

## HISTORY OF MINING COAL ON BARNUM PROPERTY

This is from the memories of locals who's families have lived here from the early 1900's.

In the earliest history of this area there was a Polish miner who hand dug a tunnel mine on the coal seam located on this hill. At some point he blew himself up in the mine and was buried on the property. After hearing this story we did a search of the property and found a stone/rock cairn which "could be" his grave site. While investigating the cairn my wife found a coal miner's carbide head lamp. Ah ha. This seemed to support our theory.

A couple of years later we had a friend of the family, from the Czech Republic, visiting us with his wife. When we told him about the Polish miner and his possible grave he told us that he had brought along his metal detector because of his interest in archeology.

So we took him down to the "grave site" and he began systematically searching around it. Pretty quickly he got a signal, at the same end of the rock cairn that we'd found the one carbide lamp. A bit of digging down, only inches, and there was another carbide miners headlamp. Voila, I immediately felt that my supposition that the rock cairn marked the grave was accurate. I surmise that when they buried the Polish miner they created a wooden "headstone" and placed a carbide lamp on each side, as was a common practice in those days. Over the decades the wooden "headstone" deteriorated but the lamps fell to the ground and were covered by debris. What a neat story. The two carbide lamps are kept on the mantle behind our wood stove along with other historical items we've found on the property.

Decades later, when the Masteller coal company (chartered in 1903) came in to do a minor "strip" mine they did not disturb the gravesite. The history of the "strip" mine is also very interesting.

They used heavy equipment to clear the soil from the top of the coal seam all around the mountain, going back only about 35 yards. With access to the coal they then created a tram way straight down the hill to the railroad along the North Branch river, at Barnum. The railroad built a tippie there for the coal to be loaded onto railroad cars.

On the bottom level of our property is what's called a "gob" pile. It is what came off of the coal seam and wasn't "good" coal so was dumped there next to where the tram started. Tram buckets were loaded with the good coal and the weight of the loaded cars pulled them down the hill to the triple tippie (almost identical to the one in the photograph on the wall). There the coal was dumped into the railroad cars and the empty tram buckets were pulled back up the hill by the weight of the loaded buckets coming down the hill. Very ingenious. The tram's path can be seen to the left of the gob pile by where the power line comes up the hill.

The railroad and tipple in Barnum were removed for the construction of the Jennings Randolph dam and lake. The railroad line was moved across the river and is still used to haul coal to the Mt Storm coal fired powerplant.