Big Water Incidents

Department Store Fire
McKeesport, Pennsylvania
May 21, 1976





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Facts & Figures…

- The photos in this presentation are from the archives of Larry Davis – we believe that he took them.
- The incident is a major fire that occurred in downtown McKeesport, Pennsylvania at the Famous department store.
- The fire started around 4:00 pm and within an hour about two blocks of downtown McKeesport were on fire.
- By the time the fire was out later that night, seven buildings were destroyed with many others suffering damage. The loss was estimated at over $5 million dollars.
- Though we don't know much about the water supply operations, we are pretty sure they were significant.

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Smoke Showing from the Famous



A photo from relatively early in the incident.

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Heavy Streams on the Attack



The building had been renovated several times over its life so we are sure that did not help matters.

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A Firestorm Brews



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Battle in the Street



Heavy defensive operations are set-up in the streets to try and stop the fire spread.

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The Façade Hides the True Story



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Heavy Fire Conditions



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The Enemy Grows in Size



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A Firestorm Brews



As the front façade fails, the fire gains tremendous strength.

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Positions are Abandoned



With a wall of fire in front we can only assume that some fire fighting positions had to be abandoned.

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The Real Structure



With the façade now completely gone, the real structure can be seen. The buildings across the street are now on fire.

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The Fire Moves Through Downtown



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Trying to Stop the Spread of Fire



Fire companies from throughout the Mon Valley responded to this fire.

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Progress is Made



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The Aftermath



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The Aftermath



The fire left a huge hole in the downtown area and according to some reports, the downtown area never really recovered from the fire.

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The Aftermath



We would love to here from anybody who may have been at this fire. We only have the photos – but we are sure there are many firemen with the story.

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For more information contact us at

thebigcamel@gotbigwater.com