

WESTBURY FD – “TURTLES” DRILL TEAM



Since the very beginning of the volunteer fire service, competition has been the driving force, or so it seems. Who was the first to arrive on the fire, the first to put water on the fire, the company that extinguished the fire or made the dramatic rescue.

Contests or tournaments, between rival companies began sometime in the early 1800's. In those early days, the contests were simple in scope, for example, who could pump a stream of water the furthest using their hand pumpers. Over the years, the contests became more sophisticated, especially here on Long Island.

At the turn of the century, soon after the formation of Hook & Ladder Company No: 1, a group of men in the company began to formulate plans to organize a drill team. The group utilized the hose wagon as the first drill team apparatus.

The first tournament that the team competed in was the Hempstead drill in 1903. Mr. William Post offered the use of his team of horses to draw the truck to the tournament, and, for his efforts was presented with a whip by the Company. In September, the team competed in the Labor Day drill, held in Sea Cliff. This drill was sponsored by the Nassau County Firemen's Association, which now organized the tournaments, which were now held more regularly and on a yearly basis.



The first time a prize, a kerosene lamp, was won by the drill team, comprised of members of the Hose Company No. 1, which took over the reins of the drill team, was the Hempstead tournament held in 1912. The cherished prize is today, safely displayed in the department's trophy case. Prizes offered during these early days of tournaments, consisted of cups, lamps, furniture, rugs, nozzles, trumpets, and in some cases, money.



The events, in those early days of tournaments, that the teams competed in consisted of foot races, running hose, dry hose running, ladder and efficiency. In 1916, a new twist was added to the competitions, with the addition of motorized apparatus. now, instead of pulling a hose wagon down the competition track, the drill team members would ride the back and sides of the apparatus, as it raced down the course.

Each year the team improved, and in 1917, at the tournament in Woodmere, the team set a new record in Motor Hook & Ladder (using the Kelly-Springfield Truck), with a time of 37 seconds. Over the next twenty-five-years, the Hose Company No. 1 drill team won many, many trophies. The team also broke many existing records, and, set numerous new record times.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1941, the competitions were put on hold, due in large part, that many of the young men were now defending fighting to free the world of the axis powers. It would not be until the late 1940's , with the war's conclusion, that the tournaments would once again thrive throughout Long Island.



At the conclusion of World War II, life in America, and activities in the volunteer fire service, began to slowly return to normal.

Little by little, the activities that the departments and companies in Nassau County so fervently pursued before the outbreak of war were once more beginning to flourish. One of the most popular activities was the racing or tournament team.

As has been previously noted, the racing teams of Westbury, especially the men from Hose 1, were a force to be reckoned with on the tournament track.

In 1948, the members of the drill team, which consisted of members from each of the three companies, decided it was time to identify the team with a name. No doubt, after much discussion and debate over what name to choose, the team finally decided on the name "*Turtles*." Throughout Long Island, teams began to adopt team names-Teddy's Boys of Oyster Bay Co. #1, the Hicksville *Hicks*, Carle Place *Frogs*, Hempstead *Flukes*, Glenwood *Greenhorns*, here wasn't a company or department whose team did not have a "*team name*."

As in many other departments, being a member of the drill team, was passed on from generation to generation. The Bennett's, Buck's, Riccardo's and Readon's were all fierce competitors, and through this sense of competition, made the team achieve a standard of winning.

Even though the methods used in competition have changed dramatically since the early days of tournaments, the passion for that championship cup have not diminished.

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The Team has achieved many major accomplishments since competing in their first tournament at Hempstead in 1903:

1969-2nd Place, Total Points, NYS Drill

1972-Set State Record in Motor Hose Class B 7.98 seconds.

1976-Nassau County Champs

1976-Bi-Centennial Champs

1976-Woodmere Champs

1976-Labor Day Champs (Hicksville Drill)

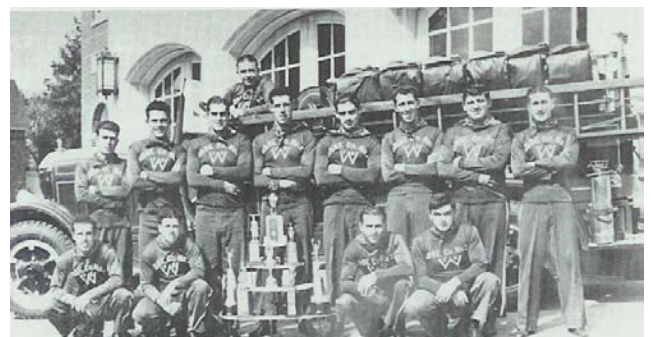
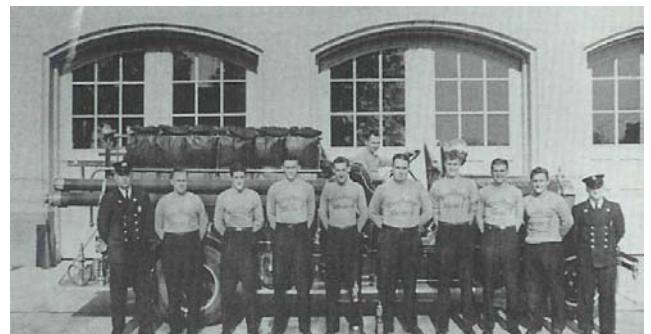
1978-Nassau County Champs

