Anthracite Tears

Youth Mining Fatalities, Ages Seven to Eighteen, In Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, 1870 – 1920

By Joseph M. Keating

Edited by John Dziak Jr.

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Foreward: Lost Stories

*Anthracite Tears* is being published in tribute and memory of its author, local historian Joe Keating of Plymouth, Pennsylvania, who died of cancer on October 21, 2006. Although he did not have a paid position or professional training, it would be unfair to call him an amateur. He spent decades compiling facts on the stories of ordinary people and extraordinary events in the Wyoming Valley and northeastern Pennsylvania. He was good friends with my father, and they shared a common goal of preventing stories from being forgotten.

This book is about children and teenagers who died in anthracite coal mining accidents. Therefore, first and foremost, readers should be warned that most of this material is heartbreaking, and some parts are extremely graphic and intensely disturbing. However, we believe that it is a book which strongly deserves to be published.

The rationale for the current book needs some explaining. Mr. Keating presents his information frankly, with a minimum of commentary. There is much that could be said about coal. It formed much of the basis of America’s industrial revolution, heated millions of houses and tenements for decades of winters, and played a major role in powering America’s rise from a largely agricultural to global economic prominence. Anthracite coal — common in Northeastern Pennsylvania and rare elsewhere — was especially important because it contains fewer impurities than softer forms of coal and burns hotter and cleaner. The need for labor in Northeastern Pennsylvania facilitated waves of immigration from Wales, Ireland, Germany, Italy and Eastern Europe, enabling many who lived in dire poverty and oppression in the Old Country to build a new life for themselves in America. On the negative side, many thousands of men and boys were killed or permanently crippled through gruesome accidents; thousands more died a slow and agonizing death from “black lung;” the once stunningly beautiful landscape was covered with countless culm banks and strippings; and air and water were seriously polluted. This book focuses on one of the darkest historic aspects of coal mining in Northeastern Pennsylvania: the fate of thousands of children and youth who met with horrific accidents while working, in dark, noisy breakers (coal sorting buildings) or underground mine tunnels.

Joe tends neither to criticize nor even analyze the brutality of the economic system which drove thousands of impoverished children to abandon school and work in slave-like conditions in the dark mines and breakers in an attempt to help support their families. He does not go into the intense cultural and economic controversies of the anthracite era. He blames neither the alleged greed or negligence of mine owners, nor the alleged carelessness or ignorance of mine workers. He doesn’t explore
the larger context of the drastic cultural, economic and environmental price which Northeastern Pennsylvania paid through its dependence on the coal industry and its dramatic rise and fall. He doesn’t follow the importance of coal mining to the rise of the labor movement and laws requiring safer workplaces and restricting child labor. He doesn’t try to relate the past to the continuing international problem of child labor and exploitation in many parts of the world today. All of these ideas are interesting and important, but all that Mr. Keating does is tell what happened to the children in the mines.

A self-taught historian, Mr. Keating tended to adhere to a “just the facts” approach, without much commentary and often without much attempt at relating details to a big picture. This bluntness might lead a reader to wonder what Mr. Keating’s message is, if any; or what he is then trying to prove by describing the deaths of children and teenagers in such detail. Because of this, we were concerned that some readers might find this book offensive. However, those who know Mr. Keating, know that he was never to be ghoulish or exploitative with his subject matter; despite his frank honesty his stance is one of sorrowful respect. His message, I think, is basically one of tribute and commemoration for each person as an individual, a desire not to let these young people — whose dreams, lives and stories were tragically cut short — be too quickly or easily forgotten. This is what we hope this book will accomplish.

Dr. John Dziak, Jr.
Introduction

It began in 1762, when John Jenkins, a surveyor, with a party of Connecticut men, camping at the mouth of Mill Creek above Wilkes-Barre, returned to Connecticut and reported the discovery of coal. At a meeting of the Susquehanna Company held at Windham, Connecticut, April 17, 1763, mention was made to the beds of coal. In 1769, Obadiah and Daniel Gore, blacksmiths of Wilkes-Barre, successfully burned anthracite coal in their forge. The first shipment of Pennsylvania anthracite coal was made in 1776, from a mine at Mill Creek that was owned by R. Greer. Two boats carried it down the Susquehanna river to Harris Ferry (Harrisburg) at which place it was loaded into wagons and transferred to an arsenal at Carlisle.

Jesse Fell used anthracite coal in his forge to manufacture nails in 1788. In 1806, Abijah Smith, purchased a tract of land in Plymouth and in 1807, began to mine coal there. With the success of Jesse Fell’s grate in 1808, Abijah and his brother John, who became a partner, continued to mine coal until their deaths. The Smith brothers’ mine continued in business, under different lessee companies and owners until 1953. The mine later became the Washington and then Reynolds, and was the oldest anthracite operation in Pennsylvania.

Realizing that there was a fortune to be made, outside investors supplied the capital to develop the anthracite industry. Companies were formed and took over the operations from individual mine owners, they also acquired and developed new coal lands. From drift mining, that did not go below the level of the river, to slopes and sinking of shafts that went great depths below and involved countless miles of underground tunnels in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. From the Smith brothers 400 to 500 tons yearly the industry grew to almost 100 million tons produced in the anthracite region in 1917.

In 1920, the Nottingham Colliery of the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company, only a few hundred yards from the Smith brothers original coal opening, employed 926 men and produced 485,649 tons of coal. Anthracite became one of the most crucial factors in the industrial growth of America. Mine fatalities increased as production rose. Falls of coal and rock, mine car accidents, explosions of powder and gas, premature blasts, and other types of accidents imperiled all mine workers, including youth. From 1870 to 1920, over fifteen hundred young men between the ages of seven and eighteen were killed in the anthracite industry in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. The bodies of those returned home, many by the Black Moriah, were in many cases so horribly mangled and mutilated that they were not recognizable. The Black Moriah was a common sight in all mining communities — this covered spring wagon, usually pulled by two mules, was used to take a man who
was killed or injured to his home or to a hospital.

Today, in the exact location where the Nottingham Colliery once was, there is a school bus stop, one of the thousands in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. Daily the area youth wait for the bus in the morning, many accompanied by a parent. A long time ago many boys, the same age as those who wait today for the school bus, were already at work in the tall, black, dusty building called the breaker. They were picking slate or doing some other job performed by a breaker boy, others would be down inside the mine working, tending doors, driving mules, running mine cars, or might even be a miner’s laborer by the age of seventeen. Their education was not in the public school house of the community, but in the school of the breaker, beginning to learn the precarious occupation of a coal miner. A career that most would spend the rest of their lives at, a career that returned many of the boys to their home long before quitting time, in the Black Moriah.

A journalist in McClure’s Magazine described the inside of a breaker as he viewed it: “the coal and refuse traveled down long chutes alongside which sat boys ranging from ten to eighteen who picked out the rock and slate as the material passed before them. At the turn of the century, according to the mine laws of Pennsylvania, no boy under the age of fourteen shall be employed in a mine nor shall a boy under the age of twelve be employed in or about the outside structures of a colliery. Yet if you could see the tiers of benches that rose from the floor to almost the roof and see the boys that sat there, you would know that the mine law had not been complied with.” The Anthracite Mine Law of Pennsylvania was enacted early in 1870, as a result of the Avondale Disaster, September 6, 1869. Before 1870, there were no mine laws and no official records kept of accidents, this law also required that all mines must have two openings. The act of 1870 was amended in 1885, and again in 1891, to give greater protection to the mine workers, but the number of fatalities increased as production of anthracite coal increased. At the beginning of the anthracite industry only a few men were required to operate a mine, but as it developed from drift mining to shafts, slopes and tunnels, many men of various trades were needed to run a colliery. In 1919, the Susquehanna Collieries, Luzerne County, employed three thousand, three hundred and forty persons; the Eddy Creek Colliery of the Hudson Coal Company, Lackawanna County, employed one thousand, three hundred and thirty six persons.

The scope of this report is not the production of coal or mine statistics, but the youth who went into the breaker or down in the mine and would never again see the light of day. On many of the following pages there are graphic details relating to accidents, so horrible that a second thought was given to omit the gruesome particulars, but it cannot be changed, that is how it happened.

1 Actually, the famous author Stephen Crane, who wrote The Red Badge of Courage. His article, “In the Depths of a Coal Mine” was published in 1894.
Chapter 1

Deaths Caused by Locomotive Cars

Coal was extracted from the mines in cars, like railroad cars, pushed or pulled by horses, mules, steam, electricity, or possibly human laborers. A large proportion of mine accidents and fatalities involved these cars.

A note of caution is necessary regarding the ages given for the boys. They are taken from the official records. Therefore, they are likely to be inaccurate. In very many cases, dire poverty compelled parents to lie about their sons’ ages in order to evade the already lax child labor laws. My guess would be that subtracting about 2 years from the official ages would give a better idea of how old the child actually was.

Ryder, John (12). (date?) Near Parson. It was the noon hour and time for the breaker boys to play. John Ryder and a group of boys were playing on the culm bank, pushing the dump cars up and down the track. John hopped on one of the cars and the other boys gave it a push. While he was riding down the track, he leaned his head against the bumper of the car. There was another car on the track that the young slate picker had not see; the cars collided, crushing Ryder’s head between the two bumpers. His body was taken to his family’s home in Parson.


Holliday, Frank (17). Driver. 8/8/1871. No. 3 Baltimore slope. He fell under a trip of loaded cars and was mangled.

Friel, Daniel (18). 8/18/1871. No. 4 slope, Tresckow. Along with John McGinley, struck by a mine car at the bottom of the slope.

McGinley, John (18). 8/18/1871. No. 4 slope, Tresckow. Along with Daniel Friel, he was struck by a mine car at the bottom of the slope.


Grout, Michael (15). Driver. 12/4/1871. Avondale colliery, near Plymouth. He fell under the mine cars and was run over.

McDonough, Patrick (17). Driver. 12/11/1871. Mocanaqua Coal Co.. After coupling up his trip, he called to his team to start them. Just as they started he fell between the loaded cars and was instantly killed. Mocanaqua Co.

Narey, Joseph (10). 1/17/1872. G.I. Mines, Blakely Twp. Run over by a locomotive that was used to run the mine cars from shaft to breaker.


Lloyd, Thomas (12). Door boy. 8/12/1872. Von Storch colliery, Providence / Scranton. Hit by a trip of cars coming down grade.

Davis, Charles (16). Assistant driver. 9/7/1872. Mill Creek. He was riding on the back of a mine car and the front wheel broke and caught him between the car and the roof.

Miller, John S. (12). Door boy. 9/11/1872. Washington slope. In the act of descending a slope to his work, in company with others, a loaded mine car full of ashes descended the same track, struck several of the men and boys slightly, killed two mules, and striking out some props, which let down a considerable quant.


Swift, John (16). 10/26/1872. Ontario colliery. Leg cut off by a car running over him; he died the same evening. He had been the only support of a mother and five brothers and sisters.


McAndrew, James (14). 1/9/1873. Eaton and co.. Killed by a runaway mine car on an outside plane.

Brough, William (8). 3/5/1873. Green Ridge colliery, Dunmore. He attempted to jump on a car while in motion and was run over.

Demerly, George (16). 3/18/1873. No. 2 Tunnel, Nanticoke. By a mine locomotive while attempting to turn switch.

Scull, Mark (17). 3/20/1873. Diamond, (near Scranton?). He was riding on the forward bumper of the car, with his foot trailing on the rail, when his head caught in the latch, pulling him under the car.


Kildae, James (17). 6/2/1873. Warrior Run colliery. By a mine truck in which he was on.

Barrett, Michael (15). 8/23/1873. No. 2 colliery, N.J.C. Company. Crushed between mine cars while he was unhooking his mule.


Durch, Fred (15). 9/8/1873. Hazleton colliery. By mine cars. He lived eight hours after the accident.


McCabe, Joseph (10). 9/30/1873. No. 1 Tunnel, Baltimore Mines. Fell under a mine locomotive while playing.

Smith, John (17). 3/2/1874. Diamond shaft, (near Scranton?). Found dead under a car in the mine on.


Purcell, Patrick (14). 5/18/1874. No. 5 shaft, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. Caught between a car and pillar.


Smith, Thomas (14). 7/14/1874. Carbon Hill colliery. Fell in front of the car; the car dumped, and the frame caught his head between the rail and car frame.


Higgins, John (15). 8/19/1874. Henry shaft. Crushed between mine cars so seriously that he died 10 days later.


Webster, Thomas (16). 11/10/1874. Von Storch colliery, Providence / Scranton. Caught between cars and rib.

Eames, John (14). 11/17/1874. Spring Brook colliery, (near Avoca?). He was riding on a car coming down a runaway, when it jumped the track; his head got caught between the car and roof, the car knocked a prop down, letting the roof fall on him.


Knight, William (13). 1/30/1875. Jersey colliery, (near Plymouth?). Instantly killed, caused by collar of double timber falling on him, car having struck out one leg while he was on hind end of car with the driver.

Carter, Mark (16). 2/9/1875. Wyoming colliery. Killed instantly, head crushed between door, which he was attending, and its jam or frame, caused by a heavy concussion from an explosion of a small quantity of gas in one of the main gangways inside cross-cut.


Sturrett, Thomas (16). 8/14/1875. Mount Pleasant colliery, near Scranton. Along with two other men, was killed by a runaway trip of cars on a slope.


Moran, John (16). 12/29/1875. Phoenix, (Duryea?). Caught between two cars; died three hours later.


Hohn, Nicholas (14). 5/3/1876. Audenreid, (near Hazleton?). Killed by mine cars, attending door and lost his light.

Flemmings, James (12). 10/12/1876. Sibley shaft, Old Forge. Crushed by a mine car under which he fell.


Burns, Michael (15). 12/21/1876. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. Head crushed between bumpers of cars while trying to couple them.


Leary, Thomas (14). 10/29/1878. Hillside colliery, Pleasant Valley. Crushed by mine cars between which he was riding.


Nuk, Andrew (18). Driver. 11/13/1878. Upper Lehigh No. 2. Fell under the slate car while in motion.


Casper, Charles (15). 4/7/1879. Ebervale breaker. Loading slate, the slate car jumped the track and fell over the trestle.


O’Brien, John (15). 7/21/1879. D. & H. No. 5. By a mine car going down grade, his mule was also killed.


Schmaltz, Peter (14). 9/25/1879. No. 8 shaft, Hughestown. Skull was crushed between a mine car and pillar.


Conahan, J. (14). 10/25/1879. Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. Run over by cars which he had just unhitched from a mule.


Stewart, Abraham (16). Driver. 11/19/1880. Lattimer No. 2. Caught between car and gangway timbers.


Danahey, James (16). 12/11/1880 (1881?). Shaft No. 2, Nanticoke. Reportedly, he was a mule driver who wanted the job of running mine cars, but had been repeatedly refused because the mine boss, John Warne, thought it was too dangerous for him, since he was a thin boy. However, he decided to try it anyway one morning. Reportedly, another youth warned him that the brake of the car wasn’t working properly but Danahey tried regardless. The brake was indeed faulty, making the heavy loaded car
go too fast and eventually jump its track. This threw him against a prop, crushing his skull. The incident was cited as an example of inadequate supervision of boys employed in the mines.

Caught between car and prop.


Carloyne, John (16). 8/9/1881. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. Crushed by mine cars while he was unhitching his mule.


Broudhurst, William (15). 10/17/1881. Cayuga shaft, Providence / Scranton. Jumped on moving loaded trip of mine cars; in getting off foot caught, and was dragged 300 feet.

Bruce, George (23). Door boy. 10/20/1881. Mt. Pleasant, Hyde Park / Scranton. Fell under a trip of cars.


Hogan, Edward (13). Helper. 2/2/1882. Exeter shaft. Attempted to ride on front end of car, fell and was killed.

Pringle, Samuel (18). Runner. 2/21/1882. No. 5 shaft, Plymouth. Fell under loaded mine car.


Davies, Daniel (15). Driver. 4/12/1882. No. 1 shaft, Kingston. Fell under a loaded car.

Convway, Thomas (14). Door boy. 5/2/1882. No. 10 slope, Sugar Notch. Crushed between cars on May 1, 1882, died the next day.


Riley, George (18). Breaker laborer. 6/1/1882. Lattimer No. 1. Fell under cars near breaker.


McDonough, James (16). Driver. 7/14/1882. Gypsy Grove colliery, Dunmore. Run over by a trip of loaded mine cars.

Rupp, Jacob (16). 9/13/1882. No. 13 shaft, Old Forge. From injuries received on August 29, 1882, when a car wheel ran over his leg; it had been amputated on September 5th.


Flanegan, John (14). Driver. 9/26/1882. Coal Brook mine, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Squeezed between loaded car and pillar.

Llewellyn, James (17). Driver. 9/30/1882. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. Run over by a loaded mine car.


