

## **May 5, 1943; Nu Rex Mine, La Follette, Tenn.; 10 Killed**

*(From Bureau of Mines report, by R. W. Stahl and R. D. Bradford)*

The first evidence of an unusual occurrence was about 1:10 p.m., when dust and flame issued from the slope portal momentarily. A few minutes later two men who had been working at the underground dump at the slope bottom came out severely burned on face and hands. The mine superintendent cut off the power from the mine and notified the State mine inspector and the Bureau of Mines, and help was called for.

There were 33 men in the mine; 2 came out the slope, 3 were unaware of the disaster until found by a rescue party, 10 were killed, and 18 others were rescued from behind a barricade after being confined for 7 hours (24, pp.35-38).

The explosion was restricted to the No. 2 main headings, which had been driven approximately 2,000 feet from the surface, although forces extended several hundred feet in 1 and 2 right entries off 2 main. A mechanic and 3 other men in 7 room, 2 right entry, felt the shock, followed by dust and smoke in the air.

They tried to get to the main entry but ran into dense smoke and foul air and had to go back. The mechanic led them through 5 room to 1 right entry, where the air was clear. They met 14 men from 1 right, and the mechanic persuaded them to build a barricade and stay behind it. Three men explored 1 right toward the mains but were forced to return. The barricade was a board stopping sealed with pieces of vent tubing and brattice cloth.

Four men from 2 right and 2 men from 1 right who had tried to get out to the surface were overcome on 2 main near 1 right. The bodies of

four others were found near the face of 2 main close to the origin of the explosion. Rescue teams entered through the intake airway, extinguished a small fire, and restored ventilation by putting up brattice-cloth stoppings. Exploration was carried out by gas-mask crews. The bodies were removed by midnight. Damage consisted of the demolition of several wooden stoppings and two doors.

Gas in abandoned workings off 6 right, 1 main entry, was released when the angle room from the face of 2 main was cut through into an old room face. The map showing the location of the old workings was in error. Ignition was by an arc from the controller of the mining machine (fig. 130).

No tests for gas were made until near the end of the day shift. The mine was damp, and only a little coal dust was involved in the explosion until the dump at the slope bottom was reached. No rock dust had been used.

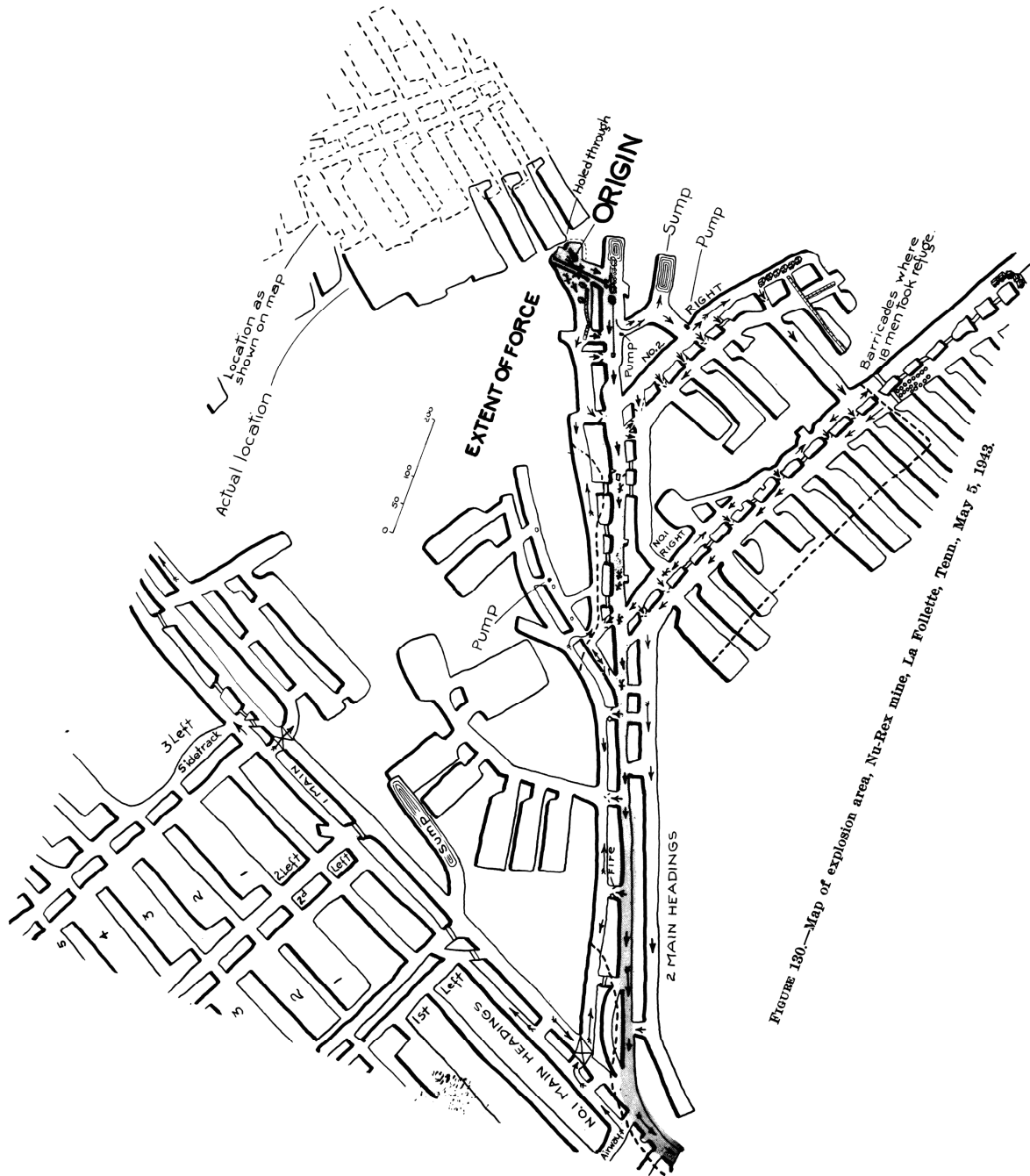


FIGURE 130.—Map of explosion area, Nu-Rex mine, La Follette, Tenn., May 5, 1943.