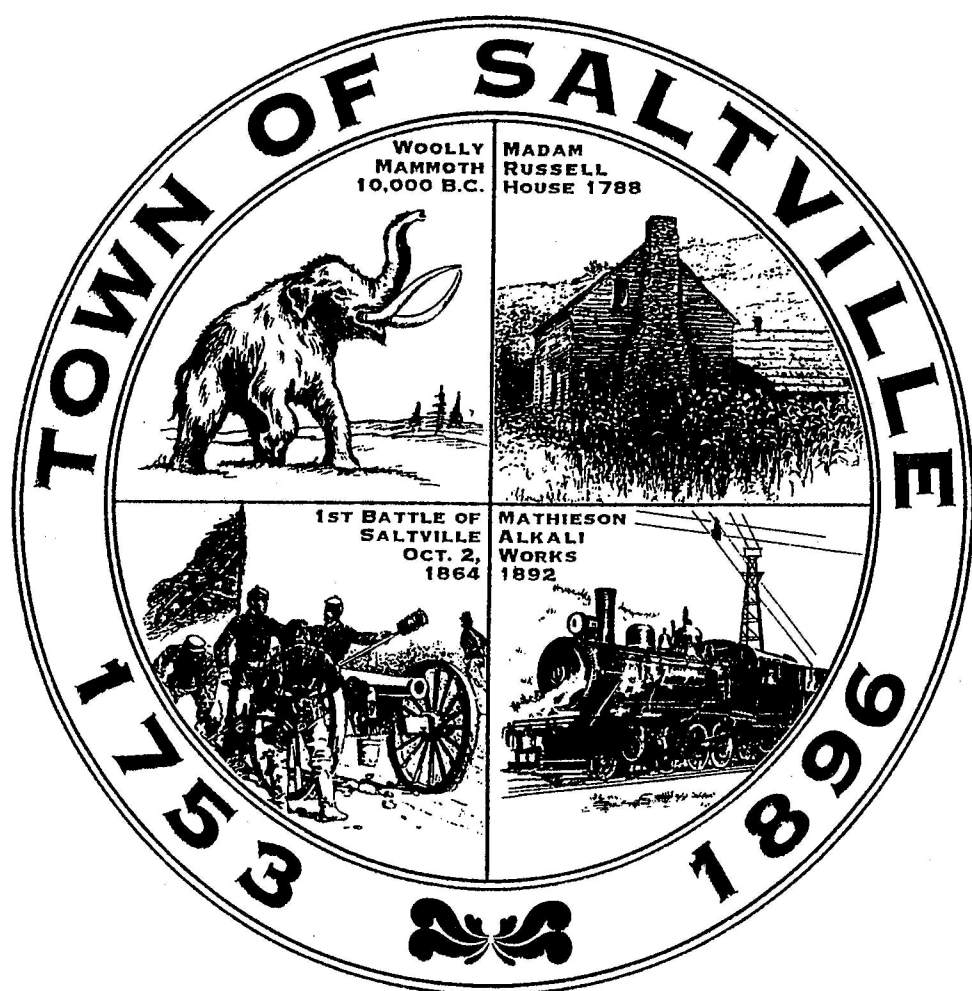


A Brief History of Saltville



By Roger A. Allison
Chairman, Saltville Centennial Committee

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A Brief History of Saltville

By **ROGER A. ALLISON**

Chairman, Saltville Centennial Committee

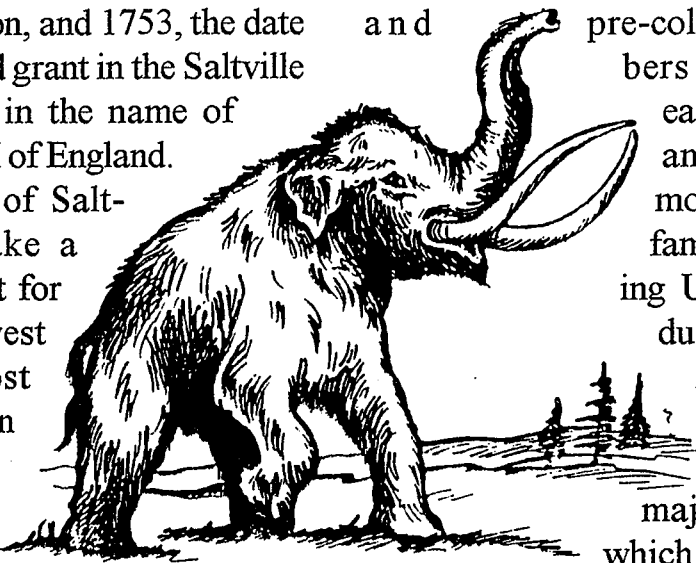
The Town of Saltville celebrated the centennial of its incorporation as a town in 1996 but not 100 years of its existence as some said. The "town" of Saltville had existed for almost 150 years before it was incorporated. That's why town seal contains two dates – 1896, the date of incorporation, and 1753, the date of the first land grant in the Saltville Valley issued in the name of King George II of England.

The Town of Saltville can make a good argument for being Southwest Virginia's most historic town and for being one of the most historic small towns in the history-rich Commonwealth of Virginia. The present community traces its history back to the mid-1700s, but Saltville is one of the few localities in the state, or in the nation and the world for that matter, which can document its history back 14,000 years.

Salt, one of the world's most

common substances, is the town's reason for being. It is the presence of salt which assured the town of its rich history. Over the millennia that vital substance had been responsible for drawing into the Saltville Valley giant mammals, now extinct; settlers, both colonial and

pre-colonial; members of some of early Virginia's and America's most prominent families; invading Union armies during the War for Southern Independence; and major industry, which ushered the town into the 20th century.



12,000 B.C.

