St. Paul firefighters battle the blaze that gutted an 1860s mansion in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood on Tuesday. Two cats died in the fire, but no other injuries were reported.

TREVOR SQUIRE / PIONEER PRESS

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› St. Paul fire

Part of the roof collapsed and the second floor fell into the first floor, said Zaccard, who described the damage to the home as extensive. The fire's cause is under investigation but Zaccard said its origins don't appear to be suspicious.

The owners and several other family members were home at the time but escaped unharmed.

Purmalietis grew up in the house, which her parents, Maris and Norma Purmalietis, purchased in 1975, when the historic Cathedral Hill neighborhood was beginning to emerge from a long decline that followed World War II and the ensuing population shift to the suburbs. Maris, a retired carpenter, hand-carved designs into the woodwork.

"My dad spent his whole life working on this place," Alida Purmalietis said. "There's a lot of history. The woodwork was irreplaceable."

Dana Aughenbaugh, who is dating the owners' granddaughter, woke up to a commotion outside their room on the second level, where the family lived, besides Maris, whose bedroom was in the basement. Aughenbaugh and his girlfriend quickly got dressed and helped Norma down the stairs along with her two other grandchildren and her son.

Three renters lived on the third floor and weren't home when the fire started. They were also displaced.

According to Ramsey County property records, the 7,214-square-foot house has an estimated market value of nearly $564,000.

The home was built in 1864 during the Civil War, "which makes it rare in itself because you can count on two hands the 1860s houses in this city," said Jim Sazevich, a St. Paul historian.

The home, which is included in walking tours of Cathedral Hill, is known as the Lasher-Newell House.

> **"This is the type of house that attracts people to come up to this hill, this bluff, and really, really understand the whole scope, the whole context, of our architectural history."**
>
> *Jim Sazevich, St. Paul historian*

Stanford Newell, an attorney who owned the home in the late 1800s, went on to become the U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands. A member of St. Paul's first park board, Newell Park is named after him. Alpheus Lasher was the original owner of the house.

It was built of locally quarried limestone — "this is a piece of St. Paul, this is the bedrock from which the city stands on," Sazevich said.

Sazevich's apprentice, Chris Keith, said the molded oak was elaborate and showed extreme attention to detail.

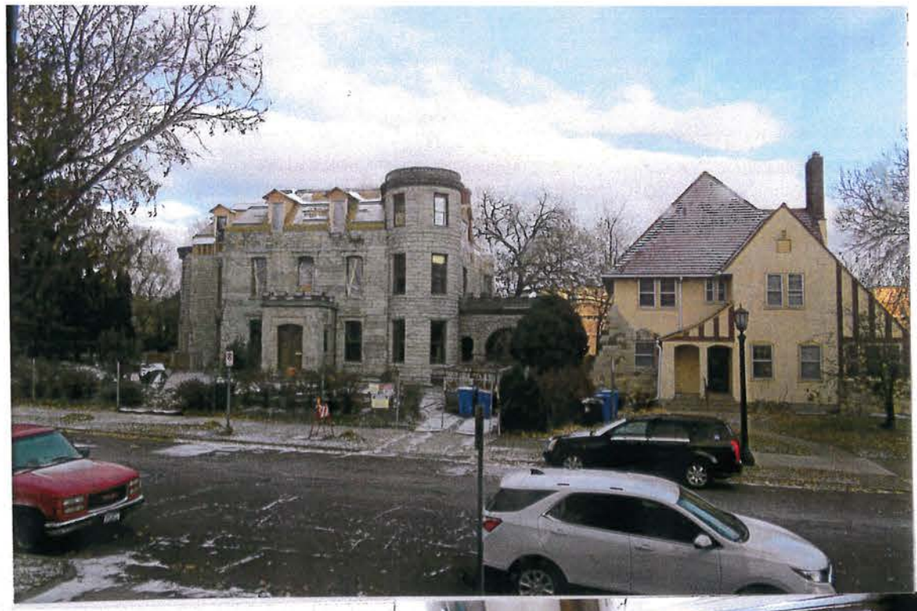
"It's probably one of the worst losses, architecturally, for Minnesota," Keith added. "The woodwork was like a big piece of furniture. It was immaculate."

