

## NINE MEN DIE IN ROCK QUARRY

Explosion of Dynamite at Pounding Mill Last Friday Morning  
Caused Heavy Loss of Life  
to Boxley Co.'s Workmen.

### THE DEAD.

#### WHITE.

R. T. McGee, Max Meadows,  
Va.  
G. C. McGee, Max Meadows.  
Joe Smith, Pounding Mill.  
F. E. Myers, Pounding Mill.

#### COLORED.

Allen Byrd,  
John Byrd,  
Ed. Byrd,  
Jasper Jackson,  
Wash Johnson.

The accidental explosion at Pounding Mill last Friday morning at the rock crushing plant of W. W. Boxley and Company, by which nine men lost their lives, has been the sole topic of discussion in the west end of the county for the past week. Thousands of people from different sections of the county and many from West Virginia have visited the scene of the tragedy since the explosion. Sunday the crowds were so large that guards had to be placed at different points around the plant to keep the curious away, and to prevent further loss of life should any of the many unexploded holes loaded with T. N. T. be accidentally put off.

A representative of this newspaper visited the scene of the accident Monday afternoon and got a close view of the immense pile of limestone rock that was accidentally blown off the side of the mountain, and which caught the men working at the base and crushed them to death. It will likely never be known positively what caused the blast to prematurely explode.

### "Spark Caused Explosion," Says Asbury.

W. A. Asbury, of Pounding Mill, the powder man for the Pounding Mill Quarry, and who is charged with the responsibility of loading the ninety foot holes with the high explosives, was only a few feet from one of the holes when the explosion occurred. He stated to a representative of this paper that he had just sounded the hole to find out the amount of dynamite it contained, and that the tape line showed sixteen feet of space at the top, leaving a charge of something like seventy odd feet. "I had just pulled the tape line up and was proceeding to the next hole, when I looked back, and saw a spark go in the hole," said Asbury. "I screamed a warning to the men below, and suddenly the ground rose under me and I was hurled several feet. When I came to myself I found my helper, George Brewster, unconscious on the ground. I endeavored to aid him and it was then I discovered that my arm was broken." Asbury further stated that there are thirteen similar unexploded holes in the vicinity, the closest one fifteen feet and the others stretched along on the top of the cliff fifteen feet apart. He said he had been loading for the quarry for several years, that he was instructed by an expert from the Dupont factory and that it had been his custom to continue the loading of the holes with the high explosive while the large force of men were working at the base of the cliff, and that neither he nor others in authority had ever supposed that a spark from a coal fire could travel such a distance and still retain sufficient heat to set off the charge.

The explosion occurred at 8:10 Friday morning, a short time after the men had reported for work. The steam shovel, operated by the two McGee brothers, and a colored helper, was at work lifting the large stones, and the crew were at work in the usual manner getting the rock ready for the crusher. Without warning the terrific explosion occurred and sent hundreds of tons of limestone rock down on the men, covering them with thirty feet or more of the heavy stones. The four white men were at work near the steam shovel, and the colored men were scattered about in different parts of the pit. The bodies of all of the men, excepting one, have been recovered. One colored man's body still remained under the debris Wednesday. All of the bodies were terribly mangled, almost beyond recognition. Undertaker W. E. Peery, of Tazewell, was called to the scene Friday afternoon, and prepared the bodies for burial.

It is the custom of the Pounding Mill Quarry to blow down sufficient rock once annually to supply the crushers, and the annual blast was set for last Monday. Fifteen holes, eight inches in diameter had been filled with the high explosive and little remained to be done for the annual blast. The holes were being sealed by W. A. Asbury, the powder man. The holes were drilled at the top of the ridge fifteen feet apart, and about ninety feet deep, and each hole was charged with over half a ton of explosives. Only two of the holes were accidentally discharged, the other thirteen remaining in tact. W. W. Boxley & Co., of Roanoke, operators of the quarry, have had a large force of men at work at the quarry since the explosion removing the rock and recovering the bodies. A wrecking crew of the N. & W. has been at work all the week assisting the quarrymen in getting the rocks cleared away. Mayor Boxley, of Roanoke, was at Pounding Mill several days last week aiding in the care of

the dependents of the unfortunate men, and doing all in his power to expedite the work of recovering the bodies. C. M. Hunter, manager of the quarry, has had the burden of the work to carry. He has worried day and night since the explosion, and has spared no expense or labor to recover the bodies of the men and aid the dependents of the victims of the explosion.

#### Another Accident Narrowly Averted.

Last Friday as Alex Bowers, of Pounding Mill, was returning from Richlands, where he had taken W. A. Craig to the Richlands hospital for medical attention, he crossed the railroad track at the station at Pounding Mill directly in front of a moving engine of the N. & W. The car in which the men were riding was demolished, but they saved themselves by jumping.

#### Others Injured in the Wreck.

A. A. Asbury, powder man, right arm broken.

Taylor Willis, rib broken.

R. A. Craig, ankle broken.

#### Smiths Body Recovered Tuesday Morning.

Pounding Mill, Va., Aug. 18.

The terrible explosion of dynamite at the Boxley Quarry here, on last Friday, a short time before 8 a. m. and which snuffed out the lives of nine men, four white and five colored, and cast a gloom not only over the village and surrounding neighborhood but over the entire county, was some what lifted yesterday at about 11 o'clock when the body of the last white man, Mr. Joseph Smith, was recovered, and buried at the G. R. Thomas cemetery, near his home at 3 p. m. in the presence of a large number of relatives and friends.

The funeral of Mr. F. M. Myers was held Sunday morning at the union church, funeral by Rev. J. N. Harman, of the Christian church of which he was a member, burial at the Thomas cemetery, while the funeral of Mr. R. T. McGee and brother C. G. McGee were held on Monday at same church by Rev. J. E. Graham, their pastor of the Methodist church, assisted by Rev. Hughes of the Episcopal church, interment took place on Tuesday at Pulaski and Meadow View. The remains were accompanied by their father and relatives.

These four men, mentioned above were model husbands and fathers, and leave 23 children—Mrs. Myers having eight, Mrs. Smith five, Mrs. R. T. McGee five and Mrs. Grover McGee six. Of the three Bird brothers, colored, one's body, John, was sent to South Carolina, while the other two were buried here. There is one body, colored, to be recovered, being covered with many tons of rock.

#### FUNERAL OF FUDGE MYERS.

The funeral service of Mr. Fudge Myers, one of the victims of the dreadful explosion at the Quarry, at Pounding Mill last Friday morning, in which nine men lost their lives, was held last Sunday morning, in the Christian church, conducted by Rev. J. N. Harman, of this town. There was a large crowd of people present to express their appreciation of this good mans devotion, and their sympathy with his stricken wife and her eight children.

Deceased was a son of Mr. Jack Myers, widely known in this community. He was a brother of Mr. M. H. Myers, Hollins, Va., with whom the father makes his home. He, the father, was present at the funeral and burial.