



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

JULY 2023

CHIEF CAMPBELL AND THE UNION OIL FIRE



Real photo postcard of Chief Campbell's hearse, led by his favorite team of fire horses, is seen at Riverview Cemetery in 1911.

WEBFOOTERS POST CARD CLUB

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CHIEF CAMPBELL AND THE UNION OIL FIRE

BY DONALD R. NELSON

Fire Chief David Campbell came up through the ranks first as a volunteer fireman in Portland and then joined the Portland Paid Fire Department in the mid-1880s. He also was a bare-knuckle prizefighter for a time in the 1880s.

By 1895 he was assistant engineer of the fire department, soon becoming Chief Engineer, a.k.a. Fire Chief.

Political shenanigans beyond his control caused his removal in 1896. Campbell was re-instated in 1898.

Campbell appeared on Rose Festival post cards about 1910. One was a lithographed card in color. It shows the Chief in a rose decorated auto with his driver and two other firemen.



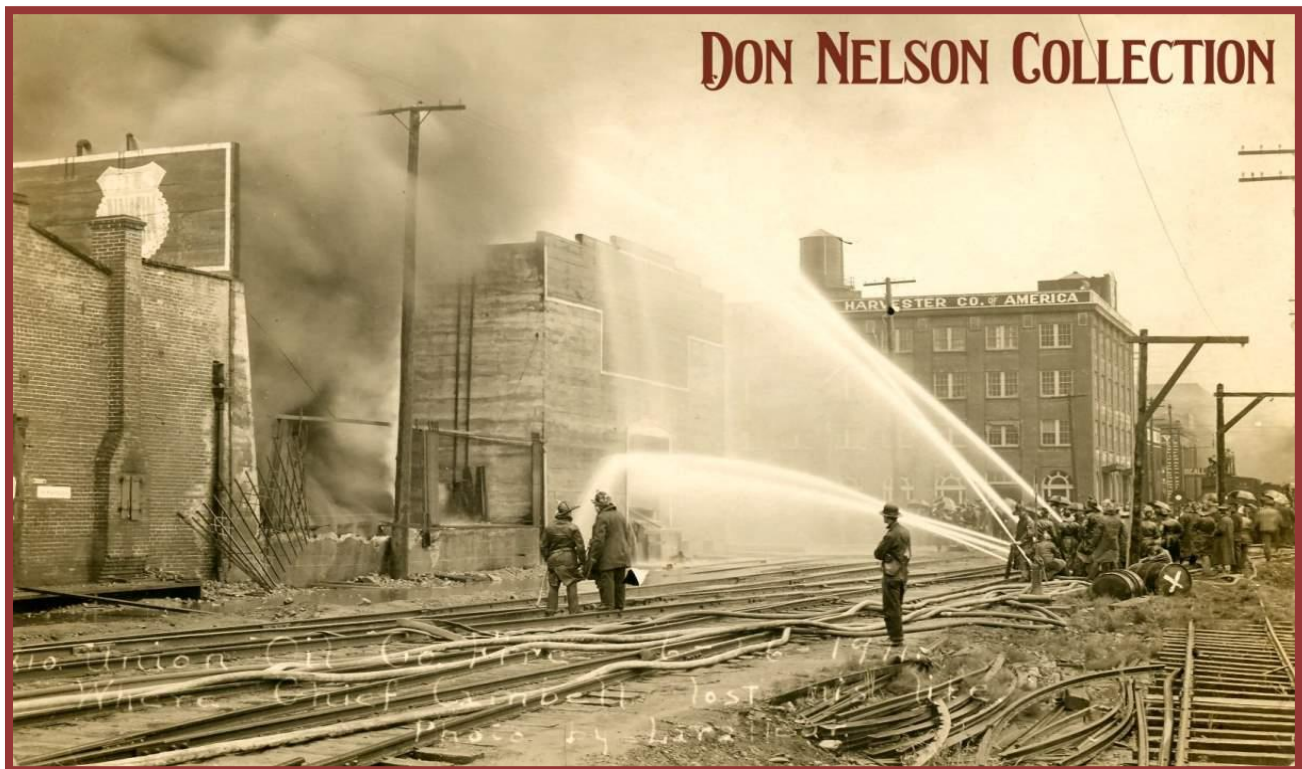
Photo of Fire Chief David Campbell in 1905.
Don Nelson Collection.

