

Death Toll Up to Five After Blast

**Increases as Men
Go In to Look
For Cause.**

By James Cooney.

(Tribune Staff Writer.)

LOVILIA, IA.—Five men were dead Tuesday after an explosion at the O'Brien Coal Co. mine, 4 miles west of Lovilia.

The five victims were:

Harold Barnes, 36, mine foreman, and **Ben Nichols**, 47, a miner, both of Lovilia, who suffocated as a result of an explosion in the mine about 4 p. m. Monday.

Gerald Lane, 59, of Bussey; **James Love**, 54, of Lovilia, and **Thomas Little**, 48, of Pershing, who were overcome about five hours later while trying to determine the cause of the blast that killed Barnes and Nichols.

The bodies of Barnes and Nichols were removed from the slope mine about 6 p. m. Monday.

The bodies of Lane, Love and Little, located by a nine-man rescue party led by W. B. Dalrymple of Ames, a federal mine inspector, were brought out of the mine about 1:15 p. m. Tuesday.

Investigate

Little, Lane and Love—along with two other miners, Thomas Wignall of Bussey and A. B. Overturf of Lovilia—entered the main mine shaft about 9 p. m., apparently to investigate the area about half a mile inside the mine, where the bodies of Barnes and Nichols were found.

About 30 minutes later, Wignall and Overturf crawled back out the main shaft, partly overcome by gas fumes.

They reported that the other three men had been overcome by gases and still were in the mine.

They said they were able to move Love's body part way out before they were forced to give up the rescue attempt.

Use Shaft

Still later Monday night, a six-member rescue party led by Roy Capps, a federal mine inspector from Duluth, Minn., then went

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down into the mine by way of the air shaft.

That group located Love's body, but was unable to find the bodies of Little and Lane and called off its search about 2:30 a. m. Tuesday.

At that time, Sheriff Roy Coolley of Albia ordered the shaft closed and placed guards at the entrances to the air shaft and main shaft.

As the grim rescue operations were resumed at 9:30 a. m. Tuesday, relatives of the missing men waited among about 350 persons gathered at the mine for word about the miners.

Little's wife Charlotte huddled with friends in a chilly shack near the main entrance to the mine.

She told how her husband and the other men went to the mine Monday night to try to help rescue Barnes and Nichols.

All 5 Married

Her husband and Lane, she explained, were co-owners of the

Lovilia Coal Co., operator of two other mines near by.

Mrs. Little is the mother of two grown children, Mrs. Boyd Rankin, of near Pershing, and Thomas, jr., 20, of Pershing. They were with her at the O'Brien mine earlier Tuesday morning.

All five of the victims were married and all except Barnes were fathers.

Ironically, Love—a miner in the O'Brien mine—had been a member of the first rescue crew that found the bodies of Barnes and Nichols and brought them out Monday evening.

'Far End'

Rescuers said the bodies of Lane and Little were found in "the far end of the mine," about a mile from the main entrance.

They said no damage to the mine from the explosion was apparent.

Officials had established that Barnes and Nichols died of suffocation caused by dust resulting from the explosion.

It was explained that Little, Love and Lane were victims of "white damp," which T. C. Chapman of Albia, a state

mine inspector, described as being "similar to what comes out of a car's exhaust pipe."

He said it results from "partial oxidation of the air" in a mine following an explosion.

He said it differs from "black damp," which "results from complete oxidation of the air" in the mine.

Explosives

Barnes and Nichols were the last two men in the mine when work was completed at 4 p. m. Monday. (The mine, which is owned by Don O'Brien of Des Moines, normally employs about 14 miners. O'Brien lives in Des Moines at 309 Clark st.)

They remained below to prepare explosive charges used to shake coal loose for the next day's mining operation.

When they failed to come out of the mine shortly after 4 p. m., fellow miners tried to reach them but were unsuccessful.

They then notified the Lovilia fire department and rescue equipment was rushed to the mine shaft.

'No Sound'

Albia Fire Chief Pling Samuel said the fatal explosion apparently occurred when dust or gas exploded after the powder charge was set off.

One miner, X. Lennie, with whom Nichols usually rode home from work, said the men on the surface did not hear any explosion.

Inquest

Monroe County Coroner Frank N. Bay said a three-man jury would begin an inquest into the double disaster later Tuesday.

Officials said state mine inspectors have started an investigation. They added that federal mine inspectors also are probing the disaster.

They said Harry Weaver, chief of the coal mine division of the federal bureau of mines, was fly-

ing from Washington, D. C., to be on hand for the investigation.

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Suit

In Des Moines last Friday, Federal Judge William F. Riley, on motion of Clويد I. Level, assistant United States district attorney, dissolved an injunction sought by the O'Brien Coal Co. and several other owner-operators to enjoin federal inspectors from enforcing a safety regulation forbidding use of black powder explosives in mines.

The inspectors were enjoined in Monroe county district court last January, but they brought the case into federal court in Des Moines, asking dismissal of the order.

Judge Riley, in dissolving the injunction, ruled the mine owners first must take their case to the federal mine regulatory commission before going into court.

Mine owners had contended that black powder could be used safely in Iowa mines because they were "non-gaseous."

The Iowa legislature recently passed a resolution calling upon congress to amend the law so Iowa could continue use of black powder in mines.