

Fire Department

The Socorro Hose Company was organized at least as early as 1891. Socorro has suffered from numerous destructive fires since the boom years as the photos below will show. The firefighters were enthusiastic volunteers, and it has been alleged (perhaps inaccurately) by an anonymous relative of an early fireman that they started many fires themselves as opportunities for demonstration of their courage and abilities, and especially for the sake of the big party that would be staged after the fire was out. After the School of Mines became New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, President Workman had a fire station built north of the Research and Development building to supplement the city Fire Department. It was later converted to a Publications Office when it became otiose. The campus fire chief was Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, Louis Grandjean, who also played a prominent role in the Socorro Fire Department.

Fires have become much less frequent in recent years owing to better understanding of fire hazards, improvements in construction, and installation of safety equipment. Nevertheless, in the last few decades there have been a number of serious fires within a short distance of the Plaza. The destruction of the Loma Theater and Keith's Ocean to Ocean Garage at the south end of the Plaza on Park Street in 1957 is mentioned in the chapter on Music and Entertainment. Further along Park Street, the Severo Baca house, a rare two-story adobe dwelling, has been gutted. At the north end of the Plaza, Grimes variety store burned in or about 1958 in the area now occupied by Gambles Big Value and Gene's Flowers and Gifts. On the east, the Title Insurance office on Court Street was burned. The Garcia Opera northeast of the Plaza had its wooden floor burned by transient occupants, and the Sunset Lounge across California Street from the Opera was burned and rebuilt recently.

A major development in 1989 was the construction and opening of the New Mexico Firefighters Training Academy located just west of Socorro's flood control channel. It provides members of the state's 357 fire departments with instruction in fighting all kinds of fires including large outdoor fuel fires. There would probably be objections to the occasional huge clouds of black smoke if it were not for the social value of the instruction. Special training for response to terrorist attacks and for disposal of hazardous materials is also offered.



Aftermath of fire on south side of the Plaza, 1886, one fatality



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Restoration after 1886 fire - Court House in background



Fire at Socorro Drug. Note that photographer J. E. Smith was the Manager.



Ruins of Loma Theater and Keith's Garage, 1957



Location unknown, note exterior stairway and fire escape.



