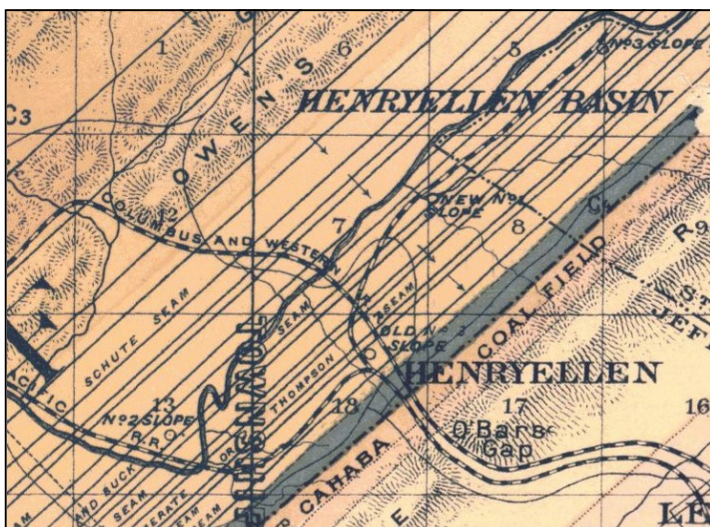


## Alabama Fuel & Iron Co - Part 4, Margaret, Acmar & Colgate

This is the fourth installment in this series about Alabama Fuel & Iron Co (AF&ICo), yet it addresses the longest and largest operation of the company. Before AF&ICo was founded, there was DeBardeleben Coal & Iron Co (DC&ICo), as discussed in Part 1. By 1890, DC&ICo had begun development of two mines near Henry Ellen, named for Henry and (wife) Ellen DeBardeleben.

Initially Henry Ellen referred to a junction on the Ga. Pacific Ry, later the Southern, at a location west of Leeds, AL where the Ga Pacific and the Columbus & Western, later Central of Georgia ran parallel. A north-bound spur track came off the Georgia Pacific and curved across the C&W to the northeast in the valley of Black Creek. At least two mines were developed here as well as along the Ga Pacific to the southwest. Squires' narrative report on the coal basins of Alabama in 1890 indicates that the DC&ICo had an office, store and miner's housing at Henry Ellen in 1890; the name was assigned to this part of the Cahaba Basin.



From Squire's "Map of the Cahaba Coal Fields, 1890 (UA Archives)

Ironically, DC&ICo would be sold to Tennessee Coal & Iron (TCI), in 1892 and at least one Henry Ellen Mine would be operated for several years by TCI. AF&ICo began development of the Harkness coal seam, on land leased from the Central of Georgia, at Margaret, but additional developments nearer Henry Ellen, called Acmar, would be on land leased from TCI which had been part of the DC&ICo acquisition.

There were also a number of mines named Red Diamond in this area, generally to the SW of Henry Ellen junction. There is a record of a Henry Ellen Mining Co incorporated in 1881, but no detailed mine information has been found. Squires narrative referenced above indicates that there was no evidence of any mining in this area prior to 1883.

There is also additional evidence of corporate entities in this area in the teens and twenties, including a company formed by Charles DeBardeleben, Jr. This company opened the Markeeta mine, sold the coal through AF&ICo and eventually sold the Markeeta mine to AF&ICo, that becoming New Acton No 5 mine.

Over the years from 1906 to 1951, AF&ICo would develop 29 coal mines at Margaret (12), Acmar (11) and New Acton (6) as well as a coal washing complex and power plant at Colgate. This area stretched over

12 miles from Henry Ellen to Margaret No 8, also known as Brookston Mine, actually served by the Seaboard RR. This area stretched as far as the distance from Birmingham to Bessemer. The total coal tonnage mined here would be about 38,000,000 tons, and make AF&ICo the largest commercial "captive" coal company (not consuming its production) in Alabama for at least part of this time. Most of this coal was sold to commercial customers, primarily railroads, based on annual negotiated contracts. A smaller amount would be sold as "domestic" coal from a total of 4 coal yards around Birmingham.

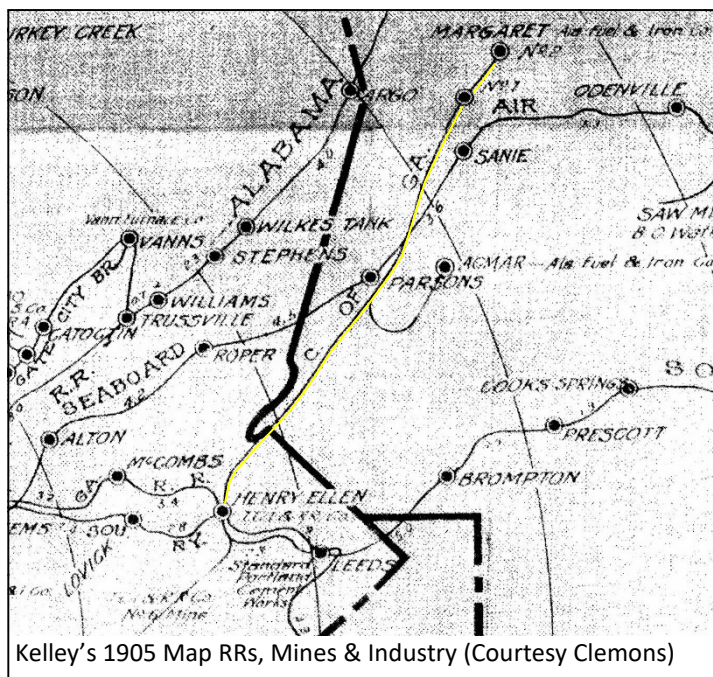
AF&ICo was also unique in being non-union; one of a very few non-union coal companies of this size in Alabama. It is not in the scope of this article to address labor issues, although it seems an achievement to be non-union in the coal industry through this time period.

The initial development of AF&ICo began in 1906 with mines at Margaret, which were accessed by a 12 mile spur of the Central of Georgia RR (CoG) which began near Henry Ellen, CoG name Margaret Jct. The older spur of the Ga Pacific (Southern) was removed at some point in time. Records relating to this are likely available in the Central of Georgia collection at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah, GA.

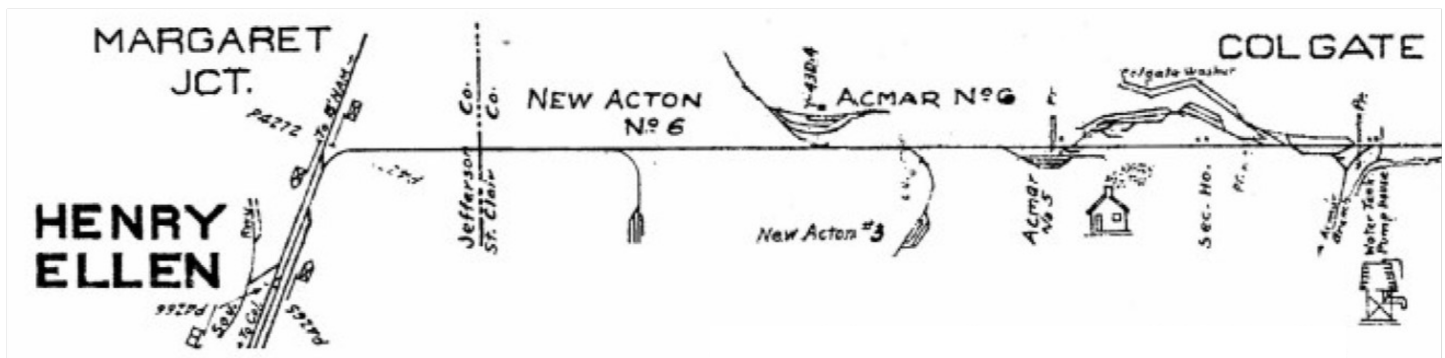
The Central of Georgia RR formed a company called the Tunnel Coal Company in 1902, which apparently was done to exploit the coal located on property controlled by the CoG. Records at Savannah are listed for 1902-1909 for Tunnel Coal Co (TCCo). The AF&ICo records at the Hoole Library in Tuscaloosa include at least one annual report (1916) prepared as a term of the agreement between TCCo and AF&ICo.

