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EIGHTEEN LIVES LOST — DETROIT MINE EXPLOSION.

Kanawha County, January 18, 1906.

The most destructive mine disaster within the history of coal mining in Kanawha County occurred in the Detroit Mine, on Paint Creek, at 12:28 noon, on January 18, 1906, resulting in the death of eighteen persons, native born of West Virginia.

The Detroit Mine was developed in the (Clarion) Eagle, or No. 1 Gas Coal Bed, which, in this mine, had an average thickness of forty inches, and the coal has a composition approximately as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Moisture | .81% |
| Volatile Matter | 32.26 |
| Fixed Carbon | 60.77 |
| Ash | 6.16 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total | 100.00% |
| Sulphur | .87 |

The Detroit Mine had been opened during the latter part of 1903 and had been operated by the Detroit & Kanawha Coal Company up to January 15, 1906.

The mine is opened by a drift in the side of the mountain about 300 feet above the valley, and the product of the mine was conveyed to the tipple below by an incline 500 feet long.

The mine was developed on the double entry system and was ventilated by an exhaust fan of the Thayer pattern. The workings of the mine extended over three and one-half acres.

No part of the mine was advanced beyond 1350 from the entrance to the mine, and the ventilation was good, there being no explosive gas evolved from the coal or adjacent strata necessitating the use of brattices within rooms. Open lights were used throughout the mine.

The coal was won by the miners blasting it from the solid.

Only in one place within the mine was the coal found to be undercut.

The District Mine Inspector had cautioned the miners of the danger of this practice 15 days prior to the explosion.

On January 3, 1906, the District Inspector visited this mine and found all conditions good excepting the presence of dry coal dust throughout the mine, and in reference to this he personally told the superintendent and mine boss of its danger and gave a written certificate requesting the mine to be made wet throughout and to be kept wet.

The superintendent of the mine promised to provide temporary means for wetting the mine until he could secure a regular water car for that

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Stone Henge Road

purpose, but no water had been taken into the mine for this purpose at the time of the disastrous explosion, on the 18th of January.

Evidence of explosive gas has at no time been found to generate within this mine.

DETAILS OF EXPLOSION.

The explosion originated in room No. 3, on the first left or butt heading: air course, about 900 feet from the main entrance to the mine.

From all evidence obtainable it appears that the miner working in No. 3 room had been at work all the forenoon and succeeded in getting very little coal broken down, that he had repeatedly shot the coal in the solid and filled his room with powder smoke, and his supply of "squibs" having exhausted, he came out with a driver at noon and borrowed some squibs and returned and fired a shot in the corner of his room, which blew out and inflamed the smoke and dust in his room, which exploded.

It appears that in room No. 2, adjoining, a shot had been fired simultaneously with the shot in room No. 3, and which had also blown out.

The explosion extended throughout all parts of the mine, being carried by the fine, dry coal dust prevalent within the mine.

The path of the explosive force was direct against the direction of the ventilating current, which in this mine was one continuous current.

All persons within the mine were killed, some by concussion and burns and others by suffocation.

Fortunately, at the time of the explosion, a number of the employees were on the outside of the mine for their noon lunch.

It had been the practice of fully 95 per cent. of the miners to shoot the coal from the solid, without any attempt to undermine or shear the coal.

Aside from the rooms 2 and 3 there was no other place in the mine where a shot had been fired just prior to the explosion. A number of holes were found already drilled, and very little loose coal was found in any of the working places.

The evidence at the investigation was conclusive that the ventilation of the mine was good, and this being so, the explosive elements were furnished a sufficiency of oxygen to create a most violent explosion.

The map exhibited gives the workings of the mine, showing the location of the bodies, direction of air current and force of the explosion.

The force of this explosion was very great, characteristic of a dust explosion; two animals, a mule and a pony, were blown from the drift mouth to the bottom of the incline, a distance of 450 feet, a mine timber six feet long by eight inches in diameter was blown a distance of 600 feet from the drift mouth. The cloud of dust emitted from the drift mouth made the atmosphere of the village below quite dark, and the shock was sufficient to stop pendulum clocks some distance from the mine.

