

FIVE OF THE VICTIMS DEAD

Dreadful Result of the West Bear
Ridge Explosion.

SEVEN MEN ARE INJURED !

There Were Twelve Victims in All.
Four Are at the Miners' Hospital.
No More Deaths Expected.

No mine accident in this section of the anthracite region since the accident at Raven Run, when ten men lost their lives, has caused as much sorrow and gloom as has been brought about by the explosion at West Bear Ridge colliery, near Mahanoy Plane, yesterday. The hand of death is felt from Ashland to St. Clair, and the accident is mourned as a most deplorable one. The people of Mahanoy Plane feel the blow with severity and in gathering on the streets to discuss the accident many gave way to their feelings. The people of Girardville are also deeply affected, as she loses one of her best known and most popular citizens, Thomas Durkin, by the accident. Durkin was a brother-in-law of ex-County Commissioner Bowes.

The dead men up to the present time number five. They are Peter Greenbach, St. Clair; Benjamin Redding, Mahanoy Plane; Thomas Durkin, Girardville; Joseph Pitts, Preston Hill, and Peter Kline, Ashland.

The injured men number seven, and are Anthony Myers, William Goff, Edward Davis, William Davis, Daniel Davis, William Minne and John Leamy. The injured men are at the Miners' Hospital at Fountain Springs.

It has been remarked as strange that so many of the leading mine officials should have reached the scene of the explosion in so short a time after it occurred. They were on the ground within three-quarters of an hour after the gas exploded. This was due to a coincidence. The officials had engagements in the ill-fated and neighboring mines yesterday morning and two of them were actually in the mine when the explosion occurred, not being more than 200 yards away from the seat of the fire and the place where the explosion is supposed to have taken place.

John Veith, general mining superintendent for the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company; John Skeath, division superintendent; Rees Tasker, district superintendent, and Mine Inspector William Stein met at the St. Nicholas colliery office at about 9:35 yesterday morning and were just about to leave there for Maple Hill colliery when they heard of the explosion at West Bear Ridge, which occurred shortly after 9 o'clock. The party immediately drove to the colliery and found that Myers, Goff, Minne, Leamy and the two Davis' had been rescued alive. Two of them were in the colliery stable office and were slightly cut about the head. Otherwise they appeared to be all right. The others were in a more critical condition.

The party of officials went down the slope and learned there were five men missing. Several attempts had been made to extinguish the fire, which originated in the north dip monkey from the effects of the explosion, which occurred at about breast No. 26, north dip, third lift, or immediately inside of the first sectional tunnel crossing from one dip to the other. Right over this sectional tunnel a tunnel is driven connecting the north and south dips, as a return airway common to both dips. Finding that the efforts which had been put forth gave no satisfactory results in extinguishing the fire the rescuing party of workmen turned their attention to recovering the bodies of Greenbach, Redding, Durkin, Pitz and Kline. The attempt to put out the fire was made first because it was deemed necessary to extinguish it in order to recover the bodies. The latter attempt was made by reversing the air current, which enabled the workmen to get into the north dip monkey, with some difficulty, and they found the bodies of Redding, Greenbach, Durkin and Pitz in the order named.

The rescuing party pushed on its work as the recovered bodies were taken out on stretchers by other men. Two additional manways were opened to admit sufficient air, and shortly after Kline's body was found.

1895 West Bear Ridge Explosion NEWS

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With the exception of those of Redding and Greenbach, none of the bodies seemed to be burned much. Redding and Greenbach were burned about the head and face. The top of Durkin's head was missing, which was no doubt caused by the concussion following the explosion. All the bodies were more or less cut, but evidently more by concussion than otherwise. Kline's body was stripped of all its clothing and the boots were blown clean off one of the other bodies. When four of the remains were recovered the heads were rapped in the shirts, the garments having been forced up like balloons by the concussion.

Superintendent Veith took personal charge of the rescuing party as soon as he reached the mine and conducted the work until all the bodies were recovered.

There were some additional explosions just before the rescuing party started its work, but they did not amount to much.

After the bodies had been recovered

Superintendent Veith gave instructions to his officials by which they could commence extinguishing the fire. Many of the officials expressed an opinion that this could be accomplished by this morning, but the fire was still raging to-day. The method resorted to in the attempts to put out the fire is by pouring water upon it. The hose of the Mahanoy Plane, Maizeville and Gilberton fire companies is in use and the lines are attached to the pumps inside and laid along the gangway, up the chute, into the monkey. All necessary preparations were made to keep the gas from the men engaged in this work, that is to supply them with plenty of fresh air.

As to the cause of the explosion, it is a matter of conjecture; but it is reasonable to suppose that when breast No. 32 was running, on the south dip, it caused a certain displacement of a considerable quantity of gas, which was discharged into the monkey and out through the air tunnel to the north dip, where the twelve men were working, and must have either blown the flame through the gauze of the safety lamps and ignited the gas, or caused an ignition in the meantime difficult to explain.

All the men in the colliery were working with safety lamps. These twelve men were employed in sections in enlarging the monkey, a work that is going on at all times by reason of a continual gradual subsidence, which is always the case in the steep angle veins, and especially where the colliery is being worked almost in the footstool of the basin.

Major Heber S. Thompson and Inspector John Granger had a close shave. They were at the face of the south dip gangway when the explosion occurred examining the general condition of the mine. They passed some of the injured men on their way out, but remained in the mine until all the bodies were recovered. Major Thompson was a very serious looking man. It was one of the closest calls he ever had, his experiences in the civil war not excepted, and they were of by no means a tame character.

A report from the Miners' Hospital at Fountain Springs to-day stated that four of the men injured at West Bear Ridge are still confined there and, while the injuries are serious, the victims are doing well and their chances for recovery are good. These men are William Goff, of Ashland, aged 45 years; William Minne, of Ashland, aged 44 years; Anthony Myers, of Girardville, aged 43 years; and John Leamy, of Mahanoy Plane, aged 51 years. Goff, Minne and Myers suffer from severe burns of the scalp, face, neck, hands and forearms.

Leamy is the worst injured. He sustained severe lacerations of the scalp, face, ears, hands and forearms, a simple fracture of the ulna, a small bone in one of his forearms, severe abrasions of the face and contusions of the legs. His escape from death was miraculous.

The Fire is Out.

Special to the HERALD.

MAHANOH PLANE, Feb. 19.—The fire in West Bear Ridge colliery is extinguished. Operations have been resumed in the mines, except in that part where the explosion occurred.