

WITNESSES HOLD LAMP SET FIRE

Inquest in Regard to Speculator Mine Disaster Substantiates Theory That Sullau's Lamp Touching Cable Caused Fire.

That the fire in the Speculator mine which had such disastrous results for 164 men was caused by the contact of a lamp carried by Ernest Sullau with a cable in the shaft on the 2,400 level, was a point upon which witnesses at the inquest yesterday before Coroner Aeneas Lane agreed.

According to evidence, before the fire broke out in the Speculator mine on the night of June 8 last, the air current in the Granite Mountain shaft was downcast. When the fire started the flames remained almost stationary. Then the fire changed to upcast.

The station immediately became full of smoke, and the men went toward the Speculator shaft, smoke following them. This showed that the smoke was not upcast above the 2,400 level.

Testimony showed that the men had broken through a bulkhead to get into the High Ore shaft. This bulkhead was in the High Ore property and not in the Speculator mine and had been placed there to keep back the gas from the Modoc mine so that the miners in the Speculator could be protected.

Jack Bronson, a shift boss, described the race with death by himself, Sullau and some 50 other men. He and others climbed to the 2,000 level and were on the way to the Badger mine when the drifts became filled with gas. Sullau was unable to go farther and fell. Bronson and Fred McFadden picked him up and tried to help him along with them.

In spite of this aid, Sullau fell again. McFadden then told Bronson to place Sullau on his back and he would try to carry him. McFadden went in this fashion a little ways, but the load was too heavy for him, and he fell. Bronson and others then lent assistance, but it was too much for all of them together, so strong had the gas become. In the confusion, all saw that the only road to safety was to do their best to save their own lives.

By the side of a drift they came to a winze. All piled in here, where they were able to escape the deadly smoke. Outside the winze it continued to be thick.

For three hours they remained there. They finally heard footsteps in the drift, and soon a number of helmet men appeared. The men in the winze told them of the predicament that Sullau was in. They searched for Sullau's body and found it. Sullau was dead.

The jury of seven for the inquest are Thomas Duggan, Michael Dwyer, George Goyatt, Nick Stiren, Cornelius

Sullivan, Andrew Donnelly and John Crowley.

John ("Baldy") Collins, one of the three eye witnesses of the start of the fire, was the first on the stand yesterday. He and three others were trying to extricate a tar-soaked cable from a point a few feet below the 2,400 level when the contact of Sullau's lamp with it caused the fire.

He said that when they first were lowered, Sullau went to the west side of the shaft and he to the east. In the search for the end of the cable, Sullau's lamp lighted the cable. He said that Sullau exclaimed, "John, I got my lamp too close." Seeing that they could not handle the blaze, they fled. They were hoisted to the surface and gave the alarm.

Peter Sheridan and Mike Conroy, station tenders, were lowered to the 2,200 level to see if the bells would work. They were never seen alive again. When their bodies were raised, they were charred.

W. W. Talbot, chief electrician for the Anaconda Copper Mining company, was the next witness. He described the sort of cable that was used. He said it was in fine condition. It had been used before in the Rainbow mine.

Iver Rhude, boss ropeman at the Speculator mine, who had charge of the lowering of the cable, took the stand. He described the system by which the cable was lowered. He said that two men went down in the "chippie" to see that the cable did not get caught in the timbers as it was being lowered.

At 4:00 o'clock on the afternoon of June 8, men came up from below and reported that it appeared as though the power cable had slipped from the steel. At this time the cable had been lowered 50 feet below the 2,400 level. Investigation showed that the covering of the cable had been completely stripped off.

Sam Patterson, one of the three present when the fire started, gave testimony of a character similar to that given by Collins. He said that they went to the 2,400 level and tried to put the fire out with a stream of water.

Clay Hale, head electrician at the mine, described the wires. Frank A. Fiscus, sampler on the 2,400 level, spoke in a similar fashion as Patterson.

William H. Rogers, a miner, who was on the 2,400 level just before the accident occurred, said that the lead was mostly off the end of the cable which had been piled up at the station on this level.

John Constantine, a shaftman on the same level, said that he saw the cable twisted and all battered up.

Testimony of all the witnesses was to the effect that the inside of the cable did not slip from the outside, but that the whole cable fell together. It showed that the men took great care in handling the highly inflammable bits of the cable as was evident from the fashion in which it was piled up on the platform.

EXPLAINS CAUTION.

A worthy Yorkshire canon, who had been greatly displeased by an act of disobedience perpetrated by one of his gardeners, sought an interview with the offender in order to reprimand him.

Knowing that if he were able to avoid the interview until his master's wrath had abated he would come off with only a few mild words of censure, the man kept out of his way.

A few days afterward, however, when the storm was quite over, master and man came face to face in one of the hothouses, and the canon asked:

"Why have you avoided me in so pointed a manner of late, Johnson?"

To which the gardener very wittily replied:

"Would you, if you could help it, stand in front of a cannon to be blown-up?"