

Another explosion disaster

Amateur observers of disasters would say that they tend to happen in twos and threes, and the explosion on July 14, 1884, close on the heels of the one in Ellettsville (May 1884) seemed to confirm that superstition.

Unlike the Ellettsville disaster — a dynamite explosion — the later one was caused by more steam than room in the boiler that powered a sawmill. But the effect was equally devastating.

Commented a Bloomington newspaper, "The *Telephone* this morning is called upon to chronicle another appalling accident in our county that resulted in heavy loss of lives and property. It has been said that mishaps never come singly, and true to this prophetic injunction, a second catastrophe has made its visit."

The sawmill, described as five



Looking back

By Rose
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11-14-1987

miles west of Harrodsburg and a mile from the Greene County line in Indian Creek Township, was undergoing an alteration that was supposed to have been an improvement. Specifically, the saws of the mill were driven by a steam boiler, and Wesley Carter, the owner, and his son, John, were adding an "inspirator" that was supposed to improve the efficiency of the apparatus.

The *Telephone* noted that the inspirator "is a patent for forcing water into the boiler and is now

extensively used, though not safe only under the hand of an experienced mechanic, who thoroughly understands operating them."

Those persons immediately on the scene found the area strewn with bits of iron and lumber. Among the debris were the dead and dying. "Uncle" William C. Graves, who happened to drop by the mill just before the explosion, the proprietor and his son were killed outright. Wounded were William Collins, a new employee at the mill, John Reed, a different and younger William Graves, John Foddrill and a man by the name of Calahan.

As in the case of the Ellettsville explosion, the *Telephone* did not spare its readers the graphic details of the tragedy. Wesley Car-

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