

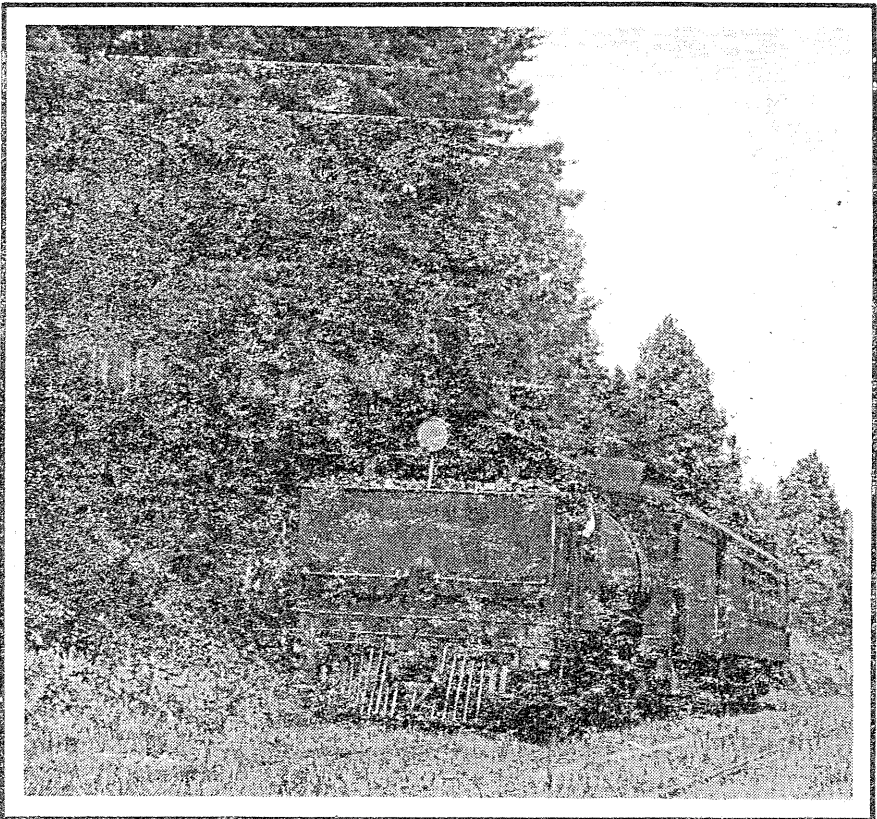
George S. Groff

SOAPSTONE SHORTLINES

ALBERENE STONE
AND ITS RAILROADS

BY

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The roster was prepared by Thomas Lawson, Jr., and
P. A. Copeland with assistance by the author.

Cover photo: Nelson & Albemarle #9 with C&O combine
#411 in tow arrives at Schuyler about 1947. (H. Reid)

Rear photo: A giant black serpentine eagle from Schuyler
still guards the steps of the post office in Johnstown, PA.
(Author)

There are many shortline railroads whose fans will claim are the most unique or interesting. Virginia's Nelson & Albemarle must be included among them. Where else could you find streetcars, commuter and mixed trains, and never-turned tank locomotives rolling past graceful mansions? But most of all it was the line's cargo which made it unique--soapstone.

In a modern world smothered by synthetics, it is easy to forget that 100 years ago most manufactured products were much closer to the raw materials nature provided. Soapstone was among the most useful of these. As its name implies, soapstone is very soft. Its most important ingredient is talc, the softest mineral. Because it was so easily quarried and shaped, soapstone was very useful as a building material. It was frequently made into door sills, window lintels, mantles and trim pieces. Soapstone is unaffected by acids and bases, making it useful for laboratory equipment. It is also extremely non-conductive and was used for many products in the early electrical industry.

It was soapstone's most unique quality that led to its commercial development in Virginia. Once warmed, soapstone is one of the most efficient heat retainers known. Even in colonial times soapstone was used for fireplace linings, griddles and carriage foot warmers. It was the search for new soapstone that brought a New York plumber named James H. Serene to Virginia in the 1880s.

James Serene joined Jacob S. York in the plumbing and heating business after the Civil War. Their firm was called York and Serene Soapstone Works with offices at 6 Peck Slip in Brooklyn. They made fireplace linings, griddles and register stones. In 1874 the partners divided the business. York took title to all the equipment, stock on hand and accounts connected with stoves and ironwork; James Serene got the part of the business dealing with soapstone. The split was apparently a friendly one because Serene married York's daughter Clara in 1877.

At that time most soapstone products in the United States came from upstate New York or New Hampshire, but the deposits were small and largely worked out. James Serene entered into a partnership with Daniel J. Carroll, a successful box manufacturer. Carroll was always looking for ways to get richer. He agreed to back Serene in developing new soapstone deposits. Serene came to Virginia looking for soapstone in the early 1880s. He was shown some deposits near the village of Johnson's Mill Gap on the east slope of Albemarle County's Fan Mountain. Serene was impressed by the fine quality and abundance of the stone. What he did not realize then was that this was just the tail end of a belt of stone that cut across central Virginia for nearly 45 miles, one of the world's largest soapstone deposits.

On January 31, 1883, James Serene and several partners bought the 1,955 acre tract known as Beaver Dam Farm for \$30,000. The sellers were Archibald Harris of New York and William and Maria

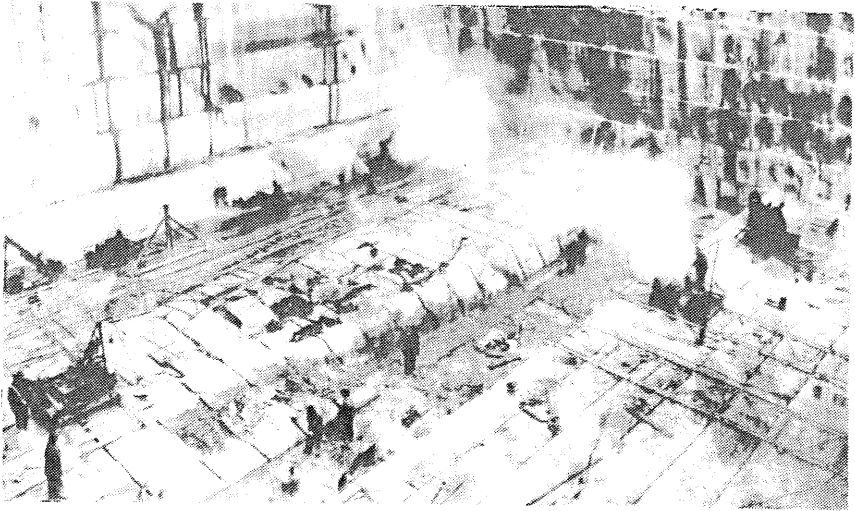
Schultz of Maryland. A charter was granted by the New York legislature February 16th to do business under the name Albemarle Soap Stone Company. Daniel Carroll was the company president and James Serene was vice-president and general manager.

Unfortunately, neither Archibald Harris nor the Schultzes had clear title to the land. The farm had been owned by Henry Babcock and his partner William Parish of Lynchburg until they went bankrupt. The farm passed to William Schultz and his wife in 1871 via a court-ordered sale. A later order awarded title to Harris, though apparently he agreed to share the farm with the Schultzes. As soon as the word got out that there was valuable soapstone on the land, everyone who had a claim against Babcock and Parrish tried to get a piece of the farm. Serene and Carroll were obliged to sue everyone with any claim to the property--the list runs nearly half a page in the county deed books. It was not until October 1883 that the county circuit court in Charlottesville confirmed the title and the company was free to begin development.

In order to give their products a distinct identity, Daniel Carroll hit on the idea of calling the stone "Alberene", a combination of Serene and Albemarle, the county where their new property was located. Carroll applied his genius to finding dozens of new ways Alberene Stone and its unique qualities could be marketed. Alberene Stone's excellent insulating properties made it a natural material for bus bars, switch panels, reostat tops and circuit breaker components in the mushrooming electrical industry. Resistance to acids and bases made it a perfect material for laboratory sinks, counter tops, fume hoods and chemical storage tanks. Already well known for its heat-retaining properties, Alberene Stone was used for snow melters, steam baths, furnace blocks and gas burner tips. This was an era of elaborate stone architectural detailing, and Alberene Stone was available in custom sizes for door and window sills, wainscoting, flooring and stair treads. Carroll even developed markets for headstones, mortuary slabs and toilet partitions, the latter perhaps a mistake since the soft soapstone was so easily carved by vandals. Many of these products were made to standard sizes and kept at the mill or branch factories for immediate delivery.

The most popular product in their line was something no modern Victorian woman could be without in her well appointed home--a soapstone laundry tub. One whole shop in the mill at Alberene was devoted to making laundry tubs. They were made of flat slabs, ground to a one inch thickness and rubbed smooth. The tubs were assembled with screws, the holes and seams sealed with a hard pitch. Tub production took a moderately soft grade of stone which had to be free of hairline cracks and veins of other rock.

The first quarry was opened by 1884 on the banks of Beaver Dam Creek, followed by construction of the first sections of an enormous wooden mill building some 600 feet long housing gang saws, rubbing beds



Workers use steam powered channelers and drills to cut soapstone at Schuyler about 1915. (Holsinger Collection, University of Virginia)

and assembly shops. The workforce in the quarries and mill numbered 250 men by 1900.

Branch factories were set up in New York, Boston and Chicago. Much of the stone, particularly for architectural uses, was shipped rough to these factories where it was elaborately carved by immigrant artisans. The company claimed their products were sold across the entire United States, and also reported substantial sales in Europe and South America. The sales division was set up as a subsidiary, Alberene Stone Company, Inc. Its offices were located in New York at 223 East 23rd Street, which also served as the parent company's headquarters.

Like the stone, the village at Johnson's Mill Gap was also renamed Alberene. By the 1890s Alberene had grown to be a typical self-contained company town. There was the usual company store, which proudly proclaimed selling everything from "coal to coffins." There was also a doctor's office, barber shop, post office and several churches. A two-story wooden school building (on a soapstone foundation, like most buildings in Alberene) stood at the south end of town. Workers with families lived in modest company-owned frame houses, each with a quarter-acre yard, which sprouted in rows across the hillsides. They were divided into neighborhoods with interesting names like Dog Town, Gospel Hill, Sun-shine Hill, Stump Town and Quality Row. A boarding house was built for unmarried workers. All of the major buildings were joined by sidewalks made from huge, carefully ground soapstone slabs.

Daniel Carroll ordered the building of a grand mansion from which to



Daniel Carroll's mansion still stands at Alberene, though the years have taken a heavy toll. The house is now being restored by a Charlottesville businessman. (Author)

rule his empire on Prospect Hill, directly across from the first quarry. The house was designed in 1899 by noted New York architect C. Wellesley Smith to be a showplace for what could be done with soapstone. The lower floor was brick covered by a carved soapstone facing. Soapstone columns flanked the main entry and its mandatory leaded glass windows. Four fireplaces featured soapstone mantles, decorative work and linings. All of the fancy stone work was carved at the New York factory and shipped back to Alberene for assembly.

In addition to the stone work, the house had the most modern gadgets of the time. It featured a dumb waiter, speaking tubes and a bell to summon servants which was operated by a foot switch under the dining room table. A central furnace in the basement heated all the rooms (the fireplaces were mostly for show). The mansion featured indoor plumbing, still a rarity in rural Virginia at that time. The service areas were equipped with soapstone laundry tubs and soapstone electrical switch boxes. Even the kitchen sink was soapstone.

The house cost \$5,000, an enormous sum for the time. But Carroll never lived in his dream house, though he may have occasionally stayed there on business visits. By the time the house was finished, Alberene was linked to the rest of the world by rail. Like many men of wealth at the turn of the century, Carroll owned a private railroad car in which he used for visits to Alberene.

The house was offered to James Serene for use by his family. Clara Serene hated the house almost as much as she disliked Daniel Carroll and

was said to have spent only one night there. She preferred the "Green House" next door, a large and comfortable Victorian farmhouse, which naturally was painted green. The mansion served as a guest house for visiting company officials.

Daniel Carroll found that the Alberene mill was unable to reach full capacity without modern transportation. The nearest railroad station was North Garden on the Southern Railway about four miles to the northwest over some very rough and often muddy roads. Huge wagons pulled by teams of oxen or mules hauled the finished stone to the station, but deliveries were always behind schedule. There was one practical solution--Daniel Carroll was about to become a railroad baron.

As early as 1884 there had been an attempt to build a railroad through Alberene. On February 20th, the Charlottesville Jeffersonian announced that a charter would soon be granted by the legislature for the Albemarle & Nelson Railroad Company. The proposed line was to have run from a now-forgotten place called Ladibar in Nelson County to an unspecified spot on the Chesapeake and Ohio in Albemarle County. Greenwood, a village west of Charlottesville, was suggested as the likely junction. The road was to be 15 miles long. Like many early railroads, this one never got beyond the paper stage. In fact, there is no record of a bill for its charter ever being introduced in the legislature.

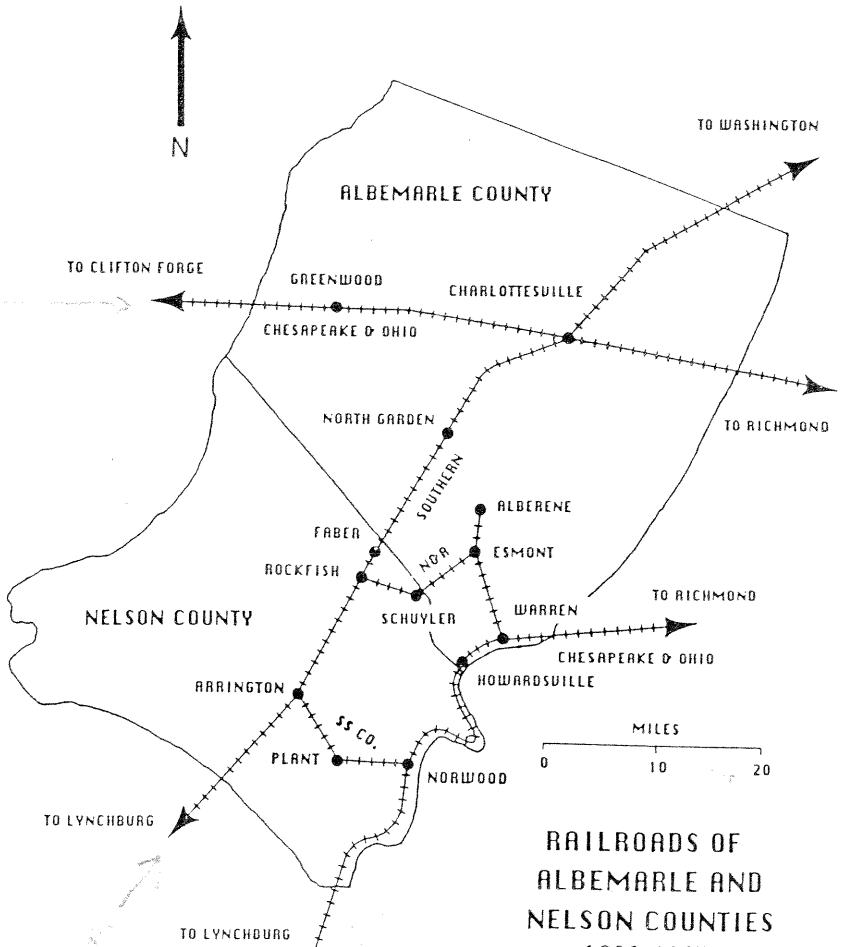
A second attempt to build a railroad through the area was no more successful. An act by the General Assembly on March 4, 1890, incorporated the Albemarle Mining, Manufacturing, and Railway Company. The act broadly allowed the company to build towns, mine or quarry soapstone or other minerals, deal in lumber, and to manufacture articles from various raw materials. The company was also authorized to build railroads of any gauge within the county. Like the Albemarle & Nelson, this line disappeared without ever turning a shovel of earth.

A railroad to Alberene was finally built when Daniel Carroll took a hand in the matter. The Alberene Railroad Company was incorporated by the Virginia General Assembly on December 20, 1895. In February of the following year, the stockholders met in Alberene to draw up bylaws and elect officers. C. D. Langhorne, local landholder, was chosen as president, with Carroll as vice-president. Other officers and principal stockholders were R. E. Shaw, F. L. Felter, and the local capitalist and business genius Henry L. Lane.