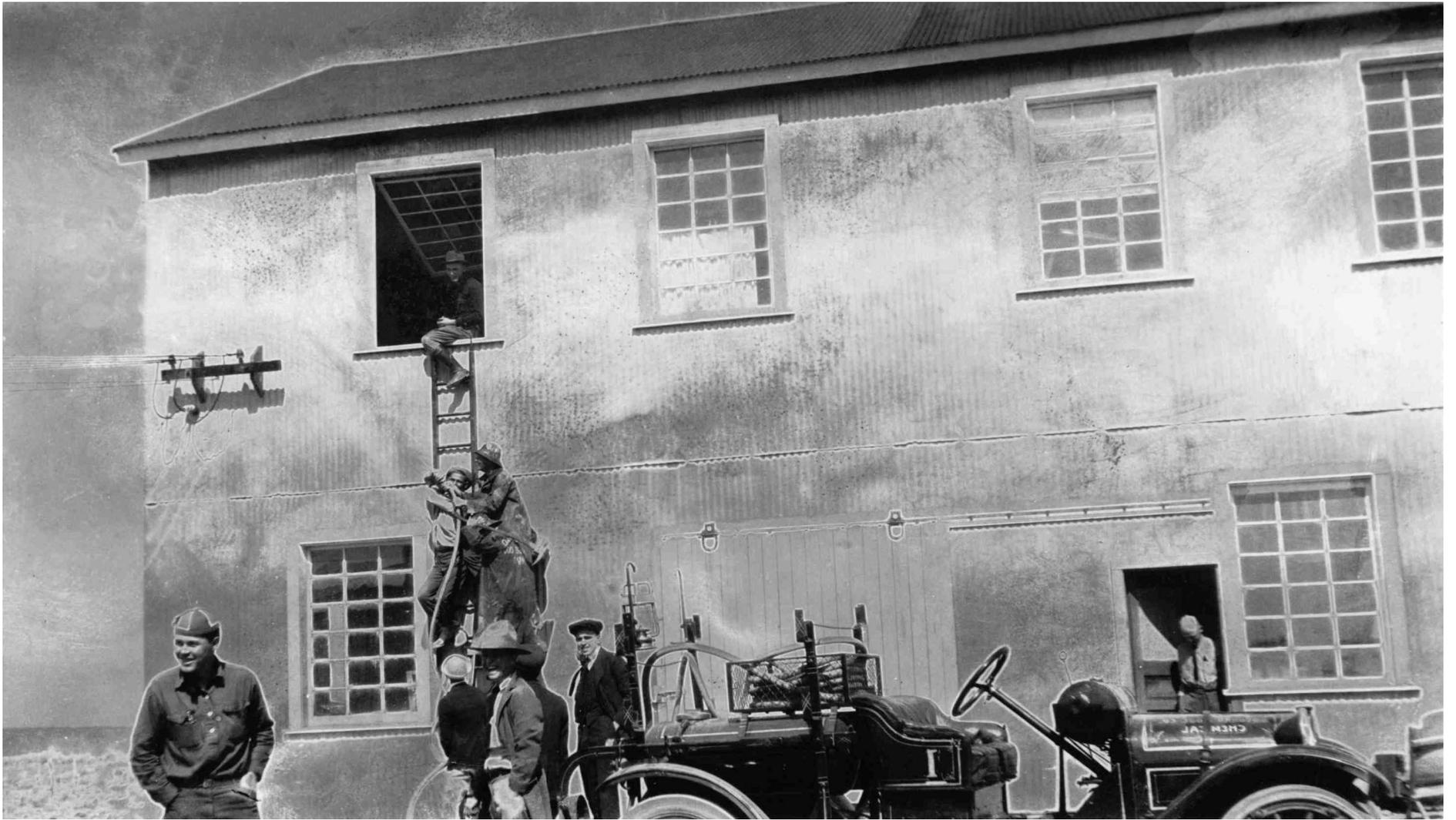
Fire in Socorro, address unknown



Location unknown



Chambon Building



