

HISTORY QUESTIONS FOR NEWCASTLE DAYS

All facts taken from "The Coals of Newcastle - A Hundred Years of Hidden History" by Richard and Lucille McDonald. Original printing was June 1987.

1) How much coal was removed from the Newcastle coal mines between 1863 and 1963? Ans. 10.5 million tons.

2) How much waste material was removed from the coal mines between 1863 and 1963? Ans. 4 million tons.

3) If all the coal and waste removed from the Newcastle coal mines was piled on a football field, how high would the pile be? Ans. 2.14 miles (based on a 50# per cubic foot density)

4) What made the Newcastle coal mines so successful? Ans. Good quality coal, reasonable production costs, good transportation system to Seattle, and the need for Seattle to have an industry to promote growth.

5) What was the primary destination for Newcastle coal during the years from 1870 to 1920? Ans. San Francisco

6) When was the peak coal output and how much was produced? Ans. 1917 when 368,000 tons of coal were removed.

7) Newcastle coal seams are at what angle to the surface? Ans. West to East between 38 and 45 degrees to the surface.

8) Why did Newcastle coal have to be cleaned and washed? Ans. There were interwoven layers of coal and partings (bone, claystone, gray shale etc.)

9) What is the name of the last remaining miner's house in near original condition? Ans. The Baima house, built in the 1870's.

10) The original name of the mining area was called the Newcastle Hills. What was it changed to in 1950? Ans. Cougar Mountain.

11) When did Coal Creek become Newcastle and where was it located? Ans. 1918 at the intersection of Golf Club Road and Lakemont Blvd. (page 3)

12) How wide is the Newcastle coal belt and how many seams? Ans. The belt is 890 feet wide and contains 11 seams. (page 4)

13) What is the depth of the deepest mine tunnel? Ans. 520 feet below sea level. (page4)

14) When and where was the first coal discovery made in the area? Coal chunks were seen along Coal Creek in 1853. (page 6)

15) When was the area surveyed and claims staked? Ans. 1863 (page 6)

16) The original coal was thought to be anthracite (stone coal) but was found to be something else. What? Ans. It is actually sub-bituminous with a heat rating of between 9600 and 10,000 BTUs per pound. (page 6)

17) How was coal moved to Seattle in the early days? Ans. Wagon over Newport Hills to Lake Washington, barge to Leschi, and wagon to Seattle. (page 6)

18) What was the coal output in 1867? Ans. 3 to 5 tons per day. (page 7)

19) What did the coal sell for at the Seattle docks in 1867? Ans. \$8 per ton. (page 7)

20) The original mining site was named Coal Creek. A second site was opened 1 1/4 miles East in 1969. What was its name and the source of the name? Ans. Newcastle. Named after the English City that is synonymous with coal production. (page 8)

21) When was the first coal shipment to San Francisco and how much was sent? Ans. In 1870 405 tons of coal were shipped. (page 10)

22) When was the first wooden rail line and what was the power source? Ans. In 1870 horses pulled two ton coal cars on wooden tracks. They were supplemented with portage teams across Lake Washington and Lake Union and ended at Pike street and Elliot Bay. (page 11)

23) What is a "gangway"? Ans. The main level of a mine. (page 14)

24) How much waste is produced per ton of coal? Ans. 1/3 of a ton of waste is produced. (page 14)

25) How much did it cost to move the coal from the mines to Seattle in 1871? Ans. The material was handled 11 time and cost \$5 per ton. (page 14)

26) What transportation catastrophe happened in 1875? Ans. 18 fully loaded coal cars sank in 200 feet of water in Lake Washington opposite McGilvra's Landing. (page 18)

27) What was the coal production in June 1876? Ans. Production was up to 400 tons per day. (page 18)

28) By the end of 1876, how big was Newcastle? Ans. 500 inhabitants (250 miners) and 100 homes. The mine produced 87,618 tons of coal and the gangway was 4,875 feet long. (page 20)

29) How much did a carpenter working at the mines make in 1876? Ans. \$3 a day with tools and \$2 a day without tools. (page 21)

30) What could you get for \$8 in 1876? Ans. Board and lodging for a man and his wife for 1 week. (page 21)

31) When was the first County road constructed into Newcastle? What was it called? Ans. The Thomas Rouse Road (King County Road #90) was built in 1880 and it went from Newcastle to the Issaquah - Renton road. (page 22)

