

THE CONYNGHAM INQUEST.

BEGUN BY CORONER O'MALLEY THIS MORNING.

Testimony That the Danger Signal Was Up—Could the Mine Have Been Kept Clear of Gas When the Water Was High?—O'Brien, Whose Death Resulted From the Accident, An Intelligent Miner.

William P. Gardner, Patrick Cullen, Patrick Harrison, James O'Malley, J. D. Birmingham and Thomas Sheridan, the Coroner's jury in the inquest of the late Thomas O'Brien, who came to his death by being burned with gas in the recent Conyngham shaft explosion, met in the Arbitration Room of the Court House shortly after 10 o'clock this morning. A large number of witnesses were present, it being the purpose to bring out all the facts in the case. The inquest was conducted by Coroner O'Malley in person. Mine Inspector G. M. Williams was present, as was also Superintendent Sharar, of the Delaware & Hudson Company. Samuel Innes, a stenographer, took down the evidence in short hand, being engaged for the work by the D. & H. Squire Gardner was made foreman of the jury.

Foreman McDonald's Testimony.

David McDonald, inside foreman of the Conyngham shaft, was the first person called. He has been in his present position for the past five years; had made an examination of the old workings the Tuesday previous to the day of the accident; never knew any gas to be in the old stable, but frequently knew gas in the "Old West." Fire bosses always put up danger signals in dangerous places; saw signals on the door leading to the "Old West" on Tuesday before accident, and two cross boards were placed at entrance to stable; danger marks were on boards, and word "danger" written on one of the boards. These boards and signals were put up on the 14th day of November. O'Brien and Boyle were found sitting on the passing branch outside of the door after the explosion took place. Maps of the mine were exhibited to the jury in answer to question by Inspector Williams and locations pointed out. The plan of ventilation in vogue was explained by means of the map, Foreman McDonald making the explanations. The West Side was examined by Wm. J. Evans, fire boss, on the morning of the explosion.

Men were prohibited from going into "old West" since last spring. Was on top of shaft when explosion took place, taking fire bosses' reports. All reports for that morning are signed except report of Williams. Boyle told me that O'Brien had been in "old West," and set off gas. Boyle said he saw boards, but O'Brien did not say he saw them. O'Brien told me that Boyle had been in "old West" before him. All the men were up the shaft in less than an hour after the explosion occurred. The second opening is shut off by a door, but ventilation is amply provided for. There was no gas there. It is visited every day by fire bosses. The cause of the explosion was the raise of water in the sump. Did not see danger signal on morning of explosion, because I was not in "Old West," at that time. Do not know that fire bosses made any report of "Old West" that morning. In answer to question from Mr. Cullen, McDonald said it would be possible to drive an opening so as to keep the "Old West" always free from gas. I know that O'Brien knew what danger marks meant. The second opening was passable. A man could walk through it to No. 3 Baltimore.

The "old West" was traveled every day by the fire bosses, but what is known as "old workings" in different parts of the mine are not traveled every day. The fan and pump were working on the morning of the explosion.

The Fire Bosses' Story.

William J. Evans, fire boss, sworn, said he made examination of "old West," about 4 o'clock on morning of explosion. Danger signals were put up to my certain knowledge, on the 14th. Saw the signals every other day after that date. I placed date and new marks on door in old stable on the morning of explosion. I found gas inside of door that morning. On top of door was an opening 12 inches high and three feet wide. There was a smaller opening on side of door. These openings were considered sufficient to keep road clear as far as could be traveled. * It would be possible to blast an opening in the rock sufficient to keep these places always clear of gas. I always found O'Brien a very careful man in his work, and know that he could tell danger signals. Gas was in the "Old West" for three months past. Sure that Boyle knew danger signals. Was in second opening about six months ago. Found it then in good condition. Second opening could be used on morning of accident, or any other time. There was no danger that morning if every man went to his work. The second opening could not be used just after the explosion because of the afterdamp. The cross board danger signals were put up by David Bodycomb and another man whose name I do not remember.

Evan Evans, fire boss, sworn. Was in old stable night before accident. Saw boards up and danger signals upon them. Placed date on boards to show that I had been there. Found air on main roads traveling properly that night. An opening could be made to keep place clear of gas. O'Brien and Boyle were intelligent miners. By a rule of the mine it is forbidden to remove standing gas by "brushing;" it is gotten out by bratticeing.

David Bodycomb sworn. I put up boards at entrance to barn upon which danger signals were marked. Did this on the 14th of November. I wrote on boards these words: "Danger, Nov. 14th, XX." Was ordered to do this by fire boss. Was alone when doing this work. It was not easy to pass this fence, but a man could pass under by stooping.

Adjourned until 2 o'clock.

It was nearly three o'clock when the jury met this afternoon.

Testimony of Baltimore Bosses.

Mr. Armstrong, mine boss in No. 3, Baltimore, sworn: I examine the second opening connecting with the Conyngham shaft two or three times a week. Didn't know anything at all about the immediate cause of O'Brien's death. He kept a record of every time he visited the mines. His fire boss did also.]

Fire Boss Symons, of the Baltimore, was next sworn. His testimony did not differ materially from that of the mine boss.

Stable boss Jacob Hick, of the Conyngham shaft, sworn. There were four mules in the old stables. Been there about eight months. These were taken out on account of the water. There was about 6 or 8 inches of water in the stable. Knew there was a little gas near the door when the water was up. It was for that reason the mules were taken out. The marks was put up on the 23d, three days before the explosion. It was a board put across about five or six feet long. This was tacked to another about ten or twelve feet long. No one told me that there was gas there, but the marks told me. The marks were on the feed trough. Saw the marks all the time for months. It was marked on the door back where the gas was there.

Patrick Cooper, driver sworn—On morning of explosion I went to get my mules and I saw a sign with the word "danger" on it, and I took my mules to another road.

Testimony of Fire Boss Williams.

Fire boss William C. Williams, of the Conyngham, substantially submitted the following deposition: He was in the mine the day the accident occurred. His duty was to travel through places to ascertain if there was burning gas. He found water was up in the sump and no chance for air to circulate. It was his opinion that had the fan not been stopped the day previous, the gas would not have been there.

Several others were examined when the LEADER went to press.

THE CONYNTHAM INQUEST.

The Taking of Testimony Resumed by the Coroner at 2 O'clock This Afternoon.

The examination of the witnesses in the O'Brien inquest was resumed by Coroner O'Malley, in the Arbitration Room of the Court House this afternoon at 2 o'clock.

Peter Andrews called: Was at home on morning of accident, and could give no important testimony.

Patrick McCabe—I asked Mine Boss McDonald if we could get up manway when explosion took place. I was at foot of shaft. McDonald answered "no." Knew O'Brien to be a good, careful man.

Michael Gallagher—I'm a policeman on regular force of the city. Testimony not important.

Louis Frank—Brought O'Brien up the shaft after he had been burned. O'Brien said he had been in the stable, and that the first thing he knew was the gas exploding. He did not say whether he had passed the door or not. Knew nothing, personally, about that portion of the mine, as to whether there was standing gas there or not. Heard miners say that there was standing gas there, continually.

John Keely—Was at head of shaft when explosion occurred. Hat was blown off by concussion. Went down shaft with mine boss. Know nothing of the immediate causes of the accident. Boyle told me, since the accident, that O'Brien was farther in towards the door than he (Boyle) was, and that O'Brien's lamp set off the gas. When water raises in sump the men are not allowed to work. I think that the water raising causes gas.

Mark Rowe—Was in fire boss's shanty when explosion occurred. Testimony not important.

At this point the lateness of the hour compelled the closing of the LEADER'S report.

