

THE DAILY EXPRESS

PETERSBURG, THURSDAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1855.

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Thursday Morning, March 22, 1855.

Terrible Explosion at the Midlothian Pits!!!

THIRTY-FOUR PERSONS KILLED AND
TWELVE SERIOUSLY INJURED!!!

A terrific explosion occurred at the Midlothian Coal Pits in Chesterfield county, about thirteen miles from Richmond, on Monday evening last, by which thirty four persons were instantly killed, and a number of others so badly burned that little or no hopes are entertained of their recovery. Up to the very moment of the accident, the superintendents and employees in the pits felt perfectly satisfied that there was not a particle of foul air afloat around them, and Mr. John Atkins, the agent, looked upon the pits as being so entirely free from danger, that he declared to us that he would not have hesitated to take his family into them to remain. Even now, the cause of the explosion is entirely hid in mystery, and must ever continue so, though Mr. Atkins inclines to the opinion that in making a blast, an old shaft sink was accidentally reached, from which poured forth a volume of gas, that became ignited, and swept as a besom of destruction through the various avenues, dealing death with an unsparing hand, on all that came within its course.

The explosion, says the *Dispatch*, caused the earth, for miles around the pits, to wave and rock as a twig in the wind. One gentleman, who was crossing the railroad, about a mile from the pits at the time, said he felt the rails reel under him; and another, who was passing the road on horse back, declared that his beast staggered and trembled, as if suddenly shocked by a tremendous galvanic battery. The centre boards around the shafts were blown off, as if they had been paper, and at the western shaft, two large cable chains were broken in two as easily as if they had been pipe stems. At the time of the explosion there were three carpenters at work on the top of the eastern shaft, about thirty-five feet above the ground. One of them was so badly frightened that he leaped to the ground without incurring any injury, but "old Squire" and the other one held on to the beams until the shock was over, and then came down.

The Midlothian Pits have always been looked upon as free from danger; consequently the company found no difficulty in employing as many steady white miners as they desired; and if the explosion had taken place between the hours of 6 and 12 o'clock, we have no hesitation in saying that the loss of life would have been trebled, and the number of widows and orphans thereby created five times as great as that caused by the accident at the English Pits in May last; but fortunately, the men were not allowed to make over work, the supply of coal raised being greater than the demand, consequently, most of the white men had left the pits at 12 o'clock, and thereby saved their lives.

As soon as the explosion was heard, all the workmen above ground, from the Midlothian and English pits, hastened to the scene, and prepared to descend the Western shaft, to rescue those who might still be alive. Mr. Job Atkins, the agent for the English pits, in company with a number of noble hearted volunteers, descended the Eastern shaft as soon as they could do so, and the two parties immediately set about in search of such of the miners as they might find alive. They succeeded in rescuing sixteen persons, more or less burned, four whites and twelve blacks, and took them to their houses and the hospitals, where they were immediately placed under medical treatment. They then discovered about thirty dead men, some of whom they removed, and others they were preparing to remove when we left the pits at half past three o'clock, yesterday afternoon. Mr. Atkins describes the scene as heart-rending in the extreme. Some of the dead men, the flesh charred on their bones, held their shovels in their hands, others were holding to their picks and drills; and Samuel Hunt, a small boy, who had been deprived of reason for the time, by the concussion, was calling loudly to the mule, he had been driving, to go along. Those who were not dead, as soon as they heard the voices of their friends, begged earnestly not to be left, and then prayed loudly for a few drops of cold water to quench their burning thirst.

In one of the avenues, several tons of stone and dirt had been thrown down, beneath which was discovered the bodies of two of Mr. Wooldridge's servants.

We visited the hospitals, and of all horrid spectacles our eyes ever beheld, the one there presented to our view was the worst. Some seven or eight negro men lay there, the skin burned from their faces, eyes, hands, arms and bodies, as if they had been roasted, and the groans that escaped from those who were conscious of their sufferings could not fail to pierce the hardest heart.

Out of fifty persons in the pits at the time of the accident, but three escaped serious injury, and these were colored persons, though there can be very little doubt that many of them were suffocated by the "after damp," rather than killed by the explosion.

Five valuable mules employed in the pits, which are 770 feet deep, were killed by the explosion.

We give below a list of the killed and wounded, as far as it could be ascertained.

WHITE PERSONS KILLED.

Thomas Dunn, an Englishman.

John Evans.

