

**Bureau of Mines Bulletin 616:
Historical Documentation of Major Coal Mine Disasters
in The United States Not Classified As Explosions of Gas or Dust,
1846-1962**

**December 18, 1885
No. 1 Slope
Nanticoke, Pa.
26 Killed**

**(From Reports of the Inspectors of Coal Mines of the Anthracite Coal Regions of Pennsylvania,
1885, pp. 75-78)**

At about 10 o'clock in the morning a large body of quicksand and water broke through the roof into the Ross vein workings causing the death of twenty-six persons. The cave broke in near the solid face of a counter gangway on the apex of an anticlinal or saddle. The bodies of the entombed men were never recovered.

The No. 1 slope was sunk on the lowest, or Red Ash seam, and this seam is nearly all worked out, so far as it can be mined from this slope. In 1881, a tunnel was driven from the third lift at a distance of about 120 feet west of the slope to Ross seam, the next one above. This tunnel reached the vein at a distance of 487 feet horizontally. For the first 2,000 feet the average dip of the seam is about 18 degrees. Here the gangway curves sharply around the synclinal of a basin, and back on the strike of another dip, and again around the saddle of a small anticlinal. Most of the persons lost were working in breasts on this saddle, and within a short distance of the point where the sand broke in. There were four persons working in the basin, at the foot of places driven up to the counter-gangway on top of the saddle. One of these escaped and said that he saw the other three struggling in the mud behind him. Those three are among the lost. The two drivers, the runner, and door boy, had gone in with the cars about half an hour before the sand broke in, and it is supposed that they had reached the miners who were working on the anticlinal before the accident happened. In less than one hour from the time it broke in, the gangways were completely filled from floor to roof, all the way out to the slope, and up part of the way into the breasts. All the men who worked the breasts on the right of the straight gangway escaped through the faces of the breasts and out through the air shaft. Upon exploring the workings above the sand level, a mistake was made in the location of the cave, and, while laboring under this mistake, it was generally believed that the men who worked on the saddle described were on higher ground than that which the sand had filled, and, consequently, were probably all alive. A large gang of men were at once set to work to effect a passage through the sand down a breast at a distance of about 2,000 feet from the air shaft, and by Monday evening, December 21, they had reached the bottom of the basin, right opposite a hole which had been driven on the opposite side or other pitch, to the counter-gangway on top of the saddle. As far as they could see with the light of a Clanny safety-lamp, this hole was clear of sand, and they were greatly elated and

encouraged by the prospect, believing that they could rescue the entombed men in a few hours. The said hole was rising about 45 degrees, too steep to climb up without ladders or steps, and orders were promptly sent out for ladders. While waiting for them, an old battery was cut out of the way at the bottom of the hole, and occasionally, while doing that, small quantities of dirt were noticed to fall from above, which caused them to be watchful and ready to retreat in case a rush should come.

Shortly after cutting the battery away a large quantity rushed down and drove them all back. The passage made through the sand was only three and a half feet high and about the same width, and it was made a distance of about two hundred and fifty feet. The debris had to be carried away in buckets, and at this time there were about sixty men employed, one behind the other, handing the buckets back and forth. It was thought difficult for so many to escape in case water and sand rushed in again, therefore seven or eight only returned to see what fell, and while they were at the bottom it rushed down again, and filled the passage all the way up to about twenty feet higher than when they started to make it, and the men escaped only by the greatest exertion. If the whole number had returned, there is no doubt that most of them would have been caught, and added to the number already entombed, but, fortunately, the few that had returned were not so much in one another's way, and they escaped. With this unexpected occurrence, all hopes of rescuing the entombed men alive were dispelled. This also caused the officials to think that probably the sand bar broke at the top of the anticlinal or saddle, and the engineers were set to work to locate the hole. This hole was a deep cone-shaped depression on the culm bank, and was about three hundred feet diameter on top. When the survey was done, it proved that the cave broke in near the solid at the face of the counter-gangway on the apex of the anticlinal, and that all the entombed men were very probably caught and killed soon after the sand broke into the mine. It also showed that the only way to recover them would be by clearing the gangway from the slope in until they were found, and this work was commenced at once and pushed vigorously up to the date of this writing, February 25, 1886. The sand was found to be packed tight from the floor to the roof in the two gangways, and although they have cleared the main gangway to a point within two hundred feet of the curve, not one body has yet been recovered. The officers of the company fear another rush of quick sand when the gangway is cleaned to the curve, and the probabilities at present are that that will take place. If it does, the bodies can never be recovered, and it is doubtful, also, whether the workmen who are clearing the gangway can escape if it should rush in under the great pressure supposed to be behind it. The danger apprehended has been fully explained to them, and it is their will, at present, to work on and see whether the bodies can be recovered or not, but the officers, apprehending danger to those working in other lifts as well as to them, may conclude to abandon the work.

