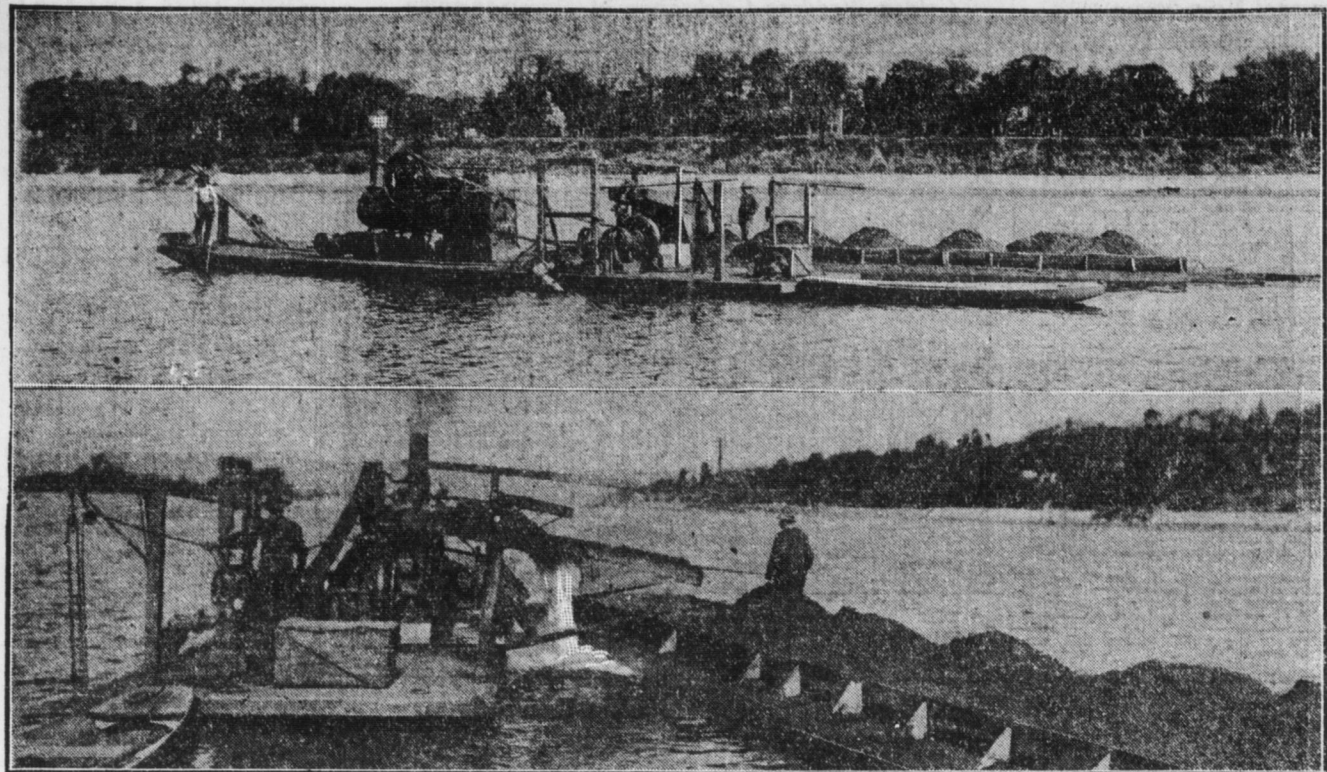


RIVER COAL INDUSTRY OF HARRISBURG ONE OF MOST UNIQUE IN UNITED STATES



Careful housewife that you are, does it not stir you oftentimes to exceeding great wrath to have your carefully cleaned window sills and painstakingly dusted porch chairs constantly coated with an almost imperceptible layer of black dust? Of course it does yet, this very same coal dust, in larger form, is not exempt from the statement that everything in this world is of some use, whether our finite minds be aware of that usefulness or not. Otherwise the apparently useless things would have been relegated by evolution or custom to the realm of "innocuous desuetude."

It is the purpose of this article to delve into the history of one of the most unique industries extant, an industry that is peculiar to Central Pennsylvania territory and which, so far as is known in this section, is not duplicated elsewhere in the United States.

