

The David Campbell Memorial

The Story Of The Tribute To Fire Chief David Campbell and Portland's Fallen Firefighters

Compiled by Don Porth

The "David Campbell Memorial" (DCM) monument, located at 1864 SW Alder, carries a story that spans more than a century. It is a story of heroism, honor, neglect, and resurrection. Ironically, among its many lessons is what should be most fundamental to the fire service; dedicated and unflinching vigilance over the cause for which it is charged. In this case, honoring their fellow firefighters who have died in service to the community.

The well-documented story of Fire Chief David Campbell's death on June 26, 1911 at the Union Oil Company fire is well known and does not bear repeating here. His legacy as one of the most significant and well-loved public servants in Portland history led citizens to build a monument in his honor. This would begin just days after his death, yet take 17 years to achieve.

By 1913, it was clear that a coordinating body was needed to guide the project. The "David Campbell Memorial and Medal Fund" would be established on June 21, 1913 to do just that. While their activity has varied over the decades, they exist today as the "David Campbell Memorial Association" (DCMA), continuing work as a non-profit with the mission of caretaking the David Campbell Memorial and the legacy of Portland's fallen firefighters.

To this end, the City of Portland, at a city council meeting held June 18, 1917, passed "Ordinance 32950," which granted the David Campbell Memorial and Medal Fund the *"privilege of erecting and maintaining a monument on the triangular tract of land at 19th, Chapman (now 18th) and Alder Streets, Portland, Oregon, and granting control of the said tract of land to said Trustees."* This was signed by Council President Will H. Daly.

BUILDING A MEMORIAL

Over the next 11 years, competition for that piece of land would threaten it as the site for the David Campbell Memorial. In the late 1920s, a local lumberman, Winslow B. Ayers, agreed to donate the final \$35,000 necessary to complete the project, but only if he could have final say in the build of the project. The city leaders granted this provision and it guaranteed the triangle as the site for this project.

Ayers, whose support went unknown for many years, provides an interesting footnote to the story of the DCM. He lived a mere 8 blocks to the north of the DCM (811 NW 19th Avenue). He came to Portland in 1883 at 23 years of age. His father was a lumberman and Winslow was determined to follow in his father's footsteps. He founded the Eastern Lumber Company in 1899 and was the active head until a few years before his 1935 death. He was close friends with President Herbert Hoover and served as the federal food administrator for Oregon. He contributed much to the community by serving as a member of the Library Association Of Portland and was also a principle contributor to the Portland Civic Theater. It was likely his civic mindedness that prompted him to see that the David Campbell Memorial was completed. It is not known if he knew David Campbell personally.

The architecture of the Memorial was the work of Paul Phillip Cret. Cret was an influential architect and instructor who, through his built work and his teaching, left an indelible mark on the American architecture culture of the twentieth century. Cret is generally acknowledged as one of the most prominent architects of his era - the first three decades of the twentieth century. He gained recognition as the designer of many renowned buildings, memorials, and bridges, a number of which are listed on the National Parks Service Registry of Historic Places. As a professor at the University of Pennsylvania for 34 years, Paul Cret educated generations of American architects in the principles of Beaux-Arts architecture.

Paul Cret was chosen as the architect at the recommendation of Ernest F. Tucker, Jr. Tucker, who acted as the local supervising architect to the monument's construction, had been a student of Cret's at the University of Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts. He played no role in the design of the monument; his position seems only to have been to recommend his former professor to the Campbell Association, and then to act as the construction supervisor, assuring that the commission was completed on schedule and within budget. Tucker would go on to become a well-regarded architect in Portland.

By 1927 the commission had been given to Cret and to University of Oregon sculpture professor, Avard Fairbanks, for the design of the monument and sculpture. Fairbanks would create the bronze bas-relief of Chief Campbell that is poised above the fountain.

Meanwhile, Ayers, who had travelled to Europe and was quite taken by the Italian Caen limestone used in many Italian monuments. He would specify this type of stone as the material for the Memorial. This was contrary to the recommendation of granite by the city leaders, but they relented since he was paying for it.

Sadly, Ayers choice of Caen limestone was a poor one. Due to the porous nature of the stone and the weather conditions inherent to the Pacific Northwest, the stonework would quickly begin to fail. In a February 26, 1929 Oregonian Newspaper article, it reported "large pieces of stone being chipped off by the action of the freezing weather." The steps, in particular, were severely affected. They would eventually be replaced completely.

All the while, Portland Firefighters continued to die in the line of duty. David Campbell was not the first nor would he be the last.

PORTLAND FIREFIGHTERS DYING IN SERVICE

Portland would begin providing fire services to Portland citizens with the "Portland Volunteer Fire Department" on August 2, 1853 and continue as a volunteer agency until December 31, 1882. On January 1, 1883, the fire service in Portland would become the "Portland Paid Fire Department."

