



McDowell County Coal and Rail (Postcard History)

Jay Chatman

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Coal was discovered in McDowell County, located in the Billion Dollar Coalfield of southern West Virginia, in 1748, but it was not explored or mined until the early 1800s. Mill Creek Coal & Coke Company shipped the first railroad car of coal in March 1883 via the Norfolk & Western Railway. By the early 1900s, hundreds of mining companies dotted the countys landscape. The coal from McDowell County fueled the nations home heating and steelmaking businesses and both world wars. As the coal industry developed, the local population grew; by 1950, the county had grown from a few hundred people to more than 100,000. The postcard images in this book show early coal mining and how it progressed throughout the years.

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