

Explosion of Gas at Corbin Colliery of the Excelsior Coal Company

January 15, Frank Pasker, Dominick Bublovitski and Joseph Ginglefski, miners, were working together robbing a gangway at the Corbin Colliery. They had been cautioned that morning by the fire boss, that there was gas in the gangway inside of where they were robbing, and they were given safety lamps to work with. A danger signal was also erected between them and the gas, but for some reason, one of the men went beyond the danger signal, and it is supposed he struck a match and ignited the body of gas, with the result that the three men were burned to death.

Fire at Locust Gap Colliery of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company

On the morning of May 5th, I was summoned to Locust Gap colliery the scene of a mine fire, and upon my arrival at the colliery, about 6.20 A. M., I found both slopes and fan-way on fire, the fan having been burned down. Five men were entombed inside. In company with Mr. W. J. Richards, manager, I proceeded to the west end slope, which connects with the inside workings of the Locust Gap colliery. When we arrived near the slope we met Messrs. Tasker, Brennan, Superintendent, and McLaughlin, foreman, who had just ascended the slope. We accompanied them back to the office, and examined the colliery map.

I then started again in company with Mr. McLaughlin to the west end slope and descended 1,700 feet, then back east to the bottom of Locust Gap slope on the second lift. I found a fire there of immense magnitude. The third level of Locust Gap is not connected with the main or hoisting slope, the coal being hoisted from this lift on a tender slope to the 2d lift and transferred to the main or hoisting slope.

After finding it impossible to cross east of the slope, we made an effort to go down to the 3d lift through the upcast airway west of the slope, but when we reached the top of the gangway, we found that the water had raised to that point. Our intention was to go along the gangway east until we reached the other upcast airway on the east side of the slope and go up this airway to 2d lift to where we supposed the men were. When we found it impossible to reach the men through this channel, brattices were put up at once to prevent the fire from getting any air. I then went up to the first level and to the bottom of the slope and found conditions the same as below as far as the fire was concerned. They immediately made preparations to brattice here also. The next move was to slush the slopes and fan way. Also holes were sunk from the surface and

silted to prevent the fire from spreading east and west. The work was done with great rapidity.

A futile effort was also made to get down to the second level through an old traveling way on the east side. They got down about 100 feet below the first lift, when they found that the passage was blocked with immense pieces of top rock. These were old workings that had been robbed years ago, and to blast these rocks, meant the losing of more lives.

The five men that were entombed lived in Locust Gap. Their names were Michael Boylan, John J. Boylan, Michael Shannon, John Debo and William Melechefski, the two first named being brothers.

On May 8, I again went to Locust Gap in company with the Chief of the Department of Mines, where we met Messrs. Fahey and Dougherty, president and organizer of the Ninth district of the United Mine Workers. We proceeded to a room in the McClure Hotel and I pointed out on the colliery map to those present what had been done to rescue the imprisoned men. Every one present approved of the methods adopted.

On the 13th of May I again visited the mine, and in company with Charles Gallagher, inside foreman at Pott's Colliery, went down the old traveling way on the east side. As we got near the first lift I noticed that the air had been reversed, and fearing that smoke or damp might issue through the hole we decided to return. There were men timbering this manway at the time, and I suggested to the officials that they stop and take the men away, which was done.

The fire originated in the pumpway, while a party of men were timbering it. They were given lanterns to work with, so I am told, but instead of using them they used their naked lights, which resulted in setting fire to the timbers.

The company, regardless of the expense, did all in their power to recover the bodies of the men, before slushing the mines.

CONDITION OF COLLIERIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

PHILADELPHIA AND READING COAL AND IRON COMPANY

Locust Spring, West Colliery.—A new lift has been sunk from the third to the fourth lift, 306 feet on the Mammoth seam, which is about fifteen to twenty feet thick. Gangways have been turned off in this lift both east and west. The east gangway is to be connected with the Locust Spring shaft east, so that the water can be run from this colliery to the shaft and drained at that point.

A tunnel is also being driven to the seven foot, north from the bottom member of the Mammoth, which will cut the vein at about two hundred feet. The sanitary condition of the colliery is good.