

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY SEPTEMBER 6



Big Moses Gas Well

On September 6, 1894, one of the biggest gas wells ever drilled was completed on Moses Spencer's farm on Indian Creek, Tyler County.

CSO: SS.8.9

Investigate the Document: (*Parkersburg Daily State Journal*, June 15, 1895)

1. The “Big Moses” gas well, once the most productive in the world, was located “fifteen miles back of Sistersville” in *this* county. In what geographic region is this county?
2. According to the article, it seems unlikely that they would be able to extinguish the inferno caused by the lightning strike; what course of action was assumed to be the only option?

Think Critically: Using context clues from the article, what do you think that a “white elephant” refers to?

THE DAILY STATE JOURNAL.

PARKERSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA, SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1895.

A PILLAR OF FIRE.**The "Big Moses" Struck by Lightning.**

The "Big Moses" gasser, located about fifteen miles back of Sistersville, which has been such a "White Elephant" on the hands of its owners ever since it came in, on account of their inability to control the gas, is now in a worse shape than ever. It is now a roaring mass of flame. The storm cloud which passed by on the other side of this city yesterday afternoon, broke over the region of the "Big Moses" and the column of escaping gas was struck by lightning which set it on fire. Nature has taken the problem out of the owners' hands and solved in her own way the question of what to do with the gas by metaphorically setting a match to it and thus burning it. The resulting blaze is menacing and terrific. The scene is said to be grand and awful. The flame, leaping and twisting to a height of many feet, lights up the country, at night, for miles around. Crowds of curiosity seekers are flocking to the scene to witness an almost unprecedented sight. The owners of the "Big

Moses" are filled with consternation at this new and unexpected complication of their difficulties. If the control of the big gasser's output was a knotty problem before, it is now an enigma worthy of the attention of an Edison. It seems equally impossible to shut off the gas or extinguish the flames and the only course left to take is to let it burn.