

EXPLOSION OF GAS IN NO. 14 SHAFT, PENNSYLVANIA COAL COMPANY

March 2, Charles Richardson, American miner, Thomas Fleming, American Runner, John Ruscavage, Polish bratticeman, Bernard Coyle, American Co. laborer, Erico Copiteia, Italian laborer, and Anthony Tardo, American driver, were fatally burned by an explosion of gas in Branagans inside slope, No. 14 shaft, Pittston vein, Pennsylvania Coal Company. On the morning of the 2nd William Hughes, the fire boss, made his examination of the workings, and discovered a foot of gas in breast No. 299. This breast is the outside one adjoining the slope extension up the anticlinal, and is driven some distance up from the last cross-cut. All the other places being found free from gas. Hughes, after arriving at the foot of shaft, directed his men how to work, holding the men out of breast No. 299 until the gas would be removed and the place made safe. He directed his bratticeman, John Ruscavage, and Bernard Coyle, the helper, to put up a brattice in breast No. 299 to remove the gas, saying that he would go in after he had eaten his breakfast and start the men to work. He gave Ruscavage and Coyle safety lamps to work with. Ruscavage sent his helper for brattice cloth and he went in to work. About 8.00, A. M. he arrived in breast No. 299 leaving his lunch pail and sat close to a mine car that had been taken up the breast that morning by the driver to the cross-cut and left there, as it is evident the driver stopped when he came to the danger mark placed across the track. Coyle came up the breast with the brattice cloth just as Ruscavage was climbing off the car unto the gob. He said Ruscavage had an open light on his head and a safety lamp in his hand. He said he saw the gas ignited by the open light, causing an explosion, and that a few minutes after another terrific explosion took place by which the men were burned as they rushed for the slope to get out and were caught at the foot of the slope. The workings in this slope were well ventilated, the intake being on the right of the slope going down and ventilating a few places on the right and up the slope extension on the anticlinal and across the face of the workings on the left of the slope, returning up on the left of slope to the lift above. Had the men gone up the return those who worked on the left of the slope would have escaped injury.

Victor Scuzka and Jacob Scuzrick lost their lives by the above explosion, by being suffocated by the after damp before the rescuers could reach them, although every effort was made to do so. When they were found life was extinct. They had only been employed a few days in this part of the mine, and being in the dark sat down and were overcome by the after-damp.