

**THE BARNES-HECKER**  
**DISASTER**

by

Gardner A. Wallberg

Dated

1985

Revised: November 3, 1998

## The Barnes-Hecker Mine Disaster

Although this disaster occurred two-and-one-half years before I was born, it touched my life so much as it involved many members of my family, deceased and those who are still living. Wilfred Wills, the sole survivor of the disaster, was a half-brother to William, Walter and Albert Tippett, and my uncle. William Tippett, the mine captain, and his brother Walter who worked his first shift that day, were my uncles. My uncle Albert Tippett, who was also working underground at that mine that dreadful day, was fortunate that he came to surface just minutes before the disaster happened. My grandfather, John T. Wills, also worked at this mine as a dryman.

On August 27, 1972, a memorial was dedicated by the Ely Township Centennial Committee in memory of the fifty-one men who lost their lives that fateful day on November 3, 1926. My uncle Wilfred, as the sole survivor, was invited to this dedication. He came up from Flint, Michigan and stayed at my home. On the day of the dedication, he asked me to drive him to the site of the Barnes-Hecker Mine. While riding in my car, he told me of his dreadful experience of that day, November 3, 1926. My dad, John Wallberg, wrote an autobiography and went into detail explaining the Barnes-Hecker disaster.

This is the story as told to me by my uncle Wilfred, the sole survivor, and my dad with the exact words and phrases from his autobiography.

Walter Tippett had been employed as a prison guard at the Marquette State Prison and wanted a job at one of the mines where his brothers worked. He kept asking his two brothers, who were mining captains, for a job. William Tippett was captain of the Barnes-Hecker Mine and Thomas Tippett captain of the Lloyd Mine. During those days, the mining captains did the hiring at the mines. They both refused their brother a job as they didn't want him to give up such a good job to work in a mine. Walter and his family had moved back to Ishpeming from Marquette to live with his father-in-law who had recently been widowed. Walter was very persistent in trying to get a job at a mine because at that time, it was a long drive for him to Marquette to go to work at the prison. Bill Tippett finally gave in to his younger brother Walter and said, "O.K., come to work at the Barnes-Hecker." He then resigned his job at the prison and reported to work at the Barnes-Hecker Mine.

Monday, November 2, 1926, was election day and all the mines were idle. The next day, Walter started his first day at the mine which was November 3, 1926. I will now quote my dad, telling the story as he wrote it.

*“On this day I was a hoisting engineer at the Lloyd Mine engine house. At this time the men used to come to surface at noon to eat their lunch at the Morris Mine dry house. On this day, they were late getting back from lunch, and it was after one o'clock before they went back down into the Lloyd Mine, and I wondered what was wrong. Pete Coron was the cage tender and after the men had gone down, he came into the engine house and asked if we had heard the news. My partner, Bill LaPlante, and I said, No, we have not heard anything special. Then he told us Barnes-Hecker had caved in and trapped all the men underground. Bill LaPlante and I could hardly believe it. I thought of my brothers-in-law and the many friends who worked there. Pete said the cave-in occurred at 11:25 a.m. I was plenty worried, so I went over to the mine phone and called the mine office. My cousin, Rudolph Johnson, answered the phone and said, Yes, the mine filled with quicksand and water and trapped 51 men. He then said, just think, Walter just started to work there this morning. Then I thought of my wife, Jennie, and wondered if she had heard the terrible news. Well, I had to stay on my job and hoist iron ore until 5 o'clock and I thought the afternoon would never come to an end. We were told that all the men at the Morris Mine were sent home. When 5 o'clock came, I hurried home and when I arrived, Jennie and the children had already gone to the Barnes-Hecker location. I then walked to the Morris Mine and when I arrived there, I saw several people there, including some mine officials. I was told that they had seven bodies stretched out on the machine shop floor. Joe Pope was there and he told me that one of them was Captain Tippett and another was William Hill, the County Mine Inspector. The others have not been identified at this time. He said the bodies were so covered with mud, that they had to wash them off with a garden hose. I wanted to see the bodies, but they would not let me. I then started to walk up the railroad tracks to Barnes-Hecker location. When I arrived at my mother-in-law's house, there certainly was some excitement. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Wills, just sat on a chair and looked around as if she could not believe what had happened. She had two sons still in the mine. I then asked my step-father-in-law if it would be alright to tell her that the body of one of her sons, Bill Tippett, was found in the Morris Mine, and he said, yes. I told her and she said, John, have you ever suffered like I am suffering now?*

*Walter, her other son was still down in the mine with 44 other miners. Albert and Wilfred, her other sons, were safe. Albert had just arrived on surface when the cave-in occurred. Wilfred was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level when the cave-in started, but he escaped by climbing up the shaft, and he was the sole survivor.*

*I then left my mother-in-law's home and went to the mine. There was a lot of excitement and uproar with people, especially those who had relatives trapped in the mine. There were a lot of cars parked everywhere and the State Police were there. I went near the shaft and could hear a boiling sound coming from down below.*

*I will now explain the layout of the Barnes-Hecker Mine along with the other mines that are connected together at different levels by tunnels, drifts or raises. The Barnes-Hecker shaft is 1,070 feet deep. About one-and-one-half miles southeast is the Morris Mine which was 1,500 feet deep at this time. A one-quarter mile east is the Lloyd shaft which is about 800 feet deep and about three-quarters of a mile further east is the East Lloyd shaft which is about 900 feet deep. On the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine there is a long drift that goes beyond the Barnes-Hecker mine. From this drift there is a large raise running about 45 degrees up 200 feet that connects with the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the Barnes-Hecker mine. I had worked in all of these workings and in this particular raise where we installed air pipes. At the top of this raise there was a chamber, then a small drift to the right and went on about 40 feet where it connected almost to the end of the Barnes-Hecker drift which was about 3 or 4 feet below. There was a trap door at the top of this raise. The end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> level drift was 2,000 feet or more from the Barnes-Hecker raise. The end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> level drift was 2,000 feet or more from the Barnes-Hecker shaft. I drew a map of all of these shafts and their connections after the disaster. (See page 19)*

*Well, after we were at the Barnes-Hecker a few hours the first night, we returned to North Lake. We did not sleep much that night, thinking about those men down there hopelessly trapped, although we realized that no one could possibly be alive. The next morning, Wilfred Tippett drove us back to the Barnes-Hecker in his car. The State Police were stationed by Peterson's farm where the road turns off the main highway into Barnes-Hecker and on to North Greenwood. Only relatives of the victims or people who had official business were allowed to pass*

*in order to avoid congestion at the mine. There were many newspaper reporters on the scene. Wilfred Wills, my brother in law, told me about his terrible experience. He was a motorman on the underground train that hauls iron ore from inside the mine out to the shaft. He and his partner, Jack Hanna, were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level and just dumped a load of ore in the pocket out shaft and were on their way back inside and were at a point about 200 feet from the shaft when a couple terrific rushes of air came from inside the mine that blew out their carbide lamps. At the same time, they heard an awful thundering noise inside the mine.*

