



HALL OF FLAME

NEWSLETTER



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Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting



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60th

Anniversary

Edition

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Babcock Aerial Ladder

1886

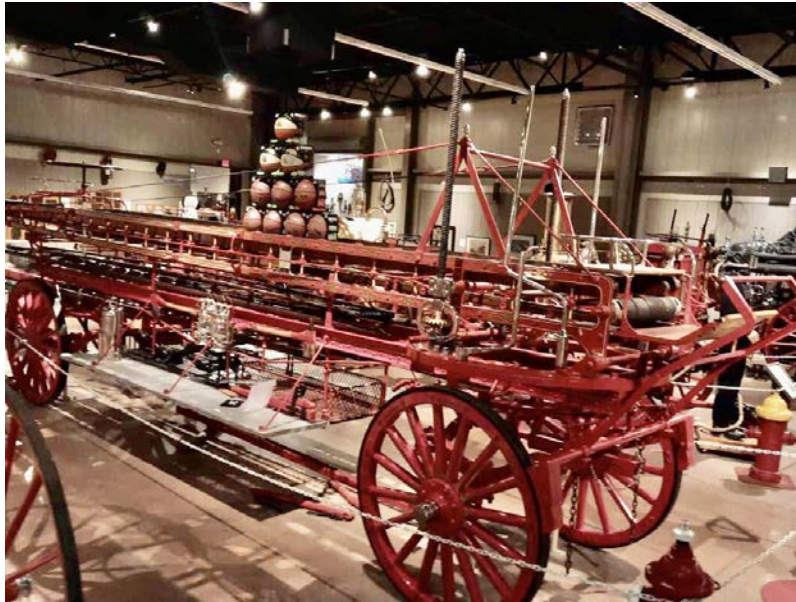
During the 19th Century, as buildings got taller, firefighting got harder. Rescuing people trapped in upper floors of tall buildings on fire is still a challenge, but in the days before fire escapes and sprinkler systems it was far more difficult.

The iconic “life net” canvasses into which people could jump, invented in Ohio in the 1860s, were dangerous, both for the jumpers and for the firefighters. Ladders were a more realistic option, but tall ladders were difficult to transport and unwieldy to deploy. Various new designs intended to improve ladder performance were attempted in the later 1800s; the “Babcock aerial,” developed during the 1880s, was the most successful of them.

The large Babcock aerial in Gallery I of the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting is believed to be the only specimen of its kind to survive intact. Built in 1886 by the Chicago Fire Extinguisher Company, it probably first belonged to the Chicago Fire Department.



In 1894 it was purchased by the fire department of Benton Harbor, Michigan, probably in response to a tragic factory fire which occurred in July of that year and which had taken the lives of eleven Benton Harbor firefighters. The disaster was blamed, in part, on insufficient ladders, so the Babcock, a larger wagon than a community of that size really required, probably represents an overreaction on the part of the town, determined never to find itself ill-equipped again. In 1927, the rig was purchased from Benton Harbor by the fire department of Alpena, Michigan, who converted it from horse-drawn to truck-drawn.



The Hall of Flame's Babcock is notable not only for its rarity and history but also as a masterpiece of restoration. Hall of Flame restorer Don Hale had to re-construct the wheels, axles and the entire front end to bring the piece to its current condition. It makes a majestic sight.

Cartwright Schools

One of the key missions of the Hall of Flame Museum, along with preserving and presenting the history of firefighting and the fire service, has been teaching fire safety, especially to children. Thus field trips have long been central to what we do. We pride ourselves not only on delivering good, practical, usable fire safety knowledge, but on doing so in a fun and entertaining manner that allows children to learn the material and take it seriously without being unnecessarily frightened or overwhelmed.



That said, for the last few years, the Hall of Flame has seen a downturn in field trip visits, particularly from public school children. Some of the reasons for this are obvious; the pandemic being the clearest example. But even before COVID-19 appeared on the scene, economic factors had limited many schools budgets where field trips and other such programs perceived, in our view shortsightedly, as "luxuries" were concerned.

