

Portland Firefighter Memorial News

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The Portland Firefighter Memorial will be a place of tribute to Fallen Fire Chief David Campbell, combined with a memorial wall sharing the names of all Portland Firefighters who have given their lives in service. The public plaza will be a place of remembrance, reflection, and interpretation of the vigilance of Portland Fire & Rescue's service to Portland.

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Dates of Importance

On April 18, 1914, the Fire Prevention Division of Portland Fire would be established. The first Fire Marshal, Jay Stevens would significantly impact the safety of the city. Stevens would leave Portland in 1917 to help establish the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, then on to California. He would continue his prevention advocacy for decades to follow, becoming known nationally as the "Father Of Fire Prevention."

The Portland Firefighter Memorial... Done, But not Complete

As the saying goes...There's good news and bad news.

First the good. The restoration of the David Campbell Memorial is complete! This is a huge accomplishment and proof of concept that a small, non-profit run by volunteers can complete a city project. That's not to say it has been easy. Many hurdles needed to be jumped, but it is done.

Among the list of restoration is:

- Refurbished lanterns, both inside and out and new lenses.
- Protective paint coated on the vulnerable Caen Limestone portions of the Memorial.
- Deep cleaning of the uncoated stone work.
- Access portals created for ADA accessibility.
- Stone floor repair and re-grouting.
- Damage from stolen name plates repaired.
- Fountain bowl coated.
- Decorative features in the stone work repaired.
- Curbing surrounding the tree behind the fountain repaired.
- Safety railings created and installed alongside the steps at the north end.
- Utility box created to house on-site maintenance tools.
- Polishing of the Campbell bas-relief
- Tree pruning

- Messenger Bell polished (it will not be placed back until the Memorial Plaza is complete)
- Historic street light post repaired
- Electrical connections placed in protected space.

The difference is remarkable and it is now ready to show off to the community.

Now for the bad news...the Memorial Plaza has yet to exist. The key feature of the plaza will be the Memorial Wall, the place that will publicly display the names of the Portland Firefighters who have given their lives in service. Other features that are on hold are the return of the Messenger Bell, the installation of the flag pole, the seating walls, and the interpretive elements to bring the historic site to life.

Not to despair though, work is underway to fill the \$1.2 million gap. One such effort is the walkway leading into the memorial. A program is underway that will allow community members to buy an engraved brick to show their support or maybe honor a relative or firefighter they know. More details will be coming soon.

Outside donors are also being sought and City Hall is being asked to help fill the gap to repair and improve this city heritage site. One way or another, we will get there. It is always good to take a moment and celebrate success along the way.

Annual David Campbell Memorial & Remembrance Service

June 26, 2026 will mark the 115th anniversary of Chief David Campbell's death. Portland Firefighters have gathered every year since David Campbell's death to consider his service and sacrifice. It is also a time of remembrance for all Portland Firefighters who have lost their lives in service.



www.DavidCampbellMemorial.org
"David Campbell Memorial Association" on Facebook

Other Happenings

Fire Chief David Campbell was so much more than any Fire Chief before or after. His impact on the community left an indelible mark that has lasted over 100 years.

Besides the Memorial in his name, two fireboats would also carry his name. This is a rare honor that has only happened six times in the 122 year history of the Portland Fire Marine Program (accompanying Campbell is Mike Laudenklos, Karl Gunster, Virgil Spencer, Vernon Buss, and Jerry Richardson).

David Campbell was a champion of technology and the need for a fireboat on the Willamette River. He was able to bring the political and practical pieces together to launch the first fireboat to serve the city. On February 27, 1904, the Fireboat *George H. Williams* would be christened. Named for then Mayor George Williams, Campbell fittingly gave credit by naming it for the man that likely brought the political will together.

Campbell would get his turn to have his name on a fireboat. After his 1911 death, the second fireboat, which



he had a significant hand in bringing to life, would launch on January 26, 1913. It would carry his name and proudly ply the Willamette River, protecting the waterfront areas of Portland.

It would be retired in 1927 and replaced with a new fireboat. The Fireboat *David Campbell* would serve Portland from November 12, 1927 to June 30, 2021. In fact, it would distinguish itself as the longest serving piece of fire-fighting apparatus in the history of Portland Fire. So important, unique, and notable is this service that in retirement, the Fireboat David Campbell is slated to become an exhibit at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria, Oregon. More news will come, but this shows why David Campbell was more than just another Fire Chief.

To Learn More...



**DAVID CAMPBELL
MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION**

The development of the Portland Firefighter Memorial continues to grow and evolve. You can find additional information on the “David Campbell Memorial Association” Facebook Page. This also includes ways in which you can support this project and bring honor, recognition, and remembrance to all of Portland’s Fallen Firefighters.

The David Campbell Memorial Association web site is another source of information. Find it at DavidCampbellMemorial.org. And to speak to a member of the David Campbell Memorial Association, contact Don Porth, President, 503-805-8482 or Don@PreventThink.com