The message written on the back by "Sadie" said that most of the flowers on Chief Campbell's auto were from her yard and that the photo was from the previous year.

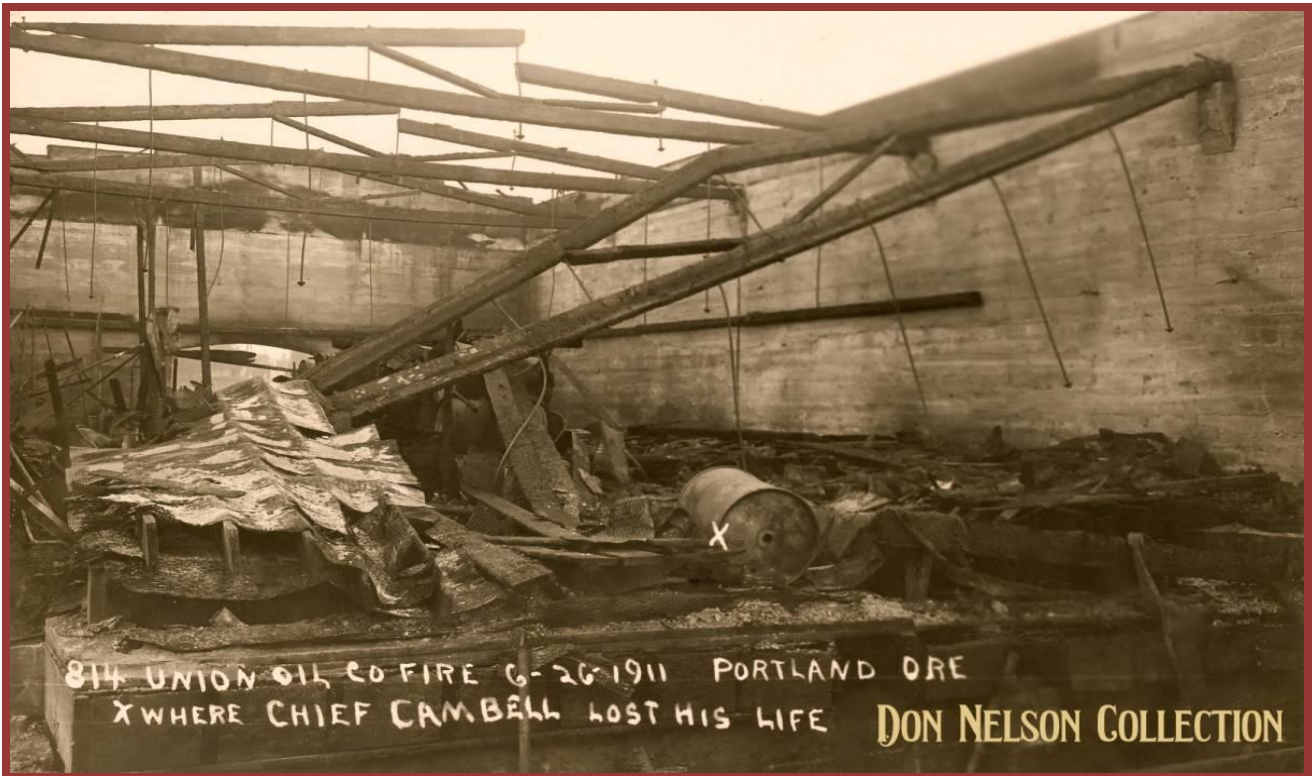
The Union Oil Company of California Fire, which occurred on June 26, 1911 was well documented in photography. Many images were sold as real photo post cards. The oil company buildings were on SE Water Avenue and Salmon Street, as well as SE First Street, which was occupied by Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.



Real photo postcard of the Chief in a rose decorated auto with his driver and two other firemen with the Weinhard Brewery in the left background, circa 1909.



Real photo postcard of the Union Oil Fire where Chief Campbell lost his life on June 26, 1911.



Real photo postcard of the Union Oil Fire showing the spot where Chief Campbell lost his life on June 26, 1911.



