

THE RELATIONSHIP OF  
COAL MINES AND RAIL LINES  
IN ILLINOIS TO 1910

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ABSTRACT OF  
THE RELATIONSHIP OF COAL MINES AND  
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While there is extensive literature on the establishment of coal mines and railroads in Illinois, little has been done to determine the types of chronological and spatial relationships which traditionally existed between them.

Geographical tools and techniques are well suited to determine the types of chronological and spatial relationships which developed between these two geographic features. The relationships are examined through a sequence of maps showing distributional patterns of both the rail lines and coal mines from 1837 through 1910. One set of maps, called a PLATE, depicts changes in the railroad network at ten year intervals, while the other PLATE shows similar chronological and geographical changes in the pattern of coal mines. Both sets of maps are analyzed through the use of geographical and historical sources to determine to what extent these two economic distributions effected pattern changes on each other.

That Illinois railroads and coal mines developed side by side has already been established. The first railroad was constructed in 1837, the year which marks the beginning of commercial coal mining in Illinois. The railroad network

achieved its greatest mileage in 1910, while coal mining reached its greatest geographical extent in Illinois in the same year.

It was theorized that many Illinois railroads, developed with coal as a major consideration in the choice of their railroad routes. The analysis of the constructed set of maps, establishes that some railroads in Illinois developed with consideration for coal. Coal resources attracted 3,125 miles of rails. However, most coal mining awaited the coming of the railroad, whether it was incidentally located to existing rails or specifically determined their orientation.