THE FIRE SERVICE OF SALT LAKE CITY

SOME OF ITS HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS THRU ONE HUNDRED YEARS

1851 1951
"And now hath every city sent up her tale of men"

Thomas B. Macaulay
FOREWORD

It has become apparent that many of the important events and transitions in the Salt Lake City Fire Department, if recorded, are not readily available. Much information of years gone by has been handed down verbally. The ranks of "old timers" are rapidly thinning out, and with them will go much of the history of the fire service. In order to preserve this information for present and future use it is attempted to record in this booklet, as nearly as possible, an account of some of the department's history and changes.

In 1941, in conjunction with the newly established Fire Prevention Bureau, a records division was inaugurated. Since that time, at the end of each year, an annual report of the fire department has been compiled. These reports have been printed in a uniform booklet since 1944.

Appreciation is extended to all who have assisted in "remembering" certain events and to those who have assisted in other ways.

It is not intended that this be a chronological history of the Salt Lake City Fire Department, but a record of some of the highlights of the fire service of Salt Lake City from its beginning.

June 1, 1951

J. K. Piercey
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Mormon Pioneers arrived in Salt Lake Valley July 24, 1847. By 1851 groups of citizens had banded together in the common cause of protecting their property against the ravages of fire.

In 1853 an ordinance was passed by the Salt Lake City Council, signed by the mayor of the city, Jedediah M. Grant, the father of Heber J. Grant, providing for the organization of a fire brigade with the city to furnish the equipment. Three dozen leather fire buckets were purchased and 21 ladders constructed, and fire companies were formed in each ecclesiastical ward. The roles and records, if any, of this organization are lost or destroyed.

The volunteer fire department was composed of men who, at the call of duty, would sacrifice their personal or domestic comfort for the safety and security of their fellow townsmen. They adopted as their motto: "WE AIM TO AID AND WORK TO SAVE." This motto is inscribed in letters of gold on the old banner of the Salt Lake Volunteer Fire Department.

Also in 1853, the Higgs Brothers, James and Thomas, of Salt Lake City, built a piston type, manually operated pump. It was named "The Volunteer" and is reputed to be the first pump west of the Mississippi River. It has been
well preserved, and at the present time is housed in the Veteran Volunteer Firemen's Hall in City Creek Canyon.

*On October 17, 1856, the volunteer fire department was reorganized and Jesse C. Little was appointed chief. March 27, 1871, John D. T. McAllister was appointed chief.

*Also in 1871, a steam fire engine was purchased from the Silsby Manufacturing Company of New York City. March, 1876, Charles M. Doneldson was appointed chief and in October, 1876, George M. Ottinger succeeded him.

*In 1879 the city council commenced paying the volunteers twenty-five cents an hour for the time they were engaged in answering calls, and this was continued to 1883, when the volunteer firemen made a united demand for fifty cents an hour. The council concluded a paid department would be cheaper, and the volunteer organization was disbanded after thirty years service, on the 30th of September, 1883.

**On September 30, 1883, at 5:15 p.m., there was an alarm of fire, caused by sparks from the electric light in F. F. Culmer & Co.'s stores, Second South and Commercial Streets. There was a very large turn out of firemen. It was the last fire that the old volunteers turned out to 'douse,' and they did it."

George M. Ottinger was the last chief of the Volunteer Fire Department of Salt Lake City and was the first chief
of the paid Fire Department of Salt Lake City, receiving this appointment October 1, 1883.

*Names and dates taken from the Constitution and By-Laws of the Veteran Volunteer Firemen's Association Salt Lake City, Utah, 1924 edition.

PAID FIRE DEPARTMENT

From October 1, 1883, to June 20, 1919, the one platoon system existed. Under this system, at the beginning, firemen had one day (24 hours) off in ten days. Several years later they were granted one day off (24 hours) in seven.

Between 1917 and 1919 working conditions were improved as follows:

In addition to the one day (24 hours) off in seven days, an additional twelve hours off in seven days was granted. This method was in effect less than one year when two (24 hour) days off in seven days was granted, reducing the time on duty to 113 working hours per week.

