

Man Dies In House Fire

By **JERRY LANKFORD**
Record Editor



Mark Settle perished in a house fire at his home at 1107 E Street in North Wilkesboro on Sunday morning. More than 50 emergency personnel responded to the scene of the historic home. Photos by Dr. Larry Milham

A North Wilkesboro man, who perished in a Sunday morning house fire, likely died of smoke inhalation, officials say.

Another man, who was reportedly renting a room in the three-story house, escaped.

Mark Settle, 49, a self-employed antique dealer and former organist for North Wilkesboro Presbyterian Church, was found dead in the kitchen of the historic home he lived in at 1107 E St.

“I think he was trying to get out of the house,” said North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Niki Hamby.

Jeffrey Scott Adams, 39, who rented a room at the home, awoke and tried to come down the front stairs, but was unable to exit that way, said North Wilkesboro Police Maj. Scott Teague. He added that Adams was able to get out of the burning house by way of a rear stairway. Adams was released after being treated at Wilkes Regional Medical Center in North Wilkesboro.

Hamby said that the fatal fire appears to be accidental. It started in a room that had an open fire place, which was being used, and a live Christmas tree garnished with what appeared to be antique lights, he said.

“We don’t know if the fire had anything to do with Christmas tree,” Hamby said. “Some of the family thought he might have still been burning the lights. We found a timer that we think was for the lights. The base for the tree was totally melted into a flat piece of plastic on the floor. We don’t know if it was in water or how dry it might have been. It had the bigger sized bulbs, like the older kind. We can’t pin point if that’s what caused it, but we do know that’s the area it started.”

Hamby said it was unclear if there were smoke detectors in the home. “We didn’t see or hear any,” he said.

A neighbor reported the fire at 4:22 a.m., Hamby said. It took firefighters from North Wilkesboro, Cricket, Broadway and Mulberry-Fairplains about an hour and a half to control the blaze. A total of about 50 emergency personnel, including members of the Wilkes Rescue Squad and North Wilkesboro Police Department, responded to the scene.

The damage to the home, which was built in 1907, was estimated at \$350,000.

The kitchen, in which Settle’s body was found, was separated from the area where the fire started by a hallway and a room.

“There wasn’t much damage to the kitchen,” Hamby said.

An autopsy will be performed on Settle at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, Teague said.

Teague added that the owner of the home is listed as Don Settle, the father of Mark Settle.

J. Robert Finley originally built the home. According to the North Carolina State Historic Preservation office, it was built in 1907. The late Kate Finley lived there for years, according to records.