

The 1840 Joel Bates "America" Fire Engine

In 2019, after several years of detective work and assisted by Josiah Wagner and Bill Ward, Allentown firefighter Jeremy Bellois contacted the Kutztown Area Historical Society because he had located, in the collection of Sutton "Sut" Marshall of Conway, New Hampshire, the "lost" 1840 Joel Bates "America" hand pumper that had been purchased by Kutztown's Borough Council in the mid-19th century and housed in the borough or surrounding vicinity for more than 125 years. Since then, the society, in conjunction with Kutztown Fire Company No. 1, has researched the pumper's history and organized a fund-raising campaign to return the pumper to eastern Pennsylvania.

When the first dwellings, made of logs, in what came to be Kutztown were constructed along the recently surveyed Easton Road early in the third quarter of the 18th century, little thought was given to fire protection, which in that era consisted only of residents perhaps keeping leather buckets filled with water near their front doors. Fighting larger fires might have entailed the organization of a bucket brigade stretching from the Saucony Creek on the settlement's eastern boundary. Although no records of early fires are extant, any home that caught fire in the East Penn Valley at that time likely burned until the conflagration ran out of flammable material or Mother Nature, in the form of rain, intervened.

Just as the first shots of the American Revolution were volleyed and the first responders, riflemen under the command of Captains Hendricks and Chambers, marched north along the Easton Road en route from Carlisle to Cambridge, Massachusetts, they passed by, and the officers quartered at, the town's first fire-resistant structure, the Swan Inn (now Pop's Malt Shoppe), built about 1775 from bricks that had been used as ship's ballast and hauled north from the port of Philadelphia. But such structures were rare in rural colonial Pennsylvania, and while the burgeoning community witnessed the construction of several stone residences along what it called its "front" street, including the Stoll-Adam (360 West Main), Kutz-Yoder (404 West Main), and Levan (428 West Main) homes, few, if any, more brick buildings appeared until Jonathan Bieber established the town's first brick yard along Noble St. in the years preceding the Civil War.¹

¹ Though few survive, it is surmised that most early residences in the East Penn Valley were essentially "tinderboxes" made of locally harvested logs with wood shingle roofs, built originally in a traditional medieval Germanic two- or three-room format with a central chimney. Schultze's 1755 survey of the Easton Road shows no structures or improvements upon the land that now comprises Kutztown except a bridge fording the Saucony, a more formidable stream in that era with a flow sufficient to actually power a mill along its western bank, if the 1779 town plan is to be believed, but structures were certainly constructed soon thereafter. According to tradition, the first residence built in what is now Kutztown proper was that of George Esser, located on the lot of what is today 136 West Main Street; sold to David Fister and John G. Wink in 1851, the home was moved to the rear of the lot (and torn down only six years later) so that the current row of brick structures could be built on street frontage -- a trend evidenced in the fact that a majority of the buildings along Main Street from the creek to the university are of brick construction and built between 1840 and 1880.

Through the several decades after 1779, when the Kutz family began to subdividing portions of its 130-acre tract extending west from the Saucony into 110 in-lots and 108 out-lots, the sparse settlement began to resemble a town, and by 1815, sufficient housing density had been achieved that the residents petitioned for the formal establishment of a Borough, which occurred on 1 March of that year. In 1816, one of the new Town Council's first actions was to authorize William Henninger to take fire ladders to Jacob Baldy's blacksmith shop, along Baldy's Lane, to have them shod with feet that would not slip on water and ice (143). Discussion of procuring a fire engine began as early as 1820, but only in 1830 did the Borough purchase its first engine, under the authority of a committee comprised by Dr. Christian L. Schlemm, George Bieber, and William Heidenreich -- presumed to be the circa 1825 American Hydraulic Co. "coffee grinder" hand pumper still in the possession of Kutztown Fire Company No. 1. The following year, Benjamin Bachman built an engine house, its location unknown, for \$44.75.

In 1840, following several years of complaints about the engine's need for repairs, Town Council authorized the purchase of a new engine.² It has long been assumed that, given the coincidence of dates, that the Bates "America" 16-man gang or hand pumper that had been housed in the borough longer than anyone living could remember, and known, as will be seen, to have been manufactured that same year, was in fact the same pumper purchased in 1840 -- especially given that, on 1 January 1841, Council appointed a committee under Bieber's leadership to procure a bell for what was then called the American Fire Company, the town's first organized fire brigade, formally incorporated on 2 April 1844 -- and named, one might conjecture, in honor of the new pumper. The bell weighed 75 pounds.³

More than a century later, Ruth E. Bonner, in her 1965 history of Kutztown, would report that "The fire company today owns a hand-pumper with the date 1776 on it, in working order, and a 1791 [sic] double hand-pumper which can be operated by 8 or 16 men. The date of purchase, the origin, of these machines is unknown, but they have been in the possession of the Kutztown Fire Co. 'since the beginning.'"⁴ The smaller American Hydraulic pumper shows the 1776 incorporation date of its original company; no records survive to indicate when it first came to town, but as previously stated, it is likely the 1830 purchase referred to in Council minutes. Likewise, no direct evidence exists to determine when the 1791 (actually 1790, based on the date of the America Engine Company's institution) horse-drawn double hand-pumper, marked "J BATES MAKER," first arrived to Kutztown.

However, extant records demonstrate conclusively that the America pumper remained in Philadelphia well into the 1840s and probably into the Civil War era,

² Deatrick, W. W. (editor), *The Centennial History of Kutztown, Pennsylvania* (Kutztown Publishing Co., 1915), p. 143.

³ Deatrick, p. 143; Ruth E. Bonner, *Sesqui-Centennial Commemorative Book, Kutztown, Pennsylvania 1815-1965* (Kutztown Publishing Co., 1965), p. 128.

⁴ Bonner, p. 128.

though the history of its pumper, designer, and manufacturer provides fascinating glimpses into the early days of American firefighting.

