

Historic New York City Church Burns in Five-Alarm Fire

A New York City church that had stood in Astoria, Queens for more than 130 years was destroyed by fire on Thursday.

The fire at the First Reformed Church of Astoria broke out at about 6:45 p.m. in a vacant rectory, FDNY officials said, according to NY1.

The fire then spread to the church.

The church had served a Dutch Reformed Church parish that was first organized in the 1830s. On Jan. 14, 1888, the church built in 1837 was destroyed by a fire, according to the website of the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

Queens NY Box 7509 – a fifth alarm fire in a church and exposures. 1 FDNY member injured and removed. @FDNYFC @fdny @FDNYFoundation @NYCEMSwatch @NYCEMCommish @UFANYC @Redwood00051 @nypost

– David Burns 🚒🚒🚒🚒 (@FD4D) April 24, 2026

The church that was destroyed Wednesday had its cornerstone laid on Oct. 6, 1888.

“The brick Victorian Gothic building had terra cotta and copper details, and an octagonal tower and steeple. The original steeple was destroyed by lightning and was rebuilt,” the site said.

Thursday’s fire required a massive response.

FDNY Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore said 84 units including

more than 270 fire and EMS personnel responded.

"When we arrived, this had escalated into a fifth-alarm fire," Bonsignore said. "We had a significant number of resources here to bring it under control."



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The fire took several hours to contain, sending heavy smoke into the surrounding neighborhood and forcing some nearby residents from their homes.

Fire officials said the age and structure of the buildings made the fire difficult to extinguish.

"Once the fire gets into these old churches behind the walls and into the roof space, it's very difficult to extinguish. And there was a major collapse danger to our members," FDNY Chief of Fire Operations Kevin Woods said.

Woods said portions of the roof and walls collapsed. At least one firefighter was hit in the helmet by falling debris.

Five other firefighters were injured, FDNY Assistant Chief of EMS Operations Kathleen Knuth said.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Residents of nearby buildings were evacuated while the fire was being fought.

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