Henry Lane, Esmont's boy wonder, was to play a major role in the development of Esmont, the railroads and the soapstone industry over the next 12 years. Born December 12, 1867, young Henry showed technical genius while still a schoolboy, excelling in math and mechanical skills. He received no formal engineering or business training beyond the public schools of the time. Yet at the age of 18, he formed his own successful contracting company which specialized in dams and railroads. His older brothers John and Charles served as strawmen (and later

"junior" partners), since Henry could not enter into contracts because of his age.

Apparently the correspondent for the Charlottesville Daily Progress still did not know about the Alberene Railroad when he announced on August 27, 1896, "A letter from Scottsville says: The people in the vicinity of North Garden and Alberene (soapstone quarry) have for a year or more been hoping that the Southern Railway would build a branch to the quarry, but the enterprise has been deferred for some cause. It was rumored, however, a few days ago, that work would soon be begun on it. It would be a good lift for the quarry company and the people around Alberene to have this work completed soon, for during the winter



**RAILROADS OF
ALBEMARLE AND
NELSON COUNTIES
1906-1963**
SHOWING LINES AND STATIONS
MENTIONED IN TEXT

season the wagons from the quarry hauling its product cause the road to become impassible [sic]." The steep grades needed to cross Fan Mountain may have been why the Southern deferred this project.

Speculation again came from a Scottsville correspondent to the Richmond Dispatch when he announced, "The interest in the road from Warren to Charlottesville, via the soapstone quarries, seems to grow, and it is confidently believed that it will be built this summer [1896] by the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad. It will make a convenient route from this section to Washington and the great Northern cities." The Dispatch was much closer to the truth, because the Alberene Railroad would start at Warren, and it was built with the blessing (but not financial backing) of the C&O.

Henry Lane's survey left Warren station on the C&O's James River line and headed north along Ballinger Creek on an easy grade for six miles to Esmont. North of Esmont, the grade left the creek and circled around Esmont Farm, John Lane's palatial mansion. The climb stiffened a bit to one percent as the line wound through the hills toward Alberene. The grade made a grand loop around the town of Alberene and approached the quarries from the northeast. The total length of the survey was eleven miles. *7 1/2*

It took nearly a year for the Alberene Railroad to acquire all the right-of-way. The gentlemen farmers between Warren and Esmont were reluctant to come to terms with the railroad. The value of a 100-foot right-of-way shot up alarmingly during 1896. Farmers W.D. Waters and Andrew J. Dawson, along with John Tompkins, owner of a grist mill at Warren which the railroad was to pass, were particularly difficult to bring to an agreement. In the end, the railroad had to resort to condemnation against eight landowners who held nearly all the right-of-way between Warren and Esmont. The right-of-way was secured by mid-1897. The farmers never forgave the railroad and they or their heirs would later cause much trouble.

Lane Brothers & Company put 100 men "in three squads" to work on the grade in August of 1897. The crews began at Alberene and worked south. Construction was done largely with hand tools and horse-drawn scrapers, although some explosives were used. A second front was opened in December working north from Warren. "The Messrs. Lane Brothers & Co., contractors for grading and tracking of the Alberene Railroad, are pushing their work rapidly in this fine weather. They have laid four or five miles of track from Warren and are operating their large steam shovel, which they brought on from their works in Maryland a week or so ago. It takes the place of a large number of hands and does its work thoroughly. It is thought the road, which is about ten miles in length, will be finished by February 1, 1898, if the weather keeps favorable," the Dispatch reporter hopefully noted.

But the optimistic predictions of an early opening for the Alberene



Most of Esmont's business district was featured on a 1910 postcard. The center building was the Lane family's Bank of Esmont, now the post office. (C&O Historical Society)

Railroad did not prove true. The Daily Progress reported on January 31st, "The Alberene Railroad is progressing finely, and I think the contractors expect to complete it by March 1st at any rate." But when the predicted date arrived and the railroad was not finished, the paper announced, "Work on the Alberene railroad is progressing rapidly, and with favorable weather the contractors expect to have it ready for use by the 1st of April, at all events."

On March 14th, the newspaper reversed its prediction. It gloomily announced, "Work on the Alberene railroad is not progressing as rapidly as was predicted, on account of the scarcity of labor. It was thought that it would be finished by the 1st of April, but it will not, and it cannot be stated positively when it will be ready for use. It is very doubtful whether the line will be extended so as to connect with the main branch of the Chesapeake and Ohio at Charlottesville, or not."

It was not until March 23rd that the newspapers announced that grading was completed and that subcontractors were putting down ties and rail. (The earlier track for the steam shovel had been temporary.) Henry Lane had already completed his portion of the contract March 19 and had moved operations back to Alberene where he had a separate agreement to grade a place for the depot, yard and engine house. On March 19th the Daily Progress crowed, "The rails are being laid as rapidly as possible now, and we soon expect to be able to visit the prosperous young town of Alberene in a carriage drawn by the iron horse. We don't hear the question of extending the road to

Charlottesville spoken of much lately, but would not be surprised if it should be built the coming summer." Visiting Alberene would have involved a round about trip of about 80 miles over several C&O lines. Taking a buggy over the twenty miles of dirt roads between Charlottesville and Alberene would have been faster, despite the mud.

No one recorded the actual date the railroad opened to Alberene. On April 14, 1898, the newspaper vaguely announced, "Cars are now running on the new Alberene railroad from Warren to Alberene, though the road is not quite complete." The trains were being run not by the Alberene Railroad, but by the C&O. On July 13, 1897, the C&O had quietly agreed to lease the Alberene Railroad upon completion. Daniel Carroll apparently was not interested at this point in running a railroad. The C&O was, though they were willing to let the soapstone company undertake the risks of financing and construction. The lease was for five years and the annual payment was five percent of the railroad's \$60,000 value. The Alberene Railroad never operated a train; as soon as the line was completed, it became the C&O's Alberene Branch.

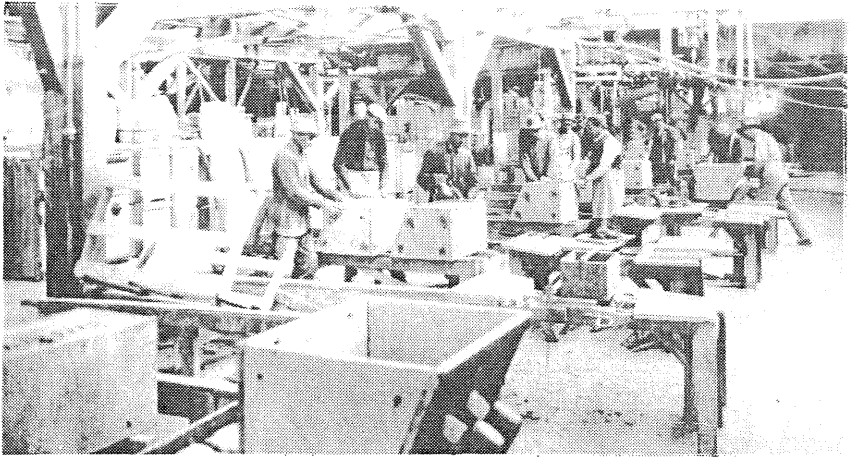
The C&O shortly found that they had leased a major maintenance headache. In August 1898 heavy rains sent Ballinger Creek and other streams over their banks, causing extensive damage to the new grade. This was but a foretaste of the weather problems which were to plague the Alberene Branch and the other soapstone railroads all their lives.

The C&O ran one pair of trains daily on the branch. The train originated at various times from Gordonsville or Richmond, and served local industries along the James River (apparently as a freight) before heading up the branch at Warren. Once on the Alberene Branch, the trains carried both passengers and freight and bore numbers 57 and 58.

Operations along the Alberene Branch during the C&O years were so mundane they might have gone completely unnoticed except for one tragic accident. On January 12, 1901, Number 57 was headed north from Esmont with three cars in tow. At 4 p.m. about one mile north of Esmont, the locomotive broke a flange on a sharp curve. The engine tipped over and dragged the cars after it. Engineer William H. McCartney was crushed to death as the engine rolled over. Fireman Charles H. Clay suffered severe internal injuries, cuts, and a sprained ankle. Conductor Luck lived up to his name and escaped almost without a scratch.

The C&O felt secure about the future of the Alberene Branch, for on February 15, 1902, they purchased the line outright. The sale price was \$80,000. This gave Daniel Carroll and his associates a tidy profit on their investment, as well as a railroad outlet for their products.

Henry Lane and Daniel Carroll were involved in several other enterprises in the Alberene-Esmont-Warren area at the turn of the century. One such scheme was the Fallsburg Power and Manufacturing Company, founded in 1899. Carroll, Henry Lane and John Lane had



Laundry tubs are nearing completion at Alberene about 1915. The spots are pitch which sealed the seams and screwholes. (Holsinger Collection, University of Virginia)

purchased Fallsburg Farm on the Buckingham County side of the James across from Warren, as well as Goosby's Island in the middle of the river and property at Warren itself. They were joined in this enterprise by James Serene and George W. Bostwick, another New York financier closely associated with Daniel Carroll. Their plan was to dam the James and generate electric power for Alberene, Charlottesville and the huge slate quarries in Buckingham County. What they proposed to manufacture is not known. Beyond the charter and purchase of the land, nothing more was heard of this project.

Another ambitious undertaking was Carbolane Slate Company of Esmont. In 1899 Henry Lane found large deposits of slate on his farm. He interested Daniel Carroll and George Bostwick in developing the slate, thus the name "Car-bo-lane", surely another of Carroll's catchy marketing devices. By 1901 there were 50 men digging two quarries and building the mill. By the next year, the company was in limited production of 10X20 inch roofing slates. Henry Lane claimed his quarry produced the only green slate south of Vermont, as well as buff and blue. The company operated until about 1910 when it closed for unknown reasons.

For several years following construction of the Alberene Railroad the Daily Progress was filled with letters, editorials and reports of meetings calling for extending the line north to Charlottesville. The Charlottesville merchants favored the extension because they feared much of their business in southern Albemarle County would flow toward Richmond or Lynchburg along the C&O. Alberene's retail trade was a prize too great to lose; by 1900 the area was home to 1,500 people.

A letter from a Mr. R. H. Fife written in 1899 to the Daily Progress summarizes the merchants' fears: "Charlottesville ought to be the business center of the surrounding county for 40 miles with macadamized roads and railroads radiating from it and tapping the country in every direction bringing to it the trade and produce of every section of our own and adjacent counties. The road to Alberene is the one that is of the greatest importance to us just now for if it is not built, and built at once, we are going to lose a fine trade that we have enjoyed from that section of the country heretofore." Fife advocated extending the new railroad up the east side of Carter's Mountain to join the Charlottesville City and Suburban Railway, an electric streetcar line, at Fry Springs on the south side of town. He called for the new line to also be powered by electricity. He was very vague about who was to finance this railroad.

In February 1901, Henry Lane himself appeared before the Charlottesville Chamber of Commerce to beat the drums for the railroad extension. Speaking completely without authority, he suggested that the C&O would build the line. Lane proposed that the C&O abandon the Main Street station it shared with the Southern and build a new depot at the junction with the Alberene line. Lane could hardly be called an objective party. His numerous business interests in the Esmont area would be well served by a railroad to Charlottesville. Of course, we may assume he also hoped to win the contract to build the railroad.

In late 1902 and early 1903 the Daily Progress carried several articles announcing that the Alberene line would terminate at Keswick, several miles east of Charlottesville. The C&O was seriously considering building the branch and ran surveys in February 1903. It was found that the Carter's Mountain route would meet heavy grades. The C&O had no desire to route freight trains over the lightly built streetcar tracks in Charlottesville, nor did they want to abandon the Main Street depot. A route along the Rivana River to Keswick was much more practical, since most of the stone traffic would head east to Richmond before being routed to northern industrial markets .

Charlottesville and Alberene were cool to the idea of the Keswick junction. Little business would flow from Charlottesville south by such a round-about route. The merchants were also disappointed to lose business from the railroad's locomotive shop which was planned for the junction. Support for the extension evaporated rapidly and the railroad expansion news dropped out of the papers--for a while.

Developments at Alberene were no secret and it was not long before other capitalists were attracted to the soapstone belt. While it was certainly no gold rush, many new companies opened quarries to compete with James Serene and Daniel Carroll. Piedmont Soapstone Company, Phoenix Soapstone Company, American Soapstone Company, National Soapstone Company, Pinkerton Soapstone Company, C&O Soapstone

Company, Old Dominion Soapstone Company and the interestingly-named Plumbers Soapstone Company of America, were all in business shortly after the turn of the century. Most of these companies were short-lived, undercapitalized, lacked transportation and had limited reserves of good quality stone. Of all the competitors, Captain James W. Foster's Virginia Soapstone Company posed the only real threat to Albemarle Soap Stone.

Captain Foster had the courage and leadership skills to be successful in every almost every enterprise to which he turned his gentlemanly Southern hand. During the War Between the States he joined Colonel John S. Mosby's famous Partisan Rangers and was promoted to captain for his valor in leading a charge which routed pursuing Union cavalry. Following the war, Captain Foster studied law at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He settled in Leesburg, north of Washington, D.C., and began a successful law practice.

During this time Captain Foster became associated with Carl Adolph "Max" Wiehle, a German-born doctor who had retired at the age of 35 after a short, but very successful practice in Philadelphia. Wiehle had the utopian dream of building a perfect city in northern Virginia. He bought up 3,500 acres and laid out a model town modestly named Wiehle (now the site of Reston, Virginia, a prosperous suburb of Washington D.C.). One of the industries located in Wiehle was the mill of the Maryland and Virginia Serpentine and Talc Company of Baltimore. This mill processed a very pure foliated white talc from quarries on the property. Captain Foster and Max Wiehle were investors in this company, but Foster saw greater potential in stone from Nelson County.

During the winter of 1891-92 Captain Foster was poking around the little Nelson County town of Schuyler buying up likely looking soapstone deposits along Schuyler Creek (also known as Ivy Creek on some maps). On March 4, 1892, work began on the first test quarry in Schuyler. The Virginia Soapstone Company was formally incorporated on October 19, 1893, with Max Wiehle as president and Captain Foster as secretary and general manager. By the turn of the century Virginia Soapstone reported employing 175 men in its quarries and mill. The mill building was constructed of flat soapstone slabs, much of it waste from the gang saws. Products from the mill included laundry tubs, sinks, mantles and backs for stoves and fireplaces.

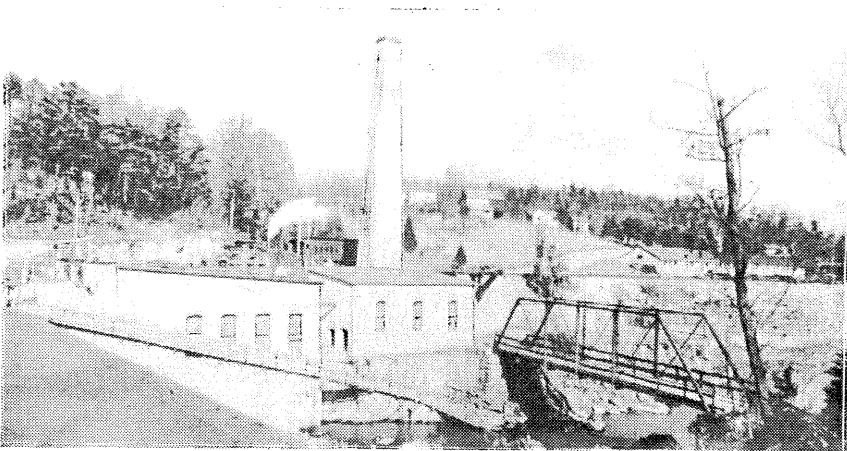
The Schuyler mill, like the competition at Alberene, was originally powered by steam, but Captain Foster was extremely progressive. During an expansion in the late 1890's, he decided that his mill would be repowered with electricity. Construction began in 1899 on the first of two dams across the Rockfish River, each with an attached powerhouse. Powerhouse Number One was located at Bridgeport, about two miles upstream from Schuyler. Powerhouse Number Two, built in 1904, was located at Fostoria just outside of Schuyler. The dams backed the

Rockfish River up the narrow canyon into a pair of lakes which a newspaper gushingly described as fine for bathing or boating.

Both plants had problems operating at capacity when the river was low and were expanded with auxiliaries within a few years. A massive flywheel-equipped diesel engine was added to Powerhouse Number One. Powerhouse Number Two had a steam plant. In addition to supplying the mill with power, most company-owned houses in Schuyler were wired for electricity (a single cord dropped from the ceiling of each room, but even that was a wonder at the turn of the century).

