

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY NOVEMBER 15



**On November 15, 1964, fire destroyed the Cameron Clay Products plant in Cameron.**

**CSO: SS.8.9, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document: (*Wheeling Intelligencer*, November 16, 1964)**

1. Cameron Clay Products had recently resumed its operations following a two-year closure. How long had the plant been operating prior to the fire?
2. According to the article, where did the fire originate?
3. How many people were employed by the plant at the time of fire?

**Think Critically:** What were the effects on the town of Cameron in the aftermath of the blaze? What vital industries exist today in Cameron and Marshall County?

# The Intelligencer.

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WHEELING, W. VA., MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1964

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## \$500,000 Fire Levels Cameron Pottery Plant



Flames lick at the remains of the Cameron Clay Products plant as night fell over the destroyed building. (Photo by Ruminski)

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WHEELING, W. VA., MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1964

## New Industry Only Three Weeks Old

### Yorkville Packing Plant Also Hit By Blaze Sunday

By HENRY RUMINSKI  
Of The Intelligencer Staff

A plant upon which the town of Cameron had pinned its fondest economic hopes burned to the ground yesterday.

The damage to the Cameron Clay Products plant, which resumed operations only three weeks ago after being idle for about two years, is expected to run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, possibly as much as \$500,000 according to some firemen.

"It's terrible. It's very, very bad for the people of this town. It's a big economic blow," commented a saddened Mayor William L. Johnson of Cameron who was one of the firemen to answer the call.

Plant Manager William Chandler declined to estimate the damage and said any decision about rebuilding the plant would have to come from its owners, Sikeston Ceramics, Inc., of Chicago.

The Cameron blaze was the second major one in the Ohio Valley yesterday. The first occurred at the Kull packing house in Yorkville which sustained heavy damage in an early morning blaze.

One Cameron official estimated that the replacement value of the plant is approximately \$250,000. The concrete block and brick building, which measured about 300 by 100 feet, was over 50 years old.

Firemen from eight communities as well as Cameron answered the alarm which was turned in about 4 p.m. by an unidentified caller. The firemen came from Limestone, Bethany, Sherrard, Hundred, Graysville, Pa., Jacktown, Glen Dale and Cameron and were credited by Mayor Johnson last night for doing "a magnificent job in coming to the aid of Cameron."

Emmett Burge, the fire chief of Cameron, said the blaze spread rapidly throughout the building, located on the outskirts of the town, and firemen devoted their efforts to keeping the fire confined.

Portions of the gutted interior were still glowing at press time this morning and one fire vehicle was scheduled to remain at the scene throughout the night.

Chandler said the exact cause of the blaze has not been determined but he said it apparently started in the kiln room. One Cameron resident said she heard an explosion which may have been caused by a kiln erupting.

The plant manager said workmen were able to save only a few office records. He also noted that firemen were able to keep the blaze from reaching a nearby frame garage which the company owned.

According to Chandler, about 40 persons were employed at the plant at the time of the fire but additional workers were slated to start this week. When the purchase by Sikeston was announced late in September, company officials said employment would at first be about 70 but there was a possibility the total would climb to about 100.

The plant was being rebuilt by Sikeston to manufacture ceramic lamp bases. Chandler said much of the remodeling work had been completed prior to yesterday's fire.

The blaze attracted hundreds of spectators from throughout

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## Blaze Levels Pottery Plant In Cameron

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the area and law enforcement officers in Marshall County said the roads to and from Cameron were jammed with Sunday motorists.

In the evening hours, the blaze could be seen from the hilltops from as far away as Sherrard. The plant had been expected to be in full operation early next spring.

The sale of the abandoned facility, Johnson noted, was the product of the efforts of "a lot of people" who had high hopes for the anticipated economic benefits.

"We were just starting to notice the benefits of the income when this hit. We hope and will make every effort to get it rebuilt," remarked Richard Burley, chairman of the industrial development committee of the Cameron Planning Commission.

The committee headed by Burley not only played a major role in luring the Chicago firm to Cameron but also has hopes of attracting a wood veneer plant to the Marshall County community.

Mrs. Joseph Kull, wife of the owner of the Yorkville packing plant, said an undetermined amount of meat was destroyed but 73 hogs and several head of cattle in a barn were rushed to safety. The blaze of undetermined origin was battled by firemen from Yorkville, Tiltonsville, Martins Ferry, Glen Robbins and Rayland who were at the scene until 3 p.m.

Only the front section and walls of the building, located on Highland Ave., were left standing.