

## The Progress of Mineral, As Told by a Number of Its Prominent Citizens<sup>1</sup>



D. E. Bumpass, Sr.



W. J. Coleman



L. A. Keller, Sr.

"Some of Mineral's Most Prominent Business Men Tell of Great Strides Made by the Town Since the Year 1889, When Only One Family Resided Here. At That Time Mineral Was Known as Tolersville. Town is Steadily Going Forward With Bright Future Before It"

**Mr. L. A. Keller** says: "I arrived in October, 1889, to take the place of John Davis as station manager, and have been in charge continuously since that date. No one was living in Tolersville when I arrived but Mr. Harry Quarles and his family moved into the Reuben Davis home several days afterwards. Mr. Bancroft of the Arminius Mine very graciously offered me accommodations until some better way was found to live and Mr. Bill Gunter kindly loaned me a peaceable mule to enable me to make the trips to and from the mines. My first trip out was without event but returning after dark I was directed by a shorter route and soon was in the dense thicket near the Walton Mine when without warning a rabbit jumped from the path, scared the mule and in the twinkling of an eye I found myself, like Absalom of old, tangled up in the wayside trees, with the mule standing near and what look much like a laugh on his face.

The station of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway at Tolersville when I arrived was the former cowshed of the Davis farm which had been turned into a store owned by John Davis, then run by a man named Bowles, and finally leased to replace the boxcar station which stood on the site of the present station after the fire had destroyed the primitive room called the station during Civil War times. The cowshed station was divided into waiting, baggage, express and office rooms in about as primitive way as it had been a tent, but served the purpose for nearly two years.

"Harry Quarles was the first to appear, and I boarded with him thereafter and returned the mule. Dr. Coleman was the second man to come to town and he moved into the John Davis home--the family having vacated it on my arrival as John Davis was called to Richmond to enter the service of the C. & O. there. On a snowy, wind-lonesome day in winter, 1891, the C. & O. agent was surprised to have appear in his office Frank Bickers, Phil Porter, William Flannagan and W. L. Bishop. They came

to be the ones who claim to have convened the scheme and discuss the feasibility of purchase for the purpose of platting a town site and building thereon an industrial city. The C. & O. had decided to build a depot for the already growing trade, and did so in a short time thereafter.

"It is now a matter of history which has nearly been forgotten but in some ways these gentlemen did swing the proposition to a successful issue and crowds visited the boom town during the exciting period of 1892-93 from every part of the country, listening to the fairy tales and mapping out industries from building hotels, woolen mills, cotton mills, ore-reduction plants, and the starting up of gold, iron and zinc mines, etc. The scheme was to purchase lots at a uniform price, and to draw numbers from a wheel corresponding to the numbers of the lots sold. A day was named for the drawing, a special train was run from Richmond, a great feast had been prepared and the eatables and drinkables were praiseworthy in quantity and quality - such a day as is seldom seen in this country. Hundreds of persons were present, representing almost every condition of earnest ambition to draw the best lots and have the best time for the money invested, led by the agents of other like scheme for land sales being promoted in other parts of the country. Then the panic of 1893 came which halted all development of industries in the United States for years afterwards; the boom spirit died out, the people departed until during the next winter there were but five males living in the town.

I state the coming and progress of the earlier business houses in about this order: Bowles in the years 1883-84; Davis in the years 1884-90; Boyd Smith 1890; Coleman & Chaplin 1890 to the present time; D. E. Bumpass, V. W. Turner.

The churches were built in the following order: Episcopal in 1903; Methodist, Baptist, Rev. J. R. Ellis, of Gordonsville, in looking over the field, saw that Mineral was to be an important centre for religious action in a wide field occupied by the sprites mines- perhaps a difficult one on account of the license in liquor habits, but his determination to overcome this pernicious habit, led him to enter the fight and become an attorney-the better to overawe the law breakers and because other attorneys had for a century derived much of their revenue from handling liquor cases- and is given the credit today for having broken up the trade, brought about prohibition in the district, and consequently paved the way for establishing real law and order in the county."

