

TEN MEN KILLED AND FORTY OVERCOME BY GAS IN WILLIAMSTOWN MINE TUNNEL

Wild Dash for Pure Air by Engineer in Charge of Train Bearing Miners, Who Fainted and Fell as Train Rushed Along in Darkness

Rescuers Overpowered and Many Tumbled Fainting Into Underground Stream Where They Drowned--Heart-rending Scenes at the Surface--Accident is Mysterious

Special to the Telegraph.

Williamstown, Pa., May 26.—Ten men were killed and forty overcome by sulphurous fumes in a tunnel of the Summit Branch Colliery of the Susquehanna Coal Company mine at this place between three and four o'clock yesterday afternoon in one of the most peculiar accidents which has occurred in the mines of the State. All but one of the men killed and all of the forty overcome were members of a relief party.

The dead are:

M. M. Golden, local superintendent, aged 55, with a wife and several children.

John Kenny, a miner, wife and three children.

Enoch Morgan, miner, aged 38, with five children.

Joseph Punch, laborer, aged 24 years and single.

George Radle, 50 years, chief machinist.

Aaron Koppenhaver, Pine Valley, repairman.

Peter Koppenhaver, repairman, Pine Valley.

Albert Nau, engineer, aged 18 and single.

Bert James, miner, single.

Henry Frederick, miner.

All but the Koppenhavers reside in Williamstown. Enoch Morgan was the first man killed and the rest of the victims were members of the rescuing party, which at one time was made up of more than 100 men.

Gas in the Mine

Intimation of the presence of extraordinary amounts of sulphurous gas in the mine was first gotten by miners who were walking through the tunnel, which extends from the Bear Valley to the Williams Valley side of the mountain, shortly afterwards a coal train came through and picked up some of these men, overcome and hurried them to the Williams Valley side. Enoch Morgan was found dead in the mine and was carried out on this trip. A relief train, loaded with rescuers and members of the night shift, was hurriedly made up and sent into the gas-laden mine.

Before the train had gotten any great distance, the rescuers started to explore the mine and in a short while these men were tottering and fell to the ground either fatally stricken or seriously overcome. The lights which the miners carried were of little good, because of the large amount of gas, and in the death-reckoning atmosphere and with little light, a number of men partly overcome fell into a stream of water which flows along the track, and what the gas left undone drowning completed.

Fought Against Odds

In spite of the immense odds against which the rescuing party worked, the bodies of the forty overcome victims and those of the dead were placed on the relief train and hurried to the mouth of the tunnel. The rescuers, covered with smoke and grime, eyes bloodshot and awaying from the awful effects of partial suffocation, were met by thousands of people to whom the news of the disaster had been communicated and hurried to places of safety. Doctors were summoned from all the nearby towns and by the middle of the evening, the men were so well cared for that further deaths were not expected.

Engineer Overcome

So deadly were the fumes in the mine that Hardy Ryler, the engineer of the relief train, was overcome shortly after he entered the tunnel and, losing his grip on the throttle,

rolled from his seat. His place was quickly taken by another and the journey continued. It was thought for a time that Ryler would die, but shortly after reaching the outside, he recovered.

The scenes at the mouth were most distressing. When the news first reached the centre of the town, which is nearly a mile away, there was a wild rush to the mouth of the tunnel, halfway up to the top of the mountain. The first word which came from the tunnel stated that the extent of the accident was small, and there was no delay in gathering together a relief party.

Rescuers Overcome

When a few hours thereafter there were brought out the dead bodies of ten and the almost lifeless forms of forty of the rescuing party, the scenes of widowed mothers and orphaned children, grief-stricken and frantic were most pathetic. They had proved themselves to use the rescuers return in good health and instead were borne to them the blackened corpses of their heroes.

So far as can be learned now, for a full investigation by mine officials has not yet been made, the gas came from the dirty steam engines used in pulling the trains from one side to the other of the tunnel, and because of the unusual heat of yesterday did not pass out through the exits as usual. More than the usual number of trains passing through the tunnel yesterday combined to increase the amount of gas and the combination is supposed to have been responsible for the large amounts of gas.

There are slopes and shafts on both sides of the mountain and the tunnel was used in bringing coal from the Bear Valley side to the breaker at Williamstown. But one shaft is in operation on the Bear Valley side but yesterday the production was so large that a large number of trains were run through, each dinky adding his share of sulphurous smoke and steam which could not escape through the ordinary channels because of the atmospheric pressure from above. About 1,000 men are employed in the colliery and the most of these live in Williamstown.

Coroner Investigates

Coroner Krause, who was notified of the disaster last evening, went to Williamstown this morning. He reached there about noon and immediately began an investigation, the result of which has not been announced.

