

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Nyack fire companies' roots go back to 1800s

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Special to The Journal News

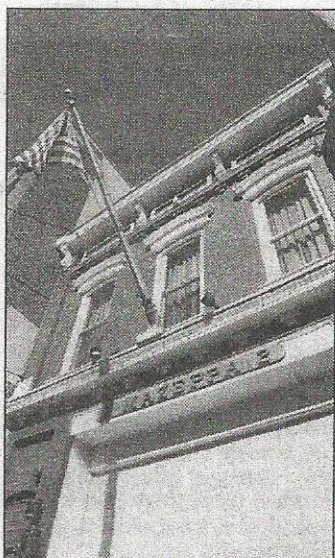
The Nyack Fire Department comprises a number of companies with more than 100 years of service to the county.

Started in 1852, the Mazepa Engine Company No. 2 is the second-oldest company of Nyack's eight and the third-oldest fire company in Rockland.

The origins of the company's name, however, date back to the 17th century.

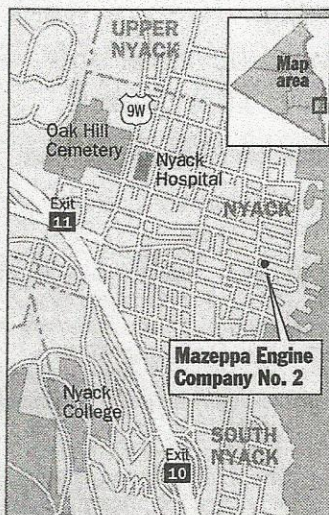
Ivan Stepanovich Mazepa, a son of Ukrainian nobles, was a Cossack "hetman," or leader, during the late 1600s. Mazepa, educated at the Polish court, built numerous churches, libraries and educational institutions throughout Ukraine during his rule. While considered a longtime friend of Czar Peter the Great, Mazepa eventually abandoned his loyalty to the Russian empire, which the czar considered a treasonous act. Today, Mazepa's portrait is printed on the 10 hryvia bill, a Ukrainian currency.

The Ukrainian ruler's life has also inspired a number of musical and literary works, including Tchaikovsky's opera "Mazepa" and, perhaps best known, Lord Byron's "Mazepa." The poem,



Kathy Gardner/The Journal News
The Mazepa Engine Company No. 2 station in Nyack.

published in 1819, details Mazepa's affair in his youth with a Polish noblewoman and his subsequent punishment, being tied naked to a wild horse by her angry husband. As the legend goes, Mazepa, though almost killed by the experience, was carried by the horse to the Cossacks of the Ukrainian steppes, where he eventually became ruler.



John Cornell/The Journal News

The Mazepa company was named after New York City Mazepa Engine Company No. 48, said James Hartwick, a member since 1967. Two of the founding members were originally New York City firefighters.

"Our company is steeped in a lot of history," said Hartwick, who is the third generation of his family to volunteer for the Mazepa company, which has about 40 active members. "We have a unique name and it's something many people inquire about."

Jackson Engine, Hose

After a large fire ruined a number of farm buildings that belonged to Isaac Lydecker, the need for another fire company in Nyack became apparent.

Soon after, in 1867, the Exempt Fire Company was formed, which later became known as Jackson Fire Engine Company No. 3.

According to a 1992 article in The Journal News, the company bought a horse-drawn hand pumper from Jackson Engine Company No. 24 of New York City.

Though it is not certain, it is thought that the company's name comes from either the "Jackson Engine Co." painted on the pumper or Jackson Street, where the company first built its station. In 1880, Jackson Hose Company No. 3 was organized, splitting from Jackson Engine Company, said Chris Ryder, a volunteer with the 49-member Jackson Hose Company for the past 25 years.

"Nyack's fire companies are really great organizations," said Paul O'Donoghue, a member of the Mazepa company for more than 25 years. "We are always looking for more volunteers; it's such a good way to help out the community. We only hope more people want to get involved."