Gradual Unfolding of the Flower of a Unique Industry

The dredging of coal from the bottom of the Susquehanna river, which was first begun about fifteen or twenty years ago by pioneers still living in this city and still plying their old trade, has developed far beyond the dreams of those who first took advantage of the thousands of dollars worth of coal that was glistening silently and undiscovered past this city and on and on until it reached the bay and then the ocean. The fact that there are no hard coal mines located on any other river in the country except the Susquehanna is authority for the statement made by an expert in this city that the reclaiming of coal and sand from the bottom of the river is almost exclusively done in the river which washes the "Front Steps of Harrisburg." Little did the originators of the industry realize the vast economic value and the enormous possibilities for profit that were wrapped up in the simple task of taking

coal from the unlimited stretches of water.

For years and years a good healthy livelihood for a large number of men and a great saving of expense for innumerable manufacturers in this and other cities located on the banks of the Susquehanna as far north as Danville and as far south as Columbia, were not realized in the thousands of tons of coal which swept slowly or rapidly, depending on the depth of the stream and the consequent rapidity of the current, down the river and away. "Across of Diamonds," as the famous Dr. Conwell puts it in his million-dollar lecture, were all about us, and it was not until a decade and a half ago that the figurative glitter of these "diamonds" caught the eye of the pioneer riverman.

James Stiner, manager of the St. James Hotel, this city, was among the first to definitely establish a business built around the scooping of coal from the river depths. Mr. Stiner was not the first to discover the profitability of the industry, nor was he the first to employ machinery in obtaining the coal, but he first pushed the game and increased its proportions to the output that for years has remained at a consistent average, something less than 100,000 tons a year.

After the first rush and the spasmodic diggings had gradually developed into a well-established business, competitors appeared in the field—a wet field, to be sure—fleets and dredges sprang up full-grown overnight, and Harrisburg was the proud possessor of an industry all its own.

At other points above and below the city, the same activities prevailed and still prevail, but it is doubtful if there is any locality more prolific with coal than is the river right before us. What is missed above is caught here, and what filters through the dragnets of the Harrisburg rivermen, is swept up at various points below. The supply of river coal from the coal banks in

the mining region is increased by the large pieces that drop from trains crossing and recrossing the many bridges.

Johnstown Flood a Possible Cause

B. F. Nead, well-known member of the bar in this city, is of the opinion that the Johnstown flood, back in '89, was largely responsible for the original founding of the new profitable beds. At that time, huge deposits rushed down the river and flooded the country at the time of the disaster, for a long period menacing the city of Harrisburg and threatening the health of its inhabitants, until at length the filter plant was installed on the island and the danger from infected water averted. Other floods followed the big deluge and all sorts of material came down the river, giving credence to the belief that the origin of the industry may be traced to that great misery-producing flood.

At length competition became so keen that the inevitable happened and there was a combine of interests. The Harrisburg River Coal, Sand and Stone Company became an entity and B. F. Nead, now treasurer of the organization. The name of the company betrays the fact that coal was not the only commodity which the river gave and gives up. Prosperity was the guiding star of the new company, which at one time was under contract to deliver 100,000 tons to a Philadelphia concern, and an idea of the magnitude of the business may be had when one realizes that this was not an extraordinary order.

Coal Companies Wake Up

For several years the company and its competitors did business unmoiled until the big coal strike about a decade ago brought the mining interests to a realization that they had been very negligent in the matter of this by-product which was proving such a gold mine to concerns all along the river; and so they began washing their coal banks themselves, and the source of supplies was cut down noticeably. This was ten years ago, and it was claimed then that the industry would soon die out here from lack of nourishment, but the coal is being taken out in enormous quantities and there doesn't seem to be any indication of a let-up. The small tributaries of the Susquehanna steadily pour their quota into the main river, and the steam dredges continue to ply their interesting trade and the home manufacturers continue to buy their coal from the river companies and the individuals who buy the coal continue to keep their houses warm. For this latter purpose we use what is commonly known as "buck-wheat" and "rice" coal, which is quite extensively used in many houses not only for heating, but for cooking.

This coal which is washed from the coal banks of the mines and used for the purposes above, is unsurpassed in quality, and in fact is superior to many grades, because it is hard. It used to bring anywhere from \$1.10 to \$1.50 a ton. There are conditions, of course, that render the industry somewhat too unstable to suit the general run of persons who wish to make their business pay day in and day out. The high water, dredging is easy because navigation is unimpeded, but when the river falls the work becomes more difficult and the industry is in anything but a "booming" condition.

