

The company owned the houses and the company store. Miners bought their coal from the company and their water, which was pumped from the bottom of the mine. The company built WPA toilets which were, according to Mrs. Wise, “as modern as you could get for an outhouse.” The company also sent a man around to clean the outhouses. (The swell of patch houses and their accompanying outhouses, no matter how filtered, added to Wolf Creek’s sewage burden, particularly north of town).

Before the union, miners often heard, “If you don't like that, Jack, you can pile on your banjo (shovel).” Men had to organize. Strikes and attempts at unionization occurred in the early 1900s. The union was broken in 1927. The men went back to work without the union. In 1933 came the big strike. Bud Wise's father was vice president of the union quietly picketing the No. 5 mine.

During these depression years, one fourth of the state’s labor force was out of work. Gifford Pinchot was struggling to institute various measures of social legislation. This time when the miners went on strike, Bud Wise remembers Pinchot’s encouraging “Stick ‘til the cows come home.”

Wise remembers many times he spent on Wolf Creek with his father. He said, “We used to go up Wolf Creek towards Millbrook before breakfast and stay all day.” He fished for suckers, carp and bass. Mrs. Wise remarked, “Wolf Creek used to be really high.” Commenting on the abundance of fish which used to be in Wolf Creek, she said, “I remember when Courtney’s Mill dam went out, there were fish washed out everywhere.” Understanding Grove City’s mining past is important. It helps to explain the relationship between the mines and the people, the town and Wolf Creek. In the classic Welsh mining story, *How Green Was My Valley*, Richard Llewellyn says of the mines, “An age of goodness I knew, and badness too, but more of good than bad, I will swear.”



Courtney's Mill  
(Photo courtesy of  
Bill Graham)