

06-13-1897 Henry Coyle Chicago FF River -Accident**3-3-5 Chicago Firefighters**

<https://www.facebook.com/335ChicagoFire/posts/4623889867640666>

June 14, 1879 – LODD - Pipeman Henry T. Coyle of Engine Co. 11

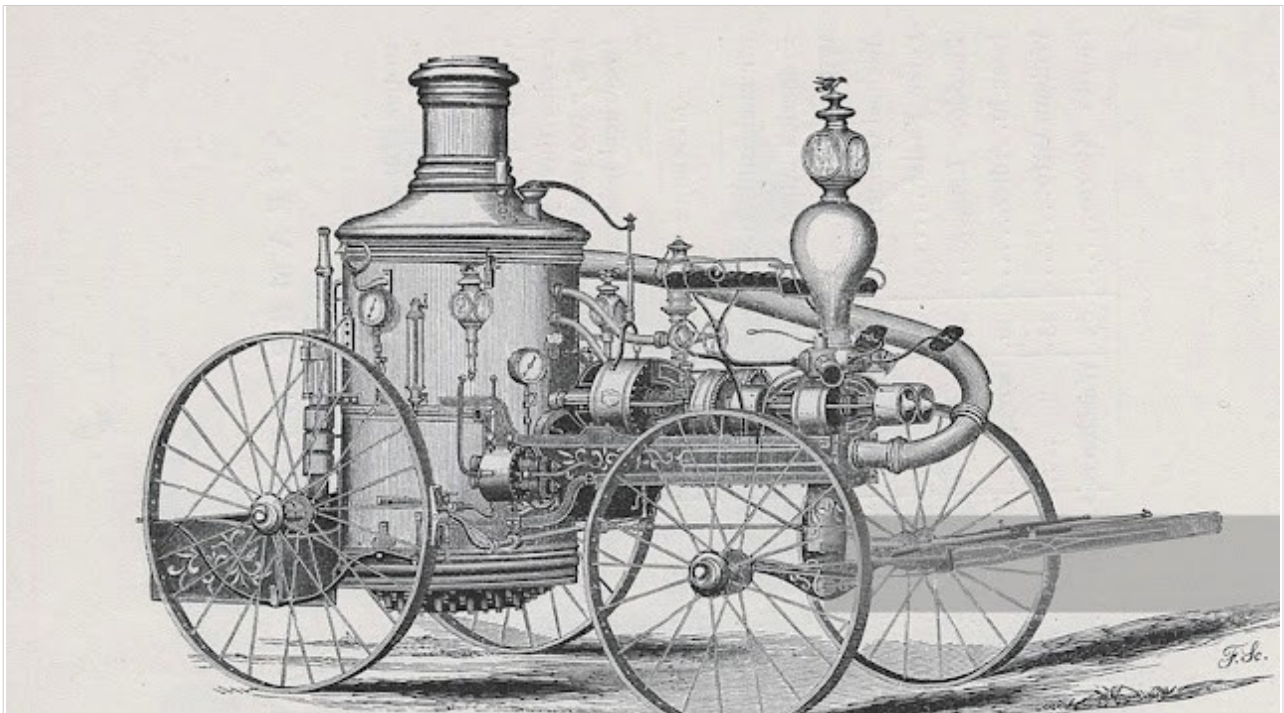
Chicago Fire Department. Chicago, IL

Pipeman Henry T. Coyle of Engine 11 died in the line of duty while responding to a fire alarm near the intersection of LaSalle and Lake Streets. Coyle and three other firefighters were riding in the Engine 11 hose cart as it raced south on State Street, and the hose cart was less than forty feet away from the State Street Bridge before the driver realized that the swing bridge was open. As the other two firefighters jumped clear, Coyle and the driver attempted to stop the horse, but they were pulled into the river along with the hose cart. The driver survived the fall, but Coyle drowned.

