



Reports

--:-- E X P L O S I O N A T "A" M I N E --:--

O F

CHICAGO AND CARTERVILLE COAL COMPANY,

HERRIN, WILLIAMSON COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

DECEMBER 23d, 1909.

The explosion is said to have occurred at 12:15 p. m. December 23d, 1909. It was a local explosion confined to the 7th and 8th West entries off the Main North, the area including a short pair of stub entries, the 3d and 4th North.

It appears that the 7th and 8th West entries had not been working for some time. It is claimed that the Mine Examiner had found for some days previous slight indications of gas at the head of the entries. It was desired that these entries be surveyed. The civil engineer who had the contract for surveying for this company, The Chicago & Carterville Coal Company, W. T. Pierce, took in with him two men to assist. He had requested that the assistant mine manager, Tom Williams, go with him and see that everything was safe. Williams went ahead of the party and when about 300 feet from the face ignited gas with his open light and explosion followed which killed all of this party, four in number, and four other men who were working farther out. The 7th and 8th West entries are about 1700 or 1800 feet long from the mouth at the Main North. The explosion was barely felt in the Main North near the mouths of the entries.

Warning was sent to men in other parts of the mine and about 400 in all came out safely. The rescue party, headed by the superintendent, James Guinney, and Robert Hueston, at once proceeded to get into the area affected by the explosion. Meantime the fan, which had been down-casting, was reversed, thus making the hoisting shaft the intake and out of this the men escaped on the cages. This made the Main North Entry the intake and the 8th West also. This was the entry on which the surveying party had gone in. One (or more) of the men in the area affected had managed to escape before the black or after-damp had overcome him. The rescue party reached a point by rebratticing the crosscuts near the 3d and 4th North Stub by about 1:30 p. m. In this vicinity three men overcome by the after-damp were found dead; two of them apparently had died within a few minutes of being found. In addition, one man was found alive and was brought out to the Main North where efforts were made to revive him, but after half an hour's effort, he died. None of these four men were burned. The work of rebratticing was continued and by the following morning, December 25th, the four bodies of the surveying party were recovered. These men had been burned quite badly; Williams, however, not as badly as the others, although farthest in, his hair was not burned.

The work of bratticing was continued, evidently not continuously, as it was still being carried on Monday morning when the mine was visited by the writer. The mine was not damaged except by blowing out the light wooden brattices so that the mine resumed work on Monday morning with a large proportion of the miners. However, the section affected was not yet ready and the repairs were still going on. The brattices in two of the crosscuts of the first and second North Stubs had not been replaced. Water stood in these stub entries. The latter went to the dip and the

pump line had not yet been repaired for pumping them out.

The writer made the examination of the affected area in company with Mr. Thomas Little, State Inspector, Mr. Evan Johns, and Mr. W. T. Morris, representing the Illinois Coal Operators Liability Insurance Company, and others, including the superintendent and mine manager. We made a complete circuit of the affected area. We found a slight indication of gas for 600 feet or so back from the face of the 8th West Entry, which was then the return, and for a distance of about 1200 feet back from the face in the 7th West Entry, or from the mouth of the second South Stub inward. This gas was evenly distributed by the current and was shown only by the Wolf lamp carried by the writer. There was the barest indication, in fact some question was raised if it was not due to the gasoline used in the lamp. On trial however for comparison in fresh air, I felt that there was a slight indication, but it could not have been exceeding $3/4$ of 1 percent of Methane at most. Repeated tests were made with the lamp but no more was found anywhere in these entries, even at the face. There was a crosscut immediately at the face and a fair current of air passing around; from 3000 to 5000 cu. ft. per minute by estimate. There were no blowers at the face. The 3d and 4th Stub Entries South (?) had been shut off by a brattice which had been destroyed by the explosion. We could not get definite information as to which way this brattice was blown. The manager claimed that "it was blown every way." These entries had been re-bratticed. No particular indication of gas was observed by testing with a light at these brattices. Nominally the air inside had been worked out, although the pillars had not been pulled. The 1st and 2d South Stubs were open. It was claimed that these are not connected at the face with the stub entries driven north from the

entry toward the 8th entry, the flame passing through the crosscut burned the three in the surveying party between 6th and 7th crosscut, or possibly the flame extended back over Williams to them. The flame evidently did not extend through the 15th crosscut which was where the men were eating their dinner, but these men were hurled from their position and more or less bruised. One of them bewildered, ran a few feet inbye before being overcome; the other three ran outbye, one of these escaped by himself going through into the 7th West, then the intake, at a crosscut opposite the 1st South. Another, Hueston, brother of the mine manager, was subsequently rescued but the shock had affected his memory. A third was living when rescued but died before long as mentioned.

