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A history of the village of Midlothian, Virginia, emphasizing the period 1835-1935

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A HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF MIDLOTHIAN, VIRGINIA
EMPHASIZING THE PERIOD 1835 - 1935

BY

BARBARA IRENE BURTCHETT

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
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PREFACE

Located ten miles west of Richmond, Virginia, Midlothian today is the name given both to a magisterial district in Chesterfield County and to the community immediately surrounding the school and post office that bear the name. The focal point of this thesis is the old community known in its early years both as Coalfield and Mid Lothian - Coalfield because it was the home of the oldest coal mines in America and Mid Lothian after a coal mining center in Scotland.

Midlothian was a village in the sense of being a group of homes and businesses in the countryside of northwestern Chesterfield County from 1835 to the mid-twentieth century. While it was never self governing or incorporated, it generally managed, through the influence of its dominant families, to handle its own affairs and cooperate as one of the townships and districts in the larger county government.

Many of the citizens of Midlothian are descendants of families who have been there for generations. There is a great sense of history in the area and a number of local legends concerning events in years gone by. There has never been a thoroughly researched history of Midlothian. This paper, then, is written to provide such a history, and where possible, to separate fact from fiction.

It is my thesis that Midlothian village came into existence because of the coal mines in the area and survived after the mines closed because the railroad, built to serve the mines, provided jobs and transportation to Richmond. The coal mining companies that

played such a major role in the village have long since disappeared.

I have depended heavily on deeds, wills, census reports, personal property tax records, minutes of the school boards, Board of Supervisors, and Township Council. These public records have been illusive. Some, including the minutes of the Midlothian school board, have not yet been found. Newspaper reports and early magazine and journal articles were most helpful. Church records were available from several churches but those of two major churches have been lost. Letters and family papers in the Virginia Historical Society have been useful. Minutes of the Midlothian Masonic Lodge gave a glimpse into the life of the community.

A master's thesis written by Charles R. Routon in 1949, entitled "The History of Midlothian Coal Mines,"* served as a spring-board for further research. Yet its lack of adequate footnotes made it necessary to find his sources to insure the accuracy of the material.

Francis Earle Lutz's history of Chesterfield County provided the matrix for a history of Midlothian. His work was not footnoted, making it difficult to verify. It was helpful in suggesting areas for further research.

The railroad history was derived from records in archives that the Southern Railway Systems office in Washington D. C. made available to me.

Technical information about the mines and help in locating materials and some of the mines was received from the men at the Department of Conservation and Economic Development's Division of Mineral Resources in Charlottesville, Virginia. A special word

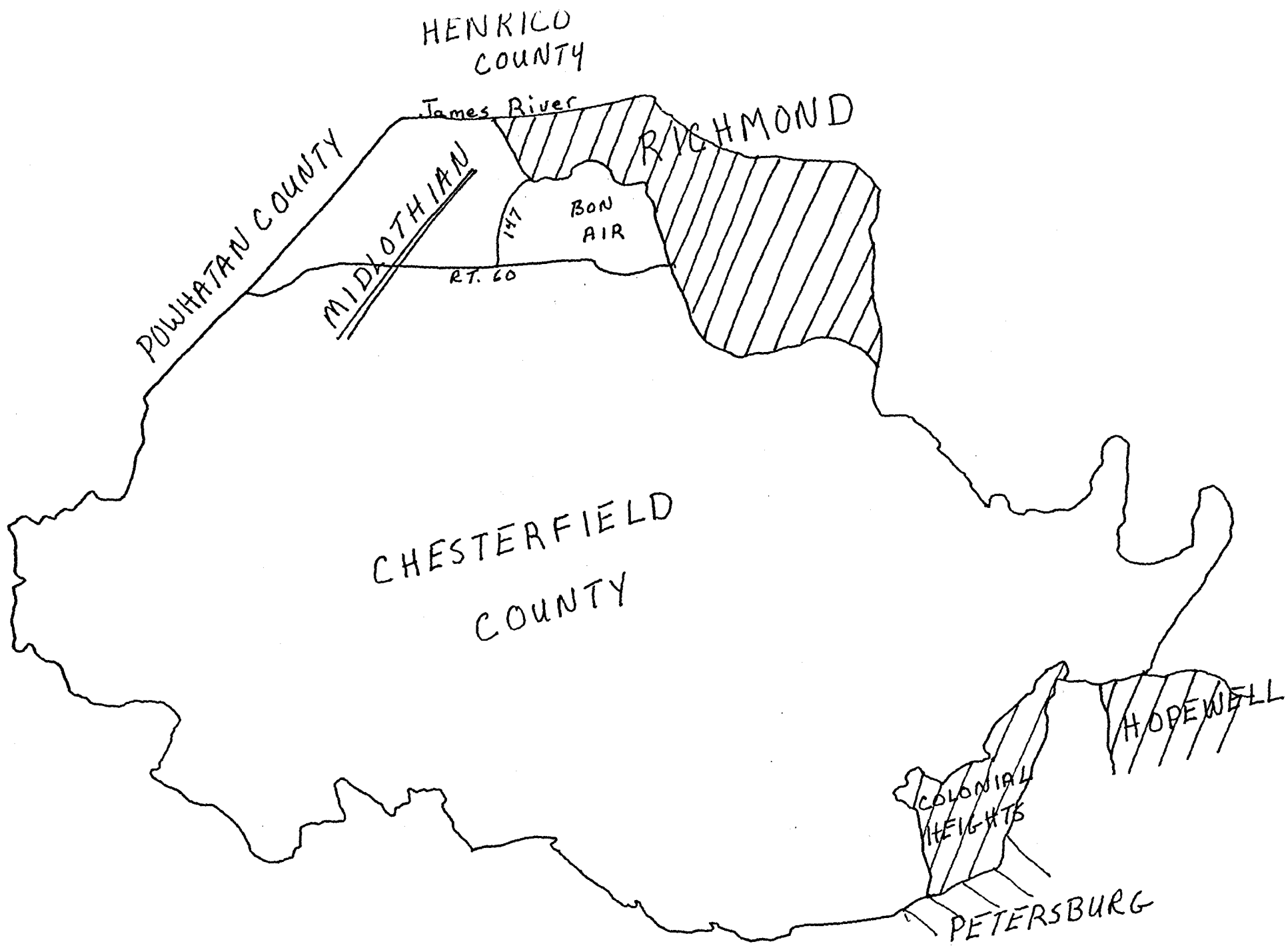
* This thesis is located at the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia. It is hereafter cited as Routon, "History."

of thanks is due Gerald P. Wilkes for his help both in the office in Charlottesville and in Midlothian.

My thanks go to Doctors Frances Gregory and Barry Westin for their guidance and encouragement as the thesis was written.

The most enjoyable part of the research has been the interview with Midlothian's wonderful people. They have opened their homes and memories to me and in many cases shared mementoes, pictures, records and letters from the past. I have loved reliving with them the Midlothian they knew in the early years of this century. Before including any material in the paper, all information gleaned from these interview has been verified by at least two other people. Mr. Leland Anderson's testimony on the workings of the mines is an exception to this rule as he is the last living person to work these mines, thus making verification impossible.

My deepest gratitude goes to my husband, Earl, who prodded and encouraged me, helping in many ways and accompanying me into the past as we wandered miles through the forests and down railroad tracks in search of long forgotten mines, cemeteries, and ruins. Our shared interest in the history of this village we call home has made the research for this paper a labor of love.



HENRICO
COUNTY

James River

POWHATAN COUNTY

MIDLOTHIAN

RICHMOND

147

BON
AIR

RT. 60

CHESTERFIELD
COUNTY

COLONIAL
HEIGHTS

HOPEWELL

PETERSBURG

CHAPTER ONE

MIDLOTHIAN 1700 TO 1835

Present day Midlothian was first inhabited by the Manakin or Monacan Indians. They had a village about five miles west of Midlothian in what is now Powhatan County. Before 1700 their number dwindled to approximately thirty bowmen and they peacefully left their old hunting grounds and moved further west.¹

The Huguenots, a group of French Protestants, were refugees in the last part of the seventeenth century. King William offered them a haven in the New World about 1700. These honest, hardworking people were much sought after as inhabitants in the colonies. To encourage the Huguenots to come to Virginia, they were given ten thousand acres of land, 133 acres per family; this was granted tax free for seven, later eight years. They were also supplied with a bushel of Indian meal each month to tide them over until their crops were ready to harvest.²

The land given to the Huguenots was along the south side of the James River, extending east and west of the old Indian settlement. To get their monthly provisions of meal they had to apply in person to the distribution station in Bermuda Hundred. This trek to the eastern end of the county soon turned an old Indian trail into a well traveled road inviting more settlers to go west.

¹Francis Earl Lutz, Chesterfield, An Old Virginia County (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1954), p. 66. Hereafter cited as Lutz, Chesterfield.

²R. L. Maury, "Introduction" The Vestry Book of King William Parish (Midlothian, Virginia: Manakin Episcopal Church, 1966), p. 290. Hereafter cited as The Vestry Book.

About five hundred Huguenots in three ships came to Virginia in 1700. They cleared fields, laid out a village, and built a church, parsonage, and school house.³ As they spread out into the countryside, they discovered coal exposed by erosion along the steep banks of a creek near the James River. This discovery was reported by Colonel William Byrd to the colonial council of Virginia on May 11, 1701.⁴

Colonel Byrd's property bordered the French land and his notice of the coal was not a passing glance. By 1709, Byrd had his own mine operating near the headwaters of Falling Creek. He recorded in his dairy on May 18, 1709: "My coaler has found the coal mines very good and sufficient to furnish several generations."⁵

Records indicate that apparently the interior and western sections of Chesterfield were settled by several families, English and French, who by sponsoring the passage of new colonists, gained fifty acres for each person sponsored. Some of these grants were only about one hundred acres, while others were very large. William Byrd received 3,664 acres in this area by importing seventy-four people. John Tullit was granted 17,653 acres for bringing in 353 people. These two grants, adjacent to each other, bordered the Huguenot land in Chesterfield.⁶ Much of this land was sold in

³Ibid.

⁴Routon, "History," p. 4.

⁵Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 68.

⁶Nell M. Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants, 1623-1800, 3 volumes (Richmond, Nell M. Nugent, 1934), III: 10 & 109.

Powhatan
County

Manakin
Town

Huguenot Springs Road

FRENCH
SETTLERS

JAMES RIVER

ENGLISH
LAND

COAST
OUTCROPPING

RIVER ROAD

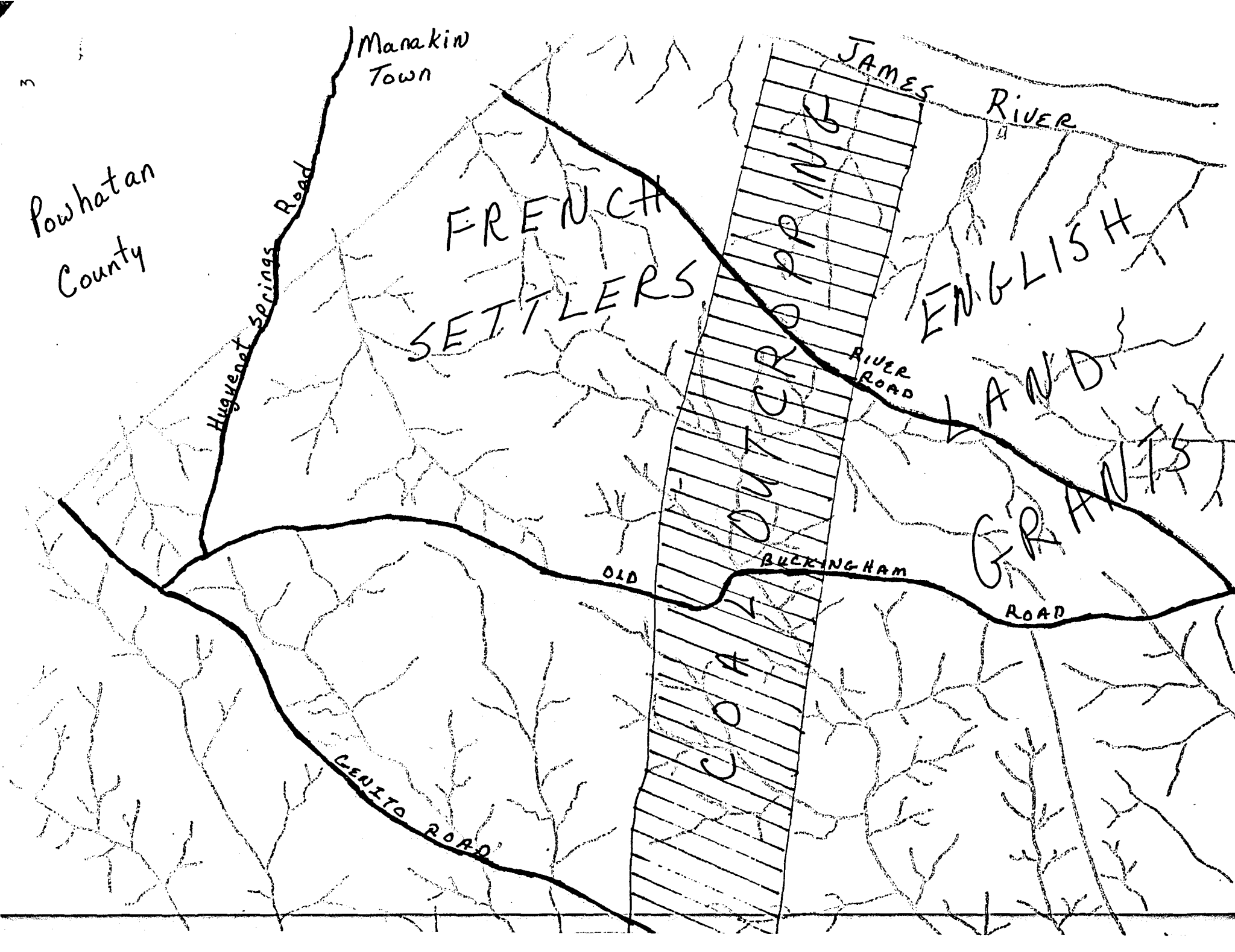
GRANTS

OLD

BUCKINGHAM

ROAD

GENITO ROAD



the next seventy-five years either to newcomers or members of families already there. By the time of the Revolution, the English and French families were intermingled.

As the English moved into the French land and the French were granted land among the English, the life of the Huguenots changed. By 1739 services at the Manakin Church were in both French and English.⁷ Today there remains only the French names, Manakin Church, and a few examples of houses built in the Huguenot fashion with two front doors.

Limited records of the pre-1800 period indicate family names and general locations of homes. The families intermarried and sometimes these marriages were by consent only, perhaps owing to the lack of a clergyman at the time.⁸ Many families lived in comfort operating sizeable plantations with slave labor.⁹

The major crop in the area was corn closely followed by wheat. The farmers raised hogs and cattle.¹⁰ Mining in the early years was limited because the demand for coal was confined to the people who owned the land containing the coal. They used it only because it was convenient as they too had access to abundant firewood.

⁷The Vestry Book, p. 183

⁸Chesterfield County Marriage Register, One volume, 1771-1853, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

⁹Chesterfield County Personal Property Tax Records, 1786, Virginia State Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

¹⁰Various deeds of the period listed grain and livestock to be sold.

Large plantations were set up along the river. Because this property was above the fall lines, river transportation was limited to small boats which were used to visit back and forth and to cross the river above the rapids. A road was cut from Manchester following the path of the river west into the present Powhatan County. This road, originally called River Road, provided the river plantations with a means of trade and communication with Manchester and points east.

Running roughly parallel to the River Road was the Buck and Game or Buckingham Road. This may have been named for the abundant wild life or perhaps for the area in England. It provided an access to the smaller plantations settled by the Huguenots and English settlers south of those plantations on the river. Gracious homes were built with names that still exist as subdivisions and streets: Black Heath, Summerville, Buck Hill, Mount Hill, Salisbury, Mid Lothian, The Grove, Hallsborough and others. A few of these homes remain.

As Richmond grew during and after the Revolution, some of its citizens found the clean air and spring water of Mid Lothian refreshing. Summer houses and hunting lodges were built there. Nicholas Mills of Richmond, involved in mining and later in transportation systems, had his summer home there. Thomas Mann Randolph built Salisbury in 1777 as a hunting lodge. It served as Patrick Henry's home during his fourth and fifth terms as governor.¹¹

Non-agricultural ventures developed as the population spread westward. Men traveled to areas west of Richmond found overnight

¹¹Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 6.

lodging and food at ordinaries along the Old Indian Trail, known today as Midlothian Turnpike. As Richmond grew the need for coal increased and local coal was first mined commercially as early as 1750. Miners were shipping coal from Midlothian by 1758. Within a decade mine owners were exporting 5,000 bushels of coal a year.¹²

The coming of the Revolution cut off coal shipments from England and increased the demand for Midlothian coal. This coal was used to heat Richmond homes as well as to provide fuel for the Westham Foundry, an iron works on the north side of the James River, west of Richmond. The British occupation of portions of Virginia in 1780 interrupted the shipment of coal. Governor Thomas Nelson ordered that all mules and wagons be loaned to the government to carry supplies to the troops in Yorktown. An Advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette on July 5, 1780, which read:

Manchester, June 17, 1780. As the Power exercised by some of the publick officials of impressing waggons [sic] and horses prevents working our coal mines, we hereby give notice that no person can be supplied by us with any coal at present; when we can safely employ waggons, and carry our coal to navigable water, we shall give notice in the publick papers.

William Ronald¹³
Samuel DuVal

At Thomas Jefferson's suggestion, after the war, Midlothian coal and other coal from the Richmond Basin, north of the James River, was used to help meet Virginia's war debt. He noted that "coal sells in New York at six guineas the cauldron."¹⁴

¹² Ibid., p. 91.

¹³ Virginia Gazette, Richmond, Virginia, July 5, 1780.

¹⁴ Paul Leicester Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 10 volumes (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899), II: 446-447. A cauldron of coal was equal to about thirty-six bushels.

Jefferson used his influence again in the Midlothian area on behalf of one of the local citizens. Dr. Phillip Turpin had been completing his medical studies in Edinburgh when the Revolution began. He was not allowed to return to Virginia but was forced to serve as a surgeon on the British warships. After the war was over, he was allowed to return home and found that he had been declared a Tory and his property confiscated. Jefferson's influence and friendship led to the restoration of Turpin's property. Despite testimony by officers in the British Navy that he had served unwillingly, many of Turpin's neighbors still regarded him as a traitor. Ill feelings forced him to leave the property he had purchased at Salisbury to his daughter, the wife of Dr. Edward Johnson, and to move further southwest to a more hospitable community.¹⁵

Another Midlothian resident, Harry Heth was a celebrated hero of the Revolution. A captain in the Continental army, he became a charter member of the Virginia Society of the Cincinnati. After the war, he was United States Commissioner of Loans for Virginia. His estate, known as Black Heath, had an elegant mansion and beautiful grounds. Before his death in 1821, he had accumulated a fortune in land containing coal deposits and had been involved in several other profitable business ventures.¹⁶

By the late 1780's Heth had purchased several coal bearing properties. These mines continued to be known by their original

¹⁵ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 140.

¹⁶ Heth Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

owner's names. By 1790 records indicate that the Black Heath mines, Trabue pits, Salle pits and Buck and Cunliffe pits were in operation.¹⁷ These mines were in fairly close proximity and all located along the outcropping of coal. The Salle and Trabue pits lay between the river and River Road, and the Black Heath and Buck and Cunliffe pits were between the River Road and Buckingham Road. (See map on page 30) The Aetna pits adjacent to the Buck and Cunliffe pits had been mined before 1750 according to the will of the owner, John Brummall.¹⁸ This was perhaps for personal use as no mention is made of its being mined again until 1842.¹⁹

As the coal business grew, the heavy coal wagons turned the road to Manchester into little more than ruts. Drivers of coaches and carriages found the trip west very difficult at best and sometimes totally impossible. The dreadful condition of Buckingham Road led to the formation of the Manchester Turnpike Company in 1802.²⁰ A group of investors including Benjamin Hatcher, Henry Briscoe, Harry Heth, Andrew Nicolson, William Robertson and John Cunliffe had a toll road built into Manchester.²¹ Farm wagons and passenger vehicles only paid toll one way, but the coal wagons had to pay half toll even when returning empty because of the beating the heavy wagons gave the road. Loads were limited to 11,000 pounds

¹⁷ Methane Project, An Open File, Virginia Department of Mineral Research, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1979. Hereafter cited as Methane Project.

¹⁸ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Will Book 15:294.

¹⁹ Methane Project

²⁰ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 151.

²¹ Ibid.

pulled by no more than six horses per wagon.²²

Many mine owners complained that the road did not go an equal distance from all of the mines as was originally intended, but favored one group of miners over another. The toll added to the cost of producing the coal by from eight to twelve cents a bushel. This was when it was selling at the dock for about twenty-five cents a bushel.²³

By 1824 Midlothian coal had a hard time competing with mines on the north side of the river where the recently completed Kanawha Canal provided cheaper transportation. Midlothian miners soon began to look for a better way to get their coal to the wharves below Manchester. Mine owners petitioned the General Assembly for permission to construct a canal on the south side of the river. The request fell on deaf ears.²⁴ The petitions continued for years as the Kanawha locks failed and the canal proved too shallow at low water to carry much coal. All was to no avail, the petitions were denied.

Despite transportation problems the mining business continued to grow. New coal fields were opened south of Buckingham Road. Mills' Creek pits, the Green Hole pit, Wooldridge's pit and the Railey pits were adjacent to each other along the outcropping

²²George I. Johnson, History, Midlothian 211 A. F. and A. M., (Richmond, G. I. Johnson, 1966), p. 2. Hereafter cited as Johnson, History.

²³"Nicholas Mills, Early Virginia Industrialists - President of Virginia's First Railroad," Ties (Southern Railway Magazine) July, 1960, p. 9. Hereafter cited as "Nicholas Mills."

²⁴Chesterfield County Petitions, December 15, 1824, quoted in Routon, "History," p. 28.

and west of Falling Creek. To the east of the creek, the Union pits were opened in another basin of coal. North of Buckingham Road and near the Black Heath and Cunliffe pits, the Gowrie pits were opened.²⁵

As the mining business grew so did the village of Mid Lothian. These new mines were several miles away from the river on both sides of Buckingham Road. This road was fast becoming more heavily traveled than River Road. The Manchester Turnpike also emptied into Buckingham Road just east of the village.

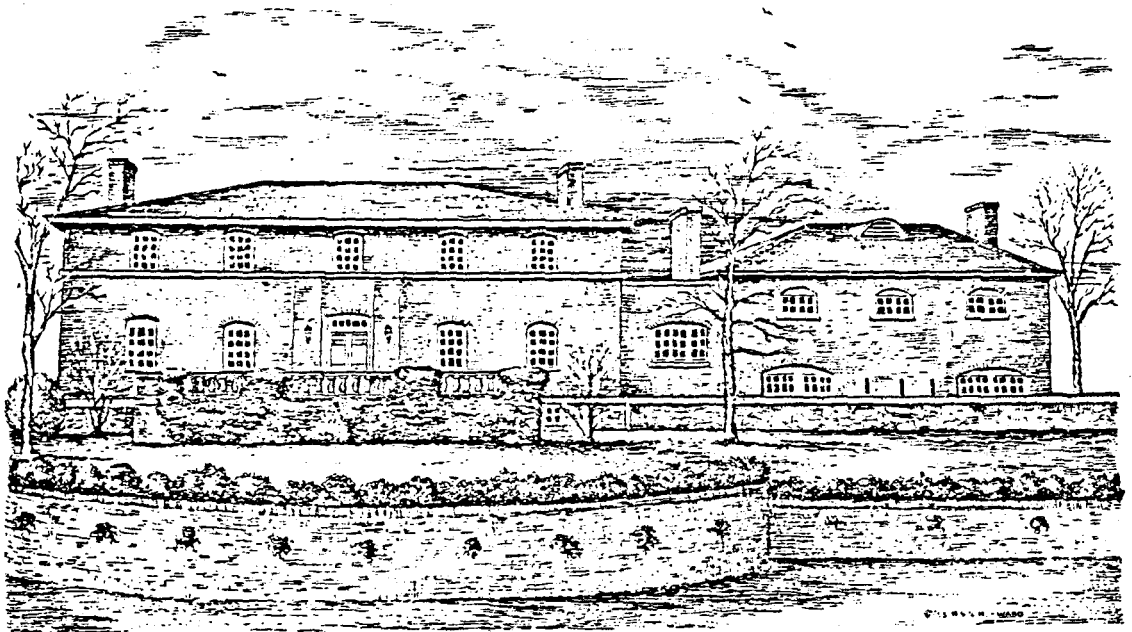
By 1817, the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage line provided service between these cities once a week, a trip that took two and one half days. The coach customarily stopped at the home of Major Abraham S. Wooldridge in the center of present day Midlothian. The coach left Richmond at two o'clock in the afternoon and would reach Mid Lothian about six o'clock in time for the evening meal and the night's layover.²⁶ The Wooldridge's home was named Mid Lothian and its owner was reported to have served an excellent mint julep, and provided warm hospitality. Neighbors visited the near-by tavern to hear the latest news from the East and West. Mid Lothian had no newspaper and mail was brought to the Wooldridge home to be picked up. Mail was simply addressed to Mid Lothian, naming the area.²⁷

Threats of another war with England led to the establishment in

²⁵ Joseph K. Roberts, "The Geology of the Virginia Triassic," Virginia Geological Survey, Bulletin 29 (1928): 116.

²⁶ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 166.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 167.



