

CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah

MARCH 8, 1924

Interspecies & Environmental Exploitation





EXTRA

THE SUNDAY HERALD

First in news, first in circulation, first in advertising, and first delivered in the home.

PROVO, UTAH, SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 1924

PRICE TWO CENTS

GIVE UP HOPE FOR MINERS BURIED IN CASTLE GATE MINE EXPLOSION

173 Men Are Entombed In Coal Mine

HERALD REPORT OF MINE EXPLOSION

DAUGHERTY REFUSES NAMES

PIONEERS

UTAH PIONEER PASSES AWAY

U. N. S. REPORT OF DISASTER

RESCUE CREWS ARE CALLED TO MINE

Capital exploits:

People

Animals

Ecosystems



CASTLE GATE MINE

CASTLE GATE, Utah

BACKGROUND



UTAH'S COAL PROPERTIES.

The foremost coal producers in Utah and the location of their properties are as follows:

Utah Fuel company (the largest of all)—Two mines at Castle Gate, two at Sunnyside, one at Winter Quarters and one at Clear Creek.

Castle Gate Coal

The **Utah Fuel Company**, Utah's largest coal company at the time, owned the Castle Gate coal mines and company town and store.

UTAH FUEL COMPANY'S AFFAIRS TANGLED WITH LOCAL RAILROAD DIFFICULTIES

The **Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad**, which hauled the coal, was a major shareholder.

The railroad exited bankruptcy in 1923 after having gone bankrupt in 1918 and seized by the federal government during World War I.

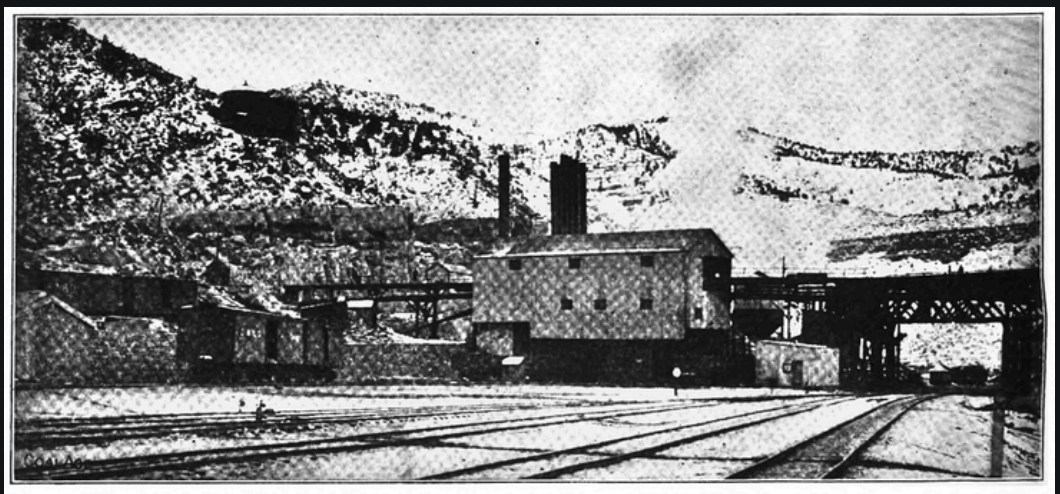


Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad
Castle Gate Station, 1929

CASTLE GATE MINE

CASTLE GATE, Utah

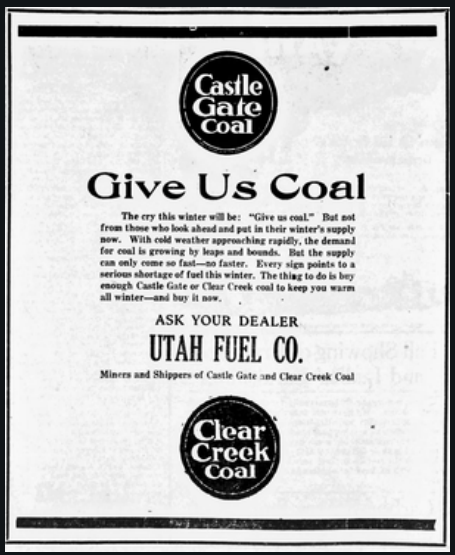
BACKGROUND



Utah Fuel Co.s Steel Tipple and Screening Plant at Castle Gate

The No. 2 Coal Mine extended two miles into the mountain.





CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah | MARCH 8, 1924

EXPLOSION

On March 8, 1924, Castle Gate Coal Mine No. 2 exploded three times.

171 miners and one rescue worker died from the explosion and aftermath.



