**Coleman Norfleet Biography**

Coleman Norfleet was born about October 1881 to Mariah Norfleet. Currently nothing is known about his father to include his name. In 1900 Coleman was 18, he lived with his mother at 348 Spring Street in Clarksville, TN. His mother worked as a cook, and he found employment as a tobacco factory laborer. According to the 1900 Montgomery County census, Coleman had a sibling who is currently unknown. Neither Coleman nor his mother could read or write. On April 23, 1900, Coleman was arrested for shooting craps and fined a total of $10.50.

Around 1908, Coleman married a woman named Cornelia and moved to L & N Street in Providence Town, Kentucky. He found work as a coal miner with the Providence Mining Company, and his wife worked as a seamstress. The 1910 census shows they shared their home with three boarders.

Providence Town suffered a disaster on Friday, November 25, 1910. An explosion occurred in Mine Number 3 belonging to the Providence Mining Company and trapped nine men below ground. The explosion was so violent that a big fan and a mining car at the top of the mine were destroyed. Miners worked all night to construct a temporary windlass that they hoped to use to get to the trapped miners. The next day, black smoke was still billowing from the shaft indicating that a fire still burned at the lower levels. Mine rescue experts arrived from Knoxville, Tennessee and Linton, Indiana. Rescuers with oxygen helmets went into the shaft on November 26 and brought up the bodies of three miners who burned to death. By 1 p.m. all the bodies were brought up out of the shaft.

At the time, this was the worst mine disaster that Kentucky had suffered. However, if the explosion had occurred 15 minutes earlier, double the number of men would have been caught in the shaft. The working day was coming to an end and the nine dead miners were waiting for the cage to be taken to the surface. Immediately after the explosion, air was pumped into the mine in the hope that some of the men had survived the explosion. The explosion was immediately followed by a flow of black damp from the mine which is a “suffocating mixture of carbon dioxide and other unbreathable gases.”[[1]](#footnote-1) An autopsy of the miners revealed that some of the men had died instantaneously and the others died from the smoke and black damp.

Coleman Norfleet was thirty years old when he died in this explosion. He and his wife Cornelia had no children. His remains were brought back to Clarksville on November 27,1910. His funeral was probably held at his mother’s house by Reverend Paul Dennis of Guthrie, Kentucky and burial was at Mt Olive Cemetery. Currently no headstone has been found for Coleman and no record of his wife or mother has been found beyond the 1910 census.

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