

COLORADO MINE DISASTER

**Rocky Mountain Coal & Iron Company's Mine
at Jerico Wrecked by an
Explosion.**

ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF DEAD VARY

Trinidad, Col., Oct. 23.—The Rocky Mountain Coal & Iron company's mine No. 3 at Tercio, 40 miles west of this city, was so badly wrecked by the explosion which occurred yesterday afternoon that rescuers have not yet succeeded in penetrating to the point where the miners were working. Estimates of the number of men in the mine at the time vary from 20 to 60. They are mainly foreigners and are not known to Americans in the vicinity. The mine company's officials have no record of the number working, though it is known that only 21 men went down into the mine yesterday morning. According to reports which have not been verified, many more men went into the mine in the afternoon. It is regarded as certain that none of those who were in the mine when the explosion occurred are now alive.

The mine is a sloping tunnel, over 2,000 feet long. Rescuers entered the slope as far as room 13, which is 200 feet from the mouth of the tunnel. They succeeded in reaching this point only after the most dangerous work and after crawling through many narrow places. At this point they encountered a solid wall of rock which had fallen from above and closed the passage. Room 26, where most of the miners are supposed to have been working, is 600 feet from the mouth of the tunnel, or 400 feet beyond the point to which the rescuers penetrated.

Only one body has been recovered, that of T. Doran, a driver, who was just entering the tunnel when the explosion took place and who was terribly burned.

Company officials deny that there were more than 21 men in the mine at the time of the explosion, but miners have to-day estimated the number of missing men at 68.

Coroner Sipe has begun an inquiry into the fatal explosion which occurred Friday afternoon in Tercio mine No. 3, owned by the Rocky Mountain Coal and Iron company, an adjunct of the Colorado Fuel & Iron company.

There were only two Americans in the mine, George Brandenburg and John Hatton. The others were Slavs and Mexicans.

No bodies had been taken out up to noon Saturday and miners at work say the bodies may not be reached before night and perhaps not then. The further relief workers get into the mine the worse the conditions

are found to be. The tunnel and crosscuts are piled full of timbers and rock. All hope of finding any of the entombed miners alive is now abandoned. One air shaft has been opened. There is no fire in the mine. Only four Americans were killed. They are Ed Haddon, Tom McKown, Frank Suttler and Charles Brandenburg. The others killed are Slavs and Mexicans.

State Mine Inspector Jones of Denver left here on a special train at noon with General Superintendent J. T. Kebler for Tercio. Mines in adjacent camps are closed and all the men assisting at Tercio. The explosion is thought to have been caused by gas but the real cause may never be known as the whole shift was killed.

The crash was so terrific that it was heard for miles and the vibrations were distinctly felt at Newton, 12 miles away. It seemed as if an earthquake had occurred, so violently did the earth tremble. Smoke, dust, and dirt were blown from the tunnel and airshaft in heavy black volumes. Broken timbers, huge chunks of coal and blocks of all sizes were hurled hundreds of feet from the portal of the big bore and fell on and around the tippie that stands directly opposite the mine. People who were near the mine were showered with sand, stones and dirt. Some of the stones landed fully a quarter of a mile away.

The local officers of the Colorado Fuel & Iron company refuse to give out the names of the men who were employed in the wrecked mine, on the ground that it is inaccurate, because many changes had taken place during the past few weeks and because no tab was kept of the "contract" coal diggers while on duty. All of the Slavs at the mine worked under the number system. Their names are entered on the company's books, and each is given a number. Whenever a car of coal is sent to the tippie the miner sending it writes the number with chalk on the side of the car. The clerk at the tippie then gives that particular number credit and later the total amount of coal mined for the day is entered on the permanent records of the company.

The mines at Tercio have been examined by C. H. Plumb, division engineer four times a month. At the last examination Mr. Plumb reported everything in good shape with no signs of gas.