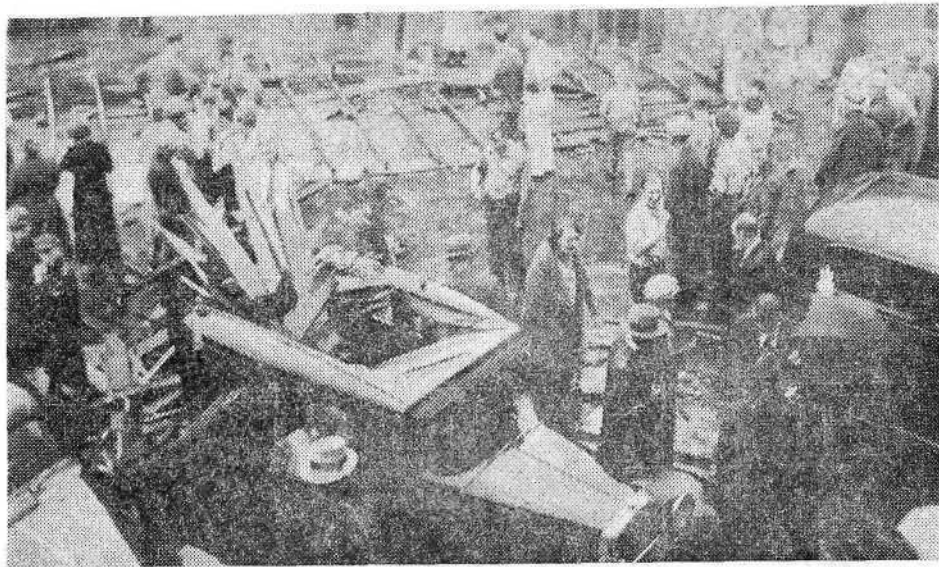


# BENSON HOTEL HISTORY RECALLED



Top, a view of Kent street with the wreckage of the Benson roof lying around, and below a crowd of interested spectators inspect the damage to the parked cars. It is reported a portion of roof pierced the car in the foreground while the driver was still in it, missing him by inches.

The recent sudden removal of the metal roof sheeting from Lamantia's fruit warehouse by the windstorm last weekend, brings to mind the big blow of 1938 when the roof was lifted off the Benson House and deposited on cars parked on the south side of Kent street.

The Benson House block was erected following the great conflagration of 1861, when a large portion of Ridout, Kent and William streets was razed to the ground.

History relates that a gentleman named Benson gave the hotel his name which has remained during many decades. Many people in Lindsay may recall the name of Miss Teresa Benson, a very accomplished musician and her sister Mrs.

musician, and her sister Mrs. (Dr.) Blanchard. Information is somewhat vague but it is reported that John Wardrobe ran the hotel for many years, and on his demise, his son and daughter assumed management. Later Miss Wardrobe operated a boarding house in the present Grand Union Hotel and also a rooming home for men in a terrace which once stood on Cambridge street north where the municipale parking lot is now located.

Other owners of the Hotel Benson included George O'Neill, who was keenly interested in sport and later operated the Tecumseh Hotel in London, Ontario. Harry Burgess also ran the Benson. Hyatt and Wellman were excellent hotelmen as were Burns and Lonergan. Then followed W. (Bill) Nugent, and Gus Bodnar and John Tozer.

The hotel has through the years been a fine home on the road. In the days of the commercial traveller the hostlery was very busy. Huge trunks filled with sample merchandise were hauled over the muddy Lindsay streets from the station on Durham street to the hotel on Kent street. The drayman dumped the trunks on the wooden sidewalk in front of the hotel, they were placed on a small but strong

elevator which was located on the front street in the east end of the hotel. The elevator was handled by a rope and the trunks hoisted to the second floor to the large barren sample rooms. Here Lindsay merchants examined the samples and placed orders for all kinds of articles.

1938

The Hotel Benson has always been in the news, but once in particular in the year 1948 or thereabouts when in a terrific wind and rain storm a very large section of the roof was lifted into space and dropped in Kent street, landing on motor cars on the south side of the street. No one was hurt but the big roof was a sight to behold for a couple of days before it was removed and replaced. Today the Hotel Benson is one of the best homes on the road to be found east of Toronto.