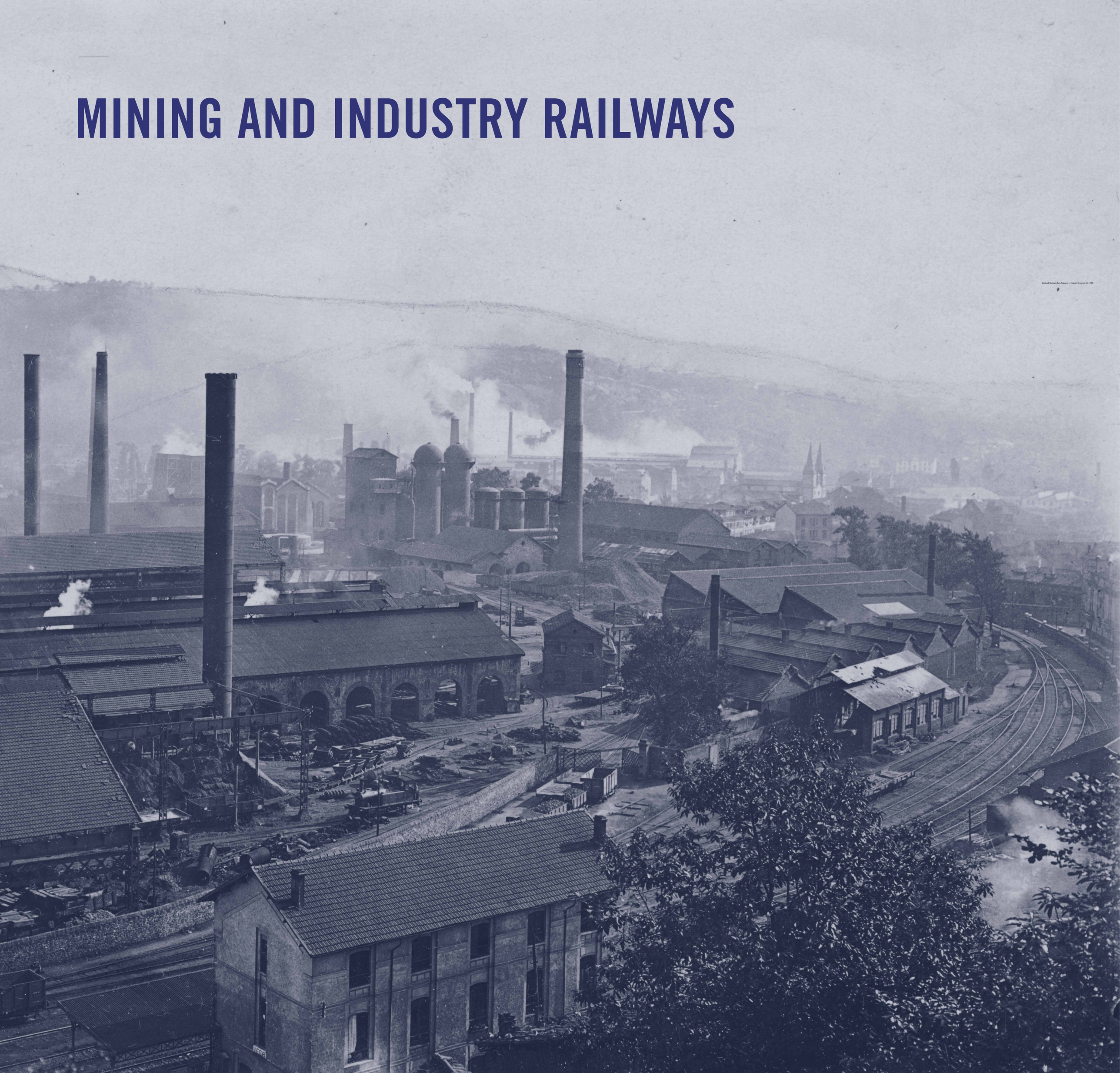
MINING AND INDUSTRY RAILWAYS



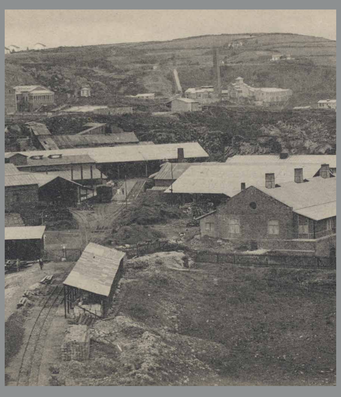
Steelwork Company Duro Felguera. La Felguera (Langreo). Ca. 1928

I

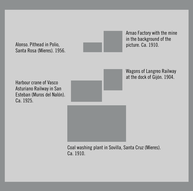
MINING. THE ORIGIN OF RAILWAY IN ASTURIAS

The first railways were built in Asturias to carry coal from inside the mines to the pithead and loading docks. Most railways for public use were linked to mining and industrial ones. In the late 1800s the railway turned into the only efficient means of transport for industrial companies. In the 1950s, roads gained ground and trains specialized in carrying big loads.

