



The Juanita Coal and Coke Company

GENERAL OFFICES AT PUEBLO, COLORADO
MINES LOCATED AT BOWIE, COLORADO

A special Act of Congress, approved March 3, 1873, provided for disposal of coal lands by ordinary private entry or by preference right based on priority of possession and improvement. Under this Act, tracts were limited to 160 acres for individuals and 320 acres for associations; the sale price was \$10 per acre if more than fifteen miles from a completed railroad and \$20 if within that distance.

When it was disclosed that the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad intended to extend their narrow gauge line into the coal rich valley of the North Fork of the Gunnison River, where they owned a large block of coal land, many individuals flocked to the area to take up coal claims while the land was available for \$10 per acre.

The Juanita Coal and Coke Company was incorporated May 16, 1902, by H. B. King, C. M. Morris and A. B. Farrow; directors named then were C. W. Gill, Dr. A. T. King, C. M. Morris, H. B. King, George H. Whitelaw and J. W. Douglas. On May 22, 1902, a meeting was held in Pueblo, Colorado, to organize the company and officers elected were C. M. Morris, President; Dr. A. T. King, Vice-President; A. S. Farrow, Treasurer and J. W. Douglas, Secretary.

The company purchased coal lands six miles east of Paonia in the North Fork Valley. C. M. Morris was the first general manager and H. B. King the second. The mine later took its name from King and his brother, Dr. King. Harry Mallot was the first mine superintendent; it is believed that the company name, "Juanita," was for his daughter.

Entries were driven in four locations; three were on the north side of the river. The fourth, on the south side of the river, was abandoned because the coal had to be hauled much further and involved a river crossing to reach the railroad. The third location proved to have the highest quality coal and was selected for further development.

Many of the first stockholders were from the Pueblo area, among them Mahlon D. Thatcher, who was president of the First National Bank of that city. Pursuing his interest in coal lands, Mahlon had met Alexander Bowie in 1880, when Bowie was employed at Rockvale, south of Canon City. Alexander had first started mining work at a colliery in Scotland at the age of 10.

At 20, in 186¹⁰, he and his father, William, emigrated to Nova Scotia. After several months there, they moved on to the coal fields in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. During this time he studied engineering and earned a mine inspector's certificate; in 1877 he was appointed the first mine inspector for the state of Pennsylvania. He met and married Elizabeth Whinnie, also an emigrant from Scotland. With a growing family, he came west in the early 1880's, working in Rockvale, Colorado, Carthage, New Mexico, Topeka, Kansas, Gallup and Monero, New Mexico. In 1886-87, he worked at the Bell Mine near Gallup and in 1887-89 at Monero. He returned to Gallup, and the family settled there. In 1888 Alexander organized the Caledonian Coal Company, serving as general manager and later as president.

In 1906 Alexander sold out his interests in Gallup, invested in the Juanita Coal and Coke Company and was hired as general manager for the King Mine. The settlement there was unofficially called Juanita Town, and the railroad siding Reading. Company president, A. T. King, applied for the establishment of a post office, using the name Reading. The Post Office Department rejected Reading, and also Juanita, because both were too similar to other town names. The name Bowie was then submitted and accepted, and Alexander was appointed as the first post master.

By 1903 buildings completed were a combination boarding and bunk house, an office and a mine manager's home. The mine plant consisted of a stable, mules, blacksmith shop and a steam plant and pump. In 1906 the railroad was broad-gauged from Delta. The tramway from the mine was completed and the first coal delivered to the tipple on July 22, 1907.

The tramway was a double-track gravity plane on which steel cables were attached to loaded cars at the mine and empty cars at the tipple. Each cable went back approximately 300 feet into the mine where each was attached to a separate drum affixed to a common shaft. One cable went over its drum and the other cable under its drum, so that when one drum was winding up cable, the other cable was unwinding. Loaded cars descending on the gravity plane would be unwinding cable, and the other drum winding and pulling the empties up the plane. A trip was usually made up of four loaded cars descending and pulling four empty cars up the plane. A trip could be stopped at any point on the tram and its speed controlled by the wheelman in the pilot house overlooking the tram.

