

NONE TO BLAME, BUT CAUSE IS UNEXPLAINED

Coroner's Jury Finds that
Williamstown Mine Horror
Was Unavoidable

NOBODY COULD EXPLAIN
ACCUMULATION OF GAS

Mine Inspectors, Miners and Officials
Testified at the Hearing
Yesterday

Williamstown, May 28.—The Coroner's jury has cleared mine owners and officials of blame for the deaths of the men who were killed by gas on Wednesday afternoon in the tunnel connecting the Bear and Williams Valley mines. The jury failed to discover the cause of the gas in the passage.

The Coroner's jury was composed of John Weidle, carpenter; James Cox, merchant; Joseph Shissler, carpenter; Richard Mack, miner, all of Williamstown, and Richard V. Fox and Louis A. Russ, Harrisburg. Mine Inspectors Benjamin Evans, of the Shamokin district, and Michael Brennan, of the Pottsville district, were present at the inquest in the absence of Inspector Martin Kelley, of the local district, who is ill.

Wallace Lewis, mine fireman; Stephen L. Crook, assistant mine foreman; Edmund Williams, shift boss, one of the heroes of the rescuing party, who was at the throttle of the dinkey engine that drew thirty unconscious miners from the tunnel; Thomas Mack, fire boss; John Hay, fire boss; Eli White, topman; Thomas Barnes, inside foreman; John Saussman, outside foreman; Harvey Blyler, the engineer of the dinkey, who was overcome before he was relieved at the throttle by Williams; David Watkins, miner; John Bell, miner; Calvin Bowman, miner; Isaiah Hartman, mine engineer; George Thomas, repairman; Evan Adams, miner, and David Watkeys, miner, were witnesses.

THE ACCIDENT AND RESCUE

**Engineer Harvey Blyler Overcome by
Gas on Locomotive**

Special to the Telegraph.

Williamstown, May 28.—The locomotive from which the gas escaped that caused the accident was run by Harvey Blyler. As he was approaching the Bear Valley side of the tunnel, which is about a mile long, he noticed a light waving back and forth, which is a signal used by all miners to stop a trip of cars whether drawn by an engine or mules.

He brought his engine to a standstill and upon examination found that two or three men were lying there. The engineer, assisted by Edmund Williams and Joseph Darby, picked up the first man they saw, who was a miner, and put him in the mine car. Then they started for another when Williams and Darby noticed something was wrong with Engineer Blyler and heard him say that he could do nothing more and dropped over unconscious. Afterward they noticed the conductor of Blyler's engine beginning to drop his head and Darby and Williams loaded him into the mine car. By this time Williams began to think there must be something wrong (little thinking that it was sulphur which was doing the deadly work) and although he never ran an engine in his life jumped on the seat and called out, "Are all the men on the trip?" meaning the night shift that had come over on the cars consisting of about thirty men, and he thought he heard them say "yes." He then threw the reverse lever ahead and opened the throttle and ran the engine to the other side. Too much praise cannot be given Williams because it is believed that he saved the lives of about thirty men in rushing to daylight and the open air with his load of human freight.

Two men working at No. 2 shaft were the first, it is said, to give the alarm as to the condition of the men in the tunnel. Then a rescuing party from the south end of the tunnel was sent from No. 4 slope, headed by Patrick Golden, a son of the late M. M. Golden, who did what they could in helping the unfortunate men. Just as soon as General Inside Foreman Golden heard about it he, with Master Mechanic Radle and Foreman Bond started from the other end of the tunnel toward the scene of the disaster. In their heroic attempts Golden and Radle succumbed to the sulphurous fumes and it is supposed that when Golden fell he dropped into the ditch and was drowned, while Bond, who was partially overcome and so weak that he had fallen on his hands and knees, was found frantically trying to get to the men and was dragged out by some miners who had just come upon the scene. He made a second attempt but was prevented from going very far by the men who knew that if he went again he would surely die.

The outside foreman, John Sassaman, on hearing of the accident, went at once to the rescue and saved the lives of three men. Much credit is due him.

At about this time men coming home from the No. 1 shaft on the north end of the tunnel had not proceeded far when they came across the unconscious bodies of their fellow workmen lying on the floor of the tunnel.

They at once began to feel the effects of the gas, but nevertheless did what they could to relieve the unfortunate men, themselves at last falling to the ground.

By this time Assistant Foreman Stephen Crook arrived at the scene of action and took control. He noticed that the roof of the tunnel was clearing and notified the rescuers to stand up straight and work their way in.

After this the men were able to penetrate far enough to bring out all the men. Crook again examined the place and found it safe to go to the south end of the tunnel. He then met Superintendent Hood McKay, who

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was approaching the north end of the tunnel. Crook notifying him it was now safe for the doctors to come through.

The doctors at once came, accompanied by the Rev. O. E. Stocking, Druggist J. S. Lautenbacher and several others. Much credit is due Stocking and Lautenbacher, who greatly assisted the men to regain consciousness by applying restoratives which they thoughtfully brought with them.

The following also deserve credit: William Wtakins, David Watkins and many others too numerous to mention.

The distressing scenes at the mouth of the tunnel have been graphically described in earlier issues.

SURVIVOR TELLS OF MINE HORROR

Saw Men Fall Over and Was Himself Overcome

Special to the Telegraph.

Williamstown, Pa., May 28.—David Watkeys, one of the members of the original party which discovered the presence of dangerous fumes in the tunnel, preceding the Bear Valley disaster of Wednesday, has so far recovered from the effects of his experience that he is willing to talk of the affair.

He said: "About 2.30 o'clock a party of about twenty of us, after finishing the day's work on the Bear Valley side, started to walk along the tunnel to our homes in Williamstown. As we walked along cracking jokes we did not notice that anything was wrong, and as we kept up our jolly conversation our lights showed us the prostrate form of George Kramer lying across the tracks. A loaded coal train went through the tunnel just ahead of us, and we supposed that Kramer had been hit by the train. Of course there was a lot of steam in the tunnel, but there always is, and we didn't think anything of that.

“We knew that it would not do to let Kramer lie in there, wounded as we supposed he was, and decided that some four or six of us should carry him to the Bear Valley side, while the rest would walk through to the Williamstown end and have an ambulance ready, when Kramer should be brought over on the next train. Everything was dark and murky and we did not pay any attention to Kramer and supposed that he was unconscious from his injuries.

The Men Fell

“Well, four or six of the boys picked Kramer up and walked to the Bear Valley side, while the rest of us in twos, threes and fives walked on towards the southern end of the tunnel. I was well in the rear with Enoch Morgan, and before we got very far we saw a number of miners’ lights flickering ahead of us, and finally saw several of the men tumble over. I turned to Morgan and said ‘Enoch, there’s something wrong in here. Look at those fellows dropping ahead there.’

“I noticed that Enoch was turning pale and began to totter and about the same time I became so light-headed I could hardly stand. At that Morgan fell over, while fellows all around me were tottering.

“I told Morgan to roll himself over into the ditch, for I was too weak to help him and he did so, his face striking the water in the ditch with a splash. From all I know, he was drowned there. I looked up the track and saw pretty nearly all my companions either swaying or lying prostrate on the ground. Except for their presence of mind, all might have been killed by the next train which came along, but they all had presence of mind to roll themselves off the track.

“About that time I was so very weak that I could not stand and that is about all I know of it.”