

Awful Loss of Life!

Earth Opens!

Houses Prostrated

Lone Pine!

Its Terrible Condition

Most Heart-Rending Scenes!

Miraculous Escapes!

Individual Heroism!

A Demoralized Printing Office.

(Sunday, March 26, will mark the 111th year of the great Owens Valley earthquake which flattened Lone Pine and part of Independence, and killed a large number of persons. In commemoration, we reprint excerpts from the March 30, 1872 issue of the Inyo Independent—The Editors.)

Between 2 and 3 o'clock Tuesday morning last (March 26), the inhabitants of this region experienced one of the most terror striking, awe inspiring sensations that ever falls to the lot of mortal man—an earthquake—an earthquake in all its mighty power!

The solid earth was loosened from its very foundations, and heaved and tossed as if in the throes of a terrible agony. The Mighty Power beneath threw it up and down, hither and yon as a strong man might toss a helpless babe. No words of ours can begin to portray the terrors of that dread moment, nor the great horror that fell upon every living thing!

It was a terrible scene when all were so rudely awakened from deep slumber to face death in its most terrifying form. Men whose cheeks would never blanch in ordinary dangers cried out in a very agony of terror, women screamed as they clasped their crying little ones, cattle lowed, horses broke from their fastenings and huddled together, dogs howled, chickens left their roosts and staggered about in the darkness in their wild efforts to escape a danger that came they knew not whence.

Strong wooden houses bounded up and down and rolled to and fro like ships in a heavy seaway, crockery smashed and furniture danced about the floors, chimneys dropped instantly to the ground, stone and adobe houses crumbled and went to earth like piles of sand, burying the miserable occupants in the ruins, and the whole world was in its last convulsions!

It would fill volumes to detail all the wonders of those few seconds of time—the wondrous phenomena of nature, the dire calamities, the personal experiences, miraculous escapes and interesting incidents, but for the present we are forced to forego the greater part of these things, and give some main facts, the most of which at the time or subsequently came under our own observation.

All who were not caught in the falling ruins were soon in the streets and soon began to hunt out the extent of the damage.

Henry Tregellas Killed

Henry Tregellas was killed in the ruins of his house. When found by the terrified employees his arms were locked around the almost inanimate form of his wife, both buried in the debris, she badly injured, nearly suffocated and he quite dead. Every building on the ground, save the frame mill, is razed to the earth, and it is absolutely wonderful that none but Mr. Tregellas fell victim. At the mine no one suffered injury.

The Destruction of Lone Pine.

The greatest loss of life and destruction of buildings occurred in the town of Lone Pine, 18 miles south of this place. Every stone and adobe building, comprising about three-fourths of that unfortunate place, was leveled to the earth.

Owing, probably to the soft, springy nature of the ground upon which it stands, the destruction of even the class of buildings above mentioned, was more complete than elsewhere.

Many of the dwellings and with but one or two exceptions, every business house in the town was built of adobe and hence the great loss of life.

Dead of Heroism

There were over sixty persons killed and wounded in that place alone. The large store of Loomis Bros., crowded with goods, fell and buried Rockwell Loomis. The debris caught fire close by where he was lying and near to a large quantity of powder in kegs.

He owes his life, as do many others, to a deed of Heroism performed by Wm. Covington, who, in the midst of the quakings and terrors of the scene, and at the imminent risk of his life, refused to abandon his helpless friend, and never ceased his efforts until he extinguished the fire, then lapping the powder kegs, and got the wounded man out.

It was a noble act. The worst hurt, though not the only one, sustained by Mr. Loomis was in having one ear and a large portion of this scalp torn away.

Mrs. C.M. Joslyn

Mrs. C.M. Joslyn and her three children were buried under masses of adobes and broken timbers. She and her only son, the pride of her heart, little George, occupied a bed on the opposite side of a heavy partition from the bed where her two little daughters were sleeping.