This accident is a remarkable one, nothing like it having occurred before in the anthracite coal regions of this State. Any one visiting the mine prior to the accident would have pronounced it one of the safest mines in the region. The pillars were large and regular, the roof strong and safe throughout, as far as appearance indicated. There was no crush, nor any-thing to create alarm, or to give the least sign of danger. No one suspected that it was possible for danger to exist from quick sand. The No. 4 tunnel workings were in the same vein, and higher on the pitch, between this and the outcrop, and had mined

nearly one and a half miles further without encountering trouble of this nature. The levelings showed that there were two hundred and sixty-two feet of strata right over the vein at the point where the sand broke in, and it was supposed that about two hundred feet of it was rock. The surface where it broke in was covered by a culm-bank, forty-seven feet high, and this was up on the side of a dry sand-hill, somewhere about sixty or seventy feet above the level of a creek. The rock is seen on the surface above the culm-bank, and also below it at the creek, but between these two points the rock seems to have been washed away to a depth approaching closely to the vein, and again re-placed by sand and water. The appearances of the surface are such that no one suspected that such a depth of sand existed there, and, therefore, no one could have foreseen the possibility of such a calamity as that which happened. It was such that no blame can be attached to any one, for every practical pre-caution was taken to mine the coal so as to insure safety of the mine and the workmen employed.

The Daily Republican.

TUESDAY EVE., DEC. 22, 1885

DEAD OR DOOMED.

The Fates Against the Imprisoned Miners in the Nanticoke Slope.

The Heroic Efforts of the Noble Band of Rescuers Rewarded by Signals From Within,

Only to be Overwhelmed by a Second and Greater Cave-In—Universal Mourning and Desolation.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., December 21.—Last night at midnight it was given out by the bosses in charge of the ill-fated slope at Nanticoke that the men imprisoned in the mine would be rescued before morning, but the men are still in the mines with no hopes of immediate relief. The rescuing party now consists of 100 men. The relatives of the imprisoned men have still hopes that they may be rescued alive.

The ministers in all the churches referred to the terrible calamity yesterday morning and asked their people to pray that the unfortunate men might be brought out alive.

At six o'clock last night the rescuers knocked on the pipe which runs through the gangway, but received no response. This is a bad omen. Had the imprisoned men heard the sounds, they would have responded by striking the pipe. It is possible that they may be cut off from the pipe, or may be too weak to get to it.

At eight o'clock the rescuing party struck a mass of wet sand and forty-five additional men were sent in to remove it with buckets as fast as it was thrown out. At nine o'clock an official report was received at the company's office here that the rescuing party were within twenty feet of the fatal chamber and were hoping to reach the imprisoned men by eleven o'clock. There was still no response to knocks on the pipe.

1 A. M.—The rescuers have just reached the place where the men were supposed to be, but they are not there. The rescuers are now pushing their way to another part of the mine. Great excitement prevails. It is feared all have perished.

Later.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., December 21.—The rescuing party in the Nanticoke Mine have not reached their unfortunate comrades, who are imprisoned in the slope and but little hope is now entertained of finding any of them alive. The rescuers are still at work laboring vigorously to get an entrance to the chamber where it is thought the imprisoned men will be found. Work will be continued unceasingly until some discovery is made. The excitement in the vicinity of the mines is unabated, and anxiety of relatives and friends of the missing men has become unbounded.

