

Archbald Borough – Gravity Slope

GRAVITY SLOPE COLLIERY HISTORICAL SITE

The Gravity Slope Colliery was opened in 1913 when the White Oak Breaker was shut down.

At one time there were 1700 men employed at the Gravity Slope Colliery and three full shifts worked day and night. There were 120 mules in use and it used to be a sight every morning when the boys would drive the mules from the old White Oak Mule Barn down the tracks to the mines. The main mine, which was a slope and was appropriately named Gravity Slope after the colliery, was open in 1911.

The Gravity Slope Colliery was the center of activity in town for many years. In 1942, the conveyor line to the top of the breaker collapsed and the breaker was permanently shut down. The coal from the still working colliery was shipped to the Powderly Breaker in Carbondale and the Marvin Breaker in Scranton. Soon afterwards the Gravity Slope Breaker was dismantled. The mines at the colliery were worked until 1955 when water began seeping through the coal seams into the Delaware & Hudson mines from the shutdown Riverside mines. This became too much for the mine pumps to handle. On October 4, 1955, the Gravity Slope Colliery shut down for good, ending the Delaware & Hudson mining in the Borough, one hundred and ten years after their first mine opened in 1845.

The Gravity Slope presently consists of a completely overgrown site with three buildings, the Shifting Shanty, the Fan House and the Oil House. The buildings are in disrepair due to a lack of repair and maintenance. The entry to the mine is also present on the site. The opening has been sealed, but is recognizable and will be used as a site attraction.

Oil House

This building is approximately 654 sq. ft. with a 216 sq. ft. exterior concrete slab. The building was used to store bulk shipments of oil that was then pumped into smaller containers to be transported by oilers for lubrication of mining cars, lifts, fans and gears and miners' lamps.

Shifting Shanty

This is the largest building on the site (approximately: 3800 square feet). This is the location where the miners changed shifts. It provided them with a place to store their gear and equipment and toilet and shower facilities. The original appearance has been altered. The alterations were performed when the shifting shanty was no longer needed and the building was changed into an equipment repair facility. Openings were cut in the exterior walls to allow for garage doors to be installed for equipment to enter.

Fan House

This building is approximately 1963 sq. ft. with utility crawl space. The fan was used to draw fresh air through the mines thereby protecting miners from smog, coal dust, and dangerous gases. The Guibal Fan is one of only two such I fans known to remain in the Northeast Anthracite region. It is believed that the large Guibal Fan was originally powered by a coal-fired steam engine prior to 1925. After 1925 the use of electricity grew. It is believed that at this time due to Electricity's efficiency and economical cost, an addition was added to this building to house the electrical power distribution system for the site as well as an electric motor to power the fan.

Who We Are

Since 2005, a group of volunteers known as the Gravity Slope Committee, a non-profit organization, has been working to restore the three Gravity Slope Colliery buildings in an effort to fulfill their mission to preserve the proud history and culture of the Gravity Slope Colliery.

A recently completed structural survey by KBA Engineering, p.c. determined that the basic structures of all three buildings are stable. However renovations are needed to bring them to a useable condition. The Committee plans to convert the Oil House, Shifting Shanty, and Fan House into a visitor's center, museum, and restored Guibal Fan House respectively.

Where We Are

The Gravity Slope is located on Laurel Street in Archbald Borough between the railroad and the Lackawanna River at the entrance to the Rails- To- Trails portion of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. More definitive directions will be available when the Gravity Slope web site is developed.

What is Our Vision?

The Gravity Slope Committee would like to transform the site into a park in remembrance of a significant period of local history. Several goals for the three old mine buildings have been established.

First, the Oil House will become a reception center where visitors will register. It may also be home to a small gift or snack area.

The old Shifting Shanty will be converted into a museum of mining artifacts designed to help a visitor understand the hardships under which miners and their families lived their lives. This building will also contain an area where educational sessions can occur and perhaps the main gift shop. Most important, part of the Shifting Shanty will remain as it did over 100 years ago. When this area is entered, you will see firsthand how a miner started and ended his long, hard, dangerous struggle to provide food for his family and heat for thousands of homes from New York to Philadelphia.

In the Fan house, the rare Guibal Fan will be made functional and visitors can appreciate the importance of this piece of equipment and how it allowed miners to labor hundreds of feet below ground under extremely difficult conditions.

How Can I Get Involved?

To fund this endeavor, in addition to grant money, the Committee will offer various levels of membership, sell pavers for a miner walkway, accept donations of cash and artifacts, develop admission fees, and solicit local businesses for financial support. Watch for an upcoming public notice about purchasing a Miner Walkway Brick or Paver. More information will be available when the Gravity Slope web site is completed. In the meantime, please call: 570-876-1800.

Mining Artifacts

The Gravity Slope Committee is currently compiling a collection of items dating back to the mining era. The items can be permanently donated or given on loan. Donation Forms are available now. Please include any personal information, if known, since every artifact will relate a special story. All artifacts will be catalogued and those who donated them will be identified. If you have an item from the mining era that may be of historic significance, please request a Donation Form by contacting: Archbald Borough at 570-876-1800.