

## **Coal: the Answer to Edmonton's Fuel Problem**

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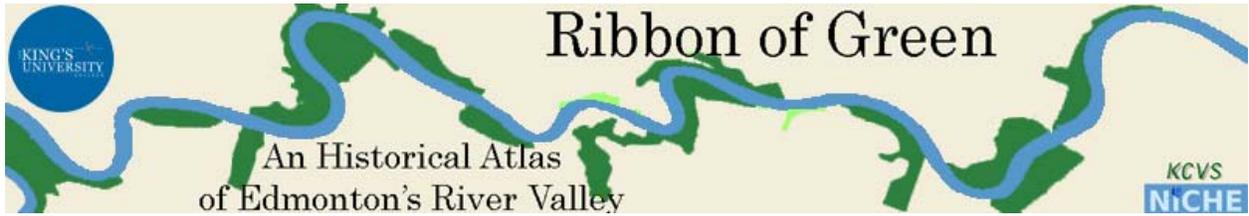
The attitude of Edmontonians in 1905 was similar to the attitudes of Albertans today. The multitudes of coal in the North Saskatchewan River banks made the citizens of Edmonton confident that they had an infinite supply of fuel. As a July *Edmonton Bulletin* article brags: “a trip to the coal mines down the river, and an inspection of their contents is all that is required to convince a person that the fuel problem of this city is solved unto the third or fourth generation -- yes, for all the time to come.”<sup>1</sup> With the tons of coal being mined out of the river valley, it's obvious why people of the time felt they had found the solution to their energy problems. However, this jackpot of coal would run out and flooding of the North Saskatchewan would prove detrimental to this process. The article goes on to describe Edmonton as a center for manufacturing because of the supply of coal: “it is bound to make Edmonton an attractive place for manufacturers, as plenty of cheap fuel is a greater inducement than even the alluring bonus to the wide-awake business man.”<sup>2</sup> This article displays the irony of the coal mining industry in Edmonton. Though the mines thrived for a few years, the damage which they were causing to the stability of the river banks eventually led to the closure of these mines. The city of Edmonton filed suits against the mining companies for damages to river front properties. The structural integrity of the river banks was ruined by mining practices which resulted in landslides.<sup>3</sup> So although there remained plenty of coal to be mined out of the river valley, it was deemed illegal

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<sup>1</sup> “Productive Coal Mines,” *The Edmonton Bulletin*, July 14, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “The End of Edmonton Coal Mining,” [http://www.abheritage.ca/abresources/history/history\\_case\\_coal\\_end.html](http://www.abheritage.ca/abresources/history/history_case_coal_end.html), Heritage Community Foundation 2002.



to retrieve it. Thus making the permanent solution of Edmonton's fuel problem to disappear and

sending citizens in search of alternative sources of fuel.