



# Meeting Agenda

## Heritage Commission

City Hall  
601 4th Avenue E  
Olympia, WA 98501

Heritage Commission  
Contact: Brittany Gillia  
(360) 753-8427

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**Wednesday, January 28, 2026**

**5:00 PM**

**Room 207**

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**1.A ROLL CALL**

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 3.A** [26-0090](#) Approval of the September 24, 2025 Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Attachments:** [Heritage 9.24.2025 minutes DRAFT](#)

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

*During this portion of the meeting, community members may address the Advisory Committee or Commission regarding items related to City business, including items on the Agenda. In order for the Committee or Commission to comply with Public Disclosure Law for political campaigns, speakers will not be permitted to make public comments before the Committee or Commission where the speaker promotes or opposes a candidate for public office or a ballot measure.*

**5. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

- 6.A** [26-0088](#) 2026 Work Plan

**Attachments:** [2026 work plan draft](#)

- 6.B** [26-0087](#) OFD Historic Storyboard Presentation

**Attachments:** [OFD Storyboard](#)

**7. REPORTS**

**8. OTHER TOPICS**

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

**Upcoming**

**Accommodations**

*The City of Olympia is committed to the non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in employment and the delivery of services and resources. If you require accommodation for your attendance at the City Advisory Committee meeting, please contact the Advisory Committee staff liaison (contact number in the upper right corner of the agenda) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. For hearing impaired, please contact us by dialing the Washington State Relay Service at 7-1-1 or 1.800.833.6384.*



City Hall  
601 4th Avenue E.  
Olympia, WA 98501  
360-753-8244

## Heritage Commission

### Approval of the September 24, 2025 Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

**Agenda Date:** 1/28/2026  
**Agenda Item Number:** 3.A  
**File Number:**26-0090

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**Type:** minutes **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

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#### Title

Approval of the September 24, 2025 Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes



# Meeting Minutes

## Heritage Commission

City Hall  
601 4th Avenue E  
Olympia, WA 98501

Heritage Commission  
Contact: Brittany Gillia  
(360) 753-8427

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**Wednesday, September 24, 2025**

**5:30 PM**

**Online**

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**Register to Attend:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_LuzGAvt5R6Kk7Qr6am\\_OXQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LuzGAvt5R6Kk7Qr6am_OXQ)

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

**1.A ROLL CALL**

**Present:** 6 - Chair Garner Miller, Vice Chair Stacy Hicks, Commissioner Michael Bowman, Commissioner William Cotter, Commissioner Eleanor Knight-Malek and Commissioner Melissa Patrick

**Absent:** 3 - Commissioner Stephen Becker, Commissioner Mark Shepard and Commissioner Gary Stedman

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 3.A** [25-0830](#) Approval of the August 27, 2025 Heritage Commission Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT - None**

**5. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Staff announcements were provided.

**6. BUSINESS ITEMS**

- 6.A** [25-0825](#) Volunteer Shifts

Staff provided information.

The information was received.



**6.B**     [25-0826](#)     Housekeeping

Staff provided information.

**The information was received.**

**7.        REPORTS**

Committee reports were made regarding the upcoming Window Workshop, Arts Walk, and a Heritage Design Review.

**9.        ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.



## Heritage Commission

### 2026 Work Plan

**Agenda Date:** 1/28/2026  
**Agenda Item Number:** 6.A  
**File Number:**26-0088

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**Type:** discussion **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

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#### Title

2026 Work Plan

#### Recommended Action

Discussion only, no action requested.

#### Report

#### Issue:

Discussion on the Commission's work plan for 2026.

#### Staff Contact:

Brittany Gillia, Historic Preservation Officer, Community Planning and Economic Development,  
360.753.8427

#### Presenter(s):

All

#### Background and Analysis:

Each year the Heritage Commission updates it's work plan and provides a draft to the Community Livability and Public Safety Committee (CLPS) for review. The draft work plan is due in early March.

The Commission may consider any amendments and discuss committee roles and tasks, and assignment of commissioners to each of the committees. Final committee assignments will follow in April once new commissioners are seated.

