

# EIGHT CONVICTS PERISH IN FIRE KINDLED IN BOLD EFFORT TO ESCAPE

## CLUB TO TAKE UP LIVE SUBJECTS

Water and Pig Iron Rates Come  
Up Friday

## BABB DISCUSSES PLANS

He Thinks Friendly Steps Should Be  
Taken to Get Better Freight Tariffs  
for Birmingham Than  
Now Exist.

At the meeting of the Commercial club Friday afternoon the two most important factors in the building up of Birmingham as an all around city will be taken up. The club is in the habit of dispatching matters with celerity, and it is proposed to have these two movements, better water and better freight rates, well under way by the time the Chamber of Commerce building is completed.

"Some people may say that they will make Birmingham a pig iron town, but they are very much mistaken," said Secretary Babb. "The county will have the water here for the manufacturing plants and the club members propose to fight until all discrimination against Birmingham is done away with."

"It is not proposed to fight the railroads, but by showing them the conditions and waging a friendly campaign for the reduction of tariff on various articles the city's rights will be protected. Birmingham is in the position to be the greatest jobbing and industrial manufacturing city in the south, and the citizens of Birmingham are ready to place her there."

"The jobbing interests are now ready to join in the fight against rate discrimination. It is claimed that Selma is a bigger jobbing center than Birmingham, and that Atlanta is protected to the disadvantage of Birmingham. Club members say that it is no accident that Birmingham has no shoe factory, no millinery manufacturing or jobbing house and many other jobbing and merchandise distributors that Chattanooga, Atlanta and Nashville boast."

As will be remembered, Frank Nelson, Jr., was appointed some time ago to try to get a basic rate for Birmingham on iron products, and thus allow Birmingham the benefit of her location in the iron competition of the world. It is even claimed that this city has only an ordinary rate on pig iron, which is no better than many other districts have.

At the meeting Friday definite steps will be taken toward the acquirement, construction or whatever is necessary in connection with a water plant. The various citizens who have been urging action will be on hand. Active committees will be appointed, and something will be

## Fifty Men In Pratt Mines Plan Bold Break For Liberty Which Results In Agonizing Death Of Eight Of Their Comrades

When Fire Broke Out Guards Became Suspicious and Forces  
At Opening Were Redoubled—All Of the Conspirators Locked In Stockades

Superintendent of Mines Edward H. Cox when asked last night regarding the damage to No. 3 mine as the result of the attempted escape of the negro convicts said:

"The damage to the mine is very small, amounting to but a few hundred dollars. A large force of men are at work repairing the damage and the mine will be in full operation by tomorrow."

P. J. Rogers, superintendent of mines for the Pratt division, was in personal charge of the rescue and fire-fighting work, from Monday night until late last night. There was no sleep for any of the mine officials from the discovery of the fire until everything appeared absolutely safe last night.

Eight dead and one missing is the awful record of a desperate attempt on the part of 50 negro convict miners to escape late Monday night from the Tennessee company's No. 3 Pratt mine. The deaths were caused by fire in the manway, which was apparently started by the convicts.

No. 3 mine has a slope through which the coal is hauled to the surface, while the manway is for the entrance of the miners into the mine. The slope and manway meet about a quarter of a mile underground. Both convict and free labor are worked in the mine.

Monday afternoon when the day shift of convicts were brought from the mine to be taken to the stockade, about 50 were found to be missing. The force of guards at the manway, slope and other points were immediately doubled and preparations made for any attempt to escape on the part of the negroes.

Shortly after 10 o'clock Monday night one of the guards at the manway noticed a small puff of smoke among some timbers at the mouth, then the timbers burst into a huge blaze, and from the manner in which they burned it is believed that oil had been poured upon the timbers.

### Manway a Seething Furnace.

In a moment the manway was a seething furnace, the timbers supporting the wall burning with rapidity. The alarm was quickly spread and a systematic fight started against the fire. A heavy force of guards was placed at the slope and the raising of the heavy iron gate disclosed 40 of the convicts belonging to the day shift. It had undoubtedly been their hope that all of the guards would be attracted to the fire at the manway and they would have a chance to break through the iron gate and make their exit to freedom through the slope opening.

