Benson Fire Department, to 2020, 3rd Edition

To those interested in the history of the Benson Fire Department. We have put together all the information that we have. If you have additional information, articles, photos, etc. we would be very interested in adding them to this collection. Please contact Al Ring, ringal@comcast.net to make arrangements. We do not have to keep any of the items. We scan copies and return or you can scan them of copy them and mail or e-mail them. Make it easy on yourself.

SPECIAL THANKS TO — Gerry Thompson from the Benson Museum:

1883 Before fire department

September 19, 1883, *Arizona Weekly Citizen*:

Benson, Sept. 19, 1883. The fire broke out in the dwelling house of F. Brandon about twelve o'clock. The cause supposed to be incendiary. It continued burning until all the buildings from Sisson, Crocker & Co. were burned stopping at the Virginia hotel. The losers are Sisson, Crocker & Co., $20,000; insured; D. Johnson, livery and boarding house; loss, $2,000; insurance eight hundred; Dyar, Finch & Baldwin, stock and building; $2,000; partly insured; Hugo Robn, saloon; twenty-live hundred; insured for one thousand; Clark Brothers fruit store: loss fifteen hundred; Sam Stanton, saloon; one thousand; Frank Brandon, saloon and fixtures: loss $2,000, and; not insured; G. W. Bryan, saloon; loss fifteen hundred: insurance, five hundred; Bob Stewart, saloon; six thousand; insured;
D. H. Logan, hotel; four thousand; insured; Virginia House; loss six thousand; insured for twenty-four hundred. Had there been much wind all of Benson would have been in ashes. Several thieves were given five minutes to leave town. All quiet.

1886 Before fire department

May 7 & 10, 1886, *Arizona Weekly Citizen*:

Benson, May 10, 1886. A fire broke out in this place early Sunday morning and burned a large portion of the town. The loss is at forty thousand dollars and partly covered by insurance. The cause of the fire was incendiary. Dyar & Baldwin, W. Callahan, Clark Bros, Mrs. W. W. Baldwin's Millinery store, Henry Brans' saloon, Mrs. Coker's restaurant, Geo. Bryan's saloon, W. Zeek's barber shop, a Chinese restaurant, and the post office were a complete loss. Bryan & Redfield, general merchandise, total loss; Barrack & Miller's saloon and O. L. Finch's saloon were burned.

Another Account.

Special to the Citizen

Benson, May 10. The fire started at 12 o'clock Saturday night in a Chinese restaurant; the wind changed and blew in the direction of the depot and this saved the lower part of the town. The upper part was saved by throwing water on the Chinese building. Hand grenades were used but to no purpose.

TE3 5-7-1886

Disastrous Fire At Benson Yesterday

A disastrous fire occurred at Benson yesterday morning which for a time threatened the entire town. Four buildings were consumed in the business section, and but little of the contents was saved. The fire started about 3 o'clock in the morning, the origin of which is not known, but is believed to have started from a smoldering cigarette. The fire burned from the Weiss corner to the Etz butcher shop where, by the heroic action of the Benson fire department, the ravages of the flames were checked.

The burned district included a saloon and lodging house owned by J. A Lopnow, who had only bought the property the day before; a restaurant owned by two Japanese, and the general merchandise store of J M Cosby. But very little was saved, the loss falling heavily on the individual owners. TE2 7-1-1906

1886 Before fire department

May 10, 1886, *The Daily Tombstone:*

Benson Burnt.

Almost the Whole of the Business Town Swept Away.

The Estimated Loss $40.000 ---List of Sufferers, Etc., Etc.

About 11:30 last Saturday night, Fred Clark, who runs the switch engine at Benson, discovered flames issuing from the rear of Zeek's barber shop, on the main street of the town, and immediately opposite the depot. He at once gave the alarm by sounding his whistle, and then hastened to the fire. Here he was soon joined by J. D. Jennings, who informs THE TOMBSTONE that the fire was located in the bath room adjoining the barber shop, and had gotten so slight a start, that had himself and Clark been able to procure the necessary water supply, the fire could have been confined to the spot where it originated. Their efforts to quench it with the meagre supply at hand were unavailing, and notwithstanding the herculean efforts of the citizens, most of whom were on the ground shortly after the alarm sounded, the flames spread with frightful rapidity until in almost less time than it takes to chronicle it, about a block of the business portion of the town was in ashes. This is the second time that Benson has been laid low by the fire fiend, but notwithstanding this it is said that the losers are preparing to rebuild in a more substantial manner.

The following is a list of the principal losers:

Dyar & Baldwin, $25,000, insured for $12,000; Clark's grocery store, loss $5,000, no insurance; Cal Finch's saloon, loss $2,500, no insurance; Barrack & Miller saloon, loss $1,500, no insurance; Geo. Bryan, postoffice and stationery store, loss $1,000, no insurance; Zeek's barber shop, loss $500, insurance not known; McAllister's restaurant, loss $500, no insurance; Mrs. Baldwin's millinery store, loss $2,000, insurance $1,700. There were a number of other buildings destroyed, the value of which, and amount of insurance, if any, was not learned.

May 12 & 13, 1886, *The Daily Tombstone:*

The fire at Benson was extremely unfortunate coming as it did, as the citizens of that town had not yet recovered from the disastrous fire that visited it a little over two years ago.

The Morning Mongolian says that the people of Benson "promptly set fire to the town." This is the meanest and dirtiest blackmailing scheme we have ever known of a paper resorting to. The people of Benson are an honest and law abiding people and have attended strictly to their own business, and now that they are homeless and their earnings of years of industry have been swept away in one short hour, the Mongolian accuses them of being incendiaries.

1890/1892 Before fire department

Courtesy, http://www.bensonvisitorcenter.com/history.htm Street scene:

Fourth Street and Huachuca-1890

March 4, 1892, *The Arizona Republican*:

FIRE AT BENSON.

An Estimated Loss of $10,000—The Fire Still Raging.

Special to THE REPUBLICAN.

BENSON, Ariz., March 3.—A fire broke out in Clark Bros. merchandise store about 11 p. m. and the entire stock is lost. The origin of the fire is unknown. The fire at this hour is still burning and men are busy carrying goods from other stores. The danger to other stores is about over. The loss is estimated at $10,000, partly insured.

March 20, 1892, *The Tombstone Epitaph*:

The stock of goods destroyed by fire in the building occupied by Clark Bros at Benson was insured for $5,000 and the building was insured for about half its value.

1892/1893 **Before fire department**

August 7, 1892, *The Tombstone Epitaph*:

Goldwater's large warehouse at Benson was destroyed by fire last night. About $6,000 worth of goods were destroyed with it. The office of Wells Fargo & Co. at the depot narrowly escaped burning also. The origin of the fire is a mystery.

November 12, 1893, *The Tombstone Epitaph*:

The army of tramps that passed through Benson a few days ago had a high time at Deming. They camped near an oil warehouse, which caught fire from their camp fire and was consumed entailing a loss of $2,000. A fight ensued over the discussion of who was to blame, and one tramp stabbed the lieutenant of the gang, from the effects of which he will die. Seven of the party were arrested and the balance told to "get."

1896 Before fire department

October 2, 1896:

THE FLOOD AT BENSON.

Description of its Awfulness by Oour Correspondent.

BENSON, October 2, 1896.

ED PROSPECTOR:—An impressive warning came yesterday to the people of Benson which most vividly and forcibly reminded us that in the "midst of life we are in death." Those who witnessed the storm yesterday say they can never more doubt the theological idea of an ancient deluge. Houses floated away like toys upon the deep.

The storm came about 12 in the day. Many describe the water spout as twisting and writhing like a snake, until finally it burst upon the little village with such terrible force that it was almost swept from the face of the earth. The depot of the S. P. Co. is almost demolished and Wells, Fargo & Co.'s express office is a total wreck. Business houses are filled with mud and hail to the depth of from one to three feet. People stading on the upstairs balcony of the Grand Central Hotel were watching those who were on the plaform of the depot and could see them only when flashes of lightning came, the storm cloud was so dense.

Two of our most esteemed citizens, Mr. Ashburn and Mr. Zeek, each now mourn the loss of wife and babies. Mrs. Ashburn and two babies were visiting Mrs. Zeek when the storm came and, without a moment's warning or any human aid, were all six swept down with the flood. The bodies of Mrs. Ashburn and Mrs. Zeek have been recovered by the serching party, but the four children are all missing.

No trains reached Benson from any direction last night or today and it is reported that miles of track each way have been washed away, and no trains can possibly reach Benson until Monday.

Wrecking trains are in Benson and everything is being done that can be to clear things up.

STRICKEN BENSON.

Further Details of the Flood and its Ravages.

The death dealing torrent has come and gone leaving in its wake a trail of sorrow, desolate homes and crushed hopes.

October 1st will be a day long to be remembered in the history of Benson; no one would have prophesied on that bright morning that before high noon the elements would have precipitated themselves with such savage ferocity upon the unhappy town. Two clouds were seen approaching each other—clashed and formed a storm center. A gyratory motion was observed in the middle of the clouds, the rain fell in sheets, the hail (an inch in diameter) came with the fury of demons, leaving their impression upon the woodwork and producing a deafening noise. Soon the water was observed approaching like some maddened monster revelling in destruction; Mr. Zeek's residence was right in its track. Mrs. Zeek and the two little boys were inside the house, also Mrs. Ashburn and her two little girls, making a total of six who were swept into eternity. They were seen by several now up and struggling, again out of sight; a piercing wail, then the ominous silence.

The two ladies were found the next day about half a mile from the town. Saturday evening the body of little Clyde Zeek was found; Sunday morning Mr. Ashburn's little girl was recovered (still two remain to be found). Not a vestage of the Zeek residence is left.

Several narrow escapes are to be chronicled. A large building known locally as the "Hide House" had stored in it about forty ton of baled hay, was lifted bodily and dashed against Wells-Fargo's office, crushing that building out of all semblance. Mr. Webster's house was flooded and filled with ice (hail) to the depth of four feet; the family had a narrow escape; so sudden was the rush of water that Mrs. Christenot and family had to be drawn out of their house with ropes.

The most pathetic scene witnessed among the living was that of Mrs. G. W. Bryan who had tied her babe to herself so that they might not be separated even in death, as she expected every moment for her house to be carried away, but it was providentially saved.

The funeral of Mrs Ashburn and Mrs. Zeek took place at half-past eleven Saturday from the hall (the largest building in town), Rev. D. Roberts officiated. The hall was filled with sympathizing friends.

Searching parties are out from early morning until dark trying to recover the remaining bodies.

The heartfelt sympathy of the whole town is with the bereaved husbands.

BENSON'S SORROW.

The Other Bodies Recovered and Laid to Rest.

The bodies of Della May Ashburn, aged three years, and Edgar Preston Zeek, aged six years, were recovered last evening and laid to rest, thus outwardly drawing the curtain over a truly tragic scene.

Six mounds of earth, eloquent in their silence, proclaim the stern fact of life's brevity and uncertainty. Property destroyed, homes made desolate and lives lost; hearts wrung with sorrow and lines of grief plainly visible on the countenance of the bereaved ones the curtain truly is drawn, but the memory remains; nature's tocsin has been sounded, the elements lashed into fury claimed their innocent victims; the furrowed earth shows traces of indignant stripes; the trees stripped of their leaves join in the universal sorrow; the dead are laid to rest, the living have received a solemn warning. From the depths of their grief stricken souls may there arise a hope in the Son of Righteousness, who comes with healing on his wings. We mourn with the mourners; we sympathize with the sorrowful, and counsel that this severe lesson may not pass by unheeded.

Mr. F. S. Webster, the popular S. P. agent at Benson, and his family sustained considerable loss from the recent flood, their carpets and furniture being ruined and their store house with its contents swept away. Fearing that the entire building containing their quarters would succumb to the violence of the flood, they escaped to the higher parts of the depot proper.

Mrs. Samuel Bohn, of Benson, well known in Willcox as Miss Nancy Harris, has great reason to congratulate herself on the fact that a call from a neighbor a few minutes before the flood prevented her from going to Mrs. Zeek's house as she fully intended. From her residence, she is said to have seen the doomed house with the imperiled inmates swept past by the resistless current to a speedy and shocking death.

THE BENSON FLOOD.

A Full Account of the Frightful Disaster at that Place.

Last week THE OASIS gave a short account of the frightful disaster which befell the town of Benson on the last day of September, which, while incomplete, was correct in the main, but was gathered fragmentarily from various persons who had their own information by hearsay. It was impossible to get anything more complete or accurate, for, at the time of going to press, communication with the stricken town had not been restored.

The rain poured in torrents, and was accompanied by a hailstorm of unusual severity. Many of the hailstones were nearly an inch in diameter and they covered the ground to a depth of two feet on a level, save where the flow of the rushing waters served to carry them away, and where the water did move them it lodged them at salient points in great banks four to six feet in depth. Water was knee deep in all the streets, and in many of them it ran so deep and swiftly that to attempt to cross would result in loss of life.

The dwelling of Mr. W. M. Zeek was the only one completely demolished, but many others were seriously damaged, and many more were invaded by water, and furniture, goods and other contents seriously damaged by mud and water. A warehouse (which was generally known as the "hide house") some distance west of the depot, with its contents (some 1800 bales of hay) was swept down in the course of the awful flood, striking Wells, Fargo & Co.'s office building forcing that from its foundation and against the depot building—that part occupied by Agent F. S. Webster as residence. The force of the water burst open the doors of the building, flooding all the rooms to a depth of three feet and ruining carpets, furniture, etc. Mrs. Webster escaped to the main building, forcing her way through water waist deep to do so. The office was also inundated, but the higher floor of the freight house and platform all the occupants found safety. While there they saw with agonized eyes the women who were drowned, Mrs. Zeek and Mrs. Ashburn, swept by in the raging torrent. They were yet alive and screaming for help, which was impossible to give. Herbert Wood, the express agent, on his way out of his office with a hatchet, and joined the others at the freight house.

The house occupied by Mr. Christenot, the yardmaster, which is located about midway between the lower end of the depot and the water tank, seemed threatened with demolition. It was surrounded by water on all sides, flowing so deeply and swiftly that sure death awaited an attempt to cross. A strong rope was thrown across the street, from higher ground on the other side, secured at both ends and with that as a life line Mr. Christenot crossed his family in safety.

The drug store of H. Walker was flooded, and a great deal of stock in the cellar badly damaged by mud and water.

Mrs. Ashburn and her two children, Della and Ruby, were at the house of Mrs. Zeek, who had with her Edgar and Clyde, her two little boys. Mrs. Zeek had been at home about the storm commenced and had returned to his shop, while Mr. Ashburn was out of town. The cloudburst just above Mr. Zeek's house swept it out to the corner of the yard and down against the express office (some 400 feet away) where it went to pieces, under the very eyes of Mrs. Zeek, whose shop was but a little distance away. Mrs. Ashburn was above of the house—some think she was out on the porch when the house was struck by the rush of water.

Thursday the remains of the two ladies were found. Mrs. Ashburn had caught upon a barbed wire fence, and as her arms were clasped tightly around a post it is supposed she lived until after she lodged there, and died either from exposure or from injuries. Mrs. Zeek was found with her head in a ditch beneath a bank of hailstone from which one of her feet protruded. The remains of the two ladies were given burial Friday, the services being held in the Knights of Pythias hall, Rev. Roberts officiating. The gentleman delivered a very affecting discourse which moved strong men to tears, and they wept like children.

Saturday afternoon the body of little Clyde Zeek was found, and on Sunday morning that of Baby Ruby Ashburn. They were buried from the M. E. church on Monday. The two tiny caskets, side by side, were a pitiful sight. Tuesday morning the body of Della Ashburn was found, and Thursday evening that of Edward Zeek. In both decomposition was far a

1896 Before fire department

October 2, 1896:

...ered, and they were quickly sepul-
...ured.
...Like the moment of last week this
...gathered from various sources, and
...yet incomplete, as the extent of in-
...ry to the various dwellings and
...ness has not reached this office. The
...ation was sad indeed, and the peo-
...le of the stricken town have the
...sympathy of the entire territory.

THE BENSON DISASTER.

The calamity which has proven so disastrous was the result of a cloud-burst in the Whetstone mountains to the southwest of Benson. All day the sky in that direction, as viewed from Benson, presented a black and forbidding appearance and indicated a heavy storm. The gorges and gulches, arroyas and canyons leading toward the San Pedro river in the direction of the town, suddenly became filled with fast traveling, deep, angry streams, which united upon the sloping plain east of the mountains, and became one gigantic stream, broad, forceful, and deep, carrying with it in its mad course, everything movable. As it descended it gathered momentum, and when it struck Benson it exerted its mighty force upon everything in its path.

The western portion of the town was almost entirely swept away. The express office was washed from its foundation and jammed up against the depot. Then the rushing column of water had passed beyond the town, the baggage and waiting rooms of the depot contained at least three feet of mud.

Oscar Ashburn's family, consisting of his wife and two sweet little daughters, the eldest about four years of age, found a watery grave beneath the merciless torrent of roaring water, and Wm. Zeek's wife and two children met a similar sad fate. A number of others are missing, and it is almost hoping against hope to think they have escaped.

The Southern Pacific Co. announces that this is the most damaging storm which has ever taken place on the line in Arizona.—Citizen.

AFTER THE FLOOD.

Further Particulars Concerning the Fatal Benson Cloud Burst.

While the account published last week in the SULPHUR VALLEY NEWS was pronounced by the citizens of Benson to be the most accurate that appeared in any paper, it contained a few slight inaccuracies, and the NEWS editor a few days ago visited the stricken town with a view of making a careful examination of the ground and noting the remaining evidences of the flood's ravages.

The following particulars were obtained from the parties who sustained the heaviest losses.

The first indication of the approaching storm was a dense black cloud that loomed up from the southwest over the western point of the Whetstone mountains. Soon another thick cloud of peculiar shape with a deep blue black color betokening hail shot up rapidly from the dragoons in the southeast. The two clouds, borne along by opposing winds, charged swiftly upon each other. The moment of their collision was announced by fierce lightning and terrific crashes of thunder.

The whirling motion, characteristic of a waterspout, soon made itself manifest and drew adjacent clouds into the raging vortex of cloud.

This was noted as an interesting phenomenon, but, owing to its distance, no special significance was attached to the spectacle.

Presently a light rain began to fall in Benson, and in compliance with a previous request of his wife Mr. Zeek went home to assist in housing a brood of young chickens.

Mrs. Ashburn, whose two children were at Mr. Zeek's—just across the street from their own residence, went over to prevent them from running out in the rain.

By the time the chickens had been secured a brisk rain was falling, and Mrs. Ashburn, on Mrs. Zeek's invitation, consented to remain until the storm should pass.

Mr. Zeek hastened on his bicycle to his place of business to close the doors and windows in anticipation of the coming wind, little dreaming that in a few brief minutes his beloved wife and innocent children would be ruthlessly snatched from life by the grim monster in the shape of an overwhelming merciless torrent.

The storm increasing in violence, Mr. Zeek, knowing his wife to be of a timid nature, resolved to return to his home, but just then began a fall of hail such as had never before been known by any one who witnessed it. Large, dense and closely crowded they fell with terrific, thunderous noise and a violence well nigh sufficient to kill either man or beast.

But a worse danger was at hand. With upraised crest, like a great tidal wave, a wall of water swept over the slope from the foot hills straight toward the hapless dwelling where waited the two helpless women and their four children. The main rush of this torrent was down the little arroya just west of Mr. Zeek's lot. Its left wing swept the rear of G. W. Bryan's premises and the right struck fairly against the doomed house of Mr. Zeek.

What scenes of anguish that devoted home contained will never be known.

The hide house had just succumbed to the force of the flood. From its site between the siding and main tracks of the S. P. road it was lifted bodily with its contents of hides and baled hay and carried forcibly down along the track and struck the office of Wells, Fargo & Co. jamming it from its foundation and against the substantial structure containing the quarters of Agent Webster and his family.

The contents and timbers of the wrecked ware house piled up against the Wells Fargo office, the depot building and the long line of freight cars to the west formed a barrier which diverted the current to the right, and when the Zeek dwelling with its precious human cargo came along it was carried out clear of the wreckage but collided violently with the substantial fence surrounding the agent's residence and collapsed in mid stream.

Mr. Zeek's guns and a few other articles of metal were afterward found here. A wardrobe and cupboard were drifted farther down the street, but the timbers and most of the contents of the house, together with the struggling victims of the flood were swept down past the depot and across the S. P. track a little to the left of the yardmaster's residence.

The flood lasted perhaps three-quarters of an hour, during which time all the citizens had been fully occupied in rescuing their families from danger or trying to save their buildings or furniture from destruction.

So dense was the fall of hail and rain and so great the gloom, that lamps had to be lighted in the houses, and the darkness and the absorption of all in concern for the safety of themselves, friends and their property, was due the fact that the loss of Mr. Zeek's house and the two families was not known until the violence of the storm and flood had passed.

As soon as the water had sufficiently abated, the citizens turned out in force and began a vigorous search for the missing ones. Men labored to the point of exhaustion in the accumulated wreckage at the Wells Fargo building, thinking that the victims were buried in the debris there. Toward evening the body of Mrs Ashburn was found lodged against a wire fence about a quarter of a mile below the railroad. Later the lifeless form of Mrs. Zeek was found a few yards farther up, completely buried, except one foot, in hail and drift.

The remains of the two mothers were buried Saturday, Rev. Roberts officiating, and a large concourse of sympathyzing friends followed the unfortunate victims to their last resting place.

Saturday Mr. Zeek's youngest child, a boy of two and ond-half yrs. and later the body of Mr. Ashburn's infant girl were discovered down in the valley buried in hail and drift. Sunday and Monday's search proved vain but Tuesday the hail had melted sufficiently so that the two remaining corpses were found—that of Della Ashburn in the morning and Edgar Zeek's in the afternoon. Owing to their having been imbedded in ice the bodies were remarkably well preserved.

The slope descending from the S. P. tracks and the valley below are strewn with broken lumber, pieces of furniture, fragments of carpet and clothing, and other articles bearing pathetic witness to the dread tragedy of October 1.

The writer, following down the path of the flood, picked up a part of what had been baby Zeek's little carriage. The axle was broken off short and the wheel doubled over on itself as though it had been fine wire instead of tempered steel.

Mr. Zeek, since the finding of the bodies of his dear ones, is measurabiy resigned. Mr. Ashburn, seeking solace in occupation, has joined the roundup. Other citizens are repairing the ravages of the storm and flood and the town is gradually resuming its normal condition, but besides the loss of six precious lives the damage to the town will long be felt.

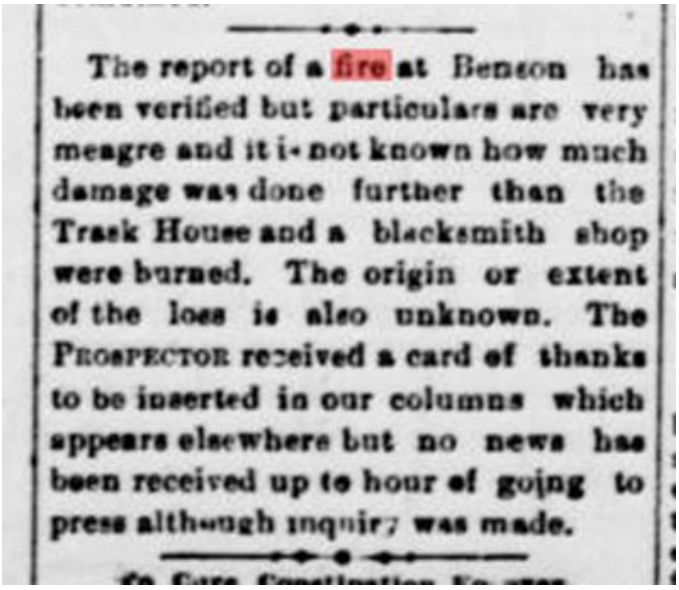
Mr. Zeek's property loss is estimated at	$1000 00
Henry Walker	800 00
G. W. Bryan	250 00

H. W. Etz also lost several hundred dollars worth of property, and nearly all the resident on Main St. suffered considerable damage to buildings, furniture and carpets.

For a generation to come 1896 will be known in Benson as the year of the flood, and six mounds in the quiet cemetery above town will long bear testimony to the truth of the scriptural adage: "In the midst of life we are in death."

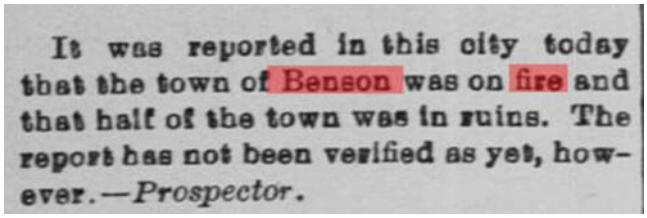
1897 Before fire department

October 21, 1897, *Tombstone Prospector*:



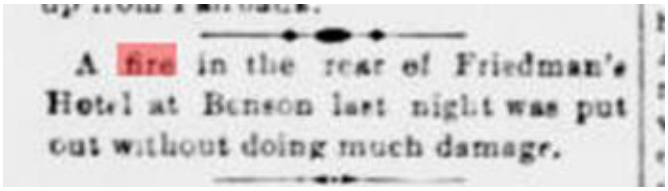
The report of a fire at Benson has been verified but particulars are very meagre and it is not known how much damage was done further than the Trask House and a blacksmith shop were burned. The origin or extent of the loss is also unknown. The PROSPECTOR received a card of thanks to be inserted in our columns which appears elsewhere but no news has been received up to hour of going to press although inquiry was made.

October 28, 1897, *Phoenix Weekly Herald*:



It was reported in this city today that the town of Benson was on fire and that half of the town was in ruins. The report has not been verified as yet, however.—*Prospector*.

October 30, 1897, *Tombstone Prospector*:



A fire in the rear of Friedman's Hotel at Benson last night was put out without doing much damage.

1902 Before fire department

May 5, 1921, *The Arizona Sentinel*:

The Arizona brick manufacturing company's plant at Benson was entirely destroyed by fire on the 15th inst. The loss is estimated at $40,000; the property was insured for ten thousand dollars.

May 18, 1902, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

Word was received here today that a fire occurred at the property of the brick company at Benson last night, destroying all the buildings and machinery of the company, occasioning a total loss. The origin of the fire is not known.

October 22, 1902, Tucson Citizen:

A petition in bankruptcy for the Arizona Clay Manufacturing company was argued in the district court yesterday afternoon. Judge Mitchell appeared for the objectors and C. F. Ainsworth for the petitioners. The plant was located at Benson, and was destroyed by fire a short time ago. The case was taken under advisement.

June 21, 1902, *The Coconino Sun:*

The big bridge on the Southern Pacific nine miles east of Benson, Arizona, was destroyed by fire on Saturday night, tying up the system and involving a loss of thousands of dollars to the company. The bridge was 150 feet long, spanning a deep canyon. The fire is supposed to have caught from sparks from a locomotive. Passenger trains from east and west have transferred passengers and mail since the fire. Five hundred men are at work rebuilding the bridge, and it is expected the new structure will be ready on Saturday.

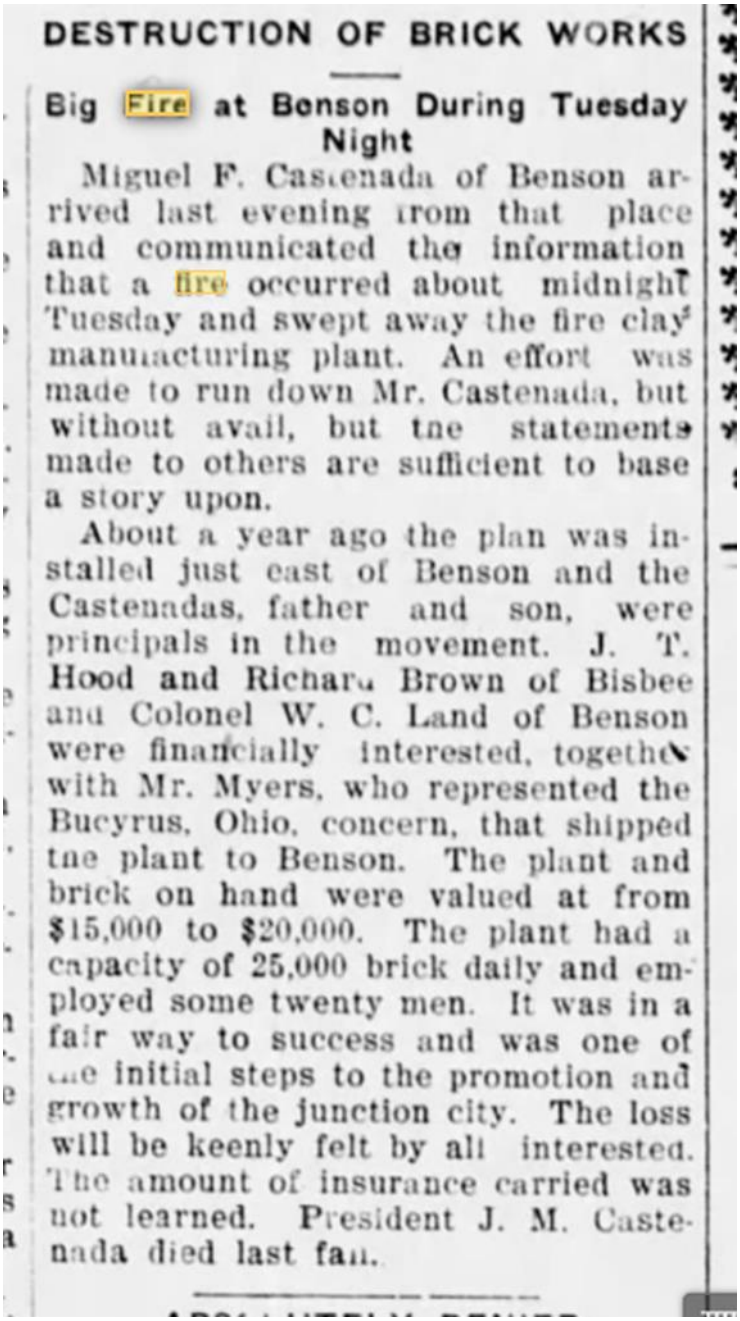
May 19, 1902, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Brickyard Fire
Big Loss to Company.

A representative of The Citizen interviewed Hon. S. Roemer at Benson this morning concerning the disastrous fire which destroyed the brickyard at that place several days ago. Mr. Roemer stated that the loss sustained by the company is in the neighborhood of $40,000, there being but $10,000 insurance on the machinery destroyed. No insurance adjusters have as yet visited the place, but the quotation published to the effect that a suspicion exists that failure on the part of the brick company to pay dividends might account for the fire, is entirely erroneous and a serious and unwarranted reflection upon the gentlemen who were losers by the conflagration. As before stated, the plant, valued at $40,000, was but about one-fourth covered by insurance.

1902 Before fire department

May 16, 1902, *Arizona Daily Star:*



DESTRUCTION OF BRICK WORKS

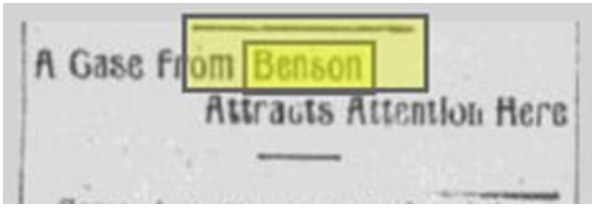
Big Fire at Benson During Tuesday Night

Miguel F. Castenada of Benson arrived last evening from that place and communicated the information that a fire occurred about midnight Tuesday and swept away the fire clay manufacturing plant. An effort was made to run down Mr. Castenada, but without avail, but the statements made to others are sufficient to base a story upon.

About a year ago the plan was installed just east of Benson and the Castenadas, father and son, were principals in the movement. J. T. Hood and Richard Brown of Bisbee and Colonel W. C. Land of Benson were financially interested, together with Mr. Myers, who represented the Bucyrus, Ohio, concern, that shipped the plant to Benson. The plant and brick on hand were valued at from $15,000 to $20,000. The plant had a capacity of 25,000 brick daily and employed some twenty men. It was in a fair way to success and was one of the initial steps to the promotion and growth of the junction city. The loss will be keenly felt by all interested. The amount of insurance carried was not learned. President J. M. Castenada died last fall.

1903 Before fire department

October 3, 1903, *Tucson Citizen*:



A Case From Benson
Attracts Attention Here

Some two years ago the Arizona Clay Manufacturing company's plant at Benson was destroyed by fire and was a total loss. A. Bucyrus, Ohio, company installed the machinery in the buildings which the Arizona Clay Manufacturing company had erected. The latter company included in its membership a number of Cochise county men, including R. P. Brown, the conductor; J. T. Hood, the Bisbee banker, the late A. A. and his son, Miguel Castenada, Col. W. C. Land and Henry Germin, the last four named residents of Benson.

The operating company had started operations at the plant, which cost $23,000, and were in a fair way to do handsomely in the enterprise, when the fire destroyed the works. The affairs of the company went into bankruptcy and Steve Roemer became trustee. More or less litigation has resulted. The elder Castenada died shortly after the fire occurred and while matters were being adjusted following that event.

It appears that in the settlement with the estate of Mr. Castenada, a claim was made against the company in bankruptcy for something over $11,000. The trustee paid what is alleged a preference in the sum of $5,000, leaving a balance of over $6,000, which claim is being contested before Attorney S. L. Kingan, as referee, this afternoon.

Colonel Herring is the attorney for the Castenada estate by the widow as executrix thereof. Miguel Castenada and Captain John Gandy are here in the interest of Mrs. Castenada, the widow. On the other side is ex-Territorial Attorney General C. F. Ainsworth of Phoenix, who represents Steve Roemer, the trustee. Richard Brown with Mr. Roemer, are here to contest the claim, as aforesaid.

December 3, 1903, *Tucson Citizen*:

Town of Benson Prosperous Many Tucsonians There

A glance at Benson after an absence of a year, is sufficient to satisfy the observer that the town is growing, which is due to several causes, among which may be stated, the early expectation of the blowing in of the oil fuel smelter being installed by Kirk Pidgeon and others; the location of and opening of the Territorial Industrial school and the prospective entrance of the Phoenix and Eastern railway via the San Pedro river route There are other causes for the change that means something better but the reasons stated will suffice for the present, although it is well to add a fourth which has reference to improved conditions at the mines contiguous to the function city.

The town front is built up solidly from the Hotel Virginia for two blocks in an easterly direction, although the new buildings considered first class, being in many cases small frames. The loss by fire of the Arizona Clay Manufacturing company's works a little over two years ago removed a valuable aid to the growth of Benson, an institution that would have been the means of doing much good for the town as a permanent home producer of brick. That product is now brought in from Tucson, a fact our brick makers are pleased to observe.

urer Joaquin Legarra, as also others.

The moveable lunch wagon is a feature and the Weekly Press was held over one day to print a story of Monday night's events.

The tramp is much in evidence, just as he is in Tucson.

Benson and vicinity is in the artesian water belt and one is pretty sure to hear of this fact from any citizen of the town before a conversation has continued five minutes. The number of flowing wells must be all of two hundred in the vicinity of Benson toward St. David's, a few miles up the San Pedro, and in the two divisions of the settlement where a colony of Mormons reside.

It may be said in conclusion that the Industrial School is supplied with an acetyline lighting plant, furnishing one hundred lights. This fact was accidentally omitted in a recent mention of the institution, incident to the opening.

See next page for rest of this column.

December 3, 1903, *Tucson Citizen*:

A number of new residences have been built in the past two years and aside from the Industrial School, the Hotel Banks being erected in the east end of town, this to cost about $14,000, is to be an important addition. Robert Weatherll of Tucson is the contractor and the bulk of the building material to go into this structure was selected in Tucson. The building will contain about forty rooms and it is expected that it will be completed within two months.

It is now stated that the smelter promoters have been obliged to send away for fire brick, hence another tedious delay. The smelter has been in progress of construction almost two years.

The presence seven days of each week of so many passenger and freight trains in the yards, day and night, gives life to the town at frequent intervals. In respect to the movement of passenger trains Benson leads Tucson.

The presence seven days of each week of so many passenger and freight trains in the yards, day and night, gives life to the town at frequent intervals. In respect to the movement of passenger trains Benson leads Tucson.

Among the many Tucson people located in Benson are James Gamble, the roadmaster; George Christensen, who, by the way, was married recently in Benson, is with Agent Carl Bock, who was formerly night agent at Tucson. Mr Cristensen was formerly collector for Agent Lowrie; George Rupert, who is working on the El Paso and Southwestern; A. J. Devine, formerly of Vic Griffith's, is doing well in business; Jesus Martinez, the blacksmith at the smelter; Jack Harris, the switchman; Jack Moon, conductor and base ball expert, temporarily with the work train; Lionel Shibell, a hostler; Robert Wetherill, the contractor, Rudolph Castenada, a mining engineer at present with the Hays company in Sonora who was a University student; Henry Castenada, manager of the Hotel Virginia, who also attended the University There are others, no doubt, the above being hastily summed up.

