

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY FEBRUARY 6



Twenty-two coal miners were killed in an explosion at a New River Company mine at Carlisle, Fayette County, on February 6, 1915.

CSO: SS.8.9, ELA.8.26

Investigate the Document: (Department of Mines Annual Report, 1915)

1. Whose job was it to examine the mine each morning before anyone could enter? What did they fail to do on the morning of the fatal explosion?
2. Using the chart [*Fatal Accidents for The Year Ending June 30, 1915*], what nationality were many of the miners who lost their lives? Was this apparent throughout the southern West Virginia coalfields during the early twentieth century?

Think Critically: Despite changes, today's miners still face danger for the same reasons as the miners of many years ago. Research and report how safety has changed in the mines, and the common causes of coal mining disasters.

Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. Deceased fell from cage to bottom of shaft, a distance of about 100 feet and was instantly killed.

August 15, 1914.—George Alkire, Italian, Laborer Outside, Pierce No. 40 Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. Deceased was attempting to climb off cage through the timbers when he was knocked to the bottom of the shaft and instantly killed.

October 9, 1914.—Pete Urban, Italian, Laborer, Pierce No. 39 Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. Deceased was following mule down the heading when he was caught by fall of slate receiving injuries from which he died a few hours later.

November 4, 1914.—Ben Douglas, Negro, Miner, No. 23 Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. Deceased was killed by an explosion caused by a short fuse in No. 10 room, Klondyke heading.

December 6, 1914.—Joe Dominick, Italian, Laborer, No. 43 Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. On December 5, 1914, deceased was caught by run-away trip off 1st left heading about 500 feet from the pitmouth and received injuries from which he died next day.

December 16, 1914.—Charles Varonich, (Schmidt) Slavish, Miner, outside, No. 24 Mine, The Davis Coal & Coke Company. Deceased was caught by fall of coal while coaling engine and instantly killed.

February 15, 1915.—Dominic Quatro, Italian, Roadman, Benbush No. 38 Mine, Davis Coal & Coke Company. On February 13, 1915, deceased and partner were sent to north heading to lay track and in the absence of the regular motorman attempted to remove trip when he was caught between cars receiving injuries from which he died on above date.

UPSHUR COUNTY.

January 8, 1915.—Parley Cutright, American, Driver, Florence No. 2 Mine, Buckhannon River Coal & Coke Company. Deceased was riding on front end of empties, contrary to rules, when same wrecked killing him instantly.

DISASTROUS EXPLOSIONS.

CARLISLE EXPLOSION.

On the morning of February 6, 1915, at 7:45 A. M. a local gas explosion occurred at this mine in which twenty-two persons lost their lives. This mine is located at Carlisle, Fayette County, on the White Oak Branch of the C. & O. Railroad and operated by the White Oak Fuel Company. It is a shaft mine 440 feet in depth, operating the Sewell seam which has a thickness of four feet, developed on the double entry system, ventilated by an eighteen foot fan which produces 100,000 cubic feet of air per minute and which is divided between the workings of the Carlisle and Oakwood Shafts. These two mines are connected and employ from 160 to 175 persons. This mine was known to liberate a slight quantity of explosive gas, but not considered dangerous and open lights were used exclusively

by miners and laborers. Fire Bosses were employed to examine the mine each morning before any person was allowed to enter same.

On the morning of the explosion the Fire Bosses had made their examination, at which time they found a small accumulation of gas in room No. 11 on the 5th left entry off of 3d right main and reported same in Fire Bosses' record book, but failed to advise any person of the fact and marked the mine O. K. on a bulletin board kept for this purpose and a few minutes later the employees entered the mine. Shortly after the explosion occurred, and upon investigation it was found to be a local gas explosion due to an accumulation of gas in room No. 11, where the body of a miner was found burned to death; two of the bodies found near No. 10 room were only slightly burned about the face and hands, while the others lost their lives from suffocation, with the exception of a trapper boy at the mouth of the entry who was badly mutilated.

The damage to the mine was very slight. A few stoppings were blown out and the doors were destroyed at 5th left where the explosion occurred, being a distance of one and a quarter miles from the shaft bottom.

Had the Fire Bosses performed their duties as required by law, they would have arranged the brattices after detecting gas in this room, so as to prevent an accumulation of gas. This they failed to do, but placed a prop across the room track, a distance of 113 feet from the face, returned to the outside and without giving notice to anyone that he had detected gas in this room marked the mine O. K. on the bulletin board, and by their neglect caused the death of twenty-two persons, which should be a warning to all Fire Bosses that negligence of this kind is very dangerous to life and property.

The following is a list of the persons killed at the local gas explosion which occurred at Carlisle mine under date of February 6, 1915.

