



71 1/2 Boulevard, Chicago. No Fire Escapes.

# AN OPEN LETTER

To David Campbell, Chief of the Fire Department of the City of Portland, and His Mighty Assistant, Johnnie Young.

You gentlemen have seen fit to give me some free advertising in the Journal of March 25, to which my attention has been called, and being something of an advertiser myself, I propose hereby to return the compliment. You are reported to have stated that I am violating the law in declining to put an additional fire escape on my six-story building on Fourth and Oak streets. As I explained to you both, my building is a costly building; it endeavored to put up a very handsome exterior, and that while the brick in the Beck building and Commercial Club building cost \$43.00 per thousand laid down at the job, the heavy enameled brick, which I procured for my building from Mommence, Ill., cost \$130 per thousand, as H. A. Heppner & Co., local agents, will verify.

**Building Thoroughly Safeguarded.**  
My building is so constructed that it has an unusually light court and area way on the west side of the building, adjoining the Corbett building; has a large light court and area way adjoining the Sherlock lot on the south, and has a continuous corridor through the building on every floor; is supplied with two of the latest high-speed Otis electric elevators, enclosed in the highest style of fireproof elevator shafting, all windows facing on light courts being metal framed with wire glass, as required under our recent building restrictions; in fact, being up to all the severe requirements of the Building Inspector's office. And you also know that I have made arrangements to buy the heat for my building from the Board of Trade building, which is carried through in an underground conduit, doing away with the necessity of fire, fuel or ashes. And it is also provided with the American District fire alarm system.

**Won't Allow Building Defaced.**  
I stated to you gentlemen that it was not the mere matter of three or four hundred dollars for the additional fire escape that I objected to, and offered to put an iron ladder down on the west light court, also one down on the south light court, and one or more down the center, but that I did not want to mar and deface the handsome front of the building on the Fourth-street side. These you would not accept. You both seem bent and determined to push and augment the sale of fire escapes. Nothing would do you but I must mar, deface and disfigure the building on the Fourth-street side, and I tell you flatly I won't do it. The Police Station is on the corner of Second and Oak streets; I never have been arrested, and don't want to be, but in your excessive zeal for the fire escape business, you may take that course if you want to, and then a judge of the court is the one to say whether I am a law-breaker, not you.

**Why This Partiality?**  
I have one fire escape on my six-story building; the Wells-Fargo building of 12 stories has but one; the Commercial building on Second and Washington streets, on a quarter block, with but one single elevator of the old-fashioned, slow-going type, has but one fire escape; the Chamber of Commerce building, eight stories in height, has but one fire escape to the quarter block; the Worcester building has but one to the hundred feet. Why do you say I am a violator of the law, when these buildings have no more fire escapes than has mine? There are a number of other buildings in like position that I might mention, but I have no desire to impose any hardships on other property owners. Some of you city officials do enough of that, the Lord knows.

**Put Fire Escapes on City Hall.**  
If fire escapes are so very necessary, why don't you have fire escapes put on the City Hall, with its one old-fashioned, slow-going elevator; or have them put on the Postoffice building, with its great mass of people and thronged courtrooms?

**Brow-Beating Property-Owners.**  
You are after me, and holding me up as a law-breaker. Why? Is it because you have of late been brow-beating and coercing property-owners to put up fire escapes according to your whims, notions or caprice? Let us see. The McKay building, on the southwest corner of Third and Stark streets, is a six-story office building, 50x100 feet in size, with but one fire escape. Adjoining it on the east is the Concord building, a like office building, the same six stories in height, on one lot, and yet you have recently forced its owners to put two fire escapes on that, while there is but one on the McKay building. In doing so you obliged them to cut, mar and disfigure the fine stone cornices on that building, and also

mar and disfigure the front on Second street, one-third of the front being taken to with unnecessary, rusting and unsightly fire escapes. You have also recently forced the owners to put two fire escapes on the five-story building on one lot on the southwest corner of Sixth and Washington streets. Why this partiality? You brow-beat these people into submission by saying "it is the law."

