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## 10 Walking Tour of West Chester's Railroad Corridor (from Riggstown to Market Street and back)

James Jones

*West Chester University of Pennsylvania*, JJONES@wcupa.edu

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**Walking Tour of West Chester's  
Railroad Corridor  
(from Riggtown to Market Street and  
back)**

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**Instruction:** Begin in Green Field Parking Lot in the 600-block of South Franklin Street.

- **Goose Creek** : Also known as "Shallow Run" on turn-of-the-century fire insurance maps, it is one of the creeks that feeds into the Chester Creek. During the 19th century, it served as a sewer for the southeast end of town.
- **Green Field** : This area was turned into a swamp by the construction of the elevated railroad right-of-way in 1858, and as the town expanded towards the southeast, this area became an unofficial trash dump. The houses along East Niels Street were completed between 1887 and 1896, and children from the neighborhood used the dump as their playground. They had a baseball diamond at the "high end" near Franklin Street and hit long balls towards the swampy area next to the railroad. In 1944, 118 neighbors signed a petition that got the Borough to fill in the swamp and build a ball field. In 1991, the Department of Public Works paved the parking lot using an experimental surface that permits water to drain through it.
- **Riggtown** : Riggtown consists of 36 houses located between Goose Creek and the railroad tracks, and encompasses the 500-blocks of South Franklin and South Adams Street, plus the 300 to 500-blocks of East Niels Street. Most were built between 1891 and 1898, with the majority constructed by two contractors, Patrick Barry (ten houses on the west side of South Franklin Street) and Mifflin L. Rigg (14 houses east of South Franklin Street and north of East Niels Street). Although a few newspaper articles referred to the area as "Barryville," by 1898 it was commonly referred to as "Riggtown." Rigg's daughter Nora lived at

437 E. Nields Street until the turn-of-the century, and several sources recalled Mifflin Rigg as a good builder and a good landlord.

Until the end of World War I, Riggstown remained a community of rental properties owned by investors from as far away as Philadelphia. As a result of the war-time economic boom, Riggstown residents were able to buy their own houses starting about 1919, and a few managed to acquire title to as many as four houses. They invited family members to move in, and Riggstown became a close-knit community composed mainly of three large extended families--the Harvey-Ferrier-Gincley family, the Townsend-Hamilton-Smiley family, and the Davis-Carey-Holston family.

**Instruction:** Walk east along alley between baseball field and backyards of the houses on the south side of East Nields Street. Turn left beyond the large apartment building and walk to East Nields Street. Stop at the railroad crossing.

- **Trivia** : The house numbering in this block is unusual, North of East Nields Street, the railroad divides the 200 and 300-blocks and South Adams Street divides the 300 and 400-blocks. Where South Adams Street intersects East Nields Street, there is a house number 400, but it is attached to house number 500 as a duplex. Thus, the houses on Nields Street between Franklin Street and the railroad tracks include numbers from 386 to 510 in a single block.
- **Willows Apartments** : This apartment building, located at 510 East Nields Street, last sold in 1987 at a cost of \$1.8 million dollars. Note the misspelling "Neilds" on the sign. Formerly, it was the site of a single family home owned by the Guthrie family, and was known as a bad place to lose a baseball, because according to children who grew up in the area, the owners didn't like it when they came into the yard.
- **East Nields Street crossing** : In the 19th century, East Nields Street was an unpaved lane that served farmers from West Goshen and Westtown. They drove animals and used wagons to bring produce to the West Chester market, which opened on West Market Street in the 1830s. After the West Chester State Normal School was founded in 1872, trains occasionally stopped here to serve students and teachers, and after World War I, this became a regular stop on several morning and evening trains.