All of the previous equipment would move from the volunteer effort to the paid version of the fire department and 18 members would be hired to paid positions. They would be supplemented by 35 volunteers called "extramen." The same fire stations, equipment, and most of the paid and volunteer members were exactly the same after the transition as before. The only significant change was the reduction in staffing (from approximately 350 volunteers to 53 paid and volunteer) and the addition of

horses to pull fire equipment. Over time, the Portland Volunteer Fire Department became forgotten or diminished as something other than a "real" fire department, thus hindering the legacy of James Reed.

James Reed of Protection Engine Company #4 of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department was the first firefighter to die in the line of duty in the state of Oregon. James would pass several days after suffering a heart attack helping his crew pull a hand-pump fire engine up a steep incline. While the incident occurred on August 16, 1881, he would not pass until August 21st. For many years, his death was barely a footnote in Portland Fire's history simply because he was part of the volunteer fire department. It would not be until 2008 that Portland Fire & Rescue would recognize his sacrifice.

The first Portland Firefighter to be acknowledged in a service connected death would be Fred Wagner of Truck 2. He was testing a new steam powered fire engine when control of a nozzle was lost and Fred was struck in the head. He never regained consciousness. He would die on February 28, 1890.

Fred's Death would be followed by Tom O'Keefe on August 21, 1891, when he fell from a responding hose wagon and was crushed beneath the wheels. John Hewston of Engine 4 would be next, being fatally injured by a falling timber in a fire at SW 1st Avenue and Pine Street. This would occur on October 2, 1892.

On June 26, 1911, Fire Chief David Campbell would parish in the Union Oil Company fire. Because of his rank and prominence in the community, Portlanders would rally around David's death and the mission to create a memorial in his honor. But the Memorial plans did not yet include anyone other than David Campbell. The tradition to remember David Campbell would begin on June 26, 1912 by gathering at David's gravesite at Riverview Cemetery. This would continue until the David Campbell Memorial was completed.

An Oregonian Newspaper article from June 12, 1923 announced that the Campbell Association would, for the first time, acknowledge and honor all Portland Firefighters who had died in service to the citizens of Portland. The article published a list of 13 names. They would first be honored at the memorial service held on June 26, 1923. Honored members included:

1. Fred Wagner - February 28, 1890
2. Thomas O'Keefe - August 21, 1891
3. John Hewston - October 3, 1892
4. David Campbell - June 26, 1911
5. William Higdon - June 6, 1912
6. Emil Gustafson - March 16, 1916
7. Francis McCormick - August 15, 1919
8. Karl Gunster - June 15, 1921
9. Oscar Lehman - October 3, 1921
10. James Baldwin - June 19, 1922
11. Oscar Gabriel - October 25, 1922
12. Fred Rittenour - February 1, 1923
13. Adolph Wefel - June 1, 1923

Over the next few years, newspaper articles would occasionally mention the list of names in articles leading up to or documenting the annual David Campbell Memorial service, yet the list differed from time to time and had many misspellings.

An October 20, 1932 Oregonian Newspaper article would announce that bronze plaques for 19 fallen firefighters would be produced and placed the following year. According to today's records, the 19 names listed below would have populated that list. What is unusual about this list is the addition of Thomas Grenfell, who had never been mentioned in previous announcements of fallen firefighters.

1. Fred Wagner - February 28, 1890
2. Thomas O'Keefe - August 21, 1891
3. John Hewston - October 3, 1892
4. Thomas Grenfell - March 25, 1896
5. David Campbell - June 26, 1911
6. William Higdon - June 6, 1912
7. Emil Gustafson - March 16, 1916
8. Francis McCormick - August 15, 1919
9. Karl Gunster - June 15, 1921
10. Oscar Lehman - October 3, 1921
11. James Baldwin - June 19, 1922
12. Oscar Gabriel - October 25, 1922
13. Fred Rittenour - February 1, 1923
14. Adolph Wefel - June 1, 1923
15. William Wilbur - April 7, 1926
16. Harry Josephson - July 23, 1928
17. Charles Ryan - May 20, 1928
18. William McCreery - May 20, 1928
19. Richard Laisner - July 4, 1930

Newspapers printed little about the David Campbell Memorial until an April 4, 1948 Oregonian Newspaper article described the Memorial as "*crumbling and forgotten.*" It went on to say that the fountain had not been operational for many years and that only 16 of the 19 name plates for fallen members remained, that three had been stolen and never replaced. There was no mention of which name plates had gone missing. By this time, the total number of fallen firefighters should have numbered 27, but apparently no one kept up on the remembrance of Portland's firefighters who died in service.

Other reports described the David Campbell Memorial and Medal Fund as being inactive and absent. Funds held for care of the Memorial were sitting idle in a bank account. The group had also taken on the task of awarding valor medals to heroic acts by Portland Firefighters. Their activity was limited to giving the Gold Medal of Valor to Tom Gavin in 1917 and a Gold Medal of Valor to Red Morgan in 1932. The inactivity appeared to last until 1966, when award activity would resume. It was also the year Virgil Spencer died in the line of duty.

