

OUR HISTORY

ENGINE 290

Organized on October 1, 1915 at 480 Sheffield Avenue.

LADDER 103

Organized as Ladder 3 of the Brooklyn Fire Department
on September 15, 1869 at 236 Gold Street.

Moved to 183 Concord Street on April 29, 1875.

Became part of the New York City Fire Department on January 28,
1898

As Ladder 3 of the Brooklyn & Queens Division of the New York City
Fire Department.

Company number changed to Ladder 53 on October 1, 1899.

Company number changed to Ladder 103 on January 1, 1913.

Moved to 480 Sheffield Avenue on September 21, 1932.

LADDER 193

Organized between the hours of 7 PM until Midnight at Ladder 103
September 1, 1966 to August 10, 1968.

Disbanded to Organize Ladder 103 (2).

LADDER 103 (2)

Organized on August 10, 1968 at 480 Sheffield Avenue.

Disbanded on December 16, 1974.

THE PRIDE OF SHEFFIELD AVENUE

ENGINE 290 & LADDER 103

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Donated to FDNY Home Page by: Mike Boucher S. I. Dispatcher

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Located in the south central section of Brooklyn where East New York, New Lots and Brownsville meet, is the home of Engine 290 and Ladder 103. This area of Brooklyn was first settled in 1677 with the village on New Lots. It became a separate town in 1852 and was annexed by Brooklyn in 1886. East New York was part of New Lots and remains rural until 1835. Brownsville was first settled in 1865 with the building of several hundred homes. All three areas remain remote until the building of the elevated railway in 1889. Because of the railway, many immigrants moved to the areas and a steady growth began. After 1910, large apartment buildings were built instead of the smaller two and four family buildings and the population exploded. With the larger buildings more demands was placed on city services. Through out the area most of the streets were dirt, with no sewers. The closest fire protection was over a mile away and some three more miles to the eastern most end of the Borough and their district.

Starting in 1912, the Fire Department started expanding the Department in Brooklyn and Queens by building new firehouses. In 1913, twenty-six fire companies were added through out the City. In Brooklyn, eight engines and two trucks were placed in service that year. On October 1, 1915, a new firehouse opened at 480 Sheffield Avenue for an engine and ladder truck. Originally the building was lettered for Engine 296 and Ladder 145 but when opened only Engine 290 was placed in service and no truck. Its unknown why at the last minute Engine 290 replaced Engine 296? Hose Company 8 in College Point would become Engine 296 in 1918. Ladder 145 has never been put in service to this day.

During this time technology was changing in all areas throughout America including the fire service. The most dramatic change was motorized apparatus replacing the horse drawn. A horse pulled apparatus could travel for a half mile at a full gallop. A motorized pumper could travel until it ran out of gas. The houses being built during this time did not have stalls for the horses, which eliminated the smells and chores, associated with the horses. Even with motor, apparatus Brooklyn was still growing and needed more fire companies.

Engine 290 was placed in service with a new 1915 Ahrens Fox, 700-gpm pumper. The crew assigned to Engine 290 were mostly from Brooklyn companies with a few from Manhattan and Queens. The first crew consisted of Captain Charles Jacobs, Lieutenants William J. Reed, Charles Funk and George F. Trefcer, Firemen Francis Schmidt, Edward Cramer, Edward M. Luft, Diedrich J. Ruege, Charles Hollander, David P. Kind, William H. Fehling, Francis H. Fallon, Arthur T. Cole and Philip J.

Herburger. For many years Engine 290 responded alone and had to wait for a ladder truck. The five truck companies (107, 113, 120, 123 & 170) around Engine 290 all had a long run just to get into the area.

Ladder 103 was placed in service as Ladder 3 of the Brooklyn Fire Department on September 15, 1869. The first crew, Foreman Samuel Huestis, Michael McGuinnis Driver, Firemen John Bradley, Peter Campell, Patrick Dougherty, Ed Flinn, William Higgins, Henry Adair and James McLaughlin all were members of the volunteer department.

Their first house was located at 236 Gold Street in the former quarters of Volunteer Ladder 2. It measured only 20 by 50 feet on the first floor with two stalls for the horses. The second floor had living and sleeping quarters and it was very tight. On April 29, 1875, Ladder 3 moved into larger quarters at 183 Concord Street. The apparatus floor measured 25 by 75 feet and had room for three horses.

