

THE PETERSBURG INDEX.

VOLUME IV.

PETERSBURG, VA., SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1867.

NUMBER 83.

THE DAILY INDEX.

SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1867.

The Great Disaster at the Clover Hill Coal Pits.

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE HEART-RENDING CATASTROPHE.

We take the following account of the sad disaster at the Clover Hill coal pits on Wednesday from the Richmond *Enquirer* of Friday:

These mines, which have been worked for many years, consist at present, of three pits, known respectively as the Bright Hope, Raccoon and Hall's pits, and from these pits were raised last year about 900,000 bushels of coal. Both of the last named pits having been for some time submerged, operations in them were temporarily discontinued, and the Bright Hope mine was the scene of a terrific explosion on Wednesday last, which, without a moment's warning, hurled nearly a hundred human beings into eternity! What was the cause of the disaster must ever remain an impenetrable secret, for the lips of all who might have explained the mystery, are closed by the death which spared none to tell the tale. It is supposed, however, to be caused by the neglect of a drunken gasman to discharge the duties of his office, which are to examine, with one of Davy's safety lamps, the condition of the air, and attend to the proper ventilation of the pits, this ventilation being kept up by means of doors opening into various portions of the pits, the purification of the air in this mine being additionally secured by a powerful wind fan driven by the pit engine.

There are, however, many other causes which may produce an explosion in the mines, one of these being a tumble, or (as it is technically termed by the miners) a fall, which occurs when a portion of the roof falling in, admits into the pit the impure gases which may have accumulated above, and which, taking fire from the lights used by the workmen, is sometimes the cause of an explosion; but, as we have already stated, the cause of the late disaster will never be ascertained.

We are informed, however, that a few days since a portion of the roof of this pit threatened "a fall," and that Mr. Owen was preparing to put in scalers to prevent the danger.

The pit has two shafts (used respectively for ascending and descending) running 850 feet beneath the surface of the earth, but so powerful was the explosion that the overseers on the platform at entrance to the shaft were greatly jarred, and so terrific the heat of burning gas that the rope to the bucket in which two or three poor fellows were at the time ascending to light and life, was instantaneously severed as though by a knife, and the unhappy men with lightning-like rapidity were hurled back to an awful, but happily, a speedy death.

The number of operatives in the employ of the Clover Hill Company is nearly 200, and a little village, with a population of about one thousand, has sprung up in the vicinity of the pits, and when the tidings of the disaster, which had killed some seventy men, spread through the village, the excitement, suspense, and agony were intense.

The mouth of the pit was soon surrounded by some hundreds of persons, and the shrieks, moans and lamentations of the female friends of the victims were indeed harrowing. Stern men, who had faced the horrors of many a battle-field, were unable to bear the heart-rending scene, and, weeping like children, turned away utterly unmanned.

The following letter, which was received on yesterday, will enable our readers faintly to imagine the extent and the horrors of the catastrophe:

CLOVER HILL, April 4, 1867.

D. S. Woolridge Esq :

Dear Sir—When the pit bottom was reached last evening it was ascertained that the lumber-house in the pit, which contained some powder, was on fire. I endeavored to get the men to put it out, which, no doubt, could have been done; but the men feared the danger of another explosion, and were unwilling to work. The pit has been again examined this morning, and the fire is so small that it could be managed if the men were willing to risk the danger.—Under all the circumstances, I have determined to save the pit by closing both shafts. We are now engaged in this work.

All of the men, about seventy in number, and all the mules that were in the pit are of course lost. The bodies cannot be recovered until the fire is extinguished and the pit is reopened.

Very respectfully,

J. H. Cox.

Of the victims of the explosion some twenty or twenty-five were white, the remainder being negroes. We have been unable as yet to procure a list of the killed, but give the names of most of the white laborers whose duties called them at that hour into the mines, and the most of whom must, of course, be put upon the dead list. The following were what are termed "diggers:" Joseph Clayton, E. Condry, John Garbert, George Garbert, William Thomas, Beverley Ammonette, Peter Logan, George Moore, B. L. Jordan, Patrick Donnanhue, James Lockett, Henry Palmer, William Richards, John Insko, James Kearney. The following are "trailers:" N. P. Roberts, James Harper, Richard Berry, W. A. Cole, William D. Goode John Weal, gasman, Thomas Marshall, gasman; George Bertram, boy, driver; Jack Smith, overseer of trailers.

