HISTORIC CONTEXT
AND
PREDICTIVE MODEL DOCUMENT

ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY OF COAL MINING RELATED RESOURCES OF PITTSBURG COUNTY

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Submitted by:

Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey
Department of History
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-0611

To:

State Historic Preservation Office
Oklahoma Historical Society
Wiley Post Historical Building
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INTRODUCTION

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, establishes a unique federal-state-local partnership for the identification, evaluation, and protection of significant prehistoric and historic resources. Such an ambitious task, however, would be virtually impossible without comprehensive planning. Only through a systematic approach can such resources actually be identified, evaluated, registered, and treated in a manner that is both efficient and provides a useful land-management tool. As detailed in "Archeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines" (Federal Register, 29 September 1983: 44716-44742), each activity builds upon the results of the other. Planning dictates where program emphases lie and defines major goals. This, in turn, dictates what shape the identification effort will take. The resources thereby identified then may be evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. Those listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or determined eligible, thus receive the limited protection which accompanies inclusion. Should the owner of a listed property seek available investment tax credits, the results of the comprehensive plan are incorporated in the treatment phase. Moreover, throughout the entire process, data gaps and new areas warranting attention are revealed, information which is included into future planning. In short, comprehensive preservation planning is a series of interrelated and continuous steps.

At the heart of the comprehensive planning process lies the historic context. This document groups information about historic resources according to their shared themes, chronological period, and

geographic area. It provides the necessary background which, when applied with the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, makes possible a meaningful determination of a property's significance to the broad patterns of our historic, archeological, architectural, and engineering heritage. Essentially, the context serves as the necessary link between the property as it remains today and the past which gives it special meaning.

The Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office recognizes the fundamental importance of comprehensive planning, as reflected in its strategy for historic context development. The Office organizes the historic component of its plan around a combination of geography and theme. It has divided Oklahoma into seven management regions, using county borders as their primary dividing lines. It should also be noted that historic patterns influenced the establishment of these regions. This enables the resulting historic contexts to serve agencies and persons interested only in a particular geographic area. To further refine the process, Oklahoma's past has been divided into twelve major themes. Using this system, Oklahoma's historic contexts each pertain to a specific theme as it applies to one of the management regions. Taken together, they may assess the theme's importance to cultural resources statewide, or the various historical forces which influenced a single management region. More specialized needs are addressed by narrowing the geographic area to be studied and/or considering a sub-theme related to one of the twelve major ones. This assures that even these very localized historic contexts relate to wider regional and state trends.

The historic context document produced for the Intensive Level

Survey of Coal Mining Related Properties in Pittsburg County focuses on a sub-theme of the larger Industrial theme within a single county in the State Historic Preservation Office's Management Region Four. It examines the many forces which influenced the development of commercial coal mining in the county and its impact on the county as a whole. In doing so, it provides a necessary link between this element of Pittsburg County's past and the extant historic resources associated with this heritage.

Preparation included consultation of the Resource Protection Planning Project documents prepared earlier for Region Four, with the one on industry proving most helpful. These, however, provided only a very general depiction of the development and impact of coal mining. The more specialized focus of the project required extensive additional research in secondary and archival resources. The notes for the Historical Narrative and the Bibliography for this context accurately reflects the degree to which reports previously prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office were utilized.

The Intensive Level Survey of Coal Mining Related Properties in Pittsburg County, including its historic context, also demonstrates the cyclical implementation of Oklahoma's comprehensive planning process. As is intended, the context provides the necessary background information for making an evaluation of the significance of historic resources within the study area. The property type analysis draws on this information to predict the kinds of resources one would expect to find there. All this information, moreover, guided the survey component of this project. Graduate Assistants entered the field knowledgeable of

the region's coal mining history and with an understanding of the extant resources associated with important themes and trends. The results of the intensive-level survey, therefore, identified properties, including several potential historic districts, which warrant additional study for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. In accomplishing these tasks, this project exemplifies the comprehensive planning process at its best. It furthers the identification and evaluation of coal mining related historic resources in Pittsburg County which have experienced considerable transformation in the recent past. It also provides needed data for making sound land-use decision, and establishes a sound foundation for the registration and even treatment of significant historic resources.

The scope of work for this project also included preparation of a predictive model which can be applied in future surveys of coal mining related properties in southeastern Oklahoma. Drawing primarily upon Quantifying the Present and Predicting the Past: Theory, Method, and Archaeological Predictive Modeling (Denver: U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1988), an objective-associational model was constructed. The details of this model are outlined in a separate section of this report.

Completion of this historic context and predictive model of the Intensive Level Survey of Coal Mining Related Properties in Pittsburg County was a collaborative effort. Dr. William s. Bryans, Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey at Oklahoma State University, prepared the context and model with valuable contributions by Graduate Assistants Steven Sewell and Brad

Bays. Jeffrey K. Williams, AIA and Associate Professor at Oklahoma State University's School of Architecture, served as Architectural Historian. All work was performed under a contract from the Oklahoma Historical Society (40-88-30041.005), utilizing funds from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

OVERVIEW

When one thinks of energy resources in Oklahoma, petroleum most often comes to mind. However, from 1870 to 1920, another fossil fuel--coal--played a major role in the social and economic development of what today is southeastern Oklahoma. Extensive deposits of bituminous coal underlay the region, and for approximately fifty years, the coal industry thrived there. A period of decline began in 1921, which deepened with the Great Depression. World War II temporarily brought coal mining out of its doldrums, but by 1950 it was well on its way toward extinction until resurrected by their nation's seeming insatiable thirst for energy in the 1970s. Even now, coal is sleeping giant among the nation's energy reserves.

Native Americans used some of this coal, and Euro-American explorers dutifully noted its presence long before commercial exploitation began. A confederate veteran and intermarried white citizen of the Choctaw Nation, J.J. McAlester, generally receives credit for founding the region's commercial coal mining industry. After establishing a store at the site of the city which now bears his name, he filed claim to a nearby deposit and persuaded the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad to tap the Choctaw coal fields as it built southward across Indian Territory. The 1872 arrival of the Katy, as the road became popularly known, provided both the market and the mode of transportation which made extensive mining possible.

The coal industry established itself during its initial historical phase, which lasted until 1901. Railroad-owned and -affiliated companies dominated the period. Early major producers in the Choctaw

Nation, where virtually all mining occurred, included the Osage Coal and Mining Company and the Atoka Coal and Mining Company. The former was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Katy while the latter was an affiliate of the road. The Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway specifically built into the region to tap its rich coal reserves, and smaller concerns supplied other railroads penetrating the Nation, including the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad. A limited number of small independent firms also served the local domestic fuel market. Driven primarily by the railroads demand for locomotive fuel, production in the Choctaw Nation grew from about 50,000 tons in 1873 to 2,421,781 in 1901.

The impact of mining during this period was social as well as economic. After native-born Americans and Choctaws proved reluctant to work the mines, coal companies imported immigrant laborers who contributed much to the region's cultural mosaic. Initially, most lived in company towns and houses, and traded at company stores. Actually, they had little other choice since tribal law outlawed property ownership by non-citizens and even required these intruders to purchase residency permits. Once the Curtis Act of 1898 eased the plotting of new towns, many miners moved into their own homes in communities such as Krebs, McAlester, Hartshorne, Lehigh, and Pittsburg.

Mining also greatly impacted the Choctaw and their society. Royalties from coal production contributed much to their national treasury, and ultimately tribal officials felt compelled to cooperate with the companies to suppress strikes which threatened their source of income. More importantly, the thousands of non-Indians attracted to the area because of mining constituted a cultural invasion which aided

significantly to the erosion of Choctaw sovereignty and self-determination by 1907.

Always considered a hazardous profession, coal mining in Indian Territory was especially dangerous. Accident and fatality rates constantly ranked among the highest in the nation. The gaseousness of the openings, the quickened work pace of miners being paid by the ton, and corporate laxness, all contributed to the unsafe atmosphere. Even under the best of circumstances, miners worked up to twelve-hours a day underground, usually stooped over or on their knees. Such working conditions prompted miners to organize, and local assemblies of the Knights of Labor appeared as early as 1884. After the Knights' national decline during the 1890s, the United Mine Workers of America became active. Formal recognition of the union, however, came only after a prolonged strike lasting from 1899 to 1903.

Settlement of the strike marked the beginning of coal mining's second historical phase, 1903-1920. Building on the foundation of the earlier period, this was coal mining's heyday. No truly spectacular boom occurred, but the industry did enjoy steady growth. Large railroad-owned and railroad-affiliated concerns remained the dominant producers, but the structure of the industry became increasingly complex. New investors formed middle-sized companies, usually by consolidating several adjacent openings, and numerous small independent operations formed. Locomotive fuel continued the major market for coal, although the growing population of Indian Territory, and after 1907 the state of Oklahoma, created a greater demand for domestic and industrial fuel. Most miners vacated their company houses during these years and

moved into the region's town. The United Mine Workers served as their official collective bargaining agent, but the inherent dangers of their profession changed very little.

In 1920, Oklahoma's coal industry enjoyed its best year, at least in terms of production. Stimulated by the extraordinary fuel demands of World War I and the immediate postwar years, a record 4,849,288 tons of coal were mined. Nearly two-thirds of this total came from the former Choctaw Nation. Yet, by the following year, the coal industry was clearly entering a downturn. As early as 1904, regional railroads began experimenting with oil-burning locomotives, and industrial and domestic consumers increasingly turned to petroleum and natural gas for their fuel needs. With the loss of these primary markets, coal mining entered an era of serious decline.

With the exception of the increased demand for coal during the World War II, depression marked the years between 1921 and 1950. As railroads canceled orders with independent concerns, the mid-sized companies began to fail. When the Great Depression struck, even the largest railroad-owned mines closed. Only the small operators serving the constricted local domestic fuel market remained open by 1934. Miners during this period took wage cuts and seldom worked more than half-time. Many left southeastern Oklahoma for industrial jobs in the Midwest. Those who did not were likely to find themselves on federal relief rolls.

A global war once again restored prosperity to the coal industry, albeit temporarily. During World War II, the nation's railroads used every piece of equipment at their disposal to move an unprecedented

traffic of men and material. In addition, European allies clamored for fuel of any kind. Some Pittsburg County coal also fueled steel foundries in Texas.

Once peace returned, however, the industry sank back into its previous doldrums. An increasing percentage of what coal was still mined in Oklahoma came from surface operations in Okmulgee and Rogers Counties. The reign of King Coal in southeastern Oklahoma came to an end in 1950. That year, the Choctaw Nation, original owners of the region's deposits, sold their remaining coal lands to the federal government.