Miguel Castenada, the merchant like others was pleased with the Tucson orchestra that played Monday night and he had the quintette out serenading subsequent to the ball Mr. Castenada comes to Tucson frequently to see his friend, City Treas-

1904 Before fire department

June 23, 1904, *The Copper Era*:

Big Fire at Benson.

One day last week an alarm of fire was sounded in Benson, and the blaze was soon located in the eastern part of town on Fifth street, in the Mexican part of town. The fire started in the residence of Mrs. Saiz, caused probably from a defective flue. The fire spread very rapidly, and within forty minutes three or four piles of smoking embers was all that was left of that number of Mexican domiciles. The fire was prevented from spreading to the east by a bucket brigade, who worked heroically. The fire spread so rapidly that practically nothing was saved from the burning houses. The losses are severely felt, as the families are all poor. Miss Temple is taking up a subscription for the distressed families, and she is meeting with success.

A committee will apportion the money between the families as thought best.—Press.

September 23, 1904, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

BRIEF CITY NEWS

Engine Caught Fire—Engine 15 brought in the train from Benson last night, 11 having had her pilot burned off in the Benson yard as the result of running over a pile of live ashes.

November 19, 1904, *The Williams News*:

Fire destroyed part of the business portion of Benson on Nov. 11, causing a loss of $50,000, including the postoffice, Grand Central hotel and five business houses. The fire was of incendiary origin.

1904 Before fire department

November 11, 1904, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Hit Hard by Fire

The Junction City a Heavy Victim of a Conflagration that Did Much Damage Early this Morning.

Special to The Citizen.

BENSON, Ariz., Nov. 11.—About 1:30 o'clock this morning the most disastrous fire in the history of the town of Benson broke out, it is supposed, in the rear of Hoy's restaurant, The Mansion. The flames, fanned by the high wind, swept the principal thoroughfare from Collins' place on the west to the Wildcat saloon on the east, consuming in its unchecked path, the postoffice building in which was suituated Redfield's store, the Grand Central hotel, th eMansion restaurant, the Turf saloon, the Elite saloon and the Wildcat.

Altogether, as nearly as can be estimated, the losses will foot up $35,000, and it is understood that of all the owners of buildings, Proprietor Ohnessorgen, of the Elite saloon, carried the only insurance—$1000. No one was hurt and none of the railroad property was burned. The devouring element simply had things its own way, and the dried old buildings, stacked up like card houses, burned like tinder. The futile efforts of the citizens were only what might have been expected in view of the circumstances, though it is possible that more places might have been saved if it had not been for the wind. As it was, the terrific heat prevented many from getting near enough to do any service in the way of helping to extinguish the flames. The rebuilding of the various places of business, will, it is understood, be immediately begun, and the unanimous hope of the citizens of the town is that Benson may arise, Phoenix-like, from her ashes and rehabilitate herself in better garb.

1904 Before fire department

November 12, 1904, Bisbee Daily Review:

THE BISBEE DAILY REVIEW, BISBEE, ARIZONA, SATURDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12, 1904.

$30,000 FIRE IN BENSON

Fire Started in Post Office Building With Stiff Wind Blowing. Eight Buildings Swept Away

BENSON, NOV. 11.—SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT THE CITIZENS WERE AROUSED BY THE BLOWING OF THE YARD ENGINES OF THE S.P., MOST OF THE PEOPLE HAD RETIRED AND THE FIRE HAD GAINED GOOD HEADWAY BEFORE ENOUGH PEOPLE HAD ASSEMBLED TO TAKE UP THE WORK OF STOPPING ITS PROGRESS.

FLAMES WERE FIRST SEEN ISSUING FROM THE REAR OF THE POST OFFICE BUILDING, OWNED BY J. W. REDFIELD AND ALSO OCCUPIED BY HIM AS A GROCERY AND FRUIT STORE. AT THIS TIME A STIFF WIND WAS BLOWING AND THE PUNY EFFORTS OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT WERE MOCKED BY THE ROARING FLAMES WHICH QUICKLY SPREAD TO THE LAND BUILDING.

THERE WAS NO HELP AT HAND WITH WHICH TO STOP THE ROARING FURNACE. THE GRAND CENTRAL, OWNED BY SAM FRIEDMAN WAS THE NEXT DESTROYED AND THE FLAMES WERE EATING THEIR WAY INTO THE COLLINS SALOON, ADJOINING, WHICH WAS ENTIRELY CONSUMED. SIX BUILDINGS WERE DESTROYED AND THE VIRGINIA HOTEL WAS SAVED BY HEROIC EFFORTS AND A LULL IN THE WIND AT THE TIME.

EVERYTHING WAS SWEPT AWAY BETWEEN REDFIELD'S POST OFFICE AND THE VIRGINIA HOTEL.

THE HEAVIEST LOOSER WAS SAM FRIEDMAN.

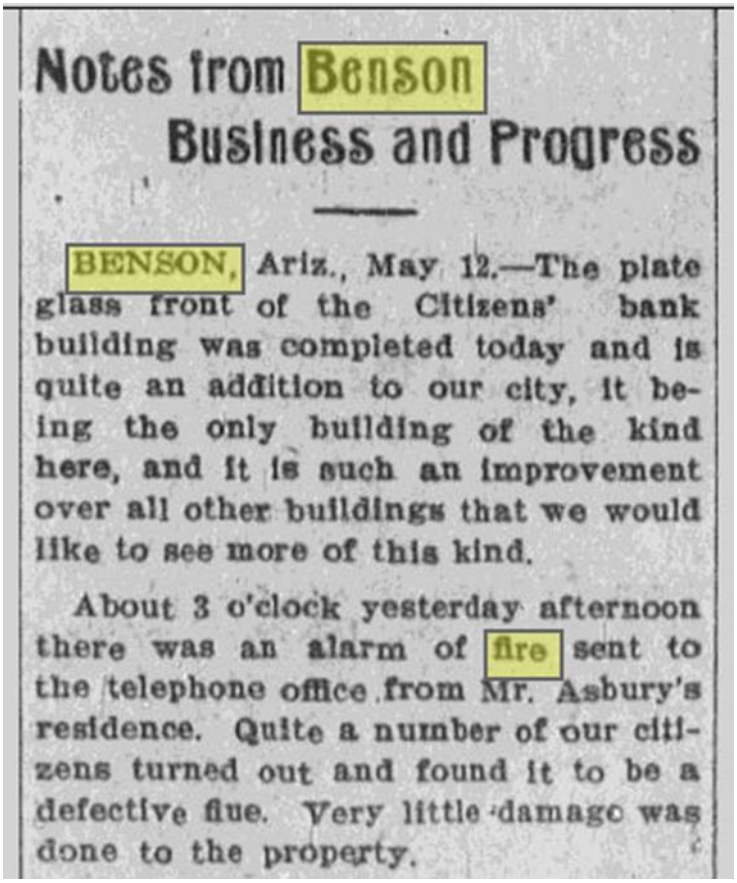
HON. STEVE ROEMER STATED TO THE REVIEW OVER THE TELEPHONE THIS MORNING THAT THE CAUSE OF THE FIRE WAS UNKNOWN AND THAT NO ONE KNEW AT THAT TIME WHETHER THE FIRE WAS INCENDIARY OR ACCIDENTAL.

IN ALL SIX BUILDINGS WERE DESROYED.

THE ESTIMATED LOSS WILL REACH $30,000 WITH VERY LITTLE INSURANCE, NOT TO EXCEED $5,000.

1905 Before fire department

May 13, 1905, ***Tucson Citizen:***



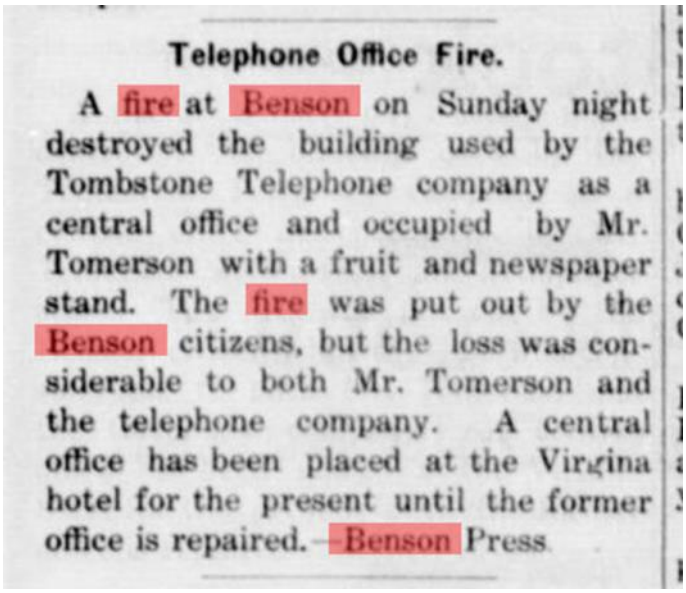
Notes from Benson
Business and Progress

BENSON, Ariz., May 12.—The plate glass front of the Citizens' bank building was completed today and is quite an addition to our city, it being the only building of the kind here, and it is such an improvement over all other buildings that we would like to see more of this kind.

About 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon there was an alarm of fire sent to the telephone office from Mr. Asbury's residence. Quite a number of our citizens turned out and found it to be a defective flue. Very little damage was done to the property.

1906 Before fire department

January 11, 1906, *Arizona Silver Belt*:



Telephone Office Fire.

A fire at Benson on Sunday night destroyed the building used by the Tombstone Telephone company as a central office and occupied by Mr. Tomerson with a fruit and newspaper stand. The fire was put out by the Benson citizens, but the loss was considerable to both Mr. Tomerson and the telephone company. A central office has been placed at the Virgina hotel for the present until the former office is repaired.—Benson Press.

1906 Before fire department

June 3, 1906, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

OF COCHISE COUNTY. ARIZONA

Tombstone, Ariz., May 14, 1906

It appearing that there is a necessity for a special meeting of the board of supervisors to transact important business, it is hereby ordered that a special meeting of the said board be held on the 22d day of May, 1906, at the office of the board, in the city of Tombstone, Cochise county Arizona, at the hour of 7.30 p. m.

W M Riggs,
Acting Chairman,
C A Taylor,
Supervisor.

Attest:
Chas R Howe, Clerk

Tombstone, Ariz May 22, 1906.

In pursuance to the above call for a special meeting, the board of supervisors convened at 7.30 p m.

Present—Wm Riggs and C A Taylor.

Absent—J Boren

Wm Riggs acted as chairman pr tem

On motion of Taylor, seconded by Riggs and carried unanimously, the following resolution was adopted:

Whereas, The large increase in population in Cochise county since the last registration necessitates a re registration of the voters thereof, in order that all qualified electors be given an opportunity to participate in the next general election; therefore, be it, and it is hereby ordered and required, that a re-registration of the voters of Cochise county be made as required by law, and that this order be published in the Bisbee Daily Review, a newspaper published in said county, for not less than thirty days preceding the next ensuing general election, to be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, 1906 same being the 6th day of November, 1906.

Henry W Ez appeared before the board and presented a petition from the citizens of Benson praying that a bridge be constructed across the San Pedro at that place. After due consideration action on the above matter was deferred to a regular meeting of the board

A petition was received from the citizens of Benson requesting that the liquor license of H K Fisher—Fashion saloon—be revoked by the board, on the ground that the same is frequented by lewd and dissolute women.

On motion of Taylor, seconded by Riggs and carried unanimously, the aforesaid petition was granted and the clerk was instructed to inform the Sheriff that the said license is revoked

Motion of Taylor, seconded by Riggs and carried unanimously, the citizens of Benson were granted the privilege of using the old branch county jail at that place for the purpose of storing fire apparatus, and to remove the same to a lot to be hereinafter chosen.

Motion of Taylor, seconded by Riggs and carried, the former action of this board granting Treasurer J N Gaines a leave of absence for thirty days from May 4, was rescinded, and a leave of absence was granted Mr. Gaines for thirty days from May 22, 1906

The clerk was instructed to have the range at the hospital repaired

On motion of Taylor, seconded by Riggs and carried unanimously, it was ordered that in consideration of the offer made by Col W C Greene to donate eighty acres of land in the San Pedro valley to Cochise county as a site for a county poor farm, that this board proceed tomorrow to examine the said land and make a selection, and to notify Mr. Greene of the land selected, giving a description of the same

The following described land was selected by the board:

North half of southwest quarter of section 22, township 23 south, range 22 east, containing eighty acres

Board adjourned to meet July 2, 1906

Wm M Riggs,
Acting Chairman.

Attest:
Chas R Howe, Clerk

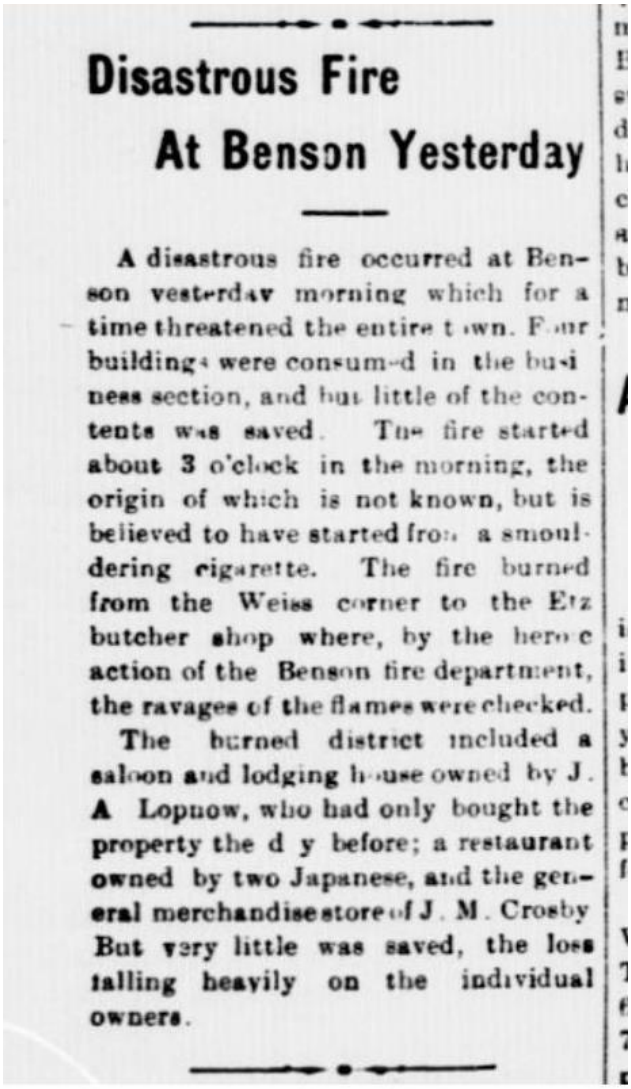
June 26, 1906, Bisbee Daily Review:

BENSON SUFFERS LOSS FROM CONFLAGRATION.

The town of Benson had a narrow escape from destruction by fire early Sunday morning, which started in the lodging house of J. D. Allen. Those affected by fire or water loss are: H. W. Etz, John Lupnow, a restaurant keeper, J. M. Cosby, Cosby's Cash store, I. N. Norton, who owned the furnishings of the Allen lodging house, Frank Makita, a gapanese restaurant keeper, and Mansoletti's liquor store. Charles Hines was burned about the arms and hands. H. W. Etz suffered a sprained ankle from a fall and was also severely burned. James Howell, cashier of the Benson Bank, sustained a badly lacerated foot from stepping on a nail. The property loss is estimated at $6000, with but $1700 insurance, all of which was carried by Lupnow and placed on the property which he owned the day preceding the fire.

1906 Before fire department

July 1, 1906, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

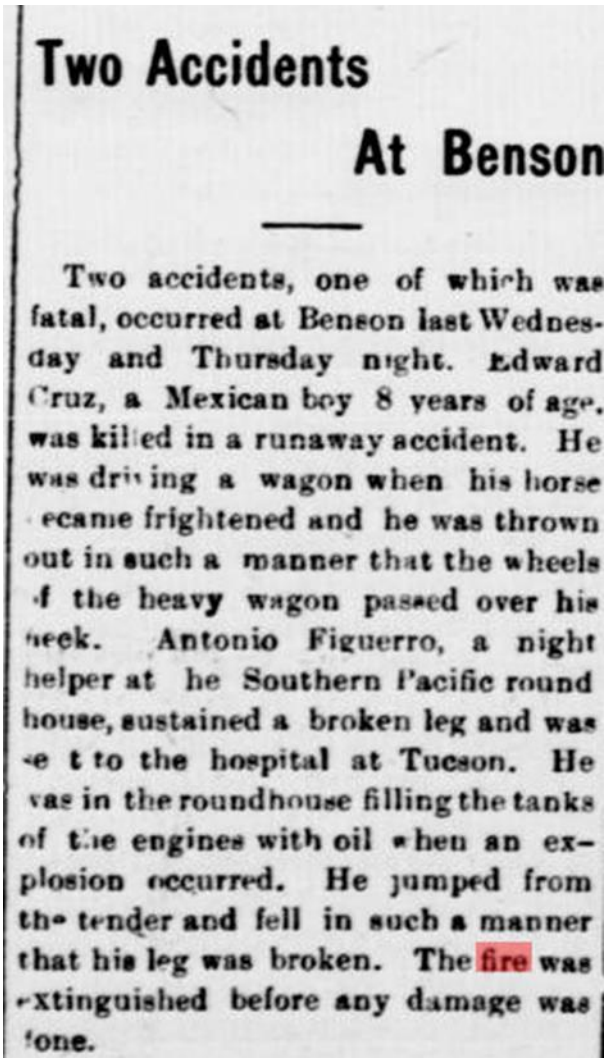


Disastrous Fire At Benson Yesterday

A disastrous fire occurred at Benson vesterdav morning which for a time threatened the entire t wn. Four buildings were consumed in the business section, and but little of the contents was saved. The fire started about 3 o'clock in the morning, the origin of which is not known, but is believed to have started from a smouldering cigarette. The fire burned from the Weiss corner to the Etz butcher shop where, by the heroic action of the Benson fire department, the ravages of the flames were checked.

The burned district included a saloon and lodging house owned by J. A Lopnow, who had only bought the property the d y before; a restaurant owned by two Japanese, and the general merchandise store of J. M. Crosby But very little was saved, the loss falling heavily on the individual owners.

September 30, 1906, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



Two Accidents At Benson

Two accidents, one of which was fatal, occurred at Benson last Wednesday and Thursday night. Edward Cruz, a Mexican boy 8 years of age, was killed in a runaway accident. He was driving a wagon when his horse became frightened and he was thrown out in such a manner that the wheels of the heavy wagon passed over his neck. Antonio Figuerro, a night helper at he Southern Pacific round house, sustained a broken leg and was sent to the hospital at Tucson. He was in the roundhouse filling the tanks of the engines with oil when an explosion occurred. He jumped from the tender and fell in such a manner that his leg was broken. The fire was extinguished before any damage was done.

1908

January 26, 1908, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

The Exempt List Of Cochise Firemen

The members of the volunteer fire companies in the county have filed the exempt list with the clerk of the board of supervisors and during the last few days have had their names checked off from the great register, so when the jury list is made up for this year their names will not appear. Those cities that have filed exemption lists are Tombstone, Bisbee, Benson, Douglas and Lowell.

June 7, 1908, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

The volunteer firemen of Arizona will hold their annual convention at Tucson on the glorious Fourth.

1908

June 5, 1908, *Bisbee Daily Review:*

TWO INJURED IN A CAVE-IN NEAR BENSON

Accident at Empire Mine In the Johnson District—Fire In Benson Does $900 Damage. Fine Artesian Well.

(Special to Review.)

BENSON, June 4.—A cave-in in the Empire mine in the Johnson district today injured two men, John Westfall, a miner, and General Manager Seth Merrill of the Empire, who happened to be in the mine and at the point where the accident occurred. Westfall had his right leg broken, the bones being snapped just above the ankle. The cave-in was at the 400 level. Merrill was badly bruised about the body. He had a narrow escape as did Westfall. Dr. C. F. Powell of this place attended the injured men.

Fire Loss of $900.

What threatened to be a more serious fire than it proved, broke out in the Benson building today. The tailor shop of a Mexican was destroyed. The proprietor was badly burned about the hands and face in trying to get his goods out of the shop. He was taken to the hospital at Tombstone. The office of Justice of the Peace Cheseldine was also burned. All of his books and records were saved. The hose company boys did fine work in preventing further spread of the flames and in keeping the loss down. It will be about $800 or $900.

Strong Artesian Well.

The strongest artesian well ever struck in Benson was drilled in today. The well was down about 800 feet when a flow started that runs thirty gallons to the minute. The well was drilled by H. K. Street, Dave Adams, Charles Moss and Mr. Hustead. They will use it for irrigation of their lots. There are a number of other artesian wells here, but none as strong as the one developed today.

June 10, 1908, *Daily Arizona Silver Belt:*

TWO INJURED NEAR BENSON

ACCIDENT AT EMPIRE MINE IN THE JOHNSON DISTRICT—FIRE IN BENSON DOES $900 DAMAGE —FINE ARTESIAN WELL.

BENSON, June 9.—A cavein in the Empire mine in the Johnson district today injured two men, John Westfall, a miner, and General Manager Seth Merrill of the Empire, who happened to be int he mine at the point where the accident occurred. Westfall had his right leg broken, the bones being snapped just above the ankle. The cave-in was at the 400 level. Merrill was badly bruised about the body. He had a narrow escape as did West fal'. Dr. C. F. Powell of this place attended the injured men.

Fire Loss of $900

What threatened to be a more serious fire than it proved broke out in the Benson building today. The tailor shop of a Mexican was destroyed. The proprietor was badly burned about the hands and face in trying to get his goods out of the shop. He was taken to the hospital at Tombstone. The office of Justice of the Peace Cheseldine was also burned. All of the books and records were saved. The nose company boys did fine work in preventing further spread of the flames and in keeping the loss down. It will be about $800 or $900.

1908

March 28, 1909, *Tombstone Epitaph:*

Yesterday morning the Banks Hotel at Benson was destroyed by fire, the magnificent building being a total loss, and but little of the furniture and fixtures saved. The fire originated in the kitchen, and despite the efforts of the Benson fire depart ment to check the same, the flames crept steadily on, consuming every piece of wood work within the two-story structure. The fire lasted over two hours. It is thought but little insurance was carried on the propert The loss is estimated at $20,000

June 13, 1908, *The Oasis:*

Sam Stanton, chief of the Benson fire department, is at present acting as chief mixologist at the Pony, in the absence of Charles Batchelder in Tucson.

August 7, 1908, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

Tombstone Prospector: M. M. Martinez was brought to Tombstone last evening and taken to the hospital suffering from severe burns about the face and shoulders. Martinez sustained his injuries during a fire at Benson Thursday when fire destroyed his tailor shop and damaged the office of Justice of the Peace Cheseldine. The total loss is estimated at about $900. Martinez although badly burned is doing nicely and will shortly be all right.

1909

March 3, 1909, *Arizona Rep*ublican:

BENSON HAS BIG FIRE.

Benson, March 21.—The Hotel Banks was totally destroyed early this morning by a fire originating in the rear on the second floor. The loss is estimated at $20,000; insurance, $10,000. The origin of the fire is a mystery. No one was injured.

March 3, 1909, *The Oasis*:

Cochise Co. Press: Benson suffered a heavy loss Sunday morning when the Hotel Banks, a two story brick building, 25 feet wide and 150 feet long, built over five years ago, was completely destroyed by fire. The alarm was sounded about 7 o'clock, and by 10 o'clock nothing remained but bare walls as a reminder of what had been the most expensive business building in Benson. The origin of the fire is a mystery, but it is supposed to have originated in the second story and in the rear of the building. Part of the contents were saved.

1909 06-106

3

1909

April 6, 1909:

1909

Hotel Banks:

April 6, 1909, *Holbrook Argus*:

Hotel Banks in Ruins

Benson Suffered a heavy loss last Sunday morning when the Hotel Banks, a two story brick building, 25 feet wide and 150 feet long, built over five years ago, was completely destroyed by fire. The alarm was sounded about 7 o'clock, and by 10 o'clock nothing remained but bare walls as a reminder of what had been the most expensive business building in Benson.

The origin of the fire is a mystery, but it is supposed to have originated in the second story and in the rear of the building. Part of the contents were saved.

The value of the building and contents was about $25,000 upon which $10,000 insurance was carried.—Cochise County Press.

1909

March 22, 1909, *Tucson Citizen*:

BANKS HOTEL DESTROYED

Fire at Benson Yesterday Caused a Loss Estimated at $12,000.

Fire yesterday forenoon destroyed the Banks hotel at Benson, causing a loss which is estimated at $12,000. The fire was caused by a defective chimney.

The blaze had made big headway before it was discovered and the entire building was destroyed. A portion of the furnishings however, were saved.

The Banks hotel was a brick building and was one of the leading hotels in the town.

March 25, 1909, *Daily Arizona Silver Belt*:

Hotel Banks Is Burned.

The Hotel Banks, at Benson, was totally destroyed by fire early Sunday morning, the fire originating in the rear on the second floor. The loss is estimated at $20,000; insurance, $10,000.

June 1, 1909, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Merchant.

J. A. Legarra is in the city today from Benson on a business trip. Mr. Legarra is chief of the Benson volunteer fire department and is one of the leading merchants of that town.

June 9, 1909, *Daily Arizona Silver Belt*:

M. M. Martinez was severely burned about the face and shoulders while fighting fire in a tailor shop at Benson. He was taken to a hospital at Tombstone. The tailor shop was totally destroyed.

June 1, 1909, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Merchant.

J. A. Legarra is in the city today from Benson on a business trip. Mr. Legarra is chief of the Benson volunteer fire department and is one of the leading merchants of that town.

1909/1910

Courtesy, http://www.bensonvisitorcenter.com/history.htm **Street scene:**

Fourth Street-1909

Benson Roundhouse- 1910

1910

May 22, 1910, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

officials at the court house.

Sam Stantor, chief of the Benson fire department, left for the Whetstone mountains today, where he goes to look after his mining interests. Mr. Stanton will return to Tombstone on Monday morning to resume his duties as a territorial trial juror.

August 7, 1910, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

Springs, Inc., San Francisco, Calif.

Sam Stanton, chief of the Benson fire department, is at present acting as chief mixologist at the Pony, in the absence of Charles Batchelder in Tucson.

June 15, 1910, *Arizona Republican*:

FIREMEN MAKE RUN FOR VISITORS HERE

A display fire drill was held at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon by the fire department for the benefit of four visitors, Frank Treat and Joaquin Legarra of Benson, and Michael Hannon and B. J. Whitesides. Mr. Hannon and Mr. Whitesides were returning from the constitutional convention to their homes in Bisbee and Nogales respectively.

The hose-wagon clanged out of the fire house in 11 1-2 seconds after the alarm was turned in, and the last piece of apparatus was outside in 17 seconds after the alarm, according to Fire Chief Conlon. The department raced around two blocks near the station before returning to the fire house.

1910

November 27, 1912, *Tucson Citizen*:

BANKER IS HURT IN FIGHTING FLAMES

The residence of Mrs. Barney F. Flynn at Benson was totally destroyed by fire Monday night. The loss was $2,000, half of which was covered by insurance.

Dean Merrill, president of the bank at Benson, was injured by a falling timber while he was assisting the fire fighters.

The union meeting of the Woman's Missionary societies of Tucson will be held Friday afternoon, Nov. 22 at 2:30 at the Presbyterian church.

C-916-68-69

December 12, 1910, *Tucson Citizen*:

FIREMEN MAKE RUN FOR VISITORS HERE

A display fire drill was held at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon by the fire department for the benefit of four visitors, Frank Treat and Joaquin Legarra of Benson, and Michael Hannon and B. J. Whitesides. Mr. Hannon and Mr. Whitesides were returning from the constitutional convention to their homes in Bisbee and Nogales respectively.

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1911

February 21, 1911, *Arizona Daily Star:*

FLETCHER RESIDENCE DESTROYED BY FIRE

Started from Blazing Lamp. A High Wind Fanned Flames Destroying Everything

BENSON, Feb. 20.—The Fletcher residence on the north side of town was totally destroyed by fire between 7 and 8 o'clock Saturday night. Contents were also burned. Mrs. Fletcher was at home at the time and had lighted a lamp and then went out in the yard. The light must have been turned too high and caught some inflammable material, as the lady when reentering the house found the room ablaze. She rushed from the house and called fire, but a high wind prevailing at the time soon fanned the fire beyond control. No water protection was to be had and it was impossible to save anything. Fortunately it was the last house in the block and the wind blowing in the opposite direction of the buildings. The building was a two room, one story frame. It was insured. Mr. Fletcher is at present in the Phoenix country.

June 28, 1911, *Arizona Daily Star:*

PRIVATE CAR TUCSON BURNS AT BENSON

Traveling Home of Superintendent Dyer Is Reported as Destroyed

News was received in Tucson yesterday that the car Tucson belonging to Superintendent Dyer of the Southern Pacific was burned at Benson. The car was standing on the main line and was waiting to be picked up by No. 1 and brought to Tucson when it took fire.

The origin of the fire is not known. No one was on it at the time of the fire but the porter, and he is able to give no reason as to the origin of the fire. The first that was known of a fire at all was when some one saw the smoke pouring out of the front end. The alarm was turned in and everyone hastened to the scene as soon as possible.

A good strong wind was blowing and the fire soon gained such headway that it was not possible to check it. The car was a mass of flames in no time and nothing was saved but the iron parts of the car.

July 9, 1911, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

EAGLE SCREAMED IN COCHISE

Many Towns In the County Celebrate The 137th Anniversary of Our Country's Independence

TOMBSTONE ATTIRED IN PATRIOTIC COLORS

Although the county seat did not celebrate the Fourth of July yesterday in a glorious style as it has done in the years past, there were many evidences of true American patriotism in sight all over the city. The Stars and Stripes waving over the public buildings, business houses and residences. All business was suspended in honor of the 137th birthday of the independence of the United States. Many Tombstonites helped to pull the eagle tail feathers in the nearby Cochise towns.

A goodly number of Tombstoners spent yesterday at Benson and report the celebration there a rousing success. The doings at the Gibson Park during the day consisted of a literary and musical program in the forenoon; juicy barbecued meat dinner at noon; in the afternoon a long program of sports consisting of horse races, bronco busting, baseball, etc. The snappy game of baseball was played between Benson and Willcox, the former winning by a score of 11 to 3. In the evening the gala day ended with a grand ball given by the Benson Fire Department. The dance was largely attended and well managed by the committee in charge.

Bisbee is having a two day celebration and many Tombstonites are in attendance. Governor Sloan delivered an able address yesterday morning. The feature of the big event was an exhibition drill by the Sixth Cavalry. The big doins' will close in the big copper camp tonight.

Those Tombstonites who returned today from Douglas state that the smelter city had a glorious celebration yesterday. Attorney Hayes of Willcox was the orator of the day, and an interesting program of sports were pulled off.

1911

July 30, 1911, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

DISASTROUS FIRE AT BENSON

As The Prospector goes to press a telephone communication is received in Tombstone from Benson to the effect that a fire has broken out in the lumber sheds of the Southwest Lumber company in that city and further that the sheds are a mass of flames.

All property in the immediate vicinity is reported as in danger of destruction by the flames.

The volunteer fire department of that city is making every effort to check the flames and confine the fire to the burning lumber sheds.

August 6, 1911, *Tombstone Epitaph:*

A Mexican was arrested and brought to Tombstone Sunday charged with being a firebug, and suspected of starting the recent fires at Benson. It is claimed that the Mexican acted very suspiciously at the time of the fire Saturday, and some strong circumstantial evidence will be introduced against him at his hearing before the Justice of the Peace at St. David today.

The fire at Gerwen's Lumber Yards destroying $800 worth of property was followed shortly after by another blaze at the Moss stables and put out before it had gained much headway. The morning previous a fire of incendiary origin was discovered in the postoffice and extinguished in time to save the building and contents.

The Benson residents became alarmed at the operations of an evident firebug in their midst, have maintained a close watch. The arrest of the prisoner, who disclaims any guilt, was made following suspicious actions and the hearing today is expected to bring out some revelations.

Courtesy, http://www.bensonvisitorcenter.com/history.htm
Street scene:

Fourth Street and San Pedro Street-1911

1911

August 1, 1911, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Fire Bug Suspected

Benson has had a number of fires recently that leads to the suspicion that there is a firebug in that city. There were two fires last Saturday, the most important being the Gerwein Lumber yards and on Wednesday a mysterious fire was discovered at the post office.

Building in Benson

The erection of a new slaughter house in Benson for H. W. Etz and company to take the place of the one which was recently burned, began yesterday.

August 19, 1911, *Arizona Daily Star*:

ALLEGED FIREBUG CAUGHT AT BENSON

Several Mysterious Blazes There Are Traced to Same Source

A telephone message tells of the arrest of one Manuel Sanez, a Mexican employe of the Wells Fargo Express company at Benson, on the charge of arson. A change of venue was obtained and the case will be heard Thursday at St. David, before Judge Post of that place.

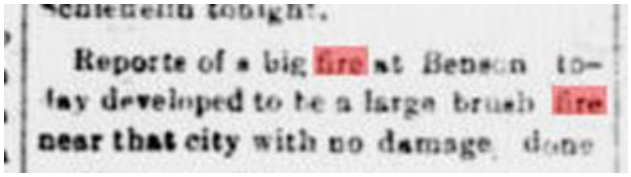
Sanez was arrested Saturday afternoon shortly after a fire that destroyed a barn filled with hay. The Mexican was seen near the barn when the fire started and it is said that a man who saw him set the barn afire gave chase and overtook the alleged firebug.

The destruction of the barn occurred about an hour after the burning of the sheds at the lumber yard at Benson and it is stated that he was seen near the fire station shortly after the fire started. Officers believe that the man set fire to the sheds and then went to the fire station to turn in the alarm.

A week ago a mysterious fire occurred at the Benson postomce. This fire was started by someone dropping a lighted newspaper through one of the open letter boxes and witnesses will testify to having seen Sanez come out of the postoffice shortly before the fire started.

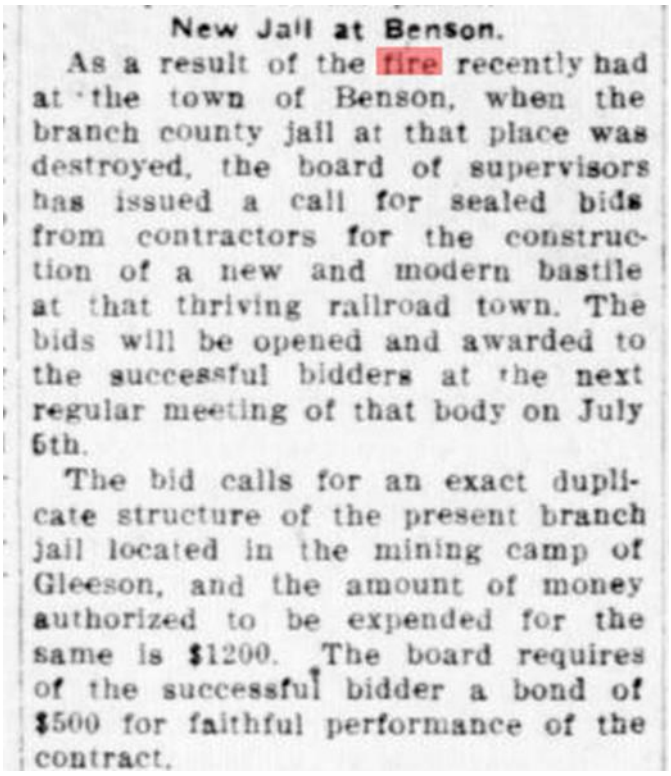
1911/1912

November 26, 1911, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



Reports of a big fire at Benson today developed to be a large brush fire near that city with no damage done

June 28, 1912, *The Bisbee Daily Review*:

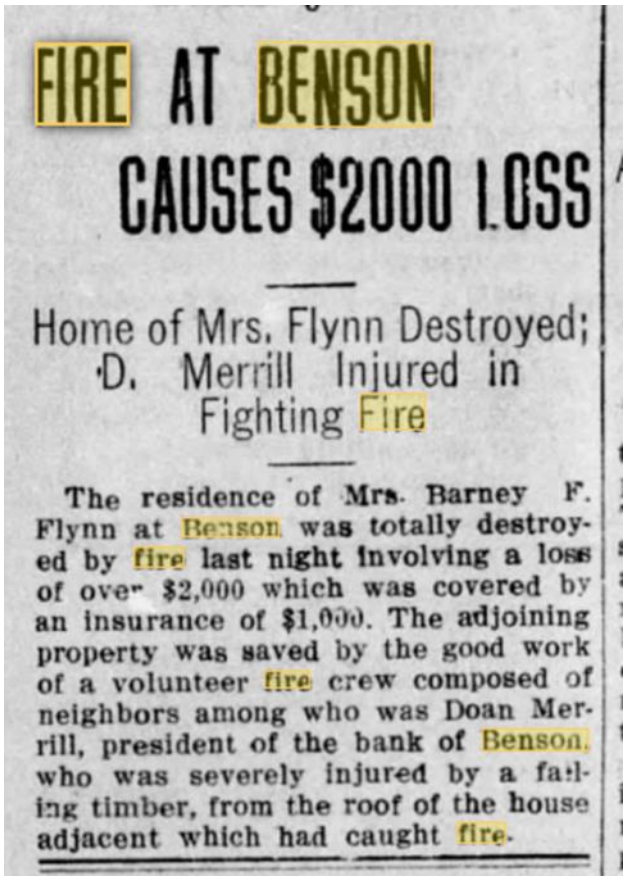


New Jail at Benson.

