

The District Ledger

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JAN 19 1913
VICTORIA, B. C.

Industrial Unity is Strength.

The Official Organ of District No. 18, U. M. W. of A.

Political Unity is Victory.

SPECIAL EDITION.

THE DISTRICT LEDGER, FERNIE, B.C. DECEMBER 30, 1912.

\$1.00 A YEAR.

DREADFUL CALAMITY AT COAL CREEK

Six Killed, Six Injured, when Gigantic Snowslide Buries Them

Electrical and Carpenter Shops are Wrecked

(Specially Reported for the District Ledger)

LIST OF KILLED:

JAS. BUCKLEY.
HENRY NEIL.
ALEC WORTHINGTON.
T. CATTANERO.
D. ROSARIO.
NYLYCHUK.

INJURED:

ARCHIE NICHOLSON—Injured back and possible rupture.
PERCY JONES—Injured back and pelvis; perhaps internal injuries.
FRED PLATT—Fracture and dislocation of foot; wound on face.
SAM CARDAMONI—Fractured shoulder and injury to back.
TONY SECRETI—Fractured ribs.
GEO. MICHELL—Injured leg.

Just as we are about to celebrate the passing of 1912 we are confronted by a catastrophe at Coal Creek that is surpassed only by the "big bump" of May 22nd, 1902, when one hundred and thirty two men were hurled to eternity by an explosion of gas. While the cause of today's disaster is neither gas, nor in any way connected with the getting of coal, and did not occur in the mines, it serves as an instance to illustrate the insignificance of man when Nature starts to assert her latent powers.

We have been complimenting ourselves on the beautiful weather that we have been enjoying—in spite of the heavy snowfalls. The mildness of the weather, the warm winds, and the intermittent thaws have dangers that few of us realize, in spite of the fact that they are hanging over our head day and night more threatening than the sword of Damocles.

Only the more daring among us ever climb the mountainside to get an idea of the vast quantity of snow that lies on the benches, and the danger that results from the drifting winds is generally lost sight of in our admiration for the beautiful effect of the snow clad slopes. Still, as one looked up the steep slope of the mountain rising above the scene of the calamity that occurred this morning, one cannot fail to recognize an air of warning in the steepness of the mountain with its ledges and benches upon which the snow accumulates, and our attention is drawn to this particular place on account of the knowledge of a previous disaster in

this identical spot, in December 1906, when Chas. Douglas was killed and another man injured. After this accident snow sheds, or cogs, were erected to break up any slides that might descend at a future date. This puny break in the descending avalanche of snow apparently failed to serve as any protection, for it would appear that the mass of snow came right over this, completely demolishing the buildings standing in its way.

THE SCENE OF THE DISASTER

The disaster occurred at 6.55 this morning, and within a few minutes there were hundreds of men frantically digging the snow away in a desperate effort to rescue those who were buried beneath it. Supt. Shanks was early on the scene and directed operations. The cries for help of two of the unfortunates were audible, and these were the first two out. During the day the task of displacing the thousands of tons of snow was steadily going on. Up to the time of going to press no further casualties than those reported above is known, and no others are expected. The carpenters and electricians' shops, which were in the same building, is one mass of wreckage. In December, 1906, the landslide caught a part of the carpenters' shop, but this time it completely demolished it. The exact site of the accident is between No. 9 and Old No. 1 North. The mines immediately ceased operations, and the men returned to town about 9 a.m.

EYE-WITNESSES TO THE SCENE

Ernest Noidig, the tippie boss, said that about 6.45 he was in the super's office taking his instructions for the day. Generally he takes up a big gang of men to clear the track and surroundings of snow, but on this occasion, for some inexplicable reason, he decided to go up to No. 19 incline with the steam dinky, and another man, to take a run through the snow. This is the first morning, he said, that he only put such a few men on. When he saw no lights around the carpenters' shop he immediately concluded that there was something wrong. When he got down there he, of course, saw what had happened and acted accordingly. Three Italian laborers, who were working on the track, were knocked clean over the railway and were killed outright. There was a tremendous wind blowing at the time and the snow brought down with it a large number of stumps and trees which were strewn around in all directions.

Supt. Shanks, when seen, was hard at work, but in between he told our representative that he was in the wash-house putting on his pit boots when the accident happened. He arrived on the scene shortly after. The loss to the company property was only between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

I. Foster, who is employed in the carpenters' shop, says that about 7.05 he was in the shop, when he heard a noise which he immediately recognized as a snowslide, having been close to, and an actual eye-witness of the 1906 occurrence. He, together with the others there made a dash for the open door, except J. Buckley (the man who was standing by his side when the 1906 slide occurred). Buckley is numbered amongst those killed, together with young Alec Worthington, who was employed in the same shop. Foster immediately took a hand in the rescue operations, and the first men brought out were W. Bennett and Fred att. The former was not much hurt, but the latter was not so fortunate, having sustained some serious injuries and wounds. In the electrical shop there was only Georgie Michel, who at the time was lighting the fires, and made a dart for safety. He was, however, caught and sustained serious injuries.

