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B.J. Fett

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## COAL MINES OF GARRISON

B. J. FETT

Those people who recall the workings and operations of the coal mines which existed throughout East Texas until the turn of the last century are found few and far between. Coal mining as an industry in East Texas is today one of the past, having reached its decline in 1928. Because the resource of coal is not in demand in the present day, the actual existence of the mineral and one-time operation of the mines is a fact not realized by much of today's population.

Quantities of coal have been mined at different times from the East Texas counties of Anderson, Bowie, Camp, Cass, Freestone, Harrison, Henderson, Hopkins, Leon, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rains, Robertson, Shelby, Titus, Van Zandt and Wood.<sup>1</sup> The coal taken from these areas is known as lignite. Lignite, a low grade of coal, is the third best coal to burn, falling behind anthracite and bituminous, yet being of a higher grade than peat. Lignite is an early stage of coal formation and usually contains some definite plant matter. It is "classified by total moisture, which is related to calorific value and yield of low-temperature tar which indicates value of lignite for chemical processing."<sup>2</sup> Much of the lignite in East Texas is found in veins too thin to mine (seams should be five feet thick or greater) or is of too low grade to be mined at profit.

The coal resources of East Texas have been recognized and even mined on a limited scale far back into the 19th century. It was reported that as "early as 1819, when L. F. L'Heriter indicated a mine, *du charbon de terre*, in East Texas on a map accompanying a report, '*Le Champ D'Asile, tableau photographique et historique du Texas*', which was published in Paris, France."<sup>3</sup> There are other reports of small amounts of mining which were done in the 1850's on a local scale. The first actual production list was published for Texas in 1884, however, when approximately one hundred twenty-five thousand tons of coal were produced.<sup>4</sup> This figure increased constantly, reaching its peak in 1913 just prior to World War I, when 2,429,920 tons of coal were produced, and only 1,200,000 tons of this coal was lignite.<sup>5</sup> Coal production dropped sharply during the war, never to reach such a production peak again. 1928 was the last year that Texas was to produce over one million tons of lignite.<sup>6</sup>

The coal mining industry in the vicinity of Nacogdoches was first established in Northeastern Nacogdoches County and Northwestern Shelby County at the turn of the century. Mineral analyses taken of the lignite in the specific area of Northwestern Shelby County have shown it to be of an excellent quality.<sup>7</sup> The samples were taken from an outcrop on the W. J. Crumpley headrights, approximately seven miles south of Timpson, and from the Timpson Coal Company, one mile south of Timpson. Although taken from only one limited area of East Texas, the analyses provide a general knowledge of chemical breakdown of all East Texas coal.

The analysis breakdown reads as follows:

