

Way We Were

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The Deason family home

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The house at 835 Norfolk Avenue started life as a standard T/L-cottage, typical of Park City's mining-era architecture. William and Elizabeth Deason purchased the house in 1896 and built an expansion off the south wing, a common architectural addition to T-cottages throughout Utah.

The Deason family had moved to Park City from Nova Scotia in 1883. William's background in coal mining gave him a foot in the door for the local silver mining scene and he quickly found work in the area.

As a miner, William was no doubt aware of the dangers associated with that occupation. But he experienced them first hand in 1895 in an accident at the Daly. Deason and fellow miner Fred Stohl came on shift Tuesday morning, May 7. They were informed by the team coming off shift of a "missed hole" in the area in which they were scheduled to work. A missed hole is a packed with charges that failed to detonate with the rest of the area's charges at the appointed blasting time.¹ The previous shift had investigated the missed hole and deemed it harmless. Deason and Stohl performed a secondary investigation before starting their work and also deemed it harmless.²

Upon commencing their drilling, however, Deason and Stohl inadvertently set off the unexploded charge. They were both rendered unconscious and suffered serious injuries. The blast also blew out their lights, leaving the men in total darkness. Upon regaining consciousness, the two verbally checked on each other and managed to turn off their machinery. They made their way down the shaft and got help.³

Stohl was the lesser hurt of the two. He was badly cut on his head and face from flying rock but Doctors Gregor and Wilson were able to patch him up, even managing to save both of his eyes which had been damaged. Deason was less fortunate. He had been "tending chuck,"⁴ or cleaning out freshly drilled holes at the time and thus was right up against the rock face when it exploded. He lost his left eye and suffered a crushed nose, a severely cut and burned face, lacerated muscles on his left arm, and several damaged bones including a broken finger. The doctors cared for him as best they could and by Saturday, he was "resting comfortably" and "doing as well as could be expected."⁵

Though he did recover, he dealt with complications from his injuries for years to come. He died in 1912, a respected and well-loved Park City old timer.⁶ Elizabeth Deason continued living at 835

¹ Claude T. Rice, "Prevention of Accidents in Metal Mines," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 87, February 6, 1909.

² "Another Missed Hole," *Park Record*, May 11, 1895

³ *Park Record*, May 11, 1895

⁴ "Speed in Small Drifts," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 86, October 17, 1908.

⁵ *Park Record*, May 11, 1895

⁶ "Death of William Deason," *Park Record*, August 10, 1912.

Norfolk with her grown daughter Joanna, taking on boarders to support herself and fill the large home.⁷ She died in 1933 at the age of eighty-six.⁸

You can see this and other historic homes during our upcoming annual Historic Home Tour, June 24 from 10am to 3pm. This year's tour features homes on lower Norfolk and Woodside Avenues. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit the Park City Museum's website or call 435-649-7457.



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Caption: The Deason family lived at 835 Norfolk Avenue for nearly forty years. The two-story addition on the south side of the home was added by the Deasons to support their large family of seven children.

⁷ 1930 United States Federal Census

⁸ "Mrs. E. Deason Called," *Park Record*, May 26, 1933.