The Winston-Salem Rescue Squad was formed in 1937 when Roy Kane gained the support of local businessman Thurmond Chatham for the idea. Kane had moved to Winston-Salem from Roanoke, Virginia, in 1936. In Roanoke, he had been a member of the Roanoke Life Saving Crew, which was founded in 1928 and was the first volunteer rescue squad in the United States. John Wise founded the Roanoke squad after he was unable to assist two men who capsized in a canoe and drowned.

The Winston-Salem Rescue Squad was the first volunteer rescue squad in the state of North Carolina. In its early years, the Rescue Squad had fifteen to twenty members. They participated in training and raised funds for their own equipment. Most of the emergencies handled by the squad were traffic accidents and drownings.

The squad also maintained a supply of durable medical equipment for use by residents of Winston-Salem. In the 1940s, this included iron lungs to support breathing in polio patients. They also offered oxygen tanks, crutches, wheelchairs, and hospital beds to patients outside of hospital settings.

Because Forsyth County did not have an ambulance service until 1968, the Rescue Squad supplemented the work of funeral homes in providing emergency transportation for those in medical distress.

In 1968, the Rescue Squad moved to a state-of-the-art station at 2995 North Liberty Street, next to Fire Station 3. During the 1970s, other agencies began to provide rescue services in the county. The squad was instrumental in training volunteer fire departments in the techniques of rescue. They provided crash-fire-rescue services at nearby Smith Reynolds Airport, which was a hub for Piedmont Airlines. Members staffed events like football games, rodeos, and the Dixie Classic Fair.
In the 1990s, the squad became the second in the state to achieve recognition as a Heavy Rescue Provider. They won two State Rescue Association Heavy Rescue Competitions in that decade. The squad also added collapse and cave-in rescues, water and dive rescues, and a dedicated animal rescue unit in this period. The heavy rescue unit remains in service with Mineral Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

Members of the squad volunteered their time to serve the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Its roster included business people, lawyers, physicians, blue collar workers, students, and more. An ethic of service and duty bonded the men and women of the Rescue Squad into a family, many of whom served for decades. As the city and county began to provide more services, the need for the squad declined. It merged into Forsyth County EMS in 2009. In 2013, EMS divested itself from rescue services and transferred all equipment and personnel to the Mineral Springs Volunteer Fire Department.

This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission web site: www.ForsythCountyHRC.org