BELLONA ARSENAL

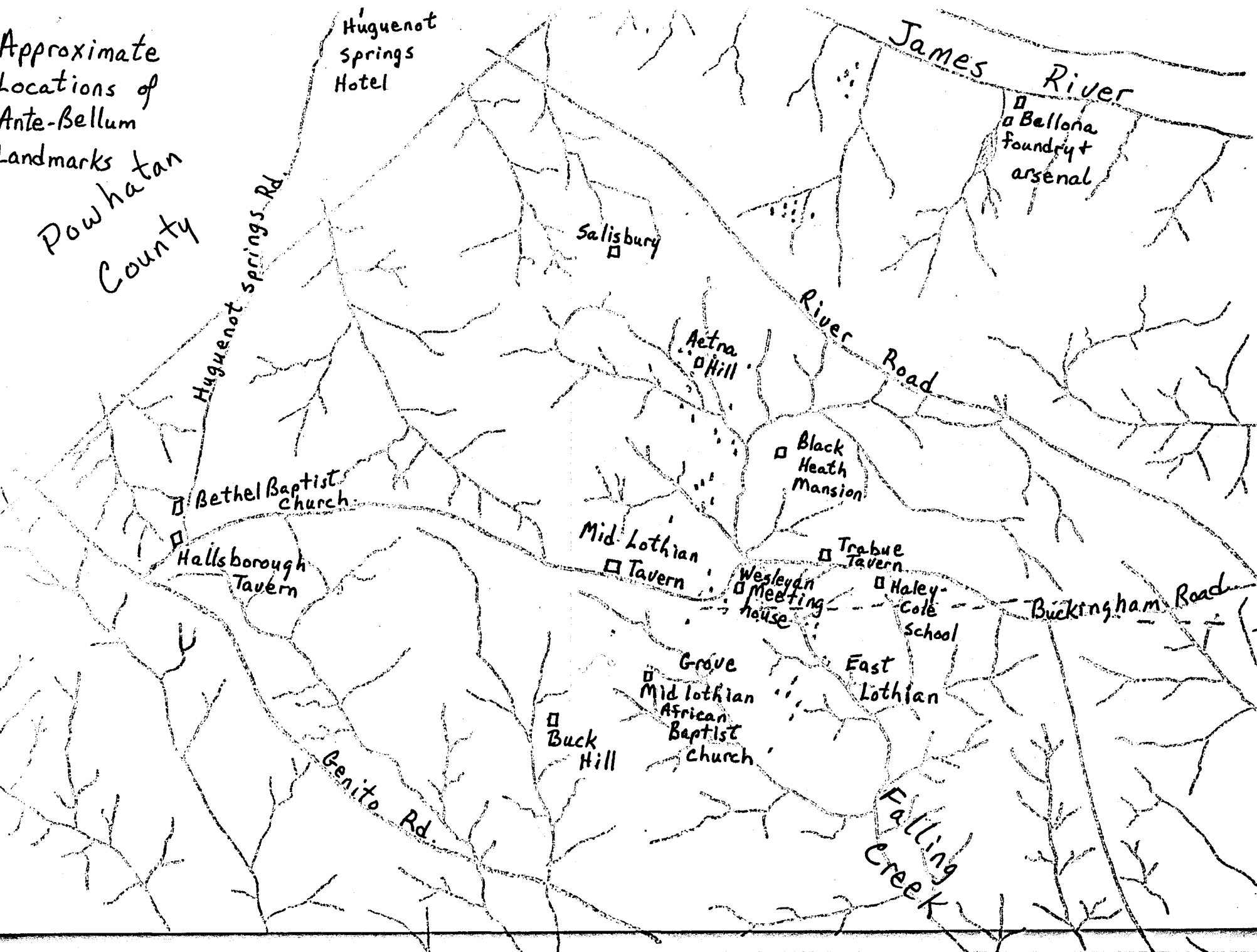
1816



Mid Lothian
Tavern

the Sycamores

Approximate
Locations of
Ante-Bellum
Landmarks
Powhatan
County



Huguenot
Springs
Hotel

James
River

Bellona
foundry +
arsenal

Salisbury

River
Road

Aetna
Hill

Black
Heath
Mansion

Bethel Baptist
Church

Hallsborough
Tavern

Mid Lothian
Tavern

Wesleyan
Meeting
house

Trাবে
Tavern

Haley-
Cole
School

Buckingham Road

East
Lothian

Grove
Mid lothian
African
Baptist
church

Buck
Hill

Genito Rd.

Falling
Creek

1810 of the Bellona Foundry. The Foundry, owned by Major John Clarke was located on the south bank of the James River. It produced some of the cannon and shot used in the War of 1812. Coal to operate the foundry came from the local mines. There was quite a bit of iron ore in the immediate area and some was no doubt processed to make iron goods, but there is no record of it being extensively mined. Perhaps Clarke received his ore from areas west of Richmond.

When Clarke learned that the government in Washington was looking for a site in Virginia for an arsenal, he journeyed to Washington to suggest the land adjoining his property. The government took his suggestion and purchased the property in 1815 from William Trabue.²⁸

The arsenal was constructed in 1816-1817. It consisted of eight buildings connected by a seventeen-foot-high brick wall, the buildings and walls together forming a quadrangle. The grounds in the middle of the quadrangle served as a drill field for the troops. The buildings provided workshops and storage, and living quarters for the ordnance troops and later artillerymen who were garrisoned there. Down the hill from the arsenal a large powder magazine was built on the side away from the foundry at Major Clark's request. Its "tightly cemented brick walls" were five and one half feet thick. It was capped by stone. The bricks used in the arsenal and magazine were made on the site and

²⁸William H. Gaines, Jr., "Guns, Silkworms, and Pigs," Virginia Cavalcade, Autumn 1953, p. 33. Hereafter cited as Gaines "Guns."

the stone, according to the present local stories, was capstone from the coal mines. Capstone was the stone that covered the coal. Frank Woodson, writing in 1912, said the roof was stone brought from Maine and covered with slate.²⁹ At any rate the magazine was considered to provide ample protection for its explosive contents.

There was fear of another explosive situation, however. Local citizens were concerned about the danger of having so much powder and weapons in an area close to a large concentration of slaves. The mines by the 1830's employed a number of blacks, slave and free. Fear of an uprising, perhaps increased by Nat Turner's rebellion in 1832, led to the removal of the arsenal to Old Point Comfort in 1833.³⁰ Such fears seem to have been groundless as no major problem with slaves was ever recorded in Midlothian.

The mining business continued to grow with its slave labor. By 1828 a corporation was set up to create a railroad from Midlothian to Manchester. The track was to follow a line half way between the mines of Nicholas Mills and those of the Heth Family. (See map on page 30) When original planners were slow in acting, Heth and Mills, taking matters into their own hands, set up the Chesterfield Railroad Company and began work.³¹

Claudius Crozet, Virginia's State Engineer and former West Point instructor,³² laid out the tracks on an incline from

²⁹ Frank S. Woodson, "Bellona Arsenal, Hive of History," Richmond, 1912. (Typewritten) In the possession of the Frank Easterly Family at Bellona.

³⁰ Gaines, "Guns," p. 36.

³¹ "Nicholas Mills," P. 9.

³² Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 179.

Midlothian to the river at Manchester. Moncure Robinson did the actual engineering. Robinson was "later to be recognized as the nation's outstanding railroad builder of his time."³³ He was active in railroad building from the late 1820's until his retirement in 1847.³⁴

The Chesterfield Railroad was elevated in low places and excavated in high places. Bridges were built across creeks and roads and a firm bed for the track was completed forming the incline plane. Wooden tracks were laid and topped with straps of iron.³⁵

This magnificent little railroad only ran twelve miles but it was an instant success. The incline had been expensive to construct but it was so well planned and executed that the company was spared the expense of purchasing and maintaining a locomotive. The coal cars were simple boxes on wheels. Coal was placed in all but the last one. Mules or horses were put into the last car. When the brakes were released the train moved down hill to Manchester. It was unloaded and the mules hitched up to pull the empty cars back to the mines.

The Richmond Enquirer, in 1831 recorded the event of the first trip on the Incline Railroad as follows: "The whole operation presented a scene of great interest to the spectator and this interest was not a little enhanced by the circumstance that the

³³Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 181.

³⁴Dumas Malone, ed., The Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 11 volumes, Vol VII:48-49.

³⁵"Nicholas Mills," p. 9.

incline plane is about the second or at the worse the third that has been executed upon any railroad in the country."³⁶

The first load was not coal but passengers, friends of Mills and Heth and other people of importance who had been invited to ride the train to Midlothian for a barbeque. The people sat on benches placed in the coal cars and enjoyed the ride up hill to Midlothian but found the trip home faster as the cars sped down hill under their own power.³⁷ Passengers rarely rode the train after the first trip as the cars filled with coal dust were not fit for well-dressed people.

This new mode of transporting the coal was an answer to prayer for many mine owners. The cost of shipping the coal dropped from eight to ten cents a bushel to less than three cents a bushel. Even at such a low rate, the company made a profit from the beginning. All investors were paid back in full and continued to receive dividends for nearly twenty years.³⁸

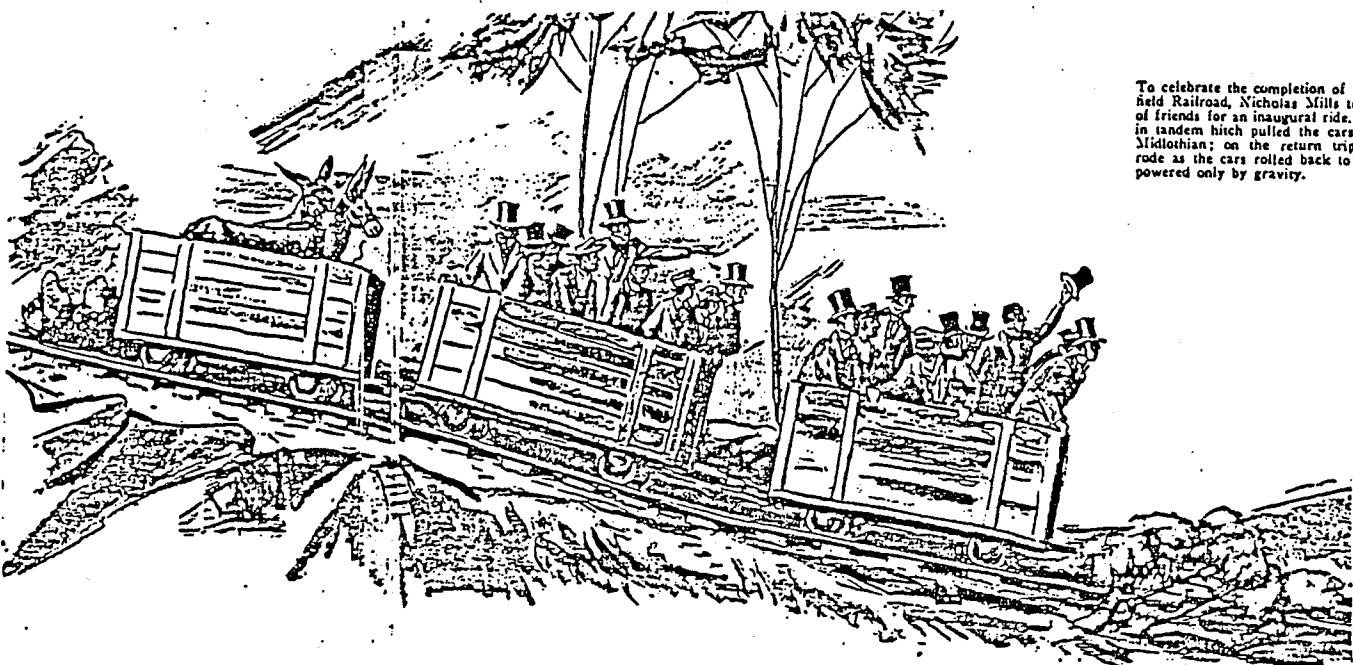
As convenient as the railroad was for the owners of the Mills mines, the Old Wooldridge, Railey, Union, Buck and Cunliffe and the Gowrie pits, the further the mine was from the railroad, the more expensive it was to use it. Heth, one of the original owners of the railroad, found that to meet his needs an additional rail system was desirable.

Accordingly he built a railroad running from his Black Heath

³⁶Richmond Enquirer, June 17, 1831.

³⁷"Nicholas Mills," p. 10.

³⁸Ibid.



To celebrate the completion of the Chesterfield Railroad, Nicholas Mills took a group of friends for an inaugural ride. Two mules in tandem hitch pulled the cars upgrade to Midlothian; on the return trip the mules rode as the cars rolled back to Manchester powered only by gravity.

mines north through the Salle pits that he had purchased and on to the river above the rapids. From that point he ferried the coal across the river to be transferred to a canal boat on the Kanawha Canal and sent down to the docks in Richmond.³⁹

This system did not prove profitable in the long run because it required too many men to transfer the coal from train to ferry to canal boat, each move breaking up the coal and making it less marketable. Heth had the additional expense of constructing the railroad, purchasing the train and ferry, and paying toll on the canal boats. He was further frustrated because he could not ferry the coal across the river in high water or down the canal when the water level dropped too low to handle the loaded boats.⁴⁰

While Heth had his troubles, the Chesterfield Railroad continued to operate, seeing the coal business to its zenith. It also removed ninety per cent of the coal wagons from the Buckingham Road and Turnpike, much to the delight of those citizens who traveled the road in passenger vehicles or wagons.

By 1835 more than fifty families lived in Midlothian and intermarriages between them created greatly intertwined family trees. The skills and occupations of the heads of these households varied. Some were craftsmen, some miners, some shop and tavern keepers. A few were professional men providing legal and medical services for the community. Nearly all the white population owned some land and farmed an area

³⁹Routon, "History," pp. 31 & 32. Route identified by walking the old track bed, October 5, 1980.

⁴⁰Routon, "History": pp. 31 & 32.

ranging from a vegetable patch to several hundred acres. The black population was about twice the number of the white population. About three per cent of the blacks were free.⁴¹

Education was considered important for the white children. The leading citizens in the community, while not extremely wealthy, were well educated. Haley Cole, a lawyer and slave trader in the community, and his wife considered education important enough to donate a place for a school, the Haley Cole School, which began operation in 1813. This one room school was set up for the "express purpose of a seminary of learning."⁴² It taught reading, writing and ciphering, subjects such as history and geography being added as years went by. This little brick school provided education for the white neighborhood children until 1910.⁴³

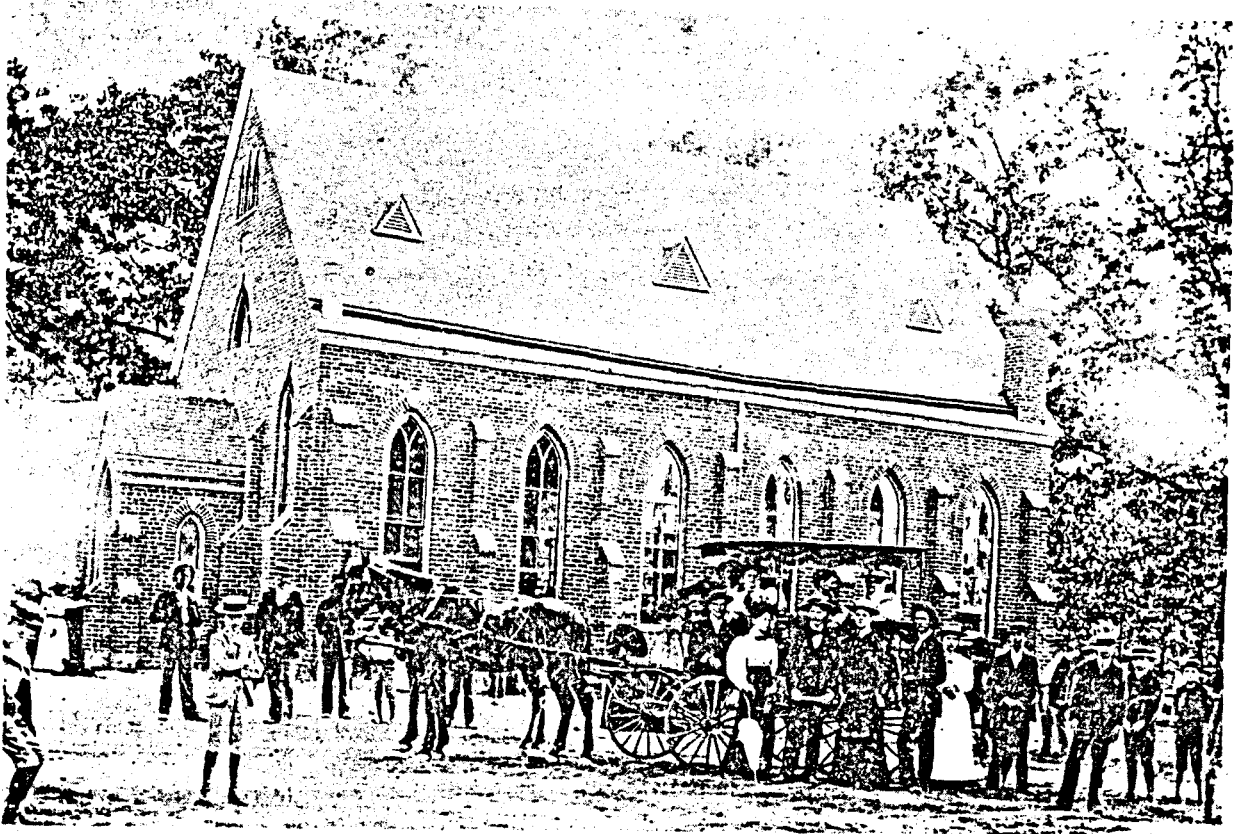
The religious life of the area was centered around the Manakin Church in the edge of Powhatan County for the Huguenots, and Bethel Baptist Church for other Protestants. Bethel's congregation had started having prayer meetings as early as 1799 at Shortt's Stage at the corner of Buckingham and Huguenot Springs Roads. When the church was constituted in 1817, John and Olive Shortt donated part of their property for a church building to face Huguenot Springs Road.⁴⁴

⁴¹United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Population, Chesterfield, Virginia.

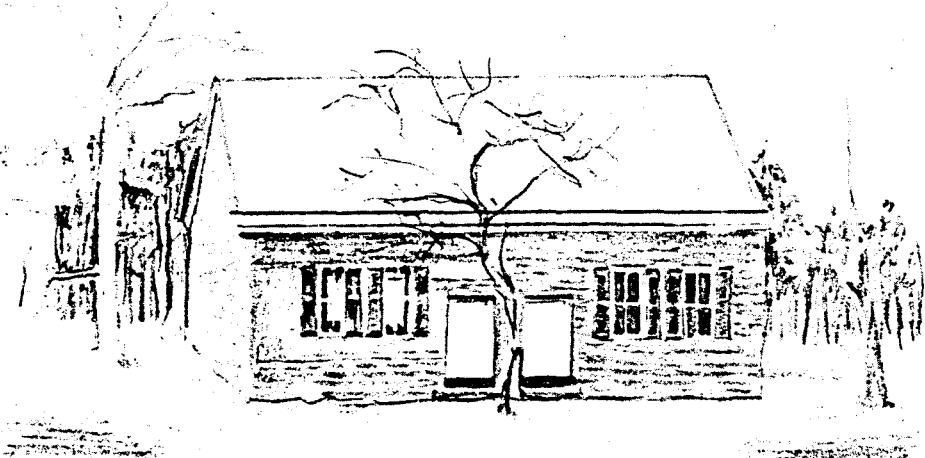
⁴²Dorothy Hudson, "History of Midlothian High School," Midlothian Virginia, 1971. (Mimeographed and found in the Midlothian High School Library)

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Bethel Baptist Church, Minutes of the Church Business Meeting, April 12, 1817. (Bethel Church records are in the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.)



A picture of the sanctuary, believed to have been taken when the Middle District Association met at Bethel on August 7, 1894.



Haley Cole School

Bethel was a small church and shared a minister with several other churches. Preaching was done only once a month. Church business meetings were also held once a month on Saturday mornings. The male members of the church attended this without fail unless they had a very good reason for not being present. Meetings were occasionally postponed because they conflicted with the drilling of the militia to which several members of the church belonged.⁴⁵

Most of the social life of the community centered around the homes and churches. Several Midlothian citizens belonged to the Masonic Lodge in Manchester and attended meetings when the weather permitted despite the long trip. The early residents did not seem to object to travel. Citizens from Richmond and Manchester enjoyed trips to picnics at the Barbeque Springs in Midlothian or, for a longer stay, a visit to the Huguenot Springs. These mineral springs located east of the Huguenot village gave the name to Huguenot Springs Road that provided access to the springs. A hotel was built there and over the years it became a resort for the sick to be healed in the waters and for the wealthy to enjoy the balls, hunts, and horse-racing that were part of life around the springs.⁴⁶

The community grew supported by the increased economic activity in the mines. For decades, and especially in the years from 1835 to 1865 coal mining was the overwhelmingly important economic activity in the Midlothian area. However, it was never the sole occupation of the community, thus Midlothain would survive after the mines stopped being worked.

⁴⁵ Bethel Church minutes over several years indicated that the militia drilled about once a quarter but not on a set schedule.

⁴⁶ Interviews with Miss Dorothy Hudson & Mrs. Gladys Dance, 1979.

CHAPTER TWO

GROWTH OF MIDLOTHIAN FROM 1835 TO 1850

By the 1830's coal mining in Midlothian had undergone a number of changes. New methods of mining evolved as technology improved and the market increased. The earliest coal pits were just pits dug into the coal that was near the surface. As the top layer (the only layer known to the early miners) gave out, the process was repeated by digging a new hole along the outcropping near the first one. As most of the early coal was used only by the land owner the demand was small and these pits, dug and sometimes filled in, were sufficient.

As the demand grew and the pits went deeper, it was discovered that a second and larger vein of coal lay beneath the rock under the first vein. To make use of this lower coal more equipment and labor was needed. A pulley of some sort was necessary to lower and raise the men digging the pit and once coal was reached, it was necessary to lift the coal as well. Once the men dug to the bottom of the second layer, the ease of expanding the diggings by breaking loose the coal surrounding the pit led to the formation of a bulb-shaped mine. It soon became apparent that increasing the size of the bulb without supporting the ceiling led to costly cave-ins.

Mine owners began seeking information from the coal mining regions of Great Britain. The English pillar system of mining was soon adopted in Midlothian. This used the basic pit as a shaft and dug into the vein of coal at its base to form a tunnel. It was

necessary to leave pillars of coal twice as large as the area where coal was to be taken out. In specific terms, an eight foot square pillar must be spared to mine a four foot section of coal. Sometimes the temptation to rob the pillars became too great. If the pillars were robbed to any extent, the coal shifted since the grain of the coal ran on an angle. The pillar then collapsed and the roof caved in, burying those working in the area.¹

Midlothian miners seemed to have been forewarned of the danger of robbing the pillars. While some cave-ins occurred, there is no record that pillar robbing was the cause. Wood was also used in Virginia to give added protection against cave-ins.²

Ample forests in the area provided large timbers that were used to support the ceiling and walls of the mines. This made it possible to get more coal out of the Virginia mines. Sir Charles Lyell, a noted British geologist, visited the Black Heath mines about 1847 and made the following observation:

I descended a shaft 800 feet deep to find myself in a chamber more than forty feet high; caused by the removal of the coal. Timber props of great strength are required to support the roof, although the use of wood is lavish here as elsewhere in the U. S.³ the props are seen to bend under the incumbent weight.

However, the main problem confronting the local miners was not the cave-in but gas. The coal gave off methane gas which was both suffocating and highly explosive. Tunnel mines were soon

¹Thomas S. Ashton, The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century (New York: A. M. Kelly, 1967), p. 17.

²Sir Charles Lyell, "On the Structure and Probable Age of Coal Fields of the James River, Near Richmond, Virginia," Geological Society, London, Quarterly Journal, III (1847), p. 263.

³Ibid.

developed supported by pillars and running between air shafts. The Black Heath mine had three shafts in a line, two were 300 feet deep and one 350 feet deep. These three were connected by a tunnel.⁴ Multiple sources of air helped alleviate the problem of gas but did not eliminate it.

A former impediment was ingeniously put to use to create a new means of circulating the air in the mines. Old pits, no longer in use but not completely sealed off, sometimes caught fire. Such was the case in a pit owned by the Black Heath Company. By 1830 the pit had been burning slowly for many years, heating the ground around it and making it impossible to dig another pit close to it. Since there was obviously coal in the area another shaft was sunk at a safe distance and tunnels advanced as close to the pit on fire as the men thought wise. When the tunnel became gassy an unknown miner told the men to dig a passage to the base of the firey pit and put an air-tight door between the pit and the main tunnel. This was done with great caution fearing an explosion. When the job was safely completed the door was opened and the light heated air from the smoldering pit created a vacuum that pulled the gassy air out of the tunnel.⁵ Once this method of ventilation was acknowledged as successful, furnaces were built at the base of one shaft for each new mine to create heat and force the air to circulate. Later a fan was placed at the head of a second shaft to force fresh air

⁴John Grammer, Jr., "An Account of Coal Mines in the Vicinity of Richmond, Virginia," American Journal of Science and Art (1820) I : 126.

⁵Ibid, pp. 126-128.

into the mine.

In less than a century the mines had evolved from shallow holes in the ground to deeper bulb-shaped pits, to corridors supported by pillars of coal, to tunnels deep in the ground supported by coal, rock and timbers. This evolution changed the entire mining business. Up-to-date equipment replaced the bucket on a rope. Large wooden boxes called coves were used to transport the coal along the tunnels underground. These boxes sat on a flat wagon and were pulled by mules to the bottom of the shaft where the cove was hooked to cables to be pulled to the surface by other mules or a steam engine.⁶

Henry Heth, in need of a steam engine to lift the water out of his mines, hired David French of a New York firm to build such an engine. The engine was built but before delivery French insisted that Heth hire a man from New York to run the engine. Heth, sure that he could train a slave to do the job, refused to accept the extra expense of a man's salary. French refused to release the engine unless the engineer was hired so the deal was canceled and Heth ordered a similar engine from England.⁷

Increased demand for coal in the 1830's required greater production which necessitated new equipment, new mines, and a larger labor force. As mining became big business, the number of single pit mines decreased. Mine owners joined with investors not directly involved in mining. The labor force specialized.

⁶Routon, "History," p. 36.

⁷Contract between Heth and French, November 30, 1811, Heth Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Staff to operate the mines had to be enlarged to include a business manager, several agents to sell the coal throughout the coastal region, a superintendent to see to the operations, a top boss and a bottom boss for each shift and two top and bottom crews. The top crew included the man who operated the lift, those who dumped out the coal, those who sorted it according to size and quality, and men who loaded it into the wagons. It also included the team drivers who took the wagons to the tipple where the coal was tipped over into the cars on the train. Before the train was available, the wagoneer would drive the coal to the coal yard in Manchester. Each company had a coal yard on the river. Most of the coal was reloaded on ships and sent to the cities along the East Coast. Some of the coal was sold at the yard for the use of Richmond residents. For a moderate operation at least five men were needed in the coal yard. The top crew would include at least twenty men. Much of the time from 1835 to 1865 the larger mining operations worked around the clock with two twelve-hour shifts working six days a week.⁸

The bottom crew's work was less complicated. In addition to the bottom boss, there was a gas man whose job was to check the mine for any gas accumulation before each shift of men entered the mine. This was done by using a Davy Lamp that went out immediately when

⁸Daily Dispatch, February 5, 1882; Oswald J. Heinrich, "The Midlothian Colliery, Virginia" American Institute of Mining Engineers' Transactions I (1871-1873):346-364. Hereafter cited as Heinrich, Transactions I; Heinrich, "An Account of an Explosion of Fire Damp at the Midlothian Colliery," A. I. M. E. Transactions V (1876-1877): 152-154. Hereafter cited as Heinrich, Transaction V.

gas was encountered. He also made his rounds several times during a shift. If the mine was declared safe, the rest of the bottom crew descended. Several carpenters were needed to shore up the works as the diggers (men who worked with the picks to break loose the coal) went deeper into the vein. The diggers did not shovel the coal into the cars; other men did that. At least one mule driver was needed underground in each tunnel. There were several tunnels in the larger mines. When the coal was pulled to the base of the main shaft, several people were needed to hook the cove on to the cables to be pulled to the surface. Firemen were also needed in the mines from time to time to put out coal fires or to build walls between areas that were on fire and the area being mined. This was an exhausting and dangerous job.⁹

There would commonly be between twenty and sixty men working underground in a large mine such as Black Heath or the Wooldridge or Railey pits. An equal number would be in the top crew plus several other employees such as cooks and bookkeepers. This large labor force had to be housed in the immediate mining area. Harry Heth and his successors for a while depended heavily on slave labor. Barracks for the slaves were built close to the mines. Some slaves actually lived in the mines, particularly those who tended the mules.¹⁰

Heth owned many slaves and rented as many more from local farmers. Professor Ronald Lewis, who has written on the use of slaves in the southern mines, suggested that only slaves who were

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

difficult to manage were sent to work in the mines, maintaining that this was a dreaded form of punishment.¹¹ This does not seem to have been the case in Midlothian. Contemporaries writing about the use of the slave labor noted that slaves preferred mine work to field work¹² because the work was no more difficult and the temperature was better, being an even sixty-five to seventy degrees year round. The slaves worked only twelve-hour shifts and if asked to work overtime were paid in cash for the hours worked. This unusual source of money provided the means that some slaves used to purchase their freedom, and that of a family member. While the slaves working in the mines were usually separated from their families, they were allowed to go home on Sundays if it was not too far away, and the entire month of December was usually a holiday.¹³

Job Atkins, an Englishman observing the life of a mining slave, wrote that he had been taught by his mother to pray daily for the poor slaves in America but that these slaves were well fed and physically fit. Medical needs were met by a company doctor. Many such slaves were making and spending more money a year than most white miners in England made.¹⁴

¹¹Ronald L. Lewis, "The Darkest Abode of Man: Black Miners in the First Southern Coalfield, 1780-1865," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 87 (1979): 190-202.

