

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Coal Mining Project

Coal Mining in Petersburg, Ohio

O. H. 360

ROY L. SCHOLL

Interviewed

by

Bernice Mercer

on

June 29, 1978

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: ROY L. SCHOLL

INTERVIEWER: Bernice Mercer

SUBJECT: Location of Coal Mines, Tools, Miners

DATE: June 29, 1978

M: This is an interview with Mr. Roy Scholl at his home in Petersburg, Ohio, at eight o'clock, June 29, 1978. Bernice Mercer is the interviewer for the Oral History Program of Youngstown State University.

Mr. Scholl, we are interested in what you remember about mining. I think you were saying that you knew where a mine shaft had been a good, long time ago.

S: Yes, it was on the Bill Toot farm. He was one of the folks who developed it. This shaft was used for the actual mining. I mean they went down this shaft and took the coal out. As far as I know, it has never been filled in. It was deep; it was a very dangerous thing. I don't know if it still exists. The man who lived in that vicinity, and maybe owns that farm, at least his mother owned the farm, was John Zuback. He lived on the State Line Road. He is married to one of the Byers' girls, I believe. I don't know if that mine shaft was ever filled in. It was in the woods up there. I couldn't locate it. I have seen it years ago.

M: That farm is off Heinick Road?

S: No, that farm is on State Line Road. You can see it from here.

M: Were you ever there to see that?

S: Yes, I saw it years and years and years ago. It wasn't in use at the time, but when I was a youngster they used a gasoline motor to pump water out at night when they weren't working. You could hear that thing working all night.

- M: You don't happen to know who owned the mine?
- S: Well, two Toot families owned it at the time that I knew it. Who owned it before that, I don't know.
- M: Did they have employees?
- S: I don't know if it was just a family project or if they had employees. They probably had employees because it was a big mine.
- M: You don't know whether they employed anybody or not, but it was a pretty big operation?
- S: Yes, it was a pretty big operation, but maybe the boys of the family did it; I don't know. They probably hired somebody.
- M: That may turn out to be the place that somebody else that I know did work. Did you ever go down into it?
- S: No, it wasn't in operation when I saw it. It was abandoned. One time I was walking through the woods with some people and we looked down, but it was deep, probably 75 or 80 feet deep. Of course, it was probably deeper than that because the bottom was filled with water.
- M: It could be much deeper.
- S: Oh yes. It was a dangerous thing.
- M: Maybe there was somebody that closed it then.
- S: Yes, unless they filled it in, I don't know.
- M: You mentioned that a lot of the mines around here were stripped. Of course, they don't exist anymore.
- S: There was one up here on the farm where Brownlee lives now. Of course, that farm has been stripped. Most of that mine is gone, but I've heard some of the old men talk about it years ago when I was a child that the mine went under the road. This road was paved about 1917; it was one of the first paved roads around. After, I heard these fellows tell about when they were working down underneath the road they could hear horses and wagons that were overhead. So those mines are still there under the road, but they must be down far enough so that the road is strong enough for a lot of heavy trucks.
- M: You wouldn't know the name of the people that were in that mine?

- S: Dave Beck owned that farm. I think that mine was in operation when he owned it.
- M: Was he doing the mining himself?
- S: I can't tell you. He might have himself. I don't think he did because he was a very enterprising man and I don't think he did much of the labor. I believe that farm was inherited by his daughter when Dave died. I think Irv Brownlee bought it from Mary Beck. Irv has been there a long time. Dave Beck was an old man when I knew him.
- M: It isn't stripped right up to the road anywhere?
- S: No, but it's up within a hundred yards of the road.
- M: That hole may still be under there.
- S: Yes, it might still be; it probably is.
- M: About the opening, did you know where the opening was?
- S: No, I never knew that.
- M: There may have been a shaft, but probably not very terribly deep.
- S: Most of the mines around here went right in the side of a hill. They didn't go down in a vertical shaft. They might have had a small one someplace.
- M: That shaft that you saw, that might have been the entrance to the mine.
- S: That's where the men went down. What kind of a mechanism they used to lower them and take the coal out, I don't know. It was probably horse operated.
- M: Were you ever down in a mine yourself?
- S: No, it was abandoned when I was there.
- M: Do you know any people that are still around that did work in mines?
- S: No, all those people are gone. Years ago I knew quite a few people who worked in the coal mines, but they're all gone.
- M: Mr. Wonner worked in the coal mines. Louie worked in one, but not around here. Did you ever hear of a mine extending under someone's property? Wasn't there usually a leak involved when somebody was mining?