The current owners are the longest residents of the house. It was used as a boarding house in the early 1900s, according to Sazevich.

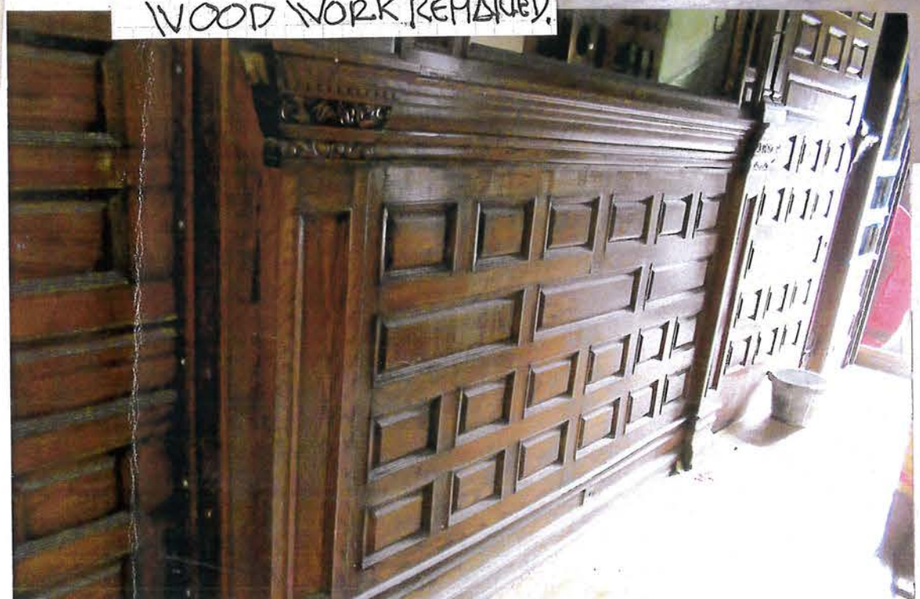
"I've seen houses severely damaged that are rebuilt," Sazevich said. "This is one house that's worthy of being rebuilt as much as possible. ... This is the type of house that attracts people to come up to this hill, this bluff, and really, really understand the whole scope, the whole context, of our architectural history. We have to go east to start finding houses of this caliber, and they're so rare here from our 1850s and '60s."

A fundraising page for the owners' family has been established at tinyurl.com/yclcaccw to help them cope with the aftermath of the fire. They're staying at a nearby hotel.

