

VERDICT

OF THE CORONER'S JURY ON THE NEILSON EXPLOSION.

NO DEFINITE DECISION GIVEN.

Jury, Coroner and Mine Inspector Unable to Secure Positive Information as to Who is to Blame for the Loss of Ten Human Lives.

The Neilson mine disaster will ever remain a mystery. The evidence of the witnesses was so conflicting and void of corroborated facts that it is simply impossible to determine positively upon whom rests the responsibility. The only positive fact brought out before the coroner and jury and Mine Inspector Edward Brennan was that John Orbitskie, a laborer working at the bottom of shaft in No. 10 vein, did go into a shanty a few yards from the shaft, which is cut in the rock with a plank front, the top, bottom and three sides being solid rock, heated by steam, used for drying and shifting clothes, (the place being very wet so that the workmen are sometimes obliged to change their outer garments during the day) and that a box was in said shanty where oil was kept (torch oil,) used in a double spouted torch lamp which is placed at the landing to light the miners and workingmen going into and coming out of said No. 10 vein, the place being so wet that a small lamp will not continue to burn. Neither can they use good miners' oil, must be something that will give a large blaze on account of the continued dripping and splashing of water.

It is said that there is never more than two gallons of this oil kept there at one and the same time and that there was not over a gallon of the oil in the shanty at the time of the fire, from the fact that they take oil down every day when working at noon to keep up the supply.

Noah Geary mining accident 1893
paragraph 1-2

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Now Orbitskie went in the shanty the first thing in the morning to fill the lamp and while in the act of doing so the fire ignited like a flash. Whether it was caused by the oil or other inflammable matter such as gas or dry air is not clear. Orbitskie says the shanty was very hot when he opened the door and entered to fill his lamp; hotter than he ever experienced it before, having been closed from Thursday evening until Saturday morning, as there was no work on Friday.

It has been freely circulated that he poured oil from the can on the burning wick after the lamp had been filled and this caused the explosion, but it has also been proven that this was a customary practice by all working at that particular place from the fact that often the wick would get wet from the continued dripping of water and they were obliged to either squirt or pour oil on to keep the touch burning. But the question here arises, how could the oil can or oil explode without burning the man?

Such a thing has never been heard of

Noah Geary mining accident paragraph 3 -

4

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Such a thing has never been heard of or is it known or recorded that it could possibly explode without saturating his clothes and burning him. The man was not burned, scorched or hurt in the manner. This fact is in his favor and surrounds the accident with a mystery hard to solve and gives rise to a possibility that there was an explosion of gas of some kind that so quickly enclosed the whole top of the shanty in a flame, which is corroborated by several witnesses that the flame bursted out in the top and not in the bottom of the shanty where the fire would certainly be the fiercest had the oil can exploded and the oil box stood, which is naturally saturated with oil from continual use for several years. Therefore the mysterious occurrence of this destructive fire and dreadful calamity will ever remain a matter for theorizing and will never be positively and certainly accounted for.

However to exonerate everybody from blame would not be right. There was not that due precaution practiced by the bosses or the men working at the Neilson that should be used in a place of that character and no doubt Mine Inspector Brennan will enforce some new rules at that place and many other collieries soon as time will permit him to do so.

