

Illinois Coal Industry Significant Dates

The following is a listing of important dates in the Illinois coal industry broken into 3 categories: Mine Disasters, Regulatory History and Landmarks in Illinois Coal Mining History. The majority of the events have a website listed which serves as a starting point for further investigation.

Mine Disasters

1883 On February 16th at Wilmington Coal Mining & Manufacturing Company, Diamond Mine, there were 69 miners that drown when mine flooded.
<http://coalcity.lib.il.us/coalmining/pages/diamond/disaster.html>

1905 On April 3rd at Zeigler Coal Company, 47 miners were killed in an explosion and three died from asphyxiation while conducting rescue operations.
<http://www.zeigleril.com/pages/zighist.htm>

1909 November 13th at St. Paul Coal Company, Mine #2 (also known as the Cherry Mine Disaster) 259 miners died in the mine fire.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/cherrymi.htm>

1914 On October 27th at the Franklin Coal & Coke Mine #1, 52 miners died in a gas explosion.

1932 On December 24th, Moweaqua Coal Company had 54 miners die in a gas explosion.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/moweaqua.htm>

1947 On March 25th there were 111 miners that died in coal dust explosion at Centralia Coal Company #5.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/centrali.htm>

1951 On December 25th in Chicago, Wilmington and Franklin Coal Company, Orient #2, 119 miners died in gas explosion.
<http://www.wf168.franklin.k12.il.us/fchs/lh022.htm>

Regulatory History

1883 The Bureau of Mines and Minerals was created, which had authority to inspect the state's coal mines.
<http://dnr.state.il.us/mines/>

1890 United Mine Workers of America was formed. It continues the fight for safe workplaces, good wages and benefits, and fair representation.
<http://www.umwa.org/homepage.shtml>

1891 Congress passed the first federal statute governing mine safety. The Federal Coal Mine Safety Act established ventilation requirements and prohibited operators from employing children less than 12 years of age.
<http://www.msha.gov/MSHAINFO/MSHAINFO2.HTM>

1910 Legislation was passed that provided for the creation of mine rescue stations. This act was in response to the mine fire at the St. Paul Coal Company, Mine #2 that claimed the lives of 259 miners.
http://www.osh.netnam.vn/html/coal_mines/mines_rescue.htm

1917 Civil Administrative Code established the Department of Mines and Minerals, which had the powers to regulate the state's growing coal industry.
<http://dnr.state.il.us/mines/>

1948 Following the Centralia Mine disaster, legislation was adopted that created a laboratory to analyze mine air and mine dust. The first analytical laboratory was established on the campus of the University of Illinois.
http://www.msha.gov/Accident_Prevention/ideas/airchange.htm

1962 On January 1st, the first state laws regulating reclamation at Illinois surface coal mines became in effect.
<http://dnr.state.il.us/mines/education/indus3.htm>

1967 Air Quality Act would improve air quality and implement emission limitations.
http://wps.prenhall.com/wps/media/objects/751/769950/Documents_Library/airquality.htm

1969 Mine Health and Safety Act creates MSHA enforcement. As a result, the safety standards for all coal mines were strengthened and health standards were adopted.
<http://www.msha.gov/MSHAINFO/MSHAINFO2.HTM>

1970 Clean Air Act is a strict air pollution control law.
<http://www.nsc.org/ehc/mobile/acback.htm>

1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act protects society and environment from adverse effects of surface coal mining operations.
<http://ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook/smcras.html>

1977 Federal Mine Safety and Health Act states all underground mines are inspected four times a year and surface mines twice annually.
<http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/guide/msha.htm>

1963,1970 Clean Air Act was considered to be the first modern environmental law enacted by Congress. It promoted the use of clean low sulfur coal by setting emission standards.
<http://www.ametsoc.org/sloan/cleanair/cleanairlegisl.html>

1990

1979 On July 1st, new laws were enacted providing mine subsidence insurance to homeowners providing coverage against damage from mine subsidence due to long abandoned coal mines.
<http://www.imsif.com/mine.htm>