Crow, John (18). Brakeman. 11/30/1882. Hartford, Ashley, Luzerne Cty.?.. Fell under the mine locomotive.


Davis, John (13). Helper. 1/31/1883. Cross Creek No. 3. Fell under mine cars.


Moyles, Thomas (18). Driver. 2/19/1883. Diamond colliery., (near Scranton?). Of hip injury received seven days previous, by being jammed between car and prop.

Heibel, John (18). Car runner. 2/26/1883. Bridge Mines, Hyde Park / Scranton. Leg injured and amputated when he was run over by a trip of cars; he bled to death.

Vincent, Charles (13). Door boy. 3/10/1883. No. 1 shaft, Nanticoke. By cars running on him.

Borthwick, Henry (15). Driver. 3/22/1883. Law’s shaft, Pittston?. Skull fractured, caught between two cars.

Rodgers, Frank (17). Car loader. 4/19/1883. Dodge breaker. Large railroad car ran over him at chutes.


Jenkins, Elias (15). Helper. 5/16/1883. Cross Creek No. 3. Fell under mine cars.

O’Brien, Peter (17). Footman. 6/18/1883. Mount Pleasant slope, Scranton. Hit by a loaded trip of mine cars as foot of slope.

Ryan, Thomas (18). Driver. 7/28/1883. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Squeezed between car and mule.

Tomblin, James (13). Driver. 8/16/1883. Marvine shaft, Scranton. Caught between car and pillar.


Sorbolic, John (14). Helper. 9/17/1883. Tresckow No. 7. Along with Samuel Scheim, 21, a carpenter, he was killed by a rock which rolled against them, because of a runaway mine car on the slope.


Robertson, Robert (18). Driver. 10/18/1883. East Sugarloaf No. 4. Fell under mine cars.

Williams, William (17). Driver. 10/20/1883. Dodson, near Plymouth?. Fell under cars.

Gray, Matthew (12). Door boy. 10/24/1883. Mill Creek slope. By cars running over him.

Kilroy, Phillip (13). Door boy. 12/7/1883. Franklin colliery. Attempted to board a moving car and fell under it.

McGee, Conoy (17). Driver. 12/19/1883. Yorktown No. 5. Fell under mine cars.


Jones, Thomas John (13). Driver. 2/22/1884. No. 2 shaft, Nanticoke. Crushed between cars.


McGovern, Thomas (17). Driver. 3/19/1884. Henry colliery. Skull fractured while riding on front of car.


Losnefskey, Sylvester (16). Door boy. 7/8/1884. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Run over by mine cars.

Dougherty, Mike (17). Driver’s helper. 8/4/1884. Dodge Mines. riding on front bumper of car, fell in front, and the cars passed over him.


Gallagher, Anthony (14). Door boy. 8/15/1884. Prospect colliery. Caught between car and prop.

Connors, Patrick (15). Driver. 8/27/1884. Green Ridge slope, Dunmore. He ran car against head block; it jumped the track and caught him.


Thomas, James (14). Driver’s helper. 10/14/1884. Von Storch Mines, Providence / Scranton. Fell under trip of cars which passed over him.

Williams, Joseph (17). Driver. 10/25/1884. Scranton Coal co. mine. Knocked down and run over by empty mine cars.


Robinson, Thomas (17). Driver. 12/30/1884. Shaft No. 6, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. Mine cars rolled over and caught him under it, jamming his head.

McGuire, Dennis (14). Helper. 1/6/1885. Council Ridge No. 2. By a runaway car on the plane, the boy was caught while sitting near bottom.

Price, Harry (18). Helper. 4/16/1885. Stockton No. 2. Caught between car and collar.


Golden, Patrick (17). Driver. 11/5/1885. Slope No. 4, Pittston. Fell under cars while coming out with a trip.

Stevenson, Ralph (16). Driver. 6/19/1886. Pancoast, Dickson City. riding in front of loaded mine car and fell under it :.

Riley, Thomas (18). Laborer. 7/13/1886. Gypsy Grove colliery, Dunmore. Fell in front of a loaded trip of mine cars and was run over.

Stanley, Hugh (16). Door boy. 7/27/1886. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). By mine cars.


Fletcher, Charles (16). Driver. 10/14/1886. Baltimore colliery slope. Fell under an empty car and was killed instantly.

Mortan, Daniel (14). Door boy. 10/21/1886. Central, Dickson City / Scranton. Run over by a loaded mine car.


Phillips, Sydney (15). Driver. 12/24/1886. Oxford, Scranton. He was sitting on front bumper of a car when it jumped the track and threw him in front, car ran over him.

Branghan, Frank (16). Driver. 1/14/1887. Wyoming colliery. On January 13, while riding on front of a loaded car, he fell off. He was injured so severely that he died the next day.


Lewis, George (14). Door boy. 2/19/1887. Shaft No. 9. Crushed by a mine car.


Holleran, John (17). Driver. 3/10/1887. Franklin slope. Crushed by a mine car.


Malia, Patrick (17). 7/2/1887. Dickson, Scranton. Caught between cars, outside the mine.

Davenport, Levi (15). Door boy. 8/10/1887. Crushed by a mine car.

Morgan, David (16). Door boy. 9/16/1887. Oakwood shaft. Caught between a timber and car.

Waller, James (17). 9/16/1887. Pancoast, Dickson City. Caught between car and rib.


Williams, David (16). Driver. 10/24/1887. Run over by car.

Boyle, Michael (18). Driver. 11/1/1887. Prospect. By a mine car.

Gleason, Michael (18). Driver. 11/9/1887. Shaft No. 3. Crushed by a mine car.


Carey, Patrick (17). Driver. 11/26/1887. No. 1 shaft, Hughestown. Run over by cars.


Turnbull, John (15). Driver. 4/24/1888. No. 1 shaft, Forest City. Run over by mine cars.


Jones, John (17). Driver. 8/22/1888. Taylor breaker. Fell under car and it ran over him.

Murphy, John (15). Driver. 9/27/1888. Eddy Creek, Olyphant. Run over by a loaded mine car.


Scott, Michael (18). Driver. 10/17/1888. No. 4, Jermyn. Drawhead of car broke while on plane, cars ran back down plane and caught and killed him.

Keough, John (16). Driver. 12/27/1888. Pine Brook, Scranton. Caught between cars, died as they got him into his home.


Welch, James (16). Driver. 3/1/1889. Fell under cars.


Owens, George (15). 4/20/1889. No1, Jermyn. His head was squeezed between top bumper of car.

Hawk, William (13). 5/2/1889. No. 4 breaker, Jermyn. Run over by a large car.


Puncheon, George (15). Door boy. 6/20/1889. Shaft No. 6, Glen Lyon. Stepped in front of runaway car.


McCahill, Michael (17). 11/8/1889. Meadow Brook Tunnel. One arm broke and body severely bruised by cars, died the next day.
Copp, William (17). Driver. **11/15/1889.** Consolidated co. Falling under a mine car.


Judge, Martin (18). Runner. **12/7/1889.** Edwardsville shaft No. 4. Took a driver’s trip to drive the last trip out on the level gangway, and when about to unhitch the last mule he fell under the cars.


Reese, William (15). Door boy. **2/21/1890.** Clear Spring shaft, West Pittston. By a car knocking the door on him.


Thomas, Oliver (17). Driver. **3/26/1890.** Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Head crushed while coupling cars.


Quinn, John (17). Driver. **7/22/1890.** Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. Crushed between cars at the junction of 2 roads.


Lynott, John (16). Slate Picker. **8/28/1890.** Dolph, Peckville?. By a runaway car at breaker.


Kildea, Charles (15). Driver’s helper. **10/16/1890.** Stockton Stripping. Run over by cars while trying to get on the side of one.


Johnson, John (18). Driver. **11/27/1890.** Red Ash No. 1. Fell while unhitching the mule from a runaway car out on the culm dump. The car ran upon him and fractured his spine. He died withing a few days.

Roth, Herman (16). Locomotive helper. **12/8/1890.** Beaver Brook, (near Hazleton?). Slipped on ice and fell under locomotive, Beaver Brook.


Heckler, Irvin (16). Outside Driver. **2/12/1891.** Upper Lehigh No. 2. Run over by the slate car while unhitching his mule while the car was in motion.


Cornell, Harry (14). **4/7/1891.** Diamond shaft, (near Scranton?). Caught between bumper of cars.

Koch, George (15). Pump boy. 7/10/1891. Laurel Hill colliery. Either fell off a car, or was struck by it while walking up the slope.


Yenglind, Albert (15). Slate Picker. 7/16/1891. breaker No. 9, Sugar Notch. Tried to couple two railroad cars and was crushed between the jammers.


Parfrey, Ambrose R. (15). 8/19/1891. Pancoast breaker, Dickson City. His foot was caught in the frog and large railroad cars ran over him.


Evans, David (16). 10/1/1891. Diamond shaft, (near Scranton?). His foot was caught in a latch and cars ran on it.

Tigue, William (15). Door boy. 10/12/1891. Columbia shaft, Pittston?. By a runaway trip of cars.


Burns, Martin J. (15). 10/30/1891. Meadow Brook. Run over by a loaded trip of cars.

Bennett, William (14). Door boy. 11/30/1891. Shaft No. 9, Hughestown. Caught between car and pillar.

Carey, Martin (17). Driver. 12/24/1891. Shaft No. 1, Penna.Coal Co. Fell under an empty car which he was taking from another driver who had his trip moving.

Anderson, Charles (14). Door tender. 11/1/1891. Shaft No. 9, Sugar Notch. When crossing the main slope immediately after a trip was started up, a car ran back upon him causing injuries which resulted in his death in about one week. Accident on September 4.

McGeever, Patrick (15). Driver. 1/16/1892. Spencers, Dunmore. Run over by a mine car.

Knott, James (14). Driver’s helper. 2/18/1892. Continental colliery. riding on bumper of first car in trip, he slipped and fell in front of car.


McManus, Michael (14). Driver. 4/20/1892. Delaware breaker. Crushed between mine cars.

Mea, Patrick (17). Door tender. 5/0/1892. Shaft No. 5, South Wilkes-Barre. Following the driver to the face of the airway and on attempting to get on the front end of car to come out he slipped and fell under the car; his leg was badly crushed; amputation was performed at the hospital and he died at 4 a.m.

Lancaster, Edward (16). Driver. 7/1/1892. Pettibone shaft, (Kingston?). His head being caught between cars.

Lewis, George (17). Driver. 7/2/1892. Von Storch shaft, Providence / Scranton. His head was caught between two mine cars.

Freese, William (18). Laborer. 7/5/1892. Greenwood No. 4, Lackawanna Twp. Run over by the wheel of a mine car.
Readla, Andrew (18). Outside Driver. 7/30/1892. Milnesville Stripping. Crushed between car and truck.

Duffy, Patrick (18). Helper. 8/16/1892. Milnesville colliery. Squeezed between locomotive cab and trestle.

Jones, George (16). Helper on locomotive. 9/6/1892. Humboldt colliery. By an empty trip of cars which he was riding when they left the track.


Noviock, George (18). Outside Driver. 10/29/1892. Milnesville No. 3. Leg broken by mine car. Died Nov. 5 in hospital.

Brezinski, Stachley (15). Door boy. 11/12/1892. Highland No. 2. Fell under empty car.

Wittig, August (16). Helper on locomotive. 11/25/1892. Humboldt colliery. Slipped on rail and fell under locomotive while getting off to turn switch on November 22.

Griffiths, Evan (16). Door tender. 12/3/1892. Shaft No. 6, Glen Lyon. Struck by runaway car on gangway, died while being carried out.


Drakanovesky, John (16). Loader. 1/23/1893. Sandy Run. Slipped from the front end of a gondola under the breaker and was crushed under the wheels.

Sabbett, Frank (16). Door boy. 1/28/1893. No. 1, Jermyn. A trip of cars crashed through the door and he died in 5 hours.

Shaffer, Charles (16). Patcher. 2/3/1893. Gowen No. 4 / Derringer, (near Hazleton?). Head squeezed between hind end of loaded car and leg of cross timber through car being derailed.


Thomas, Benjamin (14). Door boy. 2/13/1893. Blue Ridge colliery, Peckville. Squeezed between car and side of gangway.


Quinn, John (15). Driver. 4/11/1893. Consolidated co. By car striking head block; crushing him against the pillar.


Hughes, Thomas (17). Driver. 5/17/1893. Shaft No. 9, Sugar Notch. Fell beside a trip of cars.

Hennigan, Patrick (14). Door tender. 5/24/1893. Keystone, (near Pittston?). struck by a trip of loaded cars while riding up plane.


Fox, George (17). Driver. 6/9/1893. breaker No. 11, Plymouth. Fell under culm car on the dump, Breaker No.11, Plymouth.
Gilroy, Edward (14). Door boy. 6/17/1893. Dodge shaft. struck by a trip of loaded cars, he was in the dark at the time.


Walsh, John (15). Driver. 5/10/1894. Von Storch slope, Providence / Scranton. Run over by a mine car on slope.


Lee, John (16). Driver. 7/12/1894. Twin shaft, Pittston. Fell off car bumper which he was riding.

Mulligan, John (18). Assistant ticket boss. 7/12/1894. No. 2, Sugarloaf. Crushed by loaded car being run back while he was cleaning coal out of hole below the dump on plane. Engineer claims he received signal to let car back.


Klugg, Charles (16). Door tender. 11/20/1894. Hillman Vein. While attempting to climb on board the front end of a car, he slipped and fell under. The car ran over him.


Minnich, Charles (16). Driver. 3/19/1895. No. 5 Strippings, Milnesville. Caught by car by his foot getting fast in latch at branch.


Gaughan, John (18). Driver. 4/11/1895. Pine Brook shaft, (near Scranton?). Caught between car and door post on April 2, 1895.
Gemeada, Frank (17). Driver. 5/29/1895. Forest City. Fell under a loaded car while it was being hauled out of a chamber.


Davitt, Frank (16). Driver. 6/10/1895. No. 6 shaft, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. By a runaway car out of chamber.


Quinn, James (14). Slate Picker. 9/16/1895. No. 8, Hughestown. Run over by a loaded truck of mine timber.

McEvoy, Patrick (14). Water carrier. 10/2/1895. Strippings, Jeanesville. Fell in front of locomotive while attempting to jump down to turn a switch.

McDonald, Joseph (13). Oiler. 12/7/1895. Nay Aug, (near Scranton?). Fell between cars, outside on Dec. 5.

Lynch, John (14). Door tender. 12/17/1895. Hollenback. While waiting to block an empty car which was being pulled up by a chain and pulley, the car jumped the track and crushed him against the gob wall.


Machusky, Alexander (14). Driver. 5/14/1896. Maxwell, Ashley. Leg crushed between cars on May 13, 1896. Died from shock when his leg was amputated.

Bankus, George (18). Driver. 6/15/1896. Avondale colliery, near Plymouth. Knee severely crushed between cars, died in a few hours.


James, Thomas (17). Driver. 10/23/1896. Mount Pleasant colliery, near Scranton. Fell under a mine car while riding on the bumper with his foot on the rail.


Flatko, John (16). Slate Picker. 11/26/1896. Derringer breaker. Accidentally sliding down a chute leading to the rolls. His legs were ground up in the rolls before the machinery could be stopped.


Rosowoski, Stanley (15). Runner. 1/22/1897. breaker No. 7, Nanticoke. On January 19, while running loaded cars at the breaker, he fell under them. His leg was crushed so that amputation was necessary. He died from shock.
Wale, Albert (16). Door boy. 2/1/1897. Diamond Drift, (near Scranton?). He left his door and went into another part of the mine and met a trip of cars, he became confused and was squeezed by the cars and the rib.

Barry, Julius (15). Door tender. 3/31/1897. Shaft No. 5, Plymouth. Crushed between a car and door.


Jones, Albert (17). Bell ringer. 7/15/1897. Johnson No. ?? By a runaway trip of cars.


Werkley, John (16). Driver. 8/24/1897. Highland No. 2. Crushed under a mine car while uncoupling.


Nufree, John (18). Driver. 1/10/1898. No. 1 Strippping, Hazleton. In an effort to jump off car he fell backwards striking his head against the car wheel.

Oleksack, George (15). Bell ringer. 2/16/1898. Griffith Tunnel. By a runaway trip of cars.


Butts, Robert (15). Door tender. 5/2/1898. Richmond No. 4. Attempted to jump on front end of an empty car in motion and fell under it.

Deacon, William (16). Door boy. 6/24/1898. Capouse, Hyde Park / Scranton. Returning from a face to his door with a can of oil, struck by a runaway.

Fox, John (17). Errand boy. 8/20/1898. North Cross Creek Strippping, Jeddo, near Hazleton. Killed while preparing to jump from a moving train he fell to the track between the engine and car, lived but a short time after the accident.