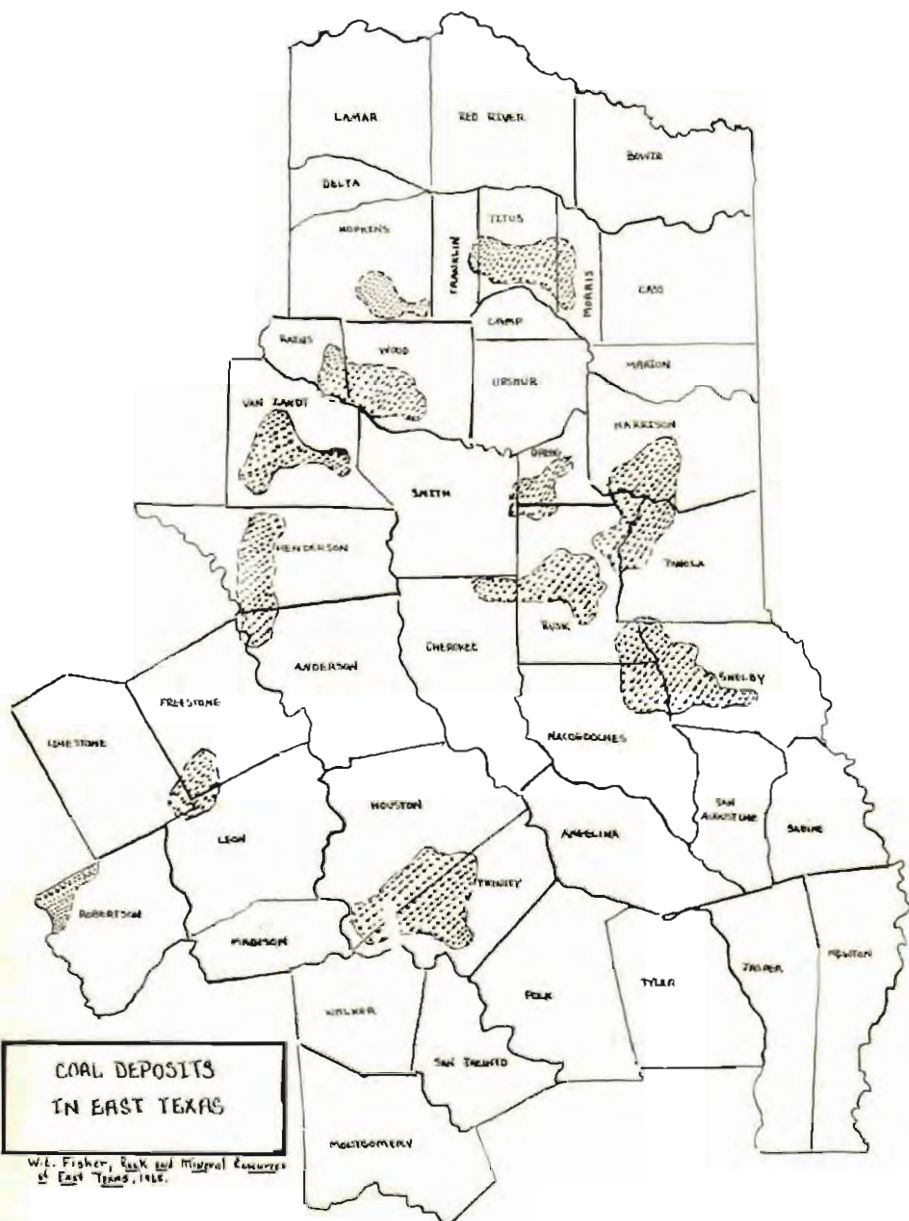
	Timpson Mine <sup>a</sup>	Outcrop <sup>b</sup>
Moisture	31.96	18.26
Volatile Matter	39.53	43.51
Fixed Carbon	23.05	29.53
Ash	5.46	8.70
Sulphur	1.46	2.46
B.T.U.	80.53	—

Coaling mining as an industry for Garrison, Texas, in Nacogdoches County, began in 1896 with the Acme Coal Company and Union Coal Co. obtaining mineral leases around Garrison. The Union Coal Company financed by W. P. Calloway, H. W. Downey, and J. B. Fears of Nacogdoches County obtained a number of mineral leases beginning in February, 1896. The leases were all similar and would all pay two cents per ton of coal that goes over a one and one-half inch grate.<sup>10</sup> On April 10, 1896, the company owners sold one-fourth interest in the company to Percy Allen for five hundred dollars and transferred operating responsibility to Percy Allen.<sup>11</sup> The company, under a Louisiana Charter, had its office and place of business in Houston, with Sam Allen as President, Percy Allen as Secretary, and H. W. Downey as Treasurer.<sup>12</sup> The Union Coal Company renamed the East Texas Coal Company then sold all its privileges, franchises, equipment, shafts, and all property which was completely free from debt to Emmetee A. Ellis of Fort Bend County, Texas, on January 8, 1897, for \$2500. This mine started production in 1900 and ran until 1902 when the Spindletop Oil Field came in near Beaumont forcing both mines at Garrison to close. During this time, the East Texas Coal Company produced a splendid quality of lignite coal which was used successfully on stationary engines and railroads. The East Texas Coal Company had two shafts which were about fifty-four feet deep and had an average thickness of at least five feet of lignite.

