

Project History Here are some milestones of The New Jersey Fire Museum:

1960's - The Department of Environmental Protection began accepting donations of fire equipment and related material from Mr. Ernest N. Day of Dunellen, a collector of fire equipment and memorabilia. The material was to be preserved and exhibited in a 'future fire museum'. The division continued to accept donations until 1986, by which time Mr. Day had transferred essentially his entire collection. At that time, the appraised value of the collection was approximately \$1 million.

1970's - Governor William Cahill signed legislation authorizing the establishment of a State Fire Engine and Equipment Museum to house and display fire apparatus, equipment and memorabilia donated to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) by Mr. Ernest N. Day of Dunellen, New Jersey. The legislation also provided for an Advisory Commission to select an appropriate site for the museum. A nine-member commission was appointed by Governor Brendan Byrne in March 1975 and after considerable study, a site in Allaire State Park, in southeastern Monmouth County, was chosen as the site for the museum.

1980's - At the request of the Fire Safety Bureau of the Department of Community Affairs, a monument dedicated to New Jersey firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty was added to the museum plan and endorsed by the NJ State Firemen's Relief Association.

In 1983, the State appropriated \$1 million for the design and construction of the museum. The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry (NJDPF) commissioned a design of the proposed facility. A private not-for-profit corporation, the New Jersey Fire Engine and Equipment Museum at Allaire, Inc. was established to operate and maintain the proposed museum.

In 1984, the division hired an architectural firm to design the proposed facility. During the design effort, it was determined that a suitable facility could not be built with the available funds. The project would be delayed until additional funds could be obtained. The non-profit corporation lobbied for the necessary funds and in 1988 Governor Kean signed into law an additional appropriation of \$2 million.

In 1989, the architectural firm of Kehrt Shatken Sharon of Princeton was hired to prepare plans and specifications for a larger facility with the additional appropriated funds.

1990's - The design of the new larger facility, a minimum of 18,000 square feet, proved to be too large to fit the original site within Allaire State Park. Rather than encroach on the Allaire Village National Register Historic District, the state DEP identified a 14 acre site across County Route 524 from Allaire State Park as a new location. The planning for the new facility was completed in 1991 with an estimated construction cost of \$2.5 million.

A contingency placed upon expenditure of the \$2 million required the non-profit corporation to demonstrate financial ability by commitments and other means that it could generate sufficient non-public funds to operate the museum. Lacking evidence of such commitments, the DEP Commissioner declined to certify the financial ability of the corporation. The funds subsequently lapsed into the General Treasury.

After the project lay dormant for a time, the non-profit corporation was conveyed to a new Board of Directors. Executive and Volunteer committees were established. The project's scope was expanded to include the interactive fire safety learning experience. A Development Study was prepared and the fund-raising plan was expanded to include an appeal for both public and private support.

2000's - Grass roots efforts began raising awareness as well as funds. Petitions generated thousands of signatures of support. Family Fire Safety Musters were held, memberships, pavers, and t-shirt sales began. The 1960 Mack (ex-Somerville) was used to promote the project. Websites were established that reflected our new titles: www.njfiremuseum.org and www.njfallenfirefightersmemorial.org.

Mr. Larry Petrillo, Director of the Division of Fire Safety, designated the Museum as the state-sanctioned agency to operate a family fire safety education center.

The Silver Ghost, a parade carriage from Irvington, was donated to our organization by a museum in Cape Cod that closed its doors.

We applied to the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey for a piece of World Trade Center steel. Several pieces of apparatus were moved to a warehouse in Middletown, NY.

2010's - Grass roots efforts continued raising awareness and funds.

We took possession of a piece of World Trade Center steel on May 25 2011. The steel was temporarily placed in storage for about a year, until it was put on display at the Firefighter's Museum of Southern New Jersey, in Galloway Township, NJ. A Model T that once served Mendham was donated to our organization by the museum that donated the Silver Ghost. The museum also donated several lamp posts that were once at Seton Hall. A 1951 Ward La France that served Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital is now on loan to our organization.

We submitted a proposal for the use of the firehouse at Ft. Monmouth. The proposal was considered, but in the end we were not awarded the use of the firehouse.

During the spring of 2013 we were informed of several empty buildings at the Princeton Nurseries complex in Allentown, NJ. The complex was being purchased by Monmouth County Parks. Some of our board members visited the site, and recommended we pursue using two buildings, one for apparatus storage and the other for office space.

2014 - In January, we signed a short term lease for winter storage on a farm in Monmouth County for three pieces of apparatus. Once the winter was over, they were moved to different locations.

We continued our grass roots efforts of raising awareness and funds. The museum began posting updates to our new Facebook page.

2015 - The Princeton Nurseries complex was acquired by the Monmouth County Park System. An agreement between NJ State Park Service and Monmouth County, concerning the use of the two buildings, was approved by the county Freeholders on July 9.

The agreement between the NJ State Park Service and the NJ Fire Museum was signed on Aug 3.

We soon began the process of upgrading and repairing utilities, installing alarms, and getting the buildings ready for occupancy. Early in August, we began moving apparatus from Middletown, NY to the storage building. On Oct 17, we held our first work detail, and began moving into the office. Late in October, many pieces of apparatus in the state's collection were moved into the storage building.

2016 - We continued working on the buildings and received many donations of furniture, supplies, and parts. We held an Open House to allow the public to view the collection, and also continued raising awareness as well as funds.

2017 - We are continuing the work we have been doing for several years, raising awareness and funds.

Legislature

Efforts to provide public funds have been made in each legislature since 2000. In 2002, legislation for \$7 million in capital construction came close to passage. In 2005 legislation for \$2 million for Phase One construction was submitted but not passed. In 2006, the same legislation was re-introduced but again it was not passed. Also in 2006, legislation was introduced to create special fallen firefighter license plates. To date, none of the legislative efforts have been enacted into law.

At the current time:

Since the DEP has declined further donations of apparatus for the collection, the non-profit accepted donations of apparatus and equipment that would be otherwise lost to the future museum. There is limited space, and further donations will be looked at very carefully due to storage limitations, and whether the piece will benefit the collection.

The various fundraising campaigns cover minor operating costs of the non-profit, primarily the operating and improvement expenses for the current facility, restoring and repairing items, and the newsletter. All of this while trying to build a reserve fund for future expenses and endeavors.

In the future the Board of Directors for the NJ Fire Museum and Fallen Firefighters Memorial look toward the day when a museum and memorial can be built.