



Tallahassee Fire Department

2026

TFD HISTORY



The City of Tallahassee Fire Department has a long and distinguished history of responding to public safety needs. TFD continues to plan how to best serve and protect citizens for the next 100 years.



FULLY
COMMITTED

ABOUT TFD'S HISTORIAN



**MAURICE
MAJSZAK**

Maurice Majszak is retired from the U.S. Navy, where he served as a permanent Master Chief Petty Officer and a temporary Chief Warrant Officer (CWO4) and earned the Defense Meritorious Service Medal for the hostage rescue attempt in Iran on April 24th, 1980. Upon his retirement from the Navy, he began a career with the City of Miami Fire Department, the City of Miramar Fire-Rescue as Fire Marshal, and the City of Tallahassee Fire Department. He currently serves as the official Tallahassee Fire Department Historian, Museum Curator, and liaison between active and retired firefighters.

Maurice is certified in the State of Florida as Fire Instructor III, Fire Inspector I and II, and Fire Investigator I. He was named Broward County Fire Inspector of the Year in 2003, Florida Fire Inspector of the Year in 2008, and VFW Post 3308 Firefighter of the Year in 2015. He has served as an adjunct instructor at Broward Community College and the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and also served on the Florida Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association Legislative Committee and the statewide Informal Fire Code Interpretation Committee.

An award-winning author, Maurice has published *Historic Tallahassee*, *Remembering the Tallahassee Fire Department*, and *William Earl Levy, Sr., Dean of the Fire Service*. He has updated more than 300 Tallahassee Fire Department photographs in the Florida State Archives and contributes to historical preservation through findagrave.com. He was instrumental in establishing the Hydrant Garden at Tallahassee Fire Station 1 and is the founder of the Tallahassee Fire Department Museum.

Maurice is a member of the Florida State Firefighters Association, Florida Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association, National Fire Academy Alumni Association, and a lifetime member of the Florida Antique Bucket Brigade and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He is also an honorary member of the International Association of Firefighters Local 2339.

HISTORY OVERVIEW

The Tallahassee Fire Department has been responding to fires and emergencies for more than 100 years. As Tallahassee developed, firefighting evolved from community bucket brigades to hand- and horse-drawn wagons. The city's first volunteer fire company was established in 1867, with various volunteer organizations operating until the formation of the Tallahassee Volunteer Fire Company in September 1902. In May 1930, it became the Tallahassee Fire Department, consisting of six paid firefighters and six volunteers who were compensated only for drills and fire responses. In March 1916, the department purchased its first motorized fire truck, an American LaFrance engine, for \$10,542. By December of that year, all five fire horses - Tom, Jerry, Dick, Jack, and Jake - were sold for one dollar each.

Fire prevention has long been integral to Tallahassee's public safety efforts. Following the Great Fire of 1843, which destroyed more than 90 downtown structures after igniting at the Hotel Washington at South Monroe and St. Augustine streets, the City Council enacted an ordinance requiring fire-resistive construction in the downtown area. The fire spread north to Park Avenue in less than three hours, destroying most buildings between Monroe Street and Calhoun Street on the east and Monroe Street and Adams Street on the west. In response, newspapers warned residents about defective flues and chimneys and urged households to keep ladders available so homeowners and their neighbors could access their roofs to extinguish flying embers and protect their homes.

In 1988, the City of Tallahassee entered into an agreement to provide fire protection services for all of Leon County. Locations for four of the new county fire stations were selected by Deputy Chief Herb Roberts, with the fifth station chosen by Fire Chief Ed Ragans. All county fire stations went into service on January 1, 1989, except Station 14 in Fort Braden, which began operations earlier on December 23, 1988. Under the terms of the agreement, each station was staffed by two firefighters who were also certified Emergency Medical Technicians, a requirement that became the driving force behind certifying all Tallahassee firefighters as EMTs and expanding the department's emergency medical response capabilities.

Firefighting, prevention, and emergency response have expanded significantly over the last century. Today, TFD operates 16 stations protecting approximately 702 square miles across Tallahassee and Leon County, serving a population nearing 300,000.

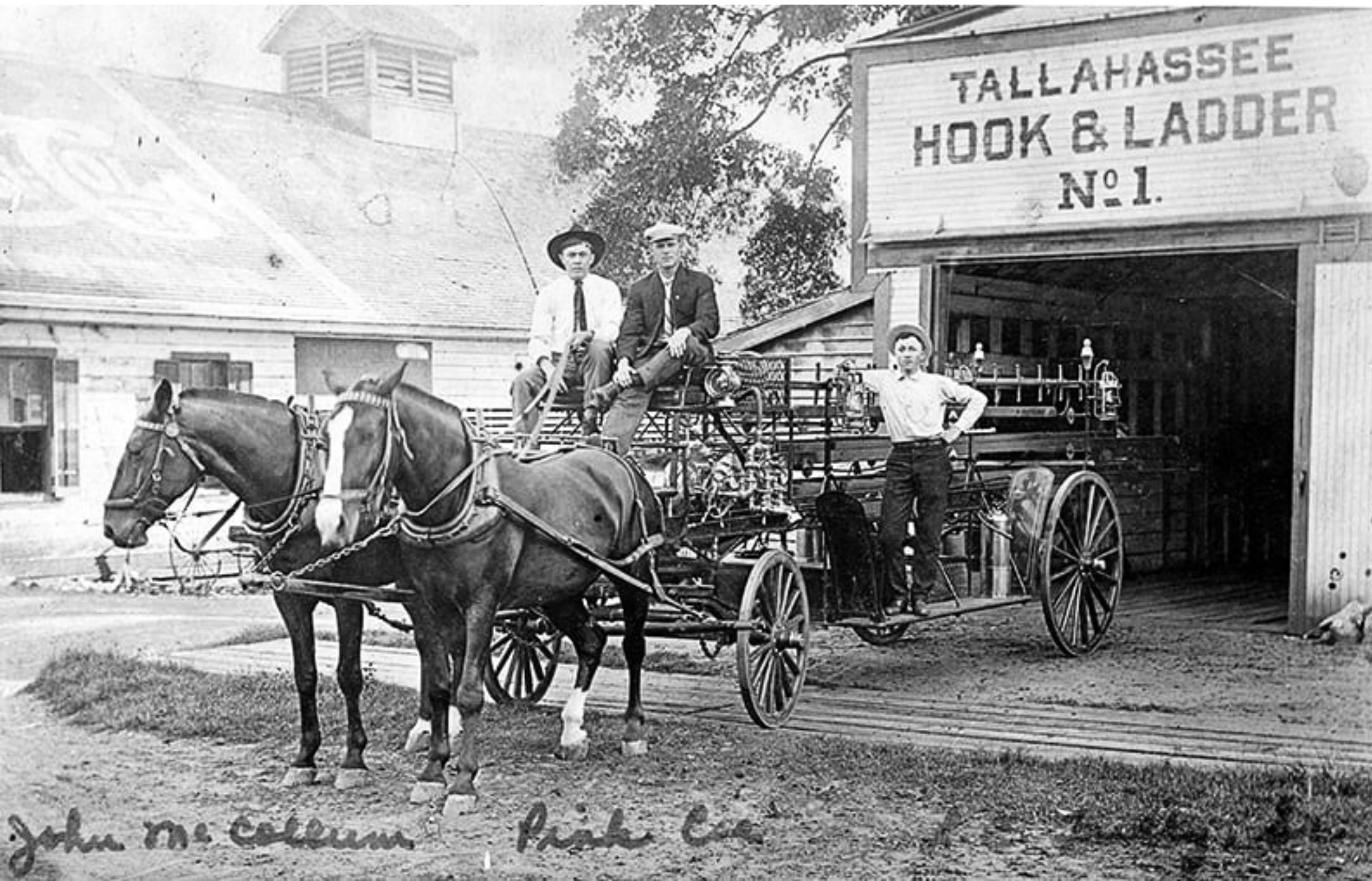
The department consists of 327 positions, with most assigned to the Suppression Division, which responds to more than 44,000 incidents annually. Additional certified personnel serve in EMS, Training, Logistics, Prevention, and command staff roles, supported by 19 general administrative positions.