The CoG/TCCo's lands included 4,160 acres of mineral rights and 5,440 acres owned in fee simple, according to the 1916 annual report. The land contained the Harkness or Margaret coal seam. By 1916 this was accessed by a spur track with a number of spurs, sidings and small yards serving the various parts of the overall AF&ICo operations.

Additional lands were leased from TCI, the Alabama State Land Company, Brown-Fowlkes Coal Co. and other entities. Each year the annual report of the company included a summary page of land leases and



Kelley's 1905 Map RRs, Mines & Industry (Courtesy Clemons)



The schematic layout across these two pages is taken from an article in the CoG Magazine provided by Marv Clemons. The schematic is from about 1940 and does not show all the mines developed by AF&ICo,

although it does reflect the mines active about 1940. In any event this schematic helps locate various operations of AF&ICo. At this time, Margaret Slope No 6 was located about 1.5 miles beyond No 3. Margaret

holdings. Although AF&ICo owned and purchased various tracts over its existence, the bulk of the coal mine was on leased lands for which a royalty was paid. This was true at Acton, Overton and at the Henry Ellen properties.

The AF&ICo records in the Hoole Library at UA do not include years prior to 1916. Fortunately there is information in the State Mine Inspectors reports. In **1906**, it is reported that there are two slopes at Margaret, St. Clair Co., in the "Hackner" [Harkness] seam of 4.5 foot thickness. These mines employ 100 miners, plus 35 other workers. The mines are ventilated with fans and explosive gases have been recorded combined production at Margaret was 60,000 tons, working 180 days, or half the year. It is also noted that TCI is operating one mine slope at Henry Ellen, nearby in Jefferson County.

The report for **1907** contains similar information with an increase in the labor force to 215 total and a production of 138,000 tons, assumed to be for the full year. TCI's Henry Ellen mine is noted as having a production of 38,00 tons, being served by the Southern Ry.

For **1908**, data on Margaret 1 and 2 is similar. Although No 1 is noted as having explosive gas present while No 2 is not. Margaret No 1 is shown with a production of 111,000 tons while No 2 only has 11,000 tons. Both mines are shown as working only 216 days, a little less than 9 months total. TCI's Henry Ellen property shows 35,000 tons production for the year.

No report for 1909 has been located, but the report for 1910 indicates that a slope has been opened at Acmar, as well as the two slopes at Margaret. Acmar is noted as working the Henry Ellen [Mammoth] seam, with a thickness of 11.5 feet.. Only 18 workers area shown at Acmar, likely a development team. The workforce for Margaret is listed at 350 men for both slopes combined. Production for Acmar is listed at 3,000 tons over 90 days, while Margaret No 1 produced 220,000 tons and No 2 produced 167,000 tons for a full year. TCI's Henry Ellen is still listed with production down to 29,000 tons working about half the year.

The Mine Statistics Report for **1911** (Author's collection) lists Acmar and Margaret 1 & 2. Acmar employs 156 men while Margaret has a total force of 387. Production is shown as 80,000 for Acmar working only 108 days. Margaret shows 204,000 tons and 212,000 tons for No 1 & No 2 mines, working full time. TCI's Henry Ellen is shown with only 4,000 tons working only 30 days.

For **1912**, it is reported that a No 3 slope is being developed at Margaret. Acmar has apparently added drift mining to the existing slope and the workforce has increased to 200 men. Workforce at Margaret totals about 360 men. Production at Acmar is 354,000 tons while Margaret reports 181,000 for No 1 and 226,000 for No 2. There is no listing for TCI's Henry Ellen mine.

The State Inspection report for **1913** lists 3 slopes at Margaret and one at Acmar. All these mines are using pick and shovel methods, and steam is used for hoisting although electricity is used for the ventilation fans. Production at Margaret totals 444,000 tons working a 6 foot seam and at Acmar 435,000 working the 12 foot "Henry Ellen" or Mammoth seam. These mines employ 650 men working between 10 months and full time.

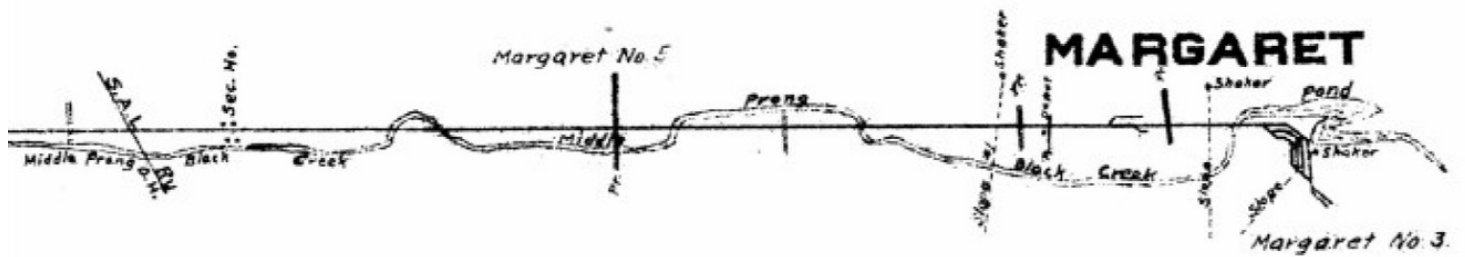
We have no data for 1914, but in the **1915** report it appears that Margaret No 2 has been idled, and that Acmar No 3 has opened. No mention is made of Acmar No 2. In addition, the first New Acton mine has



Wooden frame stretcher designed to be placed on a mine car to remove an injured man. Safety was a never ending effort for the company as mining is a dangerous occupation. Other features are checking with Fire Boss for gas. (Coal Age 1914, courtesy of Thomas Denney)

opened accessing the Helena Seam. Overall employment has increased to about 700 men. Production figures at Acmar are 316,000 tons, working about 9 months, at Margaret 318,000 working about 10 months, and New Acton 60,000 for about 10 months.





No 8, aka Brookston was located about 1.4 miles beyond No 6, but was served by the Seaboard RR (SAL). Keep in mind that the mines are numbered in chronological order of development, and may not be located in order along the Margaret Branch line.

Also note that the Margaret Branch of the CoG passed under the SAL

mainline (above). Although the SAL line and the Margaret Branch were developed in the same time period, the SAL was in place first forcing the CoG branch to construct a short concrete tunnel which is still in place. This may have been the source of "Tunnel Coal Company" although this is by no means certain.

The Hoole Library at UA holds the AF&ICo corporate records which begin in **1916**. Overall production increased compared to 1915, and business conditions improved in the summer of 1916, although labor conditions were noted as "very unsatisfactory"; mines in Kentucky and West Virginia having pulled labor north when business in the south was slack. But even when business improved, there was a general shortage of railroad cars. Thus even though demand peaked, and prices increased AF&ICo found itself limited in its ability to ship more coal. In addition, labor costs increased in an effort to entice more labor.

