

Fire on the Mall!

Memories of the Mangel's Building Fire – July 7, 1981



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Introduction

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Part I - Narrative

Setting the Stage

Let's travel back in time to the early Eighties, to the second year of that decade. The summer of 1981. Ronald Reagan is President, and has survived an assassination attempt. Pope John Paul II is also recovering from gunshot wounds. The Oakland Raiders are the year's Super Bowl champs. Major League Baseball has gone on strike. The Centers for Disease Control have identified the first recognized cases of an acquired immunodeficiency disease.

The City of Raleigh is less than half its present size at 56.63 square miles, and its population is less than a third of its present amount at 149,771. It's the state's third largest city. G. Smeades York is serving his second term as Mayor. The Fayetteville Street pedestrian mall and the Raleigh Civic Center are four years old. The merged Raleigh and Wake County school system is five years old.



The Raleigh Fire Department has fifteen fire stations, with sixteen engines, three aerial ladders, three service ladders, two rescue units, and three District Chiefs.¹ They'll answer 5,214 calls in 1981. This is also the second year of the citywide first responder program. They have 325 authorized positions (with 299 in Operations), and a budget of \$5.7 million. The Fire Chief is Rufus Keith. The Assistant Chiefs are Norman Walker (Operations) and C. T. May (Services).

The month is July, the day is the seventh. Tuesday, July 7, 1981. The forecast says sunny, with warmer temperatures and high humidity. The weather station at the airport will record a high of 90 degrees that day, with a dew point of 73 degrees, and a maximum humidity of 93. No precipitation, and wind speeds of 5 mph, with maximum gusts of 9 mph.²

¹The three service ladder companies were converted to two aerial ladder companies in 1987 and 1990. The District Chief position is presently named Battalion Chief.

²Weather Underground, <https://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KRDU/1981/7/7/DailyHistory.html>.

Smoke Investigation

At about 8:45 a.m., the attendant in a parking lot in the 100 block of S. Salisbury Street noticed smoke coming from the Mangel’s Building next door. He saw smoke coming from a second-floor window. He went inside, into the Corkscrew Restaurant, and informed the owner of what he saw.³ The owner called the fire department and Engine 1 and Engine 3 were dispatched at 8:50 a.m. to a smoke investigation.

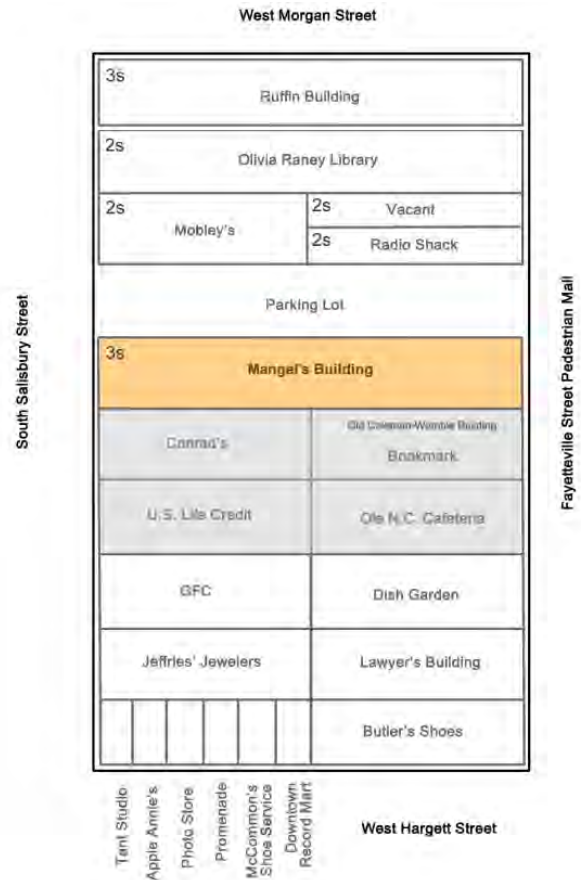
The Mangel’s Building was a three-story, eighty year-old building at 124 Fayetteville Street Mall, in the middle of a block bounded by Morgan, Salisbury, and Hargett streets.⁴ It spanned the width of the block, with a front entrance on the mall and a rear entrance on Salisbury Street. The first floor was divided into two main businesses—the Corkscrew Restaurant and the Raleigh Bazaar flea market—and ten smaller ones.⁵ The second and presumably third floor were empty, neither occupied, nor used for storage. The building adjoined two others on its north side. There was a small parking lot on its south side.

Built between 1890 and 1900, the Mangel’s Building had a masonry exterior that covered solid wooden construction: timber beams and columns, and hard pine floors. Over those were plaster and sheetrock ceilings and walls. It had also been extensively remodeled inside, with what fire officials would later call a “labyrinth of subdivided rooms and false ceilings.”⁶ The total square footage was 24,940 square feet. The building bore the name of a longtime woman’s clothing store that was located there until 1975.⁷

There was no sprinkler system, but it was equipped with a pair of portable fire extinguishers.

**MANGEL’S OF RALEIGH INC, Helen J Bourke Mgr,
Women’s and Misses’ Wear, 124 Fayetteville, Tel
TEmples 2-1931**

Raleigh City Directory, 1960



³The story of the parking lot attendant appeared in news stories. The smoke was also seen by a Sunbeam bread deliveryman, who recounted his story to fire investigators. He was making a delivery to the Corkscrew Restaurant and saw smoke coming from beneath a window at the back of the building. He went inside and told the owner to call the fire department.

⁴The building was cited as two-story in news reports.

⁵The ten other businesses were Allred Home Fashions House and an array of smaller antique, jewelry, concession, and gift shops.

⁶Raleigh Times, July 9, 1981.

⁷Raleigh city directories first listed the store in 1928, with Louis Josefsberg as Manager. By the 1930s, Jack Josefsberg is listed as Manager.

Engine 1 arrived at 8:54 a.m. and just ahead of Engine 3. They parked on Salisbury Street, and found light smoke conditions inside. As they began investigating—with two firefighters going inside with a hose line—the smoke, and soon heat, increased. Conditions quickly worsened, and heavy smoke started showing along with high heat. Engine 1 hooked to a hydrant beside the building, while Engine 3 moved onto the mall, and connected to a second hydrant. Truck 1 was requested, and was followed by the dispatch of three additional engines and a second truck company between 9:04 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.

Thirty minutes later, Rescue 12 was dispatched at 9:39 a.m. and a third aerial ladder, Old Truck 5, was brought from Station 15 at 9:45 a.m. No formal first- or second-alarm assignments were apparently dispatched.

By the second hour, flames were showing from the roof. Smoke billowed from the structure and filled the pedestrian mall. Firefighters pressed onward inside the building, trying to find the seat of the fire. More companies were dispatched: new Engine 13 at 10:15 a.m., Rescue 14 at 10:26 a.m., reserve Engine 2 at 10:30 a.m., and Engine 13 at 10:44 a.m.

New Engine 13 was a recently delivered Mack pumper parked at Station 2 and not yet in service. It was called to the scene, along with eighteen firefighter recruits in class at the fire station.

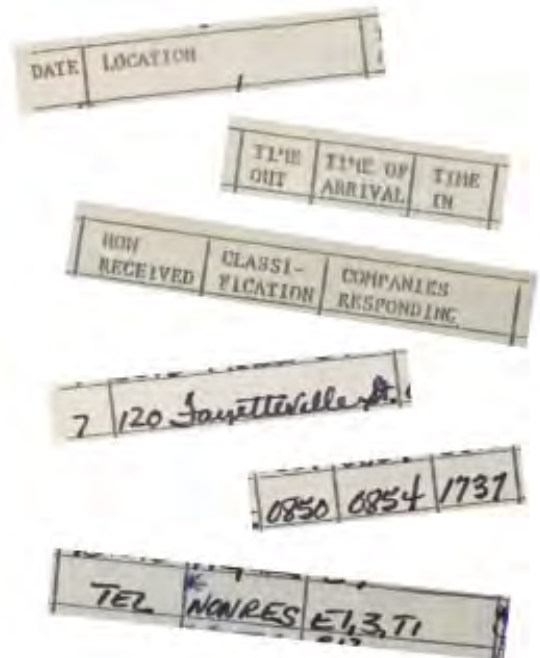
By the third hour, bulges and cracks in the building's walls were observed. Floors inside the building had already collapsed. Firefighters were no longer inside the structure—due to the danger—but were still standing in doorways, training their hose streams into the building. Other firefighters manned portable monitors on the mall and in the parking lot.

About 11:00 a.m., the walls on two sides of the building collapsed and showered debris into the mall and the parking lot. Crews abandoned their hose lines and portable monitors. They scrambled from the falling debris and escaped injury.

The collapse was helpful to the firefighters, as it helped relieve the heat and pressure inside the burning building. Firefighters picked through the rubble, to find their hoses and nozzles, and resumed spraying water on the fire. Truck 1 was also moved back into the parking lot, and continued its aerial streams.

The equivalent of a third alarm was dispatched around 11:30 a.m., with Engine 11 at 11:28 a.m., Engine 9 around the same time, and Engine 6 at 11:45 a.m. The equivalent of a fourth alarm was dispatched just after noon, with Engine 10 at 12:01 p.m., both Engine 7 and Truck 7 at 12:02 p.m., and Engine 8 at about the same time.

By noon, the fire was under control. Additional engine and truck companies continued to be sent to the scene through the day, including Truck 16, Engine 15, and Engine 14. Other companies left and returned, such as



Excerpt from daily fire report ledger book

Truck 1 which was re-dispatched at 2:33 p.m., and Engine 7, which was re-dispatched at 5:18 p.m. Crews would remain at the scene of the fire through at least Thursday.

Fighting the Fire

The Mangel's Building fire started in the back of the building, in a small area between the first and second floors. The building's wooden floors and false ceilings helped fuel the fire, which quickly mushroomed and spread through the rest of the structure. Flames leapt thirty feet into the air after the fire vented through the roof. The wind was in the fire department's favor, however. There was only a slight breeze, and though originally blowing toward the exposures next door, it later reversed.



Gary Knight photo

Crews had difficulty both finding and controlling the fire, as the first floor of the building was heavily partitioned. “It was like fighting five separate fires at once” said District Chief Lewis V. Choplin in later news stories.⁸ The structure had numerous false walls and ceilings added as the result of renovation work over the years. “You name it, they had done it in there,” added Fire Chief Rufus Keith. “We couldn’t find [the fire]. We never really found [it].”⁹

The intensity of the blaze grew as each hour passed. The owner of the Bookmark was planning to open at 10:00 a.m., but the building next door—that shared a common wall—was blazing. And “it seemed to get worse and worse,” he recalled to reporters. “The more firemen that came, the worse the fire got.”¹⁰ By 11:00 a.m., the owner was forced to abandon his shop, and taking memorabilia and some books with him.

Black smoke covered the Fayetteville Street Mall like a blanket, and shoppers found fresh air inside stores farthest from the fire. Those businesses closer to the Mangel's Building were impacted by smoke and water damage, as well as power and phone outages. The fire also attracted hundreds of spectators to the scene, with crowds so large that the police department sent special teams to watch for pickpockets and looters.¹¹

In addition to the many hand hose lines and portable ground monitors, three pieces of aerial apparatus were used to spray water into the upper stories of the building and onto the roof:

- Truck 1 - 1977 Mack/Baker 85-foot aerial platform. Parking lot beside the building, then temporarily moved to Salisbury Street.
- Truck 5 - 1979 Mack/1958 American LaFrance 100-foot aerial ladder. Fayetteville Street Mall, facing the front of the building.
- Truck 5, Old - 1961 American LaFrance 100-foot aerial ladder. South Salisbury Street, parallel to the back of the building.

⁸*Raleigh Times*, July 8, 1981.

⁹*ibid.*

¹⁰*Raleigh Times*, July 7, 1981.

¹¹The *Raleigh Times* said that there were hundreds of spectators, while the *News & Observer* said thousands.

Collapsing Walls

At about 11:00 a.m., the walls collapsed. First, a section on the mall side sent firefighters scrambling, and then a second section crumbled into the parking lot.

The collapse was expected. Cracks and bulges in the walls had been observed and were being watched closely by the chief officers. Truck 1 was moved from its position in the parking lot to a safer spot on Salisbury Street. And firefighters with hand lines were not allowed inside.

Then a section of the wall on the mall side began peeling away.¹² The crews ran for cover, leaving their hoses in place. It was a close call for some, as one firefighter remembered bricks striking the back of her boots as she ran from her abandoned hose line. After the first collapse, a section of the south wall collapsed into the parking lot. The falling rubble crushed two cars and damaged a third.¹³ No one was injured, however, on either side of the building.



Gary Knight photo

Noted the news stories, “a collective gasp rose from spectators” who were watching the blaze. As the wall tumbled, they felt a “blast of intense heat.” Recalled Raleigh lawyer Thomas C. Manning, “It was just like a wave of heat rolling down that mall.” He added, “It was like opening an oven when you’ve got a turkey cooking. That’s the way it felt.”¹⁴

“It was a blessing,” Chief Keith later told reporters, “because it relieved some of the pressure [inside the structure].”¹⁵ Had the wall not collapsed, he speculated, fire might have spread to the roof of the vacant Coleman-Womble building next door. Fire did creep into an elevator shaft leading to the building, but damage was minimal due to the Mangel’s Building’s fire wall.¹⁶

“We knew we had lost [the building],” said Chief Keith, “So we had to concentrate on keeping it from jumping the rooftop and spreading to [next door].”¹⁷ The parking lot on the south side also acted as a fire break and prevented the fire from spreading to the buildings on the north side of the block.

More than 100 firefighters responded to the fire, including off-duty members and firefighters from suburban volunteer fire departments.¹⁸ Also helping were nineteen recruits from the fire academy, due to graduate on July 17. They fought the fire for over three hours in temperatures ranging between 83 and 89 degrees.

¹²Photographer Gary Knight captured the collapse of the west wall in a sequence of photos. See later section.

¹³Barbara H. Smith’s 1978 rust-colored Mustang was crushed “to the size of a dishwasher,” reported the *News & Observer* on July 8, 1981.

¹⁴*News & Observer*, July 8, 1981.

¹⁵*Raleigh Times*, July 7, 1981.

¹⁶The building’s firewall may have been the only thing that saved half a city block from destruction, officials also said.

¹⁷*Raleigh Times*, July 8, 1981.

¹⁸ Other accounts said 75 firefighters fought the blaze.

Every fire station in the city sent units to the scene, either as part of the original response(s) or as special called units or relief companies. Those companies still in service concentrated on coverage in the downtown area, while Cary, Garner, and Six Forks fire departments provided coverage in other areas of the city.

Over thirty firefighters suffered smoke inhalation and heat exhaustion, and were treated by Wake County EMS personnel and the two fire department rescue squads. Eleven or twelve were transported and treated at hospitals, while more than twenty were treated at the scene. Firefighters sprawled upon the grassy areas of the mall, “sucking oxygen and gulping down soft drinks and water,” as the *News & Observer* wrote.¹⁹ Salt tablets were also distributed, after officials purchased all eight bottles on the shelves at the nearby Revco drug store. No serious injuries were reported.

