

New York Times
February 8, 1882

THE MIDLOTHIAN DISASTER

The Mine Discovered to be on Fire – The Search for Bodies Stopped

COALFIELD, VA., FEB. 7 – The rumor that another explosion had occurred this afternoon at 4 o'clock at Grove shaft in the Midlothian group of coal mines, near this place, caused the most intense excitement. The mouth of the shaft was soon thronged with a crowd of anxious miners and their families. The rumor was unfounded, however. Mr. George Kendler, one of the most experienced miners here, penetrated about a hundred feet down the first incline and upon his return reported that he had discovered evident symptoms that the coal was on fire. This led to the immediate withdrawal from the shaft of the exploring party of which Kendler was a member. Steps were at once taken to close up and seal the mouth of the mine and all other apertures thereto, to prevent air from reaching the fire. The search for the bodies of the other victims of the disaster had to be stopped for the present at least. These mines caught on fire about a year ago and burned for weeks. In other mines of the same group, the coal has been known to catch fire and burn of months. This new trouble has caused a great deal of trouble. It is, of course impossible to tell how far the fire has extended or when it will exhaust itself.

George Kendler, who made the discovery of fire in the mines today has distinguished himself by the heroic efforts he has made during the past few days. In his search for the bodies of his comrades, he has worked unceasingly, hardly taking time to eat or sleep. When he first saw the flames today, the heat and the accumulation of deadly gas came near to overpowering him. He made his way back over the rugged gallery of the incline as rapidly as his condition would permit him, told his companions of what he had found, and the signal of alarm was quickly given to the men on the surface, and the party was drawn up. When Kendler got out of the cage he was much the worse for his perilous journey

RICHMOND, VA. , Feb. 7 – A meeting of citizens of Midlothian was held today for the purpose of forming a plan to procure relieve for the families of the entombed coal miners. Col. T. O'Brien was in the chair. The Rev. D.B. Winfree, the Hon. George H. Jewett, and Jacob Beach, and John Manders were appointed a relief committee for the purpose of making a general appeal to the public for aid and to receive and distribute contributions. A visiting committee was also appointed to ascertain and report the condition and wants of the several families. It was resolved that the newspapers throughout the country be respectfully requested to ask for and receive contributions for the aid of the sufferers and to send the same as fast as possible to the Relief Committee at Coal Field, Va. or to the First National Bank of Richmond. A meeting of the Relief Committee was held subsequently and the following appeal was made:

“We appeal to the sympathy and generosity of the public for contributions for the relief and alleviation of the suffering of 26 widows and 109 orphans through upon this community by the recent terrible explosion in the Midlothian Company's coal mine, in this township. At the time of the explosion, there were 32 men in the mine, everyone of who were killed. Twenty-six of them were married and leave widows and children, the great majority of them in a helpless and destitute condition. To have this large additional number of dependents through upon this small and improvised community in one day, in midwinter, forces the necessity of appealing for outside aid, to prevent as far as possible further suffering and distress. The Richmond and Danville Railroad Company will carry free all packages sent to the Relief Committee at Coal Field.

Burlington Weekly Hawkeye
February 9, 1882

The Midlothian Mine on Fire

Richmond – Feb. 7 – The Midlothian mine being on fire, the searching party has withdrawn and the mine has been closed. Twenty-seven bodies are still in the mine.

Freeborn Standard
Albert Lea, MN
February 1882

A MINING HORROR

Terrible Explosion in a Virginia Mine Which Has Undoubtedly Resulted in the Death of Thirty-two Miners

The New York Herald has a special from Coalfield, Va. saying: Shortly after 1 o'clock on the 3rd, an explosion occurred in the Grove shaft of the Midlothian coal pits. A volume of smoke, cinders, wood and bark burst from the shaft which became choked up and closed. Intense excitement ensued as it was known that a large number of men were at work in the pit, which is over 1,200 feet deep, the galleries extending 3,000 feet under the ground. General efforts have been made to test the pit and to reach the imprisoned workmen but without success. People from all quarters are flocking to the scene of the explosion.

About 2 o'clock all hope was abandoned and the most harrowing scenes of wailing women and children and grief stricken men followed. A majority of the entombed miners were married and many leave large families, most of these by this time assembled at the mouth of the shaft and the scene was heart-rending in the extreme. Amid all this it had to be decided to make no further effort to reach the bottom of the mine until the boiler fire had gone out. It was feared, and almost positively known, that any efforts to restore ventilation would only create a disastrous conflagration from the boiler fires, and nothing could be gained by the attempt.

