

Fire Destroys Waterbury Home

An early morning fire which gutted a three-family apartment house on Randall Street in Waterbury routed the owner and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Romprey, and a tenant, Miss Diane Hanna, and destroyed most of their belongings today.

The fire broke out in an unoccupied apartment around 1 a.m. and was discovered by the building's owner, according to a neighbor.

When firemen arrived at the scene, the Romprey's had reached safety but Miss Hanna was still inside the house.

First attempts to reach the woman were hampered because thick smoke blocked the entrance to her apartment. As firemen donned equipment to enter the smoke-filled building, the woman appeared on a porch and was helped off the burning building unharmed.

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Blake, and a daughter, who reside in the second floor apartment, were not home at the time of the fire.

A neighbor said the Blakes had been living in the home of Mrs. Blake's parents in the village, while they were in Flori-

da. The woman's parents had returned to the village, but the Blakes had not moved back into their Randall Street home.

Waterbury Fire Chief C. C. Fisher said the fire started in the center of the house on the second floor and was "pretty sure that a defective gas stove" caused the blaze.

He said there was a hole in the wall in back of the stove and a hole under the stove caused by the fire.

The fire was "real bad" and "very stubborn" although at "no time did the fire get away from us," he said.

However, firemen worked for more than three hours before the fire was under control, he said. The fire was confined to the building's partitions, damaged the second and third floor apartments, while the first floor apartment sustained mostly water damage, Fisher said.

He also said the fire fighting was hampered by the heavy layer of snow around the building and by propane gas that kept feeding the blaze until workmen shut off the supply. Except for the ground floor apartment, the building was heated by gas.

Twenty firemen and other volunteers at the scene were served coffee by neighbors, the Rev. and Mrs. Paul Willard and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Sabins.

A fireman, Frank Larock, was knocked from a ladder when he was struck in the chest by a fire hose, but was not seriously hurt.

Volunteers were able to remove furnishings from the first floor apartment.

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Police Chief Joseph Sprano said the children and neighbors "worked hard" to get the belongings out of the ground floor apartment. Because of the intensity of the fire and smoke, they were unable to salvage any of the belongings in the other two apartments.

Although made homeless by the fire, Miss Hanna found temporary lodging with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Kendall Thorington, the Blakes are living with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Champagne, while the owner found temporary lodging across the street at the home of Mrs. Josephine Lander.