Products from the Schuyler mill were usually freighted to the Southern Railway's Charlottesville-Lynchburg mainline at Rockfish. The stone was moved in huge wagons pulled by teams of magnificent draft horses. Products were crated for final shipment in a warehouse at Rockfish. A county-owned road spanned the four miles between Schuyler and Rockfish. Because of its heavy traffic, the Virginia Soapstone Company shared the road's maintenance and it was a fairly good road, as roads of the time went. But even the best of dirt roads could become a morass during Virginia's wet seasons (roughly most of the year), especially when the heavy wagons churned the mud into a sticky goo. It was clear that more efficient transportation was needed for the mill to reach its full potential. A railroad was the obvious solution, and of course, the progressive Captain Foster decided it would be electric.

In its charter, the Virginia Soapstone Company had wisely foreseen the need for rail service. The charter authorized the company "...to construct and maintain a private railway or tramroad...and to operate the same either by horse, electricity or steam, or any other power



Number 5 and a single coach pause at Powerhouse Number 2 in 1915. The building at right was used as a warehouse. (Holsinger Collection, University of Virginia)

provided always that the said railway or tramroad is used exclusively for the works of said Virginia Soapstone Company and is not operated as a common carrier."

On June 16, 1899, Captain Foster's plans for an electric railroad were grandly announced in the Lynchburg News. The railroad was to have run along the west bank of the Rockfish River between Schuyler and Rockfish, but was changed to the east bank and the shoulder of the jointly-maintained road. The article predicted that the line would be running by the first of January, 1900. This was optimistic since right-of-way purchases at Rockfish were still being made in December 1899.

The nameless electric line began at a carhouse on the knoll east of the Schuyler mill. It crossed Ivy Creek and the mill yard on a high trestle. The track left the Schuyler mill from the north end and climbed the steep hill on the current grade of Route 800. Cresting the hill, the line dropped down past the present location of the Baptist church and then turned northward along the Rockfish River at the future site of Powerhouse Number Two. The grade followed the 400-foot contour along the river to a point below the village of Rockfish. The dams raised the water level in the Rockfish to just below the grade, an oversight which would later cause many problems during storms. A short siding near Bridgeport was planned to allow two cars to pass. Below Rockfish the track left the river and made a loop counter-clockwise around the slopes of Drumheller's Hollow to approach the Southern depot from the northeast. The track was to run inside the soapstone company's warehouse to unload both passengers and freight.

On January 4, 1900, the Daily Progress reported that the grading was complete, ties were in place and that track laying would begin the next week. The used rails leased from the Southern were one and 1/8 miles of 45 pound iron and three miles of 50 pound steel.

In July the Daily Progress announced, "Work is progressing rapidly on the immense trestle at the Schuyler end of the new electric railroad. The machinery is all up in the power-house, just ready to touch the button, as soon as the stringing of wires is completed." On August 29 the Schuyler correspondent wrote, "The new railroad is now entirely completed except the trestle at the Schuyler end, which is very nearly done. The connection will be made this week to start the machinery in the mill by the power of electricity. We hope when the steam is all done away with that we will all be very much cooler."

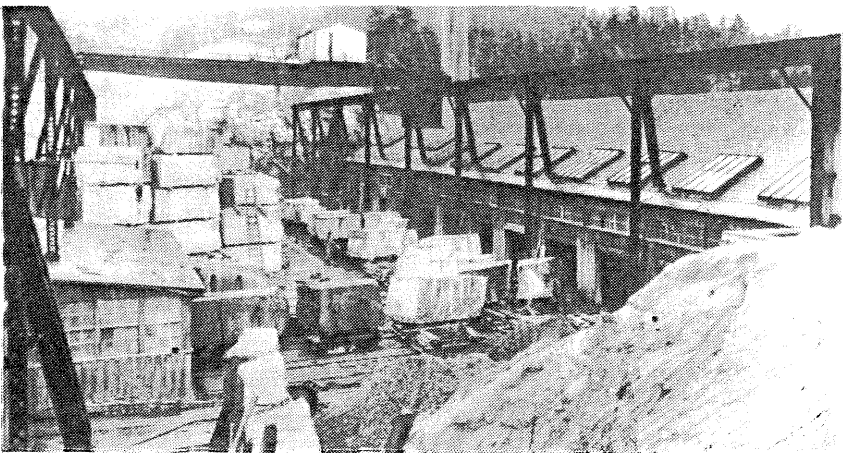
Captain Foster and his company were beginning to run short of cash by this time, so he outfitted the line with used equipment--very used equipment. Three obsolete Lewis and Fowler single truck, open platform trolley cars were purchased from the Lynchburg Street Railway. When built in 1891, they rode on Eickemeyer trucks with jack shafts and side rods which made them prone to derailments. By the time they arrived in Rockfish, the cars had long been re-equipped with Maguire #20 trucks

and Westinghouse motors. One car was completely stripped of seats for use as a locomotive. The other two had only some seats removed and could carry both freight and passengers. The line also owned three non-powered freight cars.

A Westinghouse engineer was making the final adjustments at the power plant in August 1900. The track was finished by then, but no wires had been strung. A correspondent for the Daily Progress exclaimed, "In the next week or two we may expect to see the slow, plodding four-horse teams which have been used for hauling stone to Rockfish entirely superceded by the fast-flying 'no pushee, no pullee' cars."

After all the hoopla about the electric railroad in the local newspapers, they completely forgot to record its actual opening. However, the Daily Progress did carry a small item about operation of the line on January 30, 1901. "The excursions from this place [Schuyler] to Rockfish over the new electric railway have been perfect successes. The country bred horses have now almost ceased to look startled as the electric car comes whizzing around curves; and all of us have gotten over our fear of the new high 'trestle' on the new road, which only a short while ago we vowed by all that is holy, we would never cross." The four mile railroad opened 13 months later than the original estimate. Building and equipping the line cost a mere \$15,500.

The streetcars proved very popular with both employees and paying passengers. Cars were scheduled to run at half-hour intervals and met all the important passenger trains on the Southern mainline plus providing commuter service for the mill hands. The fare was five cents



Soapstone blocks, most cut to approximately 4 X 6 X 10 feet, await their turn in the Schuyler gang saw rooms. (Holsinger Collection, University of Virginia)

each way. Wages at this time were seven cents an hour for a 12 hour day, so two nickles were quite a bite. After some grumbling from the employees, the company paid for the ride to work if the employee logged the previous month without lost time.

Since the electric line met the Southern's mail trains at Rockfish, it was only natural that they soon won a contract to carry sacked mail to Schuyler. The route was assigned number 314005 and dumped \$250 dollars annually into the company bank account.

Unfortunately, the little railroad proved too popular with general passengers. The line was not a common carrier and was authorized to carry only company employees. No figures were published for the first year of operation, but some idea of how much under-the-table business was going on can be gained by looking at the following year's totals. Over 20,000 passengers rode the line in fiscal year 1902, the first year records were kept. This was a clear violation of the company's charter: ...to construct and maintain a private railway...provided always, that the said railway is used exclusively for the works of said Virginia Soapstone Company and is *not operated as a common carrier*.

To stay out of trouble with the state, a new company called the Schuyler Railway Company, was chartered March 14, 1902. The line was captialized at \$25,000, quite a jump from the \$15,500 it cost to build the railroad, but the streetcars were now a going concern. Captain Foster was president of the new company, with Daniel Carroll, Henry Lane and George Bostwick as the other officers and directors. The soapstone companies were rapidly moving toward a merger by this time and Schuyler Railway was to be an important part of this plan.

As work ended on expanding the Schuyler mill, finishing the Bridgeport dam and opening the electric railroad, Captain Foster found his company in very poor shape financially. The expansion program had used up nearly all the company's capital. The situation was so bad that some of the projects, such as the railroad, could only be completed on a shoestring. Although Virginia Soapstone had the most modern plant in the state and enormous reserves of fine quality stone, they had not yet been able to penetrate the national market.

Although a well-to-do man, Captain Foster was far from rich. He could not hope to save the company from his own pocket. Max Wiehle could not help either. His utopian community near Washington had been a miserable flop--in the fifteen years since the development opened only seven lots had been sold. The land, its paved streets, spacious town hall and enormous lake left Wiehle with a staggering debt. A hotel and spa on the property were profitable, and other income came from the talc works and a lumber mill, but these still could not make Wiehle a success, either the town or the man.

Over in Alberene, Albemarle Soap Stone was facing exactly the opposite dilemma. The company's aggressive sales force and Daniel

Carroll's genius had made the Alberene company a leader in the industry. They had plenty of cash, but after 17 years of production were simply running out of stone. It might be more correct to say that they were running out of so-called "regular grade" stone which was used for laundry tubs, their bread and butter. There was still plenty of stone in Alberene, but as James Serene had found in test borings, it was very hard--too hard to quarry and mill economically into tubs.

There can be no doubt that Daniel Carroll fingered the company bankroll and cast covetous eyes at Virginia Soapstone's huge reserves of undeveloped stone. James Serene was opposed to buying stone from Schuyler which he claimed was inferior. Although he may have had technical reasons to say so, more likely he was just proud. As later events were to show, the Schuyler stone was excellent.

One day early in May, James Serene boarded a train for New York to spend a few days with his family at their home in Brooklyn. He began the trip with a slight cold but by the time he reached New York it had become pneumonia. Since there were few drugs available in those days, the doctor prescribed whiskey to keep up Serene's strength. But Serene had taken the pledge of temperance before God at a camp meeting in the army 35 years before. Now he refused to embrace John Barleycorn, even to save his life. James H. Serene died on May 20, 1901 and was buried in Brooklyn's Cypress Hills Cemetery following a private funeral.

At almost the same time in Washington, D.C., Max Wiehle also left the living. Oddly, he too died of pneumonia.

The deaths of James Serene and Max Wiehle gave Daniel Carroll the freedom and the opportunity he needed to increase his holdings in the soapstone industry. "It is rumored here that the Albemarle Soapstone Company has bought the interest in the Virginia Soapstone quarries at Schuyler, formerly owned by Mr. Max Wiehle," a newspaper article announced on June 28, 1901. "This interest will give them almost total control of these quarries and should the rumor be correct, it is very probable that both companies will be consolidated in one large concern." Carroll had waited a discreet time for the Wiehle family to get over their loss and had then bought up all their stock. What he paid for control of the company is unknown, but it surely was a godsend for Wiehle's debt-ridden heirs.

Full merger of the two soapstone companies took place in 1904. The name Virginia Soapstone Company was retained for the new corporation. Alberene Stone Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary, remained the marketing arm. Daniel Carroll became the president with Captain Foster serving as vice-president.

With soapstone quarrying on the wane in Alberene, it was decided to use the Alberene mill's excess capacity to work stone from Schuyler. A railroad to join the two towns was chartered by an act of the Virginia Assembly on March 21, 1903, under the name Nelson & Albemarle

Railway Company. Officers were chosen in September. Daniel Carroll was elected president. Henry Lane served as vice-president and general manager with Samuel H. Purcell of Esmont as secretary and Richard Flynn (Daniel Carroll's nephew) of New York as treasurer. Captain Foster was listed as company attorney. There were 2,500 shares of stock outstanding each with a value of \$100.

The Nelson & Albemarle had to cross two summits in the seven miles between Esmont and Schuyler. The new grade began one mile north of Esmont at Guthrie on the Alberene Branch (behind John Lane's Esmont Farm). The line turned southwest on a short ascending grade of 1.75 percent for about one mile, then dropped at 1.75 percent for two miles to Green Creek. The grade climbed back up from the creek at rates between 1.75 and 2 percent for two miles. The final two miles into Schuyler was again at a 1.75 percent descent. The new yard at Schuyler ran parallel to Ivy Creek on a north-south axis through the mill, cutting under the electric line's dreaded high trestle. Originally it was announced that the line would be powered by electricity and an extra-width right-of-way was purchased with future double-tracking in mind. However, electrification plans were shelved during construction and were never revived.

Two major bridges were required on the Nelson & Albemarle. One was a 455 foot trestle across a meadow near Green Creek. The other was a short highway overpass about two miles from Esmont. This bridge was on a high fill and its abutments were made with large milled soapstone blocks, rather than stacked flat pieces used at other bridges on the line.



N&A personnel pose in front of the Schuyler engine house about 1910. The man with the bowler in the middle of the second row is believed to be Henry Lane.

Henry Lane of course had the contract to build the new railroad. By early 1904 he had 125 men working on the grade. Although there was quite a bit of earthwork on the new line, there was almost no rockwork. Crews encountered no major problems except for the two bridges and at least came close to the June 1 opening date Henry Lane had announced to the local press. The track was laid using untreated chestnut ties and second-hand rails leased from the C&O.

The second link in the Nelson & Albemarle was the northern end of the C&O's Alberene Branch. The track from Esmont through Guthrie to Alberene, about five miles, was leased back from the C&O on November 2, 1904. The switch at Guthrie faced toward Esmont, in reverse of the normal direction of traffic. Trains between Schuyler and Alberene first headed down to Esmont station where they reversed direction by running the engine around the train.

The final piece added to this miniature empire was the Schuyler Railway. This line passed out of existence as a separate company on June 23, 1905. Mail service was suspended April 9, but apparently the electric cars were still running in July. A short note in the Daily Progress for July 19 stated, "Mr. Craig and Miss Easton of Schuyler were married last evening. The young couple were to have been married earlier in the day, but were left by the trolley line which connects Schuyler and the Southern Railroad, and had to wait another long hot day without the mitigating bliss of conubial life."

The electric line was too lightly constructed and the grades too steep for regular steam trains, so Henry Lane rebuilt the line to heavier standards. The new track left the Schuyler mill to the south and turned upstream by the Rockfish River. The new route rejoined the electric line near Power House Number 2, eliminating the steep climb through town and the trestle which had so frightened everyone five years before. Below Rockfish a new grade was run up the northwest side of Drumheller's Hollow to end at a blind siding. A switchback led up a 1.75 percent grade to connect with the Southern in front of the station. The grades along the river ranged from 1 to 1.5 percent.

During the latter part of 1905, the Schuyler Railway was closed down while Henry Lane's crews improved the roadbed and removed the electrical equipment. A letter to the C&O dated August 29, 1905, noted that due to the reconstruction work between Hamilton and Rockfish, the Nelson & Albemarle was not prepared to deliver cars or heavy pieces of freight between those stations. The electric cars were still being used as a shuttle over that part of the line. The letter predicted that the whole route would be open for regular traffic in about three months.

Without fanfare or even notice in the newspapers, the whole railroad was running by the beginning of 1906. Early correspondence lists 10 station stops: Alberene, Coles, Esmont, Melvale, Damon, Ruffin, Schuyler, Bridgeport, Hamilton and Rockfish. Agents were on

duty at Alberene, Esmont, Schuyler and Rockfish. Other stations were merely flag stops, although several had sidings. Some flag stops had shelters for the occasional passengers who boarded there. It had cost \$116, 869 for the entire 13 miles of new, upgraded or leased track.

The electric cars, stripped of their motors and controllers, ended their days as section sheds. Two were located at Esmont a few yards north of the depot. The third probably wound up at Schuyler where a second section crew was based. Electrical components and trolley wire were sold to the Electric Construction Company of Virginia for \$2,696.

There was barely time for the grade to settle before an October storm washed out several sections of track between Schuyler and Esmont. Trains were delayed 24 hours until repairs could be made. The Rockfish line had far more damage, with some sections under five feet of water. At one place the track was left hanging in the air over what had once been the roadbed. This would not be the last time floods cut the line to Rockfish.

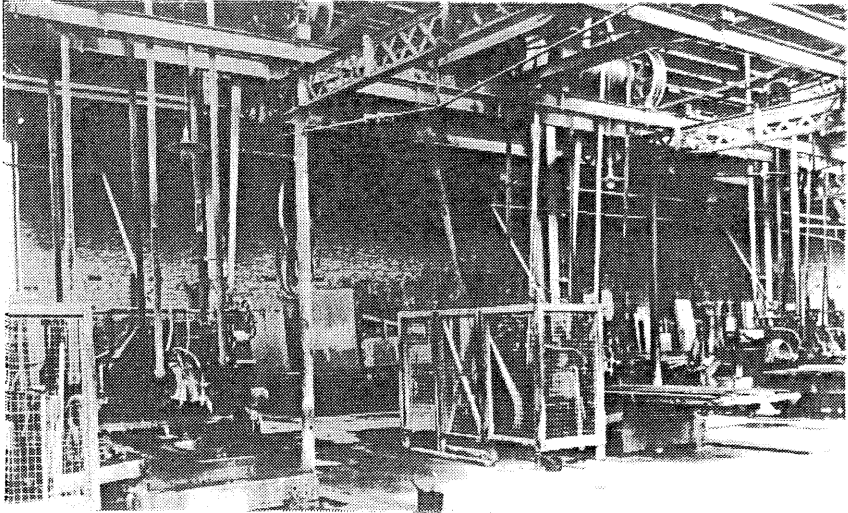
Henry Lane found himself severely over-extended by so many business activities. He and Daniel Carroll agreed to find a permanent manager for the Alberene quarries and mill. Their talent search ended at a marble works in Georgia when they hired Michael J. Copps. Copps came from a long line of Vermont marble men and he had extensive experience in both the quarries and mills there. Copps soon turned that experience and his considerable mechanical talents toward improving soapstone quarrying and milling machines. He adapted equipment from the marble, granite and slate industries to the special needs of soapstone. Under Copps' management, production time and costs decreased. In recognition he was made a company director.