As a result of the fire recently had at the town of Benson, when the branch county jail at that place was destroyed, the board of supervisors has issued a call for sealed bids from contractors for the construction of a new and modern bastile at that thriving railroad town. The bids will be opened and awarded to the successful bidders at the next regular meeting of that body on July 6th.

The bid calls for an exact duplicate structure of the present branch jail located in the mining camp of Gleeson, and the amount of money authorized to be expended for the same is $1200. The board requires of the successful bidder a bond of $500 for faithful performance of the contract.

November 26, 1912, *Arizona Daily Star:*

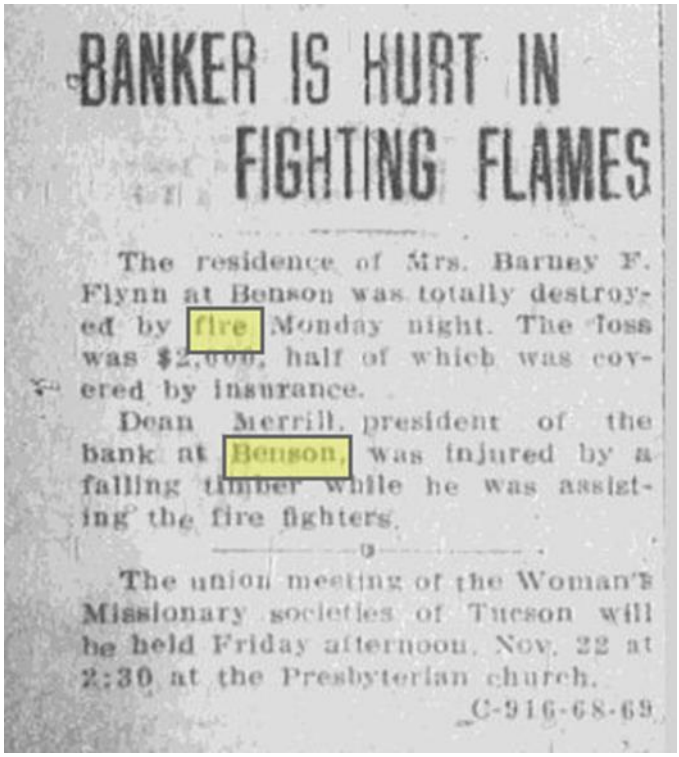


FIRE AT BENSON CAUSES $2000 LOSS

Home of Mrs. Flynn Destroyed; D. Merrill Injured in Fighting Fire

The residence of Mrs. Barney F. Flynn at Benson was totally destroyed by fire last night involving a loss of over $2,000 which was covered by an insurance of $1,000. The adjoining property was saved by the good work of a volunteer fire crew composed of neighbors among who was Doan Merrill, president of the bank of Benson, who was severely injured by a falling timber, from the roof of the house adjacent which had caught fire.

November 27, 1912, *Tucson Citizen:*



BANKER IS HURT IN FIGHTING FLAMES

The residence of Mrs. Barney F. Flynn at Benson was totally destroyed by fire Monday night. The loss was $2,000, half of which was covered by insurance.

Doan Merrill, president of the bank at Benson, was injured by a falling timber while he was assisting the fire fighters.

The union meeting of the Woman's Missionary societies of Tucson will be held Friday afternoon, Nov. 22 at 2:30 at the Presbyterian church.

C-916-68-69

June 27, 1912, *Arizona Daily Star:*

NEW JAIL TO BE BUILT AT BENSON

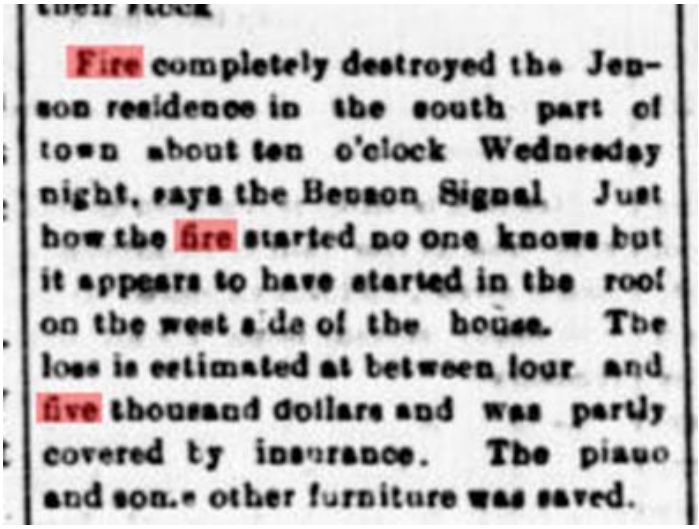
Bids Called for by Supervisors; Old One Destroyed by Fire Recently

TOMBSTONE, June 26.—As a result of the fire recently had at Benson, when the branch county jail at that place was destroyed, the Board of Supervisors has issued a call for sealed bids from contractors for the construction of a new and modern bastile at that thriving railroad town. The bids will be opened and awarded to the successful bidders at the next regular meeting of that body on July 5th.

The bid calls for an exact duplicate structure of the present branch jail at Gleeson, and the amount of money authorized to be expended for the same is $1200. The board requires of the successful bidder a bond of $500 for faithful performance of contract.

1914

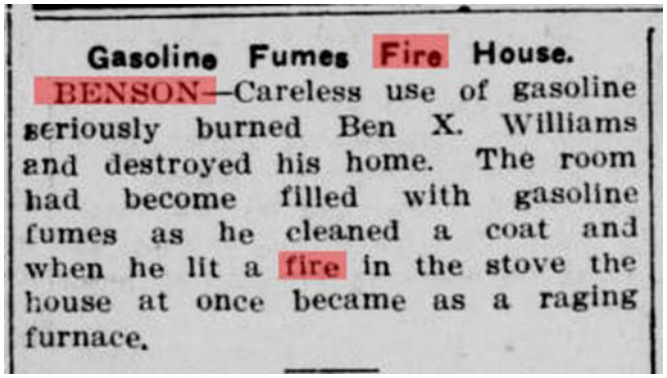
January 4, 1914, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



Fire completely destroyed the Jenson residence in the south part of town about ten o'clock Wednesday night, says the Benson Signal. Just how the fire started no one knows but it appears to have started in the roof on the west side of the house. The loss is estimated at between four and five thousand dollars and was partly covered by insurance. The piano and some other furniture was saved.

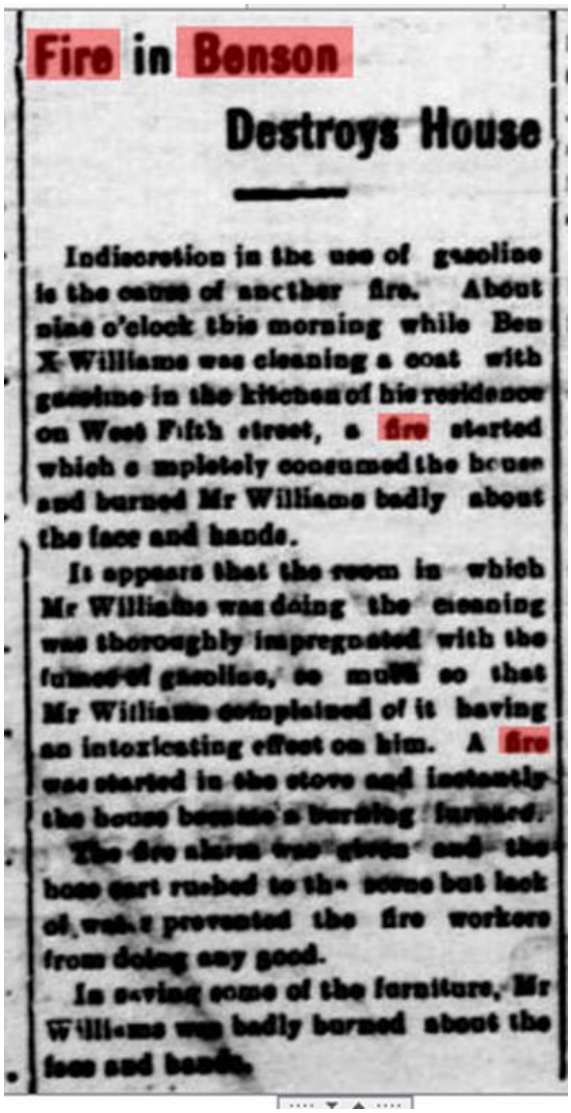
February 27, 1914, *Arizona Republican*:

March 1, 1914, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



Gasoline Fumes Fire House.

BENSON—Careless use of gasoline seriously burned Ben X. Williams and destroyed his home. The room had become filled with gasoline fumes as he cleaned a coat and when he lit a fire in the stove the house at once became as a raging furnace.



Fire in Benson

Destroys House

Indiscretion in the use of gasoline is the cause of another fire. About nine o'clock this morning while Ben X Williams was cleaning a coat with gasoline in the kitchen of his residence on West Fifth street, a fire started which completely consumed the house and burned Mr Williams badly about the face and hands.

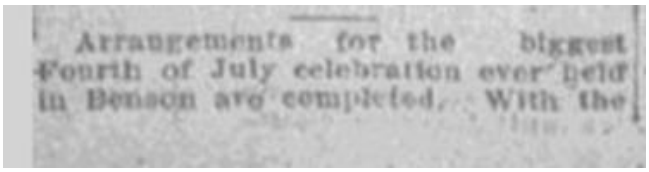
It appears that the room in which Mr Williams was doing the cleaning was thoroughly impregnated with the fumes of gasoline, so much so that Mr Williams complained of it having an intoxicating effect on him. A fire was started in the stove and instantly the house became a burning furnace.

The fire alarm was given and the hose cart rushed to the scene but lack of water prevented the fire workers from doing any good.

In saving some of the furniture, Mr Williams was badly burned about the face and hands.

1916

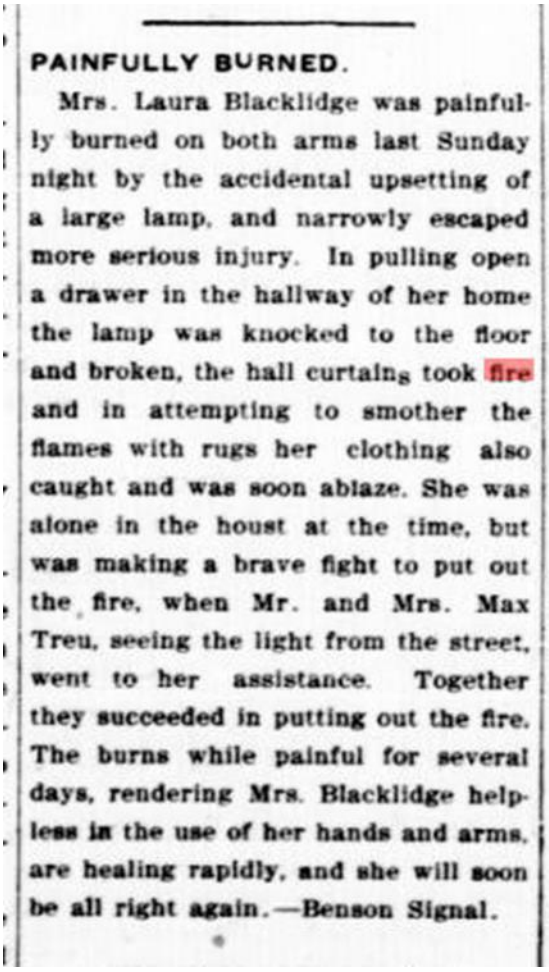
July 1, 1916, *Tucson Citizen*:



Arrangements for the biggest Fourth of July celebration ever held in Benson are completed. With the

exception of the preparedness parade the events will be staged on the high school grounds. A feature will be a big free barbecue. The day will wind up with a dance at the skating rink in the evening. The money realized from the celebration, will be used to purchase new equipment for the fire department.

September 24, 1916, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



PAINFULLY BURNED.

Mrs. Laura Blacklidge was painfully burned on both arms last Sunday night by the accidental upsetting of a large lamp, and narrowly escaped more serious injury. In pulling open a drawer in the hallway of her home the lamp was knocked to the floor and broken, the hall curtains took fire and in attempting to smother the flames with rugs her clothing also caught and was soon ablaze. She was alone in the houst at the time, but was making a brave fight to put out the fire, when Mr. and Mrs. Max Treu, seeing the light from the street, went to her assistance. Together they succeeded in putting out the fire. The burns while painful for several days, rendering Mrs. Blacklidge helpless in the use of her hands and arms, are healing rapidly, and she will soon be all right again.—Benson Signal.

September 16, 1918, *Tombstone Prospector*:

Attempt to Blow Up Troop Train at Benson With Nitro-Glycerine Bombs

Sept. 16, 1918 Prospector

THREE BOMBS CAMOUFLAGED IN OLD CANS, DISCOVERED IN BENSON YARDS; PWOERFUL CHARGES WOULD HAVE BLOWN TRAIN TO PIECES; DISCOVERED WHEN SECTION FOREMAN RUNS OVER ONE OF THEM FAILING TO EXPLODE; FEDERAL OFFICERS ARE INVSETOGATING; CLUE IS HARD TO FOLLOW

What was undoubtedly an attempt to bomb a troop train passing through Benson was frustrated last Friday when the bombs were discovered and the track cleared before a train had a chance to pass over them. According to reports, which had reached the sheriff's office and kept quiet to allow a chance for the officers to work on the case Section Foreman Henry Fisher was leaving the yards at Benson on his gasoline speedster when he run over what he thought was an ordinary can which caused his machine to leave the track. He immediately investigated, and was amazed to find that he had run over a powerful nitro-glycerin bomb, ciecerly camoufaged in an old molasses can and well prepared. The speedster had not been heavy enough to cause the machine to explode, and he immediately retraced his direction and reported the matter to Deputy Sheriff Bennett of Benson, who notified the sheriff's office and continued a search of the vicinity. He was rewarded by finding two more of the infernal machines, one made up in an old milk can and th other in a tobacco can.

The matter was also reported to railroad headquarters at Tucson and an exert sent down to invesigaate, and when opened one of the bombs proved to be loaded with enough nitro-glycerin to blow an entire train to pieces. They were taken by the federal officers, which has the case in hand, and a thorough investigation under way. The only possible deduction that can be drawn from the case is that whoever planted the bomb had either planned to blow up a troop train, since such trains pass through Benson almost every day, or either to blow up a passenger train loaded with passengers, Benson being on the main line. What makes it appear stronger that the would-be assassins no doubt German agents, had planned on dy-

almost always the troop trains are sidetracked at this point to await the clearance of the main line, and it is believedy to have been done by some one ho alighted long enough from a main line train to plant the innocent looking bombs and continue his journey, hence it is almost impoasible to discover a clue.

Tombstone Prospector September 16, 1918

1919

September 29, 1919, *Tucson Citizen*:

O. F. Ashburn of Benson, manager of the Whetstone and San Pedro Cattle Co., sustained a considerable loss in the destruction of his house by fire in Benson recently. A lump exploded, setting the house on fire.

October 29, 1919, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

New Automobile Is Destroyed by Fire

A new 7-passenger Jordan car belonging to A. Jordan of Benson, was destroyed by fire yesterday just across the divide on the Tombstone road. With the machine at the time of the accident were Jordan and two passengers.

According to reports which were brought to Bisbee last evening, a small accident had happened to the gasoline feed line and the car was stopped while an investigation was made. During the examination, the cap was taken from the gas tank to ascertain whether all the gasoline had leaked away. While the cap was off, one of the passengers, standing some distance from the car, lighted a match and a small piece of the burning sulphur was thrown across the intervening space into the open tank. The gasoline ignited immediately, and the fire burned so freicely that it was reported here that nothing but the front wheels were saved.

No one was seriously injured, the only hurts having been sustained by one of the passengers, who was slightly burned.

March 14, 1921, Bisbee Ore:

FIRE WIPES OUT BLOCK OF BUSINESS DISTRICT IN BENSON THIS A. M.

(By Associated Press)

Fire of unknown origin practically destroyed the business district of Benson at an early hour this morning, causing a loss of approximately $125,000, according to word received here this afternoon.

The fire started in the rear of the Cash Store, a millinery establishment, and spread from there to the old Walker Drug Store, and before it completed its work of devastation had destroyed the Maier & Co .store, wholesalers, the Moss Grocery Store, the old W. D. Martinez building, which had been vacated only two weeks, and several vacant buildings, everything in the block being destroyed.

Owing to the fact that there was no system of water supply in case of fire, the flames could not be controlled and continued until all buildings which they could reach had been destroyed.

The Maier store suffered the greatest loss, probably about $100,000, the other losses totalling approximately $25,000. Practically no insurance was carried owing to the nature of the structure of the buildings and lack of fire protection, making insurance prohibitive.

1921

March 20, 1921, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

$150,000 FIRE AT BENSON.

According to word received early this morning from Benson that place was visited by a disastrous fire in its business center this morning shortly after 2 o'clock and due to the lack of water and fire-fighting apparatus, a loss of over $150,000 was sustained.

The fire started, it was said, in the rear of the Cash Store, from some unknown cause.

Business buildings consumed were the Cash Store, a millinery establishment conducted by Mrs. Cash; the Moss Grocery, owned by C. B. Moss, which was recently opened, the building formerly occupied by W. D. Martinez, and the B. Maier wholesale mercantile establishment. The greatest loss was sustained by the Maier company, which amounted to over $100,000 in stock, it was reported, with probably half the amount covered by insurance. The Maier building was owned by Mrs. E. Gribble and carried no insurance. The only other property protected by insurance was that of the Moss grocery, which was taken out only last week. All will suffer heavy losses, the report said.

The water supply of the Benson works was soon depleted and the pumps of the S. P. railroad company brought into play, but with little effect on the flames and within an hour after the fire started, the most of the block was in ruins. Only by hard work, the reports state, were the building occupied by the Walker drug store, adjoining the Cash Store, and the Moss Grocery across the street from the Maier store, saved from destruction. The Castaneda brothers owned the Martinez building.

April 8, 1921, *The Copper Era & Morenci Leader*:

MYSTERY BLAZE IN BENSON STORE

The Mortinez general merchandise store at Benson Monday was virtually destroyed by fire believed of incendiary origin, according to information reaching here. No estimate has been made of the loss. Bensonites were aroused from their slumbers by the sonorous blasts of a locomotive whistle.

Rushing wildly from their homes with the belief that Benson was a mass of flames, the Martinez store was discovered completely engulfed ni a swirl of smoke and flying embers. Martinez narrowly escaped with his life. Willing hands joined in fighting the blaze which, according to reports, endangered the whole city. The high wind which prevailed Sunday and Monday aided the fire fighters in getting the blaze under control the report said. This is the second disastrous fire of which Benson has been the scene.

April 8, 1921, *Arizona Republican*:

Fire Takes Benson Store

TOMBSTONE—The town of Benson suffered another damaging fire, the second within three weeks, this morning, at 4 o'clock, when the mercantile establishment of W. D. Martinez was burned to the ground. For a time the Benson telephone exchange was threatened and despite a terrific wind, it was prevented from burning down by volunteer fighters. The Martinez store is a total loss, with part insurance.—Prospector.

1921

April 10, 1921, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

BENSON SUFFERS ANOTHER SERIOUS FIRE.

The town of Benson suffered another damaging fire, the second within three weeks, this morning, at 4 o'clock, when the mercantile establishment of W. D. Martinez was burned to the ground. For a time the Benson telphone exchange was threatened and despite a terrific wind, it was prevented from burning down by volunteer fighters. The Martinez store is a total loss with part insurance. The proprietor, it was reported, had just completed considerable alterations and improvements to the store and the fire is a considerable loss to him. This leaves only two grocery stores in town, one with a complete stock and the other starting over again following the big fire of three weeks ago when an entire block was burned to the ground in the business section.

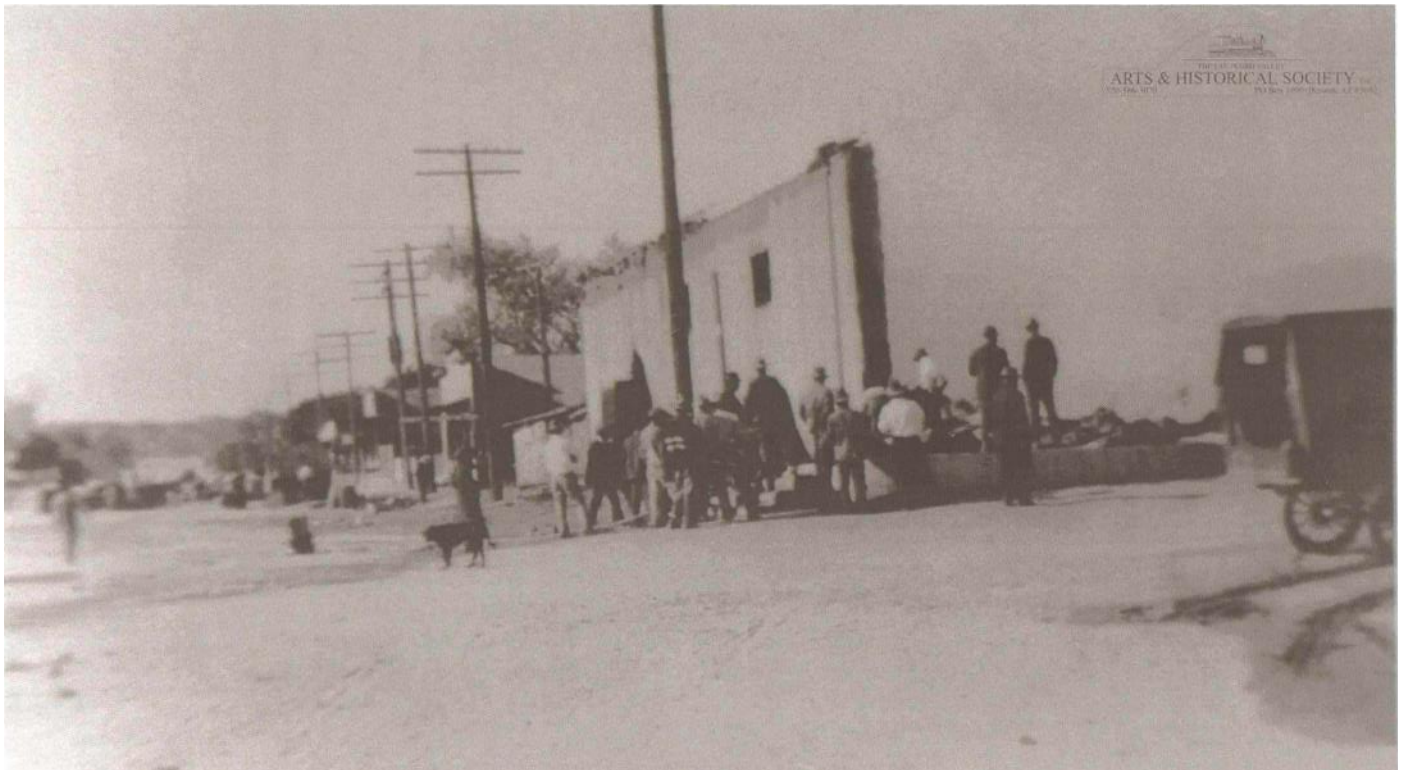
April 22, 1921, *Tucson Citizen*:

BENSON NOTES

Benson has recently suffered a good deal of fire. Marir Bros., the Cash Store, Moss Cash Grocery and W. D. Martinez general store were complete losses. Mr. Martinez has let a contract to Contractor H. M. Eckelman of Tombstone for a new building which is to be 28x60 feet with a 12x12 store room at the rear. The new building will be on the sight of the old one on the corner of San Pedro and Fifth streets and will have cement floor, reinforced concrete walls with metal roof and metal ceiling.

1921

May 20, 1921, Maier Bros store



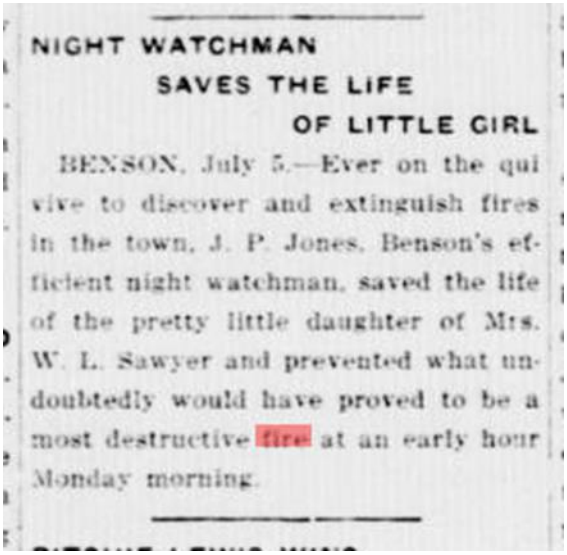
1921

July 7, 1921, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

Another Fire Starts

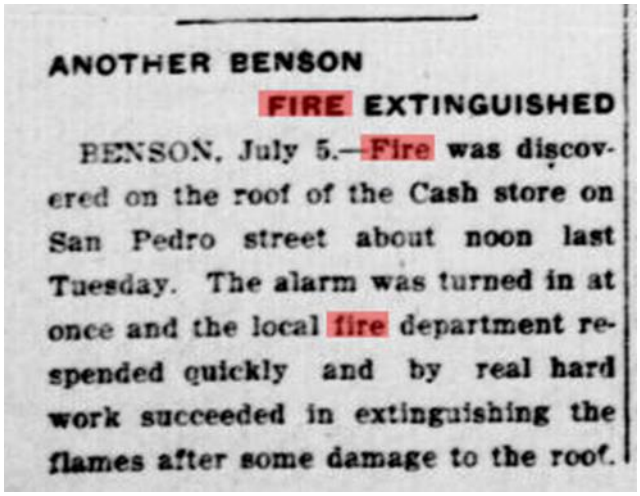
BENSON—Fire was discovered on the roof of the Cash store on San Pedro street about noon last Tuesday. The alarm was turned in at once and the local fire department responded quickly and by real hard work succeeded in extinguishing the flames after some damage to the roof.

July 10, 1921, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



NIGHT WATCHMAN
SAVES THE LIFE
OF LITTLE GIRL

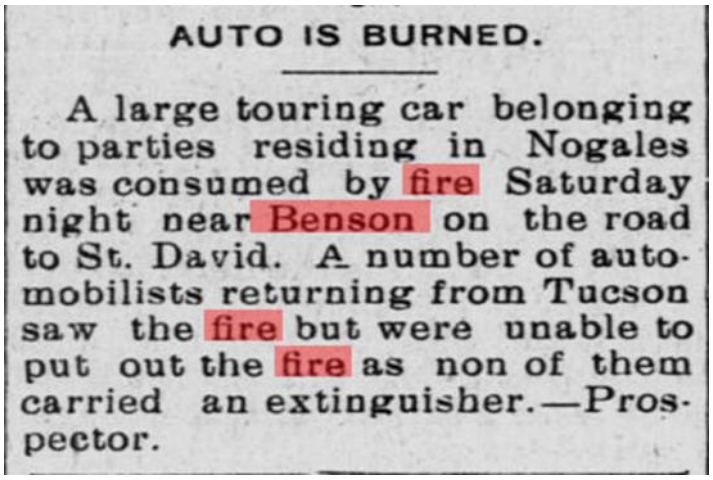
BENSON, July 5.—Ever on the qui vive to discover and extinguish fires in the town, J. P. Jones, Benson's efficient night watchman, saved the life of the pretty little daughter of Mrs. W. L. Sawyer and prevented what undoubtedly would have proved to be a most destructive fire at an early hour Monday morning.



ANOTHER BENSON
FIRE EXTINGUISHED

BENSON, July 5.—Fire was discovered on the roof of the Cash store on San Pedro street about noon last Tuesday. The alarm was turned in at once and the local fire department responded quickly and by real hard work succeeded in extinguishing the flames after some damage to the roof.

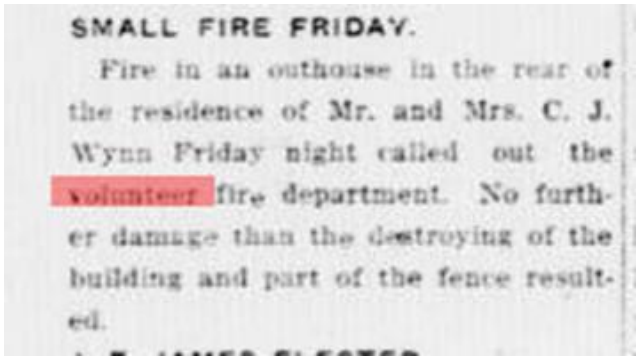
November 11, 1921, *The Border Vidette*:



AUTO IS BURNED.

A large touring car belonging to parties residing in Nogales was consumed by fire Saturday night near Benson on the road to St. David. A number of automobilists returning from Tucson saw the fire but were unable to put out the fire as non of them carried an extinguisher.—Prospector.

November 6, 1921, *Tombstone Epitaph*:



SMALL FIRE FRIDAY.

Fire in an outhouse in the rear of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Wynn Friday night called out the volunteer fire department. No further damage than the destroying of the building and part of the fence resulted.

1922

January 22, 1922, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

FIRE DESTROYS
THREE BENSON HOMES.

Fire last night in Benson completely destroyed two and almost three residences houses, according to word reaching here. The flames broke out in the Maxwell home situated near the Hi Wo store and spread to a house owned by Mrs. Trask, completely destroying the two. A third house owned by Mrs. Trask caught fire and was saved by the Benson volunteer fire fighters, although for a time it looked as though it would be destroyed, and the flames would spread to the Benson Flouring Mill adjoining.

But little furniture was saved. The loss is estimated at over $3,000. The origin of the fire is undetermined.

This is the fourth disastrous fire to visit Benson within the past eight months, three fires in the business district but a few weeks apart during the latter part of last summer having wrought considerable damage to the town.

January 23, 1922, *Tucson Citizen*:

BIG FLOUR MILL IN BENSON ENTIRELY DESTROYED BY FIRE

Losses approximating $75,000 were sustained late Saturday in Benson when a flour mill and five residences were destroyed in a conflagration which for a time threatened to engulf the entire town.

The flour mill was the property of Charlie Clark, a resident of Benson and was razed to the ground, being entirely destroyed. A large proportion of its value is said to have been covered by fire insurance, altho much of the value will be a total loss to the owner.

The residences to which the flames spread from the flour mill were unpretentious, and constituted the smaller part of the loss involved.

The cause from which the flames started is unknown, discovery not being made until they had gained sufficient headway to make their quenching practically impossible.

The Benson volunteer fire company immediately rushed to the scene and applied all measures in their power to halt the flames with but small measure of success for a time, altho later their efforts appeared more effective.

January 24, 1922, *Arizona Daily Star*:

FIRE DESTROYS THREE HOUSES

BENSON.—Fire in Benson completely destroyed two and almost three residence houses, according to word reaching here. The flames broke out in the Maxwell home situated near the Hi Wo store, and spread to a house owned by Mrs. Trask, completely destroying the two. A third house owned by Mrs. Trask caught fire and was saved by the Benson volunteer fire fighters, although for a time it looked as though it would be destroyed, and the flames would spread to the Benson Flouring Mill adjoining.

But little furniture was saved. The loss is estimated at over $3000. The origin of the fire is undetermined.

This is the fourth disastrous fire to visit Benson within the past eight months, three fires in the business district but a few weeks apart during the latter part of last summer having wrought considerable damage to the town.

1922/1924

July 22, 1922, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

ANOTHER FIRE AT BENSON TODAY.

Another fire, the fourth or fifth to be experienced in the past eight months, menaced the business district of Benson occurred again today when two more buildings were added to the casualty list.

The fire, which started in the Musgrave Second Hand Store, and is believed to have resulted from an explosion, quickly spread to the Moore Barber Shop, destroying both buildings before it could be placed under control by the Benson fire department.

For a time the entire block, in which are situated the Etz Market, the old Goetz store and other business houses, were threatened.

The fire started shortly after 11 o'clock and was not checked until after noon.

The amount of damage was not learned here this afternoon.

June 30, 1922, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Have Many Fires

Benson.—Another fire, the fourth or fifth to be experienced in the past eight months, menaced the business district of Benson when two more buildings were added to the casualty list. The fire, which started in the Musgrave Second Hand store, and is believed to have resulted from an explosion, quickly spread to the Moore Barber shop, destroying both buildings before it could be placed under control by the Benson fire department.

April 4, 1924, Tombstone Epitaph:

ANOTHER FIRE AT BENSON MENACES CITY

Only the fact that the wind suddenly changed direction is responsible for the principal business district of Benson being saved from total fire loss, when flames destroyed three business buildings and menaced two others Tuesday night.

Loss sustained as a result of the fire was the Liberty Theater building owned by the Gerwein estate, the contents owned by Mrs. L. L. Schwab. Loss in this building was given at $2800 to equipment, and $1500 to the building, with no insurance; The American Cafe, conducted by Mrs. Harrington, loss $1,000 in contents and building $1,500, owned by Jerry Ioll, with no insurance; The Cochise County State Bank, Benson branch, loss about $3500 with no insurance.

Damage to stock of M. H. Allen, druggist, which was removed into the street, was estimated at $2000, although it was not damaged by fire or water.

The fire broke out shortly before 9 o'clock when the moving picture show was practically filled. There was no disorder as the flames began to shoot out of the operator's box, and the audience filed out hurriedly, but with no attempt t o crowd one another. Women and children were permitted to leave first, several men stationing themselves at the door demanding that they be given passage out before the men.

The flames soon consumed the wooden structure and aided by a high westerly wind soon had spread to several buildings in the block. With nothing but old fashioned hand carts and poor water pressure at their command, the volunteer fire department was powerless to combat the blaze, and it seemed inevitable that the entire business district and in all probability most of the residences would be razed. But shortly before 10 o'clock the wind died down, and when the flames reached the post office building that structure had been practically torn down. The drug store adjoining was saved and while the remainder of the postoffice was destroyed, the fire was halted there.

There were several thousand dollars in currency in the band building, but the steel safe withstood the intense heat and the money or records were not lost. Records and mail in the post office building were also saved.

This is the second disastrous fire to occur in Benson within the past year.

April 2, 1924, ***Arizona Daily Star:***

Full Associated Press Report by Leased Wire.

VOL. LXXXI. No. 80 EIGHT PAGES TUCSON, ARIZONA, WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 2, 1924. EIGHT PAGES On Trains and at News Stands, 5c a Copy.

WIND FANS FLAMES THREATENING TO DESTROY BENSON

Postoffice Torn Down In Desperate Effort To Save Cochise City

Explosion in Movie Theater Starts Blaze; Crowd Passes Out of Hall Without Casualty, but Volunteer Department Is Unable to Check Sweep Through Business Center.

At 11 o'clock the fire in Benson was reported under control. The wind that for two hours threatened to destroy the whole of the business district, had retarded to a light breeze, scurrying whirlwinds of ashes and sparks from the ruins of four of Benson's largest business buildings, the Liberty movie theater, American Cafe, Cochise County State Bank and the postoffice.

At 9:30 last night residents of Benson, 50 miles from Tucson, in Cochise county, called on the employes at the Apache Powder plant, eight miles away, for help in fighting a conflagration which threatens to take the entire village of 2,000 inhabitants if the strong wind did not soon subside.

The fire started in the Liberty theater at the west end of Main street about eight o'clock, during a show when a film is reported to have taken fire in the projection booth. The theater was emptied with no casualties.

With no organized fire department, the show building was soon in ashes. Before the theater was burned to the ground, the American Cafe, adjoining on the east, was half consumed by the ravaging flames which were unaffected by the valiant efforts of the volunteer fire brigade. The cafe was a total loss within 30 minutes after the first building was down.

A small alleyway failed to keep the flames from spreading to the Cochise County State Bank, the third business place to go in the toll of the flames.

While the bank was in flames, men and women citizens worked side-by-side to wreck the Benson postoffice building in hopes of checking the fire from being communicated to the Allen drug store. This was at 10 o'clock when the Star was able to talk by phone with Miss Sophia Doll, proprietor of the Virginia hotel, across the street from the postoffice.

Miss Doll said the wind had been carrying flames in direct line with her hotel, but that the wind appeared to be dying a trifle and some hope was held for saving the town which will likely be swept away if the fire gets to the opposite side of Main Street.

At 10 o'clock the telephone operator told the Star over long distance that the flames were still two blocks from the building where the exchange is located, but coming that way and she didn't know how long she would be able to stick to her post.

The postoffice is only partly damaged, but the other three places are total losses. When the wind began to die about 10:45 and the first indications of getting the blaze under control were seen, a gang of employes which was rushed by motor from the Apache powder plant was prepared to plant a charge of powder in the postoffice building and wreck the structure in an effort to check the progress of the fire.

