

Chapter VIII

Lynchburg – Gateway to the Valley of Southwest Virginia – Something of its earlier history – Gradual growth of the town from ante-bellum days until the present – Its commercial and ,manufacturing interests – Its capital – Its business progress – Its climate – Its religious privileges, educational facilities, and social status – General remarks concerning Lynchburg

Lynchburg is situated in Campbell County, on the border of James River. Although it is not within the borders of Southwest Virginia territorially, yet so great has its influence been in developing the sections of which we are writing that it is but proper to give some account of it. The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, which was the first to penetrate the Southwest, was largely subscribed to and supported by Lynchburg, which was the eastern terminus of the road at one time. Lynchburg was largely interested in the James River and Kanawha Canal, which penetrated the Valley of Virginia to Lexington, and made a handsome subscription to the Virginia Midland and Lynchburg and Durham Railroads, both of which afford Southwest Virginia northern and southern outlets. Today, with its geographical situation and railroad facilities, Lynchburg occupies the position as gateway to this fertile valley.

This city, set upon hills, is one of the oldest and most interesting places in Virginia, and has contributed largely to every undertaking which it deemed for the benefit to the State. Like most places over which time has passed its hoary hands, it is conservative in all things, requiring a certain degree of confidence in whatever it grasps. As far back as the year 1786 Lynchburg had her auction and private sale of lots, for in a revised copy of the ordinances published in 1880 of the city we find this sketch:

“The Legislature of Virginia, in the year 1786, vested in certain trustees forty-five acres of the land of John Lynch lying contiguous to Lynch’s Ferry in the county of Campbell. The village thus laid out was named Lynchburg after the owner of the soil. The trustees sold this land in half-acre lots at public auction at first, and subsequently at private sale, for the benefit of John Lynch. The lots brought an average of £50 in the Virginia currency of that day. The first meeting of this board of trustees was held on May the 8th, 1787, at which John Clarke, Jesse Burton, Joseph Stratton, William Martin, Micajah Moorman, and Achilles Douglas were present. Richard Smith was appointed to lay off the town. According to his map the eastern boundary of the town was Lynch Street; the western, Court Street; the northern, a line running between Sixth and Seventh streets at right angles to Lynch and Court Streets; and the southern, a line running between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets parallel to the northern boundary. These trustees met from time to time between the years 1786 and 1817 for the transaction of business. They had no control in the town except over the legal titles of the unsold lots. The money they received for the lots was paid over to John Lynch.”

The Lynch name has been handed down to posterity as the founder of a city and “Lynch law.” One is as much a credit to it as the other a disgrace to the annuals of any civilized and respectable community. The city taking its name after this family grew slowly until the year 1805, when, on the 10th day of January, it was incorporated as a town, and on the 6th day of May, 1805, the first corporation court met in the Mason’s Hall, situated on the corner of Ninth and Church Streets, which was for a time the court-house of the place. In 1805, 1813, 1814, 1819, and 1826, the Legislature enlarged the corporate limits of Lynchburg, and on June 5, 1827, by act of Legislature, three commissioners were appointed – Thomas Dillard, D.G. Murrell, and Ralph Smith, Jr.- who made a survey and report, by which the limits of Lynchburg were laid off to the river, extending from the

mouth of Blackwater Creek, at the toll-bridge, to the mouth of the Horseford Branch, at Hurt's mill. The plat of this incorporated extension is now extant, and can be found in the first deed book in the corporation court clerk's office. In 1830 the first reservoir was constructed, and a general gathering of the citizens celebrated that event, who thought their water supply amply sufficient for any future needs, but afterwards found out that another reservoir would have to be constructed.

But the year 1849 seems to have inaugurated a new era for Lynchburg. A subscription of \$500,000 was made to the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and a charter was granted the same. In 1852 the town of Lynchburg, by act of incorporation, stripped itself of the title town and adopted that of city, having over five thousand inhabitants. In 1857 both the Southside and Virginia and Tennessee Railroads opened up, and Lynchburg possessed the fertile grazing section of Southwest Virginia and the tobacco region of Southside to draw from, besides the succulent valley of the James, with all its agricultural resources, reached by the James River and Kanawha Canal.

The city improved until the civil war came on, and during that ordeal Lynchburg was patriotic and true to her trust, and after it ended the soldiers returned to their homes on the James, and again Lynchburg began to grow. Nothing daunted by the reverses met with, this city opened up an enviable tobacco business and wholesale trade, and in 1871 subscribed \$200,000 to the Lynchburg and Danville Road, without which subscription we doubt that undertaking could ever have succeeded. Tobacco factories, iron works, nail works, and various kinds of other enterprises sprang up, until the place subscribed \$250,000 to the Lynchburg and Durham Railroad, which was completed in 1889, rendering Lynchburg one of the greatest railroad centres in the South. At this period the city had become a place of commercial interest, a manufacturing point, and a centre of about twenty thousand people.

