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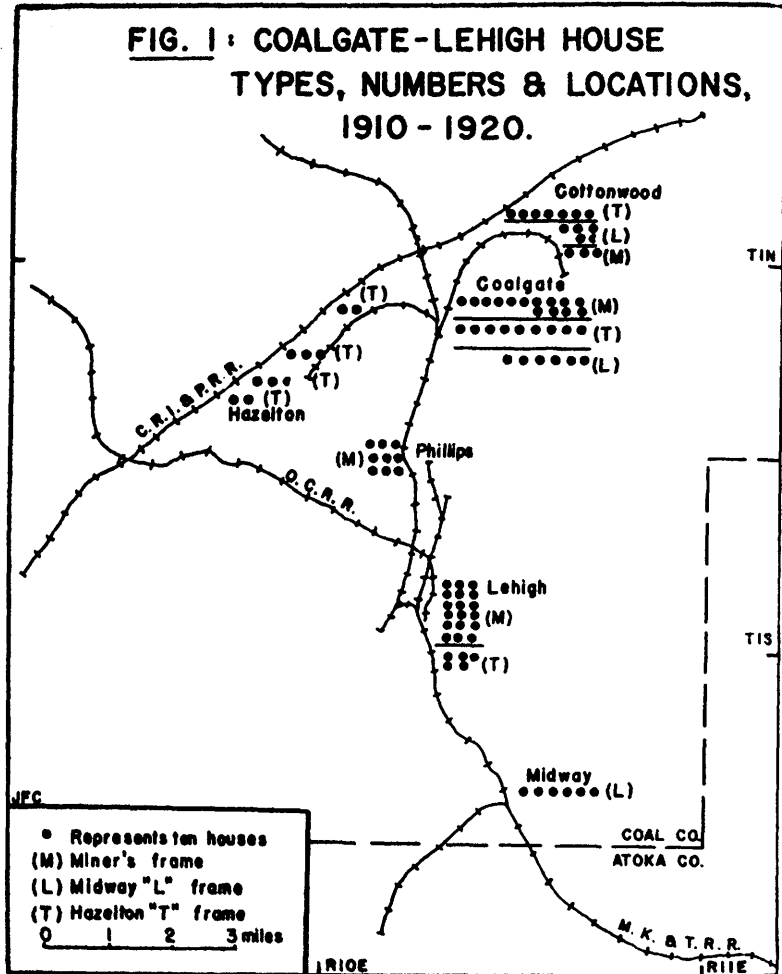
## Rural Settlement in the Vicinity of Coalgate, Oklahoma

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House types indicate several factors regarding a cultural landscape. To the keen observer, a dwelling's design depicts time—a particular era—and relates to traditional or environmental influences which are presently or were previously operative. More important, the spacial arrangement of living units denotes much about existent or past economic activities and their effects upon the surrounding environs.

The vicinity of Coalgate, Oklahoma, was selected as the study area since several house types were apparent in sizeable numbers. This locale, extending from Midway to Cottonwood, was initially settled when coal mining was begun in the 1880's and actively continued into the early 1920's (Fig. 1). Since this area, situated in the Coalgate-Lehigh Coal Field, is one of eight mining districts located in Oklahoma, similar housing patterns may be found elsewhere.

Originally, the coal industry in the study area was operated by a private company, the Folsom-Morris Coal and Mining Company, and was focused upon Lehigh; concurrent with the evolution of mining was the creation of company settlements or towns, from which other settlement



clusters spread. The Southwestern Development Company, a subsidiary of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, procured mining rights for the tract around Coalgate. Here, also, was positioned a company settlement. Several outlying, small independent company communities were established at various stages during the coal field's operational period.

Generally, each company erected houses of a particular design. It appears that the large companies built the more mobile structures, which made feasible the movement of homes from one mine site to another as manpower alterations occurred. Apparent, too, is the standardization of company home construction that lowered many costs, which included: (1) those encountered in ordering materials; (2) those keeping waste in building materials at a minimum; and, (3) those construction routines familiar to the company carpenters, which saved time and facilitated the rapidity with which structures could be erected.