PATRICK LYON

The double hand-pumper, a water-throwing hydraulic engine and the basis of the modern fire engine,⁵ is the invention of Philadelphia locksmith, blacksmith, and mechanic Patrick Lyon (1769-1829) that came to be known as the “Philadelphia style.”

Prior to the 1760s, fire engines in Philadelphia were still being imported from England, and although Lyon was not the first manufacturer in Philadelphia, which had already benefited from the contributions of Richard Mason (active 1768-1801), who introduced engines working from the ends as opposed to side-lever operation, his son Philip (active 1775-1801), and the less successful Samuel Briggs,⁶ he was among the earlier American designers first to duplicate, and then to improve upon, the European models in the pre-steam era. Philadelphia’s early historian James Mease in 1811 counted more than 40 fire companies and about 35 engines in the city:

They provide buckets, baskets, and bags, at their individual expense; and most of them have an engine, purchased out of the joint funds of the company. . . . One of the members is appointed to direct the water, in case of fire, and the members and citizens generally, render their assistance where wanted. A universal spirit prevails on such occasions, among the people.⁷

Given the primitive nature of firefighting in that era, the impact of Lyon’s engines was profound. As the celebrated Philadelphia history commonly known as *Watson’s Annals* notes: “The before-mentioned builders were superseded by the celebrated Patrick Lyon. About 1794 he invented an improved engine, which he claimed would throw more water and with greater force than any other. He does not, however, seem to have accomplished much until 1803, when he made machines for the Philadelphia and Goodwill. After these he built a number as late as 1824, when he built the Reliance.”⁸

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1769, Lyon has entered American folklore largely as a result of John Neagle’s famous painting, *Pat Lyon at the Forge* (1826-27), which Lyon himself commissioned late in life, but through the 19th century, he was a sort of working-class hero who provided the subject matter for a serialized novel (1839), a

⁵ Whitney Rakich, “Patrick Lyon” (1769-1829), George Washington’s Mount Vernon, <<<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/patrick-lyon-1769-1829>.

⁶ John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (L. H. Everts & Co., 1884), Vol. 3, p. 1907.

⁷ James Mease, *The Picture of Philadelphia, Giving an Account of its Origin, Increase and Improvements in Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, Commerce and Revenue* (Philadelphia: B. and T. Kite, 1811), p. 137.

⁸ John Fanning Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (Parry and M’Millan, 1879), p. 409.

play (1843 - contested by his son and son-in-law in court for its supposedly libelous content), and a youth novel (1890).⁹ So popular was he in the mid-19th century that even a counterfeit bank note showed his portrait: the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, on 4 July 1845, reported that on the previous day, a merchant in Market Street had received a “spurious” Bank of Delaware 20-dollar note with a vignette of Lyon on its face.¹⁰

Lyon’s improved fire-engine design “featured a surge tank encased in a square column at the center of the engine, vertical pump cylinders, double decks, and hinged lever bars at the ends.”¹¹ His patent for an "engine for throwing water" was approved on February 12, 1800,¹² and the earliest of his improved engines appear to date to 1803, with eventual commissions into the Pennsylvania hinterlands and other states. He also invented the first hose wagon, which, coordinated with Philadelphia’s gravity-fed water system and hydrants (first installed in 1802), eliminated the need for bucket brigades.¹³

Of the 50 or so fire engines that Lyon built between 1792 and 1824, surviving examples, including a number of double-decker examples, may today be found at the Mercer Museum, Doylestown (Volunteer Fire Co., Philadelphia, ca. 1800), the Station 10 Museum of the Perseverance Fire Co., Jonestown (1803), the Lazaretto Interpretive Museum, Essington (1803), the Fire Museum of Maryland (Independent Fire Co., Annapolis, 1806), the Schuylkill County Historical Fire Society Museum, Shenandoah (Friendship Fire Co., Orwigsburg 1809), the 1901 Firehouse Museum, Newtown (Washington Fire Co., 1812), Womelsdorf (American Engine Co., Philadelphia, 1812, purchased 1846), and the Berks History Center, Reading (Rainbow Fire Co., Reading, 1820).¹⁴

⁹ As recently as 2019, *Robbery in Philly: The Ninth Token*, a youth’s book and game by D. A. Featherling, has as its focus the gathering of evidence to prove that Lyon is innocent of bank robbery, a charge for which he was imprisoned for more than four months as the prime suspect in the 1 September 1798 theft of the Bank of Pennsylvania’s reserves in cash and Spanish gold from Carpenters’ Hall when Philadelphia’s streets were mostly deserted as a result of evacuations during the yellow fever epidemic; Lyon had recently installed the locks, which were found intact, in the bank’s vault. Ultimately found to be a conspiracy between William Davis, a member of the Carpenters’ Company, and a night watchman (who died of yellow fever several days later), the case has gone down in history as America’s first bank robbery. Lyon was released from prison after a grand jury refused to indict him in January 1799 and, nine years later, received \$9,000 compensation from the bank. “Patrick Lyon (blacksmith),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_\(blacksmith\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_(blacksmith)); Philadelphia Public Ledger 30 October 1844, p. 1.

¹⁰ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 4 July 1845, p. 2.

¹¹ “Patrick Lyon (blacksmith),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_\(blacksmith\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_(blacksmith)).

¹² Joseph Delaplaine, "List of American Patents," *The Emporium of Arts and Sciences, Philadelphia*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (September 1812), p. 392.

¹³ “Patrick Lyon (blacksmith),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_\(blacksmith\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_(blacksmith)).

¹⁴ “Patrick Lyon (blacksmith),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_\(blacksmith\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Lyon_(blacksmith)).

JOEL BATES

Many pumpers by various builders all in Lyon's "Philadelphia style" followed in his wake, including examples by Perkins & Jones, Sellers & Pennock, and about 24 known to have been built by Joel Bates.¹⁵

Born in 1802 in New Jersey, Bates moved to Philadelphia and joined the Reliance Fire Company as a young man; he began building hand engines by 1827 and is thought to have completed about 25 by 1848, when he sold his machine shop tools and fixtures to A. L. Archambault, who as late as 1851 was still placing ads referring to himself as "successor to Joel Bates,"¹⁶ indicating something of the former's lasting reputation when he may no longer have even been residing in Philadelphia.