*The lights dimmed, flickered and went out. The electric-powered train stopped as there was no longer any power to operate it. They jumped off the train and ran out to the shaft in total darkness. They felt their way by kicking the train rails with their boots. When they reached the shaft, they called to the skiptender, Joe Mankee, and told him, "We'd better go up to surface as something terrible is happening in the mine." They were unable to get a response from the hoisting engineer to ride the cage up to surface, so the three men started to climb the ladder in the main shaft to surface which was 800 feet up. Wilfred was in the lead and climbed a lot faster than the other two men and consequently reached the first level well ahead of them. Upon reaching the first level, he called to the first level skiptender, Joe Kirby, who was not aware of what was happening, to join in the climb to surface. When Wilfred resumed his climb with Joe Kirby joining him, Jack Hanna and Joe Mankee were just approaching the first level. So now there were four men climbing the ladder up the shaft to surface which was at this point 600 feet straight up. They did not hear any noise on the first level at this time, but below them there was a terrific racket. After they climbed a couple of hundred feet, the sand, water and debris were close behind them. Wilfred was some distance ahead of the other three men and once he heard them yell, but he kept on climbing in total darkness. At one time the water and debris were up on his legs, but he kept climbing. Wilfred was 22 years old at the time and was in excellent physical shape and that's why he made it. He climbed 800 feet in 10 minutes.*

*Edward Hillman and his partners Albert Tippett and Allivyon Miners were underground at the Barnes-Hecker this morning and had just finished a piping job and came out to the shaft and decided to go up to surface as it was too close to dinnertime to start another job. When they were close to surface in the cage they could feel the cage bounce a little bit and they thought it was a wind storm on*

surface. When they got off the cage at surface, they could hear an awful noise of rushing air coming up from the shaft. They thought maybe it was a broken air line in the shaft. They signaled the hoisting engineering for the cage, but got no response because the electrical power was gone. So the two of them decided to ladder down the shaft. On the way down they met Wilfred Wills climbing up and asked him, "What has happened? Is there anyone else still climbing up?" Wilfred said that Hanna, Mankee and Kirby are coming behind him. Hillman shouts to them and gets no answer. At the surface, Miners is worried about Hillman and Tippett and ladders down the shaft about 250 feet and meets Wills, Hillman and Tippett and all three climbed to the surface. Shortly after, someone lowered a tin can on the end of a long rope down the shaft and it stopped about 80 feet from surface. They hoisted it up and it contained sand and water. Someone then walked a couple of thousand feet or more south of the shaft and discovered a large portion of the swamp, an area 200 feet by 800 feet, had disappeared into the mine. The cave-in was the shape of a funnel and the bottom of the opening was about eight feet in diameter. Trees, stumps, boulders and sand were still pouring into the mine through this opening. In a very short time the whole mine was filled, but the water in the shaft receded when air pockets in the mine filled with water. That was the bubbling noise I heard the first night after the cave-in.

Captain Tippett, Mine Inspector William Hill, Nels Hill, Bill Huot, Tom Kirby, Sr. and two others were found quite a distance from the bottom of the Barnes-Hecker raise on the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine. No one will ever know, but they may have tried to escape through this raise and were caught with a rush of boulders, sand, water and debris of all kinds and washed down to the level and toward the Morris Mine shaft. Men working on the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine felt the rush of wind that came from the Barnes-Hecker raise that blew their carbide lights out.

Fortunately, because of the peculiar layout of raises and tunnels that connected the Morris and Barnes-Hecker Mines, the debris plugged itself at this point somewhere and prevented the Morris Mine from filling up and causing more loss of lives and destruction.

On the following day after the cave-in, large pumps were installed at the cave-in site in the swamp because after the mine filled up, the cave-in filled up with water. Large bailers were attached to the skip rope which would fill up with water and

were raised to surface. When one was emptied the other would be filling up. When the water level was low enough, men would go to work in the shaft to clear it of tangled mass of sand, boulders, timber, steel and all kinds of debris. After they had cleared the shaft to a point about 200 feet above first level, they found the bodies of Joe Mankee, Thomas Kirby, Jr., and Jack Hanna. The funerals of the victims were a very sad event. I saw them in their caskets, I personally knew a great many of the victims that are still in the mine. They are too numerous to mention by name.

The men clearing the shaft worked day and night and the further down they went, the more tightly things were snarled and the work was also slowed by water that had to be bailed out. They eventually reached a point just at the top of the first level and prodded with a one-inch pipe and could feel the train rails on the bottom of the drift. There was not much wreckage on the first level and that goes to prove that when Wilfred and his companions were climbing the shaft, nothing came down upon them, but came up below them. The cave-in, in my opinion, broke in above first level where ore was mined about two or three thousand feet from the shaft and poured down the numerous raises to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level and down more numerous raises, down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> level and then down to the raise to the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine, at the same time toward the shaft of the Barnes-Hecker Mine's 3<sup>rd</sup> level. When the raise that went down to the Morris Mine 6<sup>th</sup> level plugged itself, the water, sand and debris started to fill up the entire Barnes-Hecker Mine. The pressure behind this must have been terrific as it filled up the whole mine in a matter of minutes. As a matter of fact, they found a boulder in the shaft a couple of hundred feet above first level that was so big they had to blast it with dynamite and remove it in pieces, along with other boulders and tree stumps that came all the way from the cave-in about 3,000 feet from the shaft on surface and into the mine for thousands of feet and then up the shaft almost to surface. One can imagine what happened to the poor men that were in the mine. They must have been mangled. Walter Tippett, and three other men, were working on a sub-level about 100 feet above the main level. This sub-level was a considerable distance in a round about way from the place of the cave-in. Consequently, they may not have been in the direct flow the water and debris. Because of air pockets, it is possible they could have been trapped and lived a short time after the cave-in, but only God knows what fate they had.

*After the rescue workers reached a point in the shaft above the first level, they finally had to give up. No more progress could be made, but they kept on bailing water until January 1927. They then removed the bailers and let the shaft fill with water. They later sealed the shaft opening with concrete and it became a tomb for the bodies of the 41 men who still remain there.*

*On Memorial Day in May of 1927, they had funeral services at the cave-in site and threw flowers on the water. Both the Catholic and Protestant survivors of the dead miners held memorial services at the cave-in from time to time.*

*The mine buildings were torn down and the houses of Barnes-Hecker Location were moved to other locations. The 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine was cleaned of debris and for days hoisted to surface skip loads of sand, gravel, stump roots, planks, timbers and parts of a timber truck. All this debris had been washed down the raise from the Barnes-Hecker Mine. Some human fragments were also found, along with Bill Tippett's notebook and steel tape measure. The drift was then sealed with concrete.*

*What caused the Barnes-Hecker disaster? That will forever remain a mystery. The Company officials and the others believed that when the miners blasted on that fateful day, they broke into an underground lake. But, here is the flaw in that reasoning. How could this underground lake contain such a vast amount of sand, gravel, boulders and tree stumps? The large cave on surface proved where all the material came from. Here is my opinion of what caused this disaster. In the early nineteen hundreds, I worked on diamond drill explorations all through that region from North Lake to Dexter. During these operations, we found an average of 100 to 200 feet of overburden. That is, gravel and sand and boulders over the so-called ledge. We always found it difficult to drill holes in the ledge as it appeared to be broken ground. We had to install casing in the drill holes to enable us to continue drilling. When the Barnes-Hecker shaft was being sunk, the biggest problem was water. The workers had to contend with this problem from the very beginning. I know this for a fact, as I was put to work there to help control the water by pumping. When they started to drift into the orebodies from shaft, they struck more and more water. At one point about 200 feet in from the shaft on second level, they struck such a large volume of water that they were forced to discontinue operations. They sealed that portion of the drift with a*



concrete dam. I was there and saw it. A water pressure gauge was installed and it showed a couple hundred pounds of pressure. They later continued to drift around this badly broken up wet spot and proceeded on to the orebody.

