

# St Joseph Church Damaged by Fire

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## Explosion of Gas From Leaking Pipe in Blind Partition Gives Firemen Busy Two Hours, During Which Pews were Chopped Away

Fire which started by an explosion of gas from a leaking pipe in a blind partition did heavy damage to St. Joseph's Church on Allen Street yesterday forenoon.

The fire started in the basement chapel in a blind partition which contained gas pipes and electric wires. There was a Cross-T on the gas pipe and a plug on each side of the pipe. One of these plugs in some way probably became loosened so it leaked and filled the space between the partition walls with illuminating gas. The janitor smelled the gas and taking a paraffin taper used to light altar candles started to find the leak. The tiny flame of his taper ignited the accumulated gas and a muffled explosion followed.

The flames soon filled the partition and then followed beneath the floor of the main auditorium and burst up through the floor.

The firemen were called at 10:35 and found the church filled with smoke. It was necessary to chop away the pews, flooring and break down part of the partition in the basement before effective streams of water could be used to quench the flames.

The Blessed Sacrament was not reserved in the high altar at the time, but the Rev. Norbert Proulx, pastor of St. Joseph's parish, ordered the altar fittings removed and the costly vestments were taken from the sacristy and removed to the pastor's residence, which is connected with the church by a cloister.

It was afternoon before the firemen left the church. The fire alarm did not function perfectly and the bell rang confused strokes instead of the number on the box where the alarm was turned in.

St. Joseph's church is said to be the largest church edifice in New England, north of Boston, although some others have a larger seating capacity. It is of stone and built in the basilican type of architecture.

The church and contents are insured through the T. S Peck Insurance Agency, the building it is said, for about \$65,000 and the contents for \$10,500, and the estimated loss probably is about 20 percent of the amount of insurance carried.

The ceiling of the nave, and the reredos, and ceiling of the sanctuary are decorated with painted fresco's and it is impossible to accurately estimate the cost of renewing the work, which is badly damaged by smoke.

The Rev. Norbert Proulx expressed in hearty terms his appreciation and gratitude to Fire Chief Stockwell and his firemen for their prompt and effective work in preventing more serious damage to the church and its property.