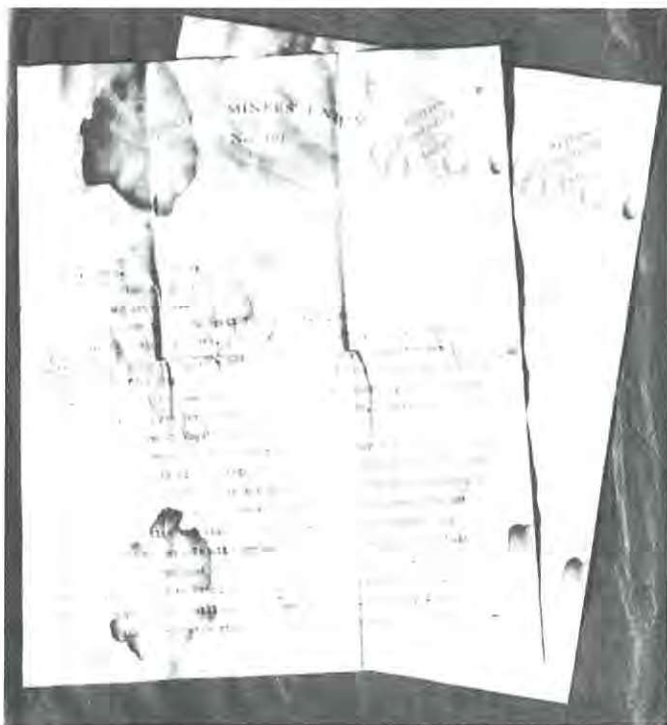


# TRAGEDY AT UNITED VERDE MINE

by Deric English

Like many accounts of mining disasters, the tragic cave-in at the United Verde Mine in Jerome, Arizona presents an opportunity for one to sense the human toll exacted during these disasters. Viewing these tragedies only in terms of the number of casualties robs us of insight and a heightened sense of our own humanity. When histories, families, and names are linked with the departed, one will likely engage in a somber moment of reflection.



Survival of a miner was as precarious as Jerome's footing on the side of Mingus Mountain. The miner, as well as the town of Jerome, was obligated to join forces when facing cave-ins, sliding buildings, fires, and other hazards thrown before them by this past upheaval of rock from the Verde Valley floor. This central Arizona locale of unpredictability was the location of the 1905 United Verde Mine cave-in.

The cave-in at United Verde occurred around 4:00 a.m. Sunday, April 2, 1905. It took place in old workings when recent rains saturated surrounding ground, loosening the ground around old timbers, and adding enough weight on them to cause a cave-in. The cave-in weakened the bulkhead at the 300-foot level, unleashing hot air, steam, and deadly gases upon the miners.

The miners were not entirely overcome by the gases, and scattered in all directions, fleeing the mine through the 300-foot level tunnel. Others were hoisted to the surface from a new shaft. All of the miners incredibly walked from the mine to the hospital, except two who were carried down on stretchers.

The miners were terribly burned, their skin peeling from their bodies. The stench of burnt flesh and whispered moans of agony filled the air. Their hands received the worst burns due to the instinctive raising of hands to protect their faces from the inferno. Those that inhaled the deadly fumes were the worst sufferers. Among them, F.W. Crawford lived eight hours after the cave-in, E.R. Duffin, Peter Serdar, Joseph Wendovich, and N. Lazovich died within the next two to three hours. Barney Caranto survived for two days until passing away on Tuesday morning.