Woolly Mammoths, Mastodons

The Saltville Valley is a virtual graveyard of the first-known visitors to the area. It is almost impossible to dig a ditch or well of any

great extent without uncovering the bones of mastodons, woolly mammoths, giant ground sloths, musk oxen, and other prehistoric creatures which frequented the valley 14,000 to 10,000 years ago.

The first recorded find of the remains of these animals was made by Col. Arthur Campbell in 1782 when he dug the first well for the manufacture of salt. Campbell presented his discoveries, "bones of uncommon size," to a collector friend named Thomas Jefferson, who recorded the find in his 1785 *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

Since that time there have been dozens of recorded finds and, no doubt, scores of unrecorded discoveries throughout the Saltville Valley. Following accidental discoveries in 1917 and the mid-1960s, some scientific archaeological digs were conducted, and since 1980 the town has hosted summer digs almost annually. The Virginia Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian Institute have conducted digs each summer since 1991.

A.D. 1000-1500

An American Indian Village

Saltville's prehistoric period also included a large permanent Indian settlement, which covered the eastern end of the valley and thrived from about A.D. 1000 until about 1500 or later. Thomas Preston, in

his *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, said, "In 1846 or 1847, when the field south of the road leading from the valley to Cedar Branch was ploughed, the lines of former buildings could be distinctly traced by the ashes and piles of periwinkle shells and fragments of pottery, which were turned up." When that same field was graded in 1956 to make way for a new Saltville high school, approximately 300 burials were uncovered.

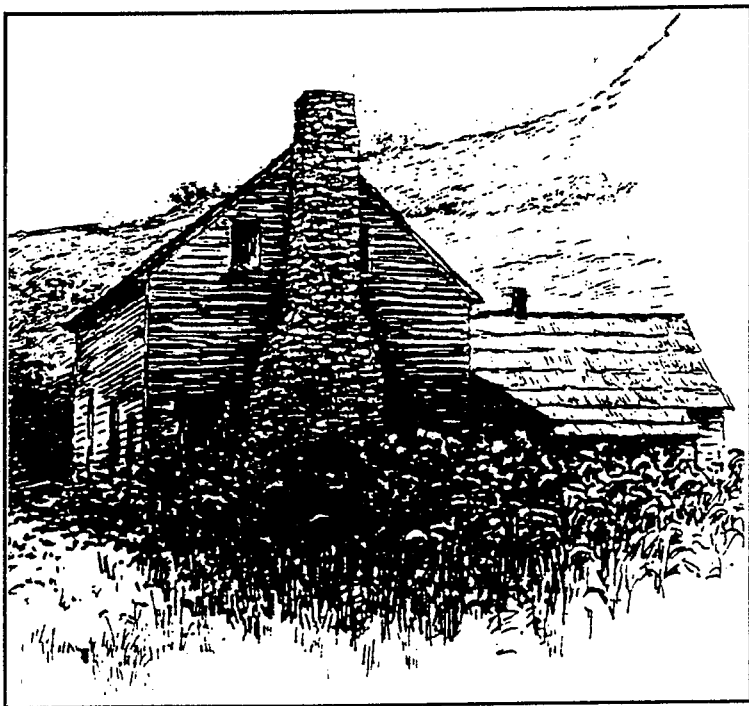
1748-1781

Exploration, Colonial Settlement

Saltville's historic period began in 1748. That was the year that the Patton Expedition, which discovered the Cumberland Gap, visited the valley, and Charles Campbell, a member of the expedition, made the first survey of 330 acres. He was given a patent to the land in 1753, and when he died, the "Salt Lick" tract and a tract of land at Aspenvale, 12 miles to the southeast, passed to his son William.

William Campbell was educated at Augusta Academy, the forerunner of Washington & Lee University. He was active politically prior to the Revolution, having been one of the signers of the Fincastle Resolutions, and, when Virginia Governor Patrick Henry called for volunteers in 1775, Campbell raised a company from Southwest Virginia

and marched to Williamsburg. There Campbell met Henry and his sister Elizabeth, who was serving as hostess for her widowed brother at the governor's mansion. William Campbell and Elizabeth Henry had a whirlwind courtship, they were married, and he brought her back to his home at Aspenvale.



Madam Russell House (1788)

During the Revolutionary War Campbell commanded American forces at the Battle of King's Mountain in South Carolina, served in the Virginia General Assembly, attained the rank of brigadier general, and was with Lafayette on the Virginia Peninsula when he became ill shortly before the Battle of Yorktown. He died, leaving Elizabeth with two small children, a daughter Sarah and an infant son Charles Henry, who survived his father by just four years.

1782-1861

Preston & King Salt Works

Arthur Campbell, a cousin and brother-in-law of William, was appointed guardian of William's children. He immediately began plans for the commercial development of

the property at Saltville and, in 1782, he began the first salt-manufacturing operation in the Saltville Valley. Arthur Campbell is probably best known for his effort to establish the State of Franklin, which he envisioned to include present-day Southwest Virginia and southern West Virginia and for which he was charged with treason by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In the meantime, Elizabeth observed a brief period of mourning and, following another whirlwind courtship, married General William Russell, for whom Russell County was named. (Campbell County, Virginia, near Lynchburg honors Elizabeth's first husband.) Russell, who was a widower with ten children, was a graduate of the College of William & Mary, and he, too, had attained the rank of brigadier



Preston House (1789)