¹²Joseph Martin, A Comprehensive Description of Virginia (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1835), p. 152. Hereafter cited as Martin, A Comprehensive Description.

¹³Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 210.

¹⁴Job Atkins, The Practical Miners' Own Book and Guide (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1860), Introduction. Hereafter cited as Aktins: Practical Miner.

Brick tenements were built close to the mines to house part of the labor force of the mines. Other laborers were housed in wooden tenements and boarding houses.¹⁵ The mine owners from the two major mines, Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company (formerly Black Heath) and the Midlothian Coal Mining Company, constructed a brick hospital just south of Buckingham Road on Midlothian Company land. This served the miners and their families and was staffed by three doctors.¹⁶ A closer look at the development of these two large mining companies will help the reader to understand the growth of the village of Midlothian.

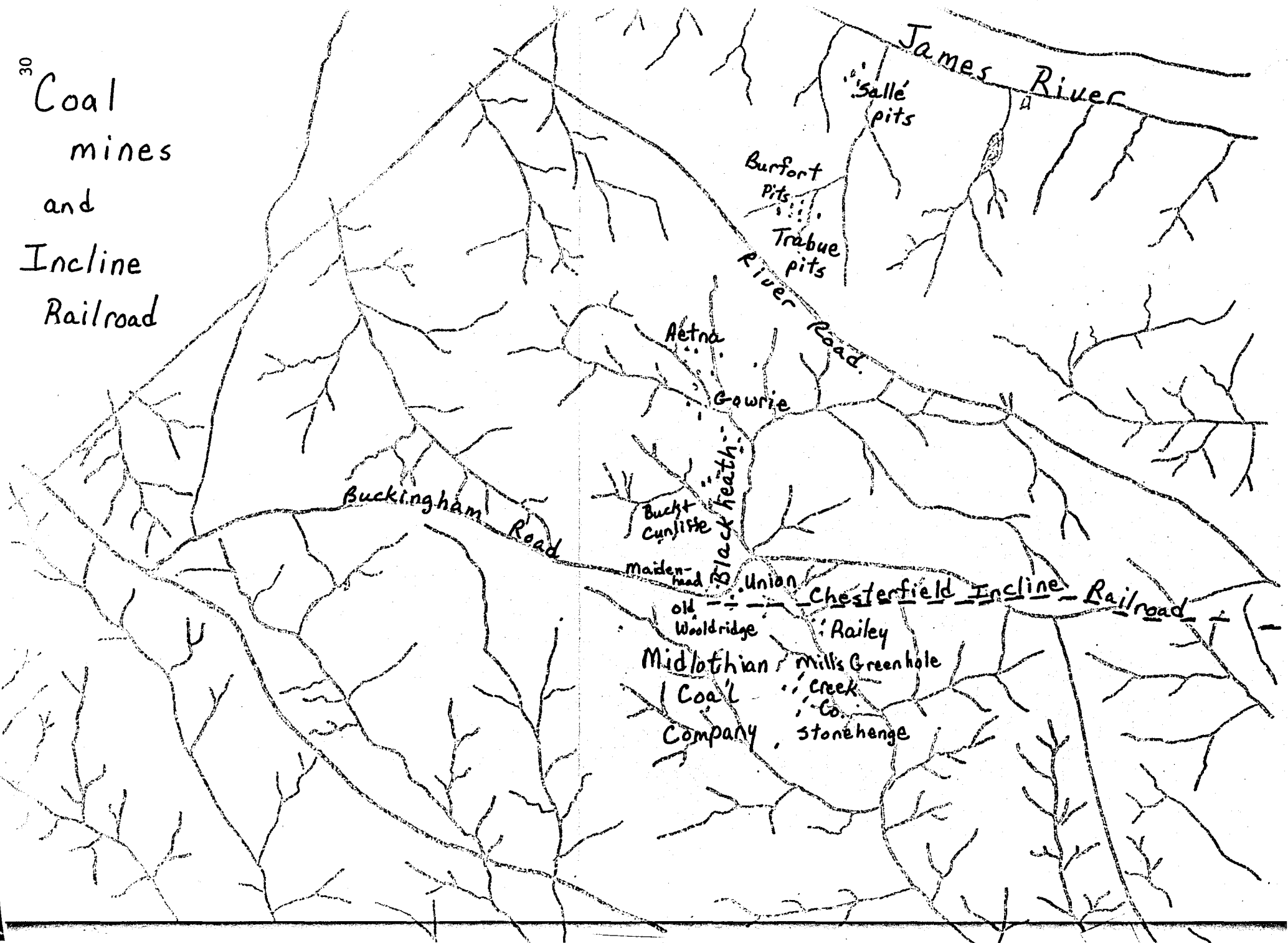
The growing mining business demanded greater capital and the ownership of the mines moved from sole proprietorship to partnership to corporation within a ten year period. Colonel Abraham Wooldridge in 1842 listed the mines in Midlothian in operation in 1835, that being the year that Midlothian Coal Mining Company owned by the Wooldridge family was incorporated. His list included the Salle and Burfort pits, Black Heath and Maidenhead pits, Buck and Cunliffe, and Mills' Greenhole and Creek pits, the Creek company pits, and Stonehenge, Railey and the Old Wooldridge pits.¹⁷ (See map on the next page for location of these pits.) Several of these pits were not in operation, but

¹⁵ Frederick L. Olmsted, Journey In the Seaboard Slave States (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), p. 47.

¹⁶ Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser, January 2, 1846.

¹⁷ A. S. Wooldridge, "Geological and Statistical Notice of the Coal Mines in the Vicinity of Richmond, Virginia," The American Journal of Science and Arts, 53, (1842): 2. Hereafter cited as Wooldridge, "Coal Mines."

³⁰
Coal
mines
and
Incline
Railroad



James River

Sallé pits

Burfort Pits

Trabue pits

Aetna

Gowrie

Buckingham Road

Buck + Cunliffe

Black Heath

Maidenhead

Union

Chesterfield Incline Railroad

old Woodridge

Railey

Midlothian Coal Company

Mills Greenhole Creek Co. Stonehenge

seven or eight were operating in 1835, collectively raising two hundred tons of coal every twenty-four hours. According to Joseph Martin, they employed seven to eight hundred men and three hundred horses or mules.¹⁸

To mine efficiently by the mid-1830's demanded the use of steam engines as well as mules for hauling coal to the surface. A large labor force, either a large area or several small areas to be mined, and a good transportation system were all necessary. All of this required a great deal of money. To acquire the large amount of capital needed, several mine owners formed corporations.

The coal mines in the Richmond basin were getting serious competition for the market for the first time by the early 1830's. The coal mines of Pennsylvania and Maryland were threatening the local economy. The wisdom of setting up corporations to provide more capital and greater efficiency was balanced in the minds of the members of the General Assembly against the danger of creating an impersonal and almost irresponsible entity to operate something as potentially volatile as a coal mine. The wealth, prestige, and record of responsible behavior of several of the mine owners perhaps persuaded the General Assembly to give in and charter the coal companies.¹⁹

The Black Heath Company of Colliers was set up in 1832, composed of the three remaining partners of the four-way partnership set up by

¹⁸ Martin, A Comprehensive Description, pp. 151-152.

¹⁹ Richmond Enquirer, March 3, 1832.

Harry Heth before his death in 1823. Beverly Randolph, husband of Heth's oldest daughter, joined his brothers-in-law, Beverly and John Heth, in being the major stock holders in this new company. They controlled the Salle, Maidenhead and Railey pits and were part owners of the Union pits, or about one third of the coal mining operations on the eastern outcrop. Evidently Beverly Randolph died before 1839, because John Heth was president of the company at that time and no further mention was made of Randolph.²⁰

The Black Heath Company of Colliers wanted to buy other mines and consolidate its business in Midlothian. The Company could not afford to do this on its own, so John Heth went to England in 1839 to interest mining entrepreneurs in Virginia mines. While in New Castle, he received news of an explosion in the Black Heath pits that killed forty people.²¹ He immediately set out to find experienced miners to take to Virginia. These men returned with Heth along with the agents from a group of Englishmen interested in investing in Virginia mines.²²

Thomas Marshall, who had been working in the English mines since he was eleven years old and was quite an expert, was made the new superintendent of the mines. He also brought a "gas man" and together with the other English miners, they set up the first professional ventilation system known in Virginia.²³

²¹Richmond Enquirer, March 23, 1839.

²²Wooldridge, "Coal Mines," p. 2

²³Letter from Thomas Marshall to Colonel A. S. Wooldridge November 12, 1855, Phillips Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

The agents for the English investors returned to New Castle with a favorable report and a new company was formed in 1842. This company combined the Black Heath Company of Colliers and the English stockholders and was known as the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company. (The company is generally referred to in local history simply as the English Company.) This new company was capitalized at between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000. The incorporators were John Heth, Charles Scaresbreck, William Crockford, Henry J. J. Hunlock, Robert Martin, Charles Cunningham, Samuel Amory, Germain Lanie, Thomas Ellverson, Wilmie Wilmer and Thomas Y. Hall.²⁴

The year that the new company was formed both Beverly Heth, the manager of the mines in Powhatan on the western outcrop, and John Heth, of the Black Heath mines, died. Their deaths shifted the management of the Midlothian mines into the hands of the English agent, probably Thomas Y. Hall. The Englishman recommended that no slaves be used in the mines. He felt this was wise since after the explosion, slave owners were reluctant to rent their slaves to the mine owners. So the mines used fewer slaves each year. The free black labor was acceptable to the Englishmen who had no dealings with slaves in England because slavery had been outlawed there.²⁵ There seems to have been some free blacks available to work the mines, but a great influx of British miners soon took the place of the slaves at Black Heath.

²⁴ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Book 60 : 63.

²⁵ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 199.

In 1844, the mines suffered the first explosion since the English had taken over and eleven miners perished. There were twelve men in the mine at the time, four white and eight black. Jonathan Jewett, an Englishman, was the only one to survive.²⁶

The explosion did no permanent damage to the structure of the mine so mining was resumed fairly quickly. The demand for coal was great and the Black Heath coal was of excellent quality. In the 1840's coal was selling in Philadelphia for twenty to twenty-two cents a bushel, or five dollars and ninety-five cents a ton. In Boston coal sold for five dollars and four cents a ton.²⁷ By 1850, Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company employed 115 men and raised 430,000 bushels of coal a year.²⁸ This was almost sixteen thousand tons of coal.

The Midlothian Coal Mining Company, mentioned earlier was incorporated in 1835. As incorporators, the Wooldridge family held controlling interest for the next thirty-five years. The Wooldridges had come to Midlothian sometime prior to 1786. They were of English descent and lived as gentlemen farmers. Early land plats and deeds indicate that the family owned in excess of five hundred acres of land. According to the census of 1830 the four households of the Wooldridge family owned from

²⁶ Richmond Compiler, June 15 and 17, 1844 as cited in Routon, "History," p. 78.

²⁷ F. R. Wadleigh, "Story of the Richmond Coal Field or Basin," Mimeographed compilation of information, 1930, p. 22. Hereafter cited as Wadleigh Report. Library of the Virginia Department of Conservation & Economic Development, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁸ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Industrial Census, 1850, Chesterfield, Virginia. Hereafter cited as Bureau of Census with appropriate schedule and date.

eighteen to forty-five slaves each.²⁹ The family had been involved in mining before they incorporated. The Old Wooldridge pits, worked out before 1835, may have been their first taste of mining.

The Midlothian Coal Mining Company was located on two tracts of land, Mid Lothian and The Grove. These two areas represented four hundred and four and one-half acres of land joining mining land on the eastern outcrop of the coal. The company was granted a charter by the General Assembly on January 23, 1835 and was allowed to sell three thousand shares of stock at one hundred dollars each. The family kept two thousand shares of stock and sold the rest to people in Richmond and surrounding counties and to Misters David Branch, Patterson and May (no first names recorded) Mister Charles Osbourne and Samuel Myers of Petersburg and Misters James Kelso and James Hunter of New York City. Several of the early shareholders including John Heth, defaulted in payment and lost their shares. These shares were quickly picked up by Nicholas Mills and Edward Moseley.³⁰

Beginning with four hundred, four and one-half acres, the Midlothian Coal Company expanded its holdings to 1,887 acres before the Civil War. In the process, they purchased many of the smaller mining operations surrounding them and along Falling Creek. Nicholas Mills sold his mining interest to the company and went on to other endeavors. The Railey pits that belonged to the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company were leased to

²⁹Bureau of Census, Population Census, 1830, Chesterfield County, Virginia.

³⁰Chesterfield County Deed Book 30:219-222.

the Midlothian Company and successfully worked for a while.³¹

The Midlothian Company began operations by digging four shafts. The Pump Shaft hit coal at 716 feet and was continued through the vein to 777 feet. The Middle Shaft hit coal at 612 feet and continued to 625 feet. The Wood Shaft hit coal between 250 and 300 feet and continued through several veins to 623 feet. The Grove Shaft that hit coal at 183 feet was 622 feet deep. While all shafts were begun about the same time, coal was first discovered in the Pump Shaft. This went through a thirty-six foot seam of good coal. Other operations were temporarily suspended and all efforts were put on developing this find. By 1850, one hundred fifty men and twenty-five mules were employed at the Pump Shaft and about 300,000 bushels of coal were being raised a year.³²

The Middle Shaft was evidently completed next and the underground workings of these two shafts joined. In 1844 The Reverend Jacob T. Tinsley visited the Midlothian pits and described his visit in the Baptist paper, The Religious Herald. He said he had entered with a great deal of trepidation but was fascinated by what he had seen below. The mines were clean, he reported, and the air was fresh, the diggers in good spirits, and happy about their employment. He descended the Pump Shaft to a depth of nearly 800 feet, according to his report. His guide, Thomas Marshall, the "gas man," led him down the main incline to where it joined another slope at a point 1,050 feet below the

³¹Chesterfield County Deed Book 36: 141, 145, 452, 454.

³²Wooldridge, "Coal Mines," pp. 6-7.

surface and under the old Wooldridge cemetery. The miners were gathered and he preached a sermon at that place, quipping that he had often preached to the living above the dead but never before had he preached to the living below the dead. After the sermon, he was ready to return to the surface, but Marshall insisted that he see the other part of the mine, and he followed the second incline up to its shaft where there was a furnace to heat the air and create ventilation. Tinsley noted that above one of the shafts there was a large steam engine with cables attached that pulled the cars along the underground track up to the bottom of the main shaft. He and Marshall mounted the bucket and were hoisted along with the coal to the surface.³³

Colonel A. S. Wooldridge, writing in 1842, proudly described his mines, noting that the drifts in progress extended north and south over a quarter of a mile. The east-west seam of coal sloped at thirty-two degrees. He predicted that with a second engine, about two million bushels of coal could be produced per annum.³⁴

Thomas Marshall had engineered and supervised the building of the ventilation system in the mines. Wooldridge described this impressive system in detail.

The ventilation is kept up by means of brattice work or boards and aided by a furnace underground. The atmospheric air is taken down on one side the shaft, and courses the whole drift passing out by the furnace in the opposite side of the shaft. On the upcast side the air is received some thirty feet from the bottom

³³ Jacob T. Tinsley, "Visit to the Coal Pits," Religious Herald, March 23, 1844, p. 3.

³⁴ Wooldridge, "Coal Mines," p. 7.

of the pit into the shaft, and at the top it is boxed up so as to throw it off fifty feet above the mouth of the shaft. Large quantities of inflammable gas are thrown out from the coal in the mines constantly and any interruption in the air coursing the mines with regularity, might and would be attended with disastrous consequences from the explosion of the gas. Sir Humphrey Davy's lamp is used at the mines, more as a pioneer than otherwise; no mines are considered safe that require to be worked by safety-lamps. They ought to be used only in going through the mines to see that all is right, before the miners are put to work; or to be used to free the mine in case they are over-charged with gas.³⁵

A shaft was eleven feet square and divided by timbers into four parts to facilitate the ventilation and raising and lowering of coal and people. Such a shaft was recommenced at the Grove Shaft mine in 1842. It cost \$20,000 and required three years labor to reach the workable coal.³⁶ The cost of sinking a shaft varied but always became more expensive the deeper it went. A chart made in 1854 indicated that the cost was thirteen dollars and fifty cents per perpendicular foot.³⁷ This did not take into account the problem of large quantities of rock. The coal was generally covered by alternate layers of sandstone and slate. Lacking modern equipment, a number of able diggers, haulers-up of dirt, and men to build supports in the shaft were needed.

The labor source so necessary to operate the mines saw a

³⁵ Wooldridge, "Coal Mines," pp. 8-9. (Brattice is a heavy piece of canvas made stiff by wax)

³⁶ Henry Howe, Historical Collections of Virginia (Charleston, South Carolina: Babcock & Company, 1845), p. 230. Hereafter cited as Howe, Collections.

³⁷ Letter from Richard Smithurst and Sampson Vivian to James T. Tompkins, December 22, 1854, Tompkins Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

major transition between 1840 and 1850. Under the influence of the English Company, the slave labor used in the mines before 1839 was gradually replaced by free blacks and a large number of miners from the British Isles. News seems to have spread quickly in Britain that in Virginia there were jobs at good pay, in favorable conditions, with limited hours and a chance to buy land and build a home of your own.³⁸

The people came eagerly looking for a new start. Many settled in the Richmond coal basin and others went to the Pennsylvania coal fields. Some men brought their families as they came; others came alone to get a place ready and then sent back for their families. Some of the local farm families took advantage of the influx of newcomers and turned their homes into boarding houses or taverns and ordinaries. Many of the mine people were forced to live in company housing until their need or bankroll prompted more desirable quarters.³⁹

³⁸ The material in the next six pages is the result of three years of research, using many sources to form this picture of Midlothian Village before the Civil War. The picture is an amalgam of the following sources: United States Census Reports for 1840, 1850 and 1860 for Chesterfield County, Personal property tax records from 1830 to 1860, An 1865 map of Chesterfield County made by Andrew Talcott, Church records, physical evidence such as old brick arches in Ante-Bellum mine shafts, ruins of Ante-bellum homes and homes still standing from this early period, Family records, mementoes, pictures, and especially the memory of the people explaining what they had been told by their grandparents of the period before the Civil War.

³⁹ Ruins of old dormitories have been found on mining property. Mr. Leland Anderson remembered in 1920 that he, working for the Murphy Coal Company demolished seventy-five year old houses built to house the mine workers by the Midlothian Coal Mining Company.

Mine owners advertised for miners, stressing the lengths and expense that the company had gone to in order to insure the safety and comfort of the people who worked at the mines.⁴⁰ Part of the expense had been the building of additional housing units. This required the services of artisans, and many sons of old farm families were turning to carpentry, masonry and back-up construction work - running a brick kiln or a saw mill. Some of their labor was needed in operating the mine itself with the timbers needed to shore up the shafts and tunnels. Quite a bit of brick work was also done in the mines, particularly around the main shaft.

The miners had to have clothes. In the mines they wore course "hardtimes clothes", heavy trousers, short skirt coat, shirt collars of sailcloth, low black wool hat, and heavy shoes and stockings.⁴¹ Local cobblers and seamstresses provided the clothes and company stores provided what the local artisans could not supply and served as a distribution point for food locally produced.

The mines obviously created a great number of jobs, more above ground than below. As the worker was able to save more of his pay, he looked to having his own land and a home built for his family. Most of them bought small plots of land - several acres for a garden plot, room for a few animals and a house. Such land was found in the areas adjoining the land

⁴⁰Richmond Enquirer, January 9, 1840.

⁴¹Howe, Collections, p. 230.

owned by the mining companies.

By the late 1840's Midlothian had a large number of salaried people, families not self-sufficient as some of the plantation owners and farmers were, but people who needed the products others produced. This led to the completion of a village with close neighbors, stores, churches, fraternal organizations, taverns and eventually a school. Thus Midlothian came into existence, a community of hard-working middle class people surrounded by large land owners and the summer homes of rich businessmen from Richmond. A look at some of these groups and ^{the} institutions they helped create will give the reader a better understanding of the area.

The miners led a simple life working twelve hours a day, six days a week. The mines were explosive and perhaps facing death every day made them a very religious people. Most of the English miners were Methodists. There was no Methodist church in the area where most of the old families were Episcopal, Baptist or Huguenot, so the miners created their own congregation, meeting first in homes. The English company, their employer, donated the land for a church building in the area formerly known as the Union Pits. A church was constructed there in 1845 with an adjoining cemetery.⁴²

The cemetery has become known as the miners graveyard because of the number of people killed in the mining accidents who were buried there. While there are headstones for many of these graves, the very devout Methodists did not believe in stone markers;

⁴²Oscar Watlington, "History of Mount Pisgah Church," 1975 (Typewritten and in the possession of Mrs. Watlington, Midlothian.)

thus there are a number of unmarked graves in the cemeteries surrounding the mines.⁴³ The congregation of the Old Wesleyan Meeting House continued to grow over the years and formed the Mount Pisgah Methodist Church which is still an active church in Midlothian.

In 1846, a year after the Methodist church was established, a black Baptist church was organized, again on mining land. The Midlothian Coal Company granted permission for the building of a church on their land. This church became known as the Midlothian African Church. Most of the members of the congregation worked at the mines although slaves from neighboring farms were permitted to worship there. The congregation had various pastors, black and white, over the years. The most colorful of these pastors was a slave of the Wooldridge family named John Jasper. Jasper was given a great deal of freedom, and he preached regularly at several churches. His famous sermon, "The Sun Do Move," won him the attention and respect of people far beyond the limits of the village of Midlothian.⁴⁴

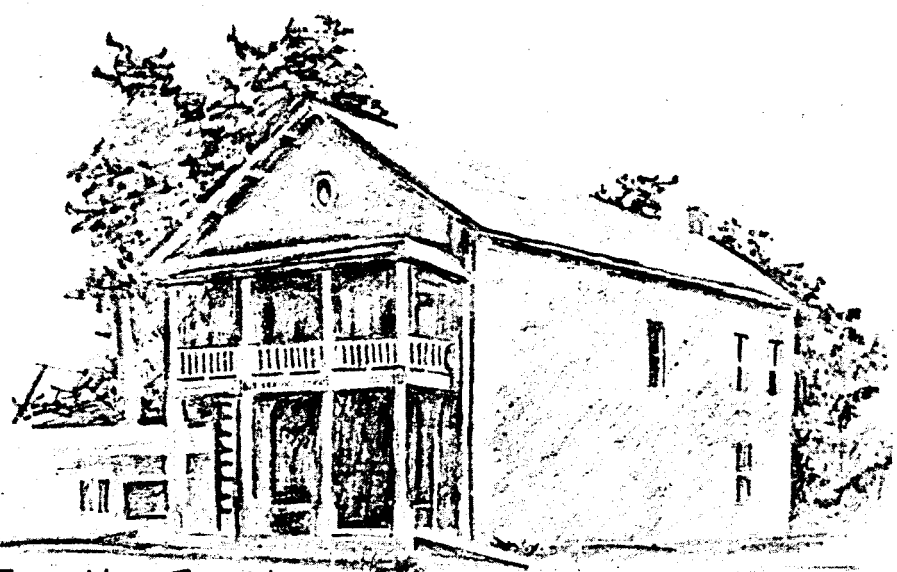
It is interesting to speculate as to how the miners amused themselves in their spare time. There were several taverns in the area but it is doubtful that the miners spent a great deal of time there because of their long hours in the mine and the taverns were closed on Sunday. More likely the men gathered at the stores in the area to discuss politics and exchange gossip. There were several stores including the Company Store.

⁴³ Interview with Jeremiah J. Jewett, Midlothian, Virginia May 20, 1980. Hereafter cited as Jewett Interview.

⁴⁴ Richmond Whig, June 26, 1846.



Grove Shaft Mine



Jewett + Brothers
 Later
 Bass's Store Later a Bicycle Shop

Jewett's store and Manders' store were the largest stores in Midlothian. These two were almost across the road from each other between the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company and the Midlothian Company. They were run by John Manders, an Irish immigrant, and the Jewett family, English immigrants. When her husband was killed in a mining accident, Mrs. Anne Jewett opened a store to support her family. Her sons carried on the business well into the twentieth century.⁴⁵

All of the stores in the Midlothian area were supplied with goods from local farmers and craftsmen, but also purchased goods from Richmond and further away. They depended on the railroad to bring these goods to Midlothian.

In 1848, the Richmond-Danville Railroad Company was incorporated to build a steam railroad between those two cities. This would nearly parallel the Chesterfield railroad, and as the steam locomotives could provide better service, the little incline railroad was in trouble. Negotiations began at once for the new Richmond-Danville Company to buy out the Chesterfield line. The owners of the Chesterfield line demanded twenty-five dollars per share of stock and Richmond Danville investors were not willing to pay that much, therefore, negotiations failed.⁴⁶

By 1850, the village of Mid Lothian was serviced by two

⁴⁵ Jewett Interview.

⁴⁶ Letter from Debbie Noxon to Barbara Burtchett, February 5, 1980. Miss Noxon is the Public Relations Director of the Southern Railway Systems in Washington, D. C.

railroads, several stores and taverns, two churches, and two major coal corporations. The population continued to grow as more miners came from England, Scotland, and Wales. The Huguenot influence was fading. Huguenot mine owners had long since sold their land to others. The mining operations were erratic, stopped too frequently by explosions. The market had to be shared with coal mines in Pennsylvania and the mountain areas of Virginia and Maryland, and while the Midlothian mines were profitable, they were also volatile and could be shut down instantly by a major explosion.

The railroad was increasingly important to Midlothian. While the Chesterfield line had served the mining interest well, a larger steam railroad that could in its foreseeable future ship the coal all the way to tidewater was definitely a better mode of transportation.

CHAPTER THREE

MIDLOTHIAN FROM 1850 THROUGH THE CIVIL WAR

Conflict between the Chesterfield and Richmond-Danville railroads dragged on until after the Richmond-Danville line was completed through Midlothian. At the request of the coal companies in 1854, a spur line was run to Black Heath and Grove Shaft. By 1858 the Chesterfield line was completely bankrupt and Richmond-Danville bought their road bed and remaining appurtenances for \$1,500.¹

Financially, Midlothian people benefited from the Richmond-Danville railroad. The Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company built twelve four-wheel dumping cars for the railroad between July and September of 1850. The rail company paid Robert Marks (a local carpenter) to build houses for the freight and section leader and a freight station. (The section leader was the man responsible for maintaining a particular section of the railroad.) Marks was paid \$1,910 for the houses and \$118 for the work he did on the station.² Railroad workers were boarded in two Midlothian homes. William Morrisette was paid \$64.62 for those who boarded with him and E. W. Powell was paid \$80.65 for those he boarded. Mrs. E. A. Blunt was paid \$10.50 for making clothes for the black workers. Mrs. P. Trabue was paid \$12.00 for making clothes.³

¹Letter from Debbie Noxon to Barbara Burtchett, February 5, 1980.

²Superintendent's Report, Richmond-Danville Railroad Annual Report, 1850, Southern Railway Company Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereafter cited as Superintendent's Report.

³Ibid.

Railroad construction continued in 1854 when Robert Marks was paid an additional \$1,671 for building the freight station and another \$1,082 for the section master's house and houses for the Negroes. (It is not known whether these Negroes were slaves working for the railroad or free blacks.) A bridge high above Falling Creek was built by Enoch Taylor who was paid \$2,000 for the masonry work.⁴

The Richmond-Danville company spent a great deal of money in Midlothian but felt it was worth the investment. In 1851 the company earned \$8,324.61 for hauling Midlothian coal. In addition they earned \$1,203.84 for hauling stone, \$3,016.99 for freight and \$345.00 for mail. Passenger service from Midlothian brought the railroad \$7,063.00.⁵

The local people seem to have been delighted with the passenger service which connected the village to Richmond. Many made use of this new means of transportation to engage in business in the growing city.⁶ Richmond, too gained from the railroad. Locomotives and other train equipment were made there.

