

The Morgantown Volunteer Fire Department proudly provides Fire, Rescue and BLS EMS services for the 3400 residents of Jackson Township, Morgan County, Indiana.

### **MORGANTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY AND TODAY**

Our community is fortunate to have a wonderful Volunteer Fire Department with excellent fire fighting equipment. The June 20, 1981 "Morgantown News Review" had this information about the Fire Department—written by Marvin Elkins.

"The first Fire Department was a volunteer department. It was a bucket brigade. Everyone had a well in their yard. The firemen would bring buckets to carry water from the well to put out the fire. Everyone in town would turn out to help put out the fire. Later the town of Morgantown purchased a small hand pumper. There were 5 cisterns dug in the streets, the firemen would take the lid off the top of the one nearest the fire, drop the host in the cistern and the firemen would start pumping. This pumper had a bar along each wide of the pumper where the firemen raised the bar up and down to pump the water to the fire through a 1 1/2 " hose. Then later a small fire truck was purchased by the town, still used the cisterns to produce the water in fighting the fire. This fire truck could only be used within the city limits. A few years later, as I was coming down the Bean Blossom hill, I saw smoke down toward Bean Blossom. When I came closer, I could see it was Mr. Clarence Smith's frame house. Within a very short time the well was pumped dry and the house soon burned down. This gave me the idea that some organization should have the full cooperation of not only Morgantown but Jackson Township and other surrounding townships to help the Morgantown Lions Club to get a fire truck that could not only be used in Morgantown but could be used to go out and help rural fires.

"I brought this up before the Lions Club. Ray Allen was the president of the Lions Club at that time, and after some discussion among the 25 members, the decision was made for the club to purchase one. We had many fish fries and other projects to make money; we held a fair in the school yard; we had a fair queen contest; we made quite a bit of money with our projects. At the same time we had several donations, not only from the business people, but from individuals. The truck was purchased from Joe Woods & Son, a dodge dealer in Morgantown (*This was Sharon Zimmerman's grandfather*). We had a good tank and pumper mounted on the truck and after it was completely outfitted with all the necessary equipment needed to fight a fire, we had about \$8,000 in the truck. The members of the Lions Club operated it for some time. Several members had several weeks of training and before long the Club had a very good fire department. Later on a Rural Fire Department was formed and the Lion's Club donated the Dodge Fire Truck to them.

"The Rural Department combined with the town department developed into a very fine fire department and have now purchased a building to house their equipment in; they now have 5 units of fire equipment. The Fire Department has a fine organization and very fine job; they still have fish fries and other projects to help support the Fire Department."

This is a great article about the history of Morgantown and highlights two very important heritages we have—the Volunteer Fire Department and the Lions Club. Both contribute to

making our community a better place to live.

Today's Morgantown Volunteer Fire Department has grown. There is the Fire House #1 located in Morgantown and Fire House #2 located in Painted Hills. We have 32 volunteer firemen who give of their time to help others. Equipment includes 3 fire engines, 1 tanker truck, 2 rescue units, a brush truck and an ambulance. They provide ambulance service to the community with trained personnel. (And also at the Indian Creek football/basketball games. All volunteers must complete training to be on the department and they must keep their training current. If you listen to police scanners—Morgantown is #16. They are called out quite often to help surrounding fire departments fight larger fires—the recent fire in Helmsburg of the Bare Feet Sock factory is one example.

Until Morgantown installed a water system (1927), any fires within the town were fought by bucket brigades made up of volunteers. About 1917-18, Morgantown purchased a hand-pump engine which was pulled to the scene of the fire. When a fire was discovered in the town, word was called to the telephone operator who spread word to volunteers via telephone. The Morgantown Rural Fire Department filed as a non-profit with the Indiana Secretary of State on December 27, 1949.

In 1924, the fire department was formally organized with the town purchasing an automatic pumper truck. The fire station was where the current town hall is (120 W Washington St). A Rural Fire Department had been organized and within a few years it joined with the Morgantown Fire Department.

They have a facebook page—Morgantown Volunteer Fire Department where you will find current postings of their activities