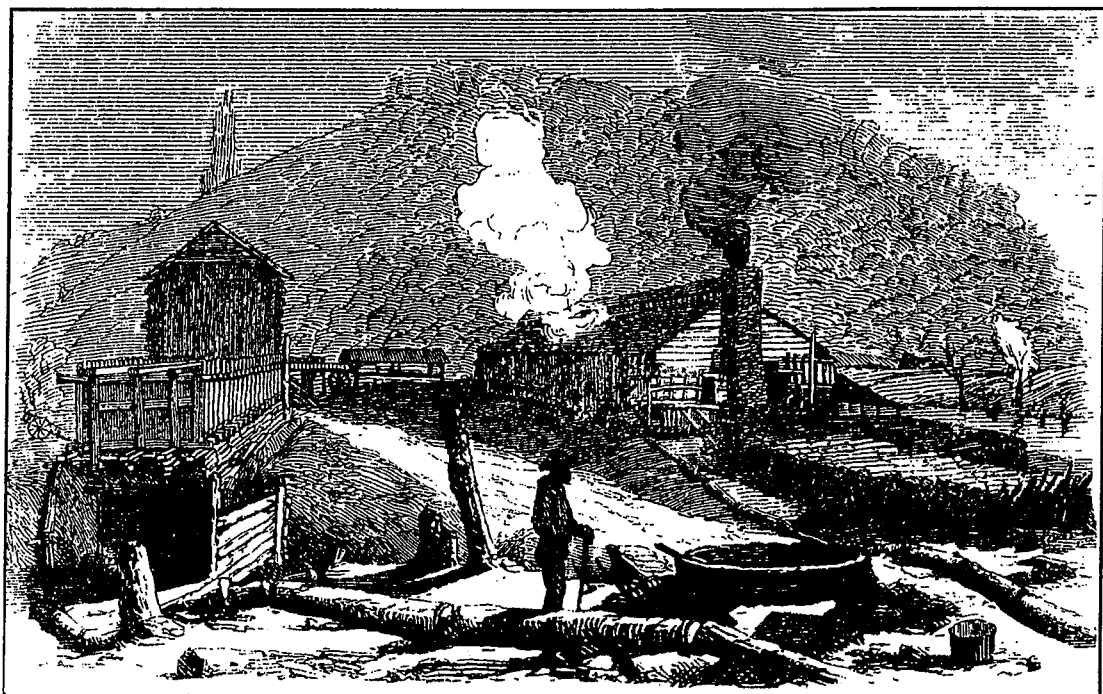
general during the Revolution. He soon clashed with Arthur Campbell over the management of Sarah Campbell's estate, and within a year (1783) had established his own manufacturing operation at the Salt Works.

In 1788 William and Elizabeth Russell moved to Saltville from Aspenvale and constructed a two-story log home, which is known to this day as the Madam Russell House after Elizabeth Henry Campbell Russell. The present structure is a reconstruction from old photographs of the original home, which was torn down around 1908.

Russell and Campbell's disagreement over Sarah's estate led to a new court-appointed guardian – Col. Thomas Madison, who was Sarah's uncle by marriage to

Suzannah Henry, Madam Russell's and Patrick Henry's sister. Madison, who was a cousin of James Madison, moved to Saltville with his wife in 1789, constructed a log home on the south side of the valley, and took over all that Campbell had formerly managed. Russell, however, continued his salt-manufacturing operations on the north side of the valley, three-quarters of a mile away, until his death in 1793 en route to the Virginia Assembly, of which he was a member.

Sarah Campbell's marriage in 1793 settled the issue of guardianship. Sarah's husband, Francis Preston, was a member of Congress, and the couple's first son, William, was born in Philadelphia. In 1795 Preston added a frame structure to the cabin Thomas Madison had built, and in 1797 he retired from



Preston Salt Works River Furnace (1832)

Congress to devote his full effort to the manufacture of salt. The next seven of the Preston's ten children were born in the Preston House, and each of the four Preston sons would, in turn, manage the salt works before moving on.

William Preston, after receiving a college degree and touring Europe in the company of author Washington Irving, managed the salt works before, on doctor's advice, moving to Columbia, S.C. There he became active in politics and was elected to the United States Senate as that state's junior senator to John C. Calhoun. Following his stint in the senate, he served as president of the University of South Carolina until his death.

John S. Preston, born in Saltville in 1809, was a member of the first class of Thomas Jefferson's new

University of Virginia in 1825. He, too, toured Europe and returned to manage the salt works before following his brother to South Carolina. He, too, went into politics, chaired the South Carolina Sessionist Convention in 1861, and was sent back to Virginia to urge the Virginia Convention to follow South Carolina's example. He served as a brigadier general in the Confederate States army.

Charles H. C. Preston died in his 20's while managing the salt works, and Thomas L. Preston was the last of Charles Campbell's descendents to own and manage the salt works. He sold out in 1859 and moved to Charlottesville, where he was elected to the Virginia General Assembly and served as rector of the University of Virginia.

All six of the Preston daughters



King-Stuart House (1795)

former Flora Cooke, were both Virginians, but they had met before the war at a post in Kansas, where Flora's father was stationed. When Virginia seceded and Flora's father remained in the Union army, Jeb made his wife promise that if anything happened to him, she would come to live with his family in Saltville.

(Not only Jeb's brother

married prominent men, including three who married governors – John B. Floyd and James McDowell of Virginia and Wade Hampton of South Carolina.

but also his mother and two of his sisters lived in Saltville during and following the war.) When Stuart was killed at the Battle of Yellow Tavern in 1864, Flora honored his request.

1861-65

War for Southern Independence

In 1859 four Syracuse, N.Y., businessmen took over the management of the salt works under the name of Spencer, Akerman & Co. On April 10, 1861, just two days before South Carolina forces opened fire on Fort Sumter, one of the four, George W. Palmer, bought out his partners to take controlling interest. He immediately sold a one-sixth interest to William A. Stuart. Stuart was the older brother Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart.

William provided Flora and her two small children, Virginia and J.E.B. Jr., with a home on the western end of the valley, and Flora and William and Jeb's sister Mary, also widowed by the war, taught school in one of the rooms on the ground floor.

The homes occupied by William A. Stuart and Flora Stuart still stand today. The former, built around 1840, is still owned by W. A. Stuart's descendents. It was the boyhood home of Henry C. Stuart, William's son and Virginia's Governor from 1914-18.

