bleeder headings to barrier pillars along the main conveyor way. The next outby group of lateral headings would be developed as the inby panel of rooms retreated. With the exception of the 10-foot rib, where conditions were favorable, pillar extraction would not be done. The barrier pillars would be mined as the section retreated.

The new plan was approved in late 1941 and early in 1942 a haulage slope, on a three percent grade, was driven from the inby end of No. 30 Main Haulage to develop approximately 2600 acres of "B" Seam coal, for conveyor mining, in the southeastern section of No. 30 Mine.

Conveying equipment, together with low vein cutting machines, hand-held electric drills, blower fans, cables, pipe, pumps, etc., were purchased and installed as rapidly as development could be made.

In 1943, a similar slope was put down from Four Haulage to develop about 1700 acres of "B" coal for conveyor mining in the northeastern section of No. 31 Mine. Several sections were laid out in the upper bench of the "C" Seam in both mines to accommodate conveyor equipment.

Due to the critical labor shortage in 1943, hand loading was discontinued in No. 30 Mine and several sections in No. 31 Mine were put on single shift in order to man the new conveyor sections.

During 1943, two low vein loading machines were placed in service, in conjunction with conveyors, in No. 31 Mine. Three Myers-Whaley rock loading machines were reconditioned and put to work in high coal sections in Nos. 30 and 31 Mines. The old CE-7 Sullivan cutting machines were replaced with modern permissible shortwall machines. Four hundred and twenty 180 cu.ft. mine cars for exclusive use at conveyor loading points were placed in service at No. 30 Mine.

The mineral rights in the Rebecca Creech tract, comprising 337 acres, were acquired in 1943 to extend the mining in the northeastern section of No. 31 Mine. Extensive experimental mining was carried on in this tract, with Myers-Whaley loading machines, with reasonable success.

At 4:00 a.m., on May 4, 1944, approximately 100,000,000 gallons of water, which had been impounded in the No. 4 Roda Mine of the Stonega Coke and Coal Company, broke through into the First Right Section, No. 31 Mine, when a mountain bump occurred, crushing the barrier pillar between the two mines. Assistant Mine Foreman Luther Cook and a crew of eighteen men were at work in the section when the water broke through. Cook, thinking that an explosion had occurred when he heard a great rumbling noise, followed by a rush of air, went to the telephone to call for help. When he reached the telephone, waist-deep water, carrying timbers, lumber and other debris, was running down the 3% grade on the haulage toward the outby end of the

section. He notified the night foreman, then hurriedly gathered his men together and led them to a high point where they remained for six hours. When the water receded, he led them to safety through the return airways which were partially flooded, but the main body of water was confined to the haulage road by the concrete stoppings separating the intake from the return airways.

Available pumps and pipe, that could be secured in a reasonable length of time, were borrowed from neighboring companies. To prevent the total flooding of the major portion of the mines, twelve pumps and 25,600 feet of pipe were installed in the shortest possible time. The water was brought under control on May 23, but the flood left hundreds of tons of debris scattered along the 18,800 feet of badly wrecked haulage roads.

In addition to the First Right Section, One Curve and Two Heading Right Sections were closed because of the water hazard due to the fact that approximately 200,000,000 gallons of water still remained in the No. 4 Roda Mine. In closing these sections, production was curtailed about 1000 tons per day for several months.

By early 1945, the flooded areas had been rehabilitated, and to control future possibilities of flood damage, concrete bulkheads were built at the mouths of One Curve and Two Heading Right Sections to retain the runoff from the Stonega Mines. A 12-inch pipe line was laid from an intake dam at the inby end of Five Right Haulage to the outside. At the request of the United States Coal & Coke Company, under a permit issued by the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals, the Stonega Company removed 190 feet of barrier pillar between their No. 3 Roda Mine and the Lynch No. 31 Mine, at an elevation where not more than a 20-foot head of water could build up along the barrier pillar.