Pit cars, used to haul coal from the mine to the tipple, were designed for a capacity of two tons. The front end of each car was 15 inches higher than the sides and rear. This was to keep coal from sliding off as it

descended the incline. Cars were connected by link and pins and when disconnected, controlled by hand brakes. Each car was weighed on the scale at the tippie and dumped into a storage hopper. From this point a feeder took it to the shaking screens which separated it according to size. Under the tippie were three parallel tracks, which allowed the loading of three railroad cars at a time.

In the morning, miners rode up the tramway in empty pit cars. After the day's work was done, they had a unique means of transportation down the incline to the tippie. This device was called a "boat" and was made from a piece of 2x4 or 2x6 lumber. They were 8 to 12 inches long; one side was grooved the full length to fit over a rail. Some were made in the shop but many miners made their own, using a wood chisel for the grooving. On the front end a metal plate, curved upwards, was attached, similar to a ski. Attached to the back end was the brake, a piece of rubber air hose from railroad cars. The miners sat cross-legged on these boats, with their left hand behind their bodies to squeeze the rubber hose for braking. In the right hand, a small piece of coal was held and put on top the rail to the right; this was for balancing purposes. The upper part of the tramway was a 33 degree incline, and the boat's speed on it was dangerous. Miners usually sat on the brake for this part until they reached the dip where the incline gentled to 26 degrees. Upon reaching the tippie, the miners stashed their boats in their own selected places and picked them up the next morning when they came to work.

All mining was done then by man power, and the miners usually worked in pairs. The coal face of a developing entry was undercut by a miner wielding a pick. Holes were drilled in the coal face with a hand-cranked, post-mounted drill. Black powder cartridges would be made up using a special oiled paper. At least one cartridge would be placed in each hole and tamped tightly with clay. A long, slender rod, with a tapered point on one end and a formed handle on the other would be forced through the tamping and into the black powder. When it was pulled out, a fuse would be pushed into the charge. When all the holes were loaded, the miners would light the fuses with the oil lamps they used for illumination and retreat to a safe place. When the smoke cleared, the loose coal was shoveled into a pit car and the track extended. Miners were paid according to the type of work done. When driving narrow entries or crosscuts, they were paid a "yardage" rate, based on the distance advanced. If they were mining in rooms or pillars, they were paid by the ton of coal mined. These were the contract miners, and their weigh sheet was taken to the office after each day's work. For other work done, such as timbering, track laying, etc. they were paid a day rate. Rates were as follows:

\$2.50 per yard on narrow development work; \$0.90 per ton for coal mined in rooms and pillars; day rates ranged from \$2.50 to \$3.25 depending upon classification and experience. This is the way it was in 1907.

The tenant houses in Bowie were built between 1906 and 1915. The large brick residence of the general manager and the mine office were completed in 1914. Inside the mine there were some slopes that were so steep that they taxed the mules strength. In 1909 a steam-powered hoist was installed to pull the loaded cars out of these areas. The water supply first came from the North Fork River. In 1916 the company purchased stock in the Deer Trail Ditch Company to supply water for the houses. Prior to 1911, ventilation was provided by a furnace and stack in the west air course. A steam-powered ventilation fan was purchased in 1911 and located at the mouth of the east air course. A blacksmith shop, powder house and electric light plant were added in 1914 and an electric cutting machine for the mine in 1915. The brick power plant was completed in 1922, and 2 individual sets of boilers were installed in the east room and two 375 kilowatt, A.C. turbine-driven generators in the west room. This took the place of a D.C. electric generating plant built in 1915 to supply electric lights and power for the cutting machine. In 1928 a new tipple was constructed of steel, equipped with rotary dump, hopper and feeder, shaking screens and conveyors to load cars on four tracks. A Universal cutting machine for the mine and a coal crusher for the tipple were added in 1937, a 460 Goodman loading machine in 1940.

As the mine became more and more mechanized, there was little need for the mules. These sturdy, steadfast animals had been valued highly for their many years of hard work. By 1956 they were retired except for one retained for odd hauling jobs.

The highest production of coal was 103,622 tons in 1920 when approximately 110 men were employed. In 1940 a severe mine fire had to be sealed off for six weeks until it went out for lack of oxygen. Fortunately it happened on a weekend when the mine was idle and no men were underground. Mining has always been a hazardous occupation although safety measures improved over the years. The unexpected can always happen. Seven men lost their lives at the KingMine in a variety of accidents: They were Dan Molloy 1913, John Fischer 1915, A. R. Chapman 1918, William H. Daily 1924, Martin Kuretich 1926, Frank Blazonick 1937 and Bernard Holybee 1940. Two other miners, Leonard Bruce and Mike Kuretich, died of heart attacks while on the job.