Young Michel, was not brought down to the hospital in Fernie, but was conveyed by our rig from Dr. Workman's house to his own home, a distance of about 150 to 200 yards. A short journey though this was, it was an extremely painful one to the injured boy, as with every lurch of the cutter he was compelled to give vent to screams of agonized pain. His cries were truly pitiable, and he looked a total wreck. There is every hope of his life being saved, although at what cost to his health and strength it is difficult to surmise. It is probable that at any rate he will be crippled as a result of his injuries.

From another report of the catastrophe, related by one who was at work on the tippie at the time, it seems that the extinction of the lights soon after seven this morning did not convey any idea that anything out of the ordinary had happened. However, as the lights were not switched on again, a suspicion that there was an accident somewhere began to be felt, and just then some of those who had not been severely hurt came running on to the tippie with the news of the havoc that had been wrought in the carpenters' and saw sharpening shops by a snow slide. At once men left for the scene of the disaster, and they at once set to work getting the victims out of the debris. Amongst the dead is Alec Worthington, upon whom the doctors and men worked for almost two hours in their efforts to bring him around, but in spite of all their efforts they had finally to admit failure.

Great credit is due to the Superintendent Shanks, who did not spare himself in his efforts to resuscitate the dead and injured, and there is not the slightest doubt that more than one of the injured owes his life to the splendid and almost superhuman efforts of the supt. on their behalf. This opinion has been expressed to us by an eye witness, and we give it the publicity it deserves.

Other eye-witnesses have the same report to make. Whilst with the men who were at work removing the snow and debris there was no commotion or confusion, it was difficult, in the midst of death, to obtain much detailed information. It would appear, however, that whilst six are seriously injured and in the hospital, there are a number of men, less seriously injured, who proceeded to their homes.

Further details and photographs of the scene of the disaster will be published in our next Friday's issue.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 1906 SLIDE

The snow slide in 1906 also occurred early in the morning, around eight o'clock. The snow at that time was particularly heavy on account of having been sodden by the heavy rains preceding.

Chas. Douglas was at work at his bench in the carpenters' shop, when the mass of snow, coming in contact with the building tore away the rear end of the shop and part of the roof. The unfortunate man was buried in the snow and wreckage, and when found by the rescue party had succumbed.

There was only one other working in the shop at the time, Jack Campbell who was a bench on the opposite side, and escaped w. serious injury, little difficulty being experienced in extricating him from the light covering of snow in which he was found.

LATEST REPORT OF THE INJURED

From information received it would appear that all the injured in the Fernie Hospital are doing well. Young Michel is in Coal Creek, and in the opinion of Dr. Bonnell, so far as the information that he has received from Coal Creek, he is progressing favorably, the only danger being that in connection with his leg.

THE INQUEST

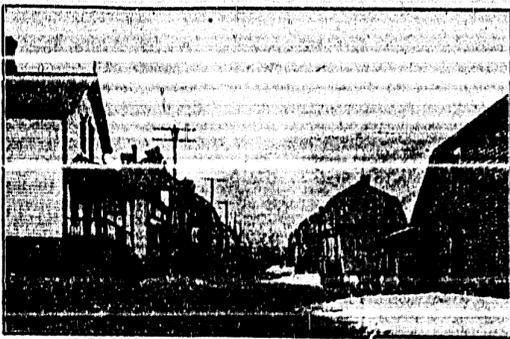
The jury chosen for the inquest are: Robert Duthie, Thos. Whelan, Peter Landie, Guy Johnson, Wm. Barton and Robert Kerr. The coroner will be H. Wilkes. These gentlemen left for Coal Creek on a special this afternoon at 4.30 to go over the scene. The inquest will be held on Friday evening next, 7 o'clock.

The bodies were viewed by them at Thomson and Morrison's undertaking parlors at 4 p.m.

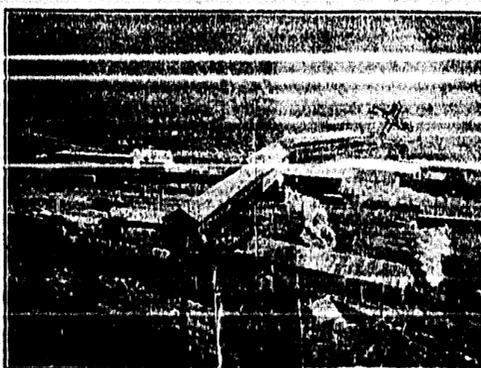
THE FUNERAL

So far as can be learned at the time of going to press the funerals will be held on Wednesday at 2 p.m.

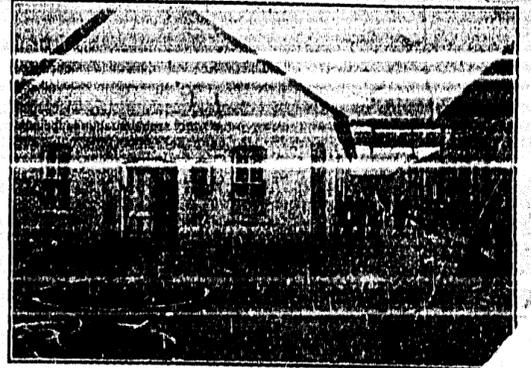
Cross denotes place of disaster



Coyote Street, Coal Creek



View of Tippie and Mines



Lamp Cabin (near the scene of disaster)