Firemen Protect People, Property

When Livonia became a city in 1950, the 36 square miles with 17,000 population received fire protection from two fire stations, each equipped with a fire engine. There were four full time fire fighters on the department plus the Chief and a volunteer force of twenty men.

The first year as a city the department responded to 223 fire calls. Open farm land and undeveloped property resulted in many grass and trash fires, with an occasional structure fire. Fire losses for the first year were $111,000.

As the city grew in population so did the fire department, with the third fire station being put into operation in 1952. This station was located at Five Mile and Farmington Road in the rear of the old City Hall building, which is presently the Drug Abuse Center.

When the city offices moved into the new City Hall, the fire department occupied the complete building and this became fire headquarters. An emergency rescue vehicle was purchased and with the manpower increased to 14 full time fire fighters, first aid rescue service was instituted by the department.

Aug. 12, 1953, saw the skies over Livonia darkened by a disastrous fire at the General Motors Transmission plant on Plymouth Road between Inkster and Middlebelt. The fire was the largest fire loss in the country of a building under one roof, with the loss estimated at $55 million. Fire authorities throughout the country realized that due to the type of building construction, this loss could have occurred regardless of the fire department size and equipment.

To maintain adequate fire protection for the rapid growth within the city, a new fire station was put into operation at Farmington Road behind the Shelden Shopping Center. Additional fire equipment was purchased and additional firemen added to the fire force. The fire department still maintained an active volunteer fire brigade to supplement the 27 full time fire fighters.

It was necessary at this time to institute a Fire Prevention Bureau within the department to conduct fire inspections of the rapidly growing school system and commercial and industrial development. Investigation of fire causes was instituted or conducted and fire safety codes were adopted.

The purchase of a 100 foot aerial ladder and more modern fire engines, which were much larger than the fire engines built in the early 1950s, required that a new fire station at Farmington and Seven Mile be built to replace the one at Middle Belt and Seven Mile.

When the Civic Center was developed in the center of the city a new, modern fire headquarters building was built to replace the antiquated headquarters facilities located in the old City Hall. At this time a second emergency rescue squad was put into service.

With the development of the Livonia Mall, the advent of high rise buildings, the commercial and industrial development in the northeast area of the city and in the southwest section, additional fire protection was required and fire stations five and six were constructed.

In 1971 and 72 stations five and six were opened, with five new 1,250 gallon per minute diesel fire engines acquired and put into service to replace old equipment and to provide for the additional fire engines necessary in the new stations. Twelve additional fire fighters were hired.

With the construction of fire station six a fire department maintenance garage and training facilities were incorporated with the building. Extensive training programs for fire fighters were instituted and are being conducted on a year-round basis to keep abreast of the most up-to-date fire fighting techniques. Fire preplanning of target areas such as large shopping complexes, industrial plants, etc. are conducted by the fire companies.

All fire department apparatus and vehicles are maintained in top operating condition by two full time fire department mechanics.

At the present time the department consists of six fire stations, six engine companies, two rescue vehicles and one ladder truck. The department has 96 full time fire fighters with three fire prevention personnel. Total department complement is 102 full time positions, which includes clerical and mechanical personnel. During the year 1972 the fire department responded to 2,820 runs. Six hundred and twelve were fire runs, 108 false alarms, 2,100 emergency rescue runs.

Plans are underway to purchase two new aerial platforms and the department is planning on improving the emergency rescue services.

3rd Largest

Continued from Page 13

mentary schools serving separate communities until 1944. During this period Livonia students attended high school in Plymouth, Clarenceville, Northville and other neighboring districts. In 1944, however, seven school districts in Livonia Township consolidated and elected a single board of education. They were Briggs, Elm-Rosedale, Livonia Center, Newburgh, Pierson, Stark and Wilcox.

Harry O. Johnson was chosen the first superintendent of the district in June, 1944. In 1945 the new district decided to build its first junior and senior high school named for George N. Bentley, a former teacher and merchant who had for many years been a member of both the Elm-Rosedale Board of Education and the new board. Substantially enlarged and modernized, Bentley High School today is one of the four 10-12th grade high schools in the Livonia district.

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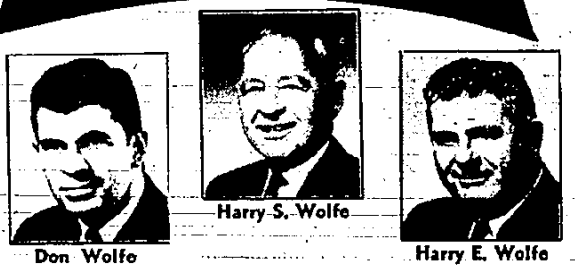

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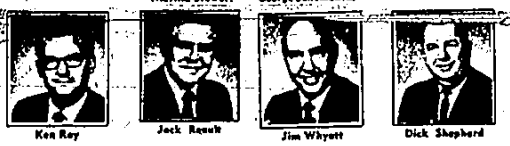

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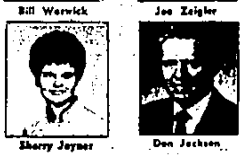

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