

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF MINES

REPORT

ON

BLACK BLASTING POWDER EXPLOSION

BALTIMORE TUNNEL NO. 2 MINE

DELAWARE AND HUDSON COAL COMPANY

WILKES BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA.

June 5, 1919.

INVESTIGATORS:--

S. P. Howell  
L. C. Ilsley  
D. J. Parker  
G. S. McCaa  
Jesse Henson  
E. J. Gleim

Pittsburgh, Pa.,  
October 22, 1919.

Report by  
D. J. Parker  
S. P. Howell  
L. C. Ilsley

### INTRODUCTION

About 6:45 o'clock on Thursday morning, June 5, 1919, ninety-two (92) men lost their lives in Baltimore Tunnel No. 2 Mine, due to an explosion of black blasting powder, forty-four (44) were more or less seriously injured and seven (7) escaped uninjured.

The accident occurred only a short distance inside the mouth of Tunnel No. 2 Mine.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Location:- The Baltimore Tunnel No. 2 Mine is located in the East End District of Wilkes Barre, Pa., and the mouth of the tunnel in which the accident occurred is about one mile from the heart of the city.

Ownership:- The mine is owned and operated by the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company, General Offices Scranton, Penna.

The personnel of officials is as follows:

L. F. Loree, President, New York.

Charles Dorrance, Vice President and General Manager, Scranton, Pa.

R. H. Buchanan, Asst. General Manager, Scranton, Pa.

Number Employees:- The Baltimore Tunnel No. 2 Mine employed about four hundred fifty men at the time of the disaster.

Veins Worked:- Four veins are worked, as follows; Tunnel, Stanton or G. Vein, Baltimore, and Red Ash.

There is considerable variation in thickness of these seams, all of which are pitching. The tunnel in which the accident occurred is driven through the rock on a slight up grade and intersects the several seams worked. The tunnel is used for drainage, ventilation, and as a main haulage way.

#### STORY OF THE EXPLOSION.

On the morning of the accident the man trip was made up near the tunnel mouth as usual. The trip consisted of thirteen cars and carried, according to the best information, one hundred forty-three men, twenty-four kegs of black blasting powder, and some drills and possibly other tools.

The last, or thirteenth car, had barely cleared the tunnel mouth when, due to some trouble ahead with the trolley wire, the motor was detached from the trip and ran ahead 256 feet and stopped. (See Sketch A). On account of the delay occasioned, the men began getting out of the cars, at which time the explosion is said to have occurred.

Within an hour after the explosion, all men had been removed from the mine. Rescue apparatus was not used in the recovery work. (See Sketch B for outside features).

Bureau Activities:- Upon receipt of notice of the accident in Pittsburgh about noon of June 5, Bureau of Mines Safety Car No. 6 was immediately ordered to the scene of the accident. Upon receipt of subsequent information to the effect that all bodies had been recovered, the car was stopped enroute.

Mr. Henson arrived at the mine a few hours after the accident. Messrs. McCaa and Parker arrived the morning of June 6 and Messrs. Howell, Ilsley and Gleim arrived the morning of June 7.

#### EVIDENCE AND CONCLUSIONS

General:- A 300 volt trolley system is used in the haulage. Sketch No. 1 shows the type of mine cars used.

An unglazed powder was used in this mine and was issued to the miners in 25 pound metal containers, 7 inches in diameter and 27 inches in length. The powder itself was wrapped in double thickness heavy paper tube and folded back and forth on itself in links not unlike sausages.

Examination for Evidence of Cause of Ignition:- The mine cars, third and fourth from the rear end of the trip which contained the powder that ignited were outside of the mine and were examined carefully for signs of burning by electric arcs or flashes. Five powder cans and seven covers were seen in the tenth car and two cans and two covers were seen in the eleventh car. All of these were very closely examined for marks or burned spots due to electric current and none were found.



There were several tobacco pipes and miners' lamps of the open flame oil type in both of the cars. The metal parts of the cars such as bolts, angle iron braces, etc., were also closely examined for evidence of arcs and none were found.

Examination was made of the rails, bonding and trolley wire over the length occupied by the trip of cars at the time of the ignition. The trolley wire did not show any signs of recent arcing. The wire was loose from two of the hangers. The bonding of the rails was in poor condition. In two places there were open joints in the rails without either bonds or fish plates. In some places the bonds were not joined to both sides of the joint, and at the mouth of the tunnel the cross-bond was fastened only to one rail.

Since the examination by the writers was made on the second day after the disaster, the tunnel had already been cleaned up, and thus may have made more definite and conclusive evidence unavailable.

Discussion:- The possible causes of the ignition may be considered under three heads, namely: (1) electricity, (2) open lights, (3) lighted tobacco pipes:

1. (a) A drill or bar may have touched the trolley wire and produced a short circuit through the powder cans to the metal parts of the car and then to the rail.

(b) A powder can may have been brought into contact with the trolley wire while resting on the angle iron edge of the mine car thus causing an arc to burn through the can and set off the powder.

(c) The cans may have been lying in the car in such positions as to form a part of the return circuit in the case of open rail joints forcing the current to follow its way back through the metal parts of the car and burn through the thin metal of the cans.

2. One of the miner's lamps may have been sitting close enough to one of the cans so that the flame could play against it and heat the powder up to the ignition point. One of the cans may have come open and enough loose powder scattered to ignite the rest from a spark from the open flame of one of the lamps.

3. It is understood that it is sometimes the practice of miners to borrow powder from each other when not having brought enough in for the day's work. In this case there may have been an exchange of powder going on when a spark from a pipe could have fallen into some of the loose powder and started the ignition.

Taking up each one of these theories:-

*Not  
omit?*

If a drill or bar produced a short circuit through the cans to the rail, it is hardly to be questioned that any arc sufficient to burn a hole in a can will ~~not~~ also ignite the powder in spite of the paper wrapping on it. Enough surface of cans might be in contact to carry a large current without appreciable heating until the cans were disturbed enough to draw a dangerous arc. There were no bars or drills about at the time of the examination nor did any of the cans examined show any marks to support this theory.

The length of the powder can and the height of the mine car

are such that a can could rest on the iron top edge of the car and touch the trolley wire; trolley wire is hung on right side of tunnel going in. Normally, with the men acquainted with the facts that the trolley wire was so close on that side and that there was running water at that side as well, it seems hardly probable that a man would *get out of a car on that side and -* rest a can on that side of a car in getting out. Even if he did,

as far as could be told from inspection of the construction of the cars, there was not normally a complete circuit from the angle iron edge down through the wheels to the rails. The circuit would have to be completed by making connection between the ends of the bolts holding the strap irons to the sides of the cars and the heads of the bolts which are set flush in the car floor and which hold the bearing housings to the car.

It is possible that one set of wheels of a car was on one side of an open joint and the other set on the other side of the joint. The joint could then be bridged across by cans in contact with both sets of axle bolt heads in the car floor. No open rail joints were found near enough under the burned spots in the tunnel roof to support the theory of bridged joints.

Any current following the couplings could probably get through to the rails only by the following of such cross ~~rods~~ <sup>rods (?)</sup> under the car floor as were in contact with the coupling rods and then up into the strap iron on the car sides. The circuit to ground could then be completed by a powder can in contact with the bearing housing bolt heads and the ends of the strap iron bolts. (See sketch No. 2).

The second and third theories have support in the fact that several pipes were found inside the cars and a number of miners' lamps were both on the floor and attached to the bails of dinner buckets where the flame could easily play against the side of a can and heat the powder to the point of ignition in a comparatively short time.

Conclusions:- The writers are strongly of the opinion that open lights were responsible for the ignition in the Baltimore Tunnel No. 2 Mine and for "safety-first" reasons, because such lights increase mine hazards, with respect to initiation of gas explosions, mine fires, and igniting of explosives, <sup>They</sup> look forward to the time when open lights will no longer be permitted for use in mines.

The rule in the 1918 anthracite laws, (Rule 1, Article XII) that "the owner, operator, and superintendent of a mine or colliery shall use every precaution to insure the safety of the workmen in all cases, whether provided for in this act or not, and shall have supervision, direction, and control of the mine foreman and all other mine employees", is only very general. A very definite rule should be made and enforced so that there will be no mistakes in the handling and transportation of explosives.

The Bureau's representatives are indebted to officials of the company for the many courtesies extended and the splendid spirit of cooperation manifested, in that every facility was placed at the disposal of the Bureau representatives for securing the necessary data concerning the accident.

VERDICT CORONER'S JURY

An inquisition taken and indented at Wilkes Barre in said county, before Charles L. Ashley, Coroner of said County, this 23rd, 24th and 25th day of June, 1919, pursuant to a notice from Thomas J. Williams, inspector of mines of the Eleventh District attached to and made a part of this return upon view of the body of James J. McClosky, then and there lying dead, and upon the oaths of W. F. Otto, C. C. Simons, James Ashman, and T. F. Barry, David David, and Casimir Sieminsk, six good and lawful men of the county aforesaid and at least four of them having had practical experience in and about the mines and none of them at present being employed in or about the mines where the accident happened, nor being personally interested, charged to inquire on the part of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, when and where and by what means the said James J. McClosky came to his death, and upon their respective oaths do say that it appears from the view of the body and from the evidence produced before them, that said James J. McClosky came to his death on the fifth day of June, A. D. 1919, at Wilkes Barre, about 6:40 o'clock A. M., in the Baltimore Tunnel No. 2 of the Hudson Coal Company as a result of being burned or suffocated from the effects of an explosion of blasting powder which was being carried in the same mine car with workmen, and after a careful inspection of the scene of the accident and examination of all witnesses who seemed to have any knowledge of the facts, it is decided that the powder became ignited in a manner unknown to the jury.