Under the 113 hour work week and the one platoon system, a fireman worked as in the following example:

Each year he would have a different combination of days off as a result of the policy of having all members of the department work on the 4th of July. (This was before the safe and sane 4th).
If his days off were Tuesdays and Saturdays, he would be off duty from 1:00 p.m. Tuesday until 1:00 p.m. Wednesday. Then he would be on duty continuously, except for meal hours, until Saturday at 1:00 p.m. He would then be off duty until 1:00 p.m. Sunday. Off duty meal time was allowed only Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. On these days he would have either one period of 2 hours and 20 minutes, or two periods of 1 hour and 10 minutes. Meal hour schedules started at 5:50 A.M. and continued to 7:00 P.M. Early or late meal time periods would be the 1 hour and 10 minute schedule. The 2 hour and 20 minute periods were given during the middle of the day. Off duty meal time was assigned each member and could be changed only for very good reasons.

During the one platoon system, except for his regular days off, or during periods of injury or sickness, a man desiring time off had to engage the services of one of the extra men. (An extra man list was maintained consisting of two names.) As a vacancy existed, the senior extra man was appointed to the status of a permanent member of the Fire Department. The Department at this time consisted of 87 members.

On June 20, 1919, at 8:00 A.M. the two platoon system went into effect. Seventeen members were added to the department as a result of this change. The method of working was as follows:
The members of the department were divided into "A" and "B" platoons. Each platoon worked an 8-hour week as follows:

"A" Platoon would work from 8:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. and "B" Platoon would work from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. the following day. The platoons would change shifts on the 15th and last day of each month. No days off or meal hours were allowed. However, if a man wanted to lay off he would make arrangements for a man on the opposite platoon to come back and work for him.

The members on night shift could go to bed anytime after 9:00 P.M.

After working the two platoon system for 1½ years a desire was manifested to change from the 10 and 1½ hour day and night schedule to the 24-hour on duty and 24-hour off duty schedule. As this new system did not change the on duty time of 8½ hours per week, nor did it require additional manpower, no problems were encountered. As a result, in the summer of 1933 the later system was adopted. At the outset the change time of shifts was at 1:00 P.M. Later it was changed to 12:00 noon, to 8:00 A.M. and 9:00 A.M.

March, 1943, saw the adoption of a 72-hour work week. The 24-hour on duty and 24-hour off duty, and 9:00 A.M. shift change schedule, continued. But every eighth on duty shift now became a day off. In order to maintain the proper balance, each three months a man received an additional 24
hour period off. Eighteen new members were hired to make this possible.

Six years later a referendum petition was submitted to the voters of the city asking them to approve the requested change from a 72 hour work week to a 63 hour work week. With the voters' approval, the 63 hour work week was inaugurated January 1, 1950. The 63 hour work week schedule is as follows:

The firemen continued the 24 hour on duty and 24 hour off duty shift. Change time of shifts is at 9:00 A.M. Every fourth on duty shift now became an off duty day. Twenty One new firemen were appointed to accomplish the 63 hour work week, bringing the authorized membership of the fire department, as of this June 1, 1951 to 216 members, consisting of: Chief of Fire Department, 4 Assistant Chiefs, 4 Battalion Chiefs, 14 Captains, 22 Lieutenants and 171 firemen.

DIVISIONS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

COMBAT

FIRE PREVENTION AND RECORDS

TRAINING

ALARM AND SIGNAL

MAINTENANCE

HORSE-DRAWN FIRE APPARATUS

The information in regard to the days of the horse-drawn fire equipment comes from my memories of living approximately backyard to backyard of Number 4 Fire Station.
from the time of my birth. In my early youth I received many a free haircut at the station, and even though the horse clippers were used it was still quite presentable.

Along with many others in the neighborhood, it was always a fascinating sight to see the horses perform their hitches. Three separate hitches were made at 7:00 P.M. each night. The horses returned to their stalls to make the second hitch, but remained under the harness after the second hitch while straw bedding was placed in their stalls and their evening oats and hay supplied.

After they were in the stalls, a special type of clay was packed into the sole of each hoof. The purpose of this was to prevent the hoofs from drying out. Due to the galloping of the horses it was necessary to keep their hoofs and legs in first class condition. This clay would readily break out of the hoofs upon the first few steps they took.

The horses in the fire service were outstanding specimens. They were intelligent and well trained. One could not help but note the feeling of pride of the firemen toward their horses.

The hitch consisted of the horses running underneath the harness, which was suspended from the ceiling on straps. As the firemen gave a downward pull on the collar, the hooks, which held the harness to the straps, would be released. Incidentally, the collar was open just opposite from the con-
ventional collar. It opened underneath, and, as the horse came under, the firemen would snap it down over the neck.

The morning for the drivers started at 5:00 o'clock. They would be called by telephone, and between 5:00 A.M. and 5:50 A.M. they would clean the bedding from the stalls, curry their horses, get them their morning food and water, and the driver would be ready to go home for his breakfast at 5:50 A.M.