EXPLANSION OF THE MEMORIAL TRIANGLE

In January of 1962, an opportunity would present itself. The reconfiguration of the streets around the Campbell Memorial would take place, increasing the size of the triangle. A grassy area to the east of the DCM would be created. The Portland Junior Chamber of Commerce would take on the project of creating "Portland Firefighter Park." It should be noted that even with that designation, it was never officially a Portland Park. In fact, the entire Memorial Triangle was never a "property" or tax lot of any kind. It was simply "right-of-way" that was technically the responsibility of the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT).

Over the course of 1963, the streets would be renovated and so would the Campbell Memorial. The damaged and failing stone received a coating of paint and the rest was cleaned. However, this effort was apparently minimal and the work would not hold up well.

From the time of the 1948 reports of damage occurred to the time the 1963 restoration would take place, three more Portland Firefighters would die in service, bringing the total to 30. It remained unclear if the name plates had been repaired or replaced but given the work on the memorial, it is possible that replacement name plates had been procured.

On October 29, 1966, Firefighter Virgil Spencer would die in the BP Johns Furniture Company fire. This would bring the total number of fallen firefighters to 31. 1966 also corresponds with the time at which the Campbell Association issued the first Valor Award since 1932. It would seem that they had returned from their three decades of slumber.

Struggles with the stonework would continue. In 1975, a synthetic coating was applied to the stone work at the fountain head and the ends of the wings where the lanterns stood. This was not approved by any qualified stone restoration expert. Once applied, it was too late to do anything about it without damaging the stone beneath it.

February 15, 1977 would add John Devaney Jr. to the list of fallen firefighters, bringing the total to 32. John and his crew responded to a shed fire in SW Portland. Hours after, John would suffer a heart attack and die.

The list containing 32 names would remain well documented and represented with bronze name plates for the next 31 years. Strangely, that list would no longer include Fred Rittenour. Could his name have been one of the stolen name plates from 1948, causing him to be somehow forgotten?

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DAVID CAMPBELL MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

While little information was recorded about the activity of the David Campbell Memorial and Medal Fund after 1977, a 1988 amendment to the bylaws and Articles of Incorporation show the name of the organization appearing for the first time as the "David Campbell Memorial Association." They continued to issue Valor Awards regularly. The bylaws would be amended again in 1999.

In the year 2000, the decision was made to place the "Messenger Bell" near the south tip of Portland Firefighter Park. The DCMA, in partnership with the Portland Firefighters Association, arranged for donated labor to build a brick cover to house the bell. The bell was adorned with a dedication plaque and a small interpretive panel.

The Messenger Bell was purchased in 1874 as a result of the August 2, 1873 conflagration that swept through Portland, destroying 22 city blocks. It was believed that inadequate warning was given by the current bells and a louder bell was needed. The Messenger Bell is huge, weighing 4,200 pounds, 600 pounds of which were pure silver. The clapper itself weighs 50 pounds. It had been placed in the bell tower of Vigilance Hook & Ladder at 720 SW 4th Avenue before it was put into storage when that station closed in 1921. In the year 2000, it would become a unique part of the Memorial Triangle.

Around 2004, research in the archives of Portland Fire would find an additional 13 names that would seem to have been qualified for inclusion on Portland's list of fallen firefighters. In 2008, the list was presented to the DCMA for consideration. They would accept four names, James Reed, Henry Krimbel, Peter Kumpf, and Joseph Allerton. This would bring the total number of fallen firefighters on the roll call to 36. After 127 years, James Reed, the first firefighter to die in the line of duty in Oregon, was finally recognized as a member of Portland Fire.

A NEW MEMORIAL

From the year 2000 to 2010, Portland Fire would renovate and/or build fire stations across the city to achieve seismic standards and create better accommodations for male and female firefighters living together in the stations. Station 7 (originally known as Station 29), at 5 SE Madison Street (on the east bank of the Willamette River) would be completely rebuilt. It was finished in 2010 and renumbered as Station 21. Positioned between the Eastbank Esplanade (a Portland Park walkway that follows the east bank of the river) and the Willamette River, Station 21 included a small area of pavers and landscaping with adjacency to similar areas of the Esplanade property. The idea to move the David Campbell Memorial to that location (a mere block away from the place where David Campbell would meet his demise - SE Water Avenue and Salmon Street) was introduced and embraced by the DCMA.

A design competition for the new memorial was held with Portland State University. It would be won by the same architect who designed the new Station 21, Aaron Whelton. The design called for different items to be taken from the existing David Campbell Memorial, placing them as part of the new east bank memorial.

Little known to members of the DCMA, the David Campbell Memorial was highly regarded as an architectural treasure by the architecture community in Portland. When they got word that it might be disassembled, they were not happy. The Bosco-Milligan Foundation and the Architectural Heritage Center of Portland wrote a nomination for the David Campbell Memorial to be entered into the National Parks Service Registry of Historic Places. This would be accepted on August 12, 2010.

