

Coal Formation and Mining in Glen Carbon

Many of Glen Carbon's properties now sit over former mines along the coal corridor running through Edwardsville, Glen Carbon, Maryville, and beyond. Subsidence sometimes occurs, causing structural damage, and it is not unheard of to stumble across an old mine vent even today. But how did this area become such a rich source of coal? Where and how was it mined?

Coal Formation

Approximately 300 million years ago, during the Pennsylvanian Period, the area that is now Illinois was located near the equator with a climate primarily controlled by glacial cycles. It varied between wet and dry intervals.



Illinois saw luxuriant plant growth on broad plains and the creation of vast peat swamps because of these oscillating cycles.

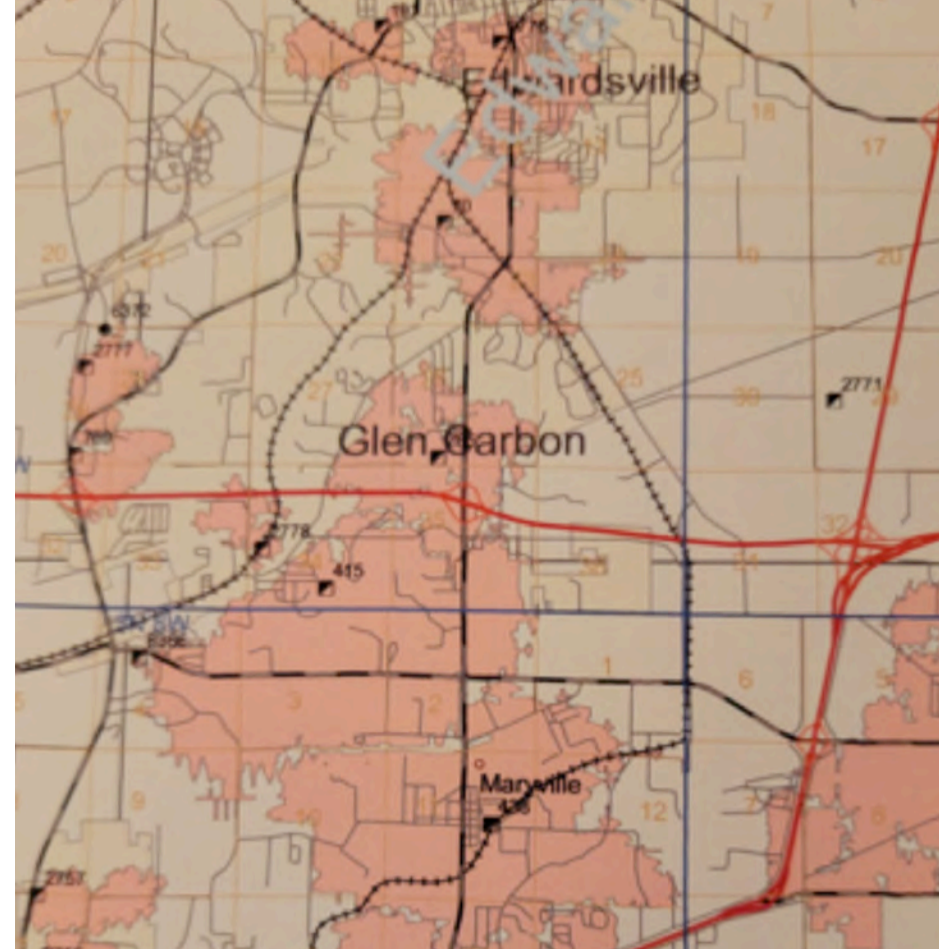
When the wet, peat-forming, glacial periods ended, the drying climate and rising sea levels brought eroded sediment flooding over the peat swamps, covering the peat, and beginning the coal forming process. Over time, more sediment was deposited and compacted the peat further. Heat and pressure from one-mile-thick overlying sediment and expelled water and volatile gases gradually concentrated the carbon-bearing plant remains into first lignite, then sub-bituminous, and finally bituminous coal.