The jury has heard all the witnesses that survived the accident and some of them state they saw lighted lamps on trip of cars. We also heard the testimony of the results of the tests made by the mine inspectors and electrical experts who show that it was impossible to reproduce the explosion by bringing a keg of powder in contact with the wire under varying conditions, such as prevailed ordinarily in the mines. The testimony shows that the disaster occurred so quickly that the eye could not possibly detect the cause of the explosion. The tunnel itself is low and the wire must be a few inches lower than the roof of the tunnel. The phrase "The wire is hot", is a typical reference heard around the mines to warn men not to touch the wire. In view of the testimony given by the survivors it is impossible to determine the exact manner in which the disaster occurred. As the witnesses were practically all in total darkness, much of the evidence is a matter of conjecture which makes it impossible to fix the direct cause of the explosion.

We, therefore, do recommend that in order to minimize dangers from blasting powders and explosives carried in the workings of the mines, all powder or explosives shall be transported in separate and distinct trains; that in no case shall it be permitted that men ride in the same cars or in the same train with said powder or explosives.

2. Where electric motive power is used, the powder should be encased in containers of non-conducting and non-combustible material, and that the only persons permitted to accompany said powder or explosives on cars or trains, supplied with such motive power, shall be the persons

necessary to man the mechanism employed.

3. Where powder or explosives are to be taken down a shaft by carriage, we recommend that after said powder or explosives has been removed from the protection provided for its storage, it shall be deposited a safe distance from the point at which men are gathered for entrance to the mine carriage. After such powder or explosives is placed at the shaft, or at the entrance to the various veins, a mine foreman or other qualified person shall see that the men do not call collectively for their powder or explosives, but that each shall be served separately.

4. We recommend that the miners boxes shall not be assembled in any one place; that at least 50 feet shall separate any two of said boxes where powder is stored, this to prevent the assemblage of men in the direct vicinity of the dangerous quantity of powder or explosives.

5. Powder containers should be inspected before they are distributed to men to be carried by them to their places of labor.

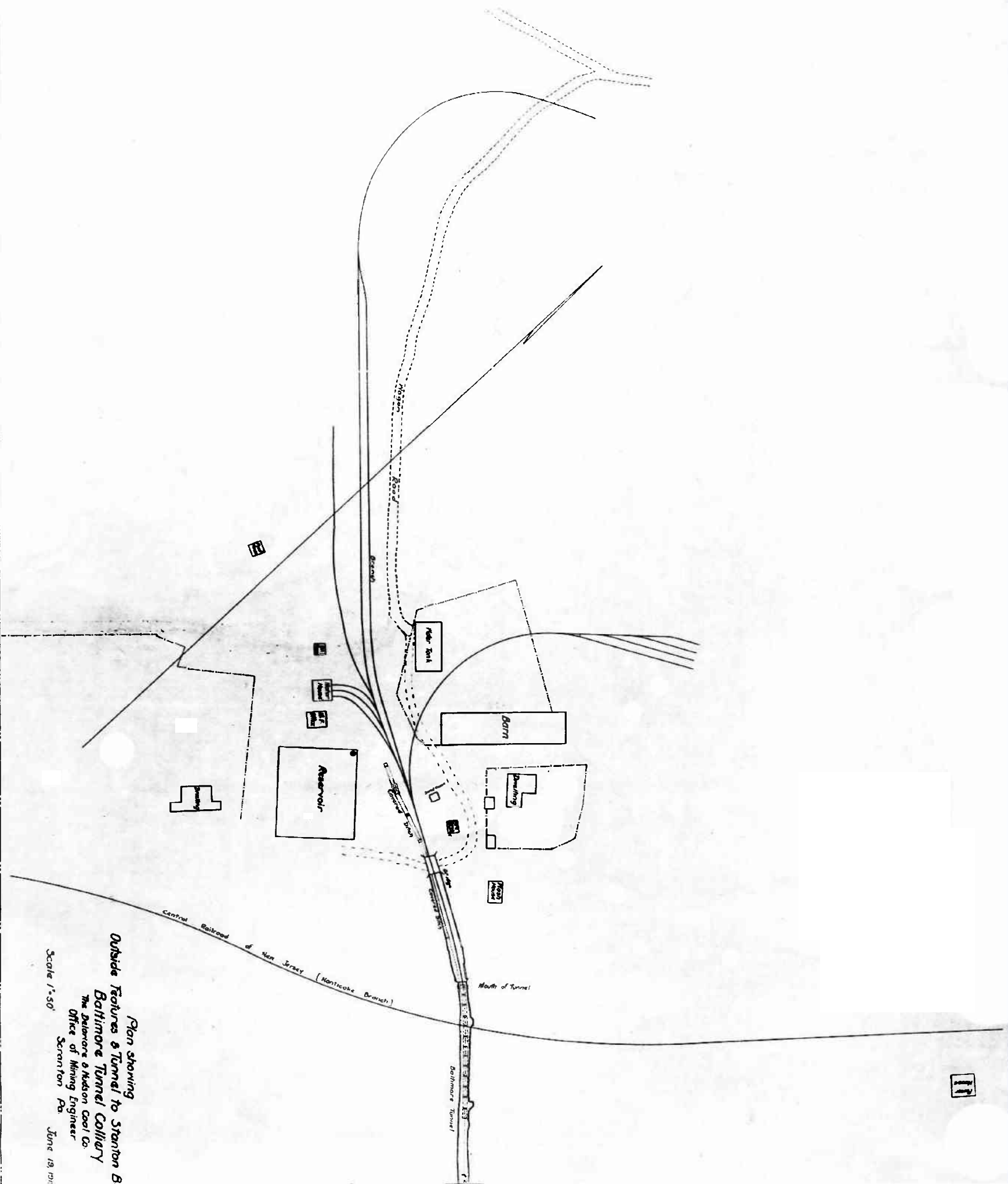
6. In the carrying of dynamite by men, we discover a very dangerous practice in that the high explosive is put into boxes and so carried by said men. We recommend that dynamite shall be deposited in canvas bags, reinforced by leather, with two catches to fasten cover, a hook or ring to hold the miner's ticket, and a long strap to place over the shoulder for convenience in carrying. A competent man at the powder house shall place such dynamite in such box. Carrying by box should be stopped immediately.

7. All powder or explosives to be issued by mine foreman, or qualified person, keeping himself posted on supplies of the men, who shall see to it that no man shall obtain or have at one time, a sufficient quantity of explosives to create a menace to himself or to others in the same or nearby working places, nor shall he issue powder to any one but a qualified miner.

8. Mining Laws of the State of Pennsylvania we do find are rendered obsolete by the progress in mining methods and a failure of properly constituted legislative forces. To enact safeguards timed to the developments as they occur. We recommend of Governor William C. Sproul that he authorize the chief of the State Department of Mines to proceed at once in appointment of experts who will revise the mining laws and regulations, particularly as to such new equipment as has been introduced. Electricity as a factor in mining is wholly ignored by such laws as exist. We ask immediate action for amelioration of these omissions.