After the first level was extended to the orebody, several raises were made on a slight incline to a height of 150 feet. A raise is an opening, all lined with cribbing, consisting of two compartments, one for ore and the other for ladder road and supplies. At the top of each raise, two mining teams would commence to make a drift; one to the left and one to the right. They would mine ore on both sides until this portion of the orebody was mined out. All the ore was put in the ore compartments in the raise where it was loaded through a chute at the bottom into ore cars and hauled out to the shaft and hoisted to surface. Then the miners would descend the raise at the proper distance and commence to make another drift into the orebody and continue the procedure of mining the ore.

For every amount of ore taken out, timber was placed to support the overhead. When this network of timber began to take weight from the ground up above, it would cave down and follow the operation all the way down as the miners were mining the ore. Sometimes they had to blast the timbers so the burden would follow. In this operation, the miners were always protected with new sets of timber where they worked. All this mass of wood and broken ground is called a matting. Just before the disaster this orebody was mined out almost to the first level. In fact, a few miners had worked their way down below first level. This spot, in my opinion, was the key to the cave-in. At this time the overhead consisted of about 200 feet of overburden, that is gravel and boulders, then about 200 feet of solid ground and roughly 200 feet of matting. The first level was 600 feet from surface.

Here is another factor that contributed to the disaster. During the time they were mining the top sub-level above first level, they had several bad sand runs. That is, sand was working its way into the mine. These sand runs were successfully sealed with bales of straw and bran. The cause of this sand run came from a so-called ore run. That is, a steady stream of good ore that would run like water from above and only God knows from where. The ore would either run directly into the chute or the miners would scoop it in with a shovel. That was a miner's bonanza. A cheap way to get ore without any effort. I was told by good authority that they

*had such runs at times. The proper procedure would be to seal out this ore run immediately for safety sake. That is the reason they cease mining operations on the top sub-level at a certain height so they won't rob too much of the overburden. These so-called ore runs can penetrate to one side and far beyond the matting.*

*Another factor that contributed to the disaster was the extremely wet fall of 1926. It rained and rained day after day. The ground was saturated. Small streams were overflowing. What was only a riverlet became a raging torrent. While this was going on, the rain water seeped through the broken ground formation surrounding the mine area and made contact with those previous sand runs above first level and proceeded to a point just below second level. In my opinion, this movement took place some distance away from the first level mining operations. Remember, the ore runs, followed by the sand runs? At any rate, the key was set in the trap. With the continued blasting going on from time to time, it only served to loosen the ground more and more by concussion. The fatal moment had arrived. It took the last blast just below the second level to dislodge the key and release the force behind it. Once started, it ate its way towards surface and came in contact with the previous sand runs. When it broke through to surface, the whole swamp together with trees and stumps slid into the opening and down through the side of the matting and out below second level. The sand, water with all the debris and thousands of tons of pressure behind it rushed down the numerous raises to the third level, where some rushed to the shafts some 3,000 feet away, and then toward the connecting raise between the third level of the Barnes-Hecker Mine and the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the Morris Mine. This large raise was 200 feet on a 45 degree angle. The blast that set off the trap happened at 11:25 a.m. This was the blasting time for the mines. This raise between the Morris and Barnes-Hecker ended in a large chamber on the Barnes-Hecker site.*

*A trap door was at the end of this raise that had to be opened to enter the chamber. Off to the right of this chamber a small drift ran about 40 feet where it connected to the Barnes-Hecker 3<sup>rd</sup> level. This connection was almost at the end of the breast of the 3<sup>rd</sup> level where it dropped about four feet to the floor of the level. The breast extended about 30 feet further in. I know this locality well, as I worked there to install air pipes to the raise some time before. I traveled many times on this route between the mines when I worked underground on the chain gang. This particular layout of this small drift between the Morris and*

*Barnes-Hecker Mines is what saved the Morris Mine. I think my brother-in-law Bill Tippett, and the seven other bodies found about a thousand feet or more from the bottom of the raise on the 6<sup>th</sup>, had tried to escape for their lives down through this raise, but were caught in the rush near the bottom and were blown down the 6<sup>th</sup> level drift. If they would have been caught further up in this raise, they probably would have been completely mangled. At any rate, the flow of debris plugged itself in this small connecting drift. That's what prevented further loss of life and destruction in the Morris Mine. Although thousands of tons of ore, rock, mud, gravel, sand, and boulders had washed down this raise before it plugged, God only knows how many mangled bodies are still in that plugged raise. A concrete dam was later installed in the drift to seal off the workings of the Barnes-Hecker Mine. Another dam was installed on the 4<sup>th</sup> level and another on the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the Morris Mine for safety measures.*

*In closing, the mine officials said that it would have been impossible for the cave to break through the thick matting above first level. To this I fully agree, but I still say it was caused by man's error. Although there is a possibility that it could have happened of its own accord, considering the broken nature of the ground and the vast amount of water; but, I do not believe that they blasted into an underground lake. That does not make common sense."*

## EPILOGUE

What you have just read was the story of the Barnes-Hecker disaster. My Dad told the story and he was very accurate in every detail. The story my Uncle Wilfred told me personally about his climb out of that mine is exactly the way my Dad told it.

After the disaster, my Uncle said he would never work underground in a mine again. In fact, My Grandmother and Grandfather, Uncle Albert and Uncle Wilfred left the area with their families and settled in Lower Michigan. Uncle Wilfred settled in Flint, Michigan and worked for General Motors-Buick Motor Division as a security office in plant protection.

In the spring of 1943, he moved back to North Lake Location and acquired a job from Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company as a surface laborer at the Mather "A" Mine. He worked there for about one year and didn't like the snow and cold so he quit and went back to the Flint area to his old job at Buick Motor Division. He retired from that job in 1965.

He visited relatives in the Ishpeming area from time to time and his last trip to Ishpeming was when the Barnes-Hecker Memorial Dedication was held on August 27, 1972. He was hesitant to make this last trip to Ishpeming as he was still recuperating from an operation to remove a cancerous kidney, but with his doctor's permission he came to pay his respects to the men he had worked with and who died on that fateful day of November 3, 1926. On May 7, 1973 he passed away in Flint, Michigan, a victim of cancer. He was 69 years old. My Dad, who wrote this story so well, passed away on January 20, 1969 at the age of 82.

Gardner A. Wallberg

Listed below is the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company response to the families following the Barnes-Hecker Disaster:

Immediately following the accident on November 3, the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company secured the assistance of the following people to visit the families of the men to verify their presence in the mine and to notify the families of the seriousness of the accident: J.H. Williams, C.W. Nicholson, J.L. Hyde, H.O. Moulton, W.E. Johnson, Joseph Pope, John Peterson, W.H. Kellow.

Cleveland Cliffs got into immediate communication with their nurses, asking them to come to North Lake. Miss Brown, arriving home from her vacation on the morning of November 4, was also placed at Cleveland-Cliffs disposal by Miss White, and Mrs. A.L. Johnson, County Nurse under the direction of the Red Cross Chapter, rendered Cleveland-Cliffs efficient service during this period. After a few days, Miss Hirwas and Miss Atkin returned to their regular work and Miss Brown returned to the hospital. Mrs. Johnson continued from time to time to visit the families with whom she is particularly acquainted.

