

TEN MEN DASHED TO DEATH  
BY THE BREAKING OF A ROPE

Frightful Accident Occurred This Morning at the Conyngnam Shaft, of the Delawars & Hudson Co., in Wilkesbarre, Miners Being the Victims.

WIRE ROPE ON CAGE SNAPPED  
WHILE MEN WERE BEING LOWERED

Cage With Its Human Load Dropped Four Hundred Feet  
Landing at the Foot of the Shaft—Every Man on Board Was Instantly Killed.

Ten human beings were dashed to death this morning while descending to their work in the Conyngnam mine of the D. & H. Coal Co., in Wilkesbarre. The accident was almost exactly similar to the Archbald disaster of six months ago and the recent terrible accident in the Clear Spring colliery in West Pittston. The mine horror occurred at about 4:30 while the men, who were being lowered to take up their work for the day, the rope of the descending cage with its load of human freight was dashed to the bottom where the bodies of the men were later found, in mass of bleeding and mangled flesh and bone.

The names of the dead are: ANTHONY JATANCY, resident of Georgetown, miner, survived by his wife. WILLIAM F. HANEY, North Main street, Wilkesbarre, miner, married. JOHN JURITSKY, 317 Wyoming street, miner, wife and two children. JAMES MATONIDLEN, Georgetown, miner, wife and six children. HARRY MURRAY, laborer, married. ANTHONY ZILBOC, 31 Empire st., miner, wife and two children. ARTHUR E. RAYANSE, Georgetown, miner, wife and four children in the old country. JOHN CHASE, corner North Main and Kelly street, miner, wife and four children. LAHINTZ WACHUK, 311 Wyoming street, miner, wife and four children. FRANK KROGAL, 21 Ralph st., miner, married.

The colliery in which the accident occurred is situated on North Pennsylvania avenue, Wilkesbarre, and is one of the largest of the D. & H. workings.

The miners and inside employees of the colliery assemble at the mouth of the shaft each morning shortly after 6 o'clock, and today the usual number were at the shaft enjoying the balmy spring weather, laughing and chatting while waiting for the cage to start.

Shortly before 6:30 o'clock the engineer, William Cunningham, began lowering the men into the mine. Two carriage loads were lowered without incident, the engine and machinery working smoothly.

As the next carriage, the fatal one, reached the upper landing, the usual friendly jostling of men anxious to get down early to the scene of their labors, took place, and soon ten men were on the carriage. Two or three others anxious to get down were disappointed not to find a place, and the other ten were lowered into the black depths.

Engineer Cunningham, at the throttle, lowered the carriage, steadily and shut off steam preparatory to stopping it at the Hillman vein opening when suddenly he felt a snap, the rope on the drum loosened and he knew that the rope had broken. The men who crowded around the mouth of the shaft opening were horrified at the same time to notice that the rope had broken and the fear for the fate of their comrades blanched many cheeks.

Instantly the engine was stopped and a rescuing party prepared to descend. For a short time there was hope that the "dogs" on the carriage had worked, and that the cage with its human freight was stuck in the shaft, but in a few minutes a signal was sent up from the footman that the carriage and its occupants were a mangled mass in the dump at the bottom.

It is about 400 feet from the Hillman vein to the Baltimore vein and the carriage and its occupants fell that distance into the sump. The shaft is altogether 718 feet deep.

Instantly the news of the disaster spread and within an hour a crowd of several hundred people gathered about the mouth of the shaft and there were many heartrending scenes. Women and children cried for husbands, brothers and fathers, and for a time the greatest confusion prevailed.

Some of those who were employed at the colliery and had not yet been lowered, hurried to their homes to assure their relatives of their safety, but others who had previously been lowered and entered the workings to their chambers and had no knowledge of the accident for a few hours, were feared to be lost.

As those at the mouth of the shaft were not sure of the names of the men on the fatal carriage, each man who could not be located was feared to be among the dead and the excitement and confusion were therefore added to.

The mine officials at the colliery immediately took charge of affairs. Mine Inspector Riple and other mine officials hurried to the scene and arrangements were made to take out the dead.

