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Creators: [Whittlesey, Charles, 1808-1886](#)

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*DISCOVERY OF COAL IN OHIO AND EARLY
MINE WORK.*

BY COL. CHARLES WHITTLESEY.

Mineral coal had been observed on the Tuscarawas River, before the publication of *Lewis Evan's* map, in 1755.

The outcrop is located on the west of the river, apparently ten (10) miles north of the mouth of the Big Sandy at Bolivar; probably on the hills between the river and Sugar Creek. Mention is made of a burning coal bed, which would naturally attract the attention of the red man, and of the white traders who traversed

that country along the main trail from the Ohio River, to Sandusky Bay and Detroit. Farther north on the waters of Chippeway Creek, a few miles northwest of Clinton, in Summit County, I have seen where such a fire has occurred, a very long time ago; probably as early as 1755.

No doubt other coal seams were noticed by early travelers and explorers, but the engineers who ran the west line of Pennsylvania north of the Ohio in 1785-7, and the surveyors who laid out the Western Reserve, east of the Cuyahoga, in 1796-7, made no mention of mineral coal.

In 1810 coal was worked by stripping, in a ravine one mile west of the center of Tallmadge, Summit County.

It continued to be wrought in this manner and to be carried by teams for the use of blacksmiths a distance of twenty to twenty-five miles. About 1822 the demand increased so as to warrant an entry and regular mine work, which was commenced at that time. When the Ohio Canal was finished from Cleveland to Lock 19, in 1827, there were three mines in operation along the eastern base of Coal Hill in Tallmadge, and coal was hauled to the canal at that point. It was beginning to be used in grates, but met with stubborn resistance from steamboat owners and firemen. The quantity shipped to Cleveland from that time, to and including 1832, was only 1,550 tons. By 1834 the canal had reached the mines at Massillon, New Philadelphia, and Trenton, and the business became important.

Owners of mines have said that it became necessary to bribe the firemen of lake steamers before they would use it.

There was an open pit on seam No. 1, near the corners of Franklin, Ravenna, Rootstown and Brimfield, as early as 1827. In 1837 there were such pits made for home use by blacksmiths, in Windham and Paris, Portage County.

There were also several on the Meander in Austintown and Lordstown, on the Mahoning, from Brier Hill into Crab Creek Valley; also in Hubbard and Brookfield, in Trumbull County.

The old Heaton furnace built at Niles in 1812, at an early day found its water to be insufficient in summer months and put up a steam engine.

When coal was first used there I cannot say, but probably before 1830.

Entries were driven on Mineral Ridge, two miles south, that had the appearance of antiquity, in 1837.

The ax of the wood-chopper in the vicinity of the early salt furnaces of Ohio was destroying the timber so fast that the Legislature in 1810 offered a rebate of the rent to any boiler who should successfully introduce mineral coal. This was on the Muskingum River, where the business was very important.

As late as 1838 there were (26) twenty-six establishments in Muskingum County, most of which used bituminous coal, but when it was introduced I am not informed; probably not until the forests in the vicinity had largely disappeared. Each establishment where coal is used implies the existence of a small mine.

Coal had been mined many years before 1838 in the hills on Salt Creek below the county seat of Jackson County, which was taken to Chillicothe by teams. Probably it was used by the salt boilers also.

Before the close of the war of 1812, borings were made for brine on Yellow Creek, Columbiana County.

In 1818 the manufacture of salt was an extensive business there, and in some of the furnaces coal had taken the place of wood. I have seen three abandoned salt works, situated near an outcrop of coal, where rooms were driven under cover. Probably in 1820 there were veritable coal mines on the Muskingum and on Yellow Creek.

All the mineral coal credited to Ohio by the census of 1840 is only 143,900 tons of 2,000 pounds. The completion of the Hocking Valley Canal, of the Muskingum River improvement, and the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, gave such an impetus to the coal trade that in 1850 it reached 320,000 tons. Then came the decline of canals, but more than supplemented by railways, which have been especially beneficial to the mineral regions.

The progress of mining since 1850 is well known to the members of this Association.