

IN THE COEUR D'ALENES

HECLA DISASTER NOT AVOIDABLE

Coroner's Jury at Wallace Exonerates Mining Company of Blame or Negligence.

HORSTMAN IS RELEASED

John Martino and L. H. Craig Are in Hospital in Serious Condition.

WALLACE, Idaho, July 26.—A coroner's jury today, after listening to the evidence in the fatal hoist accident at the Hecla mine last night when four men were killed and three badly injured, brought in a verdict that the four men came to their deaths by an involuntary accident. The inquest was held by Justice George W. Walker acting for Coroner Leshner, and after examining a score of witnesses the following verdict was rendered by the jury:

"We, the undersigned jurymen, after inquiring into the cause of the deaths of B. Bernardi, Tranquillo Cantamessa, Charles Cantanora and Harry Patton, find that the above named persons came to their death by an involuntary accident caused by being drawn into the sheave wheel of the hoist at the Hecla mine July 25, 1919, at about 6:30 p. m. of said date. We further find that Hoistman Wallace is not deemed guilty of any criminal negligence, and the Hecla Mining company is hereby exonerated of all blame or negligence.

The jury was composed of D. C. McKissick, J. S. McInnis, Charles E. Burns, William Becker, Samuel Eustice, Harry H. Ross, E. G. Smith, Charles Couch and O. G. Thompson.

Hoist Man Is Released.

J. W. Wallace, the hoistman, who was overcome by the accident and who was taken into custody by the sheriff pending today's investigation, has been released.

Investigation of the machinery today divulged nothing wrong with the hoist, and the only explanation made by the hoistman appears to be that in starting the hoist he got mixed in the drums on which the cable winds and instead of switching the lever to lower the hoist he switched it on the raising side, and in a twinkling the accident was beyond recall.

It was the body of Cantamessa that fell back down the 2200-foot shaft and was brought out in an unrecognizable mass. All of the dead and injured bore marks and bruises on head and shoulders as the result of being catapulted from the cage when it struck the choking guides.

Two in Critical Condition.

Inquiry at the Wallace hospital tonight, where three of the injured miners are being cared for, brought the report that John Martino, who suffered a broken back, and whose body is paralyzed from the shoulders down, and who also received a broken collar bone, and L. H. Craig, the cager, who received a fractured skull, are in a serious condition.

All of the dead and injured miners, except Craig, the cager, were contractors on the 2000-foot drift in the Hecla mine, and were on the cage when the signal to lower them into the mine was given last night, and instead of lowering them the hoist was shot upwards into the gallows frame.