

The following article about the past practice of dredging the Susquehanna River for coal appeared in *The Morning Press* on February 22, 1938.

40,000 Tons of Coal Dredged in Susquehanna Bar:

Upwards of 40 People Given Employment Through River Operations

An industry foreign to any section other than along the Susquehanna and Schuylkill rivers is that of coal dredging, one of a yearly output of some forty thousand tons and giving employment to upwards of forty people in this immediate section.

Coal dredging has been in effect during the past twenty-six odd years, but it has been the past fifteen years that the industry has reached any size.

All along the Susquehanna River from the Wilkes-Barre section south to Columbia dredges take to the water in the spring as soon as conditions are favorable, with operations continuing until fall.

Years ago, one operator recalled, there was no coal on the bed of the river. Eelgrass was prevalent and there was no indication of coal.

Begin in Spring

It was not until the collieries along the river in the upper anthracite began using water in cleaning the coal that river coal came into its being. The water, used in the operation, made its way to the river, carrying coal particles.

This goal, carried gradually down stream to settle on the riverbed, is that dredged each year and used extensively in this area, particularly by manufacturers as a product to generate heat and steam.

The dredgers take to the water in the spring, the latter part of March or early in May. If the waters have been particularly high the coal is carried further down stream and is not profitable for local dredges. On the other hand if the water is too low the boats cannot navigate advantageously and in all probability large quantities have not been carried southward.

Certain rights and privileges are honored among all dredgers. In the spring the proprietor lays out his plans for the season and when a bed is found a buoy is placed at the head of the coal. Other dredgers recognize this and look elsewhere for beds.

The endless bucket-line tube of the coal dredger is rapidly being replaced by the more efficient centrifugal pumps, with a six-inch intake and discharge.

The coal is pumped from the riverbed onto the tops of flat boats, with the excess water draining overboard. Under normal conditions some 100 tons are dredged daily.

Laden with coal, the capacity being from ten to twenty tons a load, the flatboats are taken to the shore from which the coal is conveyed to the coal piles.

Tabled Studied

In recent years an excessive quantity of gravel has been found in the coal, and a concentrating table is being used by three operators. The table separates the coal from the gravel. As the materials are conveyed from the riverbank it is dropped onto the table, the surface of which is covered with strips of linoleum. Every minute 100 gallons of water is poured over the coal as it drops onto the table, and the heavier gravel sinks into grooves and goes off into a separate pile, with the coal being carried to another.

Beds of coal settles where there is little disturbance from the current with the beds being up to some three hundred feet in length and as wide as 150 feet.

Some six or eight weeks are spent in dredging the larger coal and latter the dredges go over the same places in taking in the finer.

Manufactures Use It

River coal is used extensively by local manufacturers for heat, it being dumped into large bins for automatic feeding into the fireboxes.

Dredgers in this section are Fred Fox, Bloomsburg Dredging Company, at Bloomsburg; Luther Hess, Gulliver Brothers and Leo Hoffman, of Espy, and the Sneiderman Brothers of Almedia.