Still Later—Hope Yet—Knocking on the Pipe Heard.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., December 21.—There is hope yet. The rescuers say that they hear knocking at the pipes. The rescuers are now but twenty feet from where the men are. The crowd around the mine is greater than ever, and great excitement prevails. The superintendent says the men will be taken out alive yet.

The Latest—Dead or Doomed.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., December 22.—At nine o'clock last night, while the rescuing party were within a few feet of where the imprisoned miners were supposed to be, a second cave occurred. Thousands of tons of quicksand and culm again filled the gangway, making the condition of affairs even worse than it was on Friday morning. Two of the rescuing party were caught in the huge mass of falling sand, and it was with much difficulty that they were brought out alive. The work of cleaning away the debris has been abandoned for the present, and everyone appears to be discouraged. The men who were at work are now afraid to re-enter the mine. It is now considered absolutely certain that the twenty-four men and boys entombed in the mine will not be rescued alive. They have been imprisoned since Friday morning, and even though they may have lived for a time in the breastworks, they must now die from starvation if from no other cause. It will take two weeks to penetrate the mass of earth now obstructing the passages.

The excitement around the mine is indescribable. Women and children, who have hardly closed their eyes since Friday, are made nearly crazy by the frightful calamity. Screams and wails of anguish from the women rend the air, while the disheartened and exhausted miners sit around the mouth of the mine in sullen despair. Large crowds of people are coming from miles around to view the scene of desolation. The town of Nanticoke is a place of universal mourning and desolation.

Fort Wayne Sentinel
Fort Wayne, IN
December 19, 1885

Twenty-nine Men Imprisoned to Die in a Coal Mine

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. Dec. 19 – The outlook at No. 1 slope this morning is frightful. Mine Inspector Williams says that men can be reached in forty-eight hours if they will be found alive. A total exhaustion of air will probably occur before then and the chances of rescue are small. There are sixty-seven feet of quick sand that must be dug away. This is wedged in. An extreme authority says it will require five or six days to dig through it. This ends all hope of the twenty-nine men imprisoned, who it is believed died within twelve hours after the imprisonment. This mine was closed by water from the Susquehanna River mention of which was made in yesterday's dispatches.

Newark Daily Advocate
Newark, New Jersey
December 22, 1885

ALL HOPE IS LOST

Another Cave-in at Nanticoke -Twenty-four Souls Must Perish-

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. - , Dec. 22 – At 9 o'clock while the rescuing party was within a few feet of where the imprisoned miners were supposed to be, a second cave-in occurred. Thousands of tons of quick sand and coal again filled the gangway, making the condition of affairs even worse than it was on Friday morning. Two of the rescuing party was caught in the huge mass of falling sand, and it was with much difficulty that they were brought out alive.

The work of clearing away the debris has been abandoned for the present, and everyone appears to be discouraged. The men who were at work are now afraid to re-enter the mine. It is now considered absolutely certain that the twenty-four men and boys entombed in the mine will not be rescued alive. They have been imprisoned since Friday morning, and even though they may have

lived for a time in the breastworks, they must now die of starvation if from no other cause.

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IMPRISONED IN A MINE.

TWENTY LIVES BELIEVED TO HAVE
BEEN LOST

**The Roof Caves in and the Mine, Be-
comes Flooded The Mouth Closed
by Timbers and Broken Cars.
Danger from Gas.**

NANTICOKE, Pa., Dec. 19. Nanticoke was thrown into a terrible consternation by a report that the mines of the Susquehanna Coal company were being flooded by water from the river, and that several lives had been lost.

The break was in No. 1 slope, and the volume of water pouring in was so great that before the miners and laborers could get away from the breasts in which they were working the water was more than a foot deep on the gangway, and rising rapidly. Tools were abandoned, driver boys left their mules in the gangway, and all fled for points of safety. Before the workmen were all out the water was breast high. Several men are reported missing, and it is feared they have been drowned. An alarm was spread to the other workings, Nos. 1 and 2 shafts and No. 2 slope, all of which are connected with the slope and are lower and of greater depth. The alarm was promptly acted upon and the workmen were hoisted ten at a time to the surface.

The working now affected by the inflow employ upward of 1,500 men and boys, all of whom will be thrown out of employment.

