

TO FUEL A NATION



Robert Cathcart was a native of Dublin, Ireland but emigrated to the United States in 1790. He was most likely the first settler in the Mahoning Township area in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. He appears to have arrived in or before 1805 under an improvement right as he appears on a tax assessment in 1806 with 330 acres, one horse and three cattle.

His two story red house was not only the first frame building erected in that area... for many years it was the only one for miles around. He spent his life clearing the timber from part of his tract and erecting other necessary buildings. The commissioners of the county in 1810 granted him sixteen dollars for his killing of two panthers. By the time of his death (which occurred in 1847 at the age of 75) he had established a fine homestead for himself, his wife and their children.

While the "estate" was passed onto his children, in the 1850s a discovery was made that prompted the family to sell. The Fairmount Coal & Coke Company became the new owners of the land and opened the Bostonia Mine which was found to contain the largest vein of cannel coal within the United States.

The Industrial Revolution of the latter part of the 19th century brought an increasing demand for this energy source. As the labor force grew, iron and steel works were created as

the railroad brought expansion and growth to the area. By 1910, 4,290 men in Armstrong County were producing more than 3,500,000 tons of coal.

The coal industry began phasing out by the 1950s and because the company constructed buildings were not designed for longevity, little evidence remains of the bustling communities that produced the energy that helped fuel the nation in its early years.

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