

Pay Envelopes -
Cabin Branch
Mine

U.S.V.
Thru courtesy of Jean Watson

VIRGINIANA FILE
Historic Sites
(Cabin Branch
Mine)

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.
(Weons-Botts Museum
Collection)



1877
Dyke
Blank
5-04

14
Dyke Charles
13 34
15-20

Dyke Charles
13 90
120 bags
Section 110
Myrtle
Dyke

11-12 Day
5-10-11
Dyke

Dyke
12
100



Historic Dumfries Virginia Inc.

DUMFRIES, VIRGINIA 22026

Phone: (703) 221-4220

March 15, 1975

Mr. Frank Doyle
4304 21st Avenue
Hillcrest Heights, Maryland 20031 -

*File
copy*

Dear Mr. Doyle:

On behalf of Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., I wish to express appreciation for your kindness in lending us the five pay envelopes which you and your father received in connection with your work at the Cabin Branch Mine. They are most interesting and instructive reminders of the conditions under which mining was carried out in the Dumfries area around the turn of the century.

I have taken the liberty of making Xerox copies of the envelopes for inclusion in the archives of the Organization for future reference and research in connection with the Cabin Branch Mine, along with Mrs. Watson's notes about your and your father's connection with the mine. It may be that in the future, after the Museum is in operation, there will be occasion to have a special exhibit on the Cabin Branch Mine, at which time the Organization may ask you for a temporary loan of the envelopes.

In the meantime, if you should have the time and the inclination to write out or record your recollections of the Cabin Branch Mine and of people, places and features of Old Dumfries, the Organization would be greatly appreciative of receiving a copy.

Sincerely yours,

William E. S. Flory
William E. S. Flory
Curator



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THE CABIN BRANCH MINE

by A. L. Mountjoy

An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries
Virginia, Inc., at the Dumfries Town Hall
November 2, 1978

As one walks through Prince William Forest Park today, one can hardly realize that some seventy-five years ago this forest was a mining community employing several hundred workers, bringing substantial financial benefits to Dumfries and the surrounding areas. Men from as far south as Stafford County walked to this mine each day, worked ten hours, and then walked home.

It was about 1890 that pyrite was found in Quantico Creek. A shaft was sunk to verify the presence of the ore, and the test proved positive. From 1908 to 1920 more than 200,000 tons of pyrite was sold for more than \$1,168,513.

Schist, containing quartz and hornblende, make up the rock of the mine area. The pyrites in lens-shaped deposits are among the schist. The Cabin Branch lens is 1,000 feet long and up to fourteen feet wide, sitting on an angle of sixty degrees. Sulphur content of the mine ore is forty to fifty per cent, considered quite high. Because of its similarity in appearance to gold, pyrite is sometimes called "fool's gold."

Pyrites are mined for the manufacture of sulphuric acid. The 1916 pre-war price was \$4.64 per ton; the 1917 price rose to \$15.75 per ton. Virginia had outproduced all other states as of 1917, with thirty-seven per cent total U.S. production.

Cabin Branch Mine was a total operation almost self-sufficient. It was a major source of income for Dumfries during its production years.

The mine had three shafts, Numbers 1, 2, and 3. Numbers 1 and 3 were vertical, with Number 2 on an incline of twenty-five to fifty-five degrees. Number 3 shaft was the deepest - 2,400 feet according to two sources. A document written in 1917 reported the depth to be 1,800 feet, which leaves the possibility that there was an expansion to 2,400 feet before 1920.

A narrow-gauge railroad connected the mine to the wharves on the Potomac River at Barrows Siding about seven miles distant. Contrary to some reports, this narrow-gauge railroad was not part of or connected to the

R. F. & P. Railroad. At the mine site this railroad connected the shaft, the crusher mill, and other buildings. Three steam engines ran on the tracks: the Dewey, the Virginia Creeper, and the Dinkey - named because of its size. Also at the mine was a skiff, named because of its shape, to haul ore up an incline to the head from where the ore was gathered before being processed.

There were about seventy buildings at the mine, including a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, workers quarters, a sawmill, a commissary, a superintendent's house, and the Detrick House. Today little remains to show evidence of a once thriving economy.

The mining procedure was explained in great detail as Mr. Cecil Garrison reminisces.

The first step was to construct the necessary buildings and to begin to sink the shaft. Unlike some of the other mines in Virginia, Cabin Branch shafts had to be totally supported by timber due to the composition of the country rock. About every 110 feet or so a horizontal "level" would be cut into the pocket of ore. These levels had to be supported by timbers.