June 13, 1879 - Henry T. Coyle - Chicago Firefighter Drowns at State Street Bridge

<http://www.connectingthewindycity.com/2018/06/june-13-1879-chicago-firefighter-drowns.html?m=0>

https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/content/library/IFLODD/search/firefighter_detail.cfm?ff_id=636



June 13, 1879 – Pipeman Henry T. Coyle, working on a hose-truck belonging to Engine No. 11 of the Chicago Fire Department drowns when the truck is driven into the river at

full speed. The night is dark, and the driver, next to whom Coyle is seated, cannot see whether the State Street bridge is in position for crossing. Unfortunately, the rotating bridge is in the open position, and the truck's driver "dashed on through the darkness to the terrible catastrophe which followed." [Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1879] The driver and another truckman leap from the truck, but Coyle drowns. It takes the better part of a day to find the body of the missing firefighter. The whole affair prompts the *Chicago Daily Tribune* to react strongly to the danger that the rotating bridges pose in this way, "The bridges of Chicago have been a continual source of danger and annoyance to the impetuous people of Chicago ... Scarcely a week passes by that some accident does not occur at some of them, mostly on account of the impatience of pedestrians ... Why people, great and small, will persist in swarming upon and over the bridges of our main thoroughfares while they are swinging, at the risk of life and limb, it would be hard to tell. The wonder is that more fatal accidents do not occur."

[From the Ashes, 1872-1900 \(ilsos.gov\)](http://ilsos.gov) A Selection of Documents from the Illinois State Archives

DOCUMENT 19

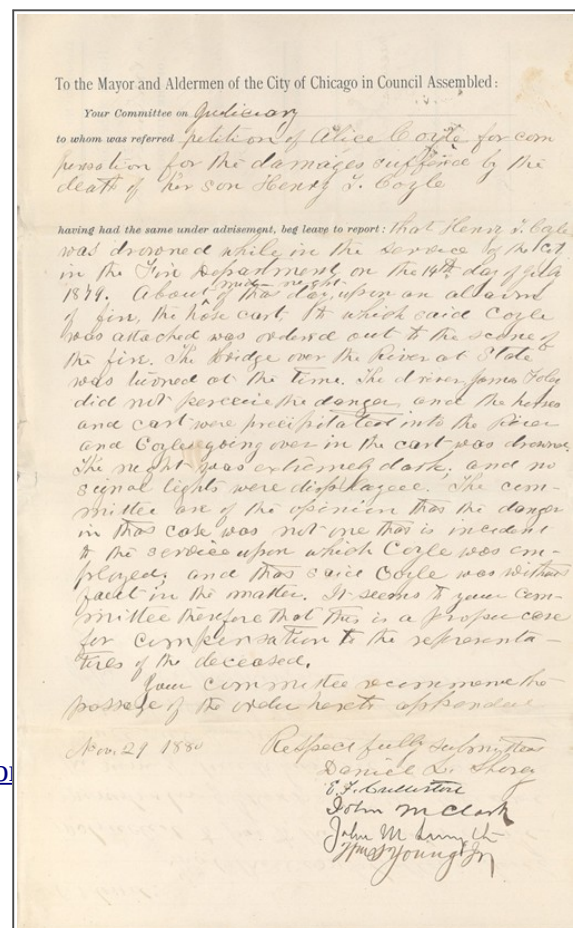
REPORT ON A PETITION FOR COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES SUFFERED FROM THE DEATH OF HENRY COYLE

November 29, 1880

DOCUMENT 19 – REPORT ON A PETITION FOR COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGES SUFFERED FROM THE DEATH OF HENRY COYLE

November 29, 1880 TRANSCRIPTION

To the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Chicago in Council Assembled: Your Committee on Judiciary to whom was referred petition of Alice Coyle for compensation for the damages suffered by the death of her son Henry T. Coyle having had the same under advisement, beg leave to report: that Henry T. Coyle was drowned while in the service of the city in the Fire Department on the 14th day of July 1879. About of that day, upon an



alarm mid-night of fire, the hose cart, to which said Coyle was attached was ordered out to the scene of the fire.

The bridge over the River at State was turned at the time.

The driver, James Foley did not perceive the danger, and the horses and cart were precipitated into the River and Coyle's going over in the cart was drowned. The night was extremely dark; and no signal lights were displayed.

The committee are of the opinion that the danger in that case was not one that is incident to the service upon which Coyle was employed; and that said Coyle was without fault in the matter. It seems to your Committee therefore that this is a proper case for compensation to the representatives of the deceased.

Your committee recommend the passage of the order hereto appended Nov. 29 1880.

Respectfully submitted Daniel L. Shorey E.F. Cullerton John M Clark John M Smyth Wm S Young Jr

Explanation

In Alice Coyle's petition she stated that she was a widow, her husband having died eleven years earlier. Her son Henry had been a bachelor and aged twenty-five at the time of his death. He had been his mother and his minor sister's sole source of support. Henry had been working for the Fire Department since January 1879. Before that he had been a fireman with the Northwestern Railroad Company. The widow Coyle and her daughter were living on a small donation Henry's comrades had collected for them. In the corporation counsel's opinion the city was not legally liable for Coyle's death. This attorney did believe however that some relief should be provided. The city council passed an order on December 9 to compensate Alice Coyle the sum of \$3,000.