Socorro Fire Department, ca. 1920



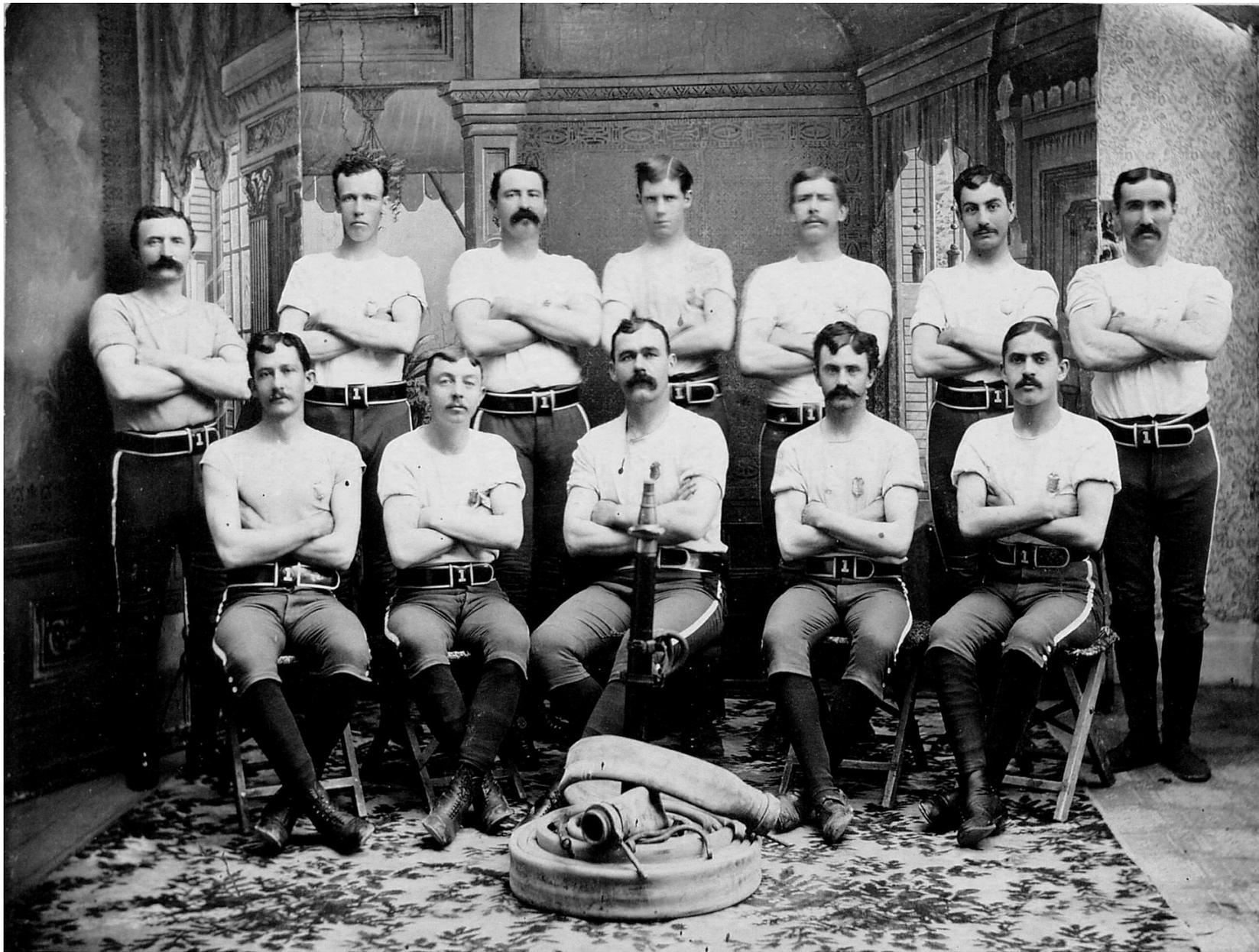
Fire Truck, time and place unknown