Salt Lake Telegram

A Thought

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 10, 1924

PRICE FIVE CENTS

EARCHERS RECOVER 26 BODIES AT CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

Scenes at Explosion Disaster Where One Hundred and Seventy-three Men Are Believed Dead

TOMB REVEALS TORN VICTIMS OF COAL BLAST

Many of the Men Taken Out Are Mutilated and Dismembered; Some With Heads Severed

SMOKE AND GAS RETARDS SEARCH

Wives of Children of Slain Workers Gather at Entrance and Identify the Men Brought Out

CASTLE GATE, Utah, March 10—Twenty-six bodies had been recovered at 2:15 p. m. today from the Utah Fuel

ENY DENIES NG AID TO RTA FORCES

Magnate Declares Jr. Wheeler, Mon- Talks With Rock Disregard for Truth

ED $5,000,000 O GEN. OBREGON

Hollis Accuses Newspapers as Subsidized and Raising Oil Probe

PRESIDENT OF COMPANY GOES TO CASTLE GATE

A. R. Baldwin of New York City, president of the Utah Fuel company, was in Castle Gate last Friday accompanied by Carl Taylor, Gotham counsel for the corporation. This after a conference at Salt Lake City with executive heads of the concern. From Utah himself and others left for San Francisco. Commenting on the disaster of Saturday, March 8th, that on that date overtook the company and which had brought death and mourning to Castle Gate, Baldwin expressed his sorrow for the accident, which he characterized as one of the unfortunate happenings of life which cannot be anticipated nor prevented, and indicated his sympathy for the bereaved. He had nothing but praise for the manner in which the situation had been handled by company officials at Salt Lake City and at Castle Gate.

“one of the unfortunate happenings of life which cannot be anticipated nor prevented.”

– Utah Fuel Company President A. R. Baldwin

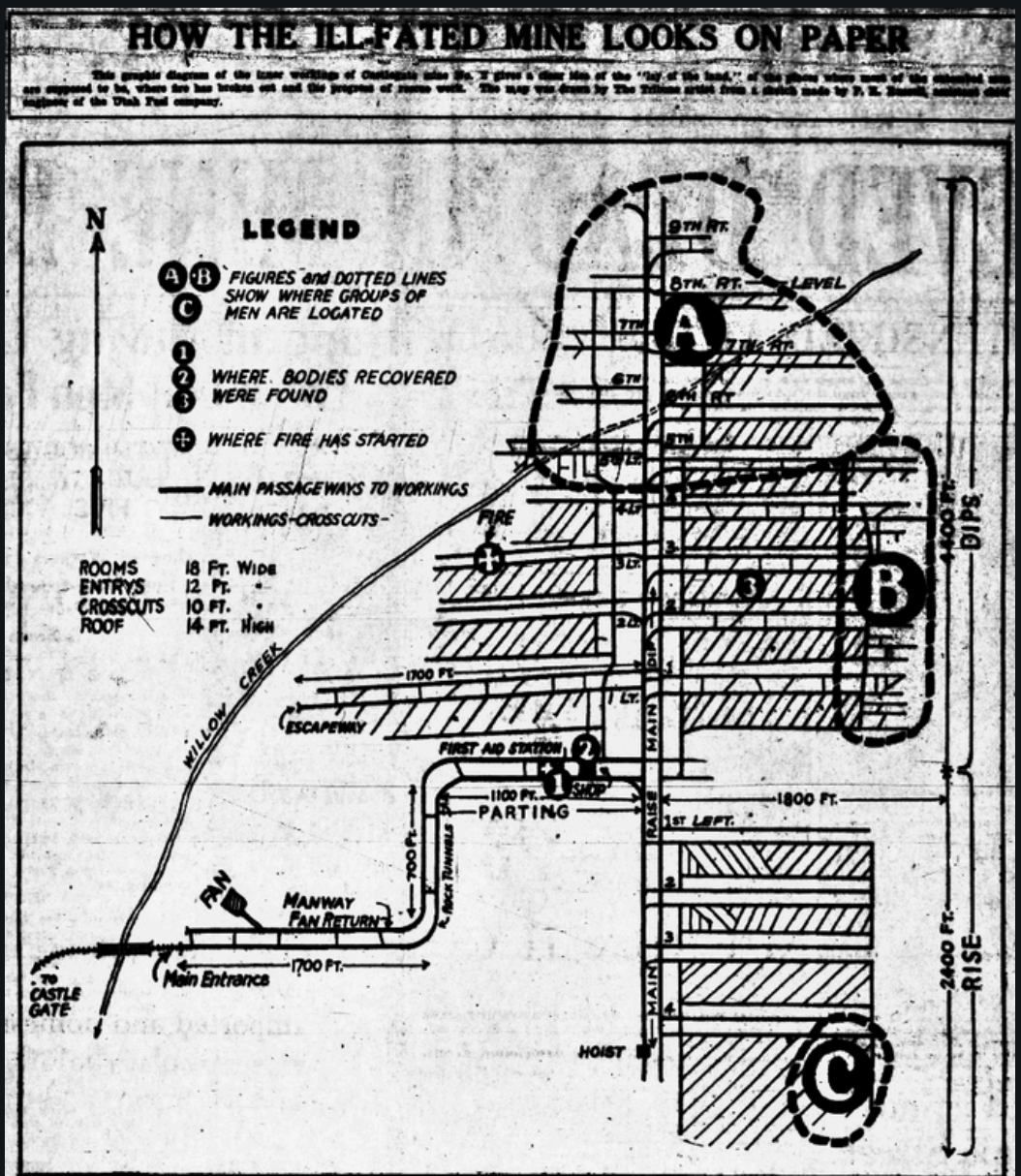
CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah

MARCH 8, 1924

HOW THE ILL-FATED MINE LOOKS ON PAPER

This graphic diagram of the inner workings of Castlegate mine No. 2 gives a clear idea of the "lay of the land," of the places where most of the disaster victims are supposed to be, where fire has broken out and the progress of rescue work. The map was drawn by The Tribune artist from a sketch made by D. E. Daniels, assistant mine engineer of the Utah Fuel company.



CASTLE GATE MINE

CASTLE GATE, Utah

Mules & Horses



During normal operation, mules & horses pulled coal carts most of the way out of Castle Gate Mine No. 2. A small railroad brought the coal the rest of the way out.

Most mules & horses **never saw daylight again** after entering the mine. There were underground stables.

The mules **typically died after 3.5 years, vs. 30 - 50 years when free**.

CASTLE GATE MINE

CASTLE GATE, Utah

CANARIES



Mines around the world used canaries as carbon monoxide detectors.

If levels got too high, the canaries would become distressed and/or pass out.

Some mines used rats.



Some canaries recovered after re-surfacing.

Some mines used oxygen tank devices to resuscitate their canaries.

CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah

MULES, HORSES, & MEN DIED TOGETHER

Some papers reported on the mules and horses killed in the disaster.

One paper framed the horses' deaths in terms of their monetary value and the cost to train them.

Horsese Are Victims.

Aside from the great loss of human life, and enormous property damage suffered in the explosion in mine number two of the Utah Fuel company, there is another loss keenly felt by company and employees.

That was the loss of 19 trained horses, of an aggregate valuation said to be close to $8,000.

These animals worked regular shifts and according to an official were trained at a cost of about $75 each. Many of the horses and their drivers pals, died side by side, it is believed.

A number were found in the inner workings of the mine, some a mile and others a mile and a half from the entrance. No effort has as yet been made to bring the bodies of the animals out. This will not be done until all the men are removed. It was stated that in all probability bodies of some of the drivers would be found under the carcasses of the horses.

These animals worked regular shifts and according to an official were trained at a cost of about $75 each. Many of the horses and their drivers pals, died side by side, it is believed

The same article noted that the "horses and their drivers...died side by side."

It was stated that in all probability bodies of some of the drivers would be found under the carcasses of the horses.

And, that "some of the drivers would be found under the carcasses of the horses."

There are many curious incidents, one of which he told was a 1600 pound horse on its back in a coal car.

Besides the men who are entombed in the mine there are also 25 mules which were used in pulling the coal from the workings to the tracks in the main tunnel. Only one of these mules had been located up to noon Sunday.



CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah

MULES, HORSES, & MEN DIED TOGETHER

The recovery teams left the mules' and horses' bodies where they died. They used chemicals to dry out the flesh in order to make it easier to remove them later.

Animal Carcasses Treated With Chemicals

In addition to the 171 men, nineteen horses and mules were killed underground. No attempt was made to remove the putrid carcasses of these animals. Whenever one was discovered, chloride of lime was sprinkled over it and later, men in apparatus chopped open the abdominal and chest cavities, placing quick lime therein as well as over the entire carcass. By the action of this material through the absorption of body fluids, such carcasses were reduced eventually to dry flesh, skin and bone which could be removed later with little difficulty.



CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

CASTLE GATE, Utah

CANARIES

Since any canaries in the mine at the time of the explosion would have been killed, rescue & recovery workers commandeered 20 local pet canaries and shipped in 30 more to detect dangerous gas levels.