Albert Kopinski, Leo Vitovich, Frank Smith, John Makers, Victor Comminski, James Ora, Montague Thomas, William Gray, Jack Souders, William Comminski, Charles Kebert, Andy Garten, Frank Erstine, Fred Pannell, Dayles Scarbro, Lindsey Johnson, Fred Solbey, Joe Sabalo, Mike Sonnenberg, Jack Custer, Ottis Rex.

Remus Chandler, Negro, was injured and taken to the McKendree Hospital and died February 10th.

Fayette County, to-wit:

An inquisition taken at Glen Jean, in the County of Fayette on the 10th day of February, 1915, before S. J. Jasper, Justice of the said county, upon the view of the bodies of Albert Kopinski, Leo Vitovich, Frank Smith, John Makers, Victor Comminski, James Ora, Montague Thomas, William Gray, Jack Souders, William Comminski, Charles Kebert, Andy Garten, Frank Erstine, Fred Pannell, Dayles Scarbro, Lindsey Johnson, Fred Solbey, Joe Sabalo, Mike Sonnenberg and Jack Custer there lying dead. The jurors sworn to inquire when, how and by what means the said persons above named, came to their death, upon their oaths do say that the said, above named persons came to their death on the 6th day of February, 1915, by an explosion of gas in the Carlisle mine, and we do further find that there was no evidence showing or tending to show any negligence or failure to perform its duty, on the part of the White

Oak Fuel Company, operating said mine, and that the said White Oak Fuel Company furnished all necessary supplies of all kinds and gave to the mine foreman and the mine bosses the necessary instructions to keep the mine in a safe condition, and we further find that if there was any negligence that it was due to the failure of the fire bosses in not marking up on the outside of the mine that there was a small amount of gas in room No. 11 on the 5th left although he had marked the said room as dangerous at this entrance.

In testimony whereof, the said Justice of the Peace, and jurors hereto set their hands:

(Signed) S. J. JASPER, J. P.
J. E. GARRETT.
J. W. McVEY,
J. E. GRAY,
W. L. HANGER,
B. E. LYKINS,
M. C. BIBB.

NEW RIVER & POCAHONTAS CONSOLIDATED COAL COMPANY DUST EXPLOSION.

On Tuesday, March 2, 1915, at 8:30 A. M. an explosion occurred in the No. 3 mine located at Layland, Fayette County, operated by the New River & Pocahontas Consolidated Coal Company, resulting in the death of one hundred and twelve persons, one hundred and eleven on the inside and one on the outside. At the time of the explosion there was one hundred and sixty-four persons at work in the mine, seven of whom were working on the fourth left off of third main entry and were rescued shortly after the explosion. Fortunately the fan was not damaged to any extent and in a very short time Mr. Kneer, Mine Superintendent, and Mr. Nahodil, Mine Foreman, entered the mine finding the overcast partly destroyed and stoppings blown out. They returned to the outside reporting the conditions found to Mr. H. M. Bertolet, the General Superintendent, Mr. Holliday and Mr. Absalom, District Mine Inspectors, who had arrived at the mine, and under the direction of Mr. H. M. Bertolet rescue crews were organized who immediately entered the mine for the purpose of restoring ventilation, removing the dead and rescuing the living should any be found. The rescue work was carried on successfully without any interruption and rapid progress was made under the existing conditions, as the force of the explosion had displaced the timbers at the main entrance of the mine, causing the same to be greatly obstructed by a large quantity of earth and stone, which required several days to move. For this reason supplies were taken into the mine through a narrow space by the side of the fan, as there was no track in the air course and all material had to be carried into the mine, the farthest point being at least one mile from the entrance, but this work was carried on day and night, with no complaint, as there were several hundred miners and mine officials on the scene ready and willing to aid in the rescue work. The working force was divided into several crews,

FATAL ACCIDENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1915.

