

The miners of the Wabash Coal Co.'s mine at Dawson, suspended work June 1, 1897, owing to a reduction in the price of mining. The mine is not working at this time, July 1, 1897.

Summary.—The following summary, as taken from the statistical tables, is given for the fiscal year 1897:

Number of counties in which coal is produced.....	8
Total number of mines.....	79
Shipping mines.....	50
Local mines.....	29
New mines.....	4
Abandoned mines.....	9
Mines using mining machines.....	11
Total tonnage.....	5,009,102
Tons of lump coal.....	3,353,877
Tons of other grades.....	1,655,225
Average value of screened coal at the mines.....	30.70
Aggregate value of total product.....	\$2,868,860
Number of miners.....	4,090
Number of other employes.....	1,922
Total employes.....	5,672
Average number of days in active operation for all mines.....	177.4
Number of kegs of powder used.....	104,415
Fatal accidents.....	19
Non-fatal accidents.....	54
Number of widows.....	14
Number of orphans.....	51
Number of coal cutting machines used.....	118
Tons of coal cut by machines.....	1,581,778
Number of tons of coal produced to each fatal accident.....	263,637
Number of tons of coal produced to each non-fatal accident.....	92,751
Number of persons employed to each fatal accident.....	299
Number of persons employed to each non-fatal accident.....	105

Contemplated Mines.—A coal company has been organized at Raymond, Montgomery county, which is now sinking a shaft at that point, on the east side of the Wabash railroad, about one half mile northeast of the village.

The Citizens Coal and Mining Company, of Springfield, is sinking a new shaft about one mile southeast of their present mine, on the east side of St. L., C. & St. P. R. R.

Improvements.—The Moweaqua Coal Mining and Manufacturing Company, of Moweaqua, Shelby county, and the Green Ridge Coal Company, Green Ridge, Macoupin county, have completed escapement shafts during the year.

Mine Fires.—In the report of 1896 a report is given of the fire that occurred at the Taylorville Coal Co's mine No. 1, at Taylorville, on June 12, 1896; a full description is given showing how the fire occurred, and what damage was done. This mine is now in first-class condition. In the early part of October, 1896 coal was again hoisted. To put this mine in a condition again for work was a very dangerous undertaking, and reflects great credit on the management, in combatting the fire, and again putting the shaft in order without an accident of any kind.

In the first place No. 1 shaft, where the fire occurred, had to be filled up for a certain distance to stop the currents of air passing over the fire to No. 2 shaft, as the fire was raging around the bottom of No. 1 shaft, so that the fire could be put out and the shaft examined. It was found that the curbing was burnt out for a long distance, and all the curbing was more or less damaged and the centre buntons burnt out. The shaft was successfully relined and made secure. After the bottom of the shaft had been cleaned out, it was found the coal had been on fire and all the heavy timbers supporting the

bottom of the shaft, and partings had been burnt out, causing large falls of shale and rock. The tower on the surface and all outbuildings were destroyed. A more modern tower and outbuildings have been erected, with suitable shaking screens for all grades of coal. The shaft bottom and partings have been retimbered in first-class manner and the mine is now one of the best fitted up plants in the district.

In October last, a serious fire also occurred at the Gillespie mine of the Consolidated Coal Co. No lives were lost but the property was greatly damaged and was only rescued from total loss by skillful treatment and a considerable expenditure of money. Mr. T. R. Stockett, Jr., chief engineer of the Consolidated Company, makes the following statement of the damages and difficulties of the situation at this mine and of the manner in which they were overcome:

GILLESPIE MINE FIRE.

“Fire occurred October 16, 1896, about 7:30 p. m.

South side of mine resumed operations April 1, 1897.

North side of mine resumed operations July 1, 1897.

The fire, which broke out on the main north entry of the Gillespie mine October 16, 1896, at about 7:30 p. m. causing the total suspension of the production of coal from the mine for a period of five and a half months from the south side and eight and a half months from the north side, is supposed to have had its origin at the overcast, over the main entry at a point 460 feet north of the hoisting shaft and 280 feet north of the entrance to the air shaft. It may have been caused by a spark from the lamps of passing men; or by spontaneous combustion; or the breaking out of an old gob fire, due to the crushing or falling of the fire-walls walling off the west side old workings, which had been giving more or less trouble from fires for some years previous. This latter is now generally accepted as the originating cause of the fire.

The fan at the time of the fire was running as a “blower” and forcing into the mine about 44,000 cubic feet of air per minute, passing it down the air-shaft, through the overcast, up the air-course and back the main entry under the overcast to the hoisting shaft or upcast.

The overcast was constructed principally of lumber. That the fire was some time in destroying it was evidenced by the burned and charred timbers in the air-course for a considerable distance northward. The destruction or burning through of the overcast gave the air-current a quick return down the main entry, reversing the course of the fire and sweeping it along the main entry towards the hoisting shaft.

This shortening of the passageway for the air to travel increased the air produced by the fan to about 56,000 cubic feet per minute, and this was further largely augmented and its velocity accelerated by the furnace-like heat sweeping along the main entry and up the hoisting shaft, taking the fire but little time to traverse the 460 feet to the foot of the shaft. Luckily, however, the falling of the soapstone, which blocked the entry, and a small fall near the shaft, held it in check until the sealing up the shafts smothered it out, or prevented its spreading.