

January 25, 1924; McClintock Mine, Johnston City, Ill.,; 33 Killed

(From Bureau of Mines report, by C. A. Herbert)

The 1st stub entry off 11th northeast pillar section had begun to squeeze, and the night before the explosion the fireboss had marked off the 1st stub as a precaution against a release of gas. The foreman examined the rooms the following morning and finding no gas directed two trackmen to finish removing the rails and switches.

At about 2:40 p.m. gas from the broken roof in the squeezed rooms came in contact with the open lights or the trackmen, causing a local explosion that was propagated, by coal dust over a limited area. There was little violence, and the spread was halted by clay dust where grading had been done on the 11th north entry. The explosion was not felt at the shaft bottom, but smoke and fumes were noted on the return-air side and help was called.

Electric cap lamps kept for emergencies were issued to rescue crews, who started to look for the men trapped by the spreading smoke and gases. Several groups had retreated to entry faces and erected temporary seals.

One group of 47 telephoned to the outside that gas was leaking through their brattice and were released after being shut in for 6 hours. Other smaller groups were not reached in time, and only five of the unconscious men were revived when found. Of the 370 men in the mine, 32 were found dead, 8 were injured (of whom 1 died afterward), 47 were rescued unharmed, and 330 escaped unaffected.

Damage to the mine was negligible; the loss of life was charged to use of open lights, neglected ventilation, lack of rock dust, and possible nonuse of self-rescuers. A gas mask used by J. E. Jones of the Old Ben Coal Corporation was a distinct aid to exploration ahead of fresh air.