THE ROCKING VALLEY COAL MINERS' STRIKE, 1884-1885

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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PREFACE

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the origins, events, and effects of the 1884-1885 strike of the Hocking Valley coal miners. To accomplish this aim, the publications of the contemporary period, mainly newspapers and government reports, have formed the heart of the bibliography.
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CHAPTER I

THE HOCKING VALLEY COAL FIELD

Geography

The Hocking Valley coal field of Ohio lies about sixty miles southeast of Columbus in Hocking, Athens, and Perry counties in an area east of Logan and north of Athens. Frequently included in the Hocking coal field are the Sunday Creek Valley mines immediately east of the Hocking Valley along the Ohio Central Railway (now the New York Central).

The commercially developed section of the field stretches about twenty miles from north to south and is only twelve to fifteen miles wide. A few mines lie along the Hocking River near Nelsonville; however, most are found along Monday Creek and its tributary, Snow Fork, or in the Sunday Creek Valley on the eastern border of the district.

Geology

There are no fewer than six distinct veins of coal in the Hocking district in 300 feet of strata, but the only two which have been worked to any extent commercially are the Nelsonville or "Great" vein which is second from the bottom and the Sunday Creek vein seventy-five feet above the Great vein.¹ The extreme thickness of the Great vein provides much of the unique character of the Hocking field.

MAP OF THE HOCKING COAL MINING DISTRICT
At New Straitsville and Shawnee this vein is normally six to ten feet thick, but widens to thirteen feet in places. In the valleys of the Hocking River and Monday Creek the vein is five to ten feet thick.

Four slate seams aggregating about two feet of thickness run through the vein and have to be separated from the coal when it is mined. Where the vein is thicker than six feet, part of the upper bench becomes too impure for commercial development and is unaired or discarded.

The great vein is tilted upwards towards the north, emerging from below the river bed five miles below Nelsonville, and is eroded away starting a few miles north of Nelsonville. Thus, the Hocking field has an advantage over its competitors since its coal can be reached by driving nearly horizontal drifts into the vein, thus eliminating the expense of sinking shafts and operating hoists which beset other fields.

Coal mines in the lower Sunday Creek Valley have to dig shafts eighty feet deep, while at Rondonia and Corning the coal lies a few feet below the surface.

The ceilings of the Hocking mines are generally hard shale and present few drainage problems, although occasional slate falls (really shale cave-ins) have resulted in the death of many miners.

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3 Andrew Roy, A History of the Coal Miners of the United States, p. 239.

The field was popular with the miners who flocked to the Hocking Valley where they could enjoy the luxury of easily mined coal in a high ceilings room. Operators appreciated its quality, thickness, and easy, drift entry.

Iron ore of thirty percent iron content lay a few feet below the Great seam; however, the ore was a poor substitute for Lake Superior ore.\(^5\)

**History**

Coal was reported to exist in the Hocking Valley as early as the late Eighteenth Century and was dug out of the outcrops on the sides of the hills by the pioneer settlers for home use. The first commercial shaft was reported sunk in 1833 in Athens County north of Athens.\(^6\) Most coal mined in the Hocking district at this time was used locally for domestic consumption, but the mines in the northern part of the district shipped some coal out in wagons long before the Civil War. Some coal was sent to Newark and Columbus from Nelsonville and Haydenville as early as September, 1840.\(^7\)

After 1856 a small amount of coal was hauled to the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad (now the B&O) at Athens, a few miles south of the coal mining district. But, it was the construction of the Columbus and

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Hocking Valley Railroad (now part of the Chesapeake and Ohio) southeast into the Hocking district in 1869 that really opened the coal trade of the district. In 1871 the CAHV reached New Straitsville and a Baltimore and Ohio subsidiary opened from Newark to Shawnee. These two lines were followed by a rush of promoters who opened mines in the Great vein to supply the new and rapidly expanding national market for coal.

The iron industry entered the Hocking Valley when the Hocking Furnace was opened in 1851. By 1855 there were three furnaces in the valley, but the Civil War and the Panic of 1873 delayed the further development of the local iron industry. The combination of cheap coal, convenient limestone supplies, and a low grade iron ore sparked a construction boom of iron furnaces in 1877 along the CAHV at no fewer than six points. In 1882 Fleetwood Furnace—considered the largest in the country at that time—was opened, ending the furnace construction era.

The iron men soon found they obtained better results by substituting Pennsylvania coke and iron ore from the upper peninsula of Michigan for the local product. Local coal was still used to calcine the small amounts of Hocking ore mixed in the charges. The long freight haul of raw materials which resulted made the Hocking furnaces marginal.

11 Peters, Athens County, p. 211.
producers able to sell their iron profitably only in periods of peak prosperity. By 1890 only four furnaces were left in operation, and the last was junked about 1899 after lying idle for several years.\textsuperscript{12}

The Sunday Creek Valley was tapped by the Ohio Central Railway which was opened from Toledo to Athens in 1882.\textsuperscript{13} Unlike the Hocking Valley Road (CVH) which owned, but did not develop coal lands, the Ohio Central Railway mined some of the coal under its own lands. The CVH had already tapped the best coal mining area, and this, coupled with the high debt from construction, soon forced the Ohio Central into a receivership which lasted until the Hocking Valley Road bought it in 1885.

Meanwhile the Hocking Valley Line earned large profits and backed two other railroads which extended the system to the Ohio River at Point Pleasant and to the Great Lakes at Toledo. The two subsidiaries were merged with the CVH in 1881 forming the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad. The new company had a monopoly of the coal and iron trade of the western half of the Hocking district.\textsuperscript{14}

The coal trade

In 1883, fifty-seven percent of the Hocking district coal was shipped north on the Hocking Valley Road. A third of the coal shipped


\textsuperscript{13} History of the Hocking Valley, p. 141. The road reached the Sunday Creek coal fields in 1881.

\textsuperscript{14} Annual Report of the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad, 1881, n.p. The canal carried little coal, being frozen half the year and frequently flooded.
LEGEND

佻 COAL FIELDS
□ MARKETS
railroads carrying hocking coal
olid competitive transportation routes

CLEV - CLEVELAND, LORAIN, WHEELING
CT & V - CLEVELAND TERMINAL VALLEY
C&P - CLEVELAND PITTSBURGH
W&LE - WHEELING LAKE ERIE

· FIGURE 2: MARKETS AND TRADE ROUTES FOR HOCKING COAL AND ITS COMPETITORS
by this route was interchanged at Columbus to other railroads, or sold for local consumption in Columbus homes, public buildings, and factories. Another third was turned over to the Baltimore and Ohio or the Nickel Plate Road at Postoria where it was shipped west, generally to Chicago. This was a much longer route to Chicago than the routes of connecting railroads at Columbus, but the Hocking Valley Road got a larger share of the freight bill by taking the coal to Postoria. Most of the remaining coal shipped on the Hocking Valley went to Toledo where it was then trans-shipped on lake freighters to Chicago or Canada.

A similar pattern was followed by the Ohio Central which took about a quarter of the Hocking field's output—all from the eastern side of the district. The Ohio Central also served Columbus, Postoria, and Toledo. A smaller share of the district's coal, about thirteen percent in 1883, was taken north from Shawnee to Lake Erie at Sandusky by the Baltimore and Ohio. Some coal was burned in the valley domestically or in the iron furnaces.15

The coal trade at best was unstable. There was a seasonal variation which sometimes resulted in twice as much coal being sold in the winter as in the spring and summer. In common with other primary industries, the demand for coal varied sharply in business cycles as the demand for manufactures, iron, and railroad transportation boomed and withered.

15 The Athens Messenger, a running account, January to May, 1884. The data on the relative importance of the carriers is from the Ninth Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines, 1883, p. 120.
With the low fixed costs of the Hocking mines, Hocking operators were in a better position to withstand periods of depression than competing fields (at least when they did not have to pay considerably higher freight rates). To protect themselves from irregular trade, the coal producers eagerly sought the large contracts with lake steamship companies and railroads for engine coal. It was usually a Hocking producer which got the prized contract for the various state buildings.\textsuperscript{16}

As it will be seen, the Hocking Valley coal and iron industry in 1884 was a sick industry with over-capitalization and surplus capacity and labor, an industry subject to highly accelerated cyclical pressures and strong competition.

CHAPTER II

MINER AND OPERATOR

The miner

The first miners in the Hocking district were commonly descendants of the early settlers from Ireland and the German section of Pennsylvania. With the boom caused in the field by the coming of the railroad in 1869-1871, many new miners were needed. Most came from abroad; many were Welsh, some English, and some Norwegian. Negroes were imported by operators as strikebreakers during the 1874 strike, and almost a thousand more came when the Randville and Corning Mines opened in 1882. Most had had previous experience mining in the border states, especially in the West Virginia and Virginia fields. Almost 700 experienced German miners were used to open the mines of the Ohio Central.¹

There appears to have been friction between the older miners and each wave of new miners, but soon the distinction between old and new disappeared making the mines of the district a huge melting pot of white and black, native and immigrant individuals.

Because of persistent unemployment, it was impossible to say how many miners lived in the Hocking district immediately preceding the 1884-1885 strike. The figure was probably between 6,000 and 7,000

(including several hundred mine laborers), a thousand or more being unemployed and the rest working only part time.\(^2\)

R. H. Miller, a miner himself, described the typical miner as "hump backed, undersized and bowlegged."\(^3\)

A miner's day began at seven in the morning when he and his partner entered the mine. His job was to undercut the seam of coal so that when he set off a charge of blasting powder the coal would fall and break. To undercut the coal the miner sat on the floor swinging a three pound pick over his leg until he had a groove several feet broad, eighteen inches high, and extended a foot under the coal. To dig the groove the final three or four feet back under the coal, the miner lay on the floor with his shoulder on his thigh. Then the miner used a drill, scraper, and needle to cut a hole which was packed with blasting powder. All firing of the charges took place just before the 5:00 P.M. quitting time so that the air would be cleared.

The second day was spent breaking and loading the coal cut of the previous day. Part of this task was to load the coal into a mine car, being careful to separate the good coal from the slate and other impurities—a job made difficult in the dim oil light of the miner's lamp. After the coal was mined, a hauler took it to the screen where the small pieces of coal, "nut and pea," were separated from the lump coal for which the miner was paid. The nut and pea went to the company free, as it commanded a lower price on the market.\(^4\)

\(^2\)Proceedings: Hooking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 142.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 118.

A miner's work at the time of the 1884-1885 strike was still dangerous with constant threats of slate falls, cave-ins, premature explosions, rolling mine cars, and the common mine kicks. But the legislation of 1873 had eliminated much of the chance of death from cave-ins, gas and coal dust explosions, or gases that suffocated. Regular state inspection, two entries, sufficient ventilation, and other safety measures were required by these laws.\(^5\) Despite the laws, coal mining was heavy, dirty, dangerous labor. Yet, once a man became a miner, it was in his blood as the sea is in that of a sailor. During the 1884-1885 strike there were many reports in the local newspapers of individual miners leaving the valley, but the men were always headed for another mining field. Boys frequently helped their fathers in the mine, tending to make the occupation hereditary.

The foreign miners who came to the valley—especially the English and Welsh—preferred their new conditions to those of the Old Country because of the increased freedom, cheap and plentiful land, and the opportunity to leave the mines for another occupation, generally in the business world. But they seldom left mining; it was the mere presence of an alternative that satisfied most of them, since it made the choice of occupation their own, not one of force.

Compared to the English miner, the American had a poorer home, but a greater quantity and variety of food. Unlike his English

\(^5\) See Chapter II of Andrew Roy, *A History of the Coal Miners of the United States*, pp. 127-140, for a history of early mining legislation in Ohio, much of which was obtained by Roy who became the first Ohio State Inspector of Mines.
counterpart who had libraries, adult education programs, and mechanical training institutes provided for him, the Hocking miner had only his family or the local saloon to go to when he was not working. And the saloons did a booming business! Few got drunk, but they spent much money on liquor and the inactivity and commiserating around the cup no doubt fathered many of the grievances against the operators which even the miners themselves admitted reached absurd proportions, 5

Surplus labor

It was general knowledge by the early 1880's that there were far too many miners for the limited work available, even in periods of peak activity. 7 Christopher Evans, President of District One (the Hocking District) of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association, could never remember a time when all the miners in the district could obtain work. 8 Indeed, as was pointed out by Evans and others, the problem of a labor surplus was not peculiar to the Hocking district, but was a general

6 Much of the preceding account of the lives and conditions of the Hocking miners is based on a detailed and disconcerting report by a British visitor, Mr. Thomas Bart, an M. P., in Commons from New Castle on Tyne and secretary of an English miners' union, printed in John Swinton's Paper, October 28, 1885, p. 3. See also: Roy, History of the Coal Miners, pp. 330-332.

7 There is complete agreement on this point in the testimony before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee of W. F. Rend, pro-union operator (see Proceedings, p. 28); Chris Evans, district union president (pp. 43, 50); R. H. Miller, striker (p. 115); John Brashers, member, Ohio Coal Exchange (p. 185); John L. Rechtel, vice-president Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Co. (p. 197).

8 Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 43.
problem of the coal mining industry in Ohio and the rest of the nation. Estimates of the extent of the surplus in times of peak employment ranged from 20% to 35%, appearing to be about double the rate of unemployment in other Ohio districts.

The manpower excess was also manifested in underemployment of those that did work. As hard times set in, more and more days were subtracted from the working week—nearly six ten-hour days—until the spring of 1884 when most of the major mines were giving their men only three days of work a week. More unfortunately, the assignment of work was highly irregular, and the miners had to sit at mine hoppers all day to see if there would be work available the next day while they might have been out working on a part-time job. By the winter of 1883-1884 the union was lodging complaints with operators over the situation.

Historically there were several origins of the surplus. The thick Great vein was popular with the miners who could mine more coal per day here than in thin-veined mines and, thus, earn more. Just as important, the Hocking mines provided much better conditions with good drainage and high calling permitting a man to stand. In 1878 a sharp

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9 Ibid., p. 50. See also: R. H. Miller testimony, p. 115.


11 Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee; R. H. Biley testimony, p. 67, also testimony of J. A. Donly, p. 61.

12 Ibid. Again this appears to be a case where most of the men would not have taken part-time work if they had been free to do so. There was little evidence that men laid-off or on strike took outside jobs. It seems to be that it was the mere denial of the opportunity that annoyed the miners.
increase in demand for Hocking coal allowed the miners to force temporarily the wage rate up to $1.00 per ton, attracting a flood of miners from other fields who remained even when the wage fell.\textsuperscript{13}

It also appears that in several of the multitude of strikes that beset the field the operators imported strikebreakers, some of whom remained after the strikes adding to the surplus of labor. Mining machines—only emerging from the experimental stage—were beginning to replace men on a small scale, with ominous import to the miner for the future. More important, at this time coal was suffering stiff competition from the newly applied fuels of electricity and natural gas.\textsuperscript{14}

The union contained considerable sentiment that the operators employed too many miners so that these men would spend all the wage money at the store which sometimes earned more profit than the mines.\textsuperscript{15}

The operators retorted that the miners forced them to employ more men.