The nature of emergency response has also changed. While early calls were primarily fire-related, often caused by cooking incidents, chimney sparks, or arson, modern demands are far more complex. Emergency medical services now account for approximately 75 percent of all calls. With more than 33,000 EMS responses each year, TFD provides the largest non-hospital-based medical response force between Jacksonville and Pensacola and serves as a first responder for major medical emergencies.

Beyond EMS, TFD personnel are trained to respond to arson investigations, structure collapse, high-angle rescue, extrication, search and rescue, and hazardous materials incidents. The department reviews all new and existing residential and commercial construction plans except for single-family and duplex construction and conducts fire safety inspections to ensure compliance with approved designs. TFD also works closely with county and state partners and serves as the City of Tallahassee's lead agency for planning and response to both natural and man-made disasters.

With a long and distinguished history of service to Tallahassee, Leon County, and surrounding communities, the Tallahassee Fire Department continues to adapt and plan for the challenges of the next 100 years.

THE TALLAHASSEE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY



The Tallahassee Volunteer Fire Company formally adopted its by-laws on September 24, 1902. On May 1, 1930, the organization became the Tallahassee Fire Department, consisting of six paid firefighters and six additional members who were compensated only when training or responding to fires.

Pictured is Tallahassee Hook and Ladder No. 1, circa 1906. Pictured are John McCollum, Thomas P. Coe, and L. C. Tully Sr as well as horses Jake and Dick. The first hook and ladder for the Tallahassee Fire Department was purchased and placed into service in the early 1900s. It was later mounted to an automobile, becoming the department's second piece of mechanized firefighting equipment.

(State of Florida Archives)

