

The American Flint, January, 1918

The Star Glass company located at Star City, W. Va., was completely destroyed by fire on Monday night, December 10, 1917, causing a loss estimated at \$50,000 and throwing into idleness over three hundred employees. It is not definitely known as yet whether the plant will be rebuilt or not. We have been informed that temporary arrangements have been made whereby a majority of the men will be transferred to other plants of this company at Pt. Marion, Pa., and Cameron, W. Va.

By R.C. Maurer [*written Monday, December 11, 1917*]

The big plant of the Star City [*sic*] Glass Co., the main industrial asset of Star City, was completely destroyed by fire here tonight with a loss variously estimated at from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and when contracts and business of the coming months is considered, actual loss to the owners may be \$50,000 above the higher figure. The greatest loss, however, is in employment to the workmen of the plant. They looked to it for their source of revenue for the coming winter and spring—at least 150 heads of families and 200 boys and girls.

The fire was discovered about 12:30 o'clock by Eli White, a trusted night man on the job at the factory. The flames then had made considerable headway, and in the absence of any fire fighting apparatus, there was no chance of checking the flames. The alarm was given and efforts were made to save adjoining buildings from the shower of sparks that were carried up, but the factory buildings were doomed from the outset, and there was no chance of saving any part of the structure, although almost the entire populace of Star City turned out to witness the conflagration and to render any possible aid.

The fire started, it is evident, in the chemical room of the plant, located near the center of the factory building. Here chemicals used in etching and frosting glass are stored, and it is believed that fire originated here. There is little suspicion that it was of pro-German origin, although the possibility has been considered, since the plant is said to have government contracts to fill. [*This is, of course, in reference to anti-German sentiment due to World War I*]

The property destroyed includes the factory, which offered 50 shops for blowers, the ware rooms, in which finished product was stored, the rooms containing raw material, the offices, [and] a number of box cars on the siding loaded with raw materials.

During the past summer, the company has made additions to the factory at a cost of \$10,000 or more, and additions which were being completed were destroyed in the flames last night. The company had just received a shipment of 10 or 12 carloads of box lumber and this was destroyed in the fire last night.

The controlling stock of the Star Glass Co. is owned, it is said, by Louis Kauffeld, the manager, W.J. Wambaugh, one of the officials of the plant, and J.W. Wiles. A large amount is held in small certificates by men employed at the factory, and by men of all classes and conditions in Morgantown and vicinity. The plant of the company itself was covered by insurance, the exact amount of which could not be learned tonight.

The Star plant is a ruin for the second time in its history, having been reduced to ashes in a conflagration nine or ten years ago. The present loss, however, is much more important than the first, because of the large number of men, women, and children thrown out of employment.

The plant has been idle since the cold snap of Saturday night [*two days previous*], because of gas shortage, and there was no one at work at the time the fire was discovered.

The blaze burned fiercely without interruption and was spectacular in the extreme, as practically the whole population of the town gathered about and looked on, helpless to stop the devastating flames.