\textsuperscript{15} See testimony in Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committees by R. H. Miller, miner, p. 113, and John McBride, president of the Ohio Miners'\textsuperscript{4} Amalgamated Association, p. 165. Andrew Roy, a leading mining engineer and former state inspector of mines who was a discerning and seldom biased observer of labor relations of that period, held the same opinion (\textit{History of the Coal Miners}, p. 231). The logic behind this viewpoint was that miners generally spent about $30 per month at the company store and the rest of the month's wages in town or at the saloons. If enough miners were employed that they could earn only about $30 per month—what an average miner would earn working three days per week—then they would have to spend all their earnings at the company store.
than were needed and that if a mine boss tried to discharge unneeded miners, the rest of the miners would walk-out until the men laid-off were rehired. There is no dispute that the miners tried to share the work rather than have some of their number go without work, thus adding substantially to the underemployment of the miners with jobs and discouraging emigration from the Hocking mining field.

Probably a more important cause of the labor surplus in the Hocking Valley mines—one which would help explain the national surplus of mining labor—was recognized by the noted Nineteenth Century American Economist, Edward W. Benis, in a study of the Hocking miners. He found that the miners stayed in the coal fields because they were "engulfed in an ignorance and poverty," for which they were not responsible. They knew little of other opportunities and found nothing but the prospect of fear and evil in other jobs. Also, mining was a way of life and it was hard for a miner to conceive of himself in another occupation. At the close of his 1886 essay, "Coal Miners," John McBride, the leader of the Ohio miners, concluded the most significant problem to be solved by the miners was that of finding new occupations for the surplus men.

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16 Testimony in the Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee by John Brashers, pp. 142, 185.
17 Ibid., p. 50, testimony of Chris Evans.
The miners' grievances

As Andrew Roy noted, "The miners had abundant leisure, and as Satan finds some mischief for idle hands to do, they employed their idle time in the discussion of real or imaginary grievances."

One of the common complaints of the men relating to the surplus manpower problem was the charge that operators employed men unequally and discriminated in hiring. Alexander Johnson, district secretary for the union, charged before the Hooking Valley Investigation Committee of the Legislature that mine bosses gave more turns and the best working faces to men who traded regularly at the company store or had families (since these men would purchase more at the store). The owners protested that they knew of no such abuses by mine bosses and that married men were hired in preference to single, because they needed the job to support their families while the bachelors could more easily move out of the district.

The company store

The biggest complaint of the miners was the company store. Since a miner was usually inscrutable when first hired, the operator would, on his request, give him scrip good only for purchase of goods at the company store. At pay day, the scrip was deducted from the miner's pay. In this way the miner was kept in constant debt to the operator.

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20 *Proceedings*, p. 98.
21 See especially testimony before the Investigation Committee of Walter Crafts, pp. 217-218.
The company store had been in vogue since before the Civil War.22 An example of how a company store started—although not typical—was that of the Akron Iron Company at Buchtel (became part of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company in 1883). According to the founder, John R. Buchtel, when the company opened its furnace and mine in 1887 it resolved not to enter the mercantile business. When the semi-isolated location made the establishment of a store at Buchtel imperative, Mr. Buchtel prevailed on a private businessman to open a store there. But the storekeeper took advantage of the remote location and abused the miners so much that Buchtel was forced to buy him out. Buchtel claimed he benefited the miners by checking the Nelsonville stores to see that the prices at his store were less than those of other stores.23

Granting that Buchtel’s testimony was true, his was an unusual case. Other operators admitted the men had never even asked for a store.24 The union and miners charged that the operators ran company stores because of the profits. One case was cited of an operator who in 1886 earned $287 from his mine worth $8,000, $22,000 net on a store valued at $5,000. Perhaps this is an extreme example, but illustrative of the potential.25

22 Testimony of W. B. Brooks, Sr., one of the oldest operators in the Hocking Valley, before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, Proceedings, p. 285.
24 Ibid., p. 285, W. B. Brooks, Sr., testimony.
The situation attracted enough public attention that in 1883 the General Assembly appointed Edward Orton of Ohio State University and John Brashares, a mine owner and member of the syndicate to investigate the situation. They found the stores, with exception of those run by men like J. R. Buchtel, subject to abuses and indirect violation of the state law prohibiting payment in scrip or other forms of credit. A report of the Commissioner of Labor and comparative price lists showed that many, if not most, company stores charged 10 to 20 percent higher prices than local cash stores. As few mining camps of under 1,000 population had cash stores, the significance of the price differential becomes obvious.

As previously pointed out, the average miner spent about one dollar per day at the company store, regardless of the income earned. In the period just prior to the 1884-1885 strike, typical earnings were in the $30 to $35 per month range, giving rise to the complaint of the miners that the operators were employing double the needed number of miners. This forced them into spending all their earnings at the

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27 Ibid., pp. 36-38, 222. A legislative investigative committee reached similar conclusions, see pp. 222. An important example of price differentials is that involved in a keg of blasting powder (which the miner had to buy himself), $3.67 at a company store vs. $3.13 at a cash store, p. 38.

28 Ibid., p. 40.
company store instead of having enough income to be able to go into town to spend part of it.29

If this failed to make the miners trade at the company store, the miners claimed that other pressures were then used to force the men to do business there. A man who did not buy at the mine store was given a poor working area in the mine where the shale or drainage was so troublesome that he could not mine enough coal to make a living, thus forcing him to quit.30 There was also a general feeling among the miners that men were discharged for not trading at company stores since there was "no other visible reason" for their being fired.31 The miners also charged that some operators forced wholesalers, under threat of losing the purchases by the company store, not to sell to merchants who were underselling the company stores.32 Independent operator W. F. Send who did not own company stores testified that he had a difficult time competing with operators who sold coal at cost and made their profit on the stores.33

One operator replied that "the store business is a subordinate part of our business [run] for the convenience of our men."34 Still

29 Ibid., pp. 113, 165, 195. Both sides were in agreement as to earnings and expenditures stated.
30 Ibid., pp. 63, 90, testimony of miners J. A. Donley and Joseph Devault.
31 Ibid., pp. 71-72, H. B. Emile testimony.
32 Ibid., p. 113, R. H. Miller testimony.
33 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
34 Ibid., p. 222, testimony of Walter Crafts, a vice-president of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company.
another, John Brashers, testified that his stores seldom earned much and that he was planning to sell them. He added that scrip created a heavy bookkeeping expense, but admitted that his expense was not the common case and that company stores in the more isolated areas might be money makers if there were "abuses" of the system.\textsuperscript{35}

The company store was a subject of much dispute, but it is evident from reports of unbiased sources that there were many abuses of the system. But these were not as extensive as the miners insisted and much of the abuse of the system was the result of mine bosses acting against the desire (or knowledge) of their employers.

Two remedies for the company store problem were offered. Semi-monthly pay checks were demanded by the miner as a means of reducing his need for credit while he waited to be paid for work already performed.\textsuperscript{36} The other remedy came in the form of the so-called anti-truck law enacted early in 1885 as part of the public reaction to the 1884-1885 strike. Unfortunately, the law only prohibited the use of scrip and company ownership of stores. This enabled some mine owners to circumvent the law by giving miners credit in another form and incorporating the store as another company separate from the mine.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 184. It should be noted that the largest operator, Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron, abolished scrip and started making all transactions in cash in late 1884 with "no regrets." See The Athens Messenger, Nov. 5, 1885, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 18.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., "Miner Labor in the Hocking Valley," p. 38. For a study of English and American laws on this subject, see John Swinton's Paper, October 28, 1893, p. 3. English laws came earlier, specified cash payment and were more rigidly enforced.
Other grievances

The men had a multitude of other grievances. They objected to being shifted from one mine to another as the larger companies shifted their operations back and forth to equalize depletion in periods of low demand. This forced them to depend on company housing where the prices were higher and miners were threatened with eviction during strikes. 38

The miners were constantly annoyed by what they considered attempts to take away part of their just earnings. They objected to the practice of "deadwork" where in order to keep their regular turn at work they had to drain water, pull pillars, clean shale and lay mine track without pay. Bank expenses—the blasting powder, lamp oil, tools, and pick sharpeners—constituted another drain on the miners' pay check and patience.

In 1883 the operators further irritated the men by refusing to pay for any mine-cars loaded with less than 3,000 pounds or for any coal in the mine-cars over the 3,000 pound limit. Formerly only coal over a 3,300 pound upper limit was not paid for. The men objected that it was difficult to judge how much coal was loaded in the mine-car in the semi-darkness of the miner's lamp and that frequently the cars were 600 pounds overweight. 39 The companies' reasons for these limits were that the mine-cars had to be sufficiently loaded to prevent the hiring of

38 These and the following grievances, unless otherwise stated, came from a list submitted by Thomas Lawson to the Horshin Valley Investigation Committee, Proceedings, pp. 56–59. Most of these complaints were also mentioned by the other miners before the committee.

39 Ibid., p. 151, Wilson Ross testimony.
extra haulers, but had to be limited from overloading to avoid excessive wear on mine-cars.  

To keep the quality of coal high, companies frequently docked miners for an entire mine-load when part of it was bad coal. The men protested that they should be paid for the good coal in the car since it was difficult to sort out shale in the dim mine. When first installed, the screening system invoked remonstrance from the employees, but by 1884 the screening was generally accepted by the men as the normal practice with only the abuses of the system causing complaint (e.g.: holes in the screen).  

In 1883 the major operators lengthened the working day from 9 to 10 hours, forcing the miner to spend 11 or 12 hours in mining, traveling, preparing, and bathing. Another grievance of the miners occurred when the Syndicate purchased coal from other producers. Late in May, 1884, President McDride complained to J. R. Buchtal of the Syndicate that the purchase of coal was in bad faith. These purchases put miners in the Columbus and Rocking out of work, charged McDride, and constituted an attempt to gain a monopoly in the Ohio coal trade without concern for labor's welfare. W. P. Rand, an independent operator favorable to the miner's welfare.

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40 Ibid., p. 149.
41 Ibid., p. 46, Chris Evans' testimony. The miners had set the size of the screen, and the system found some favor as it favored skilled miners. In screening the miner was not paid for coal that fell through the 1 3/4 inch mesh screen—about one-sixth of the tonnage mined.
cause, testified to the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee that the purchase of 700,000 tons of coal from the Tuscarawas Valley did cause a reduction of output in the Syndicate mines prior to the 1884 strike.\textsuperscript{43}

Besides the large purchases from the Tuscarawas field, the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company also purchased under special contract about nine cars per day from three Hocking district operators, including W. P. Reed, and were rumored to have purchased Pennsylvania coal.\textsuperscript{44}

To placate the miners, Superintendent J. R. Buchtel of the Columbus and Hocking syndicate offered in May of 1884 to pay the expenses if the miners appointed a committee to investigate unwarranted charges that the Syndicate was buying coal from the Ohio Central, Jackson, and Pittsburgh mine fields. The miners never took up the offer.\textsuperscript{45}

Buchtel justified the purchases made from the three local Hocking district producers because "they were demoralizing the trade... sending off a car or two here and there, and cutting the prices of coal..." Specifically, Buchtel said the Syndicate bought Reed's coal "to keep him going" and avoid competition.\textsuperscript{46}

The coal purchases were a logical move to prevent price wars and to maintain prices in hard times. However, the miners read into the

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee}, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{44} ibid., p. 203; J. R. Buchtel testimony; and Logan Republican Gazette, June 26, 1884, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee}, p. 193; Buchtel testimony.

\textsuperscript{46} ibid., pp. 193, 206.
Syndicate's actions a conspiracy designed to exploit labor by monopolizing the coal trade, thereby controlling the sources of employment for miners. The distrust and ill will existing among the miners and many operators strengthened this suspicion of the miners.

Mechanization was already starting in the Hocking Mines, but the use of machines was limited. The miners, however, objected more to the pay in the machine mines than to the use of the machines. 47

The first practical mining machines were the Lehner machines introduced in 1876. These machines, run by compressed air, undercut the seam of coal. Three men were still required to keep steam, run the compressor, and shovel the undercuttings. After the machine had undercut the seam, the coal had to be broken and loaded as in hand mining. There was, therefore, little saving of labor, and the cost of machine mining was equal to, or greater than, hand mining. 48

Interestingly, the two mines in the Hocking Valley to use these machines in the late seventies and early eighties were the Central Mine at New Straitsville and Longstreth's Mine which had two of the worst labor relations histories in the district. This suggests that the purchase of labor saving machines was motivated more to eliminate or threaten their troublesome miners than to cut costs. 49

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47 Chris Evans, History of United Mine Workers of America from the Year 1860 to 1879, v. 1, pp. 95, 103.
The replacement of drivers and mules by cable haulage or steam mine locomotives contributed to further frictions in the mines. 50

Alone, these grievances seemed minor and insignificant. But, reinforced by a mutual distrust among miners and operators, these minor complaints grew into industrial warfare.

The operator's grievances

The miners were not the only party with complaints. The operators were frequently annoyed when the miners and their union tried to tell them how to run their business. 51 They complained that the union had a strong control over the hiring and firing of employees, a right the owners felt was their own. 52 A feeling common to employers in the period was voiced by F. L. Brooks when he testified that the union separated the employee and employer by demanding of the worker a new loyalty and fostering distrust of the company. 53

Early mine organization

The mining industry was one of the first to be organized by unions. The early large-scale development and attachment of miners to their dangerous occupation promoted the development of unions. However, the organizing was somewhat hampered by the remoteness of many mining

52 Ibid.; also p. 186, John Brashears testimony.
53 Ibid., p. 268.
districts, the seasonability of work with the resulting migration from one field to another, and by the occasional employment of non-miner labor which had no interest in unions.\(^5^4\)

The first known miners' union in the United States was formed by John Baker in the Pennsylvania anthracite mines in 1849; however, it fell quickly after it lost an ill-advised strike. This dampened the union spirit for a long time.\(^5^5\) About 1857 or 1858 unions began to appear in some coal mining districts, feeding on the discontent of hard times.\(^5^6\) Shortly after 1860, the first known union in the Hocking Valley was formed. This union was a district union patterned after the American Miners' Association.\(^5^7\)

The American Miners' Association was the first national miners' union. The AMA was formed at Belleville, Illinois, January 28, 1861, by representatives of miners in Illinois and Missouri. Most of its leaders were foreign-born, one of them being Daniel Weaver, a former Chartist from England. The organization's major concern appears to have been with accidents and dangerous conditions in mines.\(^5^8\)

The American Miners' Association was a loose federation of district unions. By the end of the Civil War, Ohio and the Hocking


\(^5^6\) John McBride, "Coal Miners," p. 244.


\(^5^8\) McBride, "Coal Miners," pp. 245-246.
Valley were well organized by AWA affiliates, but internal dissensions among its officers and the lost strikes of 1867 and 1868 killed the parent organization.59

With the fall of the AWA in 1868, there was no state organization for the miners. Weak district organizations still remained in the major Ohio fields and affiliated in 1871 with the Miner's and Laborer's Benevolent Association, a very loose federation of district unions branching out from the Schuylkill anthracite field in Pennsylvania. The various district unions in Ohio including the Hocking District joined to form the Ohio Miner's and Laborer's Benevolent Association in Youngstown on October 14, 1873.60 This same meeting, under the leadership of John Miney, organized the National Miners' Association which was based on the lines of the British organization of the same name. The NMA rapidly gained power, absorbing the Miner's and Laborer's Benevolent Association in 1874.61 The NMA was hurt by strikes which attempted to prevent wage cuts during the depression of 1871 and 1874.

