

Radford



and



Radford THEN

and

NOW

A Pictorial History

Compiled and Edited

by

Elmer D. Johnson

for

The American Revolution
Bicentennial Commission

of

Radford, Virginia

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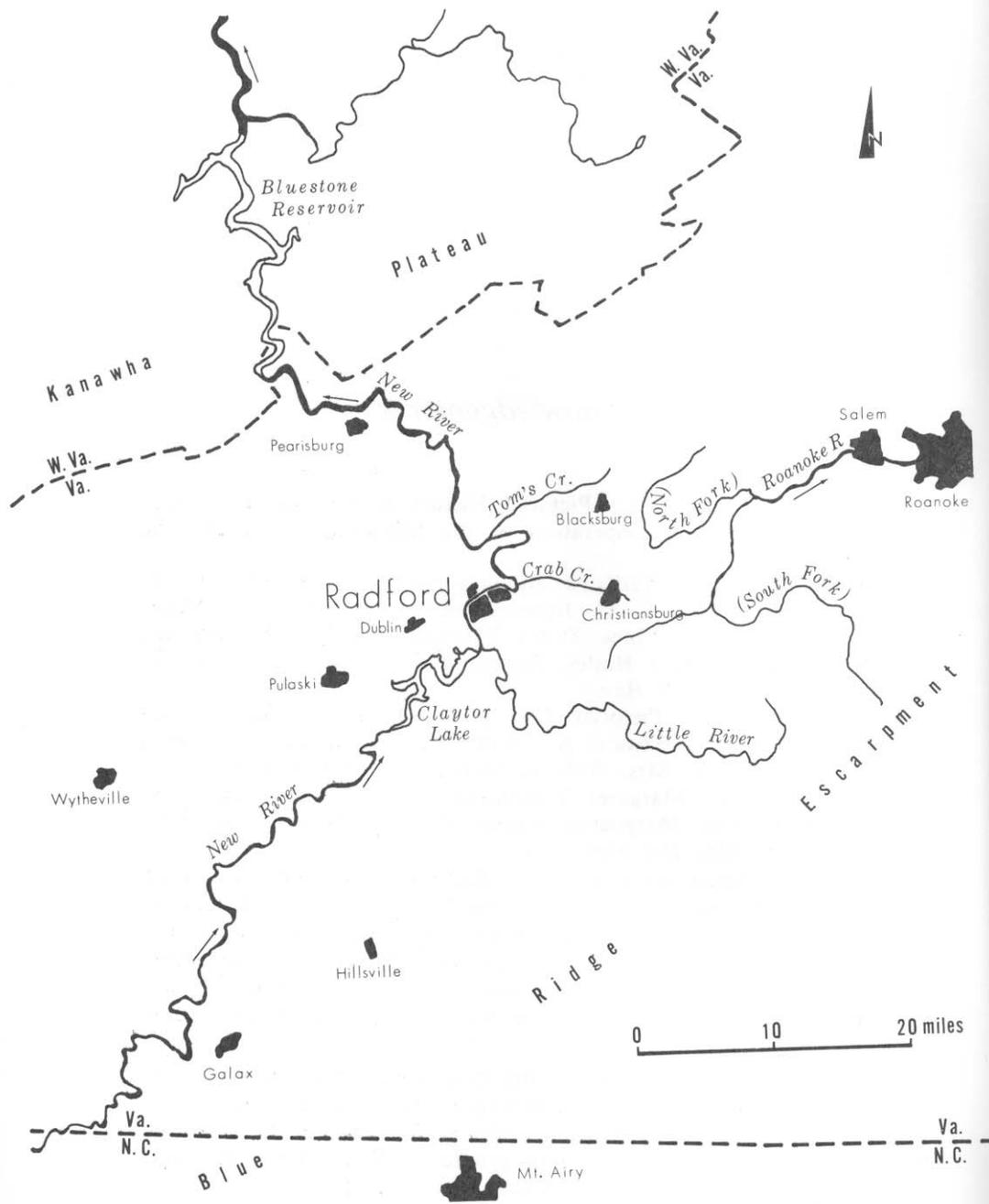
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Radford's geographical location in the New River Valley

Pre-History and Explorations

The history of Radford begins long before there was a city, or even a settlement in the area. First there was a geological history of millions of years, then a prehistoric Indian history of thousands of years, and finally a history of the white settlement that has lasted only a little more than two hundred years. Geologic, prehistoric or recent, few areas in the United States have had a more interesting history than Radford. Whether it was known as Dunkard's Bottom, Ingles Ferry, Lovely Mount, Central Depot, or Radford City the local area has been home for thousands of good citizens from the 1740's to the present day.

Geologically speaking, the area is an ancient one. Not only are the Appalachian mountains older than the Rockies or the Andes, but the New River is older than the Mississippi, or even the Ohio. Millions of years ago the southern Appalachian area was a rolling plain, across which the ancestor of the New River flowed northward to an inland sea in the present Great Lakes area. In time, tremendous changes took place, and the Appalachian mountains began to rise. The rise was so moderate, over hundreds of thousands of years, that the river cut through the mountains as they rose. Today the New River as it flows through Radford is at approximately 1740 feet above sea level, with much of the city and surrounding area rising two to three hundred feet higher. As it has meandered through the ages, the New River has left fairly wide flood plains in several places, and at Radford the city is situated on two to three levels of former flood plains.

The New River has played a geographic as well as a geological role in the history of the Radford area. In most cases rivers served the explorer and settler as means of transportation inland and westward as he sought more and better land. The New River, on



The Radford area as it probably looked to the first explorers.

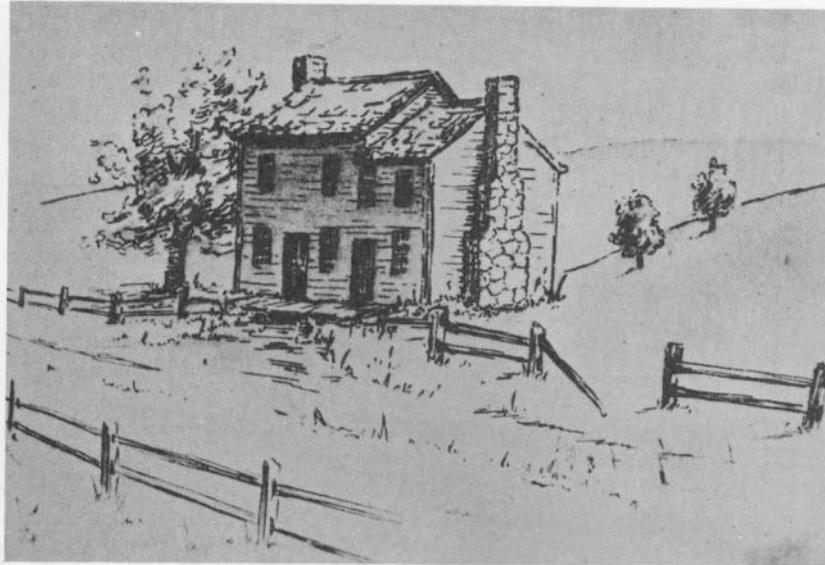
the other hand, crossed the westward route almost at right angles. It was a fairly large river and it had to be crossed by the frontiersmen following trails to Kentucky and Tennessee. Hence its fords, and later its ferries and bridges, would prove vital elements in the westward movement. For this reason the early location of Pepper's Ferry to the north and Ingles' Ferry to the south meant that the future Radford area would be strategically located for settlement long before much of the southwestern Virginia area. Throughout its history the New River has served the Radford area not so much as a means of transportation but as a barrier that had to be crossed.

The first human settlers of the Radford area were, of course, the American Indians. Just when the first Indians located in the area has never been ascertained, but it was at least 8,000 to 10,000 years ago. Almost every flat plain along the river has at some time been the site of an Indian village. Indian corn and vegetables flourished in the alluvial soil, and the surrounding forests supplied plenty of game. The river furnished fish, which the Indians probably caught with primitive weirs. It is probable that not one but several distinct Indian cultures flourished in the area over the centuries, but at the time of the arrival of the first settlers in the eighteenth century there were no permanent Indian habitations in the Virginia segment of the New River Valley. Instead, several tribes used the area as a hunting ground, and hunting paths crisscrossed the area from north to south and from east to west. Two powerful tribes, the Shawnees to the northwest and the Cherokees to the southwest, considered Southwest Virginia to be a sort of neutral ground, and both hunted over it periodically and fought over it occasionally. Still another Indian group, the Senecas of the powerful Iroquois Confederation of New York, also laid claim to the area, and sometimes sent hunting and warring expeditions down into the southern Appalachians. Early settlers often pointed out what they considered to be the ruins of Indian towns or forts, but these were probably the remains of temporary stockades set up by fairly large hunting groups that ventured into the area. For some fifty years the early settlers were harassed by sporadic raids from the surrounding Indians, but by the 1790's this threat had passed. The Indian trails became roads and then highways and a few Indian place names are still found on the map. Aside from these reminders, the only remains of the Indian era are the thousands of artifacts, usually hidden beneath the soil and awaiting the archaeologist's spade.

Occasional white visitors undoubtedly came to the New River vicinity of Radford long before there was any permanent settlement. There is a strong tradition that Abraham Woods, a substantial resident of the Petersburg area, visited the New River valley in the early 1650's and gave the name of "Woods River" to what



Highway 81, as seen from Cumberlea, shows how man has changed the area landscape



An artist's sketch of Lovely Mount Tavern

would later be called the New. There is no documentary proof of this exploration, but there is definite evidence of a trip to the Radford vicinity in 1671 by two men sent out by Abraham Woods. These early visitors were Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam (sometimes spelled Fallowes), who reached the New River just north of Radford on September 13, 1671. They found evidence of prior visits by Europeans who had carved letters on trees. Batts and Fallam traveled northward down the New River apparently as far as the Narrows before their restless Indian guides forced them to turn back over the mountains to the headwaters of the Roanoke. In the description of their trip, the two explorers described the area of the "horseshoe bottoms" downriver from Radford as "rich ground and brave meadows" surrounded by "curious rising hills." Reaching a high point, probably on Big Walker Mountain, they described the prospect to the southward as "a curious prospect of hills like waves raised by a gentle breeze of wind rising one upon another." Henceforth, for more than half a century, the New River valley was seen only by scattered bands of Indians and an occasional fur trader.

After Batts and Fallam the next serious exploration of the area came in the 1740's. In 1742, Peter Salley who lived at a frontier outpost near Natural Bridge obtained permission from the pro-

vincial Virginia government to explore the "western waters." With a group of his neighbors he traveled from the headwaters of the James across to the North Roanoke and thence over the mountains to the New River in northwestern Montgomery County. He never reached the immediate vicinity of Radford, but his visit did stimulate interest in the area, and quite probably hastened the first settlements. Whatever the cause, settlement did reach the New River both below and above Radford in the 1740's, although the exact date is uncertain. In essence, the settlement of the New River area was merely an extension of the settlement of the Great Valley of Virginia, coming down the Shenandoah, past the upper James and Roanoke valleys, and over the divide.

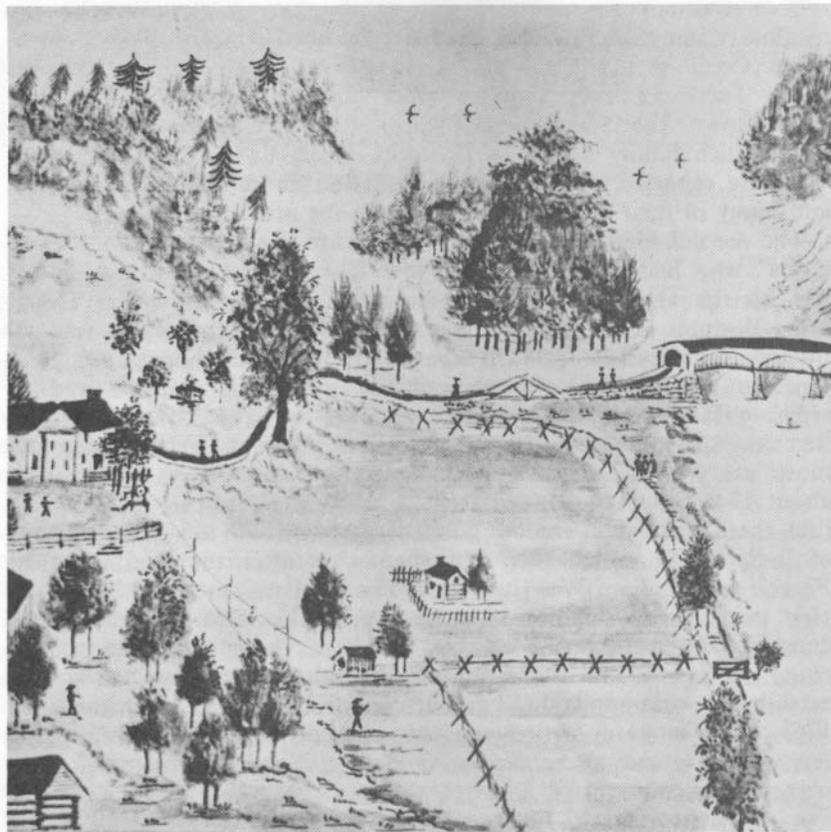
First Settlements

Two German groups were among the first settlers in the immediate vicinity of Radford. Just to the north, in the Price's Fork-Toms Creek area, there were German settlers possibly as early as 1743. These German families were mostly Lutherans who had come down the Shenandoah valley from Pennsylvania, and included such family names as Harmon, Price, Long, Shell and Wall. They are reported to have had a Lutheran church as early as 1750, and many of their descendants still live in the area.

The second German group were Seventh Day Baptists or "Dunkards" who had arrived on the New River about 1745 and settled just up the river from Radford in what became known as Dunkards Bottom. They called their settlement "Mahanaim" and although other settlements of their sect lived a communal existence in dormitories, the New River group apparently lived in separate family units scattered over a fairly large area. The settlement was never stable, with settlers arriving and leaving almost every year. Samuel Stalnaker, for example, arrived there about 1746, but had left for settlement on the Holston by 1750. At first the Dunkards were on good terms with the occasional bands of Indians who visited their settlement, but after the coming of the French and Indian War in the 1750's, Indians attacked the frontier settlements indiscriminately, and the Dunkards suffered considerably. As a result of this, many of them moved to the vicinity of Salem, North Carolina, where the Moravians had a well established community and others returned to Pennsylvania. By 1763, the Dunkard settlement had generally dispersed, although a few of them, may have remained in the New River area as permanent residents.

Another stimulus to settlement in the New River valley came from eastern land speculators and developers. The system of obtaining large grants of land on condition of surveying it and securing a stipulated number of settlers had begun in the Northern Neck of Virginia and proceeded down the Shenandoah Valley

to the upper James and Roanoke. The Woods River Land Company was organized by Col. James Patton and others in 1745, to obtain and settle landgrants on the Woods or New River. His agent, John Buchanan, reached the Dunkard Bottom settlement on October 17, 1745, and legalized the grants of land to the settlers there. In 1748, Dr. Thomas Walker passed through the New River settlements on an exploratory trip that took him farther into southwest Virginia, leaving his name on Walker Mountain and Walker Creek. As a result of this trip, another group was formed, including Col. Patton and Dr. Walker, and known as the Loyal Land Company. On July 12, 1749, this company obtained from the Governor and Council permission to survey and settle an immense area of some 800,000 acres stretching from the eastern



Ingles Ferry Bridge as painted by the artist Ed Beyer in the 1850's



A two-story log cabin, dating from the early 1800's, near the site of Haven's Mill on Plum Creek

branches of the New River to the headwaters of the Tennessee. Dr. Walker was a physician, scientist, frontiersman and businessman who made his home in Albemarle County. After obtaining the land grant, he made a second trip to explore the area, and this time passed on along what would become known as the Wilderness Trail, through Cumberland Gap and into Kentucky. Back in the New River area, the Loyal Company's agents, usually Col. James Patton or John Buchanan, made arrangements with the earlier settlers, validating their titles to already settled lands. To aid the settlements on the "western waters" the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1746 authorized roads from the South Fork of Roanoke to Dunkards Bottom and from North Fork of Roanoke to Adam Harman's on the New River. Again, in 1752, the legislature offered freedom from taxes for ten years to all who would settle west of the divide. Connelly's Run was probably named for James Conley who in 1749 laid off the road from the South Roanoke to the New River. Plum Creek had also received its name by this time, probably from the wild plums along its banks.

