

## CHAPTER XII

*West of the New River – Stock-grazing section – New River plateau – Pulaski County – New River-Cripple Creek mineral region – Cripple Creek extension of the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company – Martin's Tank – Beginning of its development – Growth of the place, and change of name to Pulaski City – Bertha Zinc Works – George T. Mills – L.S. Calfee – The furnaces and other industries and enterprises – Population, schools, churches, and social state of the town – Pulaski City as an iron centre – Probable future of the place.*

We will now conduct our reader into that productive, charming, and beautiful country west of New River, and known as the blue grass section of Southwest Virginia. Near Pulaski City, and adjoining the county by this name, lies the counties of Floyd, Grayson, and Carroll, composing the celebrated region known as the New River plateau. This country, as well as the counties west and southwest, is the home of cattle, sheep, and all classes of stock, the raising of which has been so remunerative in days gone by, and which still constitutes one of the chief agricultural pursuits in these counties of which we are writing. A lovelier country than this, or a richer or more productive one, it would be hard to find, and the climate is more salubrious, if anything, than the places we have been writing of hitherto. The reason for this difference we have already explained, which arises from the fact that the farther west we go after reaching the summit of the Alleghanies the milder it becomes, which accounts for the delightful temperature around Wytheville, Virginia. The finest bred herds of cattle are raised in this section, which not only assist in supplying the Northern markets, but are shipped to Europe; and horse-breeding has become quite popular with many of the people of the country. Pulaski is one of the counties composing this favored section, and was cut off from Montgomery and Wythe in the year 1839 to administer its own affairs, with Newbern, one mile from Dublin, as the county seat.

This county composes a portion of the celebrated "New River-Cripple Creek mineral region," of which we have already spoken, and which contains an area of some 300 square miles in this and Wythe County. This country is rich beyond conception in ore-bearing properties, and the quality of the very best. Limestone iron ore and mountain ore lie in vast quantities, while in the county of Carroll adjoining has been discovered what is known as the "gossamer ore," which not only makes a splendid class of pig-iron by itself, but gives a decided character to the iron manufactured from ordinary ores mixed with this. This ore-bearing section has long been known, for charcoal furnaces have been in course of operation for years, hauling their products by wagon over the mountains to the nearest station on the railroad, before the erection of the Cripple Creek extension. Along the lines of this last branch of road may be seen the remnants of these old furnaces, which were fed with coal burned from the trees of the forest. Having given in a previous part of this work an analysis of these ores, we will not attempt another here, but simply say that a richer and better ore-bearing territory does not exist than the one we are attempting to describe. And not only iron, but both zinc and lead, have been worked with profit, and the largest zinc works – the Bertha Zinc Works – in this section draws its raw materials from this ore-bearing territory. The Claytons, of Baltimore, own and are developing this gossan ore, which even impressed Mr. Edmund C. Pechin so favorable as to cause him to report especially upon it to the stockholders of the Virginia Development Company. The Pulaski Iron Company at its furnace used some of this gossan ore with the ordinary ores, and the result from the reduction was a superior quality of pig-iron. All of this valuable ore-bearing country is but a few miles from Pulaski City, the town which we now propose to describe; of which Colonel Eddy says, in "Reference Book of the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company," for which he deserves special credit in compiling:

"An additional iron furnace is now being erected, and the promise of Pulaski becoming one of

the most important industrial cities in Southwest Virginia is now becoming a fact." (Description of Pulaski City, page 39)

There is an amusing tradition concerning the ground on which this place rests, which we have determined to give, because it may have been true. In fact, the weight of the extrinsic evidence in its favor leads us to credit it at least. We give here a statement of Mr. Robert L. Gardner, in his own language, who resides in this place, and is a prominent attorney and a gentleman of unquestionable veracity. He writes:

"Tradition has it that some time back – very early – in the present century Robert Martin traded an old flint lick rifle gun to the two Montgomery boys for a large, wild boundary of lands located in the county of Wythe, near where a tank, familiarly known as, 'Martin's tank' now lies."

However that may be, the records of Pulaski make no mention of anything of the kind, inasmuch as this county was established from portions of Wythe and Montgomery in 1839. The records of Pulaski County do show that the said Robert Martin departed this life leaving a will of date June 26, 1854, and which was admitted to probate on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1859, wherein he devised a large body of arable lands to his son, Robert D. Martin.