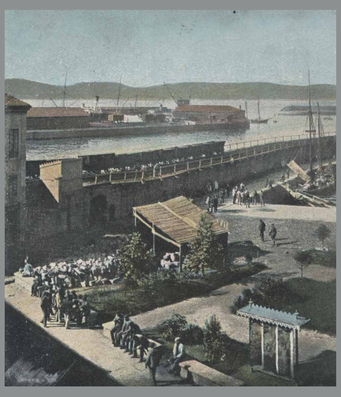
1
The first railways were built in Asturias to carry coal from inside the mines to the pithead and loading docks. In the early 1800s these iron tracks were no more than two parallel rails where hutches were pulled by mules, oxen or people.



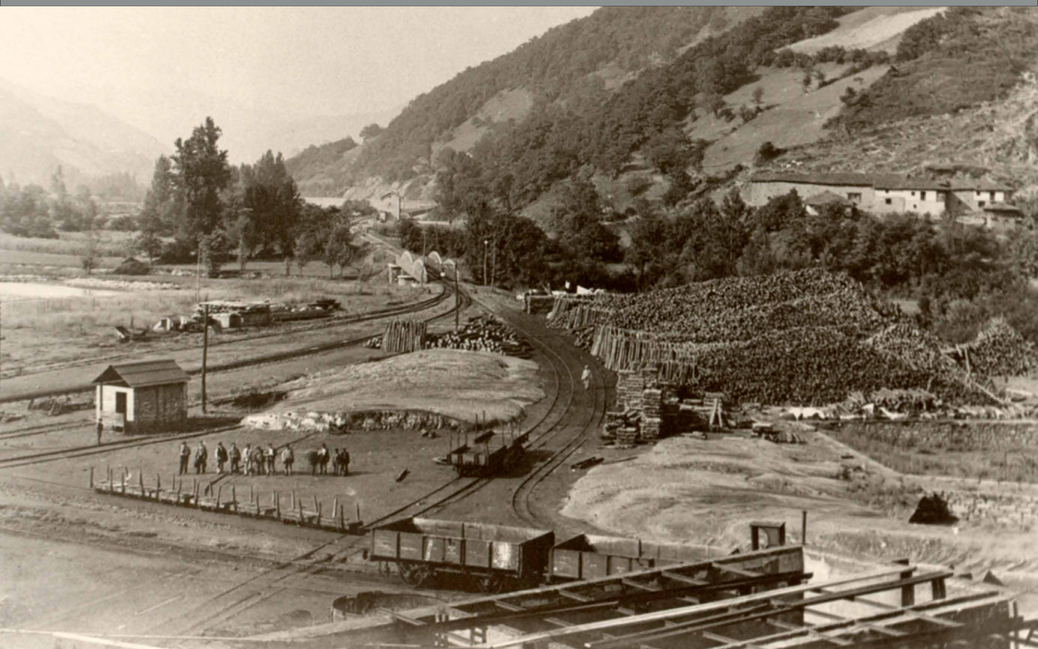
2
The first Spanish railway ever documented was built in a coal mine near Arnáu (Castrillón) in 1834. It ran over iron tracks similar to those patented by British engineer John Birkinshaw in 1820.

