

400 DIE IN MINE

Frightful Explosion In Consolidation Coal Co.'s Pits
At Monongah, W. Va.

65 BODIES PILED IN HEAP

14 Bodies Taken Out And Five
Miners Terribly Injured.

BLACK DAMP GIVEN AS CAUSE

**Most Fearful Disaster In History Of
Mining — 380 Coffins Ordered—
Mines Were Considered Among
The Safest In The Country.**

Monongah, W. Va., Dec. 7, 2 A. M.—
That not less than 400 miners were killed
by an explosion of black damp, known to
scientists as methane, in mines Nos. 6 and
8 of the Consolidation Coal Company of
Baltimore, at this place yesterday is now
conceded by those who take the most hope-
ful and most conservative view of the dis-
aster.

Of these victims six dead bodies had
been taken from mine No. 6 at midnight
last night and 65 others were piled up in
the entry, awaiting the completion of fa-
cilities for bringing them to the surface.
From mine No. 8, at the same hour, 14
bodies had been removed and a number of
others are ready to be brought out as soon
as arrangements can be completed.

Five rescuing parties, with ten men to
each party, are working like Trojans at
different parts of the two mines to the
end that every nook and corner of the
workings may be reached in the shortest
possible time. There is a large force of
experienced miners for this work and they
are working in relays with short turns, ow-
ing to the accumulation of gas, which pre-
vents the men from remaining long within
the mine.

B. AND O. PRESIDENT ON SCENE.

President Oscar Murray and other offi-
cials of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
were in New Martinsburg, W. Va., 85 miles
from here, on an inspection trip, when they
heard of the disaster. They immediately
ordered their special train run to Monon-
gah, arriving here last night. President
Murray upon his arrival conferred with the
officers of the mining company and offered
on behalf of himself and the company any
assistance that it was possible to render.

Clarence W. Watson, of Baltimore, presi-
dent of the Consolidation Coal Company,
was at Frostburg, Md., and immediately
chartered a special train to bring him here.
After conferring with the mine superin-
tendent and other local representatives of
the company, he said there was no doubt
but that 400 lives had been lost.

"While nothing definite is known at this
time," said President Watson, "to judge
from the small volume of smoke it is evi-
dent that the disaster was caused by the
explosion of dust, which was probably ig-
nited by a pocket of gas or a blow-out
shot."

THOUGHT MINE SAFE.

President Watson referred to the last report of J. W. Paul, State mine inspector for West Virginia, which stated that a small quantity of gas had been found in mines Nos. 6 and 8. This had been corrected, so far as possible, and the law complied with in every respect. He also said there had been a complaint as to the quality of oil used, but said that this had also been remedied, and everything possible had been done to make the mine entirely safe. "This was a matter of good business policy, aside from any other consideration," said President Watson.

"Superintendent Malome has been with the company all of his life, and was considered one of the most competent men in the mining business. The connection between mines Nos. 6 and 8 was made with the sole idea of making them safer."

It is reported that the mine officials have ordered 380 coffins shipped to Monongah as soon as possible.

The explosion occurred shortly after 10 A. M. yesterday, after the force of about 400 men had gone to work in the two mines affected. These mines are Nos. 6 and 8 of the Consolidation Coal Company of Baltimore, located on opposite sides of the West Fork river, at this place, but merged in their underground workings by a heading and on the surface by a great steel tippie and a bridge.

KNOW NOT HOW THEY ESCAPED.

The five living men are unable to give any detailed report of the disaster or to even explain how they reached the surface. They state that immediately back of them when they began their frantic struggle for liberty there was a large number of men engaged in a similar struggle, while still farther back in the workings there was a larger number, of whom they know nothing.

It is the opinion of the mine officials and others familiar with mining that these seven men had not penetrated the mine as far as had the majority of the day shift when the explosion occurred and that they headed for and reached the main entry before the heavy cave-in that now blockades the entrance for more than a few hundred feet beyond the main opening of Mine No. 6.

OTHERS CAUGHT BY CAVE-IN.

As to the miners referred to by the rescued men as having been alive when last seen, it is believed that they were caught back of a heavy cave-in of coal and mine roof and that they could not have survived more than a few minutes in the deadly gases with which the entry filled as soon as the ventilating system was interrupted. There is more hope for those in more remote sections of the mine, as they may have reached workings where fresh air is supplied by other openings. But at best only the most slender hope is entertained

for the survival of any one of the men in the mine until the debris can be cleared away and communication with the outside re-established.

