AMAZING ESCAPES AS THE FLOOD CAME

Telephone Girl Who Got First Word of the Break Found Refuge on Hillside.

FATHER OWES LIFE TO BABY

Thrilling Experiences in the Bayless Mill—How the Rushing Torrent Looked to Survivors.

AUSTIN, Penn., Oct. 1.—Lena Binokey, the central telephone operator who got the first word that the dam was breaking from Harry Davis, the Buffalo & Susquehanna engineer, was not killed. After sending in an alarm she rushed into the street, screaming, "The dam has broken!" and fled for her life toward the steep hillside at the north end of Main Street. Turning toward the valley, she saw the great wall of water descending upon the town.

"From where I stood," she said to-day, "the wall of water seemed fifty feet high. Above it rose a great cloud of spray in which houses seemed to toss, bumping against one another, spinning and turning as they fell to pieces or were swept out of sight. The noise was appalling.

"When I fled from Main Street there were scores of people behind me, many of them children. They did not seem to appreciate the imminence of their danger.

"Some turned into stores as if to make a casual purchase. While I was looking down upon them, utterly helpless to give further warning, the cloud of mist that seemed to precede the flood hid them from view, and a moment later the green water buried the houses from my sight."

Boyd Lockhard, a young business man, said that when he heard the alarm given he thought some one was playing a practical joke, and he went to the street to watch the people's actions. He looked in the direction of the dam and saw the oncoming flood but three blocks away.

Like a Wall of Wood.

"It looked like a wall of wood, twenty-five feet high," he said. "At first glance I did not see the water at all because the wood at the pulp mill was carried before the water, and became a sort of battering ram that tore away the buildings. I ran toward the hill, and by the greatest effort got above the level of the water while it was surging within ten feet of me. The ground began to give way under me, but I managed to clamber a few feet further."

James Leeman, a night worker, was asleep at his home, and did not hear the alarm. When the rush of water swallowed up his little home, he was tossed out upon a pile of floating debris, and eventually floated to a landing a mile and a half below the village. Wounded and bruised, he made his way back, only to find that his wife and four children had perished. Leeman went insane.

W. D. Robertson, another night worker, watchman at the Bayless Mill, was asleep in the third story of the Starkweather building when aroused by the roar of the flood. He stepped out on a balcony commanding a view of the onrushing waters.

"Houses were tossing about like corks," he said. "I was transfixed with horror, unable to make a move to save myself. The entire building lurched forward and then collapsed. I fell two stories with the building, and found myself protected by a bridge which had formed by the wedging timbers. I made good my escape, and I am mighty glad to be here to tell about it. I have three little kiddies in Erie. Thank God they were not here." Robertson was badly injured.

Frank Robinson, a one-armed stenographer, was also on the third story of the Starkweather building. He said he heard the fire whistle, but paid no attention to it, and the first thing he knew the floor gave way beneath him, and the whole building fairly lurched across the street. He was hurled through a window and landed on top of some débris, on which he floated to safety.

Saved by Saving Baby.

Thomas Lawler, a bartender at the Commercial Hotel, says he owes his life to his attempt to save his baby daughter. He told his story to-day as he lay on a cot in the hospital with both legs broken.

"I was upstairs in my home on Railroad Street," he said, "playing with my eight-months-old daughter. My wife and little boy were downstairs. Without warning the roof caved in over my head, and then with the rising water it floated away. Instinctively I grabbed my baby, and when I found myself floating along with the wreck of the house, I held her above my head.

"I caught hold of the side of my house and pushed the baby on it, and held on tight. All around me was a sea of slabs. It was all over in three or four minutes, but it seemed years. The part of the house I was clinging to was rammed with terrific impact into the hills, where I scrambled ashore with both legs broken. How I dragged myself to the hospital with the baby I don't know, but I did."

Lawler's wife and boy were drowned.

Robert Cransie tells of an amazing escape. "I was about 100 feet below the dam when it gave way," he said. "I saw the wall of water rushing down upon me, and although it poured over me at least thirty feet high, it threw me flat on the ground. Somehow I came bobbing up to the top of the twisting, gurgling mass, and grabbed the branches of a tree as it shot past me. I was rescued while clinging to it last night."