32) When was the first narrow gauge railroad into Newcastle completed? Ans. In 1878 a 6.5 mile long line to Renton was finished. It contained 18 trestles ranging from 3 to 120 feet in height and 40 to 1100 feet in length. (page 25)

33) What was the output of the main mine in 1878? Ans. 500 tons a day were produced from the two mile long main mine. (page 26)

34) What profits were generated from the mining of coal in Newcastle in 1879? Ans. \$63,493 on the sale of 136,000 tons of coal (\$.47 per ton) and \$122,400 to the railroad for shipping. (page 27)

35) What was the name of the bar in town? Ans. The bar was named the "Saloon at Newcastle" and it stood until 1920. (page 27)

36) When was the cemetery established? Ans. 1879. It would take an entire day for a funeral procession to make the round trip. A total of 8 miles. (page 27)

37) What railroad accident occurred in 1880? Ans. Seventeen loaded coal cars fell off the large Lake trestle (one mile east of the May Creek trestle). (page 28)

38) How big was Newcastle in 1880? Ans. 117 homes, 650 people, and two schools serving 100 children. (page 29)

39) How was coal and waste transported underground? Ans. In 1880 an engine pulled the coal and waste as much as 3 miles underground before reaching the surface. Waste was used as fill along the railroad. Formerly it was piled in waste dumps in the town higher than rooftops. Sometimes the coal in the waste dumps would catch on fire through spontaneous combustion. (page 30)

40) How much Newcastle coal was exported during the 1870's? Ans. More than 700,000 tons of Newcastle coal was exported from Seattle. (page 30)

41) What president visited Newcastle? In 1880, President Rutherford B. Hayes visited the Newcastle mines. He was accompanied by General William Tecumseh Sherman. (page 30)

42) What was Newcastle's population in 1883? Ans. There were 750 residents (169 miners) (page 33)

43) What was the Newcastle coal production of 1883? Ans. 218,742 tons. (page 33)

44) Describe the average Newcastle house from 1883. Ans. A white house with vegetable and flower gardens and a lawn or hayfield. It was located near a mine entrance. The community was surrounded by waste dumps eternally emitting smells and smoke. (page 33)

45) What was the nickname given to the Washington Coal Territory? Ans. "Pennsylvania of the Pacific Coast" (page 33)

46) Until 1886 Newcastle had the only one on the Eastside. What was it? Ans. Newcastle had the only post office and voting precinct on the Eastside. People from places like Bellevue had to travel by foot or boat to cast a ballot. (page 33)

47) What was another name for Lake Boren? Ans. "Etta Cartney Lake" It was said to have average depth of 90 feet in 1883. (page 34)

48) What was "Little Seattle's" role at the Newcastle mines? Ans. Little Seattle was a coal burning engine that hauled coal out of the mines to the bunkers. The locomotive was 12 foot long and 4.5 feet high. She made 14 to 16 trips a day hauling 30 coal cars each carrying at least 1 ton of coal when loaded. (page 34)

49) What were the nationalities of the miners in 1884? Ans. According to Harper's Magazine, the 250 to 300 miners at Newcastle were primarily Welsh, Scotch, English, and Irish. (page 35)

50) How did China Creek get its' name? Ans. In the 1880's Chinese workers were brought in to separate good coal from waste in the bunkers. They were forced out of town (due to prejudice) and set up their own camp along a small creek that flowed west into Lake Boren. (page 36)

51) How profitable was coal production in 1888? Ans. Coal sold for \$6.50 a ton during the winter, while production costs were only \$1.10 for deposits above the water line. (page 39)

52) How long did it take to go from Seattle to Newcastle by coal train in 1890? Ans. 3 hours. A lot of time was lost in switching at Renton. (page 42)

53) What was the Havercamp law suit of 1890? Ans. A farmer at the mouth of Coal Creek (Newport Shores today) sued the coal company because of all the mine waste washed down Coal Creek and deposited on his farmland. Mr. Havercamp won damages and then reclaimed the fine coal and sold it to Seattle steam plants.

