

Former Fire Chief Wedded Fifty Years

Illness forced cancellation of a family planned celebration, but for former city fire chief Gerald Vance and Mrs. Vance, their golden wedding anniversary didn't pass without recognition.

But instead of the planned "open house" the couple celebrated the anniversary quietly. A few close friends called to extend personal congratulations while they were also the recipients of a large number of anniversary cards and gifts.

The couple are life residents of the city and live at 42 Murney Street. Mrs. Vance is the former Helen Genevieve Hurst. They are members of Holloway Street United Church.

Now retired, the "ex" fire chief spent more than 43 years with the Belleville Fire Department. He was deputy fire chief from 1930 to 1948 and served as chief from 1948 until his retirement two years ago.

"They were looking for a with horses," recalled Chief temporary man who was good Vance. "I joined the department intending to stay only for two weeks and ended up by staying more than 43 years."

Horses were still hauling the fire wagons to fires when Chief Vance joined the department. The first motorised fire engine was not acquired until the next year and the horses were to remain on until 1926.

The horse drawn fire wagons were little more than carriers for hose and other equipment, but the city did have one of those old fashioned steam operated fire engines.

"I remember it being used only once and then it didn't work," commented the chief.

The then fire chief, William Brown, was so provoked that the machine was hauled back to the station and never used again.

Chief Vance is proud of the fact that all presently owned fire fighting equipment with the exception of one car, and both of the present fire halls were

acquired during his years as department head.

The city fire department has been a "permanent" force since 1916 and for the next five years fire fighters were to serve 24 hour days, sleeping and eating at the fire station.

The switch the double shift—12 hours on and 12 hours off—in 1921 was one of the reasons Chief Vance decided to remain with the force.

Chief Vance wasn't to work with horses long after joining the fire department, but in recent years the ponies have filled a bigger spot in his life.

About eight years ago he was one of the driving forces in forming the Quinte Driving Club and for the past four years has served as the club's president.

Chief and Mrs. Vance have three sons, one of whom is carrying on in his father's footsteps as a fire fighter.

Allen Vance, now a captain with the force, has been with the department since 1949. Lawrence "Doc" Vance is a civilian worker at Trenton air station. The third son, Robert, also lives in Belleville.