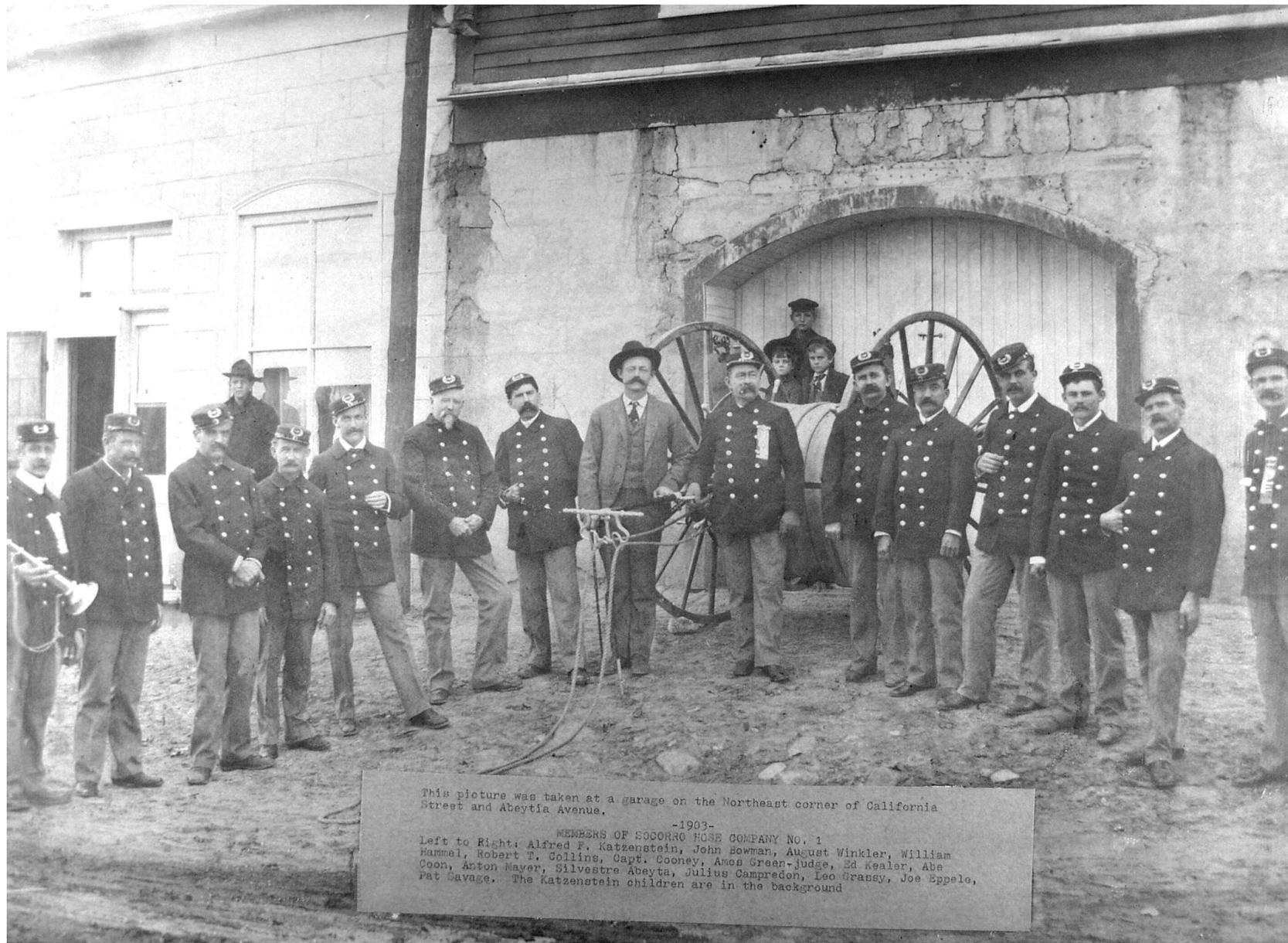
Socorro Fire Truck in Parade, ca. 1950



Socorro Hose Co.