It would seem, at this point, that the DCMA and others felt that little could be done to or with the DCM since it was now historically designated. It would begin to be and look neglected. In the meantime, an uninspired effort to push the new memorial idea along was dragging out with no discernible progress. A detailed plan had not been created, only renderings of what might be.

In 2016, Portland Firefighters donated \$103,000 to the cause and their donation was matched by then Commissioner Nick Fish. Commissioner Fish would bring \$100,000 from the city budget to the project (Commissioner Fish was not the Fire Commissioner at the time). Despite these funds, nothing would happen for another three years.

Care of the David Campbell Memorial must have been an issue. In 2010, a resolution was passed at city council stating that care of the DCM was the responsibility of the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Portland Parks and Recreation. Given that this was the right-of-way to surrounding roads, the responsibility assigned to PBOT made sense. Parks was only charged with the responsibility for patrol by park rangers to address vagrancy. Strangely, Portland Fire and the DCMA

were not mentioned in this resolution. That said, intermittent care was provided by Parks and by members of Portland Fire, primarily Station 3 located at NW 17th and Johnson.

On May 15, 2019, Don Porth was invited to join the DCMA as a Trustee. Don had conducted the research that added the previously mentioned four members to the roll call of fallen firefighters in 2008. He continued to push for the additional nine, which would allow Portland's list of fallen firefighters to match that of the Oregon State Firefighter Memorial (45 names). He also advocated for 19 more names identified by Portland's "Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund" as "service-connected" deaths occurring prior to retirement.

March 31, 2021 Don would be elected President and advocate for the installation of the 28 additional members on the Memorial roll call. The DCMA approved this and the list of Portland's fallen firefighters now stood at 74.

On November 19, 2021, Lieutenant Jerry Richardson would succumb to Mesothelioma, a cancer he contracted on the job. Jerry was added to the Memorial at the June 26, 2022 remembrance service.

In the meantime, efforts continued in earnest to develop the east bank site for the memorial. The application process to the City of Portland took place and the results were not favorable for continuing the effort at that site. Various legislative changes to any project positioned close to the Willamette River had created barriers to development of the site. This included environmental zones, flood plains, and the close proximity to an interstate freeway (overhead). A complete overhaul of the plan would be necessary but costs and uncertainties made moving ahead challenging.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

At the February 14, 2022 meeting of the DCMA, the idea of abandoning the east bank plan and placing the new memorial elements alongside the David Campbell Memorial at the Memorial Triangle was introduced. This plan would allow the renovation of the DCM as well as the new build of the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza, which would include the memorial wall, Messenger Bell, and various interpretive panels to help visitors understand the significance of the entire site. The DCMA would vote to approve this idea and the plan would begin.

In November 2022, Fire Commissioner Joanne Hardesty would dedicate another \$250,000 in city funds to help get the project moving.

In early 2023, additional research on the members of Portland Fire uncovered the April 22, 1920 death of Captain Fred May. Fred died of a stroke while on watch duty at Station 8. He would be added to the roll call at the June 26, 2023 service and become the 76th member to be honored on the roll call.

Soon after the addition of Fred, the family members of Firefighter Roger Brandenburg presented his death for consideration. Roger had been hired with no pre-existing health issues (having served in the military and with another fire agency). In 1977, he would respond with his crew to a sailboat that had drifted into energized electrical wires. He was electrocuted during the operation. He recovered, but one year later was forced into medical retirement with a heart disability. Three years later, on July 26, 1981, Roger would die of heart failure. He was 43 years old. The DCMA was unanimous in their

decision to add Roger to the roll call as the 77th member, recognizing the causal path from his on-the-job injury to his death.

In September 2023, history would repeat itself. Just as had happened in 1948, name plates would be stolen from the memorial. This time, 14 name plates would be removed and never recovered. Because plans were underway to restore the DCM and build a new memorial wall to include all fallen members, the remaining 22 name plates would be removed. They were turned into plaques and placed in the fire stations where the member had served at the time of their death.

The story continues as the \$1.6 million project to build the Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza and DCM restoration unfolds. Only time will tell how this will turn out.