The two men who were in the 4th North started out but were overcome by the after damp. It was stated that these men had apparently died a very short time before the bodies were found. The door between the 3d and 4th North entries was blown out and then into the 3d North about 25 feet. The position of the door had been close to the mouth of this entry. Some debris thrown into this entry and two of the three crosscuts that had brattices had these blown out.

The greatest evidence of violence was shown by a mining machine which was said to have been loaded on a truck between the 3d and 4th North entries on the 8th West. This truck and the machine, a punching machine, were carried over 100 feet outward, the truck somewhat farther than this; both were broken. The men who were eating lunch in the crosscut were out of line of the explosion in the 8th West. It would appear that the blast must have passed out this entry a moment before they were blown out of their position. The main explosion in the 7th West had an opportunity for expansion in the two pairs of South Stub entries.

It is claimed that some of the men in the rescue party smelled powder smoke; search was made for an exploded keg but none was found, although a number of partly filled kegs found were unexploded.

It appears that it is the practice in this mine when the weather is cold or freezing to reverse the fan at night in order to thaw out the air shaft, which is more or less wet. This had been done, the management admitted, the night previous to the explosion, and for that matter it had been done the night previous to the investigation on December 27th. The current is reversed in the morning before the men go inside. The question arose whether the inspection did not take place before the last reversal; therefore any dangerous condition such as might have been caused by a fall in either of the abandoned pairs of entries to the south would not be known. As the management did not deny to me that this might be possible, I assume the inspection probably did occur prior to the last reversal, and that such a fall of roof had occurred and thrown out gas. Mr. Johns stated that a certain limestone stratum often contained gas. The reversal of the fan would have caused the gas to go in towards the face of the 7th West and out on the 8th West, as the surveying party did not enter the mine until noon, it would seem possibly there was something wrong with one of the brattices or that the door farther out had been left open, preventing the gas from being swept out. On the other hand, there may have been a much larger quantity of gas dislodged and the ventilation had not carried it away. As we were unable to get in the 3d and 4th South Stubs on account of the brattices, it is a question if even more dangerous conditions may not have existed in that pair of entries than was shown near the mouth of the 1st and 2d South Stubs. It was reported that those entries had been squeezing, which would be another cause for an outburst of gas. It is

claimed that normally the mines makes very little gas.

Extraordinary recklessness was shown by the assistant mine manager, Williams, in not investigating with the safety lamp and in requiring that naked lamps should be left behind. The same recklessness was manifest at the time of my investigation, when I had to request that naked lamps and pipes be left behind. It was stated that there was no occasion for this precaution as men with naked lamps had been erecting the brattices.

I advised the management that it was unwise to use such light brattices to shut off abandoned works. Heavy stopping should be put in to resist a fall of roof, and certainly conditions such as they exist in the 1st and 2d South Stubs should not be allowed. I also advised the management that in my opinion it was unsafe to reverse the fan at night. The freezing should be taken care of in another way. In any case, the inspection should follow the reversal.

The four men who were unburned were suffocated by after-damp. They were located 600 to 800 feet from fresh air and were exposed only one hour and a half to two hours to the after-damp. Had helmets been immediately available, there is little question but that these four men would have been saved. If the operators had only had an oxygen resuscitating box, one man would have been certainly revived, and two others, in the opinion of the men who helped get out the bodies, might have been revived, as apparently they had only died a few minutes prior to the rescuers reaching them.

Respectfully submitted,

Mining Engineer.

Pittsburgh, Pa.,
January 22, 1910.



Newspaper Accounts

8 DIE, 400 RESCUED IN AN ILLINOIS MINE

Explosion Is Followed by
Death-Dealing Gases in
Pit Near Herrin.

FRANTIC SCENE AT SHAFT

Women Rush to Spot and Greet
Their Husbands—Fire Now
Raging Underground.

HERRIN, Ill., Dec. 23.—Eight men were killed and the lives of 400 others were imperiled by an explosion of gas in mine "A" of the Chicago and Carterville Coal Company at this place late to-day. Open lamps carried by the mine engineer and his assistants caused the disaster. They venturied into an abandoned room, where gas accumulated, it is said. The mine is afire, but it is thought the flames can be soon quenched.

Prompt action by the management of the mine resulted in the safe exit of the hundreds of men who were at work below ground. Within five minutes of the first reports of the explosion the miners in the immediate vicinity of the accident were started toward the surface and on the return trips of the cages rescuers were lowered to entries 7 and 8 west, where the catastrophe took place.

WILD SCENE IS ENACTED.

