

Early Mineral¹

written by
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article in the [Richmond] Times Dispatch describing Mineral as a mining town worthy of the Old West" which "boomed merrily, with many churches, until 1918," does not jibe with accumulated old-time data

Mineral townsite was originally the plantation of Reuben Davis and his old home until sometime in the thirties. In the early days of Mineral it was owned by M. Quarles, and in 1899 was purchased by Grace Adams Davis who lived on for several years. It was then operated as a hotel over the years by D. E. Bumpass, Mrs. Palmore and Mrs. Swartz, and numbered among many famous mining engineers. Later, it was used as a residence and was long vacant. The lot is now owned by the Mineral Fire Department. The C. & O. Railroad reached Frederick Hall about 1839 and a stage was operated between Frederick Hall and Louisa C.H., stopping en route at Toler's Tavern (some site in Mineral).

During the Civil War, the iron capping above the pyrite veins was being mined and used at the High-and-Ready Furnace near Mineral and at the Victoria Furnace, to make pig iron. Pig iron from the Victoria Furnace was used for rails supplied by the Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond, for armor plates, etc.

When the road was extended to the west, the station at Mineral was called Mineral, so known for many years. During the Civil War, Federal troops at Mineral, heated them in fires and bent them around large trees on the site of C. Spicer's residence.

Grace Adams, a very brilliant mining engineer, developed a method of recovering the underlying the "iron cap" deposits along Contrary Creek and started

mining operations at the Arminius Mines. A railroad spur was built from Tolersville to the Arminius in 1886. Mining operations at Arminius and the Sulphur Mines began to assume major status and town-site promoters became active.

The Mineral Land Company (name condensed) employed W. L. Bishop to lay out the Reuben Davis lands as a town site and his map was completed and recorded in 1891 and the village was then known as Mineral City.

In the early nineties, Mineral had about a dozen buildings, but more buildings were built up as people came in. L. A. Keller and Dr. W. J. Coleman were among the newcomers. In 1893, the *Mineral City Pilot*, printed in the residence of W. L. Bishop on Third Street, recorded that W. E. Bibb had been sent to New York and Boston to offer \$30,000 cash and 300 "average" building lots to any suitable business that might be interested in locating in Mineral. The Arminius Mines was operating a fertilizer plant just west of the Baptist Church location and was marketing "Marlybone" fertilizers.

At this time the town had two saloons, one operated by Mr. Hogg on the present site of Noel's Store and the other by Jim Warren on the site of the former residence of G. R. Luck on Louisa Avenue [1990 site of the office of Dr. Russel Beattie]. In 1896, Oliver Hamilton shot and killed William Trice in front of the Hogg place. A newspaper clipping dated December 30, 1989, stated that the two bar rooms which "defiance" last year have been extirpated, one having been converted into a hardware store and the other building is being used as a school." The Warren building was moved across the street and still exists as a part of the residence located just South of the Episcopal Church. Apparently liquor was not sold in Mineral after this episode, although still sold at a place to the west of Mineral and at Cuzco (now Whitlock Store). A few years later liquor was voted out in the county and with the coming of churches, the town became a quiet, law-abiding place.

Mining was increasing at the turn of the century and a railroad scales and three new sidings had been installed, together with a shifting engine to bring ore cars from the mines. The Louisa Telephone Company had lines between Louisa, Mineral and Apple Grove.

Between 1900 and 1910 the town grew apace. The Episcopal Church was erected about 1903 and the Baptist and Methodist Churches about 1906. M. B. Quisenberry built a grist and flour mill (now the Mineral Milling Co.). A modern school building was erected in 1910. An attempt was made to move the Court House from Louisa to Mineral and failed by a narrow margin. The town boasted two hotels, two livery stables, a bank, and many business places. D. E. Bumpass, V. W. Turner, W. Chaplin, Fred Shelton, Charles Gibson, Dr. H. W. Judd, J. S. Harlow, Rev. J. Wilkinson, Rev. L. J. Haley, H. W. Payne, and many others became permanent residents of the community. The *Mineral Mirror* was published for several years and the printing press was sold for taxes.

From then until 1920 the town continued to grow with wartime activity in the pyrite mines, and some exploration was going on in the nearby gold veins. A major cave-in at the Arminius in 1916 greatly reduced ore production there and eventually caused a change in ownership. The *Mineral Weekly Progress* appeared and was published for several years. Many new residents came to locate in the town.

Due to extremely poor roads and very few automobiles, the miners at the various mines usually lived at or near the mine, and thought nothing of walking two or three miles to town. Walking was a very common way of travel. If automobiles and good roads had been available, Mineral would have been a much larger town and probably not so law-abiding. A bunch of miners in town with money in their pockets

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supplies of "Old Hen" and "Henry K. Wampole" under their belts might have been a problem for the Town Sergeant.

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For 60 years, the 4th of July at Mineral was a time of tournaments, baseball games, horse races, riding contests, greased poles, picnics, "selling" for churches or the school, minstrel shows, etc. All the mine folks and people from all directions came and everyone had an enjoyable time.

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In 1920, the sulphur domes of Texas, producing almost pure sulphur at low cost, caused the pyrite mines to close down. Many of these domes have been worked out and not many more in sight, so that several years ago mining scouts began to come into the Mineral pyrite area, one result of which has been the present work at the Arminius.

A letter to the Editor of *The Central Virginian* published June 19, 1958 from Mr. W. H. Boyle, Atlanta, Georgia.

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Mr. Boyle was a mining engineer. He married Lucy Kennedy, daughter of John H. Kennedy and Virginia Bowles Kennedy and sister of Miss Fanny, Brian and Jim Kennedy.



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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF MINERAL, VA.