The mines belong to the estate of the late H. H. Burroughs of New York and cost about twelve years ago between \$400,000 and \$500,000.

Manitoba Free Press
Winnipeg
February 8, 1882

Widows and Orphans

There are 26 widows and 109 orphans by the Midlothian coal mine disaster. The Coal Fields appeals for aid to prevent further suffering and distress.

The mine being on fire, the exploring party has been hastily withdrawn and the shaft will be stopped up. Twenty-seven bodies are still in the mine. A false rumor that a second explosion had taken place and the explorers perished brought to the mouth of the shaft a crowd of excited men and crying women.

New York Times
February 4, 1882

A MINE DISASTER IN VIRGINIA

AN EXPLOSION IMPRISONS 32 MEN WITH LITTLE HOPE OF THEIR RESCUE

Coal Field, Va. – Feb 3 – An explosion occurred at the Grove Shaft of the Midlothian coal mines, about a mile and a half from here, at about 1 o'clock this afternoon. Thirty-two men were caught in the shaft, and there is little or no hope that any of them will be got out alive. The gas testers went down nearly to the bottom of the pit three times but they were forced to return on account of the smoke and gas, which were suffocating. They report the pit is on fire, but they will make another effort in the morning to search for the unfortunate men. The news of the disaster spread very rapidly, and in a short time a crowd had gathered at the shaft, and the scene was most distressing, as nearly every one had some relative or friend among the entombed miners.

The cause of the disaster is not positively known. By some it is attributed to gas, while others say the boiler in the pit exploded. Mr. George M. Dodds, superintendent, states that the gas-testers made an examination this morning and reported that there was no gas to burn. There is no doubt, however, that those who were not killed by the explosion will be suffocated by black damp and smoke with which the pit is choked and through which no fresh air can penetrate. The following is the list of victims:

Whites:

William H. Marshall, the bottom boss
James, E. Hall
Thomas M. Hall
George Jewett, Jr.
A. W. Jewett
James Brown
Joseph Cournow
John Morris
James Shields
Richard Cogbill,

Ben Brooks
Alex Logan
Peter Hopper
Major Pollard
Soloman Taylor
Squire Bright
John Green
Lewis Hobbs
Daniel Hammond
Isham Graves
Ed Ross
Robert Brooks
Thomas Summells
Albert Hughes
James Mills
Jeff Coleman
Fred Anderson

Colored:

Richard Morgan
Robert Binford
Samuel Cox
Pleasant Stewart
Joseph Cunlupp

The shaft in which the explosion occurred is nearly 600 feet deep, running about three quarters of a mile in a lateral direction. The Midlothian coal Mines belong to the estate of the later H. H. Burroughs, of New York, and cost about 12 years ago, between \$400,00

The New York Times
February 16, 1882

AID FOR MIDLOTHIAN SUFFERERS

Richmond Va., Feb. 15 – The committee appointed to solicit outside subscriptions for the relief of the survivors of the victims of the recent explosion in the Grove shaft of the Midlothian Mines have issued the following circular:

An awful explosion has occurred in the Midlothian Coal Mines, about 20 miles south-west of this city. Thirty-two men were in the mine, all of whom were killed, leaving 26 widows and 109 orphans, all of whom were supported by the labor of the bread-winner and are dependent on charity. The people living in the mining district, who are mostly in moderate circumstances, contributed freely to the extent of their ability to relieve the immediate pressing wants of the sufferers. A public meeting was held in this city, and the citizens have done well. Contributions have been numerous, but not large in the aggregate, considering that these poor sufferers have in a moment, by a dreadful visitation of Providence, become claimants on the sympathy and charity of all just and humane persons. The money contributed will be distributed in such manner as will relieve their present wants and gradually enable the survivors to take care of themselves. This committee was specially appointed to apply to friends beyond the State to contribute to the cause. The bare report of this calamity will be enough to move the hearts of those who know what a dreadful thing in a mining district a mine explosion is. We appeal to the humane everywhere to assist us in taking care of those poor women and children thrust suddenly on our charity. Contributions may be sent to the Merchants National Bank, Richmond Va., and will be acknowledged through the daily papers and direct mail.

The Agitator
Wellsboro, PA
February 21, 1882

The committee at Richmond, Va. to solicit aid for the sufferers of the Midlothian mine disaster has issued another circular. They state that 32 men were killed, leaving 26 widows and 100 orphans, all of whom are dependent on charity. They earnestly appeal for subscriptions to be sent to the Merchants National Bank of Richmond, Va.