

**Bureau of Mines Bulletin 586:
Historical Summary of Mine Disasters in the United States
Volume - 1 - Coal Mines
1810-1958**

**October 27, 1884;
Youngstown Mine, Uniontown, Pa.
14 Killed**

(From Adventures in the Mines, by T. T. O'Malley, 1891, p. 181)

In one of the rooms * * * it was known that there was gas * * * examined about half past two in the morning * * * the explosion took place in the afternoon just as the day turn were about to quit * * *

The mine inspector * * * hurried to the mine * * and got 5 or 6 men to follow him * * * they found men still living but overcome with the afterdamp; these were assisted to the outside * * * and re-covered. * * * The door * * * was left open all day for the convenience of the driver. On the trip before the explosion * * * he had shut it, and * * * air * * * drove the (accumulated) gas into number seven, where the driver * * * with his naked light, exploded it. * * *

The Review
October 31, 1884

Burying the Fourteen Victims

UNIONTOWN, Pa., Oct. 30 - The funerals of the victims of the Youngstown mine disaster took place yesterday. There was a large attendance and the services were very impressive. The company defrayed the expenses and is doing everything possible to relieve the temporary wants of the bereaved families. There is yet no well defined and accepted theory of the explosion. Coroner Battin's investigation begins tomorrow and it is hoped some facts will be brought out which will throw light on the mystery.

Dunkirk Evening Observer
October 28, 1884

FATAL FIRE DAMP.

**Two Terrific Explosions in the Mines of
a Coal and Coke Company Near
Uniontown, Pa.**

**Of the Twenty Men in the Mines at the
Time, Sixteen are Supposed to Have
Been Either Killed or
Suffocated.**

THE MINE ON FIRE.

UNIONTOWN, Pa., October 28.—About four o'clock yesterday afternoon a terrific explosion of fire damp occurred in the mines of the Youngstown Coke Company, whose works are situated four miles north of here. One loud report startled the employes, followed shortly afterwards by another. The mine is entered by a slope instead of a shaft, and the explosion was followed by sweeping flames which completely shut off all passage to or from the mine.

In the course of an hour Superintendent Reise and others descended the air shaft and took out the following: Joseph Zeibly, aged eighteen, found dead, body burned and crushed; Jackson Lape, aged thirty, suffocated by fire damp; Jacob Colo, aged fifty-three, pit boss, badly burned; his son David, also badly burned; a boy named Chauncey, burned and arm broken. Washington Keifer saved himself by lying down in a pool of water. The flames were too fierce to allow search to be prosecuted further, and it was abandoned until preparations can be completed for shutting off the air and thus extinguishing the fire.

There were over twenty men in the mine at the time of the explosion, and it is thought the fifteen or sixteen yet in will never be taken out alive. The mine was inspected yesterday morning as usual, and it was thought to be free from explosives.

Atchison Daily Globe
Atchison, Kansas
October 28, 1884

AN AWFUL EXPLOSION.

**Still Another Great Loss of Life
by a Mine Ex-
plosion.**

**By an Accumulation of Deadly Fire
Damp—Many Lives are
Lost.**

**An Imprisoned Miner's Presence of Mind--
Women and Children on the Scene
--Full Particulars.**

UNIONTOWN, Pa., October 28.—An explosion of fire damp with results probably as fatal as attended the terrible disaster at West Leisnering last January when nineteen lives were lost, occurred at the mines of the Youngstown Coke Company four miles from here between four and five o'clock last evening. The explosion took place in the sixth right hand flat, where about twenty-five men were at work. The fire boss made his rounds as usual in the morning and discovered no signs of gas. The day force went to work and at four o'clock in the afternoon were relieved by the night turn. Twenty minutes later and just after the pit boss James Cole and Superintendent Reis had come up from the mine and gone to the office, an explosion occurred, which shattered windows for a mile around. Five minutes later there was a second report, and immediately after flames burst forth from the openings, blocking up the avenues of entrance. News of the disaster spread quickly, and friends and relatives of the doomed miners soon gathered around the mouth of the mine, but the fierce flames prevented any attempt at rescue. After an hour's work, however, the flames were subdued sufficiently to allow of descent by way of the air shaft. At this writing the volunteers had only been able to reach part of the mine, owing to the after damp, and it is feared the entire roof of the sixth flat has fallen in. If this is the case none of the miners at work there can be saved. The men in other parts of the mine who escaped after the explosion occurred made an attempt to rescue their companions, but were

