

CHESTER TIMES – April 25, 1906

BLAZING OIL FROM BROKEN PIPELINE THREATENS DESTRUCTION ON PIKE – Leak Sprung in Line This Morning Floods Pike and Nearby Ditches and Fields and Miscreant Ignites Inflammable stuff Blaze Resulting in Great Damage to Property with Spectacular Effect – Volunteers Called From Many Points To Aid Fighters

The Atlantic Refining Company's pipe which runs from Oil City to Point Breeze, broke in several places along the Chester Pike, in the vicinity of No. 1 tollgate in Eddystone, about 8 o'clock this morning.

The escaping oil first began slowly to ooze from the ground in one or two places but the number of eruptions gradually increased and within half an hour the oil spurted from eight or ten places and the pike

Keith Lockhart Collection

CHESTER TIMES – April 25, 1906

BLAZING OIL FROM BROKEN PIPELINE THREATENS DESTRUCTION ON PIKE – Leak Sprung in Line This Morning Floods Pike and Nearby Ditches and Fields and Miscreant Ignites Inflammable stuff Blaze Resulting in Great Damage to Property with Spectacular Effect – Volunteers Called From Many Points To Aid Fighters

The Atlantic Refining Company's pipe which runs from Oil City to Point Breeze, broke in several places along the Chester Pike, in the vicinity of No. 1 tollgate in Eddystone, about 8 o'clock this morning.

The escaping oil first began slowly to ooze from the ground in one or two places but the number of eruptions gradually increased and within half an hour the oil spurted from eight or ten places and the pike, for a distance of thirty years, was soon covered.

William Whittaker, watchman at No. 1 tollgate, who first discovered that the oil was leaking, sent a telephone message at once to the company's main office at Point Breeze.

Watchman Whittaker then proceeded to warn teamsters to keep off the pike at that point, and as the breaks increased and the surface for the pike began to sag up and down, showing that the road was thoroughly undermined with the oil, and was in a dangerous condition, he prohibited any teams from passing over the affected ground.

One of the breaks occurred in the center of the Chester Traction Company's line, and in view of this fact, Superintendent C.V. Mills, who was quickly notified, sent a force of workmen at once to the scene and strengthened the road beneath the tracks with ballast, obviating any danger of the pike crushing in by the weight of the cars.

GUTTERS AND FIELDS FLOODED – The gutters on each side of the pike and the fields on either side of the road are filled with the oil which is in a crude state. At 10 o'clock this morning, veritable mire, and presented the appearance of a huge sponge as the thick oil slowly oozed from the various pores.

OIL SET ON FIRE – Fire, which threatens to destroy the entire property around the vicinity of Crum Lynne is now raging, and the wind is blowing the flames towards the river, which is a Godsend to the people of that vicinity, for had it not been for the sudden shift, all of the property within a radius of a mile would have been destroyed.

The flames were started by a man who resides in Leiperville. Several hundred men, in small groups, are hunting for him and he will not fare very well if captured. As soon as the blaze was discovered, efforts were made to extinguish it, but it was useless and in an instant the flames were roaring, the blaze being at times twenty feet high.

The fire spread rapidly to the mills of the Kennebec Worsted Mills and the workmen in the plant were compelled to flee for their lives. In an instant the plant was in a mass of flames, and although the company fire department, with the assistance of a number of the borough fire companies of the pike tried to stay the progress of the flames, it proved useless, and the fire ate through the building as if it was a structure of paper. The only remaining portion of the building which is now standing is the outside walls.

MUCH DAMAGE DONE – No. 1 tollgate house was burned to the ground but all of the important papers and documents which were in the building were secured by William Whitaker, the keeper, who was compelled to flee for his life.

The rectory of St. Rose of Lima Church was several times ignited but by almost superhuman efforts on the part of the parishioners and the fire companies, it was extinguished without much damage.

, for a distance of thirty years, was soon covered.

William Whittaker, watchman at No. 1 tollgate, who first discovered that the oil was leaking, sent a telephone message at once to the company's main office at Point Breeze.

Watchman Whittaker then proceeded to warn teamsters to keep off the pike at that point, and as the breaks increased and the surface for the pike began to sag up and down, showing that the road was thoroughly undermined with the oil, and was in a dangerous condition, he prohibited any teams from passing over the affected ground.