Seven bodies were recovered on the evening of the accident, November 3. Included among these were Captain W. H. Tippett and William Hill, the County Mine Inspector, Henry Haapala, John Luoma, Thomas Kirby, Sr., William Huot and Nels Hill. These seven were all married with the exception of one man. At 5:00 p.m. on November 8, the body of Joseph Mankee, a single man, was recovered, and at 7:00 a.m. on November 9, there were recovered the bodies of Jack J. Hanna and Thomas Kirby, Jr. both married. These bodies were recovered in the shaft.

Cleveland-Cliffs arranged for the services of the undertakers in these cases and everything was taken care of in a satisfactory manner. Shortly after the funerals of these men, in the case of all married men, the families were seen and the provisions of the Compensation Law explained to them and compensation payments prepared and signed by them. Since this period, Mr. Walter Johnson, especially, was very busy in seeing the various families and explaining the provisions of the Compensation Law, this began when it was reasonably certain in the minds of the people, that the men underground could not be alive. As instructed, the matter of compensation was discussed with Mrs. William Hill, wife

of the County Mine Inspector, and papers were prepared and she was put on the compensation roll the same as the widows of our employees.

She was one of the most grateful persons when she realized that she was to have this help.

There were 42 married men and 9 single men who lost their lives in the accident. At the end of November, 1926, compensation agreements had been signed by all the widows living here, with the exception of five, who still claim to be waiting for the recovery of their husbands' bodies.

Three of the men who were married were supporting families in Finland, and letters rogatory have been sent to Finland for definite information concerning the dependence of these families upon the men employed by Cleveland-Cliffs. This information was sent through the Finnish Consul. Consultations have been had in regard to the single men, some of whom had dependents, and negotiations entered into to determine the extent and amount of the dependency, upon which the compensation payments would be based. This took a great deal of time as it meant several interviews before any definite basis of settlement can be made. During the process of this investigation, Cleveland-Cliffs had been in close touch with Mr. Thomas Clancey concerning the payments to be made.

As soon as the papers were signed, they were forwarded to Lansing and the approval of the Board in the different cases has been received. As soon as they were signed, the survivors were placed on the compensation rolls and at the request of these people, payments were made to them every two weeks, they all received the maximum compensation, under the provision of the Law, which is \$14.00 per week.

The nurses, in visiting the families inquired into their condition to see that there was no immediate suffering previous to the time when the compensation payments would begin, as the cold spell had come on unexpectedly early, and some of the families were found in very bad shape as no special provision had been made for the winter. The nurses carefully investigated all cases, and fuel, provisions and clothing were furnished to the families who actually need it so far as it was possible to ascertain by investigation.

The five families that did not sign the compensation papers, were given emergency relief with the understanding this was not given based on the signing of the compensation papers, but Cleveland-Cliffs could not continue the relief work indefinitely, and it would not be continued indefinitely to those who did not fill out the compensation papers, but there may be certain cases where this cannot be strictly lived up to, to avoid any real suffering.

The Women's Service Club through their Ward Chairman, have visited many of these families and have also given Cleveland-Cliffs a report upon their findings. The Marquette Chapter of the American Red Cross appropriated \$500 for the use of Mrs. Johnson, the nurse, to provide those things which she may find are required, as she visits these families. One new baby was born since the accident and three more were expected between that time and spring.

Individuals and organizations of all kinds have been very helpful and their services were offered in any way which Cleveland-Cliffs could use them.

Careful records were immediately prepared showing the families, names and ages of the children and their condition, and record has been kept of whom they have been visited by and when. The compensation agreements were secured with less difficulty than Cleveland-Cliffs at first though possible based on the fact that the bodies of the men had not been recovered. In the majority of the cases, the women looked at the compensation as very reasonable, and in many cases, they expressed their appreciation of what the company had done for them.

The following letter from Mrs. Walter Tippett indicated the general feeling among people:

*Ishpeming, Michigan  
December 3, 1926*

*Mr. Moulton:*

*Dear Sir:-*

*I wish to tell you that I am truly grateful for what I have received from the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. The thoughts that I am not entirely dependent on my dear old dad, through the kind consideration of the Company make my troubles easier to bear.*

*Walter absolutely knew no fear, and he has gone as he wished. On his legs, like a man; and I wish to be as brave as he was, and face whatever comes to me. But it would be much harder to stand up under, were it not for the help I am receiving from the C.C.I. Co.*

*The days are getting harder to bear on account of the loneliness, and the nights are practically sleepless. When sleep does come, waking only brings stern realization and a renewed battle for strength to withstand the grief. I will try my utmost to live up to one of Walter's sayings, "I may be down, but I'm never out."*

*With many thanks from a grateful heart, I am*

*Sincerely,*

*Mrs. Walter Tippett*



Barnes Hecker Disaster  
November 3, 1926  
Roster

Name	Married or Single	Children Under 16	Weekly Compensation	Balance Due
Norman Aho	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Peter Carlyon	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Raymond Carlyon	Single	None	\$4.06	\$1,218.00
William Carlyon	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Edward Chapman	Married	5	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Herman Chapman	Single	None	\$7.24	\$2,172.00
Thomas Drew	Single		\$7.00	\$2,100.00
Peter Durocha	Married	5	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Earl J. Ellersick	Married	4	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Gust Frendi	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Joseph Gelmi	Married	5	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Thomas Greene	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Henry Haapala	Married	3	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Jack J. Hanna	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Arvid Heino	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Nels Hill	Married	2	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
William Huot	Married	7	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Frank Jokinen	Single	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
William Kakkuri	Single	None	\$4.06	\$1,218.00
David Kallio	Married	2	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Thomas Kirby, Sr.	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Thomas Kirby, Jr.	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Uno Koskinen	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Theodore Kiuru	Single	None	\$4.82	\$1,446.00
Ed Laituri	Married	2	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
George Lampshire	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Richard Lampshire	Widower	4	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
John Luoma	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Emil Mackie	Married	5	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Joseph Mankee	Single	None	\$4.06	\$1,218.00
Walter Mattila	Married	2	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Solomon Millimaki	Married	3	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Peter Mongiat	Married	5	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Sam Phillippi	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Harry Quayle	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Elias Ranta	Married	6	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
John Santti	Married	4	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
James Scopel	Married	3	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Clement Simoneau	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Nester Sulonen	Married	2	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Eric Timo	Married	6	\$14.00	\$4,200.00
Walter Tippett	Married	4	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
William F. Tippett	Married	None	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
William Tuomela	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Louis Trudell	Married	7	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
Nick Valenti	Married	7	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Solomon Valimaa	Married	6	\$14.00	\$4,116.00

## Barnes Hecker Disaster

November 3, 1926

## Roster

Name	Married or Single	Children Under 16	Weekly Compensation	Balance Due
Harvey Vepsola	Single	None	\$6.59	\$1,977.00
Albert Vickman	Single	None		
John Wiljanen	Married	1	\$14.00	\$4,116.00
William Hill	Married	4	\$14.00	\$4,102.00
Total Compensation				\$184,445.00

Listed below are the men who lost their lives in the Barnes-Hecker Disaster on November 3, 1926:

**ISHPEMING**

William E. Hill, County Mine  
Inspector\*  
Raymond Carlyon  
Albert Vickman  
Frank Jokinen  
Edward Chapman, and son  
Herman Chapman  
Ed Timo  
Louis Trudell  
Emil Maki  
Harry Quayle  
Herman Aho  
Arvid Kallio  
Frank Henio, and son  
Arvid Henio  
Uno Koskinen  
Gust Frendi  
George Lampshire, and  
Richard Lampshire brothers  
Ed Laituri  
Theodore Kiuru  
John Wiljanen  
Walter Mattila  
Henry Haapala\*  
William Carlyon, and  
Peter Carlyon brothers  
William Tuomela  
Earl J. Ellersick  
Clement Simoneau  
Jack J. Hanna\*  
John Luoma\*  
Solomon Millimaki  
Thomas Kirby, Sr.\* and son  
Thomas Kirby, Jr.\*  
James Green

**NORTH LAKE**

Salomon Valimaa  
Nestor Sulonen  
Elias Ranta  
James Scopel  
William Kakkuri  
William Huot\*

**DIORITE**

Harvey Vespola

**WEST ISHPEMING**

Walter Tippett, brother of  
captain

**BARNES-HECKER**

Captain William Tippett\*  
Sam Phillippi  
Nels Hill\*  
John Santti  
Peter Mongiatt  
Joseph Mankee\*  
Thomas Drew

\*-bodies recovered

**SOUTH GREENWOOD**

Nick Valenti  
Joseph Gelmi

**FOUR-MILE CARP**

Peter Durocha

## GLOSSARY

- Breast - the end of a drift
- Cage - an elevator used to transport men and supplies in a shaft
- Cage Tender - a person who takes care of loading and unloading supplies on a cage
- Carbide Lamps - lights that miners wore on their hard hats; it was an open flame light that was fed by acetylene gas
- Cribbing - wooden logs cut to size and notched on ends to line a raise in a Lincoln-log effect
- Drift - a tunnel in an underground mine
- Dry House - a building where a miner changes into and out of his work clothes
- Dryman - a custodian of a dry house
- Pocket - a measuring device that is filled with ore which is dumped into the skip
- Raise - a passage way for men or materials in an underground mine, usually a vertical passage way
- Skip - A self-dumping type of apparatus that is used in a shaft to hoist iron ore

BARNES HECKER  
SHAFT

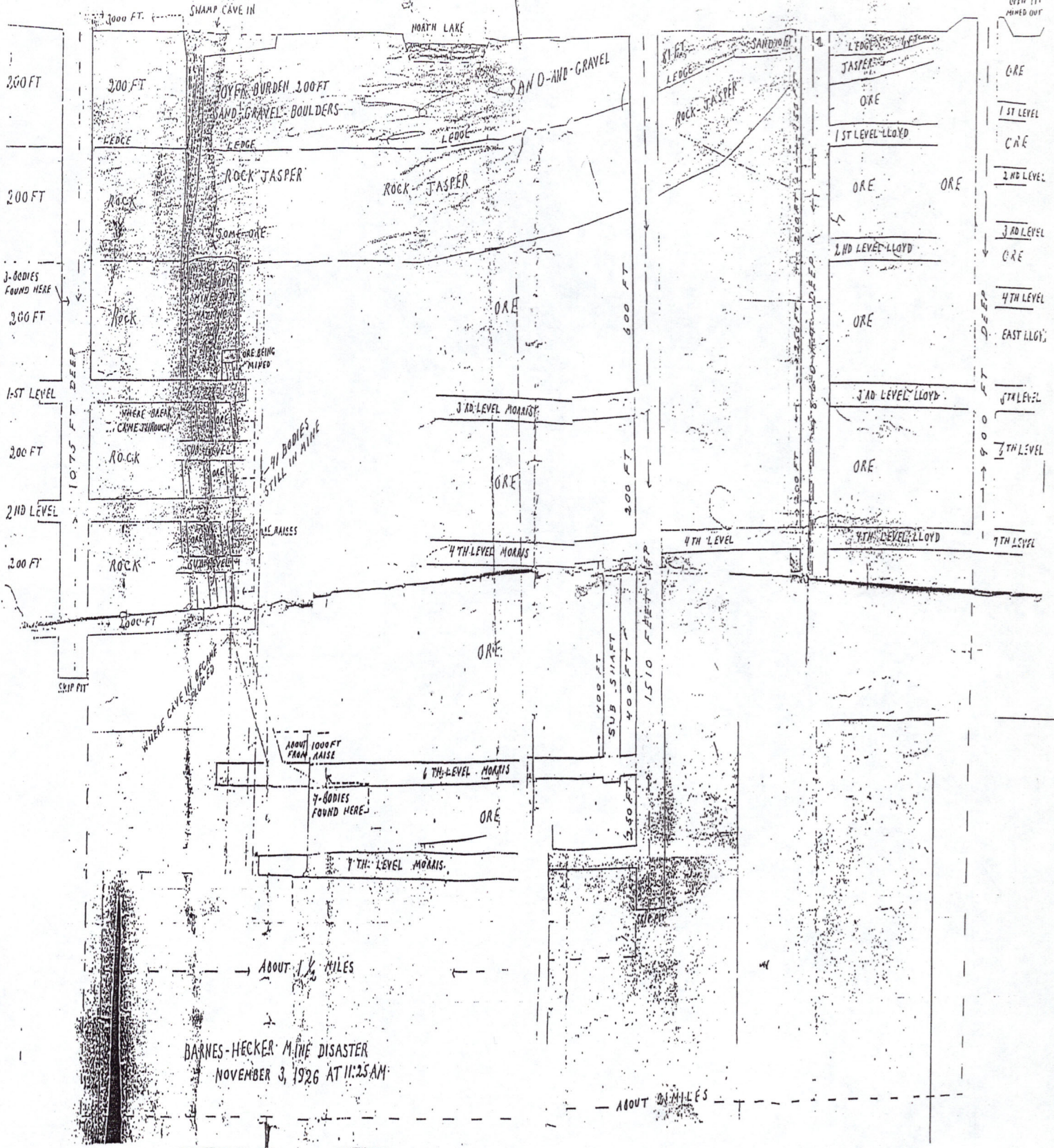
1926

MORRIS  
SHAFT

LLOYD  
SHAFT

EAST LLOYD  
SHAFT

OPEN PIT  
MINED OUT



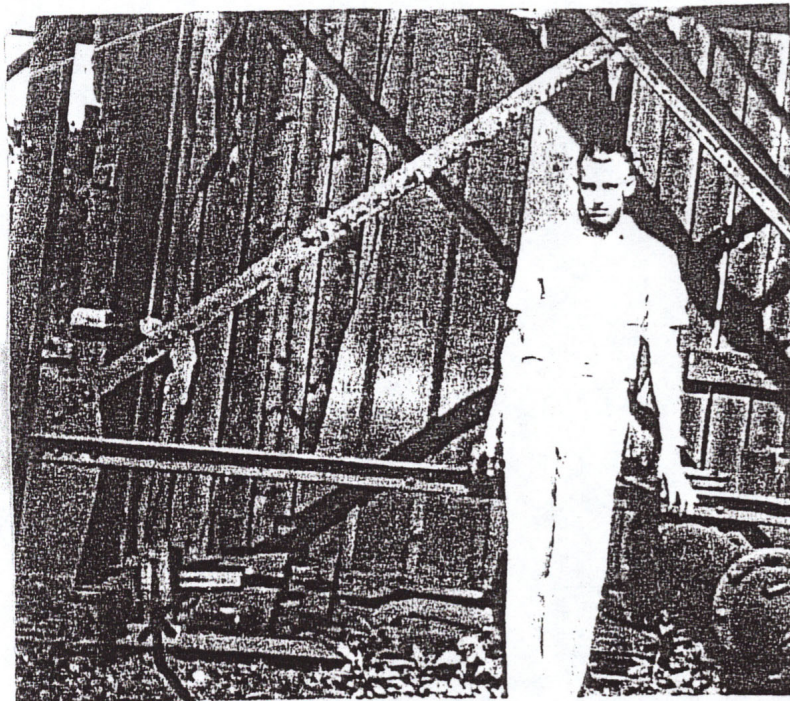
BARNES-HECKER MINE DISASTER  
NOVEMBER 3, 1926 AT 11:25AM

ABOUT 1/2 MILES



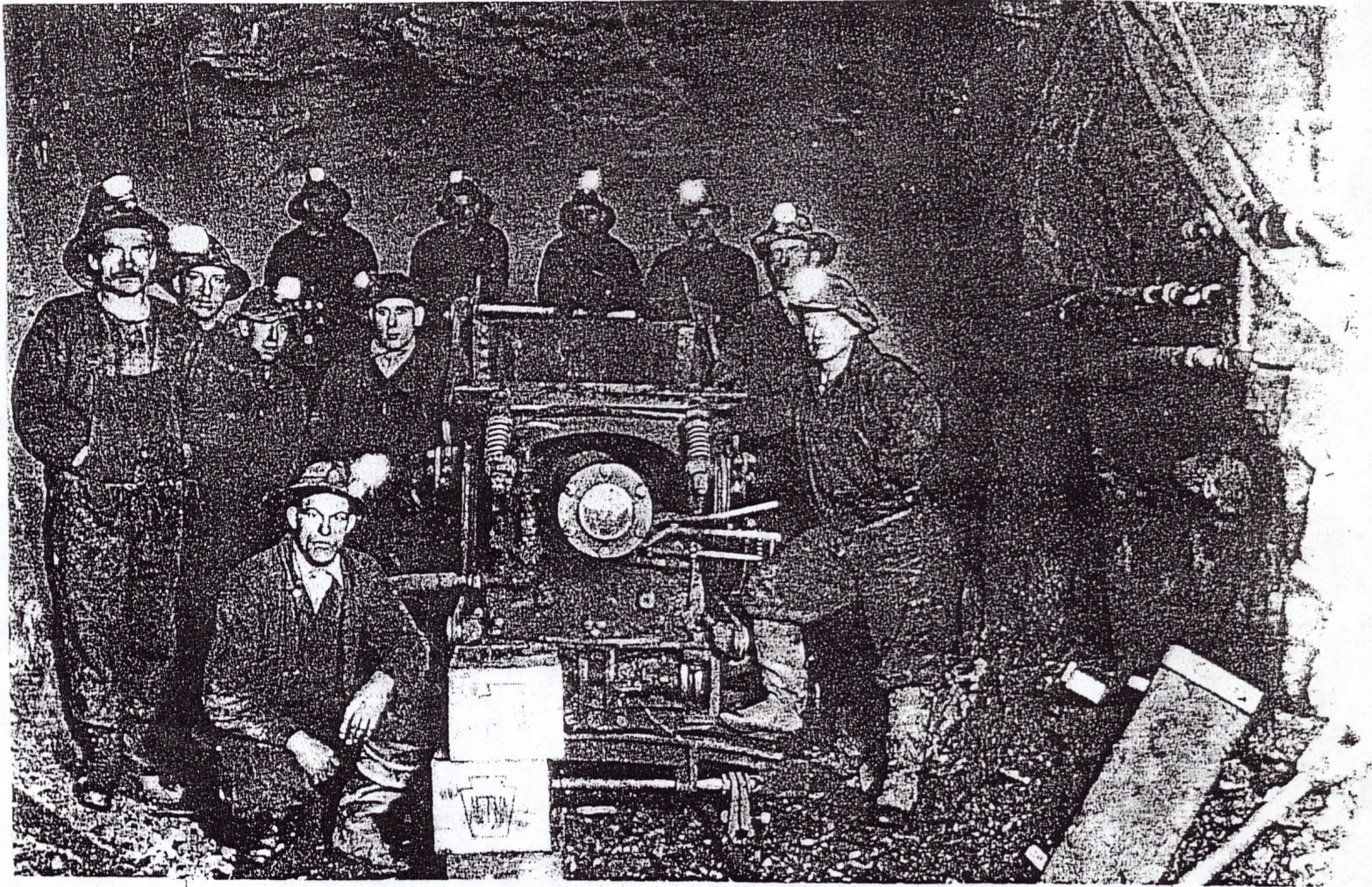
**PICTURE TAKEN SHORTLY AFTER THE TRAGEDY**

This Section of Swamp Bottom Collapsed Into Mine



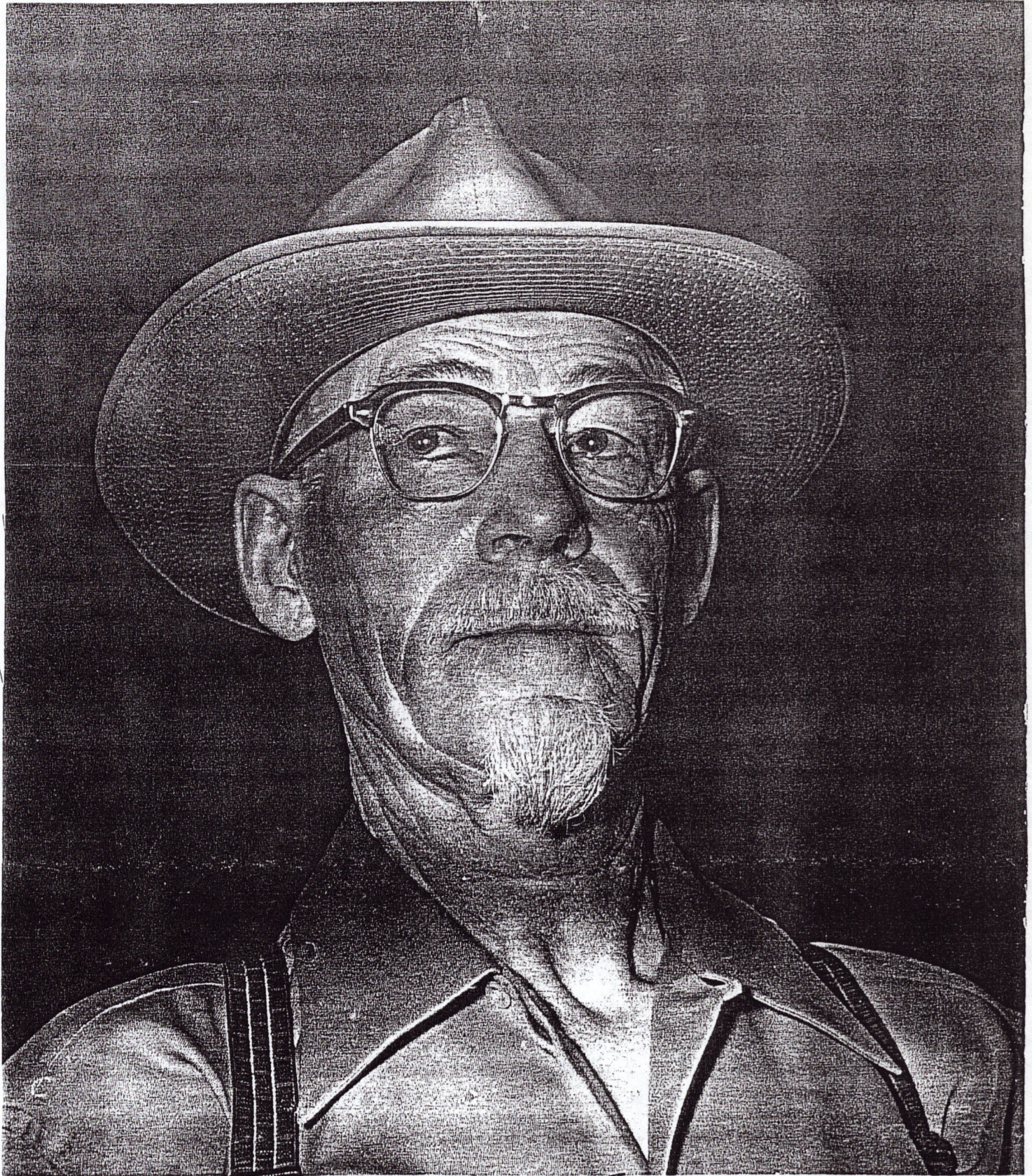
**LADDER**

This is a photo from Rutherford Wills' scrapbok showing him about the time of the disaster, when he was 23 years old. Wills has indicated on the snapshot where the ladder he climbed to safety was located.



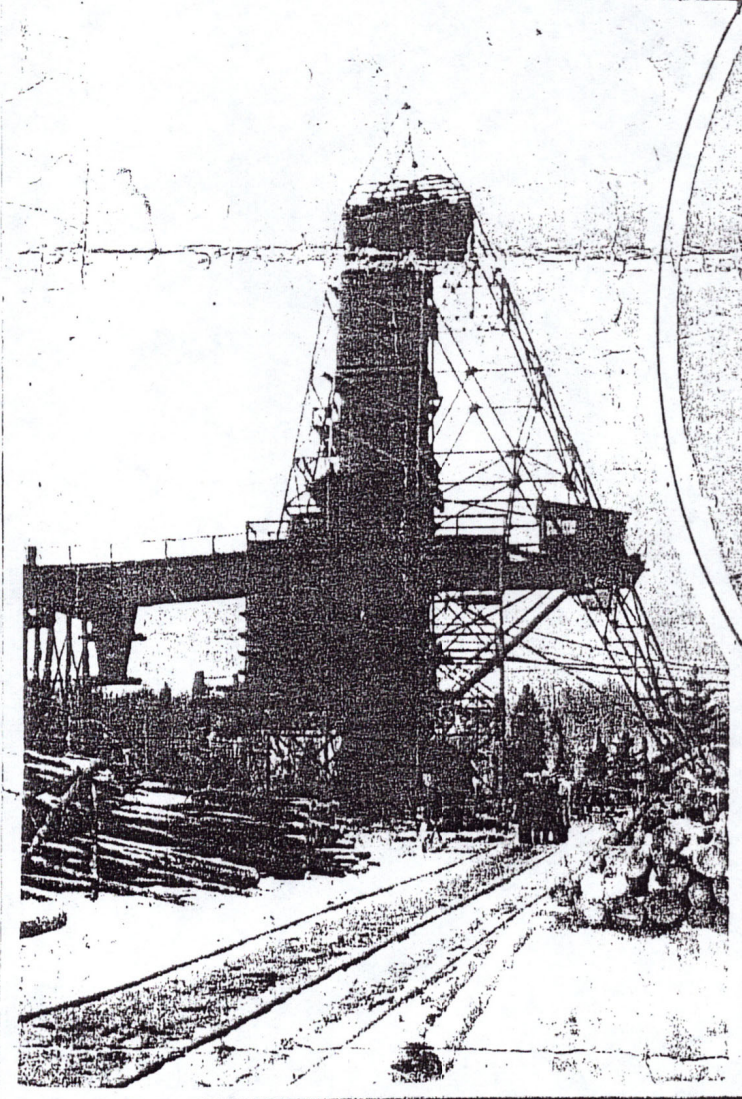
▲  
 CAPT. BILL TIPPETT

This scene was photographed six months before the tragic accident inside the Barnes-Hecker Mine. Many of the men pictured here lost their lives. Diagram at left shows the elevations and some of the strategic points connected with the accident and Rutherford Wills' scramble to the surface. He emerged the lone survivor of the tragedy. (Photo from Marquette County Historical Society collection)



MY DAD, JOHN E. WALLBERG  
(Picture taken in 1954 Ishpeming Centennial Celebration)



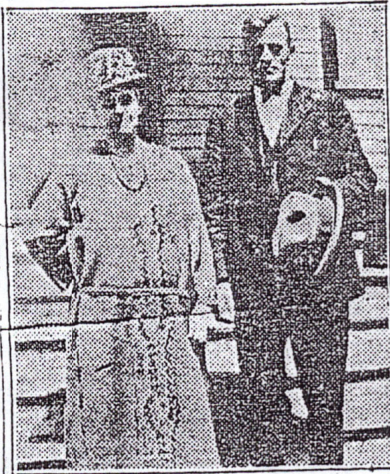


This shows the main entrance to the shaft of the Barnes-Hecker mine, located eight miles west of Ishpeming, Mich., where 51 men were lost when the huge swamp caved in.



Rutherford Wills, 23 years old, sole survivor of the mine disaster. Wills was at work on the second level when water came flooding down the main shaft and into the mine levels. Quick to realize his danger, he rushed to the shaft and began an 800-foot climb against the onrushing water, and reached the surface safely. His fellow workers, not so fortunate, became imprisoned in the flooded levels, and perished.

# Lost Two Sons

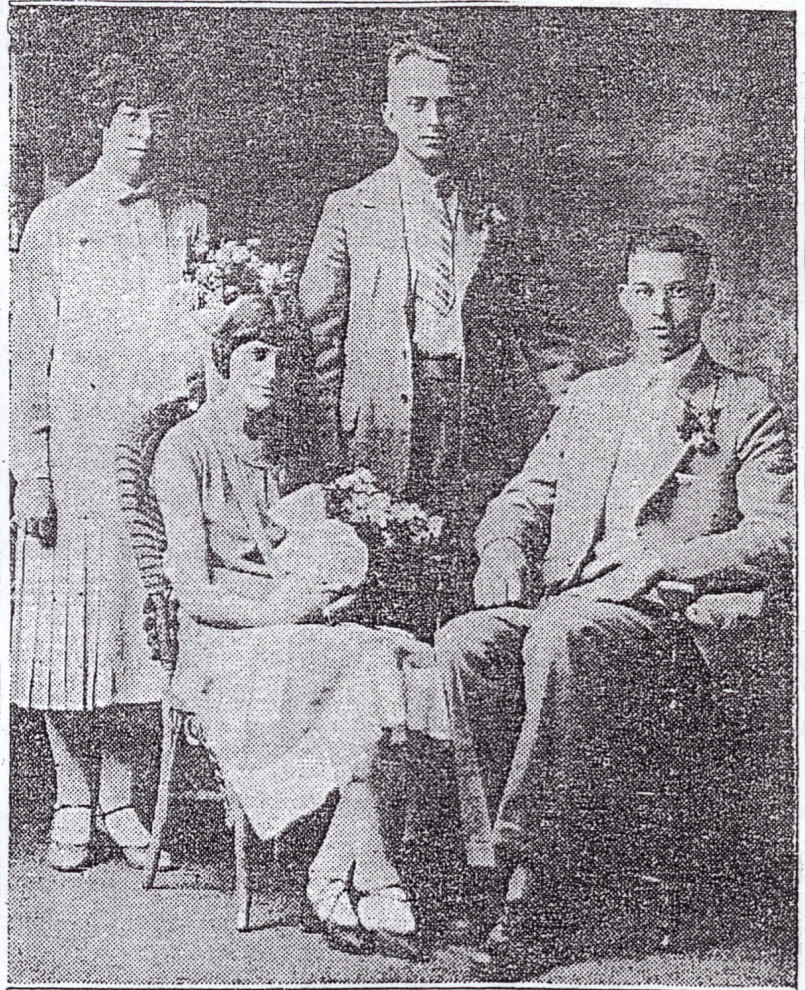


CAPT. WILLIAM TIPPETT AND MOTHER.



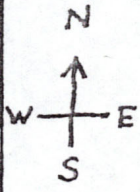
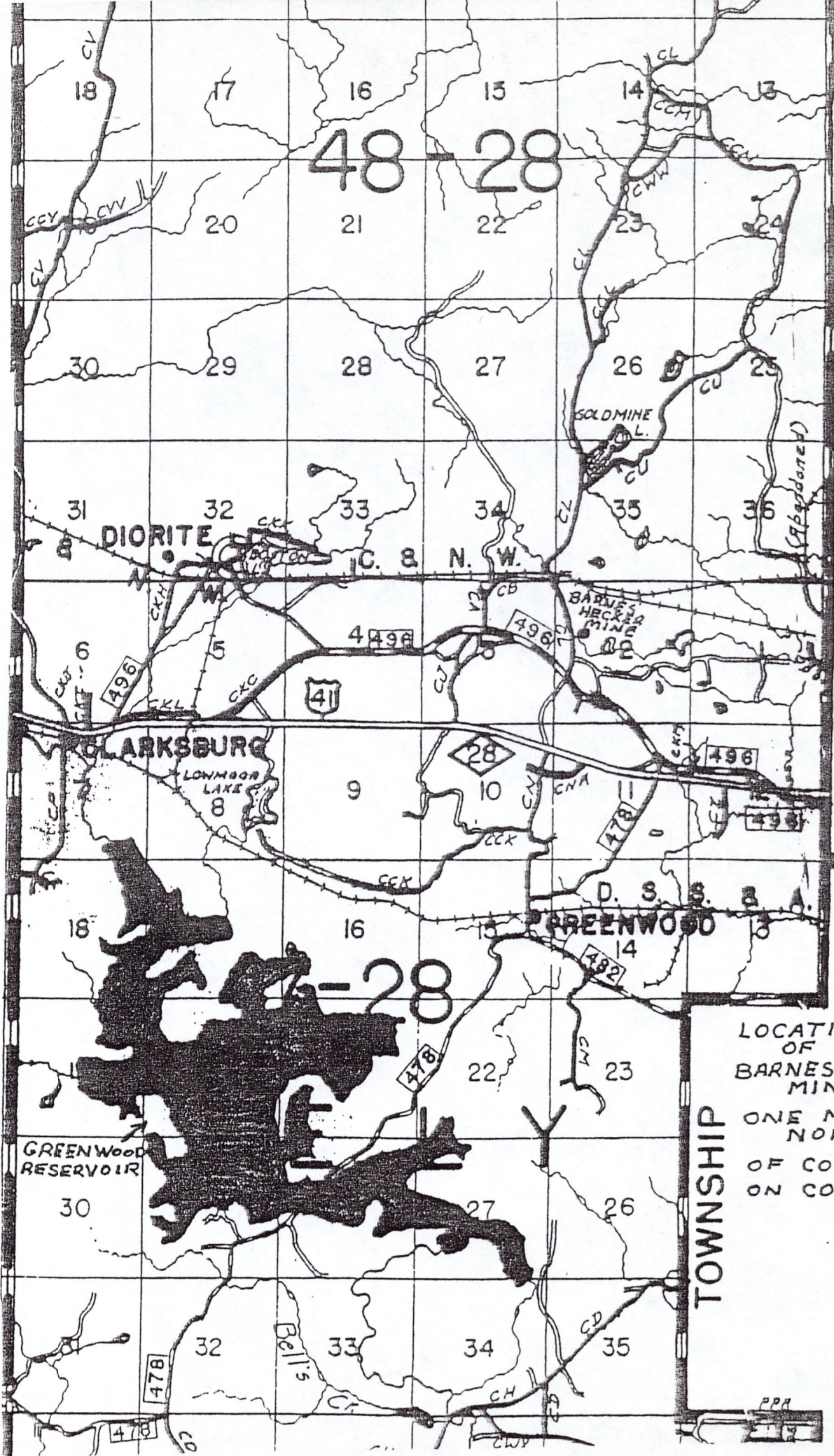
WALTER TIPPETT.

Two stalwart sons in the Tippet family, of Ishpeming, were killed in the Barnes-Hecker mine disaster Wednesday. One was William Tippet, captain of the mine, and the other his brother, Walter, who had started his first day of work in the Barnes-Hecker only a few hours before the cave-in. Captain Tippet's body was one of the seven recovered Wednesday, but Walter's is still in the mine.



Seated at the lower right in this picture is Rutherford (Wilfred) Wills, only man in the Barnes-Hecker mine when the cave-in occurred who escaped with his life. He was on the second level when the mine began to fill with water and muck and he climbed 800 feet up the shaft ladder with the water rising at his heels. Next to him in the picture in his bride, formerly Miss Bruna Phillipi, to whom he was married two months ago. Mrs. Wills' father, Sam Phillipi, shift boss in the Barnes-Hecker, was lost in the disaster and his body has not been recovered. The couple standing in the picture are Miss Margarete Tippet and Joseph Mankee. Mankee's body is also in the mine. He was on the second level with Wills when the cave-in occurred and started to follow Wills up the shaft ladder, but the ladder broke off above him and he dropped to his doom. Miss Tippet is the daughter of the late Captain Tippet, captain of the mine, whose body was one of the first seven recovered. Walter Tippet, brother of the captain, whose body is still in the mine, was Miss Tippet's uncle. Rutherford Wills is a half-brother of the Tippetts. The picture above was taken at the time of the Phillipi-Wills wedding. Miss Tippet and Mankee were the attendants to the bride and groom.





ISHPEMING

TOWNSHIP

48-28

48-28

LOCATION OF BARNES HECKER MINE - ONE MILE NORTH OF CO. RD 496 ON CO. RD CL

DIORITE

BARNES HECKER MINE

CLARKSBURG

GREENWOOD

GREENWOOD RESERVOIR

GOLDMINE L.

(Abandoned)

C. & N. W.

D. S. S. B. A.

Bell's

PPA