The thing which helped to save the 10 free laborers and convicts of the night shift who were working deep in the mine, was the caving in of the walls of the manway between the slope and surface

entrance. The smoke poured through the different passageways and but for the falling in of the walls the miners in the deeper recesses of the mine would have been suffocated.

The eight men who met their death were caught in the manway, their egress through the surface opening of the manway being cut off by the roaring flames above, while the falling roof cut them off from the slope and they were gradually roasted and suffocated.

### Dynamite in Passageway.

Dynamite was also found in the passageway and it is believed that it was the intention of the convicts to dynamite the iron gate in the slope. They were cowed, however, by the sudden raising of the gate and heavy force of guards, and offered no resistance to being marshaled into the stockade.

It was early yesterday morning when the night shift of free laborers and convicts were removed from the mine and as soon as they were rescued a search was made for any of the day convicts who might be hid in the mine. Two were found shortly before noon in one of the furthestmost pockets and it is believed by the prison officials that the missing man is hiding somewhere in the mine.

Four bodies were found during the forenoon lying close to each other, near the spot where the roof caved in, while the others were found at intervals of about every two hours, the last one being discovered about 3:30 o'clock.

### New Route to Manway.

The fire was put out shortly after the noon hour, but the manway was so hot that it could not be entered for some time. Men were put to work digging another entrance to the manway. A search was made of the manway for the missing man, but without avail.

It will be impossible to tell who the convicts are until the wardens cneck up. The manner in which the convicts shifted and "lay back" Monday will make this task of checking up extremely hard. The actual damage to the mine will be very small and it is expected to be in full operation by today. It is one of the most complete electrically equipped mines in the district and most of the damage was to the electric cables and apparatus. A large number of electricians were put to work yesterday afternoon repairing this part of the damage and will probably complete it today.

This is one of the boldest attempts to escape ever made by the convict miners in this district and resulted more disastrously to them than any other. The setting on fire of the mine, however, in an effort to attract the attention of the guards away from some other opening is an old trick, having been tried a number of times in the other mines.

## ONE NEGRO KILLED IN FRISCO CRASH

Passenger Train Hits Open  
Switch At Pratt City

## PLOWS INTO FREIGHT

Engineer and Fireman of Passenger  
Save Themselves By Jumping.  
Train Moved on in Less  
Than an Hour.

A rear-end collision between Frisco freight and passenger trains at Pratt City yesterday afternoon resulted in one death, while the quick work of the engineer of the passenger and the intervening of good fortune was all that prevented a bad wreck. It was caused by an open switch. The dead man is Jim Clark, a negro flagman of the freight train.

While many of those on the passenger train were shaken up and slightly bruised, none was seriously hurt. James Caldwell, white flagman on the passenger, sustained the most serious injury, which was a sprained wrist.

The passenger train was No. 206, which left Birmingham at 1 o'clock for Memphis, and was traveling at a rapid rate. The freight was extra No. 1232 for Amory, Miss. The accident occurred on the siding at the Copeland Brick company's plant, about a quarter of a mile east of the Frisco's Pratt City depot.

The freight pulled into the siding with the passenger but a few minutes behind. It is said the freight was slow in getting into the siding and the white flagman was sent back to flag No. 206. It appears that he had no red flag and did not succeed in stopping the passenger.

The freight made it into the siding in ample time, and had been waiting there several moments, when the passenger came along. The negro flagman, Jim Clark, did not close the switch, but swung aboard the caboose, and was in it when the collision occurred. There is some dispute as to whose duty it was to throw the switch. It is said that it is the duty of the white flagman to throw all switches, but as he had been sent back to flag the other train that it was the negro's duty.

Immediately upon seeing the open switch Engineer H. C. Snyder reversed his engine and checked the speed greatly before the crash came. After doing all he could to stop his train he and his negro fireman jumped from the left side of the engine, which is the side next to the main line. Had they jumped on the other side they would have been buried under the engine, as it toppled over on that side.