(revised December 2, 2024)

~~~~~

## **Portland's 77 Fallen Firefighters**

### ***Service - Sacrifice - Honor***

*Below are the stories of Portland's Firefighters who  
have given their lives in service to the community.*

On August 21, 1881, Firefighter James Reed of Protection Engine Company #4 died of an apparent heart attack while helping his crew pull a hand-pulled fire engine up a steep hill. He was hospitalized and would die five days later. He is the first known firefighter line of duty death in the state of Oregon.

On February 28, 1890, Firefighter Fred Wagner was working on Truck 2. When testing a new steam powered fire engine, control of a hose nozzle was lost. The errant nozzle struck Fred in the head, killing him. He was 37 years of age when he died.

On August 21, 1891, Firefighter Tom O'Keefe was riding on Hose Company #1. As it exited the fire station and turned a corner at 16th and B Street, Tom fell from the Hose Wagon and was crushed beneath the wheels. Tom had been with Portland Fire for 7 years.

On October 3, 1892, Firefighter John Hewston was fighting a fire with his Engine 4 crew at the Kamm Block when he was knocked from his ladder by a falling timber. He fractured his skull and died at the scene. He was survived by his wife and two children.

On March 25, 1896, Firefighter Tom Grenfell sustained an injury while responding with his crew on Engine 2. They were pulling a fire engine up a steep grade to a house fire during which time his appendix burst. He was admitted to the hospital. During the course of surgery to address the problem, he died. Tom was survived by his wife and three children.



On June 26, 1911, Fire Chief David Campbell would die in the Union Oil fire at the corner of SE Water Avenue and Salmon Street. Chief Campbell entered the building to warn his crews to evacuate the building, which they did. Before David could exit, the building collapsed and killed him. David was 47 years old at the time of his death and had already served Portland Fire for 31 years, 18 years as Chief.

On June 6, 1912 Firefighter William Higdon had only been with Portland Fire for 3 years. He was assigned as driver of Hose 6 (horse drawn). Upon return from a fire at 518 NW 25th Street, William was thrown from the hose wagon and crushed by the wheel of the cart. He was taken to Good Sam Hospital but died soon after arrival. William was 37 years old at the time of his death.

On March 16, 1916, Emil Gustafson, who was assigned to the Fire Alarm Telegraph section, was servicing the system atop a telegraph pole at NW 26th and Nicolai Street. He inadvertently came in contact with a 10,000 volt electrical wire. Emil would be transported to the hospital but die a few hours later. He was survived by his wife and three children.

On August 15, 1919, Firefighter Francis McCormick was with his crew of Truck 1 at a fire at the foot of SW Lincoln Street, the Northwest Box Factory. Francis and his crewmates took a line onto a nearby railroad trestle to allow for an elevated angle from which to spray water onto the fire. The trestle itself would catch fire and as firefighters worked to evacuate the position, Francis fell 30 feet to the ground below, hitting his head. He was transported to Good Sam Hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival.

On April 22, 1920, Captain Fred May was standing watch at Station 8 as part of his station duty. At 7:30 pm, crew members discovered Fred as he was suffering a stroke. Before they could take action to have him transported to a hospital, he died. Fred was 54 years of age with 39 years of service, which began in 1881. Fred was survived by his wife and two daughters.

On June 15, 1921, Lieutenant Karl Gunster and his crew of Engine 22 responded to the May Apartment fire at SW 14th and Taylor. Karl entered the third floor to help locate trapped occupants. He was overcome by smoke. Another firefighter found him and carried him from the building but he could not be saved. Karl was 41 years of age at the time he died. In his memory, a fireboat would be christened in his name.

On October 3, 1921 Lieutenant Oscar Lehman and his crew of Engine 1 were responding to a fire at SW 10th and Montgomery Street. As Engine 1 approached the intersection of SW 4th and Jefferson, Engine 22 was also approaching from a different direction. The two fire apparatus collided. Oscar was killed in the collision and another firefighter seriously injured. Oscar was 35 years of age at his time of death and survived by his wife of only three weeks.

On June 19, 1922, Firefighter James Baldwin and his crew of Truck 1 responded to a fire at 387 Yamhill Street. After extinguishment, several inches of water had accumulated in the basement. As James descended the stairs to the basement for overhaul, he came in contact with a live electrical wire and was electrocuted. James was 38 years old at the time he died. The fire was caused by two boys playing with matches.

On October 25, 1922, Firefighter Oscar Gabriel was with his crew of Engine 12 at a fourth alarm fire at Washington High School. After 45 minutes, crews were ordered to clear away from the building. Before Oscar could do so, a wall began to fall and overtook him, crushing him to death. Oscar was 41 years old at his time of death. The cause of the fire...arson.

On February 1, 1923, Firefighter Fred Rittenour died while working at Station 19. He was performing station maintenance when he fell from the hose tower to his death. Fred was 44 years old at the time of his fall.

On June 1, 1923, Lieutenant Adolph Wefel and his crew of Engine 13 were completing the extinguishment of a house fire at N Benton Avenue and Clackamas Street when a brick chimney, weakened by the effects of the fire, toppled and landed on Adolph. Even with his protective gear, he sustained fatal injuries. Adolph was 38 years of age at the time.

