

The "Old Shoe Store" Burns
By Shirley (Bailey) Miller

A bit of Kinmundy history was burned last night at the corner of Fourth Street and Highway 37.

In the first part of the century, this building housed a Service Station, complete with a coffee shop, gas pumps, a garage for repairs, oil changes, etc. Since Highway 37 was a main north/south route, business was good, and the owner, Wilfred Snelling, was very busy. He had an outhouse and a spring-fed well. He installed pipe racks out front so customers without cars would have a place to tie their horses.

At the beginning of WWII, Mr. Snelling sold the business to Frank and Mary Shelton. They made it into a restaurant/general merchandise store. Frank Shelton was quite a character, related to the famous Shelton Gang. He would put up huge signs and stop cars advertising items we all knew were rationed. When Mary would yell "I just sold the last one", Frank would invite them to come in, have a cup of coffee, and see if there was anything else in the store they would like to buy.

After the war, Maxine and Wayne Robb had a restaurant in the building. Business was good because of the large amount of traffic on Highway 37. The building was then rented by Effie Crain who ran a thriving café there for the next several years. There were a lot of migrant workers traveling North to work in the crops, i.e. Alma peaches and apples, Michigan cherries, etc. Their transportation was cattle trucks and they came in the café in groups of 50 or 60 going north and on the return trip coming south.

In the early fifties, Marie and Bob Johnson opened a shoe store in the building, thus it has since been known as the "old shoe store".

It was then purchased by a man who made a home in it until he passed away in the nineties. Time and weather finally caused the building to deteriorate and it was necessary to have it burned. But this busy corner will surely look bare without the "old shoe store".