54) When did the first black workers arrive at Newcastle? Ans. 1891, they were paid 15 to 20% less than the white workers. (page 45)

55) How much might a 15 year old boy make working in the mines in 1894? Ans. David Powell (15) earned \$.85 for a 10 hour day working as a trap boy (opening and closing gangway doors). (page 47)

56) How were underground coal mine fires extinguished? Ans. First choice was to flood the shaft that was burning. If that wasn't possible, the shaft would be closed and allowed to burn itself out. Some underground fires burned for decades. (page 47)

57) Who was George Sparling? Ans. Dr. George Sparling was hired to be the Newcastle Company doctor. He stayed until 1917. In 1937 he became the King County health officer. (page 53)

58) In 1895 there were two useful roads in Newcastle. What were they? Ans. The Thomas Rouse Road and the old tram route to Lake Washington. (page 53)

59) When did the railroad switch from narrow gauge to standard gauge between Seattle and Newcastle? Ans. 1897 (page 55)

60) The high railroad trestle over May Creek was replaced in 1897. How high and how long? Ans. The trestle made 100% of timber was 120 feet high and 1200 feet long. (page 58)

61) In 1897 the gold rush began in the Yukon and traffic poured through the port of Seattle. How much coal was produced that year? Ans. 163,000 tons. (page 58)

62) What event in 1900 signaled the general decline of the Pacific Northwest coal industry? Ans. The completion of the trans-continental railroad that allowed cheaper coal to come from the Rocky Mountain states and British Columbia. (page 58)

63) What was the simplest cause of coal fires? Ans. Exposure to air causing the coal to heat and possibly catch on fire. One such fire that started in 1894 was still burning in 1902. (page 59)

64) In 1900 what was the capability of the washing plant? Ans. The washing plant could process 500 tons in a 10 hour day. 40% was extracted as waste. (page 59)

65) 1901 was the peak population of Newcastle and Coal Creek. What was it? Ans. Between 2500 and 3000 people lived in more than 400 homes in the two towns. (page 62)

66) How did "Red Town", "Finn Town", and "Rainbow Town" get their names? Ans. Red town had all buildings painted the same color red. Rainbow town had buildings of any color. Finn town was populated with the Finnish workers. (page 62)

67) In 1910 how much would it cost for two people to stay overnight at the boarding house? Ans. With food the bill would be \$5.65. (page 62)

68) In 1910 the train from Seattle made two trips a day. Where did it stop and how long did it take? Ans. The train stopped at Renton, Kenndale, Newcastle, and Coal Creek. The 3PM arrived at 4:40 and the 6:20PM arrived at 7:20. (page 63)

69) In 1910 Newcastle served as a destination for what activity other than coal mining? Ans. Hunters from Seattle came to Newcastle to hunt cougar, bear, and raccoons. There was a bounty on cougars. (page 63)

70) What were the two biggest years of coal production? Ans. 1916 produced 305,000 tons, 1917 produced 368,000 tons, and 1918 produced 325,000 tons. The increase in these years was due to the energy needs during World War I. (page 63)

71) The Ford Slope mine opened in 1906 and closed in 1926. The bottom seam (Muldoon) was at what elevation and how long was the decent from the entrance? Ans. The Muldoon was at 310 feet below sea level and 850 feet below the surface. It was a 1740 foot ride to that level at a 30% down angle. (page 64)

72) How many electric locomotives ran on the Muldoon seam? Ans. 11 (page 65)

73) What was the tipple? Ans. A rotating drum that was used to empty the coal cars into the bunkers. (page 71)

74) What was the production rate of the Ford Slope mine in 1912? Ans. 600 tons of coal per day were extracted from the Ford Slope. (page 75)

75) What is a "skid road"? Ans. A conveyance for moving cut logs to the saw mill. A team of horses would pull logs along a dirt road that had 20" diameter greased logs placed every 8 feet. (page 76)

76) What function did the sawmill serve in the mining business? Ans. The sawmill manufactured the many planks and timbers needed in the tunnels. (page 76)

77) In 1914 the Newcastle School at Coal Creek was built. How big was it? Ans. The school was located on the road between the two towns and had 4 classrooms with two grades per room, a manual training room, and a home economics room. (page 79)

78) Did removing coal affect the tunnels? Ans. As coal was removed, geologic stresses could cause the tunnel walls to move, floors to buckle, or timbers to be smashed. (page 79)

79) Did the miners receive Social Security or retirement? Ans. There was no paid retirement or Social Security. As the physical abilities of the miners lessened, their jobs would get less demanding (dirtier and more miserable?) and they would receive less pay. (page 79)