The commission will be reviewing the draft this month, and then voting to proceed with a final recommendation to CLPS at the February meeting.

#### Climate Analysis:

Elements of the work plan include Climate elements, such as exploring “preservation of historic assets that may be affected by Sea Level Rise”.

**Equity Analysis:**

The Heritage Commission is dedicated to providing information to the community about historic homes, the Olympia Heritage Register, cultural heritage projects, and more. As such, the Commission is working to achieve outreach and engagement that reaches new demographics and creates opportunities for all who may be interested to participate in the City’s historic events and heritage projects.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

N/A

**Options:**

1. Discuss the draft 2026 work plan
2. Do not discuss the draft 2026 work plan.

**Financial Impact:**

N/A

**Attachments:**

2026 Work Plan Draft

# Olympia Heritage Commission

## 202~~6~~<sup>5</sup> WORKPLAN



### Mission:

“Identify and actively encourage the preservation of Olympia’s historic resources by maintaining, updating, and expanding the Olympia Heritage Register and reviewing proposed changes to Heritage Register properties; to raise community awareness of Olympia’s history and historic resources; and to serve as the City’s primary resource in matters of history, historic planning and preservation.” **(OMC 18.12.055)**

### Core Strategies:

Educate and Inspire	Partner, Promote and Collaborate	Integrate Preservation Best Practices in Good Government	Review and Permitting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heritage Month</li><li>• Recognition Awards</li><li>• Explore and encourage incentives</li><li>• Special programs, events, tabling, tours</li><li>• Build trust with owners, developers, contractors, realtors, &amp; community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ARCH</li><li>• Community &amp; Educational Org’s</li><li>• Heritage Org’s</li><li>• Local Businesses</li><li>• Build relationships with Tribes &amp; BIPOC community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Input to City Planning efforts</li><li>• Diversity, Equity &amp; Inclusion</li><li>• Heritage Commission Development</li><li>• Research and Interpretation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Timely review w/in permit process</li><li>• Guidance for homeowners and contractors</li><li>• Special Tax Valuation</li><li>• Individual listings</li><li>• District listings</li></ul>

### Committees:

✓  
**Marketing & Outreach**

✓  
**All Committees**

✓  
**Policy, Ordinance & Guidance**

✓  
**Heritage Review**

## Heritage Commission 2025~~6~~ Projects



~~2026~~ Meeting Schedule: 5:30pm on 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays: Jan ~~22~~28, Feb ~~26~~25, March 26~~5~~, April 22~~3~~, May 27~~8~~, July ~~22~~~~7~~~~8~~~~9~~, Aug 26~~7~~, Sept 23~~4~~, Oct 28~~2~~, November and December dates TBD

Activity	Task Detail for 2025 <del>6</del>	Schedule	Budget
<b>Educate and Inspire: Marketing &amp; Outreach Committee</b>			
Heritage Month May 2025 <del>6</del>	Explore partnerships; A+H Awards and event	January to October	-0-
Community Engagement/Partnerships Events	OHC presence at Arts Walk, Arts+ Heritage Week, Walking tours, <u>Neighborhood engagement</u>	Ongoing	\$50
Educational Workshop Series	Informational sessions on topics such as: Cyclical maintenance for historic homes, What is the Olympia Heritage Register, etc	Ongoing goal to host 3 sessions through 2025 <del>6</del>	<del>\$50</del> As needed
Picnic Social	Build relationships and welcome new commissioners	Summer 2025 <del>6</del>	-0-
<b>Integrate Preservation Best Practices in Good Government: Policy, Ordinance and Guidance Committee</b>			
Heritage Commission Training	Plan new member orientation, 2025 <del>6</del> retreat and development training for OHC <u>including Climate initiatives, building materials, and board trainings</u>	Schedule Retreat and training	\$50 + Grant funds
<del>Commission Bylaws Update</del>	<del>Review and clarify commission bylaws</del>	<del>Spring 2025</del>	<del>-0-</del>
Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) Ordinance Update	Participate in Staff update to OMC re: Historic Preservation and Cultural Resource Management	Ongoing through 2025 <del>6</del>	-0-
<del>Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update</del>	<del>Participate in the Periodic Update of the Comp Plan</del>	<del>Ongoing through 2025</del>	<del>-0-</del>
Equity in Historic Preservation Discussions	Equity training discussion on preservation, including intangible heritage assets and cultural landscapes	Ongoing	Grant required
<b>Review and Permitting: Heritage Review Committee</b>			
2025 <del>6</del> Special Tax Valuation Applications	Review and recommend approval to City Council	Fall 2025 <del>6</del>	-0-
Explore National listings that should be listed in the Olympia Heritage Register	Talk with property owners, research properties and possible district boundaries, advocate to list districts and individual properties	March through December	CPED administration fund for plaques
Promote new listings	Advocate to list key properties around Olympia	April through December	-0-
Provide design guidance	Continue design consultations for historic properties, Evaluate OMC design guidelines and best practices for code updates as needed	Ongoing through 2025 <del>6</del>	-0-



