

Firefighters restore Lordstown's first truck

By **BOB COUPLAND**
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LORDSTOWN — Members of the Lordstown Fire Department have restored the village's original fire truck.

The 1947 International was completed last fall after several years of work done mostly by firefighters Tom Dietz, Bob Hoffman and Dave Horner.

"It was the first official fire truck the township bought," said Dietz, explaining Lordstown was a township in the 1940s, and one trustee putting his farm up for collateral to pay for the vehicle.

Lordstown began organizing a Fire Department in the mid-1940s. It became a village in 1977.

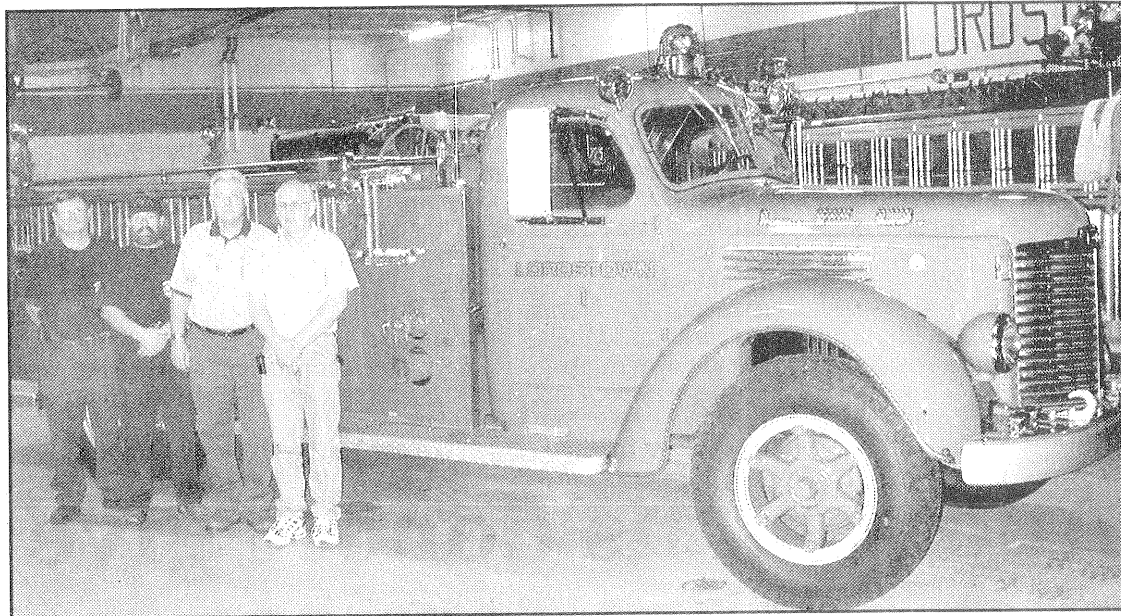
The vehicle was stored behind the fire station and at different firefighters' homes from 1978 to 1988. From 1988 to 2003, the truck was at the Gordon D. James Career Center. Hoffman said the vehicle was stored at the center but not used by any the classes. The body shop class at the school used another fire truck.

In May 2003, the firefighters began restoring the vehicle. The restoration included a paint job, and rebuilding the engine. Although some work had been done over the prior 13 to 15 years, the majority of work was done in 2003 and 2004.

On drill days at the fire station, the vehicle was brought back to be worked on by many firefighters as part of training sessions.

"We worked on it when we had free time," Horner said.

Minors Performance in



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Lordstown Fire Department's original fire truck firefighters Tom Dietz, Dave Horner, Bob Hoffman and Chief Jim Wishart. Standing by the 1947 vehicle are, from left,

Lordstown did machine work on the fire truck's engine.

"We chased parts for the vehicle all over the country," Hoffman said.

Dietz said many of the parts, including the oil pump and crank, had to be remanufactured. Some parts were hard to find because the vehicle was obtained from a company that went out of business in the early 1990s.

Hoffman said the vehicle had to be disassembled.

"The engine was the hardest part," Dietz said.

The three didn't keep track of the hours they worked on the vehicle, but estimate more than 1,000 hours were put in at the station alone. Dietz said some work, such as cleaning of parts, was done at each firefighter's home and other work at other businesses.

The firefighters association recently presented a plaque to Mayor Michael Chaffee, former Mayor Arno Hill and Lordstown Village Council from 2003-04, thanking them for their

support in providing \$20,000 for the project.

"The village supplied the money, and we supplied the labor," Dietz said.

Hoffman said plaques were given to 17 key contributors to the truck including the many businesses and individuals who donated materials, funding or service.

When completed, the vehicle was taken out in late August to get gasoline and was shown to the public at the next month's Lordstown Apple Cider Festival. Hoffman said the red truck was placed next to the new red Chevy Cobalt at the festival.

Hoffman said the fire truck has not answered any fire alarms but would be used as a hose truck.

"If we had a huge fire where we needed extra hoses, we could bring it out," Hoffman said.

The history of the vehicle began in August 1946, when a bid was accepted from Maxim Fire Equipment for the \$9,966 vehicle. A three-year bank loan was obtained in September 1946

from Union Savings with one payment per year.

In February 1947, the chassis was ordered. That September, a four-year, one-mill levy was placed on the ballot for the purchase and maintenance of the truck. An additional \$500 brought the total cost of the vehicle to \$10,466.

Hoffman said the truck was used from 1947 to 1978. It later was only featured in parades and then placed in storage.

The vehicle, which can have two people riding inside, has a 600-gallon water tank, 1,000 foot 5-inch hose and a 1,400 foot 3-inch hose and a ladder. Hoffman said the vehicle had only one brake light with turn signals added in the 1950s to give it one blinking light.

The stages of work on the vehicle can be viewed at the Fire Department's Web site www.lordstownfire.com. The Web site also includes pictures of the village's oldest and newest vehicles.