Samuel Gouldin, who leaves a wife and three small children to mourn his loss. Mr. Gouldin was an overseer in the pits, and had a dream on Sunday night that weighed heavily on his mind. Before starting to work on Monday morning, he conversed freely with his wife, and instructed her how to act, if he should meet with any accident that day. After starting to work, he returned three times to kiss his little children and bid them good bye.

John Lester leaves a wife to whom he had been married but a short time.

Jonathan Jewett, a lad, thirteen years of age. One of his brothers was killed in the English pits by an explosion last May.

Joseph Howe, a young man, about 18 years of age.

WHITE PERSONS BURNED.

John Howe, (father of Joseph Howe, who was killed,) badly burned. His recovery hoped for.

Samuel Hunt, a boy, 14 years of age. Face

head, breast, arms, and eyes burned. But little hopes of his recovery. This lad's father fell in these pits four months ago and was killed.

Nicholas Ham, (married but two weeks since,) badly burned about the face; head and eyes, and his breast completely roasted. His recovery will be almost a miracle.

Thomas Kenedly, a lad 14 years of age, was severely burned about the face and breast, but hopes are entertained of his recovery.

NEGROES BURNED TO DEATH.

Armistead Ritchie, Rich'd Hancock, William Harrod, Wilson Mills, Charles Wilson, Edwin Carter, Isaac Gault, Lewis Jackson, Patrick Witchelow, Patrick Mills, Jordan Goode, Isaac Johnson, Herrod Pope, William Kinney, Henry Pickett, John Goode, S. Burton, Bob Burton, Oran Lantern, Bob Adams, David Depp, Philip Foster, Fendall Riley, Henry Spears, William Purcell, Fredd Harris, Alfred Wooldridge and Archer Wooldridge.

NEGROES INJURED.

Dick Smith, slightly burned; Isreal Walker, badly burned; Joel White, slightly; Jim Mills, dangerously; Jasper Forsey, badly; Fred. Jones, bad, but not dangerous; Anthony Jones, slightly; Lewis Monroe, slightly; John Gray, slightly; Henry Talbot, slightly; Isaac Minor, badly; Dick Dipp, dangerously burned.

A large number of the above servants were owned by the Midlothian Company, and very few of them were insured.

The injury to the pits is serious, and it will cost a considerable outlay to get them fairly under way again. Mr. John Atkins, the agent, is said to be one of the best miners in this country, and in twenty years' management, has never met with an accident of the kind before.

When Mr. Job Atkins entered the pits, he immediately proceeded to extinguish all traces of fire, and thereby succeeded, in all probability, in preventing a second explosion.

This accident has thrown a deep gloom over the neighborhood in which it occurred, and will be the means, no doubt, of driving many persons to seek other employment than that of mining.

New York Daily Times
March 21, 1955

**Terrific Explosion in Coal Pits at Chester-
field, Va.**

Richmond, Tuesday, March 20.

A terrific explosion occurred at the Midlothian Coal Pits, Chesterfield, last evening. Sixteen persons were taken out living and eight dead, and all will probably die. It is supposed there were fifty in the pit at the time. The explosion was caused by a blast.

Fort Wayne Sentinel
March 24, 1855

Baltimore, Thursday, March 22.

The Coal-pit Explosion at Richmond—Further Particulars.—The Richmond dispatch contains full particulars of the coal-pit explosion at Midlothian.

Thirty-four persons were instantly killed, including twenty negroes; and twelve negroes and five persons were so badly burned that not over three or four of them can recover.

The pits were considered perfectly safe and free from foul air but in making a blast an old shaft-sink was accidentally crushed, from which a volume of gas issued and ignited, causing a most terrific explosion, and tossing the earth for miles around to wave and rock similar to the effects of an earthquake.

Over one hundred of the white miners were fortunately out of the pit at the time of the explosion.

Every effort was immediately made to rescue those who were not killed. Some of the dead were found with the flesh burned off the bones and still holding picks, shovels, &c. in their skeleton hands.

The flesh on those still alive was burned to the bone, as if had been roasted.

Particulars of the Explosion at the Mid-
lothian Coal Pits.

Baltimore, March 21, 1855.

A dispatch from Richmond gives us the full details of the explosion at the Midlothian coal pits in Chesterfield. Thirty-four persons were instantly killed, including twenty-eight negroes and six whites; and twelve negroes and five white persons were so badly burned that but three or four of them can possibly recover.