1,000 MEN WORKED THERE.

The two mines regularly employ 1,000 men, working in two shifts, and almost the entire day force had gone to work this morning and all were caught.

It was shortly after 10 o'clock when the explosion occurred, and at that hour even the latest of the straggling force is customarily at work, according to mine officials. Beyond these figures the company officials do not attempt to give estimates. The general opinion in the town is that the number of dead and imprisoned will reach 400. A few persons believe this number will be exceeded, claiming that more than half of the total force worked during the day, while, on the other hand, some think the number will be smaller.

CAUSE IS A MYSTERY.

There is much speculation as to the cause of the explosion, but the most generally accepted theory is that it resulted from black damp, scientifically known as bethane. It is believed that a miner attempted to set off a blast, which blew out and ignited an accumulation of this deadly gas, and that this in turn ignited the coal dust, a highly inflammable substance found in greater or less quantity in all West Virginia mines. However, all explanations of the cause up to this time are necessarily speculative. Only a thorough investigation after the mine is reopened will disclose the cause, if it is ever ascertained.

EXPLOSION WAS TERRIFIC.

The explosion affected both mines, and so far as now known appears to have done about as much damage in one as in the other. It has not been established in which mine it originated. Evidencing the terrific force of the concussion, props in the entry of No. 6 mine, supporting the roof, were not only shattered and torn from their position, but were blown out of the entry and to the opposite side of the river. Other evidence of the awful force is shown in every section of the mines that has been reached by the rescuers. Huge quantities of coal and rock have been loosened and hurled into every opening, and all of the underground structure is wrecked beyond semblance of its original shape.

The entry of No. 6 mine, 300 feet from the mouth, is piled high with the wreckage of two strings of cars and two electric motors. Some of the rescuers have climbed over this and found bodies beyond, but have made no attempt to remove these to the surface, partly because it would be almost impossible to carry the bodies over the debris, but more particularly because they do not want to lose any time in reaching other sections of the mine where it is possible men still living may be imprisoned. The cars are being righted as fast as possible and removed from the entry, together with all other obstructions.

TRYING TO SEND DOWN AIR.

All of the headings leading off from the main entry are being cut off by canvas and barricaded as fast as they are reached by the relief workers, so that the innermost workings of the mine may be given the benefit of the ventilating system to sustain any that may be yet living and make possible an early exploration of these workings.

The American miners of the town have been placed in charge of the relief work, but the Italians and other foreigners are working under them most faithfully. It is impossible for a man to remain long in the depths of the mine, and the rescue forces are divided to work in relays, with frequent reliefs. Many in the relief party have already become exhausted and been sent to the surface.

OWNED IN BALTIMORE.

The mines are owned and operated by the Consolidation Coal Company of Baltimore. General offices are located in Baltimore, and the operating offices in Fairmont, W. Va. The company is said to be one of the largest operating in the bituminous coal industry of America. It is capitalized at \$20,000,000 and has in operation about 100 producing plants. Its largest mines are located in Fairmont and Clarksburg, W. Va.; Somerset, Pa., and Cumberland, Md. Clarence W. Watson, of Baltimore, is president.

Monongah is a mining town in Marion county, West Virginia, about six miles southwest of Fairmont. It has a population of about 6,000, most of whom are foreigners, although there is a larger proportion of American miners in this district than in most of the other bituminous fields.

FOREIGNERS IN MAJORITY.

Until about 10 years ago the mines were operated almost exclusively by Americans, but during a general strike of miners in the Pennsylvania and Ohio fields many of these West Virginia miners went out in sympathy to prevent the filling of contracts at lake ports and elsewhere with West Virginia coal by the companies in Ohio and West Virginia, against which the strike was directed.

At that time the mine owners brought a large number of foreigners into the field to take the places of the strikers and ever since the foreigners have been displacing Americans until they are now in the majority.

HOW MINES ARE CONNECTED.

Mines Nos. 6 and 8 are located on opposite sides of the West Fork river, No. 6 on the east side and No. 8 on the west side, the homes of the miners occupying both sides of the river. The two mines are connected by a heading far back in the hills from the opening of No. 8 mine and their underground workings are merged. They are also connected on the surface by the largest steel tippie in the State and one of the largest in the country. This structure includes a large steel pier bridge owned and controlled by the coal company. The mines have both slope and shaft entries.