On April 7, 1926, Firefighter William Wilbur and his crew of Engine 18 were dispatched to a house fire at 848 NE Clackamas Street. During overhaul of the fire scene, William began to feel dizzy and sat down to rest. Five minutes later, his heart failed and he died at the scene. The fire only caused \$200 damage. William was 43 years old at the time he died.

On May 20, 1928, Firefighter Charles Ryan and Firefighter William McCreery would both die in a single incident. Both men were assigned to Truck 3. During a training session with ladders, both men climbed to the top of a ladder and were connected together by a hose belt. The hose belt broke and both men fell to their death near SW Chapman (18th Avenue) and Taylor Street. Charles was 29 years old and William was 38 years old. Both left a wife and children behind.

On July 23, 1928, Fire Alarm Telegraph Electrician Harry Josephson was servicing the fire alarm telegraph lines on a pole at SE 51st and Hawthorne. He lost his balance and fell 25 feet from the pole to the street below, fracturing his skull. He died at the scene. Harry was 29 years old when he died.

On December 19, 1929, Firefighter Walter McBride was sleeping in the dormitory of Station 9. He went to bed complaining of a headache. The following morning, he failed to report to roll call and was found dead in his bunk. It was determined he died of a heart attack. Walter was 49 years of age at the time he died.

On July 4, 1930, Captain Richard Laisner and his crew of Engine 31 were overhauling a house fire at 6135 SE 37th Avenue. Richard told his crew he needed a drink of water and entered the house to get one. When he didn't return, a crewmate went inside and found him slumped over in a chair. He died of a heart attack. Richard was 45 years of age when he died.

On October 23, 1932, Firefighter Henry Krimbel died. In 1930, he responded to a working fire with his crew from Truck 2. A room in the Councilor Apartments had been ignited by a cigarette left burning on a couch. Truck 2 was assigned to ventilate the roof. As Henry and his crewmates worked to remove a skylight over a stairwell, the loosened skylight vented smoke and heat. Henry lost his balance and fell through to the stair landing below. He was seriously injured and evacuated by his crew. Henry would recover, but with lasting injury. Over two years later, after returning to work,

Henry would succumb to kidney problems attributed to his injuries in the fall. Henry was survived by his wife and son.

On April 21, 1933, Lieutenant Clement Kemmer was playing handball at Station 8 as part of his physical fitness program. He collapsed during play and while the first aid squad was dispatched to assist, he died at the Station. Clement was 42 years old.

On June 26, 1933, Lieutenant Gustave Stephan, Portland Fire's Theater Inspector, feeling ill, stopped at 68 NE Stanton Street between inspections. He sat down to rest and died of a heart attack at that location. Gustave had served Portland Fire for 44 years at the time he died. He was survived by a wife and son.

On January 7, 1934, Firefighter Frank Kearney died when Portland Fire Engine 21 and Squad 1 collided at the intersection of SW 4th and Pine. Frank died at the scene and 9 other firefighters were seriously injured. Frank was 37 years of age when he died.

On July 1, 1934, Firefighter Harry Morrow and Engine 23 responded to a vehicle collision at SE 17th and Division Street. During the response, Harry suffered a heart attack and could not be resuscitated. He would die at the scene. He was 48 years old at his time of death.

On January 19, 1935, Firefighter Harry Gardner was overcome with smoke at a fire at 2305 NE 51st Avenue. He and his crew were advancing a line into the house fire when he collapsed. The fire was caused by an overheated stove causing \$850 in damage to the home. Harry left behind a wife and three children.

On March 18, 1935, Battalion Chief William Heath died of a heart attack. He was the Battalion Chief overseeing District 1. He and his crews had fought a fire at the Hotel Lindquist at 1122 SW 2nd Avenue earlier in the day. After returning, he retired for the night and died in his sleep, being found the following morning.

On March 11, 1937, Firefighter Frank Platt was performing the morning service checks on Engine 10. While he was behind the fire engine, the driver, servicing the inside of the cab, inadvertently stepped on the starter switch, which crushed Frank between the fire engine and the back wall of the fire station. Frank was 58 years old at the time he died.

On December 31, 1939, Firefighter Harry Howard died of a heart attack while on duty at Station 36. The pension board determined this to be connected to his service. Harry was 46 years of age at the time of his death.

On June 3, 1940 Captain Carl Markstrom and Firefighter Ernest Bills were dispatched from Station 4 to a working fire at the Portland Furniture Company at 5331 SW Macadam Avenue. The building was well involved with fire and smoke. Carl and Ernest took a hose line into the building with Henry Susbauer. While they were wearing the new technology of canister masks to filter out the toxins in smoke, the depleted oxygen levels would cause both Carl and Ernest to pass out. They were found by other firefighters and pulled from the building, but could not be resuscitated. They would both die at the scene. Carl was 42 years of age and Ernest 43 at the time they died. Both left families behind.

On December 5, 1940, Captain Peter Kumpf was working at Station 23 when a heart problem prompted his crew to send him to the hospital. He died a few hours later. His heart attack was determined to be service connected by the pension board. Peter was survived by his wife and daughter.

On October 28, 1943, Captain Owen Peterson of Engine 5 died of a ruptured appendix and peritonitis that the pension board determined was connected to his service. Owen was 44 years of age at the time of his death.

