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TWENTY MEN DIE IN EXPLOSION

TRAGEDY AT MAYER MINE NO. 9 YESTERDAY IS COUNTY'S WORST MINE DISASTER

NINE ARE RESCUED

TEN BROUGHT TO SURFACE ALIVE BUT ONE EXPIRED WITHIN A FEW MINUTES

FATHER AND TWO SONS KILLED

Twenty-Seven Men Caught in Side Where Explosion Occurred—Believe Powder Ignited and That Black Damp Did the Rest

From Thursday's Daily.

Twenty men were killed and nine others had a narrow escape from death in the explosion which occurred in Mayer coal mine No. 9, a short distance north of Stone City, shortly after noon yesterday.

All of those killed were either burned or suffocated or both, and some of those rescued were badly burned but it was said late last night that they would probably recover.

Although the cause of the disaster is unknown, some of the survivors declared they smelled burnt powder immediately after the report of the explosion, and it is possible that it was due to a combination of both powder and black damp. It is denied there was gas in the mine.

With one exception, the loss of life sustained yesterday was the largest in the history of the Kansas coal district, and it was the worst disaster of the kind that has ever occurred in Cherokee County. More than forty men were killed in an explosion, near Frontenac, Crawford County, in 1888.

Yesterday's disaster was not without its pathetic incidents. One woman, Mrs. W. H. Windsor, saw the bodies of her husband and two sons removed from the mine, and in two other instances father and son were killed. Practically all of those killed were married men and it was estimated last night that at least forty children had been rendered fatherless by the catastrophe. Many of the wives and children and other relatives and friends of the dead men stood about the mine during the five solid hours a mine rescue team was engaged in bringing the bodies to the surface, hoping against hope that fate would not be against them. One elderly woman collapsed when the body of her dead son was brought to the top of the shaft, and there were many heart rendering scenes at an undertaking establishment at Mineral last night, where more than a dozen blackened, burned bodies lay in a row, their heads hidden from view.

Explosion on North Side

The mine is operated by Ryan Brothers and Reedy, who employ about one hundred men, but only sixty of them were under ground yesterday, and only twenty-seven of those were working on the north side of the mine where the explosion occurred.

The first news of the explosion came when several nearby towns were asked to send all physicians possible to Mine No. 9, that an explosion had occurred there. Within a short time a corps of physicians were at hand as were also ambulances from Mineral, Scammon, and Columbus.

Coroner J. S. McAuley, of Columbus, and Grover Todd, of this city, hurried to the scene of the disaster with the McAuley ambulance and removed eighteen of the dead bodies to a morgue at West Mineral. Mr. McAuley says he received the call about 12:15 o'clock, which was only a few minutes after the explosion occurred, and he took charge of the situation immediately upon arriving there. After the twenty bodies had been removed to Mineral, Mr. McAuley and Mr. Todd and two local undertakers embalmed them, completing the work this morning at 7 o'clock.

Happened at 12:10 O'Clock.

According to one of the survivors, who says he was standing at the foot of the shaft, at the time, the explosion occurred about 12:10 o'clock. His attention was first attracted by a noise that resembled that of a door being slammed shut, then came a rumble. Instantly he was aware of what had happened and he quickly notified the men who were working on the south side of the mine. To prevent confusion and disorder he told the men that the fan had stopped and that they had better come out.

The report of the explosion was considerably louder to those outside of the mine, and the report was followed by black smoke belching forth from the shaft.

Ed Ryan, one of the proprietors of the mine, and Tim Reedy, pit boss, hurried into the mine. Both were overcome and had to be carried out.

Three Taken Out Quickly

Within a few minutes, miners who had been working on the south side, had effected a rescue of three men whom they discovered near the foot of the shaft. One of these, Paul Lefevre, died, within a few minutes after reaching the top.

Several dead bodies were then taken out of the mine, but no more rescues were effected until after the arrival of a rescue team from the state mine inspector's office at Pittsburg, headed by John Pellegrino, state mine inspector. Almost at the same time, the first aid team of the United States Bureau of Mines, under J. J. Forbes, arrived. This team had just completed a practice at the Fleming mine when word of the disaster at No. 9 was received.

The rescue teams brought seven more men to the surface alive, two of them being Ed Ryan and Tim Reedy, who had entered the shaft. Then the dead bodies were collected at the foot of the shaft and were taken out as fast as the ambulances could haul them away.