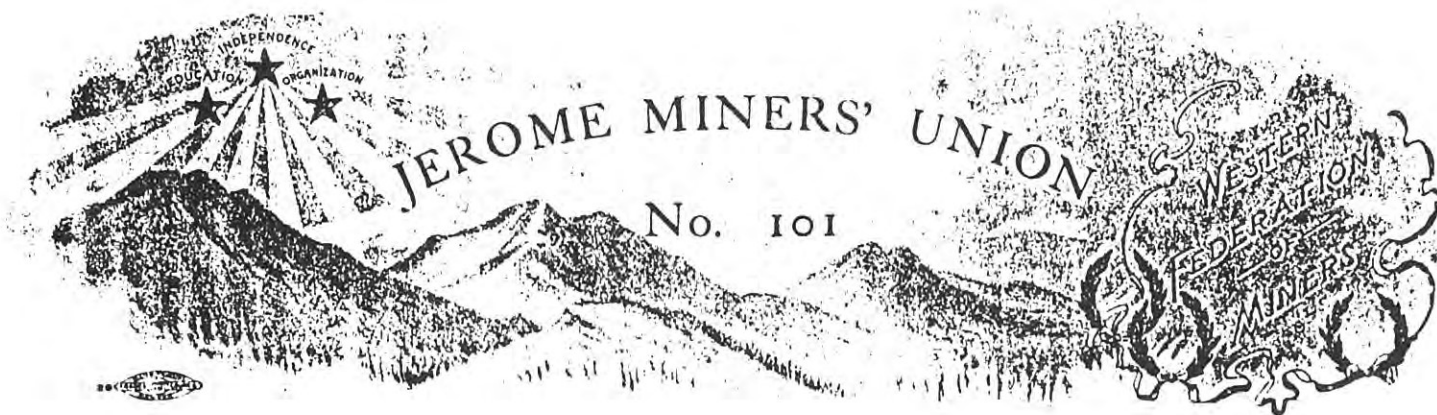
Six other miners were injured, but escaped death. They were J.D. Rose, John Rose, C. Garcia, John Holman, N. Kostich, and Tim J. Sullivan.

Monday night the Jerome Miners' Union called a special meeting to appoint a committee to consult with officials of the United Verde Company regarding burial of the deceased miners. On the following day the Miners' Union invited the public and Serbian Society to a meeting where funeral arrangements for the deceased would be discussed.

On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday all flags in Jerome were at half-mast and during the hours of the funerals on Tuesday and Wednesday every business in Jerome was closed. On Tuesday between six and seven hundred people were in the funeral procession. The United Verde closed down after noon so that the miners might pay their last respects to the departed.

Tuesday morning, April 5th, at 7 o'clock the remains of E.R. Duffin were escorted to the U.V.&P Ry depot where they were shipped to his parents in Utah. E.R. had been in Jerome for only a short time, but had made many friends. He was a friend of Superintendent McDermott, who was instrumental in having his remains sent near St. George, Utah.

In the afternoon Peter Serdar's funeral was held in the Scott Undertaking room. He



April 5th, 1905.

W. O. Emery. Sec-Treas:  
Mojave Miners Union.

Dear Sir and Brother:--

I have your letter of April 1st with \$5.00. for transfer of Thos Fahey for which I enclosed receipt. As to the transfer of B. Vogel, I can assure you that it calls for \$5.00. and I would send you the transfer for proof only for the fact that my quarterly report goes to the Finance Committee on to-morrow and it is necessary that I have all my vouchers, etc for their examination. When you forward the difference of \$3.00. I will receipt for the amount and credit Vogel for it on account.

I have not been able to answer your letter sooner being very busy with the funerals of six miners killed in the mine on the 2nd. The night shift were at the 250 and 300 levels waiting for the cage to go on top when one of the burning stopes caved from the surface and the impact blew out the bulkheads and filled the stations with red-hot gas etc scalding the boys in a horrible manner. It all happened and was over in less than half a minute. Six are dead and six more in a dangerous condition. We shipped one named E.R. Duffin to Utah, buried P. Sirdar, N. Lazovich and J. Wenovich yesterday and on today will bury F. Crawford and B. Caranto. The mine broke out last night with flame and gas coming through the surface openings. It seems to be a veritable volcano at present. After a while the fire will be confined with new bulkheads and things will go on as before but so many of the miners are leaving that our membership will dwindle and we will have to begin all over again as we often had to do in the past.

Yours fraternally,

*Albert Ryan.*

Sec.



was about 26 years old and was the sole support of his widowed mother in Austria.

At the same time and in the same undertaking room, the Joseph Wenovich funeral was held. Joseph was about 39 years old and a member of the Serbian Society. Fellow members of the Society escorted his body to the grave.

Like the funerals of Serdar and Wenovich, N. Lazovich had his funeral in the Scott Undertaking room. Lazovich was about 35 years old and was survived by a wife and children.

Wednesday afternoon, April 6th, the body of Barney Caranto was laid to rest beside his comrades in the city cemetery. Barney was a member of the Western Federation of Miners and the United Mine Workers of America. He was married.