No mine accident within the State has ever had a more thorough investigation by the State authorities than the Detroit disaster.

The Coroner of Kanawha County, with a jury and the assistance of the Department of Mines, conducted an exhaustive investigation, which resulted in the jury holding for the Grand Jury three persons under the following verdict:

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Pt. 1 Box 412

In testimony thereof we have hereunto set our hands this 17th day of February, 1906.

CHARLIE M. MEADOWS
Rt. 1, Box 412
Stone Henge Road
Fayetteville, W. Va. 25840

F. L. BEARDSLEY, Coroner.
SEBASTIAN BELCHER,
JOS. W. DILEY,
D. M. JARRETT,
MELL TUCKER,
R. R. HUDDLESTON,
W. R. MERRITT,

Jury:

Following the findings of the Coroner's Jury, the Judge of the Circuit Court, Hon. Sam. C. Burdett, called a special Grand Jury, which jury exonerated Inspector B. H. Hill, but indicted for involuntary manslaughter Mr. John E. Miner and R. F. Townsend, superintendent and mine boss, respectively, for the Detroit & Kanawha Coal Company.

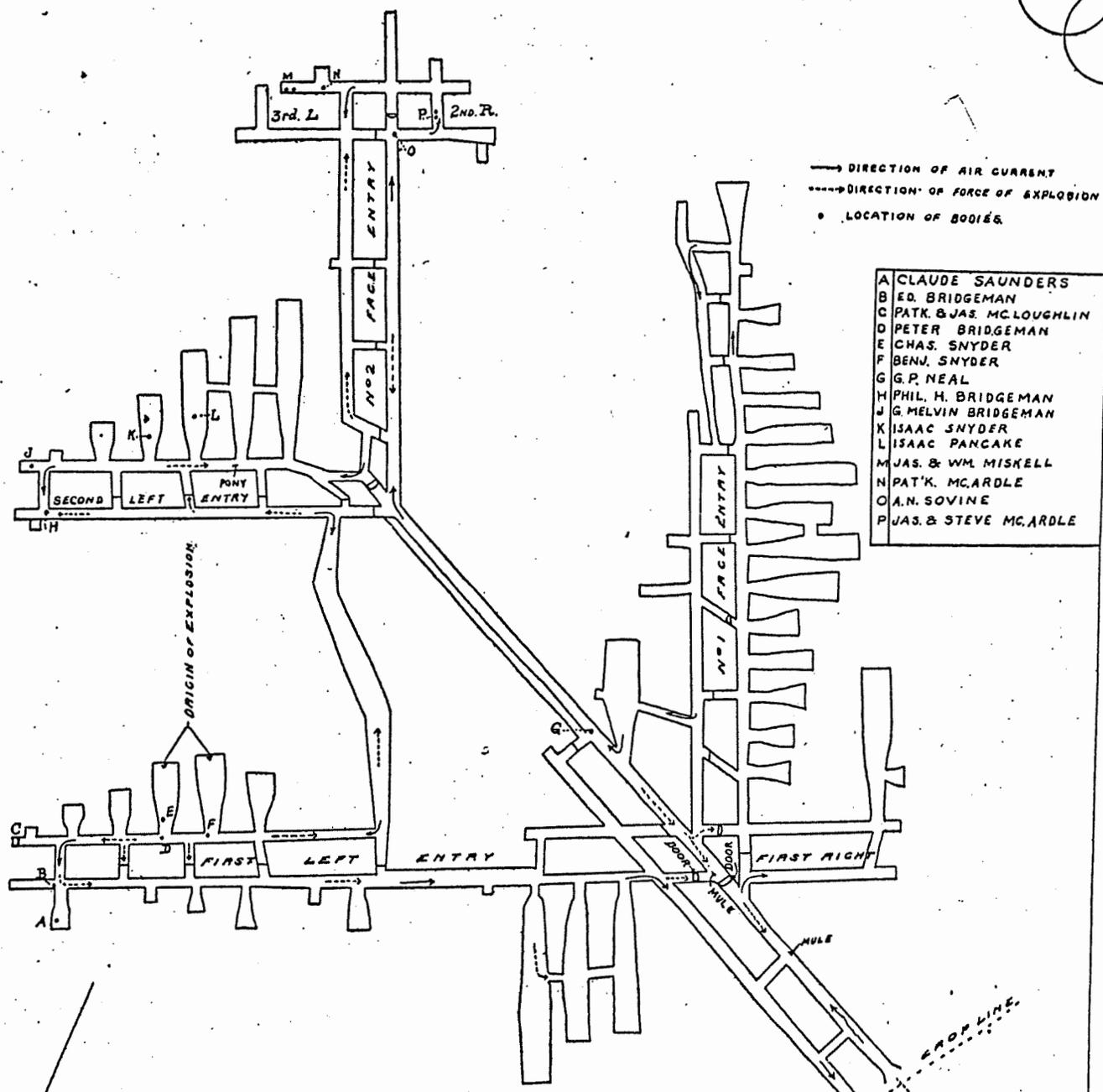
Upon trial before a jury the defense asserted and testified that on the 15th of January, three days prior to the explosion, the Detroit Mine had changed ownership and that at the time of the explosion the defendants were not in charge of the mine, that their authority had been superceded by the representatives of the new ownership.

