

# Roaming Around Reidsville

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The City of Reidsville's oldest "employee" with the longest continuous service celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2019. The Fire Department's 1919 American LaFrance became the town's first motorized fire truck. Legend has it that the truck was destined for the Boston Fire Department but was re-routed to Reidsville due to a fatal fire. The LaFrance was delivered by rail at the old train depot on Northwest Market Street to replace the town's horse drawn carriage steam pumper, according to local Fire Department officials. When hooked to a hydrant, this truck had the capability to pump 750 gallons of water per minute, which was exceptional for its day.

The American LaFrance was taken out of active fire service in 1952, but the truck still remains a popular attraction during tours of Fire Station No. 1 located at 402 South Scales Street in downtown Reidsville. The truck has been a centerpiece of events held at the Fire Station over the years, including as a popular photo opportunity at Christmastime.

The LaFrance has been making more of an appearance out in the community lately. It was in the lawn for viewing as visitors came to the open house for the Governor Reid House during the downtown Fall Jubilee in October. The antique fire truck returned to the downtown Christmas Parade in late November. For that event, the truck was on a flatbed truck; however, Fire Chief David Bracken said his



Do you know any of these firefighters? Above, Left to Right: Tom Dallas, Wallace Garrison, Self Davis, Bill Stanfield, Floyd Trent, "Doc" Preddy, Hugh White and Jesse Dallas. Below is a color photo of the fire truck when the fire station was on Morehead Street. *(Photos Courtesy of Reidsville Fire Department)*



department has gotten the old engine running again. He said they hope to have it “road ready” sometime in the coming year although there are no plans to put it back into actual fire service (LOL).

Reportedly part of the truck can be found in the New Bern Firemen’s Museum. Originally the truck had two red lamps which were used for emergency lights. These lights were fueled by kerosene and at some point in time, one of the lamps was donated to the New Bern museum. The head lights were lamps fueled by acetylene, which is a colorless gas and can be unstable in its purest form. Back in the day, firefighters had to manually light the lamps with an open flame in order to have the head lights and emergency lights in working order.

An old article I found about the fire truck when it was on display at the 1991 Rockingham County Folk Festival described it as a “powerhouse of its day” with a six-cylinder engine and a chain-driven rear end. Rated at 105 horsepower, the engine could run up to a maximum speed of about 45-50 miles per hour, which was pretty fast for the time. It was likened to a Model T Ford of the same period, which would only have had 20 horsepower so it sounds like the fire truck would have won a race between the two.

The City’s fire trucks have definitely seen a lot of changes in recent years. When American LaFrance made the 1919 model, the company made the entire vehicle and all its parts. These days, a fire truck can be a compilation of parts from several different companies. The American LaFrance Company went out of business in 2014, but the exceptional fire trucks they built live on in the wonderful examples found at fire departments like the one here in Reidsville. We love this terrific example of history, both of the City and its Fire Department. Happy Belated 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday to our 1919 American LaFrance Fire Truck!

### **Other Upcoming Events in January**

- **January 1, 2020:** Reidsville City Offices will be closed for the **New Year’s Holiday**.
- **January 2, 2020:** A **Big Lunker Contest** will be held at a cost of \$20 per person at Lake Reidsville. Call the lake at 336-349-4738 for more details about this fishing contest.
- **January 3, 2020:** Registration ends for the **10- to 12-year-old Basketball League**. Games start January 20<sup>th</sup>! Call the Parks & Rec Department at 336-349-1090 for more info.
- **January 6, 2020:** Registration begins for **Spring League Baseball & Girls Softball!** From T-Ball (ages 4-6) to Coach Pitch (ages 7-8) to Minor League (ages 9-10) and Major League (ages 11-12), we’ve got all the ages covered. Girls Softball returns for ages 7-8 (Darlins); ages 9-10 (Angels); ages 11-12 (Ponytails); ages 13-15 (Belles); and ages 16-19 (Debs). Registration ends March 2. You register and find out more details by calling 336-349-1090 or stopping by the Parks & Rec Department at 201 North Washington Avenue or registering online at <http://activenet.active.com/reidsvillerec>.
- **Week of January 6-10, 2020:** It’s your last chance to put those leaves out for **loose leaf pickup!** After that, you will have to bag them!

- **January 15, 2020:** The first pickups are scheduled for those residents and businesses inside the Reidsville City limits that chose to participate in **voluntary curbside recycling** with Foothill Waste Solutions. You can still sign up by calling Foothill at 336-871-4055.
- **January 20, 2020:** Reidsville City Offices will be closed for the **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday**.
- **Ongoing: Basketball signups for ages 13-15** are going on through February 28, 2020. Cost is \$20 for In-City and \$40 Outside-City. Call the Rec Department at 336-349-1090 for more information.