

Fatal Explosion of Powder in West No. 1 Slope, Linderman & Skeer,  
at Stockton.

At about 7 o'clock A. M., Tuesday, July 17, 1894, eight persons were instantly killed by an explosion of Atlas Powder at the foot of the subterranean shaft from the Mammoth vein to the Wharton vein in the west No. 1 slope of Linderman & Skeer, at Stockton. They were Charles O'Donnell, footman, American; Andrew Sabol, Hungarian, miner; John Pirimbo, Hungarian, loader; John Kasheda, Hungarian, loader; John Brizyon, Hungarian, loader; John Krinock, Hungarian, loader; John Mateofski, Hungarian, miner; Anthony Norcavitz, Pole, loader.

The miners and loaders were employed in the Mammoth vein, to which a tunnel is cut back from the foot of the subterranean shaft, in robbing what would be known as the third lift of the Mammoth vein of the west No. 1 slope, and as usual were on this morning taking to their several schutes the powder, fuse and caps which would be required through the day to start the batteries; the miners having brought back the night previous what had not been used the day before.

The powder, fuse and caps were all brought from the magazine on the surface by Charles O'Donnell, the footman, in order to avoid all danger of explosions on the slope, or in the shaft, by reason of careless handling of the caps and sticks of powder by the men while riding down the slope with it, or in the shaft on the cage. He kept them under lock and key in a box near the foot, when not distributing them to the men.

On this morning, while he was giving out to the men the powder, fuse and caps they each made request for, in some way an explosion was caused and every one present killed.

There are many theories as to what was the cause of the explosion, one being that one of the men had dropped fire from his lamp or pipe into a cap; another that some one had been picking at a cap with a lamp picker or horse shoe nail to remove the fine sawdust with which they are sometimes clogged, and still another that one of the men having his powder lying beside him on a bench near the box cut his fuse into lengths and began placing the caps on these lengths of fuse ready for use when required, and in pushing the fuse into the cap twisted the point into the fulminate of the cap and it, exploding near his powder, set it off, and that in turn set off what was in the box nearby. The only thing we know is, there was an explosion caused in some way by some one of the eight persons present, and those of us that remain should take warning and be careful in the handling of these explosives ourselves, and be watchful of others to see that they are careful.

Superintendent James E. Roderick was informed of the explosion and at once went to the slope and entered the mine and was lowered to the foot of the shaft, where the work of recovering the bodies at once began. This was rendered difficult owing to the timber at the foot of the shaft being blown down by the force of the explosion, but by 11 o'clock the bodies were all placed in coverings and these in boxes provided by an undertaker and by 12 o'clock noon they had all been taken to the surface where the undertakers took charge of them.

An inquest was held and the jury rendered a verdict of accidental death for which no blame could be attached to any living person.