Jeb Stuart and his wife, the

The house in which Flora Stuart

and her children lived is known today as the King-Stuart House. It was built in 1795 by William King, another of Saltville's early salt manufacturers. King's name and memory are perpetuated today in the William King Arts Center in Abingdon and the City of Kingsport, which was originally spelled King's Port. In 1802 King purchased a landing there where salt from Saltville was unloaded from rafts onto flatboats to be sent on down the Tennessee River.

During the first half of the 19th century, the Preston Salt Works, the King Salt Works, and the Buena Vista Plaster Co. were the main components in an industrial complex in Saltville, which also included a brick factory, a boat-building industry (building rafts for shipping salt down the river), a lumber yard, a cheese factory, and a grist mill.

The Buena Vista Plaster Co. was started in 1808 by Francis Smith. Following William King's death that same year, Smith married King's widow, giving him an interest in the King Salt Works as well as Buena Vista Plaster. Smith's daughter married former Virginia governor Wyndham Robertson (1836-37), and the ownership of Buena Vista Plaster Co. remained with the Robertson descendants until purchased by the United States Gypsum Co. in 1923.

The Virginia & Tennessee Rail-

road came into Saltville in 1856, causing the demise of the boat-building industry but greatly expanding the market for Saltville salt. Without the railroad the unbelievable expansion of the salt works during the upcoming war could not have taken place.

Saltville's importance to the Confederate States during the War for Southern Independence cannot be exaggerated. In the days before refrigeration, salt was the only way to preserve meat, and Saltville was the South's only significant source of salt. The importance of salt in the war and the two battles fought in Saltville have been the subject of a number of books and magazine articles, some of the more important of which are *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* by Ella Lonn (1930), "The Massacre at Saltville" by William C. Davis in *Civil War Times Illustrated* (1971), "The Battle of Saltville: Massacre or Myth?" by William Marvel in *Blue & Gray Magazine* (1991), *The Battles For Saltville* by Marvel (1992), and *The Saltville Massacre* by Thomas D. Mays (1995).

The importance of Saltville was not lost on Gen. U. S. Grant. After assuming command of Union armies in the west, he virtually pleaded with his generals in Kentucky and East Tennessee to make an effort to raid the salt works, "but," he said in a telegram to the War Department in Washington,



First Battle Of Saltville (Oct. 2, 1864)

"not knowing the feasibility [sic] of the plan I did not make the order imperative."

When Grant was transferred to the East and made commander of all Union armies in the field, he prepared a coordinated spring offensive in 1864 with four main targets – Richmond, Atlanta, Mobile, *and Saltville*. Grant took Richmond himself, Sherman took Atlanta, and Admiral "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" Farragut captured Mobile, but the thrust aimed at Saltville was a total failure and has been almost completely ignored or forgotten by history.

Saltville was perhaps the most extensively fortified site in the Confederacy, and the remains of four earthen forts and many hundreds of yards of trenches are still deeply cut into the hills above the valley. Two Battles of Saltville were fought, with the defeat of a Union army of 5200 men coming on October 2,

1864, and the capture of the town by an army of similar size coming on December 20, 1864.

Before the war the salt works had operated with one to three furnaces and 75 to 150 kettles. During the war every Southern state from Mississippi eastward built furnaces in Saltville to supply their people back home with salt, and the states of Alabama and Georgia each operated two furnaces in Saltville. The number of furnaces grew to three dozen and the number of kettles being fired mushroomed to more than 2600. Annual production of salt grew from 150,000 bushels to four million bushels.

1865-1892

Holston Salt & Plaster Co.

Following the war the production of the salt works settled back to about twice its pre-war level. The Preston and King Salt Works, which

had been leased and operated jointly during the war under the name of Stuart, Buchanan & Co., were merged in 1868 to form the Holston Salt & Plaster Co., which dominated the scene for the next quarter of a century.

The 25 years following the war were uneventful except for an 18-year-long lawsuit by some of the heirs of the King estate against the Holston Salt & Plaster Co. over their share of the profits made during the war. The town grew during the period. A new high school was built in 1868 and was outgrown in eight years. A larger school was constructed in 1876. George W. Palmer, still holding controlling interest in the new company, was the great patron of Saltville's schools during this period.

The "town" of Saltville at that time was located at the county line three-quarters of a mile to a mile west of where it now sits. The depot, the post office, the stores, the Palmer Inn (built in 1861), the Union Church (built around 1870), the schools, the salt plant and furnaces, the William A. Stuart house, the King-Stuart House, and several other homes were all concentrated on the western end of the valley.

In 1886 the lawsuit against the Holston Salt & Plaster Co. was finally decided in favor of the plaintiffs, nearly bankrupting the company and George Palmer. As a result Palmer began seeking a pur-

chaser for the company, and in 1891 he found what he was looking for in the Mathieson Alkali Works. This newly formed company was scouring the country for a site for their first plant, and they liked what they saw in Saltville.

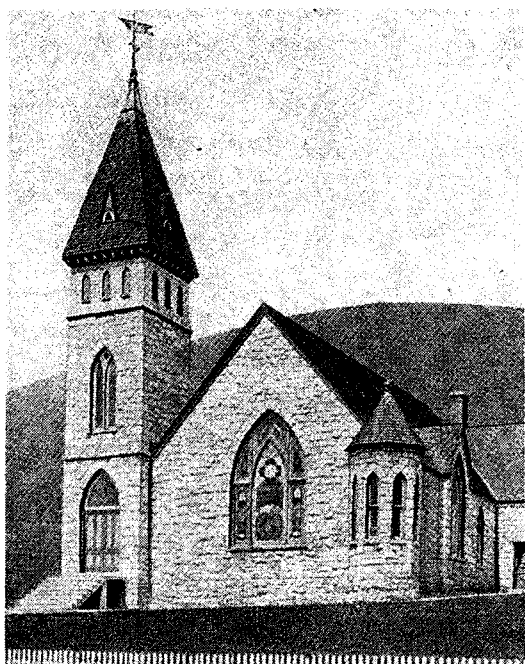
1892-1972

Mathieson Alkali Works

The Mathieson Alkali Works was chartered by the Commonwealth of Virginia on August 13, 1892, and work began immediately on the new facility. This started the greatest construction boom in the town's history, bringing hundreds of carpenters, bricklayers, masons, and laborers into the community along with crime and smallpox.

