



Saddle Brook VAC History

By Gene Egan with Glenn Mac Donald

During the prosperous years following World War II, there became the realization that some type of ambulance service was needed in what was at the time Saddle River Township, a growing suburb of New York City. What was once a sleepy farm area was now becoming a densely populated suburban area with increasing needs for its residents. Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 3484 founded the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1952. These brave gentlemen knew from their wartime experience that efficient first aid and prompt transportation to a medical facility would be an invaluable service to their community. In 1952, the VFW purchased a Cadillac ambulance. With donated materials, a one bay headquarters was built onto the west side of the Police Headquarters by the members. At their first meeting on December 18th, 1952, the 38 members elected Vincent Donovan, a Rochelle Park resident, as Captain and First Aid instructor, a position he would hold for the next 18 years. Captain Donovan reported at the January 1953 meeting that the Corps had answered 39 calls and had \$59.60 in the treasury.

Members paid 50 cents monthly dues to help with Corps expenses.

In 1958, the Corps purchased a television, and each crewmember was assessed 25 cents each duty night until the Corps could be reimbursed for the cost of the TV. During the same year, the Corps had their eye on expanding the building some day in the future. The Corps purchased a plot of land 88 x 100 feet along Market Street, adjacent to the current Corps building. This land was purchased from the Nightingale family for \$4,900.

In 1967, the Board of Education deeded the site of the abandoned and soon to be demolished Lincoln School to the Corps. The land had a triangular shape with the Ambulance Corps property at the base and the apex at the corner of Market Street and Harrison Ave. The apex of the triangle would be reserved for a Veterans Memorial Site. The land could never be sold and had to be used for Municipal purposes only. While the Corps now had the necessary land, it lacked the finances to construct the building they dreamed of.

In 1970, Vincent Donovan retired due to ill health, and with him many of the older



members decided to retire as well. Newly elected Captain Harry Reid and President Gene Egan were faced with a declining roster reduced to 16 members, and an ever rising number of calls to handle. Reid and Egan felt that if the Corps could offer more, it might entice more residents to join and save the Corps from going under. With the help of the Town Fathers arranging matching funds with the government, a 1971 Oldsmobile ambulance was purchased. With donated materials, the Corps augmented paid labor and built a second bay to house the new ambulance. Those two bays now make up the West Side of the present day Police Headquarters. The membership grew slowly, and in 1975, the first female member joined the Corps. Many more women who now make up more than 33% of the Membership followed her over the years.

In 1975, the Township of Saddle Brook was in dire need of a new and larger Municipal building. The Township entered an agreement with the Corps to exchange Corps property for a combination Municipal and Ambulance Corps building. The Corps received a fifty-year lease at one dollar per year with an option for another 25 years. President Gene Egan sent a check for the first fifty years in advance. The building was dedicated on March 23rd, 1980.

On November 4th, 1990, the members prepared a site and erected a monument to the members who had passed on after giving so much time and energy to building the Corps. This monument will forever serve as a reminder of those who served our Town with distinction in the Emergency Medical Services.

The Corps now number 50 active members aged 16 to 81, every one of whom is a state certified as EMT or EMR on call 24 hours a day. The members utilize three fully equipped ambulances and a fire rehab truck thanks to the generosity of the people we serve. From its inception, SBVAC has not only actively recruited adults of all ages, but also young members for the youth squad. We always welcome anyone who wants to join our family and serve with us.

Update: In 2022 we moved again into the new Township building on 55 Mayhill St. We now have a four vehicle garage bay, upstairs conference space, separate offices and a lot more storage space.