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Official Mine Report of the Recent Disaster at McCurtain

OFFICIAL REPORT OF CHIEF INSPECTOR ED. BOYLE OF THE MCCURTAIN DISASTER, WHICH HAPPENED MARCH 20th, 1912.

McCurtain, Okla., May 6.—On Wednesday, March 20th, at about 9 a. m. an explosion occurred at Mine No. 2 of the Sans-Bois Coal Co., located at McCurtain, in Haskell county, Oklahoma, which was the most destructive to human life when we consider the small damage done to property.

While the explosion snuffed out the lives of seventy-three men, the bodies have been recovered. The damage to the property was hardly noticeable. The state law of Oklahoma makes it the duty of the management of all mines generating gas, or commonly known as fire-damp, to employ fire bosses to examine the mines carefully before the miners enter the mines. (See Sec. 1, Art. 6, Senate Bill No. 26.)

In No. 2 Mine, which is operated as a slope mine, the coal dips at about an average of ten degrees. The slope is driven down this dip for the distance of about 3,000 feet, when the dip of the coal takes a turn at almost right angles to the main slope and another slope is driven on this dip for the distance of about 1,000 feet.

The rope on the small slope is operated through a drill hole to the surface where an engine pulls up the coal cars at the parting which is located at a point between the ninth and tenth lift. The mine is ventilated by an eight foot fan, Capell make, which was throwing about 45,000 cubic feet of air into the mine which was sufficient to ventilate the mine, if it was properly distributed.

The mine has been in operation about nine years and has been known as a dangerous mine, as it has exploded before this, which makes about the seventh explosion that has occurred since this mine has been in operation, causing the loss of life each time. Accordingly, the mine which is described above, consists of two sides, the north side and the south side.

The company employed two fire bosses, John Kokoske on the north side and Frank Crooks on the south side to examine the mines.

On the date of the accident the

fire bosses' report book shows that Frank Crook discovered gas in the eleventh south top entry and in room twenty-five of the eleventh south entry, room twenty-five being close to the face of the entry, and in room nineteen, twelfth south top entry, and in the eleventh south stub entry.

In this mine, as in other mines, where the ventilation is carried to the face of the entries from the last cross-cuts by brattice cloth, this cloth is usually torn down when the shots are fired at night and consequently the ventilation is disarranged. It is the duty of the mine management to restore the ventilation before the men go into the mine in the morning.

On the date of the explosion it was evident that the fire-boss, Frank Crook did not have time to do this before the time for the men to enter the mine at 7:30 a. m. and he took a chance to restore the ventilation after the men were in the mine as their bodies were found on the eleventh south entry with their coats and dinner pails in their hands, mute evidence, that they were told by the fire boss to stay out of the entry until he would drive out a little gas that was starting at the face of the entry. He either lit it himself, or drove it out with the mine air to room twenty-one where some men were loading a car and probably lit it. In fear of losing his job, or under-estimating the amount of gas in the places and allowed those poor men, who placed implicit confidence in his judgment, to enter the mine, when he should have put a dead-line on the south of the slope and proceed to make the mine safe, as the law directs.

There is no doubt but what the initial point of the explosion was on the eleventh south entry, as the canvas used for brattices was charred to a crisp and the bodies were badly burned. The fire came out through the room cross-cuts, crossed the slope and entered the eleventh north entry, abandoned, which was connected with the twelfth north entry by rooms which had been driven up. There was evidence of great force at the twelfth north where the explosion came back on the slope throwing a trip of loaded cars which were standing on the twelfth north parting out on the slope. From indication the force of the explosion came up the slope

towards the big parting, where it evidently died out. According to eye witnesses there was only a little puff of dust came out the slope entrance and the fan was not stopped.

On the morning of the twentieth, from the information we could glean from the survivors and others, there were ninety-seven men entered the mine. Of those men, six came out the man-way, three came out the main slope alive, and thirteen men were found alive the next morning in the thirteenth north entry where they had the good judgment to take refuge in the pump-room and broke the air connection and was revived by the air.

The men on the thirteenth south rushed out and tried to get up the slope but were suffocated from the after-damp, and died on the slope. There was no evidence of explosion on the thirteenth north, or the twelfth south.

There was evidence found where this company was disobeying the state law in regard to mining. (See Sec. 1, Art. 3, Senate Bill No. 26.), which says cross-cuts for ventilation in gassy mines must be made thirty feet apart, and the inspector insisted on this rule at this mine, but as soon as he was gone, it seems that this company would make cross-cuts forty feet apart and in some instances, such as the twelfth south, the face of the working places was sixty feet in advance of ventilation, and the thirteenth south entry was also found to be sixty feet in advance of ventilation, and room nineteen was more than seventy feet in advance of cross-cuts.

As it is my desire to make known to the general public the causes leading up to this disaster, I desire to call their attention to the following which is a part of the Mining Law found in Sec. 6, Art. 1, of Senate bill 26, which reads as follows: "It shall be the duties of the District Inspectors to examine all the mines in their respective districts as often as necessary and not less than once in every three months; provided that the mine committee shall have authority to call the Mine Inspector at any time in cases of emergency to see that the requirements and provisions of this act are strictly observed and carried out."

