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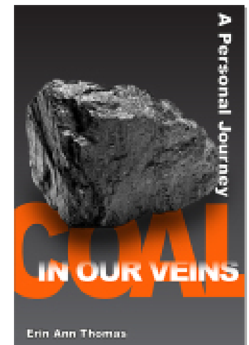
6. The Rattle of Dead Men's Skin



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6

The Rattle of Dead Men's Skin

I grew up under the shadow of a great mountain. The slopes that rose above my cul-de-sac in Orem, Utah, conjure up deep familial love, but also reverence. No matter how intimately you get to know the pink light that kisses the snow on the peaks during a winter sunset, or the spill of radiant light over the dark contours of the morning, the Rockies always keep a distance. They are too grand and too wild to be household mountains. They do not belong to the city that climbs into their foothills below; the city belongs to them. Farther south, the black limestone becomes tawny colored sandstone, and the rugged face of the mountain lands is not chipped by ice and ground by glacier, but carved by the wind and the rain.

There is a sense of antiquity about the arid mountains of the American West that is unlike the slender valleys and old hills of Wales. In central Utah, the prehistoric Fremont kept their living sparse, and the silence of the pictographs they left on rock walls merges with the silence of petrified dinosaur bone. Shale is scattered with fossils of sea things that speak in codes we are just beginning to crack. The soft bodies of these creatures sank to the bottom of Lake Bonneville, combining with plant refuse that, after years of compression, became coal. Miners who dig out the seams sandwiched between the sediment of these mountain ranges occasionally turn up a Brontosaurus footprint.

Carbon County contains the relics of many beginnings, including my own. I remember crawling over a big pile of shale during a summer camp my school district sponsored for fifth-grade students. We were in Scofield, near an opening to an old mine level, the location of the mining accident of 1900 the teachers had elaborated on during a hike that seemed too hot

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and long. I had already been told this story by my parents and was looking forward to poking my nose into a dark tunnel, but the opening had been barricaded with stones and boards. Not even a sign had been erected by the park service or the historical society to mark the famous disaster, but I seized the opportunity anyway. “My ancestors died in that mine,” I bragged to a girl and a couple of boys that were sorting through the shale pile beside me for fossilized trilobites.

Before the hike, we had visited a mining museum, hardly more than a cabin that displayed various objects retrieved from the explosion. All I remember was a boot. The curator cheerfully explained that the owner had died in the accident and left sloughed-off pieces of his skin inside. My mind seized on this one morbid detail. Ever since, I have not remembered this experience without imagining the rattle of dried skin in an old leather boot.

Consequently, my family’s history in central Utah has never been separate from the idea of disaster and this memory of a dead man’s skin. Had Evan and Margaret known that death and coal would follow them to their new country, I wonder if they would have still crossed the ocean on the *SS Wyoming* and made their way across the plains to join the Saints.

The Thomas family boarded a train in the East, traveling west on a railroad that had been first invented in their hometown to transport coal. The iron of the tracks that first canvassed their new world was forged with the coke fired from Welsh coal, coal that had passed through the hands of Thomases for three generations. The tracks civilized the prairie and mountain lands, bringing manufactured goods to the pioneers and farmers who made their own soap with white ashes and animal fat, spun and knit their own clothing, and grew their own food. With the expanding railroads, the capacity for coal extraction increased, further fueling development and the power to create goods and move them—setting in motion a cycle of consumerism and fossil fuel that defines much of the way we live today.

With their five children and Evan’s father Frederick, my great-great-grandparents settled in Logan, Utah, a small community north of Salt Lake in a valley in the Wasatch Range of the Rockies, below pine-covered mountain slopes where snowmelt trickled down during the summer months. Here my great-grandfather Zephaniah was born, the second American to join this poor Welsh immigrant family.

Evan and Margaret were determined to make a break from their past in coal, so Evan found work on the railroad, a job that offered the pleasures of light and air, but otherwise was not a far cry from the back-breaking labor of the mines. One day, after working for twenty-four hours straight, Evan was ordered back on the tracks by his supervisor. Exhibiting the fiery temper he was known for, Evan refused and was fired on the spot.