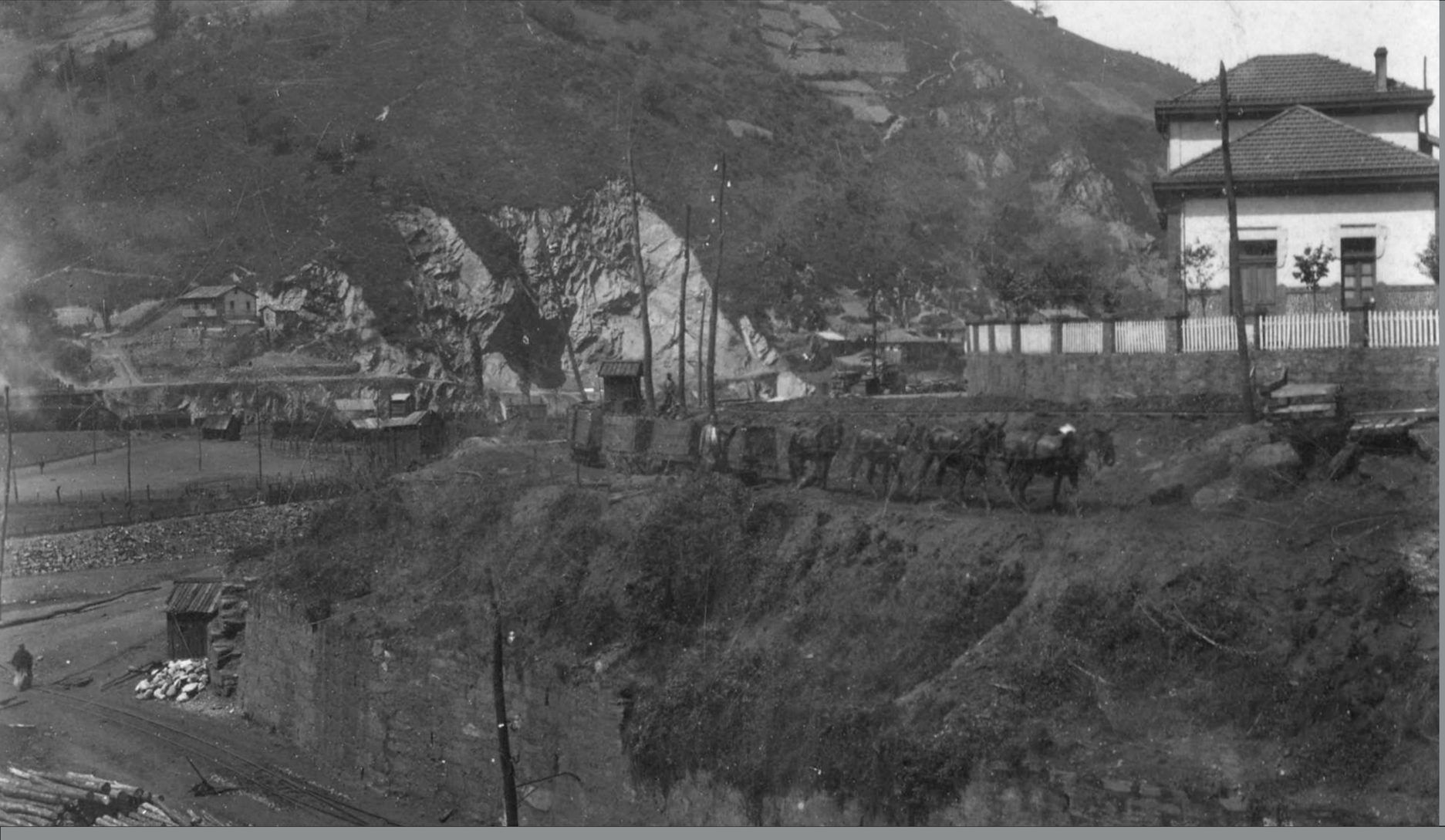


3
Most railways for public use were linked to mining and industrial ones. The most relevant ones were meant to transport coal and iron ore from the mining areas to the harbours in Gijón, Avilés and San Esteban.

