

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY  
OCTOBER 26BLAST DAMAGES  
PURE OIL PLANT  
ON CABIN CREEK

On October 26, 1923, an explosion at the Pure Oil Company plant at Cabin Creek caused damage estimated at more than \$100,000.

**CSO: SS.8.9, SS.8.24, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document:** (*Charleston Gazette* October 27, 1923)

1. How large was the blast radius?
2. Although an official investigation had not been completed, the article states that *what* was likely the cause of the explosion?

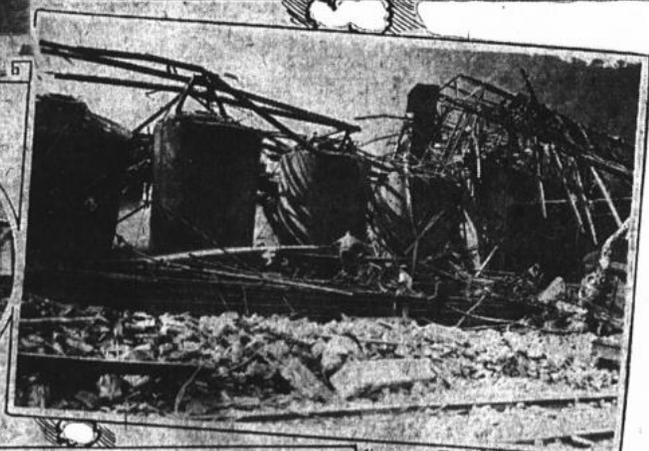
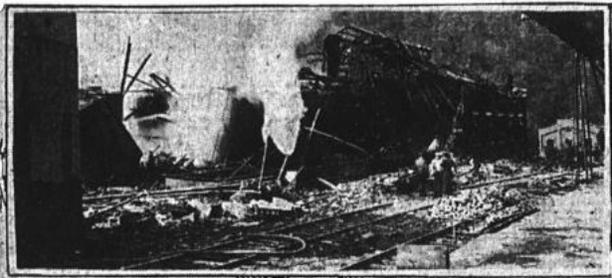
**Think Critically:** Describe the change in industry that occurred during the 1920s. What was the state of labor unions and work safety? The rise of *this* industry necessitated the need of oil plants, such as the one that was in Cabin Creek. Why was the 1920s referred to as the “Roaring 20s?”

# THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE

THE STATE NEWSPAPER—MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA, SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1923

### SCENES IN CABIN CREEK GASOLINE PLANT BLAST



BECK STUDIO

Close-ups of the filter plant of the Pure Oil company at Cabin Creek, which was destroyed by an explosion yesterday. The two photographs at the upper right show the extent of the blast when the tanks, located some distance from the wrecked building were covered with debris that was carried in its wake. In the lower picture is a panoramic view of the settlement, the white "X's" representing the area affected by the explosion.

# THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE

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CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA, SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1923

## \$100,000 LOSS IN OIL PLANT BLAST AT CABIN CREEK

Two Men Seriously Injured  
When Filter Plant is Razed  
by Explosion and Subsequent  
Fires

ROCKS COUNTRYSIDE  
FOR MILES AROUND

Officials Announce Plans to  
Rebuild Wrecked Structure  
at Once; One Man Thrown  
Through Building

Work will be started immediately on the Cabin Creek refinery division of the Pure Oil company to repair the \$100,000 damage caused yesterday morning by an explosion and a subsequent fire in the oil filter building, it was stated last night by J. J. Rhie, general manager of the division.

One man was seriously injured and four others slightly hurt when the explosion made a complete wreck of the filter plant and damaged adjoining buildings within a radius of a half mile.

F. J. McConihy, 42 years old, was badly hurt. He was inside the building when the explosion occurred and was blown through the structure. At the Mountain State hospital, this city, where he was brought by a special train, it was stated he has a fair chance to recover.

The explosion, which rocked the countryside, occurred between 10 and 11 o'clock yesterday morning. It was said to have been caused by excessive pressure in the oil filters. This pressure was too great for the safety valves and the explosion was the result.

### Cause Not Determined

General Manager Rhie said no official investigation of the explosion had yet been made and he could not say definitely what was the cause. Mr. Rhie is suffering with a broken eardrum as a result of the blast.

Debris covers the territory surrounding the refinery for a distance of several hundred feet.

The explosion was terrific. Windows were blown from houses in the vicinity of Dry Branch and the force of the blast was felt at Cabin Creek, Chelyan and other places.

M. C. Pennell, 65, employe of the plant, suffered a broken arm and a broken leg as a result of the explosion. He was walking along the railroad track a short distance from the filter building when the explosion occurred. He was buried beneath two feet of brick and shattered timber.

McConihy, the most seriously injured, suffered several broken ribs and numerous surface lacerations. Physicians attending him had not ascertained last night whether he received other internal injuries. Workmen at the plant took four feet of debris from the unconscious body of McConihy and he was rushed to the local hospital as soon as the special train could be secured.

### Has Narrow Escape

General Manager Rhie had walked past the filter building only a minute before the explosion occurred. He was standing at the general office of the division and was knocked to the ground by the force of the blast. An instant later he recovered consciousness and crawled to a safe distance. Brick and timber were falling all around him.

The company's emergency fire apparatus was brought into use, and the fire was confined to the filter house. Burning oil and gasoline hampered the volunteer fire workers, but they succeeded in bringing the blaze under control by noon.

Mr. Rhie estimated the damage at approximately \$100,000. He said the loss was covered by insurance and that the filter plant, which makes possible the manufacture of certain grades of oils, will be rebuilt. He said a temporary arrangement will be made at once, and that oil will be filtered again within the next few days.

Three men are employed in the large filter building. One of them did not report for work yesterday morning, and a second workman was not in the building at the time of the explosion. Mr. McConihy was the only occupant. It was said to have been remarkably fortunate that several persons did not lose their lives.

### Calls Are Sent

Immediately following the explosion calls were sent to adjoining towns for medical aid, and several physicians responded. First reports to Charleston said several men had been killed.

Physicians who went to the scene gave first aid to the injured men, and then ordered the special train. They were Dr. A. H. Nelson, of East Bank; Dr. R. D. Black, of Cabin Creek Junction, and Dr. Hayes, of Chelyan.

According to the Rev. W. M. Tisdale, pastor of the M. E. church at Chelyan, who gave a graphic description of the accident, the force of the explosion was so great that roofs of dwellings on the company's

(Continued on Page Five.)

## \$100,000 LOSS

(Continued from Page One)

property were torn off, holes were torn in the sides of the houses and windows were shattered.

Bricks and boards were blown a great distance, and tops of automobiles parked several feet away were carried away.

Windows were reported blown out at Dry Branch, three miles distant, and at Chelyan, a mile and a half away. Telephone lines also were severed.

The filter house was of brick construction. It was destroyed, and a hole was blown through the wall of an adjoining building housing the wax department.

About 150 men are employed at the plant.