My Dear Father,

(Saturday, April 12th, 1845)

I received your box of birds that you sent me and thank you very much for sending them. We have not yet moved out to the country. Uncle Sterling and Uncle Black’s family are all well, Uncle Alexander and I are very well. Alexander and Joseph when I heard from them were very well. A dreadful calamity has befallen the city. Twenty squares of the city have been entirely destroyed by fire & from 1000 to 1200 houses destroyed. The fire originated in a frame building over an ice house belonging to William Diehl near the corner of Second & ferry. It seized the third Presbyterian Church near the corner of third street which was with difficulty saved. It got into third street burning a good piece of it, from that into water street burning towards Pipetown and every ware and dwelling house from Market street until there was not a house along Water street nor in Pipetown except the gas works and the foundry beside it. That large and beautiful building called the Monongahela house was entirely destroyed with all its furniture. The Monongahela Bridge caught fire and in seven minutes it was all in flames. It is supposed that several people lost their lives upon it; The farther end was cut down and in a short time it all fell into the river.

Second, Third & Fourth streets were almost entirely consumed, Market Smithfield & Wood, were a good deal burnt. The fire was stopped at Diamond Alley in Wood street. Had it gone half a square farther it would have burned Uncle Alex’s three ware houses. The flames spread so rapidly that many of the people had just time to escape from the houses
World Industry Looks to Pittsburgh

RECENTLY members of the economic missions of Great Britain, France, Belgium and Italy visited Pittsburgh for the purpose of learning what amount of basic world commodities produced here could be secured for the rehabilitation of the devastated areas of Europe and the re-establishment of industrial activities.

The importance of their Pittsburgh conference can be understood only when you fully appreciate how much the industrial and even the commercial activity of the world depends upon the production of the great basic industries of this district.

Pittsburgh manufacturers in every line have a distinct advantage in developing foreign trade for their products because of the paths that have been blazed and the goodwill won throughout the world by the basic products of this district. Our Foreign Trade Department with its world-wide banking facilities can be of inestimable aid to you in merchandising your products abroad.

Mellon National Bank
Smithfield Street
Fifth and Oliver Avenues

(Circa 1919)

We have a history of providing solutions.
without even saving their clothes. The loss is estimated at ten million dollars—At dinner time when I went to the University and I had proposed we should go on top and water the roof, but not another person could be found in the place, but we thought we would go on top where although the fire was half a mile distant the dead cinders were flying thick. We then went down town and when we came back the whole place was on fire, two of my books were burnt, Mr. Stevens carried about one hundred dollars worth of things to the river, where they were burned. He, however, saved some of the laboratory. Uncle Black's three houses in fourth street were burned to the ground, but fortunately he was insured three thousand dollars in Philadelphia. It has broken all the insurance Offices in town but one. But that will never give any Dividend for years. In this office Uncle Alex had a large amount. Grandmother and Uncle Alex together lost twelve hundred dollars in the Monongahela Bridge. Uncle Sterling had just extended his warehouse from one street to another, and it was burned to the ground, Uncle Alex has his face burned by a shingle.

Your affectionate Son,
J. R. Banks.

P.S. The Pittsburgh Bank was also burned. Excuse my bad writing as i am in a hurry. — J. R. B.

Having now obtained an extra paper and am already too late for todays mail, I will give you a more fully account of the fire. The public buildings, offices &ca burned were as follows. The Globe Cotton Factory owned by J. Wood & Co. The Firemans Insurance Office. The Fire and Navigation Insurance Office. The Mayors Office. Tombs. Reading room. Philo hall & Library. The Bank of Pittsburgh. The Chronicle Office. Exchange Offices of Sibbet & Jones, Allen Kramer, West & Hill, The Merchants Hotel Wood Street, The Eagle Hotel, Third street, The Monongahela House, The Glass works of Bakewell & Pears, Anderson & Son Foundries & Scale Factory. The Fuller Iron Works. The Glassworks of Muller & Co. The Associate Presbyterian Church, Fourth street, The Scotch Hill market house, The Western University, The Custom House, The rest are to numerous to mention occupying a column and a half in the newspapers. If you stand on water street and look up towards the city you see nothing but chimneys and walls. Every thing helped the fire, the pipe which takes the water to the basin had been taken up and was not then down & in a short time the water ran out, several of the hose were burned and there had not hardly been a drop of rain for two weels. Your affectionate son John R. Banks.