Canary Birds To Accompany Rescue Crew as Gas Indicators

Canary birds are being drafted by those directing rescue work in the Castle Gate mine disaster with a view to minimizing the loss of human life. Sunday agents for the Utah Fuel company scoured this city for the throaty little songsters in response to urgent appeals from the rescuers for four dozen birds. Only forty-three canaries were available and these were dispatched on the morning train today.

Bird stores of the city were depleted of all stock birds and appeals were made to acquaintances known to possess a treasured household singer.

Use of the canary in gas detection was explained by officials here today.

"It is not that members of the rescue crews hold even a canary's life as trivial, but these birds are so constructed as to afford real protection of human life without necessarily fatal results to themselves.

BIRDS SENSITIVE.

"A rescuer equipped with gas mask entering an underground workings has no way of determining the presence or the extent of gas excepting through some delicate mechanism. The respiratory organs of a canary are such a mechanism. It is absolutely necessary to know where the gas is and to gain some knowledge of its intensity before the workings can be freed of the deadly poison.

"In contact with these mine gases the respiratory organs of a canary are infinitely more sensitive than those of a human being.' Each exploring rescuer advances along the tunnel with a bird cage in his hand.



BIRDS GIVE UP LIVES TO AID WORKERS

One of the deadly gases that forms in a mine with an explosion is carbon monoxide. It is a sure and quick-acting poison. It is quite likely that George Wilson was killed by this gas. Tasteless, orderless, it insinuates its presence into a man's lungs without warning, and by its action on the blood causes death. That the "fresh air" crews might work with assurance of safety a canary bird is carried into the mine. These little creatures are more sensitive to the deadly gas than are the humans, and by their fluttering give warning when it is present before it would be detected by the men. Quite a few of the birds were brought into service from local homes, while many more were shipped in for this use.

About 16 out of 50 canaries died in the rescue and recovery efforts.

One paper claimed the canaries "gave up" their lives to rescue the workers. We still see similar doublespeak regarding animals killed while "working" for human benefit. It provides comfort to the humans, but certainly not to the animals.

"Without the aid of the canary it would have been impossible to have had the bodies out of the mine at the present time," he declared. "In all cases the little birds formed the advance guard and by their distress warned the rescue crews whenever they approached chambers filled with deadly gas."

The presence of carbon dioxide can be detected by carrying a canary into the mine. This bird collapses in the presence of a very weak percentage of carbon monoxide and shows signs of distress in slight traces of the poison.

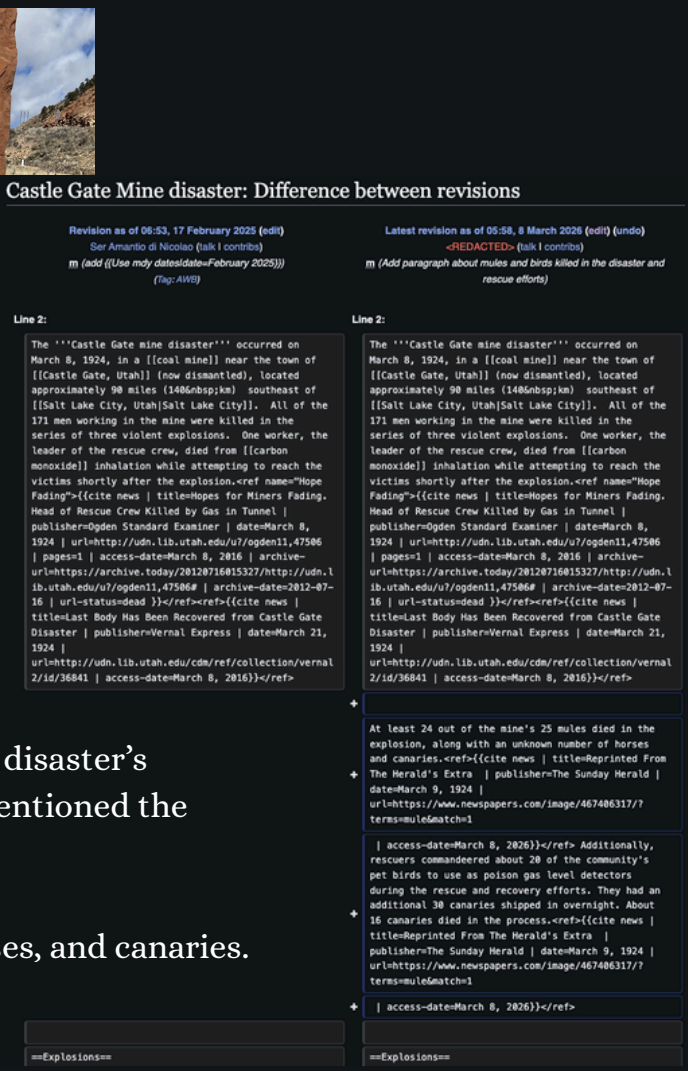
Most of the helmet squads entering the mine during Saturday night and Sunday forenoon carried with them a canary in a cage. In several instances before the ov'nuts in the air passages had been repaired so that the current of fresh air could be forced into the various parts of the mine, these canaries would collapse a short distance from the fresh air base. This was a signal for the helmet men not to venture too far into the poison filled tunnel.

CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

MEMORIALS

The official memorial only honors the human victims.





Castle Gate Mine disaster: Difference between revisions

Revision as of 06:53, 17 February 2025 (edit)
Ser Amantio di Nicolao (talk | contribs)
m (add {{Use mdy dates|date=February 2025}})
(Tag: AWB)

Latest revision as of 05:58, 8 March 2026 (edit) (undo)
<REDACTED> (talk | contribs)
m (Add paragraph about mules and birds killed in the disaster and rescue efforts)

Line 2:

The '''Castle Gate mine disaster''' occurred on March 8, 1924, in a [[coal mine]] near the town of [[Castle Gate, Utah]] (now dismantled), located approximately 90 miles (140 km) southeast of [[Salt Lake City, Utah|Salt Lake City]]. All of the 171 men working in the mine were killed in the series of three violent explosions. One worker, the leader of the rescue crew, died from [[carbon monoxide]] inhalation while attempting to reach the victims shortly after the explosion.<ref name="Hope Fading">{{cite news | title=Hopes for Miners Fading. Head of Rescue Crew Killed by Gas in Tunnel | publisher=Ogden Standard Examiner | date=March 8, 1924 | url=http://udn.lib.utah.edu/u?/ogden11,47506 | pages=1 | access-date=March 8, 2016 | archive-url=https://archive.today/20120716015327/http://udn.lib.utah.edu/u?/ogden11,47506# | archive-date=2012-07-16 | url-status=dead }}</ref><ref>{{cite news | title=Last Body Has Been Recovered from Castle Gate Disaster | publisher=Vernal Express | date=March 21, 1924 | url=http://udn.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/vernal2/id/36841 | access-date=March 8, 2016}}</ref>

Line 2:

The '''Castle Gate mine disaster''' occurred on March 8, 1924, in a [[coal mine]] near the town of [[Castle Gate, Utah]] (now dismantled), located approximately 90 miles (140 km) southeast of [[Salt Lake City, Utah|Salt Lake City]]. All of the 171 men working in the mine were killed in the series of three violent explosions. One worker, the leader of the rescue crew, died from [[carbon monoxide]] inhalation while attempting to reach the victims shortly after the explosion.<ref name="Hope Fading">{{cite news | title=Hopes for Miners Fading. Head of Rescue Crew Killed by Gas in Tunnel | publisher=Ogden Standard Examiner | date=March 8, 1924 | url=http://udn.lib.utah.edu/u?/ogden11,47506 | pages=1 | access-date=March 8, 2016 | archive-url=https://archive.today/20120716015327/http://udn.lib.utah.edu/u?/ogden11,47506# | archive-date=2012-07-16 | url-status=dead }}</ref><ref>{{cite news | title=Last Body Has Been Recovered from Castle Gate Disaster | publisher=Vernal Express | date=March 21, 1924 | url=http://udn.lib.utah.edu/cdm/ref/collection/vernal2/id/36841 | access-date=March 8, 2016}}</ref>

+

+ At least 24 out of the mine's 25 mules died in the explosion, along with an unknown number of horses and canaries.<ref>{{cite news | title=Reprinted From The Herald's Extra | publisher=The Sunday Herald | date=March 9, 1924 | url=https://www.newspapers.com/image/467406317/?terms=mule&match=1

+ | access-date=March 8, 2026}}</ref> Additionally, rescuers commandeered about 20 of the community's pet birds to use as poison gas level detectors during the rescue and recovery efforts. They had an additional 30 canaries shipped in overnight. About 16 canaries died in the process.<ref>{{cite news | title=Reprinted From The Herald's Extra | publisher=The Sunday Herald | date=March 9, 1924 | url=https://www.newspapers.com/image/467406317/?terms=mule&match=1

+ | access-date=March 8, 2026}}</ref>

==Explosions==

==Explosions==

As of March 8 2026, the disaster's Wikipedia page only mentioned the human victims.

I added the mules, horses, and canaries.

CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

July 2000 - Explodes again, killing 2 men

'I Just Wanted to Get Out': Survivor Tells of Fatal Mine Blast

BY FRANK CURRERI and SHAWN FOSTER
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PRICE — As Wes Ellner and a mining crew fought to extinguish a small coal fire, they felt the air rush out of the Willow Creek Mine.

