

JURY FAILS TO FIX BLAME FOR TRIPP DISASTER

Scranton, Pa., Dec. 24.—Coroner W. M. Lynch, of Lackawanna county, today received the verdict of the coroner's jury who have spent three evenings hearing the testimony of twenty-four men and investigating the disaster at the Tripp shaft of the Lackawanna company on December 9, when the carriage gave way and thirteen men plunged to death.

The verdict fails to fix the cause of the disaster, but it does say that the mine carriage law was violated in the company permitting more than ten men to ride on the cage.

The verdict follows:
"We, the jury appointed by the coroner of Lackawanna county to investigate into the cause of the deaths of thirteen men killed while being lowered into the Tripp shaft, owned and operated by the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western company, on the morning of December 9, 1914, at or about 6.20 o'clock, do find:

"That Article 12, rule 16, page 33, of the Pennsylvania Anthracite mine laws which reads that not more than ten men shall at any one time be allowed to enter or leave the mine on any one trip of the carriage, has been violated. We suggest that some arrangement be erected or devised to prevent men from entering or approaching the cage, only from the side where the headman is located or stationed; also that some device should be arranged which would aid the headman in ascertaining that only ten men are on the carriage.

"We also find that the thirteen men came to their deaths by falling down the shaft, said accident being due to forcing out of a portion of the bottom of the cage, and after consideration of all the testimony and also an inspection of the shaft, cage, etc., that the cause is unknown to this jury.

(Signed) H. C. BIRBECK,

Foreman.
DAVID T. PIERCE,
W. C. JONES,
W. O. JENKINS,
FRED H. THOMAS,
THOMAS SOULSBY."

Following the session of the jury last night, certain of the jurors declared that they were unable to find from the testimony whether an explosion of dynamite or defects in the carriage or the shaft was the primary cause of the disaster. The evidence on this point was conflicting, the jury found, and some of the jurors said they did not deem it the proper thing to guess the cause in the face of the contradictory testimony.

The verdict established that the mine laws regulating the number of men allowable on a carriage for any one trip was violated, but whether the company's agent—the headman—or the miners themselves were responsible for this violation, the verdict does not state. As to the actual cause the most significant word in the decision is the word "forcing," but the agency of force is left undetermined. Whether owing to dynamite, the swaying of the carriage against the sides of the shaft, or the snapping of the truss rods, the verdict remains mum.

There are a number of law suits as a result of the disaster pending. M. J. Martin and R. J. Manning, lawyers, have five or six cases for the families of as many of the victims. They also represent Martin Bolitsky, the fourteenth man on the ill-fated carriage, and who escaped death by a miracle. Bolitsky, himself, owing to the nervous strain incidental to the experience he passed through, was unable to clearly describe the accident, and while on the stand at the last session of the inquest, his wife interrupted him with an exclamation that he was "crazy."