William B. Robertson, "hanger on," a position which compelled him to stand at the foot of the shaft.

Thomas Marshall, Sr., is certainly safe, as is also Ellis Martin; and as the miners work in pairs, it is supposed that his partner, Jack Straughan, is also living.

Miles Hackett, who was sick a short time previous to the accident, is also supposed to be safe.

The laborers in the mines are divided into the diggers, the trailers, who move the coal to the mouth of the shaft, and the drivers, who attend to the teams.

The mules killed are supposed to be seven or eight in number, and when the shaft was opened after the accident, the bodies of two of the animals were found near the foot of the shaft.

For a more accurate account of this awful calamity, we must await the extinguishment of the flames and the re-opening of the pit, both of which objects may, we hope, be speedily accomplished.

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VOLUME IV.

PETERSBURG, VA., MONDAY, APRIL 8, 1867.

NUMBER 84.

THE DAILY INDEX.

MONDAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1867.

The Clover Hill Calamity.

FURTHER PARTICULARS.

The Richmond *Examiner* of Saturday gives a full account of the terrible disaster which occurred at the Clover Hill Coal Pits on Wednesday.—There were 69 persons in the pit at the time of the explosion—30 whites and 39 colored—all of whom are supposed to have been instantly killed. We subjoin the *Examiner's* account of the disaster:

AFTER THE EXPLOSION.

The report of the explosion called together every person about the mine, and many from the neighborhood. It is estimated that in less than two hours, eight hundred persons had congregated there. The anguish of the wives and children of the men who were in the pits, is said to have been extreme. Their cries, and sobs, and frantic appeals to all about them to try to rescue their husbands and fathers, was heart-rending.

THE DESCENT INTO THE MINE.

Immediately after the occurrence of the explosion, Captain James H. Cox, Mr. Samuel Owen, superintendent, Mr. Thomas Marshall, chief gas man, and the hands outside of the pit, made preparations to send some one down to endeavor to see whether any of the laborers had escaped death, and to render them such assistance as they could, to ascertain the cause of the explosion, and the amount of damage done. The apparatus for descending had been so completely torn to pieces, that it required some two hours and a half to get ready for the descent. Having completed their preparations, Mr. Thomas Marshall, Sr., John Strong and James Duggan descended slowly, feeling their way as they went.—When they had gotten within about one hundred feet of the bottom, they called loudly, thinking some of the miners might be alive, and within hearing, but they received no answer. They returned without going to the bottom of the shaft. In about an hour, they again descended, took rope with them to splice the telegraph wire, and went to the bottom of the pit. They found the reservoir for surface water at the bottom of the shaft filled with the debris of the cages, broken timbers, etc. They went about twenty feet, to the point at which the northern level runs off. They here found a dead mule. Nothing was seen of any of the miners. Mr. Marshall attempted to pass into the south shaft, but found the doors blown open and everything torn to pieces. Mr. Strong went out to the north level, and found the mine on fire near the powder magazine. Fearing that there might be an explosion there, he returned to the shaft and came up.

Captain Cox, wishing to do everything in his power to relieve the living in the mine, if any were living, sent three men down again next morning. Thos. Marshall, Jr., white, and Lewis Cox and Richard Berry, negroes, descended into the mine. They made as full exploration as they were able to do and returned, reporting the same condition of things that the persons who went down on Wednesday evening did. They saw nothing of any of the miners.

THE SHAFTS STOPPED UP.

After the descent of the last party it was determined to stop the shafts. Captain Cox and the superintendent, concluding that it was impossible to render assistance to any of the miners, if living, but being perfectly convinced that they were all dead. The north shaft was stopped, but it was found impossible to stop the south shaft, on account of the smoke and impure air that was issuing from it; and fearing, also, that if too much air were sealed up hermetically in the mine it would, by expanding, cause another explosion.—The issue of atmospheric air ceased on yesterday, however, and this shaft was also stopped. It was absolutely necessary to pursue this course in order to extinguish the fire.

