

James Pack accused Nellie Bly of trying to kill James Sander by mixing rat poison in bread; but Nellie was acquitted.

The coal mining family had its ups and downs, but life was not always drab. Neighbor looked after neighbor, and friendliness among families was the keynote of social life. Baseball teams flourished, and there was much excitement over a game between Newcastle and Black Diamond. The children easily found games to play when they were not in school. The women of the household could be busy from morning to night, but she found time to go to her sewing circle or bridge club. Life halted only when the lift went up slowly during the middle of the day; that meant that someone was injured or killed in the mine. Lucky for Newcastle, this happened rarely. But when it did, all ran to the mine opening to find out whose husband or father was the victim.

The men lived a hard life in the mine. They worked a ten to twelve-hour day. There were no washing facilities at the mine, so they came home dirty. There was no electricity, so all work was done in semi-darkness. Although the coal generated very little gas and could be worked in safety with open lights, lanterns were fired by coal or lard oil. The blaze would go right back over a man's head because of the strong ventilation, and it was hot-so hot that one wondered how the worker could stand it. Such work was hard physical labor, and the best relief was to stop at the saloon and fill one's lunch bucket with liquor. There was a great deal of drinking both on and off the job.

Most of the men had been miners in their native countries. Many had worked in the deep mines of Great Britain: the Welch, Scottish, Irish and English who made up a large part of the early population. Later, Italians came, and the Germans, Scandinavians, and Slavic peoples. Each nationality brought with it the superstitions and traditions of its homeland. To some it was bad luck-a sign of impending disaster - for a woman to go down into a mine. Many were sure that rats could anticipate coming explosions. This latter belief had more than an aura of truth, for rats and mice really seemed to sense trouble. Living in the mines as they did, they apparently became quite sensitive to conditions and seemed to know just when to leave a mine to escape an explosion. If a miner saw the rats alarmed, he knew that something was wrong.

Uncertainty always attended the coal mining family. The man of the household could be alive one day and dead the next. Finances were a problem. All trading had to be done at the company store, especially if earnings were scarce. Credit at the store sometimes took the place of paychecks as a method of payment; articles purchased would be subtracted from the month's balance-if there was any. The miner's house was likely to be a dreary, unpainted structure which fronted on a dusty unpaved street.

During the 1890's, after the labor troubles had been settled, production exceeded 100,000 tons annually. Hoisting machines had been improved, so that in 1891 more than 1,000 cars could be hoisted in ten hours. Facilities for handling the coal were excellent. Ventilation was still a problem, as the mine had been worked so extensively that the pillars had been crushed. The installation of another fan in 1892 eased the situation somewhat.

Tragedy struck Newcastle twice late in 1894. In October one person was killed instantly in a mine explosion and eight others were

seriously burned, three of whom died later from injuries sustained at the time. A charge of powder which had been fired by one of the victims ignited the dust in the chute, and in turn the dust on the timber and lagging. The floor had been well watered the day before, or the explosion would have been much more disastrous. No fire damp was ever found, leaving no doubt that it was only a dust explosion. However, the accident convinced the mining inspector that as much attention should be given to dust as to explosive gases.

In December, 1894, fire totally destroyed the mine. Possibly it was the work of an incendiary or the result of an accumulation of fine coal near the steam pipe. The 160 employees escaped to safety without injury. The fire burned the main exit, so most of the miners had to travel out by means of rope. It was very fortunate that two fanways had been constructed earlier; all would have perished had there been only one. This was a hard object lesson to the miners that they should be more aware of what to do in case of fire to save the lives of those in need. Part of the mine was retimbered the next year and worked from the Coal Creek slopes. A new slope had to be sunk two miles west of Coal Creek and within the town limits.

In 1900 Newcastle was one of the oldest coal mining towns in the state, having been in continuous operation for about forty years. The mines were now the property of the Pacific Coast Company, but they had been largely abandoned, operations having been transferred to places where mining was more profitable. When this happened, the miners and their families moved away from Newcastle, leaving the place deserted and forlorn. Without the mines the town had no means of support. When the coal was exhausted, Newcastle lost its reason for existence.

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An attempt was made during the day to fasten the blame for the loss of life upon the man who shut down the fan at the top of the hill which keeps the air course in the levels, but not much was accomplished. While some will admit that the closing down of the fan was an error in judgement, others claim that it was what any man would do under ordinary circumstances. It was shown at the inquest today that the closing down of the fan alone would not have suffocated the men, but the door in the rock cut leading into the level from the air course was opened, and this caused a recourse which blocked the men in between two banks of smoke, and death ensued in a few moments. The only man who escaped alive, J.L. Snyder, testified that John E. John, the gas tester, from the south side, who came into the north level to look after his son, opened the door, thinking it would drive out the smoke. The opening of the door or the closing down of the fan alone would not have caused suffocation, but the two formed a deadly combination whose effects only the rows of thirty-seven bodies in the improvised morgue can properly demonstrate. John E. John died with his son in his arms, and father and son lie at Black Diamond Knights of Pythias lodges. Tomorrow Joe Bossio, Chris Dunkers, Joe Dawson, John T. Pugh, D.D. Jones and Evan D. Jones will be buried, the latter under the auspices of the Knights of Pythias and I.O.O.F. lodges. The bodies of Jacob Olsen and John Q. Anderson, Peter Perry, Joe Cassell and Frank Larson will be buried at Cedar Mountain; Evan Huges and William Secor at Renton, and Hebert at Newcastle. The others will be buried here today.