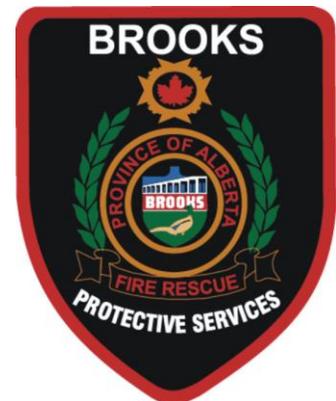


*History of the  
Brooks Fire Department*

The following history of the Brooks Fire Department was prepared by Maurice Landry after reviewing clippings from the Brooks Bulletin obtained by Joe Yarrow.



## Fire Chiefs

- J.A. Bosley 1913-1914
- Unknown 1914-1936
- William Swanson 1936-1937
- Graham Anderson 1937-1939
- Fred Hansen 1939-1949
- Oliver Ingram 1949-1955
- George Anderson 1955-1973
- Gordon Wilson 1973-1991
- Denis Cunninghame 1991-2002
- Kevin Swanson 2003-present

## Interesting Facts

- **1910** – July 14<sup>th</sup> the Village of Brooks was formally established and became a Town a year later.
- **1911** – A large fire destroys a whole downtown block. Constable Heskath expressed the need to organize a fire brigade and purchase a reliable fire pump as the existing one is in a state of disrepair.
- **1913** – November – A Fire Brigade was organized with J.A. Bosley as the Fire Chief.
- **1914** – January – The Fire Brigade moved to request Town Council to purchase a gasoline engine and force pump to be mounted on a truck which will be used in addition to the present chemical pump.
- **1915** – January – Fire destroys the Town Office, Fire Hall & Jail.
- **1920** – May – Council decides to spend \$10,000 for a new fire hall and Town Office. The old chemical engine was reported in fair shape.
- **1937** – December – Fire Chief Graham Anderson recommends that Council purchase a new fire truck. The 1928 Model A chemical truck has been used in Ontario and the price of \$750 plus freight is reasonable.

- **1938** – February – Fire Chief Graham Anderson's year end report indicated the department attended 4 alarms and had 44 members. He recommended that the department should be appropriated \$1 per capita instead of the present \$0.03. He also stressed the need for a new fire truck.
- **1941** – Electric fire siren was installed downtown to alert fireman of an emergency call.
- **1945** – February – Town purchased the 1941 Ford for the Brooks Fire Brigade at a cost of \$3,400.00. This was a much needed replacement for the existing 1928 chemical truck.
- **1949** – A crew from Brooks participated in a hose laying competition. They laid 200 feet of hose and had water in 34 seconds. The Provincial record was 27.4 seconds.
- **1952** – December – The new Town Office and Fire Hall are located on First Avenue at First Street West.
- **1955** – Firemen received \$5 per month, which was called "soap money". Most times the firemen, after receiving their \$5, went to the local beer parlor for the evening.
- **1958** – February – Fire Chief George Anderson reports that the fire department had 10 calls in 1957.
- **1961** – Brooks Rural Fire Association is formed.
- **1963** – Rural Fire Department purchases a 1963 Dodge fire truck. It has a 500 gallon water tank and a 500 gpm front mount pump. The yearend report indicates there were 19 members in the Department and they attended 13 fire calls in Town.
- **1966** – Firemen to receive \$4 for the first hour of a call and then \$3 per hour thereafter. The Fire Chief would get \$6 for the first hour and then \$4 per hour thereafter.
- **1970** – The yearend report indicates there were 19 members and they attended 22 fire calls.

