Laura West

HIS 949

Varley

Business Timeline Event Annotation

Monongah 1907 Mine Disaster. Dir. Davitt McAteer. 1985.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Nq2ryRSdpk>

On December6th 1907 a coal mine 365-500 men and boys are working in the Monongah mines of West Virginia. At 10:28 am an explosion occurs in the mines, the explosion is so loud that it is heard 8 miles away in the next town. To this day no one is sure of the exact numbers of the men who were trapped in those mines because during this time no records of employment were kept. 3,000 people lived in the town of Monongah, most of the men living in Monongah worked in the coal mines that were located in the hills surrounding the town. More than 1,000 men worked in these mines. [[1]](#footnote-1)

By the year of 1907 the coal mining industry is only 50 years old, but unfortunately it has already killed and crippled more men than any of the civil war battles.[[2]](#footnote-2) Because of this men are traveling to Europe in order to find volunteers who will come to America to work in the mines.

This event gives us insight into how dangerous mining conditions were in the early 1900’s and also shows how desperate people in the U.S. as well as immigrants from Europe were for work.

The fatal accident frequency rate for the mining industry in America is 2x as high as in Germany, roughly 3x as high as in England, and roughly 4x as high as in France.[[3]](#footnote-3) The mine industry was having such a struggle to find workers that even boys as young as 8 years old are working in the mines. This is possible because in the mining industry there are no Unions or Federal laws to help them if they are injured on the job, there are also no laws controlling child labor.[[4]](#footnote-4) Although the risks for working in the mines of America were very high many were not worried in particular about the Monongah mines. The mines in Monongah, West Virginia were seen as model mines to almost everyone. Sadly, almost everyone was wrong and one of the worst coal mining explosions occurred in Monongah, and due to its severity this mine explosion led to the first faint stirrings of enlightenment in mine safety.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. Monongah 1907 Mine Disaster. Dir. Davitt McAteer. 1985. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Monongah 1907 Mine Disaster. Dir. Davitt McAteer. 1985. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-5)