

1906 Levi Jefferson "Jeff" Mathias was the father
of Russell Mathias.

ONE INSTANTLY KILLED TWO OTHERS WERE CAUGHT

The three Smith, Keffer and Mathias were opening a new Mine near Tuscarawas when rock and dirt fell on them.

Christian Smith was instantly killed, Ben Keffer badly injured and Jefferson Mathias penned in a mine for about 14 hours, Saturday by the fall of a 10 ton rock and a quantity of earth. The mine where the accident occurred is located on the Parker Schupp farm which lies northeast of Tuscarawas, and was a new one, which George Mathias was having opened. It was the worst mine accident that occurred in that vicinity and drew hundreds of sight-seers Sunday. Crushed almost to a pulp, the body of Smith was recovered by the men who hastened to the rescue of the men. The remains after being view by Coroner Romig were taken to Tuscarawas and the funeral was held Sunday afternoon.

Keffer, who was badly bruised is barely able to get around and Mathias is none the worst for his harrowing experience.

The men were engaged in opening the new mine near the old one, and as it was but 2 o'clock in the afternoon decided to get in as many props as possible for the entry had been driven about 35 yards into the hill. Possibly 75 feet from the mouth of the entry, was a huge rock weighing over a ton, from which the soil had fall out at the time of the accident the men were endeavoring to stay it. Smith was down on his knees leveling a space for a plate upon which the post was set all at once the man heard an ominous crack" down came the huge rock, burying Smith beneath it. Keffer leaped backwards but not far enough to escape being hit on the head and slightly stuned. When he revived he was well nigh buried beneath the rock and dirt which had followed the fall of the mammoth stone. With the blood streaming from the numerous small cuts about his face and head, and his body so badly bruised that even the slightest move caused terrible pain, Keffer managed to dig his way to freedom by using his hands to claw away the dirt and stone. In a half exhausted condition the staggered out of the mine and over to where George Mathias was working. His appearance told Mathias that a terrible accident had happened and in a few words Keffer told his story. Help was summoned and the men went to work to dig out Smith and Mathias. After several hours of hard work the former was found pinned under the rock, his body crushed almost as flat as a sheet of steel. But where was Jeff Mathias? Knowing that if alive, he must be in the mine, the men procured a large pipe and drove it through the mass of debris so that he would have sufficient air. Using the pipe as a carrying tube for his voice, he told the men that he was in good condition and asked how the other fellows were. Fearful of the consequences, he was not told of Smith's death until he was released. All night long the men worked like beavers, and just as the first light of day come peeping over the eastern hills Sunday morning, the imprisoned man was released. He was then appraised of the tragic death of his late companion. While weak from the lack of nourishment he was none the worse for his awful experience. Mathias later found out that had he followed the entry he would have come out into the main entry of the old mine and thus gained freedom long before he did. As he had a lantern but no matches he was afraid to venture very far back into the mine.

Mathias stated that he was working just ahead of Smith when the rock fell and the shock was sufficent to throw him out of harm's way.

It was an experience that came near costing the lives of the three men, and one that the two who escaped will never forget.

Sunday afternoon over 800 tons of earth and rock fell in the entry. Deputy mine inspectors Turner of Cambridge and Morrison of Sherodsville view the mine Sunday and ordered it closed for all time. They decided this to be the best thing and thus save any loss of life in the future.