The excitement was greatly increased over the report that about forty men employed on rock work and a half dozen slope men are imprisoned in an old working, the mouth of which is closed by mine timbers and broken cars that were forced against it by the rushing waters. Twenty-nine men and boys were rescued through the air shaft by means of ropes, which were lowered and fastened about their bodies, and one at a time they were drawn to the surface. As each one was safely landed terrific shouts of rejoicing arose from the hundreds of people present. It is believed that there remains yet in the abandoned breast at the slope the following named miners and laborers: Oliver, Will and F. Kilver, brothers, miners; Thomas Clifford, doorboy; William Dehaney, driver; William Elkie, driver; Louis Tarbey, company man; Isaac Sarber, laborer; Harry Howe, miner; John Shutt, miner; John Hawk, laborer; John Barber, laborer; August Mitul, miner, and several others whose names cannot be learned. The first rescuing party have just entered the mine. The greatest danger feared is from foul gas which is rapidly accumulating, and which the fan cannot drive out, owing to the air ways being closed up. The disaster is now believed to have been caused by the caving in of a large swamp, covering several acres, upon which culm was being dumped, the accumulating weight of which is supposed to have forced the bottom out.

LATER. In tracing the water it was discovered that it flowed from a pool on the surface, in which it had collected from some springs near by. The water had then followed the rock to a fault in the seam, which was the first outlet for it. It then ran into the gangway and slopes, and thence to the lower working of No. 1 slope. At 10 o'clock it is believed that there are no less than thirty men altogether in the slope, but no other names can be given. The company are making every possible effort to reach the imprisoned men. The pumps are now at work, and new ones are being rapidly put up. Another force of men have been sent down the air shaft, who will endeavor to cut through to the spot where the imprisoned men are believed to be. This work will be kept up night and day until the fate of the men is known.

Fort Wayne Sunday Gazette.

FORT WAYNE, IND., SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1885.

ENTOMBED.

The Miners at Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, Coal Shaft, Still Shut In.

Belief that that from 24 to 29 Men are Already Dead.

The Singer Sewing Machine Works at Elizabethport N. J.,

Shut Down Throwing Some 3,500 Operatives out of Employment.

A Typhoon Makes Terrible Destruction in the Phillipine Islands.

THE NANTICOKE HORROR.

Twenty-four or Twenty-nine Unfortunates Entombed in the Coal Mine—A Bare Possibility that They are Yet Alive, but the Better Opinion is, That All Are Suffocated.

By Telegraph to the Gazette.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., December 19.—The outlook at No. 1 slope this morning is frightful. Mine Inspector Williams says the men can be reached in forty-eight hours if they will be alive. A total exhaustion of air will probably occur before then and the chances of rescue are very small. There are sixty-seven feet of quick sand that must be dug away. This is wedged in. An extreme authority says it will require five or six days to dig through it. This ends all hope of the twenty-nine men imprisoned, who it is believed died within twelve hours after the imprisonment. [This mine was closed by water from the Susquehanna river, mention of which was made in yesterday's dispatches.—ED.]

The exact number of men imprisoned in the mine cannot even now be exactly told, but at 6 o'clock this evening, it was believed that twenty-nine persons were in the mine. Of these eighteen are Welsh, Irish or American and the rest Polish or Hungarian laborers. Whether they are alive or dead cannot be told. If they have been enabled to obtain fresh air they are undoubtedly still alive and there is good hope of rescuing them. Many experienced miners believe, however, that in their position they cannot get any new supply of air and that having exhausted what little there was in the workings, they must now be perishing from suffocation. The people of Nanticoke are in the greatest excitement and nothing is thought of or talked of but the disaster. Business is partially suspended and the colliery is surrounded by hundreds of persons, among whom are many relatives of the imprisoned men, eager to learn how the work goes on below and to gain a hope that that their friends may be rescued. The officials of the company state this evening that there are twenty-four men in the fatal slope, not twenty-nine, as is generally understood.

THE MINING DISASTER.

HORRIBLE FATE OF SOME THIRTY COAL MINERS.

BURIED ALIVE WITHIN SOUND OF THEIR RESCUERS.

