Alton, East Alton firefighters, 9-1-1 caller save historic Watson House

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
May 21 2015 4:05 PM

Firefighters and a passer by saved the historic Watson House in the 600 block of Alby Street in Alton with their rapid and extensive responses.

Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said the department was called to the scene of The Watson House at 11:38 p.m. on Wednesday and battled the fire and its aftermath until 8:30 a.m. on Thursday. Alton called in the East Alton Fire Department and the two fought the blaze together.

"It was a difficult fire," Sebold said. "I thought both our firefighters and the East Alton firefighters did an excellent job. It was a heavy fire and did some significant damage."

Early in the investigation foul play was not suspected, Sebold said, but the probe continues into that and how the fire started. Sebold said signs indicate it started in the kitchen or underneath that area.

The floor in the kitchen collapsed and the refrigerator, dishwasher and tables fell through that area, the fire chief said. The floor joists underneath that area were burned, which is why the firemen thought the fire likely started in the kitchen or in the floor beneath it.

Gregory and Carol Fletcher own the home and were out of town at the time of the fire. There were parked cars in the driveway at the time of the fire, but no one was in the house.

Sebold said he was told the home was built around the 1879 era and has a lot of historic value in the community. There was smoke damage throughout, but the fire was primarily contained to the kitchen area and basement.

Sebold was glad the fire didn't extend to the attic and that the fire departments were able to catch the fire in time to contain it.

"I couldn't be more proud of how both departments responded," he said. "The person passing by who called 9-11 can also be commended with helping save the house."