



Retrospect



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Restored 1935 fire truck draws kids, adults alike

Kids climb all over it, but most of all they want to ring the bell and sound the siren. Adults remember when the 1935 fire truck visited their schools during fire safety education programs when they were younger. Some even got to ride in it back then.

Terry Garland, chairman of the Denton County Historical Commission's Fire Truck Committee, and members of the committee are working to restore the 1935 Peter Pirsch hook and ladder truck.

Committee members Lee Capps and Bob Larrabee have shown the truck at numerous local events, where it has proven to be a big draw. The truck has been shown at the North Texas State Fair, the Denton Air Show, Arts, Antiques and Autos and the Denton Holiday Lighting, and it will be displayed as part of John B. Denton Days when the county celebrates the 200th birthday of the namesake of the City of Denton and Denton County in July, 2006.

The restoration of the truck is nearing completion, but it needs a permanent home.

Mark Martin, a local architect, has drawn plans for a building to house the fire truck, and the plans have been approved by the Historical Commission. The hope is that the structure can be built by the fire fighters memorial in the Historical Park near the Bayless-Selby House Museum.

Working from 1940s black and white photos of the truck when it was in service and a copy of the original 1935 specifications from the Peter Pirsch Co. in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Capps and other volunteers have been able to replace most of the missing original equipment.

The missing bell has been replaced by an exact duplicate, cast by a company in Michigan that has been making bells for many years.

The truck has more than 240 feet of wooden ladders. Although Ed Moorhead and Hugh Ayer refinished part of the ladders, most still need to be refinished. Many local businesses and individuals have donated parts, equipment, services, and money toward the ongoing restoration.

The late Joe Harris and other local fire fighters have provided invaluable history and lost parts for the truck.

Capps, a retired automotive engineer for Ford Motor Company, and many volunteers have contributed thousands of hours of their time and expertise to make the truck “shine” again. “We would like to ask anyone who has old picture of the truck or who has memories of the truck to contact us,” Capps said. Call him at home, (940) 382-0804, or call the Historical Commission at (940) 349-2860.

Donations may be made to the Denton County Historical Foundation Fire Truck Fund and mailed to the DCHC at 110W. Hickory, Denton 76201.