

CHURCH COAL MINE HAS RICH HISTORY

A chapter in the history of the Welfare Department will close next month with the proposed sale of the Deseret Coal Mine, located in Orangeville, Emery County, Utah, to the Utah Power and Light Company.

The mine, which grew out of the efforts of the late John Franklin Killian, of Emery Stake, who died in March 1953, has provided hundreds of tons of coal for ward chapels, church-owned properties and families in need.

Utah Power and Light officials notified church officials last week that they will exercise their 90 day option to purchase the mine. The purchase should be completed by February 7, according to company officials.

Projections made by the company call for an annual production of coal up to 800,000 tons per year.

Under the purchase agreement, the company will continue to supply coal to meet requirements of the church. Coal for church use will continue to be transported in church-owned vehicles.

President Killian opened the mine in December 1938. His motivation was to provide employment for coal miners and truckers in the Orangeville area, who were unemployed due to the depression, according to newspaper stories printed about the mine.

He and his two sons started mining the area with pick and shovel, using a wheel barrow to move the coal they had mined. (Rulon and Lloyd were the sons).

In July 1939, President Harold B. Lee, at the time a member of the Church Welfare Committee, toured the mine, located eight miles northeast of Orangeville.

Ten years later, the mine was being operated by Emery, Carbon and Carbon North Stakes. Production capabilities were cited at more than 130 tons of coal a day. The church had acquired additional coal properties across the canyon. The total church-owned property was reported at that time to contain enough coal to last the church 250 years.

In 1949, President J. Reuben Clark Jr., and Elder Henry D. Moyle attended a unique dinner, served deep within the coal mine. The meal was prepared by the wives of the three stake presidencies whose members operated the mine.

Over the years, the mine has been passed from an individual's operation, to stake, tri-stake and finally an operation controlled by the Church Welfare Committee.

Peak production in 1953 was reported at 200 tons per day. President David O. McKay visited the mine in that year and attended a dinner similar to the one served in 1949.

At the time, President McKay spoke of the great spirit of the Church Welfare program and also lauded the spirit of the men who worked the mine.

Elder Henry D. Moyle, on the occasion, said that a glorious chapter "is being written in the history of welfare work by those developing this mine".

Over the years, dozens of men have been activated through working in the mine with their priesthood brethren.

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THE HISTORY OF THE DESERET COAL MINE

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Submitted by James F. Killian

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Preface

The purpose of this paper is to record the historical events of the discovery and development of the Deseret Coal Mine.

President J. Frank Killian, President of the Emery Stake and grandfather of the author, was directly responsible for the acquisition and development of the mine. He was assisted by his sons, Lloyd and Rulon Killian.

The complete story of how the mine was acquired has never been accurately recorded in any of the church periodicals. Rulon Killian, the author's father, has attempted to record some of the pertinent information about the discovery and early development of the mine. Much of the information contained in this paper is from his account and from conversations the author has had with him.

It is hoped that the reader will be able to catch the feeling of dedication and sacrifice of those who struggled to see the mine developed and become an integral part of the L.D.S. Church Welfare Program.

The Deseret Coal Mine is located 160 miles southeast of Salt Lake City. Its entrance is 7,500 feet above sea level on the south side of the East Mountains. It overlooks beautiful Castle Valley.¹ The nearest town, Orangeville, eight miles away.

A mine has been started in this area as early as 1898, but because of the inaccessible terrain, nothing had been developed until 1936 when two men purchased the mine and built a crude road.

In the winter of 1937-38 J. Frank Killian and his two sons, Rulon and Lloyd, were employed by the Castle Valley Fuel Company, as this mine was called, to mine coal. During the winter they heard rumors about some coal lands adjacent to the Castle Valley Fuel Company which could be purchased for the taxes owed the county. President Killian investigated and found that 600 acres of coal lands were available. Of these 600 acres, only 40 were available without having to cross coal lands owned by Castle Valley Fuel Company.

Lloyd and Rulon wanted to purchase the 40 acres of available property and develop a mine. President Killian didn't show much enthusiasm about the proposition. When asked why, he replied, "This is an excellent proposition; too good for us. I have had a strong impression that the Church should own it. I've been worried about how I could approach you boys and ask you to forget it and let the Church have it."²

Eleven years later, President Killian said that the idea for developing the coal resources came to him as he was pondering the

hardships of the miners and truckers who had been thrown out of work during the Depression. One day, while employed by the Castle Valley Fuel Company, he was . . . "sitting on the rim rocks and he envisioned the possibilities (developing the coal), and it was given him to see the future of such a venture. He testified that he saw the mine much as it is today (1949), with great quantities of coal being taken out to supply the needy of the Church."³

After much discussion and deliberation, it was decided to approach the General Authorities of the Church and see if they would be interested in purchasing the property for Church use. President Killian went to Salt Lake City and informed the General Authorities about the mine. He was sent to Harold B. Lee, Chairman of the Welfare Program, and Elder Lee said he would make his recommendation to the Church Welfare Committee. Several months went by without a word. President Killian made several trips to Salt Lake City and received encouragement from Elder Lee but no final word. These were discouraging times for President Killian and his sons. They felt many times that the Church didn't want the property and they should purchase it for themselves. Had it not been for Elder Lee's encouragement, they would have forgotten about letting the Church have it.

