

April 8, 1927; Carbonado mine; Carbonado, Wash.; 7 Killed

(From Bureau of Mines report by John G. Schoning)

About 12:45 p.m. on April 8, 1927, a cave-in occurred in the Carbonado mine in which seven men were killed by the down rush of gravel, mud and water. These men were working in the North Morgan seam which is from 15 to 20 feet thick, and pitches from 60 to 80 degrees, and is covered with about 200 feet of gravel, clay, and earth, which without warning gave way and rushed into the mine burying the men who were in its path.

Six of the men killed were engaged in pulling pillars. The seventh was a motorman leading a trip of coal out of number 5 chute.

To extract the pillar, an angle chute is started above the cross-cut and driven to about the center of the block, then up through the block to the cross-cut above, then through the block above the cross-cut, after which a round of holes are drilled, and the holes loaded and blasted at one time, thus shooting down all of the coal in the block at one time. This is called booming the pillar. The coal is then run down the chutes and loaded into cars on the gangway. When rocks start to run down the chute the pillar is abandoned, and work started in the pillar below.

Two men were engaged in this work on the fourth cross-cut between number 5 and 6 chutes. One was caught by the rush of gravel and mud but was taken out alive within a short time after the cave, none the worse for his experience. He was held directly on top of the other by the debris, and while he was unable to get out without help, he tried to keep the other's head above the water and mud but found this impossible. The dead man was dug out of the mud between 4 and 5 chutes at about 2:30 p.m., Friday, April 8.

Two bodies were taken out of number 7 Chute at 3:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. on Monday the 11th.

The motorman's body was found in number 5 chute, just below the bulkhead, early Monday morning April 18th. A miner was found in number 5 chute at the foot of the angle leading lip to number 3 and 4 chutes. On April 20, and another

was taken out of the angle chute above the first cross-cut between 4 and 5 chutes. He was recovered on Saturday morning, April 23. (It appears that one body was not accounted for in the report.)

The gravel came down in three distinct rushes or surges according to the men who were working near the affected area. Presumably it came into the mine faster than it could get down the pitch through the workings and would be held up for a while then it would take on another surge.

When chutes were driven up the pitch some of them would be driven through to the gravel. This was done for two reasons. To find out where the gravel was, and also that it might be used as filling. The contact between the gravel and coal was not regular, number 4 chute running into gravel about 30 feet above the sixth cross-cut, while it was struck in the sixth cross-cut between number 6 and 7 chutes, but not in number 6 chute.

Up at the fourth cross-cut and above it the pitch was about 70 degrees, and the hanging wall was very hard to break, and it was nearly impossible to cave a place after the coal had been extracted, therefore if the gravel did not run in there would be a large open place left.

Evidently there was a lot of open country up around number 7 chute, and the heavy winter rains loosened up the gravel so that it let go and came into the mine with a rush, carrying everything before it as it came. The cave left a hole about 100 feet long by 50 feet wide by 50 feet deep.

Six holes were fired in number 6 pillar about 11:30 a.m., on the morning of the accident. The resulting jar, and the weight of the water soaked gravel, the large open space where the coal had been extracted in seven and eight pillars, the steep pitch on which the mining was being done, all of these no doubt played a part in causing this cave-in in which seven men lost their lives. The exact cause of this accident will probably never be known.