

GAS EXPLOSION RIPS THROUGH BIG COAL VEIN

Blast occurs 300 feet deep and two miles from slope opening of St. Clair Coal company mine near Pottsville—Eleven other miners are injured by force of blast.

Pottsville, Pa., April 27. — Three known dead, eleven injured and eight men unaccounted for was the still unsettled disaster toll at noon today from a gas explosion that flashed through the St. Clair Coal company's mammoth vein near Pottsville.

The known dead, with other fatalities feared from the blast that occurred 300 feet deep and two miles from the slope opening, were:

Frank Montgomery, 30, St. Clair.

Paul Sikra, 42, St. Clair.

Wassil Holobiak, 45, St. Clair, father of nine children.

Two other victims were believed dying. Taken to Pottsville hospital with serious burns of the body, they were Andrew Potts, 42, a fire boss, and Nicholas Panco, 40, both of St. Clair.

Earlier a report from the coroner's office had been listed among the dead, but the hospital reported them "still alive."

Rescue workers and relatives of the men feared either dead or injured crowded about the slope entrance on a mountain top overlooking the village of St. Clair.

At the foot of the mine slope, 300 feet underground, Dr. Charles Delp, of St. Clair, administered first aid as the victims were carried from the scene of the fatal blast two miles back in number 9 tunnel.

The dramatic scene at the mine entrance was intensified by the throng of state motor police, nurses and doctors, and grimy miners from other pits who milled anxiously about the shaft.

Black damp, the treacherous mine gas that snuffs out life without warning, was delaying the efforts of rescue workers to check the full toll of the explosion.

In addition rescuers and mine company officials had to ride 500 feet down the slope in a mine car and then walk approximately one mile into the working to reach the scene of the blast, an official said. The trip took about half an hour each time.

Mine rescue officials, hospital attaches and nurses, WPA workmen and miner-volunteers crowded about the St. Clair slope opening for any possible aid in the emergency.

William Bush, Schuylkill county WPA superintendent, assigned a number of men to the scene and local officials were contacting labor and industry Secretary Ralph M. Bashore and Gov. George H. Earle for emergency supplies and aid.