

BLOWN UP IN BEER TANK.

Dec 28, 1897

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ONE MAN KILLED AND TWO TERRIBLY HURT BY GAS EXPLOSION.

Accident at the Independent Brewing

Association's Plant-Theodore Wilnkofsky Meets Instant Death-Louis Imme and Leonard Schaller Injured with Difficulty-Tragedy Due to Breaking of an Incandescent Lamp In Vat Pull of Varnish Fumes.

One man was killed outright and two others terribly injured by an explosion of gas in a large beer tank at the Independent Brewing Association Brewery, 198 North Halsted street, yesterday afternoon.

The explosion was caused by the breaking of an incandescent electric light globe. The exposed spark ignited the explosive gas and surrounded the unfortunate trio of workmen with flame. According to witnesses the man who was killed was the innocent cause of the catastrophe. He was carrying the naked light globe in his hand when he accidentally struck it against the iron wall of the tank and the explosion followed.

The Dead.

, THEODORE. 39 years old; painter;

court, painter, 15 years old; instantly killed by explosion: remains taken to Poth's undertaking rooms, 860 North Halsted street.

The Injured.

Imme, Louis, 3223 Illinois avenue, painter;

burned and bruised about head, arms, and body, taken to Alexian Brothers Hospital; serious.

Schaller, Leonard. 103 West Eighteenth street,

painter; badly burned; picked up unconscious; taken to Alexian Brothers Hospital; may not recover.

The three men were painting the interior of the beer tank. They were using hard enamel and had nearly finished the job when the paint pot became empty. Wilnkofsky called to a workman on the outside to bring another can of the varnish. He was in the act of reaching through the manhole in the side of the tank when the crash came.

Wilkofsky was blown through the manhole by the force of the explosion. His body struck with terrible force against a large steam radiator and tore it from its fastenings, bending and twisting the iron pipes. His body was badly mangled and burned.

Imme and Schaller remained inside the burning vat for some seconds, while the flames rushed through the manhole with great force. Assistant Brewmaster T. Henry Klein was standing beside the tank when the explosion took place. He was blown some distance away, but as soon as he recovered he rushed to the rescue of the imprisoned men and dragged them through the narrow hole, which was the only means of escape from the caldron of fire.

One of the two was half conscious when he emerged, but the other seemed too far gone to recover. Both were nearly stripped of clothing and were suffering terrible agony from burns. The police were notified at once and

both were cared for with all possible speed.

Panic Among Workmen.

The shock of the massive building to its foundation and started a panic among the large force of workmen employed there.

The big tank where the men were at work is one of five of uniform size which almost completely fill a large room in the rear portion of the plant. The tanks are constructed of heavy sheet-iron and are used for beer. They are fourteen feet in diameter and twenty-two feet high. Each has a capacity of 1,200 barrels. There are but two small openings in each tank beside the manhole on the side near the bottom. This hole is just large enough to admit the body of a man. The vats are opened but once a year, when they are cleaned out and given a fresh coat of enamel varnish on the inside to prevent the beer from coming in contact with the iron. A specially prepared varnish is used, and the men who do the work are experts known as "caskers." The occupation is considered hazardous, and the work is usually let out by contract. Winkofsky was a contractor and his two sons were in his employ.

In view of the danger of explosions of the gas remaining in the airtight tanks, and of the other gases which might arise from the varnish, the men were not permitted to use lamps in the vats, and electric lights were furnished instead. An electric light wire

was led into the tank and each of the workmen was furnished with an incandescent lamp, with enough slack wire to reach all parts of the vat. Each man carried the lamp about with him as he worked. It was the usual custom to cover each lamp with a net of wire to prevent accidents, but this was neglected yesterday.

The three men had been at work nearly two weeks on the five tanks, and the last one was almost finished. Assistant Brewmaster Klein had been called to make a final inspection when the explosion took place.

Winkofsky left a widow and two small children. Schaller and Imme are not married.

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