Margaret mines produced 384,000 tons and No 3 slope was reopened, having been idled for 2 years due to low demand. During slack times the other two Margaret slopes had been extended, so that new workings could be started as needed. That is, the "narrow work" or entries were extended, although no headings were cut to the sides. This helped keep miners working and prepared for higher demand when business improved. Ventilation improvements were made with installation of a new Jeffrey fan at No 2, with the older fan moved to No 3.

Acmar produced 312,000 tons from Slopes 1 & 3 and New Acton produced 75,000 tons. It is noted that New Acton was named so that the market recognition of Acton coal would be maintained.

Colgate served as a central washer location for the overall operations in the Henry Ellen basin, as well as the location of a central power plant. This was a very important as all coal had to be washed before sale and the CoG RR depended on AF&ICo as its primary source of coal. Colgate was named for James Colby Colgate, of toothpaste fame. He and V. Everit Macy (distant cousin of the retail Macy) were key financiers in the 1908 reorganization of AF&ICo.

The corporate report for **1917** addresses issues related to US entry into WWI as well as labor and regulatory issues; these were covered in previous articles. Acmar and New Acton operated full time producing 378,000 tons and 63,000 tons respectively before washing. A new mine was developed at No 2 Acmar on the "Big Seam" [Mammoth]. In order to respond to this new housing had to be constructed for new workers.

A new lease was being negotiated with TCI for 1,000 acres adjacent to the Acmar property. It was stated that if successful, AF&ICo would control all the "workable coal lands adjacent to the CoG railway". It is noted that New Acton is lower production and actually less desirable since it is not in the [Mammoth] seam which Acmar mines. Generally



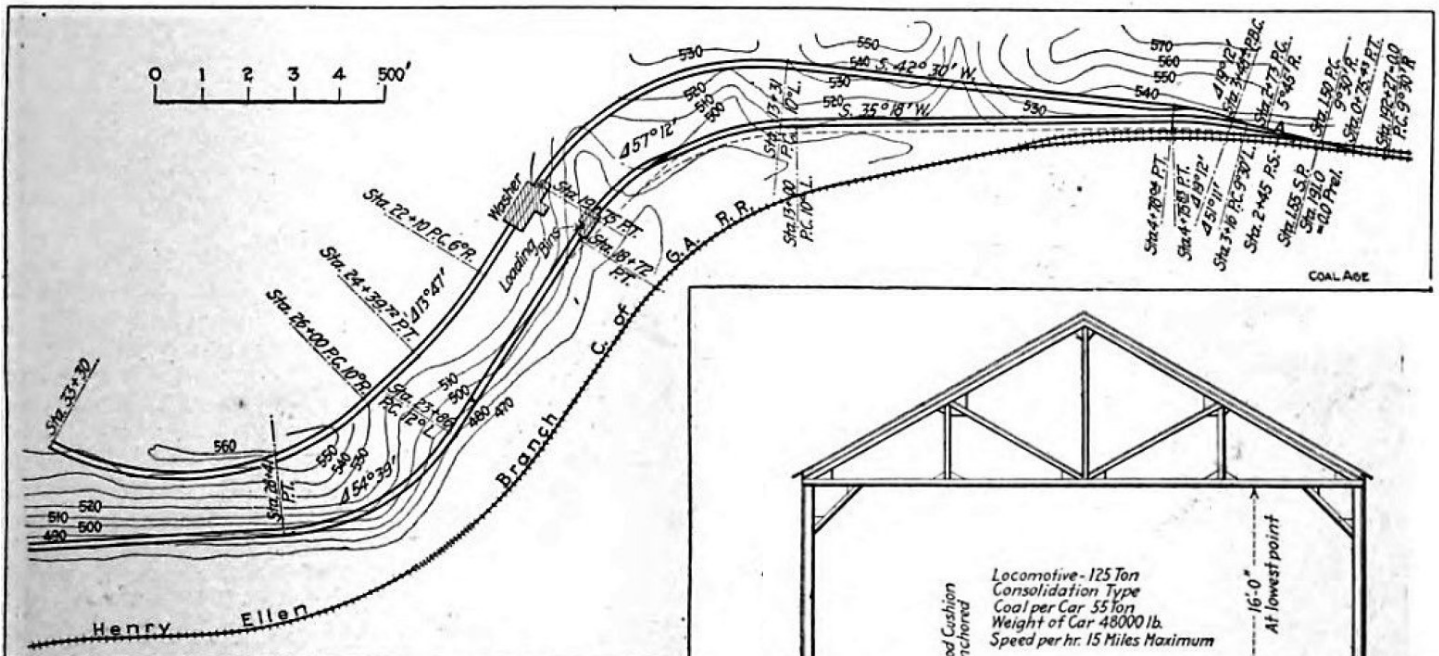
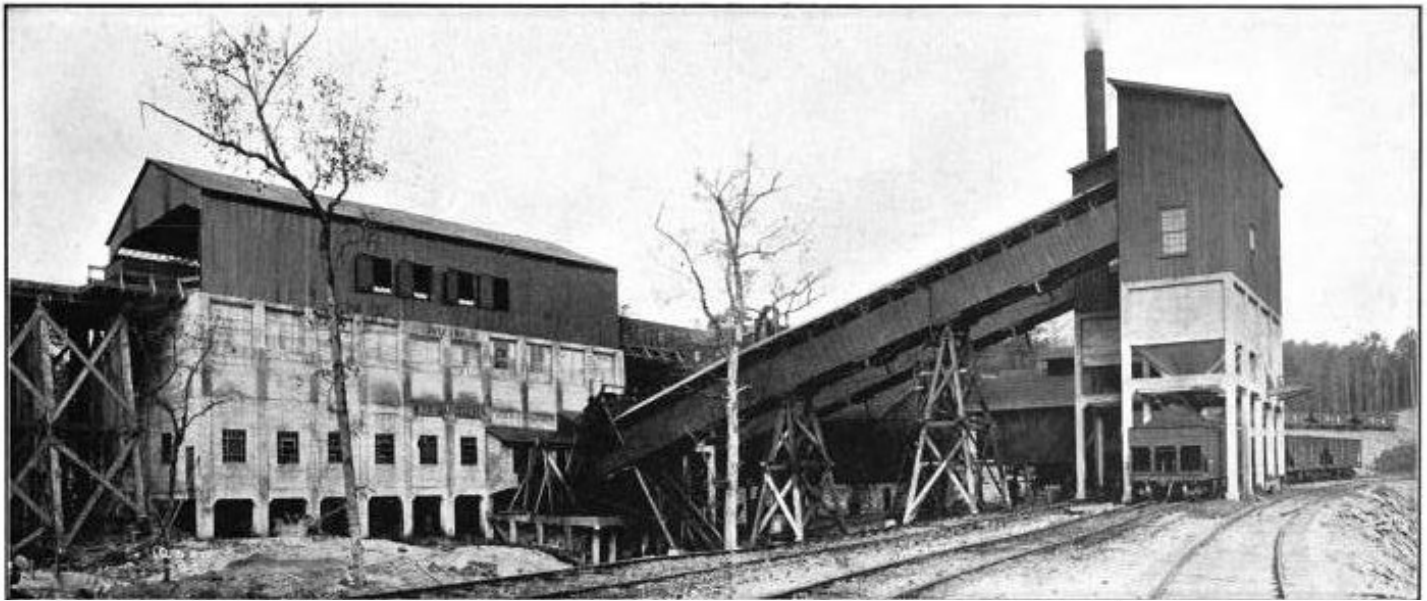
Margaret Branch tunnel under the SAL mainline (Clemons)

speaking New Acton would never produce at the same level as Acmar.