With motorization downtown, Brooklyn had too many ladder companies in such a small area. Surrounding 103's quarters were Ladders 102, 118, 105, 110, and 119. Ladder 118 was just a few blocks away and was located in the old Brooklyn Headquarters building which would not be closed making Ladder 103 the likely company to be moved or closed. On September 21, 1932, Ladder 103 was relocated from downtown Brooklyn into Engine 290's quarters.

The East New York area started suffering from urban blight during the 1950's and 60's. Urban Renewal laid waste to this area as well as other parts of New York City. The middle class moved out and poor people moved into the area. Buildings started to deteriorate and the fire load skyrocketed. Engine 290 and Ladder 103 were responding to more fires as other companies throughout the City were doing. Many new fire companies were being added to the Department. Due to the fire action in this area, slow companies would relocate to the busier areas. Ladder 15, Located in Wall Street area of Manhattan would relocate to the quarters of Ladder 103 between the hours of 7:00 PM to Midnight starting on September 1, 1966. They would be Ladder 193 during this time and assigned to 324 boxes. The following September Ladder 15 was replaced with Ladder 10 also located in Lower Manhattan.

The relocating of Ladder 15 and 10 worked well for the hours they were at Ladder 103. It seemed that East New York was burning at all hours of the day. Because of this, a second section was added to Ladder 103. On August 10, 1968, Ladder 103 (2) was placed in service. Other companies in the area had second section in placed or would go in service soon. Engine 231 had Engine 232, and Second Sections were placed at Engine 225, 233, and 283. Although the fire load was increasing, dark clouds were looming just over the horizon. The fiscal situation the City was taking a nose-dive and soon budget cuts would be effecting every department. The Fire Department began cutting in 1974 with the closing of nine companies on December 16, 1974. Ladder 103 (2) was one of the casualties.

In the history of the F.D.N.Y. over 775 men have been killed protecting the citizens of New York City. Engine 290 has had one killed, while Ladder 103 has had lost two men. The first member was Fireman Robert McDougall of Ladder 3 of the Brooklyn Fire Department. He was injured on July 19, 1883 and died on July 25, 1883. The second member was Fireman Thomas J. Hitter of Engine 290 who was shot by robbers while cashing the company's checks on October 31, 1938. The last line of duty death was that of Fireman Eric Anderson who was thrown from Ladder 103 while responding to an alarm on December 20, 1954 and died on December 28, 1954.

Engine 290 and Ladder 103 has been providing fire protection to the East New York Community regardless of the time or seasons. No matter what the call members of Engine 290 and Ladder 103 will be ready to serve the citizens of New York City. This book is dedicated to all the past and present members of Engine 290, Ladder 103 and 103 (2).

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FIREMAN ROBERT MCDUGALL LADDER 103 (LADDER 3, BROOKLYN FD)

Injured on July 19, 1883 - Died on July 25, 1883

Box 14, 16 Furman Street

A spark from a hoisting engine stationed opposite Pier 2 on Harbeck's Stores, at 10:30 in the morning, burned three ships to the water's edge, two lighters, and consumed the entire cargo as well as destroying the dock shed, which was 350 feet long and 60 feet wide. The fire caused the probable loss of at least twenty sailors, injured thirteen firemen, one fatally. Fireman Robert McDougall of Ladder 3 was working in the shed along with members of Engine 6 and 7. Without warning the main mast of "Lawrence Delap" of Annapolis, Nova Scotia swayed and fell full on the burning shed. The shed cracked, broken, and flatten like a shell. Cries of help could be heard from the ruins. McDougall was buried under the blazing boards of the roof. In the excitement following the fall, his disappearance went unnoticed. When found after several minutes his head was the only thing showing through a pile of burning boards. His hair was burnt off, his scalp severely scorched and the upper part of his head "roasted to a deep yellow color." He suffered painfully for six days before expiring on July 25, 1883.

FIREMAN THOMAS J. HITTER

October 31, 1938

In Front of Quarters

Fireman Thomas J. Hitter of Engine Company 290 was killed while returning to quarters after cashing the payroll checks for the company. He was getting out of his car in front of quarters on Sheffield Avenue with the cash from approximately 30 checks, a month's payroll, for the two companies. Two gunmen had followed Fireman Hitter from the Republic National Bank, Sutter and Williams Avenue to the firehouse. When Hitter parked his car the two bandits doubled park next to him and shot him as he exited his car. Hitter was shot in the chest and arm by a .45-caliber gun and died instantly. He was carrying \$3,075. He was married, father of two children and lived at 94-12 103rd Avenue in Richmond Hill, Queens.