The Blue Ridge Slate Company began extensive workings west of Esmont at the turn of the century. A short spur was built by the C&O from the main line near the Scottsville-Schuyler road and crossed Ballinger Creek on a trestle with a two percent grade up to the mill. The quarry had its own railroad operated by small steam engines.

Old Dominion Soapstone Corporation was formed in 1903 to work a high-quality deposit on a ridge between Esmont and Schuyler. Chicago industrialist D.W. Campbell was president; Arthur H. Lloyd of Esmont was vice-president and general manager. Their main product was laundry tubs. After the Nelson & Albemarle was built, Old Dominion ran their own two mile railroad from Damon up to their plant. The railroad used two small standard gauge Vulcan 0-4-0T engines.

During 1907 Captain Foster retired from active management of the Schuyler mill. He returned to law practice in Leesburg which he pursued with success for the rest of his life. Captain Foster also dabbled in his other great passion, Confederate veteran's organizations. He died June 10, 1913, at the age of 69 and was buried in Leesburg.

The last quarry at Alberene ran out of economically recoverable



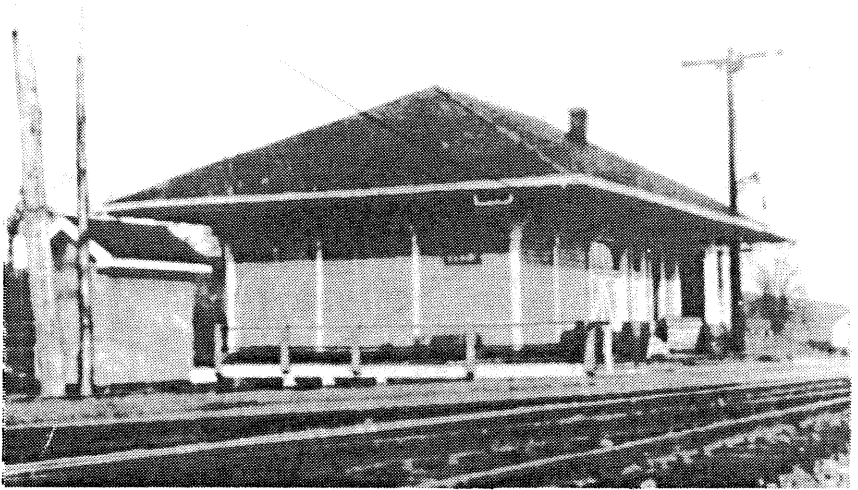
Equipment in the Schuyler mill was driven by belts from overhead shafts. The whirling machinery made the mill a dangerous place to work. (Earl Lipscomb Collection)

regular grade soapstone in 1908. The quarries had been worked down to the very last block by using oaken stulls to hold back the unstable east wall. One quarry reached the unprecedented depth of 200 feet before being abandoned. From then on, the Alberene mill cut only Schuyler stone. It would be almost 50 years before stone would be quarried again at Alberene.

Henry Lane kept offices for Lane Brothers Company in Lynchburg as well as in Esmont. He frequently came back to his large Esmont farm, Altavista, to take care of local matters and enjoy his family. Lane rode Southern trains between Lynchburg and Rockfish, then caught the Nelson & Albemarle to Esmont. He sometimes got to Rockfish after the last Nelson & Albemarle train had gone for the day. This meant a 12-mile buggy ride over rutted roads in the dark.

His solution was to buy a track speeder which was promptly christened "Maude". While Maude was normally kept at Rockfish for Henry Lane's use, it was also called out to pick up important visitors when trains were not running. It was also popular with the section gang, who were less than careful with its use. In 1907 Lane cautioned superintendent Sam Purcell about abuses by the section gang. "It appears that 'Maude' is being run in a most reckless manner, both as to speed and without orders....I do not like to deprive them of the use of the car while I am not needing it, but unless it is handled more carefully, I shall have to take it away."

The crews were more careful, but there were still problems. In



The N&A's main connection with the wider world was via the C&O whose trim depot at Warren is shown in this 1915 valuation photo. (C&O Historical Society)

1911 Mrs. Lane was left stranded at Rockfish on Christmas day. Sam Purcell wrote a carefully worded note of apology to Henry Lane, explaining that Maude had not been in working order after use for official business. Since it was Christmas, the engine crews were at home for the holiday and there was nobody left to run a locomotive up to fetch Mrs. Lane.

Stranded passengers were a frequent problem as Henry Lane and Sam Purcell juggled the Nelson & Albemarle's schedules to meet the needs of the soapstone company, and to make connections with both Southern and C&O trains. Every time they got things running right, the C&O or the Southern would change their timetables. There were often long layovers, or impossibly short blocks of time for switching, particularly at Esmont. In 1910, for example, the Southern moved up Train 44's schedule by 20 minutes without telling Purcell. An outraged Michael Copps and his young daughter were stranded at Rockfish. Sam Purcell had to beg the Southern for timetables to avoid future problems.

In 1907 Henry Lane ordered Sam Purcell to discontinue the morning and evening commuter trains which shuttled from both Rockfish and Alberene to Schuyler. There was not enough business to keep these trains running. Daniel Carroll pulled rank on Lane and ordered the trains put back out of concern for his employees. But as an economy measure, Carroll substituted mixed trains (passenger and freight cars in the same train) for some other passenger runs. Lane wrote to Purcell, "...I will have to admit that Mr. Carroll's views seem so strange to me that I

cannot understand what he wishes to do, therefore, I am not in a position to offer suggestions; of course he knows what he is trying to do, but he has failed to make it plain to me, therefore, I can only say do whatever he wants and give it a fair trial, and keep me advised."

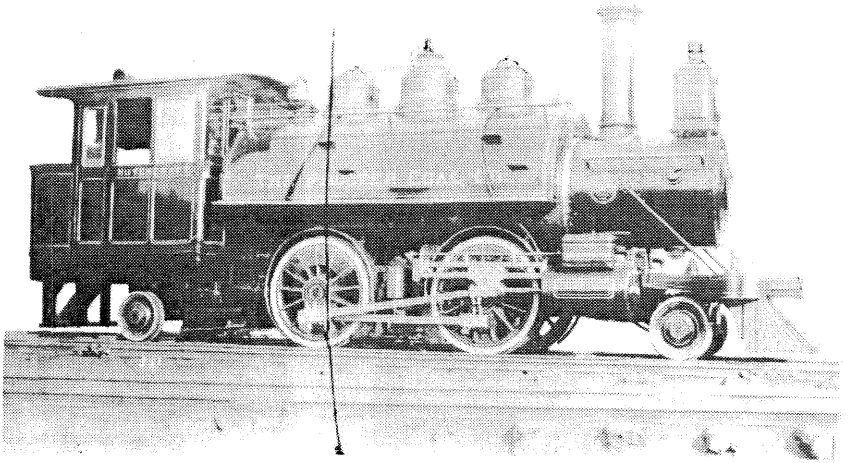
Henry Lane's own letter to Daniel Carroll gives an idea of his growing frustration at not having a free hand with the railroad. "I wish to impress upon you that there is no spirit of resentment, or desire on my part to criticize. I am taking a business view of the matter," he wrote to Carroll. "I am...perfectly willing to give a bad law a fair trial and if at the end of the year we have been lucky, and have not killed any passengers with a mixed train, I may be able to say we have saved some money, but I wish to be on record as being opposed to taking the risk that we are now going to assume for the sake of effecting the small saving that may be accomplished by the new arrangement."

The debate between Daniel Carroll and Henry Lane continued to flare for several years. Carroll demanded strict economies, but paternalistically would not allow his employees to be inconvenienced. Commuter runs lost money constantly--\$27.85 on the Rockfish run during May 1910, for example. Lane was so frustrated that he could no longer discuss the matter with Carroll. "It appears on its face that the Soapstone Co. should make the N&A whole on these trains," Lane wrote Sam Purcell. "If you agree with me, will you please confer with Mr. Carroll direct, as questions of this kind are awkward for me to handle, and I do not think Mr. C. appreciates my position in the matter."

These were busy years for the Nelson & Albemarle. Several trains shuttled daily between Schuyler and Rockfish carrying workers and meeting the Southern's passenger trains to and from Charlottesville. There was also a daily round trip between Alberene and Schuyler, plus early morning and late afternoon commuter trains for workers. A round trip was also run between Esmont and Warren. Most runs were mixed trains, a combination passenger-baggage car trailing a few freight cars, although on some trains the best that passengers could expect was a seat in the caboose. Only the money-losing commuter trains ran with just passengers and no freight.

As early as 1906, Nelson & Albemarle trains were operating between Esmont and Warren over C&O tracks. Originally they were carded as trains 9 and 10. The C&O also had trains of this number passing through Warren on the mainline, so at the request of C&O superintendent J.W. Knapp, the numbers were changed to 209 and 210. These numbers were carried in the C&O timetables as their own trains, even though they ran with Nelson & Albemarle crews and engines until the end of operations.

Somehow the company ran all these trains with just three locomotives, all leased from the soapstone company. When the Nelson & Albemarle opened, its premier engine was Number 4, a 1904 Porter



N&A #7 was originally built by Baldwin for Proctor Coal Company In 1887 and was named "Hutchcraft". (Broadbelt Collection, Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania)

2-6-2T bought new for road freight service. An 1887 Baldwin 2-4-2T, Number 7, held down mixed trains to Rockfish. The usual engine on the Alberene run in the early days was Number 8, described by old timers as having a tender, but otherwise unidentified. Since there were no turntables (except for the C&O's 56-foot job at Esmont), tank engines were favored on the Nelson & Albemarle. They were almost never turned. The Alberene engine was housed at night in a wooden shed behind the Alberene mill. All locomotives were maintained in a four stall engine shed and machine shop at Esmont (built of soapstone slabs, of course).

Virginia Soapstone used several other locomotives between the mill and the quarries, and they often turned up on Nelson & Albemarle trains. Unfortunately, nearly all the company records were destroyed many years ago, but a few letters between Henry Lane and Sam Purcell survive to give tantalizing clues to the identity of various engines. Two Pittsburgh-built Forneys from the New York Elevated Railway saw extensive use as mill switchers. They were numbered 5 and 6. Number 6 still had vacuum brakes in 1910 (standard equipment on the EI) and could not legally run on the Nelson & Albemarle, but often did anyway--Schuyler was far beyond the usual rounds of any inspectors. One locomotive was referred to as "Spunky Sally" in Purcell's letters, but is otherwise unidentified.

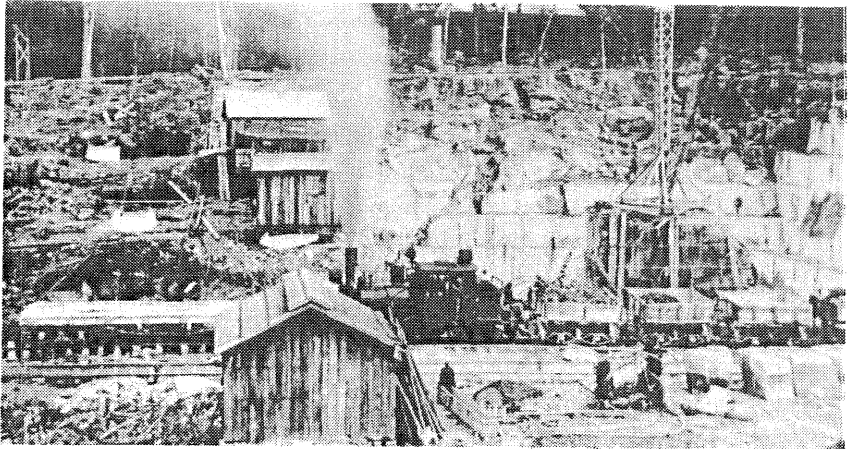
During 1910 the motive power situation on the Nelson & Albemarle became critical. Sam Purcell complained that he was paying rent on six locomotives: 3 through 8. Number 7 spent most of the year in the shop

undergoing a major overhaul. The previous owners had changed the design of Number 7's rear truck, and even after rebuilding, it still jumped the track frequently. Old Number 8 was in need of a new front end and was out of service between May and September. Then in late September, Number 5 broke a driver tire, Number 4 was in the shop for emergency work and Number 7 was back for more adjustments to that troublesome rear truck. Purcell pulled aged Number 8 off the deadline to join rented Number 3 and the vacuum-braked Number 6 in regular service. Since the soapstone company still had its own switching to do with the few locomotives still running, the Nelson & Albemarle's schedules were a mess until the end of September when Number 4 came back to work. Number 7 was not completely repaired until June 1911. By then the railroad had hired machinist A. M. Wyland away from the Richmond Locomotive Works. Under Wyland's hand all the engines were soon put back in service.

Like the locomotives, the Nelson & Albemarle leased all its passenger cars. Some came from the soapstone company, but most were owned by the C&O. The C&O cars came as part of the Nelson & Albemarle's contract to operate trains 209 and 210 between Esmont and Warren. Sam Purcell faced some trying moments dealing with the C&O over their condition. They were among the oldest and worst cars in the C&O fleet. In January 1910, combines 243 and 255 were badly in need of outside painting, and 243 also needed roof repairs. The C&O obliged by lending the Nelson & Albemarle their combine 283 while the others were rotated to Richmond for reconditioning.

Unfortunately, 243 came back from Richmond without the aisle covering. Sam Purcell thought the C&O shop crews had taken it out and forgot to replace it. He wrote to Richmond asking the shop to send some sort of covering, noting that the draft timber bolts were "much in evidence and look very badly." The C&O's master mechanic denied removing the aisle covering, which was probably true. According to a statement by Conductor C.C. Critzer, most of the cars sent by the C&O, including both 243 and 255, had no aisle covering at all when received.

Unlike most of the other passenger cars, coach 10 was owned by the soapstone company and leased to the Nelson & Albemarle. It too was in need of paint during August 1910. Sam Purcell asked Henry Lane's permission to send it to the C&O shops in Richmond for repainting and to rent a replacement from them. "I think it would be cheaper in the end to send coach 10 to Richmond to be repainted and overhauled," Purcell wrote. "In any event, with our present schedule we could not get along without an extra coach, [even] if we tried to repaint it here with our jack leg painters." Apparently his opinion of his own painters was accurate--when Purcell wrote to Richmond he noted that "Albemarle" was misspelled on the car, and asked the C&O to please make sure they spelled it right.



N&A #5 and vacuum-braked #6 originally ran on the New York EI before coming to the N&A in 1905. (Virginia Department of Mines and Mineral Resources)

The Nelson & Albemarle had no interchange freight cars of their own and depended on the C&O to supply them with empties at Warren. There frequently were not enough cars to meet the shippers' needs. Sam Purcell noted in letter of February 1910 to E.J. King, the C&O's Richmond superintendent, "The Soapstone Co's are needing cars this morning as below, orders having been in for several days: Damon, 2; Schuyler, 2 large cars; Alberene, 4. If you will help us we will be obliged." This didn't solve the problem. On March 5, Sam Purcell again complained, "We are short eight box cars this morning. Some of the loads have been held four or five days and shippers are getting impatient. Your attention will oblige." Again on March 9 Sam Purcell complained and by now he was getting terse. "We are short this morning nine box cars, 2 for Damon, 1 for Schuyler, 6 for Alberene. Yours truly, Superintendent."

Sam Purcell had other trying problems with the C&O. The agent at Warren had riled up the Nelson & Albemarle crews by insisting they help load baggage and express aboard C&O trains. Purcell diplomatically wrote, "The N&A crew is expected to deliver all baggage to the C&O platform and assist in delivering all express. They have also always transferred all baggage from the C&O to N&A and assisted also with the express; but we cannot require them to load baggage or express on C&O #10, after delivering to C&O platform; though I am quite sure in any emergency they will always assist."

