

**GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING  
PRESENTATION ON MAY 8, 2008**

**"Going to Blazes: One-Hundred-Fifty Years of the Grand Rapids Fire Department," by Dennis W. Morrow, Pastor, Saints Peter and Paul; Chaplain, GRFD & GRPD**

This sounds like 160 years rather than 150. See below copied in from Baxter. I guess I would go ahead and change the title for immediate purposes. Anyway, how about something like this:

No dramatic disaster underwrote the organization of fire-fighting in Grand Rapid, but by 1848 citizens began institutionalizing practices, buying the equipment, and building the housing that has developed over 160 years into the professional GRFD we know today.

Baxter:

**THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

THERE was no regularly organized force for extinguishing fires in Grand Rapids until about 1848. The citizens of the village had not been awakened to the necessity of a fire department organization. The place had until then been visited by very few fires, and those in detached and not very valuable buildings. Not until 1846 was there even a small hand engine of the tub pattern in the village. In that year a little hand engine of home manufacture, made by William Peaslee, was tried, with eight or ten men at the brakes, on Monroe Street, and threw a stream of water over Irving Hall, a three-story brick building. The village bought one and contracted for an engine house to cost \$60.

Three fire companies were partly organized as early as 1844, or at least an effort was made to organize them, under the names of Bucket Company and Hook and Ladder Companies, Nos. 1 and 2. They were but temporary makeshifts. Their stock of buckets and hooks and ladders did not amount to a very large equipment. When a blaze occurred the implements were generally used by the men nearest at hand and aroused by the cry of fire. This sort of volunteer service was about the only reliance at fires until 1849.

In the fall of 1849, Alert Fire Company, No. 1, was organized, with the following members: Charles H. Taylor, Solomon O. Kingsbury, Wright L. Coffinberry, John Clancy, William D. Roberts, Daniel McConnell, Frank N. Godfroy, William H. Almy, Thomas W. Parry, Wilder D. Foster, Ira S. Hatch, Benjamin Haxton, George H. White, William Clancy, Harvey K. Rose, James W. Sligh, T. S. Rock, Justin M. Stanly, William N. Cook, George C. Fitch, John C. Buchanan, Charles Trompe, William B. Renwick, M. Sparlen, Robert Wheeler, Samuel F. Perkins, Robert M. Collins, Jacob Barns, and C. W. McKenzie. Charles H. Taylor was Foreman of the company.