Commercially, this city necessarily occupies the most prominent position of any other in this part of Virginia. It lies 204 miles from the sea-coast at Norfolk, and the same distance from Bristol, the southwestern terminus of the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company. It is within a short ride of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and other northern cities, while the Richmond and Danville and the Lynchburg and Durham place it in direct communication south. Through this place the supplies going east, west, north, and south have to pass, as well as the vast quantities of mineral ores and manufactured iron coming from Southwest Virginia. At present, for this country, it possesses the most direct outlet south, having equally superior eastern, western and northern outlets as any other city we can think of. On the whole, it has almost every railroad facility which one could desire, and the result has been that, commercially, it has reached a prosperity second to no city in Virginia. The place has a State reputation for wealth, and as a trading mart its manufacturers and jobbers, both wholesale and retail, are extending their various channels all over the South. A New York salesman, in any line of goods carried by Lynchburg, has no advantage whatever in quality or price – in consequence of which Lynchburg holds her own against any market. The result of this commercial basis is, that many of Lynchburg's citizens are among the leading merchants in Virginia, and a large number have amassed a competency which they are richly entitled to enjoy.

With good transportation facilities, in the midst of a fine agricultural region, and on the borders of a rich mineral section, there is but a step from commercial enterprises to manufacturing industries. This step Lynchburg has taken, when we turn to her various manufacturing establishments of tobacco, as well as other products, now. For a number of years much money has been made on the place through buying and selling tobacco, as well as the manufacture of the article itself. Some people have contended that the city has declined as a tobacco mart, but an examination into the statistics themselves concerning this staple of Southside and Eastern Virginia controverts any such suggestion. We herewith submit a table which gives an idea as to the immense amount of tobacco handled and manufactured at this point. The tobacco year ends October 1st, the time when the old crop is disposed

of and the new one placed upon the market:

August sales of leaf tobacco...

for year ending October 1st, 1885, was....29,495,758 pounds

for year ending October 1st, 1886, was....37,462,979 pounds

for year ending October 1st, 1887, was....28,517,670 pounds

for year ending October 1st, 1888, was24,806,725 pounds

for year ending October 1st, 1889, was28,769,200 pounds

And, notwithstanding the drought of last season, the place has held her own. In this business, concerning tobacco, the city has twelve manufacturers of tobacco, twenty-four dealers in leaf tobacco, twelve exporters of tobacco, five warehouses for the sale of it, commission merchants, manufacturers of cigarettes, snuff, smoking tobacco, and cigars. This staple, in passing from the crude leaf into chewing and smoking tobacco, cigarettes, and snuff, gives employment to many thousand people, when we enumerate the families all employed who derive their subsistence from the necessary labor expended in the manufacture of it.

But the wisdom of Lynchburg has long since taught it that no place can become a city from dealing in tobacco alone; so she has turned her attention towards the manufacture of other products. The proximity of the place of ore and coking fields of Southwest Virginia has naturally led to the establishment here of furnaces, iron works, and other metal industries, which are now in extensive operation, and among which may be mentioned two blast furnaces, two machine shops, one pipe works, nail works, merchant bar-mill, two iron foundries, zinc reduction works, and gas and water main foundry. These are all busy and prosperous, with every prospect of success, and are, beneficial in every way. Pig-iron of the most approved quality is made here from the roes around, while the rails, bars, spikes, and iron of other varieties forged are well thought of and command a ready market. Iron piping of all kinds and castings for agricultural works is made and has a good market throughout the country. The means of supplying, running, and repairing is thus brought within the reach of all who employ engines and other mechanical machinery, either upon railroads, mills, and tobacco factories, or in the simpler, but no less essential, operations of the farm. The zinc works have proven of great benefit to the city, and use much material from the Southwest of Virginia. The extraction of the zinc will be made by the new patented process, by which ore is made soluble. By applying a strong electric current the zinc is extracted from this solution, and the advantages of this latter over the old methods are marked. In addition to these manufactures, Lynchburg abounds in many others, comprising minerals, wood, stone and clay. The natural consequence of such manufacturing power is that a large amount of active capital is employed and distributed among the people.

