

Juveniles accused of starting mill fire

Three kids told police that they accidentally caused a fire that destroyed a century-old mill earlier this month.



File photo from June 17, 2013, showing old mill fire.

- **By Diane Turbyfill**

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Three kids told police that they accidentally caused a fire that destroyed a century-old mill earlier this month.

According to the Lincolnton Police Department, two girls and a boy said they dropped burning candles by accident. The incident sparked a blaze at Massapoag Mill around 5:45 p.m. Monday, June 17.

Firefighters worked for about six hours to extinguish the fire that engulfed the 73,000-square-foot building at 407 Massapoag Road in Lincolnton.

Once the flames were extinguished, investigators began searching for a cause.

The Lincolnton Police Department and Lincolnton Fire Department got assistance from the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation and [Southern Pride Search Dogs](#), but a tip from a Lincoln County Sheriff's deputy helped identify the three young people, according to Lt. Brian Greene with the Lincolnton Police Department.

The kids have not been charged for the fire, but they do face criminal charges in juvenile court for breaking and entering and larceny, Greene said.

Greene would not say how old the children are, but he would said that one of them was from Lincoln and the other two from Catawba County.

The old mill building is owned by A-M-F Properties and Investments in Lincoln, according to county tax records. It was being used for storage but once served as a cotton mill.

There was no power to the building, and the owners had no insurance covering it.

The building has since been condemned.

Time magazine once featured the former cotton mill, reporting it was the first in the U.S. to be completely fitted with Japanese-made spinning equipment.

The book "Lincoln County Revisited" says the mill was built in 1907 as Rhodes Manufacturing Co. and was once the only plant in the county running on electric power during the 20th century.

After World War I, the mill was renamed Anderson Mill, followed by a change to Massapoag after 1929.

As Massapoag, the plant wove cotton material to line the insides of shoes. It closed in the early 1970s.

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