

CHAPTER X

Salem – Its name – Surrounding country, scenery, and climate – A summer resort – The seat of learning, refinement, and culture – Manners and character of the people – Epoch of 1889 to the town – The land companies – D.B. Strouse, A.M. Bowman, J.W.F. Allemong, J.T. Crabtree, Dr. Dreher, George Allen, William M. Nelson – Industries and manufactories – Mineral resources and F.J. Chapman – Wonderful growth – Number of inhabitants – Financial status – Religious, educational, and social features of the place – Something concerning the future.

When nature, clothed in the garb of beauty and plenteousness, cast her countenance over this section she smiled first with joy upon that part of the valley where rests a town which used to bask in the sunlight of its own name – Salem, or Peace. This place occupies something of a central position between the ranges of mountains known as the Alleghany and Blue Ridge, amidst a land of beauty and delight, ever satisfying to every sense of taste and sight. Look as we may around the lovely valley stretching away to the everlasting hills, and naught but sublimity and grandeur greet the eye, from the succulent green pastures and foliage to the ethereal blue of the peaked Blue Ridge or the rugged Alleghany. The serene calmness surrounding all, the lovely varying scenery in perfect view on all sides, the level outstretching landscape sweeping away, blended with a balmy atmosphere, gives a surrounding air impregnated with peace and contentment found only in Salem. The climate is all that can be desired, as can be seen from the average temperature for fifteen years, observed by the late Dr. Griffin, which is as follows: Spring, 56°; summer, 76°; fall, 61°; winter, 41°; average for year, 58°.

It is distinguished for the equability of its climate, being seldom too warm in the summer or cold in the winter. Storms, tornadoes, and cyclones are never known here, and rarely does one hear of a case of sickness, except that kind of disease which providence has provided to gradually remove people from this world, termed by us in plain parlance – old age.

Logically, with such a climate and surroundings, Salem could but be a famous summer resort. Not only the town, but Lake Spring, nearby, and the Roanoke Red Sulphur, nine miles off, have been taxed to the utmost to sustain the swarms of people longing to summer in this Eden of the Valley. When persons used to travel the macadamized road from Lynchburg to Salem en route for the Montgomery White and other places west, before the days of steam, the town was then a place of a thousand or more, and a noted summer resort, as well as the county seat of the rich county of Roanoke. The society of the place has ever been celebrated for culture and refinement, an impression of which charmed and followed the visitor even after he had left the place behind and turned his face homewards.

Since 1853 this town has been a seat of learning. From that year until now the classic shade of Roanoke College has thrown its mantle of culture over the place, and the walls of the building not only enclosed the grand library of seventeen thousand volumes, but learned professors, and students groping after that most satisfying yet attainable elixir of life – the forbidden fruit – knowledge. Its alumni have branched all over the land, first shedding its light in Salem, then casting mature rays elsewhere. The families of many of the students lived in the place, who, with the households of the professors, caused it to a par excellence one of learning and culture indeed. The natural consequence of this was the formation of a status of society for refinement and native elegance scarcely to be surpassed. An air of gentle breeding and ease settled over the place which always impressed itself upon everyone entering the gate of the town.

The manners and character of the people residing in Salem were molded in the highest type, amid the influences of this nature, and developed a race of people peculiar unto themselves. Of all the places in Southwest Virginia along the line of the Norfolk and Western railroad, there is no town whose inhabitants are characterized more fully by honesty, probity, and uprightness in all their dealings than the people of Salem. The social feature presents a distinct feature in the make-up of the place, and the original inhabitants were composed of the best people in the Southwest of Virginia, and the many inducements offered as a summer resort inured always a state of society at once conservative, elegant, and refined. For a number of years Salem existed with her college and this state of affairs. Yet it was by no means a stagnant place during this period, for in 1880 there were some eighteen hundred people, and the place contained, perhaps, more wealth and business caliber than any small town in the Southwest. From 1880 to 1889 it progressed very slowly, but the time had now come when Salem was to discard the long-worn robe of peace and quietude in order to adorn that of material prosperity.