Approval came from the Church in August 1938. The Church appropriated \$12,000 to buy 40 acres of coal lands, open the mine, build bins to hold 100 tons of coal, build chutes from the mine to the bins, and construct a road to the mine. By trading some property with Castle Valley Fuel Company, President Killian was able to purchase 400 acres of coal lands for the Church.

A surveyor was employed to determine the best area to begin digging. After digging in the area suggested by the surveyor, the men found no coal. The men sighted across the canyon and began to dig where they thought the coal would be and this way they found the vein of coal. A small trail was constructed from the yard area to the mine entrance.

The next major project was to build a road to the yard area where trucks could load. The laying out of the road was accomplished in the following way:

We would get up on a high knoll and size up where we thought the road should go. Father [Pres. Killian] would remain on the knoll and I [Rulon] would go down in the cedars and tie rags on the trees he told me to mark. In about a week we had laid out a new road. We didn't have a single instrument to help us. (A few years later, the Church improved the road but didn't deviate one foot from the road as we laid it out.)⁴

The chutes, used to convey the coal to the loading bins, were constructed on the steep side hill. The building of the chutes was done by hand and horse power. The exterior of the chutes were of wood and then lined with heavy gage steel. Each section of steel weighed approximately 1,000 pounds and had to be raised in place by hand and horse power.

After the chutes and bins had been constructed, the mining operation began. The men used dynamite to blast the coal loose, then shoveled it into wheelbarrows and wheeled it out of the mine and dumped it over a ledge. The first 200 feet of coal were unfit for burning because it was too soft.

By Thanksgiving Day (1938) the bins were full of coal. Two truck loads, 13 tons, were loaded. These loads of coal were taken to the

Provo Welfare Region as a donation from the men who produced the coal. Pres. Killian persuaded the truckers to donate their time to haul the coal in order that the first loads of coal went to the poor as a complete donation.

None of the coal mined was sold. All trucks with a properly signed bishop's order were loaded with coal. Pres. Killian received \$1.75 per ton of coal. He paid the miners \$1.00 a ton and the balance was paid to the men who loaded the trucks and moved the coal down the chutes.

Some of the problems met were: coal freezing in the chutes preventing it from sliding into the bins, slack too dirty to burn and had to be dumped, rock dusting to keep down the danger of explosion, battery lamps instead of carbide lamps, and a fault in the vein of coal which had to be cut through to the coal. New equipment was added as needed. Carts to transport coal from the mine to the chutes, electric drills and a generator to produce electricity to run the drills and cutting machines to mine the coal.

The mine was operated until 1943. A power plant needed to be constructed to produce electricity to operate the new equipment used in mining the coal. Materials to build the power plant were scarce due to the war, and it was decided to close the mine until conditions became more favorable.

Pres. Killian was concerned about when the mine was to be reopened and was told by Elder Marion G. Romney:

. . . Pres. Killian, don't worry about the opening of the mine. It will be opened when we are ready, and we are getting ready for bigger things. You have demonstrated that coal can be mined and transported to Salt Lake cheaper than

from the Carbon County mines and the coal is just as good. Our coal is mined and transported by Latter-day Saints. The day is past when we have to buy coal for our chapels and Church institutions from nonmembers. It may be a source of satisfaction to you, Pres. Killian, to know that the coal you have mined so far has saved us enough money to pay back every cent the Church has invested in the mine. We are going to do bigger things.⁵

In 1947 the Church purchased the Castle Valley Fuel Company property. With the purchase of this property, the Church owned 1,000 acres of coal lands and complete rights to the area developed on East Mountain. The road was widened and the truck loading area was enlarged.

Water was not readily available at the mine, and it was decided to pipe water from a spring on top of the mountain above the mine. Pres. Killian had anticipated the need for water and some years before had filed a claim on the spring.

An engineer was hired to survey the route for the water line. He reported to Pres. Killian that water would not run from the spring over a high ridge. Pres. Killian replied, "If that is what your transit says, then its wrong; and you had better get a new one. It has been made known to me that water will run from the spring over the ridge and to the mine."⁶ After discussing the matter, the engineer agreed to try a new transit the following day. When he took the reading with the new transit, he found that the spring was 4 to 5 feet above the ridge and there was sufficient fall for the water to run by gravity over the ridge and to the mine.