At 10:00 A.M. a hitch was performed and again at 12:00 noon, after which the horses were fed.

Although the gong sounded 5 times for a fire and 7 times for a hitch, one could detect in the actions of the horses that they instinctively knew the time of the different hitches from an actual fire alarm.

The drivers returned from breakfast at 7:00 A.M., and at 8:00 A.M. they would take the horses out for a 45 minute exercise period. This consisted of walking the horses back and forth on Fifth Avenue between "H" and "K" Streets, after which they were brought back and rubbed down.

If a fire alarm came in during the exercise period, one of the firemen would run to the corner and hail to the driver. It was quite a sight to see them galloping bareback to the station to be hitched and dash to the fire. The exercise period was held each day—Sundays excepted.

The floor of the fire station was made of wooden blocks. The stalls were kept scrupulously clean and showed evidence
of being scrubbed with soap and water.

In the summer and fall, during the day, all blinds on the apparatus floor were drawn. This was a measure to keep the flies from annoying the horses.

After returning to the station from a fire the horses always received first consideration. They were washed down and dried and their hoofs carefully checked over before any attention was given to the men or equipment. Of the hundreds of times that I have seen these fine animals dash out of the station and gallop down the street, the last time was just as thrilling a sight as was the first.

Several years ago, it was my privilege to read the minutes of the Utah State Firemen's Convention of the year 1911. They included a debate that took place at this convention on the question: "Can The Automobile Efficiently Replace The Horse In the Fire Service?" Chief William H. Glore of the Salt Lake City Fire Department was one of the participants in the debate. I have made several attempts to again locate these minutes that told which side of the question the participants took and their arguments for and against the question. I do remember, however, that if one would let his memory go back to those days he would have to agree that this was a very pertinent question.

The ladder truck at the station, carrying ground ladders up to 50 feet, was pulled by two horses, and the hose wagon, containing 1000 feet of 2½ inch hose and other small
fire fighting equipment, was drawn by three horses.

October 15, 1918, saw the complete motorization of the Salt Lake City Fire Department and the remaining fire horses were retired to the city farm in Mountain Dell.

FIRST FIRE INSPECTION

On March 5, 1897, Chief James Devine inaugurated an inspection program for the department. Before becoming chief of the fire department, James Devine had the background of an architect and builder. As a result of this training he saw the value and benefits for the firemen to understand something of the construction of buildings and of their contents in case of fire. Also, by noting hazardous conditions the firemen could have them removed, thus preventing fire.

Chief Devine presided at the conference of the International Association of Fire Chief's, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1896. At this time he gave a very important and impressive paper on "The Value of Inspection Work for the Fire Department."

Although Chief Devine had left the fire service several years before I entered it, May 1, 1919, I was well acquainted with him. Chief Devine, until his death, always maintained a close relationship with the fire service.

A few years ago, his son Paul sent me the original
inspection record book that was inaugurated by his father. This book is approximately 5 1/2 inches by 8 1/2 inches and contains about 150 pages. Each day the fire department officers detailed to inspection work would go into the chief's office and obtain the book. Following the outlined procedure on the first page, they would write the information in the book. It is interesting to note that the first inspection made was by Captain W. H. Bywater, later chief of the Salt Lake City Fire Department. In 1924 Chief Bywater, as president of the International Association of Fire Chief's, presided at the Buffalo conference.

The following was written in long hand by Chief Devine and is on the fly-page of the book:

Inspectors Record

Commencing March 5th, 1897.

Officers making inspections will secure the following information:

1st Name and Location of Building?

2nd Description inside and outside and use of same?

3rd What fire protection has it inside?

4th Entrance and Exits?

5th Contents?

6th Fire Escapes and stand pipes?

7th If accessible at rear state how?

8th Location of hydrants for front and rear?

9th Does areaway extend under sidewalk?

10th If so is it safe for aerial truck?
11th Describe arrangements of basement?
12th Is building connected with other buildings?
Miscellaneous:

Note any violation of fire ordinances or such information as may be of benefit to the Department.

NOTE:

Modern fire codes still incorporate the twelve points outlined by Chief Devine.

FIRST MOTORIZED PUMPER

The first gasoline motor combination pumping engine was put into service at Headquarters Station in 1911. It was a 500 gallon per minute rotary type Webb pumper. The first fire at which the pumper was used was the Daniels Theater fire. It is recorded that it pumped continuously for "2 hours and 20 minutes."