- S: I imagine there would be. When you get underground you can't tell what direction you're going. You could get in under somebody else's property line and not know it. (Laughter)
- M: Things like that could have happened pretty easily. The area around here really had quite a few mines then, actually.
- S: Across the road from the Dave Beck mine there was a mine there that was opened years and years ago by Duncan Livingston's father. I think his name was David; I'm not certain. That property is now owned by Mike Ceter and is being stripped.
- M: From Ceter's mine I wonder if there was any possibility that it also could have gone under the road?
- S: I don't know much about that. When it was in operation the Shrenck family operated it. There were a number of boys in that family. I think the mine extended east away from the road.
- M: At that time people didn't call these different grades of coal by their numbers like we do now, I suppose?
- S: No, they didn't have that information. They just went in and dug until they found coal and brought it out.
- M: What about your neighborhood around Negley, have there been mines around here?
- S: Yes, there is mining going on down there.
- M: Still?
- S: Yes, I can't tell you anything about them. It's on west I-170 as you come down Pancake Hill; it's off on the left. It is probably a half a mile or so. They're not going down very deep there. They're up on top of the ridge.
- M: Often times they discovered that the coal or the water had been taken out in advance.
- S: They couldn't take out very much by hand the way those fellows worked in those days. Most of the coal is still left there now.

If you go down the Creek Bottom Road--now Wallace Road--there was a mine there years ago and you can probably still see it. It was in the side of the hill. Maybe the last time they took coal out of there was two years ago. I don't know if they exhausted it or not.

- M: The general picture is that if there was shaft mining it was either in the 1930's or else about a hundred years ago. There wasn't too much in between.
- S: The Ohlin's revived this mine over here back in the 1930's.
- M: The one on the Beck place?
- S: No, the one on the Mike Ceter place. They bought that place along in the 1930's somewhere and started to mine coal.
- M: The Ohlin boys probably mined themselves?
- S: Yes.
- M: The information that people are wanting now it from the farms that know where the digging was. As time goes on somebody wanted to do some building and this information can be very valuable for safety reasons and other reasons.
- These people that worked in the mines, some of them you knew, did they ever describe their work to you?
- S: Yes, they did; they often talked about it. It was hard, dirty, cramped, dangerous work. They very rarely worked where they could stand upright. They crouched or were maybe on their knees. They had to block up the ceiling as they would go along. It was hard, dirty, dangerous work.
- M: And it was, a lot of times, wet.
- S: Yes. In years past in this vicinity--that takes in East Palestine too--there were quite a few people employed in coal mines.
- M: Were there any large companies?
- S: No, I think they were mostly smaller companies. Maybe when you got into Columbiana County you would find larger companies. Around here I think they were all small operations.
- M: Could you give any details at all about their pay?
- S: No, I don't know how they were paid, but they were paid by the hour. Most likely they were paid tonnage, so much a ton.
- M: And they did use blasters as part of their operations?
- S: Yes. When they uncovered the coal they would have to

blast the thing up so they could take it out.

M: Were there accidents that you heard them tell about?

S: No, not around here. I think the fellows that worked around here worked very carefully, but these coal mining accidents that you and I are familiar with are accidents that happened in bigger mines, more extensive operations and probably more hurried operations. Around here I've never heard the local men tell about any accidents; they worked carefully. Maybe they didn't go deep enough that they would run into what they called blackdamp; I think that's carbon monoxide. I never heard them talk about that around here.

M: You didn't ever see any of their equipment? They had lamps of some sort on their hats.