"I didn't hear anything," the 21-year-old Ellner said Tuesday, hours after escaping an overnight mining accident that killed two, left him with minor burns and injured seven others. "I only felt it. When the air rushed back in, my mind was going in every direction. After the explosion, I couldn't see or hear anything. I just wanted to get out."

He crawled 2,000 feet to the mine entrance, feeling lucky to be alive. One of

■ Tragedy stalks area mines A-4

the miners who died had been standing 20 feet from Ellner when the blast hit.

Before midnight, mine officials said, a crew of 10 experienced coal miners were operating a longwall mining machine grinding away at a coal seam when a small cave-in occurred, sending rock crashing from the roof to the floor. The fallen coal caught fire, probably ignited by a spark from the collapse.

"It was just a little fire," Ellner said in disbelief. "We kept it pretty much under control."

But as the miners battled the blaze, it apparently ignited a pocket of methane

See MINE FIRE, Page A-4



Chris Zuppa/The Salt Lake Tribune

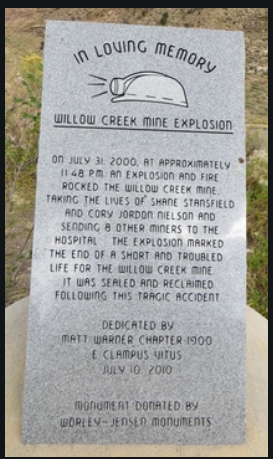
The Willow Creek mine, which claimed the lives of two workers in a probable methane gas fire, is located behind an old miners' cemetery near Price.

The **US Federal Bureau of Land Management** took over the Castle Gate/Willow Creek mine after the 2000 explosion.

Taxpayers are now responsible for the costs of environmental management and reclamation at the **toxic site**.

Jill Fillingim, one of Stansfield's Price cousins, has advice for those thinking of taking work at the Willow Creek Mine: Just say no.

"I don't even know why they even opened the mine back up," she said. "There was so much gas in there."



Castle Valley obituaries

Cory Nielson

PRICE - Cory Gordon Nielson, born June 21, 1972 in Price, died August 1, 2000 in Helper at the Willow Creek Mine.

Cory loved fishing, hunting, shooting his many guns, and most of all spending time with his family. Cory served three years in the U.S. Army and was discharged in 1995. He then moved to Crawford, Colo., where he spent four and one half years and started his career in mining. He moved to Lawrence in March 2000 and he began working at the Willow Creek Mine. Cory was loved by everyone who met him, and he is greatly missed and always will be.

At age 28 he left behind a loving wife, Tricia Nielson; son, Jace Gor-



Shane Stansfield

WELLINGTON/PRICE - Shane D. Stansfield, age 29, passed away Aug. 1, 2000 from injuries received in a coal mining accident.

He was born Oct. 11, 1970 in Price, to Terry and Shirley Moosman Stansfield. Married Micah Martin April 8, 1995 in Price.

Graduate Carbon High School class of 1988 and later attended C.E.U. Presently employed at Willow Creek Coal Mine. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, golfing and running field trials with his German Shorthair Pointers. Member P.R.C.A. Shane's passion in life was riding bareback horses, his love for rodeo and spending time with his family who he loved and cherished. He will



CASTLE GATE MINE

2025 - Still Burning

Castle Gate Mine No. 2 caught fire again in 2025.

Workers risked their lives sealing the vent with foam.

However, the fire still burns underground.



The Federal **Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement** plans to investigate the site further in **spring 2026**.

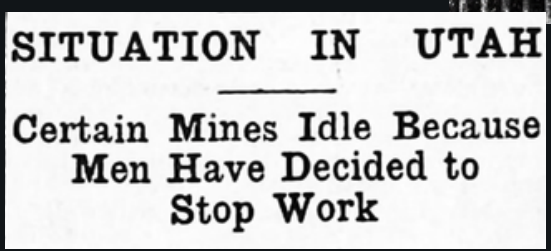
APPENDIX

1922 COAL STRIKE

Two years before the explosion, **Castle Gate** coal miners went on **strike** during a nationwide coal strike organized by the **United Mine Workers** union after failed contract re-negotiations.

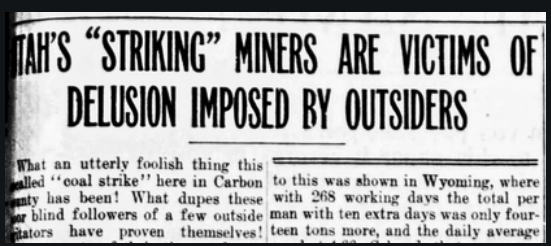
The nationwide coal strike lasted from **Apr 1 - Sep 11, 1922**.