The building in which Allen's drug store is located was next in line of the fire. It was not damaged, but the drugs and furnishings of the place will show a loss in articles missing and broken in removing the contents of the drug store to the streets.

A. G. Smith, president of the Cochise County State bank, announced at midnight that the institution would open in the Milton Farlee pool room Wednesday morning to accommodate patrons.

It is thought that the postoffice building is not damaged too badly to permit the distribution of mail until repairs can be made.

1924/1925

April 2, 1924, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Full Associated Press Report by Leased Wire.

VOL. LXXXI. No. 80 EIGHT PAGES TUCSON, ARIZONA, WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 2, 1924. EIGHT PAGES On Trains and at News Stands, 5c a Copy.

WIND FANS FLAMES THREATENING TO DESTROY BENSON

Bisbee, Ariz., April 1:—The entire town of Benson, 50 miles northwest of here, is threatened with a destruction by fire, according to word received here tonight. A moving picture house, where the fire started, a garage and several residences already have been razed and with a high wind blowing and no organized fire protection, it is believed the town will be practically destroyed before the flames can be conquered. Benson is on the main line of the southern Pacific and has two blocks of business houses.

At 9:45 o'clock the wind suddenly died down and by tearing down the post office building at the end of the block where the fire started, volunteers claimed to have the fire under control. Included in the five or six buildings destroyed by fire was the Bank of Benson, which contained several thousand dollars in currency. Whether the safety vaults withstood the intense heat could not be determined at this time.

The fire was checked shortly after midnight tonight after it had razed half a block, inflicting property damage estimated at $25,000. The theater building where the fire started from a burning film, two business houses unoccupied, the restaurant, the bank building and a residence were in the path of the flames, which were placed under control by dynamiting the post-office building. But for a sudden cessation of the wind, which was blowing at a 40 mile an hour gait when the fire first broke out, it is believed the entire town would have been razed.

June 3, 1924, *Arizona Daily Star:*

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TO REBUILD BENSON BLOCK

Construction of a $15,000 building to be occupied by the Cochise County State Bank and the Gerrad Dilol Mercantile company of Benson to replace the building burned down in the Benson fire will start immediately, according to Herbert Brown of Tucson, who received the contract. The building will be one story high and will be built entirely of re-enforced concrete with a plate glass front.

July 25, 1925, *Arizona Daily Star:*

H. Armitage had the misfortune of losing two residences last

Wednesday by a fire originating from an oil stove. There was no insurance and the buildings were a total loss.

August 22, 1926, *Arizona Daily Star:*

$60,000 WATER PLANT WILL BE PUT TO VOTERS

Benson Council Adopts System That Includes Fire Protection.

BENSON, Aug. 21 (Special to Arizona Daily Star.)—Complete plans for the construction, operation and financing of a municipally owned fire and domestic water system, recently prepared by D. E. Fogg acting under the direction of the city council, have been accepted unanimously by the members of the city council.

The motion for acceptance was made by George Kempf and seconded by Max Treu, Sr. It provided that the council accept the report as written and presented to the council and that the mayor at once appoint a committee to prepare plans for a $60,000 bond issue to finance the project.

The new system, according to the plans, will supply adequate water for both domestic and irrigation use and will be built entirely new no part of any existing water system being incorporated in the plans. It will also meet every requirement of the board of fire underwriters and by so doing will effect a reduction of 18 per cent in the present insurance rates here.

The total cost of the combined fire protection and water system is estimated at $60,000 to be raised by a bond issue carrying interest at 6 per cent and maturing in 20 years.

The proposed rate was set at $2.50 a month for the use of 5000 gallons or less, 25 cents per thousand for the next 10,000 and 15 cents per thousand for the next 10,000. Figuring both probable consumption and cost of operation the report shows a yearly operating profit, not including payment of principal and interest on bonds of $1664.40. Counting payments and interest the report shows a deficit of $3,135.60 to be raised by taxation. This, however, does not include any payment by the city for fire protection which would ordinarily cost the city from 1400 to 1500. Under these figures, figured conservatively and not providing for any increase in taxable wealth or water consumption, city taxes would be raised 60 cents on every hundred until the bonds were retired.

Under the plan as accepted the Cochise Utility company would be made the agents of the city in operating this system and would operate the pumps for the full 24 hours, read meters, collect bills and supervise repairs and installations. For this they would receive $150 a month and would in addition be paid at the regular rates for power used in pumping.

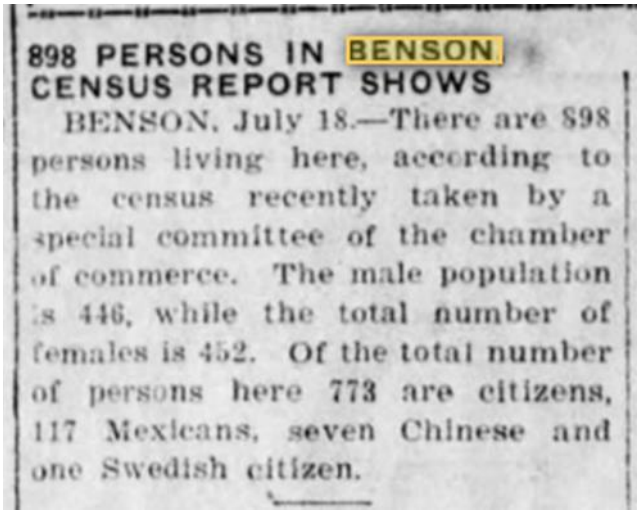
In regard to the three existing water companies, the report states that the city would be under no legal obligation to them and that they would be forced to discontinue the use of city streets and alleys as soon as the new system was put in operation. It was proposed that they be given the sum of $5000 to continue the use of their systems until the new plant was put in operation and for the purchase of their pipe lines now in the city streets.

A plan to supply the Southern Pacific company with 64,000,000 gallons of water per year was included in the report with the suggestion that this be held in obeyance until such time as a satisfactory rate with the Southern Pacific company be reached.

Quite a number of local tax payers attended the meeting and each expressed his entire approval of the project. In discussing the 60 cent increase in tax rate, it was learned that deducting the 18 per cent saving in fire insurance from this addition in taxes there would be a balance of only a few dollars actual increased cost to the tax payer. It was also brought out at this meeting that preventable fire losses in the town of Benson for the past five years had been figured at $160,000, which amount would in all probability have been saved with the fire protection system called for in the report.

1927

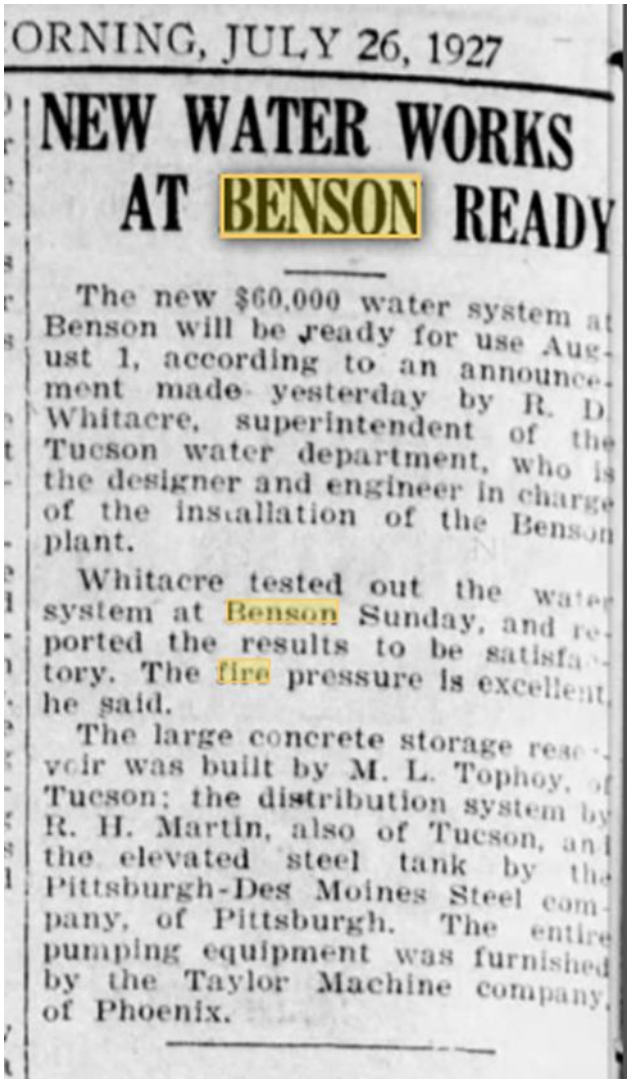
July 19, 1927, *Arizona Daily Star:*



898 PERSONS IN BENSON CENSUS REPORT SHOWS

BENSON, July 18.—There are 898 persons living here, according to the census recently taken by a special committee of the chamber of commerce. The male population is 446, while the total number of females is 452. Of the total number of persons here 773 are citizens, 117 Mexicans, seven Chinese and one Swedish citizen.

July 26, 1927, *Arizona Daily Star:*



ORNING, JULY 26, 1927

NEW WATER WORKS AT BENSON READY

The new $60,000 water system at Benson will be ready for use August 1, according to an announcement made yesterday by R. D. Whitacre, superintendent of the Tucson water department, who is the designer and engineer in charge of the installation of the Benson plant.

Whitacre tested out the water system at Benson Sunday, and reported the results to be satisfactory. The fire pressure is excellent, he said.

The large concrete storage reservoir was built by M. L. Tophoy, of Tucson; the distribution system by R. H. Martin, also of Tucson, and the elevated steel tank by the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel company, of Pittsburgh. The entire pumping equipment was furnished by the Taylor Machine company, of Phoenix.

October 30, 1927, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

Sunday Morning, October 30, 1927

Fire Bug Foiled by Benson Woman Saturday Night

Attempt to Burn Home Thwarted by Quick Wits and Courage of Feminine Owner

BENSON, Oct. 29.—Mrs. M. B. Harrington prevented what might have resulted in a major fire for Benson when last Saturday night she frustrated the plans of a fire-bug. It appears that an attempt was being made to set fire to the Harrington home, opposite the Southern Pacific railroad station.

It was about 11 o'clock when Mrs. Harrington heard strange noises outside of her home. Quietly opening the door, she peered into the night and discerned what she believed to be a man busily occupied at some strange task at the side of the house. Just as she was about to investigate at a closer range, the person became aware of her presence and left.

Mrs. Harrington then went to the place where the person had been working and found several sacks of paper and a considerable quantity of kindling wood. The wood was found to be piled on top of the sacks and over this some fuel oil poured. A plank had been torn away from the side of the house for the apparent purpose of permitting the fire to reach to the floor of the house.

A careful examination of hte entire premises are being made by local authorities.

The community sing-song struck its full stride at the close of the summer season last Friday night. The meeting at the club house was one full of energy and enthusiasm, in spite of the fact that quite a number were necessarily absent.

Mrs. W. F. Jones directed the singing and Max Klinger was back again at his old position in front of the piano.

clerk and has many friends in Benson who will regret her leaving.

Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Titus, Jr., Mrs. Edgar Titus, Sr., and their house guest, Robert E. Hall motored to Tucson Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Bingham and children and Miss Janet Schwab and Bill Harrington motored to Safford Saturday returning Sunday.

Miss Frances Roberts, Marshall Jarratt and Walter Simmons motoed to Tombstone Saturday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Hisler and two children arrived Thursday from El Paso, Texas, to make Benson their home. Hisler has accepted a position with the Southern Pacific.

Dr. and Mrs. R. E. Yellott and children motored to Tucson Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Jarborough, who have lived at Mescal, moved last week to Lordsburgh, New Mexico. He will be with the water service of the Southern Pacific.

R. T. Ball of the University of Arizona spent the week end in Benson with his mother, Mrs. L. R. Richart.

Mrs. T. G. Emmons and her house guest, Miss Laura Mae Seward, county home demonstrator, of Willcox, motored to Mesa Saturday.

Frank Campbell, Benson shoemaker, visited his brother B. G. Campbell in St. David Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Smith motored to Tucson Friday on business.

K. G. Marman was a business visitor in Nogales Thursday.

William Fourr (Uncle Billy) of Dragoon was in Benson Tuesday looking after business.

Mr. and Mrs. Val Kimbrough motored into Tucson Sunday where Mrs. Kimbrough had an operation performed at St. Mary's hospital Monday. Kimbrough returned home Tuesday and reported Mrs. Kimbrough getting along fine.

Mrs. Dick Heiber and baby went to Tucson Tuesday where she will receive medical treatment. Mr. Heiber joined them Wednesday and remained a few days.

Mrs. A. C. Lee and sons, Cecil and Dare, motored to Tucson Tuesday to visit Mrs. Lee's son, Edward, who is seriously ill in the Methodist hospital

October 30, 1927, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

the fact that quite a number were necessarily absent.

Mrs. W. F. Jones directed the singing and Max Klinger was back again at his old position in front of the piano. Klinger's return from a vacation spent in California had much to do with the success of the evening's music.

Those in charge say that a successful fall and winter season is encouragingly bright. They wish it to be generally known that the events are arranged for the sole benefit of the public and that all are welcome to join in the endeavors of the organization.

"A Night in Russia" might well have been the title of the first of the season's card parties of the Benson Woman's club, held last week at the club house. When the guests entered they were pleasantly surprised by a novel scheme of decorations. The furnishings and walls of the clubrooms were oddly and attractively ornamented with Russian color schemes.

After a cleverly arranged evening at bridge, guests were served with a lunch under the light of multicolored candles. A delicious Russian salad was the principal dish of the menu.

Mrs. D. E. Fogg and A. W. Bard won high score and Mrs. Geo. Seeley won the consolation prizes.

The next card party on the program is scheduled for the evening of November 9. Mrs. George Seeley and Mrs. C. S. Quinn will be hostesses.

R. M. McKinnery, new agent for the May Tag washing machine in this district, with headquarters in Tucson, is here demonstrating the machines this week.

Mrs. Wilbur Robinette is working at Mothers Place this week in Mrs. Hoel's place, as Mrs. Hoel is out on account of illness.

Mrs. Kate Woods of Fort Huachuca visited Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Colvin over Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Bard were shopping in Tucson Wednesday.

Mrs. Mary Benton and baby departed for Los Angeles where she will make her home. Mrs. Benton was connected with the Manson Hotel as

joined them Wednesday and remained a few days.

Mrs. A. C. Lee and sons, Cecil and Page, motored to Tucson Tuesday to visit Mrs. Lee's son, Edward, who is seriously ill in the Methodist hospital there.

Mrs. M. B. Harrington and Mrs. Jess Wien visited their daughters, Misses Lottie Wein and Thelma Harrington, in Tucson where they are in training for nurses at the St. Mary's hospital.

Charlie Goetz was a business visitor in Bowie Wednesday.

Mrs. George Scheerer, Mrs. T. G. Emmons, Misses Helen and Jean Emmons motored to Tucson Wednesday.

N. W. Fowler of Alabama arrived in Benson this week to spend the winter. He is in hope that the wonderful Arizona climate will improve his health. He is at home at the Moon Camp grounds.

D. E. Fogg, R. V. Misenhimer, Jimmie Edwards, and H. D. Carter of Douglas took advantage of the first day of the opening of the qual season Sunday. They left Benson Saturday and returned Sunday. They reported a very successful hunt.

Mrs. H. J. Getzwiller and Mrs. P. Getzwiller left Friday for California for a indefinite visit with relatives.

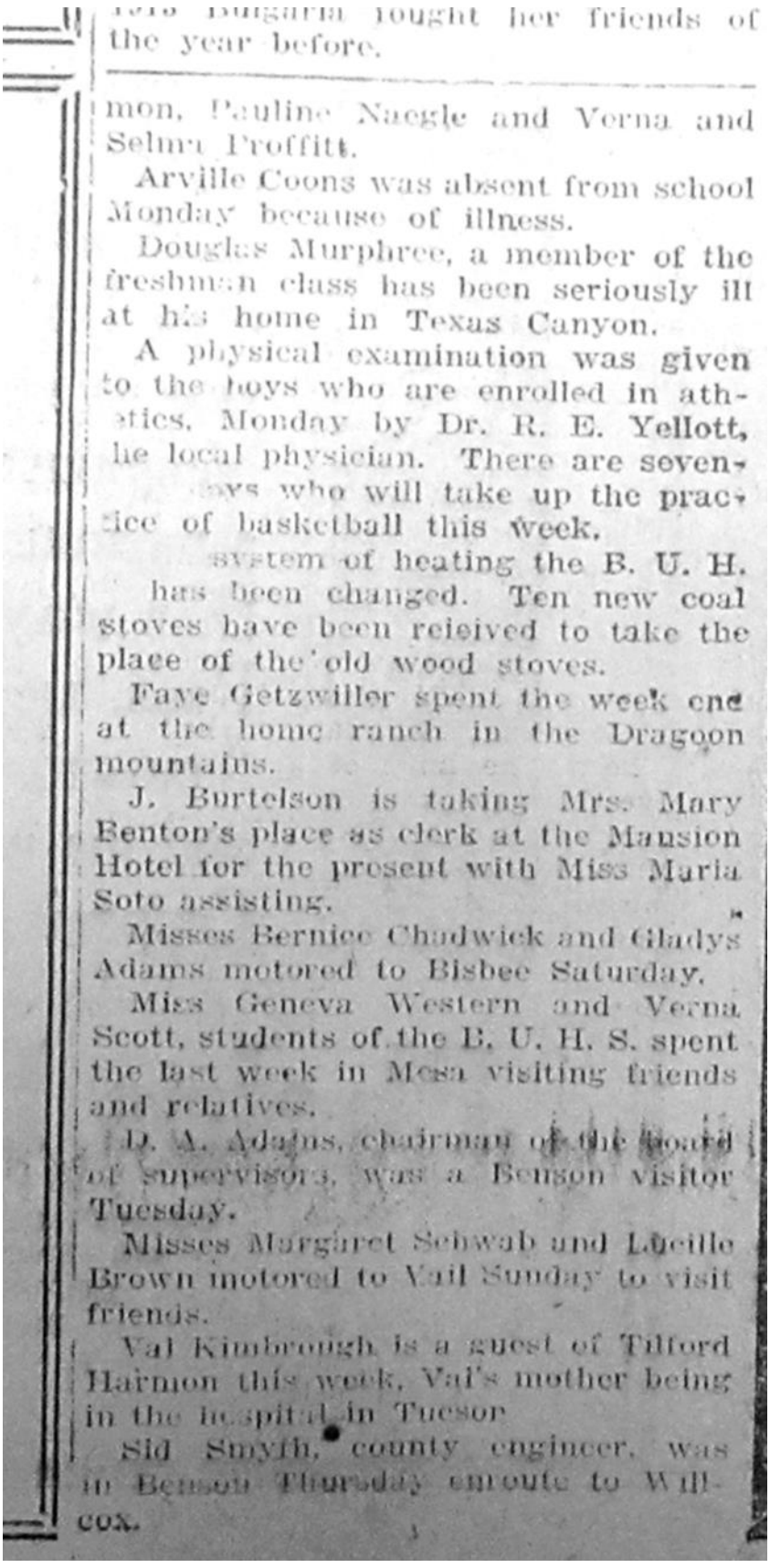
A Hallowe'en play was given at the Texas Canyon school house Friday night and was well attended by many people from Cochise, Dragoon, Willcox, Benson and other surrounding towns. This was a great surprise to the school children as they had only expected to see their parents and a few friends present. This is the first play to be given by the school but many more are expected to be given in the future.

The health nurse visited at the high school Thursday and inspected the girls. Notices will be sent to the parents concerning any defect that the girls might have.

Ralph Adams, a member of the senior class at the high school, is a owner of a new Studebaker, purchased from Owen and Sims of Bisbee.

Among the students visiting the Mormon temple in Mesa are the Misses Rhoda Riggs, Ramona and Lucile Har-

October 30, 1927, *Bisbee Daily Review*:



...Bulgaria fought her friends of the year before.

mon, Pauline Naegle and Verna and Selma Proffitt.

Arville Coons was absent from school Monday because of illness.

Douglas Murphree, a member of the freshman class has been seriously ill at his home in Texas Canyon.

A physical examination was given to the boys who are enrolled in athletics, Monday by Dr. R. E. Yellott, the local physician. There are seven... who will take up the practice of basketball this week.

...system of heating the B. U. H. has been changed. Ten new coal stoves have been reieived to take the place of the old wood stoves.

Faye Getzwiller spent the week end at the home ranch in the Dragoon mountains.

J. Burtelson is taking Mrs. Mary Benton's place as clerk at the Mansion Hotel for the present with Miss Maria Soto assisting.

Misses Bernice Chadwick and Gladys Adams motored to Bisbee Saturday.

Miss Geneva Western and Verna Scott, students of the B. U. H. S. spent the last week in Mesa visiting friends and relatives.

D. A. Adams, chairman of the board of supervisors, was a Benson visitor Tuesday.

Misses Margaret Schwab and Lucille Brown motored to Vail Sunday to visit friends.

Val Kimbrough is a guest of Tilford Harmon this week, Val's mother being in the hospital in Tucson

Sid Smyth, county engineer, was in Benson Thursday enroute to Willcox.

1928

January 22, 1928, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Tony Cox had the misfortune of running into a freight train at a railroad crossing five miles west of Benson Wednesday night. The car turned over and was destroyed by fire. There were four occupants in the car and none was injured.

P. Dickerson was a visitor here

March 11, 1928, *Arizona Daily Star:*

The Benson fire department is giving a St. Patrick danch at the auditorium March 17.

May 6, 1928, *Arizona Daily Star*:

BENSON FIREMEN STAGE BANQUET

Pastor for Presbyterian Church Arrives to Resume Services

BENSON, May 5.—The Benson firemen gave a banquet at "Mother's Place Cafe" Thursday evening. There were about 50 present. Among the out-of-town guests were Fire Chief Joe Roberts of Tucson. Music was furnished by the Ray Fiske orchestra.

1928

May 6, 1928, *Arizona Daily Star:*

BENSON FIREMEN STAGE BANQUET

Pastor for Presbyterian Church Arrives to Resume Services

BENSON, May 5—The Benson firemen gave a banquet at "Mother's Place Cafe" Thursday evening. There were about 50 present. Among the out-of-town guests were Fire Chief Joe Roberts of Tucson. Music was furnished by the Ray Fiske orchestra.

Mrs. Joe Schnazel entertained a few friends with four tables of bridge Wednesday afternoon at her home. The house was decorated with beautiful pink roses. The hostess served her guests a two-course luncheon. Mrs. George Seeley receiver first prize, Mrs. C. Morris second, and Mrs. C. Papazoni consolation.

Rev. M. L. Edwards and son arrived Thursday from Cincinnati. Rev. Edwards came here to occupy the pulpit at the Presbyterian church. The church has been without a pastor for the past six months. Mrs. Edwards and daughter stopped over at Kansas City for a brief visit with relatives and will join Mr. Edwards soon.

W. B. Grice of Pantano was a visitor here Tuesday.

G. W. Maloney of Bisbee was in town Wednesday.

Nancy Yellott, a University of Arizona student, came home Tuesday for a few days visit with her parents, Dr. and Mrs. R. E. Yellott.

Tom Richards of Safford was here Thursday en route home from Yuma.

F. E. Wheelon of Willcox was visiting friends here Thursday.

Mrs. Wilborn Robinette and and Mrs. Gussie Essery motored to Tucson Monday to shop.

Mrs. J. J. Benton spent Tuesday in Tucson.

A. E. Lewis, Jr., made a business trip to Tucson Tuesday.

Mrs. Lena Moss and daughter, Mildred, returned home Wednesday from Bisbee, where they have been for several days.

B. Dewey and Bob Hall motored to Tucson Tuesday evening to attend "The Follies."

W. C. Tackett of Douglas was here Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. G. C. Bethurum of Tucson, former manual training instructor at the grammar school, spent Sunday here visiting old friends.

C. B. Jeffries of Phoenix spent a few hours here Thursday.

Eddie Robinette of San Carlos spent last Sunday with his mother, Mrs. M. Harrington.

Charles Miller, who has been fireman on the helper here for the last two months, returned to Tucson Thursday.

M. F. Hawk of Safford was here Thursday.

Hollywood Garden will open its swimming pool May 18.

Carol Clark and sisters, Julia, Vada, and Mrs. Rosa Lee Whitehead and Bill Schwab of Tucson called on friends here Saturday evening.

Fred Soell motored to Tucson Tuesday.

G. W. Maloney of Bisbee was a Sunday visitor here.

The W. O. W. will give a minstrel show at the auditorium next Saturday evening.

Miss Hazel Williams of Tucson attended the Woodman dance here Saturday night.

J. G. Krentz of Douglas spent Monday here.

Joe Fox of Tucson was visiting the merchants here Monday.

J. R. Jennings, state dairy commissioner, was here Tuesday visiting the local dairymen.

Mrs. Larson Skov left Wednesday for El Paso.

The Benson grammar school will hold its graduating exercises at the auditorium Wednesday night.

Mrs. Mary Titus and Mrs. O. N. Stratton were hostesses Friday afternoon for the Ladies' Aid at the home of Mrs. Titus.

Ruth Glenn, daughter of John Glenn, was thrown from a horse and received a broken arm.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Bingham and son, Fred, and Bill Harrington motored to Safford Friday for a few days visit with relatives.

Edward Benton of Tucson spent last week-end with his mother, Mrs. J. J. Benton.

Lucile Brown, Margaret Schwab, Gladys Adams and Bernice Shadwick motored to Tucson Thursday.

Ed Atwood of Tucson spent Sunday at the Moss home.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Papazona and daughter, Helen, and Mrs. C. Morris and daughter, Bernice, were Saturday shoppers in Tucson.

February 2, 1929, *Arizona Daily Star:*

SIX MEN INJURED AS CABOOSE COLLIDES WITH CATTLE; FOUR VICTIMS BROUGHT TO TUCSON

Cattle Guard Hides Animals as Train Backs Into Them, Is Version of Several Witnesses

TUCSON MEN PART OF WORK TRAIN CREW

Section Crew of 16 Men Riding in the Caboose As Train Backs Into Livestock On Track

Six men were injured, three cows were killed, a work-train caboose was splintered and four loaded gondola cars were derailed in a collision between Cochise county livestock and Southern Pacific rolling-stock one mile east of Benson yesterday morning.

The crash occurred on the "north line," at 7:19 a. m., when an eastbound work train "rode herd" on a dozen or so cows that were crossing the right-of-way.

Four of the victims of the collision were brought to Tucson, and the other two were taken back to Benson. All six men will recover.

version had it that it was expected that the cows would scatter—and they didn't.

Cattle Killed

At all events, the impact of livestock and rolling stock smashed the caboose, where the section crew of about 16 men were riding and derailed four other cars—gondolas loaded with mine waste to be used on the right of way east of Sibyl.

Three of the cows were killed, pieces of the carcasses being strewn along the tracks for a considerable distance.

In a statement given at St. Mary's hospital at noon yesterday, Hernandez said that this was the second injury suffered by him while in the employ of the rail-

(Continued to Page 2, Column 3)

The four injured men who were brought to Tucson are:

F. W. Killmer, 1349 East Broadway, Tucson, conductor of the work train; badly bruised in the face and body.

Joe E. Moore, Benson, assistant foreman of the work crew; left patella, or kneecap, fractured.

Francisco Hernandez, 39, Benson, section hand; left ankle bruised.

Manuel Vasquez Gonzalez, 27, Benson, section hand; injured in the pelvic region and in the left knee.

The two injured men who were taken back to Benson, according to Dr. Richard E. Yellott, the railroad company's surgeon at Benson, are W. M. McCommons, Benson, apprentice foreman, who was injured in the right knee, and Santos Martinez, also of Benson, a section hand, who suffered a number of slight bruises.

Hurled To Ground

One of the injured Mexicans was hurled to the ground with such force that he was found completely covered with soil.

Killmer and Moore were given treatment at the Thomas-Davis clinic, which handles the medical and surgical work for the Southern Pacific company. Killmer then was sent to his home, while Moore was sent to St. Mary's hospital. The two injured Mexicans were immediately taken to St. Mary's hospital upon their arrival in Tucson.

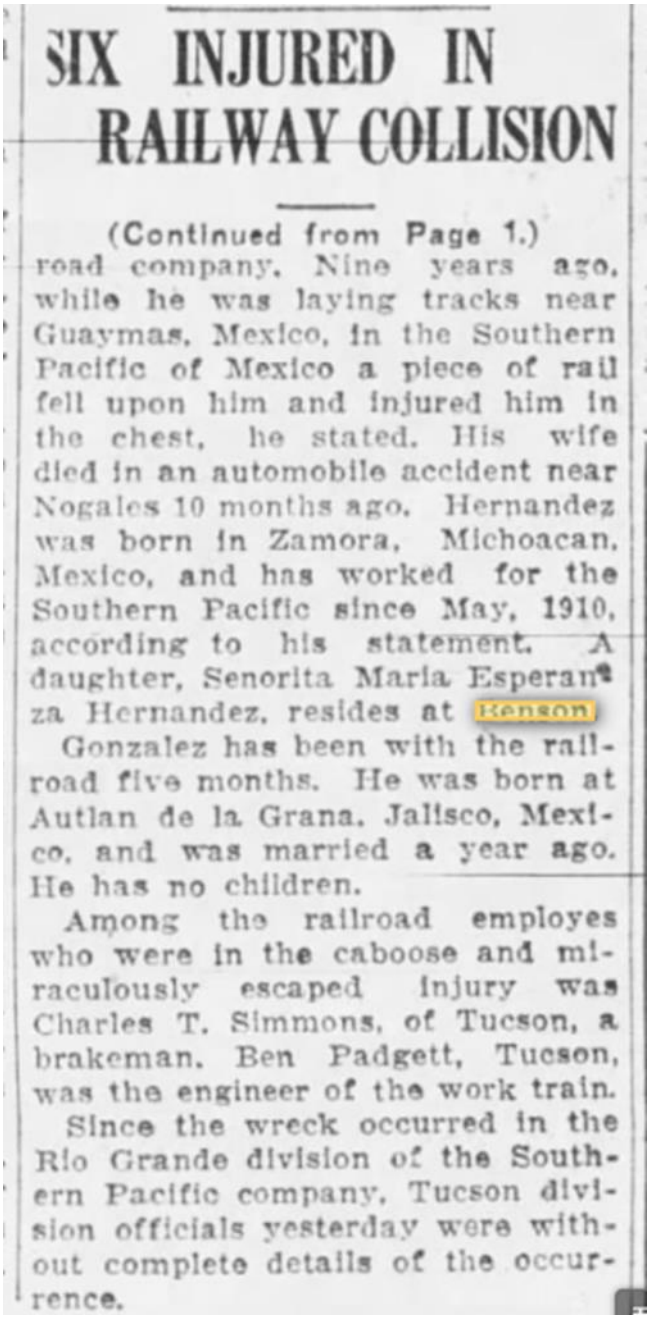
Dr. C. A. Thomas, surgeon for the Southern Pacific company at Tucson, left for the scene of the crash on the division wrecker, but met the caboose special bringing in the injured men near Pantano and returned to Tucson in the special.

The work train was being backed out of Benson over the north line of the Southern Pacific, bound for a point a mile east of Sibyl, which is nine miles east of Benson. When the train reached a crossing about a mile east of Benson, it ran into a herd of 10 or 12 head of cattle.

According to one eye-witness report, the cattle guard hid the animals from view until it was too late to stop the train. Another

1929

February 2, 1929, *Arizona Daily Star:*



SIX INJURED IN RAILWAY COLLISION

(Continued from Page 1.)

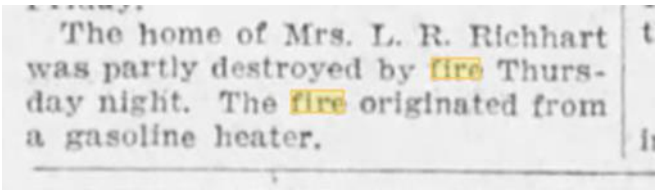
road company. Nine years ago, while he was laying tracks near Guaymas, Mexico, in the Southern Pacific of Mexico a piece of rail fell upon him and injured him in the chest, he stated. His wife died in an automobile accident near Nogales 10 months ago. Hernandez was born in Zamora, Michoacan, Mexico, and has worked for the Southern Pacific since May, 1910, according to his statement. A daughter, Senorita Maria Esperanza Hernandez, resides at Benson.

Gonzalez has been with the railroad five months. He was born at Autlan de la Grana, Jalisco, Mexico, and was married a year ago. He has no children.

Among the railroad employes who were in the caboose and miraculously escaped injury was Charles T. Simmons, of Tucson, a brakeman. Ben Padgett, Tucson, was the engineer of the work train.

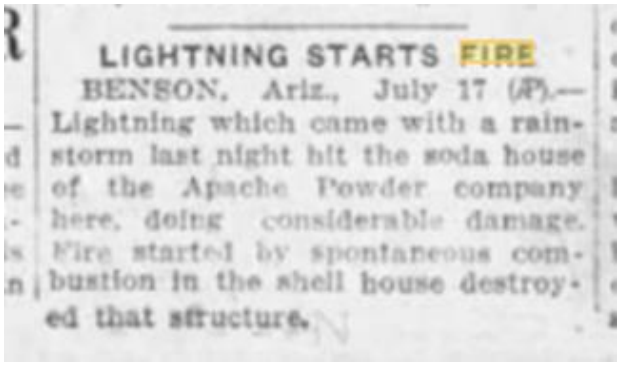
Since the wreck occurred in the Rio Grande division of the Southern Pacific company, Tucson division officials yesterday were without complete details of the occurrence.

October 27, 1929, *Arizona Daily Star:*



The home of Mrs. L. R. Richhart was partly destroyed by fire Thursday night. The fire originated from a gasoline heater.

July 18, 1929, *Arizona Daily Star*:

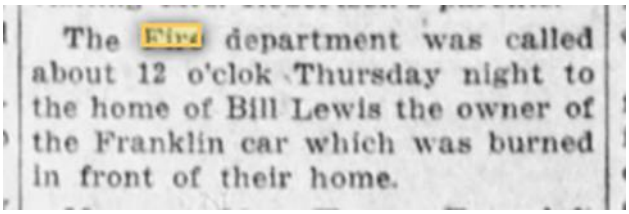


LIGHTNING STARTS FIRE

BENSON, Ariz., July 17 (AP).—Lightning which came with a rainstorm last night hit the soda house of the Apache Powder company here, doing considerable damage. Fire started by spontaneous combustion in the shell house destroyed that structure.

1930/1931/1934/1935

April 6, 1930, *Arizona Daily Star:*

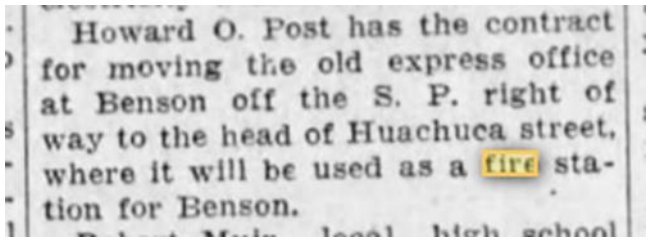


The fire department was called about 12 o'clok Thursday night to the home of Bill Lewis the owner of the Franklin car which was burned in front of their home.

April 10, 1931, *Arizona Daily Star:*

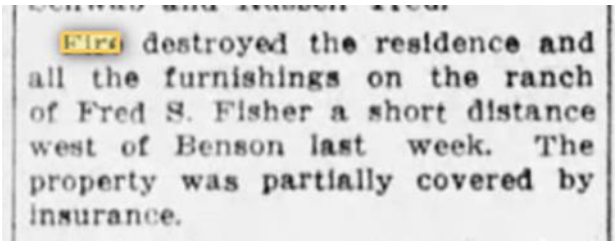
The fire department was called to Hollywood Garden Sunday afternoon. No damage was done to the other buildings, which were only a short distance away.

May 8, 1930, *Arizona Daily Star:*



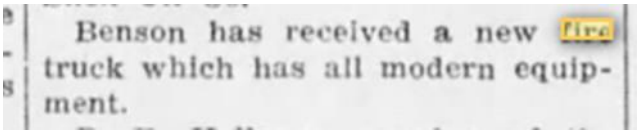
Howard O. Post has the contract for moving the old express office at Benson off the S. P. right of way to the head of Huachuca street, where it will be used as a fire station for Benson.

March 15, 1931, *Arizona Daily Star*:



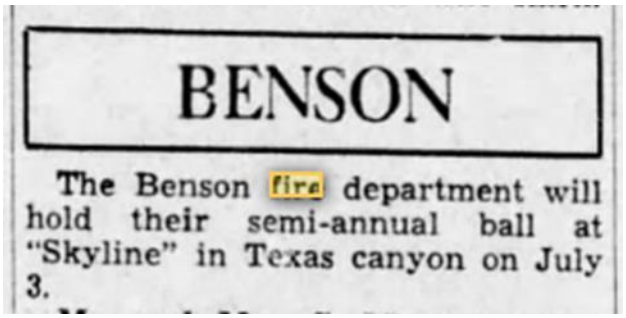
Fire destroyed the residence and all the furnishings on the ranch of Fred S. Fisher a short distance west of Benson last week. The property was partially covered by insurance.

