

Recall early history of fire station here -- when horses pulled wagons

With the dedication of the new fire station at 5921 North Figueroa street, Old Engine Station 12, which stood for 45 years on that site, is relegated to the memories of old-timers, along with the horse-drawn, coal stoked fire equipment the historic structure once housed.

The new two-story building which has taken its place is a two-company house, with all the modern improvements and conveniences that present-day design can envision, but George W. Simon, proprietor of the billiard parlor at Avenue 56 and Figueroa street, can remember back, "when" . . .

George recalls the day—April 5, 1905, to be exact—when he joined the Fire Department as a hoseman at Engine 12. That was about eighteen months after the station was commissioned. Equipment consisted of one second size Amoskeag Engine (coal stoked and all brass finished) and one Hose Cart with 1,000 feet of two and one-half inch hose. (That brass finish George would rather forget.)

LONG HOURS

Firemen then worked 24 hours a day, every day, with three hours a day allowed off for meals. Two days off were permitted each month, and all for a monthly salary of \$80.

Engine company 12 handled all fires north of Avenue 44. The exception to this was on receipt of a general alarm. George brings to mind the day the Van Nuys Broadway hotel burned. This was the longest run—from Engine 12 headquarters down to Fourth and Broadway. The hotel was located across the street from the present site of the Broadway department store and it took the company about 45 minutes to make the run. One of the horses was still kicking up his heels after their arrival, displaying the spirit for which the fire horses were famous. Keno and Rondo were teamed on the engine, Tom and John on the hose wagon. The wagon had replaced the two-wheeled reel cart which was the original equipment at the station.

INTERESTING LORE

The annual report of the Fire department for 1904 reveals some interesting lore. The following were causes among others of injuries reported: fell through pole hole; kicked by a horse; fell from hose wagon; horse stepped on foot.

Among expenses for the year at Engine 12 were: Salaries—\$6,541.25 (for crew of seven men); Barley and Bran—\$39.91; Horse Shoeing—\$34.25; Veterinary Services—\$18.10; Harness repairs—\$1.25; Hardware and Tools—\$20.82; Coal Oil—\$13.12.

OLD TIMERS

There are other local residents still in Highland Park who answered alarms from Engine 12 back in the days of horses. Among these are Barney Healy who retired as an Engineer and resides at 6223 Echo street. His

father was a councilman in the early days.

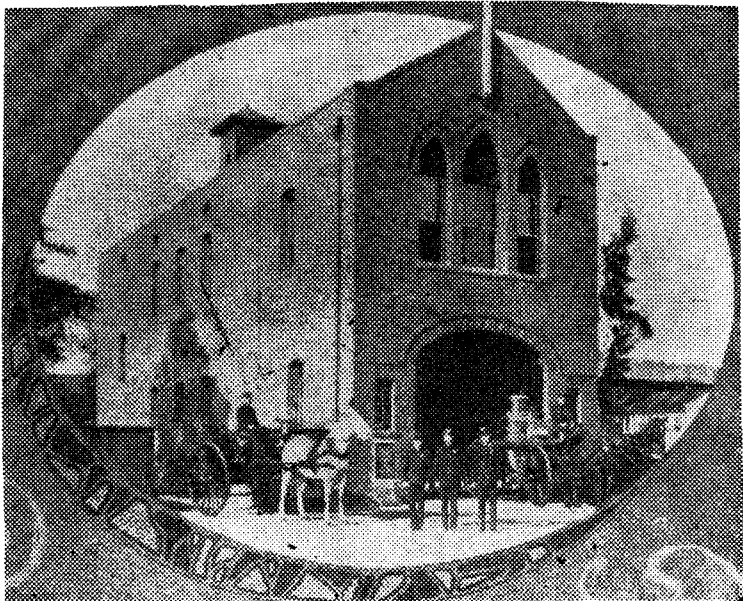
F. A. Alvarez who retired as a captain now conducts a funeral parlor at Olive and Court streets. "Gus" Alvarez broke his foot sliding a pole in the engine house back in 1910. Lee Davis retired as deputy chief of the department under chief engineer, Ralph J. Scott, in 1925 and resides in the north end of town.

George Simon retired as a lieutenant October 11, 1911, due to an injury.

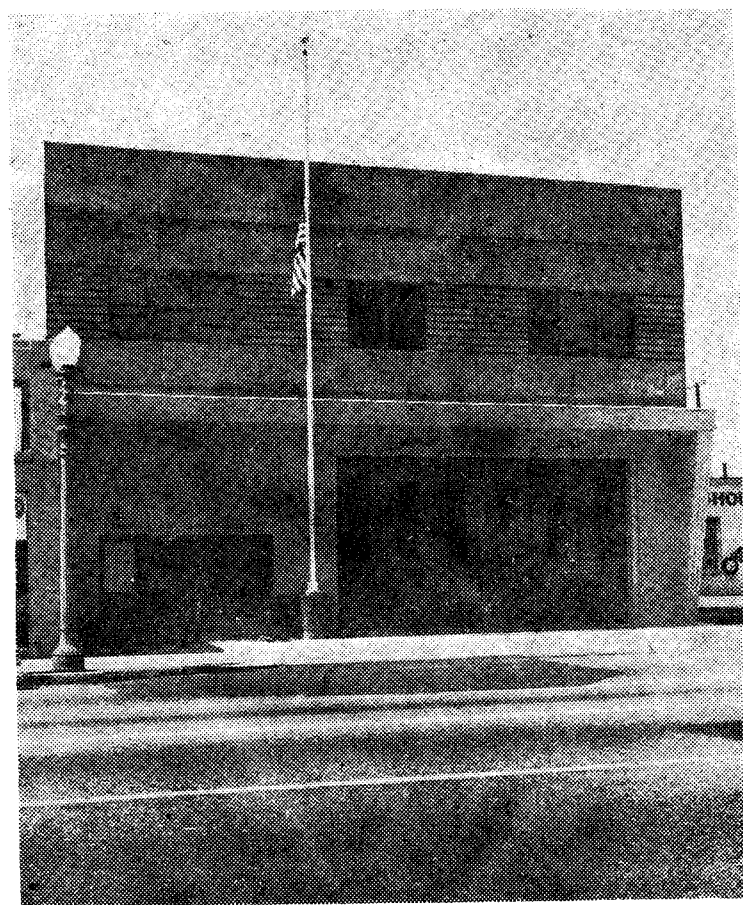
HISTORY REMAINS

The ground where Engine 12 is located was purchased by the city from J. J. Backus for \$900, and the building cost amounted to little over \$4500.

The new station, built at a cost of \$121,300, may be the last word in fire houses, but the Old Fire Station wrote the book, and the colorful history of spirited Keno and Rondo, Tom and John, cannot be replaced even by the architectural perfection of the new structure.



THE OLD — Replaced by the modern station house being dedicated today, Old Fire Station 12 is now just a memory of the days when horse-drawn fire equipment raced through the streets of Highland Park.



THE NEW — With Mayor Fletcher Bowron, and Fire Chief John Alderson, and Chamber President Charles Adair participating, the new \$121,300 fire station at 5921 North Figueroa will be dedicated today at 11 a.m. The public is invited to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremonies.