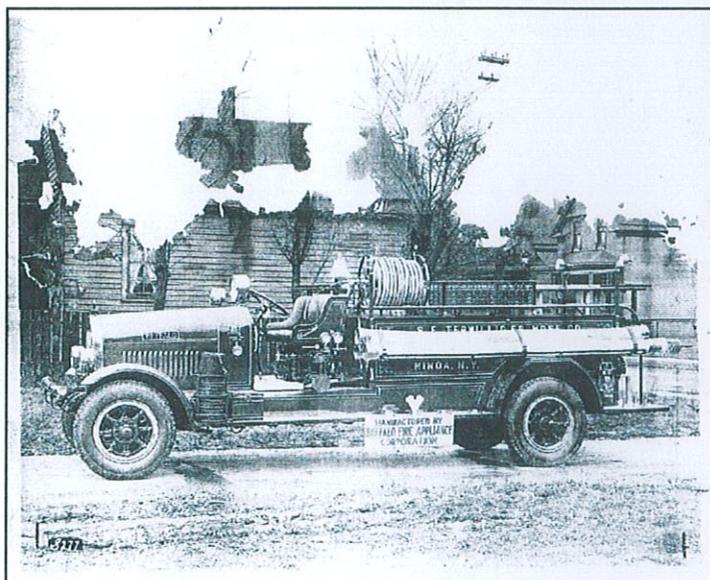


A 75th anniversary, a 99th birthday, and a return home after 62 years

On April 22, 2015, a few members of one of Minoa's oldest families commemorated some history from long ago. April 22nd had some deep meaning for Tom Schepp who has been consumed for the past two years on returning part of Minoa's history. His twelve year journey began late in the summer of 2003. His father Russ had died in his 87th year that July. As Tom was cleaning out his dad's desk, he came across a



folder of pictures and articles about one of Minoa's first fire engines. His dad had saved an old beat-up picture of a fire engine. There were also articles of old Minoa firemen arguing about the picture. Some said it was Minoa's Ward LaFrance, while others said it looked nothing like it. Russ said it was definitely not Minoa's Ward LaFrance, but it looked just like Minoa's first pumper, the "little Buffalo". Tom was intrigued. What was this indeed a picture of? Did it truly belong to Minoa at one time. Did it still exist? If so, where was it. Tom just couldn't put it down, he had to find out the answers.

Some research in Minoa's village hall provided the basics. The village had been created in 1913. Two major goals were behind the incorporation. The community was a collection of homes built quite close together. If one caught fire, it would easily spread to neighboring structures. As everyone had a well, in prolonged times without rain, they would go dry. If a community water system were built, everyone could have a continuous supply of water and a fire fighting network would also be in place. Bonds were secured to build the water system and by the mid-twenties every home had water piped to it along with street hydrants for fire protection. As the system had been built under budget, left-over money was used to purchase a fire engine which was to be housed in the newly constructed village hall.

July 13, 1927

FIRE ENGINEERING

719

Buffalo Type 50

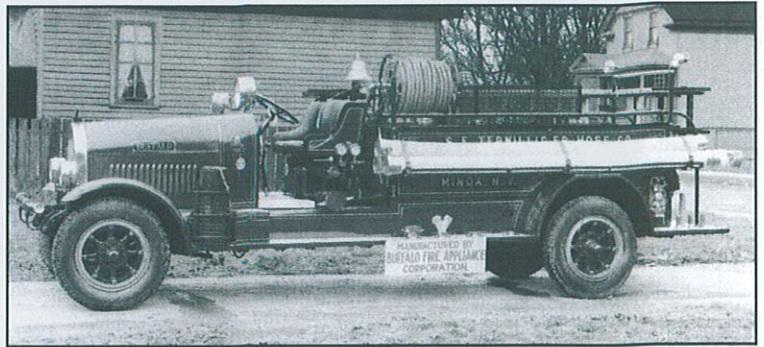
Speaks For Itself In
Construction — Service — Power

Write for Detailed Specifications

BUFFALO FIRE APPLIANCE CORP.
44 Central Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

The village board voted in January of 1927 to investigate what equipment to buy. They soon focused on a new manufacturer in Buffalo, New York. The Buffalo Fire Appliance Corporation had built fire extinguishers and supplied other equipment to fire departments since the turn of the 20th century. In 1925

they began to build fire engines. Unlike Ahrens-Fox and American LaFrance who built the entire vehicle, Buffalo bought standard chassis, installed chemical tanks and /or pumps, built the hose bed, and supplied a complete fire engine at a very reasonable price. In short order, many small upstate towns and villages were purchasing Buffalo equipment.