## Heritage Commission

### OFD Historic Storyboard Presentation

**Agenda Date:** 1/28/2026  
**Agenda Item Number:** 6.B  
**File Number:**26-0087

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**Type:** information   **Version:** 1   **Status:** In Committee

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#### **Title**

OFD Historic Storyboard Presentation

#### **Recommended Action**

Information only. No action requested.

#### **Report**

#### **Issue:**

Receive information from a local historian that is working with the Olympia Fire Department on a storyboard about the origins of the Fire Department.

#### **Staff Contact:**

Brittany Gillia, Historic Preservation Officer, Community Planning and Economic Development Department, 360.753.8427

#### **Presenter(s):**

Shirley Stirling, WA State Regent, Daughters of the American Colonists

#### **Background and Analysis:**

Shirley Stirling is a volunteer with the Daughters of the American Colonists and has been working with the Olympia Fire Department (OFD) to design a storyboard illustrating the early history and evolution of the Olympia Fire Department. The interpretive panel is proposed to be installed at a local fire station.

#### **Climate Analysis:**

N/A

#### **Equity Analysis:**

N/A

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

N/A

**Options:**

1. Discuss the interpretive panel / storyboard
2. Do not discuss the interpretive panel / storyboard

**Financial Impact:**

Project is being privately funded.

**Attachments:**

OFD Storyboard





# EARLY OLYMPIA FIRE DEPARTMENT



## In the Beginning

In early days, communities used bucket brigades to deliver water, ladders to reach higher floors, and hooks on poles to create fire breaks.