At 7 o'clock last night, fifteen dead bodies had been removed, and five others lay at the foot of the shaft and they were brought to the surface within the next hour. With seven others, besides Ed Ryan and Reedy, brought out alive, all of the twenty-seven men employed on the north side of the mine had been accounted for.

The Dead

The men who lost their lives were:

W. H. Windsor, and his two sons, Frank and Laddy Windsor, all of Stone City.

A. H. Roycroft, of West Mineral.
Carlo Taverno, of Stone City.
William Hays, and his son, Lyrl Hays, both of Stone City.
Rudolph Frels, of Stone City.
Paul Knontaz, of Stone City.
Tony Kroshel, of East Mineral.
Mike Drisk, of Stone City.
J. W. Paize, of Stone City.
John Lautrette, of Stone City.
Matt Rott, and his son, Charles Rott, both of Stone City.
Dominae Calso, of West Mineral.
John Frye, of Stone City.
Frank Jerino, of Stone City.
George Bruyz, of Stone City.
Paul Lefevre, of West Mineral.

The Rescued

Tony Steffler, Frank Bouret, Geo. Tourary, Mon Racy, Lloyd Brezavoir, and his son, Joe Brezavoir, Lewis Manley, Ed Ryan and Tim Reedy.

The first seven are miners, which with the twenty dead, make up the total of twenty-seven who were working on the side where the explosion occurred. Ryan and Reedy entered the mine after the explosion and were overcome. A total of ten men were taken out alive, but Paul Lefevre expired soon after being taken to the top, and his name appears with the dead.

It is said that the nine men will recover, although all were unconscious when found and some of them were badly burned.

The bodies of the dead men show that they were first burned and then suffocated before all reached them. Some were more burned than others but all showed the effects of the flames from the water line up and about the arms, and their hair was singed. It was a gruesome task to gather up the dead bodies and remove them to the undertaking establishment, and the undertakers report considerable difficulty in caring for the bodies as in many instances the skin and flesh were so badly cooked that they moved upon being touched.

Found With Faces Down

It is said that eight of the dead men were working in the main entry north, nine in the back north entry and three in the west entry, 150 feet under the ground. According to the positions of the dead bodies, the men, immediately after the explosion, started to make their way toward the shaft, but were overcome before reaching it. They were found with their faces downward just where they fell. Both Ed Ryan and Tim Reedy must have made a desperate effort to rescue some of their men as they were both found far into an entryway where they had fallen after being overcome.

It is believed that in several instances the rescue party was only a few minutes late. When the body of one of the miners, that of a boy said to have been not more than 17 or 18 years old, was brought to the top, a doctor declared that death had taken place not to exceed five minutes before. In other cases it was shown that the men had been dead only a short time.

John Pellegrino, state mine inspector, and J. J. Forbes of the United States Bureau of Mines, and their assistants, worked incessantly and at the risk of their own lives to save as many of the men as possible. Equipped with oxygen helmets, they visited every part of the mine in the search of bodies, and the ventilation in many places was extremely bad. The rescue teams remained in the mine for five solid hours. The men composing the rescue team from the state mine inspector's office were John Pellegrino, state mine inspector, James Sherwood, George Price, Blaine Dunham and Tom Surman.

But there were a score of volunteers who played a noble part in the rescue work, and a number of doctors performed valiantly in attempting to revive the stricken men. One of the doctors, who deserves special praise for his efforts, was Dr. E. C. Lightfoot, of Mineral. It was his first trip into a mine but he braved asphyxiation many times while trying to save some of the men, and he remained at the foot of the shaft until the last one had been accounted for. While the rescue work was going on, others had equally as hard a task comforting the wives, mothers and children of the men whose lives had been snuffed out.

His Dream Saved Him

One young man, who had been employed at No. 9 for sometime, had a dream a few nights ago that an explosion had occurred in the mine, and the next day he told his sweetheart that he was not going back to work. He kept his word and is alive today. Two or three other men were found last night who are employed at the mine but who happened to be taking a vacation yesterday. One of the dead men, it is said, had intended to turn in his time and quit his job last night.

