

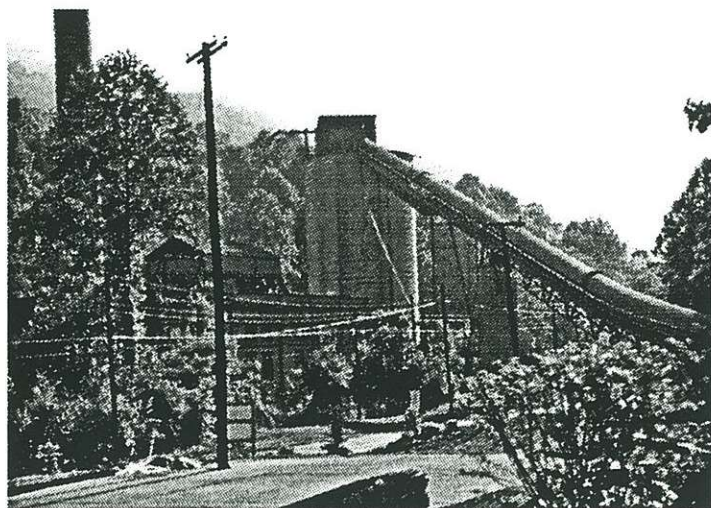
Kentucky State Coal Mining Museum

Dave Johnson

The small Southeastern town of Benham, Kentucky, located in Harlan County, is home to the Kentucky State Coal Mining Museum and Coal Miner's Park. The present town of Benham was named in 1911 by the International Harvester Corporation when their subsidiary the Wisconsin Steel Company, Incorporated opened the Benham Coal and Coke Works. By 1920 there were 408 cokeovens in continuous operation and a population of 3,000.

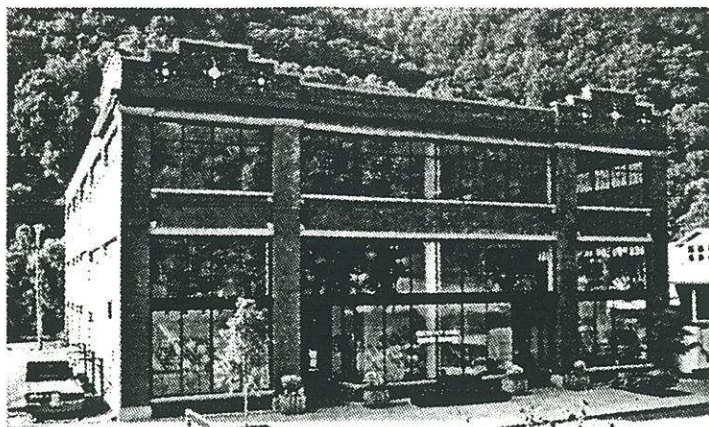
Originally named Yowell, Benham was a small isolated mountain community in 1910 when IHC purchased a large tract of land to mine the exceptional quality coking coal found there. The railroad reached Benham in July of 1911 and the first coke ovens went into operation January 1, 1912. The coke was shipped to the Wisconsin Steel Company furnaces in South Chicago.

The museum is housed in the former Benham Coal and Coke Works company store, a large well kept brick structure. The museum as designed to exhibit the lifestyle in the mining community and the equipment used in coal mining. Exhibits include mining tools and lighting, a company medical clinic, a home parlor, organized labor items and a children's crawl-through exhibit. Admissions \$4 for adults. The hours are Monday through Saturday 10-5 and Sunday 1-4.



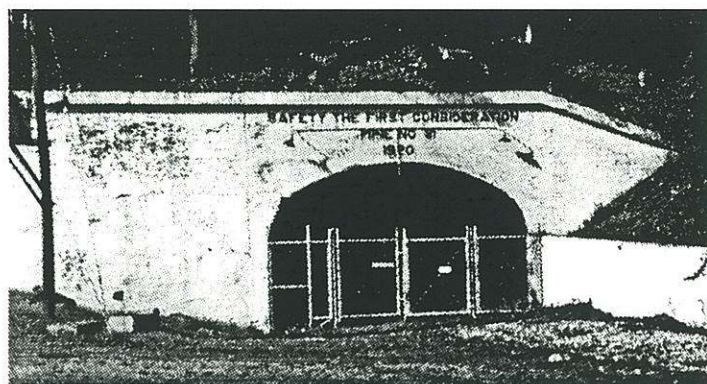
Tippie, Lynch, Kentucky.

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Kentucky Coal Mining Museum. Benham, KY.

The small Coal Miner's Park next door has an old wooden railroad caboose open for children to climb through, along with picnic tables for a picnic lunch before proceeding on to nearby Lynch.



Mine Portal. Lynch, Kentucky.

Lynch was founded in 1917 when United States Steel opened its coal mines there. At one time Lynch was the largest coal camp in the U.S. with 1,000 structures and 10,000 people, with 38 different nationalities represented. Today you can take a walking tour of the town and see the company store, school, lamp house, bath house, firehouse, water plant, tippie and mine portal 31, as well as the post office and railroad depot. Each building has a sign explaining its history and function. None of the buildings are restored by appear as they were when the mines closed.

Both Benham and Lynch are worthy of a visit if you are in the area. I passed through the day before the Huntington Show, having taken the day to travel through the southeastern Kentucky coal region. For anyone not liking narrow winding mountain roads, this drive is not for you. The roads leave much to be desired. Once there, the sights are enjoyable.