

**Accident at the Lance Colliery** of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company

On May 5th at 11.40 A. M. in the Hillman vein seam, 14 tunnel, shaft level, Lance Colliery, an explosion of dynamite occurred by which the following persons were instantly killed:

Edward Gallagher, Irish, miner; John Phillips, Polish, laborer; the following persons fatally injured: Thomas Cummings, American, runner; Edward Thomas, Welsh, driver; Felix Smith, Polish, laborer.

Gallagher and his two laborers were back a considerable distance from the face of the gangway. Gallagher stood at the entrance of the gangway, or at the terminus of the tunnel; Phillips, his laborer, was at the box, where dynamite and caps were stored; Smith was inside, a distance of about 35 feet, when a terrific explosion occurred. Gallagher was killed by shock. Phillips' body was badly mutilated. Smith was burned on the face, arms and body, and received a punctured wound in the pectoral region, and a fracture of thigh and elbow. He died at Mercy Hospital May 7. Cummings died at the Hospital May 6. Edward Thomas died at the City Hospital May 5.

No one who was in the immediate vicinity could give a positive statement how the accident occurred. At the inquest held in the town hall in Plymouth borough, May 9, the following persons testified:

Thomas Davis, being sworn, and examined by Mine Inspector Davis:

Q. Where do you work, Mr. Davis?

A. I work in No. 11.

Q. Company work or miner?

A. Miner.

Q. What part of the Hillman vein do you work in?

A. In the Outlet.

Q. How soon after the explosion did you arrive on the scene?

A. Just as quick as I could run down, three minutes or something like that.

Q. Did you have any conversation with any of those men who were hurt?

A. No.

Q. Did they say anything to you?

A. No; only Cummings asked me for help, to let him know where he was, and I told him he was in the tunnel by the gangway. Told him to be quiet there a little bit, and I went to see what I could do.

Q. Did you get into the gangway at all?

A. No, sir; I did not go any further in.

Q. What do you think the cause of the disaster was?

A. I don't know.

Q. Haven't you any idea?

A. I was working in the face. The laborer said, "Tom, there is something wrong, let us go down to see what is the matter."

Q. How long have you worked in the mines, Mr. Davis?

A. Well; I am working in the mines since I was about eight years old.

Q. How old are you now?

A. Fifty-seven the first of last March.

Q. How many years have you worked in gaseous mines?

A. Eighteen years in the old country, with a safety lamp.

Q. And how many years in gaseous mines in this country?

A. Well I am in Plymouth, and I only worked in Nottingham and No. 11 since '86. I worked six years in Nottingham and the rest in No. 11.

Q. Then you worked 36 years in gaseous mines. Can you tell us in your opinion, whether or not, this was a gas or dynamite explosion?

A. No; I cannot tell you exactly, because I don't know. I have not worked so much with the giant powder, until here lately.

Q. Where you ever in an explosion?

A. I was not in an explosion, but I have seen the effects of explosions.

Q. How did the effects of this disaster compare with the disaster of an explosion of gas?

A. It was nothing to compare.

Q. Well just tell us the difference between an explosion of gas and the explosion that occurred the other day.

A. Well; the real explosion of gas, you can smell the effect of it for some time after, but in this one, there was nothing hardly within an hour after it.

Q. Well, was there any?

A. I could not smell any.

Mr. Joseph Lewis sworn. Examined by Mine Inspector Davis.

Q. Where do you work, Mr. Lewis?

A. In the Outlet.

Q. Where were you on the day of the accident?

A. In the Outlet, sitting down in heading.

Q. Did you feel the shock?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How soon after the shock did you appear at the scene?

A. I was down there in less than five minutes.

Q. Did you hold conversation with any of the men?

A. Well; Mr. McIntyre was holding Tom Cummings, and the head driver boss went to speak to him. I went there in place of Mr. McIntyre, and I asked him if he knew what happened, and he said he didn't know.

Q. How many persons were there to do rescue work at that time? How many beside Mr. McIntyre and yourself?

A. Only my laborer and Mr. Davis' laborer. When we were coming down we were falling over one thing and another. Evan Jenkins hollowed "Have you any lights?" "Yes;" and he said "for God's sake put them out." So I smothered my lamp.

Q. Did you ask Mr. Cummings what was the cause of the accident?

A. I did when I went to change Mr. McIntyre.

Q. What did he say?

A. He didn't know. Asked him if he saw any fire. He said no.

Q. How long have you worked in gaseous mines, Mr. Lewis?

A. Nine years in No. 11.

Q. Do you know the after-effects of an explosion?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How did this compare with the after effects, which you have already experienced.

A. It was different altogether.

Q. What in your opinion was the cause of this accident?

A. From the time it first went off it puzzled me. It didn't go off like an explosion of gas.

Q. Do you think the dynamite exploded?

A. Yes; I do think the dynamite exploded.

Q. Mr. Lewis, you stated you have a knowledge of gas. If there was 130 feet or 50 feet, as Mr. Gallagher said, of gas in the place that he was working, what would be the effect of it in the Outlet where you were working?