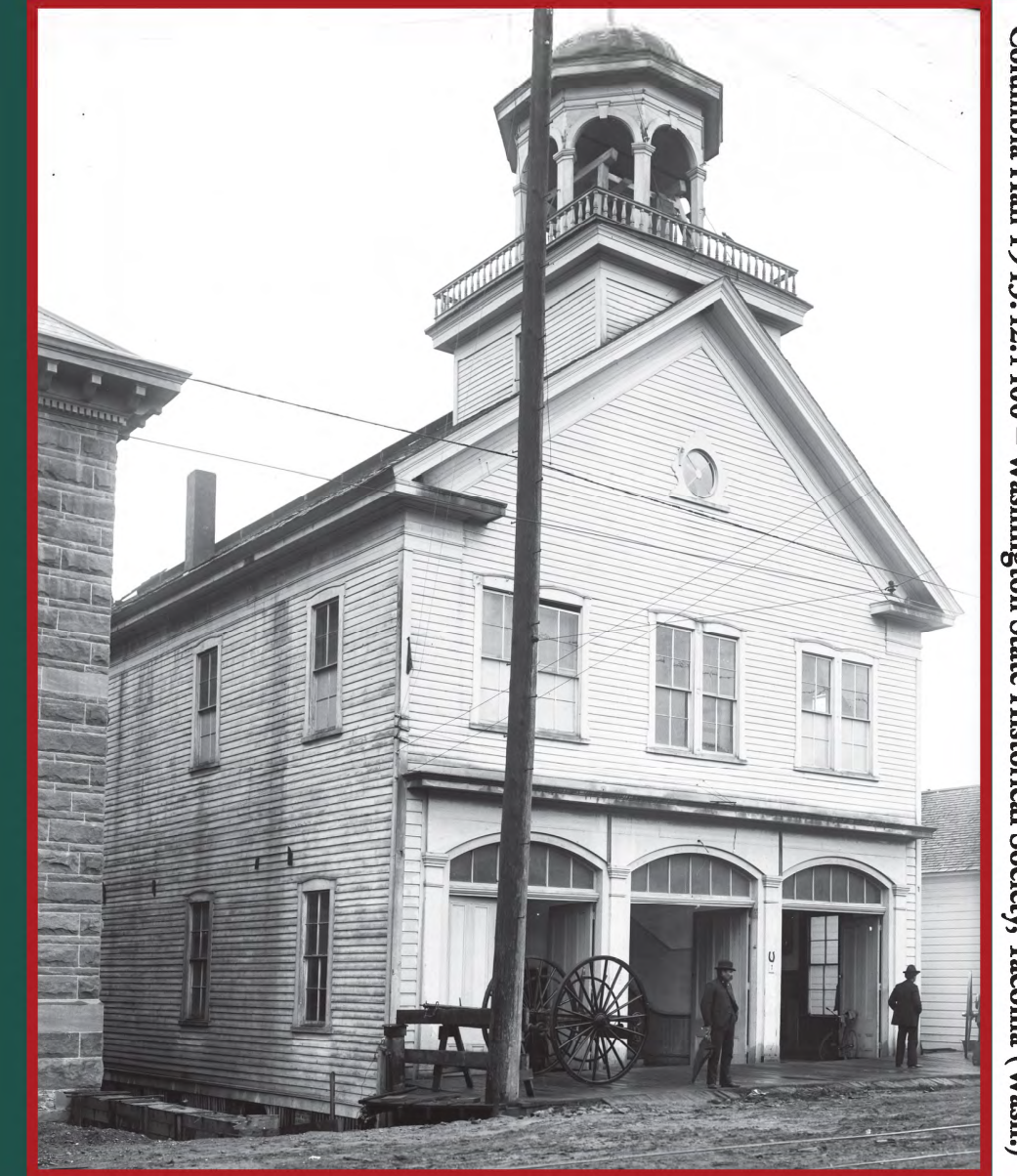
## Alert Hook & Ladder

After a series of suspicious fires, thought to be set by hobos, citizens organized at the district schoolhouse in late 1859 and, in January 1860, chartered a fire company at the first annual meeting of Alert Hook & Ladder. (In early days, fire companies were exclusive clubs with dues, but over time they transitioned to government.) Early on, officers tried to buy a fire engine with city funding (taxes), but no luck. In the “social season of 1864–65,” Foreman Charles E. Williams saw an ad in a fireman’s journal, resolving to buy a 2nd-hand Button hand-engine. Williams followed the lead of local women who had raised money through benefit balls to fund Long Bridge and the Westside Wharf, a busy landing serving ocean steamers. He gave a grand ball (\$10 per ticket, about \$200 in 2025 dollars) in Olympic Hall, which he owned... and it succeeded!



## 1865 Button Engine

The engine arrived in 1865 by ship, around the horn. It was inscribed Columbia Engine No. 1 and they kept the name. They later nicknamed it Old Reliable. It was, “a splendid machine, with 9-in. cylinders and 8-in. stroke, calculated to be manned, at full capacity, by 60 men, 30 per shift.” Williams decided to keep the engine privately but relented when firefighters built a mock engine, Squilgees, and set a fire in front of Williams’ business and only pretended to extinguish it! The engine had arrived without hoses or a hose cart, so ordering hose from San Francisco and awaiting a two-wheeled cart took months.



## Columbia Hall

Built in 1869 at 210 Fourth Avenue East, Columbia Hall was a symbol of Olympia’s growing community spirit. The first floor housed the Olympia Fire Department, while the second served as City Hall—together forming the city’s first true seat of government.



