

Hose Wagon #8

In an amazing and long journey of ownership, an 1800s Portland Hose Wagon went from fire department service to television fame, and finally to a collector who brought it back to its fire department roots.

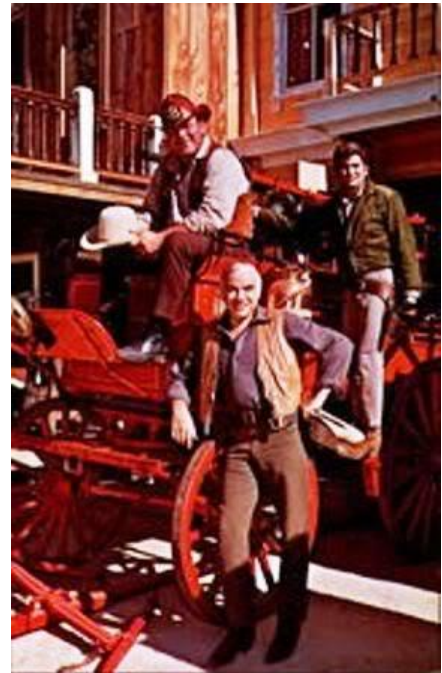
As the story goes, a fire department hose wagon was found to be part of a collection of old cars and horse-drawn wagons once owned by



Harrah's Car Museum in Reno, Nevada. At some point, the collection was sold to the Ponderosa Ranch in Nevada, the same ranch that played host to the Bonanza television program that aired from 1959 to 1973. The Ponderosa Ranch collection was so large and varied that apparently they decided to sell it off beginning in 2015. The fire department hose wagon was one of the pieces up for sale.

At this point, the hose wagon did not look exactly like it had while in fire department service. It had been modified to look more like an old west buckboard because of use on the Bonanza television program. A collector, Dave Hubert, from the Reno area bought it because he needed a hose wagon to match up to his beautifully restored Reno Fire Department steamer pumper. This piece would complete the typical steamer/hose wagon set.

After purchasing the hose wagon, he began a restoration. One of the first things he noticed was the unique way in which the ladders had been mounted on the hose wagon. Rather than hanging on the sides like was most common, this hose wagon had a mount right down the middle, with the ladders resting on the beam. The railings on the sides extended out the back of the wagon and connected to the tailboard in a different way too. They curved out in a beavertail-like shape before connecting to the tailboard.



As he stripped down the old paint, he came across a Florian Cross with the letters PPF and the number 8. He didn't quite know what PPF stood for until a fellow collector, who had a photo of Portland Fire Station #4 from the early 1900s, showed him the photo. It included Engine 4 and Hose 4

in front of the station. Hose Wagon #4 shared the same unique features of ladder placement on the beam in the middle, and the curved rail connecting to the tailboard. He concluded it must have been a Portland Fire Department hose wagon.

After closer review, historic photos show that most Portland hose wagons shared this unique design. A review of historic photos showed at least seven different Portland hose wagons were found to have the exact same features as described. In the photos where you could see the logo, it matched what the collector had uncovered, with each carrying the number of the company to which it was assigned in the center.



It should be noted, Portland Fire & Rescue was called the "Portland Paid Fire Department" from 1883 to about 1903. In 1903, civil service would be adopted and volunteers would be fully eliminated. The department name would then change to "Portland Fire Department." That Florian Cross, along with the number 8 in the middle, would indicate that the hose wagon served at Station 8 at 2600 N. Borthwick Street between 1891 and 1903 as part of the Portland Paid Fire Department (PPFD).

In the photos, you'll see the partial restoration where he found the logo on the side. He completed his restoration by making it a Reno Fire Department look-a-like, which is the next photo. You'll also find a photo of Hose 2, which shows the same distinct features of the center mounted ladder and the curved rail to the tailboard. If the quality is good enough, you can zoom in and see the same logo, except it has a 2 in the middle rather than an 8.

So, old Hose 8 was retired, became a star of television, then ended up restored in the hands of a Nevada collector. That's quite a journey!