The Ingles family, who would later establish Ingles' Ferry just south of Radford, moved along with the Draper family to Draper's Meadows, near the present site of Blacksburg, about 1750. William Ingles, one of Thomas Ingles' sons, was married to Mary Draper, and on July 30, 1755, the famous Draper's Meadow Massacre took place. A band of Indians, presumably Shawnees, descended on the little settlement, killed several persons including Col. Patton, and carried Mary Draper Ingles away into captivity.



Another nineteenth century cabin near the site of the Taylor home, Rockford, across the river from Radford

She was later able to escape and make a dramatic return to the New River settlements. William and Mary Ingles later settled at the site of Ingles' Ferry, just down the river from Dunkards Bottom, and by the late 1750's had begun operating a ferry across the river. A charter from the legislature for this ferry was obtained in 1762. William Ingles died in 1782, but his wife lived until 1815.

The American Revolutionary Era

By the 1770's, the New River area was becoming, for a frontier zone, rather well settled. Over 224 tracts of land had been sold by the Loyal Land Company in the New River valley, although not all of them had been settled. Col. William Christian had acquired lands in the Dunkards Bottom area, and soon became one of the area's leading citizens. In 1774 he and Capt. William Ingles led the militiamen from the valley to take part in "Lord Dunmore's War" against the Indians on the Ohio. This resulted in the Battle of Point Pleasant near the mouth of the Kanawha on the Ohio, and quietened that sector of the Indian frontier for several years. In 1775, as leading citizens of southwest Virginia gathered at Fort Chiswell to sign the Fincastle Resolves, Christian and Ingles again represented the New River area. These famous Resolves noted that the signers were loyal to King George III, but were

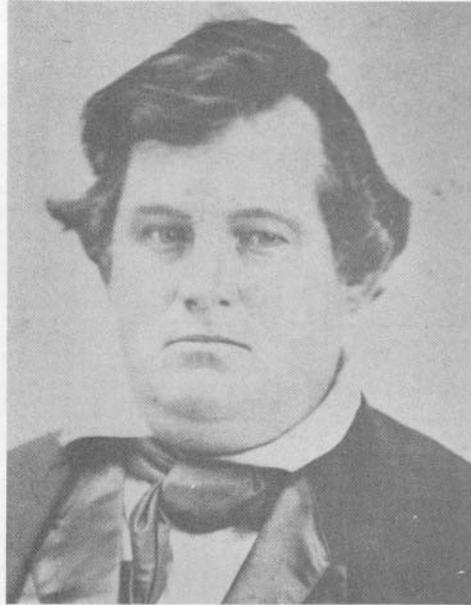
determined to preserve their rights and liberties, by war if necessary.

Although no events of a military nature took place directly in the Radford area during the American Revolution, the citizens there were involved in several military actions. Under Christian, Ingles, Col. William Preston and Col. William Campbell, New River men took part in expeditions against the Cherokees in 1776, against the Tories in 1779, to the Battle of King's Mountain in 1780, and to the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in 1781. In 1779, Ingles Ferry had an important visitor when Gen. Henry Hamilton, who had been captured in Illinois by Gen. George Rogers Clark, passed there on his way to Williamsburg as a prisoner. Hamilton was a notorious British commander, greatly hated by the Americans because he had armed and encouraged Indians for raids on the Ohio frontier.

After the Revolution, the area was relatively peaceful and new settlers arrived constantly. Ingles' Ferry was a particularly busy place as settlers on their way to Kentucky and Tennessee passed over the Wilderness Trail. A tavern had been opened in 1772, and in the ensuing years a blacksmith shop, general store and other businesses opened there. At times as many as 30 or 40 wagons and teams might be found there on a single night. Many famous visitors are known to have spent the night there. In addition to George Rogers Clark and his British captive, William Clark and Meriwether Lewis also stopped at Ingles' Ferry in 1804 on their way to St. Louis and their expedition to the Pacific. In later years Andrew Jackson stopped there several times on his trips between Nashville and Washington.

At the time of the first settlements, the Radford area was in Augusta county, which had been formed in 1745. In 1770, most of the area west of the Blue Ridge was formed into Botetourt County, and from this in turn Fincastle County was formed. Again, in 1776, Fincastle County disappeared from the map, and the Radford area became a part of Montgomery County. The area now inside the Radford city limits had few residents during the Revolution, and much land in the vicinity had been granted to non-residents. John Mills and Francis Riley had grants of land by the 1750's, and James Addair owned 880 acres across the New River from the mouth of Connelly's Run. In 1786 the Montgomery County Court authorized him to open a "bridle way" or road from Pepper's Ferry across the Horseshoe Bend by his house and thence over the New and along Connelly's Run westward. This was apparently a popular road because in 1791 he petitioned the legislature for a permit to operate a ferry across the New River near the mouth of the Run. He received this permission in 1796, and by this time another road, from Back Creek in Pulaski County to Christiansburg, also crossed at Addair's Ferry. Other family

*Dr. John Blair Radford,
for whom the city was
named*



names in the Radford area before 1800 included Craig, Bingham, Haven, Taylor, Penner, Skaggs, Cassiday, Taylor, Trigg, Wall, Wiley, and Sallust.

The Early Nineteenth Century

The early nineteenth century saw the Radford area still sparsely settled. What is now Fairlawn, then known as the Upper Horseshoe, passed from the hands of the Addairs to John McCandless Taylor about 1817, and his home "Rockford" stood in the middle of his large holdings. Other members of the Taylor family owned land on the East Radford side of the river, including the "Race Path" where horse races were held. In 1812, men from the area again marched off to war, this time under Col. James Patton Preston, to fight the British in Canada. Several local men took part in the Battle of Lundy's Lane in 1813, and Col. Preston was wounded there.

Among the prominent residents of Radford in the 1830's were Dr. John Blair Radford and Col. Edward Hammet, both of whom constructed rather imposing residences in that decade. Dr. Radford was a physician who had married a grand-daughter of John Taylor, and built his home "Arnheim" just west of Connelly's Run in 1838. Col. Hammet, farmer and school teacher, married a daughter of James Craig, and built his home near the river in East



Arnheim, the home of Dr. Radford, built in 1838. Photo taken about 1886

Radford. Few other homes were built inside the present city limits before the coming of the railroad in the 1850's, but it is interesting to note that descendants of these two families still live in the city.

The area that was to become Radford was known in the early nineteenth century as "Lovely Mount," from the ridge just east of Connelly's Run. The area further south, however, around Ingles Ferry was on the main road, and it was here that the first settlement of any size grew up. Closer by, on Plum Creek, the Bingamin family had built a home and mill in the 1790's. William Haven (Heavin) bought this mill in the early nineteenth century, while his brother John bought land from the Trigg family along the stagecoach road and opened a tavern there. This "Lovely Mount Tavern" was a two-story log structure that served as both home for the Heavins and as an inn for weary travelers for many years. In time a small settlement grew up around the

Tavern, including a general store, blacksmith shop and saloon, with residences for several families and quarters for slaves. In 1827 the Heavins moved to southern Indiana, selling the tavern to William Baskerville. John Heavin III, son of William Heavin, remained behind and operated the grist mill on Plum Creek until his death in 1853.

Under the management of William Baskerville, the Lovely Mount Tavern prospered for a while, and when a post office was established there in 1836 it took the name of Lovely Mount with Baskerville as the first postmaster. The post office was moved to Ingles' Ferry in 1837, back to Lovely Mount in 1849, and finally to Central City (Radford) in 1888. In 1842 the tavern and property around it were purchased by Dr. John Blair Radford. It remained a social and business center of the area until after the Civil War.

Meanwhile, at Ingles' Ferry business was so good that in 1842 Thomas Ingles built a bridge to replace the ferry. The bridge was 28 feet wide, 20 feet above the water, and 600 feet long. Tolls were still charged, and at times the income from them ran as high as \$1000 a month. This bridge operated until 1864 when it was burned during the Civil War. In 1846, men from the New River area followed Col. James F. Preston into the Mexican War. None of the local soldiers took part in major battles in the war, but several died of disease and accidents during the year they were away from home.

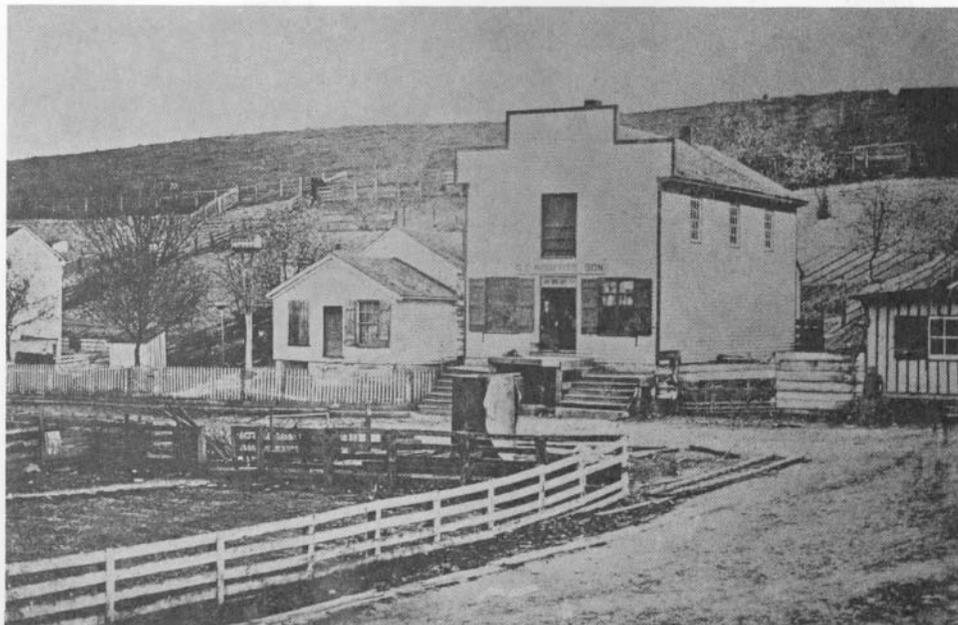
Near the Lovely Mount Tavern, on the Stage Coach Road as it was then called, a red brick church was built in the 1840's. Long known as the Lovely Mount Church, its congregation was founded in 1835 by a group of Presbyterians led by Edward Hammet. Dr. Radford gave land for the church, and other denominations were allowed to hold meetings there on occasion. This church remained a prominent one in the area until long after the establishment of Radford City. Otherwise, the area along the New River from Ingles' Ferry to Plum Creek remained a sparsely settled farming community until the coming of the railroad in the 1850's.

As early as the 1830's Virginians had been thinking of reaching the Ohio valley and tapping its lucrative trade by means of a canal from the James River to the New or Kanawha. To this end a canal was actually built from Lynchburg to the Blue Ridge, but the difficulties of the terrain and the coming of the Panic of 1837 virtually put an end to the hopes of its builders. Instead the transportation interests now turned to railroads. The Virginia and Tennessee Railway company was incorporated in 1839, to build a road from Lynchburg to Knoxville and the southwest, but it made only slow progress due to lack of capital and the tremendous engineering difficulties involved. It was not until 1854 that the railroad reached the New River near Lovely Mount, and as this was about half-

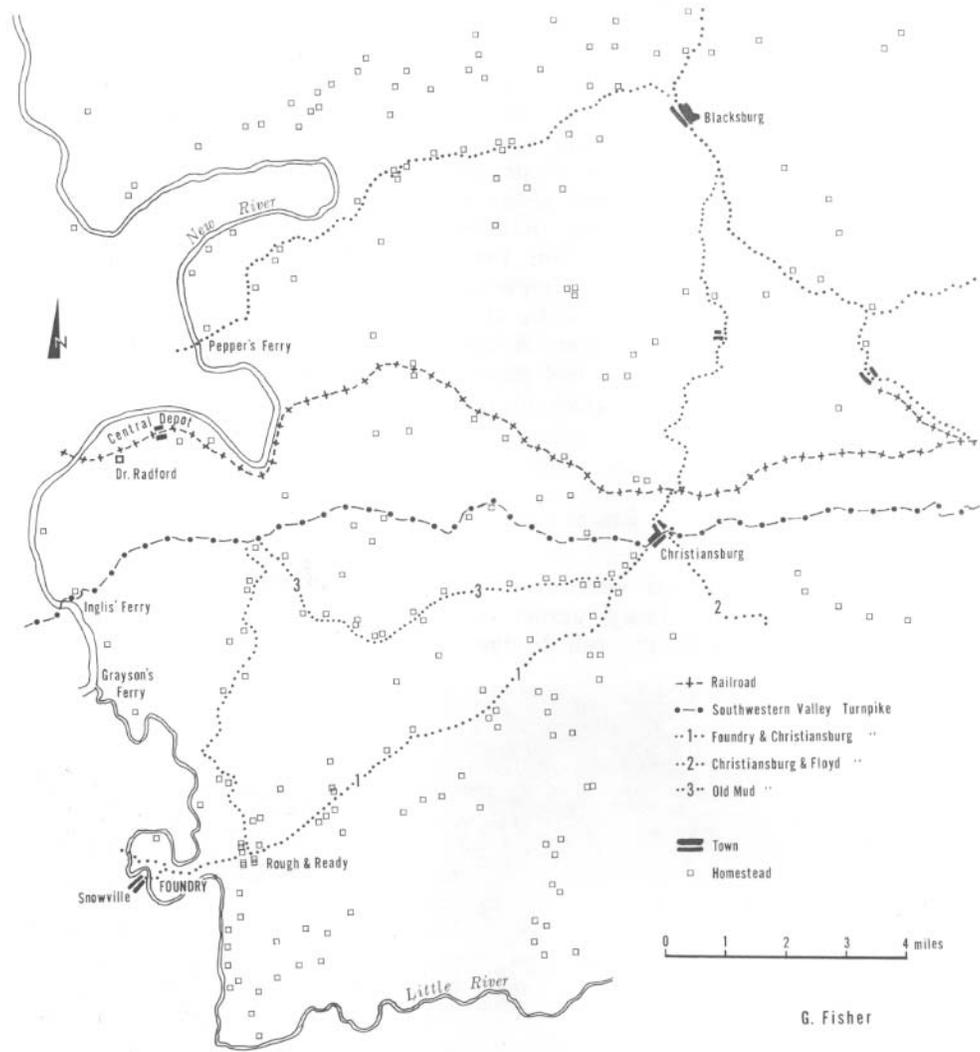
way between Lynchburg and Bristol, it was decided to build railroad repair shops there. The railroad station there was called Central Depot, with a population in 1854 of 30. The first train reached Central on June 1, 1854, but it was two years later before regularly scheduled trains began to run. By this time there were over 100 people living in Central Depot, where the railroad had built a station, a roundhouse, repair shops, and homes for the workmen. There was also a tavern and restaurant operated by James Smith, and a general store belonging to George E. Roberts. Central soon began to take trade away from the Lovely Mount Tavern about two miles away. As a town it grew only slowly, but it did serve as a shipping point for the produce of the surrounding area, largely, tobacco, salt meat and lumber. A school was organized in Central in 1856, but it had only a few pupils and no permanent home for several years, meeting at times in the freight depot for want of a better place.