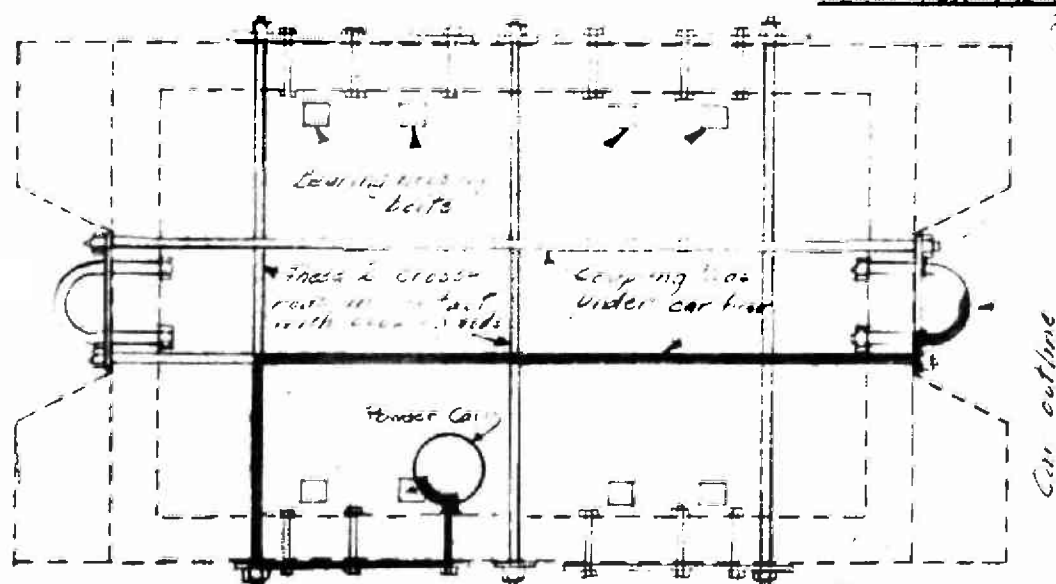
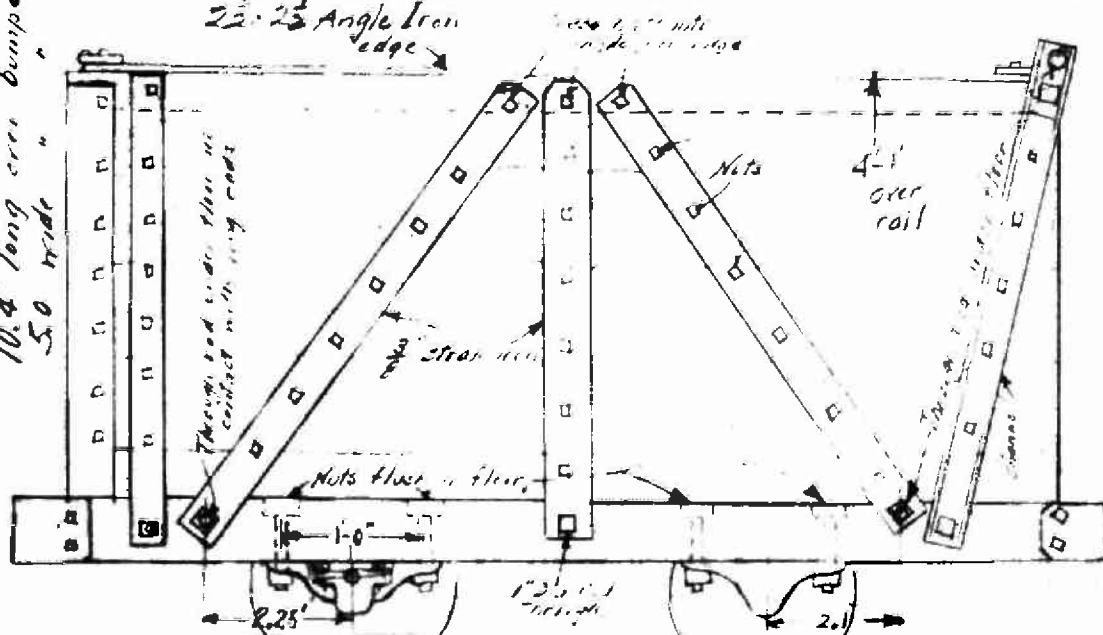
A committee of electrical engineers, mining engineers, and practical mining men should be appointed to confer at once with the State Department of Mines and to draft all such additional regulations as will fit the present condition of mining and meet the problems that miners of this day must face. Continual reference to mining practice and comparative attention to the laws governing the industry should be the rule of caution from this time forward.



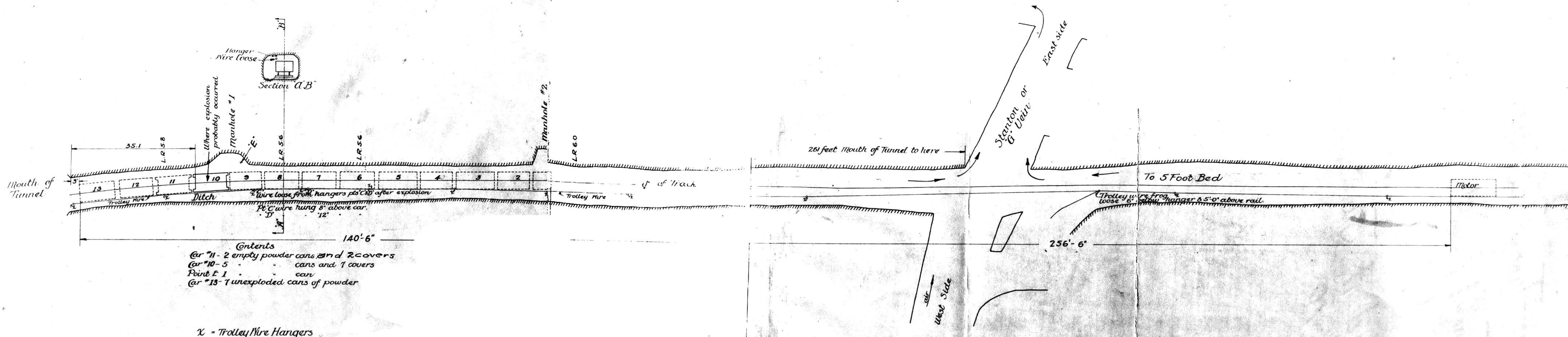


Plan showing  
 Outside Features & Tunnel to Stanton B  
 Baltimore Tunnel Colliery  
 The Delaware & Hudson Coal Co.  
 Office of Mining Engineer  
 Scranton Pa. June 18, 1911

Scale 1"=50'



A possible path for current in metal units of 4<sup>th</sup> car shown filled in solid.



BALTIMORE TUNNEL COLLIERY

PLAN OF TUNNEL FROM MOUTH TO STANTON BED

SHOWING POSITION OF TRIP OF CARS AT TIME OF ACCIDENT JUNE 5, 1919

THE DELAWARE & HUDSON COAL CO.

OFFICE OF MINING ENGINEER

SCRANTON PA.

SCALE 1"=10'

JUNE 21, 1919

(Sketch A)



## OFFICIAL LIST OF DEAD

The Hudson Coal Company today announced the official list of those killed in the Baltimore Tunnel disaster. It contains eighty-nine names, and one, Michael Nestor, is given as missing.

The list of victims follows:

WILLIAM BOHN, runner, Spring street.  
CHARLES POPHERDINIS, miner, 16 Pulaski street, Georgetown.  
BERNARD GILLESPIE, miner, 68 Maxwell street.  
STANLEY FORESTAL, runner, 39 Penn street.  
SLACA TAMINSKY, runner, Baltimore lane, Wilkes-Barre Twp.  
GEORGE HANZA, team driver, 109 North Fulton street.  
GENE GETNER, (boarding,) runner, 303 Coal street.  
MICHAEL CONNELL, miner, 62 Kidder street.  
JOHN BROCHOASKI, laborer, New Hancock street.  
MICHAEL PLACHTA, miner, Hayes lane, city.  
STANLEY TAVGONSKI, miner, 46 Logan street.  
HARRY LINTESKI, miner, 114 Logan street.  
GEORGE KUBICK, miner, 75 North Empire street.  
JOSEPH BORDEN, laborer, 29 Thompson street.  
LLEWELLYN PERROTT, Co. Miner, 28 Charles street, Parsons.  
ANTHONY STANITIS, miner, 57 Oakwood lane.  
JOSEPH HART, team driver, Hart street.  
OSCAR BIDWELL, miner, 209 Kidder street.  
VICTOR HARRIS, runner, 46 School street.  
EDWARD OLIVER, team driver, 283 Kidder street.  
MICHAEL HARRIS, headman, 295 Scott street.  
WALTER KUBICK, team driver, 75 North Empire street.  
JAMES MURPHY, runner, 23 Oakwood lane.  
JOHN MILESKE, laborer, 38 North Empire street.  
RICHARD WEICHAERT, miner, Baltimore lane.  
JAMES J. MCLOSKEY, company miner, 413 East Market street.  
JOHN J. MCLOSKEY, miner, 108 North Empire street.  
JOHN WALLACE, miner, 51 Reno lane.  
PATRICK LENAHA, bratticeman, 345 Scott street.  
MICHAEL BURCHA, laborer, 72 Walnut street, Georgetown.  
MICHAEL LESTANES, miner, 24 North Empire street.  
JOSEPH CHESNOCK, laborer, 104 North Empire street.  
GEORGE BUNZA, miners' laborer, 10 Walnut alley, Georgetown.  
(Boards with Mrs. Rice.)  
JOHN POCHKA, miner, North Empire street.  
WILLIAM HOGAN, laborer, 17 Lincoln street.  
JOHN D. JONES, company miner, 73 North Meade street.  
ANDREW J. KINCJA, miner, 134 Logan street.  
PATRICK O'MALLY, assistant tracklayer, 63 North Meade street.  
JOHN J. VAN NORT, miner, 19 Pine street.  
MICHAEL CUTLARKSKI, miners' laborer, 108 North Empire street.  
JOHN RUSHTON, tracklayer, 36 Custer street.  
FRANK GASNER, 31 Carbon lane.  
GEORGE KLEPPER, miner, 21 Walnut street, Georgetown.