October 30, 1930, *Arizona Daily Star*:



Benson has received a new fire truck which has all modern equipment.

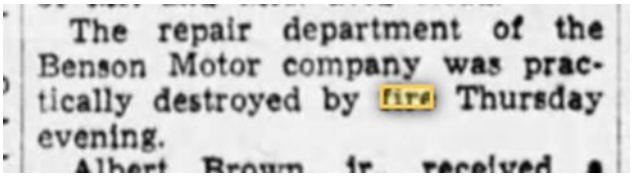
June 29, 1934, *Arizona Daily Star*:



BENSON

The Benson fire department will hold their semi-annual ball at "Skyline" in Texas canyon on July 3.

March 7, 1935, *Arizona Daily Star*:



The repair department of the Benson Motor company was practically destroyed by fire Thursday evening.

1936

April 22, 1936, *Arizona Daily Star*:

VETERAN BURNED IN BENSON FIRE

Horace G. Shaden Brought To Hospital Here: Will Recover

BENSON, April 21.—(Special to The Arizona Daily Star)—Fire destroyed a tourist court cabin here early this morning and critically burned Horace G. Shaden, 63-year-old Spanish-American war veteran.

The flames apparently started while Shaden, sole occupant of the place, was cooking a meal.

Witnesses said the veteran was burned when he attempted to extinguish the fire without calling help. He was treated for his injuries here and sent to the veterans' hospital in Tucson.

VETERAN WILL RECOVER

Officials of the veterans' hospital here stated last night Horace G. Shaden, Spanish-American war veteran admitted from Benson today, was "doing as well as could be expected." The man, burned in a fire at a tourist court, probably will recover, they said.

August 7, 1936, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Firemen Begin Picket Duty Before Theatre

BENSON, Aug. 6.—(Special to The Arizona Daily Star)—Benson's red fire truck, complete with regalia and the entire personnel of the volunteer fire department took its stand by the fire plug opposite the local theatre Thursday night.

When questioned about the action officers and members explained that inasmuch as the building had no exits they considered it to be dangerous to human life in case fire should break out. They explained that the fire commission had made former attempts to have adequate exits built and that they would continue to patrol the theatre every show night until a city ordinance has been passed requiring adequate exits.

October 17, 1936, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Moving Van Fire Costs Trucking Company Load

BENSON, Oct. 16.—(Special to The Arizona Daily Star)—Yesterday afternoon, the Benson volunteer fire department received a call that a large moving van was burning four miles west of here. Upon reaching the scene of the fire, they found they were unable to control it by use of chemicals. Santiago Acuna, one of the firemen, volunteered to drive the truck into town within reach of a fire plug. In this way some of the things were saved although the damage was estimated in the thousands of dollars. The origin of the fire was unknown, but apparently started among the furniture. The truck was a branch of the Saieway lines that operates in Arizona, New Mexico, California and Texas. Everything was covered by insurance.

October 10, 1937, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Volunteer Fire Department At Benson Volunteers Fine

Smoke Eaters Also Agree to Donate Three Months' of Hypothetical Pay to Community to Express Regret for Raising Disturbance

By FRED FINNEY

When the Benson volunteer fire department volunteered its services to the town of Benson, it took the word "volunteer" very seriously indeed.

So much so, that quite recently the volunteer fire department voluntarily appeared in Benson's city court; voluntarily pleaded guilty to disturbing the peace charges; and voluntarily paid a $25 fine—assessed against the department. And, as if the foregoing was not enough, the volunteer department, which as the name implies, serves without compensation, volunteered to pledge its total salaries for the next three months to the city.

How it Started

It all started over the semi-annual "beer bust" to which Benson's volunteer fire brigade treats itself. The picnic was held last month, and, about midnight, the boys returned to the town. It was only midnight and the night seemed young, so they celebrated further. Then, the fire brigade recalled that a fellow member, but recently married, had not been treated to any sort of a celebration.

So to his home, for an old fashioned charrivaree. And, as the charrivaree reached the climax customary with such nocturnal celebrations, neighbors were awakened from their sleep. And more neighbors; and still more neighbors.

Then Resentment

Now, among these neighbors of the recipient of the good natured fun, was one whose sudden awakening turned to resentment. And, the next day and the next this resentment grew, and attained to some local consequence in Benson. For the resentment of the original man was accelerated by the additions of resentment of others.

And thus, in Benson, sprang the ugly spectre of dissention. And the resentful person and his supporters stormed the city hall, attempting to bring charges against the volunteer fire department.

The volunteer fire department numbers 16 men of Benson, representing a pretty fair cross section of the town. Among the list are to be found the president of the chamber of commerce; the three members of the Benson school board; two of Benson's fire commissioners; the mayor; two of the town councilmen; and the water commissioner. And, members of the volunteer fire brigade agree, had Benson a bank, undoubtedly, the banker would belong to the fire brigade.

So a situation existed in Benson. The "law" was definitely on the spot. The resentful ones were clamoring for redress. The police judge and town marshal were frankly up a tree.

Unanimous Guilt

Something had to be done, the volunteer fire brigade agreed. As no one provided a happy solution, the brigade took matters into its own hands; appeared in Benson police court; and insisted on being allowed to plead guilty to disturbing the peace charges. The charge rested against The Benson Volunteer Fire Department—not against the 16-man squad as individuals.

Police Judge Ed Land accepted the plea of guilty, and fined the volunteer department $25. Then, just to show that there were no hard feelings, the department very graciously offered to remit to the town of Benson, its next three months "salary" to boot.

MRS. B. SALVERSON DIES IN HER HOME

Mrs. Bertha Simon Salverson, 67, died yesterday at her home, 3 Clearwater drive. She had been a resident of Tucson for the past 14 years.

Mrs. Salverson leaves her husband, Simon Salverson, two sons, Sam and Silas Salverson of Tucson, and two daughters, Mrs. O. S. Pierson of Denver and Mrs. E. H. Wood of Tucson.

She was born in Rushford, Minnesota.

Funeral services will be held at 2 o'clock Monday afternoon at Grace Lutheran church with Rev. E. Arnold Sitz in charge. Burial will be in Evergreen cemetery. The Parker mortuary is making arrangements.

WE ARE RENTERS

and we expect to move into

November 25, 1937, *Arizona Daily Star:*

BENSON FIRE

BENSON, Nov. 24.—(Special)—Prompt action by Benson's fire department was credited yesterday with halting progress of a fire which did several hundred dollars worth of damage in the home of Kearney Gardner. The house was insured but other property loss—including a prized set of golf clubs—was not covered.

1938/1939

May 12, 1938, *Arizona Daily Star*:

BENSON.—This city's one-room, one-window jail—seldom crowded on any night but Saturday, when some townspeople occasionally attain a degree of hilarity not compatible with the public peace—is soon to be replaced by a modern, three-room structure now being built on property south of Main street which was recently purchased by the city from the Casteneda estate.

An office suitable for the town judge or justice of the peace, two cells and a corridor which may be converted into a third cell in an emergency, are planned. Mayor Harold Holcomb and Councilman V. M. Gibson are in charge. Doors, windows and other material have been brought from the Courtland jail, built in 1909 and standing idle these two decades. T. M. Reeves is now drawing plans for additional buildings, contemplated as a WPA project, which include a town meeting place, a garage for the town fire truck and quarters for its driver.

June 15, 1939, *Arizona Daily Star*:

BENSON PLANNING MUNY BUILDING

BENSON, June 14.—(Special)—Plans have been set in motion here for a municipal auditorium to be built with NYA labor, the boys being brought here from all over Cochise county. A meeting was held at the town hall Monday evening when H. Bohannan displayed a scaled drawing that had been worked out from suggestions given him by local people.

The plans call for a fire house, living quarters for the firemen, a main building with a large auditorium, and a kichen. The building would be located on the city property line on the south, east and west.

Last year when plans were made for the building of a new city jail, enough property was bought in one piece for more buildings if the city desired.

night were representatives from all Present at the meeting Monday the civic organizations and business houses, as well as members of the council.

1940/1943

October 20, 1940, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Benson Enjoys Its City Hall

New Building Complete Except for Room Furnishings

BENSON, Oct. 19. (Special)—Months and months ago the men and women started talking about a town hall for this little town. First one plan and then another was advanced but they were all turned down. The town just did not want to go into debt.

But when Benson dreams a dream it is usually carried to completion. The money was partly budgeted last year, partly this year and next year will see the balance budgeted with which to complete the building.

Building Complete

The new city hall is now complete except for about $600 worth of small items that will be taken care of next year. It is of hollow brick construction and of Spanish style architecture.

Assembly Room

The building of which the town is justly proud consists of a large assembly room that can be used for banquets, a modern kitchen, two rest rooms, a bedroom for the resident fireman, a shower for the resident fireman, an entry hall and a hall leading to the [illegible] truck room or garage.

The banquet room has been finished in rough deep ivory stucco with a ceiling of a lighter composition material. The small steel sash windows swing either out or in and the three lighting fixtures are hand hammered bronze Spanish chandeliers. The room will comfortably accommodate fifty guests and with a little planning will hold seventy-five.

The kitchen will be a delight to the women of the town for it is an all white one, done in "Keen" cement. A sink centers the west wall with built-in cabinets all around.

Organizations Aid

The furnishings will be provided by those organizations that want to use the town hall as their meeting place. A meeting is to be called soon by Mayor Gibson of all the organizations when plans will be made.

Looking into the future, Mayor Gibson said the $600 that would probably be budgeted next year to complete the building would be spent for sidewalks all around the building, a curbing from the city jail clear around the corner to the end of the city property, a sidewalk from in front of the city hall all the way around with a space left in the parking for shrubbery.

The building is located one block off from Front or Main street and is just south of Allan drug store.

June 24, 1943, *Arizona Daily Star*:

THREE CHILDREN VICTIMS IN FIRE

Little Girls Trapped In House at Benson As Others Escape

BENSON, Ariz., June 23.—(AP)—Three small girls perished today when a fire consumed their grandmother's home here, trapping them in one of the bedrooms.

Six other children in the house escaped from the blaze believed to have broken out from the kitchen range while the grandmother, Mrs. Margarita Madrid, was visiting her daughter.

Away on Visit

Mrs. Madrid said she had gone to visit Mrs. Manuel Sabald to inquire about another grandchild who had been ill.

The dead were Lucia Telles, 12, and Agapita Telles, 9, sisters, and their cousin, Susie Celaya, 8. The Celaya girl was an orphan. The Telles girls were the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Andreas Telles, now residing in Yuma where the father is temporarily employed.

Andreas Telles Jr., 14, was drowned less than a month ago while swimming near St. David.

Girl Escapes

Aurelia Telles, 10, was in the bedroom with the three children who were burned to death. She said she escaped by crawling through the flame-swept door on her hands and knees, suffering several minor burns.

Two boys and three other girls also saved themselves by running from the house when the fire broke out.

Mrs. Sabald said the children's grandmother tried to force her way into the burning building, but was held back by by-standers who were afraid she would only lose her own life.

The death room had one win-

(Continued to Page 4, Column 3)

tution said.

THREE CHILDREN BURNED TO DEATH

(Continued from Page One)

dow which was nailed shut and covered with a heavy screen, Mrs. Sabald said.

Dr. A. N. Shoun, Benson physician who was called to the scene, said the girls apparently had become panic-stricken when the flames first blocked their escape.

ROMBERS HAMMER

1940/1944

Courtesy, http://www.bensonvisitorcenter.com/history.htm **Street scene:**

Fourth Street and Huachuca-1940

January 18, 1945, *Tombstone Epitaph*:

CANDLE STARTED FIRE, PACA HOME

Prompt Response of Volunteers Saved Structure; Fire at Benson

Saturday evening the fire siren let loose and volunteers responded to find the residence of Mrs. Rosa Paca, corner Third and Bruce Sts., in flames. Prompt response to the alarm saved the property, although not before considerable damage had been done to two rooms. Cause of the blaze is said to have been a lighted candle coming into contact with a window curtain.

Occupying the dwelling besides Mrs. Paca were her daughter, Mrs. Nellie Antunez and four children, whose huband and father is confined to a hospital in Tempe.

FIRE AT BENSON

The following night, according to report, the residence of Charles Joetz at Benson was completely destroyed by fire. The home had been leased to out-of-town parties, who spent Saturday at the home, leaving several hours before the blaze was discovered. Cause of the fire was not ascertained.

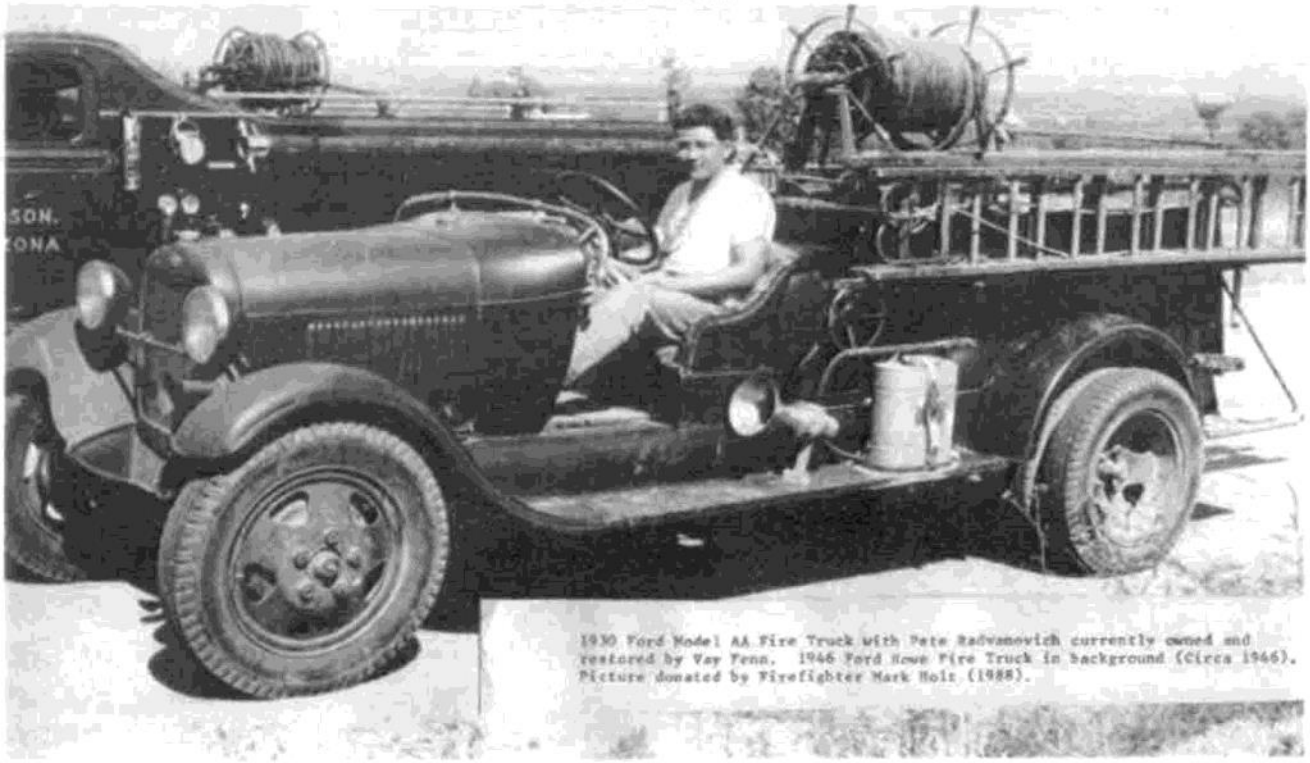
CAR BURNED ON HIGHWAY

A touring car was piloted through Tombstone Sunday from the west, where it had been damaged by fire near this city. It was being taken to Bisbee for salvage. Name of owner or other particulars could not be ascertained.

1946

Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

Fire Trucks Owned
By
Benson Volunteer Fire Department
1930-2007



1930 Ford Model AA Fire Truck with Pete Radvanovich currently owned and restored by Ray Penn. 1946 Ford Howe Fire Truck in background (Circa 1946). Picture donated by Firefighter Mark Holt (1988).

Late 1940's

Front Row (L to R): Albert Comaduran, George Kempf, Eddie Robinson, Pete Radovanovich, Jeral Hibbs, Chief Martin Lohman, Dave Pacheco, Roy McGoffin
On Truck (L to R): Santiago Acuña (in truck), Semer Sherman, Lamar Bingham, Kearney Gardner, Harold Holcomb, Archie Judd, Delmar Spangler
Not Pictured: Albert Brown
Circa Late 1940's

07-381

1949/1950

December 29, 1949, *Tucson Citizen*:

BENSON FIRE
DEPARTMENT
present
NAT BRUSILOFF
ORCHESTRA
For an Evening of
Excellent Entertainment
to usher in a
HAPPY NEW YEAR
Benson School Gym
Dec. 31 — Benson

January 9, 1950, *Tucson Citizen*:

Blaze At Benson Causes $150 Loss

BENSON, Jan. 9.—The Benson volunteer fire department was called out for the first time in the new year at 10 a.m. yesterday to fight a blaze which caused about $150 damage to a two-room adobe house owned by Mrs. Marie Ramez, Benson. No one was living in it at present. A new roof was just about completed to ready the place for a rental. The house is located on Fifth street on east side of Benson.

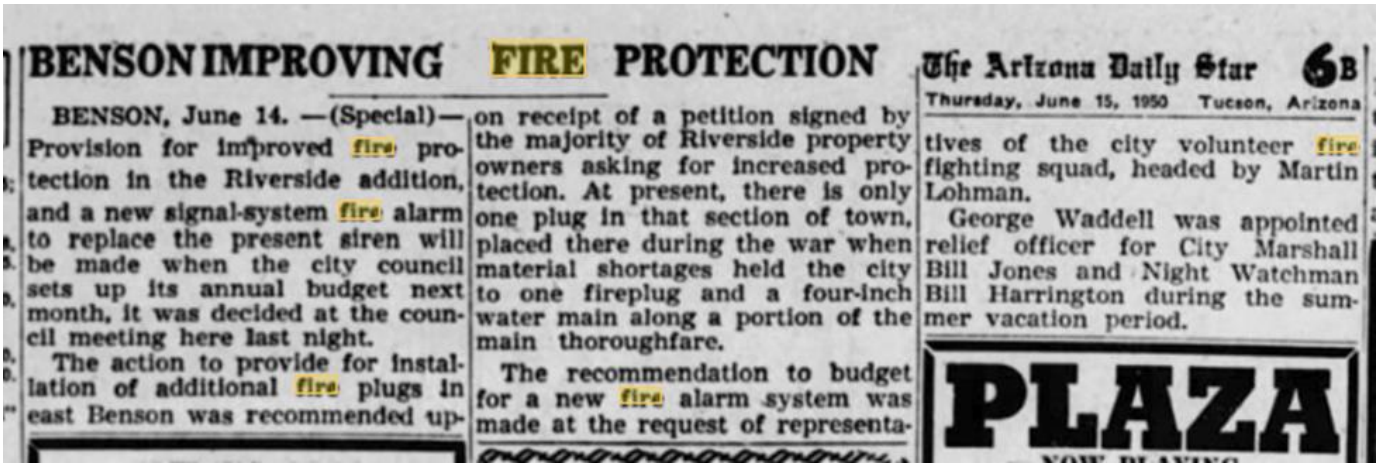
The flames were quickly extinguished. Origin was undetermined.

March 8, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:

HOUSE DESTROYED

BENSON, March 7.—(Special)—Fire completely destroyed the home of Dr. and Mrs. R. E. Frame here Monday afternoon. The blaze was reported at 3:00 o'clock. Within an hour, in spite of high winds and the close proximity of frame building on either side of the burning house, the volunteer fire squad had the fire under control.

June 15, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:



BENSON IMPROVING FIRE PROTECTION

The Arizona Daily Star 6B
Thursday, June 15, 1950 Tucson, Arizona

BENSON, June 14. —(Special)— Provision for improved fire protection in the Riverside addition, and a new signal-system fire alarm to replace the present siren will be made when the city council sets up its annual budget next month, it was decided at the council meeting here last night.

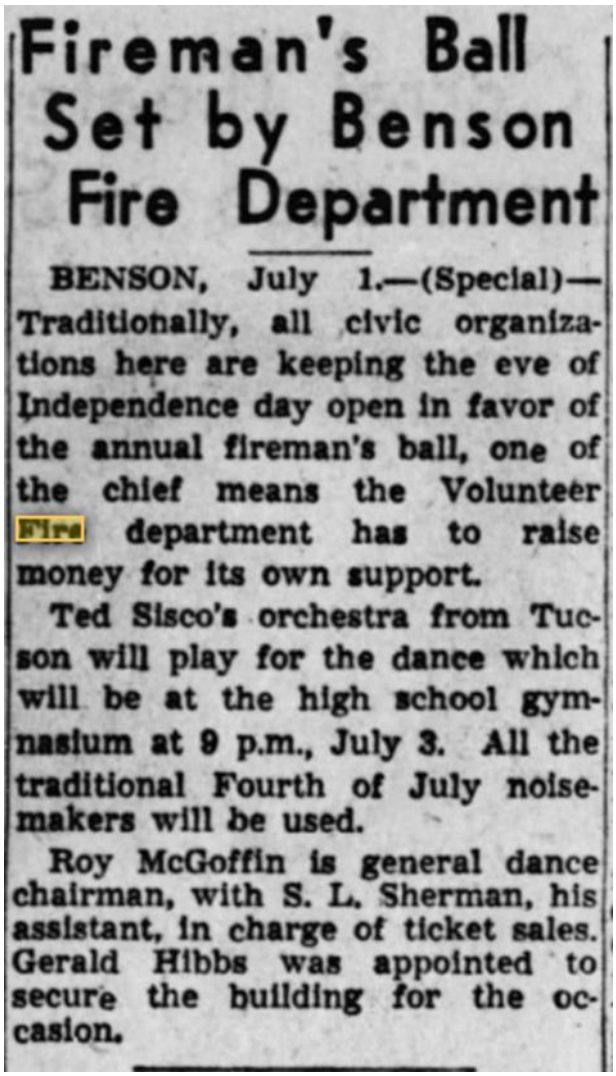
The action to provide for installation of additional fire plugs in east Benson was recommended upon receipt of a petition signed by the majority of Riverside property owners asking for increased protection. At present, there is only one plug in that section of town, placed there during the war when material shortages held the city to one fireplug and a four-inch water main along a portion of the main thoroughfare.

The recommendation to budget for a new fire alarm system was made at the request of representatives of the city volunteer fire fighting squad, headed by Martin Lohman.

George Waddell was appointed relief officer for City Marshall Bill Jones and Night Watchman Bill Harrington during the summer vacation period.

PLAZA

July 2, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:



Fireman's Ball Set by Benson Fire Department

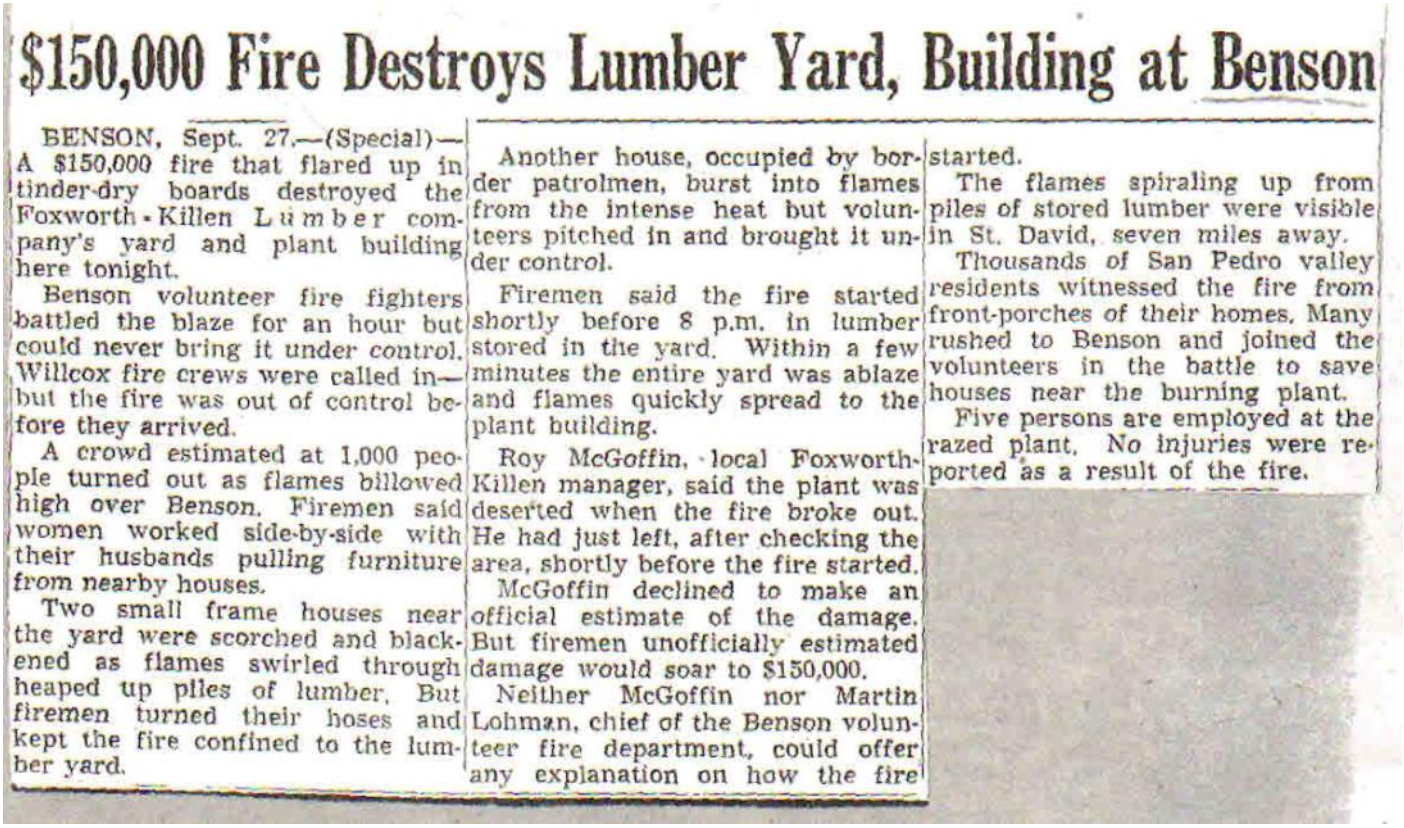
BENSON, July 1.—(Special)— Traditionally, all civic organizations here are keeping the eve of Independence day open in favor of the annual fireman's ball, one of the chief means the Volunteer Fire department has to raise money for its own support.

Ted Sisco's orchestra from Tucson will play for the dance which will be at the high school gymnasium at 9 p.m., July 3. All the traditional Fourth of July noisemakers will be used.

Roy McGoffin is general dance chairman, with S. L. Sherman, his assistant, in charge of ticket sales. Gerald Hibbs was appointed to secure the building for the occasion.

1950

September 27, 1950:



$150,000 Fire Destroys Lumber Yard, Building at Benson

BENSON, Sept. 27.—(Special)—A $150,000 fire that flared up in tinder-dry boards destroyed the Foxworth-Killen Lumber company's yard and plant building here tonight.

Benson volunteer fire fighters battled the blaze for an hour but could never bring it under control. Willcox fire crews were called in—but the fire was out of control before they arrived.

A crowd estimated at 1,000 people turned out as flames billowed high over Benson. Firemen said women worked side-by-side with their husbands pulling furniture from nearby houses.

Two small frame houses near the yard were scorched and blackened as flames swirled through heaped up piles of lumber. But firemen turned their hoses and kept the fire confined to the lumber yard.

Another house, occupied by border patrolmen, burst into flames from the intense heat but volunteers pitched in and brought it under control.

Firemen said the fire started shortly before 8 p.m. in lumber stored in the yard. Within a few minutes the entire yard was ablaze and flames quickly spread to the plant building.

Roy McGoffin, local Foxworth-Killen manager, said the plant was deserted when the fire broke out. He had just left, after checking the area, shortly before the fire started.

McGoffin declined to make an official estimate of the damage. But firemen unofficially estimated damage would soar to $150,000.

Neither McGoffin nor Martin Lohman, chief of the Benson volunteer fire department, could offer any explanation on how the fire started.

The flames spiraling up from piles of stored lumber were visible in St. David, seven miles away.

Thousands of San Pedro valley residents witnessed the fire from front-porches of their homes. Many rushed to Benson and joined the volunteers in the battle to save houses near the burning plant.

Five persons are employed at the razed plant. No injuries were reported as a result of the fire.

September 28, 1950, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

$150,000 Fire Destroys Plant At Benson

BENSON, Sept. 27 (AP)—A $150,000 fire that flared up in tinder-dry boards destroyed the Foxworth-Killen Lumber Company's yard and plant buildings here tonight.

Benson volunteer fire fighters battled the blaze for an hour but could never bring it under control Willcox firemen were called in, but arrived too late.

Flames spiraling up from piles of stored lumber billowed high over Benson and were visible in St. David, seven miles away.

Neither plant officials nor firemen could offer any explanation for the blaze that started shortly before 8:00 p.m.

September 28, 1950, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Fire Burns Lumber Company

By JESSIE MILLER

BENSON, Sept. 28.—The lumber yard, hardware store and office of the Foxworth-Killen Lumber Co., 135 E. Fifth st., was in ruins today with a loss estimated at $150,000. But Manager Roy McGoffin immediately rented a warehouse in the same block from Mrs. Charlcie Barker and the company resumed business this morning. Trucks were arriving today with loads of cement and lumber. However, it was not announced immediately when the burned yard and buildings would be restored.

The fire caused electric power to be cut off all over Benson for about six hours, starting soon after the fire was discovered at 8 p.m. A power pole at a corner of the yard was destroyed by fire and A. L. Haws, construction superintendent, turned off the electricity. He immediately replaced the pole and lines, but at request of firemen kept the power off until 2 a.m.

Saw Fire For Miles

The blaze could be seen as far away as St. David, eight miles distant, and Martin Lohman, Benson volunteer fire chief, and George Kempf, volunteer firemen, who were en route home by automobile from a vacation trip to Utah, could see the flames for miles as they sped along the highway to Benson. They arrived 46 minutes after the fire was discovered.

Today Lohman, who joined with McGoffin in estimating the fire loss at $150,000, praised both Benson and Willcox volunteer firemen for their efforts in fighting the flames. While four homes near the lumber yard were damaged, all of them were saved. One of the houses, occupied by Border Patrolman and Mrs. Paul Watkins and owned by Mrs. Barber, will have to be partly rebuilt. Two other houses were owned by Mrs. Mary Hobbs, who lived in one of them, and the fourth was owned by Mrs. Minnie O'Grady and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Ray McClure.

Started Near Lumber

As the fire which started in or near stacks of lumber in the rear of the yard spread, it was fed by inflammable materials such as turpentine and paint thinners. As the flames reached the office and hardware building, which had been remodeled last winter, the fire set off shotgun shells and rifle cartridges. The ammunition kept popping off for more than an hour making both firemen and spectators uneasy, but none was hurt by the flying lead.

A fireman, Albert Brown, of Benson, was injured when falling tin struck his arm, and four stitches were required to close the wound.

Citizens Move Furniture

Firemen and citizens removed every piece of furniture from the four threatened homes, including heavy articles such as kitchen stoves. The furniture was still outside the homes today.

Neither firemen nor McGoffin could say today what started the fire. It once was thought under control in the yard, but flared again. The yard is one of several owned by the company. William Killen of 2001 E. Sixth st., Tucson, is one of the owners of the firm. The loss was partly covered by insurance, McGoffin said.

The water supply was adequate, but the fire got too much of a start.

October 1, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:

$150,000 Benson Fire Stirs Memories of Earlier Blazes

By MARGUERITE JENNINGS

BENSON, Sept. 30.—(Special)—Benson's $150,000 fire which destroyed the Foxworth-Killen Lumber company's yard and hardware store here Wednesday night, and Fire Chief Martin Lohman's comment that "in terms of money loss, it was the most expensive fire Benson has had for a good many years," set oldtimers scratching at their memories and leafing through old scrapbooks.

They came up with the information that Lohman's remark can be covered to stretch over the entire history of Benson, and since its formal beginnings in 1880, it has had a couple of whoppers.

'Burning o' Benson'

The first, known historically as "The Burning of Benson" happened in 1886, starting from a Chinese laundry on Fourth street. In those days the front street was dotted with Chinese establishments, including laundries, restaurants and hotels.

Anton Mazzonovich, early day writer, was an eyewitness to this fire.

"As we looked," he wrote, "we saw flames suddenly come through the flimsy structure of the Chinaman's shack and the Oriental himself came rushing out. He carried a bucket full of water and a tomato can.

Saving His Water

With this he was dipping into the pail and gently tossing water on the flames. He was apparently making a concerted effort to save as much water as possible, as it cost 50 cents a barrel and it was almost cheaper to let the shack burn than use water to put out the flames."

Although everything on the south side of Fourth street was destroyed, with only a hotel and a few small buildings on the west end of town saved. No estimate of damage was cited.

"The flames swept on," Mazzonovich wrote, "until they reached the largest store in town. It was an adobe building with iron shutters and corrugated iron roof. There the fire stopped."

Building Exploded

Ten minutes later, he heard an explosion, and turned in time to see the corrugated iron roof of this building fly in all directions.

"The interior of the store was a seething mass of flames," he said. "Shortly after, the ammunition started to explode. Lead slugs commenced flying in every direction, and everybody had to get under cover."

A second major fire happened in November, 1905. Total loss was set at $23,000, which looks small in comparison to Wednesday's costly blaze, but it, too, took most of Benson's front street.

Razed Street

The Grand Central hotel went, at a loss of $8,000; the Mansion House, $2,000; L. D. Redfield's general merchandise, $5,000; Fairlee & Jensen's Turf Saloon, $1,500; William Ohnesorgen's building and saloon fixtures, $1,000. The fire was stopped at Fred Clark's Wildcat saloon, which was damaged to the extent of $750.

That conflagration brought forth local editorial comment that "Benson is badly in need of a fire department, even if the starting of such an organization amounts to nothing more than a bucket brigade."

Benson went through the bucket brigade stage, graduated into the two-wheel cart with hose—pulled by whoever got to it first in times of fire—and in 1926 organized its own volunteer fire squad.

Talk here late last night and this morning was that the local squad, aided by a unit from Willcox, deserved high praise for confining the blaze to one establishment, and the comment was general: "Lucky thing we had no wind."

American asphalt tile manufacturers have adopted the names of "draycot," a red English marble; "Napoleon," a French marble with a veined light fawn ground, and "breccia sanquina," an Algerian marble with light red patches on a deep red ground.

October 23, 1950, *Tucson Citizen*:

Fire Damages Benson Church

BENSON, Oct. 23.—Members of the Community Presbyterian church today surveyed fire damage to the church kitchen and voiced praise of the Benson Volunteer Fire department for saving the main part of the building.

Fire was discovered in the kitchen of the church, on Sixth street two blocks south of the main highway, about 9 p.m., 20 minutes after the kitchen was closed and the last members had departed. The kitchen and dining room had been used for a potluck earlier in the evening.

As nearly as could be told from inspecting scorched cabinets, the flames started in the vicinity of the kitchen sink. Before the fire was put out, the walls, floor and ceiling had been damaged and the refrigerator, dish washer and other equipment except the stove had been lost.

The wives of Benson Rotary club members had recently had the kitchen completely repainted. The Rotary club used the church for weekly dinner meetings.

The sanctuary and the study of Rev. David D. Martin, pastor of the church, was saved from the fire. The sanctuary, however, was heated up by hot air from the kitchen, carried by air vents, and firemen broke a large painted glass window to lift the new Hammond organ out of the sanctuary.

Locked doors kept the flames confined to the kitchen until firemen brought the fire under control.

October 23, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Flames Raze Interior Of Church in Benson

BENSON, Oct. 22— (Special) — Fire swept through the Community Presbyterian church in Benson tonight causing damage estimated at several thousand dollars.

The fire was first noticed about 9:00 p.m. soon after a service and potluck supper was concluded, firemen said.

Main damage was to the interior of the church.

A spokesman for the church board of directors said he could not estimate the amount of damage but figured it would amount to "several thousand dollars."

The fire was brought under control by the Benson volunteer fire department.

October 29, 1950, *Arizona Daily Star*:

FLOCK TO REBUILD CHURCH IN BENSON

BENSON, Oct. 28.—(Special)—A decision to restore the Community-Presbyterian church as it was before the fire Sunday night that destroyed the recreation room and kitchen and blackened and blistered paint of the sanctuary was made by the board of trustees of the church at a meeting here recently.

No official estimate of damage has been made, but it is expected that the cost of restoration may exceed $3,000. Contractors' bids will be called for.

1950/1951

November 22, 1950, *Tucson Citizen*:

the rest of the world.

Benson

BENSON, Nov. 22.—The Benson volunteer fire department was called out Sunday at 9 p.m. when fire broke out in the west wall of a bedroom in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Sandoval on Benson east side. Accumulated gas from a leaky valve was thought to have caused the fire, which did not do much damage. Owners of the three-room cottage, Mr. and Mrs. Y. Ramirez, who live next door, discovered the fire and had it under control with a yard hose upon arrival of the fire department. The Sandovals were attending a movie at the time.

