

SMOKE AND FIRE SHOWING: FIRE, FRATERNITY, AND SOCIAL ORDER

IN POST FRONTIER FORT WORTH 1873-1919

by

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Acknowledgments

My father, Jack Tucker, was a high school dropout and son of a sharecropper in Spearman, Texas who never went on to higher learning. Ironically, he acquired his GED at Texas Christian University in 1961, and then with it became a career fireman in Irving, Texas. I cut my teeth within the Irving Fire Department's fire halls and witnessed at an early age what it meant to be a civil servant. He served as a member for 33 years in the fire service, ending his profession as a Captain. He supported me fully in all my endeavors until his recent death, and even now is with me daily as I write about my brothers of Fort Worth Fire Department. He taught me to be a civil servant and offer service as a path through life's journey.

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Preface

This thesis is largely based in a setting when Fort Worth develops after a civilization of Native Americans were said to be conquered or “Post Frontier”. If population density is the measure of a frontier condition then the development of a town or city would seem to close as a “frontier” area before or by 1890, when the U.S. Census deemed the frontier closed. And yet in the far west one half of available land was federal land in 1890 and much of it was still considered frontier areas. Fort Worth has a large history swept up in stereotypes of frontier and Western American History, and by the 1890s was an established city of record. Local newspaperman Amon Carter, owner of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, was fond of saying, “. . . that Dallas is where the east peters out, and Fort Worth is where the West begins.” The idea of a “frontier” was and is a powerful concept worthy of study. The term frontier used within this thesis is to denote a place and not a process. Fredrick Jackson Turner’s historiography is used in a limited sense and to many will be denoted as outdated. And yet it’s applicable to the mindsets held by men such as B. B. Paddock or John Peter Smith who became important city leaders in this community. Within this thesis is a focus on symbolic events intended to show a group of men and a city coevolving to support their community in the American West – that specific group are the volunteer firemen of Fort Worth.

Much of the history in the Fort Worth Fire Department has been cataloged by District Chief Jim Noah, who served over thirty years in the department. Noah became the self-appointed historian for all things fire department related, often writing articles in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* about the old days of firefighting. His archived personal notes and chronological papers are on record at the Fort Worth Library and most of his data appear to be gathered from primary documents in the form of newspapers. His historical process, however, is riddled with anecdotal stories passed down from the men who served there and much of it is rooted in myth and legend building. I used sparingly Noah’s documents and only after cross referencing his information in newspapers and recorded minutes of the Volunteer Fort Worth Fire Department dated 1883-1893.

The modern term firefighter is not used in this paper as there were no women members of the volunteer fire department. When referencing the members of the fire department for this thesis, firemen or fireman is used throughout. Some of the apparatus and alarm systems terms quoted for accuracy describe, for example, a City Call

Box Alarm system by Gamewell; this references strategically placed Alarm Boxes where an alarm could be manually pulled signaling a fire location within an established fire ward. A fire ward is an area mapped out district where fire responses were allowed in a given area, the fire department's territory was normally limited to the established city boundaries. The term wildfire refers to what old-timers called an uncontrollable fire or large conflagration. It is not meant to reference a forest fire or fire in the wild. The remainder of fire department terms should be self-evident and further explanation is given in the narrative regarding clarity on tactics or apparatus.

Historian Patricia Limerick states in her book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, "The contest for property and product has been accompanied by a contest for cultural dominance." Limerick argues western history did not end with the frontier, it continued along a western-themed arc as the region's conquerors put their stamp on the land. In Fort Worth, men such as B. B. Paddock and John P. Smith built the fledgling city based on an abandoned frontier fort into a growing, thriving community. The volunteer firemen of the Fort Worth Fire Department helped protect assets in the new city and built as well as reflected the community's social fabric found in this American West. This is their story.

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Chapter I: Post Frontier Firemen

Fire's documented discovery and use as a tool would forever shape mankind's destiny. When harnessed properly as a tool, fire would modernize a myriad of aspects of daily life from cooking to shaping metal. But when control of its power is left unchecked an uncontrollable "fire" or "wildfire" as it has come to be known, can have devastating effects on developing communities. No small village, township, or upstart community would exist without fire in all of its many forms.¹ The need to control fire was a natural mandate for all communities large or small, that desired to grow and flourish. Studying how communities and leaders responded to such fire events offers a clear view of what they deemed essential to their prosperity. This project will focus on the co-evolution of firefighting in an American West community of Fort Worth and explore how the dedication of time, money, resources, and at times the lives of volunteer firefighters revealed the development of the social and civic fabric of post frontier societies. The scholarly literature on fire departments has largely overlooked places like Fort Worth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The case of Fort Worth can tell us much about the process of professionalization and modernization in such places considered the west. This thesis will focus on how Fort Worth developed into a city along "western" lines and explore its history during the closing of any so-called frontier toward the turn of the century.

Volunteer fire companies along the eastern seaboard of eighteenth-century America organized as social groups or clubs. In some early American cities, these firemen competed against one another, rather than collaborate during the course of their duties, partly due to a competitive pride in serving loose territorial districts they sought to protect. Often, these petty competitions led to squabbling or even physical brawling over salvage rights - the primary means

¹ For a detailed discussion of urban fire history, see "Urban Fire: Building Habitats for Fire," in Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 102-118.

of payment for fire protection. After the 1850s, many volunteer fire “clubs” transformed into paid fire departments and companies served by both paid and volunteer firefighters.

The fire departments that developed in the post frontier areas would resemble those of their predecessors east of them. From their inception, these post-frontier fire departments looked a lot like the old colonial models. But by the late 1890s, a significant shift would occur forever changing this fellowship’s identity. In the 1870s, firemen’s clubs of old took on new practices with significant re-creation of internal structures of rank and file via paramilitary approaches in fire service establishments.² This shift, coupled with how city leaders themselves collaborated through fire organizations would also define both a city and its fire service objectives. Elected membership into a volunteer fire department was a badge of honor, an accolade which allowed social and professional advantages accompanied by newfangled expectations of service and professionalism - expectations that were generated from within departments as well as from civic leaders. These expectations eventually led to the transformation of firefighting into a recognized profession, rendering the fire department a formal city service and helping to redefine what constitutes a modern city. A community’s fire department most certainly created public attention locally. This public formation and interests were true as sister cities observed and reported on frontier upstart’s growth and other comparable well-established cities would draw comparisons of such progress.

The few post frontier fire departments, in all their various early forms, naturally attracted attentions beyond their communities’ boundaries. Comparisons of fire services was a usual form of competition representing a town's progress to have established reliable fire protection. The fire

² Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: Volunteer Firefighters in the Nineteenth Century City* (Princeton University Press), p.p.1-20, p.p. 81-88; *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes, 1883-1893*, Fort Worth Public Library Archives (hereafter FWPLA) 27-30. For firefighting in the American Revolutionary Era and Antebellum periods see Paul Ditzel, *Fire Engines Firefighters from Colonial days to Present*, (Crown New York, Rutledge, 1976).

service did more than extinguish flames. It embodied civic values and indicated to outsiders that had achieved the status of a modern town or city. Inside the ever-growing frontier regions, the fireman's service culture expanded professionally and created new standards defining a city. Such groups would co-evolve with their community growing precipitously from the 1870s to the 1900s. Little scholarship delves into the how, what, why, and when this occurred in the fire service among the established post frontier communities or its impacts creating modern approaches to upstart townships west of the Mississippi River. I assert much changed in defining these social fire groups after the Civil War in fire company establishment approaches for upstart communities. Some of the key forces that created these changes include firemen's public social interactions, urban commercial development via fire events, fresh tactical approaches to firefighting, technological improvements of fire apparatus, paramilitary organization within its fire ranks, racial discourse, women's support roles within a fire service, city planning, and lastly a push toward modernization of fire service, and eventual recognized civil servant professional departments by the 1890s. Furthermore, I assert that Fort Worth speedily came into its own as a city by the late 1880s due to such efforts. The early volunteer fire department blazed a trail toward modernized approaches to fire service that extended well into the twentieth century.

This thesis explores the evolution of a volunteer fire service in Fort Worth, Texas, emphasizing the period from the establishment of the Volunteer Fire Department in 1873 through the creation of a professional paid department in late 1893. Little scholarship exists on the early days of firefighting in this part of the American western frontier. Most of the historiography developed on firefighting is based on volunteer departments that developed from the Colonial era to the 1850s.³ The scholarship of this paper is based upon primary documents

³ David Danal, *The Fireman: The Fire Department of the U.S.*, (1858); Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790*, (1981); Donald A. Yerxa, *The*

and minutes from the first citizen Volunteer Fire Department of Fort Worth. These documents reveal much of these firemen volunteers' social history and paramilitary influences in the fire service. These sources reveal how urbanization and social expansion of Fort Worth as a city related to the institutional history of firefighting with links to city boosterism and the transformation of a frontier town into a western city. By studying a once-abandoned military outpost located along the Trinity River, which began in the frontier, becoming Fort Worth the town, one can observe this paradigm shift.⁴

In the frontier regions west of the Mississippi River, pioneers and adventurers sought out new lands. From these harsh regions arose humble settlements, some of which would develop into lasting towns or cities and with them the need to embrace more modern mindsets. Over time, circumstances and a pioneer spirit created growth, and with new people came modern mindsets.

Burning of Falmouth, 1775: A Case Study in British Imperial Pacification, (1975); Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742*, (1938); Peter Clark, *British Club and Societies, 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World*, (2000); Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse: An architectural and Social History*, (1982); William J. Novak, "Public Safety: Fire and the Relative Right of Property," *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America*, (1996); Arthur Wellington Brayley, *A complete History of the Boston Fire Department . . . from 1630 to 1888*, (1889).

⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921), 1-38, Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, W.W. Norton & Company New York, NY, 1987, p.p. Introduction, 18, 20 -21, 42-52, 216-218, 324. [Turner's thesis claimed that a continuously receding frontier line shaped the development of unique individuals, Americans, as they grappled with the frontier environment. He argued how they themselves were impacted in this westward expansion and he further claimed that American Democracy was the result. Turner argued that each time pioneers encountered the wilderness, they adapted socially and mutually, thus creating a new culture and region. Frontier traits were forever interwoven in the fabric of American history, including the history of the abandoned military posts like Fort Worth. New historians like Limerick, who repudiate Turner, claim that the frontier already existed, settlers did not discover a new place, they attempted to conquer what already existed. Limerick doesn't write about Western History as a specialized study, rather she creates connections within fields of economics, geography, and anthropology while also acknowledging current events relationships to the past. Limerick's allows for inclusivity in Western scholarship and shines a light on missing elements from former historians. She defines the west as wracked by boom and bust cycles which wreaked havoc on these settlements - and created instability killing myths of self-sufficiency in such regions where places like Fort Worth, found itself by the 1850s, as Native Americans and settlers competed for domination of land and cultural domination. I will be using the term frontier loosely, to refer to refer to US settlements in the nineteenth and twentieth century, west of the Mississippi River, where these outposts and thriving cities, who were on the cusp of modernity.

In any new township, there would be situations that required attention. Wildfires in an upstart village where most structures were canvas tents or crude wooden buildings were a serious problem; as such places grew, mere bucket brigades would not suffice in handling threats from fires. As structures increased in size and quantity, threats from fire posed as much danger as yellow fever outbreaks or financial panics. How communities would handle such emergencies reveals much about those communities' social moorings at the turn of the twentieth century.

Fire devastations certainly took a toll on inhabitants and not merely from physical losses of property, but also from the threat that a fledgling city could literally be burned off the map and perish altogether. By examining the cause and effects of fires and viewing subsequent public reactions to their effects, one can learn much about a community's values and priorities and how those values and priorities compared to neighboring cities. A variety of questions arise. How did citizens address the consequences of losses? What decisions were made to combat or even prevent fires? And at what cost? A city is linked to its disasters and how it handles them, so a study of fire episodes is important if for no other reason than to discern what its citizens saw as important politically, socially, and economically. How did these cities and firemen physically battle fires that threatened to wipe out the material progress of a young town?

The military outpost established in 1849, Fort Worth, rested upon a north-facing bluff overlooking the confluence of the Clear Fork and West Fork of the Trinity River. The outpost was one of ten in a series of picket line posts. These military posts were established one hundred miles apart, extending southwest across Texas ending at Eagles Pass and the Mexican border. The former Army post of Fort Worth would eventually become the fifth largest city in Texas, and like many communities struggled with the ravages of fires. This thesis will show how Fort Worth, a once-abandoned military post, took steps to deliberately create a modern fire service for

suppressing fires and promoting fire safety, and these steps eventually led to the development of a professional, civil servant model communities still embrace today.

The city founders agreed to build a volunteer fire department and in time perpetuated an idea of civil service members within its emergent community as a means to maintain prosperity by the early 1870s. Prior to this change, during the days of bucket brigades in the 1850s and 1860s, the citizens appeared to take fire episodes in stride and were merely reactionary to these events. Why? The limited secondary sources on the subject of early firefighting allow scholars to compare established fire companies of the east to those founded in the western frontier cities such as Fort Worth. An additional focus in this paper is how veterans of the Civil War, who became prominent members of Fort Worth society also led volunteer fire companies in the area and guided their development. Drawing upon a range of experiences from the Civil War, these leaders turned volunteer fire services into paramilitary organizations, complete with military rank and rules of conduct. The Fort Worth Voluntary Fire Department's minutes from 1883 to 1893 make clear the firefighters' use of military language and a military style of leadership. The use of military language, combined with a military style of leadership in fire companies or fire brigades, is very evident in the primary sources of the Fort Worth Volunteer Fire. The minutes, handwritten notes, are a rich snapshot into the use of military rhetoric and decorum. One such example is found in a reference to a court martial of its members, these and other similar traditions still exist in the modern professional Fort Worth Fire Department of today.

Captain Broadman Buckley Paddock, a Civil War veteran and transplant to the region in the 1870s, used his standing as a military man and entrepreneur to become a well-known figure in Fort Worth. He also became intimately involved in the city's volunteer fire department. Paddock dedicated much of his life to Fort Worth's growth and expansion. His works touched

many facets of important developments in his adopted city. Numerous items contributed to Fort Worth's success: agriculture, the growing cattle industry, water, topographical location, the arrival of the railroad, and eventual city services. But none of Fort Worth's success would have occurred without citizen involvement and leaders such as Paddock. Much has been written about Fort Worth's red-light district (Hell's Half Acre), military industry, water development, cattle-drives, and the age of the great packing houses, cowboys, lawmen, and railroads. Scholars have not fully explored one institution, which reflected Paddock's boosterism, critical to the city's early and continued survival: the fire department.⁵

Paddock just arrived in the post-frontier setting, but still had a blank slate within this primitive city on the rise, and he helped to shape it into a going concern and over time a thriving modern city. Frontier traits were forever interwoven in the fabric of American history, including the history of the abandoned military posts like Fort Worth, which became a town. Frontier communities and cities, and organized groups such as fraternal organizations in fire departments, shaped a social order that transitions from frontier to "civilized" areas. Fort Worth, Abilene, and Fort Griffin, Texas were all located along frontier lines at one point or another as the boundary moved westward. Over time, Fort Griffin would wither and die, and Fort Worth would prosper and grow much larger than Abilene by the turn of the century. What set of circumstances would deliver such outcomes of city growth and how did the actions of its citizens contribute to the

⁵ Richard F. Selcer, *The Fort that Became a City: An Illustrated Reconstruction of Fort Worth, TX 1849-1853* (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1991), 1-14; Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1966), 103-5; Biographical Sketch, *The B. B. Paddock Papers 1862-1946*, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries; Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost On the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953) 1- 30, 211-214, *The Democrat*, March, 8, 1873, p.1 April 12,1873. p.1.

settlement's failures and losses? Laurence M. Larson in *The Changing of the West and Other Essays* defines the West as a peculiar condition of social life frequently. Larson delves into the cultural lineages of American immigrants in an attempt to determine the influences of theology, cultural groups, and intermarriages among settlers in the region. Rather than rely on territorial maps, he creates a map showing the influence of settlers from different cultural groups to understand the impact of each on the frontier. This cultural map shows a critical and needed focus in understanding the ever-changing racial ties, religious views, intellectual norms, and moral standards. Indeed, the frontier area changed along with those who settled and pushed the lines westward. One cannot overstate how much these settlers' backgrounds and origins mattered. The settlers not only brought tangible possessions with them when they moved west, but with them came emotional, cultural, and social baggage, which shaped the settlements being fostered. These new groups and organizations created by the settlers influenced public stances and represented core values that would manifest in the fire department and cities fashioned like that of Fort Worth. However, Larson does not address firemen or fire departments.⁶

The study of fire organizations along with cause-and-effect outcomes from such groups are limited concerning western frontier lines, but some have broached the subjects further east as to how fire played roles in their communities. Historian Amy Greenberg, in her book *Cause For Alarm: Volunteer Firefighting in The Nineteenth Century City*, focuses mainly on established seaboard cities from the revolutionary era until the 1850s. Greenberg sheds light on a long-ignored culture of fire service volunteers who were central to the social and cultural life of nineteenth-century cities. Comparing the fire companies of Baltimore, St. Louis, and San Francisco, Greenberg addresses such oversight by concentrating on how men claimed civic

⁶ Laurence M. Larson, *The Changing of the West and Other Essays* (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1937), p.p. Intro, 60-71.

virtue by joining such groups. Membership in fire companies provided many men with fellowship, comradery, and friendships, all while protecting their given cities from the ravages of fire. Greenberg delves into gender roles and explores the mixed social classes existing in such fire companies' merchantmen, immigrants, and native-born Americans all found identities as firemen. Greenberg focuses on the shared masculinity that allowed for the celebration of strength and bravery within ranks defined not by mere class, but mainly gender and the gender roles of the men themselves. Greenberg suggests that the male gender roles may have led to many problems, including public brawls, corruption within the city governance, use of salvage laws to generate revenues, accusations of violence in the ranks toward citizenry, and abuses of power in fire organizations while discharging of duties. She demonstrates how the public ultimately demonized such fire organizations over time in this era, claiming overt masculinity roles played by fire members and abuse of public trust by firemen. The changing attitudes of the community, combined with new technologies and tactics for controlling fire scenes, along with fire insurance and new conceptions of citizenship, led to changes within the fire service, and men from all backgrounds serving as volunteers. Men of various social backgrounds found an outlet for their competitive urges and sense of community in the fire companies.