Talbott and Brothers built the locomotive Roanoke for the Richmond-Danville line in 1850. Upon completion of a bridge from Manchester to Richmond in December, 1850, the Roanoke pulled a special train which was run to the coal pits where a "handsome coalition" was served to a large list of notables.⁷

⁴Superintendent's Report, 1854.

⁵Superintendent's Report, 1851.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 213.

These notables were shown a prosperous coal mining industry in Midlothian which lasted undisturbed for another year. Late in 1851 production at the Chesterfield Company mine was interrupted by an explosion that did extensive property damage. The mine thus closed was reopened when safely reconstructed and continued to work until 1852 when another explosion killed twenty workers.⁸ A third explosion in 1854 killed another twenty people.⁹ Newspaper reports offer greater detail of this explosion than were available for the earlier ones. Several miners who had come to the surface ten minutes before the explosion said the air in the mine was free of foul gasses. It was supposed that a miner with his lighted hat got too close to an old "damp" or unknown gas lead from an old mine. The explosion happened at lunch time in a pit 625 feet deep. Job Atkins, one of the superintendents of the mine, went down with other volunteers as soon as fresh air was pumped into the mine. They discovered William Elliott who was "dreadfully burned and bruised, but not dead."¹⁰ He was the only survivor. The other men were either crushed or mangled by the concussion or charred by the flash fire after the explosion. Twelve of the victims were married men with families. Two were just boys.

The people of Richmond and Chesterfield subscribed money to help the families. Dr. Phillip Hancock, who had come to Midlothian

⁸Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 215.

⁹Richmond Enquirer, May 19, 1854.

¹⁰Ibid.

to work in the miners' hospital and to treat the people in the area, was asked to be in charge of distributing the money collected for the families. Since he, more than anyone in the community, knew the needs of the people, the money was well used.¹¹

The explosion of 1854 caused the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company to give up active mining in Midlothian. The company rented the mine land to others requiring only a percentage of the money they made - usually one cent per bushel of coal raised. Many of the English workers stayed in Midlothian and went to work for the Midlothian Coal Company or the person or persons who rented the English pits.

The Midlothian Company was also having difficulties. In 1855 an explosion in the Midlothian pits trapped fifty-five men. The courageous action of volunteers and Job Atkins, former superintendent of the English mines and superintendent of the Midlothian mines at the time, saved the lives of sixteen miners, some of whom were severely burned. The cause of the explosion was unknown. It was felt that perhaps as they blasted the coal an old shaft might have been breached, filling the mine with gas that exploded. According to the newspaper accounts, the explosion was so great that it "caused the earth to quake for several miles around the pit. A man who was crossing the railroad tracks a mile from the pit stated that he felt the tracks reel under him...."¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Richmond Enquirer, March 23, 1855.

A newspaper reporter described the scene as heart-rending and said that some of the dead had their flesh charred to the bone but still held on to their picks and shovels. Those who survived pleaded not to be left behind and begged for a drink of water. The paper listed the names of the nine white people killed in the explosion but failed to identify the thirty Negroes.¹³

The explosion closed the pump and middle shaft, the Grove shaft and Woods shaft had not been completed and so attention was turned to the former Railey pits leased from the Chesterfield Company. The White Chimney pit had water problems and an attempt to drain these mines resulted in the drowning of a number of men in 1856.¹⁴ By 1858 a five hundred horse power Cornish pumping engine had been obtained to drain these pits. This draining effort was a success and all the water was removed. Unfortunately as the coal dried out it caught fire, and by 1861 "all lower works had to be abandoned, leaving a column of pumps, a train of loaded cars, a fire engine, etc. behind in a hasty retreat."¹⁵

Demand for Midlothian coal was low in the 1850's compared to what was being mined and stock piles of coal grew both at the mines and the coal yards on the river. The beginning of the Civil War, however, created a great demand for fuel for the Tredegar Iron Works and war industries in the Richmond area. The old Railey pits were

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 15, 1856.

¹⁵ Oswald J. Heinrich, "The Midlothian, Virginia, Colliery in 1876," Transactions IV (1875-1876): 310. Hereafter cited as Heinrich Transactions IV.

were worked during the war without incident. As evidence of the probable profits, several barrels of Confederate money were found in the mining office at the end of the Civil War.¹⁶

Demand for coal was great and the price was high during the war, but the English company did not seem to be interested in taking advantage of the situation by reopening their mines. Perhaps a hands-off policy existed because the coal would have been used to aid the Confederacy and England refused to officially help the Confederate States. Other than the mines leased to the Midlothian Company, no record can be found of any English pits operating during the war, although several had been leased prior to that time.

The Richmond-Danville Railroad continued to grow during the period before and during the Civil War. All went well for the railroad until 1859 when an engine named Pittsylvania, built by Souther, Anderson, and Company, blew up near the coal field killing the "engine driver."¹⁷

While the "engine driver" was not a native of Midlothian, many local people did work for the railroad. They served as section masters and later telegraph operators. One was even a major officer in the company. A. F. D. Gifford, sent from London as the attorney for the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company, lived in Midlothian and became vice president of the Richmond-Danville Railroad. He was

¹⁶Meriweather Jones, "Some of the Successes and Failures In the Richmond Coal Field," 1916, p. 4. (Typed report included in the "Report on the Richmond Coal Fields and Maps" unpublished compilation in the Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia) Hereafter cited as Jones, "Some Successes and Failures."

¹⁷Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 223.

actively involved in the railroad business both at its headquarters in Richmond and at his home in Midlothian. In December, 1853, the stockholders voted to pay Gifford \$2,000 for gratuitous services, (perhaps these were legal fees) plus \$351.00 for feeding and tending the mules at stables in Midlothian.¹⁸ In 1854 he received \$239.00 for transporting coal on the incline plane (a reference not explained but perhaps they were still making use of the old incline railroad). He also received \$30.00 for one mule and a sawing machine.¹⁹

Gifford was representative of many of the people in Midlothian who had come to work at the mines. As the heyday of the mines declined, many turned to the railroad either for direct employment or as a means to get to jobs in Richmond. It also improved communications between this small village with its limited interests and the outside world.

Between 1846 and the beginning of the Civil War four new centers of interest were developed in Midlothian - three churches and the Masonic Lodge. It would appear that this wicked village full of horse-racing, gambling, taverns and coal dust was about to be reformed.

The African Baptist Church mentioned earlier had a white pastor in 1852. The Reverend A. A. Baldwin became pastor of a church of 162 people, by far the largest church in Midlothian. The membership dwindled until the Civil War when it remained static during the war years. Its membership rose and fell as

¹⁸ Superintendent's Report, 1851-53.

¹⁹ Superintendent's Report, 1854.

the need for slave labor in the mines increased and decreased.²⁰

All but very recent records of the African Church have been lost. The original building burned before the war and blacks collected money and bought land for a church on Westfield Road, part of the old Wooldridge estate.²¹ The church now known as Midlothian's First Baptist Church, is in the same location.

The white Baptist church which resulted from a split at Bethel in 1852 was established on the Hancock property on Buckingham Road. The new church, named Jerusalem, was pastored by David B. Winfree during the Civil War. The congregation, primarily white, grew to eighty-six at the end of the war. It had an active Sunday School most of the time and shared its preacher with several other churches, each having services once a month.²² Early minute books are lost, denying accurate information of the activities of this little church. It is reasonable to assume that they followed the same strict moral code that had been followed at Bethel. Their little frame church served as a meeting center for its community. A grave yard was next to the church.²³

The Reverend Winfree shared with many of his neighbors an interest in the work of the Masonic Lodge. In 1853, the Black Heath Lodge was founded, meeting first at the home of Dr. W. B. Ball on October 8 of that year. Many of its early members were

²⁰Middle District Association Records, 1852-1865, Virginia Baptist Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²¹Chesterfield County Deed Book 75, p. 49

²²Middle District Association Records, 1852-1865.

²³Interview with Gladys Dance, Midlothian, Virginia, November 6, 1979.

former members of the Manchester Lodge Number Fourteen.²⁴ On December 15, 1853, the Black Heath Lodge was officially visited by Edwin P. Hunter, grand master of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. Its officers were duly accepted and the Black Heath Lodge was designated as number eighty-nine. The lodge then conferred the past-master's degree on Dr. Ball and installed the other officers.²⁵

There was no permanent home for the lodge and so it met first at Buck Hill, then at East Lothian and at the Brick Store. Several times it met at the home of Doctor Ball which may well have been Buck Hill.²⁶ Later the second floor of the brick store - possibly the Jewett store - was converted into a lodge room.²⁷

The lodge grew in membership and importance to the area over its brief existence. Its minutes note several disasters such as the mine explosion at Black Heath in 1854 and the explosion at Grove Shaft in 1855. In one year Midlothian lost seventy-five people aside from the natural deaths during that period. While records do not indicate that any member of the lodge was killed in these explosions, the lodge joined the rest of the community in aiding the families of the victims.²⁸

²⁴ Johnson, History, p. 16.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The assumption that Doctor Ball's home might have been Buck Hill is based on a deed he had to property adjoining the Buck Hill estate and deeds that indicate that Buck Hill was owned by the Wooldridges who also owned the home of Doctor Ball's widow. Chesterfield County Deed Books 44:1, 48:566, 55:183.

²⁷ Johnson, History, p. 21

²⁸ Ibid, p. 32.

The duration of the lodge's existence is unknown. No minutes were kept after 1857 and by 1860 it was noted by the Grand Lodge that the Black Heath Lodge had been suspended.

G. I. Johnson, in his book on the history of Midlothian Masonic Lodge, suggested that the financial panic of 1857 and its resulting depression was the reason why the brothers gave up the lodge.²⁹

Midlothian had more than its share of economic problems with both of its major mines shut down due to explosions. A. S. Wooldridge of the Midlothian mines also owned Huguenot Springs, having purchased it from Dr. R. W. Royster. He sold the Springs, 790 acres of land, "the hotel, cabins, farmhouse, outhouses of every description and all other improvements and appurtenances" along with whatever coal lay under the land to W. E. Phillips of New York in 1856.³⁰

The Huguenot Springs and Mining Company had been chartered and incorporated March 26, 1856 by Wooldridge; and Phillips was to take over this company. The only thing retained was the right for Major and Mrs. Wooldridge to continue to use their cottage at the Springs for as long as they lived.³¹

Mr. Phillips' intent to mine the area is evidenced not only by his purchase of the company but by inquiries and answers that were made concerning the qualifications of the two Englishmen, Thomas Marshall and Thomas Foizey as possible mine superintendents.³²

²⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁰ Letter from A. S. Wooldridge to W. B. Phillips, July 26, 1856, Phillips Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

The mine was never dug at Huguenot Springs. It is not known what happened to Mr. Phillips. Perhaps the economic and political climate of the time were not conducive to a New Yorker beginning a business in the South.

The war came and as the casualties piled up in Richmond's Chimborazo Hospital, some of the less seriously wounded were sent to Huguenot Springs where the hotel had been converted into a hospital for the overflow. No battle was ever fought around Midlothian but there is a cemetery near the Springs where Civil War soldiers who did not survive their wounds were buried.³³

Local doctors served the Huguenot Springs hospital under the supervision of Dr. Powhatan Spencer Dance,³⁴ and local ladies served as nurses. One of the nurses was Mrs. Sarah Martin Harris, a young widow with small children. While nursing at the Springs, she caught the eye of many wounded men but lost her heart to one. Mrs. Harris married Charles Winham of Tennessee, and descendants of the family still live in the Bethel Community.³⁵

The war did not provide such a storybook ending for all Midlothian citizens. It did have an effect on the local people financially and through family losses. Wartime inflation had a great effect on those who did not farm and had to buy food. In March, 1863, flour sold for \$200.00 a barrel in Confederate

³³ Interview with Dorothy Hudson, Powhatan, Virginia, November 3, 1979.

³⁴ Dance Interview

³⁵ Hudson Interview. Miss Hudson is the granddaughter of Sarah and Charles Winham.

money, apples were \$25.00 a bushel, butter \$2.50 a pound and beef \$2.00 a pound. By 1864 prices were even higher; flour was \$400.00 a barrel. Meal sold for \$75.00 a bushel and meat was not to be found at any price.³⁶

Railroad men were among those who had to pay the inflated price for food. The railroad company also had its expenses. During the war the Richmond-Danville line operated the incline railroad out of the coalfield as well as their steam locomotives. In 1863 the cost of operating the incline plane was \$4,178.64. Part of the expense was due to the loss of six four-wheel wooden coal cars though the reason for the loss was not explained. The agent and operator at the Coalfield station was J. N. Cook. He was paid \$70.83 a month, which does not seem to be much money for such inflationary times. Other than Cook's salary the operation of the station cost only \$140.81. It was noted that the telegraph was used greatly at that station, presumably for war orders from the coal mines. Two large engines, the Appomattox and Caroline, were used to power the heavy coal trains.³⁷

In 1864 the railroad was in debt. Equipment was hard to get and prices were high. The money made from shipping coal that year was \$133,973.30.³⁸ The service to the mines seemed to be paying for itself until Union raiders burned the Coalfield

³⁶Johnson, History, p. 38.

³⁷Superintendent's Report, 1863

³⁸Superintendent's Report, 1864. This was inflated currency.

Station and destroyed the tracks.³⁹

A great deal of excitement was aroused in May, 1864, when a party of Yankee troops raided Midlothian. They went to the coal mines first. Destruction of the mine property was prevented after the English superintendent told the commanding officer that the mines were owned by an English company. So the hungry troops rode to Doctor Mills' house close to the mines and demanded liquor to drink. He said he had no liquor but that the well was full of water and he handed the commander a silver goblet to drink from. He never got the goblet back. The soldiers left the mine and raided Manders' store, pretty well destroying it. The old Irishman, it is said, cried like a baby for the first time since his mother's funeral; it was not over the destruction of the store but over the loss of his whisky supply. The soldiers continued to the railroad station, tore down telegraph lines and ripped up track before they burned the station and looted the surrounding neighborhood - all told a frightening night for the citizens of Midlothian. According to the Enquirer's report of that night's activities, many of the black miners fled into the woods to avoid capture by the Yankees. Some were caught and taken off - no one seemed to know where.⁴⁰

The mining superintendent, Job Atkins, was very outspoken in his hatred of the Yankees. He referred to them as "robbers and murderers of the deepest dye." He continued to complain about England aiding the North and he referred to the action of the North

³⁹ Richmond Enquirer, May 14, 1864.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

as being "anti American." He also complained about the Confederate government not doing what it should have to protect the coal mining operation. He referred not only to military protection, which was totally lacking, but also the absence of economic protection.⁴¹ Atkins did not explain what economic protection could be given. A tariff would have been useless in light of the blockade and Pennsylvania coal was not being shipped to Richmond.

When Richmond was evacuated in April, 1865, Lee surrendered the entire railroad to the U. S. Military authority. It was retained until July when it was returned to the state of Virginia. The fire that swept the city at the end of the war destroyed the Richmond station, the Richmond-Danville offices and two bridges used by the Richmond-Danville trains.⁴²

In addition to the railroad the United States government took over the Bellona arsenal and foundry after the war. Before and during the war this installation seemed to have been forgotten by the Federal government. In 1853 the government (which was no longer using it) sold the arsenal to Doctor Junius Archer. The deed was signed by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. Shortly before the war, Doctor Archer sold the arsenal property to General Phillip St. George Cocke who was farming the land and not using the arsenal buildings. As the foundry was still operating, arms were temporarily stored in the arsenal. In 1860 the Federal

⁴¹ Atkins, Practical Miner, Preface.

⁴² Superintendent's Report, 1865.

government had contracted with Doctor Archer to build fifty heavy Columbiad Cannons. This job was completed and the guns were ready to ship to Fort Monroe on March 29, 1861.⁴³

When it was learned that the big guns were to be shipped through Richmond, a great furor ensued. Various members of the Convention on Secession spoke loudly against permitting the guns to leave Virginia. Tempers flared, secessionists against unionists. It was even rumored that Governor John Letcher would call out the army to protect the guns. The guns remained at Bellona.⁴⁴

The Confederate Congress finally decided to buy the guns, paying Archer \$8,800 for what the Federal government had not paid him. It also ordered other guns - fifty, forty-two, twenty-four, and sixty-eight pounders. The arsenal was again put to use.⁴⁵

Local legend said that Bellona was Lee's secret arsenal. Easily supplied and equipped from the river, not far from the rail lines, it appeared to be no more than an old ruin with a farm around it. Union spies tried in vain to locate the source of Lee's supply of weapons but never thought to look at this old arsenal. There must have been a grain of truth to the story because after the war, the property was confiscated by the government. Cocke and Archer joined in a chancery suit to get their property back. In 1875 Bellona was sold under court order

⁴³ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 228.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 229.

to R. B. Chaffin.⁴⁶ The truth behind the story of the supply of guns remains illusive.

Perhaps one source of guns for the Confederacy was another Midlothian resident. A. F. D. Gifford of the Richmond-Danville Railroad made periodic trips to his native London. On one such trip in 1861 he wrote to the Virginia legislature offering to "purchase arms and supplies in England."⁴⁷ As he never returned, it is not known whether he purchased the guns. Apparently his ship was lost at sea, perhaps sunk in an attempt to run the blockade.

Another man who might have tried to obtain British help was Doctor W. B. Ball. Dr. Ball, doctor for the mines and respected member of the community, made an unexplained trip in England in 1863, leaving his wife with power of attorney over his estate.⁴⁸ He did return, but no record has been found as to why he went or how long he was gone.

There were two other Midlothian men whose service to the Confederacy is clear - Major Generals Henry Heth and Edward Johnson. Henry Heth was born and raised at Black Heath and Edward Johnson at neighboring Salisbury. Both were members of wealthy families, were well-educated, and were Southern gentlemen in every sense of the word.

⁴⁶ Frank S. Woodson, "Bellona Arsenal, Hive of History," Richmond, Virginia August 25, 1912. (Typewritten in possession of the Frank Easterly Family at Bellona.

⁴⁷ H. W. Flournoy, ed., Calender of State Papers (Richmond: H. W. Flournoy, 1893), vol. 6, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Chesterfield County Deed Book, 46:415.

After graduating last in his class at West Point, Henry Heth served in the Mexican War with U. S. Grant with whom he became friends. He had worked his way up to the rank of captain when he resigned to join the Confederate army. He was made a colonel in the Forty-Fifth Infantry in June, 1861. By 1862 he had been promoted to brigadier general and later that year to major general.⁴⁹

Heth served in West Virginia under General H. Marshall and General Bragg. There he commanded a division of infantry and at one time a brigade of cavalry. Then he came east to command a cavalry division under General Longstreet. His men were the first in combat at Gettysburg. He was in several other campaigns with the Army of Northern Virginia, commanding a division of A. P. Hill's Third Army Corps.⁵⁰

Heth, when present at the surrender at Appomattox, was brought forward to pay his respects because of his former contact with Grant. He noted that it was a friendly visit, not a confrontation between conqueror and conquered.⁵¹

Edward Johnson, nine years older than Heth had a parallel career. He too went to West Point, fought in the Mexican War, resigned from the United States Army to join the Confederate Army where he was made a brigadier general under Major General Thomas J. Jackson. He idolized Jackson and served well under him. In 1863, as major general he commanded a division of the Second Corps of the

⁴⁹ R. W. Johnson and C. C. Buel, eds., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 10 vols. (New York: The Century Company, 1888) 4:746.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Army of Northern Virginia. In September 1864, he was assigned a division in the Second Corps of the Army of Tennessee.⁵²

Johnson like Heth returned to Midlothian after the war. As war heroes, they found the period of reconstruction difficult as did many people in Midlothian. As large plantations were broken up, freedmen now had to find a means of support and a place to live, and the demand for Midlothian coal dwindled further.⁵³

⁵²Ibid., vol. 10, p. 244.

⁵³Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

MINING IN MIDLOTHIAN DECLINES 1865 - 1920

With the end of the Civil War one hundred members of the Vermont Ninth Infantry were immediately dispatched to Midlothian to occupy the area around the mines. This was done to control the freed slaves and protect the mine property. There is no record of any vandalism or need to control the freedmen. The troops were removed by June 10, 1865.¹

The end of the war brought harder times for Midlothian than the war itself had created. Without the use of slave labor the mining operations were badly hurt. The demand for coal had dropped drastically with the cessation of production of war materials, and the massive destruction of the railroads made it difficult to ship out what coal had been mined. Until the rails could be repaired and the Tredegar works could begin to produce iron again the coal mines were in limbo.

The loss of leadership at the Midlothian Coal Company during the war further frustrated production. Nicholas Mills had died in 1862, a reluctant rebel,² and A. S. Wooldridge had died near the end of the war. These two men had directed the operation of the company for twenty-five years. Colonel George Wooldridge took over the business and after attempts to reopen several old works failed, he had to choose among several works begun and then abandoned. He turned

¹G. G. Benedict, Vermont in the Civil War (Burlington, Vermont: The Free Press Association, 1888), p. 272.

²Richmond Daily Dispatch, September 15, 1862.

his attention to completing a shaft known as the sinking shaft that had been begun before the war as an airshaft for the pump system.³

Wooldridge gambled on the sinking pit and went deeply into debt to get the capital to finance this venture. He borrowed \$180,000 from Rosewell Burrows,⁴ a New York banker, to enlarge and deepen the pit, northwest of the Pump shaft, constructing the entrance to a new mining system.

Using the other shafts as a guide, Wooldridge perhaps didn't expect to reach coal in this most western shaft until he got to 850 to 900 feet. When the diggers reached 1015 feet without finding coal, he ordered the shaft stopped and a borehole was drilled an additional 322 feet without success. An unexplained accident occurred at the bottom of the shaft killing the superintendent and causing Wooldridge to admit defeat and stop all work.

The company, having mortgaged all its land and equipment, lay in financial ruin and went into trusteeship in 1867.⁵ Two years later the company was auctioned off by Robert A. Lancaster, Charles S. Mills and James Branch, local bankers. Despite of notices of the auction placed in the Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston papers, the only serious bidder was Rosewell Burrows. His bid of \$140,000 bought the company in which he had already invested \$180,000.⁶

³Routon, "History," p. 62.

⁴Jones, "Some Successes and Failures," p. 77.

⁵Chesterfield County Deed Book 47, p. 476.

⁶Ibid., 51, p. 202.

Losing control of the Midlothian Coal Company did not end the interest of the Wooldridge family in mining. William Wooldridge early in the 1870's joined Junius Archer and James A. Clarke as one half of a "co-partnership" with C. C. Harsin and John Bryant. The purpose of this organization was to reopen the old Wooldridge pits, now owned by the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company.⁷

Harsin and Bryant, businessmen in Richmond, put up \$3000 to be paid back at the rate of one cent per bushel of coal mined. As collateral, Wooldridge and partners mortgaged the residence of Doctor W. B. Ball's widow (this is listed as such on the deed because Doctor and Mrs. Ball were well-known and respected members of the community), and the Wooldridge and Clarke storehouse on Buckingham Road. Creditors of the Wooldridge and Clarke storehouse agreed to be patient and not interfere in the mining activities, being assured that they would be paid out of money from the coal to be raised.⁸ When no appreciable amount of coal had been mined in six months, Bryant and Harsin dissolved the "co-partnership" and took the collateral.⁹

Investors in the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company had little interest in continuing to finance a tract of land that produced little coal, many explosions, and no profits; and so the English stockholders demanded that the business be sold. A. M. Trabue was appointed as receiver and the local agent for the company. The land was advertised for sale, but there was little interest in such an

⁷ Chesterfield County Deed Book 55, p. 183.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 588.

investment.

In 1874-1875 Trabue leased the old Wooldridge pits plus land on the north side of the highway to John Bryant and his new partner, Timothy O'Brien. The rent was one cent per bushel of coal raised, but with a minimum of three hundred dollars and a maximum of \$1500 a year stipulated. The rented property contained nine brick tenements and one wooden tenement, three houses and a loading platform for the Richmond-Danville railroad.¹⁰

In 1875 John Bryant and Company purchased from several sources the mineral rights to the Aetna Coal pits and leased the surface area around them. Bryant improved the pits and worked them for a while.¹¹ A major explosion in the Grove Shaft of the Midlothian Company in 1876 brought help from the men who were working the Bryant mines.¹² No records have been found of this Bryant Company. O. J. Heinrich recorded that 57,000 tons of coal were shipped out of Coalfield (Midlothian) in 1876.¹³ No indication was made as to how much of this was from the Midlothian Coal Company and how much from the Bryant enterprise.

When the Bryant lease ran out in 1879, it was not renewed. In 1880 Bryant apparently gave up working the Aetna pits as well. His company and the widow and heirs of Elijah Brummall, earlier owner of the property, leased to Jeremiah T. Jones and John T. Jones of Henrico, the eighty-six acres of land that made up the Aetna Estate. The lease involved only the sub-surface land, and while it allowed buildings to

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

¹¹ Ibid., Book 65, p. 103.

¹² Richmond Enquirer, May 23, 1876.

¹³ Heinrich, Transactions, 1877-78 cited in Wadleigh Report, p. 63.

be erected necessary for mining and to house mine personnell, no structure, holes or tunneling was to be permitted closer than 170 yards from the mansion, in which the Brummall heirs still lived.¹⁴

Bryant leased the sub-surface rights to the coal for fifteen years at the rate of twenty-four cents per ton of 2,240 pounds. These pits were still being mined in February, 1882 when miners from there went to help search for survivors in the Grove Shaft explosion.¹⁵

In April, 1882, John H. Bryant and Tim O'Brien, "finding themselves embarrassed and unable to meet their obligations," went into bankruptcy and sold a great deal of property including the mineral rights to the Aetna or Blount pits, seven acres of coal property purchased from James A. Clarke, and the house near Coalfield where Doctor Ball's widow had lived.¹⁶

In 1880 the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company had been turned over to Charles U. Williams and Aubin S. Bouleware, Richmond bankers. These men were empowered by Thomas William Usherwood Robinson of New Castle, England, the president of the company to sell all the property and pay the bills.¹⁷ It was eight years later that the property was finally sold to Ware B. Gay of Boston for \$30,000. (Gay already owned the Gayton mines north of the James River.) The Midlothian tract of land contained 1,250 acres including the property known as the Wooldridge, Black Heath,

¹⁴ Chesterfield County Deed Book 65, p. 103.

¹⁵ Daily Dispatch, February 5, 1882.

¹⁶ Chesterfield County Deed Book 55, p. 183.

¹⁷ Ibid., book 77, pp. 381-383.

Barker and Branch, Harvie and Harris, Cullins, Salle, and the former Martin pits. All of this was located near Coalfield Station on the Richmond-Danville Railroad.¹⁸ None of this land had been worked for twelve years and most of it had not been worked for fifty years.

