

Photo of the Month

Natural Resources



Silica mine near Rogers, circa 1950. (Neg.#008532)

From before the Civil War through World War II, industry in Benton County was heavily dependent upon the exploitation of natural resources. The most successful enterprises were lumbering and the mining of limestone and silica. Starting in 1851, the undisputed giants of the lumber industry were Peter Van Winkle and his son-in-law, J.A.C. Blackburn, of War Eagle. Later Roscoe Hobbs of the Hobbs-Western Tie Company produced railroad ties from the Van Winkle lands.

The business of transforming limestone rock into agricultural lime in lime kilns began in the 1880s and continued into the 1920s. Another profitable mineral was the white silica called tripoli, which was used in paints, concrete admixtures, and abrasives. Commercial silica production began in the 1920s and continued on and off for about 50 years. In the early 1900s self-proclaimed visionary William H. Kruse began an unsuccessful search for gold on his father's farm. While neither lead nor zinc in paying quantities was ever found, Frank Page did operate a copper mine near Larue in the 1910s and 1920s.