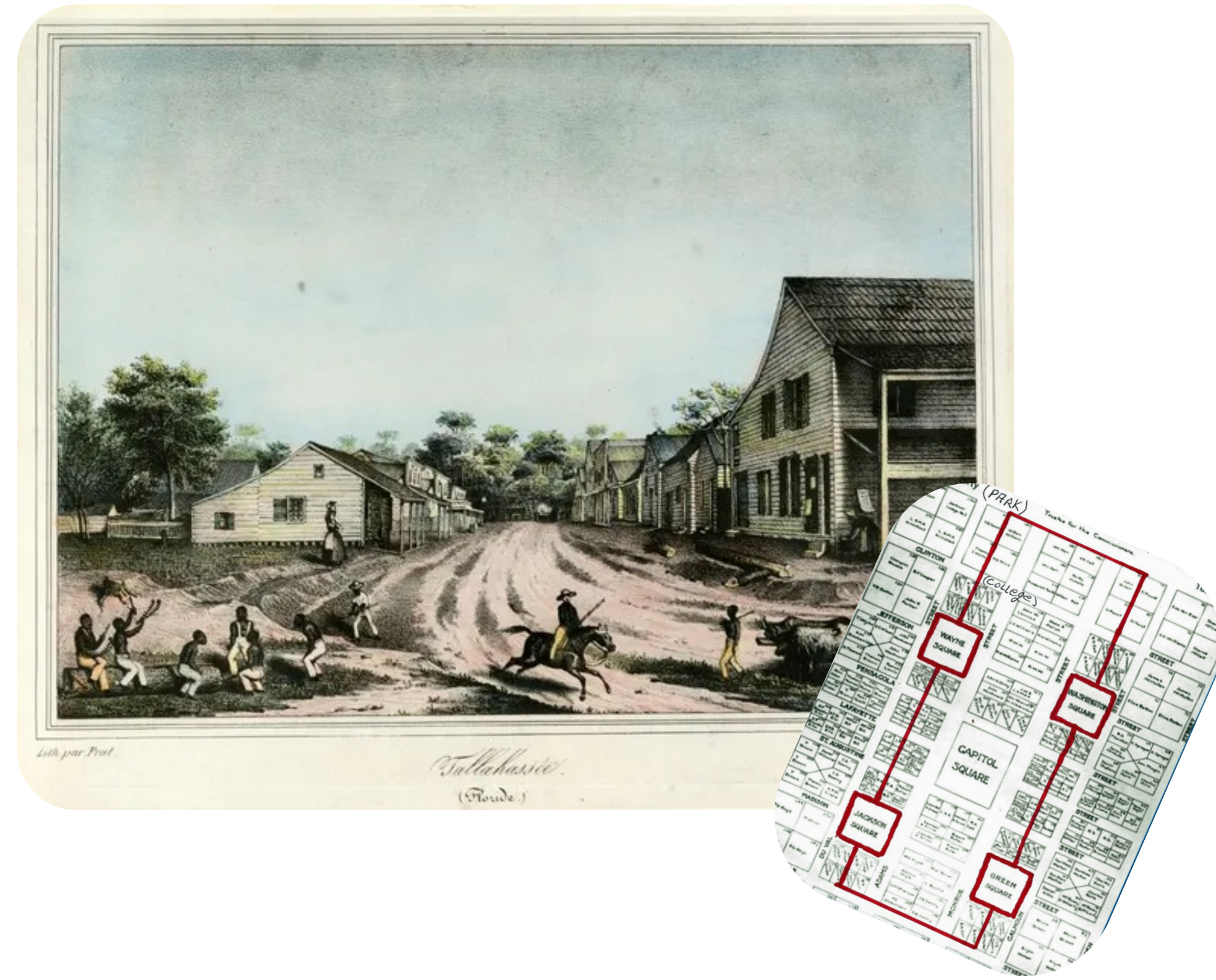
THE GREAT FIRE OF 1843

On May 25, 1843, at approximately 5:00 p.m., a fire broke out in the wood-framed Washington Hall Hotel, later known as the Dixie Hotel, located at the northeast corner of South Monroe Street and St. Augustine Street. Built between 1825 and 1835, the hotel was one of Tallahassee's earliest landmarks. Hot, dry conditions and a brisk south-to-north breeze allowed the flames to spread rapidly, giving residents little time to save their belongings as businesses and homes were evacuated. Although no lives were lost during the three-hour fire, the destruction was extensive. More than 90 commercial and residential buildings were destroyed, with damages estimated at nearly half a million dollars. The fire spread north to present-day Park Avenue, east to Calhoun Street, and west to Adams Street. Several individuals were arrested and charged with arson, but no convictions were made.

This disaster led to Tallahassee's first formal fire-prevention measures. Although an organized fire department was proposed, none was immediately formed. Instead, the downtown area was designated as a fire district, also known as the "Burnt District." New regulations required the use of non-combustible building materials and mandated 16-foot alleys running north to south between buildings along Adams, Monroe, and Calhoun Streets to help slow the spread of future fires. These changes marked the beginning of structured fire prevention in Tallahassee.

The accompanying lithograph shows Jefferson Street looking east from Adams Street in 1839. The building on the right, the Planter's Inn, was among the structures destroyed in the Great Fire of 1843.

(State of Florida Archives)



CALL MANSION FIRE OF 1934

At approximately 10:00 p.m. on Monday, January 1, 1934, a fire partially destroyed the Call Mansion, also known as The Grove, in Tallahassee. The fire completely destroyed the north end of a comparatively recent wood addition attached to the original brick structure. The wooden addition, along with its furnishings and personal belongings, was entirely lost. The cause of the fire was suspected to be crossed electrical wiring within the newer addition.

The Grove was purchased in 1825 by Richard Keith Call and his wife, Mary Kirkman Call. Between 1825 and 1832, Call, who served as Florida's first delegate to Congress and later as its third and fifth territorial governor, designed and built the two-story Greek Revival mansion using enslaved African-American labor. After his death, the property remained in the Call family and was adapted for various uses, including an art and dance studio and a boarding house.

In 1940, Thomas "LeRoy" Collins and Mary Call Darby Collins purchased The Grove and preserved the historic home for decades. During Collins' term as Florida's 33rd governor from 1955 to 1961, the property served as the state's Executive Residence. The Grove was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and was deeded to the State of Florida in 1985 for use as a historic house museum.

Upper Picture - State of Florida Archives



FLORIDA THEATRE FIRE OF 1960



Around 12:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 26, 1960, a fire broke out at the Florida Theatre, located at 118 North Monroe Street on the west side of Monroe Street between Park Avenue and Call Street. The final showing of the night had ended about an hour earlier, and theater employees had already gone home when the fire began. When firefighters arrived on scene, Chief William Earl Levy reported that the entire seating section was already engulfed in flames, making it clear that the building could not be saved.

Fire crews quickly positioned hose lines on all four sides of the structure and worked throughout the night to prevent the fire from spreading to nearby buildings. All off-duty firefighters were recalled to assist in the operation, and the blaze was brought under control by approximately 2:00 a.m. The department's tall extension ladder truck, rarely used at the time, was placed into service to attack the fire from above and spray water onto the roof. Although the exact cause was never determined, investigators believed the fire likely originated in the attic or film room. In a striking coincidence, the final movie shown at the theatre that evening was *The Last Voyage*.

The Florida Theatre had been constructed in 1940 at a cost of approximately \$15,000. The fire resulted in an estimated \$500,000 in damages and the complete loss of the building.

The upper photograph documents the aftermath of the fire. From left to right are Lt. Charles Byrd, Firefighter O'Neal White, and an unidentified Tallahassee firefighter exiting the theatre. (State of Florida Archives)





