



Hallettsville Brick Hotel The Last Chapter

By Brenda Lincke Fisseler

The last chapter of the Hallettsville Brick Hotel begins in 1916, when the owner, Blanche Avant, sold the property to Charles and M.L. Wolf in June. The Wolfs operated the hotel for about three years before selling it to S.J. and M.C. Lipscomb of Bexar County, Texas.

According to the local newspapers, R.H. Smith purchased the hotel property in January of 1925. While a deed was not located in the County Clerk's office, it is assumed that Smith purchased the property from Lipscomb.

Civil Case #7927 S.J. & M.C. Lipscomb vs. R.H. Smith & J.H. Reynolds was filed in the Lavaca County District Court. Smith & Reynolds lost the case and the property was foreclosed on by the court and ordered sold.

On April 10, 1925 a deed in Lavaca County recorded the sale of the property to Lipscomb from Smith & Reynolds. In the deed description it states that the property conveyed in that deed was the same property conveyed to Lipscomb by Charles Wolf in 1916.

Mell Lewis, of Lewis Bros., a real estate company in Houston, Texas, purchased the Brick Hotel property from Lipscomb on September 2, 1927 in exchange for 10 acres of land in the City of Houston valued at \$16,000. It was announced in the local newspaper that A.F. Ganley would manage the establishment.

Well, as it turns out, Ganley did not have a job for very long. On Thursday, October 27, 1927, just a few weeks after the Lewis Bros. had purchased the property, the three story brick structure known as the City Hotel, burned to the ground.

*“Great minds are related to
the brief span of time
during which they live
as great buildings are to a
little square in which they
stand...”*

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According to the local newspaper, the fire began around 4:30 am that Thursday morning. It originated on the third floor and burned its way to the ground. The Hallettsville Fire Department assisted by the Yoakum fire truck did valiant work and saved the two story frame building on the east end of the brick building which was the kitchen and also prevented the spreading of the flames to the Methodist Church and other buildings nearby.

Local Fire Marshall, N.A. Moreland, reported that the value of the hotel was \$25,000.00 and the value of the contents was \$3,500.00. Moreland also reported that the property was insured for a much lower value which will be an important fact later.

By February, 1928, local citizens along with the newspaper were expressing some strong opinions. Complaints were made that falling bricks from the building were dangerous and the burned out remains had been blocking the sidewalks since the fire. In April, the owners, the Lewis Bros., awarded a contract to A.V.C. Moore to have the structure taken down to the first floor.

In June of that same year, Mr. Mell Lewis filed suit against the (Standard) Federal Insurance Co.. Lewis contented that the insurance company refused to pay a \$10,000.00 policy on the property after the fire. The case eventually ended up at the Supreme Court of Texas where the Court ruled in favor of Mell Lewis in 1932.

In 1929, C.L. Stavinoha purchased the wooden part of the old hotel that survived the fire and used it for improvements at his home.

Albert Pavlu, a local blacksmith, purchased the property which had once been in home of the City Hotel, in January 1931. Pavlu began work on erecting a building for his blacksmith shop. In the plans, he used the brick wall that was left standing after the hotel burned as part of his new building.

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Cornerstone