Factory photograph of Minoa's 1927 Buffalo

Minoa's trustees, fire chief, and some fireman traveled to Lyons and viewed a basic demonstrator, the Buffalo model 50, based on Selden chassis (built in Rochester) containing a Hale pump. They came back and recommended the village purchase it. After the positive vote, the engine was decked out in gold lettering with the village fire company's name and delivered in early February 1927. Two years later, the village bought another Buffalo engine. These two engines served the village for nearly three decades.

On April 22, 1940, both engines responded to the largest blaze in Minoa's history. Around 4:00 am a young fireman awoke in his parent's home on Main Street just north of the village to the sound of the fire siren. On this, his 24th birthday, Russ Schepp had been a fireman for two years. The same year he joined the fire department, he had become a licensed undertaker and embalmer. In these days most funeral services were held in the family home or church, so his base of operations was at his family home where he stored all of his equipment. To make ends meet, he was also one of two janitors at the village school right behind the village hall. A few years later he would become the school's first bus driver. As he looked out his window that April morning, the sky was ablaze. A few minutes earlier, the village priest, Father Norbert Scheid, had awoken to find the church ablaze next door to the rectory. He attempted to enter the sanctuary to rescue the sacred host from the tabernacle on the altar, but intense flames drove him back. He then smashed the glass on the fire pull



Fr. Norbert in Fireman's coat surveying the destroyed church

box on a pole in front of the church and awaited the arrival of the firemen. Russ arrived and immediately started setting up hoses from the small Buffalo parked on Dorothy Street next to the side rear of the church. Russ would remember years later that just as he arrived the bell in the steeple crashed to the basement and the steeple then fell backward into the church. Father Norbert was insistent on trying again to rescue the host.



Tom is convinced one of the shadows in back is his father.

By this time the altar had fallen into the basement. Donning a fireman's coat he started to crawl through a basement window to try and reach the altar. Unable to stop him, Russ and the other firemen trained water from their hoses over the determined priest. A few minutes later Father Norbert emerged with the sacred host safely in his hands. As dawn broke, it became quite obvious the church was a total loss. The firemen concentrated on protecting the other buildings in the area.

In 1953 the village started to update their equipment. The '27 Buffalo was traded in for a new '53 Mack, Minoa's first green fire engine. Two years later, the '29 was replaced with a '55 Mack, also painted green. As a young boy, Tom remembers seeing the '29 rust away in Pastuf's junk yard on North Central Avenue. But what happened to the '27 Buffalo that Mack took in trade? His research found that Mack sold it to a farmer on Long Island where the Mack fire truck factory was located in the '50's. That farmer sold it to another farmer in Connecticut who bought it because he was told it would reduce his insurance rates. It didn't, and the engine went into a shed. A few years later, a visitor saw it sitting there and asked the farmer what he was going to do with it? The farmer saw the opportunity and got rid of his problem pocketing \$45. Over the next 60 years, Bob Hotaling spent nights and weekends preserving the engine. While striping the paint, he ran across the word "Minoa" and learned some of its' history.



1927 Buffalo when Bob Hotaling bought it

By the time Tom tracked down the engine, Bob had died and his son Rick still housed the engine in a shed. Tom contacted Rick and explained who he was, that his father had been a long time fireman and mayor, and that he would like to return the engine to where it had served so many years. Rick explained that as the engine was so dear to his father, he would not sell it to Tom. Tom understood, but asked him to keep him in mind if he ever changed his mind.

Many years later, Minoa's 100th anniversary approached. Mayor Richard Donovan knew of Tom's quest, and asked if there was any chance the engine could be brought here for the celebration.



