

Copyright © 2025 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

BUTTE MINE DISASTER

(Continued From Page 1.)

were taken to the surface, where they told of the two left behind.

As soon as the news of the fire reached the offices of the company practically every helmet man and safety-first team from the mines of the Anaconda company were rushed to the scene. Within 30 minutes the rescue work had been organized and was proceeding with the regularity of well-drilled forces. This was the first fire of great magnitude, where hundreds of lives were in danger, that has happened in the mines of Butte since the safety-first work was organized.

Roy Alley was among the first of the company officers to arrive. He was followed quickly by John Gillie, W. B. Daly, Capt. D. Gay Stivers and others.

The news of the fire spread with great rapidity and within a few minutes crowds of men, women and children were heading for the gates. There they found the company watchmen would not permit them to pass and they stood with ashen faces and waited patiently to hear from their husbands, fathers and brothers, whose lives they feared were in danger.

Sheriff Henderson, Under Sheriff Wyman and a force of deputies hurried to the scene to assist in maintaining order and keep the crowd from interfering with the work of rescue. They found but little difficulty, however, as every one seemed to realize that the rescue work would be impeded if the crowds were allowed to get to the collar of the shaft.

Heading Off Fire.

All of the fire doors leading to the different levels of the adjoining mines were ordered closed and the work of bulkheading, so as to prevent the possibility of the fire spreading, was taken up vigorously.

The mines that connect with the Pennsylvania are the St. Lawrence, Tramway and Mountain View. Some of the rescue work was carried on from these connections and a number of the men raised to the surface in the shafts of these mines.

Word was sent to the city fire department and Chief Martin, with a force of men, went to the assistance of the fire-fighting forces of the Anaconda company, which were working on the blaze. They found that the fire had spread from the 1,200 to the 1,000 level and the timbers on these two levels were blazing.

By 11:30 the shaft was fairly well cleared of smoke and good progress was being made in getting the blaze under control. The main shaft was also being cleared of smoke rapidly and the work of fighting the fire and also of looking for missing men was being carried on with much more ease.

Ambulances and physicians had been rushed to the scene as soon as the word of the fire was received. Men overcome by smoke and gas, as soon as they were brought to the surface were given a quick examination, and where their condition was not too serious they were rushed to the hospitals, where they were soon resuscitated.

At midnight it was stated that all the men underground had been checked up and that practically all had been accounted for.

Heroic Work.

Many thrilling stories were told by the men who were rescued of the bravery of some of their comrades. The men on the 500 and 600 levels were working some distance from the station, and one of the men near the station, in spite of the fact that the smoke was pouring into that level, went through all the stopes and notified every man of the danger. It was here that Mitchell and Brennan were overcome. Both of them had on helmets and were attempting to find missing men who were supposed to be in there.

Told by Miners.

One miner told how the fire spread. "We were eating lunch and all of a sudden some one shouted: 'Look out boys she's on fire.' I thought he was joking, but then I began to smell it. We all started to run, and before I could get to the station, I saw two of the three horses drop dead and then I knew I had no chance unless we got to the station. The smoke came fast and it was mighty strong. As we ran we yelled to the others."

When it came time for volunteers

to don helmets and go after the bodies on the 300-foot level there was no dearth of men. They glanced at the indicator on the oxygen tank and then went down. It was expected that the smoke and fire would be worse on the 1,000-foot level, but "Long John" Norris of the Tramway mine went through this level and they found a number of lunch buckets were scattered. He stopped at that level twice when making three trips on the cage in the hopes of warning some miners to get their fellows to the station. No one answered his yell and when he came up the last time the smoke was so bad that he could not see the cord and when he reached it by feeling for it, the cage was past that level.

One Says He Saw Start.

One of the station tenders said he saw the fire start and that if he had had a helmet and a chemical it could have been out before it gained much headway. It was only a few minutes after the yell of fire was sounded through the mine that the smoke had penetrated to the 330-foot level from some of the lower levels; it was possible for some of the men to escape, but there was little chance for men to get to other mines from above the 300 or from several levels below the 1,500.

Miners in the Tramway and other mines were stationed at the doors leading between mines to admit any miner who might have crawled to a level which would take him out of the zone.

There were 220 miners on the night shift, and the majority of these had to fight their way through some smoke. Some miners who were farther in on some of the levels had a hard time getting to the station through the smoke, and when they got to the surface they were sick and in some cases momentarily overcome.

At 2 o'clock this morning a fan and motor had been installed on the surface and this was working with the fan on the 1,200-foot level. Miners had hope that some of the men might have gotten into some inclosure where they would be protected, and, if the smoke were driven out, so that rescuers could go down and save their lives. Preparations have been made on the surface to handle these men as fast as they are brought up. More safety-first equipment was brought from other mines and more rescuers were on hand to go underground as soon as any helmet-wearer came to the surface showing signs of exhaustion.