Captured on Film

One dramatic moment was caught on film by *Raleigh Times* photographer Seny Norasingh. He captured firefighter Reggie Perry clinging to the outside of the bucket of Truck 1. Or what was called in some news reports as the fire department’s “cherry picker.”

As the story goes, the platform was raised with two firefighters in the bucket when flames exploded from the roof. Perry instinctively jumped, but was grabbed by Thomas “T.J.” Lester before he could fall. As the tower was rotated and then lowered, recounted the *Times*, the unmanned master stream sprayed in an arc that sent spectators on the mall scrambling for shelter.

Norasingh's photo was transmitted on national newswires, and the picture appeared in newspapers across the country. The city subsequently received notes from other fire departments that saw it. The photograph became well-known within the fire department, though the details of the rescue have been less well-preserved.

Some tell the story as heavy smoke sending Perry out of the bucket, while others say it was fire. The truth is a combination of both.

Prior to the wall collapse, Truck 1 was still operating from the parking lot beside the Mangel’s Building. Two firefighters had already been in the bucket, and were sent to the hospital with smoke inhalation. They were replaced by Perry and Lester.

While airborne and over the fire, nearby refrigerant lines ruptured on an air conditioning unit. The escaping Freon gas became heated, and produced Phosgene gas. The effects of this acrid and deadly gas—most famously used as chemical warfare in World War I— were felt by the men in the bucket. But as they attempted to move the bucket using their controls, the controls didn't respond. At the turntable, the driver/operator had inadvertently depressed a pedal that overrode the controls in the bucket.



Robert Ott photo



Seny Norasingh photo

¹⁹*News & Observer*, July 8, 1981.

The effects of the gas compelled Perry to jump. He was caught by Lester, and both were caught on camera. The bucket was lowered, the truck was moved before the wall collapsed, and both the photo and the fire became a part of history.²⁰

People Watching

Hundreds of spectators lined the mall and Salisbury Street. Some could feel the heat even a block away on the Salisbury Street side. Dozens of police officers responded, to secure the area and control the crowd. They roped off the area, and the immense crowd was orderly. Members of the police department's Selective Enforcement Unit also responded and watched for pickpockets and looters. No vandalism or larceny was reported.

Buildings were evacuated for several hours in the 100 block of the mall, as well as some in the 200 block. Many of the spectators were employees from the emptied buildings. Judges of the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals watched the blaze, along with attorneys whose offices were on the mall.

At the Lawyer's Building at 134 Fayetteville Street Mall, two attorneys called two moving vans to the Hargett Street corner of the mall, after firefighters told them that they had about twenty minutes to vacate their offices. "We formed an assembly line and moved everything out but the furniture," said lawyer Thomas C. Manning.²¹

Traffic in a two-square block area was diverted during the incident. Electric power to the entire block was shut down, and telephone service was also disrupted to a number of stores as a cable on the Mangel's Building melted. Twelve businesses lost power, and at least eight lost phone service.

This was also the first major fire on the Fayetteville Street Mall, which had been converted to a pedestrian mall a few years earlier.

It was described as "one of the largest fires in the downtown in recent years" by Jerry Heath, Assistant Director of the Raleigh-Wake Communications Center.²² "As far as involvement and handling," added Chief Keith, "this is the worst in about ten or twelve years."²³ He also said the incident used more personnel and apparatus than any fire in the city's history.

²⁰ How high is bucket in the picture? Notice that the boom sections are collapsed, and the truck's front outrigger is visible in the lower corner of the frame. The bottom of the bucket is probably eight feet in the air.

How high was the bucket, when Perry fell out and was grabbed? A police officer at the fire recalls seeing the platform fully extended. As the wall fell, Perry "dropped everything" and "held on" as the platform was rotated "north toward the Capitol." He got soaked during the swing. Legeros Fire Blog Archives 2006-2015 – The Mangle Fire, 1981 – The Rescue, The Photo,

<http://www.legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog/pivot/entry.php?id=2992>.

²¹*News & Observer*, July 8, 1981.

²²*Raleigh Times*, July 7, 1981.

²³*Ibid.*

Damages and Losses

The Mangel’s Building was occupied on the first floor only, by two main businesses and ten smaller ones:²⁴

	Name	Owner
Main Businesses	Corkscrew Restaurant	Henry Mouchahoir
	Raleigh Bazaar	Ann Jensen
Smaller Businesses	Allreds Home Fashion	Ann Allreds
	Devone’s Fashions	Raymond Devone
	Discount For Beauty	Jim & Deloris Lawrence
	Gems & Silver	Ralph Warner
	Invention Marketing	Chuck Atkinson
	Second Story Books	Carrol Sugg
	This & That Brass Items	Blair Smith
	Victoria Limited – Antique store	Ann Jensen
	Concession stand	Zel Warner
	Unnamed	Betty Sager

All of the businesses were destroyed, and the building itself was a total loss. The tax value according to county records was \$63,190. Its value and corresponding damage was recorded by the fire department as \$229,750.

The Mangel’s Building was insured for \$150,000. The Raleigh Bazaar was not insured, nor were the tenants. They were unable to purchase reasonably priced insurance, said the Bazaar’s owner to the *News & Observer*, because of the building’s age.

The Corkscrew Restaurant had \$18,429 of property, \$20,000 of insurance, and \$80,000 of damage. The value of the Raleigh Bazaar’s inventory was estimated at \$150,000 to \$175,000. ²⁵ Damage to the Bazaar was estimated as \$10,000.

Damages to the smaller businesses as recorded by the fire department were:

- \$40,000 - Gems & Silver
- \$35,000 - Victoria Limited
- \$8,800 - Allreds Home Fashion
- \$7,000 - Discount For Beauty
- \$5,000 - Invention Marketing
- \$4,000 - This & That Brass Items
- \$3,000 - Concession stand
- \$2,500 - Devone’s Fashions
- \$2,000 - Betty Sager’s business
- \$950 - Second Story Books

Total damage was \$229,750 for the building and \$188,250 for the contents.

²⁴Did the ten smaller stores comprise the Raleigh Bazaar? Perhaps or probably, but the descriptions in the news stories don’t offer a definite answer. Only a couple of the smaller store names appeared in the newspaper. The remaining names were recorded in fire department records.

²⁵The owner of the Bazaar escaped with only her poodle, ironically named Smokey.

The Other Stores on the Mall

Many businesses along the 100 block of the Fayetteville Street Mall suffered smoke damage. Most of the establishments reopened the next day. At the Bookmark, the manager didn't see much damage to the bookstore. "I'll just blow out the smoke," he said.²⁶ Little damage was found at the Ole N.C. Cafeteria, which was open the next day.

Olivia Raney Library at the end of the block was also open, and with no smoke or water damage. Only the smell of smoke was present, said a librarian. They were helped by the wind, which was blowing away from the library on the day of the fire. U.S. Credit Life was open but with minor smoke damage. Radio Shack was closed, due to lack of either electricity or telephone service. Little damage was reported at the store, though the manager's 1971 Chevrolet Impala was destroyed by the wall that collapsed into the parking lot.

Stores closed due to damage included Conrad's Uniform, which suffered smoke and water damage amounting to about \$20,000. The Dish Garden also suffered smoke damage, and the owner hoped to reopen in a few days.

Other businesses were impacted on the day of the fire because they had to close after evacuating.

Brittain's department store had recorded just a single sale—one dress for \$35.36—before police evacuated them, just minutes after the wall collapsed across the mall. Some stores closed due to loss of power, and in turn suffered losses from spoiled food and dying plants during the outage. The longest break in power was four hours. The interruption of phone service continued into the day after, for about a dozen small businesses on Salisbury and Hargett streets.

The impact on mall businesses varied considerably and was based on their distance to the fire. At Hudson Belk, near the south end, manager W. J. Hudson said "it's just been a normal day."²⁷

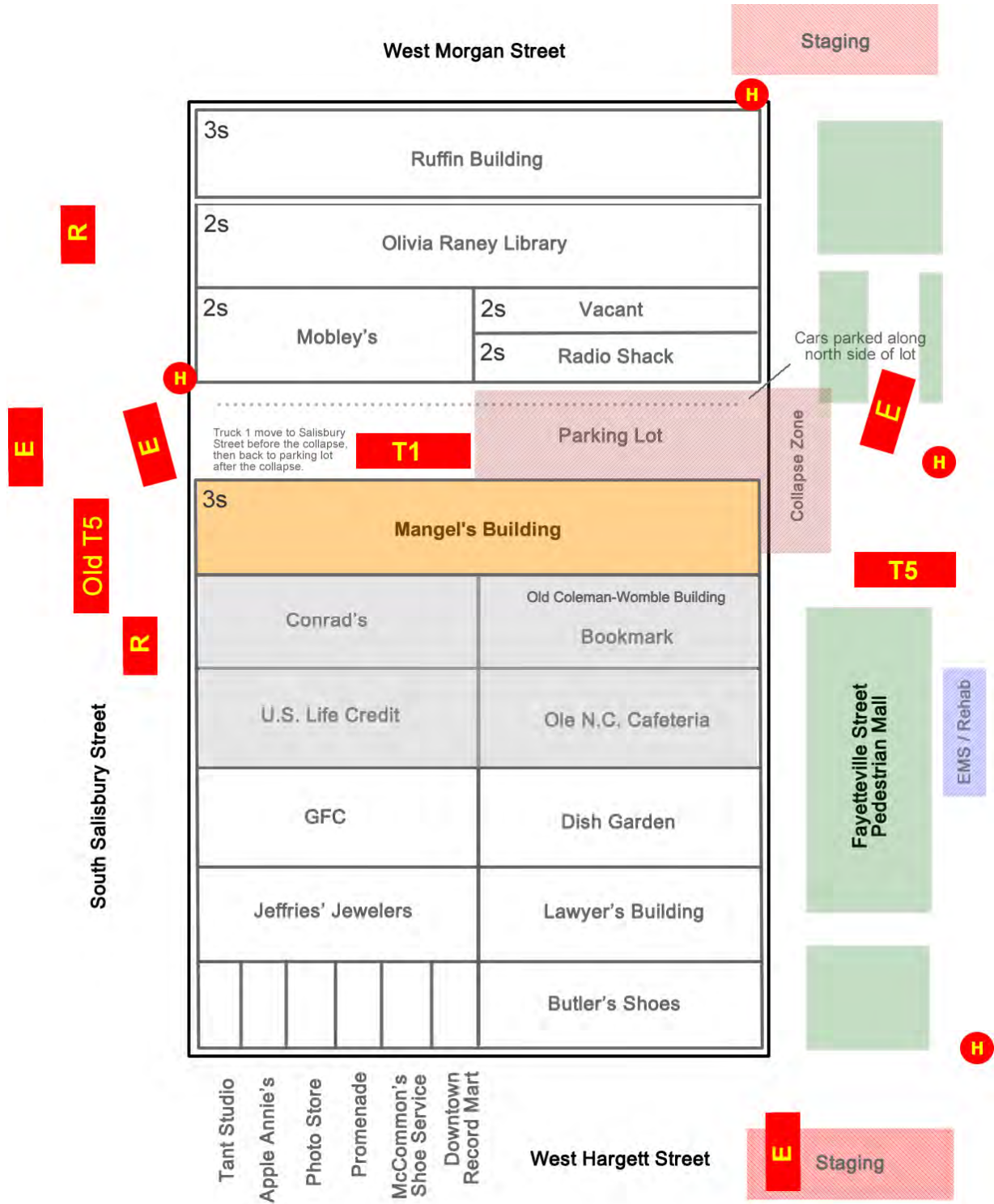
Some businesses benefited from the fire and the spectators it attracted downtown. Crowds flooded Hard-ee's on the mall. The fast-foot restaurant reported sales \$500 above normal by 5:00 p.m. Sales also jumped 50 percent at Sunrise Biscuit Kitchen on Wilmington Street. They likely drew patrons that would have otherwise visited the restaurants that were closed due to the fire.

By 1:00 p.m. the next day, most of the businesses closed due to smoke and water damage had reopened.

²⁶*News & Observer*, July 8, 1981.

²⁷*Ibid.*

Diagram



The Recruits

Who were the recruits sent to the fire scene that day? The Class of 1981 (later named Recruit Academy 6) graduated the following members two weeks later. All but Greg Wall, currently a captain, have retired (ret.) or resigned:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Michael D. Allen (ret.) | 9. Wilbert Dunn Jr. (ret.) | 17. Cynthia R. Rubens (ret.) |
| 2. Donald Wayne Auteri (ret.) | 10. Bertram V. Dupree (ret.) | 18. Basil E. Vassilion (ret.) |
| 3. R. Alex Averette Jr. | 11. Percy C. Evans (ret.) | 19. W. Greg Wall |
| 4. Chuck R. Blake | 12. Wayland E. Holden (ret.) | 20. L. Alan Walters (ret.) -
Absent due to illness that
day. |
| 5. Darrell R. Canady (ret.) | 13. Thomas L. Inscoc | |
| 6. Donald L. Carter (ret.) | 14. Paul W. Lowery (ret.) | |
| 7. G. Michael Davis (ret.) | 15. W. Robert Marshburn (ret.) | |
| 8. Melvin D. Dove | 16. Billy Neal Perry Jr. (ret.) | |



Times. “It still contains all those chemicals, all that turpentine. Most of the floors in these old buildings have been treated with oil. We used something much like motor oil. All very combustible. We’ve probably got the most combusting [building] there is [on the mall].”³⁰

The same officials noted that though the older wood frame buildings were no more prone to fires than newer buildings built of less combustible materials, they were nearly impossible to control once a fire started in them. “There is always the possibility of conflagration, of the entire block going up,” said Assistant Chief and Fire Marshall James T. Owens.³¹

Renovations to the building also hampered the efforts of firefighters, who encountered a maze of subdivided rooms with partitions and false ceilings. Noted Chief Keith, “We couldn’t find the fire to ventilate it [and relieve the built-heat and pressure].” He added that many of the renovated buildings downtown had such mazes. They were considered fire safe, but were still a barrier to firefighting. “They’re restoring a lot of the older buildings, and it’s great for historic preservation, but not for us,” he said.³²

For all of its partitions, the Mangel’s Building did not violate the fire code, said Chief Owens. But other buildings could be in violation. Construction Inspector Supervisor Gene Harrison told the *Raleigh Times* “There’s no way we can go through all of them. We don’t have the manpower. I would not be surprised to see that work has been done unbeknownst to us that doesn’t comply, I’m sure it does pose a problem.”³³ He noted that store owners who install false ceilings and walls must use materials that can contain a fire for one hour.

City building inspector Bobby Brown told the *News & Observer* that the first floor of the Mangel’s Building complied with the “minimum standards” of the North Carolina Building Code, but the second floor would not. The upper story was exempt from meeting those standards, however, since it wasn’t occupied as a business nor used as storage.³⁴ Nor was a sprinkler system required. For older buildings like the Mangel’s Building, the state building code required only a fire extinguisher and a plan to evacuate occupants in the case of fire.

The Investigation

Investigators determined within days that a faulty fluorescent light fixture located in a false ceiling above the first floor apparently ignited the wooden ceiling above it. “The fire was just rolling [inside the false ceiling] and it could have been burning from Salisbury Street to the mall street side [by the time firefighters arrived],” said Chief Keith³⁵.

