

Recommendation to change GBMFD emblem to show 1841 as year established

David Siegel

November 21, 2018

The Borough of Green Bay did not create a fire department upon incorporation in 1838. Consequently, in the early morning hours of December 24, 1841, a block on N. Washington burned completely, substantially due to the absence of any organized firefighting efforts. In the midst of the inferno, a group of men crossed the frozen Fox River to the decommissioned Fort Howard garrison. The caretaker gave permission for them to take the fort's hand-pumper fire engine to Green Bay. They utilized this hand-pumper (currently displayed at the Neville Museum) with great effect, stopping the fire-spread beyond that block—singularly impressing participants and witnesses.

Later that same day, Daniel Whitney (Green Bay's founding father) chaired a citizen's meeting to specifically address the lack of fire protection. They passed several resolutions including organizing a company of volunteer firefighters, purchasing the hand-pumper from the military and building an engine house (Figure 1). Municipal officials and private citizens fulfilled these provision in 1842. Thus, they initiated actions to establish the critical components of a fire department in 1841—firefighters, a pumper and an engine house.

The term Green Bay Fire Department was used formally thereafter. For example, an 1855 notice in the *Green Bay Advocate* used the heading "Green Bay Fire Department" (Figure 2). Additionally, the Green Bay Common Council passed measures and ordinances using the formal proper noun term "Fire Department" (Figure 3). This substantiates that the Green Bay Fire Department did exist as a recognize entity following the 1841 resolutions and before 1891.

In 1891, the Common Council passed an ordinance modernizing the fire department. This included replacing one engine house, purchasing horses dedicated to the fire department, installing street-corner alarm boxes and transitioning from volunteers to full-time, paid firefighters.

The modernized fire department used all the same apparatus, one of two stations remained in use and most (if not all) of the full-timers were drawn from former volunteers (Figures 4 and 5). Thus, 1891 simply represents a major transition, not establishment. In fact, other, similar transitions have occurred and thus would qualify as a new "established" date such as motorization in 1924 or merger with Allouez in 2012. Each represents a major change on par with the events of 1891.

Overall, the date shown on the GBMFD emblem should represent the actual creation of the fire department, which was 1841. Using a later date representing a subsequent change or transition short-changes our history and denies our predecessors' efforts and existence.

I am advocating that new emblems be updated, but that none already in-service be replaced. This way, a gradual transition to 1841 on badges, shirts, and vehicle stickers would occur through normal attrition. There would be zero-cost to the department.

PUBLIC MEETING.

At a meeting of the citizens of Green Bay convened at the Navarino Hotel, on Friday the 24th December, 1841, for the purpose of taking measures for the protection of property by fire in said town. **DANIEL WHITNEY**, was called to the Chair, and **F. GILBERT**, appointed Secretary. The object of the meeting having been stated by the chairman, it was on motion

Resolved, That the formation of a company of firemen is essentially necessary for the protection of our property, and the safety of the town.

Resolved, That a committee of three persons be appointed by the chair, to call upon Capt. Shaler, and make arrangements with him, as the agent of the U. States, in relation to the Engine at Fort Howard, either for the purchase, or temporary use thereof.

Resolved, That a committee of three persons be appointed to receive subscriptions for the erection of an engine house, to be located in a central situation, in the Borough of Green Bay, and that said committee be authorized and requested to circulate a paper and obtain signatures of persons willing to become members

Resolved, That the Engine and apparatus shall be and remain in the care, and under the control of Col. C. Tullar, and Maj. W. C. Disbrow, until the formation of said company.

The resolution having been separately considered, were unanimously adopted by the meeting.

Whereupon the chairman appointed **H. S. Baird**, **W. Mitchell** and **W. II. Brnce**, the committee to call upon Capt. Shaler, in regard to the leasing or purchasing the Engine.

Messrs. **N. Goodell**, **C. Tullar**, and **A. J. Irwin**, committee to circulate a subscription for the erection of an Engine house.

On motion it was further

Resolved, That a committee of three persons be appointed Fire Wardens.

Resolved, That the President and Trustees of the Town be requested to pass an Ordinance, to carry into effect the above resolution.

Resolved, That **H. S. Baird**, **C. Tullar**, and **O. P. Knapp**, be requested to act as Fire Wardens, for the North Ward, and **A. J. Irwin**, **N. Goodell**, and **J. F. Lesssey**, for the South Ward.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and published in the **Green Bay Republican**.

DAN'L WHITNEY, Ch'n.
F. GILBERT, Secretary.

Green Bay Republican.



Saturday, January 1, 1842.

Figure 1. Results of the meeting following the disastrous December 24, 1841 fire. The first three resolutions call for the formation of a fire company, purchasing the hand-pumper and building an engine house—the three necessary components of a fire department. January 1, 1842 *Green Bay Republican*.

