

A new coal company has been incorporated since the last report, under the name of the Springfield Coal and Mining company. This company has bought the mines of the Riverton Coal company, Starnes Coal company, Black Diamond Coal company, and the Junction Mining company. The president of the company is J. A. Agee; D. D. Shumway, general manager; Wm. A. Jess, secretary and treasurer. The Riverton mines will be known as Nos. 1 and 2; the Starnes' mine as No. 3; the Black Diamond mine as No. 4, and the Junction mine as No. 5.

Kortkamp Coal company, recently formed, is sinking a new shaft on the line of the C., C. & St. L. R. R., two miles east of Hillsboro, Montgomery county. The company expects to reach the coal early in July of this year.

The Nilwood Carbon Coal company of Nilwood, Macoupin county, has sold its mine. The mine will hereafter be operated by the Weaver Coal and Coke company.

EXPLOSIONS IN MINES DURING THE YEAR.

There have been two explosions in the mines in this district during the past year, caused by "windy" shots.

The first explosion occurred at the mine of the Victor Coal company, Pawnee, Sangamon county, Oct. 13, 1902, at firing time, about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, whereby two men and a boy lost their lives.

The explosion was in room 17 of the first east entry on the south side of the shaft; the room, at the face, was 27 feet wide extending 97 feet back from the entry. The entrance to room 17, was 1,336 feet from the hoisting shaft, 160 feet from the face of the entry, and 750 feet from the air shaft.

The fan was blowing air down the air shaft at the time of the explosion at the rate of about 28,400 cubic feet per minute, and this quantity of air was passing the mouth of room 17.

A large shot had been fired on the right hand side of this room, the shot was 7 feet wide at the heel and 9 feet wide at the toe; the drill hole was 8 feet deep. This was an unusually large shot, consequently there must have been a very large quantity of powder used in preparing the blast. On examination after the explosion the coal was found to be cracked on the rib also at the drill hole, and slightly cracked at the back of the shot, but the coal was not dislodged.

About 33 feet back from the face of room 17 a cross-cut was being driven to the right to connect with room 18, however, this room had fallen in; the cross-cut was being driven to strike the face of room 18.

A second shot had been fired about the same time on the right hand side of this cross-cut, this shot had blown its tamping; it had been drilled into the solid and there was no chance for it to dislodge the coal. About 14 inches was blown off the face at the hole; the shot also blew through into room 18, a distance of 16 feet.

These two heavy shots going off at about the same time evidently produced the explosion, and both shots striking each other at right angles, caused the carbonic oxide gases from the shots to ignite from the flames. The burning vapor issued out of the room, and along the first and second entries. Two cross cuts were open at the face of these entries; five stoppings between the entries were blown down, which was a very fortunate occurrence, as it permitted the expanding of the blast at the face of the entries.

The concussion was felt very heavily at the bottom of the hoisting shaft; most of the miners were congregated there waiting to be hoisted to the surface, and unmistakably the blowing out of the stoppings gave vent to the flames, and force of the explosion, otherwise the blast would certainly have killed most of the men congregated at the bottom of the hoisting shaft.

W. D. Overcash, who fired the shot in room 17 was found dead about 300 feet back from the entrance to this room; his body was severely burned and bruised.

Michael Yoji was found dead in the second east entry, presumably had been suffocated by the after damp.

The boy, Frank Isaacs, was found at his trap door, 950 feet from the entrance into room 17; this door was on the first east entry on the north side of the shaft; it seems that the boy had been in the act of opening the door to let a trip pass through, and that the force of the explosion caught the door and crushed his body between the door and the post of the door frame; his body was so bruised that he died shortly afterwards.

The second explosion was in the Auburn and Alton Coal company's mine, at Auburn, Sangamon county. This explosion occurred Feb. 25, 1903, at 15 minutes to 7:00 o'clock, p. m., and resulted in the killing of two shot firers Matt Donnelly, and Thomas McLaughlin, and one driver Walter Davis, six mules were also killed. The explosion took place in the second working room, on the second south entry. This room was very dry and dusty; two large blasts had been fired in this room; one on the right hand side in the lower part of the coal seam, and the other in the top coal, that had been left up and back from the working face. Both of these shots had been largely overcharged with powder, and must have been fired almost simultaneously, as the blown coal was nearly all reduced to slack or fine coal.

The carbonic oxide gases given off by these shots, took fire from the flame of the shots; the force of the blast raising the fine dry coal dust in the room, and with the dust from the shots, which also ignited, greatly intensifying the explosion.

The flame from these blasts passed through a cross cut into the room adjoining where other shots had been previously fired; the gases from these shots also took fire, which, with the force of the explosions and flames, passed out into the entry. Near the mouth of the room, in which the explosion took place, and on the entry, a box containing powder, was blown to pieces, the powder exploding greatly increased the force of the blast. Two mine cars standing on the entry were blown to pieces. The fan was blowing a direct current of air down the air shaft; about 16,000 cubic feet per minute was passing in the first and second south entries; the force of the blast went against this current of air, and forced the doors off of the top of the air shaft; fortunately however, the fan was located back from the air shaft and was not damaged. The flames following the explosion passed out on the return entry for a distance of 600 feet, the bodies of the two shot firers, Mathew Donnelly and Thomas McLaughlin, and the driver, Walter Davis, were found at this point.