The Nields Street grade crossing was the site of many accidents, including four in a ten-year period that culminated in the "worst railroad

accident in the borough's history" in 1953, when an entire family from Paoli was killed by a train that collided with their car. One consequence was the installation of warning lights and crossing gates in the following year. However, 1953 was also the last year for direct passenger rail service from West Chester to Philadelphia. Sunday service ended on January 19, 1958. Regular train service to West Chester ended in April 1987.

- **Sartomer** : On the east side of the railroad tracks and south of East Niels Street, the James D. Reilly family had a farm until 1967. For many years, the Reilly children and the Riggstown kids played together, and Riggstown residents remembered playing football, target shooting, and going for walks on the Reilly farm. In 1967, the parent company of the Sartomer Corporation (presently owned by the French petrochemical firm Total) bought the property and built a plant for the manufacture of intermediate chemical products used in the manufacture of plastics.
- **Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories** : The Wyeth-Ayerst Company operates a facility for the manufacture of sterile pharmaceutical products such as disposable hypodermic needles. Wyeth came to West Chester during World War II when it acquired Reichel Laboratories, which was founded by Dr. Charles Heathcote, Raymond Rattou and Mr. Carlisle of West Chester. Reichel Laboratories began production in a building on East Rosedale Avenue near South Penn Street as one of the first companies to produce penicillin in the United States. After the war, Wyeth needed larger quarters, so it built a factory on this site in 1952. In 1969, they added a second factory, at which time South Adams Street was rerouted to eliminate the grade crossing north of Niels Street (at the present location of the West Chester Railroad yard office).

**Instruction:** Cross the railroad tracks and walk north through the railroad yard to South Adams Street in front of the West Chester Railroad yard office.

- **Wyeth-Ayerst parking lot** : The entrance to the Wyeth-Ayerst parking lot was once a borough street named Elmer Street, which appears on the 1933 map as a continuation of East Lacey Street. A siding was built parallel to Elmer Street in 1858 by the WC&PRR to provide access to a three-stall engine house that maintained eight locomotives (seven passenger and one freight) at its peak in 1907.

Before WWII, mushroom soil was unloaded at this siding and transported in wagons through Riggstown to the mushroom houses on

South Matlack Street. Circus companies also unloaded here and marched their wagons and animals through Riggstown to the Fair Grounds located south of the present West Chester University E. O. Bull Center parking lot. After electrification of the line made the engine house obsolete, local children used the lot for a ball field. NOTE: The 1933 map shows a property owned by the Sinclair Oil Refining Company in the middle of the present parking lot, about two-thirds of the way from South Adams to South Bolmar Streets.

**Instruction:** Continue north along the 300-block of South Adams Street to the corner of East Union Street.

- **West Chester Railroad yard** : The current switching yard of the West Chester Railroad was once a freight switching yard for the Pennsylvania Railroad. It was originally constructed about 1900 when freight operations became too great to handle at the main station on East Market Street, and expanded in 1907 by filling in the area between the tracks and Goose Creek.
- **National Foam Systems Inc.** : On the west side of South Adams Street, a large manufacturing facility belonging to the National Foam Company produces fire-fighting chemicals from animal byproducts. The plant opened in 1942 to produce foam for the U.S. Navy. The firm regularly tests its products by igniting a fire in the open area between the factory and railroad tracks, providing tense moments for people who are unfamiliar with the firm.
- **Grocery Store Products** : The large brick industrial complex on the northeast corner of East Union and South Adams stands on land that once belonged to Henry R. Guss. By 1883, it had become the site of the A. D. Sharpless brickyard. In 1929, the land was purchased by the Grocery Store Products Company and they built the factory that stands today. Grocery Store Products processed locally-grown mushrooms and marketed them throughout the United States under the trade name "B-in-B" (Broiled in Butter). The company was purchased by The Clorox Company of Oakland CA in 1971, and since then, it has been divided into a variety of industrial and office spaces.
- **Guss' Row** : Most of the houses located along the east side of South Adams Street were built by Colonel Henry Guss using brick manufactured in his brickyard on East Union Street. A few were built prior to 1873 and the rest were constructed by 1883.