In November, 1893, smallpox broke out in the community, and the town was placed under quarantine. Smallpox was fatal in a majority of cases at that time, and the epidemic greatly delayed the construction of the plant. Many of the workers who had come to Saltville to work on the construction of the plant sneaked out of town under cover of darkness until the quarantine was lifted.

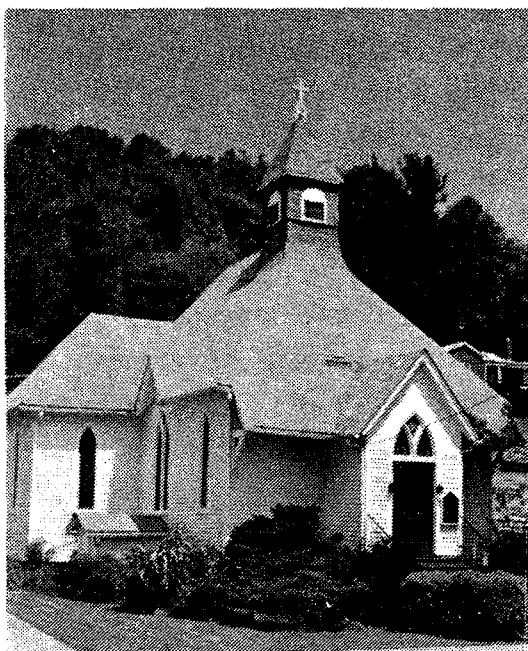
The lawlessness brought about by the influx of laborers was largely concentrated in the small community of Henrytown and for good reason. When Smyth County was formed from Washington County in 1832, the county line was desig-



Madam Russell Methodist Church (1893)

nated as the boundary line between the Preston Salt Works and the King Salt Works, giving each county one of the facilities. But the county line was not surveyed until the 20th century, and no one knew where the county line lay in Henrytown, which was north of the Saltville Valley on the north bank of the Holston River. Henrytown became sort of a "no-man's land" which neither county tried to police. The community was composed of a number of saloons where illegal gambling and prostitution became commonplace.

Following a murder committed in one of Henrytown's saloons early in the 1890s, many Saltville citizens became concerned about what was happening around the commu-

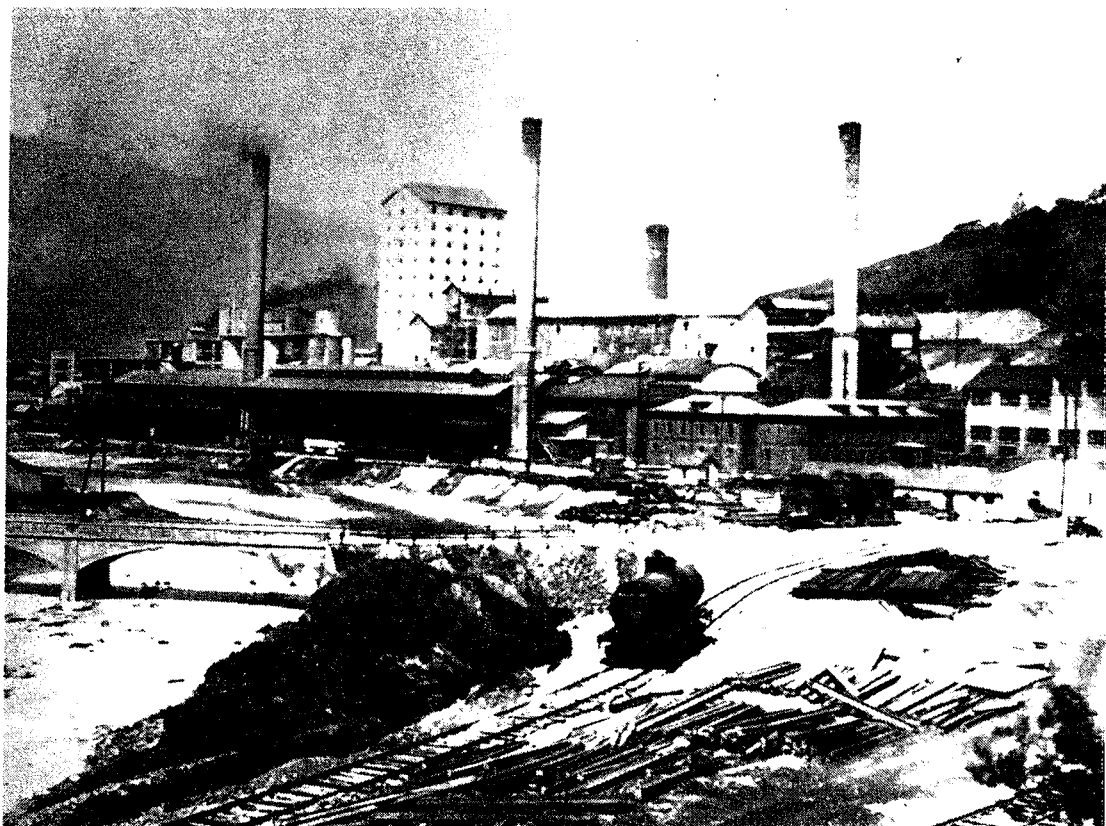


St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1896)

nity, and one of their solutions for the problem was the construction of more churches. Saltville had only one church at the time, the Union Church, which was attended by Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians alike.