Bates's engine manufactory, which included a machine shop and brass foundry that manufactured metal lathes, was located at 13 Drinkers Alley (now Quarry St.) in Philadelphia -- just a few feet east of what is now the Fireman's Hall Museum at 147 No. 2nd St.¹⁷

Information on Bates is scant, but among his first engines sold was to the Vigilant Fire Company, on 10 March 1829, for \$1,150.¹⁸ (While Bates seems to have done mostly commissioned work for specific companies, he also advertised directly in at least one instance when, on 15 April 1841, he took out a classified for a "good second class fire engine, suitable for a country town."¹⁹) He is listed as one of three delegates (with John F. Schell and John S. Johnson) representing the Reliance Company in an 1835 petition to the city council concerning uneven apportionment of annual funds "among the different Fire and Hose Companies, whose time and whose means are equally devoted to the promotion of the public good."²⁰ In 1837, he sold a pumper to the Deptford Fire Company of Baltimore, Maryland.²¹ By the 1850 census, he is listed as a soup maker, still residing in Philadelphia, but two years later, he had found his way to San Francisco county, California, where he is listed as a mechanic; by 1860, he lived in Soquel (today a suburb of Santa Cruz) as a logger and died there, aged 59, in October 1861.²²

¹⁵ Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, pp. 408-409.

¹⁶ William Thomson, *1851-52 Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory, for the States of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia* (Self-published, 1851). <http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/ imagedetail.aspx?id=18921>

¹⁷ "Joel Bates," <http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/ detail.aspx?id=10942>.

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Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 20 March 1841, p. 4.

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Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 April 1841. p. 3.

²⁰ *Register of Pennsylvania*, Vol. 10: Proceedings of Councils [1835], p. 137.

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Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 25 September 1837, p 2.

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Lee Ryan, "Bringing Home the Joel Bates Engine," Fireman's Hall Museum, <https://www.firemanshallmuseum.org/bringing-home-the-joel-bates-engine>.

Only three Bates pumpers are currently available for public viewing: one each at Fireman's Hall Museum, Philadelphia (salvaged from its watery grave in the Delaware River in the early 1950s and restored), the Hall of Flame Fire Museum, Phoenix (an 1844 model rebuilt by William Jeffers in 1848 and formerly owned by the Rhode Island Engine Co., Pawtucket), and the Union Fire Co., Medford, New Jersey (owned continuously by the company since its assembly in 1844). The 1840 pumper now in Philadelphia was formerly in the collections of the Home Insurance Co. (New York City), The Morris Agency (South Orange, NJ), and New England Fire & History Museum in Brewster, MA; its penultimate home had been Fireman's Hall in Dresher, PA, when it was returned to Philadelphia through a \$45,000 restoration and relocation fundraiser.²³ Of the Jeffers example, the hosting organization Wall of Flame notes, "Its design dates from about 1800 with the engines of a Philadelphia blacksmith named Pat Lyon. With two sets of pump handles manned by fifty firemen, it can pump over 250 gallons per minute."²⁴

The 1840 pumper that Bates built for the America Fire Company of Northern Liberties, which was featured when still unfinished in an exhibition at the Franklin Institute. Of the afore-mentioned examples, it has the only surviving maker's plate.²⁵ It is also noted as the first "patent construction" from Bates' patent of that same year.²⁶ Earlier in 1840, he had supplied the Globe Fire Company of Kensington with a new engine.²⁷

Bates had already placed engines in previous years of the Institute's annual exhibitions, including the Vigilant engine in the 1838 event²⁸ -- a machine built by Bates, painted by William Young, and mounted by William Watts, said to possess "a beauty of finish . . . equalled by none in this city."²⁹ Later, in 1846, he would exhibit the "Reliance" there.³⁰

An initial mention in the 9 October 1840 edition of the *Public Ledger* describes it as "a new fire engine, not yet finished; the body is only primed, and the panel boards have not yet been placed in it; the top of the gallery, as yet, also remains unfinished. It is built by Mr. Joel Bates for the America Engine Company of this city. The

²³ Ryan, *ibid.*

²⁴ "1844 Jeffers Philadelphia Style Pumper," *Fire Truck World*, <http://firetruckworld.com/fire-trucks/fire-engines-1800-to-1849/1844>.

²⁵ Ryan, *op cit.*

²⁶ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 February 1841, p. 2.

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Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 1 April 1840, p. 2.

²⁸ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 8 November 1838, p. 2.

²⁹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 7 August 1838, p. 2.

³⁰ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 22 October 1846, p. 1.

chambers, carving, and, in fact, the entire model, strengthen our belief that when finished it will be a very handsome machine. The body rests upon springs.”³¹

Several days later, the more extensive account presented in the *Public Ledger's* 14 October edition by “a Friend to the Arts and Sciences” is worth quoting in full for his appraisal of the innovative design:

Messrs. Editors, -- Having visited the exhibition at the Franklin Institute several times during the past week, I had an opportunity of fairly examining the various specimens there deposited; among the many I perceived several interesting and very important improvements made in the mechanical branches, some of which I believe to be highly creditable and worthy of public patronage. On entering at Chestnut street, and turning to the right, the beholder's attention is attracted by several richly decorated specimens of the Philadelphia Fire Apparatus; one of which is an unfinished Fire Engine, constructed on a plan foreign to any thing that has yet come under my observation, and was manufactured by Mr. Joel Bates of this city, who has, as I understand, made it the subject of a patent.