February 17, 1951, *Bisbee Daily Review*:

Fire Destroys Marshall Store And Feed House

BENSON, Feb. 6 (Special to The Review)—One of the biggest fires in recent years raged here tonight, totally destroying the Riverside Grocery and the Benson Feed Store, firemen reported.

The blaze was still raging out of control shortly before midnight and was threatening a restaurant.

The fire was reported to have started in the feed store, and spread to the grocery store next door, operated by Clark Marshall. Frank Bass operated the feed store.

Amount of the damage, partly covered by insurance, had not been determined.

Marshall, pioneer Bisbee resident and father of City Councilman William Marshall, had been living in Benson operating his business.

February 7, 1951, *Arizona Daily Star:*

BLAZE RAVAGES BENSON STORES

Riverside Area Business Block Glutted; Only 2 Houses Escape Fire

BENSON, Feb. 6.— (Special) — One of the biggest fires in recent years tonight glutted a business block in the Riverside section of Benson.

The blaze destroyed the Benson Feed store, the Riverside grocery and Marshall's Frozen Food Locker service. Unofficial estimates of damage soared to $80,000.

Firemen battled for more than two hours to bring the blaze under control.

Two Escape

Only two business houses in the block which lies along Highway 86 on the east side of Benson escaped destruction in the fire. Both the Frank Bass service station and the Benson Cafe were scorched and blackened but damage was considered negligible.

Volunteer fire department chief, Martin Lohman, said one horse, stabled in the feed store, perished in the flames.

He credited Jacky Wadell, teenage Benson high school girl, with averting a more tragic loss.

She spotted the fire at 10:20 p.m. while returning from the Hayden-Benson High School basketball game.

Owner Awakened

Jacky, daughter of Town Marshal George Wadell, rang the alarm and rushed to find her dad, who broke into the flaming Riverside grocery store and awakened Co-owner Clark Marshall, asleep in backroom living quarters.

Wadell said Marshall was "hysterical" at his near brush with death.

Fire Chief Lohman said, "Practically all of Benson, part of Pomerene and St. David turned out as flames billowed hundreds of feet in the sky."

Plenty of Anlookers

He said Benson children who swarmed to watch the fire broke open the closed Benson Cafe and hauled furniture and dishes to safety.

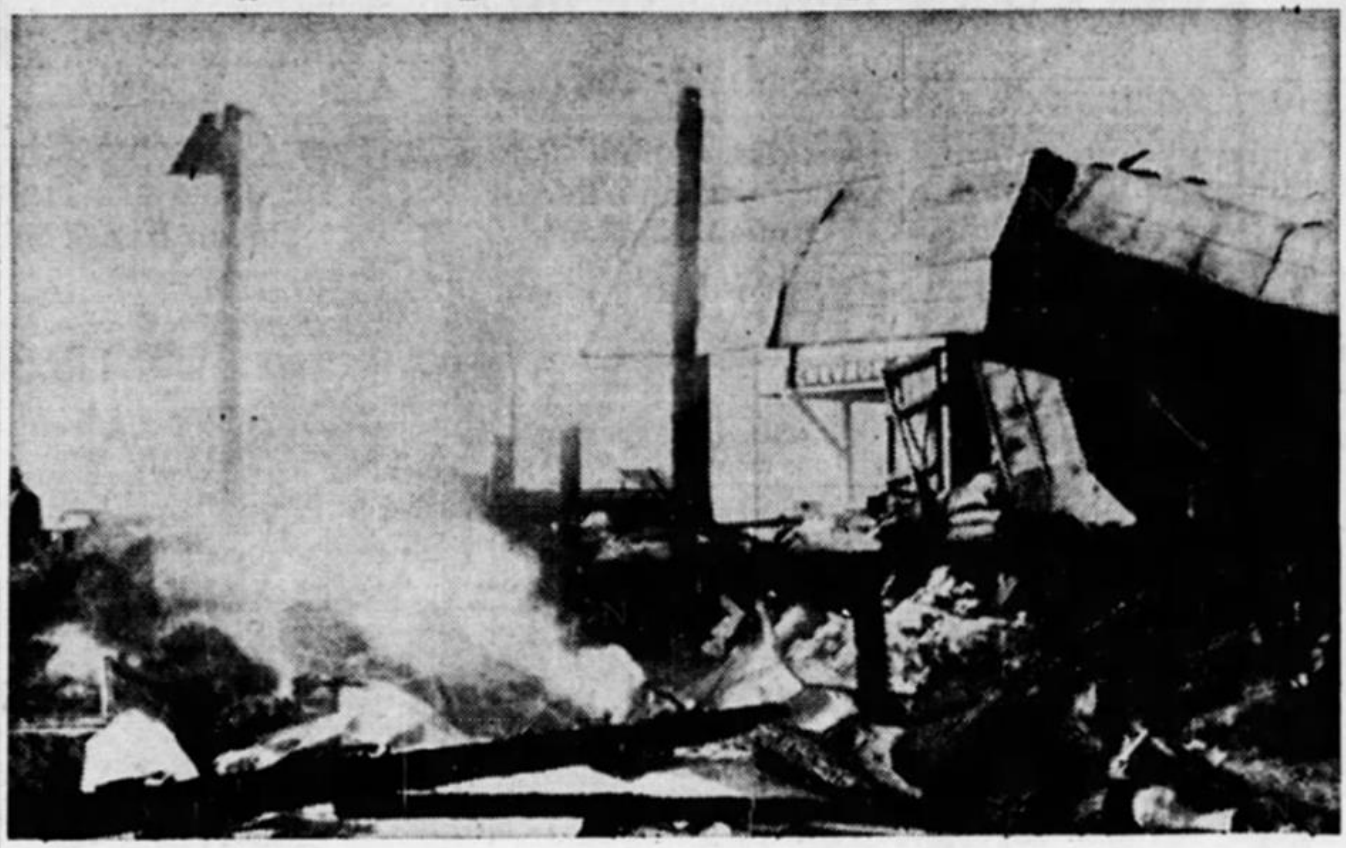
Firemen said the fire toll would probably soar when official calculations are made. No accurate picture of losses could be given at midnight.

Only last Sept. 27 the Foxworth-Killen Lumber company yard and Hardware store was destroyed with an estimated loss of $150,000.

Firemen considered this blaze the worst in actual properties hit although monetary loss might fall short of the $150,000 Foxworth-Killen toll.

February 8, 1951, ***Arizona Daily Star:***

Smoke Spirals up From Ravaged Benson Block



Ruins of the Bass Feed store still smolder 12 hours after Tuesday night's fire that ravaged a business block in the Riverside section of Benson. Flames first erupted here where the smoke still spirals up. Three business establishments were gutted in the blaze that raged out of control for more than two hours. (Photo by Marguerite Jennings.)

February 8, 1951, *Arizona Daily Star:*

CHARRED RUINS BLOTCH BENSON

Gutted Business Houses Stand Like Monument To Ravaging Blaze

BENSON, Feb. 7.— (Special) — The charred and twisted ruins of three business establishments stood like a monument today to one of the biggest fires in the history of Benson.

Volunteer firemen and property owners poked through the smouldering, water-logged rubble left in the wake of last night's blaze that gutted a business block in the Riverside section here.

All day crowds of people hung around and watched as flames licked up now and then in piles of blackened hay scattered amid ruins of the Bass Feed store, where the fire erupted at 10:20 p.m. last night.

Twisted, Charred

Blackened cans and charred cardboard cartons still stood on twisted shelves of the Riverside grocery store, owned by Clark L. Marshall and son, William.

They dug around and tried to salvage what they could. The Marshalls estimated $40,000 damage to their store and to the Frozen Food Locker service, also a Marshall concern.

Locker renters pulled aside fallen timbers to recover meat undamaged in the fire. Wrappers on the meat in the walk-in box and cold storage rooms were damaged by water, but the meat was still frozen and unspoiled.

Little Salvageable

Little, if any of the grocery stock was salvageable., the Marshalls said.

And today townspeople praised their heroine, Jacky Wadell, teenage Benson High School student.

Jacky spotted the fire last night while returning from a high school basketball game. She rang the alarm and rushed to find her dad, Town Marshall George Wadell.

As flames billowed up from the Riverside grocery store the officer broke into rear-room living quarters to awaken Clark L. Marshall as fire swept near his bed.

Flames Billow High

Spectators said "the whole rear end of the store was burning." "Flames were shooting 200 feet in the air" when Wadell pulled the store owner to safety.

A horse, believed to have perished as flames swept through the feed store last night was found today. It had broken loose and escaped to a back pasture as fire licked near its stall.

Fire Chief Martin Lohman said his volunteer crew was hampered in their battle last night by an "inadequate water supply." They fought for five hours with water pumped from a single plug.

Sought Water

He said only last June residents of the Riverside addition, concerned over what they considered "inadequate fire protection" had petitioned the city for more outlets.

An appropriation for installation of additional plugs was earmarked for the district in the city's annual budget.

"But they'll come too late to help us any," was the dry comment from fire-ravaged property owners.

Lohman said the fire flared up at the rear of the feed store, swept across to the roof of the Riverside grocery, and within 20 minutes had eaten its way into the Food Locker firm.

Pare Down Loss

Property owners today estimated their total loss at about $55,000. Earlier they had set damage at $80,000 but pared it down after checking over the ruins.

For awhile last night fire threatened the Bass service station and the Benson cafe. But firemen wet down the buildings and staved off major damage.

Frank Bass, owner of the feed store, estimated his loss at about $15,000, only partially covered by insurance.

Last night's fire followed on the heels of last September's $150,000 blaze that ravaged the Foxworth-Killen Lumber company yard and hardware store.

July 2, 1951, *Arizona Daily Star:*

FIREMEN'S BALL

BENSON, July 1. — (Special) — "Fight Fire with Fun" is the slogan of the Benson Volunteer Fire Squad's annual ball to be held at the grade school tennis courts here July 3. Music will be by Monterey's orchestra from Tucson. Eddie Robinson is in charge for the Volunteer Firemen.

December 9, 1951, ***Arizona Daily Star:***

New Benson Ordinance Hits at Fire Hazards

BENSON, Dec. 8.—(Special)—The City of Benson passed an ordinance this week stiffening control over fire hazards in "theaters, motion picture houses, dance halls or other places of amusement or public assembly," giving the fire chief full power to close down any establishment in violation if correction is not made within 72 hours of official notice of the violation.

First house affected by the new ordinance was the Benson theater, owned by Louie Long, Safford, and operated by E. A. Brown, Benson. Chief complaints against the local theater were inadequate exits and improper heating. The ordinance demands that the open type heating in use be replaced by closed type, and that the rear exit be widened.

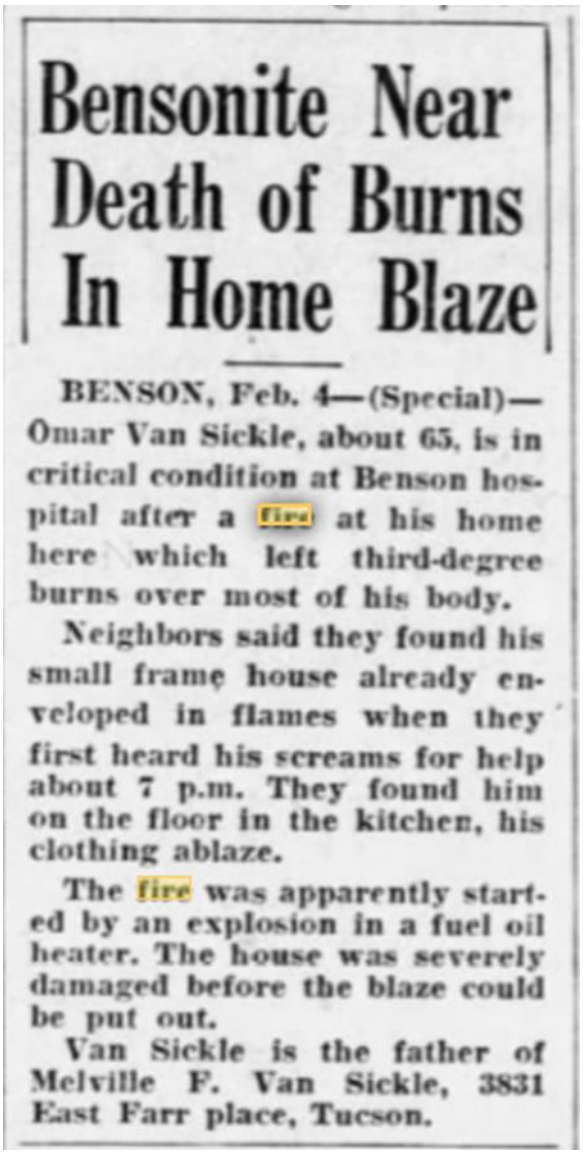
MAJOR KNUTH HAS NEW ASSIGNMENT

BISBEE, Dec. 8.—(AP)—Major Lowella Knuth has been assigned as officer in charge of the Salvation Army headquarters in the Bisbee district, it was announced today.

Major Knuth has been in charge of Salvation Army headquarters in the Verde Valley area for the past several years.

She succeeds Capt. Carl Irby who, with his wife, has been assigned to Prescott to succeed Lt. Leslie Hood who has been on temporary assignment in Prescott.

February 5, 1954, ***Arizona Daily Star:***



Bensonite Near Death of Burns In Home Blaze

BENSON, Feb. 4—(Special)—Omar Van Sickle, about 65, is in critical condition at Benson hospital after a fire at his home here which left third-degree burns over most of his body.

Neighbors said they found his small frame house already enveloped in flames when they first heard his screams for help about 7 p.m. They found him on the floor in the kitchen, his clothing ablaze.

The fire was apparently started by an explosion in a fuel oil heater. The house was severely damaged before the blaze could be put out.

Van Sickle is the father of Melville F. Van Sickle, 3831 East Farr place, Tucson.

1954

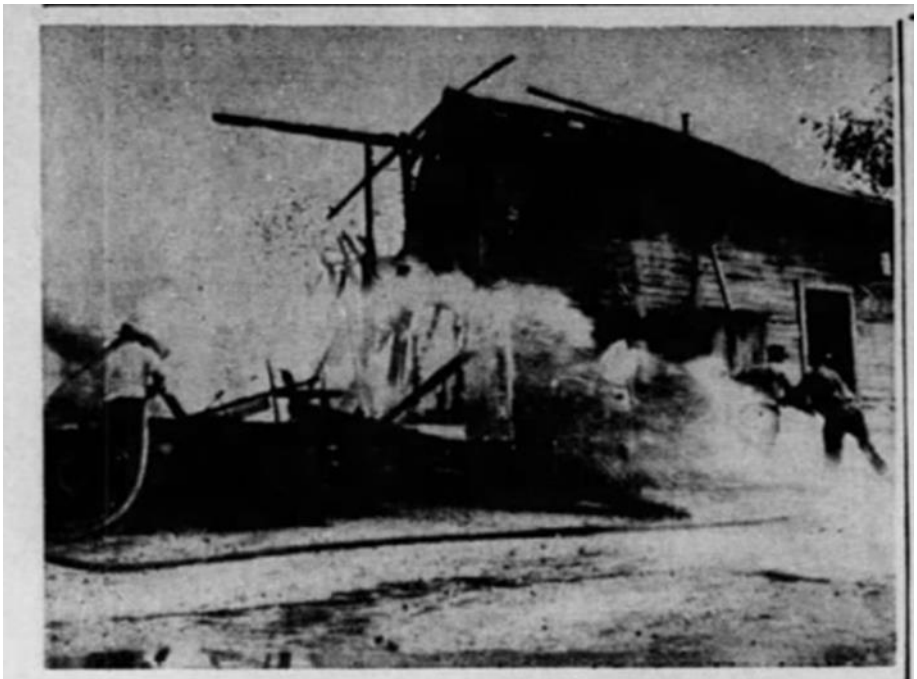
June 28, 1954, *Tucson Citizen*:

—Citizen Photo

CIVILIAN AIRMEN SURVIVE BELLY LANDING NEAR BENSON

Shortly after take-off from municipal airport yesterday afternoon this commercial C46 developed engine trouble. The engine quit before the pilot could return to Tucson and he crash landed about a mile from the Benson airport. The plane was carrying a cargo of military equipment and was en route to San Antonio, Tex. Pilot Bill Kratz and Copilot Bill Jones escaped unhurt. The Benson volunteer fire department arrived within minutes after the crash and although smoke poured from one engine for a short period, the airplane did not ignite. Davis-Monthan sent a guard to watch the plane. Repairs started today. The plane is owned by the American Air Import & Export Co. of San Antonio. Propellers, landing gear and engines were damaged.

September 19, 1954, Arizona Daily Star:



Firefighters Battle Blaze

Firefighters battle flames that yesterday gutted this frame building in Benson that formerly housed the Benson Ice plant and the Sulphur Springs Valley Electric co-operative offices. (Marguerite Jennings photo)

Leaping Flames Raze Building In Benson

BENSON, Sept. 18—(Special)—Flames broke out in the tinder-dry frame building formerly occupied by the Benson ice plant and the Sulphur Springs Valley Co-operative on West Fifth street here today and within minutes had reduced the unoccupied building to a blackened skeleton.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Whitfield, who have a laundry across the street, first saw the flames leaping over the roof in the center of the building, and called the fire department. Within seconds the structure was a solid sheet of flame.

Sparks leaped over the San Pedro Valley News office less than 100 feet east of the building, and caught a piece of canvas on fire. The News office was not damaged.

The building, which formerly belonged to the Electric Co-op, was sold to Frank Gunnel of Tucson in 1948 who later sold it to Dr. J. M. Hesser and Paul Hunter of Benson, the present owners.

Front end of the building was used by the Church of God for Sunday services and midweek prayer meeting.

Cause of the fire and estimated damage have not been determined.

August 17, 1955, Arizona Daily Star:

Benson To Note 75th Birthday

Town Preparing Week-Long Celebration To Mark Its Diamond Anniversary

There's a ruckus brewing in Benson as the town prepares to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. A week-long celebration has been planned, starting Aug. 28.

The event is sponsored by the Benson Vigilantes.

Mayor Russell Moore and the City Council have proclaimed the Western Week for the event. Half the proceeds from the events will be donated by the Vigilantes to a fund for buying equipment for the Benson [redacted] Department.

The town will revert to the garb and the re-enacting of doings of the area 75 years ago, with bearded hombres stalking the streets, occasional bursts of gunfire and general merrymaking. Frontier dress will be mandatory and those caught without it will be tossed in the Vigilante clink until they pay a fine.

A parade, including entries from Tucson, Willcox, Tombstone and Bisbee, will kick off the week of celebration. Queen of Western Week will be crowned in the afternoon.

Featured each day but Sunday and Thursday will be a tar-and-feathering of some objectionable character. Hanging attempts are set for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Travelers on U. S. Highway 80 through Benson should be on guard for almost anything.

A horse show Thursday will include barrel races, musical chairs, potato races and a race in which contestants will have to catch their unbridled or saddled mounts. Prizes will be given that night at a dance to be held in the Vigilante Hall.

An invasion of Benson by the notorious Top and Bottom of the early days is expected to be repeated Friday, Saturday and the final Sunday.

On Sept. 4 a torchlight parade through town will windup the celebration.

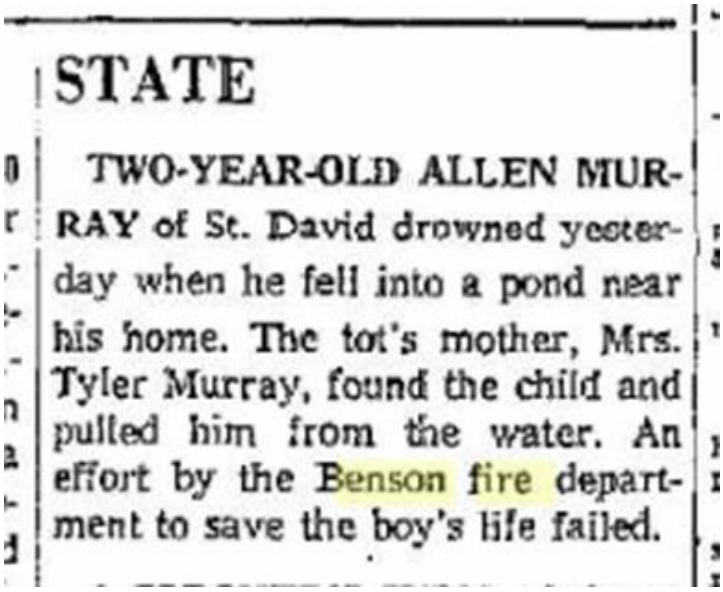
Dean Armstrong and his Arizona Ranch Hands will play at all dances sponsored by the Vigilantes.

On the opening Sunday, follow-ing the parade, the Little League All-Star teams of Benson and Willcox will play a game. There will also be a White Elephant auction.

Vigilante Chief Chuck Craven and Ray Gordon, in charge of arrangements, invite Tucsonans to come over and join the fun. Tucson and Tombstone Vigilantes will also participate in the fete. Entries should be addressed to Ray Gordon, Box 258.

1958/1959

May 13, 1958, *Tucson Citizen*:



STATE

TWO-YEAR-OLD ALLEN MURRAY of St. David drowned yesterday when he fell into a pond near his home. The tot's mother, Mrs. Tyler Murray, found the child and pulled him from the water. An effort by the Benson fire department to save the boy's life failed.

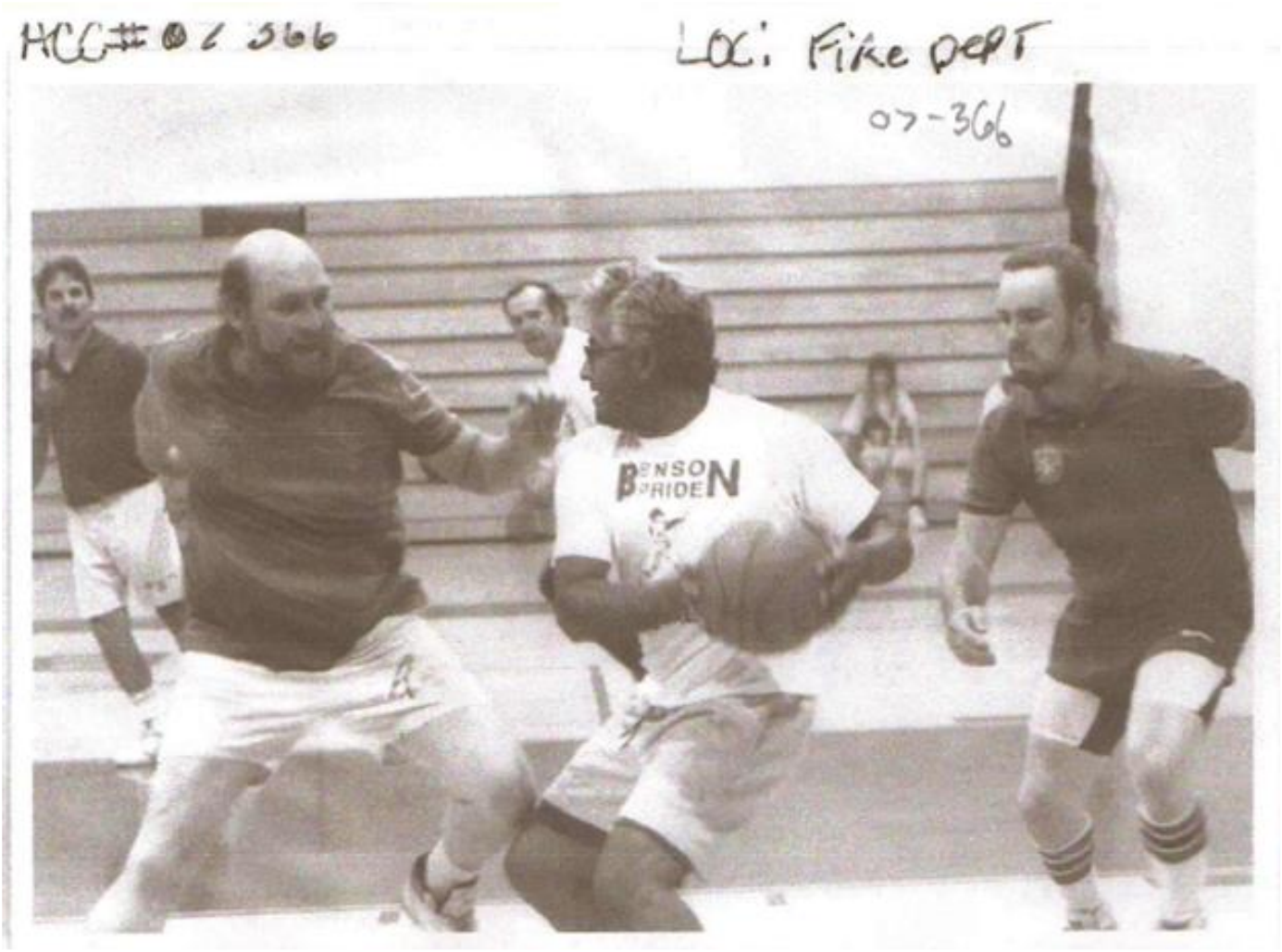
January 9, 1950, *Tucson Citizen*:

Blaze At Benson Causes $150 Loss

BENSON, Jan. 9.—The Benson volunteer fire department was called out for the first time in the new year at 10 a.m. yesterday to fight a blaze which caused about $150 damage to a two-room adobe house owned by Mrs. Marie Ramez, Benson. No one was living in it at present. A new roof was just about completed to ready the place for a rental. The house is located on Fifth street on east side of Benson.

The flames were quickly extinguished. Origin was undetermined.

Unknown Date



1960

February 1960: Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

Benson Volunteers CIRCA 1960.

1946 Ford Howe Pumper (left) and early 1940's Dodge war surplus pumper (right). L to R: Johnny Crozier, Archie Judd, Chief Eddie Robinson, Bill Blakey (on truck), Ken Fischer, Joe Cota (on truck), Rudy Aldinger, Roy McGoffin, Joe Luna, Sam Player, Rudy Caballero and Albert Comaduran (on truck).

January 6, 1962: ***Arizona Daily Star:***

Scott Fills Council Vacancy

BENSON, Jan. 5 (Special)—George Scott, Benson businessman, has been appointed to the City Council to replace Councilman Russell Moore, an employe of the Southern Pacific Co., who resigned because of business pressures.

Scott, who with his brother Bill, operates an automotive machine shop and a gravel and sand processing plant, was sworn in by Bill Dennestaedt, city magistrate. Scott was then appointed the street commissioner, an office which had been also held by Moore.

The council reappointed the police and fire chiefs, city clerk and magistrate.

Eddie Robinson is fire chief and Russell Milner is chief of the police department, Andy Orr city clerk, and Dennestaedt is city magistrate.

Tree!
Root

July 1, 1964, *Tucson Citizen*:

Benson Fire Cuts Titan Sites' Power

Fire which destroyed a tavern one mile east of Benson early today also knocked out electric power throughout the Benson area, including two Strategic Air Command Titan 2 missile sites west of the town.

Employes of Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Co-operative were still working this morning to restore power to the Benson-Pomerene-Mescal area. Davis-Monthan Air Force Base officials said auxiliary power units at Missile Sites 2 and 3 kicked on immediately when the power went out at 3:13 a.m.

Deputy Ray Coffee of the Cochise County Sheriff's Office said the blaze, which broke out at El Rancho Bar, burned through four large cables which passed over the building as they carried power from a substation to the Benson area.

Coffee said the fire was spotted by Red Spooner, an employe of Fulton Ranch, as he was driving past the bar about 2:30 a.m.

Coffee said Spooner tried to find someone in a nearby house but finally broke into the bar when he was unable to locate anyone.

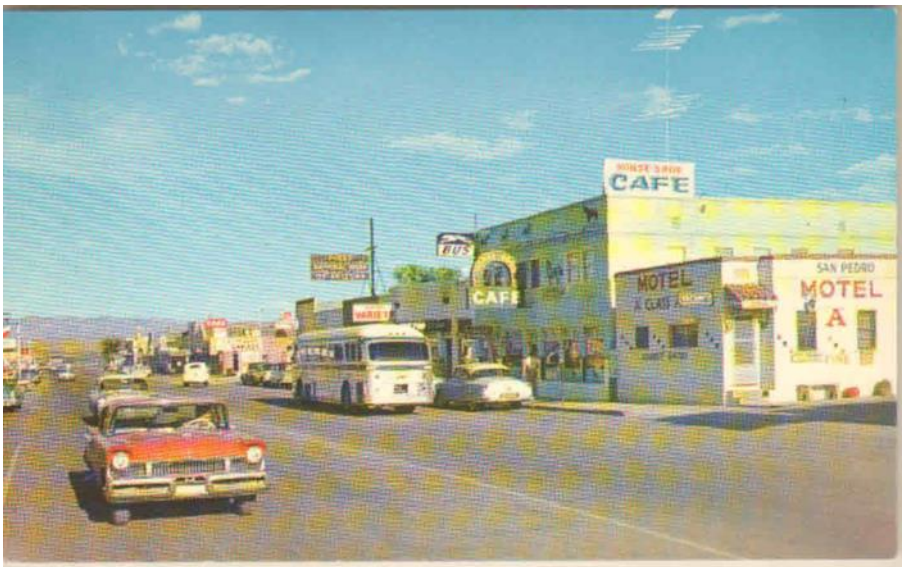
The deputy quoted Spooner as saying he tried to extinguish a small trash fire behind the bar but was forced outside by heavy smoke. Spooner then drove to Benson to report the fire, Coffee said.

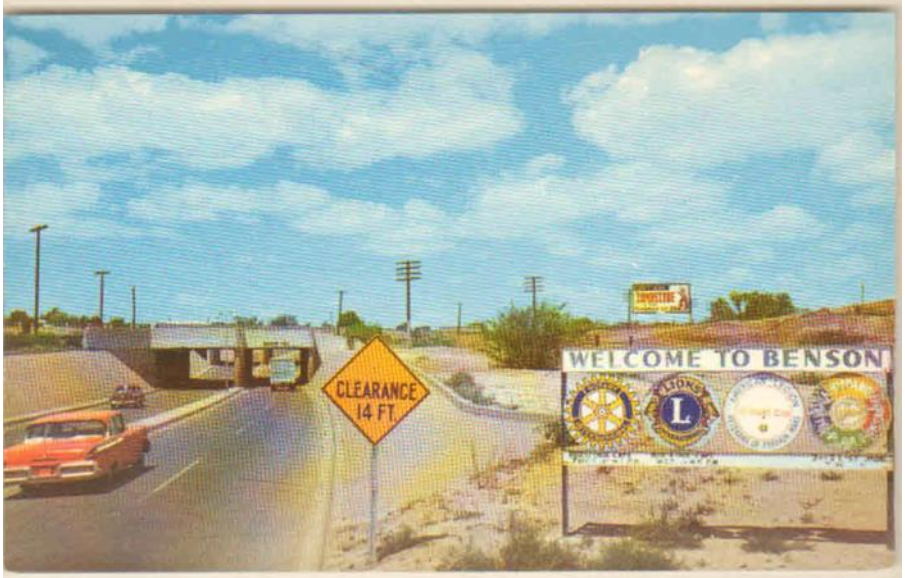
Coffee and Sam Player, publisher of the San Pedro Valley News, said the bar recently was purchased and remodeled by Robert C. Sutherland, of Tucson, a former Pima County sheriff's detective.

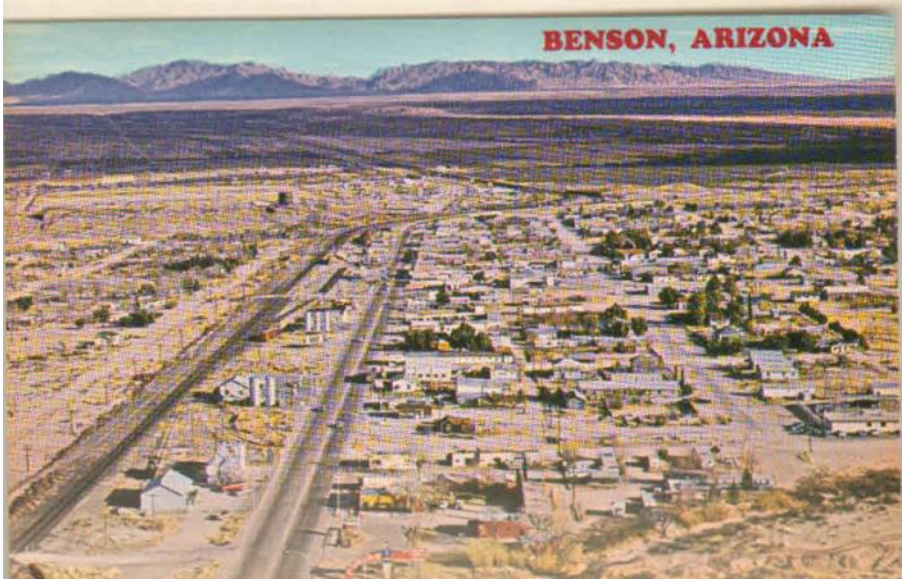
Coffee said the blaze gutted the interior of El Rancho, leaving only its concrete block walls standing. He estimated the damage at more than $30,000.