Era of the Civil War

The Civil War years were eventful ones for the Radford area. The railroad and its bridge across the New River became very important, as was also the toll bridge at Ingles' Ferry. These were



G. E. Roberts' store, East Radford, in the 1870's



The Radford area in the Civil War

important elements on the main road from Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, to the Confederate southwest that stretched from Tennessee to Texas. There were several threats to the railroad and the bridges and the latter were finally destroyed in 1864, partly by retreating Confederates and partly by advancing Union forces. On May 9, 1864 the Battle of Cloyd's Farm was fought in neighboring Pulaski County, and the victorious Union forces proceeded to the west side of the New River from which they shelled the railroad buildings and private homes in Central. This was when Arnheim, the home of Dr. John Blair Radford, was hit by artillery fire. Three regiments of Virginia Infantry were then stationed in Radford, and they returned the Union fire. The Union forces under Generals George Crook and William Averill bypassed Central, with part of them crossing the river at Ingles' Ferry and part at Pepper's Ferry. The railroad bridge was burned at this time, but it was repaired and back in use before the end of the war.

In the very last days of the war another Union force invaded Montgomery County, this time from North Carolina through Carroll and Floyd Counties. Christiansburg was occupied on April 8, 1865 by General George Stoneman, one day before General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. In fact, a skirmish was fought not far from Ingles' Ferry on April 12, three days after the surrender but before the news had been received. A detachment of Union troops attempting to join Stoneman skirmished with a local Confederate unit at the Ferry, and then a more serious conflict took place at Seven Mile Tree, on the road from Christiansburg to Ingles' Ferry. Capt. G. C. Junkin, of the Confederate troops, was considered to be the last Virginian wounded in the Civil War, being shot in the arm in this battle.

Radford area men served in several Confederate units during the Civil War, including the Fourth Virginia Infantry, the Preston Guards Cavalry unit, the 36th and 54th Virginia Infantry, and the 25th Virginia Cavalry. Three Ingles served in the 25th Cavalry, for example, and two of Dr. Radford's sons, William Moseley and John Taylor, were killed in action. William Moseley Radford had organized the New River Grays, a cavalry unit, early in the war.

As most of the remainder of the state, Central Depot was slow in recovering from the war. The material damage to the railroad bridge was repaired, but the bridge at Ingles' Ferry was not replaced, and instead the ferry resumed operations and continued until well into the twentieth century. There were only 14 houses clustered around the railroad station at Central as late as 1871. Once again, however, it was railroad activity that spurred a rebirth of prosperity for the area. General G. C. Wharton, a son-in-law of Dr. Radford, had seen action in Tazewell County and the neighboring areas of West Virginia during the war, and had noted



General G. C. Wharton

the evidences of huge resources of coal in the area. Settling in Central after the War, he represented Montgomery County in the Legislature where, in 1871, he secured a charter for the "New River Railroad, Mining and Manufacturing Company." This company was empowered to build a railroad down the New River from Central to the coal-bearing areas, to mine coal and iron, and to bring out the ores for sale. The original organizers of the company, which included several area leaders as well as major Virginia political figures, eventually lost control of the company to northern financiers but the railroad was finally built and it did much to encourage development of the middle New River valley. Unfortunately, the Depression of 1873 came along, and it was not until 1883 that the first carload of Pocahontas coal rolled up the river to Central. By 1887 the mines and railroad were very busy, and almost a million tons of coal were shipped out in that year.

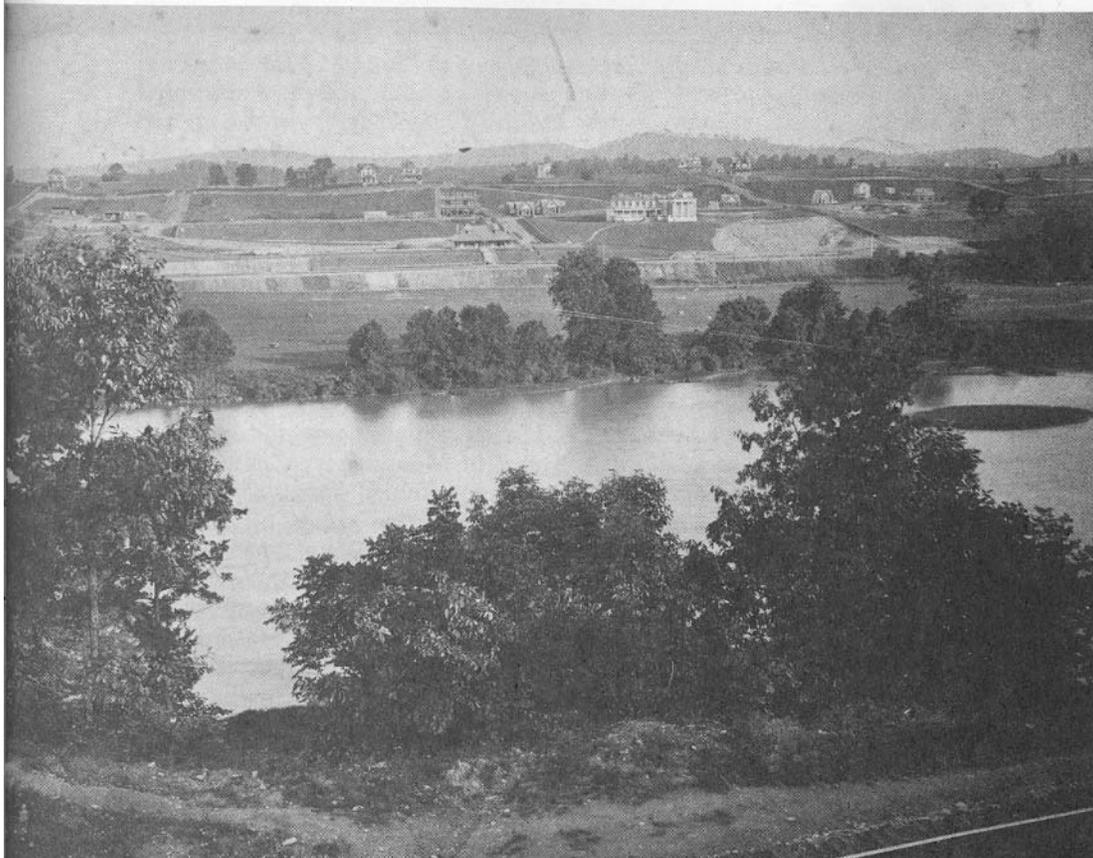
The building of the spur line to the new coal fields down the river sparked an era of rapid development. Not only did Central grow rapidly, but the area to the west of Connelly's Run also began to fill up, and across the river the station for the new branch line was named "New River." To add to the boom, there was excitement over the development of iron mines in the Cripple Creek area up the river. Another branch line was built in this direction in the 1880's, eventually reaching Galax. To provide homes for the new settlers who came during the boom, several land develop-

ment companies were formed and sub-divisions were planned on both sides of the river. The Radford Land and Improvement Company was one of the most active, purchasing land from the heirs of Gen. Wharton and Dr. Radford and developing much of what was to become West Radford. Other land development companies in the area were the West End Land Company, the New River Land and Improvement Company, the South Radford Land Company, and the Radford Development Company, the latter with J. Hoge Tyler, a future Governor as its president. These companies purchased lands from the Ingles, the Radford heirs, and from Capt. Stockton Heth, who had married a daughter of Col. Hammet. With these companies promoting industry as well as homes, a number of new companies located at Central and New River, including brick works, lumber companies, an iron foundry, a knitting mill and a stone quarry. The railroad enlarged its repair maintenance operations in the area, and the population grew from 300 in 1880 to nearly 3,000 in 1890.

Radford Becomes a City

✓ Obviously such a rapidly growing area had all the requirements for an incorporated town. In 1885, Central City was incorporated

West Radford as seen from across the river, 1890's





West Radford, after the building of the bridge, 1890's

by the legislature, with boundaries entirely east of Connelly's Run. In 1887, a new act of the legislature changed the name of the town to Radford, in honor of Dr. John Blair Radford, but left the boundaries the same. In 1888, the post office, which had been located at the Lovely Mount Tavern for almost half a century, was moved to Radford, and the name changed. Finally, in 1892, assuming a population of 5,000 necessary for city status, the city of Radford was incorporated on January 22, 1892, and formally separated from Montgomery County. Hugh C. Preston was elected the first mayor, although George A. Sullivan had previously been mayor of the town of Radford as a part of Montgomery County.

The new charter provided for a mayor-council form of government for Radford, and divided the city into two wards along Connelly's Run. Serving with Mayor Preston were Councilmen H. P. Briggs, E. F. Gill, G. T. Kearsley, W. W. McElrath, R. J. Noell, and W. R. Roberts from the East Ward, with J. H. Washington, C. A. Bienkampen, Lewis Harvey, W. J. Kenderdine, H. H. Powers, and W. R. Wharton representing the West Ward. Arthur Roberts

*George A. Sullivan, Mayor
of Radford in the 1880's*



was Clerk of Court, Ambrose Robinson, City Treasurer, and J. W. Hopkins, Commissioner of Revenue. Among the first expenditures of the new city were funds for erecting a bridge across Connelly's Run.

A picture of Radford in the 1890's would have shown a town of about 5,000 population; it was estimated at 5643 in 1892, but the census of 1900 showed only 3344 inside the city limits. The major industries were the railroad shops and the Radford Pipe Foundry, but there were at least a dozen other smaller firms. Carson's Drug Store had opened in 1887, and the Bee Hive was the major department store. There were several hotels or inns, including La Belle Inn in East Radford and the Hoffman House in West Radford. There were no paved streets in 1890, but those that existed were described as broad and well-graded. The first telephone was installed in the city in 1891. There was a waterworks for the town privately owned and the Radford Electric Light and Power Company began operating in July, 1893. A street railway began operating in the same month, running from the depot in East Radford to the iron foundry in West Radford. It belonged to a corporation formed by J. L. Radford, William Ingles, J. Hoge Tyler and others. The early 1890's were boom years, and businessmen from the North were financially involved in the industrial promotion of the area. These outside interests were indicated by a letter written in 1892 from the "Radford Land and Improvement Co." with headquarters in Philadelphia, to the "Radford Foundry and Pipe Co." with headquarters in Cincinnati. Unfortunately, another depression, that beginning in 1894 rather effectively put an end to this period of progress for Radford.

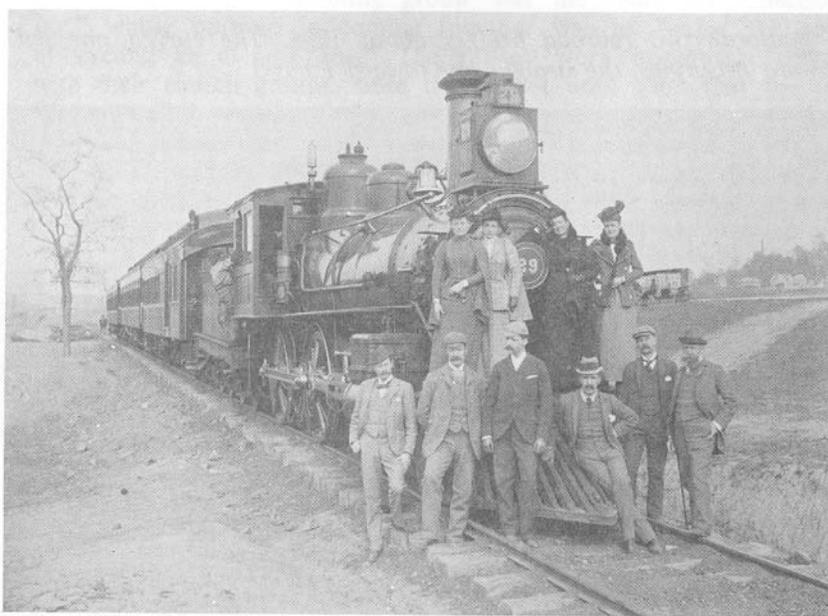


East Norwood Street scene, about 1900

Industrial progress necessitated the development of a city educational system, and much was done in this direction in the 1890's. There had been a school of sorts in Central since the 1850's, and a one-room school had been built in the 1870's across from the railroad station. It had one teacher - the first was Miss Kate Palmer - an enrollment of about 50, aged 6 to 20, and grades one to eight. This school building was burned in 1881 and once again the school met in various places until the Belle Heth Academy was completed at Third and Downey streets in 1886. This was a public school, named for the donor of the land on which it was built, Mrs. Isabella (Belle) Heth. By the 1890's there was also a school in West Radford, conducted in a building belonging to the Radford Land and Improvement Co. on the corner of Sixth and Wadsworth streets. This was usually known as the Wadsworth School; it too had eight grades, but by the 1890's it had three teachers, with H. B. Nolley as principal. To round out the educational scene there was St. Alban's School for Boys just across the river in Pulaski County.

This was opened in 1892, with about 50 dormitory students and 20 to 30 day students. Founded by George Holland Miles, it opened with a formal address by a leading literary figure of the day, Thomas Nelson Page, and soon developed into a leading preparatory school.

Although there had been Episcopal services held prior to the Civil War at Arnheim, the Radford home, the nearest place of worship before the 1870's was the Old Brick Church, then known as the Lovely Mount Church, on the road from Christiansburg to Ingles' Ferry. In 1870 a Presbyterian congregation built a frame church in East Radford, about on the site of the present Alleghany Hotel. It was called the "Union Church" since other congregations also met there at times. The Rev. John Kellogg Harris, of Floyd, served this and other Presbyterian congregations in this area in the 1870's. By this time there were also Baptist and Methodist congregations in Central, and by 1887 both of these groups had permanent buildings. By the 1890's, Christian, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Lutheran congregations had buildings in East or West Radford, or both. In 1898 the first Negro church, the First Baptist Church on Fairfax Street, was opened. Most Radford families were church goers in those days and Sunday was "go to meeting" day. By 1900 there were eight Protestant churches in the city.

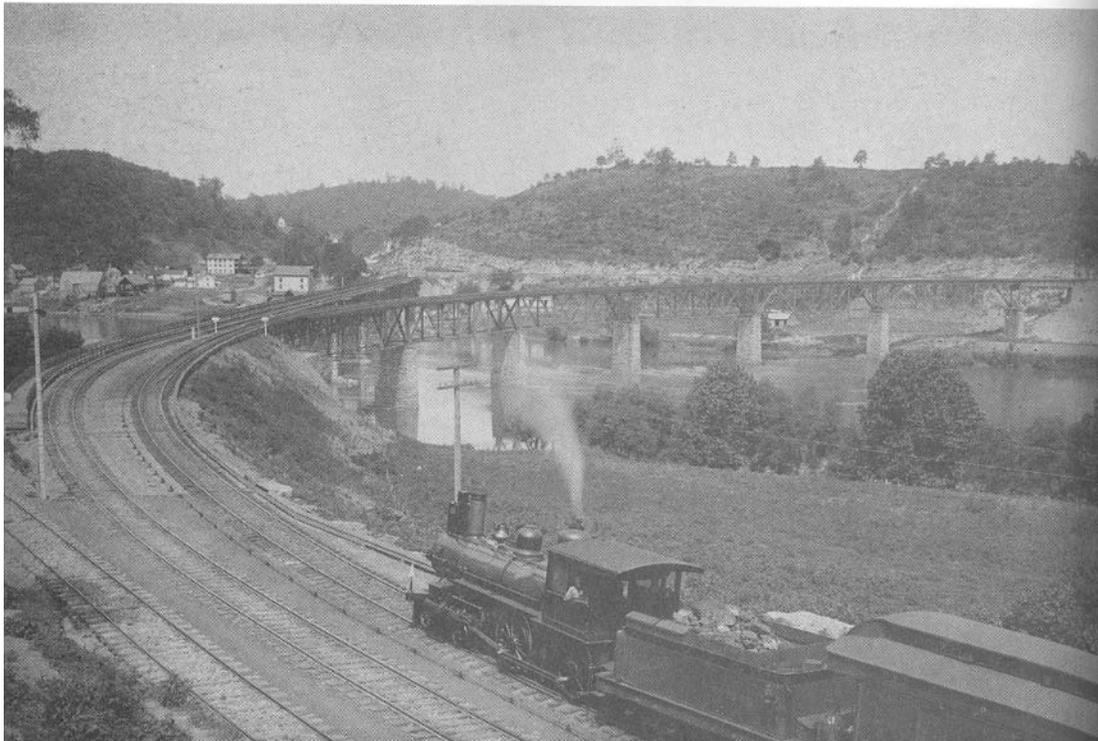


A railroad engine at Radford, about 1900

For recreation there was a variety of outlets in the 1890's. First there were the quieter diversions such as a Sunday walk in the woods or along the river. Then there were the numerous children's games, ranging from baseball in many forms to swimming in the river or ice skating in the colder winters. Hunting and fishing were still popular in almost all social and economic circles. The St. Albans boys played interscholastic games in football and baseball, and fielded winning teams for several seasons. At least once a year a circus came to town, usually holding forth on the grounds west of Tyler Avenue and south of Downey Street, after a long parade down First and Norwood. For the more culturally inspired there was an "opera house," and although operas were few if any, there were plays presented there, political speeches, and occasional speakers and entertainers on the Chautauqua circuit. At the other end of the entertainment spectrum, there were several saloons, four in East Radford alone. The last one out on East Norwood was appropriately known as the "Last Chance Saloon."