My curiosity being somewhat excited at the peculiarity of its construction and apparent simplicity, induced me to inquire more minutely into the principle upon which this novel apparatus operates. It is supplied with two concentric cylinders of unequal sizes, one above the other, (the larger one being in the bottom); into each cylinder there is fitted a piston, which is secretly connected to the levers, thus dispensing with guides, stuffing boxes, &c. The working parts seem so much simplified that there appears but little or no liability of getting out of repair. I understand that it is the opinion of some scientific men, that it has some advantages over the ordinary double chamber fire engine; and the opinion seems to be confirmed in practice, so far as practice has gone. The first and only performance proved entirely satisfactory to the manufacturer. Another component part of this engine, I believe, is the dispensing with one half the number of valves: two only in this instance being required. But the most important object in this arrangement is the direct water course from the chambers to the air vessel, thus greatly diminishing the friction engines usually have to overcome. In expressing my opinion of this new arrangement, I can only say I believe it to be an improvement on the Fire Engine; but as to superiority in every respect over the old plan, I submit that decision to the more scientific portion of the community, who, no doubt, will attribute that due credit the skilful manufacturer merits.³²

A final notice on 23 October of the closing of the 1840 exhibition revealed only that the “fire engine, deposited by Joel Bates, had not yet undergone the examination of the committee.”³³

³¹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 9 October 1840, p. 1.

³² Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 14 October 1840, p. 1.

³³ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 23 October 1840, p. 1.

Several weeks later, the *Public Ledger* recounts a 14 December demonstration (cut short by a broken lever) of this same Bates engine, noting that it “threw water to the distance of one hundred and eighty-seven feet.”³⁴ In a subsequent trial on 17 December, after repairs, a stream of water was thrown 191 feet.³⁵

By mid-February, Bates’s work on the engine had advanced to the point at which the *Public Ledger* could report on 12 February that three fire companies in the Northern Liberties district -- Humane, Northern Liberty, and America engine companies, “all of which have been partially out of active service for a number of successive months” -- would be securing new apparatus imminently.³⁶ The America pumper was to be delivered the very next day, 13 February, with notice to that effect in the *Ledger*’s classifieds requesting “Members of the Company” to meet at Joel Bates’ shop at 2 p.m. “to accompany their Engine home” to No. Third St. above Tammany.³⁷ The pumper’s weight is noted in the 15 February edition as 2,840 pounds.³⁸

A final mention of this pumper describes it as “one of the best in Philadelphia,” having been rebuilt in Bates’s factory and retracing its housing journey on 7 February 1843.³⁹ Since the “America” currently has a straight axle suspension, it is surmised that its original spring suspension, deemed impractical on Philadelphia’s cobblestone streets, was replaced at this juncture. Curiously, on a side note, by 1836, Bates also was cited among the manufacturers of stationery steam-engines in Philadelphia, so one must conclude that advances in steam technology were not yet applicable to firefighting apparatus in the era.⁴⁰

AMERICA ENGINE COMPANY

The America Engine Company of Philadelphia, known informally as Company No. 9, was instituted on 10 April 1790 and incorporated on 13 April 1844 -- literally 11 days after Kutztown’s American Fire Company.⁴¹ There is some confusion about the company’s history, understandable given that during this era, the City of Philadelphia also hosted the American Fire Company (organized prior to December 1764⁴²), the

³⁴ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 December 1840, p. 2.

³⁵ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 18 December 1840, p. 2.

³⁶ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 12 February 1841, p. 2.

³⁷ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 13 February 1841, p. 2.

³⁸ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 February 1841, p. 2.

³⁹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 7 February 1843, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Steam Engines: Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, Transmitting, in Obedience to a Resolution of the House, of the 29th of June Last, Information in Relation to Steam Engines, &c.* (Printed by T. Allen, 1838), Doc. No. 21, p. 159.

⁴¹ The Act to incorporate the America Fire Engine Company was reported in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 11 April 1844, p. 1; <https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A64389>.

⁴² Scharf and Westcott, p. 1885.

America Fire Company, and the America Hose Company, and this confusion was ongoing even at the time, as the *Public Ledger* admitted in correcting a published reference to the America Engine Company in its report on City Council proceedings that was actually to the American Hose Company.⁴³ However, it seems evident, based on articles from the *Public Ledger*, the newspaper of record during this era, that the company was referred to, accurately or not, as both America Engine and America Fire, and that the America Fire Engine Company and the America Steam Fire Engine Company are later iterations of the same organization.

The America Company made news sporadically through the 1830s and '40s primarily for its visits to other companies and cities, its escorts of visiting companies, and the injuries of its members in the line of duty, but also not infrequently for its members' brushes with the local constabulary on charges ranging from assault and sidewalk pugilism to incitement to riot. The mayhem was apparently so pronounced on city streets that, by the early summer of 1843, the Vigilant Engine Company had "resolved that they would not take out their apparatus until the hostilities of several of the fire companies, whose outrages for a long time past have disgraced the city, should be stopped," a move soon to be duplicated by the city's United States Engine Company.⁴⁴

No reliable information on the America's apparatus prior to the late 1830s can be located, but the 10 October 1838 *Public Ledger* reported the delivery of the company's "rebuilt and newly painted" apparatus on the previous Monday, 8 October.⁴⁵ Curiously, and without further explanation, the 30 Sept 1839 edition reported that the company had sold its apparatus the week previous for \$500⁴⁶ but the following day issued a correction, stating that the transaction had not been completed but that the company was still attempting to sell.⁴⁷ The Womelsdorf (Berks County) Borough Council purchased an 1812 Lyon pump engine from the America Company -- likely this same apparatus -- on 19 June 1846 for \$800 and, on 8 August of that year, instituted the America Fine Engine Company of Womelsdorf. Rebuilt by John Haak in 1851, it is still owned by the Borough.⁴⁸

In early 1841, according to an annual report on the Northern Liberties companies, the America Engine Company had 104 members, 300 feet of hose, apparatus valued at \$1,915, \$157.34 balance in its treasury, \$350 in real estate value, \$923 in debts, with 1840 receipts totaling \$1,049.91 and expenditures of \$892.57.⁴⁹

⁴³ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 11 April 1842, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 14 June 1843, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 10 Oct 1838 p. 2.

⁴⁶ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 30 September 1839, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 1 October 1839, p. 2.