THE WILKESBARRE HORROR.

'Twenty-Nine Imprisoned With No Hope of Rescue.

WILKESBARRE, Pa., Dec. 10.—The outlook at No. 1 Slope this morning is frightful. Line inspector Williams says if the men can be reached in 30 hours they will be found alive. The total exhaustion of air will not occur before then but their chance of rescue is this morning very slim from the fact that the air circle has been broken. This was ascertained by the second rescuing party working at the opposite end from the first party in slope No. 1. Superintendent Morgan finds that there are 67 feet of quick sand, culm and earth to be dug away. This is edged in between the mine timbers which have sprung inward and crossed, presenting an almost insurmountable barrier. Shifts are now changed every two hours but the culm and quick sand by its very nature fills in the place taken out before. It will require five or six days to dig through this, which ends all hopes for the 29 men imprisoned who it is believed died during the first 12 hours from suffocation. Sixteen English and Welsh, and thirteen Poles and Hungarians are known to be entombed in the chamber of death.

A party of sixty rescuers came out of the slope at 3:15 and report that all are hard at work. They have sent calls in every direction and in every manner possible, but are unable to elicit any response from the entombed men as to their being still alive. It still rests wholly upon conjecture. Old and reliable miners, who understand the situation, say the men are surely dead.

It has now been definitely decided the disaster was caused by the caving in of the roof and rushing in of a large body of water, which had accumulated on the surface from natural drainage. This water brought with it a vast quantity of culm or coal dirt which blocked the gangways and passages, and cut off the escape of a number of men in the upper lift. The cave-in was caused by a blast by Oliver Viver, one of the men now in the mine. At first little could be done for the water was five feet deep. It was impossible to begin digging away the quick sand and culm which blocked up the gangways. Last evening the water subsided, having run off to the lower levels of the mine, and effective work was commenced in earnest. Two gangs of men were set to work excavating from the different points to where it is believed the men are. One party, sixty strong, commenced work from the foot of the air shaft. This is the nearest point to the place where the men are, but great difficulties are encountered. There is no hoisting apparatus at the air shaft. Men and tools are sent down by a derrick. The workers are obliged to throw behind them the material they have excavated and this hinders them. The gangway being blocked up at one end they could get no circulation of air until the tubes were brought, and air forced through them from the compression used for rock drills to places where the men were at work. The rescuers are working with the greatest possible energy to-night. The thought that their comrades are perishing on the other side of the mass of rock, sand and dirt, nerves every arm with courage and strength. Gangs are relieved every four hours, and sixty men have been constantly at work since last evening. It was believed they have penetrated to within fifty or sixty feet of where the imprisoned men are. Another party are working from the direction of the slope towards same point. They have further to go but have better facilities. There is little ground for hope but efforts will not be abandoned until fate of the imprisoned men is determined.

The Trenton Times.

TRENTON, MONDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 21, 1885.

THE IMPRISONED MINERS.

IT IS NOW FEARED THAT THEY
HAVE ALL PERISHED.

A Chamber in the Mine Supposed to
be Their Refuge Found to be
Empty The Rescuers Still
Pushing Forward.

NANTICOKE, Pa., Dec. 21. At midnight Saturday it was given out by the bosses in charge of the ill-fated slope at Nanticoke that the men imprisoned in the mine would be rescued before morning, but at 7 o'clock the men were still in the mine, with no hopes of immediate relief. An important discovery was made, however. The further the rescuers went on with the work of removing the debris which blocks the passage way, it was found that the coal and quicksand which accompanied the water into the mine were easier to remove. This allowed the men to make good progress, and inside of one hour they cleared away twenty-seven feet. As the quicksand is not piled up to the roof, the air has free circulation, which lends additional strength to the belief that the men may still be alive. Another important fact established is that the men must certainly have escaped to the highest part of the mine in safety, for had they been caught in the flood, which carried everything before it, they would have been drowned, and their dead bodies would have been discovered by the rescuers, who are now making a passage way through the gangway. The supposition is that the men were taken by surprise when the danger came, and that they did not have time to get out of the chambers where they were at work to run to the gangway to make their escape by way of the air shaft. Finding the main gangway blocked, the men sought the highest ground.

