

CATASTROPHY AT AMASA-PORTER

**WATER FROM OPEN PIT BURST IN-
TO MINE DROWNING MANY**

FOUR MEN RESCUED SO FAR

**Mine Officials Hope That Some
Have Escaped to the Stopes
Where They Can be Rescued**

The very latest word from the Amasa-Porter mine is that there is a possibility of rescuing some of the entombed miners. The last man up says he saw some of the men running towards the back end of the mine and thinks that some of them got up in the stopes and are above sand and water level which is ascertained to be 16 feet. The pumps are working and the men are working back through raises in an effort to get around and down into the stopes on the fifth level where the men are supposed to be.

The worst mining accident that Iron county has seen since the great Mansfield disaster of twenty-four years ago, occurred at the Amasa-Porter mine of the Nevada Mining Co., shortly after noon on Thursday.

Water which had accumulated in the open pit, cause by the cave-in of last week, brok through under bulk-heads which were put in to hold it back, and filled the mine with sand and water. It is thought that the water worked through a crevice.

The accident occurred at 12:45, just as the men were being lowered to their work, and only one load of men was down in the mine when the water broke through. Three of the men on that load succeeded in getting to the ladder in time to make their escape up the shaft. They were taken out very shortly after the accident occurred. One additional victim was caught and partly submerged in the sand and water, but about 6 o'clock his rescue was affected.

First Cave-in Last Week.

Operations at the Amasa-Porter mine were started in 1914 when the present shaft was sunk and the mine opened up, during the succeeding year. The ore produced by this property is mostly of a Bessemer grade and is very desirable in iron manufacture at the present time. For that reason heavy demands were made upon the mine during the shipping seasons of 1916 and 1917 and a large output was expected therefrom the coming season.

The mine was being worked upon the caving system. There is an overburden of about 90 feet of quicksand. The rock supports were firmer than expected, so that the caving of the sand overburden didn't come as quickly as was expected and the mine had been opened up on five levels, a total depth of about 500 feet before the expected caving of the surface occurred.

In expectation of this cave, concrete bulkheads were put in to guard the openings that led from the old workings to the shaft. It was expected that these bulkheads would hold back any pressure from the expected open pit.

Men Had Just Gone Down.

The men who lost their lives had just been lowered to work after eating their dinner on the surface. Had the accident occurred ten minutes sooner no one would have been injured; had it occurred half an hour later,

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AWFUL aCATASTROPHE.

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er all of the workingmen of the shift, about 100 would have been caught like rats in a trap and drowned.

Immediately after the alarm was given the work of rescue started, and at 6 o'clock only one man of the number caught below had been taken out and he escaped because he was but partially submerged.

The work of rescue continued throughout the night and was resumed with vigor the succeeding day.

From Alfred Erickson, a Crystal Falls miner who was awaiting his turn to go below, we got the following story:

"Dinner was over and the men started to descend to work about 12:30. Two pumpmen were in the mine, one on the lower level, and one on the third level where the top pump is located.

"One cage load of men descended. The lander says that four men were on the cage. The cage came up and was loaded the second time. The lander says that there were nine men on it. I didn't count them, so I can't say for sure just how many men were upon it, but it is taken for granted that there were nine men on the cage.

"When the second cage got down as far as the third level we who were standing at the shaft noticed that there was something wrong with the cage. The brakeman noticed it also and tried to stop it by putting on the brakes, but was unable to hold it and the cage went right through to the bottom before it stopped.

"One man ran over to the pit and yelled back that the water was going down. We then knew what was wrong. I think that the run of sand and water lasted about 15 minutes. Three men came up the shaft, one the pumpman from the third level. One of the men who came up had nothing left of his clothing but a shirt, the sand and water had ripped everything from him. I can remember but one of the men, Axel West, of Balsam. He came up minus his shoes which had been stripped from his feet by the falling water.

"We could hear no noise as the rush of water was too far down in the shaft. We did hear the men who got up as they neared the surface.

"A number of us immediately went down the shaft. I got as far down as the third level. From there down the ladderway was blocked and had not been cleared when I left the mine about 6 o'clock.

"When we got down to the third level we found that all the water had drained out and that everything was quite. I went into the drift where the bulkhead was and found that there was about two feet of sand in the bottom. The water had all drained out of the sand and it was hard so that we could get in.

"The cage and one skip were fast upon the bottom. The rope of the other skip was cut and the skip lowered as far down as possible, but it got wedged and wouldn't go all the way down.

"One man was stepping onto the second cage when he thought of two picks that he had taken up to have sharpened so he stepped off just as it was about to descend and his life was thereby saved."

Many Crystal Falls Men.

A number of the men killed are from Crystal Falls and most of them are Swede-Finns. We have been able to get the names of the following men who are said to be lost.

Crystal Falls—John Johnson, Oscar Johnson, E. Erickson, L. Isaac Isaacson, C. Kivela, M. Isotalo and John Ellis.

Amasa—Andrew Sand, Victor Kivimacki, Charles Kenivevla, Jos. German, Jacob Karl, Jim Rudis and Steve Surimak.

Amasa-Porter location: John Sartori.

This makes fifteen men, and doesn't tally with the number Erickson says was reported to him by the cage tender.

Among those who got out was a son of Albert Olexa of the half-way farming section. He was tending pumps on the third level.

From the mine office we learn that

there is some question about Oscar Johnson, Victor Kivimacki, Matt Isolato and Charles Knevila being among those missing.

Similar Accidents.

An occurrence almost identical in kind occurred at the Fogarty mine a year ago on the Fourth of July. The surface had been caved and a great burden of water was caught up in the sand of the open pit thus formed. On the morning of the Fourth of July with but two men about the place, the sand and water succeeded in working through some old stopes and the mine was filled in a few moments. As no one was at work in the stopes and drifts, no lives were lost, but the sand bothered the operators of the mine for a long time.

The Mansfield disaster of 1893 was caused by the giving away of the surface of the mine which lay under the bed of the Michigamme river and the river was turned into the mine, drowning twenty-eight men in its inrush. Only a few of the men escaped and they did so by climbing the ladders against a terrific volume of water that poured down the shaft.

Mine Badly Affected.

The accident will affect the mine very badly as with the best of luck it will be several weeks if not a couple of months before the mine is freed of danger and then comes the difficult task of getting rid of the quicksand that has sealed up every crevice about the underground openings.

The operators expected to get out a good sized shipment this year, and the accident will severely handicap them in many ways.

The property is operated by the Nevada Mining Co., a co-partner of the Judson Mining Co., of which the E. J. Longyear mineral interests are the moving spirits. Connected with them are the Porters of Chicago and the headquarters of the company is at Chicago. They are independent operators, selling their ores on the market.

Narrow Escape for Children.

When the caving of the surface occurred a week ago, a number of the school children had a very narrow escape. The ore body lies directly beneath the old county road to Amasa. Last year the county road commission built a new road away from all danger, but the old road was used as a short cut by people going back and forth from the mining location.

The children had just passed over the affected portion and gotten clear of all danger when down went the surface and an open pit about 300 feet long and 200 feet wide loomed up with the road over which the children had traveled leading across the center of it.