

Gascapades

By Shila Moore

The fire that started June 17, 1927 at Crawford No. 1 gas well was finally extinguished. The July 1, 1927, issue of The Hugoton Hermes reprinted an article from The Hutchinson News. “Tex Thornton used a charge of five quarts of nitroglycerin to shoot out the fire in the Crawford gas well southwest of Hugoton. He came from Amarillo with his outfit. A slanting wire was rigged up from one side of the well to the other, crossing over the top of the pipe, but a little bit to one side. The dynamite charge was allowed to slide down the slanting wire until it was a foot or so from the pipe where it was exploded by the use of a battery, the operator being a long way back from the hole. It snuffed out the fire and the well was then got under control. Millions of feet of gas have been burned there, the fire being started in a short circuit of electric wires in the tower. It is planned to build a line to take this gas to Dodge City and Garden City and other Kansas towns in a short time. Other gas wells will also be drilled near there.”

Ward Augustus Thornton more commonly known as Tex Thornton was a well shooter and oilfield fire-fighter. The following

biographical information was found on findagrave.com. “Tex was born in Oxford, Ms, October 9, 1891. In 1913 he went to Cleveland, Oh, where he worked for a company that manufactured torpedoes; there he mastered the use of explosives. Thornton put out his first oilfield fire in East Liverpool, Oh. After World War I he began working as a well driller and shooter for the Knox Oil Company at Artesia, NM, and then at Electra, Tx. He first traveled to the Texas Panhandle in 1920, while working with the United States Torpedo Company of Wichita Falls. Later the company sent him to Amarillo as a branch manager. There he met and married Sarah Troxell; they had one son. Thornton soon found that the limestone formations in the Panhandle oil and gas field necessitated the use of as much as 500 quarts of nitroglycerin to shoot each well. He established his own business, the Tex Thornton Torpedo Company, in a canyon nine miles outside of Amarillo. There he constructed a torpedo factory, hired two engineers, and manufactured his own nitroglycerine explosives. The high gas content in the Panhandle field made a well shooter's job particularly hazardous. More than once Thornton reportedly caught shells of nitro forced back up



Photograph of Tex Thornton is from findagrave.com.

well holes by gas bubbles. The great amount of gas in the Panhandle field also made well fires a constant menace, and Thornton quickly gained a reputation as the man to put them out. Whenever there was danger of causing other fires by using explosives, he used massive amounts of water and steam to smother the flames. This process usually took about three weeks, required twenty to thirty men, and employed fifty steam boilers. The better-known and more spectacular mode called for extinguishing the blaze with a charge of nitroglycerine. After removing red-hot metal pieces from around the well head, fire fighters planted a post on either side of the blazing well and connected the posts with a double wire line strung on pulleys. A bundle of nitroglycerine wrapped in a protective asbestos covering was then attached to the wire, positioned over the fire, and exploded with a foot-operated electrical switch. The blast choked off the oxygen and snuffed out the fire. The most dangerous part of the operation, however, was capping the still-blowing well.

cess. His ability to make friends and his generosity were legendary. He was killed June 22, 1949, by a pair of hitchhikers to whom he gave a ride, and was buried in Llano Cemetery in Amarillo.”

“Thornton's exploits earned him fame as the ‘king of the oil-well fighters.’ In January 1928 he traveled to Corpus Christi, where a fire had been burning out of control for some time. After spending a week preparing the site, he made the shot. The fire went out, but within fifteen minutes it reignited and blew a crater over 200 feet wide and almost as deep. Thornton called Amarillo, where his wife Sarah loaded up a company vehicle with nitroglycerine and drove 700 miles to Corpus with the load, a performance that made headlines throughout the state for several days.

Once, while Thornton was attending a convention in El Paso, he gave oil company employees step-by-step instructions over the phone for putting out a gas fire that had erupted near Borger. Thornton was also known for his inventiveness. He is credited with designing the protective asbestos suit for fighting fires, although he preferred not to use the clumsy outfit. During the 1930s he invented a device with which he sought to produce rain by bombing clouds, but with only limited suc-

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whom he gave a ride, and was buried in Llano Cemetery in Amarillo.”

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Matthew 16:26; Acts 2: 38 - 47

Romans 6: 4-5; Colossians 2: 11-12

Lin Goode

PUBLIC NOTICE

(First published in The Hugoton Hermes, Thursday, September 10, 2026) 3t

In the Twenty-sixth Judicial District
District Court, Stevens County, Kansas
Probate Department

In the Matter of the Estate of Vera Louise Sims, a/k/a Louise Sims, a/k/a Vera Louise Sims-Marsing, Deceased.

Case No. SV-2026-PR-25
Notice of Hearing

The State of Kansas to All Persons Concerned:

You are hereby notified that on the 1st day of September, 2026, a Petition has been filed in said Court

by Kenneth Bruce Sims praying for foreign probate without administration; and you are hereby required to file your written defenses thereto on or before the 15th day of October, 2026, at 9:30 o'clock a.m. of said day, in said Court, in the City of Hugoton, in Stevens County, Kansas, at which time and place said cause will be heard. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon said Petition.

