

By this time, some of the Missouri workers felt they had been taken West under false pretenses. Each was notified he owed the Oregon Improvement Co. \$45 for his fare and that he must do his purchasing at the company store.

As groups of the new arrivals went underground, they discovered that the mine was more steeply pitched than those of the Middle West. Workers had to get used to small avalanches of coal falling on them.

The company expected the whites to leave, but there was no mass departure, in spite of increasing discontent. Miners at Newcastle, Black Diamond, Cedar Mountain and Issaquah struck in sympathy. Railroad crews refused to handle coal from Franklin. The port of Seattle, which had been shipping 5,500 tons weekly, felt the pinch. So did the merchants. The supply of fuel ran low.

The Franklin band, reputedly the best musical organization north of San Francisco, gave concerts in Seattle for the benefit of unemployed comrades.

Violence had been expected from the locked-out miners, but the only firing of weapons was on the outskirts of Franklin where guards drilled the newcomers in the manual of arms. Many of the workers never had handled a firearm, and it was feared recklessness on their part might result in tragedy.

An altercation between Ike Perkins, a mule driver, and Charles F. Bayley, who served as valet for Corey, resulted in the fatal shooting of a bystander named Black. Perkins missed when he aimed his company-issue pistol at Bayley, whom he had known and quarreled with in Springfield, Ill. Corey succeeded in convincing the coroner that his valet had no part in the episode: the shooting was written down as accidental and Perkins vanished from the scene.

Other reports reached Seattle of a man scalded when a boiler head blew out, and of a man shot and half a dozen badly beaten during a Saturday night brawl.

On May 25 miners from Black Diamond, Franklin and surrounding communities, 900 strong, gathered on the flat at Franklin to protest continuance of the armed occupation. Sheriff Wollery and six deputies were on hand to maintain order.

Simultaneously a rival meeting was staged inside the fenced area and the newcomers adopted a resolution condemning the union's attitude as "a menace to true American citizenship." However, after the meeting a number of recruits expressed willingness to return to their homes if their fares were paid.

Both whites and Negroes gradually drifted away from Franklin and found employment nearby at Issaquah, Carbonado and elsewhere. Mrs. Collins recalled, "We were never bothered by the newcomers. We kept to ourselves during the trouble. Some of the Pinkertons boarded at our house. Soon my father moved to Carbonado."

The company insisted throughout that it was making no money from the mines. It went into receivership, blaming the financial difficulties on labor troubles, fires and loss of a contract to supply coal to the Oregon Railway and Navigation Co.

Several persons were slightly burned by fire damp before a serious conflagration broke out on June 5, 1893. It is thought to have originated from the contact of open flame lights, worn by men timbering an airway, with moss which filled the cracks.

The long-wall method of mining, tried out in the new tunnel in

1891, had to be abandoned because of constant caving of chutes and consequent crushing of the coal.

Troubles reached a climax on the morning of August 24, 1894, when 37 miners were suffocated by smoke from a fire, probably caused by spontaneous combustion. Powdered coal and other refuse had shown a tendency to become heated in the Franklin mine sufficient to start minor fires.

A coroner's jury declared the disaster to have been incendiary, although no evidence supported this theory. The state mine inspector blamed the deaths on the ignorance of the unknown person who, without orders, stopped the ventilation fan at a critical moment. In the 15 minutes before it was turned on again, the victims were overcome.

They had ample opportunity to escape, the inspector said, but paused to extinguish the fire with buckets of water. When the fan ceased circulating the air, they retreated to the bottom of the slope. Descending smoke cut off their escape while they were trying to get out through a gangway. This tragic error left 14 women without husbands and made 38 children orphans.

Troubles were not over yet. On June 24, 1895, four men were seriously burned, one fatally, in an explosion of fire damp. Crews were repairing the damage when another explosion was caused by the still-burning fire. The foreman was fatally injured and three other men were burned.

In October four more men lost their lives from smoke inhalation. They had descended in a car and were heading for their work when someone tried to extinguish a fire at a burning gas blower, sending a cloud of fumes in their direction.

The Oregon Improvement Co. was reorganized in 1895, but this did not improve the situation at Franklin. In July, 1896, the mine was on fire for the third time in two years.

"Surely there is something wrong" a contemporary writer observed.

Company affairs went from bad to worse. The Franklin slope was abandoned. Pumps, pipes, rails and cars were removed and the mine was allowed to fill with water. A large hoist remained to mark the mine for a number of years. It finally was moved east of the Cascades.

The Pacific Coast Co., with vast steamship, railroad and property interests, took over the Oregon Improvement Co. in 1902 three new shafts were opened at Franklin. One went down 3,000 feet.

After the Second World War, the company constructed a bridge across the gorge a quarter of a mile downstream from the old town and drove tunnels in the opposite bank. It also operated an open-pit mine in the top of the hill above Franklin, where a 45-foot-thick vein was exposed. The pit closed eight years ago when the Pacific Coast Co. sold its coal interests. The Pacific Coast Coal Co., which acquired the property, is headed by John H. Morris of the Palmer Coking Coal Co. The only digging near Franklin now is in another tunnel opened about five years ago in the gorge.

Evan Morris, secretary of the firm, said that exploration underground near Franklin invariably reveals old workings. You can find more of Franklin beneath the surface than remains on top of the ground.