

## THE MINE DISASTER.

**The Rich Hill Calamity Proves  
Worse Than as at First  
Reported.**

**Between Thirty and Forty Miners  
Thought to Have Been Killed—Par-  
tial List of Victims.**

**The Explosions Due to Natural Gas—In-  
spector Wolfe Denounced—Heartrend-  
ing Scenes at the Mine.**

**RICH HILL, Mo., March 31.**—It was almost four o'clock yesterday morning when the full extent of the calamity at the Keith & Perry coal mine was known. At that hour five had been taken from the mine dead, fifteen alive and fourteen or fifteen were known to be still in the mine. A final and desperate attempt was made to reach these, and it came very nearly costing two of the would-be rescuers their lives. They were unable to accomplish any thing, but they saw stretched out upon the bottom of the mine the dead bodies of their comrades. It was then definitely known that all who remained in the mine had been suffocated, and the exhausted crews suspended work until daylight. The list of the dead, according to the best information that it is possible to obtain, is as follows:

The dead—Charles Smith, colored; George May, white; G. C. McPherson, white; Frank Lawler, white; Jordan Smith, colored; Joshua Trickle; John Roberts, white; George Black, colored; C. Black, colored; W. Black, colored; H. Sheppard, colored; J. C. Neptune, white; John Lefler, white; Charles Kay, white; John Gray, white; Bruce Brown, white; L. R. Dixon, white; Fred Henderson, colored; W. H. Hill, colored; Alexander White, colored; Gibson McFerron, white. Of the above Trickle and Roberts died after having been rescued, and the fourteen last named are the imprisoned miners who were suffocated in the west end.

The injured are: N. B. Gray, Norman Gray, G. R. Sweeney, M. Dullahaunt, George Henry, Robert Dick, Charles Smallwood, C. J. Neptune, William Young, R. Mason, Frank Jackson, W. Richards, J. L. Williams, F. Fernando, C. W. Roberts, Arch Marshall, John Lucas, D. C. Jones.

This list includes Superintendent Sweeney and those who went down with him after the first explosion and were caught and burned in the second. Most of the injured were desperately hurt, two having died yesterday. The fatalities will probably number thirty.

Later—The scenes around the shaft were heartrending during the entire day. Up to noon yesterday twenty had been taken out, five of whom were dead. Four of the living who were taken out have since died. Several others are in a dangerous condition.

Seven more dead miners have been taken out and seven more are known to be yet in the mine, but are at points hard to reach, and it is difficult to find volunteers to go down and make the search.

Those miners who had risked their lives to rescue the buried living, and bring to the surface the dead, are from the mines of the Rich Hill Coal and Mining Company, under charge of Superintendent Joseph T. Reavely, who, after Mr. George Sweeney, of the Keith & Perry Coal Company was severely burned, volunteered his services, and has since been in charge of the exploded mine, and to whose careful work, good judgment and courage, is largely due the success of the rescuing corps.

All night men were at work in the search for the living and the dead, notwithstanding the mine was so filled with natural gas that it burned above the regular blaze of the arc safety lamp used.

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/477904223/>

The lower end of the double cage shaft had been crushed in the bottom, leaving it in a wedge shape, point down, and six feet or more of slate and clay had fallen in around this, preventing either crib reaching the bottom. This was all removed and one crib is running to lower the rescuing corps and bring out the dead.

The only shaft the mine had was a section of the main shaft, partitioned off, about three by seven feet. This was blown to pieces or into the south crib, necessitating the converting of the south half of the crib shaft into an air shaft. Superintendent Reavely kept the engine forcing sprays of water into this air shaft for four hours, at the end of which time it was only possible for any one to enter the mine proper.

There seems to be no question but that the explosion was caused from natural gas, which abounds in the earth at and below the depth of this mine in a large section of country south and west, frequent explosions and great damage and loss of life having occurred heretofore.

The State mine inspector, Mr. Wolfe, though having reported the mine in excellent condition, knew of the existence of large quantities of natural gas, and has frequently unofficially so stated, and such great indignation prevails among the living miners of No. 6 mine that it would have been dangerous for Mr. Wolfe to have put in an appearance at the mine. Had there have been a separate air shaft, experienced miners say, the explosion could hardly have occurred, or if it had the consequences would have been much less disastrous.

Dr. Rice, county coroner, was at the mine yesterday, and the inquest will be held today. The large blacksmith and carpenter shop close by is being used as a morgue, and at this place the inquest will be held.

The rescued dead are most horribly burned, and present a horrible sight and sickening smell of burnt human flesh, ready to drop from the bones. In some cases past recognition except by some other than personal evidence. A half mile away the Rich Hill Gas Company's natural gas well, now down a depth of three hundred and fifty feet, brightens up the darkness of night with its lurid flames reaching heavenward, as if in mockery of its deathly work under ground so short a time since and at so little distance away.

1888 Keith and Perry mine explosion  
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