- **1973** – Town appoints Gordon Wilson as the first full-time fire chief. The Fire Department ordered a new Ford fire truck at a cost of \$29,700. The truck was not delivered until 1975. It was a 1974 Ford which carried 500 gallons of water and had a 840 gpm pump.
- **1975** – The fire department moves to a new building on First Avenue at Centre Street. The equipment to be stored in the new building was the '41 Ford, '63 Dodge (Rural), '74 Ford and an equipment van. Fireman remuneration increased from \$4/hr to \$8/hr.
- **1977** – Purchased a 1952 85 foot Ladder truck. The truck was used by the Edmonton Fire Department. It was built by the Saskatoon Fire Engine Co. and had a King Seagrave Chassis with GMC power train.
- **1978** – The fire department purchased a foam maker for fire fighting. Council was also requested to purchase pagers for each fireman.
- **1979** – Fire department equipment consisted of 2 Town pumper trucks, one Rural pumper truck, an 85 ft ladder truck, equipment van and a rescue vehicle. The department had 3 two-way radios.
- **1980** – The department obtained additional rescue equipment which included air bags, an electric winch and an oxygen/acetylene cutting torch. Also the hose drying tower was added to the firehall. The fire department purchased a new 1-ton rescue truck. They responded to 73 fire calls in Town.
- **1981** – The Rural Fire Department receives a new fire truck. It was a 1981 Ford Louisville with 1000 gallon tank and a 625 gpm front mount pump. This replaced the 1963 Dodge which was purchased by the Town. Fire Chief G. Wilson reports that it is difficult to recruit firemen who are available during the day.
- **1982** – Volunteer fireman, George Anderson, is voted the Chamber of Commerce citizen of the year, for his many years (34 years) of service to the community.

- **1984** – The fire department purchased a rescue tool called the Jaws of Life. Also acquired 700 feet of 4" high volume fire hose.
- **1988** – A new Ford pumper truck was purchased at a cost of \$150,000. This truck would replace the 1941 Ford which will be moved to the museum. It had a 1050 gpm pump and carried 1000 gallons of water.
- **1989** – The fire siren was taken out of service. All firemen were now equipped with pagers.
- **1991** – Gordon Wilson retires and Denis Cunninghame is appointed Fire Chief. The department answered 101 fire calls during year – 71 were in Town and 30 were in the rural area. Volunteer firemen receive \$10.50 per hour while fighting fires.
- **1993** – The Rural Fire Department purchases a Volvo fire truck at a cost of \$170,000 to replace the 1981 Ford. It carried 1000 gallons of water and had a 1050 gpm pump. An addition to the firehall for a workshop and storage area was completed.
- **1995** – The department purchased a new Volvo truck to be used as a rescue truck and a mobile command centre at a cost of \$144,000. They answered 109 fire calls during the year – 69 were in Town and 40 were in the rural area.
- **1996** – A new law was passed to allow volunteer firemen to use flashing green lights to advise motorists they were responding to a fire call.
- **1997** – Fire Chief Denis Cunninghame suggests to Council that a new fire hall is required as the department is outgrowing the present building. Kevin Swanson was hired as the second full-time firemen.
- **1998** – The department purchases water rescue equipment including a 14 foot Zodiac inflatable boat. In August, all emergency calls are switched to a 911 service.
- **1999** – A new fire truck was acquired. It had a 1250 gpm pump and replaces the 1974 Ford Pumper.

- **2000** – The department answered 133 fire calls during the year – 90 were in Town and 43 were in the rural areas.
- **2001** – The department responded to 191 calls – 145 were in the Town and 46 were in the rural areas. The staff of 28 firefighters received 1,199 hours of training. Department hosted Southern Prairie Fire Fighter Combat Challenge.
- **2002** – The department responded to 173 emergency calls. Two volunteer firefighters, Terry Welsh and Shane Cote, were presented with Life Saving Awards. Volunteers participated in the Fire Fighter Combat Challenge in Swift Current. Brooks hosted the Battle of the Badges Charity Hockey Game. Denis Cunninghame resigns as Fire Chief.
- **2003** – A total of 218 emergency calls were answered this year. Kevin Swanson is new Fire Chief and Keith Martin is hired as Assistant Chief. Ten members, Joe Yarrow, Rick Evans, Kevin Swanson, Maurice Landry, Ron Hagg, Denis Cunninghame, Barry Yokoyama, Liam Latta, Shawn Bryant and Ron Redelback were presented with Alberta Emergency Services Medal for 12 years of service. Two members, Denis Cunninghame and Liam Latta, were presented with the federal Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal for 20 years of service.
- **2004** – 310 emergency calls were responded to this year. Land purchased for a new fire hall.
- **2005** –A total of 341 emergency calls were answered. Three members, Jim Bonora, Terry Welsh & Keith Martin, were presented with the Alberta Emergency Services Medal for 12 years of service. Two members, Keith Martin & Joe Yarrow, were nominated for federal Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal for 20 & 40 years of service.
- **2006** - A total of 355 emergency calls were answered. Received delivery of the new Rapid Response Vehicle.

