

This history of the Pendleton Fire Department, and Pendleton Emergency Ambulance, was researched and compiled by Pam H. Jones in 2021.

## **The Pendleton Fire Department was organized in 1904, 117 Years Ago. This is our story:**

From *The Pendleton Times*, October 7, 1904 – “The Volunteer Fire Department has been organized. The first steps toward the organization were taken last Friday night when a meeting was held in Taylor’s Hall. It was attended by a large percent of the young men of Pendleton, who signified their willingness to go into such an organization...A.B. Taylor was elected Fire Chief. The Town Board was to place a fire bell on the building and furnish the company with rubber boots, coats and hats. It was decided the boys would meet every Thursday night and practice until further notice.”

On August 7, 1908, work began on the new city building to be constructed of brick and was to be two stories high. It contained space for the fire and police departments, jail, council chamber, and power and light plant equipment.

*(History of Pendleton 1880-1970, Aloise Jarrett)*



*Photo provided by Bob Eley*



*Photo from the Pendleton Collection at PCL*

At approximately 7:30 in the evening, on January 9, 1936, during a Town Board meeting, the Pendleton Town Hall Building blew up. The blast occurred when a board member lost his spectacles through a grate over an old cistern. He and the Town Marshall climbed down into the cistern, and one of them struck a match. A sewer gas explosion followed immediately. Five people

were killed and thirteen others were injured. The fire department lost all of its equipment in the blast. (See site marker on Pendleton Avenue.)

On June 30, 1936, the Trustees of the Town of Pendleton held a special session regarding the need to purchase a fire truck to replace trucks lost in the Town Hall Explosion. The members of the board voted to purchase a **Diamond T truck chassis** from Howe Fire Apparatus in Anderson, Indiana. The truck was purchased for \$3757, and is still owned by the PFD; this truck is **Fire Engine #1**.



*This photo of the Diamond T, Fire Engine #1, was provided by the PFD*

On December 21, 1937, nearly two years after the Town Hall Explosion, while still trying to recover from the devastating loss caused by the explosion, the Trustees met again. The members voted to purchase a **1931 Chevrolet** from B&C Chevrolet for \$175. An additional funding amount of \$1267 was approved to have Howe Fire Apparatus outfit the truck. This fire truck, purchased in 1937, is **Fire Engine #2**, and after 84 years of firefighting duty, **Fire Engine #2** was brought back to its home in Pendleton on August 29, 2021. For the full story of its journey, please see the article “The Evolution of Pendleton Fire Fighting Equipment”, also researched and compiled by Pam H. Jones, and also linked on this website.



*This photo of Fire Engine #2, during a fundraiser, was provided by the PFD*



From 1904 to 2021, the Pendleton Fire Department Fire Chiefs and volunteer firemen have provided excellent service to our community. A total of twelve fire chiefs have served from 1904 to 2021, and they are all named below. Unfortunately, the 1936 Town Hall Explosion destroyed all Fire Department records so we are missing specific tenure years from 1904 to 1955. With much gratitude, we honor the following chiefs:

1904-? the first Fire Chief: A. B. Taylor

1927- circa 1940: Walter L. Lewis

circa 1940 – 1949: Claude Taylor

1950 -? Carl Reddick

1954: C. M. Craig

1954: Garland Brookbank or Verle Ring

1955-1984: Ralph Miller

1985-2003: Kurt Kahl

2004-2014: Danny Gardner

2015-2016: Mike Hall

2017-2020: Jeff Moore

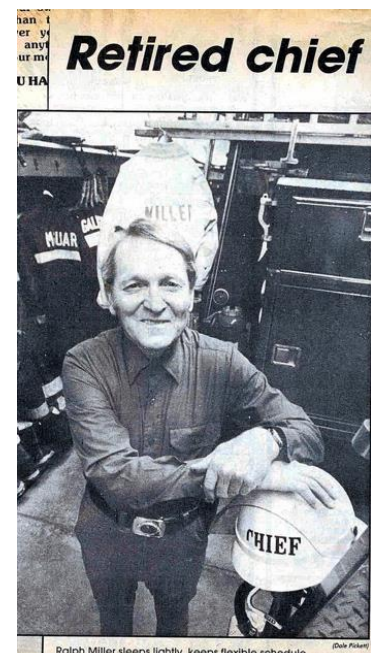
2021-2022: Chris Nodine



*Photo provided by the Pendleton Fire Department*



*Photo provided by the Pendleton Fire Department*



*Photo of Ralph Miller provided by Dale Pickett*



Photo provided by the Pendleton Fire Department

In 2021, PFD Chief Chris Nodine said, “In 1975, a big change took place in Indiana, ambulance services must be certified by the state.”