⁴⁸ "1812 Patrick Lyons [sic] 'Philadelphia-Style' Hand Pumper," *Womelsdorf Volunteer Fire Company*, <http://womelsdorffire.com/pastPage.php?2>

⁴⁹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 5 February 1841, p.1.

The 15 March 1841 edition reported on a recent benefit for the company at the National Theatre headlined by the recitation of a poem ennobling firefighters recited by a certain Mrs. Judah, who had recently been shipwrecked off the coast of Florida and spent three days in the water prior to rescue, losing her husband and her three children in the calamity.⁵⁰ A few years later, on 22 December 1845, the company also held a firemen's and citizen's dress ball at the military hall on Third St. below Green.⁵¹

The location of the America's engine house prior to this period is given at one point as "located next above Commissioners Hall Northern Liberties,"⁵² which stood since 1756 on the east side of North Third St. below Green, originally as the officers' quarters for the British Army's Northern Liberties Barracks until the American Revolution, then as Commissioners Hall until 1854.

The *Ledger's* 4 November 1841 edition reported an update on the company's petition to City Council requesting a loan to enable the purchase of a plot of ground upon which to build a new facility.⁵³ Little more than a year later, on 23 January 1843, the America Company razed its engine house because, according to an article in the next day's *Ledger*, because the Northern Liberties Commissioners, who owned the building, had refused to grant the company's annual allocation. The *Ledger* notes that "The company as far as we can learn, have no location for their apparatus, and of course are out of service."⁵⁴

This situation was yet unresolved in a 6 February 1845 report on the Northern Liberties Commissioners meeting notes that "The America Fire Co. have no house to keep their apparatus in, but have a prospect of securing a property which can be made a suitable and convenient place for their accommodation," with the recommendation that their annual accommodation be granted.⁵⁵ The company's 68 members, 500 feet of hose, and apparatus valued at \$1,670 made it the smallest of the district's nine companies.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 March 1841, p. 1.

⁵¹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 11 December 1845, p. 1.

⁵² Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 24 January 1843, p. 2.

⁵³ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 4 November 1841, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 24 January 1843, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 6 February 1845, p. 1.

⁵⁶ The other eight companies were Northern Liberty Fire, Humane, United States, Friendship, Humane Hose, United States Hose, Northern Liberty Hose, and Lafayette Hose.

By 20 June 1845, the America Fire Engine Company was preparing an engine house in the 300 block of Green St.,⁵⁷ and by 2 August, it had not only completed the new housing but was also enjoying the return of its refurbished apparatus from Mr. Agnew's. "The company have been out of service for some time, from the want of a suitable location and building for the apparatus," the *Ledger* noted, "but we are pleased to learn they are now well provided and in a prosperous condition."⁵⁸

After this flurry of reportage, references to the company are more scarce, though its participation in a 1 May 1849 firemen's parade in which its apparatus, "preceded by a small boy in fireman's costume on horseback," was followed by 70 members "equipped in red shirts, black pants and hats" is referenced in the next day's *Ledger*.

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The 8 July 1850 edition of the *Public Ledger* records the return of the America Engine Company's apparatus from a visit to Baltimore but does not specify whether or not it was the Bates engine.⁶⁰ Similarly, the America's apparatus overturned while attempting to avoid a carriage at Third and Chestnut while responding to a fire in Dock Street, resulting in considerable damage: "The gallery of the engine and the foot boards were much broken. The levers were also bent, and other portions of the engine injured."⁶¹

In June 1853, the company purchased a 16' x 66 1/2' parcel on Tammany St.⁶² between Brooke and St. John, with plans to erect a four-story house "composed of iron to the top of the second story, and pressed brick to the roof," with 16 feet frontage and 50 feet deep, surmounted by an 86-foot cupola. The existing three frame tenements ("at present, inhabited by colored persons") were to be razed imminently, and the company's former Green St. property was to be sold.⁶³ By early August of that year, the old Green St. Housing had instead been razed.⁶⁴

On 14 March 1859, an article notes the ordering of "three more" steam fire engines (implying earlier orders) for the city's Vigilant, America, and Independence Hose companies, the America's to be of the same size and capacity as that already owned

⁵⁷ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 20 June 1845, p. 2. By the time of an 1847 notice requesting the return of lengths of hose lost in a recent fire response, the America's engine house had a street address of 387 No. Third St. (Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 24 June 1847, p. 3).

⁵⁸ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 2 Aug 1845, p. 3.

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Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 2 May 1849, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 8 July 1850, p. 2.

⁶¹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 7 September 1858, p. 1.

⁶² In that era, Buttonwood between Second and Third was still called "Tammany Street." Philadelphia History: Old Street Names, <https://www.ushistory.org/philadelphia/formerstreets.htm>.

⁶³ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 15 June 1853, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 12 August 1853, p. 2.

by the Northern Liberty Hose Company.⁶⁵ Accordingly, by 1 July 1859, the America is referred to as the “America Steam Fire Engine Company” in reported plans announced to place a telegraph box in its (and that of the Philadelphia Steam Fire Engine Company) engine house.⁶⁶ By early August, though no published account of its housing appeared, the engine had been delivered in time for a “grand display of steam fire engines” by ten of the sixteen companies -- America among them -- that by then comprised the city’s “steam department”; owing to the length of the demonstrations, the engines of the final three companies (Good Intent, Northern Liberty Hose, and America) were operated simultaneously, and “the general opinion among the spectators, who were principally firemen, was that ‘our company,’ whichever that happened to be, had the best engine of the lot.”⁶⁷

The following month, 40 or so members of the America took an excursion to Baltimore, Washington D.C., and Mount Vernon with their “new steam fire engine.”⁶⁸ On 14 September same, six Philadelphia companies met in the hall of Schuylkill Hose Company to plan an escort for the return of the America Company on the following Saturday evening.⁶⁹ A 19 September follow-up noted that the escort greeting the returning America delegation included eight companies (Schuylkill Hose, Perseverance Hose, United States Engine, Southwark Hose, Spring Garden Engine, Franklin Hose, Warren, and United Hose), followed by a diagnosis affecting a number of these companies whereby the copper and brass flues used in the engine boilers lacked the expansive power of iron when heated, causing the fastenings to iron portions to loosen when cooling, thus leading to leakage and difficulty in building steam.⁷⁰ Similarly, the city’s “steam department” demonstration had been compromised by frequently bursting hoses that could apparently not withstand the increased water pressure from the steam engines. Not to mention the design and manufacturing flaws that caused some of these engines to explode. Thus, though still in an era of trial, experimentation, and refinement, the city’s steam era of firefighting had clearly been inaugurated.

