

14 KILLED IN HENDERSON SIX BODIES ARE RECOVERED BY RESCUE PARTY

Two Explosions Occur as Shifts Are Changing--Mine Inspectors Are Directing Work--Statement Issued by Company

Fourteen miners are believed to have been killed and a portion of the mine of the Henderson Coal Company at Hendersonville, four miles north-east of Canonsburg, on the Montour railroad, was wrecked by an explosion which occurred at 6:20 o'clock this morning.

The exact cause of the disaster which is the most serious that has occurred in the mining industry in Washington county in several years had not been determined this afternoon. It could not be stated whether it was due to coal dust or gas.

Physicians from Canonsburg, Bridgeville and every point from which help could quickly reach Hendersonville were summoned by telephone and they rushed there by automobile.

Dr. D. M. Bell, who was among the first of the local physicians to respond, returned to Canonsburg at 1:30 o'clock this afternoon. He reported at that time that six bodies had been brought to the foot of the mine entrance but that they had not been brought to the surface then and probably would not for an hour or more.

Mine rescue work was under way shortly after noon but none of the bodies had been brought to the surface. Government experts who rushed to the scene in an automobile truck from Pittsburgh were delayed as their

machine became stuck in the mud shortly after they passed Bridgeville and it was necessary to abandon it. They did not arrive at the scene of the disaster until this afternoon.

The fans were not damaged and one cage was left intact despite the force of the blast and this enabled the mine officials and volunteer rescue men to soon commence exploration. Despite this fact, however, no bodies have been brought to the surface as yet and no list of identified dead had been issued by mine officials.

"There are known to be three dead and there may be three more." This was the opening sentence of a statement made this afternoon by W. M. Henderson, general manager of the Henderson Coal Company.

But about the workings it is generally believed that the official's estimate is low and that the death toll will number as high as fourteen, it being impossible to give more than an estimate as yet.

Explosion Scatters Men

Approximately 20 men are thought to have been in the mine when the explosion occurred. Some of these are known to have escaped alive, but some were so badly frightened by their harrowing experience that they scattered immediately and just how many rushed from the workings is unknown, they failing to check up in the excitement that prevailed.

In the cold driving sleet that pelted down upon them, women and children, wives, daughters, sons and mothers of the victims claimed by the disaster, stood about the mine entrance. Some were griefstricken and frantic while others were seemingly stunned by the unexpected sorrow and loss. Some hoped against hope that their loved ones would be rescued alive.

Two Explosions Occur

Two explosions occurred in rapid succession, about 6:20 o'clock this morning as the day shift was entering the mine. Not many of the workmen had reached the workings, only a small portion of the number employed being underground when the death-dealing blasts came.

As the low rumblings of the explosion vibrated and shook the mining town, men, women and children rushed from homes in wild excitement. They made a mad rush for the mine entrance knowing too well what had happened.

W. M. Henderson, general manager of the mine, took charge of the situation as soon as he arrived on the scene. The fans were tested and the volunteer rescuers were organized as soon as possible to make a descent into the ominous and forbidding cavern. But this work was slow.

With the arrival of D. J. Parker and other government experts from Pittsburgh the rescue work was turned over to these experienced men. The volunteers who had heroically risked their lives and done everything possible to penetrate into the dangerous tunnel with the hope of saving some of their fellow workmen continued under their direction.

Valor of Volunteer Workers

The valor of the volunteer rescuers is shown by the fact that they entered the mine without being equipped with oxygen helmets. But little safety

first apparatus was in evidence.

Apparently the two explosions were local blasts of unusual force. Only one end of the workings was affected. Seemingly there was not either sufficient dust or gas to cause the explosion to penetrate into various recesses.

Hendersonville, tho a mining town practically four years old, is almost isolated. Telephone communication to the village is inadequate, only occasional passenger trains run on the Montour, and the country roads leading to the stricken place are almost impassable.

Statement by Mr. Henderson

W. M. Henderson, manager of the Henderson Coal Company, made the following statement this afternoon:

"There are known to be three dead and there may be three more. I don't think there will be any more than that. We were very fortunate. The men were just leaving the mine when the explosion occurred and this alone is responsible for the small loss of life. Of course there are a number of miners unaccounted for, but the majority of these scattered soon after the explosion and failed to check up. I do not think there were more than 15 men in the mine at the time of the explosion and it is possible there were just half that many. The fans and a cage were not wrecked by the explosion and this aided us in starting exploration work at once."

OTHER DISASTERS IN COUNTY'S MINES

Nine Men Killed in Canonsburg in 1911—Marianna and Finleyville

The disaster at Hendersonville today was the worst mining catastrophe in the immediate vicinity of Canonsburg since March 22, 1911, when nine men were killed in the Hazel mine of the Pittsburgh-Buffalo Company, Canonsburg. The fatality was due to a car in which the men were riding having jumped the track on its way into the mine.

The worst mine disaster in the history of Washington county occurred Saturday, November 28, 1908, at Marianna. An explosion of gas cost the lives of more than 150 men, and of all who were in the workings, only one came out alive. The mine was badly wrecked.

The second worst disaster was on Wednesday evening, April 23, 1913, in the Cincinnati mine of the Pittsburgh Coal Company near Finleyville. The death list numbered 110. Two men were taken out alive after having been in the mine 53 hours. The explosion was due to gas in the workings.

Since 1913 there has been a decided decrease in mine fatalities not only in this section of Pennsylvania, but throughout the country. This is due to the stricter enforcement of the law and more careful observance of rules.

At the Alhambra
Mabel Tallaferra in "A Wife by Proxy," today. -79-1