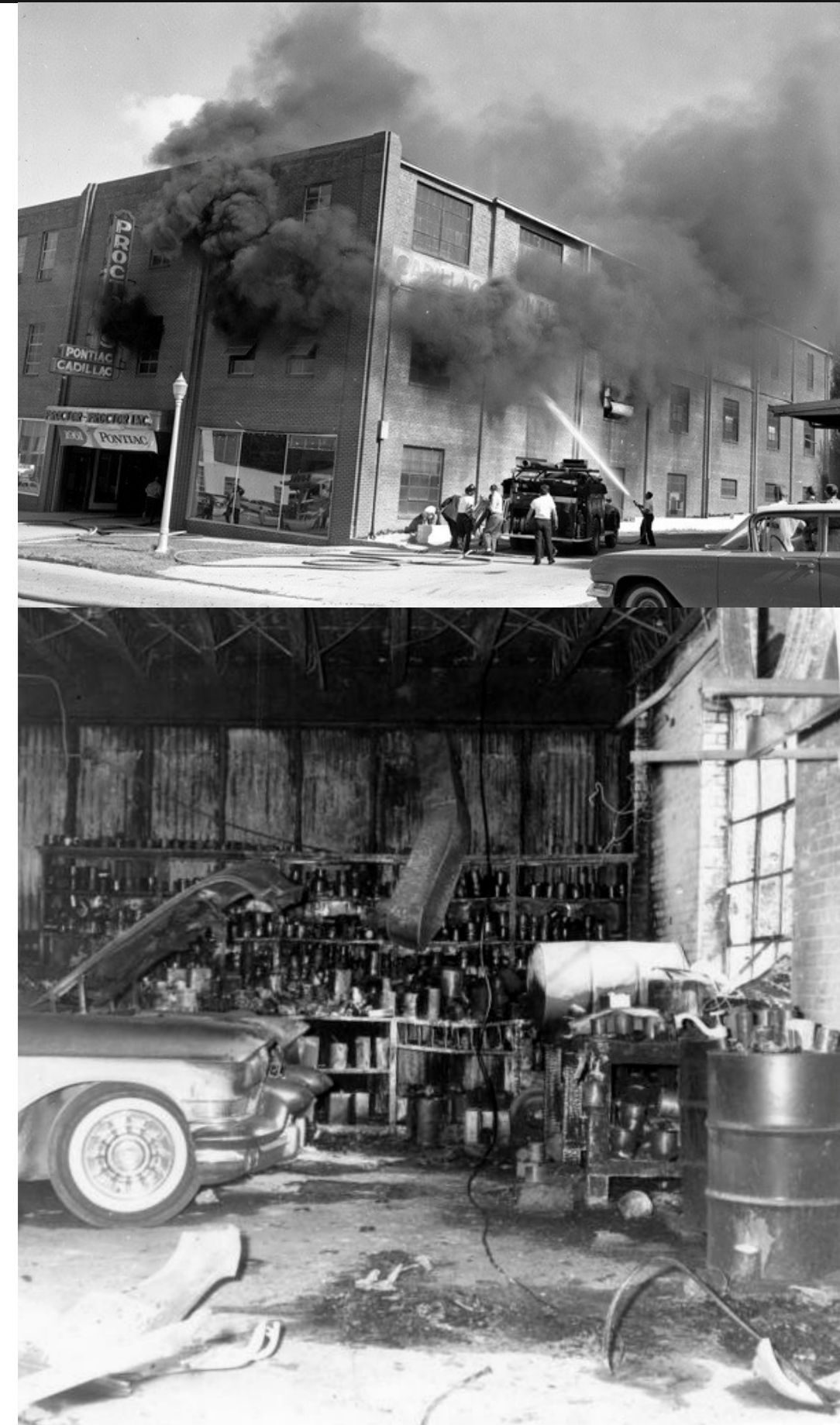
PROCTOR & PROCTOR FIRE OF 1960

On Wednesday, November 16, 1960, a fire broke out at the Proctor & Proctor automobile dealership located at 216 North Monroe Street. The structure was a single-story building along North Monroe Street and extended as a three-story building along North Adams Street. The fire originated around noon in the paint shop located on the second floor on the building's southwestern side.

The vehicle inside the paint shop was completely destroyed, and a second nearby vehicle sustained heavy damage. Fire crews responded quickly and extinguished the blaze within approximately 5 to 20 minutes of notification, preventing the fire from spreading further through the structure. As smoke billowed from the building, it drifted around a large sign at the North Monroe Street entrance that read "Hot Topic, Tempest," an ironic sight that drew amused reactions from spectators.

Several firefighters suffered minor injuries during the operation, including cuts from splintered glass, smoke inhalation, and eye irritation caused by the acrid smoke. When Lieutenant Ridgway Coe arrived on scene, he prepared to enter the building from the North Adams Street side. A police officer exiting the structure stopped him and warned, "Don't go in, there's going to be an explosion." Lt. Coe heeded the warning, and moments later an explosion occurred. He later credited the officer with saving his life.

The accompanying photographs show the North Adams Street side of the dealership where the fire originated. (State of Florida Archives)



MENDELSON'S FIRE OF 1967



On Friday, December 1, 1967, a major fire broke out at Mendelson's Department Store prior to 2:30 a.m., originating on the second or third floor of the building. The fire quickly spread to the third floor of the adjacent Leon Federal Savings and Loan Association building. According to Captain Ridgway Coe, the fire doors separating the two businesses were either missing or propped open, allowing the flames to move freely between the structures.

The blaze became the largest property damage fire in Tallahassee's 143-year history at the time, surpassed only by the Great Fire of 1843 that had destroyed much of the downtown area. Estimated losses exceeded \$1 million. Firefighters worked for more than eight hours to bring the fire under control, and it was officially declared out at 10:30 a.m. Extensive firefighting operations were undertaken to contain the fire to the two involved buildings. Hose streams were continuously applied to neighboring structures to the east and west, as well as directly onto the burning buildings. At one point during the operation, approximately 1,750 gallons per minute of water was flowing onto the fire. The only reported injury occurred to Captain W. O. Kinard, who was removed from operations at 9:00 a.m. after suffering minor steam burns to his eyes. After being examined at the hospital, he returned to the scene and resumed directing hose streams by 10:00 a.m.

The accompanying photographs document the scene and aftermath of the fire. (State of Florida Archives)



On Monday, April 28, 1969, a serious fire broke out in the Florida State University Administration Building, commonly known as the Westcott Building. The fire originated on the fourth floor in the attic area, which was being used as an art studio and contained flammable liquids, including paint and paint cleaner, along with other combustible materials. The attic was located directly above the main entrance of the nearly 60-year-old building and spanned the length of the building.

Tallahassee Fire Department Captain Ridgway Coe and Lieutenant Jesse J. Freeman Jr. conducted an initial primary search of the attic and confirmed that no occupants remained on that floor. While operations were underway, Chief Earl Levy, who had not yet arrived on scene, radioed Captain Coe and advised that reports indicated people might still be in the attic. Acting on this information, Captain Coe and Lieutenant Freeman, accompanied by Firefighter Marshal Brown, re-entered the building to conduct a second search.

As Captain Coe and Lieutenant Freeman stepped onto the attic floor and Firefighter Brown was about to follow, the fire suddenly flashed over. Captain Coe and Lieutenant Freeman were burned by the intense heat, while Firefighter Brown was blown backward down the stairwell by the blast. No occupants were located on the fire floor. Both Captain Coe and Lieutenant Freeman were transported to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital for treatment of burn injuries and were later released. During the incident, Florida State University students worked to salvage files, records, and equipment from the building to preserve administrative materials. In the days that followed, temporary administrative offices were established in Bryan Hall, and students slept on the lawn in front of the building. The Quincy Fire Department also responded and assisted Tallahassee firefighters during the operation.

The top images show significant damage to the attic area following the fire. The lower right image shows displaced FSU students on the lawn at Bryan Hall following the fire. (State of Florida Archives)

WESTCOTT BUILDING FIRE OF 1969

HALSTEAD ESTATES FIRE OF 1988

On Saturday, April 9, 1988, a major fire broke out at Halstead Estates, where multiple residential buildings were under construction. Five buildings were completely destroyed, and five additional structures were damaged, resulting in an estimated \$1 million in property loss. Lieutenant William Mitchell was the first officer on scene and immediately radioed dispatch with the urgent size-up, “Send everybody you’ve got, there’s enough for everyone.” Battalion Chief Charles Dery later described this as the best initial size-up he had witnessed in his 29 years with the Tallahassee Fire Department.

Water supply proved to be a critical challenge at the incident. Only one hydrant was available, supplying approximately 2,000 gallons of water to serve 15 quadplexes. To maintain suppression operations, tankers were used to shuttle water to the scene. Every section of hose carried on Engine 1 was deployed, and the wet hose was later dropped in the alley at Station 1 for drying. When another fire occurred at Halstead Estates the following morning, crews were forced to reload the still-wet hose to respond.

Several notable actions occurred during the incident. Engineer Andrea Jones, who was off-duty and eating lunch nearby, learned that old Truck 4 had been dispatched as a last-resort apparatus. She had kept her bunker gear on the truck while off-duty and responded to the scene, requesting permission from Incident Commander T. E. Roberts to suit up and assist. Her request was approved, and she actively worked the fire. Jerry Coe, a driver on Engine 1 at the time and later a retired lieutenant, was among those heavily engaged in suppression efforts.



