

**Bureau of Mines Bulletin 616:
Historical Documentation of
Major Coal Mine Disasters in
The United States
Not Classified As
Explosions of Gas or Dust,
1846-1962**

July 3, 1872; Atwater Slope Mine, Atwater Township, Ohio; 10 Killed

*(From "The Democrat" (weekly), Ravenna, Ohio,
July 10, 1872)*

The most extensive coal mine horror that ever transpired in Ohio occurred between one and two o'clock Wednesday afternoon, July 3, 1872, in Atwater township, Portage County.

In the construction and preparation of the mine for working, the company were [sic] liberal in all their plans and expenditures, seeking to do everything that would ensure the comfort of the miners, using only the most suitable material and employing the most competent men to direct the work. Up to the date of the accident, which sent ten employees to eternity, there had been very little embarrassment in prosecuting the work. 739 square yards of entry work has been put, and the miners were just ready to turn the rooms, and would by the present week have employed 50 to 60 miners and turned 150 tons of coal a day.

The coal mine is entered by a slope 170 feet long, running down an average, say of 33 degrees. This slope was divided into two sections—a car-way and a man-way. At the bottom of the slope was located the ventilating furnace, the fire in which from some cause, not now satisfactory known, made the mine a death-trap. Diverging from the foot of the slope are the entries in which the men were at work when the explosion came, and from which they sprang at the sounded alarm and rushed into the smoke filled slope to die of suffocation.

At the time of the catastrophe, there were sixteen men and a boy in the mine. Of these seven escaped alive (through heavy smoke) and ten perished. The mule which drew out the coal cars from the entry, was also on duty and of course died—those who escaped, getting out of the mine fifteen minutes after the alarm was raised—were more or less cut, bruised, and prostrated. The last man saved (nearly suffocated), states that in coming out he passed over the prostrate bodies of several men near the top of the slope, but who they were he did not know.

A steam fire engine and two hose carts were transported by rail from Ravenna on Thursday, and after considerable difficulty, the fire was extinguished about 10:00 p.m. Seven of the bodies were recovered along the slope by 9:00 p.m., Friday, and the final three were found under several feet of water in by the foot of the slope.

The verdict of the coroner's jury is stated in part as follows:

After having heard the evidence and seen the bodies, we find that the deceased came to their death by suffocation from fire and smoke in the slopes of said mine, communicated to the timbers of the slope from a fire arch or furnace located near the foot of the slope, for the purpose of ventilating the mine. The furnace was constructed by one of the deceased, who was "Pit Boss" of the mine. From the evidence we are unable to say whether fire was communicated to the wood-work by gas, or the furnace being in too close proximity of the timbers of the slope.

The New York Times

Monday, July 8, 1872

THE OHIO MINE DISASTER.

**Fire at the Atwater Coal Company's
New Mining Slope—Escape of the
Miners Cut off—Ten Men Smothered
to Death, and Four Others Badly
Burned.**

From the Cleveland Herald, July 6.

The Atwater Coal Company is a Cleveland corporation, which has recently opened a new mine in Atwater township, two and one-half miles from Lima, on the Pittsburg Railroad, to which station it has built a private railway for transportation of its coal. The coal is reached by a "slope," which penetrates the "bank" for 160 feet, and which is protected from "caving" by wooden supports and roof, like the great majority of such mines. Between one and two o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, while fourteen men and one mule were at work in the mine, the entrance to the slope was discovered to be on fire. Four of the alarmed men in the mine rushed out through the slope, getting considerably burned in so doing, but all of them will recover in time. The remainder of the men could not effect their escape, and were smothered in the slope. A telegram was sent to Ravenna for assistance in extinguishing the flames, and the entire Fire Department of that place, accompanied by the Mayor, promptly responded to the summons. The President of the Company was on the way to Cleveland from the mines when the fire broke out, but was recalled by a telegram which reached him at Ravenna. He has been continuously at the scene ever since, and has been doing everything within the limits of possibility which duty and humanity demanded in the premises. The people of the entire surrounding country flocked to the scene by scores and by hundreds, and also rendered timely and energetic assistance in such directions as it was needed.

As soon as the case would admit, efforts were resolutely made to reach the imprisoned victims, but so much mischief had been wrought by the flames, which were not fully subdued until Thursday afternoon, that the progress was necessarily slow and discouraging, and it was not until Thursday noon that the first body was reached. By Thursday night six more were recovered. Richard Roberts, boss miner, was in the slope, and also his two brothers, and these and Thomas Names are the only victims whose names are yet known to us.

The Ohio Democrat
New Philadelphia, July 12, 1872

From the *Minerva Commercial*.
SHOCKING CALAMITY.