Problems of a different sort caused friction with the Southern at Rockfish. Southern crews frequently choked the Nelson & Albemarle track to the depot with stored freight cars. Sometimes passengers,

including women and children, were forced to walk up the hill through snow with their baggage. The situation became so tense that it led to a fight between crews in 1907.

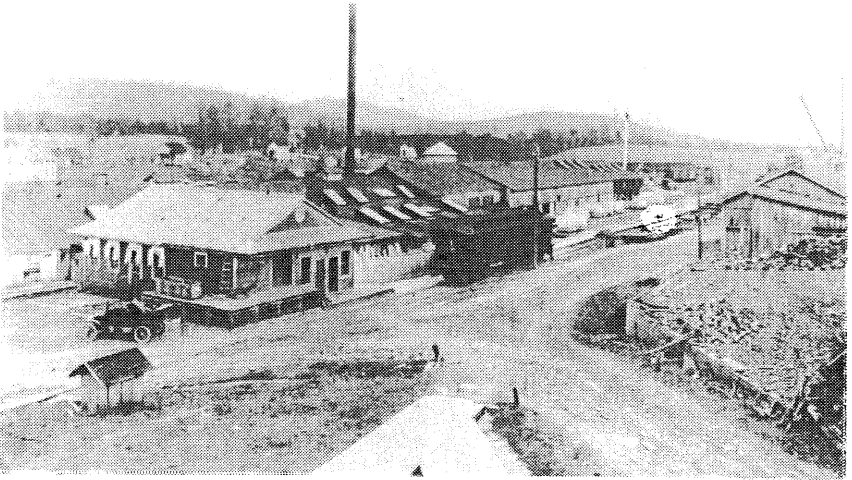
A brakeman on Southern's Train 63 named William Gay got into a heated argument with Nelson & Albemarle's conductor C.C. Critzer. According to witnesses, Gay picked up a sizeable rock and hit Critzer, making a large wound in his arm. Critzer claimed that Gay had drawn a pistol and shot him, though no one else saw Gay with a gun. But Critzer's gun was obvious; he drew his own pistol and started firing. Fortunately he was a poor shot and Gay was not hit. Henry Lane advised Sam Purcell that the Nelson & Albemarle's contract with the Southern prohibited them from blocking the depot approach tracks. He told Purcell to insist on protecting the company's rights, but to downplay the fight between Gay and Critzer.

Three years later, the problems at the Southern depot had not been solved. Purcell wrote to the Southern's superintendent, G.V. Peyton, in December of 1910, calling attention to seven blockages that month and in October. "I have been sending in reports for several years without any marked improvement and I consider it useless to continue same. I agree with you that the station is the proper place for passengers to take your trains, and if you will arrange for them to do so I am sure it will be greatly to the interest of both companies."

Lane Brothers Company was building a 32-mile segment of the Virginian Railway between Mansion and Moneta in 1906. This line crossed the Southern at a place called Hurd. Henry Lane was bitten by the same utopian bug that had infected Max Wiehle and decided Hurd would be the ideal place for his perfect town. It was soon named Altavista after Lane's Esmont estate. His construction company relocated there in 1908 and took over the second floor of the new brick First National Bank building. Lane himself moved permanently to Altavista in 1910 to keep an eye on his growing empire. The success of Altavista was assured in 1912 when he founded the Standard Red Cedar Chest Company, now known as Lane Furniture. The plant was, and still is, Altavista's economic lifeblood. About 1920 Lane sold his Nelson & Albemarle stock and his name disappeared from the company's records.

During the 1909 to 1911 period, the farmers south of Esmont plagued the railroad with damage claims for property and livestock. These farmers were the same men (or their heirs) whose land had been condemned for the Alberene Railroad right-of-way 14 years earlier.

It was in late 1909 that John C. Tompkins claimed that a Nelson & Albemarle train had set fire to his fields, straw stacks and timber at Warren. He demanded \$240 damages and threatened suit. The crew claimed the fire was already burning when they passed the spot, possibly started by C&O Train 58 which had come by a few minutes before. Several local witnesses swore the fire came from the Nelson &



The Alberene mill was in its last year of operation when shot in 1915. The depot is to the left of the C&O combine. (Holsinger Collection, University of Virginia)

Albemarle train. Sam Purcell went over the burn with Tompkins and set the value at \$145. The next year Tompkins dropped his demand to \$150 and finally settled for a mere \$112.50.

W. D. Waters made a similar claim in 1910. Pasture covered by broom sage, a small stand of chestnut timber and some fencing were damaged by fire from a Nelson & Albemarle train. Waters demanded \$435, an amount estimated by Sam Purcell to be equal to the value of the land itself. Upon being advised that Purcell burned the broom sage on his own farm to improve the pasture, Waters dropped his demand to \$250. Purcell countered with \$150 which Waters accepted.

A dead sheep was the basis of a claim by William Dawson, heir to Andrew J. Dawson. Engineer Harry Leake claimed that he did not hit the sheep, but that it was already dead when his train arrived at that spot northbound from Warren. It had not been on the track when Leake passed that spot going south a few hours before. Sam Purcell expressed suspicion that the sheep had died elsewhere and been placed on the tracks. In the end, Purcell put the blame on C&O Train 58 which had passed there between Leake's runs. The C&O denied responsibility and the argument between Dawson and the Nelson & Albemarle resumed. Unfortunately, we will never know the outcome since the response was lost long ago.

Free-roaming hogs also came to grief under the little engines. One such case involved John Lane's son Harry. Harry was courting a girl who lived between Esmont and Schuyler. One evening he decided to

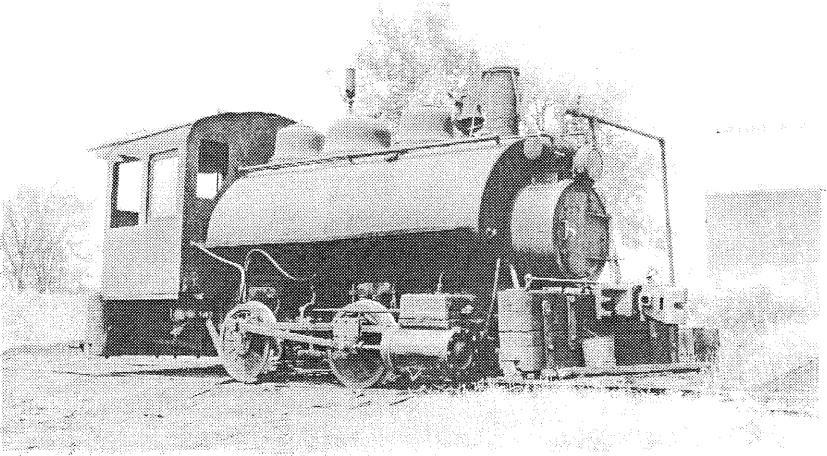
"borrow" one of the Nelson & Albemarle engines which had been spotted for the night at Esmont to visit his girl. West of Esmont the engine ran over a hapless pig. To hide his porcine crime, Harry cut up the pig and stuffed it into the engine's firebox. He completed his trip accompanied by the smell of sizzling bacon. Unfortunately, Harry bloodied his best suit during the butchering and had to confess all to his father. While too old for a trip to the woodshed, the tongue lashing Harry received probably stung just as badly. This would not be the last time a Nelson & Albemarle engine was "borrowed" for amorous purposes.

The Nelson & Albemarle's schedules were what might charitably be called leisurely, and Sam Purcell sometimes had to discipline his engineers for speeding over the spindly track. Harry Leake, the regular engineer on the Alberene train, caught a blast from Purcell for fast running in 1910. Purcell wrote, "Attention has been called to fast running out of Alberene....you can get to the overhead bridge and not exceed 20 miles an hour....On Saturday the train was run at this point between thirty and thirty-five miles an hour. The above instructions must be observed and Engineer and Conductor will be held responsible." The message didn't sink in because Leake was chewed out in 1911 for the same offense.

Nelson & Albemarle trains seemed to spend about as much time off the rails as on them in the early days. Usually there was little damage and seldom any injuries, probably because the trains were so slow (except when Harry Leake was at the throttle). Typical was a minor wreck in December 1910. Engine Number 7 spread the track two miles east of Schuyler. One stone car and Coach 243 were derailed with slight damage. The track was torn up for about 100 feet and trains were stalled for four hours.

With Nelson & Albemarle trains handling the bulk of the business on the Alberene Branch, the C&O dropped trains 57 and 58 about 1912. Thereafter, trains 209 and 210 took care of all work between Esmont and Warren. The only regular C&O activity on the Alberene Branch was the annual visit by the weed killer train. The C&O engines, usually small 2-8-0s, seemed enormous compared with the Nelson & Albemarle's little teakettles. Everybody in Esmont turned out to gawk when the outfit train came to town.

One of Virginia's earliest ecological lawsuits caused the aging Alberene mill's closure. For years the company had flushed grit-laden waste water from the rubbing beds and gang saws into Beaver Dam Creek behind the plant, fouling the water for several miles downstream. A local farmer named Lionel Skipwith sued in 1913 to stop the silting in his cornfields. The case was settled out of court the next year when Virginia Soapstone paid Skipwith \$3,000 damages. He agreed to not sue the company again for future silting. The dumping continued, but time had clearly run out for the Alberene mill.



Old Dominion's #2 was still working in 1956 at Buena Vista for Leas & McVitty. The engine is on display in Marion, Virginia. (D.W. Johnson, Thomas Lawson, Jr. Collection)

The huge Schuyler mill was expanded again in 1915. The main building was completely replaced by a larger structure, again built with flat soapstone slabs. To Lionel Skipwith's relief, the Alberene mill closed for good in 1916. Salvagable machinery was shipped to Schuyler. Only the depot, some warehouse space for the Alberene store and the enginehouse were used after 1916. The rest of the plant gradually fell into ruins.

Following Captain Foster's death in 1913, Daniel Carroll again moved to consolidate his holdings and bring in new investors. A new company called Virginia Alberene Corporation was organized in 1916. Carroll remained in control as president. The new vice-president was W. W. Hepburn of Philadelphia who represented Philadelphia Trust Company, holders of \$900,000 in gold notes for the new company. Nelson N. Money Penny, a financier friend of Carroll's from New York, was secretary and treasurer. Michael J. Copps was listed as a director and was made a vice-president in 1917.

One of the first acts of the new corporation was to buy out Old Dominion Soapstone Corporation in June 1916 for \$150,000. Old Dominion's assets included 284 acres of real estate, several quarries, the mill, a small store and workers' homes. Railway equipment included two 0-4-0T Vulcan engines of 1905 and 1909 vintage. The property still contained large reserves of good quality soft stone, as well as some fine lenses of harder stone, and quarrying continued here for 30 years.

In 1918, the Nelson & Albemarle floated a bond issue for renovation and modernization. A total of \$100,000 six-percent, twenty year bonds were sold. Whatever modest profit the railroad showed was

wiped out by the \$6,000 interest on these bonds until 1939. This really didn't bother the Virginia Alberene management--they held all the bonds. It was just money from one pocket into another.

As a rather unimportant shortline, the Nelson & Albemarle was spared control by the United States Railroad Administration during the Great War. One of the Government's few acts was to send Samuel Purcell a letter warning his crews to be on the lookout for German saboteurs who might drop bombs through passenger car toilet chutes onto key bridges. This brought gales of laughter from the Nelson & Albemarle crews--few passenger cars on the line had toilets at all.

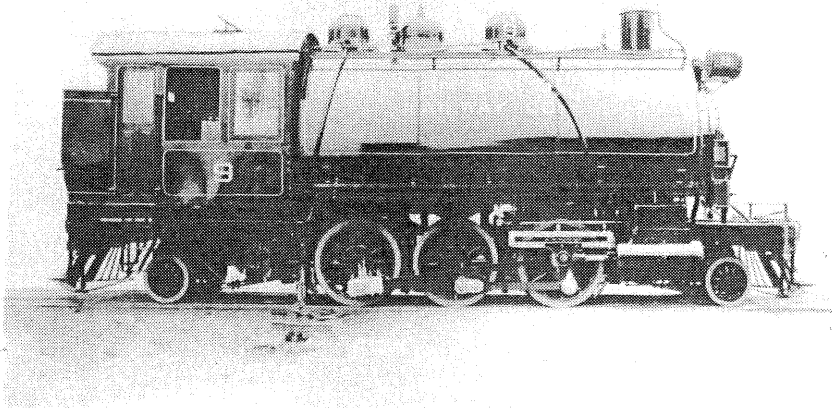
By the end of the War Schuyler was booming. Five quarries were in operation. Virginia Alberene employed 650 men, turning out an impressive half-million cubic feet of stone annually. The company owned 4,000 acres of property in Nelson and Albemarle Counties.

An era ended for Virginia Alberene when Daniel Carroll died in New York City on April 4, 1920. When Carroll's estate was counted it was found to be worth \$4,553,171. His Virginia Alberene stock was divided among Nelson Money Penny, Michael Copps and Samuel Purcell. Many business associates, relatives, friends and charities received cash bequests. (Carroll had no children).

The decade following the Great War was one of unprecedented urban growth and prosperity for America. Except for a brief postwar slump, industry was booming. For the first time in our history more people lived in urban areas than in the countryside. There was an enormous demand for residential, commercial, civic and industrial construction. Virginia Alberene manufactured products for all these markets. If there ever was a golden age for the soapstone industry, it was the 1920s.

Virginia Alberene reported net sales in 1919 of \$910,502, leaving a surplus of \$179,049 after operating expenses and interest. By 1922, the company's biggest year yet, the totals had climbed to \$1,627,419 in sales with a \$421,981 surplus. Employment reached 1,000 in 1925. That year the 35th quarry was opened--Quarry 36 (Number 13 had been skipped intentionally). Only three quarries were being worked at Schuyler in 1925, but others were in operation at Old Dominion.

By mid-decade Schuyler had displaced Lovingson, the county seat, as the largest and most prosperous town in Nelson County. Some 2,500 people lived in Schuyler and in the surrounding area. Businesses included a bank, several garages, an auto dealer, four retail stores, two grist mills, a barber shop and a restaurant. A grade school and a high school drew children from miles around. Fraternal orders included Mechanics, Masons and Odd Fellows. There were also three churches: Methodist, Baptist and Episcopal. In addition to several rooming houses, there was a company-owned hotel. It was built from old barracks buildings from Fort Lee, cut into sections and reassembled on a hill overlooking the mill. Of course, it was comfortably remodelled.



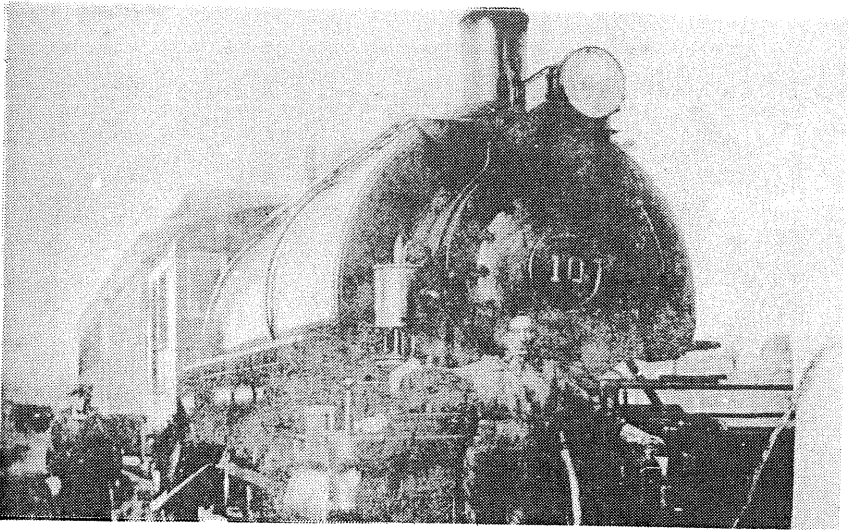
N&A #9 posed for the camera at the Vulcan plant in 1920. This engine was the first of six Vulcans bought during the 1920s. (Frank Mayo Collection)

The locomotive situation had become critical again by the end of the Great War. Several older locomotives were just about worn out. Numbers 5 and 8 were fired up only as needed. Each averaged about 40 miles a week in road service and 12 hours a week switching the Schuyler mill after 1917. Even the sturdy little Porter 2-6-2T, Number 4, was proving inadequate. The boom in soapstone sales meant more carloadings and longer trains for the railroad. Average capacity of freight cars jumped from 30 to 40 tons during the war, and the cars themselves became heavier.

