

When Tobacco Was King In Danville

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Geography and history give grown people as well as children even more than a book knowledge of the different parts of the world, but the best known states, cities and towns are those that are the most talked about in the commercial circles of the various subdivisions of this mundane sphere.

There is probably no town and all the Southland that is known in as many cities and centers of trade as Danville, the story of this busy Virginia city have had been carried in every part of North America, Europe, Asia and Africa and all the Isles of the sea by the rapidly flying birds of Commerce. Bright tobacco goes direct from Danville to every commercial center of every country in the world where tobacco is used; cotton goods go from the mammoth factories of Danville to all foreign parts; elevators made in Danville go all over the southern sections of the United States and to Cuba and the Philippines; wagons and trucks made in Danville find their way beyond the waters; flour that has been ground in the unsurpassed mills of Danville is sold from the Potomac to Florida; overalls, working men's shirts and other like apparel made under union label in Danville are sold throughout the South and in Cuba, and the same may be said of Danville made furniture; the drummers from the wholesale stores of Danville sing the praises of their city in many states and extended businesses of the banking houses of Danville in handling the funds, checks, drafts, etc., of all these worldwide traders put them in correspondence with bankers and businessmen of every tongue; hosiery and all manner of knit goods manufactured in Danville are sold in many parts of the world, and electric railway experts come to this city from all parts of the country to examine and try to copy after what is declared by numbers of them to be the best electric railway systems in the country.

These are some facts that I have gathered from the most reliable of sources during a few days sojourn here, and I want to tell all about it if space will permit.

The Largest In The World.

It is a true saying, that has been repeated not less than 10 million times within the past decade, the Danville is the largest bright loose-leaf tobacco market in the world. This is one of the old sayings, "chestnuts" if you will, that will bear repeating for 10 million times more, it being a cast iron fact backed up by the figures, and indeed it is being repeated in many languages.

Danville has been a tobacco market ever since it was laid off and incorporated as a town in 1792, until about 1/4 of a century ago it was a local market, the bulk of the weed marketed here being manufactured into plug and twist in local factories and the balance being shipped never further than Richmond or Petersburg. Now all of the weed that is not manufactured here is shipped to factories all over the United States and Canada and to every foreign land.

Being located in the dead center of what is known as the "Old Bright Tobacco Belt," comprising seven or eight Virginia counties and five or six in North Carolina, and the "old belt" rights being far preferable to all others in the estimation of consumers, and then will having superior facilities for handling the weed, add more capital for that purpose than any other known bright market, it is but natural that it should have become the largest market in the world.

There is no market in the world that has more and better warehouse facilities for displaying and selling the loose leaf and none with more or better warehouses for storing the packed goods and on with more or larger factories for stemming ordering and packing the leaf. There is no market with as good financial backing and there is no bright market with as many buyers, and certainly none with as many world travelers. These Danville people have "hoofed it" all over Europe, they have traversed to Cuba, they have visited Japan and China, and South America, and even Africa; and over half of the leaf dealers here are as familiar with Canada as they are with Virginia.

Tobacco Is The King.

All this traveling has been done to introduce Danville bright tobaccos to the wide, wide world, and the travelers have succeeded and built up direct trade with every commercial center of importance in civilized territory.

The Danville Tobacco Association made an exhibit at the Jamestown Exposition and walked away with a medal. The Association also made a splendid exhibit this year at the fourth International Tobacco Exposition, held in Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster, London, March 20th to 28th, and information was received here yesterday that Danville had captured the gold medal.

The annual sales of the loose leaf direct from the farmers on this market varying according to crop conditions from 35,000,000 to 55,000,000 pounds and twice the last years totals have exceeded the last figure. The sales for the tobacco year ending July 31, 1907, were 36,040,016 pounds for \$ 3, 283, 785.80, the average being \$9.11 per 100 pounds. For the present fiscal year up to April 31st the sales have been 34,291,427 pounds which brought \$3,929,005.59, an average of \$11.46. The total sales for this

tobacco year will run considerably over 40,000,000 pounds, and will be observed the average price is \$2.35 per 100 better than last year. The farmers who market their bright tobacco in Danville have been doing well this year.

This immense quantity of loose-leaf tobacco is sold on the floors of eight commodious warehouses, seven of which are actively operated by the Danville cooperative warehouse company.

