



Website is the mother lode of NEPA coal country culture

If you're from Northeast Pennsylvania and you are old enough to remember going to the Ack-a-mee to pick up some film, then **CoalRegion.com** will be an entertaining trip down memory lane. The site is a collection of history, language and customs from the coal country towns of Carbon, Columbia, Dauphin, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Northumberland and Schuylkill counties.

Coal was king in this area from the latter part of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th. Digging out the hard, black anthracite that fueled the nation through the Industrial Revolution was physically demanding work that required lots of laborers. The influx of immigrants from Ireland, Poland, Italy and other nations who worked the mines in



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this area brought with it a variety of languages and traditions.

As generations of these workers from foreign lands settled and raised families, the melting pot effect of America did its thing. Their languages mixed with English, and their recipes and customs were shared as blended families formed. The result was the unique experience of growing up in NEPA. Coal Region attempts to document and preserve this experience.

The site has been around since 1995, and it still has the look of a very early internet site. It's a bare-bones presentation, with very basic typography and no-frills text links. The navigation consists of the links to the various sections of the site on the left side and more links to related items on each section page.

The sections cover all aspects of coal country. Recipes is a page of links featuring a variety of favorite ethnic dishes. The name of each dish serves as a link to the recipe. Coal Speak is probably the most entertaining section of the site. It's a dictionary of local slang derived from the mashup of languages and subsequent mispronunciations of unfamiliar terms that may be called coal speak. Terms and phrases like a couple,

two, tree; close da light; upda line; downda line; or dis, dat, dem, dese, dose and dere are sure to bring a smile to expats of the area.

There's a collection of top 10 lists on the site that include festivals, swimming holes, pizza, bars, sleigh-riding hills and more. The site is very Shamokin-oriented, so a lot of the lists favor that area, but entries from the Scranton area still make many of them. Coal Crackers is a list of people from the area who found fame in entertainment, sports, government and more. Towns and Patches is a list and information on the towns and neighborhoods of the region. Green Ridge, the Honkey Patch, Minooka, Eynon and Providence are some of the local sections that made the list.

Coal Bin features a few of the

cultural gems that originated in the area. You can read the lyrics to the theme from "Hatchy Milatchy" or the "Hayna Family" song. You also can listen to a recording of the latter, which is a parody of coal speak sung to the tune of "The Addams Family." The Pictures section has a gallery of historical and more contemporary photos from around the region. There's also a Book Store section that features titles related to coal mining and a Links section that has numerous connections to related sites of interest.

Coal Region could definitely use a visual makeover, but its heart is pure NEPA.

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