Transporting the ore in each level was accomplished by hand pushed wagons on tracks. These wagons were pushed to the shaft where they would be dumped into a bucket suspended by a cable from an eighty foot high "pithead" built directly over the shaft opening. This bucket was not only used to haul ore, but also to transport the workers to and from the different levels. Various bells signified the different loads: men, empty, or ore. When the bucket reached a certain section of the pithead it would automatically dump the ore into a waiting railroad car.

At any one time there were 200 to 300 men working at the mine, above and below ground. The underground mining process went on twenty-four hours a day, with three shifts per day. Huge circulating fans and water pumps ran continuously to keep the underground network clear of poisonous gases and seeping ground water.

On each level worked a "crew" which was supervised by a blaster. This blaster would get paid for the number of feet he could progress in one day. The blaster with a good crew could make quite a good salary. Some of the men in each crew were: the "driller," who drilled the holes for the dynamite; the "muckers," who loaded the ore into the wagons; the "timberman," who made sure the roof was properly supported; and the "powderman," who carried the dynamite from the powder house to the level where it was needed.

After the ore was brought up to the surface, it was transported by the narrow-gauge railroad to the ore bins. From the ore bins, the pyrite was hauled up the incline or runway to the head frame where the milling procedure began.

The milling procedure is generally explained as follows. The produce was divided into three classes: lump, spall, and fines. Lump was first grade that required no sorting. Spall was first grade ore broken to pass a two and a half inch ring and freed from fines by screening. Fine ore was under three-

eights inch in size in the milling practice at the Cabin Branch Mine. The ore from the hoist was dumped on a two and a half inch grizzly. Oversize ore went to a lump storage bin. Handsorting separated the slate from first-class lump which went to a spalling floor. The finer impure ore went to a roll-jar crusher. The larger lumps were broken by hand and shipped without further treatment. The undersize from the grizzly was treated in a three-compartment Hartz jib or sieve. Clean pebble ore was shipped as such. Middlings from the jib were treated by roughing rolls of two grades and were treated in two-compartment jibs.

The hand sorting process mentioned was performed by young boys for fifty cents a day. This is where Mr. Cecil Garrison started his day at the mine.

The jigs or sieves were devices which separated the country rock from the ore by vibrations and a washing procedure. Jigs were located in the mill, and all of the treatment was done in the mill. All primary crushing was done in the crusher house.

From the mill the ore was loaded on the narrow-gauge cars or railroads and delivered to the docks at Barrows Siding near Possum Point.

I think we all know that the Cabin Branch Mine was the major supporting industry of Dumfries for a thirty year period from 1890 to 1920.

Through railroad deeds and other records, one may gather that the Cabin Branch had ownership from 1899 to 1916, and the American Agriculture Chemical Company from 1917 to 1920. The original owners were the Detricks and the Bradleys and their families.

Around 1919 or 1920 it was found that a higher content of pyrite could be mined more cheaply in Spain than in the United States. During this period of economic uncertainty, the miners went on strike for a pay increase from \$4.25 per day to \$4.50 per day. The superintendent responded by closing the mine down, saying that he would let the Cabin Branch Mine fill with water and the frogs jump in before he would reopen it.