Greenberg explores a generation of antebellum urban social history when she writes that gender, and not class, is the key to understanding volunteer firefighting. *Cause For Alarm* relies on a wide range of evidence and anecdotal tales, weaving together political and cultural mainstays of fire service, and what it meant to be a part of such service, according to her viewpoints. Greenburg explores three antebellum cities in search of a better understanding of urban life. It is unclear why she selected these particular cities beyond the fact that they are not New York and Philadelphia. Greenberg's chosen cities would all seem to share a nineteenth-

century common experience, yet in her analysis, she views antebellum firefighting only through the lenses of gender and class. What of race? What of women's gender roles either directly or indirectly? Surely race had something to do with the rise and fall of volunteer fire companies in mid-century Baltimore, Saint Louis, and San Francisco? So too did the growing roles of women found in the frontier in the fire service. But most important were the citizens demands for better civil service and in this regard fire services.

While Greenberg explains a decline of the volunteer tradition within the majority of her chapters, her account is considerably weaker early on when she explores the tradition's peak in the 1830s and 1840s. *Cause For Alarm* implies an overpowering form of republican ideology and masculinity to explain the popular appeal of volunteer firefighting in the early antebellum years. Greenberg's later chapters on the complexities of 1850s political culture certainly make a convincing case for what she labels a death rattle of the mythic masculinity characterizations about fire culture in the public eye. *Cause For Alarm* advances a number of important arguments in 165 pages, with each chapter narrating an important aspect of the history within antebellum fire departments. In her attempt to unify the various cultural, social, and political strands of her narrative, Greenberg tends to repeat her larger argument in each chapter, more than likely due to lack of primary sources to fully support it, and it tends to become tedious and repetitive.

However, Greenburg's cultural history emphasizes revealing the importance of male gender relationships in antebellum firefighting and manly attributes to its fire service development. Clearly, firemen claimed their place in public life by such actions described in *Cause For Alarm*, and it lays out the case of how in the performance of duty, these groups thus created a language all their own along with a subculture of ideologies to follow in the fire service. Greenberg's scholarship, however, is of limited value in helping us understand the development of rural

frontier regional fire departments after the 1850s, which were far removed physically and temporally from the east coast antebellum communities she studied.⁷

By 1850 the original military post of Fort Worth was abandoned. This abandoned outpost no doubt qualified as a frontier, set in a vast expanse of untamed land supposedly beyond the reach of civilized communities at the time of its creation. Such outposts were set up with claims to establish communications, protect settlers, and provide law and order under military guidelines in the region. The military posts were also set up to control or eradicate native inhabitants. Modern historians such as Patricia Limerick, who focus on the conquering of native inhabitants, give a hat tip to Turner's thesis which served a purpose in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. In Limerick's book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, she points out the excessive deference concerning Turner's thesis that has allowed many historians to use Turner as the last word on the western frontier. Limerick describes Turner's writing as influential and forceful, yet she focuses on the debate that the frontier was already a place. Therefore, Limerick's scholarship hinges on the conquerors and the conquered, not merely a place called the western frontier, as Turner suggests.

This thesis builds upon a small, but significant, body of scholarship examining the development and characteristics of American frontier towns. By asserting the critical roles of fire organizations and businessmen in shaping the growth of new settlements, this thesis draws upon and reframes ideas previously laid out in Robert Dykstra's *The Cattle Towns*, Page Smith's *As a City upon a Hill*, Don Doyle's *The Social Order of a Frontier Community*, and Timothy Mahoney's *Provincial Lives*. This thesis extends the previous works mentioned in three significant ways. First, by examining a continued evolution of former "frontier" towns after their

⁷ Greenberg, pp. 1-17.

earliest stages, it offers a more complete explanation of their urban development. Second, this thesis emphasizes the role of local promotional organizations in guiding that development. Finally, this thesis examines boosterism as a force for development of frontier townships, viewing the collaborative efforts of fire companies as an effective model for the development of lasting cities. A relatively small group of researchers has examined the history of American town-building and its internal support organizations.

This thesis also advances the understanding of Fort Worth history written by local historian Harold Rich, in his book *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown*. The author describes in great detail how Fort Worth from its early stages as an army camp in the 1840s, develops into one of the nation's larger cities, ultimately hosting a thriving commerce. His chronological examination is built upon sizeable array of historical data detailing how Fort Worth's future was anything but certain. Rich's scholarship explores Fort Worth's patterns of boom-and-bust progress that defined a city and its people through to the twenty-first century. Rich explores documents detailing changes upon Fort Worth's economy in succeeding years by packinghouses and military bases, the discovery of oil, and the growth of a notorious vice district – Hell's Half Acre. It is the first thoroughly researched economic history of the city's early years in more than five decades, and its historiography is an invaluable resource for this thesis. Rich, however, lightly touches upon the Fort Worth Fire Department but acknowledges in his book the needs for railroads, water, manufacturing, and a fire department toward the city's success.⁸

A few historians, like Page Smith, have explored characteristics of American towns more generally – without imposing regional or temporal limits focusing on groups' social structures. Other scholars have studied town-building in the context of systems of cities. In contrast, Lewis

⁸ Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 2014.

Atherton, author of *Main Street on the Middle Border*, and Richard Wade, who wrote *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburg*, focused on Midwestern communities prior to 1865, anticipating Doyle and Mahoney's research in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Atherton suggests what he designated a "Middle Border," which held many villages and small towns typifying Midwestern life in the mid 1800s and between the end of the Civil War and the 1950s. The Middle Border towns were no longer a mere raw frontier area before the Civil War even if they may have lacked the spit and polish of a more sophisticated east. Atherton's sociology and historiography describe how each community held a group of inhabitants who simply ignored a middle-class code of respectability and, at times, religious observance. Atherton states, here too, were the livery stables and the general stores, the saloons and hotels, and a growing education system. The inhabitants drank, fought, caroused and "cussed," or they hunted on Sundays, shunned the churches, and pursued their simple pleasures without yielding to community pressure to yield to a "better" life – with an emphasis on what was immediately practical for daily life. It was difficult for anyone to solely be a product of one cultural layer with so many influences of medicine and the ministry; the circus or opera; politics; fads and festivities; and the insistence on an ethos based on "immediately useful and the practical" which were the cultural criteria of the times.⁹ He left firefighting unexplored.

Richard Wade's book, written in 1959, explains the expansion of urban development before 1830. As he explains, cities in this region were developing systems of banks, newspapers, businesses, cultural/art centers, and educational institutions before 1865. River commerce already existed, while buildings had advanced from simple board structures to brick and mortar. Wade describes a developing country after the US had suffered an economic collapse after the War of 1812. More was going on in the country in the first half of the 1800s besides an exciting

⁹ Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966) p.p.74-75.

Lewis and Clark exploration or the Oregon Trail. Wade explains in great detail how the cities of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis grew and thrived before 1840. Few historians have considered a focus on co-evolution of cities with their fire departments in rural developments in the Trans-Mississippi West or those support organizations like the fire service and its impacts.¹⁰ And those who do have focused more on emerging western cities such as San Francisco or Los Angeles and not frontier areas between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Dykstra's pioneering work on Kansas cattle towns remains essential reading for any scholar of town-building in the trans-Mississippi west but ends when the towns lost their cattle trade. His conflict model describes social undercurrents that drove town-building compulsions present in each town throughout the cattle period. Dykstra asserted that expansion agendas grew out of conflict, and that these agendas better reflect the interests and attitudes of a broad base of inhabitants because they resulted from natural negotiations that took place as different factions asserted their positions in these regions. Sometimes this occurred quite forcefully, where towns flourished with little to no infrastructures, poor governments, where saloons, gambling, and prostitution proliferated. He, too, ignores firefighting.

Such scholarship sets the stage for further examination of additional commercial enterprises and the support organizations like the fire service inherently connected groups of boosters that sought to expand their town into a frontier metropolis. Smith's scholarship suggests that those towns founded for economic reasons grew through the gradual accretion of individuals, or, sometimes, by rapid but disorderly accumulations of fortune seekers. Smith believed that over time, these cumulative cities would become durable or lasting, acquiring the

¹⁰ Richard Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) p.p. 46, 60, 121, ; Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community*; and Mahoney, *Provincial Lives and River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820 – 1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

social and institutional forms of the typical towns. Smith claims residents became increasingly connected with one another and their towns' developments through their memberships in local associations. These associations included literary societies, political clubs, churches, chambers of commerce or boards of trade, and civil servants or fire department groups. The cattle industry period is an important facet of the raw material out of which townships like Fort Worth evolved; however, an examination of city boosters' intentions on how to turn these regions into thriving areas through its internal support organizations like that of civil servant groups is important to the historiography.¹¹

Fort Worth was a community in flux for several reasons. It progressed slowly out of its status as a humble outpost because of its proximity to the frontier, the impact of the Civil War, a slowly developing economy, the consequences of secession, and Reconstruction policies. After the Civil War, Fort Worth, like many southern communities, needed to bolster its growth and commerce. Men such as Ephraim Merrell Daggett, John Peter Smith, Khleber Miller Van Zandt, and Boardman Buckley Paddock were tireless promoters of their town and its eventual status as a city and would be integral in developing civic-minded organizations. Their hard work brought significant progress as they guided the city through Reconstruction and two national fiscal crises and into the 1900s. These visionaries did much to improve their city. Fort Worth adopted a number of modern innovations in infrastructure, business, and civic institutions, one of which was its fire service. Modernization of volunteer institutions like the fire service went hand in hand with city promotions, boosterism, protection of infrastructure, and the creation of volunteer

¹¹ Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983; New York: Knopf, 1968), p.p. 375-376 all citations refer to the University of Nebraska edition; Page Smith, *As a City upon Town in American History* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971) p.p. 30-32, Smith, cite quote p. 174 ; Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825 – 1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Timothy R. Mahoney, *Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and, Harold W. Rich, *Beyond Outpost, 1880 – 1918*, TCU Dissertation 2006. *a Hill: The*

organizations that signaled a city had arrived. The handwritten minutes of the Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department of 1883-1893 reveal this modernization and co-evolution.

Civil War veterans are especially important to this project. They brought with them skills forged in military service that they applied to the job of maintaining and building a frontier community. The Fort Worth volunteer fire service, organized along paramilitary lines, and demonstrates how they applied their experience to the weaving of a social fabric for Fort Worth based on military codes put into action as civil service ideals. These codes would significantly encourage growth in Fort Worth's fire organizations and its success in that community on the whole. Such a paramilitary approach shaped its fire department into an eventual modern professional department by the turn of the century.

Fort Worth developed modern infrastructures that led to civil servant volunteer organizations and that required funds, communal support, editorial shaping, and community boosterism. In a shrewd move, civic leaders leveraged their volunteer firemen's muscle to build a functioning fire organization supported by constantly improving equipment purchases by city leaders. This created the practicalities of a modern fire service infrastructure but as the city grew and its volunteer fire department membership grew so did the costs for fire services and fire department infrastructures. At one point, the Fort Worth volunteer fire department administration and city leaders grappled in public debates over salvage rights for firemen in the community they served as a means of payment for services rendered and or equipment needs. This type of innovative approach could be seen as the product of a new western city operating without the hidebound constraints of tradition found in eastern cities. This idea of salvage rights as a means for payment of services however created concerns of possible unscrupulous behaviors. The administration worried that bad actors might use arson to generate more possible

funds, pitting property owners, fireman, and insurance companies at odds on settlements of loss and values, and according to Assistant Chief Don Adams in April of 1893, “it would lower the patriotic duty of each fireman to only gaining an almighty dollar.” This thesis also contributes to a fuller appreciation of gender and race in firefighting and frontier community building. It will explore the limited roles women played in Fort Worth’s fire department and how firefighting exposed racial conflicts. And most importantly this thesis denotes how Fort Worth and its fire department would step out of a frontier into a progressive city before the turn of the century.¹²

If the U.S. Census Bureau’s claim that the frontier ended in 1890 is correct, that would nearly coincide with the demise of the Volunteer Fire Department of Fort Worth when it ceased to exist formally by 1893. Fort Worth probably ceased to qualify as a frontier region, as described by the Census Bureau’s characterization of a frontier before 1890. The professionalization of the fire department at that time signaled a new stage of development for communities like Fort Worth. As the cattle boom suffered financial panics in the late 1870s and 1890s, some early residents pulled up stakes and moved on. Others would remain toughing it out, many of whom like B. B. Paddock hoped to turn towns like Fort Worth into lasting cities despite fiscal pressures, and to profit by doing so. In this sense, these towns or cities remained and relied heavily on speculation, determination, luck, and willing peoples to shamelessly promote their areas and establishments. Over time, these businessmen pushed support infrastructure projects, manufacturing, water development, and municipal programs and ideas like better fire departments for economic growth. City governments enacted ordinances that restricted prostitution, set curfews for citizens, and established dust abatement programs in the business

¹² *Volunteer Fire Department Minutes* 1883-1893, Fort Worth Public Library Archives, p.p. 276-277, Report by Asst Chief Don Adams; *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 24, 1883 – Published Annual Reports, Condition of the Fort Worth Fire Department – Fire Salvage Committee, Don Adams, p. 1.

districts all as a means to polish its image. City officials created street planning and organized sewer assessment districts and water departments. Local businessmen replaced wooden buildings with more substantial brick or granite facades, funded the construction of churches, and joined booster organizations to promote their cities to potential residents and outside business interests even far beyond its state borders. They also served in volunteer fire companies of this western frontier area and lent a hand in creating modern approaches for their department and its population. Firefighting reveals the story of Fort Worth starting with a newspaper editorial written by Paddock in 1873, with a call to duty by those citizens willing to come forward and serve as volunteers.

Chapter II: An Abandoned Outpost - A Tent City Rises

Of the many people who came to Fort Worth, Texas, seeking new prospects in business or hoping for better lives, a select few volunteered to help their community by battling fires. Their decisions may have increased the chances of the town's survival while also enhancing their prospects. Low on supplies and machinery and with very little or no training, these firemen of the frontier volunteer companies stood side by side against a common enemy—fire—that threatened the very existence of their settlements. Fires easily destroyed towns consisting largely of canvas tents and wooden structures, especially when no real fire control systems were in place. Settlers naturally desired protection for their investments and townships, which eventually led to the creation of a new social group, firemen. The fire department they founded would pave the road to success for themselves and the community they swore to protect.

Rich's academic histories of Fort Worth delves deeply into this community's successes and failures. His thorough systematic statistical approach to how the outpost became something more, and his use of data would leave few wanting. Specifically, he describes the roles played by the red-light district, named Hell's Half Acre, developments of the cattle industry with packing houses, railroad, a waterworks, and local manufacturing in Fort Worth's development. He also leans heavily on census data comparing Fort Worth to neighboring sister cities in Texas. Rich holds to task its city leaders and their approaches to boosterism and certainly uses B. B. Paddock as an example of a serial entrepreneur who might at times stretch the truth but not break it. Rich agrees with this project's contention that the fire service played important roles in the city's development, but he does not fully explore this topic. This gap in Rich's history points to the

need for a comprehensive history of Fort Worth firefighting and its role in the city's development.¹

Eventually, a unified community created a lasting fire department to support town-building. The fire service evolved into an organization they themselves may not have ever initially imagined a fire service for its community could be. These volunteer firemen were replacements for well-meaning but unorganized dawdling community citizen bucket brigades in the 1860s that often failed in their attempts at fire suppression. The Fort Worth, Texas Volunteer Fire Department records and handwritten minutes dated 1883-1893 indicate these self-taught men became highly organized, held regular inspections and drills, influenced and developed policies for fire protection, and developed plans of action and implemented fire suppression attacks with great skill while maintaining a distinctive social standing in the community they served. Their ranks included businessmen, laborers, gamblers, lawmen, cowboys, criminals, and Civil War veterans all eager to serve. These men performed a significant civil duty integral to Fort Worth's ability to flourish.