In December, 1874, the NMA damaged employer respect for both the union and for the principle of arbitration of wage disputes, a principle held dear by the leaders of the NMA. The union had accepted arbitration of a dispute over a proposed wage cut in the Tuscarawas field, but violated the terms of arbitration when the Crawford Coal Company continued to pay

59 Ibid., p. 248; also Roy, History of the Coal Miners, p. 72.
61 Ibid., pp. 249-251.
a higher wage. The miners then demanded to be released from the terms of the agreement, thereby creating a source of employer distrust that spread beyond the Tuscarawas field. This incident was cited by operators all over the state for years to come as an example of the bad faith of the union.  

In 1875 the NMA lost several poorly organized strikes. The arrest of John Siney and twenty-five other NMA leaders in the Clearfield field of Pennsylvania for inducing strikebreakers not to work had a dampening effect on the whole organization. The National Miners' Association broke up in 1876 when its dues no longer covered the Cleveland office expenses. For the next decade the miners were without effective national organization and the Hocking district unions were on their own.  

The growth of unionism in the valley

As already noted, the first miners' union in the Hocking district was a branch of the American Miners' Association formed in the early 1860's. This union was short-lived. In 1871 a Hocking Valley Miners' Union negotiated a regional wage contract, but soon collapsed because


of the fluctuating coal price and strong opposition of employers caught in a wage-cost-price squeeze.

To check the growing unionist sentiment among the miners, some of the operators sponsored a company union. The Hocking Valley Benevolent Association negotiated a "contract" favorable to the operators in April, 1873. Few miners joined.64

A seventy-five percent reduction in the output of the Hocking Valley mines occurred during the depths of the 1873 depression. The resulting suffering aided the formation of locals of the National Miners' Association in December, 1873.65 Organization in the Hocking Valley appears to have survived on the local level after the demise of the National Miners' Association in 1876. Chris Evans, one of the contemporary leaders of the miners in the Hocking Valley, felt that the lack of a strong state or national union in the late 1870's was offset by a strong union organization in the Valley which held weekly meetings and which was held together by good secretaries.66

Knights of Labor

During this period the Knights of Labor made their entry into the Valley. The trial of the UMWA leaders in the Clearfield strike of 1875 increased the appeal of a secret organization among the miners. When

65 Ibid., pp. 248-249.
66 Evans, History of the UMWA, v. I, p. 94.
the Knights attempted to fill the void left by the fall of the NMA by sending Chris Evans into the Hocking Valley as an organizer. Evans found considerable support. Local 120 of the Knights of Labor was formed in New Straitsville on September 23, 1875, followed by Local 169 in Shawnee on February 5 of the next year. These two locals were two of the strongest in the Knights’ District Assembly which was formed in Akron on May 8, 1877. The locals of the Knights formed in the Hocking district were known as “mixed locals,” locals which tried to include laboring men of all occupations, grocers, and commercial men. Friction developed when interests of the various groups in the locals differed. Further difficulties developed from the dual unionism that resulted because the Knights’ locals existed beside the older purely miners’ locals. Some animosity developed, and the rivalry between the two movements sapped much effort that should have been devoted to the miners’ welfare.

It is difficult to assess the position and importance of the Knights of Labor in the Hocking district. Many miners belonged to both the Knights and the miners’ unions. The two movements had common leadership in the district, Chris Evans being the foremost example.

67McHride, Coal Miners, p. 251.
68Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 37. Evans in his book claimed Local 120 was organized in October, 1876; a date that makes less sense than Ware’s chronology. Written forty years later mostly from memory and a few documents, Evans’ History of the UMWA is often in error on dates. See p. 78.
69Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 37.
because he led both movements. By the 1880’s miners so dominated the Knights’ locals that the membership, leaders and affairs of the Knights, and the miners’ unions became intertwined. It was often impossible to tell where one ended and the other began. Coal mine unionism was to be wrapped in this bifurcated character until the 1890’s.

The Knights appear to have supplied many leaders for the miners in the Hocking Valley as well as fraternity with miners and workers outside the district. But, it was the militant leadership of the miners’ unions that the miners preferred to the fraternity of the Knights.

Ohio Miners’ Amalgamated Association

Various attempts in the late 1870’s and 1880’s failed to establish a new state miners’ union. “Laziness” and “indifference” were blamed.71

Lasting state organization came with the founding of the Ohio Miners’ Amalgamated Association at an April, 1882, convention of miners’ representatives in Columbus. John McBridge was made president, and Massillon, his home, was made the headquarters. While the OMAA was a member of the Amalgamated Association of Miners of the United States—a loose, ineffective confederation of mine unions formed in 1883 in Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—the OMAA was supreme in Ohio in the mid-eighties. Here at last was a strong state union with an effective organization which, though it might lose strikes, would not be broken.72 While many miners in the state did not officially belong

71 McBridge, “Coal Miners,” p. 252.

to the OMAA, many of these non-members participated in its conferences and agreements. Even more important, there was general support for its strikes.

The union leaders

Typical of unions of this period, the strength of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association was in its leadership. Young John McBride (he was not quite thirty at this time) provided a rough-and-tumble type of leadership which the miners loved. Since he was eleven years old, McBride had been a miner in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and finally the Masillon field of Ohio. In 1880 he led the Tuscarawas Valley miners to victory in seeking a raise, marking himself as the future leader of the whole state. McBride was a blunt, forceful man who chose to fight any opponent rather than back down. His force as an orator won for himself a seat from Stark County in the Ohio House of Representatives in the early 1880's.73

Chris Evans, the old Knights of Labor organizer who came to the Hocking Valley in 1875, became the head of District One of the OMAA which was the Hocking district. Evans had had a long record as mine leader extending back to 1873 when he was a leader in Mercer County, Pennsylvania. As leader of one of the two best organized districts in the state, Evans was the second most powerful man in the OMAA. McBride was the young trash strike leader of the union. The older Evans, who

73See the testimony of McBride before the Hocking Valley Investigating Committee, especially p. 151. Also: Wars, The Labor Movement, p. 212.
was forty-one when the OMAA was founded, was the man who could sit at the same table with operators and arrive at an accord. Even operators who dealt with Evans testified to his honesty and his ability to win a compromise that all could respect. 74

Because of the character of the two leaders, McBride was fitted to be the vigorous 1884 strike leader and Evans to be the moving figure in the conference with the operators in 1886.

The OMAA Policies

The OMAA was a militant union with powerful leaders. Until the 1884–1885 Hooking Strike showed how costly strikes could be, the OMAA preferred to strike on the slightest challenge to its honor, wages, or conditions. It was a typical American bread-and-butter type union concerned mainly with material welfare and little with the changing of the existing economic system. The OMAA did, however, try to improve the miners’ conditions through legislative action. Many of the leaders ran for political offices in the early 1880s.

In the 1870s the miners had obtained inspection laws and a state mine inspector. There was a second wave of mining legislation in 1883 resulting from the efforts of the OMAA and state mine inspector, Andrew Roy. The bills which were passed provided for the abolition of payment by scrip, a lien law giving miners preferred claims on a company for

wages due, and a special committee to investigate the practice of
screening coal.\textsuperscript{75}

The OMAA in its wage bargaining tried to maintain wage differ-
entials among the various fields. The Tuscarawas Valley and Massillon
fields' wages were to be kept ten cents per ton higher than the Hocking
rate since they had shorter hauls to market and used a larger screen.\textsuperscript{76}

The operators

Previous to 1883, the mines of the Hocking Valley were owned by
individual proprietors or partners. The owners generally left the
operation of the mine to a mine boss—sometimes with the worst evils of
absentee ownership. Many mine owners, however, took an active interest
in the welfare of their employees and made frequent visits to inspect
the conditions and hear the complaints of the men.\textsuperscript{77}

This highly competitive form of organization raised two problems.
First, the small unorganized employers were easier prey for the unions
than those belonging to a larger organization.

Second, the small owners frequently engaged in disastrous price
wars. In the winter of 1882-1883, the union forced a state-wide ten
cent wage increase. Some of the Massillon and Tuscarawas operators
decided to recover their profits by cutting their price in order to

129-140; Evans, History of the UMWA, v. 1, pp. 102-103.

\textsuperscript{76} Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 158-
199.

\textsuperscript{77} For a good description of a mine owner interested in the welfare
of his men, see the Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Com-
nitee, pp. 238-239.
capture more of the lake market. This precipitated a price war which also involved the Pittsburgh and Hocking fields. Only the refusal of the Hocking operators to reduce their prices below four dollars per ton at the lake stopped the downward tumble of prices. The lesson of this debacle was obvious: organize.  

In February and March of 1883, the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company was formed by the consolidation of two dozen mining and blast furnace properties in the Hocking Valley. The Syndicate, as the new company was called, was huge for its time. It owned 18 mines, 5 furnaces, 12,579 acres of coal lands, 597 houses, and 12 stores. The appraised value of the properties of the firms was $4,494,369.  The Syndicate's offices were in Columbus. Samuel Thomas was president while John R. Buchtel, Walter Crafts, and Thadeus Longstreth were vice-presidents. Spencer Churchill was the treasurer. All these men had other investments. Crafts had invested in other coal and iron companies.  

The stated reason for the consolidation was that the larger firm would furnish lower clerical costs, a larger selling force able to cover a larger market area, the ability to fill large steady contracts, and relief from the losses caused by the competition of small individual operations.

78 Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 159.  
As noted, the Syndicate took steps to control the coal business of Ohio. Besides buying the output of other producers, the new company tried to apportion the market territories among the various coal producers of the state. The Syndicate offered to purchase the output of several producers if they agreed not to sell in the markets that Syndicate reserved for itself.82

Contemporaneous with the formation of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company, another form of producer combination came into being. The Ohio Coal Exchange was founded in the spring of 1883 by several independent coal producers to act as a marketing organisation. The Exchange bought the coal of a member company, sold it, and paid the company what was received for the coal minus the selling costs. Unofficially, the Coal Exchange also handled part of the labor relations of the members.83

In addition to the Syndicate and the Coal Exchange, there were often meetings of the coal producers in central Ohio for the purpose of "regulating" their common interests.84

As far as labor relations were concerned, the consolidation of many of the important operators of the Hocking Valley had several effects. Owners were further removed from their mines, giving rise to more abuses by mine bosses of what the miners felt to be their rights. In his annual report for 1883, State Inspector of Mines Andrew Roy

82Ibid., p. 23, W. P. Rand.
83Ibid., pp. 178, 243-244, 246, 248, 261.
reported that "the organization of the syndicate was looked upon by the miners with a jealous eye," since they "feared it had been organized to reduce their wages." More important, the operators and miners, both fearful of the other, were organized for a supreme struggle by the end of 1883. It was no accident that the great Hocking Valley strike occurred in 1884.

The railroad

Labor disputes in the Hocking Valley were three-sided affairs. The Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad was more militantly anti-union than most of the operators and added much to the bitterness of the 1884-1885 strike. While they had no direct dealings with the miners' unions, the railroad's officers went out of their way to show their hostility to them.

CHAPTER III
MINER-OPERATOR RELATIONS

Causes of strikes

President McBride of the Ohio Miners’ Amalgamated Association admitted that “there is no industry under the sun that has such a record for strikes as the coal mining industry.” McBride concluded that “the recklessness of miners is derived from their calling, which also gives them a spirit of independence such as cannot be found among the workers of any other trade.” Since many left foreign lands to avoid oppression, they resist every imposition placed upon them, and resent every intrusion on their rights. . . .”

Thus, there were a spate of strikes in the Hocking Valley as in other fields. The miners made a multitude of demands of their employers which at times even the miners admitted were unjustified.

While the biggest, most prolonged strikes were struggles over wage rates, most of the smaller strikes were over the miners’ grievances. Most responsible for these short strikes were disputes on screen sizes and on the right of the miners to employ a checkweighman. However, the

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2 Ibid.
3 For example, see testimony of R. B. Weiley, p. 69 of the Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee.
miners would lay down their picks on any minor issue which annoyed them or seemed to be a challenge flung by the management. ⁴

The company store was seldom the direct cause of strikes, but Chris Evans credited the store issue as being the major source of miner discontent. ⁵

Early strikes

The first strike remembered in the Valley occurred about 1869 over a demand for higher rates. ⁶ Most of the miners in the Hocking district were on strike for higher wages from December, 1871, until January, 1872. A wage scale for the following fifteen months was agreed upon by representatives of both labor and management. It was one of the first collective bargaining contracts in the district. ⁷

In April and May of 1874, a strike occurred in the Hocking dis-


Annual Report for 1871 of the Columbus and Hocking Valley Rail-

road, n.p.
company continued to import replacements until the union—a branch of the National Miners' Association—was broken. It was significant that there was considerable public support for the miners, especially when some of the operators refused to rehire any former strikers. The strike also demonstrated that while the old union might be defeated, a new union with basically the same leaders would quickly rise to take its place.

Undaunted by their defeat in the 1874 strike, the miners struck again in March, 1875, in order to prevent a further wage cut. This time the miners were under stronger control. Many small strikes followed.

July, 1877, was a time of labor troubles which included the destructive Pennsylvania Railroad strike. To support their railroading comrades the miners commandeered a B&O train and headed for Newark, only to be stopped by a bridge which just happened to be burning. So the miners returned and went out on strike for a twenty cent raise, but finally compromised on a ten cent increase per ton.

The Ohio River was so low in the summer of 1878 that Pittsburgh coal could not be shipped downstream, so Cincinnati turned to the Hocking Valley for its fuel supply. Rapidly the operators in the district accumulated a backlog of orders. Knowing the operators were

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9 Ibid., p. 261-262.

legally bound to fill these contracts, the union took advantage of the situation and drove the wage rate up to one dollar per ton. Although the rate soon dropped back to eighty cents per ton, the operators still remembered this incident in 1884 and were ready to use it as an example of the disrespect of the unions. This aggressive action of the miners in 1878 contributed much to management's growing distrust of the unions.¹¹

In September, 1885, the Ohio Central mines, recently opened on the eastern side of the Hocking district, offered their miners a sliding wage scale based on the price of nails, pig iron, and other iron products. This plan was accepted by the miners in several other fields in the state. The Ohio Central miners refused to accept and were locked out. The strike soon spread to the older mines in the Hocking Valley. When the strikers intimidated the Negro strikebreakers, Governor Charles Foster sent four companies of national guard to the district, including fifty national guardsmen from New Lexington, to encamp at the Ohio Central Number Three Mine near Corning. Three or four hundred miners attacked the troops at Number Three. By the time the soldiers had repelled the attack, one striker was dead and a couple guardsmen injured. Soon after the "Corning War", as the incident came to be called, the operators capitulated and discarded the sliding scale.¹²

¹¹ For a good example of the effect of this incident, see the testimony of Frank S. Brooks before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 261 in the Proceedings.

The 1880 strike reminded the operators that they needed stronger organization to face the union. Certainly the incident strengthened the miners' reputation for violence.