The Danville cooperative warehouse company was chartered and began business in 1902, with a paid-up capital of \$175,000. The company was formed for the purpose of aiding the tobacco growers and of extending the territory of the market. By combining capital and influence the territory has been greatly extended, and the tobacco growers have been hated to a greater extent than ever before in the history of the market.

Mr. E. F. Acree, the veteran Danville warehousemen, was the first president and general manager of the company and laid the foundation for its future growth period since his death some three years ago, Mr. J..P. Acree has been president and general manager and under his management the company has had a steady growth and improvement.

With ample capital an unequaled facilities and a disposition to serve and accommodate their patrons in every capacity, this company has rapidly grown in favor, and now sells a very large percentage of the market receipts. I have 80 greatly in keeping Danville so far in advance of all competitors as a loosely loose-leaf tobacco market.

Among the different houses of the company and of the market Acree's always popular, and among the leaders now easily heads the list. Since being rebuilt a few years ago it is the handsomest and most commodious structure ever erected for the sale of loose-leaf tobacco.

As evidence of its popularity, it has time already sold during the eight months of the fiscal year (to May 1, 1908) more than 6,500,000 pounds at an average of \$0.13, totaling close to \$1,000,000 paid out by this house alone for the "golden weed" in eight months, a record unequaled on this or any other market.

The other warehouse here, known as the Exchange, is a large and commodious building with ample floor space, and does a profitable business.

Great Variety Of Buyers.

The sales of these warehouses are attended daily by sixty-two active buyers, every one of them being expert judges of tobacco and superior businessmen. Among the buyers are representatives of The American Tobacco Company, the Imperial, the R. J. Reynolds

Company, and several Canadian and Northern and Western factories. The others are independent buyers, who either manufacture the weed here or stem, dry and otherwise prepare it for other markets both domestic and foreign. There are more independent buyers here than on any other market, and among them are some of the most prominent businessmen in the country, who, with ample capital, conduct the largest bright leaf tobacco establishments in the country.

Danville has, including those of the American and Imperial and Reynolds Companies, ten bonded warehouses for the storage and sale of leaf tobacco in hogsheads. The combined capacity of these houses from 50,000 to 60,000 hogsheads, which makes Danville the biggest market in the country for storage facilities.

All of these houses are of the very latest design and equipment, and they now have in them from 35,000 to 40,000 hogsheads of the bright leaf.

The Tobacco Association.

Since his organization in 1870 no agency has done more to build up the market and make the name of Danville great in the world than the Danville Tobacco Association. The officers for the present year are A.B. Carrington, president; John S. Meade, vice-president; and Isaac S. Bendall, secretary and supervisor.

Danville does not manufacture altogether as much of the plug and smoking tobacco as it did some years ago, but it has a number of very active manufacturers, who conduct large plants and sell famous brands all over the United States.

The time was when Danville was said to have stood altogether on one leg, commercially speaking, and tobacco was absolutely king, but that time has passed and the city has been for thirty years past constantly diversifying its interests. The first to contest the claims of tobacco to kingship was cotton.

When The Cotton Factories Came.

In 1880 or thereabouts, the water power in Dan River was developed and cotton mills had to come. In 1883 the Schoolfields came here, and combining with the Fitzgeralds and other local capitalists, commenced the work of making Danville as famous a cotton manufacturing center as it was as a tobacco mart. The Riverside Cotton Mills were organized, and commenced operation that year with a capital of \$75,000 and an equipment of 2,300 spindles and 100 looms. They commenced to make the best of goods, and soon the reputation of the output of the Riverside Mills not only gave Danville a new cause for pride and a new name in the trade centers, but necessitated enlargement of the Mills from time to time, until now they are spread out on both sides

of the river to the number of seven distinct mills. The capital now amounts to \$200,000, and the machinery equipment is approximately 80,000 spindles and 3,000 looms with carding machines and other equipment in various departments for dyeing the raw stock and finally preparing the manufactured goods for shipping, thus producing from the raw material the finished cloth, which is sold throughout the country and in foreign markets. The output of these mills includes plaids, shirtings, denims, wide sheetings and other fabrics. The Riverside Mills are among the most progressive in the South, and the continuing success of the company is a source of much gratification and pride to its management and stockholders.

The Dan River Mills.

As large as was the capacity of the Riverside Mills, the constantly growing trade required further enlargement, and so the upper water power two miles higher up the river, was acquired and developed, and the Dan River Cotton Mills company was organized as the offspring of the Riverside. These mills were completed and put in operation two and a half years ago, and everything in and about the immense plant is on the very latest design and pattern. Throughout the buildings and everything connected with them the mills represent in construction, equipment, convenience and economy of handling stock and general welfare and comfort of employees the mightiest results of the experience and achievement of past years in the cotton manufacturing business in this country and in England.

