75th Anniversary of the Port Crane Fire Company
August 20, 2011
11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

A beautiful, sunny day with a deep blue, cloudless sky and temperatures in the low 80’s greeted the Port Crane Fire Company on their day of celebration. A very interesting program was presented and was well attended by approximately 125 people.

Firefighter Dick White was the Master of Ceremonies. The first speaker was Sharon Aswad, 1st Lieutenant of the Hillcrest Fire Company, former President of Hillcrest Fire Company and Chief Response Officer of the American Red Cross-Southern Tier Region. Sharon spoke of the importance of a local fire department; the significant role women play in a volunteer fire department, and gave examples of fires that were extinguished solely by women.

Patrick Brennan, County Executive, then spoke about the number of volunteers serving in Broome County and the role Port Crane has played in the Broome County Firefighter’s Association throughout the years. He added his congratulations to the company on the anniversary of their 75 years of service.

Assemblyman, Clifford Crouch, of the 107th Assembly District spoke about his three years chairing the Task Force on Volunteer Firemen. Different issues addressed were how to attract volunteers, giving adequate training, raising money, and the certification of medical personnel to ride with the firefighters. Assemblyman Crouch presented a citation honoring the 75 years of dedicated service the Port Crane Fire Company has provided.

Director of Emergency Services 401, Brett Chellis spoke about why Port Crane Fire Company is special.

1) Port Crane Fire Company, under the direction and operation of Ernest S. Youngs, was the first to initiate a Broome County Fire Coordinator position and he also set up and ran the Dispatch Center.
2) Mr. Youngs began and installed the radio system and oversaw the building of a tower on Stratmill Road to be used for this purpose. His children, Dean, Paul, and Audrey, as well as, a grandson, Kevin, have all been active participants in the work of Fire prevention and rescue.
3) Under former Chief, John Eldred, a fire numbering system for the Town of Fenton was implemented. This innovative idea was soon begun in the Town of Colesville and then spread to other townships within the county.
4) Esther Aswad helped to implement the Broome County 911 Communications Center and Audrey France, Ernest Young’s daughter, was the first paid dispatcher for Broome County.

Historian’s Note: “Ernest Youngs was Broome County’s first Fire Coordinator and doubled as Port Crane fire chief and dispatched his department out of the Port Crane general store in the early 1950’s. First, he dispatched for Port Crane. Then he took in Sanitaria Springs and Chenango Bridge, and after that “it just mushroomed,” said France of Chenango Bridge.” Taken from Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin article by Jim Wright, October 27, 2005.
In a Brief Look Back, Mr. Wright told how in early 1936 three houses burned to the ground in Port Crane. Port Dickinson responded to the fire call, but could not make it to Port Crane in time to save the buildings. In August of 1936, petition was made to form Port Crane Fire Company.

A very nice PowerPoint presentation was shown with the history of the Port Crane Fire Company including some nice photographs. Many photographs have been donated by Paul Youngs, a son of Ernest Youngs.

Past Fire Chief, John Eldred, conducted a Dedication of the Port Crane Fire Company’s Museum. It was Mr. Eldred’s dream to have a Museum in the Route 369 Fire Station; however, sufficient funds were not available to finish the room. A local resident, Pete Mooney, had a horrific accident on Monkey Run Road several years ago and the Port Crane Fire Company responded. It took many hours using the Jaws of Life to extricate Pete from his crushed pick-up truck. He was air lifted to Syracuse for treatment and survived. Out of gratitude and a desire to support the fire company, Pete’s wife, Ellen left a sum of money to the Port Crane Fire Company in her will. Sadly, several years later Ellen suffered a heart attack and passed away. In consultation with Pete, it was decided to use the money to finish the Museum Room. Pete Mooney was present today.

Chief Kevin Kresge, Secretary and Medical Lieutenant Earl Drury and Dean Horton, Chaplain of the Broome County Firefighters Association conducted “The Last Roll Call”. Earl Drury read the names of the Charter Members, the bell was rung, and the Chaplain Horton gave the Firefighters Memorial Prayer.

Pastor Daniel Baker, Chaplain of the Port Crane Fire Company and Pastor of First Baptist Church of Port Crane gave the Benediction. A Buffet Lunch was served and a good time was enjoyed by everyone for the remainder of the celebration.

Following is a list of current firefighters and auxiliary members.

Kevin Kresge       Chief
Brett Chellis      1st Assistant Chief
Tom Sheridan       2nd Assistant Chief
Dean Horton        Captain
Chad Benedict      Captain
Lance Catunato     Lieutenant
Jason McGonigal    Lieutenant
Tom Fletcher       Medical Captain
Earl Drury         Medical Lieutenant
Mike Grasso        Safety Officer
Daniel Baker       Chaplain
Jarred Francisco   Firefighter
Zac Gage           Firefighter
Art Goetsman       Firefighter
Zachary Kark (Military)* Firefighter
Don Klemppka       Firefighter
Robert Lee         Firefighter
Chuck Lalley       Firefighter
Terrence Patrias   Firefighter
Bill Pease         Firefighter
Bernie Russell     Firefighter
Al Seymour         Firefighter
Ralph Shoemaker    Firefighter
Jim Stout          Firefighter
Jesse Villella     Firefighter
Kurt Weir          Firefighter
Lonny Werner (Military)* Firefighter
Dick White         Firefighter

Listed in alphabetical order
Josh Beardsley     Firefighter
John Driesbaugh    Firefighter
Jeff Eldred        Firefighter
John Eldred        Firefighter
Tom Engle          Firefighter
Lonny Werner (Military)* Firefighter
Dick White         Firefighter
Auxiliary Members

*Listed in alphabetical order*

Nancy Baker
Anna Beckwith
Nancy Cady
Pam Dean
Barbara Eldred
Michelle Eldred
Debbie Fletcher
Ruth McMullen
Olga Ryman
Christell Shoemaker
Ruth Shoemaker

*Zachary Kark is currently serving in the Air Force and is stationed in Omaha, Nebraska. Lonnie Werner is currently serving in the Army and is stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina awaiting transfer to Italy this month.*

Barbara Guernsey,
Town of Fenton Historian