**Instruction:** Turn left onto East Union Street and turn right at the next corner onto South Franklin Street. From there, walk north to the corner of East Barnard and South Franklin Streets.

- **Hoffman's Lumber Yard** : Across South Adams Street from the Grocery Store Products building stands Hoffman's lumber yard. In 1866, one of West Chester's most celebrated Civil War veterans reopened a brickyard formerly owned by the firm of Sharpless & Hall. In 1884, I. M. Warnick took over the brickyard, and purchased a house at 221 South Franklin Street, a block away. An 1896 map shows it to have been abandoned, but newspaper articles from the first decade of the twentieth century state that it was in full production to accommodate a local building boom, and that local supplies of clay were running short by 1907. The firm of Hoffman and Baldwin acquired the property for a lumber yard by 1930, and the successor firm, the Hoffman Lumber Company, still operates there today, although they lost most of their buildings in a disastrous fire in the fall of 1992.
- **Pennsylvania Railroad freight station** : The Pennsylvania Railroad built a freight station in the 300-block of East Union Street between 1900 and 1902, in the open area located just west of the National Foam Company. During the heyday of West Chester railroading just after World War I, it was constantly congested. However, evidence of the decline of West Chester railroading comes from newspaper accounts of two fires at the station. A 1944 fire caused about \$40,000 in damage to the building and railcars on the site, but the 1967 fire that finally destroyed the freight station caused just \$14,000 dollars worth of damage (roughly \$5,965 in 1944 dollars, adjusted for inflation).
- **Houses at 304-310 East Union** : The four houses in 300-block of East Union Street were built prior to 1902 and have been owned by as wide assortment of people and firms including the First National Bank, The Fruit Growers of Chester County and many private landlords. One unusual feature is that they are coupled together on two deeds (304-306 and 308-310) instead of four separate properties.
- **Barn at 300 East Union** : Until the spring of 1999, there was what appeared to be an old barn at 300 East Union Street. In 1902, this was the site of the I. N. Haines coal shed, but for most of the 20th century, this property belonged to J. Leon Hagerty Jr., a coal and wood dealer. In 1981, it was purchased by M. S. Yearsley & Sons, owners of the hardware store in the 100-block of East Market Street.
- **Union Street grade crossing** : This grade crossing was probably the most dangerous in West Chester, because it was too low to replace with



a bridge. Instead, street traffic had to climb over a hill to cross the tracks, and horse-drawn wagons--especially those from the freight station a half block away on East Union Street--had trouble to cross the tracks quickly. In addition, its location on a curve made it difficult for drivers to see a train before it reached the crossing. As a result, it was the scene of many accidents and near misses, and frequently the source of contention between the Borough of West Chester and the owner of the railroad.

- **Reneuxit Incorporated** : This industrial building is located on the northwest corner of East Union and South Franklin Streets (250 South Franklin). In 1857, it was the site of Jonathan W. Speakman's West Chester Agricultural Works and shops used by men like machinist Thomas G. Kelley, moulder John Martin, machinist George S. Tapley and engineer Thomas Mearmar. By the turn of the century, the entire structure was occupied by the West Chester Cold Storage & Ice Company Ltd., but by 1933, the ice company had moved into the portion nearest the railroad tracks and leased the remainder to the Chester County Fruit Growers Association and the McCormick & Cotter Coal Company.

**Instruction:** Proceed to the corner of East Barnard Street and South Franklin Street.

- **Hoopes Brothers & Darlington Wheel Works** : The buildings that stretch along the west side of South Franklin Street from East Market Street to the middle of the 200-block are all located on the former site of one of West Chester's largest industrial enterprises. The "Wheel Works," which manufactured wooden wheels for farm wagons and carriages, opened in 1868. It became one of the borough's largest employers and continued to produce wheels until it closed in 1973. The plant's equipment and remaining stock were sold to Vern Barnett of Jonesboro, Arkansas, and the site was redeveloped by Ray Carr and David Knauer of the Pickering Creek Industrial Park.