Evan had heard of the excellent wages paid to experienced colliers by

Courtesy of the Western Mining and Railroad Museum

The town of Scofield

the Pleasant Valley Coal Company that mined in Emery County. By now, Evan and Margaret had seven children, and in order to feed his family, Evan was forced back into the trade he knew best. The Thomas family moved two hundred miles south to Winter Quarters, a coal mining camp above the city of Scofield.

At the time, Scofield housed 1,800 residents and the business district was a mile long, sizable for a place that was such a far reach into the mountains. It was a coal town, like the one the Thomases had left behind in Wales—the men who left the mines at the end of the day continued their comradeship in seventeen busy saloons. An English gentleman complained of Welsh miners that "the workmen of this black labour observe all abolished holy days and cannot be weaned from that folly," and a similar complaint could have been made about the miners in Winter Quarters. The young women whose beaus and husbands spent most of their daytime hours underground looked for every excuse to plan parties. According a local resident from that time: "People would get out and make their own good times. They had dances in the meetinghouse, for instance. The dances were usually on Fridays because on Saturdays they made them stop at midnight. The next day was Sunday and there was always a squabble about closing up the dance."

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Much of the community's social life surrounded the local chapels—the Latter-day Saints meetinghouse was prominent in Winter Quarters. Due to the numerous Welshman employed at the mine, singing was a common evening time diversion, and miners and their families would gather to sing at the homes of neighbors who owned instruments.

A piano was rare. Most of the residents of Winter Quarters had few possessions: their one-room cabins were equipped with a stove, beds, a table, and chairs. Some families had rockers, and occasionally a phonograph. Still, a miner's home would have been set off a few paces from the neighbors. Americans, with their characteristic love of space, made sure that even coal villages had freestanding houses. They were small and unelaborated, but had their own grounds, a mark of status in Wales, where most miners were packed into company owned blocks of terraced housing. In Scofield and Winter Quarters, most families built their houses with sawmill-cut boards placed vertically, topped by a peaked roof. Though privately owned, these houses were built on company land and families paid a monthly land rent.

The women took great pride in their homes. Contrasted with the atmosphere of the coalfields—a masculine landscape based on muscle, waste, and the triumph of mechanization over wilderness—the culture of the home was one of order and cleanliness. Most mining towns, though initially inhabited by single males and enough public houses and saloons to serve them, would eventually include enough women to balance out the population.

Margaret would have had a very similar life to that of her mother Ann in Wales. Fighting back the dust of the coal mines, she would spend many hours scrubbing her wooden floors white and stirring the clothes of her men in a big copper pot of boiling water to release the body and earth grime staining the cloth. Aside from preparing meals, chores like these would occupy her days, wearing her hands as rough as her husband's. Margaret's rejection of Mr. Lewis's son, her voyage across the ocean, and renunciation of her former life would come to mean only one thing: at night the man she loved would emerge from the mine and they would gather with their children to read the Book of Mormon in a community of Saints in hills more commanding and remote than those she had left behind.

Winter Quarters was a relatively new coal venture. In 1870, farmers had begun to scoop coal from the surface into wagons and cart it forty-five miles through Spanish Fork Canyon to the larger town of Provo, a four to five day trip over rough mountain roads. In 1875, the Pleasant Valley Coal Company began to invest in the area—the first miners dubbing it Winter Quarters, due to the snows that came early and trapped them in the coal pit until February. The Calico Road (a length of rail built by trading labor

for yards of cloth) later connected Winter Quarters with the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, preparing the area to produce half of Utah's coal output by 1899.

Chinese laborers who had originally worked on railroad gangs were hired to mine in Winter Quarters. Their skill in perfectly proportioned tunneling was admired in other mines, and they placed small demands on the company, as they were willing to make their homes in the tunnels they dug. Miners of other ethnicities, who had just begun to unionize, saw their leverage with the company slipping and resolved to settle the matter with the violence characteristic of mining towns. According to an oral history from 1890, a group of miners, reportedly mostly Welsh, roughed the Chinese into a railroad car, sending them with a push down the incline from Winter Quarters to the valleys below. Ten miles down the tracks the car turned over. The Chinese scattered, never to mine coal in Castle Valley again. Thankfully, this was three to four years before the Thomas family had arrived in town, and Evan and his boys were not involved.