The sale was agreed to at a meeting of the stockholders held in New Castle, July 18, 1888. R. Spruce Watson officiated. The stockholders, with the exception of T. Y. Hall who had served as agent for the Chesterfield Coal and Iron Mining Company, had probably never seen the Virginia property.¹⁹

In 1890 Ware B. Gay formed the Southern Coal and Iron Company. The company was capitalized at \$100,000; at one hundred dollars per share. A. L. Bouleware was the only stockholder whose name had appeared in earlier dealings in Midlothian.²⁰

Gay also purchased the Gowrie pits in 1891 and the mineral rights to seventy-five acres of the Aetna pits. He had grandiose ideas of mining this area, but in that same year he joined his predecessors in trusteeship. The title of the property was held by the Central Hanover Bank and Trust Company of New York until 1938 when it was sold to Ada Irene Jones for \$150,000.00 in bonds.²¹

This ended all major attempts to mine this once lucrative coal field. The operation of the Midlothian Coal Company land had also

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., book 86, p. 40

²¹ Chesterfield County Deed Book 244, p. 154.

gone through many changes in the period after the Civil War. Rosewell Burrows, who had purchased the Midlothian Coal Company in 1869, hired Oswald J. Heinrich to be his superintendent. Mr. Heinrich had been born in Germany and was an experienced coal miner. The industrial census of 1870 records that the mines were in operation and the company produced 11,765 tons of coal that year. Iron and timber were also produced by the company.²²

When Heinrich took over, a legal dispute prevented his working the newer shafts sunk by the Midlothian Company. He resorted to trying to reclaim some of the Railey pits from their fiery existence. Heinrich explained in great detail the process he used to reclaim the ground. He made clay dams to stop the spread of the fire and to hold back most of the heat long enough to get a great quantity of coal out of the mines. To do this, discarded pipes, old bricks, stone rubble, all kinds of inflammable objects were used to build walls that were thickly covered by wet clay. This served as a primitive fire-wall and made the adjoining area workable on a somewhat temporary basis.²³

The cost of fighting the fire was becoming prohibitive. The intense heat close to the fire and lack of ventilation made a large crew necessary for no man could stand the heat more than five to ten minutes at the time. Finally the fire broke through forcing the mine to be hurriedly abandoned. They left a great deal of

²²Bureau of the Census, United States Industrial Census, 1870.
Chesterfield County, Virginia.

²³Heinrich, Transactions 1:356.

equipment and a number of already loaded coal cars behind them. Fortunately, the legal barriers surrounding the Grove Shaft were lifted and Burrows with clear title to the property could now begin work there.²⁴

In April, 1873, Heinrich began to clean out and reconstruct the Grove Shaft and the building surrounding it. Heinrich described the work necessary to make Grove Shaft a profitable operation. Workers sunk a 622 foot shaft into troubled ground²⁵ and actually located only a small vein of coal four to six feet thick. To make this shaft useful, it had to be determined which way to tunnel from the shaft's bottom. Three bore holes were made and the second, 608 feet deep, revealed three seams of coal; 14½ feet, 12 feet and 3½ to 4 feet thick. Work was begun to tunnel into the two large seams.²⁶

The main shaft 11 by 11 by 622 feet had to be cleaned out and retimbered. It was divided by an air-tight brattice to provide an exhaust for bad air, entry for fresh air, and a place to raise and lower men and coal. A 180 foot "jacked pit" was cleaned and retimbered. This pit was used to collect surface water and equipped with a pump to dispose of it.

Tunnels were driven totaling 2,140 feet in length, one-third through rock, most of it new work. About 500 feet of old tunnels

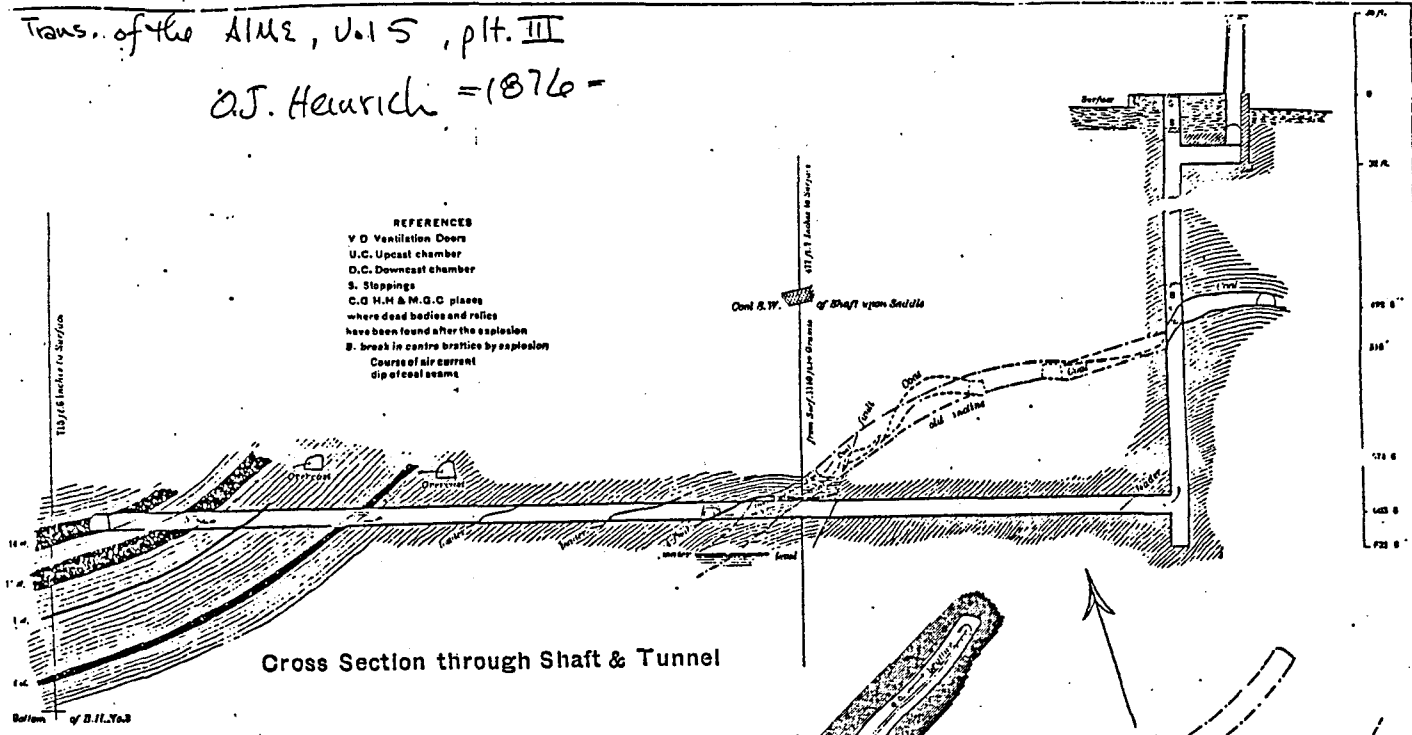
²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "troubled ground" was an area that had a fault or failed to follow the normal patterns of subsoils, or that had already been dug up and refilled.

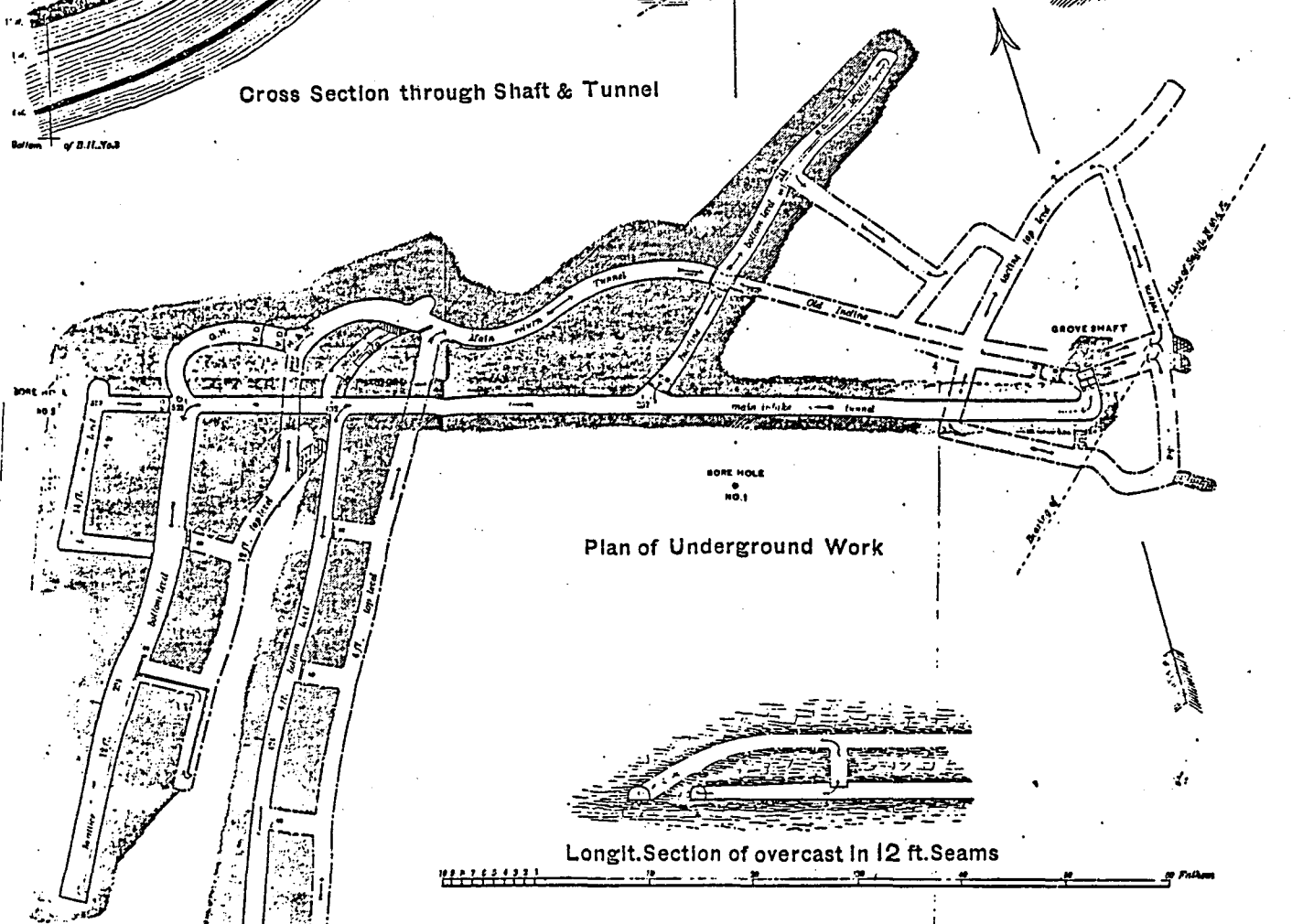
²⁶ This and the next seven paragraphs used material from Heinrich, Transactions IV: 308-316.

Trans. of the AME, Vol 5, pl. III
 O.S. Heinrich = 1876 -

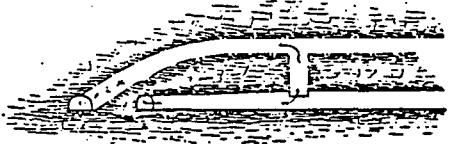
- REFERENCES**
- V.O. Ventilation Doors
 - U.C. Upcast chamber
 - D.C. Downcast chamber
 - S. Stoppings
 - C.O. H.M. & M.O.C. places where dead bodies and relics have been found after the explosion
 - B. break in centre brattice by explosion
 - Course of air current dip of coal seams



Cross Section through Shaft & Tunnel



Plan of Underground Work



Longit. Section of overcast in 12 ft. Seams

MAP
 OF
GROVE SHAFT
 MID LOTHIAN COLLIERY
 CHESTERFIELD CO.,
 VA.

were widened and retimbered, the tunnels varied in size from 12 by 16 feet to 8 by 7 feet. A special tunnel for return air was driven and walled with arches in brickwork.

A new engine house 53 by 50 feet was erected, as well as a new boiler house 50 by 50 and a fan house especially designed to hold a fan that was 23 feet in diameter and 7 feet wide. The buildings were made of solid rubble masonry. This masonry was also used to encase a waste bank 210 by 64 by 12 feet high. A brick chimney 18 feet at the base and 56 feet tall was erected from the furnace in the boiler house.

Additional construction, probably of wood, included a pit head of 30 by 20 feet base 70 feet high from the floor of the engine house; and a platform where the coal was sized and dumped into twelve hopper cars, ten tons per car, located on the railroad track below the platform. The platform was built in front of the shaft and measured 88 by 62 feet and was 19 feet high. There were three screens on the loading platform for sizing the coal.

In his list of equipment used in the mine, Heinrich noted a double cylinder, direct action hoisting engine that his men had made out of two old engines. He said it had about 130 horsepower and easily lifted a ton of coal a minute up the 622 foot shaft. Another steam engine was used to run the fan and auxiliary machinery.

Four new boilers 42 inches by 24 feet had been installed and a place made for another battery of boilers that he already had at the mining site. Water to provide the steam was piped to the boiler room from a pond the men had dug near the building.

Fuel to heat the water was, of course, coal as it came from the mine.

Heinrich predicted that when the mine was fully operating, it could produce five hundred tons of coal each twelve hours. He had hopes of reclaiming tunnels from the abandoned Pump Shaft that had been destroyed in an explosion in 1854. From this network of tunnels he hoped to continue digging to the western edge of the property, using the old sinking shaft for ventilation at the end of the tunnel. This dream was never realized due to an explosion in the Grove Shaft.

The Grove Shaft was in operation in January, 1876 and produced well until May 22, 1876 when an explosion in the mine claimed the lives of eight men. Three men survived, two being nearly dead when rescued.²⁷

The explosion created chaos. Heinrich, in his office about a mile away, was summoned immediately. When a signal of life was received from in the mines, he ordered water pumped down the shaft to break the afterdamp and allow a rescue team to descend. The three men who gave the signal, ironically were drowned as they attempted to escape the afterdamp by crawling into the sink hole at the bottom of the shaft.

John Kendler, a one-legged miner from the Black Heath mines led the rescue team and recovered two unconscious miners at the base of the shaft. One other survivor had been in the bucket being raised out of the mine at the time of the explosion. His companion was thrown

²⁷ Richmond Enquirer, May 23, 1876.

out of the bucket and fell to his death. The other clung to the side of the bucket and was drawn up safely. The eight bodies were brought up by 4:00 Sunday morning. The explosion took place at about 1:00 p. m. on Friday.

The Richmond Enquirer reported that it was well that the explosion took place at the shift changing because only eleven men were left in the mine. Otherwise as many as seventy-five people might have been in the works. It further reported the names of all the dead, black and white. Five of the dead were white, three black. The Masonic Lodge and Odd Fellows took care of burying their lost members. The community pulled together to provide aid for all the widows and orphans.²⁸

The cause of the explosion was attributed reluctantly to Thomas Canoe, the gas man killed in the explosion, who had used a regular torch that day instead of the Davy Lamp which would not have ignited the gas. He evidently walked into a pocket of gas setting off the explosion. The mine had been gassy and was not in full operation as preparations were being made to install the big fan described on page seventy-three. This would have created a much better ventilation system lessening the chances of gas pockets.²⁹

It would appear from the discontent at the hearing following the accident that Heinrich became a scapegoat. He lost his job in Midlothian and moved on to the mines in Powhatan. Later he described the explosion and events surrounding it. He asked his fellow engineers to serve as his jury, feeling that they could view the situation objectively,

²⁸ Ibid., May 23 and 24, 1876.

²⁹ Ibid., May 27, 1876.

and perhaps hoping to be vindicated.³⁰

Heinrich worked in salt mines in Canada and conducted a Mining and Mechanical institute in Pennsylvania before he died in 1886. His body was returned to Richmond and buried in Hollywood Cemetery.

The seventy-nine year old Burrows being in ill health turned the administration of his affairs over to A. S. Warner who hired a man known only as Mr. Dobbs to superintend the Midlothian mines. Dobbs years later said that Warner was systematically robbing the business by requiring Dobbs to turn in large payrolls on non-existent workers, or payrolls every week for men who were paid every other week.³¹ The administrator in turn generally neglected the mines and failed to provide necessary funds for expansion of the work or even money necessary to provide proper maintenance of the property to protect the safety of the men. Despite this neglect, the mines seem to have continued operation. When Burrows died, Warner disappeared. No record has been found to indicate who took over the administration of the mines.³²

Owing to poor management, accidents, and embezzlement at the upper levels of business, the mines were unprofitable. The business had cost Burrows \$500,000 since he had purchased it in 1869.³³

In February, 1882, there were 120 employees of the Midlothian

³⁰R. H. Rudlick, Heinrich's nephew, quoted in Wadleigh, p. 29.

³¹Jed Hotchkiss, The Virginians, July 1822, contained in Wadleigh, p. 34.

³²Jones, "Some Successes and Failures," p. 51.

³³Daily Dispatch, February 4, 1882.

Coal Mining Company. Two-thirds of these men were white. The men worked around the clock on twelve hour shifts. Their average salary was \$1.50 a day and each had the task of digging, hoisting, sorting, or whatever his job, one hundred bushels of coal daily. This usually took nine hours.³⁴

Midlothian mining operations at the Grove Shaft came to an abrupt halt on Friday, February 3, 1882, when a massive explosion entombed thirty-two men and four mules. Eye-witnesses said it looked like a volcano erupting as ashes and debris were expelled from the top of the shaft and then settled to block the shaft.³⁵ The explosion *not only* blocked the mine shaft but severed the signal cord that connected the underground passage with the top. Frantic efforts were made to get down the shaft to repair the broken signal cord and determine by signals if there were any survivors. The gas rising from the works below drove workmen back several times. Mining operations at the smaller mines in the area ceased as every available miner rushed to Grove Shaft to offer his help. The men worked frantically from the time of the explosion at 1:00 p. m. until after midnight and were frustrated by the gas and their inability to get to the bottom of the shaft.³⁶

Since there was always a fire in the furnace at the base of the shaft it was feared that reopening the air passage in the shaft might give the fire enough oxygen to flare up and with the gas present cause a second explosion killing whoever was at the base of the shaft trying to open it. The men agreed to wait until the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

fire had been given sufficient time to go out before risking more lives in completely reopening the shaft.

As the miners waited they looked for an explanation for the explosion. The only problem that had occurred in the mines prior to the explosion was a tumble of slate the night before that had broken some brattice work, creating a pocket of gas. This had been quickly cleared up and the brattice repaired before the day crew had come to work at 6:00 a.m. ³⁷

The two Marshall brothers, sons of the English mining engineer who had come over in the 1830's were the bottom bosses and gas men on alternate shifts. One was trapped in the mine, and the other worked to get below in hopes of finding his brother alive. Superintendent Dobbs was on the scene, going below once, but then staying on the surface to get supplies and organize the work. Each man who volunteered to go down into the mine risked his life and this added to the tension in the crowd of families and curious onlookers. Work continued and men willing to go down did not seem to be lacking. After twelve hours it was reasonable to assume that those in the mine were dead from the explosion, fire or suffocation. Most of the men on the scene were exhausted and they drifted silently homeward about midnight. The widows and children were taken home as the snow began to fall. Little hope remained. Workers trod through six inches of snow early the next morning. Some even came from the Clover Hill mines, ten miles from Midlothian. ³⁸

³⁷ Daily Dispatch, February 4, 1882.

³⁸ Ibid.

By 9:00 a. m. February 4th they had cleared the shaft and restored ventilation but found no bodies at the base of the shaft. The seventy-eight surviving employees of the Midlothian mine were there working with their neighbors. All day, recovery teams of three or four men went into the shaft and cleared debris in search of bodies. Dobbs, George Conrad, Edward Coxon, Johnson Marshall, Royall Johnson, John Mallor, Thad Crump and John Kendler worked in the mine. Most of these were English or sons of English miners. All were experienced at working in an explosive situation. Crump and Marshall were overcome by afterdamp and had to be returned quickly to the surface.³⁹ As work continued Sunday two bodies were discovered and on Monday yet two more. By Tuesday only five bodies had been found -- four brought to the surface at once, and the other brought up when it was released from the debris. Coffins for the other twenty-seven men lay ready outside the mine entrance.⁴⁰

On Tuesday the recovery teams had gotten about 1500 feet on the incline when they ran into smoke and realized the coal had caught fire. Each man ran for his life. John Kendler, a one-legged miner, was about to be left behind, when he called for help.⁴¹ Two young miners from Clover Hill went back and carried him up to the bucket to be lifted to the surface. The agony of waiting at the bottom of the shaft the fifteen or twenty minutes it took to pull up one group and send the bucket back down must have been

³⁹ Daily Dispatch, February 5, 1882.

⁴⁰ Ibid., February 7, 1882.

⁴¹ Ibid., February 8, 1882.

great knowing that there was a fire and gas and that another explosion could entomb them with their fellow miners. All of the recovery team was safely evacuated and the mine openings were again sealed up until the fire went out.

The people of Richmond and surrounding areas were appealed to for help. Stories were printed in the Daily Dispatch about the twenty-five widows and one hundred children of the men killed in the explosion. The reader was reminded that Midlothian was a poor mining community whose charitable resources had already been fully tested to meet the needs of the families of the victims of the 1876 mine explosion.⁴²

The Midlothian citizens organized a relief program under the leadership of Doctor P. S. Hancock, who tended the miners and Colonel Timothy O'Brien of the Bryant Company Mines. Doctor Hancock visited the bereaved families to assess their needs and Mr. O'Brien appealed to the public for help and saw to the distribution of the contributions.⁴³

Contributions came from merchants, neighborhood canvases, churches and synagogues, fraternal organizations and the railroad. Contributions of food were taken to the Richmond-Danville Station where it was sent immediately to Midlothian. Money was sent to the First National Bank of Richmond where Timothy O'Brien saw to its distribution.⁴⁴

No record has been located to show how much money or food was sent, but it appears to have been enough to maintain the families for several months. In the nineteenth century the widows and children

⁴² Ibid., February 7, 1882.

⁴³ Ibid., February 8, 1882.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

had no insurance, company pension, or social security. There were few jobs in the immediate area for uneducated women. Their only hope for survival was the support of their neighbors. This support from churches, and the Masonic Lodge and individuals continued for many years after the 1882 disaster.⁴⁴

The mine owners seemed to have felt little responsibility for this disaster. William Burrows, probably Rosewell Burrows' son and the only owner to appear, went to Coalfield by train after the explosion. His main concern was that the mines had cost \$300,000 during the past twelve years and that the vein being worked at the time of the explosion was good coal that sold for three dollars a ton.⁴⁵ As far as the records show, the Burrows family made no contribution to the relief of the families. Perhaps this reflects the general attitude of the "robber barons" of that time, but it was not the treatment the miners' families had received when the mines were owned by local people and the mine owners cared for the families of miners killed. The Richmond-Danville railroad made a donation of \$500.00 for the relief of the families.⁴⁶ The railroad's management was still small and local enough to feel compassion for these people.

Surviving miners felt the sting of the explosion as they faced unemployment. The mines were closed while the New York owners were consulted about what method they preferred to extinguish the fire in the mine. Flooding the mine would quickly put the fire out,

⁴⁴Midlothian Masonic Lodge Record Books note support of these widows and children for a number of years.

⁴⁵Daily Dispatch, February 5, 1882.

⁴⁶Ibid., February 11, 1882.

but pumping the water out would be slow and expensive. This all seems to have been an inconvenience for J. R. Lightfoot, the local agent for the mine owners, who was forced to stay in the area for several weeks postponing his honeymoon, but not his wedding. The Lightfoots lived in Richmond, not Midlothian, thus removing the bride from the suffering.⁴⁷

After being closed for eighteen months, the mines were re-opened in the summer of 1883. Some, but not all, of the bodies were recovered.⁴⁸ Those bodies in the lowest reaches of the mine were not recovered. These had probably been covered by rising water in the mine. There is no record of any attempt to resume operations of the mine at that time.

By 1886, after four years with little work in the mines, the Midlothian Coal Company was heavily in debt. The Burrows estate was in receivership. Mr. Dobbs, former superintendent of the mines, had sued the Burrows estate perhaps for back wages or maybe on behalf of the victims of the explosion, the reason for the suit is not known at this time. At any rate, the suit pending in Richmond Chancery Court tied up the Midlothian property.⁴⁹

The court appointed W. W. Gordon and Beverly T. Crump as trustees of the mining property and ordered them to dispose of it for the Burrows estate. The trustees had hopes when a group of Pennsylvania operators formed a company to take over the land. This group of men

⁴⁷ Daily Dispatch, February 11, 1882.

⁴⁸ Johnson, History, p. 91.

⁴⁹ Chesterfield County Deed Book 103, pp. 310-311. Attempts to find a record of this suit either in Richmond or Chesterfield have been futile.

were to pay ten bonds of \$7,012.50 each over a ten year period. This allowed them to use part of their capital to sink new shafts and operate the business.

The group paid about forty per cent of the purchase price, but spent the rest of their money prospecting for coal east of the Grove Shaft in barren land. By the time they realized their error, their money had run out. They defaulted on the payments to the estate.⁵⁰

Once more the land reverted to the court and advertisements were published and sent to all east coast cities. The sale was held April 2, 1902 at the Customs House in Richmond. The high bidder was Lorenzo Burrows who purchased the property for \$36,000. This amount was just about what the Pennsylvania concern had invested in the mines.⁵¹

A Professor Monroe of Columbia College, probably at Burrows' invitation, examined the mining property and reported that there was plenty of coal in the mines. Almost immediately a group of Richmond businessmen called the Richmond Syndicate took over the mines under the supervision of Meriweather Jones. The Grove Shaft was pumped out and a double track slope was constructed parallel to an earlier slope constructed by Heinrich and Dobbs and connected to it at several levels. New levels were constructed to the south of the new slope. Unfortunately the slope had not been completed to the surface in the southeast nor driven to the end of the coal seam in the

⁵⁰ Jones, "Some Successes and Failures," p. 78.

⁵¹ Chesterfield County Deed Book 103, pp. 310-311.

northwest, naturally the money ran out.⁵²

This group of businessmen, unidentified individually but called by Jones the Richmond Syndicate tried to get together enough money to buy the mines through a sale of stock in the company. An outside expert, Mr. E. I. d'Invilliers of an engineering firm in Philadelphia, was asked to visit the area and do a feasibility study on the mines.

A very thorough report was written describing the mine in detail. d'Invilliers noted the quality of the coal and its chemical value while regretting that water in the Dobbs slope prevented a complete exploration of the mines. He listed problems to be dealt with and the estimated cost of putting the mine in proper shape, complete the slope, get the necessary equipment and operate the mine. The expected cost would be \$225,000 which could be paid off in ten years at a yield of 500 tons a day, half of what Heinrich had estimated as possible twenty years earlier. d'Invilliers recommended the purchase of the mines as a sound investment. The report was completed and presented to an unidentified recipient in 1904.⁵³

Jones seems to have found other backers and in 1905 the mines were bought by the James River Coal Corporation for \$45,000. Meriweather Jones was the new corporation's president and treasurer. The company was capitalized at \$300,000.⁵⁴ There is no record of how well this company did. The State Corporation Commission records

⁵²Jones, "Some Successes and Failures," p. 78.

⁵³E. V. d'Invilliers, "Geological Report on the Midlothian Coal Property with Special Reference to the Grove Shaft, Chesterfield County, Virginia," Philadelphia, January, 1904. Virginia Department of Mineral Resources, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵⁴Chesterfield County Deed Book 110, p. 16.

show the James River Coal Corporation had been defunct in 1905.⁵⁵
 This may be an error. In 1907 a spur track of the Southern Railroad
 was put in to the coal mines.⁵⁶ In 1908 the company sold the right
 to cut over their land to the Chesterfield Lumber Company for \$40,000.⁵⁷
 Four acres of their land was condemned by the county for Midlothian
 High School for which they were paid \$600.00⁵⁸ There is no data
 available on coal mined in Midlothian between 1904 and 1921.

