

# THE COLUMBIA Paper

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## Charcoal making is hot topic August 5

EAST CHATHAM—"The Taborton Charcoal Burners," a short film by colliers Loren and Gene Dobert, sponsored by the Canaan Historical Society in collaboration with the Society of New Concord, will be presented at the Society of New Concord Meetinghouse, 2689 County Route 9, Saturday, August 5 at 7:30 p.m.

The film is followed by Q & A featuring Wayne Dobert and Junior Collier Frank Kehn. Wine and snacks will be provided during the discussion.

Charcoal making was an industry started in Germany, England and Scandinavia. It was an art passed down from father to son. Charcoal burning

was at its height during the American Civil War, 1861 to 1865.

Wood was cut in winter to make charcoal, preferably hardwoods like beech, birch, maple, and oak. About one-fifth of the original wood becomes useful charcoal, which is then put in sacks and sold. In this region, charcoal was used primarily for the Burden Iron Works in Troy. It was also used in homes and area hotels.

The manufacturing of pit charcoal is an art almost lost to this country. The pits used for this purpose were made by the formation of a cone-shaped mound. The wood was piled in a circle with an opening at the



Photo contributed

### *Second stage in construction of a charcoal pit*

top; then the wood was ignited and completely covered with dirt. The small hole at the top was very important, as it was

the only method of controlling ventilation. The operator managing the pit would climb up the outside on a ladder. From

this vantage point, he would look down inside. If the viewer felt that the pit was burning too brightly, he smothered the fire by closing the opening. The fire was never allowed to flame up. The children of the neighborhood considered it a great privilege to be allowed to climb the ladder and peer into the pit.

Join friends and neighbors to learn more about area forebears. This event is free of charge and no RSVP is needed. For more information visit [www.CanaanHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.CanaanHistoricalSociety.org) or email [canaanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:canaanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com). The Canaan Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charity and welcomes donations and new members.