The firemen of Fort Worth battled the ravages of fire, facing regular catastrophic conflagrations; from such devastating fire experiences, they would continuously develop new systematic measures to combat the fires that plagued their city and its inhabitants. Many of the recorded fire disasters are important in understanding how the department advanced, but this chapter will focus on a minority of those scenarios and reactions by the city and its public. There is a dearth of historiography concerning Texas fires and impacts but the newspaper accounts record a vast amount of information as to causes and effects. A cursory study of large fire losses in Fort Worth and the State of Texas on the whole show multitudes of reactionary measures to

¹ Rich, Harold *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014.

firefighting tactics and fire department growth in Texas cities and allow for future dissertation on the subject matter. Efforts to modernize a crude post-frontier fire service into a well-functioning volunteer department in Fort Worth would ultimately lead to an established paid professional department by December 1, 1893. After two decades of prior volunteer fire service, that volunteer effort paved the way for more modern approaches.

Fort Worth's humble beginnings occurred in 1849 as a military outpost when Major General William Jenkins Worth erected a series of forts in Texas. In June of 1849, Brevet Major Ripley A. Arnold, under Worth's command, established a camp, thirty-five miles west of Dallas named it in honor of General Worth, who had died of cholera in 1849.² By September 17, 1853, the Fort Worth military post was ordered abandoned by the US Army and its troops moved westward to a new frontier line in Fort Belknap. Fort Worth's population dwindled to roughly 175 to 250 inhabitants by the Civil War's end, and Tarrant County recorded 1,000 inhabitants. The empty outpost might well have become a faded memory if not for continued western migration and an immense number of Texas longhorns grazing in south Texas after the Civil War.

In 1867, 35,000 longhorns were driven by cowboys over the Chisholm Trail northward; by 1869, 350,000 head of beef were rounded up for transport that year, and by 1871, the annual cattle number rose to 700,000 driven in herds of 2,000 to 3,000 along the route on the Chisholm Trail supplying the North's hunger for beef and aiding in curing a shortage. These cattle drives became Fort Worth's first large and stable industry, as the town was strategically located between southern cattle ranges and the Abilene, Kansas railhead. Such an industry created a wealth of new commerce and entrepreneurial spirit of support businesses in the region. Within a

² Richard F. Selcer, *The Fort that Became a City: An Illustrated Reconstruction of Fort Worth, TX 1849-1853* (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1991),1-4.

decade, Tarrant County's population grew from 5,788 in 1870 to 24,761 by 1880, a significant milestone.³ "Go west young man" was printed in an editorial by Horace Greely, in 1865 in the *New York Tribune*. Greely favored westward expansion and wrote the editorial to encourage Americans and Civil War veterans to take advantage of the Homestead Act, which was established to colonize public lands, more than 160 million acres in all, most west of the Mississippi. The fast-paced growth of Fort Worth presaged both expansion of the frontier to the city's west and its urban evolution.

After the Civil War, some veterans, steeped in military training and shaped by battle, moved west to townships along the frontier. According to Larry M. Logue in his book *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace*, most Civil War veterans returned home "battle-toughened but not fundamentally altered." The society they returned to had changed economically and politically. Most veterans remained in the former slave states—indeed, the 1890 census recorded that only seven of identifying Civil War veterans were living outside of the South. This number recorded however, seems to be a poor recording of actual veteran migration who moved outside of the original southern homes after the war.⁴ Texas became a magnet for Confederate veterans looking for a fresh start. It held vast amounts of land, towns were emerging rapidly due to great cattle drives, flourishing agricultural commerce, and the freed black populations were relatively small in most parts of Texas. These outcomes resulted in Texas claiming more Confederate veterans than any other state in the union by 1890.⁵

Men who sought out new places to create a new life left war-torn southern towns further east; they would devote their lives to a new cause, such as town-building in the frontier spaces,

³ Ibid., 14.

⁴ Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1966), 103-5.

⁵ Ibid., 105.

and shape these regions with their influences. These men could become city fathers and create communities that they not only desired to live in but could profit from as well. Captain Boardman Buckley Paddock, a notable Confederate veteran who pulled up stakes after the war and moved west, sought his fortune in the community of Fort Worth. Born January 22, 1844, in Cleveland, Ohio, he spent his youth in the Northwest Territory of Wisconsin among the trapper and logging camps. Paddock volunteered for service in the Confederacy at the age of sixteen, enlisting in the Confederate Army in 1861 in Mississippi commanded under Colonel Writ Adams Regiment of Cavalry. In 1862, the eighteen-year-old Paddock was promoted to captain, becoming the youngest officer in the Confederacy. Paddock fought at Shiloh, Corinth, Vicksburg, and elsewhere, assigned with the Signal Corps and Secret Service. Commanding 1,364 troops, Paddock captured an Ironclad gunboat holding a crew of 268 Union men. Paddock's war exploits were legendary. He had five horses shot out from under him, and after one particular battle claimed to have twenty-seven bullet holes in his shirt from enemy fire yet escaped serious injury.⁶ Paddock became an inspiration for George Washington Cable's novel, *The Cavalier*, and was the epitome of a handsome, heroic, dashing, and daring Confederate soldier. In short, Paddock was a self-made man, a man of action whose formative time within the Civil War profoundly affected his approaches to business, his choice of location in which to grow roots after the war, and his like-minded approaches to developing groups or organizations he deemed important socially.

Paddock's personal war correspondence foreshadows what the future might hold for him and his fiancé Emmie Harper after the war's end when he moved west. At one point, Paddock wrestled with the notion of becoming a guerilla fighter due to his deep love of the Confederacy

⁶ Biographical Sketch, *The B. B. Paddock Papers 1862-1946*, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries, Arlington.

and strong southern beliefs. In the end, Paddock saw no honor in such tactics and returned home to marry Emmie in Fayette, Mississippi, on December 10, 1867.⁷ By 1872, when B. B. Paddock ventured into Texas seeking a suitable homestead for his family, he was on a clear mission to prosper and lend a hand in building something bigger than himself.

As Paddock scouted Texas for a suitable place to resettle, he wrote to Emmie a series of letters that provide clues about how he would shape social life in his new home. In a letter dated October 23, 1872, from the Mouth of the Red River, Paddock wrote:

Have met three gentlemen from Tarrant County – the county in which Fort Worth is situated – they say I will be delighted with it, so much so, that they doubt I will even go back for you. Let me give you one specimen of the good things of Tarrant County: There are only twenty-three negro voters in the county. This is good enough for me.⁸

Paddock's private correspondence offers a unique and honest snapshot into his deeply personal views toward African Americans and reasons for choosing Fort Worth as his new home. His racism would be a repeated theme as he shaped a city and its fire department. Paddock, like many white southerners after the war, struggled or refused to accept that the blacks were now a freed people. Paddock's racial views no doubt influenced his resettlement destination and guided his shaping of the community, including the volunteer fire service.⁹

Paddock finally settled in Fort Worth on December 16, 1872, and began his editorial duties at the *Fort Worth Democrat*, where his editorial stance focused mainly on the development of his newly adopted city. One major problem addressed by Paddock after three months in the frontier community was the need for organized fire service. On March 4, 1873, within the *Fort Worth Democrat's* editorial pages, he called for a meeting on the courthouse

⁷ Paddock to Emmie Harper, December 10, 1867, *The B. B. Paddock Papers 1862-1946*.

⁸ Paddock to Emmie Paddock, October 23, 1872, *The B. B. Paddock Papers 1862-1946*.

⁹ Louge, *To Appomattox and Beyond*, 104; Paddock to Emmie Paddock, October 23, 1872, *The B. B. Paddock Papers 1862-1946*.

steps to organize a fire department. As a businessman, he believed in the city's potential for commerce and culture. As a military man, he clearly recognized that a growing city defenseless against wildfires had no future. The citizens of Fort Worth ignored Paddock's initial editorials and public pleas for organized fire protection as no one showed at the appointed hour on the courthouse steps.¹⁰ It appears few in the community supported the expenditure of public funds to pay for fire service and equipment. The town's people seemed uninterested in such lofty modern standards and would continue to rely on citizen bucket brigades.

Paddock, obviously, disagreed and pushed Fort Worth in a new direction. After all, just days earlier, the *Democrat* had reported that a large fire on the town square occurred March 1, 1873, and no one seemed willing or able to do anything to prevent a reoccurrence of an existential threat to the young city. Paddock wrote, "The almost miraculous escape from a very destructive fire on Saturday last, seems to have produced no effect whatever upon our businessmen." The meeting Paddock called for ended with him the only one in attendance. A cold front blew into town that day, and Paddock was the only soul stout enough to brave it for the good of the community.¹¹ On Saturday, March 8, 1873, the *Democrat* printed the story of the aborted attempt to organize the fire department. Paddock wrote:

We took our position on the steps of that edifice and although the stone was a little cool, we heroically held our position until patience ceased to be a virtue and went inside the courthouse. Electing myself chairman we sat amid the most profound silence, an immediate problem arose – the lack of a secretary. Not to be thwarted by minor obstacles, we finally with much reluctance consented to assume the arduous position also.¹²

Paddock's humorous comment boasted in his editorial he was a chairman, committee of five, treasurer, and author of procedures to establish a fire company ready to extinguish fires in all

¹⁰ *Historical Research Project, Historical Index*, Fort Worth Public Library, Genealogy Department, 1931; "Paddock, Buckley Broadman," *The Handbook of Texas Online*.

¹¹ *Fort Worth Democrat*, March 8, 1873; *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, February 25, 1873.

¹² *Fort Worth Democrat*, March 8, 1873.

areas of the city day or night. He also facetiously offered fire protection to the city of Dallas, given a day or two notice prior to any fire event. The editorial was the first of many times he would mention neighboring city sister Dallas as a subliminal message to critique its failure to address its community. In spite of his tongue-in-cheek approach, his intent was clear. His editorials hit home in the community, and, on May 2, 1873, Fort Worth formed a sixty-member company consisting of local businessmen, clerks, and mechanics - an auspicious beginning that, nevertheless, left much to accomplish.¹³

The fire service represented a significant stride toward a more modern city, a step toward consensus among Fort Worth citizens on how to organize and modernize their community. Public action by concerned citizens over the effects of the most recent fire demonstrated their approval of the newspaper editorial call to arms. In protecting their businesses, homes, and the future of their municipality, these citizens had taken the first step in modernizing their city. From these humble beginnings came a frontier fire service in Fort Worth that evolved over the next two decades.

As part of Paddock's tireless editorial support for the Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department, he lobbied for financial support from civic-minded businessmen, elected officials, and common citizens. He reported, and waxed poetic, about the fire stories and brave lads pulling hook and ladder companies in his adopted city. He also estimated the cost of fire damages, creating the first sets of fire report data. Paddock depicted Fort Worth firemen as heroes, brave volunteers whom he described as risking life and limb in battling their urban fires. Paddock published the dates of fundraising events, ice cream socials, fire department fundraisers, and the volunteers' first purchase of a hook and ladder company.¹⁴ Hook and ladder crews

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Fort Worth Democrat*, May 2, 1873; *Fort Worth Democrat*, May 10, 1873.

consisted of a large wagon, pulled normally via horse teams, with a series of hooks, ropes, axes, buckets, hammers, and ladders. They took a simple yet effective approach to extinguishing fires, especially in undeveloped areas without consistent water supplies or water mains and fireplugs. The idea was to use the ladders, with firemen placing hooks in strategic areas of the structure, or throwing hooks onto the structure, involved in fire and then pulling fire load combustibles away from the seat of the fire's origins. This action normally robbed the fire of fuel and allowed any existing fuel to be minimized. Thus starved, the fire would either burn itself out or permit using buckets of water to deluge the seat of the fire. At times, it became necessary to pull down adjacent or close structures to create a fire break. This crude, yet effective, means of firefighting sacrificed little of the already involved structures and saved adjacent buildings. With its first hook and ladder company, Fort Worth was well on its way to setting standards and practices for the public good.

Money and funding shortages plagued upstart companies and Fort Worth's newly established volunteer fire company went to great lengths to raise money to pay off the \$600 debt incurred for its first hook and ladder company. The *Democrat's* editorials and announcements could not muster enough excitement to raise badly needed funds to satisfy such debts in the aftermath of the national Panic of 1873. Reluctantly the volunteers had to sell their new hook and ladder apparatus to the city of Fort Worth at a cost of \$1,000, with the express stipulation that the volunteer company (newly named M.T. Johnson Hook and Ladder Company) would appoint its own officers and volunteers would devise systems to answer and combat fires. The city council agreed to this compromise, and the Fort Worth Volunteer Fire department entered the age of mechanized fire suppression. By collaborating with the city leaders in this manner, the stage was set for delegating positions of authority and eventual ownership of the volunteer organization.

Perhaps the important point here is the compromise between the department, which could not fully fund the venture, and a city that relied on a volunteer force to fight fires.¹⁵ These steps would be some of the first Fort Worth took to use public coffers to equip its volunteer force to protect the city against the ravages of fire and property loss. Furthermore, Fort Worth laid significant groundwork for future civil service organizations within the community, as city leaders administered funds for organizational governance.

Unfortunately, this first volunteer fire company's one critical piece of apparatus was hand-pulled, requiring great manpower, as it had yet to acquire a horse and harness for delivering the unit to fires. Furthermore, the company lacked devices for extinguishing fires with water save leather and wood buckets. These pioneers of Fort Worth were unseasoned, self-trained firemen and had little hope of dousing fires with water due to a lack of reliable water sources, or a means to move water via fire-lines connected to a water fireplug system. The ineffectiveness of trying to pour a large deluge of water on fires using the bucket brigade techniques offered little hope of extinguishing large blazes. Instead, the old proven rudimentary tactic of hook and ladder companies focused on depriving the fire of fuel before it could engulf adjacent structures, using hooks with ropes to pull down structures engulfed in flame. Firemen also still used leather buckets to transport water from horse troughs, cisterns, or nearby wells extinguishing flames during the overhaul of fire scenes. This combined system of firefighting relied on the firemen's ability to organize rapidly to a call and respond quickly to scenes when duty demanded it. These firemen needed large companies of volunteers to respond to calls in time to save adjacent structures. This arrangement was successful in that the fire crews and the city accepted the loss

¹⁵ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 25, 1973; *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 25, 1875.

of a burning structure and focused on saving adjacent structures in close proximity to the fire and save the lives of trapped victims with ladder attack groups.

This coordination of fire suppression was not new; crews in North America had improved it during the colonial era. Fort Worth's firefighting equipment enhanced over time, but more significant to the community's development was how the men who operated it functioned in fighting fires effectively. Their professional experience shaped them as an organization and, in turn, shaped the development of Fort Worth's social and government infrastructure. Historian Benjamin L. Carp details this establishment of firemen's urban voluntary culture and Revolutionary movement in his article published in *William and Mary Quarterly* entitled "Fire of Liberty." Many of the same issues that affected the colonial era of fire suppression also affected the western frontier establishment of Fort Worth in 1873, with few exceptions. Colonial and Revolutionary firemen developed fire clubs to combat fires, and they held a special status as heroes in their respective communities. According to Carp, these men held various positions in their society, and they took great pride in their fire clubs, which were very organized and proficient in fire suppression and prevention. Having an established waterworks and hand fire pumps, colonial firemen used teamwork, cooperation, and training in their community fire service. Fire services allowed these communities to come together by protecting their property.¹⁶ Carp laboriously details how these men developed political influence in communities, how their politics or alliances divided them during the Revolution, and how most firemen traveled in the same social circles.¹⁷ His contribution to the historiography concerning volunteer fire service is significant and well thought out. Clearly, the volunteers of the nineteenth-century frontier towns

¹⁶ Benjamin L. Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58(October 2001), 1-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

of the West were much like those found in eighteenth-century colonial America along the eastern seaboard.¹⁸

Both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century firemen shared common attributes of civic pride and ideals of heroic masculinity within the communities they served, which fostered an exclusive brotherhood among the volunteer firemen. It appears, however, that the nineteenth-century firemen in Fort Worth, Texas, developed into a similar brotherhood shaded more with a paramilitary philosophy. One must note that the volunteers themselves proposed rules of conduct and constitutional bylaws, based on the military model, to create a better fire service that earned community respect. An interesting difference when one compares the fire organizations of colonial times to those of frontier Texas involves long-established and weighty social and political pressures in the East that did not plague firemen in nineteenth-century Fort Worth. Why? Partly because firemen had no political influence to contend within the new prairie community. Nor were there dense populations with competing fire brigade companies to share a rivalry with. And those in business or social circles had no reason for infighting or competition for fire services. These reasons, combined with a newer paramilitary approach to a fire organization within the ranks, allowed the city to develop a paramilitary fire service organization, which would eventually give way to a more professional form of fire service and a future paid department by the turn of the century.

