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TWENTY-TWO LIVES LOST—COALDALE MINE EXPLOSION.

Mercer County, 11:30 A. M., January 4, 1906.

CHARLES M. MEAD, JR.
Rt. 1, Box 412
Stone Henge Road
Fayetteville, W. Va. 2584

The Coaldale Mine is operated by the Coaldale Coal & Coke Company, owned by the Mill Creek Coal & Coke Company, at Coaldale, Mercer County, and operates the No. 3, or Pocahontas Coal, which has an average thickness of 10 feet 5 inches.

At 11:30 o'clock on the forenoon of January 4, 1906, an explosion occurred in the Smoky Hollow section, resulting in the death of twenty-two persons.

The section of the mine affected was in the workings of the three drifts known as the Crackers Neck, New and Old Smoky Hollow.

At the time of the explosion there were only 22 persons in these three sections.

The Crackers Neck section had connection with the Old Smoky Hollow workings and the workings of the main Coaldale Mine.

The Old and New Smoky sections were connected, and the ventilation of these three sections was dependent upon the same current of air which entered the New Smoky opening and passed through these three sections and found its exit at the fan, near the entrance to the main Coaldale opening, at which place was located a Capell fan 8 feet by 16 feet and having a capacity of 250,000 to 300,000 cubic feet per minute.

The force of the explosion was quite great and disastrous. The heavy timbers which supported the material over the drift mouths of the three openings were blown out and carried 300 feet, and in one instance the timbers were blown across the valley, mowing down small timbers which grew on the side of the mountain. Mine cars were found to be badly broken and distorted. At a number of places in the mine the fine coal dust was found to be charred and coked, adhering to timbers and the ribs of the coal.

With the exception of the workings in the New Smoky opening, all the development had reached the limit of the "first work" and the workings

in the New Smoky opening were in a spur of the mountain and the first, or advance work had reached the lease line of the property. In the Old Smoky and Crackers Neck workings the advance workings had reached their limit and the pillars were being robbed, retreating.

At no time has explosive gas been reported in any of these excavations, and a careful examination along the line of the robbings after the explosion failed to indicate the presence of any explosive gas (Marsh gas). No evidence of heat was found anywhere along the line of the robbings, and as men were working along this line, using open lights, the gas, if any, came from the robbed-out section, would have been fired and its evidence made apparent.

A long section of the Old Smoky entry and air course was wet, necessitating the use of a pump, and the Elkhorn entry and some of the rooms leading therefrom were wet.

Rooms 3, 4 and 5, off Elkhorn entry, and the Butt-off entry, at the face of rooms 4 and 5, were dry, as was also Crackers Neck entry.

All indications and evidence of force were conclusive that the explosive force traveled from the lease line Butt-off entry, through the other parts of the workings.

Having discerned the line of travel of the force, the point from which it originated was easily found. This point was located in the lease line Butt-off entry at B, as indicated on the map. Here it was found a keg of powder had exploded, the keg being in evidence, having the side seam blown open and the heads of the keg bulged out.

About 20 feet in by this keg was found the body of a miner, badly burned. A prop had been blown toward the face of the entry and away from the keg.

At the other end of this entry was found a powder keg which had exploded.

Although the path of the explosion was through the wet portion of Old Smoky entries, there was sufficient dust in suspension to carry the flame and heat to the Crackers Neck entry, however, beyond the eighth room in Old Smoky the flame and heat abated, but the force was sufficient to pick up the mud along the entry and plaster the ribs of the room necks up to the face of the entry.

The writer, as well as a number of other experienced mine men who visited and examined the mine after the explosion, is of the opinion that the explosion was the result of the keg of powder exploding and inflaming the dust within the mine. This keg which exploded was at B in the lease line Butt-off at a point 775 feet from the drift mouth.

None of the working places off Elkhorn entry had sufficient loose coal to indicate that a shot had been fired just prior to the explosion, and there was no evidence of a shot having blown out.

Several powder kegs containing from 10 to 20 pounds of powder were found unexploded in different parts of the mine where evidence of heat was present.

The coal in situ was not anywhere found to be coked or charred, but deposited on the ribs of the coal and mine props was to be found large patches of coke or partly charred dust.