In 1893 construction was begun on the Madam Russell Methodist Church, which took seven years to complete. It was dedicated on June 3, 1900. Work began on St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1896, and it was dedicated on May 14, 1900. This latter church was spurred on by the arrival of forty-some former workers of the Mathieson plant in England, many on them with their families.

The work on the plant was shortly followed by the construction



Mathieson Alkali Works (1892)

of scores of company houses, the new Hotel Saltville, and the Mathieson General Store, which for more than half a century was the largest department store between Bristol and Roanoke. The railroad was extended to the plant site at the river, and Norfolk & Western built new freight and passenger depots near the site of the company store. The "town" of Saltville began its rapid move from the western end of the valley to its present location.

The Town of Saltville was actually incorporated by an act of the Virginia General Assembly on March 8, 1894. The first mayor appointed by the act was George W. Palmer, and the first town council, also appointed, included E. E.

Arnold, C. M. Perry, Charles W. Palmer, Thomas T. Mathieson, W. H. Wiley, and P. C. Landrum.

The records of this first Saltville government have not been preserved, and it is not known for sure if it ever functioned as a government. For whatever reason, a new act of the Virginia General Assembly was passed on February 7, 1896, entitled "An ACT to incorporate the town of Saltville, and to repeal an act entitled 'an act to incorporate the town of Saltville,' approved March 8, 1894."

The first product of the Mathieson Alkali Works was manufactured on July 4, 1895, and the plant was completed and in full operation by the winter of 1896. The

products of the new plant included soda ash, baking soda, caustic soda, and other alkaline commodities, and the company continued to manufacture salt at the salt plant, which was located across from where the Saltville Baptist Church now sits.

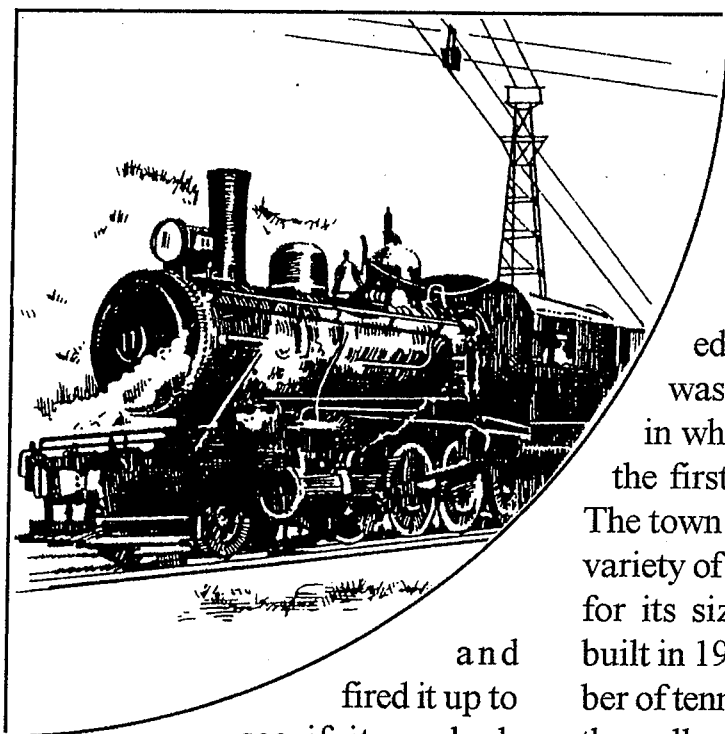


Hotel Saltville (1896)

Demand for more raw materials for production resulted in the construction of an aerial tramway or bucket line in 1902 to carry limestone from the quarry to the plant, replacing the wagons which had formerly done the job.

Much of the first sixty years of the 20th century was marked by expansion and growth of the company. In 1914 work began in Broady Bottom on the plant of the Nitrogen Products Company, a subsidiary of the MAW. The company operated until the end of World War I when a shortage of labor forced it to close. A row of houses which was built to accommodate the employees of the Nitrogen Products Company became known as N. P. Row.

In 1918 the U. S. Government began the construction of a \$2 million plant to produce sodium cyanide for the war effort. It was from this that the Government Plant community received its name. Because of the war, the labor for the construction and operation of the plant was not available, so the War Department established a military base and 400 soldiers were assigned to Saltville. Barracks to accommodate the soldiers and support facilities, including a YMCA, were constructed on the north side of the river where the PCS Phosphates plant now sits. The war ended before the plant was finished, but the government completed the facility



and
fired it up to
see if it worked.

Then they tore it down.

The Dry Ice Plant, the largest of its kind in the world, was built in 1931, the Chlorine Plant was built in 1952, and the Hydrazine plant was constructed in 1961. The astronauts, who set foot on the moon in 1969, were powered on their journey there and back by hydrazine made in Saltville.

The greatest tragedy in Saltville's history occurred on Christmas eve in 1924 when the muck dam broke, inundating the community of Palmertown on the river below the plant. Nineteen residents of Palmertown lost their lives. The blow to the community was so great that it has almost completely overshadowed yet another tragedy which occurred within 18 months. In the spring of 1926 a flash flood overflowed the banks of

McHenry's Creek, flooding the U. S. Gypsum property at Plasterco, spilling into the mines, and taking the lives of six miners.

Apart from these tragedies, the town of Saltville was a wonderful community in which to live and grow up in the first half of the 20th century. The town offered an unusually wide variety of recreational opportunities for its size. The golf course was built in 1923, and there were a number of tennis courts scattered around the valley. A salt-water swimming pool opened in 1943. There were bowling alleys and bowling leagues, a skating rink, and motion picture theatres in Saltville, Allison Gap, and North Holston. The first movie theatre in Saltville, the Pleazu Theatre, was replaced by the Victory Theatre around 1920, and it was replaced by the Salt Theatre in 1948. Saltvillians enthusiastically supported their powerhouse semi-pro baseball team, the Alkalies, and the high school athletic teams, the Shakers.

