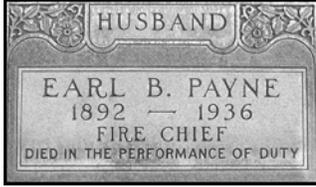


Earl b payne



Earl Broxun Payne came to North Platte in 1912. He joined the volunteer fire department in 1922. On July 16, 1936, he became Fire Chief. He was the first salaried fulltime fire chief hired by the City of North Platte. During his short term he was responsible for obtaining a new ladder truck and equipment that was needed for the truck. He had the new drill tower constructed on East 7th Street for the training of the firemen. He had spent the previous summer in fire training school and carried on intensive drills with the volunteer firemen.

On Saturday, October 17th of 1936, Chief Payne and fireman Francis Fitzgibbons were going down West 4th Street and were at the intersection of Jefferson and 4th Streets to fight a grass fire near Cody School on the outskirts of North Platte when tragedy struck.

Payne was traveling in his little red coupe ahead of the fire trucks when a car driven by Ira P. Wright (radio operator), clipped the rear of Payne's coupe. Wright was traveling south and didn't stop at the intersection. Wright claimed that he looked both ways and didn't see or hear the approaching sirens. He had slowed down, but never came

to a complete stop at the intersection. There was no stop sign at the intersection, so instead of stopping, he just did a quick look, and continued through the intersection.

*North Platte Fire
Chief Dies in Crash
On Way to Blaze*

At that time, West 4th Street had a narrow ditch running down the middle of the street. Wright's car struck the left fender of Payne's car, causing Payne's car to hit the curb along the center ditch, causing both men to fly out of the roof of the car. The car turned over twice and ended up in the ditch about twenty feet ahead of the two men, who landed on the pavement. Payne died shortly after reaching the hospital.

Payne was born July 8, 1892 in California and married Verda Timmerman in 1911 in Fort Morgan, Colorado. They had no children together. Mrs. Payne received \$2,000.00 from the city after his death.

The building pictured here is the first Fire Station in North Platte. The building still stands at 620 N Vine Street. The furthest right portion of the building is original and was completed in 1918; the middle expansion was built in 1921; and the last part of the building was added in 1929. The building is currently occupied by a private resident and two businesses.



618-620 N Vine Street