

CORONER PROBING MINE DISASTER

IN WHICH ELEVEN MEN LOST THEIR LIVES

Witnesses of Gas Explosion at the Mt. Lookout Colliery Gave Sensational Testimony at the Initial Hearing Held in the Exeter Town Hall.

Evidence of a rather sensational character was adduced at the initial hearing in the inquest conducted by Coroner Dodson to ascertain if possible, the cause of the gas explosion which took place in the Mt. Lookout mine, at Wyoming, on the afternoon of May 12 and which cost 11 lives and brought serious injury to a score or more workmen. The inquiry was commenced yesterday afternoon in the town hall at Exeter, only a short distance from the colliery where the disaster occurred. Coroner Dodson presided. He was assisted in the work of examining the witnesses by Mine Inspector P. M. Boyle, of Kingston, in whose district the ill-fated mine is located.

The surprise of the day came when Martin Tighe, who was acting fire boss at the mine May 11 and 12, testified that he had no certificate permitting him to act in capacity of fire boss, a position upon which devolved the safety of several hundred employees who worked in the mine. That his testimony will play an important part in the aftermath of the affair seems certain, representatives of the district attorney's office and of the families of several of the victims having subjected the witness to a grueling examination which eventually brought out the statement of his not being qualified to fill a position he temporarily occupied on the day preceding the explosion and also at the time that the accident took place. The various counsel took notes of Tighe's testimony, and from the interest manifested it is evident that relatives of the victims and the county authorities intend making a big effort to have reparation made for the sad affair that cost so many lives.

When Coroner Dodson swore in jury shortly after 2 o'clock a crowd that taxed the capacity of the borough council chamber was in attendance eager to hear the testimony of the many who had been subpoenaed.

The jurors are: Thomas P. Mackin, C. Donnelly, Patrick Walsh and Patrick Duenn, all of Exeter borough; John Oberdorfer and Dr. C. E. Richards, both of West Pittston. The district attorney's office is represented by Assistant District Attorney John Dando, while the counsel for the Temple Iron Company is former District Attorney Benjamin R. Jones, of Wilkes-Barre. Other attorneys in attendance, presumably representing families of the victims are: Senator W. H. Hines, of Wilkes-Barre; Frank A. Battle, of Pittston; and James McQuade, of Wilkes-Barre.

Officials Present.
Besides the above, there were in attendance Vice-president A. F. Law, and District Superintendent George P. Steele, of the Temple Iron Co., and a large number of colliery workmen and members of the families of the victims. Many of the workmen in attendance were present as witnesses. On account of the fact that many of the witnesses are foreign-speaking people, Burgess Grisconis, of Exeter, borough, was secured to act as interpreter.

Coroner Dodson announced that the inquest would be held in the case of George Metcalf, one of the men killed in the explosion, and that the decision reached would apply to the

cases of all the men killed in the explosion.

The first witness was a foreigner named Joseph Kodok, who was employed as a miner in the gangways at Mt. Lookout where the fatal explosion occurred. He testified that he and his companion went to work in the gangway on Monday afternoon—the day before the explosion occurred. They found a feeder of gas burning, and they left their naked lamps at a point some distance back from the face of the gangway. About 5 o'clock that evening an explosion of gas occurred in the gangway, and the witness said that he and his laborer were jostled about in a lively manner, but were not burned. Then they became afraid and went out of the mine notifying the footman about the gas being in their place. The witness was examined very thoroughly, the purpose of the examination being, it would seem, to show that an explosion of gas occurred in the gangway on the day preceding the fatal explosion, also, that the witness should have notified the foreman instead of the footman about gas being in the gangway.

Alex Wascavage, who cross shifted the preceding witness, told of his going to work on the morning of the explosion and of his not being permitted to enter the gangway where the accident later took place. Wascavage said he never saw any safety lamps for the use of miners in the mine. During the time that he stayed in the gangway, Tuesday morning, May 12, he saw one of the smaller explosions take place some distance away from him. He was not hurt.

Discovered Gas Escaping.