Fire officials, police detectives, and engineers had combed the remains of the building. They agreed that the fixture’s transformer or ballast apparently shorted and began heating up the nearby wooden ceiling and support structures. The fixture was located in the rear of the building’s north end.

³⁰*Raleigh Times*, July 9, 1981.

³¹*ibid.*

³²*ibid.*

³³*ibid.*

³⁴As the building had three stories, it’s a reasonable assumption that the third floor was also empty.

³⁵*Raleigh Times*, July 10, 1981.

The investigators identified that area as the fire's origin, which was directly below a pair of floor air conditioning units on the second floor, in the north side of the building nearest to the Salisbury Street entrance. They first thought the air conditioning units may have caused the fire. No problems were found after the units were lifted from the rubble using a crane, and subsequently studied by engineers.

Chief Owens said that the investigators turned to the rear of the building's north end because of burn patterns found there, and reports from witnesses who saw heavy smoke from a window near that side of the building.

Investigators examined other electrical components in the area, said Chief Keith, including outlets, fixtures, and wiring systems. These were dug from the debris and examined individually. They found one fluorescent light fixture that showed a high concentration of heat. It was disassembled and examined at the scene. The ballast—a small device that regulated the electric current in the light—appeared to be not functioning properly. It was sent to a laboratory and found to be faulty.³⁶ The consensus of the investigators was that the fixture was the source of ignition.

Chief Keith explained that the row of fluorescent lights was left on overnight and most likely for security reasons. When the wood was ignited from the shorted transformer, the fire didn't accelerate because there wasn't enough oxygen inside the false ceiling.

"The fire had probably been smoldering quite some time," he said, "but it couldn't get quite enough air to burn." When the manager of the Raleigh Bazaar opened the building and started the air conditioner, the incoming air "scattered [the fire] throughout the building."³⁷

Chief Keith added that the fire did not result from the violation of any fire code or building code. "[Fire marshals] could have inspected the building [days before] and never detected anything."³⁸ Had the building been newly constructed, however, that type of ballast would not have met code requirements, because it didn't have a device for preventing overheating.

The age of the ballast was estimated between ten and thirty years. Fluorescent light fixtures were not subject to being checked by the city for defects, nor could problems be detected prior to a malfunction, noted Dr. J. Samuel McKnight of Research Engineers Incorporated, a firm retained by the fire department for investigation. Signs of problems, he added, included dimming or browning out of the entire light, or a "sudden asphalt-like odor."³⁹

The investigation team consisted of Chief Owens, Raleigh Police Department Detective W. G. Arnold, and four engineers from the RTP firm: Gary M. Moss, John Aiken, Woody Rapp, and Dr. Herb Hill.

The investigation started at 11:30 a.m. on the day of the fire, when Chief Owens met with Detective Arnold at the scene. Crews were still battling the blaze. After the fire was extinguished, they began combing through the rubble. They focused on the rear north end of the building due to burn patterns they found there, and reports from seven witnesses who saw smoke coming from there.

³⁶ Other lab work included a pair of carpet samples examined by a chemist at the State Bureau of Investigation laboratory in Raleigh.

³⁷*Raleigh Times*, July 10, 1981.

³⁸*ibid.*

³⁹*News & Observer*, July 11, 1981.

The process of the investigation included recording statements from the first-arriving company officer, building tenants, electrical repairmen, and other witnesses. The investigators also examined the debris from the building, and conducted a laboratory analysis of items removed from the fire scene.

Demolition

Reported the *Raleigh Times* on July 14, clean-up at the site was scheduled to begin the next day. A real estate company was handling the effort and the site would likely be turned into a parking lot, said Sid Gulledge of North Hills Realty. A parking lot would reduce the tax liability of the vacant site, and generate revenue to compensate for the income no longer received from tenant rentals.



Preservation North Carolina photo

The property was owned by the Shepherd Estate, and specifically owners William Vass Shepherd of Coral Gables, FL, and James E. Shepherd of Alexandria, VA.

It was leased to Boston businessman Matthew C. Weisman, who had an option to buy the Mangel's Building, the parking lot next door, and the adjoining building that housed the Bookmark and the old Coleman-Womble clothing store. Mr. Weisman declined to reveal his plans for the properties and options. The News and Observer noted on July 8 that a consultant's study of the mall area had recommended that a high-rise office building be erected on the property.

Starting on July 15, demolition crews would begin tearing down the remaining walls. Some of the work would be done at night, due to daytime heat, congestion on the mall, and traffic on nearby streets. The demolition was requested by the city as the site was deemed a public safety hazard. They also wanted to remove the barricades that were blocking part of the mall.

The site was expected to be cleared within the next ten days.

Parked Cars

As the heavy smoke spread through the downtown blocks on the day of the fire, soot accumulated on hundreds of cars. Four days later, the *Raleigh Times* reported on their owners attempts to clean their vehicles. Tommy Frazier, who owned Country Caterers on Salisbury Street, found his white 1968 Cadillac covered with specks of black tar. "I'm just sick with it," he said.⁴⁰ Raleigh resident Jerry Casper found his light blue 1974 Plymouth covered with black ash on Salisbury Street. He used degreaser and a laundry product to clean the car, but that left many spots still standing. "That tar is sure hard to get off," he said.⁴¹

The manager of the Constan Car Wash on Peace Street said he'd seen a number of tar-spotted cars since the fire. "We got fifteen or twenty [the next day]," said Larry Martin.⁴² He said his staff hand-washed the

⁴⁰*Raleigh Times*, July 11, 1981.

⁴¹*Raleigh Times*, July 11, 1981.

⁴²*ibid.*

cars first, then applied Varsol and wax. Not all of the tar could be removed, however. “Most of the customers are keeping receipts for their insurance company.”⁴³

Dusty’s Detail Shop was using a chemical on cars, then applying an abrasive paste followed by buffing to remove all dead-looking paint. Then they washed and hand-waxed the cars. It cost as much as \$150, due to the amount of time needed.

Chief Keith said the apparatus at the fire was easily cleaned with detergent. He added that the trucks were always kept clean and polished. “The polish,” he added, “keeps the stuff from sticking to the paint.”⁴⁴

More Inspections?

“Fire causes officials to ponder increasing building inspections,” read the headline in the July 10 edition of the *News & Observer*.

Raleigh building inspector W. F. Harrelson said that increased inspections could be a deterrent against future fires, because some code violations—such as failing to use fire-resistant materials in renovations—likely go undetected in some of the older buildings downtown. Some owners limited the amount of work on older buildings, so they didn’t have to conform to newer fire codes.

“If a building has in excess of fifty percent of its value done in repairs and alterations” within a few years, said Harrelson, then the entire building was required to conform to current building and fire safety standards.⁴⁵ Added Chief Keith, some owners were careful “to renovate piecemeal, to build a little at a time,” so they only had to meet the older and less-restrictive building codes.⁴⁶

Harrelson noted that the city inspections division would need more people, and such a project would be a major undertaking.

Presently, city inspectors made no regular checks of commercial buildings for building code violations. Fire inspectors, however, conducted checks for violations of fire codes, such as “exits, combustible materials, some electrical socket storage, sprinklers, furnaces, and other heating equipment,”⁴⁷ said Chief Keith. The fire department tried to complete two fire inspections per year, he added.

City Manager L. P. Zachary Jr. said increased inspections of buildings downtown were “something we probably need to look into.”⁴⁸

Out of the forty-six buildings on the Fayetteville Street Mall, twenty-two were similar in construction to the Mangel’s Building. They were designated Class 2 for insurance purposes, meaning built primarily with masonry and wood for support, roof, and flooring, noted William D. Lanier of Insurance Services, the agency that established insurance rates for commercial buildings based on their construction and occupancy.

⁴³ibid.

⁴⁴ibid.

⁴⁵*Raleigh Times*, July 9, 1981.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷*News & Observer*, July 10, 1981.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Many of the other Class 2 buildings on the mall were also built around the turn of the century. They included Raleigh Books Inc., Brittain's Cosmetics, Kimbrell's Furniture, Holly's Hallmark Card and Gift Shop, Ron's Fast Foods, Johnson's Jewelers, Land's Jewelers, McCrory's, Briggs Hardware, the Bookmark, Ole N.C. Cafeteria, Christian Science Reading Room, Rusty's Restaurant, and the old Coleman-Womble building.

Other Large Fires

The *Raleigh Times* on July 8 quoted Chief Keith saying that the blaze "used more firefighters and equipment than any fire in the city's history." He added to the *News & Observer*, it was the biggest one he remembered downtown since the K&W auto garage burned on Blount Street in the early 1950s.

James Briggs had a different opinion. "The biggest one came with the Yarborough House fire on July 3, 1928," he told the newspaper. "And [the Mangel's fire] was a peewee compared with that one." He also cited Efirds department store. "It burned in the afternoon and there were a lot of people trapped, and they had to get them out before they could start fighting the fire," Briggs said. The building burned to the ground, he recalled.

Because he had bronchitis the day of the fire, the 77 year-old stayed in his store, which was about a block down the mall. "With the way things are going," he told the newspaper, "looks like we're going to have another parking lot."⁴⁹

What were some of the comparable major fires, before or after?

Excluding the blocks-long conflagrations in the early 1800s, the largest fire in the city's modern history was Pine Knoll Townes on February 22, 2007. Six alarms were struck for a fast-moving, wind-fed fire in a developing townhome community off Capital Boulevard. Thirty-two homes were seriously damaged or destroyed. Twenty-nine families and 72 people were displaced. Damage exceeded \$4 million.

Other large and resource-intensive fires of the last century:

- Shelton's Furniture Company - 1993
South Saunders Street
Four alarms
- Gorman Crossings Apartments - 1993
Kings Court
Four alarms
- Wake County Courthouse - 1990
Fayetteville Street
Four alarms
- Peebles Hotel - 1970
Hargett Street
Five alarms
- Manmur Bowling Center - 1959
Hillsborough Street
Four alarms
- Yarborough Hotel - 1928
Fayetteville Street
15 lines
- State Insane Asylum - 1926
Dix Hill
15 lines.

⁴⁹*News & Observer*, July 8, 1981.

Cross-era comparisons are difficult, however, due to different metrics for measuring fires and firefighting resources. See this blog post <http://www.legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog/pivot/entry.php?id=2881> for a more detailed analysis.

See the appendixes for information about other fires on Fayetteville Street.

The Pedestrian Mall

Fayetteville Street was the city's main thoroughfare south of the Capital in the early 20th century. By the 1950s, however, parallel streets such as Salisbury Street and Wilmington Street were more heavily travelled.

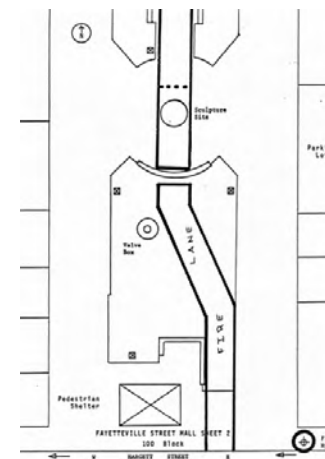
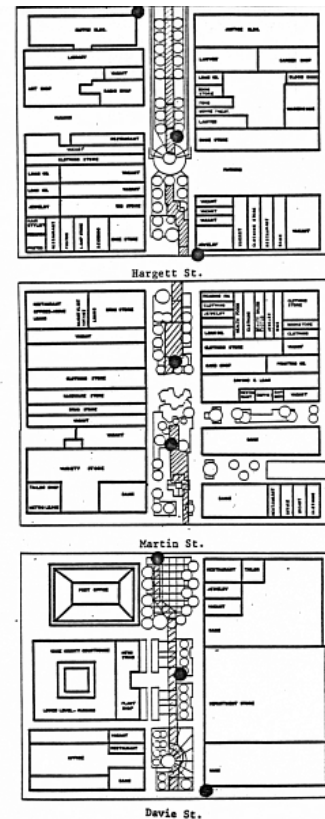
In 1966, the one-block cross-street Exchange Street was converted to a plaza, testing the concept of installing a pedestrian mall on Fayetteville Street. The idea was explored by business owners as a revitalization strategy. Downtown businesses had been impacted by the opening of shopping centers and malls in Cameron Village in 1947, at North Hills in 1966, and later at Crabtree Valley in 1972.

On January 1, 1976, Fayetteville Street was closed to traffic. Pedestrian malls were a successful innovation elsewhere in the country, and city leaders hoped this would bring people back downtown. A civic center would also be constructed in the middle of the south end of the mall, as a new gathering place for the growing city.

The Fayetteville Street Mall opened in November 1977. The gradually descending roadway had been replaced by sequential plazas separated by short staircases. Features were added, including sculptures and fountains, planters and sections of grass, and tables and benches made of granite. The mall also contained a fire lane that could accommodate emergency vehicles.

The pedestrian mall raised expectations of a renewed shopping corridor, where people could walk without the impediment of automobile traffic. Within a few years, however, the level of business activity had returned to pre-1977 levels. The street stayed busy during the workday with office workers, but was largely empty after 5:00 p.m. Eventually, such landmark stores as Hudson Belk and Briggs Hardware closed or relocated.

In 2006, the street reopened to vehicle traffic. The grand opening was held on July 29, after a two-year project that returned the street to its original form. As part of a new downtown revitalization project, the outdated and undersized Raleigh Civic Center was also demolished. Fayetteville Street was again bookended by the State Capitol and Memorial Auditorium.





Elizabeth Reid Murray photo (left), City of Raleigh photo (right)

In 2008, the Fayetteville Street Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places. It's comprised of the 100 to 400 blocks of Fayetteville Street, the 0-100 blocks of the south side of West Hargett Street, the 00 block of the north side of West Martin Street, and the 100-400 blocks of South Salisbury Street.

The historic district contains mostly commercial establishments, and includes eleven buildings individually listed on the national register.

What's There Today?

After the Mangel's Building was demolished, the site was converted to a parking lot, which expanded the size of the adjoining parking lot. The remaining buildings south of the site were removed in or after 1988, and a thirty-story skyscraper was erected on the site. Completed in June 1990, the Wells Fargo Capitol Center is addressed 150 Fayetteville Street. It was one of downtown's two tallest buildings for nearly twenty years, and is currently the third tallest building in the city.

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- July 11, 1981 - Fire's fallout takes toll on parked cars
- July 14, 1981 - Mall fire clean-up to begin Wednesday.

News & Observer:

- July 8, 1981 - Blaze destroys 12 businesses on Raleigh mall

- July 8, 1981 - Fire crushes cars, sends neighbors running
- July 8, 1981 - Fire spreads woes to nearby businesses
- July 9, 1981 - Fire probe focuses on air conditioning
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Part II - Firefighter Stories

Note: The accompanying portraits are from 1984, and appeared in a commemorative book about the fire department that was published that year.

Donald Summers

Retired Captain Donald Summers (2010) was a new firefighter at the time of the fire, hired a year earlier. This is adapted from an oral history interview conducted on April 21, 2010.

This call came in for a structure fire at Fayetteville Street.⁵⁰ They gave the address. Of course, they didn't give a building name for it, but they gave the address. I was riding on Engine 1.

