

the late Rev. Dr. McGregor was making one of his usual visits to the people along the banks of the East River, he discovered what afterwards proved to be iron ore, and after consulting with Richard Smith, manager of the General Mining Association at Albion Mines, they started in search of the supposed mineral, which, when found, was sampled, and a barrel of it, taken principally from the Grant & Macdonald farms at Bridgeville, was sent over to the old country to be analyzed. It was not very long before a most favorable report was received, accompanied by a snuff box, razor and a pen-knife, made from the sample sent.

H. S. Poole, manager of the Acadia Coal Company, says that on receipt of the report the General Mining Association voted £1,000 for the erection of a blast furnace, which was erected at Albion mines, on the north side of the foundry, in front of an archway now bricked up. The furnace, according to Roderick MacKay, of Fox Brook, and who has seen 85 winters, was forty feet high and eight feet in diameter at the boshes. It was lined to the thickness of one foot with fire-brick, backed with a course of stretchers, between which there was a space of four inches filled with sand. The casing was some twenty inches thick, built with red brick and stone, and hooped with large iron bands. An inclined way with iron rails led to the top of the furnace for charging purposes. The ore used was mined at what is now known as Iron Ore Post Office, where, in some places, it is naturally exposed. This ore, known as red hematite, was mixed with some brown hematite taken from the Fraser "Saddler" farm at Bridgeville; it was then taken down to Albion Mines by way of McLellan's Brook. The foremen employed in mining the ores used were Robert Davidson, Alexander Purvis, John English and James McDonald, all of Bridgeville.

The limestone used was taken from the farm of the late Thomas MacKenzie, at Riverton, and the coal from the old bye pit, near the present Ford pit. The blast for the furnace was taken from the foundry engine. This engine was erected in 1828 and continued to be used until 1872, when new machine shops were built.

The fall of 1829 saw everything in readiness and a start was made, but great difficulty was experienced in getting the metal to flow, but after many failures success crowned their efforts. The furnaceman in charge, one Jerry Quinley, an Irishman by birth, was brought out from the Old Country, and so far as I can learn seems to have been an "old hand" at furnace work. He was a low set man, with scars and burns from head to foot, but he had that bad habit, so prevalent among men, the free use of bad language. Mr. Mackay says that he was the only man that would face the hot metal as it flowed from the furnace into the moulds or beds made of sand. Seven or eight tons a day was considered a good output, but the iron made did not come up to the expectations of the promoters, it being hard and very difficult to work. The trouble lay principally in the insufficient amount of silicon in the iron.

After having made some fifty tons, it is said that one night the men got drunk and left the furnace to take care of itself, which it did for all time to come, for they found on resuming work that the furnace was cold, and the metal in one solid mass, or as a furnaceman would say, "all frozen up." An attempt was made to re-heat her, but in vain, and thus ended the working of the first blast furnace in Pictou county.

In 1885 it was taken down and a large coal fire built around the mass of iron, and as it became heated water was thrown upon it, breaking it up into small cakes; in this manner the iron was removed. The discovery of gold in 1860 led to a demand for hard iron, and we are informed that some very superior stamp-heads were made from this old mass, and current report confirms Prof. How's statement that "stampers of a quartz mill at Waverley made of it, had been pronounced to be ten times more durable than Belgian iron." From a sample of this old iron I obtained the following analysis: Silicon, 0.409; manganese, 0.504; sulphur, 1.238; phosphorus, 0.788; graphite carbon, 0.668; combined, 1.295; metallic iron, 95.098 per cent.

In addition to the plant referred to, according to Mr. Poole, preparations were made for operating on a more extended scale. A blowing engine was imported, the air-cylinder of which remained lying on the bank of the river where it had been landed over half a century before, until 1884, when it was broken up; but the steam cylinder and beam were utilized in Gordon's pumping engine, at the bye pit of the second lift of workings, afterwards known as the "Crushed Mines;" and the blast pipes found service as a conduit for the first fill on the Albion Mine Railroad below New Glasgow, where, doubtless, they may still be found.

From the failure of the furnace in 1829 until 1875 no definite work was accomplished in developing the iron resources of the East River, but during these years the young men saw visions and the old men dreamed dreams of the time when blast furnaces would be erected along the banks of the river. In 1875 we find in the Dominion Statutes, vol. 3, chap. 91, "An Act to incorporate the Pictou Coal and Iron Company, for the purpose of mining coal and iron and for manufacturing iron in its various branches. Also to construct a railway or tramway either of wood or iron from its mines or deposits in the County of Pictou to some point or junction with the I.C. Railway, at or near Hopewell."

Extensive explorations were carried on under the supervision of Dr. (now Sir William) Dawson, and for several years later by Dr. Gilpin. Valuable discoveries were made of spathic, specular, red and brown hematite ores, varying from five to thirty feet in thickness, and from 45 to 60 per cent. in metallic iron; but notwithstanding the highly favored reports, both practical and analytical, the Pictou Coal and Iron Co. could not raise sufficient capital; progress was stayed, and the once bright prospect faded away.

In 1882 Thomas Burrows, having on his mind the building of a furnace, in order to make steel direct from the ore, bought a plot of ground at St. Paul's, threw up trenches, set prospectors and miners to work mining and dragging ore. Speaking afterwards of his failure, he says: "New parties then entered the field, and, by changing the course of the river, cut off my supply of water, and blasted my hopes forever."

As we look back at the progress we are making, our hearts beat faster; we see capitalists growing more and more sanguine, for it was in 1885 that J. H. Bartlett became interested, and through his untiring efforts a company was formed to develop our mines. Analyses of our ores were laid before English and American capitalists, but, I regret to say, without success; they were afraid to invest their money in our country. But why? They must have known that within a radius of 15 miles coal, limestone, ore, a water supply, and everything required to make good and cheap iron could be obtained.