S: They wore carbide lamps that were powered by carbide. They were made of brass. There was a clamp or small plate on the front of their cap and the lamp fastened to that. The carbide was put in the lamp. I can't tell you the chemical composition of it. It was put in and then water was added and the acetylene gas was generated. I've seen these lamps lit and they give a long, thin, blue flame.

M: Did the brass have something to do with the chemistry of it?

S: I don't think so. They used those lamps, and I suppose earlier than that they used oil lamps. I haven't seen acetylene miner lamps for years. They were handy little gadgets.

M: You might find them in a museum somewhere?

S: I suppose. They're probably a collector's item now.

M: Right. I have heard that Had Baun used to work in the mines when he was young.

S: I can't tell you that, but he is still living. I don't know what his condition is. I saw him sitting on the porch the other day.

M: They say he has done pretty good.

S: The tools they used in mines were smaller tools than they use out above the ground. The picks were small because they didn't have much room to swing. The shovels were small. They would carry a water jug with them and take it in there until the thing was empty and then bring it out and refill it again.

- M: There were different ways of getting this coal out. They usually put tracks down in.
- S: They put tracks down in and they would used a small burro.
- M: They used a burro?
- S: They used a burro because a burro was small enough to go down the smaller opening. I have seen those tracks; they're very crude. I imagine they would go in by gravity; it's all downhill.
- M: Is that right?
- S: Yes. The shaft would have a slope to it. The tracks were very crude and the carts were small. They would load them by hand and the burro would pull them out. Some of the mines I have seen had a place where they could pick it up and dump the cart. It would come out on a trestle and they would dump it there so it would be on the ground below.
- M: In any of the mines around here you didn't see any of this matter of sorting this whole thing like you see in pictures?
- S: No, I don't think in those days they sorted the coal. Nowadays they grade it according to size. It was used probably just for domestic heating.
- M: The early mining probably didn't have any affect on this area at all?
- S: I heard an interesting story about the mines in Southern Ohio. The man who told the story was Willis Smith, who was the county superintendent of schools. Down in the section that he came from there was a fellow who was hired as a blacksmith in one of the coal mines, a bigger coal mine. He asked permission to live in the blacksmith's shop and they said yes. He got married and they had children. They had quite a large family and they got in an argument with the boss and the boss fired him. Then they tried to tell him to get out of the blacksmith's shop. He took it to court and claimed squatter's rights and he won. (laughter) He lived right on the company property.
- M: That squatter's right thing is an ancient establishment.
- S: He was smart; he knew the law.
- M: You may be able to answer some of the questions I have about limestone. Who is the manager of this Ethyl place?



- S: The president of the company is Dave Carson; he is the brother-in-law of Hank Garlit. He and Carson, together, owned City Asphalt. They are in business and each man has a quarter share and Ambrosia has a half share.
- M: The man who is sort of superintendent of operations is Bob. I asked him if we could come and look at the operation with my grandchildren. He took us in and showed us the machinery and his control mechanism that mixes asphalt and certain liquids and formulas and all this. What the kids like is out there on the ground where they were picking up these pieces of limestone that had this shine on them; it's natural polish. Almost everybody got a little piece of it that was real shiny on the top. He said that the pressure of the glacier on the top of the limestone bed did that. Almost anybody could find a piece that had that on it. I heard somebody question that, that that was actually glaciers that did this.
- S: I believe so. The man who did the geological survey in here, a fellow by the name of Warner, was a very learned man. He was a young man. He was interested in the glacier. He had maps of how far the glacier went down. He told me that marble was limestone that had been subjected to this tremendous pressure of the glacier. That's what formulated marble.
- M: Does the layer of limestone have a surface with that polish all over it, which you would expect would be true if it was caused by the glacier?
- S: I can't tell you that. I've been up there and walked over that stuff.
- M: It wouldn't have to be that way, but would the whole top of it be subjected to this?
- S: You would think it would be.
- M: Yes, you would. Of course, a person's guesses are often times way off.

I guess this is where we leave off. Thank you very much, Mr. Scholl.

END OF INTERVIEW