The influential paramilitary style that developed in Fort Worth's Volunteer Fire Department derived from the lessons learned and passed on by those who served in the Civil War and are clearly represented in the fire service's minutes from 1873-1883. In short, the department developed into a strict military unit or faction, rather than a club or mere social association

¹⁸ Carp, pp. 10 -15.

without military principles or codes of conduct like eastern predecessors. This watershed moment marks a recognizable push toward the professionalization of the volunteer fire service and away from the social club mentality of colonial fire clubs. Such changes led to subtle but important transformations in this community and its civil servants' approaches to firefighting.

Past military service shaped these men who in turn, shaped Fort Worth society. As mentioned, Paddock served in the Confederate army. So, too, did others in the department's founding leadership ranks such as Captain S. P. Greene, 1st President; William T. Field, 1st Foreman; Captain M. B. Lloyd, president of the department in 1876, and Captain Khleber Miller Van Zandt to name a few. All of them served in the Confederacy and lent their skills in establishing rules of conduct and organizational integrity to the department. The primary sources make clear Paddock's military influence on the department through his organizational skills and rhetoric. An example of his military rhetoric appears in news stories, such as his report of a fire that occurred on March 28, 1874, at the Frazier house where he arrived at the "Truck House" and "under the company rules, took command of the company and scene at the fire." He was commanding a civil servant army of sorts.¹⁹

A majority of prominent citizens in Fort Worth who were instrumental in shaping the city maintained Civil War ties and clung to southern notions of patriarchy, honor, white elitism, cultural southern values, and as veterans, they tended to socialize together and work alongside one another while building businesses and supporting the creation of this New South community built along the western frontier. They became land speculators, doctors, lawyers, newspaper editors, teachers, shopkeepers, saloon owners, lawmen, blacksmiths, stage drivers, railroad

¹⁹ Capt. B. B. Paddock, *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, Vol. II* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), 266; *Fort Worth Democrat*, March 28, 1874.

developers, and bankers; these men also volunteered for service in protecting their frontier city against the hazards of fire.²⁰

Newspaper articles and the minutes of the Volunteer Fire Department reveal the military order of Fort Worth's new department. An article printed in the *Democrat* on August 7, 1875, when the newly formed city council initiated the appointment of a Chief Engineer and 2nd Assistant without consulting members of the volunteers of Hook and Ladder Company #1, demonstrates from the volunteers' standpoint, a breach in chain of command. The volunteers viewed this episode as a violation of their operating procedures, and they reminded the city fathers of their original agreement that when the city purchased Hook and Ladder Company #1, only its members would elect officers and member assignments within the Volunteer Fire Department. The volunteers further admonished city leaders and reminded them only the department would establish personnel and ranks for the Volunteer Fire Department. In short, only the members would be in control of the fire service organization, and the city council would supply them equipment or needed funds for operations.²¹

The volunteer firemen and their leadership desired to play an integral role in their organization's hierarchical command and rank structure. Their reprimand of the city fathers highlights an unusual relationship with the city, which had the obligation of procuring equipment and pay administrative officers but could not choose these officers or members. This created a unique and peculiar relationship with city leaders and the procurement of needed equipment and pay for administrative officers. The firemen needed municipal funds to operate and the city needed men to protect existing property, and for a time it was a good marriage. Of course, it

²⁰ Capt. B. B. Paddock, *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, Vol. IV* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), 683-700, 626.

²¹ *Fort Worth Democrat*, August 7, 1875.

never hurt if a catastrophic fire occurred, thus demonstrating the need for additional modern fire equipment and funding. And disasters certainly played their role in the matter over due course.

Conflagrations would occur as the city was essentially a collection of fuel; meanwhile, firefighting remained in its infancy and no structured program of fire prevention existed. On March 29, 1876, fire destroyed the courthouse, and with it, most of the city's records. The physical loss of a courthouse and many important records held within it was certainly an interruption of normal business and commerce for the city and county. The mental stress from the loss of this building and what it symbolized to its town led to a public cry for more modernized fire equipment.²² Early on, such issues created reactionary approaches to fires rather than preventative moves. The city council changed that thinking by agreeing to purchase a Silsby Steamer fire engine from Seneca Falls, NY, at a cost of \$6,250. The *Democrat* called for a new station to be built to house the steamer and Hook and Ladder #1.²³ In November of 1876, the newly formed Panther Company obtained a very modern piece of fire suppression equipment that could rival any other city in the state. The Panther Company also ordered uniforms complete with insignia and hats with panther embossed badges in honor of the city's nickname: Panther City. Over the course of the next six years, great strides were made in the department. This city furnished additional resources including additional hook and ladder companies, hose, uniforms, office supplies, quarters to house equipment in a centrally located fire hall, and a team of horses complete with \$100 per month to cover maintenance costs. In addition, negotiations were made to create a form of modest payment for services rendered; each volunteer was to be paid \$2.50

²² *Fort Worth Democrat*, July 10, 1876.

²³ *Fort Worth Democrat*, October 2, 1876; *Fort Worth Democrat*, October 21, 1876; City of Fort Worth Secretary, *City of Fort Worth Bill of Sale Records*, November 10, 1876.

per fire call.²⁴ This was a marriage of convenience between the city and its volunteer firemen and would lay the groundwork for a city to recognize it could no longer be merely reactive concerning its fire issues, but would become more proactive.

²⁴ *Fort Worth Democrat*, December 2, 1876; *Fort Worth Democrat*, February 1, 1877; Fort Worth City Directory 1883-4, Fort Worth Public Library Archives.

Chapter III. Point of Origin - A Volunteer Fire Department, 1883 - 1893

The men who became members of the Volunteer Fort Worth Fire Department came unsolicited, with little more than able bodies and an inborn desire to give to their fellow man and community. For the most part, they began their service untrained, ill-equipped, and with little knowledge of future battles they would fight as firemen. They did, however, bring an undaunted pioneer spirit combined with military experiences in the recent Civil War that would see them through many tribulations. Along with these experiences, they brought to firefighting a desire to create a region more prosperous than the one they had found. These brave souls, organized into fire companies, would without a second thought drop the trappings of their daily trades to stand together in dusty streets to fight a common enemy: fire. Their efforts brought little to no pay but established recognizable pride and esprit de corps and built an organizational foundation for future firefighters.

This chapter explores the role of white, middle-class businessmen, city leaders and boosters, and organizations like the volunteer fire service in the evolution of Fort Worth from pioneer town to modern city. In particular, it examines how individuals and groups reacted to the economic, political, social, and environmental challenges Fort Worth residents faced between 1883 and 1893. Primary documents offer insights into post-frontier Fort Worth and its more established neighboring towns. These documents reveal the social dynamics that created safer communities and how these social interactions affected urban aspirations. By focusing on the towns' transition one can see into a more commercial center during struggles negotiating agricultural and economic depressions of the 1870s and 1890s. But, from such transitions, a lasting city develops, and, therefore, lasting institutions. Examining how these city leaders

negotiated with one another, with other residents, and with their rural neighbors to make needed changes to enhance property, I conclude that communities like Fort Worth successfully used volunteer groups to fashion a cogent vision for development of volunteer civil servant groups. At the center of this social and developmental web, understudied and underappreciated, was the fire service.

The sprawling frontier tent village that was Fort Worth in the 1860s evolved into the post-frontier town of the 1870s, to a more substantial place characterized by wooden-framed structures and a more complex social infrastructure. It did a town no good, however, to merely build structures for homes, hotels, saloons, various other commercial establishments, and a seat of government without protections against fire. Fort Worth by 1881 was divided into three territorial fire wards. The current Mayor John Peter Smith, an original founding pioneer father, spent \$12,000 on reorganizing a sixty-two-member volunteer fire service for the protection of its citizens and commercial centers. This expenditure alone details how important a fire service was. Purchases included additional hose carriages, allowing the creation of three new companies and a three-thousand-pound fire bell to call all firefighters to duty. Fort Worth proudly staked its claim as the first city in Texas to install a state-of-the-art modernized electric Gamewell Fire Alarm system, with eleven pull boxes strategically located within city limits to notify volunteer firemen of an alarm and the approximate location of the trouble.¹ None of this, however, would be worth a much without a reliable source of water for fire suppression. After much debate, the city established a waterworks at the Clear and West forks of the Trinity River able to deliver four million gallons of water a day to the growing city via six miles of underground water mains.

¹ Fort Worth City Directory, April 24, 1883-4, 30; Rich, Harold *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014.

Such aggressive municipal strategies signaled the increasing importance of the city's growing fire department.

Clearly, the growth of city services, including the fire department, reflected a strong urban development ethos among city leaders.² Prestige and fraternal bonds developed among the select few allowed to join the fire department. Despite the diverse backgrounds of its membership, this newly formed paramilitary organization and its members shared a crucial duty and obligation to the preservation of the city they served. As such, they communed with men from all walks of life. This now post-frontier village became a walking city, where those who walked its streets came to know one another. Civil servants such as firemen were known, moving about the city on their daily business and recognized as important citizens. A more professional outward appearance took hold over the years in duty, dress, firefighting tactics, and equipment acquisitions. Not surprisingly, these men carried into the nineteenth century chivalrous ideals that harkened back to the fire companies of the Revolution. The department and fire companies' growth in membership was significant and went hand-in-hand with public boosterism. These developments benefitted both the city and the fire department—the city with a modern fire department was a modern city.

To become a member of a Fort Worth volunteer fire company was to bind oneself to the city's future and to weave oneself into Fort Worth's social fabric. Membership included ties to a variety of businessmen and fraternal fellowships, which brought a number of benefits. For example, in 1884, a well-known local lawman, Jim Courtright, was attempting to elude capture by Texas Rangers, who wanted to arrest him on a murder charge. The *Fort Worth Gazette* reported that Courtright's horse fell in front of Fire Station #1. The firemen helped him to

² Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 152.

remount and make good his escape; he was after all a volunteer member and foreman of Hose & Ladder Co. #1. Courtright was later exonerated and remained on the volunteer roster until his death in a shoot-out at the White Elephant Saloon with gambler Luke Short.³

The informal benefits of firefighting enjoyed by Courtright belied a growing professionalization in the modernizing firefighting community. In an attempt to bring forth better rules and standardized policies and procedures, the department produced a constitution and by-laws for its operation on April 11, 1884. The department approved these rules on March 12, 1887, and published them in a pamphlet distributed to all registered and recognized members. The bylaws set rules for membership in the department, for the conduct of officers and firemen, for disciplinary actions, and for the procedures to elect leaders. In short, the members became a very organized group of city servants, a prelude to civil servants.⁴ The published codes offer insights into the social order of the department and the larger Fort Worth community. Article 1 of the constitution called for the organization of regular fire companies, composed of white male members only. This rule put Jim Crow on public display. At this point, these members began to publicly recognize themselves as the “Fort Worth Fire Department,” not as a mere volunteer group. This phrasing is significant, as its members could see themselves as a part of a more modern organization. Both a man’s profession and affiliations with his professional counterparts would create influence in their inner circles, and membership in this all-white fire department brought prestige, alliances, and individual social importance. The fire department also kept African American residents in check socially and politically by depriving them of membership.

Members of this newly professionalized force were no longer the amateur volunteers of 1873 but were part of a modern regular force within a cosmopolitan region. This all white, male

³ *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 18, 1884.

⁴ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, Fort Worth Public Library Archives, 27-30.

fire organization established a hierarchical system of white prominence in Fort Worth society and city government. Little is recorded about the black fire companies of Fort Worth, but references exist to them within the white department's minutes. For example, one of the few written references to the Black department involved a dispute over an invoice for work apparently ordered by the Black department for photographs and framing, but delivered for payment to the White department. Members of the White department voted not to recognize the Black department and declined to pay the invoice, actions which engendered some serious debate and apparent uproar. During this time, a small, yet prominent black community was developing in Fort Worth. The African Americans had established their own segregated fire department to answer their community's fire calls. Indirectly, the so-called Dark Town Brigade existence would appear to relieve members of the white volunteer department from the responsibility to respond to fires in those areas. But this argument, based on conjecture, is limited due to a lack of historical evidence on the Black fire companies or more documents concerning relationships between white and black fire companies in Fort Worth.⁵

Such biased behavior was consistent with this era and with white men in this community nineteen years after the Civil War. Most of the department's founding members came out of the war or had family who fought in the war for the Confederacy. While they used their military experience to organize this paramilitary group, they infused their ideals of white supremacy into the community. These white males strategically and systematically influenced the growth of the department and their adopted city in much the same way they had their previous homes in the Old South, with southern traditions deeply rooted in racism. Men of prominence in city government and firemen of Fort Worth wove racial segregation into the social fabric of post-

⁵ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minute*, p.85-87.

frontier Fort Worth. Jim Crow mindsets oppressing the African American community became the new order.

Another manifestation of fire-related racism appeared in local news coverage, some written by Paddock, which further demonstrates links between firefighting and community values. To denigrate the entire race, Paddock and other newspaper editors and writers accused African Americans of causing or setting fires. For example, one case involved a man named Jim Parker who tried to escape from jail by setting a fire in his cell.⁶ Paddock wrote, “The alarm of fire which aroused our people from their Sabbath evening reveries, was caused by a negro, Jim Parker.” Slurs occurred often in the Fort Worth papers.

In another example, the media blamed a large conflagration known as the Texas Spring Palace Fire of May 10, 1890, on a “negro boy.” The story implies that the young boy was dancing on the second floor of the building near the Gold Room when he stepped on a match thereby sparking the blaze, which leveled the structure in eleven minutes.⁷ The *Fort Worth Gazette* reported multiple theories concerning the fire’s start, but settled on an alleged eyewitness account by a Dr. Harper. “Harper claimed that, the fire started when a negro boy stepping on a match, the head of which appeared to explode into three pieces, two of which the boy extinguished himself, but the third, which he overlooked, ignited either grass or an oil cloth, and from that the flames spread.”⁸ The most likely cause of the fire may have been a discarded match or smoking materials.

These negative stereotypes long shaped public opinion about the African American community in Fort Worth. Another example of the fire department’s white supremacy occurred

⁶ *Fort Worth Democrat*, October 17, 1876.

⁷ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 13, 1949 (re-print of original *Fort Worth Democrat* article).

⁸ *Fort Worth Gazette*, June 5, 1890.

on December 7, 1889, when the firemen paid their respects over the death of Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy. Volunteer Chief Lassiter ordered that the drivers should tap the large and small bells 81 taps on Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock in honor of Davis, who had died on Dec. 6 at the age of 81. This simple display shows another example of a pattern of deep southern sentimentality expressed by a civic organization that influenced the racial fabric of Fort Worth society.⁹

Displays of white firemen's solidarity, witnessed in the public spectacle of fire department drills, parades, inspections, or demonstrations of equipment, can be interpreted as a form of racial control measures. Clearly, the white firemen neither recognized the African American community fully, nor allowed them into their membership. Public drills and the like allowed this community to witness its paramilitary fire soldiers in action, reinforcing their importance to the community as civil servants in a white majority and protectors of white property. Racial motivations aside, these public practices served multiple roles and by performing fire suppression drills publicly, they advertised their presence and justified their existence to city officials and taxpayers. Those who financed the fire department were the white majority, and it is a disappointing chapter in Fort Worth history.¹⁰

The city's annual flower parade in May was another social event allowing companies of volunteer firemen to engage socially with Fort Worth residents and civic leaders. Many of these men were descendants and relatives of the founding population. Appearing in uniform on firefighting vehicles or marching proudly alongside the fire machinery, they used the parade as a

⁹ *Fort Worth Register* December 7, 1889, p 3; *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes* – Dec 7, 1889, p.222, April 11, 1883 29-30 (public displays, parades, and drills), August 28, 1885 p. 97, May 2, 1885 p. 79 (Fire department Constitution and By-laws adopted and formed), p.p. 190-193 (public display and parade at Mayfest).

¹⁰ *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 22, 1885, p.3, *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, May 2, 1885 p. 79 (Fire department Constitution and By-laws adopted and formed), February 27, 1889 p.p. 190-193 (political structures, rules, voting of officer ranks).

public relations event. Cousins, brothers, fathers, and sons often served alongside one another when volunteering for duty or when working together in their day jobs.¹¹ Established ties in family and social settings, these bonds of brotherhood, fraternity, and sense of camaraderie, fostered an attitude of exclusion and white supremacy in such social mores.