During the early part of 1946, the impounded water in the No. 4 Roda Mine of the Stonega Company was tapped, by drilling through the barrier pillar between No. 3 and No. 4 Roda Mines, at the expense of Stonega, and drained off through the opening in the barrier pillar and on the surface at Lynch through the 12-inch pipe line. The First Right Section was then reconditioned and placed on production.

By 1947, mining in thin seam coal, both in the "B" and "C" Seams, was conducted with a full complement of seventy-four conveyor units producing 50 percent of the total tonnage. With the exception of the barrier pillars, the remaining high coal reserves in the "C" Seam were being rapidly worked out. Faults and thick partings encountered in the room and rib work retarded production and increased cost. There was a steady decline in annual production from a high of 3,269,071 tons in 1940 to 1,866,438 tons in 1947.

To provide additional working places in No. 31 Mine, Four Right Haulage Slope was put down in 1948 to develop "B" Seam coal underlying mined out "C" Seam, this development to be utilized later for a drainage-way and water storage.

The results of experimental mining with mechanical equipment were favorable, but not outstanding, due to the lack of suitable equipment and mining plans. To correct the situation, management was faced with the decision as to whether to purchase additional low coal equipment or open a new mine. After a careful study by engineering and research, it was decided to open a new mine in the High Splint Coal, to be known as No. 32 Mine.

The High Splint Seam lies approximately 500 feet under the summit of Big Black Mountain and the adjoining ridges. The seam averages about 5-1/2 feet in thickness, although local rolls reduce this thickness considerably in small areas, and in the southwestern area the seam thins to about fifty inches. The High Splint coal is very hard, and usually clean, although occasional sandstone intrusions occur throughout the entire seam.

An appropriation was granted in late 1948 to open and develop the new mine. Work was started in November 1948, by the Burgess and Ross Electric Company, building the power transmission lines. Bids were in covering the grading and tunnel work, but the contract could not be awarded until a commitment, involving a property exchange between the United States Coal and Coke Company and the Virginia Coal and Iron Company, could be secured. Therefore, with the exception of engineering work and power line construction, the project was held up until the early part of 1949 when, for mutual advantage, the companies agreed to exchange High Splint acreage involving approximately 3800 acres, on a tonnage basis.

When instructions were issued to open the mine, the output wanted was 5000 tons per day, although the coal handling facilities were to be designed to handle 10,000 tons per day. After a careful study of the layout map, it was decided that the most logical points of attack were at the heads of Cherry Fork, Right Fork, and Gap Branch of Big Looney Creek, as these points could be reached with a minimum of access road construction. Since a plant site at Cherry Fork would be fairly accessible to Kentucky Highway No. 160, it was decided to construct at that point all of the plant buildings required to serve the mine for a period of about ten years.

To carry out the balance of the plan, a haulage road would have to be built from the plant site, through tunnels in the coal seam and along the outcrop around the mountain, to a 1300-ton dump bin to be constructed on a ridge above the Lynch tipple. As all of the coal could be drained to this bin with an average haul of about four miles, it was decided to place the crusher house below the bin at an elevation from which the coal could be

18 Miners, Trapped by High Waters, Rescued

Lynch, Ky., May 14 (AP)—There was a dramatic rescue at Lynch, Kentucky, today, when 18 miners were saved after being trapped in a pit for nearly five hours by high water. The rescue was made at the United States Coal and Coke company mine.

The trapped miners were led to safety by an official, Ben Mills. Mills entered the pit through round-about channels and led them out through an air course.

Water from an undetermined source had trapped the men about two miles from the mine entrance.

