

Historic Fire Station #32
6330 N. Guilford Avenue
Broad Ripple Village
North side of Indianapolis, Indiana

From all accounts, Fire Station 32 along with prior structures on the site, played a major supporting role in the establishment and development of Broad Ripple Village.

Supported spiritual and religious life of the Village:

According to Charlie at Sta. 32, there was an old Indian burial ground on the site where Sta. 32 now stands. ¹

In 1851 local residents gathered subscriptions to build the Union Church in Wellington on the present site of a fire station at 6330 Guilford. Jacob Coil, son of Broad Ripple's founder, donated the land for the building. Canal supervisor and local businessman John Burke joined Coil as the church's first trustees and Henry Coe, a Presbyterian, served as the church's first minister. Over the years, local Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists used the church facility. Madison Hume was an early preacher for the Baptists. The Reverend Frank Hardin served the newly established Methodist class in 1852, which became known as the Broad Ripple Methodist Episcopal Church ²

Supported the civil/governmental life of the Village & protected Village citizens

On the site now occupied by Sta. 32 was built the original town hall for the town of Wellington before it merged with Broad Ripple in 1884.

This building was also used as a jail, a polling place, and the base of operations for the volunteer fire department. In the early days, the fire engine was a hand-pushed wagon with a hand pump.

According to the history of Broad Ripple Lodge #643, "At this time [1902] Broad Ripple was a flourishing little town, popular on Sundays with Indianapolis residents because of its park, fishing facilities and rural attractions. Well remembered are the town constable, the justice of the peace, the town lockup, the hand operated fire department, and the old street car waiting station which then stood on the site of what is today a modern drug store." ⁴

When Broad Ripple became a part of Indianapolis, the volunteer fire department changed to Indianapolis Fire Station No. 32. ³ The current Fire Station building was erected 1922.

Near the time of annexation of Broad Ripple to the city of Indianapolis in 1923, modern fire protection became available, and from that time on fires ceased to take as great a toll. Floods were also restrained by high levees built on the river banks. Even though these threats were curbed, the number of accidents increased with the coming of automobiles. ⁵

Memorabilia

There were cool old photos of the fire station, but they disappeared when the old fire engine left in 2005. The fire department used to produce yearbooks every 10 years or so (sometimes longer between printings of the books). The fire department HQ may have them. ⁶

Miscellaneous Facts:

Sta. 32 was the last fire station in Indianapolis to have horses pulling the fire apparatus. The horses would exit the front of the building, pulling the apparatus, and would enter the rear of the building on their return.⁷ The old rear entrance is no longer there because the building has been added onto in that location; however, it can be seen in several of the old photos provided by Roger Birchfield, Fire Department HQ, downtown.

The first fire truck in Broad ripple was built by Knox Motors. (There is a photo, ca 1922, in Esther Dawson's chronicles,)⁸

The first motor driven fire truck in Broad Ripple, about 1922, was an old Knox car. Shown here are the members of the truck's crew; the driver is Bob DeVault. (photo from BRHS History booklet)⁸

Footnotes:

¹ Charlie ??, "B" shift at Sta. 32., personal interview, 1-3-2009.

² The Polis Center, "Narrative History of Broad Ripple," ca. 1996

³ BRHS history booklet, chapter 7, 1968

⁴ Memories from Broad Ripple Lodge #643 (<http://www.brlodge.org/brhistory.shtml>)

⁵ BRHS history booklet, chapter 10, 1968.

⁶ Charlie ??, "B" shift at Sta. 32., personal interview, 1-3-2009

⁷ Charlie ??, "B" shift at Sta. 32., personal interview, 1-3-2009.

⁸ The Chronicles of Esther Dawson, written after 1938.

⁹ BRHS history booklet, chapter 13, 1968.