The property was once again lost to bankruptcy. In August, 1920
 court appointed commissioners, J. B. Lightfoot, Jr., J. Jordan Leake,
 and Edwin P. Cox sold at auction the property of the James River Coal
 Corporation. The highest bid, \$58,500.00 for all the land and equip-
 ment, came from E. P. Murphy and Sons, Inc. Final payment was made
 in October 1923.⁵⁹

Five companies in fifty years had invested over five hundred
 thousand dollars in the Midlothian coal mines only to fail one by one
 due to disasters, lack of experience, know-how, or capital or all four.
 The community seemed little concerned about the Murphy Company as
 it attempted to succeed where its five predecessors had failed.

⁵⁵ Record Card found by employee in the State Corporation Commission
 Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

⁵⁶ Chesterfield County Deed Book 113, p. 194.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Book 123, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Book 118, p. 82.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Book 172, p. 237.

CHAPTER FIVE

NON-MINING ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED 1865-1920

The postwar period which brought disaster and decline in the mines also witnessed an accelerating change in the community surrounding the mines. The railroad, rather than the mines, increasingly became the factor which allowed the village to survive. While the railroad had been put through Midlothian to accommodate the mines, it stayed to accommodate the people, and soon made more revenue from passengers than from coal. The railroad had hired fifty-four slaves during the closing days of the war. When the war ended these freed slaves had to choose what to do. Some stayed with the railroad.¹

The section of rails torn up during the war was repaired and Coalfield Station was rebuilt in 1866. Railroad business increased that year to about 3,700 passengers through the newly built station.²

Disaster awaited a few of these passengers as Midlothian was the site of two train accidents. The road bed at Falling Creek crosses a valley that extends on either side of the creek. It was so built up that it looks like a bridge in several places. As customary, the "ladies car" was the last car on the train, placed there to keep the ladies away from the coarser elements of society. In June of 1866 this car broke from the train and plunged down a fifty-foot embankment along Falling Creek, killing two and injuring twelve others. A second accident, in 1876, took the life of a black fireman when another train went down a twenty-six-foot embankment on the southwest side of

¹Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 269.

²Superintendent's Report, 1876.

Midlothian.³

Passenger service increased from 3,700 people through Coalfield Station in 1866 to 5,800 in 1867 and decreased to 4,150 in 1868.⁴ Perhaps the large number of people riding the train in 1867 was due to miners -- not needed at that point in Midlothian -- taking up jobs in Richmond. During the same three years coal shipments dropped from 26,190 tons in 1866⁵ to 14,782 tons in 1868.⁶ Many miners seem to have left the area and hard times at the mines^{were} reflected in a renewed interest in farming. Throughout the south the land was the primary source of revenue and Midlothian followed the example of others, revitalizing the fields with fertilizer and attempting to pull out of the postwar recession by using its greatest natural resource, the land.

Success was evident by 1869 as the local economy improved. The coal production increased as Burrows reopened the Midlothian mines. Passenger service returned to the 1876 level and the superintendent noted that a new passenger station was needed at Coalfield. In addition to the coal, two 600 pound boxes of tobacco, sixty-one bushels of corn, 258 bushels of wheat and two barrels of flour as well as 1008 bushels of potatoes were shipped.⁷ By use of the fertilizer the farmers supplied their community and provided an excess that was sold in Richmond or shipped to Tidewater.

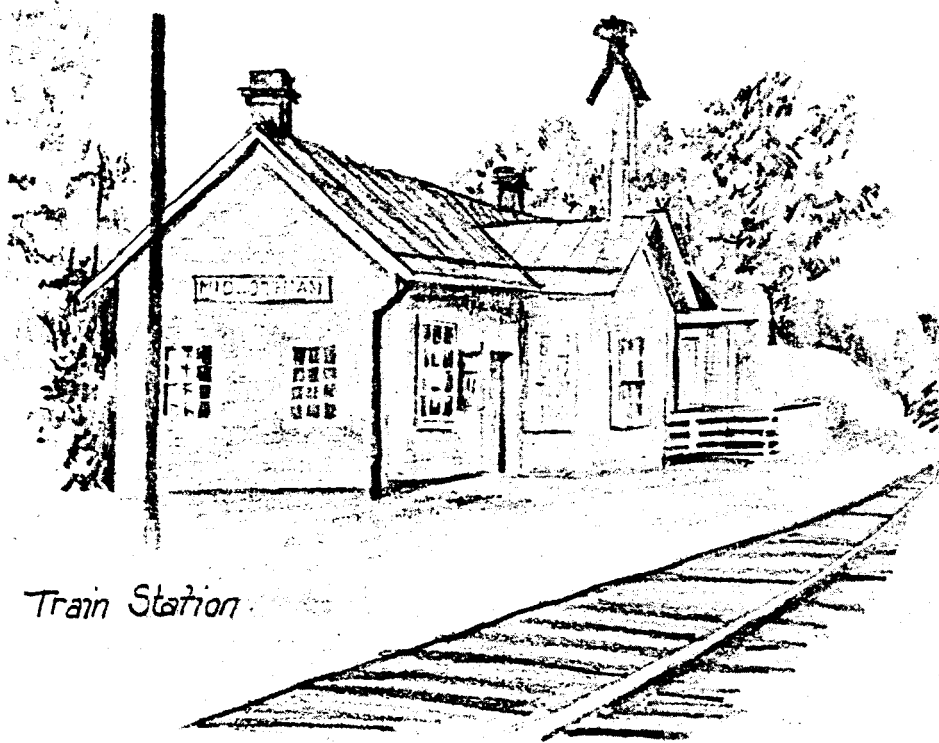
³Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 291.

⁴Superintendent's Reports, 1866, 1876, 1878.

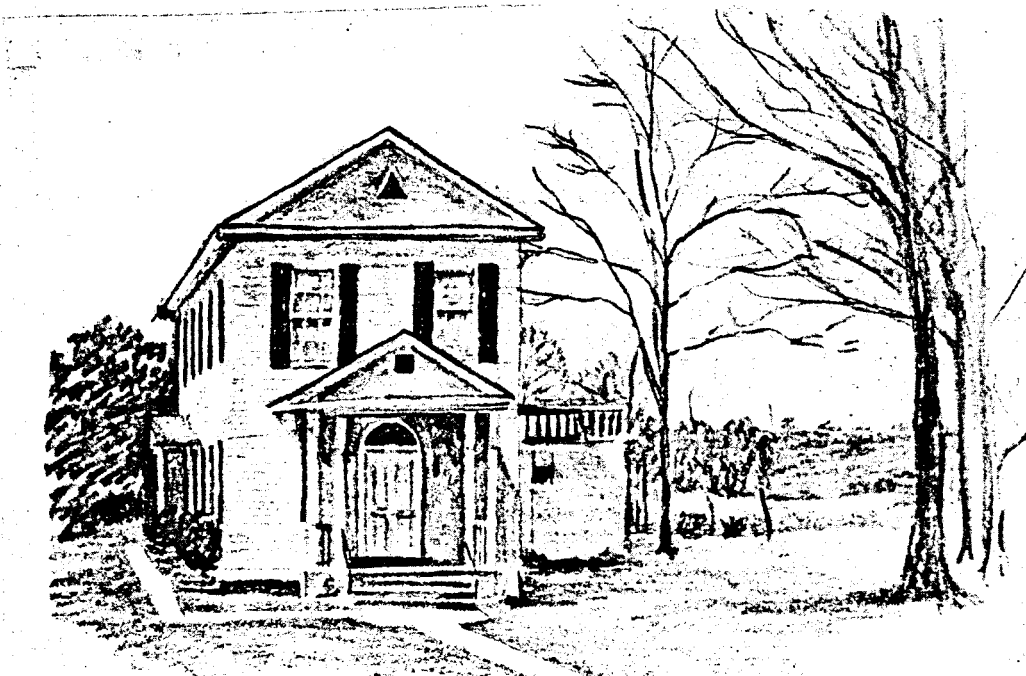
⁵Ibid., 1864.

⁶Ibid., 1866.

⁷Ibid., 1869.



Train Station



Masonic Lodge

When Burrows purchased the Midlothian Coal Mining Company in 1869 several mines were re-opened and production increased to 26,735.40 tons shipped out in 1870. Miners returned to Midlothian and railroad records showed more people arriving in Midlothian than departing. Commuters continued to keep the passenger service a major source of income.⁸

Andrew Talcott, the civil engineer who's report served as the basis for railroad information about Midlothian, retired in 1870.⁹ With his retirement the detailed reports of activities through Coalfield Station were greatly reduced. Coal shipments from Midlothian dwindled to nearly nothing after the explosion in 1882. The Richmond-Danville railroad was badly hurt by the depression in 1893. In 1894, a near bankrupt Richmond-Danville line was purchased by Southern Railway Systems.¹⁰

The end of the Civil War saw the beginning of a second Masonic Lodge in Midlothian. The Black Heath Lodge had been dissolved before the war probably due to lack of attendance. The first meeting of the new Lodge was in 1866 at the home of Job Atkins who had served as Superintendent of the Midlothian mines during the Civil War. This group of Masons were former members of the Black Heath Lodge that had existed until 1857. Officers of the newly formed lodge were not miners but land owners. Among the new members was quite an illustrious gentleman, Reuben Lindsey Walker. Mr. Walker was a civil engineer who moved to Midlothian when he married the daughter of A. G. Elam, one of the local doctors. After a brilliant Civil War career in the

⁸ Superintendent's Report, 1870.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Noxon Letter.

Confederate army. Walker became a successful farmer, did some engineering work for the Richmond-Danville Railroad and was superintendent of the Richmond Street Railways. Extending his influence beyond Virginia, he served as superintendent in the construction of the Texas state capital, a building which he completed in 1888.¹¹

Several of the other men joining the lodge were second generation English immigrants who had come to this area with nothing to recommend them but their knowledge of mining, and had risen to positions of prominence in the community. The Jewetts and Lesters were two such families. Thomas H. Jewett, John W. Jewett, M. H. Jewett, Jonathan James, Thomas Lester, R. M. Pulliam, Thomas Peacock, Dr. P. S. Hancock, and J. H. Winfree petitioned the Lodge in 1866.¹²

The lodge still lacked a permanent location. At first it used the company store of the Midlothian Coal Mining Company, then Doctor Elam's house and finally back to Doctor Ball's house. (The Black Heath Lodge had met at Doctor Ball's house frequently.) The lodge was not long to remain homeless. In 1873 Brother Jacob Baach reported that one half acre of ground had been given to the lodge. The land adjoining the Barbeque Springs had been donated by Robert Marks.¹³

The lodge was built by the Masons. William Bradly did the carpentry, James Bedser, the stone and brick work and plastering, a man by the name of Montgomery (no first name recorded) the painting, Jacob Baach supervised the construction and other masons provided the labor

¹¹Dumas Malone, Ed., Dictionary of American Biography, 15 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 10: 353-354.

¹²Masonic Lodge Minutes, April 15, 1866, Midlothian Masonic Lodge.

¹³Ibid., January, 1872.

and money necessary.¹⁴ The dedication in 1875 was a grand affair attended by Masons from all over the Richmond area.¹⁵

According to the lodge records the new building also served as the home for the Odd Fellows from October, 1875 to October, 1876. Brother S. D. Lucas of the Cooper Lodge number eighty-three, International Order of the Odd Fellows notified the Masons of their intent to vacate the hall on October 13, 1876.¹⁶ Perhaps their lodge was completed by then. The Odd Fellows lodge was located about a block east of the Masonic Lodge.¹⁷

Over the next twenty-five years, the lodge building was used for various purposes other than the strict Masonic business, providing the village with a community center. In 1880 church services were held there for a while, probably for Jerusalem Church. The Ladies Sewing Society used the lodge for entertainment for the benefit of the Methodist church in 1892.¹⁸

The Masons met their obligation to deceased brothers by supplying coffins for their burials and conducting the funeral services. They continued to discharge this obligation by caring for the widows and children, seeing that they had food and shelter and that the children had

¹⁴This building continues to be the home of the Midlothian lodge. The stables are gone and the privy was replaced by indoor plumbing. Until 1981 the Barbeque Springs continued to supply water for the lodge. Electric lights supplement the oil lamps now and modern heat warms the lodge.

¹⁵Masonic Lodge Minutes, July 5, 1875.

¹⁶Ibid., September 30, 1876.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., November 4, 1892.

all that was necessary to keep them in school.

Two men from Midlothian, one a Mason, participated in the unveiling of the statue of Stonewall Jackson on Monument Avenue in 1876. General Lindsey Walker and two others unveiled the statue following a parade that had been led by General Henry Heth, who was not a mason. Newspaper accounts indicate that this was the "biggest occasion for Richmond since the unveiling of George Washington's monument."¹⁹

The eighteen-seventies saw many new developments. Virginia was accepted back into the union in 1870 officially ending reconstruction. That same year a new county government set up a system of seven townships for the county: Bermuda, Chester, Clover Hill, Matoaka, Midlothian, Manchester and Dale.²⁰ Midlothian was to include most of the north western section of the county bordering Powhatan and the James River.²¹

This large area was further divided by the council when they first met on August 13, 1870. Socrates Brooks, supervisor for Midlothian, represented the township on the Board of Supervisors. The other members of the council were C. H. Flournoy, tax assessor; C. E. Robious, Justice of the Peace; George H. Jewett, Commissioner of Roads; and B. W. Johnson, clerk.²² Their major responsibility was road construction. The township was divided into five, later three, road districts, each having an elected overseer of roads who was responsible to the township commissioner of roads.

¹⁹ Johnson, History, p. 60.

²⁰ Lutz, Chesterfield, pp. 276-277.

²¹ Chesterfield County Deed Book 52, p. 438 and 53, p. 321.

²² Midlothian Township Record Book, listed with Chesterfield County material, Virginia State Archives, p. 1.

Midlothian village was in the central district. C. E. Robious was the overseer for this area.²³ The council passed ordinances to raise monies for the township.

The town officials set up a capitation tax of fifty cents for every male over twenty-one. In addition to this, real estate and personal property were taxed at a rate of ten cents for every \$100.00 of value. This money was used both for roads and the poor fund.²⁴

People who worked on the roads were given tax credits at the rate of eight cents an hour for able-bodied men. They also received eight cents for each horse, mule or yoke of owen. They were allowed two to three cents for wagons.²⁵

While the responsibility for the roads rested with the township, the care of the poor was more centralized. After the parish gave up the care of the poor in 1785, the poorhouse was established which continued to operate until 1924.²⁶ Each township sent their indigent to the county poorhouse, located on Woodpecker Road in the Clover Hill district, this facility was rarely used by the citizens of Midlothian.²⁷ Township records indicate that Midlothian's poor were generally taken care of in their homes or other homes in the immediate area.²⁸ Food and clothing were

²³ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶ Lutz, Chesterfield, p. 323.

²⁷ Map of Chesterfield County, J. E. LaPrade Surveyor, 1888.

²⁸ Midlothian Township Records, p. 39.

provided as long as they lived, and a coffin when they died. These were supplied by local merchants who were reimbursed from the county poor fund.²⁹

Judicial matters were handled by the local justice of the Peace who held court on a regular basis in the office of the township council. All cases from murder to misdemeanors were handled first by this court and could be appealed to the county circuit court. For many years the circuit court judge tried cases in the township rather than at a central courthouse.³⁰

A separate school trustee board in each township set taxes for the schools and handled the budding public school system. This continued to operate until the mid-twentieth century. The Justice of the Peace also continued to hold court locally until growing use of the automobile made it feasible for local citizens to go to the courthouse. The local court was finally abolished during the depression.³¹

By 1875 the township councils proved unwieldy and were abolished making the Board of Supervisors the major body for governing the county with representatives from each district or township. Each district continued to have its commissioner of roads but he reported to the county superintendent of roads and all monies for roads were paid to the county treasurer and disbursed by orders of the Board of Supervisors. Socrates Brooks of Midlothian was the first chairman of the Board of Supervisors

²⁹ Board of Supervisors Records, Vol. 1, p. 153.

³⁰ Interviews with D. I. Vincent, August, 1982, son of Benjamin Vincent, the last Justice of the Peace in Midlothian. Confirmed by Dorothy Hudson, September, 1982.

³¹ Ibid.

in 1870. Another outstanding Midlothian citizen, Colonel William B. Wooldridge served as county treasurer.³²

As early as 1870 each township set up school trustee boards, separate from the Board of Supervisors and from the township council. Colonel Wooldridge, the chairman of Midlothian's first school board, served with William G. Flournoy and John Cox as the original members. Walter G. Clarke as clerk of the board was later made a voting member. Midlothian's school population in 1870 was 824.³³

By 1872 the county school board set a common tax rate for the schools of seven and one-half cents per one hundred dollars in property for all citizens having that much or more property.³⁴ This money was then allocated to the school districts.

Textbooks used by the county schools included Holmes' Speller and Reader, Maury's Geography, Venable's Arithmetic, and Bullion's Grammer.³⁵ These texts were paid for through the special school fund to the county and disbursed by the combined county school boards.

The first reports of the State Superintendent of Instruction indicated that Midlothian had six schools, three black and three white. There were six teachers; two white men, one black, and three white women. The school session was only four and one-half months each year.³⁶ Some

³²Chesterfield County School Board Records, Vol. 1, 1870, p. 61
Office of the School Administration, Chesterfield Courthouse, Virginia.

³³Ibid., insert.

³⁴Ibid., p. 1.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶W. H. Ruffner, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Richmond: G. A. Schaffter, 1871), pp. 158-159.

of the black students had white teachers. Perhaps in 1870 there were still members of the northern philanthropic societies working with the education of the blacks in Midlothian.

The black students seemed more eager for an education than the white ones. There were 163 black students in the school representing forty per cent of the black school age children, while there were only 130 white students representing thirty-one per cent of the white children of the same age range. The black attendance record was also higher than the whites, seventy-two per cent to sixty-three per cent.³⁷

Drastic changes in composition of the schools took place within the year. The number attending schools tripled. The number of white schools increased to five, the black schools, however, decreased to two. Equally significant, composition of the teaching faculty was radically different. The black schools with 388 students had only two teachers, both black, one woman and one man. While at the same time the white schools had eight teachers, five men and three women for their 339 students. The percentage enrolled made the greatest change. In contrast to the 62.12 per cent of the white children enrolled black enrollment was only 36.8 per cent. Average attendance for both black and white was less than fifty per cent and represented the lowest attendance record in the county. As to be expected, teachers' salaries were small, men were paid \$33.82 a month and women received \$25.00.³⁸

Once consolidation of the schools took place in 1876 enrollment again dropped. Midlothian Number One, with Helen J. King the principal, was the white school with three grades and three teachers for 108 students

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 1872, p. 130.

and seventy-seven average attendance. A nine month term was conducted that year for the first time. Midlothian Number Two was black. Joseph Tener, principal, supervised two grades and three other teachers and had 114 enrolled and ninety-one in average attendance. The white school received \$300.00 from the Peabody Fund and the black school, \$200.00. Patrons paid one half of the cost of the education in addition to the taxes paid to the school fund.³⁹

In 1875 George Jewett and his wife gave the land and a building for a school in the village of Midlothian.⁴⁰ This frame school house, located just east of the Masonic Lodge, was just one large room, but served the white children of the village from 1875 to 1910. It had a large iron stove, blackboard, an ax and broom. Oil lamps were on the east and west walls, the door on the south wall. Over the years there were a succession of teachers each of whom taught all grade levels.⁴¹

Students at the Jewett School and at the old Haley Cole School on Buckingham Road had spelling bees, used McGuffey's reader, were taught moral precepts, reading, writing, and ciphering. They used slates as a learning aid and all children carried their own lunch pails. The boys were expected to chop wood for the stove and bring in water in a bucket. The pupils drank from a common dipper.⁴²

A new Midlothian Elementary School for blacks began in 1877 in a log school on land given by the African Baptist Church. The deed was

³⁹ Ibid., 1873, pp. 46 and 87.

⁴⁰ Chesterfield County Deed Book 58, p. 211.

⁴¹ Dorothy Hudson, "History of Midlothian Schools," 1971. Unpublished work done for the 100th Anniversary of the school.

⁴² Ibid.

signed by Robert Scott, W. T. Byrd, William D. Loving and Cornelius Mimms, trustees of the church. The land was given because the church members were concerned that their children have a better educational facility.⁴³

By 1880 the worth of education had been "sold" to the people. Citizens of Chesterfield agreed that through education "children of the more ignorant classes were likely to surpass their parents in respect to intelligence, good morals and industry."⁴⁴ Lawson Morrissette was in charge of the two white schools and C. C. Mimms was in charge of the two black schools. There were eighty-four white students enrolled and 114 black ones.⁴⁵ What percentage this was of the total school age population is unknown. It was noted in an 1885 census of school children under fifteen that fewer black students could read and write than their white counterparts. The census also showed that girls learned faster than boys.⁴⁶

Education was essential to families of prominence in the community, whether it was received in a public school or by private means. Old families faded out and new ones took their place in leadership positions. The Wooldridge family who dominated Midlothian for many years, had lost its prominence by the post-war period. The Midlothian mines had been sold, the last attempt to mine the old Wooldridge pits proved a costly error. A. S. Wooldridge sold Huguenot Springs in 1875 and the old Mid Lothian tavern, owned for generations by the Wooldridges was sold to the

⁴³ Ibid., confirmed by Chesterfield County Deed Book 75, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Ruffner, Annual Report, 1880, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23

⁴⁶ R. R. Farr, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Richmond: Rush U. Derr, 1885), p. 168.

Jewett Family

Colonel W. B. Wooldridge, a rich and important man, died in 1881, leaving an estate of \$2,918.77 in real estate, furniture, and debts owed him as well as land in Alabama whose value was unknown and 25 shares of Richmond Railway Company stock dated February, 1867. There are Wooldridge descendants still in Midlothian, but no white family bearing that name.⁴⁸

The Heth family was a second prominent family to fade out in this period. Black Heath, the old family home had gone to ruin. The English Company who owned the house and land would not work the coal pits and was having difficulty selling the land. The Heths who remained lived out of the Midlothian district. Some moved to Richmond, the Kennon branch of the family lived at Norwood, the family estate in Powhatan County.⁴⁹

A. M. Trabue, one of the Trabue mining family, and last in his line, died in the 1890's without having married. With his death, the Trabue Tavern, now a landmark, was inherited by Stafford Phillips whose mother had been a Trabue. He died without children and the tavern left the possession of the immediate family.⁵⁰ The Mills and Raileys had moved away from the area before the Civil War. Thus the major mining families; Heth, Wooldridge, Mills, Raileys, and Trabue, had faded from the scene.

Old families, who were not totally dependent on the mines, retained

⁴⁷ Chesterfield County Will Book 27, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Interviews with Jeremiah J. Jewett, May, 1980, Gladys Dance, November, 1980, Julian Spears, September, 1981.

⁴⁹ Ida J. Lee, "The Heth Family," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol XLII, July, 1934, 278.

⁵⁰ Interviews with J. J. Jewett, D. I. Vincent, and Dorothy Hudson.

their importance through this period and for at least another generation. The Spears, Hancocks, Pages, Morrissettes, Salles, Martins, Moseleys, and Brummalls intermarried and married the children of new-comers, mine and railroad men such as the Jewetts, Jones, Fishers, Lesters, Fields, and Watlingtons. Several of these families became important and "pillars of the community."

The Jewetts may have been among the founders of the Wesleyan Meeting House, later Mount Pisgah Church. They came to the church's assistance in a time of need after an earth-shaking event. The original church was built on mining land. According to local legend, during a revival service when the church was particularly crowded, the entire building settled into the ground as the earth beneath it caved in. The John Jewett family donated the land just off Buckingham Road as a site for a new church building. This building was completed in 1878, the Reverend J. B. Langhorn was the pastor at that time. Church records were lost in a fire in 1923 that destroyed the building.⁵¹ Little is known of the activities of the church, now located in the heart of Midlothian.

In September, 1881 Jerusalem Baptist Church also moved into the village of Midlothian on land purchased from the Burrows estate. The little church was rolled down the highway on logs about two and one-half miles to its new location. A new slate roof was put on the building and it was slightly enlarged.⁵² In 1894 a new sanctuary was erected at Bethel Baptist Church and it stands today as beautiful as it was nearly

⁵¹Oscar Watlington, "History of Mount Pisgah Church," (Typewritten)

⁵²Bettie W. Weaver, "Blest Be The Tie That Binds," Mimeographed history of Bethel Baptist Church, 1977, p. 5.

a century ago.⁵³

The Reverend David B. Winfree and Doctor P. S. Hancock, two men of great influence in the community died within five years of each other. Winfree, who for close to forty years had served as pastor of Bethel and Jerusalem Churches, died in 1888. The congregations of these two churches joined with members of Tomahawk, another of Winfree's churches, to purchase a monument to be placed over his grave at Tomahawk Church.⁵⁴

Doctor Phillip S. Hancock, who served the Midlothian and Bon Air communities as their doctor for over thirty years, died in 1893. He had been Worshipful Master of the Masonic Lodge for six consecutive years and was an outstanding member of the community. The entire community banded together to build a monument in his honor. The white community purchased a large monument which was erected and unveiled with due ceremony in the middle of the Buckingham Road. The black community erected a fence around the monument to protect it from reckless drivers.⁵⁵

At the end of the century, Midlothian was a village of churches and taverns. A drink of whiskey cost ten cents at Jewett and Brothers' Store.⁵⁶ Credit was liberal and few people seemed to pay cash. The work on the mines had halted waiting for the Murphy Company to revitalize mining once more. The railroad continued to be the lifeline to the growing city of Richmond.

⁵³ Bethel Church Minutes, November, 1894.

⁵⁴ Tomahawk Church is in the southwestern edge of Midlothian area.

⁵⁵ Chesterfield County Charter Book 1, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁶ Record Book from the Jewett and Brothers' Store in the possession of J. J. Jewett, Midlothian, Virginia.

CHAPTER SIX
THE FIRST THIRD OF
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The train station became the center of activity in the village of Midlothian, although it was not a rail town where the train went down the Main Street, nor one where the tracks were located on the outer edge of the village. Instead in Midlothian the tracks were laid to meet the needs of the coal mines. Respectable people, black and white lived on both sides of the track but more people of both races lived south of the tracks and up the hill, because most of the land north of the tracks was controlled by large estates and mining companies. As a results there was no traditional "wrong side of the tracks."

The railroad provided jobs for local people of both races and also brought in newcomers. The Fields and Butlers came to work as station masters on the railroad in the early twentieth century and stayed on to become part of the community. Each family lived in large houses constructed close to the railroad tracks. Mr. Frazier came as a telegraph operator and lived in a small house near the old tipple. The house remains but Mr. Frazier left after a short time and moved over to Bellona where he operated Camack's grist mill.¹

The railroad station had replaced the local taverns as a mail depository as soon as the first Richmond-Danville station was built before the Civil War. Residents went to the nearest station to

¹Interviews with D. I. Vincent and Dorothy Hudson.

collect their mail. Mistfers Horner and Lester were the first rural mail carriers in Midlothian. They drove a horse and buggy.²

The train station rebuilt after the Civil War quickly proved to be too small to meet the ever growing demands on it. It served as passenger station, freight station, post office and general meeting place. In 1917, the station was divided. The freight section was separated from the passenger section. The "house track," spur line beside the station, was extended 150 feet to where the passenger part of the depot had been. The waiting rooms for black and white passengers were extended by six feet and an eight feet by eighteen feet, six inch baggage room was added to this. A platform 350 feet long by ten feet six inches wide flanked the building on the track side. The old freight depot was moved twenty feet west and repaired. A standard privy was constructed. All this construction plus new furniture and a cinder driveway cost the railroad \$1,912.06³ Two additional spur lines were laid near the station to accommodate boxcars that held the goods ordered by Midlothian merchants. Both the town and the railroad benefited from these changes.

Two general stores were built close to the station. The big red store on the south side of the track was operated by Mrs. Belle Fields. Belle must have been quite a liberated woman who spoke her mind without hesitation. Altercations between Doctor Fisher and Mrs. Fields occassioned the building of a second store on the other side of the track. Financed

²Interview with Mr. and Mrs. John Coxon, March 30, 1980. Confirmed by D. I. Vincent and Dorothy Hudson.