Although social and civic organizations were not as important in the 1890's as they were later to become, there were two men's groups chartered in the 1890's that bear mentioning. One

Radford's two railroad bridges about 1896. The curved one led toward Belsprings, the straight one toward Pulaski



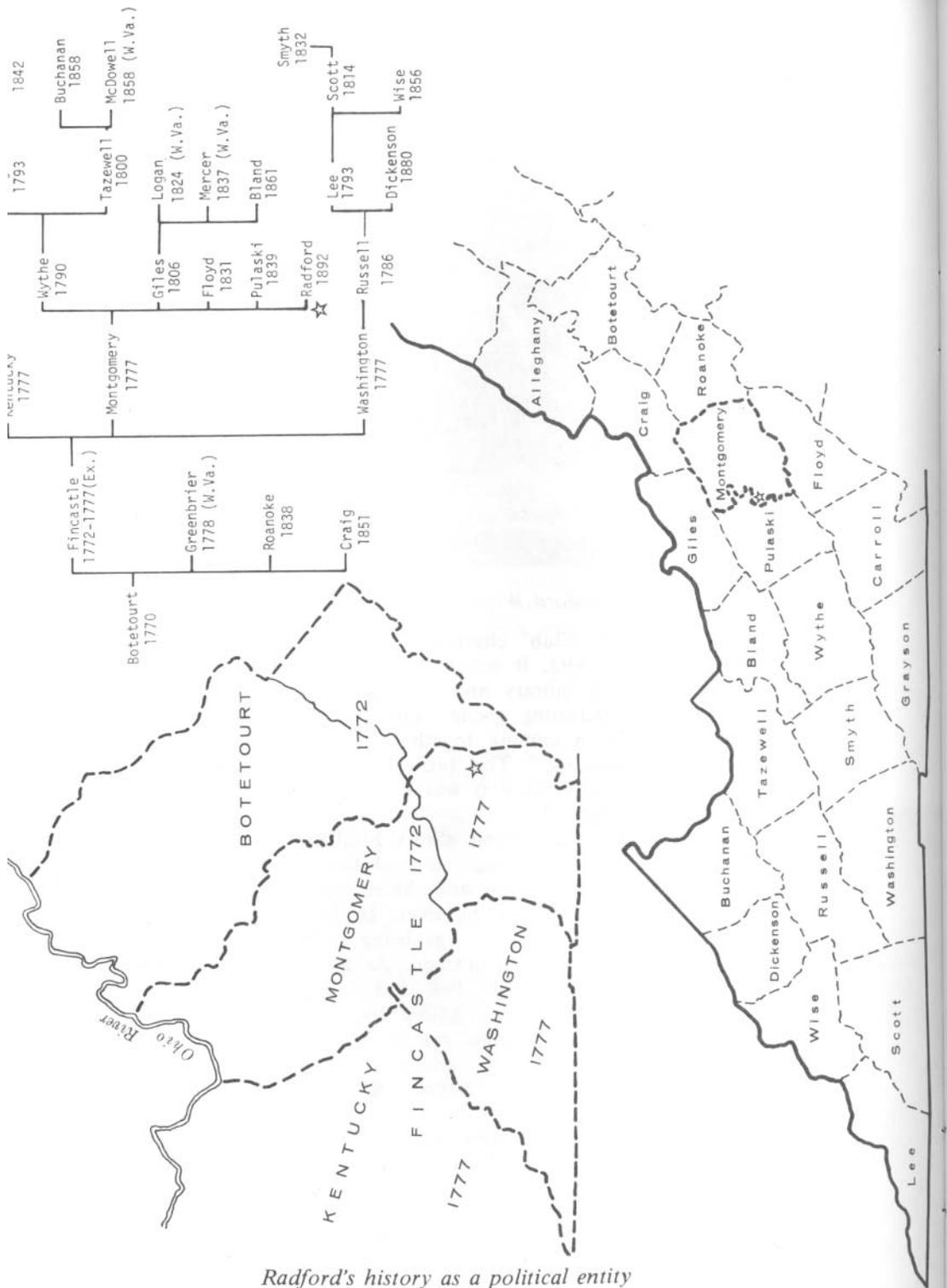


The Radford Wheelmen's Club, 1890's

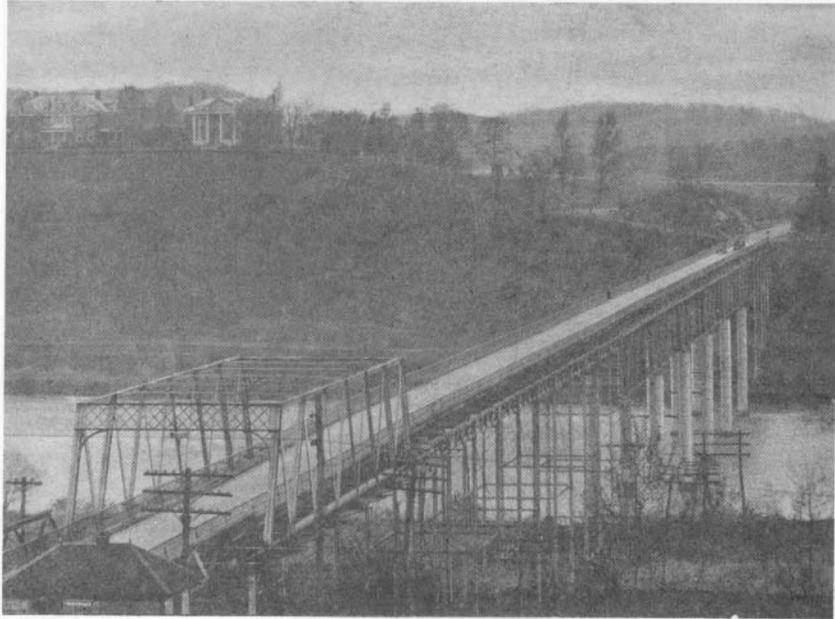
was the "Montgomery Club" chartered by R. H. Adams, William Ingles and others in 1892. It was to be social in nature, but was empowered to open a "library and reading room" if it saw fit to do so. The other interesting group was the "Radford Wheelmen, Inc." whose purpose in coming together was to "enjoy the sport of cycling as a past-time." The ladies were apparently content with their church groups, since it was not until 1903 that the first Woman's Club was founded.

Several unusual or tragic events shook Radford in the 1890's. In 1892, for example, the winter was so cold that young men of the area caught the train to Belspring and skated back to Radford along almost fifteen miles of the twisting river. In 1893 on a single day two disasters struck the city. A bridge being built across Connelly's Run collapsed, killing several workmen. At almost the same hour a hotel in West Radford caught fire, and Radford's citizens were hard pressed to decide between fighting the fire and rescuing the injured at the bridge. On Christmas eve of 1896 a fire broke out on the south side of Norwood street, and virtually the whole business district east of Third Street was burned. There was no fire department, only a voluntary bucket brigade, and it was only with much difficulty that the fire was stopped at Third Street. Shortly afterward a volunteer fire department was organized, and in 1902 this was increased to a two-man paid department, with one man and a two-wheel water cart in each ward.

There were at least two newspapers, both weeklies, established in the Radford area in the 1880's. One of these was the *Central Courier* established by R. H. Payne in 1886 and the other was the



Radford's history as a political entity



St. Alban's School for Boys, as seen from Radford, about 1900

New River Bulletin published in New River and Central after 1882, with G. C. Wharton as owner and C. W. Scott as editor. These were apparently short lived, since in the 1890's two other weeklies, the *Radford Advance* and the *Radford Enterprise* were published. The *Radford Advance* was succeeded by the *Record* in 1912, the *Journal* in 1919, and the *News-Journal* in 1928.

Among professional people in the city in the 1890's were J.W. Farmer, M.D.; George E. Cassell, lawyer and later judge; F.J. Welch, "oral and dental surgeon;" and A. Robinson, postmaster. Industrially the community leader was G. C. Wharton, and politically the man of the day was J. Hoge Tyler. Tyler worked his way up the political ladder to lieutenant governor and finally to governor of Virginia from 1898 to 1902. Tyler had built his home, Halwyck, near the top of the hill overlooking East Radford in 1892, and was prominent in business affairs of the city as well as in politics.

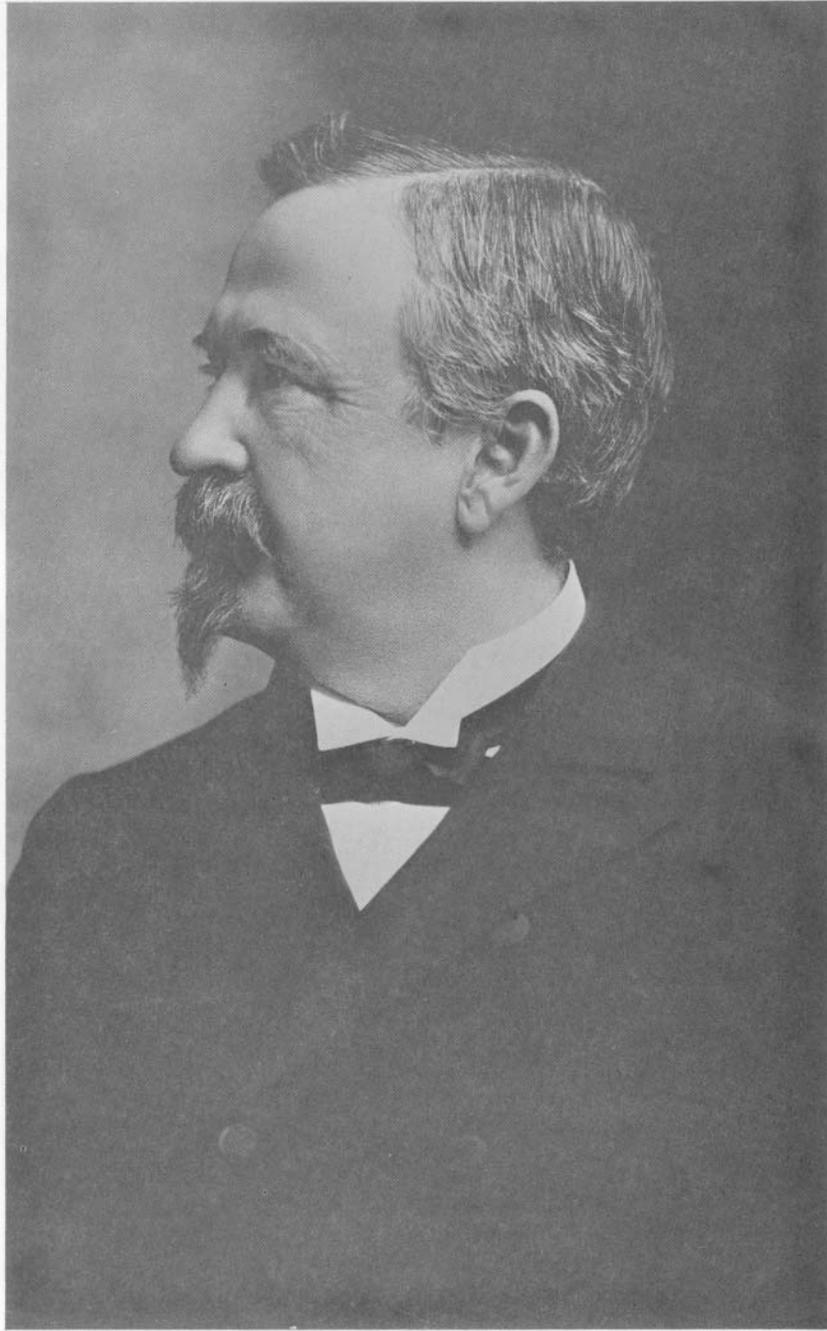
In 1898, the city was patriotically involved in the Spanish-American War, with many of the young men going off to join the army. Several boys in the senior class at Belle Heth School, including Elliott Howe, Eugene Mundy and Frank Cannady joined Company H, Second Virginia Volunteers. William Radford Wharton, as one of the four sons of Gen. Wharton, received a



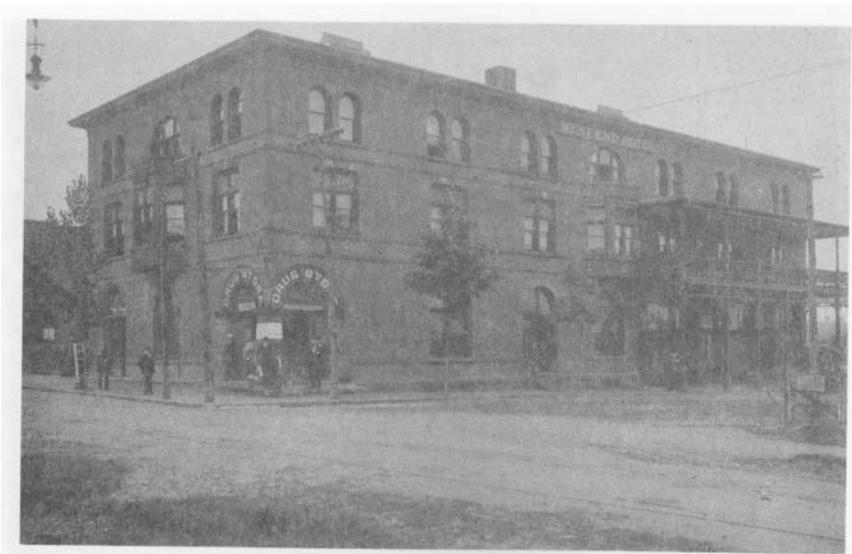
William Jennings Bryan, candidate for President in 1900, speaks at Radford

presidential commission as Captain and served for the duration of the war. Most of them got no closer to the war than the training camps of Florida, but Frank Cannady later went on to the war in the Philippines, and saw military action in putting down the "insurrection" there in 1899-1900.