There was much excitement in the entire Lykens Valley region last evening and the curious from miles around soon filled the town. There was no disorder at any time, but long into the night the streets were filled with miners and others trying to explain the most singular accident which has ever occurred in the region. If anywhere. This morning the mines were closed and will not be operated until the excitement dies. It is probable that all the victims will be buried in one day, although it is too early to learn of the arrangements.

When the funerals do occur, it will likely be the occasion of a day of mourning in the entire region. All the dead were men among the best citizenship of the town and differ remarkably from the kind of miner who is employed in the anthracite region elsewhere. The affair has cast the deepest gloom over the community and little work was done about this place today.

MINE OFFICIALS ARE MYSTIFIED AS TO CAUSE

Wilkes-Barre, May 26.—A telegram received at the Susquehanna Coal Company's office, in this city last evening, states that ten miners were suffocated by gas and sulphur fumes from a small locomotive yesterday afternoon in the workings of the Summit Branch Coal Company, at Williamstown, above Harrisburg.

The accident was one of the most peculiar in the history of the anthracite mines, and no reason for it can be assigned by the officials. The victims included Michael Golden, general inside foreman of the company, and at least nine miners and laborers. The tunnel in which the disaster occurred is one mile in length and is used by the coal company to convey the coal mined in the workings in the Bear Valley to the breaker in the Williams Valley. The men employed in the mines in the Bear Valley who reside in Williamstown have made a practice for years to ride to and from their work on the trips of cars that are hauled between the two valleys by small locomotives.

Tunnel in Constant Use

About 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon General Inside Foreman Golden and about fifty miners boarded a loaded trip which was about to be hauled from Bear Valley to Williamstown. Everything went all right until about half the journey was made when some of the men attracted the attention of the engineer, who at once stopped, and it was found that nearly every man in the party on the cars had been overcome by the gas and sulphur which emanated from the stack of the locomotive and floated back over them.

The engineer at once crowded on all steam possible and the unconscious men were hurried to the Williams town end of the tunnel with all the speed possible. Here help was at once summoned and the men were taken to the surface, where a corps of physicians made every possible effort to resuscitate them but aid came too late for Foreman Golden and the other victims.

No Overcome

The tunnel has been in constant operation for more than forty years, and this is the first accident of any kind that has happened in it. It is perfectly free from mine gases and the ventilation is so perfect and the air current so strong and steady that besides being used for hauling cars the tunnel has formed one of the best means for furnishing air to the mines. No trouble has ever been experienced before from gas from the small mine locomotives and the officials are entirely at sea as to the cause of the tragedy.

PHYSICIANS BELIEVE THAT SENATOR QUAY WILL RECOVER

Beaver, Pa., May 26.—Senator Quay continues to improve and his physicians, Dr. J. H. Wilson, confidently expect him to recover. The Senator spent yesterday downstairs reading the newspapers and taking an occasional nap.

The following telegram was received by the Senator from the Schuylkill county Republicans yesterday in session at Pottsville:

The Republican party of Schuylkill county, in convention assembled, greets you. It is our earnest hope and fervent prayer that you may speedily recover and resume your useful, pure, State and nation. God speed you.

Miss Coral Quay said yesterday: "Father has been a great deal better all day, but saw no one except members of the family. He read the papers and took an occasional nap. He did not go upstairs until after dinner this evening."

It is expected that within another day or two, if the weather continues propitious, Senator Quay will be able to get out of doors. The benefit of the change of residence from Washington, D. C., to Morgantown and again from Morgantown to Beaver has been quite marked and is producing a beneficial result.

WILL NOTIFY THOMPSON OF HIS NOMINATION

Justice Samuel Gustine Thompson, of Philadelphia, the Democratic nominee for Supreme Court Judge, will be notified formally to-morrow afternoon of his nomination for a full term on the Supreme bench. The notification ceremonies will be held in the Hotel Walton, Philadelphia, and prominent Democrats from various parts of the State will attend.

Michael J. Ryan, of Philadelphia, will deliver the notification address. Members of the notification committee, in addition to Mr. Ryan, are State Senator Arthur G. Dewalt, of Lehigh, chairman of the State convention; State Senator J. K. P. Hall, of 22d, chairman of the Democratic State committee; Representative E. Scott Ammerman, of Montour, and District Chairman William J. Brennan, of Allegheny.

THE SLEEPING PREACHER IN LANCASTER COUNTY

Lancaster, May 26.—John D. Kauffman, the "Sleeping Preacher," is traveling through Lancaster county with two attendants to look after and take care of him. Mr. Kauffman goes into a trance and while in that condition preaches sermons that for oratory cannot be excelled by some of our most eminent doctors of divinity.

Sergeant-Major Shemberger Promoted

Sergeant-Major John C. Shemberger, formerly of the Governor's Troop, and for five years a member of Gen. Cohen's staff, has just been appointed sergeant-major on the staff of Governor Pennypacker. Sergeant Major Shemberger is a resident of Harrisburg and has a fine record as a soldier. He is to be congratulated on this promotion.