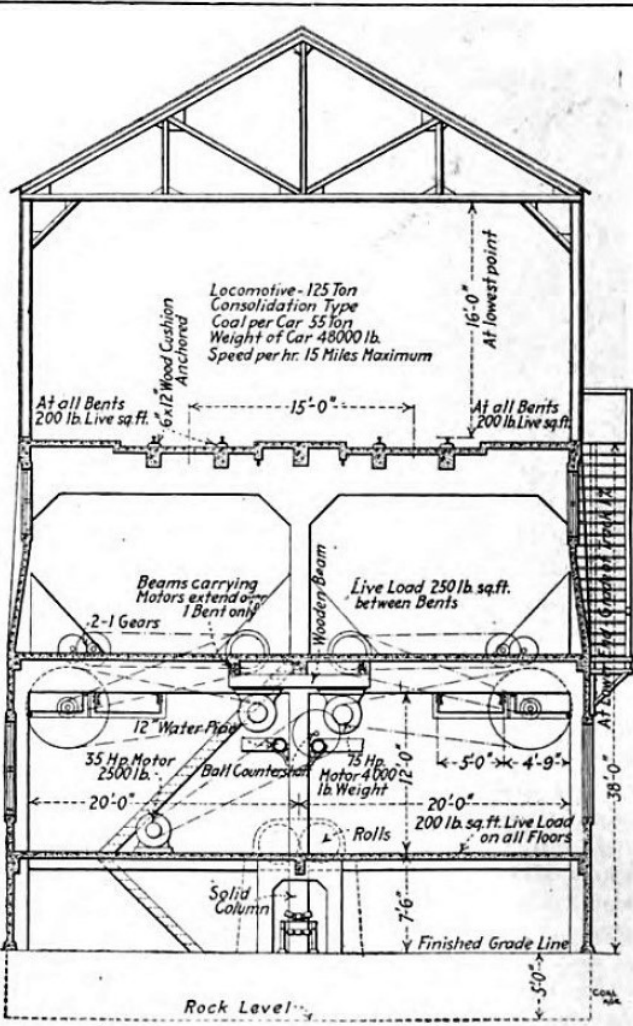
Margaret operated full time and produced 417,000 tons before washer loss, which was high at 12%, likely due to inexperienced labor. A new slope, Margaret No 4 was driven from the right hand headings of No 1, working up from the mine to the surface. This enabled better ventilation and also decreased the haul distance from the large mine. This was similar to the No 3 slope being driven from No 2 mine. Fifteen new 4-room houses were added as well as a new commissary building. The old commissary became an auditorium for movies and meetings.

The Power Plant at Colgate was improved due to increased demand; a new pump and water line were installed for steam generation. Old pumps were moved to mine use. The Washer plant is noted as being in first class condition.

The company reports for **1918** again report on regulatory and labor issues and this has been reported previously. Margaret operated mines 1, 2 & 3, and records at the washer aggregate the production. Mines worked full time and produced 288,000 tons; washer loss was considered high at 8%. All mines are worked with electricity except two steam hoisting engines. It is noted that all DC motors were replaced with AC units. The power plant produces AC and it had to be converted for the older units, and the transmission lines had to be larger for DC. Additional housing was added with 21 new 4-room houses. Labor is noted as being a problem at Margaret due to the higher amount of dirt in the



These images are from a 1913 article in Coal Age magazine and from the University of Montevallo, courtesy of Thomas Denney. They show the washer complex at Colgate as well as the track arrangement. The washer was arranged with two dump tracks on top, one for Margaret and one for Acmar. This was done to maintain separate records of coal tonnage for the purpose of paying royalties to CoG for Margaret and TCI for Acmar. Four cars could be unloaded on each side, each car having a separate bin depending on coal size. As the coal was dumped and processed it went down through the plant to the conveyor bins at the bottom. In the picture at the top, the washer is at the left, the conveyors in the middle and the loading bins are at right. The power plant is behind the loading bins. The repair and machine shop would be to the left out of the picture. Once cars were dumped, they rolled by gravity to the right of the track diagram, and then by gravity to the loading bin ready for market. The three story concrete base of the washer plant is still standing in the middle of a pond, visible on Google Earth. The side of the washer has the date "1911" and "H. F. De-Bardeleben" cast into the concrete. Colgate is named for toothpaste magnate Charles Colgate, who helped finance the 1908 reorganization.





View from the dump track at the Colgate Washer plant showing cars on the dump and cars waiting to roll into the dump. (Clemons, CoG photo)

coal [Harkness seam] and the longer distances to the work in the older mines. This would make the work harder and less efficient impacting the earnings of the miners at Margaret. Narrow work continued to be pushed ahead of production areas to be ready for future demand.

Acmar operated full time, producing 366,000 tons with washer loss at 3%, better than other areas. Hoisting machinery was moved from No 1 slope to the No 2 slope. A new slope was driven up from the workings to provide the equivalent of a new mine. Forty-two new 4-room houses were added. The movie house at Margaret caused "rivalry and jealousy" at Acmar, so the company had to build a new one -- considered "a good investment"... with a "good dividend" in satisfied labor.

The Washer plant was overhauled to upgrade the jigs and add concrete tanks for the larger jigs. Minor improvements were made at the Power plant in order to assure dependable power as the overall mine operation continued to grow and tax the plant.

As noted previously, 1919 brought many labor, regulatory and demand issues to the business community and these will not be addressed here. The issues of the November, 1919, miners strike have been addressed previously, and was settled in 1920 with impacts to wages.

Margaret mines operated full time although production was down to 253,000 tons and washer loss was up to 15%. It was noted that the haulage distance in these older mines drove lower efficiency as well as maintenance costs for the haulways.

Acmar and New Acton operated full time producing 354,000 tons with washer loss at 7%, and 44,000 tons with washer loss of 8% respectively.

The plant at Colgate, as expected, required expansion with 2 new boilers, which were ordered and would be installed in 1920.

In 1920, Margaret operated full time, producing 226,000 tons with washer loss of 18%. A new No 5 mine was developed, noted as "about a mile and a half from old No 1". This was found to have better coal and was closer to the washer plant at Colgate. The CoG would install the sidings to serve this mine. Equipment was transferred from other mine sites. An arrangement was to be developed with the railroad to transport miners from their houses to the new mine. Margaret No 4

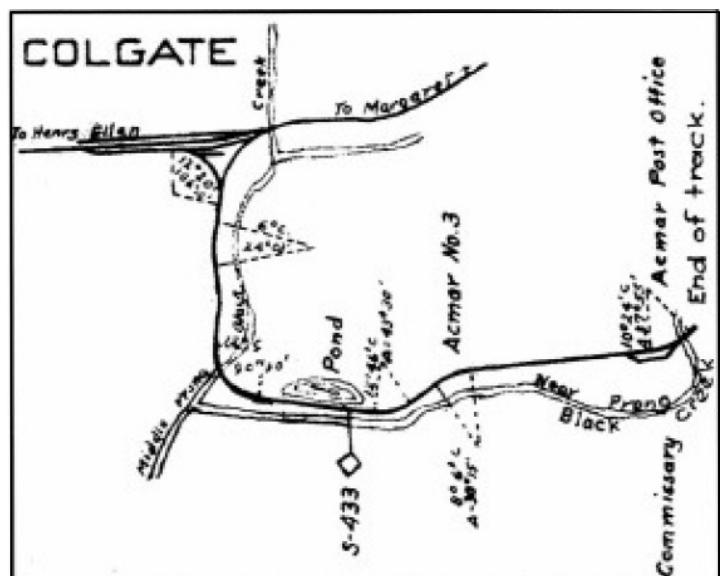
slope was noted as being put into operation, a part of old No 1, but not active due to labor shortage. The coal from No 4 was handled by a "dinkey" narrow gauge train to be dumped at the No 1 tippie.

