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Front Page November 29, 2007

Police: Shamrocks fire was arson
 Accelerant use confirmed
 BY MELISSA MCKEON MMCKEON@HOLDENLANDMARK.COM



Police:

Shamrocks fire was arson
 Accelerant use confirmed

BY MELISSA MCKEON MMCKEON@HOLDENLANDMARK.COM

The former Shamrock's Pub and Eatery, vacant since it closed last year, sits behind yellow caution tape while an investigation of alleged arson at the site is ongoing. HOLDEN - A vacant restaurant at 700 Main St. sustained heavy damage Saturday night in a fire that police officials are calling arson.

A passing off-duty police officer noticed a strobe light connected to an alarm blinking at the former Shamrocks and followed up by checking out the rear of the building around 10 p.m. Saturday. He observed smoke and alerted emergency personnel.

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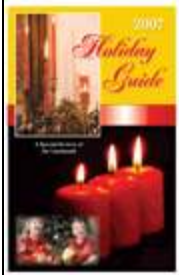
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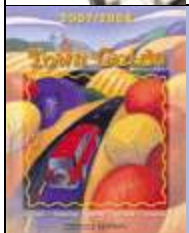
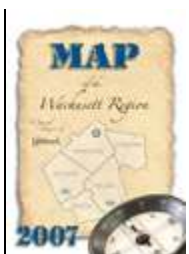
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More than 30 Holden firefighters and all Holden fire apparatus, one West Boylston engine, and a Paxton RIT (Rapid Intervention Team) responded to the scene. The town of Rutland covered the Holden headquarters station. One Holden firefighter sustained a minor injury and was treated at St. Vincent Hospital and released.

The fire was limited to the rear of the structure, but Holden Fire Chief Jack Chandler said the building sustained heavy smoke and water damage.

Officers who responded to the scene reported smelling gasoline, Holden Police Department Detective Al Bourget said Monday. The use of an accelerant was confirmed by an accelerant-sniffing dog from the State Fire Marshal's Office, which was called to the scene. Bourget said it appeared that gasoline was poured along the foundation and possibly inside the building through a hole in a rear door.

Holden Police, with assistance from the Fire Marshal, are investigating the alleged arson. The Fire Marshal's Office has offered up to \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the person or persons responsible for this fire. Anyone with information can call the Arson Hot Line at 1-800-682-9229 or contact the Holden Fire Chief at 508-829-0266.

Some leads have already come in, Chandler said, and are being investigated. Bourget said folks who noticed people or vehicles in the area are coming forward with tips.

The property was for many years Vinny's Restaurant. Both the business and the building were at that time owned by the Mischitelli family.

The property was sold to T&H Investment Corp., Inc., in 2000. T&H is owned by Thomas and Helouise Vuong, known locally as Tommy and Joanne Wong, the owners of Wong Dynasty restaurant on Reservoir Street. Wong Dynasty has

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been closed for months for renovations, according to the owners.

PJs Restaurant Group, Inc. opened several businesses in the building after the closing of Vinny's. PJ O'Rourke's, Ye Olde Chowder House and Shamrocks were several restaurant/pubs that occupied the premises. Shamrocks closed last year and the building has been vacant since. The building has active utilities and is insured.

Bourget said the owners of the property are among those being questioned about the alleged arson, because, in instances where a vacant property burns, the owners are considered suspects until they are ruled out. He said Joanne Wong told police she had checked the property earlier on Saturday to see that the heat was working properly due to cold weather conditions. Tommy Wong was scheduled to be interviewed by police Monday.

Joanne Wong did not return calls for comment by press time.