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Serving Surry, Wilkes
and Yadkin Counties

Two Sections - 26 Pages

Renovation had begun

Rockford's old hotel is destroyed by fire

By REBEL GOOD
Editor

ROCKFORD — The oldest section of the Grant-Burrus Hotel here, built in 1796 and once the hub of a bustling community, was destroyed by fire Monday afternoon.

Surry

Restoration will be difficult, if not impossible.

The roof, second floor and much of the ground floor were consumed in the blaze, the only relatively undamaged portions being part of the ground floor and the lower level in the newer back wing.

In the past month the hotel had become the home of three young men, friends of the hotel's owner, Rex Burrus of Rocky Mount, who were trying to renovate the structure.

Started Painting

The three — Randall Agee and Neil Hudson of Rocky Mount, Va., and Pat Burke of Washington, D.C. — had cleaned litter and trash from

out of the hotel, had repaired the roof and had started painting the interior.

The fire was discovered about 1:30 by Messrs. Hudson and Burke who had been cutting wood near the hotel.

"There were great clouds of smoke all around the trees," said Mr. Hudson. "I don't know how no one else noticed it."

The South Surry Fire Department responded about 1:45 and Mr. Agee arrived back from a trip to the East Bend Medical Center shortly thereafter. "I could see the smoke almost all the way back," Mr. Agee said. "I just knew it was the hotel."

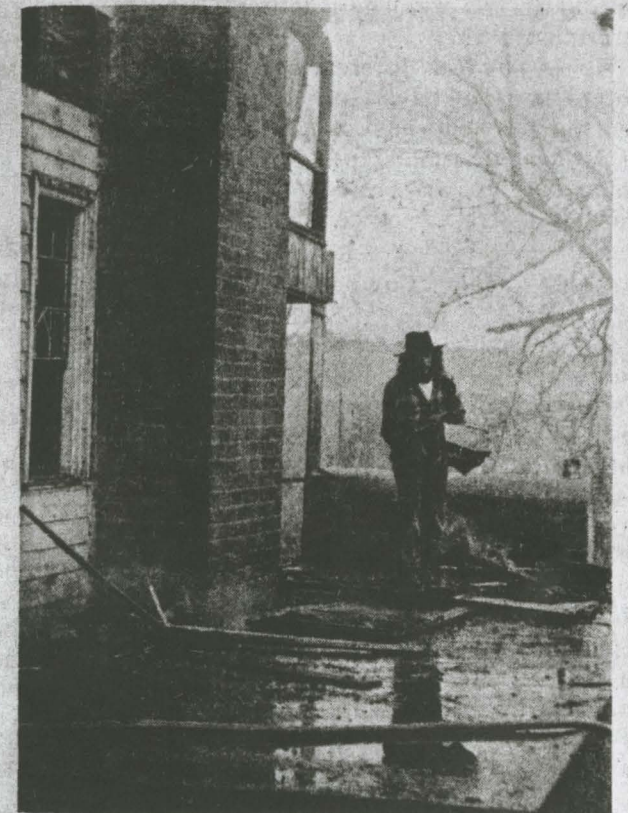
Mr. Hudson said he and Mr. Burke rushed inside and by "crawling on the floor under the smoke" managed to salvage some clothes and other belongings.

Among the items Mr. Hudson carried out were several jars of honey which had been discovered in beehives in the walls but Mr. Agee

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Randall Agee assists firemen in the effort to extinguish the smoldering walls and floors of the Grant-Burrus Hotel.



While the fire burns, Randall Agee salvages a few of his remaining belongings.

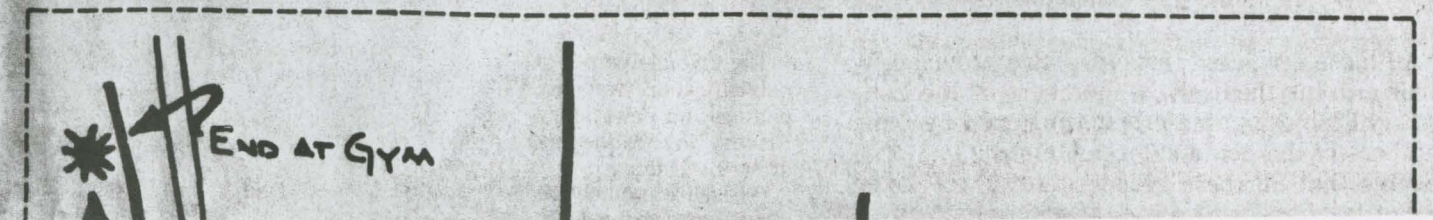
North Knobs precinct

Hill asks votes be thrown out

YADKINVILLE — The Yadkin County Board of Elections

in North Knobs, 824-350.

the petition reads.



Rockford's old hotel is destroyed by fire

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lost all his clothes and Mr. Hudson had a number of law books he had purchased in the advent of attending law school — destroyed.

Mr. Burke said he lost about \$50 in cash and Mr. Hudson said he lost about \$150.

The fire apparently started in the middle of one of the rear rooms upstairs, probably the result of old, faulty wiring.

The South Surry units, assisted by the Boonville and Fall Creek fire departments, appeared to have the blaze confined to a portion of the second story at one point. "We had it about knocked down," said Boonville Fire Chief Harvey Smith, "but then we all ran out of water."

By the time more water could be drafted from the Yadkin River about a quarter-mile away the fire had spread out of control.

When the firemen regained control the roof had collapsed along with several floors upstairs.

The would-be renovators, their work and project crumbling before them, assisted the firemen who remained on the scene into the evening in spotting and extinguishing small fires that flared up in the

aged walls.

Mr. Agee said that he had contacted insurance agents a few weeks ago about purchasing fire insurance. "We couldn't get any," he said. "One insurance agent said no one would touch it with a 10-foot pole."

Ed Spanski, executive director of the Surry Bicentennial Commission, watching what was left of the smoldering ruins, said he would contact Bicentennial and State Department of Archives officials to see if there are any funds available for restoration.

The loss of the hotel leaves only a couple of dilapidated homes, the country store across from the hotel and the Rockford Courthouse as remnants of the community's historic past.

The hotel, opened in 1796 as the Grant Hotel and later was known as the Grant-Burrus Hotel between 1890-1915. It featured 15 large, high-ceilinged rooms and 13 brick fireplaces.

At one time Andrew Jackson, later to be president, practiced law in Rockford, and his initials were reputedly carved in the wooden mantle of one of the fireplaces.

Now no one will know for sure.



Randall Agee hauls in a fire hose, passing it to Pat Burke to fight a spot fire on the ground floor.

(Tribune photo by Rebel Good)

Mary Crater

YADKINVILLE — The funeral for Mrs. Mary Pauline Lowery Crater, 63, wife of Herbert E. Crater of Mocksville, Rt. 5, was 3 p.m. today at Wyo Wesleyan Bible Methodist Church, where she was a member, by the Revs. Benjamine Stowe and Earl Newton. Burial was in the Mount Olive United Methodist Church Cemetery.

Mrs. Crater was dead on

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