

BUREAU OF MINES

SUBJECT: Gas explosion, Clover Hill Mine, April 6, 1867,  
Chesterfield, Virginia, Sixty-nine were killed.

Gas explosion, Clover Hill Mine, April 6, 1867, Chesterfield, Virginia, Immediate cause: Cause uncertain. Presumably accumulation of gas in an upset where ventilation had been interfered with. Gas inspectors had been ordered to place air-door but cover had neglected to do so. Gas probably backed down to main level where it came in contact with some workman's lamp. Sixty-nine men were killed.

[E&MJ Vol. III, 1867 - April 13., p. 47,48,50]

**Petersburg Index**  
**Petersburg VA**  
**Saturday April 6, 1867**

**THE DAILY INDEX.**

SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1867.

**The Great Disaster at the Clover Hill Coal Pits.**

**FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE HEART-RENDING CATASTROPHE.**

We take the following account of the sad disaster at the Clover Hill coal pits on Wednesday from the *Richmond Enquirer* of Friday:

These mines, which have been worked for many years, consist at present, of three pits, known respectively as the Bright Hope, Raccoon and Hall's pits, and from these pits were raised last year about 900,000 bushels of coal. Both of the last named pits having been for some time submerged, operations in them were temporarily discontinued, and the Bright Hope mine was the scene of a terrific explosion on Wednesday last, which, without a moment's warning, hurled nearly a hundred human beings into eternity! What was the cause of the disaster must ever remain an impenetrable secret, for the lips of all who might have explained the mystery, are closed by the death which spared none to tell the tale. It is supposed, however, to be caused by the neglect of a drunken gasman to discharge the duties of his office, which are to examine, with one of Davy's safety lamps, the condition of the air, and attend to the proper ventilation of the pits, this ventilation being kept up by means of doors opening into various portions of the pits, the purification of the air in this mine being additionally secured by a powerful wind fan driven by the pit engine.

There are, however, many other causes which may produce an explosion in the mines, one of these being a tumble, or (as it is technically termed by the miners) a fall, which occurs when a portion of the roof falling in, admits into the pit the impure gases which may have accumulated above, and which, taking fire from the lights used by the workmen, is sometimes the cause of an explosion; but, as we have already stated, the cause of the late disaster will never be ascertained.

We are informed, however, that a few days since a portion of the roof of this pit threatened "a fall," and that Mr. Owen was preparing to put in sealers to prevent the danger.

The pit has two shafts (used respectively for ascending and descending) running 850 feet beneath the surface of the earth, but so powerful was the explosion that the overseers on the platform at entrance to the shaft were greatly jarred, and so terrific the heat of burning gas that the rope to the bucket in which two or three poor fellows were at the time ascending to light and life, was instantaneously severed as though by a knife, and the unhappy men with lightning-like rapidity were hurled back to an awful, but happily, a speedy death.

The number of operatives in the employ of the Clover Hill Company is nearly 200, and a little village, with a population of about one thousand, has sprung up in the vicinity of the pits, and when the tidings of the disaster, which had killed some seventy men, spread through the village, the excitement, suspense, and agony were intense.

The mouth of the pit was soon surrounded by some hundreds of persons, and the shrieks, moans and lamentations of the female friends of the victims were indeed harrowing. Stern men, who had faced the horrors of many a battle-field, were unable to bear the heart-rending scene, and, weeping like children, turned away utterly unmanned.

The following letter, which was received on yesterday, will enable our readers faintly to imagine the extent and the horrors of the catastrophe:

CLOVER HILL, April 4, 1867.

*D. S. Woolbridge Esq :*

Dear Sir—When the pit bottom was reached last evening it was ascertained that the lumber-house in the pit, which contained some powder, was on fire. I endeavored to get the men to put it out, which, no doubt, could have been done: but the men feared the danger of another explosion, and were unwilling to work. The pit has been again examined this morning, and the fire is so small that it could be managed if the men were willing to risk the danger.—Under all the circumstances, I have determined to save the pit by closing both shafts. We are now engaged in this work.

All of the men, about seventy in number, and all the mules that were in the pit are of course lost. The bodies cannot be recovered until the fire is extinguished and the pit is reopened.

Very respectfully,  
J. H. Cox.

Of the victims of the explosion some twenty or twenty-five were white, the remainder being negroes. We have been unable as yet to procure a list of the killed, but give the names of most of the white laborers whose duties called them at that hour into the mines, and the most of whom must, of course, be put upon the dead list. The following were what are termed "diggers:" Joseph Clayton, E. Condry, John Garbert, George Garbert, William Thomas, Beverley Ammonette, Peter Logan, George Moore, B. L. Jordan, Patrick Donnanhue, James Lockett, Henry Palmer, William Richards, John Insko, James Kearney. The following are "trailers:" N. P. Roberts, James Harper, Richard Berry, W. A. Cole, William D. Goode, John Weal, gasman, Thomas Marshall, gasman; George Bertram, boy, driver; Jack Smith, overseer of trailers.

William B. Robertson, "hanger on," a position which compelled him to stand at the foot of the shaft.

Thomas Marshall, Sr., is certainly safe, as is also Ellis Martin; and as the miners work in pairs, it is supposed that his partner, Jack Straughan, is also living.

Miles Hackett, who was sick a short time previous to the accident, is also supposed to be safe.

The laborers in the mines are divided into the diggers, the trailers, who move the coal to the mouth of the shaft, and the drivers, who attend to the teams.

The mules killed are supposed to be seven or eight in number, and when the shaft was opened after the accident, the bodies of two of the animals were found near the foot of the shaft.

For a more accurate account of this awful calamity, we must await the extinguishment of the flames and the re-opening of the pit, both of which objects may, we hope, be speedily accomplished.

The Daily Oregonian  
Monday, May 20, 1867

The Great Colliery Explosion in Virginia--  
More than Seventy Persons Killed.

[From the Richmond Enquirer, April 5.]

Most of our readers are familiar with the coal dug from the Clover Hill pits in Chesterfield county, about twenty-one miles from Richmond by road, and thirty-one by rail; the company's branch railroad, nineteen miles in length, connecting at Chester, twelve miles from this city, with the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. These mines, which have been worked for many years, consist at present of three pits, known respectively as the Bright Hope, Raccoon and Hall's pits, and from these pits were raised last year about 900,000 bushels of coal. Both of the last named pits having been for some time submerged, operations in them were temporarily discontinued, and the Bright Hope mine was the scene of a terrific explosion on Wednesday last, which, without a moment's warning, hurled nearly a hundred human beings into eternity. The disaster is supposed to have been caused by the neglect of a drunken gas-man to discharge the duties of his office, which are to examine, with one of Davy's safety lamps, the condition of the air, and attend to the proper ventilation of the pits, this ventilation being kept up by means of doors opening into various portions of the pits, the purification of the air in this mine being additionally secured by a powerful wind-fan driven by the pit engine. There are, however, many other causes which may produce an explosion in the mines, one of these being a tumble, or (as it is technically termed by the miners) a fall, which occurs when a portion of the roof falling in admits into the pit the impure gases which may have accumulated above, and which, taking fire from the pits used by the workmen, are sometimes the cause of an explosion.

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