

# BELLEFONTE INDUSTRIES

## Atlantic Refining Company

*Published by Bellefonte Borough  
236 W. Lamb St., Bellefonte, PA 16823  
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### What is the Historical Resources Series?

Under a local history grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bellefonte conducted research and documentation of the industrial heritage of the Spring Creek waterfront. As part of this project, Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey forms were completed to document each surviving industrial resource and evaluate its significance. The Eagle Silk Mill was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register as a contributing element of the Bellefonte Historic District.

--by Erin Hammerstedt

OVERVIEW (ABOVE) OF THE ATLANTIC REFINING COMPANY PROPERTY, ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORIC BRICK OFFICE BUILDING AND MODERN ADDITIONS THAT HAVE OCCURRED TO ACCOMMODATE SUBSEQUENT USES. ALTHOUGH THE FEATURES SUCH AS OIL TANKS AND SIGNAGE IDENTIFYING THE ATLANTIC REFINING COMPANY HAVE BEEN REMOVED, THIS PROPERTY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE REDEVELOPED TO CONTRIBUTE TO BELLEFONTE'S WATERFRONT DISTRICT.

The Atlantic Refining Company developed this property beginning in 1898. From 1898 to 1956, the property served the oil company. From 1962 to 1988, the property (plus two additional tracts of land) served as a building supply store, and from 1988 to 2002 it housed a screen-printing business.

The Atlantic Refining Company was incorporated in 1870 as a subsidiary of the Atlantic Petroleum Storage Company, which

had been established four years earlier. In 1874, John D. Rockefeller purchased the company, making it part of the Standard Oil Trust. When the Sherman Antitrust Act dissolved Standard Oil in 1911, the Atlantic Refining Company was spun off as an independent company. The Atlantic Refining Company operated independently until 1963, when it purchased the Hondo Oil and Gas Company. In 1966 Atlantic Refining Company merged with the Richfield Oil Corporation, which had been established in 1905, creating the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO).

By 1894, the Atlantic Refining Company was one of the largest and most progressive oil refiners and dealers in the country. The company produced illuminating, lubricating, and fuel oils in a wide variety of types and grades, employing expert chemists to find a way to refine oil more rapidly and less expensively, making it purer and better, while still affordable to customers. They also developed several valuable products from byproducts, increasing the value of petroleum. The Atlantic Refining Company was very large, with many employees who they reportedly paid and treated very well.

Prior to the establishment of the Atlantic Oil Refining Company in Bellefonte, the Bellefonte Fuel and Supply Company was a local wholesale agent for the Atlantic Refining Company. The Atlantic Refining Company established a presence of its own in Bellefonte when it purchased a 39-perch property from the William A. Thomas estate in 1898. The property was located west of Saint Paul Alley on the north side of the railroad right of way, crossing over South Potter Street. The company built a brick office building and installed storage tanks on the site.

In 1919, the Atlantic Refining Company enlarged their Bellefonte facility, purchasing a tract of land adjacent to their other property on the west side. The 10,829 square foot property on the north side of South Potter Street was purchased from Albert C. and Jane W. Brand of Philadelphia. It is not known what, if any, improvements were made to this parcel during the Atlantic Refining Company's ownership of the property.

After working for the Atlantic Refining Company in Penns Valley for approximately two years, Harry B. Ulrich moved to Bellefonte



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**THE ATLANTIC REFINING COMPANY**

*Advertisement for the Atlantic Refining Company*

in 1920 to run the company's Bellefonte and State College distribution centers, leaving the Penns Valley facility in the hands of his brother. Ulrich managed the facility for approximately 18 years, until about 1938.

Fuel was brought to Bellefonte via the railroad. Trains stopped on the opposite side of South Potter Street, near Spring Creek. The fuel was then pumped from the railroad cars through underground pipes and into various storage tanks that once existed on the property. Fuel was also delivered to State College and Penns Valley via the Pennsylvania Railroad's Lewisburg and Bellefonte Line, which traveled down Logan Branch after passing through Bellefonte.

Approximately half of the Atlantic Refining Company's business involved the distribution of kerosene (coal oil) to grocery stores. The local stores then sold it directly to consumers who brought in one and two-gallon cans to be filled at the stores. This gas was used to power heating stoves. The other half of the Atlantic Refining Company's business was producing gasoline for cars. This was distributed to local filling stations, where consumers would pump gas into a glass bulb at the top of the pump, where it was measured and the quantity paid for before being gravity fed down into the vehicle. They also produced a very specialized aviation gas, which was delivered by tank truck and poured from 5-gallon cans through a funnel into planes at the Bellefonte airfield.

The Atlantic Refining Company sold both tracts of land to Russell R. and Helen C. Jodon for \$3,000 in 1956, and in 1962, the Jodons sold the same property to John L. and Joyce Willar, who operated a hardware store on the property and constructed the buildings along South Potter Street south of the brick building to accommodate their business. William and Mildred Mattern, together with Martin and Dorothy London, purchased the property from the Willars in 1972. The property they acquired included the two tracts of land formerly owned by the Atlantic Refining

Company, as well as a tract to the west of those lots, and a narrow lot between South Potter Street and the railroad right of way that contained a warehouse.

On this property, Martin London and Bill Mattern started Triangle Building Supplies and Services. After relocating their business to East Bishop Street, they sold the South Potter Street facility to the Potter Street Associates for \$76,500 in 1988. Potter Street Associates then leased the building to Printing and More Printing (P.A.M.P.), a screen-printing company that occupied the building until approximately 2002, at which time Potter Street Associates sold the building to Patrick and Patricia McCool, the property's current owners.