In 1860, the America was one of several city companies, along with the Delaware Engine, the N. L. [Northern Liberties] Engine, and the Goodwill Hose, suspended “on the charge of recklessly using water at a fire on Sunday, on Delaware ave., near Arch st.”⁷¹ Whether the suspension was appealed or rescinded goes unreported.

⁶⁵ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 14 Mar 1859, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 1 July 1859, p. 1. Among others, a 25 January 1869 *Public Ledger* article references the America Steam Fire Engine Company (p. 1) as well.

⁶⁷ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 6 August 1859, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 12 September 1859, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 14 September 1859, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 19 September 1859, p. 1.

⁷¹ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 17 Apr. 1860, p. 1.

On 30 July 1866, the America Engine Company's steamer was reported to be "thoroughly repaired" and returned to active service, though the circumstances of its disrepair, whether accident or routine use, were not disclosed.⁷²

A 30 August 1869 article references the America Engine Company's house "being handsomely refitted," to be finished within the week,⁷³ apparently referencing its new facility in the 200 block of Buttonwood St. (which no longer extends east of No. 9th St.) in the Northern Liberties neighborhood.⁷⁴ But, of course, the America's days were numbered, as a 29 December 1870 ordinance established the city's first fully paid and municipally controlled fire department, formalizing a trend in consolidation dating at least to the 1840s; the Philadelphia Fire Department entered into service on 15 March 1871 -- at which point many of the city's remaining older companies disbanded and sold off their equipment.⁷⁵

When and under what circumstances the 1840 "America" hand pumper left Philadelphia, and whether it went to an interim destination prior to its ultimate housing in Kutztown, remains unknown, but clearly the America, like most volunteer fire companies in Philadelphia, had incentives to sell its used apparatus both in the late 1850s as steam technology emerged and again a decade later as the paid department assumed firefighting operations. By the steam era, the *Public Ledger* was no longer reporting the sales of used and obsolete fire apparatus, and other records that might reveal further details are lost or scattered. Further information might be located in extant records of the proceedings of the Northern Liberties Commissioners or of the America Engine Company, should they be located.⁷⁶

KUTZTOWN

In Kutztown, with its 1840 engine out of repair, the town no longer had an organized fire service, so in 1854 "the young boys of the borough petitioned the Council for permission to organize a company" (143) -- which request was denied, and the engine repaired by Paul Hilbert and Henry Glasser, with additional repairs costing \$200 by D. B. Kutz and Co. in 1858. A new engine house was proposed in 1860 but, the 1915 *Centennial History* claims, owing to more urgent matters with the intervention of the Civil War, not actually constructed until 1871, as part of the borough's first Town Hall, along the street frontage of a lot in Freetown owned by Henry Glasser at what is today 439 West Main, on the hill extending downtown from the Keystone State Normal School. The two-story brick structure, measuring 21' x

⁷² Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 30 July 1866, p 3.

⁷³ Philadelphia *Public Ledger* 30 August 1869, p. 1.

⁷⁴ <https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A64389>

⁷⁵ "Philadelphia Fire Department - History," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia_Fire_Department#History.

⁷⁶ There is no mention of the America Engine Company in any of its iterations among the catalog of holdings in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Fire Companies of Philadelphia collection available online at <https://discover.hsp.org/Record/ead-0205/Description#tabnav>.

30' and costing \$1,349, housed the fire apparatus on the ground floor and Town Council offices, the borough lock-up, and a schoolroom on the second.⁷⁷ After the 1915 Town Hall was completed and the fire equipment relocated there, Daniel W. and Alice Kline purchased the old town hall for \$855 and began a series of conversions for residential use.⁷⁸

This account of a damaged pumper and nonexistent fire service strongly suggests that Kutztown had not yet acquired the 1840 Bates "America" engine by the mid 1850s. That the Borough discussed building a new engine house in 1860 may suggest that a newly purchased pumper necessitated it, but the historical record is silent in that regard, and had the purchase been made, the delay of 11 years in providing new housing seems untenable. Certainly by this era, many larger urban fire companies that had acquired steam-powered apparatus were selling off their dated hand-pumpers, and there is no reason to think that the America was not among them, but again, extant records do not allow for a conclusion to be drawn. In the absence of such data, it seems most logical to conclude that the Borough's purchase of the "America" pumper at some point in the previous decade would have provided the main impetus for the 1871 engine house construction.

Among several notable fires in mid to late 19th-century Kutztown were the 1859 fire that burned John Fisher's house, Jacob Esser's house and barn, and S. Heckman's barn; the 1870 fire that destroyed the Kutztown Foundry's first buildings at its "new" home alongside the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad's tracks east of the Saucony; the boiler explosion at the Kutztown Iron Furnace that claimed the life of workman Frank Waltman on 17 July 1883; the Hopp family residence fire that claimed three lives in Feb. 1888; and the fire that claimed the Railroad Hotel and three adjoining frame houses at 42 East Main (now Basin Street) in June 1889.⁷⁹

In 1898, the Junior Mechanics attempted to organize a fire company, again implying that Kutztown lacked functional fire service, but it lasted only about a year, with an unsuccessful attempt to revive it in 1902. When the Black Horse Hotel on the corner of West Main and Noble streets had a fire in 1907, the "Kutztown Hose Company," apparently consisting only of Henry K. Deisher with his hose and John A. Reeser with his ladders, responded.⁸⁰ Deisher owned the knitting mill just one half-block down Noble and likely had the equipment on premises.

