



The First Coal Mine at Edmonton.

This was opened in 1881 and was known as the Humberstone Coal Mine. Mrs. Beta Humberstone, owner and operator of the mine, was one of the first lady members of the C.M.A.

How We Sold Alberta Coal

By Howard Stutchbury

Alberta Trade Commissioner.

THERE is a lot of coal in Alberta. According to the International Geological Congress we have 1,035,629 million tons, or 72 per cent of the coal of the British Empire and 87 per cent of the coal of Canada, and, at the present rate of production, sufficient to take care of Canada's requirements for several centuries; and even if the present output were increased ten times, we would still have nothing to worry about. Yet, like many other natural resources, coal is not an asset until developed.

The finding of coal in Alberta was first recorded by Sir Alexander MacKenzie as far back as 1789.

When the first transcontinental railway reached the Rocky Mountains, the coal used in construction work was hauled from Ohio. Then someone had a brain wave and remembered that Dr. Dawson had reported the finding of coal on the Prairies, and in 1881 a coal seam was opened at Lethbridge. The first coal mined from this seam was hauled to Medicine Hat, and was found to be quite satisfactory for locomotive use, and a narrow-gauge railway was then built between Medicine Hat and Lethbridge. It has quite frankly been stated that had the plains not contained coal suitable for locomotive use, the construction of the railway would, of necessity, have been postponed for several years.

A lot of people have the idea that the finding of coal in Alberta is a comparatively new thing. Some even have the idea that until comparatively recent years all the fuel used in Alberta was firewood. It is interesting to note that the capital invested in Alberta coal mines exceeds 56 million dollars and over 12,000 people make their living in the mining of coal.

I well remember when I first went to Winnipeg to try and interest the people in Alberta coal, the many curious things I learned about our coals—and that is not so very long ago.

During the war and the time of the fuel shortage in Manitoba, Mr. Chas. McGrath, a former Albertan, was then Dominion Fuel Controller, and knew Alberta coal. He said to the people of Winnipeg and Manitoba, "There is a shortage of the kind of coal you have been accustomed to use, i.e., American anthracite, and in order to make it go around I am making it compulsory for you to use 3 tons of Alberta coal to one ton of anthracite—as there is plenty of coal in Alberta." A howl went up. There were meetings of protest, and delegations were sent to Ottawa to plead with the Government against this high-handed action of the Fuel Controller. One of the delegates was a coal dealer. He took with him a piece

of the worst Alberta coal he could find and slammed it down on the table in the room where the delegations were being heard, and protested in no uncertain terms that it was not coal and would not burn. It was everything that was bad and nothing that was good. But the order remained, and today it is difficult to sell anthracite in Winnipeg.

I found the insurance men were worried. They were afraid of the tremendous fire hazard through burning Alberta coal. One district agent wrote quite seriously to his head office suggesting that if the Government were going to continue this terrible practice of making them burn Alberta coal in Winnipeg he would recommend that the Government take over all the fire risks in Winnipeg. The head office replied, however, that they were carrying a large number of risks in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where nothing but Alberta coal had been used since 1881, and that the fire hazard was no greater there than anywhere else.

Another source of worry also loomed up. The health of the people was jeopardized, whole families would be asphyxiated by the noxious gases from Alberta coal. In fact Alberta coal was charged with every evil that could be imagined.

I well remember while in Winnipeg attending a meeting—and if my

memory serves me, my old friend Major Anthes, past president of the C.M.A., was also present. I was asked a lot of questions concerning Alberta coal. Those present seemed amazed that I had lived in Alberta for the past 25 years and had burned nothing but Alberta coal; that I had never collected a dollar of fire or accident insurance as a result of its use; that the health ratio of Alberta was, at that time, the highest in Canada, and fire losses among the lowest.

This was the psychology we had to contend with when we attempted to develop the Winnipeg market—the market that is now looked upon as the natural one for Western coals.

Educating Manitoba

It is always hard to educate people to a new idea. The way it was done in Manitoba was to open an office for demonstration work in charge of a highly qualified fuel engineer. This office was equipped with stoves and furnaces of the type used not only in Manitoba, but Alberta, and it was demonstrated to the people that this coal from Alberta was entirely efficient and was used in the same type of furnaces and stoves as they had in their own homes. It took a long time to put the idea across, but eventually it gave the people of Winnipeg, Manitoba and Eastern Saskatchewan a feeling of freedom from fuel shortage, and the satisfactory use of Western coal gradually drove American anthracite almost entirely out of that market.

Ontario was always in fear of a coal shortage. Many times there had been intense suffering and long queues waiting outside the coal dealers' offices, with money in one hand and hat in the other begging the dealer for



Demonstrating Use of Alberta Coal. A truck on which a furnace was erected was used in Oxford County to show the good burning qualities of Alberta coal.

a sack of coal. It was not the coal dealer's fault; he simply did not have the coal to sell.

During one of these periods of coal shortage it was one of the old members of the C.M.A.—Mr. R. L. McIntyre, who started the ball rolling. R. L. knew Alberta; had many interests here; knew our coal and how satisfactory it was. He discussed the matter with Mr. Walsh, general manager of the C.M.A., who is always anxious to help Canadian enterprise, and he was immediately interested in developing a greater trade between East and West. A special coal committee of the C.M.A. was formed with Mr. McIntyre as chairman. Everyone who knows R. L. knows he is aggressive and when he undertook to do a thing something happened. When coal was short in Ontario he deter-

mined that the people should be free from the constant menace of a coal shortage of foreign coals. Canada had plenty of coal, it was simply a question of distribution.

Mr. McIntyre made a special trip to the West and discussed the matter with the Alberta Government and with the Alberta coal operators, and it was my privilege to be instructed to go to Ontario and discuss ways and means with the Coal Committee of the C.M.A., with the railways and the Federal and Ontario Governments. As a result of this conference a trial shipment of Alberta coal went forward to Ontario in April, 1923.

The coal was donated by the various coal companies, transportation charges taken care of by the Alberta Government, and distribution of the

(Continued on page 150)



Typical Scenes in the Alberta Coal Mining Industry. At the left, moving coal to the tipple; at the right, the picking table.