SITUATION IN UTAH

Certain Mines Idle Because Men Have Decided to Stop Work

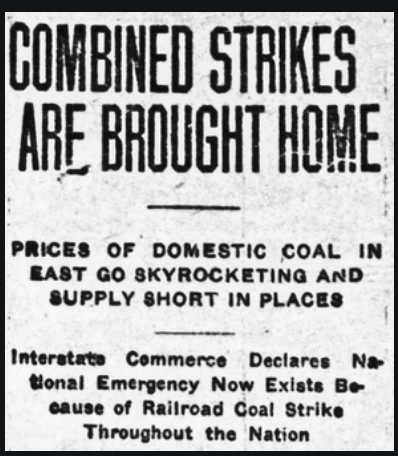


UTAH'S "STRIKING" MINERS ARE VICTIMS OF DELUSION IMPOSED BY OUTSIDERS

What an utterly foolish thing this called "coal strike" here in Carbon nty has been! What dupes these r blind followers of a few outside itators have proven themselves!

to this was shown in Wyoming, where with 268 working days the total per man with ten extra days was only four-teen tons more, and the daily average

Conservative papers blamed the strikes on "**outside agitators.**"



COMBINED STRIKES ARE BROUGHT HOME

PRICES OF DOMESTIC COAL IN EAST GO SKYROCKETING AND SUPPLY SHORT IN PLACES

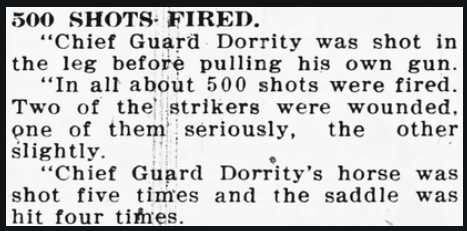
Interstate Commerce Declares National Emergency Now Exists Because of Railroad Coal Strike Throughout the Nation

Railroad workers launched a nationwide **solidarity strike** to support the miners.

CASTLE GATE MINE

1922 COAL STRIKE

Tensions between the company, its mine police, strikers, and scabs resulted in a fatal shootout.



500 SHOTS FIRED.

"Chief Guard Dorrity was shot in the leg before pulling his own gun.

"In all about 500 shots were fired. Two of the strikers were wounded, one of them seriously, the other slightly.

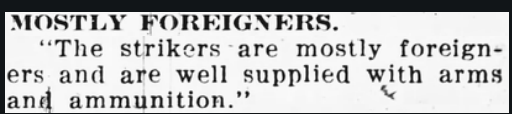
"Chief Guard Dorrity's horse was shot five times and the saddle was hit four times.

The miners shot a company mine guard's horse in the melee.

The company and its mine guards accused the strikers of firing first.

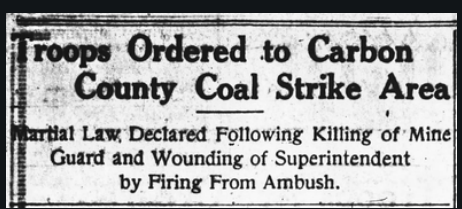
The miners accused the coal guards and strikebreakers of firing first.

Papers used xenophobia to discredit strikers. In addition to immigrant miners, the industry imported canaries.



MOSTLY FOREIGNERS.

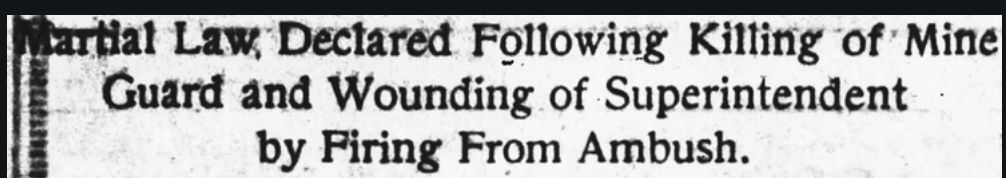
"The strikers are mostly foreigners and are well supplied with arms and ammunition."



Troops Ordered to Carbon County Coal Strike Area

Martial Law Declared Following Killing of Mine Guard and Wounding of Superintendent by Firing From Ambush.

Utah Governor Charles R. Mabey declared martial law and deployed the National Guard.



Martial Law Declared Following Killing of Mine Guard and Wounding of Superintendent by Firing From Ambush.

CASTLE GATE MINE

1922 COAL STRIKE

On Sep 2, 1922, even the **scabs** joined the strike.