It is reported that the Daniels Theater fire occurred shortly after the arrival of the Webb apparatus in Salt Lake City. Before the pumper had been given the "Underwriters Test" and officially accepted by the city, it was used at the fire. It performed well, passed the "Underwriters Test", and was accepted by the city.

When Number 3 Station in Sugarhouse was opened in 1914 the Webb pumper was assigned to this station.
STATE FIREMEN'S TRAINING SCHOOL

In addition to a daily training program in the fire department, a specialized annual training school is held in Salt Lake City.

The First Annual Firemen's Training School, sponsored by the Salt Lake City Fire Department was held June 21, 22, 23, 1945 with a registration of 121. Two states and 22 fire departments were represented.

This training school has grown each year. A complete record of the attendance and the proceedings have been printed in book form after each school.

The Sixth Annual Training School, held June 22, 23, 24, 1950 had an attendance of 383 with representation from five states.

PENSION

Title 42 - Chapter 4 - Utah Code Annotated 1943

In 1919 the State Legislature passed the Firemen's Pension Act, Reuben Simpson was the first Salt Lake City fireman to participate. He was granted a service pension June 30, 1920.

CIVIL SERVICE

Title 15 - Chapter 9 - Article 3 - Utah Code Annotated 1943.
The 1921 State Legislature passed the Civil Service Act for firemen and policemen of first and second class cities. All members of the fire and police departments who had been appointed as of May 1, 1920, or after, were required to take a civil service examination and be properly certified by the Civil Service Commission, before appointment. This also includes all advancements in rank up to and including the Assistant Chiefs.

FIRE DEPARTMENT LOCATIONS

Chief's Office

The office of the Fire Chief was moved from the second floor of the "Old City Hall", 130 East First South, to 1½ East First South, December 19, 1949.

Fire Prevention Bureau

A Fire Prevention Bureau and Records Division was established in January 1941 and was located on the second floor of the "Old City Hall". On December 19, 1949 it was moved to its present location, 1½ East First South.

Training Division

This division has an office at 1½ East First South.

Alarm Office

The Fire Department Alarm Office is located on the third floor of the Public Safety Building, 105 South State Street. This has been its location since the summer of 1915. Prior to that time, the Alarm Office occupied a portion of
Number One Fire Station, 132 East First South. First Fire Alarm system was completed on September 3, 1890.

Signal Division

The Signal Division office and Shop is on the first floor of the "Old City Hall" building, 122 East First South.

Mechanical Shop

This division is in charge of the equipment of the department, and supervises maintenance work. The shop is located in the rear of 132 East First South.

COMBAT DIVISION

Number 1 Station

119 East First South since October 31, 1948. In 1890 a building was constructed at 132 East First South for a Headquarters Fire Station, in this same year a station was also built at 19 North Second West and designated as Fire Station Number 2. In 1891 an addition was built on the west side of Headquarters to properly house a ladder truck company and was called Number 3 Station and carried this number until a station was built in Sugar House, 1135 East Twenty First South, in June 1914. At this time Number 1 and Number 3 Stations were consolidated under Fire Headquarters Station Number 1. The new station in Sugar House was then known as Fire Station Number 3.

Headquarters (Number 1) Station, 132 East First South, was used in this capacity until it was abandoned April 27, 1944, the firemen and apparatus responded from the Police Garage, 125 South State Street, and the following day,
Number 1 Station was moved to 179 Motor Avenue. On October 31, 1948, Number 1 Station moved to its present location, 148 East First South.

Number 2 Station
19 North Second West - Built and manned in 1890.

Number 3 Station
1135 East Twenty First South Street. Occupied in 1914.

Number 4 Station
222 "I" Street. Went into operation in 1900. It was remodeled on the same location in 1940.

Number 5 Station
1023 East Ninth South. Placed in service in 1906.

Number 6 Station
949 West Eighth South. Built in 1910, then razed and rebuilt on the same location in 1921.

Number 7 Station

Number 8 Station
258 Thirteenth East. Placed in Operation in 1931.

Number 9 Station
1724 South Main Street. Completed in 1940.
Number 10 Station

1111 South Twenty First East. Placed in use in 1942.

Number 11 Station

Salt Lake City Airbase. Constructed during World War II and remained under the control of the Army until June 15, 1947, when the responsibility of giving fire protection to this area was assumed by Salt Lake City.