Acmar operated full time and produced 377,000 tons with a washer loss of 8%. New Acton also was full time and produced 46,000 tons with a washer loss of 7%.

The installation of two new boilers at Colgate was completed, along with new equipment to haul ashes to rail cars. It was noted that electrical demand continue to increase and the plant had no redundancy remaining; a new generator was recommended for the next year.

The report for 1921 starts by noting that the year was bad for all businesses, and the very few coal operators would make any money; labor issues were discussed in previous articles.

The No 5 slope at Margaret was brought into production, noting that the mine was "well located... well equipped... with better coal than the other Margaret openings". AF&ICo purchased a standard gauge locomotive and 5 boxcars with seats which would be operated by the railroad in the morning and afternoon to bring miners from Margaret camp to the new No 5 slope, three miles away. Equipment for the No 5 mine was moved from the now abandoned No 1 mine. The No 1 mine tippie



The track arrangement serving Acmar No 3 by spur from Colgate to the Acmar community, post office and commissary. (Clemons, CoG Magazine)

is still used to dump coal from No 4, hauled by a narrow gauge dinkey moved from the company's brown ore operation at Russellville, AL.

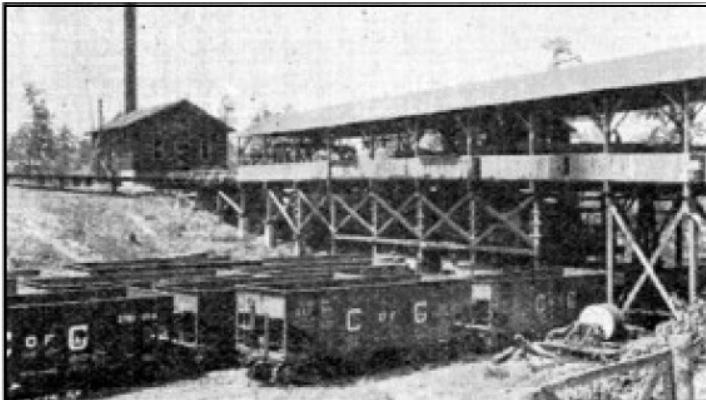
The only note for Acmar was that the No 2 workings encountered a fault which required expensive "driving through" to gain access to coal at a new lower level.

A new 1500 KW generator and related equipment was installed at the Colgate Power Plant. This expansion was used to provide power to the new mines at Overton, a transmission distance of about 14 miles.

Operations in 1922 were slow in the early months due to a limited market, but a strike in the "Central Competitive Field" improved demand for the rest of the year. An explosion at Acmar No 3 killed 11 miners

and was blamed on the superintendent and foreman not maintaining proper ventilation. The miners were using open lights, and after this event the company decided to switch to electric miner lamps, operated by a rechargeable battery. Miners were charged for the new lamps as they had been for the old open flame.

The No 2 slope at Margaret was abandoned in June, and equipment was moved to other mines. An 80 acre tract was purchased adjacent to

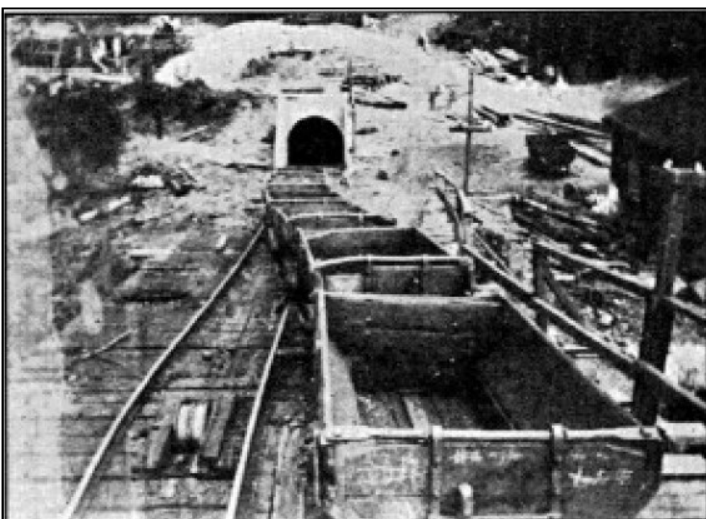


Acmar No 2 tipple about 1924 (Clemons, CoG Magazine)

the No 5 mine, and by owning the land, no royalty was due on coal mined; the cost of the land being weighed against the royalty, and profitability assured. The three operating mines were stated to be in excellent condition with a capacity of 2000 tons per day.

No new mine developments occurred at Acmar, but negotiations with TCI for additional land were underway to allow a new slope on the [Mammoth] seam as well as the New Acton seam. New Acton No 1 was noted as being about exhausted, as well as Acmar No 1. Time would be required to negotiate the lease as well as to develop the new mines.

Improvements at Colgate included installation of mechanical stokers and a steel feed bin. This would improve boiler capacity and reduce



Empty cars headed back into the mine to be loaded, at Margaret No 3 mine, c 1921. (Clemons, CoG Magazine)

labor costs, plus reducing fuel. The washer plant was noted being in excellent shape in spite of continuous operation since 1911.

Company reports for the years 1923 through 1927 seem to be some-

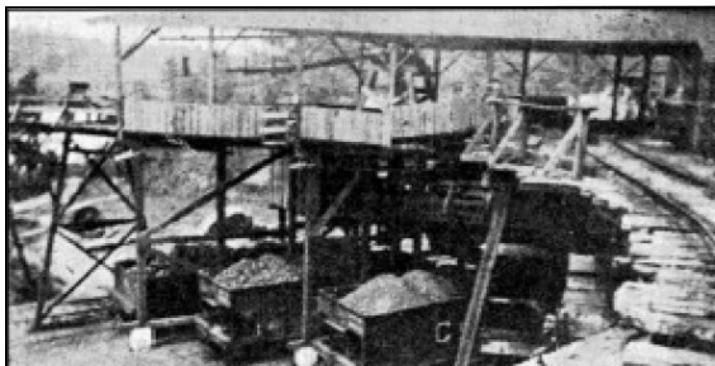
what abbreviated in that much of the operation information is consolidated. Additional research will be required to seek more detailed reports. Suffice to say that the company generally produced at or over 1,000,000 tons annually and had its best year in 1925 with 1,262,358 tons produced. The following year was close and was the best year for the state of Alabama as well prior to WWII. Production data was found in the State Mine Inspection reports online via Hathi Trust.

Market conditions were poor in 1924, having slumped in 1923. New Acton No 3 and Acmar No 5 [new] incurred capital costs for rail lines, spurs, and a small yard at Acmar the cost being shared with the CoG.

The 1925 report notes the best production ever, as well as the best sales ever, although at reduced prices. The Overton explosion, noted previously, caused the implementation of new safety procedures, such as rock dusting, which applied to the Henry Ellen operations as well. This required the purchase of new equipment for all the mines. Additional staff were employed as inspectors and shot firers, a new procedure to reduce the risk of explosions due to bad shots.

The 1926 report notes the abandonment of Acton and transferring equipment to other mines, as noted previously. Market conditions are noted as improved and the management is pleased with the in house sales efforts implemented, previously subcontracted.