After World War II, the wooden wheel market declined, so the owners leased space in their building to other firms. One of them, the Nachman Spring Company, became the object of a strenuous attempt to organize labor in the late 1950s. On the second try in 1958, Nachman employees voted to join the United Steel Workers. However, four years later they voted to leave the union and the company quickly fired eleven local officers. The fired employees sued and won "what has been termed the

largest settlement made under the National Labor Relations Board order," according to the *Daily Local News*.

- **Barnard Street bridge** : This was one of the first railroad bridges constructed in West Chester to eliminate a dangerous grade crossing. It was raised in 1906 and widened in 1917 to add an additional track that reduced congestion at the Market Street station.

**Instruction:** Proceed north on South Franklin Street to Market Street.

- **St. Luke UAME Church** : This building at 117 South Franklin Street was constructed in 1882 to house the St. Luke UAME Church, founded in Pennsbury Township in 1841.
- **Magnolia House Hotel** : The building on the southeast corner of East Miner Street and South Franklin Street (300-302 East Miner Street) was operated as a restaurant and hotel by Moses Hepburn, one of the most successful African- American citizens of the 19th century in West Chester. Hepburn worked as a barber at 6 East Market Street in 1857, but after he inherited just over \$5,000 upon his father's death in 1861, he began a business career that included the Magnolia House, which opened in 1866, a taxi service to convey passengers from the train station to all parts of town in 1873, and investments in real estate in West Chester and the surrounding area. Hepburn eventually became the first African-American member of West Chester's Borough Council in 1882.

**Instruction:** Turn left into the parking lot at Rubinstein's in the 200-block of East Market Street.

- **Rubinstein's Office Plus** : The large yellow building that houses the Salvation Army store and Rubinstein's office supply store. Rubinstein's moved here in 1990 from their store at the southwest corner of East Market and Walnut Street, which was founded in 1914 by Isidore Rubinstein, a Polish immigrant. The third generation of Rubinsteins operates the store at present.
- **Ralph Smith** : On the north side of the street at 239 East Market Street, the Ralph Smith moving company has its offices and warehouse. Ralph G. Smith Sr. began a hauling milk and moving household goods in 1916 and branched out into general freight, warehousing and horse transportation. His son Ralph Jr. took over the company in 1942, and two of his four sons are involved in the business today. They also own the military- surplus "Quonset hut" located just south of Green Field (the



tour's starting point), in a three-acre lot that serves as the company's truck maintenance facility.

- **East Market Street Station** : This was the terminus of the second railroad to reach West Chester from Philadelphia. In 1833, the first railroad was constructed from the Pennsylvania Main Line at Malvern to a point near the intersection of East Chestnut and North Matlack Streets. In 1858, the second line (called the West Chester & Philadelphia Railroad) was completed from West Philadelphia to this point via Media. In 1867, the two lines were combined and a new station was built at this location. Despite a major fire in 1885, the station remained in service until it was demolished in June 1968. At its peak in the 1920s, the building handled about 6,000 passengers a day, but by the time it closed in 1965, ridership had declined to a weekly average of 320 people.
- **Gay Street Bridge** : From the West Chester Station looking north, you can see the Gay Street bridge over the original West Chester Railroad right-of-way. Gay Street was the original road from Philadelphia to West Chester, and in 1867, a bridge was built to carry Gay Street over the tracks which connected the original WCRR with the WC&PRR. The first bridge was made of wood, and was set on fire several times by sparks from passing locomotives. The tracks were removed in the early 1960s, and the present bridge was built in 1961.

