

The Impossible Dream

The year of 1967, Boston had its incredible Red Sox. Berwick? Well, it happened this way.

Berwick's volunteer firemen chafing, for some time now, at crowded conditions in their present quarters often dreamed of spacious lodgings, ground level facilities, etc. These dreams were further enhanced when they remembered the entrance and exit problems caused by winter snow and ice storms, the area traffic and parking conditions, all beyond their control. Something had to be done and soon.

Two vital questions, however, had to be answered, namely money and location. The Town's Capital Improvement Fund stood at \$24,500.00, a far cry from the necessary monies needed to fulfill the Fire Department's needs for more efficient fire coverage.

Town Officials, Firemen and other interested parties, after a series of discussions, meetings, etc., agreed that a special town meeting was in order. At that specially convened Town Meeting the local citizenry authorized the building of a new fire station and allocated the existing Capital Improvement Fund of \$24,500.00 for that purpose. A building committee consisting of: Carl Austin, George Clement, Ed George, Sid Hall, Sr., and Phil Mathews were appointed to carry out the assignment. The "Old Town Hall", a Berwick landmark, was to be razed and the site would become the location of the new building.

July 15, 1966. This day became a milestone, building wreckers began clearing the site and for the numerous "natives" there were moments of nostalgia, fleeting remembrances, wistful thinking, etc. One couldn't help but recall the pounding feet of former Berwick basketball teams, the dances, musters, legion affairs, scout meetings, receptions, and on and on.

April 1, 1966. Maurice Hatfield, a Somersworth excavator, moved his heavy equipment in and the construction program was on its way.

August 29, 1966. Genest Concrete Works, Inc., of Sanford and Berwick began setting up their forms and pouring concrete for the foundation and ground level walls. To the anxious, the over eager, at last something tangible began to appear. A building was going up, but what would it be? This figment of imagination? Surely no registered architectural firm was in view, or any professional drawings in evidence.

There it stood; a challenging roofless 50 X 80 foot "mass" of concrete and cement block representing approximately \$15,000.00 of the available \$24,500.00. The firemen now went to work in earnest.

Steel beams were hoisted into place, floor joists and flooring quickly followed and the first floor became a reality. With "nuts and bolts", in lieu of the generally used "spikes", unique roof trusses, under the guidance of Joe Normand were assembled in place. These were covered with 2" tongue and grooved decking and when Sid Hall & Company prepared the 20 year bonded surface, the "mass" was now enclosed.

The rest is history – long tedious, unglamorous, hour after hour of time consuming labor, (15,000 to be exact) and finally room after room began to emerge in its final state.

That final state represents a building estimated at over \$100,000.00.

Building details are as follows:

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| Outer Shell | Concrete, cement block and brick veneer construction – 50' wide, 80' long and 30' high – footing 30" wide, 2' deep, 12" wide, poured concrete walls from footing to ground level – brick veneered building front – sides and rear of building to be veneered in the future – walls waterproofed inside and outside – split level access – 7" thick colored concrete floor – glass block windows in the building front, all others, aluminum jalousies – 20 year bonded roof, 1" Johns Manville roof insulation, copper flashing, inside roof drains, 2" tongue and groove decking – all roof trusses bolted in lieu of spikes – main doors, 12' wide and 12' high, heavy duty, overhead type. |
| Services | All main electrical power and communication entrances located in the rear of the building to allow maximum freedom of access and maintenance – provisions for emergency power capability by means of a portable generator. |
| Heat | Forced hot water, baseboard radiation, and 2 zones. |
| Capacity | 8 trucks, several jeeps, 3 hand tubs, miscellaneous portable equipment – hose rack for 3200' of 1 ½" hose and 1800' of 2 ½" hose. |
| Communication Center | Provides unilateral intercommunication with seven other communities in a mutual aid pact – 10' X 12' X 8' high dual controlled radio room – jalousie windows – operation desk and files. |
| Meeting Hall | Provides facilities for York County and Mutual Aid meetings, firemen meetings, entertainment, fund raising events, etc. – 40' X 40' X 8' high – suspended acoustic ceiling – ¼" prefinished weld wood plywood paneling – 9" X 9" wood packet flooring – recessed fluorescent lighting – combined lighting and ventilation features. |
| Kitchen | Ultra-modern appliances and work center – steam tables – indirect lighting – grilles – deep sinks – spacious cabinets, etc. |
| Board Room | Provides facilities for small groups, directors and committees – 14' X 20' X 8' high – insulated walls – ¼" prefinished paneling – recessed fluorescent lighting – combined lighting and ventilation features. |

Rest Rooms Facility on main floor as well as ladies and men's rooms on second floor.

Storage Room A 50' X 30' area now utilized for miscellaneous fire equipment as well as fund raising equipment. Future quarters for permanent firemen.

Services and Donors:

Hauling	Town of Berwick Highway Department
Excavating	Maurice Hatfield
Painting	Earl Bailie, L. Littlefield, Normand Gosselin, W. Rice
Roofing	Sid Hall, Sr.
Hot Top	P. Boston (material) Eugene Plante and Carl Horne (installation)
Carpentry	Joe Normand, Ernest Normand, E. Brown
Wiring	Ernest Roy and Son
Surveying	John Ames
Misc. Materials	P. LeHouillier
Brass Fire Pole	Portland Fire Department
Stainless Steel Ring	Dolby and Lilly
Window Drapes	Normand Gosselin
Monies	Fireman's Auxiliary, Forest Hanscom, Nat Gibbs, Jr., Miss M.L. Hobbs, Mrs. Grace Perry
Misc. Furnishings	General Electric Co. and Prime Tanning Co., Inc.
Overhead Doors	Edward Cochrane (labor)
Floors	Vachon's Floor Shop
Entrances and Stairways	(Metalwork, labor and materials) Ernest Roy and Son
Rest Room Fixtures	Chet Frost, Jr.
Fire Extinguisher	F. Ward
Wood Flooring	City of South Portland (Mr. J. Welch)

During the many long hours of toil it no doubt occurred too many of this special breed of dedicated people to pause and wonder if others know or cared. Dedications services will be held, many sincere words of praise and gratitude will be spoken and the day will end. But will it??? Immeasurable pride and gratitude will always remain with the majority of this Town's populace as they daily pass this building and just as assuredly they will often reminisce as to how this feat was done and by whom. They might even chuckle, a rite of comparing this with today's accepted practice of seeking financial aid from State, Federal or other sources.

To the Fire Department and their understanding wives, a grateful community acknowledges with God's blessing a job well done and leaves this thought for all:

"and all travelers can witness that the best of guides today is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way."

Impossible Dream? – Dream, yes – Impossible? Ask the Berwick Fire Department!

It is altogether fitting and proper that the dedicated individuals often referred to in this story, be identified to ensure their recognition for a job well done. They are:

Warren Studley (Fire Chief)
Robert Allen
Verne Brackett
Donald Bragdon
Maurice Bragdon, Jr.
Arthur Burke
David DeVoll
Richard Doucette
Lawrence Drury
Adelard Dumont
Donald Cheney
Arthur Fall
Ellsworth Fall
Fred Farwell

Nat Gibbs, Sr.
William Farwell
Dana Hall
Emilian Lajoie
Jesse MacDonald
Lester Mathews
John Philbrick
Arthur Plante
Joseph Saucier
Dwight Wentworth
Glen Whitman
Vernon Zinck