



THE MUSEUM TRUMPET



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The Official Newsletter of the San Jose Fire Museum

January 2026

SAM SEIBERT: SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT ICON

By John A. McMillan

Samuel Henry Edward Seibert's life began August 26th, 1919 and ended on November 30, 2025. Sam lived 106 years and we think he was the oldest living firefighter in America at his passing. One of Sam's goals was to catch or pass his dear friend Retired San Jose Fire Department (SJFD) Battalion Chief Lawrence Campbell who lived to be 105 and passed away in 2012. I suspect Sam was the oldest living firefighter in the history of the San Jose Fire Department.

I met Sam in 2002 at a kick off meeting for the 150th Anniversary of the SJFD Firefighters Ball at the offices of the San Jose Firefighters Local 230. I was chairperson representing Fire Administration, Randy Sekany was in attendance representing San Jose Firefighters Local 230 and Councilmember Pat Dando attended for the City of San Jose. San Jose Fire Museum President Josh Weggeland and Director Dennis Madigan also were in attendance. Before the meeting I noticed an older man sitting on the other end of the conference room table and went down to introduce myself. It was Sam Seibert and was the first time for me to meet him even though he retired in 1976 and I was hired in 1974. We never crossed paths until that day and he was already 82 years old and wanting to help us plan for our big Firefighters Ball.

From this meeting and over the next 24 years, Sam was the SJFM guiding light. He worked hard and volunteered to help on all our needs. He helped us fill the blanks on a lot of our SJFD History and the City of San Jose's History. He gifted the SJFM over \$350,000 in cash donations. Sam and Retired Fire Captain Joe Paradiso (deceased) purchased and gifted a 4 wheeled hose cart & 1810 James Smith Hand Pumper for about \$20,000 around 1970. Sam also gifted to the SJFM many historical SJFD items including the most important, the original Hook & Ladder Co. No. One Badge and Constitution approved by the Common Council back in 1854.

So on January 6, 2026, the SJFM and Seibert Family hosted a Celebration for the Life of Sam. Over 200 people attended at Old Fire Station One. The Seibert Family provided a great meal including dessert. We had many individuals who wanted to speak about Sam. It was very clear that Sam, his stories, personality, skills and experiences left a very positive impact on our speakers and it stood out in their speeches.



SAM SEIBERT A FEW YEARS AGO SITTING IN FRONT OF OUR 1931 MACK THAT SAM DROVE FOR MANY YEARS.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, WINTER 2026

By John A. McMillan



Hello everyone and Happy New Year! We are now starting our second decade owning Old Fire Station One (OFS1). We have so much to be proud of. Many capital improvements, improved organization planning and finally opening our museum up to the public on a limited basis.

This past holiday period was rather quiet. We had no significant holiday parties so we used the time as an opportunity to get a little more organized within OFS1. Our Display Design Committee used this time with our consultants to review concepts for the display of "The Five Eras of Firefighter Response". As you may recall we were considering installing this display in the large area next to the Seibert Gallery. Our consultant asked us to consider installing the display in the Gift Shop area and also make that area the entrance to the San Jose Fire Museum (SJFM). After careful thought, some of the members of the Design Committee met with our consultants not confident with their proposal. After a great discussion, we mutually came up with an idea to install the Five Eras of Firefighting Response in strategic wall areas on the apparatus floor. Each display will be portable flat wall surface on wheels. We don't have a dimension yet but expect it to be like eight feet wide by ten feet tall. Each era will be designed on a separate portable wall. We are still considering whether to keep the entrance in the Seibert Gallery side or move it to the Gift Shop area and share the Gift Shop area space. We also mentioned to you that we hoped to get this display completed by December 15, 2025. We now know we are months away from even completing the Era One Wall Display and to complete all Five Eras timeline is unclear at this time.

We are still working with Garden City Construction in the overall Program Design of OFS1. We are doing some structural design for an elevator and considering options for a steel structure in the backyard area. Our goal is to complete an updated overall cost estimate for use in our next major step - Fundraising.

We hope to have some real cost estimates for the final buildout of OFS1 by the Spring Newsletter along with pictures of a completed Era One Display Wall.

Finally we will be approving our new Board of Directors at our Monthly SJFM Board Meeting on January 15th that will be in place for the next two (2) years. We do have a vacant position now since the passing of Sam Seibert and hope to fill the position as "Director at Large" in the near future. If you are interested please contact Jim Carter or John McMillan.

Sam Seibert (continued from page 1)

Meeting Sam changed our lives. He became a great friend and guided all of us with his consistency and resilience. If you met Sam and could spend a few minutes with him, you noticed a few things immediately. He was high energy, very smart, had a great memory and liked to tell stories. His stories were epic at times and if you were lucky to be there, you would remember it forever! Sam's legacy with the SJFD and SJFM will live forever!



SAM CELEBRATING HIS 105TH BIRTHDAY AT OLD FIRE STATION ONE!



SAM WITH HIS FAMILY ON AUGUST 26, 2025 CELEBRATING HIS 106TH BIRTHDAY AT OLD FIRE STATION ONE.



DOREEN BELOW, SAM SEIBERT'S NIECE RECEIVING U.S. FLAG FROM SJFD FIRE CHIEF ROBERT SAPIEN AT SAM'S CELEBRATION.



SAM SEIBERT IN THE 1950's. THINK ABOUT IT, OVER 70 YEARS AGO!



SJFD HONOR GUARD FOLDING U.S. FLAG FOR PRESENTATION TO SEIBERT FAMILY AT SAM'S CELEBRATION.



SAM SEIBERT PRESENTATION TABLE WITH A MINI GRANDFATHER CLOCK (SAM DID CLOCK REPAIR AND WAS A CLOCK COLLECTOR) CONTAINING HIS ASHES.

San Jose Fire Museum



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DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF THE SAN JOSE FIRE DEPARTMENT

San Jose Fire Sharks Gifts

SALE

Stickers \$3 to \$4

Patches \$10

Hats \$25



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