

'Suspicious in nature:' Alton firefighters extinguish difficult blaze on College Avenue

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
August 29 2017 9:34 AM



ALTON - Alton firefighters battled a difficult blaze early Monday, Aug. 28, in the 900 block of College Avenue, but eventually the fire was extinguished.

The home, which is under renovation to be a rental property and vacant at the time, had several additions and knee walls, which made it difficult to extinguish the fire, Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said. A knee wall is a short wall, typically under three feet (one meter) in height, used to support the rafters in timber roof construction.

The State Fire Marshal's Office was called to the fire and it was "suspicious in nature," Sebold said.

"The fire is under investigation," Sebold said. "We had 20 firefighters on scene. We had both on-duty Alton firemen as well as off-duty officers on scene. The off-duty firefighters were called so we had extra firemen to protect the city on any subsequent calls. East Alton firefighters were also on the scene. I am proud of all the firefighters for their efforts in fighting a very difficult fire."

Sebold said it took two and a half hours to completely extinguish the fire because of all the void spaces within the home concealing burned spaces.

"It was an older, early 1900s, one-and-a-half story framed house with several additions," he said. "We had to perform a forced entry because the front door was locked. We quickly extinguished the fire on the first floor and on advancing to the second floor encountered high heat conditions behind the walls in the voids. We had a difficult time advancing up the second floor. We held the fire on the second floor and were able to open up the void from the outside of the home and cool the fire."

The property owner was in California at the time of the fire, Sebold said.

Information about the fire report from the state fire marshal will be released later as the investigation into the blaze continues.