

COAL FATALITY
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON
PACIFIC COAST COMPANY
OCTOBER 1, 1902

On October 1, about 8:30 p.m., an explosion occurred in the mine of the Pacific Coast Co., Lawson, King county whereby 11 lives were lost and four persons injured. The inspector received notice in Tacoma by telegraph, on the morning of the 2nd, and immediately started for the scene of the disaster. On arriving found Coroner C. E. Hoye, of King county, at the mine. All bodies, except that of John Crazhino, which was not recovered until November 13th, had been taken out of the mine. Going immediately into the mine, found General Foreman William Hann, in charge of a shift of men, restoring ventilation and searching for the body. The explosion occurred on the 4th level south.

From the bottom of the auxiliary slope to No. 2 chute, there was very little disturbance, although timbers and debris had been blown by force of the explosion to a considerable distance along the north side gangway. From chute No. 2 toward the face, the gangway was impassable. We advanced up No. 2 chute to the first counter, along this to chute No. 19, returning again to the gangway. From this point to the face of the gangway the explosion did very little damage, except blowing out stopping and door of gangway between chutes Nos. 27 and 28. This stopping is for the purpose of forcing air to the face of the gangway. A barrel full of water, kept for wetting face of gangway before firing shots, was undisturbed.

This was at the end of pipe line near chute No. 27. From the broken ground in the face of the gangway, it was found that one or more shots had recently been fired, and, on subsequent investigation it was evident that two shots had been fired. The counter had not been disturbed by the explosion, excepting a "cave" at one of the chutes, and this was undoubtedly caused by a "caving" of the gangway. Friday, the 3rd, was spent in removing gas from the chutes. This was necessary in order to ascertain if there had been any blown-out shots on the pitch.

On Saturday morning, the gas having been removed, we were able to gain access to each and every chute, but no evidence of a blown-out shot could be found. In the afternoon, in company with J. H. Shaw, superintendent of the Northwestern Improvement Company's mines; General Foreman William Hann and Mine Foreman Ben Allen, Coroner Hoye and a number of others, the mine was entered and search made to ascertain, if possible, the cause of the explosion. Finding no evidence of the origin of the explosion on the pitch, we proceeded to investigate face of the gangway.

Here we found about two cars of loose rock and coal, the result of .. Fired shots or shots. On removing same, it was found that there had been a heavy shot fired in the bottom, and about four inches of a drill hole was found in the band of rock near the top. This, without doubt, was the back end of a hole that had been fired. In driving this

gangway it is necessary to remove this band of rock which overlies the coal and is between the same and the hanging wall. In order to do this, it is necessary to place two shots, one near the top of the gangway, and one at the bottom. Before this is done, however, a mining is put in between the coal and the rock before firing the shots. It was unanimous opinion that there had been two shots placed, and then lighted at the same time.

The bottom hole, exploding in advance, had liberated a quantity of firedamp, and, breaking the ground nearly to, if not quite into, the second shot, which, having no resistance, spent its force in the gangway, making a flame which ignited the gas liberated by the first shot. This explosion put dust in motion which had lodged over the timbers, which, in turn, exploded and gained force as it traveled along the gangway. This conclusion was concurred in by the jury which was taken into the mine on the following Monday (October 6th); also by D. P. Davies, general foreman of the Carbon Hill Coal Company's mines; Chief Engineer Jas. Anderson, of the Pacific Coast Company; Wade Harris, superintendent Denny Clay mines, and others. The inquest was held at the mine on Monday afternoon, above date, and, after hearing the evidence, the following verdict was rendered:

"An explosion caused by two shots being fired, one after the other, the second shot igniting the dust, created by the first shot."

(Signed)

J. D. LUTZ, Foreman;
ALFRED BLODGETT,
HENRY GWYNN,
JOSEPH KRAUS,
EDW. V. GARRETSON,
CHAS. MCKINNON,
JURORS.
C. E. HOYE, M.D.
CORONER."

KILLED AND INJURED IN LAWSON MINE, OCTOBER 1.

J. Swanson, single, killed.

R. Lamberger, single, killed.

Joe Jocki, married, killed--wife and one child.

J. Cerazhino, single, killed.

Hugh Lavander, single, killed.

Frank Flinder, single, killed.

E. Ricci, single, killed.

Louis Deckman, single, killed.

Symon Tarasoviz, married, killed--wife and four children.

Ed Applenap, single, killed.

Frank Grosshell, married, killed--wife and one child.

INJURED.

Jas. Carson, single, at bottom of slope four weeks, injured.

Christ Baker, single, was around in a couple of days.

Wm. Whitesnell, single, was around in a couple of days.

Louis Schallotti, single, leg broken.

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONDITION OF MINE PRIOR TO THE EXPLOSION

The gangway men, together with the man driving inside chute, and the one driving counter, were found at the tool box between 22 and 23 chute. This is a point to which it is customary for these men to retreat after lighting a shot in the gangway. There is a positive rule at this mine, that only one shot be lighted at a time. This rule was put in force from the fact that a small quantity of gas, liberated by a shot, had been ignited by a second shot, exploding shortly after the first.

The timbers near face and gangway were charred and carbonized dust was found on cars. From evidence at the inquest it was ascertained that the gangway had been thoroughly sprinkled on the afternoon of the explosion. This work was finished at the face of the gangway at 5 p.m. This mine is quipped with two ventilating fans, one a 10-foot double inlet cyclone on the south airway, and an 8 foot single inlet Capell on the north side airway.

This arrangement provides two separate and distinct ventilating systems with a capacity that is more than adequate to ventilate the The following is an average of the ... readings taken at different times in this mine during the last three years: Intake of gangway, 15,690 cubic feet per minute; through air boxes at face of gangway, 960 cubic feet per minute; in return air-course in counter, between 2nd and 3rd chute from face of gangway, 3,940 cubic feet per minute; at face of chutes on the pitch, from 2230 to 750 cubic feet of air per minute. This does not represent, however, the full capacity, for an increased amount is available at any time by increasing the velocity of the fan, if the circumstances should require.

To sprinkle the 4th level, the water is reservoired in sump on the 3rd level, and is conducted with pipes down the slope and along the gangways.

In December, 1899, it was thought advisable to discontinue the use of open lights, which had been used prior to this date, and adopt the lock safety system. When this change was made, the miners refused to work and the mine was idle for a number of days. The reason for their objection to the change was that it is not as handy to work with a safety lamp as an open light.

The following petition was presented:

PETITION.

To C. F. Owen, Mining Inspector for the State of Washington, From the Miners at Lawson Mine, County of King:

We, the undersigned miners who are and have been employed in Lawson mine, respectfully request your presence at Lawson mine at your earliest convenience on order that we may confer with you regarding your recent order to work the mine with safety lamps.

We consider the order unjust and the work thereby made much more dangerous than when naked lamps are used. There is no standing gas in the mine nor any accumulation of dust, and the air furnished by fan more than sufficient to ventilate the mine properly. (Signed)

PAUL BOYD, AND 38 OTHERS

The petitioners were given a hearing, but their request was not granted, and this mine had been on the locked safety system from the above date to the present time.

The reason advanced by the petitioners was to the effect that they would be in more danger of falling on a heavy pitch with a safety lamp than with an open light. There have been no accidents of this kind, however.