FIREMAN ERIC R. ANDERSON

Injured on December 20, 1954 Died on December 28, 1954

Box 77-1663 Georgia Avenue & Dumont Avenue.

Fireman Eric R. Anderson of Ladder 103 was injured, when was thrown from the ladder truck as it was trying to avoid a collision with Engine 290. Both companies were responding from quarters and took different routes to the alarm at Dumont Avenue and Bristol Street. The two apparatus met at Georgia and Dumont Avenues. Ladder 103's brakes locked up trying to avoid the accident and threw Anderson and Fireman Edward A'Avanza off the rig. Anderson received a broken leg and severe

head injuries while A'Avanza was slightly hurt. Eight days later Fireman Anderson succumbed to his injuries. He was 45 years old and lived at 1010 E. 4th Street.

UNIT CITATIONS

ENGINE 290

| | | | |
|------------|--------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Friday, | August 17, 1956 | 33-2100 | 796-802 Stone Avenue |
| Sunday, | June 12, 1966 | 75-1793 | 750 New Lots Avenue |
| Thursday, | July 21, 1966 | | East New York |
| Friday, | March 12, 1971 | 75-2002 | 389 New York Avenue |
| Wednesday, | September 27, 1972 | 22-1724 | 386 Pennsylvania Avenue |
| Friday, | November 17, 1942 | 75-1721 | 516 Livonia Avenue |
| Thursday, | July 14, 1977 | 1721 | 438 Hinsdale Avenue |
| Friday, | September 14, 1979 | 75-2028 | 907 Sutter Avenue |
| Wednesday, | April 2, 1980 | 75-1747 | 800 Dumont Avenue |
| Friday, | October 31, 1980 | 75-1741 | 426 Vermont Street |
| Saturday, | September 10, 1983 | 33-1736 | 210 Miller Avenue |
| Wednesday, | June 20, 1984 | 2017 | 907 Livonia Avenue |
| Thursday, | September 19, 1985 | 1723 | 523 Sheffield Avenue |
| Sunday, | August 30, 1987 | 75-2109 | 230 Lott Avenue |
| Monday, | August 21, 1995 | 22-2026 | 277 Pennsylvania Avenue |
| Wednesday, | August 14, 1996 | 75-2001 | 350 Sheffield Avenue |
| Saturday, | May 9, 1998 | 1904 | 323 New Lots Avenue |

LADDER 103

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|------------|--------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Friday, | August 17, 1956 | 33-2100 | 796-802 Stone Avenue |
| Sunday, | June 12, 1966 | 75-1793 | 750 New Lots Avenue |
| Thursday, | July 21, 1966 | | East New York |
| Friday, | December 9, 1966 | 75-1704 | 367 Snediker Avenue |
| Friday, | April 26, 1968 | 22-1766 | 2321 Pitkin Avenue |
| Tuesday, | April 20, 1971 | 75-1721 | 462 Williams Avenue |
| Friday, | November 17, 1972 | 75-1721 | 516 Livonia Avenue |
| Saturday, | November 25, 1978 | 75-2100 | 240 Lott Avenue |
| Saturday, | September 10, 1983 | 33-1736 | 210 Miller Avenue |
| Wednesday, | June 20, 1984 | 2017 | 907 Livonia Avenue |
| Thursday, | September 19, 1985 | 1723 | 523 Sheffield Avenue |
| Monday, | April 6, 1987 | 75-2007 | 485 Alabama Avenue |
| Tuesday, | June 2, 1987 | 1723 | 456 Georgia Avenue |
| Sunday, | August 30, 1987 | 75-2109 | 230 Lott Avenue |
| Monday, | April 17, 1989 | 1965 | 215 Cozine Avenue |
| Monday, | August 21, 1995 | 22-2026 | 277 Pennsylvania Avenue |
| Wednesday, | August 14, 1996 | 75-2001 | 350 Sheffield Avenue |

LADDER 103 (2)

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|---------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Friday, | November 17, 1972 | 75-1721 | 516 Livonia Avenue |
|---------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|

