

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Coal Patch Houses

Adapted from explorepahistory.com



Eckley Miners' Village Museum  
Eckley, Pennsylvania

## Introduction:

The mining company typically built the houses the miners lived in. Most houses were built of large wooden planks and had very few rooms. Some houses were of very poor quality, with leaky roofs and cracks in the walls that rain, wind, and snow entered through. Other companies built sturdier houses with thick walls. All of the patch town houses were built quickly; it was very important to have a place for miners to live, but it wasn't really necessary for it to look nice. In order for the houses to be built quickly, all of the houses had to be built the same way, which resulted in many of the houses looking the exactly the same. The most common patterns in coal patch towns were row houses and two-story double houses. Some coal patch towns like Eckley had mostly double houses, some very small, and some single-family houses. Some patch towns had row houses as well. All were simple to build.

A single-family house was built for a mine boss or important company official. A double home was a single building that was cut in half by a wall—one family lived on one side, and another family on the other side. Each side had between four and six rooms depending on the size of the double home. These houses also typically had a double outhouse, or bathroom, behind it. It was also common to have a summer kitchen, which would have been a small building to house the oven in the summer when it was too warm to cook inside the home. Small double-houses with three rooms were built for the employees who had the lowest rank in the company with larger ones made available for miners. Often families would take in boarders, or single miners who did not have a wife or children, to make extra money. It was also common for mining companies to forbid single men to live alone, forcing them to move in with a family. The homes of miners were very simple—no electricity, no water, a few beds, and some essential furnishings.

## Questions:

1. Who built and owned the houses in a coal patch town?
2. How were these homes built?
3. What were some problems with the houses?
4. Describe some things you might find in a miner's house.

## Activity:

Draw a picture of what you think a miner's house would look like.