

DEATH RIDES IN BLAST AND TAKES A TOLL OF NINE AT POUNDING MILL

Many Tons of High Explosives Let Go and Hurl Mountain of Stone and Earth Down on Workmen in Quarry Pit, Crushing All in its Path.

Nine persons are dead and several others are suffering from serious injuries as a result of a premature explosion which occurred at the W. W. Boxley & Company's plant at Pounding Mill, Va., thirty-five miles west of this city, yesterday morning. Thousands of tons of stone were thrown down into the pit by the explosion, catching the workmen under its ponderous weight and causing almost instant death to all. F. E. Myers, one of the victims, died while being rushed to the hospital at Richlands.

The dead:

JOE SMITH.

F. E. MYERS.

JOHN, ALLEN and EDWARD BIRD, colored (brothers).

WASH G. LOVERN, colored.

R. T. and C. G. MCGHEE (brothers).

JASPER JACKSON, colored.

Seriously injured:

GEORGE BREWSTER.

TAYLOR WILLIS.

At a late hour yesterday evening only two of the bodies had been recovered, one of these being F. E. Myers, who died shortly after being removed from the pit and sent to the hospital at Richlands. The name of the other person found was not learned. It was said that this body was not entirely covered with the fallen stone but was badly mangled. George Brewster, one of the seriously injured, was blown a distance of twenty feet. It is thought he will recover.

The explosion occurred at 8 o'clock yesterday morning. The quarry force was drilling holes preparatory to blasting. Some of the holes had been charged with heavy loads of powder and dynamite and it is said that a spark from the steam shovel fell into one of the holes causing the explosion. It was reported here that C. M. Hunter, superintendent of the works, gave warning to the men to save themselves when he saw the spark from the steam shovel fly into a hole that was being charged with powder, but the explosion came so quickly that all of the force did not have time to make their get away.

Reports from the scene of the disaster late last night indicated that it would be late this afternoon before the seven bodies buried under the mountain of limestone would be recovered. Searching parties were organized immediately following the explosion yesterday morning but little progress was made until late last evening. The Norfolk and Western railroad officials sent several work crews to the scene, including the Bluefield wreck cars. Owing to the condition of the siding which leads off to the quarry, however, it was impossible to get the wreck car into the quarry pit until late last evening.

Foreman Farmer with a bridge crew from Swords Creek, Va., reached the scene at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon and Mason Foreman Legenoa with a force of men from this city and an extra force from another point on the Pocahontas division were sent to Pounding Mill yesterday. Assistant Road Foreman W. F. Perkins and Assistant Road Master R. M. Alley supervised the rescue work.

The Pounding Mill quarry, which furnishes crushed limestone ballast for the Norfolk and Western, and for road building in the Clinch Valley section, is one of the largest and most carefully managed concerns of its kind. Thousands of pounds of high explosives have been used in the past years without injury to a single person, it is said. It is the custom of this concern to blast out rock about every six months, using approximately fifteen to twenty tons of dynamite, nitroglycerine and powder combined. Preparations were being made for the semi-annual blast for next Monday, and fifteen holes, about six inches in diameter and many feet deep, had been filled with the explosives.

The holes are put down with the use of a well digger and reach to the bottom of the quarry pit. It was said that about six hundred cans of powder and eight hundred pounds of dynamite and nitroglycerine was to be used in the big blast on Monday, which would throw enough stone from the mountain side into the pit to run the crusher plant for a period of six months. Six men were engaged in leading these holes at the time a spark from the steam shovel was caught by the wind and carried high in the air and descended directly in the hole and set it off. All of these men were injured by the shock. The concussion set off an adjacent shot, bringing down thousands of tons of limestone on the men and helpers operating the shovel seventy-five feet below.

Later reports received last night stated that these men in the pit received no warning of the impending disaster and were consequently caught in a trap and crushed to death. One report stated that Superintendent Hunter saw the spark fall into the hole and gave warning to the men to save themselves, but from persons arriving here from the scene last night it was learned that a foreman named Asbury, who was supervising the loading of the holes, saw the spark

fall and only those men engaged in the loading received the warning. Asbury succeeded in getting about twenty-five feet from the hole when the blast went off. He had his arm broken and was taken to the hospital at Richlands.

The steam shovel was located in the pit directly under a hole which had been charged with several hundred pounds of powder and dynamite. The McGhee brothers were engaged in operating this machine, one being the regular crane man and the other the engineer. All other men in the pit were laborers. Reports received here said a bolder weighing about fifty tons was thrown over on the shovel, mashing it like a cracker box. The shovel was completely buried. Thirteen of the holes remained unfired and will likely be held in abeyance for several days.

No damage was caused to the Norfolk and Western railroad tracks or interference to the operation of traffic. The quarry is located on a siding several hundred feet from the main line of the Clinch Valley district. N. H. Pile, a Du Pont Powder Company representative, who was en route to this city from Stonega, Va., yesterday morning, was notified of the explosion and got off at Pounding Mill last evening to make an investigation of the accident.

The frightful tragedy cast a dreadful pall over the little village of Pounding Mill, where the four white men killed lived with their families, and were highly respected and honored by the citizens. Most of the colored men killed were transit laborers. The McGhee brothers had recently moved to Pounding Mill from Max Meadows, Va., where their remains will be taken for burial. Great crowds from the nearby section visited the scene of the disaster all during the day and stood about in groups watching the workmen engaged in clearing away the great piles of limestone that hid the bodies from view.

Thus another frightful tragedy has been credited to Friday the thirteenth.

Will Punish Leaders of Denver Mob.

Denver, Colo., Aug. 13.—Legal action to punish the leaders of the mobs who were active last Thursday and Friday nights in connection with the strike of the street car men was begun today while union leaders were planning the establishment of a line of jitney buses to compete with street cars operated by strike breakers.