The earlier homes were more cheaply constructed than those of later periods. Frame work was kept to a minimum when erecting these dwellings. Framing was necessary for the roof and floor, but partially omitted in the walls. Studding was used only at the corners and for enclosing doors and windows. Since 12- to 14-inch-wide planks, placed vertically, were used usually for wall covering, strength was added which otherwise would have been lost due to the limited degree of framing. Narrow wooden strips covered the joints of these wide planks. Roofs were generally covered with shingles.

Foundations for these home consisted of stacked bricks or stones which were placed beneath the corners and along the center portion of each side. These, obviously, could be hastily assembled or altered, at little or no cost. Chimneys, in like fashion, cost little and could be easily assembled or dismantled. Flues were made mainly with stove pipe and were commonly in central locations in the homes.

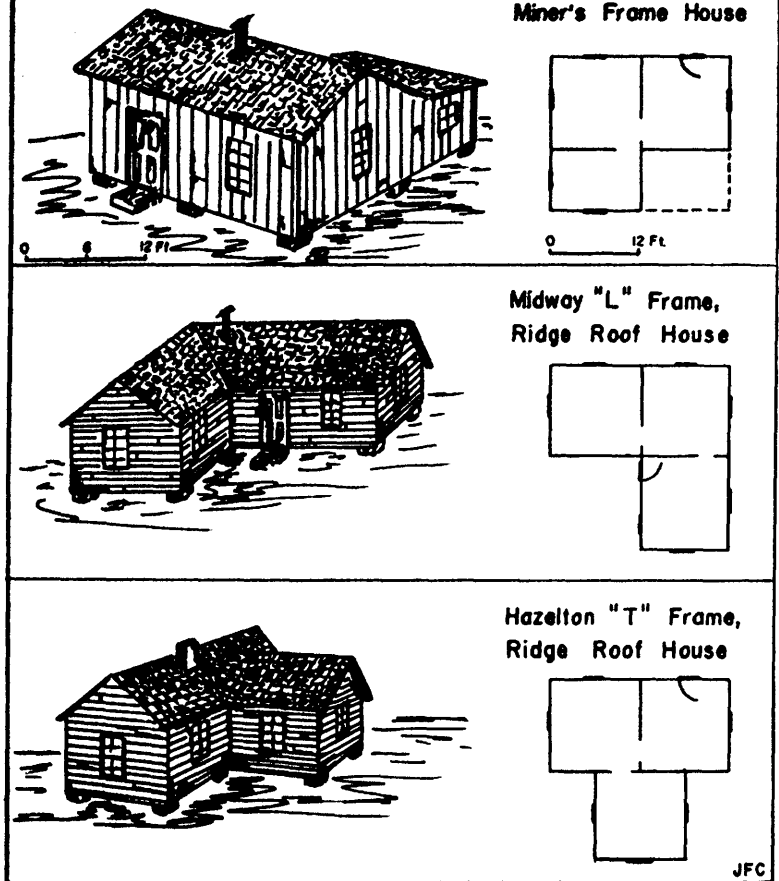
*House Types*—Three types of company homes were erected at various locations in the Coalgate-Lehigh Coal Field, during its operational period: the Miner's frame house, the earliest structural type built in the area; the Midway "L" frame, ridge-roof house; and, the Hazelton "T" frame, ridge-roof house. All were cheaply and easily constructed and could be quickly dismantled and moved to another site without too much difficulty. However, the Midway "L" frame and the Hazelton "L" frame houses were much less mobile than the former and earliest unit, the Miner's frame house.

The Miner's frame house is typical of many found in mining communities, having appeared elsewhere in the state's early coal mining areas (Fig. 2). These structures were at least two rooms in length, one room in width and covered with a ridge roof. Frequently, additional space was gained by the construction of rooms on the rear, which were then covered with a shed-type roof. This rear appendage consisted of either one or two rooms, with location at one end or centered against the main unit. Entry was gained on the front of the house, but the location of these entrances varied. Several of these buildings had one front door, others had two, which led to separate rooms. When the second doorway was lacking its place was filled by a window. Windows were also found along the sides, and in the shed appendage. Few of these homes had any type of porch.