Volunteer fire companies of Fort Worth grew in number and social status in their twenty years of service. Their predecessors on the eastern seaboard cities, written about by Amy Greenburg, suggests great similarities as a class socially in the historiography of fire service. Both groups modernized their companies and fire suppression techniques based on contemporary technology or methods of firefighting. Steam engines, for instance, enabled more modern fire crews to develop modern departments and better fire response methods. A more modernized city and its population's expectations of professional civil servants do seem linked. In the 1850s, volunteer departments in the East, such as Boston's, began to incorporate professional members by using volunteer fire companies as the stepping-stone for creating paid professional departments as they came closer to the turn of the century.¹² These similarities abound with one glaring exception; Greenberg, in her book *Cause For Alarm*, claims that volunteer firemen on the East Coast were "hostile to feminine authority". Women in Fort Worth were an integral part of social planning, recording of minutes within regular meetings, fundraising, and offering advice to their spouses in the fire service.¹³

The Fort Worth Fire Department volunteers no doubt incorporated the established traditions of their brethren from the East in their growing city. They emulated fire suppression techniques, use of modern equipment, and leather fire helmets that showed their status as firemen

¹¹ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes – Member Registers, 190-1933* (there are lists of company members found within the minutes).

¹² Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm*, 17-22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59-61.

much like the eastern firemen. The volunteers of Fort Worth did, however, add a unique and important twist to their service organization, which appears to differ greatly from the 1850s volunteers studied by Greenberg. The Fort Worth Fire Department pushed the very status of civil servants to an extreme by using a military code in their daily affairs, which appears to come out of Civil War service. Within the recorded minutes of the volunteer fire department are multiple examples of required military order. These codes were based on the use of a constitution, military code, civil service rules, fines, elections, regular annual reports, and the use of court martial proceedings in their regular meetings. They were not merely a social club entwined in a fire service setting.

The volunteers of Fort Worth also differed from their eastern brethren by incorporating women, mainly wives of members, into special services for the department. Wives of chiefs, department presidents, and common members were enlisted into establishing needed committees concerning various issues. Most noted were committees led by women who selected uniforms for fire companies for public functions, purchased decorations for social fundraising, and some women were allowed honorary membership into fire companies. Women assisted regular members with heading or assisting in special finance committees. Women could also become involved in the political fabric of the department growth or feel the sting of insult when fined for disorderly conduct under the departmental rules of conduct (some women were fined for disorderly actions in regular meetings). At such times, the department treated them as members under rules of decorum. These women aided in the establishment of a benevolent fund, which financially assisted those firemen injured in the line of duty.¹⁴ These entities would appear to refute Greenberg's claims that firemen abhorred the participation of women in the service of

¹⁴ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 89, 212, 218, 277.

volunteer departments when applied in the post-frontier areas. The role was limited for women in most respects, but they played an important position in the male-dominated class and in so doing, held a distinctive and public status among the social hierarchy of the volunteers throughout its existence.

Evidence of the department's growing paramilitary structure, striving for professional decorum, and modernism can be seen in how it handled disciplinary matters. In the case of 2nd Assistant Chief Kerr on August 28, 1885, when in a regular meeting, a portion of the minutes read as follows:

Ordered that the charges preferred against 2nd Assistant Chief Kerr and Mr. Kerr preferred by Frank Miller be received and filed and referred to a court martial composed of its members from each company with chief and President added to try Mr. Kerr on said charges and Mr. Kerr is hereby suspended as 2nd Assistant Chief with said court reports its findings. It is ordered by said court that the proceedings of said Court be kept out of the papers.¹⁵

M. T. Kerr was suspended for ten months while the department conducted its regular business and meetings. On May 1, 1886, the court-martial evidence was reported to the volunteer administration. Its findings and claims of misconduct at a fire tournament in Lampasas, Texas, leveled at 2nd Assistant Chief M. T. Kerr were unsubstantiated after exhaustive efforts to secure some evidence of his wrongdoing. Kerr was honorably acquitted of all charges and findings were ordered that the proceeding's results be published in the papers on May 1, 1886. These actions clearly demonstrate an important form of self-governance and recognized conduct that emulates military practices. The use of a court-martial prevented its members from becoming a common social organization and was an early step toward the adoption of a professional fire department model. These actions are the prelude to a modern fire department.¹⁶ As mentioned in chapter one,

¹⁵ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 28-30, 97.

¹⁶ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Departments Minutes*, 97-105.

a significant body of scholarship examines town-building and defines it as a characteristic of American frontier growth throughout history. However, these works do not address the civic-minded servant classes, specifically those of firemen.

Civic infrastructure, such as a fire department, could boost economic development. In Fort Worth, when the cattle boom ended, many firemen like Paddock who owned businesses worked at a feverish pace to diversify the economy. They would use boosterism to attract people and industry to the city. Fort Worth would develop firefighting not only to protect its infrastructure and as an enticement to newcomers, but also to show the outside world it was modern, creative, and worthy of investment.¹⁷

More specifically, in the case of Fort Worth, businessmen defined objectives based on such economic and community support structures as the fire department. These support services provided a means by which residents could feel secure in developing an attachment to their new community. They also provided evidence that builds upon Smith, Doyle, and Mahoney's positions that voluntary associations provided a means by which residents developed an attachment to these new communities and evidence that these communities were shifting to a more durable long-lasting development and no longer a mere frontier.

Doyle and Mahoney's observations on voluntary associations and boosterism delineate the importance of such organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Doyle observes how boosterism was a partial solution to issues of community division as it could

¹⁷Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983; New York: Knopf, 1968), all citations refer to the University of Nebraska edition; Page Smith, *As a City upon a Hill: The Town in American History* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971) 30-32 171-174; Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825 – 1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); and Timothy Mahoney, *Provincial Lives and River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820 – 1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

successfully link goals of a person's opportunity to the communal fortunes of where they lived and worked. Similarly, Mahoney denotes how promoting self-interest into accommodating public labors could draw more people into local networks in towns and thus stimulate development - what we today would call marketing for economic development. Within such growing communities, this process of institutionalizing, modernizing, and elevating the status of volunteer groups, in cooperation with promotional organizations, provided permanent physical space for these groups. And such groups created rules governing behavior that fostered collaboration as a positive outcome for a lasting durable city. As the fire service grew in both members and as an organization, so too did its public status and importance as noted in its annual fire reporting to the public and city council.¹⁸

Fire department annual reports published in local newspapers were instrumental in detailing information for the citizenry and city council as to the overall status of the fire department and budgetary records. The reports disclosed information concerning equipment, maintenance, membership, needed services, recorded fire damage, and causes for fires in Fort Worth. Normally these reports were vetted to the volunteer membership first in regular meetings by the acting chief and then voted on prior to publication in news articles, so the members could approve for publication annual reports for a discerning public. The vote to publish annual reports insured that the department's image, status, and importance in the city remained protected and untarnished. One significant issue that surfaced in published fire department reports was the question of how to pay for an increasingly expensive fire department. The department's report

¹⁸ Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825 – 1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); and Timothy Mahoney, *Provincial Lives and River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820 – 1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

published on April 24, 1893, provided details of its fiscal health. As early as the 1840s, many municipal fire departments grappled with paying for their departments through something called salvage rights. In Fort Worth, Assistant Chief Don Adams suggested in an editorial that Fort Worth adopt this strategy. This suggestion posed one of the major issues of the time and explained how and why many cities during the 1840s -1850s paid their fire departments and stopped using voluntary companies paid through salvage rights.¹⁹

The Texas legislature deliberated passing a law in 1893 giving salvage rights to civil servants within organized fire companies as a means of payment. *Salvor* is the Latin word meaning to save, and it described maritime shipping history payments awarded to those men who saved ships, cargo, or persons from extraordinary dangers at sea. Don Adams stated that, “he could find no specific record of division of assets for claims in salvage for his report concerning firemen.” He argued that each case for salvage might be decided on its merit. Those merits were,

1. The degree of danger incurred by the salvors, 2. The degree of peril in which the property of rescue stood, and 3. The value and nature of property, except here the assistance rendered has been trifling, the salvage usually is from a third to a half of the property saved. A royal ship is bound to come to the aid of a merchant man in distress, but it can still lay claim to salvage.²⁰

Adams derived his definitions of salvage by using maritime codes. The laws of England divided its salvage into two classes, civil and hostile; the civil salvage dealt with saving a vessel from the perils of the sea, while hostile salvage dealt in the recovery of vessels from pirates or enemies. Such mindsets had become woven into early American firefighting during the revolutionary era. Adams wrote, “Now Gentlemen I may be wrong, but I do not think there is not a state in the Union that allows salvage as to Fire Departments currently. However, my answer to the question is no, as I am opposed to the measure in toto.”

¹⁹ *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 24, 1893, p.5, (salvage).

²⁰ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 313-16.

Adams based his refusal to support salvage rights in lieu of payment for services rendered on issues surrounding those unscrupulous individuals who might commit arson in order to lay claims to items salvaged from fires. Complicating issues further was how to assess and settle fair insurance losses between insurance companies and those who suffered the loss of property from fire. To make matters even more complicated, a portion of that loss would need to adjust the cost for firemen for payment of responding to these fires. It could create a quagmire and poor optics for all concerned. Adams worried salvage rights, if adopted as a policy within Fort Worth, would diminish the reputation of the local firemen, the city they served, and their associations status statewide. Adams wrote, “It would, without a doubt, have a tendency to lower the patriotic duty of our brave volunteer firemen to the level of gaining the almighty dollar.” In short, it might create serious issues as to what defined a civil servant and the possible unscrupulous actions that might occur if firemen made their living off mere salvage alone, from fire losses and their victims.²¹

Like many members of the Fort Worth Fire Department, Adams believed that volunteer firemen had no right to ask the state to enact a law allotting payments to firemen from salvage of fire losses. Nor did they have a right to request funds for full-time salaries from the city council stipulating amounts for service as firemen. The records are at times confusing, as are the definitions of the firemen themselves, who often referred to themselves as volunteer members (those who donated service in the department as volunteers) or Fort Worth Fire Department members (those volunteer members who felt they were more than volunteers, thus calling themselves a “fire department” leaving out the word *volunteer*). One should note that the fire

²¹ *Fort Worth Gazette*, August 2, 1893 (Annual fire report published); *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 313-16.

chief, fire wardens, and engineers (drivers) did receive pay for services within the volunteer department administration as opposed to its volunteer regular force, a fact documented in regular fire annual reports. What is clear, after Don Adams's report, is that the department had changed into a complex hybrid by 1893, with members volunteering their service at fire scenes for \$2.50 per fire, and chiefs, wardens, or engineers receiving small salaries for performing their duties.²² Don Adams presented his assessment to the Fort Worth Fire Department membership prior to publication. The working of the editorial implies that the majority of the department wanted to view themselves as a professional fire department, not a volunteer organization seeking to profit from salvage rights in exchange for services rendered. It appears that these volunteer firemen viewed the idea of fighting fires as a duty and one that needed no full compensation in the form of annual salaries using salvage as a means of payment. Salvage created bad public imagery as it pit firemen seeking payment from insurance losses against those who suffered property loss from fire. This would not be viewed as very chivalrous and could turn an admiring public against the fire service.

The city council disagreed and on November 7, 1893, developed a special committee on a Paid Fire Department to weigh the costs of maintaining this now two-decade-old "volunteer department" in Fort Worth versus those of a paid department. The fire committee surveyed the effectiveness of paid departments established in cities with similar populations to Fort Worth's. The committee surveyed such cities as San Antonio, Galveston, Houston, Lynchburg, Virginia, and Salt Lake City, Utah, where the populations ranged from 19,704 to 44,843. They researched their closest neighbor and rival city Dallas, whose department consisted of 44 men and 22 horses and had an annual maintenance budget of \$35,000. According to city records and annual reports,

²² *Fort Worth Gazette*, August 2, 1893 (Annual fire report published); *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 313-16.

the Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department maintenance cost was much higher than a paid Dallas Fire Department. All records in the city secretary's office dating from October 31, to November 28, 1893, indicate that a paid fire department would cost much less to maintain and still offer a professional modern service. The daily affairs of departmental needs, guided by the city council more fully, with greater fiscal oversight created advantages that far outweighed the use of a large force within a volunteer organization.

On November 15, 1893, the volunteer fire department announced to its membership the city council's intention to establish a paid department and choose its membership and rank structures. Volunteers formed a committee to respond in writing, representing their sentiments of who thought their city government was only looking at financial considerations and nothing more.

Where it has been made known to us that the Honorable City Council of this city – contemplate the organization of a paid fire service and whereas the Volunteer Department does not design to place any obstacles in the way – Now therefore be it resolved to that the volunteer Fire Department of the city of Fort Worth in meeting assembled hereby tender the City Council all fire apparatus now in the hands of this Department and all property to which the City is entitled.²³

In short, the volunteers could see the writing on the wall and did not stand in the way of city leaders creating a professional force. With such changes, volunteers had little recourse and would remain in service until a paid department, and they offered the city their full cooperation and a “heartfelt thanks for past favors.”²⁴ At 10 a.m. November 27, 1893, the members of the volunteer department turned over the responsibilities of the fire service in full to the City Council

²³ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 327.

²⁴ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 328.

and the Honorable Mayor B.B. Paddock, who, as editor of the *Democrat*, first called for the creation of a fire department to protect its city.²⁵

The *Fort Worth Gazette*, also owned by Paddock and partners at the time, printed a full-page article about the department's founding members, complete with sketches and short biographies of the men chosen from the former volunteer department. The article explained in great detail the men's backgrounds, abilities, experiences, nicknames, and expert talents that had enabled them all to be competent firemen. On this historic occasion, the *Gazette* reported,

We offer pardonable pride for the assertion that there is not a city in the state of Texas, perhaps not in the entire Southwest, that has reached a complete and large development in the few years of its history as has Fort Worth, and there is no better city that can boast a more thorough, a better systematized fire department than Fort Worth. The two go hand in hand as living monuments of the enterprise that has characterized our leading citizens since the city began an embryo existence to its present magnificence.²⁶

Indeed, from the days of organized bucket brigades of the 1870s to 1893, much had changed within the ranks of the volunteer firemen. Of course, it was also the type of popular propaganda that bolstered positive opinions of the city and its firemen. This article compliments Fort Worth's founding fathers, especially Mayor Paddock. No doubt Paddock along with other city fathers and the department's members drove home the significant point that the volunteer department's time had come, both in terms of money and public relations.

The volunteer firemen of Fort Worth left an indelible mark upon their city. They were an indispensable force that constantly transformed a frontier community into a modern society. The founding members of the volunteer fire service did not merely fade into the background but continued to lobby for the department's importance as an institution. These volunteers also continued to serve and aid its new paid department at fire scenes and without compensation.

²⁵ *Fort Worth Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 329-30; City of Fort Worth Secretary of Records, Fort Worth City Council Minutes, November 21-27, 1883, 460-90.

²⁶ *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 31, 1893.

Those men of the city's first fire service changed forever the face of fire protection in Fort Worth and, in so doing, shaped political and economic futures, and solidified a lasting community. Along with city leaders, the volunteer firemen established unprecedented policies concerning fire suppression, fire operations, city waterworks, public safety, city planning, creation of a modernized paid department, and fire prevention city ordinance model. This fire prevention system of fines addressed life and safety concerns but clearly became a revenue source for a future modern department and city coffers.

By 1893, the processes of organizing the volunteer firemen into a professional paid department came from likely sources—its citizen volunteers and leaders—and progressive changes implied that the frontier mindset was long gone. Seven years later, the U.S. Census Bureau's statement that the frontier had passed would seem to have held up in this region. Clearly, the founders and volunteers of the department wanted to continue to bond as a fraternal group, serve against a common enemy, and form communal bonds, as evidenced by the annual meetings they held for former volunteers. Assessing the influence of firefighting in Fort Worth as of 1893 showed the following results: a unique social class of men in a post-frontier community helped it grow into a city. Firefighting had become mechanized and thereby signified the arrival of modernity. Likewise, fire protection and prevention policies heralded modernization. Fire service was segregated, reflecting the application of the New South social order in Fort Worth. Firefighting contributed to urban growth and boosterism, as many volunteer members had served Fort Worth, while at the same time advancing their individual social status. Firefighting by this era had become a fiscal matter for the city, but also helped to define Fort Worth's status as a city. After all, what made it a city in many respects were its institutions,

especially one that shaped and protected it from fire. But the co-evolution of Fort Worth and its firefighting service continued into the twentieth century.

