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WHO IS TO BLAME

Commission Inquiring Into the Twin Shaft Disaster.

SOME DAMAGING TESTIMONY

Adjoining Veins Were Worked Simultaneously, Pillars Were Not One Over the Other and the Openings Were Unusually Wide, Say the Witnesses Who Were Heard Yesterday—An Old Miner Gives His Opinion Unasked and Despite the Objections of the Commission.

At yesterday's session of the commission investigating the Twin shaft disaster little evidence that was new or startling was elicited, the witnesses for the most part being called to corroborate those who were heard yesterday.

A crowd even larger than that of the first day was present at both sessions. Attorney General McCormick was not present, but was represented by his deputy, John P. Elkin, of Indiana.

David Davis, civil engineer of the Newton Coal company, was the first witness called to the stand. He did not think that the accident was caused by the weakness of the pillars or the manner of placing them. The average width of the pillars was twenty feet. The manner of placing the pillars might have a tendency to weaken the mine. The driving of chambers though large pillars also had a tendency to weaken the mine. It looks as if it is possible that the accident might have been superinduced by the manner of working the mines. He never heard that any mining engineers or surveyors had refused to go in the mine at any time because of its dangerous condition. He noticed a disturbance about 800 feet square on Thursday before the accident. The operators knew of this.

To Mr. Stein's questions he stated that the general superintendent, Mr. Langan, directed what the width of the pillars should be.

The attorneys for the miners next called John B. Law, the general manager of the company.

OPERAES HREE SHAFTS.

The Newton Coal company he said in answer to Mr. McGovern's question operates three shafts, Seneca, Ravine and Twin, and one breaker, the Seneca. He himself has been general manager since 1892. He does not go into the mines regularly and is not familiar with any of the mines.

Superintendent Langan had charge of the mining. Mr. Law never knew until he heard it at the investigation that gangways and chambers were opened to the widths of 24 feet. In his opinion it was good mining to leave larger pillars in the fifth vein than those directly beneath them in the sixth vein. The method of mining at the Twin shaft met his approval.

On the Saturday evening previous to the accident Mr. Langan called at his house but he was not at home.

There is no regular law which can direct a man what to do in working a mine. The scientist can not lay down any rules. It is not bad mining in his opinion to open gangways to the width of 24 feet if proper sized pillars are left to protect the roof.

The company furnished the miners with all the props that was necessary. On the Sunday morning of the accident, it was necessary, he admitted, to send to Scranton for two car loads of props. These however, were extra sized props which were usually kept on hand.

Mr. Wheaton, attorney for the company wanted to show by Mr. Law, that the company would not mine coal in a reckless manner in the two lower veins when it has two or three veins of unmined coal to be gotten out from above these veins.

AN OBJECTION RAISED.

The attorneys for the miners objected to this questioning as the fact that the company was liable to lose some coal had no bearing on the inquest.

Chairman Stein, however, admitted the question and Mr. Law answered that if his fears are correct, the company can never take out the coal from the upper veins.

John Williams, a company hand at the Twin, who on the fatal night came out with Hughes, Healey and the others was next called by the attorneys for the families. On the Saturday preceding the night of the cave-in he noticed a squeeze not over five hundred feet from the foot of the shaft. The width of the chambers and gangways at the Twin is in his opinion from 24 to 26 feet. In his opinion the openings were too large for safety. He observed the space left under the roof in the fifth vein where three pillars had settled.

On the fatal night he went back into the mine but could not get down into the workings because of the fall that had occurred. After waiting at the foot of the bridge for two hours he went out on account of the danger.

He never saw General Manager Law in the mine and only saw Inspector McDonald once. The inspector could be in the mine without him seeing him.

EXPERIENCED MEN WANTED.

The examnation of Williams having been completed Chairman Stein remarked that with all due respect to the knowledge and veracity of the young man who had been called as a witness the commission would suggest that older and more experienced miners should be called if they can be secured as their testimony would be of much more importance.

Mr. McGovern agreed with the commission in this and suggested that the investigation be adjourned until the middle of next week in order that the witnesses might be examined by the attorneys so that none but those who had new and relevant evidence might be called.

Mr. Wheaton advised that an afternoon session be held so as not to waste the half day. The company would send to Wilkes-Barre he said for Lehigh Valley engineers who had made an independent survey of the mine, the coal of which the Lehigh Valley owns, and these engineers would be put on the stand to verify the map which the Newton Coal company had furnished Inspector McDonald and which was in evidence.

