

CHAPTER VII: ASSETS, AMENITIES AND UNIQUE OFFERINGS

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Other Assets, Amenities, and Unique Offerings in the Tri-City Area

The Tri-City area of Cumberland, Benham, and Lynch has numerous unique offerings that, in themselves, are major draws to the area. Combining these assets with the proposed connector trail and other existing and potential trails will further insure the area of becoming a “tourism destination”. This chapter provides an overview of the many assets, amenities and unique offerings.

KINGDOM COME STATE PARK* – *Highest elevation*

Located on the top of Pine Mountain, **Kingdom Come State Park** has the *highest elevation of any park in Kentucky*. The **Park offers fourteen trails** and is famous for its eight overlooks that give a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains and valleys below. *See Appendix D for a list of trails*. A gazebo near the Park’s visitor center provides a spectacular view of **Black Mountain**, the highest peak in the commonwealth. *See Black Mountain on following page for more on this*. There are also **camping** and

picnic areas, a **playground**, **basketball court**, **putt putt golf course** and **water activities** such as fishing and paddle boats. The area is also known for the number of bears one might see in and around the Park.



The unique name of **Kingdom Come is in honor of the best-selling novel written by native Kentucky author William Fox Jr. Written in 1903, The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come became the first novel in the United States to sell a million copies.*

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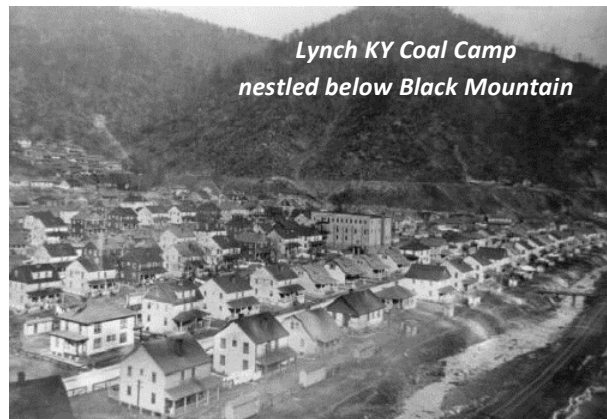
BLACK MOUNTAIN – *Highest Mountain in KY*
Black Mountain, with a summit elevation of 4,145 feet above sea level, is nearly 500 feet taller than any other mountain in Kentucky and one of the highest mountains in Appalachia outside the Blue Ridge Mountain region. The summit is marked by an abandoned metal fire lookout tower. On a clear day the Great Smoky Mountains on the North Carolina/Tennessee border are clearly visible. **One can hike or travel by 4-wheel drive vehicles to the summit via a one-lane dirt road.** See Chapter V for more on trails and trail access.



Penn Virginia Resources, a coal company out of Radnor Pennsylvania, owns the summit but allows public access with the completion of a waiver. See Chapter V for more on the trails in and around Black Mountain. Black Mountain is located in the heart of Coal Country. At its base is **Lynch Kentucky**.

LYNCH KENTUCKY – *Largest coal mining town in the nation.*

The coal camp of Lynch KY was established in 1917 to house the workers of the newly developed coal operations of the US Coal & Coke Co., a subsidiary of US Steel, which continued to operate until the 1960's. Within a year, there were over 1500 men on the payroll, the majority of who were housed in bunk houses and fed at one of the 25 company kitchens.



By 1918, over 600 single homes and duplexes plus five boarding houses and a 108-room hotel had been built. Every house had running water and an electric light in every room. Some even had central heating and indoor toilet and bathing facilities with a sewer system for the entire community. Plus fire hydrants were placed within 200 feet of every home.

By the 1940s this mining complex employed over 4000 persons above and below ground with the overall population rising to 10,000

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and over 1,000 company owned structures providing housing for people of 38 nationalities, the most prominent of which were Italian, Spanish, Czech, Polish, English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish.

