PRESS RELEASE
7/26/2017

1954 Fire Chiefs death to be recognized as a Line of Duty Death

LACONIA - The Winnisquam Fire Department was established in 1942 to augment responses to the Winnisquam section of Tilton, Sanbornton, and Belmont. The department was funded by annual payments from the three communities. The Winnisquam Fire Department was ultimately merged with the Belmont Fire Department in August, 2006. On January 15, 1954 Winnisquam Fire Chief Chester Brickett, and his men responded to a “small fire” in Laconia. While returning from the fire, Chief Brickett was “stricken behind the wheel” and ultimately passed away while being taken to the “Laconia Hospital.” Chief Chester Brickett's cause of death was ruled a heart attack. Chief Brickett was 51 at the time of his passing, and had served as the Winnisquam Fire Chief for six years.

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association was established in March of 1953, with Winnisquam Chief Chester Brickett presiding as the first President of the Mutual Aid Association, up until the time of his death.

LRMFA Chief Coordinator Jonathan Goldman, who is also a Team Leader with the Granite State Fire Service Support Team came upon mention of Chief Brickett's death via a “New England Fire Rescue History On This Date” Facebook page that is managed by John Bolduc of Londonderry NH, on the anniversary of Chief Brickett's death. Chief Goldman, realized that Chief Brickett was not recognized as dying in the line of duty at the NH State Firefighters Memorial in Concord NH.

Chief Goldman, along with LRMFA Lieutenant Kevin Nugent, who is also a former Winnisquam Fire Chief began to research the circumstances of Chief Brickett's passing. Utilizing internet web site archives, 1950's era town reports, handwritten Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid meeting minutes, and family interviews they slowly began to piece together Chief Brickett's life, and the circumstances surrounding his death. After several months of research, and tracking down family members descending over sixty years ago, they had a lot of circumstantial evidence that clearly showed Chester Brickett was the Fire Chief of the Winnisquam Fire Department when he died, but were having a hard time finding official documentation. Eventually Lt. Nugent came across a torn, leather bound book of meeting minutes from the Winnisquam Fire Department. Within that
musty, old, leather bound book was a handwritten page on which was written “This page to be left blank in memory of our Chief, Chester Brickett. Passed away at the wheel of the F.M.C in the line of duty returning from the home of <unreadable>, South Main Street, Laconia Jan 14, 1954.”

The State Fire Marshall is responsible to officially rule a firefighter’s death, as a “Line Of Duty Death,” the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a firefighter. A label which although solemn, demonstrates a firefighter’s last selfless act to his community.

Chief Goldman, with the help of Lieutenant Nugent submitted all of the documentation they could to NH State Fire Marshall J. William Degnan for review.

Marshall Degnan has advised Chief Goldman that Winnisquam Fire Chief Chester Brickett’s death has been ruled a Line of Duty Death. Chief Brickett’s name will be engraved on a panel, at the NH State Firefighrers’s Memorial in September of 2017 as part of the annual memorial service.

The NH Fire Service Committee of Merit, will also honor Chief Chester Brickett with the “Paul Sypek Medal of Valor” award at their annual awards ceremony on September 25, 2017. The Sypek Medal of Valor is the highest award that can be bestowed upon any NH Firefighter, and is automatically awarded to any NH Firefighter killed in the line of duty.

Any questions regarding this press release may be directed to:

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Attachment: Photo of memorial page in Winnisquam Fire Department minutes
Voted that requests from persons for subscription be
received.

Voted that the board of superintendents form a committee to investigate
in regard to procedures necessary to form a Patent
District, and report at some future meeting.

Voted that a committee of engineers
enforce plans to take care of
the matter of fire, active members,
and submit at next meeting.

Names for membership

Aga Hughes
Clinton Hughes

Voted that Raymond Knowles be
made an honorary member,
and that a letter be sent him
for what he has done for us.

Canda to be sent to those who
have contributed to small fund.

This page is kept in memory of our Chief.

Chester Brickett

Passed away at the wheel of
the F. M. C. in the fire of
South Main Street,
Adams,

Nominated that requests for membership be
Aaron Hughes.

Voted that the board of engineers
be a committee to investigate
in regard to procedure
necessary to form a fireman's
district, and report at some
future meeting.

Mutual Aid meeting Jan. 27, 1954
At Kinner Grange Hall.

Voted that board of engineers
form up plans to take care of
the matter of fire active members
and submit at next meeting.

Names for membership

Voted that Raymond Kintzle
make an honorary member
and that an letter be sent him
for what he has done for us.

Canda to be sent to those who
engaged donated to small fund
voted to adjourn.

This page to be kept
in memory of our Chief.

Chester Brickett

Passed away at the wheel of
the F. M. C. in the fire of
May 6th, returning from the home
of George Ford, South Main Street,

Dec. 14, 1954