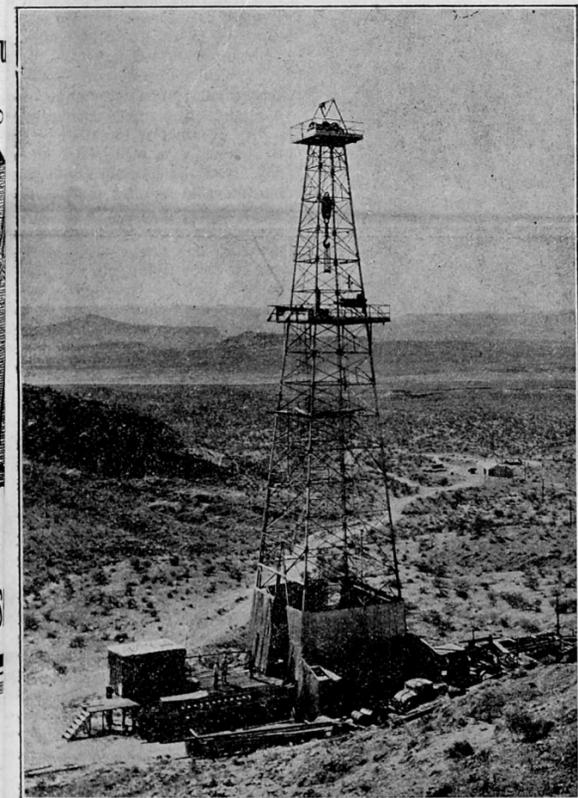


Ten People Dead In Oil Well Explosion

Blast Occurs While Lowering Dynamite In Arrowhead Pet. Well

Nine people, two of whom were women, were instantly killed when the shot which was being prepared to be lowered into the Escalante oil well exploded at approximately 9:40 p. m., Wednesday night, from causes unknown. Two women, Rosamond Snow and Lea Cottam, who were part of the group, were so badly injured that the latter died after they had been taken to the Washington County hospital and Miss Snow is so badly injured that it is not known whether she will live or not.

Two men, Bert Covington and Elmer Erickson, spectators, were injured by the blast. Mr. Erickson seriously when a piece of metal was blown into his chest. Considerable blood was lost by the injured man before he was given medical attention at the hospital. Dr. McGregor reports that surgery will be required before they know the extent of his injuries. Mr. Covington was bruised and lacerated about the head and his ears were injured but it is thought that his case will not prove to be serious.



A view of the steel rig of the Escalante well, scene of the explosion Wednesday night where nine people were killed and three seriously injured. It is located on the Bloomington Dome about seven miles south west of St. George. The well was being drilled by the Arrowhead Petroleum corporation.

The known dead are: Charles Alsop, president and general manager of the Arrowhead Petroleum company, by whom the Escalante well is leased and was being drilled; his wife Mrs. Mabel Alsop; J. M. Flickenger, veteran oil driller who was handling the shooting; Joseph Empey, Jr., electrician, his son-in-law, Kail Nicholson, assistant electrician; Billy Maloney, oil worker, son of Mrs. Vivien Maloney; Mrs. Olive Bleak Snow, wife of Joseph S. Snow; Ray Nelson, son of Mrs. Ernest Nelson; Joseph F. Kitterman, druggist at the Liberty Drug store.

Mr. and Mrs. Ellis Pickett, Wallace Blake, of St. George; A. Samson, an oil land salesman; Jack Williams, oil well driller, Mrs. C. M. Flickenger and her sister, and Tex Bethea, driller were also spectators at the scene but had all retired a distance from the well and so were not seriously injured.

According to Mr. Pickett, his wife and he had parked close to the well along with others, but Mr. Bethea came by and suggested that since they were under some high tension wires it would be better if they moved their car to another spot. Mrs. Pickett was nervous and so when they got to the place they first thought to move to, a spot about seventy-five yards from the well, she asked him to go a little farther so that

the place where they stopped was approximately 100 yards from the well. They had the back of the car toward the well and were sitting there listening to the radio. Mr. Pickett bases his estimate of the time when the explosion occurred by the fact that the 9:30 program had just been announced and he figures that it was about ten minutes from that time when the explosion came. Although they were 100 yards from the well, the top of their car was blown in, Mr. Pickett receiving a slight wound on the side of his head, and the right window was shattered, although it is of unbreakable glass. Several dents were made in the side of the car and one of the fenders was bent.