**Buildings Marred by Rusting Iron Junk.**  
The writer has visited a great many cities in this country, and in no other city in the United States is there so much iron junk, rusting, unsightly, dust-collecting, so-called fire escapes as there is in this city, with its small toy blocks, under your direction and official coercion. Were you or either of you interested in the manufacture and sale of fire escapes more so in pushing sales of fire escapes could not be shown. The city has been obliging the companies to take down their unsightly poles and wires, while you have forced property-owners to put up far more unsightly fire escapes to mar and disfigure the appearance of the city. A fire chief's duty, after all, is not so much in looking after and providing for things after a fire occurs, as it is that he should endeavor to prevent fires in the beginning. The good old saying is:

**Patenting at the Public Crib.**  
The writer has brought about the removal and destruction of a lot of old houses, shacks and fire-traps in the down-town part of the city that were a real menace, and in so doing feels that he has rendered great assistance to your Fire Department. This was being done without much fuss, while you gentlemen have been fattening at the public crib, riding around in city automobiles or buggies and pestering citizens who are trying to erect new buildings in the city, and whom you are punishing by your "discretion," or rather lack of discretion, and putting a premium on the old shanties that still remain. If you really want to earn the salaries that you are drawing, I would suggest that it is better to avert fires than to put them out after they are started, and urge you to inspect the old shanties on the southwest corner of Fourth and Stark streets, in the rear yard of which there is a mass of old lumber and paint debris; or that you inspect the premises on the southwest corner of Front and Salmon streets, covered with a lot of old tumbled-down shacks and shanties, used as a feed and sales stable, in which many horses are quartered and much hay stored, a dire menace to that section of the city. There are many others that you might look up in like condition.

Having published that I am a violator of the law, you gentlemen have been so petted, humored and pampered in the conduct of the Fire Department of the city, that you go to undue lengths. How dare you say I am a violator of the law? That is for the court to say, and not you.

**Extraordinary Demands of Fire Department.**  
You made a demand for your department this year for the sum of \$610,000, or about \$25,000 more than Seattle had last year, her fair year. Do you really require more money to run the Fire Department of this city, with its level streets, than it does to run the Fire Department in Seattle, with its steep, hillside streets, and its great fair year on? Let us look at your conduct and expense of your department. You asked for \$510,000—more than was allowed all the following departments:

Engineer's Department	\$136,796.20
Sanitation	23,000.00
Garbage Crematory	23,000.00
Street cleaning & sprinkling	224,590.50
Police Department	64,000.00
Mayor's Office	4,300.00
Auditor's Office	52,280.00
Treasurer's Office	7,500.00
City Attorney's Office	12,120.00
Comptroller	4,500.00
Civil Service	2,100.00
Building Inspector's Office	2,000.00
Municipal Court	2,000.00
Plumbing Inspector's Office	2,200.00
City Hall expenses	15,545.00
Harbormaster	2,400.00
Boiler & Weights and Meas.	3,281.00
Free Employment	2,100.00
Miscellaneous apparatus	65,000.00
Total	\$595,004.20



Union Trust Building, Los Angeles. Twelve Stories.—No Fire Escapes.



Corbett Building, Portland, Ten Stories, 100x100. Two Fire Escapes.



Office Building, Fifth Ave., N. Y. No Fire Escapes.



National Bank of Commerce—Six Stories—No Fire Escape.



Wells Fargo Bldg., Portland, 12 Stories, One Fire Escape.



Alaska Building, Seattle. Fifteen Stories. No Fire Escapes.



Paulson Building, Spokane, Wash., Eleven Stories; Larger Than Any Building in Portland. No Fire Escapes.

The \$610,000 that you asked for is more than was allowed for the Police Department, the street repairs department of the city, the street lighting of the city and the Park Board.

I concede that the City of Portland is growing rapidly, no man knows it better, but I charge the expense of your department is increasing in greater ratio, as the following table will show:

**Fire Department Expenditure.**

For year 1904	\$173,218.68
For year 1905	182,120.95
For year 1906	262,475.51
For year 1907	341,730.07
For year 1908	267,371.23
For year 1909	351,583.64
Appropriation for year 1910	465,553.00
(Asked for \$610,000.)	

**Look at the Pictures Closely.**  
Attention of the public is called to the accompanying pictures, showing the disfigurement of the buildings in Portland with fire escapes, and contrasted with the series of pictures of buildings in other cities, not marred and disfigured as they are in Portland. Evidently the fire chiefs in other cities are not pushing the sale of fire escapes.

You gentlemen are public servants, paid by the city to avert and prevent fires, and not to push the sale of fire escapes. You evidently assume that the city ordinance invests you with, or attributes to you, "discretion." Readers of this letter may think you woefully lacking in "discretion." Respectfully yours,

**Concord Building, Portland, Six Stories, 50x100. Two Fire Escapes.**

**Merchants Trust Bldg. Five Stories, 50x100. Two Fire Escapes.**

CHARLES K. HENRY.