Finally, Kutztown Fire Company No. 1 was organized on 14 January 1908, merging with whatever remained of the original American company, with Charles D. Herman serving as its first president, aided by vice-presidents Nicholas M. Rahn, N. Z. Dunkelberger, and Eugene P. DeTurk; Walter S. Dietrich was its secretary, assisted by

⁷⁷ Deatrck, p. 143.

⁷⁸ Brendan D. Strasser, *A Most Agreeable Town: A Photographic History of the Borough of Kutztown, Volume 1: West Main Street* (Kutztown Area Historical Society, 2004), p. 156.

⁷⁹ Bonner, p. 82.

⁸⁰ Bonner, p. 128.

Daniel M. Saul. William R. Sander was the town's first Fire Chief, assisted by John D. Geiger and Marion Hertzog.

The fire company was still purchasing horses to assist in hauling fire equipment as late as 1913, used mostly for sprinkling along Main Street to settle the dust⁸¹ -- but also suggesting that the hand-pumper may have still been in use at that time.

In 1915, amid elaborate plans for the borough's centennial celebration, the fire company sold its fire horses as finishing touches were put on a new Town Hall on North Whiteoak Street adjacent to Hope Cemetery that would provide offices for Town Council as well as housing for the town's fire apparatus. That same year, the 115-member company purchased for \$3,000 a Brockway chemical hose combination motor apparatus, delivered on 1 July -- literally the first day of the borough's week-long centennial celebration, which included four separate parades.⁸²

At this time, the Bates pumper, as well as possibly the older 1830 and 1840 pumpers, were still being stored in the 1871 engine house, though the 1915 Centennial history claims that they then lacked any company to maintain them. It remains unclear what equipment Kutztown Fire Co. No. 1 had at its disposal in this era, since there is no mention in extant records of any equipment purchase between the 1840 pumper and the 1915 Brockway.⁸³

The Uniformed Rank (men's auxiliary) was organized, mainly by Keystone Hotel proprietor and later Town Council president Worth Dries, in March 1917 to raise funds both for the fire hall and to purchase and maintain new equipment. Company members organized a relief association, headed by J. D. Kemp, in April 1918, the same month that the fire company incorporated.⁸⁴ In October 1924, the ladies auxiliary was founded to assist further in funding the fire company's maintenance expenses. Additional income was provided by the original Kutztown Swimming Pool, located off of Rt. 737 by the first dam north of town, opened in August 1932 on land purchased a year earlier and maintained by the fire company until the Borough constructed its new swimming pool along Industrial Avenue in 1963.

Revenues garnered enabled purchases through the early decades of the company's service included an American LaFrance 750-gallon triple combination motor apparatus in 1924⁸⁵ (by which point the company also owned a hook and ladder

⁸¹ Bonner, p. 128.

⁸² Bonner, p. 105.

⁸³ Deatruck, p. 143.

⁸⁴ Bonner, p. 128.

⁸⁵ The Kutztown Fire Company's *100 Years of Dedication* commemorative, issued in 2008, dates the LaFrance to 1926 (p. 43), but the historical society's collection includes a 1925 program for the spring convention of the Berks County Firemen's Association, held in Kutztown to celebrate the housing of the new LaFrance. Incidentally, in this program, the Bates pumper is pictured in obvious contrast, captioned as "One time modern -- now a relic" (p. 5).

truck that had once belonged to the Washington Fire Co. in Reading), and two more pump engines/pumpers from the same maker: a 500-gallon in 1937 and a 750-gallon in 1947.⁸⁶ This apparatus served the company until 1968, when a new pumper (a 1968 American LaFrance) and tanker-pumper (a 1969 Ford Sanford) were purchased, followed by a tractor trailer tanker in 1972, claiming much of the space in the engine room and perhaps leading to the relocation of the historic but obsolete Bates pumper.⁸⁷

Vintage photographs confirm that the Bates pumper was hauled through the streets of Kutztown in both the 1915 Centennial and 1965 Sesquicentennial parades. At some point, it was relocated from 439 West Main to the old Town Hall, and then to the “new” (1950) fire company, where it appears in a 1964 photograph alongside the fire company’s equipment parked in the driveways.⁸⁸

KEMPTON

The pumper’s later history is somewhat murky, but by some point prior to the mid-1980s, it had been relocated to the Kempton Farm Museum, established in 1964 by Howard N. and Elda M. (Adam) Geisinger in an old barn adjacent to the Kempton Community Center and the WK&S Railroad to house his collection of farming implements and household tools acquired over more than 30 years at local auctions. Geisinger had worked for the Kutz Bros. Bakery for 21 years, then 34 years for Erb Electric before retiring in 1978; in 1949, he had been involved in founding the Kutztown Folk Festival, where he displayed and demonstrated his collection of hit and miss engines, and served as its historian until his death.⁸⁹

The Geisingers lived in town (149 West Walnut St.) and were supportive of the fire company, where Elda served as a trustee of the ladies auxiliary. The Farm Museum, with its regular weekend hours, offered the obvious advantage of making the antique apparatus available for public display, and the growing tourist attraction of the WK&S attracted additional visitors. In its heyday, Geisinger’s museum was likely rivaled only by the Smithsonian Institution and the Mercer Museum.⁹⁰

The Kempton Community Recreation Center had acquired the 43-acre tract, formerly the property of Donald Stump, in 1961, and sold land along the western side of the

⁸⁶ Bonner, p. 129.

⁸⁷ Kutztown Fire Company, *100 Years of Dedication 1908-2008*, pp. 44-45, 16. Not until 2007 was the engine room enlarged with the addition of a third bay, erected by Martin Construction.

⁸⁸ Bonner, p. 129.