The pits were considered perfectly safe, from foul air, but in making a blast, the old shaft sinking accidentally, crashed, from which poured forth a volume of gas that became ignited.

The explosion caused the earth for miles around to wave and rock like a twig in the wind. Over one hundred white miners were fortunately out of the pit at the time. Every effort was made to rescue those that were alive. Dead men were found with the flesh charred to their bones, holding shovels, picks and drills in their hands. The flesh on those still alive is burned to the bone, as if it had been roasted. The pits are seven hundred and seventy feet deep.

Ohio Repository
March 28, 1855

Baltimore, March 22.

A Richmond dispatch contains full details of the explosion at Midlothian Coal Pits. Thirty-four persons were instantly killed, including 28 negroes and 6 whites, and 12 negroes and 6 white persons were so badly burned that but three or four can possibly recover. The pits were considered free from foul air, but in making the blast, an old shaft sink was accidentally crushed from which poured forth a volume of gas that ignited. The explosion caused the earth for miles around to wave and rock like a twig in the wind. Over 100 white miners were fortunately out of the pit at the time. Every effort was immediately made to rescue those who were still alive. Dead men were found with flesh hanging to their bones, holding shovels, picks and drills in their hands. The flesh on those still alive was burnt to the bone as if roasted. The pits are 770 feet deep. The persons killed are Thos. Dygh, John Evans, Englishman, Samuel Golden, John Lester, Jonathan Jewitt, Joseph Howe, wounded, John Howe, Samuel Hyatt, Nicholas Ham, Thomas Kennedy.

Mineral Point Tribune
May 2, 1855

The Coal Mine Explosion.—We give a few particulars of the explosion at the Midlothian Coal Mines, in addition to those furnished by telegraph.

The pits were considered perfectly safe, from foul air, but in making a blast, an old shaft, sinking accidentally, crashed from which poured forth a volume of gas that became ignited.

The explosion caused the earth for miles around to wave and rock like a twig in the wind. Over one hundred white miners were fortunately out of the pit at the time. Every effort was made to rescue those that were alive. Dead men were found with the flesh charred to their bones, holding shovels, picks and drills in their hands. The flesh on those still alive is burned to the bone, as if it had been roasted. The pits are seven hundred and seventy feet deep.

Burlington Telegraph
March 31, 1855

Baltimore, March 21.

The Richmond Dispatch is full of the details of the explosion of the Midlothian coal pits.—Thirty-four persons were instantly killed, including 28 negroes; 12 negroes and 6 white persons are so badly burned that only three or four can possibly recover. The pits were considered perfectly safe and free from foul air, but on making a blast, an old shaft-sink was accidentally crushed, from which poured forth a volume of gas that broke into an ignited explosion, which caused the earth for miles around to wave and rock like a twig in the wind. Over 100 white miners were fortunately out of the pit at the time. Every effort was immediately made to rescue those still alive—the dead men were found with the flesh burnt to the bones holding shovels, picks and drills in their hands. The flesh on those still alive was burnt to the bones as if roasted. The pits are 770 feet deep. The white persons killed are Thomas Dunn and John Evans, Englishmen; Saml. Gouldin, John Lester, Jonathan Jewett and Joseph Home; wounded, John Howe, Saml. Howe, Nicholas Ham and Thomas Kennedy.

March 19, 1855
Midlothian Mine Disaster Victim Names
from Petersburg Daily Express for March 22, 185
55 Victims

Killed

Thomas Dunn
John Evans
Samuel Gouldin
John Lester
Jonathan Jeweti
Joseph Howe
Armistead Ritchie
Richard Hancock
William Harrod
Wilson Mills
Charles Wilson
Edwin Carter
Isaac Gault
Lewis Jackson
Patrick Wichelow
Patrick Mills
Jordan Goode
Isaac Johnson
Herrod Pope
William Kinney
Henry Pickett
John Goode
S. Burton
Bob Burton
Oran Lantern
Bob Adams
Henry Spears
William Purcell
Fredd Harris
Alfred Wooldridge
Archer Wooldridge

Injured

John Howe
Samuel Hunt
Nicholas Ham
Thomas Kenedly
Dick Smith
Isreal Walker
Joel White
Jim Mills
Jasper Forsey
Fred Jones
Lewis Monroe
John Gray
Henry Talbot
Isaac Minor
Dick Dipp'