CONDITION OF THE MINE BEFORE THE EXPLOSION.

From the account of parties who left the pit just before the explosion, the ventilation was perfect. One of them said that he met gas man Weale as he came out. He asked him "how was times." Weale replied "all right." He was on duty at the time, and it is thought it was from his carelessness that the explosion occurred. He had failed to examine chamber No. 8, in which the gas had accumulated, and where, it is thought, the explosion took place. He and the other assistant gas man, Thomas Marshall, Jr., had been ordered by the chief gas man, Thomas Marshall, Sr., to have the door to this chamber, which had been broken down, replaced. He paid dearly for his want of care. He was one of the men killed.

NAMES OF THE KILLED.

We give below the names of the persons who were in the mine at the time of the explosion.—Not one of them has been heard from. It is probable that all who were in the northern part of the mine were killed instantly. Two men were at work on the south level, and it is thought they may have survived a short time.

The following are the names of the white men killed, with number of persons left by them unprovided for: Thomas Layton, wife and six children; Patrick Donahoe, two children; James Locket, wife and four children; William Thomas, wife and five children; Beverly Amond, wife and three children; Joe Condry, wife and one child; John Ainsko, wife and three children; James Ainsko, wife and one child; John Weal, wife and five children; Peter Logan, wife; George Moore, wife and six children; Jim Harper, wife; Nat Roberts, wife; Albert Isaacs, wife and three children; H. McGruder, wife and three children; William B. Robertson, wife and five children; George Puckett, Tom Puckett, Jim Puckett, not married, but have one sister; George Traylor, mother and two sisters; Samuel Fowler, six children; Nick Hackett, father and mother, aged and infirm; Robert Bowman, wife and three children; William Goode, wife and three children; William Cosley, wife and three children; William A. Cole, Thomas Cosley, John T. Kerner, Total—30 men killed, and 81 women and children utterly destitute.

The names of the negroes are as follows. We could not learn whether they left families, but suppose many of them did. They are of course destitute:

Carter Cox, Beverly Anderson, Giles Patterson, Gus Cox, Dick Hobson, Andrew Branch, Henry Finny, John Artis, Washington Hunt, Wm. Simms, Asa Coleman, Edmund Jones, Simon Stokes, John Owens, Randall Jackson, William Thwaatt, Price Jackson, Charles Jefferson, Doctor Faulker, Redd Jefferson, Wyley Gibbs, Elliott Trent, Edmund Johnson, Joseph Turpin, Phil Bossieau, Henry Bossieau, Aaron Wood, Elijah McTyre, Jim Selden, Danish Langford, Robert Helman, Frank Wiles, Albert Jones, Dick Mann, Daniel Osburn, Henry Owens, Henry Howard, Jordan Gates and William Kirby.

These men were all laborers in the mine, trail-ers, banksmen, mule drivers, &c.

EXTENT OF THE PIT.

The pit is about three thousand five hundred feet in length from north to south. The chambers from which the coal is mined are about three hundred feet apart. The "drifts" or passages through the pits are twelve feet wide.

The mine was opened in 1857. An explosion occurred in this pit in 1859, by which nine persons were killed.

THE DISASTER.

This is the most serious mining disaster that has ever occurred in the United States, and but few anywhere has had more victims. Let us hope that this may be the last it shall be our painful duty to record.

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

The Board of Directors, William H. Macfarland Esq., President, visited the pits yesterday and held a meeting. Messrs. Macfarland, Freeland, Maxall and Cox were present. The subject of the explosion was fully investigated, and the facts given above were set before the Board.