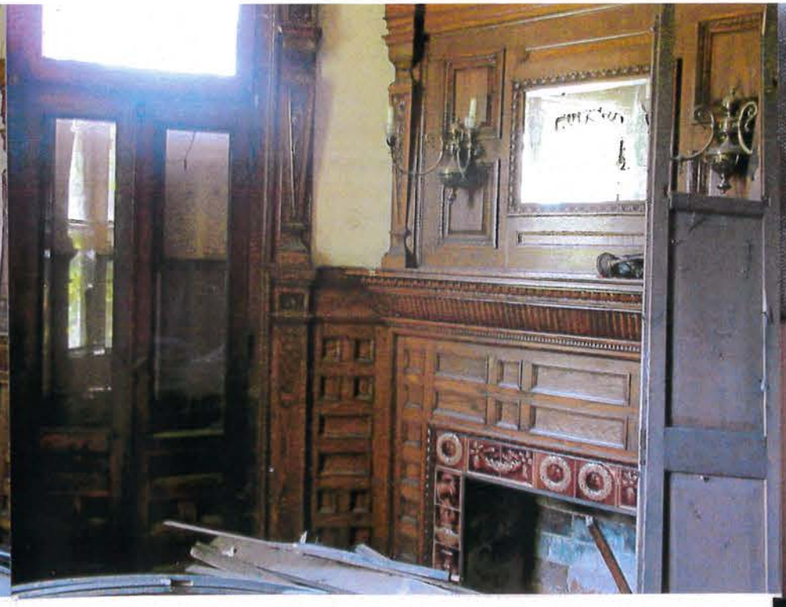
251 Dayton Ave



11 OCT 2017 WAS THE DATE OF AN AWFUL FIRE THAT DESTROYED THIS BEAUTIFUL CIVIL ERA MANSION. AFTER THE FIRE, A GOOD PART OF THE WOOD WORK REMAINED.



MARIS WAS VERY CAREFUL IN PROTECTING THE REMAINING WOODWORK BY DIVERTING WATER AWAY AFTER RAIN & SNOW STORMS. HE ALSO STRAIGHTENED OUT WARPED PANELS.



MARIS CAREFULLY SAVED THE CURVED WOOD PIECES THAT REMAINED AFTER THE FIRE IN THE DINING ROOM. THE BEVELED MIRROR OVER THE FIRE PLACE WAS UN-DAMAGED, EXCEPT IT NEEDS RESILVERING. TILE WK IS ALL INTACT.

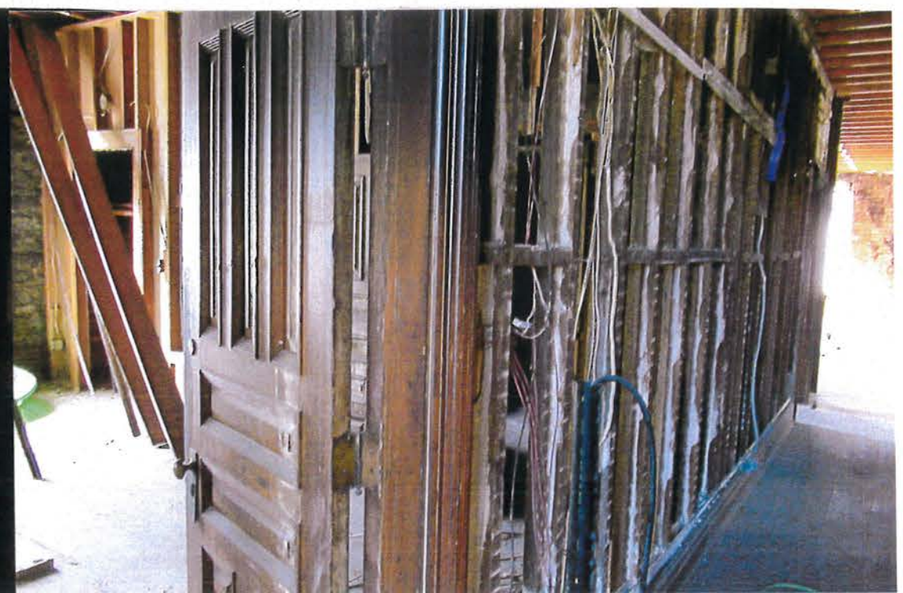
ALL OF THE ELABORATE OAK 1880's WOODWORK REMAINS UNDAMAGED IN THE FRONT RECEPTION ROOM. THE DOORWAY WITH A PLASTIC SHEET SEPARATES THE BURNED OUT HALL AND DINING ROOM. IN THIS AREA, ALL 3 FLRS & ROOF WERE RE-

ORIGIUAL 1860'S BACK STAIRAUD 3RD FLR WINDOW FRAMING.

•————•

BELOW SHOWS 1880'S NEWER WOOD-WORK ON THE HOUSE MAIN STAIRCASE.

