

**FIREHOUSE DEDICATION CEREMONY IN MEMORY OF EUGENE E. MARTIN**  
**MAY 31, 2010**

*Presented by George J. Deblon.....*

On behalf of all the members of the Pittsfield Volunteer Fire Department, I welcome everyone here today to witness the dedication ceremony of the firehouse in memory of Eugene E. Martin.

Before the dedication I would like to share with everyone the history of the Pittsfield Volunteer Fire Department, as we know it. Before 1951 there was no real organized fire department, however in the early 1940's, Mrs. Mabel Ranny donated the first fire pump to the town. She lived in the big house where the Clear River Motel is. After receiving it Mel Colton, Gene Martin, and June Davis took it down to the river by Mrs. Ranny's to try it out, the pump had so much pressure that it blew the clapboards right off of the barn.

The original firehouse was behind the Town Hall, it was torn down in the mid 1970's to make room for the basketball court. In 1951 Eugene E. Martin was elected as the first "official" Fire Chief and held that position for two years. In 1954 Vernon "Bud" Bonin was Fire Chief. Eugene E. Martin was re-elected in 1955. Pittsfield purchased its first fire truck in 1955, it was a 1950 Jeep Willy's pick-up, from Howard Eddens for the amount of \$650.00. They equipped the pick-up with a portable pump and some hose. The original firehouse, behind the town hall, was just big enough to park the new truck with just enough room to walk around it. Eugene E. Martin held the position of Fire Chief until 1965. In 1966 Lewis Sackrider was elected Fire Chief. In the Town report of 1966 Article 7 read; Will the town vote \$3,500.00 to be used toward the construction of a new fire house. Chief Sackrider negotiated with J. Douglas Cairns from Champlain Oil Co., who owned the lot where the current fire house is located as well as the service garage where the current Post Office is, which burnt to the ground in 1965, into donating the land to the fire department for the construction of the new firehouse. In 1968 Pittsfield purchased a 1945 American LaFrance 1,000 gallon pumper fire truck from Rahway, N.J. for the amount of \$1,000.00. In 1969 the fire department contracted Harold Baker to construct the new firehouse. With the hired contractor and many hours of volunteer firemen's dedication and hard work, along with the \$3,500.00 from the town and several thousands of dollars from donations and money raised from fund raisers, it was completely constructed in a timely manner. In 1971 Eugene E. Martin was once again elected Fire Chief. That same year the fire department purchased a brand new Ford F-600 all wheel drive cab and chassis from Ted Green Ford for the amount of \$7,290.00. They took the truck to Middlesex Fire Equipment to have the pump, tank and fire body installed for the amount of \$6,426.00 for total amount of \$14,716.00 for the new fire truck. They soon sold the American LaFrance. In the fall of 1973 the fire department purchased a 1968 Ford F-800 milk truck with a 2,200 gallon tank from Ted

Green Ford for the amount of \$3,200.00. It had a six inch dump valve and was used as a tanker truck. In 1979 Ronald E. Colton was elected fire chief after Eugene E. Martin decided to retire. That same year the fire department purchased a new 1979 GMC 2500 pick-up from Cliff Cerro for the amount of \$6,000.00 to replace the 1950 Jeep Willy's. The new pick-up was equipped with a 250 gallon tank and pump as well as hose and other fire fighting tools. The Jeep was sold to the highest bidder. In 1988 Kenneth L. Merrill was elected Fire Chief. In 1990 the fire department purchased a new Ford F-800 cab and chassis for the tanker. Once again the volunteer firemen gathered together to take the tank off of the old tanker truck and put it onto the new cab and chassis. In 1992 Ronald E. Colton was elected Fire Chief again. In 1994 George J. Deblon was elected Fire Chief. In 1994 the fire department purchased a brand new International/E-One Pumper Fire Truck, it has a 1,000 gallon per minute pump and a 1,000 gallon poly tank with an aluminum fire body. The cost of the new fire truck was just under \$118,000.00. The 1971 Ford/Middlesex fire truck was sold to the Stockbridge Volunteer Fire Department and they still use it today as a tanker. In 2001 Greg Martin was elected Fire Chief. That same year the fire department put vinyl siding on the fire house. In 2003 David H. Colton was elected Fire Chief and is still Chief today. Also in 2003 renovations were made to the tank that was on the tanker truck and a portable pump was installed on it as well. In 2008 the fire department purchased a new Ford F-350 and installed a service body as well as the tank, pump, hose and tools, for the amount of \$45,000.00. The 1979 GMC pick-up was sold to the highest bidder. Last summer (2009), the fire department installed the flag pole that is in front of the firehouse. Just a couple weeks ago Keith Hopkins and Brian Merrill constructed the "cricket" over the entrance door of the firehouse.

