



City landmark burned

The old Chevrolet Place in downtown Kings Mountain, a landmark since the turn of the century, is no more.

Sixty-five firemen from six fire departments razed the wood, brick and asphalt building Friday night as a four-hour training exercise led by the Kings Mountain Fire Department.

Fire Chief Frank Burns said that firemen from Kings Mountain, Bethlehem, Oak Grove, Lawndale, Waco and Shelby participated in the what he termed training for a "defensive fire attack." Burns said that no fireman entered the building.

"The building was in such bad need of repair that we were afraid it would fall in so we sent no fireman inside and the building burned rather quickly," said Burns.

Shelby city firemen took a water tower, an elevated fire stream to protect exposures, to the scene, said Burns.

Firemen started arriving for the county-wide training session about 6:30 p.m. Friday but their work was hampered by an afternoon thunderstorm. Activities were resumed about 8 p.m., said Burns.

Among bystanders who watched the building go up in flames were Mable Dixon Goforth and her daughter, Joyce Dixon. The Charles Dixon family rented the building from the W. K. Mauney family and began operating it, along with the late Charles Dixon, as Dixon Chevrolet in 1963. Dixon had formerly worked up in the business from a salesman in 1952 with W. Gurney Grantham and Tom Williams, who had owned the car business. After Dixon's death in 1974, his family sold the business in 1975 to Jerry Nations and Nations Chevrolet. Nations sold to Jim Testa and the business became Testa Chevrolet and subsequently Baucom Chevrolet and Ray McKenney Chevrolet. Testa built the new Chevrolet building, now owned by McKenney, on Broadview Street.

Irvin "Tootie" Allen, another bystander at the scene, recalled that he walked the area as a young boy and recalled that his father said that the old Chevrolet place location had the first T-model Ford in Kings Mountain.

"The building had a lot of history," said Mrs. Goforth who recalled that her family remodeled the business several times.

At one time the "old Chevrolet place" was the West Kings Mountain

voting precinct before it moved to the National Guard Armory in later years.

In recent years the Kings Mountain Pool & Gardens operated a business but moved to a new shop on East King Street.

In 1872 Crow & Beam Bar Room was located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Mountain Street and there was an old liquor sign in the parts department of Victory Chevrolet for years, recalled Joyce Dixon, a Cleveland County auctioneer who said she never noticed the value of the antique sign until she became an auctioneer.

In 1905, the old Chevrolet place was actually a Ford place and the place where T models were assembled. The parts came in on the railroad and the work was done in the back shop for Cleveland Motors in the early 1920's and 30's. In the 1940's Gurney Grantham opened the firm as Victory Chevrolet and hired Charles Dixon in 1952. Dixon bought the business in 1948 and changed the name to Dixon Chevrolet and his logo was "the walking man's friend."

"I sat up and there and cried Friday night because Daddy was always afraid of fire and took great precautions to turn off everything when he left the building at night," said Joyce Dixon.

"When I saw those flames coming out the front door I became very emotional and my sister, Connie Bell, would not come with Mother and me for that reason."

What's left of the former Chevrolet place is the body shop that Dixon built on to the building in the 1960s and was separated from the old building.

"It's a shame to have to burn a building to get a crowd of people downtown," said Joyce, who said that a big crowd turned out for the demise of the landmark.

Kemp Mauney said the rubble of the building will soon be a new parking lot for a retail outlet store to be operated by Clyde A. Short & Company.

"Hopefully, the outlet will be a drawing card for people to shop downtown," he said.

Faunce Realty is handling the negotiations for the new business citizen.