**Instruction:** Continue west in the 100-block of East Market Street to Matlack Street.

- **200-block East Market Street** : The row of buildings between the railroad tracks and Matlack Street were built following the completion of the West Chester & Philadelphia Railroad in 1858 and the development of adjacent land in the 1880s to 1890s. They have housed a variety of businesses over the years including a florist, a construction company and a warehouse.
- **West Chester Locker Company** : This concrete block structure at 216 East Market Street was built between 1944 and 1946 by Harry A. Spriggs on part of the lot formerly owned by the P. J. McCormick Construction Company. In April 1946, Spriggs sold it to Joseph M. Fox, who founded a cold storage company with his partner Charles O'Neill later that year. Their manager was John Aquilante, who eventually bought the business about 1964. His son Jim runs it today.
- **Star Social Club** : The Star Social Club, located at 212 East Market Street, was founded in 1896 in a house on Hannum Avenue by James

Edwards, John T. Melton, Willis Lampkin, George Whipper and Harry Berry. Over the years, it moved from Hannum Avenue to a room over Speare's Clothing Store at Church and Gay Streets, a building in the 50-block of North Walnut Street, 208 East Market Street in 1919, and finally to 212 East Market Street in 1946.

- **Police Athletic League** : The Police Athletic League is located at 208 East Market Street in the building formerly occupied by the Star Social Club.
- **Elks Club (Captain Levi Hood Lodge #159 the Pride of West Chester Temple #487)** : The Captain Levi Hood Lodge of the B.P. Order of Elks was founded in West Chester in 1908 and named after a prominent local African-American citizen of the nineteenth century. The Order purchased the building for \$6,000 in 1939 (following a complicated set of deed transfers) from the estate of Frank Worrall. Worrall owned the property since 1912, when he acquired it from T. C. Eldridge (see below, 100-block South Matlack Street). Based on deed research, it appears that the building was constructed after 1891.

**Instruction:** Turn left into the 000-block of South Matlack Street.

- **000-block South Matlack Street** : There were houses in this block as early as 1857, but the houses currently standing on the right side (#12-14-18-20) were built shortly before the turn of the last century. The large open lots on the left side of the street were the site of the West Chester Gas Works, The Gas Works opened in 1852 to manufacture illuminating gas, and later, it passed through several sets of owners until it became part of the Philadelphia Electric Company. The plant closed in the 1960s, and the storage tanks and buildings were removed and the site was decontaminated in 1996. Next fall (1999), this area will open as Horace Pippin Park (named after the renowned African American painter). Facilities will include a picnic pavilion and playground equipment divided into two theme areas--wilderness and castle.
- **100-block South Matlack Street** : The houses on the east side of the 100-block of South Matlack Street date back to before 1857, when the Borough Directory lists a number of laborers who lived there--people like Abram Berry, D. Brister, Thomas Carsal, J. Farley, and James Finnegan, a "wheeler." In other words, this was a working class neighborhood.

Most of the land adjacent to the railroad tracks in the 100 & 200-blocks of South Matlack Street were coal and lumber yards for much of the past century. For instance, the site presently occupied by Brandywine

Auto Parts at 213 East Barnard Street was owned by a succession of coal and lumber companies including Darlington & Williams in 1873, T. C. Eldridge by 1902, Chalkley C. Hipple for many years, and finally J. Leon Hagerty, who bought it in 1956.

- **Care Center for Christ** : The Care Center for Christ was founded in 1982 and moved to this location in 1987. The building formerly housed a tavern.
- **Apartments for Modern Living** : In 1858, John S. Robinson and a partner named Shoemaker opened a lumber and coal yard at this location, and the business went through many hands over the next century. Mssrs. Mendinhall, Way & Phillips had it in the early 1870s, Ralston R. Hoopes bought them out in 1874, C. C. Hipple took over in 1914, and J. Leon Hagerty followed in 1956. The present owner acquired the property in 1983.

At the turn of the century, Ralston R. Hoopes leased a number of buildings along the south side of the 200-block of East Barnard Street to the Keystone Tag Company. Hoopes had his own office, scale and lumber shed along the east side of the 200- block of South Matlack Street.

