FIREMEN SHOWN ASSESSING THE DAMAGE to the entry of All Souls Roman Catholic Church Sunday evening following the fire which did an estimated $3000 to $4000 damages to the structure. The picture is hazy because of the smoke.

Herald Photo
Damage At $4,000

All Souls Church Gutted By Blaze

A fire Sunday afternoon did an estimated $3,000 to $4,000 damage to the narthex of All Souls Roman Catholic Church on Ninth Street.

The Salvation Army Department received the call at 4:50 p.m. and was answered by Father Richard Lyons, parish priest. Responded in about two minutes.

Fr. Lyons said the fire was discovered by two unidentified parishioners who went to the church to leave some used clothing in the narthex and were not able to enter because of the smoke.

They ran to the rectory and asked Fr. Richard J. Bowles, assistant to Fr. Lyons, if they were burning anything in the church. The priest investigated, ran back to the rectory and notified Fr. Lyons, who called the fire department. Fr. Bowles, then ran in the back entrance of the church and removed the Holy Sacrament and took it to the nun's residence.

According to Fr. Lyons, the interior of the vestibule was gutted, and the fire burned across the ceiling and did minor damage to the confessional just inside the sanctuary. He had high praise for the local firemen and the way they contained the fire in the narthex, and did only a minimum of water damage. He said the church library was almost a total loss, as was the pamphlet rack and the case for articles loss and found in the church.

Fr. Lyons added that the fire was started in a waste paper rack. A week some matches or scrap of wood were found in the room, and an unidentified man was seen to enter and leave the church just prior to the discovery of the fire Sunday.

Fr. Lyons also said arson was suspected because of the rapid spread of the flames from the time of discovery until Fr. Bowles investigated the report of the parishioners.
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It is suspected the fire was the work of an arsonist because last week some church matches and scraps of wood were found in the church, and an unidentified man was seen to enter and leave the church just prior to the discovery of the fire Sunday. Fr. Lyons also said arson was suspected because of the rapid spread of the flames from the time of discovery until Fr. Bowles investigated the report of the parishioners.