Attempting to end the succession of strikes, the operators met in Columbus early in 1881 and invited the miners to meet in a joint convention. The convention met, and the miners agreed to accept the wage rate in practice since 1878, which was seventy cents in the summer and eighty in the winter. At a second meeting two weeks later at Logan, the miners' representatives failed to get the operators to sign a binding agreement; however, the unions voted and notified the owners that they would accept the wage scale anyhow. The rate remained from this time until 1884 at seventy cents from March 1 to August 31, and eighty cents the rest of the year.

In January, 1883, a depression was again setting in over the mining industry, but the miners rejected an offer by the operators to cut the wages from eighty to seventy cents in return for the prospect of more work generated by the higher sales resulting from the lower price of coal. The operators saw the miners' rejection as proof of the unions' "bull-headedness" and lack of concern for the welfare of the Hocking coal industry. The union, with a state-wide organization, saw the operators' request as wage competition which in the end would benefit nobody and force the miners' wages below the subsistence level.\[13\]


\[14\] The Labor Equirer, Jan. 27, 1883, p. 8.
One of the first steps of the newly formed Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company was to lengthen the time of the working day from nine to ten hours and to cut the wages of haulers from $2.05 to $1.75 per day. The haulers were forced to accept the cut after a short strike in April, 1883.15

Troublemaking employers

Two employers had special histories as troublemakers, W. A. Shoemaker and Thadues Longstrth. Inspector of Mines Andrew Roy cited Shoemaker's mine as a death-trap and closed the mine at least once when Shoemaker openly flouted the mine laws.16 Longstrth opposed the unions at every turn, posting a notice that he would see no committees representing the miners. He was usually the leader of the employer moves to cut the wages.17 Longstrth's mine superintendent, Thomas Berry, was also a source of a great deal of trouble. On several occasions mine inspector Roy charged that Berry was backward in his mining methods and a source of labor problems. "How can we expect peace and friendly relations, and an avoidance of strikes in such mines?" asked Roy after discussing the problems he had had with Berry.18 To be fair, it should be noted that Roy praised most mine superintendents as being "practical

15 Told, April 21, 1883, p. 4. See also the testimony of Chris Evans before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee on p. 30 of the Proceedings.


17 Evans, History of UMWA, v. 1, p. 95.

men" of "superior mining intelligence. After the Syndicate took over Longstrehl's mine, Berry was made superintendent of several of the company's mines, but was fired a year later in early 1884.20

Because of the long growing antagonisms at these two mines, both were centers of trouble and violence in the 1884-1885 strike.

The setting for the strike

At the start of 1884 everything was ready for the great strike.

Both sides had a long history of opposition and mutual distrust. Grievances, especially the miners', had built up to fantastic proportions until labor and management became antagonistic towards each other. Finally, in 1882 and 1883, respectively, the miners and management had organized into powerful combinations. Two powerful forces faced each other, each fearful of the other, but resolved to fight when the time came.

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CHAPTER IV

HOW THE STRIKE BEGAN: JANUARY-JUNE 1884

The depression

The years from 1883 to 1885 were depression years. According to Bradstreet's, there was a thirteen percent reduction of the national industrial workforce between 1880 and 1884. The industrial workforce for Ohio fell seventeen percent in the corresponding period.¹

The coal and iron trade slackened in early 1883, but the full force of the depression was not felt until December, 1883.² In the year ending June 30, 1883, the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad carried 1.86 million tons of coal. The figure fell to 1.61 million in the fiscal year 1883-1884, then to 1.20 million in 1884-1885 (partly showing the effect of the strike), but it climbed back to 1.71 million tons in 1885-1886.³ When the winter demand for domestic coal ended in April, 1884, the daily carloadings of coal on the OHV&T from the Hocking

¹Quoted in the Logan Republican Gazette, January 1, 1885, p. 2.
²Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 103.
³From the annual reports of the railroad and of the Commissioner of Railroads and Telegraphs of Ohio.

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district fell from an early winter peak of 600 cars to approximately 150 to 175 cars. ⁴

The immediate cause of the decline in the coal trade was the depression. The railroads were doing less business, so they were ordering less locomotive coal. The railway building boom of the early 1880's was over and less steel for rails was being ordered, with a related decline in the demand for coal by the iron industry. The Hocking Valley iron production in 1883 was less than half of the 1882 output. ⁵

Worse yet, the cheap transportation of the improved railroad system and the fast communication of market conditions by the telegraph had broken down the old local markets bringing the various fields into sharp competition. As the depression deepened, the competition rose. The growing use of electricity and natural gas and the use of improved machinery were reducing the demand for coal. During 1883 the Pittsburgh district became a sharp competitor for the lake trade with Canada, Chicago, and other lake ports. The increased competition drove the price of coal down, making the reduced trade even more painful to the operators. ⁶

⁴Columbus Dispatch, quoted in the Logan Republican Gazette, April 17, 1884, p. 1.


The coal business of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company made money between March, 1883 and February, 1884, then went into the red. The iron business lost all through 1883 and 1884.7

The first wage-cut offer:
January, 1884

The monthly conference of Hocking district operators at Shawnee in January, 1884, decided to ask the miners to accept a wage reduction from eighty to sixty cents per ton on March 1 rather than the customary reduction to seventy cents. W. P. Reid and John R. Buchtel opposed the idea strongly until its passage by the other operators. A committee consisting of John Brashears, J. R. Buchtel, and Mr. Martin (representing the Coal Exchange, the Syndicate, and the Ohio Central Railway's mines respectively) was appointed to present the idea to the miners.8

When Brashears put the request before President McBride of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association, McBride replied that he did not think the miners would accept a rate reduction since he had had trouble recently in discouraging a demand among the miners for an increase in the wage rate. McBride was right. The state convention of the OM&A rejected the offered wage cut and devoted most of the meeting in Columbus on January 22-24, 1884, to the issues of screening and the

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7 *Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee*, p. 212, Walter Crafts'. The OM&A balances included a five percent charge on gross income for a sinking fund for the retirement of $2 million in first mortgage bonds.

truck system. About February 1, 1884, McBride met with Brashears and Brooks. The operators asked McBride to send a delegation of miners to Columbus so that they could explain to the miners the reason for the reduction. When McBride asked that they bargain over the issue, the operators refused.\textsuperscript{9}

The March walkouts

Many people expected trouble to occur when the customary cut in the wage rate of coal from eighty to seventy cents per ton went into effect March 1. Some suspected the syndicate would try to drop the rate to sixty cents; however, the operators made only the usual ten cent cut and McBride and Evans discouraged the miners from pressing for anything more.\textsuperscript{10}

The unemployment problem was worse by March, 1884, and the union was forced to collect donations and distribute relief payments to the idle men. A committee solicited $23.75 from the citizens of Buchtel, including $10 from J. R. Buchtel himself.\textsuperscript{11}

In the beginning of March when the operators of the mines on the eastern side of the district reduced the haulers' daily wage from $2.05 to $1.75, both the miners and haulers walked out and stayed out until

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., pp. 160-163, 180. Also The Cigar Makers' Journal, 9:6 (January, 1884); and a letter by McBride to the Columbus Dispatch, August 25, 1884, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{10}See The Athens Messenger, February 14, 1884, p. 5 for a good feature story on the mounting tension.

\textsuperscript{11}Proceedings, Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 105.
March 27 when they finally accepted the reduction. An unofficial meeting of miners was held at Nelsonville on March 9 to see if the men of the western side of the district should join the strikers on the eastern side in the demand for $2.05 for the haulers (The rate had been $1.75 per day for a year in the Syndicate’s mines). The men decided to leave the decision up to the regular monthly district meeting of the union on March 12. The district meeting resolved in favor of the existing seventy cent per ton rate for miners; but, in view of the hard times, a majority of the delegates voted to stand by the operators and accept the $1.75 rate for haulers. However, it took Evans and McBride two weeks to get the Ohio Central miners back to work.

A hint of what was to come came early in March when an armed mob of several hundred miners (or so it seemed to a frightened correspondent) marched to Baird’s Furnace to force the miners there to quit working at sub-standard wages.

The furnace agreement

The Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company owned five sets of iron furnaces in the district, but only two were operating at the beginning of 1884 due to the depressed state of the iron business. At the January meeting of the Syndicate’s executives, J. R. Buchtel moved to reopen the closed furnaces. Longstreth felt that there would not be

12 The Labor Recorder, March 15, 1884, p. 3; The Athens Messenger, March 30, 1884, p. 4.
13 The Athens Messenger, March 20, 1884, p. 3.
14 The Logan Republican Gazette, March 13, 1884, p. 4.
enough business, but Buchtel obtained approval from the other officers to start the banked furnaces if either the railroad or the miners would lower their rates. Feeling the railroad could absorb a reduction in rates better than the miners, Buchtel went to work on the CH&J, but had little success. 15

At the end of January, two dozen miners that had worked at the Gore furnace agreed to mine furnace coal at fifty cents per ton instead of eighty cents for which the commercial coal was then being mined. These men worked full six-day weeks all through February, 1884, and their earnings for the month averaged $75 to $100, more than double what the commercial coal miners were earning in the abbreviated work weeks shortened because of the low demand for coal. Then at the beginning of March, several hundred miners from Nelsonville forced the Gore furnace miners to quit, leaving only one furnace in operation in the whole district. 16

Still wishing to reopen the furnaces, J. R. Buchtel sent an open letter to the miners on April 14 offering a new rate for furnace coal of 2 1/2 cents for every dollar rise in the price per ton of foundry iron. McBride and the Miners' Association rejected the offer on the grounds that they did not recognize different rates for furnace and commercial coal, and that this new wage scale would have cut the rate per ton of furnace coal mined to fifty-five cents. Late in April Buchtel

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reapproached McBride saying he could afford the seventy cents per ton rate if he did not have to shut down the furnaces during the frequent strikes and walkouts.\textsuperscript{17} The May 1, 1884, district convention of the miners at New Straitsville accepted Buchtel's offer after McBride strongly urged acceptance. The officers of the union and Buchtel met May 9 to draft the agreement. The wage would be seventy cents per ton. In case of alleged violations of the contract, a committee of three representatives from labor and management would investigate. The union promised to give seven days' notice before going on strike, and, in the event of a strike in the commercial mines, the furnace miners agreed to continue to work for the old rate until the end of the strike, then to accept the new wage rate.\textsuperscript{18}

The new agreement seemed to promise a solution satisfactory for all. But, unfortunately, the officers of the company failed to realize that the representatives of the union had to take the contract back to the miners to be ratified. Even the officers of the union agreed this process took too long to enable each side to proceed in good faith. The company took steps to repair its furnaces and announced in mid-May it intended to reopen the Core and the Craft furnaces about June 25.

The further tightening of the depression and the long delay of the union to return the ratified contract—taken by management to imply

\textsuperscript{17}Proceedings: Hoising Valley Investigation Committee, p. 162.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., pp. 162-163; Tenth Annual Report of the Inspector of Miners, 1884, pp. 34-35 (the contract is reprinted in full here).
rejection—worked to prevent the realization of these plans. Each side felt the other was acting in bad faith; thus the agreement, designed to bring peace and prosperity, served to promote hostile feelings.\footnote{Proceedings: Hocking Valley Committee, pp. 104, 192-193; The Athens Messenger, May 29, 1884, p. 1.} 

The second general wage cut offer 

By the first week of April, 1884, only eleven of the sixteen Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron mines were operating, and then only when orders came in.\footnote{The Athens Messenger, April 10, 1884, p. 5.} 

On April 21 the operators met in Columbus and agreed to ask the miners to accept a reduction in the wage rate from seventy cents to sixty cents until August 31. The next day a group of the operators went down to the Valley to explain to the miners their reasons for requesting the reduction. In addition, a notice was posted on the property of the Syndicate and of the members of the Coal Exchange explaining the reasons for the sixty cent wage offer. 

The notice, signed by officers of both the Coal Exchange and the Syndicate, explained that the operators were in a competitive squeeze. Pittsburgh coal, which was mined at seventy-five cents per ton on a larger screen, and benefited from a shorter haul to the lake, was taking the lake coal contracts for Cleveland, Canada, and Chicago away from the Hocking producers. Tuscarawas Valley coal and the coal along the recently opened Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad were doing the same because they too had a shorter lake haul and slightly lower wages. Also,
Indiana block coal had broken into the Chicago market because of its lower wages and a shorter haul. Therefore, it was to the mutual interest of labor and management to cut the wage rate to sixty cents per ton in order to increase the district's share of the market. Labor would increase its wages since it would have more steady work, concluded the notice. 21

The miners rejected the offer. The less informed rank and file felt that the Syndicate was the cause of the unemployment in the first place since they were buying and marketing coal from other producers. 22 In formally rejecting the offer, the April 30 meeting of the Executive Board of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association in Columbus noted that the effect of the reduction would be to initiate a chain of wage cutting in all the field with no net change in the market shares. 23 The next day, May 1, the district convention of the OMAA at New Straitsville postponed consideration of the question (this was the same convention that accepted Buchtel's furnace coal offer). 24


22 See Evans, History of UMWA, pp. 32, 43, for this viewpoint.


Rejection of the last management offer

After early May, 1884, the relations between the miners and operators deteriorated rapidly making a strike almost inevitable. However, no further mention of the sixty cent wage request was made by the operators.\textsuperscript{25}

The economic situation became worse. A twenty-five cent per ton reduction in the price of Hocking coal in June failed to set the operators more business and increased the losses being suffered by the Syndicate. In early June J. R. Buchtel of the Syndicate approached the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad and obtained the right to load between four and five hundred idle cars with coal just "for the sake of giving the men work." The cars were then stored on sidings for lack of buyers of the coal.\textsuperscript{26}

With business in such a state, the Syndicate and the Ohio Coal Exchange members concluded that their only choice was to institute a unilateral wage cut from seventy cents per ton to sixty. In the light of past experience, the operators concluded that it was impossible to bargain with the employees on the wage cut. So, with no advance warning, a notice was posted on the properties of both the Syndicate and the Coal Exchange on Friday evening June 20 announcing that henceforth the miners would be paid sixty cents per ton.


\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee}, pp. 196-197, J. R. Buchtel.
When Monday morning, June 23, came, almost no one appeared at the pit head to work for the new rate. The strike had begun.27

The cause of the strike

W. F. Reed, whose mines operated during most of the strike at the old seventy cent rate, felt the strike and its long duration were caused by the "feeling of ill-will and enmity which prevailed between the contesting parties." Reed noted that "there was almost a state of warfare prior to the strike." The inflamed hostility of the miners towards several of the operators burst forth in a "conflagration of passion" when the notice of the reduction was posted.26

Reed was quite correct. The ill feelings between labor and management had prevented the union’s acceptance of the sixty cent rate as well as solution of the other problems. As William Job, one of operators belonging to the Coal Exchange, observed, the feeling among the union miners was that the Syndicate had been formed to "crush them out." Therefore, the notice of the wage reduction posted June 20 was viewed as a challenge to the existence of the union itself.29 There was no evidence that this was the aim of the employers at that time, but the important fact is that the union miners felt that it was true and were determined to resist.

28 Proceedings: Rockefeller Valley Investigation Committee, p. 16.
29 Ibid., p. 294.
CHAPTER V

THE STRIKE

The strike begins

The strike began Monday, June 23, 1884, when the miners refused to return to work, and continued officially until March 18, 1885, when the district meeting at New Straitsville declared the strike a lost cause.