## 1870 Barnes

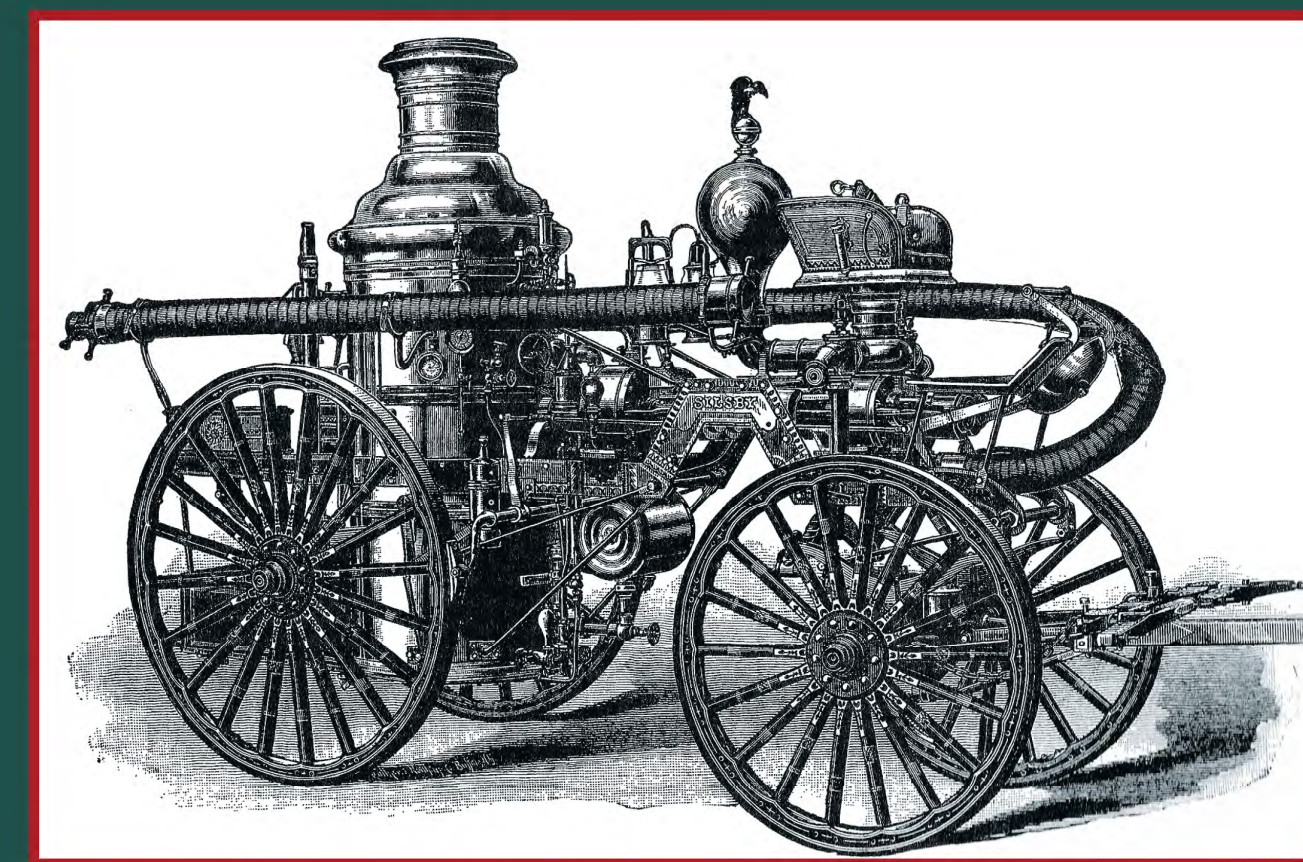
After a fire destroyed his and other downtown buildings, George Barnes organized a hook-and-ladder company, buying uniforms and equipment and continuing the fund-raising-ball tradition. Organization and community spirit were essential. The firemen were community leaders, not only fighting fires but also appearing at fairs and parades in uniform and with their engine.

## Speaking Trumpets

Large crowds often pressed in at fire scenes, adding to the commotion. In the days before electronic speakers or even megaphones, officers relied on speaking trumpets, sometimes engraved as honorary gifts. *Images:* The trumpet and OFD helmet are from the Olympia Fire Department archives.



Back inscription: “Fire Company, Olympia, Washington Territory, approximately 1885.”



