

MILTOWNE COLLISION
100% Satisfaction Guaranteed
751 Main Street East, Milton
905-878-6919

The Canadian Champion

Milton's Community Newspaper Since 1860

CNA Named Canada's Top Community Newspaper

www.miltoncanadianchampion.com

Scott B. Prior
Broker
RE/MAX REAL ESTATE CENTRE
905 878-7777
www.thepriorteam.com

REAL ESTATE

See what's on the market inside



NEWS

Former mayor passes away



COMMUNITY

Canada celebrated

A Metroland Media Group publication • Vol. 151 No. 34

Tuesday, July 6, 2010

44 Pages • \$1.00 (incl. G.S.T.)

Historic church intentionally set ablaze: police

Witnesses spot suspect running from St. Paul's

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Shocked residents, some wearing pajamas, stood together and watched as firefighters battled a suspicious blaze Wednesday night at the historic St. Paul's United Church in downtown Milton.

One of those people was St. Paul's Rev. John Benham, who said he'd received a call from the church custodian frantically yelling, "The tower's on fire!"

"I got there and stood there like everyone else in disbelief... It was almost like a movie," Benham said. "People in their pajamas were standing around going, 'Is this really happening?'"

The Main Street fire was quickly knocked down, but not before fine wood was charred and several First World War memorial stained glass panels — windows into Milton's history — were broken.

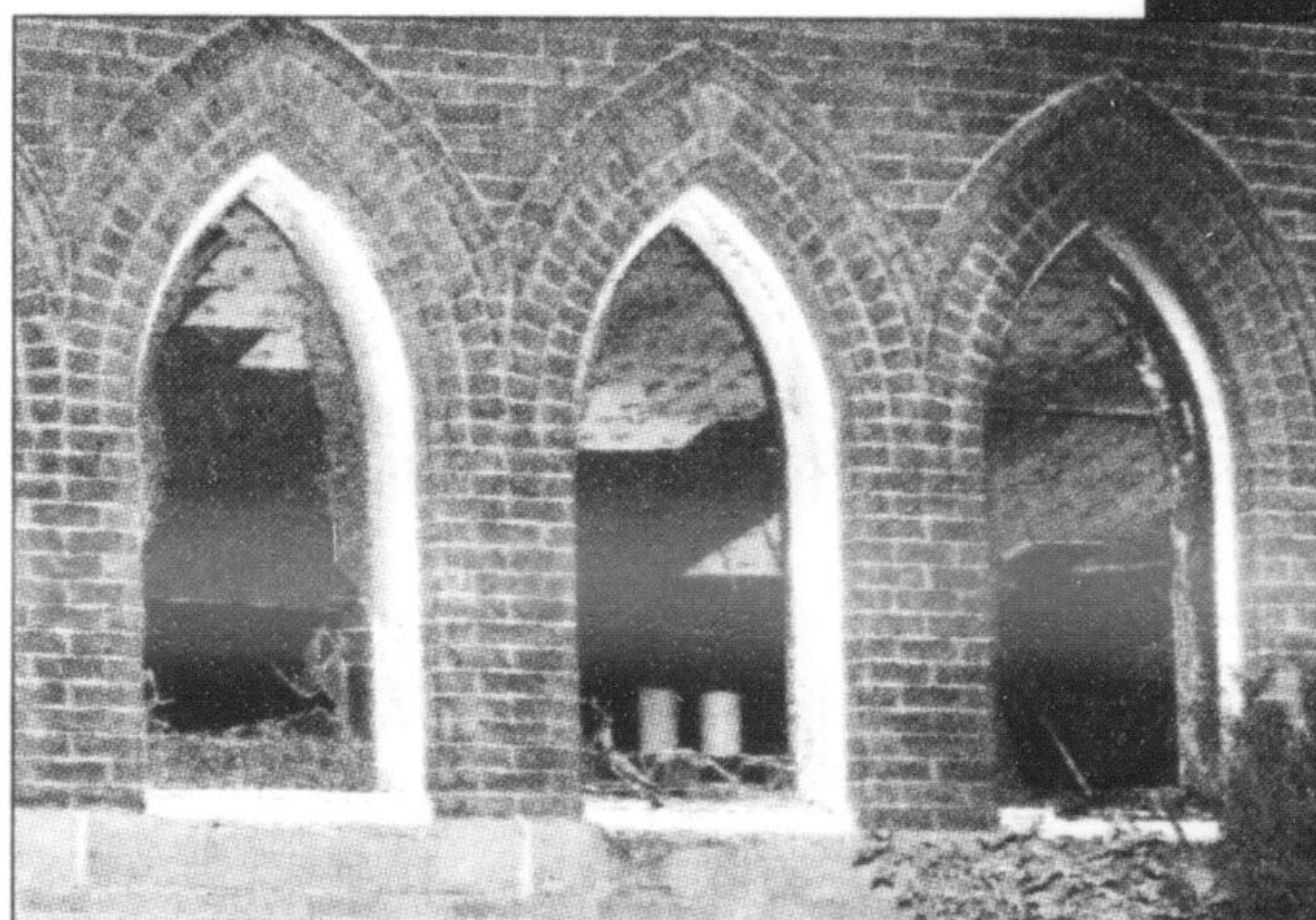
"Thank God we have pictures of them, but they're priceless," Benham said.

Halton Regional Police's Arson Unit and the Milton Fire Department (MFD) say the fire is suspicious. The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal is investigating.

Police said witnesses at the scene saw a man running from the area. He's described as a white male, five-foot-six, with a stocky build and light brown hair. He was wearing a black jacket and a white ball hat.

