

# Operator, Two Boys Die In Utah Coal Mine Blast

## Inflammable Dust Explodes 250 Feet Beneath Surface



Map shows location of mine in which three were killed.

**Special to The Tribune**

ORANGEVILLE, Emery County—A mine operator and two small boys were killed Wednesday about 4 p.m. in a coal mine explosion 12 miles northwest of Orangeville off Utah Highway 29.

The victims were Ted Robertson, 34, operator of the mine; his nephew, Earl Cox, 12, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ward Cox, and Ben Ihler, 12, son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ihler, all of Orangeville.

**Father of Six Children**

Six children, all under 10 years of age, were left fatherless with the death of Mr. Robertson.

Emery County Sheriff Don Kofford said the three were killed instantly when a small coal mine, owned and worked solely by Mr. Robertson, was wracked with an explosion.

It was reported Mr. Robertson was blasting rock with dynamite to make an entrance inside the mine, about 250 feet underground. Fine coal dust, highly inflammable, apparently ignited and exploded, the sheriff said.

The victims were the only ones in the mine at the time of the blast.

In an adjoining mine was Earl Robertson, father of the victim Ted Robertson was attempting to blast through rock to make an opening between the two mines.

**Set Off Charge**

He set off one charge, and a few minutes later, the mine exploded, apparently as he was setting off a second blast.

The boys had gone to the mine with Mr. Robertson and his father. They told the adults they were going up the canyon to shoot rabbits while the men worked.

They apparently returned and entered the mine without telling the men. The elder Mr. Robertson said he did not know the boys had come back, and he doubted whether his son knew they were in the mine.

State mine inspectors said they do not know exactly what caused the explosion. Len Arnett and James Phillips, mine inspectors, will go to the scene Thursday to make a further investigation.

**Not Mutilated**

The elder Mr. Robertson said he heard the explosion from the adjoining mine. He rushed outside and when the fumes cleared, he entered the shattered mine where he found the bodies.

All three bodies were lying together. They were not mutilated and it is believed they died from the concussion.

A passing oil drilling outfit with two-way radio equipment stopped to investigate. When the elder Mr. Robertson told workmen there had been an explosion, they radioed for help.

The bodies were taken to Witbeck Funeral Home in Castle Dale.

## Double Slaying in Layton Termed Murder, Suicide

**Special to The Tribune**

LAYTON—A three-man coroner's jury Wednesday ruled the Christmas Eve shooting of a Layton couple was a murder and suicide.

The jury returned a verdict that Donald Earl Bennett, 37, shot and killed his 34-year-old wife, Isabel, then took his own life at the couple's residence at 62 Aircraft Ave.

The jury deliberated less than 15 minutes before returning the verdict at an inquest conducted at Layton City Hall by Justice of the Peace John M. Park. Jurors were Richard S. Stevenson Jr., Ben Whitesides and John B. Cook, all of Layton.

Three law officers and the man who found the victims testified at the hearing. All were questioned by Davis County Attorney Milton J. Hess.

Mrs. Bennett, the former Isabel Adams of Layton, was shot eight times in the side, chest and head with a German automatic Luger. Mr. Bennett died of a bullet wound in the head.

**Found Bodies**

Donald V. Cornia, Layton, testified he found the bodies lying in a pool of blood in the bathroom and the hallway of the Bennett residence at about 11:40 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

He told the jury he, his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Bone, also of Layton, had stopped for a holiday visit with the Bennetts.

"I could see him (Mr. Bennett) lying in the hallway when I went to the front door," he related, "and I thought he was asleep. I went around back with Mrs. Bone and entered the house."

**'In Good Spirits'**

Sheriff LeRoi Day testified his investigation of the shootings turned up no evidence that

## Yule Bills Many? Pete Hoards \$200

If you want some nice cold cash to pay those Christmas bills, try your skill at the \$200 BLACKOUT puzzle on page 20 of Thursday's issue of The Salt Lake Tribune.

BLACKOUT is the fascinating, free, puzzle game sponsored exclusively by The Tribune for entertainment of its readers. It offers \$50 in weekly prizes from BLACKOUT Pete's treasure chest, and the \$50 has been unclaimed for the past four weeks.

As a result, puzzle No. 29, on page 20 of Thursday's Tribune has a fine \$200 reward for the person who turns in the correct solution.

## Police Detain One in Death

A 21-year-old Salt Laker was being held by police Wednesday in connection with the death of John Martin Goddard, 623-9th