A Town Was Built.

The Dan River Mills are capitalized at \$2,500,000. The power which operates the 86,000 spindles and 3,400 looms and other machinery in those mills is generated at the powerhouse on the Dan River and conveyed thence by electricity to the mill buildings about three-eighths of a mile distant. Like the Riverside, the Dan River Cotton Mill is complete in all departments, handling the raw cotton as it comes in bales from the southern field and transforming it into the finished cotton cloth ready for market.

Surrounding these mills has been erected by the company a beautiful little village; houses and cottages and homes of employees dotting the hillsides. The village, which has been named Schoolfield, is lighted by electricity, and has been supplied with other comforts and conveniences. The location is ideal and a more healthy spot would be hard to find.

Churches of several denominations have been organized at Schoolfield and handsome houses of worship erected. The company is a liberal contributor to the building funds of all of them, and they have established here good schools for the education of the

children of their employees. While the schools are under the general supervision of the public-school authorities they are in the main supported by the mills. The company improves every opportunity to help their employees and to make life a pleasure to them.

Both the Riverside and the Dan River companies (and they are practically one) or what are termed independents, that is they belong to no combination of spinners or carters or whatnot. They work when they please and quit when they want to, and they please to work all the time, and therefore their employees are not standing in constant dread of a shutdown. Mr R.A. Schoolfield is the president and Mr. H.R. Fitzgerald is the treasurer of both of the companies.

Other Enterprises Came.

Soon after cotton commenced to divide the honors with tobacco other industries commenced to show their heads in Danville, but it would be tedious to trace the history of their coming and going. The Morotock Manufacturing Company is another establishment of which Danville is justly proud, for that company has demonstrated what great things can grow in this Danville soil from small beginnings. In 1900 this company with a paid up capital of \$5,000 commenced in a small way the manufacture of overalls, and every year since the capital has been increased and the business enlarged, until now with a working capital of \$100,000 the company is manufacturing under union labels working men's clothing of all kinds, such as overalls, work shirts, pants, corduroys and cheap summer suits. Their new factory building was erected last year at a cost of \$40,000 and equipped with the very latest machinery call, all run by electric power, at a cost of \$10,000. The state inspector of factories, who has recently given this one a thorough examination, declares that it is the best built, best equipped and the finest factory of its kind he has ever seen. The company sells only to the trade, and their traveling men traverse many states. The officers of the company are J.R. Jopling, president; L.C. Batten, vice president; and J.C. Watson, secretary.

Elevator and Milling Interests.

Another enterprise that has carried the business reputation of Danville far and near was built up from a small beginning by "the Westbrook boys," as they are called. The Westbrook Elevator Company, who operates a \$75,000 plant, are manufacturers of elevators, which they sell all over the country. They make passenger and freight elevators of all kinds to be operated by electric, hand or belt power. They can equip a modern building of any kind with elevators that cost all the way from a few hundred dollars up to \$10,000, and they are made under the Westbrook's own patterns, and all

are sold under guarantee of their perfection and equipped with the most approved safety devices. This company also manufactures and sells automatic doors and gates.

The Dan Valley Flouring Mills joined forces with cotton mills and other industries to clip the wings of King Tobacco, and its famous brands of flour have made the name of Danville a household word in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. The capacity of the mills is 500 barrels of flour per day and the elevator capacity is 90,000 bushels of wheat. Mr. James I. Pritchett, one of Danville's most successful businessmen, is the president of this company, and Mr. William B. Hill is the secretary.

The Danville Knitting Mills, of which Mr. L. Herman is president and Mr. L.B. Conway, Jr., is secretary at general manager, is also carrying the name of Danville and its reputation as a manufacturing town to the uttermost parts. Their brands of hosiery and all kinds of knit goods are known in the markets far and near, and it is a comparatively young concern, too.

Harness Making Emporium.

The Horner Wagon Company, of which Mr. Charles L. Holland is president, and Mr. W.P. Horner is general manager, is extending the Danville reputation for hustle in various directions, and their wagons and trucks are popular with the trade.