We rounded the corner, came across Morgan Street up there, and turned on Salisbury. You could see it was just faint smoke. It wasn't heavy and Captain [Nick] Glover came off the truck and gave a "Code One." And we pulled up there, and we pulled a booster line. Connie Altman and I went inside with the line, through the back door on the Salisbury Street side.



I remembered walking inside and into the back of the building, and I could see all the way in through to the mall. There was still people in the store. There was a "world bazaar" in that building, a flea market-type thing. Light haze was inside and I told those people, "Hey, y'all need to get out of this building."

Because, obviously there was something burning, and we didn't know what it was. I wasn't in there very long, just a couple minutes, and all of a sudden that smoke started getting heavier. Heat started coming, but we never could see any visible flames.

So I came back out and said to Captain Glover—they called him "Boss"—and I said "Boss, I think we're going to need more ammunition. That booster line ain't going to be enough." He said "what do you mean?" I said "it's kinda heavy in there."

He was outside, sizing up his building. And so Altman and I went back in with the inch-and-a-half [hose line]. Obviously not spraying any water yet, because you didn't see anything. We didn't know where it was. And we didn't advance very deep into the building, because it was a multi-story structure.

We had Engine 3 responding with us. They went to the Fayetteville Street side of the mall. And back then it was a [pedestrian] mall. It wasn't a street, it was a mall. So the engine had to get up on the mall itself.

I remember then the smoke got solid black, and it was down to the floor. You couldn't see anything. And I came back out and told "Boss, whatever it is, it's not enough." We were going to have to get a two-and-a-half-inch. I'll never forget his hands, looked just like this. Like, what in the world has happened here?

⁵⁰Dispatched as smoke investigation, it was soon upgraded to a structure fire.

That's when things started showing. And smoke was coming through the mortar and you knew you had a really massive high-rise fire. The whole building was engulfed in flames.

We started making advances with the two-and-a-half-inch, as I saw fire breaking through the ceiling of the first floor. We got about three feet into the building when an explosion of heat blew us back. We rolled backward about ten feet and landed in front of the engine.

And I'll never forget, I saw that our driver Creighton Edwards had set up a sprinkler system on top of the truck with a booster line to keep the truck cool. It must have been pretty hot [from the radiant heat]. Engine 1 never moved from that spot. They had a hydrant right there.

It didn't take long for us to realize that we had to go to a defensive mode and come back out, and fight this thing from the outside.

That's when the ladder came in. Old Truck 1, the platform. They set it up [to spray water from above]. Lo and behold, when they set it up, there I stood.

Back in those days, they just looked for anybody to go in the bucket, any two bodies. I just happened to be standing there. Chief Walker saw me standing there. It was me and Janice Olive. He said "I need you to go up in the bucket."

I'd been up in the bucket before. I had trained on the bucket, because it was a piece of equipment at Station 1 and we trained on it. Everyone at Station 1 trained on all of the trucks, no matter if you were assigned to the engine or the ladder. So I went on up in the bucket.

I'll never forget, we were raised to the top of that building, and you could see it was opening up. The flames were coming out, and it was getting hotter and hotter and hotter. There were two nozzles on the bucket. I had the left fog nozzle and she had the right. The left one couldn't be angled on the building, it was just a waste. It was flowing water, but it wasn't being directed on the fire.

There was a kill switch at the turntable, to give the driver control of the bucket. So he was moving it around. He knew he had too much experience, and there was no way in the world he was going to let us [the firefighters in the bucket] have control of the aerial.

Pretty soon, I looked behind me and my turnout gear started smoking. It was hot. There was also a heat shield underneath that bucket. And little sprinklers under the bucket. In the intercom system, I said "You might want to bring us down." And he thought I said "You might want to bring us around."

So we were moved even closer to the fire and I was like "Oh my gosh, this is not where we need to be." And it really became really hot, and apparent that we were going to burn up in this bucket. And if I'm hot, what's it doing to the ladder?

That's when they began to see that the side of the building was bulging. And they brought us down. They got that truck out of the alley, because the wall was going to fall.

I'll never forget when I hit the ground. I mean, I just jumped out of the bucket and just collapsed, because the heat was so... I was totally exhausted, after making the initial attack and going into the fire, and doing that for a good 20 or 30 minutes, and then doing this bucket job. I just collapsed on the sidewalk.

We were in the bucket about fifteen minutes. We went over to the rehab area, which was on the opposite side of Salisbury Street. EMS was administering oxygen and giving towels to firefighters.

I got taken to the hospital. Several of us got taken to the hospital. Rescue 7 transported me, Altman, and two or three others to Wake Medical Center.

When we got there, of course, you were feeling better. Rehydrated. The nurse came around to give us a carbon monoxide blood test. I just figured that was no more than a finger stick or something. Okay, that's cool.

And I'll never forget, as long as I live, she put this needle about six inches long down in my artery, and I like to come off of that table. It was funny enough that Connie Altman and those boys were over there laughing. Calling me a sissy and everything else. I said "Wait'll you get one too." [Asks the interviewer, how did they do?] "I watched them draw up."

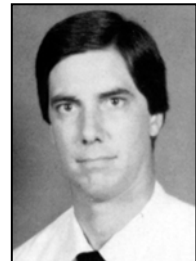
None of these guys ever had anything like that before, a carbon monoxide test. I said "Well, I never did get overcome by smoke," I said, "I'm just hot."

I never had another one since then. I always said, "I'm not doing that again." After leaving the hospital, I was sent back to the station. I was only on scene for about 45 minutes.

Randy Wall

Retired Battalion Chief A. Randy Wall (2009) was a Driver at the time of the fire, in the fifth year of his career. His 1984 portrait reflects his subsequent rank of Captain.

I was a Driver/Engineer assigned to Truck 5 on "C" shift on the day of the fire. On that Tuesday, Captain Wayne Best and myself were the two personnel working on Truck 5. Although we had repeatedly warned command staff that there needed to be a minimum manning of three personnel on that apparatus, we routinely rode with only two. On this day, I was driving the front and Captain Best was driving the tiller.



We had pulled Truck 5 onto the apron at Station 5. After checking off the truck, I bled the air brakes. As I recall, while going through the usual routine of check off and brake maintenance, Engine 1 and Engine 3 were dispatched to a smoke investigation at the Mangel's building. Captain W. N. "Nick" Glover reported a "Code One" upon arrival. This designation meant that the situation could be handled with either a booster or a one-and-a-half-inch line.

I remember his report because Nick was a fairly new captain and we often joked afterwards that if he ever marked a "Code Two" upon arrival, we would all mark out sick immediately. As it turned out, this was Captain Glover's first working fire as a captain.

Captain Glover saw a small amount of smoke coming from the roof area. A woman exited the building and stated that the air conditioner was on fire. They had had problems with it for a few days. Captain Glover instructed Firefighter Donald Summers to pull a booster line. They encountered a locked steel door that could not be breached. No one had a key. Things got ugly very quickly from there. When Cap-

tain Glover requested that Truck 1 be dispatched, the chief officers were alerted by that request that something was going on.

As I was completing the bleeding of the brakes on Truck 5, several personnel ran outside to say that Engine 1 was calling for additional companies due to heavy smoke conditions. As I recall, Assistant Chief Norman Walker requested Truck 5 to respond. When I acknowledged the call, I reported that Truck 5 was en route with two personnel. My reason was to remind them that we had minimum manning of two personnel in case they were expecting a full company to arrive.

Truck 5 was directed to respond to the Fayetteville Street Mall entrance on Morgan Street. Upon arrival I had line of sight contact with Chief Walker who was in command at that time. He did not have a handheld radio. After a couple of confused hand signals—a waving motion to come to him and my thinking that he wanted the truck to stage at his location—I realized he wanted me to physically walk to him to receive further instructions. Upon walking to his location, about midway between Morgan Street and the Mangel’s building, he instructed me that we were to come and assist with the advancement of hand lines into the front of the Mangel’s building.

I ran back to Truck 5 and related to Captain Best what Chief Walker had requested. We both donned air packs and walked to the Mangel’s Building, and began assisting with advancing hand lines into the building. After Truck 5 arrived, Engine 5 was dispatched to the fire on another alarm. As Engine 5 arrived on Morgan Street, Chief Walker asked me to go across the mall and through a parking lot on Wilmington Street, and guide Engine 5 onto the mall and to a hydrant on the mall.

I removed my air pack and placed it on a park bench. I then jogged to meet Engine 5 and led them to the requested location. We began pulling lines from Engine 5 when Chief Walker requested that Truck 5 come onto the mall and position directly in front of the Mangel’s building. Captain Best and I walked up the mall to Truck 5 and drove around to Wilmington Street and through the parking lot onto the mall. We were directed to position perpendicular to the middle of the building and set up the ladder for aerial operation of the ladder pipe.

We positioned the ladder truck as requested. On Truck 5 we had three-inch hose strapped to the bed of the ladder and attached to the ladder pipe and a 500 GPM fog nozzle. We placed the triple Siamese beside Truck 5, and placed the hose clamp on the three-inch line. As either Engine 10 or Engine 12 laid the lines to the “triamese” [or three-way valve], I mounted the ladder and Captain Best manned the turntable. I distinctly remember thinking that I should have taken the time to retrieve my air pack from the park bench before mounting that ladder.

As we were preparing for aerial operations on the mall side, smoke was coming from every nook and cranny of the building. It was what I called “angry smoke,” looking for a way to escape in volume rather than oozing from every crack in the mortar and around windows. As the ladder rose above the roof line, I observed the angry smoke coming from the seams in the flat roofing material. The fire had not vented itself through the roof at that time.

I remember thinking that I would have to wait for the fire to vent itself before I could flow any water. And even then, I would not train my stream into the vent opening, as was often seen on most aerial operations, because I knew the devastating effects that would have on everyone fighting fire inside the building.

Suddenly there was a sound from inside the building that sounded like a roll of thunder. At that moment, smoke began billowing from the windows on the mall side. I knew that there had to have been a collapse of a ceiling or a floor above the fire. Instantly I was in trouble because I had no air pack. I was completely engulfed by the heat and smoke, hoping and praying that the fire would not vent through the windows as well.

My three-inch line to the ladder pipe was flat, no water. If I only had water, I could protect myself from the heat and smoke. My vision was completely obscured by the smoke. I couldn't see the bottom of the ladder and no one on the ground could see me. I had seen a metal canopy to my left, two floors below, attached to the building adjoining the Mangel's building. Still my line was flat.

I had no radio communication with the firefighters below. We had hand signals that we used to communicate with the person operating the turntable. I couldn't see Captain Best and he couldn't see me. If only the smoke would clear long enough for me to locate that canopy again, I could jump to the canopy. One may wonder why I didn't just climb down the ladder. I was certain that there had to be fire on the ladder, judging by the heat I was receiving on the tip of the ladder. Still no water, my line was flat.

Desperation set in. I was screaming to move the ladder. No one could hear. I was whistling as loud as I could, anything to call attention to the ladder and the person on it, me! Still, no water to the ladder pipe.

Everything seemed to slow down into slow motion. I had my face in my coat to filter the smoke as best I could. My forgetting the air pack seemed to be a potentially fatal mistake. Continuing to holler and whistle for a few more moments, I resigned myself to the inevitable fate that seemed to lie just before me. I was becoming very weak. Still, no water. I relaxed and leaned back letting my life belt support me. This was it, I thought.

Suddenly, water! The three-inch lined swelled with water. I had already placed the handle in the nozzle so I pulled it back, elevating the nozzle and so I could change the pattern from a straight stream to a 90-degree fog pattern to give me relief from the smoke and heat. I couldn't muster the strength to adjust the pattern on the nozzle. I gave it all I had.

I finally just let go of the handle on the nozzle and let the 500 gallons-per-minute of water spray straight down below. When the stream of water kept hitting the sidewalk, one of the chiefs instructed Captain Best to move me out of the smoke to see what the problem was. Clear air and blue skies were a true life-saving blessing for me that day. I now know the meaning of "just in the nick of time."

Firefighter Clyde Leonard from Engine 5 relieved me on the ladder and I went to the EMS unit on the mall. A little water and a few minutes rest and I would be good to go. District Chief Merton King and the EMS crew, however, would not allow it. I told Chief King that I would have to go tell Captain Best that I was going to the hospital. Chief King would not let me. He said I would leave and not come back, and he would tell Captain Best.

Firefighter Kenny Jones and I were the first firefighters transported to Wake Medical Center that day. I figured we would be the only ones. Not long after we arrived, the emergency room began filling up with firefighters from the fire. They performed the dreaded arterial blood draw for the carbon monoxide test. It was painful, but I considered myself lucky to be able to feel pain. After a while the doctor told me I could

leave, but that I could not return to duty that day. Kenny and I caught a ride back to the fire with an EMS unit.

While in my little space at the ER, an administrative employee brought me a telephone and said I had a call. It was my wife. She was a nurse at an OB/GYN office and one of the employees had come in talking about the bad fire on the Fayetteville Street Mall. Something was said about one entire block had burned and that the radio news reports were saying that the entire mall was in danger.

At her office they kept a radio in the lab. My wife quickly turned the radio on. The first words she heard were that “The scene is reminiscent of Vietnam. Firefighters are laid out everywhere. Many have been taken to the hospital. Many were seeking refuge from the sweltering 90+ degree heat and stifling humidity in what little shade was available.” My wife called Station 5. When she didn’t get an answer she called Station 11, where I had worked a few months earlier before getting promoted to Driver/Engineer.

She asked Captain Whittington if he knew if I was at the big fire downtown, knowing full well I had to have been dispatched. When he answered that Truck 5 was at the fire, she asked if he knew whether or not I was still there or had gone to the hospital. He told her he had no way of knowing.

However, all Fire Prevention personnel had been ordered to go to a fire station with their turnout gear to help man the apparatus. They were placing reserve apparatus into service by going around and picking up personnel from each station. The Fire Prevention personnel would fill the vacancy created by the firefighters manning the reserve engines.

The fire inspector that reported to Station 11 had come from downtown. He told the guys at Station 11 that he traveled down Wilmington Street, and that whoever was on the ladder on Truck 5 was catching hell, because you could only see the bottom half of the ladder. The top half was in total black smoke. Of course, Captain Whittington didn’t tell my wife that, but he knew it was probably me. She took a chance and called the ER and they let her talk to me. I assured her I was alright and would be returning to the station soon.

Kenny Jones and I waited on the curb at the entrance to Wake ER. We caught a ride with EMS. Kenny rejoined his company at the fire. Truck 5 had returned to the station and I ended up back at the station. District Chief Buck King called shortly after my return and asked me what the doctor had told me. I told him I was told to go home, but that I was fine and we were short of personnel so I would stay. He said okay and I stayed and finished the shift.

That’s my experience that day. I remember most of it very vividly.

Alonzo Moore

Retired Captain Alonzo Moore (1992) was a Driver at the time of the fire, and in the sixteenth year of his career:

I was the driver of Engine 12 and we had gone down to the training center that morning. And when we heard all the radio traffic, and nobody showed up to train, we went back to the fire station. As we started backing in, Captain says on the radio, “we’re ten eight, back at Station 12.” And Chief Keith came on the

radio and says “Come to Fayetteville and Hargett Street.” And by that time, I believe we could see the smoke.