JOHN YASKULSKI, miner 763 Lehigh street.  
JOSEPH POMEZIN, miners' laborer, 123 North Empire street.  
EDWARD GEORGE, miner, 1017 East Northampton street.  
JAMES M'GUIRE, team driver, 248 North Washington street.  
JOHN GOLONGO, laborer, 101 Fulton street.  
FRED DIPPENWORTH, runner, Spring street.  
JOHN KOWATSKO, 129 North Empire street.  
JOSEPH HOPPER, miner, 115 North Empire street.  
JOHN STAVEYASH, miner, 101 Fulton street.  
MICHAEL WASHICK, miner, Hemlock street, Georgetown.  
ANTHONY DZENIS, miner, 72 North Fulton street.  
JACOB WOZICK, miners' laborer.  
MICHAEL REMAKUS, miner, 695 East Northampton street.  
JOHN BURCHTA, miner laborer, 72 N. Walnut street, Georgetown.  
JOHN PENONISH, miner, 13 Cross lane.  
EDMUND BREW, miner, 9 Hayes lane.  
FRED SPADER, bratticeman, Walnut street, Georgetown.  
FRANK WEICHAERT, miner's laborer, 65 Corbett lane.  
JAMES HIERN, miner's laborer, 1017 Northampton street.  
ALICK CICHON, miner, 36 Slattery street, Georgetown.  
ANTHONY NARKUNAS, laborer, No. 3 Patch, Wilkes-Barre Twp.  
WILLIAM HOMICK, miner, 34 Oakwood lane.  
ADAM VOYCHICK, miner's laborer.  
WILLIAM STENKA, miner, Koon's Hotel, N. Hancock street.  
CHARLES MANTVILLE, miner's laborer, Sherman House, North Sherman street.  
SAMUEL TOPEKA, 43 Walnut street, Georgetown.  
JOSEPH LIPENSKI, 124 North Empire street.  
SAMUEL SUBIACK, miner, 127 North Empire street.  
JOSEPH POLINSKI, miner, 45 Chestnut street, Georgetown.  
MICHAEL KAHWTI, miner, 21 Hayes lane.  
ANDREW DREVENOCK, miner, 107 North Empire street.  
STANLEY SMIKEL, Miner's laborer.  
PAUL MILCHICK, miner's laborer, 861 East Northampton street.  
KOSTY VICKESKY, miner, 68 North Fulton street.  
ANDREW FELECTO, miner's laborer, 119 Reno lane.  
STEPHEN DEMCHACK, miner's laborer, 124 North Empire street.  
JOSEPH YARIS, team driver, 120 Logan street.  
GEORGE COHEN, laborer, 22 Walnut street, Georgetown.  
FELIX BORITZ, miner's laborer, corner Carbon lane and Coal street.  
JOSEPH ROPICKA, team driver, 36 Hollenback street, Georgetown.  
JOHN FEDOCK, runner, 28 Hollenback street.  
ANDREW MURASKI, team driver, Boulevard street.  
JOHN ZELINSKY, 46 Logan street.  
POWELL KUDA, miner's laborer.  
LAZLO MARJAZICZ, 75 North Hancock.  
MICHAEL CONNORS, runner, 24 School street.  
JOHN GREGLOCK, miner, 776 North Pennsylvania avenue.  
JOSEPH STREMUS, 113 Logan street, aged 30, single.  
ALEX TRUSIAK, 73 North Empire street, aged 29, married, one child.

# NEARLY 100 DEAD IN WILKES-BARRE MINE DISASTER

## Kegs of Powder, Carried Upon a Workmen's Train, Against Law, Explode

*Special Dispatch to The North American*

WILKES-BARRE, Pa., June 5.—The greatest of anthracite mine disasters since that at Avondale in 1865, when the lives of 110 men were snuffed out, occurred at the Baltimore No. 2 tunnel of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company, East End, this city, early today, the lives of eighty-three mine workers being sacrificed on the altar of negligence and forty-three others being burned, a score per-haps fatally.

Five kegs of black powder, transported in violation of law on the same "trip" of cars on which about 150 started under a "Safety First" sign for their work underground, flashed into a flame and the fire spread out over the length of the trip covering the men like a blanket. They were caught with little chance of escape and they met awful deaths.

Direct cause of the accident is uncertain, but it is known that electric sparks from an overhead trolley wire were brought into contact with the powder. Eyewitnesses, men who escaped from the veritable inferno, declare that the wire was loose. Company officials make the bold statement that the wire was intact and that fault does not lie with them.

Certain, however, is the fact that powder was in the cars and that men were riding the trip. And this is against the mine laws and the safety-first rules of the coal companies.

A few escaped from the hell of smoke and fire. They escaped because they rolled into dirty sulphur water ditches along the sides of the tunnel. They put out the flames, and after what seemed

weeks of time offered their help to the wounded who lay piled in heaps about.

The flames caused most of the deaths, but the lack of air which came with the smoke suffocated many.

The accident occurred at 6.45 o'clock. The watches of several of the victims stopped at that time. The "trip," made up of fourteen cars, had two cars in which there was powder. In one was five kegs and in another was seven. The seven were found intact after the cars had been removed from the tunnel.

The fourteen small mine cars are used every day by the miners going to their work, two miles underground. The "trip" was ready to leave at 6.40 today and John McGroarty was in charge as motorman and Jimmy Kehoe as brakeman. McGroarty started the electric motor which pulls the cars and had gone only fifty feet from the mouth of the tunnel when there was a blinding flash. Men fell from their seats, others were knocked over. Some jumped and they piled up in heaps all about.

So intense was the fire that it burned the clothing from the men's bodies. It seared the faces of some beyond recognition. It burned the arms of a few from their bodies. It licked away parts of limbs and it killed some instantly. A few rolled and a few crawled to the ditches. Some died while trying to save themselves, and a few succeeded. Then came the great columns of smoke; with it the men tumbled over like flies. The flames

Continued on Page Thirteen

21073  
6/6/19 June 6, 1919  
North American

# NEARLY A HUNDRED DEAD IN A COAL MINE DISASTER

Continued From Page One

had weakened them and the smoke suffocated them.

At the point of the accident, the intake of air is 135,000 cubic feet per minute. With this draught the flames and the smoke were pulled directly over the men.

The fire lasted but a few seconds, and the smoke was gone in a few minutes. On the outside of the tunnel a gust was seen to be hurled from the mouth. It was the sight of trouble. Power was shut off, and then cries of the injured came in frightful agony from the tunnel. Men rushed in and they rushed out as quickly. It was an awful sight which greeted them. The bodies of men were roasting, clothing was still burning, charred flesh was seen. Hose and water were rushed in and a stream was poured on the men. In a little while the work of clearing the mine was under way.

Calls went through the length and breadth of Wyoming valley for ambulances, for doctors, nurses and supplies. Clergymen came, and then the relatives and the crowds of the curious gathered at the mouth of the tunnel.

Rescuers started to carry out the bodies. On a little patch of green, not far from the company office and a short distance from the tunnel, they began to deposit bodies. One by one they were stretched out on the grass. A steady stream just seemed to come from the tunnel. Some were dead, some were living.

## Flames Caused Most Deaths

Flames caused the greater loss of life. Others who were burned and were trying to reach safety died of suffocation.

When rescuers reached the tunnel there were dead and dying scattered everywhere. The injured were rapidly removed, sent to hospitals as quickly as ambulances could be provided, and the dead were brought out and placed in tiers on the green.

Doctors and nurses were somewhat late in reaching the scene. This was because many of them were abed when the accident happened. Hospitals quickly filled and morgues were filled to overflowing.

East End last night was the scene of great gaiety. That section of the city welcomed home boys from the 35th field artillery; bands were out, flags were flying, redfire burned and there was general rejoicing. Some of the dead were fathers of returning soldiers.

Among the victims was John McCloskey, old baseball pitcher, at one

time a member of the Philadelphia National League club. He later played in the International League and in the New York State League.

Hundreds of women, men and children gathered about the tunnel, shrieking and crying, they lifted the blankets from the men. They were terrified at the sight. Women fainted. Men lost their nerve and children ran away in fright.

Rescuers got into the mine with hose and played streams of water on flames. While they were doing this the cries of the dying and the injured were heard. The fire was extinguished in a remarkably short time.

## THE DEAD

The identified dead are:  
Lelliwyn Parrot, Parsons.  
John Rutstein, Wilkes-Barre.  
Simon Shoblik, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Kivotchke, Wilkes-Barre.  
Stephen Demchak, Wilkes-Barre.  
Walter Kubic, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Kubic, Wilkes-Barre.  
Tony Streamer, Wilkes-Barre.  
Richard Rickett, Wilkes-Barre.  
Edward Oliver, Wilkes-Barre.  
George Gettner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Patrick O'Mally, Wilkes-Barre.  
Charles Logan, Wilkes-Barre.  
Slack Tomblinski, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Vannort, Wilkes-Barre.  
Patrick Lenahan, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Harris, Wilkes-Barre.  
Victor Harris, Wilkes-Barre.  
Martin Maraski, Wilkes-Barre.  
William Bone, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Connell, Wilkes-Barre.  
Edward Connors, Wilkes-Barre.  
John McCloskey, Wilkes-Barre.  
Joseph Hort, Wilkes-Barre.  
Stanley Forestal, Wilkes-Barre.  
William Bircha, Wilkes-Barre.  
James Murphy, Wilkes-Barre.  
Joseph Schenay, Wilkes-Barre.  
William Stanagitis, Wilkes-Barre.  
William Stanvak, Wilkes-Barre.  
Edward Marasky, driver, Georgetown.  
Charles Poppardinis, miner, Georgetown.  
Bernard Gillespie, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Adam Bosinski, miner, Parsons.  
John Brochaski, laborer, Wilkes-Barre.  
Stanley Plachta, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Harry Linetski, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Joseph Bordon, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Oscar Bidwell, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Wallace, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Buna, laborer, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Lestanes, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
John James, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Lyons, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Andrew Kincja, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Gologue, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Greenlock, miner, Wilkes-Barre.

Michael Cutlarski, miner, Wilkes-Barre.  
John Kwotchka, miner, Wilkes-Barre.