We now have our first female firefighter, Coral Allen. Although she may be the first female firefighter, she is not the first female to be a part of the fire department. For several years now Stacey Veilluex has been the fire departments treasurer, and handles all of the finances. There are several other women that need to be recognized for all they have done for the fire department. Susie Martin, Cathy Merrill, Ellen Martin, and Jeanette Colton. For years the fire department had a "red phone" system that rang into their houses, as well as into the stores here in town, and these ladies would then go down through a call list to inform the firemen of the call. They even took it upon themselves to provide beverage and refreshments for the firemen if we were battling a fire. I am sure there were many other women that helped out as well and I apologize for not mentioning your name, but we certainly appreciated all your efforts and support.

Here we are today, dedicating the firehouse to Eugene E. Martin, whose vision and dedication made the fire department into what it is today. Although he may have retired as Fire Chief in 1979, he remained active in the fire department for many more years. In 2005, the fire department presented him a plaque commemorating over 50 years of service, of which 20

years he was Fire Chief. All the past fire chiefs depended on Gene's advice and wisdom and he was always there to be of assistance.

The fire department meant very much to Gene and he certainly was very influential in making it what it is today, however he couldn't have done it without a great support team. Some of the original firemen that are no longer with us are; Larry Taylor, Bill Martin, George Rounds, Herb Barton and Bud Bonin. Some of the honorary members of the fire department in addition of all the past fire chiefs mentioned earlier are; Robert F. Colton, Earl Davis, Jr., Melvin Colton, Malvern Folsom, and Ted Griffin. If I have forgotten to mention someone I apologize, please let me know so that we can make sure it is recorded.

The entire Fire Department was deeply saddened in 2005 with the passing of Gene Martin. He was certainly the founding member of the fire department. The fire house as it stands today was a dream of his that became a reality. The construction of the new fire house was a giant leap forward for Pittsfield not just because it is a building to provide a place to house the fire equipment and conduct fire business, but because it gave a big moral boost to the community. The fire department and community was very important to Gene and I know that his memory will live on among us all.

After the ceremony we invite everyone into the firehouse to view several photos and share stories. I know that we all have stories that we would like to share with each other of Gene Martin and the development of the Pittsfield Volunteer Fire Department.

I would now like to introduce Chief Colton for final remarks.....

*Submitted by,*

*George J. Deblon*

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*Presented by David H. Colton*

The man we are honoring today had many names, most called him Gene, some called him Geno, we all knew him as Mayor, and one of his best friends, Newt Whitcomb, call him Cheaps. Though, I haven't a clue why.

Gene also wore many hats. He was Postmaster for many years. He was a Farmer. He looked after the Wilcox Water System, which provided the village with pure spring water, even after he drilled his own well. He was one of the founders of the Pittsfield Historical Society, which was near and dear to his heart. Gene could also be found in and around the village supervising any and all projects that were underway. But this hat is the reason we are here today, (holding Gene's retired fire helmet).

As Fire Chief I hereby proclaim that from this day forward this firehouse shall be known as the Eugene Martin Memorial Fire Station.

*Submitted by,*

*David H. Colton*

*Fire Chief*