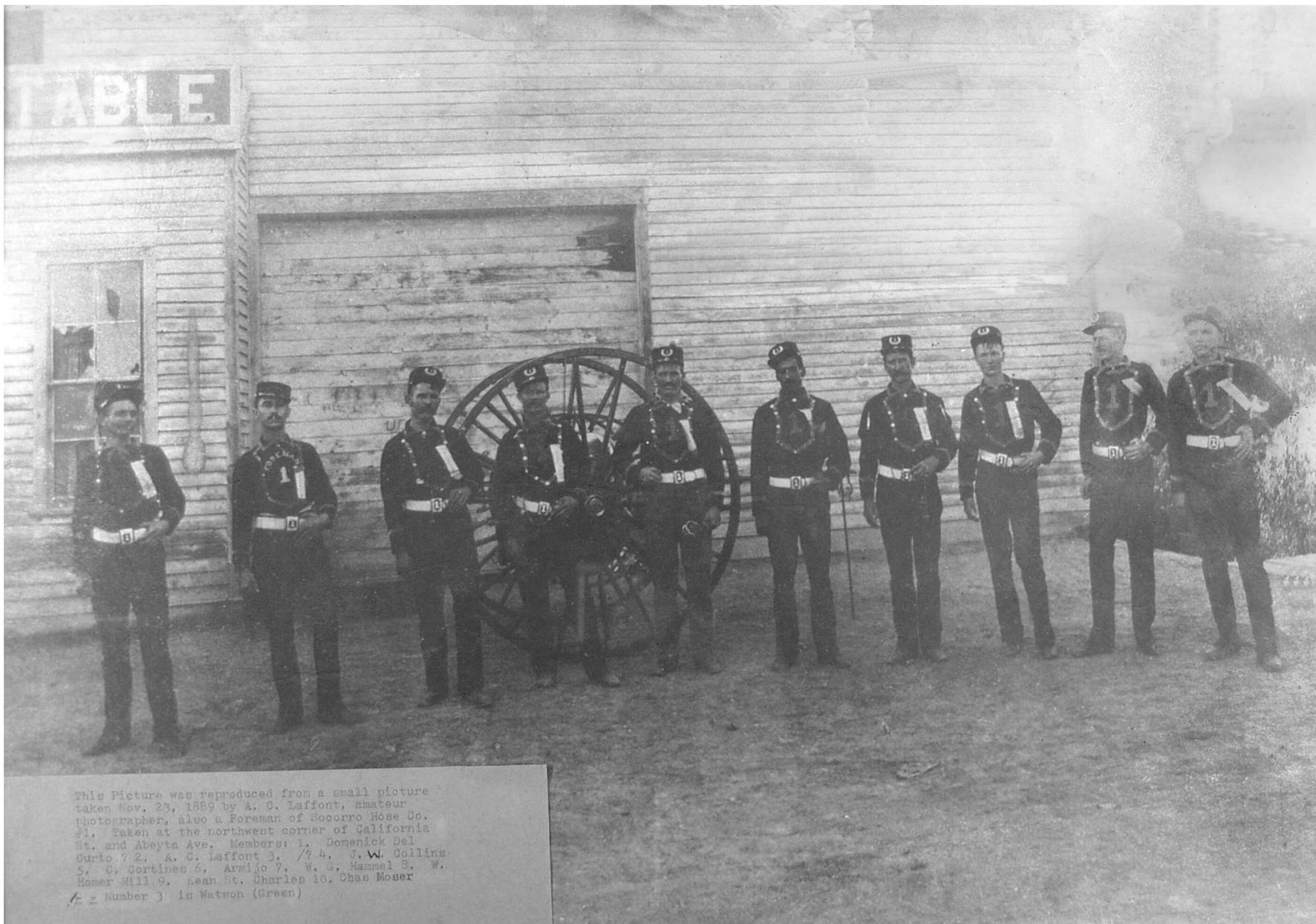


Socorro Hose Co. - mustache apparently required for membership



Socorro Hose Company 1. 1903, California and Abeyta

L to R: A.F. Katzenstein, J. Bowman, A. Winkler, Wm. Hammel, R.T. Collins, Capt. Cooney, Amos Green, Ed Keeler, Abe Coon, E. Meyer, S. Abeyta, J. Campredon, Leo Gransy, Joe Eppeler, Pat Savage, Katzenstein children in background

