For two hundred and fifty years, Haddonfield has been protected from fire and loss of life by a Fire Department with a long honorable record for efficiency and readiness.

In 1713, the town of Haddonfield was established. In 1736, Ben Franklin formed the first Volunteer Fire Company in Philadelphia, PA known as Franklin’s Bucket Brigade.

The formation of a Haddonfield Volunteer Fire Department can be traced back to the Colonial Days at a time when the British Flag was flown over the town paying allegiance to the King of England. To give a better perspective, the French and Indian War (1754-1763) had just ended, the Revolutionary War had not yet started and the Declaration of Independence would not be signed for another twelve years.

Recognizing the need for fire protection in Haddonfield, on March 8, 1764, 26 men being the chief owners of property and heads of families in the village, met in the Friends Meeting House, which at the time was located on Ferry Road (Haddon Ave) and formed the Friendship Fire Company of Haddonfield. During this meeting, articles of association were written as follows:

“The eighth day of the third month, called March, in the year of our lord, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four, we whose names are unto subscribed, reposing Special Confidence in each other’s Friendship, Do for the Better preserving our own and our Neighbor’s Houses, Goods and effects from fire, Mutually agree in Manner following, That is to say.”

The original Article, which is older than the Declaration of Independence, hangs on the wall in the today’s Haddon Fire Company No.1’s meeting room. These articles contain the basis for fire service that continues today.

The agreement provided that each member shall provide, at their own expense, two leathern fire buckets and the Company shall provide six ladders and three fire hooks. Any member who failed to provide care for his bucket was fined one shilling and any fire bucket that was lost during a fire, would be replaced by the Company. The agreement also allowed the Company to fine any member two shillings for failing to respond to a fire. Each member was to serve as Clerk, who was responsible for inspecting and reporting the conditions of property, scheduling meetings, and collecting fines.

Friendship Fire Company of Haddonfield operated until 1811 when the company was reorganized. The Company was reorganized as a result of lapse in attention and membership. A membership drive was conducted, which sparked new interests and membership with a new constitution under the new name, The Fire Company of Haddonfield. During this time period, funds were raised to sink several cisterns strategically placed in the town as designated by the Company.
In 1818, the Company raised enough funds to purchase its first fire pump, a Perkins Hand Pump for $300 that was fed by a water bucket brigade. In 1851, the Company went under another name change from The Fire Company of Haddonfield to Haddonfield Fire Department by an act of Assembly dated February 21, 1851. The Fire Department was not organized in accordance with the Act and a supplement was passed in February 1854. However, the Fire Department did not become organized until February 1857.

The Company utilized the Perkins Hand Pump until 1873 when Haddonfield Fire Department purchased a Harlan & Hollingsworth hand pumper. The Department continued to improve its service to the community by adding hose, additional leather buckets, and additional cisterns and wells throughout the town.

The present location of Haddon Fire Company No. 1 was originally occupied by the Friends Meeting House that was built in 1760 (1762). The original structure was torn down in 1852 and replaced in 1854 by a wood frame building that served as the Borough Hall, Police Station, Jail, and Fire House. In June 1874, the Department received approval to add a bell to the belfry in order to signal an emergency in the town.

In January 1887, the fire department was reorganized and the name changed to Haddon Fire Company No. 1. In May 1887, the Company adopted a red flannel shirt and belt as the company uniform, a sample of which is housed in the Company’s Museum. In August 1887, a 1600 lb bell was purchased at a cost of $125 for the tower. With the town expanding and the equipment getting bigger and heavier, the Company looked for assistance in transporting the apparatus. In November 1887, the Company offered an award to the owners of horses in town to respond to the station, hook up the apparatus and respond to the fire. From the late 1880’s thru the early 1900’s, the Company purchased several horse drawn apparatus including a horse drawn ladder, a horse drawn Hose Carriage, a horse drawn Hose Wagon and a horse drawn Holloway Chemical Engine that contained two 40 gallon mounted water tanks at a cost of $1,300.
In October 1897, the Company obtained a horse named “Ned” to replace the responsibility on the community in supplying a horse to pull the apparatus. In April 1898, the Company adopted the Maltese Cross as its official hat badge, and in 1907, the Company designed its breast badge, both of which are still in use today.