The Midway "L" frame, ridge-roof house was more common after 1890, although its construction time and costs were greater (Fig. 2). Prior to this date, some of these dwellings were erected at Midway. Thereafter, this dwelling type occurred in all parts of the coal field. This structure consisted of two units. One portion was two or three rooms in length, one room wide and covered with a ridge roof. Joining this section was another unit of one or two rooms, also with a ridge roof, which formulated an "L"-shaped floor plan due to their meeting. On the average, these homes were comprised of three rooms—two rooms in length with an adjoining one-room wing. The entrances for this structure opened onto the court which was formed by the main structure and its wing; there would be either one or two doors, while a window occupied the space when the second portal was omitted. Porches were uncommon on these dwellings, too.

Hazelton "T" frame, ridge-roof houses were more common after 1900 (Fig. 2). A series of these homes was erected by the Hazelton Coal Company about 1910 at their slope mines, west of Coalgate. However, this particular structural type seemingly occurred at other sites earlier. The homes were better constructed than their predecessors, especially the Miner's frame house. Each structure generally consisted of three or five rooms. The main portion of the dwelling had either two or three rooms

FIG. 2. COALGATE - LEHIGH HOUSE TYPES, 1880-1920.



covered with a ridge roof; at the rear of the larger unit was centered a single room appendage. The wing was covered with a ridge roof. This floor plan then constituted a "T"-shape. The siding material was generally clap board or cove fitting strips applied horizontally. Entrances were located on the front of the main structure, where either one or two doors were found. Few of these homes had porches. Many of the "T"-frame structures had masonry chimneys rather than the commonly used stove pipe flues.

*Spatial Arrangement*—The company-constructed dwellings generally were positioned in rows, which then necessitated a crudely surfaced road in front. Behind each housing unit was situated an outhouse, often a garden and later, although infrequently, storm cellars, which served also as a place for storing food. With the growth of these communities, particularly, Coalgate and Lehigh, came ethnic segregation, seemingly self-imposed, whereby various sectors or streets were known as Polish, Italian, French, etc.

At smaller mine sites, usually independent companies on the periphery of the coal field, similar patterns evolved with lesser numbers of homes. Moreover, since these operations were initiated later than those focused upon Coalgate and Lehigh, newer dwellings were found. The Hazelton "T" frame, ridge-roof house serves as an example and was less mobile than the others due to its better construction, and its ownership by small independent companies who seldom moved their mine locations. At these camps or isolated settlements, nearby the housing area, were located company buildings which included: the store, office, various shops, stables, and the lifting apparatus and trackage associated with the underground mining operations. Usually a large pond or several water tanks were encountered at such settings. The stored water was heated in huge boilers and used in steam engines for powering the lifting machinery.

Regarding the intensity of house types and their numbers in particular portions of the study area, the oldest and greatest totals were located in the initial settlements: Coalgate and Lehigh (Fig. 1). The most prevalent dwelling type found in these communities was the Miner's frame house. However, on the periphery of the coal field, and at younger settings, the newer house types, *i.e.*, the Hazelton "T" frame and the Midway "L" frame houses, were found. The newer dwelling types found in the older communities were generally those built by miners as private residences; much of this latter building was prompted by various labor disputes and strikes during which miners were often evicted from company-owned houses.

*Conclusion*—Presently, several hundred of these dwellings are found in the study area, particularly at Coalgate. Most of the small mine camps, which ceased operations in the later 1920's, as well as most of the Lehigh housing units, were dismantled and moved. These found new settings in Coalgate or other towns or were utilized as outbuildings on surrounding farms. Although other styles of homes, built at later periods, are found in Coalgate, the existence and positioning of these early structures indicates much about the locale's early growth. The most apparent generalization is the high degree of standardization imposed upon the landscape by these company-dominated communities; similar analogies could be made to the petroleum industry. Moreover, even when the miners, comprising the largest segment of these settlements, constructed their own dwellings, it was often these former types which were copied; thus, these house types were perpetuated, increasing in numbers, while the cultural setting was further unified.

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