The Acme Coal Company began obtaining mineral leases through J. A. Roosevelt after Union Coal Company opened. Roosevelt transferred all his leases to Acme Coal Company on September 10, 1896.<sup>14</sup> All the leases were similar and gave the lessor two cents for every ton of coal that passed over one and one-half inch screen.<sup>15</sup> This company was made up of W. P. Calloway of Garrison and J. A. Roosevelt and Frank Brown, Jr., of Austin.<sup>16</sup> The Acme Coal Company, on October 24, 1896, sold all its leases to the South Texas Coal and Oil Company for two thousand dollars cash.<sup>17</sup> This company, with its main offices in Houston, worked the mine until about 1902 when it was forced to close down, as was the East Texas Coal Company. Both the South Texas Coal and Oil Company and East Texas Coal Company mined approximately seven acres of coal each during their operation from around 1900 to about 1902.<sup>20</sup>

During this period another coal company called the Texas Coal and Coking Company had a short existence. It began in the summer of 1897 when A. Sampson obtained a number of leases from around Garrison and sold them to the Texas Coal and Coking Company for one hundred shares of capital stock, par value of which was ten thousand dollars. The company also assumed three promissory notes executed by Norman G. Keiltner to E. B. Fisher for \$212.50, and two to J. J. Lewis and wife for \$219.<sup>21</sup>





W.E. Fisher, *Rock and Mineral Resources of East Texas, 1918.*

The main office of the company was in Galveston and its officers were John Lovejoy, President; Gus Schultz, Secretary-Treasurer; and A. Sampson, Attorney. This company operated for about a year, until 1900, when the company was sold at auction by Sheriff W. J. Campbell by order of District Court of the County of Galveston, Texas. The court ruled in favor of L. P. Duncan, who was suing to obtain payment for a debt; therefore, on March 6, 1900, all the estate, rights, titles, and interests of the company were sold to B. S. Wittermark for \$830.00.<sup>22</sup>

All the mines were similar in production and structure. They were slope mines, having a 45° slanted shaft, except for the Douglass and O. K. mines, which had a straight shaft.<sup>23</sup> Both types of mines had a trifle constructed over them to pull the small one-ton coal cars out of the mine and to raise them high enough to dump into a railroad car or truck. The mines were from sixty to eighty feet deep,<sup>24</sup> with a lignite vein of at least five feet thick. Although blasting was attempted, it proved to be unsuccessful, due to the softness of the ground, and miners had to resort to pick and shovel.<sup>25</sup> The coal was mined and placed into a small one-ton coal car which, when filled, would be pushed to the shaft hole, hooked to a cable, six or seven at a time,<sup>26</sup> and pulled to the top of the trifles by steampower to be dumped.<sup>27</sup> Mines around 1900 in this area used donkeys to pull the ore cars out of the ground.

The shafts were about eight feet wide and six feet in height and were built in a vertical fashion following the vein of coal. There were many branches from the main shaft which were usually about four feet wide and five feet tall. Very few wooden beams were used inside the mines because pillars of coal measuring "ten feet square were left for support."<sup>28</sup> This was probably done using the pillar-and-stall method of mining.<sup>29</sup>

The mines employed largely Mexican labor, which immigrated from Mexico or the Valley. It has been said that G. W. Anderson of the East Texas mine brought in the first Mexicans,<sup>30</sup> but this is not a confirmed statement. Although many of the Mexicans could not speak English, they received fairly good wages, being paid for the number of cars that they filled each day. Each laborer was given tags which he fastened onto each car that he filled. When the full car was pulled to the top of the trifle, the counter would remove the tag and hang it on a board. At the end of the day, each worker's tags were tallied and he was paid thirty cents per tag.<sup>31</sup> Sam Frank, who worked as counter in one of the mines recalled many arguments between Mexicans involving any untagged car which might come up. Usually, any untagged cars would be marked to the benefit of the Company.<sup>32</sup>