With the turn of the century, modern evolution was in full swing with the introduction of motorized vehicles to replace horse drawn apparatus. In 1916, the Company purchased its first motorized vehicle, a “Boyd”, a combination auto and apparatus that contained two 35 gallon chemical tanks, 1,200 feet of 2 ½” hose, and 200 feet of chemical hose. From the early 1920's thru the 1950's, the Company continued to grow purchasing several motorized apparatus.

In March of 1951, the bell was removed from the tower and turned over to the trustees in preparation for the demolition of the wood frame fire station. On May 1, 1952, the Company held the last company meeting prior to its demolition. After approximately 100 years of service, the wood framed structure was demolished and replaced with the current building.

The fire service continued to progress with bigger and more efficient apparatus and safer equipment, including firefighter protective gear. In 1956, the Company purchased its first breathing air pack, also known as a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) from Scott. These air packs replaced the Mine Safety filters that the Company used inside a smoked filled building to breath, while fighting fires. Prior to the Mine Safety filters the Company would utilize a wet sponge placed in the firefighters mouth as a way to filter the smoke from entering their lungs. Today, the Company uses MSA self-contained breathing apparatus with several key safety features for the firefighter safety.
Communications play an extremely important factor in the fire service. In the early years the Chief only had his voice to command the operation. Then with the development of the Horn, the Chief was able to project his voice louder and further. Following World War II, the Company purchased a two way mobile radio system for the apparatus. In 1963, the Company was identified as District 14 in Camden County in order to distinguish the apparatus in Haddonfield from other towns. The radio system was periodically upgraded to include the installation of a base station for dispatch and portable radios for fireground operations.

In 1973 the Company constructed a Museum inside the station to house many of the antiques and artifacts belonging to the Company. Present inside the Museum is the Perkins Hand Pumper, Harlan & Hollingsworth Hand Pumper, numerous leather buckets, glass window from the old firehouse, axes, pike poles and uniforms.

Thru the 250 years of service, the Company has responded to numerous fires and emergencies, and unfortunately has seen its share of fatalities and serious incidents. The Company has also saved immeasurable amounts of life and property. Of the many fires the Company responded to, most notable were the Tavistock Country Club in December 1945, Methodist Church in 1955, and the Garden State Race track in 1977.

In 2008, the Company obtained a Pierce Fire Engine Pumper containing a Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS), the first of its kind in Camden County. This system utilizes a blend of compressed air, foam, and water to extinguish fire. The utilization of the CAFS system reduces the amount of water needed to extinguish the fire, thus reducing the amount of damage caused by water during the fire extinguishing operation.

In September 2011, Haddon Fire Company No. 1 designed its first Challenge coin to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the attack on the United States in New York City, by terrorist on September 11, 2001. This coin became the Company’s symbol and is carried by each member in Honor of the 343 fallen firefighters that died in New York that horrific day.
To commemorate the 250 years of service to the town of Haddonfield, the Company designed a set of 12 coins, one coin for every 25 years of service, reflecting the Company’s name changes and equipment utilized during that period.

1764 Friendship Fire Company of Haddonfield (ladder, bucket, pike pole)
1789 Friendship Fire Company of Haddonfield (ladder, bucket, pike pole, ax)
1814 Fire Company of Haddonfield (ladder, bucket, pike pole, ax)

1839 Fire Company of Haddonfield (Perkins hand pump purchased 1818)
1864 Haddonfield Fire Department Perkins hand pump purchased 1818
1889 Haddon Fire Company #1 (Harlan & Hollingsworth Suction Pump purchased 1873)

1914 Haddon Fire Company #1 (Holloway Chemical Engine purchased 1895)
1939 Haddon Fire Company #1 (Hale purchased in 1927)
1964 Haddon Fire Company #1 (Peter Pirsch purchased 1964)

1989 Haddon Fire Company #1 (American LaFrance purchased 1983)
2014 Haddon Fire Company #1 (Pierce Velocity purchased 2008)
250th Anniversary
Haddon Fire Company remains to be the second oldest Volunteer Fire Company in continuous service in the United States. This celebration is dedicated to the current members and all of the former volunteer members of Haddon Fire Company No. 1 and the community for which we serve.