The Hocking Valley strike was only one of the rash of strikes besetting almost every coal field as a result of the hard times in 1884-1885, but it was the biggest and most publicized.1 According to union records, about three thousand miners and a thousand mine laborers refused to work at the 46 mines shut down.2

A district convention of miners was called for June 27 at Nelsonville to discuss the strike. Just before the convention met, Vice-president Stevenson Burke of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad sent a telegram to Nelsonville offering to reduce the coal freight rates to Columbus from eighty-five cents per ton to sixty-five cents if the miners would accept the pay cut from seventy cents per ton

1For a list of coal miners' strikes in progress, see John Swinton's Paper, June 29, 1884, p. 4.

2Reported to the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee by the district union president, Chris Evans, Proceedings, pp. 41-42.
to sixty cents. This pressure enraged the miners who felt that the failure of the railroad to lower its rates to a fair basis was one of the causes of the depression in the Hocking mining industry.

The district convention of the union on June 27 discussed the company offer and the long strike possibility, then resolved unanimously to strike until the notice of reduction was withdrawn. A committee, with Chris Evans as head, was appointed to solicit relief for the strikers from other miners in the state.

After the convention was over the railroad cut its rates by twenty cents even though the union had not reduced their rate.

The operators had expected the miners would resist the wage cut demand but did not think they could hold out long, since the low employment had eaten up most of the personal and union funds of the miners. Therefore, for the first two weeks the operators did nothing but wait for union submission. The miners were peaceful and orderly for the first month of the strike, thereby winning considerable public sympathy.

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3 Evans, History of UMW, v. I, p. 116. According to W. B. Brooks (Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 248), Judge Burke and Brooks met just before this and Brooks asked Burke to lower his freight rate ten cents if the miners came down ten cents. Burke replied that he would cut the freight rate twenty cents if the miners took ten cents, and then Burke sent the telegram.

4 Logan Republican Gazette, July 17, 1884, p. 1.

5 Evans, History of UMW, v. I, p. 117.

6 Logan Republican Gazette, July 17, 1884, p. 1.

7 Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 29.

W. P. Rend; The Athens Messenger, July 10, 1884, p. 3; July 31, 1884, p. 5.
About June 30, a joint meeting of the Syndicate’s officers was held to discuss the continued resistance of the miners. It was decided to remove the notices of the sixty cent offer July 1, and, rather than asking the miners to return, to install strikebreakers and mining machines. They had offered the best they felt they could afford—sixty cents—and now they intended to pay only what would earn a “satisfactory profit.”

Now the strike rested not only on the wage issue, but also on the right of the workers to organize and strike. One of the officers of the Syndicate told Rev. Washington Gladden, “We’ll kill that union if it costs us half a million dollars.” Gladden noted that the man was genuinely interested in the welfare of his men and felt the end of the trouble-making union would be in the miners’ best interests. This typified the paternalistic attitude that characterized the actions of the employers.

To effect the new policy the Syndicate posted a notice July 11, 1884, discharging its 1800 miners and ordering them to collect back pay and to remove their tools from the mines. Any miners wishing to be reemployed by the company would have to sign an ironclad contract in

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8Reported by John Brashears of the Coal Exchange before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, Proceedings, p. 181. See also: Columbus Daily Times, July 5, 1884, p. 3.


10Ibid. According to Jake Dorn of the University of Oregon who is presently writing a biography of Gladden, this man was Walter Crafts.
which the miner agreed not to strike or "countenance any combination."
The Syndicate also announced it would not deal with any unions.\textsuperscript{11}

The strikebreakers

The first strikebreakers, about 250 in number, arrived from Chicago Monday morning, July 14, guarded by over one hundred Pinkerton detectives. A train load of mining machines arrived the same day. Both men and machines were sent to Syndicate mine Number 19 (ex-Longstruth mine), and one Coal Exchange mine, W. B. Brooks and Sons' Nelsonville Mine.\textsuperscript{12}

To the surprise of everyone the miners caused no trouble when the strikebreakers arrived, mainly because the strikers felt the strikebreakers would leave as soon as they learned of the situation.\textsuperscript{13}

From then on the strikebreakers came in a steady flow until the end of 1884. About a quarter of the strikebreakers were experienced Negro miners from the western Pennsylvania and Virginia coal fields.\textsuperscript{14} Many other strikebreakers were of foreign birth: German, Polish, Italian, Hungarian, and Swedish. By September the operators had a contract with Phillip Dorner of Pittsburgh to furnish strikebreakers.

\textsuperscript{11} Columbus Daily Times, July 12, 1884, p. 1. The contract was reprinted in the Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 33-35.

\textsuperscript{12} Columbus Daily Times, July 14, 1884, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{13} Columbus Daily Times, July 15, 1884, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{14} The Athens Messenger, January 22, 1885, p. 5; Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 221.
Borner was to receive $5,000 if he succeeded in breaking the strike. Most of the men supplied by Borner were immigrants from central and eastern Europe with little experience in mining.\textsuperscript{15} The operators even put 25 ore miners from Gore at work in the mines.\textsuperscript{16}

All through the strike large numbers of the strikebreakers left, often as soon as they arrived. The first strikebreakers were hired for a "railroad job," and many returned home when they learned the reason they were hired. On their way back from the mines, on July 16, the departing strikebreakers were fed and were given train fare by the Nelsonville strikers.\textsuperscript{17} At first the strikers relied on kindness and quiet elucidation of their position to encourage the strikebreakers to leave, but when the number of strikebreakers remaining in the mines began to rise (in August), the miners resorted to intimidation, with moderate success, to drive out their replacements.\textsuperscript{18}

By late 1884 new strikebreakers were flooding in so rapidly that they greatly exceeded the disgruntled departures. In November about 1,500 strikebreakers were working in fifteen mines, spelling doom to the strikers' cause.\textsuperscript{19} However, the operators were paying for breaking the strike.

\textsuperscript{15} Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 81, 246; Columbus Daily Times, October 11, 1884, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Columbus Daily Times, July 23, 1884, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., July 16, 1884, p. 1; The Athens Messenger, July 17, 1884, p. 5, and July 31, 1884, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{18} Columbus Daily Times, October 6, 1884, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{19} Tenth Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines, 1884, p. 36.
The typical imported man was a very poor miner who even with the aid of mining machines averaged less than half the output per man of experienced miners. The owners paid dearly for the expense of recruiting, transporting, guarding, and training the strikebreakers, only to get a poor product in the end. It was easy to understand why the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company made no profit during the strike.

The Pinkertons and Guards

To guard their property and strikebreakers from reprisals, the Syndicate and the Coal Exchange operators entered into a contract with the Pinkerton Detective Agency of Chicago, the largest industrial security agency of the time. Over a hundred Pinkerton operatives arrived with the first strikebreakers on July 14, 1884. When the miners failed to show any violence toward the arrival of the first strikebreakers, some of the Pinkerton guards were returned July 26. The growing unrest among the miners at the start of August, however, caused the operators to raise a supplementary force of mine guards from local residents. Afterward, the Pinkerton force was restored to a strength slightly over one hundred.

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20 *Columbus Daily Times*, July 26, 1884, p. 1.
21 *Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee*, p. 213.
23 *Columbus Daily Times*, July 26, 1884, p. 1; *Ohio Eagle*, July 31, 1884, p. 5; *John Brinton’s Press*, September 7, 1884, p. 1.
By September, 113 Pinkertons were employed by the Syndicate and the number of private guards was estimated at 700 (perhaps a little high). 24

Lt. Kay's Pinkertons, dressed in their bright blue uniforms and brass buttons, were a colorful and controversial contingent. To the friends of the miners, the guards were examples of depravity. But to the operators and their partisans, the Pinkertons were unimpeachable guardians of peace, justice, and security.

In reality the Pinkerton guards, while a rough-and-tumble group, were not the open trouble makers that they were frequently accused of being. At first when the situation was peaceful, the guards and miners frequently fraternized. When the situation became uglier in August, the Pinkertons had a duty to discharge, but seldom went beyond what their employers told them to do. The cases of disorderly action by the Pinkertons were surprisingly rare. 25

Two orders of their employers which the Pinkerton's faithfully carried out inflamed public opinion against the guards. First, operators established dead lines around their mines and ordered the guards to shoot at all who were ordered to halt, but refused to turn back. To their credit, the guards braved many fusillades of stones and insults with their guns silent. 26 Second, local citizens objected to the orders

24 John Swinton's paper, September 7, 1884, p. 1.
of the operators that the guards must block some public roads which passed through mine property.

There was public questioning of the legality of the Pinkertons. The Pinkerton Guards had been sworn in as special constables under sections 608 and 609 of the Ohio Statutes. An indignant citizen's meeting July 16 in Nelsonville, which was presided over by the mayor, appointed a committee to investigate what legal right "Pinkerton's armed police had to invade the county and obstruct the highways." A series of arrests of the Pinkertons followed. At New Straitsville twenty-five Pinkertons were arrested on July 16 for keeping concealed weapons and especially for "unlawfully usurping the office of constable." The prosecution's case was built on the Ohio law which stated that all appointees to office had to possess voters' qualifications. Judge Newman examined the case and found a true bill; however, the guards were released on bond and the case postponed until November when it was dropped. Meanwhile, the Pinkertons were permitted by the authorities to operate providing that they used their guns only in self defense.

The railroad and its guards

The Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad took a much more hostile stand against the striking miners than the operators.

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27 Logan Republican Gazette, July 17, 1884, p. 5.
28 The Athens Messenger, July 17, 1884, p. 5.
29 Logan Republican Gazette, July 24, 1884, p. 2; Columbus Daily Times, July 17, 1884, p. 1; July 21, p. 1; July 25, p. 1.
Judge Stevenson Burke of Cleveland, the vice-president of the Hocking Valley Road, was in charge of the line during President Greene's absence due to ill health. Burke was more militantly anti-union than the officers of the Syndicate. His chief agent, railroad superintendent, George Carr, was seldom friendly towards the union.

Burke regarded "any association" of workers as "dangerous." He told a reporter from the Columbus Daily Times that "we have had enough tyranny of the union..." As a railroad man Burke said that he would rather wait two years without hauling coal, if necessary, providing that time was required to root out the union..." Burke was an old man at this time whose view appears to have represented a stronger pre-Civil War attitude of the employers against unions. The common view of the younger capitalists who had developed the Hocking mining industry was more liberal.

Even before the strike Burke had assured W. B. Brooks of the Coal Exchange that the railroad would aid the operators in a strike. Partly in keeping with this pledge and partly because of past experiences of damage to railroad property by strikers, Burke hired John Norris of Springfield, Ohio, to lead a detective force for the railroad and placed a patrol train on the road (eventually supplemented by two more trains).

\[30\] Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 2.
\[31\] August 1, 1884, p. 2.
These trains, filled with Norris’ armed guards, made trips up and down the Hocking Valley’s lines in the strike area.33

John Norris was undoubtedly the worst troublemaker in the whole strike. Almost every newspaper issue reported new fights in which he participated or arrests which he made (Norris has been deputized). Norris arrested most of the miners caught for the various acts of violence against the mine owners’ property. Most of these arrests were temporary, but it must be admitted that Norris did arrest more of the troublemakers than anyone else.

The public—even anti-union people—were frequently outraged by Norris’ exploits, bluster, and arrests of innocent people. Most papers cheered when Norris’ heavy handed tactics frequently landed him in court.

The miners’ relief

The miners’ position was strengthened by the relief program which allowed them to survive for the nine months of the strike.

At the start of the strike, the state and district treasuries of the Ohio Miners’ Amalgamated Association were almost empty because of the relief given to the unemployed miners prior to the strike. The union immediately embarked on a program for solidifying outside relief. Appeals were sent in late June to surrounding farms and other mining districts.34

33 Logan Republican Gazette, Nov. 27, 1894, p. 3; The Athens Messenger, January 8, 1895, p. 3.

On the eastern side of the Hocking district, the Ohio Central Railway, Sunday Creek Coal Co., and W. F. Rand were operating at the old seventy cent per ton rate and furnished the core of the relief fund throughout the strike. These miners at the start of the strike voted to have one dollar per week checked off their pay, and later agreed to raise the contribution fifty cents per week.\textsuperscript{35}

Donations also came from other fields in Ohio and even other states, especially West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The West Virginia operators who were still paying seventy cents per ton sent money for the relief fund as did W. F. Rand who gave $100.\textsuperscript{36} Benefits were held by the Columbus Trade Assembly at the Hessenaue Rier Garten.

A relief committee was organized on June 27 with Chris Evans as chairman. The committee's headquarters were set up at New Straitsville on July 17, in an old store, and branches were soon established in Nelsonville, Bucy, Shazee, and other mining centers.

Distribution was weekly with each man receiving at first less than fifty cents, which rose to a maximum of seventy-five cents. Instead of giving the miners the actual money, the committee bought flour, sugar, and coffee wholesale to give to the men so that the money would go farther and not end up in a saloon. The miners who had

\textsuperscript{35}The Athens Messenger, July 31, 1884, p. 1; August 21, p. 5. Also: Evans, History of NWv, v. l, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{36}Columbus Daily Times, July 19, 1884, p. 1; Alexander Johnson (district secretary of the OMWA) in Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 104.
property, other income, or credit shared with those who did not and refused relief.  

The relief donation rose in August, then fell slightly until a determined campaign brought the weekly income of the fund to four or five thousand dollars per week towards the end of 1884. By March, 1885, the CMAA's relief committee had collected $25,741 in food and clothing and $70,333 in cash for a total of $97,074 in relief donations.  

The total donations to the Hocking miners were only half of those collected for a contemporary, smaller strike by the Cincinnati cigar makers, who belonged to a strongly organized national union. This emphasized the need for a strong national union for the miners.  

The economic effect of the strike  

Many of the strikers found work in those nearby mines still in operation, especially the small mines which normally employed less than ten men and those of the Ohio Central Railway, the Sunday Creek Coal Company, and W. P. Bann. At the start of the strike, the men had been ordered out of these mines, but on August 10, a union convention at New


39 John Swinton's Paper, March 1, 1885, p. 1.
Straitsville approved the reopening of those mines which were willing to work at the old seventy cent rate.\textsuperscript{40}

In these mines four men were placed in each room, where two had formerly worked, in order to provide new jobs and to fill the greatly increased orders. Business for the mines still open boomed as they got most of the Coal Exchanges\textsuperscript{1} and Syndicates\textsuperscript{3} trade. One of W. P. Redd's mines that formerly employed 150 men on day shifts now employed over a thousand men in three shifts.\textsuperscript{41} Redd stood by the miners throughout the strike since he felt "the miners, in the main, were right\textsuperscript{2} and he could pay their just demand of seventy cents and still earn a profit.\textsuperscript{42}

The miners were not the only people who benefited from the mines still operating, but also the Ohio Central Railway, which served most of the larger mines, profited from the greatly increased traffic—the biggest in its history. This helped pull the OC out of bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{43}

Most of the miners were not fortunate enough to find work in those mines still in operation, and soon squads of striking miners began leaving the district in a steady stream to seek employment in West Virginia and other fields. Some got jobs on nearby farms, but most of

\textsuperscript{40}\textbf{Columbus Daily Times,} August 11, 1884, p. 1; \textbf{Tenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Mines,} 1884, p. 10.