So we went downtown. There was a hydrant right in the middle of the mall, on Hargett Street. That’s where I stopped and where we connected, with the two lines like we did then.⁵¹



They pulled off every line off my truck. First the inch-and-a-half and then they started pulling the two-and-a-half and taking it with the nozzle and so forth. And they took it out of sight. I couldn’t see where it went.

Then somebody came back and told me to go ahead and charge the line. So I did. Truck 5 was also there, and set up on the mall. And when I charged the line, water started coming out at the top of the ladder. I closed it, I opened it. And I realized that the line had somehow been connected to the truck. I thought they was fighting fire [inside] with it. But you know how the lines were all like spaghetti, you couldn’t tell where any of them were. But I figured out through opening and closing that it was connected to Truck 5.

I also remember a lot of people gathered out and watching. And the wall fell down. You know how when you open an oven, and you got your glasses too close to it, and it fogs your glasses up? It was just like that. Well, when that wall fell down, a blast of heat [came] out. I mean, just came rolling out of there. And everybody was running and trying to get away. There must’ve been fifty or more. And I thought, well darn, since I was standing out there, I grabbed my coat and put it on. ‘Cause, what was going to happen next? That blast was hot!

Michael Davis

Retired Captain G. Michael Davis (2010) was a recruit in class at Station 2 on the day of the fire.

Twenty-three years after the fact, I still have vivid memories of fighting my first structure fire.

It was a Tuesday morning and the class of 1981 was due to graduate the Academy in ten days. Three and-a-half long months of training were about to come to an end and each of us eagerly awaited, with anticipation and excitement, our first station assignments. There was a guest instructor teaching our last formal class before graduation.



The subject of his lecture escapes me, because along with everyone else in the room as well as everyone else in the fire department that day, information blaring from an overhead speaker commanded our attention. The voice from the speaker broadcast an alarm announcing what I remembered as “Headquarters to Engine 1, Engine 13, Rescue 7, Car 52, Reported structure fire, Mangel’s building, Fayetteville Street Mall.”⁵²

I had learned over the past three-and-a-half months not to become too excited until the first engine company arrived on the scene, and transmitted a “fire code.” I tried to ignore the distraction created by the

⁵¹ Hydrant connections were a pair of two-and-a-half-inch lines. Five-inch supply lines were a decade-plus away.

⁵² The fire was first dispatched as a smoke investigation for Engine 1 and Engine 3, then upgraded to a structure fire and with additional units.

emergency dispatch and focused my attention back on the class facilitator as he lectured from his podium. The first arriving engine announced “Engine 1, 10-23, condition red, light smoke showing.”

The report of smoke showing made the already difficult task of listening to the instructor all but impossible. Despite the drama being transmitted over the radio our instructor seemed oblivious to the fact that no one was paying attention to him. All ears in the room save his strained to hear every sound that reverberated from the speaker, which had become our nexus to the landmark event taking place two short miles from where we sat. We had become envious observers of an event in which we desperately wanted to participate.

The Mangel’s Building was a three-story structure erected in the early 1900s. It was comprised of brick and wood frame construction. During the years preceding its incineration, the building had accommodated office spaces as well as other types of mercantile and commercial businesses. As with many buildings of its type and age, it had been renovated and reconfigured many times during its existence. The installation of partition walls and false ceilings in particular would prove fatal to the building. These renovations delayed preliminary efforts to find the fire and subsequently hindered efforts to extinguish the inferno once it was found.

The Mangel’s Building was situated almost directly in the center of downtown Raleigh. The building was flanked to the east by a pedestrian mall, which on sunny days became filled with people sitting on park benches, or walking up and down the mall lost in conversation, window shopping or just enjoying the day. There was a small alley used for parking on the north side of the structure. Salisbury Street, a thoroughfare leading south out of town, bordered the west side of the building. The south side shared a party wall with other shops and businesses. The proximity of these shops and businesses to the conflagration occurring directly beside them created cause for concern, as the fire could easily spread one building to the next eventually consuming the entire city block.

The fire companies dispatched on the first alarm had been on the fire scene now for several minutes. Reports on smoke conditions, initially described as light, were revised as conditions inside the building rapidly deteriorated. Interior attack teams reported poor visibility and steadily increasing temperatures. The fire was generating smoke in ever-increasing quantities.

It was obvious that the fire was growing in intensity. However, the fire companies who had advanced attack lines into the structure were still unable to reach the seat of the fire. Using pike poles, interior attack teams began to breach the ceilings on the first floor of the building. Pike poles are harpoon-like tools of various lengths, used to pull down ceilings and punch through walls in order to locate hidden fires.

Upon breaching the ceiling, the fiery beast revealed itself. By this time the fire had grown beyond the capacity of the initial emergency response to extinguish. As crews worked inside to deprive the fire of its hiding place, the magnitude of the situation and the potential for destruction became all too apparent. Once again we heard the overhead speaker in our classroom spring to life trumpeting the need for assistance. “Command to Headquarters, dispatch a second alarm to this location.”

Despite the best efforts of all involved, the fire was now raging out of control, and it soon became necessary to dispatch a third alarm. Due to the large numbers of personnel and equipment required to fight the

fire, the Incident Commander requested and received a mutual aid response from surrounding fire departments to cover those parts of the city left without fire protection.

Our entire freshman class was surprised when the classroom speaker suddenly broadcast an announcement that all of us longed for, but none of us expected. Seven words that would signal an abrupt end to our training and mark the practical start of our careers as professional firefighters. The order was given without protocol or fanfare, “Captain Honeycutt get your rookies down here.”

Every rookie in the room leaped to their feet as if jabbed with a cattle prod. We rushed out of the room leaving the guest lecturer standing alone at his lectern. Each of us loaded our gear into the back of cars and pickup trucks, along with any other means of transportation available to deliver personnel and equipment to the fire scene.

As we approached the intersection of South Wilmington Street and Pecan Road, we crested the top of a hill overlooking the city. There was a thick gray haze that created a murky view of downtown Raleigh. A huge column of smoke rose several hundred feet above the city. The feeling of anticipation and excitement was palpable. It all seemed surreal.

Becoming a firefighter was not a lifelong dream for me. The truth is that I had never even considered the prospect until a friend suggested the idea, but here I was, rushing headlong towards an event that would completely reshape my thoughts and opinions on where my life was headed.

Once on the fire scene, the officer in charge of staging divided the rookie class into squads, assigning us to various operational teams already fighting the fire. I joined a team of veteran firefighters preparing to advance a two-and-a-half inch hose line directly into the “belly of the beast.” We entered the building through a mezzanine reminiscent of department stores I had visited with my mother as a child. Glass enclosures created a gallery of about fifteen feet in depth, which in years past displayed mannequins and merchandise. To me it created a pitch black tunnel that invoked fear.

As we entered the dragon’s lair, we crawled on our hands and knees, wrestling with the hose we used as an attack line. The two veteran firefighters to whom I had been assigned conducted themselves with an air of authority and confidence that created within me a sense of trust. Though I had never met either one of them, I accepted their judgment and direction without question. I saw little choice in the matter as I had no clue as to what I was doing, or of the dangers that might await us. I instinctively knew that my best chance for survival depended upon their experience, and upon my listening to their advice and instruction.

As we reached the far end of the mezzanine, we took a position where we could direct a stream of water onto the fire, while using the doorway leading into the building as cover from falling debris. The entire second floor had collapsed, and the fire completely engulfed the interior of the structure. As I stared into the abyss of boiling churning flames, the spectacle left me frozen in awe. It was like standing in the middle of a glowing ember and looking out. The motion and beauty of the flames mesmerized me, as they rolled gracefully around us. I was jolted to awareness by the sound of shouting. One of the veteran firefighters bellowed out from behind me “Open the nozzle, new boy.”

Startled, I yanked the handle, which controls the flow of water from the nozzle, and sent a stream of water spraying onto the raging inferno. The massive hose sprang to life and it was all the three of us could do to hold the hose in place. The stream of water seemed to have little more effect than a water pistol would

against a campfire. We straddled the hose while kneeling in five inches of standing water. I remember being astonished at how uncomfortably hot the water felt on my legs. The radiant heat from the fire was so intense that it caused the skin on my face to peel as if sunburned from a day at the beach.

Suddenly we heard a muffled crackling sound. The firefighter directly behind me told me to back out, his voice filled with alarm. As I lifted myself off the charged hose line, on which we had been sitting, it slid out from beneath me like a giant snake striking out in all directions. The hose threw me face down into the murky water. I lifted my head in time to watch the same firefighter, who had ordered my retreat, wrestle the hose to the ground, shutting the nozzle off to keep it from injuring anyone.

I tried once again to stand. As I attempted to lift my body from the floor, I felt the weight and heat of debris that had fallen from the ceiling of the mezzanine onto my legs. The veteran firefighters with whom I had entered the building grabbed me by my armpits, one on either side, dragging me out from beneath the rubble. I tried to regain my footing, but my rescuers hoisted me with such vigor that I could only stumble along between them. The exit was only a few feet away, but to me it seemed an eternity. As we moved toward the light of day it reminded me of books I had read recounting near death experiences and how those who had died moved as we did now towards the light of salvation at the end of a dark tunnel.

By days end, much of the Mangel's Building was nothing more than a pile of rubble. However, we had kept the fire from spreading to additional exposures, very likely saving an entire city block from destruction. I sat on a concrete wall encircling a large planter contemplating the events of the day. The feeling of exhaustion, both mental and physical, was complete. Until that moment, I had been too busy to pay any attention to how fatigued I was.

A news reporter stuck a microphone in my face and asked me how I was feeling. I looked straight at the camera and proclaimed, "I'm wore slap out!" This display of poor grammar became ammunition for others to embarrass and tease me with for some time to come. Even so, as I surveyed the fireground, and watched fellow firefighters as they collected tools and equipment, the phrase seemed appropriate. We were all wore slap out!

Fighting fire is hot, nasty, exhaustive work that quite often scares the crap out of you. Yet, even then I knew that it was the career for me. I can think of few professions more challenging or rewarding than is the business of protecting property and saving lives. We are not always successful in our efforts to rescue the afflicted from calamity, but almost always we are a mitigating force amid catastrophic occurrences. We make it less painful than if we had not been there, and often that is enough.

Cindy Rubens

Retired Captain Cindy Rubens (2010) was also a recruit in class on the day of the fire. This is adapted from an oral history interview conducted on December 21, 2009:

As I cruised through the radio room of Station 2, I heard someone on the radio request that Captain Hunicutt load hose on the reserve parked out back, bring it to the scene with all the Rookies. I froze in place. Did I hear that right!? I was headed to my first fire!!

We also loaded extra sections of hose in Robert Marshburn's truck, another rookie, and carpoled from the station to the scene. When the caravan turned north on South Wilmington Street, it looked like all of downtown was on fire!



We parked beyond the scene, walked a couple blocks back to the fire, and passed rehab where a lot of firefighters and a few EMS personnel were. Six of us reported to District Chief Richmond Davis, and were told to split into groups of three. One group to set up a monitor, another on a line to be taken in. I opted for the line. On the way into the structure, I noticed a crack in the wall of the building and was told that they were keeping an eye on it.

I was manning a two-and-a-half inch line on the mall side, preparing to enter the structure, and this reporter kept bugging me; tapping me on the shoulder, asking me questions. I kept telling him to back up, it isn't safe, go away! Just before entering the structure, I turned the hose to face the reporter and repeated "BACK OFF," which he finally did.

We were about ten feet inside the structure when I heard Chief Davis shouting "Get out! Everyone OUT!" So we started backing the hose line out, when Chief Davis started screaming "Drop the hose and get out!!" The wall collapsed as we were running away. I can still remember the bricks hitting the heels of my boots and a great big mushrooming fireball with a huge wave of heated air pushing at my back.

I was sent to rehab after that and then noticed my hair. I had conditioned it with this Henna stuff a couple days prior, and within twenty minutes in rehab I went from brunette to red. To bright red, as henna reacts to heat.

Later, I helped dig through the rubble, to try to recover the abandoned nozzles and hoses. We'd dig a little, find a nozzle, dig some more, and find another. And lo and behold, my lil' reporter guy was right there asking questions, again.

Danny Poole

Assistant Chief of Services Danny Poole was a line firefighter of nearly three years at the time of the fire.

I was assigned to Engine 15 at Station 15, where the reserve aerial ladder, old Truck 5, was stored. The day started out a little unusual. This was to be Captain Aldred Perry's last day before retirement, and we had a celebration planned at the fire station. He was actually doing all of the cooking and inviting everyone to attend.



Our driver, Phil Woodlief, was detailed to Station 2, and that left just me and I believe Everett Pernell at the station. We were listening to the fire downtown, and we were soon notified that they needed the spare aerial at the scene. We were told that someone would be coming to get the truck, as well as myself as additional manpower.

Dallas Perry came and picked up the truck. We rode downtown and once we arrived, I was sent to the front of the building on the mall side. I was told to ladder the front of the building, and place an extension ladder near what appeared to be a small access door on the second story. We took a line up the ladder and you can see us flowing water into that space in some of the pictures. The door was right behind the "E" in the Mangel's sign.

After we opened the door, we were assigned to a deluge gun, also in the front of the building. When it looked like the wall was going to collapse, we were ordered to move the monitors away from the building. We had time to move just one, and then abandoned the others and just moved to safety. After the wall came down, we tried to get what deluge guns were uncovered and put them back in use. Several were damaged.

I remember going to rehab and getting some food and water, and then being reassigned back to a deluge gun. I also remember when Reggie [Perry] came out of the bucket truck. While it was a great picture, I believe he was only about eight feet off the ground when that happened. But the memory with age has dimmed somewhat, like other things in life.

Captain Perry did have several attend his retirement party, but that was the last day I ever worked for him. He was my first Captain and I hated that this was his final day.

I also remember that my wife Donna worked downtown for the Revenue Department. Several wives of Raleigh firemen worked for the state, and their bosses let them leave, to go see if their husbands were involved. They were especially concerned after the news reports of injuries and firefighters being taken to the hospital. I was at rehab on the mall and turned around and saw Donna standing about fifty feet away.

More Stories

Retired Lieutenant Creighton Edwards (1991) was the Driver on Engine 1 and a nineteen-year veteran at the time of the fire:

I was driving Engine 1 on this call, and I was hooked up on Salisbury Street at the northwest corner of the building. There wasn't anything showing when we arrived, so I parked right next to the building. If there had been fire showing, I would've parked farther away. When fire started showing, it got so hot at the engine that I tied the booster nozzle to the deck gun—they were mounted on the top of the cab—and turned it onto full fog to keep my truck from getting too hot.



If you look at the picture on the wall at the Keeter Training Center, you can see Engine 1. It's the picture taken from the roof of the building next to Mangel's.⁵³ The pump panel is behind a small tree and I'm behind the pump panel, out of sight.

I remember supplying Truck 1, which was the platform truck. Remember the picture where T.J. Lester was holding a fireman by the collar of his coat? That was Reggie Perry. It appeared he fell out of the bucket of the truck, [though] I think he was trying to get down and away from the smoke and heat, and he slipped and T.J. caught him. The bucket was only about eight feet off the ground as I recall.