Although it is impossible to determine the exact number of Mexican laborers in Garrison during the peak of coal production, an estimation of between one hundred fifty to two hundred families has been made. Mrs. Ruth MacDuffie, former teacher and present resident of Garrison, stated that in 1922-1923, she taught twenty-seven Mexicans in a class of eighty-five for second and third grades.<sup>33</sup>

The largest and almost sole buyer of the coal was the Southern Pacific Railroad, which used the coal from the Garrison mines in its ballast pit in Mayotown.

The coal was used to cook clay brought from Butler Bros., so that it would harden into ballast. The cooking process entailed the laying of three feet of clay in a shallow pit and covering it with three feet of lignite. This layering process



was repeated until it was sixteen to twenty feet tall.<sup>34</sup> Actual cooking took approximately six months to cook the clay and for the lignite to burn after the bottom layer had been lit. The ballast was loaded on open rail cars while still hot and the townspeople "could see ballast glowing red as it was shipped away."<sup>35</sup> The ballast pit close to Garrison used about sixteen cars of lignite daily and turned out twenty thousand cubic yards of ballast per month to be distributed along two hundred forty miles of rail from Houston to Shreveport.<sup>36</sup>

After their closing in 1902, the mines remained dormant until the end of World War I, when there was a tremendous fuel shortage in the United States.<sup>37</sup> With the price of coal high and rising, it seemed to be an excellent investment and a feasible step to re-open the mines. During this period beginning in 1919 and continuing until 1928, five mines were in operation south of Garrison.

The first mine to open after World War I was the Garrison Coal and Oil Company, headed by Sterling P. Strong and other Dallas capitalists.<sup>38</sup> On May 21, 1919, land for the mine was leased for the production of gas, coal, or other minerals, from J. D. Wilson, H. N. Higginbotham, and C. May, for one dollar an acre for all land for the first year plus ten cents for every ton of coal mined and marketed. If the mine was not developed within a year, the company had to pay one dollar per acre for each year until operation had begun, in order to keep the lease. The lease was good up until ten years if all requirements were met. If coal was found, ten cents per ton was to be paid each month to leaser or to the First State Bank of Garrison. The total acreage leased by the Garrison Coal and Oil Company on May 21, 1919, was two hundred twenty acres.<sup>39</sup> Later, Garrison Coal and Oil leased two hundred forty-seven more acres, from M. L. Cook, P. L. Cook, and W. C. Lee, with approximately the same terms as have been previously described.<sup>40</sup>

In early summer, 1919, the Garrison Coal and Oil Company was opened and operated under the direction of W. W. Hill,<sup>41</sup> and by August was producing up to two hundred fifty dollars worth of lignite coal per day.<sup>42</sup> During the following winter of 1920, the company tried to sell stock certificates of ten shares each for one hundred dollars, with the aid of E. G. Douglass. The company claimed that the stock should sell for twelve dollars and fifty cents per share, but that the one hundred dollar blocks would be offered as a limited special purchase. They tried every means to sell their stock, even offering an installment plan of payment (one-fourth in cash, three months to pay in installments),<sup>43</sup> but the stock was obviously a failure, for the company exhausted its supply of capital and stopped production in October of 1920.<sup>44</sup>