James Johnson, a pumprunner, at the mine, testified to having been a witness to two explosions that took place at 5 o'clock Monday afternoon and at 12.15 the same night. Following the second explosion, Johnson cautiously made his way up the gangway and into another part of the mine to acquaint a number of workmen of the presence of a large body of gas in the gangway. After doing this Johnson notified Martin Tighe, who was temporarily filling the position of fire boss, the regular man, James Wal-

being ill. Accompanied by Tighe, Johnson again visited the scene of the explosion only to find the entire place ablaze. Both men at once set to work trying to extinguish the fire. With the aid of about 15 sticks of dynamite they managed to get the fire under control. The explosion had torn down a considerable amount of brattice work and the flames had wrought considerable damage.

The Star Witness.

When Johnson concluded, Martin Tighe, the man mentioned above, was called to the stand. He told of his being on duty continuously from 4 o'clock on Monday afternoon, May 11, until 5 o'clock the day of the explosion. He told of his being notified by Johnson of the explosion early on the morning of May 12, and his subsequent visit to the affected part of the mine and of the effort made to extinguish the fire that followed the explosion. He told of his notifying a number of workmen of the dangerous condition of the mine. Tighe related in detail his visit to the gangway at 5 o'clock on the morning of the explosion. To his surprise he found the place again in flames another explosion having taken place. He at once notified the employees on the surface not to stop the fan, which had been stopped earlier in the night to make some minor repairs. Tighe also told of his securing a number of workmen to assist him in extinguishing the second fire and restoring the air passages. At 6 o'clock this force was reinforced by many others including Mine Foreman Bernard Holleran, who assumed control of the situation.

Tighe testified that at the time of the big explosion that brought death to many workmen he was stationed in the gangway some four hundred feet from the scene of the explosion. When closely questioned by Assistant District Attorney Dando, Tighe admitted that he had never qualified as a fire boss, yet he had served in that

capacity on several occasions. He was still on the stand when adjournment was taken at 5.30. The next hearing will be held in the Exeter town hall, Thursday evening, next, commencing at 7.30 o'clock.

CONVENTION CLOSED

Welsh Baptists Will Hold Next Meeting at Olyphant.

The conference of the Welsh Baptist churches of Northeastern Pennsylvania closed last evening at Nanticoke. The morning session opened with devotional services by Rev. W. F. Davies, of Scranton. Report of the trustees was read by the clerk, Mr. L. N. Roberts, and approved, and also the report of the Welsh Home Mission by Rev. W. S. Davies.

The report of the obituaries was next read, and which showed that 32 deaths occurred during the past year. A letter of recommendation was also passed to be tendered Rev. W. F. Davies, of Scranton, on his departure to Wales, his native land. A vote of congratulation was extended to Rev. W. S. Jones and Rev. W. T. Francis, of Wales, wishing them God speed in their journey to America and a safe return to Wales.

A committee of two—Rev. W. F. Davies, of Scranton, and Rev. T. S. Evans, of Olyphant, was appointed to draft up rules for the prosecution and the advancement work in the interest of temperance and report at the next quarterly meeting.

A resolution recommended the missionary work on the Hayti Island under the charge of Rev. L. Ton Evans to the churches and the call for a generous financial support of same. A committee on local option reported the recommendation, the adoption and the prosecution of local option in the churches and to appeal to the churches to advance the interest both by word and by practice and that the matter be left to a committee, to bring local option in a tangible form before the churches by the coming election.

It was decided to hold the next convention of the association in Olyphant a year hence.

In the morning Rev. T. P. Morgan, of Mahanoy City, preached in English. Rev. D. R. Davis, of Plymouth, preached in Welsh at the evening services, when he closed the convention. Rev. T. D. Morris, of Warrior Run, preached a forcible sermon in English followed by a sermon in Welsh by Rev. W. T. Francis, of Wales.

B. G. COON AWARDED PAVING CONTRACT

At the meeting last night of the street committee of council the bids for street paving and street curbing were awarded. The paving contract went to B. G. Coon of Kingston, his bid being \$2.03 per square yard. D. M. Rosser received the contract for curbing at 68c per foot. The other bidder was Frank Kuss of this city. The work will start at once.

MINER INJURED.

John Boranis, a miner employed at the Heidelberg mine, was seriously injured by a fall of rock yesterday.

DOLLARS AC

With surprising rapidity if the place. Plant one dollar in the COUNTY TRUST CO., where it interest.—Laning Building, Publ