1927 was a bad year for business in general and mining as well. Never-



Loaded cars at tipple, likely Margaret No 3 c 1921 (Clemons, CoG Magazine). Coal was sorted by size at the tipple with shaker screens, larger sizes being picked at the tipple, ready to ship, and smaller sizes sent to the washer.

theless, production was 1,144,722 tons. A new rail customer, Alabama Birmingham & Coast was added, which pretty well covered all the railroads east of Birmingham. It is noted that the New Acton coal is primarily a "domestic" coal, for home and business heating, and that it is doing well in the market.

The company felt the need to negotiate with Alabama Power to purchase peak load power when needed, having used up the redundancy gained as more electrical equipment was added. This required paying a minimum \$400 per month charge, based on regular rates.

The company purchased 720 acres of land west of Acmar which contains the Margaret, Acmar and New Acton seams. Other negotiations with TCI led to the leasing of all the other land adjacent to this purchase west to Henry Ellen. This completed the goal of controlling all the mining adjacent to the tracks of the CoG railroad. It was estimated that this



land held a potential of 33,000,000 tons of coal to be mined.

For the year **1928**, the records hold the more detailed reports from the General Manager, F. R. Bell. Acmar is noted as operating about 8 months, producing 356,000 tons. The No 2 mine was closed due to market conditions but pumping was maintained. No 1 and related No 4 Acmar slopes are noted as been nearly exhausted, although it is expected that other mines on the same seam will be developed. Likewise, No 3 mine is "being exhausted very rapidly", but is expected to last another 3 years. The No 5 mine encountered a fault but development is being extended. A No 6 mine opened at the former Mammoth Coal Company slope has been idled while rail spurs were extended. The company pays for grading and CoG the rest of the cost. Plans call for a temporary tippie to get up and running as soon as possible, the future depending on market conditions.

New Acton operated about 9 months, producing 94,000 tons. Due to poor coal encountered, No 2 and No 1 were closed at the end of August, until market conditions improve. No 3 slope is not satisfactory due to coal quality encountered, and a new slope is being sunk half a mile to the south, to be called New Acton No 4.

Margaret also operated at about 9 months producing 326,000 tons overall. No 3 mine production includes the No 6 mine, the total running at 700 tons per day [210,000 tons per year]. No 4 mine is noted as having a life of not more than 2 years, at a current rate of 200 tons per day. No 5 mine is producing at 500 tons per day based on pillar robbing. No 7 slope, adjacent to No 5 had been idled, but is being started again as No 5 winds down.

Both washer and power plants at Colgate are noted as being in excellent shape. Consideration is being given to recovering coal from the wash refuse with a possible "re-wash plant". If feasible this would be used as boiler fuel for cost savings. An electrical and machine shop is operated here to keep repairs timely and in house.

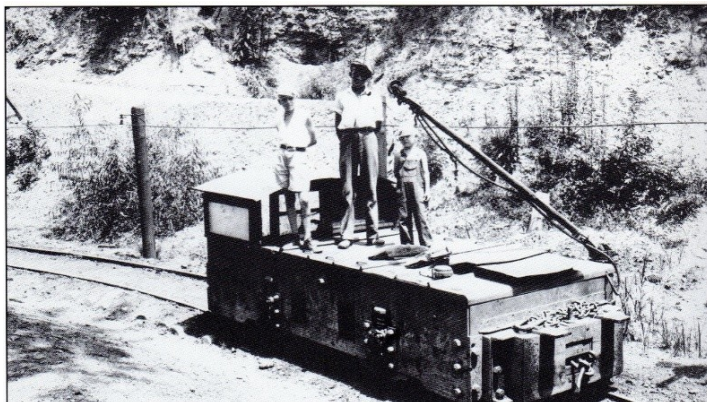
Total shipments for the year were down to 1,068,496 as prices fell and the company didn't reduce its contract sales price. Consequently two railroad's business was lost, the Seaboard and ACL. It is noted that a new VP for sales and traffic has been hired, H. M. Brooks.

**1929** was a bad year for the coal companies due to the overall reduction in business leading to the depression. This led to over production of coal and falling prices. Strong sales efforts, and focusing production on the most efficient mines helped maintain income as well as an increase in the domestic coal price based on quality. Total shipments were 991,000 tons for 1929, with Acmar at 368,000 tons and Margaret at 300,000 tons. No 6 Acmar and No 2 New Acton were idled. Ventilation and drainage were maintained till better business conditions.

At Acmar, No 1 and 4 mines were abandoned in May, with equipment moved to locations where needed. No 2 Acmar was restarted at this time, producing at 550 tons per day, and developing new territory for the future. No 3 Acmar is being exhausted, with a life expectancy of two years for robbing. No 5 Acmar is producing 700 tons per day and is being developed for future years with a life expectancy of 10 years. No 6 Acmar was idled as noted above, but rail spurs are in place and a new fan was moved into place for future use. Since the mine is new and relatively shallow it was allowed to fill with water.

At New Acton, the No 3 mine is producing 325 tons per day, although most of the coal is coming from the newer No 4 adjacent slope. This No 4 slope is being developed "on a system of semi-longwall work". The coal from No 4 is hauled to No 3 by an 8 ton GE motor moved from Margaret. The generator for this also came from Margaret and being repaired and rebuilt at the in house repair shop. At the end of the year New Acton No 2 and adjacent new No 1 slope were restarted, based on demand for this domestic coal, the mines having been maintained dry.

Margaret No 3 is producing about 700 tons per day including the coal



An electric locomotive ["motor"] used to haul coal from one slope to a tippie. (from Rails Remembered, by Louis Newton)

from No 6 slope, which is dumped over the No 3 tippie. No 4 mine is producing 250 tons per day, and is expected to be exhausted in a year. It is noted that a pump station will have to be maintained in No 4 since it receives drainage from No 3 mine. No 5 mine is producing 500 tons per day, including 350 tons from the new No 7 slope. Pillars are being robbed in retreating fashion in the No 5 mine. When No 5 is exhausted, the pumping equipment will be moved to No 7.

Colgate's plants are in good shape, and the investigation of recovering coal from washings indicates as much as 50 tons per day might be recovered. The arrangement for peak power use with APCo is being utilized when needed [heavy rains, for example] and is judged as being a good decision compared to delays in pumping. The machine and electrical shop continue to prove a good investment in timely and cost saving repairs. It is reported that the decision to provide electric lighting in homes and for the streets is being well received and is considered a good investment. A similar note about company installed landscaping.

The report for **1930** includes discussions of the overall impact of the Depression which were included in previous articles. Overall production decreased about 10% from 1929 to 900,000 tons. The company has arranged to market coal from Markeeta mine adjacent to the New Acton operations but owned by Charles DeBardeleben, Jr., the president's son who had left AF&ICo to seek his own fortune.

The company continued its policy of prudent capital investment when and where needed, spending \$210,000 in 1930 for a variety of items. The largest of these included new electrical plant related to Acmar, coal handling equipment at Acmar including a new tippie and revolving car dump, land acquisition of 920 acres of land from Alabama State Land Company, previously leased, including the Colgate plant site and other

coal acreage, and 40 acres of land adjacent to Margaret owned by the L&N RR. All of these items and others are carefully justified and show the careful long term management view of the company.

The mines operated this year are Margaret 3, 4 and 5, Acmar 2 and 5, and New Acton 2 and 3 (plus Overton 1). Acmar No 6 is idle. Long view exploration with diamond drilling identified two high quality seams of coal on the Acmar property leased from Brown-Fowlkes Coal Co and the DeBardeleben estate. These seams are 30 and 40 inches thick.

Acmar No 2 is producing 700 tons per day and is robbing on retreat but expected to go for three or four more years. Pit car loaders were purchased for this mine as well as a mining machine moved from Overton, for improved mining and loading of coal underground. No 3 Acmar is expected to be exhausted in March, 1931, currently mining the outcrop.

