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Fires destroy theater, Gum Springs school

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Fire destroyed Ouachita College's Old Main in 1949

Fires of 1915

The 2015 edition of the *Clark County Historical Journal* includes articles on a wide range of topics. One of the articles, as its title suggests, “100 Years Ago: Front-Page Stories from the Southern Standard” features items found in the 1915 local newspaper. Among the newsworthy subjects were events that were much too commonplace at the time---fires.

The year began with a bang, with two substantial fires reported in the Standard’s January 7, 2015, issue: “Again our city was saved from a destructive fire on last Monday night when fire broke out in the rear of the Arcade Theatre. As yet the cause of the fire has not been discovered, and it is probable that this will go down as another one of the mysteries of Arkadelphia . . . Firefighters were not able to prevent the total destruction of the Bell two-story building in which the Arcade was located . . . Besides these losses there was damage done to the buildings of the Royal Theatre on one side and the Hearn restaurant on the other. It was fortunate indeed that there was no wind, and that the stand pipe was well filled with water. With three hoses playing on the fire, however, the streams were not as strong as they could have been with a fire engine.”

Also reported in the January 7 paper was a fire that destroyed the school at Gum Springs: “The school house at Gum Springs was burned Saturday night at ten o’clock. The cause of the fire is unknown, but it is thought it was set fire by some bums who had been in the schoolhouse previous to the fire. No insurance was carried on the building, and the loss of the new fixtures, organ, and library is complete loss.”

The March 25 edition reported yet another fire: “J.T. Abraham suffered a loss of about \$2000 at his farm down on the river one day last week in having his barns and nearly all their contents destroyed by fire. The fire started from some unknown cause in the

middle of the afternoon, and though T. and his full force of farm hands were nearby when the fire started, they were not able to save the barns.”

In October, an old home burned: “One of the oldest landmarks of Arkadelphia was destroyed late on last Saturday afternoon when the residence of Mrs. Julia Pickett was burned to the ground. The house, remarkably well preserved and beautiful in its old-style Southern architecture, was built in 1858 by Dr. Thomas Rowland, who with his bride, who was Miss Mattie McDaniel, moved into the new residence and made it their home for many years.”