

ESTABLISHED IN 1873

LONDON, KENTUCKY

EIGHTY-SECOND YEAR

Interesting Facts Are Noted On County's Early Mining Industry

By Jno. C. McNeil and from notes supplied by Mr. McNeil, Native of Pittsburg, Now of Wheelwright, Kentucky

Kentucky was indeed fortunate in the fact that Gov. J. Proctor Knott appointed C. J. Norwood as the first State Inspector of Mines. One prediction will be of interest, even though it never did materialize and that was his prediction of the "Kentucky Division of the projected Carolina, Cumberland Gap and Chicago Railroad," with a footnote stating: "This division begins at London, Laurel County."

Mine Bosses In speaking of those "who 'bossed' these mines in those days," Mr. McNeil wrote: "My uncle, William McNeil and his brother Bob (my father) came to Laurel county from Muhlenberg county, sons of an old Scotch Miner who first mined coal in the Georges Creek field in Maryland; then down to the Brazil Block field in Indiana, and then to Muhlenberg county in Western Kentucky."

The former was superintendent for the Pitman Coal Co. and the latter worked for his brother-in-law, Mike Hope. Others recalled in this connection and the mines for which they worked, included: Robert Brown, father of Renuus and Bob, not placed.

D. W. Romark, Laurel. W. C. Webb, Peacock. J. W. McBrayer, Manchester. Rolly Beatty, for S. L. Bastin. W. R. Ballow, F. D. Wood and Wm. Miller, Pittsburg. Wm. Heath, Lily.

Still others are mentioned in lists of "Mine Operations."

J. D. Cain was assistant mine inspector, and was succeeded in 1907 by Perry V. Cole.

Union Leaders Pittsburg witnessed some of the earlier movements to unionize the miners and furnished a number of important leaders in that movement.

W. C. Webb was one time national vice president of the Knights of Labor during the days of Terrence V. Powderly. John J. Jeffrey was for many years identified with the Union movement. Two Pittsburgers, W. D. Duncan, deceased, Central

City, and James W. Ridings of Middlesboro, have been members of the International Executive Board of the United Mine Workers; and many from Pittsburg have been field workers for the UMW.

Mine Operations In Laurel County, As Reported 1895 and 1909

The following lists of mines and their operators in Laurel county are taken from annual reports for this edition by Jno. C. McNeil of Wheelwright:

The following information is from the 1895 Annual Report where different from the 1898-1909 lists:

Peacock Coal Company—W. R. Letcher, president; Jno. E. Greenleaf, treasurer; G. F. Anderson, superintendent and secretary.

Union Coal Company—Thompson Jeffrey, Manager.

Pitman Coal Company—William McNeil, superintendent.

Victoria Coal Company—Lewis Baxter, president.

Star Coal Company—Jonathan McNeil, president; R. J. Morris, secretary and treasurer; Geo. W. Harrison, superintendent.

Diamond Coal Company—J. C. McKee, secretary.

Little Silver Coal Co.—A. M. Crooke, president.

The following data is taken from the 1898 and 1909 Annual Reports: Peacock Coal Company—C. D. Anderson, president; G. F. Anderson, secretary and general manager.

East Altamont—C. L. and Robert Green, operating as Green Bros. Lily Coal and Coke Co.—L. L. Parks, proprietor.

Kentucky Coal Co.—H. C. Thompson, general manager. Grant Mine—W. R. Grant, proprietor.

East Bernstadt Coal Co.—W. H. Litton, secretary; J. C. Pritchard, manager.

Swiss Mining Co.—A co-operative association of miners.

Altamont Coal Mining Co.—William McHugh, president; John W. Weed, secretary; A. J. Totten, manager.