\textsuperscript{42}Told to a New York \textit{Tribune} reporter, reprinted in \textbf{The Athens Messenger,} December 11, 1884, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{43}\textbf{The Athens Messenger,} August 14, 1884, p. 5; August 21, p. 5.
the miners sat in dreary idleness building up the hate and desire for excitement which led to mob violence.44

Many nonstrikers suffered too. Men in jobs dependent on mining were laid off. All of the Syndicate's iron furnaces were closed. These men did not even receive the meager relief of the miners. The newspapers reported an increase in stealing food from farms in the Hocking Valley.45

The business of the merchants decreased sharply, and mining centers like Core, Nelsonville, and New Straitsville suffered severe depopulation by the end of 1884.46

At the beginning of the strike, most of the coal traffic—the biggest item of freight—ceased on the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad. Thousands of cars were stored on sidings while many engines were idle or leased to the Ohio Central. The closing of the Columbus backshops on July 1 threw 300 employees out of work. Many more were laid off, including clerks.47

The railroad was in an agreement at this time with the Ohio Central and the Baltimore and Ohio which pooled the profits of these

44 There were frequent references in the newspapers to the departures of strikers. See especially: The Athens Messenger, July 17, 1884, p. 5.

45 The newspapers of the district are full of stories which demonstrate these points. See: The Athens Messenger, August 2, 1884, p. 5; August 21, p. 5.

46 See especially the various editions of The Athens Messenger during the strike.

47 The Athens Messenger, July 3, 1884, p. 5; The Labor Enquirer, July 5, 1884, p. 3.
roads from their coal traffic and provided a set percentage for each. With the aid of the pool, the Hocking Valley Road continued to show a profit throughout the strike. 48

The evictions

At first the operators made no attempt to evict the striking miners from company owned houses. However, late in July as the influx of strikebreakers increased, the operators started posting eviction notices so these houses could be used by the newcomers. The first eviction notices at Carbon Hill were ignored, so the Syndicate (which owned the houses) brought the matter before a court on July 31, 1884. 49

Justice Bodinot decided the same day that the strikers could remain in the houses since the operators had signed a contract with the residents. 50

A second effort was made by the operators. W. B. Brooks of the Coal Exchange tried to evict the strikers from his houses in early August, but the tenants finally got a jury trial. Brooks won this second test case on evictions. The jury, returning its verdict on August 28, agreed with the argument of Brooks' lawyers that the master-servant relationship no longer existed. The jury felt that when the

48 The Athens Messenger, August 7, 1884, p. 5.
49 The Athens Messenger, August 7, 1884, p. 1; Columbus Daily Times, August 1, 1884, p. 1; Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 182.
50 Columbus Times, August 1, 1884, p. 1; August 15, p. 1.
miners were discharged from their jobs the house rental contract ceased to have force. 51  

The decision was quickly followed by a flood of eviction notices in late August and early September. At Bucktel the Syndicate ordered 290 families out of its houses by September 10; so George Snowden, a prominent local citizen, telegraphed Governor Hoodly for fifty tents, which were promptly sent. However, only two families had to use the tents, the rest were returned. The miners who owned their houses took in those without a roof. 52

The first violence  

The peace of the strike was broken on Saturday, August 2. Excited by the increasing flow of strikebreakers, a crowd at Nelsonville assaulted James Hippel, a mine boss. On the same day at Gore, a special train brought those strikebreakers working at Longstreet’s home to Gore to spend Sunday with their wives. A boisterous crowd gathered at the sound of the whistle and soon was clamoring that the men be stoned; only the pleas of the strikebreakers’ wives averted an incident. 53

A third incident occurred when two men who had returned to work at fifty cents per ton (commonly called “black legs”) were followed by a crowd from Nelsonville to Snake Hollow and beaten. When W. B. Brooks Jr.—the brash, provocative son of mine owner W. B. Brooks—tried to

51 Columbus Daily Times, August 15, 1884, p. 1; August 29, p. 1; The Athens Messenger, August 29, 1884, p. 5.
52 Columbus Daily Times, September 5, 1884, p. 1; John Swinton’s Paper, March 15, 1885, p. 3 (letter from Alexander Johnson).
53 Logan Republican Gazette, August 7, 1884, p. 5.
intervene on the victims' behalf, he found himself on his back. The younger Brooks' imprudence later provoked several altercations with strikers whom he antagonized.54

Saturday night, August 2, the engine of a Stocking Valley Road train was stoned at Carbon Hill. The strikers were blamed, and, to show its vengeance, the railroad boarded up the station and ordered all trains to pass Carbon Hill without stopping.55 Later, detective John Norris arrested two strikers for this act but did not file formal charges. Citizens objected to holding one of the two men in chains. Meanwhile, the train made several trips up and down the valley while Norris tracked down the other man.56 After the uproar over the incident, it was found that nonstrikers had stoned the train.

As a result of the violence of August 2, President McBride of the union toured the strike area requesting the miners to avoid violence. He asked them to accept the result of the strike cheerfully, whatever it might be, and warned that continued violence would destroy the public's respect for the strikers.57

The violence slackened for a while. But in the last week of August, tension increased as the strikers, annoyed by the deluge of strikebreakers, became angry with the eviction notices following the loss of the last case on August 28. Many stray shots were fired from

54 Columbus Daily Times, August 4, 1884, p. 1.
55 Logan Republican Gazette, August 7, 1884, p. 5.
56 Stocking Sentinel, August 14, 1884, p. 2.
57 Logan Republican Gazette, August 7, 1884, p. 4.
surrounding hills at the guards and the strikebreakers. On Monday, August 25, a mob of 400 rioted at Buchtel injuring one mine boss. Consequently, Superintendent Carr of the railroad telegraphed Governor Roadly asking if it would be possible to send the National Guard to the Valley. Roadly replied that no troops would be sent unless the sheriff had "exhausted all means at his disposal" to keep the peace.58

The raids of August 30

Each Saturday night everybody came to town and the liquor flowed freely. It was the most disorderly evening during the strike. The strikers' growing bitterness and restlessness burst into full force on Saturday night, August 30. At New Straitsville the hopper at the Number Seven Mine was fired quietly with a loss of about $4,000. A band of strikers raided the Murray City camp where the strikebreakers lived, but there was no damage done. Since the telegraph lines leading out of the strike area were cut early in the evening, public opinion concluded the actions were premeditated.59

That same night a large number of strikers milled about the main street of Nelsonville. Some began discussing what should be done about the strikebreakers at the Longstreth mine. For several days some hot heads had advocated marching with arms to the mine to force it to close, and now about a hundred men left a little before midnight to get their guns and masks, then met in secret and set out for the mine.

58The Athens Messenger, August 26, 1884, p. 3; Columbus Daily Times, August 29, 1884, p. 1.

59Logan Republican Gazette, September 4, 1884, p. 1; a less excited report written at leisure for the weekly edition of the paper on the following Thursday. The other papers agree generally in fact.
Longstreet's mine lay in a short, narrow, box-like valley called Snake Hollow a little over a mile from Nelsonville. The masked force, armed with an assortment of squirrel guns, pistols, shot guns, and rifles, reached Snake Hollow about half past one, Sunday morning. The twenty-one guards—local citizens of Nelsonville who had only recently been recruited to replace the expensive Pinkertons—were caught by surprise; indeed only seven pickets were posted.

One guard, William Hare, an old respected citizen of Nelsonville, was patrolling the valley below the mine. Too late he realized the presence of the marauders. He uttered a short plea for mercy and was slain.

The attackers were deployed in the darkness behind the dense underbrush at the sides of the hollow. The camp was engulfed in their gun barrage. Two guards were wounded by buckshot.

Finding the firing too powerful, most of the guards and strike-breakers fled. One fleeing figure had his horse shot out from under him. The attackers had more guns and better cover, and soon the boarding house and grounds were deserted.

Three mine laborers were captured by the mob, but two escaped. The raiders vented their anger by beating the third.60

The raid had succeeded in closing the mine temporarily, but badly hindered the miners' cause.

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60This story is woven from the various local and Columbus newspaper accounts of the raid, the best being the Weekly fourth accounts of the local weeklies.
of the operators to import strikebreakers. But the length and bitterness of the strike began to wear on the public's patience.\(^5\)

Meanwhile, the newspapers demanded that justice be dispensed for the murder of the guard, Hare. Friday, September 10, Dave Woody had a preliminary hearing before Probate Judge Acker, who dismissed the case, since there was "not much, if any, evidence against Woody" except his confession extorted by John Norris who had used "undue influence."\(^6\)

Six other persons were arrested for the same crime, but after Acker's decision their cases were dropped.\(^7\)

As a punishment for the raids and fire, the Syndicate announced that it would close its New Straitsville mines for one year (they were reopened early in 1885). At the same time the operators let it be known they would not rehire strikers (this policy, too, was later abandoned).\(^8\)

**The Sunday Creek and Ohio Central Strike**

When the miners working in the Sunday Creek and Ohio Central mines were refused the traditional September 1 raise from seventy to eighty cents, they voted to go on strike September 10. The men remained out for over a month; however, President McRide of the union and operator Rand finally prevailed on the Ohio Central and Sunday Creek miners to

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\(^5\) *The Athens Messenger*, July 17, 1884, p. 5; September 4, p. 4; *Columbus Daily Times*, September 4, p. 1.
\(^6\) *Logan Republican Gazette*, September 18, 1884, p. 5.
\(^7\) *The Athens Messenger*, September 6, 1884, p. 1.
\(^8\) *Columbus Daily Times*, September 4, 1884, p. 1; *The Athens Messenger*, September 4, 1884, p. 5.
The other three companies of national guard were sent as soon as Hoadly finished his tour. The companies kept the peace in the valley for the next month and were liked and respected by the miners. Starting September 8, Hoadly and adjutant General Dill began withdrawing the companies one-by-one, the last company departing on October 3, 1884 from Longstreth's.63

When questioned after he left office, Hoadly replied he had garrisoned the valley so sparingly because "the employment of force is itself an evil." He added, "Our system of Government does not contemplate its use as a permanent or long-continued agency." Hoadly concluded that it was better to awaken the civil authorities to "a sense of the dangers of the situation and their duties."64

Aftermath of Snake Hollow

Much of the public support for the miners was lost after the violence of August 30 and 31. Previously many outsiders sympathised with the miners, but hereafter there was growing disgust with the violence which was blamed, unfairly, on the union. The public seemed to take the attitude that the miners were exercising their just rights by striking—as long as there was no violence. Likewise, it was the right

of the operators to import strikebreakers. But the length and bitterness of the strike began to wear on the public's patience.\(^65\)

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\(^66\) *Logan Republican Gazette*, September 18, 1884, p. 5.

\(^67\) *The Athens Messenger*, September 6, 1884, p. 1.

\(^68\) *Columbus Daily Times*, September 4, 1884, p. 1; *The Athens Messenger*, September 4, 1884, p. 5.
return to work on October 22 for seventy cents since the market price of coal had fallen so low that this was all the employers could afford. Thus, the supply of relief funds was reassured again.69

**FRESH TROUBLE: October and November, 1884**

Two weeks after the last national guardsman went home new trouble flared. Unknown persons on the night of October 12, 1884, set fire to the Upson Mine near Shawnee. In what appeared to be a well-organized move—but beyond the authority and sanction of the union—five mines of the Syndicate in the New Straitsville area, another mine at Sand Run, and W. A. Showmaker's mine hopper at Nelsonville were set on fire October 15. It took a long time and much expense and labor to quench the fires. Worse yet, lawless elements among the miners had found an effective, if unfair, tool which was frequently used hereafter on poorly guarded mines.70

November 5, 1884, about 300 men attacked and fired on Murray City, breaking windows in a bunk house where strikebreakers were quartered. The Pinkerton guards drove off the strikers in a flank attack. The attacking party of miners suffered some injuries and perhaps deaths, but the extent of casualties was never revealed by the strikers who carried off their wounded comrades. The same night three railroad bridges in the mining district were burned.71

Three days later Sheriff McCarty requested the return of the Ohio National Guard units, but the governor again refused since he was not

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69 The Athens Messenger, October 30, 1884, p. 1; Logan Republican Gazette, October 23, 1884, p. 5. In December and January the Ohio Central's mines were closed due to the bankruptcy of the parent company.

70 The Athens Messenger, October 16, 1884, p. 1.

71 Logan Republican Gazette, November 6, 1884, p. 5; The Athens Messenger, November 13, 1884, pp. 1, 5.
convinced all possible steps had been taken by the sheriffs to maintain order. Instead, Governor Hoodly issued an appeal to the citizens of the strike area to stop the lawlessness, or he would be forced to send in the troops again.\textsuperscript{72}

Soon after this, twenty-three persons were indicted for the Murray City attack, but released on bond until the February session of the court at Logan. The men never appeared in court when their cases came up March 20, 1885. There was public feeling at that time that the judge, prosecution, bondsmen and defendants arranged prior to the trial that the bond would be forfeited and the case not pressed further. The truth is that almost no convictions were ever obtained in the many arrests of both strikers and guards for violence and other causes, most cases being allowed to drop quietly.\textsuperscript{73}

For the last few months of the strike there were no more mob actions (with the exception of another attack on Murray City, December 19, similar to the November 5 attack, but less bloody). Instead, there was a growing problem with cases of petty violence. From November, 1884, until March, 1885, when the strike ended—and even after that—there was a constant succession of burnings of company houses, mine buildings, railway cars of coal, and even mines themselves. In December several houses in which black legs were quartered were dynamited, causing two deaths. This prompted Sheriff Boden to again request, without success, that the troops be sent back to the mines.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{The Athens Messenger}, November 13, 1884, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{The Athens Messenger}, March 26, 1885, p. 5; \textit{Hocking Sentinel}, May 25, 1885, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{The Athens Messenger}, December 25, 1884, p. 5.
W. F. Rand and the railroad

In the latter part of November a C&N&T switch engine backed into the siding at W. F. Rand's New Straitsville Mine, coupled onto the standing hopper cars, and then left. A section crew followed and spiked shut the switch. The railroad then informed Rand they would furnish him no more transportation for his coal. The railroad explained its action on the grounds that the Syndicate had asked it not to furnish Rand any more cars since he had no contract with the Syndicate.75

The excuse was a crude attempt to eliminate a renegade mine operator. Seeing this, the Federal court in Cincinnati ordered the railroad to furnish Rand the same service given other shippers. The railroad then honored Rand's request for cars, but demanded he pay local rates instead of cheaper through rates, and pay them in advance. Contrary to practice, the railroad refused to interchange cars of Rand's coal with other railroads, thus effectively keeping Rand out of the Chicago market. On December 5, United States Judge Baxter asked Vice-president Burke of the railroad to answer a charge of contempt of court, prompting the railroad finally to settle with Rand out of court.76

Private mediation attempts

The growing violence and economic effect of the strike prompted many private citizens to try to end the dispute by mediation. A group of Nelsonville citizens tried to effect a mediation meeting of the two sides in Nelsonville, November 24. This meeting was to consist of six representatives spouse from the public, operators, and miners, but the operators refused to send any representatives since they were winning...