HISTORIC NARRATIVE
Coal Mining in Management Region Four, 1870-1950

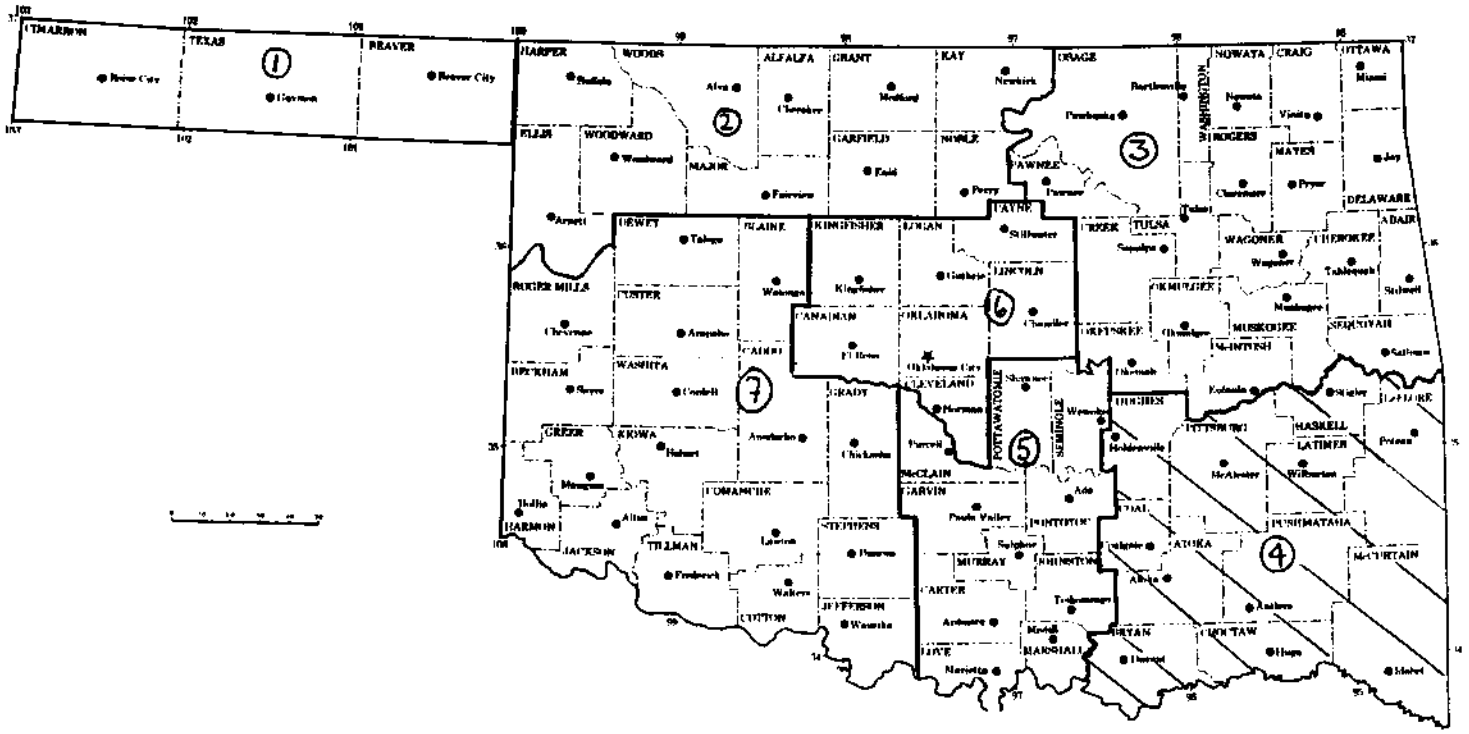
INTRODUCTION

When one thinks of Oklahoma and fossil fuels, petroleum immediately springs to mind. The image of derricks reaching skyward from the backyards of Oklahoma City and the fabulous fortunes of oil men such as Frank Phillips and E. W. Marland are well known. The petroleum driven boom of the 1970s and early 1980s, together with the bust that followed, only reinforce the association. Yet, another fossil fuel, coal, has played an important role in Oklahoma's past. From 1870 to 1920, King Coal reigned supreme in that portion of Indian Territory which became southeastern Oklahoma. After 1920, coal mining entered a period of decline reversed, albeit temporarily, by the extraordinary demand for fuel during World War II. By 1950, however, the industry was on its way to virtual extinction until resurrected twenty years later by an increased demand for coal-fired electricity and the OPEC oil embargo. Today, in a period of plentiful and moderately priced petroleum, Oklahoma's coal industry is again a sleeping giant waiting to be called upon, as it no doubt will, when oil can no longer satisfy the nation's energy needs.

Coal, most of it high grade bituminous ideal for generating steam, underlies some 14,500 square miles of 19 eastern Oklahoma counties. This coal belt stretches approximately 185 miles south of Kansas and 110 miles west of Arkansas in the southern portion of what the United States Geological Survey has designated the Western region of the Interior Coal Province. The Oklahoma deposits are further divided into two sections

MANAGEMENT REGIONS FOR OKLAHOMA'S COMPREHENSIVE

PRESERVATION PLANNING PROCESS



separated by the Canadian River and the Arkansas River east of its confluence with the Canadian. South of this boundary, in an area within the State Historic Preservation Office's Management Region #4, is the Akoma Basin (See Map #1). Characterized by elongated hills and ridges occasionally interrupted by wide valleys, the Akoma Basin contains rich coal seams that are generally one to four feet thick. More importantly, it is this region which historically has been the center of Oklahoma's coal mining industry.[1]

The existence of coal was known long before commercial exploitation ever began. In September 1719, the French Indian trader Jean-Baptiste Benard Sier de la Harpe encountered deposits in what is now southern Muskogee County. A century later, Thomas Nuttal, an English botanist traveling across southeastern Oklahoma, noted in his diaries on several occasions the presence of coal. The U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported in 1837 that coal was among the plentiful resources to be found in the recently created Indian Territory. When Lieutenant Amiel W. Whipple led a military survey of a potential railroad route across the future LeFlore, Haskell, and Pittsburg Counties in 1853, he found what seemed to him an inexhaustible source of locomotive fuel. He also met Choctaw Indians who dug coal lying close to the surface and used it for blacksmithing. In 1859, the Butterfield Overland Mail Company found the

[1]J.V.A. Trumbull, Coal Resources of Oklahoma, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1042-J (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957); John W. Morris, ed., Drill Bits, Picks, and Shovels: A History of Mineral Resources in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1982), 82-87.

native fuel suitable for similar purposes.[2]

Commercial mining, however, awaited the arrival of the railroad. Throughout their mutual existence, American railroads and coal mining have enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. A bulky and heavy commodity, coal required a mode of transportation capable of hauling large quantities from isolated mines to distant markets. Railroads likewise looked to coal both as a locomotive fuel and a lucrative source of freight revenue. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that railroading and coal mining exerted considerable influence upon one another. Indeed, railroads most often pioneered commercial exploitation, as the origins of Oklahoma's coal industry illustrate.

ESTABLISHING AN INDUSTRY, 1870 - 1902

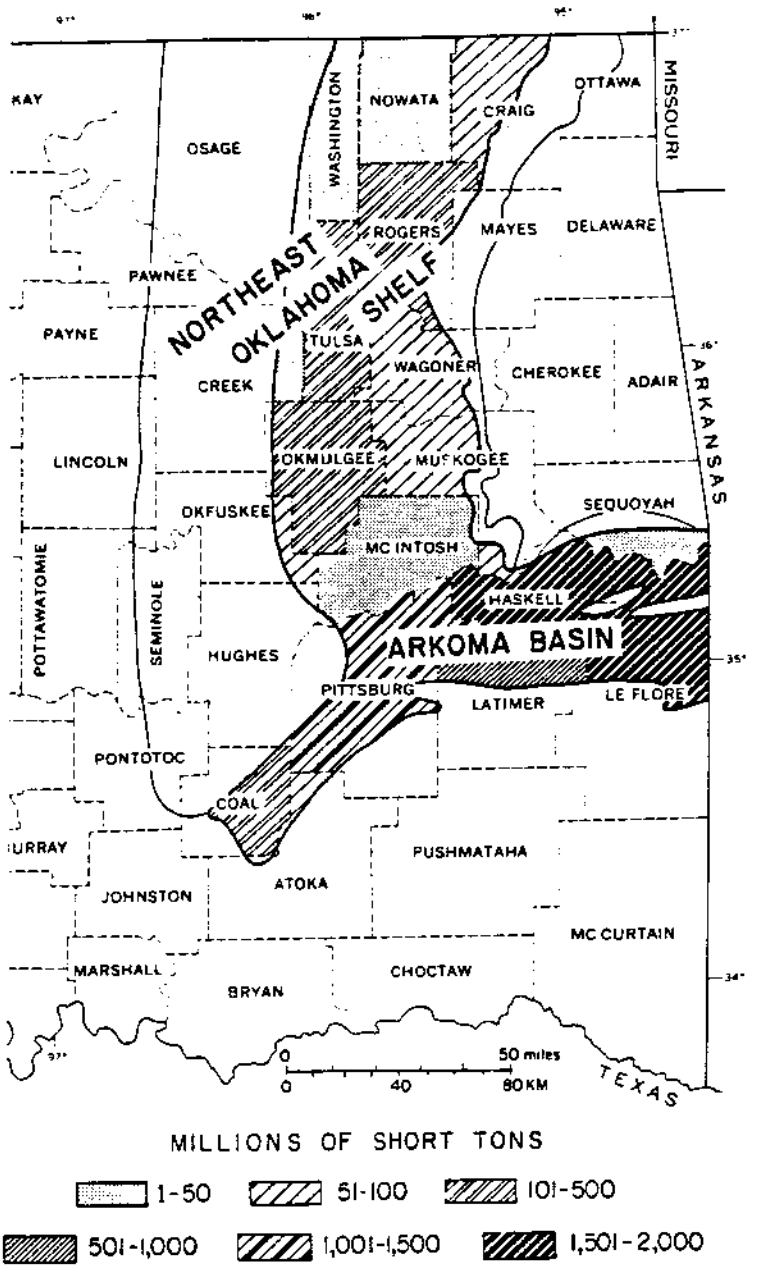
The Role of J.J. McAlester

J.J. McAlester generally receives credit as the founder of Oklahoma's coal mining industry. After the Civil War, the young Confederate veteran lived in Ft. Smith, Arkansas and struck an acquaintance with Captain Oliver Weldon, a member of a party which earlier had surveyed the Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory. Sources disagree on whether Weldon volunteered information on the coal deposits he had seen or McAlester spied it from his friend's field books. Nevertheless, Weldon clearly was the source from which McAlester gained

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[2]I.C. Gunning, When Coal Was King: Coal Mining in the Choctaw Nation, n.p., n.d., 6; Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, Resource Protection Planning Project: Exploration in Oklahoma, 1540-1860 (Stillwater: Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, Department of History, Oklahoma State University, 1986), 3-5, 13-15, 31-32.

OKLAHOMA COAL DEPOSITS



Map outlining boundary of the Oklahoma part of the Western Region of the Interior Coal Province and showing distribution by county of remaining resources of bituminous coal in Oklahoma as of January 1, 1974 (Source: Oklahoma Geological Survey GM-17, p. 10).

this valuable knowledge. [3]

Although he originally entered Indian Territory as a freighter, coal remained uppermost in McAlester's plans. The federal government's Reconstruction treaties with the Five Civilized Tribes allowed the construction of railroads across Indian Territory, and the existence of coal would certainly be of great interest to such an enterprise. By 1870, McAlester had established a store in the heart of the Choctaw Nation where the Texas and California Roads intersected, and where Weldon had noted rich coal beds. He also had by this time married into the Chickasaw tribe. Exercising his rights of dual citizenship with the Choctaw, he then made claim to a coal deposit which, in accordance with Choctaw mineral law, stretched one mile in every direction from the point of discovery. Already, the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad had won the right to build southward across Indian Territory and was poised on its northern border. Seizing this opportunity, McAlester loaded his choicest coal onto a wagon and hauled it to Parsons, Kansas for inspection by railroad officials. Tests proved it a superior steam coal and the Katy, as the road became known, decided to build along the Texas Road and through the coal field that had been brought to their attention. With the coming of the rails in 1871, commercial coal mining could begin.[4]

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[3]Paul Nesbitt, "J.J. McAlester," Chronicles of Oklahoma 11 (June 1933): 758-759; Gunning, When Coal Was King, 8-10.

[4]V.V. Masterson, The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 161-162; Nesbitt, "McAlester," 760-761.

McAlester himself wasted little time. He quickly organized the Oklahoma Mining Company and began developing mines. Initially, these earliest operations were strip pits which took advantage of deposits close to the surface. However, as the Katy showed an increased interest in the area's coal, underground mining became more feasible. Accordingly, McAlester and several other Choctaw citizens formed the Osage Coal and Mining Company in 1872.[5]

Commercial coal mining in the Choctaw Nation, however, would have developed no further had traditionalists in the tribe had their way. Coleman Cole, principal chief of the Choctaw, sought to halt McAlester, realizing the threat such large scale economic development posed to traditional values and tribal sovereignty. He also complained that McAlester and his partners leased their mines to operators, presumably the Katy, from whom they received a royalty rightfully belonging to the Nation. Cole had McAlester and his associates arrested and ordered their execution, but the captives managed to escape after bribing their jailers. McAlester fled north to the Creek Nation where he raised a force of fifty men, including several former Quantrill raiders. The private army returned to the Cross Roads, threatening harm to Cole should anything happen to the coal pioneer.[6]

This conflict ultimately resulted in a 1873 compromise which enabled coal development to continue unfettered. McAlester was free to

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[5]Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 161.

[6]Angie Debo, The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press , 1981), 161.

mine, but the Choctaw would tax production. The owner of the claim was to receive a half-cent per bushel royalty from any lessee. The Choctaw were to receive one-quarter cent and the Chickasaw, bound to the Choctaw by virtue of the Reconstruction treaties, one-eighth. Moreover, the Secretary of the Interior, who exercised federal authority over Indian affairs, was to approve all leases. Progressive and intermarried whites in the Choctaw Nation welcomed the agreement, while traditionalists feared it would accelerate the loss of tribal autonomy begun after the Civil War. Although the tribe derived considerable revenue from coal royalties, these fears proved well founded.[7]

The Early Coal Industry in Indian Territory

The Katy and the other railroads which followed it into Indian Territory could not have been happier. Initially, these roads penetrated a region which, at least from their perspective, was economically undeveloped. Coal interested them not only as a locomotive fuel but also as a generator of much needed freight revenue. During the last half of the nineteenth century, and into the first two decades of the twentieth, coal was America's primary domestic and industrial fuel. The rapid development of the surrounding states and territories promised both a lucrative market for Indian Territory coal and a profitable haul for the railroads.

