

UPDATE #3 - Fires in Historic Oakwood

11/23/14 901 W, 3 I - + 9 - 6

November 23

Research documents again updated. Finding more fires, notably those that were very minor. Still five tiers to these categories, but using loss/damage to determine Tier 2 versus Tier 3. And yet some nits to pick. The 200+ smaller fires include a couple that probably belong in the "big list." And maybe a sixth tier should be added, where we don't have damage/loss amounts. Or maybe the whole tier system is confusing, and one big list sorted by address is better. Or a master index. Yes, one more list! Will ponder.

[Read the research document](#) (PDF).

[Read a one-page summary of the research](#) (PDF).

November 16

Here are a couple photos. Left to right, top to bottom are (black and white) 222 North Bloodworth on February 17, 1957, 407 Polk on February 18, 1958, 403 Edenton Street x 2 on July 23, 1978, and 202 Linden on March 20, 1984. *News & Observer* credit for all. Color photos are (first set) 515 Oakwood on October 12, 1991 (Jeff Harkey), 500 Franklin on April 6, 1992 x 2 (Jeff Harkey), 405-407 New Bern on June 20, 1993 (Jeff Harkey), 501 Oakwood on November 3, 1999 (Lee Wilson), and 100 North Bloodworth on July 5, 2001 (Lee Wilson). Second set are 405 N. East Street on January 10, 2010 (Mike Legeros) and 704 E. Franklin Street on October 10, 2011 (Mike Legeros).

Click once or twice to enlarge:



News & Observer photos



Jeff Harkey, Lee Wilson photos



Mike Legeros photos

November 14

The research document has been updated, with some data revisions. And a one-page summary of the data has been created. See bottom of this posting for those links. Also present this research last night at the Society's monthly meeting. Here are some questions and answers based on my ten-minute presentation:

Q: The buildings in your list that have burned down were all destroyed (except one) in recent decades? What is that?

A: To be determined! Might reflect trends in occupancies. Might correlate to deteriorating conditions of particular structures.

Q: Why isn't the fire that I remember happening listed here?

A: First, there are two buckets of data. First are the working fires, split into five tiers. Those are the fires where flames damaged an entire room, or the contents of an entire room. Or greater. Second are the smaller fires, which can include things like a mattress that caught fire, or something cooking on a stove that filled the house with smoke. (And such a fire can produce enough smoke that the carpeting and other materials require replacement. Thus the label "small fire" is a relative one. For the homeowner, it's still a big deal!)

Q: How complete is your data?

A: For working fires, it's pretty darned robust. Through oral histories and newspaper articles and log book entries and Legeros research over the years, we've nailed the lion's share. Or maybe nearly all. For "small fires," which are included at the end of the research document, it's more of a representative sampling. Such fires are harder to find in the historical record. Plus they weren't the focus of the project. Rather, they were tallied as ancillary data as a bonus.

Q: How often will you update this data?

A: New and improved data was posted this week, so reload and re-view the research document(s). Will keep poking around for another week

or two. By early or mid-December, it'll probably be done for the duration.

October 24

How many fires have happened in Historic Oakwood?

That was the question posed by [The Society For the Preservation of Historic Oakwood](#), in advance of their annual [Candlelight Tour](#). History Boy accepted the challenge and commenced some six weeks of research. Okay, six weeks including three trips including two out of state. (Took my files with me.)

The parameters? Had to have occurred within the defined historic district. Meaning, specific blocks (or addresses) on such streets as Bloodworth, East, Person, and Polk. And only working fires. No pots on stoves. No mattress fires. No vehicle fires.

Sources included Oakwood historian Matthew Brown, News & Observer and Raleigh Times articles, Raleigh Fire Department records including their public [fire report web site](#) (not to mention the log books of Engine 3 and Engine 7, which were particularly helpful), Sanborn Maps, city directories, and county real estate records.

Survey Says!

What was found? Five tiers of fires in the historic districts (totals updated November 23):

- Destroyed - 8
- Major (damage) fires, building not destroyed - 12
- Working fires, not major damage, but more than minimal damage - 72
- Outbuildings, kitchens, barns, garages - 11
- Unconfirmed, need dates or addresses - 12

One of which killed four people on April 29, 1982. One of the deadliest in the city's history. Another on February 18, 1958, saw the injury of firefighter Claude Johnson, who broke his leg. It was later amputated and he was unable to return to firefighting. He became a dispatcher and retired as same twenty years later. [Read that blog post](#).

The earliest fire was 1890, the latest was 2012. The totals for recent decades are three in 2010s, five in 2000s, twelve in 1990s, nine in 1980s, and thirteen in 1970s.

Plus some smaller fires (31), some notable fires outside the district (A&P grocery, IGA grocery, etc.), and even a list of fireman who lived there. All sorts of goodies for your Friday reading pleasure.

Data review is absolutely encouraged. Help me correct errors, clarify information, and, of course, add any other fires yet confirmed or discovered.

The Results

[Read the research document](#) (PDF).

[Read a one-page summary of the research](#) (PDF).

Chief Lewis Hicks lived at 223 N. East Street, almost directly across the street from where Capt Randy Scott lives now.

Brian - 10/28/14 - 07:45

I owned 609 Polk St. from 1989 until 2000. There is evidence in the attic of a fire involving the roof.

Chris Crew ([Email](#)) - 11/14/14 - 12:07

Name: (real name

Remember personal info?