The mine remained vacant for one month until November when E. G. Douglass and Belton Latimer purchased the mine for operation again.<sup>45</sup> With approximately thirty Mexicans being hired to dig coal,<sup>46</sup> production began in early December and advertisements for the coal to be used domestically were seen frequently in the newspapers.<sup>46</sup> The mine experienced a setback on Monday, December 13, 1920, when fire destroyed all the overhead woodwork and a small sawmill that had been used to build the mine, resulting in losses of almost four thousand dollars.<sup>46</sup> Douglass and Latimer, apparently undaunted however, rebuilt the sawmill and had the mine back into production by February, 1921,<sup>50</sup> providing the Southern Pacific Railroad with lignite which was used to cook ballasts. The mine remained in operation until 1926 when the Southern Pacific closed the ballast pit.<sup>51</sup>

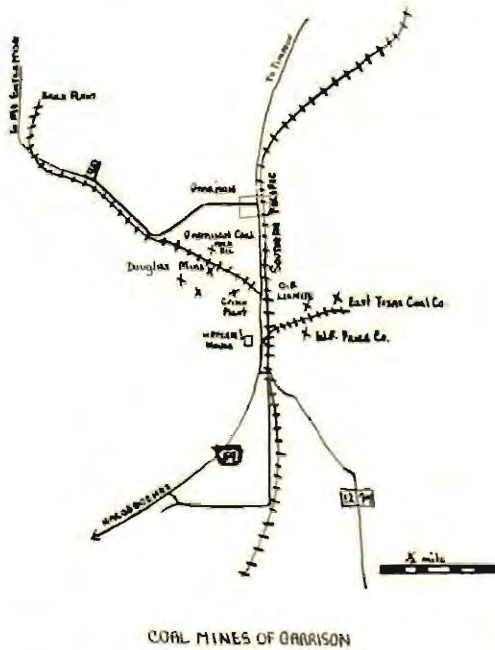
The only known tragedy resulting from the operation of the mines occurred at this Garrison mined by Latimer and Douglass. Crawford Cook, who was in charge of the cables, recalls the incident well. One evening, a Mexican and a Negro had come up to prepare a dynamite charge to loosen the coal to be set off at the end of the day. As they were walking back down the shaft, a coal car that was being re-set on the track broke loose suddenly as the cable snapped, and careened to the bottom of the shaft. The two miners were hit and killed.<sup>52</sup>

The largest mine operating in Garrison was the East Texas Coal and Oil Company, which was formed under a Declaration of Trust on May 27, 1919 in Houston, with capitalization of \$300,000.<sup>53</sup> H. D. Garrison was the first president of the company, but was replaced by W. W. Wallace by 1921. The company was composed, besides the two men previously mentioned, of Guy G. Gidmann, Curtis C. Saner, and E. R. Eberhart.<sup>54</sup>

The company hired G. W. Anderson<sup>55</sup> to be in charge of the mine's construction, which consisted of a blacksmith shop, a four room boarding house, three small "shotgun" houses, a bath house, one tippie, one small house, a shed over slope of mine, and of course the mine itself.<sup>56</sup> Construction began in October, 1919, after the East Texas Coal and Oil Company had received a contract from Southern Pacific to deliver 200,000 tons of coal f.o.b. Garrison.<sup>57</sup> The company obtained leases similar to that of the Garrison Coal and Oil Company, except for the fact that H. D. Garrison and W. W. Wallace compiled leases from thirty-three different people and then sold them to the East Texas Coal and Oil Company for \$10,000 cash and \$141,000 in East Texas Coal and Oil Company stock. Also, these leases only ran for five years and were renewable at twenty-five cents an acre per year instead of one dollar per year.<sup>58</sup> The East Texas Coal and Oil Company had a suit filed against them by Mrs. Ada Garrison in District Court, Nacogdoches County, on August 30, 1923. The suit was filed to recover the money on a note sold to her by Belton Latimer which he had received from the East Texas Coal and Oil Company.<sup>59</sup> Mrs. Garrison obtained judgment from court on October 13, 1923 for the equipment of the mine to be sold at a Sheriff's sale so that she could obtain the \$1,250 due her plus interest.<sup>60</sup> The sale was to take place on November 19, 1923, but did not, because a court order halted it until the company's bankruptcy proceedings could be worked out.<sup>61</sup>