In 1872, the Osage Coal and Mining Company opened the first underground mine at Krebs, a new camp just east of McAlester, the

[7]Ibid.; Danny Goble, Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 62-64.

community which emerged adjacent to its namesake's store. Although J.J. McAlester and several partners founded the Osage Coal and Mining Company, the Katy quickly acquired an interest in the firm. By 1888, the road owned it outright. As spurs from the mainline tapped into the coal field, mines Nos. 10, 11, 11 1/2, and 12 at Krebs, together with No. 5 at McAlester, were put into production. The company also mined from strip pits near these openings. The Katy used most of the coal produced for its own locomotives, but some also was shipped as far away as Galveston and San Antonio, where it was manufactured into gas. On the strength of these operations, the Osage Coal and Mining Company monopolized commercial coal mining in Indian Territory until 1881, a period during which an estimated 680,947 tons were produced (Table 1).[8]

The Atoka Coal and Mining Company became the second major producer in the Territory following its 1881 organization. The Katy, by now one of the many railroads held by Jay Gould, likewise held a controlling interest in this firm. Originally, the Atoka Coal and Mining Company operated underground mines and strip pits at Savanna, about five miles southwest of McAlester, and at Lehigh in present-day Coal County. The company supplied locomotive fuel to nearly all the Texas railroads, which Gould also happened to own. Gas companies in Texas, Missouri, and Kansas used the fuel as well. At Lehigh, Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 6 1/2 were

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[8]Gunning, When Coal Was King, 11; Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 120; Preston George and Sylvan R. Wood, The Railroads of Oklahoma, Bulletin No. 60 (Boston: The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc., 1943), 52; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1876 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 62; First Annual Report of the Coal Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 53d Cong., 3d. sess., 1894, H. Doc. 1, Serial 3307, 500-504.

the major mines. Two mines tapped the deposits around Savanna, but they were abandoned in 1887 following an explosion which killed 18 miners. This tragedy prompted the company to move its entire operation, including 135 miners' houses, to Lehigh. From there, it remained an important mining company for many years.[9]

Until 1890, the Osage Coal and Mining Company and the Atoka Coal and Mining Company were the only commercial operations in Indian Territory. Several small mines, often referred to as wagon mines, supplied the local fuel market, but the Osage and Atoka were the driving force behind the impressive growth of coal mining through the 1880s. In 1881, when the Atoka Coal and Mining Company entered the region, an estimated 150,000 tons were produced. Eight years later, production reached 752,832 tons, a five-fold increase. Virtually all of this, as well as almost all of the coal produced in both Indian Territory and Oklahoma until 1910, came from the area within the Choctaw Nation (Table 2).

The coal industry continued to grow during the early 1890s, thanks in large measure to the emergence of a third premier producer. In 1885, a Minneapolis party ventured to the Choctaw Nation on a turkey hunt, and one of its members, Edward D. Chadrick, was impressed by the coal beds in the vicinity of Wilburton. After the hunt, he approached the powerful Lehigh Valley Railroad about building a coal line into Indian Territory. The Lehigh concurred, and in November 1887 the Choctaw, Coal

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[9]Gunning, When Coal Was King, 11; Mineral Resources of the United States, 1882 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 51-52; First Annual Report of the Coal Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 507-509.

and Railway Company was incorporated under the laws of Minnesota. One year later, Congress awarded the new road the charter needed to actually construct the line. A sixty-seven mile mainline between Wister and South McAlester was completed in 1890. The firm, however, soon experienced financial difficulties due to illegal town lot speculation and free-spending. The Choctaw Coal and Railway Company consequently went into receivership in January 1891, and in October 1894 was finally reorganized as the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway.[10]

These corporate problems failed to prevent the road from becoming a domineering force in the coal mining industry of Indian Territory. By 1891, it was working underground mines and strip pits along its mainline at Hartshorne and Alderson. By 1894, it also had opened several mines at Wilburton. When L.W. Bryan, the mine inspector for Indian Territory, made his first annual report that same year, the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railway ranked as the Territory's largest producer, a position it maintained until acquired by the Rock Island in 1902.[11]

While the rails of the Katy and Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway made possible the largest operations, several other railroads enabled the expansion of mining into new areas. The Denison and Washita Valley Railway Company, chartered in 1886, completed a spur between Lehigh and Coalgate in 1889. This allowed the Southwestern Coal and Improvement

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[10]Clyde E. Wooldridge, Wilburton, I.T. and OK, n.p., 1976, 13-15; Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 124-125; George and Wood, Railroads of Oklahoma, 42.

[11]Mineral Resources of the United States, 1891 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), 232-233; First Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 505-507.

TABLE 1

Production of Coal in Indian Territory
1873-1907

Year	Tonnage	Year	Tonnage
1873	50,000*	1891	1,091,032
1874	60,000*	1892	1,192,721
1875	70,000*	1893	1,252,110
1876	80,000*	1894	969,606
1877	90,000*	1895	1,211,185
1878	100,000*	1896	1,366,646
1879	110,000*	1897	1,336,380
1880	120,947	1898	1,381,466
1881	150,000	1899	1,537,427
1882	200,000	1900	1,922,298
1883	350,000	1901	2,421,781
1884	448,000	1902	2,820,666
1885	500,000	1903	3,517,388
1886	534,580	1904	3,046,539
1887	685,911	1905	2,924,427
1888	761,986	1906	2,860,200
1889	752,832	1907	3,642,658
1890	869,229	Total	40,428,015

*Estimated.

SOURCE: Coal Resources of Oklahoma, United States Geological Survey Bulletin 1042-J (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1957), 364.

Company to develop underground mines and strip pits at Coalgate and Midway, in what today is Coal County. With completion of the St. Louis and St. Francisco from Fort Smith to Texas, the Kansas and Texas Coal Company began mining at Braidwood, Bryan, and Poteau by 1891.[12]

Production records underscore the enormous impact the railroads had on the coal industry at the turn-of-the-century. Driven primarily by the demand for locomotive fuel in Indian Territory and the surrounding region, annual production surpassed one-million tons for the first time in 1891. Moreover, only with the exception of a strike-plagued 1894, the amount of coal mined increased yearly until 1904 (Table 1).

Nearly all of this coal--approximately 93 percent in 1898 for example--came from the various railroad affiliated mines. Yet, after 1894, increasing quantities came from independent operators. Several factors explain the emergence of smaller concerns. First, Indian Territory experienced tremendous population growth during the 1890s, partially due to the influx of coal miners. This created a domestic fuel market capable of supporting the independents. The development of adjacent Oklahoma Territory after 1889 had a similar impact. The rapid erosion of Indian self-determination also played a role. Between 1890 and 1895, the establishment of federal courts in Indian Territory severely reduced the authority of tribal laws. The 1897 Atoka Agreement, negotiated with the Dawes Commission by the Chickasaw and Choctaw, had an equally debilitating effect by paving the way for the

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[12]Mineral Resources of the United States, 1891, 232-233; First Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 509-512; George and Wood, Railroads of Oklahoma, 52, 62, 66-69.

allotment of tribal land. In a supplemental agreement, mineral lands, including those containing coal, were reserved from allotment and for the time continued to be held by the tribes. Authority for awarding leases and collecting royalties, however, was given to a variety of officials within the Department of the Interior. As tribal control over Indian mineral wealth eroded during the late-1890s, so did the concerns of many non-Indians toward opening coal mines in what essentially was a foreign country.[13]

Indeed, this unique environment in which the coal industry evolved up to the Atoka Agreement, and even to the dissolution of Indian Territory in 1907, needs to be kept in mind. For most of this period, the Choctaw enjoyed sovereignty, and all activities were subject to tribal, not federal, law. The Choctaw held fast to their traditional belief in communal ownership of the land, so coal tracts were leased rather than sold. In addition to a bonus payment at the time leases were awarded, the mining companies also paid a royalty based on the amount of coal extracted. The Choctaw in 1873 designated a National Agent to collect the production tax, and it eventually also stationed weighers at each mine to monitor production. The coal companies often complained about paying royalties and the difficulty of doing business in the Nation, but generally the Secretary of the Interior upheld the Choctaw's actions. As the ever-increasing production figures of the industry from 1873 through the early twentieth century

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[13]Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 245-268; Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 1899, 56th Cong., 1st sess., 1899, H. Doc. 5, Serial 3918, 745-746; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Part II, 1902 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 177.

TABLE 2

Production of Coal in Oklahoma, 1908-1950
With Comparison to Region #4

Year	Region #4 Total*	State Total	Percentage of State Total Produced in Region #4
1908	2,733,942	2,948,116	92.74
1909	2,796,450	3,119,377	89.65
1910	2,345,482	2,646,226	88.63
1911	2,621,130	3,074,242	85.26
1912	2,967,798	3,675,418	80.75
1913	3,259,181	4,165,770	78.24
1914	2,980,360	3,988,613	74.72
1915	2,686,262	3,693,580	72.73
1916	2,395,253	3,608,011	66.39
1917	3,217,508	4,386,844	73.34
1918	4,078,328	4,813,447	84.73
1919	2,698,447	3,802,113	70.97
1920	3,173,888	4,849,288	65.45
1921	2,196,385	3,362,623	65.32
1922	1,731,269	2,802,511	61.78
1923	1,758,153	2,885,038	60.94
1924	1,237,053	2,329,615	53.10
1925	1,476,082	2,325,840	63.46
1926	2,049,743	2,842,673	72.11
1927	2,549,818	3,818,054	66.78
1928	2,271,470	3,501,325	64.87
1929	2,498,941	3,774,080	66.21
1930	1,847,621	2,793,954	66.13
1931	1,331,455	1,908,394	69.77
1932	741,220	1,255,466	59.04
1933	775,294	1,238,244	62.61
1934	736,925	1,208,289	60.99
1935	720,019	1,229,398	58.57
1936	832,174	1,540,303	54.03
1937	738,166	1,600,295	46.13
1938	559,964	1,244,732	44.99
1939	478,992	1,187,562	40.33
1940	688,709	1,645,981	41.84
1941	695,678	1,771,108	39.28
1942	775,231	2,387,192	32.47
1943	825,654	2,837,347	29.10
1944	1,223,675	3,208,534	38.14
1945	1,001,851	2,908,976	34.44
1946	703,078	2,647,380	26.56
1947	1,296,580	3,420,563	37.91
1948	1,471,585	3,462,184	42.50
1949	1,433,103	3,021,859	47.42
1950	1,178,603	2,678,571	44.00

*Includes Coal, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore and Pittsburg counties.

SOURCE: Coal Resources of Oklahoma, United States Geological Survey Bulletin 1042-J (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1957), 364-365.

TABLE 3
Production of Coal in Region #4, 1908-1950
(by county)

Year	Coal	Haskell	Latimer	Le Flore	Pittsburg
1908	576,746	674,636	*	187,624	1,294,936
1909	658,159	738,806	*	128,376	1,271,109
1910	498,658	675,953	*	87,628	1,083,243
1911	778,546	701,374	*	122,468	1,018,742
1912	816,155	766,798	*	150,511	1,234,334
1913	889,299	738,679	*	201,853	1,429,350
1914	676,292	0	666,274	264,023	1,373,771
1915	556,479	0	740,869	256,642	1,132,272
1916	524,954	82,752	810,504	266,162	977,043
1917	581,770	230,174	841,262	285,239	1,279,063
1918	542,254	246,049	919,487	331,374	1,364,207
1919	427,306	129,306	697,177	274,597	1,170,061
1920	461,394	96,070	800,442	411,812	1,404,170
1921	187,451	83,910	344,659	296,814	1,283,551
1922	79,847	226,744	191,098	211,401	1,022,179
1923	33,464	130,695	137,144	214,907	1,241,943
1924	29,249	72,847	254,024	163,139	717,794
1925	52,862	129,132	269,023	250,965	774,100
1926	83,452	321,234	308,988	370,285	965,784
1927	124,015	380,248	371,318	446,939	1,227,298
1928	131,110	148,736	247,690	568,878	1,175,056
1929	134,328	161,412	210,780	672,749	1,319,672
1930	96,931	115,255	175,644	483,367	976,424
1931	53,396	103,239	62,209	415,917	696,694
1932	42,886	88,263	83,959	323,067	203,045
1933	46,671	90,476	93,466	340,062	204,619
1934	38,913	103,535	69,082	347,416	177,979
1935	31,079	95,027	57,988	355,831	180,094
1936	24,740	68,161	57,392	419,192	262,689
1937	21,126	50,642	29,229	406,057	231,112
1938	13,312	*	6,153	341,530	198,969
1939	17,941	75,315	6,794	219,253	159,689
1940	24,451	85,811	27,409	354,544	196,494
1941	21,918	104,377	34,637	372,819	161,927
1942	26,280	62,210	20,810	452,988	212,943
1943	63,035	102,060	17,057	396,521	246,981
1944	242,932	153,567	33,566	421,451	372,159
1945	312,035	110,163	36,790	297,042	245,821
1946	239,479	39,933	126,748	198,899	98,019
1947	213,702	91,532	329,234	495,964	166,148
1948	233,038	177,371	314,142	452,681	294,353
1949	134,937	239,518	82,271	681,894	294,483
1950	81,269	388,057	2,420	424,637	282,220

*Production included elsewhere.
SOURCE: Coal Resources of Oklahoma, United States Geological Survey Bulletin 1042-J (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1957), 364-365.

clearly illustrate, however, the problems of conducting businesses proved more a nuisance than an obstacle.[14]

Coal mining, of course, also left an imprint on the Choctaw. By the time a federal census was taken in 1890, non-Indians in the Nation--many of them miners, their families, and the merchants they attracted--outnumbered Indian residents nearly three to one. Coal royalties also contributed mightily to the Choctaw treasury, as well as that of the Chickasaw, who by treaty received one-fourth of the monies. Between 1898 and 1902 alone the tribes collected a total of $689,441, even though the Secretary of the Interior reduced the royalty rate in 1898 and 1899. Initially, these funds went solely to support the Nation's fine educational system. Yet, as production increased during the 1880s and 1890s, the Choctaw, and the Chickasaw to a lesser extent, became dependent on the coal industry for nearly all their revenue. Consequently, the confrontational atmosphere which marked the beginning of mining soon disappeared, and tribal and company officials emerged as allies. When miners struck, the Nation ordered their ouster as intruders. One time, a majority of the National Council accepted gratuities for approving a lease. The culmination of this cooperative spirit came in 1896 when a proposal to nationalize coal mines was soundly defeated.[15]

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[14]Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 145.

