

## Charles Linn ( - 20 Dec 1865)

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*The Evening Star, December 18, 1865*

### **Terrible Explosion at the Arsenal Ten Men Killed! A Number Missing! Exciting Scenes**

At fifteen minutes to 2 o'clock this afternoon a terrific explosion was heard in the direction of the arsenal, shaking buildings in the very heart of the city, and soon it was ascertained that the explosion had taken place in a small building about 20 by 40 feet to the left of the main walk and near the large magazines.

This building was in charge of Sergeant Flint, of the Ordnance Corps, who had under him the following persons, who were engaged in sorting fixed ammunition, removing the cartridges:--Jeremiah Mahoney, Patrick Reardon, Marshland Whiteley, John Crane, James Moran, Michael McDermott, John Meehan, Martin Kyle, John Feely, Peter McGariehey.

Sergeant Flint had left the building about two minutes before the explosion, , some two dozen rounds of cartridges being then loose on the floor and the men had just placed on the benches two boxes of ammunition containing 8 rounds, making in all, as far as he could account for, but about 40 pounds of powder when the explosion took place and the building was in ruins and flames.

As soon as the explosion was heard, officer Weeden sounded an alarm of fire from box 17, which brought down steamers 2 and 3 and the hook and ladder, and in a little time large numbers of persons were around the grounds., but none were allowed to enter but the firemen and police.

Numbers of women and children were seen frantically running back and forth near the gates and making inquiries for their friends.

The guards were immediately doubled by Col. Benton (who was promptly on the ground) around the magazines and the workmen at once directed to leave.

In a short time, however, the fire in the material which composed the building and in a large pile of boxes was extinguished, preventing another building in which a large amount of ammunition was stored from taking fire.

The terrible scene, immediately after the explosion, was only equaled by the scene at the explosion in June 1864, some of the corpses being burned, blackened, and torn so as to expose the entrails, and none being recognizable from the features.

There were seven found dead. The following are known to have been killed:--Jeremiah Mahoney, Patrick Reardon, John Crane, James Moran, Michael McDermot, John Feely, Marshland Whitley, John Meehan and Peter McGariehey.

Mahoney's body was recognized by an account book in a pocket of his pants. Martin Kyle was taken out horribly burned and mangled, ,and was at once removed to the hospital.

James Lawler, who was near the building at the time was badly burned, and Charles Linn, a discharged one-legged soldier, who was sitting on the powder cart nearby at the time, was so badly burned that he is not expected to live. He, with the mule and cart, were thrown a short distance, and the mule was also badly torn and burned.

The deceased, as well as the injured, have all been in the army and discharged, preference being given in employ8ing men to those from the army.

Col. Benton was promptly on the ground and superintended the operations to stay the flames, and the 214th Pa. Regiment, on duty at the post, rendered valuable assistance.

P.S. John Crane is not dead, but severely burned about the head, hands and feet. One of his feet is badly injured by a splinter. Hopes are entertained of his recovery.

Surgeon Porter, of the arsenal, was promptly on the spot, and rendered efficient services assisted by Dr. Miller, of the Navy Yard, Dr. Croggon and Dr. Ford.

*The Evening Star, December 19, 1865*

### **The Arsenal Disaster**

#### **The Coroner's Inquest--The Verdict of the Jury**

#### **The Officers of the Arsenal Exculpated From All Blame**

This morning, Coroner Woodward summoned a jury on the bodies of the victims of the explosion at the Arsenal yesterday. The remains of Jeremiah Mahoney, John Meehan, and John Moran, which were each identified, and of Martin Kyle, Michael McDermott, and Marshland Whiteley, the remains of the three last not being distinguishable one from another, Charles Linn, the driver of the powder cart died yesterday afternoon from injuries received, and his body laid in the hospital.

Thomas Feely was instantly killed, both legs being blown off. His remains were removed last evening to his late residence, at the junction of P street and Rhode Island avenue, near 13th street. He leaves a family of small children, among them his son Tommy, who has been acting as Messenger to the Board of Aldermen for some time back. Patrick Readon and Peter McGariehey were also instantly killed. Readon's body was taken to his residence in Jackson Hall alley last evening.

John Crane was badly burned about the face, hands, and hip, and his foot was injured by a splinter. He is doing well under the care of Dr. Porter, in the hospital. James Lawlor was cut about the face with glass from the window. A leg was thrown on top of the magazine about a hundred yards distant, and the scalp of one of the parties was picked up near the gate today.

Linn's body will be buried by his brother-in-law, and those who are not claimed by their relatives, or which cannot be identified, will be placed in handsome coffins and buried from the Arsenal.

#### *The Inquest*

About 9 o'clock this morning, Coroner Woodward summoned the following jury of inquest:-- Frederick Whyte, George Wright, Thomas Taylor, John H. Debille, Luther Martin, H.C. Elliot, George W. Lunt, George A. Cook, Humphrey H. Lemon, Andrew Cox, Mark E. King, Hiram Bauer.