Vulcan Locomotive Works of Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, delivered the Nelson & Albemarle's first really modern engine in April 1920. Number 9, another 2-6-2T, rode on 46-inch drivers and tipped the scales at 74 tons. The "big" saddletanker immediately went into mainline service, bumping Number 4 from the top slot. Number 9 became a favorite with crews and headed most mainline freight and mixed trains for the next 30 years.

The Nelson & Albemarle management must have been very satisfied with their new engine because they bought five more Vulcans over the next eight years. It seems odd that Vulcan supplied the rest of the Nelson & Albemarle's engines, rather than Philadelphia's Baldwin Locomotive Works.

Another new 2-6-2T was purchased in December 1922. Number 10 weighed only 56 tons and rolled on 42-inch drivers, but otherwise was a twin to Number 9. The lighter engine was favored on the Alberene line's

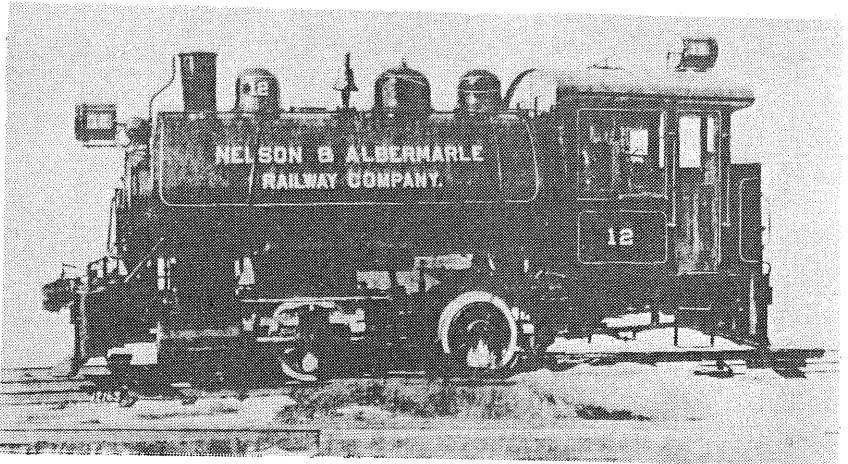


The second Vulcan 2-6-2T was #10, built in 1922. The engine posed with the Alberene train soon after delivery with Harry Leake on the pilot. (Irene Leake Newcomb)

poor track and was based in the old engine shed behind the decaying Alberene mill.

Bigger engines and heavier cars were hard on the aging 56-pound steel rails. Used 80-pound steel rails were obtained from the C&O in 1922 and spiked down on the Schuyler to Esmont portion of the railroad. Some of the better 56-pound steel found its way onto the Rockfish line, replacing badly worn 45-pound iron rails left over from the trolley car days. Very little, if any, Rockfish track got 80-pound rails. Traffic to Rockfish was fairly light; the line was mainly operated for mail and a connection with the Southern's daily passenger trains to Charlottesville. Most freight traffic moved via Warren on the C&O.

Despite better rails, the Rockfish line was the scene of a near-tragic wreck in 1922. A short freight powered by new Number 9 broke a rail at Alum Rock just north of Bridgeport. The engine and train turned over into the Rockfish River, fortunately in shallow water. The engine crew escaped without serious injury, although fireman John Mayo had to unload into the icy river. Conductor Clark Sutherland, who was riding on the rear platform of the caboose, was not so lucky. He was thrown from the train and his scalp was almost completely torn from his skull. Sutherland was rushed by car to the hospital in Schuyler where Dr. Sizer stitched his head back together. The next morning Sutherland back at his usual post in the Nelson & Albemarle's combine. Instead of wearing a conductor's cap, his head was wrapped in bandages for several weeks.

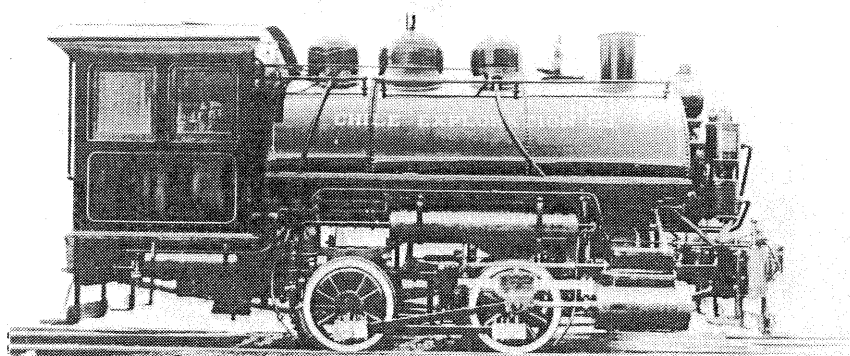


Vulcan delivered 30-ton #12 in 1924 for switching the Schuyler mill. Note the incorrect spelling of the railroad's name on the saddle tank. (Frank Mayo Collection)

Many older residents of Rockfish fondly remember the Nelson & Albemarle's school trains. According to the county school board minutes, in 1924 Clyde C. Rothwell, Nelson & Albemarle director, informed Clyde C. Rothwell, school board president, that the railroad would carry Rockfish-area children from the 5th, 6th and 7th grades to Schuyler to attend the new high school for the sum of \$75 per month. (This offer apparently included older children already riding the train at family expense.) About 60 youngsters made the daily trip in an extra coach behind the regular morning and afternoon trains. Other children were carried in from Damon (actually in Albemarle County) on the morning commuter train from Alberene.

A third Vulcan road engine was added in 1923. This was a used 2-4-2T of 1909 vintage. It was originally built for the Culver & Port Clinton, a two-mile private line at Gypsum, Ohio. Vulcan took the engine back and overhauled it for resale. It came to the Nelson & Albemarle as Number 11. The old Baldwin 2-4-2T, Number 7, had been sold off in 1920. She was resold by Southern Iron & Equipment of Atlanta to a lumber company in Florida.

The three other new Vulcans were all 0-4-0Ts. Number 12, a 30-tonner, was delivered in 1924. She was lettered "Nelson & Albemarle Railway Company". This painting flub was strangely reminiscent of Sam Purcell's comment about his own "jack-leg painters" who misspelled the railroad's name on Coach 10 many years before. Despite their bad spelling, Vulcan got another chance in 1925 with an identical switcher, Number 14. Like the quarries, no Nelson & Albemarle locomotive ever carried unlucky number 13.



Little #15 was bought used in 1927 to switch the crusher at Damon for the Alberoyd Corporation of America. The engine later served at Schuyler. (Frank Mayo Collection)

A new boiler was ordered for Porter 2-6-2T Number 4 in 1926. For some reason it ended up on ex-Old Dominion Stone #2, an 0-4-0T Vulcan. The Porter, the last non-Vulcan left on the line, was sold to Southern Iron & Equipment in 1927. The Nelson & Albemarle was 100-percent Vulcan powered until dieselized in 1951.

The last Vulcan was a used 26-ton engine, Number 15. This little engine was built in 1917 for the Chile Exploration Company who never took delivery. It went instead to Rhodes Construction Company. The tanker was purchased in 1928 by Virginia Alberene for their subsidiary, Alberoyd Corporation of America. The engine served the Schuyler mill after the Alberoyd Corporation was dissolved.

More competitors in the soapstone business came and went during the 1920s. Among the new companies formed to quarry soapstone in the area were Charlottesville Soapstone Corporation of Esmont (1922), Albemarle Soapstone Company (1922; no relation to the original company of that name), Virginia Chesapeake Soapstone Company of Norwood (1924) and Dixie Soapstone Products Corporation of Arrington (1928). None of these companies lasted long enough to have any impact on the fortunes of the Virginia Alberene.

A more serious threat was the Phoenix Soapstone which opened its first quarry about 1904 on the Tye River between Norwood and Arrington. The property was operated by various owners, including Oliver Brothers Inc., which added a six-mile narrow gauge railroad from the mill to a connection with the Southern at Arrington in 1920.

Rails, ties and fastenings were leased from the Southern. Very little is known about the equipment used on this line, though it apparently included a small gasoline locomotive.

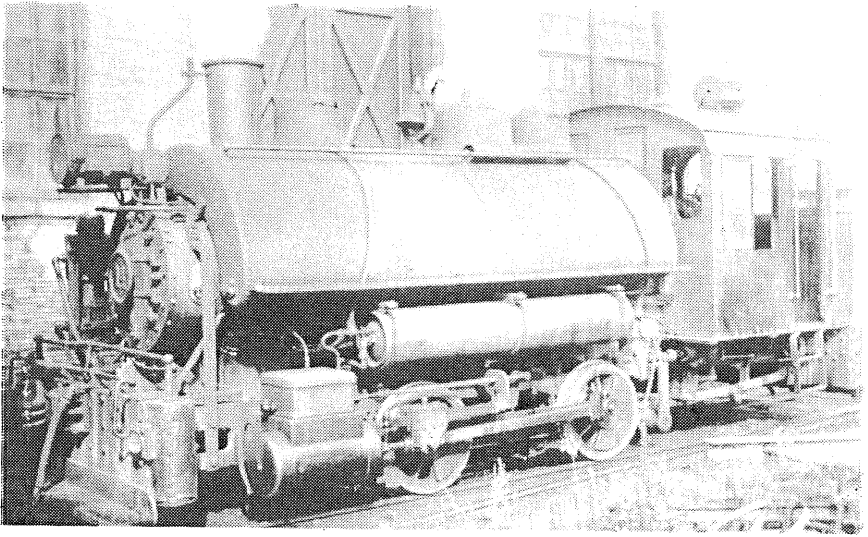
The property eventually operated as the Standard Soapstone Corporation under the control of millionaire Thomas Fortune Ryan from whose neighboring estate the 1,600-acre property had originally been purchased. Ryan poured a lot of money into the company. In 1926 a force of 350 men were put to work building a new concrete-floored steel mill, 300 by 134 feet, at a cost of \$400,000 (including equipment). The mill was powered by a 1,500 horsepower steam turbine electric plant. Two new quarries were opened. A commissary, a clubhouse and workers' homes were erected. Finding the Oliver Brothers' narrow gauge railroad inadequate, Ryan built a new standard gauge line to Norwood on the C&O. The line was five miles long and had grades of less than two percent. Power was a used two-truck Heisler and a new Alco 2-4-2T. The company failed shortly after Ryan's death in 1928. All the equipment was removed, the buildings razed and the railroads scrapped by 1929.

The last competitor of any consequence to bedevil Virginia Alberene was Arthur H. Lloyd's Alberoyd Company of Esmont. Lloyd was general manager of the Nelson & Albemarle. In 1924 he formed his own company to market ground soapstone made from the enormous piles of mill waste which were collecting all over the area. Soapstone dust was used as a filler in roofing materials and rubber products, blown into coal mines to keep coal dust from exploding, and bagged for the auto tire trade. Following Daniel Carroll's example of catchy trade names, Arthur Lloyd called his product "Alberoyd". He was issued a registration for the trade name by the U.S. Patent Office in 1927.

This was too great a treason against Virginia Alberene to be ignored. That year they incorporated their own Alberoyd Corporation of America and bought Lloyd out. The new company built a crusher near Damon on the former Old Dominion Stone Company railroad. Shortly after the great Alberoyd flap, Arthur H. Lloyd's name disappeared from the Nelson & Albemarle. Clyde C. Rothwell, already a director, became general manager in 1928. Colonel William H. Sage, Jr., was named superintendent.

Arthur Lloyd's brazen registry of the trade name "Alberoyd" spurred the company to protect their own trademarks. "Alberene" had been a trade name for building stone since at least 1890, and "Alberene Stone" had first been used for manufactured products at about the same time. For some unknown reason, the names had never been registered with the Patent Office. Trademark protection was granted in 1930.

Virginia Alberene was not immediately hurt by the stock market crash of 1929. Most shares were in the hands of company officers and not on the open market. There was none of the frenzied selling at lower



#14, twin to #12, rests at the Schuyler engine house in 1936. The engine has lost its fancy lettering through ten years of hard service. (Richard E. Prince)

and lower prices that ruined so many companies on the first day of the crash. Sales of stone products remained strong through 1930 when the company posted a net profit of \$128,623 on sales of \$2,292,901. The good performance was partly due to contracts which had been signed before the Depression deepened.

Though there were ominous signs on the economic horizon, local gossip in the Schuyler barber shop and sewing circles during the spring of 1931 centered on Shirley Gentry, an engine hostler at the Schuyler mill. Gentry kept heads nodding over tales of his adventures with the ladies and his brushes with the law. But nothing Gentry ever did could top the time he stole a locomotive.

One day in March, Gentry had visited his favorite moonshine still and was enjoying a pleasant glow. He wandered into the cafe behind the Schuyler commissary and ended up in the pool room. A Nelson County deputy sheriff who happened by saw that he was liquored up and vowed to the cafe manager, Robert Hall, that he was going to arrest Gentry for being drunk in public--Prohibition was still in force.

"You can't arrest him here," countered Hall. "He isn't in public. This cafe is private property. He's behaving himself and you're not going to put your hand on him in here."

"Well, I'll wait in front and arrest him when he comes out," growled the lawman as he stomped out to take up a position in the parking lot.

As soon as the deputy left, Hall snuck Gentry out the back door and

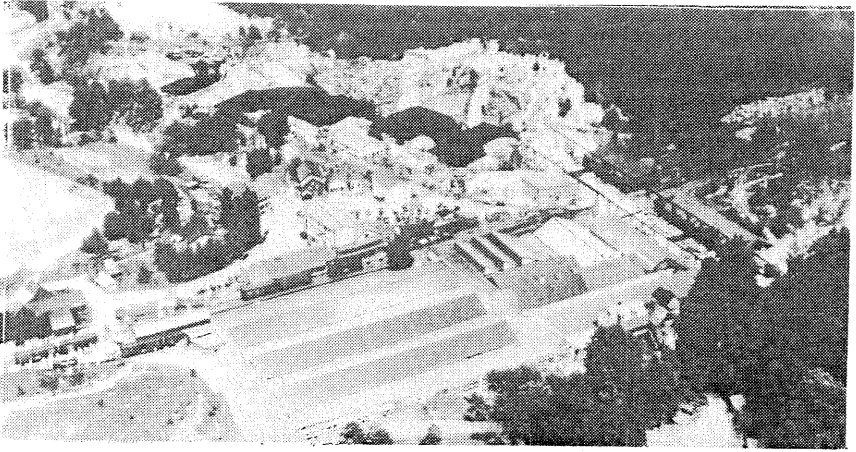
suggested a hiding place in the bushes down by the creek until the deputy left. Gentry took Hall's advice and made for the creek. But along the way he passed one of the mill switchers which was spotted near the commissary. The engine wasn't in use, so Gentry decided he would go see his girlfriend who lived near the track between Schuyler and Rockfish. He climbed into the cab, heaved a few unsteady shovels of coal into the firebox and opened the throttle. The engine started toward Rockfish at a furious five miles an hour. At the south end of the yard Gentry stopped to open a switch lined against him.

The departure of the engine was quickly noticed. It didn't take long before somebody figured who was in the cab and the chase was on. The posse caught up with Gentry just as he started down the mainline. The deputy climbed into the cab and yanked Gentry from the engineer's seat. In the scuffle, Gentry (who didn't weigh much more than 120 pounds dripping wet) somehow ejected the burly deputy from the engine, spraining his ankle in the fall. By then reinforcements had arrived, and Gentry was subdued and led away in handcuffs to the county jail.

Shirley Gentry's trial didn't come up until the spring of 1932. (Gentry claimed he broke out of jail and had several interesting adventures with moonshiners and revenue agents, but this is doubtful). The charges were that "Shirley Gentry did steal or carry away one locomotive belonging to the Virginia Alberene Corporation", and conviction could have gotten him ten years in the state prison. Gentry had no money for a lawyer, but Lovington attorney Andrew Coleman, offered to defend him for free. There was little doubt Gentry was guilty, but Coleman ridiculed the charges, asking how a man Gentry's size could carry away a 30-ton engine. When this ploy failed, Coleman made an impassioned plea to the jury for the lightest possible sentence. The jury found Gentry guilty and called for one day in jail with a \$100 fine. Since Gentry could no more afford the fine than he could a lawyer, he spent six months behind bars. The Virginia Alberene officers were very tolerant--despite the conviction, Gentry got his job back after he was released from jail.

By late 1931 Virginia Alberene was beginning to reel under the economic pressures of the Depression. Business hit rock bottom, so to speak, over the next three years. Sales fell and existing orders were cancelled as customers across the country failed or cut back operations. The construction industry was devastated. Commercial and residential building dried up almost completely.