Valinto, Samuel (16). Bell ringer. 9/5/1898. “Harry E.” Coal co. shaft, (Luzerne Cty.?). Killed while riding on loaded car up the slope.


Butski, Andrew (18). Laborer. 1/20/1899. Hazle Brook co. Crushed between a railroad car and platform under the breaker.

Evans, Albert B. (15). Door tender. 2/22/1899. Bliss colliery. Riding on the front end of a car, he fell and was crushed between the car and brattice.

Sibley, Josiah (15). Driver. 3/7/1899. Old Forge No. 2. While taking out a loaded car from a chamber, he lost it, and was struck by it.

Clark, John (14). Door boy. 4/19/1899. Old Forge No. 2. On April 5th while helping a driver to get a loaded car out of the chamber and it got away.


Kitching, George (14). Door tender. 5/15/1899. Buttonwood. Riding an empty car the car jumped the track and knocked a pair of timbers out and the top fell on him.

Kane, John (14). Door boy. 6/6/1899. Penna. shaft No. 5. Killed by mine cars.

Ketrick, Michael (17). Driver. 6/17/1899. Cayuga colliery, Providence / Scranton. He and his brother were taking an empty trip of cars in the gangway and he was killed by a fall of roof.


Taylor, John A. (14). Door boy. 9/16/1899. Pancoast, Dickson City. While trying to jump on a car, he slipped and fell under it.


McHale, James (18). Locomotive fireman. 10/24/1899. Grassy Island, Olyphant. Fell under mine cars and was run over.

Bevan, Frederick (14). Door tender. 10/25/1899. Parrish colliery, Plymouth. On October 18, 1899 he appears to have fallen asleep on track; cars ran over him.


Murphy, Martin (15). Door tender. 11/9/1899. Franklin Rock slope. Attempted to get on the front end of car just as it was approaching a close pillar; his foot slipped and he was crushed to death.

Marr, George (16). Driver. 11/21/1899. Eddy Creek, Olyphant. While trying to jump on the front bumper of a car, he slipped and fell under.

Ferguson, Martin (17). Driver. 11/28/1899. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). Head crushed between two mine cars.

Smith, Albert (14). Car oiler. 12/6/1899. Highland No. 5. Leg crushed between mine cars while attempting to uncouple them, died at the Hazleton hospital.

Choniski, Andrew (18). Driver. 12/7/1899. Baltimore colliery No. 2 shaft. Attempted to cross the pit of the shaft, when the cage came upon and crushed him.


McElligott, Thomas (15). Door tender. 12/14/1899. Maxwell No. 20. Followed the driver out to foot of slope and attempted to couple the moving cars to one standing at the foot and his head was crushed between the top rails of the cars.


Reid, Thomas (15). Door tender. 1/1899. Shaft No. 3, South Wilkes-Barre. He was sitting near a prop when a car jumped the track and he was crushed.
Rubeline, Nicholas (18). Laborer. 1/2/1900. Minesville. Run down by railroad cars.
Jones, George E. (17). Door tender. 1/22/1900. Shaft No. 1, Nanticoke. Leg severely crushed, he was taken to the hospital and died soon after.
Foley, Patrick (15). Door tender. 3/5/1900. Reynolds No. 16. He ran a loaded car down against a block, in his father’s breast. The rear end of car swung off track and crushed his head against a prop.
Gavingan, Patrick (18). Runner. 6/14/1900. Twin shaft, Pittston. Slipped and fell under cars while spragging.
Tunitus, William (15). Door tender. 6/25/1900. Dorrance. Fell asleep on the track when on night shift and a trip of cars ran over him.
Shebloski, Mike (15). Door tender. 8/3/1900. Shaft No. 5, Plymouth. Trying to block a car he failed, and the car ran on and cut him on the knee. The accident happened on July 20th; lockjaw set in on the 29th.
Monahan, Morris (16). Door boy. 1/21/1901. Hillman slope. While sitting on bumper of loaded car at foot of inside slope by an empty car coming down slope.
Ponko, Thomas (15). Door boy. 2/15/1901. Slope No. 6, Glen Lyon. By a trip of loaded cars.
Gallagher, Richard (16). Driver. 3/12/1901. Manville colliery, Dickson City / Scranton. Fell off the bumper of a car he was driving.
Tinner, Thomas (16). Driver. 3/25/1901. Sibley colliery, Old Forge. between car and rib on narrow side of gangway.

Young, James (15). Driver. 5/7/1901. Fell under the cars.

James, David (16). Driver. 7/2/1901. Taylor shaft. By mine cars.


Birbeck, Elias (16). Door boy. 8/13/1901. Von Storch slope, Providence / Scranton. He was sitting in an empty car when a passing train of loaded cars jumped the track, striking the car.

Corcoran, Anthony (18). Runner. 8/29/1901. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. Tripped on rope and fell in front of a trip of cars.


Deveks, John (16). Driver. 11/23/1901. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. he was riding on an air motor, and was shaken off and killed at a point 1,000 feet away from his post.


Brogan, John (14). Driver. 12/13/1901. Law’s shaft, Pittston?. Caught between empty cars and rib.


Woods, James (17). Driver. 1/13/1902. “William A.” colliery. Hit by a trip of loaded cars which jumped their track, while he was sitting at the corner of a pillar.

Brennan, John (17). Patcher. 1/21/1902. Head crushed while making a flying coupling.

Savage, George (16). Driver. 1/21/1902. Pancoast, Dickson City. Fell under a mine car.


Gibbon, Thomas (14). Door boy. 2/26/1902. Stanton No. 7. Crushed between cars.

Balago, Mike (18). Laborer. 3/17/1902. Pine Ridge colliery, (Wilkes-Barre?). Head caught between culm car and door frame of boiler room while car was being pushed out of the boiler room, he got on front of car to ride out; his head was caught against top frame and his neck broken.


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McHale, William (17). Switchman. 12/5/1902. Raymond washery. Squeezed between car and locomotive; was riding on front end of latter when car jumped track.

Richmond, Elwood (15). Driver. 12/30/1902. Consolidated co.. By a runaway trip of cars.


Kishock, John (15). Patcher. 2/19/1903. Maltby colliery. Run over by cars.


Martin, Albert (18). Driver. 3/5/1903. Tripp slope, Scranton. While standing on the front bumper of a moving mine car, he was crushed between the roof and the coal in the car.


Fitzimons, Mathew (17). Switch boy. 3/20/1903. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Fell under moving cars, he was crossing between cars when he fell under, the wheels passing over his body.


Decker, Winfield (16). Driver. 6/1/1903. Spring Brook, (near Avoca?). Fell under a truck.


Robinson, Samuel (15). Car oiler. 6/8/1903. Grassy Island, Olyphant. Was working on locomotive, and while he was trying to step on the bumper, he slipped and fell under.

Tully, Francis (16). Driver. 6/17/1903. Von Storch slope, Providence / Scranton. Fell off a mule he was riding; his feet caught in the harness and he was dragged and killed.


Barron, Rubey (17). Driver. 7/18/1903. Johnson No. 1. By mine cars, he fell under cars.


Peters, George (17). Driver. 8/14/1903. Baltimore colliery No. 2 shaft. Caught against side of shaft with empty car.

Straud, John (18). Runner. 8/24/1903. No. 3 shaft, Kingston. By loaded cars becoming derailed, crushing him.
Becoski, William (17). Driver. 12/10/1903. Johnson No. 1. On December 4, in an attempt to mount a moving trip of cars, he fell under, he died of lockjaw from an arm injury.


Lewis, Daniel (18). Motorman. 1/9/1904. Forest City, Susquehanna Co. Two motors ran into each other, killing both men.

Harten, Charles (18). Slate Picker. 1/19/1904. Stanton. Skull was fractured between railroad car and breaker post.

Nitzer, Martin (17). Driver. 2/2/1904. Hazleton shaft. Run over by loaded car.


Naylor, Stanley (17). Driver. 3/26/1904. Spring Brook, (near Avoca?). while riding on the bumper of a car and sliding hit foot on the rail, his foot was caught between the branch rails, throwing him under the car.


Heaney, James (17). Door boy. 11/14/1904. Stanton. Between rib and loaded car which jumped the track.


Upavitch, Frank (17). Driver. 4/19/1905. Henry shaft. Fell under loaded trip of cars.
Tremmers, Frederick (16). Door boy. 4/22/1905. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). By runaway mine cars.


Gillespie, Frank (14). Slate Picker. 5/18/1905. White Oak, Archbald. By a locomotive on which he was riding the bumpers, and fell under.

Yambo, William (15). Junction tender. 6/3/1905. Storrs No. 2. the motor runner lost control of the trip on a heavy grade and Yambo in getting off fractured his skull.


Davidson, Benjamin (17). Driver. 7/14/1905. Green Ridge colliery, Dunmore. By mine cars in accident on on June 13th.

Evans, Alfred (16). Header. 7/18/1905. Johnson No. 2. By mine cars.


Merrigan, James (17). Driver. 8/5/1905. Riverside, (near Wyoming / Plains Twp.?). By mine cars, a miner, By blasting, started a car which ran onto the gangway, killing Merrigan.


Cortese, Dom (15). Slate Picker. 10/14/1905. Lattimer No. 3. Head caught between top of car and breaker.


Evans, James (18). Brakeman. 1/21/1906. Run over by cars.


Sherbin, William (18). Driver. 3/3/1906. Fell off and being run over by trip of cars.


Gidish, John (18). Driver. 6/30/1906. Forest City, Susquehanna co. By mine cars.


McNamara, Edward (17). Driver. 10/30/1906. Cayuga colliery, Providence / Scranton. By mine cars on October 1st.


Van Horn, Ray (17). Driver. 11/21/1906. West End, (Mocanaqua?). Struck by runaway cars on slope.


Walker, James (17). Driver. 12/12/1906. Leg caught between car bumpers.

Harwin, Stephen (16). Door boy. 12/19/1906. Johnson. While trying to get on a car bumper he fell under.
Hatton, George (18). Door boy. 0/1/1906. Connell, Sullivan Cty. Leg badly lacerated by cars. Leg was amputated and injuries proved fatal.


Clark, Edward (17). Runner. 2/1/1907. Storrs No. 3. By mine cars on January 9th.

Krugguski, William (16). Door boy. 2/2/1907. Pancoast, Dickson City. By mine cars.

Hahn, Edward (16). Door boy. 2/19/1907. Plymouth No. 2. Squeezed between loaded and empty cars.

Yaskoviak, Stanley (18). Bell boy. 3/1/1907. Squeezed between cars.

Otto, Fred (18). Runner. 3/23/1907. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. Run over by mine cars that were being pushed into an airway by an electric motor.

Coley, Andrew (16). Door boy. 4/9/1907. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Run over by mine cars.


Shepanski, Anthona (16). Door boy. 5/13/1907. Run over by cars.


Brozena, Michael (17). Door boy. 7/19/1907. Parrish, Plymouth. By a runaway trip of loaded cars.

Carter, Michael (16). Motorman. 7/20/1907. Eddy Creek, Olyphant. His lamp fell off and he jumped off to pick it up and was squeezed between the rib and the motor.


Connors, Dennis (17). Driver. 9/5/1907. Cranberry, (near Hazleton?). By cars on gangway.

Buongari, Antonio (15). Slate Picker. 9/19/1907. Cranberry, (near Hazleton?). By gondola above breaker.


Dubrawezk, Stephen (17). Driver. 10/16/1907. Johnson. Fell under mine cars.

Lugan, George (18). Headman. 11/14/1907. Sterrick Creek. By mine cars on November 6th.

Geneski, George (16). Door boy. 11/22/1907. Sugar Notch. Fell under a car.

Connor, John (16). Driver. 1/2/1908. His foot slipped off the car bumper and he fell on the rails, No.6 shaft.

Chuebran, Andrew (18). Driver. 1/6/1908. Glenwood. His arm was caught between the top of the car and the roof and arm was badly lacerated. The accident was not considered serious and he walked home. He was then taken to the hospital where he died a few days later.

Blascake, John (16). Door boy. 1/18/1908. Butler slope. Ran over by mine cars.

Morris, Frank (18). Brakeman. 2/7/1908. Ewen, near Pittston. Riding on a trip of mine cars on the front end, on Feb. 14, he fell off and the wheel passed over his foot.

Strawham, Charles (18). Runner. 2/10/1908. Johnson. Riding between cars with an armful of sprags when he fell under the cars.

Berish, Andrew (18). Driver. 2/19/1908. Upper Lehigh. Run over by cars.

Handlos, Frank (17). Door boy. 4/21/1908. No. 2, Plymouth. Trying to jump on a trip of cars he slipped and fell under.

Dirbis, Michael (18). Driver. 5/11/1908. Dolph, Peckville?. He was side hitching and for some unknown reason he crossed over on the wrong side and was squeezed between cars and rib.

Libzak, Michael (17). Door boy. 5/13/1908. Prospect. By a runaway trip on slope.


Ring, Frank (18). Runner. 5/25/1908. West End, (Mocanaqua?). Squeezed between motor and door.


Buscavage, Adam (17). Door tender. 8/28/1908. By an accident involving a runaway loaded mine car.

Secula, Michael (18). Driver. 9/1/1908. Squeezed between car and rib.

Raffelo, Frank (18). Nipper. 9/8/1908. West End, (Mocanaqua?). While running ahead of a motor to open a door his light was extinguished and he was squeezed between motor and rib.

Loughney, William (17). Door boy. 10/31/1908. By mine cars.

Hurtt, Thomas (17). Driver. 11/28/1908. Laffin Tunnel. Run over by mine cars.

Santino, Cragle (17). Driver. 12/7/1908. Seneca, Pittston. Fell under a loaded car.

Cowcow, Mike (17). Patcher. 12/12/1908. Beaver Brook, (near Hazleton?). Caught in the abdomen between the car and sprag.

Spanburg, Sherman (17). Driver. 12/12/1908. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). By mine cars.


Jeziorskie, Edward (16). Door boy. 12/16/1908. Barnum No. 2 shaft, Pittston/Duryea/Marcy Twp. He was in the dark as there was no oil in his lamp and he left his door to go up to a miner's breast to get oil and was caught by a car that was being run down.

McAndrew, Leo (18). Tail rope rider. 12/19/1908. Clinton, (Lackawanna Cty.?). He was standing near a pillar at a passing branch waiting for the tailrope to come down. The first car of the trip jumped the track and knocked him against the pillar.


Smith, Birt (18). Driver. 1/30/1909. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). Struck on the head by a mine car.
Vilinsky, Alex (18). Driver. 5/1/1909. Prospect. Fell under a loaded car.
Russler, Roland (14). Locomotive brakeman. 7/9/1909. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). He was riding on the “tender” (fuel car for the locomotive) when it jumped off the track, and he was thrown under the locomotive.
Screen, Charles (17). Brakeman. 9/3/1909. West End, (Mocanaqua?). Fatally scalded by escaping steam from engine when a locomotive turned over.
Pelychock, Mike (17). Brakeman. 10/18/1909. Run over by a locomotive.
Garrett, David (18). Driver. 4/26/1910. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). Caught by a trip of mine cars that jumped the track.
Kanyak, Mike (14). Jig runner. 5/24/1910. Jeddo No. 4, near Hazleton. Run over by gondola under breaker.
Quinn, Frank (17). Driver. 7/11/1910. Diamond, (near Scranton?). Fell under a mine car while attempting to jump on front end.
Cosgrove, Joseph (17). Brakeman. 8/1/1910. Ewen, near Pittston. Fell under the motor while opening the door on gangway.
Kawitosky, Leo (17). Trip rider. 12/20/1910. Clinton, (Lackawanna Cty.?). A trip of empty cars on slope jumped off the track and caught him against a pillar where he was standing attending an electric bell.


Howell, Fred (17). Driver. 2/9/1911. Richmond No. 2. Fell on the sharp edge of a tie, while running after a car to spray it.


Crawford, Albert (18). Driver. 5/21/1911. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Struck by loaded trip of cars.


Kane, Edward (17). Brakeman. 7/12/1911. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Squeezed between mine cars while coupling them.

Klonskie, Stanley (18). Driver. 7/29/1911. Powderly. By a mine car, the car tipped over on him while running it from a chamber.

Kojinski, Joe (18). Driver. 8/16/1911. Pancoast, Dickson City. Along with another man, he was helping to replace a derailed car on the track at the foot of the slope. The engineer started the engine, pulling the car over them.

Mitchel, Joe (18). Driver. 9/1/1911. Cayuga colliery, Providence / Scranton. Crushed between loaded rock car and an empty trip of mine cars.

Prosser, Thomas (16). Door tender. 9/14/1911. Lackawanna. He was riding on the motor and in some way fell off and under it.

Kropas, William (18). Driver. 10/2/1911. Storrs. He was riding on the bumper of a car going through a doorway when the mule pushed the door open with its nose. This caused the door to rebound and threw the youth under the car.