Drill Tower

Prior to 1931 a 5 story hose tower in the rear of Headquarters Station was also used as an improvised drill tower. In 1931, in the rear of Number 5 Station, 1023 East Ninth South, a drill tower of six stories was constructed. The first floor was a room of concrete construction, 14 x 14 feet, 9 feet high. The balance of the tower was of frame construction.

In 1941, because of structural defects, it was necessary to take off the two top stories.
MAYORS OF SALT LAKE CITY

Council Form

Grant, Jedediah M. Jan. 11, 1851 to Dec. 1, 1856
Smoot, A. O. Jan. 2, 1857 to Feb. 16, 1866
Wells, Daniel H. Feb. 16, 1866 to Feb. 15, 1876
Little, Feramorz Feb. 15, 1876 to Feb. 21, 1882
Jennings, William Feb. 14, 1882 to Feb. 19, 1884
Sharp, James Feb. 19, 1884 to Feb. 16, 1886
Armstrong, Francis Feb. 16, 1886 to Feb. 16, 1890
Scott, George M. Feb. 18, 1890 to Feb. 16, 1892
Baskin, Robert N. Feb. 16, 1892 to Jan. 2, 1896
Clark, John Jan. 3, 1898 to Jan. 2, 1900
Thompson, Ezra Jan. 6, 1900 to Jan. 4, 1904
Morris, R. P. Jan. 4, 1904 to Jan. 6, 1906
Thompson, Ezra Jan. 6, 1906 to Aug. 12, 1907
Bransford, John S. Aug. 13, 1907 to Jan. 2, 1912

Commission Form

Ferry, W. Mont Jan. 3, 1916 to Jan. 5, 1920
Neslen, C. C. July 26, 1920 to Jan. 3, 1928
Bowman, John F. Jan. 3, 1928 to Jan. 4, 1932
Marcus, Louis Jan. 4, 1932 to Jan. 2, 1936
Wallace, John M. Feb. 19, 1938 to Jan. 2, 1940
Jenkins, Ab Jan. 2, 1940 to Jan. 2, 1944
Glade, Earl J. Jan. 2, 1944
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSIONERS

Commission Form

Mayor Mont. Ferry  Jan. 3, 1916 to Jan. 4, 1918
Comm. Karl A. Scheid  Jan. 4, 1918 to Jan. 5, 1920
Mayor E. A. Bock  Jan. 5, 1920 to July 26, 1920
Comm. Arthur F. Barnes  July 26, 1920 to Jan. 4, 1926
Comm. T. T. Burton  Jan. 4, 1926 to Jan. 4, 1932
Comm. John M. Knight  Jan. 4, 1932 to Jan. 2, 1936
Mayor E. B. Erwin  Jan. 2, 1936 to Feb. 7, 1938
Mayor John M. Wallace  Feb. 19, 1938 to Jan. 2, 1940
Mayor Ab Jenkins  Jan. 2, 1940 to Jan. 2, 1944
Comm. Ben E. Lingenfelter  June 21, 1949
FIRE CHIEFS

Volunteer

Jesse C. Little Oct. 17, 1856 to Mar. 27, 1871
John D. T. McAllister May 27, 1871 to Mar. 1876
Charles M. Donaldson Mar. 1876 to Oct. 1876
George M. Ottinger Oct. 1876 to Sep. 30, 1883

Paid

George M. Ottinger Oct. 1, 1883 to June 1890
W. A. Stanton June 1890 to Feb. 13, 1894
James Devine Feb. 13, 1894 to Feb. 8, 1904
Wm. H. Bywater Feb. 8, 1904 to Jan. 15, 1906
James T. Vail Jan. 15, 1906 to Aug. 3, 1908
Wm. Glower Aug. 3, 1908 to Feb. 2, 1912
Wm. H. Bywater Feb. 2, 1912 to Apr. 20, 1925
W. S. Knight Apr. 20, 1925 to May 8, 1940
L. M. Hanson May 8, 1940 to Aug. 12, 1943
J. K. Piercey Aug. 12, 1943
ADDENDUM

No attempt has been made to record events that might be outstanding in one's memory of his service in the fire department - such as the fire best remembered, the firemen's band in which he may have taken part, and the various recruits that did "tower watch" or "bunk drill" under the direction of "the men." Nor have we tried to remember when "this or that" happened at the station, or at a fire, or many of the unforgettable memories of the fireman who loves the fire service, - memories he would like to relive.

However, provision has been made so the individual fireman may jot down special items that will keep his memories and experiences on the fire department alive.

Several pages have been left for this purpose.

J.K.P.