



Reedsport Volunteer Fire Department  
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## Reedsport Volunteer Fire Department history 1922-1976

For many years the fire department has been attempting to establish the written history of the fire department through newspapers or any other type of records. The University of Oregon Library system was contacted, and we learned that they have, on micro film, all newspaper issues published by the Port Umpqua Courier from 1912 up to the early 1960's. However it was found to be too expensive to have the U of O digitalize the over 10,000 pages of newspaper for our review.

In 2015, the Reedsport Main Street Project was able to scan every Reedsport City Council meeting minutes from the early 1900's up to 1980 and post them online for the publics review.

All the Council meetings were reviewed and by the fire department up to 1976. There were many missing gaps in-between the the minutes due to the inability of the computer software to read some of the old typewriter written format but the following is what we were able to read:

- **September 11th 1922** – Chas McCauly appointed Fire Chief.
- **February 5th 1923** – Al Staterly appointed Fire Chief. Paid \$ 10.00 per month
- **May 7<sup>th</sup> 1923** – FD purchases hose, adapters and a hose cart.
- **August 13<sup>th</sup> 1923** – FD purchases another hose cart.
- **January 1924** – Fire Chief is payed \$ 20.00 per month.
- **June 1924** – City Council talks about organizing a Volunteer Fire Department.
- **September 1924** – FD purchases an electric siren.
- **January 15<sup>th</sup> 1925** – A telephone is installed at the Johnson Mill in case of a fire there.
- **March 30<sup>th</sup> 1926** – A telephone is installed at the Fire Chiefs house for fire emergencies.
- **October 1928** – Operating budget for the FD is \$1000.00.
- **January 1929** – John Berhardt is appointed Fire Chief
- **June 1929** – FD purchases fire pump and attachments.

- **August 1929** – The Reedsport Volunteer Fire Department is officially formed.
- **September 1929** – City authorizes pay for firefighters???
- **November 1929** – City authorizes FD to purchase a battery for a fire truck and is told to respond to local mill fires when a whistle goes off. FD is also authorized to respond to Winchester Bay for large fires, not small blazes.
- **February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1930** – FD moves a hose and chemical cart to the Schofield Heights area.
- **August 4<sup>th</sup> 1930** – FD is authorizes to build a temporary airport.
- **November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1930** – FD told to discontinue the use of the fire siren to signal night time curfew for minors.
- **March 31<sup>st</sup> 1931** – FD asked City to build combo fire station and jail, and wants to purchase a fire engine. City says no.
- **September 8<sup>th</sup> 1931** – Chief asks City to purchase a triple combo Stutz fire engine with 500 GPM pump from the Howe Apparatus Company. City says yes. Cost \$ 5,293
- **December 14<sup>th</sup> 1931** – City authorizes Fire Chief to tear down hose cart shed and put them in the City warehouse. FD authorized to purchase screen for suction hose.
- **January 4<sup>th</sup> 1932** - (unable to read script).
- **January 1936** – Fire Chief payed \$15.00 per month.
- **November 8<sup>th</sup> 1937** – There is some discussion about buying a new fire truck.
- **December 14<sup>th</sup> 1937** – City to purchase a Seagraves fire truck with a 500 GPM pump with all equipment.
- **March 7<sup>th</sup> 1938** – Fire Chief proposes a building for new fire truck. City says yes.
- **July 20<sup>th</sup> 1938** – FD is authorized to go no farther than (5) miles outside the City limits for a fire.
- **June 5<sup>th</sup> 1939** - FD told not to go outside City limits unless it is in a fire district. FD authorized to respond to fire at the CCC camp at the edge of town.
- **March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942** – FD is authorized to hold (3) drills and (1) business meeting per month instead (2) drills and one meeting per month.
- **April 14<sup>th</sup> 1942?** – Will insurance cover FD if responding to Gardiner? The FD's priority is to cover Reedsport.
- **July 6<sup>th</sup> 1943** – Mayor to talk to the Fire Chief about buying (2) smoke masks.  
NOTE: The fire station may have been built on "M" Street.

- **January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1944** – Chief Berhardt resigns. City appoints M.M. Kelly as new Fire Chief.
- **July 1944** - Fire siren is installed on Jade Street??
- **March 5<sup>th</sup> 1945** – FD buys 1938 Coupe to be used as a utility vehicle. Cost \$500.00.
- **December 5<sup>th</sup> 1945** – City authorizes Fire Chief to convert Chevy pickup into an auxiliary fire truck. Cost \$500.00
- **February 12<sup>th</sup> 1948** – Fire Chiefs report to City Council that there were 22 fire alarms in 1947.
- **May 1948** – Chief M.M. Kelly resigns. City appoints Elmer Samson as fire Chief. He resigns two weeks later.
- **June 7<sup>th</sup> 1948** – City appoints Louis Wessel as Fire Chief.
- **October 1948** – RVFD gives Winchester Bay the old Stutz fire engine.
- **August 1953** – Assistant Chief John McCool is paid \$10.00 per month.
- **October 21<sup>st</sup> 1953** – City authorizes FD to purchase new Chevy fire truck???
- **November 1954** – Chief Wessel resigns. City appoints Joe Glasser as Fire Chief until the end of 1956.
- **March 6<sup>th</sup> 1946** – City asks for bids for a salvage truck??
- **January 1957** – City appoints Jim Thornton as Fire Chief. Chief asks City Council for pay raise for volunteer firefighters. Matter is tabled.
- **March 1957** – There is some discussion about a dispatch system for police and fire.
- **June 1957** – There is discussion on possibly hiring telephone operators to answer calls 24 hours a day,
- **August 12<sup>th</sup> 1957** – City passes motion to purchase new Mack fire engine. 225 HP. The City will also dispatch fire calls for Gardiner FD.
- **June 16<sup>th</sup> 1958** – City authorizes to start proses for building new fire station.
- **November 9<sup>th</sup> 1959** – FD replaces old fire siren with a new 5 HP siren.
- **July 1960** – FD purchases used school bus for salvage truck for \$500.00.
- **April 9<sup>th</sup> 1962** – The consensus of opinion of the community that the speeding of firefighters answering fire calls constitutes a hazard on these streets and should be curtailed.
- **March 7<sup>th</sup> 1962** – City receives an insurance rating of 5, down from a 6.

- **January 1965** – City police to charge \$20.00 per month dispatch and siren services for GFD and WBFD.
- **February 1965** – City discusses mutual aid agreements with other cities in the South Coast. NOTE: Leroy Cheniwick becomes Fire Chief sometime in-between Feb. and May 1965.
- **May 1965** – Chief asked for paid Chief and two firefighter positions and a ladder truck. Request denied.
- **July 1965** – City authorizes purchase of a fire boat.
- **February 1967** – FD purchases a 1930 Mack fire engine for display purposes.
- **January 1968** – Zack Turner becomes Fire Chief.
- **May 1969** – Firefighters are authorized \$2.50 per hour.
- **November 1969** – Tax levy passed by the City to purchase a new fire engine.
- **January 1970** – City accepts a bid from American LaFrance for new fire engine.
- **January 1971** – City Attorney to draw up capital improvement plan for FD.
- **August 1975** – City authorizes use of red lights on POV's when going to a fire.
- **July 10<sup>th</sup> 1976** – FF Tom Anderson nominated for Oregon Firefighter of the Year.