It is a matter of much conjecture as to whether the installation of the river dam a short time ago may possibly have given to the city for the future an assured economic value in that it may be a material aid in blocking the deposits of coal that float with the current and may increase rapidly the fleets which the river dredges and flats now roams.

Some of the River Veterans

The Harrisburg River Coal, Sand and Stone Company dealt largely with the reclaiming of sand, with coal as a side issue. This company was one of the few, perhaps the only company in the country incorporated for this unique purpose—for years it flourished and still does a large business. Among the men who were interested at the inception of the industry are the names of W. G. Stewart of West Fairview, who is now said to hold controlling interest in the above company; Squire Motter, also of Fairview, and George Good, a Fourth street merchant. "Admiral" Brown, now the leading "pathfinder" of the fleet owned by the Harrisburg Light and Power Company, and known to every man who was ever connected with the work on the river, is another veteran of the "schooners." "The Admiral," he is always called, is a deeply religious and thorough-going Christian.

Sand for Building the Capitol Taken From the River

An interesting sidelight is found in the building of the State capitol during the first few years of the present century. The George F. Payne Company, Philadelphia contractors, whose duty it was to obtain sand for use in the erection of the capitol building, were constrained by the relative cheapness of obtaining material from the river, to enter into the "fleet" business themselves. In order to compete with private owners in this city who had by their organization boosted up the price, this Philadelphia concern who were doing the work for the State under the supervision of the Board of Public Grounds and Buildings, bought them a fleet of steam, pump and flat boats and did their own dredging, afterwards selling the fleet at a public sale. In this way all the sand that was used in the construction of the State building was ob-

Coal is Sucked From the River

Imagine yourself, for purposes of elucidation, in the position of a visitor on one of these riverboats, bent on filling a flat or two with coal from the river depths. You will have been preceded by a "pathfinder" with a long pole, who poles around the sections which time and experience have proven to be the most likely places where the beds will lodge. He can tell by the feel of the pole when he has struck a bed. That he marks and then the steam dredge brings its load to the scene of action. A special make of boiler connects with a centrifugal pump worked by two wheels and attached to a suction dredge that extends over the side of the flat. The coal from the bed is sucked up and through a closed tunnel across one boat and thrown against a screen which separates the very fine dust and water and drops it through into the river again. On the adjoining flat stands a man with a rake, which he uses to rake the coal into huge heaps on the flat. And that is all there is to it.

Wide Consumption of River Coal in Harrisburg

Broad street and the landing at the upper end of the city are the only two places now where the fleets can land on this side of the river. It is claimed that the closing of Market street with concrete steps nearly put them out of business, because of the increase in the cost of transportation to the manufacturers that use the coal. Several thousand tons of sand are now taken out annually from the river; good building sand at that, being the source of practically all the sand used in the city. In the old days the fleets used to have as many as 50 or 60 flats and 8 or 9 steam dredges, but they are no longer that large.

Although there is not much body to the coal, it may be used for consumption with blowers, and is employed by many concerns exclusively, including the Harrisburg Light and Power Company, in their plant in Ninth street, where its energy is converted into making steam and electric current (and, by the way, it is said that the cost of steam and current in this city is as low if not lower than any other steam heat in the country, due largely to the cheapness of fuel obtained from the river); the United Electric Light Company of Lemoyne; the Pennsylvania Steel Company, the Railways, and the City Pumping station, located at Front and North streets are but a few of the places where this most indispensable article finds a ready consumption.



It Started with a Cold

**First a Cold;
Then Grippe;
Then Pneumonia;
Then Death!**

Such has been the sad story of thousands of deaths in the epidemic of Grippe and Pneumonia now raging. Often it all happens in a few days. And elderly people hardly have a chance.

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S. B. Goff & Sons Co., Camden, N. J. BOX 20 Established 1872.

WEST SHORE NEWS

JANUARY MEETING OF CIRCLE
New Cumberland, Pa., Jan. 29.—The January meeting of the Queen Esther Circle will be held to-morrow afternoon, January 30, in the Sunday school room of the Methodist Church at 2.30 o'clock.

RECEPTION TO MEMBERS
New Cumberland, Pa., Jan. 29.—On Sunday evening a reception to members will be held in Trinity United Brethren Church, New Cumberland. Evangelistic services are still in progress.

ENTERTAINED 500 CLUB
New Cumberland, Pa., Jan. 29.—Mrs. Edith Feicht entertained the Five Hundred Club, composed of ladies from Harrisburg and Steelton, at her home in Market Square on Thursday afternoon.