The Douglass mines remained in operation the longest. After operating the Garrison Coal and Oil Company, Douglass opened three smaller mines in 1922, and by February, was able to load one or more train cars daily.<sup>62</sup> One of the Douglass mines was next to the railroad track, but the other two were a distance away, thus employing the use of Model T Trucks to haul the coal from the mines to the train cars. These trucks were driven over a plank road built from the mine to a loading platform which stood ten to twelve feet high, next to the track. The truck driver would dump his load of lignite into the cars from the loading platform.<sup>63</sup> The Douglass mines were prosperous until as late as 1927, with Douglass reporting that he had more coal orders than he could fill.<sup>64</sup> His mines supplied the ballast pits, as well as the local areas, where he sold coal for five dollars per ton.<sup>65</sup> At their peak, the Douglass mines produced a payroll of around \$2,000, which probably greatly aided the prosperity of Garrison.<sup>66</sup> They operated until 1928 when natural gas was supplied to Garrison and Nacogdoches.





COAL MINES OF GARRISON

Two other companies were formed, and continued operation until the ballast pit closed. These were the O. K. Lignite Company and the W. F. Price Company.

The O. K. Lignite Company was incorporated on December 9, 1922, with its main office in Garrison, Texas. The Company was formed by C. W. Osborn from South Bend, Indiana; Dr. R. B. Little from Caldwell, Texas; and D. H. Rohrer of Houston, Texas. The capital stock of the corporation was \$60,000 divided into six thousand shares worth ten dollars per share.<sup>27</sup> The only purpose of the company was to mine coal, which it did until 1925, after obtaining leases through C. W. Osborn from 1922 to 1924.

The W. F. Price Company obtained leases similar to those of the other companies, beginning on April 14, 1923, with a lease from B. L. Hefin and wife, and expanding with the addition of six more leases in 1924.<sup>28</sup> The company, headed by W. F. Price, of Nacogdoches, operated from the winter of 1923 until the ballast pit closed.

The coal mines in the Garrison area were advantageous in many ways. They were important to the economy of Garrison, bringing a fairly nice payroll to be spent in the town.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>27</sup>W. L. Fisher, *Rock and Mineral Resources of East Texas* (Austin, 1965), p. 268.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 266.



<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>10</sup>William Battle Phillips, "The Mineral Resources of Texas", *Texas Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 14* (1910), pps. 14-15.

<sup>11</sup>*Texas Almanac*, 1925, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup>"Mineral Facts and Problems", *Bureau of Mines, Bulletin 585*, (1960), p. 445.

<sup>13</sup>E. T. Dumble, "Geology of East Texas", *University of Texas Bulletin 1896*, (1920), p. 276.

<sup>14</sup>W. B. Phillips, "Coal, Lignite and Asphalt Rocks," *University of Texas Bulletin*, xv, (1902), p. 51.

<sup>15</sup>E. T. Dumble, *Report on the Brown Coal and Lignite of Texas; Texas Geological Survey*, (Austin, 1892), p. 193.

<sup>16</sup>Deed Records, Nacogdoches County, Vol. 32, pps. 608-9.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 34, p. 160.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 35, pps. 49-51.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 35, pps. 49-51.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 599.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 600.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 600.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 609.

<sup>24</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), March 4, 1900.

<sup>25</sup>Dumble, "Geology of East Texas", p. 279.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 279

<sup>27</sup>*Deed Records*, Nacogdoches County, Vol. 34, p. 428.

<sup>28</sup>*Deed Records*, Nacogdoches County, Vol. 42, p. 612.

<sup>29</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.

<sup>30</sup>Mr. Bonner Wragg with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.

<sup>31</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, February 28, 1966.

<sup>32</sup>Mr. Red Garrison with author, Garrison, Texas, February 16, 1966.

<sup>33</sup>Mines in 1900 and before in area used donkeys to pull ore cars.

