

Town of Slickville
Route 819
Slickville
Westmoreland County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-256

HAER
PA,
65-SLIV1,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
TOWN OF SLICKVILLE

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PA,
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Location: Route 819, Slickville Vicinity,
Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1916-22

Builder: Cambria Steel Company

Present Owner: Various private concerns

Present Use: Mine is abandoned, town remains in use

Significance: The Town of Slickville developed to house
and service workers of the five
Slickville mines operated by the Cambria
Steel Company.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American
Engineering Record (HAER) and the
Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)
began a multi-year historical and
architectural documentation project in
southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out
in conjunction with America's Industrial
Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a
comprehensive inventory of Blair and
Cambria counties as the first step in
identifying the region's surviving
historic engineering works and industrial
resources.

Compiler: Gray Fitzsimons and Kenneth Rose, Editors

History:

DESCRIPTION: The existing mine buildings at Slickville stand near
the juncture of Route 819 and Depot Street, and have been
incorporated into the village as residences and storage structures.
One characteristic of the mine buildings is the use of common-bond
brick with rows of dark red brick headers. The extant mine
buildings include the Powerhouse, the Motor Barn, a small Repair
Shop, the Shower House, the Mine Office, and the Jail. The
Powerhouse is located near the sealed entrance to the No. 2 mine.
It is a tall one-story building measuring 89' x 33'. Now used for
storage, the building contains common-bond red-brick walls with

brick pilasters, an interior steel frame, riveted steel Fink roof trusses supporting a gable roof, and a stone foundation. The windows have been infilled with brick. Located next to the Powerhouse is the Motor Barn. Also used for storage, it is a one-story building, measuring 38' x 34', and contains common-bond red-brick walls. Its main facade features a stepped gable roof with the date "1918" displayed in brick. The building also has a brick chimney, large multi-light windows, a central double wooden door, and a stone foundation. The Shower House is adjacent to the Motor Barn. A one-story building, it measures 48' x 12' and contains stretcher-bond red-brick walls, a gable roof, and a rubble stone foundation. The building has been converted into a residence. The Repair Shop is located in front of the company store and is a small one-story building has common-bond red-brick walls, a shed roof with a metal derrick on top. It rests on a rubble stone foundation. The Mine Office and Jail is a two-story building with common-bond red-brick walls, a gable roof, a stepped parapet wall, and a stone foundation. It has also been remodeled and serves as a residence. The original front porch, featuring a pedimented gable roof and columns, was removed.

The mine buildings are located within the town of Slickville which includes the company store, a church, a school, a doctor's office, a row of twenty company-built houses on either side of Route 819, two curving roads west off Route 819 that is lined with approximately forty houses on First and Second avenues, one row of six houses on County Road, and one row of ten houses on Cottage Road. Built in 1919 and operated by the Miners' Supply Company, the Company Store contains a post office and is a one-story building with a full basement. It is located on First Avenue and measures 84' x 42'. The building retains a number of its original elements including common-bond red-brick walls, a stepped gable on the main and rear facades, a gable roof, a corbeled brick cornice with brackets on the main facade, and rectangular windows with concrete sills. It rests on a stone foundation.

A number of houses stand along Route 819 and First and Second avenues. These include single-family houses and double houses. The first constructed were along the First Avenue crescent. Completed in 1917 they are double houses, each a two-story wood-frame building with a hipped roof, clapboard siding (many now covered with asphaltic and aluminum siding), and central chimneys of brick. Each double house measures 40' x 24'. Originally they had outhouses with concrete vaults. Most of the single-family miners' dwellings are on Second Avenue. Constructed in 1918, each has two stories, measures 22' x 22', and was originally built with three bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor, and kitchen and living room on

the first floor. They also contained a with a full-length front porch. Of wood-frame construction, resting on stone foundations, most of these houses have been modified with metal siding and rebuilt porches. The houses on County Road were built in 1922. These are single-family wood-frame dwellings containing one story, clapboard siding, a gable roof, a central brick chimney, and a rubble stone foundation. The houses on Cottage Street were also built in 1922 and are single-family frame dwellings each with one story, five rooms, clapboard siding, a gable roof, a central brick chimney, and post foundations. Originally they had no indoor plumbing or water. Many of the front porches have been enclosed.

The Doctor's Office is a one-story building, measuring 25' x 15'. It contains stretcher-bond red-brick walls, a corbeled brick cornice, a gable roof, and a rubble stone foundation. The houses once occupied by company officials are wood-frame single-family dwellings containing one-and-a-half stories, a gable roof with dormers, and a narrow second floor porch over front porch. The exteriors contain clapboard siding and the buildings rest on rubble stone foundations. Each house was built with seven rooms and bath and each has a frame garage. The foremen's houses are located along Route 819, north of the town center; these include double houses and single-family houses. The single-family houses measure 24' x 22' and contain two stories, three bedrooms and bathroom, a living room, and a kitchen; the doubles are virtually identical to the houses on First Avenue. The town retains a Presbyterian Church, located on Route 819, north of the town center. It is a frame building with clapboard siding painted white. The one-story structure has a gable roof with central bell tower. The town's Catholic Church, built in 1920 and located in the town center on Route 819, was demolished in favor of a new building. The school was completed in 1922. It is a two-story red-brick building situated in the town center. The school was built with eight rooms and has a flat roof with a brick parapet wall. It has been vacant for many years and is for sale.

HISTORY: Named for Edwin E. Slick, vice president of the Midvale Steel Company which was a Philadelphia-based concern that owned the Cambria Steel Company, the town of Slickville is situated about fifteen miles north of Greensburg and was laid out in 1916. That year the Cambria Steel Company opened the first of its five Slickville mines, served by the Pennsylvania Railroad's Turtle Creek Branch. The Pennsylvania Railroad hauled coal from Slickville to Cambria Steel's mills in Johnstown. Initially miners at Slickville lived in temporary houses; however, by 1917 Cambria Steel completed the first of the town's residences. Instead of employing the standard grid plan, the company designed a town center with two curved roads, which extended west of Route 819. Ten

double houses, one-half of which rented for \$7.50 per month, were built along First Avenue. The following year the company built twenty-one two-story single-family houses. Located on Second Avenue, each of these houses rented for \$9.00 per month. This was followed in 1919 with the construction of the Superintendent's house (rent \$25 per month) and mine managers' houses (each \$15 per month). By 1922 most of the town's residences, the company store, the school, and a Roman Catholic Church were completed.

By 1923 the Cambria Steel Company operated three drift mines at Slickville. About 500 miners were employed in the mines and the population of Slickville numbered over 1,200 persons. That year the Bethlehem Steel Company acquired Cambria Steel and subsequently reorganized the Slickville mines, renaming them the No. 91 mine. No. 91 was one of fifteen mines operated by Bethlehem Steel in the 1920s in western Pennsylvania. In 1930, the first year of the Great Depression, mine No. 91 produced 545,151 tons of coal while employing 286 miners, with coal being mined from the 84"-thick Pittsburgh seam. A preparation plant to wash coal prior to shipment was erected in the 1930s, but by 1940 production had dropped to 136,683 tons of coal. Coke was never produced at Slickville; Bethlehem shipped slack coal from No. 91 to Johnstown where it was coked in the company's by-product coke ovens. Mine No. 91 remained a captive operation until its was closed in 1943. As with many other coal towns in the region, the houses at Slickville have been purchased by individuals.

Sources:

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