80) Working in the waste dumps carried an additional hazard. What was it? Ans. The waste dumps contained considerable low grade coal. When exposed to the air it could ignite spontaneously and create a world of smoke, fire, and noxious gases. (page 80)

81) The main dump area for coal mine waste, the "Cinder Mine" , burned for how long? Ans. The Cinder Mine smoldered for 55 years, into the 1940's. (page 80)

82) What are crushed coal cinders now used for? Ans. Running tracks and driveways. (page 80)

83) Where was the high school for Newcastle students? Ans. Renton or Seattle. Transportation was difficult. To get to Franklin in 1915 required a 3 mile walk to the Hazelwood dock on Lake Washington, a ferry ride across the lake, and a streetcar to the school. Most students just went to work. (page 81)

84) What was the price of coal during World War 1? Ans. \$2.16 per ton in 1916 and \$3.45 per ton in 1918. (page 81)

85) Describe the situation at the Newcastle mines during WW1. Ans. Every home was filled, every hotel room was occupied, and temporary housing was erected. Employment reached 400 in the mines, 27 at the picking tables, and 25 at the sawmill. Population at Coal Creek exceeded 1000, but the diverse groups of immigrants got along so well that crime was never a problem and policemen were not required. (page 81)

86) Describe the infrastructure of Coal Creek in 1928. Ans. There were no paved streets or sidewalks. There was no central sewage, but sewer tile lines leading to community cesspools. There were 20 homes and some boarding houses in Rainbow town, there were 85 homes in Red town, there were 30 homes and boarding houses in Finn town, and there 20 homes in White town. Every house had an ash or garbage pile in the backyard. (page 83 & 87)

87) Working the Muldoon coal mine in 1921 required how much water to be pumped out? Ans. 500 gallons per minute in the summer and 1200 gallons per minute in the winter. (page 94)

88) What was the production of the Muldoon mine in 1921? Ans. The mine reached a depth of 520 feet below sea level and produced 900 tons of coal in an 8 hour shift. The Puget Sound and contiguous areas was the market. (page 94)

89) Where and what was "Uniontown"? Ans. During the strike of 1921, displaced miners set up a refugee camp South of Lake Boren. Approximate location was 130th pl SE, Coal Creek Parkway, and 89th. (page 96)

90) How much was a newspaper subscription in 1920? Ans. A seven day subscription was \$.40 per month. Papers reached Newcastle by train and delivered to each home by paperboy. (page 99)

91) What was a coal miners pay in 1927? Ans. An ordinary worker made \$6 a day, while a skilled contract worker could make as much as \$16 a day. (page 99)

92) How was a skilled contract coal miner paid in 1927? Ans. Pay was based on \$.14 a square foot for drilling and blasting coal out of seams. (page 101)

93) What was the Coal Company sport in 1922? Ans. Each mine had at least one baseball team. They played against other mines as far north as Nanaimo, B.C. and as far east as Roslyn. (page 101)

94) Could you buy your home from the Coal Company? Ans. Yes. In 1924 Fred Rounds bought his house in Red Town for \$10 and had it moved 3.7 miles north. He gave a teamster one jug of moonshine for the move. The moonshine cost \$10. (page 101)

95) Gases were always a danger in the coal mines. What are "black damp" and "white damp"? Ans. Black damp is methane and white damp is carbon dioxide. (page 102)

96) Could the mine gases be dangerous outside of the mine tunnels? How? Ans. Yes. Underground shafts frequently subsided (caved in) causing openings at the surface and gases could escape. In 1921 a 10 year old picking berries laid down to rest and was killed by black damp (methane) leaking from a mine. (page 102)

97) What was Bellevue in 1925? Ans. Bellevue was little more than a collection of berry farm's. Newcastle residents depended on their own stores for general needs. (page 102)

98) What was the highlight of the year for the Newcastle miners and their families? Ans. The 4th of July celebration was the highlight. Activities included a baseball game against another mining team, races, other contests, food, and fireworks. (page 103)

99) How did the normal work day for the miner end? Ans. In 1925 the workday was from 7 to 3:30. The miners would be black and they went to the Company wash house where they could shower before going home. Women could use the facilities on Tuesday and Friday nights. This was a great privilege since most homes did not have bathtubs. (page 103)

100) Describe the Newcastle of 1921. Ans. About 1000 people lived there at the time. The business center consisted of a dance hall, drink parlor, garage, meat market, general store, theater, hotel, and barber shop. (page 103)

