

Primary Source # 1 - Newspaper Front Page

Source Description- *Faulty cast-iron pillars contributed to the collapse of the mill.*
(Picture Courtesy of the Lawrence History Center)



Primary Source # 2 - Newspaper Article

Source Description- JAN. 11, 1860A version of this archives appears in print on January 11, 1860, on Page 5 of the New York edition with the headline: ***HORRIBLE CALAMITY.; Falling of the Pemberton Mills at Lawrence, Massachusetts. Five Hundred Persons in the Ruins. TWO HUNDRED OPERATIVES KILLED. ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY WOUNDED. The Ruins on Fire Probably a Hundred Persons Burned to Death.***

BOSTON, Tuesday, Jan. 10 -- 6 P.M. - The Pemberton Mills in Lawrence, in this State employing between five and six hundred operatives, fell this afternoon about 5 o'clock, burying nearly every person in the ruins. The mangled bodies are being taken out by the cart-load. It is supposed that over two hundred were killed instantly.

LAWRENCE, Mass., Tuesday, Jan. 10 -- 9 P.M. - One of the most terrible catastrophes on record occurred in this city this afternoon. The Pemberton Mills fell with a sudden crash about 5 o'clock, while some six or seven hundred operatives were at work. The Mills are a complete wreck. Some two or three hundred persons are supposed to be still in the ruins. At present it is impossible to give anything like a correct statement of the loss of life, but from the best authority it is believed that at least two hundred are dead in the ruins. Eighteen dead bodies have been already taken out, together with some twenty-five persons mortally wounded, besides some fifty in different stages of mutilation.

Mr. CHASE, the Agent of the Mills, and Mr. HOWE, the Treasurer, escaped by running from the falling building.

It is impossible, as yet, to tell the cause of the disaster. Our reporter is just come from the ruins, and the scenes there beggar all description. Some two or more acres of ground are piled up with every description of machinery and the fallen building. Huge bonfires are burning to light some two or three thousand persons, who are working as if for their own lives to rescue the unfortunate persons, many of whom are still crying and begging to be released from their tortures.

Every few minutes some poor wretch is dragged from his or her prison, and it is heartrending to hear their cries as they are drawn out with legs and arms crushed or torn. One man, shockingly mangled and partly under the bricks, deliberately cut his own throat to end his agony.

The whole city seems in mourning. Many are running through the streets, and with frantic cries searching the ruins. Temporary hospitals have been arranged for those rescued. Many stand by the wreck frigid with despair. Often a terrible crash, caused by the clearing away, threatens death to those who may still be alive in the ruins.

Gen. H.K. OLIVER is conspicuous and active in directing those persons who are endeavoring to rescue the victims of the disaster. Gangs of men with ropes below are constantly dragging out huge pieces of the wreck which imprison so many. Some of the rescuers are killed in their humane efforts.

Since we left the scene of disaster, reports of more of the dead and dying are constantly coming to us. Surgeons are coming in from all directions, and everything that can be done, at such a painful moment, is being done for the suffering victims of the fearful calamity, the mystery of which will have to be cleared up by an inquest.

SECOND DISPATCH. LAWRENCE, Tuesday, Jan. 10 -- 11 P.M.

At about ten minutes of 5 o'clock this afternoon, our citizens were alarmed by the cry of fire, which proceeded from the Pemberton Mills, about four-fifths of which had fallen a shapeless mass, without the slightest warning to the near eight hundred human beings who were then at work.

The building was never considered to be as staunch as it ought to have been. It was built about seven years since, and was then thought a sham. Indeed, before the machinery was put in the walls spread to such a degree that some twenty-two tons of iron plates were put in to save it from falling by its own weight. From the best information that can be now gathered, the building appeared to crumble and fall from the eastern corner or end towards the duck-mill. It fell inwards, as if powerfully drawn that way.