The accompanying photographs document firefighting operations at Halstead Estates.
(State of Florida Archives)



GEORGIA BELL DICKINSON FIRES OF 1975 & 1994

On Monday, October 20, 1975, a fire broke out around 9:30 a.m. in a closet inside Apartment 201 at the Georgia Bell Dickinson Apartments, located at 301 East Carolina Street. Flames spread into the corridor and heavy smoke quickly filled the building. Approximately 160 elderly residents were safely evacuated, many of them from the second floor using ground ladders. Most of the residents were women, and several later joked with firefighters, asking if another fire could be started so they could be carried down the ladder again.

The successful evacuation was credited to regular fire drills and advance pre-planning conducted by the Tallahassee Fire Department for this building. The structure, built in 1969, featured a four-hour fire rating, with two-hour fire-rated separations between rooms and corridors and one-hour separations between apartments. These fire-resistive features helped limit the spread of flames and contributed to the successful outcome.

After the incident was brought under control, approximately two dozen firefighters knelt together on the soaked lawn and offered a prayer of thanks, led by Deputy Chief James Cureton. No serious injuries were reported.

On Sunday evening, February 20, 1994, at approximately 8:30 p.m., the fire alarm sounded at the Georgia Bell Dickinson Apartments at 301 East Carolina Street for a fire in Apartment 205 on the second floor. The Tallahassee Fire Department responded within three minutes, dispatching a total of 11 units to the scene.

As in the 1975 fire, smoke rapidly filled the corridors and stairwells, making evacuation difficult. Despite these conditions, firefighters completed the evacuation of residents within one hour. The fire was brought under control and extinguished within an hour of the first alarm. Approximately 70 residents were transported to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital for evaluation, with two reported in critical condition. The incident marked the second major fire at the complex within two decades.



FEDEX PLANE CRASH OF 2002



MARK WALLHEISER /Democrat
The burned-out remains of a crashed FedEx jet lie at the Tallahassee Regional Airport. The cargo plane was arriving from Memphis, Tenn., about 5:45 a.m. when it crashed near the main east-west runway, according to a city spokesman.



MIKE EWEN /Democrat



On Friday, July 26, 2002, FedEx Express Flight 1478 was operating a scheduled domestic cargo flight from Memphis International Airport to Tallahassee International Airport when the aircraft crashed during its landing approach shortly before 6:00 a.m. The Boeing 727 freighter was conducting a straight-in visual approach to Runway 09. At the time, the Tallahassee air traffic control tower had not yet opened for the day, and the flight was being monitored by air traffic controllers in Jacksonville.

Approximately 30 seconds before impact, all four precision approach path indicator lights were red, indicating the aircraft was well below the proper glideslope. The ground proximity warning system sounded at “five hundred” feet above ground level, but the warning came too late for the crew to recover. The aircraft struck 50-foot-tall trees located about 3,650 feet short of the runway, remained briefly airborne for approximately 1,000 feet, then impacted the ground and slid another 1,100 feet. During the crash sequence, the aircraft struck a construction vehicle and rotated approximately 260 degrees before coming to rest. All three flight crew members survived the accident but sustained serious injuries. The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and post-crash damage.

The National Transportation Safety Board conducted a full investigation and determined that the probable cause of the accident was the flight crew’s failure to maintain an appropriate flight path during a nighttime visual approach. Contributing factors included crew fatigue and failure to adhere to standard operating procedures.

Pictures 1 & 3 - Tallahassee Democrat

CAPITAL LANES FIRE OF 2003

On Friday, November 21, 2003, at approximately 3:30 p.m., a major fire broke out at Capital Lanes, a 40-lane bowling alley located on Joel Brown Road off Capital Circle Northeast. At the time the fire began, more than a dozen people were attending a local girl's seventh birthday party inside the building. All occupants were safely evacuated, and no injuries were reported.

As the fire progressed, flames rapidly spread throughout the interior of the 35,600-square-foot structure. By nightfall, the roof over the front entrance had collapsed and much of the interior was gutted by fire. Firefighters were forced at one point to withdraw from the building due to concerns that additional structural collapse was imminent. The building and property were valued at approximately \$1.5 million. The cause of the fire was never determined.

Tallahassee Fire Department deployed its E-One Bronto Skylift 95-foot platform during the incident. This specialized apparatus is unique in that its boom can extend downward approximately 20 feet into ditches or other low-lying areas, allowing access to difficult locations. At one point during operations, the platform was positioned with all of its tires off the ground.

The lower photograph shows the E-One Bronto Skylift in operation at the scene. Upper photo left to right: Chris Meeks, Deputy Chief Steve Marks, Byron Meadows, and Travis Oaks.

