

COOKEVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT'S OLDEST FIRE TRUCK RESTORED

Some who helped with the firetruck restore pose for a photo on a sunny afternoon. From left, is Susan Qualls, David Qualls, Don Prince and Cookeville Fire Chief Daryl Blair. Cookeville is one of very few cities in Tennessee to have its original firetruck. Cookeville, Tennessee.

Paige Stanage | Herald-Citizen

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By Paige Stanage



The newly restored original fire truck of the Cookeville Fire Department led the city's Independence Day parade earlier this month.

"I'll be honest, I almost had a tear in my eye when we were riding down (the street in the parade), because of all the time and effort that's gone into this," said Cookeville Fire Chief Daryl Blair of the 1924 type 75 American LaFrance.

The restoration took about 14 years to complete thanks to the help of numerous people and organizations, such as David and Susan Qualls and Don Prince.

"It's been a long ride," Prince said.

Volunteer labor and monetary donations helped complete the project. Some include Tier 1, Midas Muffler Shop and Rhoten Auto Parts.

"There's been so many people to help or donate money for this, I hate to leave anybody out, but we are so thankful for all their help," David said.

But David and Susan and Prince agreed it would have been more than \$30,000 to restore with typical parts and labor costs.



Some restorations include a rebuilt engine with another jug, a new water hose, and the wheels are different from the original hard rubber wheels and wooden spokes.

"You don't just find parts for this everywhere," Susan said. "But it still has all the original parts, mostly. So it's a restore, not a remodel."

"Now it could even pump water if we wanted it to," David said.

Originally, the Putnam County City Commission approved the purchase of the truck in 1925, according to Laura Clemons' "The Cookeville Fire Department: From Volunteer to Professional."

The truck originally cost \$9,000. The commission placed a \$2,000 down payment and paid the balance, plus interest, over the course of seven years, according to Clemons' article.

According to an online inflation calculator, \$9,000 in 1924 equals to \$128,249.48 in 2018.

The first fire the truck was used to respond to occurred at a rolling mill on Mill Street in 1925, and its last was a structure fire at J.P. Hawkins in the 1950s.

"This truck is about to see its 100-year anniversary. And I'm so happy we got it up and running before then. Now, it has so much potential. We could take it to schools to show the kids, and we can showcase it as an informational piece to the public," Price said. "It's just been such a rewarding journey."

*Read more about the history of Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>