[15]Ibid., 222-223; Goble, Progressive Oklahoma, 65; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 118-236; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1902, 196.

Aided by friendly relations with the Choctaw, and bolstered by the railroads, the early coal industry of Indian Territory thrived. The manufacture of coke also played a role, albeit a lesser one. Coke is a by-product of coal produced by driving off its moisture and non-volatile matter. This distillation process, done in an oven, raises the carbon content of the coal allowing it to burn without smoke and hotter than ordinary coal. These properties made it an ideal fuel for metallurgical applications.

The Osage Coal and Mining Company began coking coal in 1880 with twenty beehive shaped ovens near Krebs. The company used slack--coal which was too fine for any other use. The firm remained the only coking operation until the Choctaw Coke Company erected fifty ovens at Alderson in 1896. The Mexican Gulf & Transportation Company assumed this operation in 1899 and within five years also had ovens at Howe, just south of Poteau. The McAlester Coal Mining Company at Buck and the San Bois Coal Company at McCurtain were also important producers. Metal smelters in Kansas, Missouri, and Mexico provided the market for Indian Territory coke. Between 1880 and 1908, when competition from natural gas in smelting forced the industry to close, a total of 576,497 tons of coke were produced in the Choctaw Nation. Since a ton of coal on the average yielded about sixty-percent of its weight in coke, this represents approximately 346,000 tons of mined coal.[16]

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[16]Mineral Resources of the United States, 1883-1908 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885-1909); Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 1897, 55th Cong., 2d sess., 1897, H. Doc. 5, Serial 3642; Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 1899, 765-795; Gene Aldrich, "A History of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma Prior to 1907," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1952), 63-69.

Production figures amply illustrate the growth of coal mining during its first thirty years. In 1873, only an estimated 50,000 tons were extracted, and in 1902, production reached 2,820,666 tons. Clearly, the industry was firmly established by the latter year. Significant changes were soon to come, but the foundation for continued growth had been laid during these formative years.

Life and Work in the Early Coal Industry

Still, the history of early coal mining is more than production figures and the companies formed to extract the fuel. It also concerns the miners, their homes, their communities, and their work. In fact, the miners themselves left the largest imprint on the region's social and cultural environment.

When small-scale surface mining began in 1871, local and railroad laborers worked the pits. The advent of underground mining, however, required a considerably larger workforce. The traditionally agrarian Choctaw showed no inclination toward mining, so it soon became apparent that workers would have to be imported. Fortunately, for the Katy, the nation was in the throes of the Panic of 1873, and it had no problem attracting unemployed miners from the eastern coal fields simply by offering free transportation to Indian Territory. Most of these were native-born Americans and British Isle immigrants who brought with them considerable skill in coal mining. Nevertheless, as prosperity returned later in the decade, the appeal of working and living in such an isolated area waned, and many returned to their old homes. Those who

remained usually rose to supervisory positions in the mines.[17]

Immigrants by far comprised most of the workforce during the coal industry's formative years, and beyond. From the very beginning of underground mining, the Katy, and later other railroads, recruited laborers abroad by advancing the cost of passage and later deducting it from their wages. As mining expanded during the 1880s and 1890s, thousands of eastern and southern Europeans arrived in the coal fields of Indian Territory under this system. They literally were the backbone on which the industry grew. Moreover, their ethnicity contributed much to the region's cultural mosaic.[18]

The Italians were the most numerous of the foreigners who came to mine coal. The first few arrived in 1874 and 1875, and by 1883, they numbered around 300, including a few women and children. Immigration from Italy increased markedly thereafter, peaking in around 1895. In 1910, a total of 3322 first- and second-generation Italians resided in the major coal producing counties of the former Choctaw Nation--Coal, Latimer, and Pittsburg. This represented about 4.5 percent of the three counties' total population.[19]

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[17]Stanley Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," Chronicles of Oklahoma 33 (Winter 1955-1956), 440; Lee G. Knox, "Development of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," (M.S. thesis, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College [Oklahoma State University], 1948), 60.

[18]Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," 440; Gibson, Oklahoma, 162.

[19]Kenny L. Brown, The Italians in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); and, the same author's "A History of the Italians in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma," (M.A. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1975), 18-30.

Other nationalities soon followed. A handful of Russian miners arrived in 1875, but their numbers never reached significant levels. Lithuanians, one of the largest immigrant groups in the coal fields, first came the same year. In 1876, the Poles' presence began, and by 1911, an estimated 800 first- and second-generation Poles lived in the coal producing region. When the mines around Lehigh were being developed in 1881, the Illinois party brought in to work the openings included about 15 Frenchmen. Their numbers peaked at about 900 in 1895. Slovak and Magyar laborers reached Indian Territory in 1883 and soon a handful of them were spread throughout the camps. The first Mexicans worked the mines in 1890 after leaving railroad construction crews. Reputedly the lowest paid of all miners, they ranked behind only the Italians, Lithuanians, and Poles in number. Finally, about 12 Bulgarians applied for work in the Hartshorne mines in 1908, forming the nucleus for a small enclave there.[20]

Like their counterparts in the large cities, these immigrants tended to settle and socialize among themselves. Often foreign miners came from the same community in their homeland, drawn to the coal fields by the favorable reports of a neighbor who had already relocated to Indian Territory. A large number of Italians from a variety of villages, for example, settled in Krebs. Separate French, Slovak, and Mexican colonies could be formed in sections of Lehigh and Coalgate.

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[20]Immigrants in Industries. Part 1: Bituminous Coal Mining, Volume II, 61st Congress, 2d sess., 1911, S. Doc. 633, Serial 5568, 14-19; Richard M. Bernard, The Poles of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 14-29; Michael M. Smith, The Mexicans in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 42-47.

Hartshorne was home for a handful of Bulgarian miners, while other nationalities scattered throughout the coal camps in small groups.[21]

Such ethnic diversity left an indelible imprint on the region culturally and socially, as the founding of two churches illustrate. Saint Joseph's Catholic Church was established in 1886 to serve the religious needs of immigrant miners around Krebs. While many were Italian, the congregation also included Irish, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Mexicans, and Poles. In Hartshorne, Sts. Cyril & Methodius Russian Orthodox Church, the only one of its kind in Oklahoma, stands as testimony to the Ukrainians who worked the nearby mines at the turn-of-the-century. Each nationality also formed fraternal and beneficial organizations. Slovaks, for instance, often joined the First Catholic Union and National Slovak Association. The National Beneficial Society drew its members from Mexican miners, while Polish miners banded together in the National Polish Society. Italians could choose from among the La Minature, Vittario Emanuel II, and Christiforo Colombo Societies. All of these provided members with rudimentary life insurance and served as the focal point for weddings, wakes, holidays, and any other celebration.[22]

Population statistics provide insight into the magnitude of late-nineteenth century immigration into the Choctaw Nation. The total

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[21]Frederick L. Ryan, The Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), 22-23, 28.

[22]"Saint Joseph's Catholic Church" and "Sts. Cyril & Methodius Russian Orthodox Church," Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory files, State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," 445.

population of 17 identifiable coal communities in 1890 was approximately 12,500. Of these, only about 2,000 were miners, indicating that many had brought their families with them and that the mines had attracted a host of others to the region. Ten years late, the number of identifiable coal communities in the same region grew to 38, having a population of 23,179, an 85 percent increase. The number of miners also rose 164 percent to 5,272.[23]

Many of these communities were originally company towns erected by the mining companies on their leases. Here, the company owned all the buildings, including the miners' houses. The typical company house was a one story frame structure consisting of three to five equally sized rooms averaging fourteen feet square. Constructed of low grade lumber at minimal cost, windows and doors seldom fitted properly, and ceilings often went unfinished. Within the company town, the dwellings, all the same in color, size, and design, stood in uniform rows. Permanence clearly was not a consideration, for many had no solid foundation. Rather, they rested two or three feet off the ground on brick or stone piles, making them quite easy to relocate from one camp to another. Nor did sanitation receive high priority. Outhouses proliferated, and several families usually shared the same well for their water supply. For these quarters, miners paid $1.80 to $2.00 per room, per month, the rent being deducted directly from their pay. [24]

Most companies also either operated a store in their towns or

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[23]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 22-23, 28.

[24]Ibid., 35-36; Immigrants in Industry, 64-65; Gunning, When Coal Was King, 14-15; Gibson, Oklahoma, 162.

awarded an exclusive franchise to a local merchant in return for a percentage of the receipts. While miners were not forced to trade at these establishments, except for explosives used in the mines, they were usually the only mercantile in the area. The extension of credit further encouraged their use. In between pay days, a miner could draw scrip, redeemable dollar for dollar only at the company store. The amount drawn was then deducted from the next pay installment. In this manner, company stores made possible a degree of debt-peonage, but this apparently was not a major problem. When the Senate Committee on Immigration reported on conditions in the Oklahoma coal belt in 1910, it found that the company store inventories were of equal quantity, quality, and value to that offered by independent merchants. The Committee also noted that most miners, and immigrants especially, handled their credit in a responsible manner.[25]

The semi-feudalism of the company town has given it an unsavory reputation among most, but its presence in the Choctaw Nation is understandable. Choctaw law forbade the ownership of land by non-citizens, thereby restricting the coal communities to the leases held by the companies. Miners, in fact, paid for a residency permit to reside within the Nation. Nor were at least some Choctaw particularly anxious for the miners to gain a permanent foothold. Principal Chief Benjamin Smallwood, for example, refused 1888 petitions from the people of Krebs and Lehigh to incorporate their settlements. Several towns, however, did establish what amounted to extra-legal governments, backed by public

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[25]Immigrants in Industry, 65-66.

opinion and functioning through standing committees. Technically, the purchase of property by non-citizens and the platting of townsites became possible only after the Curtis Act of 1898 set into motion the allotment of tribal lands. Thereafter, many miners purchased their own homes in the towns that were formally organized.[26]

The paternalistic atmosphere of the company town certainly did nothing to dampen their inhabitants' social life. Miners and their families attended the many churches established in the camps, and children received instruction in schools supported by a deduction from their father's pay since the Choctaw educational system was open only to citizens. Virtually every town boasted a baseball team and band, participation in which was considered a high honor. Horse racing, dances, hunting, and fishing were other favorite pastimes. The ethnicity of the miners also contributed to the quality of life. Scottish miners celebrated Robert Burns' birthday and Catholics, especially Italians, observed a variety of holy days with special festivities. The consumption of Choctaw beer, more commonly known as Choc beer, usually accompanied these activities. This homebrew, still made in parts of southeastern Oklahoma, is made from barley, hops, tobacco, fishberries, and alcohol. Federal law outlawed the importation of alcohol into Indian Territory, but much to the dismay of some tribal and government officials, and much to the delight of the miners, Choc beer usually escaped prohibition on the technicality that it was made

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[26]Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 139-143, 223; Brown, "Italians in Pittsburg County," 29.

within the Territory.[27]

The rigors and perils of their profession help explain the zeal with which miners approached their free time. Coal mining has always been an arduous and extremely dangerous profession, and in the Choctaw Nation it was even more so.

Coal was extracted using one of three methods. Strip pits tapped deposits close to the surface by removing the overburden with plows and scrapers and then mining the exposed seam with picks and shovels. These strip operations were the first to appear because they exploited obvious deposits and required little capital to develop. Large-scale commercial extraction, however, called for underground mining, although surface mining with elaborate machinery became dominant after 1943. In shaft mining, a vertical opening connected the ground to the coal underneath. The actual mining followed the lateral extent of the seam. A major undertaking, shaft mining used extensive hauling systems for carrying both men and coal to the surface. Consequently, only about one-third of the underground mines in the Choctaw Nation were of this variety. The remainder were slope mines, built on outcrops exposed on the region's many hillsides. From this point, a tunnel followed the sloping coal seam underground.[28]

Whatever the means used to reach the coal, once there it became the miners' task to break down a quantity and load it for transport to

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[27]Aldrich, "History of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 198-220; Wooldridge, Wilburton, 25, 27; Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," 445-446; Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1894 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 143.