They had three ladders up in the air that day. We had a saying back then, "if the ladder went up, the building came down."

Retired Captain Donnie Carter (2010) was another new recruit in class on the day of the fire:

⁵³ See Gary Knight photos in the next section.

We could see the smoke from Station 2. Someone called Captain Hunnicutt, who ran the academy, and told him to send the recruits to the scene. Parked at Station 2 was one of the last of the Mack CF pumpers purchased by the city. It was brand new and not in service. Paul Averette came and a couple of us helped load it with hose, and he drove us to the scene. It parked on Salisbury Street, and we recruits were dispersed.

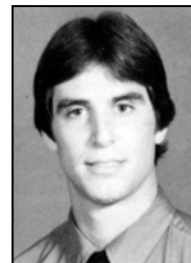


Greg Wall and Cindy Rubens and I were manning a line in the alley, where the wall was going to collapse. Captain Hunnicutt came and told us to abandon our line and leave, because the wall was getting ready to fall. It subsequently collapsed.

I'll also never forget seeing the ladder truck in the air, someone on the end of it, and I couldn't see the person at the end because the smoke was so thick. The person on the tip was getting eaten up by smoke. I remember hose everywhere, spaghetti all over the mall. And we went home late that day, after/around supper time.

Captain Greg Wall was also a new recruit in class on the day of the fire:

The new Mack at Station 2 was new Engine 13. It was empty of hose. They took the truck to the scene, along with some of the recruits. I didn't have my gear with me, so I drove home to Milburnie Road, got my gear, and drove back downtown. I parked on Salisbury Street at either Martin or Davie. Then I tried to find Captain Hunnicutt, but I couldn't find him.



I got assigned to help with a two-and-a-inch line on the mall side. This was about an hour before the wall collapsed. I remember pulling a lot of hose, and seeing portable monitors on the mall side. Maybe three of them?

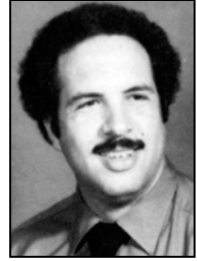
After the wall collapsed, Truck 5 was used as a ram, to push down the remaining façade from the second story. That was the truck that my brother Randy was assigned to. He was sent to the hospital, after working the tip and being exposed to smoke.

I remember lots of chiefs at the fire, the two assistant chiefs [Walker and May] plus District Chiefs Ellis Beasley, Mert King, Lewis Choplin, and Richmond Davis.

We were later fed and all ate cheeseburgers from Hardees. The next day, we helped clean hose behind Station 1. The entire parking lot was full of hose. There was also a critique later at Station 1, upstairs. All the first-due companies attended. Chief Choplin conducted it.

Retired Captain James Farantatos (2003) was a line firefighter of nearly eight years at the time of the fire:

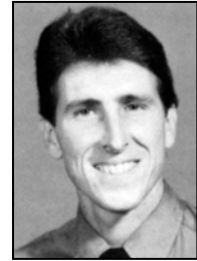
I was on Engine 4. There was a recruit class going on, so they brought them to the scene. Wayland Holden was one of them. I was footing the ladder when Holden was climbing it while holding an ax. Halfway up the ladder, he dropped it on me. (The handle hit me as it dropped.) That was a joke between us and still is. I called him on his retirement day and told him I hope you are not getting an ax as a present. I just remember it was very hot, and it was the last day of the cycle for “C” shift.



Retired Captain Wayland Holden (2010) was another new recruit in class on the day of the fire. This is adapted from an oral history interview conducted on December 28, 2009:

Going to that huge a fire and not really having hardly any fire training—we hadn’t even done any live burn training yet—had me in awe of what was going on.

We got there and pretty much did what the other guys told us to do. I remember climbing the ladder and dropping an ax on [James] Farantatos, who was standing at the bottom of the ladder. The ax slipped out of my hand and landed beside him. He spoke some words in Greek that I’d never heard before. I don’t know if they were ugly, or nice, but you know.



One particular incident in the fire happened when we were told to go inside [to where part of the second floor had burned through and] you could see the fire. And we were told to take a line in there; and five of us went with a two-and-a-half inch line and dragged it in, and we were flowing water all above us, and the Fire Chief came by and hollered, “What are you guys doing in there?” And we were just doing what we’d been told. He said “get out!” And so we backed the line out, and it seemed like within a minute that whole floor just fell in from where we were.

And there was one thing that I really remember about that fire: the magnitude of it, the devastation, and I thought, this is what these guys do every day.

Part III – Photos & Diagrams

William Artis

Firefighter William C. “Rock” Artis, off-duty on the day of the fire, went to the scene and took these snapshots. He retired as a Lieutenant in 2009.



William Artis photos⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The top left photo shows a number of familiar faces, notably Fire Chief Rufus Keith in a white shirt in the center of the frame, and future Fire Chief Sherman Pickard (1986-1995), with his back to the camera in the lower left of the frame.



William Artis photos

Robert Ott

Robert "Bobby" L. Ott Sr. moved to Raleigh from Charlottesville, VA, as a teenager. His family lived on Park Drive off St. Mary's Street. He was a 1942 graduate of Needham B. Broughton High School and served as a flight officer in the US Army Air Corps flying the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt during World War II. Following the war, Bobby graduated from Wake Forest College. He married Ruth Kost in 1946 and worked as Chief Operating Officer of McCallum Wholesale Floral Service in Raleigh for the remainder of his life.

Bobby was seldom seen without a camera within reach. He spent countless hours documenting life and events in and around Raleigh from the 1950s to the early 1990s. Bobby always had a smile and a story to go with the thousands of photographs he took documenting the development of Raleigh in the post-war years. Family and friends joked that he has at least one photo of every structure in Raleigh.

Bobby's life was cut tragically short by cancer in 1993. His two sons, Lee and Bill, live in the Raleigh area and keep his memory alive.



Robert Ott photos



Robert Ott photos

Gary Knight

City-County Bureau of Investigation forensic photographer Gary Knight worked just a couple blocks from the Mangel's Building. He took these photos from various vantage points, and also captured the collapse of the mall side in a series of sequential images. He retired in 2004, and has continued working as a professional and forensic photographer, as well as a photography instructor.



Gary Knight photos



Gary Knight photos



Gary Knight photos

News & Observer

The *News & Observer* collection at the North Carolina State Archives includes images by photographers Jim Strickland and Seny Norasingh. The pictures appeared in both the *N&O* and the *Raleigh Times*.



Courtesy (Raleigh) *News & Observer*



Courtesy (Raleigh) *News & Observer*



Courtesy (Raleigh) *News & Observer*

Elizabeth Reid Murray

Historian and author Elizabeth Davis Reid Murray, who lived from 1925 to 2014, spent the majority of her life documenting and preserving the history of Wake County. In 2006, she donated her entire collection of manuscripts, slides, postcards, and photographs to the Olivia Raney Local History Library. The collection spans from 1965-2004, and became the largest archival collection in the Wake County Library System. It includes hundreds of photographs of buildings in Raleigh and Wake County, and a couple of images after the fire.



Elizabeth Reid Murray photos



Elizabeth Reid Murray photo

Preservation North Carolina

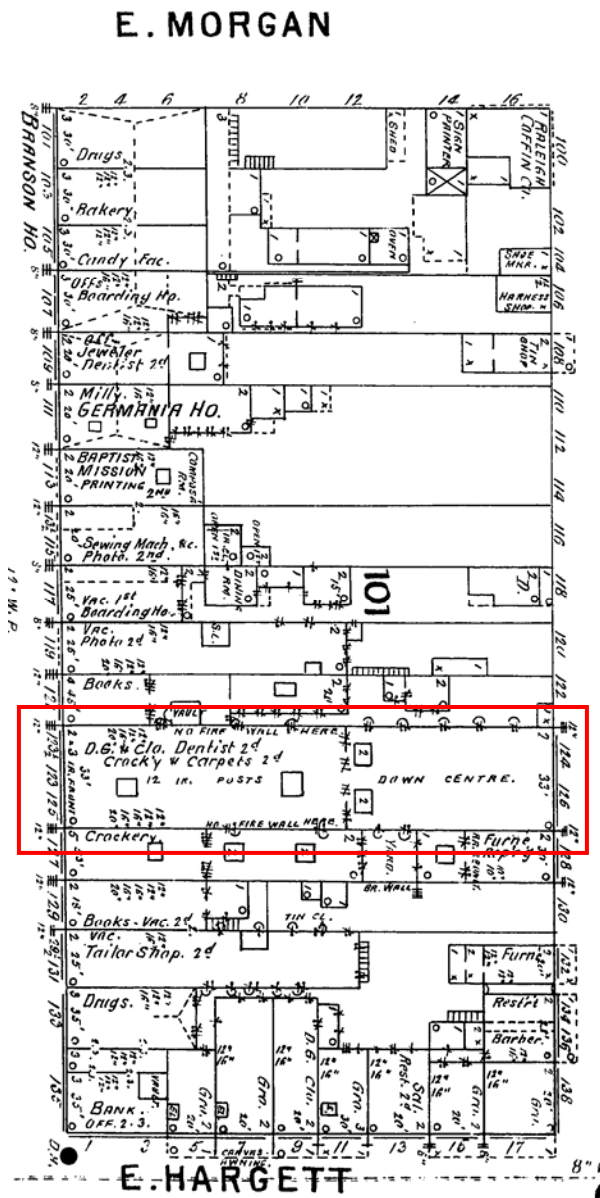
The Preservation North Carolina Historic Architecture Slide Collection, 1965-2005, at the North Carolina State University Library contains this image of the Mangel's Building ruins:



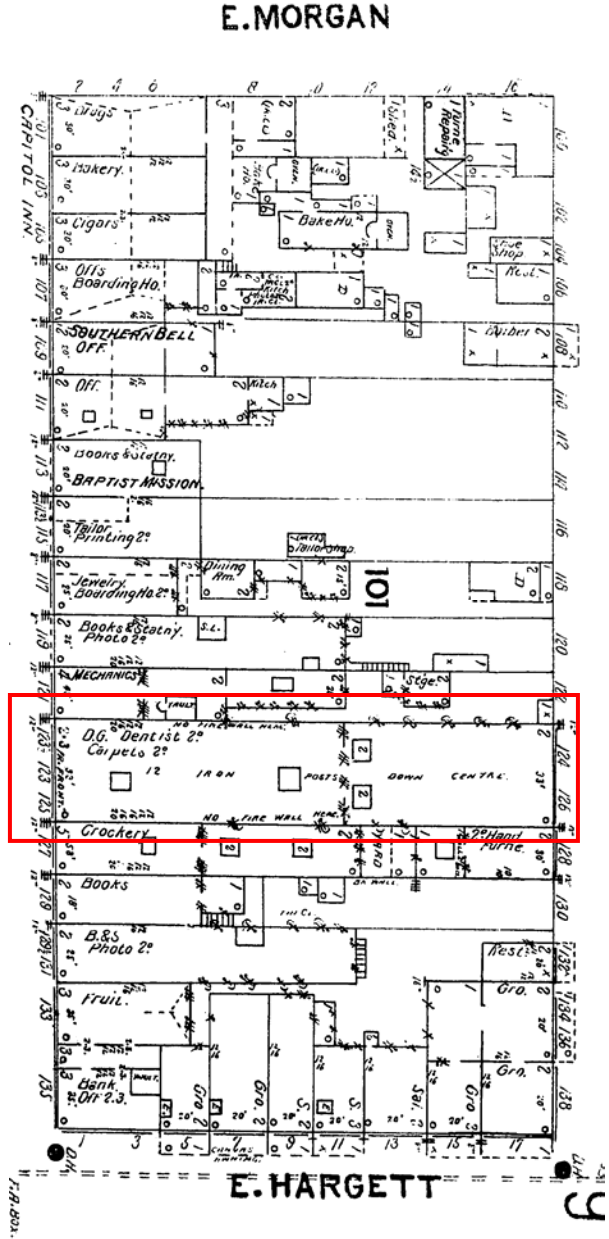
Preservation North Carolina photo

Sanborn Insurance Maps

These five insurance maps document the development of the site, from 1896 to 1950.

