

## 1928 Ahrens – Fox: A Legend Among Fire Engines

WHEN FIRE BUFFS talk about Ahrens-Fox, chances are you'll hear it compared to “ the Duesenberg or a Rolls-Royce.” In terms of size, strength, ability, durability, and unique design, it's apt comparison. The legendary piston pumpers with the most noticeable big shinny ball in front looked and performed like no other fire engine in its time.

Over the years these big, gutsy pumpers, built by the Cincinnati-based Ahrens-Fox Fire Engine Company, have become as respected among fire buffs who now collect them as they once were by the firemen who operated them on a day to day basis.

This Ahrens-Fox shown in this article is a M-S-4 model owned by the City of Columbia Fire Department in Columbia, Tennessee, just 45 miles south of Nashville. This engine was ordered by the city on October 19, 1928. The cost at that time was \$13,000.00. It is only one of eleven M-S-4 built in 1928. The contract stated that the apparatus would be built in 90 days. This is a very short time compared to how long it took to refurbish this engine 3 years ago. Once we began the project of restoring the Fox we had to decide just how far to go. The Engine had been out of service setting in the fire hall since 1966 when it was used last as a reserve engine. It was decided that we would go all the way. We started with the 998 cubic inch gas engine that was rated at 110 horsepower which was a powerhouse in its day. Next we went to the frame. Once all of the running gear checked out O.K it was on to the bodywork. By the way, the metal on this truck is similar to an army tank, not like the sheet metal we see today. *These babies were built to last.* Once the metal finishing was complete we primed the body with 2 stage primer, and by all means, if you have something of value use this stuff; it's easy to work with and holds up great! Then it was time to refinish the truck. Having worked in bodyshops for several years before taking a position as a firefighter, I had been very familiar with Dupont's line of refinish products. After talking with the paint specialist at Maury Auto Supply (a Dupont dealer) we decided to use the Centaria with a 2000 performance kit. This was a great choice. Once we finished putting it back together it was time for the 3M 1500 wet sand and buff what a beautiful fire truck. A year and a half later we had a finished project that was a sight to behold even in today's modern world.

As we travel through town it really is a head turner and a great conversation piece. The old folks can remember seeing it go around the city square picking up volunteer firefighters in the 30's & 40's as they were summoned to a fire call by a siren. The young, on the other hand, enjoy the seeing and hearing about a piece of working, living history.

It is great to see something such as the Ahrens – Fox come back to life and be enjoyed by both young and old alike. The Fire Service has come a long since 1928 with closed cabs, air conditioning, air brakes and automatic transmissions; but still it is nice to reflect back to yesteryear and remember what it was like for those that lead the way.

Submitted by Randy Fox, Training Officer, Columbia Fire Department