

**Seventh Day Adventist Church Fire  
Prattville, Michigan  
10/23/02**

**9 FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN 4 COUNTIES AND 2 STATES BATTLE CHURCH  
FIRE IN PRATTVILLE MICHIGAN!**

By John A. Tanner 10/24/02

Shortly after 4:00 p.m. Wednesday 10/23/02 the Wright-Waldron Fire dept. was dispatched to a structure fire the Seventh Day Adventist Church near Prattville and Coman Roads in Prattville.

Soon after arriving on the scene Wright-Waldron Fire personal called for assistance from Morenci for a tanker and Pittsford with a full assist. As the fire began to build more steam Hudson was called for a full assist and Hillsdale City Fire Dept. was called for their Air Trailer around 4:30 p.m. Hudson Fire Dept. put Clayton on standby for their fire calls in Hudson. The Michigan State Police fire Marshall was called to investigate, but no word on those results.

**FIRE REKINDLES AROUND 8:45 P.M.**

The Fire at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Prattville rekindled around 8:45 p.m. on the same day of the original fire; assistance was once again called for "from **Hudson, Pittsford, Morenci, and Hillsdale City. Addison, Fayette, Pioneer, and Clayton** were" called this time also for tankers by the **Wright-Waldron Fire Dept.** Water was being drawn from the Lime Lake area or the Lake. Morenci Fire Department had additional trucks at the Wright-Waldron fire Dept. for any calls that might come in to the Wright-Waldron Dept. Hillsdale City was called with the air trailer and an Arial truck but the Arial truck was cancelled after it was on the way here. Waldron Fire personnel cleared the scene at 12:40 a.m. Prattville once a village larger than Waldron has had many fires in the past years, and never rebuilt, how much more can Prattville take before the signs come down and it's no longer a named place, in Wright Township. The Church was built in 1873, and the Seventh Day Adventist moved in, in 1893. Back on Sunday March 9, 1952 at 5:00 a.m. the Prattville community church burnt and the Seventh Day Adventist let the Prattville Community Church hold temporary church sessions at their church, now the Prattville community church has returned the favor.

**Michigan church ravaged by blaze**

By Julie Njaim and Jack Baessler , Blade Staff Writers

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Courtesy Of The [Toledo Blade](#)

PRATTVILLE, MI - Less than three hours after firefighters put out a church basement fire, flames engulfed the historic building and left a congregation homeless.

"I know the church members feel somewhat devastated by it, but we'll get through this. We need to move on," said the Rev. Monte Landis of the Prattville Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The two fires shocked the 62 church members in this small town about four miles north of Waldron, Mich. It appears the fire began about 4 p.m. Wednesday in a basement restroom near an electrical box, Mr. Landis said yesterday. Firefighters put out the fire and left the scene about 6:15 p.m.

At 8:45 p.m. when firefighters returned to check on the church, the fire had rekindled and quickly spread throughout the building. About eight neighboring fire departments, including Morenci, Fayette, and Pioneer, assisted Waldron firefighters.

Once the fire reignited, there was little firefighters could do to save the old, wooden church

covered with metal siding.

"Your older style buildings [have] what they call balloon construction; they don't have fire stops on each floor. Your fire can go all the way up into the attic," said Wright-Waldron Fire Chief Don Gruber.

The cause of the fire is undetermined but doesn't appear suspicious, Chief Gruber said. State Fire Marshal Ken Hersha said he plans to investigate today to determine how the fire started.

Yesterday, passers-by slowed their cars to look at the charred remains. The west wall of the church lay on the ground. Strips of aluminum siding creaked while swinging from the church's tower.

Former church members, Dorothy and Wallace Cooper, drove from Morenci to view the damage.

"We heard it was burned to the ground," Mr. Cooper said.

Mrs. Wallace cried as she looked at what remained of her childhood church.

"I got a phone call about 10:45 [Wednesday night]. It just made me so sick," Mrs. Wallace said. As a young girl, Mrs. Wallace, now 69, attended the church and still does on occasion. "They just put on a new roof a few weeks ago."

According to church records, German Dunkards built the church in 1872. The Dunkards were a branch of the Brethren, a German Baptist religious group. Preachers of the Seventh Day Adventist faith had proselytized in the area for some years afterward and eventually converted the Prattville congregation in 1895.

Jini Lane, a member of the church and a mother of three, had been cleaning the church Fellowship Hall next door about 2 p.m. Wednesday when electrical power went out in this small town. She returned about 4 p.m. to find the church smoldering and firefighters arriving.

"It was scary watching all that smoke come out. The church is 100 years old. You just think it is going to be around forever," Ms. Lane said.

Ms. Lane was able to give firefighters a key to the church's front doors, as they were about to break them open with an ax. The blackened doors remain standing.

Although the church members have lost their worship place, all is not lost, Pastor Landis said. The pastor of Prattville Community Church - the only other church in this community of about 30 homes - has offered to let the Seventh Day Adventists use the church until their building is rebuilt.

Pastor Landis said he is meeting tomorrow with the insurance adjuster to discuss the amount of damage and the cost to rebuild the church. He said the church is insured for replacement. The church will hold an open business meeting soon to discuss its plans.