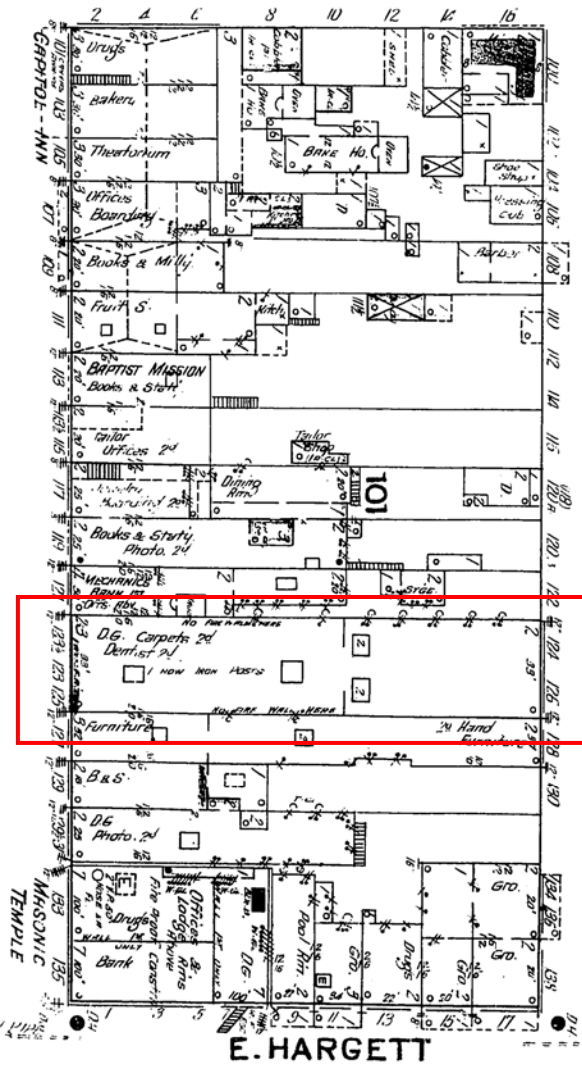


1896



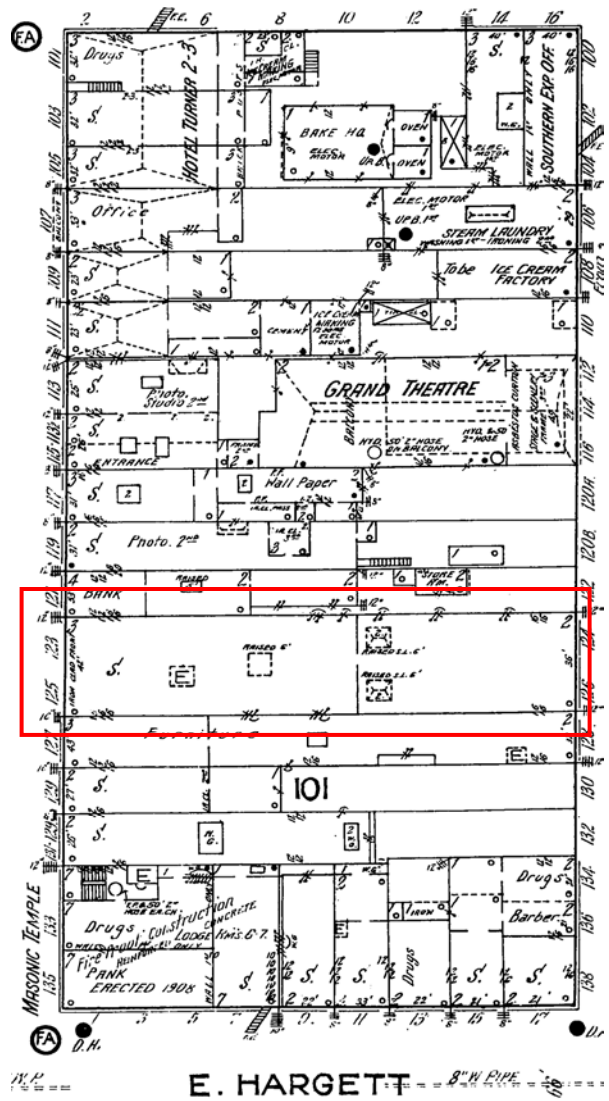
1903

E. MORGAN



1909

E. MORGAN

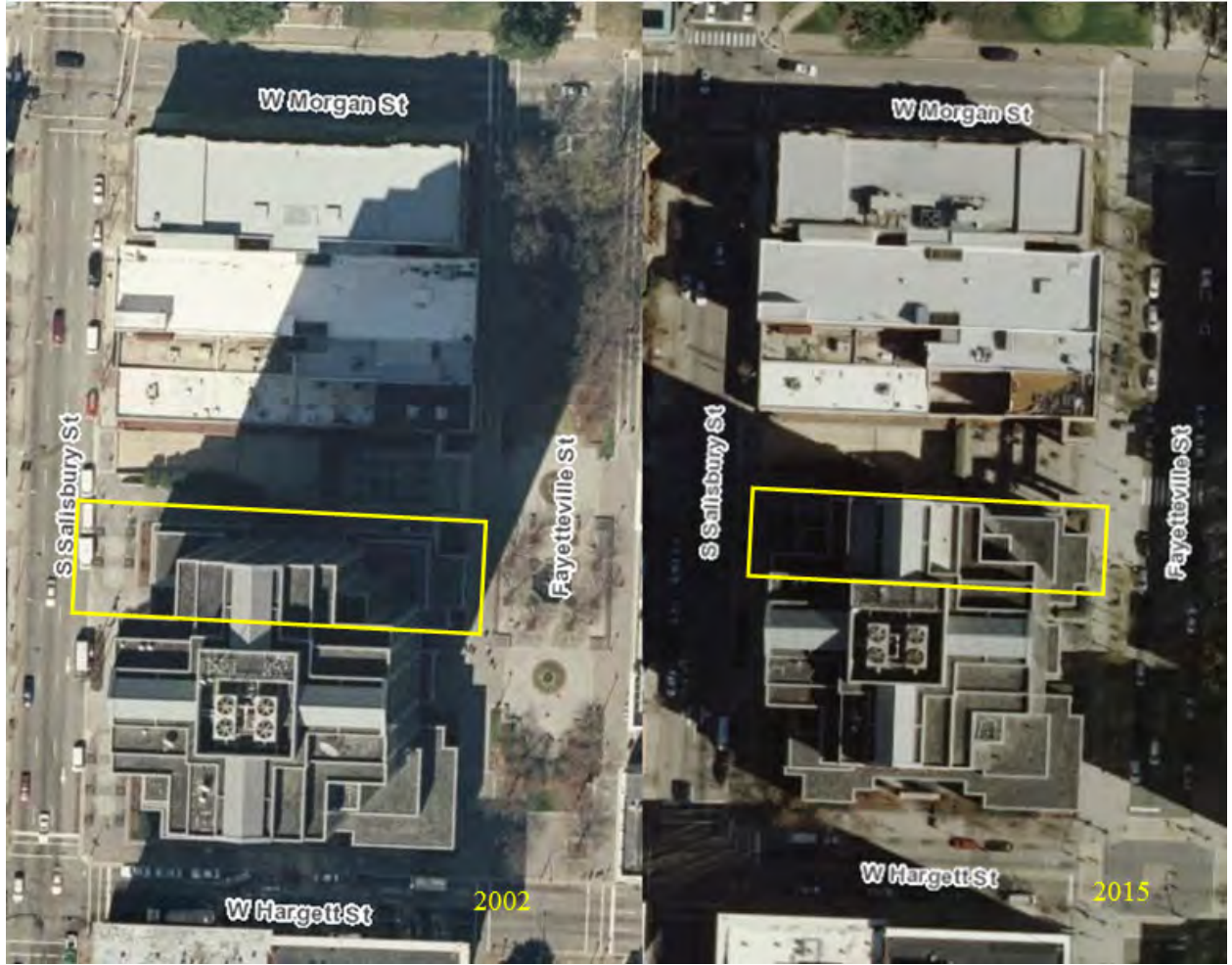


1914

Building Site Over The Decades

These four aerial photos document the development of the site, from 1981 to 2015.

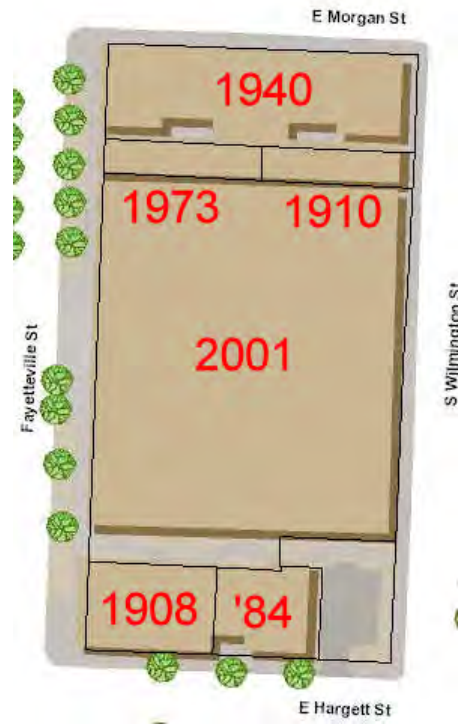
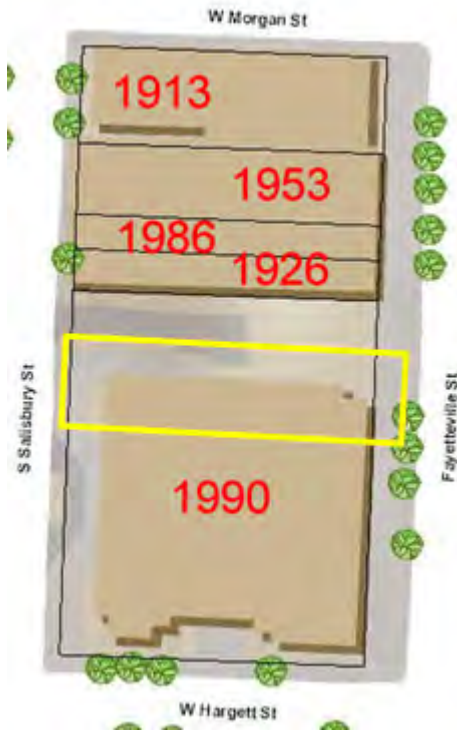




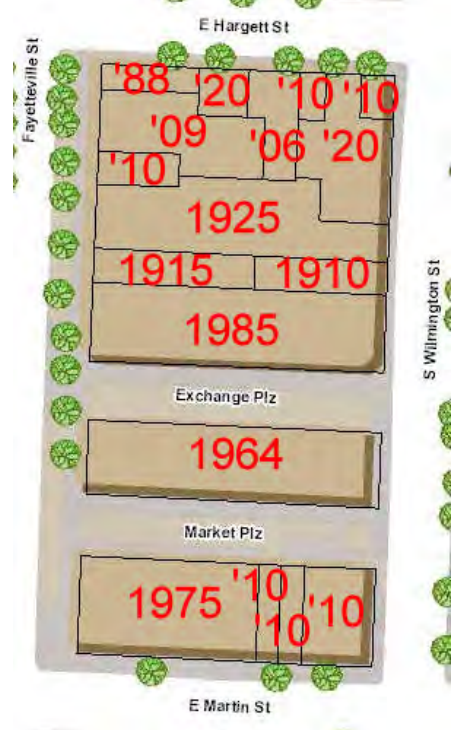
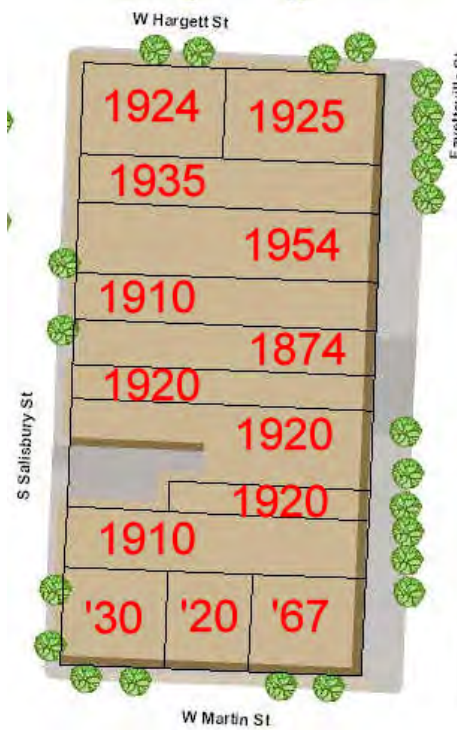
How Many Old Buildings Are Still Standing?

Ages of buildings on Fayetteville Street, compiled in 2013 from county real estate records:

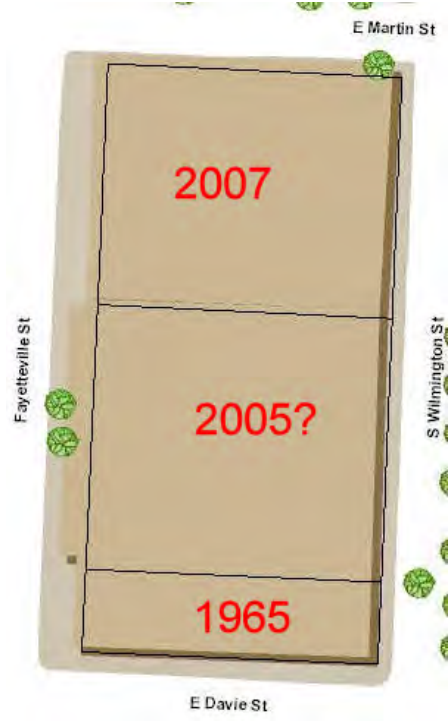
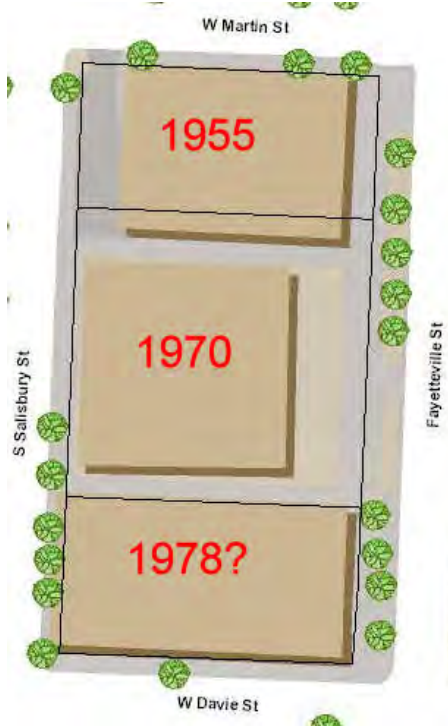
100 Block



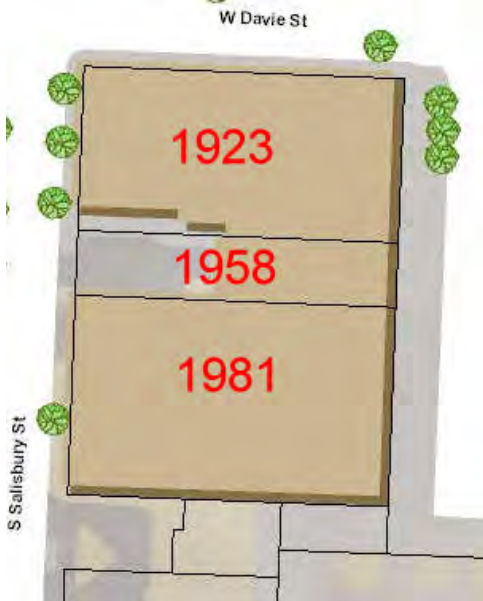
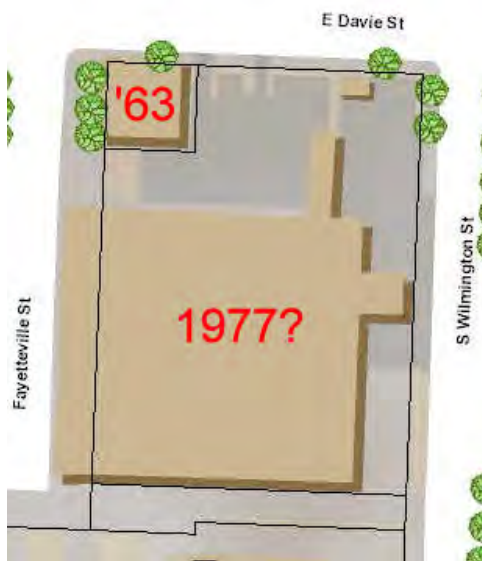
200 block



300 block



400 block



Appendices

Run Card(s)

Which units were dispatched to the fire, and in what order? The answer depends upon the source. From the daily ledger of fire calls, these were recorded:

Units	Disp	Arrived	Cleared	Notes
E1, E3, T1	0850	0854	1737	Dispatched as smoke investigation.
E2, T5, E5, T7, R12	0904		1534	Sent to 100 S. Salisbury St.
E4, R14	0950	0953	1738	Sent to Hargett and Fayetteville.
E13, E11, E9, E6, T16, E10, E7, E8	1044		1639	Sent to Fayetteville and Morgan.
T1, E15	1433	1436	1511	Sent to Wilmington and Hargett.
E7, E14	1718		1735	Call type recorded as first responder.
E14, E9	2038		2130	Call type recorded as first responder.
E10	0043	0049	0050	Call type recorded as first responder.

