

Bedford Fire Department History By Lt. Phillip S. Dale

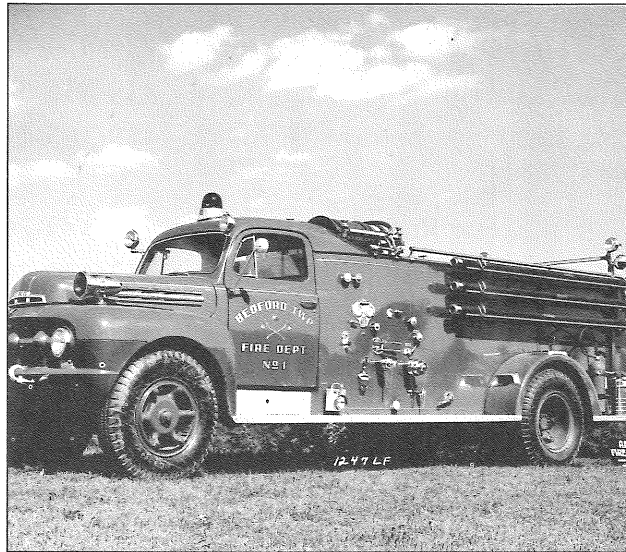
When the first Bedford Township Hall opened in September, 1893, it marked the beginning of a community that is today the largest Township in Monroe County, Michigan. Bedford Township is composed of the villages of Lambertville, Samaria and Temperance, MI.

It took over 50 years from its founding to establish the first organized Fire Department in Bedford. In 1925 a Model T Ford Chemical Fire Truck was purchased and stored in the Elliott-Whittaker garage on Dean Road west of the current Lambertville station. It was hoped that the American Legion in Temperance would take over responsibility for the truck and then organize a Fire Brigade. It wasn't long, however, before interest waned as no one maintained responsibility for the truck and it sat in the garage with no one to staff it. (Its last fire was at the old Universalist Church on Monroe Road when it failed to start and had to be pushed to the scene by a group of enthusiastic citizens).

In 1938 it was reported that Bedford was one of nine Townships in Monroe County still without organized fire protection. During that time Bedford established contracts with the nearby communities of Ottawa Lake/Whiteford, MI and Trilby, OH to respond to emergency calls for \$25/run.

In 1941 several citizens appeared before the Township Board requesting the establishment of organized fire protection within the Township. The Board agreed and in February, 1944, Henry Hackman was appointed as the first Fire Chief of Bedford Township. At that same time, Assistant Chiefs were appointed for the Bedford communities of Lambertville, Samaria, and Fortuna.

On May 15, 1945, an REO Speed



Ford American Fire Truck

Wagon pumper was purchased from Howe Fire Truck of Anderson, IN. It was stored in Floyd Clark's garage on Lewis Avenue until the Temperance station was completed in 1948. For the next three years, the response district for that one truck included all of Bedford and, occasionally, neighboring townships.

In January, 1948, a decision was made to add a second station in Lambertville to be located on Dean Road just east of Monroe. The first truck there was a 1948 Buffalo Pathfinder pumper. Before the station was completed, the pumper was housed in Gene Sheely's Sunoco gas station at the corner of Consear and Secor. Gene was appointed as the first Lambertville Chief. If there was a call, the operator would call Gene and he would drive to the station and set off the siren. (Many years later, in 1965 the dependence on the siren for alarm notification was enhanced by the purchase of home monitor radios. Ultimately, the use of pagers for each member and cell phone texting for alarm notification replaced the siren altogether).

Bedford Township continued with two departments until 1999 when the Board appointed John Bofia as the Fire Chief to oversee the entire Township. This ended years of

friendly (and sometimes not so friendly) rivalry between the Temperance and Lambertville stations.

A third station was constructed in 2012 at 7016 Lewis. The Department Administration is also located there.

John Bofia served as Fire Chief until 2013 when he retired. In 2014, Rudy Ruiz from Sandusky, OH, was appointed as the first Fire Chief from outside the community. Chief Ruiz left in 2015 and after an extensive search, Adam Massingill, a Monroe County native, was appointed in 2017 and is the current Fire Chief.

The Bedford Township Fire Department provides service to over 33,000 residents in a 39 sq. mile area. Bedford is a Class 4/4Y Department which puts us in the top 10% of Michigan Departments rated by the ISO. We are licensed by the State of Michigan as a Basic Life Support (BLS) Transport Agency. Our annual budget is just over \$1,000,000. We have a roster of 42 paid on call individuals who respond to three stations, using four engines, one 75' aerial ladder, two transport ambulances, one heavy rescue, two brush trucks, one non-transport BLS vehicle, and two utility vehicles. Two of our three stations are staffed Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm.

In the early days of the Department, the annual response totaled less than 50 calls per year. In 2016 we responded to 2,645 incidents, 73% of which were medical in nature. Bedford has mutual aid agreements with all townships in Monroe County, MI as well as the Lucas County, Ohio communities along our southern border, including the City of Toledo.

Appreciation is extended to Donald R. Adams and Ronald A. Whipple for providing information used in writing this narrative.