## INJURED

The City Hospital reported one unidentified man dead and the following injured:

Tony Mattavage, condition fair.  
Charles Carosy, serious.  
Anthony Zabo, good.  
Andrew Ondich, serious.  
Unknown, serious.  
James Fisher, fair.  
Tony Strumo, fair.  
Steven Robertuse, fair.  
Patrick Fisher, good.  
Metro Pestavsky, fair.  
John Natrasky, fair.  
Unknown, serious.  
Unknown, serious.  
Alex Trushock, serious.  
Andrew Kempa, fair.  
Joseph Perry, fair.  
Unknown, serious.  
Mike Vatcha, good.  
Clement Kozinski, good.  
George Rumitis, good.  
Unknown, serious.  
Unknown, serious.  
William Reubmosky, good.  
Andrew Hobr, fair.  
James Murphy, serious.  
Joseph Straums, serious.  
Mike Fedash, serious.  
Joe Begner, serious.  
Unknown, serious.  
Unknown, serious.  
William Davies, serious.

Mercy Hospital records show the following as admitted for treatment, most of them being in a serious condition:

William Oliver, Wilkes-Barre, serious.  
Joseph Fanigo, Heights, fair.  
Edward Muraski, Parsons.  
John Greylock, Brookside, serious.  
Gus Hudrick, Wilkes-Barre, fair.  
Frank Lowery, Wilkes-Barre.  
Richard Owens, Wilkes-Barre, went home.  
Dominic Rogalli, Wilkes-Barre.  
Walter Rukosky, Wilkes-Barre, went home.  
Frank Hartman, Wilkes-Barre.  
Stanley Machanus, Wilkes-Barre.  
Michael Flster, Wilkes-Barre.  
William Daruski, Wilkes-Barre.  
John McGroarty, Wilkes-Barre, went home.  
John Greylock, Wilkes-Barre, serious.

time a member of the Philadelphia National League club. He later played in the International League and in the New York State League.

Hundreds of women, men and children gathered about the tunnel, shrieking and crying, they lifted the blankets from the men. They were terrified at the sight. Women fainted. Men lost their nerve and children ran away in fright.

Rescuers got into the mine with hose and played streams of water on flames. While they were doing this the cries of the dying and the injured were heard. The fire was extinguished in a remarkably short time.

## Miner Describes Disaster

John Connon, who was on the motor when the accident occurred today, said:

"The trip forms at the mouth of the tunnel each morning. The trip today formed at 6.25. John McGroarty was the motorman and Jimmy Kehoe the brakeman. I was riding on the head end of the trip, and the cars were filled with men. In the last car were several kegs of powder. I do not know whether any men were in this car. The last car was just inside the mouth of the tunnel when McGroarty, the motor runner, noticed the wire hanging low. He stopped the trip and started ahead a few hundred feet to ascertain the cause of the low wire. He had traveled ahead a few feet when he again stopped and told me to go out and tell another motorcar runner on the outside, William Williams, to pull the trip out again. McGroarty also shouted to the men in the cars that they had better get out and walk. I saw some night-shift men going out, and I told them to notify Williams to put the trip cars out. They said they would.

"The men in the cars were in the act of climbing out and the night-shift men had just left when there was a blinding flash. There was not much concussion and the flame was gone in a little while. Every man in the tunnel was affected by



# Chief of Bureau of Mines Also Condemns Coal Company's Practice of Permitting Miners to Carry Powder Into Tunnel on Same Trip of Cars on Which They Ride to Work—Issues Order Prohibiting Operators to Risk The Lives of Workers in The Future.

## DECLARES KEGS WHICH CONTAINED THE BLACK POWDER WERE IN BAD CONDITION

**Head of State Department Determined to Make Work Safer For the Men Who Toil Beneath the Surface—C. W. Wagner, Assistant Foreman, and Arthur Dymond Testify at Probe Today—Committee of Three Mine Inspectors Named to Examine Evidence and Determine Cause of Accident**

Following an all morning conference in the offices of the Hudson Coal Company, another trip was made into the Baltimore Tunnel and the fatal spot where so many miners lost their lives Thursday morning was inspected by a dozen or more state mine inspectors, under the supervision of Seward Button, chief of the State Mine Bureau. The Miners' Union was represented by local officials and several members of the national organization accompanied the party through the tunnel.

Chief Button issued a statement at noon today in which he condemned the coal company's practice of permitting miners to carry gunpowder into the tunnel on the same trip of cars on which they rode every morning. He discovered that this had been customary for some little time and immediately issued an order prohibiting the coal company to risk the lives of miners in the future. "At best," he said, "even under ideal conditions, it is extremely dangerous for miners to carry gunpowder and from now on this practice must cease."

**Says the Foreman.**  
The chief of the Mine Bureau also made a discovery this morning that caused him to bitterly score the coal company's foremen for not reporting the bad condition of their present cans in which gunpowder is packed. Following an investigation he found the cans in such condition that he pronounced them extremely dangerous to send into the mine and ordered them all replaced.

**Button's Statement.**  
When pressed by a Times-Leader reporter for a statement at 1 o'clock this afternoon, Chief Button said:

"After spending two days in a most rigid investigation in an attempt to determine probable causes of the mine disaster, we have failed thus far to find a positive solution to the question as to how the powder carried in the third and fourth cars ignited. There are several ways in which this may have occurred. However, we have discovered this morning, in examining the coal company's surplus stock of powder in storage that several of the cans while not absolutely defective, are in bad condition. The discovery caused me to issue an order today condemning these cans. They are in a very bad condition and I would not consider them safe for men who are compelled to handle the explosive.  
"I have also stopped the carrying of

powder in the same cars with miners. This practice, I must stop. While we have not fully ascertained the causes of the accident, I am positive that had the miners not carried the gun powder on the morning of the disaster, no one would have been killed. The real powder car, the last of the trip of thirteen was intact after the explosion. None of this powder ignited. For this reason I am inclined to believe that little weight can be attached to the theory that because of a broken trolley wire the rails became charged and caused the powder to ignite in the third and fourth cars. Had this really happened the powder car in the car

would have gone the same route.

"I am not able to say whether it was negligence on part of the company that resulted in the men losing their lives. The defective cans however, in which the powder may have been ignited from a spark, either from the trolley wire or from the men's pipes, certainly makes it appear that someone did not take all the precautions they could in order to prevent such a disaster.

"Inspectors are on the ground from several sections of the State and we are not going to rest until we can dig to the very bottom of the matter and ascertain positively where the fault lay on the fatal morning."

## RELIEF FUND

The following contributions have been sent to the Times-Leader for the Relief Fund started to relieve the suffering of survivors of men killed in the Baltimore Tunnel:

Times-Leader	\$ 100.00
Peoples Outfitting Co.	100.00
Isaac Long's	100.00
Justin Bergman	100.00
Benesch & Sons	100.00
The Hub	25.00
Penn Tobacco Co.	200.00
Planter's Nut & Chocolate Co.	200.00
Duncan & Homer Co.	100.00
Simon Long's Sons	100.00
Joseph S. Coons & Co.	50.00
Michael C. Norton	10.00
John C. Madden	5.00
Cash	.25
Cash	1.00
W. Howard Heimbach	25.00
Louis Epstein, 70 East Market street	3.00
P. S. Pissott	3.00
"F. J."	5.00
C. F. Murray-Smith Co.	100.00
Weitzenkorn's	100.00
S. J. Strauss	25.00
R. Baur & Sons, employes	30.00
James H. Kenney	10.00
Friend	5.00
Friend	1.00
Friend	5.00
Dr. F. P. Archer	5.00
Cash	3.00

Totals ..... \$1,511.25

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JUNE 7, 1919

# 78 WORKMEN ARE KILLED IN BLAST AT WILKES-BARRE

Relatives of Victims Present Pitiful Picture as  
Bodies Are Brought to Surface—Explosion  
Sets Fire to Workings.

## SCORES DIE IN HOSPITAL; MANY STILL UNIDENTIFIED

WILKES-BARRE, Pa., June 5.—Seventy-eight men lost their lives in the Baltimore No. 2 tunnel of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Co. explosion and fire today and 31 were injured, according to a list given out by the company officials at noon today.

Forty-one bodies have been identified and 36 remain unidentified. The company's injured list is not complete and it is certain that the number of injured will reach about 40.

The accident occurred shortly before 7 o'clock. A train of empty cars was sent to the mouth of the tunnel to take the men into the chamber. One hundred men piled into the cars which were drawn by an electric motor. Near the end of the tunnel was a car of black powder. McGroarty drove the motor.

When 200 feet in the tunnel the trolley broke and fell. Sparks caught the powder and instantly there was an explosion that sent the bodies of men flying in all directions. The force was so terrific that it was heard throughout the greater part of the city.

Flames caused the greater losses of life, many of the bodies being burned to a crisp. Other men who were burned and were trying to reach the tunnel mouth died of suffocation.

### Dead Scattered Everywhere.

When rescuers reached the tunnel there were dead and dying scattered everywhere. The injured were rapidly removed, sent to the hospitals as

quickly as ambulances could be provided, and the dead were brought out and placed in tiers on the green.

Doctors and nurses were somewhat late in reaching the scene. This was because many of them were abed when the accident happened. Hospitals quickly filled, and morgues were filled to overflowing.

East End last night was the scene of great gaiety. That section of the city welcomed home boys from the Three Hundred and Eleventh Field Artillery. Bands were out, flags were flying, red fire burned, people laughed and shouted. Within 12 hours all was changed, many homes being made sad. Some of the soldiers had their joy turned into despair. Their fathers were among the dead.

Identification of the bodies is almost impossible. Many of them are charred beyond recognition. The limbs of some, the heads of others, are missing. At 8:30 a. m. it was said between 75 and 100 were killed or had died from injuries.

