

## SLABS MARK TOMBS OF SAND VICTIMS

Undertaker Denies Men Who  
Died At Hawk's Nest Buried  
In Cornfield; None Of Bodies  
Claimed, Declares

Summersville, W. Va., Jan. 14. (AP)—An undertaker pointed to 33 graves marked by wooden slabs on the side of a bleak hill today and vigorously denied the declaration of a congressman that some who died at Hawk's Nest were "dumped into a cornfield."

H. C. White, the undertaker, asserted the death certificates all showed causes other than silicosis, a lung disease which Representative Vito Marcantonio (R-NY) said killed 476 of the workers in a tunnel drilled as part of the \$10,000,000 Hawk's Nest hydro-electric plant.

White stood in the little graveyard on his father's farm and pointed toward the nearest cornfield, a few hundred feet away but out of sight over the crest of the hill.

"There was no other place to bury them," he said.

"Rinehart and Dennis, the contractors who dug the tunnel, paid me for the funerals, and the cost covered burial clothes as well as graves."

"Some of the bodies we kept for a long time. Nobody knew who their survivors were. No one ever claimed a single one of the bodies."

He declared that of the 33 graves, three were those of women.

"One of the women was killed in a fight with knives, another one was killed when a tree fell on her shack. I don't recall how the other one died."

"But none of the death certificates gives silicosis as the cause. Pneumonia is the reason given on most of the certificates."

In Washington today, the house of representatives projected an investigation of working conditions in the tunnel, Marcantonio having asked that a board of inquiry be created. The New Yorker asserted 1,500 men are suffering silicosis—caused by inhaling powdered silica sand—and that 100 bodies were "dumped into a cornfield and their only grave-stones are cornstalks waving in the wind."

The little cemetery, whose wooden grave markers are bare of markings, and whose mounds are covered by briars, is 27 miles from Hawk's Nest, where the tunnel was drilled to divert water from the New river into the New-Kanawha Power company's great plant.

White said there is another cemetery near the dam.

He continued:

"Rinehart and Dennis paid me also to prepare some bodies for shipment home; that is, when they could find out where their homes were. I don't remember how many of those bodies we handled. Most of those people died of pneumonia."

"I didn't have a contract with the company but we agreed on a price for the burials."

"I used to have a map with the graves plotted on it, and every time we had a funeral, I'd write the name of the person on the plot, but the map's lost now. Of course, I have a record of the people, though."

He said the first man buried here was Roosevelt Singleton, on May 15, 1931. Eighteen were buried between May 15 and October 17, 1931. Of those, 16 were recorded as victims of pneumonia and two were killed in accidents.

The last grave was dug March 6, 1933, for the body of John Stronk, whose death was recorded as caused by pneumonia.

Charleston, W. Va., Jan. 14. (AP)—George S. Couch, attorney for the firm that dug the Hawk's Nest tunnel, declared today that "nobody on earth will ever know how many persons contracted silicosis" from the silica sand in the tube.

Couch represented Rinehart and Dennis, Charlottesville, Va., contractors who were sued by hundreds of persons claiming to have contracted the lung disease from breathing particles of silica sand.

He asserted that after the contractor paid a number of men who proved they suffered the effects "everybody in southern West Virginia seemed to have silicosis."

"I have handled about 450 suits since the first case was filed. Since then, between 4,000 and 5,000 persons have tried to sue the contractors, claiming they had contracted the disease."