

VERDICT IN MINE CASE.

Jury of Inquiry Into the
Braznell Horror Blames
Mine Foreman and
Fire Boss.

WERE NOT COMPETENT
TO FILL POSITIONS.

State Inspector Blick Says It
Was Not Safe to Use Open
Lamps on Account of Accu-
mulation of Gas.

TESTIMONY OF THE OTHERS.

Special to The Pittsburgh Post.
UNIONTOWN, Pa. Jan. 5. — The coroner's jury in the Braznell mine disaster, after three hours deliberation, this evening rendered the following verdict:

"We find from the evidence that the mine foreman was negligent in failing to see that the mine was in safe condition before permitting workmen to enter it. We also believe that the fire boss of said mine was negligent in failing to make a daily verbal report to the mine foreman, and we believe both the mine foreman and the fire boss to be incompetent to perform their respective duties."

There has been no action taken as yet toward prosecuting these officials. This will be decided upon by a conference of the inspectors with Chief Inspector Rodertok at an early date. The inquiry to-day was largely devoted to expert testimony as to the cause of the explosion and remedies to avert similar disasters.

James E. Blick, inspector of the Seventh Bituminous district, was called to the stand again this morning and gave his theory as to the accumulation of gas in the rooms where the explosion occurred.

"Do you think there was more gas in the room than the fire boss reported?" asked coroner Taylor.

"I would not want to say. There was time after he left for the accumulation of sufficient gas to cause the explosion."

"Would you have allowed open lights in the room?"

No, sir; not at that time. Though safety lamps are not an absolute guard against explosions, they are safer than open lamps."

He stated that he did not think the mine officials realized the dangers existing in the mine. He was asked about what could be done to minimize such catastrophes and replied that he would not permit a miner to fire his "shot" but would designate the mine foreman or other competent man to look after this work.

J. J. Bower, superintendent of the Redstone mines of the Pittsburgh Coal Company, stated he thought the Braznell mine safe for the use of open lights only where the gas was reported. The mine was not gaseous and the condition of the mine safe for the use of open lights only.

Superintendent Bower stated that if safety lamps were used entirely in mines like the Braznell the dangers would be increased 10 to 1. In explanation of this he said the safety lamp does not give sufficient light.

William Sedden, superintendent of the Albany and Climax mines, was called and told his experiences in the mine. His theory of the explosion was that it was on the right of the mine in Entry 2, and that gas was ignited there by men going along the entry to work.

Inspector Henry Louatt, of Monongahela city testified as to the condition of the mine after the explosion when he reached there and corroborated Inspector Blick's opinion as to where and how the explosion occurred. When asked whether he thought men should have been permitted to work in the mine with open lamps in view of the conditions reported by the fire boss on the morning of the explosion he emphatically replied "No."

Inspectors Chauncey B. Ross and Bernard Callahan also testified in a vein similar to Inspector Blick and agreed with his deductions and opinions. Charles Connor, inspector of this district, told how he had visited Braznell mine five times since it was opened last summer. He said that some time ago he found that Mine Foreman Jones was not keeping written records and called his attention to the violation of the law. The next time he visited the mine he found that Jones had made his reports antedate by three days the date of his last visit.

Superintendent Sedden, of the Albany and Climax mines, who examined the Braznell mine after the explosion, said he believed the explosion took place on the east side, some distance from the seat, as located by the mine inspector.

Superintendent Boyer denied that he knew anything of the misconduct of the fire boss and mine foreman, or that he knew that the fire boss left the mine an hour and a half before the foreman arrived. Inspector Connor said that this interval, when no one was in charge of the mine, was a clear violation of the law, that the fire boss should have remained on duty until the mine foreman arrived, and that he should have made a verbal report daily to the foreman in addition to his written report.

William Dyson, a negro miner, testified that he was in the mine when there was a gas explosion on Friday, the day before the 19 men met their deaths, and that he did not go to work on Saturday because he was afraid of the mine. Dyson said he was allowed to carry an open lamp. He did not know anything about safety lamps; did not know the difference between open and safety lamps, as far as danger was concerned. Foreman Jones yesterday testified that only trust and competent men were allowed open lamps.