On the same day, April 6th, F.W. Crawford was laid to rest in the city cemetery. F.W. was a 29-year old Nova Scotian from Westville, Picton County. After an absence of four years, he had returned to Jerome about three months prior to his death. He had spent these four years in Victor, Colorado and Cananea, Mexico.

These fallen miners of Jerome's United Verde Mine are only a few of the many miners that have met untimely deaths in the depths of the earth. Let their story stand as a reminder of the others. And maybe, while raising your flag on Labor Day, you might pause for a moment and reflect upon how we all have benefited from the sacrifices and contributions of miners like them.

### Sources

"A Cavein At The United Verde Mine," *Jerome Mining News*, 10th Year, No.29, April 8, 1905

Letter from secretary of Jerome Miners' Union to the secretary of Mojave Miners' Union. (author's collection)

\*Copy of Jerome Miners' Union letter has been re-typed for visual clarity. ✕

## MINING ARTIFACTS FOR SALE OR TRADE

1. Hughes Bros. Fireboss Davy-style lamp w/copper wind shield used hard but complete.
2. American Safety Lamp & Mine Supply Davy with steel top in very good + cond.
3. Early unmarked Davy lamp with cylindrical font, probably English-good cond.
4. Trethaway Bros. Tin oil wick lamp, tin cylindrical font, domed shoulder, flat lid, brass collar-excellent cond.
5. Dunlap driver size oil wick lamp-excellent condition.
6. Crown slope-sided face lamp, tin with brass collar, fully copper lined-excellent cond.
7. Unmarked Trethaway Bros. Slope-sided face lamp w/brass collar & vent tube & dbl.-walled spout-exc.
8. Tin, cyl. Font, domed shoulder-collar, dbl. Hook from single stock "Pat'd Nov. 15, 89" on hook-exc. Cond.
9. Early style Buddy carbide cap lamp, missing cap brace, OW in very good condition
10. Justrite Streamlined carbide cap lamp, mint, unfired in original blue box w/ instruction sheet
11. Justrite Streamlined carbide cap lamp, mint unfired w/ instruction sheet in base
12. Auto-lite carbide cap lamp, orig. red bumper grip on base, in orig. box-lamp slightly used, box v. good
13. Justrite horizontal, later style, complete & in very good cond. w/ all brass reflector
14. Justrite horizontal, later style, complete & in very good cond. w/ NP brass reflector
15. Lenticular (tunnel) lamp circa 1870's, sheet steel, stamped & crimped construction, wire bail-good + cond.
16. Taylor & Boggs Furnace Lamp, cast iron font & spout, wire bail, zinc screw lid, orig. black paint-v. good
17. Justrite 8-hour lamp w/mint 8" reflector, rear flat hook, bail

- w/homemade hanging hook-v.good + cond.
18. Tin "Guy's Dropper" carbide bottle-style flask-good cond.
  19. Shanko brass carbide container with lid-v.good cond.
  20. Several safety lamp globes etched "Wolf Special No. 1 Made in Germany"-new old stock
  21. Davis Instrument Co., Baltimore, Md. 4" dia. Early brass anemometer w/ wooden handle & leather case w/cut-out(orig.) to allow for leaving handle mounted to instrument. No reset lever, two small dials in one large.
  22. Jos. G. Pollard dip needle, mostly alum., in orig. leatherette box-exc. cond.
  23. Ten shot twist blaster by Fidelity Electric w/Atlas Chemicals-Explosives tag on side, complete-exc. cond.s
  24. Wm. Scholhorn Co. U.S. blasting cap crimpers, steel construction-v.good + cond.
  25. Pair of American Cyanamid cardboard boxes (~5"x9"), "25 8ft Copper wire Delay 1 Electric Blasting Caps"
  26. Grasselli Zinc 100 No. 6 blasting cap tin-good to very good cond.
  27. DuPont No. 6, 25 caps, style "B" blasting cap tin-very good cond.
  28. Trojan Powder Co. checkerboard w/ great graphics on back & blasting instructions-fair to good cond.
  29. Leonard 2-1/2 quart tin lunch kettle, wire bail, wooden handle, unusually large size-v. good cond.
  30. UMWA ribbon from 3rd triennial convention, Dubois, Pa. 1918, mint, on orig. Whitehead & Hoag card
  31. Small diamond scale, NP, complete(including all weights) in walnut box, tweezers w/scoop on end-exc

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