

Two tried to mine coal in 1918 when fuel was in demand

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professor, and William N. Logan and Louis Roark, assistant professors. Cumings, the department head, had published articles about Southern Indiana rock formations in scholarly journals, and his handbooks and special reports on Indiana geology were used in searching for mineral resources during World War I. According to the newspaper, "Members of the department of geology of Indiana University have examined the coal veins and pronounced the product good. . . ."

Having a valuable mineral resource and capitalizing on it are two entirely different things. Enter George Timberlake and Richard Hall.

The city directory for 1918 doesn't indicate what Hall was doing for a living in those days, but Timberlake owned a cigar store on Kirkwood Avenue, an occupation that hardly qualified him as a natural resources entrepreneur. Nevertheless, the local newspaper of Feb. 1, 1918, informed its readers that

"George Timberlake and Richard Hall of this city have obtained options on the land and have been taking out coal of a fine quality."

Unfortunately, the newspaper did not share with its readers any of the details of the partners' coal mining operation. There was, however, an indication that, initially at least, they were serious. Its readers were to learn from reading the Feb. 1 edition that "The first load of coal to come to Bloomington from the mine was hauled in on a sled last week. . . ."

What happened to the Timberlake-Hall enterprise? It is likely that either the vein ran out or the financial resources of the partners did. Coal's more glamorous relative, limestone, was getting more attention in Monroe County anyway.

Timberlake and Hall may not have profited much from their coal mining, but there were those who did in that frigid winter of 1918. The first load hauled into two from the mine was taken to City Hall and distributed to the poor.