**Fire in a Coal Mine in Stark Co., O.
—Fifteen Persons Perish—Intense
Excitement.**

We are indebted to H. H. McKenzie of Alliance for information concerning a terrible accident which happened at a coal mine at Limaville, Stark county, on July 3d. It seems that the mine is an extensive one, in which, at the time of the fire, there were twenty persons.—The entrance to the mine was, for some little distance, a vertical shaft, from which an incline ran several hundred yards. This entrance was lined with heavy plank and timbers. Mr. McKenzie says there are several stories as to show the fire originated, one (and what seemed to him the most probable) being that a fire had been started at the bottom of the vertical shaft to create a current of air to purify the air in the mine; and from this the woodwork lining of the mine caught fire. A boy (son of one of the men in the mine) saw the fire, and ran in to tell his father—this being the first intimation that those in the mine had of their danger. The father, with five others, started at once to make their escape, and almost lost their lives, in doing so, as they had to crawl a long distance on their hands and knees through the roaring and crackling flames which were eating out the woodwork. They presented a horrible spectacle, the severe burning having drawn their countenances so that

their nearest friends could hardly recognize them. The little boy and fifteen others did not escape. Nine bodies, burned out of all recognition, have been taken out. One of the parties in the mine was a young man engaged to be married on the 4th inst., (the day after the fire). It is beyond the power of pen to portray, or tongue to tell the scene at the site of this terrible disaster.—Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and friends of the unfortunate ones swallowed up in the fiery grave; people who lived in the neighborhood, and strangers from a distance, all crowded there and made it a scene of the wildest excitement. The cries of the bereaved ones was heartrending in the extreme. The affianced bride of the young man above spoken of was inconsolable; she was almost a raving maniac, and had to be forced to leave the spot to save her reason and health. Fire engines were sent for, and every exertion was made to put out the fire and if possible, get out the bodies of the fifteen who had fallen a sacrifice to the flames. As we have already stated, nine have, so far, been taken out. After the woodwork burned out, the earth caved in and closed up the mouth of the mine, so that even if the fire had not reached to the innermost recesses of the mine, those who might have escaped the flames could not escape suffocation.

Ohio Democrat

July 2, 1872

Limaville Disaster.

ALLIANCE, OHIO, July 7, 1872.

The following are further particulars of the mine disaster near Limaville:—The mine is a new one, and the shaft slopes towards the vein, striking it at a depth of seventy-five feet and following the vein as it slightly ascends for a short distance. In a depression near the junction of the slope and shaft is a furnace, used for expelling foul air.—On Wednesday the foul air and gas caught fire from the furnace, and the flames communicated with the wooden supports to the roof. The boy, aged about nine years, who was attending the furnace, ran into the mine to alarm his father, and nineteen miners inside and ten in the outer shaft escaped, but the boy and ten men farther in were cut off. A fire engine was brought from Ravenna as soon as possible and the flames extinguished.

A portion of the roof of the mine fell in, owing to the burning of supports, which made the work of recovery slow and tedious. Yesterday evening seven bodies had been recovered, when a fresh fire occurred, and this was finally penetrated at three o'clock this morning, and the remaining three bodies, including that of the brave boy, were brought out. They were found as far back as they could get in the rooms of the mine.—They were buried soon after their removal. Their corpses were blackened and almost indistinguishable.

The excitement is intense and crowds from all parts of the country are flocking to the scene of the disaster.

The following is the list of the victims: Joseph Evans, John Wells, foreigners; Thomas Mann, James Oaty, of Limaville, Ohio; George Hulford, the boy, of Atwater, Ohio; William Roberts, Richard Roberts and Robert Roberts, of Salinaville, Ohio.

The Coal Mine Disaster at Limaville, Stark County.

We are permitted to publish the following letter from Mrs. ADLARD, formerly a resident of Canal Dover, to Mr. Joseph Moore of Goshen township:

LIMAVILLE, July 5, 1872.

Mr. JOSEPH MOORE:

Dear Sir:—I am sorry to inform you of the sad and painful death of Mr. Anthony T. Maines. He has been working in a new bank. On the 3d the bank took fire. All made their escape but eleven. They worked to put the fire out, and still had hopes the men had not worked forward, but it appears they had, for last evening seven bodies were found, all very much mangled and burned. You cannot imagine what a sorrowful sight it was to see among the bodies that of Mr. Maines, although he is not as badly burned as some others. Mrs. Maines' son, James Oley, was, also, in the bank, but has not been found yet. Mrs. M. takes it very hard, and is now laid upon a bed of affliction. The bodies will not be brought home (to Dover,) now, but will be buried at the bank until cold weather, when they will be taken up and buried where their friends wish to have them. . . . It is a sad affliction for all, and we greatly sympathise with them in their grief. How little we know what a day or an hour may bring forth.

Write by return mail.

KATE ADLARD.