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Events That Touched Our Ancestors' Lives

## Jeansville, PA Mine Disaster, Feb 1891 - Miners Drown

Submitted by Stu Beitler

### MINERS DROWNED.

An Engineer's Mistake Results in a Frightful Disaster.

Two Score of Men Perish at Jeansville, Penn.

Eighteen men entombed in watery graves mark the result of the most awful mine horror that has ever occurred in Hazleton (Penn.) coal region. Jeansville, the pretty little mining village of J. C. Haydon & Co., two miles across the mountains from that place, is the scene of the disaster.

At 10:50 o'clock on a recent morning two miners, PATRICK COLT and CHARLES BOYLE, were at work in a breast of the mine of J. C. Haydon & Co., at Jeansville. They were drilling a hole and struck a vast body of water. In a few moments the entire slope was flooded, and eighteen men had perished in the rush of the waters.

There were twenty-five men at work in the slope at the time of the accident. One of the seven who escaped said that at first there was a rumble like the sound of an approaching train. In a moment there was a fierce blast of wind and the lamps were extinguished. There was a cry; "For God's sake run for your lives!"

WILLIAM BRESLIN, who escaped, said he cried out to a companion named JAMES GRIFFITHS to run. GRIFFITHS'S light went out, and that was the last BRESLIN saw of him. BRESLIN tried to run for the bottom of the slope, but made slow progress in the dark. Then BOYLE and JOHN NOLINS came running out of the gangway toward him. NOLINS'S lamp was burning, and by its aid they reached the bottom and then clambered up the slope. The water came on with a rush, and in less than five minutes the water had raised 624 feet to the mouth of the slope, the pitch of which is eighty-three degrees.

JOHN WATKINS and JOHN MORGAN also escaped. They heard the cries of BOYLE and COLT to fly, and with great presence of mind they ran to an old air course and bursting open a brattice inside, made their escape. They dragged a frightened Hun with them and saved his

life also. He was too frightened to make a move to escape, and with great courage MORGAN and WATKINS dragged him along at the risk of their own lives.

BOYLE and COLT, the two miners who tapped the deadly flood, strangely enough were saved from death. The water forced them along, and at last, as they were being shoved past an air way, BOYLE pulled COLT in and the two managed to escape.

The names of the drowned men are as follows: BERNARD McCLOSKEY, single; PATRICK KELLEY, single; JAMES WARD, wife and eight children in Ireland; LAURENCE REED, wife and five children; EDWARD GALLAGHER, wife and two children; SAMUEL PORTER, single; JAMES GRIFFITHS, wife and one child; HARRY HALL, wife and six small children; ten Hungarians-- WARIL FRINKO, single; JOSEPH MATUSCOWITZ, married; JOHN TOMASOSKI; THOMAS JAKE; JOHN BURNS; JAMES BALACKI; MICHAEL MITH; MIKE PALASHALT; and one Unknown.

The scene of the disaster was in the lower life or working of J. C. Hayden & Co.'s No. 1 slope. The upper gangway was worked out five years ago, and eighteen months ago the pumps were taken out. The workings gradually filled up with water. Many of the old miners knew of the presence of the water and trouble had been feared. None of the workmen had had any idea that the lower workings were driven so close to the water. As quick as the news of the disaster reached the surface hundreds of people flocked to the mine, but as there was nothing to see they soon left, and the scene around the mine was totally different from the heartrending scenes usually witnessed on such occasions.

It will take at least a week to pump out the water, the colliery owners say, but experienced miners think that it will take a month. Pumps are now taking 1500 gallons a minute from the mine.

The accident is charged by some people to the oversight of the mining engineers in not notifying the workingmen of the proximity of such a great body of water. J. C. Hayden & Co. are very wealthy operators. The same company operates mines at Mahanoy City, Penn.

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