

NINETEEN KILLED IN ZEIGLER MINE

MOST MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION
OF ILLINOIS COAL DISTRICT.

JOSEPH LEITER FIGHTS FIRE

MILLIONAIRE AND HIS BRIDE
ASSIST IN RESCUE WORK.

**Declares He Will Not Close Mine or
Retire From Management.
Coroner Holds Inquest
Over Victims.**

Benton, Ill., Jan. 10.—Nineteen men are known to have lost their lives in the famous mine of the Zeigler Coal Company at Zeigler, this county, shortly after midnight this morning, as a result of the most mysterious explosion to occur in the Illinois mining district.

The Zeigler mine has been closed for several weeks on account of a serious fire in the working places until early this month, when Joseph Leiter, millionaire, president of the Zeigler Coal Company, came down from Chicago with his bride and took charge of the work of extinguishing the flames that threatened the destruction of the valuable property.

So effective was the work of Leiter and his experts that the fire was confined and sealed in a small portion of the workings, and the debris was cleared away and everything placed in condition to resume operations.

Caught the Night Shift.

A small quantity of coal was hoisted yesterday, and it was the intention of the management to put on the usual force during the coming week. The night shift of men, twenty to twenty-six in number, went into the mine at midnight, and had been down there but a short time when the explosion occurred. Of this number twenty-one have been recovered, nineteen of them dead. The other two are alive, one of the number being in apparent good shape, while the second is in a rather serious condition.

The remainder of the men have not yet been found, and it is not known whether they are dead or alive.

Of this number only two are natives of Franklin county. These are Seber Puckett and Charles Smothers. Four of the others are negroes, while the remainder were foreigners. Their bodies are badly burned, making recognition difficult.

Will Not Close the Mine.

Coroner Dye of Christopher was summoned and held an inquest over the bodies. Adjournment was taken until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, when the jury is expected to return a verdict.

No explosion was felt nor heard by the residents of Zeigler, and the only warning of anything wrong below was a gust of black smoke from the mine shaft.

Mr. and Mrs. Leiter are still in Zeigler and have been busily engaged throughout the day in assisting in the rescue work and attending the injured.

Mrs. Leiter furnished coffee and sandwiches to the men attempting to rescue the bodies. The day was bitter cold, but Mrs. Leiter was foremost in comforting the widows.

Leiter, who has had considerable trouble with union miners, said that there is absolutely no foundation for the report that he contemplates closing the Zeigler mine, or retiring from the management. He says he has no idea of the cause of the explosion.

A spark from a trolley pole of an electric motor coming in contact with a pocket of gas is assigned by some miners as the cause of the explosion.

The mine was put in operation in 1903 and soon after labor troubles began. In April, 1905, an explosion in the mine killed fifty-one men.