- **National Crayon Company** : On the right side of the block about halfway between East Barnard and East Union Street, there is an alley that leads up to Mechanics Alley. The building on the left at the far end of the alley has housed several interesting businesses. The National Crayon Company was there in 1902 but gone by 1909. In 1914, Charles Lucas Sr. (father of the burgess/mayor from 1958 to 1966), opened the Lucas Machine Works to repair automobiles and sell products like "Frictionless Babbitt" metal, VISCO oil and grease, "Bull Dog" engines and pumps, and "Michener automobile gasoline saver." Currently, there is a hand-lettered sign that says "Exton Machine Company" in the window, but no sign of activity.

The 1857 Borough Directory lists a house on the northeast corner of East Union and South Matlack Streets that was occupied by a widow named Ellen Henry. The large house on the southwest corner (142 East Union) may have been a boarding house at one time.

**Instruction:** Turn left onto East Union Street and walk towards the railroad tracks. Turn right into the alley just before the entrance to Schriver/Houck Inc.

- All of the land on the south side of the 200 & 300- blocks of East Union Street was used by Sharpless & Hall to make bricks in 1857. After the Civil War, George Fassnacht, a soap and candle maker, bought everything bounded by Union, Magnolia, Matlack and the railroad, and gradually subdivided the property over the next two decades.
- **Fassnacht Alley** was originally a lane that ran behind the houses in the 300-block of South Matlack Street, the first ten of which were built between 1873 and 1883. Goose Creek crosses under the railroad tracks at this point, and the land between the alley and the creek was used by Ralston R. Hoopes as part of his coal yard in 1883.
- **Bituminous Service Company** : The enclosed area at the corner of East Union Street and Fassnacht Alley is the present location of Schriver/Houck Inc., West Chester Foreign Car, and several other industrial enterprises. Between 1931 and 1986, this was a storage yard for the Bituminous Service Company, which paved roads throughout much of Chester County. (See 1931 Goose Creek Fire, below).

**Instruction:** Continue walking south along Fassnacht Alley. At the end of the alley, turn left onto Magnolia Street for a few yards and then right into Maple Alley.

- **House and warehouses** : The 1873 map shows this area to be part of a parcel owned by Augustus Duer, a Civil War veteran and engineer who helped build the West Chester & Philadelphia Railroad. According to Futhey & Cope, Duer left the area in 1865 to work in a Colorado mine, but returned to the area a few years later to take up residence in Atglen.

By 1883, the Duer property had been subdivided but was still largely unimproved. The 1933 map shows a foot bridge across Goose Creek at the foot of Magnolia Street, a house on the southeast corner of Magnolia and Maple, and lists Harry F. Taylor, a local realtor, as the owner of all the flood plain between the tracks and the alley.

The flood plain was used for fruit orchards until the 1960s by Morris Holman, a local entrepreneur who lived on Price Street. The house on the corner of Magnolia and Maple Alley was built after World War I and occupied by a succession of Jewish families until the National Bank of Chester County foreclosed on Morris & Jennie Siegel in 1934. The house sold for \$2,000 in 1967 to the Miller family whose descendants still live in it today.