Acmar No 5 is producing 1200 tons per day, and is expected to have "a good many years" remaining, although currently a fault is being addressed. Eight pit car loaders and two Jeffrey coal cutting machines have been purchased, and are proving justified in cost. Also added were new pumps and 140 new 2.5 ton mine cars, equipped with Timken roller bearings. This expense enabled the reduction in labor of 5 men on the tippie, and improved production from 800 to 1200 tons per day.

New Acton No 2 is noted as producing about 150 tons per day, from the new slope at the No 1 mine. The No 2 slope has been closed, so that shorter haulage and cheaper mining could be used via the new No 1 slope. No 3 slope is producing about 275 tons per day, and is experiencing a series of faults lowering production in the newer No 4 slope. This mine has been equipped with electric lamps due to gas coming down through cracks in the roof.

Margaret No 3 mine is producing about 750 tons per day, mostly from the No 6 slope where good new territory is being developed. Two Jeffrey coal cutting machines have been installed reducing cost and improving quality. No 3 is robbing on retreat, but is expected to continue for some time. No 4 mine is producing 250 tons per day and is expected to be exhausted in the coming year. No 5 is producing 500 tons per day with the coal actually coming from the No 7 slope; No 5 is all robbing work. There are some problems being encountered with coal quality in lower No 7 but focus is on extending the upper workings.

The plants at Colgate continue to operate in excellent condition for washing and power generation. The CoG RR inspects the washer regularly and finds it to be excellent. The power plant has a new 3500 KW generator replacing two 500 KW units. This is expected to preclude buying peak power from APCo and the new unit is saving fuel costs.

The report for **1931** includes impacts of the Depression as reported previously. This year showed a decrease in tonnage from 901,000 to 853,000 tons. On a unit ton basis, Acmar was far less profitable than New Acton and Margaret, yet Acmar produced more tonnage than the other two combined. But the overall operation was profitable.

At Acmar, the No 2 mine is very deep and is experiencing a "squeeze" due to the weight of the overburden. This causes roof falls and crushes pillars, causing operation to be "problematical"; remaining life is estimated to be two more years. No 3 mine was abandoned in March, 1931, and all equipment is being relocated. No 5 mine is producing

1400 tons per day, after much of the year being in faulty conditions raising the cost and lowering the production, a problem which it is believed is over. These conditions precluded the use of the more efficient coal cutting machines put in place, and it was only in the last part of the year that these machines could be used again. This mine still used steam hoists which required expensive repairs during the year. No 6 mine is only producing 200 tons per day, but is not being developed aggressively for output, rather development is being extended for future mining while labor is cheap and readily available. A new steel tippie and rotary dump with concrete bin have been installed for the future reducing labor costs at the tippie.

New Acton No 2 is only producing 150 tons per day, and is expected to last only two more years. No 3 is up to 350 tons per day, due to new territory with good coal being developed beyond faulty territory.

At Margaret, No 3 mine is producing 200 tons per day and handling 900 tons per day from No 6 slope. 40 pit car loaders were purchased for this mine in conjunction with coal cutting machines reducing cost and improving production. The electric haulage from No 6 slope to No 3 tippie was rebuilt upgrading the rail to 60# [from Russellville brown ore mine], and adding a used 10 ton GE motor refurbished by the company's shop. No 6 workings are encountering good coal with a 7-8 year life expectancy, while No 3 is expected to last only a couple of years. No 4 mine was abandoned in April 1931, only maintaining pumping from No 3 drainage as planned. No 5 is producing 100 tons per day with an additional 300 tons coming from No 7 slope which is part of the same mine, and using the No 5 tippie. The overall operation at No 5 is expected to last two more years. The steam hoist at this location was replaced with an existing 75 HP electric hoist improving cost and labor.

The Colgate plants continue in excellent condition and operations as well as the machine and electrical repair shops equipped to do acetylene and electrical welding.

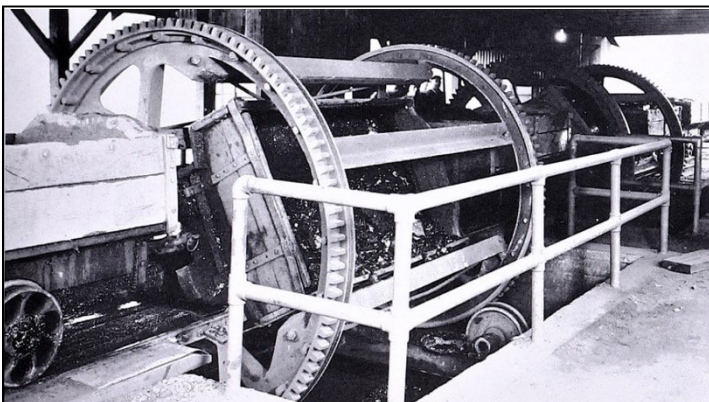
Production for **1932** was 632,000 tons, the lowest since 1910. But AF&ICo was actually producing a larger percentage of the state's output at 8%, than in 1929 at 5%. Business conditions have been discussed previously. Since average working time was about one third normal, the company required ["forced"] the employees to engage in farming with support from the company using company land. The company continued to make capital improvements and selected landscaping.

No 2 Acmar was producing 400 tons per day based entirely on robbing pillars on retreat. As noted the depth of the mine was causing overburden to "squeeze" pillars -- life expectancy of No 2 was about 2 years. No 5 Acmar produced 1400 tons per day, with some faulty territory, which was expected to require a new slope to develop the left headings of this mine. Coal cutting machines and mechanical loaders are being used routinely by this time, which is stated to save cost. No 6 Acmar produced 250 tons per day from extending slope, headings and airways, anticipating future production for this "very modern mine".

The New Acton No 3 and then No 2 were closed due to market conditions. The decision was made to withdraw from the market for domestic coal and to let the Markeeta Coal Co handle that market; AF&ICo had been selling Markeeta coal on a commission basis.

Margaret No 3 tippie handles 1300 tons per day, with 200 tons from No





Rotary mine car dump at the Acmar No 6 tippie. One dump is for coal and the other for rock from the mine. Cars were spotted by the hoist operator and did not have to be uncoupled to dump. (Denney, Explosives Engineer Magazine, 1944)

3 proper based on robbing and 1100 tons from the No 6 slope. Ten additional pit car loaders were added during the year so that the No 6 mine is almost 100% mechanically cutting and loading coal. Due to the length of the No 6 workings a new 60,000 cu ft capacity fan was added for ventilation. The slope of No 6 is being turned at an angle judged to better follow the "trough" of the seam. No 5 mine is handling 350 tons per day with most of this coming from the No 7 slope; coal from No 5 is mostly robbing of pillars. It is noted that No 7 has encountered faulty territory and life of this operation is shorter than previously predicted.

In **1933** the company did not pay a dividend. Business conditions and worker issues have been discussed in previous articles. Efforts by workers with the mandatory farming and canning program continued with a great deal of food produced.

The sales department "was able, after long effort to convince SAL RR to support development of a coal mine on their line". SAL passed on the south side of the NE extent of the basin after passing through the basin. Thus this new mine would have to be at the far eastern end of the Margaret group. As the land was owned by the CoG RR, their approval was required, and an additional royalty of 2 cents per ton was negotiated above that already paid for CoG Margaret coal. Development of this mine began in 1933, on a one mile SAL spur and the mine would be named Brookston for H. M. Brooks, VP of Sales and Traffic; it would also be called Margaret No 8. Development utilized much existing equipment moved to the new site, and spur costs were shared with SAL RR paying about one third. This mine would be connected underground to the Margaret No 6 mine. It would have a new wooden tippie as well as it's own washer prior to loading on SAL cars.