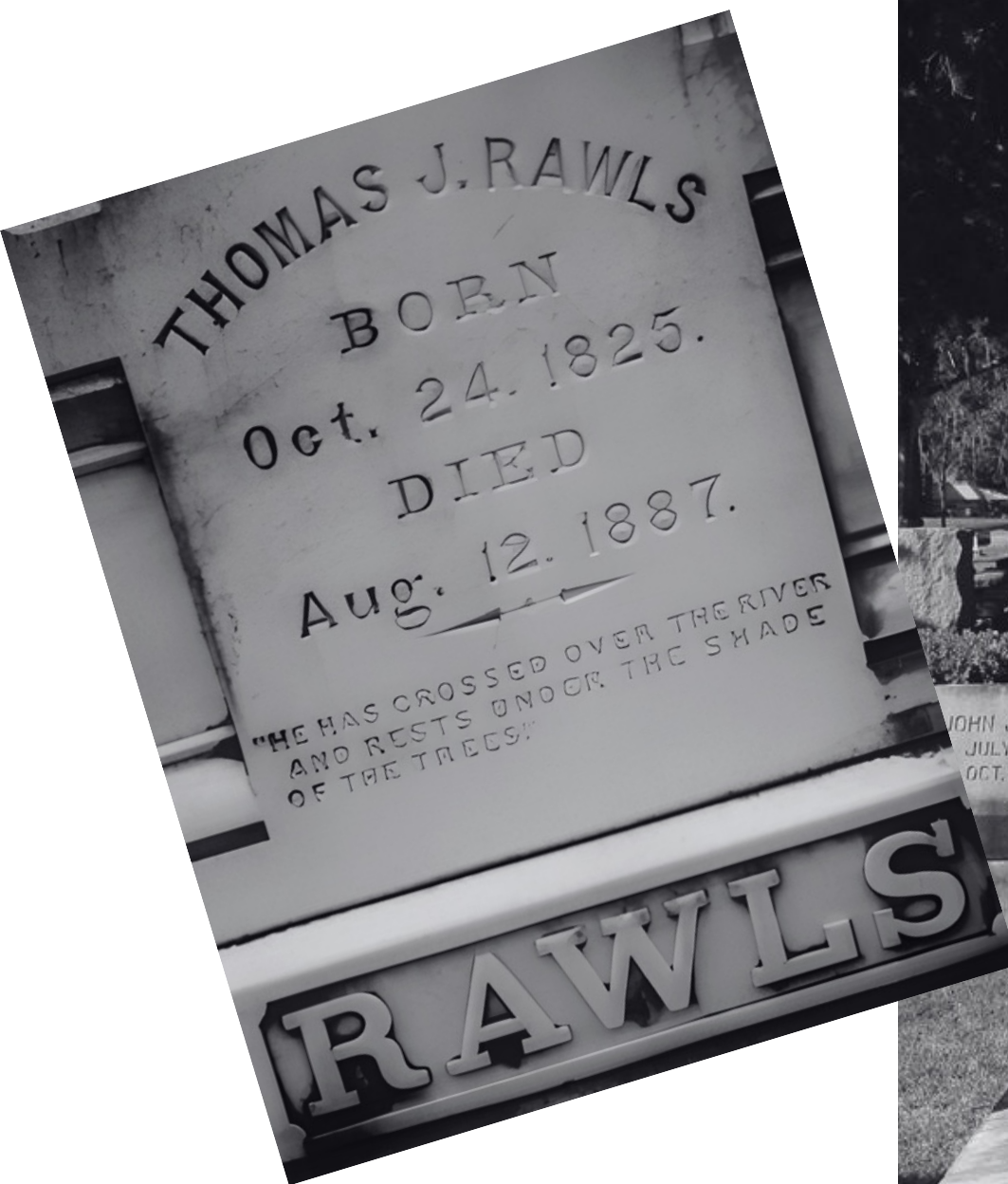


FLORIDA SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION FIRE OF 2008



At approximately 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 15, 2008, a fire completely destroyed the Florida Sheriffs Association office located at 2617 Mahan Drive. The blaze was intense, with flames visible above the treetops from Capital Circle Northeast, drawing attention from surrounding areas. When crews arrived on scene, they contacted dispatch to locate a nearby hydrant. Dispatch advised of one approximately half a mile away, but firefighters quickly found a hydrant less than 100 feet from the building. Firefighters worked to contain the fire and prevent the fire from spreading to nearby properties. Despite suppression efforts, the building was a total loss. The cause of the fire was undetermined.

Pictures 2 & 3 - State of Florida Archives



FIRST FIRE CHIEF OF TALLAHASSEE

1868 - 1870

Although the City of Tallahassee did not have a continuous fire department prior to September 24, 1902, it did have Fire Chiefs and volunteer fire companies before that date. On August 10, 1868, the City Council passed a resolution establishing that the Fire Chief of Tallahassee would be elected annually by the City Council each January.

Thomas Jesse Rawls was elected Fire Chief in September 1868 and formally appointed by the City Council on September 4, 1868, becoming the city's first recognized Fire Chief. Born on October 24, 1825, Rawls moved to Tallahassee in the late 1840s and became a successful contractor, builder, and undertaker. He was among the first in the area to establish a machine shop with full woodworking capabilities.

During the Civil War, Rawls enlisted in Gamble's Artillery, but his industrial skills were deemed essential at home. He added a grist mill to his operation, producing meal and supplies distributed to Confederate forces throughout the region.

Thomas J. Rawls passed away on August 12, 1887, and is buried in the family plot at Old City Cemetery in Tallahassee, Florida.

(State of Florida Archives)

FIRE CHIEF CLARK A. SPENCER

1902 - 1904



Mr. Clark A. Spencer was appointed Fire Chief on April 10, 1902, and served until December 16, 1904. He came to Tallahassee in 1891 as Superintendent of the Tallahassee Water Works Company when the City contracted water services and later became an agent for the City Gas Company.

He was a founding member of the Tallahassee Volunteer Fire Company (TVFC), signing its by-laws on September 24, 1902, marking the beginning of the continuous Tallahassee Fire Department.

In October 1902, Chief Spencer presented badges to each member of the TVFC. In 1903, he was sent by the City Council to Atlanta to consult with officials of the Southeastern Tariff Association regarding improvements to the Fire Department and the pursuit of better fire insurance rates for the City.

Chief Spencer resigned as Chief of the TVFC on December 16, 1904, upon moving away from the City.

From left to right: Earnest McLin, Chief Clark A. Spencer, Lewis Lively and Eugene Levy. (State of Florida Archives)

