

The History of Fircrest

Fircrest's Growth and Community Spirit: 1940-1955



During the 1940s, Fircrest continued to grow as a close-knit, civic-minded community. In April 1941, Fircrest Park was officially granted to the Metropolitan Park District, beginning a lasting partnership that supported local recreation for nearly two decades. As World War II unfolded, the town stepped up with its own Civil Defense program and Volunteer Fire Department. In January 1942, Mayor Lakin formed the Fircrest Home Defense Council to coordinate local efforts, and by 1943, the Volunteer Fire Department was fully established under the leadership of longtime resident Wood Freeman, Fircrest's first Fire Chief.

Freeman was more than a community leader—he was an inventive mind with national impact. Born in the early 1900s and raised in Fircrest, he developed his skills aboard his family's deep-sea trolling boat out of Tacoma. In 1937, he patented the Metal Marine Pilot, a magnetic-compass-based self-steering device for boats. Manufactured locally under Metal Marine Pilot, Inc., Freeman's invention became one of the first successful marine autopilots, known for its durable and simple design. Despite its widespread use, Freeman remained deeply connected to Fircrest throughout his life.

In 1945, Fircrest's Town Hall moved from the Methodist Church into the newly renovated Public Utility Building. The original church building, located at 909 Dartmouth Street, still stands today as Liberty Baptist Church, its early role as Fircrest's first seat of government an important chapter in the town's history.

By the late 1940s, Fircrest was drawing regional attention. From 1947 to 1949, the Fircrest Golf Course hosted the popular Fircrest Open, bringing visitors to the growing community. In 1949, the town celebrated the dedication of Wainwright School with a tree-planting ceremony led by Mayor Morrison, underscoring Fircrest's commitment to education. That same year, a cement wading pool was added to Fircrest Park through the Metropolitan Park District partnership, providing a summertime gathering spot for families.

As the 1950s began, Fircrest invested in infrastructure to support its expanding population. By 1951, new wells were drilled and a water tank installed to meet rising demand. In 1952, the town expanded for the first time with an annexation southwest of Ramsdell Street. That same year, Oren Satterlee was appointed Fircrest's first full-salaried Chief of Police, marking a new era in professional public safety.

By 1955, local business and civic life were thriving. Manley's Market opened its doors, serving as a convenient shopping destination for families. Also that year, the Fircrest Kiwanis Club was incorporated, beginning a legacy of community service that continues to this day.

These years laid strong foundations for Fircrest's growth, community spirit, and civic pride—qualities that still define the city today.

Stay tuned to future issues of Town Topics for more Fircrest history and fun facts.