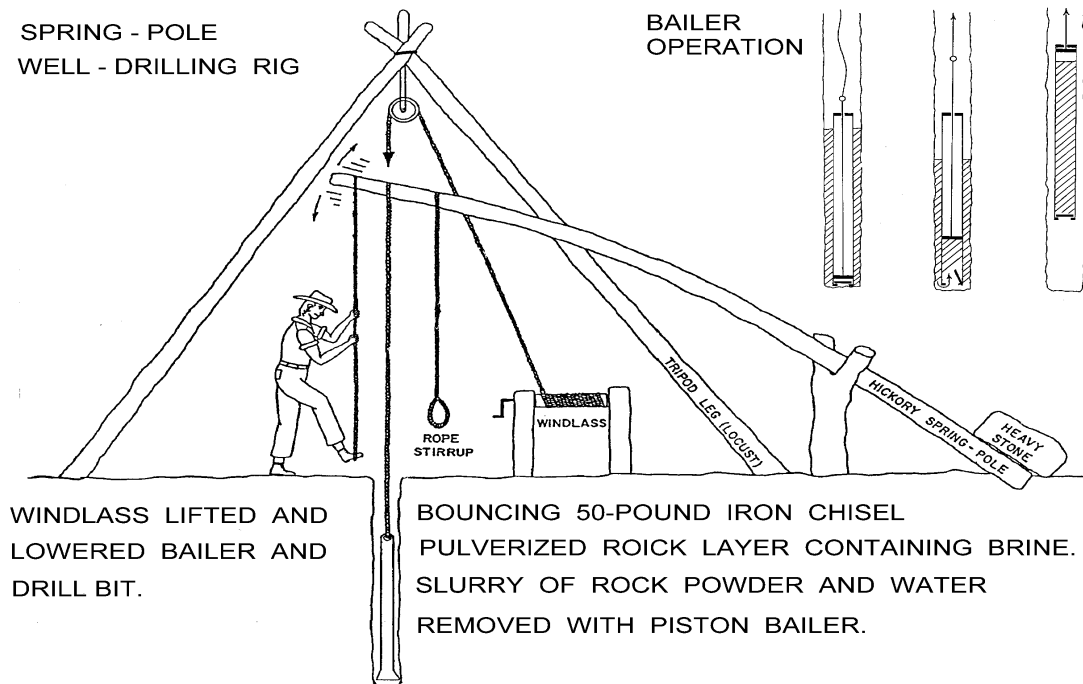


WEST PENN TRAIL

at
FIRST SALT WELL (1813)

SPRING - POLE
WELL - DRILLING RIG

BAILER
OPERATION



As early as 1755, the Royal Surveyor, Lewis Evans, reported that "the Kiskiminetas has coal and salt". Settlers needed salt to preserve foods. When the War of 1812 shut off the supply of salt from England, Americans began a desperate search for domestic sources of salt.

William Johnston, a pioneer on the Conemaugh, found salt water seeping out of the ground at a "deer lick" here, where animals gathered to lick salt from rocks on which brine had evaporated.

After nine months spent in "kicking down" a well hole 387 feet deep and three inches in diameter, a flow of salt water was obtained from a layer of rock known today as the Pottsville Sandstone.

The brine, in large kettles, was evaporated over coal fires, to recover the salt. Fuel for the salt works came from an outcrop of coal in the vicinity. Later, the brine was boiled in large shallow pans.

Most of the salt was carried to Pittsburgh, by canal boat, but wagons also hauled salt throughout the region, and steamboats took Conemaugh salt down the Ohio River – until the Kanawha Salt Works captured that market.

By 1830, the Great Conemaugh Salt Works was the third-largest salt-making center in America (after Onondaga, NY and Kanawha, WV), shipping 100,000 barrels of salt annually.