- **Warehouses** : The four warehouses have belonged to a succession of businesses including the Bituminous Service Company, the Taggart Printing Company (printers of the Bicentennial Souvenir Book), Thomas Boyle's photo service, and Collins automotive service. At present, the two warehouses at the south end of the row are owned by the Borough of West Chester.
- **Public Works** : At the south end of the alley on the right (west) side is the Borough Public Works Building. In 1883, this site was vacant, but by 1909, it served as the Borough Stables and housed a stone crusher used to produce paving materials for the Borough's streets.
- **220-222 Lacey Street** : The three-story duplex with the mansard roof was built in the 1890s as a home for the family of Patrick Barry, one of the builders of Riggstown. It was owned by Joe and Rose Stancato from 1926 to 1941, after which time the properties were separated by brothers Frank and George Snyder. Following the war, the right half (220) was bought by members of the Guinta family and the left half (222) was purchased by members of the Davis family from Riggstown.
- **Maple Alley south of Lacey Street** : Local residents tell how, in the era before World War II, many people kept horses in their backyards. One such family was that of Daniel C. Leary who lived at 523 South Matlack Street. They kept a race horse named Joe-Boy in a stable on the alley behind 503 South Matlack (second house south of Lacey Street, on the west side of Maple Alley) that entertained the local children by stamping his hoof to say how old he was.

**Instruction:** Turn left into the 200-block of Lacey Street and then right into the 500-block of South Franklin Street. As you cross over Goose Creek, notice the bridge, which had to be replaced after the 1931 Goose Creek fire (see below).

- **Factory at 501 South Franklin Street** : The two-story brick building located on the northeast corner of Lacey and South Franklin was built in 1901 to house the Sun Electrical Manufacturing Company, manufacturer of telephone switchboards. The company quickly went out of business, but the building remained in use, first as a knitting factory and newspaper print shop in 1906, then as the home of the ESCO Cabinet Company from 1928 to 1933. In 1933 it was acquired by the United Dairy Equipment Company, successor company to the Sharpless Separator Works, and was used for the manufacture of milk storage coolers, and during World War II, it was used by two entrepreneurs, Joseph Stephens and Gene Gray, to produce aircraft

parts. In the 1990s, it became part of the complex of brick buildings on South Franklin Street owned by Integra Medicus, manufacturer of pharmaceutical products including artificial skin, but after the FDA declined to approve their product, they sold it to a developer.

- **500-block South Franklin Street** : The houses on the west (right) side of the street were built by Patrick Barry, one of the two contractors who built Riggstown. He began with number 500 in 1891 and completed two or four each year over the next three years.

The buildings on the east (left) side of the street all became part of the Atlantic Refining Company by 1912, and included an enormous oil storage tank that was constructed in 1912. The buildings are all currently owned by Integra Medicus, manufacturer of pharmaceutical products including artificial skin. However, their product failed to win FDA approval, so the plant has been closed since 1997, and they will most likely put it up for sale.

- **Nields Street Bridge** : In 1931, a leak in a storage tank at Bituminous Service spread oil across much of Goose Creek. Several young teenage boys from Riggstown were smoking cigarettes at the Nields Street bridge over Goose Creek, and when they noticed the slick, one dropped a match into the creek. The oil slick ignited and the resulting fire destroyed the backyard sheds and fences along the 500-block of South Franklin Street, damaged the Lacey Street Bridge over Goose Creek, and spread upstream to the rest of the Bituminous Service Company's storage tanks. It took several hours for emergency crews from as far as Philadelphia and Longwood to extinguish the flames.

The resulting fire shut down service on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and drew "hundreds of men, women, boys and girls, and even little children, [who] packed the sidewalks and a solid portion of Union Street from the intersection with Matlack almost to the railroad tracks, within thirty yards of the fire. Suddenly there was a deep-toned, reverberating 'boom' from the oil tanks. A pillar of livid flame leaped several hundred feet into the air, rolled over in a billow of dripping oil sparks, and swept in a towering wave of heat towards the crowd. A gasp went up from the watchers. For one split second they were motionless. In that interval, someone screamed, and with one accord the mob turned and fled. In the tremendous rush, several people were knocked down, and at least one, Mr. Ashton B. T. Smith of 619 West Miner Street, was hurt."



As a footnote to the fire, the following year the Pennsylvania State Association of Fire Chiefs passed a resolution calling for the construction of retaining walls around all storage tanks containing flammable liquids to contain them in the event of a leak.

**Instruction:** Return to parking lot at Green Field.