

Fire's debris: Farmington Hills firefighter Phil DeWachter hauls a mattress from the burning Samuel Locke House on 11 Mile Road Tuesday.

Fire at historic house kills dogs

By BILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

A house fire Tuesday was not only a tragedy for the owners of the house, but for the community in which it has stood for more than a century.

Carol and Terri Powell had spent the last two years repairing and remodeling the historic Samuel Locke House at 31620 11 Mile, only to see their efforts go up in smoke. At about 1:40 p.m. Tuesday, firefighters from stations 2 and 3 responded to the fire that gutted the northwest section of the house and caused heat and smoke damage throughout the structure. The original wood frame structure was built in 1881.

A tearful Carol Powell said she and her husband were at work at the time of the fire and her two sons, ages 9 and 7, were in school. But the family's two dogs and several other pets, including six gerbils, were at home and perished in the fire.

Neighbors Doris Kangas and Marge Saylor looked on in stunned disbelief as firefighters took control of the smoky fire.

"It's certainly a taste of hell every time you have a fire like this," Kangas said. "They worked on that house for two years. And the older boy really loved his animals. I'm glad he wasn't here to see this."

A passing police officer spotted and reported the fire, which was in plain sight of the police and municipal complex on the south side of 11 Mile.

Deputy police chief Miri Spencer and JoAnn King, assistant to the police chief, were discussing a report when King spotted the fire.

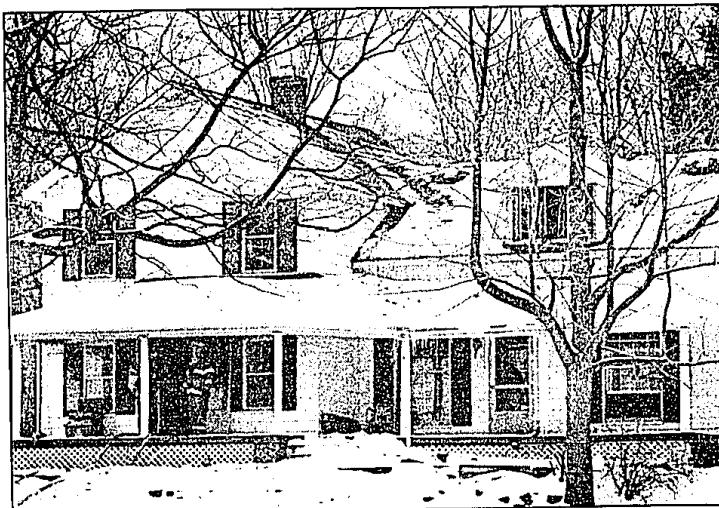
"JoAnn said she thought the house was on fire," Spencer said. "I made sure dispatch was aware of it."

Police closed about a 200-yard stretch of 11 Mile in front of the house and hooked up hoses across the road by the complex. Although the temperature was 20 degrees, firefighters had to deal with a wind-chill factor of minus 7 degrees. Fire Chief Richard Marinucci said only one firefighter suffered injury, from overexertion.

Flames were visible, lapping up the west rear wall through a side window. Soot from smoke bordered the front door and windows of the house, which is white with black shutters.

Marinucci said firefighters were continuing their investigation to determine the cause of the fire Wednesday. An upstairs bedroom and family room were destroyed, and smoke and heat damage to the interior was extensive.

Cold day's work: Above, the mercury stands around 20 degrees Tuesday as firefighters battle a blaze at the Samuel Locke House. Right, the house, which was severely damaged by the fire, dates to 1881.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIEUX



Garage fire: Hills firefighters battle a fire in a garage on Barfield at about 6 p.m. Monday.

It's been a busy winter for firefighters in Hills

By BILL COULTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills firefighters have had a busier-than-usual winter despite stepped up efforts to educate the public about fire hazards.

A fire that started in one trailer at the Sunset Trailer Park on Grand River caused damage to two neighboring trailers Feb. 17.

Firefighters from Station 3 responded to the fire at 9:56 a.m. Officials suspect an open flame in the trailer's kitchen ignited paper to cause the fire, which caused heat damage to a trailer to its north, including cracking two windows, damaging 100 square feet of paint and melting 30 feet of skirting.

It also melted a flexglass window, 10 feet of skirting and window blinds on another trailer. A woman living in the trailer that caught fire and her son were not seriously injured.

On Feb. 21, firefighters from Station 1 responded to a reported utility pole fire shortly after 11 p.m. on 10 Mile Road at I-275.

A 100,000 volt power line pole was burning 20 feet from its top. A Detroit Edison supervisor ordered power cut to the arcing line, which is directly overhead of I-275 and M-102 northbound.

On Feb. 22, fuel stored in a three-car garage at a residence on Barfield ignited. Firefighters from station 3 responded at 6 p.m. and extinguished the fire.

Farmington Hills Fire Chief Richard Marinucci said the department has had a lot of work this winter, including some large structure fires.

"Although I don't have any statistics to bear me out, it seems like we've been to more fires in the last two months than we have been in previous years," Marinucci said. "It's still not as bad as 15 years ago when we had a lot more fires."

Marinucci said Tuesday's fire at the Locke house across 11 Mile Road from the City Hall, a suspected arson at a house on Harlan Drive and a New Year's Eve fire at a house on Wildwood stood out as especially serious.

WAREHOUSE STYLE SALE

40%-70% OFF

Womens & Mens Fall, Winter, Spring Quality Clothing

(Sale prices do not apply to previous purchases or layaways)

Consolidated from 2 Locations

4 DAYS ONLY

Thursday	Feb. 25	9:30-9
Friday	Feb. 26	9:30-9
Saturday	Feb. 27	9:30-6
Sunday	Feb. 28	12-5

DEARBORN LOCATION ONLY!

23044 Cherry Hill at Outer Drive

1 Mile East of Telegraph
1 Mile North of Mich. Ave.

562-2020