1944 US Steel Mine No 31 Mine Inundation Lynch KY

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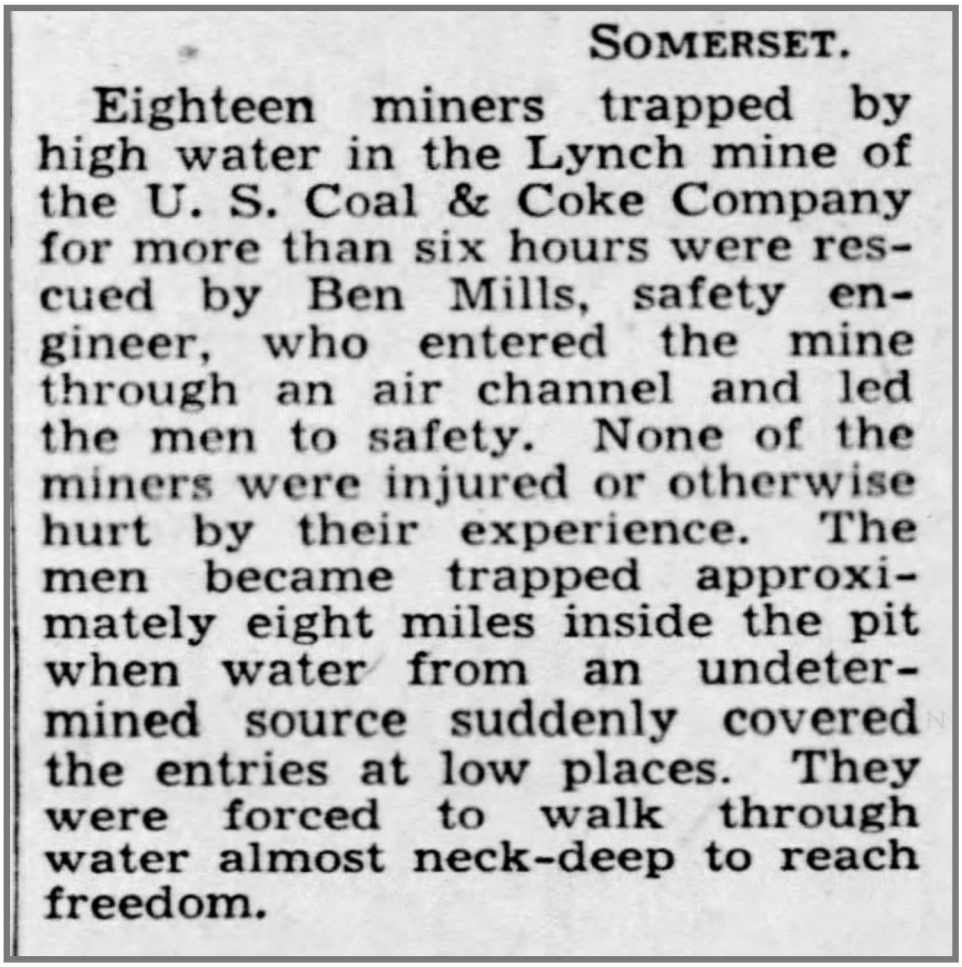
Fri, Jul 9, 2021

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky) · 21 May 1944, Sun · Page 36



SOMERSET.

Eighteen miners trapped by high water in the Lynch mine of the U. S. Coal & Coke Company for more than six hours were rescued by Ben Mills, safety engineer, who entered the mine through an air channel and led the men to safety. None of the miners were injured or otherwise hurt by their experience. The men became trapped approximately eight miles inside the pit when water from an undetermined source suddenly covered the entries at low places. They were forced to walk through water almost neck-deep to reach freedom.

1944 US Steel Mine No 31 Mine Inundation Lynch KY

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14 MINERS TRAPPED

LYNCH, Ky., May 14.—(U.P.)—Fourteen miners, trapped by high water in a U. S Steel corporation coal mine for more than six hours, were rescued at noon today. Company officials here said no one was injured. The plight of the miners, workers on the night shift was discovered when they failed to report at the head of the pit at 5 a. m. Pipes with which to pump the water from the mine were brought by truck from Pike, Ky., 80 miles distant, and rescue work was begun immediately. Lynch is in the Harlan county coal mining region.

1944 US Steel Mine No 31 Mine Inundation Lynch KY

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