Touching the development of most of the towns in Southwest Virginia, the causes generally rise from situation, railroad intersections, or some chapter of events suddenly springing up, unknown before. But not so with Salem. From 1880 until 1889 the place stood at one thing almost, while towns around rapidly advanced. Toward the latter part of 1889 the place stood at one thing almost, while towns around rapidly advanced. Towards the latter part of 1889 the place shot up like some meteor, and from that time being excelled any place in Southwest Virginia, Roanoke not excepted. No railroads ran past her doors suddenly; no chapter of events appeared upon the scene; no bonanza that had hitherto lain dormant was found; no sudden placing down of any large manufacturing place was seen. What, then, was the cause?...the formation of joint-stock land companies, and placing the natural and manifold advantages of the town before the public. Salem owes her development to the united efforts of D.B. Strouse, A.M. Bowman, J.W.F. Allemong, T.J. Shickel, and F. J. Chapman, all gentlemen of the best business qualifications and of indomitable pluck and energy. On October 2, 1889, the Salem Improvement Company was organized with an authorized capital stock of \$1,000,000, of which \$300,000 was issued. J.W.F. Allemong was made president, and D.B. Strouse, who had been prominent in originating the move, with T. J. Shickel, were placed upon the Board of Directors. The company purchased about nine hundred acres of land in and adjoining Salem, and laid off streets and avenues sixty to seventy-five feet wide, with other improvements. The first sale of lots took place on December 11, 1889, and within ten days \$300,000 of lots were sold. This was virtually the beginning of the development of Salem, and manufacturing industries began to be located at once. On the twenty-seventh day of January, 1890, the Salem Development Company was organized with an authorized capital stock of \$1,000,000, with A.M. Bowman as president. He is of the Palmer-Bowman Company, of Saltville. Mr. Bowman, originally from the Shenandoah Valley, has done a great deal for Salem, and the policy adopted by his company was an aggressive one in the extreme concerning the material advancing of the place. Eight hundred acres were purchased by this company for business and manufacturing purposes, and improvements of the most substantial kind were inaugurated, among which was the construction of the two iron bridges across the river, with both a drive and a walkway, at a cost of \$18,000. The company also put in water-works at a cost of \$8,000, conveying the fluid from Mountain Spring, 307 feet higher than any point in town, and put under construction fifty dwelling houses suitable for mechanics. The concern is interested, like the rest of the development companies in Salem, in various enterprises in the city, and owns stock in many companies. Not less than thirty dwellings and a handsome hotel and office were constructed by the Salem Improvement Company, which also took stock in almost every industry securing a location in Salem and desiring to operate there. On January 6th the West Salem Land Company was organized with a capital stock of \$500,000, issued in series or classes, based upon property which supports each series distinctly. Mr. George Allen is president, whom we have already mentioned in connection with joint-stock land companies in another chapter. This company has in course of construction a number of houses, market-houses and four stores, and other improvements. The South Salem Land Company

organized in March, 1890, with a capital stock of \$300,000, and elected J.T. Crabtree as president, who is better known as a former professor of Greek at Roanoke College, which position he resigned with honor to himself and the sincere regret of the college faculty. This company began its operations by the purchase of 318 acres of land around Salem. Negotiations were set on foot by the company for two manufacturing plants which they secured, and plans were laid out for the erection of residences and other improvements. During the month of February, 1890, the Lake Spring Land Company was organized with a capital stock of \$100,000, M.M. Rogers being president. In March, the Glenmore Land Company came into existence, with E.S. Strayer as president; while in this same month the following companies were organized: The Creston Land Company, capital stock \$200,000, G.L. Ligon, president; The Central Land Company, capital stock \$80,000. C. M. Killion, president. The Glenmore Land Company (mentioned above) was capitalized at \$250,000. In April (the following month) the Steelton Land Company, capital stock \$500,000, with J.C. Langhorne as president, Arthur T. Powell (brother of L.L. Powell, of Roanoke, and son of D. Lee Powell, the accomplished educator of Richmond, Virginia) being made secretary, was organized. In this month, also, the Hockman Land Company was formed with a capital stock of \$100,000, and W.M. Nelson, an able financier, formerly from the Valley of Virginia, was declared president. From October, 1889, to May, 1890, ten reliable, strong land companies were organized, with authorized capital ranging from \$80,000 to \$1,000,000 and unlimited chartered powers.