CHARLIE M. MEADOWS

Rt. 1, Box 412

Stone Henge Road

Fayetteville, W. Va. 25840

ANNUAL REPORT OF

[W. VA.]

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No. 15. Face and hands badly burned.

No. 16. Slight burns.

No. 17. No burns. Face broken in badly.

No. 18. Hands burned slightly.

No. 19. No burns. Mouth bruised badly.

No. 20. Face bruised, hands burned badly.

No. 21. Not burned or bruised.

No. 22. Not burned or bruised.

On January 5, 1906, a Coroner's Jury was empaneled at Coaldale and the testimony of three persons taken in reference to the cause of the loss of life in this disaster, and the following verdict rendered:

An Inquisition taken at Coaldale in this County of Mercer, State of West Virginia, on the 5th day of January, 1906, before Thomas F. Burke, a Justice of said County, upon a view of the bodies of R. H. Larew, W. L. Larew, J. D. Sluss, Anthony Bruce, Alada Loas, John Patterson, Gus Harris, W. P. Sullivan, Thomas King, Walter Gwynn, June Kelly, William Ward, Jack Martin, William Price, Sterling Williamson, Sip Gray, Silas Harris, W. C. Conrad, George Martin, Nathan Hosten, Stanley Holland and Albert Barnum, there lying dead, the jurors sworn to inquire when, how and by what means the said persons came to their death, upon their oath do say:

We, the jury, upon the evidence we have heard, find that the said persons, R. H. Larew, W. L. Larew, J. D. Sluss, Anthony Bruce, Alada Loas, John Patterson, Gus Harris, W. P. Sullivan, Thomas King, Walter Gwynn, June Kelly, William Ward, Jack Martin, William Price, Sterling Williamson, Sip Gray, Silas Harris, W. C. Conrad, George Martin, Nathan Hosten, Stanley Holland and Albert Barnum, came to their death by an explosion in the mines of the Coaldale C. & C. Co. on January 4, 1906, the cause of said explosion not being known to the jurors.

Witness our hands and seals this 5th day of January, 1906.

E. T. CECIL.

JOHN OBCOM (?)

A. J. WILLIAMS.

J. T. BYRD.

RUFUS SHAW.

W. STEENBERGEN.

Given under my hand this 5th day of January, 1906.

THOS. F. BURKE, J. P.

The Department of Mines not having been given an opportunity to be present at the inquest, and not being satisfied with the character of the witnesses appearing before the jury, the Department on the evening and night of January 6, 1906, at Coopers, proceeded to conduct an investigation through testimony of all available witnesses.

In this investigation it developed that powder in 25-pound cans had been permitted to be taken into the mine in violation of instructions from the inspection department, and from the evidence it appeared that the disaster was due to the exploding of a keg of powder, which inflamed the fine, dry coal dust within the mine.

CHARLIE M. MEADOWS

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Fayetteville, W. Va. 25840

1904]

CHIEF Mine Inspector.

With a view of applying the penalty of the Mine Law, the Chief Mine Inspector appeared before the Grand Jury of Mercer County on July 1, 1904, and presented the testimony as taken at the investigation, but no indictment was returned. Respectfully,

