

## Fayetteville Mayors, Police and Fire Chiefs

In Fayetteville's long history – in just over twenty years the city will celebrate its bicentennial – it has had many and varied civic leaders. The following lists of mayors, police chiefs, and fire chiefs are intended to be as exhaustive and as accurate as the primary sources – including, but not limited to, newspapers, city records, and local histories – will allow. The purpose of these lists is to provide historians and interested citizens an entry point into the history of Fayetteville municipal leadership.

Over the years, the positions of mayor, police and fire chief have been directly impacted by the city's several incorporations. Fayetteville had at least six incorporations from its beginning until just after the turn of the twentieth century:

- 1828 (October 17), as Washington Courthouse<sup>1</sup>
- 1836 (November 3), as Fayetteville, by state legislature<sup>2</sup>
- 1841 (January), by county court as “The Aldermen and Town Council of the Town of Fayetteville”<sup>3</sup>
- 1870 (August 24), by county court<sup>4</sup>
- 1883 (November 15), as a City of Second Class – 2500 inhabitants<sup>5</sup>
- 1905 (June 20), as City of First Class – 5000 inhabitants<sup>6</sup>

### Fayetteville Mayors

In its one hundred and eighty year existence, Fayetteville has had many distinguished city leaders beginning with Alderman Pleasant Vinson Rhea on down to current Mayor Lioneld Jordan. Alderman Rhea, who according to the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* “Ruled Fayetteville”<sup>7</sup> from 1841 to 1859, held the city's highest office longer than anyone before or since. Rhea was

succeeded by J. W. Walker who served in 1859 as the first mayor under the city's new charter, which was granted by the state legislature. Walker was followed by Stephen Bedford whose term was cut short by the outbreak of the War Between the States.<sup>8</sup>

During the war, Fayetteville city government was suspended, replaced by military administration. After the war ended, civilian rule was resumed and the first mayor elected to office, in 1868, was Col. M. Larue Harrison who had commanded the First Arkansas Cavalry (Union) during the Battle of Fayetteville, April 16, 1863.<sup>9</sup>

The subsequent Reconstruction era in Fayetteville created, as it did elsewhere, some measure of local conflict with what was perceived as outside, and unwanted, federal and state intervention. Here in town, this conflict reached its peak with the municipal elections of 1871.

The weekly *Fayetteville Democrat*, owned and published by E. B. and W. B. Moore, crowed that the "Conservative" Democrat "Citizens" ticket had swept the elections. An unnamed acting governor in Little Rock did not agree, however, and replaced J. M. Pittman, the Democratic Party candidate who had apparently won the popular vote for mayor, with "Radical" Republican T. Murray Campbell. The Moores were so incensed by the installation of Campbell that they refused to recognize the new mayor or his city council on the pages of the *Democrat*.<sup>10</sup>

When Reconstruction and the *Democrat* finally calmed down, Fayetteville had a long, settled period of regular elections (held every April), and a smooth transition from one mayor and council to the next ensued. With names like VanHoose, Eason, Mulholland, Rollins, Philips, Taylor and Wilson, the list reads like a who's who of local public service in Fayetteville's civic past.

In the years of the Great Depression, Mayors T. S. Tribble and A. D. McAllister battled through an unusual period of local corruption and with the help of the Civil Service Commission

– established to provide oversight to the police and fire departments – and the Good Government League, the more brazen lawbreakers were swept from office and public prominence.<sup>11</sup>

George Vaughan succeeded Mayor McAllister just as World War II was starting and his administration was about one year into its second term when Vaughan announced in March 1944 that he could no longer serve as the city's top official because he had been inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States. George T. Sanders became Mayor Pro-Tem and when Vaughan did not return in time to reclaim his position, Sanders was elected mayor himself in 1945 and served two terms in office.<sup>12</sup>

In the years after the end of World War II until the mid-1960s, when Fayetteville adopted a City Manager/City Board form of government, long time public servants such as Powell M. Rhea, Roy Scott, and J. Austin Parish, and Guy E. Brown held the post of mayor.