- In May, the new Regional Fire Training Facility, located at 280 Canal Street, was opened.
- **2007** - 394 emergency calls were answered during the year. A 2007 109 ft Rosenbauer Aerial/Pumper was purchased. Construction of New Fire Hall (Protective Services Facility) was approved by City Council. Ground Breaking Ceremony occurred May 12, 2007.
  - **2008** – In January the Brooks Rural Fire Protection Association disbands and their two trucks were signed over to the Brooks Fire Department through an agreement with the County of Newell. The new fire hall is completed with Grand Opening Ceremonies held on September 6. Two members, Mike Stewart and Darcy Seitz, were presented with Alberta Emergency Services Medal of 12 years of service.
  - **2009** A total of 382 emergency calls were answered. Assistant Fire Chief Keith Martin, was nominated for federal Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal for 30 years of service. Firefighter Joe Yarrow was awarded City of Brooks Citizen of the Year. Hosted live mock disaster exercise with 124 participants was a huge success. Received partial grant funding to purchase Hazmat Decon Unit. Purchased new 17.5 ft rescue watercraft along with side-scan-sonar, 4-head underwater camera & GPS capability.
  - **2010** - A total of 378 emergency calls were answered. Changed 911 Dispatch Services from FREMS (Black Diamond) to Red Deer Emergency Services. Hung huge Canada flag in front of City Hall with our two aerial units while Winter Olympics Torch Relay ran underneath. Fire dept. took part in the City's centennial celebrations. Regional training facility receives large storage shed to protect antique fire trucks, etc. Keith Martin becomes Fire & Emergency Services Coordinator for the County of Newell and through agreement with City of Brooks remains a member of the Brooks Fire Department.

- **2011** - A total of 310 emergency calls were answered. Volunteer firefighter Stewart Luchies is hired as full-time Deputy Fire Chief. County of Newell purchases new 1 –Ton fire truck c/w 300 gallon tank & 1500 psi pump. Captain James Mitchell is awarded the Alberta Emergency Services Medal of 12 years of service. Our Regional Fire Training Facility was very busy with Brooks & County of Newell FDs training schedules. Other FDs from outside the County of Newell also used our facility a total of 10 times this year.
- **2012** - A total of 332 emergency calls were answered. Our newest member “Tinder the Fire Dog” joined thanks to our secretary Jody Attwell’s for sharing her family’s Dalmatian. Tinder spends each work day putting smiles on folks young & old by demostating how to crawl under smoke & how to stop drop & roll. Purchased new International 4000 gallon water-hauler, Unit “Tender 210”. Captain Jim Bonora, was awarded the federal Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal for 20 years of dedicated service. Fire (5) firefighters awarded Queen Elisabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, Jim Bonora, Rick Evans, Keith Martin, Kevin Swanson & Joe Yarrow.
- **2013** – Our Centennial Year!!! Cenovus donated a Mini Emergency Response Vehicle (MERV) along with state-of-the-art Trench Rescue Equipment. The MERV is a 2013 John Deere Gator outfitted with 70 gallon water tank, fire pump & tools plus basket stretcher, spine board, O2 & jump kit. The MERV allows us to access areas that fire trucks & ambulances can not. We hosted the Southern Alberta Regional Firefit Championships on June 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. We replaced our 15 yr/old Rescue Boat with a new 15 ft 35 HP Jet-Drive Zebec Recsue Boat. Seven (7) Brooks firefighters (James Mitchell, Anare Roqara, Dustin Bartlett, Cody Picot, James Cooley, Bobby Dyck & Bryan Wright) competed in the Canadian FIREFIT National Finals in Edmonton Sept.

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> the team of James Cooley, Bobby Dyck & Bryan Wright were awarded the Fastest Relay Team in Canada and will proudly represent the City of Brooks in the FIREFIT World Championships in Las Vegas, October 22<sup>nd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. Our Centennial Celebrations were held October 5<sup>th</sup> at the firehall. Citizens of Brooks & area were in attendance as we celebrated our 100 Years of Fire Service. Mayor Shields unveiled in Commemorative Painting completed by local artist Linda Wilson.