Chapter IV. With Pardonable Pride: A Professional Brotherhood Rises

In 1873, Fort Worth was a walking city, that is, a place that was still small enough that walking was the principal mode of urban transportation and most citizens knew one another. Among the promising signs of its growth and maturation was the replacement of bucket brigades with a new hook and ladder company for its fire protection. By 1881, the city had established a volunteer fire organization, complete with equipment, uniforms, and upwards of 150 members. Perhaps unwittingly, this fire department laid historic groundwork toward a paid professional department when its volunteer membership and chief lobbied the city council for a fee, payment for each volunteer working a fire scene on November 1, 1881. The city council agreed to pay each fireman \$2.50 per fire fought.¹ What appeared to be a modest reimbursement for services rendered under a volunteer banner would open a Pandora's box. It effectively converted the volunteer force into a semi-professional one and paved the way to a fully professional force. As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, the fire department and its city co-evolved into models of modernity.

Perhaps, at first glance, this common-sense offer of modest payment for services looked responsible and fiscally necessary. Over the years, both city leaders and the voluntary fire service collaborated in a symbiotic relationship, with each relying on the other for survival. Volunteers donating the muscle to put out fires and the city allocating funds to equip them seemed a good marriage, but by 1893 sparks would fly and several factors would force change. The fire service had all the infrastructure it needed to gain recognition as a regular fire department: horsepower, manpower, equipment, city call box alarm systems, water development supply, and now, a small pay structure to incentivize its members for service. But these organizational alterations placed

¹ *The Dallas Daily Herald*, Nov. 1, 1881.

them on a precipice, nudging volunteers ever so closer to a professional department standing. Secondly, the financial panic of the 1890s was causing havoc in the nation and Fort Worth was not immune to its effects or financial struggles to cover the cost of services. Thirdly, the volunteer department's ranks had swelled to two hundred members, creating substantial costs, as all volunteers reported to fires under the department's all-call alarm system. The department appeared to have no system or reason for turning any volunteer away from a fire scene once he arrived to perform duty. None of the department's by-laws or minutes included rules regulating the arrival of volunteers to the scene, so one can assume that the city's costs per fire scene rose with the number of firemen who reported. If a volunteer simply arrived on scene and worked, he got paid.² The cost of firefighting mushroomed.

A look at the budget shows how the department had grown in size and managerial complexity. Minutes of the volunteers' regular meetings from 1883 to 1893 show the firemen's ranks grew regularly and exceeded 200 by April 22, 1893. Chief Ben Bell's annual report to the city in April 1893 indicated salaries of \$12,435.00, less his fixed costs for regular key position annual salaries, leaving \$6,375 paid to cover volunteer firemen working attended fires in that year at a cost of \$2.50 per volunteer, per fire. This figure would indicate 2,250 singular payments made to member volunteers in 1893 at \$2.50 cents per man. In 1893, the annual fire report specifies that the department responded to 141 total alarms, 47 during daylight hours and 94 at night. According to Chief Bell's hand-written report, some 2,716 men responded to fires thereby

² *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 29, 1890, p.6; *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 29, 1891, p.2; *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 18, 1893 p.6; *Fort Worth Gazette* April 24, 1893, p.5. Research for this project did not identify clear details of this arrangement pointing to the need for more scholarship.

creating an average of 102 volunteer man-hours in extinguishing fires for the city. One could surmise these costs were not fixed but varied and as such showed uncontrolled expenditures.³

Upon closer examination of Chief Bell's fire-scene arrival numbers, one could surmise his fixed cost of \$2.50 per fire scene but without records it is conjecture. Averaging out Bell's final salary line item for volunteers divided by the number of fires that year indicates roughly eighteen men responded to each fire; however, no records extent shows exactly how many volunteer members attended fires when called, only sum totals in fire reporting by the chief signified in annual fire reports exist. In short, Bell's figures would indicate loose controls on how many members responded to any given fire scene and no real controls to regulate how many men would be on scene and thus collect payments. Such a loose arrangement and poor fiscal controls sounded the death rattle for the practice of volunteers collecting \$2.50 per call to duty. Any member could simply arrive on scene when the public bells sounded and collect the \$2.50 fee. Chief Bell notes in his annual report that by repairing large footage of damaged hose and other equipment himself, at no charge to the city, he created a savings of \$3,000. One could interpret this note, though perhaps factual, as a desperate ploy on his part - the appearance of savings for the sake of optics.⁴ One could further conclude that the old volunteer days of all hands responding to an alarm had become an outdated system, as the reward system made it too expensive for the city. Understanding how that came to be and why converting to a fully paid department made financial sense requires a deeper consideration of how the city was co-evolving with its fire department.

³ *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 23, 1893, 1; *Volunteer Fort Worth Fire Dept Recorded Minutes 1883-1893*, Fort Worth Public Library Archives, 416-478;

⁴ *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 5, 1893; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1893

The pivot point when the volunteer fire department gave way to the fully paid department makes a good starting point. The financial shortcomings of what had become a loosely monitored, semi-professional department become glaringly apparent when compared to Fort Worth's first fully professional department. In its first full year, 1893-1894, the thirty-four-member department under newly appointed Chief John C. Cella reported a budget of \$21,293.61. This was a marked change from its predecessor and brought a savings to the city's budget of \$13,485.70.⁵

I find no evidence in existing procedural policies, annual fire reports, or written records where anyone in leadership was trying to curtail expenditures for volunteer manpower arrivals at fire scenes. During the panic of 1893, this fiscal math would work against the fire organization when city leaders called for a report comparing how other paid fire departments were faring in comparison to Fort Worth's current department. Before the city settled on a paid department, the city appointed Chief Bell to be on an investigative fire committee formulated and in correspondence, over several months, he traveled about the state surveying departments and options. When Chief Bell offered his committee report and annual fire numbers in April of 1883, he lobbied city leaders not to disband the volunteer department under its current structure. This department had started some two decades earlier as a purely volunteer force, and by 1893 it had become voluntary in name only as its members volunteered for membership but were, in fact, paid to appear at fires.⁶ Payments for services would push the department ever closer to a fully paid fire service, and limited membership controls in the fire department.

The final pages of the minutes denote months of weekly meetings and reports to the city council from October to November of 1893 concerning costs of volunteers versus that of paid

⁵ *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 5, 1893.

⁶ *Fort Worth Gazette* April 24, 1893, p.6

departments. Significantly, Fort Worth leaders were asking questions as far back as eight months prior to a paid department shift and appointed a fire committee to study the paid fire department in Dallas, its closest eastern neighbor, to determine if such a department model was feasible. The request for this study illustrates how serious matters were. The Fire Committee traveled as far as Galveston, San Antonio, and Austin to explore how such a transition to a paid department fared within Texas cities established for a longer period than that of Fort Worth. These were good comparisons to make from the standpoint of size, growth, commerce, and population. Meanwhile, leaders prepared for a logical transfer of power from its then elected leadership Chief Ben Bell to a hired chief. Upon Chief Bell's reports to the city council, he reluctantly concluded that abandoning the semi-professional force as it functioned at that time and replacing it with a carefully managed professional force made good financial sense.⁷

Clearly, economic pressures or fiscal prudence led to these changes, in part because of requests by volunteer firefighters for payment. Fort Worth, unable to pay its bills during the Panic, would lead to demanding better fiscal controls for those existing services by the 1890s. At the very least, sound common sense called for considering a reorganization. Primary documents indicate that both city leaders and volunteer members could see the writing on the proverbial wall. Both sides desired to make positive changes in the department and its city service to grow as a region.⁸

Those changes fell into place on December 1, 1893, when a uniformed Volunteer Fire Department Band led a large procession of men, some in uniform, walking behind Chief Ben Bell and his Assistant Chief Matkin, drove the chiefs' fire buggy with many pieces of fire

⁷ *Volunteer Fort Worth Fire Dept Recorded Minutes 1883-1893*, 247-258, 427- 428.

⁸ *Fort Worth Gazette* April 24, 1893, p.5; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Aug, 30, 1893, p2. *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 18,1893, 6.

apparatus following close behind to City Hall. After twenty years of service, the volunteers and their chief literally turned over the reins of the department (and all of its equipment valued at \$69,000) to city leaders and Mayor Paddock. The mayor gave short speeches and offered praise for the services rendered by these original men who dedicated much time, valiant efforts, and in some cases their lives, to their city.⁹

Surviving members of the first fire company, the W. T. Johnson Hook & Ladder Co., were present, as were the remaining twelve men elected as chief of the volunteers over two decades of service. On December 31, 1893, the *Fort Worth Gazette*, “with pardonable pride,” published on two full pages a tribute entitled “*Our Brave men – Who They Are.*” It depicted the transition from what the editors labeled the “old” or “volunteer service” into a paid professional fire department with considerable ballyhoo. A portrait of each of the thirty-four appointed members of the new professional department appeared. Under their artistic likeness, the paper listed details of birthplace, township connection, past volunteer service, former residences, and current assignments within its reorganized fire department companies for all to explore and read.

The newspaper left no doubt its stance in these pages, proclaiming the importance of this shift to a professional department while lavishing praises on the volunteers for past service. A public transformation passing the torch from a post frontier volunteer department to a modern paid department was cause for news and demonstrated significant changes. Publication of the financial documents in fire reports in newspapers proffered evidence of sound leadership on behalf of those who were now paying for its department - its citizens.¹⁰

Having considered the pivot, reviewing the city’s growth over the preceding decades shows how the city and firefighting co-evolved. Fort Worth went through a watershed era with

⁹ *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, Dec. 1, 1893, 5.

¹⁰ *Fort Worth Gazette* December 31, 1; *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, Dec. 1, 1893, 5.

respect to growth between 1873 and the late 1880s. By the late 1880s, it ranked seventh among Texas cities in population behind Galveston, San Antonio, Houston, Austin, Dallas, and Waco. From 1870 to 1880, Tarrant County grew from 5,788 to 26, 678, which was the largest increase of all counties in Texas, but the city itself remained small in comparison statewide. Fort Worth had a modest industrial base in meatpacking, and a large iron foundry being built in 1882, according to its City Directory. Its main commerce relied heavily on agriculture, cattle, hides, railroads, and pounds of bones being shipped from the area. Fort Worth's leaders valued its status as a city of significance and also credited the event of the Industrial Revolution with the city's urbanization and modern organizations. The Industrial Revolution by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was primarily responsible for a corresponding rise in urbanization in areas like Fort Worth, which created more diverse manufacturing to become, over time, influential economically.¹¹

By the 1880s, the community and Mayor B.B. Paddock began to link its future to commercial expansion and already counted Fort Worth as a city. After all, with its railroad, Fort Worth served as a regional agricultural and cattle market, a fire department, waterworks, granite buildings, lawmen, schools, medical facilities, a foundry, public gardens, and a beautiful stone courthouse. In addition to these attractions, it had Hell's Half Acre (the red-light district), where 22,000 square feet of red-light businesses existed, a fire department, waterworks, granite

¹¹ *Fort Worth Democrat*, July 8, 1880, 2; *Tenth Census of the United States Washington Government Printing Office*, April 12, 1882, 2, 424, 455, 1534; *Fort Worth Democrat*, July 8, 1881, 2; *Fort Worth Democrat*, September 3, 1881, 4; *Fort Worth Democrat* June 3, 1882, 4; *Tenth Census*, 1534; *City Directory*, 1882, 6-9; William J. Hammond, *History of the Municipal Departments of the City of Fort Worth, Texas, 1873-1939* (n.p.: Federal Education Radio Project 705-3-9 sponsored by the United States Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, 1939), p.1017-1020. Also See, Harold Rich, *Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880 -1918*, Texas Christian University, ProQuest Information and Learning Co., Dissertation, 2006.

buildings, lawmen, schools, medical areas, a foundry, public gardens, and a beautiful stone courthouse. Indeed, its railroads saved the city in 1876 as a first major industry outside of cattle drives. Early in 1880, Fort Worth offered very limited rail service with one arrival and departure daily, but by July, the schedule doubled to two eastbound trains and two westbound. As of September 1880, its rail services made Fort Worth the railroad center of Texas.¹²

An original plan by the heads of Santa Fe Railways called for an interchange near Buffalo Gap outside of Abilene, Texas, but tireless negotiations of Colonel John Peter Smith, one of Fort Worth's founding fathers, persuaded the company to locate its junction in Fort Worth, contingent on subsidies and rights-of-way. Meanwhile, B.B. Paddock promoted his visionary conception of all roads leading to Fort Worth and backed up this vision by offering rail service on what he labeled the Texas Tarantula Railway to Missouri, Kansas, and other parts of Texas via the Denison line, creating for Fort Worth a rail line stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to St. Louis. The successes of such industrial ventures and the record-breaking pace of campaigns raising subsidies from its wealthy citizens gave the city three new rail lines and created hopes for a successful economic future. Railroad expansion contributed to a construction boom during this period, including 180 new homes, three elementary schools, a high school, and social groups, creating new halls in which to meet and entertain. Much of this construction created opulent homes south of Fort Worth localizing a remote, private, class of wealth developed in that area of the South Side.¹³

¹² Rich, *Beyond Outpost*, pp.34-36.

¹³ *Fort Worth Democrat*, Jan. 2, 1880, 4; *Fort Worth Democrat*, July 14, 1880, 3; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 23, 1881, 3; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 25, 1880, 4; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Feb. 8, 1880, 4; *City Directory*, 1882, 6-9; *Fort Worth Gazette*, January 3, 1883, 8; Jan. 24, 1884, 6; Aug. 14, 1883, 6; Nov. 3, 1883, 6; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Apr. 5, 1882, 4; *Fort Worth Record*, Aug. 27, 1905, 7; *Fort Worth Bohemian Quarterly*, (Fort Worth Bohemian Club), (November, 1899, Vol. I), p.77; Knight, *Outpost*, 139; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 23, 1881, 3; Sept. 28, 1881, 3; *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 11, 1883, 4; *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 25, 1883, 8; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1883, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Feb. 25, 1884, 6; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Sept. 23, 1881, 3; Sept. 28, 1881, 3; *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 11, 1883, 4.

Such success by 1883, with a growing new construction base and city expansion, called for something more, an ever-growing contingent of volunteer firemen, more equipment, more organized approaches to fire tactics, and the development of fire safety ordinances to protect its now booming growth and its citizens' personal investments. Volunteer firemen's membership had grown so significantly and the incentive of a \$2.50 payment to volunteer firemen per fire was acceptable to city leaders and the public for a time. The city's growth would also solidify the department's importance as a needed commodity for the city itself and its survival. Men such as Paddock and Smith willed into existence this economic watershed moment for Fort Worth in 1883 along with the fire department's developmental expansion. For example, historian Oliver Knight credits Col. Smith with putting the city government on a sound footing by implementing four major improvements: a waterworks, an organized fire department, a street-paving program, and the first sanitary sewers.¹⁴ Of these four organizations, the two very vital facets, Fort Worth Waterworks, and its fire department were related to its firefighting capabilities and citizens' needs for water. The most troublesome over time was the commodity of water, and how to create reliable continued sourcing for water supply and growing demands.

A city could not lay claim to modernization without improved water, sewage, or fire service. To a large degree, such infrastructure made industrial growth possible. Fort Worth's improved infrastructure in the early 1880s soon made it a true city and no longer a frontier post or cattle town. But its people and leaders laid claim to this prairie and its city on the hill and it, like most cities, would change and grow as it made improvements, but Fort Worth appears to have done so at breakneck speed in comparison to its sister cities. Already struggling with declining revenues, ever-increasing debts, falling cattle prices, and an ongoing struggle to grow

¹⁴ Knight, *Outpost*, 139.

and diversify its economic base, Fort Worth was ill-prepared to face the ensuing panic of the mid-1890s. Nevertheless, in his 1890 annual report, outgoing mayor Hiram Broiles listed a host of accomplishments during his four-year term: more water mains, better sewage, private artesian wells, a city-owned electric company, 175 fire hydrants, and a city coffer recording \$222,824 and more accounts receivable from bond sales nearly equaling the same amount. The 1890 City Directory listed significant businesses at that time as five grain elevators, four flour mills, the stockyards, an iron foundry, and sixty-nine saloons. Included in the 1890's manufacturing expansions were improvements of industry with the opening of a pork packer, a cotton mill, and the Texas Brewing Company. Then the bottom fell out as the financial panic of the 1890s hit Fort Worth. In response, city leaders scrambled for solutions to meet debts and costs of all public services. Incoming Mayor B.B. Paddock confronted the panic at the same time he had to deal with myriad of other problems, including making bond payments on time for all manner of projects, creating a better water plan, building new water reservoirs, reducing many city departments and city salaries, and coping with a decrease in property values. Prices of the state's economic mainstay, cotton, collapsed along with those of other agricultural products, and the reverberations were felt by wholesalers and retailers, driving many into bankruptcy. Paddock and other city leaders faced unprecedented challenges.¹⁵

From 1891 leading up to 1895, Fort Worth added twenty-one smaller businesses boasting four companies employing 100 or more: Fort Worth Packing (200 employees), Fort Worth Rolling Mills (125 employees), Fort Worth Iron Works (125 employees), and Texas Brewing. Compared to its closest neighbor Dallas, Fort Worth's economic numbers are modest and held a

¹⁵ *Fort Worth Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1883, 8; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Jan. 24, 1884, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, August 14, 1883, p. 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Nov. 3, 1883, 6; *Fort Worth Democrat*, Apr. 5, 1882, 4. *General City Directory 1890*, 297-298

slower rise to full fruition in the wake of a national panic gripping the nation. Fort Worth's business sector—manufacturing, manufacturing, agricultural products, and railroads—was still expanding and stimulating a consequent expansion of city services such as its waterworks and fire department.¹⁶ By 1893, other significant municipal changes would emerge, some out of necessity and others out of a shrewd awareness that the city needed to bolster its growth while simultaneously saving money. It would seem that both arguments would dovetail nicely with a move from a volunteer fire organization into that of a paid fire department in order to save funds. The cost savings would make it an easy sale. These efforts created better services under a professional banner for these services and at less cost to taxpayers while also inspiring praise of the city's role in the city's modernity by local papers. This growth and substructures mattered, and the cross-pollination of economic growth and the construction of infrastructure offered proof of Fort Worth status as an authentic, twentieth-century city. More important, the infrastructures of commerce were protected by a modern fire service, creating an environment conducive to investment.

