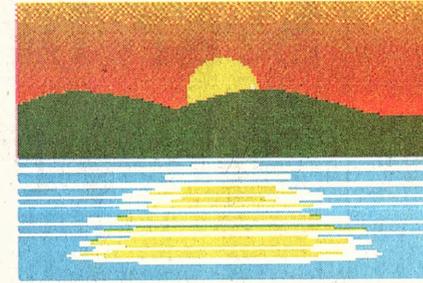




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## Two escape early morning Gilmanton fire

### Wood stove may have caused blaze that heavily damaged 300 year old cape-style home

By VICTORIA GUAY  
Staff Writer

GILMANTON — Two people escaped a one-alarm fire unharmed early this morning that may have been sparked by a wood stove.

Firefighters were able to save a nearly 300-year-old cape style home from complete destruction by containing the blaze inside

the house on Bunker Lane.

"We woke up to the fire," said Frank Chimielecki, the homeowner.

He and a friend woke to the smell of smoke and tried to contain the fire on their own before calling for help, Chimielecki said.

"The response time was so excellent, I was still bringing stuff out," Chimielecki said, referring to the speedu arrival of the

Gilmanton Fire Department. "We barely turned around and they were coming up the drive."

Acting Fire Chief Joe Hempel said they got the call around 4:30 a.m.

The fire started in the wood stove area and moved into the wall, the wood stove being the most likely cause, said Hempel, though no official cause has been determined yet.

"The top floor sustained serious damage, but it appears the structure is sound with the bottom floor intact," Hempel said.

Hempel explained the fire went to 1st alarm, and fire-fighters from Barnstead, Pittsfield, Belmont, Loudon and Alton responded.

Hempel said when he arrived on the scene, Chimielecki and his friend were removing personal belongings from the

house.

The fire was under control within an hour, said Hempel.

Chimielecki said the fire fighters worked quickly to save the house and even covered furniture with tarps to protect it, a fact which he appreciated.

Chimielecki said the damage was mini-

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al from what it could've been, and s he is a general contractor and wner of F.M.C. Enterprises, he nks he will be able to repair the amage.

"It looks worse than it actually," said Chimielecki as he stood in ont of his house that now has a aping hole in the roof from the re. He said he probably will be ole to seal off the upstairs and heat e downstairs.

Chimielecki said he is not sure if e will stay with anyone, as he ight be able to do some work on e house today. He said he hadn't en had a chance to think about a ace to stay yet, his first concern s calling his children to let them ow he was okay.

Chimielecki said he believes the use is at least 300 years old. He id he's been able to trace it back the 1700's, though there is not ough proof to register with the torical society.

Gilmanston firefighters also had e advantage of using a pond locat-right across the street, which s built by neighbor George



**Residents of this Bunker Hill Road home in Gilmanston awoke to smoke early this morning and discovered a fire quickly consuming their living room at about 4:30 a.m. Firefighters rushed to the scene from Gilmanston, Barnstead, Alton, and Pittsfield and extinguished the blaze just before daybreak. Both occupants escaped safely according to Joe Hempel, Gilmanston's acting fire chief.** (Citizen Photo/ Keith Shoemaker)

McClary. McClary said he built the pond in 1962, for use mainly as a fire pond and swimming hole.

"Thank goodness this was the

first time firefighters have had to use it," McClary said.

McClary said he was up at the time of the fire, but could not see it

through the trees. His mother called him and told him about it after hearing the call go over her scanner.