### Identification Is Hard.

The death list is rapidly growing. As the bodies were being removed from the mine, living and dead, they were piled up on the green about the colliery. Many of the injured lived but a short time. Hundreds of women, men and children gathered about the tunnel. Shrieking and crying, they lifted the blankets from the men. They were terrified at the sight. Women fainted, men lost their nerve, and children ran away in fright. Bodies of scores have been removed to the morgue. There the work of identification is being carried out with little success. Brave men and women are seeking to aid the relatives, to give them news, but the scene is pitiful.

It has been established that the explosion was caused by a break in the trolley wire. This wire gained contact with the powder and sparks did the rest.

### Many Are Suffocated.

The death list was made large by the flames and the sulphur fumes which filled the tunnel. The fire did not last long, but it was long enough to make a heavy death toll. Many of the men were killed outright, parts of bodies being found in the wreckage of life and property.

Rescuers got into the mine with a hose and played streams of water on the flames. While they were doing this the cries of the dying and the injured were heard above the roar of the flames.

There will be scores of widows and orphans as a result of today's catastrophe, next to the greatest this section of the anthracite coal field has seen.

### Law Was Violated.

Today's accident is a direct result of violation of the law. Permission was given the men to ride the trip to their place of work and a special train was provided for that purpose. On these cars special seats are built and the train was in daily use.

It is a violation of the mine law to carry powder on a train. The law is specific that powder and other explosives must be transported alone. There were a dozen kegs of powder in one of the rear cars, all of which were exploded.

Mine officials and state officials were on the scene promptly but their efforts were directed solely to the work of rescue. There were enough men to meet all needs for the work inside the mine, but the chief trouble during the early hours was in getting nurses, doctors and supplies.

PITTSBURGH CHRONICLE TELEGRAPH

JUNE 5, 1919.

Noted by JWP



# MOTORMAN GIVES FACTS REGARDING EXPLOSION IN BALTIMORE TUNNEL

John McGroarty Testifies Before Chief of Bureau of Mines and Inspectors—Tells of Being Notified About Sagging Wire and Investigating its Cause

## INTIMATES THAT LIGHTED MATCH MAY HAVE BEEN THROWN INTO KEG

Gruesome Story is Told by Jas. Kehoe, Who Was Brakeman on Ill-Fated Trip of Cars—Officials Visit the Mine and Inspect Scene of City's Worst Disaster

An investigation conducted by Chief of the Bureau of Mines, Seward Button, and a half dozen mine inspectors together with D. & H. officials was conducted this morning at the office of Baltimore tunnel, in close proximity to where the catastrophe occurred. A number of eye witnesses to the tragedy gave what information they had. The probe developed some new side lights in connection with the accident and two plausible theories in which the powder might have been exploded were advanced, one was that an employees mine drill might have come in contact with the trolley wire setting off the powder and the other was that one of the lids of a powder can might have jarred loose and fire from a match thrown carelessly by one of the men might have been responsible.

### John McGroarty Motorman Testifies.

Motorman and brakeman James Kehoe were the two principal witnesses and they related in detail the gruesome facts in connection with the disaster. They also advanced the two theories as to how the accident might have happened. Both these men say that the tops of the powder cans containing the powder, or lids fit on the cans similar to the lid on a baking powder can and the jarring of the empty coal cars going into the mine might have caused a lid to fall off, which has often happened, and an employee lighting a pipe or cigarette might have carelessly thrown the match and falling into the can or near the powder might have set off the explosive, and this in turn would have ignited the other cans of powder.

The theory of a mine drill coming in contact with the trolley wire they also said was very plausible. They explained that a can of powder in one of the cars might have been lying against an iron nut in the car or against one of the iron strips of the car, and a mine drill touching the trolley might have formed an electric circuit with the can of powder which would have burned a hole through the tin container almost instantly and ignited the powder.

Mine inspectors and mine officials could throw no further light on the exact cause, but all agreed that the trolley wire did not strike the cars.

### Witnesses Tell of Horror

McGroarty and Kehoe who had a miraculous escape from possible death or injury gave the mine inspectors a vivid description of what occurred. They stated that the trip of empty coal cars numbered fourteen, and there was but one motor and this was on the head end, in their charge. In what car the powder was located they did not know, but judging from later development it

was toward the rear end. They started into the tunnel within 150 or more men in the cars, after entering the tunnel only a short distance, the rear end of the trip being only 125 feet from the mouth of the tunnel, they were stopped by four workmen who were coming out and were told that the trolley was loose from one of the brackets. The men in the cars were told of the facts and they were informed that they would have to walk in.

### Uncouple The Motor.

McGroarty and Kehoe then uncoupled the motor from the cars and left them standing where they were and proceeded with the motor, or engine as they call it, about fifteen yards where they found the trolley wire sagging down from the bracket, where it had become detached. Both got off the motor and were about to send word back to the switchman to turn off the electricity so that they could repair the broken bracket, the entire operation taking only two minutes from the time they uncoupled the

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HILKES-BARRE

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(Continued From Page One.)

motor, when suddenly they saw a sheet of flame and a cloud of smoke, carrying with it deadly fumes.

McGroarty at once came to the conclusion as to what had occurred and informed McGraw of his fears. The latter thought such a thing impossible but in a few seconds they heard the moans and groans of the injured and dying, and they with the four men who were walking out began the work of rescue. The first men they came to they carried back farther in the tunnel, toward what is known as the "C" vein. They carried back dozens of the men, and as they carried them back and laid them down, one or two of the rescuers would remain with them and give them coffee or water secured from the many tin bottles, carried by the miners, and which were strewn all about.

During this work of rescue McGroarty and Kehoe had handkerchiefs tied about their mouth and nose, soaking the same with water from time to time, from the sulphur stream, which runs along side of the tracks. Finally McGroarty fell down, partly overcome from the choking fumes, but he revived after putting his face into the sulphur water. About this time he missed Kehoe, the latter having gone farther ahead in the tunnel, and he shouted to him, but received no response and he thought the latter had perished with the others. He said he continued with the work of rescue until an opening was finally effected in the tunnel and he reached the open air when he fell unconscious and knew no more until he awoke in the hospital. He quickly revived and today feels no ill effects from his experience.

### Tells Gruesome Story.

Kehoe tells the most gruesome story. He picked up the details from the time he left McGroarty in the rescue work. He said he came to the car which contained the powder which exploded and here he said the men were being roasted alive. He said the sight was terrible. He said he pulled at men in an effort to rescue them and the skin from their hands and arms would pull loose, while the groans of the dying has made a lasting impression and he still imagines he can hear and see the awful sight. About this time he began to fear for his own life for his strength was fast leaving him.

At one place he jumped from a car and fell upon a prostrate form, and hurled himself into the water to escape the fumes, keeping his face in the water as long as he possibly could, and by scrambling along this way he began to approach the mouth of the tunnel, but could not see the light of day because of the atmosphere being

charged with fumes and smoke. He struggled on when he encountered one man who held out his hand in appeal to him and he crawled to him and found it to be McCloskey the base ball player. He had been frightfully burned, and his tongue was so swollen in his mouth that he could not talk, although he made an effort to do so.

He said he took hold of him and attempted to carry him out but he was unable to proceed with him. He said the man was near death but had strength enough to give him his brotherhood book and papers in it. At this point McCloskey became delirious and grabbed Kehoe by the throat and it was with a considerable effort that he was able to pry the man's fingers loose. After freeing himself he again made an effort to get out of the place, when he came to a heap of dead and dying men, piled four feet high, many of them with their clothes on fire. He crawled around them and in doing so his shirt caught fire. This he jerked from his body and soon began to inhale fresh air, and yelled to those ahead of him asking how far he was from the mouth of the tunnel, a voice answered not far and with a superhuman effort reached fresh air and safety.

Kehoe came reeling out of the tunnel naked to the waist, while startled men on the outside stood looking at him in fear, he screamed to them to go inside and help with the work of rescue, and when he rushed back in they followed him and the work of bringing out the dead and dying started in earnest and it was not long before all were removed. The sight these dead and dying men presented as they were brought out has already been told.

### Other Witnesses Quizzed.

Several other witnesses were quizzed by the mine inspectors, including Martin McGraw, a tracklayer; Martin Noon, head electrician, and Joe Rutledge, a section boss together with several others, but none of them could throw any further light on the direct cause of the accident, other than the two theories already advanced.

The officials of the company who were present at the investigation were: Vice-president and general manager, Charles Dorrance; general superintendent, Luzerne district, R. H. Buchanan; consulting engineer, Eli Connor; district superintendent, Samuel Tench; division foreman, Jerome McCrystal; engineer safety first department, Bruce Demmick; inside foreman, Baltimore tunnel, P. J. O'Hara.

In addition to Chief Button the following mine inspectors were present: Robert Johnson, of Pittston, inspector of the Eighth district; Edwin Curtis, of Pittston, inspector of the Ninth district; John B. Corgan, of this city, Tenth district inspector; Thomas J. Williams, of this city, Eleventh district inspector; Frank Kittle, of this city, Thirteenth district inspector, and Joseph J. Walsh, of Wilkes-Barre, Fourteenth district in-

spector.

Following the investigation the mine inspectors and officials of the mine entered the tunnel and inspected the ground where the sad affair occurred.

# FLASH OF POWDER KILLS 78 IN MINE

Workers Riding to Labors Are  
Trapped as Trolley Wire Hits  
Blasting Material Kegs.

