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Creators: [Haseltine, Robert Montgomery, 1846-1905](#)

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THE MAHONING COAL FIELD.—R. M. HASELTINE.

The system of operating coal mines in the Mahoning Valley differs from that of the other coal fields of the State, on account of its peculiar geological formation, being No. 1, the lowest of the coal measures. With a few exceptions, it lies from 80 to 250 feet below the surface. It was first discovered where it cropped out in the ravines at Brier Hill, at Haselton and along Crab Creek, near Youngstown, at Mt. Nebo, near Lowellville, and on Four Mile run, in Wethersfield township. It was in these places that the block coal, which made the Mahoning Valley famous, was first mined

As these fields began to fail, and the demand for the coal increased, companies were formed, land was leased in all directions from these fields, and drillers were set to work to determine the course and extent of the basins. In this way it was followed northward from Crab Creek and Brier Hill, through the eastern portion of Liberty township, where it lies from 100 to 150 feet deep, and ranges from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 feet in thickness. Thence through the northern part of Hubbard. There it lies from 80 to 100 feet below the surface, and is from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to even 7 feet in thickness. The greater portion of this field was four and one-half feet thick. The coal over that was apt to be of an inferior quality, called "buoy coal." Thence it was traced into the southeastern portion of Brookfield, where it

again crops out on the Shenango river. A great portion of this field is from 175 to 200 feet deep. As the field approaches the outcrop on the Shenango, the swamps narrow up and a greater proportion of the coal is from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet in thickness than in Hubbard and Liberty. This field has been traced across the Shenango river into and beyond Hickory township, Mercer county, Pennsylvania. In a westerly direction, from Four Mile Run, it has been traced through a large part of Wethersfield into Austintown, where it unites with the Mineral Ridge coal, forming the floor for the Black Band ore, which is capped by the Mineral Ridge coal, an entirely different variety. It then jumps Jackson township, and is found in small basins in Palmyra township, in Portage county. This is the farthest point west that Block coal has been mined. In later years it has been found south of the Mahoning river, in Youngstown township, in very small deposits, as compared with those in Liberty and Hubbard; except the Powers mine, on the eastern line of the township, which was opened in 1855 and been worked continually ever since. The fifth opening has been made into this field. The main coal fields of the Mahoning Valley lay along Crab Creek, through Liberty, Hubbard and Brookfield townships. Here the basins were broad and the coal was more uniform in thickness and was less disturbed by horse-backs and other irregularities. It is of superior quality and commands the highest price in the market.

The coal in this region was universally mined under leases, which usually provided that the lessee should have a certain period, usually from one to two years, to drill and develop the territory. If coal was found in quantity and quality to warrant an opening, a like period was granted to open and commence mining.

In case the mine was not opened at the time specified, the lessee paid a certain amount annually, as could be agreed upon. After the mine was opened, the royalty was paid quarterly. Often the advanced royalty was deducted from the first coal mined. In the first leases the royalty was $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per ton, the weight of which ranged from 2100 pounds to 2240 pounds, as the parties could agree upon. The rate of royalty steadily increased as the new coal fields were discovered and as the market price of coal increased, until in a few instances 75 cents per ton was paid, the usual price being from 40 to 50 cents.

The system of drilling, like the mining, has improved with time and experience, the first being done with wooden rods attached to the bit and coupled with pins. These gave way to the iron rods, in general use to-day. Until within a few years all the drilling was done by hand, by the aid of a spring pole. But, as the search for new deposits extended to fields requiring deeper drilling, this mode was too expensive and the portable engine was brought into use, I think of Booth & Miller's make, which so lightened the cost that the deeper drilling cost no more than the shallow of years ago. The first coal sold from this Valley was about 1844, when it brought from one dollar to one dollar and twelve and one-half cents per ton. Its commercial value steadily increased, until about 1864, when Hubbard coal brought from six to seven dollars per ton. Since that time the price has gradually decreased until the present time, when two dollars a ton is about the highest price paid.