³Building specification sheet from the Southern Railroad files in Atlanta, Georgia. A copy of this was sent by Debbie Noxon to Barbara Burtchett and remains in the Burtchett files.

by Fisher but managed by Kelly Wilkinson, the new store was known as Kelly's store. Reputedly it had the finest meat available along the rail line and many passengers going beyond Midlothian got off to do their shopping before continuing home.⁴

Other stores in Midlothian depended on the railroad. Chapman's Store at the east end of Coalfield Station Road was an early cash and carry store. A half block east of Chapman's Store was the old Jewett Brothers' Store, later Bass's Store. This establishment was typical of general stores carrying everything from lace to hardware.

Mr. Bass was involved in community affairs and ran the store with the help of several clerks. Lowell Owen (black) and Calvin (Pat) Cosby, (white) helped with the store. In his later years, Mr. Bass was not mentally well and Owen and Cosby ran the store. Upon Mr. Bass's death and Calvin Cosby's death, J. J. Cosby assumed management of the store with his son Bernard.⁵

A black grocery store, the Midlothian Grocery Store, was incorporated in 1905. Its Board of Directors were Henry Choice, Charles Anderson, Silas Stuart, Richard Draper and Moses Cooper. Anderson, Draper and Cooper were local people. Other members of the Board of Directors were William F. Byrd, William Ruse, James Anderson, Robert Wooldridge, John Burford, George Booker, and Matthew Stuart.⁶ The exact location of this store is unknown. It was most likely located on the highway as there were several black businesses along Buckingham Road on the west side of the village.

⁴Interviews with D. I. Vincent and Dorothy Hudson.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Chesterfield County Charter Book 1, pp. 109-110.

Other businesses came to Midlothian during World War I. The village slowly began to move into the modern era. A small spool factory was set up making wooden spools from the dogwood trees.⁷ The David M. Lea Company also made use of the local trees. The Lea Lumber Company set up a "portable saw mill" in Midlothian in the 1920's.⁸ This business was on the western edge of the village and connected to the surrounding forest by a series of temporary railroads. There was also a spur line from the Southern Railroad to haul the lumber to the market. Angus Powell was president of this company. During the few years they were in Midlothian, the Lea Company constructed a number of houses around the saw mill. These were to house the workers. This area was known as "slab town" and many of the houses still stand.⁹

The Murphy Coal Company brought mining back to Midlothian for one more time in 1920. The company employed less than twenty people and since its entire operation was located in the woods nearly a mile off the highway, it seemed to have little impact on life in the community. The local people remember several of the people who were involved with the mines, but only those who worked in the mine were aware of how much coal was being shipped or what a big operation was in the planning stages at the pits.¹⁰

The E. P. Murphy and Sons Company that purchased the Midlothian Coal Mines in 1920 revised its charter in October of that year to pro-

⁷ Interviews with D. I. Vincent and John Coxon.

⁸ Interview with Brice Powell, son of the late Angus Powell, August, 1980.

⁹ Interviews with J. J. Jewett and D. I. Vincent

¹⁰ Interview with Mrs. Oscar Watlington, May 28, 1980.

vide for an authorized capital of \$300,000 and shares at \$100 each under a new name of Murphy Coal Corporation. Three officers of this new corporation had made separate bids on the land in August, 1920, but Murphy had the high bid of \$58,500.00.¹¹ Dixon, Murphy and Thompson then pooled their experience and resources. Murphy's expertise was in coal distribution; Sam Dixon, from the Prince Hill mine in West Virginia ran the Midlothian mine and Thompson's role is unknown, perhaps just that of financier. John Serey, the company secretary moved to Midlothian to report to Murphy on the operation, but had no role in running the mine. The legalities required in settling the case demanded several months of negotiations.

To put the mines in operation extensive planning had to be done. The owners had to attract a crew to work the mines after a fifteen year lapse. Water had to be drained from the mines and the superstructure repaired. A first step was to select an overseer to direct this process.

Sam Dixon came to direct the repairs but quickly turned the operation over to his brother, Fred. Three members of the labor force were veterans of the Midlothian mines, Misters Parker and Henley were two of these, the third man's identity is unknown. Men came from West Virginia to work and the rest of the laborers both top and bottom workers were local people.¹² All told between fifteen and twenty were brought in to work the mine. Only six or eight of these were actually diggers. The others were engaged

¹¹Chesterfield County Deed Book 72, p. 237.

¹²Much of the information in this section on mining is from the memory of Leland Anderson, the last surviving member of the mine crew in this area. Due to the circumstances it is impossible to verify this material. While Mr. Anderson is over ninety years old, his mine is alert and his memory good.

in construction work outside of the mine, or shoring up the inside of the mine. Several were hired to tend the pumps, boilers, engines and electrical equipment.

A letter from Sam Dixon to Mr. A. H. Sands, a lawyer for the company, described in detail the buildings on the mining property. There were thirty-three houses on the land, five of which were new. The others were forty to seventy years old and not fit to live in. These were taken down. Many of these houses were brick. The company store on the highway was also in disrepair. An outside carpenter was hired and a house was built for him at the mine. Dixon anticipated building fifty new homes, an office, and commissary in addition to the construction necessary to run the mine.¹³

Part of the letter looked to the future. Mr. Dixon wrote that if money could be found for the increased labor force, improvements, and new equipment he needed, arrangements had been made to sell crushed coal which would be converted into electricity to the Richmond Street Railroad (an early name for the Virginia Electric and Power Company.) They had agreed to set up a line to Midlothian and take all the current that could be made. He was also free then to sell the lump coal on the domestic market, noting that it would only cost \$2.25 per ton to mine. Dixon paid his men well, about \$1.00 a ton, this being enough to attract and keep good miners. He estimated that under ideal conditions the mines could produce three hundred to three hundred-fifty tons of coal a day.¹⁴

¹³ Letter from Sam Dixon to A. H. Sands, July 30, 1923, Wadleigh Report. Included in its entirety in the appendix of this paper.

¹⁴ Ibid.

In spite of this rosy prediction, most of the mining operations in Midlothian stopped the same year the letter was written, 1923. A substantial cave-in in the mine frightened the miners; some quit. The money to hire new men was scarce. Without a large loan to restart in a big way, the mine could not pay for itself. Water was kept out of the mines until 1924 when all work was abandoned.

An inside look at this activity in the mine has been provided by one of the men that Dixon brought to Midlothian. Mr. Leland B. Anderson, originally from Hanover County, came to Midlothian as a young man in 1920. In 1981, the ninety-two year old Mr. Anderson remembered the mine and was invaluable in explaining the mysteries of the long silent mine.

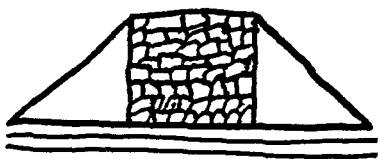
Once the mines were purchased it took two years to pump the water out of the shaft and tunnels. As each section of the mine was reclaimed and dried out, old timbers had to be replaced and caved in areas had to be cleared. The main Grove Shaft had to be retimbered and the slope built by Jones -- known as the Murphy slope -- needed repairs.

Two operations to clear the water were being carried on simultaneously. At Grove Shaft a metal bucket, thirty inches square was attached to the bottom of the cage, an elevator-like car used to take men and supplies down into the mine. This bucket was used to bail the water out of the shaft. On its bottom side, it had a trap door that opened to let the water run into a passage way near the top of the shaft.

On the slope a "sinking pump" (sump pump?) was lowered on a rail car into the water. This pump, powered by compressed air, forced the water to the surface through the pipes attached to it. This was a slow process and the creeks surrounding the mine were never so full.

The unwatering process continued until most of the mine had been cleared. When the shaft was cleared, the water pumped out of the mine to the level of fifteen hundred feet, where the new slope intercepted the old slope that led into the shaft, work in the mine began. The walls were shored up, new brattice work was put in to insure ventilation, and extraction of coal begun. It was necessary to keep a pump operating in the lower recesses of the mine all the time to pump out water as it collected and to drain off water from old sections still full of water that had been punctured and allowed to drain down to the pump. The entire workings of the mine were never reclaimed.

While the unwatering operation was going on, construction was being done. A new tibble was built at the opening of the Murphy slope. The main section of the tibble wall was built of stone. The two wing sections are made of concrete. The wall is about eighteen to twenty feet high and about twelve feet wide at the top and broader at the base. Beside and below the tibble wall there were three railroad tracks.



The Southern Railroad had to lay new tracks from the mine to the main line in Midlothian. The grading had already been done years earlier, but the tracks had been removed after the big explosion in 1882 when the

¹⁵ Sketch by Barbara Burtchett from visit to tibble, 1981. The left concrete wing has fallen across the area where the tracks were since 1981.

mines were closed for so long. Additional tracks were laid to the tibble a thousand feet southeast of the Grove Shaft. Once a week, when the mine was in full operation, the locomotive would come down the spur line and pick up seven or eight cars loaded with coal. Each car held forty tons.

Mind work began before the new boiler was completed at the tibble and steam from the old boiler at Grove Shaft was temporarily piped overhead to the hoisting engine at the tibble. The heavy cable was attached to two cars and the center of it sent around double drums. As one car was being pulled out of the mine, the other car was being lowered down the slope. The cars were built on the site out of old wheels and pieces of scrap metal sent from West Virginia. Two inch thick oak boards were bolted to three metal straps, one on either end of the car and one in the middle. The cars were about six feet long and four feet wide and held one ton of coal.

A new system of hauling coal out of the Midlothian mine was needed. More power was necessary to pull the heavier cars to the top of the tibble. A new steam engine was being set up and foundations of stone were built across the tracks from the tibble. When the foundations were completed a new boiler was erected on one to provide steam for an engine and this would pull the cars up the slope. A 250 volt generator was also installed at this site.

The tibble was equipped with a curved rail at the end of the mine track. This extended over the tibble wall about two feet. This piece of rail was attached to the rail coming out of the mine by a hinged action at the wall. When the full coal car was pushed up so that the front wheels struck the curved rail, a simple lever action behind the

car would allow the car to tip over and dump the coal into the waiting train car below. The empty car would then rebalance itself on the level track.

Work at the tibble only occupied part of the crew. A new superstructure had to be built over the Grove Shaft. Twelve by twelve inch oak timbers were used to build the housing for the large "bull" wheel that controlled the cable and raised the lowered the cage. The boilers and hoisting engine for this operation was located in the back of the old stone building and the cables ran to the wheel in the front. A smaller boiler and engine was used to operate the large fan encased in an elaborate stone and brick structure with air shafts to the main shaft. This provided proper ventilation in the mine from 1877 whenever the mines were operational. Murphy, however, never used this fan. Perhaps it was in ill repair. A smaller fan was put at the junction of the Murphy slope and the level leading to the Grove Shaft. Fresh air was pumped into the mine through pipes by an air compressor. Gassy air circulated out through the brattice work.

Brattice was a heavy piece of canvas made stiff by a waxy, sticky substance. It was placed in the passage ways to assure proper ventilation. This was most important in this particular mine. When asked to compare the danger of gas in Midlothian to that in the mines in West Virginia, Mr. Anderson said this mine was liked a "cocked gun with a child's hand on the trigger."

The fear of gas led to the power company's refusal to put lights in the mine. There were several lights powered by the generator outside the mine but these were dangerous. In 1920 the miners used carbide

lights to see where they were going. The mine inspector made them change to battery powered lights on their hats. The batteries had to be recharged each night.

The mine inspectors were supposed to come once a month to check the mines. Ideally, the mines should have been inspected between shifts of workers. The remoteness of the Midlothian mines from the big ones in the western part of the state and the smallness of the operation did not lend itself to adequate inspection. Mr. Anderson said that two inspectors came about once a year. He explained, however, that most mining accidents were caused by carelessness on the part of the miners.

Such was the case in the one explosion that occurred during the time Murphy operated the mine. One miner failed to ventilate an area properly where he had been digging the day before. He walked into a gas pocket and was badly burned by a slight explosion and flash fire. While no other explosions occurred in the three years Murphy operated the mines, the possibility of it and ghosts of past miners constantly made the men cautious.

Mr. Anderson let curiosity overcome his caution one day when he wiggled through a narrow air passage to see what lay beyond it. He came out into an eight to ten foot opening containing the bodies of two miners who lay right where they fell in the explosion of 1882. They must have been standing together when the explosion happened because their feet were close together, but they had fallen in different directions. All that remained of the clothing was the mole cloth vest and jacket one man wore. Suddenly aware of the dangerous thing he had done, Mister Anderson scrambled back to safety without "having a prayer meeting over the bodies." The bodies remain where they were a century ago.

While the fear of gas was a major concern, a more frequent danger was the cave-in. The rock in the Murphy slope had a sway in it like a horses back. It was very slick looking and in layers that seemed to adhere to each other by suction. Occasionally several layers would let go and fall. Usually it was just a light fall and timbers broke up most of it. Sometimes a large chunk would let loose and break the timbers as it fell. A light fall occurred when Mr. John Hetherman, the mine superintendent and Mr. John Serey, the company secretary, made a rare visit to the mine. When the two were rescued after being trapped by a slight cave-in for thirty minutes, they returned to the surface as white as ghosts and never entered the mine again.

Late in 1923, a major cave-in caught three men in the mine. Mr. Fred Dixon, who was badly crippled with arthritis, Mr. Henley, one of the veteran miners who was well past middle age, and Mr. Anderson. Mr. Anderson said that he had been up at the base of the Grove Shaft checking on the electric pump. When he was sure it was all right and pressed the signal bell for the cage to be sent down, nothing happened so he decided nobody was tending the cage and he would walk down the old slope and walk out the Murphy slope. As he approached the Murphy slope he could hear falling gravel. When he stepped into the slope, larger rocks were rolling down the incline. He made his way up the slope, stepping behind a timber every time he heard a rock coming and made his way to the nine hundred foot mark where he should have been able to see daylight. Here he met the other two men.

There was only a tiny hole near the top of the passage, the rest was completely blocked. Very carefully he began to climb over the debris

toward the hole. Since he was small he was able to clear away enough rocks to crawl through and go for help. It took several hours before a hole was made large enough to get the other two men out of the mine, although why they couldn't use the Grove Shaft cage lift is unclear. Perhaps the cage was not working. Once the men were out, it would take a week to clean out the fallen rock. Mr. Anderson had had enough and quit. All work at the mine stopped shortly thereafter.

The mines were kept free of water until 1924, maybe in the hope that more money would be made available. It seems that the cave-in was the straw that broke the camel's back. The company had been in financial difficulty for some time. It did not have a large enough work force to make the mine pay and it could not afford to hire more men. The coal was unpredictable as the seam folded and vaulted. Men interested in financing the operation became discouraged.

The Murphy Coal Corporation became one more mining company to run out of money and not be able to make a profitable operation in Midlothian. Dixon returned to West Virginia to Prince Hill Colliery Company and worked there until he died. Murphy continued to sell the West Virginia coal for a while and then the company just seemed to vanish. No record of this company has been found.

All that could possibly be salvaged from the property was salvaged. A crew was sent from Prince Hill to Midlothian to strip all the metal out of the mine and it was sold for junk. This was done during the depression when even the railroad tracks were taken up and sold as scrap metal. Perhaps the twelve by twelve timbers used in the superstructure of Grove Shaft were salvaged. This structure is not visible in the photograph made in the area later on.

The timber was sold off the property. The bricks from the old houses were sold to Colonial Williamsburg to be used in the restoration, which was in its early stages. Land was sold off to the school, the church and to Doctor Richardson and other individuals. No further attempt has been made to mine this area although some interest has been expressed and surveys taken from time to time, the current interest being more in harnessing the methane gas than mining the coal.¹⁶ Weather has taken its toll of the buildings and once more water has reclaimed the mines. The small number of people involved in Murphy mining operation indicates that mining was no longer a major industry in Midlothian.

The people involved in the operation were a colorful group. In this period of the "roaring twenties" Mr. and Mrs. Serey could have felt at home in a Fitzgerald novel as they dressed in the latest fashion and roared around the area in a Stutz Bearcat. Sam Dixon, a preacher who had turned miner, was a politician at heart. A drinking buddy of Pete Murphy during the time of prohibition, they had a place in the back woods where they could enjoy their drinking without fear of the law. Sam Dixon's son, Bill, better known as "wild Bill," was sent to work in the Midlothian mines after he married in hopes that he would mellow a bit. Even Bernard Driver, the bookkeeper for the company was said to have been quite a "beau" as far as the ladies of the community remembered. Their life in this rather conservative community occasioned much talk.

It was people connected to the mines that first brought the automobile to Midlothian. Meriweather Jones came to Midlothian in 1905 in his Buck-

¹⁶Gerald Wilkes, Methane Project, Division of Mineral Resources, Charlottesville, Virginia.

board.¹⁷ The car had big wheels and hard tires and was made by the Waltham Company in Waltham, Massachusetts. In 1905 it sold for \$495, and was very simple to operate.¹⁸

Doctor Fisher acquired the second automobile, a Ford, about 1915.¹⁹ This began an increasing interest in the automobile in Midlothian. By 1916 when the Masonic Lodge celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, the village was invaded by 102 cars. Most of these came from out of the immediate area.²⁰

In the twenties several automobile companies came to Midlothian. The White Motor Company, on the corner of Mount Pisgah Drive and Route 60 sold Model T. Fords. A Chevrolet Company set up operation at the corner of Route 60 and Coalfield Station Road.²¹ The cars to be sold arrived in crates on the railroad box cars. The wheels were put on the frame and the rest of the car piled on top and pushed up the hill to the store to be completely assembled. This provided entertainment for the children of the community and any adults who came to observe.²²

Each car owner needed to see to his own gasoline supply. Doctor Fisher had a pump by the barn behind his home.²³ The cars were light, the

¹⁷ Interviews with John Coxon and Mary Goode.

¹⁸ Joseph Schroeder, Wonderful World of Automobiles (Northfield, Illinois: D. B. I. Books, Incorporated, 1971), p. 40.

¹⁹ Interviews with John Coxon and Mary Goode.

²⁰ Johnson, History, p. 137.

²¹ Interviews with Dorothy Draper, June 27, 1980 and Dorothy Hudson.

²² Interviews with Levi Johnson and Dorothy Hudson.

²³ Interviews with Mary Goode and Dorothy Hudson.

engines small and gas went a long way. Some car owners got gas in ten to twenty-five gallon cans delivered on the railroad. Others got barrels of gas or later had tanks that were filled when the gas truck came about once a month. One of the earliest gas stations in Midlothian was in operation in the late twenties. The station run by Eddie Mimms who not only pumped gas but also fixed the automobiles. To test a car he would stand on the running board with his ear down toward the engine while the owner drove the car down the highway.²⁴

Gas stations were not necessarily garages. Gas could be purchased at Bass's store. Mr. Bass rented the Texas Company of Delaware part of his property for gas to be sold. The rent was one cent per gallon pumped.²⁵

The Dominion Oil Company bought the old Manders' Store in the early 1930's and tore it down to build a service station. This station was run by Tom and Winston Enroughty.²⁶ Automobile repair work was done at David Sledd's garage next to Bass's Store. Raymond Britton ran this garage after Sledd. The building now much remodeled, serves Midlothian as a bank.²⁷

Midlothian gained the reputation of being something of a speedtrap in the 1930's. Sunday afternoon drivers traveling the dirt highway were stopped for speeding if they were going fast enough to kick up dust. Bill Flynn, the arresting officer, brought the offender to Ben Vincent, the

²⁴Interviews with Dorothy Hudson and D. I. Vincent.

²⁵Chesterfield County Deed Book 206, p. 430.

²⁶Interviews with Dorothy Hudson and D. I. Vincent.

²⁷This site had once been a blacksmiths shop. This gave way to the garage as the age of the horse and buggy gave way to the automobile.

Justice of the Peace and a trial was held in the open-air court beside the highway. The speeder was fined and sent on his way,²⁸ having learned a lesson.

The young people were being taught their lessons too in several small schools in the area. The local people, particularly the ladies, were interested in building a better school. To finance the new building the ladies organized fund raising projects^{ranging} from picnics at the Masonic Grove to selling pencils on the train. Mrs. Annie Fisher led the pencil sellers and through these various projects collected enough money to build a new school in the early twentieth century.²⁹

The new two-story frame building was opened in 1911. It had four rooms and cost \$3333.33. The new school had three teachers and twenty-five students. The building was on the site of the present Midlothian High School in the center of the Midlothian village.³⁰

As the school population grew, more teachers were added to the faculty and three rooms and an auditorium to the building. This was adequate for a decade. In 1924, a five room brick building with auditorium was built expressly for the high school students. This building adjacent to the frame building, housed a fully accredited four year high school (grades eight through eleven). The first graduating class of three completed school a year before the new building was completed.³¹

As more additions were added to the school in 1947, 1950, 1951 and 1963, the frame building was torn down and so were the stables for the

²⁸ Interviews with D. I. Vincent and Dorothy Hudson.

²⁹ Interviews with Mary Goode and Dorothy Hudson.

³⁰ Hudson, "History of Midlothian High School."

³¹ Ibid.

horses and horse-drawn school buses.³² Miss Mary Hatch drove one of the new buses from the Robious area, and Mr. Selden Spears drove one from Hallsborough.³³

Schools in the black community remained small, teaching only the children who were within walking distance of the school. In 1948, the Midlothian Elementary School consolidated the black schools from Midlothian, Mount Nebo, Robious, Spring Creek and Brown Grove. This school had five teachers including Mrs. Elizabeth Bebbs who was a teaching principal. There were 175 students in this new school across from the Midlothian First Baptist Church. This school continued to serve the black community until 1969 when the schools were integrated. Blacks wishing to attend high school prior to 1969 had to ride a bus to Carver High School near Chester or to Granite High School off Forest Hill Avenue, both in Chesterfield County.³⁴

Discipline in all schools was strict. Small students who misbehaved were punished by being slapped on the palm of their hand with a ruler.³⁵ High School students were given demerits. Suspension was greatly dreaded as it meant days of hard work at home and no communication with one's peers from school.³⁶

Midlothian's senior citizens look back on their early school days with fond memories. Classes were small and there were few graduates. Proportionately there were apparently the same number of ambitious students and laggards, bright and dull as there are today. The courses offered were

³²Interviews with Levi Johnson and Dorothy Hudson.

³³Interviews with Julian Spears and Dorothy Hudson.

³⁴History of the Black School in Midlothian, part of "The History of Midlothian High School." (typewritten)

³⁵Interviews with Peachy Cheatham, May, 1980, Eloise Watlington.

³⁶Interviews with Dorothy Hudson and D. I. Vincent.

limited to the size of the school and the ability of the faculty. For many years faculty members only had to have some college education and not all were graduates. Each faculty member taught several subjects, often dividing their day between elementary and high school classes.

During the depression of 1929 when jobs were scarce only single ladies were allowed to teach on the assumption that if there was a husband to support the family, the wife did not need to work. The contract that teachers were required to sign stated that marriage voided the contract.³⁷

The faculty and administrators were not a dull group. Usually faculty members were fairly young and enthusiastic, eager to try new things. When invited to go on a night time possum hunt in the early twenties, most of the faculty at Midlothian decided to do so. They were promptly arrested for breaking the law and hunting at night. Doctor Fisher went to the courthouse and bailed out the teachers; and the court in a quandry as to what to do, decided to drop the case.³⁸

During World War I, a large lawn party and minstrel show was held for the benefit of the war relief. The affair was directed by the school principal. It was a great success, attended by people from many miles around. When it was over and the money earned was to be counted, it was learned that the principal had absconded with the funds.³⁹

Of course not all faculty members were jailbirds, or administrators, thieves. Most were hard-working, dedicated people who taught as much as they could each day. Even the janitor, Temple Ross, was caught up in

³⁷ Interviews with Eloise Watlington and Dorothy Hudson.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interviews with Peachy Cheatham and Dorothy Hudson.

the importance of education and spent hours trying to help the "bad" kids learn their school work.⁴⁰

The basic courses were taught, reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as science. The high school students took these plus history and geography and civics. Latin, French and home economics for boys and girls was also offered. Physical education was limited to recess activities and after school.

There was a ten minute recess at 10:30 a. m. and an hour for lunch recess. The young children played games. One enjoyed by all students was "Running the Fox" or "Fox in the Water." The object of this game was for two groups of boys to run from one side of the playing field to the other without getting caught by the foxes who were in the middle.⁴¹ In the late thirties the students saved what little money they had to buy land for their playground. The Coal Company sold the land to the school board and the students used their money for equipment.⁴²

Extracurricular activities found a place in the early schools. The student government organization was called the Junior League and it provided funds for other activities. The Woodrow Wilson Literary Society appealed to the intellectual interest of the students. For the less academically inclined, there was the fun-loving P. I. T. Club, a secret organization for girls that had no practical purpose. Athletic teams included boys and girls basketball and baseball. Baseball was played on the vacant lot across the highway from the school, near Mt. Pisgah Church.

⁴⁰ Interviews with John Russell, May 22, 1980, and Dorothy Hudson.

⁴¹ Interviews with Levi Johnson and D. I. Vincent.

⁴² Interviews with John Russell and Dorothy Hudson.

This was just a community playground.⁴³

The school had its first yearbook called the Midlo Mirror in 1923 and a newspaper having various names such as "You-Tell-Em" and "The Skipper." These were printed in Richmond. With the advent of the radio in the early twenties, Midlothian High School students formed a radio club. The boys returned at night to meet with the principal and make crystal sets.⁴⁴

The students attended school from nine to three. As there was no cafeteria, every student brought his lunch unless he lived close enough to walk home for lunch. School transportation was limited to two horse-drawn wagons that brought students from the outlying areas. Most students walked to school. Some even boarded with families who lived closer to school so they could attend.⁴⁵

The schools were heated with coal stoves and later furnaces with radiators. A generator at Bass's Store provided electricity to the school in 1923 and the community at large by 1927. Virginia Electric and Power Company did not put lines into Midlothian until 1930.⁴⁶ The high school had a good deep well from which the children could draw water for drinking. The brick school built in 1924 was the first to have indoor plumbing.

Food services began with a soup kitchen during the depression. Concerned mothers made soup in large kettles at home and brought it to school to sell for a nickle a bowl, and children who could not afford to buy it or did not have food to bring for lunch, recieved food without charge.

⁴³ Interviews with Alease Frady, November 6, 1979, and D. I. Vincent.

⁴⁴ Interviews with Dorothy Hudson and D. I. Vincent.

⁴⁵ Interviews with Levi Johnson and Dorothy Hudson.

⁴⁶ Midlothian Masonic Minutes, February 4, 1930.

This service expanded and one of the entry halls was closed off, a kerosene stove installed allowing for the preparation of simple hot lunches, and lunches were served in the auditorium and consumed in the classrooms.⁴⁷

The water bucket soon gave way to a fountain; the old soup kitchen to a modern cafeteria, and several buses added to bring the ever increasing student population to school.

The twentieth century brought growth to the churches in the community as well as to the schools. Jerusalem Church, that had been part of Bethel Church since 1884, became a separate church again in 1920 and began a building program culminating in a new brick building completed in 1924. At that time the name of the church was changed from Jerusalem to Winfree Memorial Church in honor of its former pastor David B. Winfree.⁴⁸

Mount Pisgah Methodist Church added an annex to house its growing Sunday School. The newly completed and furnished annex was cleaned and awaiting the dedication ceremonies when the church caught fire, probably from oily cleaning rags left in the furnace room. On July 10, 1925, the sanctuary and annex building burned to the ground.⁴⁹ A two year dispute over the location of a new building split the church and was finally resolved by laying the cornerstone for the new building on the site of the burned building in 1927.⁵⁰

The First Baptist Church of Midlothian grew under the leadership of its Sunday School Superintendents. These in order of succession were Cornelius Mimms, the lawyer; his son Cornelius Mimms, the undertaker;

⁴⁷ Interviews with Dorothy Hudson and Peachy Cheatham.

