

# LIVES OF EIGHT MEN CRUSHED OUT AS ROCK AND DEBRIS RUSHED DOWN THE SLOPE

DISCUSS MEETING  
WITH WM. S. VARE  
YESTERDAY

No Warning of Impending Danger as Men Prepared to Begin Work on the Night Shift—Colliery, Idle for Some Time, Was to Have Resumed on Monday Next—Many Sad Scenes at Mouth of Shaft as Anxious Relatives Awaited Their Dead or Injured Rushed to Hospitals.

1930 Gilberton Colliery cavein NEWS1

Clipped By:  
usma\_rob  
Jun 14, 2025

An accident occurred at 4:45 o'clock yesterday afternoon at the Furnace slope of the Gilberton colliery, of the P. & R. C. & I. Company, which resulted in the loss of the lives of eight men employed there on the night turn. The accident was one of the worst in this section of the anthracite coal fields in many years, and caused great alarm throughout this section.

The accident occurred a short time after the night turn, consisting of twenty-four men, reported for duty. At the time of the fatal mishap, the men were working on the slope putting down the last twenty feet of track of a wreck which occurred April 28, last, shutting down the colliery since that time.

Three shifts of men have been working on the repairs in order that the colliery could resume next Monday. The work progressed nicely and residents of Gilberton valley were jubilant over the thought of resumption next week. The men had but a short distance to complete when the accident happened. It was fully expected that the work would be finished last night and the gun boats put back on the slope.

The scene of the accident was about 550 feet from the top of the slope, which has a 45 degree pitch. The men were working below the third level and were unaware of anything happening until a fall of rock occurred. The fall broke from a west rib, when, without warning, the rock and debris rushed down the slope, sweeping the men before it, catching most of them about the legs. It is a miracle that any of them escaped, as they had little chance to find a place of safety. Clouds of dust went with the fall and the men were unable to see, and in the darkness were caught in the mad rush of debris and carried with it, some to the bottom.

### The List of Dead.

Patrick Birmingham, 48, Gilberton, wife and five children. Died in Locust Mountain State Hospital.

Joseph Komerowski, 21, single, Turkey Run. Died in Locust Mountain State Hospital.

William Burke, 45, Maizeville, wife and one child.

Charles Yourche, 42, Gilberton, wife and two children.

Anthony Sczuka, 48, Shenandoah, wife and several children.

Matthew Koaker, 29, Maizeville, wife and two children.

George Nielubowicz, 35, Frackville, wife and two children.

Michael Mallick, 40, Frackville, widower, leaves five children.

### The Injured.

Edwin Phillips, 23, of Gilberton, compound fracture of left leg above knee, lacerations of scalp and a probable fracture of the skull. At Locust Mountain State Hospital, where his condition is serious, but recovery is looked for.

George Davis, 26, Gilberton, left foot broken, right hand lacerated and a finger on right hand fractured. At State Hospital at Fountain Springs.

Philip Berwick, 42, of Gilberton, amputation of right leg above knee and compound fracture of left leg. He is at the State Hospital at Fountain Springs in a serious condition.

### Sad News Spread Rapidly.

When news of the accident reached the surface almost the entire  
*(Continued on Page Eight)*

## LIVES OF EIGHT MEN CRUSHED OUT AS ROCK AND DEBRIS FELL

*(Continued from First Page)*

populace of the mining village was at the mouth of the water shaft, where the victims were brought to the surface. The news spread to all sections of the region and thousands from Shenandoah, Mahanoy City, Ashland, Girardville and other places hurried to the scene in automobiles. The highway was soon blocked and it was necessary to have traffic officers stationed there until late last night in order to keep traffic moving.

Officials of the coal company summoned first aid corps from all surrounding collieries, also ambulances, and notified both the Locust Mountain State Hospital and the State Hospital at Fountain Springs to have everything in readiness for the injured, which was said to be large at that time. Miss Jean Hall, superintendent of Locust Mountain State Hospital had everything in readiness for the reception of the injured.

The Rev. J. A. Karalius, pastor of St. George's Lithuanian church, his assistant, the Rev. A. J. Alauskas, and the Rev. S. J. Zmich, pastor of St. Stanislaus' church, were summoned to the local hospital and administered the last rites of the Catholic church to the victims.

### First Brought to Surface.

The first three brought to the surface were Patrick Birmingham, of Gilberton; Joseph Komerowski, Turkey Run, and Edwin Phillips, of Gilberton. Mr. Birmingham suffered a compound fracture of the right leg, while his left leg was amputated below the knee. He also suffered from shock. He died at 7:10 o'clock. He is survived by his wife, daughters, Mrs. John Kirby, Mahanoy Plane; Mrs. Charles Krittlér, of Gilberton; Grace, at home, and sons, Patrick and James Birmingham. He is further survived by three brothers, James and Peter, of Gilberton; William, of Parksburg, Va., and one sister, Mrs. Thomas Campbell, of Philadelphia. A brother, Michael Birmingham, died two months ago. Mrs. Birmingham was at the hospital a short time after her husband's admission, and the scene was most pitiful. She and her children were at his bedside until he passed away.