Mr James H. Cox submitted the following report:

"I was formerly the Superintendent and General Agent of Clover Hill Railroad Company, and President of the Clover Hill Coal Mining Company, and had, for many years, charge of all the mines at Clover Hill. Last January I resigned my position, and Samuel R. Owens, who had been my chief mining engineer for about twenty years, was appointed in my place. During the time of my service there had been several small explosions at some of the mines, at all of which I have been present, except on one occasion. On Wednesday last, the 31 instant, at 2½ P M, I was in my house, distant about three quarters of a mile from the pit called "Bright Hope," when one of my servants ran in and told me that he apprehended that an explosion had taken place at the pit, as he had heard a loud report and saw smoke arising from the pit. I immediately left my house and was satisfied of the reality of the report. I at once repaired to the pit. When I reached it, I found the managers, with each of the laborers as were out of the pit, preparing to make a descent. Some delay was experienced in completing the arrangements to make the descent, so that the men did not reach the bottom of the pit until about 5 o'clock. On their return they reported that there was a fire in a small closet or lumber house about forty feet from the shaft bottom. They saw no man living or dead, and did not believe there was a living man in the pit. I urged them to return and make a further and truer examination, with a view of seeing if a single individual might not be saved. I was satisfied there was no danger of a second explosion at that time from the fire at the place where they reported it to be. I appealed to them and offered them a large reward to descend again, but they declined to go, on

the ground that there might be fire in the rise workings, in which case there would be danger of another explosion. The advice of all the most experienced miners was, at once to close the shafts, hermetically, and by excluding atmospheric air to extinguish the fire. This course I resisted with the hope that I might prevail on parties to descend again.

Early next morning I prevailed on three men to descend, who returned and reported that the fire was moderate in extent, but could not be extinguished with the men and means at our disposal.

I was then satisfied that all the unfortunates in the pit were lost beyond hope, and the only thing left was to close the pit. I then gave my consent that this should be done. I believe that everything that could be done, was done, to save life under the circumstances; but my belief now is (from partial examination made of the pit since the explosion) that every man in the pit was either instantly killed or survived but a few moments. I am well acquainted with the arrangements that have been in existence for ventilating the "Bright Hope," and am satisfied they were so complete that it faithfully executed there would have been no explosion.

By this deplorable accident sixty-nine persons have lost their lives—thirty whites and thirty-nine colored."

The sum of \$1,000 was appropriated, on the suggestion of the President, for the immediate relief of the families of the workmen, white and colored. It was ordered to be placed in the hands of Major J. P. Cox and Mr. Samuel Owens, for the benefit of their families.

Messrs. John Adkins, from the National Coal Mining Company; Thomas Jewett, from the Midlothian; Robert Marks, from the Black Heath, and Robert Straghan, from the Nurwood Company, were present, and gave the Board the benefit of their experience on the questions before them.

The thanks of the Board were returned to these gentlemen.

Colonel Woolbridge sent ten hands to assist the company, for which the thanks of the Board were tendered him. The meeting then adjourned.

RE-OPENING THE MINE.

It is not probable that the mine will be re-opened for three or four weeks. The fate of the unfortunate men who were in it at the time of the explosion is beyond doubt, and out of abundant caution, Superintendent Owens is of the opinion that sufficient time should be allowed to elapse before the mine is re opened, to prevent any possibility of the smouldering fire being re-kindled by the contact of atmospheric air.

Petersburg Index
Petersburg VA
Saturday April 6, 1867

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There are, however, many other causes which may produce an explosion in the mines, one of these being a tumble, or (as it is technically termed by the miners) a fall, which occurs when a portion of the roof falling in, admits into the pit the impure gases which may have accumulated above, and which, taking fire from the lights used by the workmen, is sometimes the cause of an explosion; but, as we have already stated, the cause of the late disaster will never be ascertained.

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The number of operatives in the employ of the Clover Hill Company is nearly 200, and a little village, with a population of about one thousand, has sprung up in the vicinity of the pits, and when the tidings of the disaster, which had killed some seventy men, spread through the village, the excitement, suspense, and agony were intense.

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For a more accurate account of this awful calamity, we must await the extinguishment of the flames and the re-opening of the pit, both of which objects may, we hope, be speedily accomplished.

**The Great Colliery Explosion in Virginia—
More than Seventy Persons Killed.**

[From the Richmond Enquirer, April 5.]