No.	NAME OF COMPANY	NAME OF MINE	Name of Persons Killed	Date of		Nationality
				Injury	Death	
FAYETTE COUNTY—Cont.						
135	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	L. L. Shaffer.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	American...
136	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	J. E. Simmons.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	American...
137	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	J. H. Smith.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	English....
138	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Frank Sowich.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
139	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	John Spolaric.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
140	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Jim Spariaco.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Italian....
141	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Tom Spolaric.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
142	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Mike Sukes.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
143	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Wilson Susky.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Russian...
144	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Mike Supanski.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Russian...
145	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	G. O. Weeks.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	American...
146	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Tony Weber.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
147	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Nick Widmer.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
148	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	John L. Wimmer.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Austrian...
149	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Charles Zofinelli.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Italian....
150	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Pete Zupanski.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15	Russian...
151	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Layland No. 3...	Unidentified.....	3- 2-15	3- 2-15
152	New River & Poca. Cons. C. Co.	Minden.....	Ed. Blackwell.....	5-21-15	5-21-15	American...
153	New River Collieries Co.	Sun No. 1.....	Pete Konoski.....	1-27-15	1-27-15	Polish....
154	New River Collieries Co. (W. H. Hide, Contractor).....	Sun No. 2.....	Mike Braditch.....	2-25-15	2-25-15	Montene- grin....
155	Nichol Colliery Co.....	Nichol.....	Arthur Colston.....	1-15-15	1-15-15	American...
156	Prudence Coal Co.....	Jones No. 3.....	Pete Hamlin.....	8-21-14	8-21-14	Spaniar d...
157	Prudence Coal Co.....	Lyman No. 2.....	Harry T. Leach.....	2- 1-15	2- 1- 15	English....
158	Prudence Coal Co.....	Lyman No. 2.....	Steve Baronsky.....	4-21-15	4-21-15	Russian...
159	Solvay Collieries Co.....	Ncs. 3-4.....	Fred Nowordsky.....	7-21-14	7-21-14	Polish....
160	Solvay Collieries Co.....	Westerly No. 1.....	James K. Darlington.....	8-11-14	8-11-14	American...
161	Solvay Collieries Co.....	No. 1.....	Joe Turk.....	4- 1-15	4- 1-15	German...
162	Stone Cliff Coal & Coke Co.....	Stone Cliff.....	William Bibb.....	7-23-14	7-23-14	Negro....
163	Stuart Colliery Co.....	Summerlee.....	William Powell.....	8-24-14	8-24-14	English....
164	Stuart Colliery Co.....	Summerlee.....	Steve Anchow.....	10- 7-14	10- 7-14	Polish....
165	Stuart Colliery Co.....	Summerlee.....	Horace Morgan.....	6-29-15	6-29-15	English....
166	Stuart Colliery Co.....	Lochgelly.....	Phillip Howard.....	11- 2-14	11- 2-14	Negro....
167	Star Coal & Coke Co.....	Star.....	Stany Suchodolsky.....	10-29-14	10-29-14	Austrian...
168	Star Coal & Coke Co.....	Star.....	David Kyle.....	6- 7-15	6- 7-15	Negro....
169	Sunday Creek Co.....	No. 112.....	Dewey Walker.....	7-14-14	7-14-14	American...
170	Sunday Creek Co.....	No. 112.....	Floyd Riley.....	4-22-15	4-22-15	American...
171	Sugar Creek Coal & Coke Co.....	Sugar Creek No. 2.....	Charles A. Midkiff.....	1- 1-15	1-12-15	American...
172	Turkey Knob Coal Co.....	Turkey Knob.....	William Hammons.....	12-29-14	1-14-15	American...
173	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Whipple.....	George Terris.....	7-11-14	7-11-14	Polish....
174	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Whipple.....	William Say.....	8- 3-14	8- 3-14	American...
175	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Scarbro.....	Felix Janciski.....	12- 1-14	12- 4-14	Polish....
176	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Victor Cuminsky.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Spanish...
177	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	William Cuminsky.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Spanish...
178	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Jack Custer.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Polish....
179	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Frank Erstime.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Polish....
180	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Andy Garten.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Slavish...
181	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	William Gray.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	American...
182	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Lindsay Johnson.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15
183	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Charles Kobert.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Lithuanian
184	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Albert Kopruski.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Polish....
185	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	John Makevas.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Hungarian.
186	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	James Ova.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Cranish...
187	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Fred Pannel.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	American...
188	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Ollis Rex.....	2- 6-15	2-20-15	Polish....
189	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Mike Sounenberg.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	German...
190	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Fred Salway.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Russian...
191	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Joe Sabola.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Polish....
192	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Frank Smith.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Slavish...
193	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Davles Seardro.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	American...
194	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Jack Souders.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	American...
195	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Montague Thomas.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	American...
196	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Leo Vitsvitch.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Polish....
197	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Carlisle.....	Remus Chandler.....	2- 6-15	2- 6-15	Negro....
198	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Scarbro.....	Adam Reimeris.....	3- 3-15	3- 3-15	Lithuanian
199	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Scarbro.....	Stanley Delinsky.....	3-27-15	3-27-15	Lithuanian
200	White Oak Fuel Co.....	Whipple.....	John Ginnis.....	5-22-15	5-22-15	Litvitch...
GILMER COUNTY						
201	McCaa Coal Co.....	McCaa.....	Rosco Muto.....	12-16-14	12-16-14	Italian....