101) What kind of discipline was allowed in the school? Ans. In 1925 if a student misbehaved a ruler to the hands was the discipline. (page 103)

102) Is there danger of mine holes opening today? Ans. Yes. There is still a lot of empty space beneath the surface. In 1950, a cave hole appeared under the current Golf Club Road near Lakemont (big enough for a car to disappear inside). The hole was covered with logs, five feet of dirt, and blacktop. (page 104)

103) What is the Baima House? Ans. The Baima House (#75) is the last surviving unchanged company dwelling on its original site (1872-1880). (page 105)

104) What did a portion of the Primrose mine called the "Swamp" refer to? Ans. The plastic like clay in the rock tunnel that swelled and wrecked the track from time to time. It would be repaired and a few months later swell again. (page 107)

105) How much coal did the Primrose mine produce in 1926? Ans. As much as 743 tons a day, but only 83,000 tons for the year. (page 107)

106) What signaled the end of big mining at Newcastle? Ans. A fire in 1929 destroyed the Coal Creek bunkers. (page 107)

107) Why did the Pacific Coast Coal Company begin liquidating their Newcastle operations in 1929? Ans. Coal was in little demand due to the availability of oil, Montana coal was cheaper, and the nation had entered the Great Depression. Cumulative production between 1876 and 1929 had been 8,840,000 tons. (page 107)

108) How much did it cost to buy a miners house from the coal company in 1929? Ans. \$25. (page 108)

109) What happened to the railroad between Seattle and Newcastle starting in 1925. Ans. In 1925 passenger service was discontinued and in 1930 all service was stopped. The line was officially abandoned in 1933 and the rails were pulled up in 1937. (page 108)

110) What happened after the Pacific Coast Coal Company moved out of the Newcastle mines? Ans. Between 1930 and 1963 Independents came in to work what was left behind. There was less attention to safety, overburdens were removed, supporting coal pillars were harvested causing underground roofs to collapse, and strip mining was introduced. (page 109)

111) Who is Milt Swanson? Ans. Milt Swanson was born in Old Newcastle in 1918. He lives in Company House #180 (his parents bought it in 1930) that faces Lakemont Blvd and has a coal car in the front yard. He was employed as a mechanic by the B & R Mining Company. He is an historian for the area. (page 110)

112) How was the independents (1930 to 1963) coal transported? Ans. They trucked fine coal to the rail car loading ramp at present day Coulon Park. Larger coal was trucked directly to fuel yards in the city, mostly for residential use. (page 111).

113) What was the B & R Mining Company? Ans. The Company was started by Joe Baima and Mike Rubittino to continue digging coal in Newcastle after the Pacific Company left. They worked many of the old mines leased from Pacific. They mined 536,149 tons of coal between 1932 and 1962 with a peak year 31,835 in 1945. (page 112)

114) What is the make-up of the land along Coal Creek Parkway? Ans. The land was a swamp 25 to 30 feet lower than today's parkway level. It is filled with coal washings, overlaid with dirt from the original I-90 highway excavation through Mercer Island. Enough fine coal had been deposited in the flat that the material warranted salvage in the 1930's for boiler fuel. Old timers are surprised the area never caught fire. (page 112)

115) What was the Strain Company's primary method of coal mining? Strain used strip mining where possible. Pits were opened from Red Town to Old Newcastle. (page 112)

116) Could strip mining cause underground fires? Ans. Yes. When a strip encountered an underground mine a fire could start. In 1937 one such fire started and continued to burn for years and could still be burning far underground. (page 112)

117) How much land in Newcastle was laid bare by strip mining? Ans. 80 to 90 acres of open pits were left behind between Old Newcastle and Coal Creek . (page 112)

118) When did King County purchase the property for Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park? Ans. The County purchased 1000 acres of the original Pacific Coast Coal Company holdings for \$6,000,000 in 1984 and 1985. (page 113)

119) Where did the independents dump most of their coal mine waste? Ans. Waste was dumped along Newcastle Golf Club road in piles 30 to 50 feet high. (page 114)

120) How many openings or mine subsidence's were filled or covered in 1987? Ans. 166 openings were identified and filled by the Office of Surface Mining. One opening required 50 yards of concrete to create a plug over the top. Some sink holes were as large as 100 feet in diameter. (page 114)