

CHIEF EXPRESSES THANKS FOR HELP IN FIGHTING FIRE

On February 21st, the Ste. Genevieve Fire Department was called at 3:17 AM to a well-involved structure fire at the nationally known Inn St. Gemme Beauvais located at 78 North Main St. Upon arrival, firefighters were greeted with heavy smoke throughout the building and fire in the northeast portion of the kitchen area which had extended to the second floor.

This would prove to be one of the toughest fires that the department has fought in recent memory, due to the nature of the structure and the many renovations done over the past 160 years. The fire took advantage of multiple drop ceilings and utility access holes to remain concealed and extend from the first floor to the second and third floor ceiling areas and eventually into the third floor roof structure.

Not only did the firemen have to battle the fire but the weather as well. With temperatures below freezing, the sleet starting falling as fire fighting units arrived and did not quit. Firefighters were on the scene over seven hours to bring this fire under control. This made the dangerous job of fire fighting even more dangerous.

This structure may have been lost to history forever if not for the assistance of nearly every fire department in the County. A mutual aid call for assistance went out for manpower to assist the Ste. Genevieve department. A special call was made to the Perryville Fire Department to respond with their 75-foot Ladder Truck. Within the hour, there were a total of 57 firefighters battling the blaze. The cooperation of the responding Fire Departments was tremendous. The last apparatus left the scene about 10:30 that morning.

On all structure fires in Ste. Genevieve the wives of the firemen respond to provide Firefighter Rehab. These ladies braved the elements to provide an on scene safety monitoring system to determine if firefighters are in danger of fatigued due to overworking at prolonged fires. These ladies provided water, coffee, food, hand warmers and medical monitoring during this incident.

The Fire Chief determined that the fire started above the ceiling of the kitchen on the first floor. A request was made to the State Fire Marshal's Office to determine the exact cause of the blaze. The investigation was completed Saturday morning by the State Fire Marshal with the assistance of Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) and members of the Ste. Genevieve Fire Department. It was determined that the fire was started from heat tape wrapped around the copper sprinkler piping. The heat tape overheated causing the wiring to become exposed which ignited the wood joist and ceiling structure. The heat tape had been installed by a previous owner.

The Ste. Genevieve Fire Department would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to the following for their assistance during this event.

Ozora Fire Dept., St. Mary Fire Dept., Weingarten Fire Dept., Bloomsdale Fire Dept., Zell Fire Dept., Kinsey Fire Dept., SGFD Ladies Rehab Team, Ste. Gen. County Ambulance District and the Perryville Fire Department.

We would also like to thank Rozier's Country Mart for the doughnuts, drinks and coffee, Sara's, and The Hotel Ste. Genevieve for opening early and providing coffee and facilities, Citizens Electric and the City of Ste. Gen. Water Dept., Street Dept. and Police Dept. for their assistance.

The Fire Department would also like to thank the Owners Jan and Kathy Brans for their cooperation during the fire and investigation. We would like to wish them the best of luck with the restoration of this great landmark.

