



Our Old Bookcase, March 23, 2017. Burkettsville's Fire Department History

Photo caption: Burkettsville Community Fire Department. Back row: Frank Bueter, __?__, and Nip Wehrkamp. Front Row: __?__, Willie Rammel. Can you identify the two men and Nip Wehrkamp's first name?

OUR OLD BOOK CASE

By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society

Thanks to Dennis Hemmelgarn for sharing this photograph with the Mercer County Historical Society. Can you identify the date and type of fire truck in the photograph? When was the front of the Fire Department building remodeled, from the smaller arched entry, to the larger entry today? The history of Mercer County is often illustrated in old photographs, and with the help of local citizens, that history is identified and preserved.

The Burkettsville Community Fire Department Members placed the history of their Fire Department in the 1978 "Mercer County History" book, on page 367. Burkettsville Fire Department was organized October 26, 1900 with about twenty members, with Stephen Olinger as chief. The Department first had a hand pumper. They had monthly meetings and examined the fire equipment. For water supply, the town

dug cisterns located at various places in the middle of the street. January 11, 1915, the Fire Chief asked the Burkettsville Board of Council to put up markers at the village cisterns for easy identification.

The old pumper type was discontinued around 1920. On August 4, 1936 the present fire department was organized with Officers and the Burkettsville Council as the executive committee. The 1936 truck was the first truck. [What fire equipment did the citizens use between 1920's and 1936?] The next fire truck was a 1952 truck and the 1936 truck was converted to a tank wagon. The 1952 truck was replaced in 1968. Over the years, the number of fires varied from year to year. Some years there were as many as twenty fires or more a year. Other times there were as few as half dozen. The biggest fire the department ever had was the Burkettsville Novitiate on State Route 118, on January 1, 1971.

As of 1978, the department served an area of over 200 certificate holders (farmers), in addition to the residents of New Weston and Burkettsville. As of 1978, the department had three trucks: a 1975 grass fire unit; a 1965 pumper, and a 1968 tank truck. At that time, there were twenty-three members on the Burkettsville Fire Department, which was made up of all volunteers. Funds for the department originated from assessments from the townships, the towns and the farmers.

I invite the Burkettsville Fire Department Members to update their history since 1978, and share a copy of that history with the Mercer County Historical Society, because the Mercer County Historical Society's Mission is To Preserve Mercer County's History and To Educate the Public about that history.

Sunday, April 2, 1:00 – 4:00, an exhibit of old photographs related to the history of Burkettsville will be on exhibit at the Mercer County Historical Museum, 130 East Market, (a block east of the Courthouse).

An Exhibit about New Idea Company's history will also be on exhibit that April 2 Sunday afternoon. You and your family can have the pleasure of seeing both temporary exhibits about the history of Burkettsville and the New Idea Company as well as the permanent exhibits at the Mercer County Historical Museum. Your Mercer County Historical Museum is important to you and your family & friends.

Burkettsville area citizens (Mercer & Darke Counties) are invited to bring their old photographs to exhibit at the County Museum, on April 2. (I will be at the Museum by 11:30; you may come early if you wish.) Your help will be appreciated by the Sunday afternoon Guests at the Mercer County Historical Museum.

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