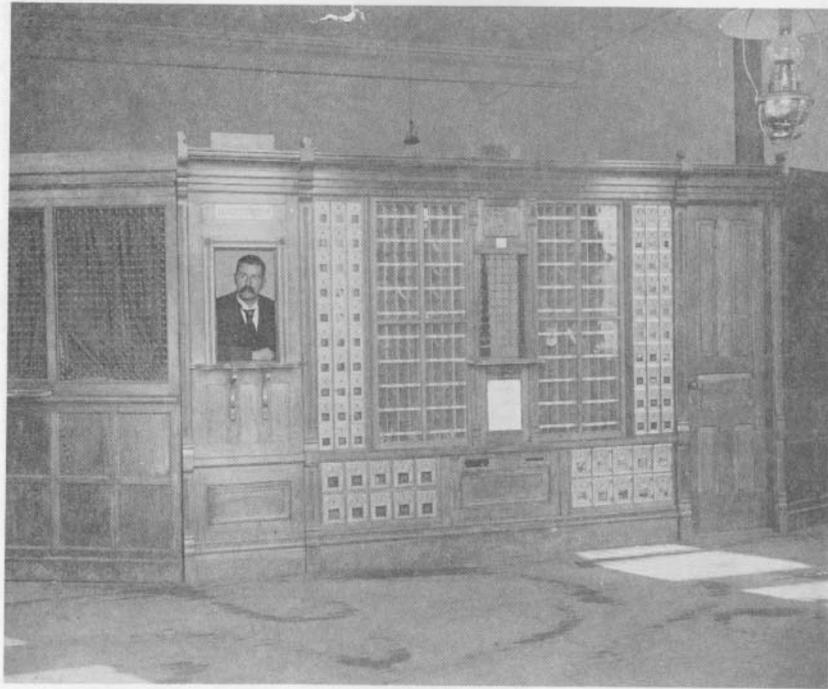
Most of the 1890's were depression years for Radford despite the auspicious beginning of the decade. The Panic of 1894 put an end to much of the expansion, and relative prosperity did not return until near the end of the century. The boom days never returned and the city actually lost population between 1890 and 1900. Instead, the new century ushered in a period of slow growth, with the population increasing from 3344 in 1900 to 4204 in 1910. Industrially there were few changes. The railroad that had been built down the west side of the river after crossing from Radford to New River on the "curved bridge," was rerouted to cross the river several miles below Radford and pick up the old road near Belspring. This left the old roadbed to be used as a public road from Radford to Belspring. The Radford Foundry had actually been closed for a year or so in the late 1890's, but it managed to reopen with new owners, and in 1905 was acquired by the Lynchburg Foundry. The Norfolk and Western Railway remained the largest employer in the city, but new businesses were formed, including the Radford Ice Manufacturing Co. in 1900, Central Lumber Co. in 1902, and a national bank in 1903.



Governor James Hoge Tyler



Radford's West End Hotel, about 1900



The Radford Post Office was located in the Hotel above



Heth House, East Norwood Street, about 1910

In education, new brick buildings were built for Belle Heth in East Radford and McHarg (named for Henry McHarg, owner of the Pipe Factory) in West Radford, with a high school established at Belle Heth. Across the river, St. Alban's continued to attract boarding students from all over the South. Several new church buildings were constructed in the decade from 1900 to 1910, and the Radford Music Club was added to the city's cultural scene. After 1906, a railroad hospital was operated for several years in La Belle Inn, which had failed as a hotel. On the other hand, George W. Miles, who had founded St. Alban's School, and taken a leading role in establishing electric and water works for the city, moved away in 1906.

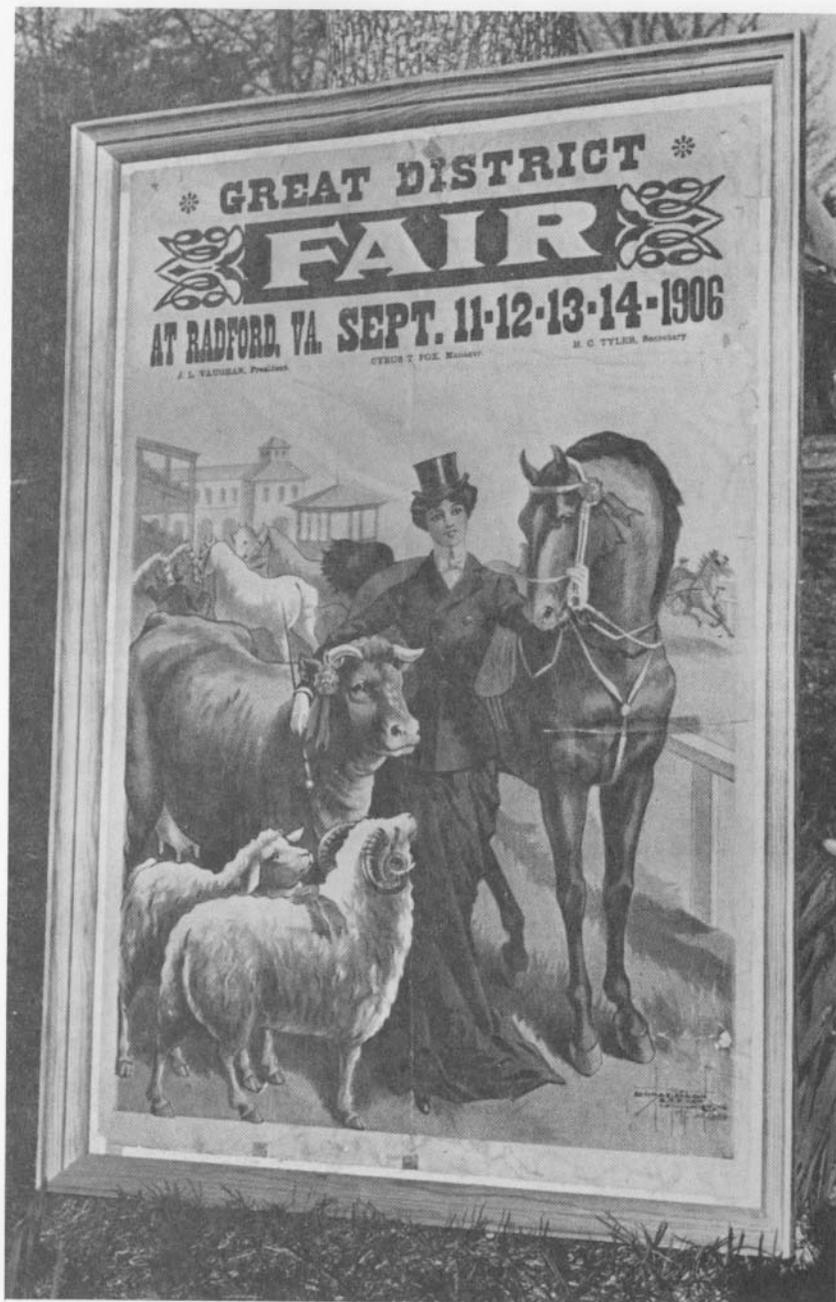
Toward the end of the decade a move was underway toward bringing a state institution of higher education to the city. State schools for the training of women teachers had been opened at Farmville in 1884, at Harrisonburg in 1908, and at Fredericksburg in 1910, but there was still a need for such an institution in Southwest Virginia, and Radford citizens were hopeful that it might be located there. A local committee consisting of Judge George Caspell, W. T. Baldwin, Robert J. Noell, George A. Sullivan, and Robert L. Jordan went to Richmond to lobby for the Radford site.



La Belle Inn, East Radford, about 1910

Charles A. Johnston, member of the legislature from Christiansburg and representing Radford, threw his support to the effort. When a legislative committee studied the proposed sites, Radford received a unanimous vote, and in 1910 the legislature established "The State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Radford." The city of Radford acquired the land from the Heth family, known as "The Grove" in the triangle between Norwood and Tyler Streets, and gave it to the state. A ten member board of supervisors were appointed to supervise the school. Some objections arose to the "industrial" part of the school's name, so in 1914 a legislative change made the name "The State Normal School for Women at Radford," and placed it, along with the other three normal schools, under a single state board of twelve members.

The new normal school was fortunate in securing the services of Dr. John Preston McConnell as its first president. Dr. McConnell was at that time serving as a member of the faculty at Emory and Henry College. He divided his time between the two schools long enough to get plans made and a building constructed, and in September, 1913, the normal school was finally opened for students. The Administration building, later known as Founders



District fairs were held regularly in Radford in the early twentieth century



A grocery store built by Max Rupe in 1902 in West Radford



Max Rupe's second store, built about 1911



The New Racket Store, West Radford, about 1910

Hall was the first building, serving as office building, classrooms and auditorium. There was no dormitory at first, so boarding students were housed in La Belle Inn, which followed its years as hotel and hospital by becoming a dormitory. Dr. McConnell brought to the new institution not only scholarly and administrative ability, but a genuine interest in the community and region that was to make him one of the most prominent citizens of southwest Virginia for the next twenty-five years. He was fortunate in securing a fine faculty for what was then a senior high school and junior college, including Dr. M'Ledge Moffett and Professor William E. Gilbert, both of whom were to survive him and continue to lead the college into the 1950's. A total of thirteen faculty members greeted 72 students on the opening day, and a grand total of five students graduated at the first commencement in 1914.

World War I and After

In other areas of education, there were more changes during the World War I decade. Belle Heth increased its high school offerings year by year until by 1913 the first four year high school graduates were produced. The first school building for Negroes was constructed in East Radford in 1912, to be joined by another in West Radford in 1920. Both were elementary schools, with only two or three teachers each. While the public schools were progressing, St. Alban's was running into financial difficulties as a



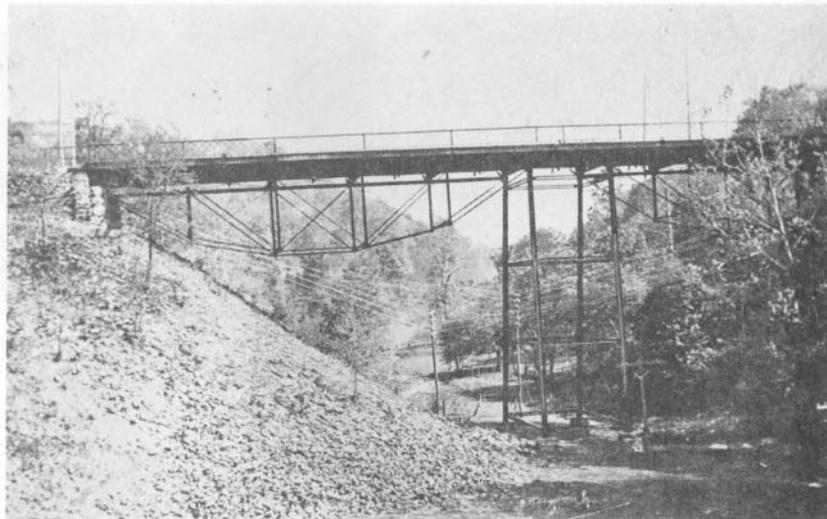
Sketch of West Radford's Railroad Station, Radford Inn in the background

private boarding school, and it was finally closed in 1916. At the same time the buildings and grounds were purchased by Dr. J. C. King who opened there St. Albans Sanatorium, a private psychiatric hospital. The city's population increased only slightly in the decade, growing from 4262 in 1910 to 4627 in 1920. The business district also changed very little, adding only a few new firms, including Radford Furniture Co. in 1916 and Jackson's Hardware in 1918. Both the railroad and the foundry continued to prosper, and in general the war decade was a prosperous one for the city.

World War I was a major era in Radford's history, as it was for the rest of the nation. The outbreak of war in Europe caused much



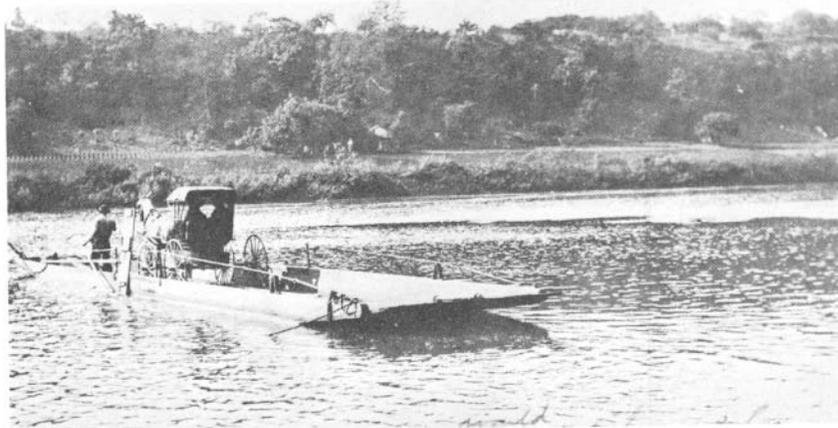
East Norwood Street scene about 1910



The bridge over Connally's Run as it was in 1906

excitement, but it was trouble on the Mexican border that caused the first Radford men to enter the services. In the spring of 1916, Company M of the Second Infantry of the Virginia National Guard, composed largely of Radford men, was ordered to the Mexican border, with Dr. J. G. Bowman as captain and Wise Worrell as lieutenant. This unit spent the period from June, 1916, to February, 1917, in Texas. Later Company M Served with the 116th Infantry, 29th Division, and with it arrived in France on June 27, 1918. It went into the trenches on August 3, and remained there until the Armistice on November 11, but not without many casualties. Among the Radford men killed in action were Lt. Elliot H. Howe, Sgts. Alfred Harvey and Jake Carper. Prominent among the survivors were Lt. Howe's brother, Capt. Daniel D. Howe, and another Radford native, Capt. Ballard Preston.

Back home the people of the city were very much aware of the war, in addition to their concern for their relatives in uniform. There were meatless days and wheatless days, bond selling drives, and Red Cross activities. Four liberty loans and a victory loan were oversubscribed by Radford investors, thanks largely to the full employment and prosperity brought on by the war. Lynchburg Foundry was particularly active with military contracts, and the railroad was having a most prosperous era. A unit of the Virginia State Volunteers known as the Radford Home Guards was organized and its members served as guards at railroad bridges and tunnels to prevent sabotage. On the campus of the Normal College, the students were busy, in addition to their normal

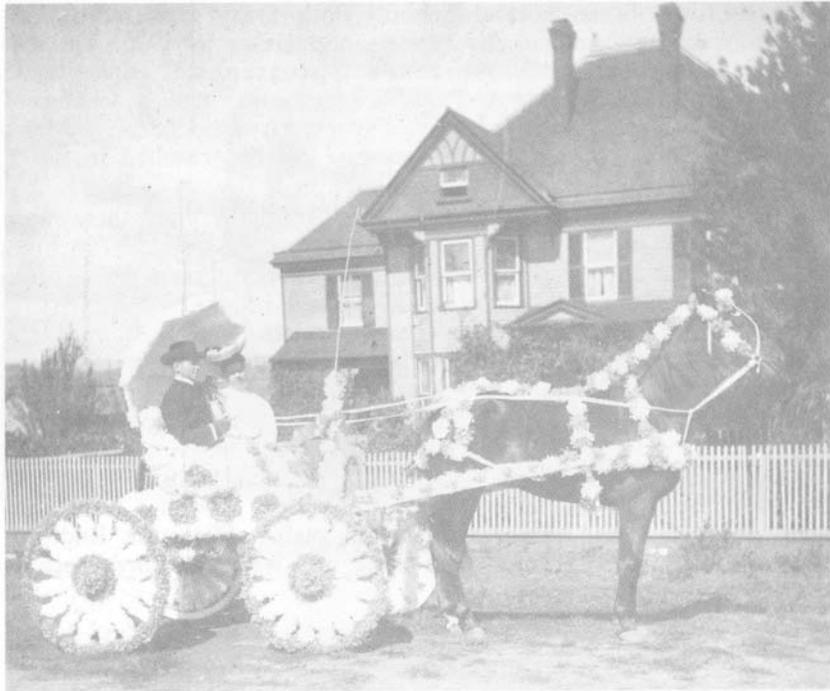


Ferry across the New River at Radford, about 1906

activities, in sewing bandages, knitting socks, and preparing gift packages to be sent to service men. Others worked with the Red Cross and took courses in first aid. Dr. McConnell, the College president, served as director of the Junior Red Cross of Virginia, in addition to other wartime obligations. Other faculty members served locally and in speaking engagements in the area, but none of them saw military service. Three of Dr. McConnell's sons enlisted, but only one, Carl McConnell in the Hospital Corps, saw overseas duty.

