

Quarry explosion took five lives in Stinesville in 1898

When Monroe County Coroner R.C. Rogers tried to piece together what happened in the quarry explosion near Stinesville in September 1898, he had two living witnesses who were close enough to see the accident. (Walter Brown, Sam Swafford and Isaac Grounds were in the quarry but working at a distance.)

Of the two witnesses, Milton Hite was mortally injured, blinded and deafened by the blast, and the waterboy, Willie Liford, was suffering from severe shock. Hite, taken to the home of Ware Walker, died two days after the explosion.

Meanwhile, Stinesville buried its dead, staggering the funerals of the men so that townspeople could attend all of them, if they chose. Ed Watts, John Grubbs and John Williams were buried at Chambersville, John Wampler at Maple Grove. Related the *Telephone*, "There were many touching scenes and the grief of the friends was agonizing. There were numerous floral offerings



Looking back

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and the little town has never before witnessed such a solemn day."

Bea Brown, who lives a quarter of a mile from the explosion site, remembers hearing family accounts of the tragedy.

"Milton Hite was related to my family and Willie Liford to my husband. John Grubbs left a wife, daughter and twin sons," she said.

According to the *Telephone*, one of the Stinesvillians could count himself lucky. "Benjamin Fyffe had a narrow escape. He was working with the men and had just been sent over to another quarry or he, too, would have been killed."

By Sept. 6, Liford had recovered. **see Explosion. Back page**