

Belle Vernon Post Office

611 Circle Drive
Belle Vernon, PA 15012

MURAL

Title: *Men of Coal and Steel*

Artist: Michael Loew

Date: 1942

Medium: Oil on canvas



Photograph of "Men of Coal and Steel" courtesy of the National Archives.

Men of Steel and Coal commemorates Belle Vernon's most important and intertwined industries from the first part of the 20th century, steel making and bituminous coal mining. The figure on the left is a steel worker standing against a background of the towering smoke stacks of the mills. On the right are two coal miners standing along the tracks leading into the mine. The one on the far right carries a lunch bucket and a pick while the second miner holds an air drill on his shoulder. Picks, like the lunch buckets, helmets, and lamps, were personal property and were carried home after each shift but equipment such as the air drill was probably company property. Behind the miners is the mine portal indicating a drift or slope mine. Unlike the anthracite mines in eastern Pennsylvania which typically required a mine elevator to access, this bituminous mine could be entered on foot.

The buildings in the central background are part of the colliery. They are probably the breakers that sorted the coal and tipples, the chutes that loaded coal into rail cars. The logs in the foreground are the timbers used to

support the mine ceiling. Logs were cut to correspond to the height of the coal seam. These appear to be about the height of the workers but some seams could be much shorter.

About the artist: Michael Loew (1907–1985) was born and lived in New York. He studied at the Arts Students League, the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts and the Atelier Léger in Paris. In his later work, Loew preferred to paint colorful geometric abstract compositions. His works are in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Philadelphia Museum, the Hirshorn Museum, the Carnegie Museum.