Street Scenes of Benson

Courtesy Al Ring postcard collection:

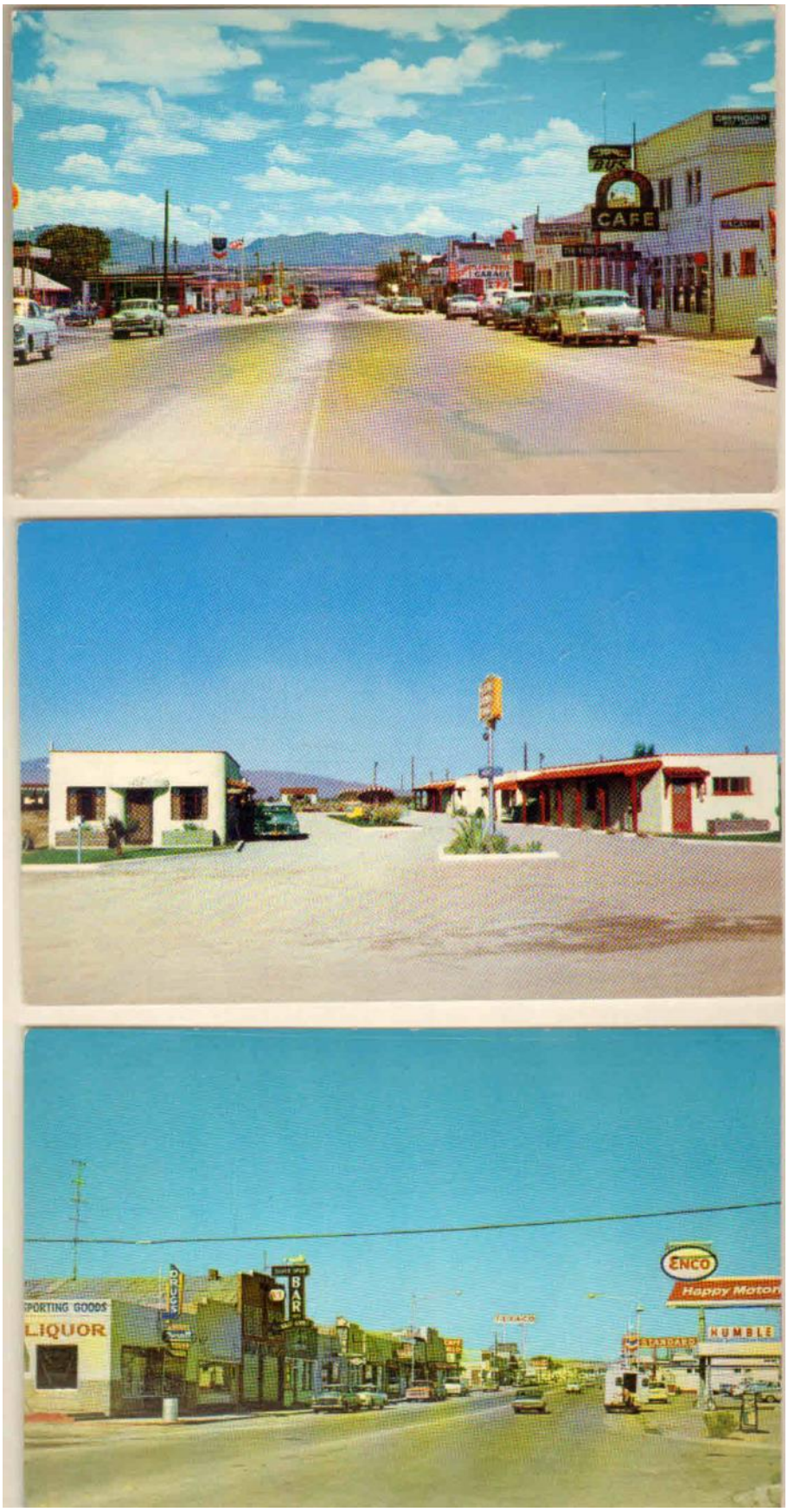






Street Scenes of Benson

Courtesy Al Ring postcard collection:



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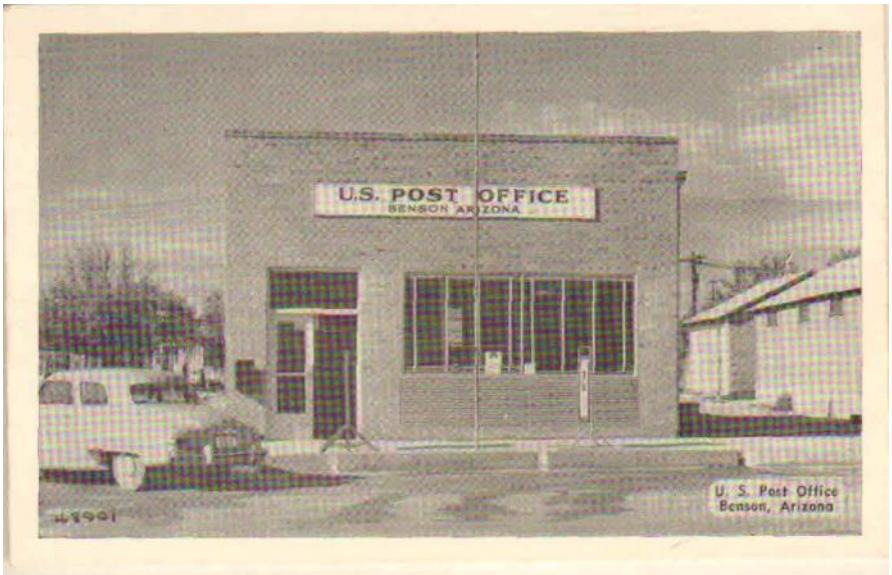
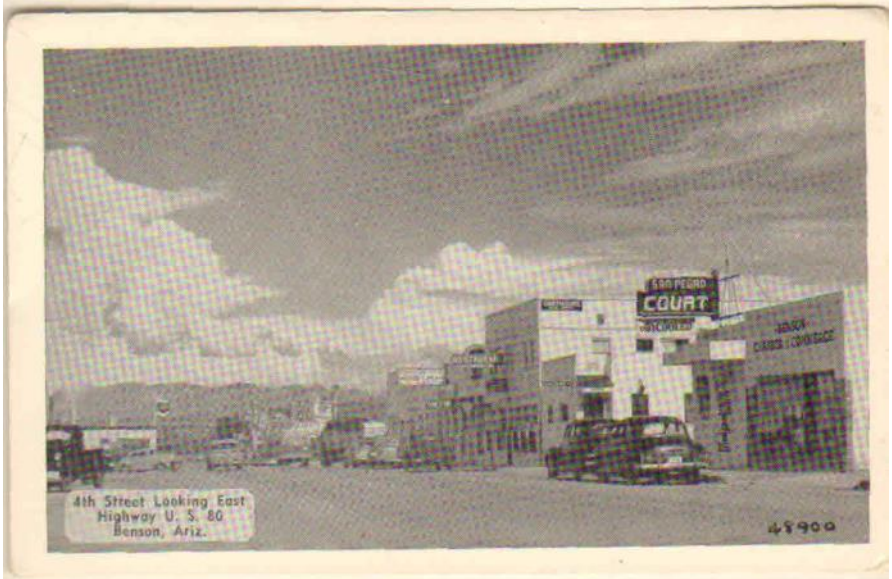
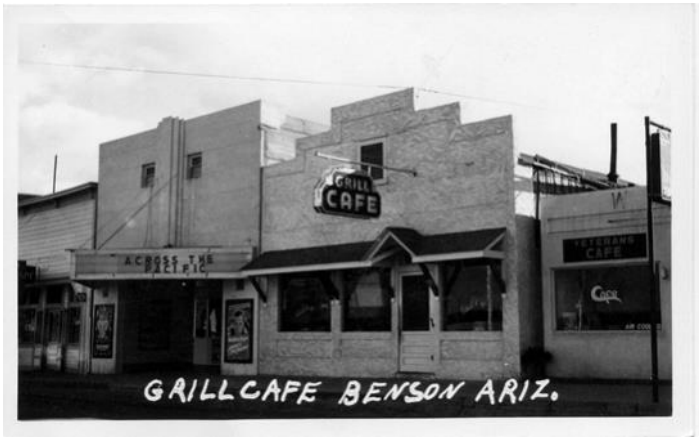




Street Scenes of Benson

Courtesy Al Ring postcard collection:



Street Scenes of Benson

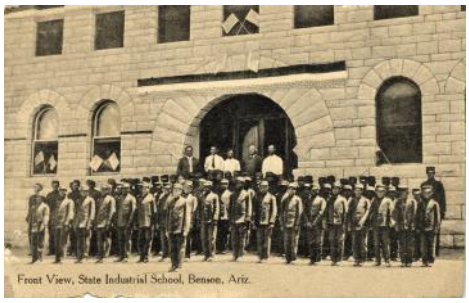
Courtesy Al Ring postcard collection:

5435 West Main Street, Benson, Ariz.

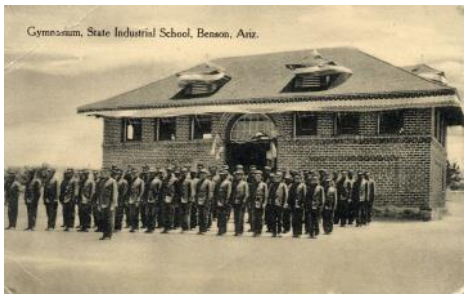
5436 Benson, Ariz.

A34218 Public School, Benson, Arizona

Fourth St., Benson, Arizona

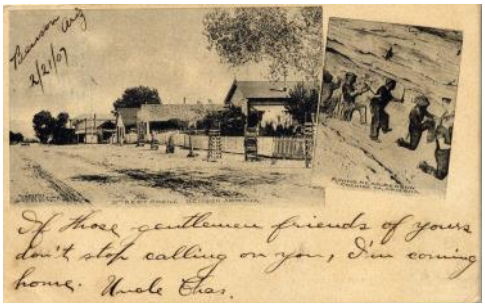


Front View, State Industrial School, Bens

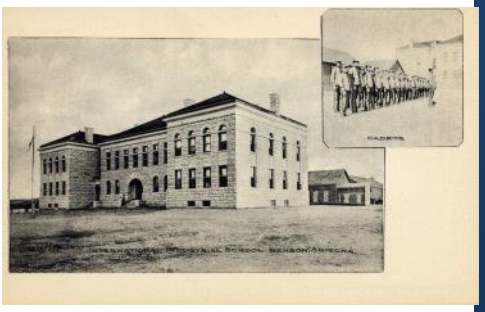


Gymnasium, State Industrial School, Ben

Mountain Air Motel AAA New-Modern



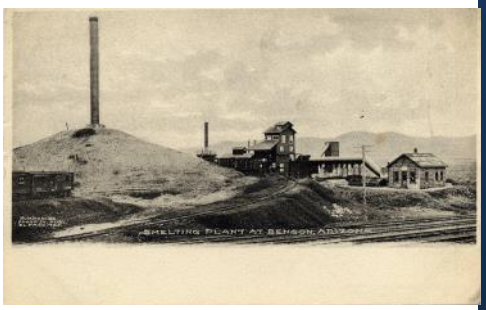
Picture (1) (2 Shots)



Picture (2) (2 Shots)

Residence Street Scene, BENSON, Arizo

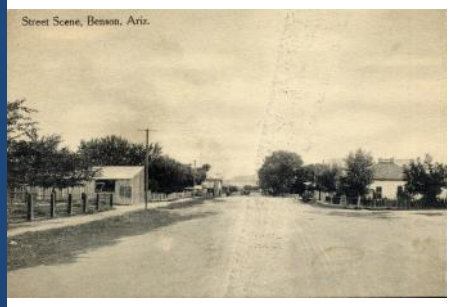
Round House, BENSON, Arizona



Smelting Plant At Benson, Arizona

Street Scenes of Benson

Courtesy Al Ring postcard collection:

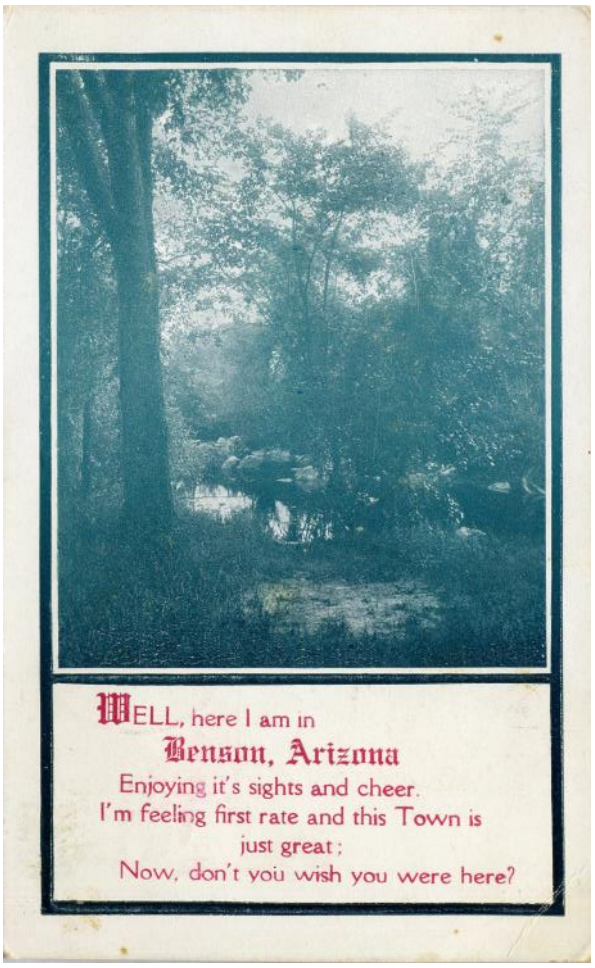


Street Scene, Benson, Ariz.

Territorial Industrial School, Benson, Ariz.

The El Cochise Motel—St. Hwy. 86

View-S.W. Smelting & Refining Co., Be



Well, Here I Am In Benson, Arizona

March 27, 1966, ***Arizona Daily Star:***

Benson Fire Claims Alfred Hayfield

BENSON (Special) — Alfred A. Hayfield, 78, died of burns and suffocation when his two-room house was gutted by a fire of unknown origin here Saturday morning.

Hayfield's body was found in a chair beneath a window through which he apparently had tried to escape the fire, according to coroner Harold W. Holcomb. Hayfield was a custodian for the Kingdom Hall Church across the street from his home.

1973

SEE SEPARATE SECTION UNDER MAJOR INCIDENTS

May 25, 1973, *Tucson Daily Citizen*: Do not how active the BFD was:

Tucson Daily Citizen FINAL STOCKS

TUCSON, ARIZONA, FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1973

EXPLOSIONS RIP BOMB TRAIN

Desert near Benson is site of blowup

Aftermath of bomb blasts

It's leap and live for alert trainmen

'Key man' agrees to aid prosecution in Watergate case

Bombs away!

Skylab chased by 'repairmen'

Blue skies for holiday

Inside

May 10, 1975, ***Arizona Daily Star:***

Benson Gas Bills To Rise

BENSON — Town residents will pay higher gas bills hereafter for cooking and heating. The Town Council is passing on the increased rates set by El Paso Natural Gas Co. City Clerk Amy Lowery, warned the cost may go even higher.

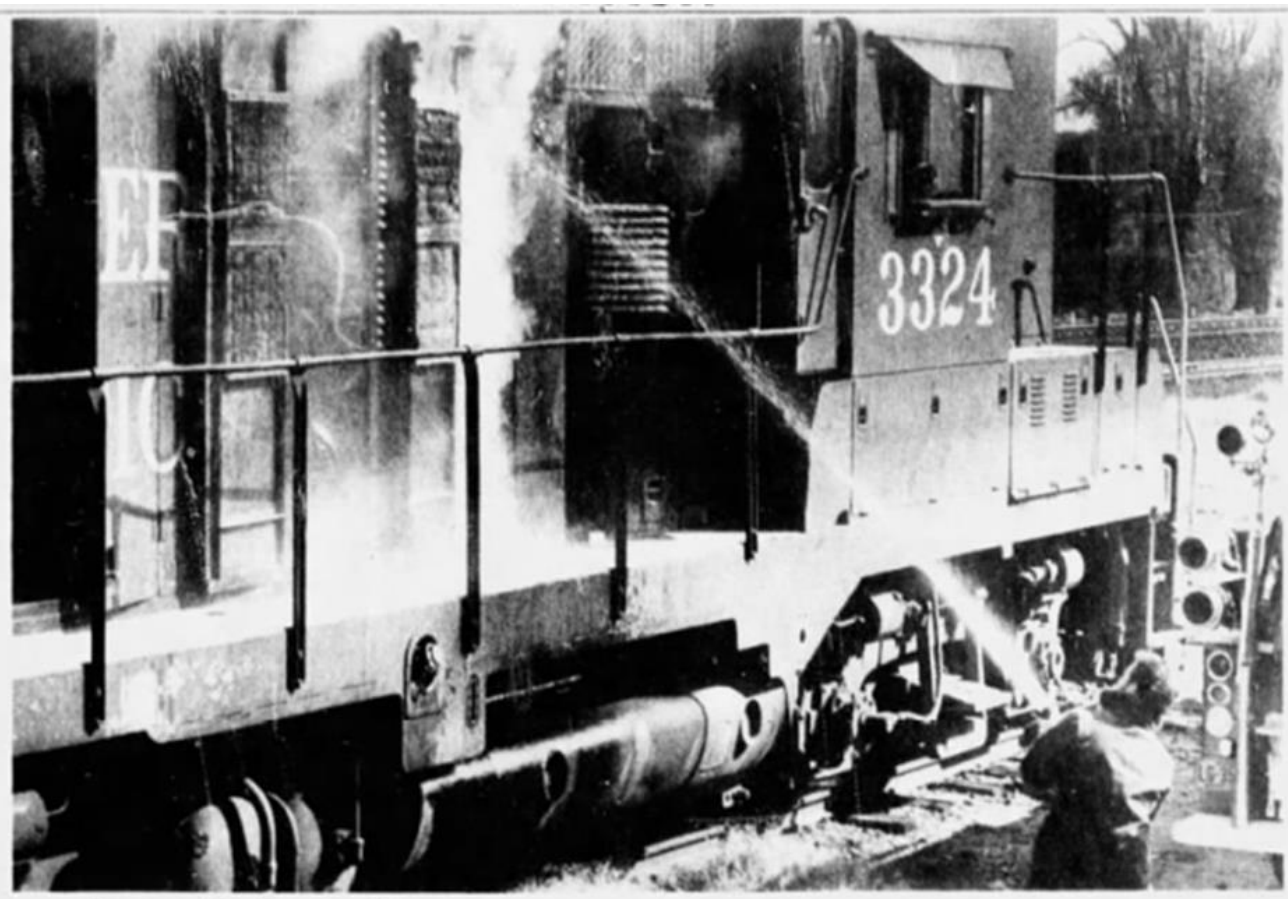
Brighter on the council meeting agenda was news of the town's receipt of revenue sharing funds which were allocated to public funds, including a new fire truck; police department, environmental protection, landfill maintenance and other public services, recreation, social services, and multi-purpose general government.

Encouraging, also, was the city water situation which allows 5,000 gallons per day per resident and increased pressure in separate parts of the town. Ruly Amado, city facilities supervisor, closed his report, "residents should not waste water."

A mutual-aid fire protection agreement was discussed which would provide disaster service in the event of catastrophic fire or explosion. The agreement would include Benson, Willcox and Tombstone with one fire truck from two of the communities going to the aid of the third at the disaster site.

1976

November 16, 1976, *Arizona Daily Star:*



Engine Brakes Ignite — A dozen volunteer firemen in Benson spent 45 minutes yesterday morning "cooling off" this Southern Pacific Railroad locomotive, which caught fire when the braking system overheated. Flames were reportedly shooting from the unit as the westbound train pulled into Benson. The locomotive was shifted onto a siding in downtown Benson, and the train was pulled to Tucson by other units. (Star Photo by John Woestendiek)

December 13, 1976:

Steakhouse Burns; Probe Is Underway

Dec. 13, 1976

The shell of the Stronghold Steakhouse was about all that was left Tuesday morning after fire swept through the structure the night before. Firemen responded to the blaze, which began at 10:10 p.m., Monday, within five minutes, but were unable to salvage the business. Cause of the fire is under investigation.

February 20, 1977:

Fire Destroys Theater

None Injured In Blaze

Feb. 20, 1977

Feb 20 1977 Benson PAPER SPVNS

The Benson Theater, a landmark for more than 50 years in the area was destroyed Sunday when flames engulfed the structure. No one was injured.

Authorities said the fire broke out about 3:15 p.m. and within five minutes the blaze had spread to virtually all parts of the building.

At the time the fire broke out, only four customers and a few employees were in the building, and all were evacuated safely.

Fire[illegible]en didn't have far to pull their trucks, driving around the corner from the station to the theater. They soon had all of the available equipment fighting the blaze, but due to the structure's age and condition, it took nearly two hours to extinguish the flames.

Meanwhile, onlookers rushed over to help Francine Sierrakoski, removing merchandise from her clothing store adjacent to the theater.

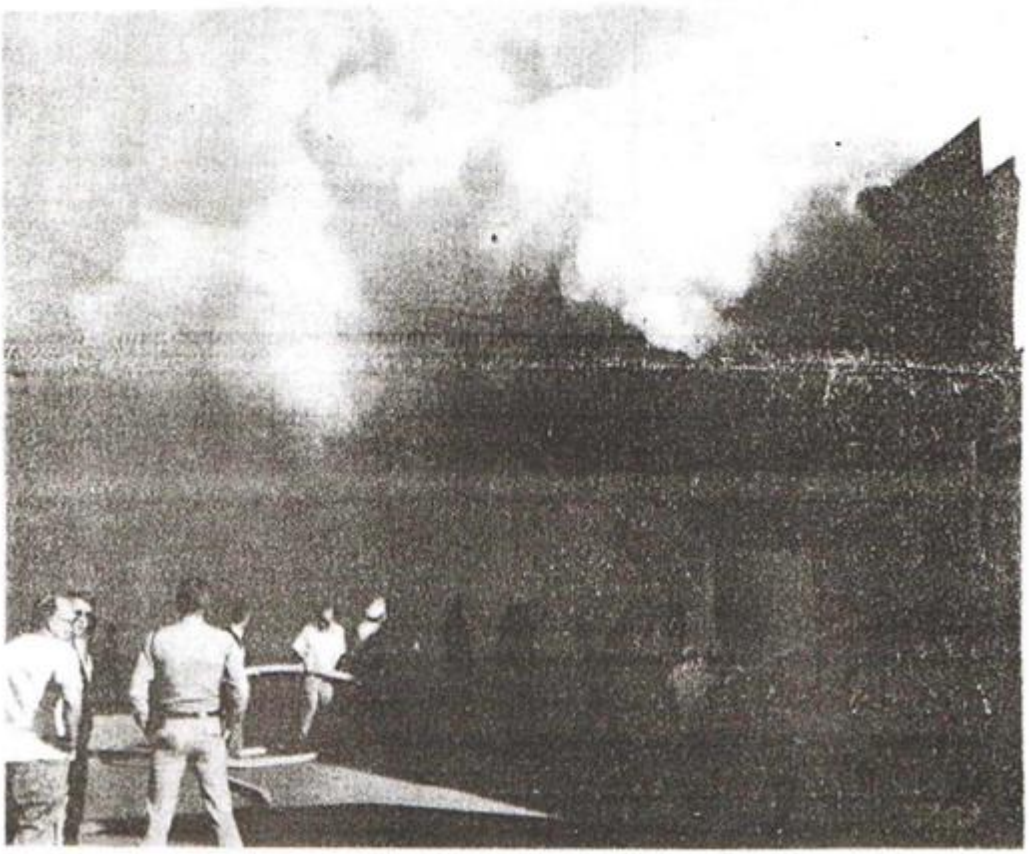
The dress shop filled rapidly with smoke, making the removal of clothing difficult. It was, however, later moved into a van owned by Ozella-Harrington Trucking Co.

By the time the fire was out completely, nearly all of the wooden structure was destroyed. The roof and ceiling collapsed and burned within the concrete and block structure.

The housing in back of the building also was burned by the fire.

The Department of Public Safety, an emergency unit from Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative, and Burch Ambulance were on the scene.

Other businesses threatened by the fire were the Clip Joint barbershop, a garage, and the Eagles Club.



Firemen battle smoke and flames as fire spreads through the Benson Theater. The 50-year-old structure caught fire about mid-afternoon Sunday and was completely destroyed. No one was injured. It took firemen about two hours to extinguish the fire.

1977

February 22, 1977, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Benson theater fire

The Arizona Daily Star

BENSON — The only theater in town was destroyed by fire Sunday afternoon. Five employes inside the closed theater escaped unharmed.

Lt. Henry Rios of the Benson Police Dept. said the cause is under investigation. Smoke caused slight damage to a dress shop next door.

Rios said the five employes were taking inventory when they noticed smoke coming from near the screen and ran outside. The theater, built near the turn of the century, was owned by Louis Long of Safford.

1980

August 28, 1980, White Spot:

1880 1980

Volume 80, Number 29, Twenty-five Cents San Pedro Valley New

Benson fire fighters worked Tuesday morning to extinguish smoldering fire on rubble that was once the White Spot Cafe on the corner of San Pedro and Pearl. The 11:45 p.m. blaze was the second fire in Benson Monday night. Fifteen minutes earlier, a fire at the Benson Union High School began that gutted two classrooms in the old high school building. The fire took two hours to control.

14-602

1980

September 4, 1980:

Sep 4, 1980

LAZE GUTS CHURCH — Clifton Comstock and Cliff anders, members of the Seventh Day Adventist hurch in Benson gaze at their fire-gutted church in ismay. Firemen were called to the building at 1:20 m. Friday. They saved the outer portion of the uilding, but flames completely destroyed the interior f the recreation and education areas and smoke and eat damaged the sanctuary. "We can't say what we ill do," Comstock said. "We'll have to talk to the surance adjusters." The church building originally built by the Presbyterians had been a landmark for many years. The blaze was arson, according to Chief George McMinimy of the Benson Police Department. The officers took a suspect into custody Friday and are extending shifts because of this emergency. McMinimy said the recent high school fire and the one in the church are related and asks anyone who notices something strange in his neighborhood to call crime check, 586-3011.

1982

1982: Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

Benson Volunteer Fire Dept. February 1982

Front Row: L to R, Jerry Fink, Pat Teague, Larry Napier, Mike Hoskinson, Max Jones, Art Carrillo, Ken Fischer Back Row: Bob Bivens, Jess Provienco, Jim Hansen, Corky Brandt, Geoff McGoffin, Joe Rothermich, Albert Comaduran, Harry Hensell, Joe Luna, Joe Rodriguez, Mark Barker, Al Estavillo, Lee Rolfes and Jim Thelander

March 30, 1984, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Explosion cuts off gas in Benson

No injuries or damage reported in alley blast

A gas-main explosion and fire in Benson left many residents without natural-gas service last night, but no injuries or damage to property was reported.

The cause of the explosion, which occurred at about 5:25 p.m. in an alley near Fifth Street and Central Avenue, had not been determined last night.

"We were really fortunate," said MaryAnn Steelhammer, secretary to Police Chief George McMinimy. "Nobody was standing nearby, and they got the fire out quickly."

Several residents were evacuated while the fire was being put out by the Benson Volunteer Fire Department, but everyone was allowed back within a half hour, Steelhammer said.

She said one city worker was taken to Benson Hospital after inhaling gas fumes, but was given oxygen and released.

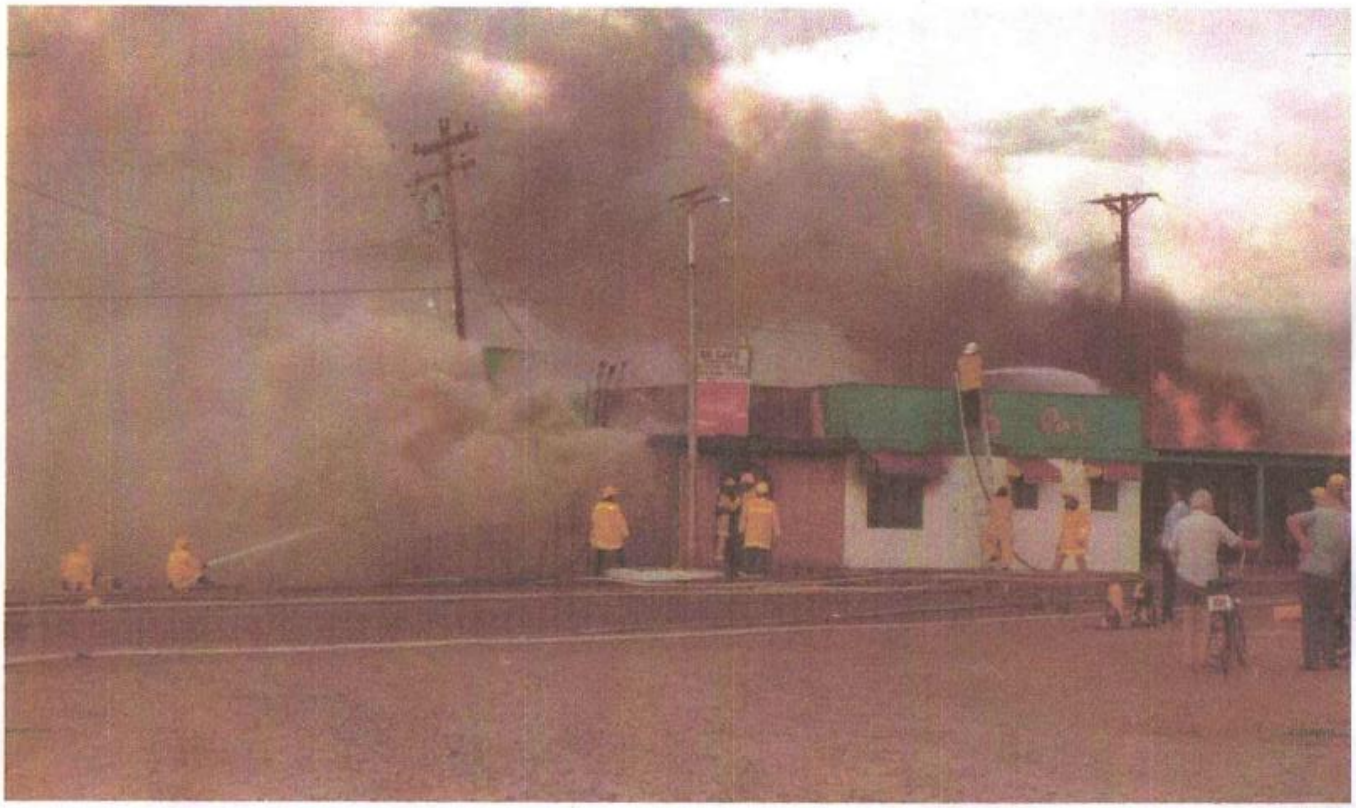
The blast on the Benson Utilities Department main initially cut off gas service to almost everyone in town, but service was restored to some residents by 8 p.m.

City utility workers were continuing with repairs through the night, but many residents are expected to be without gas until sometime today, Steelhammer said.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety and the Cochise Couty Sheriff's Department assisted local authorities at the scene.

1987

July 21, 1987, 86 Café:



OLD 86 CAFE ON HWY 86 EAST OF THE UNDERPASS. 14-601

July 22, 1987, *Arizona Daily Star:*

Cafe in Benson destroyed by fire

Fire companies from four towns responded to a fire in Benson on Monday that destroyed a cafe and caused damage estimated at $250,000, a Benson Fire Department spokeswoman said.

The fire began about 2:40 p.m. in the back of the 86 Cafe, on East Highway 86, and soon spread to the front, the spokeswoman said.

The fire was under control by 6:30 p.m., she said.

Fire companies from Benson, Pomerene, Tombstone and Willcox responded to the call.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, she said.

1987

List of fires compiled by Gerry Thomson:

NEWS12 ALL BENSON FIRES.

Arizona Weekly Citizen., September 22, 1883, Image 2
Benson, Sept. 19, 1883. The fire broke out in the dwelling house of F. Brandon about twelve o'clock. The cause supposed to be incendiary. It continued burning until all the buildings from Sisson, Crocker & Co. were burned stopping at the Virginia hotel. The losers are Sisson, Crocker & Co., $20,000; insured; D. Johnson, livery and boarding house; loss, $2,000; insurance eight hundred; Dyar, Finch & Baldwin, stock and building; $2,000; partly insured; Hugo Robn, saloon; twenty-live hundred; insured for one thousand; Clark Brothers fruit store: loss fifteen hundred; Sam Stanton, saloon; one thousand; Frank Brandon, saloon and fixtures: loss $2,000, and; not insured; G. W. Bryan, saloon; loss fifteen hundred: insurance, five hundred; Bob Stewart, saloon; six thousand; insured;
D. H. Logan, hotel; four thousand; insured; Virginia House; loss six thousand; insured for twenty-four hundred. Had there been much wind all of Benson would have been in ashes. Several thieves were given five minutes to leave town. All quiet.

Benson, May 10, 1886. A fire broke out in this place early Sunday morning and burned a large portion of the town. The loss is at forty thousand dollars and partly covered by insurance. The cause of the fire was incendiary. Dyar & Baldwin, W. Callahan, Clark Bros, Mrs. W. W. Baldwin's Millinery store, Henry Brans' saloon, Mrs. Coker's restaurant, Geo. Bryan's saloon, W. Zeek's barber shop, a Chinese restaurant, and the post office were a complete loss. Bryan & Redfield, general merchandise, total loss; Barrack & Miller's saloon and O. L. Finch's saloon were burned.
Another Account.
Special to the Citizen
Benson, May 10. The fire started at 12 o'clock Saturday night in a Chinese restaurant; the wind changed and blew in the direction of the depot and this saved the lower part of the town. The upper part was saved by throwing water on the Chinese building. Hand grenades were used but to no purpose.
TE3 5-7-1886

Disastrous Fire At Benson Yesterday 1906
A disastrous fire occurred at Benson yesterday morning which for a time threatened the entire town. Four buildings were consumed in the business section, and but little of the contents was saved. The fire started about 3 o'clock in the morning, the origin of which is not known, but is believed to have started from a smoldering cigarette. The fire burned from the Weiss corner to the Etz butcher shop where, by the heroic action of the Benson fire department, the ravages of the flames were checked.
The burned district included a saloon and lodging house owned by J. A Lopnow, who had only bought the property the day before; a restaurant owned by two Japanese, and the general merchandise store of J M Cosby. But very little was saved, the loss falling heavily on the individual owners. TE2 7-1-1906

1987

List of fires compiled by Gerry Thomson:

CONDENSED VERSION

Sept. 19, 1883 Sisson, Crocker & Co. were burned stopping at the Virginia hotel. D. Johnson, livery and boarding house; Dyar, Finch & Baldwin, stock and building; Hugo Robn, saloon; Clark Brothers fruit store; Sam Stanton, saloon; Frank Brandon, saloon and fixtures: G. W. Bryan, saloon; Bob Stewart, saloon; D. H. Logan, hotel; Virginia House.

May 10, 1886. Fred Clark spotted fire in rear of Zeek's barber shop across from the depot. Dyar & Baldwin, W. Callahan, Clark Bros, Mrs. W. W. Baldwin's Millinery store, Henry Brans' saloon, Mrs. Coker's restaurant, Geo. Bryan's saloon, W. Zeek's barber shop, a Chinese restaurant, and the post office; Bryan & Redfield, general merchandise, Barrack & Miller's saloon and O. L. Finch's saloon were burned.

3/4/1892 Clark Bros mdse destroyed.
8/7/1892 Goldwater's warehouse; Wells Fargo at depot nearly burned.
10/21/1897 Trask House; blacksmith shop.

5/16/1902 AZ Clay Manufacturing Co plant burns.
6/21/1902 San Pedro RR bridge burns.
6/23/1904 Three or four homes burned east 5th St in Barrio.

November 11, 1904, post office building, owned by J.W. Redfield and also occupied by him as a grocery and fruit store. The Grand Central, owned by Sam Friedman; Collins saloon adjoining, Six buildings were destroyed and the Virginia Hotel was saved. Everything was swept away between Redfield's post office and the Virginia Hotel. Mansion house, Fairlee & Jensen Saloon; Wm Ohnesorgen Elite Saloon; stopped at Fred Clark's Wild Cat Saloon.
1/5/1906 fire at phone co
6-30-1906 A disastrous fire occurred at Benson yesterday morning which for a time threatened the entire town. Four buildings were consumed The fire burned from the Weiss (probably Sam's Saloon, Sam Wise) corner to the Etz butcher shop The burned district included a saloon and lodging house owned by J. A Lopnow, who had only bought the property the day before; a restaurant owned by two Japanese, and the general merchandise store of J M Cosby. TE2 7-1-1906
6/13/1908 MM Martinez tailor shop and Justice of the Peace office.
3/21/1909 Hotel Banks fire
7/30/1911 Gerwien's Southwest Lumber co burns
11/27/1912 residence of Barney Flynn destroyed
Sometime in 1912 jail burned
1/4/1914 Jenson house on south side of town
3/20/1921 Maier Bros; Mrs. Cash millinery shop; CB Moss
4/8/1921 WD Martinez store
7/10/1921 Cash Store on San Pedro St; Musgrave; Moore.
7/2/1922 Barber shop, Etz block
1/22/1922 Benson Flouring Mill, 2 houses owned by Mrs. Trask
1924 Wednesday ? 3 AG Smith, Cochise County State Bank safe moved to Farley Pool Hall; American Café; Nearly burned Allans Drug. Started in movie theater from exploding film.

1933 Fred Clark's Wild Cat Saloon TS Hudspeth Saloon; Wm Ohnesorgen Saloon; Fairlee & Jenson-Turf Saloon; HD Hall Saloon; LD Redfield-gen mdse; Charlie Hoy Restaurant; Sam Sing Restaurant; Grand Central Hotel; Delahanty Estate; Clark F building
9/27/1950 Foxworth-Killen Lumber
12/13/1976 Stronghold Steakhouse Burns
2/20/1977 Benson Theater burns
8/28/1980 White Spot burns; BUHS loses 2 classrooms
7/21/1987 86 Café burns

1988

April 1988: Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

Bronze Plaque mounted on rock in front of Fire Department entrance at 375 East 7th Street reads as follows:

Benson Volunteer Fire Department
Founded 1907
In Memory of Chief E.S. "Eddie" Robinson
Served 1947-1972

Note: The large rock was brought from the Johnson Mine.

1988

April 1988: Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

A plaque on the outside wall to the Benson Police Department, 360 South Gila Street entrance reads as follows:

City of Benson Police and Fire Stations
Dedicated April 1988

Councilmen:
James M. Crawford, Arthur Faust, Richard W. Hamilton, David C. DiPeso, Jerome B. Flanders, Richard J. Saenz
Mayor, James F. Mellentine
Paul Nordin, City Manager
Max D. Jones, Fire Chief
George C. McMinnimy, Police Chief
Stewart W. Cleave, A.I.A. Architect
Division II Construction Co., Inc. Contractor
Lyle Calvert, Superintendent

1988

April 1988: Courtesy, 1907-2007 Benson Volunteer Fire Department:

Retired firemen at dedication of new Benson Fire-Police Building located at 375 E. Seventh Street, April 1988. L to R: Joe Luna, Lisandro Montijo, Bill Blakey, Carl Naegle, Kenneth Fischer, Dick Hamilton, Lynn Naegle, Tom Castro, Albert Comaduran, Kearney Gardner, Leo Calderon.

A picture on the wall of the Fire Department entrance hallway is of retired firemen that attended the dedication of the new Fire-Police Departments building in April 1988 as follows: L to R – Joe Luna, Lisandro Montijo, Bill Blakey, Kenneth Fischer, Dick Hamilton, Lynn Naegle, Tom Castro, Albert Comaduran, Kearney Gardner, and Leo Calderon.
Note: As of March 2007 all retirees in this picture are deceased except for Kenneth Fischer and Dick Hamilton.

1993

July 16, 1993, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Vol. 152 No. 197 ** Final Edition, Tucson, Friday, July 16, 1993

Photos by Bruce McClelland, The Arizona Daily Star

Tallcie Cranston reaches out to Michelle Watson, whose two daughters were killed; the girls were spending the night with neighbors

Trailer fire kills 2 young sisters, infant

By Edward L. Cook
The Arizona Daily Star

Two young sisters and a 6-month-old boy died in a fire that swept through a mobile home on the southside yesterday.

Neighbors said they could hear the girls screaming and pounding on the locked door of the trailer as others tried to pry security bars from a window to free them.

"I heard someone pounding on the door trying to get out. Within five minutes the trailer was totally engulfed. I just couldn't believe it," said Ivonne Graves, a resident of the Willow Springs Estates mobile home park, 6001 S. Palo Verde Road.

