-1931
Box 2, Folder 13	1932-1933
Box 2, Folder 14	1934-1935
Box 2, Folder 15	1936-1937
Box 2, Folder 16	1938-1939
Box 2, Folder 17	1940
	Foreman's Reports
Box 2, Folder 18	Eckley, Frank A., 1924 Dec
Box 2, Folder 19	Dietz, R. J., 1925 Jan 14-Dec 22
Box 2, Folder 20	Barclay, David, 1926 Jan 28-Oct 16
Box 2, Folder 21	Detwiler, Paul, 1926 Dec 30- 1927 Dec 27
Box 2, Folder 22	Wilmot, Harry, 1927 Feb 6 – 1928 Jan 30
Box 2, Folder 23	Phillips, Thom. M., 1928 Dec – 1929 Feb
Box 2, Folder 24	Grant, Wilbur, 1929 Feb 29-Dec 19
Box 2, Folder 25	Christian, Clarence, 1933 – 1934 Nov 25
Box 2, Folder 26	Hadden, George, 1937 Jan 9-Dec 25
Box 2, Folder 27	Merritt, Michael, 1938 Jan-Dec
Box 2, Folder 28	Hein, George, 1939 Feb 8 – 1940 Jan 19
Box 2, Folder 29	Weiner, R. W., n.d., 1931, 1940
Box 2, Folder 30	Unidentified, 1934, n.d.
Box 2, Folder 31	Evans, Truman, n.d.
Box 2, Folder 32	Remaly, Raymond
Box 2, Folder 33	Firemen's Association of PA, 1920-1925, 1933
Box 2, Folder 34	Four County Firemen's Association, 1925, 1930
Box 2, Folder 35	Bethlehem Firemen's Relief Association
Box 2, Folder 36	Advertisements