Coyle, James (18). Runner. 12/30/1911. Marvine. While spragging a car it became derailed and he was hit by runaway cars.

Roman, George (18). Driver. 1/6/1912. Sterrick Creek. Riding on a trip of cars and in some manner fell off and under car.

Kanyuck, Andrew (18). Runner. 1/18/1912. Squeezed between platform and car.


Suskas, Stephen (18). Door boy. 2/21/1912. Ewen, near Pittston. Killed while opening the door he was caught by the cars.


Washolefski, Lawrence (18). Runner. 6/24/1912. Squeezed by derailed mine car.


Rybenski, Joseph (17). Door boy. 10/16/1912. Truesdale. By cars on gangway.


Edwards, John (18). Driver. 11/30/1912. Woodward. He fell asleep on tracks and was killed by cars.


Stinson, Leo (17). Driver. 2/14/1913. Central, Dickson City / Scranton. Crushed to death between loaded and empty cars on passing branch.


Clutchnick, John (17). Door boy. 6/24/1913. Seneca, Pittston. Fell off carriage into shaft.

Machinidis, Tony (17). Driver. 7/9/1913. Diamond, (near Scranton?). Squeezed between car and timber.

Adrozak, John (17). Driver. 8/14/1913. Squeezed between derailed car and prop.

Arthum, John (18). Driver. 9/5/1913. “Harry E.” Coal co., (Luzerne Cty.?). While attempting to get on front end of loaded car he fell under.


Therbock, Frank (18). Runner. 11/26/1913. Manville colliery, Dickson City / Scranton. Squeezed between car and rib.

Holman, Samuel (18). Driver’s helper. 1/10/1914. Diamond, (near Scranton?). By a trip of mine cars.


Deres, Frank (17). Door boy. 8/20/1914. Old Forge. Neck was broken by cars at entrance to abandoned chamber.


Pero, Leo (18). Runner. 10/2/1914. East Boston. By brake stick while running cars from breaker to the siding.


Valenjick, Alex. (18). Engineer. 11/25/1914. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Crushed between motor and loaded car.


Drakus, John (18). Driver. 1/16/1915. Laflin. By cars on tunnel.


Serianni, Angelo (18). Brakeman. 8/18/1915. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Killed by mine cars being pushed by a locomotive. He was riding in the third car from the front end as the trip was being pushed from the breaker to the mine; the first four cars jumped the track.

Wasdovish, Simon (18). Door boy. 9/15/1915. Derringer colliery. Attempted to get on a trip that was passing his door and he was killed.

Burke, Richard (17). Driver. 9/20/1915. Tappans. He had been riding on the rear end of a loaded trip in order to give light to the driver in case his lamp became extinguished. He tried to run ahead of the trip of two loaded cars that were being pulled by two mules, when he was caught by them.

Ward, Vincent (17). Brakeman. 10/1/1915. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). He was riding on the rear end of electric motor that was pulling three loaded cars and in some unknown manner he fell under.


Infantenio, John (18). Driver. 10/16/1916. By cars on gangway.


McCabe, Joseph (17). Driver. 5/21/1917. Clinton, (Lackawanna Cty.?). By cars on slope.


Havrilak, Andrew (16). Patcher. 8/13/1917. Andrew Havrilak (Havrilla) was a loader at the Warrior Run Colliery, he lived in Glen Lyon. The twenty-one year old man was married and had a young son, Mike. On July 27, 1907, Andrew was run over and instantly killed by a railroad car on the colliery grounds outside. His son Mike was born in 1901, at Glen Lyon, and resided there until May, 1917, when he moved to the Honey Pot section of Nanticoke. Mike worked at the Wanamie Colliery; he was a patcher. At 2 o’clock on the afternoon of August 13, 1917, a runaway mine car derailed and knocked out a set of timbers that caused a fall of rock. Mike and his mule were caught by the fall and both instantly killed. A cruel untimely death that was so similar to that of his father.


Hrichock, Mike (17). Topman. 10/12/1917. Hazle Brook co.. Fell under cars at top of slope.

Chesney, Mike (16). Driver. 11/3/1917. By cars on gangway.


Wintergrass, Metic (16). Brakeman. 2/4/1918. Run over by an electric mine motor.


Saduski, Frank (18). Runner. 7/10/1918. Bliss colliery. By a motor, outside the mine.


Smith, Henry (17). Ashman. 8/21/1918. No. 18, Wanamie. Coupling on head end of truck that he was shoving got caught in a frog, throwing the rear end of the truck on him.

Regalis, Lewis (17). Door boy. 8/24/1918. Woodward. Struck by a loaded car on gangway.


Yescavish, Michael (16). Door boy. 3/28/1919. Highland No. 5. Run over by cars on gangway.


Harris, John (18). Driver. 5/10/1919. Richmond No. 3. Squeezed between car and concrete wall.


Labude, John (17). Door boy. 6/5/1919. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). By runaway cars on gangway two men killed.

Giordana, Ignatus (17). Driver. 7/17/1919. By cars on gangway.

Connor, Francis (18). Motorman’s Assistant. 8/11/1919. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Struck by prop on car on gangway.


Petix, Sam (18). Driver. 3/17/1920. By cars on gangway.


Lloyd, Joseph (17). Door boy. 7/15/1920. Loree No. 5. By cars on gangway.
Meholsky, Michael (17). Slate Picker. 7/29/1920. Riverside, (near Wyoming / Plains Twp.?). A trip of cars bumped the cars he was on.


Adam Buscavage, 17

It was 4:30 p.m., August 28, 1908, and most of the workers had already gone home from the Warrior Run Colliery. Seventeen year old door tender, Adam Buscavage, Warrior Run, and seven other men working in the lower lift hopped on and placed themselves on the seats of the two cars that were used to hoist the men. The cars stopped at the last lift and twelve more men got on. The signal was given to hoist the twenty men up the slope. Up on top the headman went to the breaker, a short distance away, to run a loaded car to the yards. The track that he was pushing the car on was steeply graded and it got away from him before he could put a sprag (braking stick) in the wheel. The car jumped the switch and ran up an incline about thirty feet from the head of the slope. When the car stopped on the incline it began to roll backwards, picking up speed as it went. When it reached the latches on the track it should have been sent back to the place that it came from, but the latches failed. The car ran down to the entrance of the slope, the headman and another employee running after it in a frantic effort to sprag it. Their effort was unsuccessful and the loaded runaway mine car was soon on its way down the slope. William Williams, the inside foreman, who was in his office, witnessed the runaway car enter the slope. He was first to enter the mine, but not before notifying the rescue squad. The continuous roaring of the oncoming runaway car was heard by the men who were riding up, and a terrifying shout came: “Jump!” The hoisting engineer felt the shock vibrations through the cable, the cable that was now loose from the cars. The runaway car travelled with terrifying speed for almost one thousand feet before it crashed into the cars that were carrying the men. The force of the impact broke loose the cable and drove the cars backwards for one hundred feet before it derailed, smashing and piling them up into a huge wreck. Five men were instantly killed and horrible mangled, the sixth man died the next day. Two men were seriously injured and the rest were badly bruised. All of these injured recovered. Frederick Gallagher was able to jump to safety; his brother James couldn’t. The men who were killed included Peter Ostrofsky, 46, of Warrior Run (miner); John Tokarshak, 56, of Warrior Run (miner); Julius Muscavage, 24, of Warrior Run (laborer); Frank Proprota, 20, Laborer (died the next day); and James Gallagher, 24, Warrior Run (runner). The last body recovered under the massive wreckage was mutilated beyond recognition, but it was that of the seventeen year old door tender, Adam Buscavage.
Chapter 2

Deaths Caused by Blasts and Fires

This chapter lists boys who were killed by fire or explosions. Mine inspector William Hemingway, in his 1875 report to Governor Hartranft, explained three reasons why anthracite mining is very dangerous in this regard. First, unlike softer bituminous coal, the underground veins of anthracite coal are so dense that the coal must be blasted loose with dynamite before it can be dug out.

Second, some miners were careless, whether through ignorance, inexperience, haste, or familiarity: A miner would often be “making up cartridges in small cross-cuts or headings with his lamp on his head, and not unfrequently a tobacco pipe in his mouth, with a strong current of air passing at the same time; when a spark of fire from either lamp or pipe falls among the loose powder in the keg or cartridge an explosion takes place, and sometimes none are left to tell the tale.” The boys listed here were not miners (a term which, at least theoretically, indicates a trained professional; the miner is the one who uses the explosive), but some were laborers digging and loading coal under the supervision of a miner, and they faced whatever dangers the miners did.

A third danger was the most ominous of all. Natural processes led to some areas in the mines becoming full of methane (CH₄), which the miners called “fire-damp” (“damp” being jargon for a gas) and which the engineers called carburated hydrogen gas. The methane was highly flammable and an unwitting miner could cause a major explosion by lighting a match in the wrong place.

Besides explosions, this chapter also includes a few who died due to fire, etc. It does not include the famous Avondale mine fire of 1870, which killed well over 100 men and which Mr. Keating studied separately. Before his illness, Mr. Keating

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1Reports of the Inspectors of Mines of the Anthracite Coal Regions, 1876, p. 21. Samuel Gay, Inspector of Mines for the Second Schuylkill District, in the 1896 reports, similarly suggested that accidents in general tended to result from ignorance and carelessness: “To any person who travels around amongst the men who are using blasting powder, and witnesses the very careless, yes, even reckless, manner in which they handle the same, it is more a wonder that many more of them are not destroyed, than it is of the number of lives sacrifice at present — annually. At least nine-tenths of the risks run by our men in using blasting powder are unnecessary.” These criticisms may not always be entirely fair.
had been gathering evidence to support his theory that the Avondale disaster was “certainly not an accident” but was a result of a Molly-Maguire-like arson attack related to a labor dispute. Another fire, in West Pittston in 1871, led to the death of one of the most famous underage victims of the mines, “little Martin Cra[gh]an,” whose story is described on page 45.

Crahan, Martin (11). Driver. 5/27/1871. West Pittston shaft. He along with 19 other men were suffocated by the burning of the breaker. There had been no second opening for the men to escape.


Murray, Philip (17). 10/30/1875. Hit by a piece of coal from a blast, died 7 hours later.

Fox, John (12). 12/28/1875. No. 3 slope, Ashley. Killed instantly by coal from a blast ignited by his father. According to his father, he had the boy with him to keep him company. He had sent the boy away when he was about to fire the blast, but the boy was somehow caught in the explosion anyway and he.


Phillips, Joseph (13). 10/20/1876. Cayuga shaft, Providence / Scranton. Killed by an explosion of explosive powder, which was being carried into the mine encased only in a paper wrapper.


Tredinnick, Stephen (18). 12/29/1877. Audenreid, (near Hazleton?). From injuries received from an explosion of gas on December 28.


Carroll, Patrick (18). 11/3/1879. Sibley shaft, Old Forge. Burned by an explosion of powder while making a cartridge with his lamp in his hat, he died two days later.


Dietz, John (16). 12/14/1881. Prospect Colliery, Plains Twp. Along with another young man, John Turner (age 19), he had sent to bring out two loaded mine cars which had been left in a gangway overnight. One of them was a runner and the other was a driver. At that time, an explosion of gas took place, sending fear and panic throughout the mine. Evan Richards, a young man who knew where the boys were gone, went to look for them. He found them lying in the gangway, seriously burned. He carried one on his shoulder and helped the other one walk beside him, trying to keep him from being overcome by the gases which had resulted from the explosion. With the help of some other workers, the two injured boys were rushed outside. However, both died from their injuries shortly after being taken outside the mine.
Arnold, William (16). Driver. 1/1882. Sloan shaft, Lack. Twp. Along with Hiram Watkings, killed when for some reason the boys were at a miner’s box and the powder there exploded.


Colleran, James (16). Driver. 5/21/1883. Mineral Springs, Plains Twp.? He and Gomer Evans went into an abandoned chamber to get water for a miner. They came in contact with a body of gas and it exploded (presumably due to their lamps).

Evans, Gomer (13). Door boy. 5/21/1883. Mineral Springs, Plains Twp.? Along with James Colleran, killed by a gas explosion.


Brady, Patrick (16). 4/29/1889. Lackawanna Coal Co., Blakely. He was hit by coal from a blast and his skull was fractured.

Jameson, James W. (17). Driver. 3/3/1890. Shaft No. 3, South Wilkes-Barre. Killed along with seven other men and boys. Jameson accidentally ignited some gas 400 feet inward from the shaft. The mine foreman soon reached the place of the explosion and sent Jameson to call out six workers who would be in danger from the fire. The.

Ross, John (15). Slate Picker. 3/15/1890. Simpson breaker. He and two other boys were in the boiler room at noon sitting down when three boilers exploded.

Thomas, John (13). Slate Picker. 3/15/1890. Simpson breaker. He and two other boys were in the boiler room at noon sitting down when three boilers exploded.

Whithrington, Richard (15). Slate Picker. 3/15/1890. Simpson breaker. He and two other boys were in the boiler room at noon sitting down when three boilers exploded.

Dand, James S. (18). Driver. 9/4/1891. Shaft No. 9, Nanticoke. He accidentally ignited some gas with his lamp.


Parich, Michael (17). Blacksmith’s helper. 12/14/1891. Milnesville Stripping. Killed along with two other men by an explosion of dynamite.

Kyora, John Jr. (18). Laborer. 3/9/1892. Alden. A miner accidentally ignited some gas while blasting. This caused a shockwave (“forceful concussion of the air”) which hit some workmen 250 feet away, severely injuring or killing them.

Carver, Fred (15). Door tender. 10/4/1892. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Fatally burned by an explosion of gas.

Deblog, Edward (17). Driver. 5/4/1893. No. 1 colliery, Nesquehoning, Carbon Cty. By an explosion of gas in an old traveling way, the use of which had been forbidden.

Bennock, Frank (15). Door Tender. 6/22/1893. Shaft No. 1, Nanticoke. Killed, along with four other men, by an explosion of gas.

Hughes, Robert (17). Driver. 7/12/1893. Pettebone shaft, (Kingston?). Killed by an explosion of gas.

Brennan, Martin Jr. (16). Driver. 7/24/1893. Kingston Coal Company Shaft No. 4, Edwardsville. Fatally burned, along with three other men, by an explosion of gas. The workers had been putting up timbers in an area of gangway where a roof fall had
occurred. They had known that there was gas in the shaft near the roof and they were using safety lamps. Unfortunately, while two of them were unloading a car full of timber, their lamps set off an explosion. They had stepped on the bumper of the timber car and in so doing their oil lamps came in contact with the gas.


Burke, Thomas (17). Door tender. 4/1/1896. Shaft No. 9, Sugar Notch. A miner had left his oil can in an old heading (corridor in the mines). He went to get it, carrying a naked lamp (i.e., without the cover sometimes used to protect against gas explosion). The lamp ignited a body of gas. As a result, two men – seventeen-year-old Tom Burke, a driver, who had four younger siblings; and Henry Bennett, a twenty-one-year-old door tender from Tamaqua – were instantly killed. Two other men were severely burned but survived. The fire boss had visited the area not long before the explosion and had found that there was only a trace of gas there; there was also an air fan at the head of the slope which should have kept the area free from gas. However, some miners claimed that the fan had not been running at the proper speed, which allowed gas to accumulate.

Bambrick, William (15). Door tender. 8/13/1896. Reynolds No. 6, Plymouth. He was burned by an accidental explosion of nearly a full keg of powder on August 11.

Burke, William (17). Driver. 9/7/1896. Dickson shaft, (Dickson City / Scranton?). By an explosion of gas.

McHale, Joseph (15). 4/23/1897. Barnum No. 3 shaft, Pittston/Duryea/Marcy Twp. He spilled oil on his clothing and took his lamp to dry them and took fire.

Williams, Rees (15). Door tender. 5/12/1898. Shaft No. 2, Nanticoke. Fatally burned, clothing took fire from his lamp.

Jones, George (18). Driver. 2/13/1899. No. 5, South Wilkes-Barre. On February 3, 1899 his clothing took fire from his lamp; he carried a bottle full of coal oil in his pocket; the bottle broke and the oil saturated his clothes and they took fire.


Metcalf, Roy (16). Driver. 9/11/1901. Stevens slope, (Exeter?). The mule he was driving ran away into an old abandoned working; he with another boy followed after the mule, ignited gas with their open lights.

Young, Gilbert Jr. (16). Driver. 11/2/1901. Parrish colliery, Plymouth. Burned by an explosion of gas that was set off in an abandoned chamber. He had been working together with miner Michael Terofski, age 34, and laborer Walter Wascavage, 24. It was surmised that Wascavage’s lamp set off a body of gas. Terofski was taken to the City Hospital, Wascavage to Mercy Hospital, and Young to his home. The accident took place on 10/31; Young died on 11/2 and Wascavage on 11/3.