The pipe had to be hauled to the spring in a roundabout fifty mile route. (It was impossible to haul the pipe up the side of the mountain, so they had to go around the mountain and up the other side.) The pipe

had to be hauled by team and wagon over much of the road due to the rugged terrain. Because of the ruggedness of the mountain, it took three months to install the pipe line from the spring to the mine. The last half mile, the pipe had to be laid straight down the face of the mountain. The pipe was hooked to the storage tank and the water turned on, but no water came. Most of the line was checked for leaks and none were found. The engineer returned and surveyed the route again and confirmed his report that the water should flow. The men then climbed the face of the mountain checking the line as they went. They discovered that some huge boulders had fallen from the ledges and shattered the pipe. The line was repaired and water flowed into the storage tank. Before the tank was full, the water stopped. Three times Pres. Killian and his men climbed the face of the mountain in the snow and repaired the line. The next spring (1948), the line was completely rechecked and covered over. Special care was taken to provide sufficient cover for the line down the face of the mountain to protect it from falling rocks.

In 1948 Pres. Killian was released as superintendent of the mine and Shirl McArthur became the superintendent. Under his direction, coal was mined from the Castle Valley Fuel Co. Mine because of more and better equipment and loading facilities.

In 1949 a group of Church leaders, led by Pres. J. Rueben Clark, Jr., visited the mine and the facilities. Along with Pres. Clark were: Elder Henry D. Moyle, Elder Marion G. Romney, Pres. Antoine R. Ivins, Bp. Thorpe B. Issacson and the General Presidency of the Relief Society. A banquet was held in a large "room" inside the mine.

It was reported at that time that:

. . . 52.3 per cent of the coal mines was sold to Church institutions such as chapels, hospitals and Church schools and that the remaining 47.7 per cent was distributed on bishop's orders--the sale of the former more than paying for coal supplied to the needy Cost of production . . . was phenomenally low. In 1948 . . . 17,000 tons of coal were taken from the Deseret Mine at a cost of \$1.863 per ton which, if given a commercial value of \$77,542, shows a profit of \$38,296.⁷

In the fall of 1951 the wooden tippie caught fire and was completely destroyed. The men who were working in the mine returned to the entrance of the mine and saw the fire. They were able to close the entrance of the mine, thus preventing the fire from spreading to the mine. In recalling the incident of the fire, Brother McArthur said:

That fire was a real testimony to me, for the men were saved, the mine was saved, and because of the fire, we received earlier delivery on our new steel tippie. By fall, when our order was scheduled, the Korean war was raging and materials of that sort were frozen. We couldn't have operated with the burned, broken-down wooden tippie.⁸

During the time the new tippie was constructed, a new entrance to the mine was made. The new entrance was placed equal distance from the original mine entrance and the Castle Valley Fuel Mine entrance.

In 1953 a large delegation of Church leaders, led by Pres. David O. McKay, visited the mine. A banquet for the 500 people present was held in the mine "assembly room" 1,000 feet inside the mine. An inspection of the mine and the up-to-date equipment used to produce coal was an important part of the visit. "Pres. McKay described the visit into the mine and the meeting which followed as one of the most unusual experiences of his lifetime."⁹

The mine today (1966) can be described as one of the most up-to-date mines in the state of Utah. A large mining machine can mine the coal at a rate of a ton a minute. This machine can mine the coal faster than it can be loaded and hauled in the ten-ton coal cars to the tipple. Eighty-eight per cent of the coal mined is crushed into slack for stoker use. Not a pound of the coal is for sale. The total production is consumed through the Welfare Program and by Church owned buildings.¹⁰

The coal is mined on two levels separated by 130 feet. At one point in the mine, two large shafts have been bored, connecting the two levels. Through these shafts coal mined on the upper level is dropped to a waiting coal mine train on the lower one. This expedites delivery to the crusher and the chute overlooking the tipple.¹¹

The Church has invested over two million dollars in mining equipment. This includes the cutting machine, loaders, coal train, crusher, tipple and large trucks capable of hauling 35 tons each. If one takes into consideration the amount invested in the mining property and other items, the mine's estimated value would be around 6-8 million dollars.

Pres. Clark remarked on his visit to the coal mine in 1949: "If it had not been for Pres. Killian's vision, foresight and struggles, this thing [mine] could not have been brought about."¹²

FOOTNOTES

¹Church Section, (Salt Lake City), March 19, 1960, pp. 10-11.

²Rulon Killian, History of the Church Coal Mine, (unpublished, personal account), p.2.

³Church Section, (Salt Lake City), August 7, 1949, p. 7.

⁴Killian, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁶Ibid., p. 27.

⁷Church Section, op. cit.

⁸Improvement Era, (November 1953), p. 850.

⁹Church Section, (Salt Lake City), Sept. 19, 1953, p.

¹⁰Church Section, (Salt Lake City), August 7, 1949, p. 10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹²Killian, op. cit., p. 31