Fire safety was sometimes delegated to visiting local fire departments, even though these departments also may be struggling with budgetary difficulties of their own and therefore be unable to devote time and personnel to educational programs. Fire safety may at times simply be overlooked altogether in favor of other safety training like school shooting drills. In light of all this, however, we're pleased to say that the Hall of Flame took a major step this fall toward reclaiming our past success as a school field trip destination. From mid-September to mid-November of 2021, we hosted field trips from every 2nd grade in the Cartwright School District; it was the first time the museum has ever contracted with a whole district as opposed to booking schools piecemeal.

Founded in 1921, the Cartwright Elementary School District includes more than 20 schools on Phoenix's west side and the Maryvale area. A representative from the district told us that in recent years, a family from one of the schools suffered tragic losses in a house fire that might have been prevented with better safety education.



During the two-months of our contract, The Hall of Flame provided our “storytime” fire safety presentation, along with a tour of our collection and playtime in our children’s area on our 1951 American LaFrance fire truck, to second grade classes from Sunset, Spitalny, Frank Borman, Harris, Desert Sands and many other elementary schools. We also had the honor to host students from Bret R. Tarver Elementary, and to explain to the students there why the Phoenix firefighter, who died in the line of duty in 2001, is their school’s namesake. Cartwright District Superintendent Dr. LeeAnn Aguilar-Lawlor toured the museum with students from Tomahawk Elementary and expressed enthusiasm for the Hall of Flame and the partnership.

This contract also represented a continuation of the Hall of Flame’s partnership with the Arizona Burn Foundation and their “Milo and Moxie” program for burn safety. Each of the Cartwright second-graders to visit the Hall of Flame was sent home with a “Milo and Moxie” coloring and activity book, and teachers were given a guide to the lessons, so that the safety education could continue both in the classroom and at home.



We greatly enjoyed our time with the Cartwright Second Graders, and hope that the relationship will continue in coming years. We also look forward to partnering with other districts in the future.

Chicago/ Peshtigo

The Deadly Night of October 8th, 1871

October of this year marked the 150th anniversary of two of the worst fire disasters in American history. One of them is an iconic episode in our nation’s lore; the other is far less remembered, although a new display at the Hall of Flame seeks to redress this.

The Great Chicago Fire began on October 8, 1871. Legend has long held that it was caused by “Mrs. O’Leary’s Cow” kicking over a lantern while being milked in a barn at 137 DeKoven Street. The story, which catered to anti-immigrant sentiment toward the Irish prevalent in Chicago at the time, originated in the Chicago Republican and was repeated in many other sources. Catherine O’Leary always denied the story, and more than twenty years later the writer of the original article, Michael Ahern, admitted that he made it up, but by then it had entered the category of myth, and is still well known.

Whatever the cause of the fire, it burned through October 10, destroying more than three square miles and killing about 300 people. The Chicago Fire Department at the time consisted of fewer than 200 firefighters, but firefighters from all over the upper Midwest poured into the city to help; a small Rumsey pumper from the village of Centerville Township, Wisconsin, now on display in Gallery I of the Hall of Flame, was brought to Chicago by train, joining the effort on the last day.

Many historians now believe that, in a sense, the Great Chicago Fire probably saved more lives than it took, in the long run. Prior to the disaster, Chicago was built largely of wood; even the sidewalks and roads were made of wood. In response to the fire, the city was rebuilt according to new codes which required more stone and brick in construction, as well as wider roads, alleys, etc. Other cities around the country and eventually around the world were then built up along this model, gradually making big citywide fires a thing of the past.



During the same week in October of 1871 as the Great Chicago Fire, multiple severe wildfires burned throughout the upper Midwest-Great Lakes region. The largest and deadliest of these was the Peshtigo Fire, which burned more than a million acres in northeastern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and killed between 1,000 and 3,000 people.



