

# Gilmanton Landmark Heavily

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## Damaged by 2-Alarm Fire



Two firefighters pour water onto a section of the Gilmanton barn which was heavily damaged by fire Thursday night. Firefighters from eight departments responded to the blaze.  
(Citizen Photo/Mark Bolton)



# 2-Alarm Fire in Gilmanton



Eight fire departments battled a fire in Gilmanton Thursday night which gutted part of an historic building in the Gilmanton Corners section of the community. The blaze lit up the sky and could be seen for miles, authorities said. (Citizen Photo/Mark Bolton)

## Historic Gilmanton Corner Structure Gutted in Blaze

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Staff Writer

GILMANTON — Firefighters from eight departments battled a two-alarm blaze Thursday night that claimed part of an historic building in the Gilmanton Corners section of town.

While the living quarters of Hughes family homestead on Route 107 was largely un-

touched by the fire, flames destroyed one attached barn and damaged two others.

"I would say at this point there's no damage to the main house and minor damage to attached buildings. The main barn here is probably going to be a total (loss)," Fire Chief Norm Skantze said Thursday.

Fritz Hughes owns the house next door to his fam-

ily's homestead. The building that burned is currently owned by his sister, who lives in Massachusetts, but the home has been in his family for more than 100 years.

The building, built in 1815, was unoccupied at the time of the fire, used primarily for storage of furniture and "family heirlooms," Hughes said as he stood across the road, watching smoke billow

from the windows. "The whole house is a family heirloom."

Hughes said the fire, spotted by his son, Joshua, started on the second floor of the barn. He suspects the fire could have been the work of an arsonist.

"There's no live electricity in that part of the barn," he said. "The barn has been

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broken into many times, year after year. It's very possible it was set. Who knows?"

Skantze said fire officials and Gilmanon Police would begin an investigation to determine the cause once the fire was under control.

Firefighters battled the blaze in the barn for about an hour after the first call at 8:19 p.m.

"When we arrived, we had heavy fire coming out of the second story and cupola of this barn," Skantze said. Firefighters extinguished the fire in the two rear barns, then went to work at containing the blaze in the front barn, using an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 gallons of water a minute.

Flames leapt from the windows and reached as high as 20 feet from the housetop before the roof and cupola caved in to the blaze. The raging fire cast almost a daylight glow on the firefighters working below to extinguish the flames.

Capt. Frank McClary, on the first Gilmanon engine to arrive at the scene, "came in and ordered a first alarm," said Skantze, "and when I heard it, I'm pretty familiar with the house, and so I backed that right up with a second alarm .... (When the call came in, ...) I was in a budget meeting in the town hall on the other side of town



**Gilmanon Fire Chief Norm Skantze discusses a point about Thursday night's fire with Fritz Hughes who owns the house next door to his family's homestead. (Citizen Photo/Mark Bolton)**

and I called (the second alarm) from the driveway of the town hall."

Joshua Hughes said he saw a glow through one of the second story windows in the barn. He awakened his mother, Betty, who called the fire department. Fritz Hughes was at work at the New Hampshire Hospital when the

fire started.

Fire departments from Gilmanon, Alton, Barnstead Parade, Belmont, Center Barnstead, Gilford, Laconia, and Winnisquam responded. New Durham and Sanbornton fire departments provided coverage at Gilmanon Iron Works and Gilmanon Corners stations.