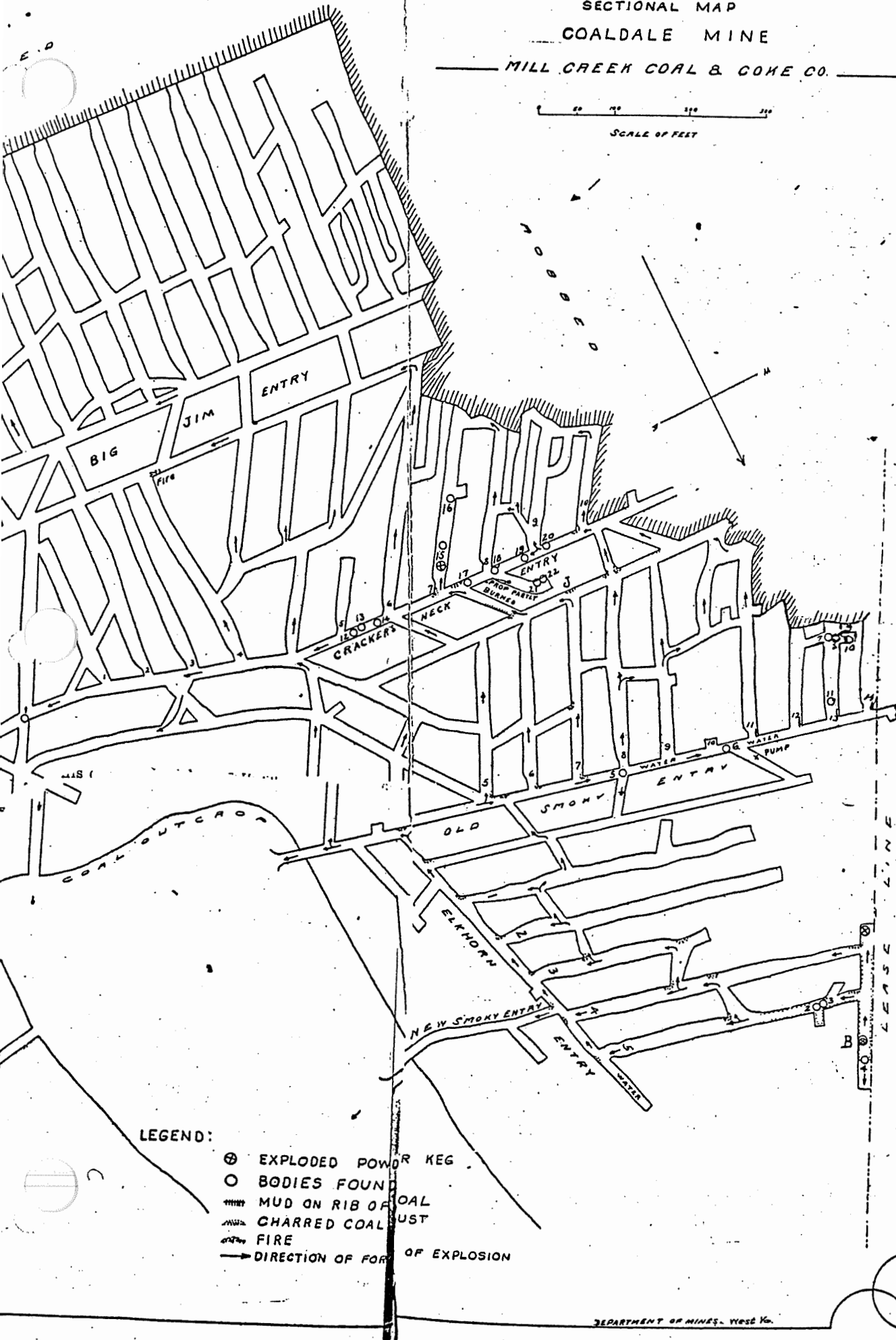
JAMES W. PAUL, Chief Mine Inspector.

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SECTIONAL MAP
COALDALE MINE

MILL CREEK COAL & COKE CO.

0 50 100 150 200
SCALE OF FEET



LEGEND:

- ⊗ EXPLODED POWDER KEG
- BODIES FOUND
- ~~~~~ MUD ON RIB OF COAL
- CHARRED COAL
- ★ FIRE
- DIRECTION OF FORCE OF EXPLOSION

Coal Fatality

Coopers Mercer WV
Coaldale coal and Coke
Coaldale Mine 46-00000
1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

R. H. Larew

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Gus

Harris

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Thomas

King

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Sterling

Williamson

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Satanley

Holland

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Nathan

Hosten

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

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Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

George

Martin

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

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Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

June

Kelly

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

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Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Jack

Martin

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

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Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

W. L.

Larew

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

W. P.

Sullivan

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Silas

Harris

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

William

Ward

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers	Mercer	WV
Coaldale coal and Coke		
Coaldale Mine		46-00000
1 /4 /1906		

Victim Name

William	Price
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It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

John

Patterson

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

J. D.

Sluss

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Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Anthony

Bruce

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Alada

Loas

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

W. C.

Conrad

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Sip

Gray

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Walter

Gwynn

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.

Coal Fatality

Coopers

Mercer

WV

Coaldale coal and Coke

Coaldale Mine

46-00000

1 /4 /1906

Victim Name

Albert

Barnum

It is believed that an explosion of a keg of powder caused the ignition of the fine coal dust in the mine.