Virginia Alberene lost money for all three years between 1931 and 1933. By 1934, the company was over a year and a half behind in interest payments on \$1,500,000 in bonds. To prevent foreclosure, a petition was filed with the Federal Court in Charlottesville on March 8 asking for voluntary receivership. Another petition was filed in Charlottesville by local creditors holding \$40,000 in outstanding bills.



The Schuyler mill was a huge building from any angle. The commissary and depot are just above the main mill building. (New Alberene Stone Co., Inc.)

The mill in Schuyler closed its doors that day, throwing the remaining 450 employees out of work. Colonel Sage and John S. Graves, a Charlottesville banker, were appointed temporary receivers.

Major Graves immediately began negotiations with the Federal Government for business. A \$107,000 contract to supply stone for a major job in Washington, D.C. had been signed just before the closure. The receivership threw this contract into doubt. At the same time, the government announced an unrelated delay with the project. It was mid-April before Major Graves was able to get the contract firmed up again.

Representatives for the bondholders and other creditors met on March 30 in Charlottesville to elect a permanent receiver. Nineteen creditors with unsecured claims of \$630,000 cast votes for Colonel Sage. Among these were bondholders with claims of \$375,000. Sixty-one local creditors, mostly Charlottesville merchants holding \$40,561 in trade debts, cast votes for Arthur H. Lloyd. The referee could not get the two sides to agreement on whether the number or the value of the claims would have greater weight. After three identical votes the referee appointed Major Graves the sole receiver.

Colonel Sage and Major Graves managed to keep the Nelson & Albemarle running by strict economies. Employees were slashed from 37 to 24 and everyone left took a pay cut. The number of mainline trains was chopped and a section car substituted for one mail run to Rockfish. The four mile branch to Alberene had outlived its usefulness--few of the remaining workers rode the commuter train, and the two scheduled public round trips were equally empty. All service to Alberene ended in 1934. Two years later the C&O tore out the track.

Under Major Graves' leadership the stone company managed to make a slow recovery. The Schuyler plant resumed operating in early April. Government contracts for building stone made up the bulk of the business. One of the most interesting Federal jobs was for two huge stone eagles to guard the steps of the post office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The birds weighed five tons each and were carved from black serpentine. As the economy improved, more industrial and laboratory orders came in. The laundry tub market, however, was ruined by cheaper products made from steel-reinforced concrete. Tub production dragged on until World War II, but never recovered its pre-Depression levels.

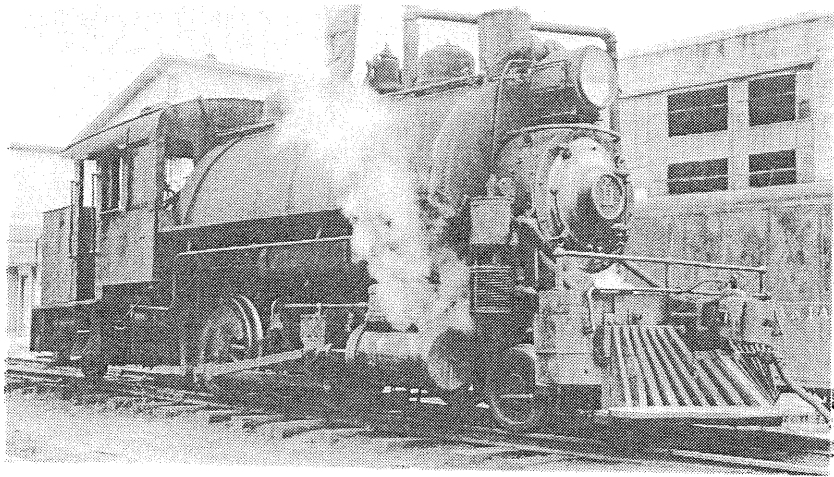
On April 16, 1935, a new company, Alberene Stone Corporation of Virginia, was incorporated by Major Graves to take over the assets of the Virginia Alberene Corporation. Bondholders received five shares of Alberene Stone stock for surrendering a \$100 bond. Major Graves himself had picked up many of the Virginia Alberene bonds at discounted prices during 1934 and owned enough shares to have himself elected president. General creditors were given one share for each \$83.13 in claims. Creditors who wouldn't accept stock got twelve cents on the dollar. Virginia Alberene stockholders received nothing for their shares. The Nelson & Albemarle and Alberoyd Corporation of America were salvaged as subsidiaries.

During the latter part of the 1930s the Nelson & Albemarle had the first of several serious collisions with vehicles on Route 6. As waste stone was removed from the quarries and mill, it was dumped into hopper cars for the short trip to the dust plant at Damon. Because the switchers did not carry insurance for mainline running, the stone was supposed to be run up to Damon by whatever road engine was free. The switchers did run frequently on the mainline and nobody ever worried much about it.

That particular day, 2-4-2T Number 11 should have made the run, but was down for boiler inspection. The dust plant would have to shut down if the stone wasn't delivered soon. New vice-president Hugh Matthews made an executive decision--he sent one of the mill engines up to Damon with the stone cars. While crossing Route 6 the train was struck by a bus. Although no one was killed, there were several injuries, including a broken leg.

A few days later the insurance adjustor visited Schuyler to inspect the damage. When he asked to see the engine involved in the accident, Matthews showed him Number 11. The adjustor was satisfied and authorized payment of the claims. The whole incident was forgotten, or so everyone thought.

A short time later, Shirley Gentry reported back to work after an "unexcused absence" of several days. This time the superintendent reluctantly refused to let Gentry return to work.



After the dust plant closed at Old Dominion, #11 was used mainly to switch around the mill at Schuyler. The rare little 2-4-2T was scrapped in 1954, the last steam locomotive left on the line. (D.W. Johnson, Thomas Lawson, Jr., Collection)

"I'm sorry, Shirley", the superintendent said, "but I've got orders from the office not to take you back. But I think Major Graves is in today, and if you see him, maybe he'll give you back your job."

So Gentry, hat in hand, went to plead with Major Graves for his job. Graves listened to Gentry's request, but before he could answer, Hugh Matthews interrupted.

"Shirley, how many times have you been hired by this company?"

"I don't really know, Mr. Matthews," he responded.

Matthews got his record book. "It says here that we've hired and fired you 13 times. Now don't you think that's a pretty bad record for a man to have?"

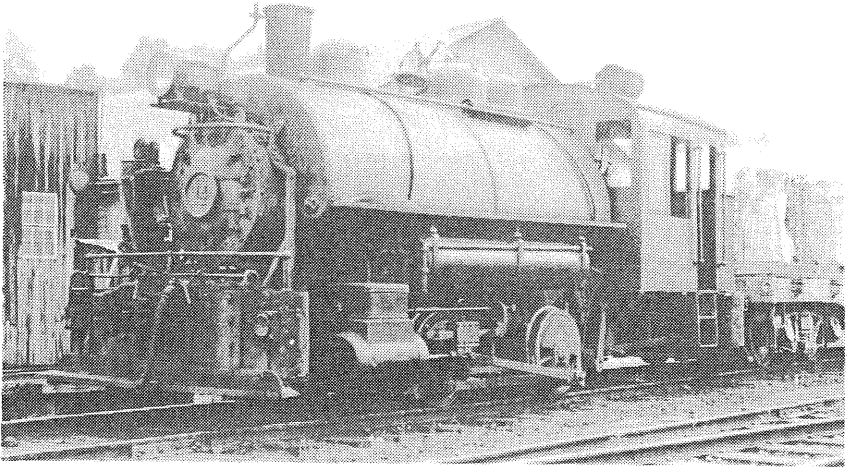
"Well, Mr. Matthews, what about your record?" Gentry countered.

"My record? What do you mean?"

"You sent that mill engine out on the mainline the time it got hit by the bus," Gentry accused. "And when the insurance man was here, you told him it was Number 11 that was on the train. You could get ten years in prison for that."

Matthews sat in embarrassed silence. Major Graves scratched his head and regarded the two for a moment before speaking. "Well Shirley," he said judiciously, "any man who has been hired 13 times by this company must have some talent we can use. You can work for us any time you want."

Germany's lightning dash across Poland, France and the rest of Europe was hardly noticed by the people in soapstone country during the



N&A #14 was hard at work in 1941. The line owned several steel flat cars with arch bar trucks for in-plant use. (Ted Gay, Thomas Lawson, Jr. Collection)

summer of 1940. Something far more personal and exciting was happening right in their own backyards: Hollywood had come to Nelson County. Most of the location work for Paramount Pictures' romantic feature Virginia was shot at Monticolla, a classic Southern plantation near Howardsville. The movie featured a cast of major stars including Fred MacMurray, Madeline Carroll and Stirling Hayden, all of whom were on location at one time or another.

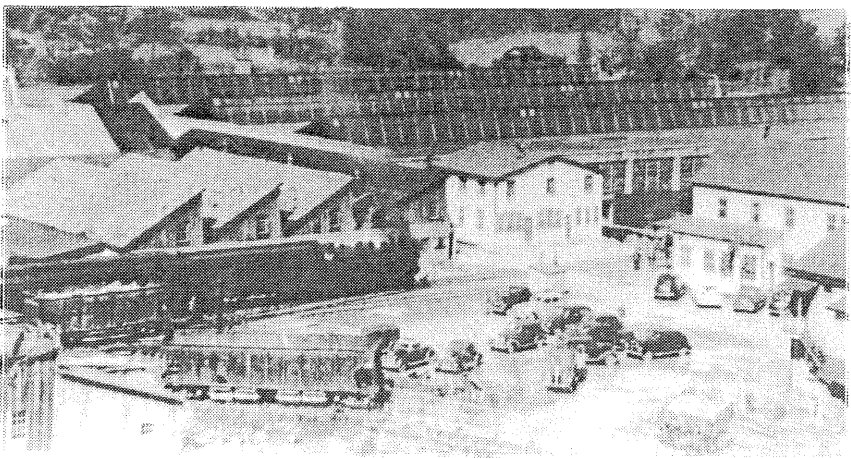
The script called for several scenes with a typical small-town railroad station. The location scouts chose the Esmont depot, and construction began on camera platforms, reflector stands and other movie paraphernalia. Nelson & Albemarle's Number 9, combine and crew were rented for the shooting. There was also a ventilated boxcar boldly lettered Nelson & Albemarle Railway, but this must have been a Hollywood repaint since the railroad owned no boxcars, ventilated or otherwise.

Folks in Esmont were so agog at the thought of seeing a real movie star step off "their" train that they even gave up any pretense of working in their gardens and just stared at the outlandish goings on. At the last minute, the director decided the C&O's Howardsville station was more photogenic, so the whole company packed up and moved without a movie star ever setting foot in Esmont. Even John Mayo lost the chance to run his engine for the shooting--a C&O crew was substituted. People in Esmont were so insulted that they boycotted the movie when it premiered in Charlottesville, though some will now quietly admit catching it on late-night TV.

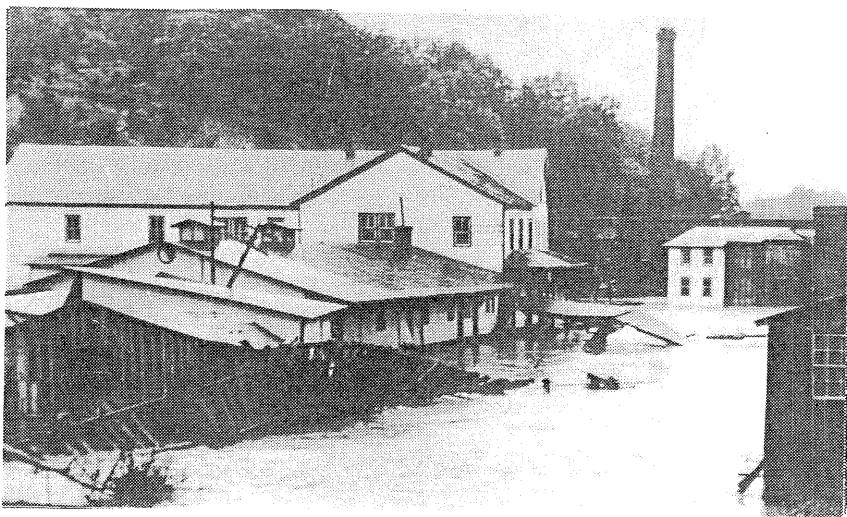
As the war in Europe and the Pacific heated up, demand by the defense industry for soapstone products boomed. Ground soapstone found new uses in such military products as rubberized canvas and camouflage paint. Hundreds of government and industrial research and photo labs were equipped with Alberene Stone sinks and counters. Major contracts included Navy yards at Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Portsmouth, Virginia, as well as the medical center at Bethesda, Maryland. Counter tops and sinks were also supplied to secret atomic bomb factories at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Pasco, Washington, though Major Graves did not learn where the products had gone until well after the war. Alberene Stone Corporation received a Double A-1 rating from the government for their excellent war-time record.

In September 1944 a flood roared down the Rockfish River and Ivy Creek, tearing up tracks, knocking out the power plants and filling the mill with mud. The mill office, which had unwisely been built right over Ivy Creek, was torn from its foundation and floated free. Only the travelling crane stopped the building from being relocated in Richmond. Three large company trucks and some employee-owned cars ended up in a huge debris pile under the crane. Several thousand feet of timber used to crate stone was lost. Pieces from the gang saws were later found on the C&O station platform in Howardsville. As soon as the flood waters fell, Major Graves put the 350 mill hands to work cleaning up the mess.

The railroad fared much worse than the mill. Tracks through the mill yard were twisted like rope. Several flat cars loaded with stone were washed downstream and destroyed. The rails to Rockfish were covered by a dozen slides in four miles. In several places track was



A mixed train from Rockfish rolls into Schuyler about 1940 behind #9 or #10. The hoppers were leased from the C&O for crusher service. (Schuyler Centennial Committee)



The 1944 flood uprooted the track and shoved it against the depot. The mill office was wedged against the crane in the distance. (New Alberene Stone Co., Inc.)

washed away or undercut for as much as 200 feet. Major Graves estimated that it would take two months to put the railroad back together. In the meantime, mail and passengers were driven between Schuyler and the Southern's depot at Faber in a company truck. This "temporary" arrangement became permanent and the track to Rockfish was never rebuilt. There wasn't enough business to Rockfish to justify fixing the track, nor could men be spared from cleaning out the mill.

Once the yard tracks were back in shape, the Nelson & Albemarle resumed its daily round-trips from Schuyler to Warren. There were usually more cars than Number 9 could drag over the hill, so a batch was taken on an early morning run and left at Esmont. After returning to Schuyler, the crew rounded up any remaining cars and went back over the hill. At Esmont the train was put back together and any local cars of slate or pulpwood were added for the downhill run to Warren. On the return trip, excess cars would be left at Esmont for the next day's first trip back to Schuyler.

The regular mainline engineer was now John Mayo, who was not above a bit of low-level extortion. The C&O often left empty pulpwood cars in the crowded little yard at Warren for local farmers to load. C. W. Baber of Howardsville arranged with the C&O crew to spot his cars at a place where his truck could be pulled alongside for convenient loading. Whenever Mayo steamed into town he left the pulpwood cars scattered wherever they happened to be at the end of his moves, to Baber's irritation.

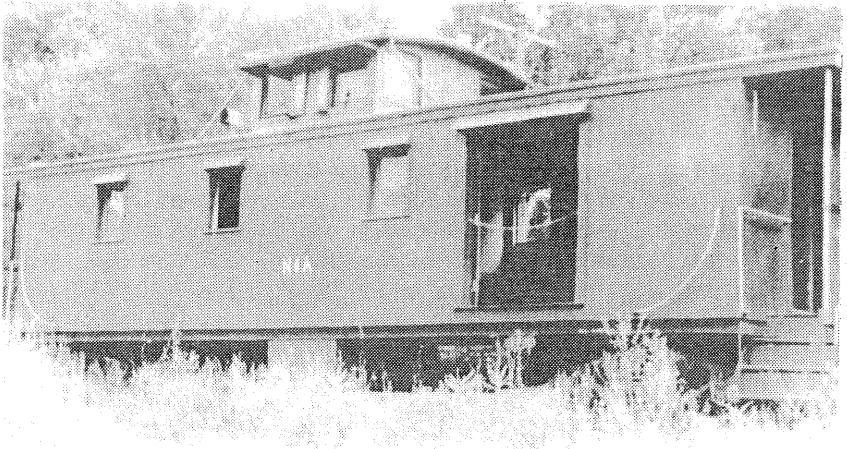
Finally Baber cornered Mayo and asked him if he would move the pulpwood cars back after the day's switching so they could be loaded more easily.

"Sure," said Mayo, "but it'll cost you a 'Co-cola' for each of the crew."