From 1966 until 1992, when the Mayor/City Council form was re-adopted, Fayetteville was led by city managers like Don Trumbo, Garland Melton, Jr., and Joe Fred Starr. In 1975, Marion Orton became Fayetteville's first woman mayor (the second, Marilyn Johnson, would serve in the latter 1980s). Since 1992 and the return of the mayoralty, three men, Fred Hanna, Dan Coody, and Lioneld Jordan have served as the city's top official.<sup>13</sup>

### Fayetteville Police Chiefs

The position of Fayetteville Police Chief was not created until 1906, after the city was incorporated as a first class city, but its equivalent, City Marshal, is traceable at least back to M. D. Frazer who held that position in 1860.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the mayor-appointed position of police chief, the city marshals were elected by municipal vote. H. C. C. Botefuhr was city marshal in 1869<sup>15</sup> and Jefferson Gilliland was elected to that position in December of 1870.<sup>16</sup>

A city marshal with the unlikely name of A. K. Coward resigned his position in 1874 “in disgust” – most likely over lack of pay and the unruly behavior of denizens of “Smoky Row,” a strip of bars and seedy establishments that used to exist in the area directly in front of where the “old” courthouse now stands at the eastern bottom of Center Street. Coward’s replacement was Parson Elisha Robinson who was described in the local paper as a “South Methodist Minister.”<sup>17</sup>

J. D. Henry, who was elected City Marshall in 1875, had a near fatal encounter with unfriendly Native Americans when on a visit to a friend over in the Indian Territory. According to the *Fayetteville Democrat*, a group of men from a local tribe armed with pistols were intent on doing harm to Henry’s friend and attacked the man’s house during the night. Henry, who was not the target of the attack, and his friend, who was, both escaped the assault unscathed.<sup>18</sup>

Just a few years later, on July 2, 1881, in a scene more reminiscent of Dodge City or Tombstone than sleepy Fayetteville, City Marshall W. D. Patton and Deputy Sheriff John I. Mount were shot down in cold blood near the northeast corner of the square by unknown assailants.<sup>19</sup>

It was suspected that Patton was murdered in retaliation for killing a man named George Reed, who was part of a gang operating out of West Fork during this time. The *Democrat* vowed that the murderers would be brought to justice, but the resolution of this case seems to have been lost in the dozen decades since the killings occurred.

Among other City Marshals during this era were George H. Pettigrew, W. A. “Toy” Gregg – who served for many years in various local law enforcement positions – and Lee Duggans. C. S. Tunstill was the last elected City Marshal, serving from 1904 until 1906.<sup>20</sup>

On June 20, 1905 Fayetteville was incorporated as a City of First Class (5,000 inhabitants) and in early 1906 Capt. U. L. Smeltzer (or Smelser) was appointed police chief by Mayor C. A. Mulholland. Capt. Smeltzer resigned in 1908 to be replaced by Alexander C. Cruse.<sup>21</sup>

When W. H. Rollins became Mayor in 1909, he immediately appointed veteran law enforcement officer W. A. Gregg as chief and Gregg served in this position, with one short break when he ran for county sheriff and lost, for the next ten years. 1909 was also the year that the city passed Ordinance #259, which delineated for the first time the powers and duties of the chief of police position.<sup>22</sup>

In 1930, Alexander Cruse's son Neal was appointed chief. A short four years later, after a virtual mountain of corruption charges had been leveled at him by the city and the Civil Service Commission, Neal Cruse was relieved of his position. Earl Hand took over as acting chief and held that position until 1939 when Ordinance #832 was passed abolishing the positions of Police and Fire Chief.<sup>23</sup>

Mayor A.D. McAllister served as ex-officio Chief of Police and Chief of the Fire Department until 1941 when new Mayor George Vaughan was elected and became the new ex-officio chief of the two departments.<sup>24</sup>

City Ordinance #852 was passed in May of 1941 creating again the "Seperate (sic) Office of Chief of Police of the City of Fayetteville." In September of that year Dan Allen was offered and accepted the position of police chief. Allen was chief until 1944 when he resigned to run for Sheriff of Washington County. Bob Day acted as chief until May when Mayor Pro-Tem George Sanders became ex-officio chief.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, in March of 1945, City Ordinance #884 was passed describing the performance and duties of the chief of police. Sanders, by then officially elected mayor, appointed Pearl Watts

as permanent chief of police, ending better than a decade of upheaval in the police department and laying the groundwork for the orderly and more stable position of chief that we know today.<sup>26</sup>

### Fayetteville Fire Chiefs – Introduction

The beginning of Fayetteville's Fire Department is somewhat obscured by the smoky haze of distant history. W. S. Campbell, in his history *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, says that George Albright was the first fire chief beginning just "after the Civil War."<sup>27</sup>

A few years after the war, in 1869, the weekly *Fayetteville Democrat* did report an early attempt to form a Fire Company and by 1872 the Washington Fire Company had been organized but it had no equipment. The next year local businessmen provided the company with ladders, buckets and such. In January 1874, however, the department – now called the Washington Hook and Ladder Company disbanded.<sup>28</sup>

Finding the exact dates when the department reorganized and when Albright became its chief is problematical due to the paucity of source materials. But, on January 22, 1876, a fire broke out at the Book Store on the east side of the square and the *Democrat* reported that Capt. George Albright was credited with putting out the flames before they could do major damage to the store. It appears Albright may have put out the fire all by himself.

