

Coke Oven Plant (City of Belleville)

buildings provides some information about the process of making gas. It says the raw materials used in the steam-powered plant included bituminous coal, bog ore and wood shavings.

After the coal is burned, "gases pass up the standpipe and thence to hydraulic main. The partly purified gases are then withdrawn by exhauster and delivered to (the) tar extractor. From the tar extractor the gas goes to (the) rotary scrubber and from scrubber to purifiers.

"The gas is then passed through a meter to the storage holders ready for distribution," the survey reports.

The factory itself was "quite an operation," Ethier recalls.

"You could hear sometimes when the tank was lifted by the gas and water, one tank inside the other tank."

After the coke was created, it was sold to coal dealers, who in turn sold the coke to the general public.

"All the coal dealers were down on Foster Ward where the coal used to come in," Ethier recalls. "That was more or less the city down there."

In fact, Ethier's uncle used to deliver coal by horse and wagon, and with a sleigh in the winter, for Reinden's Coal Company.

"I can remember jumping on the sleigh. I remember riding with my uncle Johnny with the horses and the box sleigh filled up with coal."

One trip to deliver coal in Bayside took all day.

Ethier's family, however, didn't worry about buying coke.

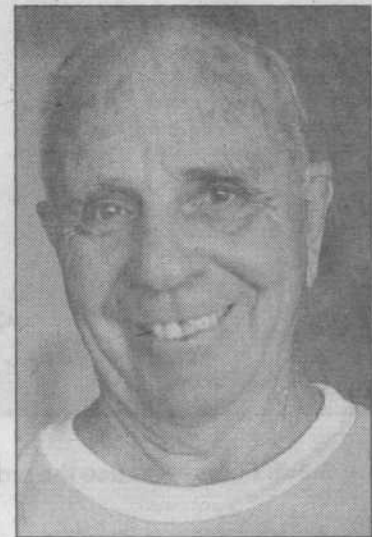
"All we had to do was just walk across (to the coke plant)."

But, if they wanted hard coal, they — and many others in the neighborhood — took a moonlight stroll.

"You generally received your coal coming into the bin at two or three o'clock in the morning," Ethier sheepishly admits. He added the dubious claim that, because he was the baby in the family, he never partook in such activities.

He remembers his sisters could walk along the tracks in the day and pick up pieces of coal that had gone astray.

Ethier also remembers his family had a gas line running from the factory into their home.



Arnold Ethier

"There was a metre and when you wanted to use your stove, you put your change in the metre. That's the way the gas was piped into the houses. Then the fellow used to come along and get the change out of the metre."

He thinks they paid 25 cents for enough gas to last them two or three days.

"That's the way it worked then," he said.

After the gas plant closed, a junkyard took its place. Now, nothing stands on the property

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