As the turn of the century approached, entrepreneurs like John C. Cella personified the evolution of the department and the city. In 1889, Cella ran the Metropolitan Saloon near Hell's Half Acre, among other ventures. That same year, he joined the volunteer fire department in addition to his workload. He managed his business interests well and would rise through the

¹⁶*Fort Worth Gazette*, August 31, 1891, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 1, 1892, 2; April 28, 1892, 5; April 29, 1892, 5; May 29, 1892, 4; April 19, 1893, 3; *General City Directory 1890*, 297-298; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Oct. 9, 1890, 8; Apr. 21, 1891, 5; June 14, 1891, 8; Sept. 4, 1890, 4; *Twelfth Census, Vol VIII, Manufactures*, 994; B.B. Paddock, *Central and Western Texas*, 262-263, 267; Knight, *Outpost on the Trinity*, 123- 125; Harold Rich, *Beyond Outpost*, 120.

ranks of the department, being elected 2nd assistant foreman of the M. T. Hook and Ladder team. With ten years of service in the original volunteer force, he then ran for the position of volunteer fire chief against then-incumbent Chief Ben U. Bell and lost in May of 1893. However, eight months later, Cella found himself appointed head of the newly formed professional Fort Worth Fire Department after the city council abolished the volunteer organization. Cella, along with thirty-four appointed men, including officers, took the helm of the department with a salary of \$125.00 per month.

Chief Cella picked professional firefighters mainly from among the ranks of the former department's volunteers. From then on, no more elections of membership would occur. Only by appointment would membership be endorsed, thus creating an application system over internal votes for the job. This change represents a small yet important type of civil service reform from within the department and another shift toward modern employment practices.¹⁷ According to Jim Noah, a self-appointed historian of the department who also served as a fireman from 1952 through 1984, Cella appeared dissatisfied with his \$125 per month salary and spent much of his time within the Metropolitan Saloon attending to his other business matters. If a fire alarm came, his driver and buggy from Central Station were under orders to pick up Chief Cella at the saloon on the way to the fire. Under his tenure, Chief Cella encouraged firemen to cash their paychecks at his saloon for the cost of a ten-cent beer. He expressed this encouragement in the form of a standing order, and if members needed loans of any kind for financial reasons, he insisted they come to him for loans at 10 percent interest. This requirement did not bode well for morale among the newly formed paid department under Chiefs Cella's administration. These corrupt

¹⁷ *Fort Worth gazette*, December 31, 1893, p.p.2-3; *Volunteer Fort Worth Fire Dept Recorded Minutes 1883-1893*, Fort Worth Public Library Archives, 416-478.

practices cast a shadow over some of the other reforms and implied Cella was more interested in using his position in the department to line his own pockets. In today's times, such actions would be beyond the pale. In the 1890s Cella could serve his own interests and work at his saloon until an alarm sounded and called him to his public duty. His brazen actions and lack of public decorum show a clear abuse of power, yet none of this corruption appeared to raise eyebrows, thanks to the close relationship the city had with many businesses in Hell's Half Acre. Yet Cella still managed to create some positive moves as the first modern paid chief.¹⁸

The city approved the building of additional Hose Company #6, manned by existing employees, during his tenure as chief. Cella knew full well that water supply was a major issue for the city, specifically in the warmer months, so he requested in his annual budget for 1895 the purchase of a double sixty-gallon chemical engine to reduce reliance on using pumpers that depleted water reservoirs. The first chemical wagon, placed in regular service on September 21, 1892, was a new form of firefighting technology for the department. The wagon had a sixty-gallon tank filled with water mixed with sodium bicarbonate. A stoppered glass bottle containing sulfuric acid was suspended in a cage inside the tank. To discharge the engine's load of fire suppressant chemicals, the firemen removed a safety pin and used the handwheel to rotate the tank, thus tipping the acid into the soda water and triggering a reaction. The discharge pipe was connected to a small-diameter hose. The manufacturer recommended tipping the tank occasionally as it discharged to get better working pressure and a better mixture of gas and water.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 23, 1894, 25; District Chief Jim Noah, *Chronological History of the Fort Worth Fire Department*, Fort Worth Public Library private collection papers; *Fort Worth Gazette*, September 15, 1894, 7; *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 23, 1894, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 11, 1894, 5.

¹⁹ *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 13, 1894, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, April, 11, 1894, 6; District Chief Jim Noah, *Chronological History of the Fort Worth Fire Department*, Fort Worth Public Library private collection papers.;

Chemical carts were the quick fire-attack apparatus of the day. While it took time to set up and man a pumper engine for large deluges of water, the chemical cart was ready to go for quick and immediate attacks once on scene. Its operation was simple. If crews could get to scenes quickly before fires became too large, such devices would deliver positive results when and if delivered on the seat of the fire and extinguishing the blaze. In theory, one gallon of chemical was equal to forty gallons of water, so two sixty-gallon tanks on a chemical wagon could deliver the equivalent of 4,800 gallons of water onto a fire. By resorting to such sound and forward thinking, Cella saved water, saved fuel (used to run the pump houses), reduced wear and tear on equipment, reduced excessive water damage to structures, and reduced costly hose damages where smaller fires could be extinguished faster with less loss and expenditure on equipment. Cella cited several recent fires where fire loads could have been in the extremes but were checked quickly via chemical fire retardants versus large water deluge approaches. Adding the chemical cart brought cutting-edge firefighting technology to Fort Worth.²⁰

Chief Cella also suggested revising building codes to accommodate new structure standards, and ordinances to require building companies and citizens not to block streets or sidewalks so fire crews could maneuver without incident to fire scenes. He requested financial assistance from the city for firemen injured in the line of duty known as firemen relief, added alarm box close to the Seventh Fire Ward near a school, and finally submitted new construction of a Central Fire Hall. He explained the rationale for the new building this way: “The current building is near falling down now and should be condemned and torn down. It is unfit for horses

Fort Worth Gazette, Sept. 5, 1894, 1-2 (Annual Fire Report); *Fort Worth Gazette*, September 5, 1894, 6; *Fort Worth Gazette*, September 12, 1894, 6.

²⁰ District Chief Jim Noah, *Chronological History of the Fort Worth Fire Department*, Fort Worth Public Library private collection papers; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1894, p.3 (Annual Fire Report).

or men, and the bell tower is leaning so much that it may fall on the fire hall itself! Furthermore, the station needs to be moved to a better locale for service. When it rains the roof leaks, and the men and apparatus are soaked - much of his men were sick most of the time due to the seepage from dilapidated horse stalls.” Such requests showed Cella’s efforts to improve the department and brought about awareness for the cities needs to improve the safety of its residents.²¹

Cella would also be able to capitalize on infrastructure improvements made prior to his appointment as Chief. In 1887, John Peter Smith helped pave the way for progress by allocating \$12,000 for the reorganization and professionalization of the fire service. The funds consisted of \$2,450 spent on eleven Gamewell Fire Boxes, all strategically located in the newly formed fire ward boundaries. These fire alarm boxes were the first of their kind found in Texas cities according to the local paper, the *Fort Worth Democrat*, denoting modernized improvements. The city ordered a new three-thousand-pound fire bell from M. E. Neely Co. of Troy, New York, at a cost of \$700 and placed it in the newly completed Central Station on Main Street between 11th and 12th streets. Central Station, a then-wooden structure, included a belfry tower for the bell, built at a cost of \$1,000. Further allocated was a horse-drawn hook and ladder along with a new hose carriage wagon, both second hand, at a cost of \$2,000 from E. B. Prestor & Co. of Chicago, and an additional hose cart at a cost of \$700 from Brooklyn, New York.²²

The alarm system gave Fort Worth the latest in such technology. The fire bell would sound the number of the Gamewell Fire Box call. For example, if firebox number 5 was pulled, a fireman rang a large bell five times to indicate the coded location of the alarm. The foremen repeated this alarm four times with short pauses between sequences. The Waterworks would

²¹ District Chief Jim Noah, *Chronological History of the Fort Worth Fire Department*, Fort Worth Public Library private collection papers; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1894, p.3 (Annual Fire Report).

²² *City Directory, 1883 – 1884*, 30-31, City of Fort Worth Public Library.

blow a whistle corresponding to the firebox pulled, but would only whistle one sequence and not repeat. When the firemen extinguished the fire, the waterworks would offer a signal of three long distinctive whistles followed by three long paused rings of the main central fire hall bell, allowing the public to know all was well and fires were extinguished. John Peter Smith also created three new fire wards in 1883, including the John Peter Smith Hose Company #2, E. M. Daggett Hose Company #3, and John A. Thornton Hose Company #4 and thus began the reorganized professional strategic planning approaches in tactics and equipment.²³ These forward-thinking improvements were of great benefit to a Cella administration and more so to a department now consisting of only 34 members.

Fort Worth's other municipal departments were modernizing slowly, specifically the water department, which was logically related to the mission of the fire department and city needs. A privately funded Fort Worth Waterworks, created with the help of Paddock, completed in June of 1883 at the Clear and West forks of the Trinity River increased the water volume capacity to four million gallons per day and boasted six miles of pipes for water supply and fireplug systems. Fire department minutes indicate regular monthly water allowances to the fire department, and by July 1884, the city had purchased a fifty-percent interest in the Fort Worth Water Works for the sum of \$32,500. By March 1885, the city would own it completely, but that left the city to continue an arduous task of supplying usable water for a variety of needs in an ever-growing community.²⁴ This water problem would persist for decades with only cheap band-aid solutions. By the late 1890s, Paddock was analyzing sections of the municipal government and its failings and constantly trying to improve services but under very tight financial restraints.

²³ *Fort Worth City Directory* 1886-1887, Fort Worth Public Library; Knight, *Outpost*, 152.

²⁴ Knight, *Outpost*, 153; *Volunteer Fire Department Minutes*, 216; District Chief Jim Noah, *Chronological History of the Fort Worth Fire Department*, Fort Worth Public Library private collection papers.

The lack of revenue for the city was a growing concern. Even as the city worried about revenue, Mayor Paddock pointed to the water system as an income stream.²⁵ Paddock boasted that the water department generated a positive cash flow and described its machinery and pipelines as “ample and adequate,” but water pressure along with supply were not at desired levels. John Hawley, a civil engineer, suggested that an answer to supply lay in a ground basin reservoir. He proposed a surface water reservoir, but the timing was not right with the panic of 1893, and the proposal was rejected due to costs approaching \$150,000. Existing water wells were both water supply and drinking water, and when they became sparse due to demands, the Trinity River was a backup system.

Firemen blamed insufficient water pressure for the fire losses; some examples were the Ellis Hotel fire on Throckmorton and Third streets and other large fires. These events placed pressure on city leaders to improve waterworks for fire safety. Water engineering firms offered solutions to Fort Worth leaders, but the council opted to first assess water systems in other cities. After a Chicago visit, leaders determined necessary changes to ensure a consistent pressure costing at least \$600,000, a huge sum for the day. The council authorized a \$650,000 bond issue, which would provide twelve additional wells, deep wells, and a pump house powered by four large boilers, for emergency supplies from the Trinity River. By the end of 1892, this new system was completed and running. By 1893, the waterworks returned to a positive cash flow, creating \$20,962 of income. Mayor Paddock was delighted, calling the new Fort Worth system the most complete waterworks in the South. But actual supply was still lacking. In May 1894, Paddock complained that the daily output of wells, the primary water source, decreased to around 1,000,000 gallons a day, and the Trinity River during summer months was always too

²⁵ Paddock and Montgomery, *Annual Report* 1898, 5-7; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 12, 1897, 1; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 13, 1897, 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 15, 1897, 8; Rich, *Beyond Outpost*, 110.

low to serve as a reliable backup source. Citizens suffered from existing water supply issues, as did its fire department, which knew water supply was inadequate.²⁶ It took Fort Worth many years to cure its water supply issues, and it is a continual narrative in daily news articles.

Even by 1903 water supply from thirteen artesian wells at Fort Worth's Holly water plant stopped flowing, and untreated water from the Clear Fork of the Trinity was being used, despite it being found unfit to drink due to raw sewage being poured into the river.²⁷ Fort Worth made huge strides in developing its local services, but its most significant advance concerned the waterworks development. Only two decades later would long-term actions create better solutions constituting a valued water department, which took take shape in 1911 as the Lake Worth project began. Until that time, citizens, developing local industry, and the fire department would endure a patchwork of mismanaged solutions that never fully measured up to demands until 1920 upon Lake Worth's reservoir completion.²⁸

Significant proof of the water supply's inadequacy came on April 3, 1909, when two boys experimenting with matches started what was known as the Southside Fire. At first, a nearby barn went up in flames as the point of origin. Forty-mile-per-hour gusts created a furious firestorm that would envelop the south side, roaring toward downtown Fort Worth. The affluent

²⁶ *Fort Worth Register*, Sept. 9, 1897, 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Sept. 12, 1897, 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Sept. 14, 1897, 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 5, 1897, 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 7, 1897, 8; Paddock and Montgomery, *Annual Report 1898*, 18; Knight, *Outpost*, 178, *City Council Minutes*, Volume O, September 7, November 1, 1897; *Fort Worth Morning Register*, March 3, 1899, 5; June 23, 1899, 2; *Fort Worth Mail Telegram*, Aug. 23, 1899, p. 8; *Fort Worth Register*, Oct. 2, 1897, 6; Oct. 20, 1897, 5; *City Council Minutes*, Volume O, Nov. 1, 1897.

²⁷ Rich, *Beyond Outpost*, 175-177, 284; Simon W. Freese and D. L. Sizemore, *A Century In The Works: 100 Years of Progress in Civil Environmental Engineering 1894-1994* (Fort Worth: Freese and Nichols Inc. 1990), 1-19; *Fort Worth Record*, Oct. 2, 1906, 4; *Fort Worth Record*, Sept. 2, 1905, 4; *Fort Worth Record*, Nov. 18, 1906, 10; *Fort Worth Record*, June 26, 1907, 14; *Fort Worth Record*, June 27, 1907, 7; *Fort Worth Record*, June 30, 1907, 3; *Fort Worth Record*, July 7, 1907, Section 3, 7; *Fort Worth Record*, Dec. 28, 1907, 10; *Fort Worth Record*, March 1, 1908, 9; *Fort Worth Record*, July 10, 1910, Part 2, 5.

²⁸ *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, March 31, 1920, 1.

south side of town was oddly enough considered outside of the fire department's territory or city limits, so initially, fire companies did not respond to the first alarms. As a result, the fire burned for some time before fire crews arrived on the scene to the area. Eventually, all fire companies would all be dispatched to the blaze, and fire departments from North Fort Worth, Weatherford, and Dallas, whose members arrived by train, came to help. Citizen volunteers stepped in to aid the firemen as did two baseball teams scheduled to play that day, the Fort Worth Panthers and the Detroit Tigers, who canceled the exhibition to help fight the fire. The fire was reportedly so hot it melted fire hose couplings and burned hoses. It also melted telegraph wires and alarm boxes. After three hours, the fire simply ran out of fuel, and smoldering piles of ash and rubble remained. As the fire headed north, the Texas & Pacific railroad along Vickery Boulevard became a natural firebreak, stopping its progress to the inner city. Some workshops, freight cars, railroad roundhouse, thirty-five locomotives, and caches of coal burned, creating a thick plume of smoke. But the railyard served as an ending fireguard to the city and the fire burned out in that spot.²⁹

The fire department pumped such a deluge of water onto the fire that the city water supply was fully compromised. Luckily, only two citizen fire fatalities occurred that day, but property losses totaled \$2,000,000. The fire department would seize on this opportunity to further improve its department and learn from the catastrophic event. The South Side Fire would call for its fire department to phase out of horse-drawn apparatus, as horses proved woefully inefficient under such extreme circumstances. The fire department bought hoses that would not melt in intense heat and began investing in motorized vehicles while building more neighborhood fire stations. As the city began purchasing motorized equipment for the

²⁹*Fort Worth Record, Fort Worth Record*, Apr. 4, 1909, 1,6, 10; Apr. 5, 1909, 1-2; *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Apr. 3, 1909, 1-3.

department in 1909, its first motorized vehicle was a car at the cost of \$2,140. It would take ten years to transition to a fully motorized department and replace all horse-drawn equipment from service. The city would pave more streets and encourage people to use brick instead of wood to “fireproof” homes.