Strikebreakers In Castle Gate Out on Strike

CASTLEGATE, Sept. 2—Strikebreakers employed by coal operators here since the strike, April 1, went out in turn on strike today because of dissatisfaction with wage proposals of the operators. One hundred and ten men went out. Only fifteen remain employed. Reports from Kenilworth and other camps indicate that probably all coal mines in Carbon county will be affected.

The strike resulted from a mass meeting last night when the new wage scale, prepared by operators in Salt Lake Thursday, was discussed. The new scale and bonuses proposed did not meet with satisfaction of the men.

The strikebreakers insisted upon a bonus of $1.05 a day from April 1, and a wage scale that much above the wages which they have been paid. The strike wage scale has been that much under wages paid prior to the strike, it is claimed.



COAL MINERS IN MEETING WANT OLD SCALE BACK

Castle Gate Men Select Committee to Ask Company to Restore 1921 Rate Instead of Increase.

The same day, the national **United Mine Workers** agreed to end the strike with a new contract re-establishing the previous contract's terms.

The **Castle Gate** miners demanded the same deal.

CASTLE GATE MINE DISASTER

1922 COAL STRIKE

The 1922 strike succeeded in maintaining wages.

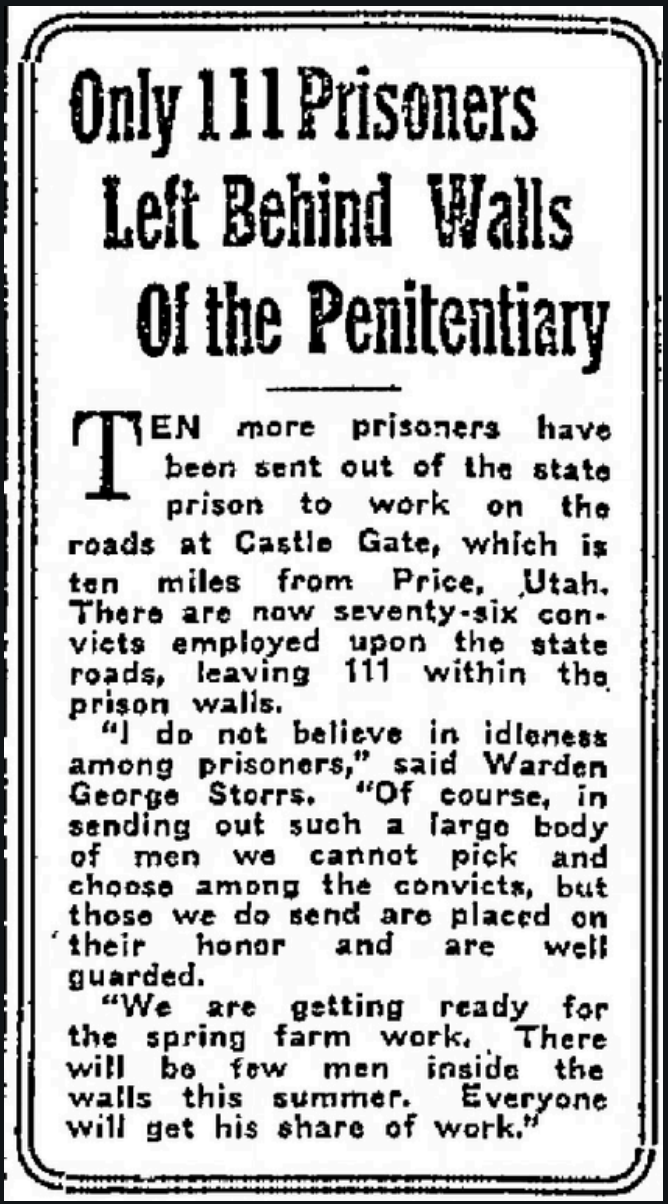
However, it also maintained existing safety protocols.

These proved insufficient two years later when Castle Gate Mine No. 2 exploded on Mar 8, 1922.



APPENDIX

In 1918, the state of Utah used prison laborers to build the roads around the mine.



Only 111 Prisoners Left Behind Walls Of the Penitentiary

TEN more prisoners have been sent out of the state prison to work on the roads at Castle Gate, which is ten miles from Price, Utah. There are now seventy-six convicts employed upon the state roads, leaving 111 within the prison walls.

"I do not believe in idleness among prisoners," said Warden George Storrs. "Of course, in sending out such a large body of men we cannot pick and choose among the convicts, but those we do send are placed on their honor and are well guarded.

"We are getting ready for the spring farm work. There will be few men inside the walls this summer. Everyone will get his share of work."



samuelhenry@gmail.com

@samuel_lament_of_hathor

samuel-baca-henry.com