

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

State Bureau of Labor Statistics

CONCERNING

COAL IN ILLINOIS.

1898.

CONTAINING THE

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORTS

OF THE

STATE INSPECTORS OF MINES.

DAVID ROSS, *Secretary.*

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1899.

September 24, 1897, at the mine of the Williamson County Coal Co., at Johnston City, a fire damp explosion occurred at 7 a. m., which proved fatal to Frank Fanaro, aged 45, and single; John Geneli, aged 38, single; Charles Schiller, aged 34, single, and Peter Casper, aged 37, single, also seriously injuring Robert Britton and Joseph Barlow. Barlow has not been able to work since the accident.

On the morning of September 24 the men gathered at the pit top, as usual, for work; the fire boss being sick, the mine had not been examined on this morning. Caleb Davis, the mine manager, claims to have told Peter Casper and others who were working in the first and second south entries on the east side, to remain at the bottom of the shaft till he could come down and examine their working places. Peter Casper, on reaching the bottom, went direct into the first south entry and left his naked light on the outside of the cross-cut and took off his coat and went to the face and started to brush out the fire damp with his coat. After working at this a few minutes he returned and got his naked light and then went and got an empty pit-car and pushed it toward the face. As soon as he was inside the cross cuts a few feet his naked light came in contact with the fire damp, which caused a terrific explosion and the death of the four miners mentioned. The stoppings, doors and timber of the first and second south entries were blown in all directions. Robert Britton and Joseph Barlow were blown several feet along the main east entry by the force of the explosion. Joseph Barlow had his leg broken and the flesh torn, and his head badly bruised. Robert Britton had his left arm broken. Caleb Davis, mine manager, was at the pit top at the time the

explosion occurred, and as soon as possible he secured some practical men and started them to work to restore ventilation by putting up temporary doors and stoppings. Peter Casper walked alone to the bottom of the shaft, though severely burnt, and was there met by his friends and conveyed to his boarding house, where he died on the 26th. Chas. Schiller was found in the second south entry by the searching party, trying to make his way to the bottom. At the time of the explosion he was at the mouth, which was 200 feet from the face of the entry, on his knees, taking off his top shirt. He managed to crawl several hundred feet along the entry. He was conveyed to his boardinghouse, where he died on the 25th. Frank Fanaro was found dead in his room in the first south entry, evidently overcome by after damp, and when found was lying face downward. It was then supposed that this was all that were injured by the explosion, and the searchers went to the top, but after a few minutes it became known that John Geneli was missing. The party then descended the shaft and searched for him. They found him dead in the third room from where he was working, toward the bottom. It was evident that he had tried to find his way out after the explosion, but had become bewildered and strayed into this room. Peter Casper said there was some one calling for help and light when he was on his way out. The last body was taken out at 11 a. m. The company was sinking an escapement at the time of the explosion, which has been completed since. I visited the mine on the afternoon of September 24, and discovered, upon examination of the record book, that the mine had not been examined in the morning before the men were allowed to go to work, nor had it been examined since the morning of September 20, the day on which I made my previous visit. This mine, at the date of this report, is operated by A. W. Crawford, lessee.