Crocker, Richard (16). Door boy. 5/6/1902. Taylor shaft. He tried to use the flame on his lamp to dry some oil on his clothes. The flames spread, burning him severely. He died two days later.


Derhammer, Charles (16). Door tender. 1/30/1907. “Harry E.” Coal co., (Luzerne Cty.?). His mining lamp set his clothes on fire.
Zonbiozki, Frank (16). Door boy. 10/18/1907. Marvine. His mining lamp set his clothes on fire.
Geafski, Joseph (18). Laborer. 1/3/1908. By a blast while tamping a hole with his miner.
Golehewski, Joseph (16). Door boy. 11/17/1909. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Burned by an explosion of gas caused by his lamp while he was taking down a canvas door.
Molenda, Bolak (18). Laborer. 12/23/1909. Greenwood, Lackawanna Twp. He was working with his father and somehow accidentally ignited the powder and he was burned.
Gal, Mike (16). Driver. 4/7/1911. Pancoast, Dickson City. Suffocated by a mine fire along with two other boys and 70 men.
Lucas, William H. (18). Runner. 4/7/1911. Pancoast, Dickson City. Suffocated by a mine fire along with two other boys and 70 men.
Ostrosky, Stefan (16). Driver. 4/7/1911. Pancoast, Dickson City. Suffocated by a mine fire along with two other boys and 70 men.
Malast, John (17). Door boy. 5/10/1911. No. 5, Plymouth. There were eleven men working on the night shift, a strike the day before idled over seventy men. Three men were driving a new tunnel near the Larksville Mountain manway. A driver, George Fender, age 19; and his helper, John Malast, age 17, had left the tunnel with a load of rock. A few minutes later the rockmen heard an explosion. Raymond Blank, who lived near the manway, saw a fire from the outside. He told his neighbor Martin Goodman, who went to warn the mine officials. Blank then bravely went into the mine to warn the workers there. Unfortunately, it was no use; the mine was full of fire, smoke, and poisonous gas. Fender and Malast, as well as some other men (Jacob Kurilla, William Angelovic and John Russellski) died of suffocation. A coroner’s jury later concluded that the fire was started on purpose by an unknown person using a bomb.
Wekart, Peter (18). Loader. 7/17/1912. South Wilkes-Barre colliery. Eighteen-year-old Peter Wekart was in this country two months when he got a job laboring in the mines. He was living with his uncle Stanley Wekart on McGinnis Street, Plymouth. Another relative, Carl Leskowski, lived nearby. In the afternoon of July 17, 1912, Peter’s second day at work, a devastating explosion occurred, caused by gas which was accidentally ignited by a miner’s shot. Both Wekarts were killed, as well as another man, Joseph Toth; and Frank Wrobel was fatally injured. Leskowski was among those who were injured but survived.


Leshinsky, Bruno (18). Driver. 2/17/1915. Prospect colliery. Thirteen men were killed by a gas explosion in this accident.

Michalo, Mike (18). Driver. 2/17/1915. Prospect colliery. Thirteen men were killed by a gas explosion in this accident.

Sevenak, John (18). Runner. 2/17/1915. Prospect colliery. Thirteen men were killed by a gas explosion in this accident.

Tarutis, John (18). Door boy. 2/17/1915. Prospect colliery. Thirteen men were killed by a gas explosion in this accident.

Litwok, John (16). Door tender. 8/8/1916. Edwardsville. A resident of Pulaski Street, Kingston, he was among seven men killed by an explosion of gas on a gangway in #26 Slope, #1 West Hillman Vein, Woodward Colliery. This vein had been known to have a problem with gas, and precautions were being taken, but they were apparently not enough. Three other men were horribly burned and were rushed to the Nesbitt Hospital, but died within a few hours. The force of the explosion had been enough to break down 91/2-inch concrete walls, tear rails from their tracks, and scatter mine cars. Litwok had been blown ninety feet up the slope and slammed into a pillar. When his body was found he still had the handle of the door gripped tight in his hand. The explosion was puzzling because the men had been using safety lamps, but apparently there was so much gas that the flame in someone’s safety lamp became elongated, eventually shattering the glass and allowing it to come into full contact with the gas outside.


Karloski, Frank (17). Door boy. 7/20/1918. Frank Karloski and Bill Ulefski, both age 17, and close neighbors on Slocum Street, Swoyersville, worked at the “Harry E” Colliery. Frank was a door boy and Bill was a driver. On the afternoon of July 20, 1918, the two boyhood friends were running low on carbide. They left their place of work and went down the slope to a lower lift to get carbide for their lamps. The chamber into which they entered had been roped off, although a short time before the fire boss had been through and said that it was free of gas. The boys had been in the condemned chamber only a short time when there was an explosion. Miners working nearby rushed to the chamber and found the burned body of Bill, who was killed instantly. Frank was alive but died a short time later. There was a keg of explosive black powder in the chamber which they may accidentally have set off.

Ulefski, Bill (17). Driver. 7/20/1918. “Harry E.” Coal co., (Luzerne Cty.?). See above.


Franklin, George (17). Door boy. 4/29/1919. Pettebone, (Kingston?). Three men killed by an explosion of gas in cross section between airway and gangway.


Maruski, Andrew (18). Driver. 6/5/1919. Baltimore colliery No. 5. Among 92 men killed by explosion of powder.

Oliver, Edward (17). Driver. 6/5/1919. Baltimore colliery No. 5. Among 92 men killed by explosion of powder.


Martin Cra[gh]an

Not long after the Avondale Disaster in Plymouth, a similar fire broke out at the West Pittston breaker, operated by Blain, Brown and Company. The fire originated from a faulty fan on May 27, 1871. Within a short time the whole structure was on fire. The engineer sent a warning signal to the weighmaster and the footman, who were then supposed to warn the other men working in the mines, but according to them they didn’t know that they were supposed to do this. There were forty-eight men in the mine. Men were working in fourteen chambers; there were also four drivers, a footman, two runner, two boys tending doors one trackman and one man at the fan, in addition to four mules and two horses. Twenty-eight men escaped, but twenty men were suffocated to death by the smoke from the fire. There had been no second opening for them to be able to escape.

At the inquest on May 30, 1871, the mine superintendent was asked the ages of the boys, and he said that he didn’t know but that he had thought that the two boys who were killed were older than twelve. He hadn’t known that Crahan was only eleven, and he said he didn’t believe it. He admitted that he ought to have known the ages, but said that he had judged by their appearances. The age of Martin Crahan at the time of his death was eleven years and five months. At that time he had already been working inside the mine for two years.

Frank Bennock, 14

It was 5 p.m., June 22, 1893, when the large party of men stepped on the mine cage at Shaft #1, Susquehanna Coal Company, Nanticoke. A large crowd watched as the rescue party disappeared into the earth. It took less than fifteen minutes for the rescue party to organize and descend the shaft. About three quarters of a mile from the bottom of the shaft they found mine props blown out, mixed with wrecked mine cars and twisted rails — the aftermath of a devastating gas explosion. Seven men were working in this area and just about ready to quit when the explosion occurred. An important door had been left open too long and gas had accumulated. A crowd of more than a thousand watched as the litters containing four men were carried off the mine cage. The men were burned and charred almost beyond recognition, three of them dead and the fourth somehow still alive. He was carried to his home in Nanticoke and died a short time later. Two men were brought out alive and survived, one so severely burned that the scars were permanent. The body of the seventh man was later recovered under tons of debris. The two men who survived, John Weisgabel, a laborer, and nineteen year old John Gwynn, the driver, were
taken to their homes in Nanticoke and Bonetown, a short distance away. The men killed were John T. Smith, age 36, a miner; Abe Walker, 30, a miner; Frank Wolland, 24, a laborer; and John Makinosia, 32, a laborer. Frank Bennock, the door boy, was critically burned, but survived for hours until taken home. He was fourteen years old.

John Tershinski, 17

The timbering at the #3 slope had caught fire, which quickly became a serious blaze. The heavily timbered area where it started had been in place for many years and the timbers were very dry. At 2:30 in the afternoon the alarm was set off, signaling every man in the mine to get out quick. Several men barely made it out, among them John Povowski. He was found unconscious by his brother Joe. Joe and his friends Mike Skuodzi, Harvey Hontz and Jesse Rosencrats carried him out. The men had to run through the flames and blinding smoke that filled the tunnels. The fire had started near the foot of the slope and three hundred men who were working ahead of the fire had escaped, but seven men working behind the blazing timbers were trapped. Mine officials and the rescue team were immediately on the scene, hundreds of Wanamie residents rushed to the mouth of the slope.

At midnight colliery officials announced that the blaze was still fierce and every possible effort was being made to save the trapped men, but that there was little hope. The trapped men included John Tershinski, age 17, a patcher, from Glen Lyon; George Vandermark, 20, driver, from Wanamie; William Wosdilla, 25, laborer, from Wanamie; Joseph Strensaki, 29, miner, from Glen Lyon; Victor Slowtovash, 35, miner, from Wanamie; William Karpovage, 23, miner, from Wanamie; Martin Savage, 39, miner, from Wanamie.

By fighting the fire all night, the rescue party was able to reach six of the seven men, but they were dead. One body was found first, and then three others were found side by side. The bodies of George Vandermark and John Tershinski, were found together a few feet away; it looked as though Vandermark had been carrying his friend on his back when death came. The body of William Wosdilla was not found. After the bodies were removed the search for Wosdilla continued until it was decided to erect walls at different places to prevent the fire from spreading. The walls were built of timber and covered with cement with the intention of shutting off the air which would cause the fire to die out.

It was the opinion of mine officials that William Wosdilla could not have survived the smoke and died from suffocation. However, when the mine openings were sealed up so was the fate of Wosdilla. On Tuesday, December 17, 1908, almost two years later, the skeleton of William Wosdilla was found beneath a pile of burnt-out debris. It was concluded, but not with certainty, that he had been suffocated by the smoke and his body had been partly burned up by the fire.

The Williams and Brislin Families

For several days a section of the Warrior Run Mine had been squeezing, surface cracks began to appear. The Music Hill and the Plumbltown sections of the small
mining town did not escape the mine subsidence. Early on the morning of August 1, 1906, gas was detected in a section of the mine directly underneath Warrior Run. A caution sign was set up. The gas spread and at 10:30 a.m. all men were ordered out of the mine. All but John Shoemaker, he was a pump runner and remained at the pumps. Mine foreman Williams checked on John at 1:30 p.m., and everything was ok. Another check at 3:30 p.m., found that John was not at the pumps. An immediate search began and the body of the fifty-six year old pump runner was found, killed from an explosion of gas.

The mine squeezing continued, followed by a series of gas explosions and roof falls; surface cracks throughout the town began to widen. Men were stationed along the tracks of the Lehigh Valley Railroad to watch for any signs of caving. Trains were run slowly and with great care through Warrior Run. Terrified residents were watching the settling of the surface as the mine cracks still continued to widen. Yet unnoticed by anyone, the deadly mine gas was creeping into some of the cellars and basements. The Williams residence along with others rested above the turbulent part of the mine. Mrs. Williams had been ill for nearly a year, since her ten year old son and eight year old daughter died of scarlet fever. Her daughter Margaret had taken over the chores of the house during this time. Shortly after 6 p.m., William, Jr., came into the house to change his shoes, having been out with most of the Warrior Run residents watching the surface settlement. He went to the basement where his sister Margaret was preparing the evening meal. He opened the door to the adjoining cellar, and as there was little light, he decided to light a match to find his shoes. When he did a terrific explosion occurred igniting his clothing into a sheet of flames. He rushed from the house and in an effort to extinguish the flames he fell to the ground. Margaret fled up the stairway to the upper floor in an attempt to escape. Mr. and Mrs. Williams, who were upstairs, rushed from the house which was immediately engulfed in flames. Mrs. Williams went into a state of shock. The burning house on the hillside could be seen all through Warrior Run. Everyone rushed to the scene including the fire department. Several attempts were made to enter the burning building to rescue Margaret, but each attempt was turned back by the fierce flame. The water main had been broken by the mine subsidence during the day and only a small stream of water was available to fight the fire.

John Williams, an older brother who lived in another part of town arrived, and could not be restrained from an effort to rescue his sister. He entered the flaming building and made his way to the first floor when another explosion occurred which threw him from the building. The father also made an attempt to enter the building but was pushed back by successive explosions. After the mine gas had been exhausted and the flame extinguished only the shell of the building remained. The charred body of sixteen-year-old Margaret was found at the head of the stairs. It is believed that she stumbled and fell as she was attempting to escape and was immediately overcome by the flames. The burns and injuries that were received by the family were not fatal, other homes in Warrior Run were badly damaged and injuries sustained. A neighbor, Bridget Brislin, who was visiting the family, left only seconds before the fire started, she also in time to come would be involved in a Warrior Run tragedy.
Bridget Brislin narrowly escaped a tragic death on August 1, 1906, when she left the Williams’ residence moments before the fatal fire. Bridget’s life was filled with many family afflictions. A brother Dennis was caught under a fall of rock in a Colorado mine in 1888, his back was broken and he returned to Warrior Run an invalid for life. John, another brother, was married and shortly after the birth of his second child, his wife died. On April 24, 1896, John was killed at the Warrior Run Colliery by a fall of coal. Bridget and her brother James undertook the task of taking care of their invalid brother and John’s two small children. On October 17, 1898, James, the sole supporter of the family, was killed at the Warrior Run Colliery by a rush of coal from the face of the breast. Bridget now became mother to the two children and provider for her invalid brother – a family responsibility that she dedicated herself to. On February 21, 1910, shortly after the noon hour, Bridget went down into the basement kitchen to prepare lunch for her brother, something that she had been doing daily for many years. In back of the basement kitchen was the cellar, a storage area for food and other items. Behind the cellar door, not known to her, was a body of lethal mine gas that had creeped up from the mine below. She opened the door to the cellar to obtain some food items and in so doing the gas came in contact with the open flame of the kitchen coal stove and an explosion occurred. Bridget’s hands were severely burned and her clothing set on fire. She rushed outside and neighbors extinguished the flames from her burning clothing. The gas explosion had set fire to the house and the flames spread quickly. Several men removed Dennis to safety just in time to save him from a horrid death. The Warrior Run fire department immediately responded but the flames engulfed the dwelling with such speed that nothing was left of the home when they arrived. Bridget Brislin died that evening.
Chapter 3

Deaths Caused by Breaker Accidents

Although few remain in Northeastern Pennsylvania today, the huge coal-sorting buildings called breakers are a famous part of coal country lore. They involved a massive conveyor belt system by which coal was separated from slate and other unwanted rock matter, and was filtered and sorted into different sizes for use in home heating, in industrial settings, and as train fuel. Young boys and old men, too weak to work in the mines themselves, sat all day in the breakers removing slate from the streams of coal by hand. Their hands quickly became bloody because they were not allowed to encumber their work by wearing gloves. A “breaker boss” with a stick stood nearby to enforce discipline, both for the sake of safety and of productivity.

This chapter considers boys who died in breaker accidents, usually either by being caught and mangled in the breaker machinery, or by falling into the stream of coal and rock and being smothered or crushed. The causes of these accidents were often a combination of the inherently unsafe conditions of the breakers, and the difficulty which young children, many of which were immigrants with poor English skills, faced in understanding rules and safety procedures. On page xi of his 1905 annual report, state mine safety inspector Edward Roderick explained, “If the boys tending doors in the mines would stay at their work they would be practically safe from danger, but when there is a slackness in the work they frequently run away from the doors, and when they hear the cars coming, in their haste to return to their post of duty, they are apt to fall and be run over, or they are so late in opening the doors that the cars come upon them before they get out of the way, and the result is often injury or loss of life to themselves or the drivers. The same observation will apply to boys in the breakers. If they could be compelled to remain at their working places when the breaker is running empty, instead of going about, they would incur very little danger. The fact is, however, that the minute the chutes are cleared the boys run loose, climb on top and over the safety guards, and frequently fall on or into the machinery, and are injured or killed. They also run and jump on moving cars, and in many other ways invite disaster. The management should impose the penalty of discharge upon a boy who leaves his work in the breaker or in the mine.” Anti-child-labor crusader Owen Lovejoy brutally parodied this recommendation by saying, “In other words,
the breaker boy is surrounded with so many dangers that for his own protection he
must be denied even a moment of respite in his eight- or nine-hour day bent over
the coal chutes. The report recognizes that play is natural to a child of this age, but
proposes its suppression by the immediate discharge of any boy who leaves his task
for a moment.”

Rodgers, Robert (10). Slate Picker. 11/10/1871. Nottingham shaft, Plymouth. Fell
into pony rollers.


Dodson, William (14). Slate Picker. 5/1/1872. Baltimore colliery No. 1. Fell into the
pea coal chute at the breaker and was suffocated.


Cannon, Francis (13). 3/13/1873. Yorktown colliery. Crushed by screen in breaker, he
lived ten days.