[28]Morris, Drills, Bits, Picks and Shovels, 87-89.

the surface. Pairs of miners typically worked together in rooms cut into the seam from the main tunnel. The safest method of loosening the coal, besides by hand, involved undercutting the face of the seam with a pick and then blasting it down with a small explosive charge. Afterwards, the miners shoveled the highly desired lump coal into rail cars which another laborer collected and brought to the top assisted by either a mule or steam-driven cable. Later, electrified and diesel locomotives were used. With seams averaging only about four feet wide, and sometimes narrowing to two feet or less, the work was extremely tedious and difficult. Many times, miners labored stooped over, or even on their knees, commonly while in the water that constantly seeped into the tunnels.[29]

The amount of coal he extracted determined the miner's wages. A metal tag, or check, attached to the rail car indicated to the weighman above ground who was to be credited for the load. The wage scale varied widely from company to company, and even from mine to mine, but it ranged from about 60 to 90 cents per ton. Miners, however, received no credit for the fine shale and rock which was sifted from the lump coal before shipping it to market. This could comprise up to one-third of the mine-run coal that was actually loaded into the car. Nor were miners paid for the so-called "dead work" they performed--driving tunnels and rooms, laying rails, and erecting props to support the fragile mine roof. By working 10 to 12 hours a day, a turn-of-the-century coal miner in the Choctaw Nation could earn about $2.40 per day,

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[29]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 29.

from which the cost of tools, explosives, house rent, debts at the company store, a monthly residency permit fee, contribution to the schools, and a doctor's fee were deducted. Even so, this represented a respectable wage for the time, but the work proved highly irregular. Mines operated only when the demand for coal warranted, and this fluctuated widely from year to year due to forces beyond the miners' control. Prior to 1900, miners worked between 250 and 300 days per year, but by 1910 the average fell to just 177 days. In short, the economic existence of the coal miner was a precarious one and he often resorted to part-time employment elsewhere to make ends meet.[30]

The constant threat of death they faced while on the job only made matters more uncertain. The fatality rate in the Choctaw mines constantly surpassed the national average. Mine disasters, defined as accidents with at least five deaths, were the most spectacular and well-publicized calamities. The first occurred in April 1887 at Savanna when a coal dust explosion killed six miners and twelve others suffocated in the rescue attempt. Through 1914, another 14 such calamities claimed 300 miners in the region. Yet, during this same period, a total of at least 729 died in the mines. This indicates that the majority of fatalities came either individually or in small groups. Also, rather than a major disaster, death most often resulted from a fall of the roof, being crushed by a car or locomotive, the toxic gases that

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[30]Ibid., 29-30; Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," 452-453; Gibson, Oklahoma, 163; Morris, Drills, Bits, Picks and Shovels, 103.

sometimes filled rooms, or a minor explosion.[31]

A series of factors contributed to the high death rate. First, the practice of paying miners by the ton encouraged them to extract the maximum amount of coal in the least possible time. Accordingly, safety often became only a secondary consideration. Many miners would "shoot off the solid," that is blast the coal from the face of the seam without undercutting. This necessitated a greater powder charge which itself might be fatal, or set off explosive coal dust. It also weakened the roof, setting the stage for future accidents. Much like their employees, the companies likewise sought to maximize profits by minimizing expenses. Consequently, miners often complained of shabby timbering of the mine and a corporate indifference to safety. In addition to these human elements, the Choctaw mines had the dubious reputation of being unusually gaseous. Deadly methane, trapped for eons in the coal, sometimes escaped unexpectedly during the extraction process.[32]

The dangerous working conditions, and their employers seeming indifference to it, was one of the major motivating factors behind the miners attempt to unionize. The Knights of Labor entered the Indian Territory coal fields in 1882 with a local assembly at Midway. The following year it led an unsuccessful one-month strike among the miners.

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[31]Phillip A. Kalisch, "Ordeal of the Oklahoma Coal Miners: Coal Mine Disasters in the Sooner State, 1886-1945," Chronicles of Oklahoma 48 (Autumn 1970): 331-341; Albert Fay, comp., Coal-Mine Fatalities in the United States, 1890-1914, U.S. Bureau of Mines Bulletin 115 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 268-276.

[32]Aldrich, "History of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 181-197.

Nevertheless, the Knights continued to organize, and by 1884, had 1500 members at assemblies in Krebs, McAlester, and Savanna. That same year, the union also won workers a 25 percent wage increase, resulting in even greater membership. The Knights, however, opposed the presence of immigrants in the coal fields, claiming that their willingness to work for less than their American and British counterparts drove wages down. Although perhaps correct in this contention, this xenophobic attitude prevented the Knights from being truly representative of the Choctaw Nation coal miners.[33]

The outcome of the 1894 coal miners strike--the first major labor confrontation in Oklahoma history--further weakened the Knights. In March, the operators announced a 25 percent wage cut, citing the loss of markets to mines in Alabama, Colorado, and New Mexico. They also argued that the scale in Indian Territory was already as high as anywhere in the country. The miners protested, and a meeting between the two parties, including local officials of the Knights of Labor, failed to resolve the question. In April, the miners struck. The operators responded by evicting the strikers from their company houses and importing strikebreakers, many of them blacks from Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Tensions heightened as these replacements arrived, with strikers resorting to massive demonstrations and threats of violence in an attempt to close the mines. On May 11, an alarmed Dew M. Windom, agent for the Union Agency, which included the Choctaw Nation, requested

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[33]Clyde Hamm, ed., Labor History of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, OK: A.M. Van Horn, 1939), 4-6; Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 28-29.

federal troops to protect both the strikebreakers and the operators' property. At the end of the month, three companies of infantry from Fort Leavenworth arrived by special train at South McAlester. Two companies of cavalry from Fort Reno soon joined them.[34]

The Choctaw Nation joined with operators, soldiers, and strikebreakers to squelch the strike. Concerned about the sudden loss of coal royalties, tribal officials cooperated with the companies by ordering the expulsion of strikers. Since they were unemployed, these miners had failed to pay their residency permit fee and thus were deemed illegal intruders into the Nation. Under this pretense, upwards of 300 miners and their families were loaded onto boxcars and deported to Jenson, Arkansas, just over the border. Nearly all, however, returned by the time a settlement was reached on July 31. This agreement stipulated a 20, rather than 25 percent wage reduction. The strike had essentially failed. When the Knights of Labor's national organization suffered a decline shortly thereafter, they quickly disappeared from the Choctaw coal fields.[35]

The United Mine Workers of America stepped into the void. A national organizer for the union came to Indian Territory in 1898 and soon formed its first local at Krebs. Others quickly followed, and union miners from Arkansas and Texas gathered at Fort Smith on October

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[34]Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 6-9; First Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 514-515.

[35]Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 9-12; Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 130; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1894 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 71-79, 143-145.

7, 1898 to form District 21 of the United Mine Workers of America. Their first demands included a wage increase to meet the rising cost of living, an eight-hour work day, and recognition of the union. The owners refused and even proposed a pay decrease. Negotiations to reach a settlement failed, and on February 1899 a strike began that would ultimately last over four years.[36]

It appeared initially that the United Mine Workers would suffer the same fate as the Knights of Labor. Strikers again were evicted from company houses, although a union strike fund did provide tents and a modest living allowance. Choctaw officials also ordered the expulsion of labor agitators, meaning union leaders. The federal government's Indian Inspector for the Nation, however, vetoed this action fearing it would only further aggravate the situation. Moreover, there was good reason not to stir too much of a fuss. Despite the strike, nearly all the mines were operating a full capacity by 1900 thanks to the importation of strikebreakers from Alabama, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Sporadic riots, bombings, destruction of mine property, blacklisting, and injunctions characterized the next several years, but neither side budged. In fact, coal production continued to rise. Credit for maintaining union solidarity in the midst of what was essentially an ineffective strike belongs to Pete Hanraty. A former Knight of Labor and mayor of Coalgate, and a future state labor leader, Hanraty became president of District 21 in 1900 and worked tirelessly to

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[36]Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 12-14.

enlist union members in the coal fields.[37]

Hanraty's perseverance was finally rewarded when a settlement was announced on August 1, 1903. At a meeting in Pittsburg, Kansas, the newly-formed Southwestern Coal Operators Association, representing nearly all the major producers in Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, and Indian Territory, agreed to recognize Districts 14, 21, and 25 of the United Mine Workers of America. The Association also approved an eight-hour work day and a small salary increase. The coal miners had won, but in Indian Territory circumstances elsewhere accounted for the victory. While strikers there failed to close the mines, their union brothers in Texas and Kansas enjoyed success in their simultaneous work stoppage against many of the same railroad interests active in the Choctaw Nation. Regardless of who was responsible, recognition of the United Mine Workers ushered in a period of relatively peaceful labor relations.[38]

THE ERA OF PROSPERITY, 1903-1920

Settlement of the strike for union recognition also marked the beginning of coal mining's heyday in Indian Territory and Oklahoma. Over 3 million tons of coal were mined for the first time in 1903. This represented a tremendous expansion since the 2 million mark was reached only two years earlier. Such exponential growth, however, failed to

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[37]Ibid., 14-15; John Barnhill, "Triumph of Will: The Coal Strike of 1899-1903," Chronicles of Oklahoma 61 (Spring 1983): 80-95; Gibson, Oklahoma, 163.

[38]Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 16; Gable, Progressive Oklahoma, 149-150.

continue. Production exceeded 4 million tons only in 1913, and the record of 4,849,288 tons came seven years later. This figures illustrate that stability more than boom characterized the era of prosperity.

The ultimate disposition of the Choctaw mineral estate partially explains why mining leveled off. In 1902, the federal government and Choctaw and Chickasaw officials agreed that tribal coal lands would be sold within three years of an allotment treaty's ratification. The Indians highly desired such an action because they feared little or no benefit would be derived from their resources once they no longer exerted any control over them. The agreement stipulated that the lands would be sold in 960 acre parcels by sealed bids. A commission of three, two of whom were to be Choctaw and Chickasaw citizens, was appointed to supervise the transaction. Both leased and unleased tracts were to be included, with existing conditions attached to any lease sold. J.A. Taff of the United States Geological Survey, who had been surveying Indian Territory coal deposits since 1897, recommended segregating nearly 450,000 acres for the proposed sale. Congress in 1904 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to proceed.[39]

The results greatly disappointed everyone. After nationally advertising the sale in major newspapers, the commission opened bids late in 1904 and into the following year. In every case, they rejected the bids as far below the market value. As allotment moved toward completion, anxious Choctaw legislators in November 1905 considered an

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[39]Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 280-282; Knox, "Development of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma,"28.

unofficial offer of $15 million for the entire segregated lands. They declined, but asked that parcels as small as 40 acres be sold in order to encourage purchase by small operators. The lawmakers further requested that the lands be disposed of by private sale or public auction, believing that the sealed bid method kept prices artificially low. The federal government, however, hesitated.[40]

Congress finally in 1906, as part of the final settlement of tribal affairs, declared that no coal lands presently under production would be sold until the leases on them expired. This essentially represented a thirty year delay in transferring ownership to the operators. The Choctaw protested, but to no avail. They even attempted to sell their mineral lands to the proposed state of Oklahoma to endow its public school system, but were unsuccessful. By the time Congress provided for the orderly sale of segregated coal lands in 1921, oil and gas were replacing coal as the nation's primary fuel. Consequently, interest in the coal lands, and their value, had greatly diminished.[41]

Despite the difficulties surrounding disposal of the segregated lands, the coal industry became much more complex during the prosperous years. Railroad-owned mines continued to dominate, but many medium- and small-sized firms joined them. In 1898, for instance, nineteen companies mined coal in Indian Territory. By 1905, the number rose to

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[40]Aldrich, "History of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 221-249.

[41]Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic, 281-282.

48 and in 1910 was 53.[42]

As long as locomotive fuel provided the major market for coal, the railroads remained the most important force in the industry. The Katy's coal department continued to direct the Osage Coal and Mining Company operations at Krebs, McAlester, Savanna, Alderson, Carbon, Craig, Bache, Dow, and Craig. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad acquired the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf in 1902 and soon thereafter began extracting coal as the Rock Island Coal and Mining Company. Eventually, the Rock Island Improvement Company, a holding company designed to take title to all property and equipment not directly related to the transportation business, worked the mines around Hartshorne, Haileyville, Wilburton, Gowen, and Lutie. Similarly, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe purchased the Western Coal and Mining Company properties at Lehigh. The formation of such subsidiaries became a necessity as both state and federal regulation of the railroads increased in the early twentieth century.[43]

The roads also affiliated with large- and medium-sized independents along their lines. Much to the delight of railroad officials, these companies often supplied fuel at a cost equal to their own subsidiaries, and without the overhead of leasing land and

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[42]Annual Report of the Mine Inspector for Indian Territory, 1898, 55th Cong., 3d. sess., 1898, H. Doc. 5, Serial 3758; Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 51; Fourth Annual Report of the Oklahoma Department of Mines, Oil and Gas, 1910-1911, 43-44, 73-74.