"A person fleeing the scene always sends a few red flags," said Det. Duncan Taylor.

Firefighters responded to the blaze at about 10:10 p.m. after a 911 call was made by a couple parked nearby, said MFD Deputy Chief Dave Pratt. The fire



At right, smoke billows from the church Wednesday night. Inset, firefighters were forced to break several stained glass windows to extinguish the blaze.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

was quickly suppressed, limiting damage to the church interior.

Pratt said several factors make the fire seem suspicious — the cause remains undetermined — including that the fire seems to have started on the floor, an unusual place.

"It triggers your senses to say, 'This doesn't seem like a normal fire,'" Pratt said. "At this point it's definitely suspicious."

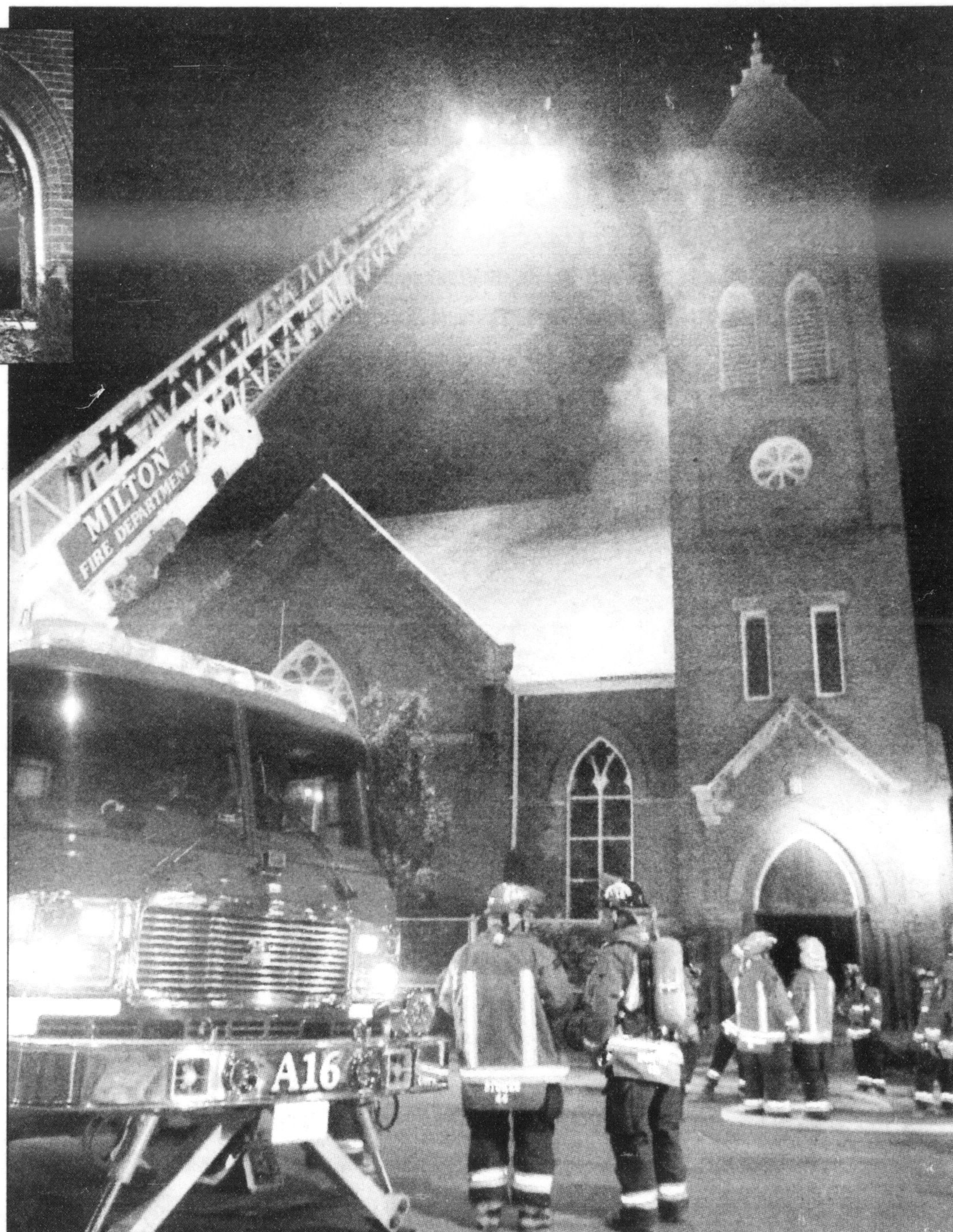
Benham said the investigators hired by the insurance company told him the cause of the fire is electrical and isn't suspicious.

The *Champion* hasn't been able to confirm this with the insurance company.

The blaze started at the back of the sanctuary, Pratt said, and flames started toward the second-floor balcony, but didn't make it all the way.

A couple of stained glass windows blew out when the church ignited, while others on both the main level and in the bell tower had to be broken by firefighters for ventilation.

• see FIRE on page A2



There's Always Something For Everyone's Taste At....



\$5.00 Appetizers & All You Can Eat Ribs \$13.95

Every Monday 4 pm - close

201 Main Street
Downtown Milton

905-876-4899



7429 Fifth Line, Milton, Right at the east end of Main St.
www.taylornursery.ca

Taylor Nursery

SUMMER PLANT SALE until July 11th
SAVE ON ALL PLANTS, TREES & SHRUBS
13% off on purchases \$100-\$199
23% off on purchases of \$200-\$299
33% off on purchases of \$300+

For 35 years...Your Town & Country Gardening Centre * 905.876.4100