Undertaker James Marley was summoned and the dead were taken from the shaft, identified and taken to his morgue and prepared for removal to their national homes. Coroner Dolan was soon on the scene and will make a rigid investigation.

The crowd at the shaft became so large and there was so much excitement and confusion that a squad of city police, headed by Mayor Kirkendall and Chief Briggs, went to the scene and had ropes stretched to keep all back from the mouth of the ill-fated shaft.

Immediately upon being notified of the accident the officials of the colliery set about the work of rescue and within a few minutes a rescuing party had descended the shaft, hoping that some of the victims had escaped death and prepared to render every assistance in case any were found alive.

The news of the accident was also communicated to the officials of the company and soon General Manager Pettibone, Inside Superintendent Samuel H. Morgan and Division Superintendent Van Horn were on the scene and personally took charge of the work of rescue.

The shaft is located about twenty feet distant from the double or balancing shaft, out of which the coal is hoisted, none of the men being allowed to enter or leave the mine except by the main shaft. The carriage in this shaft was supported by a 1-1/2 inch wire cable, which was examined each day at noon, and no reason can be given why this cable should have parted at the time it did.

The officials of the colliery when men this morning said they cannot understand how the accident occurred as the cable when examined yesterday seemed to be in excellent condition.

Owing to the serious illness of Mine Inspector James F. Martin, who is confined to his bed, it was necessary to secure an inspector from outside the district. Mine Inspector P. M. Boyl, of Kingston, was communicated with and offered his services, arriving on the scene shortly before nine o'clock. He at once descended the shaft, remaining at the foot until the last body had been removed.

It was past 10 o'clock before the first body was brought to the surface. Long before this, however, word was sent to those in waiting, notifying them that the men were all dead, and every effort was being made to recover the bodies. The carriage had dropped with terrific force. When the sump was reached the force of the impact caused the upper portion of the cage to give way and the top or bucket crashed down upon the men, pinning them fast beneath a mass of broken timber and twisted iron from which it was difficult to extricate them.

It was necessary to take chains, levers and jack screws into the mine and wrench away this mass of broken iron and wood to get out the bodies. After working steadily for three hours one of the men was sent to the surface to notify those in charge there that the bodies had been recovered, and at exactly 10:25 the body of the first victim was brought to the surface. The body was at once placed in a waiting ambulance and taken to the undertaking rooms of J. P. Marley, East End.

As rapidly as possible thereafter the other bodies were removed from the mine, the tenth and last victim being brought to the surface by 11 o'clock. Each body was mangled out of all semblance of humanity, but, strange to say, in but one or two instances were the faces so mangled as to make them unrecognizable. Each body as it was received was hurried to the morgue in East End, and after the bodies have been embalmed the remains will be taken to the homes of the victims.

Engineer Cunningham, who had charge of the engine at the time the accident occurred, told the following story:

"I am on night duty this week and at the time of the accident was engaged in lowering a cage load of men into the mine. This was at 6:25 and I would have been relieved from duty in a short while by the day man. I had already lowered two carriage loads of workmen, this being the third. Everything worked smoothly, the rope paying off from the drum without the slightest friction when the cage had reached a point a short distance above the Hillman vein.

"I shut off steam, preparatory to stopping at that landing, as I did not know but some of the men wished to get off there, suddenly the rope parted and the carriage dropped to the bottom of the shaft. The first indication I had of the accident was when the rope began to slip back into the engine house."

Mr. Cunningham says he has not the slightest idea as to what caused the cable to part, as it had been inspected at noon yesterday and no flaw had been discovered.

One of the officials stated after the bodies had been recovered that the carriage had dropped squarely, that is it had not left the guides during its descent, but that the force of the impact when the bottom was struck had twisted it entirely out of shape and it will be necessary to remove it piecemeal.

Asked why the "dogs" did not work this official said:

"This I cannot tell. There are various reasons why they might not work but just what the real reason was no one could tell."

The same official said that the weight of the piece of rope attached to the carriage might have been sufficient to check the dogs from acting. This can not be stated definitely, however, until an examination has been made to ascertain just where the rope broke.

1905 Conyngnam Colliery hoisting disaster NEWS2

Clipped By:  
usmra rob  
Sep 21, 2025