## LAW OF STATE VIOLATED

Explosive Carried Upon Same  
Train as Passengers the  
Cause of the Disaster.

## FEW ESCAPE THE INFERNO

Creeks Running Beside Track  
Offer Refuge for Those Who  
Act Quickly.

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., June 4.—Seventy-eight men and boys are dead and 48 are injured, according to official lists of the Delaware & Hudson Coal Company and the various hospitals and morgues, as the result of an explosion of blasting powder in a car attached to a trainload of miners being transported to their work in the Baltimore No. 2 mine of the coal company in the east end of this city today. Of the dead 41 have been identified and 37 are unidentified. A number of the injured have not been identified. The disaster is, with one exception, the greatest that ever has occurred in this vicinity.

More than 100 mine workers were crowded into what is known as a trip of mine cars drawn by a motor. The rear car carried 12 kegs of black powder used for blasting loose the coal in the chambers. The mine is modern and equipped electrically. The trolley wire snapped when the train had gone about 200 feet from the entrance. The wire sputtered and sizzled and the sparks it emitted touched off the powder. The terrified riders instantly were aware of the danger that confronted them but they stood powerless to avert it.

There was a roar and in an instant every man and boy on the train was either dead or wounded. Terribly mangled bodies were found everywhere by the rescue crews which instantly rushed into the mine. Firefighters, working frantically, succeeded in an incredibly short time in subduing the flames which followed the blast.

### Many Injured Past Recovery.

Then came the gruesome work of taking out dead and injured. Those who had not already succumbed were so badly burned that in nearly every case death is a matter of only a short time.

Flames caused the greater loss of life, many of the bodies being burned to a crisp. Others who were burned and were trying to reach safety died of suffocation. The injured were rapidly removed, sent to hospitals as quickly as ambulances could be provided and the dead were brought out and placed in tiers on the green. Doctors and nurses

were somewhat late in reaching the scene because many of them were abed when the accident happened. Hospitals quickly filled and morgues were filled to overflowing.

Carelessness and violation of mine laws of the State caused the great loss of life. One of the most drastic provisions of the anthracite mine code is the section forbidding the transportation of men on a car or train which carries explosives. Yet the train of little cars conveying its freight of miners had attached to its rear a car of powder. Investigation will disclose whether the men or the company is responsible for this violation of the law.

East End last night was the scene of great gaiety. That section of the city welcomed home men from the 311th Field Artillery. Bands were out, flags were flying, red fire burned, persons laughed and shouted. Within 12 hours all was changed; many homes were made sad. Some of the soldiers had their joy turned into despair. Their fathers were among the dead.

### Relatives Identify Corpses.

Hundreds of women, men and children gathered about the tunnel. Shrieking and crying, they lifted the blankets from the bodies and were terrified at the sight. Women fainted, men lost their nerve and children ran away in fright. At the morgues the work of identification was carried out with little success. Brave men and women sought to aid the relatives, to give them news; but the scene was pitiful. It is estimated that there will be scores of widows and orphans as a result of the catastrophe.

Mine officials and State officials were on the scene promptly, but their efforts were directed first to the work of rescue. There were enough men to meet all needs for the work inside the mine, but the chief trouble during the early hours was in getting nurses, doctors and supplies. Some of the first bodies brought from the tunnel were burning when they reached the surface. Clothes had been burned away and the flesh was searing from the intense heat. Water was poured on these to put out the fire. It was such sights as this that made brave hearts turn away.

Company employees said that there was a pull of 186,000 cubic feet of air a minute in the tunnel and that the air pulled in the flames of the powder directly over the heads of the men. Along the side of the tunnel runs a creek and at the flash of the flames some men who walked along the side of the cars dropped into the water and saved their lives. Thomas Dougherty, a miner, one of the survivors, was thrown out of a car and saved himself by throwing himself into a ditch. He talked of the accident and said:

### In a Veritable Hell.

"We were riding along about 50 feet in the tunnel. There was a blinding flash. I was thrown from the car. I saw the water and I hurled myself into it. Bodies were all about. Some I know were dead, others were crying. The flames were terrific. They were all about. We were in a veritable hell. No man could possibly hope to escape with his life unless he got in the water, buried his face and rolled over and over as I did. There was powder in the car. There were about 10 kegs besides there were kegs carried by the men. Of course I do not know what set them off, but I believe the trolley wire broke and that sparks ignited the powder."

"The trip forms at the mouth of the tunnel each morning," said John Connon, who was on the motor when the accident occurred. "The trip today formed at 6.25. John McGrearty was the motorman and Jimmy Kehoe the brakeman. I was riding on the head end of the trip and the cars were filled with men. In the last car were several kegs of powder. I do not know whether any men were in this car. The last car was just inside the mouth of the tunnel when McGrearty, the motor runner, noticed the wire hanging low.

"He stopped the trip and started ahead a few hundred feet to ascertain the cause of the low wire. He had traveled ahead a few feet, when he again stopped and told me to go out and tell another motorcar runner on the outside, William Williams, to pull the trip out again. McGrearty also shouted to the men in the cars that they had better

get out and walk. I saw some night-shift men going out, and I told them to notify Williams to pull the trip of cars out. They said they would.

### Night Shift Men Escape.

"The men in the cars were in the act of climbing out, and the night-shift men had just left, when there was a blinding flash. There was not much concussion and the flame was gone in a little while. Every man in the tunnel was affected by smoke. We men who were on the front were affected, but we escaped the force of the flames—McGriary, myself, Frank Solinsky, Nicholas McNulty and John Guvein. Then we started to help the injured and take out the bodies of the dead.

"Because of the smoke we could not go beyond the fourth car. We took as many men as possible into the G vein. Those who were saved owed their lives to McGrearty, and had started to walk to their places of work. We remained where we were until we could find our way out of the smoke. Men on the outside hurried in. I am not sure how the accident happened.

"The wire was hanging low. It might have touched the metal of the car. Some of the men, I am sure, were drowned as they piled on top of each other in the sulphur creek which runs along the side of the tunnel."

Officials of the company and men rescued from the accident agreed that the explosion was not terrific. Black powder, they said, does not explode like dynamite, but burns. The flash is sudden and, while it is in the nature of an explosion, it has not the driving force of the other explosives. The ignition of the powder, drawn in by the force of the fans, pulled the flames like a blanket down over the men. It seems like the irony of fate that over the mouth of the tunnel in great, big white letters, are painted the words, "Safety First."

### Loss in Wilkes-Barre.

The identified dead include the following, almost all of whom lived in Wilkes-Barre: Lellwyn Parrot, John Rutstein, Simon Shoblik, Stephen Demchak, John Kivotchek, Walter Kubie, John Kubie, Tony Stroamer, Richard Ricket, Edward Oliver, George Gettner, Patrick O'Mally, Charles Logan, Slack Tombinski, John Vannort, Patrick Lenahan, Michael Harris, Victor Harris, Martin Maraski, William Bono, Michael Connell, Edward Connors, John McCloskey, Joseph Hort, Stanley Forestal, William Bircha, James Murphy, Joseph Schesny, William Stanagitis, William Stanvak.



#### Committee Named.

Chief Button appointed a special committee today for the purpose of investigating all the evidence they have unearthed so far that would throw any positive light on the cause of the disaster. They are:

Thomas J. Williams, Inspector from the 11th district, chairman.

David T. Thomas, Inspector from the 12th district.

John B. Corrigan, Inspector from the 10th district.

E. C. Curtis, Inspector of the 9th district.

Robert Johnson, Inspector from the 8th district.

Joseph J. Walsh, Inspector from the 14th district.

When asked what theories the committee intended to proceed upon, Chairman Thomas J. Williams named four causes, either of which might have ignited the gunpowder:

First—A bar carried by any of the miners could have touched the trolley wire and thus caused a contact with tin can of powder.

Second—One of the men may have attempted to get out of the car with a can of powder on his shoulder, thus causing it to touch the trolley wire overhead, causing the powder to ignite.

Third—In case the cans holding the powder were defective, a spark from the trolley or a lighted match might have caused the ignition. Pipes belonging to the dead miners were found in the fatal cars which shows that they were probably smoking while riding into the tunnel.

Fourth—The trolley broke at a distance of 2,500 feet inside the tunnel earlier in the morning, just before the accident occurred. If the trolley fell across the steel rails and the current came back and charged the cars in which the men and powder were, that may have caused the ignition.

#### No Positive Evidence.

"However," said Inspector Williams, "there is no positive evidence that any of these causes ignited the powder. There are numerous conditions which must be fitted in order to determine whether or not electricity ignited it. We are now fitting these conditions according to the evidence we are obtaining, and of course, cannot arrive at any definite conclusion just yet. We must finish with the evidence first."

"About August, 1918, a committee of mine workers met the officials of this colliery for the purpose of obtaining a ride to their work in the morning. It was agreed at the time between this committee and the coal company executives that a trip into the mine would be furnished in the morning and that all powder be placed in the last car. No men were to ride in this car or the next one ahead."

"The evidence indicates that the miners' committee and the company officials examined the cars frequently to see that this agreement was carried out."

"On the morning of the accident there were seven kegs of powder in the last, or powder car. This powder remained intact and did not explode."

"The investigation however is not finished for the reason that many of the witnesses yet to be called are in the hospital and in a condition that does not permit them to be questioned now. When they recover, a full report will be made to Chief Button of the state bureau of mines."

