

MINERS KILLED BY EXPLOSION OF MINE GAS

SEVENTEEN DEAD AND SIXTEEN INJURED, SOME OF THEM DANGEROUSLY, IN LACKAWANNA MINE AT WEHRUM—WORKINGS CONSIDERED SAFE AND OPEN LAMPS WERE ALLOWED—DEAD WERE MOSTLY FOREIGNERS.

WOMEN WERE FRANTIC

WEHRUM, Pa., June 23.—As the result of an explosion of gas in mine No. 4, of the Lackawanna Coal and Coke company shortly after 7 o'clock this morning, seventeen miners were killed and sixteen injured. With the exception of one, those killed were foreigners. With few exceptions those injured were Americans.

Twelve of the more seriously injured were taken to Spangler hospital. It was stated all would probably recover.

Inspector Joseph Williams, of Altoona, with a party, entered the mine shortly after 8 o'clock tonight for the purpose of ascertaining whether any one was yet entombed.

Superintendent A. M. Johnson stated tonight that while the mine has always been regarded as non-gaseous, the explosion was due to the ignition of a pocket of gas by the open lamp of a miner.

"The mine has been so free from gas for the past six years," said the superintendent, "that the state inspectors have permitted the use of open lamps. With seventeen dead and sixteen injured, I am of the opinion that everyone has been accounted for who entered the mine today."

1909 Lackawanna No 4 Mine explosion
NEWS3

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The mine has only been operating two days each week, Tuesday and Friday. Those in the mine today had entered the shaft for their daily allowance of coal for family use.

Grouped about the slope entrance of the mine just before the explosion were several Italians. When the terrific subterranean upheaval of rock and deadly gas spouted skyward these Italians were caught. Terribly burned and maimed they rushed about the settlement crying for aid. The cries and sound of hissing mine gas at the entrance of the mine brought the entire town to the scene.

Superintendent A. N. Johnson, backed by the office force of the company, stood at the mine entrance and held back the frantic women whose relatives were entombed.

The first man to reach the surface was A. L. Johnson, son of the superintendent. Young Johnson had been in a lower heading. There were burns on his arms, body and neck, and tonight it was stated he had inhaled flames. He is one of the few seriously injured.

Following the superintendent's son came two Italians, their faces burned to a crisp. They were attended by the mine physician.

Superintendent Johnson called for volunteers to enter the mine. In the volunteer ranks stood several women. These were ordered back. With wet handkerchiefs tied over their faces the first squad of the relief party started down the shaft. Of the eight who started four came back with their senses. The others, overcome with black damp, were pulled to the surface with ropes.

A second and a third party entered only to be driven back by the deadly gases, hissing and spouting in the lower levels.

Oxygen, sent by the Cambria steel works, aided the searchers and with safety helmets a fourth rescue party succeeding in bringing twelve bodies to the surface. Late in the afternoon five more bodies were recovered. They were found huddled together in the lower left heading where they had died in an evident effort to reach the main shaft.

In twos and threes the injured were found and lifted to the mouth of the mine and then hastily taken to the temporary hospital established at the company store. They were later removed to the Spangler hospital.

Late tonight all but two rooms of the mine had been thoroughly searched and it was announced that it was thought no more bodies were in the mine.

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