The first written record of coal in the New World is from Illinois, along the Illinois River near what is now the town of Ottawa. Coal-bearing rocks underlie 37,000 square miles or 68% of the state. (Source: *Geology of Illinois*).

Mining in Glen Carbon

Miners have dug coal in 73 different Illinois counties. More than 4,500 coal mines have operated in Illinois since commercial mining began in 1810. The Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS) has compiled maps and directories of known coal mines for each county and are available for selected quadrangles. These maps show the approximate positions

The map below depicts the extent of mining operations around Glen Carbon by overlaying roads, water features and town boundaries.



of mines in relation to surface features such as towns and roads, the companies that operated them, and their chosen mining method. Surveyors use these maps when locating mine boundaries and assessing the potential for subsidence. Glen Carbon sits over two quadrangles, **Edwardsville Quadrangle** and **Collinsville Quadrangle**. Mining in the Edwardsville Quadrangle began at least as early as 1857, with Henry Ritter's shaft near the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Depot, and continued until 1951.

Shortly after the World War coal mining became an important industry in this area, and the future Village of Glen Carbon sat atop vast coal reserves. Seven veins of coal, ranging in depth from 90 to 400 feet, ran beneath the surface. In 1891, three St. Louis industrialists founded the **Madison Coal Corporation** proposing mining coal and other minerals. The Madison Coal Corp. operated four coal mines in the area, three mines in Glen Carbon and one in Edwardsville. Madison Coal Corp. worked to develop Glen Carbon as Mine No. 2 first dug its shafts in 1891. They constructed new houses and boarding homes over the year, and planted shade trees along the streets. Seventy-six residents petitioned the county court and officially incorporated the Village of Glen Carbon on June 6, 1892. After all, the name "Glen Carbon" means "valley of coal," reflecting the importance of its coal mining history.

Mining Methods in Glen Carbon

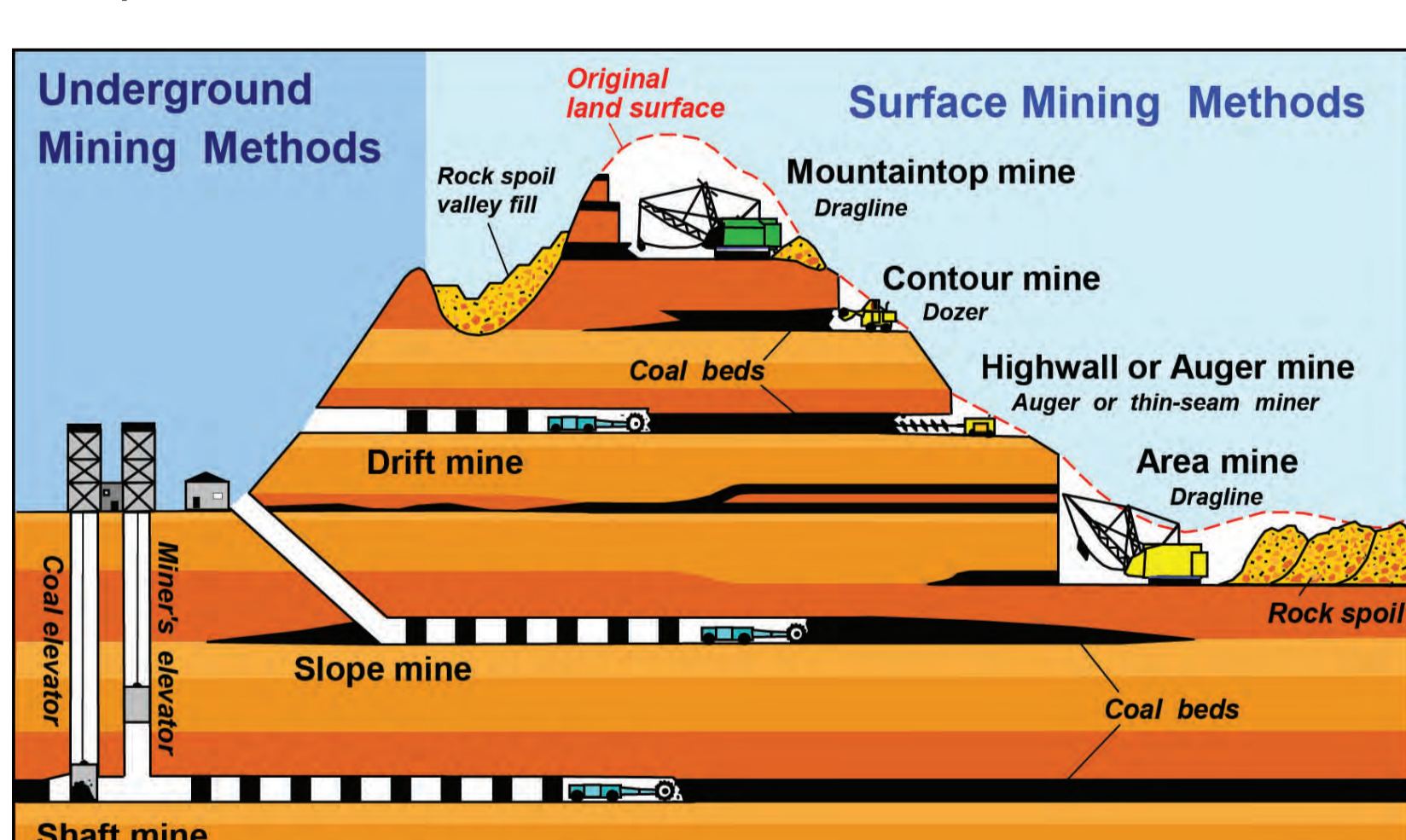
Herrin (medium sulfur) coal was the only coal mined here, ranging from 3.5 to 7.5 feet thick and 60 to 216 feet deep. General mining conditions were good, although some mines had roof problems and required extra timber, increasing costs.



