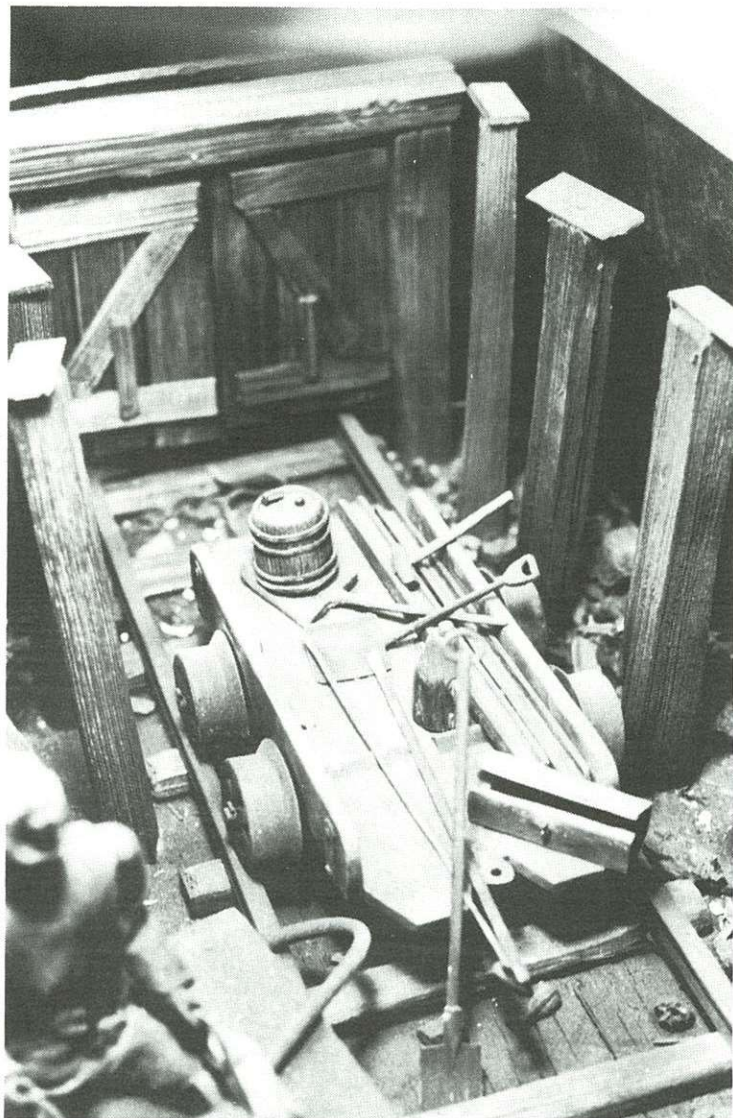
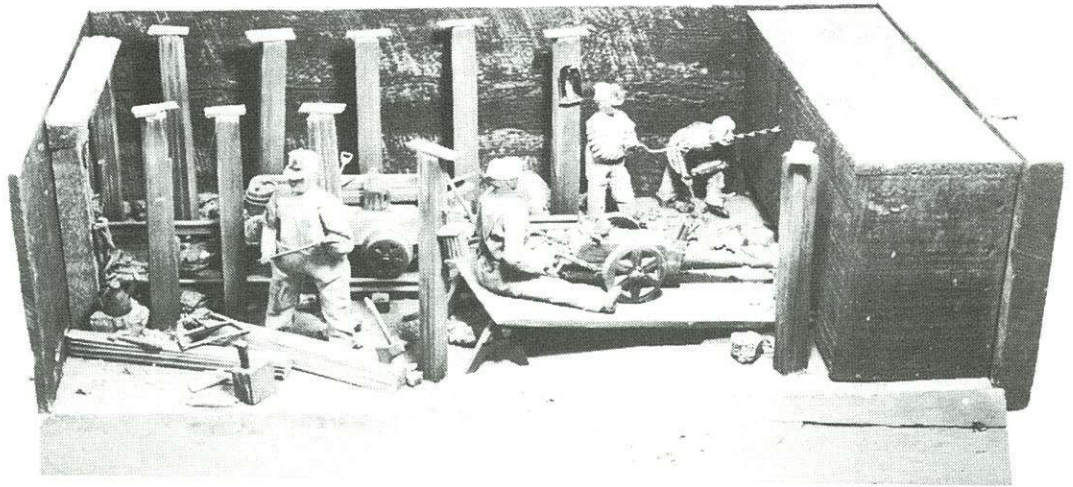


A Mining Diorama

by Ken Rupp

I would like to share these pictures and the story behind them with other collectors. The history of this diorama was told to me by an 82 year old gentleman who was a former coal miner from the bituminous or soft coal fields of Pennsylvania. Failing health made it difficult to put together the story of this unusual piece.



His uncle was a carpenter and coal miner, and built this diorama for a miner's convention that was to take place in the late 1800's in a small coal mining community called Coal Port, PA. He was unable to remember the exact date. After the death of his uncle, the diorama was passed on to him and kept in the attic until the 1990's.

The figures in the diorama are carved of wood with pins in the arm joints for movement. Hat brims and shoes are leather. The cutting machine and most of the tools are carved of wood, except the wheels which are steel. The figure's clothing is all hand sewn cloth. Each figure stands about 4 inches high. The diorama is 25 inches long, 14 inches deep and 8 inches high.

Note the many details of coal mining work represented in this very realistic display. The coal is undercut by machine, but the loading, and drilling to place a blasting charge are still done by hand. In the foreground, a timberer prepares wedges for setting props. The miners all wear oil wick cap lamps, but there is also a candle sconce on a prop, and a large oil wick lighting the timber cutter's work area. The cart carries all the necessary tools for blasting with black powder. Finally, there is a canary cage hanging from a prop, their early warning system for deadly gas.

This unique piece of mining folk art will be on display at the Eastern Reunion July 25th in Morgantown, WV. See you there!

