

v. 4.

Indiana -

Mine accidents + explosions

ARC 298
July, 1931



The Linton, Indiana, Mine Explosion

January 28, 1931

Official Report of Relief Operations of The American National Red Cross

The history of almost half a century of the coal mining industry in Linton does not record a catastrophe so appalling as the explosion at 3:00 p. m. Wednesday, January 28, 1931, in the "Little Betty" mine five miles southwest of Linton in the edge of Sullivan County, Indiana. The explosion, caused by gas, came at a time when the shifts were changing, otherwise it is quite possible many more men would have been killed. Of the 38 men still in the mine, only ten escaped death.

The Rescue Work

Many acts of heroism were performed in the attempts at rescue. Immediately after the explosion, rescue crews were organized among the miners going off and coming on duty and these rescue crews were augmented by workers from nearby mines within a few hours, the news having spread rapidly. Braving the dangers of "the damps," gas and dangerous wires and handicapped by darkness, obstructions of debris and the distance to bases of supplies, these courageous volunteers, some 125 in number, working in shifts valiantly continued their efforts to rescue their fellow workers.

The first of the 11 dead and injured reached in the early evening were brought to the surface at 7:03 p. m., but up to 6:30 the following morning there did not appear the faintest hope that any of the 27 men still in the mine were alive. At this hour a rescue group reached seven of the men who had bratticed themselves off from the gas and damps and created a chamber of purer air. A short time later the last of the bodies was brought to the surface.

Emergency Relief

The whole community responded with one accord to the emergency needs. An impromptu hospital was established in the mine office and local doctors and two nurses from the Freeman County Hospital gave first aid. Ambulances sent by nearby undertakers transported the bodies of the victims and volunteer motor corps transported the injured. Hot

coffee and sandwiches were dispensed to the relief workers during the night.

The Chapter Chairman and the Chapter Disaster Relief Chairman were at the scene of the disaster shortly after the explosion and made a survey of the situation, after which a meeting of the Chapter Executive Board was called and a fund of \$2,000 set aside for relief. In addition it was decided to raise a local relief fund.

The following morning Governor Leslie visited Linton and gave \$1,000 from his contingent fund for emergency relief to be expended by his local Unemployment Committee. From this fund food, fuel, clothing and other incidental emergency relief was given to the families of the mine victims. This Unemployment Committee composed of Red Cross members and Chapter officers became the Red Cross Advisory Committee, thereby making it possible to conduct the emergency relief and rehabilitation as a unified program.

Raising the Relief Fund

The explosion occurred at a time when the whole of the United States was in the grip of an industrial depression and followed upon the worst drought in the nation's history from which the farmers in 22 States had suffered heavy losses. Many communities were raising a relief fund for unemployment relief and the Red Cross was in the midst of a national campaign for a fund of \$10,000,000 for drought relief. These factors greatly retarded what otherwise might have been expected—a generous response from the public to the Mine Disaster relief fund. As it was the final total of the relief fund was \$4,950.34, of which \$2,274.46 was contributed by National Headquarters of the Red Cross, \$1,209.62 by the Green County Chapter, and \$1,466.26 by the public.

Accounting for the \$1,000 contributed by Governor Leslie from his contingent fund for emergency relief was sent to the governor and therefore was not considered a part of the rehabilitation fund.

Rehabilitation

Due to the fact the mine had been in continuous operation thereby furnishing steady employment to the miners and due to the fact that the dependents received the maximum compensation insurance allowance, \$4,950 payable at the rate of \$16.50 per week for 300 weeks, the problem of rehabilitation resolved itself into one of making economic adjustments for the dependents to enable them to carry on with their weekly allowance. The necessary facts and information upon which a decision could be made were gleaned and assembled into a case record for each of the disaster suffering families. These assembled facts were given careful consideration by the advisory committee and after each case was weighed on its relative merits as to need, a decision was made. Where the record

revealed a need, which the family apparently could not meet, an award was made. In some instances the award was made to help complete the education of minor children, in some it was to clear or reduce the indebtedness on the family home, in others to help meet the burial expense or other needs, as is reflected in the Financial Statement which is a part of this report.

The Advisory Committee

The following citizens served as the Red Cross Advisory Committee:

W. J. Hamilton, *Chairman*

D. R. Scott	Dr. E. V. Bull
E. A. Powell	Ray E. Singer
L. W. Warren	Joseph H. Haseman

Statistical Report

Number persons killed.....	28	Number persons injured.....	10
Number families registered.....	38	Number families given rehabilitation aid	11
Number of families given food.....			1
Number of families given household furnishings.....			3
Number of families given maintenance.....			1
Number of families given medical aid.....			3
Number of families assisted with burial expense.....			5
Number of families assisted by reducing real estate mortgages.....			7
Number of families assisted by providing an educational trust fund.....			3

Financial Report

Receipts:

Contributed by the public	\$1,466.26
Contributed by the Green County Chapter.....	1,209.62
Contributed by the American National Red Cross.....	2,274.46
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$4,950.34

Expenditures:

Maintenance	\$ 300.00
Food	25.69
Payments on real estate notes and mortgages.....	1,850.70
Household furnishings	167.52
Medical aid	111.00
Family service	318.46
Burial expense	493.95
Educational trust funds.....	1,630.00
Miscellaneous	53.02
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$4,950.34

Letter of Appreciation

National Red Cross,
Washington, D. C.

Linton, Indiana,
April 28, 1931.

Messrs :

We wish to express our appreciation for the special gift of \$2,000 for the relief of the families of the Little Betty Mine disaster.

Mr. Chas. W. Carr and Mrs. Linder did a very commendable piece of work. The case history of each case was carefully prepared and the suggestion as to the help from the funds available was carefully considered.

We, again, wish to thank the American Red Cross for the wonderful assistance rendered us in this catastrophe.

Yours very truly,

Special Relief Committee
Green County Chapter American Red Cross
Little Betty Mine Disaster,
W. J. HAMILTON, *Chairman.*

Your Annual Membership makes disaster relief and
other peace-time services possible for the Red Cross