After a consultation the commissioners announced through Mr. Elkin that an afternoon session would be held and at its conclusion adjournment would be made until some day next week to be agreed upon later. Adjournment was then made for dinner.

DOUGHERTY CAME FORWARD.

During the day Chairman Stein announced at different intervals that the commission would be pleased to have anybody come forward and give any testimony that would tend to aid them in their task. One old miner, Timothy Dougherty, didn't have any evidence to offer, but he had something to say and he took advantage of the invitation of the commission to come forward and say it. As soon as he had fairly started Chairman Stein saw that Dougherty was giving an opinion and not evidence and called him to order. Dougherty heeded not the rapping of the gavel but went ahead with his story and did not subside until he had said all he started out to say.

The gist of his remarks was something after this order: "It is time to bring this investigation to a close. You have heard it testified to and admitted by the company that their top pillars were bigger than their bottom ones. What's the use of rehashing this evidence and bringing more witnesses here who only work injury to themselves by giving testimony against the company. You know whether or not it is against the law and against all rules of mining to have a heavy pillar on top of a lighter one. It is against nature. Look at Campbell's Ledge. Is the base of that smaller than the top. Look at the trees. Look at the abutments of buildings the world over."

Chairman Stein at his point firmly but quietly insisted on Dougherty taking his seat unless he was willing to be sworn and testify in the regular manner. Dougherty said he had never worked in the Twin shaft and could not tell anything about the mine.

WILLIAM COSTELLO SWORN.

After Chairman Stein had repeated several times the invitation for any one to take the stand and testify to anything he might know bearing on the disaster, William Costello, a timberman at the Twin, came forward and was sworn.

He testified that there was squeezing going on for five months at the mine. The width of the chambers was very unusual. It varied from twenty-six to thirty feet. The chambers were opened at twenty-six feet and as the miners got nothing for opening the chambers there was nothing for them to do but take out as much as they dared, and as they proceeded they cut the chambers wider and wider to make up for what they were deprived of for making the opening.

He could not say positively that the pillars were too small, but he did know that some times the company hands were sent in ahead of the miners to clear the main road of the chippings that came from the pillars. As high as fifteen to twenty cars would be taken out some days. In his opinion the pressure on the pillars being too great for them to bear caused the bursting and chipping. He quit work at the Twin about two weeks before the accident because he was afraid of the roof. He didn't care much about the job, anyhow, because the company hands only worked on breaker time.

He knew that some of the chambers were over thirty feet in width, because he often helped to turn a thirty-foot T rail clear about in a chamber. In his opinion the mine was not worked safely. "It was," as he expressed it, "the worst gutted-out mine I ever worked in."

WAS NOT POSITIVE.

In answer to Mr. Woodward's questioning he said he was not positive that there were any thirty-foot T rails inside the mine, as he had never measured them, but always supposed they were thirty feet in length. Up to the time he quit work the timbermen only worked when the breaker worked, although the squeeze has been going on continually.

William Siley of the engineer corps of the Lehigh Valley Coal company, which is the lessor of the coal being worked by the Newton Coal company, at the Twin shaft was sworn to prove the reliability of Mine Inspector McDonald's map, to which objection was made by the attorneys for the families because it was furnished to the inspector by the engineer of the Newton Coal company.

Mr. Siley at the direction of the attorneys made measurements of various portions of the mine.

At the foot of No. 3 slope according to the Lehigh Valley map the gangway is sixteen feet wide. At 1,000 feet beyond the width increases to eighteen feet. On the inspector's map the width at these points were shown to be identical.

Mr. Siley then took his scale and measured the gangways at certain points indicated by Mr. O'Boyle. In not a single instance was a gangway found to be as narrow as 14 feet and in a number of places the width was found to be thirty feet.

WHERE THE PILLARS ARE.

In his opinion the pillars in the fifth and sixth veins are directly over one another, or at least as nearly in a line as is practical. By measurements it was shown that certain pillars taken hap-hazzard had as much as 2-3 of their base unsupported by any pillar beneath and that the pillars in the upper vein were as a rule larger than those in the lower vein.

To a question propounded by Deputy Attorney General Elkin, Mr. Siley said that it was not customary in other mines to have the pillars in the upper vein larger than those in the vein below.

Fire Boss A. T. McCormack's record book showing his daily report of the condition of the mine was offered in evidence, having been asked for by the commission.

The next witness was Martin Healey, one of the miners at the Twin shaft who left on account of the impending danger on the night of the accident. He said he was thirty-five years of age and had worked at the Twin shaft since he was a boy.