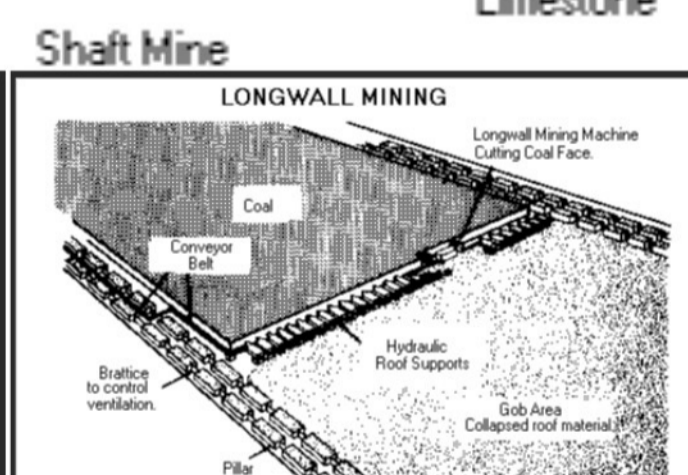
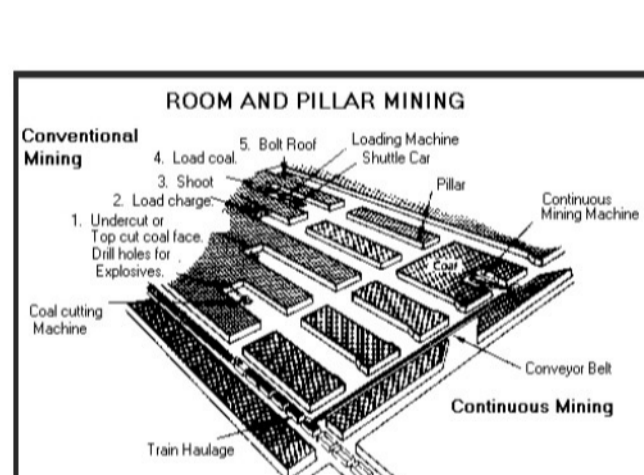
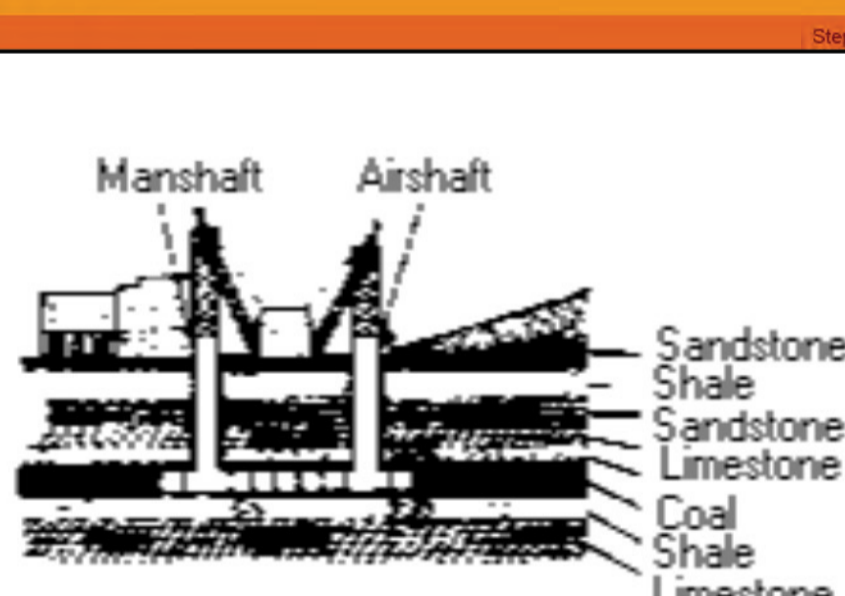
MINING METHOD	
	Room & pillar (RP)
	Room & pillar - basic (RFB)
	Modified room & pillar (MRP)
	Room & pillar panel (RPP)
	Blind room & pillar (BRP)
	Checkerboard room & pillar (CRP)
	High extraction retreat (HER)
	Longwall (LW)
	Underground mine, method unknown
	General area of mining
	Surface mine

