

State of Washington
Report of the State Inspector of Coal Mines
Biennial Period Ending December 31, 1941

Sixteenth Biennial Publication

February 16.—Pacific Coast Coal Co., Cannon mine, Franklin: Andrew Churnick, Hungarian, aged 50 years, occupation miner. Killed by a rush of water and gravel in No. 11 chute on the water level in the Gem seam. His body was recovered 4 days later near the first crosscut in No. 12 chute. The deceased and his partner, Mike Bobchurnick, who was rescued after being imprisoned for 7 days near the sixth crosscut in the same chute, were driving No. 11 and No. 12 chutes as prospects 6 feet wide and from 50 to 100 feet in advance of the other places on this level. Nothing unusual had been noticed in these chutes until shortly before the gravel broke in on the morning of February 16 when streams of water began to run from the roof. The deceased and his partner decided to go and notify the foreman of these conditions and started through the seventh crosscut to No. 12 chute, when the gravel and water came in with a rush. The deceased was carried down No. 12 chute with the gravel and boulders, and Bobchurnick was thrown by the force across No. 12 chute into the manway. No. 11 chute was filled with gravel to the top and No. 12 nearly to the seventh crosscut, which was at the face. The first attempt to reach the men was made from the face of No. 10 breast by a crosscut driven to tap No. 11 chute near the face, and which was found blocked with gravel. It was found impossible to reach them from this side. A crosscut was then driven from the face of No. 13 breast and holed into No. 12 chute about 100 feet from the face at which point it was found to be blocked with gravel. After rapping on the coal and using other methods to attract attention and receiving no answer it was decided that the men had been carried down either No. 11 or No. 12 chute. It was then decided to clean out No. 12 chute. This work was carried on very cautiously as the water coming down this chute made the work very dangerous. On the morning of the 20th Andrew Churnick's body was recovered at the first crosscut. Work was continued in No. 12 chute until the 23rd, when the second crosscut was reached without finding the other man. A consultation was held with the mine officials on the morning of the 23rd and it was decided that an effort be made to reach the face of No. 12 chute by driving through the gravel above the fifth cross cut from No. 13 breast. All other work was abandoned as it was not considered safe to work in No. 12 while men were inside on

account of the danger of a rush of gravel blocking the gangway. After two hours work in No. 12 chute above the fifth crosscut, or about 10 a. m. on the 23rd, one of the men heard a rap in the chute and a few minutes later it was learned that Bobchurnick was alive. Renewed efforts were made to reach him and he was rescued about 3 p. m. the same afternoon. The miners who helped in this rescue and the mine officials are both to be commended for their loyal work in the face of grave danger, and their persistent efforts when all hopes of either being alive were given up by all concerned. We were all more than repaid on seeing a father restored to his wife and six children, who for a week had mourned him as dead. The deceased leaves a widow and six children.

Following is a copy of the verdict of the coroner's jury, which met to inquire into the death of the deceased:

"We, the jury duly sworn to inquire, on the part of the people of the State of Washington, into all circumstances attending the death of Andrew Chernick now lying dead at home, in the county of King, State of Washington, find, in our judgment, that he came to his death on the 16th day of Feb., A. D. 1914, by reason of a cave or break at the face of No. 11 chute on the water level in the Cannon mine. The said cave or break let the gravel or water run down No. 11 chute, running through the crosscuts, filling No. 11 and No. 12 chutes, and caught Andrew Chernick in No. 12 chute.

"In testimony whereof, the jury of this inquest have hereunto set their hands this 4th day of March, A. D. 1914.

"Signed: Jas. M. Carson, foreman; J. W. Schneider, Steve Nowak, Stef Balint, Wm. Duncan, R. F. Dudley."

The inspector ordered that drill holes be kept at least 15 feet ahead in the face and roof in all workings on the water level of this mine.