#### Local Official Attends.

President Jacob Stephens of the local Miners' Union, No. 1689, was present at the conference of the state mine inspectors this morning. He accompanied the officials into the tunnel and was shown every foot of the track where the accident occurred. Following this inspection tour, he admitted, as true Inspector Williams' statement pertaining to the miners' committee and company officials agreement in August, 1918.

He said he appointed two members on that committee at the time, both of whom were in the third car of the trip and were killed. He recalled the committee having come back to report to him about the agreement having been reached and remembered that no powder kegs were to be carried in the same cars with the men on a trip.

President Stephens did not venture to state as to what in his opinion was the cause of the disaster. "So many causes could have been responsible," he said, "that it would be folly to jump at conclusions at this time. However, we are vitally interested in ascertaining whether any negligence existed anywhere and are not going to stop our investigation until this is finally determined."

"In the meantime I have appointed a committee to call upon the families of the dead and injured miners and funds will be raised immediately for their relief, in addition to what we have on hand to extend them aid."

The committee appointed by President Stephens are W. J. Evans and Jacob Stevens, for investigating conditions among the members of the dead miners' families.

The men have been instructed to call at the home of every miner whose family in any way has been made to suffer because of the disaster. They will in turn report to President Stephens and immediate relief will be provided in every instance, the chief officer of the union announced.

President Stephens also stated that an international relief committee had been appointed to supplement the work of the local committee and thus cover the ground from every standpoint. By this method, he pointed out, every family in distress will be cared for without a moment's delay.

#### International Relief Committee.

The international committee is composed of:

Neil J. Ferry, Hazleton; John Mates, Williamstown; Thomas Davis, Nanticoke; Daniel Lee McHugh, Pittston; James Gleason, Scranton; Peter O'Donnell, Wilkes-Barre, and Organizers Hugh Friel and W. Peter Dagnowsky.

#### Witnesses Summoned

Only two witnesses were summoned before the gathering of state mine inspectors this morning. The first called was C. W. Wagner, assistant foreman of the mine. The nature of his testimony was not disclosed but

Chief Button said later that he was unable to throw any light upon the situation.

The second witness was Arthur Dymond who was riding in the second car of the trip, but escaped by getting out of the car and starting to walk ahead toward the point where the motorman had gone to investigate what looked like a broken trolley wire. He also was unable to furnish the officials any information except to say that had the motorman of the trip taken the miners 250 feet further instead of uncoupling his motor and going ahead to investigate the trouble, many of those killed would have been saved.

He explained this by saying that the air tunnel at the advanced point would have given them plenty of fresh air and no deaths would have resulted, as it was ascertained they died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

In addition to the mine inspectors who were present at yesterday's conference, four more attended today's session. They were: J. Roderick, Hazleton; M. J. Brennan, Pottsville; Charles Price, Lyken's Valley, and John J. Stickler, Hazleton.

The inspectors do not place much confidence in the theory that electricity from a charged rail caused the powder to ignite, saying that had this been the case, the last car which remained intact although it had seven kegs of powder in it was not effected in the least.

The finding of the imperfect cans of powder today seems to incline the mine inspectors to think that either a spark cans on the premises, pointing out the dangers ever present from defective containers. Chief Button however, ordered that all cans now on hand be replaced with new ones and said that the poor condition of the cans might from the wire or a lighted match may have caused the ignition. They were unanimous in their condemnation of the company's methods in permitting such

be the fault of the manufacturer who originally packed them, thus getting into the company's storehouse without the official's knowledge.

Motion picture photographers representing a New York News Weekly exchange were on hand to-day taking pictures of the important gathering of state mine bureau officers. Following the conclusion of the session at about one o'clock, the inspectors were photographed as they came out of the coal company offices.

Another conference will be held this afternoon, following which the special committee appointed by Chief Button will conduct all future investigations.

# Seventy-Eight Killed When Broken Wire Ignites Powder

## EXPLOSION THROWS BODIES IN EVERY DIRECTION

### HORROR IN MINE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Many Men Burned to Crisp; Some Homes Which Welcomed Returned Soldiers at Night Turned Into Places of Sadness Today, as Merry-makers Are Among Dead.

#### BULLETIN

By Associated Press Leased Wire.

WILKES BARRE, Pa., June 5.—SEVENTY-EIGHT MEN LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE BALTIMORE NO. 2 TUNNEL OF THE DELAWARE AND HUDSON COAL COMPANY EXPLOSION AND FIRE TODAY AND THIRTY-ONE WERE INJURED, ACCORDING TO A LIST GIVEN OUT BY THE COMPANY OFFICIALS AT NOON TODAY. FORTY-ONE BODIES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AND THIRTY-SIX REMAIN UNIDENTIFIED. THE COMPANY'S INJURED LIST IS NOT COMPLETE AND IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE NUMBER OF INJURED WILL REACH ABOUT FORTY.

#### THE DETAILS

By Associated Press Leased Wire. WILKES BARRE, Pa., June 5.—Seventy-five to one hundred mine workers were killed and many others injured at the Baltimore No. 2 tunnel of the Delaware and Hudson Company near here early today.

A car of black powder attached to a trip of cars on which the men were riding to their chambers in the mine exploded.

An electric motor drew the cars. The trolley wire broke and sparks ignited the powder.

Men were blown everywhere, but most of the deaths were caused by fire and suffocation.

The accident occurred shortly before 7 o'clock. A train of empty cars was sent to the mouth of the tunnel to take the men into the chambers. One hundred men piled into the cars, which were drawn by an electric motor. Near the end of the train was a car of black powder.

John McGraw drove the motor. When 200 feet in the tunnel the trolley wire broke and fell. Sparks ignited the powder and instantly there was an explosion that sent the bodies of the men flying in all directions. The force was so terrific that it was heard throughout the greater part of the city.

Flames caused the greater loss of life, many of the bodies being burned to a crisp. Other men who were burned and were trying to reach safety died of suffocation.

When rescuers reached the tunnel there were dead and dying scattered everywhere. The injured were rapidly removed, sent to hospitals as quickly as ambulances could be provided and the dead were brought out and placed in tiers on the green.

Doctors and nurses were somewhat late in reaching the scene. This was because many of them were away when the accident happened. Hospitals quickly filled and morgues were filled to overflowing.

East End Wednesday night was the scene of great gaiety. That section of the city welcomed home boys from the 11th field artillery battery. Bands were out, flags flying, red fire burned, people laughed and shouted.

Within twelve hours all was changed, many homes being made sad. Some of the soldiers had their joy turned into despair. Their fathers were among the dead.

#### Bodies Charred

Identification of the bodies is almost impossible. Many of them are charred beyond recognition. The limbs of some, the head of others are missing.

At 9:30 a. m. it was said between seventy-five and one hundred were killed or had died from injuries.

The death list is rapidly growing.

JUNE 6, 1919

## DEATH TOLL OF 83 RESULTS FROM MINE EXPLOSION

Three Hundred Pounds of Black Powder, Ignited by Trolley Spark, Lets Go At Wilkesbarre

### FEW ESCAPE UNINJURED

Many Injured Miners Are Burned Alive Before Rescuers Reach Them

WILKESBARRE, Pa., June 5.—Eighty-three men dead and fifty others burned and maimed, none of whom will die, is the toll of a disaster in the Baltimore tunnel of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company in the East End section of this city early today. Seven tons of black powder, 300 pounds in all, were detonated, and the dead and the maimed were literally roasted by the compressed gas flames following the explosion.

The tragedy occurred while the men were on their way to work the morning shift.

Owing to their working places being two miles from the mouth of the tunnel, the men were making the trip in a train of fourteen mine cars drawn by an electrical motor, the power being carried in ten cars in the middle of the train.

#### Sparks Ignite Powder

The train had descended the tunnel about 200 feet, August Hadden, one of the engineers, stating, when the overhead trolley wire sagged and, touching a steel powder bag, formed a short circuit. In an instant there was a shower of sparks and a terrific blast.

A great cloud of flame, driven by the air current, enveloped the helpless men who were huddled closely together in the cars with no possible chance to escape. Owing to the ventilating system the smoke and flame was drawn toward the front, the first indication of the disaster to those on the surface was the shriek of anguish of the miners. Flames were at once feared and the dead and injured were rapidly brought to the surface, where the living were given first aid treatment, by physicians and then rushed to the City and County hospitals, the ambulances and vehicles of all sorts, even with fire apparatus being used in the emergency.

#### Dead Piled in Heaps

When the rescuers first entered the tunnel they found the dead and dying piled in heaps in the cars and along the tunnel. Bodies of the dead were burned to a crisp. Of the dead sixty-nine were found dead in the tunnel and fourteen others succumbed to their injuries at the hospital. Only 4 have been identified.

Among the men killed outright was James J. McCloskey, a former baseball pitcher, at one time a member of the Philadelphia National League Club.

Assistant General Manager Buchanan, of the Delaware and Hudson Coal Company, after investigation at the scene of the disaster, gave it as his opinion a steel bar or drill carried by one of the men came in contact with the overhead wire, forming the short circuit. According to the company's figures, 143 men and boys were being carried by the train.

Seward Butts, Chief of the State Bureau of Mines, informed the Associated Press tonight that the state code contained regulations governing the storage of explosives in magazines and working places, but did not refer to the transportation of the same.

THE LEXINGTON LEADER

LEXINGTON, KY., THURSDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 5, 1919.