[43]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 53-54; William Edward Hayes, Iron Road to Empire: The History of 100 Years of the Progress and Achievements of the Rock Island Lines, n.p., 1953, 159-162, 169.

maintaining a substantial physical plant. The roads, nevertheless, retained effective control over these operators by providing the market and transportation they needed to stay in business, and by awarding them preferential contracts. The Bolen-Darnell mines at McAlester enjoyed such an arrangement with the Katy, and the Crowe Coal and Mining Company at Poteau furnished locomotive fuel to the St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco) Railroad in this manner as well.[44]

A number of newcomers entered the industry during this period by purchasing adjacent small mines, or acquiring properties near their own, and consolidating them into one operation. This represented a new mid-level of investment in coal mining. D.M. Hailey, long active in locating mines and selling them to others, formed his own company, the Hailey-Ola Coal Company, using this technique. William Busby, another entreprenuer engaged in various mining enterprises, combined all of them into the Great Western Mining Company in 1905. Outside investors also engaged in this practice. Kansas City interests backed the Central Coal and Coke Company's acquisition of the Kansas and Texas Coal Company mines at Carbon, while Dallas capitalists incorporated the Milby-Dow Coal Company to develop several small openings at Dow. All of these large- and medium-sized independents contracted with the McAlester Coal and Fuel Company, formed in 1904, as their common selling agent. This centralized marketing encouraged the trend toward consolidation all the more.[45]

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[44]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 52-53.

[45]Ibid., 54-55; Gunning, When Coal was King, 14.

Although dwarfed in size and production by these larger competitors, small mining enterprises continued to flourish. A chronic labor surplus left many miners looking for a source of income, which they often found in the easily exploited deposits close to the surface. With coal commanding five to seven dollar a ton on the local market during the 1910s, unemployed miners could turn a profit with little effort. At times, groups of men formed a cooperative and shared the coal amongst themselves for their own needs, with any remaining being sold in the nearby towns. The smallest of these openings became known as "dog-holes" as they were nothing more than a shallow excavation into a hillside. Many of these appeared illegally on the unleased portions of the segregated coal lands, especially within the five-mile stretch between Krebs and Adamson.[46]

As the number of companies and mines increased during the first two decades of the twentieth century, so did the population of the surrounding towns. In 1900, the communities within the Choctaw Nation which owed their existence to coal mining had 23,179 residents. Ten years later, their population reached 48,370, a 108 percent gain. Coal production did not experience substantial growth during these years, so other factors account for this population explosion, primary of which was the massive white settlement of eastern Oklahoma associated with the dissolution of Indian Territory. By 1920, a total of 52,222 lived in

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[46]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 55-56.

the coal towns, a more modest 7 percent increase.[47]

McAlester far and away experienced the greatest growth, especially between 1900 and 1910. When the century began, it actually consisted of two separate communities. McAlester proper centered around the house and store of the city's namesake, and 646 lived there. Another 3,479 lived in South McAlester which emerged after the Choctaw Coal and Railway built into the coal fields during the 1880s. The two formally merged on May 1907 and became the Pittsburg County seat in the new state of Oklahoma. Three years later, the city boasted a population of 11,774 and had firmly established itself as the coal region's financial and commercial center.[48]

There could be little doubt that McAlester and the surrounding coal towns were maturing once that all-important turn-of-the-century symbol of urbanity--the trolley--arrived. Investors incorporated the Indian Territory Traction Company in 1903, and one year later it became known as the Choctaw Railway and Lighting Company. By the time the firm was reorganized as the Pittsburg County Railway Company in 1916, McAlester enjoyed a street railway system and a seventeen-mile interurban line connecting it with Krebs, Alderson, Bache, Dow, Haileyville, and Hartshorne. The introduction of this mode of mass transportation broke the isolation of the coal camps and no doubt

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[47]Ibid., 21-23; Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. Volume I: Population (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Office, 1911), 447-452, 456-458.

[48]Aldrich, "History of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 28-33; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Volume I: Population (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Office, 1901), 448; Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 22.

contributed to the company town's demise.[49]

The attention the new state of Oklahoma paid the coal industry further signaled that it had become an economic mainstay. The Oklahoma Constitution provided for a chief mine inspector and stipulated that the holder have at least eight years of practical mining experience. It also mandated the eight-hour work day and prohibited boys under 16 years of age from working underground. When the First Legislature convened, it formally organized the Office of Chief Mine Inspector and appropriately named Pete Hanraty to the post. The Office divided the coal fields into three districts for inspection purposes and established minimal safety standards. In 1908, a state mining board was added to administer tests to miners seeking such specialized positions as engineer, fire boss, pit boss, and superintendent. Oklahoma's regulation of the coal mining industry at this time mirrored that of other states during the Progressive Era.[50]

The First Legislature also authorized an institution for teaching technical courses in mining and metallurgy which would ultimately lead to a degree in mining engineering. In April 1908, Wilburton citizens rallied in support of such a school and pledged a 60 acre plot one mile west of town. This prompted the Second Legislature to designate Wilburton as the site of the Oklahoma School of Mines. In addition, the

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[49]Allison Chandler and Stephen D. Maguire, When Oklahoma Took the Trolley (Glendale, CA: Interurbans, 1980), 87-92; George and Wood, Railroads of Oklahoma.

[50]Constitution of the State of Oklahoma, Article VI, Sections 25 and 26; Frederick L. Ryan, A History of Labor Legislation in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), 63-65; Brown, "Italians in Pittsburg County," 36.

lawmakers appropriated $250,000 for its construction and maintenance. In 1911, one hundred students attended the first classes in a rented building. Soon, separate Science and Metallurgical Buildings were completed, and the first degree was awarded in 1912. The School of Mines closed temporarily in 1917-1919 due to lack of appropriations, but reopened with an added emphasis on industry and trade. By the 1920s, it began offering more general courses. The de-emphasis of a mining-related curriculum culminated in changing its name to Eastern Oklahoma College in 1927. Thereafter, it was essentially a junior college.[51]

Employment figures serve as yet another indicator of the industry's status between 1903 and 1920. In the former year, 6091 men worked in the mines, but in 1904, the workforce grew to 8260. The number engaged in mining, of course, varied from year to year due to fluctuations in coal demand and competition from other producing regions. Still, the annual average for the period was 8080. This proved a larger workforce than the industry actually required, for underemployment remained a chronic problem. Seldom did miners work more than half-time. Even during the peak of production during World War I, they worked only about 200 days per year. Under such conditions, a miners' income amounted to only around $400 annually.[52]

Several reasons explain the employment problem. Government inspectors blamed the introduction of mining machines; in 1914, machine-

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[51]Wooldridge, Wilburton, 46-67, 213-219.

[52]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 59-60; Brown, "Italians in Pittsburg County," 34-35; Mineral Resources of the United States, 1904 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 478.

mined coal accounted for 26 percent of the state's total production. Operators cited high union wages which they claimed escalated the price of coal to an uncompetitive level. However, one student of the industry claimed that the companies actually encouraged higher prices, preferring to sell less coal at a greater profit than more at a smaller return. They also contended that the large population increases made a labor surplus inevitable. But the primary culprit for underemployment was actually the increasing utilization of oil and natural gas as industrial and domestic fuels. Even the railroads began converting to oil-burning locomotives, a development that directly threatened coal's major market. As early as 1904, the federal government noted the loss of traditional markets in Texas to petroleum.[53]

When miners did report for work, their job remained extremely dangerous. A law passed by the First Legislature required miners be paid by the ton rather than an hourly wage, and this encouraged them to continue shooting-off-the-solid. Consequently, the injury and fatality rate ranked among the highest in the nation. In 1906, for example, just 73,000 tons of coal were mined for each Oklahoma miner killed, compared to the national average of 174,500 tons. The United States Bureau of Mines recognized the special dangers of the region's mines when in 1914 it purchase a two-story brick building in McAlester, constructed ironically enough two years earlier by the coal operators. Here, the Bureau maintained a Mine Rescue Station, from which personnel assigned

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[53]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 59-60; Brown, "Italians in Pittsburg County," 34-35; Mineral Resources of the United States, 1904 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 478.

to its railroad rescue cars were dispatched to the scenes of accidents. One wing of the Station also housed a mock mine in which miners received training in rescue and safety techniques.[54]

Given the conditions under which they labored, it is understandable that the strong union sentiment born out of the strike for United Mine Workers recognition persevered. In fact, the success of their collective action inspired a spirit of class consciousness which for a time found expression in miner support of the Socialist party. The Oklahoma Socialist party won its first victory in 1904 when Coalgate elected Welsh miner John Ingram mayor. By 1910, the state party, which drew support from both the tenant farmers and coal miners of eastern Oklahoma, was the largest in the nation. It continued a viable political force in the region until falling victim to the superpatriotism associated with World War I.[55]

To solve their work-related problems, miners turned to the United Mine Workers of America. The biennial contract negotiations between the union and Southwest Coal Operators Association managed to maintain industrial peace in the coal fields until 1910. In that year, with encouragement and support from the Socialist party, union miners struck for higher wages and better working conditions. Although unsuccessful,

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[54]Mineral Resources of the United States, 1910 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 172-175; Clark, "Immigrants to the Choctaw Coal Industry," 447; "Mine Rescue Station Building," Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory files, State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

[55]James R. Green, Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 32-33.

the five-and-a-half month walkout caused production to fall by about 500,000 tons over the previous year. With the exception of several minor skirmishes, labor-management relations remained amiable until 1919.[56]

The extraordinary conditions associated with World War I lay behind the 1919 strike. Wartime mobilization and the exportation of coal to the Allies overseas created unprecedented demand--and prices--for coal nationwide. In Oklahoma, the coal companies could not find enough men to operate the mines, even though union wages rose as high as $7.50 a day. Nor could operators satisfy the demand by running both day and night shifts. Under the stimulus of these unusual circumstances, production in 1920 reached an all-time record of 4,849,288 tons. During this boom, the coal communities experienced tremendous economic expansion with many new retail businesses opening with an eye on the miners suddenly sizeable disposable income. In the long term, however, this rapid commercial development only made the bust which soon followed all the worse.[57]

Because the extreme demand for coal lasted beyond the actual fighting overseas, the United Mine Workers nationally demanded a continuation of a the high wartime wages in their 1919 negotiations with the coal companies. When the operators refused, a nationwide strike began on October 31. In eastern Oklahoma, some 7,000 union miners walked out. Governor J.B.A. Robertson quickly acquiesced to the

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[56]Ibid, 195.

[57]Knox, "Development of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 34.

operators requests that the National Guard be sent to the coal fields to protect their property, dispatching 2,000 troops. He also declared martial law in Pittsburg, Latimer, Haskell, and Okmulgee Counties. As winter set in and fuel shortages developed throughout the state, Robertson attempted unsuccessfully to deport strikers and have convicts work the mines. The operators, seeing their unusually high profits quickly evaporating, reached a temporary settlement with the United Mine Workers in December. The agreement paid miners an average of $5.50 per day. When a regular two-year contract was negotiated in June 1920, wages returned to their wartime level.[58]

THE DECLINE OF AN INDUSTRY, 1921-1950

In retrospect, the companies acted prematurely in awarding the increase, for after 1920 the coal industry entered a prolonged depression. In 1921, production statewide fell 1,486,665 tons, or 31 percent. Two-thirds of the loss (977,503) came from the coal producing counties of the former Choctaw Nation--Coal, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, and Pittsburg. By 1922, the amount of coal mined dipped below 3 million tons for the first time since the strike riddled year of 1910, and in 1931 it plummeted below the 2 million ton mark. Not until World War II again created an extraordinary demand for coal were the tonnages of the 1903-1920 period repeated, and then only temporarily.

Continued competition from petroleum in the industrial and domestic fuel markets lay at the heart of the collapse. In 1923, over

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[58]Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 58-59; Gibson, Oklahoma, 213; Steve Sewell "Cultural Life of Oklahoma's Coal Miners, 1870-1930," Unpublished manuscript in the author's possession, 10-11.

55 percent of Oklahoma's manufacturing plants used steam engines, most of which burned coal mined within the state. By 1930, however, probably no more than 15 percent used coal. Those that did, used it more efficiently and, thus, required less. Nationally, utilities in 1902 consumed an average of 6.6 pounds of coal to produce a kilowatt hour. In 1917, a kilowatt hour required only 3.3 pounds, and in 1927 just 1.84 pounds. Coal-fired locomotives also were improved to require less fuel. Worse yet from the coal operators' perspective, oil-burning engines became increasingly popular after the discoveries in the Mid-Continent field during 1917 sent the price of petroleum plummeting.[59]

The medium-sized and railroad affiliated independents at first suffered the greatest from this loss of coal's primary market. As railroads reduced their consumption throughout the 1920s, their directly-owned subsidiaries were more than able to meet locomotive fuel demands. The increasing adoption of oil and gas by industrial and domestic customers also dealt these firms a serious blow. That the value of coal declined simultaneously, due to competition from Colorado and Kansas for an already shrinking market, only exacerbated an already difficult situation. As a result of these factors, most moderately sized operations were set out of business by 1930.[60]

Such a depression naturally had a debilitating effect on the miners. Throughout the 1920s, the average number of days they worked

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[59]C.W. Shannon et al., Coal in Oklahoma, Bulletin No. 4 (Norman: Oklahoma Geological Survey, 1926), 28-29; Knox, "Development of the Coal Industry in Oklahoma," 36.

