

# Fire from front

As firefighters arrived, they immediately began battling the building from the outside.

“With that building, we knew it had been abandoned for years,” Fleming said. “There was no way I was putting firefighters in there. We weren’t going to fight it from the inside. It had to be defensive the whole way.”

Once Fleming made the decision to fight the fire from the exterior, they turned their focus to nearby Little Rock Lake and the safety of others.

“Our primary goal was to protect the lake, and we didn’t want a wall falling and causing a major problem on the highway.”

The constraints of the parking lot and an active power line forced the SRFD to set up its aerial ladder truck on Highway 10, reducing traffic to one lane. Firefighters from all three cities battled the blaze from multiple angles, opening doorways and holes to the building in an attempt to keep the fire in the center of the building.

A basement to the building contained the water runoff and debris. When water looked as if



PHOTOS BY NATASHA BARBER  
A Sauk Rapids firefighter works to extinguish the rear side of the former King's Inn building Sept. 12 in Watab Township. The building is deemed a total loss.

it might make its way toward Little Rock Lake, firefighters built dams and dikes to reroute the streams.

Five tankers trucked in water and firefighters pumped from the lake.

“We used a lot of lake water yesterday, and we used water from the city of Rice and the development by the golf course,” Fleming said.

Working throughout much of the day, an excavator was called in to help extinguish parts of the building the firefighters could not easily reach. The building was taken

down to its steel beams as a safety measure.

“We needed the excavator to move things around,” Fleming said. “That building was unsafe before it was on fire. It was structurally unstable, and we needed to demolish it to extinguish the fire and for public safety.”

Crews left the scene around 5 p.m.

The site has been the home of multiple entertainment venues and a supper club. In the 1920s, it was a dance hall known as the Little Rock Lake Pavilion before transitioning to the King's Inn



Rice Fire Chief Scott Janski (from left), Sauk Rapids Fire Chief Jason Fleming and Sartell Fire Chief Peter Kedrowski along with firefighter Dale Hiscock assess the fire of the former King's Inn building Sept. 12 in Watab Township. About 25 firefighters fought the blaze from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Supper Club in the mid-1960s. Under different ownership, the building featured exotic dancing from 1993 to the early 2000s. It has sat vacant

since. Property records identify Thomas A. Rannallo, of Minneapolis, as the owner of the parcel. Benton County is owed

roughly \$24,000 in back-dated property taxes, which were last paid in 2018.



Rice firefighter Allen Petron empties water into a pool Sept. 12 in Watab Township. Five tanker trucks brought water from the city of Rice and a nearby residential area, and the departments also used water from Little Rock Lake.



Brad Peterson, first assistant chief of the Sauk Rapids Fire Department walks toward Highway 10 Sept. 12 in Watab Township. An aerial ladder truck was set up on the highway due to an active power line.



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