

# Provincetown building hit by fire

By David Polochanin  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

A one-alarm fire yesterday ripped through parts of a 2½-story wood building on Commercial Street that dates back to the mid-to-late

1800s.

Fire officials said no major injuries were reported in the fire, which started about 2:30 p.m. when a clay piece separating the building's furnace from the chimney disintegrated, said Deputy Chief Warren Alexander of the Provincetown Volunteer Fire Department.

The oil burner of the furnace touched the wooden frame of the building, which is at 447 Commercial St., igniting the blaze, officials said.

Several firefighters were treated with oxygen at the scene because of the heat, he said. The Turro Fire Department was also called in.

Alexander estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000 in damage, and said the fire, which broke out in the town's historic district, could have easily spread to nearby landmarks. The building houses Martin's Market, a popular grocery store.

The market was open at the time of the fire, and patrons were evacuated, he said.

The building has no sprinkler systems, Alexander said.

Officials credited the early response of fire departments with saving the building from more serious damage.

Many historical structures are nearby, he said. The Salt Works Replica, which dates back to the 1800s, is on the same property as the building. It is a replica of a water wheel used to extract salt from ocean water. Also nearby are popular eateries such as the Beachcomber's Club and the Flagship Restaurant.

"Thank goodness it happened when it did," said Alexander. "If it happened at night, it probably would have taken a lot longer to respond."

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# Fire damages whaling-era building on Cape-tip

PROVINCETOWN — Firefighters are investigating the cause of a late afternoon fire that damaged the interior of a historic building on Commercial Street yesterday.

The fire apparently began inside a wall behind the gable end of the Martin's Market around 3:20 p.m.,

according to Firefighter Warren Alexander.

Customers were in the store when the fire began. No injuries were reported, and no exterior structural damage was reported.

The building was built in 1837 for the E and EK Cook Co., part of the whaling industry in Provincetown. 7/31/94