

Demise of Fire Station No. 9

Written by Steve Lackmeyer

Tuesday, 10 July 2007 00:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 22 February 2009 03:03



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JULY, 2007: Firehouse No. 9, built in 1901, was the city's second and finest, but that wasn't enough to spare it from the onslaught of Urban Renewal. This week in 1967, Oklahoma City officials announced the fire station at 25 S Broadway would be among hundreds of structures to make way for the city of the future. Much of legendary fire chief George Robert McAlpine's 45 career at OCFD was woven in with the station, according to news accounts.

"It will be a sad thing," He said. "But you can't stand in the way of progress." McAlpine was employed by a hauling firm in 1913 and driving one of the first motorized trucks locally when he first flirted with a career in the fire department. As he was driving his truck, he came upon a shiny red Franklin automobile owned by the fire chief. It was stranded, with a broken drive shaft. McAlpine, telling the story years later, said he towed the car to No. 9 station, repaired it, and was immediately offered a job as fireman, driving the city's first motorized fire truck. Back then, the station had a glass dome on the roof.

"A watchman would stand up there, looking all over the city through that dome to see if there were any fires," McAlpine said. In 1940, McAlpine was chief - and it was then he ordered a complete remodeling of the station. McAlpine retired in 1959, and his name now graces the old fire station training grounds that are now part of the downtown Arts Quarter and home to the annual Festival of the Arts.

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