Racial tensions continued at Winter Quarters. Faced with a shortage of labor, the company imported a sizable number of Finns. The miners from the British Isles and France regarded these new immigrants as nonwhite due to their perceived foreignness and their superstitions, so they were relegated to rows of houses farther up the canyon, which came to be known as Finn Town. A subsequent migration of Greeks settled near them in 1903. It was in Finn Town that a murmur began late in 1899. Miners began to speak in low voices about "bad spirits" near the Winter Quarters mines.

At the turn of the century, Americans in general had great faith in their frontier and their factories. In the coal industry in particular, miners were paid better than any other workingmen, and the national market had never been better. The year previously, Utah had not had any accidents and every mine had met regulations. As a result, the fears of the Finnish miners were dismissed by the others as the superstitions of a backwards people.

On May 1, 1900, Evan and his three boys awoke at five o'clock in the morning to put on warm clothing. Even in the spring and summer, the interior of the mountain was cold and wet. Likely, their lunch was packed in tin buckets by Margaret, who wiped the sleep from her eyes, and then kissed them and sent them off to the mine, glad to have some peace for Dewey Day preparations. Two years earlier, General Dewey had defeated the Spanish fleet in the Philippines in five hours, without loss of man or ship. This victory fed into America's sense of manifest destiny, and the repercussions were felt even in this small mountain town. Winter Quarters had just received a contract for two thousand tons of coal a day from the US Navy. Miners were only required to work a half day on this holiday, and later that evening they would celebrate with a party, a dance, and Dewey Cakes at the church house.

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My great-grandfather Zephaniah, or Zeph as he was known, woke with his older brothers Frederick and Evan Jr. to work with his father. He had been allowed to graduate from primary school, but after sixth grade he was expected to help earn his keep. In 1900, he was seventeen years old and had been working in the mines for five years. The already sizable Thomas family had expanded by another member since the move to Winter Quarters, and multiple sources of income were doubtless a necessity to feed a Welsh family of eleven.

The workday would start with the fireboss, who carried a torch by hand through the tunnels to burn the mine clear of flammable gases that had accumulated overnight. After that, the foreman would assign each miner to a room. The men would then turn to the mouth of the mine and walk or take a mantrip—a line of cars pulled by horses or mules—yards or even miles into the mountain to their designated spots, where they would lay down their tools. Their path would be lit by the oil-powered lanterns attached to their soft cloth hats. The open flame, rising out of an oil lamp shaped like a small teapot, extended six to eight inches above the brim, flickering off the roughly cut, black walls of the tunnels. That day Frederick and Evan Jr. split off to go to their assignments in Mine No. 1, but Evan Sr., feeling he had been given an inferior room, "rose to his full five foot three inches and roundly denounced the foreman, the superintendent, and the Pleasant Valley Coal Company generally before taking his youngest working son and heading home."

Methods of mining had progressed with new technology, and although miners still swung picks, blasting powder accelerated the process of extraction. Once reaching his room, a miner would shore up the roof with wooden poles. Then he would proceed in one of two fashions of removing coal from the face. Undercutting required a man to lie on his side and cut the coal from the bottom with his pick, making it easier to remove the *burden*, or higher coal, later. This was the older, slower way, used only when the floor of a mine needed to be level. Shooting was messier but faster. With a hand-turned drill, a miner would bore two to four six-foot-deep holes into a coal face. The next step was preparing the charge, which, according to a miner who worked as a boy in Winter Quarters, went something like this: "First they would make a paper cartridge from butcher paper or wrapping paper. They had a round stick, like a broom handle, that they would wrap the paper onto. Then they would fold the paper over the end and pound it to block off one end. Into the open end they would pour the powder. The charge would be eighteen or twenty inches long and would contain a pound or a pound and a half of black gunpowder."

This blasting powder was poured from a twenty-five pound wooden keg that had been punctured with a pick and then stopped up with scraps of paper. The homemade charge was popped into one of the holes, followed

by a copper needle that would hold the place of the fuse, or *squib*, which was inserted later. Next, clay was tamped around the device. If this mud was not tamped in well, holding the charge of blasting powder deep in the face, the charge could backfire and ignite the coal dust.

Before a man lit his squibs, he would alert his comrades in the rooms on either side of him. Touching each tip with flame, he would duck into a safe corner with his hands over his ears until the shots went off. Immediately, he would cough his way back to the cracked surface of coal, batting the dust from his face, and pry out the chunks with the tip of his pick. Miners were paid by the weight of lump coal they extracted a day. They did not have time to wait for the dust to settle.