Joseph Komerowski, of Turkey Run, who sustained a crushed skull, was still alive when admitted to the hospital, but passed away at 6:25 o'clock, surrounded by his relatives. He was a well known young man and enjoyed a large circle of friends. The body was taken in charge by Undertaker William Menkewicz, who removed it to the home of Mrs. John Turnbull, of Turkey Run; a sister of the deceased, from where burial will take place. The deceased was a member of St. George's Lithuanian church. Three sisters, Mrs. John Turnbull, Mrs. Walter Zuber, of Turkey Run, and Della, of Atlantic City, and three brothers, Gabriel and Peter, of Turkey Run, and John of Gilberton survive. The funeral will take place Tuesday morning. A high mass of requiem will be celebrated in St. George's church at nine o'clock, after which interment will be made in St. George's cemetery.

The body of Charles Yurche, 42, of Gilberton, who was killed instantly, was also taken in charge by Undertaker Menkewicz, who prepared it for burial. The funeral will take place Monday morning. A high mass of requiem will be celebrated in St. Ludwig's church, Maizeville, of which the deceased was a member, at nine o'clock, after which interment will be made in the parish cemetery at Frackville. Mr. Yurche is survived by his wife and the following children, John, Joseph and Frank. Two sisters and two brothers residing in Europe, also survive.

Edwin Philipps, the third victim admitted to the local hospital, is in a serious condition but today reports from the hospital state that his recovery is looked for.

George Davis, who is a patient at the State Hospital at Fountain Springs, is reported resting today and his recovery is looked for.

Philip Berwick, the other victim who was removed to the Fountain Springs Hospital, is in a critical condition. His right leg was amputated and he sustained a compound fracture of the left leg. He also suffers from shock.

#### Met Dead Husband At Shaft Mouth.

Mrs. William Burke, wife of one of the victims, was at the top of the shaft when the body of her husband was brought to the surface. She collapsed when his body, covered with a blanket, was carried from the cage, and had to be assisted to her home. Her condition was most pitiful and her sobs brought tears to the eyes of many in the throng.

Undertaker M. J. Clarke, of Girardville, took charge of the body of William Burke and removed it to the family residence from where the funeral will take place. Mr. Burke was a member of Holy Rosary church, Mahanoy Plane, and was well known in mining circles. He formerly resided in Centralia. His wife and one daughter, Catherine; five sisters, Mrs. Maria Kane, Wilkes-Barre; Mrs. Margaret Mohen, Centralia; Mrs. Michael Goff, Ashland; Mrs. Thomas O'Brien, Ashland; Mrs. John Joyce, Centralia, and two brothers, Frank, of Centralia, and John, of New York, survive. Michael Butler, father-in-law of the deceased, was buried from the Burke residence on Monday last. The funeral will take place Monday morning, cortege leaving the house at nine o'clock and proceeding to Holy Rosary church, where a solemn mass of requiem will be celebrated at 9:30 o'clock. Interment will be made in St. Joseph's cemetery, Fountain Springs.

Wives, mothers and other relatives of the victims, were at the shaft all eager to learn the fate of their relatives. Officials of the coal company gave the relatives every consideration and nothing was too much trouble to aid them in learning the fate of their relatives. All the victims were taken from the mine as speedily as possible and physicians and first aid corps were ready to aid in caring for the injured.

The bodies of Michael Mallick and George Nielubowicz, of Frackville, were carried to the bottom of the mine in the debris and it was some time before they were recovered. It was thought that the former was the only one at the bottom but when rescuing parties reached the place they found the body of the latter. This was at ten o'clock last night. It was necessary to put cribbing in the slope to make sure of safety for the rescuing parties.

The body of George Nielubowicz

was removed to his home, No. 215 South Broad Mountain avenue, from where the funeral will take place Tuesday morning. He is survived by his wife and two children, Cecelia and George. He was a member of St. Ann's church. Michael Mallick, leaves to survive him the following children, Mary, Anna, John, Andrew and Michael. His wife preceded him in death five years ago. He was a member of the Russian Orthodox church, where funeral services will be conducted Monday.

The body of Anthony Strucko was found early in the evening but it was some time before his home could be located. He resides at 100 North Bowers street, town, and is survived by his wife, Josephine, four sons, Charles, Anthony, Leo and Walter. The deceased was a member of St. Casimir's church.

The victims of the accident were brought to the surface by means of the water shaft, which is used for hoisting men since it was abandoned some time ago as a water shaft.

#### Officials at the Scene.

George Roose, assistant to the general manager, and P. J. Quigley, general superintendent, together with many other officials and mine inspectors, were early on the scene and directed the work of rescue.

Supintendent E. H. Holderman, of the Lehigh Valley Coal Company, and Richard Kane, inside foreman at Packer No. 4 colliery, were also on the scene early and volunteered their services to officials of the Reading Company.

Reading officials were very courteous to the army of newspapermen who rushed to the scene. The officials realize the newspapermen represent the public and freely gave all the information and showed them every courtesy, which means much to the newsmen, who sometimes are kept in the dark, but on this occasion their treatment is to be commended.

When the accident occurred the men rushed into headings and other places trying to seek shelter from the onrushing debris. Some were fortunate enough to escape, but when they reached the surface presented a most pitiful appearance. All suffered from shock from their awful experience and were hurried to their homes and loved ones as speedily as possible.

William Jones is superintendent of Gilberton colliery, while George Stern is the inside foreman. The mine has been idle since April last due to the slope closing and the early resumption was looked forward with pleasure by the hundreds of men employed there. It will be some time before resumption can be made, as it requires time before it is made safe.