Prior to 1975, local funeral homes, including Cornell Bright Funeral Home (now Wilson St. Pierre) provided emergency medical transport to hospitals. The change was the passage of Indiana statute PL 55 passed in 1974. The new state mandate required that ambulance services be certified, and licensed Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) respond to calls. The state would begin governing the courses, curriculum, and recertification requirements of all EMTs. The ambulances themselves would pass strict guidelines regarding size, lights, equipment and manpower.

As a result, Pendleton Emergency Ambulance (PEA) was established as a separate 501©3 under the leadership of Pendleton Fire Department.



In 2021, Chief Nodine praised all the PEA Chiefs and Volunteers who serve our community 24-7: “Just in the last 8 years, PEA has made over 11,000 runs, saving lives.” With gratitude we honor the names of the men and women serving as PEA Chiefs:

1975: the first Ambulance Chief, Jim Davis

1976-1978, 1982-1983, 1986, George Gasparovic

1979-1981, Jack Kasdorf

1984-1985, 1991, Jeff

Moore

1987, Gary Meeker

1988, Doug McGee

1989, 1990, Cara

Brandom

1990, Ralph Hand

1992, Greg Thompson

1993-1996, Jeanette

Isbell

1997-1998, Dave Parker

1999, Jim Stewart

1999-2000, Dave Parker

2001-2021, Don Meyer



*Photo provided by Pendleton Emergency Ambulance*

In 1983, the Rookie Program for PEA was launched. High school students were invited to more formally be involved in PEA. Many benefits of the program included more students potentially becoming adult PEA members, medical experience for those considering a career in medicine or health care, and the experience of learning to effectively handle a high level of responsibility rarely required of young people in volunteer roles.

The community sponsored, supported, and cheered on special PEA fundraising events like the Grand Prix through the Park.





In 2002, Pendleton and Fall Creek Township built a new Pendleton Fire Station. The building design was created to reflect elements of the previous Town Hall building, destroyed by fire and explosion in 1936, and to house both PFD and PEA.



*Both photos provided by the PFD*





# The EMS Communicator

INDIANA EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COMMISSION  
315 STATE OFFICE BUILDING, INDIANAPOLIS IN 46204  
TELEPHONE: (317) 232-3980

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## High School Students Assist Local Ambulance Service

*From Pendleton Emergency Ambulance Service*

In an effort to supplement crews and offer interesting and valuable training to the younger segment of the Pendleton Community, PEA (Pendleton Emergency Ambulance) has initiated a new and innovative program involving high school students.

George Gasparovic, Assistant ambulance chief, met with local school officials and presented an idea. With the cooperation of Supt. Charles Mock, Pendleton Heights Principal Loran Skinner, and a progress-minded school board, a pilot program was designed. It allows a few selected seniors to run with experienced EMTs on the service. The "rookies" receive the same training orientation as

all other personnel and are attending an EMT training course. If there is an ambulance call, they are allowed to leave class without scholastic penalty.

Allowing these students to receive this training and experience is advantageous for the school. It allows trained personnel to be at the school and school activities. For the individual it is an excellent career development concept, since it introduces the student to the medical community. In past years, several local students have joined the ambulance service following graduation. Some are now serving on college ambulance services or have decided to further their careers in the medical

field. Encouragement and cooperation from the school system as shown also creates a positive public image for the school and the community.

According to Gasparovic, "A two-fold accomplishment has developed as they assist us. They are receiving a better understanding of the adult community and are learning to work with adults on an adult level. Experience has shown them to be responsible and capable young men and women. Their interest and caring attitude are tremendous assets. Hopefully, they are paving the way for other young people to generate interest for similar programs throughout the state."