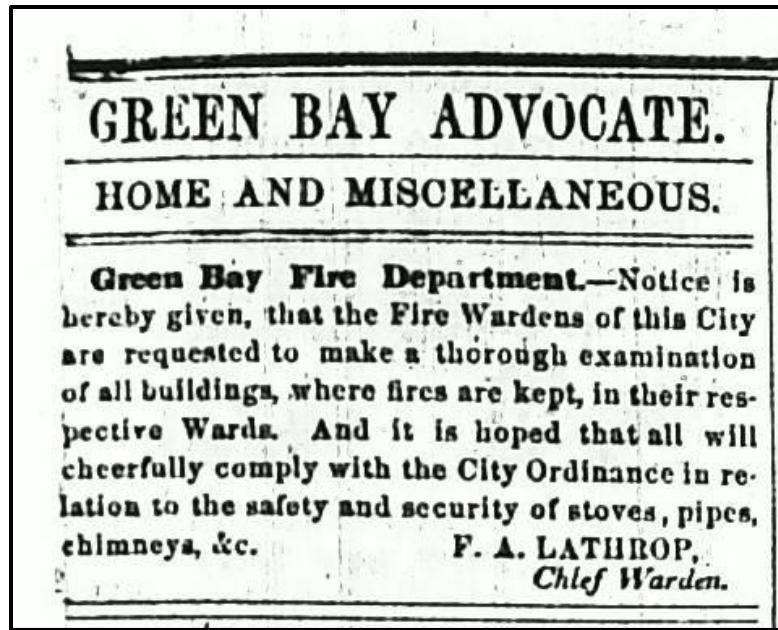


Figure 2. Notice from the November 22, 1855 *Green Bay Advocate* specifically using the term Green Bay Fire Department.

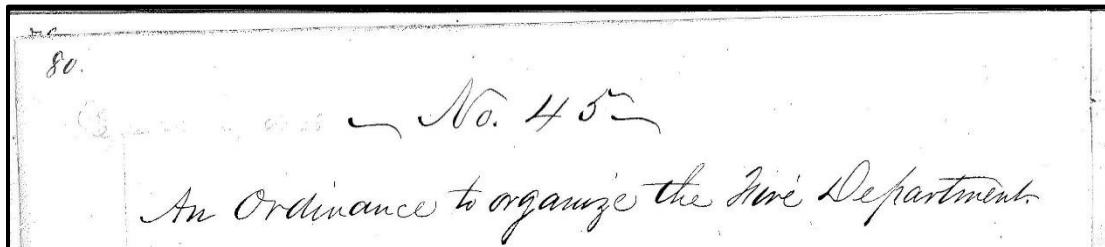


Figure 3. Ordinance heading from the March 27, 1858 Common Council minutes. Capitalization of “Fire Department” indicates proper noun usage, indicating the formal name. UWGB-Area Research Center.

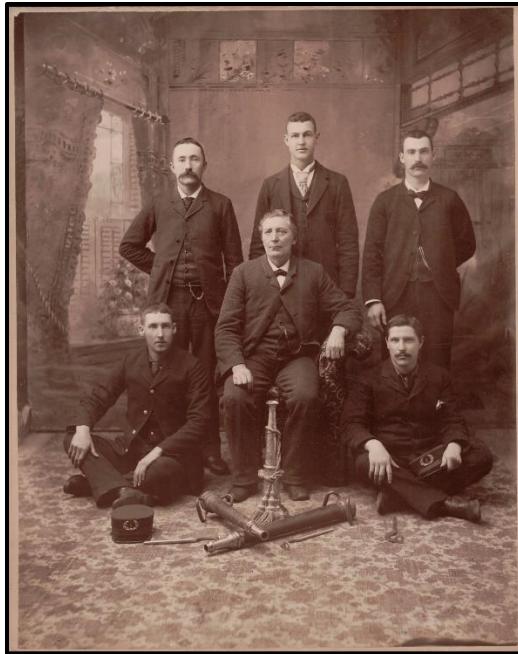


Figure 4. Guardian No. 2 volunteer company of the Green Bay Fire Department in 1890. These six represent the entire company at the time. Four of the six can be confirmed as becoming full-time, paid GBFD firefighters in early 1892. Family heirloom in the possession of the grandsons of Tell Coel (standing center).

New Fire Department.				
Following is a list of the names of the members of the new Fire Department; also office and salary of each:				
With Hose Co. No. 1. and H. & L. Co:				
John E. Kittner, engineer, full paid at \$45.00 per month.				
E. C. Kittner, call man, \$5.00 per month.				
A. Weise, " " " "				
Wm. Hills, " " " "				
Jas. Church, " " " "				
Wm. Johnson, " " " "				
With Hose Co. No. 2:				
Mark Hansen, driver, full paid, at \$40.00 per month.				
J. Dewan, pipeman, " " 35.00 per month.				
Frank Bodart " " " 35.00 per month.				

Figure 5. Notice from the February 11, 1892 *Green Bay Advocate* announcing hiring of the first group of full-time and part-time (call man) firefighters. Four of the eight firefighters can be confirmed to have been volunteers prior to the change.