On an average, 30 to 50 men were employed. There was little or no work during the summer months, and the miners found what work they could on ranches and in the fruit harvest. Most of the yards were large enough to accomodate a large vegetable garden and a small flock of chickens. The

wives were busy during the summer and early fall canning vegetables, fruits and meat. When the heating season began in the fall, work picked up again. Coal was sold at the tipple to wagons and trucks for local use. Railroad car shipments went to western Colorado and later to Kansas and Nebraska. Most small towns had coal yards, often a part of a feed and grain store. Juanita coal had excellent heating qualities with a BTU of 13,000 plus.

Alexander and Elizabeth Bowie had 11 children; two of them died in childhood. He wanted his remaining children to be associated with him at the mine. The oldest, William, came first, followed by Wallace, Alexander R., John S. 'Jack' and Edwin. A daughter, Mary Ann 'Anna,' came with him in 1906 to establish his household. She also worked as a clerk in the mine office for a short time. When Elizabeth and the older daughter Agnes came, Anna returned to Gallup and married James A. Sneddon. Jack worked at the tipple and in the mine and also substituted in the office when his father took a vacation for health reasons. Another son, Dr. Morris R., came to this area in June of 1908 to become associated with Dr. Harry Hazlett in Paonia. Morris became the physician for the Juanita Company, and from 1910 until his death from diabetes in 1913, he was the resident doctor in Somerset for the Utah Fuel Company. Elizabeth died in 1915. Jack succeeded his father as general manager after Alexander's death in 1917.

Alexander R. had been troubled with arthritis for some time, and in 1935 lost a leg as a result of an accident inside the mine. After recovery, he assisted Jack in the office and took over as general manager when Jack's health failed in 1942. After graduation from Colorado School of Mines and army service during World War II, Robert F. 'Bud' Bowie worked at Rock Springs, Wyoming, and came to Bowie in 1954 to be both inside superintendent and general manager in the office. He is the son of William and Martha Bowie.

The mine and properties were sold in 1974 to the Adolph Coors Company of Golden, Colorado. Some of the houses were moved intact and relocated; others were sold for salvage lumber. Eventually the tramway from the mine down to the tipple was removed, and the mine closed off. The tipple was used as a load-out facility by other mines in the valley for several years and then removed. The Coors Company gave the Colorado Historical Society some of the machinery from the tipple and mine; these pieces were removed and are displayed at the museum in Denver. To date, Coors has not announced any plans for the property.

The block for the mine quilt was made by Patricia Tuin, who is a great-granddaughter of Alexander Bowie.

Robert F. Bowie
Alice B. Abseck

THE MINE MULE

By Berton Braley

He sees the pleasant daylight only once or twice a year,
When they take him out to gambol on the grass;
But he cocks those funny eyes of his and waves a crazy ear,
And you bet he's wise to all that comes to pass.
He is meaner than the skinner--and the skinner's awful mean--
But he's stronger than the cable on the cage;
And of all the critters underground it's plainly to be seen
That the mule's the boy who always earns his wage.

The skinner is a driver who swears a purple streak,
But profanity is love talk to the mule;
He would kick the gentle miner to the middle of next week,
But when the skinner beats him he is cool.
For the mule he loves the skinner, and the skinner loves him back,
Though you sure would never know it by his talk;
And the mule he hauls a string of cars along the bumpy track
And very very seldom will he balk.

But if the mule gets sulky he can tangle up the mine,
While the pit boss and the cager stand and swear;
And the cars are backed behind him in a long, unbroken line
And the skinner hops around and tears his hair.
Yet when the mule is ready he will start to work again,
And merrily he hauls the cars away;
For like that guy, Sir Galahad, he has the strength of ten
When he really wants to bring it into play.

So here's to Mr. Long Ears with the tassel on his tail,
May he prosper like a dividend that's fat;
And when he's done with working and he hits the spirit trail,
May he go where all the saintly mules are at!
Where there isn't any mining and there isn't any coal,
And a skinner is a critter never met;
Where the only occupation is to bray with all his soul
For the mule has earned his Heaven, you can bet!