In Mine No. 4 at 10:28 a.m., the exact hour later discovered on the watch of a dead Finn, miner Bill Boweter overheard two miners in a room adjacent to him say they were going to blow some shots. They had overestimated the thickness of the wall that divided their room from the next, and the ensuing blast brought the entire wall down. The coal dust exploded into a surge of white flame, which lifted Bill off his feet and threw him against the wall. The cloud of coal dust billowed and burned, orbs of fire rotating in the middle of an onslaught that thundered from room to room, igniting each miner's powder kegs with bangs and bursts of light.

The local justice of the peace, Joseph Saunders Thomas, and his son Joe, who grudgingly held the drill steady on the coal face for his father, felt the shock waves before they saw the conflagration. Dropping their work, they ran for the entrance, Joseph grasping his son seconds before they were picked by the energy of the blast and flung. John Wilson stood near the mouth of Mine No. 4 with his mule. The explosion threw them 820 feet. The mule was killed by the impact, but John's fall was halted by a tree branch that impaled him right through the middle.

Later, a train sent from Salt Lake City to convey the seriously wounded carried John and four others to the hospital. After several operations, John returned to Scofield to live out the remainder of the seventy years of his life, never setting foot in the mine again. Harry Taylor, also aboard the train, was stopped by a reporter as he was being moved by stretcher into Saint Mark's Hospital. In the words of the May 2, 1900, *Salt Lake Tribune*, "his face [was] swollen and bandaged until there was barely any room open for his mouth and eyes," and, although Harry sustained a number of injuries caused by rocks and debris, he "believed he came out comparatively in good luck." The journalist scribbled down phrases at a time, as Harry would pause to summon his courage between severe attacks of pain. According to Harry: "I was repairing some track out on the dump when I started toward the mouth of the tunnel to get some more tools. I got about fifty feet away from the tunnel mouth when all of a sudden there was an awful report and at the same time a black cloud filled with rocks bore down on me like a

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streak of greased lightning. …" And then, with what the journalist called a ghastly attempt at smiling, Harry added: "Next thing I knew I woke up with a man pouring brandy down my throat." In terms of his good luck, Harry understood the matter right. Most of the men who were not killed by the blast soon succumbed to poisonous gases.

The town did not react immediately; it was Dewey Day and some thought the boom came from fireworks being shot off early. Evan had undoubtedly returned home to repeat his tirade, rising up on his toes and shaking his finger, adding additional color to his denouncements to impress his wife. Likely, Margaret shook her head, peered at him knowingly with her deep blue eyes, and hoped his boss would take him back tomorrow. At the sound of explosions, Evan must have paused in his cursing and Margaret in her kneading of dough. Was it fireworks? Or—a sharp intake of the breath and a rush of terror—the mine? I imagine Zeph straightening up from where he sat, safely slumped in the corner with nothing to do now that he had been pulled from both work and school. Both Evan Jr. and Frederick were still in the mine. The family must have run from their home, the air just beginning to reek of coal dust as a cloud of smoke rose from the hillside.

Men who outran the explosion went back into the mine for their comrades. At this point, rescue crews had not been fitted with protective equipment, so a man would walk as far in as he could until he dropped. Others behind him would put their hats to their mouths, dash forward, grab hold of his feet, and drag him out. This is how they tested the poison content of the air, and progress into the depths of the mine was made in increments. Most of the men pulled from Mine No. 4 were already dead; the few that showed signs of life expired soon after being brought to the air. All were burnt badly—"to a cinder," reported a local schoolgirl.

Rescue teams were later assembled, wearing helmets that resembled those of early astronaut suits: two thick tusks emerged from the helmet and connected to an oxygen tank strapped to the front. Once the teams had penetrated through to the far reaches of Mine No. 4, they moved on to Mine No. 1, which the afterdamp (carbon monoxide) had filled earlier, making it impossible for unprotected rescuers to enter. Progressing slowly, the men moved in a line along the back corridor downhill from Mine No. 4 to Mine No. 1. In the first room, no larger than the size of a frontier living room, thirty-five men lay dead. They had fallen in positions revealing their scramble toward fresh air.