Great Peshtigo Fire of 1871

The fire is believed to have started when flames from prescribed burns were fed by winds from a cold front, resulting in a firestorm (although some historians have theorized that falling debris from Belia's Comet could have caused Peshtigo and other fires of the time, including the Chicago Fire).

About a dozen small communities were destroyed, including the town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin. Some residents took refuge from the flames in the waters of the Peshtigo River, which resulted in many deaths by drowning and hypothermia.

From the start, the Peshtigo Fire was overshadowed in the media by the more high-profile disaster in Chicago. Even so, Peshtigo's death toll was several times that of the Chicago Fire's; in terms of fatalities, it's the worst wildfire disaster in recorded history. A new pictorial exhibit in the Hall of Flame's Wildland Gallery, titled "PESHTIGO—THE FORGOTTEN FIRE" AND using images from periodicals of the time, seeks to improve our understanding of this disaster.



HALLOWEEN



In October of 2020, the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting was faced, like the rest of the world, with restrictions due to the COVID pandemic. But we still wanted to provide some Halloween fun for our visitors.

Our solution? "Trucks and Treats," a socially distanced trick or treat event in which our staff and volunteers sat up in our vintage fire trucks and slid treats down plastic tubes in the waiting bags of costumed kids. We did it our parking lot, to increase the safety factor and to enjoy the fine fall weather here in the Valley, on the Saturday prior to Halloween.



It was a hit with guests and Hall of Flame folks alike, so we decided to try it again at Easter. This time we moved the event inside, and it worked just as well. So we decided to keep it indoor for Halloween Eve, October 30, 2021, and turn our Gallery II into a fog-enshrouded domain of uncanny mystery. And free candy.

The gallery was taped off with ominous-looking caution tape, and theatrical fog was pumped in to give the proper eerie atmosphere. Macabre skull lights were strung up to add to the spooky feel. Young visitors dressed in costumes ranging from superheroes to dinosaurs to unicorns to ninjas to fairy princesses to a banana to the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man were routed up and down the aisles past fire trucks from the first half of the 20th Century—including, appropriately enough, our beautiful '30s-era Ahrens Fox pumper from Sleepy Hollow, New York, home of Washington Irving's Headless Horseman. Perched on these old rigs were volunteers armed with bags of "fun size" candy and long, transparent plastic tubes to slide them down.

This year those giving out goodies on the trucks included, along with our usual loyal volunteers and staffers, Museum President George Getz and his wife Dyan, as well as other representatives from the Globe Corporation (parent company of the Hall of Flame). There were signs that the volunteers had at least as much fun as the kids, and in some cases may have consumed as much candy.



Alongside the Hall of Flame's display devoted to the breathing hood designed by Garret Morgan is a new exhibit, added in 2021, showcasing another early self-contained breathing apparatus: The Vajen-Bader Smoke Protector. This dramatic-looking mask was a pioneering attempt to allow firefighters to breathe in a smoke-filled environment. Produced by the Indianapolis, Indiana-based company starting in the mid-1890s, it was a lined chamois leather hood with fire-resistant mica eye pieces and ear diaphragms; some also incorporated a whistle for communication. The device was equipped with a small canister of compressed air on the back, allowing the user to breathe, and providing air in the hood's interior that was significantly cooler than the surrounding atmosphere in a fire.