76 The Athens Messenger, December 4, 1884, p. 3; Logan Republican Gazette, December 11, 1884, p. 1.
the strike and did not want to recognize the union by sitting down at a conference table with its representatives.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{The miners' relief and unity, late 1884}

During September, the flow of donations to the union's relief fund decreased. In November, McBride made a strong effort to increase the donations by tapping national public and union sympathy for the strikers.\textsuperscript{78}

In Pittsburgh the theatrical companies held a benefit in the Opera House on December 11 under the auspices of several labor organizations. The Central Labor Union of New York City sponsored a concert at Steinway Hall as part of a general drive by that organization to raise money for the strikers in the Hocking district. The Chicago Central Labor Union had a similar campaign, while John Swinton collected several hundred dollars through his pro-labor newspaper in New York. About $2,000 were raised by the \textit{Cleveland Press} from Cleveland citizens.\textsuperscript{79}

By January, 1885, the donations were again up to $1,000 or $4,000 per week.

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\textsuperscript{77}Procedures: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 105-106.

\textsuperscript{78}Logan Republican Gazette, September 4, 1884, p. 2; The Athens Messenger, November 6, 1884, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{79}See John Swinton's Paper in December, 1884, and January, 1885. Also: The Athens Messenger, December 11, 1884, p. 5.
CHAPTER VI

THE END OF THE STRIKE: 1885

The situation: January 1885

By New Year's Day, 1885, most townsmen felt the strike was
over in reality. Rumors were rife that the union was ready to declare
the strike lost. ¹

With the opening of four mines in the last week of December, 1884,
all Syndicate mines except New Straitsville were open. Business in the
town was reviving. The arrival of strikebreakers, now almost daily, no
longer caused excitement among the majority of the miners, but many
miners now began to fear that all the jobs would soon be filled. ²

The recovery of the mining industry was less complete than it
appeared on the surface. The strikebreakers were poor miners and the
Hocking Valley's output was only about 250 cars daily, less than half
of capacity. ³

The condition of the strikers

The cold winter increased the privations of the miners, but was
offset somewhat by the increased relief payments. ⁴

¹ Columbus Daily Times, January 1, 1885, p. 1.
² Ibid. Also: The Athens Messenger, December 25, 1884, p. 5.
⁴ The Athens Messenger, December 25, 1884, p. 5.
Relief payments at the start of 1885 consisted of an eighth of a sack of flour, one package of coffee, and a few pounds of sugar. It is not surprising that local farmers suffered from food-stealing raids. However, a Columbus Times reporter found that, although many strikers had to budget closely, there was extensive self-denial and little real suffering.

The striking miners interviewed by this reporter admitted that they were willing to work at fifty cents per ton (what was being paid strikebreakers) but refused to sign the ironclad contract. In line with their instructions, the representatives of the Hocking miners voted with the majority at the January state convention which supported the continuation of the strike.

The anarchist scare: January, 1885

At the end of December, 1884, the Baltimore and Ohio Railway's Bristol Tunnel on the Shawnee Branch was fired by a group of strikers. This isolated the mines at Shawnee from their market until the tunnel was reopened May 4, 1885. In January, 1885, more mines were set on fire, including the Flummer Hill Mine on January 29, which continued to burn until after the strike was settled. Two other mines continued to

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5 Ibid., February 5, 1885, p. 1, 7; October 2, 1884, p. 1.
6 January 3, 1885, p. 1.
7 Ibid.; Logan Republican Gazette, January 22, 1885, p. 1.
8 Logan Republican Gazette, January 8, 1885, p. 4; The Athens Messenger, May 7, 1885, p. 2.
burn underground into the twentieth century. One was Upson's Mine at Shawnee, the other was Mine Number 11 at New Straitsville.9

Many rumors, that the miners were arming for a pending war with the operators' guards, gained credence in January, 1885. Railway detective John Norris secured the arrest of James O'Donnell, a striker, at Newark. O'Donnell was bringing a shipment of firearms to Shawnee, thus the incident increased public fears. Reporters noted in mid-January that the strikers were buying large quantities of arms and ammunition.10

When people heard of the burning mines, armed purchases, and dynamited houses, they began to believe a popular story that the famous German anarchist, Johann Most, and his comrade, Justus Schwab, had come to the valley at the beginning of 1885 to foment disorder.11

In reality, most of the vandalism of this period of the strike appears to have been caused by a few troublemakers who chose to use rather extreme means to demonstrate their hostile feelings towards the operators. Many of the schemes of destruction were formulated by idle minds as a way of breaking the monotony of an unemployed man's life, and as a way of showing displeasure with the progress of the strike. It was easy for a few of these troublemakers to lead a mob of discontented men to violence.

9For a description of the mine firings, see The Athens Messenger, January 15, 1885, p. 5; Columbus Daily Times, January 29, 1885, p. 1.

10The Athens Messenger, January 8, 1885, p. 1; Logan Republican Gazette, January 6, 1885, p. 4; January 15, p. 4.

The union officers made frequent attempts to curb the lawlessness, and most of the miners seem to have disapproved of the more extreme acts of violence, although they probably felt much of the destruction of company property was taking tit for tat after the importation of strikebreakers.

The legislature and the strike

The strike engendered much interest in the Ohio Legislature which met in the first months of 1885. Representative Jones introduced a law against the payment of wages by scrip and money orders. A bill prohibiting black-legging (employment of strikebreakers) and the ironclad contract was introduced by Representative Barger. The Jones bill passed, but the Barger proposals failed. On the other side, Seth Waldo lost an attempt to secure a law making it a criminal offense to intimidate "in any manner" any workers—in effect a law prohibiting the intimidation of strikebreakers. 12

The strike created a popular demand for a law establishing formal arbitration procedures. On January 11, Daniel Ryan introduced a bill to establish arbitration tribunals. As finally passed, the Ryan Arbitration Law delegated to the common pleas courts the power to, upon petition, establish a tribunal in their county for the "voluntary settlement of disputes." However, the law was never put to practical use. 13

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12See: the Columbus Daily Times, February 18, 1885, p. 1; the Logan Republican Gazette, January 15, 1885, p. 4; June 4, 1885, p. 1.

In January, 1885, State Representative John McBride, the miners' president who had turned politician, introduced a resolution that the legislature appoint a committee consisting of three members of each house to investigate the strike. The resolution carried, and the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee was instituted.\textsuperscript{14}

The committee toured the strike area, then, for several weeks, held hearings on the strike. Both sides were given full opportunity to testify, producing three hundred pages of testimony.\textsuperscript{15}

The committee's findings mirrored the moderate attitude of Ohioans toward the strike. The committee concluded that the dispute was the result of the "wild issue between labor and capital."\textsuperscript{16} The wage cut caused the strike and the ironclad contract prolonged the strike. The miners went on strike in refusing to submit to the wage cut, "as they had a right to do, either individually or in a body," concluded the report, and the operators, "had a right to make the demand and persist in it as long as they chose."\textsuperscript{17}

The close of the strike

By the beginning of February the strike was rapidly closing. As a sign of this, the last Pinkerton guard left in the second week of February. Pressure on the union to end the official strike was on the

\textsuperscript{14}Logan Republican Gazette, January 29, 1885, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{15}Roy, History of the Ouel Miners, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{16}Proceedings, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 5.
increase. Relief donations were rapidly declining as outsiders were beginning to realize that the strike was lost.\footnote{The Athens Messenger, February 19, 1885, p. 5.}

While mine owners refused to recall strong union men, by February the operators were replacing many of the inefficient strikebreakers with former strikers who were in such immediate need for the work that they were willing to work at fifty cents per ton and sign the ironclad contract (which they all violated a few months later). The recovery of the mining industry in the district now was so complete that the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad had its busiest February in history. The recovery was aided by the economic recovery of the nation then in progress, and by a temporary wage and price advantage of the Hocking producers over their competitors.\footnote{The Athens Messenger, February 12, 1885, p. 5; February 19, p. 2; Logan Republican Gazette, March 5, 1885, p. 5.}

On February 7, the State Executive Board of the Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association met in Columbus and voted to reduce the wage rate in all fields in the state by ten cents so that other producers could compete with the Hocking operators operation with a fifty cent wage rate.\footnote{Logan Republican Gazette, February 5, 1885, p. 4.} At a miners' meeting at New Straitsville, February 16, 1885, the miners voted to return to work at forty cents per ton (the rate offered at New Straitsville by the Syndicate was ten cents per ton lower in retaliation for the damage done by the strikers.). However, the
miners announced in the meeting that they refused to sign an ironclad contract.\textsuperscript{21}

The miners in the Ohio Central Mines refused to accept the new rate of sixty cents per ton established by the State Executive Board of the union, and on February 16 they walked out of the mines. Through the persuasive efforts of the district union president, Chris Evans, the Ohio Central Miners voted on February 27 to return to work at the sixty cent rate.\textsuperscript{22}

On March 6 the state convention of the UMWA approved the sixty cent rate for the Hocking Valley.\textsuperscript{23}

The official end of the strike came March 16, 1885, when, after a long plea from Chris Evans to admit defeat, the district convention "Resolved, that we proclaim this strike a failure."\textsuperscript{24}

Faced by the reprisal rate of forty cents per ton, the New Straitsville miners stayed out two months longer before they agreed to work at the low rate.\textsuperscript{25}

The effect of the strike

The fifty cent rate paid by the operators in the Hocking Valley began to be felt by operators in other mines and fields even before the

\textsuperscript{21} Columbus Daily Times, February 17, 1885, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Logan Republican Gazette, February 19, 1885, p. 1; The Athens Messenger, March 5, 1885, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{23} Evans, History of UMWA, v. I, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{24} John Hinton's Paper, March 29, 1885, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{25} Evans, History of UMWA, v. I, p. 132.
strike was officially ended. The wage cuts in the Hocking Valley forced the operators competitive with Hocking coal to make similar wage cuts in order to preserve their share of the market.26

Both the operators and miners lost so much in the strike that in the future they were willing to resort to arbitration of their differences. Estimates of the losses sustained were about $1,000,000 for the operators and $1,500,000 for the miners.27 As early as December, 1884, the Columbus Board of Trade estimated losses to Columbus business interests other than the railroads and mining companies at $3,500,000.28

As a result of the strike, both parties learned the cost of conflict. The miners realized the importance of national organization, which they lacked. The operators came out of the strike with the realization that they would have to treat the miners on equal terms. While the wage cut was instigated, the union in one sense was the victor, since the operators failed to destroy the Ohio Miners’ Amalgamated Association.

26 Note the testimony of W. P. Reid before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, Proceedings, p. 15.

27 John Swinton’s paper, March 1, 1885, p. 1; statement by Vice-president Burke of the CNV reported in The Athens Messenger, March 18, 1885, p. 5.

CHAPTER VII
AFTER THE STRIKE

After effects

Initially, there was a revival of business in the Hocking Valley in March and April, 1885. Several blast furnaces were reopened and car loadings stood at a high level for a few weeks while back orders were filled. But, the nation's economic recovery was proceeding slowly. Soon competing coal fields cut their wage rates and regained their share of the coal market temporarily stolen by the Hocking Valley. For the rest of 1885, the coal and iron business in the district was sluggish.¹

For a considerable while after the strike ended, the miners still needed relief. There were not enough jobs in the valley for all the miners, so relief committees functioned for several months more.

On April 7, 1885, the miners' long struggle seemed to bear fruit. On that day, Walter Crafts, vice-president of the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company, announced that the Syndicate was abandoning the truck system. Hereafter, the company would make all wage payments in cash.²

¹See: The Athens Messenger, March 26, 1885, p. 5; April 2, 1885, p. 5.
²For a discussion of this problem, see: The Athens Messenger, April 16, 1885, p. 5.
³Logan Republican Gazette, April 16, 1885, p. 4.
The bitterness of the strike continued for a long time. Black legs and strikebreakers continued to receive threats. In late September, 1885, men who had worked for the Syndicate during the strike were being forced to leave the area. Some of the dynamiting and destruction of mine property continued into the summer of 1885.

John Norris stayed in the employ of the railroad for the rest of 1885 and caused several uprisings, and public patience with him was soon exhausted.  

By the end of 1885, most of the foreign-born strikebreakers had left the district. Mine owners preferred to replace them with the more skilled ex-strikers. Even the pro-management newspapers found the departure of the strikebreakers to be "good riddance."  

New strikes, 1885

In May, 1885, when the New Straitsville miners finally agreed to return to work for forty cents per ton, all the other operators in the Eocking Valley cut their wage to forty cents. By September 2, 1885, the union and miners had sufficiently recovered from the great strike to call another strike. A district convention of the OMAA held at New Straitsville that day called the miners out of the mines until the operators were willing to raise the wage rate from forty cents back to

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5"The Athens Messenger," September 17, 1885, p. 1; April 9, p. 5.
6"Ibid.," June 4, 1885, p. 1.
7"Ibid.," December 3, 1885, p. 5.
fifty cents. The next day the Syndicate informed the union it would pay the fifty cent rate demanded.

At the state convention of the CMAA held in Columbus on November 3, 1885, the miners' representatives voted unanimously to demand that the Hocking mine operators raise the wage rate for coal from fifty cents to sixty cents. The New Straitsville miners walked out at once, and by the end of the next week about 4,300 miners in the Hocking district were on strike. W. P. Rand offered to pay the fifty cent rate and was permitted by the union to remain in operation. This time, the operators declined to import strikebreakers.

**Arbitration**

After a meeting at Nelsonville on November 20, the miners asked the owners to agree to submit the wage issue to arbitration, and the next day the operators agreed to this. The miners returned to work Monday, November 23.

The acceptance of the arbitration offer was important. First, it showed that the two parties were unwilling to repeat 1884's expensive strike. Both realized they would have to live with the other

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8 The Athens Messenger, September 10, 1885, p. 1.
10 For a description of this strike, see: Columbus Daily Times, November 7, 1885, p. 4; The Athens Messenger, November 12, 1885, p. 1; November 19, p. 1.
11 Columbus Daily Times, November 22, 1885, p. 1.
side. By the act of accepting the union's arbitration offer, the operators recognized the union as the representative of the miners. Most of all, the way was cleared for future peace and understanding.

Each side appointed three members to a Committee on Arrangements. At the Committee's first meeting, the new attempt at harmony was evident when Chris Evans was nominated by an operator as chairman. A miner then nominated mine owner Patterson as secretary. Both men were elected by unanimous vote. At a later meeting, Judge Allen G. Thurman was selected as arbitrator.

In the arbitration session, the operators argued that—because of the thick coal seam of the district—a Hocking miner could mine more coal than a miner in a competing coal field could mine while expending an equal amount of effort. Hocking miners were paid for more coal per ton of mine-run coal than were miners in other fields because the Hocking district employed a finer mesh screen. Therefore, claimed the operators, it was just to ask for a fifty cent wage rate which would allow them to compete with other fields' coal in the Chicago market.

