

BENNINGTON COURT OF INQUIRY

Blame for the Explosion is Chiefly Laid Upon Ensign Charles T. Wade, U. S. N.

BOILERS IN FAIR CONDITION.

Fireman D. N. Holland Shut Off Steam Valve, Preventing Gauge from Recording.

Washington, Aug. 21.—Secty. Bonaparte today received, and as soon as he had time read, made public the findings of the court of inquiry which investigated the explosion on the gunboat Bennington at San Diego, Cal., on July 21. The findings were a complete surprise, for they at once set at rest the stories that had been circulated to the effect that the Bennington's boilers and perhaps those of other naval vessels of the same age were defective.

As a matter of fact, the court found the explosion resulted from the closing of a valve which admitted the exploded boiler with its steam gauge so that the pressure on the boiler may have been several hundred pounds to the square inch when the accident occurred.

While D. N. Holland was accorded to the officers and men for their conduct during the harrowing scenes following the accident, the officers and men who were responsible, in the opinion of the court, are pointed out and court-martial proceedings suggested in view of the only one of them surviving, Ensign Charles T. Wade.

The court consisted of Commodore Stevenson, retired, and Capt. E. J. Moore and Capt. Thomas Phelps. The findings were as follows:

"The ship was in an excellent state of repair and in a good and efficient condition with the exception of her boilers, which were in fair condition and efficient, considering their age (about 14 years) and the use to which they had been subjected."

Continuing:

"On July 21, after both boilers had been filled and the furnaces started, it was observed that the steam gauge on boiler 'B' showed about five pounds of steam pressure, and that the pressure on the boiler was the cause of the explosion. The findings of the court were that the steam gauge was faulty, and that the safety valves had not opened, and that the safety valves had not closed, and that the safety valves had not been tested in accordance with the regulations."

"The finding goes on to state that about 15:30 o'clock a small leak was found in boiler 'B'. A request was made by the engineer to come and attend to the leak, when the explosion occurred. All that happened after the explosion is described at considerable length. The court said:

"No one seems to have noticed any escape of steam from the safety valves of any of the boilers, and no one can ascertain if any of the safety valves blew off. It is also of the opinion that we can find no record of the safety valve of boiler 'B' having been overhauled since July, 1904, nor any positive evidence of its having been done, though orders had been given for this to be done in March, 1905, that there is no record of the sentinel valves having been tested since July, 1904, that the safety valves were set at 125 pounds; that en route from Honolulu to this port orders were given to carry the steam pressure at from 130 to 135 pounds, not to exceed the latter, but the safety valves were not changed; that this order had been clearly understood; that the hand gear for lifting the safety valves was not in working order, and there is no record nor direct evidence that the safety valves had been tested in accordance with the safety regulations."

"The discipline seems to have been excellent, and everything that could be done by the surviving officers and men was done in a cool and courageous manner, especially that of himself, of what he could do for the injured sailors and the safety of his ship; that volunteer aid of every kind came from shore, and the injured were promptly removed to the regular and improvised hospitals, where all was done that mortal could do to alleviate their suffering and aid in their recovery, while the survivors were sent to various upholding establishments where they were prepared for burial; that after an examination of the collapsed furnace line and from physical tests that we have had made, the material of this furnace line was of good quality, and the ship was found to be fitting and settling when tug was ob-

"The court is of the further opinion that further proceedings should be had in the case of Ensign Charles T. Wade, U. S. N., who was in charge of the engineering department of the U. S. S. Bennington at the time of the explosion and since Oct. 22, 1904, in this, that the said Ensign Charles T. Wade, U. S. N., did fail in his own person to see that the safety valve on boiler 'B' was overhauled at the proper time and kept in good working order, but did accept the sentinel valves from the sentinel, or substitutes, that it had been overhauled in March, 1905; and further, that he is the said Ensign Charles T. Wade, U. S. N., did fail to keep the sentinel valves on the boilers in good working order; and further, that he is the said Ensign Charles T. Wade, U. S. N., did fail to cause the safety and sentinel

"One in Cigar Box Sent Captain O'Reilly of N. Y. City.

New York, Aug. 21.—Guncotton enough to kill nine, arranged in an internal machine and disguised as a cigar box, was seized yesterday by Fred C. Poole, Capt. Miles O'Reilly.

Capt. O'Reilly received a cigar box which contained nine sticks of dynamite, and after taking it out, he turned it upside down, causing a suspicion. When the box had been carefully opened at the ends matches were found glued to the inner surface in such a manner that they would be ignited on entry paper by the friction necessary to raise the lid.

The police found that fuses of one of the half dozen matches would have caused the death of Capt. O'Reilly.

STATISTICIAN JOHN HYDE

Sick in London, and Prohibited From Doing Business.

London, Aug. 21.—John Hyde, former statistician of the United States government, now living in London, and present in London, is under the care of a physician and is prohibited by his physician from attending to business. To the Associated Press tonight said:

"I have just seen for the first time the revised cotton acreage report, issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture on July 23. The cotton estimating board reduces the official estimate of June 2 by more than 1,000,000 acres and even goes so far as to say that I made the estimate lower than the reports received from official cotton estimators in the country who wanted to. To this statement I give unqualified denial and assert that the most trustworthy of the various sets of figures on which the report of June 2 was based, afforded the most ample warrant for my estimate."

"It is only an entire disregard of the facts of country to toward correspondents that the department's acreage reports can be prevented from once more becoming the laughing stock of the world. When concerned only with the condition of the growing crop, except under special circumstances, the reports of county and township correspondents are without value. When, however, these correspondents report either upon the acreage or upon the size of the crop in bales, their reports are absolutely worthless."

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