This city justly has the reputation of being one of the wealthiest in the South to its size, and so great is the amount invested within her borders that an account of it is well worth mentioning. Its mercantile establishments are upon the soundest basis; its manufactories have all their capital stock paid in; its commercial dealings honest and prompt; its banking institutions have always the largest kind of deposits, and its private citizens generally have good incomes. There is a solid, conservative air of financial soundness which impresses itself upon even the stranger sojourning within its gates, and the residences themselves betoken the fact that plenty reigns within their walls. We give below a table of figures carefully compiled, which shows the financial standing of this city up to 1890:

Value of real estate as assessed	\$8,154,218.00
Value of Personal property as assessed	\$2,198,311.00
Value of property on which license is paid	\$2,232,500.00
Amount invested in land companies	\$2,675,000.00
Amount in deposit in banks	\$2,714,428.72

Value of personal property in surplus of assessment	\$762,770.00
Value of real estate in surplus of assessment	\$1,630,843.00
Total capital invested, with value of property	\$20,338,072.32

Considering the number of inhabitants, the foregoing estimates will give some idea of the wealth of the place, which is claimed by some very prudent persons as even less than the real values. With this amount of capital at its disposal, Lynchburg has not made the rapid strides which it ought, nor fully imbibed that spirit of progress exhibited by many of its sister towns on the Southwest. The reason of this may be attributed to two sources. First, the manufacture of tobacco has been for many years the chief industry, and a great deal of capital bound up in that; and many having made fortunes by it, others were loth to give it up until the success of other manufacturing industries convinced them of their error. Again, the manufacture of iron, zinc, and other products from the raw material of ores were new industries to the people of this section, and they were unwilling to embark in what were uncertain seas concerning these, or risk capital in them. The result was that for some time Lynchburg held back from investing in manufacturing industries of minerals until the test made by foreigners coming within its borders allayed its fears, and showed that the profit was well worth the risk. In addition to the want of knowledge of these new classes of industries fast developing in the Southwest, some of the largest capitalists of the city appeared to view all innovations with more or less suspicion, and carried to a detrimental extent this conservative spirit, which, in its proper sphere, has such a salutary effect upon the community. This was to be deplored in this instance, because the want of that spirit to grasp hold of the things held out because they were new undoubtedly prevented Lynchburg from advancing with that rapidity which its position and means would have caused it to do had her citizens not been governed by that conservative spirit which objects to advances except in a certain well-known and beaten groove. But for the future good of the city, it is with pleasure that we are able to say candidly that the people are laying aside a great deal of that old spirit of sameness and taking hold of the developments around, and forming joint-stock companies for the material advancement of the place. Several development companies, with ample capital, are taking hold and making improvements, which evidence the fact that Lynchburg will not stand still, but press forward. If she does so, with her facilities and the nucleus she has already for a city, it will be but a short time before it will increase to a place of considerable size and magnitude.

At the present time Lynchburg is steadily increasing in a business way. There is no better evidence of this fact than by an inquiry into the sale of stamps at the post office. The sales for Lynchburg show the following amount:

First quarter	\$9,710.12
Second quarter	\$9,570.66
Third quarter	\$9,647.17
Fourth quarter	\$10,243.42
Total	\$39,171.37

In proportion and ratio with the increase in the sale of stamps we find the manufacturing and commercial interests advancing and other industries coming in. Improvements, too, are being made in the way of grading streets and building handsome bridges and public buildings well worth seeing. Particularly in the West End are extensive additions being made, which generally will add greatly to the business capacity, as well as the beauty of the city.

The location of this place, with reference to agricultural resources and climate, is unsurpassed. Almost at its door lies the great granary of the James River Valley, while the rich country bordering Shenandoah River is but a short distance off. The tobacco region of the Southside, Piedmont, and Eastern Virginia sections all throw this staple into her lap, and the trucking tide-water country is in

direct communication, with its wealth of vegetables, fish, and oysters. Transportation facilities extend in every direction into the various sections we have named, giving Lynchburg rare opportunities from which to draw the comforts as well as the luxuries of life. Nor is there a more salubrious climate anywhere than the ones in this place. Situated in the mountains, yet far enough south to possess a balmy temperature, it is free from the heat of the latter and the blizzards of the north. The nights even in July and August are pleasant and agreeable, while the days have a temperature, as shown by the United States Signal Service, which office is stationed in the city, is as follows for the last five years:

January	37.17°	July	75.18°
February	41.17°	August-Sept	69.11°
March	46.15°	September	69.11°
April	56.03°	October	60.17°
May	67.17°	November	46.14°
June	75.05°	December	40.05°

Mean temperatures for the year, 57°

It can be readily seen that such a temperature not only insures a pleasant climate in which to dwell, but on epe4rfectly free from all malarial troubles of every nature whatsoever.