Nearly all of the men killed were married and some of them had large families. It is said that W. H. Windsor and his two sons, Frank and Laddy, were working close together when the explosion came. Members of the Windsor family were at the mine when the three dead bodies were brought to the surface. W. H. Windsor is survived by a widow and five other children, and Laddy Windsor is survived by a widow and two children. Frank Windsor was unmarried. In this case, grandfather, father, and son were taken from a family. Rudolph Frels is survived by a wife and eight children. Paul Knonatz is survived by a widow and five children. William Hays leaves a widow and four children besides the son that was killed. Matt Rott leaves a widow and three children besides the son that was killed. Some of the other victims leave from two to five children.

Say Powder Exploded.

Although it was hinted at the mine last night that it was powder that exploded, it was said by the officials, including Alexander Howatt, head of the miners' federation, that the cause of the disaster was unknown, but today it was reported that it had been definitely established that A. H. Roycroft and his "buddy" were working with some powder that was to be used for blasting purposes and that the powder exploded. This probably means that a sheet of flame flashed through the entry ways, and black damp did the rest to suffocate the men. The powder theory was first advanced when it was said that the scent of burned powder was evident, and again when it was said that only two or three of the miners were badly burned.

Hold Hearing Monday.

Coroner J. S. McAuley, who is busy today taking caskets to Mineral for the victims of the mine accident, has announced that an inquest to inquire into the causes of the disaster, will be held at Mineral, next Monday, starting at 10 o'clock in the morning. Mr. McAuley has secured the names of about twenty men who will be examined at that time and the list may be increased. Some of the twenty who are already on the witness list are those who were rescued from the mine, others were working on the other side at the time, and the rest were at the surface when a rumble followed by the appearance of black smoke told of the explosion. Every effort possible will be made to learn what caused the disaster and to fix the blame, Coroner McAuley says.

It was announced last night that all of the mines in this district would remain idle until after all of the twenty men have been buried and no coal is being mined in Southeastern Kansas today.

The scene of the disaster is known as the Mayer mine No. 9, and is located about 2 1-2 miles northeast of East Mineral and about one-half of a mile north of Stone City. It was sunk about six years ago by William Barrett and it is said that R. A. Long, of Kansas City, was interested in it at that time. Later the mine was sold to John Mayer, who about two years ago leased it to Joe and Ed Ryan and Tim Reedy, who were operating it under the name of Ryan and Reedy.

The statement made last night that the mine had been considered one of the safest in the district has been disputed. It is reported that soon after the mine was opened an explosion occurred which resulted in the loss of nine lives and that several miners have been killed there by falling rock. The statement that nine men lost their lives there in a former explosion has also been disputed, not that such an explosion did not occur, but that only six deaths resulted, and that three other men who were badly injured finally recovered. Because of the great loss of life yesterday and the reported former tragedies there, it was even predicted last night that Mine No. 9 would never be reopened.

Hundreds of people visited the mine yesterday afternoon and there was still a crowd, mostly men, there last night at 8 o'clock but this was after the last dead body had been taken away and there was nothing to do but to discuss the affair. For the first hour or so after the explosion the crowd which gathered was composed largely of the men women and children of Stone City, many of them relatives of the miners underground, but later people began arriving from other cities in motor cars, and many reached East Mineral on the interurban cars and walked the rest of the way to the mine. Five or six newspaper reporters were at the mine last night at 7 o'clock.

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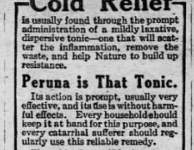

SAY IT WAS POWDER

INVESTIGATION AT MINE FAILS TO PROVE GAS THEORY

NO OFFICIAL REPORT MADE

But the General Opinion is That Explosion of Powder Caused the Disaster—Inquest Monday.

From Saturday's Daily.

Although no official announcement was made following the investigation yesterday, it is now generally believed that the disaster at Mayer Mine No. 9, last Wednesday afternoon, which snuffed out the lives of twenty miners and seriously injured several more persons, was due solely to an explosion of powder and that the victims suffocated from black damp which set in immediately.

It is possible that other circumstances may creep out at the coroner's inquest which will be held at Mineral, next Monday, but it was the accepted theory around Mineral last night that the twenty men came to their death through the carelessness of some one or two or perhaps more of their number in the handling of powder, and the only criticism that is being directed toward Ryan and Reedy, the mine operators, lay in the fact that they failed to carry insurance which would indemnify the losers by the catastrophe.