A. I don't think it would go down that far. I am sure the boys out there would have been roasted.

Q. Suppose there was an accumulation of gas in that section, where would the gas have been in all probability?

A. In the face I should think.

By Juror Gallagher:

Q. Do you think it would make two reports?

A. I think the way the thing went off, that if gas exploded it would surely make another explosion.

Q. You know if the gas exploded there would be a concussion.

A. It would not go so quick.

Mr. Samuel McIntyre sworn. Examined by Mr. Berge:

Q. Do you work in the Lance Colliery, Mr. McIntyre?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What position do you fill?

A. Bratticeman.

Q. Were you working the day these men were killed?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Where you into the place?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Were you there the day before the accident?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How long previous to the accident?

A. I was just coming out when the boys were eating their dinner.

Q. How long before it occurred?

A. The boys were eating their dinner when I came down, and they wanted me to eat dinner with them.

Q. Then you were in there the day before the accident occurred?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You think about five minutes before?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You were in this particular place where these men were working?

A. No, sir; I just passed the place.

Q. Did you see these men?

A. I saw three of them. I think that Gallagher was down with us in the morning.

Examined by Mine Inspector Davis:

Q. Did you appear on the scene immediately after explosion?

A. Yes, sir; I was the first from the outside.

Q. Did you have any conversation with any of the men that were injured?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you ask them how it occurred?

A. I did a dozen times. I asked Thomas Cummings. I laid under that boy all the time and held him up.

Q. And what was his reply?

A. He told me when the cars came down they struck right in the door. He said that when the driver went to pull the sprags out, that was all he knew. I asked him if he saw any fire. He knew nothing.

Q. Did he complain about being burned?

A. No, sir.

Q. Was he burned according to your idea?

A. No, sir; not that I could see; there was not a hair on him singed.

Q. Have you ever felt the after-effects of an explosion in any colliery in your experience?

A. Yes, sir; I have been there 32 years. I sent my buttys to get safety lamps to the shanty for fear. A great many that understand gas do not understand damp.

Q. Mr. McIntyre, according to your idea, what do you suppose the cause of the explosion was?

A. I believe it was powder, because from the time I went down there I could feel no effects of after-damp at all. I was satisfied when I got down there that there was no after-damp, and I stuck to the boy. I never went further; never passed where the boy was.

Other witnesses testified that the box where the dynamite was stored was smashed to kindling wood, and the manure heap in close proximity, which contained dynamite to be thawed out, was scattered in every direction. Sticks of dynamite that did not explode were lying promiscuously about the gangway. Upon an investigation of the accident and in the examination of the witnesses, who worked close to the scene of the disaster, and others who arrived at the scene of the disaster immediately after its occurrence, I came to the conclusion that the accident was caused by an explosion of dynamite, but by whom and in what manner, could not be ascertained.

The verdict of the jury after meeting in the town hall on the 9th and 23d days of May, A. D. 1904: "Upon view of the body of Edward Gallagher then and there lying dead, and upon the oaths of C. D. Gallagher, Michael Finn, James McFadden, John Dougherty, James O'Donnell, David T. Griffiths, good and lawful men of the county of Luzerne, who being sworn on the part of the Commonwealth, how, when and after what manner the said Edward Gallagher came to his death, do say that the said Edward Gallagher, came to his death and we the jury do further say that from the circumstances connected with the case and the evidence that the aforesaid Edward Gallagher came to his death from shock and burns, from an explosion of gas, in the Hillman vein, Lance No. 11 mine, of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre

Coal Co., at Plymouth, Pa., May 5th, 1904, and we the jury do further say that the death of the aforesaid Edward Gallagher would not have occurred in such manner if the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Co. had complied with Section 15, Article 10 of the Anthracite Mine Laws, June 2nd, 1891, and amendment to Section 10, Article 10, of the 20th of April, 1899.

Coroner, W. H. BERGE.

Jurors:

James O'Donnell,  
James F. McFadden,  
Michael Finn,  
C. D. Gallagher,  
John Dougherty,  
D. T. Griffiths."

## CONDITION OF COLLIERIES

### LEHIGH AND WILKES-BARRE COAL COMPANY

Nottingham colliery, Lance colliery, Reynolds colliery, Waninnie No. 18 and Wanannie No. 19, condition good as to safety, drainage and ventilation.

### DELAWARE AND HUDSON COMPANY

Plymouth No. 2, Plymouth No. 3, Plymouth No. 4, Plymouth No. 5 and Boston, condition good as to safety, drainage and ventilation.

### WEST END COAL COMPANY

West End, in safe condition, drainage good, ventilation fair.

### PLYMOUTH COAL COMPANY

Dodson, condition good as to safety, drainage and ventilation.

### DELAWARE, LACKAWANNA AND WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

Woodward and Avondale, condition good as to safety, drainage and ventilation.

### PARRISH COAL COMPANY

Parrish and Buffonwood, condition good as to safety, drainage and ventilation.

### KINGSTON COAL COMPANY

Kingston No. 2 and Kingston No. 3, in safe condition, drainage good, ventilation fair.

Gaylord, in safe condition, drainage and ventilation fair.