The Virginia Hardware and Manufacturing Company, in connection with their immense business in hardware and farm implements, operate what is claimed to be, and doubtless is, the best equipped and most up-to-date harness manufactory in the State of Virginia. The products of this factory have added largely to Danville's reputation, for the traveling men have visited all parts of the adjoining states, and wherever they go they find but little difficulty in disposing of goods, for the company uses nothing but the best of material and work none but the best of talent at the benches. The officers of the company are young men and hustlers. They are A.D. Starling, president; E.T. Estes and P.D. Guerrant, vice presidents; and W.R. Guerrant, secretary and treasurer.

Other manufacturing establishments that helped make Danville great are the Boatwright Furniture Company, Noell Anderson Company, The Danville Lumber Company, the N.A. & T.J. Fitzgerald Brick and Tile Company, and quite a number of other manufacturing establishments of greater or less importance.

Wholesaling and Jobbing.

In the meantime the wholesaling and jobbing houses have been doing a splendid share in helping Danville onto greatness. The wholesale hardware establishment of the Piedmont Hardware Company covers a large territory with their traveling salesman, and

since the day of the opening of their first stock they have done a good business extending over several states. They have erected convenient to the depots, where they enjoy splendid shipping facilities, a mammoth warehouse and store, which is one of the handsomest businesses houses in the city. The officers of the company are B.F. Jefferson, president; A.W. Traylor, vice president; and Spencer James, secretary and treasurer.

The wholesale grocers also travel many men. The leader in this line is Swanson Brothers and Company, who also operate the Swanson Supply Company, the latter concern being extensive dealers in fertilizers. These firms are large stockholders in the W.L. Clements Lumber Company, which has immense mills at Cheraw in South Carolina, and have general offices in Greensboro, N.C. The Danville office is with Swanson Brothers and Company. This firm owns 500,000 feet of standing timber in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and much of the same is for sale.

Financially Danville Is Strong.

Thus it may be seen that Danville does not stand on one leg, and while tobacco is his first love, and while it is yet the greatest single industry, other industries and enterprises have assembled around the weed, and altogether they have made it one of the liveliest commercial cities in the South.

It goes without saying that considerable banking strength and force are required to handle all of this very business. Danville has them. Its seven prosperous banks are among the strongest and best managed in the State. They represent total assets of about \$4,000,000, and their total capital stock is about \$600,000.

The oldest financial institution in the city is Johnston and Cheek's, a private bank of which Mr. Charles Holland is the president. This bank was established as a national bank soon after the War Between the States, by Johnston and Ficklen. They later made it a private bank, and after the death of Mr. Ficklen, Mr. W.F. Cheek bought his interest. Messrs. Johnston and Cheek have both passed over the river, and they were succeeded by Mr. Holland, who had been already admitted as a partner. It has always been conducted along the conservative and safe lines that were originally drawn by its founders, and there is probably no bank in the state that has done more to help the business interests of its town along than this one.

Richmond Money Interested.

The First National Bank came into existence in 1872 as the Planters National Bank, and a good deal of Richmond money went into its first capitalization at \$100,000. The late

John B. Davis, of Richmond, was the first president, and his son, John C. Davis, was the first cashier. Among the Richmonders who were large stockholders were Walter K. Martin, E.D. Christian, and Mr. Davis.

In 1899 the name was changed to First National Bank of Danville. Present officers are J.R. Jopling, president; J.R. Gilliam, vice president; Alan Cucullu, cashier; W.J. Fowlkes, assistant cashier; T.C. Guerrant, paying teller; H.C. Patton, receiving teller. The capital stock is \$150,000; surplus, \$200,000; deposits, \$1,500,000; loans at investments \$1,500,000. The First National is the largest bank in the city and its report shows that it carries the largest line of deposits of any bank in the section. The depositors are both town and country people. The bank has recently purchased a splendid fifty-foot lot at the corner of Main and Market streets, and next January, when he gets possession, it will commence to pull down the building now there on an erect and magnificent banking house.

Other Gibraltar Institutions.

The Commercial Bank was established in 1878, and has always done a large business. The capital stock is \$100,000; surplus and undivided profits \$40,000; deposits \$500,000; loans \$500,000; total assets \$600,000. The bank lives in its own home, a nice little building valued at \$10,000. The officers are John F. Rison, president; R.W. Peatross, vice-president; C.L. Booth, cashier.

The Bank of Danville was organized and commenced business in 1892. Its capital is \$190,000, loans and discounts \$600,000; real estate, including banking house, \$24,000; total assets, \$815,000. The officers are D.A. Overby, president; O.W. Dudley, vice president; W.E. Griggs, cashier; James M. Loy, assistant cashier.