The news of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, brought on a citywide celebration in Radford. There was a parade down Norwood and First streets, speeches by the town's leading citizens, and patriotic songs sung by the college girls. Individual celebrations were held in the homes as soldiers returned, and many of them soon began thinking of a permanent veterans organization. Soon after the national American Legion was organized, the post in Radford was formed, taking its name from the three soldiers killed in action and becoming known as the Harvey-Howe-Carper Post. It was organized on September 3, 1919, with Hugh R. French as its first commander. A Legion Auxilliary for wives of Legionnaires was organized on February 26, 1922.

The government of the city of Radford had been, since its incorporation in 1893, the mayor-alderman type. This had been reasonably satisfactory, but the trend in city government was toward change, and by 1919, many citizens of Radford had come to prefer a city manager form of government. In a popular vote in 1920, this form of government was adopted, and Paul Murphy was employed as the first city manager. It was felt that the



A festive occasion on Grove Avenue, about 1910

management of a modern town deserved a skilled hand at the helm, and the infrequent meetings of the city council could not keep a firm hand on the constantly arising problems. At the same time the city council was reduced to three members, and J. R. Wyatt, W. E. Gilbert, and N. H. Webb were elected to these posts. Gilbert, a member of the faculty of the State Normal School, was elected mayor.

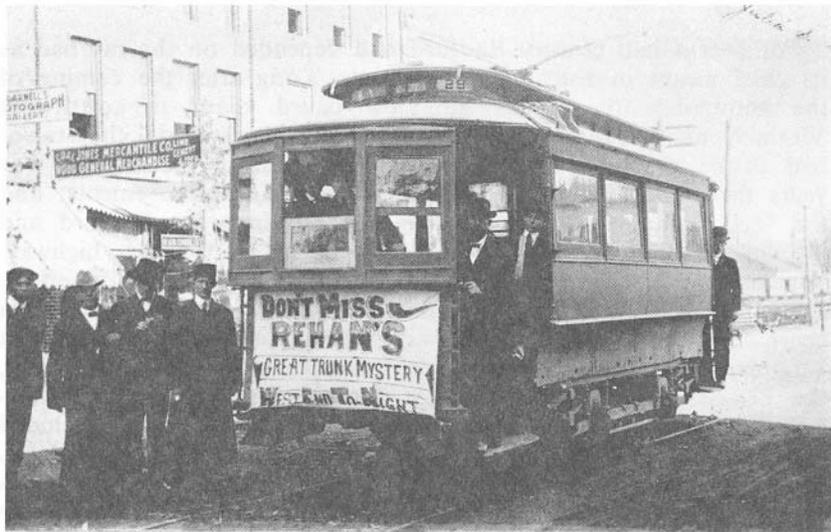
The new form of government probably aided in the settlement of an old problem facing the city. This was the rivalry between the two parts of the city - East Radford and West Radford. Although included together as one city in the original charter, there were many divisive influences. In the first place, Connelly's Run rather effectively divided the city geographically, although it was bridged on Norwood Street and forded at a lower point nearer the river without great difficulty. There were two post offices - East Radford and Radford; there were also two railroad stations - Radford and West Radford. West Radford had from its beginnings an industrial character, although many of the city's finest homes were there. East Radford at first had the major business district, although this was later challenged by West Radford, and

after 1913 the State Normal School. Both areas grew slowly, although West Radford had the edge in population by 1920. The differences, however, were more than geographical since there was a definite rivalry between the two sections, and a feeling of city unity was difficult to achieve. Particularly among the younger people of the city the rivalry was strong, and this resulted in not a few fights, particularly at the high school age.

The unification of the city came only gradually, but there were noticeable improvements in this direction in the 1920's. First, there was the change of government to the city manager system, which placed a single individual in charge of government activities in all parts of town. Next, there was the organization of the Radford American Legion post, and the construction of its headquarters near the dividing point of the city. Finally, in 1928 the placing of the new high school building on First Street near the center of the city rounded out the unifying process. Later in 1931, the railroad station in West Radford was discontinued, leaving the only station in the eastern part of the city. Also the East Radford post office was designated as the main office for Radford, with the former "Radford" post office in West Radford became the "First Street Station."



The original municipal building, corner First and Wadsworth streets, before fire destroyed the top floors



Radford's trolley, about 1910



East Radford, showing the trolley tracks

For over a half century Radford had depended on the railroad as its chief means of reaching other points. Long after the coming of the automobile there were still few paved roads in southwest Virginia, and automobile travelers venturing outside the towns had to be prepared for all emergencies. During the World War years there had been much discussion of road improvements, and the "good roads movement" slowly got on the way. Radford and its citizens were particularly interested in a federal highway, popularly called the "Lee Highway" in honor of General Robert E. Lee, that would run from Washington, D. C., to the California coast. To insure that this highway would pass through southwest Virginia, and particularly through Roanoke, Radford and Bristol, the Lee Highway Association was formed in Roanoke in February, 1919. Radford men taking a lead in the association included Judge George E. Cassell, W. E. Gilbert, and J. P. McConnell. Dr. McConnell, President of the Normal School, was very active in the group, and maintained his interest long after the road, now U.S. 11, was completed. He made the association a sort of regional chamber of commerce, promoting not only transportation, but also industrialization of the area. The completion of the Lee Highway in the 1920's did much to open up the area, stimulating trade and school development as well as industry and transportation.

Radford's public utilities had been privately owned since the 1890's, but this system was becoming both unpopular and un-



East Radford hotel about 1920

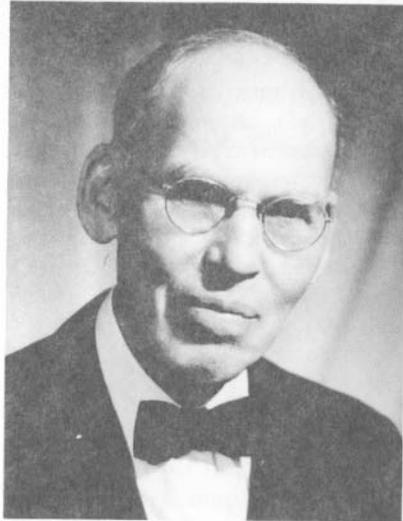
*Miss M'Ledge Mof-
fett, long time dean of
Radford College*



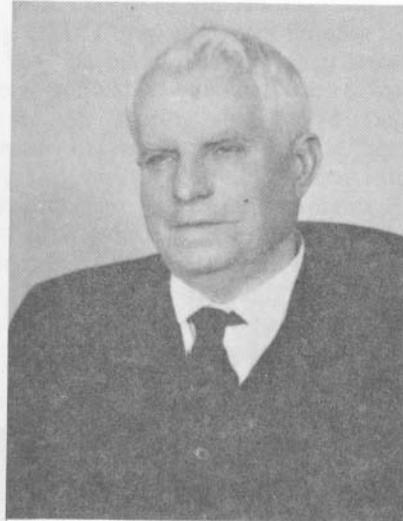
profitable to the owners by the 1920's. Consequently, in 1923, by a vote of the citizens, the City of Radford purchased the water and power companies and the street railway. The latter was later discontinued and replaced by a city-owned bus. To improve the water and power systems, a bond issue was voted, and bonds were also issued for the paving of city streets and the construction of sidewalks in the business area in 1924. The first fire truck for the city was purchased in 1922.

A number of new industries and businesses came to the city in the 1920's, and this growth was reflected in the building of many new homes, and in a population growth from 4627 in 1920 to 6227 in 1930. Among the industries were the Paul Knitting Mills (1919), the Clover Creamery (1922); and the Norfolk and Western Timber Preserving Plant (1921). The railroad itself and the Lynchburg Foundry continued to be the city's major industries. As of 1928, the city boasted fifteen industrial establishments in all, employing 980 workers, while 84 retail and wholesale businesses employed another 245. There were three banks, three hotels, and two motion picture theatres. The two weekly newspapers, the *Radford News* and the *Radford Journal*, combined in 1928 to form the *Radford News-Journal*, destined to become a daily in the 1940's.

Also in 1928, Radford claimed no less than 1400 homes with 40 miles of city streets, of which eight miles were paved with asphalt, 20 miles were "improved", while the remaining 12 were "dust in the summer and mud in the winter." By this date, however, 225 street lights improved the landscape, and Norwood



William E. Gilbert, professor at Radford College and three times mayor of Radford



Dr. John Preston McConnell, President of Radford College, 1913-1938

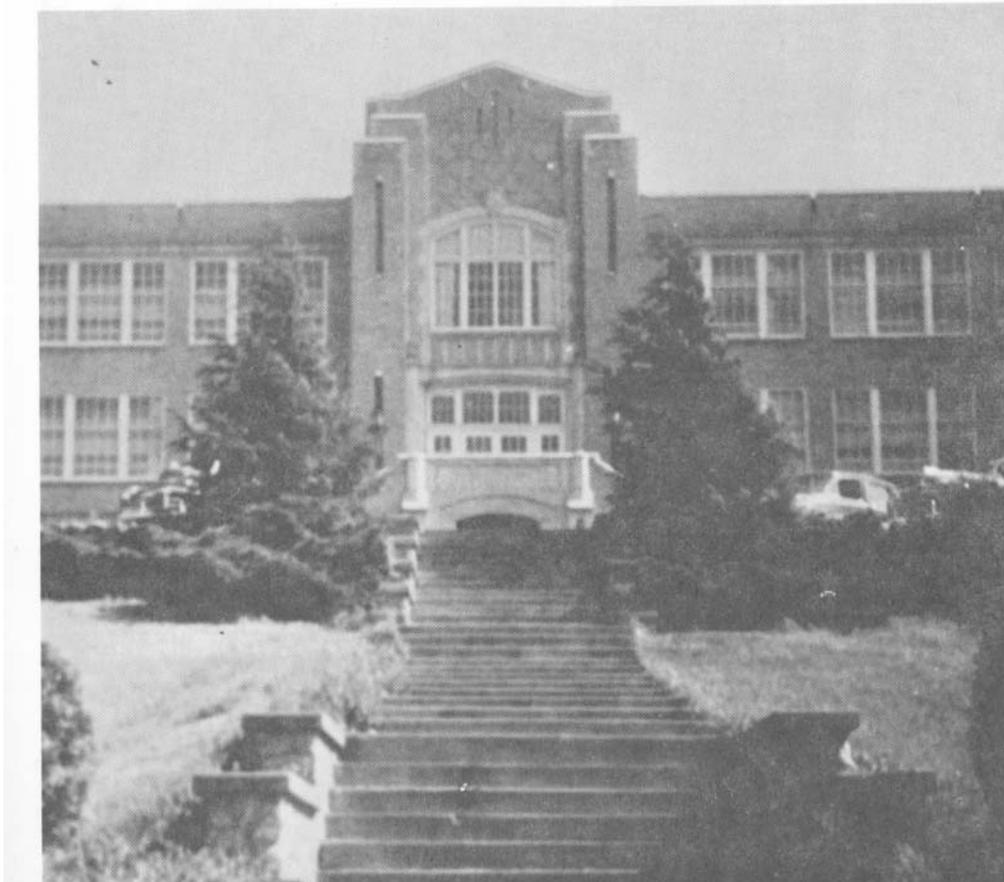
street was so well lighted that it was known locally as the "whiteway." Fourteen churches were available for the white population and three for Negroes, who at this time numbered about 600. Over half of the 6,000 population were church members. Civic clubs came to Radford in 1923 when both the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs were founded. For the ladies, the Womans Club and the Music Club were joined by the General William Campbell chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, founded in 1923. The city had never had a hospital, although the railroad had maintained a clinic for its employees for some years, and this lack was remedied somewhat by the opening of a hospital on Tyler Avenue in 1924. Unfortunately this operation in what is now the Avalon building, was unsuccessful and closed its doors, leaving the city without a hospital for another fifteen years.

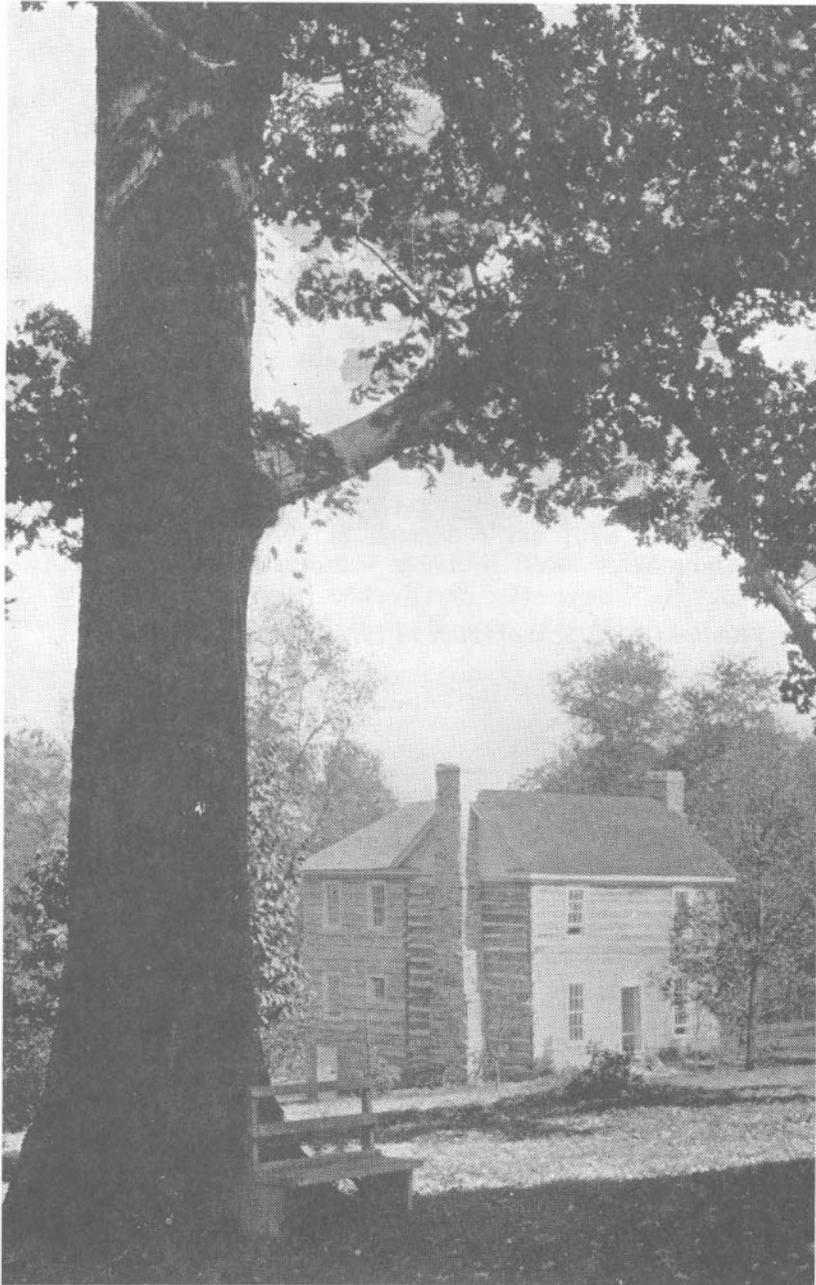
On the educational scene the new building for the Radford High School on First Street was preceded by a new structure for the Kuhn Barnett Elementary school in 1924, and followed in 1929 by the opening on the Radford College campus of the training school (now Whitt Hall). A summary of the educational facilities of the city in 1930 found a system of seven public schools - four white elementary, two black elementary, and one high school. There were nine teachers in the high school with 268 students, and 61 graduates in 1929. In the elementary schools there were 1221 students and 30 teachers, and of these five teachers and 182

students were black. If the numbers of students had not drastically increased in the decade, the school budget had noticeably improved, being over \$68,000 for the 1929-30 school year.

