

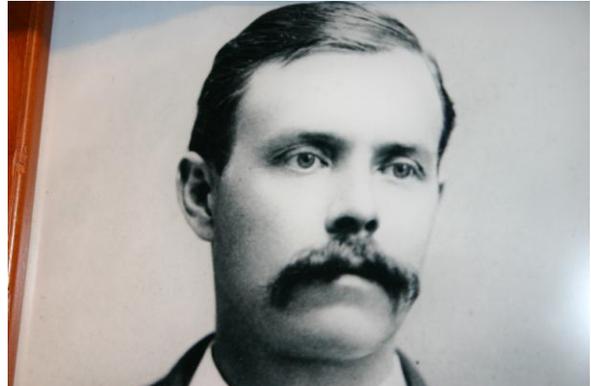
Portland Firefighters

Henry Weinhard & Stephen Skidmore

Compiled by Don Porth

The oldest piece of public artwork in the city of Portland is said to be the Skidmore Fountain, located behind the Central Fire Station (Station 1) in the Ankeny Plaza at SW 1st and Ankeny. It was dedicated on September 22, 1888, in memory of Stephen Skidmore.

Stephen Skidmore was a wealthy Portland druggist who came to Portland in the 1850s. He would begin his business and do quite well in the growing city. As his wealth grew, he became a world traveler and civic minded person. He envisioned a fountain in town that would serve as a centerpiece for the city. Thus, the idea for the Skidmore Fountain was born.

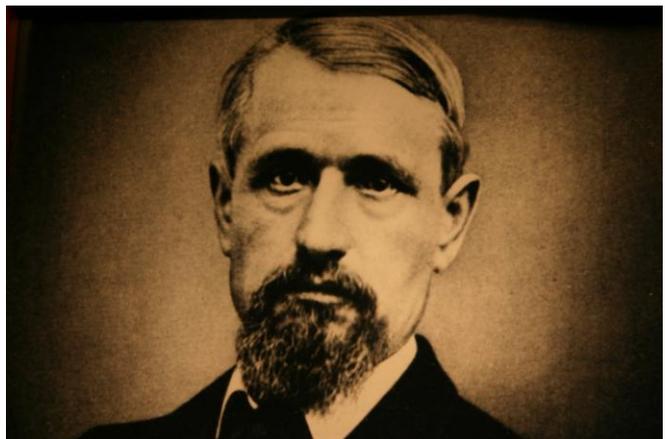


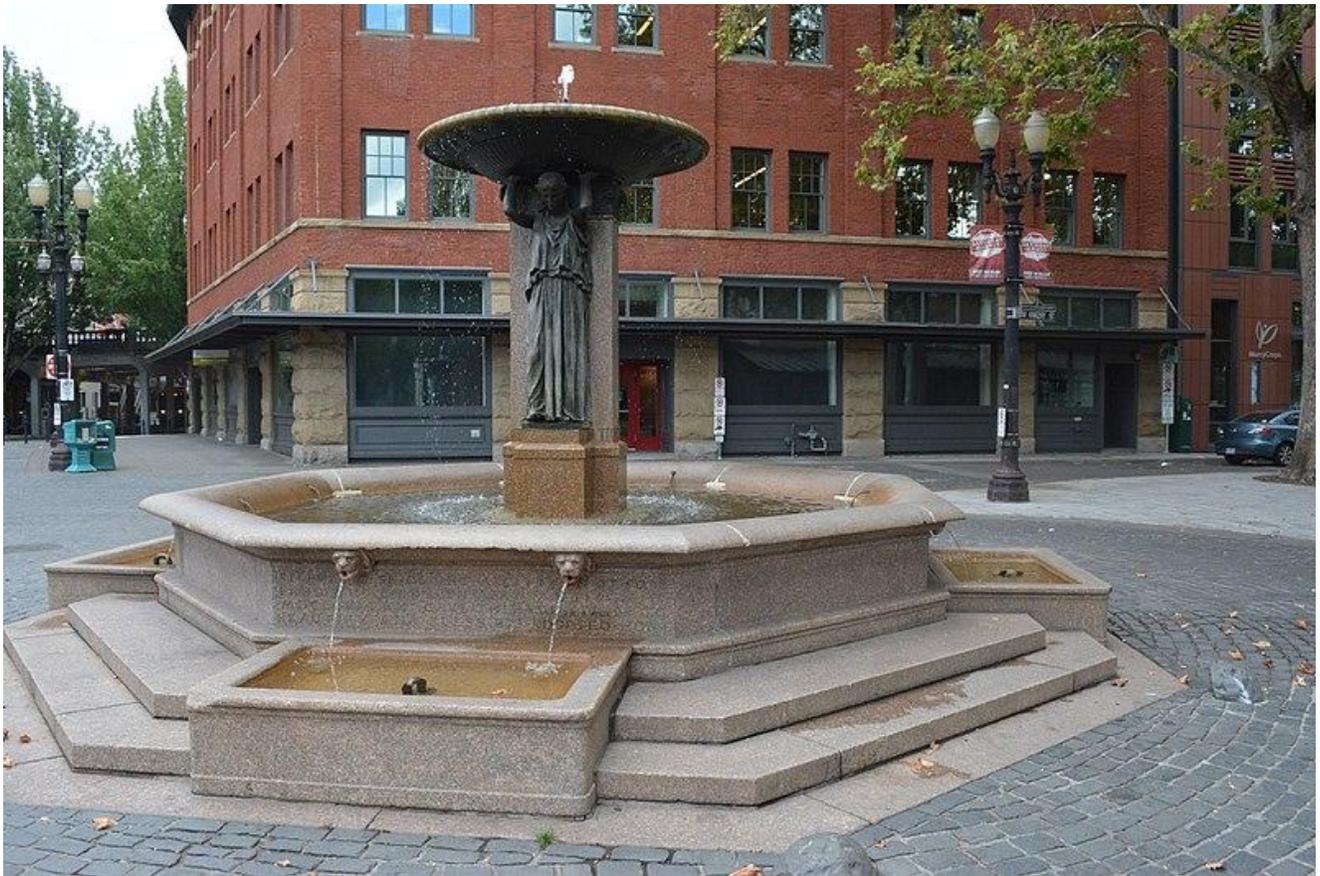
Skidmore had long suffered from a lung ailment. Upon his death on September 22, 1883, he bequeathed \$5,000 to build the fountain he envisioned. The additional \$18,000 needed to build the fountain was said to be donated by his friends Henry Failing, Tyler Woodward, and his business partner Charles Sitton.

The Portland City Council appointed a Fountain Committee in August of 1885 to implement Skidmore's wishes. An artist named Olin Warner was contracted to develop the fountain. It was envisioned to be similar to the fountains at Versailles, which Skidmore had visited during the 1878 Paris Exposition. The fountain was intended to be decorative, yet serve as a watering source for people (top tier), horses (middle tier), and dogs (lower tier).

The fountain would be completed on September 22, 1888. For its dedication local beer brewer Henry Weinhard offered to connect fire hose to his brewery and fill the fountain with beer for one day, as a celebration for the city. The city fathers at the time rejected the idea, citing that horses might get drunk.

What most historians have failed to note is the common thread both Skidmore and Weinhard shared. While they were both early businessmen in Portland but they were also both Portland Firefighters. Both men would serve with Multnomah Engine Company #2. Skidmore is shown on the rosters as early as 1856 and Weinhard around 1865. The idea for fire hose might not have been a coincidence....





Source:

- Portland Fire Archives
- <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/skidmore-fountain-and-stephen-g-skidmore/#.YSRK5o5KiUk>