Most of our readers are familiar with the coal dug from the Clover Hill pits in Chesterfield county, about twenty-one miles from Richmond by road, and thirty-one by rail; the company's branch railroad, nineteen miles in length, connecting at Chester, twelve miles from this city, with the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. These mines, which have been worked for many years, consist at present of three pits, known respectively as the Bright Hope, Raccoon and Hall's pits, and from these pits were raised last year about 900,000 bushels of coal. Both of the last named pits having been for sometime submerged, operations in them were temporarily discontinued, and the Bright Hope mine was the scene of a terrific explosion on Wednesday last, which, without a moment's warning, buried nearly a hundred human beings into eternity. The disaster is supposed to have been caused by the neglect of a drunken gas-man to discharge the duties of his office, which are to examine, with one of Davy's safety lamps, the condition of the air, and attend to the proper ventilation of the pits, this ventilation being kept up by means of doors opening into various portions of the pits, the purification of the air in this mine being additionally secured by a powerful wind-fan driven by the pit engine. There are, however, many other causes which may produce an explosion in the mines, one of these being a tumble, or (as it is technically termed by the miners) a fall, which occurs when a portion of the roof falling in admits into the pit the impure gases which may have accumulated above, and which, taking fire from the pits used by the workmen, are sometimes the cause of an explosion.

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D. S. Woodruff, Esq.

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Very respectfully,

J. H. COX.

BUREAU OF MINES

SUBJECT: Gas explosion, Clover Hill Mine, April 6, 1867,
Chesterfield, Virginia, Sixty-nine were killed.

Gas explosion, Clover Hill Mine, April 6, 1867, Chesterfield, Virginia, Immediate cause: Cause uncertain. Presumably accumulation of gas in an upset where ventilation had been interfered with. Gas inspectors had been ordered to place air-door but cover had neglected to do so. Gas probably backed down to main level where it came in contact with some workman's lamp. Sixty-nine men were killed.

[E&MJ Vol. III, 1867 - April 13., p. 47,48,50]

The following are the names of the white men killed, with number of persons left by them unprovided for: Thomas Layton, wife and six children; Patrick Donnahoe, two children; James Locket, wife and four children; William Thomas, wife and five children; Beverley Amonet, wife and three children; Joe Condry, wife and one child; John Ainsko, wife and three children; James Ainsko, wife and one child; John Weal, wife and five children; Peter Logan, wife; George Moore, wife and six children; Jim Harper, wife; Nat Roberts, wife; Albert Isaacs, wife and three children; H. McGruder, wife and three children; William B. Robertson, wife and five children. George Puckett, Tom Puckett, Jim Puckett, not married, but have one sister; George Traylor, mother and two sisters; Samuel Fowler, six children; Nick Hackett, father and mother, aged and infirm; Robert Bowman, wife and three children; William Goode, wife and three children; William Cosley, wife and three children; William A. Cole, Thomas Cosley, John T. Kerner, Total—30 men killed, and 81 women and children utterly destitute.

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These men were all laborers in the mine trail.

Name	
Thomas Layton	John Owens
Patrick Donnahoe	Simon Stokes
James Locket	Edmund Jones
William Thomas	Asa Coleman
Beverley Amonet	William Simms
Joe Condry	Washington Hunt
John Ainsko	John Artis
James Ainsko	Henry Finney
John Weal	Andrew Branch
Peter Logan	Randall Jackson
George Moore	William Threatt
Jim Harper	Price Jackson
Nat Roberts	Charles Jefferson
Albert Isaacs	Doctor Faulker
H. McGruder	Redd Jefferson
William B. Robertson	Wyley Gibbs
George Puckett	Ellett Trent
Tom Puckett	Edmund Johnson
Jim Puckett	Josephy Turpin
George Taylor	Phil Bossieau
Samual Fowler	Henry Bossieau
Nick Hackett	Aaron Wood
Robert Bowman	Elijah McTyre
William Goode	Jim Selden
William Cosley	Danish Langford
William A Cole	Robert Belman
Thomas Cosley	Frank Wiles
John T. Kerner	Albert Jones
Carter Cox	Dick Mann
Beverley Anderson	Daniel Osburn
Giles Patterson	Henry Owens
Gus Cox	Hnery Howard
Dick Hobston	Jerdan Gates
	William Kirby