On the Fire Level.

A. M. Huffman told of the narrow escape which he with several of the other men on the 1,200 level, had in getting out. The smoke and gas were detected at 8:40 o'clock, when they were eating. The men nearest the shaft, where the air was forced at the effects of the gas and smoke more than those who were in the drifts.

Ben Haskell felt the effects of the smoke first. He became ill and was rushed to the top. Men on the 1,000-foot level came down to the 1,200 level in an effort to shut off the power and stop the circulation of the smoke by the air system. One of them signaled for the cage and four men were up before 18 others, who were back in the drift waiting to make a run for it, could get to the cage.

In a Struggle.

The scenes at the stations were of frantic men trying vainly to fight the smoke long enough for the cage to reach them and drag them to safety. Others who were late in getting out of the drifts discovered conditions worse as they approached the stations.

Two men on the 500 and 600 levels saved their lives by acting quickly. The "skinner" went to the cage and rang for it and told his partner to go up to the 500 level if he did not come back, and he would hold the cage at the 500 level for him. The second man waited near the underground stables for the "skinner." He did not come back, and the latter climbed to the 500, where he got the cage and got out. When he left the 600 the horses were overcome by smoke.

Powder Is Safe.

The main powder magazine at the Pennsylvania is on the 700-foot level and miners said the fire could have burned a long time before it reached the magazine.

Thomas Cooney of 310 East Madison

street was one of the heroes of the night. He and 11 other men, when they found themselves in danger of being overcome, formed a circle and discussed the best way to get out of the mine. It was decided to cast their fortune together and at Cooney's orders they made a line, each man holding a jacket of the man in front. Only eight of the men reached the surface. Cooney told this story:

"I was at the 500-foot station, waiting to go up for supper when the car rider said he heard the mine was on fire. The smoke began to come in the station and we were driven inside, then the shift boss yelled to take everybody out. We knew there were some more fellows inside and we wanted to save the lives of 16 men if we could. They were 500 feet further in the mine than we were and they had no way of finding out unless we got in and told them before it was too late. To get around the wall of smoke we climbed from the 500-foot level to the 600 level and then back to the 500. The fellows reported that it was impossible to reach those men, so we grabbed hold of each other's jumpers and, with myself in the lead, started for the station. I fell twice, but I felt that I could lead the men out, and I got up again.

"We choked, spat and stumbled as we went along and we would probably have all been saved if we had not run into a timber truck. Some of the men could not climb over it. I yelled 'Are you coming boys?' and they replied 'Yes,' but some dropped at the truck and we were too weak to pick them up. Some of the boys collapsed on the station and we pulled them to the back of the cage. There were two deck loads of men on it then."

Nippers Gave the Alarm.

Lester Buchanan of 26 East Broadway told how the nippers went through the mine, yelling fire.

"I was working my fifth shift at the Pennsylvania and 10 of us were on the 500-foot level, one-half mile from the station. We hadn't had much air all night, so we quit blasting to get supper."

"Suddenly some one yelled that the mine was on fire and we noticed there was a good breeze in the air shaft. We were going back to see if one of our blasts had set some timber on fire when we heard the nippers yelling: 'Come, boys, make it to the station if you can.'"

"Ten of us started to run as fast as we could and during the half-mile run the smoke got stronger all the time. Billy Reynolds and some more of the boys were to the north of us and we did not see them get to the station in time to catch the chippy cage, which came four minutes after we rang. Some of the boys collapsed at the station. There was no place for a man to powderhead himself on that level, as the powder house is open. The smoke was so strong that any one who did not make the station would soon die."

Cooney and Buchanan will probably be able to leave Murray hospital today. All the drifts from the Pennsylvania connecting with the St. Lawrence, Tramway and Mountain View mines are being bulkheaded. Men were sent down the main shaft at 2:30 o'clock to fight the fire, and reports are that the fire extended over a very small area.

DR. GREIL WANTS MORE THAN HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS

New York, Feb. 14.—Dr. Cecil L. Greil, the American-born citizen among the survivors of the torpedoed Italian liner Ancona, announced at her home here today that she had filed in Washington claims amounting to \$120,000. From the Austrian government she demands \$100,000 and from the United States \$20,000, including \$5,000 cash which she said was lost with the liner.

Dr. Greil said that she would go to Washington Wednesday in the hope of obtaining an interview with President Wilson.

HOUSE MEETS BIG ONES.

London, Feb. 14 (5:55 p. m.).—Col. E. M. House, President Wilson's personal representative, spent the week end in London meeting various prominent personages, among whom was at least one cabinet minister.

DANISH ARTIST DIES.

Copenhagen, Feb. 14 (1:02 p. m.).—Vilhelm Hammershoj, one of the most prominent Danish artists, died yesterday. He was born in 1864.