<sup>34</sup>Mr. Red Garrison with author, Garrison, Texas, February 16, 1966.

<sup>35</sup>Pillar-and-stall method is described in Dwight F. Henderson's "Texas Coal Mining Industry," *Southwest Historical Quarterly*, LXVII, (October 1964), 210, as founded in George L. Kerr, *Practical Coal Mining*, (London, 1901), pps. 113-114.

<sup>36</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.

<sup>37</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, February 28, 1966.

<sup>38</sup>Mr. Sam Frank with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.

<sup>39</sup>Ruth MacDuffie with author, Garrison, Texas, March 15, 1966.

<sup>40</sup>Red Garrison with author, Garrison, Texas, February 28, 1966.

<sup>41</sup>Will Heflin with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.

<sup>42</sup>*Redland Herald*, (Nacogdoches, Texas), January 4, 1926.

<sup>43</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, (Nacogdoches, Texas), January 17, 1918.

<sup>44</sup>*Redland Herald* (Nacogdoches, Texas), May 8, 1919.

<sup>45</sup>*Oil and Gas Lease Records*, Nacogdoches County, Book 5, pps. 277-279.

<sup>46</sup>*Oil and Gas Lease Records*, Nacogdoches County, Book 6, pps. 220-221.

<sup>47</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, February 28, 1966.

<sup>48</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), August 22, 1919.

<sup>49</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), January 20, 1920, Supplement.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

- <sup>40</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), November 27, 1920.
- <sup>41</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), November 27, 1920.
- <sup>42</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, February 28, 1966.
- <sup>43</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), December 16, 1920.
- <sup>44</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), December 17, 1920.
- <sup>45</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), February 4, 1921.
- <sup>46</sup>*Redland Herald* (Nacogdoches, Texas), January 14, 1926.
- <sup>47</sup>Mr. Crawford Cook with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.
- <sup>48</sup>*Oil and Gas Lease Records*, Nacogdoches County, Book 6, p. 79.
- <sup>49</sup>Mrs. Ada Garrison vs. East Texas Coal and Oil Company, No. 6,209. August 30, 1923, District Court, Nacogdoches County, Texas. This is from the Defendant's Original Answer.
- <sup>50</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), October 11, 1919.
- <sup>51</sup>Order of Sale issued by Sheriff Campbell under orders from District Court, Nacogdoches County on October 13, 1923.
- <sup>52</sup>*Redland Herald* (Nacogdoches, Texas), September 30, 1920.
- <sup>53</sup>*Oil and Gas Lease Records*, Nacogdoches, Texas, Book 6, p. 79.
- <sup>54</sup>Mrs. Ada Garrison vs. East Texas Coal and Oil Company, No. 6,209, August 22, 1923, District Court, Nacogdoches County, Texas. This is from the Plaintiff's Original Petition.
- <sup>55</sup>Mrs. Ada Garrison vs. East Texas Coal and Oil Company, No. 6,209, October 13, 1923, District Court, Nacogdoches County, Texas.
- <sup>56</sup>Supplement to Order Sale issued by Sheriff Campbell.
- <sup>57</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), February 17, 1922.
- <sup>58</sup>Mr. Bonner Wragg, with author, Garrison, Texas, March 4, 1966.
- <sup>59</sup>Nugent E. Brown, comp., *The Book of Nacogdoches County* (Houston, 1922), p. 37.
- <sup>60</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), October 26, 1925.
- <sup>61</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Nacogdoches, Texas), February 17, 1922.
- <sup>62</sup>Charter of the O. K. Lignite Company, December 9, 1922. It is filed with the Secretary of State of Texas.
- <sup>63</sup>*Oil and Gas Lease Records*, Nacogdoches, Texas, Book 14, pps. 398, 415, 417, 419, 424, 559, 561.

W. L. Fisher, Rock & Mineral Resources of East Texas