There was a wild scene when the news spread that an explosion had occurred. Wives and relatives of the 400 men and boys employed at the mine made a wild rush to the mouth of the pit and could not be driven away until those below had all been brought to the top.

GEORGE SNYDER, aged 20, single.
SALVATORE GRECO, aged 22, single.
PIETRO ROMEO, aged 18.
W. T. PIERCE, civil engineer, aged 32, married.
EUGENE BARRETT, aged 18.
TOM WILLIAMS, aged 40, married.
THOMAS HARBER, miner.
ROY, name unknown, who was helping the surveyor.

James Guinney, superintendent of the mine, and Robert Hueston, manager, headed the first relay of rescuers. Despite the black damp which flowed into the chambers adjoining those in which Engineer Pierce and his party were killed, these men plunged into the workings.

FIND UNCONSCIOUS MEN.

Three bodies blocked their path. Hasty examination showed that the men were alive, and they were rushed to the surface. One of them was A. J. Hueston, a brother of the manager. The others, Charles Klem and Albert Shelton, were, with Hueston, revived and all are expected to recover from the effects of the gas.

The rescuers next found the bodies of Snyder, Greco and Romeo. None of these men had been burned, the condition of the corpses testifying mutely to the force of the concussion. Harber's body was badly burned, the features being scorched almost beyond recognition. At a late hour to-night one more body was taken from the mine, that of Thomas Williams. This makes five bodies recovered so far.

The valiant efforts of the rescuers to penetrate more deeply into the workings were repulsed by increasing banks of after-damp. The ventilating apparatus of the mine had not been damaged but it could not cope with the gases and Guinney and Hueston and their helpers were forced to retreat leaving the bodies of Pierce and his companions.

FLAMES GAIN HEADWAY.

Fire also began to gain headway and it is not expected that the bodies can be recovered before to-morrow. To-night all efforts are being directed towards fighting the flames. Conditions are such that it is hoped they will be confined to the two entries affected by the explosion.

News of the disaster spread through Herrin, and there was a rush of hysterical women and crying children to the shaft-house. But as the cage emptied load after load of rescued miners sobs of anguish gave way to cries of joy.

Immediately after the explosion State Mine Inspector Little of Carbondale was notified. He arrived a few hours later and is overseeing the work of the fire fighters.

The mine is under the active management of J. B. Peters of Carbondale, who is vice president of the Chicago and Carterville Coal Company. The president of the concern is J. L. Pease, Chicago.

PIERCE STUDIED AT URBANA.

Pierce, the engineer, who lost his life, studied his profession at the engineering school of the University of Illinois. He was formerly a federal inspector of government work on the Mississippi River.

Mine officials to-night were unable to account for his seeming lack of caution in using unprotected lamps to-day. Mine Manager Hueston says he warned Pierce not to go back toward the gaseous portion of the mine without some one who understood the mine to pilot him.

EX-SHERIFF PEASE PRESIDENT.

Former Sheriff James Pease is president of the Chicago and Carterville Coal Company. Immediately on receipt of a telegram informing him of the disaster Mr. Pease instructed officials at the mine to provide for the families of those who were killed or injured.

Mr. Pease's first information of the disaster came in a telegram from J. D. Peters, superintendent of the mine at Herrin, where the company's two shafts are located.

"I am satisfied that there are no miners entombed in the shaft," said Mr. Pease last night. "Searching parties have established this fact, and everything possible will be done for the families of those killed or injured. According to information sent me, an engineering party, headed by Surveyor Pierce, was inspecting the shaft in Mine A when the explosion occurred. The concussion is believed to have been caused by gas, but whether it was a spontaneous combustion I do not know."

Eight Perish In Coal Mine

Open Lamps Blamed for
Explosion in Workings
at Herrin, Ill.

[BY ASSOCIATED PRESS TO GAZETTE-TIMES.]