Line drawing of the Modern Silsby coal-fired steam rotary engine.

## 1882 Modern Silsby

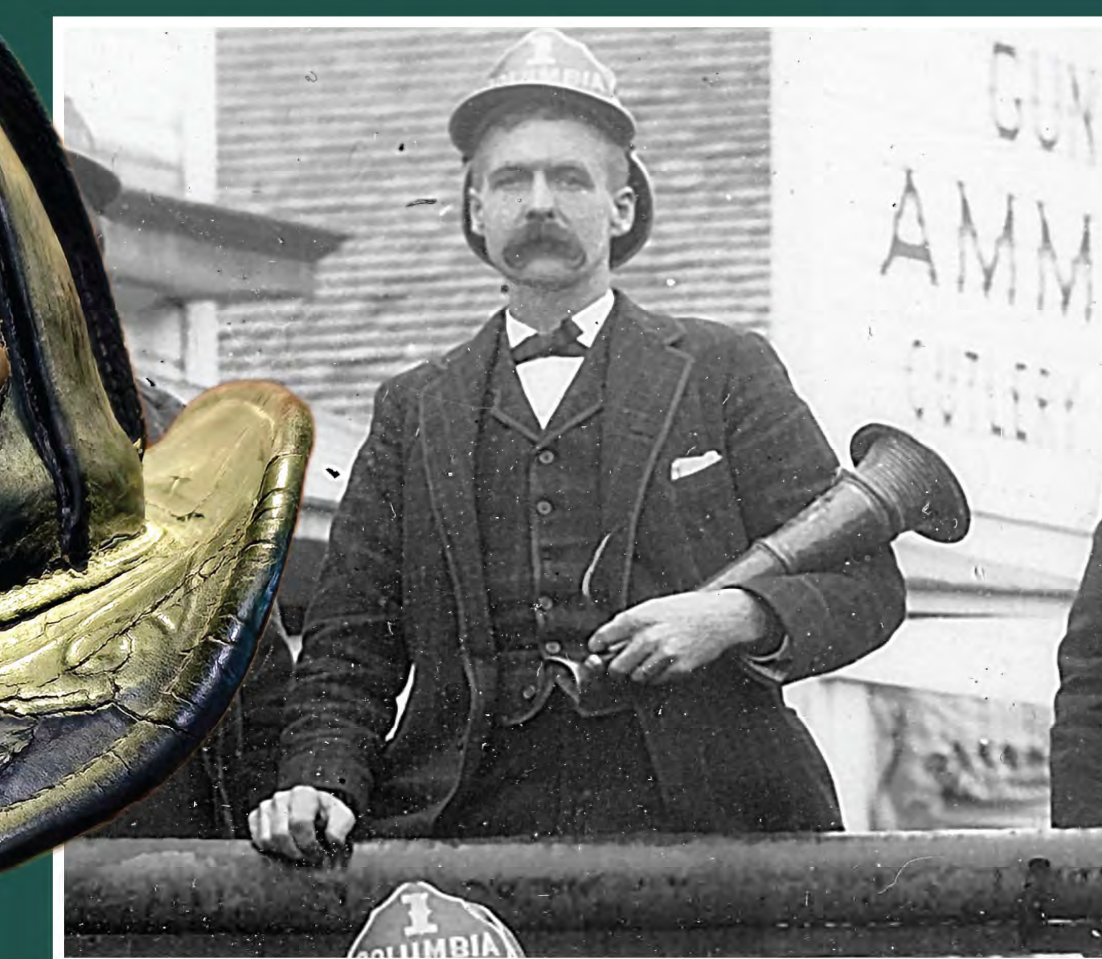
In October 1882, after the *Great Olympia Fire*, the city bought a coal-fired rotary steam engine, a Silsby, 5th size, plus a lot at 407 Columbia St. SW, to house it. They named the engine Columbia Engine No. 1—so both Olympia’s engines shared the same name, upsetting the Button supporters. It almost caused a riot!