⁴⁸ Richmond Times Dispatch, August 31, 1924.

⁴⁹ Watlington, "The History of Mount Pisgah Church."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Moses Cooper, and for the past fifty years Levi Johnson.⁵¹ Each of these men have been outstanding citizens in the Midlothian community.

The Masonic Lodge celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in grand style.

The Times Dispatch described the setting:

The Lodge owns the magnificent grove in which the building stands and the lower edge of which is one of the boldest springs of pure water to be found anywhere in Southside Virginia. This fountain has been known for a hundred years or more as the "old barbeque springs" and around and about it many a joyous barbeque and picnic have been held in years gone by.⁵²

The anniversary attracted between five and six hundred people from Richmond and other areas who came, some on the train, or by horse and buggy, but most came by car. Lunch was served by "handsome matrons, lovely young women, industrious young men and a few of the older members of the lodge who were called in merely to boss things."⁵³

The Lodge has continued to operate over the years with many illustrious members. One of the outstanding ones was Doctor John Bowler Fisher who as a doctor served the entire Midlothian community. Dr. Fisher was born in New Kent County. After receiving his degree at the Medical College of Virginia, he came to Midlothian just before the turn of the century to replace Doctor Hancock. Doctor Fisher served Midlothian well until his death at eighty-three in 1953.

In his uncompleted, unpublished autobiography, Doctor Fisher's concern for the slow progress of medicine was evident. He noted the high mortality rate in babies saying that most bottle fed babies died before the end of July each summer, due evidently to unsanitary bottles and

⁵¹ Interviews with Levi Johnson and Dorothy Draper.

⁵² Richmond Times Dispatch, September 7, 1916.

⁵³ Johnson, History, p. 138.

nipples and unrefrigerated milk. He also discussed typhoid, the scourge every summer and fall, and tuberculosis and malaria that claimed many lives.⁵⁴

Doctor Fisher made a particular note about the treatment of "Dypheria." Standard treatment was to mop the throat of the victim with turpentine; but about ninety per cent of the patients died. Fisher got a bottle of experimental antitoxin and treated Doctor J. B. Bailey's son with this. It cured the boy. After that Fisher always carried some in his bag.

Doctor Fisher's autobiography ended with 1927, apparently a watershed in his life. It was the year his first wife died.⁵⁵ The Doctor's influence in the community cannot be measured. He owned a great deal of property in the center of the village. He built a beautiful nineteen room home for his family and as the children grew to adult life, he built homes for each of them on his property. He seems to have been involved in every phase of community life. School teachers and mine personnel boarded in his home. He knew everybody locally and was respected by those who knew him. His beautiful home was destroyed by fire in the early 1960's and no fitting monument has been erected to his memory in the village.

A second person of great influence to the community was a school teacher. Miss Loula Powell, who taught in Midlothian for forty-eight years, came to the village from New Kent County. Her brother bought

⁵⁴J. B. Fisher, "Autobiography." Courtesy of Mrs. Mary Goode.

⁵⁵The story of Doctor Fisher's life and achievements is completely covered in his obituary from the Richmond Times Dispatch, August 23, 1953. This is included in the appendix of this paper.

a lovely home for Miss Loula and her four sisters; Miss Maude who worked at Miller and Rhodes, Miss Ada who was a seamstress, Miss Nellie who kept house for the others, and Miss Bernie who was a semi-invalid. None of the ladies ever married. Miss Loula went with John Jewett all of her adult life but said she could not afford to get married.⁵⁶ More likely her dedication to the children of the community was too great for her to willingly give herself to just one person.

During World War I., Miss Loula served as principal as well as teacher. She chose to teach the fifth grade and did so for several generations. Her students said that she was very strict, punishing you severely if you misbehaved. They also noted that she was fair. Her excellent means of explaining the material made it possible for even the slowest student to learn.⁵⁷

Miss Loula Powell was also devoted to the Jerusalem-Winfree Church. She cleaned hay out of the old building and set up a Sunday School. This organization was responsible for keeping the church going for quite a while. A deeply religious person, Miss Loula was one who enjoyed a good time and could laugh at herself. Not a straight-laced old maid, she would put on men's clothing and play a role of store keeper in a "Lum and Abner" production. She was a hard working person greatly respected by her peers and pupils over the years. She died in June, 1955 and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Interviews with Peachy Cheatham and Dorothy Hudson.

⁵⁷ Mrs. W. K. Post, "My Most Unforgettable Character." (Typewritten: in the papers of Dorothy Hudson, Midlothian, Virginia.)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The past fifty years have produced other people of influence in Midlothian. Some have had political influence, others financial influence and the most important have influenced through service to the community. These senior citizens have been delightful in their enthusiasm to share what they remembered of the community they grew up in. Every one of the people interviewed noted the importance of the railroad in their daily lives.

The children's day began as their fathers caught the train to town. Then dressed and fed, the children set off for school. When school was out at 3:00 the students went home to do their afternoon chores. In at least one household at 4:00 everyone came in and cleaned up and dressed for the evening meal. When the train whistle blew at Lee Hall (Bon Air) the biscuits went into the wood stove and the family went down to the depot. The children used to wait under the two big oak trees in the old station master's yard to get the first glimpse of the train as it rounded the bend. Ice, selling at five cents a pound, was taken from the train to the houses of the people who wanted it and the rest to the stores. Families went home to the evening meal while the train unloaded, reloaded and went on its way.⁵⁹

In their leisure time, the kids played in the Masonic Grove or picked up coal along the tracks to sell for spending money. They swam in the water hole where Falling Creek went under the railroad track, or walked over to the river to fish. They had ball games on the vacant lot that the whole community got involved in. As they grew older, they went to

⁵⁹ Interviews with Mary Goode and D. I. Vincent.

dances at the lodge, church socials and joined the budding fire department or auxiliary.⁶⁰

The people remembered that the road was straightened and no longer called Buckingham Road, but Midlothian Turnpike and later Route 60. It was graveled in 1905 when the first car came this way, but not paved until about 1940.⁶¹

Older residents of Midlothian had heard their parents tell about poker clubs on the trains and the crap games at Wilkinson's store every Saturday night. Older boys and men only were allowed to attend the latter. Enroughty's service station in later years was the "hang-out" for the men. They also remembered or had heard about the drinking party held by the pillars of the community to celebrate the passage of the prohibition amendment. This was a pleasant means of disposing of the liquor.⁶²

More soberly, those senior citizens remembered the depression and businesses that failed and attempts to make a little money selling coal.⁶³ During late thirties several attempts were made to strip mine the old coal fields that had once belonged to the Black Heath Company. Most of this was done with northern capital, the local people having been disillusioned with the mining business. The investors sought to use big machinery to strip mine the area in hopes of providing coal for the Richmond demand and to gain advantage over the western Virginia mines by

⁶⁰ Interviews with John Coxon and D. I. Vincent.

⁶¹ Interviews with L. B. Anderson and D. I. Vincent.

⁶² Interviews with Mary Goode and Dorothy Hudson.

⁶³ Interviews with John Coxon and D. I. Vincent.

having less transportation expense. There were four major companies: John R. McLean Coal Mining Corporation, and The Great Southern Morgan Coal and Coke Mining Corporation, both under McLean's leadership. National Industrial Engineers, Incorporated was financed by people from Virginia, Washington, D. C., Cleveland, Ohio, and Erie, Pennsylvania. The B. & H. Coal Company was financed by the B. & H. Finance Company of Florida.⁶⁴

Land was cleared, machinery moved in and the rains came with winter and spring. As with the earliest coal mining efforts in Midlothian, water began to fill the mines. The large holes created in strip mining were very difficult to drain.

At the peak of production in 1939, these combined companies were only producing 130 tons of coal a day. When the old Midlothian Coal Company was in full swing, it produced 100 tons every twelve hours. The market for these new companies vanished in 1939 when the United Mine Workers' strike was settled and coal began to move in from western Virginia. Very little Midlothian coal was shipped out and one by one these operations failed and bigger holes were left to fill up with water.⁶⁵

The big holes are now being used as dumps for trees and rubble off property being cleared for new subdivisions, and people who spoke with pride of Midlothian regret the fast infringement of the city life and the fact that realistically since 1960, Midlothian has ceased to be an independent village and has become a suburb of Richmond.

⁶⁴Routon, "History," pp. 66-70.

⁶⁵Ibid.

An overview of Midlothian from its beginning and particularly for the century 1835 to 1935 reveals a village (unincorporated) that developed to house and provide necessities for the people working in the coal mines. The same village continued to survive when the mines closed because the railroad that had come through the village to serve the local people, provided both freight and passenger services, jobs, and transportation to jobs in Richmond. As more people bought cars and trucks the railroad service dwindled but continued to provide passenger service for the entire first half of the twentieth century. Richmond took a giant step toward Midlothian in 1912 when it annexed Manchester, but Midlothian remained a village. Better highways and more automobiles encouraged people to move away from the city and a few nice homes were built in Bon Air and Midlothian. It was not until well after World War II, however, that Midlothian became a suburb of Richmond.

In 1935, and as late as 1975, descendants of the French Huguenots, English settlers, early miners and railroad workers and slaves continued to live in Midlothian -- many of them on the land of their ancestors. Midlothian was a village, slow to change, conservative in nature, peaceful and easy-going. Religious and moral values were important and family and community ties were strong. It was a vital community, steeped in the history of mining but kept alive by the railroad.

APPENDIX A

Letter from Samuel Dixon to A. H. Sands

July 30, 1923

From the Wadleigh Report

July 30, 1923

Mr. A. H. Sands
 American National Bank Building
 Richmond, Va.

Dear Sir:

Regarding conversation about Midlothian had with Mr. Green, Vice President, Southern Railway, in his office in Washington, D. C., on Tuesday last, the 24th and information asked for by Mr. _____:

I submit the following as a fair statement of the physical and financial standing of the Murphy Coal Corporation:

Money invested and expended to date:

1st. Cost of plant as of November, 1920	\$70,000.00
2nd. Cost of Material, Machinery and buildings (Since the purchase)	65,000.00
3rd. Cost of unwatering, cleaning up and driving main slope to date	115,000.00
	<u>\$250,000.00</u>

The above is within a few hundred dollars either way or actual cash spent upon the property; an audit of the records will show the exact figures.

1st Cost of Plant:

1900 acres of land in fee (at Midlothian).
 3 acres in the City of Richmond on deep water.
 33 houses and miners dwellings, five of which are new
 1 store building and 2 acres of ground on Midlothian Pike.

2nd. Power Plant at Slope:

2 - 125 H. P. Boilers
 1 - Flory Double engine hoist
 1 - 40 H. P. Generator and Engine.
 1 - Direct Connected 200 K. W. (1 small fan)
 Generator on foundation, ready to run
 1 - Blacksmith shop and contents
 1 - office and Howe 200 ton scale
 1 - Tipple with three tracks under same holding 30 cars
 1 - Sullivan air compressor
 3 - Boiler water tanks and air receivers
 40 - Tons mine rail and other material

Power plant at Grove Shaft, (1000 feet away)

1 - Hoist engine, large, with ropes
 3 - Boilers in use, but old
 3 - Feed pumps
 1 - Air compressor in good order and receiver
 1 - Small Hoisting engine
 1 - Large fan installed
 2000 Feet 3 inch pipe
 2 - Boiler water tanks
 15000 Feet Dressed Lumber for Buildings
 2 - Punchers and quantities of other materials

Material in mine:

2 - Power pumps, new costing	\$3,000.00	New
1 - Electric hoist and rope		"
1 - Compressed Air Hoist		"
4 - Pumps		
30- Mine cars		
1 - Large Pump, cost	1,200.00	"
2000 Feet 4 inch pipe		"
1000 Feet 3 inch pipe		"
2500 Feet 40 lb. track laid		
3000 Feet 20 lb. " "		
with sheaves, etc.		

The above, together with quantities of tools and surplus material represent the cost of property and expenditures for supplies and materials since the commencement.

3rd. Cleaning up and unwatering the mines:

Commencing October, 1920, we have pumped the water from the old workings and cleaned up the falls in the main slope for a distance of 1800 feet and the walls were persistent and heavy. Also retimbered the old Grove shaft, cleaning up the Dodd Incline which was completely closed by reason of the fire which compelled its closing down some years ago.

We have driven the main slope 500 feet and cross headings right and left to the old workings, unwatering these old places as we went down and all in coal in the C. seam of from 42 " to 74" in thickness.

Main slope is 2300 feet down and on an average of 45 degree pitch. At this point the slope and 40 to 30" coal ran off level on a fold for 135 feet and has now turned over at 72 degrees with about 12" coal and will connect with the regular seam in 25 feet and then its normal dip and thickness.

The 3rd and 4th right headings stand in good C. seam coal, two hundred feet from main slope, up against the old entries

driven years ago and now full of water with little pressure which we are draining. The end and 3rd lifts are driven out into the old Dodd incline and workings, the 4th lift ran into the same roll or fold developed in the main entry. We have driven through this and beyond. The coal in the face of the 4th lift, 350 feet from main entry commencing on top, coal 38" rash 28" coal 29", rock 8", coal 18" and the place not on the granite.

A place turned to right off the 4th lift and within 75 feet of face shows commencing roof slate, coal 69", slate 9", coal 16", and this place is not on the bottom granite. The sections of this place on the right would indicate the rash or coal and slate mixture was a pocket and runs out driving to the dip. The Richmond Basin at Midlothian carries coal fairly uniform as under beginning on the granite floor:

C seam	40" to 72"	Coal
Parting	9" to 30"	slate
B seam	24" to 40"	coal
Parting	9" to 18"	slate
A seam	18" to 24"	coal
Granite Floor		

Conditions at Gayton about 15 miles East in the same basin are as follows:

C seam	44"	coal
Parting	72"	slate
B seam	42"	coal
Parting	60"	slate
A seam	50"	coal - laminated
Granite Floor		

There is no question about the coal at Midlothian being in paying quantities since we have proven the seam in the main basin to run reasonably uniform. The present fold or roll in the main entry will be over-come by the driving of main entry from 25 to 40 feet when the uniform dip of coal will then continue.

Three thousand feet ahead of present main slope and a little to the East, a bore hole known as "Jewetts" shows 13 feet coke; this coke I have no doubt includes the two partings the three seams, A. B. and C.

Funds needed to mine coal in quantities.

There are 33 houses on the property, 26 of which are from 40 to 70 years old and unfit for habitation. We should have:

50 new houses @ \$1,500.00 each	\$75,000.00
1 Commissary office building and merchandise	25,000.00

2 new boilers	5,000.00
Mine cars	10,000.00
Tipple Changes	10,000.00
Main slope improvements, etc.	25,000.00
	<u>\$150,000.00</u>

this new capital, an output of 300 to 350 tons per day can be attained easily and at a cost of less than \$2.25 per ton. We pay our men for digging and loading \$1.25 per car of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons or 1.00 per ton and the dead work and labor can be done for about the same amount, paying wages to justify men in coming and staying. The surroundings can be made an ideal coal plant location, free from adjacent coal fields and labor agitation.

By the installation of additional generators and a battery of boilers all the small coal and impurities in the coal can be crushed and converted into electric current and sold to the Richmond Street Railway, who will build a line 8 miles to the mines and take all the current made at a price, thus permitting the mine to screen and sell the lump coal in nearby towns at lump and domestic coal prices.

Mr. Murphy, together with myself and friends are anxious to see the success of this property, not only because of our financial investment, but because we have demonstrated that the Richmond Basin contains coal in quantities that can be mined at a profit.

Our handicap, since unwatering and cleaning up the shaft and two entries has been in having no mine maps of the old operations. We have driven the main slope between these old workings but have been unable to open up area for an output. The map will show the extent of the solid coal we have to work in. The writer believes that on the left we will tap the face of the Dodd Incline which is the lowest place on the left and I also believe that the workings on the right were driven down to the present roll or fold and then stopped, hence the new development beyond the fold can be pushed through without the fear of interruption or danger from old workings.

I will be glad to show any practical mining man the plan and the coal, also the coal prospects as they appear below the old workings of years ago.

Yours very truly,

(signed) S. Dixon,
Mrs. Murphy Coal Corp.

APPENDIX B

Copy of Doctor John B. Fisher's Obituary

Times Dispatch, August 23, 1953

Doctor Fisher Dies at 83 At His Home

Dr. John Bowler Fisher, a general practitioner of medicine, whose shingle has been a landmark in Midlothian for nearly 60 years, died Thursday afternoon at his Chesterfield County home. He would have been 84 years old in nine days.

A true country doctor, he was a familiar sight on the county roads traveling to treat the sick. Although he began his practice in January, 1893—in the horse-and-buggy era—he kept up with advances in medicine and read with regularity the latest medical journals until shortly before his death.

One of the highlights of Dr. Fisher's long practice came in 1943 when his patients and friends, not only from Midlothian, but from all of Chesterfield as well as Goochland, Powhatan, Amelia and Henrico Counties, paid tribute to him on his fiftieth anniversary of practice.

Served as Church Steward

Funeral rites will be held at 11 A. M. Saturday at Mount Pisgah Methodist Church, Midlothian, of which he was a member and where for many years he served on the board of stewards. Burial will be in Hollywood Cemetery.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Margaret Jewett Fisher; two daughters, Mrs. L. M. Hardesty, of Richmond, and Mrs. I. R. Goode, of Midlothian; three sons, John B. Fisher, Jr., of Midlothian; F. Randolph Fisher, of Newport News, and Ralph C. Fisher, of Midlothian; one stepson, Dr. William P. Morrissette, of Midlothian; one brother, Gregory W. Fisher, of Richmond; eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Dr. Fisher was born Aug. 30, 1868, at "Hazel Dell," his ancestral home in New Kent County. He was a son of the late George W. Fisher and Frances Eugenia Marston Fisher.

After his early education in the public and private schools of New Kent County, he attended the University of Virginia where he took his premedical work.

In 1892, he graduated in medicine from the Medical College of Virginia and the following year served his internship at the City Alms House Hospital, one of the three Richmond hospitals of that time.

He then decided to return to

Continued on Page 15, Column 1

Funeral Rites Set In Midlothian

Continued From First Page

his native New Kent County to follow the general practice of medicine, but a friend informed him that the coal mines at Midlothian needed a doctor. Dr. Fisher made the trip to Midlothian to inspect the situation. He stayed until his death.

It was at Midlothian that he met his first wife, the former Anne Elizabeth Jewett, whom he married Oct. 27, 1897. She died Feb. 27, 1928. Dr. Fisher was married a second time on March 6, 1929 to Mrs. Margaret Jewett Morrissetts.

In addition to his private practice, Dr. Fisher was the first physician for the Industrial School for Girls at Bon Air when it was founded in 1910. A dormitory, built in 1940, was dedicated in his honor, bearing his name and with his portrait hung in the main lobby.

Although primarily known as a "G.P." or family doctor, Dr. Fisher served as surgeon for the Southern Railway for many years.

He was a pioneer in the founding of the first State Board of Health in 1908, and served on the board for 16 years, being its secretary from 1912 to 1920. Dr. Fisher was instrumental in selecting the present site of Catawba Sanatorium. In later years, he was appointed by the then Governor Tuck to formulate a history of the State Board of Health.

Appointed by former Governor Montague, he served for 44 years as a member of the board of visitors of the Medical College of Virginia. In addition, he had been a member of the Medical Society of Virginia since 1892 and a member of the Richmond Academy of Medicine since 1900. He also was a member of the American Medical Association.

Dr. Fisher was for many years a powerful political figure in Chesterfield County—although he never held political office. He was a member of the State Central Democratic Committee for the Third District and for 20 years served as chairman of the Chesterfield Democratic Committee. He also was a member of the Chesterfield County Electoral Board.

Dr. Fisher also served on the board of directors of the Mechanic and Merchants Banks in South Richmond and also was a member of the Historical Society of Virginia.

He was the oldest member of the Midlothian Lodge No. 211, AF&AM, with which he had been affiliated for 57 years and of which he was a past master. He also was a past district deputy grand master of the sixteenth Masonic district of Virginia.

APPENDIX C

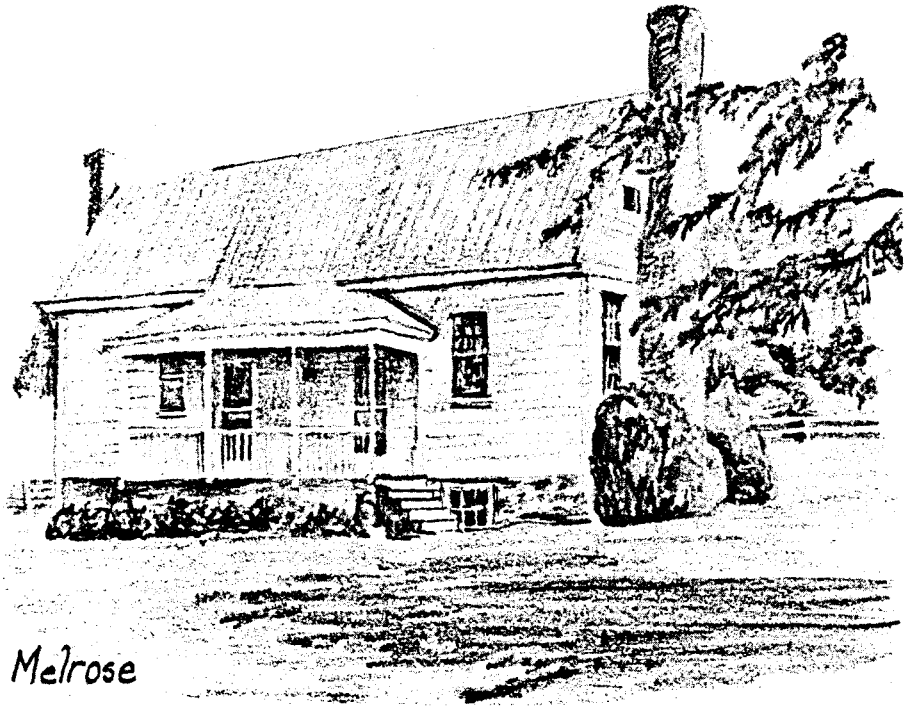
Pictures of Landmarks of the
Village of Midlothian



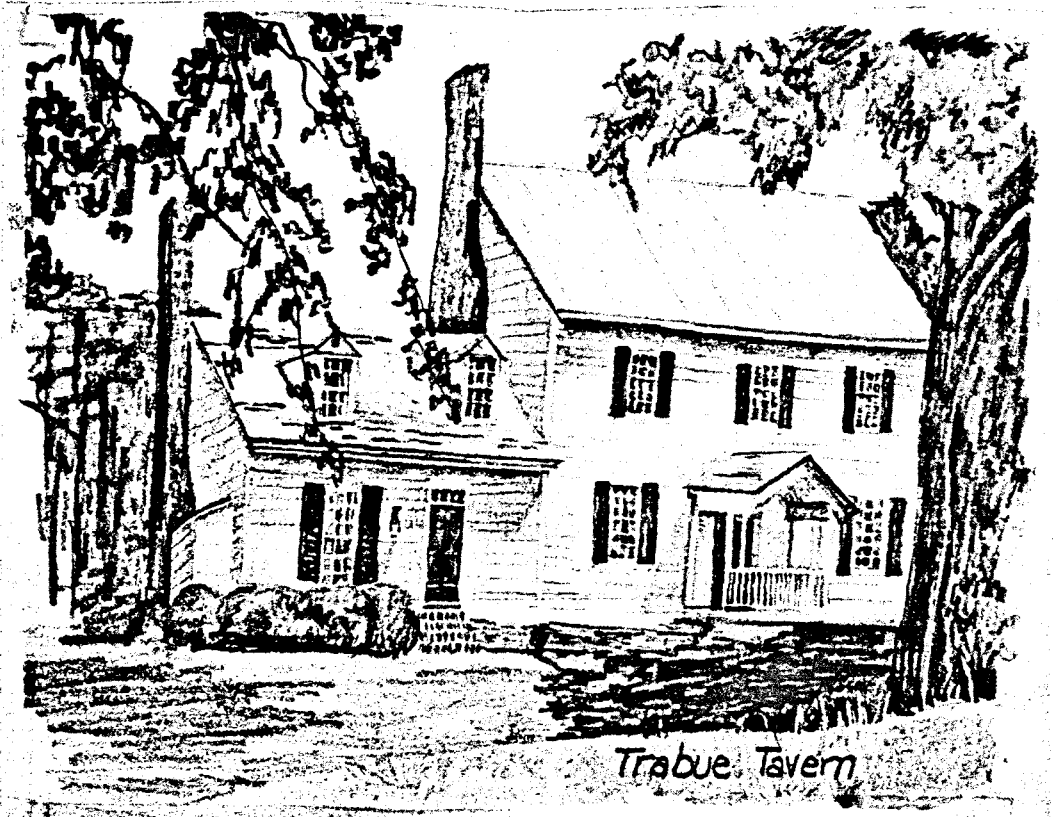
Aetna Hill



Parley Hill



Melrose



Trabue Tavern



Salisbury



Courtesy of Virginia State Library

BLACK HEATH, CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

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Anderson, Leland B. Midlothian, 1979-1981. Mr. Anderson is the last surviving miner from the Murphy Coal Corporation at its Midlothian Mine.

Coxon, Mr. and Mrs. John. Midlothian, March 30, 1980. Mr. Coxon's father was a miner. John Coxon was a railroad man.

Cheatham, Mrs. Peachy. Chesterfield, May 21, 1980. "Miss Peachy" was a school teacher in Midlothian in the 1920's.

Dance, Mrs. Gladys. Midlothian, November 6, 1979. Mrs. Dance was born at Hallsborough Tavern and spent most of her life there. She is a descendant of the Spears and Wooldridge families.

Draper, Mrs. Dorothy. Midlothian, June 7, 1980. Mrs. Draper works in the school and post office and is a respected member of the black community.

Fields, Owen. Midlothian, July 30, 1980. Mr. Fields is a descendant of the Fields family who worked on the railroad and ran one of the stores in Midlothian.

- Frady, Mrs. Alease. Midlothian, 1979-1981. Mrs. Frady is the secretary of Midlothian High School, born and raised in the village.
- Goode, Mrs. Mary. Midlothian, March 25, 1980. Mrs. Goode is the daughter of Doctor John B. Fisher.
- Hudson, Miss Dorothy. Midlothian, 1979-1982. Miss Hudson, a teacher in Midlothian for more than forty years, is descended from a Huguenot family.
- Jewett, Jeremiah J. Midlothian, May 20, 1980. Mr. Jewett, a prominent member of the community is from an English coal mining family.
- Johnson, Levi. Midlothian, June 6, 1980. Sunday School superintendent at Midlothian's First Baptist Church and costodian at Midlothian High School for fifty years.
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- Russell, John. Midlothian, May 22, 1980. Lawyer, life-time resident of Midlothian, descendant of the Winfree-Brummall families.
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- Vincent, David I. Midlothian, 1980-1983. Grandson of Sam Lucus, a mine inspector, son of Benjamin Vincent the last Justice of the Peace in Midlothian.
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VITA

Barbara Powell was born in December, 1941 in Richmond, Virginia. After graduating from Manchester High School (1960) and Westhampton College (1964), she received her Master's degree in Religious Education at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky in 1967.

Upon returning to Richmond, she taught first grade at Grange Hall Elementary School for one year and since then has been teaching history at Midlothian High School. In 1969 she married James Earl Burtchett. The Burtchetts live in Midlothian village.