

# DISASTER AT HOLLENBACK COLLIERY COSTS SIX LIVES

**Fire Threatens Mine and Smoke Hampers  
Rescuers—Only one Body Recovered.  
Little Hope for Missing Men.  
Company's Second Big Ac-  
cident in Month**

(Daily Record, March 10.)

Six men were killed in No. 6 slope of the Hollenback colliery, Lehigh & Wilkes-Barre Coal Co., by an accident that happened at 1:30 yesterday afternoon. Until the time of going to press but one body had been recovered.

The dead are:

Leo Kazenski, miner, 82 North Sherman street.

George Horney, slateman, 5 Diamond street.

William Kucinski, miner, 32 North Fulton street.

Edwin Jones, doorman, 62 South Meade street.

John Miskin, driver, 11 Spruce street, Georgetown.

Laborer, unknown.

The body of George Horney, the slateman, of 5 Diamond street, is the only one recovered.

The exact cause of the accident appears to be a mystery to the officials. Whether an explosion of gas or powder started a mine fire, or whether the mine fire caused an explosion of gas cannot be learned.

All rescue work has been delayed because of a wall of smoke that confronts the rescue party from both approaches that they might otherwise have to the area in which the bodies of the men must be.

No. 6 slope and air way makes a continuous circuit for air with a nest of chambers lying east of the slope. It is in No. 1 east, where the fire is and where the bodies of the men are. The scene of the fire is about 3,000 feet from the shaft. Approaching it from the shaft, entrance may be gained to No. 1 east gangway from its first junction with No. 6 slope, or by making the long circuit and approaching it with the air current. The rescue party first tried the shortest approach but found fire and a wall of smoke cutting them off.

A crew of rescuers was sent around with the air to get to the men from the back but when they came near to the scene of the accident they found that the smoke had become so dense that it was pushing the air back and completely covered the area where the bodies were. The work of drawing off the smoke then started in earnest. Many different tactics have been used. Brattices have been built and torn down, openings have been made into other air currents and every means known to the men on the scene has been brought into play in efforts to

reach the bodies of the men but with little success.

## Smoke Compressed by Air

A fire burning in a mine, unlike one outside in the open, first receives full benefit from the strong ventilating currents, and second has all its smoke and gases confined within the small area of the mine workings, and this smoke in surprisingly short time becomes compressed to a sufficient degree to hold back the strongest air currents that it is possible to direct into the gangways. In this airway the ventilation is 25,000 cubic feet of air per minute, and the smoke is generated so rapidly that this air will not carry it off, and at times becomes so compressed that it stops the air current completely.

## Officials on Scene

In the scene of the accident since it was first reported have been E. J. Newbaker, general superintendent; Douglas Bunting, chief engineer; J. D. Joseph, inside superintendent, and all the colliery officials. Mine Inspector T. J. Williams, within whose district the colliery is, has been on the scene since he first heard of it, and through Chief Roderick, Mine Inspectors D. T. Davis, John B. Crogan and J. J. Walsh have also been detailed to the work, and are now in the mines.

## Safety Lamps Were Required

The area in which the men were working is one in which lock safety lamps are at all times required. So far as is known safety lamps were being used, and a safety powder, permitted by the Bureau of Mines, was being used. Whether some one opened a safety lamp or went into the territory with a naked lamp, or in some other way started a fire or explosion, is not known at this time and will not be known until time is given for an investigation.

## Several Explosions

One of the men who had been near the rescuers told a story of a mine electrician who was setting up a telephone about 200 feet from the scene, and who was said to have been knocked over by the force of concussion. It is known that there were several concussions following the discovery of fire, but these explosions were caused by the fire and the electrician's story does not necessarily indicate that the first cause was gas explosion.

## Discovery of Trouble

Trouble was first discovered by a slope runner on Slope 6, who, working only about 200 feet from the scene, smelled smoke and reported the fire at once. The report was made between 1:30 and 2 o'clock and rescuers and fire fighters were sent to the place at once. All during the afternoon supplies, fire fighting equipment, from other collieries were carried to the scene and everything was done to make the work as efficient as possible.

Up to the time of going to press five men were unaccounted for. Seven men who are known to have been in the area that could not be reached; one of these escaped and the body of one man, burned, was found, so there are five to be accounted for. Little hope can be held out for them, as the action in which they worked has been approached from both sides by rescue parties, but in all cases they met smoke that could not be pene-

trated. On the one side there was smoke and fire and on the other side a wall of smoke so dense that it held back the strong air currents completely. If there were five men in this passageway filled with smoke there was little possibility at 3 o'clock this morning of their being alive.

## Explosion and Fire

Although no official information as to the probable causes of the accident could be obtained this morning, it is reasoned that there was either an explosion of gas which started a mine fire or that a fire started an explosion. In any event the fire has been the most serious factor and it has been the obstacle against which all the company officials and mine inspectors and volunteer aid has been spending its force.

The problem has been one chiefly in restoring ventilation by building brattices, making openings and attempting to draw off the wall of smoke that halted the progress of the rescuers.

About twenty-five picked men, called from all parts of the mine, have been following out the officials' directions in the attempt to clear the workings, and have been constantly at work since the accident was first discovered. Food has been sent in to them at intervals and they are kept on the job unceasingly.

## Superintendent Directs Fight

Mr. Newbaker, general superintendent, has been in the mine since the accident was reported to the office, directing the fight.

Reports at the last minute indicate that there is little hope of controlling the smoke sufficiently to reach whatever bodies are to be found in the burned area before morning. Efforts have not been slackened, for a serious fire confronts the officials, which is in itself a problem, aside from the work of rescuing the bodies of the men. To reach the victims and save the workings the fire must be stopped.

## Foreman Injured

Thomas I. Evans, a section foreman in another section of the mine, who was called to help fight fire, was caught by a falling rib, and was badly squeezed. He was removed to his home on New Market street about 6 o'clock, and though no bones were broken, he suffered a great deal of pain. It was his idea at that time that the six men who were in the working must have suffered some serious accident, for, he said, there would have been an opportunity for them to escape by going back against the air before the smoke overtook them.

## All Barred From Colliery Yard

Crowds hovered about the colliery gates during the late afternoon and early evening. Information was given as far as it was possible to do so, to all relatives of men in the mines, but a stern rule to allow no one except authorized persons within the colliery yard was rigidly enforced by the gate tenders. About supper time, when men were returning from work, a crowd of 1,000 spectators stood outside the main colliery gate.

Rumors had it that twenty men were killed, under all sorts of horrible conditions, and the news fluctuated from that point down to two fatalities. It was not until after midnight that the names of the victims were officially announced.

## ANNIVERSARY OF LANCE DISASTER

Yesterday was the monthly anniversary of the disaster at the Lance colliery of the same coal company, at Plymouth, in which seven men lost their lives and two were injured. Mine Inspector Davis only completed his investigation of the Lance accident last week and in his report directed attention to the gaseous parts of the mine and recommended the use of only safety lamps in these regions. The toll of thirteen lives in the one coal company within a month, is the heaviest to be reported in many years in the anthracite region.