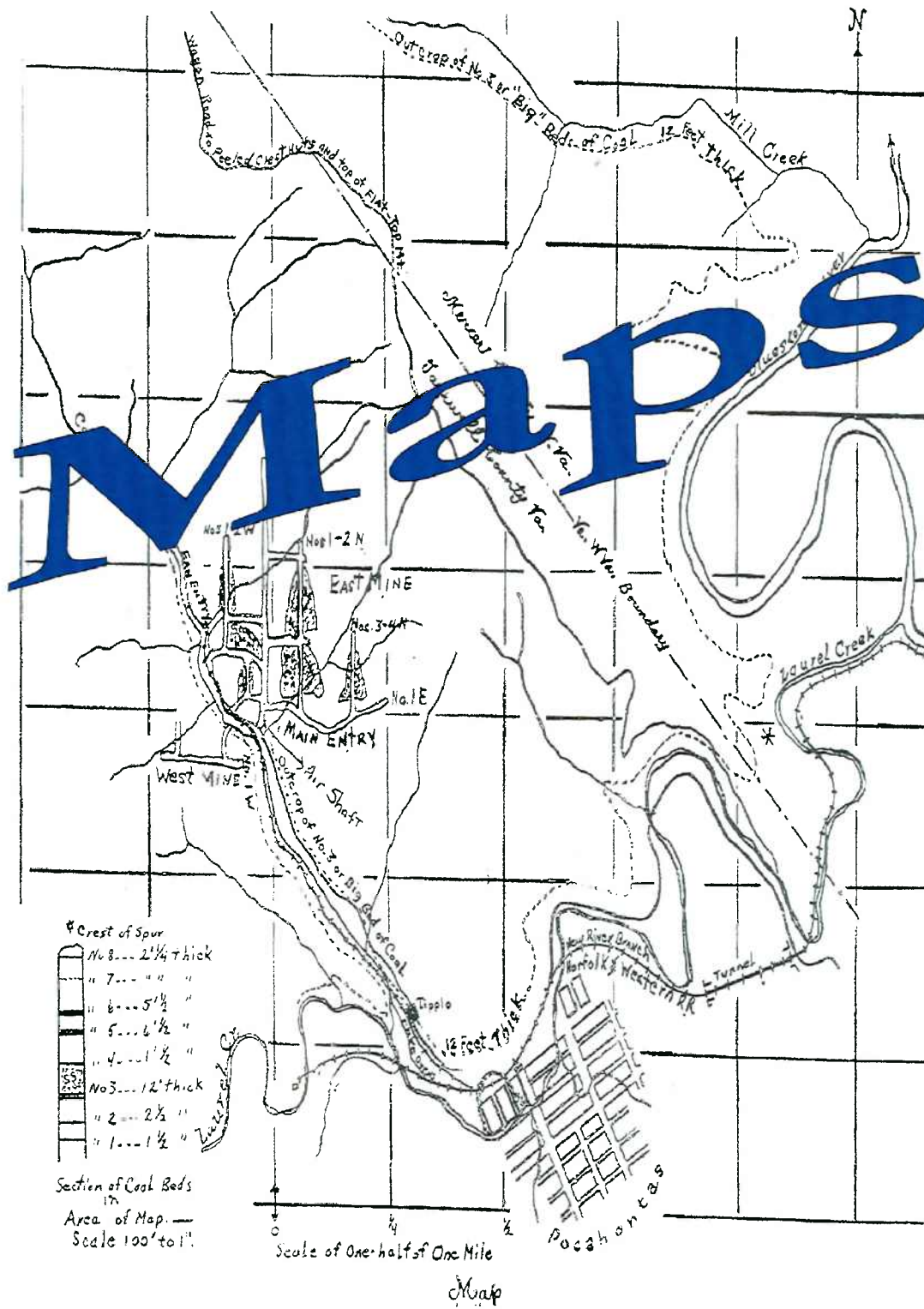
ST. LOUIS, Dec. 23.—Eight men were killed and 400 others had narrow escapes in an explosion of gas in mine "A" of the Chicago and Cartersville Coal Company at Herrin, Ill., late today. Open lamps carried by employes of the mine are believed to have caused the disaster. There were three men and a boy in this party and all are dead.

Within five minutes of the first reports of the explosion, the miners in the vicinity of the accident were started toward the surface, and on the return trips of the cages rescuers were lowered to where the catastrophe occurred. The dead are:

W. T. Pierce, mine engineer.
Eugene Barrett, assistant engineer.
Thomas Williams, assistant manager.
Unidentified boy, about 16 years old.
George Snyder, miner.
Salaytor Grecco, miner.
Pietro Romeo, laborer.
Thomas Harber, miner.

James Guinney, superintendent of the mine and Robert Hueston, manager, headed the first relay of rescuers and despite the black-damp went into the workings.

After sending to the surface three unconscious persons, and three dead bodies the rescuers were repulsed by increasing banks of after-damp. Fire also began to gain headway, and it is not expected that the bodies can be recovered before tomorrow.



Section of Coal Beds
 in
 Area of Map.
 Scale 100' to 1".

Spur Crest	Thickness
No. 8	2 1/4' thick
" 7	" " "
" 6	5 1/2' "
" 5	6 1/2' "
" 4	1 1/2' "
No. 3	12' thick
" 2	2 1/2' "
" 1	1 1/2' "

Maps

Not

Scanned