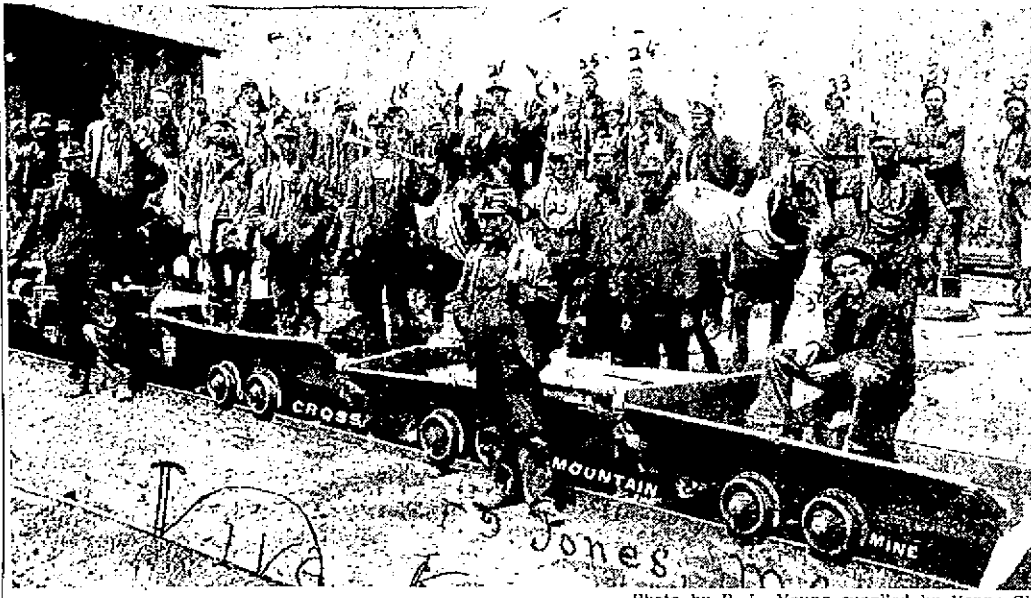
Victoria Coal Company—W. A. Pugh, president; J. E. Cornell, secretary; J. J. Hughes, treasurer.

Laurel Coal Company—George Givens, president; J. W. Bastin, secretary and general manager.

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Laurel Has First Coal Field In Southeastern Kentucky

The Cross Mountain Mine, Near East Bernstadt



ALSO CALLED WILDCAT MINE. At time this picture was taken, May 9, 1910, the mine was operated by George W. Curvin. F. C. Jones, manager at the time, operated it later. From left as numbered: 6 Marion Roe, 7 Jim Lee Owens, 8 Andrew Gill, 9 Elige Miller, 10 Pleas Miller, 11 Daniel Oakley, 12 Dave Hunt, 13 Sam Carl, 14 Bert Roe, 15 Willis Brackett, 16 —, 17 John Inman, 18 —, 19 John Money, 20 Stanley Sparks, 21 Bob Jones, 22 Park Webb, 23 Henry Vance, 24 —, 25 George Brackett, 26 —, 27 Floyd Jones, 28 West Tackett, 29 Henry Gill, 30 John Gill, 31 Dan Sparks, 32 Ben Miller, 33 —, 34 John Harrison, 35 Ben Ramsey, 36 George Jones, 37 Ira Warren, 38 Dave Vance.

Analysis And Coking Tests Of Pittsburg Coal

The following results of tests of Pittsburg coal are furnished by Jno. C. McNeil, from official reports.

In 1887, Ballard Thurston, of the Geological Survey, took sam-

Table with 5 columns: Analysis, Laurel (Full Seam), Laurel (Slack), Peacock, Pitman. Rows include Moisture, Fixed Carbon, Ash, Sulphur.

The coal analysis from the Pitman Coal Company's mine showed: Moisture and volatile 37.12, fixed

A Few Coal Statistics Laurel Operator For Many Years

By S. A. Mory, Sr. In 1890, the year the Kentucky Department of Mines began keeping tonnage separately by counties, 291,178 tons were shipped from Laurel county. The highest tonnage was in 1903, with 408,762 tons shipped. By 1920 it had dropped to 9,444 tons, and in 1913 was the all-time low of 4,990 tons. In 1942 a war time effort brought production up to 248,622 tons, all from Laurel county "truck" mines.



SAM L. BASTIN 1867-1950 For many years in charge of the Star Coal Company, Mr. Bastin was the last survivor of the major operators during the heyday of mining in Laurel county.

History of Coal Mining In Laurel County

In 1944 Messrs S. L. Bastin and S. A. Mory, Sr., wrote a history of coal mining in Laurel county, which was published by The Sentinel-Echo. In booklet form, 20 pages and cover, copies of "Coal Mining in Laurel County, Ky." may be had at this office.

Wolf Head Brings \$150

Wm. A. Storm brought in a wolf's head in February 1879, and for it received a \$150.00 reward. It was a big wolf, six inches between its eyes. From the time Knox county was organized in 1800, there were standing rewards for killing wolves. Then they were paying 8 shillings per head.

Major Coal Operations Begin In 1882 At Altamont; County Has Small Mines Much Earlier

By ERNEST L. ANOES

Kentucky's first commercial coal mine was probably the drift mine opened in 1820 by William McLean on the Green River in Muhlenberg county. Others followed and the first important mine was likely the Cook Mine opened in 1836 on Tradewater River in Union county by Charles H. Cook of New Orleans from which coal was sent down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

"There appeared to be an abundance of coal," said W. W. Mather, geologist and mining engineer, in his Report on the Geological Reconnaissance of Kentucky made in 1838, "at different points on Cumberland river between the falls and the mouth of Buck creek, seven miles above the Great Shoals." At the time of the survey coal was being mined at three points, the first, or highest, about a half mile above the mouth of Laurel and the second a little more than a mile below the mouth of Laurel, both on the left or now Whitley side of Cumberland river. Only two boat loads from each of these places had been sent down the river to Nashville, apparently that year. There was no sign of coal having been mined between these and the "principal mines, about eighteen miles below the mouth of Laurel."