Saltvillians were particularly proud of their schools, which were considered among the best in the state. The high school was one of the first accredited by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1914 and was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1928, one of only four

Southwest Virginia high schools so accredited before 1962. The MAW poured money into the schools, enabling the school system to hire the best teachers and coaches around. The Town of Saltville operated as a separate school division, apart from Smyth and Washington counties, until 1980.

Most of the houses in Saltville were owned by the company and were well maintained. The rents charged were nominal, and a growing family could have a room added to their house for an increase of a dollar or two to the monthly rent.

The hospital was located on the second floor of the company store building until the T. K. McKee Hospital was built in 1950. Medical costs were free to MAW employees. Mathieson employees had almost unlimited credit at the company store, which offered clothing and shoes, hardware and appliances, furniture, drugs, and groceries and a toyland before Christmas. A housewife could call in her order to the market, and it would be delivered by dray to her home at no extra charge.

The name of the Mathieson Alkali Works was changed to the Mathieson Chemical Corp. in the 1930's, and in

1954 the company consolidated with the Olin Corp. to form the Olin Mathieson Chemical Corp., which later became simply the Olin Corp. In 1964 the union was voted in by a single vote, and in 1967 the town experienced its first strike. It is probably not coincidental that three years later, in 1970, the Olin Corp. announced that it was closing its plant in Saltville.

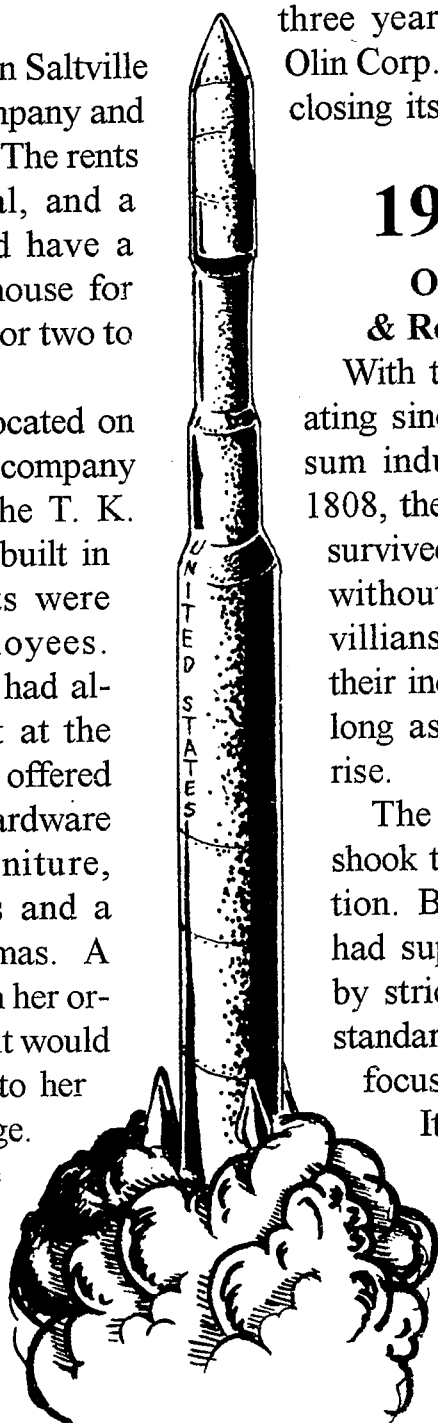
1972-2000

Olin Closedown & Reindustrialization

With the salt industry operating since 1782 and the gypsum industry operating since 1808, the town of Saltville had survived wars and depressions without much affect. Saltvillians had come to expect their industries to continue as long as the sun continued to rise.

The 1970 announcement shook the town to its foundation. Because the shutdown had supposedly been caused by stricter national pollution standards, the town became a focus of national attention.

It was highlighted on the ABC and NBC nightly news programs and was featured in articles in *Life*, *U. S. News & World Report*, the



Washington Post, the *New York Times*, and numerous other publications.

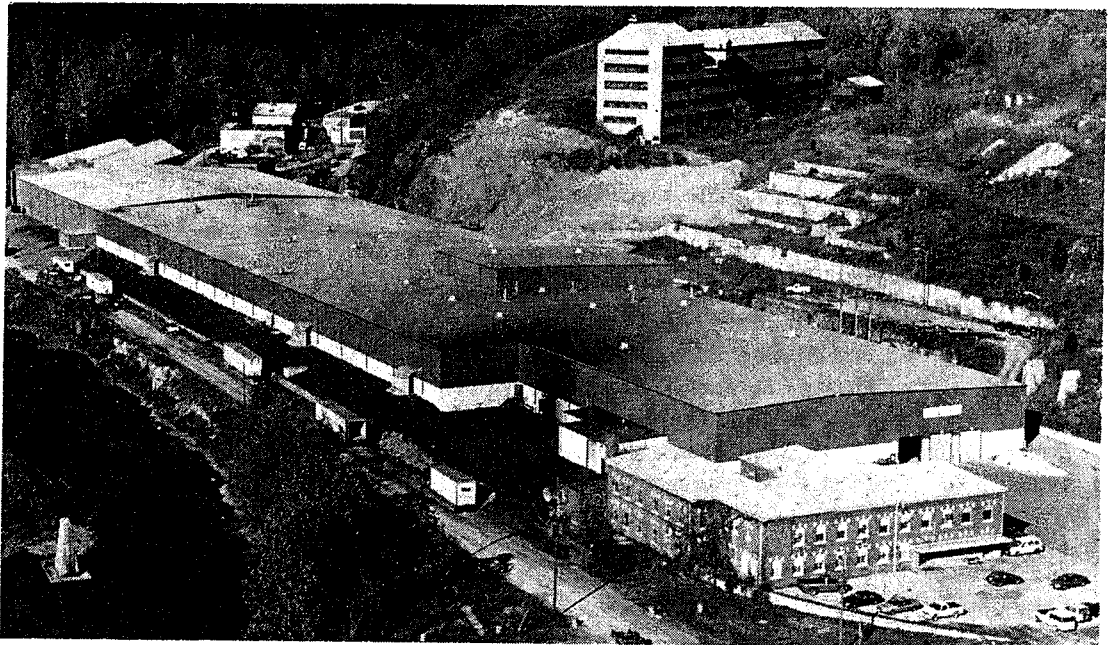
Olin offered to place any of the displaced workers in its other plants around the country, but fewer than two dozen workers out of 1000 took them up on the offer. The town began the seemingly impossible task of replacing the community's industrial base.