In April 1933, AF&ICo purchased the Markeeta Coal Co located in the New Acton area from Charles DeBardleben, Jr for \$35,000. Although the mine was idle the acreage was valuable and it was expected the mine would be productive in future years becoming New Acton No 5. Also, the company purchased 75 acres of land where the No 6 Acmar mine was developed, also a way to remove an annoying neighbor.

Production for 1933 was 621,222 tons, slightly less than in 1932. Acmar No 2 was robbing pillars and expected to be worked out during the coming year. No 5 is producing 1400 tons per day, and the problems

with the faulty area are past. Mechanical cutters and pit car loaders continue in use, and more cutting machines were put to use in older areas of the mine that hadn't been practical with hand methods. Four drag conveyors were purchased, each one moving 100 tons per day.

New Acton No 2 is producing 175 tons per day, and is expected to last another year. No 3 is producing at 300 tons per day of domestic coal.

Margaret No 3 tippie is handling 1200 tons per day, with over 1100 tons of that coming from No 6 slope. Coal cutting machines continue in use here with pit car loaders. An 8 ton electric locomotive has been installed for haulage in the 6th North heading in order to enable new development and reduce haulage costs. Mule haulage was limited in distance. No 3 is robbing pillars and expected to last two more years.

It is noted that there are plans to connect Margaret No 6 underground to the new Brookston slope [aka Margaret No 8]. A new 1,000' slope has been driven to make this connection. This will avoid a surface haulage and enable coal from No 8 to go to SAL at No 8 tippie or to CoG at No 3 tippie. It is noted that this survey for 1,000 feet underground required 3 miles of surface survey, yet connected within 6 inches.

The general issues of 1934 relating to labor and regulation have been reported previously. AF&ICo was able to continue operations when most major operators were under strike shutdowns. The Overton mines were closed August 11, 1934 when the miners there joined the union. Production for the year ended up at 688,000 tons overall. It is noted that AF&ICo and nearby Red Diamond Coal Co are the only commercial coal companies in the state that are not union.

At Acmar, the No 2 mine was closed and equipment moved to other locations. No 5 Acmar is producing 1300 tons per day and is expected to continue at this rate. The issues with overburden "squeeze" continue, and has caused the return to pick and shovel mining rather than machine cutters. A new bathhouse was built for 350 men, per employee request, requiring a charge of 75 cents per month. A new ventilation fan was installed at No 5, to double the capacity, the fan having been at Overton previously. It is noted some white employees have been agitating for the union and have been replaced with "negro" employees.

The New Acton No 2 slope is down to 170 tons per day and is expected to close within months. No 3 mine is producing 450 tons per day, with attention to producing domestic sizes which "bring fancy prices". The No 4 slope, which is an extension of No 3 had a new steel hoist house added with a 150 HP Ottumwa hoisting engine, from Margaret No 5.

Margaret No 3 is handling 1200 tons per day, with 1100 of that coming from No 6 slope. No 3 production is from robbing. Mechanical mining continues at No 6, producing a high grade steam as well as domestic coal. A new 75 HP auxiliary hoist is being used to transfer coal from No 8 to No 6 slope, or reverse, as needed. There is reference to No 8 being referred to as New No 6 slope. It is stated that this slope has been driven 1,000 feet in 1934 with four entries turned from the slope, and good coal found. The No 3 slope is expected to be exhausted in the coming year, but this tippie serves No 6 and No 8 and needs to be rebuilt.

The No 8 Slope (Brookston) is up to 450 tons per day, with only the SAL contract amounts being brought to that tippie and the rest going to No 3 tippie on CoG rails via No 6 slope. The washer at No 8 is producing

Margaret Mine Run, from Rails Remembered V. 1, Lewis Newton

"Five or six mornings a week, the shrill sound of a backup whistle on the rear of a caboose announced the arrival of the Central's mine switcher as it backed its train up the branch into Margaret, powered by a 600-series Class MK Mikado. Usually its first stop was at the commissary siding where it would set off a load of groceries or, especially in the summertime, an insulated car loaded with block ice, which was the split up and old to the local residents. From there it continued its trip a mile or so up the branch to the tipple of No 6 mine, where it delivered its empty hopper cars. It then gathered up the loads of coal, about 25 or 4=30 a day as I recall, and headed down the branch toward Acmar and Henry Ellen. Most of the hoppers in the trains were stenciled "WASHER & COLGATE ONLY." Dad pointed out to me that they were equipped antiquated archbar trucks, but the cars were still sufficiently serviceable to handle raw coal from Margaret to AF&ICo's preparation plant, or washer, at Colgate, near Acmar. While seemingly rather routine the operation was vitally important to the economy of Margaret." (Images below from book)



CoG RR Margaret Mine Run (Clemons, CoG photo)



Cars waiting to be loaded at Margaret in the late 1930's. CoG #605 Mikado in June, 1940, handling the Margaret mine run, at the Commissary.

excellent steam coal as well as nut, stoker, egg and lump sizes.

Colgate plants and shops continue to perform well with the only major maintenance being rebuilding the washer jigs to maintain quality .

In **1935** state coal production continued in decline, although AF&ICo increased production to 840,000 tons, increasing its share of state commercial production to 16% -- the largest non-captive producer and the only large non-union coal company. Part of this was due to a coal miners strike. Overall New Acton was most profitable and Acmar the least. Rail business generally increased. When the Governor settled the strike, AF&ICo was compelled to grant increases in wages, including salaried employees. Housing at Overton was being used for Henry Ellen workers, with the company providing transportation by truck. In addition, the company provided transportation by rail for some Margaret miners. All mines and downtown office were connected by telephone.

The company's schools, welfare, safety, and farming programs continued. A Quarter Century Club was started for employees of 20 (sic) years or more, getting a \$5 monthly "gift" and a gold badge. [Rent was about \$6 per month.] Christmas gifts were given to all employee's children.

Acmar No 5 is producing 900 tons per day. A fire of "incendiary origin" [arson] burned the tipple, which was rebuilt over a month's time. This shutdown required the restart of No 6 Acmar which had been idle for 2 years. No 6 required rebuilding of mine tracks and mine

cars but was brought up to 100 tons per day production. The hoist motor was replaced with a larger motor from Overton which enabled an increase in haulage and production.

New Acton No 2 was abandoned in May, having been worked out. No 3 is producing 375 tons per day, with half of the coal sold for domestic market. No 5 mine produced 350 tons per day, being reopened after 2 years to replace No 2 mine. A 25 foot loading boom was installed at these two tipples to enable lump coal to be loaded with less breakage.

Margaret No 3 mine is being robbed, producing 50 tons per day, and handling 1100 tons from No 6 and No 8 mines through interconnection. No 6 slope installed a 300 HP hoist from Overton which enabled increased haulage "in spite of the increase in distance to haul the coal". No 6 continues underground development with good results. A new steel tipple is being built with a rotary dump and 150 foot conveyor. No 8 (Brookston) is producing 350 to 700 tons per day as needed, with excess coal continuing to be dumped over No 3 tipple.

At Colgate, the wooden washer jigs were rebuilt and improved. The power plant had a new water supply line rebuilt from wooden pipe to cast iron, the pipe coming from Russellville brown ore mine. The old wooden machine shop burned, and was rebuilt with steel construction, being dedicated to J. M. Overton, former President of the company.

This ends part 4 on AF&ICo. Part 5 will cover 1936 to 1953.