MEDALS AWARDED TO MEMBERS

ENGINE 290

FF. Vincent J. Finnegan, Brooklyn Citizens Medal, June 5, 1936
Lt. Aldrich Klvana, Emerald Society Pipe & Drums Medal, June 12, 1966

LADDER 103

FF. James F. Rice, Brooklyn Citizens Medal, Aug. 23, 1953
FF. John F. Wagenman, Jr. Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia Medal, January 11, 1967
Lt. Robert J. Blume, Emerald Society Pipe & Drums Medal, April 30, 1967
FF. John T. Vigiano, Thomas F..Dougherty Medal, December 28, 1968
FF. Joseph H. Dirks, James Gordon Bennett Medal, July 15, 1981
FF. Joseph Dirks, Police Honor Legion Medal, July 15, 1981
FF. Gene J. Di Marco, Brummer Medal, July 15, 1981
Lt. Thomas F. Dunphy, Pulaski Association Medal, October 3, 1981
FF. James R. Moehring, Holy Name Society Medal, February 17, 1985
FF. Steven F. Luisi, Hugh Bonner Medal, September 25, 1989
FF. David P. Arciere, Henry D. Brookman Medal, February 16, 1990
FF. Michael Dougherty, Third Alarm Association Medal, May 29, 1992
FF. Joseph M. Trezza, Fire Marshals Benevolent Association Medal, May 29, 1992
FF. Michael J. Walsh, Firefighter Kevin C. Kane Medal, December 29, 1994

THE APPARATUS OFSHEFFIELD AVENUE

ENGINE 290

1915 Ahrens Fox 750 gpm #802 received on 10-1-15
1917 American LaFrance 700 gpm #1627 received on 8-13-20 from Engine 5
1937 Mack, the first Closed Cab rig, 1000 gpm #1040 received on 5-3-37
1946 Ward LaFrance 750 gpm #2202 used from Engine 257 in 1953
1954 Ward LaFrance 750 gpm #3313 received on 4-23-54
1963 International/H&H Body 1000 gpm #2-0-ST received on 3-19-63
1968 Mack 1000 gpm #1075 received on 11-27-68
1970 Mack 1000 gpm #MP7033 received on 3-21-70
1972 Mack 1000 gpm #MP7212 received on 8-3-72
1975 Mack 1000 Gpm #MP7504 received on 8-12-75
1978 Mack 1000 Gpm #MP7831 received on 3-17-79
1982 American LaFrance 1000 gpm #AP8207 received on 1-12-83
1979 Mack 1000 Gpm #MP7917 9-16-85
1979 Mack 1000 Gpm #MP7948 3-8-90
1996 Emergency One 1000 gpm pumper (#AP9601) in 11-?-96. This rig, a demo, was loan to the FDNY

1992 Seagrave 1000 gpm #SP9203 received on 11-12-92
1992 Seagrave 1000 gpm #SP9203 received in 4-?-97
1998 Seagrave 1000 gpm #SP98013 received on 9-7-98

LADDER 103

1869? Unknown Make Ladder Truck from the Volunteers
1883 LaFrance/Hayes 85' Aerial received in 1883
1899 LaFrance/Hayes 85' Aerial #213 received in 1899
1910 Seagrave 65' Aerial #3656 received in 1910
Unknown Tractor placed under the 1910 Seagrave
1925 American LaFrance 75' Aerial #224 received on 1-15-25
1930 Walters Tractor placed under the 1925 American LaFrance 75' aerial.
1937 Seagrave 85' Aerial #324 received on 5-3-37
1960 Mack/Maxim 85' Aerial #436 received on 3-25-60
1962 American LaFrance 100' Aerial #465 received on 8-31-62
1968 American LaFrance 100' Aerial #480 received on 1-26-68
1970 Seagrave 100' RM #SL7020 received on 8-11-71
1974 Mack 75' TL #MT7403 received on 11-20-73
1974 Seagrave 100' RM #SL7420 received on 12-16-74
1981 Seagrave 100' RM #SL8022 received on 10-9-81
1985 Seagrave 100' RM #SL8507 received on 2-17-85
1995 Seagrave 100' RM #SL9506 received on 4-23-96

LADDER 103 (2)

1956 American LaFrance 85' Aerial #406 received on 8-10-68 from Ladder 128
1970 Seagrave 100' RM #SL7004 received on 10-1-70
1970 Seagrave 100' RM #SL7017 received on 5-22-73
1974 Seagrave 100' RM #SL7424 received on 7-16-74