FIRE CHIEF THOMAS PINKNEY (T.P.) COE

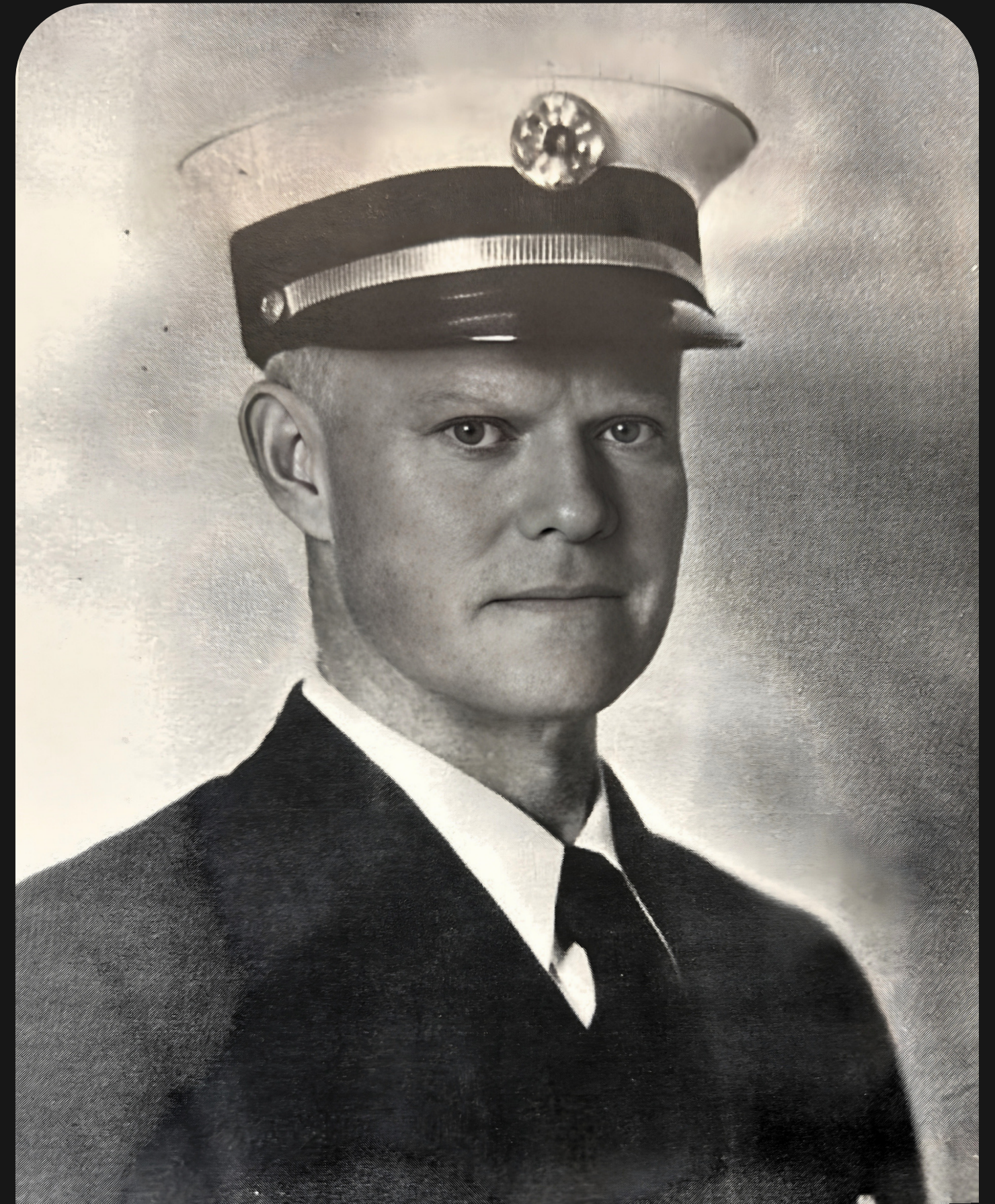
1906 - 1940

Chief Thomas Pinkney Coe joined the fire department in 1906 and was appointed Fire Chief on July 12, 1912. At that time, the department consisted of one double horse-drawn hose wagon pulled by Tom and Jerry and one hook-and-ladder wagon pulled by Jake and Dick. Staffing included two paid firefighters, a paid Fire Chief, and 18 volunteers.

Chief Coe served a total of 34 years with the department, including 28 years as Fire Chief. His final day in that role was April 30, 1940. He then continued his service to the city as the City Fire Inspector for approximately eight years.

Born on September 6, 1882, in Coe Mill, Florida, Chief Coe served in the United States Army prior to joining the fire department. He passed away on February 17, 1948, and is buried beside his wife, Maude, in Oakland Cemetery.

(State of Florida Archives)





ASSISTANT CHIEF JOE A. VINZANT

1925 - 1975

Chief Joseph “Joe” Vinzant was born on May 13, 1900. He began his career with the fire department on Tuesday, June 16, 1925, and retired on Monday, June 16, 1975, completing 50 years of service to the department.

During his career, Chief Vinzant was promoted to Lieutenant in 1941, Captain on January 16, 1950, Assistant Chief on March 1, 1951, and 1st Assistant Chief on March 1, 1957.

Chief Vinzant was known for his exceptional strength and hands-on capability, including single-handedly lifting the front end of old Truck No. 1 and climbing the fire station pole using only his hands.

(State of Florida Archives)

FIRE CHIEF WILLIAM EARL LEVY, SR.

1927 - 1978

Chief William Earl Levy, Sr. was born in Tallahassee on November 16, 1910, and began employment with the Tallahassee Fire Department on March 15, 1927, at the age of 16. He became the longest-serving firefighter and Fire Chief in the department's history.

Chief Levy was appointed Fire Chief at the age of 29, at a time when the department consisted of only nine firefighters and one fire station. During his career, he served on the Board of Directors of the Florida State Firemen's Association and held the position of Statistician. He was also a member of the two-person committee that authored the by-laws establishing the present-day Florida Association of Fire Chiefs.

Chief Levy served the Florida Association of Fire Chiefs as Chaplain for several years and later as its President. He was also President of the 10-state Southeastern Division of the International Association of Fire Chiefs and appeared on the program of the national Fire Department Instructors Conference in Memphis, Tennessee.

An early graduate of college-level municipal fire administration through the Institute for Training in Municipal Administration (ICMA), Chief Levy also taught Fire Department Administration at the Florida State Fire College. In 1976, he was named Florida Fire Chief of the Year. At 2:30 p.m. on September 28, 1978, City Manager Daniel A. Kleman unveiled a plaque commemorating the William Earl Levy, Sr. Fire Headquarters Building.

Chief William Earl Levy, Sr. passed away on April 23, 1986, and is laid to rest in Oakland Cemetery in Tallahassee alongside his wife, Hassell.

(State of Florida Archives)





ASSISTANT CHIEF JOHN B. (J.B.) HARVEY

1930 - 1979

John B. (J.B.) Harvey was born on June 22, 1912, and began working for the fire department at the age of 17 on April 4, 1930.

He retired as an Assistant Chief on October 31, 1979, after 49 ½ years of service.

Chief Harvey married Maude Coe after Chief T. P. Coe passed away. J.B. Harvey died on June 7, 1991, and is laid to rest next to Maude Coe Harvey in Oakland Cemetery.

Maude Coe was the sister of Bessie Atkinson, who married Fred Levy. Their son was Chief Earl Levy.

(State of Florida Archives)



ASSISTANT CHIEF RIDGWAY COE

1941 - 1984

Ridgway Coe was born on May 3, 1921, and began his career with the fire department at the age of 20 on November 17, 1941. He retired on January 3, 1984, after 42 years, 1 month, and 18 days of dedicated service, holding the rank of Assistant Chief.

During his career, Assistant Chief Coe was promoted to Lieutenant on November 1, 1952, Captain on January 19, 1963, and Assistant Chief on June 13, 1969.

On Monday, April 28, 1969, then Captain Ridgway Coe and Lieutenant Jesse J. Freeman were both burned in a backdraft while fighting a fire at the Florida State University Westcott Administration Building. The force of the backdraft blew Captain Coe's protective gear off his body, leaving him wearing only his shorts.