[60]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 62-63.

ranged from a high of 197 in 1928 to a low of 114 in 1922. Wages remained fairly high, the equivalent of $5 to $7.50 a day, but this meant little with employment so irregular. What hope the miners held for improvement, moreover, largely disappeared as a result of a strike lasting from 1924 to 1927. The United Mine Workers walked out on September 1, 1924 after the operators, citing the depressed conditions, refused to honor the $7.50 daily wage to which they agreed earlier in the year. Once again, the governor ordered the National Guard to the coal fields to protect company property and strikebreakers. The latter included midwestern farmers suffering their own economic woes and 600 Mexicans. The coal companies also vigorously enforced a lock-out and campaigned for an open shop in the mines. District 21 of the United Mine Workers managed to conduct the strike for three years, but the obstacles to their success proved too formidable. By 1927, the open-shop had been established and daily wages commonly fell to $5 or less.[61]

Not surprisingly, the coal communities of the former Choctaw Nation also suffered. Between 1920 and 1930, their population declined by 20 percent to 41,706. Several small settlements like Chant, Chambers, and Featherstone essentially ceased to exist. In the larger towns, including Wilburton and Krebs, large groups of unemployed miners left for automobile and tire factory jobs in the industrial Midwest. As the paycheck of those remaining behind shrank, numerous retail businesses closed, and commercial and residential construction ground to a halt. Banks began failing as early as 1923, and by 1927 just 4 of 67

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[61]Ibid., 65; Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 59-62.

financial institutions in the McAlester area remained solvent.[62]

Conditions only got worse with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929. The general economic decline of the 1930s greatly reduced rail traffic, and with it the railroads already declining need for Oklahoma coal. This dealt a final blow to the region's largest railroad-owned mines. During 1929 alone, the Osage Coal and Mining Company closed the last of the Krebs openings, and the Rock Island Improvement Company halted all operations at Hartshorne. By 1933, not a single producer directly tied to the railroads still operated. Only about 75 small mines, each employing 10 to 25 men each, remained to supply the limited local demand for coal.[63]

Just about any statistic one would care to cite amply illustrates the doldrums in which the coal industry found itself. Between 1931 and 1940, annual statewide production continued below 2 million tons, dipping as low as 1,208,289 tons in 1933. More significant for the region, the percentage mined in the former Choctaw Nation fell below half for the first time in 1937. The small amount of coal that was being exploited in Oklahoma increasingly came from strip mines in Okmulgee and Rogers Counties. The number of miners employed in the state also declined from 5465 in 1930 to just 1896 ten years later. The number of days they worked annually was even fewer than in the 1920s,

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[62]Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 22-23, 67; Wooldridge, Wilburton, 105-106; Brown, "Italians in Pittsburg County," 82-83.

[63]Morris, Drill Bits, Picks, and Shovels, 92; Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Oklahoma Department of Mines and Mining, 1933, 7-9; Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 62-63.

averaging just 112 during the subsequent decade. Wages, however, remained respectable thanks in large measure to the resurrection of the United Mine Workers under the New Deal's National Recovery Administration code for the coal industry.[64]

Miners failed to escape the relief rolls, despite this wage scale. There were just too many of them and too little work. In October 1934, a total of 147,118 residents of the coal producing counties of Atoka, Coal, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, and Pittsburg--or 70 percent of their 1930 population--received assistance from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The Administration also attempted to provide work to the unemployed at various strip mines in eastern Oklahoma, including one each at Coalgate and Stigler. Neither made much of an impact on the unemployment rate among miners.[65]

Once again, it took a world war to revive the region's coal industry and, once again, the return to prosperity was short-lived. The movement of men and material during World War II generated tremendous rail traffic, and the roads clamored for locomotive fuel of all kinds. Industry also turned to coal as manufacturing quickened to meet the needs of mobilization. Mines at Carbon and McCurtain, for example, supplied coking coal to two Texas firms, the Sheffield Steel Corporation

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[64]For statistics on production, number employed, and average number of days worked annually see Annual Report of the Oklahoma Department of Mines and Mining, 1930-1940. On labor's resurrection under the New Deal, see Hamm, Labor History of Oklahoma, 79-82.

[65]Emergency Relief Administration, Oklahoma Department of Public Relations, The Emergency Relief Administration Program in Oklahoma: April 1 to December 31, 1934, Report of the Emergency Relief Administrator for Oklahoma (n.p., n.d.), 25-26, 79; Ryan, Rehabilitation of Oklahoma Coal Mining Communities, 111.

and the Lone Star Steel Company. Driven by wartime demand, statewide production surpassed 2 million tons in 1941 for the first time in a decade. In 1944, over 3 million tons were mined. During 1942 and 1943, miners worked full-time, and often overtime. Output remained above 2 million tons from 1945 to 1950 thanks to the post-war economic boom. Nevertheless, the downward trend of the latter year signaled that the good times were over.[66]

The mines and miners of the former Choctaw Nation actually were secondary contributors and benefactors of the wartime coal boom. In 1941, over 46 percent of the state's coal production came from strip mines located outside the region. Two years later, over half of the Oklahoma coal product was surfaced mined, and in 1950, the proportion stood at 64.5 percent. Simultaneously, the region's share of production ranged from 47 percent to a low of 29 percent in 1943. These figures illustrate clearly that within the region itself mining was declining, and statewide a new era in which strip mining dominated had begun.

One event in particular symbolizes the end of this historic period of coal mining in what was once the Choctaw Nation. In 1948, both the Choctaw and Chickasaw agreed to sell what remained of the segregated coal lands, over 300,000 acres. Two years later, the federal government purchased the lands and the coal beneath for $8.5 million. The two nations distributed the money on a per-capita basis, with each enrolled Choctaw receiving about $350. The tribal mineral estate, which had served as the foundation of Oklahoma's commercial coal industry for 80

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[66]Gunning, When Coal Was King, 21; Annual Reports of the Oklahoma Department of Mines and Mining, 1941-1950.

years, passed into different hands.[67]

Yet, from 1870 to 1950, coal had shaped much of the region's development. Commercial exploitation, made possible and largely conducted by railroad interests, was the major economic force until 1920, and a lesser, but significant one, afterwards. When the coal industry enjoyed prosperity, so did the region; when it suffered so did the area. While still independent republics within Indian Territory, the Choctaw and Chickasaw derived considerable income from coal royalties. This wealth, however, came at a tremendous cost since mining attracted the white settlement and investment which ultimately undermined Indian sovereignty. The miners themselves came to eastern Oklahoma from throughout the United States and Europe and established numerous communities. Their impact on the region's cultural heritage remains evident today. These miners also introduced organized labor and socialism to Indian Territory and Oklahoma. That mining so widely influenced the region's economic, social, cultural, and political evolution underscores its primary importance during these years.

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[67]James D. Morrison, "Problems in the Industrial Progress and Development of the Choctaw Nation, 1865 to 1907," Chronicles of Oklahoma 32 (Spring 1954): 85-86; Jesse O. McKee and Jon A. Schlenker, The Choctaws: Cultural Evolution of a Native American Tribe (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1980), 172.

PROPERTY TYPE ANALYSIS

Property types group together individual properties which share similar physical or associative characteristics. Defining and analyzing property types provide the means by which large numbers of related of properties may be compared for evaluation and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The preceding historical narrative, moreover, guides this process by identifying the significant themes and events which give these properties meaning. It also provides an initial indication of the property types likely to be found in the study area.

The following property type analysis draws on the historical narrative for coal mining in Management Region #6. Since it was finalized after the survey component of the project was completed, it often includes representative examples of the property type.

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES - Mine Sites

Description

The size and complexity of mine sites vary widely, depending largely upon both the size of the company operating the mine and the mining technique employed. The largest and most extensive sites were operated by railroad subsidiaries such as the Rock Island Improvement Company. With mines spread throughout the McAlester District, these firms supplied locomotive fuel to their parent companies. Smaller operators also provided a limited amount of coal to the roads, but most served the region's domestic and industrial fuel markets.

Coal was extracted in southeastern Oklahoma using one of three techniques. Slope mines, usually located on hillsides, tapped deposits

by sinking an inclined tunnel from the surface until reaching the seam. Historically, this was the most common method of mining in the McAlester area. Shaft mining required sinking a vertical opening from the surface until intercepting the deposit. This technique required considerable motive power for hauling both miners and coal between the seam and the mine entrance. Obviously, such an operation represented sizeable capital investment, and railroad subsidiaries were typically the only practitioners of shaft mining. When coal lay barely underground, it was sometime extracted by surfacing mining. The least costly and most efficient of the three techniques, it simply entailed removal of the overburden using standard excavation methods. This may have been simply by means of scrapers and plows, or by massive steamshovels. Areas of surface mining are typically referred to as strip pits.

In addition to the actual opening to the coal seam, mine sites also contained a variety of other buildings and structures to support the extractive process. These might include power houses, machine shops, tipples, washrooms, powder houses, and office buildings. Today, few of these resources service extant. Instead, engine mounts from haulage systems, dump piles of shale and slack coal, and foundations of buildings and structures are usually encountered.

Significance

Mine sites are the property type most directly related to the coal-mining history of southeastern Oklahoma. It was here, after all, that coal was removed from the ground. Individually, they reveal much about the industrial technology used to extract coal at a particular location, and collectively they illustrate the extensiveness of mining

throughout the region. Often lying in isolated rural areas, these are perhaps the most endangered of the coal mining related resources.

Eligibility

Determining the National Register eligibility of mine sites can be a difficult task given the unique nature of the resource. Mien sites by their very nature were built to be temporary, lasting only as long as coal could be profitably exploited. Thus, they were often crudely and inexpensively constructed. Also, the deterioration, salvaging, and vandalism of these properties since the coal industry's demise in the 1920s and 1930s have taken their toll. Accordingly few extant resources remain. Instead what would best be termed "ruins"--consisting of engine mounts, foundations, and dump piles--most often survive. Obviously, the absence of extant properties complicates the application of National Register standards for integrity. Therefore, guidance provided by Bruce J. Noble, Jr.'s "Evaluating Historic Mining Resources," CRM Bulletin, Volume 12, Number 2 1989): 1-4 best applies to determinations of eligibility for mine sites.

Using Noble's formula, which incorporates the concepts of visibility and focus, it becomes clear that a mine site retains its integrity only to the degree that the surviving resources leave an impression on the landscape that mining had once occurred at that location. Often, this is a function of the concentration of resources present. A single dump pile, for instance, could hardly be defined as leaving a clear impression of past mining activity. However, a dump pile coexisting with engine mounts, a mine entrance, building foundations, or any combination of these would leave such an impression

and provide an understanding of the historic mining complex at that location. If the mine site retains such integrity and is at least fifty years old, it would be eligible for inclusion on the National Register.

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES - Mine Related Buildings

Description

At several locations, buildings associated with mining have survived sufficiently intact to warrant separate consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly as much activity occurred above ground as underground in the extraction of coal. Administration of the mine usually required the presence of some type of office building, many mines provided washrooms for the workers, power houses drove machinery, and shops kept the miners tools in working order. The simple rectangular ground plans typical of mine related buildings, together with their concrete and brick construction reflect their utilitarian nature. An example of this property type is the McAlester--Edwards Coal Company concrete building in the Pittsburg vicinity.

Significance

The Intensive-Level Survey of Coal Mining Related Properties in Pittsburg County revealed that few mine related buildings survive intact. Therefore, these are extremely important resources which provide an understanding of the many mining operations which occurred at the surface. As part of a mine site, they are especially significant links to the region's coal mining heritage.

Eligibility

Mine related buildings are eligible for listing on the National Register provided they meet the age criterion (at least fifty years old) and maintain their integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. Ordinarily, this means the building will have at least 75% of the original outside walls standing and can be directly linked to coal mining activity. Care should also be taken to note any alterations from the original ground plan or building materials reflecting the utilitarian origins of these resources, since recent area residents have sometimes adapted these buildings for other uses.

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES - Mine Related Structures

Just as coal mining included support buildings above ground, it also required various structures. Hoisting systems, consisting of rails, cables, cars, and machinery powered by steam or electricity, brought coal to the surface where it could be prepared and loaded for shipment. Often, concrete footings running between the power source and the mine entrance supported the components of the haulage system. Similarly, concrete engine mounts braced the machinery which drove the system and sometimes provided electric lighting for the mine. Numerous engine mounts and footings were found at mine sites during the survey of coal mining related properties in Pittsburg County.