Also, the large tract of land owned by John Montgomery was purchased from him by John Floyd, ex-governor, and father of John B. Floyd. The tract consisted of 2,000 acres of land. John B. Floyd subsequently sold to James N. Pierce and Dr. Watson, said Pierce coming into possession of that portion of the tract now known as the "Litchfield and Bohanon properties."

Martin's Tank, the name of the railway station which stood where Pulaski City now stands, doubtless took its name from the family of Martins who formerly owned the soil. Near the spot where the development company's furnace is now being erected under the supervision of George T. Mills, the president, and successful railroad contractor, stands the frame house of which Governor Floyd was named. This property passed out of the hands of that family, being subsequently owned by Mr. Pierce and Dr. Watson, from whom the development companies purchased.

Martin's Tank was but a flag-stop prior to the commencement of the development of the place, and its subsequent growth and change of name to Pulaski City may be attributed to the building of the Cripple Creek extensions of the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company into the rich ore-bearing country we have described. This place gradually improved from 1883, during the construction of the Cripple Creek extension from Pulaski City through Wythe County, by Allisonia, Reed Island, Barren Springs, Foster Falls, Austinville, and on to Ivanhoe, which point was reached late in 1886 or early in 1887. From this time the town commenced to improve, and the industries springing up was the cause. The first and largest, probably, of any other manufacturing enterprise in this section at that time was the Bertha Zinc Works, located at this point. This wealthy company was first organized in 1879, and reorganized in the year 1886, with a capital stock of \$3,000,000 – George W. Palmer, of Saltville, being president, Thomas Jones superintendent, and G.M. Holstein local treasurer and paymaster, as well as general manager of the office. The grounds of these works occupy ten acres of lands, and they have the most approved methods for manufacturing pure spelter. The coal, ore, and all material used by this company comes from their common property, and they have a department to manufacture their own pottery, such as fore-brick, pots, and pipes used for the reduction of the raw material in the furnace. The company works about eight hundred men at the furnace, mines, and in all the occupations connected with the zinc manufacture, with a pay-roll of \$20,000 per month. The product of this company's works is said to be as pure spelter as any made on the United States, and possesses a fine reputation in Northern markets. The result to Pulaski in having such an enterprise

was that the place began to grow at once, and people came from a distance to seek knowledge concerning it. This company has its narrow-gauge road running from Pulaski City to its coal mines, the construction of which assisted the town materially, and the number of laborers employed gave an impetus to the commercial interests of the place which produced a marked change in this line at once. Stores, dwellings, and improvements began to be erected; the town was named Pulaski City, and we hear of Martin's Tank no more except as a thing of the past. Branch roads to the mines were built in 1886 or early 1887. Since then this extension has been pushed to Speedwell, while the proposed line into North Carolina branches off at Ivanhoe. The completion of the road to Ivanhoe, in the year 1887, inaugurated a new future for Pulaski City, which in 1883 was known as Martin's Tank, and was the dwelling-place of three or four families, as well as a watering station for the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company's engines.

Probably no two men have played a more important part nor done more to develop the country and city than George T. Mills and L. S. Calfee, who now reside in the place. George T. Mills first saw this portion of the country when he passed through with Cooke's raid in 1863 and engaged in the fight at Cloyd's Mountain, subsequently striking this immediate section at Dublin, which was burned. After the cruel war was over he became engaged in railroad contracting, and gradually worked his way until 1883 he became a wealthy man, and reached Pulaski City (then Martin's Tank) for the purposes of grading the Cripple Creek extension. He, in conjunction with L. S. Calfee, obtained possession of several large joint-stock companies. Lee S. Calfee was born in Pulaski County, and merchandised up to 1882, when he began to take a part in the development going on, and afterwards became connected with the various enterprises for the advance of Pulaski City.