Kenneth Bruce Sims, Petitioner

Megan L. McCann
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e-mail: mmccann@dclawfirm.net
Attorneys for Petitioner

PUBLIC NOTICE

(First published in The Hugoton Hermes, Thursday, September 17, 2026) 1t

ORDINANCE NO. 865

AN ORDINANCE OPENING PORTIONS OF WEST 12TH STREET AND SOUTH POLK STREET LOCATED IN THE DR. NANNIE STEPHENS ADDITION TO THE CITY OF HUGOTON, KANSAS

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF HUGOTON, KANSAS:

Section 1. STREET OPENING. Pursuant to K.S.A. 14-423, the Governing Body of the City of Hugoton, Kansas hereby opens those portions of West 12th Street and South Polk Street located in the Dr. Nannie Stephens Addition to the City of Hugoton, Kansas described as follows:

A parcel of land located in the Northwest Quarter of Section 21, Township 33 South, Range 37 West of the 6th Principal Meridian, Stevens County, Kansas, also being in Dr. Nannie Stephens Addition to the City of Hugoton, Stevens County, Kansas, more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the Northwest corner of said Quarter, thence S01°30'02"W along the West line of said Quarter a distance of 445.89 feet, thence S88°44'56"E a distance of 44.00 feet to the point of Beginning of Parcel to be described; -thence continuing S88°44'56"E a distance of 606.51 feet;

-thence N01°33'33"E a distance of 392.92 feet;
-thence S87°27'54"E a distance of 87.84 feet;
-thence S01°31'46"W a distance of 468.58 feet to the South line of Dr. Nannie Stephens Addition;
-thence N89°17'25"W along said South line a distance of 694.56 feet;
-thence N01°30'02"E a distance of 84.19 feet to the point of Beginning.

Said Parcel contains 2.08 acres, more or less, and is subject to easements, reservations and restrictions of record.

Section 2. FILING. The City Clerk is directed to file a copy of this ordinance, which has been certified by the City Clerk as a true and correct copy, in the office of the Stevens County Clerk and in the office of the Stevens County Register of Deeds in accordance with K.S.A. 14-423.

Section 3. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption and publication once in the official city newspaper by the following summary:

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY of the City of Hugoton, Kansas, this 8th day of September, 2026.

/s/ Matthew Rome
Matthew Rome, Mayor

(SEAL)
/s/ Carrie Baeza
Carrie Baeza, City Clerk



Advertisement of Tex Thornton is courtesy of Tyler Hook.

History from the Hermes

Thursday, September 19, 1996

The \$33,000 lighting upgrade in the middle school, which would pay for itself in two years, will result from retrofitting existing fixtures as a result of action by the USD 210 Board of Education at its meeting Monday night. An energy grant will reimburse the district for approximately half of the cost of the project.

The existing fixtures to be updated are in the classrooms, hallway and theatre. The rooms will not lose lighting as a result of the lighting updating and the process could result in as much as 20 percent more usable light, according to maintenance supervisor Bill Decamp.

Thursday, September 18, 1986

The price most Kansans pay for natural gas hit a new 4 and a half year low during the second quarter of 1986, a survey by the staff of the Kansas Corporation Commission reveals. A Kansan using 10,000 cubic feet of gas pur-

chased from one of the states six largest natural gas systems during the 1986 second quarter (April through June) paid an average of \$34.06, 44 percent below the national average of \$60.40. The \$34.06 figure represents the lowest price for the Kansans since the \$33.09 figure recorded in November of 1981. At that time the Kansas average was 29 percent below the national average.

Thursday, September 16, 1976

The First Church of God in Hugoton held its Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration Sunday, September 5, 1976, with a number of visitors attending. People came from Hawaii, Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Michigan and Kansas. There were ministers of the Church of God from the Southwest District and also from Hugoton at various times of the day.

Thursday, September 15, 1966

Tom Boles put out about 35 acres of potatoes this summer and they were being dug last week. This was the only vegetable crop being grown in the county on a commercial basis this year.

Thursday, September 20, 1956

Stevens County may well become one the leading hybrid sorghum seed producing centers in Kansas, following the precedent of leading the state in maize production set more than a decade ago. A Garden City seed company, with contracts for 240 acres of seed this year has announced it will increase the acreage next spring. Two local farmers are producing the seed on 240 acres of irrigated land. Dick Kapp is producing 160 acres of seed on the H.V. Parker farm, three miles southwest of Moscow, and H.C. Sturgeon is producing 80 acres of seed on his farm west of Hugoton.

Thursday, September 20, 1946

Stevens County Memorial Auditorium, was unanimously approved by the members of the Hugoton Junior Chamber of Commerce of Stevens County in their regular meeting Wednesday night of last week. The proposed auditorium is to cost not exceeding \$150,000 and it is to be built by the county with funds secured by taxation.

If any readers have pictures or memories for the history page of the Hermes, please bring them in to the staff at The Hugoton Hermes newspaper.

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