⁸⁹ “Howard Geisinger, 79, Folk Historian, Founder of Farm Museum,” *Allentown Morning Call*, 21 October 1991. <https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-1991-10-21-2831044-story.html>; “The Golden Roll,” *Farm Collector*, March/April 1992. <https://www.farmcollector.com/steam-traction/the-golden-roll-march-1992>.

⁹⁰ “Kempton Farm Museum Begins its 20th Season,” *Allentown Morning Call*, 28 June 1984. <https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-1984-06-28-2411928-story.html>.

railroad tracks to the new WK&S operation in spring 1963; Geisinger (who was also active with the rail group) purchased the barn in 1964 and in 1966 held his first Pennsylvania Dutch Farm Festival, an annual event through the 1970s and into the '80s.⁹¹

After Geisinger passed away at age 79 on 20 October 1991, his widow reluctantly decided to sell the collection at auction. His obituary describes its contents as including “a complete farm butcher shop; blacksmith's and tinsmith's shops; horse-drawn huckster's wagon; moonshine still and a broom-making machine designed to be operated by a blind person. There are also horse- and dog-powered washing machines, gasoline-powered irons and a horse's tail used for shoeing flies.”

⁹²

Ron Devlin's *Morning Call* article, written on the eve of the July 1992 auction, which was conducted by local legend Ralph Zettlemyer, showcased the collection further by noting such rarities as “an entire tinsmith shop that had been owned by a Kutztown area family for five generations, a pre-1850 flax-making assembly, and a broom-making machine designed to be used by the blind.” Devlin also specifically mentions the “old horse-drawn, hand-pumped fire truck.”⁹³

Lamenting the fabled collection's dispersal were such luminaries as Don Yoder, Charles LeCount of Historic Bethlehem Inc., *Morning Call* features editor Paul Willistein Jr., Arthur Bloom (Kutztown University's Dean of Performing and Visual Arts), and the Rev. Richard Druckenbrod, who commented presciently that “There's no assurance our attempts (to preserve history) will have a lasting effect. . . . Maybe these items will be recycled to some collector who'll bring them all together again in the year 2025.”⁹⁴

NEW HAMPSHIRE

There is no record of the pumper after the 1992 auction until five years later, when Sutton (known as “Sut”) and Margaret Marshall acquired the 1840 Bates pumper at an annual antique carriage auction conducted by Martin Auctions of New Holland, PA at the Lebanon Valley Exposition Center & Fairgrounds and transported it to their home in Conway, New Hampshire, where, in a climate-controlled exhibition hall along Green Hill Road, they curate a private collection of vintage carriages, wagons, and other horse-drawn commercial vehicles, ranging from hearses to Gypsy Vardos,

⁹¹ Ethan Bond, Pauline Hamm, George D. Hamm, Herman Hunsicker, Arlan R. Schroeder and Ira J. Schroeder, “The Kempton Community Association and the Kempton Community Recreation Center.” <https://www.kemptoncommunitycenter.org/history>; “Town of Kempton,” <https://www.jeff-z.com/wks/stations/kempton/kempton.html>

⁹² “Howard Geisinger, 79,” *op cit*.

⁹³ Ron Devlin, “Farm Museum Items Will Be Sold at Auction - Farm Museum Auction Will Bring End to an Era,” *Allentown Morning Call*, 5 July 1992. <https://www.mcall.com/news/mc-xpm-1992-07-05-2878645-story.html>.

⁹⁴ Devlin, *ibid*.

that, since they began collecting in about 1993, has numbered as high as 175, some of which is displayed annually at the Fryeburg Fair -- the only public venue at which Marshall will display his collection, in a building, the Horse-drawn Wagon Barn, specifically constructed for the purpose.⁹⁵

Marshall grew up on his father's New Hampshire dairy farm and has fashioned a career in dairy operations, including his own Abbot Dairy; he has also been an early (since 1981) distributor for Ben & Jerry's ice creams.⁹⁶ The Marshalls have been honored variously for their philanthropy, including most recently by the unveiling of the Marshall Gymnasium by the Conway Parks and Recreation Department at Kennett Middle School, to which they donated half of its \$700,000 renovation cost.⁹⁷

Gratified to see its return home, Marshall has agreed to sell the Bates pumper and offered transport to whatever facility in Pennsylvania will house it, and the Schuylkill Historical Fire Society in Shenandoah has volunteered to display and maintain the pumper until such time as permanent housing in the Kutztown area can be secured.

⁹⁵ "A Love for Horses and Carriages," *Conway Daily Sun* 4 October 2011. https://www.conwaydailysun.com/news/local/a-love-for-horses-and-carriages/article_8cc48fea-758f-56ac-ad40-39781511cc07.html; Mary Peterson, "The Wagon Bosses," *UNH Magazine Online* Fall 2005. <http://unhmagazine.unh.edu/f05/wagonbosses.html>; "1899 Bugatti Carriage at Fryeburg Fair," <https://d38trduahtodj3.cloudfront.net>; Ken Wheeling, "The Painted Waggons of the Romany People," *The Carriage Journal* Vol. 55, No 4 (Aug. 2017): 204-209.

⁹⁶ Fred Lager, *Ben & Jerry's: The Inside Scoop: How Two Real Guys Built a Business with a Social Conscience and a Sense of Humor* (Random House, 2011). <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/readouts/ben-jerrys-the-inside-scoop-how-two-real-guys-built-a-business-with-a-social-conscience-and-a-sense-of-humor/>.

⁹⁷ Lloyd Jones, "Marshalls Step Up to Support Conway Rec," *Conway Daily Sun* 24 January 2018. https://www.conwaydailysun.com/news/local/marshalls-step-up-to-support-conway-rec/article_bc317d92-0144-11e8-a279-9b3eed57d75b.html; Lloyd Jones, "Marshall Gym Unveiled (Sut Had No Idea)," *Conway Daily Sun* 9 July 2019. https://www.conwaydailysun.com/news/local/marshall-gym-unveiled-sut-had-no-idea/article_677bcdac-a26f-11e9-a766-d3b90ae21362.html.