The Coming Coal Center of Missouri!

The new town is almost as the town's new center. A small town of about 3,000 people, it is the coming coal center of Missouri. The town has grown rapidly in recent years, and its future looks promising. The coal mines in the area are a major contributor to the town's economy.

The town has several advantages that make it an ideal location for coal mining. The terrain is suitable for mining operations, and the area has a good supply of water. The town is well-connected by road and rail, making it easy to transport coal to market.

The town's infrastructure is developing rapidly, with new roads and buildings being constructed. The town's leaders have a vision for a future where coal mining is a major industry, bringing prosperity to the community.

In summary, the town of [New Town Name] is on the rise as a coal center, with a bright future ahead.
CONNELSVILLE: The Coal Center That Never Came

Once a flourishing community in Northeast Missouri, Connelsville is now just a few bends in the road. Connelsville has its history hidden in its rolling hills along the banks of the Chariton River.

About 1845, David A. Ely set up a mill on the Chariton River. It came to be Ely’s Mill located north of Novering. Ely built the three-story structure containing machinery to grind wheat and corn. He later added the machinery needed to saw logs.

He also built a raft which he used as a hand-pulled ferry across the river. A horse and rider paid 12½ cents to be taken across and another 50 cents for a two-horse drawn wagon. Livestock, such as cattle were 3 cents a head and sheep, were a penny.

On March 4, 1850, Dr. Wilhelm Keil bought Ely’s Mill and about 20 acres of fertile land on the west side of the Chariton River at a cost of $3,000. He had the land surveyed into lots around a square. He called his new town “Nineveh,” a Biblical name.

History tell us that Dr. Keil was a German communist and that he was an enterprising gentleman. He had already planned Bethel and three nearby settlements of Mamri, Elim, and Hebron in the Shelby County region of Missouri. Dr Keil was born in Prussia and moved to the United States where he became a German Methodist minister. He is said to have had many followers of which about 25 came from Bethel to the colony of Nineveh in about 1851. A post office was soon built and George Miller was the first postmaster in 1852. Nineveh was on the map! Nineveh became a trading center for the colonists and the farmers who lived in and around the community. The colony soon expanded to more than 150 people on both sides of the river.

The Adair County Court rearranged the townships in

Photo below: Sam True and his dog in front of his home in Connelsville. Mr. True has lived at this location since 1931.

The old Connelsville school. It was torn down a few years after the school closed.
The Rosehill Mine was one of the last mines to operate. It closed when it ran into the old works of the Blacksmith mine.

Adair County so that the community of Nineveh became the center of the Nineveh township about the year 1860. Dr. Keil had moved to Oregon in 1854. In 1877 the town was divided equally among its citizens due to the death of Dr. Keil. From 1879 to 1901 Nineveh was just another country crossroad village.

In 1901 Nineveh had a new birth. The Iowa and St. Louis Railroad was built. The Missouri and Iowa Townsite Company soon came to Nineveh and began surveying. According to Adair County records, on the 29th of August, 1902, the town of Connelsville was officially surveyed. The same day an addition was made to the town. Five days after the beginning of Connelsville, John D. Miller had three additions surveyed by the county surveyor, Mr. Tyler Paine, for the town of Nineveh. The two communities had a good location with the Chariton River nearby and smooth rolling hills surrounding the communities. The river valley was very fertile and Connelsville grew as did Nineveh. The two towns eventually became one—Connelsville.

Mining was another rebirth for Connelsville, which was named after a great coal mining town in Pennsylvania. The Manufacturers Coal & Coke Company operated five to seven mines in and around the community.

In an article that appeared in the Kirkville Democrat on January 16, 1903, Connelsville was referred to as the "coming coal center of North Missouri." Connelsville was expected to reach a population of 10,000, making it bigger than Novering or Kirkville. There were already about 125 homes and stores built. The article also stated contracts had been made for 7 large two-story brick buildings: two 14 room miner's houses, 190 company dwellings, 4 large frame houses, and a ten room clubhouse for the coal company. A lumber yard already existed and there was a company-owned electric plant under construction. The Manufacturers Coal & Coke Company planned to have electricity in all their buildings, and eventually light up the town. Connelsville was entering its prime. According to Everett Elsea, who was born in Connelsville in 1905, the town's best period of industry was from 1908 to 1915 when it worked three to four mines of the Manufacturers Coal & Coke Company. The mines produced about 1,000 to 1,500 tons of coal daily. The Iowa and St. Louis Railroad would haul the coal away. A daily train came up from Novering, four miles to the south, and picked up coal also.

Mr. Elsea also said that the town's highest population was around 700 or 800 people. At one time there was a total of seven brick buildings in the town. There were pool halls and restaurants and a general store. The town had a two-story school for a while. Mrs. Gladys Cooper, who lived there as a child, told us about "pie suppers" and debates at the school. The two-story school had four years of grade school in one room and the next four years in the room next to it. The upstairs had two years of high school. Mrs. Cooper also told us that the school had water fountains, which were unheard of in those days. The school was heated by stoves with jackets around them. They burnt either coal or wood. The school also had what they called "cadet teachers," student teachers from Northeast Missouri State Teachers College.

The people we have talked to have said they enjoyed living in the town. Mr. Elsea reflected, "We did a lot of fishing up there, some of it legally." Mrs. Cooper remembers the miners, "coming through the woods like fireflies in the morning." To many, Connelsville was a nice place to live or have a business. During the summer the teenagers had dances and "pie suppers" and went hunting and fishing. Each winter the children went sledding, taking advantage of the rolling hills around the town. Sam True remembers the winter of 1936 when his children skated to school after the town had six inches of freezing rain on top of the snow already on the ground.

Now the rolling hills once covered with homes and businesses are mostly part of someone's pasture. The population of the town today is about 200 people. Today Connelsville is just a country crossroad village, just as when it first started 81 years ago. The community is just a shadow of what it once was. Yet to some it is still a nice place to live. As Sam True said, "I'll be here till I die."

By Ken Thomas
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