

## Museum Around the Corner

### The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

#### Fire Companies ©

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Georgetown took every opportunity to have a parade and celebration. Competitions between the four volunteer Fire Companies took place annually, beginning in 1871, with prizes given for speed, skill, and participation in feats of daring and precision. The Georgetown Times published articles regularly about these well attended events. Membership in these fire companies was given elite status and praises were heaped not only on parade days, but on the efficiency and valor shown in real emergencies. Fire was a common catastrophe, and training was essential for performance and skill in minimizing the effects of frequent conflagrations. Here is the article on the competition in March 30, 1881 issue of the newspaper.

“ANNUAL PARADE – Programme for the Tenth Annual Parade of the Fire Department of Georgetown, S.C., Wednesday, April the 13, 1881.

Each company will assemble precisely at 2 o'clock, PM., on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, on the N.E. side of Front Street, head of column resting on Scriven Street, in the following order, vis:

Centennial Brass Band  
Board of Fire Masters  
Salamander Hook and Ladder Co.  
Winyah Steam Fire Engine Co  
Heston Fire Engine Co.  
Star Fire Engine Co.

The procession will pass in review before the Hon. Intendant and Wardens at Town Hall, by moving up Front Street to Broad Street, counter-marching at Broad Street, down Front Street to Queen Street, where the column will be halted for inspection by the Hon. Intendent and Wardens and Board of Fire Masters.

After the inspection the procession will move down Front St. to Cannon St., through Cannon to Prince St., through Prince to Scriven St., up Scriven to High Market St., down Orange to Front St., down Front St. where the column will be halted, and prepared for the following exercises.

The Salamander Hook and Ladder Company, will run with their truck from the corner of Broad St. to Town Hall, put a bed ladder up against same, and a member of the company ascending ladder, take ladder down and place everything on truck again and move off. Time will be taken, and the squad performing the feat in the quickest time to be awarded a prize of \$15.00.

The Winyah Steam Fire Engine Co. will station their engines at market well; the company will divide itself into two squads equally; each squad will run with Hose carriages from Broad Street to market well, connect one hundred (100) feet in the race. The squad performing it in the quickest time to be awarded a prize of \$15.00.

The following exercises will be gone through with, on the part of the land engines.

A bonfire will be built on the corner of Front and Cannon Streets. The Heston Engine will be stationed at the well on said street, and at the first tap of the fire alarm bell, the squad of members, of said company, selected for the purpose will run with hose reel from opposite Town Hall down Front to said fire, connect with their engine and throw water on the fire. Time of race to be taken from first tap of the fire bell to the throwing of water on the fire.

When this has been gone through with, on the part of the Hestons they shall return to Town Hall.

The Star Fire Engine company will then go through the exercise as has been gone through by the Heston Fire Co. Each company will be allowed the same number of men to run with hose reel and any number of *bona fide* members may be stationed with their respective engines at the well. The company having performed said exercises in the shortest time to be awarded a prize of \$15.00. As each company gets through its part of the programme they will reform in line with their apparatus on the N.E. side of Front St., head of column resting on Broad St.

To increase the interest on the part of the companies and secure a large and creditable appearance on the parade, the following additional prize will be given: A prize of \$10 will be given to the company turning out the largest number of uniformed members on said parade.

Should either of the companies fail to win one of the prizes to be awarded as above stated, said company shall receive a prize of \$10 for their creditable appearance on the parade.

All prizes to be presented, after the parade, to the winners of same by the Hon. R. Dozier.

The Programme will be carried out under the direction of the following named gentlemen who have been elected by the Board of Fire Masters: B.A. Munnerlyn, Chief Marshal, G.E. T. Sparkman, Joseph Atkinson, Jas. Magill “

These fire companies represented not only a necessary part of town security, but a very prestigious social aspect. Their uniforms were colorful and unique, their accoutrement fine and ornate. Pride in the care of their equipment was evident in the pristine appearance of their engines. Just as today, the distinguished honor of serving their community renders them heroes. We should all take the time to thank our firefighters, policemen, and Emergency Medical Techs for rushing toward danger while we all flee for safety.