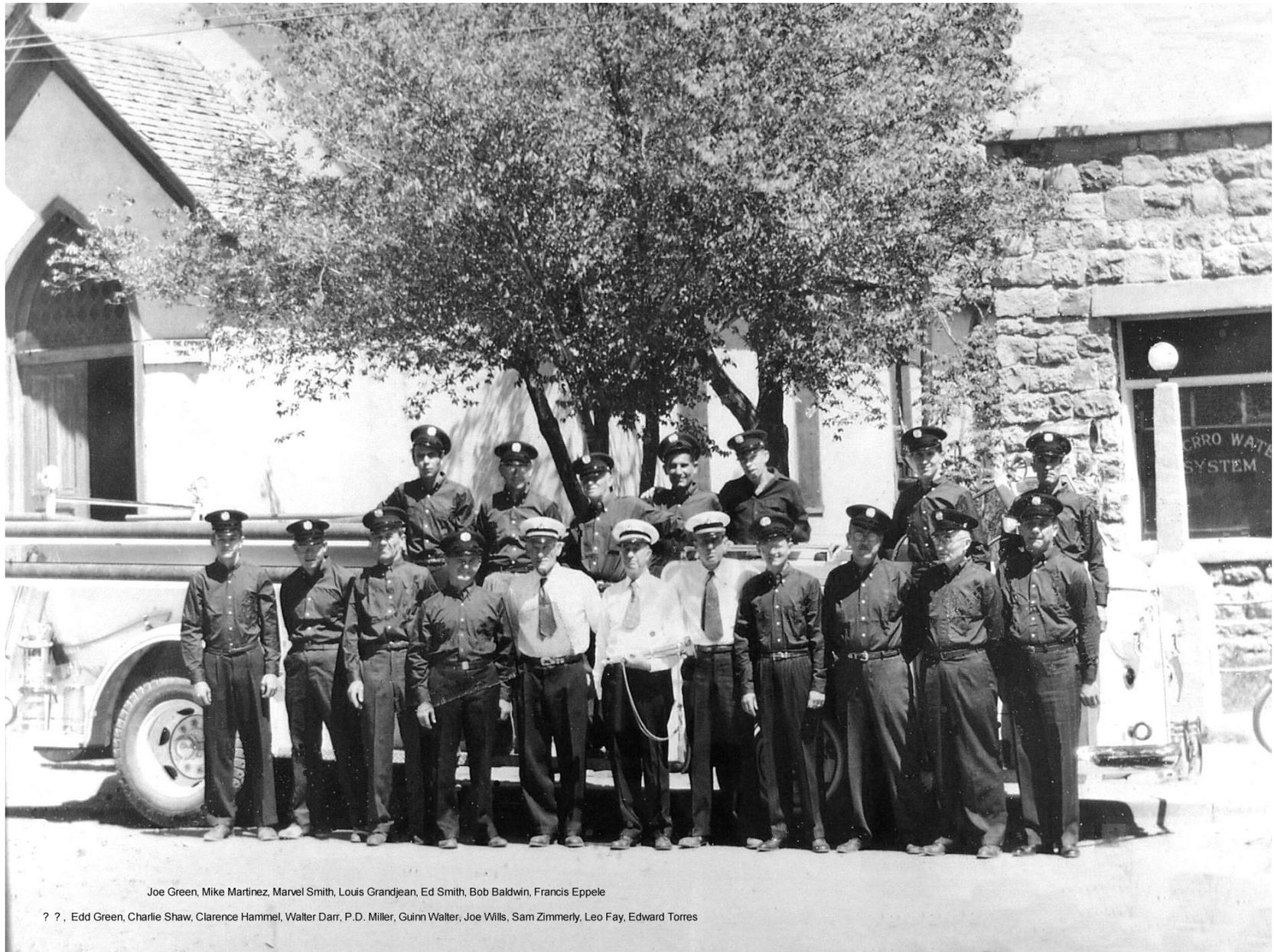


This Picture was reproduced from a small picture taken Nov. 23, 1889 by A. C. Laffont, amateur photographer, also a Foreman of Socorro Hose Co. Taken at the northwest corner of California St. and Abeyta Ave. Members: 1. Domenick Del Curto 2. A. C. Laffont 3. J. W. Collins 4. J. W. Collins 5. C. Cortines 6. Armijo 7. W. G. Hammel 8. W. Homer Hill 9. Sean St. Charles 10. Chas Moser
/ = Number 3 in Watson (Green)

Socorro Hose Co. 1889



Socorro Hose Co. #3



Joe Green, Mike Martinez, Marvel Smith, Louis Grandjean, Ed Smith, Bob Baldwin, Francis Epele

? ?, Edd Green, Charlie Shaw, Clarence Hammel, Walter Darr, P.D. Miller, Guinn Walter, Joe Wills, Sam Zimmerly, Leo Fay, Edward Torres

Front, L to R, ?, E. Green, C. Shaw, Clarence Hammel, W. Darr, P.D. Miller, G. Walter, Joe Wills, Sam Zimmerly, Leo Fay, Edward Torres
 Rear, Joe Green, M. Martinez, Marvel Smith, Louis Grandjean, Ed Smith, Bob Baldwin, Francis Epele



Present day Socorro Fire Department