Arson panel examines site

Church fire under investigation

by MONTE WILLIAMS

Arson investigators with the State Fire Marshal's Office were to meet today with district and local fire officials to continue investigations into the Aug. 25 blaze that gutted the rear and northwest portions of the Lafayette Diocese's second largest church. Abbeville Fire Chief Nolan Frederick told the Meridional Thursday morning that investigations into the Aug. 25 fire would resume before noon today.

Fire marshals Tuesday and Wednesday padlocked the decades-old Catholic Church "to give arson officials a clearer look at the damage," Frederick said.

A truck, laden with technical equipment designed to sniff out the causes of fires like the one that caused in excess of a half million dollars in damage Tuesday to St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church in Abbeville, was dispatched from Baton Rouge yesterday and arrived in Abbeville shortly after 9 this morning.

It, the arson investigators and local and district fire officials are attempting to discern the cause of a late-afternoon fire Aug. 25 which razed St. Mary Magdalen's northwest corner and smoke-damaged a good part of the rest of the building.

St. Mary Magdalen was leveled by fire in 1907.

A fire call placed at 4:15 p.m. Tuesday signaled a response by firemen from at least three parish departments.

See ARSON on page 8

(Continued from Page 1)