One of the breaks occurred in the center of the Chester Traction Company's line, and in view of this fact, Superintendent C.V. Mills, who was quickly notified, sent a force of workmen at once to the scene and strengthened the road beneath the tracks with ballast, obviating any danger of the pike crushing in by the weight of the cars.

GUTTERS AND FIELDS FLOODED – The gutters on each side of the pike and the fields on either side of the road are filled, with the oil which is in a crude state. At 10 o'clock this morning, veritable mire, and presented the appearance of a huge sponge as the thick oil slowly oozed from the various pores.

OIL SET ON FIRE – Fire, which threatens to destroy the entire property around the vicinity of Crum Lynne is now raging, and the wind is blowing the flames towards the river, which is a Godsend to the people of that vicinity, for had it not been for the sudden shift, all of the property within a radius of a mile would have been destroyed.

The flames were started by a man who resides in Leiperville. Several hundred men, in small groups, are hunting for him and he will not fare very well if captured. As soon as the blaze was discovered, efforts were made to extinguish it, but it was useless and in an instant the flames were roaring, the blaze being at times twenty feet high.

The fire spread rapidly to the mills of the Kennebec Worsted Mills and the workmen in the plant were compelled to flee for their lives. In an instant the plant was in a mass of flames, and although the company fire department, with the assistance of a number of the borough fire companies of the pike tried to stay the progress of the flames, it proved useless, and the fire ate through the building as if it was a structure of paper. The only remaining portion of the building which is now standing is the outside walls.

MUCH DAMAGE DONE – No. 1 tollgate house was burned to the ground but all of the important papers and documents which were in the building were secured by William Whittaker, the keeper, who was compelled to flee for his life.

The rectory of St. Rose of Lima Church was several times ignited but by almost superhuman efforts on the part of the parishioners and the fire companies, it was extinguished without much damage.

All of the boats of a man named McIntyre were destroyed and he would have been burned alive by the flames had it not been for the heroic rescue of John H. Ward, the milk man, who risked his own life in saving him. Mr. Ward went through the fire and dragged McIntyre from his perilous position.

The occupants in the stone row along the pike moved all of their effects out of the houses and for a time they seemed doomed. The wind changed and this carried the flames in an opposite direction, when they had almost eaten their way to the property which is all occupied by poor people.

The fence around the Broomall property is all destroyed and buildings near the mill are all scorched.

The fire is still burning and should the wind again change, serious damage may result on the pike.

The fire companies from Eddystone, Ridley Park, Norwood and the Hanley Hose Company from this city are at the scene and fighting the flames.

LATER TELEPHONE NEWS – 11 o'clock – The fire now threatens to destroy the entire Leiperville district and workmen are engaged in cutting away the trolley bridge to try to prevent the spread of the flames. The trolley wires have all been cut to prevent serious injury to the men who are fighting the flames. For a mile on each side of the flames the people are moving away from their houses, believing that serious damage may result and that their houses will be destroyed.

The Kennebec Worsted Mill was destroyed in exactly three minutes after the flames ignited it. The mill employs its men, women, girls, and boys.

The Delaware & Atlantic Telegraph Company's cables have been cut.

The trolley poles and telegraph poles are all on fire and are being cut down to prevent the spread of the flames.

One man, whose name at this time cannot be ascertained, was badly burned and removed to a place of safety.

The Glenolden, Colwyn and Prospect Park Fire Companies have arrived on the scene and with the other companies are rendering good services.

Workmen are throwing dirt in the ditches of blazing oil in an effort to smother the flames.

FIRE STILL RAGING – 11:15 o'clock – Fire shows no signs of abatement and companies are making an effort to save the rectory of St. Rose of Lima Church, which is near the fire. All of the road is a mass of flames from the oil, and every effort is being made to stop the progress of the flames. Superintendent Mills, of the Chester Traction Company, with forty men, has arrived on the scene. He has ordered all of the poles and wires of the company cut to prevent serious injury, and to try to stop the progress of the flames.

The fire now is eating its way towards this city, although little fear is entertained that it will do any damage here.

Colonel Hyatt and Colonel Comfort, with a corps of cadets from the Pennsylvania Military College, have arrived on the scene and are engaged on the scene and are engaged in digging dirt to put over the building oil. The burning oil can be distinctly smelled in this city.