

SIXTEEN ARE KILLED AT BURNETT IN A MINE EXPLOSION

Bodies of Twelve Are Recovered---Foul Gas Hinders Rescue.

About One Hundred Men Were Leaving the Shaft When the Accident Occurred.

(News Special Service.)

BURNETT, Wash., Dec. 8.—By an explosion in Mine No. 5, west side, at this place yesterday afternoon, 16 miners lost their lives. At noon 12 bodies had been recovered. Four others are imprisoned far under ground and no hope is entertained for them, as the air encountered by the searching parties is death dealing.

The body of Matt Peura was found at 9:30 o'clock this morning, buried under the debris. He was apparently on his way out when the concussion occurred, and was suffocated by gas which ignited and burned him badly about head and shoulders.

The machine shop of the mine was turned into a chamber of death. On

wooden slabs, stretched on boards are a dozen corpses, each burned about head and face and shoulders. It is a ghastly scene. Strong rugged toilers, most of them young fellows in the prime of life, were stricken as they were leaving their daily work.

Mourning widows and terror-stricken children gather in the streets to discuss the awful tragedy. It is the one and only topic of conversation in this orderly hamlet situated in a valley of the Cascades, 28 miles from Tacoma.

As far as known the catastrophe occurred at 3 p. m. yesterday. The 40 men on during the morning were going off duty. As is customary, fuses were lighted supposedly to explode after the workers had left. Without warning the explosion occurred. Some had reached the surface. Half of the crew were far under ground, a mile from the opening.

In the dim illumination of miners' lamps, pieces of coal flew in every direction. A death-dealing flame passed like a flash and workmen lay lifeless and still.

Forsythe May Die.

Of those at the scene of the explosion, Joe Forsythe, inside foreman, alone escaped alive. He may die yet, however. Some time after the explosion he was found unconscious, lying amidst bruised, burned and dirt-begrimed corpses. He was burned about the face and head and shoulders, and was still unconscious this morning.

Dr. C. E. Taylor, of Wilkeson, the company's physician, is not certain as to the outcome. He was removed to his home at Cascade.

Bodies Close Together.

Following the terrible accident a willing searching party at once went to work, led by Assistant Superintendent D. W. Watkins. Within a short time eleven bodies were found close together. Bravely the little band worked on, but soon they encountered air so foul no living creature could live in it. Doggedly they continued until Gus Strand, a miner, who was a candidate for the legislature at the last election, dropped unconscious, overcome by the fumes.

At the risk of their own lives his companions dragged him out. However, before midnight the party was forced to desist and give up for the night. This morning the searchers resumed work, digging their way through debris and constantly encountering foul gases.

Much effort was directed towards establishing ventilation. Finally the corpse of Peura was encountered, and at noon it was reported that the air was cir-

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THE DEAD

JUSTUS ELSON, married.
MATT KARKOS, married.
ERICK LUOMA, married.
OSCAR MUKARI, married.
OSCAR SIRO, married.
ANDREW MATSON, married.
JOHN LEWIS, married.
MATT PEURA, married.
JOHN LUOMA, single.
OSCAR LUOMA, single.
JOHN BALCO, single.
MATT ERICKSON.

STILL IN MINE

JAMES CHAPMAN.
GEORGE BARBER.
SALO HILL.
J. S. TAYLOR.

BADLY INJURED

GUST STRAND.
JOE FORSYTHE.

1904 Burnett No 5 Mine explosion NEWS

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SIXTEEN KILLED AT BURNETT

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culating, and it is hoped to get out the remaining bodies by tonight.

A helping delegation of Carbonado miners arrived this morning.

The cause of the calamity is unknown. Superintendent Burnett will venture no opinion at present until an investigation is made.

State Coal Mine Inspector Owen is with the searchers and will examine the scene of the explosion. Two theories are advanced—an explosion of dust, and an explosion of gas by fuse lights—but whether either is correct is unknown.

Burnett is a scene of sorrow. Several families are left penniless and destitute, and a pall of gloom hangs over the hamlet.

CORONER RETURNS FROM THE MINE

**Inquest Cannot Be Held Until the Mine
is Free From Gas.**

Dr. E. M. Brown, the county coroner, returned to Tacoma at noon today from the scene of the mine explosion at Burnett. He said no inquest can be held until it is possible to take the jury into the mine to examine the spot where the disaster occurred.

Twelve Dead Bodies.

Twelve dead bodies have been recovered, including that of Matt Erickson, whose name was not given in the list published this morning, making sixteen in all missing. It was thought the other four bodies would be recovered before the close of today, though there is scarcely any possibility that they will be found alive.

Only One Saved.

Joseph Forsyth, one of the foremen who was with the working party, is the only one taken out alive. It is thought he may recover.

Gust Strand joined the first rescue party to enter the mine and was overcome by gas. He was brought out by a second rescue party and will, it is thought, recover.

Most of the men were young married men, with the exception of John Lewis and Erick Luoma, who were past middle age.

Four Missing Men.

The four missing men, James Chapman, George Barber, J. S. Taylor and Salo Hill, sometimes called Charlie Hill, were, it is believed, in chute No. 30.

Run For Their Lives.

Many men working nearer the mouth of the mine, particularly on the 1,200-foot incline, though overpowered with gas, were saved by prompt work, as they had made a run for the exit.

Ventilators Working.

The ventilating apparatus was working at an early hour today and the work of removing the debris and exploring the mine was progressing favorably.

Coroner Brown will return to Burnett and hold the inquest as soon as he is notified the mine is in condition to take the jury in to examine it.

Profound Gloom.

While the disaster has cast a profound gloom over the little industrial community the calamity seems to be accepted with the philosophy of the soldier who takes his life in his hand and expects death as one of the great chances he faces in war.

