

COAL FATAL

1916 0001

DEPT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF MINES

OCTOBER 22, 1916 MARVEL, ALABAMA 18 KILLED (17 EMPLOYEES AND ONE RESCUER) MINE EXPLOSION.

FIFTEEN MEN ENTOMBED BY EXPLOSION AT MARVEL MINE OF RODEN COAL COMPANY.

Lives of men Snuffed out by Terrific Explosion at 2:45 O'Clock in Afternoon. Rescuer Breaks His Neck

WORKERS IN MINE MAKING REPAIRS AT TIME OF EXPLOSION

Hundreds of Volunteers in Rescue Work Reach Dead Bodies at 10 O'Clock. Cause of Explosion Is a Mystery.

By REUBEN A. LEWIS

A terrific explosion at 2:45 o'clock yesterday afternoon in the mines of the Roden Coal company at Marvel Resulted in instantaneous death to 15 miners. Accumulation of gas was the cause of the disaster. Fifty grim men are working in the dark inner passages of the mines seeking to recover the mangled bodies. Shortly after 10 o'clock last night the first bodies of the victims of the disaster were brought to the heading of the mines by rescuers. The Marvel mine is owned by the Roden Coal company and is located in Bibb county about 40 miles southwest of Birmingham on the Louisville and Nashville and Southern Railroads. But before the entombed bodies were recovered George Jones, a white miner of Garnsey, surrendered his life. On a ladder in the passageway he was overcome by fumes of deadly gas and fell to the floor of the mine, breaking his neck. Four men were overcome by the gas, removed from the inner recesses and resuscitated. Of the 15 men whose lives were snuffed out by the explosion, nine were white men and six negroes.

THE DEAD

W. F. Cochrane, master mechanic married.
W. B. Freeman, Chief electrician; single
Grover Finley, boss driver; married.
D. N. Ogletree, brattice man; single.
Mose Harwell, machinist; married.
George Liddle. pumper; single.

COLORED

John Stoke.
Roscoe Robinson.
Early Collins.
Three other negroes, whose names could not be ascertained.

CAUSE A MYSTERY

The cause of the explosion is a mystery. C. B. Dryer, superintendent of the mines, stated last night that the ninth left entry in which the explosion is supposed to have had its origin, had been inspected during Sunday morning by M. A. Lowrey and pronounced free from gas. A few hours later a mighty detonation hurtled his body, together with 14 others, against the sides of the entries with death dealing force. There were 16 men in the mines when the mighty explosion exacted its toll. Henry Holloway, a white miner, engaged as a pupper, was in the third entry of the bottom row when the deafening report was heard. Burned by the explosion, he managed to walk to the heading of the mines, which soon became the scene of gathering of hundreds of panic-stricken miners and members of their families. The sturdy reinforced concrete heading was cracked by the force of the explosion, giving mute evidence of the fate of the miners within. On every hand there were men ready to risk their lives to rescue the entrapped miners from the inner passages of the mines. With system the men started upon their morbid task. In crews of 12 men they made ready to go into the shaft where lay the mangled bodies of their co-workers.

HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS

Hundreds of volunteers were offered but, headed by the fire bosses and other foremen, the rescuers started about the work of providing a sufficient circulation of air to enable them to get to the entombed men. The fans were never stopped by the explosion, but mine cars, shattered and twisted, and the wooden brattices that conduct fresh air were converted into a jumbled mass of debris by the mighty explosion. In face of this disarray it was necessary to clear the wreckage and to conduct fresh air to the entries, where the men were ensnared. Twelve men went into the mines and returned exhausted. Another crew replaced them. On and on the rescuers worked. The frantic determination and bravery with which they labored was evidenced as coworkers brought the prone forms of men, overcome with gas, to recover in the bracing air of the fine November day.

NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE

With his closest friends, including his chief electrician and master mechanic, in the dark passages of the mine, C. B. Dryer, superintendent, offered his life, and was nearly forced to yield it, to recover their bodies. From the outset he was active, directing the rescuers, urging the hundreds that swarmed about the opening of the mine to be patient and brave. In the ninth entry, while working back toward the victims of the disaster, he was overcome by gas with three other members of the crew and carried back to the fresh air. There he was resuscitated and started back to his hard, menial task. While there he said: "I left the men at dinner about 12 o'clock on the twelfth siding. They were installing some electrical equipment necessary for the work of the

coming week. They were somewhere near there when the explosion occurred.

A GAS EXPLOSION

"I think that the explosion is due to an accumulation of gas, for I did not notice any signs of a dust explosion. The explosion had its origin in the ninth left entry. It was very heavy." The first body to be recovered was that of one of the negroes. Nearby was found the corpse, badly "shot up," of W. B. Freeman, the chief electrician. The rescuers brought these bodies to the heading of the mine on a car, although it was necessary to carry them several hundred feet on an up grade before reaching the cars. Until the rescuers saw these bodies there was a gleam of hope that the lives of the entombed might have been spared. Hope was foregone when the effects of the terrible disaster were shown by the bodies coming from the mine.

[Oct. 23, 1916 Birmingham, Alabama AGE HERALD]

NINETEEN DEAD RESULT OF EXPLOSION IN MINE.

BIRMINGHAM, ALA., OCT 23--Nineteen are dead as the result of an explosion in the Marvel, Ala., mine of the Roden Coal Company Sunday afternoon. The last two bodies were taken out today. Eighteen were direct victims of the explosion and one was killed by a fall from a ladder while doing rescue work.

[Oct. 24, 1916 Lexington (KY.) Herald]

TWELVE TRAPPED IN MINES

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Oct 22--Twelve men were trapped by an explosion in the mines of the Roden Coal Company at Marvel today. Rescuers believe that none of the men are alive. The cause of the explosion was not definitely learned, but it was believed it was due to gas, though the mines were tested and found safe a few hours before the disaster.

[Boston Morning Globe Oct. 23, 1916]

RESCUERS BRING OUT BODIES OF TWO DEAD MINERS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Rescuers late last night brought to the surface the bodies of two of the 15 men who were trapped by an explosion of gas in the mines of the Roden Coal Company at marvel, Ala. yesterday. Before the rescuers could flood the miner's inner passage with sufficient circulation of air, one miner, a white man, mounted high on a ladder in a passageway, was overcome by gas and fell to the floor of the mine, breaking his neck. Four others were overcome by gas, but were carried out and resuscitated. Nine of the dead are white and six negroes.

[Boston Evening Globe Oct. 23, 1916]