



Fire is a dangerous destructive force that causes scorching heat as well as producing smoke and noxious gases. As long as fire has existed, so has its ability to destroy communities and lives and therefore also the necessity to fight and control a raging flame. As early as ancient Rome, firefighters existed to aid in the struggle to control any conflagration within the city. Fire plagued early colonists in the United States, destroying most of their first permanent settlement, Jamestown, within a year after its establishment. To combat the danger, our nation's early leaders appointed fire wardens and encouraged the development of volunteer fire departments. Many famous and influential Americans such as Ben Franklin, Samuel Adams, George Washington, and Paul Revere set an example by joining or helping to form these companies.

The trend toward volunteer fire companies spread west as large, destructive fires pressed the need for a way to fight fire in the new territories, such as Colorado. After two catastrophic fires in the Denver area, George McClure and other civic leaders organized to form the first volunteer company in the territory in 1866: Denver's Hook and Ladder Company Number 1. Within two decades, the volunteer fire service in Denver had grown substantially and the advent of new technology allowed the city to hire the first paid members of the Denver Fire Department. The following podcast series features interviews with retired Denver firefighters detailing the history of firefighting and of the Denver Fire Department through the examination of the tools the firemen used to do their jobs.