

Charles Cist, Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects, 1841.

If our own community, as I suppose it to be, is ignorant, in great measure, of our manufacturing resources and energies, it will be naturally expected that a stranger—the mere visitor, should undervalue their importance. Take the case of the traveler, who, setting out from Philadelphia or New York, crosses the Alleghenies for the first time, and observe the different impressions made on his mind, on this subject, at different places. He approaches Pittsburgh. A dense cloud of darkness and smoke, visible for some distance before he reaches it, hides the city from his eyes until he is in its midst; And yet, half this volume is furnished by household fires, coal being the only fuel of the place. As he enters the manufacturing region, the hissing of steam, the clanking of chains, the jarring and grinding of wheels and other machinery, and the glow of melted glass and iron, and burning coal beneath, bursts upon his eyes and ears in concentrated forces. If he visits the warehouses, he finds glass, cotton yarns, iron nails, castings, and machinery, occupying a prominent place. He discovers the whole city under the influence of steam and smoke. The surfaces of the houses and streets are so discolored as to defy the cleansing power of water, and the dwellings are preserved in a degree of neatness, only by the unremitting labors of their tenants, in morning and evening ablutions. The very soot partakes of the bituminous character of coal, and falling—color excepted—like snowflakes, fastens on the face and neck, with a tenacity which nothing but the united agency of soap, hot water, and the towel can overcome. Coal and the steam-engine are the pervading influence of the place, and over the whole city the seal and impress is—“Great is Vulcan of the Pittsburghers.”

I say not this in disparagement of the place, or its inhabitants. It is, in industry, a perfect hive...

...How different is this all from Cincinnati. Our manufacturing establishments, with the exception of a few, requiring in their nature to be carried on conveniently near the river, and which, therefore, must be driven by steam, or set in motion by the water of the canal, or are, in the literal sense, the manufactures—works of the hand. These last embrace the principal share of the productive industry of our mechanics, and are carried in the upper stories, or in the rear shops of the warerooms, in which they are exposed for sale, in a variety and to an extent which can only be realized with a visit to the interior of those establishments. All these are, therefore, to a great extent, out of sight...

...Let the same traveler, then, after forming his estimate of Pittsburgh, visit Cincinnati also, and explore our streets; and unless he has been taken through the factories to which I refer, he must inevitably come to the conclusion that our manufacturing operations are, in importance, far inferior to those of Pittsburgh.

I am aware that the advantages and facilities, for Pittsburgh, are very great. It's position—at the head of the navigation of the Ohio river, and at the terminating point Westward of the great Pennsylvania canal, the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers furnishing cheap transportation to many valuable resources, coal in beds nearly inexhaustible, and almost within the corporate limits of the city—is certainly advantageous. But most of these circumstances contribute rather to its commerce and carrying trade than to its manufacturing interests, and are outweighed, as advantages, by the greater contiguity and facility of access of Cincinnati to the great markets of the

west and southwest, and the superior fertility of the soil in these regions; the increased productions and consequent cheapness of the means of subsistence, here, lessening, in the same proportion, the cost of manufacture. Independently of foreign demand, we have an extensive domestic market, stretching from the Muskigum to the Wabash, and from the Ohio to the Lakes, whose population—continually increasing—even now forms the largest share of our customers.

...The fuel consumed in this city has heretofore been principally wood; but the consumption of coal during late years has been large, and consistently increasing, and will, in a few years, probably constitute the entire fuel—except for cooking purposes—in the place. Of this none will doubt who concur in opinion with me, that it is a material for fires superior to wood in every respect but in cleanliness. The advantages of coal are

1st. It is more portable and convenient both to receive and stow away, and to put to use in a city; a great difference in its favor over wood, which requires sawing and splitting, and takes up so much room as to put it out of the power of most housekeepers, to lay up a stock for the whole season, and exposes them constantly to the rise in that article which winter always creates.

2nd. It is much cheaper: Coal is 12.5 cents per bushel, being about equal to wood at 1.75 cents per cord; which is only one half the price which wood averages throughout the year.

3rd. It is a safer fire than that of wood, both in burning by day and keeping alive at night. Everyone is familiar with this fact.

4th. It requires less care and attention to keep it in proper order, and to preserve one uniform heat, and less labor to feed than wood.

5th. And lastly. The facility it affords in rekindling instantaneously in the morning, after being covered up over the night, is a convenience and comfort so great, as to form, in this respect alone, if there were no other ground of preference, a sufficient reason to supersede the employment of wood fires.

It will be obvious, under these circumstances, that a very large quantity of coal must be consumed in this city. The sales from coal yards during the last year were nine hundred and thirty thousand bushels, and the probability is, that the supplies taken direct from the boats at the river, which sell on their own account, would swell this amount almost or quite to one million bushels, as the annual consumption for small manufacturing establishments, and private families in the city. To this must be added the quantity required in the large iron-works, city water-works, and ect., which I estimate to be as much more, at least; One establishment alone consuming ninety-five thousand bushels of this article a year.

For this supply of coal, the market depends principally on the regions of the Monongahela and Youghiogany, and the neighborhood of Wheeling. A proportion, now about fifteen percent and increasing, of the whole quantity, is Ohio coal from the neighboring Leading Creek and Pomeroy, Meigs County, in this state.

An article of such indispensable necessity, brought from so great a distance, and the supply of which is at times shut out by low water, has rendered it necessary for the citizens to make arrangements by which our families, even down to those lowest in

circumstances, might be allowed to secure their purchases in the quantity which it might be convenient to receive or pay for at one time, and at a uniform price. This is accomplished through the Cincinnati Fuel Company, by whose capital and agency, adequate supplies are laid in during the season of navigation, and distributed to the stockholders, and to others, when this supply exceeds the wants of its own members; so as to protect the community from exhortations and fluctuations in price, which the monopoly of this article in the hands of a few dealers, would be sure to produce.