

## HISTORY OF THE MALTESE CROSS

The Maltese cross is known around the world as a symbol of the fire service. It is often seen painted on fire trucks, on the clothing of firefighters, depicted on firefighter's badges, and is quite often the chosen design of firefighter tattoos. So where did the Maltese cross come from, and how did it get to be known as a symbol of the fire service?

The Maltese cross is named after the island of Malta, which came to be the home of the Knights of St. John. The Knights of St. John existed during the 11th and 12 centuries. The armor worn by the Knights covered their entire bodies as well as their faces. Because of this it was often difficult for the knights to recognize one another during battle. They realized they would need some type of symbol that could be used to quickly and easily identify them selves. They chose the Cross of Calvary, which would later be known as the Maltese cross. During the Crusades, the enemies of the knights commonly used fire as a weapon. It was quite common for a Knight to have to risk his own life to save another Knight or extinguish a fire.

The Knights of St. John were also known for their care of the sick and injured. Combined with their abilities to fight fires, and the pride and honor they took in their work, the Maltese cross seems a fitting symbol of the modern fire service. Firefighting is a proud profession, and only a symbol of pride would exemplify the work of a firefighter.

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