Ventilation was also a primary concern in the area miens, nationally recognizes as among the most dangerous. The presence of gases such as methane, carbonic oxide gas, and acid gas could easily set off expositions or suffocate miners. Therefore, supplying fresh air to the workings became a high priority. This was accomplished using one of

two basic methods. Simply sinking an additional shaft for the movement of air between the surface and tunnels was the easiest but least effective solution. The survey identified such air shafts in the Haileyville and Savanna vicinities. Huge centrifugal fans--housed in concrete, brick, or stone--proved mere common and efficient by forcing air from the surface through the workings. The Thomas Coal Company fan house near Blanco is an example of this ventilation system.

In addition to dangerous gases, which the miners termed "damps", water plagued many of the McAlester District mines. At times, this water was pumped from the tunnels through yet another shaft. The Osage Coal and Mining Company water shaft in the Krebs vicinity is a surviving resource associated with this technique.

Explosives used for mining coal were stored in powder houses, sturdy structures typically having extremely thick brick or concrete walls. At times, they were also built into a hillside. Powder houses were constructed away from the mine mouth and at a distance from the surface machinery in order to limit damage should a premature detonation occur. The survey located one such powder house near Krebs.

Significance

Mine related structures are particularly significant as links to past mining technologies. They offer valuable insights into how operators and miners sought to resolve the dangers of gases, the problems of water, and the need to store highly explosive, yet vitaL, supplies. Given the reputation of area mines as among the most gaseous, and therefore dangerous, in the country, fan houses especially are significant mine related structures.

Eligibility

To be eligible for inclusion on the National Register, mine related structures should meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and maintain their integrity, especially of location, design, and materials. This is a rather simple determination for air and water shafts, but more difficult for powder and fan houses. For the latter, at least 75 percent of the outside walls should remain standing. The thick walls associated with powder houses should be evident, and their proximity to other resources at a mine site should be noted. Fan houses will typically display circular, or a long, narrow, rectangular construction. Often, the metal fan blades will have been salvaged for scrap, but the interior of the fan house should contain evidence of where the fan's axle was once anchored.

INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES - [Non-Mine Related]

Description

Until supplanted by oil and natural gas in the 1920s, coal was the nation's primary industrial and domestic fuel. Accordingly, coal powered a wide variety of industrial activity beyond its extraction. Some industries, however, especially depended on the availability of nearby coal. These included coke and brick making.

The production of coke involved retorting coal by heating it until most of the non-volatile matter was driven-off. This distillation process raised the fuel's heat value significantly beyond ordinary coal, making it a superior industrial fuel. The Osage Coal and Mining Company erected beehive-shaped stone coking ovens near Krebs, the remnants of

which the survey identified.

Brick manufacturing also drew on coal and other materials often found at or near the miens. Coal fired the kiln which baked either clay or shale into the bricks. During the 1930s, at least, the Oklahoma State Penitentiary near McAlester utilized both shale and coal deposits on its grounds to manufacture brick. The site of this plant was recorded during the survey.

Significance

Non-mine related industrial properties are significant because they illustrate the pervasive influence of coal as the nation's primary fuel during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the first two decades of the twentieth. In addition to its utilization as a locomotive fuel, these industrial applications of coal were a major motivation for its commercial exploitation.

Eligibility

To be eligible for inclusion on the National Register, non-mine related industrial properties should meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and maintain their integrity, especially of location, design setting, materials, and association. Coke ovens should reflect their beehive shaped construction of stone or concrete building materials. If only a foundation remains, it should be circular in shape. Brick plants were often sizeable operations consisting of multiple kilns, storage and office buildings, and drying pan. If not extant, foundations and ruins associated with brick plants should be extensive enough to reflect the magnitude of activity.

DOMESTIC PROPERTIES

Description

The thousands of men who came to work the mines of the Choctaw Nation, and later Pittsburg County, required housing. Prior to the dissolution of tribal lands through allotment, miners and their families lives on the mining leases in towns and houses owned and controlled by their employer. Company houses were typically small, one story wooden frame buildings, cheaply constructed on temporary foundations so they could easily be moved to new mining locations. Most featured pyramidal roofs, which were easier and less expensive to construct than the gable variety. Lacking ornamentation, they can best be architecturally classified as being of the Folk National style. Over the years, many company houses have been destroyed or significantly altered due to their small size and poor construction. A company house associated with the Osage Coal and Mining Company was documented by the survey at 201 West Park Avenue in McAlester.

In contrast to housing for miners, homes for mine superintendents and others in positions of authority were often of more substantial construction. The mine superintendent's house at 8 West Park Avenue in McAlester, for example, is a large two story wood framed building with a pyramidal roof. While its lack of ornamentation earns it a Folk National classification, is larger size reflects the higher social rank of its occupant.

Significance

Domestic residential properties associated with the coal mining industry primarily possess social and economic significance. Coal

companies were driven primarily by the profit motive and were not deeply concerned about their employees' welfare. Consequently, company houses were cheaply constructed, providing only basic subsistence housing. The miners dwelling, in other words, was a physical reflection of his status in the industrial order, just as were the larger homes occupied by superintendents.

Eligibility

To be eligible for inclusion on the National Register, domestic properties should meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and maintain their integrity, especially of design, setting, and materials. Because they were designed to be moved, miners houses may not retain their integrity of location, yet maintain their integrity of design. Such properties should be considered for inclusion should their overall integrity be evident. Miners, and even superintendent homes will usually be shotgun or hall-and-parlor variations of the Folk National style. Some alterations may be acceptable, but, again, only if the properties overall integrity has not been compromised.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

Description

The appearance of commercial establishments within coal mining communities served several functions. Of greatest importance was the establishment's ability to meet the consumer needs of the laborer and other residents. Grocery stores, mercantile companies, and financial institutions met most of the basic requirements of this population. These were the commercial properties most commonly identified in this

survey. Coal mining related/commercial properties could be found either in the center of town or within residential neighborhoods, particularly if they were associated with a particular ethnic group.

Coal mining related commercial buildings typically date from the early 1890s to 1920. They were generally one or two stories and were constructed in the Early Commercial style of architecture. Most were constructed of brick with architectural detail limited to window or entrance treatments or decorative brickwork below the roofline. An example of this type of building is the Pittsburg Bank. Other commercial buildings display details borrowed from the more formal architectural styles. The Krebs Bank features, for instance, classical detailing around the front entrance. Lovera's Italian Grocery, also in Krebs, is constructed of sandstone and suggests an Italiante influence with its arched windows. Another unusual stylistic example in the county is the First National Bank of Kiowa building. Constructed of concrete, it bears early modernistic influences with pilasters suggestive of a later style which emphasized vertical projections.

Significance

Coal mining related properties are significant because they reflect the pervasive influence of the coal industry on the area's economic development, especially between 1870 and 1920. Many of Pittsburg County's earliest banks, groceries, and mercantiles existed primarily to serve the everyday needs of miners and their families. Commercial properties may also be architecturally significant if they reflect a locally rare style, such as the Italianate Lovera's Grocery in Krebs.

Eligibility

To be eligibile commercial properties should meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and maintain their integrity, especially of design, setting, materials and association. Consideration should also be given to concentrations of such properties, such as in a downtown, which may constitute a historic district. Typically, coal mining related commercial properties embody Early Commercial architecture. Consequently, they often consist of one- or two-part commercial blocks constructed of brick or native stone. Multi-storied two-part commercial blocks usually house public space on the street level, while upper stories include offices, hotel rooms, or meeting halls. Association with coal mining must be carefully documented and justified as well.

RELIGIOUS PROPERTIES

Description

Many of those who came to mine Pittsburg County coal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were European and Mexican immigrants of a variety of faiths, but most notably Catholicism. Religious properties associated with the miners, therefore, reflect the social and cultural dimensions of coal's impact on the region. While miners often lived in crude dwellings, their churches were often elaborate, a testimony to religion's primary importance to them. St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Krebs and Sts. Cyril & Methodius Russian Orthodox Church in Hartshorne are two outstanding examples of this tendency. At the other extreme stands St. Edwards Catholic Church in

Pittsburg, a simple shotgun building documented during the survey. Whether ornate or plain, the churches associated with coal mining represent to miners' desire to fulfill their religious needs in a life fraught with danger and uncertainty.

Significance

The significance of coal mining related religious properties lies in their ability to illustrate the social and cultural composition of the mining population. St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Krebs, for example, drew most of its congregation from the surrounding Italian population. Similarly, Russian immigrant miners constituted the majority of Sts. Cyril and Methodius' parish. Several churches, including the two above, may also be considered significant as outstanding examples of certain architectural styles.

Eligibility

Generally, religious properties are ineligible for listing on the National Register. Exceptions may be made for coal mining related religious properties if their significance stems primarily either from their association with the social and political history of the region, or their architectural merit. Great care should be taken to document and justify these exceptions, however. Religious properties, of course, should also meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and retain their integrity, especially of location, design, materials, and association. In regard to the latter, a direct tie to coal mining should be evident.

FUNERARY PROPERTIES

Description

Death proved all too common in the coal mines of Pittsburg County, reputedly among the most dangerous in the nation. Thus, cemeteries may be properly considered as coal mining related historic resources. They reveal much about the inherent dangers of mining, as well as the ethnic and religious composition of the mining population. The most notable funerary property associated with mining is the Mass Grave of the Mexican Miners in McAlester's Mount Calvary Cemetery. Here, 24 immigrant victims of a 1929 mine disaster lie interred in a 70 by 10 foot grave listed on the National Register in 1980. The survey also documented cemeteries having direct ties to mining in the vicinities of Bache, Hartshorne, Pittsburg, and Savanna. Many of the miners buried in these died individually in common mining mishaps such as a roof fall, premature explosion of powder, or accidents with machinery.

Significance

Cemeteries associated with coal mining illustrate both the dangers of the mining profession and the ethnic composition of the miners. Many plots contain the graves of several family members, reflecting the generations of men who found employment underground. A similar date of death for a multiple of graves usually indicate a major disaster at a nearby mine. The variety of surnames, and notations of nativity, also reveal the diversity of ethnic groups among the miners.

Eligibility

Ordinarily, cemeteries are ineligible for listing on the National Register. They may be considered, however, if their primary significance stems from association with historically significant

events. Accordingly, coal mining related cemeteries may be considered eligible if coal miners and their families constitute a significant majority of the graves, and if the graves contain enough specific information to provide insight on the social and ethnic composition of the miners. Since such funerary properties are generally ineligible, this connection must be fully documented and justified. They, of course, should also meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old).

TRANSPORTATION PROPERTIES

Description

Throughout their mutual existence, coal mining and railroads enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. Coal provided railroads with both a necessary fuel supply and a profitable freight item. For their part, railroads were a major market for coal, and, by carrying the bulky commodity to distant markets, they made commercial mining possible. Such was their inter-relationship that large-scale exploitation awaited the rails. This certainly was the case in Pittsburg County, where the arrival of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad in 1871 launched the region's coal industry.

Several rail-related transportation properties illustrate this relationship. Spurs connected the main line with mines, and were, therefore, essential to successful commercial mining. Steam locomotives required water as well as coal, and water towers were often erected along mine spurs. The survey recorded such a tower in the Blanco vicinity. Tipples, a trestle-like structure built over the spur which sorted and treated mine-run coal, loaded the fuel onto cars. The survey

identified no extant tipples, but several tipple foundations. A more substantial coal loading structure built of concrete, however, was documented in McAlester. Ironically, it began operation in the early 1920s, just as the heyday of coal mining was passing.

Significance

Coal mining related transportation properties are primarily significant because they illustrate the symbiotic relationship between mining and railroading noted above. Spurs, water towers, and loading structures all helped make commercial exploitation feasible and, thus, share an important association with the area's coal mining history.

Eligibility

To be eligible for inclusion on the National Register, coal mining related transportation properties should meet the age criterion (at least 50 years old) and maintain their integrity, especially of location, materials, and association. Often such resources may not be found extant, but their ruins and remnants should clearly be tied to mining either by proximity to a mine, as in the case of a spur, or by location on a mining site, as in the case of tipple foundations. Coal loading structures may or may not be found near mining activity, but the resource's association with the industry should be no less evident.

ANNOTATED LIST OF DOCUMENTED PROPERTIES

Below is a list of the properties documented during the Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of Coal Mining Related Resources in Pittsburg County. The information for this list comes from the data base compiled for the individual Historic Preservation Resource Identification Forms. Consequently, a few comments about the format are in order.

First, not every category in describing the property's location is used, only those which apply to that particular property. The absence of information on lot, block, and plat indicates that the property is in an unincorporated area. An entry of "V" after "Vicinity" provides a similar indication. The information on a rural property's address serves an as estimation of its location; a more precise location is provided by the entries for range, township, and section. Finally, when a resource occurs as part of a proposed historic district, the name of that district is recorded as the "Property Name." The individual resource is recorded as the "Resource Name." Conversely, when a resource exists individually, "Same" is entered as the "Resource Name."