The Illinois General Assembly in 1877 had enacted legislation providing for police and firemen's relief funds for cities and villages. One fourth of all local revenue generated from taxes and fees "effecting fire insurance, and all moneys received from fines inflicted upon members of the police and fire departments for a violation of the rules and regulations of the service, all fines recovered because of conviction for a violation of the fire ordinances, all moneys accruing from the sale of unclaimed stolen property" were to be paid into these funds. Compensation was to be paid from the funds to those police or

firemen who were disabled in the line of duty or to the dependents of officers who were killed in the course of their work.

Points to Consider

Describe how Henry Coyle came to his sudden death.

What was a hose cart?

Why was the bridge over the river at State Street turned at the time of the accident?

Describe that bridge.

Should Mrs. Coyle have received compensation from the city for the death of her son?

Why?

DOCUMENT 28

RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR DISABLED POLICEMEN

May 10, 1886

DOCUMENT 28 – RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR DISABLED POLICEMEN May 10, 1886

TRANSCRIPTION

Whereas in the defense of peace and good order. several members of the Police force have met with Death and a large number have received greivous wounds. which may render them incapable of supporting themselves and their families, and Whereas it is one of the highest duties of Nations and Municipalities to reward and take care of those who so suffer in the support of the public welfare, and Whereas the Charter of our City does not permit of making appropriations either for rewards or for giving pensions. Therefore, Resolved that the City

Whereas in the defense of peace and good order. several members of the Police force have met with Death and a large number have received greivous wounds. which may render them incapable of supporting themselves and their families, and Whereas it is one of the highest duties of Nations and Municipalities to reward and take care of those who so suffer in the support of the public welfare, and Whereas the Charter of our City does not permit of making appropriations either for rewards or for giving pensions. Therefore, Resolved that the City Council of the City of Chicago hereby requests the Mayor and advise all future Mayors. to employ all Officers of the Police Department. who were on the 4th day of May 1886 so maimed, as to render them incapable of performing Police duty. in such positions, as they can fill. and that we pledge ourselves and all future Councils as far as we can. to appropriate for the pay of those so employed a sufficient sum to make the annual pay equal to that of able bodied Policemen.

Council of the City of Chicago hereby requests the Mayor and advise all future Mayors to employ all Officers of the Police Department. who were on the 4th day of May 1886 so maimed, as to render them incapable of performing police duty. in such positions. as they can fill. and that we pledge ourselves and all future Councils as far as we can. to appropriate for the pay of those so employed a sufficient sum to make the annual pay equal to that of able bodied Policemen.

Explanation

Nationally organized labor was uniting in a push for an eight-hour workday in late 1885 and in 1886. In Chicago an Eight Hour Association was formed and it was made up of the Trade and Labor Assembly, Knights of Labor, Socialist Labor Party, several independent trade unions, and a few anarchic radicals. Mass rallies were held in March, April and early May. On May 3, a confrontation occurred at the McCormick Reaper Plant. Private guards and police battled striking workers from the plant and a group of other sympathetic workingmen. Several deaths and numerous injuries resulted from the clash.

Subsequently fliers were circulated which called for a mass meeting on the evening of the fourth at the Haymarket Square.

That night several speakers, including a few radicals, addressed a large crowd. Most in attendance grew apathetic but as the gathering was about to break up, a group of policemen arrived en masse and ordered the workers to disperse. Suddenly a bomb exploded in front of the police officers and panic ensued during which there was an exchange of revolver fire. Numbers of police officers and civilians were killed and seriously injured. The press and the clergy soundly denounced the anarchists who had initiated the violence. Both locally and nationally there was a fear of further terrorist attacks from unknown numbers of radicals. A major consequence of the Haymarket Riot was the setback it dealt organized labor. It would take several years for the union movement to reclaim the respectability it lost as a result of this incident.

Points to Consider

What kind of compensation did this resolution provide those policemen who had been disabled?

Describe the labor disturbance which took place in Chicago on May 4, 1886.

Were disabled officers being provided for justly?

Explain the irony in that the city's charter did "not permit of making appropriations either for rewards or for giving pensions."