WOULD-BE RESCUERS HELPLESS.

Along the hills, far back from the main opening on mine No. 8, there are a number

of openings into the mine, and to these hundreds of relatives and friends of the entombed men frantically rushed in the vain hope that their loved ones might find escape through these channels or that they might be more readily reached and released. So far as known, however, not a single man escaped this way, and the would-be rescuers are helpless at these points, for out of each entry there is pouring a volume of poisonous gas, which no human being can face for more than a few minutes at a time.

FRANTIC WOMEN AT MINE.

The scenes roundabout the entries to the mines and throughout the town are even more pathetic and heartrending than those which usually attend a mine disaster, because of a larger proportion of American and Americanized foreigners than are usually found in a purely mining settlement. Wives and mothers and sweethearts, together with children and members of the stronger sex, move from place to place, vainly seeking information and making no attempt to conceal the grief that overwhelms them. But little news can be given them, and such as they do get is bad. None is encouraged to hope that anyone in the mine has survived the explosion and the suffocating gas that immediately thereafter filled the mine.

From time to time there comes word from the searchers in the mine that bodies have been found at one place or another, and in nearly every instance it is also stated that the bodies are either terribly torn and mangled or burned and blackened.

WAS THERE WHEN SHOCK CAME

Cumberland Man Gives Striking Account Of The Accident.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

Cumberland, Md., Dec. 6.—Mr. L. Lee Lichtenstein, of Cumberland, was in Fairmont this morning when the explosion occurred. He returned to Cumberland this evening. The explosion shook Fairmont, about eight miles from Monongah, as if by an earthquake. There was a rumbling noise, houses rocked to and fro, people rushed wildly to the street, and it was 15 minutes before it was known what had occurred. Then the news came by telephone from Monongah. A relief train was sent out as soon as possible, and but two men were brought in on it. Mr. Lichtenstein saw them. Both were alive, but neither could be recognized, except one was a white man and the other was colored. These men had been working 20 feet from the mouth of the mine and were not in the mine. They were blown many yards, and it was a miracle that they were not killed outright. Mr. Lichtenstein says the scenes about the station at Fairmont were heartrending.

An interurban street car had just passed the mouth of the mines when the explosion occurred. Had it been 30 seconds later it would have been swept away by the explosion, which was of such force that it carried a 30-ton fan clear across the river.

Mr. Lichtenstein had a talk with Superintendent Gaskill, of the mines, who stated that he had no hopes that any of the men had escaped. He said there were from 425 to 550 men in two mines. In the number were a corps of mining engineers, and these, too, it is thought, were lost. The street car track was torn up for the distance of over a mile.

Baltimore and Ohio train No. 1 passed through Cumberland tonight with a special car conveying officials of the Fairmont Coal Company to the scene of the accident. In the party were Vice-President J. Wheelwright, Van Lear P. Black, George Fleming, A. T. Watson and Charles Kalkman. The officials received the first news of the explosion here after leaving Baltimore, and they were much dejected. It is a well-known fact that the Monongah mines were as well equipped with modern appliances as any in the world. It is said that the provision for safety was as good as human agency could make it. None of the officials could account for the disaster.

FACTS ABOUT THE FRIGHTFUL DISASTER

An explosion in Mines No. 6 and No. 8 of the Consolidation Coal Company, at Monongah, W. Va., resulted in the loss of about 400 lives. It is the greatest mine disaster in the history of America.

Fourteen bodies have been recovered and five severely injured men were rescued near the mouth of one of the mines. Some 65 bodies are piled in heaps near the mouth of the shaft and are being carried out as rapidly as the rescuing parties can accomplish it.

The two mines regularly employ about 1,000 men in two shifts. It is estimated that above 400 were at work and all are believed to have perished, except the 5 badly injured men who escaped by way of the airshafts.

It will require four or five days to clear up the mine and take out all the bodies.

The cause of the explosion is a mystery, but is supposed to have been caused by the ignition of "black damp," by a miner in setting off a blast to dislodge coal.

The force of the explosion was felt in Fairmont, about eight miles away.

The mines are owned and operated by the Consolidation Coal Company, of Baltimore. Mr. Clarence W. Watson, the president and other high officials of the company, went at once to the scene of the disaster.

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Mar 4, 2025