

Historic Belmont Firehouse

Safety Learning Center & Fire Museum News

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The Safety Learning Center & Fire Museum is a cooperative effort between Portland Fire & Rescue and the Jeff Morris Fire & Life Safety Foundation.

For Information,

Contact

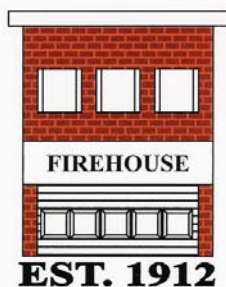
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BELMONT



Portland Fire History Available on Jeff Morris Web Site

Are you interested in the history of Portland Fire & Rescue? If so, you can now find numerous historic accounts on the Jeff Morris Web Site (www.jeffmorrisfoundation.org). A special section called "hiSTORIES" has been de-

veloped to share the rich history of the organization.

The accounts have largely been taken from past year-books. Several excerpts have been taken out to showcase stories of fire horses, the volunteer fire

companies of 1874, and other unique aspects of Portland Fire's history.

If you have stories or know where compelling stories reside, please contact Don Porth at 503-823-3615. New material is welcomed.

Fire Prevention Celebrates Its 90th Anniversary

On March 19th, Portland Fire & Rescue reaches a landmark in Prevention. This date will mark the 90th Anniversary of the Prevention Division.

On March 19, 1915 Jay W. Stevens was appointed as the first Fire Marshal of the city by Mayor Albee. He created the forerunner of today's prevention division. Amazingly, many of the same elements remain today. Here is the historic passage which chronicles the innovation.

"The line-of-duty death of Fire Chief David Campbell in 1911 may have signaled the end of an era. The years immediately following Campbell's death were not great ones for the department. Culminating in 1914, when the per capita loss from fire was calculated at a stunning \$6.89 per person citywide. The reputation of Portland as a

high-risk city had been growing and this seemed an additional indictment against the city. Sixteen lives were lost by the close of 1914. Fire insurance companies were threatening to raise rates to the city by 25 %.

By 1914 it was becoming obvious to many, Chief Biddie Dowell included, that if you could not stop Portland from burning down once it was aflame then you had better stop it from catching fire in the first place.

Fire prevention was not a new idea in 1914 - as early as 1912 a businessmen's group had organized to promote it in the downtown district. But after some terrible losses in the prior three years, it was an idea whose time had come. In April of 1914 the citizens of Portland tried again, forming the "Safety First Committee."

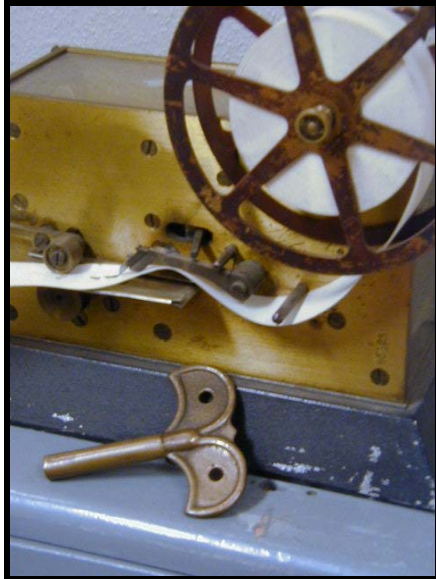
Their goal was to address accident prevention in several areas. Chief Dowell appointed Battalion Chief Jay W. Stevens as the first fire prevention officer for the fire department.

When Stevens took the job, prevention consciousness was not of a high order in the city. Most of the people Stevens interviewed could not locate alarms or fire escapes in their places of work. Owners of dilapidated buildings refused to renovate or remove them. Stevens found exits in public places blocked with garbage.

On pulling a fire alarm at Lincoln High School, Stevens waited for the thunder of feet but was greeted by stillness. Apparently the students did not respond to alarms on any day but Thursday, which was fire drill day.

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*** Safety Learning Center / Belmont Firehouse Hotline 503-823-3616 ***



Remember This???

Many firefighters may remember the old telegraph system, which sent a punch code to a paper tape system. The watchman had to read the tape to track the activity of the various crews across town. While most of these devices were electrically activated, the early days required a key to wind up a spring-drive mechanism.

Here is a wind-up key that, as the story goes, was the original key for the telegraph tape device in

the Belmont Firehouse when it was built in 1912. It was reportedly lost soon after the station opened. The system at the firehouse evolved to an electrically driven device some years later.

Captain Carr supposedly came across it one day and returned it to Station 9 in 1948. Since it was no longer a necessary device, it was kept by Firefighter Thatcher Benson, who donated it back to the Fire Museum in 2003.

FIRE SALE!!! Sweatshirts, T's, Polos, and Youth Apparel available at Belmont.
Call 503-823-3615 or check the web for details (www.jeffmorrisfoundation.org)

Museum Technical Committee Begins Work



A volunteer works on museum items

Under the direction of Museum Specialist Leann Arndt, the Museum Technical Committee is well on its way to recognizing the wealth of history that has been hidden behind closed doors for many years.

Some very interesting items have been discovered and those involved seem to be enjoying the experience.

After the initial training, Committee members have begun working in teams to explore and document the many artifacts in storage. Select items are being displayed at the Belmont Firehouse as the Safety Learning Center and Fire Museum develops.

Anyone interested in joining the committee can contact Leann at 503-823-4912.

Continued from page 1—Fire Prevention Anniversary

Under the energetic direction of Jay Stevens, appointed Fire Marshal by Mayor Albee, the Fire Prevention Division was officially organized on March 19, 1915. The Fire Prevention Division began realizing immediate results through public events such as National Fire Prevention Week and a clean-up & paint-up campaign.

Fire loss dropped ½ million dollars in 1915. Thirty-six days went by without an alarm compared with eight days in 1914. Twenty-one false alarms were recorded in 1915, 1/8 of the 1914 total.

In 1922 a campaign was begun to remove dilapidated buildings that led to thousands being razed over the subsequent ten years. Insurance companies were held accountable for over insuring,

which encouraged arson. Education of the public was an important factor from the beginning.

In 1928, Fire Marshal Fred Roberts, under the direction of Chief Edward Grenfell, began reassigning men from their companies to the Prevention Division for full time inspection work. This brought the number of inspectors to 13. Under Fire Marshal Roberts, per capita fire loss dropped below \$1.00 by 1938."

Visit the Belmont Firehouse on Saturday March 12th, Safety Saturday, to help celebrate the 90th Anniversary of Fire Prevention and visit the new features on display.

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