One rescuer recounted his experiences over the two days following the accident:

> Going in we saw a number of dead, but our object was to find any that were alive first … We only found a few alive and one of them has since died. Number

Four was so blocked that progress was slow and very dangerous and we had to carry the men out on stretchers, as cars could not be used. A good many in Number Four were badly burned and mutilated.

After working a while in Number Four we worked our way into Number One where nearly all the men who died were asphyxiated. A great many people have asked if the men who were killed by the damp suffered much. I can say that they did not, and know that to be the case, because I have gone through the experience to the stage of unconsciousness during the last two days. Many of us in the rescue parties were overcome by the damp and were carried back into the purer air by our companions. A whiff of this damp almost paralyzes a man, and a good breath of it renders him unconscious. Then he falls as if in a sleep and dies unless instantly carried to the purer air. What struggles take place after that first breath are the struggles that nature puts forth automatically. I have seen our men fall and struggle but they knew nothing of it.

We found the dead in every conceivable attitude. One man had filled his pipe and sat down to light it. The damp struck him and he died then and there, with the filled pipe in his outstretched hand … We found men in groups who had evidently sat down to consult. Other groups had been overtaken as they rushed ahead of the damp.

How can we go through the ordeal of picking up the dead shift after shift? Well, I've thought of that, too. We made up our minds not to give way to our feelings; to stifle them and ignore our thoughts of everything except the work at hand, otherwise we could not do a thing. Well, when I have gone through there and turned over a man who was a friend and intimate associate, perhaps of a year's standing, the sentiments of grief stirred in all of my being, but I repressed them. It was either that, or else drop down by the side of my chum, take hold of his cold hand, and just cry my heart out, for we have hearts just the same as the rest.

Some of our men were nervous at first, for the scenes, in spite of all resolutions, did excite and move us; but when the death list grew to fifty, then to a hundred, then to a hundred and fifty, and now to nearly two hundred, all got over it.

Frederick and Evan Jr. were working in Mine No. 1. One of the survivors, W. U. Winston, indicated that he heard "a rumbling noise in the distance" and felt "a wave that can hardly be described except to all who have been in explosions." He dashed to the mouth of the mine, convincing others to join him as he ran, leading nine of his comrades to safety. They nearly suffocated from the afterdamp that reached them three to four minutes before they exited the mine. Thomas Pugh, a fifteen-year-old boy, heard the noise and put his cap in his teeth to cover his mouth and nose, sprinting a mile and a half to the entrance. One hundred and three miners escaped the afterdamp in Mine No. 1. Others were not killed immediately and hoped to be rescued. One man and his son held out until four hours after the blast, leaving the following note to his wife: "Ellen, darling,

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goodbye for us both. Elbert [his son] said the Lord has saved him. We are all praying for air to support us, but it is getting so bad without any air. Ellen I want you to live right and come to heaven. Raise the children the best you can. Oh how I wish to be with you, goodbye. Bury me and Elbert in the same grave by little Eddy. Goodbye Ellen, goodbye Lily, goodbye Jemmie goodbye Horace. Is 25 minutes after two. There is a few of us alive yet. Oh god for one more breath Ellen remember me for as long as you live. Jake and Elbert."

Evan Jr. was working near the entrance and could have joined the miners escaping to safety, but he turned back into the mine to find his younger brother. The rescuers found Evan and Margaret's two dead sons hand in hand. Evan Jr. was twenty-five and Frederick was nineteen. Forty years later, Zephaniah could still barely speak of the incident. Frederick was just two years older than him and was his idol.

During rescue efforts, it had begun to drizzle. Hundreds of women and children gathered around the mouth of the mine, moaning and crying, trying to catch glimpses of the bodies carried out in burlap sacks and piled in the mantrip. The rescuers carried the dead miners to a storeroom, and then to a boarding house where Clarence Nix, a quiet and shy man of twenty-three who was the manager of the company store, tagged each one, identifying the men to whom he had sold blasting powder, tools, and canned goods every day over the past several months. Then, to spare the feelings of the women, these rough men carefully removed the battered and burned clothing from their friends. With sponges soaked in tubs, they washed soot and blood from the mutilated bodies, and then rolled them in old quilts. The dead miners, now ready for burial, were carried to the schoolhouse or the meetinghouse, where they would be taken home by their families.

