

## Six historic fires in 3 blocks

by Mike Brown - Reporter Editor  
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Two on same month, day

Cue the ♦Twilight Zone♦ music.

With last week's fire which gutted what's believed to be the oldest house in Rockdale, there have now been six historic blazes within a slightly less than three-block area of downtown Rockdale.

Those fires include:

- ♦ Two on the same month and day.
- ♦ Two owned by the same person.
- ♦ The only fire in which members of the Rockdale Volunteer Fire Department perished.
- ♦ Three in which priceless antiques were lost.
- ♦ Three in which popular and thriving downtown businesses vanished forever.
- ♦ A mammoth warehouse fire on the same day a tornado hit a different part of Rockdale.

Wilkes also owned an antique-filled home two doors down, 313 Milam. It was gutted by an April 14, 2005, fire.

That structure was razed. SAME DAY ♦ The fire alarm for the Wallis home fire sounded at 10:22 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19.

The fire carried over into Wednesday, Jan. 20 and there was a callback just before dawn that morning.

On Jan. 20, 1974, exactly 42 years earlier, volunteers responded to one of the scariest

calls in Rockdale history, a burning building with a theater full of kids nearby.

It was a Sunday when fire claimed the Singer's Grill Restaurant and Vera's Fads & Fashions clothing store. They were two doors down in the Dixie Theater where the kids were watching a Walt Disney nature movie.

Everyone got out okay.

MORE ANTIQUES - On the same block an overnight Dec. 11, 2002, blaze claimed three-story Arledge Antiques and the adjacent Ballard Carpets Etc. business.

The two firms occupied the ultra-historic E. M. Peebles & Sons building.

On Aug. 31, 1943, the block-long Coffield warehouse, directly across the street from last week's fire, location, burned.

Later that day a tornado dipped down in the College Hill section of Rockdale on West Bell, ripping the roof from what was then the high school gym.

No lives were lost at either place.

That wasn't the case Sept. 3, 1935, when an era-ending blaze claimed the Scarbrough & Hicks firm, where the city library is today.

Firefighters Wilbur Williams and J. W. Hooper perished when an awning collapsed.

Six landmark fires in a three-block area.

And that doesn't even count the 1888 Mundine Hotel fire, which claimed 11 lives, on other end of the same downtown street as last week's blaze.

All credit for this article goes to

Mike Brown  
and the  
Rockdale Reporter





# TWO FIREMEN LOSE LIVES IN \$50,000.00 BLAZE



OUR HEROIC DEAD

John Hooper and Wilbur Williams are in their graves today.

**MEN ARE CRUSHED  
AS AWNING PULLS  
BRICK WALL DOWN**

J. W. Hooper and Wilbur Williams, Victims of

*Stores Close Wednesday in  
Tribute to Victims of Fire*

**Monday Night Fire Greatest  
Disaster in History Rockdale**

Fire Truck Heads Funeral Pro-  
cessions as Throngs Attend  
Obsequies Wednesday

**LOSS IS COMPLETE  
AS FIRE DESTROY  
S&H CO. BUILDING**

Entire Block Threat-  
ened as Firemen Battl

Reporter photos by Mike Brown, Ken Esten Cooke and Bill Cooke.

1935 news coverage by John Esten Cooke and W. H. Cooke.

Jan. 19-20, 2016, (L) and April 14, 2005, two antique-filled homes, 146 and 104 years old, two doors apart, both owned by the same person, were gutted by fire.

Different generations of RFVD volunteers battle Dec. 11, 2002, Arledge-Ballard fire (above right) and Jan. 20, 1974, Singer's Grill-Vera's Fads & Fashions blaze (above left).

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