The public can readily see that it is impossible for the Inspector to be at the different mines in his district on each working day, as there are about sixty mines in each district, it keeping him very busy to make the inspections as provided by law every quarter, and as all mines that generate gas, can change from a safe to an unsafe condition in a few hours; therefore the law requires qualified men for superintendents, mine-foreman and fire-bosses, and the law plainly defines the duties of each, and the men under their charge trusts their lives in their hands, and with proper care and diligence on the part of each such accidents as occurred at McCurtain and in other coal mining fields would be almost unknown, but the mining laws are like all other laws, will never be rigidly enforced, until such time as the state, or county officials, have the hearty co-operation of the citizenship of every community.

Nothing but moral and practical men should hold the positions as superintendent, mine foreman and fire-bosses in this, or any other state.

The fire bosses should be protected by law, and any mine foreman, or superintendent, found obstructing him in the performance of his duties should be subject to a heavy fine and imprisonment, and have his certificate revoked, as I feel sure that many fire bosses are taking long chances, and endangering the lives of men and property under the threat of being discharged should he stand at all times for strict enforce-



U. S. SENATOR THOMAS P. GORE, of LAWTON.

ment of the law, and performing the duties evoked upon him.

ED BOYLE,
Chief Mine Inspector of Oklahoma.

J. D. TANNEHILL FOR COMMISSIONER.

In another column will be found the announcement of J. D. Tannehill, candidate for commissioner of the 3rd district. Mr. Tannehill has been holding the office of commissioner since statehood, and in all that time has been an untiring official in the interest of the people.

At the beginning of his first term he was—like all the county officials—confronted with the complete organization of county government. With the other commissioners he went to work and carried it on without any time shrinking from the responsibilities of the office.

In speaking of the work, Mr. Tannehill says:

"Since statehood I have personally taken up \$5,000 of warrants in order that roads might be worked in my district and I am still carrying \$1,500 of such warrants. I hear rumors that the 3rd district has not received its share of road work and bridges. The road work is divided equally among the districts and this district has thirteen bridges.

"If they will find any man ready to make the sacrifices that I have made, I would be glad to know who he is and turn the work over to him."

Mr. Tannehill is making his race on the record he has made as an officer, and promises if elected that he will continue to do what he can for the people of his district and for Pittsburg county.

MINERS RIOTING IN PENNSYLVANIA.

Philadelphia, May 8.—Serious rioting which began Monday in the Schuylkill valley continued tonight and outbreaks were reported from several other points in the hard coal regions. William Marchesi was shot and probably fatally wounded at Jeap and his brother Saborio was shot in the hand.

The chief disorder occurred Monday at Shenandoah. The rioting spread Monday night to Mahoney City, where a veritable reign of terror prevailed. Howling mobs of men, women and boys charged up and down the main streets and stoned suspected workmen.

A mob of 401 raided the St. Nicholas and Maple Hill collieries and ordered all men found there to cease work. Those who demurred were roughly handled.

At Shenandoah the strikers are reported to be in ugly mood.

CARNEGIE TO AID MINE SUFFERERS.

Fort Smith, Ark., May 9.—Announcement is expected to be made shortly of a \$50,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie to the fund now being raised for the relief of the McCurtain mine victims. Advice, semi-official in character, have been received here from Pittsburg to the effect that Mr. Carnegie's gift will be announced shortly. Mr. Carnegie sometime ago promised to substantially assist in providing relief for the widows and orphans of the disaster which claimed seventy-three lives March 20 last, but at that time it was indicated that his subscription would not exceed \$25,000. That this amount will be doubled by the steel king seems assured, according to information that has reached here.

The relief fund is now close to \$25,000 and the committee, which was organized with the assistance of a representative of the Carnegie Hero commission, says an additional \$25,000 is in sight. The money will be divided in various ways. Some will be set aside to be paid out in pensions to the widows and orphans, but in all cases relief will be afforded as the need of the victims require. More than three-fourths of the unfortunates are solely dependent upon the relief fund.

Included in the fund already raised is \$11,000 donated by stockholders and directors of the Fort Smith & Western railway, owners of the Sans Bois Coal company, upon whose property the disaster occurred and \$1,000 donated by the national socialist party.

COALGATE GOLD ORE PAYS \$10.00 A TON.

Coalgate, Okla., May 8.—Professor Barnett of Coalgate has received a report on a government assay of gold bearing rock from a point eight miles west of Coalgate, and it assayed \$10.20 per ton free milling.

Professor Gould, former state geologist, has been interested in the proposition for several months.

A. E. "Dynamite" Ed Perry met Professor Barnett in Coalgate today and bought controlling stock in the company that is being formed. Mr. Perry states that the new company will begin operations at once and that conditions are very favorable.

Special Subscription Offer

FIFTY PER CENT of all subscription received for the Oklahoma Miner for the next six months will be donated to the Relief Fund of Widows and Orphans, as the result of the mine disaster at McCurtain. Immediately upon receipt of money, the name of subscriber and amount of subscription will be published the following week.

IN CLUBS OF 20 OR MORE

25 Subscriptions	-	-	\$20.00
50 "	-	-	\$40.00
100 "	-	-	\$80.00

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Krebs, Oklahoma