In 1877 the *Democrat* reported a meeting of the apparently reconstituted Fire Company, and in 1880 there was a news story about the "Fire Brigade" putting out a fire burning down on troublesome Smoky Row.<sup>29</sup> According to an article in the *Fayetteville Daily* for January 27, 1909, however, the fire department was officially established "in 1896." This date does seem to mark the beginning of the "modern era" for the department has been in verifiable, continuous existence since that time.

Uncertain as its beginnings may have been, we know for certain that the following year, 1897, the fire department got its first horse drawn wagon. Twenty years later, on October 1, 1917, the older technology was discarded when the first motorized fire truck was purchased and put into operation. This truck was replaced in 1918 by a “350-gallon pumper” and in 1925 the city bought a “750-gallon pumper” at the cost of \$12,500.<sup>30</sup>

At the heart of the Great Depression, in 1934, the municipality of Fayetteville, like most of the rest of the nation, was struggling financially and otherwise. To help with local problems, a three-man Civil Service Commission was established with oversight powers for both the Fire and Police Departments. By the end of the 1930s, on August 17, 1939 to be exact, the city adopted the recommendations of the Civil Service Commission and passed city ordinance #832 which eliminated the offices of Fire and Police Chief. Dropping these positions also enabled the city to save money at a time when meeting the budget was very critical.<sup>31</sup>

From 1939 to 1941 Mayor A. D. McAllister served as ex-officio Fire Chief and Police Chief. In September of 1941, members of the Fire Department successfully petitioned the mayor and city council for the right to appoint their own acting chief and Henry George was selected for that position.<sup>32</sup>

From that time, George served as acting chief, except for a few months in 1946, until Burl Skelton was appointed temporary chief in November of 1948. Skelton was appointed permanently in 1949 and was the first man to serve as full-time paid fire chief.<sup>33</sup>

## Fayetteville Mayors:

P. V. Rhea – 1841-1859  
J. W. Walker – 1859  
Stephen Bedford – 1860  
Col. M. Larue Harrison – 1868-1869  
E. I. Stirman – 1869-1871  
T. Murray Campbell – 1871-1872  
J. R. Pettigrew – 1872-1873  
George A. Grace – 1873-1874  
Robert J. Wilson – 1874-1876  
Col. Alfred M. Wilson – 1876-1877  
A.S. Vandeventer – 1877-1880  
J. H. VanHoose – 1880-1881  
W. C. Jackson – 1881-1883  
C. W. Walker – 1883-1884  
S. E. Marrs – 1884-1885  
W. C. Jackson – 1885 (April to Dec.)  
Robert J. Wilson – 1886 (Jan. to April)  
O. C. Gray – 1886-1887 (April to Oct.)  
E. B. Wall – 1887-1888 (Oct. to April)  
J. H. VanHoose – 1888-1890  
F. M. Goar – 1890-1891  
J. T. Lusk 1891-1895  
W. S. Pollard – 1895-1897  
Jack Walker – 1897-1901  
Capt. J. T. Eason – 1901-1905  
C. A. Mulholland – 1906-1909  
W. H. Rollins – 1909-1913  
Guy Philips – 1913-1914  
Tom Taylor – 1914-1917  
Allen M. Wilson – 1917-1919  
J. M. Phillips – 1919-1921  
Allen M. Wilson – 1921-1929  
T. S. Tribble – 1929-1935  
A. D. McAllister – 1935-1941  
George Vaughan – 1941-1944  
G. T. Sanders – 1944-1949  
Powell M. Rhea – 1949-1953  
Roy A. Scott – 1954-1957  
J. Austin Parish – 1958-1959  
Guy E. Brown – 1960-1965  
Don Trumbo – 1966-1968  
Garland Melton, Jr. – 1969-1970  
Joe Fred Starr – 1971-1972  
Russell Purdy – 1973-1974



Marion Orton – 1975-1976  
 Ernest Lancaster – 1977-1978  
 David R. Malone – 1978-1979  
 John Todd – 1980-1981  
 Paul Noland – 1982-1986  
 Marilyn Johnson – 1986-1987  
 William V. Martin – 1987-1990  
 Fred S. Vorsanger – 1991-1992  
 Fred Hanna – 1992-2000  
 Dan Coody – 2001-2009  
 Lioneld Jordan – 2009-present

