

M/NM FATAL

1874-0001

May 30, 1874: Amador Mine (Gold), Amador, California; 5 Killed.

(From The Engineering and Mining Journal--June 27, 1874; pp 404)

An accident which lately took place in the Amador Mine, of California, is worthy of attention, as it was distinctively new in its method, and therefore may serve as a guide for the prevention of similar occurrences in other mines. The Sutter Creek Independent says that, "as the nighshift men were coming to the surface after 6 o'clock, in what is well known as the north shaft of the Amador Consolidated Mining Company, the cage, containing five men, reached within 5 feet of the surface, when it was suddenly and unexpectedly dashed to the bottom, falling 1,640 feet, the entire cable of No. 18 steel-wire falling on top of all. The cause of this distressing event was the giving way of the braces holding the reel within the grasp of the clutch, when, causing the wheel to slip away, it became at once like a wheel on a spindle, and was in a few seconds reveling with such speed that no power at had could check it. The cage itself weighs over 1,000 pounds, and the five men nearly as much more, one of them weighing over 200 pounds. To this must be added the constant paying out of the immense cable, weighing many tons, and 1,900 feet in length." The cage had safety catches, but these are designed to operate only when the rope breaks, or slacks, which did not occur in this case. The cage rushed down the shaft with all the conditions of its descent as usual, except that it was beyond control. It is worthy of note that all the men had the top or back of the head crushed; all, but one, lost an arm, or a leg, torn out. Both these results of the fall were probably due to the violent throw which would come when the cage suddenly stopped. The fall of the rope upon the sufferers does not seem to have had any effect.