

Danbury's St. Nicholas Church Devastated By Fire

DANBURY, Conn. -- Part of the roof caved in and the sanctuary of St. Nicholas Church in Danbury was destroyed in a large fire Saturday afternoon, officials said.



St. Nicholas Church, a landmark on Pembroke Road in Danbury, is heavily damaged after a fire Saturday. The roof behind the onion dome has collapsed.
Photo Credit: *Karen Tensa*

"It was a very intensive fire, a difficult fire to fight, as church fires are," said Danbury Fire Chief Geoff Herald. He described it as a "heavy fire" in the sanctuary.

St. Nicholas Church is located at 13 Pembroke Road, across from the Amber Room. The 18-year-old church building is noted for its onion dome on the front, which was still standing despite the intense fire.

"The church is badly damaged, severely damaged," Herald said. The building was declared unsafe, and no one was being allowed inside, he said. "Every church fire is a big fire because of the open space, the architecture."

No one was injured in the blaze. The cause of the blaze was under investigation, but Herald said there was no reason to believe it was suspicious.

The fire was first reported at about 2 p.m. Saturday from an automatic alarm, Herald said. Firefighters en route confirmed smoke and called in a second alarm.



The stained-glass windows are smashed and the roof is collapsed at St. Nicholas Church in Danbury after Saturday's fire. Photo Credit: *Karen Tensa*

In the end, career and volunteer crews from throughout Danbury responded, as did crews from New Fairfield, Brookfield and Ridgefield, helping at the fire scene or covering stations in town, he said.

According to Mayor Mark Boughton's Twitter account, the church was a "total loss" and water was coming out the churches front doors as of 3:15 p.m. Saturday. Pieces and pages of charred Missals littered the road along with streams of water.

Herald said he believed some artifacts may have been recovered, but no one was being allowed inside late Saturday afternoon to save more. An official with the church declined to speak to the media.

St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church was originally founded in 1923 on Roberts Avenue near Western Connecticut State University before moving to this new building. Although it uses the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church, it is part of the Roman Catholic Church. The church is known in the community for its Easter breads.

Workers from the Amber Room, a popular spot for events, proms and weddings, offered assistance to firefighters on the hot afternoon.

"This parish is very active," Herald said. "They are a critical part of the community. And the community responded to help them. The church is made up of the people, not the building. They are strong and will rebuild."



The onion dome is still standing, but the roof behind it is collapsed on St. Nicholas Church in Danbury. Photo Credit: *Karen Tensa*

Karen Tensa, Danbury Daily Voice – 6/29/13