

With this data I made some more inquiries and learned the ax was in fact known to some folks I knew. I received information from friends in Canada and Arizona who had these devices and had used them. They both said "they work, but. . ." And this brings me back to why the miner may have given the ax up after a couple of tries. Sure the timber is split, but one then has to chase the "explosive ax (wedge)" down after its lengthy flight through the air, assuming you paid attention to its flight path.

After receiving this data I thought to myself, this is an interesting piece of hardware of fairly recent invention. I placed the ax into the pile of other junk gathering dust in the collection room. The ax has been unmolested for almost 20 years now. But. . ., on a recent trip to Bisbee, Arizona, for a little R & R, I was rooting through a book store when I came onto a DuPont magazine. When I looked through the small magazine for articles on explosives what jumped out was an article titled, "The Explosive Wedge." Needless to say the magazine was

returned to Albuquerque with me, and I learned that the ax in the collection also was manufactured by Hutchinson. What was of interest to me was that the article was dated 1932. A copy of the article from the DuPont magazine is shown here.

Now I'm beginning to wonder just how long these devices have been around. Does anyone know?

Yep! Necessity is the mother of INVENTION.

Data was obtained from the following sources:

"The Exploding Wedge," The DuPont Magazine, Vol. XXVI, February, 1932.

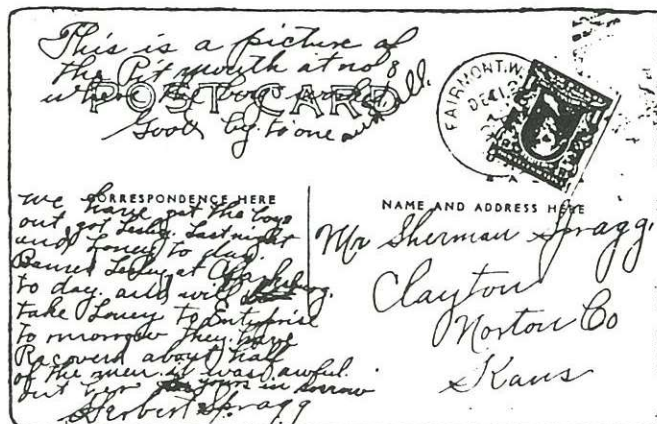
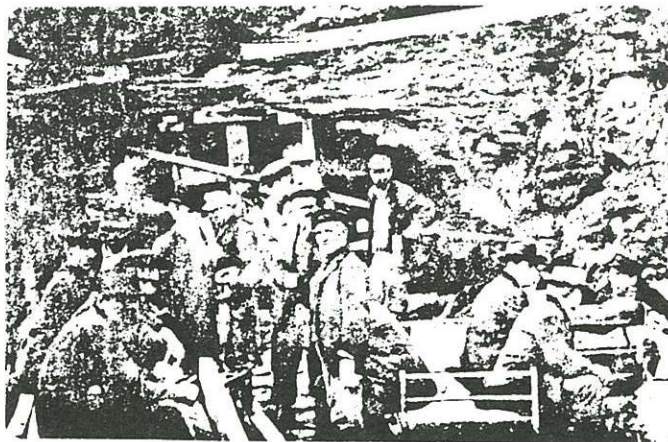
"Legal Pipe Bomb????," The Detonator, IABTI, Vol. II #3, May 1984.

"Log Splitting," Explosives for North American Engineers, by Cedric E. Gregory.

AMERICA'S WORST MINE DISASTER

by Ted Bobrink
Redlands, California

In the last issue of the *MAC*, (Number 20 Fall 1993) the first article on page 4 was titled, "A Postcard Full Of Sorrow." In that article I showed you a post card that I owned that depicted what I believed to be a mine accident of some kind at a coal mine near Fairmont, West Virginia. The writing on the back side of the card was informing a friend or relative that two men had been killed in a mine accident and had been taken out of the mine and were going to be buried. The only information as to the location of that accident was that the picture was taken at the mouth of pit # 8, and that the card was mailed on December 12 from Fairmont, West Virginia.



Well, I have to tell you that we were certainly surprised to find out from over a dozen readers that that post card was of the worst mine disaster in the history of the United States. On December 6, 1906 an explosion at the Monongah No. 6 & 8 mines snuffed out the lives of 361 miners. For five full days following the mine explosion the whole nation was consumed with the day by day information coming from the small town of Monongah where, almost overnight, several thousand people had gathered while mine rescue teams were pulling dead men out of the mine. At one time it was reported that over 500 men had lost their lives, but after five days the toll had dropped to 361. Every day as the bodies were brought out of the mine they were put into open caskets and laid out in the middle of the main street of town so that

relatives or friends could hopefully identify them.

The fact that this mine accident was such an important part of mining history, there are several readers who live near the town of Monongah doing research for an extensive article, complete with photos and day by day newspaper accounts. If you would like to be a part of that article for the next *MAC*, please contact us with any information that you would like to share.

Shown below is a photograph of a horse drawn hearse with caskets lined up on the sidewalk. (Photo courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown, West Virginia)