In the Bayless Mill.

Employes of the Bayless Pulp and Paper Mill had thrilling experiences. There were 250 hands at work when the flood came. Fifty of them were young women employed on the first floor. It is thought that all but five of these escaped. A dozen were injured.

M. A. Devereaux, who was in the grinding room, grasped the shafting above him when he saw the wall of the mill cave in. The whirling countershaft caused him to lose his grip, and he sank into the water. He was again tossed up and caught in the tangled machinery, from which he was rescued after calling for two hours for help. He was taken to the hospital with both legs broken.

Emery Worth, who was in the tying room, described the first warning of the flood as a hissing noise. "Thinking a steam pipe had blown up," he said, "I looked up from my work just in time to see the room cave in. I was thrown out of the window and onto the roof, which landed me high and dry on the hill." Worth is at the hospital, seriously injured.

Mary Blaitz, who worked in the counting room, told reporters in the hospital to-day how it feels to have a leg amputated with an axe.

"I was busy at my books," she said, "when suddenly there turned through the wall one of the big pulp-grinding stones of the mills. As I leaped aside to avoid it the ceiling caved in, and the water followed and passed over me. Rescuers found me later pinned beneath the grinding stone. They tried to release me but failed. The great stone was too big to move, and I felt as if I should surely die there.

Asked Them to Cut Off Her Leg.

"'Get an axe and cut my leg off,' I told them. But no man would volunteer. 'Cut it off,' I pleaded. 'You can stand it if I can.'

"I looked up and saw Joe Venargo, a friend of mine. 'You do it, Joe, for me,' I pleaded. I was in awful pain, and nothing could be worse torture than what I was enduring. 'I—I can't do that, Mary,' he said.

"I asked a big man back of him to do it. He picked up the axe. By the lantern light I saw the descending blade glisten. I think he chopped it four or five times before they could pry me loose."

At the hospital Dr. Ashcraft said that the stump had been dressed skillfully, and that the plucky girl would recover.

Joseph McKinney, an employe of the Bayless Mill, struggled to get over a board fence topped with barbed wire which proved a death trap for scores. He had his little child by the hand. Unable to get over it himself, McKinney threw his child over to safety, and met death in the water. A score of survivors who saw this act have pledged themselves to bring up the child.

John Harvey and Clara Dittenhoffer, other employes of the mill, dug their way through a brick wall when imprisoned by wreckage, and were subsequently rescued. Six persons are known to have been killed in the main building of the Bayless plant, and surviving employes say that thirty-five other lives may have been lost there. Even as late as to-day two persons were rescued alive from the ruins of the mill. One is an infant a few months old, which was cooing and crying alternately when rescuers came upon it, wrapped in a blanket. The baby girl had evidently slipped from the arms of some one who was trying to carry her to safety. The child has not been identified. Close by the bodies of Anna Jackson and Flossie Melzer a man also was rescued alive, but is in a precarious condition.

Laughed at the Warning.

Mrs. Martha Kinnicut, a restaurant keeper, laughed when warned of the flood. A child was drinking a glass of soda. "Oh, let the kid finish her glass," said Mrs. Kinnicut to a boy who came running in with the alarm. A few moments later the store was swept away, and the woman and child are among the missing.

The young son of Mrs. Thomas Reese was swinging on the doorstep of his father's house. The house is on high ground and one of the few that escaped. His mother had just darted out of the door when she saw her boy swept into the waters. The frantic mother plunged in to save him, and a big Hungarian waded in and pulled her out on the bank. Infuriated, she turned back to the flood. In restraining her from plunging in her clothes were torn from her body and her arms broken. The child was drowned.

Mrs. William H. Erhardt escaped from her house, but turned back to get a handbag containing $20. She was drowned. Those of her party escaped. This afternoon her handbag was found, but her body has not yet been recovered.

Madge Nelson, 18 years old, was thrown from the second story of her home upon a pile of driftwood, and escaped after a half-mile voyage on the crest of the flood. Her mother, who was on the first floor, was drowned.

Ralph Tonofaro, a shoemaker, was drowned, with his wife and six children.

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