Real photo postcard of the Fireboat David Campbell by Electric Studio, circa 1913.



Photo of the David Campbell Memorial in Portland in July 2023. Don Nelson photo.

Chief Campbell was concerned that his men had not heard the call to exit one of the buildings and he went in to make sure they were out. A wall fell on the Chief, killing him. His skeletal remains were found under Campbell's buttons that were recognized as being from Campbell's uniform. He left behind his wife, Wiebka, and faithful canine, Cole.

It was estimated that 150,000 citizens lined Portland's streets during Chief David Campbell's funeral procession in 1911. A series of postcards documented the event, including several views of Chief Campbell's hearse, led by his favorite team of fire horses. He was buried at Portland's Riverview Cemetery.

A fire boat named for Chief Campbell was launched in 1913. The David Campbell Memorial at West Burnside, between SW 18th & 19th Avenues, was dedicated in 1928.

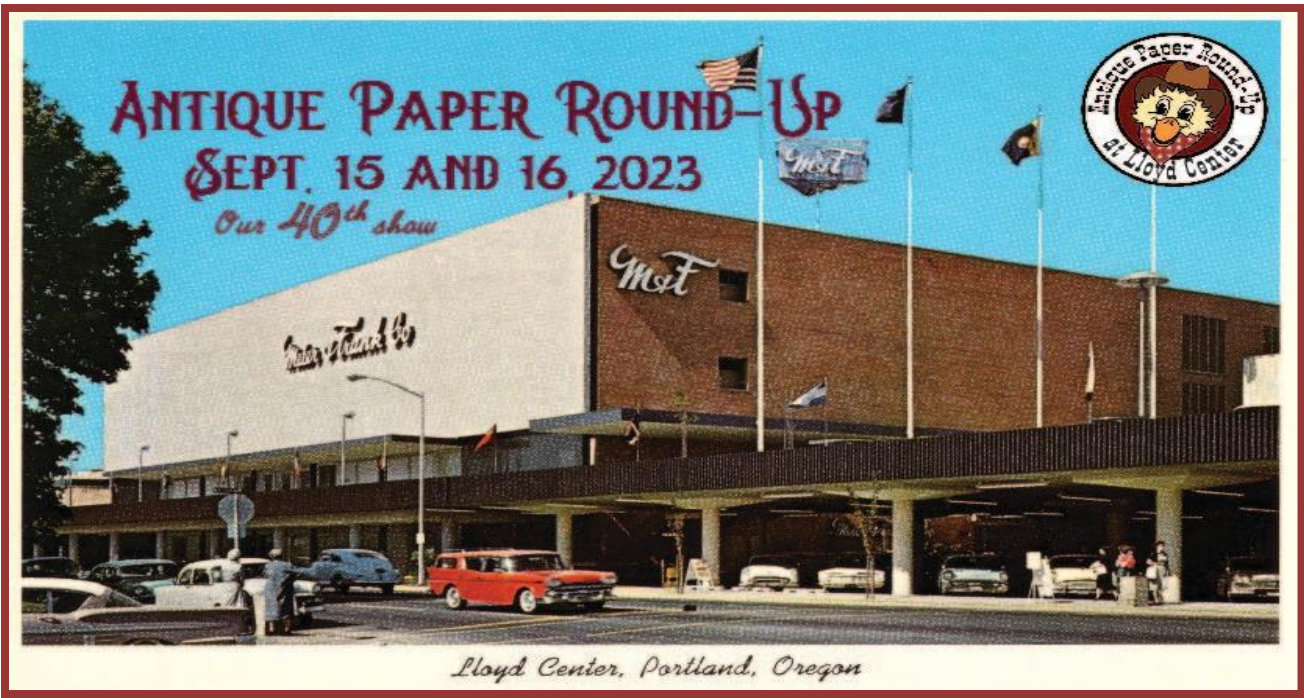
According to the David Campbell Memorial Association (DCMA) web-page the DCMA is currently spearheading the development of "**Portland Firefighter Memorial Plaza**," a renovation of the David Campbell Memorial and installation of a proper Fallen Firefighter Memorial.

Sources

Portland newspapers.

Portland Fire Department Souvenir of 1905.

The David Campbell Story by Don Porth.



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