close.

Robert E. Murray founded his company by mortgaging all of his possessions to fund the purchase of Ohio Valley Coal Co.'s Powhatan No. 6 Mine. The underground, continuous mining operation at that time had an annual output of 1.2 million tons of coal that was used primarily to generate electricity.

Both Murray and his wife, Brenda, are natives of Bethesda. As the company has grown to become the largest privately owned coal company in the nation, they have given back to the local region by supporting a variety of community projects.

In fact, Murray referred to himself as an "old coal miner" during the dedication of a new Veterans Memorial Plaza, complete with a refurbished community clock, that he and his company funded and facilitated in Bethesda.

During the 1990s and 2000s, Murray Energy expanded. The firm purchased coal reserves and developed its shipping network with operations concentrated in Northern Appalachia, the Illinois Basin and Utah.

Its reach continued to grow with the acquisition of Paradise Mine in western Kentucky in 1996 and The American Coal Co.'s New Era and New Future Mines in Illinois in 1998.

The company's impact on the Ohio Valley increased in 1999, when American Energy Corp.'s Century Mine was constructed near Beallsville in Monroe County.

Murray's operations extended across the Ohio River into West Virginia beginning in 2013. It purchased the former McElroy and Shoemaker mines in the Northern Panhandle and others from Consol Energy Inc.

"This was a transformative transaction for Murray Energy Corporation," the company's website states.

In 2015, Murray Energy acquired a significant economic interest in Foresight Energy LP — another "transformative transaction" that Murray said positioned both companies for growth and continued safe, low-cost coal production in central and southern Illinois. Murray gained controlling interest in Foresight Energy in 2017. That interest is not involved in Murray's bankruptcy proceedings, which were filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

That same year, Murray Energy went international with the acquisition of mines in Colombia, South America. Murray Energy bought additional mines in Kentucky and the Illinois Basin in 2018. And in 2019, Murray and its subsidiary, Murray Metallurgical Coal Holdings LLC, acquired mining complexes in Alabama and West Virginia.

Along the way, Murray developed related operations, such as mining equipment manufacturing and rebuild facilities

SUBSCRIBE