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James Russell Gray,  
Investigator.  
January 17, 1938.

Interview with Hayes Wright  
Hartshorne, Oklahoma

I came to Hartshorne in 1899, right after the strike of '98, and went to work at Mine No. 1. The miners could not seem to win their strikes back there before statehood; they were not well organized, for one thing. Then, too, the company couldn't afford to dicker; there was something in the terms of the lease from the Choctaw government that specified that the mines must be worked a certain amount of time each year and failure to carry out this agreement meant that the mines would revert to the Choctaws. In the strike of '98 a lot of the strikers were shipped across the state line into Arkansas.

I started driving a mule. The pit boss was Mike Woods, Sr.; Tobe Jeffers was a driving boss and Jim Brazell was a mule boss. Ed Brazell, Pete Jeffers, and Arle Miller were driving bosses. Bill Layne, our present justice-of-the-peace, was digging coal on the main north. Millard Daugherty was bank boss.

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Later I quit mule driving and began to dig; by 1900 we were getting 63 cents a ton. We shot down the coal with black powder; that was dangerous, because black powder makes a flash of fire when it explodes, and is liable to set off an explosion of gas. Later on, at Mine No. 8 in 1914, I was safety man and we quit using black powder then, and started using a new preparation called "coal powder" that was much safer; we just had to do something like that, because No. 8 was full of gas. In fact, the mine was finally abandoned because of gas.

When the Rock Island Mines closed here about 1933 they were using machines to undercut the coal; an electrically driven machine would be taken into a room and would cut into the vein of coal to a depth of from six to ten feet across the bottom of the vein. But when I dug coal at No. 1 we had only one machine, and it was not much good. It was the old "puncher" type, run by compressed air; it punched holes in the coal. But it was slow, and usually broke. Most of the

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cutting had to be done with a pick. We cut up and down, on each side of the coal to be shot down.

Then we put in our black powder and blew down the coal between the two vertical cuttings. This slowed down production; it took more men to do the work than under modern methods. Mines were not worked as far back from the shaft then, either, on account of the black powder and the danger of gas explosions.