In the quarter century since the closure of the Olin Corp. plant, the town has had a surprising number of successes, and an almost equal number of disappointments. Names like the Pyott-Boone Machinery Corp, McWhorter Lumber Co., Kenrose Manufacturing Co., Greer Lime Co., Carbonics Industries, and Saltville Silica Co. were just some of those which came and went dur-

ing the period, representing both successes and failures. There were very few years in the last 25 which passed without the announcement of the opening or closing of a Saltville industry.

Some of the successes, however, remained successes. Virginia Insulated Products and American Chain & Cable are now long-standing members of the Saltville community. Greer Lime and Texasgulf gave way to PCS Phosphates, and Hubs & Wheels and Dotson Wheel gave way to T. D. Wheel of Virginia. Three Seasons Environmental, Long Airdox, and Virginia Gas are the most recent additions to the town's industrial roster. The town's continues to seek new industry to carry it into the 21st century.

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T. D. Wheel Co. of Virginia (1996)

located on the site where Charles Preston built his River Furnace in 1832 and where the Mathieson Alkali Works built their ammonia soda plant in 1892.

IMPORTANT DATES IN SALTVILLE HISTORY

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 12,000 B.C. | First evidence of human occupation |
| A.D. 1000-1500 | Site of a sizable American Indian settlement |
| 1748 | First survey of Saltville Valley |
| Oct. 23, 1753 | First land grant to Charles Campbell in the name of King George II |
| 1769 | William Campbell inherits "Salt Lick Tract" from his father. |
| Apr. 2, 1776 | Gen. William Campbell marries Elizabeth Henry, sister of Patrick Henry |
| May 29, 1782 | Elizabeth Campbell marries Gen. William Russell |
| 1782 | First salt-manufacturing operation started by Col. Arthur Campbell (the beginning of the Preston Salt Works) |
| 1783 | Gen. William Russell begins second salt-manufacturing operation |
| Feb. 1788 | Gen. William & Elizabeth Henry Russell move to Saltville |
| 1788 | First Methodist conference west of the Blue Ridge held at Keywood, one mile south of Saltville |
| 1788 | Bishop Francis Asbury makes first of eleven visits to Saltville |
| c. 1788 | William & Elizabeth Russell establish first public school in Saltville. |
| 1789 | Col. Thomas & Suzannah Henry Madison move to Saltville |
| 1793 | Sarah Campbell marries Francis Preston |
| 1795 | First salt mine in the United States dug by William King (the beginning of the King Salt Works) |
| 1808 | Soon-to-be President James Madison visits Saltville |
| 1808 | Col. Francis Smith establishes the Buena Vista Plaster Co. |
| 1856 | Virginia and Tennessee Railroad comes into Saltville |
| 1858 | Spencer, Ackerman & Co. leases Preston and King Salt Works |
| Apr. 10, 1861 | George W. Palmer buys out partners in Spencer, Ackerman & Co. |
| 1861 | William A. Stuart purchases part ownership in Stuart, Buchanan & Co. |
| Dec. 1863 | Confederate President Jefferson Davis visits Saltville |
| May 1864 | Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's widow (Flora) and children move to Saltville |
| Oct. 2, 1864 | First Battle of Saltville, 5200 Union troops under Gen. Burbridge repulsed |
| Dec. 20, 1864 | Second Battle of Saltville, town & salt works captured by Gen. Stoneman |
| 1868 | Holston Salt & Plaster Co. formed |
| Aug. 13, 1892 | Mathieson Alkali Works chartered by Commonwealth of Virginia |
| June 20, 1893 | Mathieson Alkali Works purchases Holston Salt & Plaster Co. |
| 1893 | Construction begins on Madam Russell Methodist Church (dedicated 6-3-1900) |
| Mar. 8, 1894 | Town of Saltville incorporated by Commonwealth of Virginia |
| July 4, 1895 | First baking soda produced by MAW |
| Feb. 7, 1896 | Town of Saltville incorporated for second time |
| 1896 | Construction begins on St. Paul's Episcopal Church (dedicated 5-14-1900) |
| 1902 | Aerial tramway built from quarry to Mathieson Alkali Works |
| 1906 | Frank Wilder establishes Southern Gypsum Co. at North Holston |
| 1914-18 | Henry C. Stuart, William's son, elected governor of Virginia |
| 1923 | U. S. Gypsum Company purchases Buena Vista Plaster Co. |
| Dec. 24, 1924 | Muck Dam breaks, killing 19 residents of Palmertown |
| 1926 | Flash flood overflows McHenry's Creek, flooding USG Plasterco mine and drowning six miners |
| 1931 | Dry Ice Plant, the largest of its kind in the world, opens |
| 1952 | Chlorine Plant begins operation |
| 1954 | Mathieson Chemical Corp. merges with Olin Chemical Corp. |
| 1961 | U. S. Air Force opens Hydrazine Plant |
| 1969 | First men walk on the moon, powered there and back by hydrazine made in Saltville |
| 1970 | Olin Corp. announces closure of Saltville plant |

Artwork on page 13 by Jennifer Snow
Artwork on page 14 by Steven Mitchell
Photos on pages 11 & 12 courtesy of Jim Hatfield