But there, within a distance of one and a half miles, "many mines have been opened, some of which are being worked at present and others have been abandoned."

First Shipper And Last Survivor

First Southeastern Kentucky Coal Was River Borne It was said that the first coal was taken from the out-crops of these veins in 1827 and that in 1828 "five boats arrived at Nashville." The first drift or underground working was begun in 1829. Till 1834 twenty-five to thirty-five boat loads averaging 1750 bushels (70 tons) each, were sent annually from the landing; and between 1834 and 1837, from 70 to 100 boat loads per annum, averaging 3,500 bushels, had been sent down the river. A rise of 16.8 feet was required at the coal landing to enable these larger boats (barges), drawing four feet of water, to pass the Great Shoals with safety.

A small railway carried the coal from the drift mouth to the top of the cliff from where it went to a landing on the river by means of an inclined plane. In the early days coal was "wedged down," a steel wedge being driven into the coal and it forced down. The cars of pre-Civil War ran on wooden rails, the earlier rails, instead of the wheels, having flanges. The cars held some 800 pounds. Four seams of coal at the mouth of Laurel were described: 1, in the bed of the river; 2, twenty feet above the water and about two,

feet thick; 3, about 35 feet above the water, forty inches thick; 4, sixty or eighty feet above the river, four feet thick. It was from the third vein that the four boat loads of coal had been taken.

Not until about 1866 when the Ashland Coal & Iron Railway opened mines in Carter county was there a mine in eastern Kentucky of more than local importance. A mine was opened on Wood's creek in Laurel county in 1872 by John Pitman & Co. and continued for many years. The potential coal fields of Southeastern Kentucky were opened when the L. & N. was completed to Livingston in September 1870, and to the Tennessee line in April 1883.

First Important Operations On Railroads In Laurel County

The first important railroad operation in the Southeastern Kentucky coal fields began in Laurel county when the Altamont Coal Company, headed by Cassius (Cash) Crooke of Richmond, acquired some 3,500 acres of land from the heirs of the original Jonathan McNeil and opened a mine on Hazelpatch Creek shortly after the railroad reached London in July 1882. The town of Altamont was laid out and a narrow gauge tram-road built from the tippie at that point to the mine about a half mile away. Ten or twelve cars could be drawn by the mule used on the tram-road. Mr. Crooke, who began his mining career at Sand Gap in Jackson county in 1865 and later was operating a mine at Pine Hill, was reputedly the first man to ship Kentucky coal to market by rail. More about the Altamont Coal Co. will be found under head of Altamont and Manchester Railroad on page L1.

Shortly after the Altamont mine opened, the Laurel, Peacock and Pitman mines at Pittsburg and the Vulcan near East Bernstadt were opened and by the end of 1883 the Aetna, Black Diamond, Star and Queen City were operating. In 1884 about 550 men were employed. The Altamont mine, the largest and best equipped mine in the county and one of the most extensive in the state, employed 150 men.

Fifteen Major and 27 Minor Operations In 1887

In 1887 there were 75 major mines and numerous small "family" mines in the State of Kentucky. Laurel county had fifteen of the major ones and 27 of the smaller of which 6 were near Bush's Store, 1 at Tuttle, 3 at Boreling, 5 at McWhorter, 2 at Larue, 2 at Greenmount, 2 at Hazel Patch, 1 at Mershon's and 5 at London. Stephen Chesnut, David Asher, John Chesnut, Ed Maples and W. T. Moren operated the

Victoria Coal Co. Store in 1898

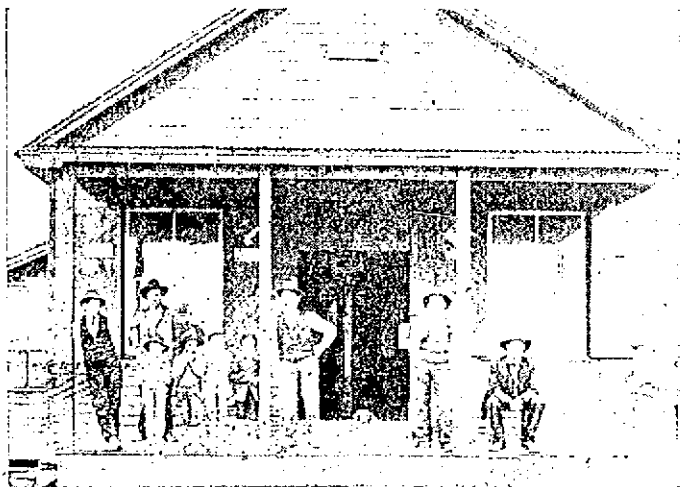


Photo supplied by Thompson Jeffrey. In Baxtertown, Pittsburg, Ky., the man at the second post of the Victoria Coal Co. store is Ed Cornell, father of Arthur Cornell. Others are unidentified.