Six of the bodies were wrapped in canvas (that is, what fragments remained of them) and placed in large boxes, the bodies being in such condition that it was impossible to place them in coffins and were taken to one of the frame buildings north of the old penitentiary building. At the floors of this building, before the jury was sworn a number of the relatives of the deceased gathered.

On the doors being opened for the jury the crowd, mostly females, rushed in, and frantic were the cries of "My poor brother," "father," etc. The bodies were limitless, every one had limbs off or broken, and in one case not half the body remained. In some cases the legs and arms were burned off to the socket. In this building the bodies were uncovered, and the jury sworn over each body.

Mr. John Sullivan identified the body of Jeremiah Mahoney. The body of John Meehan was identified by Mrs. Catherine Meehan, his mother, and his brother James. The body of John Moran, who resided on Union street, near the 6th street wharf, was identified by Patrick Shaloo and the wife of deceased, who is left with two small children.

The jury, after viewing these bodies, proceeded to the hospital where the body of Charles Linn, who died yesterday afternoon, where Mr. George H. Gates, his brother-in-law, and testified that he was from Philadelphia.

John Crane (who was badly burned about the face, hands, and hip, and injured in the foot), gave his evidence to the jury. He did not know what caused the explosion. The men all wore moccasins; never saw any smoking, and witness believes that it was accidental.

The jury, with the witnesses, proceeded from the hospital to the clerk's office, where the following evidence was taken:

Sergeant Wm. F. Flint (in charge of the building exploded) sworn—About two minutes before the explosion there were two boxes of K shot and 18 or 24 rounds in the building. There was a cart nearby, and witness thinks that a box was let fall in unloading, causing the explosion. Every precaution was taken against accident when taking cartridges from fixed ammunition. The cart went there with a fresh supply to break up. It comes from the forts in all sizes; old ammunition. Witness has frequently opened the boxes and found the friction primers loose. Witness never heard that the times fuses were ordered to be thrown into the canal. The explosion was at the cart first; there were two explosions. There were ten men in the shed at the time. There was about a barrel of powder inside the building. Linn the teamster, was a sober man about 26, Mahoney about 30, Meehan about 27, John Moran was about 26, with a wife and two children.

Mr. Frederick Whyte testified he knew Linn and regarded him as a steady, sober, trustworthy man.

Capt. Curtis S. Barrett testified to the same effect. Witness thinks he smoked, but did not know that he carried a pipe.

John Daily sworn—Witness was about fifty yards away at the time, and fell on his face, and when he got up heard Linn moaning, and helped to get him away. Witness heard two explosions, the last one the loudest. The cart was being unloaded at the time. Witness had frequently seen friction primers loose in the boxes. Witness had seen barrels rolled contrary to regulations. Had seen loose caps among ammunition turned in from the forts. Had never seen any of the men intoxicated.

Wm. Summers sworn—Witness was about 40 yards off at the time and heard two explosions, the first from the cart or the door of the shed, the cart being backed up at the time. Witness saw the flame from the cart; the second explosion knocked him down.

Several other witnesses testified to the same effect.

Col. James G. Benton sworn—Witness was in his office at the time, and was soon on the spot, ordering the hose up. The building had been erected only about a month. It was made light that in case of an explosion there would be the last amount of resistance. There are between one and two thousand barrels of powder in the magazine. There are twelve buildings devoted to the laboratory purposes; four large magazines, three small ones, and two store houses. He had distributed the buildings in the best manner he could devise, placing the buildings east of the street that the sparks from steamers might not reach there. He had represented to the chief of ordnance that there was danger in such quantities, and he had ordered much of it away, but it had accumulated very fast. There is no loose powder in the Penitentiary building. Last year the chief of ordnance recommended to Congress the necessity of an appropriation for a magazine in the interior, and had repeated it this year. Had it not been for the marshy condition of the ground he could have distributed the buildings to better advantage. Witness visited the buildings ever day, and was careful to see that the floor was carpeted and the men had their moccasins.

The evidence being in, the jury proceeded to find a verdict in each of the seven cases:--That the said deceased, (naming him if one of the identified, or name unknown if otherwise,) while at work at the Arsenal, unloading fixed ammunition, (except in the case of Linn, the teamster,) was accidentally killed by the explosion of the same at about 15 minutes to 2 o'clock p.m. on the 18th instant, and that the jury are of the opinion that this accident was caused by the bad packing of the ammunition, it having been shown by the evidence that friction fuses have frequently been found loose in the boxes. It further appears that this ammunition has been received at the Arsenal from various sources and that no blame is attached to the officers of the Arsenal, it appearing to the satisfaction of the jury that stringent

regulations for the government of the laboratory have always been fully and faithfully carried out and the deceased was a poor man and had no means. And the jury further recommend that a suitable magazine for the storage of powder be erected in some sparsely settled section of the country, the evidence showing that large quantities of powder and ammunition are on hand at the Arsenal for want of a suitable building for its reception.