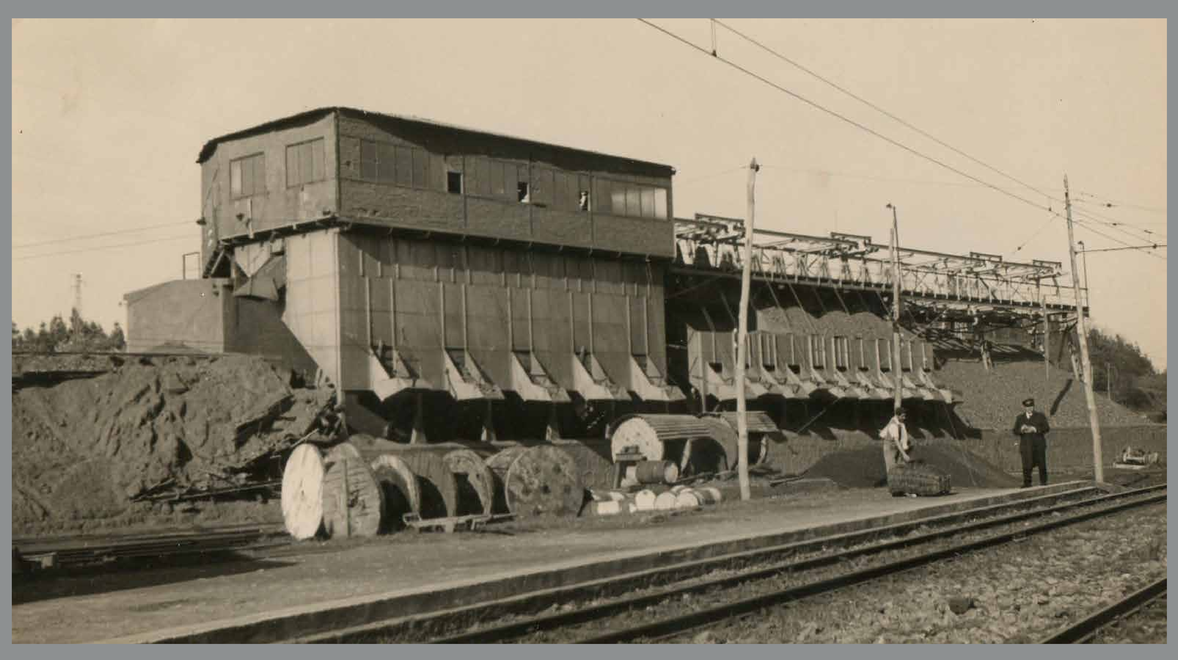


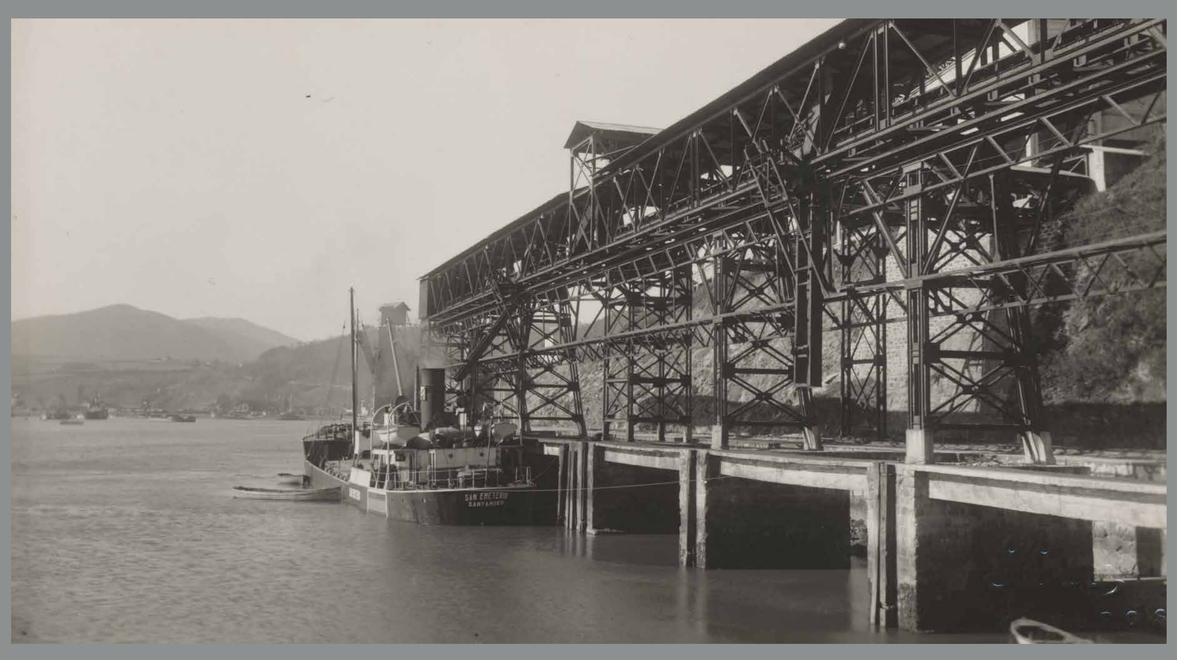
4
The first Asturian railway for public use, Ferrocarril de Langreo, opened in 1852. Its main purpose was to provide an outlet for coal from the Nalón mining area through Gijón harbour.





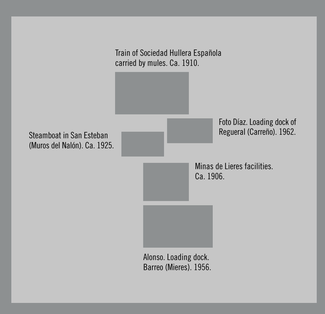
5
The Caudal mining area lacked railway transport for public use until 1874, when the Gijón - Pola de Lena line opened. This marked the beginning of a period of steady growth for the coal and steelworks industries in the area.





6
Sociedad Minas de Hierro y Ferrocarril de Carreño was founded in 1900 to transport iron from the mines in Regueral, Piedeloro and Coyanca to Aboño and El Musel, where it connected with the tracks in Gijón harbour and other Asturian public railways.

7
A group of Asturian and Basque mining and steelworks industrialists set up Sociedad General de Ferrocarriles Vasco Asturiana in 1899. Its main purpose was to transport coal from Aller, Caudal and Turón mining areas to San Esteban (Muros del Nalón) harbour, where it was loaded and then shipped to various destinations such as the steelworking plants in Biscay.



8
In the late 1800s, when mechanic traction became widespread, the railway turned into the only efficient means of transport for mining and industrial companies. In the 1950s, roads gained ground and trains specialized in carrying big loads.

9
Those mining and industrial railways and the linking lines for public use helped shape the new Asturias which resulted from the Industrial Revolution. The traditional, agricultural and cattle breeding part of Asturias kept away from this network.