

Brookside Centennial

By Sue Cochran

During 2013, Brookside will celebrate 100 years as an incorporated town. If you have memories of your family's involvement in the Town, we would welcome writings about them, and also if you would share with us documents, pictures, or other memorabilia, we would appreciate that.

Topic 2: "The Mines"

Coal, simply stated, is a rock that will burn. As it burns, it releases energy in the form of heat. This was known from ancient times.

Coal replaced water, wind and wood as the primary source of energy in America when the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s demanded huge amounts of heat/energy to fuel the nation's factories and railroads. By World War I, coal supplied 75% of the nation's energy, but oil and gas were soon to become the most-used fuels. After another spike in demand during World War II, the coal industry saw decades of decline and depressed markets.

Declines in the market weren't always the fault of competing fuels. Some-times labor conflicts were at least partly to blame. Underground coal mining was one of the most dangerous industries a man could work in. Any efforts to protect the miners cost the mine owners more money. It was sometimes cheaper to mechanize, as power-driven equipment could produce more product, faster. The use of machines cut down on the number of men needed at each mine, lessening liability as well as labor costs. In early days, accidents in the mines were almost always found to be the fault of the workers them-selves, regardless of actual circumstances. True liability of the owner or company is a fairly modern concept.

Coal was discovered in Fremont County about as soon as the earliest settlers arrived. They picked it up where it was visible on the surface of the ground in the 1860s and used it locally or hauled it to Denver by the wagon-load to sell it there. Fremont County coal soon earned a favorable reputation as a clean-burning, efficient fuel.

When the railroad boom of the 1870s and '80s came along, the coal of Fremont County was in demand. Our Brookside coal attracted the attention of the Pueblo and Arkansas Valley Railroad, a subsidiary of the larger Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe. They ran a spur up the hill from the river and opened a mine. Much of the coal produced was used as fuel to power their trains.

The Canon City Coal Company laid out a town in 1888 and named it Brookside. Miners needed to live within walking distance of their jobs, so mining camps typically did appear very near the mines themselves. Workers at the Brookside mine were fortunate that a fairly level, attractive location existed for their homes and families this close to the mine.

Underground, it was a different story. Some men were already miners when they left their homes to come to America, but many of the later European immigrants were used to working outdoors. Although they were used to hard work, adapting to the long hours underground in dark, damp surroundings was hard. Many early miners worked twelve hour shifts with few tools beyond shovels, picks and augers. (*Joe Burnetto says that his grandfather never saw the light of day in the winter months—it was dark when he went in and dark when he came out.*)

Colorado Fuel & Iron of Pueblo acquired the Brookside mine in 1896. The "*Canon City Record*" on June 29, 1899, reported that Brookside Mine No. 7 had adopted the eight-hour shift system and was running full time producing 45 to 50 train car loads (about 1000 tons) a day. There was concern whether they could keep up this production rate with only 8-hour work shifts.

Names and numbers of the mines sometimes changed with a change of ownership or with the opening of a new entrance to an existing mine. Maps of the Brookside mine made in 1897 by owner CF&I show that the workings stretched far to the west and south of the main entrance here in Brookside.

Mines in the Brookside vein were listed as drift mines or slope mines, which meant that the entrances, called adits, were sloped rather than going straight down like a shaft mine. They could be quite steep, but were probably not vertical. The Brookside coal bed is usually listed as measuring from three to six feet thick in horizontal bands.

By 1901, David Griffiths was the mine superintendent of CF&I No. 23, John Pattison was clerk, Edward Redmond ran the store, and Dr. Sanborn was the camp surgeon. *Camp & Plant*, the weekly CF&I newsletter, tells us that "Mac, our skillful machinist" could not fix the blower engine at the boiler house so they ordered a "brand new Chandler & Taylor 22-horsepower" replacement. A telephone had been installed to connect the bottom of the mine to the engine room, the newsletter said.

As early as 1902, another coal outcropping to the west along the south side of Pinion Avenue was being explored by company representatives. Pearl Myers recalls that her grandfather John Stultz died in a rockfall in that area. News reports from 1904 show that the accident occurred 3000 feet from the mouth of the tunnel, and was caused when the roof fell. Coroner Logan, undertaker Phipps, and Supt. Ball inspected the mine and determined that almost a ton of rock had fallen on Stultz. A verdict of "killed in a mine" was brought in without an inquest. This lack of an inquest was not unusual. This would have been under CF&I management, since they ran the Brookside mine until about 1910 or 1912, depending on which source you are reading.

The mine strikes of 1914 were especially violent. The "Ludlow Massacre" occurred during that strike, and there was fear and unrest throughout the Colorado coal fields. In March of 1914, gunfire tore through the normal peace of a Sunday morning in Brookside. Reports of how many shots were fired varied greatly, but most estimates fell between 50 and 100. Homes and offices occupied by mine owner John Lippis and associates Harry Satterfield and Rocco Moschetti were fired upon, with only luck preventing a tragedy. State militiamen were dispatched to Brookside to help keep the peace.

In July of 1915 the Florence Citizen-Democrat reported a disastrous fire at the Brookside mine. Most of the buildings were completely destroyed, with an estimated loss of \$10,000. Lippis, Moschetti, and the Vezzetti brothers held interests in the mine at the time of the fire. Orecchios, Scavardas, Crestos and Bertas came later. Other names and owners listed for various portions of the Brookside mine over time include Dutch Oven (Joe Balone); Big Three (Silengo & Bosco); Brook Canon; Grand Prize; Canon Red Star (Joe Balone); Boulder Canon; Spring Canon; Canon City Coal (Harold May); Carson Coal & Oil; Strainer Canon; Brook Coal; L and C (Clem Lovisone & Ted Colarelli).

H. Lee Scamehorn's history of CF&I, *Mill & Mine* says the Brookside mine produced about 1.5 million tons of coal between 1896 and 1910. Some of the small, local operators worked the mine until 1960, when it was sealed because of an underground fire. Some areas of the mine had been flooded for years.

If you'd like to add your memories to this story, please call Renee at the Brookside Community Center or contact Sue Cochran at 276-0577.