A mother and her two children managed to flee the inferno, thanks to Charles Sallee, a park resident who saw the fire as he was leaving for work. Sallee yelled at other neighbors to alert them and ran to the mobile home.

"The fire was coming out the front and women in back were screaming, trying to get out," he said. "I was somehow able to jerk the bars off the back window and get a woman and her two kids out."

Sallee, 43, a repairman at D&B Commercial Services, 3159 S. Chrysler Ave., sat outside his mobile home, staring at the ruins of the mobile home as firemen and Sheriff's Department investigators

See CHILDREN, Page 4A

The southside fire burned more than half an hour before being brought under control

Rescuer overcomes doubts, pulls 3 to safety

By Douglas Kreutz
The Arizona Daily Star

Charles Sallee's attempt to rescue a family from a burning mobile home yesterday seemed hopeless when he encountered iron security bars blocking a window.

But he wasn't prepared to give up.

"I ripped the bars off in one hard pull," said the 43-year-old Vietnam combat veteran.

"I didn't think I could get those bars off when I first saw them," said Sallee, who spotted the fire from his nearby mobile home and ran to the rescue while his companion reported the fire.

"But I heard someone inside screaming for help, and I was scared," he said. "You don't know your own strength until you're scared and see somebody's life in danger."

Sallee pulled a mother and her two young sons to safety as flames engulfed the double-wide mobile home at 6001 S. Palo Verde Road.

But thick smoke and fast-spreading fire forced him to flee the home before he could reach three other occupants, all of whom died in the blaze.

Sgt. Ron Benson, spokesman for the Pima County Sheriff's department, said investigators found three bodies in a bedroom near a window that remained blocked by security bars.

One of the victims, a 16-year-old woman believed to be nearly nine months pregnant, appeared to have draped her body across those of two younger victims in an effort to shield them from the flames, Benson said.

Family members identified the dead as sisters Carrie Arrieta, 16, and Erica Arrieta, 13, and Jamal McSwaine, who was about 6 months old.

Benson credited Nila and Frank Schaffner, who live next door to the fire scene in the mobile home park, and other neighbors with helping in efforts to loosen security bars or

See SCENE, Page 4A

July 16, 1993, *Arizona Daily Star*:

a Daily Star Tucson, Friday, July 16, 1993

Children

Continued from Page One

worked at the scene, trying to determine the cause of the blaze.

Some relatives of the fire victims were almost hysterical nearly an hour after the blaze, as they sat on the hot asphalt driveway and wept, crying out for their loved ones.

Those who escaped the fire, Regina Stephens, 28, and her children, Bobby Jr., 6, and Nathaniel, 3, all of Oakwood, Ga., were staying at the mobile home while they visited relatives in the park.

After their rescue, the boys were left temporarily with Sallee.

"They're not saying very much," Sallee said. "They're just watching cartoons on television."

Stephens told investigators that she was "doing her hair" in the mobile home when she saw smoke coming from a vent, and tried to check on people in the bedrooms — only to be driven back by the fire.

Sgt. Ron Benson, a spokesman for the Pima County Sheriff's Department, said Sallee and residents of a mobile home next to the destroyed home, Frank and Nila Schaffner, tried to rescue the victims.

He said someone pried bars off one window with a shovel, but was unable to remove other bars. The Schaffners' mobile home was singed, but otherwise undamaged.

The victims, officially listed by the Sheriff's Department as missing in the fire, were identified as:

- Carrie Arrieta, 16, a former student at Desert View High School and a resident of the park.
- Her sister, Erica Arrieta, 13, a pupil at Chaparral Middle School.
- Jamal McSwaine, 6 months old, the grandson of Raz and Carrie McSwaine, the owner of the mobile home.

The Arrieta sisters lived with their mother, Michelle Watson, in a mobile home next to the one that was destroyed, and were spending the night with their neighbors.

Erica Arrieta

Carrie Arrieta

The McSwaines, who had custody of the baby, were not at the home when the fire started.

The three fire victims won't be positively identified until autopsies are completed today.

Benson said the remains of what appeared to be a pregnant teen-ager and a younger person were found soon after the fire was controlled. Jim Pratt, a Sheriff's Department arson investigator, discovered the remains of an infant about 4½ hours later in the burned rubble.

"He said the bodies were all in a middle bedroom ... beneath a window with bars that had been improperly bolted on. They couldn't get them off," Benson said.

"The oldest one was on top of the others, like she was trying to shield them from the fire."

Under the county building code, the iron security bars on the mobile home should have been attached so they could have been opened from inside the residence.

Fire officials say that legal security bars have a key on the outside and a lever on the inside, so they can be opened easily. It's the illegal bars — including double-keyed bars — that have caused problems for rescuers, officials say.

The fire at Willow Springs Estates started about 7:30 a.m., but wasn't reported until 7:41 a.m., when the first 911 call was received, Benson said. It was brought under control at 8:07 a.m.

Six pieces of firefighting equipment, three paramedic ambulances and about 45 firefighters were sent to the scene.

Benson and Chief John Karolzak, of the Rural Metro Fire Department, were unable to explain why it took nearly 10 minutes for the fire to be reported.

But some residents of Willow Springs Estates said there are few telephones in the park, which has 161 mobile homes. The nearest telephone from the fire is a pay phone about 200 feet away.

The three who died yesterday bring to five the number of people who have died in fires in Tucson this year.

July 16, 1993, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Scene

Continued from Page One

open doors of the burning home before firefighters arrived.

Sallee, who served as a demolitions expert in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969, said he went back into the mobile home after helping Stephens and her two sons to safety.

"She said there were more people in there, so I went," he said. "I got in there and got low to try to get away from the smoke. I yelled. I yelled. But I didn't hear them.

"It was so smoky I couldn't see two feet in front of me," Sallee said. "There was so much smoke. I tried. I tried. I tried. But I had to get out. I couldn't stay there."

Victor Arrieta, brother of victims Carrie and Erica Arrieta, said he sought desperately, but unsuccessfully, to get into the burning mobile home and rescue those trapped inside.

"I tried to go through the front door, but the knob was so hot and [illegible] was coming out" of the structure, said Arrieta, 18, who lives in a trailer next door to the one that burned.

"We tried to get in, but the bars kept us from getting in," he said. "There was nothing we could do."

The tragedy was compounded, Arrieta said, by the fact that Carrie was about to have a baby.

"She was due any day," he said as gathered family members wept openly at their loss. "She had labor pains just the other day."

Tony Maas, another would-be rescuer, said he saw 8-foot-high flames ravaging the mobile home as he approached the front door.

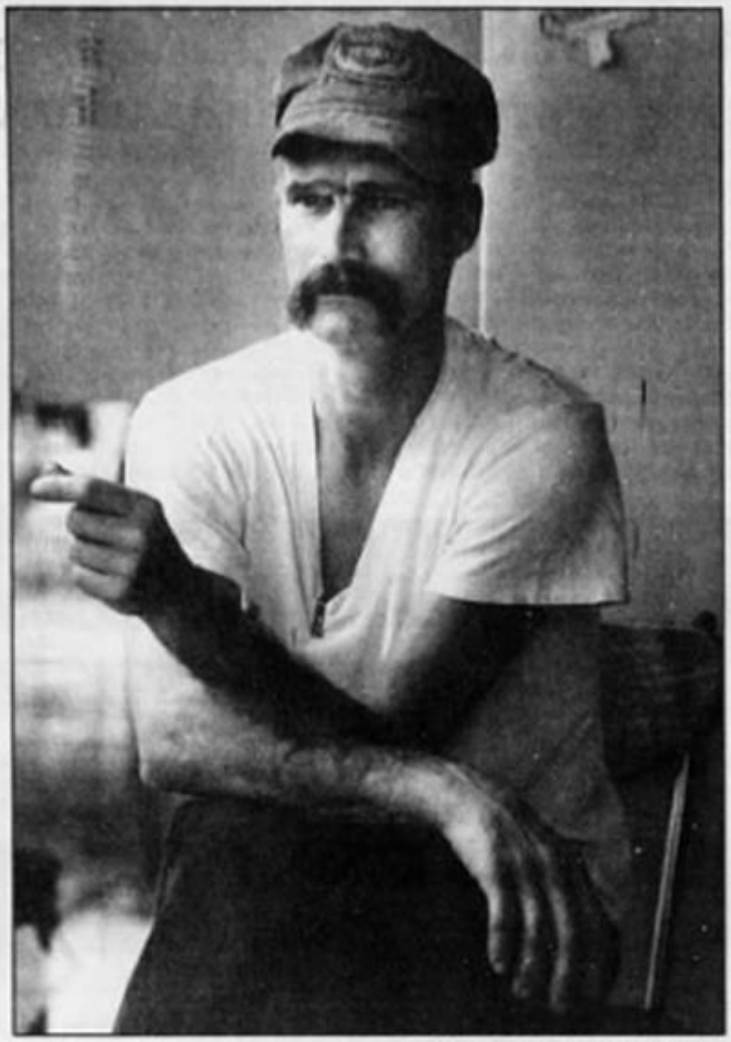
"We tried to kick down the front door, but we failed to do that," Maas said. "We tried to get in the house, man, but it was just too hot.

"I tried to use a garden hose on the fire," Maas added. "It didn't work. Three people died in there."

In the aftermath of the fire, Rural Metro firefighters mopped up the scene and attempted to stabilize the blackened hulk of the mobile home until the bodies of victims could be removed.

The metal roof of the structure drooped over a front porch that had been decorated with a pair of now-charred tile swans.

A pair of evaporative coolers perched precariously over rooms gutted by flames.



Bruce McClelland, The Arizona Daily Star

"You don't know your own strength until you're scared and see somebody's life in danger."

Charles Sallee
Rescuer

A Cadillac Coupe de Ville and a Mercury Monarch, their interiors scorched black by flames that spread from the mobile home to a parking area, waited for towing to a junkyard.

Neighbors, many of them still stunned three hours after the fire was controlled at 8:07 a.m., talked of the horror of the tragedy and their memories of the victims.

"When I came out, I saw flames just shooting out the front windows," said neighbor Shari Ehlers. "Glass was breaking. There were women and kids outside screaming."

Nearby, a Chaparral Middle School student, who asked not to be identified, sat quietly in the shade of a tree and mourned the death of her friend, Erica Arrieta.

"She was a nice person," the girl said. "She had a good personality. That's what I remember."

July 17, 1993, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Fatal trailer fire believed caused by cigarettes

By Hipolito R. Corella
The Arizona Daily Star

The mobile home fire Thursday morning that killed two young sisters and a 6-month-old boy was started by discarded cigarette butts, results of a preliminary investigation show.

Also, investigators say flames ripped through nearly half the home before the fire was discovered because batteries had been removed from a smoke detector.

"The batteries had been removed because the family complained about them going off," said Sgt. Ron Benson, a spokesman for the Pima County Sheriff's Department.

Benson said one of the fire victims, 16-year-old Carrie Arrieta, was nine months pregnant. The death of the fetus is being treated as a fourth death in the blaze because it could have been delivered alive. It would have been a girl.

The other victims were Carrie's 13-year-old sister, Erica Arrieta; and 6-month-old Jamal McSwaine.

Arson was ruled out as a cause for the fire yesterday, Benson said.

Arson investigators said the blaze apparently started in a chair in the living room of the home, near where an ashtray and discarded cigarette butts were found.

Flames quickly tore through the home's insulation and spread through the cooler ducts before 28-year-old Regina Stephens spotted smoke while doing her hair in a bathroom in the back portion of the home.

Benson said the living room,

See FIRE, Page 2A

Fire

Continued from Page One

which had the home's only door, was engulfed in flames by the time the fire was discovered.

Stephens ran across the hall where her children — Bobby Jr., 6, and Nathaniel, 3, — were sleeping. All three were pulled to safety by a neighbor who was able to tear wrought-iron security bars from a window in the bedroom wall.

Stephens told officials that she tried to reach the second bedroom where the three youngsters were, but was prevented by flames and smoke.

Neighbors also were unable to rescue the two sisters and infant in the second bedroom. Investigators believe they were trapped by smoke and flames minutes after the fire started.

Carrie, Erica and Jamal were found dead after investigators searched through the rubble Thursday afternoon.

The three were huddled together underneath the bedroom window. Carrie Arrieta's body was positioned in a way that led investigators to believe she was trying to shield her sister and Jamal from the flames.

Investigators say improperly installed security bars prevented the children from escaping through the window.

The security bars were bolted onto the wall. The bars lacked the required safety releases on the inside and key locks on the outside, which would have allowed the bars to be opened quickly.

Autopsies performed yesterday at the Office of the Pima County Medical Examiner showed that the Arrieta sisters and Jamal died from inhalation of smoke and other toxic materials.

Fire officials said the temperature inside the mobile home was 1,600 degrees when the first firefighters arrived at Willow Springs Estates mobile home park, 6001 S. Palo Verde Road, about four minutes after the fire was reported.

The blaze was not reported to the Rural/Metro Fire Department for about 10 minutes after it was discovered about 7:30 a.m. It took more than 40 firefighters 20 minutes to control the blaze.

Authorities said the delay in reporting the fire might be because few of the residents in neighboring mobile homes have telephones.

The Arrieta sisters, who lived at the mobile home next door, were spending the night. The Stephens family was visiting from Oakswood, Ga.

The homeowners, Raz and Carrie McSwaine, were not at the home when the fire started. Authorities said the McSwaines had legal custody of Jamal, their grandson.

The American Red Cross was working yesterday to help raise airfare from Georgia to Tucson for the husband of Regina Stephens, said Becky Horn Rebenstorf, a spokeswoman for the Tucson chapter. The Red Cross also provided food, clothing and a stay at a local hotel for the survivors on Thursday night. Both the McSwaines and the Stephens were staying with friends yesterday, Rebenstorf said.

No funeral arrangements had been made yesterday for any of the four victims, officials said.

July 22, 1993, *Arizona Daily Star*:

3 children killed in fire last week are remembered

Families, friends at funeral look for lessons in loss of loved ones

By Steffannie Fedunak
The Arizona Daily Star

The faces of three young people beamed from large photographs inside the church yesterday morning, a testament to the lives abruptly ended in a raging fire a week ago.

Sisters Carrie and Erica Arrieta, 16 and 13 years old, and their cousin Jamal McSwain, 6 months, all died last Thursday when a fire destroyed the mobile home they were sleeping in at the Willow Springs Estates mobile home park at 6001 S. Palo Verde Blvd. Firefighters found Carrie Arrieta apparently shielding the younger children from the flames.

The fire also killed Carrie Arrieta's unborn daughter, who was due on the day of the fire. The child would have been named Tawana Nicole Bianca, family members said.

Yesterday, hundreds of family members and friends gathered to say goodbye at the Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church, 34 W. 34th St. They struggled to find some justification or meaning for the loss of their loved ones.

"I am grateful to know all three of them," said cousin Kenneth Grayson during the hourlong funeral service. "They brought joy to my heart, they made me happy....

"Each one of them, each one of them gave me

See **FUNERAL**, Page 3B

Tucson, Thursday, July 22, 1993 The Arizona

Funeral

Continued from Page 1B

something, gave me happiness, ... gave me a smile when I needed it."

Darenthia Grayson, Kenneth's sister, told the audience to view the deaths as a sign for everyone to heed.

"This is a message to everybody. Look at yourself.... You can reach out and touch somebody and be loved," she said. "Carrie and Erica and Jamal are telling us that. They're happy.... They want us to be happy."

Several people broke into tears as the church choir sang "Amazing Grace," but as the service was ending the choir sang a lively, uplifting song as pallbearers walked the three caskets outside.

The three were buried in East Lawn Cemetery.

Carrie and Erica Arrieta are survived by their mother, Michelle Watson; brother Victor Arrieta and sister Maria Arrieta, all of Tucson; their father, Victor Arrieta, and sister Amanda Arrieta, both of El Paso, Texas.

Jamal McSwain is survived by his parents, Anne Jacques and Ras McSwain, and his sisters Anita Jacques, Melissa Jacques, Tina Jacques and Regina Jacques and a brother Miguel Jacques, all of Tucson.

Sgt. Ron Benson, spokesman for the Pima County Sheriff's Department, said investigators have ruled out arson and believe the fire started on a chair in the living room. The exact cause of the fire is not determined, but investigators did find smoking materials adjacent to that chair.

Investigators said earlier that the batteries from a smoke detector had been removed and that improperly installed security bars on the windows did not have safety releases inside or key locks on the outside of the mobile home.

Three other people in the mobile home were pulled to safety by a neighbor.

The family is requesting donations for headstones. Contributions can be made to the Carrie and Erica Arrieta and Jamal McSwain Fund at any Bank One branch.

1993

April 4, 2008, *Arizona Daily Star*:

Hard landing flips aircraft at Benson airport, killing 2

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Two people aboard a small aircraft were killed Wednesday night when the plane made a hard landing at the airport in Benson, officials said.

James Edward Robertson, 53, of Benson and Lance Swapp, 48, of Luna, N.M., died in the plane crash, said Benson Fire Department Chief Keith Spangler.

It appears that Robertson was flying the plane, Spangler said.

The pilot attempted to land the airplane about 8 p.m. when it bounced and flipped over, said Fed- spokesman Ian Gregor. There we reports that the pilot increas power during the bounce, Greg said.

The plane departed from Saffor he said.

It's unknown whether the twi engine Beechcraft Baron had a m chanical malfunction that caus the crash or there was a pilot erro he said. The plane was destroye but it did not catch fire.

The plane was being take Thursday to Phoenix, where th National Transportation Safe Board would conduct an investig

2013

Courtesy https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.447940318624554.1073741829.447937078624878&type=3

2013

Courtesy https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.447940318624554.1073741829.447937078624878&type=3

2015

Courtesyhttp://www.cityofbenson.com/index.asp?SEC=90406728-AF54-4116-A995-31CB9A8DC2E0

Benson Volunteer Fire Department

More Than a Century of Service

The history of the Benson Fire Department is one of the most unique and inspiring in Arizona fire service history. Although the City of Benson was founded in 1880, the Benson Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1907 five years before Arizona became a Stare. An all-volunteer department for nearly a Century the Firefighters respond with a two wheel hose cart and a horse drawn wagon in the early days of the department.

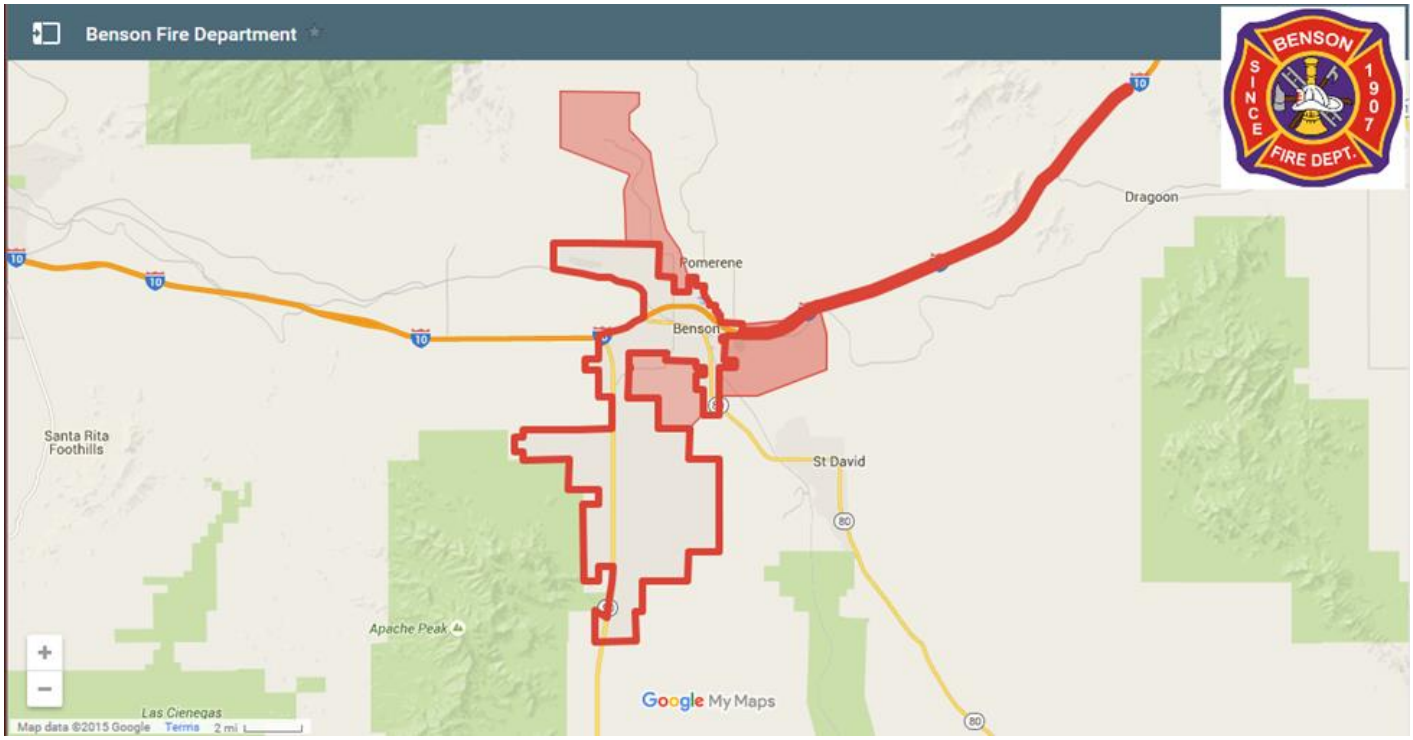
Today, we are a combination department with a full time Chief and Volunteer Firefighters along with state of the art firefighting apparatus. The Benson Fire Department is a full spectrum lifesaving service. The department responds to calls for Structure Fires, Brush Fires, Motor Vehicle Accidents, Hazardous Materials incidents and Emergency Medical Service Calls along with many other calls for service.

For more information on the Benson Fire Department visit us at the Benson Fire Department.org

Courtesy http://www.bensonfire.org/

2015

Courtesy http://www.bensonfire.org/



January 1, 2015, *Arizona Daily Star*:

2 killed in helicopter crash near Benson

JANUARY 01, 2015 12:45 AM • CARMEN DUARTE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Cochise Air — a helicopter used by the Cochise County Sheriff's Department — crashed near Interstate 10 outside of Benson on New Year's Eve.

The bodies of the pilot and mechanic were found at the crash site by a search and rescue team at about 9:20 p.m. Wednesday, said Carol Capas, a spokeswoman for the Cochise County Sheriff's Department.

The identities were withheld pending notification of relatives.

Capas said the helicopter, which is leased by the sheriff's department, was returning from the Phoenix-area after undergoing routine maintenance and headed to the Sierra Vista airport in Cochise County.

Shortly before 7 p.m., the sheriff's department was notified that the leasing company had lost communications with Cochise Air near the Benson-area, Capas said.

The department's search and rescue team, along with Benson Fire Department personnel, responded to the area in search of the helicopter. The rescue team traced the cell phone of the pilot, narrowing the search area, and Benson firefighters found the crash site, Capas said.

"This news leaves me, personally, and this organization with a heavy heart because of the tragic loss of two incredible lives," said Cochise County Sheriff Mark Dannels in a news release.

"We have worked closely with this company and these two individuals since receiving Cochise Air, and knowing that they are considered part of the sheriff's office family makes this so much harder," Dannels said. "We send our condolences out to the families of two people who will truly be missed."

Cochise Air was used by the sheriff's office and the Sierra Vista Police Department for law enforcement and public safety missions. Under the lease agreement, a pilot and mechanical crew were assigned in a civilian capacity to the sheriff's department.

The National Transportation Safety Board will investigate the crash with the assistance of sheriff's personnel, said Capas.

2016

February 9, 2016, Bensonnews-Sun

Fire dept. rolls out new engine

By CHRIS DABOVICH chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Updated Feb 9, 2016 0

Chris Dabovich | Benson News-Sun

Mark Julien of H&E Equipment of Phoenix, with Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler at the controls, give the Type I engine the once Friday. The new engine, which arrived Friday, v obtained via a FEMA grant and 5 percent city match.

BENSON — Out with the old in with the new.

The Benson Fire Department rolled out the newest addition to the department fleet, a 2016 new and improved Type I engine for structure firefighting made possible through federal grant funding and a City of Benson 5 percent match.

It was badly needed, Benson Fire Dept. Chief Keith Spangler said on Friday.

February 9, 2016, Bensonnews-Sun

"It's going to help out a lot," Spangler said. "It's going to give us a lot more resources and a lot more options when we go to calls from vehicle fires to structure fires to wrecks. It's definitely going to be better; It's got more lighting and visibility." And it's versatile, which also adds to the appeal, the chief acknowledged. The engine is equipped to fight both structure and wildfires.

"We're going to use it as an all-around engine," Spangler said. "The other truck was specifically for structure fires. This one is going to used for wildland interface, structure fires… this one's got foam on it — it's going to be one more tool in our toolbox that we can pick. If we've got a structure fire or wildland fire that's threatening, we can get this out there and get it up closer to the fire than to pull a bunch of hose across unburned property to get to it."

The 2016 state-of-the-art enclosed-cab engine, which the chief said is also safer for first responders, was made possible via a $414,486 Federal Emergency Management Agency grant awarded the department in 2014. The addition allows the department to retire the more than 43-year-old engine purchased in 1973.

"It was a lot of hard work getting it," the chief said of the grant, which is a highly competitive process.

"The city paid $23,000 for this, and basically it's a $500,000 truck," Spangler said.

2017

February 1, 2017, *Benson News Sun:*

Fire renders VFW Post 'uninhabitable'

Probe of Wednesday night blaze ongoing

BY CHRIS DABOVICH chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Feb 1, 2017 2

CHRIS DABOVICH|BENSON NEWS-SUN

Fire Wednesday night resulted in closure of the Barney-Figueroa Benson VFW Post 6271. The fire line barrier tape provided the only clue from the outside of any damage inside. It's uncertain how long the post will be closed.

Authorities continue to investigate a fire late Wednesday night at Benson's Barney-Figueroa Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6271 that has rendered the midtown building "uninhabitable" by order of city building inspectors.

Benson Fire received the dispatch at 11:16 p.m., [Jan. 25] said Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler, after Benson police patrol officers observed smoke in the area and put the call in once officers determined origin was the VFW at 233 E. 5th St.

A full-out response ensued and included mutual-aid assistance from St. David, Mescal/J6, and Pomerene fire crews.

Spangler said a forced entry was required into the structure. He said firefighters arrived to the smoke-filled area and encountered water running from beneath a door caused by a broken water line. The Fire Chief would not offer many details as to cause and damages, citing an ongoing Benson Police Department investigation.

Benson Police Chief Paul Moncada confirmed the probe but fell short of deeming the incident suspicious in nature only to say evidence forwarded to the Arizona Department of Public Safety Crime Lab has yet to be processed.

"It's under investigation," said Moncada. "We have a theory, but we're going to leave it as undetermined at this point until the lab tests our evidence to either confirm our theory or disprove it." He did say the fire appeared to be contained to the bar area which contained smoke, water and heat damage.

The Barney-Figueroa Post is active in the community, raising funds for local causes while also providing a gathering place for community members through Friday VFW fundraising dinners — the American Legion Auxiliary has one dinner monthly there — and VFW Men's Auxiliary holding a monthly Saturday breakfast as well. The past Friday's Legion Auxiliary meatloaf dinner was canceled as are all other upcoming fundraising dinners for the time being.

It remained unclear at press time when the building, or any portion of it, would be deemed safe for public use.

Clarence "Shorty" Larson, the District 7 VFW Commander, of which Benson Post 6271 is part of, indicates it may be some time until any portion of the building is deemed safe for use.

Larson said.

"We can't do anything until the insurance company comes back, and the earliest would be this week, Friday, or next week some time," said Larson. "Nothing else can be done, the club is closed, period. It can't be gone into because utilities run through the canteen."

2018

September 26, 2018, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_19c551c0-c0fa-11e8-a686-6b5ea9bf3d10.html

Midtown fire triggers multi-agency response

By Chris Dabovich chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Sep 26, 2018 Updated Sep 26, 2018 0

Weed burning that got out of control in mid Benson Saturday resulted in loss of a garage, including a fifth-wheel recreational vehicle, downed electrical power lines and threatened nearby structures.

Emergency crews responded to the 1:30 p.m. fire in the 200 block of E. Eighth Street. Benson Fire utilized an engine and ladder truck for quick suppression, acknowledged Benson Fire Department Chief Keith Spangler.

An ominous plume of thick, black smoke was visible from several vantage points, including Lions Park where the Benson Pony Express Western Days were in full swing.
The blaze kept neighbors on edge as firefighters battled to keep the fully involved structure contained.

"I heard a loud pop and the wife came in said there was a fire," commented one neighbor. "I went out and it was already fully engulfed by the time I got out there." A series of pops could be heard as the fire raged.

Authorities cordoned off the block from Seventh to Eighth streets and west from San Pedro to Huachuca streets.

"They were burning weeds and it got away from them," explained Spangler, who cited Sulphur Springs Electric Cooperative personnel for their quick response. "There were wires arcing when we first got on scene," the chief said.

Across the alleyway, a garbage can and a portable garage melted from the intense heat, and the chief offered advice. "We remind everyone don't burn on windy days… in can quickly get away from you," he said.

Along with Benson Fire, neighboring fire departments from Mescal, Pomerene and St. David responded, with Benson Police, Cochise County Sheriff's Office, Arizona Department of Public Safety and Healthcare Innovations assisting.

2018

September 26, 2018, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_19c551c0-c0fa-11e8-a686-6b5ea9bf3d10.html

Midtown fire triggers multi-agency response

By Chris Dabovich chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Sep 26, 2018 Updated Sep 26, 2018 0

The garage and contents were destroyed Saturday in a fire in midtown Benson. The incident resulted in a multi-agency response.

Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

The blaze provided challenges on many fronts.

Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

Firefighters were able to keep the blaze contained to the one structure Saturday in midtown. -

Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

2018

September 26, 2018, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_19c551c0-c0fa-11e8-a686-6b5ea9bf3d10.html

Midtown fire triggers multi-agency response

By Chris Dabovich chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Sep 26, 2018 Updated Sep 26, 2018 0

Cochise County Sheriff's Office was quick on the scene to help with crowd and traffic control throughout the ordeal.

Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

2019

October 23, 2019, www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_589e6cbe-f4ee-11e9-8904-1b382036e6f4.html

The vehicles were fully involved upon firefighters' arrival.

Buy Now

BENSON — Three vehicles went up in flames in an early morning fire Monday in midtown that drew a multi-agency response.

Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler said the blaze, a van and two RVs, is suspicious however the exact cause is unknown. The fire, in the 300 block of E. 3rd Street just north of the railroad tracks on the east end of the street, is a block away from a previous structure fire. It's an area, the chief said, "where we've had calls before for fires."

There were no structures affected, the chief said.

"It looks like a van or RVs went up in flames," one witness reported while the blaze was ongoing at 12:43 a.m.

Pomerene and Mescal Fire departments provided mutual aid response, along with HCI, Benson Police Dept., Cochise County Sheriff's Office Sulphur Springs Electric Cooperative and City of Benson utilities.

The chief said utilities crews reported there was no power source detected to any of the RVs.

2019

November 12, 2019, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_9df7bff2-04f9-11ea-b405-cbab56b00698.html

1 of 3

Benson Fire Dept. first responders listen to the mayor's proclamation in their honor. Personnel from Benson Police Dept., Cochise County Sheriff's Office, Mescal and St. David Fire departments and Healthcare Innovations were on hand.

Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler receives the proclamation from Gary Lakin of Walmart who spearheaded the First Responders Appreciation Day.

–Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

Benson Mayor Toney King proclaims Nov. 9 First Responder's Appreciation Day Saturday during a brief ceremony at Benson Walmart.

–Chris Dabovich|News-Sun

2019

November 12, 2019, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_9df7bff2-04f9-11ea-b405-cbab56b00698.html

BENSON — Appreciation for first responders was behind a brief presentation Saturday at Benson Walmart.

Fire trucks and law enforcement vehicles lined the east portion front of the building at 201 S. Prickly Pear before a small crowd that included local first responders from police, fire and ambulance.

Mayor Toney King proclaimed Nov. 9 First Responder Appreciation Day, and thanked local responders for the job they do and for going above and beyond for the citizens in the communities which comprise the San Pedro Valley.

Gary Lakin of the Benson Walmart store had been organizing the event for more than a year, he said.

"It's to show that there are places where we do appreciate our first responders and our police officers, that's why I presented this.

Following the Mayor's proclamation, Lakin presented the plaque from which it was read to Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler.

Along with Benson police and fire departments, first responders from Mescal and St. David fire departments, Cochise County Sheriff's Office and Healthcare Innovations attended the 20 minute ceremony.

2019

November 18, 2019, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_0b4ed66e-0a52-11ea-a999-b379568b06d2.html

Fuel leak results in plane fire at airport

By Chris Dabovich chris.dabovich@bensonnews-sun.com Nov 18, 2019 Updated 26 sec ago 0

The hanger and other aircraft sustained some heat, smoke and water damage.

Benson Fire Dept.|Photo

BENSON — The sprinkler system activated appropriately and saved further damage after a fuel leak resulted in a plane catching fire in a Benson airport hangar.

"The sprinkler saved the building and saved other planes from getting fire damage," said Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler. Firefighters responded to Benson Municipal Airport at 2200 W. Aviation Dr., Monday just before 10 a.m.

Spangler said three persons were working on the twin-engine plane in the maintenance hangar. that caught fire. At least two other planes in the hangar sustained some smoke damage, the chief said.

There were no injuries, although the persons agreed to have themselves checked out for potential smoke inhalation.

Spangler said the sprinkler system did the job it was designed to do.

"The fire was out when we got there," said Spangler, noting the hangar did receive smoke, heat and water damage.

Mescal/J6 Fire District, St. David Fire, Benson Police and Healthcare Innovations also responded. Benson Fire Dept. personnel cleared the scene at 12:15 p.m., the chief said.

2020

February 18, 2020, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_b515cca2-5269-11ea-9903-2fbb9a4e4aac.html

Fire destroys two travel trailers and one home, damages a second home

By Dana Cole dana.cole@myheraldreview.com Feb 18, 2020 Updated 16 hrs ago 0

1 of 4

A fire damaged several structures Saturday.
Photos by Tanja Stoddard Special to the San Pedro News-Sun

A travel trailer and a fifth-wheel were destroyed in the fire.
Photos by Tanja Stoddard Special to the San Pedro News-Sun

No one was injured in Saturday's fires.
Tanja Stoddard Special to the San Pedro News-Sun

February 18, 2020, https://www.bensonnews-sun.com/news/article_b515cca2-5269-11ea-9903-2fbb9a4e4aac.html

Fire destroys two travel trailers and one home, damages a second home

By Dana Cole dana.cole@myheraldreview.com Feb 18, 2020 Updated 16 hrs ago 0

Benson — A fire that started when a mattress fell on top of a generator destroyed a travel trailer and an unoccupied home at the 100 block of W. Fifth St. in Benson on Saturday, then spread to two other properties where a fifth-wheel was destroyed. The heat from the initial blaze also sparked a fire at a second unoccupied home and caused substantial damage to that structure, according to Benson Fire Chief Keith Spangler.

"My understanding is, that the second home belongs to winter visitors that are out of town at this time," Spangler said.

"The call came in around 3:52 Saturday afternoon with the initial fire ... That fire totally destroyed the travel trailer and house at that location, then spread west to a property ... where the fifth-wheel was completely destroyed. The second home ... sustained substantial damage," Spangler said. "Fortunately, we were able to contain the fire at that location and prevented the second structure from being completely destroyed."

Spangler said Tuesday morning it is believed that both homes were unoccupied.

"We're thankful there were no injuries," he said. "We want to thank the Benson Police Department, Cochise County Sheriff's Office for assisting, and Mescal/J-6 Fire District, Pomerene Fire District and St. David Fire District for providing mutual aid," the chief said.

Greater Tucson Fire Foundation

Thank you for taking an interest in Tucson Fire Department history —

This is one of many sections that contain information, documents, letters, newspaper articles, pictures, etc. They have been collected and arranged in chronological order or by a subject. These items were collected, organized and entered into a computerized database by Dave Ridings retired Assistant Chief Tucson Fire Department, Al Ring friend of the department, Greater Tucson Fire Foundation and with the help of many friends and fellow firefighters.

All graphics have been improved to make the resolution as good as possible, but the reader should remember that many came from copies of old newspaper articles. This also applies to other items such as documents, letters, etc.

Credit to the source of the documents, photos, etc. is provided whenever it was available. We realize that many items are not identified and regret that we weren't able to provide this information. As far as the newspaper articles that are not identified, 99% of them would have to be from one of three possible sources. The *Arizona Daily Star,* The *Tucson Citizen* and the *Tucson Daily Citizen,* for which we want to give a special thanks.

Please use this information as a reference tool only. If the reader uses any of the information for any purpose other than a reference tool, they should get permission from the source.

Should the reader have additional information on the above subject we would appreciate you sharing it with us. Please see the names and contact information on the 1st. TFD Archives page right below this paragraph.

Greater Tucson Fire Foundation