From log book entries and other sources, here's a more accurate sequence of the responses. Makes and models of apparatus are included, and with the presumption that no reserve units were operating unless otherwise indicated:

Units	FFs	Disp	Arrived	Cleared	Notes	Alarm Level
E1 1970 Mack	?	0850	0854	1737	Dispatched as smoke investigation with E3.	First alarm equivalent
E3 1973 Mack	5	0850	0855	1224	Dispatched as smoke investigation with E1. In service with E9 apparatus at 1224.	
T1 1977 Mack/Baker	?	0855	0857	1407	Special called.	
E2 1975 Mack	3	0904	n/a	1525	See also new E2 and reserve E2 below, both also activated.	Second alarm equivalent?
T5 1979 Mack/ 1958 ALF	2	0908	n/a	1355		
E5 1973 Mack	3	0913	0917	1751		

Units	FFs	Disp	Arrived	Cleared	Notes	Alarm Level
E4 1973 Mack	4	0915	n/a	1738	To "work relief." Note: Recorded as dispatched at 0950 in daily activity ledger.	
E12 1975 Mack	?	0900-0930	n/a	n/a	Not recorded in daily activity ledger, nor in log book.	
R12 1975 Chevy/ Murphy	2	0939	n/a	1511		
Old T5 1961 ALF	2	0945	n/a	1415	Brought from Station 15.	
New E13 ⁵⁵ 1981 Mack	5	1015	n/a		Brought from Station 2.	
R14 1974 Chevy /Murphy	2	1026	1033	1530	Note: Recorded as dispatched with E4 at 0950 in daily activity ledger.	
Reserve E2 ⁵⁶ ?	?	1030	n/a	n/a	To Station 1 for coverage.	
E13 1970 ALF?	?	1044	n/a	n/a		
E11 1975 ALF	4?	1128	1138	1210	To relieve E1. Returned to service with special crew (three Captains). Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	Third alarm equivalent?
E9 1974 Mack	?	1130?	n/a	n/a	Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	
E6 1975 Mack	3	1145	1149	1530	To relieve E13. Returned to service with crew (and/or apparatus) of E13. Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	

⁵⁵New Engine 13 was parked at Station 2, which was also the location of the fire department maintenance shop. It was placed in service as Engine 13 on July 8, the day after the fire.

⁵⁶Reserve Engine 2 was a reserve engine parked behind Station 2, and likely on of the 1950s engines, American LaFrance, FWD, or Mack.

Units	FFs	Disp	Arrived	Cleared	Notes	Alarm Level
E10 1973 Mack	?	1201	n/a	1240	To relieve E12. Returned to service with E12 crew.	Fourth alarm equivalent?
E7 1971 Mack	?	1202	n/a	1256	To relieve E4. Returned to service with E4 crew. Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	
T7 ⁵⁷ 1980 Ford	-1 ?	1202	n/a	1600	To relieve E4. Note: Recorded in daily activity ledger as part of second alarm.	
E8 1973 Mack	?	1205ish ?	n/a	n/a	No log entries found. Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	
T16 1964 GMC	-1	1230	n/a	2015	Note: Recorded as part of third alarm at 1044 in daily activity ledger.	
T1	?	1433	1436	1511		
E13	?	1530	n/a	n/a	Returned to mall from Station 6.	
E15 1973 Mack	?	1645	n/a	2145	To "relieve the firefighters." Note: Recorded as dispatched with T1 at 1433 in daily activity ledger.	
E7	-1 ?	1718	n/a	1735	Returned to service with E7 crew.	
E14 1958 ALF	?	1718?	n/a	n/a	No log entries. Note: Recorded as dispatched with E7 at 1718 in daily activity ledger.	
E14, E9	?	2038	n/a	2130	No log entries for either. From daily activity ledger.	
E10	?	0045	n/a	0745	Recorded as 0043 in daily activity ledger	

⁵⁷Truck 7 was recorded in some places as Truck 12. That is incorrect. Truck 12 wasn't activated until February 1, 1982, when the service ladder company traded places with the rescue company at Station 12.

Log Book Entries

All entries are dated July 7, 1981, unless otherwise noted.

Context

Arrival codes

- Code One - Meant the fire could be handled with booster or one –and-a-half inch line.
- Code Two - Meant the fire could be handled with two-inch line or three-inch line.

Handheld radios

- Issued to District Chiefs.
- Apparatus had base units only.

Fireground operations

- Incident command system not used, implemented a few years later.

Station 1

- 0800 - Jan Parker and Captain James Green out sick, Beech working [Station] 11, R. Hess working Sta 12.
- 0850 - Eng One ans alarm to 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 0854 - Eng One 10-23 code one cond red, changed to code two.
- 0855 - Truck One ans 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 0857 - Truck One 10-23.
- 1044 - Eng 13 responded to 120 Fayetteville Mall.
- 1407 - Truck One 10-8 flood light & face mask damaged.
- 1433 - Truck One back to 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 1436 - Truck One 10-23.
- 1511 - Truck One 10-8, forty-foot bango[r] ladder left on mall.
- 1737 - Eng One 10-8 with new mask, Eng One still at fire on 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 2115 - Eng 15 personnel took reserve pumper to Sta 5.

7-8-81

- 1705 - Eng 13 10-8 with new Mack pumper.

Engine 2

- 0800 - C shift - P. C. Woodlief, L. F. Bridgers, T. Brooks, R. M. King transferred to District Chief.
- 0850 - Eng 13 filling in at Station 2. Eng 2 to training center.
- 0904 - Eng 2 responded from training center to 120 Fayetteville St. assist Eng 1 & Eng 3. Incident no. 2579.

- 1015 - Eng 2 (new Mack) put into emergency service - Chief Robertson, Paul Averette, Perry, Blake, & Carter.
- 1025 - Captain Gill in off duty; to Fay. St. Mall with new men [and] Hester, Averette, and Vassilion.
- 1030 - Eng2 (reserve) to Station One to fill in.
- 1525 - Eng 2 10-8. One scott airpack, one 1 ½ nozzle at scene. L. F. Bridges & T. Brooks taken from fire to hospital.
- T. Brooks was sent home by emergency room. Bridgers return from fire scene. Eng. Two's reserve hose loaded on new pumper.
- E. T. Pernell working on E2 till 0800 hours.

Engine 3

- 0800 - Captain J. C. Munns, R. L. Smith, D. M. McCloud, J. K. Olive, J. M. Dew on vac, R. L. Smith driving.
- 0850 - Eng. #3 responded to structure fire at 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 0853 - Eng #1 10-23 100 blk. Salisbury St.
- 0855 - Approx. 10-23 for Eng. #3, which first responded to 120 Fayetteville St. Mall, Corkscrew Restaurant & Bar. Incident #2577.
- 1224 - Eng. #3 company 10-8 at Sta. #3 with #9 pumper. Eng. #3 being used at fire scene. Rookies Melvin D. Dove and Billy Neal Perry filling in for J. K. Olive and D. M. McCloud who were injured at fire scene.
- 1333 - D. M. McCloud back from hospital; told to go home, authority doctor at hospital and fire administration.
- 1430 - J. K. Olive back from hospital; told to go home, authority doctor at hospital and fire administration.
- 1500 - Eng. #9 company returned Eng. #3 and picked up Eng. #9. Reload Eng. #3 and checked off equipment; 15 sections of 2 ½" on left side and 10 sections of 2 ½" on right side. Eng. #3 10-8 at 1630.
- 1655 - Eng. #3 received 29.3 gals. Of fuel from fuel trk. At parking lot in the 100 blk. S. Wilmington St.
- 1710 - Eng. #3 10-76 to #1 Sta. To pick up scott tanks & MSA tank holder. Still missing from Engine: 1 pickhead axe, 1 hand light, & J. K. Olive's turnout gear.
- 1740 - Eng. #3 10-76 to #3 sta. From #1 sta received call for cold blue...
- 2045 - Eng. #3's hose delivered to station, from fire scene.
- McCloud out with injuries through 7-16-81.
- McCloud out on day duty, 7-21-81 to 8-17-81.

Engine 4

- 0800 - C shift. Hughes, Averette, Farantatos, Woodall.
- 0915 - Engine 4 to Fayetteville St. Mall working relief at fire scene.
- 1738 - Engine 4 back in quarters.

Station 5

- 0800 - [Engine 5] J. R. Moody, Capt.; R. Pearce v[acation]; K. Jones, B. L. Drew to #6, C. Leonard. [Truck 5 -] T. W. Best, R. L. Lugani v[acation], A. R. Wall.
- 0908 - Truck 5 responded to 100 block of Fayetteville St. Mall. Look to Eng. 1 for full report. At fire one axe handle was broken and the red globe on top of tractor got too hot and melted, needs replaced. A. R. Wall was taken to hospital (WakeMed) at about 10:00, too much smoke inhalation. He returned to scene at about 12:45.
- 0913 - Eng 5 responded to downtown mall to assist at fire. At about 10:00 K. Jones was taken to WakeMed for too much smoke inhalation. J. R. Moody has a bruised left thumb caused by running from falling wall.
- 0917 - Eng 5 10-23.
- 1355 - Truck 5 report 10-8.
- 1751 - Eng 5 10-8.
- One 10-foot yellow pole was left on scene.

Notes

- Truck 5 operated a 1979 Mack/1958 American LaFrance tiller.
- It was staffed with Captain Wayne Best (rear driver) and Driver/Engineer Randy Wall (front driver).

Engine 6

- 0800 - R. Barnette, G. O. Tuttle, T. R. Hodge. [Two absent,] L. Barnes sick, J. M. Mial out sick, J. L. Drew until 1000, went with D. H. Perry to fire on Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 1145 - Engine 6 went to Fayetteville St. Mall to relieve Engine 13.
- 1149 - Engine 6 - 10-23.
- 1530 - Engine 6. Returned to Station 6. Engine 13 went back to Fayetteville Street Mall.

Station 7

- Captain Atkinson vac, C. F. Stewart vac.
- 1202 - E7 and Tr 7 responded to fire scene on mall to relieve Eng 4.
- E4 personnel filled in at Sta 7 with Eng 7.
- 1256 - E7 10-8 with crew of Engine 4 - Hughes, Averette, Farantatos, Woodall.
- 1600 - Tr 7 10-8 at Sta 7.
- 1718 - E7 returned to mall.
- 1735 - E7 10-8 with E7 personnel.

July 8

- 2330 - E7 10-7 en route to the Fay. St. Mall fire.

July 9

- 0730 - E7 return to Sta 7.

Engine 8

No log entries found.

Engine 9

No log entries found.

Engine 10

- 1201 - Eng #10 responded to Fayetteville & Morgan - Relieve Eng #12.
- 1240 - Captain Bill Wall, A. Moore, M. L. Jones, & George Jones on Eng #10. 10-8 at Sta #10.
- 1700 - Eng #12 - Burchette, Maidon, & Lea reported to Sta #10 to relieve Eng. #12's crew. E. T. Purnell working on Engine #2 until 0800 hrs tomorrow.
- 0045 - Eng #10 to Fayetteville & Morgan.
- 0745 - Eng #10 10-8 from duty on Fayetteville St. Mall fire.

July 8

- 1800 - Eng. 10 went to Fayetteville St. Mall for stand-by duty at fire scene.
- 2400 - Eng. 10 - 10-8 back at Station 10.

Station 11

- 0800 - Roll Call - C shift working - R. M. Whittington on vac., C. McCullers out sick, M. E. Beach working relief. [Remaining are] T. G. Rich, H. S. Jones, A. R. Bradford, R. D. Barden, M. E. Beach.
- 1128 - Eng 11 was sent to relieve Eng 1 at a fire at 100 bl. S. Salisbury St.
- 1138 - Eng 11 10-23 at fire scene.
- 1210 - Eng 11 10-8 with Captain A. G. Stell, Captain J. T. Gaddis [Gattis], and Captain Powell.
- 1755 - Eng 11 crew returned to station.
- Picked up four scott bottle to fireground uptown.

Engine 12

No log entries found.

Rescue 12

- 0800 - Strickland and Hess.
- 0939 - R12 to 100 blk Fayetteville St. Mall - Code II fire.
- 1511 - R12 10-8 back at Station.

Engine 14

No log entries found.

Rescue 14

- 0800 - C shift. M. E. Murray & E. D. Harris.
- 1026 - Rescue 14 responded to 120 Fayetteville St. Mall.
- 1033 - Rescue 14 10-23.
- 1530 - Rescue 14 10-8.

Station 15

- 0800 - Roll call - C shift working.
- Watch: J. D. Poole 0800 to 2300.
- 0945 - Dallas Perry came to Station 15 and picked up J. D. Poole and Truck 5 to go to scene of fire downtown on Salisbury Street.
- 1415 - Dallas Perry returned Truck 5 to Station 15.
- 1434 - Chief Atkinson brought pickup load of 2 1/2" hose to Station 15 to be washed. Engine 15 washed 39 sections of 2 1/2" hose and 2 [sections] of 1 1/2" sections of hose.
- 1645 - Engine 15 going to downtown fire scene to relieve the firefighters.
- 2145 - Engine 15 returned to station.

Station 16

- 0800 Roll Call - C shift working - R. D. Rhodes on vacation
- 1230 - T-16 left for fire scene on Salisbury St.
- 2015 - T-16 returned from fire scene.

July 8

- 0050 - E16 left for 120 S. Salisbury St. fire scene - Stood by - Overhaul
- 0746 - E16 10-8 returned to qts.

District Chief - Car 4

- 0800 - Chief [Buck] King on duty.
- 0800 - Car 5 staff meeting.
- 0930 - Car 5 at Station 1 filling in during fire.

July 8

- 0800 - Chief Williams on duty.

District Chief - Car 5

- No entry - Chief Clifton may have been working, with Chief Mabrey on vacation.

July 9

- 0815 - Engine 5, T5 10-7 to mall.
- 1645 - E5 - T5 10-8.

Sick Log

- D. M. McCloud (3C) - Heat exhaustion, burns - Back 7-17 day duty.
- Janice Olive (3C) - Injured at fire - Back 7-12.
- Donald Summers (1C) - Heat exhaustion - Back 7-12.
- Thos. W. Brooks (1C) - Back injury, heat exhaust - Back 7-12.
- Cecil Stell (1C) - Heat exhaust - Back 7-12.
- R. D. Perry (1C) - Bruised knee, heat exhaust - Back 7-12.

Fires on Fayetteville Street

What other notable fires have happened on Fayetteville Street? From the 1910s to 1990s, they include:

Date	Address	Occupancy	Notes
1913, January 12	136	Giersch Hotel	Five lines
1921, April 22	Corner of South	Pullen Memorial Baptist Church	\$20K damage
1923, November 27	123	Business	Four lines
1924, December 23	123	Royal and Borden Furniture	Three lines
1924, December 30	127	Grand Theater	Three lines
1925, July 15	215	Almo Theater	Eight lines
1928, January 3	115	Grand Theater	Five lines
1928, March 13	213	Storage building	Six lines
1928, July 3	323-327	Yarborough Hotel	Fifteen lines
1930, May 24	230	Cafe	Four lines
1930, December 6	514	Holloway Cabinet Shop	Three lines
1935, March 25	210	Efird's Department Store	Eight lines
1935, May 13	420	Dixie Building	Four lines
1939, March 23	235	Ammon's Clothing Store	Nine lines

1949, October 27	208	Efird's Department Store	Three lines
1969, February 10	226	McCrary & Company	Two+ alarms
1981, July 7	124	Mangel's Building	Four alarms
1988, November 18	222	Hardee's	Two alarms
1990, March 18	316	Wake County Courthouse	Four alarms
1994, April 20	400	Sir Walter Apartments	Two alarms
1998, October 15	400	Sir Walter Apartments	Two alarms
1999, February 6	400	Sir Walter Apartments	Two alarms