All day great crowds collected in the vicinity of the accident. The superintendent of the Susquehanna Coal company telegraphed to the officials to spare neither pains nor money to get the missing men. The rescuing party now consists of 100 men as many as can work in the place. The relatives of the imprisoned men have still hopes that they may be rescued alive. The ministers in all the churches referred to the terrible calamity Sunday, and asked their people to pray that the unfortunate men might be brought out alive.

At 6 o'clock the rescuers knocked on the pipe which runs through the gangway, but received no response. This a bad omen. Had the imprisoned men heard the sounds they would have responded by striking the pipe. It is possible that they may be cut off from the pipe, or they may be too weak to get to it.

At 8 o'clock the rescuing party struck a mass of wet sand, and forty-five additional men were sent in to remove it with buckets as fast as it was thrown out.

At 9 o'clock an official report was received at the company's office here to the effect that the rescuing party were then within twenty feet of the fatal chamber, and were hoping to reach the imprisoned men by 11 o'clock. There was still no response to knocks on the pipe.

1 A. M. The rescuers have just reached the place where the men were supposed to be, but they are not there.

The rescuers are now pushing their way to another part of the mine. Great excitement prevails. It is feared all have perished.

*Galveston Daily
Galveston, Texas
December 21, 1885*

THE GREAT MINE DISASTER

HOW THE DIRE CALAMITY HAPPENED

Twenty-four Miners Entombed in the Fatal Slope, with No Hope of Rescuing the Victims Alive

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. – December 20

It has now been definitely decided that the disaster at slope of the Susquehanna Coal company at Nanticoke was caused by the caving in of the roof and the rushing in of a large body of water, which had accumulated on the surface from natural drainage. This water brought with it a vast quantity of coal dirt, which blocked the gangways and passages and cut off the escape of a number of men in the upper lift. The caving-in was started by Oliver Winter, one of the men now in the mines. The exact number of men imprisoned in the mine cannot now be told but at 6 o'clock last evening it was believe twenty-nine persons were in the mine. Of these, eighteen are Welsh, Irish or American and the rest Polish or Hungarian Laborers.

Whether they are alive or dead can not be told. If they have been able to obtain fresh air, they are undoubtedly alive, and there is good hope of rescuing them. Many experienced miners believed, however, that in their position they can not get a new supply of air and that having exhausted that little was in the workings they must now be perishing from suffocation. Measures for the relief of those still in the mine were begun as soon as the other men had been brought to the surface. At first little could be done, for the water was five feet deep and it was impossible to commence digging away the sand and culm that blocked up the gangway.

Last evening the water subsided, having all run off to the lower levels of the mine, and effective work was commenced. Two gangs of men were set to work excavating from different points toward which it is believed the men are. One party, sixty strong, commenced work from the foot of the air shaft. This is the nearest point to the men but great difficulties are encountered. There is not hoisting apparatus at the air shaft and men and tools are sent down by a derrick. Workers are obligated to throw behind them the material they excavate and this hinders them, the gangway being blocked up at one end. They could get no

circulation of air until tubes were brought and air forced through them from a compressor used for rock drills, to the place where the men are at work.

The rescuers were working with the greatest possible energy all night. The thought that their comrades were perishing on the other side of the mass of rock, sand and dirt, nerves every arm with giant strength. Gangs are relieved every four hours and sixty men have been constantly at work since Saturday at 6 p.m. Last evening it was believed they had penetrated to within fifty or sixty feet from where the imprisoned men are. Another party is working from the direction of the slope toward the same point. They have further to go, but have better facilities, as the air is pure and they have powerful hoisting engines to carry out the excavated materials. Whether the men can be reached in time to save any lives can not be told. There is little ground for hope, but the efforts will not be abandoned until the fate of the imprisoned men are determined. The people of Nanticoke are now in the greatest excitement and nothing is thought of or talked of but the disaster. Business is partially suspended and the colliery is surrounded by hundreds of persons, among who are many relatives of the imprisoned men eager to learn who the work goes on below and to gain hope that their friends may be rescued.