The Peoples Savings Bank and Trust Company commenced business in 1897. The capital stock is \$25,000; surplus and undivided profits, \$20,000; loans, \$230,000; deposits, \$240,000; total assets \$275,000. This bank does a Savings Bank business strictly, and is the only bank in the city which does. The officers are R.L. Dibrell, president; J.H. Perkinson, Jr., vice president, W.F. Patton, cashier; M.S. Canter, assistant cashier.

The Union Exchange Bank is one among the younger banks of the city. The officers are W.W. Williamson, president and Treadway Gravely, cashier. The capital stock is \$50,000, and total assets \$300,000. This bank does strictly a local business.

The Home Savings Bank is the infant among the banks, being the latest to open in Danville. Its capital stock is \$25,000, deposits \$75,000, loans \$80,000. The officers are A.M. Southall, president; Charles E. Hughes, vice president; W.H. Barker, cashier.

The Commercial Association.

The Commercial Association of Danville has done as much as any other agency of its age to push Danville along and his activities or ever noticeable. The officers are A.B. Carrington, president; L. Herman, vice president; and W.C. Rierson, secretary and treasurer. Many successful movements here had their origin with the Association, and now it is bending its energies toward having an agricultural fair at Danville every fall, beginning the coming autumn. It will succeed

While Danville is great as it is, it is not entirely grown. It wants more enterprises; it is a logical point for the location of many kinds of manufactories, and the Commercial Association will see to it that they are accommodated when they want to come.

Among the marked improvements here during the past year may be mentioned the remodeling and practical rebuilding of the Hotel Burton, which is now owned by W.W. Lynn, the proprietor of the Carroll, in Lynchburg. A great deal of money has been spent in this rebuilding, which is now nearing completion. A private electric plant has been installed, magnificent lights put in, a room telephone system installed, and the entire house changed from cellar to garret. The Burton, even before these improvements have been completed, is, under the management of its present owner, a model.

Going To The Suburbs.

It is true that the Danville Railway and Electric Company has done a great deal to make the city famous. It is claimed that it has the best trolley lines, gives the best service and has fewer accidents than any company in the country, and experts who have come here from a distance to look into its workings declare the claim is a just one. W.J. Payne, of Richmond, is the president of the company, John F. Rison is vice president, N.W. Berkeley is superintendent, and H.S. Lanier is treasurer.

The company operates seven and a half miles of line in the city and suburbs, and is now developing a new water power on Sandy River, where its powerhouse will be located in time.

Good trolley lines develop suburbs, and Danville needs them, for it is a crowded city. One of the surest proofs of real progress is suburban growth the erection of attractive homes on highly improved and beautiful property. The proof of prosperity is manifest in the development of "Mountain View," out on West Main Street, by the Real Estate Loan Deposit Company. This beautiful residential site has been subdivided into a number of lovely lots. A mile and a half of granolithic sidewalk has been laid, granolithic curbs and gutters, sewer and water pipes laid, streets graded, hundreds of expensive shade trees

planted, everything, indeed, that good judgment could suggest and a lavish and wise use of money secure. Like most cities, Danville's steady growth is westward. "Mountain View" is exactly in the line of this growth, and a good part of the property is already within the corporate limits. In the annexation discussion of some months ago it was developed that there were not more than twelve available lots within the city lines, on which one would be willing to erect buildings costing more than \$2,500. That there was and is evident need of this new suburb is demonstrated by what is being done with the property. Although but recently put on the market, residential lots aggregating in value more than \$30,000 have been sold; one home has just been completed and is now occupied, and eight or ten attractive residences are projected or under contract.

Besides, values are enhancing, and a number of profitable resales of lots are reported. It is a matter of common rumor that the Roanoke Female College contemplates the choice of a location here. There could not be found so suitable a site around Danville as that indicated to this writer. The scenery is beautiful, the situation healthful and the surroundings helpful.

The company discovering and enterprising this proposition, promising so much for Danville's future, is composed of gentlemen who have most successfully done the same thing for other southern cities. The alert and judicious gentleman who choose the site, acquired the property for his company and has directed and managed the improvements is Mr. D.R. Creasy, Jr., of Richmond.

Speaking of Roanoke Female College in this connection reminds me that Danville is an educational center, as well as a business center, but this letter has been made so long with the story of the city's greatness as a hustling business town I will defer discussion of the educational, social and moral side of Danville life for another letter.