October 2, 1945, Captain Joseph Allerton was commanding the Fireboat Laudenklos at a fire at the Oregon Shipyards. The following day, he was too sick to report for duty. 33 days later he would die of bronchial pneumonia. The pension board determined his death to be connected to his service. Joseph was 55 years old when he died.

On October 24, 1945, Captain Elmo St. Clair Bradford and his crew at Engine 15 were dispatched to a fire at SW Hoffman Road and Broadway. While fighting the fire, Elmo suffered a heart attack and died at the scene. Elmo had served with Portland Fire for 32 years.

On July 19, 1946, Captain William Inglesby would suffer a heart attack while on duty at Station 33. The pension board would determine this to be connected to his service. He would leave behind a wife and three children.

On December 30, 1946, Captain Gregory Warner died. He and his crew of Engine 6 had responded to a fire six days prior. Upon return, Gregory suffered a heart attack at the fire station. He was hospitalized and would die in the hospital 7 days later. He was survived by his wife. Gregory was 48 years old at the time of his death.

On March 31, 1947, Battalion Chief Marion Stark was found dead of a heart attack the morning following his work shift at Station 8. He was 63 years old at the time of his death. He was survived by his wife.

On November 2, 1948, Firefighter Alfred Berg and his crew of Engine 33 were dispatched to 8950 N. Bradford Street. While fighting the fire, Alfred suffered a heart attack at the scene. Efforts were made to revive him but to no avail. Alfred was survived by a wife and two daughters.

On April 24, 1949, Captain Daniel Shaw was directing his crew at a house fire at 432 NE Russell Street. While helping crew raise a ladder, Daniel collapsed and fell to the ground. His crew tried to resuscitate him but were unsuccessful. The cause of the fire was a cigarette left burning on a sofa. Daniel was survived by his wife and three children.

On December 24, 1957, Firefighter Victor Brown of Engine 14 would die of acute pneumonia and generalized arteriosclerosis. The pension board would determine this to be a line of duty death. Victor was 58 years old at the time of his death.

On April 12, 1960, Firefighter John Drain would receive a service connected determination for his death due to heart failure. John was assigned to Fireboat #3. John was 59 years of age at his time of death.

On August 14, 1960, Captain John Metcalfe and his crew of Engine 7 were responding to a mattress fire in Ladds Addition. As the engine rounded the corner of SE 12th Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard, they would collide with a bus from the Rose City Transit Company. John and four other firefighters were thrown from the apparatus. All were transported to Good Sam Hospital where John was pronounced dead. He was survived by his wife and son.

On July 4, 1963, Firefighter Frank Benedict of Engine 21 would suffer heart failure that the pension board would determine to be connected to his service. Frank was 36 years old when he died.

On November 21, 1963, Lieutenant Benjamin Steele of Engine 21 suffered a heart attack that the pension board determined was connected to his service. Benjamin was 44 years of age at the time of his death.

On January 10, 1965 Firefighter Robert Edner of Engine 6 died from a stroke. The Pension Board would determine this to be service connected. Robert was 64 years of age at the time of his death.

On July 21, 1965, Firefighter James Hamilton of Truck 10 died of heart failure that the pension board determined to be connected to his service. James was 49 years old when he died.

On October 29, 1966, Lieutenant Virgil Spencer and his crew of Engine 5 were dispatched to the BP Johns Furniture Factory. The firefighting efforts stirred up dust that resulted in a dust explosion. Virgil and his crew were on a catwalk at the time of the dust explosion. He fell about 40 feet to the floor below and was seriously burned. He died at the scene. Virgil was 41 years old at the time of his death. Virgil would have a fireboat commissioned in his name in 1972.

On March 2, 1969, Captain Louis Merchant, who was the Captain of Fireboat 1, died of heart failure. His death was determined to be connected to his service. Louis was 56 years of age at the time of his death.

On March 30, 1970, Firefighter Randy Hammer of Truck 3 was involved in a vehicle collision that was determined to be connected to his service with Portland Fire. Randy was 26 years old at the time of his death.

On February 8, 1971, Captain Jack Stephens was working at Engine 2. He and his crew responded to a false alarm at 329 SW Woods Street. After returning to the station, he went to bed for the night. He never woke up. He was found dead of a heart attack the following morning. He would have turned 45 years old the following week.

On July 5, 1971, Lieutenant Donald Turner of Engine 22 would die of heart failure. The pension board would determine his death to be service connected. Donald was 48 years old at the time he died.

On September 15, 1971, Firefighter Roy Bray of Engine 21 died of pneumonia caused by cancer that the pension board determined was connected to his service. Roy would leave behind a wife and son. His son would go on to become a Portland Firefighter. Roy was 35 years of age when he died.

On April 5, 1972, Firefighter Aldro Stuck of Engine 7 would succumb to colon cancer that was determined to be connected to his service. Aldro was survived by a wife and son. His son would go on to become a Portland Firefighter.

