

Engineer With Centennial Eureka Thirty two Years

When the history of the Centennial Eureka mine is written it will not be complete without it covers the record of Engineer Ben Thurmond and some of the other old timers of Tintic who have served the company so faithfully. First of all Mr Thurmond must be mentioned because his record of service with this one mine dates farther back than that of any other man who was connected with the mine when it closed down during the present week. Ben started with the company on March 13th 1890 and his first employment was underground. He remained in the mine but a short time however being advanced to the position of fireman which he held about six months and then went on the engine. This was in January 1891. At that time the mine was using an old hoisting engine of a rather crude type and the shaft was but 400 feet deep containing a single compartment and having some ore on the 200 and 300 levels.

The present hoist was installed in 1892 and it is one of the best and fastest steam hoisting engines ever made. Engineer Thurmond helped to lumber up the new machine and he has operated it continuously since that time except for a few months in 1898 when the Centennial Eureka was closed down having lost the ore.

Conditions were none too favorable in the mining game during 1898 but a more aggressive policy which was soon mapped out by the management resulted in the ore deposits again being picked up and from that time until the present the mine has been a heavy producer.

For years at a stretch the Centennial Eureka shipped in the neighborhood of fifty carloads or 2500 tons of ore weekly leading all of the other mines of this district in the matter of ore production and profits and employing from 400 to 500 men.

When interviewed yesterday Mr Thurmond was still standing with his hands on the levers of the big engine helping to hoist the mules tools etc. from the famous old bonanza. His very touch of the engine seemed in the nature of a caress. For thirty years he has shifted its levers and felt the pulsa-

tion of its power learning its moods and becoming so familiar with its workings that every unusual movement and every noise telegraphed a story to his sensitive fingers and alert mind. In all the time that Ben Thurmond has shifted the levers controlling the big and powerful engine at this mine he has never had an accident—not a single person has received even the slightest injury because of an erratic movement of the cage on which so many precious lives were daily lowered into and hoisted from the underground workings of this mine not a single serious mishap has taken place while he has been engaged in the handling of ore timbers or waste. It is doubtful if there is another hoisting engineer in the whole western country who can boast of the same remarkable record.

When asked regarding the operation of the engine during the time that the Centennial Eureka mine was most prosperous he said that his best record was 450 mine cars of ore in eight hours this being in addition to the lowering and the hoisting of men on his shift and the handling of timbers and other supplies needed underground and other incidental cage work. On the day that he made this record the engine was idle from 10 to 11 20 and of course no large amount of timber was handled. His best four hour record was 295 cars of ore which was hoisted from the various levels between the 300 and 1800 levels most of it from the lower levels of the mine. During the best days of the Centennial Eureka mine the engineers were called upon to pull from 350 to 380 carloads of ore per shift besides handling the men and taking care of other cage work. Such prosperity lasted for more than 15 years during which time the mine made millions for its fortunate owners.

Mr Thurmond was on shift at the time of the disastrous mine fire which took place in 1905 remaining at his post until the last man was brought to the surface. The fire raged for several days and resulted in the loss of one life William Menlove a shift boss. Mr Thurmond also handled the engine following the horrible cave in which on Sept. 17, 1914 snuffed out the lives of eleven men. Twelve were caught in the cave and only one Jacob Pinterella escaped.

Engineers who have worked opposite Mr Thurmond during the long period of service are: Alex Gourley, Fred Richan, Byron Thurmond, Jules Peterson, Harold Beck and Jack Fitzgerald. Superintendents who have come and gone during the same period are J. D. Kendall, Captain Smith, Newton Dunyon who were with the old company before the mine was acquired by the United States people also Robert A. Brown, Andrew Mayberry and John Enlund. This mine has been famous for being able to hold valuable employees. Mr Brown was with the company for more than a score of years. John Enlund now superintendent has served in various capacities for 22 years. I. J. Barnard bookkeeper 22 years. Fred Richan engineer 18 years. Marcellus Schmidt fireman (deceased) 15 years. C. A. Gill fireman 15 years. Byron Thurmond engineer mechanic and later master mechanic 20 years.

Ben Thurmond will remain with the Centennial Eureka company for the present as watchman of the surface workings. I. J. Barnard will act in the same capacity at the Holden Tunnel workings.