The men who took the helms of these various organizations did not start out with any purpose of bare speculation, but with the avowed object of building up Salem, and the results crowning their efforts almost immediately proved the fact that to their industry the development of Salem was due. During the year 1899 these companies brought in a number of enterprises and industries that caused the town to double its wealth and population in the space of one year. Every undertaking or commercial pursuit which was located at Salem had a free donation of site, and the companies subscribed liberally to the stock of those industries planted there. As we have previously stated, the inducements offered by them to foreign capital were simply irresistible. The logical consequences of such patriotism and energy were soon experienced. By August 22, 1890, a number of large and small industries had been secured and located, and 228 houses of all kinds had been constructed or were in the course of erection, including 159 residences, 35 for stores, offices, and other business purposes, and 34 for manufacturing enterprises. A scarcity of material prevented further construction, and how many were then under contract is not definitely known. By a fair, reasonable estimate, there was expended during the year about \$870,000 in buildings for residences and business purposes. Among the many industries may be mentioned: The Salem Furnace Company, Salem Car and Machine Company, Holstein Woolen Mills Company, the Salem Tanning Company, the Flynn Wagon-Manufacturing Company, the Salem Gas-Heater Company, the Salem Building and Investment Company, Salem Folding Chair Company, the Conrad Chair and Manufacturing Company, candy factory, Camden Iron Works, sash, door, and blind factory, grain cradle works. These industries include only those which are in operation and secured, and which have been located during the year 1890. The list, with the old industries of Salem, will employ not less than 2,000 or 2,500 mechanics and laborers, and notwithstanding the number of dwellings constructed during the year there is a pressing demand of house room. In addition to the enterprises named, the principal offices of the following large industries are located in the city: The Bonsack Machine Company, \$1,600,000; the Carper Spark-Conductor Company, capital \$1,000,000; the Universal Long-Filler Cigarette Company, \$300,000, and the Comas Machine Company, \$100,000. These land companies subscribed \$250,000 to the capital stock of \$1,000,000 of a basic steel plant, to manufacture steel rails, plates, and the like. The matter was placed in the hands of Charles G. Eddy, vice president of the Norfolk and Western railroad, and the Improvement Company of Salem states that it was at his solicitation that this subscription was made. He has a high opinion of this place, and is one of the directors, with Clarence M. Clark, in this Salem Improvement Company. The fact that the Clarkes, and Denniston and Brock, and other Philadelphia parties, have an interest in Salem augurs well for the place, since they have shown a

wonderful financiering capacity for stocking companies, ranging from the howling wilderness in the rugged mountains to the level lands in the fertile valleys, and also the greatest ability for building towns.

People heretofore have been in the habit of speaking of the climate, rich country, and lovely scenery with which Salem is blessed. She has all those and something else equally as valuable almost at her doors – mineral resources. So far as we can see, this was the cause of a furnace being located there. To the untiring efforts of F.J. Chapman is due the fact that people knew of minerals being immediately in the vicinity of the town. Visionary as Mr. Chapman was deemed when hunting minerals. It seems now that his opinion was correct in thinking that the embedded wealth of Southwest Virginia would “make us all rich some day,” as he termed it. He is now a resident of the town which he has seen grow so rapidly, and, with his sons, manages the Roanoke Red Sulphur Springs, Lake Springs, and Hotel Lucerne. Some of the iron ore around Salem is highly spoken of by Edmund C. Pechin, general manager of the Virginia Development Company, and one of the consummate judges of such property in this country. In his report, made April, 1890. He says: “After considerable negotiations, the furnace has secured the lease of the Bott property, about seven miles from Salem. ***** Not only is the amount of ore apparently very large and of good quality, but it lies in the foot-hills and on the mountain side in such a shape as to allow easy opening up and cheap mining. The washing plant and machinery are now being built.”

In 1875, Mr. Chapman began taking options on mineral lands between Salem and the Peaks of Otter, and there was scarcely a mountain or hill which he did not explore, and it must be a source of gratification to him to know that opinions which he then expressed, though deemed visionary, have been literally verified by results, even if they were accomplished by means not then thought of – in fact, not even within the borders of his native State at that time.

