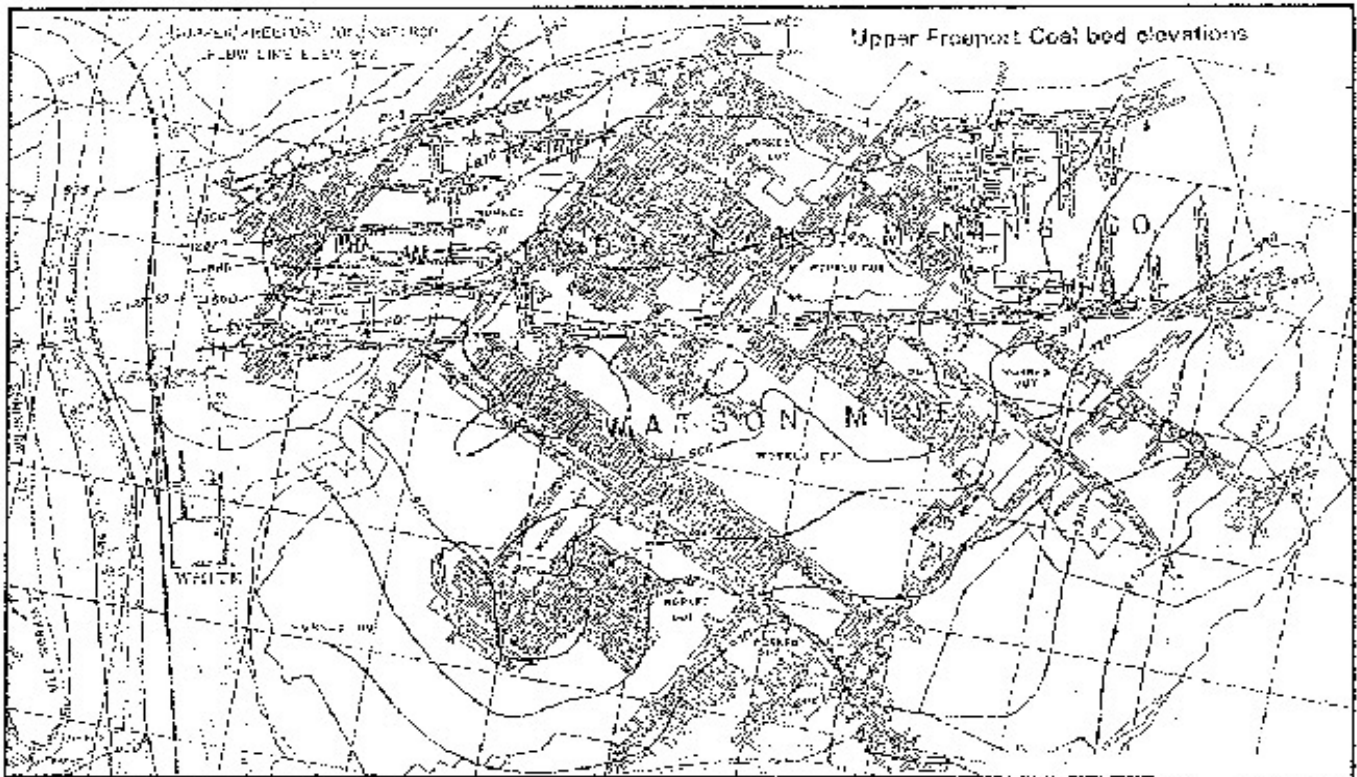


# WEST PENN TRAIL at WATSON MINE



Coal mining was a major industry in the days when coal was "king" - that is, when coal fueled everything: railroad locomotives, steam engines in factories, blast furnaces for making iron and home-heating stoves and furnaces.

Coal mines in this part of the Conemaugh Valley exploited the layer of coal that is close to the surface here - the Freeport Coal, given that name because it was first seen there, along the Allegheny River, well exposed for easy access and study.

that the Freeport Coal bed (usually four feet thick) sloped uphill, away from the river; therefore, the mine floor could be kept dry by allowing ground water to trickle out of the mine entrance. The first mine at this site was opened in 1813, to supply fuel for boiling brine at the first salt works in the valley.

The coal mines in this vicinity were so valuable that the need to preserve them dictated that the flood control dam would not be built at Saltsburg but further up the valley so that these mines would not find themselves at the bottom of a flood-control lake.