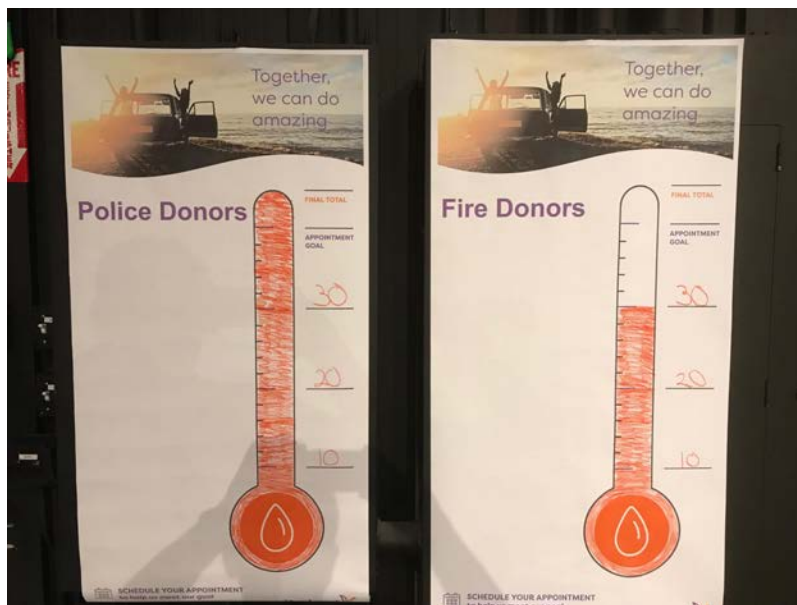


The mask represented a business and design collaboration between Willis C. Vajen (1851-1900), an Indianapolis hardware dealer and inventor, and William Bader, a German immigrant and piano manufacturer, reportedly with input from Chicago Fire Chief Denis Swenie. Hand-made at the Vajen-Bader facility on the second floor of a former Indianapolis public library at the corner of Ohio and Meridian Streets, the Smoke Protector was sold into the early 1900s. Like most early attempts at self-contained breathing apparatus, it was cumbersome and provided only a few minutes' worth of air; at \$100 per unit, it was also expensive. Nonetheless it successfully sold both nationally and internationally, and was one of the more respected of the early smoke masks.

Vitalant Blood Drive

November 9, 2021, marked the second annual First Responders Unite Blood Drive here at the Hall of Flame Museum. The local blood service took over Gallery III—including piping in an excellent playlist of '80s pop music that took some of us back to our college years—and collected pints from Hall of Flame staff, volunteers and visitors most of the day.





The event was considered a major success by Vitalant, and the Hall of Flame was proud to host it. But there was one aspect of the day that we found disappointing: police officers out-donated firefighters by an irritatingly large margin. In the longstanding and ongoing rivalry between police and firefighters, the police won this round; the Hall of Flame fully intends to capture the title next year, however.

JOE HINKLE

One of the most popular exhibits at the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting is our collection of patches. Starting on the west wall of Gallery IV and spanning onto the east wall of Gallery III, with plenty of room to grow, the collection features thousands of fire service arm patches from all over the world; every continent, even Antarctica, is represented. Visitors can search the database to find which panel their hometown is in,

or they can simply browse the panels and enjoy the various colorful, strange and whimsical designs of the patches. For many years the Hall of Flame's patch collection has been the work of one of our most senior and valued volunteers, Joe Hinkle. "Years ago, there were five or six of us that did it, but then there were some mistakes, so I took it on," explains Hinkle. "It was something I thought I could do." Hinkle adds a new patch panel every year or so while snowbirding here in



the Valley during the winter months from his native Ohio. He paints the panel, then carefully lays out the hundreds of patches that are donated to the museum over the course of the year.

“You have to check ‘em all,” he says. “If they’re new, or if we have them but it’s a different new design, then they go in. But if we already have them then they go in duplicates.”

The patch collection is only one of the roles that Hinkle ably performs here at the Hall of Flame, where he’s volunteered since 1996.

“My daughter moved out here in ‘84, I think it was, and we came out to visit” he recalls. “That was my first time at the Museum.”

It wasn’t his last. After he and his wife Marge began spending their winters here, he became a regular visitor to the Hall of Flame.

“My wife and daughter said, you’re going down there so much, you might as well volunteer.” Since then Hinkle’s participated in everything from sweeping floors to guiding tours, but is perhaps most familiar greeting our guests and answering their questions, in his distinctive, friendly way, about the exhibits.