Officials of the company make the statement that there are twenty-four men in the fatal slope, not twenty-nine, as was generally understood. They state further that the disaster was precipitated by the collapse of the passage way of a tunnel to the extent of five feet, causing a depression, which brought down in the tunnel a twenty ton vein of lake quicksand. The vacuum created by this break caused an arch and through a heavy fissure in the roof a mass of culm estimated at 5000 tons with the contents of a pond of water overhead, containing over 20,000,000 gallons, poured in, flooding both No. 1 and 2 slopes and choking up the tunnel and carrying with it fifty-two miners who were at work there. Of these men, twenty-four were in all probability caught before they could gain the chambers and they are supposed to be in this quicksand.

At 11:30 a message was brought from the pit in which the relief party were at work. The messenger reported to General Superintendent Irving A. Sterns that the men were still working vigorously, but that they had not yet reached the imprisoned miners. From the present outlook it is doubtful if they can gain an entrance to the fatal slope chamber before tomorrow. Almost as fast as the sand is removed, it fills in again, and the men are now laboring under great difficulties.

Morning Oregonian
December 20, 1885

LITTLE HOPE OF SAVING THE IMPRISONED MINERS

WILKES-BARRE, DEC. 19 –

The outlook at No. 1 slope this morning is frightful. Mine Inspector Williams says that if the men can be reached in eighteen hours, they will be found alive. Total excavation will not occur before then. The chance of rescue this morning is very slim from the fact that the air circle has been broken. This was ascertained by the second rescuing party working at the opposite end from the first party in Slope No. 1.

Superintendent Morgan finds that there are sixty-seven feet of quicksand, culm, and earth to be dug away. This is wedged between the mine timbers, which have sprung inward and crossed presenting an almost insurmountable barrier. The shifts are now changed every two hours but the culm and quicksand by its very nature fills in the places of that which were taken out before. It is feared it will require five or six days to dig through. This ends all hope of rescuing the twenty-nine men imprisoned, who it is believed died within the first twelve hours of suffocation. Sixteen English, Irish, and Welshmen, thirteen Polanders and Hungarians are now known to be entombed in the chamber of death.

CAUSE OF THE DISASTER

It has been definitely decided that the disaster at Slope No. 1 of the Susquehanna Coal Company, Nanticoke was caused by the caving in of the roof and the rushing in of a large body of water which had accumulated on the section from natural drainage. The water brought with it a vast quantity of coal dirt, which blocked the gangways and passages and cut off the escape of a number of men in the upper lift. The cave-in was caused by a blast of one of the men now in the mine. The exact number of men imprisoned cannot even now be exactly told but at 6 o'clock this evening it was believed on what seemed good grounds that twenty-nine persons were in the mine. Of these, eighteen are Welsh, Irish, or American, and the rest are Polish or Hungarian laborers. Whether they are alive or dead cannot be told. If they have been enabled to obtain fresh air they are undoubtedly still alive and there is good hope of recovering them. Many experienced miners believe however, that in their position, they cannot get any new supply of air and that having exhausted what little was in the workings they must now be perishing from suffocation.

RELIEF WORK

Measures for the relief of those still in the mine were begun as soon as the other men had been brought to the surface. At first little could be done for the water was five feet deep, and it was impossible to begin digging away the quicksand and culm which blocked up the gangway. Last evening, however, the water subsided, having run off to the lower levels of the mine and relief work was commenced in earnest.

Two gangs of men were set to work excavating from different points, to where it is believed the men are. One party, sixty strong, commenced work from the foot of the air shaft. This is the nearest point to the place where the men are, and great difficulties are encountered. There is no hoisting apparatus at the air shaft, and men and tools are sent down by derrick. The workers are obliged to throw behind them the material they excavated and this hinders them. The gangway being blocked up at one end, they could get no circulation of air until tubes were brought up and air forced through them from the compressor used for rock drills to the place where the men are at work.

The workers are working with the greatest possible energy tonight. The thought that their comrades are perishing on the other side of the mass of rock and dirt nerves every arm with grand strength. The gangs are relieved every four hours and sixty men have been constantly at work since last evening. At 6 o'clock last evening it was believed they had penetrated the within fifty or sixty feet of where the imprisoned men are.

