

How the Rush of Oil and Water Started on Its Destructive Road.

RAILROAD FIRE!

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PEOPLE SLEEP IN PEACE

While the Dams Burst and the Deluge Sweeps Quickly Onward.

GASOLINE FLOATS IN FLAMES

Upon Thousands of Unprotected Men, Women and Children.

SIGHTS AND SCENES IN TITUSVILLE

(FROM A STAFF CORRESPONDENT.)

TITUSVILLE, June 6.—An awful calamity, scarcely any without warning, has fallen upon this city. On Saturday night the community, excepting a party of citizens who went up on a picnic to Oil Creek Lake about 20 miles distant on the preceding afternoon and were prevented by a washout on the railroad from returning that night, retired as usual to rest. It had rained, good rain, for several days, but Oil Creek, which runs through the town, was still below the top of its banks, and the citizens went to bed and to sleep without a thought of approaching danger.

It rained heavily all the evening, but this was nothing unusual. It must have rained much more heavily far north as Chautauque Lake, at least Oil Creek and all its tributaries were suddenly swollen as they had never been before.

Spartansburg is a town about 19 miles north of Titusville. A good-sized stream, whose waters empty into Oil Creek, is dammed at this point for a water power, and the water back over perhaps 1,000 acres, and is used for a motive power for mills. There was something like a cloud-burst above and beyond this pond late on Saturday afternoon, causing such a well as to break the dam entirely away, and to suddenly let through a mighty river, which swept everything before it.

Dams Could Not Stay the Flood.

Other dams, all the way to Titusville, broke or were overtopped, and the water between 2 and 3 o'clock Sunday morning. The water was several feet above the highest water mark ever known here. The heavy fall of rain continued until after midnight, supplying the streams above, and it was not until 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon, that the great stream at Titusville began to recede. The water was supplied with water by the Holley system. The works are located upon the west bank of Oil Creek about half a mile above the northern limit of the town. The first strike, and submerged the water-works, thus suddenly depriving the citizens of their supply of domestic water, and this lasted nearly 24 hours. Not only this, but the water for extinguishing fires in this city comes almost solely from the hydrants of the Holley system, the pressure being increased to a high limit whenever required in the closing of the water-works suddenly left the city almost entirely without the means to extinguish or even check a conflagration.

Two of these works were still owned by the city. One of these was disabled and the other in a bad state of repair, so it did not throw water with more than half its original force.

How the Fire Was Started.

The city is heated by natural gas and lighted by electricity and illuminating gas. Both the natural and the illuminating gas, and the electricity, are supplied by the Holley system. The water for extinguishing fires in this city comes almost solely from the hydrants of the Holley system, the pressure being increased to a high limit whenever required in the closing of the water-works suddenly left the city almost entirely without the means to extinguish or even check a conflagration.

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ance of those living near at hand, who were doing all mortals could do to rescue those threatened with death by water or by fire. In some cases there was success. But the water and the absence of fire, save nothing of running into a sheet of flame, rendered almost all efforts to save the poor victims vain.

Across Monroe street, on the Fletcher house, people were driven from their homes and some may have been drowned there, but none perished from fire, the water on the street reaching to within a few feet of the crossing of Spring and Perry. Several persons perished near Monroe street. Families on the hill, north of the mill race, and on the crossing of Spring were taken out of their homes, but were able to return to-day. But there was great terror in all the northern parts of the town west of Perry street.

The first at the Rice & Robinson and International refineries, one on the north of Monroe and the other upon the south of the street, all day Sunday, even until Monday morning, menaced the people in the northwestern part of the town and the city at large. A man's hand was flung into the air and carried a great distance. They were raised upon the roofs of houses but the shingled roofs were thoroughly soaked with the rain which had fallen the night preceding and not a single building caught fire from a falling ember. The lightning bolts of the second wave realized their danger, and very naturally they were in great distress of mind. The fire at the Rice & Robinson works was attended with painful anxiety.

The stills at the southeast corner of the yard were wrapped in flames and the darkest possible smoke. To the northwest was the Tail House, which took fire at about 8 o'clock in the morning. An explosion followed, and this caused great excitement still further north, because some distance apart were two iron agitators, each holding perhaps 1,000 bushels of grain. The agitators were filled with gasoline. If the agitator from either should have caught fire a widespread conflagration would be sure to follow. Fortunately the agitators were empty at the time. The fire at the Tail House was burning, but the books and papers of the firm were saved. The fire at the International Oil Works was advancing westward. The barrel house and other buildings one after another took fire. The heat became so intense that the buildings upon the bank to the northwest were in danger of igniting.

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