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INTERVIEW

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James Russell Gray,  
Investigator.  
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Interview with John R. Woods  
Hartshorne, Oklahoma  
601 North Ninth

I came to Hartshorne, in 1892 and went to work at Mine No. 1. I worked there until 1898. It was a good mine, the biggest in the Choctaw Nation at the time. I started as a digger, but later on was a boss; at different times I was driver's boss, and pit boss.

The shaft was about two hundred and twelve feet deep. There were twin cages, and the hoisting power came from a big Litchfield steam engine; the boiler was scrapped about a year ago and sold for scrap iron. ~~Owen McHugh was the engineer.~~ There is a vein of coal here at Hartshorne about two feet thick and about a hundred and fifty feet deep. But this vein is not large enough to be commercially profitable; ~~Mine No. 1 was sunk to the deeper vein which is from~~ four to five feet thick.

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This deeper vein sometimes comes right up to the top of the ground though; that is the vein that the "strip pits" on the south and west edges of town got their coal from. When veins come to the top that way they are called croppings. A lot of the mines around here were slopes; a slope starts at the croppings and follows the vein downward. On the other hand, a shaft is sunk directly to the deep coal. All the coal in this field is good, but the deeper coal is of much better quality, and does not shatter so easily.

At the bottom of shaft No. 1 there were four "entries" or tunnels following the vein of coal; there was the entry called Main East; then Main West, Main North and Main South. Sometimes other entries would branch off the main ones; if the vein of coal had a downward pitch, the branching tunnel would be called a slope. For instance, at No. 1, Slopes 3, 4 and 14 were parts of the mine. Sometimes an entry would follow the vein upward toward the surface.

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Main South did that but it did not go upward at a steady slant; it was a sort of wave up, down, then up again.

At the bottom of Shaft No. 1 the coal drifted to the northeast. Slope No. 4 dropping off the main east entry, was about five thousand feet long and I think it had a six degree pitch to the northeast.

There was one electric motor in the mine. The power came from a generator up on top, and there was not enough juice to have electric lights in the pit.

This motor ran on the narrow tracks that supported the coal cars and it had a trolley affair that connected with the electric wires overhead, something like a street car. It pulled the coal cars to and from the shaft in the east and west main entries, but it could not be used in the north and south entries because they sloped too steeply; Main East and Main West were practically level. The motor-driven car ran back each way, in the east and west entries, about a quarter of a mile. Mules pulled

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the coal cars from the rooms deeper in the mine up to where the motor could hook onto them.

By 1895 about five hundred men were working at No. 1. For driving a mule, a man was paid \$2.10 a day and laying track, the most highly paid job in the mine, paid \$2.25. Diggers got 60 cents a ton.

Pat Malloy was a pit boss; Sandy Breckenridge was a room boss; my father, Mike Woods, was a pit boss; D. C. Cole was top foreman; Dr. Bond, who married Superintendent Ludlow's sister, was the company doctor.

Every thirty-six feet along an entry and along the side entries, and slopes, we would turn a room. A room was twenty feet wide, about five high and went back into the vein, sometimes, a hundred feet or more; how far depended on a number of things, but we never ran a room through to another entry.

Usually two men worked in a room. If the entry was level, we had rooms on both sides, but if it sloped we had rooms only on the upper side, it was too hard

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to get the coal out of a room that sloped downward.

Back when I first came to Hartshorne, mining methods differed from what they do now. Take our lamps, for instance. A lamp was a sort of can with a spout; a cotton wick went through the spout and down into the can. We burned kerosene, a thick black oil called "blackjack", or a sort of grease called "lard oil". The light flickered and smoked and the hot oil dripped on a man's arms and scalded them, or soaked into his hair and made him bald. Any way you looked at it mining was slower then. Later on at Mine No 12, after the World War, we took out more coal in a day with three hundred men than was taken out of No 1 in 1894 with five hundred men. Modern methods made the difference.