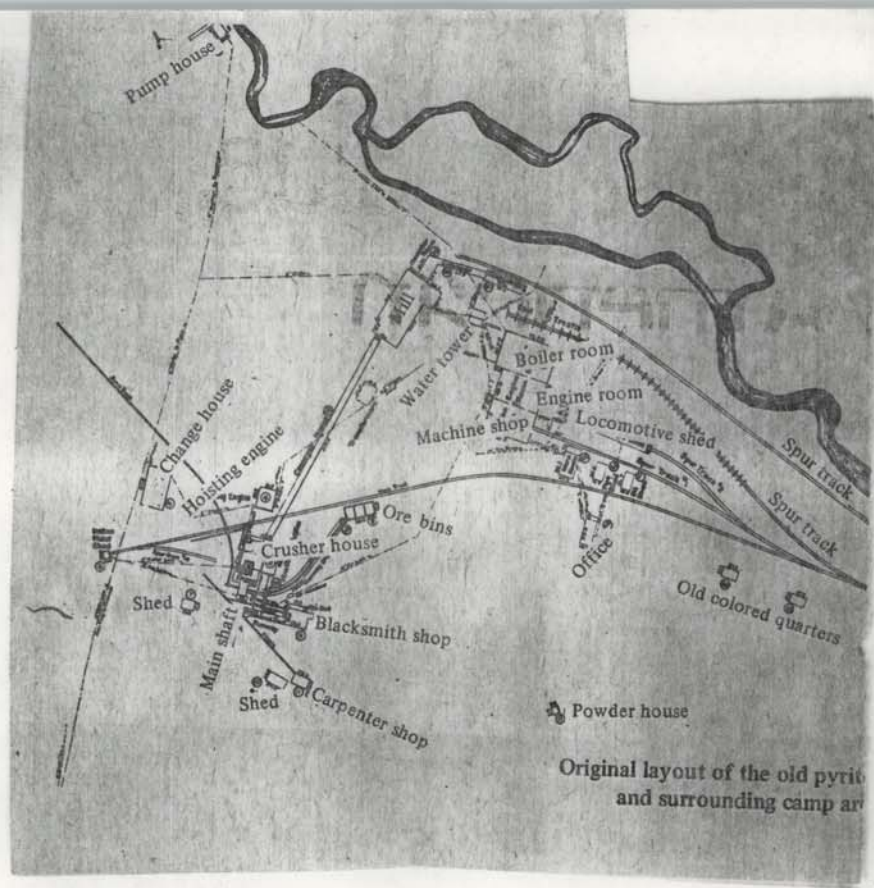
Occupation of the area by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the early 1930's resulted in complete dismantling of the mine. Building materials were used for the cabin camps, and the slate dumps were used for roadbed materials.

The economy of Dumfries was greatly enhanced by the operation of this mine. The Town of Dumfries profited as families moved in, boarding houses opened up, and stores did a thriving business.

Today Cabin Branch Mine is only a memory to be recorded on the pages of history.

REFERENCES:

1. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines.
2. The Journal Messenger, Bonnie Atwood, reporter.
3. Interview with Mr. Cecil Garrison.



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*Historic Sites
(Cabin Branch Mine)*

**Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.**

(Weems-Botts Museum Collection)

A sewerless, waterless world on old Mine Road

VIRGINIANA FILE
Historic Sites

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By MARILYN FINLEY
When does it become feasible for government to turn from the problems of the big developers, the planned communities and the federally funded projects to give a hand to the long residents who are receiving few public services? That's what the people of the Batestown-Mine Road area say Dumfries would like to know.

Among the projects to be funded by the referendum, a collector sewer for old Mine Road and Batestown. There was no mention in referendum material of water being extended into the area.

The plans for development fell through.

H.L. MOONEY, acting administrator for the Sanitary District wasn't aware there had been a bond referendum calling for a collector sewer to Mine Road. He stumbled on the information when looking for data on the 1970 bond issue.

The Swog rebuilt. In process they that their questionable disposal and "take appropriate secure public

Nearly swallowed by the surrounding Prince William Forest Park, Batestown is a small peninsula of privately owned property. There are two small communities in the area.

IN MAY, 1970, William L. Bates, a resident of Mine Road, turned to then Rep. William Scott for help. Bates received, as a result of contacting Scott, a letter from Rushford K. Fleshman, then administrator of the Dumfries-Triangle sanitary district.

What the people of Mine Road can't understand is why their property would be subject to any special levies (none of which are contemplated) should financial crisis in the Dumfries-Triangle Sanitary District require a levy.

Dr. A.J. Ferlazzo, representative of the Dumfries magisterial district on the Board of Supervisors says that until there is some more development in the area, there won't be a sewer or water line. He suggests a meeting of residents of the area with sanitary district personnel and advisory committee members to discuss the feasibility of the line.

A study prepared in 1970 by the 19 consulting engineer a program sewage intercept and water facilities. Old Batestown a "Collector sewer for several at which are provided with The total cost programs can million which referendum at So where's t Road and Bat

Barron Heights, a small subdivision is approximately 10-year-old. Then there are the residences of Mine Road itself dating from those built near the turn of the century to house the mine workers of the Cabin Branch Mine, to modern mobile homes and ranch style houses.

Fleshman said: "Water and sewer projects in Prince William County are operated on a revenue basis which require that the users finance the systems.

They receive no benefit from being in the district but their homes are bonded for improvements within the district to serve others. (Fleshman had said it would be unfair to bond people in the district for those outside. This is the same principal.)

The Richard Swoggers are residents of Barron Heights. Last November their home burned to the ground because pumper trucks ran out of water,

RESIDENTS OF both communities share a common problem: they have no public sewer and water available and no one is willing to say when it will be available. They use outhouses and septic fields.

"Due to the fact that the homes in this area are spread out so much it is questionable whether facilities could be provided on an economic basis."