(State of Florida Archives)

DISTRICT CHIEF TOMMY E. ROBERTS

1950 - 1991

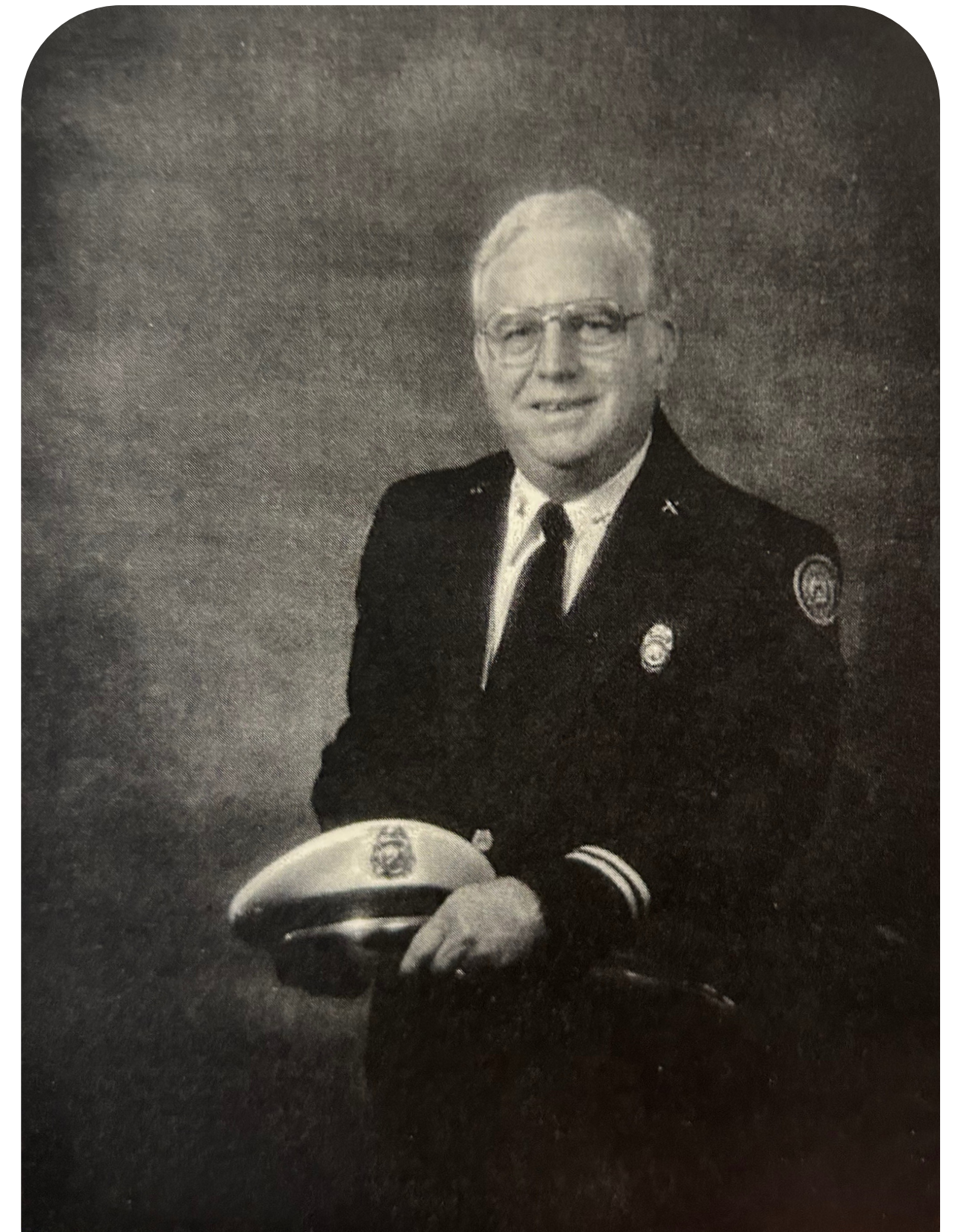
District Chief Tommy Edwin (T. E.) Roberts Sr. began his career with the Tallahassee Fire Department on June 20, 1950, at the age of 19. At the time, the department consisted of only two fire stations - the Main Fire Station at 109 S. Adams Street and the airport fire station - with approximately 30 firefighters working 24-hour on, 24-hour off shifts.

In 1951, Fire Station 2 opened at 224 E. 6th Avenue and included an integrated body shop where firefighters converted surplus military vehicles into fire engines and performed apparatus maintenance. Department personnel assembled fire trucks from the chassis up, and T. E. Roberts was one of the primary painters involved in the construction and finishing of at least seven fire engines.

Roberts served as a driver for much of his career, including while holding officer rank. He attended multiple state fire schools and later completed training at the National Fire Academy, including courses in special fire problems and incident command.

Over the course of his career, Roberts worked under four fire chiefs and served during periods of significant departmental growth and operational change. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1962, Captain in 1968, and Assistant Chief in 1978. In 1980, the title was changed to District Chief.

District Chief T. E. Roberts retired on January 31, 1991, after 40 years, 7 months, and 11 days of service with the Tallahassee Fire Department.





INTERIM FIRE CHIEF STEVE ANDERSON

1984 - 2009

Steve Anderson served as Interim Fire Chief from March 1, 2005, to October 4, 2005. He was hired by the Tallahassee Fire Department on October 8, 1984, as Division Chief of Special Operations.

Following his service as Interim Fire Chief, Chief Anderson assumed the role of Deputy Chief of Administration, a position he held until his retirement. Prior to joining the Tallahassee Fire Department, he served with the Tampa Fire Department, where he rose to the rank of Captain.

(State of Florida Archives)

FIRE CHIEF CYNTHIA “CINDY” E. DICK

1987 - 2013



Chief Cynthia “Cindy” E. Dick began her career with the Tallahassee Fire Department on May 27, 1987, at the age of 21. She was promoted to Lieutenant in 1992 and to Captain in 1997. She later served as Interim Training Chief and Division Chief of Special Services before being promoted to Fire Chief on October 5, 2005, where she was responsible for overseeing 265 employees.

Chief Dick was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, on October 19, 1965, and moved to Tallahassee in 1978. She holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration and attended Tallahassee Community College, the University of Florida, and Columbia Southern University. Chief Dick is the Tallahassee Fire Department’s first female Fire Chief and one of the first female Fire Chiefs in the state of Florida. She is a graduate of the Harvard Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government, a Florida Certified Public Manager, and a graduate, with honors, of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

The program is designed to provide senior fire officers with a broad perspective on fire administration and requires a written Applied Research Project. Chief Dick became the first female and the ninth overall graduate out of more than 3,000 participants to earn a perfect 4.0 GPA since the program’s inception in 1985. She was presented with a Certificate of Recognition by the City Commission on Wednesday, June 27, 2013.

In July 2012, Chief Dick was named Florida Fire Chief of the Year by her peers at the Florida Fire Chiefs’ Association. Chief Cindy Dick retired on July 31, 2013.

(State of Florida Archives)



Tallahassee Fire Department

2026

THANK YOU.



FULLY
COMMITTED

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