In the year 1887 the Pulaski iron furnace was constructed, being the property of the Pulaski Iron Company, organized in the same year with a capital stock of \$450,000. This concern also owns mines at Patterson, on the Cripple Creek extension, from which point much of the ore used by them is brought. The capacity of the furnace is one hundred and twenty tons per diem, and it made a two-year run before going out of blast, producing 100,000 tons of pig-iron. As may well be seen, the establishment of such an industry gave the town an impetus in a business way which can be well imagined. This furnace has been eminently successful, especially under the management of George Echman, who has charge now, and whose knowledge of the reduction of iron ore, coke, and limestone to pig-iron is of the most intelligent and varied order. The organization of the "Pulaski Land and Improvement Company," in 1887, was another enterprise which assisted this young town. With a capital stock of \$250,000, this company purchased a lovely tract of land north of the railroad, and its policy to sell lots cheaper to those who desired to erect homes, and a requirement that only brick houses should be built in a certain part of the town, resulted in some very handsome dwellings in the way of banks, stores, and other buildings now under the ownership of various people. Mr. Dinges is a president of this company, but the well executed management devolves upon Mr. Taylor, who has charge, and resides at Pulaski City. During the same year the Hematite Iron Company, capital stock \$100,000; the Martin Land and Improvement Company, capital stock \$150,000; the Swansea Land Company, capital stock \$100,000, were formed, which did good work towards the development of the City of Pulaski. The two latter companies constructed a number of houses, which added greatly to the beauty of the place and are a source of revenue to the company. George T. Mills and L.S. Calfee were the moving spirits in these developing concerns which assisted so materially in building up the town.

The year 1890 saw Pulaski City a place of some 2,500 people, with an increasing population to three thousand by now. Good, solid, substantial buildings can be seen on all sides, while some lovely residences adorn the place. The character of the architecture of the place is unusually good, seeming to be constructed with a view towards the town becoming a city. In this year the Pulaski Development Company was organized with a capital stock of \$500,000, which subscription was made principally among the people at home, Messrs. Mills and Robinson taking the principal part. This concern began at

once the erection of a large furnace, with a capacity of one hundred and fifty tons per diem. This huge plant is placed in a bottom to the east of town, on the old Floyd place, while the offices and dwellings connected with it are located on a lovely eminence above, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country and mountains. Following this great enterprise others came in rapidly, and now the future of the place as a city is an assured fact. The enterprises under construction, and those to be built which have been secured, will create a demand for employees enough, with families, to double the present population. The place is constructing a water-works which will supply the town with an abundance of the fluid from a mountain side near the lower furnace. The mercantile interests and banking facilities are admirable, and the place as a whole seems to be both prosperous and happy.

The inhabitants of this place are composed of the best people in the section of which we are writing, and considering that it is in part an iron-manufacturing centre and a mineral region, they are remarkably quiet and well behaved. That part of the city where the employees of the Bertha Zinc Works live and the furnace hands reside is picturesque, comfortable-looking, and quiet. Riots, agitations, and rows are unknown among this class, who quietly pursue their occupations and amusements. Religious privileges are good, as churches of the Episcopal, Methodist, and other denominations are there to hold worship every Sabbath. Educational facilities are unusually well provided, since they have the finest school building and one of the best graded schools that we know of in Southwest Virginia, the regular attendance of scholars being some 350 children, exclusive of the colored.

The hotel accommodations here are of a superior order in every way conceivable, as the Maple Shade Inn, known far and wide, is still in existence, and being enlarged under Fred E. Foster's management. Of all the well-known hostelries controlled by the Norfolk and Western, which are all admirably conducted, Maple Shade is the most superior, resulting from Mr. Hayes' management, who has a genius for the business. On the shaded avenue near the railroad Mr. Richard B. Roane has an excellent house. He is the same who played an important part in the New River railroad, and who did so much for the development of the road in its earlier history.

The social features of Pulaski are good and interesting. Whether we take the inn or go into town, there is always a genial, intelligent set or people with whom one can while away the time. The Browns, Moores, Calfees, Taylors, Joneses, Langhornes, McGills, and others equally pleasant, compose a delightful circle in a social way, and one of which Pulaski City may well be proud.

The situation of this city with reference to the ore and coking fields render it, as it has already beginning to be, an iron centre. True, there are furnaces on the Cripple Creek extension, but they have a haul on coke, and the furnaces east and west of Pulaski have a haul on ore, which gives this latter place an unquestionably good position as the iron centre. Here, too, are the supplies and the necessary sites for both residence and business purposes. Furnaces are going up, and a plant for a rolling-mill and bar-mill established. With its present industries, its near situation to the ore regions, its natural advantages, Colonel Charles G. Eddy was not wrong in saying in the reference book, page 39:

"And in the promise of Pulaski's becoming one of the most important industrial cities in Southwest Virginia is now a fact."