

Volunteer Fire Company,

Mineral, Tehama County, Ca

The town of Mineral lies in the ancient volcanic crater of Mt. Madiu, forty miles East of Red Bluff and thirty miles West of Chester. The town enjoys picturesque views both Summer and Winter, but is isolated, especially in the Winter. To understand the need for a local fire company and equipment, we need to go back in time.

The town now is much the same as it was in the Winter of 1949. At that time town was inhabited by nearly seventy permanent residents. Most were employed by the Lassen Volcanic National Park Headquarters, the U. S. Forest Service Guard Station, the California Division of Highways and the Mineral Lodge. During winter the small town still had residents, but had no fire protection when the Park and National Forest Service crews were laid off due to the winter snows.

The original Mineral Lodge had burned down in 1939 and was subsequently rebuilt. However, history repeated itself when a snow laden tree fell across the telephone lines in the Winter of 1949. In those days, the town residents' telephones were serviced by a switchboard in the Mineral Lodge and when the tree fell against the lines an electric short occurred in the switchboard and sparked a fire. The town had no fire equipment and lost communications with the neighboring towns and the outside world. There was little anyone could do but watch the lodge burn down.

Shortly after the lodge caught fire, other fires were sparked in neighboring homes. At first residents thought an arsonist was wreaking havoc and setting fires. They soon discovered however that the telephone lines were shorting out and were sparking the fires. Armed with axes the town residents chopped the telephone lines to their homes and did what they could to stop and control the fires.

Chris Hafley of the Park Service, fired up Lassen Park's rotary snow blower, a "Sno Go" nicknamed "Babe" and blew tons of snow into the Mineral Lodge and finally put out the blaze but the damage was complete, a total loss of the Mineral Lodge.

After the smoke had cleared the town met to discuss ways to prevent this type of tragedy from happening in the future.

They were thankful that no lives were lost, but they felt vulnerable none the less. These citizens were part of the generation later called by Tom Brokaw, the "Greatest Generation". They had suffered the privations of the Great Depression and War and had endured and risen above it. They had fought Fascism in Europe and the Pacific and won. They displayed self-reliance and a can-do spirit. They organized the first volunteer fire company in the unincorporated county.

The owner of the Mineral Lodge, Husky Beresford, also owned the water company and he installed inch and a half stand pipes on street corners. The citizens raised money from their own funds to purchase a fire hose and nozzles. Buying an engine came later. The newly organized Fire company started meeting and training. One of the first items of business was what to call themselves. They had standpipes and hoses, but no engine or fire truck so they settled on the name "Mineral Hose Company No.1", a name proudly used to this day.

The first volunteers organized a fund drive and sent out letters asking each property owner to contribute \$35.00 a year to fund the Fire Company. They also created bylaws and were duly constituted as a Volunteer Fire Company under Sec on 14825 of the California Health and Safety Code. The first members of the Mineral Hose Company were: Hugh Field (Chief); Philip Brown (Asst. Chief), Richard Brown (2nd Asst. Chief), Lester Bodine (Secretary- Treasurer), Charles Edwards, William Douglas, Ross Parker, Ernest Schultz, Chris Hafley, Alfred Wilson, Walter Wilson, Robert Smith, William H. Warren Jr., Alfred Donau, Merrill Woodward, Walter Lan and H.K. Beresford with ten honorary members.

A 1936 Dodge Pumper was purchased from the county with company funds for \$400.00 May 4, 1950. The first fire house was built with volunteer labor and donated lumber from the Brown Brother's Saw Mill in Mineral at about the same time.

In 1984 the people of Mill Creek, six miles south-east of Mineral started their own volunteer fire company becoming the "Mill Creek Volunteers" with Terry Neher as their captain. This group celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2009 and are still active.

At some point, the Mineral and Mill Creek Volunteers became one company. Engine 120 and Squad 420 are stationed in Mineral and Engine 620 is stationed in Mill Creek. The original members were Terry Neher, Georgene Neher, Jim McDaniel, Norm Bateman, Luce Mason, John Frehse, Dan Townsend and Pat Townsend.

Today (2009) the volunteers of the Mineral Hose Co. No.1 and Mill Creek Volunteers are: (Chief) Al Blomquist, (Asst Chief) Terry Neher, (Secretary-Treasurer) Georgene Neher, (Captains) John Freshe, Doug Smith, Harold Lucas, R.B Wadlington, Greg Gormely, and Dan L Foster. Honorary members include: Mike Berish, Clyde Orr, Al Wilson, Dan Foster, Gary Begrin and Frank Boes.

The Mineral Hose Company has protected their community for 60 years and the Mill Creek Volunteers have protected their community for 25 years. They have rescued accident victims, responded to medical needs and have aided US Forest Service and Cal Fire on wildfires. They enjoy the full and generous support of the communities of Mineral and Mill Creek and look forward to continuing service for years to come.

Annually there is a Pancake Breakfast and 4th of July parade that offers both community members and visitors a chance to participate and celebrate the volunteers of this organization. It is held on Sunday of the 4th of July Weekend in Mill Creek at the Mill Creek Resort. The Parade is open to anyone and the announcement of the Parade starting time (usually between 10-11am) is made at the breakfast.