Commenting on the lack of help from county officials, young Walter Kendall said "The only time you see those politicians is when they want your vote. Then you'll see them walking up the road."

For years, residents of Mine Road have been petitioning for sewer and water service. While residents insist there were promises when they were promised sewer and water, there are no immediate plans to serve the area.

Bates' letter had also referred to the need for street lights. Street lights, he was told, are provided by the sanitary district and are available to sewer and water customers.



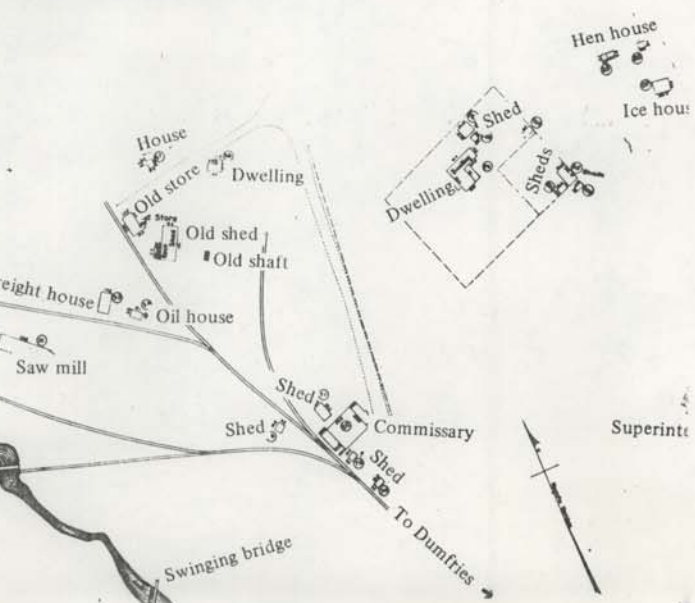
In 1968 in response to community requests, a letter from Public Works was sent to the Dumfries-Triangle Sanitary District Advisory Committee estimating it would cost \$91,938 to furnish sewer and water extensions the necessary mile and a half into the Batestown area.

Bates is just one of those who have gently prodded county officials for years to provide Mine Road with services. He was active in 1953 in getting telephone service extended to the area.

Ties mark path of railroad spur to entrance of old shaft

At that time the sanitary district did not include Batestown according to the charter. The letter explained that it would be unfair to residents of the district to bond them for improvements for areas outside the district. Therefore it was to be understood that the cost of these extensions would be borne by the residents of Batestown.

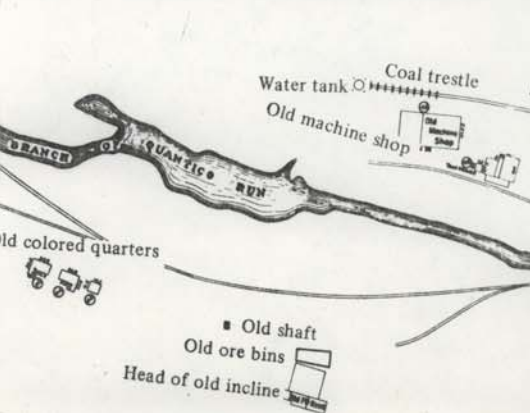
He has helped to circulate petitions for sewer and water, going door to door asking his neighbors if they would be willing to hook on to public sewer and water and if they would be willing to pay the required tap fee. Approximately 45 of some possible 65 homeowners said yes.



Batestown-Mine Road was, however, taken into the sanitary district and in 1970 a bond referendum for \$1.7 million was passed by residents of the district.

But over the years the tap fee cost has increased. The cost today may be prohibitive some residents said, when they learned it would cost them \$1370 to tap onto sewer and water services today.

APPARENTLY WHEN the bond referendum was suggested, there was a plan for development of a section of the land off Mine Road. The developer was expected to pay for extending the sewer and water to his property and the cost then of carrying the utilities on up the road would be feasible because of the number of total customers. But



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Nearly swallowed by the surrounding Prince William Forest Park, Batesown is a small peninsula of privately owned property. There are two small communities in the area. Barron Heights, a small subdivision is approximately 15-year-old. Then there are the residences of Mine Road itself ranging from those built near the turn of the century to house mine workers of the Cabin Road Mine, to modern mobile homes and ranch style houses.

RESIDENTS OF both communities share a common problem: they have no public sewer and water available and no one is willing to say when it will be available. They use wells and septic fields. For years, residents of Mine Road have been petitioning for sewer and water service. While residents insist there were times when they were promised sewer and water, there are no immediate plans to serve the area.

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