On October 2, 1974, Battalion Chief Jefferson Morris would die of lung cancer that was determined by the pension board to be connected to his service. Jefferson was the public information officer and a very charismatic and popular fire safety educator in Portland. Affectionately known as "Fireman Jeff," Jefferson was the face of Portland Fire for most of his career. A non-profit organization dedicated to fire prevention, education, and fire heritage was created in his honor.

On November 24, 1975, Firefighter Melvin Sethmann of Fireboat 2 died of heart failure that was determined by the pension board to be connected to his service. Melvin was 52 years of age at the time of his death.

On February 13, 1977, Firefighter John Devaney Jr. was working at Engine 15 when he and his crew were dispatched to 4000 SW Shattuck Road for a shed fire. During the firefight, John suffered a heart attack. He was hospitalized and survived for two days before he died on February 15th. John was 56 years old.

On December 11, 1979, Captain Charles Weberg of Engine 17 would die of lung and liver cancer. The pension board determined both to be connected to Charles' service. Charles was 55 years old at the time of his death.

On July 26, 1981, Firefighter Roger C. Brandenburg would die from cardiac arrest. On June 11, 1977, Roger was working on Fireboat 1. He would suffer electrocution while during a response to a sailboat in distress, having drifted into live electrical wires. Roger boarded the vessel and grabbed the halyard on the mast. The electrical surge prevented him from releasing the halyard. When he finally broke free, he fell into the river. He would be medically retired on a heart disability one year and two weeks later. He would die of cardiac arrest on July 26, 1981. His death was determined to have a direct, causal path to his electrocution injury. Roger was 43 years old at the time of his death.

On January 3, 1984, Training Lieutenant Tommy Tucker would succumb to Cancer. The Pension Board would deem his cancer to be connected to his service. Tommy was 49 years of age when he died. He is buried in Willamette National Cemetery for his military service.

On May 5, 1987, Firefighter Willis Hubener of Engine 17 would die of heart failure that the pension board determined to be service connected. Willis was 37 at the time of his death.

On December 18, 1987, Firefighter Thomas Tyner of Truck 6 died of heart failure attributed by the pension board to be due to his service with Portland Fire. Thomas was 55 years of age at his time of death.

On May 12, 1988, Firefighter Richard Bradley of Engine 10 would die of heart failure. The pension board determined that his death was service connected. He would be interred at Willamette National Cemetery for his military service.

On November 14, 1990, Firefighter Lonnie Zimmerman would die from pneumonia brought on by complications from AIDS, which he contracted on the job. The pension board determined his death was connected to his service. Lonnie was serving at Engine 27 at the conclusion of his life. Lonnie was 48 at the time of his death.

On December 27, 1991, Firefighter Gerald Quinby of Truck 4 died of heart failure that was determined to be service connected by the pension board. Gerald was 38 years old at the time of his death.

On April 1, 1993, Firefighter Jeff Tuggle, with only 9 years of service, fell victim to cancer that was determined to be connected to his service. Jeff left behind a wife and two young children. Jeff was 33 years old when he died.

On February 28, 1995, Firefighter Robert Hebisen would lose his life in what the Pension Board would identify as a stress-related incident. It was deemed connected to his service. Robert was 43 years of age at the time of his death.

On November 21, 1996, Firefighter/Paramedic Richard "The Bagger" Harder would die of heart failure that was determined to be connected to his service with Portland Fire. Richard was assigned to Rescue 41 at the time of his death. Richard was 44 years of age at the time he died.

On July 15, 2001, Firefighter Paul Kahn of Engine 13 would die of heart failure that the pension board would determine was connected to his service. Paul was 54 years old at his time of death.

On February 28, 2002, Firefighter/Paramedic James Woodward would succumb to pancreatic cancer that the Pension Board determined to be connected to his service. James was 47 years old at the time he died.

On July 3, 2003, Captain Jeffrey Calvi of Engine 13 was under a doctor's care (assigned by the pension board). He would subsequently die of a reaction to prescribed medications. His death was determined to be connected to his service. Jeffrey was 44 years old at his time of death.

December 30, 2004, Lieutenant Steven Higley of Truck 3 died of cancer. Steven's death was attributed by the pension board to be connected to his service. Steven was survived by his wife and child. Steven was 42 years old at the time of his death.

On June 11, 2007, Lieutenant (Senior Inspector) George Godson left his shift at Station 22 to return home for his two days off. On the morning of his second day off, when he should have been awakening for his next tour of duty, he was found dead in his home. The cause was heart failure that the pension board determined was connected to his service. George left behind a wife, four sons, and a daughter.

On July 30, 2013, Firefighter Keith Kosky would die of cancer. His cancer was determined to be connected to his service. Keith was survived by his wife. He was interred at Willamette National Cemetery for his military service. Keith was 56 at his time of death.

November 19, 2021, Lieutenant/Paramedic Jerry Richardson would succumb to a three year battle with Mesothelioma, which he contracted on the job. Jerry served 22 years with Portland Fire and also served a military career. Jerry was survived by his wife and two children.

*Thank you for reading the stories of these dedicated public servants.*



#END#

[www.PortlandFireHistory.com](http://www.PortlandFireHistory.com)