Immediately after the explosion, Bert Covington and Elmer Erickson came staggering out from among the falling debris, both injured as described. Not knowing how badly the men were hurt and realizing that help must be secured, Mr. Pickett immediately put these two men in the car and started for St. George. George A. Samson also came in and went to the Liberty Drug store and asked that they get doctors out at the well immediately. Mr. Pickett also attempted to get in touch with

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OIL WELL BLAST KILLS TEN; WORST DISASTER DIXIE HAS EVER KNOWN

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the doctors and left word that they be notified.

Cars, loaded with men were rushed out to the scene as no one knew the extent of the damage although it was thought that none of the ones that were in close could be alive.

Tex Bethea also left at the same time as Mr. Pickett and drove to the Hyrum Leany place where he phoned for Sheriff Cottam who left at once for the well. On his return, Mr. Bethea helped rescue Rosamond Snow and Lea Cottam and put them in his car and brought them to the hospital.

According to Wallace Blake's son, his father was the last man to leave the derrick and the first man back to the well after the explosion. Mr. Blake picked up Miss Snow and attempted to carry her out but because of a recent sickness had trouble doing so. He had her away from the well though when Mr. Bethea came back.

Rescue work was handicaped by the many live high tension wires that were scattered by the blast. Extreme precaution had to be used until these were turned off by Bert Riding when he had been notified to do so by C. W. Love, Jr., who was one of the first to arrive. Mr. Love, immediately turned around and came back into town to notify Mr. Riding. It is believed that the power was turned off at about 10:30 p.m.

Mr. Blake's son states that his father had felt a premonition of the disaster and he and Mr. Samson had gone to Ray Nelson's car, about 500 feet from the well, and were sitting in it when the accident occured. The back of the car, which was toward the well, was blown in and the back window smashed. Mr. Blake feels that had they not had the windows of the car up they would both have been seriously hurt.

People for miles around felt and heard the explosion. Many St. George residents were conscious of it but didn't associate it with anything serious since there had been considerable blasting being done in connection with the installation of the St. George sewage system.

Drilling operations had been going on for some time at the Escalante well and several oil sands had been encountered showing fine indications of oil so it had been decided to shoot the well. Preparations had been made during the day by the day crew and everything was ready at about 8 p.m. when the group left here. It is estimated that between 700 and 800 pounds of explosive material had been raised in preparation to letting it down into the well. This was in cartridges approximately ten feet long, five or six of these having been raised at the time the accident occured. The men had planned on lowering this to an oil sand stratta located about 3,000 feet deep. There was more powder in the powder house which was to be used if other shots were thought necessary. This powder burned without exploding.

The first arrivals after the accident found a terrible sight with the derrick a tangled mass of wreckage and fires burning in the different parts of the wrecked derrick. Although this structure was of steel, cement and galvanized iron, there was some timber among it and it was this that burned.

A coroner's inquest was held Thursday morning at the well, under the jurisdiction of Harold Snow, justice of the peace, and a jury was sworn in. An investigation was made of the bodies and C. M. Flickenger, Ray Nelson, Mrs. Joseph Snow, Mrs. Charles Alsop, and Joseph Kitterman were identified. The bodies of the other four: Charles Alsop, Joseph Empey, Jr., Kail Nicholson, and Billy Maloney were not found.

Joseph Kitterman, 46, was born at Salida, Kansas. He leaves a wife and two children who reside at Salt Lake City. The body was sealed in a casket and shipped Thursday to that city.

Officials of the Arrowhead Petroleum corporation report that their employees were covered by compensation insurance to the amount of \$5,000 each. This of course doesn't cover the spectators who were there at their own risk.

Graveside serivces for Mr. Flickenger will be held in the city cemetery at 10:00 a.m., Friday morning. Funerl aservices will be held for the rest of the group on Friday afternoon in the tabernacle. Business houses will close their doors and the entire town will turn out to mourn their dead. Obituaries will be published in the next issue of the News.