

COAL FATALITY
BLACK DIAMOND, WASHINGTON
PACIFIC COAST COAL COMPANY
LAWSON MINE
NOVEMBER 6, 1910

LAWSON EXPLOSION

On Sunday morning, Nov. 6th, at 6:40 a.m., an explosion occurred at the Pacific Coast Coal Company's Lawson Mine, Black Diamond, completely wrecking the mine and killing sixteen men. At the time of the explosion the man-car, containing eleven men, was being lowered down the main slope and five men who had been working on the night shift were supposed to be on trip coming up from the sixth level or bottom of the slope.

The force of the explosion first spent itself through the main slope, caving it and wrecking the top works, thence through the return airway, which it also caved. The fan was not damaged, but was stopped for an hour and forty-five minutes while the airway was being repaired. An exploring party was sent in through the old water level. They found the slope caved and could not get into the south airway until the cave was cleaned up, which took until Monday noon. At the same time another crew was started down the south airway. This crew succeeded in getting to the first level Monday morning and began working on the cave, toward the water level, from that side. From the water level, where a third party joined them, they proceeded to a point midway between the first and second levels, where they found the airway blocked with timbers. This they cleared up and reached the second level Monday afternoon. At 6:15 Monday evening a fourth party relieved them. This party was accompanied by J. J. Corey, assistant engineer of the mine rescue station, who had come from Seattle bringing four Draeger oxygen apparatus. They succeeded in working their way to the third level, where they found the slopes blocked by caves and could make no further progress. On Tuesday, Nov. 8th, another party made a final effort to get beyond the third level, but failed. They then examined all stoppings and found those between main and auxiliary slope blown out. The gangway stoppings on each level north and south of slope were found intact and the places were clear of gases. They found no indication that the explosion originated in any of these levels.

All parties agreed that it was impossible to go any further than the third level, so further attempts to reach the sixth level were abandoned.

Steps were then taken to locate the bodies on the upper end of main slope. Cross-cuts were started between air course and slope, one 181 feet above the first level and another 281 feet from top of main slope. The upper cross-cut was driven to strike the point on the main slope where the indicator showed the man-car should be, the lower one to strike a point a little lower in case the bodies had rolled from the car. The upper cross-cut came through just opposite where car had stopped and the bodies of the eleven men were brought to the surface. The bodies of the five other men were not recovered.

As it was impossible to reach the bottom of the slope to investigate, the cause of the accident could not be learned. This mine was subject to mine fires from spontaneous combustion and was

watched very closely for that reason. Many plausible theories were advanced. One was that a fire broke out, igniting a small body of gas, this in turn igniting coal dust, causing a dust explosion. Another, that the overlying strata caved and caused concussion enough of itself to wreck the mine or that a cave forced out a large body of gas, the concussion or compression damaging one of the miner's safety lamps, and gas being ignited in this manner.

On Nov. 20th a coroner's jury inquest was held and from evidence given there it was found the John Zan, the night shift fire boss, was the last man to inspect the working places on the morning of the accident.

Copy of the fire boss' report follows:

LAWSON MINE, NOV. 6TH

I hereby certify that I have examined this mine before the commencement of work this morning. I find it free of gas and falls and every place in good working order except as herein enumerated and I have posted a copy of this report on bulletin board near mouth of slope. Places where gas was found, 38 1/2 breast. All other places clear 6 a.m., 6th level south all clear 6 a.m.; 1st, 2nd and 3d level all clear.

Signed, JACK ZAN.

Zan was questioned very closely regarding the condition of the working places he had examined, in regard to indications of fire or heat. He said that he had examined all places very carefully but found no evidence of fire or heat. He said he had full authority to remove the men from mine as well as to prevent men from entering mine in case he should find any indication of danger. He stated that afternoon . . . in his judgment it was absolutely safe. The state mine inspector was ill in the Cle Elum hospital at the time of the accident.

The coroner's jury, after hearing the evidence, rendered the following verdict:

We, the undersigned jury, find that Dave Lunden and fifteen others came to their death in Lawson mine by explosion, cause unknown, according to the evidence before the jury.

*Foreman, PETER BOOSE,
D. D. JONES,
THOS. R. FLEMMING,
J. F. AINARDI,
F. BENDITH,
JOHN BARCLAY.*

Jurors

J. C. Snyder, M. D. County Coroner.

LIST OF MEN KILLED IN LAWSON MINE DISASTER NOVEMBER 6, 1910.

NAME	OCCUPAT ION	AGE	NATION ALITY	MAR RIED	W	C	FAMIL Y @	BODY REC'D..
Julius Persyn	Timberman	30	Belgian	Y	1	1	Lawson	N

Fred Setti	" Helper	29	Italian	Y	1	1	Black Diamond	N
Cezar Bael	Track cleaner		Belgian	Y	1	1	Lawson	N
Joe Kronenturg	Timber pkr	30	Polish	Y	1	1	Old Country	Y
Mactili Fanstina	"	33	Italian	Y	1	3	Black Diamond	Y
C. Biagi	"	28	"	Y	1		Old Country	Y
Julius Capplati	"	30	"	Y	1		"	Y
Frank Gardini	"	24	"	N				Y
Isadore Gardini	"	22	"	N				Y
Dom. Gregois	"	24	"	N				Y
Albert Fontana	"	23	"	N				Y
Frank Vergan	"	23	"	N				Y
Mat Galone	"	19	Austrian	N				Y
Dave Lunden	Fire Boss	31	Finn	N				Y
Oscar Bael	Track Cleaner		Belgian	N				N
Girth Maes	Boiler man	33	"	N				N

RECAPITULATION.--Sixteen men killed; eleven bodies recovered; five bodies still in mine. Seven married men; four widows and six children at Black Diamond and Lawson, three widows and at least one child supposed to be in their native country. Italian 9, Belgians 4, Finn 1, Pole 1, Austrian 1, Adults 13, minor 1, unknown 2.