On the night of the accident he went in to do timbering, but when he heard of the squeeze that was in progress he went out with a number of other men, who, like himself, were afraid. During the week preceding the accident he noticed the squeezing. In his opinion the mine was safe to work in until the fall came on Saturday, when it became dangerous because of the possibility of the gas being forced out into the workings where the men were by the fall which was taking place beyond. All the gangways he had any personal knowledge of were not more than fourteen or sixteen feet in width.

The session adjourned to meet at the same place next Thursday at 10 o'clock a. m., which time was agreed upon by all interested.

SITUATION AT THE MINE.

General Manager Law Tells of the Company's Future Policy.

There has been some talk during the past few days of the company being about to abandon the operations at the Twin shaft on account of the apparent hoplessness of recovering the bodies of the entombed men within any definite length of time. A Tribune reporter yesterday questioned General Manager Law about these reports and he said emphatically there were no grounds for them.

"The company," he said, "will not give up the work of rescue as long as it can be prosecuted with safety to the workmen. As long as the air continues good and we are not bothered by water we will continue the work. There is no telling, however, but that these unfavorable conditions may arise at any time and in case they do we will of course have to cease operations."

He further stated that the company fears that the mine is a total loss and may have to be entirely abandoned. Whether or not their fears are correct cannot be ascertained while the work of rescue is on, as no exploring can be done until the air current is turned into the other openings of the mine and that is not practicable now, as the whole current has to be utilized in the slope where the rescuers are at work.

Part of the current could not be used for exploring purposes, as in the first place it would not be safe to diminish the supply now going to the rescuers and in the second place it would be dangerous to disturb the gas in the other portions of the mine, as it might be driven into the slope, where the workmen are. The only thing that can be done is to work on as at present while there is any chance of accomplishing the results hoped for and when all hopes of recovering the bodies fade, if such should come to pass, then begin the inquiry into the possibility of the mine ever being worked again.

There were no new developments yesterday about the mine. The same slow progress of about a foot an hour is the best that three shifts could report.

BOARD OF TRADE FUND.

Contributions for the Twin Shaft Sufferers Constantly Coming In.

Secretary Atherton, of the board of trade, last night reported the following contributions to the Pittston sufferers' relief fund:

Previously acknowledged	$6,672 50
T. M. Miller & Co	25 00
A. B. Stevens	20 00
Union No. 86, Tin Sheet Iron and Cornice Workers	25 00
F. H. Clemons	25 00
Horace E. Hand	5 00
J. Ben Dimmick	25 00
	$6,797 50

The following letter accompanied the contribution from the Tin, Sheet Iron and Cornice Workers' Union:

D. B. Atherton, Secretary Scranton Board of Trade:

Dear Sir—At a meeting of local union, No. 86, of the Tin, Sheet Iron and Cornice Workers, of this city, held Wednesday evening, July 8, 1896, a resolution was passed extending their heartfelt sympathy to the families and relatives of those who lost their loved ones in the Twin shaft disaster on Sunday, June 28, 1896. They also voted the sum of $25 to the relief fund, for which enclosed find check. Yours, etc.,

John W. McLean, Treasurer.
W. S. Walsh, financial Secretary.

Governor Hastings has sent a sympathetic letter and a contribution of $100 to the general relief committee. The funds in Pittston and Wilkes-Barre are rapidly growing and when the general relief committee is ready to begin its labors, which will be in the course of a few days, a handsome sum will be at its disposal.

THEY ENJOY THE FISHING.

All the More So Because It Is Forbidden.

The Crystal Lake Water company, by its attorney, H. C. Butler, yesterday began proceedings in equity against John G. Thompson, George Ross, jr., and William Price, of Carbondale, to restrain them from fishing in the No. 4 reservoir of the company near Farview.

It is alleged that the men make a practice of standing just outside the fence which surrounds the reservoir and from that position throw their lines into the water. This has been going on for upwards of a year, according to the bill of complaint filed by the company.

When remonstrated with it is alleged that Thompson declared that he will fish in the No. 4 reservoir in spite of the Crystal Lake Water company and the court of common pleas of Lackawanna county.

WELSH JOURNAL'S VIEW.

It Speaks in Complimentary Terms of Mr. Connell's Candidacy.

"Y Drych," in an editorial in this week's issue, speaks in very flattering terms of the candidacy of Mr. William Connell. In speaking of the candidacy of Hon. Morgan B. Williams in Luzerne and that of Mr. Connell in Lackawanna,

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Twin Mine Disaster Investigation

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