Social and Personal News of Towns Along West Shore

Miss Almada Bair and sister Verna, of New Cumberland, are visiting friends at York.
Mrs. Grass, of Steelton, visited friends at New Cumberland yesterday.
L. E. Palmer, of Marysville, spent Thursday at York.
Mrs. W. W. Ruhl, of Baltimore, spent part of the week with her aunt, Mrs. Jennie Vox, at Marysville.
Mrs. W. H. Kocher, of Marysville, has returned home after spending some time at Williamsport.
Miss Mary Bower, of Baltimore, is visiting her sisters, Mrs. M. O. Shoemaker and Mrs. Harry Brady, at Marysville.
Miss Clemmy Roberts, of Reading, spent Thursday with her brother, W. L. Roberts, at Marysville.
Mrs. Edward Poole, of Marysville,

GIVE PROPERTY IN PARENTS' MEMORY

Children Make Donation to Church of the Nativity at Newport

Newport, Pa., Jan. 29.—John A. Bechtel, of Williamsburg, Va., and Miss Nellie A. Bechtel, of Cincinnati, children of the late Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Bechtel, of Cincinnati, have donated to the Church of the Nativity, in memory of their parents, the property adjoining the church grounds. Mr. and Mrs. Bechtel, as residents of this place, who left for Cincinnati about twenty years ago, were active and prominent church workers.

BURIED AT MECHANISBURG

Mechanisburg, Pa., Jan. 29.—Mrs. Martin Milleisen, of Bloomsburg, died at her home in that place on Thursday and funeral services were held this afternoon at 2 o'clock. Burial was made in the Bloomsburg Cemetery. Mrs. Milleisen was a former resident of Mechanisburg and had many friends and relatives here. She was aged about 48 years and is survived by her husband and one daughter.

MRS. ANNA M. KREMER DIES

Mechanisburg, Pa., Jan. 29.—Mrs. Anna M. Kremer, wife of the Rev. Dr. A. R. Kremer, died at her home in Churchtown on Thursday night after being in ill health for some time. She was aged 83 years and is survived by her husband, a retired minister of the Reformed Church, and two children, Miss Gertrude, at home, and Dr. J. N. Kremer, a dentist, of Mechanisburg. The funeral service will be held on Monday afternoon in the Reformed Church in Churchtown. Burial will be made in Mount Zion Cemetery.

BIRTHDAY SURPRISE PARTY

Enola, Pa., Jan. 29.—A birthday surprise party was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. B. K. McGuire, of State road, on Thursday evening, in honor of the latter's brother, J. Cleveland Beck. Music and games were the features of the evening and a buffet supper was served.

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The new Workmen's Compensation Act is now in effect. If you are an employer of labor you should be familiar with every phrase of this most important piece of legislation. We are prepared to supply this act in pamphlet form with side headings for easy reference. Single copies 25c with very special prices on larger quantities.

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HARRISBURG, PENNA.

Fackler's Annual February Sale

Will Surpass Any Sale We Ever Held. The Greatest Values Offered By Any Store

About This Great Clean-up Sale

We trust we have your confidence, and know that this sale will strengthen it. Our stocks are unusually complete and offer the widest variety of choice. Every article has been reduced so low that all are remarkable values.

Remember

That this sale continues throughout February. That the early buyers have the greatest variety of values to select from. That every article is from our regular stock and not bought purposely for this sale.

Note the Splendid Reductions on Dining Room Suites

- 9-piece Solid Quartered Oak Suite—\$226.00. February price, **\$135.60**
- 9-piece Jacobean Suite—\$182.50. February price, **\$127.25**
- 9-piece Quartered Oak Suite—\$115.00. February price, **\$82.00**

Bed Room Suites

The most complete stock of Bedroom Furniture we have ever shown at remarkable reductions.

- 3-piece Solid Quartered Oak Suite, Charles II design—\$77.00. February price, **\$61.00**. Toilet Table to match—\$20.00. February price, **\$16.00**
- 3-piece American Walnut Suite, Colonial design—\$88.50. February price, **\$66.00**. Toilet Table to match—\$24.00. February price, **\$17.00**

Space does not permit going in detail at this time of great reductions in Living, Library and Parlor Furniture. Pay us a visit and we are convinced you will be a purchaser.

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