Young, Jacob (13). 3/26/1873. No. 1 breaker, Nanticoke. Suffocated in a dirt chute.

McTigue, M. (10). 6/5/1873. Hartford breaker, Ashley, Luzerne Cty.? . Fell into the
machinery.


machinery.

Gallagher, Neil (18). 10/7/1874. Coleraine colliery. Struck by fly wheel of breaker
engine.

McTagen, Thomas (12). 12/10/1874. Summit Hill. Fell into dirt chute in breaker.

Watkins, Thomas (12). 12/19/1874. Rackett’s Brook breaker, Lackawanna Cty. Caught
in the machinery.

screens while trying to rescue Henry Walsh.

screens.

breaker while attempting to start the dirt in one above him.

Richards, William (12). 12/21/1875. Woodside colliery. Slipped and fell into the
breaker rollers.

in the mine.

Sanders, Lewis (12). 4/15/1876. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). By the hoisting
carriage.

breaker machinery.


Davies, Francis (13). 10/4/1876. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. Crushed
between pony screen and timber encasing it.


Garrett, Thomas (11). 11/22/1878. Spring Brook colliery, (near Avoca?). Fell into pony rollers. The accident report noted that the pony rollers had been uncovered by order of the breaker boss, which was against the law and the strict orders of the boss's superiors.

Howells, William (11). Slate picker. 12/9/1878. Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. Howells' job was to set behind the main screen and tend a lever which regulated the flow of coals to a screen below. Many other boys worked in the same room. When the signal was given for quitting time, William was not missed by the breaker boss or the other boys. His parents waited for their son to come home, and when he didn't show up, they went to the breaker and a search was made. His body was found stretched on the floor near the side of the hoisting shaft. He had propped up the gate which he was attending and gone off to the hoisting shaft, possibly out of curiosity to see the men being hoisted on the carriage. Apparently he had been struck on the head by the carriage and killed.


Reese, David (12). Slate picker. 6/29/1880. Spring Brook No. 6, (near Avoca?). Suffocated in the pea coal pocket at the breaker.

Powell, David (13). 7/13/1880. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. Crushed by a large screen on which he had fallen.


White, Charles E. (7). Slate picker. 9/1/1880. Elk Hill colliery, Dickson City. He was crushed to death in the cog wheel of a pony screen in the breaker.

Lysle, Stewart (14). 12/22/1880. Poole's colliery. Both legs crushed in the cog wheel of breaker engine in accident on December 16.


Charles, John C. (8). Slate picker. 12/12/1881. Gaylord breaker, Plymouth. He slipped on the main screen by sliding down the chute and was crushed to death.

Evans, Henry (13). Slate picker. 3/6/1882. Baltimore colliery Tunnel breaker. Found in dirt chute in breaker, dead, supposed to have been killed while playing with the machinery.

Kreidler, Elmer (14). Slate picker. 4/12/1882. Hartford breaker, Ashley, Luzerne Cty.? By the machinery in breaker.


James, Henry (10). Slate picker. 6/27/1883. No. 1, Red Ash Coal Co., (Wilkes-Barre Twp or East Nanticoke?). Caught by revolving screen in breaker.


Bierly, Frank (15). Slate picker. 1/29/1884. Eckley No. 5. By the fly wheel bursting.

Mishko, Michael (18). Laborer. 2/6/1884. No. 5 breaker, Nanticoke. Drawn into coal chute and suffocated.

Howorth, John (15). Slate picker. 2/22/1884. Eckley No. 2. Found dead at the mouth of a screen. He had wandered into a dangerous place.


Pola, Moscow (13). Slate picker. 8/2/1884. Kingston No. 2. Crushed in cog wheels.


McCool, John (12). Slate picker. 8/25/1884. Lucas breaker, Scranton. Hit by hoisting carriage in shaft tower. His head was almost taken off.


Marinofsky, John (17). Slate picker. 10/13/1884. No. 3 breaker, Nanticoke. Suffocated by being drawn into the dirt chute.


Sheppard, John (13). Slate picker. 11/18/1886. No. 8 breaker, Hughestown. The day's work was over and the boys were passing out of the breaker to go home, when the boy in advance of Sheppard stepped on the box that covers the cog wheels of a counter screen, tipping it up out of place. When Sheppard stepped on it his foot slipp.


Harlow, John (16). 3/21/1887. Forest City, Clifford Twp. His clothes got caught in the breaker machinery while oiling it.

Leppert, Lewis (10). Slate picker. 3/23/1887. Elmwood colliery. Fell on large screen while it was revolving.

Hart, Andrew (13). Slate picker. 4/16/1887. Consolidated co.. Caught in cog wheels of elevator.

Jones, John (14). Slate picker. 6/20/1887. breaker No. 2. Caught in screens and crushed.

Looine, Mike (17). Jig tender. 3/27/1888. Derringer colliery. Struck on head by a piece of chute slate that fell from top of breaker.


Thomas, Thomas (12). Slate picker. 2/6/1890. breaker No. 2, Plymouth Twp. While he was playing with a revolving shaft, his clothing was caught.


Llewellyn, David (15). Slate picker. 7/14/1890. Fell into breaker rolls.

Myers, William (15). Jig tender. 12/16/1890. Derringer colliery. Caught by his clothes or hands between belt and wheel and whirled around shafting.

Russell, Lewis (14). Slate picker. 1/14/1891. breaker No. 6, Glen Lyon. Caught in the breaker machinery and instantly killed.

Gutchaw, Michael (14). Slate picker. 1/19/1891. Midvale breaker. Getting his coat caught in the cog wheel.

Gaffney, Patrick (14). Conveyor tender. 4/21/1891. Highland No. 2 breaker. Falling into conveyor and crushed to death.

Hart, John (14). 5/6/1891. Dickson breaker, (Dickson City / Scranton?). Clothes caught on shaft in breaker.
McMenamin, Peter (17). Roll feeder. 8/6/1891. Drifton breaker. By slipping into the rolls.


Daley, John (17). Laborer. 9/13/1892. Gaylord breaker, Plymouth. Caught while playing with the machinery in the breaker.

Joint, William (13). Slate picker. 10/22/1892. National breaker, Scranton. He fell into the coal chutes in breaker; ten minutes after which he came out dead.


Houser, Robert (14). Slate picker. 11/28/1892. Hazleton. Smothered in pea coal pocket by being drawn down into coal, while playing on top of it.

Poloney, George (13). Slate picker. 1/1/1893. breaker No. 6, Glen Lyon. Caught in the rolls.

Yamblusky, Frank (13). Slate picker. 3/22/1893. Jeddo No. 3, near Hazleton. Leg crushed in cog wheels of monkey rolls, the cover to which he removed in some way; died at hospital the next day. Accident occurred on March 21.

Lalley, James (15). Slate picker. 7/13/1893. Mt. Lookout breaker. Caught on screen. Lalley had been sent to clean the culm out of a chute that was in back of the screens. He stood on top of the screen box with an iron scraper and it got caught in the screens, instantly pulling him in. A laborer who was working under the screens heard ghastly screams from above. A moment later two legs fell in front of him, one torn off at the knee and the other above. His legs were cut off and fell in front of a laborer who was working below. The engineer was immediately notified and all breaker machinery stopped. It took a while to extricate the boy, who was missing both legs and severely cut all over the part of his body that remained. He was rushed to the hospital where he died a short time later. Until the time of his death the thirteen-year-old never lost consciousness.

Furey, John (14). Slate picker. 8/22/1893. Screen building Hanto, Carbon Cty. Leg badly crushed by falling into a screen while in motion; died of hemorrhage next day. Accident on August 21, 1893.

McLaughlin, Edward (13). Slate picker. 11/22/1893. Stockton colliery. Fell into scrapers of stove coal jig while chasing another boy about.


Taballaugh, John (16). Slate picker. 10/1/1895. Baltimore colliery breaker No. 3. By climbing over a fence and falling upon a screen while playing tag.


Evans, Morgan (17). Oiler. 9/14/1896. Woodward. Caught by revolving shaft.


Kurch, Cosema (17). Jig runner. **8/6/1898.** Lattimer breaker. He was caught by a jig line and was whirled around.

Sheridan, John (16). Slate picker. **10/14/1898.** Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). Fell from the roof of the breaker while cleaning windows.

Page, Vernie (14). Slate picker. **10/28/1898.** Ontario breaker. He and another boy were playing with a rope, near the exposed end of a revolving shaft. The rope switched around the shaft, pulling him with it, which instantly killed him.


Graham, Joseph (14). Slate picker. **10/13/1899.** Cayuga colliery, Providence / Scranton. With a number of other boys he was in the pea coal pockets during dinner time; the loaders started to draw coal from the pockets into railroad cars, and he was drawn in, he was dead when found.


McCall, Charles (13). Slate picker. **11/8/1900.** Babylon breaker, Duryea. He lifted cover off pony rollers to shovel dirt in and he fell in.

Jones, Daniel (16). Breaker boy. **1/7/1901.** Capouse breaker, Hyde Park / Scranton. His body was found in the conveyor line.

Sliker, James (14). Slate picker. **1/17/1901.** Maxwell breaker. Slid down chute and passed through a pair of rolls.


McDermott, Edward (15). Rusher boy. **11/6/1901.** Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). While going toward the chute conveying coal to a pair of small crushers, he fell on the pinion wheels.

August, George (18). Repairman. **11/21/1901.** Hazleton No. 40B. Falling from egg coal slate conveyor line to the tracks under the breaker.

Parker, Gilbert (15). Screen tender. **12/6/1901.** Exeter washery. Clothing caught on set screw of shaft and he was wound around it.


Coulter, Andrew (15). Slate picker. **12/30/1901.** Conyngham breaker. Caught in the conveyors and crushed to death.

Lucashie, Thomas (15). Slate picker. **1/9/1902.** Heidelberg breaker, near Pittston / Hughestown / Avoca. Fell of roof of breaker where he was playing.

Frederick, William (15). Slate picker. 3/17/1902. Clear Spring breaker, West Pittston. Left work and climbed to top of breaker where a line of elevators was being constructed and his clothing caught on line shafting.

Blockus, Joseph (13). Slate picker. 3/18/1902. breaker No. 5, Nanticoke. Dragged by the conveyors through the sprocket wheel.


Cavallo, Michael (15). Laborer. 11/4/1902. Sterrick Creek. While the covers on rolls was temporarily removed by some person unknown, he in some manner fell into them and was killed.

Biernich, Charles (14). Slate picker. 11/26/1902. Mountain Lake, Lackawanna Cty. Fell into the rolls and was instantly killed.

Hawk, Fred (13). Slate picker. 12/9/1902. “Harry E.” Coal co. breaker, (Luzerne Cty.?). Smothered in coal chute in breaker.


Hembury, Merl (14). Slate picker. 8/13/1903. Lykens, Sullivan Cty.. Draged into conveyors.


Boland, Francis (14). Slate picker. 9/1/1904. Prospect breaker. Caught in conveyor line.


Saunders, William (15). Gate tender. 12/13/1904. Pettebone, (Kingston?). Fell from breaker to ground.

Chelus, Michael (16). Slate picker. 1/3/1905. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Attempted to step over shaft and became fastened in sprocket wheel.


Heffers, Frank (15). Hopper tender. 2/14/1905. Maltby colliery. Fell into rollers in the breaker.


Koschowack, Barney (16). Oiler. 4/26/1905. By clothes being caught on a revolving shaft in the breaker.

Foggarty, Joe (14). Slate picker. 5/5/1905. Green Ridge colliery, Dunmore. Along with George Leonard, killed while playing in the breaker; both ran into the coal pockets and were smothered there.

Leonard, George (15). Slate picker. 5/5/1905. Green Ridge colliery, Dunmore. Along with Joe Foggarty, killed while playing in the breaker; both ran into the coal pockets and were smothered there.

Fields, Raymond (15). Bartender. 5/6/1905. Lackawanna. He was found dead in the jig pit.


Mario, Paverto (15). Slate picker. 8/12/1905. Riverside, (near Wyoming / Plains Twp.?). By machinery.


Toothill, Howard (18). Jig boy. 2/19/1906. Lackawanna. Instantly killed in the breaker.


Scalzo, Salvator (15). Slate picker. 2/8/1907. Finn. Fell into a small pair of cogs in breaker.


Williams, Walter (17). Jig runner. 5/21/1907. Beaver Brook, (near Hazleton?). By machinery in breaker.


Merrigan, Delbert (16). Slate picker. 11/7/1907. Ontario colliery. He was helping his father fix the angle bar near the foot of the conveyor line while it was not moving. His father had warned him that the conveyor could start at any time and he should keep away from it, but he forgot and his foot was caught. He was dr.


Rentko, Andrew (18). Oiler. 2/13/1908. Hazle Brook co.. Fell in breaker.


Sedlisky, Benjamin (15). Slate picker. 3/24/1908. Consolidated co.. Was wound around shaft in breaker.


Novak, Wadik (14). Slate picker. 11/16/1908. Drawn into the elevator line.

Ryan, Frank (17). Slate picker. 11/25/1908. Pettebone, (Kingston?). Seventeen year old Frank Ryan and his younger brother Morris worked together at the Pettebone Breaker. On November 25, 1908, the brothers were picking slate when a picker belt became loose and Frank tried to adjust it. Somhow his clothes got caught in the machinery and he was pulled around the iron shaft. Frank died instantly and it was difficult to remove his body from the machinery. Horrified young Morris was taken home in a state of shock. Another boy, little Edward Hughes, who was picking slate only a few feet away, witnessed the accident and he fainted from shock. The superintendent, a man named Owens, carried Hughes downstairs and worked on him for over a half hour, trying to revive him to consciousness. It was only after the
company physician arrived that he showed any signs of consciousness. It was believed that for a short time that Hughes’ heart had stopped beating.

Schwieder, Charles (16). Chute tender. 11/26/1908. Austin co., Lackawanna Cty. Fell into chute and passed under the covering into the rolls.


Mardon, George M. (16). Slate picker. 4/6/1911. Olyphant. Fell over high chute in breaker. He had been climbing and slipped on the sheet iron.


Hans, Charles (18). Electrician. 11/22/1911. He got on top of the covering over the rolls to repair a lamp and slipped off into the chute.


Gentile, Philip (17). Slate picker. 3/2/1912. Coal Brook breaker, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Skull fractured in an unknown manner.


Robbins, Frank (17). Chuteman. 6/19/1912. West End, (Mocanaqua?). By scraper line.

Gentless, Leo (18). Shaker tender. 8/19/1912. Jeddo No. 5, near Hazleton. Whirled around shaft on breaker.


Kane, Peter (17). Laborer. 1/20/1913. Powderly. By a piece of iron thrown from the third floor of the breaker striking him on the head.


Tomaino, Pasco (14). Slate picker. 1/21/1915. Gravity slope. Fell against sprocket wheel of small conveyor and was dragged along with the conveyors.

Komanicky, Stephen (15). Slate picker. 9/7/1915. Olyphant. It was quitting time and he was taking a shortcut by going under the railing of the scraper line, when he was caught by the moving scrapers.

Shima, Peter (17). Bell boy. 2/14/1916. Auchincloss. Fell on pulley while running up slope.

Kochta, Andrew (18). Slate picker. 3/3/1916. Jermyn, near Scranton. While watching fuel conveyor line, he was caught in it.


Addley, Gerald (17). Laborer. 6/10/1916. Powderly. Found dead in culm chute in breaker, where he had fallen.


Huffsonner, Henry (16). Laborer. 3/28/1917. Gravity slope. He was caught in a jig drive shaft on the second floor of the breaker and whirled around, his body striking on a brace rod.


Bolonis, Peter (16). Slate picker. 9/14/1918. “Harry E.” Coal co., (Luzerne Cty.?). Crushed to death when he fell in pea coal rollers.

Murray, John (16). Slate picker. 10/2/1918. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Caught in breaker machinery.


John Sweeney, 14

The Patrick Sweeney family lived on Welsh Hill, Larksville. Patrick was a miner and his fourteen year old son John, was a slate picker, both worked at the #3 Colliery of the D. & H Canal Company. On the morning of June 29, 1906, Mrs. Sweeney had both dinner pails neatly packed for a ten hour work day, a long day for a fourteen year old. As she did every morning, she kissed her husband and tenderly hugged and kissed John, before they left for work. As fate would have it, before this day was over a crepe would hang on the door at the Sweeney home. At 7:45 a.m., the Black Moriah, pulled by two mules, left the #3 Colliery on its way to the Sweeneys’. On this morning it was carrying the body of John Sweeney, who while playing in the breaker before the whistle blew to start work, grabbed an electric wire. He was immediately killed, his clothes were completely burned off and body horribly burned by the electricity.

