

The Town of Russell had two major fires on February 14th, Valentine's Day. One was in 1962 and the other was in 1976.

In 1962, the town lost the IGA with attached gas station, feed store, and hardware store. The fire started in the hardware store, which was operated at the time by Richard White of Russell. The fire quickly spread to the IGA and feed store, which were operated by Mary and Joseph Brassard of Russell.

The hardware store lot was purchased by Anna S. Jenny on 9-3-1895 from Edgar Hazelton and his wife. Anna's heirs sold the parcel to Jerome Jenny of Great Falls, Montana on 12-4-1928. Later, the land was transferred to Jerome and Irene Jenny of Russell. The hardware store was operated at one time by Kenneth Harmer of Russell and later transferred to Richard White of Russell. Richard White operated the store at the time of the fire. After the fire, the lot was used as a parking lot for Jenny's Barbershop. The lot is currently owned by Christopher Burnham, nephew of Jerome and Irene Jenny..

Helen Duprees purchased the IGA with attached gas station and feed store from Elmer Hickot on 5-26-1960. Mary Brassard, being the only sole heir of the estate, became the owner of the parcel when Helen died on 9-12-1967. Mary later sold the parcel to Ella and Robert Davis. The county eventually acquired the parcel for back taxes and sold it to the Town of Russell. The Town of Russell owns this parcel where a gazebo currently sits.





Russell pictures taken prior to 1962

The second fire that happened on Valentine's Day was the Russell Hotel in 1976. The parcel was purchased by Fred and Pat Backus of Russell from Charles Fox, also of Russell. The parcel was later sold to Carl Richard Tiel of Canton, who operated the hotel at the time of the fire. Thankfully, everyone living in the hotel at that time made it out safely. Since the fire, the parcel has had several owners: Marilyne and Gene Knight (4-3-2002); Breanne M. Snyder (12-16-2013); Pete, Sandra, and Christopher Burnham (12-7-2018).

The hotel was the third hotel to burn at this site. The first was in the 1800s. The second hotel, which had four stories and was named The Russell House, burned in 1911. In 1912, a three story hotel was constructed and named the Russell Hotel.



Russell Hotel



Russell House



