



The Story of the Maltese Cross

The badge of a fireman is the Maltese Cross. This Maltese Cross is a symbol of protection and a badge of honor. Its story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders, the Knights of St. John, fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Lands, they were faced with a new device of war - fire.

As the crusaders advanced on Jerusalem, the Saracens pelted them with glass bombs full of naphtha and then threw down flaming torches. Hundreds of knights were burned alive while others risked their lives to save their kinsmen from painful deaths. Thus these became the first firefighters. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded them with a badge of honor similar to the cross firefighters wear today.

Since the Knights of St. John lived nearly four centuries on the island of Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, the cross came to be known as the Maltese Cross. The firefighter who wears this cross is willing to lay down his life for others, just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago.