

[CORONER.]

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1885
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INQUISITION.

Dominion of Canada
Province of British Columbia }
County or District of Nanaimo

An Inquisition indented taken at Wellington

British Columbia, the 30th day of April in the forty eighth
year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lady Victoria, before me, Daniel G. Lanes, M. D.,

gentleman, one of the Coroners for our Lady the Queen, for

the District of Nanaimo aforesaid, upon the view of the body of John Paul
and the body of Ah Yan (Chinaman) then and there and within the jurisdiction of the
said Coroner, lying dead, upon the oaths of

William Beveridge (foreman) John S. Edwards
Duncan McArthur, John W. Ross,
Benjamin Shearing and Thomas White

good and lawful men of Wellington aforesaid, in the said district or
County of Nanaimo, who being now here sworn and charged to enquire, on the part of our

said Lady the Queen, when, where, how, and after what manner, the said John Paul
and Ah Yan (Chinaman) came to ^{their} death, do say upon their oath, that the said

John Paul and Ah Yan (Chinaman) came to
their deaths by suffocation from a fire in
the Number Four (4) Shaft at Wellington
on December 30th 1884.

(2)

3

IN WITNESS whereof, as well the aforesaid Coroner as the Jurors aforesaid, have to this
Inquisition put their seals, on the day and year and at the place first above-mentioned.

William Beveridge

John D. Edwards

Bureau Weather

John W. Ross

Benjamin Hearing

Thomas White



W. G. G. M. D.

Coroner.



First Witness:

4

John Fraser sworn deposed, an workman working at the No 4 shaft, Wellington; I know the deceased John Paul during his life time; I have examined the body of the man just brought up from the No 4 shaft and recognize it as the body of the late John Paul; John Paul was a miner working in the No 4 shaft, saw John Paul alive going down the No 4 shaft on Dec. 30th 1884; I have heard his fellows say he was a Cornishman; should judge his age to be about 20 or 25 years; know nothing about the fire in the No 4 shaft.

John Fraser

Taken before me at Wellington
B. C. this 30th day of April, A.D. 1885.

D. C. G. M. D. Crown.

the Chairman

Second Witness:

5

Robert Scott sworn deposes that a fireman of the No 4 Shaft, Wellington, on the 30th December 1884 about 20 minutes to 6 p.m., a young man came to my home and told me there was a big fire in No 4, then started off and went to the office; went to the No 4 Shaft on the locomotive; made the necessary preparations and went down the No 4 shaft & Mr Bryden (Manager) Mr F Little and others; went at once to the fire, which was about 70 feet from the bottom of the shaft; we could see at a glance that we could do nothing to extinguish the fire as it had gained too much headway; before we could have done anything the fire would cut us off from returning up the shaft; I then wanted Mr Bryden to go up to the top as I was told all the men were out of the mine except my son John Scott; could not get Mr Bryden to go up without me so I went with him; we all went up on that trip of the cage; F Little, John Stewart John McNeil and myself went down into the mine again; while we were consulting at the head of the slope going to No 3 on the south side; My son John Scott then came to the level where we were standing; was asked J. Scott if all the men were out and he said there was no one in so far as he went, and then as far as Grundy's place, Grundy is the name of a miner that was working in No 4 shaft; J. Scott said he knew there was something wrong or Grundy would have been in his place; J. Scott then ran for the shaft bottom till he was overcome with the smoke; he fell but succeeded in making his way back through the door again; J. Scott struck a light and got up through the air shaft; and

6
he then came down the level to us; by that time Mr. Bryden
came down the No 4 shaft again; there was quite a number
of men came down the mine then, including Mr. Haygart
and Mr. Ross from No 3 shaft; I then supposed that
all were out of the mine, and the others present concurred
in that opinion; we then made our way to the No 3
shaft; and came to the surface there; hied at once
from No 3 shaft to the top of No 4 shaft; we then
saw that nothing could be done but cover up
the No 4 and No 3 shafts; we proceeded with that
work as rapidly as possible; the mine remained covered
up for about 30 days after the water was turned in; the
water was turned in about 3 weeks after the fire commenced;
about 8 or 9 o'clock on the evening the fire was discovered Mr
& Huffatt called me aside and told me John Paul was
not at home; by this time the No 4 shaft was partly
covered and the flames coming up the shaft; I then
told Huffatt that if Paul was not at home he would never
come home; as nothing could save anybody who was in the
mine at that time; the mine stood full of water till
we commenced to pump the water about the middle of March;
we discovered the bodies of John Paul and his chimneyman
at 8 o'clock this morning on the fourth level of the
No 4 shaft, Wellington; the body of John Paul was
lying about fifty yards from this shaft; the body
was lying alongside that of John Paul; I notified Mr. Bryden
that the bodies had been found; this was 9:30 o'clock
this morning; Mr. Bryden then sent word to Mr. St. Luke,
Government Inspector of Mines; I then came back to No
4 shaft and made preparations to get the bodies out;
a part of a cause had to be cleared away before we could
get the bodies out; about 2 o'clock this afternoon the
Mining Inspector, Mr. Bryden, Mr. Little and myself went
into where the bodies were; we then proceeded to get the
Robert Seale

Second Witness - Robert Scott. Continued -

bodies to the surface and had them brought out by about 5 o'clock this afternoon; the bodies were badly decomposed; in my opinion John Paul and the Chinaman Ah Yan, came to their deaths in the No 4 shaft Wellington from suffocation by the smoke arising from the fire; I do not know where the fire originated in the mine, I was home at the time it commenced;

By Mr. A. Deek, Government Inspector:

There is a good travelling way between No. 4 and No 3 shafts; by following the slope from No 4 takes you on to the No 2 level in No 3 shaft; the slope is on the South side of No 4 shaft; I am of the opinion that the fire originated back of the little engine on the North side of No. 4 shaft; John Paul worked on the North side of the shaft; John Paul had been working about a month; he was well acquainted with the mine by going to and from his own place; had John Paul been acquainted with the mine and left in time he could have got out of the mine without going past the fire; if he had followed the air he could have got out provided he left before the smoke overtook him; Robert Scott

Taken before me at Wellington BC
this 26th day of April A.D. 1885

D. Chasford, D. Coroner

Third Witness

8

James Shackle, sworn deposed, work
in No 4 shaft as fireman and reside at
Wellington; knew the deceased John Paul
in his life time, I recognized ^{the body of} Paul in No 4
Shaft this morning as the body of John Paul;
I have heard the evidence of Robert Scott and
corroborate his statements in reference to the
finding of the bodies of John Paul and the
Chinaman at the Lane, in every particular; I
went down the mine on Dec 30th with Robert
Scott on his second trip and corroborate the statements
made by him in reference to the fire.

James Shackle

Taken before me at Wellington B.C.,
this 30th day of April A.D. 1885

W. Cheape, M.D. Coroner.

Fourth Witness

9

William Drew, sworn deponent, - am a mule driver and reside at Wellington; I was driving mules in the No 4 Shaft, Wellington on Dec 30th 1884; I was sitting in the engine house on the north side of the bottom of the shaft; I heard a noise in the back of the brattice at the back of the ~~the~~ engine; I first thought the noise was caused by a Chinaman; I had seen a Chinaman in there before and that was why I thought it was a Chinaman; I drew back the slide doors of the brattice and saw that all the brattice on the inside was on fire; I then told Thomas Richard the Engineer; Richard told me to go and tell the men to come out; I first went down the little slope and ^{W. Bennie} and ^{G. Gunn} to come out; then went into Grundy's level and told Grundy and Paul to come out; then into Peden's level and told Hanner to come out also Home Stevens, Sam Samson, and Dick Peden; then I went outside and came up No 4 Shaft; these men all said "all right" when I told them to go out; John Paul and this Chinaman were getting ready to fire a shot; Paul answered me and said "all right"; so I passed on quickly; I did not see if Paul made any attempt to leave his stall; it was about 15 minutes after I first heard the noise behind the brattice before I opened the slide doors; I was waiting for the Chinaman to take some timber off the cage; I heard the noise all the time during that 15 minutes I was waiting; before I opened the door I thought the noise was caused by a Chinaman; the Chinaman

that I saw behind the brattice before were drying their socks on the steam pipe; this was about two weeks before the fire that I saw the Chinaman drying his socks; I could see far ahead for the brattice was all on fire; I do not know what caused the brattice to ignite; I can give no reason for the fire;

By the Inspector:

I told Paul that the brattice was on fire outside; It took me about 5 minutes to go through all the ~~levels~~ ^{levels} after I left Paul; I then came out the main level; saw the fire as I came out and the brattice had fallen down; from the shaft to the door was full of smoke; have never been through the slide door that I drew back in the brattice;

By the Foreman:

Was close to the slide door the afternoon of the fire but did not go through the door; Richard went to the shaft when he told me to go to the men; Richard did not attempt to put the fire out; I took one bucket but finding I could not get into the fire I told Richard;

By Mr. Brydges -

The Chinaman I saw through the door was one of Sharps Chinaman; he went in there to dry his socks, they got them wet in the "runup" in the slope; the Chinaman was pumping, and breaking the ice his foot slipped in; the Chinaman was on the 11 shaft's shaft; that was the only Chinaman I ever saw behind the door; I do not know why the Chinaman went inside when he could dry on the steam pipe

on the outside of the door; Paul was drilling when I went to him; one of the Chinaman that was with me went into Grundy's level and I went into Paul's; I told Paul to come out as the brattice was on fire and he answered "all right"; I do not know whether the Chinaman understood what I said or not; Paul did not say anything to me about going a shot before he came out; I did not ^{know} on which side of the stall Paul was at drilling.

By Mr. R. Scott:

When I told Richard he went and looked at the fire told me to go and tell the men, and he (Richard) went to the shaft; Richard did not attempt to put the fire out or call any one to assist him; Richard helped the Chinaman to take the timber of the cage; I opened both the slide doors; the back of the brattice ^{was on fire} and the fan was drawing the flames all up; I did not try to put the fire out with a sack, there was no sack there.

William D. Dew

Taken before me at Wellington, N. Z.
this 30th day of April A.D. 1885.

D. Charles J. Smith. Coroner.

Fifth Witness

12

Samuel Lawson, sworn deposed - am a
man working in the No. 4 ^{shaft} shaft, Wellington;
and was working there on Dec. 30th, 1884;
I was working in my stall and between 5 and
6 o'clock in the afternoon and Dennis boy came
and told me that the brattice was on fire put
logs; I had my squib lit in the hole at the time
that Dennis boy came in; I told him to keep back
as I was firing; he then told me about the
brattice being on fire; before the shot went off
I alarmed Dick Peden, who was about 20 yards
from me; I then sent my chinaman out, and went
back to my own place to see that I left no fire;
then I put my clothes on and went up two
headings between my stall and the shaft to alarm
two men working there, but they had gone; I
then went out; past the fire to the shaft; there
were 3 or 4 men waiting at the bottom of the shaft
and I went up with them; the men I went to
alarm I found at the bottom shaft; when
I part the fire it was of large dimensions and the
air was playing strong on the fire; I supposed
the stoppings had been burnt down; I thought
at that time the fire had so much heading that
it would be impossible to put it out; have no
idea how the fire originated; Paul's stall was further
in than mine;

My Mr. Scott - Dennis boy told me that he had warned
Paul and the others before he came to me;
I left in about 3 minutes after Dennis boy
told me; I cannot say that I could see the little
engine when I passed; If I had been a minute or

two later I believe I could have got the fire, Grundy
was on top when I arrived there, Richard was on
top when I got there; the fire was not shown
on the level when I passed;

Daniel Dawson.

Taken before me at Wellington B.C.,
this 30th day of April, A.D. 1885

D. Clewaf, M.D. Coroner.

132

Little Victims

14

Thomas Rickard, sworn, deposed - am a miner; was driving an engine on Dec 30th 1884 at No 4 shaft, Wellington; I was on the afternoon shift; when I got down into the mine I went to the engine I was working at as usual; there was not much dring and I was going to stand a post under the bed of the engine; went over to the other side of the shaft and went down the slope to where the little engine hauls for; I there ~~harrowed~~ ~~over~~ ~~and~~ saw and saw from one of the miners; I came up again, passed the little engine, and I think there were two Chinamen standing there at the time; I don't remember whether Green's boy was there or not; I came back to the engine I work at, and got a timber and sawed it in two for a post; while I was standing the post a Chinaman came and told me there was a fire over in the little engine house; I dropped the things I was at and went over; when I got as far as the shaft I told the Chinamen to come along with their buckets; they said to heed to me and I went to where the fire was; when I saw the fire I considered for a little while what would be best to do; I believe Green's boy was with me then; I did not see any possible way to put the fire out and I don't think I could have put it out if I had a hose; I then thought about the men and told Green's boy to go down the little slope and get Bennie and Dunn out; then went back to the shaft to see about the Chinamen.

taking the timbers of the cage; then went back again to where the fire was; by this time Green's boy was out from the slope again, having warned the first two men; then told him to go inside and get all the men out and he went to do it; I then again came back to the shaft and found some men there; the Chimamen were excited and I helped them to get the timber off the cage; I then got in the cage with a number of men and went up; the fire was in the brattice at the back part of the engine house; I cannot say how the fire originated, I do not think the fire was caused by the steam pipes;

By Mr. Byrd - Do not think it was possible for a few men to put the fire out with buckets; I thought the men were all out before I left; I did not see any appearance of fire as I was coming up the slope; it might be half an hour between the time of my coming up the slope and the Chimamen telling me of the fire; if the fire had been on the outside of the brattice I would have seen it when I was coming up the slope; saw two Chimamen behind the engine & the brattice; I can't say whether Green's boy was standing there or not;

By Mr. Leck - Made no attempt to put the fire out as I thought it would be impossible to extinguish the flames; there was only time to get the men out;

By Mr. Scott - The brattice is about 9 feet high and I cannot tell the width; the brattice was burning and some of it had fallen and the flames were blowing it up the

incline; I could not have put the fire out; I don't remember seeing Green's boy when I came past; don't know whether Peden and Samson were out before I left the shaft bottom; it has been my duty to run that engine on the afternoon shift when required; was required to run it when it was working; did not hear any that night with the engine nor out of the little slope; there was never stationed there to run the engine on the afternoon shift but one
Thomas Richard

Taken before me at Wellington N.Z.,
the 30th day of April A.D. 1885.

W. C. J. M.D. Coroner.