Of the sixteen men lost eleven were married and five single. It is thought some of the men left some provision for their families in the way of beneficial insurance.

Until the scene of the explosion can be reached the officers decline to express any opinion as to the cause of the catastrophe.

News Correspondent Killed.

James Chapman, one of the miners whose bodies had not yet been recovered this morning, was the Burnett correspondent of the Daily News.

Superintendent C. H. Burnett made a hurried investigation yesterday afternoon, and realizing that it would be unsafe for any of his men to go into the tunnel immediately after the explosion, he sent a request to Carbonado to have seven miners, equipped with safety lamps, sent to Burnett. These men arrived this morning and went to work with a will. They reported that the fumes inside the tunnel were yet very strong, and none of them could remain therein for any length of time.

The particular mine in which yesterday's frightful disaster occurred is known as the South ¼ of No. 5.

Members of Fraternal Orders.

The company's employees are reputed to be thrifty, and nearly all of them, including the unfortunate victims, were

members of some fraternal organization. Three of them were members of the Foresters of America, and others belonged to the Woodmen of the World and the Woodmen of America. Some carried insurance in the Ancient Order of United Workmen and the Red Men. It is reported that several of them took policies with a large insurance company, a representative of which visited Burnett some weeks ago.

STATE INSPECTOR IS ON THE GROUND

State Mine Inspector Owen was promptly on the ground and will make a thorough investigation. He says the Burnett mine has always been regarded as one of the best managed and safest mines in the state.

DEATH IN A FORM MOST HORRIBLE

T. A. Williams Describes the Sensations of One Affected by Gas in Coal Mine.

T. A. Williams, a street car conductor residing at 39 South C street, Tacoma, was employed in the Burnett coal mines for more than eight years, and now has two brothers who reside in Burnett and are employes of the Burnett Mining company, David Williams and Gomer Williams. A brother-in-law, E. Rowe, is also employed there. Mr. Williams, in conversation with a representative for the News, said:

"It is hard to imagine what could possibly have caused the fatal explosion, the mine having always been considered one of the safest in the country. I worked there for more than eight years and never heard of a man being hurt or becoming exhausted from being underground.

"At times the air would become awfully vile, and then orders were generally given to the men to come out. All the protection possible was afforded by the company. An accident like this one of yesterday was possible from the gas fumes becoming strong suddenly and coal powder exploding.

"Death in a coal mine is the most horrible imaginable," said Mr. Williams, "and that is why most all miners have a horror of working in coal properties. The explosion comes without the least warning. Everything in the mine may be perfectly correct one moment, and the next you are completely exhausted from the deadly fumes. One does not lose consciousness, but all the limbs become stiff and it is impossible for a person to walk more than three or four steps when exhaustion overtakes one. The victim is also too weak to crawl, so that being caught in an explosion in a coal mine practically means certain death."

BURNETT LIVED NEAR MINES.

**Recently Declined Casualty Insurance
Because of Careful Inspection.**

Ed L. Davies, formerly manager of the commercial department of Carbon Hill Coal company at Carbonado, and who has been identified with the mining business in this state since 1884, is in Tacoma today, and to a News reporter said:

"Since 1884 I have known Charlie Burnett, the manager of the mine at Burnett, and I have for years been personally acquainted with some of the miners who were killed.

"Manager Burnett has the reputation of being one of the most careful mining men in the state, and is of a kindly nature, and fatherly disposition toward all who are under him.

Anniversary of Carbonado Explosion.

"Just five years ago tomorrow we had the terrible explosion in the mines at Carbonado. On that occasion, when 31 men were killed, Mr. Burnett was one of the first to arrive and offer his services to my father and I. I have telegraphed an offer of my services to him now.

"No one, not even the members of the bereaved families will feel this thing as Mr. Burnett will. He was an exception to the ordinary superintendent. The day was an exception when he did not personally inspect the mines. Why, only a few days ago Mr. Hansard, representing a casualty company tried to insure the Burnett mines against accidents of this kind. Mr. Burnett told the man that he thought his mine was an exception to the general run, and that it was inspected so carefully and regularly that there could be no chance of any great accident.

"Among miners and mine operators it is a common saying that there is never a vacancy in the Burnett mines except in cases where new veins are opened or when a miner dies. The saying is practically true. Many of the men who were killed yesterday had been employed there for 15 and 20 years. Joe Forsythe, who was seriously injured, is past master in the Masonic lodge. Gus Stran, the other man seriously injured, was a candidate on the democratic ticket for the legislature. James Chapman I had known for 20 years, and among the others I was personally acquainted with Lewis, Peura and John Luoma. S. S. Taylor, too, was a friend of mine.

Terrible Scenes of Suffering.

"I know through what terrible scenes of suffering those men at Burnett are working today. The memory of the work that followed the explosion in our mine five years ago, will always be most painful to me. I believe the mental agony following that explosion caused my father's death, and I know something of the suffering Mr. Burnett must be enduring.

"Thinking of working through the long night bringing out the remains of mangled friends. Think of the heartrending cries of mothers, wives and children. I can see them huddled together about the opening—only restrained by force from taking part in the work themselves. I can hear them moan and I can see women fainting when a blackened, mangled corpse is borne out by friends and fellow workmen.

"Mr. Burnett lived in the little canyon where the rows of spotlessly white-washed cottages were the homes of so many miners who worked for him. He was one of them all the time. Once a week he visited Tacoma and once a week visited with his son, a councilman, at Seattle.

"What a mournful Christmas this will be. Every year Mr. Burnett gives the children of his miners a Christmas tree and himself sees that all are remembered. It will be heartrending there this season."