During these years the department hired its first full-time fire marshal under the leadership of Chief W.E. Bideker, who served as chief from 1905 through 1919, and the city began adopting several progressive fire codes. The path of destruction from the South Side Fire traversed one-half mile wide and a mile-and-a-half in length covering twenty square blocks. Some 300 buildings burned, including four churches and two schools. The southside fire area was a large, remote, and fashionable part of the city outskirts in the early 1900s, and the destruction of such an affluent area certainly pushed the city to address its water supply problems. By 1913, the completion of Lake Worth as a reservoir would more than handle needs for daily usages of water and emergencies for a generation.³⁰

Within only two decades, Fort Worth, a once dusty cowtown of 1873, had become by 1893 a city. Overcoming many obstacles, it founded commercial enterprises and is further defined by its self-created support organizations managing to generate noteworthy departments that served its community. From abandoned army post to frontier towns and then modern city, the Fort Worth Fire Department became an integral part of that growth. Learning from the fire department’s failures and successes, they blazed a path for lasting success in the region. These defeats or triumphs were part of Fort Worth’s social and political evolution, daily life experiences shaped at times literally by fire and fire department needs. The early foresight of city

³⁰ *New York Times*, April 4, 1909, p. 1; *New York Times*, April 5, 1909, p. 9; *Fort Worth Record*, April 4, 1909, pp. 1,6, 10; *Fort Worth Record*, April 5, 1909, p. 1; *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, April 3, 1909, p.p. 1-3; Rich, *Beyond Outpost*, p.163.

leaders to create fire protection is relevant to its progressive growth and yet they failed considerably over decades to create a fully reliable waterworks development. This is probably due to the enormous costs for such changes and a lack of immediate funding to pay for needed water improvements. Water, for any arid region, is paramount to its overall survival, but a lack of lasting solutions is more than likely due to a misunderstanding of fiscal demands by city leaders for the growing demands of water futures. Moreover, the existing infrastructure was constantly being over burned by demand needs. The city badly needed lasting water solutions in Fort Worth, its water history is one that is merely touched on here as to its significance to the fire departments' ability to defend its city from the ravages of fire. However, reliable water supply continued to be a weighty topic as it was a lynchpin for future economic growth. Demand for water and future industry development toward the twentieth century was resolved by 1920 with large lake reservoirs.

As the city continued to grow so too did demands for all related services for its citizens, manufactures, sewage, future commercial enterprises, and where there was smoke, there were fires. All of these water issues are interlinked toward the city's future expansion and achievements. The fire department held great demands on water needs when developing as a modern department. This vital resource of water and its delivery system was paramount to the fire departments claims to be considered a professional service. Especially when considering the exponential growth of this western area toward the twentieth century. Like most cities, Fort Worth learned via trial and error. The determining factor for progressive decisions toward growth was normally if the city was in a boom or bust economy. Regardless, Fort Worth recognized its fire service as a pivotal argument for its future development in lean or flush times and allocated needs accordingly for its fire department.

Chapter V: Fort Worth Enters the Progressive Modern Era, 1893-1919

The making of a modern city requires compromise, and it takes many steps, over time to come to full fruition. Plans and happenstances coming together and tireless dogged can-do attitudes from citizens can create lasting communities. Historians have not fully recognized the importance of civil servants such as firemen in establishing American Western communities. Often failing to fully note potent forces under hidden layers of history and co-evolution between civil servants and city development. Scholars who have studied communities similar to Fort Worth have emphasized factors other than civil service. Dykstra focused on cattle drives, boosterism, and conflicting urban antagonism. Larsen emphasized the role of capitalistic essentials coupled with urban expansion. Local Fort Worth historian Harold Rich, though, deserves special attention. Rich, in his book *Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown*, asserts that Fort Worth did not become a city by his interpretation until roughly 1919. His study concludes that “Fort Worth reached an apogee in 1919 when its manufacturing output surpassed all other Texas cities.”¹ Rich asserts that Fort Worth became a city between 1914 and 1918. The advent of WWI military spending related to Camp Bowie and the meatpacking house boom provides the foundation for his claim.

Rich delves into the creation of Fort Worth’s industrial complex and manufacturing boom, citing both as criteria for its qualification as a city. He also cites, as a moment in which Fort Worth came into its own as a city, the destruction and reliance of the red-light district known as Hell’s Half Acre by reluctant leaders and politicians, and businessmen still hanging on to revenues generated by this district.

¹ Harold Rich, *Fort Worth Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014) p.p. Conclusion and Epilogue pages.

Rich's work is steeped in solid scholarship and statistical data about manufacturing numbers and population growth. However, some of his criteria for city status qualify as connection mainly to economic values primarily, and I would take issue with his timeline. At several points, Rich takes B. B. Paddock to task for his claim that in the 1880s Fort Worth was a city in full and no longer a mere frontier town. Rich argues that in the 1880s wooden structures still stood alongside granite buildings downtown, which demonstrated a lack of cosmopolitan affluence, and were reason enough to deny Fort Worth the title of "city." Rich further claims that railroad lines and manufacturing had not expanded enough for Fort Worth to hold such a title. I disagree. Major turning points in a few decades brought on agricultural booms, railroad expansion, waterworks, a fire department, and a police department rivaling its closest neighbor Dallas at that time. Fort Worth's institutions, coupled with the hard work of capitalist ingenuity, population expansion, effective boosterism, and established city infrastructure poised for even more success drove much of Paddock's assertion that it was indeed a city by 1880.

Fort Worth by the 1880s certainly had room to grow, according to Rich's perspective. But rather than looking through such a tightly focused manufacturing data-driven lens, perhaps taking a larger view would lead a historian to broaden the definition of a *city* to include other criteria than manufacturing complexes alone. As mentioned earlier, Oliver Knight cited four things that were important for Fort Worth's prosperity: railroads, waterworks, an industrial complex, and a fire department. Rich also acknowledges these factors, but he stops short of defining Fort Worth as a "city" until after 1919, arguing economic data disproved such a conclusion. Fort Worth possessed all of the attributes of a city, as described by Knight and other local historians, such as Selcer, by the 1880s. Fort Worth likewise had a multitude of business factions, city civil services, street plans, sewage services, stone buildings, political influence,

rail, and citizen boosterism. I would argue, therefore, that Fort Worth was indeed not only a city by the late 1880s, but that by the late 1890s, it had become a more practiced municipality despite the many obstacles faced over four decades of expansion. One of the most important manifestations of Fort Worth's status as a city was the co-evolution with city leaders of its fire department in various forms over forty-plus years denoted in this thesis.

Even though Fort Worth achieved "city" status in the nineteenth century, the city and its firefighting service continued to evolve into the twentieth. Catastrophes have a way of exposing reality, forcing change in communities willing to adapt. On April 4, 1909, in a story about the causes and outcomes of the South Side fire, the *Fort Worth Record* quoted Chief Bideker, stating "I do not care to make a detailed statement until after I have had time to make a thorough investigation of the fire from various points. It was an especially difficult fire to handle because of the tinder through which it raged." Bideker gave conflicting comments in newspapers about the water pressure, stating on one hand that "practically at all times had ample supply of water" and on the other that pressure was inadequate "due to topographical areas" of the fire scene. However, we also know that the South Side Fire was not in the fire alarm response territory for the city, so there was a significant delay in response. This catastrophe led Bideker to change the downtown centralized station response system to a more neighborhood-focused station response plan expanding the department's response area and response times. This was a very important innovation in neighborhood fire service protections, which was a very significant shift toward more modern fire service. It is a model still used today in Fort Worth.

The same article states that water supply systems were heavily strained, Fort Worth Commissioner Lee Stephens of the Fort Worth Waterworks and Sewage Department stated for the record, "All reservoirs were exhausted before he could snap his fingers and it took him

several hours to get a pumping connection rolling in the river to help battle the needs of firemen.” This conflagration, like many before it, confirmed the need for modifications in the city’s infrastructure and expansion of fire territory coverages. Bideker had come into the department in the 1890s formerly serving as a volunteer foreman of Peter Smith Hook & Ladder Co. and later as one of the original thirty-four paid members appointed in December 1893. He witnessed first-hand the development of a paid modern department coupled with the panic in the late 1890s. His firefighting experiences gave him an important perspective as to what facilitated a department and its city’s needs. And Bideker offers important insights into how fire departments corrected city thinking on what its duties were toward protecting a developing city. This proactive mindset is key to understanding why we now have strategic fire response areas and proactive action versus the old ideals of reactive actions to fire event emergency management. Fire department budgets have grown exponentially from these hard-fought lessons as risk-reward calculations and emergency management have evolved.²

As chief from 1905 through 1919, Bideker was instrumental in many progressive changes toward the creation of a true modern department within the City of Fort Worth. A very strong supporter of water conservation, he was appointed to the Planning Committee for Lake Worth reservoir development. He created a Fire Prevention Day & Week, the precursor to fire prevention programs currently taught in schools and public service announcements. After the South Side Fire, his purchase of state-of-the-art auto pumpers on mechanized fire vehicles helped bring the Fort Worth Fire Department into the twentieth century. He planned for neighborhood fire stations to be built in strategically mapped locations for best response times. He appointed

² *Fort Worth Record*, Sept. 4, 1909, 1-3; Noah, *Chronological History of the Ft Worth Fire Department* – Fort Worth Public Library; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 24, 1919, 1; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 25, 1919, 1; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Apr. 16, 1919, 4; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jan. 19, 1919, 18; *Dallas Morning News* July 9, 1919, 18.

the city's first fire marshal. Bideker created many new fire ordinances that remain on the books. He realized the potential of automobiles as he phased out all horse-drawn apparatus and horses as he brought the fire service fully into modern approaches for apparatus, tactics, and state of the art training.³ He brought the fire department and its city into the twentieth century.

Bideker was a man of principle and believed in standard operating procedures for himself and his city leaders. When asked by commissioners and city council members to waive a required sprinkler system for a new wood structure being built in the downtown area, he refused to do so. The city council waived the requirement, bypassing the fire department's codes and required ordinances. Chief Bideker then promptly handed in his resignation rather than ignore the undermining of his office and authority. On November 25th, 1919, Chief Bideker became citizen Bideker and no longer served the city as a fireman after twenty-nine years of loyal and faithful devotion. In his tenure, he developed thirteen fire station locations in all, a two-platoon system with an 84-hour workweek, and vastly improved pay structure for his men. As the chief left, he said, "Cities are not accidents. They are built on long and faithful work. You must add to and not take away from the building." The Chief was building upon his life experience as an in-the-trench fireman and officer to bring Fort Worth into the twentieth century and saw no reason to cut corners. The city administration was cherry-picking and choosing as to how to apply the fire code. Bideker would have none of it as he knew these shortcuts would cost the lives of citizens. He also knew his fireman would bear the brunt of possible sacrifices. Politics be damned, Chief Bideker would have no one question the systems he designed to save lives and

³ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 1, 1911, 4; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 17, 1915, 16; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jan. 19, 1919, 18; *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1919, 18; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Sept. 22, 1974, 4-A.

improve the fire department. This important battle between cost and safety raged then as it still does today whenever budgets get squeezed.⁴

In a very real sense, Fort Worth became a nationally recognized city in the early 1900s by modern definitions. It would experience many triumphs and tribulations over the next generation. Still, evidence suggests that between 1880 and 1900, Fort Worth became a very different place than a mere humble post frontier town of the 1870s and did so rapidly. That transformation began with a vengeance in the late 1870s when Fort Worthians' committed their efforts fully to expansionism and much of their private wealth to building more than a county seat, or dusty cattle town. How they succeeded depended in equal measure on their willingness to work within its institutions, their unwillingness to quit, but also on national boosterism, luck, created organizations, and some natural happenstance. Had any of these elements been lacking, outcomes could have been far less impressive, and who is to say what could have transpired, but certainly it could have taken far longer for this post-frontier settlement to develop into a metropolitan area where a mere outpost once stood.

When delving into how Fort Worth developed several strategic organizations that guided and led it toward modern city status, one must recognize such institutions as the fire department. This city did not merely depend on its fire service to protect the status quo. It co-evolved with the fire service over the decades to become a viable and lasting entity. The history of Fort Worth firefighting reflects the development of the department's fiscal responsibility, risk management, the development of social order, better fire tactics, the adoption of the latest firefighting

⁴ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov.25, 1919, 1-3; Noah, *Chronological History of the Ft Worth Fire Department* – Fort Worth Public Library; *Fort Worth Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1894; Annual Fire Report, 2-5; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Apr. 16, 1919, 4; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jan. 19, 1919,18; *Dallas Morning News* July 9, 1919, 18.

technologies, and principles of Progressive civil service administration. The fact that Fort Worth needing prodding from 1860 to 1870 to move beyond bucket brigades and create a force of volunteer firemen shows an original apathy and small vision as to its place in society.

The early hamlet could have merely limped along, ignoring a need to expand any forms of fire protection had it not been for men such as Boardman Buckley Paddock and John Peter Smith, who were Fort Worth's two biggest advocates. The original frontier settler Smith came in the early 1850s and his counterpart Paddock arrived two decades later. Both devoted much of their energy, personal money, and personal time to civic promotions. In the 1870s, when Paddock was newspaper editor, his original vision of a fire department was merely a start toward the city on the hill above the Trinity River bluff where an outpost once stood. He, with many others, willed into existence a city built upon the backs of its more modern institutions, and the fire department was one of the most important changes he made in defining Fort Worth for generations to come.

The fruition of Paddock's vision can be seen symbolically in Chief W.E. Bideker's last day of official duty on November 25, 1919. Bideker presided over a peaceful transition of office as he passed a heavy gold badge, which had been passed down from succeeding fire chiefs to him when he passed the position in 1905, to a new chief. At Central Fire Hall, he pinned the gold embossed badge on incoming Chief Ferguson's blouse. He patted it into place then said, "Let's go." The new chief and former chief toured all of the city fire halls and introduced Ferguson to his new firemen. This ceremonial passing of the torch, symbolizing a peaceful, orderly transfer of professionalized managerial power, might not have occurred without the prodding of B. B.

Paddock in his adopted city, and with his vision of a group of civilian volunteer servants who would respond, where smoke and fire were showing.⁵

⁵ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 25, 1919, 1.

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VITA

Jeff R. Tucker was born March 16, 1963, in Mineral Wells, Texas. He is the son of Jack R Tucker. A 1981 graduate of Irving High School, Irving, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree double major in History and Philosophy from Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas in 2001. Jeff is a retired firefighter in good standing with the Fort Worth Fire Department where he served 20 years. He began his firefighting career in 1985, served in fire operations for ten years, and became an Arson Bomb Investigator in 1995. While serving the citizens of Fort Worth he worked on his undergraduate and graduate degrees within Texas Christian University and took an interest in local Fort Worth firemen's history. He published a centennial celebration annual and small history of the Fort Worth Fire Department in 1989. In 2001, he enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University working on an MA in History with an emphasis on North American Western History.

Jeff recently completed an 1881 historic renovation building in Brownwood, Texas, following the Texas Historic Commission and National Park Services offices guidelines. Within the old Weakley Watson Hardware store located at 102 Fisk, he has built Teddy's Brewhaus, a craft beer brewery named after Teddy Roosevelt. Jeff is married to Tracy Tucker, also a graduate of Texas Christian University, and they have three children, six dogs, and one ranch cat.

ABSTRACT

SMOKE AND FIRE SHOWING: FIRE, FRATERNITY, AND SOCIAL ORDER IN FRONTIER FORT WORTH

1873-1919

by Jeff R. Tucker Bachelor of Arts, 2001

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This thesis paper explores the development of a post frontier area township along the original 1849 military outpost line and the co-evolution of integral social groups of firemen within an established Fort Worth, Texas, 1873. It explores the social order, city services, commercial economic enterprise, and the fire departments formation which played significant roles in Fort Worth's existence and eventual survival. Fire events themselves created reasons for change within the budding region and created an unceasing morphing of the fire department institution and how it dovetailed into the city structure. Within this thesis is a focus on symbolic events intended to show a group of men and a city coevolving to support their community – that specific group are the volunteer firemen of Fort Worth.