

Henry "Harry" Morgan

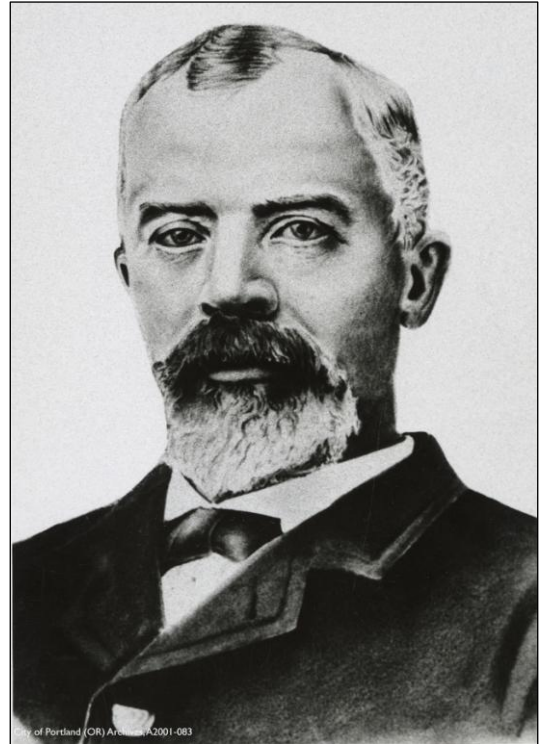
Chief Engineer and Fire Chief of Portland Fire

Compiled by Don Porth and Greg Keller

Source - Various

Henry Kinsey Morgan was born in Murtha, Wales on March 16, 1831. He and his family would immigrate to New York, NY when he was three years old. They would migrate to California during the gold rush, where he would remain for many years. He worked as a foundryman and would become the head of the union workforce in San Francisco. After leading an unsuccessful strike among union members, Morgan would leave for Portland, Oregon, where he would spend the rest of his life.

With a legal name of Henry, Morgan would always be known in Portland by the name Harry. In 1878, he would become the 15th Chief Engineer for the Portland Volunteer Fire Department. His service would last two years. It is unknown if or how he remained affiliated with the Department following his term as Chief Engineer. However, he would become Chief of the Portland Paid Fire Department in 1884 (the second Chief to be appointed) and serve until 1892, when he would be removed for "political reasons." During his term as Chief, fire loses were reduced considerably and Chief Morgan advocated for improved wiring for the fire alarm telegraph system, standpipes and fire escapes on all buildings over three stories, and the formation of an additional truck company.



After his work with the Fire Department, Morgan would become a City Park Policeman. He would serve in this position until his death.

Morgan became sick after attending a funeral the week before his death. The sickness resulted in pneumonia, which took his life on March 13, 1907. Morgan was 76 years old at the time of his death. He would be laid to rest two days later at Riverview Cemetery in Portland, Oregon. No family was known to survive him.

The badge shown here was presented by the members of the Portland Paid Fire Department to Chief Morgan on May 30, 1888. This was in the middle of his term as Fire Chief but the badge references his title of Chief Engineer, and is likely a tribute to his service as Chief Engineer of the Portland Volunteer Fire Department from 1878 to 1879.

The badge was found approximately 8 years ago by the owner of Eco Estate Jewelry of Austin, Texas. The owner recognized the historical significance of the badge and placed it for sale, but had no intention of letting it go to any private collector, feeling it was a valuable historic asset that should be part of a public display. In 2022, he made it available to be returned to its rightful home, Portland, Oregon.