*Photos and images provided by PFD and PEA*

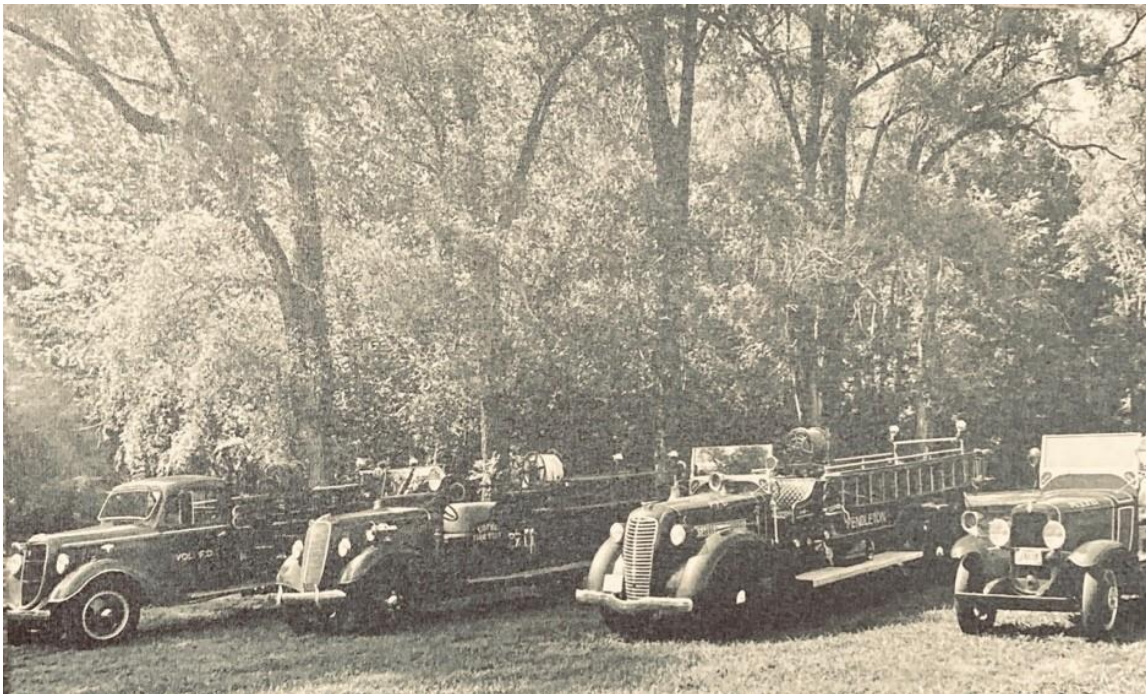
In the late 1990's as demand for service continued to increase, the PEA Board began discussing offering advanced life support locally. Doug McGee, PEA's first medic, said: "Prior to PEA offering ALS, we used a paid regional service. One night I was on a run when the medic asked not where in Pendleton do I go, but where is Pendleton? That told me we needed to make a change. Plus, ALS prices were going up and the paid service was cutting back on availability. "



ALS has been provided since midnight January 1, 2003, to Pendleton patients. Kurt Kahl, PFD Fire Chief when this new level of service was introduced, said “It is quicker access for those needing emergency care.” Doug McGee said “We saved 15 minutes. This could mean life or death for a patient.”

In 2021, Chief Nodine recalled his experiences as a medic with PEA, as a volunteer PFD firefighter and as Fire Chief. “I grew up here. I enjoy and take very seriously our work together to save lives. We know people depend on us to offer the best firefighting and emergency ambulance service possible. Understanding our history is important to me. We see the changes and challenges that faced us over 117 years of service. I can hardly imagine what new challenges will be before us – but I know from our community’s engagement, and continued support for PFD and PEA, we will meet needs and continue to offer the best care possible for the kids, grandkids and into the future.”

On August 29, 2021, we celebrated Pendleton’s Bicentennial. Our community is grateful for our volunteers and citizens who create and sustain the Pendleton Fire Department- Fall Creek Township, and Pendleton Emergency Ambulance.



Special thanks to the PFD, Chris Nodine, and Jeff Moore for their help in this project, and to Christine Bellessis for her editing help.