Another party was working from the direction of the slope towards the same point. They have further to go but have better facilities. There is ground for hope, but efforts will not be abandoned until the fate of the imprisoned men is determined.

GREAT EXCITEMENT

The people of Nanticoke are in the greatest excitement and nothing is thought of or talked of but the disaster. Business is partially suspended and the colliery is surrounded by hundreds of persons, among whom are many relatives of the imprisoned men, eager to learn how the work goes on below and to gain hope that their friends may be rescued.

Officials of the company state this evening that there are twenty-four men in the fatal slope, not twenty-nine as generally understood. They state further that the disaster was precipitated by collapse of the passageway of the tunnel to the extent of five feet, causing a depression which brought down into the tunnel a twenty foot vein of lake quicksand. The vacuum created by this break created an arch and through a heavy fissure in the roof, a mass of culm, estimated at 6,000 tons with the contents of a pond of water overhead, containing over 20,000,000 gallons, pouring in, flooding both No. 1 and No. 2 slopes, and breaking up the tunnel and carrying with it fifty-two miners who were at work there. Of these men twenty-four were in all probability caught before they could gain the chambers that pitched upwards and they are supposed to be in this quicksand and culm.

Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin
MORNING EDITION
Three O'clock, A.M
December 19 1885.

APPALLING CALAMITY

Thirty Men Entombed in a Flooded Mine

**The Disaster Occurs at Nanticoke Yesterday
It is Caused by an Opened Seams Allowing the Water to
Run in the Slope**

THE WORK OF RESCUE

Heroic Efforts Being Made to Save the Victims

**Their Fate Not Yet Decided, but it is Believed they may be Reached
Alive - Great Excitement Prevailing**

Dispatch to the Gazette and Bulletin

WILKES-BARRE, Dec. 18. - Later advices from Nanticoke state that the men employed on the rock work in the No. 1 shaft are reported to have been imprisoned in the upper lifts of the rapid rising of the water. Several miners entered the slope at three o'clock with boats and will use every *** to reach the men. There is considerable excitement among those at the mouth of the slope, who are anxiously awaiting the return of the rescuing party.

LATER PARTICULARS

The disaster at Nanticoke is more appalling than was at first anticipated. The theory that the water broke through the bed of the river has been dispelled by the fact that the place whence the water came is over 4000 feet from the Susquehanna. In tracing the water, it was discovered that it flowed from a pool on the surface in which it had collected from some springs near by. The water had then followed the rock to a fault in the seam which was the first outlet for it. It then ran into the gangway and the slopes and then to the lower working of No. 1 slope. When the water was discovered rushing into the slope there were nearly 1000 men and boys at work up the various openings, but at the particular spot where the water first appeared there were not over 30 persons at work at the time. It is reported that there are now about 20 men in the face of one of the gangways who are shut in by the water and rubbish that have accumulated in the

west gangway of the second lift of the seam. It is impossible to say what their fate will be. Rescuing parties are now following the face of the chambers of that part of the gangway which is filled with water and rubbish with the hopes of reaching the men some time during the night. Officials say there is no danger of suffocation, as they will get plenty of air from the faces of the chambers that are not filled with water and rubbish. Pumps were put into operation this evening. They have a capacity of removing 3000 gallons of water per minute, and it is expected that the mine will be clear by Monday next. Old miners are of the opinion that the men who are shut up will be rescued alive.

THE IMPRISONED MINERS

The names of the entombed men as far as can be learned are Oliver, Frank, and William Rivler (brothers), William Clifford, William Donahue, William Eiga, Isaac Sharps, Daniel Lanarty, John Shutt, John Hawks, John Labar, August Vitual, Edward Hargraves, John Shinsky, Abram Lewis, and Edward Mathias.

At ten o'clock this evening, it is believed that there are fully thirty men in the slope but no other names can be given. The company is making every possible effort to reach the imprisoned men. The pumps are now at work and new ones are being rapidly put up. Another force of men has been sent down the air shaft that will endeavor to cut through to the spot where the imprisoned men are believed to be. This work will be kept up all night and day until the fate of the men is known.