The Hall of Flame’s Curator of Education at the time shared a bit of background with Hinkle: they were both from Williams County, Ohio.

“I was born in the country outside Montpelier, Ohio,” says Hinkle, “but I grew up in the town of Edon. Three weeks after I graduated I went to work at the local machine shop; made parts for Ford Motor.” He married in February of the following year, and it was a family connection that led him to the fire service.


“I started in November of ‘66 in Edgerton, Ohio,” he says. “My father-in-law was on that department. Like most fire departments back then, you had to know somebody to get on.” Hinkle stayed with Edgerton’s paid on-call department for 25 years.

His most memorable calls, he says, included “an accident where my neighbor was killed.” He also remembers when “in ‘88, we had three Amish kids killed in a fire. That was the first call my son was on.”

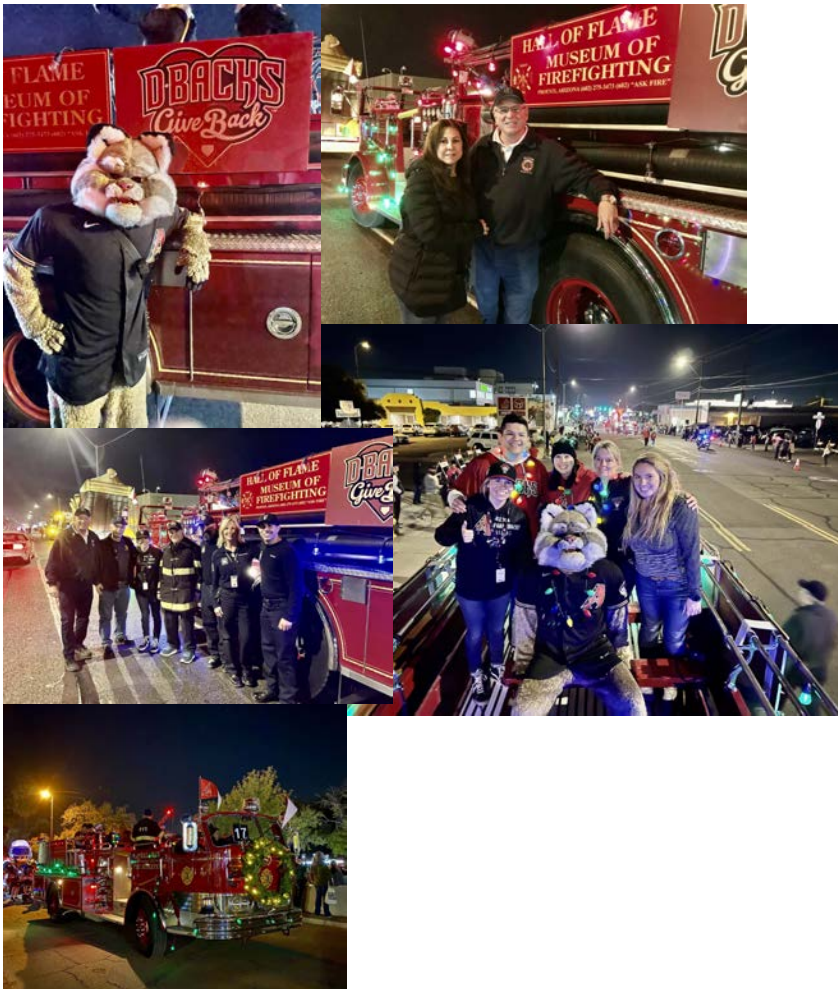
His son Doug spent a year with the Edgerton Department before spending thirty years with the fire department of Montgomery County, Maryland, where, Hinkle proudly notes, he’s now a Battalion Chief. Maybe someday we’ll get Doug to continue to carry on the family traditions, and volunteer here at the Hall of Flame Museum.

Hall of Flame

— in the —
Community

APS Festival 

Fiesta Bowl Parade 



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Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting



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