On the higher education level, other changes had taken place. In 1924 the State Normal School at Radford had become the Radford State Teachers College. By 1929, Dr. J. P. McConnell was still president, with a faculty of 32, and a regular session student body of 641. The summer session, however, had the largest enrollment of any of the four state teachers colleges, with a total of 861. Four year graduates were still few, with the majority of the students still taking the programs leading to teacher certification rather than to the B.S. degree. On the campus, a third unit was added to Tyler Dormitory in 1923, providing additional student rooms and quarters for student organizations as well. Russell Dormitory was completed in 1926 and named for Elizabeth Henry Campbell Russell, sister of Patrick Henry and wife of two of southwest Virginia's leading Revolutionary figures, General William Campbell and General William Russell. A student activities building (Lucas Hall) was completed in 1928, and the McGuffey School (now Whitt Hall) in 1929. The Avalon building on Tyler

Radford High School, built in 1928 and burned in 1970





The log cabin museum that stood for many years on the Radford College campus

Avenue, established as a hospital in 1925, was rented by the College for infirmary and dormitory purposes in 1926, and temporarily named Helen Henderson Hall. The College was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1928, and by the American Teachers College Association in 1930.

Depression and War Years

The decade of the 1930's was one of slow growth in the city of Radford. Beginning with the Depression and ending as the Second World War began, there was little real progress, and population grew only a few hundred, from 6227 in 1930 to 6990 in 1940.

As far as industry was concerned there were a few new additions, particularly in the late 1930's. Among these were the Old Colony Box Plant, the Century Ribbon Mills, the Radford Knitting Mills, and the Radford branch of Burlington Mills. The latter industry, a major one, was secured largely through the efforts of City Manager Henry T. Roberts and other interested citizens. The Norfolk and Western Railway continued to be a major employer, despite the closing of its West Radford station. This Randolph Street station, as it was locally known, had been built in 1891 and was finally torn down in 1938. In banking circles, the Depression years brought about the merger of the First National Bank and the Farmers and Merchants Bank into the First and Merchants Bank in 1931.

Two industrial developments in the immediate area greatly affected the Radford economic scene in the late 1930's and early 1940's. These were the construction of Claytor Dam up the river, and the Radford Arsenal a few miles down the river. Claytor Dam was begun in 1937 and completed in 1939 as a hydroelectric project constructed by the Appalachian Power Company at a cost of over \$11,000,000. In addition to providing some 75,000 kilowatts of electric power, the dam also created a lake some 21 miles long with a shore of over 100 miles. Moreover, the recreational area created by the lake provides considerable economic and social significance for Radford and its immediate area. Claytor Dam, the lake, and the state park later established along its shores, all take their name from Graham Claytor, vice president of the power company that planned and constructed the dam.

The Radford Arsenal followed in 1940-1941 and had an even greater economic influence on the Radford area. A government study in the mid-1930's had indicated that the area was a logical one for the location of a major industrial activity requiring large amounts of space, water, transportation and personnel. As the Second World War got under way in Europe in 1939, the need for tremendous amounts of powder for the Allied Armies and for the



The municipal swimming pool in Wildwood Park

rapidly growing United States forces was apparent. It was decided that one of several major arsenals would be located down the river from Radford, and construction was begun in September, 1940, on a major plant for the manufacture of gun powder and allied chemicals. By 1941, over 23,000 people were employed in the plant which would eventually encompass over 1000 buildings spread over 4000 acres on both sides of the New River. The first powder was produced in April, 1941, and the wartime employment exceeded 10,000. Needless to say, the economic impact of the Arsenal on Radford was immense, and although many "powder plant" workers commuted for 50 miles or more, thousands of them found their homes in Radford and its immediate vicinity. An odd coincidence, soon called to the public's attention, was the tradition that powder had been manufactured near the site of the new Arsenal during the American Revolution, some 170 years earlier.

In 1932, the city government of Radford underwent a change with an increase in the number of councilmen from 3 to 5. The fire department remained largely a volunteer affair with only two paid firemen, plus volunteers, but fortunately major fires were few in number. The police department in 1932 consisted of a chief and three policemen, made more mobile by the use of a police car - one Ford roadster. The New Deal brought local agencies of the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration, and briefly, the National Recovery Administration. More important, the need for public relief brought about the

establishment of a city department of Public Welfare in 1934. Unification of the city was further aided in 1934 with the completion of a major fill across Connelly's Run. Prior to this date, the Run had been crossed on Norwood Street only by a long and rickety bridge, originally constructed in the 1890's. With plenty of labor available under the Federal work-relief programs, the immense earth-moving project was completed in record time, and a modern street for the first time connected the areas of East and West Radford.

In 1937, when Kuhn Barnett retired as superintendent of Radford city schools, he was able to report considerable progress during his 17 years in office. In his final report, he noted that the number of students in the city schools had increased from 1234 in 1920 to 1804 in 1937, while the number of teachers had jumped from 27 to 49. The number of high school students in particular had more than doubled, from 160 to 360, while the value of the school plant had risen from \$95,000 to \$285,000. The students, including 1622 white and 182 black, attended six schools, three white elementary, and the white high school, while twelve black children of high school age were transported to the Christiansburg Institute for their secondary education. The McGuffey Elementary school, the teacher training institution on the Radford College campus, was counted in arriving at the city school totals.

The State Teaching College at Radford had rough going during the Depression years, but the campus itself was extended, and with state and Federal aid several new buildings were constructed. The Library building was completed in 1931, the dining hall



The President's Home on Radford College campus, replaced by Heth Hall in 1973

(Walker) in 1934, a new dormitory (Norwood) in 1939, the President's home in 1940, and the science building (Reed) also in 1940. Public funds were scarce in the early Depression years, faculty salaries were cut, and even then were sometimes slow in arriving. Students were equally strained financially, and more of them were attending college on borrowed funds. But Dr. J. P. McConnell was adept at making ends meet, and he pulled the institution safely through the trying period. In 1938 he retired and turned the college administration over to Dr. David Peters. Although total enrollments remained low, the college could point with pride in 1939 to the 2194 teachers in the state of Virginia who were among its alumnae. No other college in the state could equal that figure. Outside of Virginia, Radford graduates were teaching in at least 19 other states and two foreign countries.

One of the more significant developments in Radford in the latter years of the 1930's was the development of a public recreation program. The area along Connelly's Run, just south of Norwood street, had been purchased by the city in 1923, but it was slow in being developed. The Kiwanis Club took the initiative in constructing a swimming pool there, and this was taken over by the city and operated as a public park after 1932. This was open only during the school vacation months, however, and there was no other city-wide recreation facility available. Under the leadership of the Parent-Teacher Association in 1938, the recreation needs of the city were widely discussed, and particular emphasis was placed on the need for recreational facilities for the city's Negro population. The result, thanks to the lease of land from the Norfolk and Western Railway, was the creation of Riverside Park. By 1940, public interest in recreation brought about the passage of a city ordinance creating the "Public Recreation, Parks and Playgrounds Commission" with seven members. With volunteer and W.P.A. workers three playgrounds, three tennis courts, and the swimming pool were kept in operation in 1940, and in 1941 city funds were appropriated to make the recreation program a permanent feature in the city's government.

The Depression decade was followed by the war decade of the 1940's, and for Radford it was a matter of a period of slow progress followed by one of rapid change. The coming of the Arsenal brought a rapid influx of population, full employment, and hitherto little known urban problems. First there were the thousands of construction workers, most wanting only temporary living quarters, but they were soon followed by permanent employees wanting more suitable housing. Three large housing projects, built for and largely rented or bought by Arsenal personnel, were constructed early in the war. These were Monroe Terrace in East Radford, and Radford Village and Sunset Village in West Radford. These were soon joined by Fairlawn, across the river in Pulaski County, to provide more than 275 new homes for the area.



Typical Radford homes of the World War II period





Another Radford home of the 1940's

The presence of the Arsenal also brought Radford into the position of being a prime defense area, and hence into the Civil Defense program of the state and nation. Radford was in the Roanoke Civil Defense Region as it was established in December, 1940. T. M. Jones was the first Director of Civilian Defense for Radford, and Macon P. Miller was coordinator. Throughout the war, the Radford citizenry were active in every civilian defense program from air raid warnings and blackouts to scrap drives and victory gardens. One of the first tasks of the local Radford council of civilian defense was to register all available houses and rooms for the use of construction and production workers at the Arsenal. Aluminum scrap drives soon followed. When the scrap needs turned to iron and copper as well as aluminum, Radford boasted of 230 pounds of scrap metal per capita in one major drive. By 1943, the emphasis of the local effort turned to food conservation, and several hundred victory gardens and a few victory pigs were produced in the city's lots. One Radford housewife canned over 700 quarts of vegetables in one season, while the city's program as a whole was effective enough to be written up in the *Consumer's Guide*, a publication of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Not the least of the Civilian Defense activities was the establishment of day nurseries for children of working mothers.

Unlike World War I, there were no local units of military formed in the city in the 1940's. Instead, the hundreds of men who registered for the draft in the fall of 1940 under the Selective

Service Act and who were called into service or volunteered during the war years, were used in numerous units of the army, navy, air force and marines. Over 1200 Radford men and women were in service at some time during the war, serving in every theatre and at virtually every post. Many were killed or wounded in action, and at least two families, one white and one black, had no less than five sons in the services at one time. By 1944 a movement was underway to honor the service men with a tangible sign of the city's appreciation and an honor plaque with over a thousand names was erected on Norwood street across from the American Legion hall. Congressman Clifton Woodrum spoke at the dedication of the plaque, and it remained on the site for some years after the war, later being preserved in the American Legion building.

Industrially, the largest employer of Radford citizens during the war years was the Arsenal, but other large employers included the Lynchburg Foundry, J. Freezer and Sons, shirt manufacturers, Burlington Mills weaving plant, the Century Ribbon Mills, and the Radford Knitting Mill. Clover Creamery also employed a fairly large staff, and Norfolk and Western Railway continued to have a lot of employees in the city, although not as large a percentage as in earlier days. The railroad lines through the city carried hundreds of freight cars daily, and no less than twelve passenger trains passed through Radford daily at the height of the war traffic. The Ingles Ferry boat was damaged in the "great flood" of 1940



Halwyck, home of Governor Tyler, built in the 1890's



Ingleside, one of the Ingles' family homes in West Radford

and was out of service for four years. In 1944, however, it was activated and continued to give service for several more years. A new industry in 1943 was the Commonwealth Press, and in 1941 a second newspaper, the *Radford Evening Star*, began publication. Many new retail establishments, particularly groceries and restaurants, were begun to meet the needs of the increased population, so that by 1949 the city could boast of some 234 individual businesses within the city limits.

The impact of the war and the rapid increase of population (12,000 was claimed in 1943) put the city government to a major test, but the city manager system proved quite adaptable, and although a variety of new services, committees and boards were established, the city came through the crisis with flying colors. Among other things, the war years focused attention on the need for a strict zoning ordinance for the city, and this was finally achieved in 1945. Nine classes of zoning areas were established, ranging from one-family residential districts through business and industrial districts to agricultural areas. An official map locating the boundaries of each district was published, and a Board of Zoning Appeals was formed to hear and decide appeals concerning the zoning ordinances. Among other new improvements



La Riviere, another Ingles' family home





Radford Ice Plant, near Connelly's Run, to be replaced by a road to the new City Park in the 1970's

achieved by the city during the war years was a water filtration plant completed in 1943 with aid from the Federal Works Agency. This provided the city with more than 2,000,000 barrels of pure water daily, more than meeting even the inflated wartime needs.

The Radford City Schools found the increased population a major problem also and crowded school rooms were common during the war years. One new school building was added in 1943, but this was Fred Wygal school for colored, replacing the two frame buildings that had served the city's black children for so many years. In 1946 a new eighth grade was added between the old grammar school and high school, making a twelve-graded school system. By this time the number of teachers had increased to 62, and the total number of students in the city schools to 1845. The value of school property had reached \$330,000, and there was a total of 30,000 volumes in the school libraries. Of the 1845 students, 118 were black, and an additional 36 black high school students were still transported daily to Christiansburg Institute.

On the campus of the State Teachers College, the big news of the 1940's was the merger with Virginia Polytechnic Institute which took place in 1944. As of June 27 of that year, the new title

of the college was Radford College, Woman's Division of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Although widely heralded as a major advance in the state's higher education system, the merger actually produced few major changes. The President of Radford was subordinate to the Chancellor of V.P.I., and the Radford campus offered graduate degrees through the auspices of the Blacksburg institution, but otherwise there was little actual amalgamation. After twenty years under this arrangement, the schools were again separated by the state legislature in 1963. At Radford College, the war years first saw a small decline in enrollment, but in the later 1940's this trend was reversed and the school began to grow steadily. By 1949 a new dormitory was needed, and a new quadrangle across Fairfax street was begun with the construction of Ingles Hall.

The city recreational program begun in the late 1930's went ahead during the war years to give Radford one of the best such programs in the state. To add to the parks, swimming pool and tennis courts already established under the Recreation Commission, federal aid was made available to construct a city recreation building, complete with facilities for a public library, group meetings and indoor sports. The Recreation Building was dedicated on May 16, 1942, as a wartime federal facility made necessary by

Dedication of the new Memorial Bridge in 1949





The City Recreation building, another product of the World War II years

the new population increase accompanying the Arsenal. In 1947, this Recreation Building was turned over to the city of Radford for a small purchase fee, and it since has been under control of the Recreation Commission. The Public Library housed in the Recreation Building was a part of an area library operated in conjunction with Montgomery County. This too was the culmination of a long effort to obtain public library service in the area, and was partially of state encouragement. Bookmobile service to outlying areas of the city was added in 1943.

Still another progressive development brought on by the war years and increased population was the establishment of the Radford Community Hospital. The city had been without a hospital since the failure of the one on Tyler Avenue in the 1920's, but in 1941 a group of local citizens incorporated a new hospital and reopened it in the same building. This 28 bed facility was an improvement, but it was still far from adequate for the rapidly growing population of the area. Fortunately the Lanham Act was passed by the federal government in 1942, and this made funds available for the construction of hospitals in areas greatly affected by the war effort. Radford took advantage of this act to secure funds for a new hospital building, and the structure on the corner of Eighth and Randolph streets in West Radford was completed in September, 1943. This facility had 68 beds and 25 paid employees when it opened its doors, and it soon became one of the best hospitals between Roanoke and Bristol. Another addition to health facilities for the area came in 1948 with the opening of the Mountain Empire Guidance Center in Radford to meet the need for a general psychiatric clinic for a four county area.



East Radford scene, 1970's; compare with the picture on page 17

Among other developments in the city during the 1940's was the building of the Governor Tyler Hotel on the bluff in East Radford overlooking the river. Long the location of the Howe family residence, this site was one of the most attractive locations in the city, and the hotel soon became well known both for its location and for its services. A Chamber of Commerce for the city was organized in 1943, and joined by a Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1948. In the local civic clubs, the Rotary and Kiwanis were joined by the Lions Club in 1941. The Radford post office moved into a new building on Norwood street in East Radford in 1941, and the wartime influx of population and business brought a sharp increase in the amount of mail handled and in the number of postal employees. In transportation, the new Memorial Bridge across the river was completed in 1949. The four-lane, 1500 foot bridge was opened to traffic with appropriate ceremonies, including a speech by Governor William M. Tuck before some 10,000 spectators. Up the river, the opening of Claytor State Park on the lake behind the dam was celebrated in 1948. The lake, with its fishing and boating, and the park with its swimming and picnicking facilities, gave the Radford area some of the finest recreational facilities in the state.