The May 2 *Salt Lake Tribune* ran the title: "MOST APPALLING MINE HORROR: Greatest Calamity in the History of Mining in the West. EXPLOSION AT SCOFIELD KILLS 250." This original estimate is closest to the 246 counted by the men carrying the bodies out of the mine, but 200 is the number settled on by the company. Even after the final count, the Finns maintained that fifteen of their men were never found. Since many of the Finns were single men, separated from their families by thousands of miles, there is no way to confirm or reject this assertion. These men were so unassimilated into their new environment that it is possible that some still lay buried in the Winter Quarters mine, unaccounted for by the company or their coworkers.

The Winter Quarters mine explosion topped the charts as the most devastating mining accident of its time, and it currently ranks fourth in US history. The detailed accounts of rescue operations and the suffering of the people struck a sympathetic vein in the surrounding communities,

and even throughout the world. The *Salt Lake Tribune* printed condolences from President McKinley: "I desire to express my intense sorrow upon learning the terrible calamity, which has occurred at Scofield." The same issue also printed a letter from President Loubet of France. London's *Daily Telegraph* reported: "There will be deeper sympathy with America in this awful catastrophe than has been evoked by any event of the other side of the Atlantic since the loss of the *Maine*."

At the time, there was no system of government sponsored welfare, and the explosion had left 107 widows and 268 fatherless children. The first relief came by way of schoolchildren from Salt Lake City, who went door to door gathering flowers for the funerals. Many of them were not hothouse flowers, but ones people had cut from their gardens: bunches of lilacs, pansies, and violets. These were loaded into the baggage car of a train and bound into bouquets on the trip to Scofield by the women who traveled with them. In addition to burial clothes, the company had provided coffins for the bereaved families at the cost of ninety dollars apiece—only 125 were available in the whole state of Utah at the time, so 75 had to be shipped from Denver.

Four days after the explosion, the day of the miners' burial was overcast, with scattered rain and a stiff wind. A photograph shows two Finns in shiny black caskets, lined in shimmery white cloth, with bouquets of flowers scattered over them. The face of one is half covered, and one arm, doubtless scarred, is wrapped in linen. The man in the casket beside him appears unmarred. His eyes are closed over a short nose and an enormous black handlebar mustache. His arms cross his chest, the hands displayed in handsome white gloves. In death, he appears to have had a much more genteel occupation in life then wielding a miner's pick.

Fifty volunteer gravediggers from Provo were hard at work preparing the graves, some as little as three feet apart to accommodate the many burials. As the wagons carried the caskets to the graveyard, flowers were handed out from the railroad cars, with some bunches placed on the coffins and others given to the children and women. Reverend A. Granholm, a Finnish Lutheran minister from Wyoming, honored the sixty-two Finnish miners who died in the accident with a service conducted in his native tongue. An interfaith funeral was led by three Mormon apostles. An image from the later internments shows a large crowd of mostly men in the act of removing their hats. Piles of earth are stacked up between the grave markers, cut out of boards by the local sawmill operator and labeled with the names of the dead written in lead pencil. In the foreground a boy leans against a heap of dirt, tilting his head for a clear view of the man being lowered into the ground. I think of Zeph, watching his brothers buried in soil turned from the mountain that killed them. He was a quiet man with measured emotions when he grew up, but as a boy, looking down into

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Courtesy of Western Mining and Railroad Museum

Burial services at Scofield cemetery

those graves dug side by side six feet down, Zeph must have seen little hope in his future.

There wasn't a family in town without a personal connection to the tragedy. An eighteen-year-old bride of not many months lost her father, her two brothers, and her husband. The Hunters lost ten men, all the male members of the family except two. The Louma family's story is particularly terrible. Seven sons had left Finland to make their fortunes in America, finally settling deep in the Wasatch Range to mine coal at Winter Quarters. They sent for their elderly parents, writing that they could earn enough money in America so that Abe Louma and his wife would never have to work again. Three months before the tragedy, the two arrived in Scofield and began to adjust to life in a new country, surrounded by their children and grandchildren in the small miner's house in Finn Town. Six of their sons and three of their grandsons were killed in the explosion. After burying his posterity, Abe Louma told his wife: "If I don't live longer than a cat, I am not dying in America." The Loumas rode the train back through the mountain pass, escorted by their only living son. From California, they returned to Finland by ship, repeating a journey they had undertaken months earlier with anticipation.