## The Great Seattle Fire

In 1889, the OFD sent the Silsby north by ship to assist in battling the *Great Seattle Fire*. When Seattle’s water supply failed and water had to be drawn directly from Puget Sound, Olympia’s Silsby proved indispensable. It lifted seawater up the steep hillside where Seattle’s own steamers could not, delivering powerful streams of water that made a decisive difference. This accomplishment brought distinction to Olympia and is said to have influenced which city became the state capital.

## Those Who Run With the Machines

In 1890, Olympia City Council (finally) decided to purchase horses. Firefighters had “run with the machines,” as the saying goes, over the years pulling both ‘Old Reliable’ and the 4,800-pound Silsby to fires.



Courtesy of Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Wash. Photographs, 1885-1915 (negative number 1939-21)

## 1st Fire Chief

Longtime member George Smith Allen was the first fire chief, serving in 1887, 1897, and 1898. The Columbia Engine Co. serenaded Allen and his wife Annie Furquhar on their wedding evening, December 1, 1877.

## Jesse Mars

Jesse Mars, Olympia’s earliest known African American firefighter, joined the OFD at age 13. He died in 1891 at age 21 of tuberculosis and was honored with a firefighter’s funeral.



## Remember the Ladies

Early newspaper stories noted women pitching in to fight fires, including the hauling of water. In Olympia, Oct. 5, 1870, “while hundreds of men were standing idle... Miss Cynthia Shelton took hold of the engine brake [pump] and worked until her strength was completely exhausted.” Cynthia married Philemon B. Van Trump, mountaineer/writer. The first OFD female firefighter, Barbara Greene, started over a century later, in the 1980s.



Courtesy of David and Mary Helms, 1907 OFD with 1st Ladder on back step

## Horses Prove Their Worth (1907)

For 25 years, Olympia’s fire engines were pulled by hand, then for 15 years by horses—until motorized vehicles came under consideration. A lively contest was held to see which could reach a fire faster. The horses reportedly won, but progress prevailed: a Seagram motorized fire truck was delivered in 1911.

## Cisterns

In 1859 and over the next 35+ years, a dozen plus cisterns were built, sized to collect 1,000–144,000 gallons of rain and sea water. (The first two cisterns were built and filled before the hose was delivered!)

## Hydrants & Alarms

In 1890, 20 fire hydrants were supplied by the city’s first water system, which was completed in 1889. Statehood, water mains, and fire hydrants—that’s progress worth celebrating! Then, in the year 1891, came the amazing telegraph alarm system—street boxes with levers were installed. Pull a lever if you see a fire! With good water pressure and many hydrants, by 1899 a third hose company, the 5th Ward, added valuable city coverage.

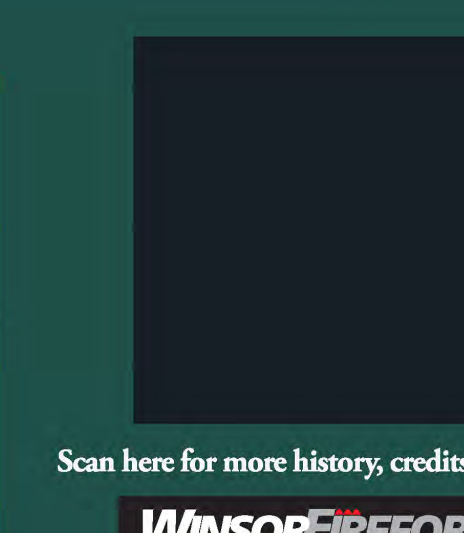


Old Fire Department Station, 1882-1892. Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, Wash.

## City Hall & Fire Dpt.

Of the three historic fire buildings in Olympia, only the one at 108 State Avenue NW remains intact as of 2026. Built in 1912, it replaced Columbia Hall at 210 Fourth Avenue East. (The additional station at 407 Columbia Street SW, which housed the Silsby steamer, went out of use when the Silsby was retired and Company No. 2 disbanded.)

For 80 years (1912-1992), the above pictured station served as the Olympia Fire Department, and for more than 50 years, it also housed City Hall. At various times, the building also accommodated the public library, the police department, and the Chamber of Commerce.



Scan here for more history, credits, and info! Winsor Fire Reform Foundation