Noah Geary mining accident paragraph
5-6

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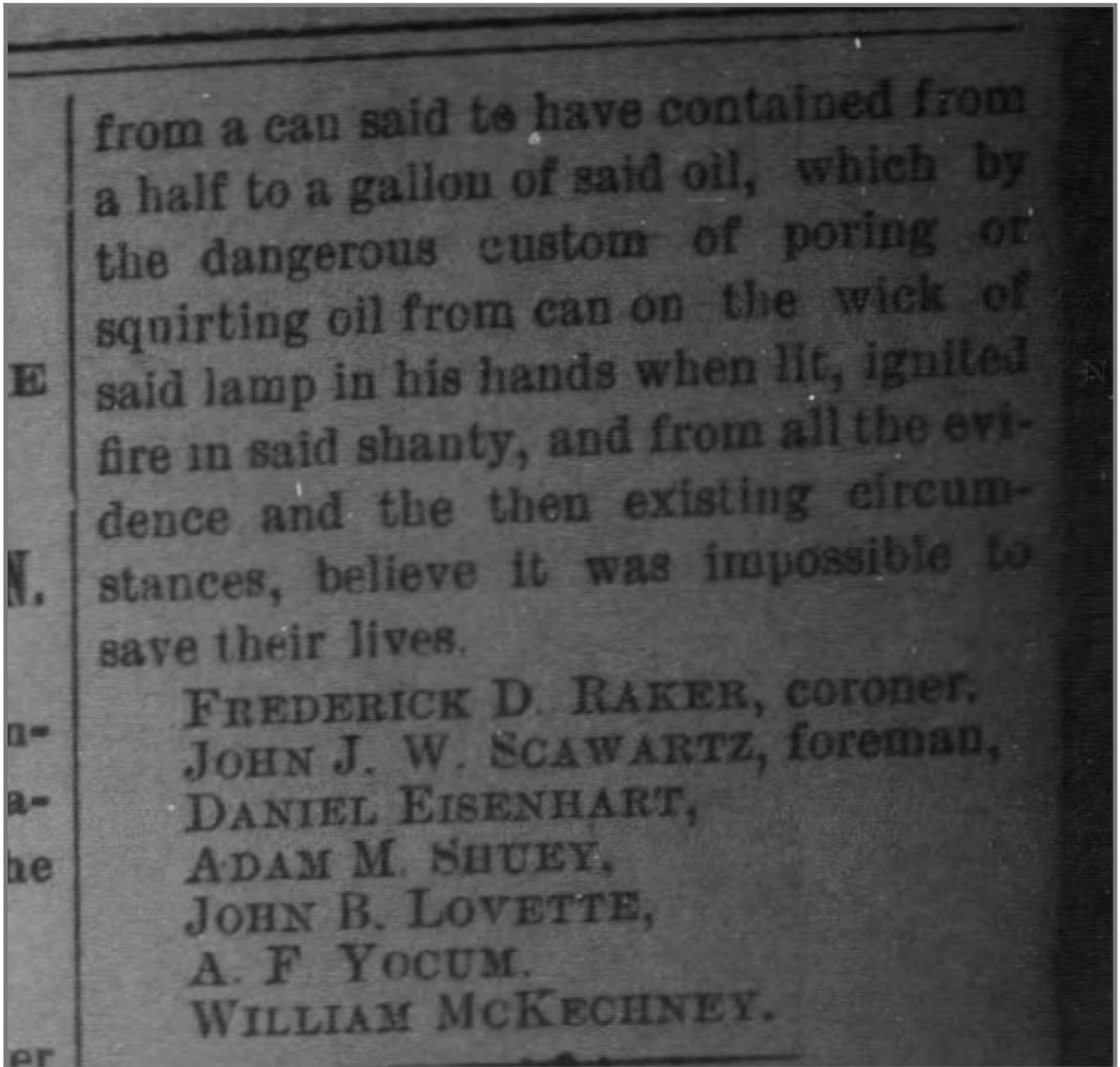
him to do so.

The following verdict was rendered:

We the jury empaneled to hold an inquest over the dead bodies of John Burt, Frank Shukes, Joe Bartoskie, Noah Geary, Ferdinand Ginter, Nicholas Dehouant, John Vrabel, John Ryon, Patrick Brennan and Michael Brennan, miners and workmen who lost their lives in the No. 11 or Red Ash vein on the north dip, west gangway at the Neilson colliery Saturday morning, April 1, 1893, between the hours of 7 and 8 o'clock on said day and morning, find from all the evidence and information gained from twenty odd witnesses that the aforesaid men lost their lives from inhaling smoke caused by a fire in a shanty in the No. 10 vein at the bottom of the shaft, said fire having been caused by the filling of a lamp with torch oil, in the hands of John Orbitskie

Noah Geary paragraph 7

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Noah Geary mining accident paragraph 8

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