Landmarks in Illinois Coal Mining History

1673 French explorers Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet report seeing coal along the banks of the Illinois River near Ottawa.
<http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/ibex/archive/vignettes/frenchconnection.htm>

1810 The first commercial sale of coal from Illinois coal mine. Small drift mine along the banks of Big Muddy River near Murphysboro.
<http://www.coaleducation.org/lessons/sec/Illinois/safil.htm>

1833 The first official recording of annual coal production indicated 6,000 tons were mined.
http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/coal/pdf/EIA_State.pdf

1837 First railroad built with the purpose of shipping coal was by a company organized by Governor Reynolds and connected the mines along the bluffs of the Mississippi River in St. Clair County with a point opposite St. Louis, MO.
<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/ihy020444.html>

1861 The American Miners Association is organized in Belleville, IL and becomes the first miner's union to extend beyond one state. The Association became inactive after 1868.
<http://www.ilir.uiuc.edu/LII/history.html>
<http://www.ilir.uiuc.edu/lii/chronlog.html>

1866 Strip mining began near Danville, Illinois, when horse-drawn plows and scrapers were used to remove overburden so the coal could be dug and hauled away in wheelbarrows and carts.
<http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/c2000/assessments/vermilion/mining.htm>

1870 The second bituminous coal washery (for washing and cleaning mined coal) in the United States was erected in East St. Louis.

1875 Coke replaces charcoal as the chief fuel for iron blast furnaces.

1885 The first year mechanical stripping equipment, other than horses and scoops, was used.

1887 The first underground electric mine locomotive was used in an Illinois coal mine to move loaded coal cars.

1890 United Mine Workers of America led the struggle to establish collective bargaining in American industrial life.
<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/ihy971218.html>

1896 Steel timbering is used for the first time at the shaft mine of the Spring Valley Coal Company, where 400 feet of openings are timbered with 15-inch beams.

1898 October 12th - Battle of Virden
The Chicago-Virden Coal Company attempted to break the strike by bringing in African-American miners from Alabama. Seven miners and five coal company guards were killed and scores wounded in what is recognized as a landmark event in the history of the labor movement in the United States. As a result, October 12th was declared Miner's Day.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/sanjuan.htm>

1899 Union Miners Cemetery constructed in Mount Olive Illinois. The local UMWA union purchased a one-acre site and the bodies of the miners killed during the Battle of Virden were moved from the town cemetery and laid to rest in the new Union Miners Cemetery. Mother Jones, the legendary UMWA organizer, and "General" Alexander Bradley, who incited Illinois miners to join a nationwide strike called by the UMWA on July 4, 1897, are buried there.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/minecem.htm>

1901 Mother Jones became involved in the struggles of coal miners and became an organizer for the United Mine Workers.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/majones.htm>

1911 The first state operated mine rescue stations were opened in LaSalle, Springfield and Benton.

1911 Three mine rescue railroad cars were commissioned for use at the state's three mine rescue stations. These rescue cars were furnished and equipped to respond to a mine emergency.

1912 The first self-contained breathing apparatus for mine rescue operations is used.

1913 First loading of railroad cars in a strip pit.

1920 John L. Lewis became president of the UMWA.
<http://www.umwa.org/history/jll1.shtml>

1921 The first electrically operated coal shovel was used at the Black Servant Mine near Elkville.

1928 The Assumption Coal Company, the state's deepest underground coal mine at 1,004 feet, closes after 31 years of operations.

1936 The first trackless means of hauling coal was used in the Blue Bird Coal Company #5 mine in southern Illinois.

1936 On October 10th, a dedication to the Mother Jones monument was located in the Union Miner's Cemetery, Mt. Olive, Illinois.
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/minecem.htm>

1937 The shuttle car is introduced by Joy Manufacturing Company.

1938 Reclamation of surface mined lands was started on a voluntary basis by mining companies. This consisted entirely of tree planting.

1948 The continuous miner is introduced.

1955 The rail industry virtually completes its switch from coal-fired to diesel locomotives.

1961 Coal becomes the major fuel used by electric utilities to generate electricity.