The fire companies at once repaired to the spot, but there being no fire, they at once set to work with a will to remove the rubbish. They very soon reached some of the rooms, so that the dead and wounded were taken out as fast as they could be reached. Mr. CHARLES BATCHELDER helped to remove some twenty-six in various conditions -- some still living, others dead and terribly mutilated. Messrs, Chase, Clark, Patterson, (or Tatterson,) Melvin and Winn, overseers and clerks, are safe.

Mr. Branch, an overseer, has not been found.

The City Hall has been converted into a temporary hospital for the dead and wounded, to remain there until recognized by their friends, although scores were recognized and taken at once to their houses.

The following wounded are now at the Hall: Mary Ann Coleman, Ellen Clary, Sarah Dale, Eliza Ward. Ellen Mahony, Thomas Conner, Bridget Bradley, Kate Harykee, Joanna Connelry, Morris Palmer, George [???]codalpha, Mrs. Fridler, Robert Hays, Courtney, Mary York, Margaret Hamilton, Margaret [???]annekill, Mary Kennedy, Eliza Yair.

There are twenty-two corpses, only the following of which have been recognized: Mary McDonald, John Dearborn, Bridget Ryan, Margaret Sullivan, Mike O'Brien and Mrs. Palmer.

Mr. PALMER was deeply buried in the ruins at the time, and thinking there was no prospect of being extricated, cut his throat to end his sufferings. Still, he was extricated, and lived for some time after arriving at the Hall.

One woman in that part of the mill still standing became frightened, and threw her bonnet and shawl out of a fifth story door and jumped out herself, breaking her arm and injuring herself so that she cannot recover. The laboring force of the mill was about nine hundred and sixty, and it is supposed that about seven hundred human beings were actually buried in the ruins.

A woman has just been rescued who says there are some twenty-five more in the vicinity of her yet alive.

About 9 1/2 o'clock fire was discovered. This additional honor, although somewhat apprehended, struck terror to the hearts that had before been hopeful of saving more lives. Still the work of removal went briskly on. The force-pumps and all the engines which were on the ground, at once got streams of water on, and have been pouring on torrents, so that now (11.30 P.M.), although volumes of smoke and steam are rising, yet the fire does not seem to gain, and it is certainly to be hoped that it has been stayed.

Those near at the breaking out of the fire were almost at the point of extracting a woman not badly hurt, but the flames drove them back, and the woman is supposed to have perished when delivery seemed so near. The Mayor has telegraphed to Lowell for the firemen of that city, who will arrive here about 1 o'clock. It is estimated that not less than two thousand able-bodied men have been constantly at work on the ruins; but, notwithstanding that so many have been working in a small space, yet no accident that we can learn of has occurred.

THE RUINS IN FLAMES.

12 O'CLOCK -- MIDNIGHT.

Calamity succeeds calamity! In ten minutes the whole mass of ruins has become one sheet of flame. The screams and moanings of the poor buried creatures can be distinctly heard, but no power can save them.

The flames threaten the destruction of the Washington Mills and the bridge over the river.

Two historical anecdotes connected with two illustrious personages in English history have just come to light. The correspondence of the French Ambassador to the Court of Queen Elizabeth reveals to us what Elizabeth says of Essex. "He took pleasure," she said, "in insulting my person; but she had warned him to take care how he touched her sceptre." The other anecdote refers to King George IV., and is told in the diary of Mr. Rose, who was much with King George [???], and more with Mr. Pi[???]. Rose was talking to the King in his own house: "[???] thank God," said King George [???], and with warmth, "there is but one of my children who wants courage, but I will not name him because he is to succeed me."

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Primary Source # 3 - Newspaper Front Page

Source Description - "Ruins of the Pemberton Mills, at Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Morning after the Fall," *Harper's Weekly* 4, no. 160 (January 21, 1860), 33. Several images of the smoking ruins of the Pemberton Mills circulated widely in the American and European press, including this image which made the cover of *Harper's Weekly*.

