

# "Portland Fire Training"

Source: Portland Fire & Rescue Documents

For most of the early history of Portland Fire & Rescue, training was an "on the job" type of affair. However, as the job became more sophisticated, expectations would rise. This led to the establishment of the "Fire College" in 1930.

Prior to the Fire College, classroom training was being developed. In this Sunday Journal article of January 25, 1920, the following was reported:

## **Firemen Are To Undergo Period Of Hard Training**

Setting up exercises, first aid, and rescue work are among the plans made by Chief Dowell



*Members of the Portland Fire Department will be put through an intensive course of setting up exercises, training stunts, first aid, and rescue work at a training school that will be established within the next month if present plans of Chief Dowell are carried out.*

*Dowell has had his scheme of comprehensive indoor training in mind for some time, believing it an effective means of training firefighters for the hazardous tasks that they are called upon to perform during the course of their duty.*

*Although definite plans have not been announced, it is quite probably that the school will be located on the upper floors of one of the many fire stations. Provision will be made in the new fire station that will soon be erected at Fourth and Taylor Streets for carrying on just such training work. A special instructor will direct the exercises and training stunts.*

*Purchase of the fire prevention film from the Minnesota Fire Board, depicting actual training classes and methods used in instruction, is one of the steps that will be taken by the department to further their work of fire prevention.*

*Commissioner Bigelow, Chief Dowell, and several members of the Fire Department witnessed the film last Monday afternoon at the auditorium and were favorably impressed with the film as a means of instructing new men in the department.*

*An instruction board, showing various knots used in firefighting work, methods of resuscitation, and fire hazards and dangers has been prepared by Chief Dowell as a further means of aiding his men in combating fires.*

*Members of the Fire Department believe their Chief will, in time, step into the place occupied by the late Joseph Buchtel, former Chief of the Fire Department, who made a name for himself as an inventor of nozzles, hand fire extinguishers, and other firefighting apparatus. Chief*

Edward Boatright



*Dowell is, at present, working on plans with Chief Graham, of the Corvallis Fire Department, for a nozzle with will be patented within a short time.*

The plans described above would evolve into the Fire College. Battalion Chief Edward L. Boatright was assigned to establish Portland's first Fire College. He reviewed the Fire College established by the International Association of Fire Chiefs in the City of Los Angeles in preparation for this assignment. Portland's Fire College would be dedicated on September 6, 1930.

The Fire College was located at 201 Fourth Street and occupied the entire 3rd floor of the central fire station. The School had desks and equipment to accommodate approximately 100 firefighters.

A training tower would begin to be built in 1935. It would be completed March 15, 1936.

The first training manual was a huge book, hundreds of pages in content that covered every subject relative to the job. It was affectionately known as the "Boatright Bible" and was first published in 1938.

In the 1950's, an intensified training program was established under training officers. The training period at that

1936 New Drill Tower



1950 Station 1 Drill Tower



time would extend for one year. It was essentially an on-the-job training program but at a fire station dedicated to training, utilizing regular, in-service firefighters working alongside trainees assigned to an engine or truck.

The building of the new Central Fire Station at 55 SW Ash Street included the provision of a drill tower connected to the west side of the building. This would accommodate additional training services held at that station.

August of 1979 would usher in the era of television training. A television production specialist would be hired to coordinate closed circuit television training that would be broadcast to all stations to accommodate the wide spread location of stations and the need to

reach three different operating shifts plus staff members. This changed the landscape of training considerably.

In 1984, Portland developed the first training academy. This occurred on the heels of the contractual service agreement with Fire District #10. The first academy was staffed by training officers from both Portland and District #10 to create a true integration of the two fire departments. The first academy would commence on July 23, 1984. The academy was 12 weeks of classroom training followed by six months of in-service training at a training company then three months assigned to a regular station before completing the one year probationary period. This system has remained essentially the same for decades to follow.

In 1993, Portland Fire would modernize and re-locate training activities to a new facility built in Parkrose. A drill tower would be built soon after as well as classroom accommodations to house the training academy. It would go on to serve both in service (Station 2) and academy based training. The sprawling grounds would also allow for a variety of other trainings to include a burn building, urban search and rescue prop, and driving exercises.



Station 2 Drill Tower

1937 Fire College Diploma for Captain Peter Kumpf