It was said last night that John Pellegrino, state mine inspector, might make a report at the coroner's inquest Monday, but it is possible that neither he nor his two deputies, John Sherwood, of Crawford County, and Fred Green, of Cherokee County, will make any report or the affair except the one that will go to the governor and the state labor commissioner, but it is said that the official report will be that the explosion was one of powder only and that no evidence of there having been gas in the mine was found.

The investigation yesterday was for the purpose of determining, if possible, the cause of the accident. The investigation was made by Mr. Pellegrino and his deputies in company with a number of other persons, including mine operators from both Crawfor dand Cherokee Counties, and representatives of the United Mine Workers of America. Among those in the party were: Mr. Pellegrino, state mine inspector, and his two deputies, John Sherwood and Fred Green; J. J. Forbes, of the United States Bureau of Mines; Geo. Richardson, arbitrator for the mine operators; John Howatt, president of District No. 14, United Mine Workers of America; George Knoll, reporter for the state mine inspector; E. L. Burton, of Parsons, and Al. F. Williams, of Columbus, attorneys; Joe Fletcher, John Robinson and John Mayer, operators; Ed and Joe Ryan, two of the men who were operating the mine in which the explosion occurred; and a number of the executive committee of the United Mine Workers of America and also of the No. 9 pit committee.

Five Hours in Mine.

The party spent five hours in the mine, and visited every entry and room of the north side of the mine where the explosion occurred. At a point nearly a mile northeast of the foot of the shaft, the party found three cans of powder and a flat empty can which showed that it had been bursted from the inside. At the same place a watch was found, the hands of the time piece pointing to 12:30 o'clock. The rim was bent and it is thought that the watch was torn from its chain when the explosion occurred.

Further on and near a turn the party found several more cans of powder, a car of coal which had been partly upset by the force of the explosion, another watch, and remnants of a burned shirt. All that was left of the garment was the neck piece and the ends of the sleeves. The explosion must have occurred before some of the miners had eaten their dinner as several dinner palls, their contents undisturbed, were found by the party. Timbers at this place were speckled with powder burns.

Advance the Powder Theory

The night of the disaster it was rumored that A. H. Roycroft, one of the victims, and his "buddy" were "making powder" and that the powder had exploded, and during the investigation yesterday this theory became more plausible than ever. Only four or five of the twenty victims were burned to any extent, and of these, Roycroft and his "buddy", Dominac Calso, were burned the more serious. It is supposed that Roycroft and Calso were "making powder" either at the turn where the car of coal stood, or the place where the three cans of powder were found, and that a can of powder was exploded, causing the fatal damp to set in instantly. If the two men were standing near the car of coal, it is said that the powder can could have easily been carried 150 feet to the place where the party found it yesterday. If the can had been exploded at the place where it was found it is believed that the other three cans would also have exploded.

It was first reported that the explosion must have been due to a combination of both powder and gas, but the investigation yesterday failed to uphold the gas theory. When a test of the mine was made the morning before the explosion, no signs of gas were reported, but it was thought possible that some miner might have drilled into a pocket of gas, causing the explosion. An examination in each room yesterday, however, failed to show where such a thing could have been possible. Had there been gas in the mine it is also pointed out that all of the victims would have been badly burned. The men burned the worst, it is believed, were near the place where the explosion occurred, while it appears that the others died from the effects of black damp. The explosion of even one can of powder, in a space so confined as a mine, is very severe, it is said, and enough to rob the air of its oxygen. The body of Frank Windsor, the 17 year old boy, was found in a sitting position, it is said, his arms folded, and as other bodies were found in similar positions, it is evident that the explosion came with black damp and died before aid reached them.

Clothes wear out, cigars are smoked up, but a Christmas present from our furniture store lasts a lifetime. Jones-Ruhland Co.

Roy Stoughton, who has been in the hospital for the past few days as the result of a car accident, was taken to his home at Sherwin, Sunday.

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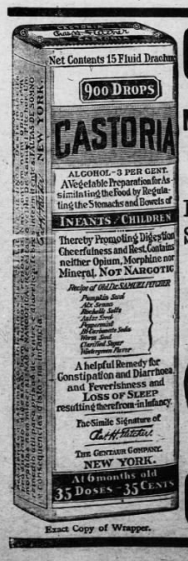

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