

## First Authentic Account Of Buttonwood Explosion

As time passes it becomes more and more apparent that the cause of the second explosion in the Buttonwood mine on Friday afternoon last, which resulted in the death of six men and the serious injury of several more, will never be known.

John G. Davis, a foreman of pipe men, and who is the only member of the first exploring party who came out of the fire uninjured, said to a TIMES reporter to-day:

"Shortly after the first explosion, which occurred about 1 o'clock, I had gone into the tool shanty at the foot of the shaft and while there Dan Evans, the driver boss, entered and said: 'Jack, there has been an explosion at the top of No. 4 plane and it has started a fire.' I notified my partner, Thomas Guest, and then picked up a length of hose and a spanner and, accompanied by Guest and Daniel Davis was hoisted to the head of the plane, where the fire was reported to be. Half way up something happened and the car stopped and we got out and walked. About fifty feet from the sheave we met Ebenezer and Gomer Wil-

liams, the two assistant mine foreman, and Gomer said the fire was all out. He ordered me to stand where I was and let no one pass by in either direction until he told me I might do so.

"I did as directed, but shortly after allowed a driver boy to pass with a team of mules. Davis suggested to Guest and I that we sit close to the rib because you don't know, for fear something might happen. Later Gomer instructed Price and Guest to go into the third breast and see that all the miners were out, and then told Phillips to see how the 'return' was. These men reported everything all right; that every one reported except Bill Phillips. Gomer and Ebenezer Williams then told me to take charge of the door about twenty yards down. When I got there McCole, the door tender, an aged man, wanted to go through to get his dinner pail. I told him the best thing he could do was to go home and let the pail stay where it was. He insisted, however, and I told him if he did not desist I would knock him down with the club which had been given me for that purpose. While this altercation was going on Gomer and Ebenezer Williams, Daniel Davis, Evan Evans and Wm. Fry went towards the face of the plane to brattice a door. Guest and Thomas Price came to the door I was watching and wanted me to allow them to pass through. I refused, saying 'If I do so the men inside may be in eternity in a very short time.' They turned back, passed around the door by way of the No. 3 west, and went up the plane. At the branch of the third west they sat down with others. Ebenezer Williams called for help and Thomas Price and Thomas Guest volunteered to go forward to his assistance and as they passed the point where I was stationed Price called back: 'Jack' has a soft snap tending door and Guest said 'yes' and he was too mean to let his butt go through, but made him go round. Those were the last words I heard them speak as shortly after they were killed.

"All this time we were in the dark, the only ones who had a light being Gomer Williams, Ebenezer Williams, Evan Evans and Bill Phillips, each of whom had a safety lamp.

"A minute after Price and Guest passed me the mine foreman, Daniel W. Davis, arrived and after passing me he called back and asked what was the matter. Ebenezer Williams answered that everything is all right. Davis asked the question again, but before I had time to answer the door opened about half way as if some one was pressing against it, and then slammed violently shut. In the brief time it was open, however, I saw a sheet of flame rushing towards me from the direction of the return. I thought at once that the jig was up and then I was thrown violently forward by the shock and at the same time I heard the report of the ex-

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plosion. The door was blown to atoms by the force of the explosion and I was stunned almost to unconsciousness. As soon as I regained my senses I felt of my person to assure myself I was uninjured and then arose to my feet and started to make my way forward to assist those who had been injured.

McCale, the old door tender, who had come back for his dinner pail had been caught by the door when it first swung open and knocked him across the track and thus escaped serious injury, the blast of fire passing over his prostrate body. I myself, was thrown upon a portion of the demolished door.

"Despite my fright, however, my desire to aid my comrades was so great I groped forward to find my comrades. I found foreman Davis in the middle of the track with a stick of timber grasped firmly in his hands. He was unconscious at the time and I passed my hands over his horribly cut face to see if I could recognize him, which I did by his beard. He heard my sobs, for I was crying, and he said 'don't cry, John, my boy, and never mind me, but do what you can for the others.' Then I heard 'Bill' Fry shout, 'My arm is blown off,' and I called to him to try and work his way towards me. When I met Fry I found that his arm was only broken. I sat him beside Mr. Davis and then hurried to help Evan Evans, whom I found under a heavy stick of timber, which I rolled off his body but was unable to help him further as he was too sore to be moved. Daniel Davis called: 'My God Jack, I am roasted alive. I 'Don't mind, Daniel, but come towards me.' I helped him back to the sheave. Jack Evans, the engineer, arrived with a safety lamp and we went back to Evans, but could not lift him as he was too sore. Jack went back for a stretcher and I sent David Evans for help to get experienced men to help.

"Fire boss Wm. Davis and a large force of men and myself soon after found the body of Ebenezer Williams. His head was blown from his body, his shoes blown off, his clothing torn to shreds and every bone in his body broken. This, together with the tension I had undergone, completely unnerved me and I was forced to give up."

## Explosion Part 2

Clipped By:

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