The partition fell across Mrs. Joslyn and little George, killing the latter instantly, and severely injuring her, while the two girls remained unhurt. When finally rescued the wounded and almost insane mother, forgetful of self and all else save her little darling, clung to his dead body until made to relinquish it by almost sheer force.

The large and strongly built brewery, belonging to Munzinger and Lubken, crushed in partially, but all escaped without injury, save one, Munzinger's innocent babe whose little life was crushed out by the fell blow.

A Mexican woman, her two daughters and one son all died together, the sole survivor of this family being a boy about ten years of age, who escaped with his nose and one foot badly crushed. Two well-known women of the town, Lucy and Antonia, occupying different houses, were crushed to death in their beds.

Juan Ybeseta, a native of Chile, and a prominent man had his skull split wide open when his house fell in. Others were mangled most fearfully and many placidly slept the sleep of death, with nothing visible to show the cause. We saw many other dead bodies laid out in a blacksmith shop and other places when we

arrived on the ground a few hours after the great visitation, but we now must take note of the wounded, and a few remarkable escapes.

Col. Whipple was asleep in the second story of his residence when the crash came. Feeling that escape was impossible, and with a thought of his absent family, he exclaimed, "This is Death!"

At Camp Independence all the buildings (adobe) are partially destroyed, though a few were thrown down, but among the latter was Jacob Vagt's, which buried up himself and only child. The latter, we grieve to add suffocated before it could be rescued, a fate the parents barely escaped. Mrs. Vagt and a few others about the Post were somewhat injured, but none seriously. With the pitiable loss of this babe our death list closes, though we are apprehensive of bad news from Deep Spring Valley, where most of the miners lived in rickety stone houses which could not withstand the shock a moment.

At Big Pine the shock was very severe, at Bishop Creek somewhat less so; some buildings down in both localities but no one hurt. At Aurora brick buildings were cracked, and at Benton, this side, the same things occurred, but except the fright, no damage done. We heard nothing from any point north of Aurora.

South, at the lower end of the Lake, the shock was light. From Coso, 70 miles south-east, a report comes that 30 Mexicans were killed, but this needs confirmation.

Strange to say, Cerro Gordo sustained no loss of life or injury other than the crumbling of a few dry stone walls. Belshaw's furnace stopped for a few hours, but resumed operations in the morning. The grade down the mountain was in places so filled with rock and earth as to be impassable for vehicles. At Belmont, a few stone cabins were thrown down, but without injury to the occupants.

Fissures in the Earth are numerous and extend all over the valley; no hurried description can possibly do justice to the wonderful effects everywhere visible. Vast Crevasses have been opened, new lakes formed, sinks of from ten inches to twenty feet and covering acre after acre, cracks extending miles, the river partially dammed and turned, and the foot-hills are in places rent with wide cracks!



Inyo Independent

Feb. 3 - 1883

A Rip Van Winkle Clock—The other day Chas. Johnson, residing a couple of miles below Lone Pine, cleaned up the debris of an adobe house, his residence at the time of the big earthquake, March 26th, 1872, and at which time the structure was demolished. In the course of his work he unearthed a clock that had remained buried up since that eventful night, over a decade ago. The hands of the clock marked 30 minutes past 2. Having noted that fact, he gave the clock a shake, whereupon it waked up from its long sleep and fell to marking time as good as new. The earthquake occurred at 2:30 in the morning, and this Rip Van Winkle clock has held the correct time from the hour the big temblor shook it into quietness until its owner shook it into activity again. School books buried at the same time were found in as good condition as when last used.

Inyo Independent

Feb. 17, 1883

That Earthquake Clock.—Much to our surprise and virtuous indignation, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Candelaria True Fissure have gently intimated that The Independent had joined the noble army of newspapers which are now engaged in a grand lying tournament, both going so far as to really express some doubts about the entire correctness of our statements as to the resurrection of a live clock from the ruins of the great earthquake of 1872. The Chronicle has a lively recollection of that shock, but apparently forgets the greater one which the defenseless people here received when that paper came with its illustrations. It is a wonder how the clock finally survived both, but that it did—