

# Fire destroys h

By Barry Hoch

A piece of area history went up in flames on Friday afternoon. Haldimand township's Wicklow Church, which was the oldest Baptist chapel in Ontario and possibly Canada, was completely levelled by the blaze.

All that remains of the 162-year-old wooden church, located along Highway 2, just east of Grafton, is a pile of charred timber, some of which were 12-inches square.

No one was in the church when it started on fire around 2 p.m. A neighbor noticed smoke shortly after 3 p.m. and the Colborne fire department was called in. The Cobourg and Baltimore fire departments were called in to assist mainly by providing water.

Twenty firefighters fought unsuccessfully for several hours to put out the fire. They were still on the scene at 8 p.m. pouring water on the ruins.

Colborne fire chief Ron Whitehead said the blaze got into the attic of the church and his men could not prevent it from engulfing the entire building.

"No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't stop it," the chief said.

Whitehead said he did not know the cause of the fire, although he did not think it was deliberately set. The Ontario Fire Marshal's office has been called in to investigate.

"I don't think there is anything wrong, but we have to be sure," Whitehead said at the scene.

Rev. Agnes Lee said it is still too early to tell how and when the church will be rebuilt. Rev. Lee and her brother Norman have been spearheading efforts to try to improve the old church.

"If we can rebuild at least we have a foundation which we paid \$16,000 for last year," she said in reference to restoration work carried out last summer in which the church's 12-inch foundation timbers were replaced with concrete blocks.

Lee said the important documents and the church archives were not in the church, but were kept in an adjacent house which escaped untouched.

The Colborne fire chief did not have any estimate of damage. Lee said she could not put a value on the historically designated church. The building was insured.

Continued on page 2



PERCY L. CLIMO  
6 SIMMONS ST.  
PO BOX 293  
COLBORNE ONT. K0K 1S0

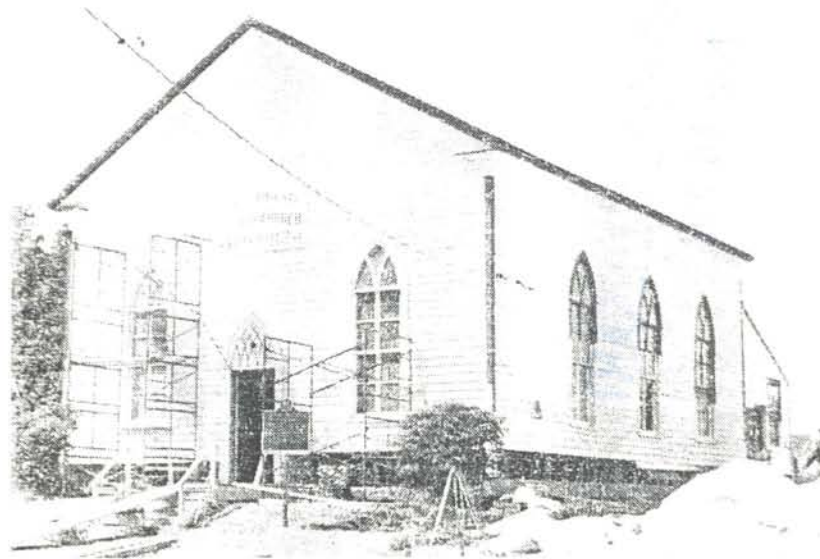
# Historic church in Wicklow



**Making sure** — A Colborne fire department firefighter pours water onto the smoldering ruins of the Wicklow Baptist Church on Friday evening to make sure flames don't start up again. The 162-year-old church, located just east of Grafton on Highway 2, was

vacant at the time of the fire. The cause of the fire is not known. In the photo below, the church is seen as it was being renovated last year.

Photos by Barry Hoch and John McClyment



*Daily Star*

ntario

30 cents