

Chief John M. Slaughter

Chief John M. Slaughter served as the second President in the history of the Kentucky Firefighters Association. Chief Slaughter succeeded KFA Hall of Famer Arnold Nuenschwander, our first president. Chief Slaughter's term was during the years of 1924-1925 and concluded with a conference and fire school in Louisville.

While much of Mr. Slaughter's history is difficult to track, we do know that as a Captain with the Paducah Fire Department in 1911, he narrowly escaped death in an accident that killed one firefighter. On August 19, shortly after 10:00 PM, Paducah firefighter Maurice C. Ingram was driving a hose wagon led by a team of 2 horses to a fire that threatened a large area of residential property. Capt. Slaughter was riding the seat with two other firefighters onboard.

Nearing the train tracks at the corner of Ninth and Clay, Capt. Slaughter saw the locomotive backing toward them. The horses had gone sufficiently far to strike their galloping gait and were running as fast as possible. Slaughter shouted "Turn to your right onto the commons there, Morris". Hardly had the words left Capt. Slaughter's mouth than the inevitable collision came. Maurice Ingram was crushed to death under the wheels of the train car. Driving the team of horses, he was hurled from his seat to his death under the wheels. Ingram was the first and only one of two, Paducah firefighters to lose their lives in the line of duty.

It is reported that the most thrilling escape from death was experienced by Capt. John M. Slaughter, who was seated beside the unfortunate driver. Capt. Slaughter was hurled from his seat to the top of a rail car and into the coal bunker, where he was found unconscious. He was on the side of the wagon that was struck by the railcar and his escape from death was considered miraculous. The other two firefighters on the wagon were both found unconscious but survived.

J. M. Slaughter recovered and continued his service in the fire department becoming Fire Chief around 1917. Involved with the KFA, Chief Slaughter served as not only our second President in 1925 but again served as President in 1930, with this conference being held in Paducah.

In September of 1931, at our 12th annual convention in Louisville, Chief Slaughter, his wife and a team of Paducah firefighters were presented a silver cup, symbolic of supremacy in firefighting skill as demonstrated through contests held at the conference the previous day. This event was



obviously, the forerunner of our present day firefighter Olympics. These competitions were staged frequently during the early years of the KFA. At this event in 1931, the Hopkinsville Fire Department team scored second followed in third place by the team from Fulton.

Chief Slaughter's run of close calls continued with an unhappy ending on January 19, 1937. Two buildings in Paducah, the H & H Produce and the Bullmer Provision Companies were both destroyed during a huge fire estimated in damage at \$75,000.00. It should be noted that this was during the great flood of 1937. During the height of the battle, a large portion of the building roof and wall collapsed injuring nine firefighters including Chief Slaughter. Chief Slaughter, 65 at the time, suffered the most serious of the injuries including a fractured spine, broken ankle, head lacerations, and various bruises. Chief Slaughter died from his injuries 6 days later on January 25th. Some attribute his sudden passing to the hurried movement of victims from the flooding hospital. Chief Slaughter became the second and last Paducah firefighter to die in the line of duty.

It is our privilege to posthumously honor Chief John M. Slaughter tonight and induct him into the KFA Hall of Fame.