

December 17, 1929; Old Town Mine, McAlester, Okla.; 61 Killed

(From Bureau of Mines report, by C. A. Herbert)

The main slope was driven down the pitch, and the manway slope some 600 feet distant served as the return aircourse. Sixty-six men were in the mine at about 10:30 a.m., when an explosion in the west slope aircourse near the lower end at 9th west killed all the men below the 5th east and west entries instantly by violence and burns.

In the 5th west all men were overcome by afterdamp while attempting to escape, as were those in 5th east, with the exception of three who turned back on encountering the smoke and retreated behind a curtain into No. 9 room. Two remained near the curtain and were found unconscious by rescuers at 5 o'clock in the afternoon; the other went up to the face of the room and suffered no ill effects. He joined the rescue crew after release; the other two were revived and taken outside.

Three men working on haulage at the inside rope hoist went into the smoke on the main slope and got into an empty trip and signaled to hoist. When the trip reached the surface, one was missing. His body was found along the track; apparently he had raised up and struck against a timber, breaking his neck and knocking him out of the car.

The explosion was only moderately violent; flame and force were confined to the lower workings. Help was called, and the bodies were recovered, and the three men rescued without use of breathing apparatus or gas masks. The main exhaust fan was not in use, as it was usual to rely on a booster fan, blowing off the main slope. This fan had stopped before the explosion as the belt was off the pulley.

The face of the aircourse was far ahead of air ; and a small blower fan recirculated and mixed air and gas in the 9th west aircourse, where the explosion originated from striking a match to light a cigarette or from arcing of the fan motor. Dust was ignited, and a slow, low-pressure explosion extended to the faces of all the lower entries (fig. 79). No rock dust was used, and occasional sprinkling of the entries did not change the dry and dusty conditions.

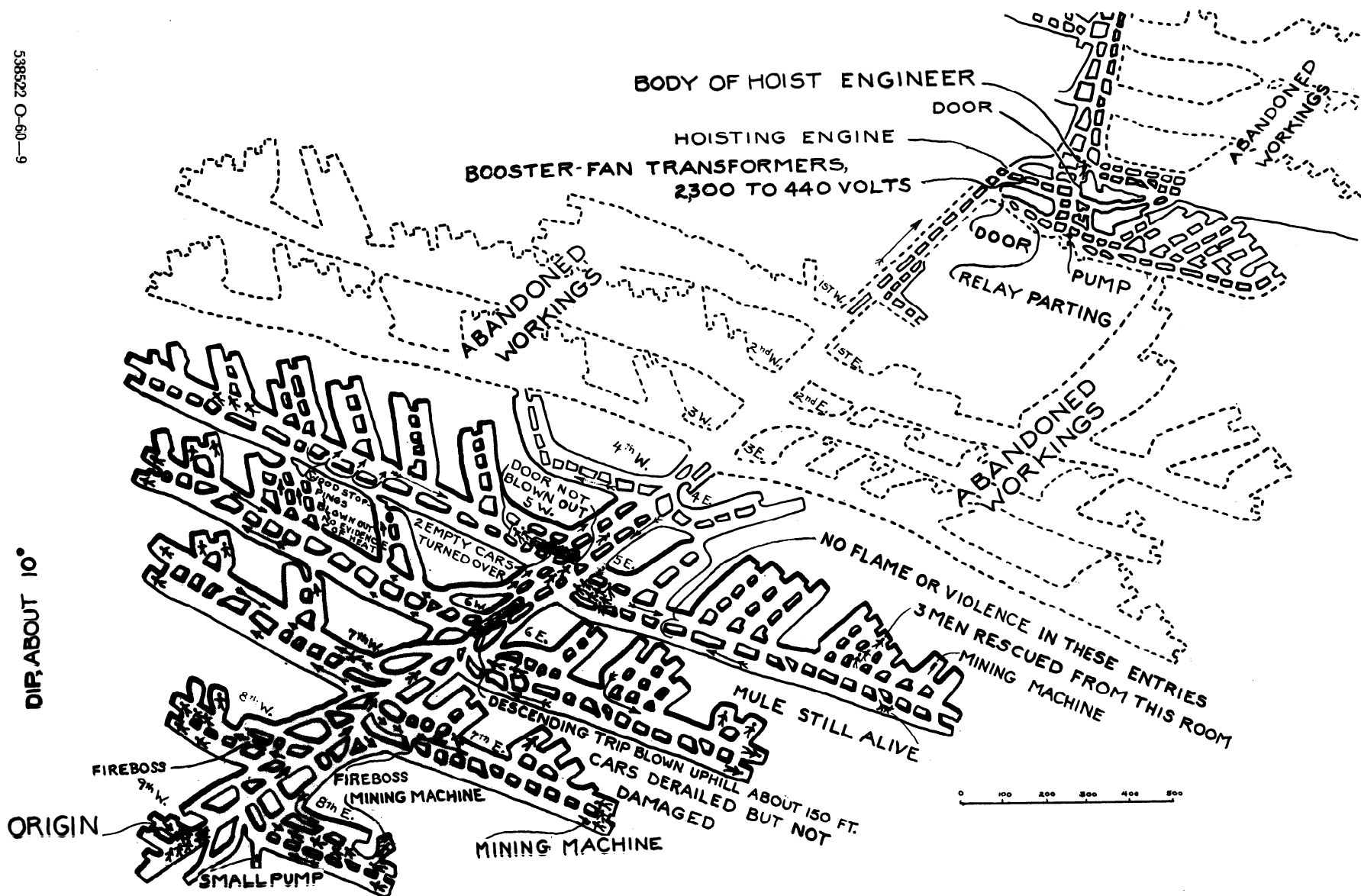


FIGURE 79.—Map of explosion area, Old Town mine, McAlester, Okla., December 17, 1929.