When we turn to the religious privileges, educational facilities, and the social status of Lynchburg, we cannot speak with too much praise concerning the place. The moral sentiments of the community, as well as religious observances, stand preeminently forth in a marked degree. Churches of all denominations are here, and are sustained and supported in the best manner possible, having as pastors the best men and most capable talent. Comparing the number of church members, members of the Sunday-schools, and the number of those in some way connected with the religious bodies, with the population as a whole, Lynchburg occupies a most enviable position. The number of people, as we have said, in this city is nearly twenty thousand. The number of church and Sunday-school members is as follows:

Number of white members of churches	5,470
Number of Sunday-school scholars	3,357
Number of colored members	3,500
Total connected with churches	12,327

More than one half of the population is in some way connected with the churches of Lynchburg, which speaks well for the tenets of Christianity there. While Lynchburg has no great number of private schools, still educational facilities are undoubtedly good, and one of the best graded schools is in existence her that we know of. The curriculum is unusually good, and languages taught in conjunction with the highest grade of English. The faculty is composed of highly educated persons, and the patronage of the school by the children of the best in town shows that it is held in high repute. The number of scholars in attendance is extremely large, being 3,350, while the teachers number 62 - 8 in the high school, 20 in the grammar school, and 34 in the primary department. The course of instruction is high, including Latin, French, and German. It is but natural to expect that the parents of these children should compose a state of society most desirable in every respect, and such is the case. The social features of Lynchburg have a reputation for gentility and refinement which extend beyond its border and society there is delightful. Whether we take the class moving in the highest circles on account of their money and position, or the working class of merchants and traders, with their families, all have their share of refinement. This causes the young ladies working in stores for a daily subsistence to possess that class of bearing and manners which would become the rooms of a

cottage or adorn the halls of a palace; and people are to be deemed peculiarly fortunate when they can combine the occupation of gaining a livelihood with true culture and grace, which is so necessary for congenial intercourse. Taking this city as a whole, we know of no place which presents superior social attractions.

We cannot close this imperfect sketch of Lynchburg without a remark or two upon the place generally. In many respects its superiority must be seen as taking it as a whole. Some of its buildings are not only very stately and costly, but ornamental to the town. The Post Office, the First Baptist Church, the numerous handsome residences, add greatly to its beauty. The Law Building, on Main Street, in which Kirkpatrick and Blackford, Thomas N. Williams, John E. Lewis, and other noted lawyers have their offices, is undoubtedly one of the handsomest buildings we know of, from the well-appointed café on the first floor to the rooms upon the seventh. The mosaic tiling composing the floors and wainscoting is beautiful in both design and execution.

The complaint that Lynchburg is a city of hills will soon pass away, for it is destined to grow until the hills will soon seem lost in the vales it will occupy. Time will as surely prove this as it has already shown that forty years ago the place was but a small town with only four thousand inhabitants, while now it is a city with twenty thousand.

The financial condition of the city is upon the healthiest basis possible, as can be easily shown from the revenue and expenditures. For the year ending January 31, 1889, the receipts from taxes, licenses, fines, and other sources amounted to \$307,661.55. The disbursements during the same time were \$298,238.96, leaving a balance in the treasury of \$9,422.59, to be expended as the authorities saw fit for the improvement of the city. It is not often that cities present such a financial showing, for often appropriations have to be made to defray the calls of expense. The mayor and common council are generally composed of the most substantial citizens of the place, who look after its affairs with that prudence and care which characterize them in the government of their individual concerns.

One cause of Lynchburg's good government and peaceful, moral character is the admirable police for the protection of the place, under the guidance of Chief Irwin and Sergeants Pendleton and Seay. The shocking murders and highway assaults of various desperate characters so often committed in cities generally are rarely if ever heard in Lynchburg. This staunch police force, composed of sober, upright gentlemen, gives a tone and dignity to the law of the land that awes people into an obedience and submission which all the brute force in the world can never do, and has a wonderful efficacy in establishing peace and quiet. At all times in this place, full of business and energy, there is a peacefulness and security which larger and more rapidly-growing cities cannot claim. And yet it is a blessing which people rarely recognize until they are placed in rough and disorderly places.

Lynchburg's future, to a certain extent, is necessarily an assured one. With her many railroad facilities, her commercial and manufacturing enterprises, her capital and wealth, the spirit of development which is fast becoming infectious, with those at the helm who will take hold and not look back, the place must continue to go forward until her true position is fully asserted and it becomes a city of magnitude and importance.