unable to reach them. The killed and injured thus far discovered are: Joseph Zebbley, night pumper, single, killed. Jack Lapes, aged thirty, single, killed. Jack Cole and his son seriously, and it is thought fatally, injured. Chauncey Wilson, slightly injured. Washington Kober has just been rescued. He is not much hurt, as he had the presence of mind to lie down in a pool of water and avoid inhaling the gas. This makes six that have been taken out—two dead and four injured. Jacob Cole and son were probably fatally hurt. Every effort is being made to rescue the others, but up to a late hour all in vain. There is scarcely a chance for any of them to be taken out alive, as it is thought all have perished from the deadly after damp before this. The air in the vicinity of the mine is filled with the cries of the wives and children of the imprisoned men. There are plenty of willing hands and hearts who are ready to risk their lives in trying to rescue them, but it is impossible to get at them now, and not before morning will the terrible tale be known. It is not known how the explosion occurred. It was just such a day as that after the West Leisnering disaster. The atmosphere was heavy and murky, which is regarded as favorable for the accumulation of fire damp in the mines, nevertheless no gas had been discovered in the mine for more than a month.

Fatal Effects of Firedamp.

Uniontown, Pa., Oct. 28.—At about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon an explosion of firedamp occurred in the mines of the Youngstown Coke company, whose works are situated four miles north of Uniontown. One loud report startled the employes, followed shortly afterwards by another. The mine is entered by a slope instead of a shaft, and the explosion was followed by sweeping flames, which completely shut off all passage to or from the mine. In the course of an hour Superintendent Reis and others descended the air shaft and took out the following: Joseph Zeebley, aged 18, found dead, body burned and crushed; Jackson Lape, aged 30, suffocated by afterdamp; Jacob Cole, aged 53, pit boss, badly burned; his son David also badly burned; a boy named Chauncey, burned and arm broken. Wash Keifer saved himself by lying down in a pool of water. The flames were too fierce to allow search to be prosecuted further, and it was abandoned until preparations can be completed for shutting off the air and thus extinguishing the fire. There were over twenty men in the mine at the time of the explosion, and it is thought the fifteen or sixteen yet in will never be taken out alive. The mine was inspected in the morning as usual, and it was thought to be free from explosives.

The Daily Republican
Wednesday evening, October 29,

Keystone Courier
December 12, 1884

The Youngstown Coal Mine Disaster.

UNIONTOWN, PA., October 29.—Mine Inspector Steiner and his assistants worked all of Monday night and until late yesterday morning removing the bodies of the dead and injured from the scene of the terrible explosion at the Youngstown mine Monday evening. The dead were fully identified by friends, and are as follows.

Joseph Zebley, pump-tender, married.

Solomon Van Sicale, miner, married.

William Minor, miner, married.

James Price, the father, and James Price, his son, miners.

Thomas Cole, miner, married.

Jesse Miller, the father, and Jesse, his son, miners.

H. J. Sape, rope-rider, married.

Albert Taylor, miner.

Abe Wilson, miner, married.

Frank Niclow and Willie, his son, married.

George Cunningham.

Fourteen in all.

The dead were found in every conceivable shape. Some were burned to a crisp. The greater number, however, were suffocated by afterdamp.

The following were saved alive, but more or less burned and bruised:

Welsh Keffer.

Frank Miller.

Jacob Cole.

David Cole.

James Darby.

Jerry Ringer.

Chauncey Wilson.

The two latter may yet die. The funerals will take place to-day. The Coroner's inquest will be held to-morrow.

A Correction

ED COURIER—Judging from your remarks in your last issue, you are misinformed as to the verdict of the coroner's jury in the matter of the explosion at the Youngstown mines recently. Following is the verdict as given by the jury: "We find that the said Joseph Zebley, Solomon Vansickle and others, came to their deaths on Monday the 27th of October A. D., 1884, in the mines of the Youngstown Coke Company situated in North Union township, Fayette county, Pennsylvania, from the explosion of fire damp from a lamp in the hands of one of the miners and from the effects of afterdamp in said mines. We further find that the said company was remiss in not providing a trapper or trappers to properly direct the air current, and also in not having a competent person to examine the mines previous to the explosion."