The war boom years of 1941-1945 had brought many problems to Radford, but they had also brought many improvements. As peace returned, it was obvious that new problems would continue to be faced. The end of military action brought sharp cut-backs to production at the Arsenal, and that agency was actually put on a stand-by basis for several years. This meant that jobs were scarce for many

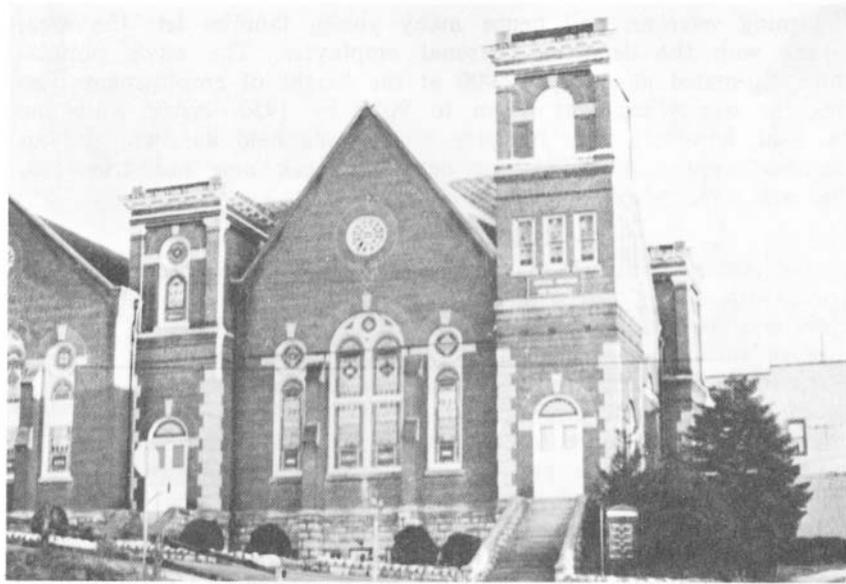
returning veterans, and hence many young families left the area, along with the departing Arsenal employees. The city's population, estimated at nearly 12,000 at the height of employment during the war years, was down to 9026 by 1950. Aside from the Arsenal, however, other industry in the area held its own, and an active Chamber of Commerce began to seek new industries and businesses for the city.

Since World War II

The post-war years have seen an era of modest progress for Radford, with steady but not spectacular growth. In population, the total of some 9000 in 1950 had reached 11,596 by 1970. The physical size of the city increased slightly with the annexation of College Park in East Radford in 1968, while a concerted street paving program extended the city's paved streets to a system of over 55 miles. The city's police force grew by the 1970's to a staff of 21, with a chief of police and 20 patrolmen, while the fire department had eight paid firemen and 25 volunteers. New city structures completed in the 1950's included city administration offices, a police building, and a new fire station. The National Guard Armory was completed also in 1955. A bond issue for \$1,400,000 passed in 1960 resulted in the construction of new sewage treatment and water systems, completed by 1962. The city joined the New River Valley Industrial Commission, formed in 1957 to bring new industry to the area. In the 1960's, a new city administration building was completed on Second Street, while the First Street Station of the post office also received a new structure. Perhaps



Radford Community Hospital



Grove Avenue Methodist Church



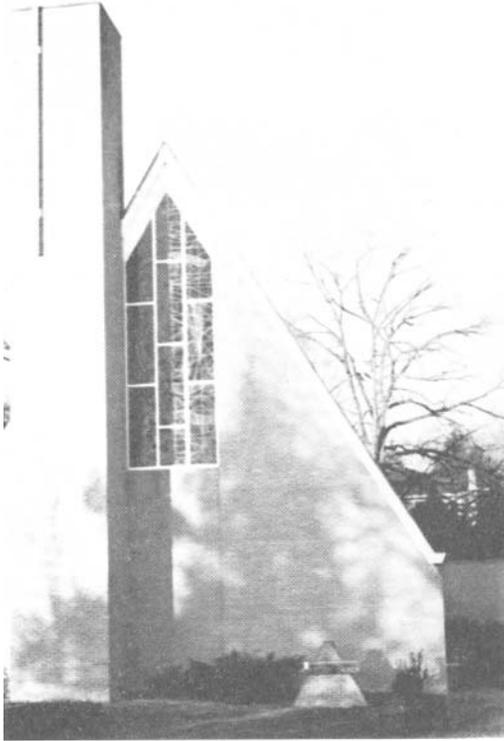
Tyler Memorial Presbyterian Church



First Baptist Church

the most important event of the 1960's, concerning the city as a whole, was its designation as an "All American City" by the National Municipal League in cooperation with Look Magazine. Basically, the honor was received for the city's activities in improving the municipal facilities and in attracting new industry. Since Radford was virtually the only city of its size in the East to receive the "All-American" status, it was quite an honor.

Industrially, the Radford Arsenal, now known as the Radford Army Ammunition Plant and operated by the Hercules Powder Company, continued to be the area's largest employer. Both during the Korean conflict, from 1950 to 1953, and the Viet Nam war, from 1965 to 1973, the Arsenal increased its output and consequently its employment, at times reaching over 8000 employees. Its products included propellants for missiles, rifles and artillery, along with TNT. Among new industries coming to the city in recent years were the Inland Motors Division of Kollmorgen Corporation, manufacturing electric motors and electronic systems for military and industrial needs, and Kenrose Manufacturing Company, producing ladies' garments. Also new were the Graflo Rubber Company (later the Brad Ragan Rubber Company), which manufactures rubber products for tire recapping, and the Radva Plastics Corporation which produces plastic packaging materials. Most recent newcomer in the industrial field is the American



Central Methodist Church

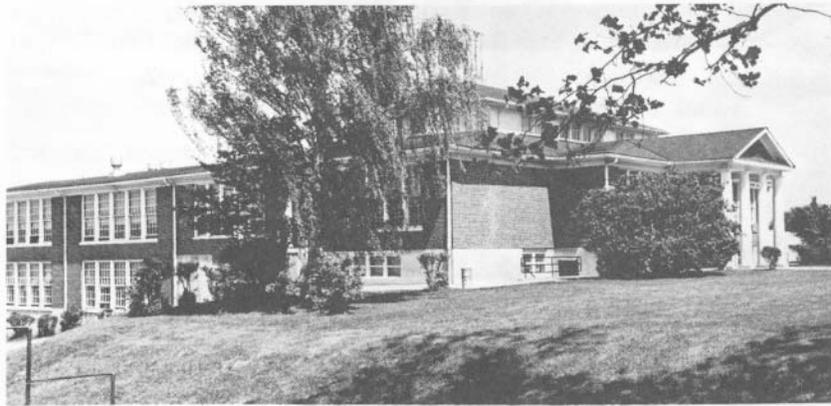
Viscose Division of the FMC Corporation, located just across the New River in Pulaski County, and manufacturing viscose yarns for the textile industry.

Among older industries the Lynchburg Foundry continued to be a large employer, and to ship its products in cast iron and pipe to all parts of the United States. Other large employers include the Clover Creamery, now a division of Beatrice Foods, Inc.; the Commonwealth Press; J. Freezer and Sons, shirt manufacturers; the New River Textiles unit of Burlington Mills, producers of acetate cloth; and the Old Colony Box Company, a major manufacturer of paper boxes and other paper products.

Closely allied to industry is transportation, and the facilities serving Radford in this area have changed materially in the years since 1945. For years after the war, the railroad continued to be a major local employer as well as a major means of transportation, but the destructive fire in its tie treatment plant in 1953 curtailed its Radford operations to a large extent. A new railway station was opened in East Radford in 1953, but passenger service declined in the 1960's so that all passenger service was discontinued in 1971. Inter-city bus service had been available to the city since the 1920's, and of course this continued. Air transportation, for both passengers and freight, came to the area with the opening of the New River Valley Airport just outside Dublin in 1962, but volume



Radford High School



Kuhn Barnett School

of business was never high, and scheduled passenger service was discontinued there just ten years later. The airport continues to operate for private, commercial and rental aircraft, but Radford area citizens now journey to Roanoke for regularly scheduled flights from the airport there. Fortunately, the trip by car to Roanoke became much easier with the opening of the four-laned Interstate Highway 81, a major arterial highway connecting the lower Mississippi Valley with the Northeast. The sector of Highway 81 between Newbern and Christiansburg, bypassing Radford but easily accessible by short access roads, was opened in 1965. The more difficult stretch from Christiansburg to Salem, descending Christiansburg mountain, was not completed until 1972. The Interstate has taken a large amount of through traffic off

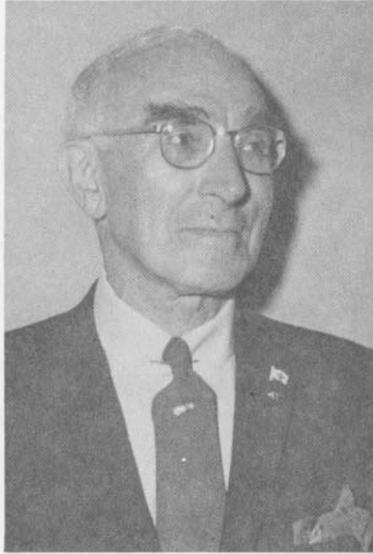
the streets of Radford, and possibly deprived the city of some tourist business, but it has greatly facilitated travel both into and out of Radford and made distant cities and recreational areas easily available to local citizens.

In education, Radford has progressed noticeably since 1950. A bond issue, passed in 1954, resulted in the construction of new buildings for McHarg and Belle Heth elementary schools, each of which contained 14 class rooms and opened for use in 1957. Kuhn Barnett elementary school also received a new addition in 1955, and the high school was improved with new areas for vocational arts and business classes in 1956 and a new cafeteria in 1957. In 1970, the high school building was destroyed in a disastrous fire, but a new modern structure replaced it in 1972. In 1965 the city schools were integrated with the Fred Wygal school for colored being discontinued and the black students merged into the other three elementary schools. At the same time, the Christiansburg Institute was discontinued, and the black high school students who had been bussed from Radford to Christiansburg for years were now enrolled in the Radford High School. The Fred Wygal



Above: McHarg School; Below: Belle Heth School
Note that these two schools were constructed from the same architectural plans





*Saul Simon, Radford
merchant and civic leader*



*H. C. Graybeal, Radford
educator and civic leader*

building became the school administration headquarters for the city. A fourth elementary school had been operated on the Radford College campus as a teacher training school, but this was discontinued in 1963, and the students enrolled in the neighboring Belle Heth elementary school. A vocational school for high school graduates and adults was conducted in the old Belle Heth building on Third Street for several years after 1957, but this was merged with the New River Community College that opened in nearby Dublin in 1969. A further change came early in the 1970's with the introduction of kindergarten classes at each of the elementary schools. Statistically, the Radford city schools served 2250 students in 1969-70, with 106 teachers, and a total annual budget of over \$2,300,000.

The state teachers college continued to be the Woman's Division of Virginia Polytechnic Institute until 1963, at which time it became a separate state institution of higher education under the name of Radford College. It continued to emphasize teacher training, but it also offered strong curricula in liberal arts and vocational fields. In enrollment, the period after 1950 was one of rapid growth for the college, and by 1975 it reached a student body of over 4200. New buildings spread out over an enlarged campus, with several new dormitories, new classroom buildings, and an auditorium. A new library annex was completed in 1967, and two years later a high-rise dormitory, Muse Hall, was built on the site of the old first building, Founders Hall. Dr. Charles K. Martin



*Mrs. Margaret Duncan,
Radford council woman
and mayor*



*Mrs. Charlotte Giessen,
Radford council woman
and member of the State
Legislature*

succeeded Dr. Peters as president of the college in 1951, and was himself succeeded by Dr. Donald N. Dedmon in 1972. Also in 1972 the long era of being solely a woman's college ended, and the institution became coeducational, admitting undergraduate men students for the first time in June, 1972. Since its founding in 1913, the college has played a major role in the social and cultural life of the city. Its staff members and faculty have been citizens and taxpayers, and have contributed effectively to the political, religious, social and business life of the city, holding offices in churches, societies, civic clubs and even in the city government. Merely as an economic factor, the college is a major business, employing over 500 people by the 1970's.

Elsewhere in the city, the Community Hospital added two new wings during the era, until by 1973 it had 212 beds, a medical staff of 28 members, and was fully accredited by the national hospital accrediting agency. St. Albans Psychiatric has also expanded to a total of 162 beds. The city health department has a director, public health nurse, and sanitarian, and the Mountain Empire Guidance Center serves as a public mental health clinic. The city recreation department conducts recreational and sports activities for all ages, while the city library contributes both educational and recreational reading services. At least 40 clubs and organizations are available for Radford citizens to join, and no less than 24 churches are located in the city and its immediate vicinity. There are several golf and swimming clubs in the area.



*Richard H. Poff, Radford
Congressman and Federal
Judge*



*James C. Turk, Radford State
Senator and Federal Judge*

*John N. Dalton, Radford's
Lieutenant Governor of Vir-
ginia*





Radford in 1975



The archaeological "dig" behind the City Recreation Building, 1974-75

Since 1951 Radford has been served by a local radio station, WRAD, and about the same time television became available from stations located in Roanoke and other nearby cities. Educational television, through Roanoke's WBRA began in 1967, and cable television service, with a wide range of programs, became available to Radford viewers in 1971. The Radford *News Journal*, an afternoon daily after the 1940's, was joined by the weekly Radford *Messenger* in 1962. Probably due to the competition from television, the two, and sometimes three, movie theatres in the city were reduced to one in the 1950's, but there were several drive-ins in the vicinity, and good roads made theatres in neighboring towns easily available.

In the summer of 1967, the New River Historical Society was organized, and in 1969 it assumed the sponsorship of an outdoor drama, "The Long Way Home." This dramatic story of the Indian captivity of Mary Draper Ingles in 1755 and her miraculous escape and return home is presented in an open amphitheater near the Ingles home, "Ingleside," during the summer months. As interest in the history of the area continued to grow with the approach of the American Revolution Bicentennial year of 1976, an archaeological "dig" along the New River back of the Radford Recreation building also aroused much local interest. Conducted by the Virginia State Archaeological Society under the direction of Col. McCord, the excavations indicated that one or more fairly large Indian villages had occupied the site some 350 to 500 years earlier.



Radford's City Council, 1975. Left to right, City manager, Finn Moffett, Mrs. Margaret Duncan, Mrs. Reese Goldsmith, Mayor Charles H. Charlton, Mr. Tom Starnes, Dr. Howard Dean, City Clerk, Bob Lloyd

In May, 1974, city elections, Mrs. Margaret Duncan was re-elected to the City Council, along with Mr. Thomas Starnes and Mr. C.H. Charlton, to join incumbents Mrs. Reese Goldsmith and Mr. Allen Kinzer who were not up for re-election. At their re-organization in September, Mr. Charlton was elected Mayor. In October Miss Ann Garth was appointed City Librarian, and in December Mr. Finn Moffett was named City Manager. In November, Mr. Kinzer resigned as City Councilman and was succeeded by Dr. Howard Dean. Court cases were initiated in 1974 to annex two areas adjacent to the city. The first of these was the shopping area just across Memorial Bridge in Pulaski County, and the second was the residential area to the south and east of the city, roughly bounded by the River, Interstate Highway 81 and access route 177 (Tyler Avenue Extension). The accession of these areas would give Radford not only room for growth, but also an improved tax base. Also in 1974 steps were taken to acquire land and funds for the creation of a large city park along the river front from Memorial Bridge eastward about three quarters of a mile.

All told, the story of Radford has been a long and involved one, sometimes calm, sometimes dramatic, but always interesting. It has produced few great figures, but thousands of good, honest citizens. It has contributed its sons to all of America's wars from



Radford's New Municipal Building

the French and Indian War to Viet Nam. Its manufactured products have not only been sent around the world, but have even contributed to the exploration of the moon. It has known war and peace, prosperity, and depression, a few exciting times and plenty of just plain good living. It may be just an ordinary American small town, but to its 12,000 citizens in the 1970's, it's a great place to live.

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The aerial view of Central Radford on the back cover is reproduced courtesy of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Eastern Laboratory, Asheville, N. C. It was taken in 1971.

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