Due to the speed with which funeral arrangements were made, some miners were buried under the wrong name. John Pittman was killed in the blast and presumed to have been buried in the graveyard with his comrades. A month after the explosion his son dreamed of an angel who told

him his father's body was still in the mine. The next day the son reported this to his Mormon bishop, who didn't make much of the boy's claim until he himself had a dream that night. In his mind he moved through the rooms and corridors of Mine No. 4 looking for John's body, until he found a rock where three little girls dressed in white were laying flowers overtop. The next day the bishop gathered a small crew of men and followed the path indicated in his dream. After digging through a hundred feet of fallen rock, he found the poorly preserved body of John Pittman, who was unmistakably identified due to the bright red socks, still on his feet, that had been knitted for him by his wife. The man initially buried under Pittman's headstone was never identified.

The day after the accident, a reporter called upon the residents of Salt Lake City to offer their assistance: "There are in the city hundreds today who have passed their summer vacation within a stone's throw of where the accident occurred, and they cannot but have a pang this morning when they think of the children who were so fond of the strangers that passed near their humble homes being robbed of the breadwinners of the household and thrown upon the charity of the world. There are few if any families, it is safe to say, who have much to the good, while it is more than probable that their accounts are already overdrawn at the store."

Catholic Bishop Lawrence Scanlan offered to take fatherless children into Saint Ann's Orphanage in Salt Lake City. When a shortage of food was reported, Salt Lake bakeries donated three thousand loaves of bread and the millers' association sent four hundred sacks of flour. Others gathered butter and eggs to be sent, and members of various communities around Utah went door to door to gather funds. The miners were the best-paid workmen in the state, but the poorer farmers did their part to relieve the suffering of the victims of the disaster. A man from American Fork sent a dollar folded into a letter, apologizing for his meager donation—he'd had to borrow it.

The Pleasant Valley Coal Company, in addition to paying for the funerals, forgave the debts of the bereaved families at the company store and gave $500 to families for each miner that was killed. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company donated $5,000, and Levi-Strauss sent $250. The LDS Church contributed $2,500 and also held a concert at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, where the proceeds of 10,000 tickets were donated to the community. Other towns sold tickets to baseball games, and the Skelton Publishing Company offered to publish a book about the explosion, which James W. Dilley, the local schoolmaster, agreed to write.

In total, $118,000 was collected. Because there were many opinions about how the money should be distributed, the governor assembled a committee of five members to assess the needs of the community in order to divide the funds. Their final decision was as follows: "Assuming a

pension of twenty dollars per month for three years, each widow over fifty will get $720 dollars. Widows under fifty will receive $576 dollars. For each boy under fourteen and each girl under fifteen; $108 dollars which will go to their mothers or grandparents. Each child with both parents dead will get $432 dollars. A parent of a deceased miner, who depended upon his son for support will get $720 dollars. If both mother and father are alive and fully dependent upon their son's earnings, they will receive $1,080 dollars. If a parent was getting some kind of partial support already, say, from another son, the parent would get $900 dollars. If just one parent was alive, $540 dollars."

The committee allotted fewer dollars to the younger widows on the assumption that they were more likely to remarry. Relief would last for three years, and by then the widows would have to find some way of supporting themselves. Many used the money to move down into the valleys in farming communities where the winters were milder. A significant number of the surviving miners left, but the majority of the Finns, who had never really become integrated into society, stayed. Perhaps the cooler temperatures reminded them of their homeland.

Evan and Margaret received $2,240 in payment for the deaths of two sons. Instead of using it to spare the rest of their children from work in the mines, they erected a monument. An eight foot marble obelisk inscribed THOMAS stands above the resting place of Evan Jr. and Frederick in the Scofield graveyard. Its size suggests their parents were more consumed with the grief of the moment than with the practical challenges of the life that would follow. Perhaps the thought of buying flour with funds procured by the death of their boys was too much for Evan and Margaret—investing in such a grave marker might have seemed the only way to dispose of it properly. Work to put the mine back into operation commenced a week after the accident. The miners who stayed and a number of new recruits spent long hours clearing out the debris and shoring up the roof. I can only imagine the feelings of Margaret, who watched Evan leave every morning with the awful memory of a rumble not far from her thoughts. Evan walked to the mine on these dreary mornings alone; after the accident, Zeph did not follow behind him.