ONE OF THE JURORS

Bismarck Tribune
Bismarck, Dakota
Friday, October 31, 1884

A Mine Horror.

UNIONTOWN, Pa., Oct. 28—The worst fears touching the fate of the men who were imprisoned in the mine at Youngstown by an explosion of fire damp, which took place there at 4 o'clock last evening, have been fully confirmed. Six miners were taken out last evening soon after the disaster, two dead and two of the other four so seriously injured that there is no hopes of recovery. This left from fourteen to eighteen men supposed to be still imprisoned in the mine, the exact number not certainly known. The work of reaching these men was continued industriously throughout the whole night, and by this morning the dead bodies of twelve of them had been brought out and delivered to their friends and relatives at the mouth of the pit. This makes fourteen dead in all and with the four injured accounts for eighteen of the whole number supposed to be in the mine. Whether there are more remains to be discovered. The scenes at the mouth of the pit as the disfigured bodies of the dead were brought to the surface and given into the hands of wives and relatives was distressing in the extreme and vividly recalled to mind

THE PIT-IOUS WALLS

of the bereaved families who waited at the opening of the mine last February. It was a sad spectacle indeed, and moved to tears many of the hundreds who had been drawn to the place by the news of the disaster. It cannot be stated whether the explosion is due to the carelessness of the company or not. Miners allege that it was, but on the heels of a fatal calamity the usual impulse is to so attribute it. The mine was inspected every morning and whenever the presence of fire damp was detected it was an invariable order to deny the men admission until the gas had been expelled. This was the rule and the officers said it was rigidly enforced; but it is claimed by the miners that the company discharged a competent fire boss two months ago and since employed in that capacity one not competent to determine whether the mine was safe or not.

Two of the men were found

WITH LOCKED ARMS

their faces buried in water, dead. The men were found in every conceivable position. The greater part of them were suffocated by after damp. Some were burned to a crisp and many were badly bruised by being knocked against the sides of piles. Those who were not killed instantly showed evidence of great endeavors to escape.

The coroner impanelled a jury and on Thursday morning will begin a thorough and searching investigation. Notwithstanding the talk of some of the miners it is the general impression that the explosion was unavoidable and that the company at all times was as careful as it was possible to be. Daniel Romager, the fire boss, has been in the service of the company for several years, but pit boss for only a few months. He is accounted a competent man; indeed any careful and intelligent man with

A SAFETY LAMP

can perform the functions of fire boss, as the lamp itself discloses, by the swelling of its flame, the presence of gas along the roof; if the gas is heavy the lamp will go out. Fourteen bodies have been recovered and seven men injured, making twenty-one in all, which is believed to be all that were in the mine at the time of the explosion. The most of the miners were natives and nearly all those killed were married men and had families. There is great excitement here and a great many people from this place and Connellsville are at the little village which has grown up around the mine, and altogether the scene is one of animation, deeply pervaded by a general feeling of profound sadness. Fourteen coffins arrived from Pittsburg this afternoon, and the dead have been laid out and tomorrow the bodies will be interred.

The Daily Miner.

BUTTE, MONTANA, WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1884.

Coal Mine Disaster.

UNIONTOWN, Pa., Oct. 28.—The worst fears touching the fate of the men imprisoned in the coal mine at Youngstown, four miles from this place, by an explosion of fire damp, which took place at 4 o'clock last evening, have been fully confirmed. Six of the miners were taken out last evening soon after the disaster. Two of them were dead and two of the other four are so seriously injured that there is no hopes of their recovery. This left from fourteen to eighteen men supposed to be still imprisoned in the mine. The exact number is not certainly known. The work of searching for these men continued industriously throughout the whole night, and by this morning the dead bodies of twelve of them had been brought out and delivered to their friends and relatives at the mouth of the pit. This makes fourteen dead in all, and together with the four injured accounts for eighteen of the whole number supposed to be in the mine. Whether there are any more remains yet to be discovered, but it is believed all have been found at this writing. A complete and accurate list of the dead cannot be given. The scenes at the mouth of the pit as the disfigured bodies of the dead were brought to the surface and given into the hands of wives and relatives were distressing in the extreme.