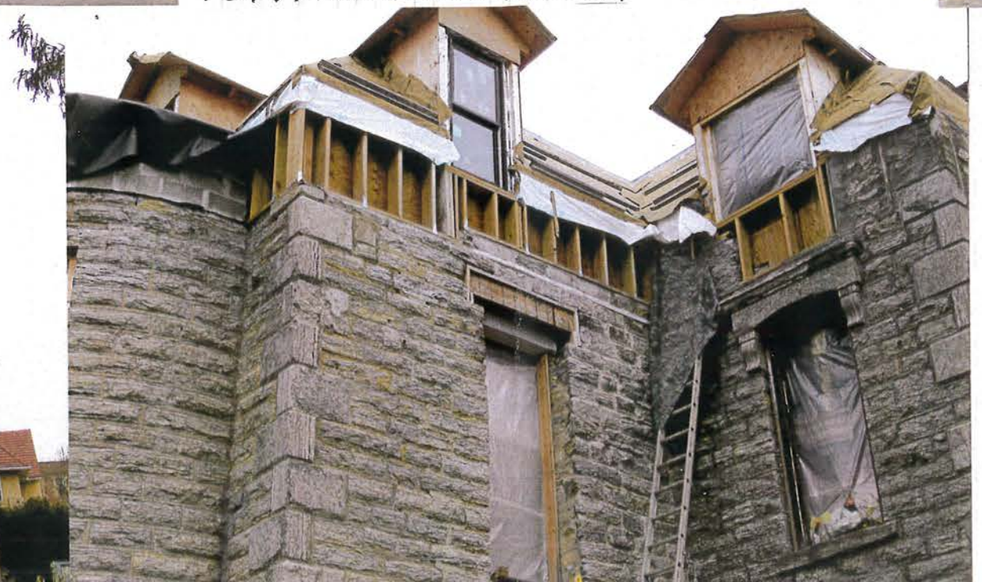
PLASTER & WOOD LATH STRIPPED A-WAY FROM ORIGIUAL STUDS. ORIGIUAL DOOR AUD FRAME REMAINS. NEW JOISTS APPEAR FROM THE RE-BUILT FLOOR ABOVE. FIRE DESTROYED ALL 3 FLRS AUD THE ROOF.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO CLOSE THE BUILDING IN AS SOON AS PRACTICAL 2 YRS AFTER THE OCT FIRE OF 2017, THE ROOF IS NOT AT COVERED ON THE SLOPPED AREAS.

SHORING BLOCKS FOR STONE WALL REPAIR WERE NOT REMOVED AFTER JOB WAS FINISHED.

NOV SEES UNFINISHED AND UNPROTECTED; FOR ANOTHER WINTER.



IS ALL OF THE MASONRY WORK FINISHED? WATER SEEPS BEHIND SHORING TWO TON BLOCKS NEAR THE OLD STONE WALLS. REPAIRS MAY BE REQUIRED AFTER BLOCK REMOVAL.

HOUSE NEGLECT CAUSED BY CONTRACTORS LEAVING BEFORE COMPLETING THE JOB AND NOT CLEANING UP THE GROUNDS CAUSED MANY NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLAINTS. THE OWNER IS THREATENED WITH LARGE FINES THAT WILL SHORTEN THE SURVIVAL OF THE TIMELINE OF THIS HISTORIC GEM.

MARIS WATCH VERY CARFULLY AS LARGE SHORING EQUIPMENT PASSED THROUGH THE CAR PORT ARCH. A FEW PAVEMENT DEPRESSION OCCURRED UNDER HEAVY LOADS.

MARIS REPAIRED HIMSELF THE FRONT STEPS TO THE FRONT DOOR.

MANY 2 1/2 TON CONC SHORING BLOCKS REMAIN ON THIS PROPERTY AFTER BEING USED TO SUPPORT & STRENGTHEN THE HIGH STONE WALLS AFTER THE FIRE.

MARIS, HIMSELF RENTED A JACK HAMMER AND DEMOLISHED 2 OF THESE 2 1/2 TON BLOCKS.

A BLOCK THIS CLOSE TO THE STRUCTURE WILL CAUSE WATER DAMAGE TO THE STONE FOUNDATION.