

Colebrook Fire Department History

The origins of the department go back to February 1938. It was at that time that several Colebrook residents decided that the era of the bucket brigade had outlived its usefulness and that the town deserved a more up to date system of providing fire protection. The primary motivator was Floyd (Buster) Hart. He and Edwin D. Mills, William J. Gray, Walter Gray, Rudolph Stenman and Paul Crosby formed themselves into a corporation of subscribers whose purpose was to provide fire protection to Colebrook Center and the immediate surroundings. The following facts are to be found in the Colebrook Land Records, vol. 27, page 126:

Articles of Association of the Colebrook Center Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

Article 1: The name shall be: The Colebrook Center Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

Article 2: The purposes for which said corporation is formed are the following: To wit: To prevent and extinguish fires at Colebrook Center and vicinity, and to render, without compensation, such services as a volunteer fire department ordinarily renders.

Article 3: The Corporation is located in Colebrook, and its principal offices at said Colebrook. The original subscribers are: Floyd C. Hart, Jr., Edwin D. Mills, William J. Gray, Walter Gray, Rudolph Stenman and Paul Crosby.

Date of signature: February 3, 1938.

Seal of the State of Connecticut affixed on February 10, 1938.

The organization of the fire department remained as such until 1950, when, at a special Town Meeting on February 6, 1950, the town voted that fire protection shall be provided for the entire town by the Fire Department.

The town voted to furnish necessary supplies and keep in repair fire fighting equipment for the Fire Department. The town shall not furnish, nor be responsible for maintenance of land, buildings, or housing facilities of any kind for the department.

The agreement was finalized by the affixing of the town seal on February 28, 1950.

At a special Town Meeting held March 6, 1950, the town voted \$9,000 for a new fire truck. (It was an American LaFrance make.)

At a special Town Meeting held April 2, 1952, the Forge Fire Company entered into agreement with the town selectmen for the protection of the Town from fire. \$9,000 was voted for purchase of a fire truck for the Forge Fire Department.

As to the buildings which house the two departments, the Colebrook Center Fire Department was originally located in the building now housing the Colebrook Post Office, between the Colebrook Town Hall and the Colebrook Historical Society. The ownership of this building, at least since 1921, is interesting and is as follows:

On June 29, 1921, Mary E. Lathrop, for \$1.00, sold to Harriet E. Hinchliff, a farm of 47 acres, more or less, known as "Colebrook House", and a building known as "Colebrook Hall".

Colebrook Land Records, vol. 24, p. 139

On February 25, 1944, Harriet E. Hinchliff, a widow, and Mary E. Lathrop, a widow, sold, for \$1.00, the building known as "Colebrook Hall" to the Colebrook Associates, Inc. together with the strip of land off from the northerly side of the premises.

(Here follows the land description.)

Colebrook Land Records, vol. 24, p. 492

On March 21, 1944, The Colebrook Associates, Inc. acquired "A certain farm of land of 47 acres, with a dwelling house known as the Colebrook Inn, the barns and buildings thereon, etc., from Harriet E. Hinchliff of Rockford, Ill.

Colebrook land Records, vol. 27, p. 488

At a special Town Meeting of the Town of Colebrook, held on October 5, 1953, it was voted that the matter of the Town accepting as a gift from the Colebrook Associates, Inc., the former Colebrook Inn property at the Center for town purposes, be referred to a committee.

At the adjourned Town Meeting of October 13, 1953, it was put to a vote as to whether the town should accept this offer, with the endorsement of the committee. The vote was 50 in favor, 16 opposed. The offer was accepted.

At a Special Town meeting held April 11, 1949, the town was authorized to sell the Center and Forge Schools and the plots of land they stood on.

The Forge School and its property was sold to the Victory Grange for \$750.00 on April 10, 1950. Subsequently, The Forge Fire Department acquired the property from the Victory Grange.

With the requirements concerning fire fighting equipment constantly evolving, the physical size of fire engines finally exceeded the capacity of the fire house of the Center Fire Department, and in 1993 the present fire station at the intersection of Bunnell St. and Rockwell Road was built by the town on the site of the old Town garage.

In 2000, the Forge Fire Department, which had outgrown its 1904 redesigned schoolhouse home, moved into its brand new facility, built expressly for their needs. This is located at 300 Colebrook River Road in the Robertsville section of Colebrook.

Bob Grigg