Theodore Tucker, 14

Fourteen-year-old Theodore Tucker lived on Ash Street, Georgetown, he was a breaker boy for the Red Ash Coal Company. At 5 p.m., on the afternoon of February 12, 1903, he was pulled into the coal conveyors and rushed to the hospital. Little Theodore died at 11 p.m; never again would he feel the gentle stroke of his mother’s hand. He had a fracture of the right thigh, both arms broken, a fractured jaw, his ribs on the right side were all broken and severe face and body lacerations. People up in Georgetown used to say that the little breaker boy had every bone in his body broken.

John Murray

On January 5, 1878, Michael Murray, 50, a miner at the Nottingham Colliery, met his death by a piece of slate from the roof falling on him while he was working in his chamber. It was said that Michael’s clothes were as black as his face, and both just as black as the slate he had been picking. On October 2, 1918, Michael’s grandson John Murray, of Cherry Street, Plymouth, was working as a breaker boy at the Lance #11 breaker, when he was also killed by an accident. On this day his screams could not be heard over the roar of the breaker when he got caught in the machinery and dragged around until it could be stopped. Miners said that one arm was torn off at the shoulder, a leg was broken, his entire body was gashed and severely mutilated — a horrible death for a sixteen-year-old.
Chapter 4

Deaths Caused by Mules or Horses

A common occupation for youths in the mines was that of mule driver. Any book on historic anthracite mining is sure to discuss the mules which were used in the early mining days to pull the mine cars which transported the coal. The mules are a source both of humor (for the stubbornness and orneriness of some of them) and of pathos (for their lives spent in the endless darkness underground; mules in the deeper mines were even stabled underground, and therefore almost never came to the surface except to die). Often the mule and his driver coexisted with mutual respect and even affection; in other cases the relationship was one of mutual frustration and abuse. Any driver who actually hurt a mule, though, would be severely punished by the company, since the mules were company property — coal country lore held that the miners cared more about mules, which were their own capital, than men, whom they paid by the hour or the ton. Unfortunately, mules could be unpredictable, and many boys died either as a result of a kick from a mule or by misjudging the mule’s actions and being crushed by the car it was pulling.

Fadden, Michael (14). 7/1/1874. No. 11 shaft, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. Kicked by a mule.
Conyngham, John (18). 11/10/1876. Washington colliery. Kicked by a mule and died a few days later.
Dougherty, Patrick (17). 7/25/1877. Empire colliery, (Luzerne Cty.?). Found dead on road near his mule.
Llewelyn, Evan (17). 4/10/1878. No. 5 shaft, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. Found dying, kicked by a mule.
Cramer, Con (14). 10/14/1878. Empire colliery, (Luzerne Cty.?). By mule that was tangled in harness.


Dunstan, John (14). 12/21/1880. Shaft No. 2, Nanticoke. Thrown down on the track by the mule and the car ran against him.

Boyle, Frank (16). Driver. 5/14/1881. Ebervale. Fell off mule and getting tangled in the harness.

Staples, George (14). Driver. 7/18/1882. Mt. Pleasant slope, Hyde Park / Scranton. Fell off horse and foot caught in trace chains and he was dragged to death.

Hoffa, Thomas (15). Driver. 8/9/1882. Exeter colliery. Kicked by a mule until he fell under cars.

Daly, Anthony (15). Driver. 9/21/1882. Slope No. 4, Penna. Coal co., Jenkins Twp. When he was taking his mule to the blacksmith shop to get it shod, a dog bit the mule. The mule started to run, and Daly’s foot got caught in its tracer chain. The mule dragged him along the road until he died.

Nesbit, George (14). Driver. 9/20/1883. Ebervale No. 3. Kicked by a mule.


Fee, Patrick (13). Driver. 5/30/1884. No. 1 shaft, Carbondale. Dragged to death by a mule in barnyard outside the mine.

McCarrick, Anthony (16). Helper. 10/14/1886. Hartford colliery, Ashley, Luzerne Cty.?. While leading a team of mules pulling a trip of cars out of the gangway, the mule caused him to fall on the road, and the cars ran over him.

Mediella, John (18). Driver. 9/20/1887. Kicked by a mule.


Buckley, William (15). Driver. 12/7/1887. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?). Kicked by a mule.

Ruddy, Patrick (16). Driver. 3/30/1888. Spencers, Dunmore. Kicked by a mule; skull fractured.


McCaulley, Frank (16). Driver. 11/25/1890. Shaft No. 1, Edwardsville. A small quantity of gas ignited, frightening the mule, which caused McCauley to fall under the cars.

Karcheski, John (15). Door tender. 1/6/1891. Slope No. 2, Nanticoke. Found lying at side of road near his door with his skull fractured and unconscious, apparently having been kicked by a mule which had just passed by. He never recovered consciousness and died the next day (Jan. 6) at 4 a.m.

Hermonofski, Frank (18). Driver. 3/13/1891. Shaft No. 2, Nanticoke. Kicked by a mule. He walked home as if he had not been seriously injured, but he died in a few days.
Lloyd, Henry (15). Door tender. 7/15/1891. Reynolds, Plymouth. Fell in front of trip of cars while endeavoring to stop the mules; died the next day, accident on July 14.


Howells, Henry (16). 9/29/1891. Pyne shaft, near Scranton / Old Forge. He was riding on his mule when a spark from his lamp fell on his clothes, setting them on fire, which killed boy and mule.


Jones, William (16). Driver. 8/28/1893. Barnum No. 3 shaft, Pittston/Duryea/Marcy Twp. Thrown from a mule while taking it to be shod.


English, Patrick (16). Driver. 12/11/1893. Black Diamond, Luzerne Cty. While unhitching his mule he was caught between bumpers of cars.

Scott, Will (14). Driver. 1/5/1894. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. By a kick from a mule that he was driving.

McNamara, Patrick (17). Driver. 5/21/1894. Von Storch slope, Providence / Scranton. Was pushed by a mule against a prop, fell and was then run over by cars.


Price, Thomas (16). Driver. 12/18/1894. Austin co.. Was thrown from a mule, outside.

Jones, Emrys (16). Driver’s helper. 1/11/1895. Hollenback. Kicked by a mule when following up a manway.

Gorman, Patrick (14). Driver. 7/26/1895. No. 6 shaft, Jenkins Twp., near Pittston. By a kick from a mule.

Rolaski, Anthony (18). Driver. 12/16/1895. Stevens slope, Exeter. While riding on the front end of car the mule kicked him off and he was squeezed between car and pillar.


Thomas, David (18). Runner. 1/29/1897. Continental colliery. While unhitching a trip of cars on January 27th, his leg was severely injured between the bumpers of the cars.


Savage, John (15). Driver. 10/16/1898. Exeter shaft. Kicked by a mule on October 12.


Helenaugh, Richard (15). Driver. 2/28/1899. Green Ridge slope, Dunmore. While leading a team of three mules, he fell under the trip and it passed over him.

Miller, Joseph (16). Driver. 10/14/1899. Mt. Pleasant, Hyde Park / Scranton. He was run over by an empty car which he fell under after the mule he had hitched it to unexpectedly started running.


Davis, Frank (15). Driver. 11/14/1899. Grassy Island, Olyphant. While unhitching his mule from a trip of cars, he fell and was squeezed between the bumpers.

Babcock, William (16). Driver. 5/22/1900. Griffith Tunnel. Fell under cars while trying to unhitch a mule from them while they were still in motion.

Cominski, Anthony (16). Driver. 6/12/1900. Johnson’s No2. Skull was fractured between mule and mine car.

Teets, George (17). Driver. 4/24/1901. Heidelberg No. 1, near Pittston / Hughestown / Avoca. Found on the side of gangway road, having been kicked by a mule. He could not speak and died before he was taken outside.

Duggan, Joseph L. (17). Driver. 8/22/1901. Shaft No. 7, Nanticoke. Caught in the stretcher chain and dragged by the mule as he was pulling cars off of the cage.


Vandozer, Charles (15). Driver. 12/18/1901. Outside No. 8 colliery, Pittston Twp. Thrown from a mule while riding to the barn. His foot was caught in the harness and he was dragged a considerable distance.


Thomas, Abner (16). Driver. 1/14/1903. Pancoast, Dickson City. He was sitting on bumper of an empty car, with one foot on the mule’s spreader, and the other sliding on the rail, when the car jumped off the track at frog of chamber branch, and the mule pulled it against a prop, squeezing and killing him.

Hagle, Edward (17). Driver. 1/29/1903. No. 4 shaft, D&H. Kicked on the head by a mule.

Dare, David (15). Door boy. 2/6/1903. No. 3 shaft, D&H Luzerne. A mule fell on him.


Bonnard, John (16). Driver. 8/19/1905. No. 1, Lawrence. Fell off mule that he was taking to the barn. His foot caught in the harness and he was dragged a distance of half a mile.

Polish, Vincent (18). Driver. 11/21/1906. Raymond. Fell off mule that he was taking to the barn. His foot caught in the traces and he was dragged a distance of half a mile.


Brienoc, Michael (18). Driver. 2/28/1907. By a kick from a mule that he was driving.
Miller, Frank (16). Driver. 11/9/1907. Old Forge No. 1. While detaching a mule from a car.


Kokinda, Mick (18). Driver. 2/20/1908. Sibley colliery, Old Forge. Kicked by a mule while taking it to the barn.


Velitis, John (18). Driver. 7/23/1913. Kingston No. 4. Kicked by a mule that he was driving.

Cullington, William (16). Runner. 8/9/1913. Marvine. He was leading a mule when it turned on the wrong road, throwing him against the rib where he was caught by a derailed car.

Zisnick, John (18). Runner. 12/30/1913. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Kicked by a mule.


Croftus, Andrew (16). Driver. 7/27/1917. Raymond. Dragged 1,000 feet by a mule. He fell off the mule's back while he was taking it to the barn and in falling his foot was caught in the harness.


Draus, Michael (17). Driver. 8/21/1920. Clinton, (Lackawanna Cty.?). Kicked by a mule.
Chapter 5

Deaths Caused by Collapsing or Falling Rock

Although some mining was done at or near the surface, in many cases the veins of coal were followed deep underground. Occasionally the tunnels and chambers in the mines would collapse, crushing or trapping the men who worked there. Despite the efforts of the company engineers, this could not always be predicted, at least by humans. Miners’ lore held, however, that the rats which infested the mines could sometimes hear or sense when a collapse was imminent – and if the rats started to run away, a wise miner would too!

Lynott, James (15). 9/25/1872. Columbia Tunnel, Pittston?. Caught under a fall of coal at face of chamber.
Carey, James (18). Laborer. 9/30/1872. Swetland shaft. By a fall of top coal while working in a chamber.
McMannis, Thomas Jr. (18). Laborer. 12/6/1872. Ashley No. 2. By a fall of coal while working with his father. He had only worked in the mine for 2 or 3 days.
Jeffreys, John M. (16). 9/12/1876. No. 9 shaft (=Barnum #9?), Pittston. By a fall of roof.
Williams, William P. (17). Driver. 9/13/1876. Cross Creek No. 1. By a fall of coal, car jumped track and knocked out prop.
Thomas, Gomer (15). Laborer. 1/14/1877. Upper Lehigh. By a fall of roof.
Boyle, James (17). 1/13/1879. Audenreid, (near Hazleton?). By a fall of coal in chamber while working with his father.

Evans, Thomas (18). 1/27/1881. Hillman vein, Empire Shaft, Wilkes-Barre. On the previous day, he had been helping his father Morris Evans work on “robbing” a pillar. They were almost done when they noticed that a nearby part of the roof, across from where they were working, had partly collapsed, and seemed to be partly resting on the remainder of the pillar they were robbing. He sent for the fire boss to inspect the area, and the fire boss said it was unsafe, so they were sent to another area. Reportedly, however, Morris decided to return to the unsafe area to make one more small blast and load a little more coal, against the wishes of his son. With the help of another miner, they did so, but as they were loading the coal both son and father were killed by successive falls of coal. It took a whole day to clear the rubble enough to recover their bodies.

Messett, John (). 4/19/1881. Taylor shaft, Taylorville. By a fall of top coal.


Howells, John (17). Driver. 9/21/1881. Avondale Colliery, Plymouth Township. He was in a chamber waiting to take out a mine car being loaded with coal. While waiting he went to put a sprag (brake) in the wheel and clean some dirt off the track. In order to do this he had to go underneath a large stone protruding from the rib over the track. While he was there a piece broke off the stone and hit his head, killing him. The miner in charge of the chamber was partly blamed for this; he was said to have been a hasty and careless man who should have stopped the boy from going under the unsafe rock.

Curran, James (16). Driver. 1/10/1882. Grassy Island shaft, Olyphant. Killed by a piece of coal falling on him while standing on safety carriage at bottom of shaft when he got on to be hoisted to surface.


McMananna, J. (16). Driver. 2/21/1883. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. By a fall of roof.

Stevenson, John (13). Door boy. 4/27/1883. “Harry E.” Coal co., (Luzerne Cty.?). By a fall of slate on gangway, about 150 feet from his door.


Cambell, Daniel (21). Miner. 1/5/1885. Upper Lehigh No. 5. Along with his brother Daniel, killed by a fall of coal.
Cambell, Peter (18). Laborer. 1/5/1885. Upper Lehigh No. 5. Along with his brother Peter, killed by a fall of coal.


Rice, George (18). Laborer. 11/24/1886. Gowen colliery, (near Hazleton?). By a fall of slate.

Wilson, Harry (16). Door boy. 1/1/1887. Drifton No. 1. By a fall of coal.

Davitt, Michael (15). Driver. 7/7/1887. Twin shaft, Pittston. By a fall of rock.


Connelly, Patrick (17). Driver. 9/10/1888. Taylor. Instantly killed by a fall of roof.


Burns, William (18). Driver. 2/5/1892. Taylor Drift. He was waiting for his car to be loaded at face of chamber when a piece of rock fell on him.

Sheridan, Patrick (17). Driver. 8/23/1892. Cayuga colliery, Providence / Scranton. By a fall of roof on main gangway, he was driving through it.

Noland, Patrick (16). Laborer. 9/9/1892. No. 13 shaft, Lackawanna Cty. Killed by a fall of rock while working with his father in a chamber.

Ba[b, John (14 or 15).] Door boy. 1/13/1893. Forty Fort. He and John Baab were waiting for a trip of loaded cars to reach the top of the slope before they could go up. They were standing together in what they thought was a safe area, when the chain broke and the loaded runaway mine cars started barreling down the slope. The cars knocked out the timbers near where they stood, causing the a massive rock fall or cave-in which buried both boys, killing them instantly.

Peeler, John (13 or 14). Door boy. 1/13/1893. Forty Fort. See above.


Holinda, Michael (18). Laborer. 6/20/1893. Eddy Creek, Olyphant. By a fall of roof.


Clark, James (15). Helper. 10/30/1893. Stevens slope, (Exeter?). By a fall or rock while going up chamber with a car.

Gownley, Michael (15). Driver. 10/30/1894. Jones-Simpson, (Archbald?). By a falling piece of rock on gangway road, where men were taking down some roof.

Fudge, John (16). Door tender. 3/16/1895. West End, (Mocanaqua?). By a fall of roof near his door.

Bannan, James (17). Driver. 1/7/1896. Olyphant. Fatally injured by a small fall of bone coal on December 10th.


Lomax, Nicholas (17). Driver. 10/16/1896. Storrs No. 2. Killed by a fall of rock on gangway.


Dougher, Edward (17). Door tender. 8/11/1899. Baltimore colliery shaft No. 4. Caught by a fall of rock while going to get some oil for his lamp.

Hoban, Michael (15). Driver. 10/6/1899. Dulph. By a fall of coal from the rib.


Grobitski, Bolic (18). Laborer. 1/11/1900. Shaft No. 2, Nanticoke. Working with William Collum in a breast; both approached the face after firing a blast and a piece of projecting rock fell on them. Collum was seriously injured.


Gilbert, William (15). Door boy. 8/7/1900. Mount Pleasant colliery, near Scranton. While helping other boys stow some empty powder kegs, he was killed by a fall of roof in cross cut.

Shefler, William (17). Driver. 8/17/1900. Shaft No. 1, Nanticoke. He went to get a car but it wasn’t fully loaded yet. He tried to help load it, but as he was doing so a piece of “bone” fell on him, killing him instantly.

McGeever, Frank (16). Laborer. 10/6/1900. Stanton. By a wall falling on him on surface. He was assisting in removing material near the wall, when it fell.


Uglo, William (18). Laborer. 2/12/1901. White Oak, Archbald. He and another man were killed by a falling saddle of rock, when returning to the face of their chamber after a blast. He had been picking coal thrown by the shot from the track.


Budufski, Berney (15). Driver. 6/1/1901. Johnsons. A miner refused to clear some coal which had been blown onto the track by a recently fired shot, so Budufski had to do it. While he was doing so, a fall of rock occurred and killed him.


