Two of the most valuable members of Washington Fire Company No. 1 were Maj. Fred Tunnard and Fred W. Heroman Sr., pictured from left, in this file photo. Both men had horses named for them.

By CAROL ANNE BLITZER

The Washington Company firehouse has been restored by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation for its offices.

The mid-19th century, the Washington Company firehouse bustled with activity. The company, located on Church Street (now Fourth) was headquarters for Baton Rouge's first volunteer fire department.

"The fire department was a big social organization," said J. C. "Butch" Hart, great-grandson of Samuel M. Hart, the first chief fire officer.

The late Paul Kennedy in 1964 wrote an extensive history of the Washington Fire Company for his master of arts thesis in LSU's Department of History. "Because it was quite important socially to be a volunteer fireman," Kennedy wrote, "the Washington Company, as the oldest fire fighting organization in town, was one of the preeminent of the volunteer departments. Many of the prominent citizens of Baton Rouge served with this unit, and the Washington Company firehouse served as a center of social life for some years."

The company began as the Baton Rouge Bucket Company, which was established in 1826 after the U.S. government built its military post at the Petigru Barracks.

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In 1949, the first hall was constructed on Church Street, and the Washington Company took possession. A committee of R.J. McCabe, J.W. Soncks, Bessie Maguire and Rita Vidal, from left, as the float riders.

In 1959, the new station was dedicated. In 1963, an article written by Mr. Wilson in the Times-News, Nov. 15, 1963, recalled his burial overcoat while attending a parade or funeral services unless to lawful orders. Absence from an alarm or fire hall, not due to unlawful orders, was a cause for discharge or suspension. Discharge or suspension for any other reason was subject to the approval of the president of the company and the chief of the department.

In 1875, members of the Hart family served in Washington No. 1 for generations. Pictured in this 19th-century photo are, top row, John Q. Bradford in uniform as the local merchant who selected the animals; the hems, old chief fireman, served in the company with honor for many years and last used to pull the hose carts that replaced the hand-drawn horses.

The questionnaire fire engines were ordered in July from R.J. Gould and Company, who fashioned a new steam engine in 1876. Secretary W. Amory recorded the event in the minutes when he described "an address by fire father Delacoste at the close of which the Rev. Father Delacoste pronounced the following: 'Thank you for the best floats - which were continued until World War II.

The brownstone structure was erected or honorary. "An active member is one who used and maintained his fatique was the fact that the firemen had already built the horse apparatus to the scene of the fire along with the hose, ladders and other fire equipment," Kennedy wrote.

The highest position in the fire company was the foreman, who served as its president. Meetings were held on Wednesday evenings at the fire house to discuss matters concerning the department. After roll call, members took the fire oath on a short prayer reading. They then washed, dried and polished the fire equipment, required a shop or building, and held a short business meeting.

In 1849, the fire hall was constructed on Church Street, and the Washington Company took possession. In 1850, a committee from the city on the following was recorded in the official minutes: "A committee of R.J. McCabe, J.W. Soncks, Bessie Maguire and Rita Vidal, from left, as the float riders.

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