

Chatham County Coal Mining: Livelihoods and Lost Lives

Sunday, June 18, 2017, 2:00 PM
Historic Courthouse
Pittsboro, NC
Free and open to the public

On the morning of May 27, 1925, explosions in the Carolina Mine shook the Chatham County village of Coal Glen and took the lives of 53 men. This accident—the largest industrial disaster in North Carolina’s history—will be the focus of a presentation by historian Forest Hazel on June 18, 2017 at 2:00pm in the Historic Chatham County Courthouse.

The only significant source of coal in North Carolina lies along the Deep River in Chatham and Lee Counties. Attempts to mine the Deep River coalfields commercially began in the early 1850s and the last mine closed about 100 years later. Mr. Hazel will talk about the history of the mining industry in Chatham County, the numerous accidents that plagued it, the impact of the industry on North Carolina’s economy, and what life was like for the miners and their families. Photographs and artifacts will be displayed.

Forest Hazel lives in Mebane, NC. He has a BA in Anthropology and a MPH degree, both from UNC-Chapel Hill. Most of his work for the past 35 years concerns the history of American Indian communities in the Carolinas, but for the past year and a half he has been working on the Deep River coalfields project. His interest in the coalfields was initiated by a visit to the Cumnock cemetery to photograph the headstone of Duncan Goins, a CSA vet of Indian descent. Hazel noticed markers in the cemetery indicating that men had died in various mining accidents. His grandfather's family were coal miners, (in Wales, not NC) and his curiosity was aroused. Hazel found that few people knew much about the NC coal mines, and felt that the story should be promoted and remembered.

Mr. Hazel’s presentation is sponsored by the Chatham County Historical Association. The event is free and the public is welcome.

Questions: history@chathamhistory.org



*Coal Glen disaster. News and Observer
(Raleigh), May 29, 1925*