

A MONSTER GRAVE.

A Graphic Account of the Keel Ridge Mine Disaster.

[From the Florence News.]

The most terrible calamity that has visited the Menominee Range occurred a little after 1 o'clock Tuesday afternoon last, the Keel Ridge iron mine, owned and operated by the Emmett Mining Company, caving in and burying alive eight miners, six of whom were married and had in all thirteen children. As follows:

William Henderson, wife and four children.

William Pollard, wife and four children.

John Morrish, wife and one child.

William Jeffery.

Thomas James, wife and child.

Alexander Helman.

Patrick Eagan, wife.

Richard Williams, wife and three children.

The mine was considered worked out and the eight men, with one more named Edward Wicks, were engaged about the mouth of the shaft on the surface taking out the pumps, pipes ladders, etc., preparatory to abandoning it, when, without warning of any kind, the whole face of ground covering the underground workings fell in engulfing them and the boiler house near by, and forming a huge sink hole sixty feet deep, one hundred wide, and one hundred and fifty in length. A re-echoing crash that shook the settlement, a cloud of dust that for an instant obscured the sun, and all was over. The whole village frantic with apprehension were out in a twinkling and there was an awful cry, "The mine! the mine!—it has fallen in!" In a moment the brink of the yawing abyss was lined with terror-stricken men, women, and children, whose white, anxious faces, peering into the depths, told of awful fear and agony. Of the nine only one struggling victim could be seen, striving to free himself from the weight of earth and rock, which had broken one of his legs and ribs. He was Ed. Wicks. Somehow he had been thrown up from the immense mass, and men were lowered down to him by ropes and carried him up in their arms, and he was laid down crushed and bleeding, but thankful. Not a vestige of his eight companions was discernable anywhere, and even the boiler house with its great boilers was nowhere visible, and only a few splinters and a small jet of steam issuing from the debris told it was there.

The alarm spread quickly and within an hour or two there were nearly a thousand people at the scene of the disaster, among them the entire force of miners of the Chapin, the Menominee Mining company ordering the suspension of work at this mine in order its men might assist its ill-fated neighbor. The work of erecting derricks and setting up hoisting machinery brought from the Chapin was speedily commenced. It is calculated that a month or more will be consumed hoisting the mass before the first body will be uncovered, even allowing that the remains lie but midway in the great heap and not nearer the bottom as may be the case. There is practically nothing on which to base a calculation as to how deep the bodies lie buried.

When visited by a reporter of the News Thursday, the huge grave presented a distracting sight. The widows and orphans stood about weeping and wailing for their dead pitifully, while two hundred men were solemnly, even reverently, engaged in the necessarily slow work of resurrection. The wife of one of the victims, Mrs. Thomas James, had become crazed at her loss, compelling her friends to provide for her safe keeping, while three other of the widows were confined to the house being about to become mothers. All the families are left in almost destitute circumstances, and suffering for the wants of life will occur soon in their midst unless arrested by the hand of charity.

The Keel Ridge mine was discovered in 1879 by John McKenna, and was developed by him in company with John O'Callaghan at which time it was known as the "McKenna Mine." In 1880 it was purchased by Wm. McCartney for a consideration of \$35,000, who in the next year disposed of it to the Emmett company, its present owner, for \$75,000, who changed its name to the Keel Ridge. It comprises the south half of section 32; town 40, range 30. It was worked under ground at a depth of nearly 300 feet. In 1880 the mine produced 11,445 gross tons, in 1881 19,011 and in 1882 28,000. J. T. Jones is agent, and John Wicks captain.

As we go to press we learn that the prospect of being able to recover the bodies in the Keel Ridge mine has become almost hopeless owing to the heavy rains occurring since the disaster, which have washed in tons upon tons more earth and rendered the work of raising it almost impracticable. It is now thought the remains can not be resurrected in two months. In view of this state of affairs the company have submitted a proposition to the widows of the victims offering them \$4,000 each if they will consent to let the dead remain in the almost unfathomable depths, and release it from its hopeless search. The proposition meets with the endorsement of all acquainted with the terrible situation and will no doubt be accepted by the widows.

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—No bodies have been found yet. A coat and a mitten have been found. These were probably hanging in the boiler house to dry at the time of the cave in. Some of the buried machinery is being uncovered. The electric lights from the Quinnesec mine are being used to facilitate the work at night. Pumps from the Chapin mine are being placed in position for use in case the rescuing party meets with water.