

Interview with Frank Gabor Summary
Interviewer: Christy Collins

For the Appalachian Teaching Project, I interviewed Frank Gabor, a native of Grant Town, West Virginia. Grant Town was founded in 1901 with the opening of the Federal No. 1 mine, built by the Federal Coal and Coke Company. Grant Town was a coal company town, with businesses and homes being owned by the coal company. In 1985, after 84 years of production, the Federal No. 1 mine was closed.

Frank Gabor provided an in depth tour of Grant Town. He described how life was growing up in Grant Town, especially when the town's economy was booming. He pointed out various locations such as where the neighborhood children used to play, where individuals and families he knew used to live or currently live, where businesses were located, and locations where people would gather, such as the bench on the sidewalk where men would listen to baseball games on the radio; every location he pointed out was accompanied by a story. It was obvious that he had very fond memories and a sense of place towards Grant Town. He then took us to the site where the mine used to be and where the company store is still standing, although it is barricaded off. Frank also pointed out where various ethnic people of the community lived within Grant Town, such as the African Americans and Hungarians. He painted a very vivid picture of what Grant Town was like when it was at its height during the 1940s and 1950s; all along Main Street, Frank pointed out and described the businesses that used to occupy dilapidated and demolished buildings, such as the movie theater, barber shop, beer garden, and car dealership. Today, there are hardly any businesses left in the small community of Grant Town and many of the structures are in disrepair; many people have left the community due to the poor economy. However, it is very obvious that those who lived during the 1940s and 1950s that they take great pride in their community and those who live there.