Dr. W. J. Coleman says: "I moved to Tolersville in the year 1890, and continued to practice surgery and medicine from my residence, the former home of John Davis, which I have occupied continuously ever since. At the time of my arrival, there was the railway station; the Reuben Davis home, now the Mineral Hotel; the store now occupied by Perkins.

"My practice extended into Spotsylvania, mostly horseback riding, as the roads of that early period were hardly worthy of the name, and I have seen the growth of the region about Mineral in every detail since 1890. There was quite an idea of making a town here when the boom period of 1893 was affecting us, in common with others of the Virginia Railway Station towns, and it was for a boom of our own that the Davis town was purchased and platted by Mr. Bishop for certain other speculators, who sold lots and promised to bring in many industrial plants to be the basis of a large measure of prosperity. The unfortunate ending of this dream came with the panic of 1893 which affected the entire country. Just after this panic there were but five heads of families, or voters in the platted areas. The first general store was opened by Coleman & Chaplin in 1890, followed by the Land Company's store in 1892, and this business was taken over by Boyd Smith, who succeeded Flannagan & Talley. It was a quiet

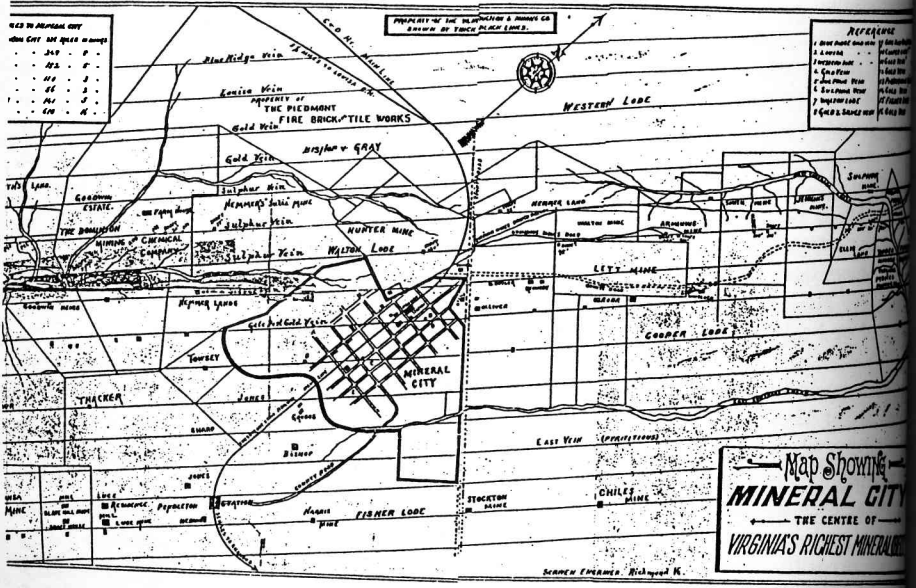
town until about 1900 when the flour mill was constructed by Mac Quisenberry followed by the Episcopal and other churches and these were naturally the result of demand from new settlers who have been coming in gradually since that date until this time there are probably 500 souls in the town areas."

Mr. D. E. Bumpass says: "I am not one of the oldest merchants in Mineral, but was born and raised within a few miles of it. I always believed it would make a town worthy to be classed at the head of Virginia towns, provided the right sort of people could be induced to locate here. I have shown the faith that was in me by acts which speak for themselves in a social and business way; have raised a family here and propose to do my part to increase values and build the town into a city within a reasonable period, as the location is ideal for such purpose, and the surrounding warrant permanent industries."

Mr. V. W. Turner says: "As one of the merchants who entered into business relations with the people of my town, and the neighborhood population which so liberally supports Mineral, some years ago, there is the reiteration of my belief that this is a good town, and always has been. The investments made here by me prove this and I have every faith in the future of the location as a logical site for a large town with a settled population."

Mr. L. A. Kennon says: "We started in Mineral with a special business at a time when it was a question as to growth or permanency, but the business which has naturally come to us has warranted the rapid increase in buildings and it looks now as if we should be compelled to find additional accommodations in the near future."

1. Mineral Week Progress, Vol. 1 No. 38, Mineral, Virginia, 22 December 1916, loaned by Mrs. Mary Goodling, Mineral, Virginia.



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