Mine No. 2 was the largest and most productive of the four mines. It was situated north of the bike trail, just east of Madison Avenue. Located on the Illinois Central tracks, the miners constructed a large coal washer nearby to wash the coal before loading it onto train cars. The establishment of on-site mine rescue and first aid stations at Mine No. 2 Mine and Mine No. 4 in 1911-1912 indicated the importance of miner safety. In 1934, the last mine in Glen Carbon closed permanently. In 1988, a project funded under "The Mine Land Reclamation Act" obliterated nearly all traces of the mine.

Coal mining methods vary depending on the local circumstances and includes surface, contour, underground mining, and more. Coal mining in the Glen Carbon area was underground and primarily utilized the room and pillar method.



Underground Coal Mines



Sources:
 Illinois State Geological Survey - Coal Formation in Illinois
 Illinois State Geological Survey - Bedrock Geology of the Edwardsville Quadrangle
 Illinois State Geological Survey - Coal Mines in Illinois Edwardsville Quadrangle
 Feeco International - Types of Coal Mining



Show your Village pride by purchasing a Glen Carbon shirt!

Glen Carbon t-shirts-\$10; coffee cups-\$8 and history books-\$10, make great gifts! All items are always for sale at the museum but will also be for sale at the **Glen Carbon Homecoming Father's Day weekend.**

Stop by our booth!



Become a Volunteer!

Share your passion for local history . . .

Do you have a passion for learning local history and sharing that knowledge?

Volunteer at our museum to engage with the history of the Village of Glen Carbon. Work with the collections—over 4,000 objects.

Apply Now

For more information contact:

sdoolin@glen-carbon.il.us or (618) 288-7271

Museum Hours:

Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays 9AM-3PM.

618-288-7271