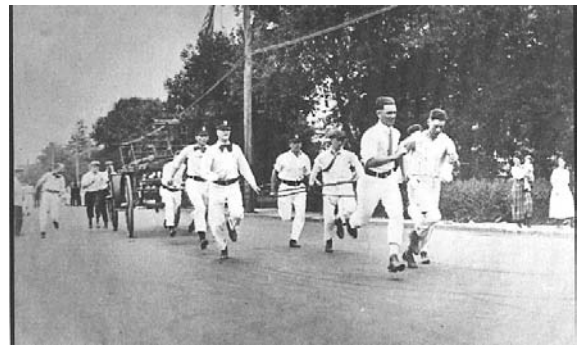
1978-Woodmere Champs

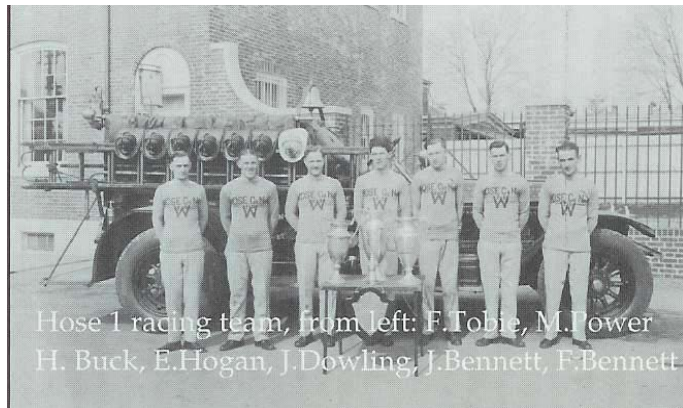
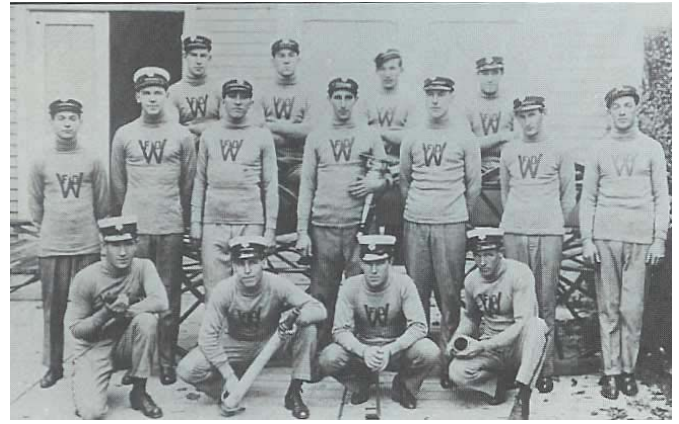
1978-Motor Pump Champs (most points in Motor Pump 1 season)

1979-Motor Pump Champs

1967-1979: For 12 straight years, 9th Battalion Champs



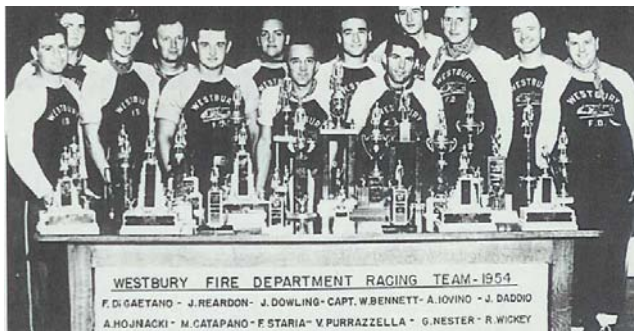




Hose 1 racing team, from left: F. Tobie, M. Power, H. Buck, E. Hogan, J. Dowling, J. Bennett, F. Bennett



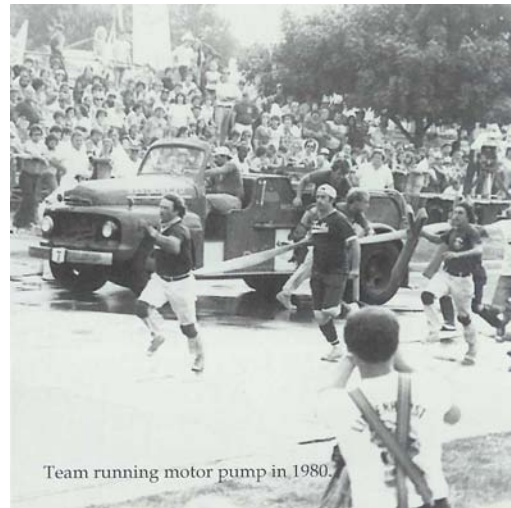
M. CATAPANO - D. SUMMA - CAPT. PURRITIA - C. SUMMA - M. PURRITIA - J. MANTLE



WESTBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT RACING TEAM - 1954
F. DI GAETANO - J. REARDON - J. DOWLING - CAPT. W. BENNETT - A. IOVINO - J. DADDIO
A. HOJNACKI - M. CATAPANO - F. STARIA - V. PURRAZZELLA - G. NESTER - R. WICKEY



1964 - banner year for the Turtles Drill Team





"C" Ladder. Hitting the brakes just past the 150!



the dummy contest, a
owback to the days of old



Heading for the target in efficiency