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GRANITE CITY FIRE | Community loses a part of its history



STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

A firefighter worked near the northwest side of the Vandalia Warehouse. Graniteware started production there in 1892.

4-story warehouse burns

Building once housed Graniteware

BY JENNIFER KAPIOLANI SAXTON AND JAYNE MATTHEWS
Belleville News-Democrat

A city block and the foundation of Granite City's history are gone.

A fire that shot up about 4 a.m. Monday destroyed a city block-sized, four-story warehouse — commonly known as the Vandalia Warehouse — on Niedringhaus Avenue. No cause has been determined.

One firefighter was taken to a hospital because of back spasms and cramping, but no injuries were reported during the daylong struggle.

"Nobody got hurt," City Administrator Mike Sparks said. "We're happy about that."

The property is owned by two companies: Delivery Network of Madison, which rents storage space to companies, and Brahler's Trucker's Supply Inc. of Granite City, a wholesaler of new truck tires and a retreader.

Slender water lines in the



News-Democrat

city's oldest district hampered water delivery to the fire in a building more than 100 years old.

The building was the original home of Graniteware — gray-speckled steel pots and pans that began production in 1892, when the town was known as Six Mile Prairie. The

company was founded by immigrant brothers William and Fredrick Niedringhaus.

The town later was named Granite City in honor of the product that made it famous. The industry eventually morphed into Granite City Steel.

The 6-inch water lines leading to the historic warehouse can deliver about 600 gallons of water a minute, compared with the 1,500 gallons a minute delivered by modern 12-inch lines, Sparks said.

"Most cities as old as Granite City are like that," Sparks said. "That old infrastructure doesn't support. Nobody does anything about it unless something happens like this."

Dennis Wingertsahn, southern division manager for Illinois-American Water Co., said he was unaware of any problems with water supply.

"Everything we know about that is there were no water delivery problems," he said. "We

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STEVE NAGY/News-Democrat

Brahler's Trucker's Supply Inc. workers saved files from the burning Vandalia Warehouse.

'Swamp Dog' sentenced to 17-year term

Scheme netted \$4.25 million

BY BETH HUNDSORFER
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EAST ST. LOUIS — He was an East St. Louis political power who had nearly \$1 million in cashier's checks in his pocket when federal agents arrested him.

On Monday, U.S. marshals led Marvis "Swamp Dog" Bownes, a East St. Louis Democratic precinct committeeman and former police and fire board member, from the courtroom to begin serving a 17-year, 5-month federal prison sentence for property flipping.

U.S. District Judge Michael Reagan also ordered Bownes, 49, to pay a \$200,000 fine after paying restitution to his property scheme victims.

"He was taking advantage of low-income families who were working hard to get a piece of the American dream," Reagan said.

Reagan also barred Bownes from working in real estate after completing his prison sentence and his five years on supervised release.

Bownes pleaded guilty to charges he bought dilapidated houses for as little as \$1, then sold



Bownes

INSIDE: Bownes sentenced for threat to reporter. PAGE A2

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Three men are arrested at Club Casino

One suspect wore police cap

BY CAROLYN P. SMITH
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Three men — including one who police said was impersonating a police officer — were arrested Sunday morning after they refused to cooperate with police at the Club Casino nightclub.

The men, all from St. Louis, arrived about 3 a.m. at the club at 6830 State St. Police said one of the men, Danyale Morgan, was wearing a blue hat with the word "Police" in white letters. When he tried to enter the club, he was stopped by an East St. Louis Police officer.

Morgan's brother, Anthony Morgan, said another police officer asked Danyale whether he worked in St. Louis. When Danyale Morgan replied "yes," Anthony Morgan said, police took it to mean he was a police officer in St. Louis. They then arrested him for impersonating a police officer, Morgan said.

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DERIK HOLTSMANN/News-Democrat

Teachers Katie Mitchell, left, and Jenny Hummert walked a picket line Monday at Freeburg Elementary School.

Freeburg teachers strike over health care coverage

Union members balk at rise in premiums

BY PATRICK J. POWERS AND TANIA E. LOPEZ
Belleville News-Democrat

FREEBURG — More than 150 teachers, community members and concerned parents packed the Carl L. Barton School Library in Freeburg on Monday night — all looking for answers at the end of the teachers' first day on strike.

They sat in the aisles, crammed in the doorway and

paced in the hallway outside. At press time, no decision had been made concerning the 54 teachers in Freeburg Grade School District 70 on strike.

Classes remain cancelled today.

At the heart of the issue lies the rising cost of health insurance. In the school board's most recent offer, the district offered to pay up to 10 percent of any increases in health insurance the teachers may face in the

next 10 years.

Anything above that 10 percent would have to be paid by the teachers themselves. For example, if insurance rates increase 12 percent next year, the same percentage it jumped this year, a teacher would have to pay \$94.08 a year out of his or her own pocket.

"Cost-sharing on the medical coverage is the only thing we disagree on," School Board President Herschel Parrish said. "We don't think we're doing anything wrong."

However, the teachers' fear is of the unknown. In the two years previous to last, health insurance costs jumped 20 percent each year. Predicting the costs of health care in the future simply isn't accurate enough for a family to budget, teachers said.

"I cannot believe that you wouldn't be willing to pay our insurance," said Elaine Heidenreich, a teacher at Freeburg's elementary school for 18 years.

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Pick Three-Midday: 8-5-6
Pick Three-Evening: 2-2-2
Pick Four-Midday: 0-7-5-6

Pick Four-Evening: 1-1-4-4
Little Lotto: 01-02-04-14-16
Jackpot: \$5 million

FOR MISSOURI

Daily Pick 3: 3-1-3
Daily Pick 4: 4-2-3-1
Show Me 5: 5-13-14-36-44

