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**Bartlesville Fire department marks 112 years of service
By Kelli Williams**

The Bartlesville Fire Department recently celebrated 112 years of service — and for the first time since it began in 1905, the department is establishing an Honor Guard.

"The guys wanted to do this as a way to honor our department," said Fire Chief John Banks. "They came to me and asked what I thought, and I told them it was a great idea. So they started researching what it would take to start an honor guard, and six of them are training for it now."

While the BFD Honor Guard will initially consist of six members, all Bartlesville firefighters, Banks expects the guard to grow in the coming years.

After more than a century of service, establishing the honor guard is a source of pride for the department, he said.

"The Bartlesville Fire Department is celebrating 112 years of service today," Banks said on Tuesday. "The department's first fire run was on January 31, 1905, to the Piazza Hotel on Third and Keeler. So, announcing the start of the Honor Guard today seems fitting."

The Beginning

According to records from the Bartlesville Area History Museum, the Bartlesville volunteer fire department, organized by the Bartlesville Commercial Club, made its first fire run on Jan. 31, 1905, to the Piazza Hotel, located at Third Street and Keeler Avenue.

Despite its 12 volunteer members, including "experienced" firemen Chief F.N. Buck and Capt. Eli Spayd, things didn't go well as hoped on that first run, records show.

“The run to the fire was all right, but the hose froze up and no water was put on the blaze through it. The fire was extinguished by other methods,” the BAHM record cites from the local newspaper.

But a 2 a.m. fire a week later at the American National Bank — which reportedly “threatened the finest building in the city” — apparently yielded better results.

“Efficient work by the fire company quickly put this blaze out,” the record states. “Three lines of hose were laid and a pressure of 90 pounds was supplied by the waterworks. Chief Buck and four of his company were on hand early and directed the proceedings.”

A growing department

The department soon gained a few additional members and ordered its first “steamer” in October 1905, for \$799. Two horses, named Buck and Mack for Chief Buck and firefighter John N. McCallister, were purchased to draw the wagon, which pushed the cost up to \$1,000.

“It looked like an elaborate buckboard, with high black wheels, ladders, lanterns, hand pumps and hose hanging all about it,” the BAHM record states.

The department’s first permanent location was at 329 S. Dewey Ave., where the First City Hall had been re-located from Second Street. The police station was housed there as well.

“The police department and jail were on the ground floor and the city offices were on the second floor,” BAHM records show. “The Chamber of Commerce occupied the third floor. The fire department opened onto 4th Street with wide doors to allow the fire horses and wagons to get a running start in either direction.”

The department has grown over the years, once housing stations on Third Street (now Frank Phillips Boulevard), Oak Park, Pennington Hills and Adams Boulevard.

A century of service

Today, Bartlesville Fire Department consists of four stations: Central Fire Station, 601 S. Johnstone Ave., Station No. 2 at Virginia & Hensley, Station No. 3, 100 SE Madison Blvd., and Station No. 4, 3501 Price Road.

“The Bartlesville Fire Department today is one of the finest in the state,” said City Manager Ed Gordon. “Our firefighters are willing to put their lives on the line to protect all of us — the citizens of Bartlesville — and for that, we are grateful.

“We can all take enormous pride in our fire department, and I look forward to seeing the new Honor Guard in action.”

Bartlesville Area History Museum and BAHM Collections Manager Debbie Neece contributed to this report.

To view this report, including photos of the Bartlesville Fire Department dating back to the early 1900s, visit <http://www.cityofbartlesville.org/fire-department-launches-honor-guard-marks-112-years-service/>

All photos courtesy of the Bartlesville Area History Museum.