

**The Filson Historical Society**  
**U.S. Coal and Coke Company**  
**Mining Photograph Album, 1919-1920**

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these photographs,  
contact the Curator of Photographs and Prints.

Size of Collection:  
1 album

Location Number:  
021PC20

## **U.S. Coal and Coke Company Mining Photograph Album, 1919-1920**

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection is compiled of 278 silver gelatin photographs, approximately 5 ½ x 3 ¼”, mounted into a photograph album. The photographs document the construction of the U.S. Coal and Coke Company in Lynch, Harlan County, Kentucky between 1918 and 1920. Lynch was a mining company town build by the U.S. Coal and Coke Company (a subsidiary of U.S. Steel) from 1917 to 1925 and supplied a vast amount of coal for steel production. Lynch was named after the company manager at the time, Thomas Lynch.

Most of the photographs in the album documents the construction of Lynch's most iconic buildings and infrastructure that helped them achieve such large yields. These buildings include the impressive commissary (a three-story department store), made of cut sandstone with large display windows and a huge metal flagpole flying a giant American flag; the powerplant, smokestack, and tipple built by the company in 1919 to make Lynch electrically self-sufficient; the U.S. Coal and Coke Company offices and bathhouse; the town's train depot; and the Lynch Hotel, which boasted 108 rooms and was used for housing by company clerks, engineers, store employees, teachers, and mining officials.

The photographs also include the construction of bunk houses, company single-family dwellings and duplexes, pipelines, a hospital, the construction dumping pit, company railway cars, and an old wood-shingle post office. There are about ten photographs that picture men in suits, likely mining officials, in front of sandstone buildings, and a handful of images depicting women sitting on the stoops of company houses, and other shots of men and women milling around the town and the surrounding woodlands on foot, on horses, or in cars. The album concludes with four pages of photographs featuring the Toronto Power Generating Station along the Niagara River in Niagara Falls, Ontario. This is likely an indication that the compiler of the album was intimately involved in the construction of Lynch, probably a U.S. Coal and Coke Company employee or engineer, and perhaps visited Niagara Falls to study the power station.

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**Historical Note**

The U.S. Coal and Coke Company built Lynch on part of a 19,000-acre tract of land, which at the time made it the largest coal camp in the world. By the 1940s, Lynch was considered the "Cadillac" of coal mining towns, with beautiful public buildings, paved streets, indoor plumbing and sewage, plenty of land for recreation, and excellent healthcare facilities servicing a population of around 4,000 miners and 10,000 total residents from almost forty countries (U.S. Steel recruited workers for Lynch largely from Ellis Island). Lynch's miners long held the record for production from a single nine-hour shift, when on February 12, 1923, a crew operating forty shortwall cutting machines pulled out 12,820 tons of coal filling 256 railcars.

As a demand for coal declined and less labor-intensive techniques were developed in the latter half of the 20th century, the town of Lynch declined as well. With shifts in mining techniques in the 1960s and '70s, people began to move away. When the railroad line to the town was officially severed in 1996, the population dwindled. Today, there are just over 600 people in Lynch, overseen by just five government employees and no prospect for employers, but many of the buildings featured here still stand. Towns like Lynch were the subject of a revered documentary produced from 1973-76 entitled, HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A, which captured the intense struggles and long-fought labor disputes of modern-day miners in the area.

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**Photograph List**

021PC20\_pg.001: Six photographs of homes in Lynch with people gathered sitting on the porch, views of the landscape including views of the homes built on the mountain side, and two views of a silo on the side of a cliff.

021PC20\_pg.002: Six photographs of early construction views of Lynch. Many structures are being built around water, presumably Looney Creek.

021PC20\_pg.003: Six photographs of individuals (possibly residents or company workers) posing outside the Lynch Hotel, which was destroyed in the 1960s.

021PC20\_pg.004: Six photographs of individuals (possibly residents or company workers) posing outside of the Lynch Hotel.

021PC20\_pg.005: Six photographs of individuals posing in a car in town, and snapshots around the rocks of Looney Creek.

021PC20\_pg.006: Six photographs of the landscape around Lynch Three men are continually pictured around the rocks of Looney Creek and the hills surrounding the town.

021PC20\_pg.007: Six photographs of landscape views, the coal mining tipple, and water works machinery alongside the valley of Lynch.

021PC20\_pg.008: Six photographs of views around Lynch including an image of woman in her nursing uniform, a woman posing outside with a horse, group shot of several men posing around a water pump and views of homes on a hill with construction below. .

021PC20\_pg.009: Six photographs of the construction of the US Steel's power plant and coal tipple.

021PC20\_pg.010: Five photographs of views around Lynch during construction including a snapshot of two women standing at the entrance of a company office or building and a snapshot of a group of women standing around a bunch of rubble from construction.

