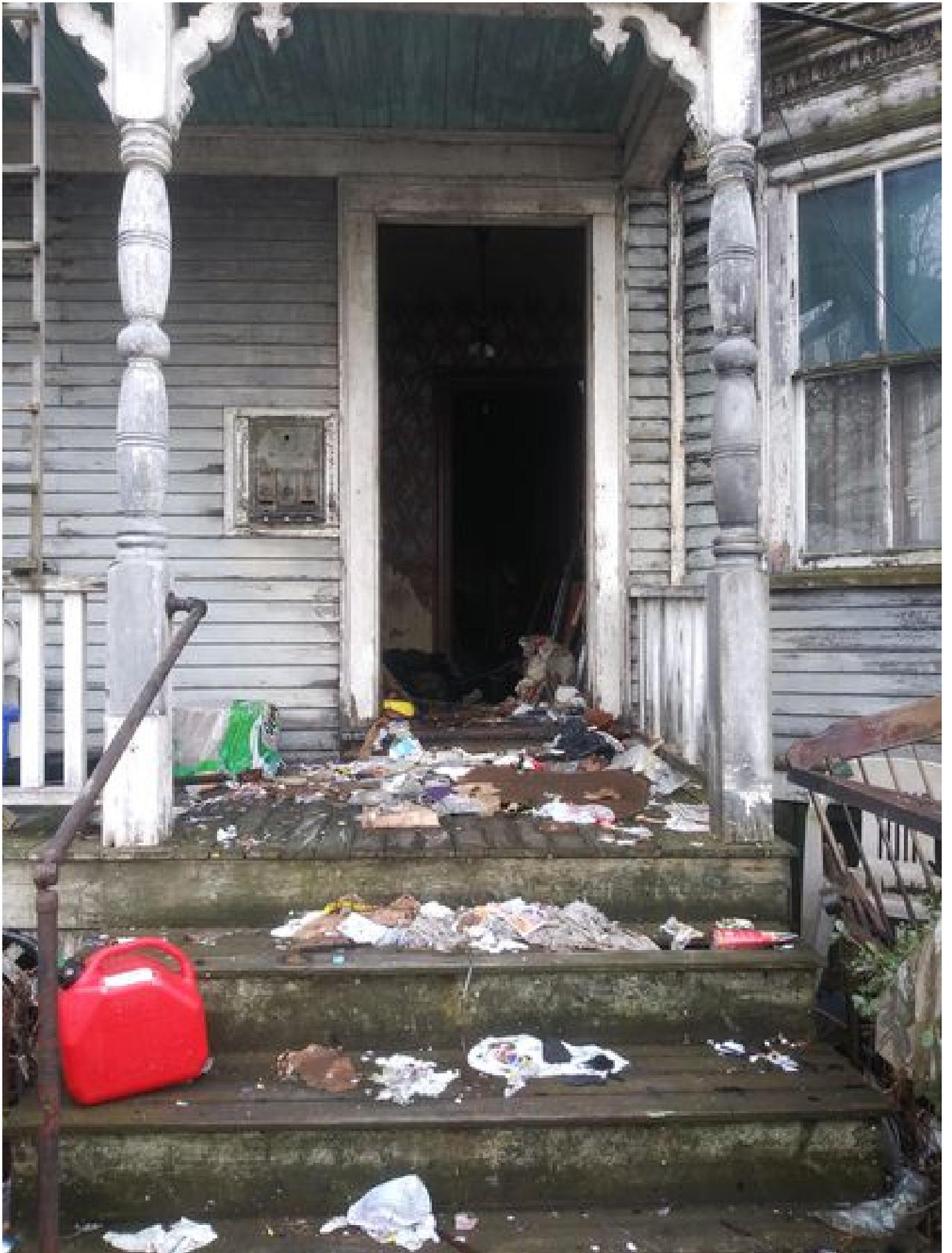


Dorchester home filled from years of hoarding goes up in flames

By **Caroline Enos** Globe Correspondent, Updated March 6, 2020, 4:21 p.m.



Firefighters had to tear through piles of stuff to reach flames that broke out inside a Romsey Street home in Dorchester early Friday. CAROLINE ENOS (CUSTOM CREDIT)/CAROLINE ENOS

Emma Miller, 20, was trying to fall asleep inside her Dorchester apartment when her roommate pounded on her door around 4 a.m. Friday.

“You’ve got to come see this!” her roommate called to her. Miller jumped from her bed and looked out one of their windows. Flames from a three-alarm fire [were pouring from the roof](#) of a triple-decker home on Romsey Street, just around the corner from her apartment.

The home, she later found out, was filled with items from years of hoarding.

Miller and her roommate ran outside and weaved through a half-dozen firetrucks that were parked in front of the burning home.

“The entire back went up in flames and the floors were glowing,” Miller said. “We saw tons of smoke and mobs of firefighters were coming out of the house.”



Firefighters had to battle the blaze from the porches and windows of neighboring houses, Miller said. A home next door, which had been recently renovated, was missing several windows Friday morning because firefighters had strung hoses up a staircase to the home's third floor and stuck them through the windows to douse the flames.

The burning home's only occupant, an elderly woman, had escaped the fire unharmed, firefighters said. Miller said she saw emergency crews bring the woman to a nearby porch and give her water.

"The soot was caked in her hair," Miller said.

Heavy flames were burning inside the third floor of the house when firefighters arrived at the scene, said Brian Alkins, a Boston Fire Department spokesman. Alkins said firefighters had a hard time battling the blaze.

"Hoarding conditions made it difficult to get access to the actual fire," Alkins said.

"[Firefighters] had to move things to get to the fire and it made it difficult for them to get up the stairs and through the rooms."

Firefighters knocked down the flames by about 5:20 a.m. Officials estimated the fire caused \$500,000 worth of damage.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Trash and debris were spilling through the home's front door Friday afternoon after emergency crews had left the scene. Inside, torn antique wallpaper and an old wooden staircase were coated with soot, and the home's charred roof had caved in.

Sean, who has lived in the neighborhood since he was born and would not reveal his full name to the Globe, said he went into the home to work on the woman's heater in the mid-1990s. He said it took him 20 minutes to reach the heater through the piles of stuff that filled the rooms.

“It was such a mess in the house. There were dust mites from newspapers she had that went back to the ’50s and ’60s,” he said, adding that it was mostly old clothes and newspapers that were stuffed inside the home.

Sean said the woman’s home had been cleaned out once before, but that she had filled it up again.

“It’s good no one else was in that house,” he said.

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