Upon these presentations Mr. Miner was acquitted and the indictment against Mr. Townsend was nollied, upon motion of the Prosecutor.

Respectfully,

JAMES W. PAUL, Chief Mine Inspector.

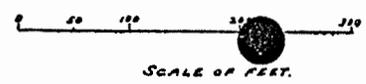
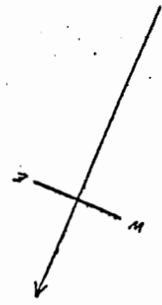
September 29, 1906.



———> DIRECTION OF AIR CURRENT
 - - - - -> DIRECTION OF FORCE OF EXPLOSION
 • LOCATION OF BODIES.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| A | CLAUDE SAUNDERS |
| B | ED. BRIDGEMAN |
| C | PATK. & JAS. M'CLOUGHLIN |
| D | PETER BRIDGEMAN |
| E | CHAS. SNYDER |
| F | BENJ. SNYDER |
| G | G.P. NEAL |
| H | PHIL. H. BRIDGEMAN |
| J | G. MELVIN BRIDGEMAN |
| K | ISAAC SNYDER |
| L | ISAAC PANCAKE |
| M | JAS. & WM. MISKELL |
| N | PAT'K. MCARDLE |
| O | A.N. SOVINE |
| P | JAS. & STEVE MCARDLE |

DETROIT & KANAWHA COAL Co.



Coal Fatality

Ash Camp

Kanawha

WV

Detroit and Kanawha Coal

Detroit Mine

46-00000

1 /18/1906

Victim Name

James

Miskell

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.

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46-00000

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Victim Name

G. P.

Neal

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Victim Name

Chas.

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Detroit and Kanawha Coal
Detroit Mine 46-00000

1 /18/1906

Victim Name

Benj. Snyder

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.

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Victim Name

Isaac

Snyder

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1 /18/1906

Victim Name

A. N. Sovine

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Victim Name

Edward

Bridgeman

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Victim Name

Claude

Saunders

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Victim Name

Isaac

Pancake

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.

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Victim Name

James McLauchlin

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.

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Victim Name

James McCardle

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.

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1 /18/1906

Victim Name

Charlie Snyder

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Victim Name

Steve

McCardle

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Kanawha

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1 /18/1906

Victim Name

Pat

McLauchlin

A miner in No. 3 room was working all forenoon and had not been very successful in shooting down much coal. In room No. 2 another miner was shooting as well. Being unsuccessful he had stirred up much dust. Apparently they both shot at the same time and the explosion carried by fine coal dust spread throughout the mine.