021PC20\_pg.011: Six photographs of the construction of underground pipes.

021PC20\_pg.012: Five photographs of construction view of underground pipes and trenches including several views of men digging pipe trenches.

021PC20\_pg.013: Six photographs of varying views of the construction of the United Supply Co. Department Store, with an American Flag on top of the building, seen in several images, ca. 1919.

021PC20\_pg.014: Six photographs of views around Lynch. The top two photographs show the construction of the United Supply Co. Department Store and a snapshot of the roof the department store with an American flag on view. Snap shots of views of homes covered in snow and views of buildings in town are also on the album page.

021PC20\_pg.015: Six photographs of varying view of homes and buildings being constructed in addition to several images of view of runs of homes in the valley of Lynch.

021PC20\_pg.016: Six photographs of varying views of buildings being constructed in Lynch. Two women are pictured on horseback and two snapshots include a group of women standing amongst a construction rubble pile.

021PC20\_pg.017: Five photographs (left to right) view of men sitting in forest (image moderately damaged,) men standing on the banks of a river or stream with the rugged landscape jutting behind them, view of the U.S. Coal and Coke Co. mining operations along a mountain side, a man feeding a bear outside a cabin, and another view of the rugged landscape.

021PC20\_pg.018: This album page has no photographs.

021PC20\_pg.019: Five photographs of the skeleton framework of several buildings and bridges under construction.

021PC20\_pg.020: Six photographs of the U.S. Coal and Coke Company's coal tipple under construction. skeleton framework of a large building next to railroad tracks. The building is elevated on a series of columns.

021PC20\_pg.021: Six photographs of finished homes in the valley of Lynch, Kentucky. The center left image pictures an unidentified woman cooking on her back porch.

021PC20\_pg.022: Six photographs showing the mining operation and the landscape in wintertime. .

021PC20\_pg.023: Six photographs of the construction of Office and Bath House. The structure is 313 feet long and 40 feet wide. In its prime it housed the general office personnel including General Superintendent, Accounting, Safety, Engineering, and the personnel department. It also housed the bathing facilities for the company men and foremen.

021PC20\_pg.024: Six construction progress photographs of s structure at the U.S. Coal and Coke Company with coal trains in view.

021PC20\_pg.025: Six photographs of varying views of U.S. Coal and Coke Company's mining operations. Including views of equipment and the mining office.

021PC20\_pg.026: Six photographs of varying views of construction progress.

021PC20\_pg.027: Six photographs of construction progress on the coal mining tipple.

021PC20\_pg.028: Six photographs of construction progress on the coal mining tipple.

021PC20\_pg.029: Six photographs showing the construction of the Lynch hotel and other structures in the community.

021PC20\_pg.030: Six photographs of the construction progress of the United Supply Co. Department Store.

021PC20\_pg.031: Six photographs of completed rows of houses in Lynch and a view of the Lynch Hotel (bottom, right).

021PC20\_pg.032: Six photographs of views of the construction of the Lynch Hotel and views of homes behind the hotel.

021PC20\_pg.033: Six photographs of coal cars on tracks, stacked up, and hauling coal.

021PC20\_pg.034: Six photographs of the coal mining tipple and construction views. Three workers are pictured with equipment (bottom right).

021PC20\_pg.035: Six photographs of the construction of the Lynch Hotel with a view of a small locomotive pictured in the center right photograph.

021PC20\_pg.036: Six photographs of homes around Lynch with a view of the back of the Lynch Hotel (bottom, left).

021PC20\_pg.037: Six photographs of newly finished homes in Lynch, and a side view of the Lynch Hotel.

021PC20\_pg.038: Six photographs of the coal operation in Lynch including views of coal lines and the coal tipple.

021PC20\_pg.039: Five photographs documenting the construction of a silo.

021PC20\_pg.040: Six photographs of the coal tipple and a possible coal preparation plant.

021PC20\_pg.041: Six photographs of cliffside homes and logged timber.

021PC20\_pg.042: Six photographs of completed homes in Lynch and two snapshots of unidentified men at the bottom of the page

021PC20\_pg.043: Six photographs taken around Niagara Falls including images of the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge (center page).

021PC20\_pg.044: Six photographs of Niagara Falls at varying angles, with a view of the Whirlpool Rapid Bridge at the bottom left.

021PC20\_pg.045: Six photographs of Niagara Falls and the Toronto Power Generating Station.

021PC20\_pg.046: Six photographs of buildings around Niagara Falls including a picture of the Gate House to the Ontario Power Company (top left), snapshots of the rapids above Niagara Falls, and an image of a water pipe.

021PC20\_pg.047: Six photographs of residents around Lynch, including women on horseback and in front of the Lynch Mines office building.

021PC20\_pg.048: Six photographs of Lynch residents on their front porches and posing on horseback.