

Slipper's Soliloquies

When Hamilton Burned



By Fred Slipper

As I have said before, it is nice to hear from old friends, or make new friends when they read my column and bring in items of interest.

A new friend I have made is George Kocman. I first met George about three years ago. He is active in the American Legion, and had stopped by the local Legion Hall. He noticed my name on the plaques showing past Commanders, "Fred Slipper, 1946 and 1947". My last name rang a bell with him, as he had been in school in the Sedro-Woolley district from the fifth grade through high school, graduating in 1925. This was the same year my sister Lorna graduated, so he knew her during the Junior and Senior years, as she attended Sedro-Woolley High the last two years, as Hamilton High was not accredited for higher education in those days. So George came out to our home and we had a nice visit. George lives in Everett, and he dropped by the Courier office last week. He had clipped an article from the *Everett Herald* and felt I would be interested.

The *Everett Herald* has a column headed "Seems Like Yesterday," and under it runs items from 50 years ago. The following item is the one George brought in: "Residents of the small town of Hamilton were going about readjusting to business after two large fires destroyed or badly damaged a pool hall, hotel, garage and grocery store. With no fire department the entire community turned out with garden hoses and hand pumps to fight flames until the Mt. Vernon and Lyman fire departments arrived. A strong wind fanned the flames. The fire started in Luke Wall's card room, destroyed that building and spread to the Earl Ellenberger garage and Swettenam Grocery, and finally reached resistance when it came to the Hamilton Bank, the only brick building in that block. The post office in the grocery store was burned out but the mail and records were saved. Two cars and all the equipment and accessories in the garage were destroyed, as were the living quarters above the grocery store."

I remember this fire very well, which happened in 1931. It was one of many that happened in those days. Of course, the one that made the biggest impression on my memory was the one in 1925 that destroyed my dad's Hamilton Mercantile store along with a number of other wooden structures. This fire was just across the street, on the west side, of the bank building mentioned in the article. The old brick bank building is still standing, and I believe is the only building left from the early days of Hamilton.

My thanks to George for bringing the article in. Remember, I like to hear from any of our readers with items of interest from "the good old days."