Pittsburg Coal Co. Mine Tippie About 1906

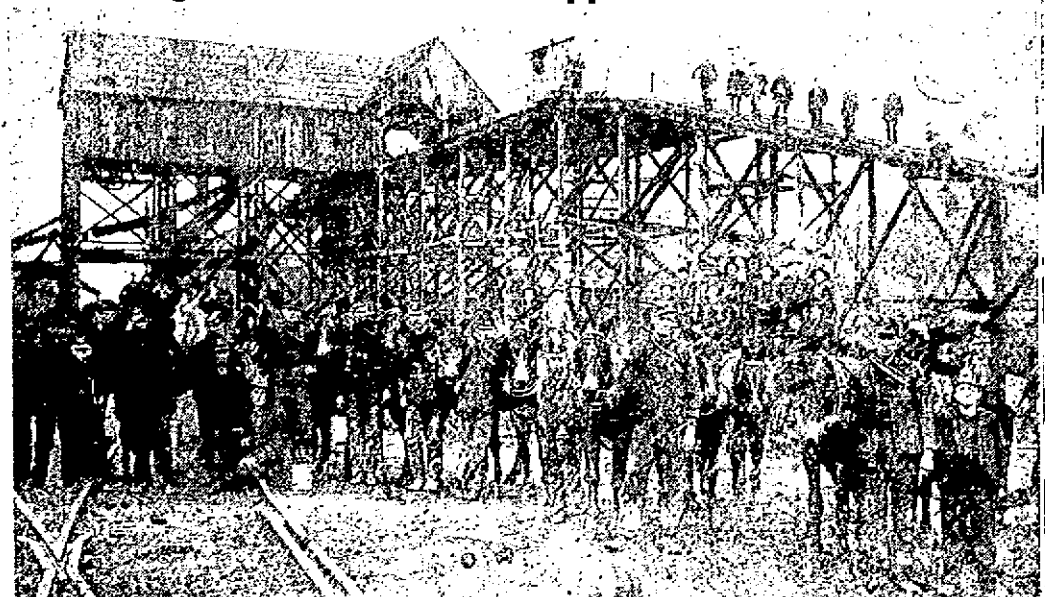
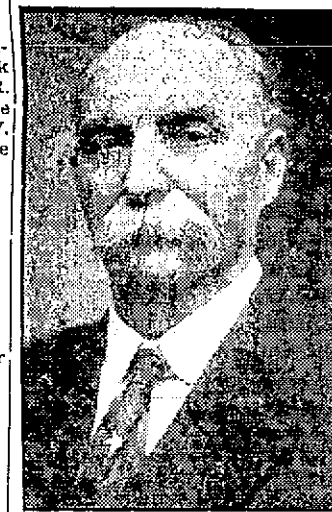


Photo supplied by James Woody. From left: Fred Zimmerman (only left side showing), Henry Zimmerman, Claude Miller, John Storms, Frank Welch, Richard Delph, unknown, Jim Bullock (sitting), Bill Welch, Jim Woody, George Gaines Sr., Oscar Milbern (better known as Buster Southard), Jim Selvy, Lige Owens, Walter Moore, Bud Selvy, unknown (with bucket under arm). In back row at right: Charlie Bryant, Jim Miller, Jim Johnson, John R. Adams, Louis Bowling, Bob Jackson, Harrison Miller, Frank Pruitt, Bob Miller. Third man on tippie under cross mark is "Old Man Gaines".



HENRY C. THOMPSON 1854-1946

As organizer and vice president of the Peacock Coal Co., Mr. Thompson was the first shipper of coal from the Pittsburg field, and unless by the Altamont Coal Co. from Laurel county. He was the last survivor of the original operators of railroad mines in the county.

Corn was all "laid by" at East Bernstadt on July 18, 1907, according to The London Sentinel.

The Union Coal Co. Mine, Pittsburg, In 1886



Photo supplied by Thompson Jeffrey. First and fourth from left are John Warren and John McIlquham, with mules. In white shirt, and vest and cap, is John Jeffrey; in white shirt beside him is Tom A. Jeffrey; and with beard and miners cap and thumbs in vest is Tom Jeffrey, father of the two. Back of Tom Jeffrey in vest is Johnnie Williams. With second mule is Bob McAlister.