

Line of Duty Death of Albert Roos

By Michael Werner



Photo of Albert Roos. (Blue Earth County Historical Society)

Captain Albert Roos died in the line of duty while helping fellow firefighters battle a blaze when he was stricken from a heart attack caused by overexertion.

The fire took place sometime on March 11, 1934 at 806 North Fifth Street. Albert Roos was helping three firefighters onto the roof of the structure to combat the fire when “he was suddenly stricken and died immediately.” The cause of death was deemed “a heart attack apparently due to overexertion.” The official death certificate of Roos stated that the underlying cause of death was “coronary sclerosis” more commonly known today as coronary artery disease or atherosclerosis. It is typically a buildup of plaque inside the artery walls that causes the arteries to become narrower and slows the flow of blood. One of the main risk factors is age with “men over the age of 55” being “at higher risk of heart disease”. Albert Roos was 64 years old at the time of his death, well past the age of 55 where the risk of disease significantly increases.

Albert Roos was serving as a captain of the Mankato fire department at the time of his death and had faithfully served the fire department for 30 years. Roos was born in Mankato December 12, 1869 and lived in the city all his life. In his early life he was a painter and decorator. Roos was appointed to the Mankato Fire Department in 1895 by Chief George Philips who happened to be the father of Roos' brother-in-law, Gates Philips. The Free Press described him as an "active, charitable man, widely known and generally popular. He was the leader of the charitable work done by the department in repairing toys for poor children during the Christmas season."

The day after his death, March 12, 1934, the Mankato City Council paid tribute to Albert Roos for his service in a resolution that was proposed by M. G. Knoff stating:

"Be it resolved by the council of the city of Mankato that it hereby express its appreciation for the exceptional, faithful and efficient services rendered in the fire department of the city of Mankato by Captain Albert Roos.

That it hereby extends to the widow and children of the said Captain Albert Roos its deep sympathy in their bereavement for the loss of a beloved husband and father.

And that this resolution be spread upon the minutes of this council and a copy thereof delivered to the family of our brother, Captain Albert Roos."

Funeral services were held on March 14, 1934 at 2 pm at the Kelly-Johnson-Boman Mortuary. The services had a substantial turnout. "Mankato's official family, including the city council, other city officers and civil service commissioners, with several hundred citizens" attending to pay their respects to Captain Albert Roos. Six uniformed firemen acted as pallbearers "while other uniformed firemen and uniformed police officers formed a guard of honor." The services were conducted by Reverend W. W. Kirby, pastor of First Presbyterian

Church, at the Kelly-Johnson-Boman funeral home and the burial took place in Glenwood Cemetery, Mankato.

Roos left behind his wife at 220 South Fourth Street; two children, Herbert of Mankato and Mrs. Reed Rose of Madison Wisconsin; two brothers, Walter of Mankato and George of Indian Lake; and two sisters, Mrs. Frank Koenker and Mrs. Gates Philips both of Mankato.

Captain Albert Roos dedicated 30 years of service to the community of Mankato as a firefighter and was clearly beloved by the community and those around him as evidenced by the grand turnout to his funeral after his tragic death. The fact that the city council had a resolution in his honor is testament to his honorable service for Mankato. He no doubt provided many children in the community joy during the Christmas season repairing their used and broken toys. He clearly left a positive mark upon the city that most certainly was missed with his early passing.