

START FIGHT ANEW ON OHIO MINE FIRE ABLAZE 52 YEARS

Flames Set by Striking Coal Miners Imperil New Billion Dollar Field.

New Straitsville, Ohio. — Works Progress administration workers were making headway here in their fight to extinguish the world's greatest coal-mine fire, which has burned in the Hocking valley continuously for fifty-two years. Resembling a smoking inferno by day and the entrance to the fabled gates of Hades by night, the fire has already destroyed \$50,000,000 worth of coal, experts have estimated, in the heart of the Hocking coal fields, one of the richest deposits in the world, and now threatens new fields, which have been valued at \$1,000,000,000.

The fire was deliberately set here in 1884 by striking coal miners and has defied three major attempts to extinguish it. Acres of farm lands and woods have been destroyed, homes have been abandoned, and the fire now running wild over an area of seven square miles, is still expanding. New Straitsville is in the southeastern part of Ohio.

Taking a lesson from the pioneers, who plowed furrows in the path of prairie fires to halt the sweep of the flames, the W. P. A. crews at work here are making preparations to isolate the fire.

The project will cost some \$365,000 and both Federal and state governments are sharing the expense.

Oil and Gas Wells in Area.

In several places a few yards from spots where smoke and fumes are escaping through fissures, oil and gas wells operate. In other places miners are now digging coal in sight of hillsides spotted with blazing craters.

Curiously enough, it has been only lately that the people in the district realized how much the ultimate loss might be if the fire is not put out, and put out soon. After numerous unsuccessful efforts business men in the district finally got the Federal government interested enough to have engineers work out a plan and then the aid of the W. P. A. was enlisted.

The story of how the fire was started is a strange one. In 1884 miners in Ohio went on strike. The first units of the miners' union in Ohio were organized here in that year and it was one of the most bitter labor struggles in American history.

Strikers Fire the Mines.

Six months after the strike began, the miners one night seized some loaded mine cars on a tippie, poured oil on them, fired the coal and ran the blazing cars into five different shafts. Within twenty-four hours the workings near the town were honeycombed with fire, and before a week had passed the creeping flames were beyond control. A number of ventilation channels, necessary in mining work, reached down into the hill where the torch cars had been spotted and they acted as smokestacks, providing a draft and fanning the spreading flames.

Year after year the fire expanded into new territory.

During the last half century a number of efforts have been made to check the flames and fortunes spent in the effort. Cement walls have been sunk into the earth at what were thought to be strategic points, but the intense heat cracked the cement and the fire passed on through almost as if the walls had been peanut brittle.

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BIG DEFICIT SHOWN FOR PANAMA CANAL

Revision of Toll System Is Seen Necessary.

Washington, D. C.—Citing a deficit of \$947,284 in the operation of the Panama canal for the fiscal year of 1936, the annual report of the secretary of war admits that the present system of collecting tolls permits inequalities, manipulations and endless reductions in charges, resulting in losses to the United States and unfair advantages to shipping interests.

The report of Secretary Harry H. Woodring makes no recommendation that congress increase the toll charges to a point where they will at least pay the interest charges on the capital investment of \$46½ million dollars and eliminate the unfair discrimination against producers of the central states in favor of those of the Pacific coast and eastern seaboard. However, he does recommend legislation to correct the present system of measurement of vessels, which, he declares, has "no justification in equity among the several types of ships and may be considered as a form of subsidy to certain types which are able to take advantage of the system."

"Subsidizes" East and West.

Manufacturers and other shippers of the Middle West have long maintained that the Panama canal toll charges are so low that the effect is to subsidize shippers of the East and West. It is cheaper, for example, for a manufacturer on the eastern seaboard to ship his products to the West coast by water than for a middle western manufacturer to ship to either coast by rail. The argument of these producers, as well as consumers' representatives, is that the toll charges should be increased to a point where they will give promise of amortizing the canal investment.

Legislation such as Secretary Woodring proposes failed in the last session of congress, but an act was passed which authorized the President to appoint a "neutral committee of three members for the purpose of making an independent study and investigation of the rules for the measurement of vessels using the Panama canal and the tolls that should be charged therefor."

Recommended Legislation.

The annual report recommends legislation for the following purposes: "First, to re-establish in the present law the system originally intended by the congress, which, through technical interpretation, has become ineffective—a system based upon the earning capacity of vessels and patterned generally after that in use for ship canals which has operated successfully over a period of many years and which is designed to avoid the very inequalities which result from the dual system now in effect.

"Second, to abolish the unsatisfactory, unfair, dual system of measurement whereby toll charges are based on one tonnage rating and the limiting factor on another different and smaller tonnage rating which is subject to manipulation.

"Third, to regain control over the tolls charged and to stop further and apparently endless reductions in tolls paid."

Fillmore Home Is Razed;

Lumber Is Sold for Barn

Geneva, N. Y. — The boyhood home of Millard Fillmore, thirteenth president of the United States, has been torn down because no organization showed enough interest in its preservation to pay the owners \$700.

Fillmore, elected vice president in 1848 on the Whig ticket, succeeded to the presidency in 1850 upon the death of Zachary Taylor and served until 1853. He was defeated for re-election by James Buchanan.

He had lived in the Cayuga county house until he was nineteen years old and returned to it many times. In recent years it had been unoccupied and the owners had attempted to sell it to some patriotic organization. Unable to obtain an offer of more than \$250, they dismantled it and sold the timber for construction of a barn.

That used car you have been looking for, is listed in the classified section.

FORMAL OPENING

Ross Motor Company's New Location, Barbur Boulevard at Whitaker Street, Friday and Saturday, March 5 and 6.

C. A. Ross, of the Ross Motor Company, pioneer Ford dealer of Multnomah, announces the opening of his new branch at Barbur Boulevard and Whitaker street, for March 5th and 6th. Besides handling the Ford and Lincoln Zepher, they will specialize in auto tune up, lubrication, washing, and painting of all cars, at the new location. The newest and most modern equipment has been installed.

Rich Womack vice-president, will be in charge of all activities at the new branch; in charge of service will be Robert Waldron, with four especially trained mechanics will be under his direct supervision. Both Mr. Womack and Waldron are long time employees of the Ross Motor. Special motorcycle service has been installed to insure fast delivery and pick up of all cars for service. Mr. Waldron estimates his department can turn out 30 jobs a day.

Mr. Ross is a pioneer Ford man, having been a Ford man since 1914. In 1927 Mr. Ross started his agency in Multnomah, and estimates his firm has sold upward of 2100 Fords since he has been in business. At the present time Ross Motors employs 17 people, all well versed in their particular

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