



Railroads and Coal

The railroad track in front of you is the C&O Railway's main line. Without the railroad, there would have been no Nuttallburg. By carrying coal to market, the railroad made coal mining in New River Gorge possible. John Nuttall came here in 1870 to explore mining possibilities only after he learned that the C&O planned to build their railroad through the gorge.

New River coal was highly prized because it had a high carbon content and contained little waste. The railroad carried it from here to many destinations. Nuttallburg coal heated homes and fueled iron furnaces, train engines, and factories throughout the East. Because New River coal emitted little smoke, the U.S. Navy valued it as ship fuel, since enemy submarines were less likely to spot ships with little smoke.

Enough Cars?

The availability of rail cars could control a mine's production. At times output at Nuttallburg was reduced due to lack of cars, and the miner's work week was shortened. Paid by the amount of coal mined, miners suffered financially by a rail car shortage.

The railroad cars were apportioned in ratio to the productive capacity of each mine, with never enough cars to satisfy all.

John Nuttall II, grandson of Nuttallburg's founder, John Nuttall

Loaded railcars sit beneath Nuttallburg's tipples, circa 1926. We can only guess where the coal was destined.