Costello, John (16). Driver. 10/31/1901. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). By a fall of rock.
King, George (18). Runner. 11/25/1902. Grassy Island, Olyphant. He was standing near the face of a chamber waiting for the men to load their car when a piece of roof fell on him.

Owens, Richard (17). Driver. 11/29/1902. Pettebone shaft, (Kingston?). By a fall of rock, while helping the runner to run a loaded car out of breast it knocked a prop out, allowing the rock to fall.


Miscarvin, William (17). Driver. 1/4/1907. Storrs No. 2. By a fall of roof in face of chamber while taking the car up.


Melousky, Stanley (18). Laborer. 6/26/1907. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). By a fall of roof near face of chamber while loading a car.

Guschefski, Alexander (17). Driver. 9/16/1907. Forest City, Susquehanna co. By a fall of roof near a pillar where he was waiting to sprag a car on August 27, 1907.


Leonard, Thomas (18). Driver. 12/3/1907. While coming up the shaft in a bucket, killed by billy falling on him.

Davis, Wendel (17). Driver. 12/17/1907. Lackawanna. Instantly killed by a fall of bell roof in the face of a chamber. The miner inside was firing and Davis went into the next chamber for safety. The jar of the blast caused an undetected “bell” to fall.


Libzak, Michael (17). Door boy. 5/13/1908. At Prospect Colliery in Midvale, on May 13, 1908, at 1 PM, a trip of cars got away from a driver, jumped the mine track, and knocked out some props, causing a small portion of the roof to fall. The driver and six other men went to work putting the cars back on the track. They knew they needed to re-prop the roof, but the derailed mine cars and small roof fall made this difficult and so they decided to first put the cars back on the track and then replace the knocked-out timber. While they were at work putting the cars back on the track, however, a large piece of roof rock — twelve feet long, five feet wide, and
a foot thick — fell, instantly killing two of them and pinning the other five. As they were screaming for help, a third fall took place, killing two more. The dead included Martin Degnan (timberman, age 38); Andrew Waski (miner, 35); Paul Bizent, (miner, 45); and Peter Zwiniski (driver, 19). After this a rescue party came and freed the two remaining injured men. One of the injured was Michael Libzak. He died from his injuries a few hours later.

**Sekelinus, Charles (18).** Laborer. 6/26/1908. Von Storch colliery, Providence / Scranton. By a fall of roof.

**Owens, David J. (18).** Driver. 11/5/1908. Olyphant. By a fall of roof while he was driving his mule.

**Jenkins, David (17).** Driver. 11/23/1908. No. 1 shaft. By a fall of rock. The runner was running a car out of a breast and missed one of the sprags and the car jumped the track, tipped over and knocked out a prop.

**Storeski, Frank (18).** Laborer. 3/16/1909. Olyphant. By a fall of roof in face of chamber, his miner was also killed.

**Murphy, Thomas (18).** Runner. 3/24/1909. Diamond, (near Scranton?). By a fall of roof.


**Burke, Patrick (17).** Driver. 11/19/1909. Gypsy Grove colliery, Dunmore. By a fall of roof in a chamber.

**Connoskie, Anthony (18).** Coupler. 5/13/1911. Kingston No. 4. By fall of rock on backswitch near foot of shaft.

**Mokes, Frank (18).** Runner. 1/17/1912. Barmum, Pittston/Duryea/Marcy Twp. By fall of rock on gangway.

**Arbutin, Nicholas (18).** Laborer. 7/19/1912. Black Diamond, Luzerne Cty. By fall of roof on gangway while making repairs.

**Gambo, Fred (16).** Door boy. 1/7/1913. Raymond. By a fall of roof at face of a miner’s chamber.

**Heckman, Ray (18).** Driver. 2/5/1913. Riverside, (near Wyoming / Plains Twp.?). By a fall of rock from the gob.

**Ginginski, John (18).** Laborer. 10/9/1913. Fall of roof while removing pillars.

**Wisnieski, Joseph (18).** Laborer. 5/4/1914. Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. Joseph Weiniewski (Wisnieski) left behind his parents, a younger brother and a sister, when he came to Plymouth from Poland. His brothers, Peter and Frank, lived on West Main Street, they worked at the Nottingham Colliery. Eighteen year old Joseph resided with them. It took only a short time and Joseph got a job as a laborer at the Nottingham, he was to labor for Wasil Frankski, a miner. On May 4, 1914, Joseph’s first day in the mines, and not long after starting time, there was a roof fall in the chamber he was working in. He was buried by the fall. When they recovered his body they knew that death had to be instant.

**Reikiec, Paul (18).** Laborer. 5/14/1914. No. 3, Plymouth. By fall of coal at face of chamber.

**Baltine, Dominick (18).** Laborer. 4/20/1915. Gravity slope. By a fall of roof.


Schifno, Joe (17). Driver. 5/20/1920. Ewen, near Pittston. Fall of top rock in airway.


Chapter 6

Deaths Caused by Other, Unknown or Unlisted Causes

Some of the causes of death listed here are bizarre and unexpected: scalding, drowning, electrocution, and concussions from falling objects. In other cases the cause of death is not described well enough in the records to be categorized elsewhere.


Socks, Philip (18). 12/11/1871. No. 5 slope, Stockton. Fell down slope.


Palmer, William (14). 4/2/1872. Coal Brook breaker, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Died from injuries by the breaker being blown down from a storm.


McCafferty, James (17). 4/22/1873. Yorktown colliery. Instantly killed when he fell down the slope.

O’Hara, Patrick (17). 2/27/1875. No. 4 colliery, Pittston. Fell over a testling while playing with other boys.


Lewis, John (13). Slate Picker. 11/20/1877. Upper Lehigh No. 2. By the breaking of the drawbridge pole, while he was playing at noon hour.

Fassold, Frank (14). 9/4/1878. Pine Brook shaft, Scranton. Drowned by Pine Brook water which broke into the shaft (possibly by way of the Fairlawn slope?).

Wiloughby, John (17). Laborer. 1/15/1879. Harleigh No. 4. By the breaking of the shackle of hoisting rope.
Kearney, John (13). 7/18/1879. Sloan shaft, (Lack. Twp.?). Fell down shaft, a distance of 393 feet.


Younkle, John (18). pump Boy. 11/26/1881. Laurel Hill colliery. Found fatally injured on a branch near the slope, died while being taken home.


Eli, Alfred (14). Slate Picker. 6/12/1883. Yorktown No. 5. Struck on the head by a piece of iron thrown from the breaker.


Barrett, Thomas (14). Door boy. 11/24/1884. Henry colliery. Knocked off the cage and falling down the shaft.


Dinany, Frank (16). Driver. 4/15/1885. Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. Fell down shaft and was instantly killed.

Williams, Ivor (14). Door boy. 10/15/1885. Dodson, near Plymouth? Fell off cage while ascending shaft.

Clifford, Thomas (14). Door boy. 12/18/1885. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Among 26 men killed in a disaster involving quicksand; none of the bodies were ever recovered.

Danahey, William (15). Driver. 12/18/1885. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Among 26 men killed in a disaster involving quicksand; none of the bodies were ever recovered.

Elkie, William (17). Runner. 12/18/1885. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Among 26 men killed in a disaster involving quicksand; none of the bodies were ever recovered.

Kivler, William (18). Laborer. 12/18/1885. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Among 26 men killed in a disaster involving quicksand; none of the bodies were ever recovered.

Longoskie, Max (16). Driver. 12/18/1885. No. 1 slope, Nanticoke. Among 26 men killed in a disaster involving quicksand; none of the bodies were ever recovered.


McLaughlin, Patrick (15). Door boy. 2/25/1888. Empire shaft, Luzerne Cty.


Murray, Patrick (16). Oiler. 3/28/1888. breaker No. 9, Sugar Notch.

Stacey, William (18). Driver. 5/10/1888. Lance No. 11, (near Plymouth?).

Weill, Mathew (18). Driver. 6/1/1888. Avondale colliery, near Plymouth.
Daniels, Thomas (18). Roadman. 6/6/1888. Drifton No. 2. Killed by a pump rod while going to his work.

Madden, Thomas (18). Driver. 7/20/1888. Slope No. 3, West Nanticoke.


Evans, John (17). Driver. 1/9/1890. Rushbrook shaft, Archbald. Fell down shaft from top to bottom, 155 feet.


Kearns, Dominick (12). Slate Picker. 9/29/1890. National breaker, Scranton. He was found dead. It was supposed that he was playing around an empty dump car and was crushed.

Palmer, George (15). 2/7/1891. Jermyn No. 4 shaft, near Scranton. Fell off carriage from 14 foot vein to bottom.

Kreuger, William (15). Signal boy. 2/9/1891. West End, (Mocanaqua?). He was standing on side of slope track when a board from a trip of cars that was passing by loaded with boards struck him, killing him instantly.


Crommerford, Daniel (18). Driver. 2/13/1893. Hazle Brook co. Head squeezed between a mine and roof.


Hillhouse, James (16). Pump runner. 9/6/1893. Cranberry colliery, (near Hazleton?). Falling under mine car while riding home from work.


Romel, Stanley (14). Door boy. 5/31/1894. No. 3, Jermyn. Fell down the shaft, he became dizzy and fell off the carriage.

Ryder, Robert (16). Driver. 8/8/1895. Avoca shaft, Luzerne Cty. Killed by a bar which he had told the headman to throw down the shaft.

Samuels, Joseph (17). Helper. 9/5/1895. Pettebone shaft, (Kingston?). Fell down shaft while playing with another boy.


Morgan, John T. (18). Driver. 9/8/1896. Nottingham colliery, Plymouth. By stepping off the cage when descending the shaft; he fell a depth of 82 feet.

Morris, Thomas (13). Slate Picker. 7/17/1897. Leggitt’s Creek shaft, Providence / Scranton. Fell from a platform.

Mullen, Patrick (16). Driver’s helper. 6/9/1898. Pine Brook, (near Scranton?). He was injured in an accident while helping to lead a three-mule team. The driver did not immediately notice he was missing. Mullen was found later, injured, and was taken to the hospital, where he died.
Hick, Martin (17). Fireman. 7/7/1898. Laflin. Died from cause unknown.


Thomas, Stanley (17). Driver. 9/20/1899. Conyngham shaft. Fell off the cage when descending shaft and was instantly killed.

Locoshake, John (14). Door boy. 12/8/1899. Delaware shaft. The cage he was riding got caught in the shaft.

Yeels, Charles (16). Bell boy. 11/28/1900. Conyngham. A truck loaded with boards ran away and he was struck by flying boards at one of the lifts.

Simmers, John (14). Door boy. 3/15/1901. Alden No. 1. Fell from the cage and killed instantly.

Evans, Arthur (18). Runner. 10/30/1902. Dorrance. Fell in a sump and was scalded.


Roman, Peter (16). Door tender. 9/22/1903. Exeter. Falling off the carriage down the shaft.

Bradis, Paul (16). Door boy. 4/14/1904. Ontario colliery. Killed while trying to open his door.


McGraw, Harry (17). Laborer. 4/26/1905. Conyngham. While being lowered down the shaft the rope broke. The carriage fell to the bottom of the shaft, a distance of 400 feet. He and eight other men were killed instantly.


Pratt, Sidney. Coupler. 7/13/1907. Fatally burned by paint.

Dominia, John. 7/11/1907. In 1887, a fire broke out in the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal Company’s #1 Slope in the Honey Pot section of Nanticoke, and it was flooded with water to put out the fire. The now-flooded workings there were then abandoned. In July 1907, the company decided to reopen the slope and began to pump out the water. Each day a party of men were sent in the mine in the early morning to measure the volume of the receding water, so as to keep track of the amount pumped out daily. On July 11, a party of three men entered the mine at the usual time to check the water level. When the time for them to come out had arrived and they failed to appear, other men were sent, in parties of two each, until three other parties had gone in after the first. When none of the parties came out, the mine officials became quite alarmed and organized a rescue team. The team consisted of mine superintendent James Goldsworthy, the fire boss William Goldsworthy, mine foreman William Davies, fire boss Charles Schaar, pumpman William Harsleft, miner
Daniel Jenkins, colliery clerks John McGeehan and Benjamin Bachman, and also David Jones, a McAdoo insurance agent who had previously in the mines. They had gone only a short way into the mines before being overcome by gases, and only with difficulty were they rescued. This made it clear that the men who had gone in before must be dead, because the slope was permeated with a large body of whitedamp, the deadliest mine gas. The whitedamp had been trapped in the mine for twenty years but escaped as the water receded. The men who had gone in in the morning did not know what was happening before they were overcome and died. Those who died that day included: Carmenia Dominia, 40, and his son John, 18; James Lefendo, 47; Frank Baltula, 26; Joseph Luciano, 48; Frank Rezella, 24; Michael Macaluso, 20; Raffelo Lucetta; and Amesko Cucosela, 23.

**Smith, Peter (18).** Laborer. 1/8/1908. Richmond No. 3. He had worked only a few days in the mines. In going out after working hours, he lost his light and strayed to the wrong shaft, and must have opened the gates and fell into the shaft.

**Hoffman, John (16).** Coupler. 2/3/1908. At about 9 AM he was told to go to No. 1 Plane to get a mule. When he did not return in the evening, a search was made and his body was found on the gangway. He had apparently been overcome by gases from a locomotive that was used along the gangw.

**Seek, Paul (17).** Slate Picker. 3/11/1908. Hampton washery. Fell from one floor to another while running.

**Buscavage, Adam (17).** Door tender. 8/28/1908. Warrior Run.

**Wilkes, John (16).** Door boy. 10/8/1908. No. 2, Plymouth. Sixteen year old John Wilkes, lived on Brown Street, Larksville; he was a door boy at the #2 Colliery, D. & H. Canal Company. At quitting time, he got on the carriage with nine other boys to get hoisted to the surface. The boys were playing, yelling and laughing while going up. When they reached the top, eight of them got off, but then one of them noticed that there was a dinner pail left behind on the cage. They realized that John had got on with them but had not gotten off. A search party went back down to look for John. Down at the bottom the foot tender said that he had heard something fall into the sump below, but had thought it was a piece of coal or rock. Down in the sump they found the body of John. He had fallen off the cage somehow during the horseplay and confusion, falling to the bottom of the shaft. The people of Brown Street were horrified to see the Black Moriah bring his body home.

**Creegan, John (18).** Oiler. 1/21/1910. Coal Brook, (Fell Twp./Carbondale?). Killed while oiling a conveyor line.

**Mullen, Patrick (18).** Driver. 6/17/1910. Carney and Brown colliery, Lackawanna Cty. By an explosion of powder from a keg that he was taking to celebrate the 4th of July.


**Kite, John E. ()** Engineer. 2/21/1914. Spring Mountain. Killed by machinery, outside.

**Whittaker, Earl (18).** Surveyor. 7/26/1916. Laffin. Electrocuted in tunnel, he stumbled and grasped the electric wire.

**Zoltevicz, Joseph (17).** Laborer. 8/28/1916. Nanticoke washery. While tearing out an old chute with a bar he slipped and it punctured him.

**Zanda, Angello (17).** Driver. 10/6/1917. Struck by flying piece of coal from a runaway trip on slope.
Darechock, John (16). Door boy. 6/20/1918. Olyphant. On June 10th, while leaning on a lever that was being used to replace a car on its track, the block slipped and he was thrown backwards striking his head on the track rail.


Smith, John (17). Door boy. 8/20/1920. Forty Fort. Came in contact with feed wire on gangway.
Major Occupations included in This Report
Anthracite Mining Terms
References and Acknowledgements

Mr. Keating obtained the majority of his information on individual accidents from the annual safety reports of the Pennsylvania Department of Mines.

He sometimes followed this up by looking up obituaries in the Wilkes-Barre Record, the ancestor of today’s Wilkes-Barre Times Leader. He also made use of the Scranton Republican newspaper and the Wilkes-Barre Record almanacs.

He also consulted and referenced the following books:

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- *Coal and Metal Miners’ Handbook*, 1907
- *Coal Miners’ Pocketbook*, 1910
- *A History of Wilkes-Barre and Wyoming Valley*, Harvey
- *Jeffrey Mine Hand-Book*, 1931
- *Luzerne Legal Registers*, Kulp, 1872 to 1900
- *Mine Accidents and Their Prevention*, Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Co., Coal Mining Department, 1912
- *Mining Engineers’ Handbook*, Peele, 1927
- *The Story of Anthracite*, Hudson Coal Company, 1932

He did much of his research in the Osterhout Free Library, Wilkes-Barre, the Albright public library in Scranton, and Plymouth Public Library. He also wished to acknowledge assistance from John and Elenore Usefara, Plymouth; Stanley Dudek, Plymouth Township; and Chester Kulesa, Anthracite Heritage Museum.

For my supplemental work I made use of some of Mr. Keating’s writings, the annual Department of Mines reports, and also the following additional sources.

• Z. B. Buddington. *Little Martin Craghan*.


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