The company provided health care, education, churches, housing, social services, wages and benefits and recreation. Public buildings included company commissary, theater, hospital, hotels, railroad depot, schools and churches. Although the population as of the 2010 census was just 747 residents, many of the original public structures and a number of the homes are still used today. *A self-guided historic driving tour of Lynch is available. See Appendix D.*



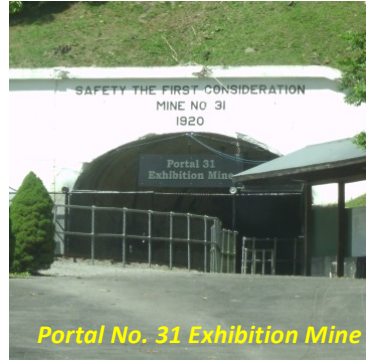
PORTAL NO. 31 – *Kentucky's first exhibition mine*

Lynch is also home to **Portal No. 31**, a coal mine that operated from 1917 to 1963 then reopened in 2012 as Kentucky's first exhibition mine. **Underground Mine Tours** provide visitors the opportunity to tour an actual coal mine by rail car. There is also a **historic walking tour** featuring a **1920's lamphouse, fire station, bathhouse, L&N Train Depot** and **other historic coal related structures**. *See Appendix D for map of Portal No. 31 Historic Walking Tour.*

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Fire Station c. 1921



Portal No. 31 Exhibition Mine



Lamp House No. 8 c. 1920

LODGING: **Portal 31 RV Park** is located within walking distance of the Portal, offering 12 full-service hook-ups and 8 primitive sites plus a dump station. Two additional campgrounds are proposed. *See Appendix XX for details.*

TRAILS: There is a **1 mile rails-to-trails walking tour** and a **proposed 2 mile rails-to-trails** connecting Lynch with **Benham**, another coal camp. Also an **OHV Connector Trail** to the top of Black Mountain and **proposed walking trail** to a historic cemetery. *See Chapter V for more on these trails.*

BENHAM KY - Home of Kentucky's Coal Museum

The self-contained company-owned town of **Benham** was built in the early 1900's by International Harvester. The community was built in a circle with mine offices, commissary, hospital, theater, clubhouse, elementary & high school, church and bandstand surrounding a community park. Most of the buildings still remain and are part of the **Benham Historic Walking Tour**. A railroad was built in 1911 which brought in supplies and workers and carried out the coal. Sections of the rail has been removed and created into **Benham's 2 mile rails-to-trail**. *See Chapter V for more on the trails in Benham.*



The **Kentucky Coal Mining Museum** is housed in the old commissary built by International Harvester in the 1920's. There are four stories of exhibits including the history of mining, life of the coal miner, a Loretta Lynn Exhibit, and a mock mine exhibit.

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BENHAM SCHOOL HOUSE INN



Benham School House Inn

Located nearby is the **Benham School House Inn**. The building served as a school from 1926 until 1992. The year after it closed, work began to transform the historical building into a **country inn & restaurant**. It currently offers 30 elegant rooms and large meeting rooms.



CUMBERLAND – Home of Poor Fork Arts & Crafts Guild

Poor Fork Arts & Crafts Guild is a non-profit corporation dedicated to “*preserving the best of the past, for the betterment of the future*”. Its name is in honor of the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River which was also the name of the city of Cumberland before it was incorporated in 1926. In 1988, the guild opened a retail outlet on Main Street to market products made “in the mountains by mountain folks”. Cumberland is also home to **Sleepy Hollow 9-hole golf course** built more than 60 years ago.



Restaurants in the subject area include Hardee’s, Subway, Charlotte’s Hoagie Shop, El Charitta Mexican, and Pizza Hut, all of which are located in Cumberland and Miner’s Market in Lynch.

Lodging is limited to America’s Best Value Inn with 73 rooms located along U.S. 119 near Cumberland, primitive camping at Kingdom Come State Park, Harlan County Campground, Cabins & RV Park in Putney, an RV Park in Lynch, and a newly opened B&B in Cumberland.

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KENTENIA STATE FOREST – *Oldest state-owned forest*

Gifted to the state in 1919, **Kentenia State Forest is the oldest state-owned forest.** The forest is located along the south side of Pine Mountain in seven scattered tracts totaling 4,277 acres. Eric Gracey, State Forest and Land Acquisition Supervisor stated that its *“rugged terrain provides unique habitat and resources found nowhere else in Kentucky”*. Primitive camping, hiking, picnicking, and horseback riding are allowed. ATV’s are prohibited.

The **Putney Connector Trail** travels north **1.4 miles** through the **largest tract of the Kentenia State Forest** starting at the Ranger Station Trailhead at Putney and continuing to the Little Shepherd Trail. *See Chapter V for more about this trail.*