The growth of Salem for the past fourteen months has been simply marvelous. All of the level plateau east of the old town has become a lively scene of activity in the way of erecting hotels, banks, offices, and residences. All have a substantial look, and the placing of the new handsome passenger depot by the Norfolk and Western Railroad Company in this eastern part of the place will make a lovely town. Pretty villas, cottages, and brick buildings are going up, while south of the railroad is the great blast furnace, now in operation for the manufacture of pig-iron. The whole surroundings have put on the air of activity, and so rapidly has building increased that it is almost impossible to keep pace with it. South of the river, on the development company's land, quite a village is springing up, and the large brick woolen mill now erected will soon pour forth its products from the raw material, worked up by numerous operatives for wholesale use. Forty or fifty houses are now being constructed on the plateau around, while some handsome dwellings are being finished on the brow of the hill above. About the whole place there is an air of rapid progress and growth which impresses one very decidedly on viewing the city even from a passing railroad car. That this improvement will continue there is every reason to believe, from the fact that in the near future the place will have railroad facilities which it does not possess at present. The Valley branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company is partly graded from Lexington to Salem, some fifty-four miles, and the construction of a branch line by the Roanoke and Southern to Salem will almost insure the building of the Baltimore and Ohio branch. With such railway facilities the place would breathe with renewed energy, if such a thing were possible.

The increase in the population of Salem has been in keeping with her other improvements. From the best evidence upon the subject which we could gather we are satisfied that in October, 1889, there were some 2,500 people in Salem. About January 1, 1890, there were some 4,450, as near as we could arrive at the matter, which shows that in fourteen months the place has almost doubled in inhabitants.

It is a difficult matter to give a correct statement of the financial worth of a place that is growing rapidly, for the reason that between assessments there is such a marked change as does not justify one I adopting any past computation by which to reckon present value; so the values we give are estimates based upon the fairest calculations we could obtain at the end of the year 1890. But one thing is true – Salem has been, and is now, a wealthy place. From the best light upon the subject we should say her values were:

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| Real Estate | \$1,856,493.10 |
| Personal Property | \$769,380.96 |
| Value of capital invested, including various Enterprises and stock companies | \$2,375,000.00 |
| Total Values | \$5,000,874.06 |

The foregoing, we are sure, is as fair an estimate as can be given under the circumstances which we have named. There has been a wonderful increase of values in the space of twelve months – probably a larger amount in value than any place we know of in the same length of time.

The religious, educational, and social features of the place are all that could be desired. The whole community is a correct, moral, and upright one, besides attending faithfully to the outward forms and ordinances of religion. Five denominations – Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian – throw open their doors for the worship of God every Sabbath, and hold divine services. The Sunday-schools are well patronized and excellently supported in every way. The town is absolutely free from open violation of the code of morality, and drunkenness is rare.

The educational facilities are unexcelled. There are two good public and several private schools fully equipped in every way, while a handsome building for a good graded school is now going up. This is one of the finest school buildings in the South, and will be handsomely supported in Salem. Roanoke College, as we have seen, is located here, and has attendance from many states, Indian Territory, Mexico, and Japan, while the graduates from this institution of higher learning can be found scattered over twenty-eight states and territories, and some on foreign shores. Dr. Dreher is president of the college, and its standard under his management is of the highest type. The buildings of the school are spacious and handsome, and the library an extremely valuable one. The grounds are beautifully laid off, and, with their canopy of shade, afford a cool resort to pleasure-seekers in the summer months, of whom there are generally large numbers in this charming town.

For many years Salem has been, and is now, noted for its cultivated society and cultured people. Happily, the rapid material development of the place and influx of strangers do not seem to have altered its standard or changed its aspect in this respect. The same culture, refinement, and high standard are preserved, and characters who are not in keeping with sobriety, honesty, and probity are not welcome in this retreat, nor are they wanted. The influence of education and intellectual culture is undoubtedly a refining process, for while it may not eradicate vice, it will always suggest a guise from which it will not shock the finer taste of society. This influence is strong in Salem, as elsewhere where colleges are in existence, and exerts a powerful lever in preserving a higher state of society. The influx of visitors every summer from all parts of the country, of the best class, has its influence, too; it tends to preserve the best order of society for congeniality, if nothing else. On the whole, the social scale is charming.

That Salem will grow into a city there can be no doubt, and many think that it will eventually meet Roanoke, forming a second edition of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The extension of Roanoke west and Salem east, which is the tendency now, would seem to be some ground for the assertion. Colonel C.

G. Eddy is reported as having said that a union of the two places was inevitable. While we are sure from the reasons we have given that Salem must continue to grow and become larger, yet what will be in the future we cannot say. It is the duty of the chronicler to record past events, and deal no farther with the future than the former by actual experience will justify. Certain it is, that for natural surroundings and climate, social and other privileges, its present resources – agricultural and mineral – its many commercial and manufacturing powers, Salem has no superior that we know of as a place of residence or business centre.