1927 Buffalo in Sharon, Connecticut

Tom wrote a letter in the fall of 2012 explaining the request, that he would provide adequate insurance, and pay for the transportation. No response was received. After some research, Rick Hotaling could not be found. Tom informed the mayor that the trail had gone cold.

On a bright summer day in June 2013, Tom got a phone call from Alton Golden, president of the Sharon Fire Department in Connecticut. Tom was puzzled by this call, and Mr. Golden explained that a letter Tom had written the previous fall was given to him. He related that his department now owned the fire engine, and they certainly would be willing to loan it. Tom explained the celebration had already taken place the previous January. Mr. Golden then said the department really didn't want the engine, would Tom be interested in buying it! Absolutely floored, Tom was speechless. Alton sent Tom an appraiser's report and Tom immediately offered more than the appraised value. On July 16, 2013, the exact 10th anniversary of Tom's dad's death, the Sharon Fire Department accepted Tom's offer! Did Russ have a hand in this from above?



1927 Buffalo one step closer to home



The restoration begins

Tom had the engine transported to his garage just north of Minoa being careful not to have the engine go through Minoa. From the fall of 2013, through the entire year of 2014, and into 2015, Tom and his mechanic, Carl van Kesteren, worked full time taking the engine completely apart. Then starting with the frame, completely rebuilt the unit one bolt at a time. As they took apart the pump, they discovered old, very old animal nests throughout. It was obvious the pump had not worked since it left Minoa decades ago.

Peter West, an owner of other Buffalo trucks, had written a book about the Buffalo company. He assisted Carl and Tom in their search for parts and diagrams. Slowly, ever so slowly, the work progressed. The engine was completely rebuilt. New valves and pistons. It had a dual ignition system, but the magneto needed rebuilding. George Pfeiffer in Mycenae began the body work and repainting. As the side hose bed panels were sandblasted, the word Minoa appeared again. Once the hood was striped, MFD appeared on both sides. Proof positive this was Minoa's Buffalo! Roger Thompson of Manlius meticulously rebuilt the hose bed out of solid white oak, just like the original. Tom searched the internet, and especially E-Bay for vintage



Original MFD on hood



The restoration continues

equipment and lanterns. Slowly, step by step, the factory picture of the engine began to come to life.

Work was nearing completion by the middle of April, 2015. Tom had an idea. 2015 was exactly 75 years from 1940. At four o'clock in the morning on April 22nd, on what would have been Russ's 99th birthday, Carl, Tom and two of his sons, T.R., and Minoa's current fire chief, Erich, drove

the '27 Buffalo out of the garage, and for the first time in 62 years, went up Main Street into Minoa. They turned onto Dorothy Street, parked to the rear of St. Mary's Church, hooked up to a fire hydrant, and Tom, just as his father did so long ago for Father Norbert, pumped water onto the sanctuary of the "new" St. Mary's church. Carl was so impressed with the engine and pump he had rebuilt— they just purred! After they packed everything up, Tom said they had one more stop to make.



Nearing completion in the spring of 2015



He turned onto Main Street, and then up into St. Mary's Cemetery where his parents were buried in the family plot. They stopped, and Tom, T.R. and Erich started telling "Russ" stories. One of Russ's favorite topics soon came up: Russ always thought Tom spent way too much money. Tom was instrumental in restoring Minoa's '53 Mack channeling family funds to that effort. What would Russ say about his latest venture? After a moment, T.R. got a grin on his face, and said grandpa probably would grouse "you know, there was a reason we got rid of this truck in 1953, why the heck are you bringing it back now?"

And so, a piece of Minoa's past is home, restored to its' appearance the day it was delivered in February 1927. If this engine could talk, imagine the stories it could tell. What would it have heard in the fire barn after meetings, or a fire call? "Meet you at Jigger's for a cold one", "let's go to Huller's and spin a few", or "let's go to Vance's and get a sandwich". Many old timers will remember these names with fondness, a few might even remember the engine itself. Many younger ones will be fascinated to see what a fire engine looked like in 1927.



Minoa Fire Department around 1930

To Tom, the history of his “Mayberry” where he grew up is precious, the names familiar, but foremost in his mind is the community pride represented by this fire engine, now home for good.



Minoa's restored 1927 Buffalo