The miners replied that Chicago was not the natural market for the Hocking Valley coal. The Hocking operators should concentrate on selling their coal at Toledo where it entered the Lake Erie market. Hocking coal sold at Toledo for twenty-nine cents per ton less than the coal of its nearest competitor; thus, the Hocking operators could afford

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12 The Athens Messenger, December 10, 1885, p. 5.
13 Ibid., December 24, 1885, p. 5.
to pay ten cents per ton more to the miner and not lose any of their rightful business if the price of coal was raised ten cents. Furthermore, the union argued, the fifty cent wage inadequately supported the miner.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 29–30.}

Judge Thurman presented his decision on January 8, 1886. The decision awarded the sixty cent wage to the miners. The arbitrator agreed with the union that the miners needed the sixty cent wage rate. He further agreed that the wage rate should be based on the price of coal at the Hocking Valley’s natural market in Toledo, not on the Chicago price. Thurman concluded that the Hocking coal business in the long run was profitable; therefore, the wage rate should not be cut in a sporadic periods of depression.\footnote{The decision is reprinted in full in \textit{The Athens Messenger}, January 14, 1886, p. 8.}

The decision was accepted in good faith by the operators.\footnote{Edward Bevis, “Mine Labor in the Hocking Valley,” \textit{Publications of the American Economic Association}, Pt. 3, 3:30 (July, 1888).} This ushered in a period of better understanding and relations among labor and management in the Hocking mines.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

The joint conference

In losing the 1884–1885 strike, John McBride and Chris Evans realized the necessity of a national miners' union. Together with Daudel McLaughlin, the powerful leader of the Illinois miners, McBride
and Evans brought about the organization of the National Federation of Miners and Mine Laborers at Indianapolis on September 9, 1885.19 Here for the first time was a strong national coal miners' union. In the early 1890's, the NF of MNL absorbed the pieces of the crumbling miners' organization attached to the Knights of Labor, and was reorgan­ized as the United Mine Workers of America.

One of the first acts of the new federation was to invite the operators to send representatives to a conference which would set the wage rates for the various coal fields. The first conference at Chicago on October 15, 1885, lacked enough representatives of management to accomplish anything. A second conference on December 15, 1885, at Pittsburgh also failed for the same reason. Finally, a successful conference at Columbus on February 27, 1886, established differential wage rates for the various soft coal fields. This was the beginning of a long history of industry-wide annual bargaining sessions in coal mining. The national scope of these conferences greatly reduced the number of strikes caused by wage competition in the coal industry. The conferences did much toward bringing order and peace to the industry.20

Both miners and operators had learned from the bitter lessons of the Hocking Valley strike.

19_Ware, _The Labor Movement_, pp. 212-213.

20_Ware, _The Labor Movement_, p. 213; Bens, "Mine Labor in the Hocking Valley," pp. 31-33; Saffern, _The Coal Miners' Struggle_, pp. 36-42.
CHAPTER VIII

THE MINERS' NEEDS VS THE OPERATORS' ABILITY TO PAY

In examining the wage disputes of 1884-1885, several questions arise: First, were the miners justified in demanding the seventy cent wage? Second, were the railroad rates too high? Third, were the Syndicate and Coal Exchange earnings low enough to justify a wage cut? Fourth, would a wage cut raise earnings? Finally, were both labor and management victims of circumstances beyond their control?

Miners' earnings

A miner's earnings were determined by the amount of coal he could mine, the amount of work available, and the wage rate received for each ton of coal mined. All coal in the Hocking Valley was separated on a screen with bars one and one quarter inches apart. The miner was paid for only the lump coal which did not fall through the screen, between eighty and ninety percent of the coal being lump coal. Most miners produced between three and five tons of lump coal in a working day. Three and one-half tons was the average daily output per man.¹

In the late 1870's the wage rate was fifty cents per ton. Miners in W. R. Brooks' mine worked a full six-day week. Average earnings per man for October, 1876, were about sixty dollars.²

¹Testimony in the Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee by W. F. Reed, pp. 9, 24, and Chris Evans, p. 42.

As business improved in 1879, the miners were able to push the wage rate up to eighty cents per ton in the winter and seventy cents per ton in the summer. In the boom period of the early eighties, the miners worked six days per week and earned an average of one hundred dollars per month.3

In 1883 and 1884 the boom of 1879-1882 collapsed. Miners now worked only two or three days per week. Monthly earnings in the Syndicate's mines fell to less than thirty dollars per man at the eighty cent rate. Miners in some of the New Straitsville mines averaged only seventeen dollars earnings per month in the first half of 1884. Men working in W. P. Bend's mines averaged slightly less than thirty dollars monthly income.4

In 1885 after the strike, at a fifty cent per ton wage, the miners of the Hocking district were earning an average of about fifty dollars monthly. This compared with the state-wide average of twenty-nine dollars per month for the Ohio miners.5

3 See the Logan Republican Gazette, March 13, 1884, p. 4; and J. R. Buchtel's testimony before the Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 195 of the Proceedings. Monthly earnings for men working full time ranged from $75 per month to $165. Buchtel produced a record for the Gore Mine Number One which showed an average monthly income per man of $222. This figure is higher than the average for other miners.

4 See Brooks' letter, Logan Republican Gazette, December 11, 1884, p. 4; and Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 11, 28 (W. P. Bend), 43 (Chris Evans), and 53-56 (Thomas Lawson).

Thus, an average miner could have hoped to earn sixty dollars per month in 1876, one hundred dollars monthly in the early eighties, less than thirty dollars in early 1884, and fifty dollars in late 1885. Out of these earnings the miner had to pay between five and eight dollars per month for his powder, lamp oil, pick sharpening, and check-weighman.6

These earnings compared favorably with other coal fields. Hocking miners earned about fifty percent more per month than did the average Ohio miner. Few American coal mine fields enjoyed higher monthly earnings than the Hocking district, and most miners in other fields earned less than the miners in the Hocking mines.7

In 1885, farm laborers earned an average of eighteen dollars per month plus their room and board. This was comparable with the fifty dollars per month earned by the Hocking miners at this time since the miners had to pay for their powder, oil, tools, check-weighman, room, and board out of their earnings. When miners' earnings fell to less than thirty dollars per month in the depression, the farm laborers were far better off than the miners.8

In 1878, a year in which earnings were almost the same as in late 1885, a study showed that the average take-home earnings for the miners were just slightly above those for unskilled workers. Skilled workers

6Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, pp. 149 (Wilson Ross), 265 (William McDevitt); and the Hocking Sentinel, July 24, 1884, p. 1.

7Ibid., p. 291. See also: John Swinton's Paper, January 20, 1884, p. 1, for some other fields' average earnings.

8Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 68.
in occupations other than coal mining earned, on the average, twice as much as the miners' income.\(^9\)

The monthly earnings of the miners in the depression, early in 1884, were but a shadow of those of men of other occupations because the miners worked so few days each month. Only in the boom years of 1879-1883 did coal miners' earnings rise to a level which placed them among the most highly paid skilled labor.\(^10\)

**The cost of living:**

It appears that about thirty dollars per month was the minimum income needed for subsistence living for a family with two children (about six or seven dollars monthly for each person).\(^11\) In 1885 an average of twelve dollars per month was spent to sustain the average inmate of Ohio's prisons and asylums.\(^12\)

Only in the depths of the 1883-1884 depression did the earnings of the miners fall to a bare subsistence level. In the peak years of business, such as 1879-1882, the coal miners' earnings were among the best of any skilled workers, but in the long periods between the extremes of the business cycle, the miners' income was well below the average for


\(^12\) Senne, "*Mine Labor in the Hocking Valley,*" p. 28.
other types of skilled laborers. While the miners seldom starved, they appeared quite justified in requesting higher wages to bring their earnings level up to that of other skilled workers, and to compensate for the hard, dangerous, irregular work in the mines.

The role of the railroad

At the time of the strike, many people felt that the high freight rates of the Columbus, Hocking Valley, and Toledo Railroad were responsible for the inability of the Hocking coal producers to hold their markets against competing fields when the depression came.

W. F. Reed, who was no friend of the CHV&I, felt that in early 1885 the rates to Chicago were fair, but that local rates were too high. J. R. Buchtel of the Syndicate stated flatly that the rates for coal were so high before the strike that the Syndicate could not compete with other coal fields. However, Buchtel concluded that the rates in force in 1885 were quite fair.

In early 1884, just prior to the strike, the CHV&I charged eighty-five cents for the shipment of a ton of coal from Nelsonville to Columbus, sixty-two miles (this rate was reduced to seventy-five cents per ton shortly after the strike began.). The Ohio Central charged sixty cents to ship a ton of coal sixty-five miles from Corning to Columbus. Rates from the northern Ohio coal fields to Cleveland were

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13 Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee, p. 22.
14 Ibid., p. 206.
lower per mile than the Hocking Valley Road's local rates.\textsuperscript{15} About the
time the strike started, the Ohio Central and the Baltimore and Ohio
suggested to the Hocking Valley Road that the three roads should make a
uniform rate of sixty cents per ton for all coal shipped from the Hocking
Valley to Columbus. This, they said, would avoid troubles with the
miners, but Burke, the vice-president of the CHV\&T, refused the offer.\textsuperscript{16}

The earnings record of the CHV\&T also suggests that its rates
were more than adequate. In the year ending on June 30, 1884, the
railroad's net earnings after taxes and rentals were \$934,418 (on total
earnings of \$2,566,000), a thirty-five percent return on the book value
of the railroad's capital stock.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus, the high rates of the CHV\&T burdened the Hocking coal
producers in their efforts to compete with other coal fields. These
rates were higher than necessary for the welfare of the railroad.

The cost of mining coal

It cost less to open and maintain a mine in the Hocking Valley
than in any other Ohio coal field since the Hocking coal mines used
drifts whereas mines in other Ohio fields required the more expensive

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 152. Burke, vice-president of the CHV\&T, did not
even know the rates of his competitors (p. 171).

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 171. Burke did not say why he refused.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Annual Report of the Commissioner of Railroads,} 1885. The net
income of the CHV\&T fell by twenty-five percent the next year due to the
deression, strike, and rate cut, and would have declined further if the
CHV\&T had not been partner to an earnings pool with the Ohio Central and
the Baltimore and Ohio.
Mining costs in the Hocking Valley were also cheaper. In 1883 it cost a sample of Hocking producers an average of $1.03 to $1.12 to mine a ton of coal and load it into a railroad car, less than the costs incurred by mines in any of the other Ohio coal fields. At the same average wage rate (seventy-five cents per ton), in 1883 it cost the Tuscarawas Valley mine operators between $1.14 and $1.39 to mine and load a ton of coal. Pittsburgh mine operators' costs in 1884-1885 were an average of $1.15 per ton.

Thus, it was higher freight costs which put the Hocking mines at a competitive disadvantage. Because of the high freight rates, Hocking coal sold in 1883 at $1.05 to $1.15 per ton on the freight car at the mine head. This was almost equal to the cost.

Earnings of the coal producers

W. P. Hess claimed that before the depression his mines made a profit equal to thirty percent of his investment, and twenty percent in the depression year of 1884. However, he had the advantage of the Ohio

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18. *Proceedings: Hocking Valley Investigation Committee*, p. 126. It cost between fifteen and forty thousand dollars more to open a mine in the Tuscarawas Valley.

19. *First Annual Report of the United States Commissioner of Labor*, 1886, p. 101. These figures were based on a seventy-five cent wage rate since in 1883 the wage rate was eighty cents for half of the year and seventy cents for the other half of the year.

20. Ibid.

Central's low freight rates from three of his four Hocking district mines.

Most of the Hocking mines served by the CH&AT earned little or nothing in 1883 and 1884. In 1883 the Syndicate earned only a token profit. The Syndicate's iron business never earned a profit, and after February, 1884, the coal business of the Syndicate also ceased to be profitable. A five percent charge on all gross earnings (for the retirement of two million dollars worth of mortgage bonds) increased the losses of the Syndicate. Thus, the Syndicate's officers came to believe that they could make a profit only when the wage rate was fifty cents per ton.

**Competition with other coal fields**

About 1883, the Pittsburgh ironworks began to convert from coal to gas as a fuel. This forced the western Pennsylvania coal producers to seek new markets. When coal from the Pittsburgh and Clearfield districts entered the lake market at Cleveland in late 1883 at a price lower than the prevailing market price, the Massillon and Tuscarawas producers were forced to lower their prices in an attempt to protect their share of the market.

Because of lower freight rates, Pennsylvania coal was underselling Hocking coal by ten cents per ton at the various lake markets in

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22 Ibid., p. 15, W. F. Reed testimony.
23 Ibid., pp. 210-212, testimony of Walter Crafts.
24 Ibid., p. 213.
25 Ibid., pp. 120-121, 139, 146.
The lower price of Tuscarawas, Massillon and Pennsylvania coal enabled these fields to capture the Hocking district's former customers in Canada and the western end of the Great Lakes.27

At the same time, Birmingham pig iron, produced with newer, improved processes and cheaper labor and raw materials than Hocking iron, was cutting into the Hocking district's iron market. Beyond one or two hundred miles from the Hocking Valley, the Syndicate lost its advantage of lower freight rates for iron and could not compete with Birmingham producers in markets beyond this range.28

Conclusion

In the absence of effective nation-wide control of wage rates and prices, predatory competition, sparked by the depression, plagued the coal industry. Both prices and wages were driven below a level of reasonable and adequate remuneration. The railway rates, unnecessarily high, hampered the Hocking coal producers in their efforts to compete with other coal fields.

In an industry as competitive as coal mining, any attempt by a producer to enlarge his profit and share of the market by cutting wages and prices was futile in the long run since the other producers quickly

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26 Ibid., p. 154.
followed suit. Prices and wages were driven downward, but profits were no greater. Since the total amount of coal demanded was no greater, the sales of each producer remained about the same.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

The Hocking Valley strike of 1884-1885 was the result of two factors: the economic problems of the Hocking Valley coal mining industry; and the hostility of the miners and operators toward one another.

The economic problems of the industry consisted of the chronic over-capacity of the coal mines, a surplus of miners, and excessive wage and price competition. All these problems were accentuated by the coal industry's sensitivity to business cycles.

Because their occupation was a rugged one, the miners tended to be a brawling group who zealously protected what they felt were their rights. The dangerous work in the mines, frequent periods of idleness due to unemployment, and independence fanned a deluge of grievances which taxed the patience of the operators. When the operators treated the miners as troublemakers, hostility developed between worker and employer. The two no longer trusted each other. The operators viewed the union as the source of constant annoyance and of an outrageous number of strikes.

When the operators organized in 1883 to counteract the new, strong state miners' union, and to prevent disastrous price competition, the miners viewed the owner combinations with suspicion and felt that the owners had combined to deprive the miners of their right to organize.
The operators were forced to request the reduction in the wage rate because of a loss of trade. The decline in coal sales was caused both by the depression and by increased competition from new coal fields, new sources of energy, and Pittsburgh coal.

Because of the mutual hostility of the miners and operators, and because of their inability to understand the needs and motives of each other, the miners rejected the companies' request for a wage reduction while the operators resolved to break the union.

The deep hostility of each party toward the other made the strike bitter. The long duration of the strike was caused by the determination of each party not to give in to the other. Only the strong organization of both sides permitted the strike to last as long as it did.

From the strike both sides learned that they would have to respect each other in the future. Both sought a way to solve their disputes by means other than costly strikes. The methods they found were arbitration and national bargaining conferences. These national conferences provided the desired escape from wage competition which had plagued the industry and benefited neither labor nor capital.

In a broader perspective, the Hocking Valley labor troubles of this period demonstrate how American labor and capital joined in the 1880's to provide organizations powerful enough to eliminate the disruption of unchecked wage and price competition. The strike is an example of how bad labor relations developed through an absence of mutual understanding of each party's needs, and of concern for the welfare of the other side.
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