#### City Marshals – Elected:

M. D. Frazer – 1860  
 H. C. C. Botefuhr – 1869 (as of January)  
 Jefferson “Bud” Gilliland – 1870-1871  
 Wesley Barnes – 1871-1872  
 Thomas Jennings – 1872-1873  
 A. K. Coward – 1873-1874  
 Parson Elisha Robinson – 1874-1875  
 J. D. Henry - 1875  
 W. F. Stirman – 1877-1880  
 W. D. Patton – 1881  
 Col. W. T. Barry – 1881-1882  
 J. H. Cooper – 1882-1883  
 A. B. Kell – 1883  
 George H. Pettigrew – 1883-1884  
 A. B. Kell – 1884-1885  
 T. J. Taylor – 1885-1886  
 H. S. Gray – 1886-1887  
 J. T. Reynolds – 1888-1890  
 H. F. “Dutch” Buie – 1890-1892  
 W. A. “Toy” Gregg – 1892-1894  
 W. P. “Pat” Moulden – 1894-896  
 Lee Duggans – 1896-1904  
 C. S. Tunstill – 1904-1906

#### Police Chiefs – Appointed:

Capt. U. L. Smeltzer (Smelser) – 1906-1908  
 A. C. Cruse – 1908-1909  
 W.A. “Toy” Gregg – 1909-1913  
 A. C. Cruse – 1913-1914 (Dec. to April)  
 W. A. “Toy” Gregg – 1914-1919  
 A. C. Cruse – 1919-1921  
 R. F. Jackson – 1921-1923  
 Harry Sanford – 1923-1925

W. A. "Toy" Gregg – 1925-1929  
 Samuel Guinn – 1929-1930  
 Neal Cruse – 1930-1935  
 Earl Hand – 1935-1939 (Acting)  
 Mayor A.D. McAllister – 1939-1941  
 Mayor George Vaughn – 1941  
 Dan Allen – 1941-1944  
 Bob Day – 1944 (Acting)  
 Mayor Pro-Tem George Sanders – 1944-1945  
 Pearl Watts – 1945-1962  
 Hollis Spencer – 1962-1975  
 Glen Riggins – 1975-1979  
 Clint Hutchens – 1979 (Acting)  
 Bob Jones – 1979-1986  
 Richard Watson – 1986-2002  
 Rick Hoyt – 2002-2004  
 Frank Johnson – 2004-2006  
 Gregg Tabor – 2006 to present

#### Fayetteville Fire Chiefs:

George Albright – post-civil war-1897  
 Frank Mayes – 1897-1906  
 Clay Duggans – 1906-1917  
 C. W. Hansard – 1917-1922  
 C. W. Winkleman – 1922-1929  
 Clyde Walters – 1929-1939  
 Mayor A. D. McAllister – 1939-1941  
 Henry George – 1941-1946 (Acting)  
 Carl Tune – 1946 (Acting: May-November)  
 Henry George – 1946-1947 (Acting: November-March)  
 Henry George – 1947-1948  
 Burl Skelton – 1949-1971  
 Charles McWhorter – 1971-1977  
 Paul Logue – 1977-1985  
 Mickey Jackson – 1985-2001  
 Dennis Ledbetter – 2001 (Interim)  
 Chris Bosch – 2001-2005  
 Marion Doss – 2005 (Interim)  
 Tony Johnson – 2005-2009  
 David Dayringer – 2010 to present

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Campbell, *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, Fayetteville, AR, 1928, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>*Fayetteville Democrat* (Weekly), April 19, 1906.

<sup>4</sup>Campbell, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>*Fayetteville Democrat* (Weekly), April 19, 1906.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, July 3, 1928.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Campbell, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup>*Fayetteville Democrat* (Weekly), December 23, 1871.

<sup>11</sup>Stephen Herman Dew, *The New Deal and Fayetteville, Arkansas 1933-1941*, Masters Thesis, University of Arkansas, May 1987, pp. 199-210.

<sup>12</sup>City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, *Minutes, Resolutions, and Ordinances* of the Fayetteville City Council, 1944.

<sup>13</sup>City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, "Mayors of the City of Fayetteville, Arkansas," 2008.

<sup>14</sup>Campbell, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup>*Fayetteville Democrat* (Weekly), January 9, 1869.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, December 3, 1870.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, March 14, 21, and 28, 1874.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, April 3, 1875.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, July 7, 1881.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, March 3, 1904 and April 12, 1906.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, April 8, 1908.

<sup>22</sup>City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, *Minutes, Resolutions, and Ordinances* of the Fayetteville City Council, 1909.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 1939.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 1941.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 1941 and 1944.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 1945.

<sup>27</sup>Campbell, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup>*Fayetteville Democrat* (Weekly), December 4, 1869, August 24, 1872, and January 17, 1874.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, March 31, 1877, and May 29, 1880.

<sup>30</sup>Campbell, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup>City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, *Minutes, Resolutions, and Ordinances* of the Fayetteville City Council, 1934 and 1939.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 1941.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 1949.