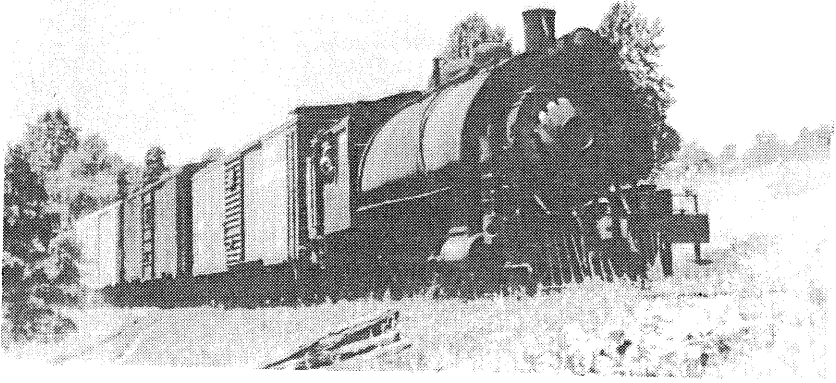
Coca-Cola cost only a nickle then, so Baber figured it was worth twenty cents to settle things with the crew and he set them up for drinks. But he was very surprised when he found that Mayo had opened a charge account in Baber's name at the general store across from the depot. Everytime Baber had a car to load, it was spotted correctly and four Cokes were charged to his account.

To streamline dust plant operation, a new crusher was built in Schuyler in 1947. The new \$100,000 building went up a quarter mile south of the mill. A gyratory crusher, a ball mill, a hammer mill, a tube mill and bagging equipment were relocated from the old plant. The new crusher was within the Schuyler yard and all switching was handled by the mill engines.

During 1947 Major Graves finally got around to asking the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon the Rockfish line. In his request Graves wrote, "The four and one-half miles of the railroad along the Rockfish River between Schuyler and Rockfish is very expensive to maintain....The physical condition of the tracks and roadbed between Schuyler and Rockfish is so bad that the use of it is dangerous to life and property. The rail, which was second hand when installed over 40 years ago, is very badly worn and service bent. The track parallels the Rockfish River and is slightly above the water level. Whole



All later N&A cabooses had side doors, though this ex-RF&P car had a door on one side only. All remaining depots were on the same side of the track. (Warren Calloway)



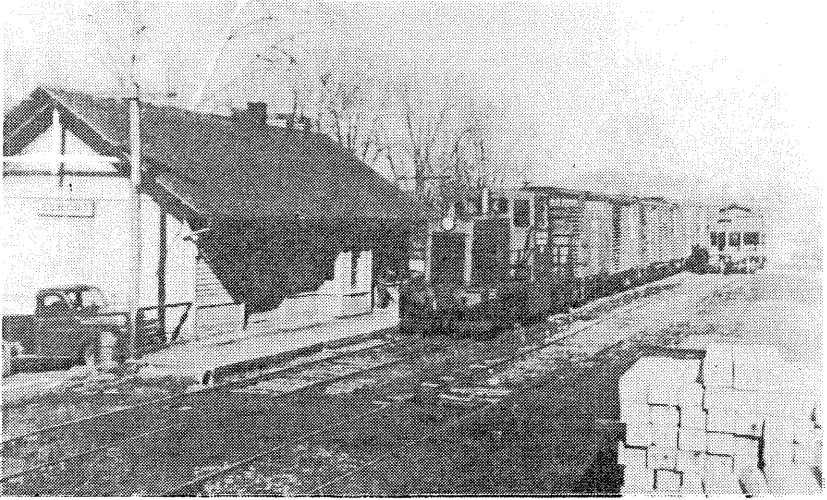
#9 works hard on the 1.75% grade up from Green Creek to Esmont with a short freight in 1949. The engine needed no lettering--everyone knew whose it was. (H. Reid)

sections of the roadbed are often washed away by frequently occurring floods." Major Graves neglected to say that a considerable part of the roadbed had already disappeared down the river or was covered by slides. The line had been abandoned *de facto* three years before, and technically the Nelson & Albemarle had broken the law by not fixing the track. There was no serious opposition to the petition, and legal abandonment took place August 28, 1947.

With paved roads linking the communities served by the Nelson & Albemarle, there was little passenger business left for the aged wooden combine. In some months passenger revenue was less than five dollars. Fares hadn't gone up since 1910. The trip down to Warren was a bargain at only 45 cents, but few people rode the train anymore. Almost nobody protested when the railroad petitioned to end passenger service in 1949.

The last passenger trip was on February 4, 1950. Number 9 made the run with John Mayo at the throttle and Aubrey Drumheller firing. Conductor Herbert Drumheller (Aubrey's cousin) was in charge of C&O combine 411, assisted by brakeman J. Percy Critzer. A story about the last train had appeared in the state's big-city newspapers and the platform was swarming with railfans. All day long the crew pointed out sights and entertained passengers with stories about their adventures on the line. Fifty-six people rode the train on its last day. The revenues were \$17.71, the Nelson & Albemarle's most profitable passenger day in years. The aged combine was returned to the C&O the next week.

Less than a year later, the Nelson & Albemarle bought its first and



N&A diesel #1 rumbles through Esmont with a cut of C&O boxcars early in 1951. The engine had no safety stripes when new. (Charles Arnold, Frank Mayo Collection)

only diesel locomotive, Number 1. The 44-ton General Electric switcher was delivered January 19, 1951 and began service four days later. The dark green engine cost \$55,000 and was the only locomotive ever owned by the railroad itself. John Mayo was especially proud of the new engine, although he missed blowing the steam whistle.

Number 9 was kept for stand-by use until about 1952. Number 10 was soon sold for scrap. Four steam switchers were still serving the mill and quarries (Numbers 11, 12, 14 and 15). Major Graves had hoped to buy two more diesels and retire all the steamers at once, but General Electric was unable to deliver due to the Korean War. It was not until November 1952 that Number 2, a rare 35-ton model, arrived from GE. A 25-ton machine carrying Number 3 followed in January 1953. The two smaller engines were owned by, and lettered for, Alberene Stone Corporation. The stone company also owned a small Plymouth gasoline locomotive whose number is not known. As soon as the smaller diesels proved themselves, the steamers were sold for scrap and by late 1954, the line was 100 percent internal combustion powered.

The many grade crossings over Route 6 between Schuyler and Esmont continued to be a headache for the railroad. A speeding car slammed into the new diesel at a blind crossing near Melvale in January of 1952. Three people in the car were injured and were rushed to the hospital in Charlottesville. Although John Mayo claimed the engine was only moving about six miles an hour and he had blown for the crossing, the railroad accepted liability for the accident. Superintendent Rothwell

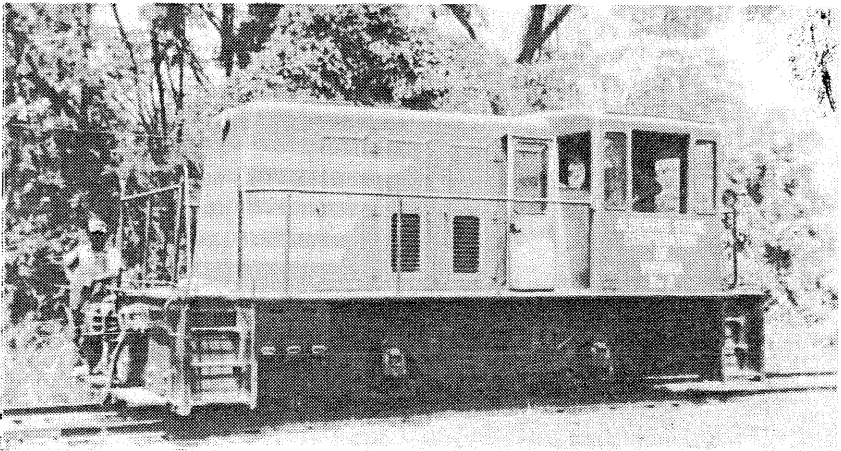
ordered the crew to flag the crossing in the future.

The locomotive was hit again on Route 6 west of Esmont in February 1954 by a taxi travelling at high speed. There were no injuries and this time the driver was charged with reckless driving. Damage to the engine was estimated at \$350. The diesel came back to service with orange safety stripes on its ends.

Post-World War II prosperity and commercial building created a boom market for construction materials. Polished soapstone panels were in great demand by architects for exterior facing. A particularly attractive black tremolite was quarried just north of Schuyler in Albemarle County. It was marketed as "Alberene Dark Stone". A new chain of regular-grade soapstone quarries was opened on the west side of the Rockfish River. A railroad bridge across the river was too expensive, so they were served by trucks.

Through the mid-1950s, Alberene Stone Corporation enjoyed the most profitable period in 30 years. Annual sales averaged \$2 million, and dividends of as much as two dollars per share were paid. Alberene Stone's high profits attracted the expansion-minded Georgia Marble Corporation of Tate, Georgia. Major Graves sold out in 1956, and Alberene Stone Corporation became a subsidiary of the marble company. Major Graves retired to Charlottesville and devoted the last years of his life to his law practice and civic activities. Under Georgia Marble control, S. E. Hyatt became president of both the soapstone company and the Nelson & Albemarle. Frank Mothes was stone company vice-president and railroad general manager.

Quarrying resumed at Alberene in 1957 after a lapse of 49 years.



GE 35-ton diesel was the second diesel on the line. It still carried Alberene Stone Corporation lettering in 1963 when photographed in Alabama. (Thomas Lawson, Jr.)

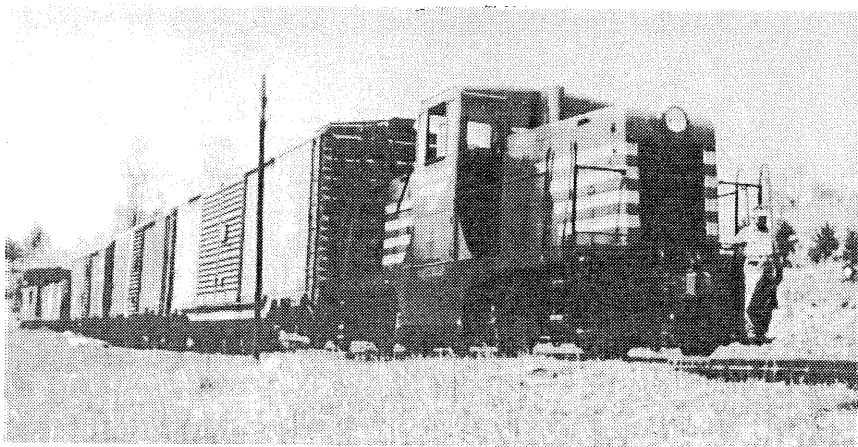
The first of three quarries were dug on the south side of town into fairly hard rock. The railroad to Alberene had been gone for over 20 years, so these new quarries were also served by trucks.

Tragedy struck the Nelson & Albemarle on the morning of November 23, 1957. Engine Number 1 was hit by a pickup truck while crossing Route 6 to switch the Blue Ridge Slate quarry in Esmont. Brakeman J. Percy Critzer, riding on the locomotive steps, was crushed by the truck. He died almost instantly. Critzer was the only Nelson & Albemarle employee killed on duty.

Less than a month later, Blue Ridge Slate Company closed its plant. For years Esmont residents had complained about the fine grey slate dust which covered their Saturday washing and everything else in town the rest of the week. Someone in Richmond finally listened and the state ordered the quarry operators to control the dust. Instead, the owners shut down the crusher and quarries in December 1957. The slate company's two little tank engines were scrapped along with the plant.

Alberene Stone was formally merged into Georgia Marble Corporation in April 1959. The Schuyler works were now known as the Alberene Stone Division of Georgia Marble Corporation. The merger was mostly paper shuffling--Georgia Marble already owned 96 percent of Alberene Stone's stock. Frank Mothes became a Georgia Marble vice-president at the same time, but stayed in Schuyler as general manager.

Very little was spent maintaining the Nelson & Albemarle's right-of-way during the late 1950s. The track was badly lined, weeds covered the roadbed and fences fell into ruin. A local farmer, Homer D. Thacker, took particular exception to the condition of the cattle guards where the



N&A #1 was given orange stripes after being hit twice by cars. The man on the pilot in this 1956 view is believed to be J. Percy Critzer. (Jim Shaw, Meandering Rails)

track crossed his Esmont farm. Complaints to Frank Mothes brought no result, so Thacker took matters into his own hands. One morning he nailed several strands of barbed wire across the track. His fence was purely symbolic, but the shotgun with which Thacker guarded the wire was all business. There were some tense moments when the surprised engineer H. M. Hackett stopped Number 1 at the fence. After promises by the crew that something would be done, the wire was cut and the train continued on its way. Thacker's cattle guards were soon rebuilt as good as new.

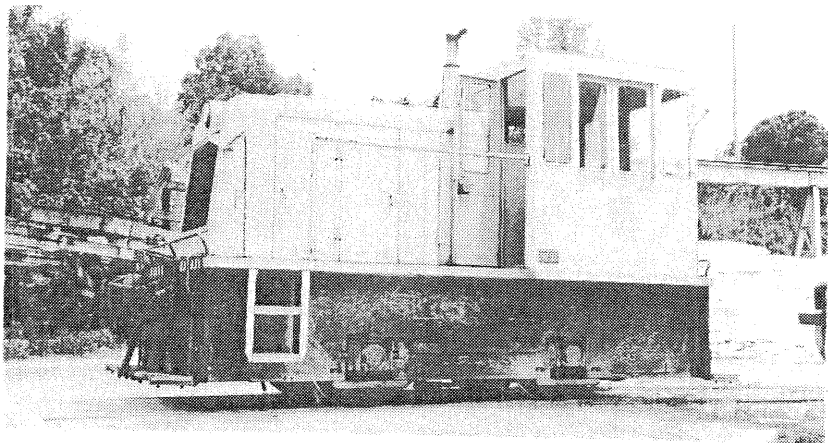
Time finally caught up with the Nelson & Albemarle in 1962. The mill was now shipping 90 percent of its output by truck. Frank Mothes cited less breakage and direct delivery to the worksite as reasons for the change. Only occasional loads of coal and abrasive sand from Missouri came in. A few cars of pulpwood were occasionally picked up from Tucker Tapscott's wood yard in Esmont, but went on the C&O's account. The train was running only once a week by summer, solely to meet ICC rules. There was little work for the mill switchers either; nearly all the quarries were served by trucks and the new dust plant had been dismantled and shipped to Georgia. There was some talk of selling or even giving the line to the C&O, but the larger road had no interest in a run-down branch with no traffic.

On August 30, 1962, the Nelson & Albemarle requested permission to abandon their entire line. On November 23 the C&O followed with a petition to tear out their track between Esmont and Warren. As usual, there was no opposition from the community and abandonment was authorized for January 5, 1963.

The last train left Schuyler on a bitter cold Saturday morning. H. M. Hackett was engineer with Jake Tyree firing. Joining conductor J. W. Lanum in the caboose were several "passengers" including retired conductor Herbert Drumheller. The engine and caboose ran light to Esmont through the snow, stopping only to examine a beaver dam below one of the bridges. At Esmont they picked up three cars of pulpwood for the C&O at Warren. Then the engine and caboose traced the route back to Schuyler for the last time.

The three little diesels were moved to Esmont in March 1963 for shipment to other Georgia Marble plants. A C&O Geep came up from Gladstone to fetch them. It took the engineer eight hours to make the round trip. Most of the time was spent on the six miles between Warren and Esmont. The track and bridges were in no condition for an engine the size of a Geep and the engineer had some frightening moments, but made the trip safely. Number 1 was sent to Georgia Marble's home operation at Tate, Georgia. Thirty-five ton Number 2 went to the subsidiary Alabama Marble Division at Sylacauga, Alabama. Number 3 was sent to a Georgia Marble plant at Nelson, Georgia.

The seven miles of track from Schuyler to Guthrie were soon torn



#3 was found at Nelson, Ga., in new paint about 1972. The little engine served Georgia Marble for about 25 years after leaving Schuyler. (Thomas Lawson, Jr.)

up. One short section of track was left in the Schuyler yard between the overhead crane and the machine shop. The Plymouth locomotive and three ancient flat cars were kept for moving parts between the gang saws and the shop. The operation proved impractical and the engine was scrapped about 1967. The track and the three cars were still there in 1990.

In September 1963, C&O crews tore up the track between Warren and Gutherie, closing out 65 years of soapstone railroading. There were no tearful last runs for the old Alberene Railroad. Only a single photo in the Charlottesville DailyProgress bore witness to the line's passing.

The later history of the soapstone company was a story of declining sales and slow retrenchment. In 1969 Georgia Marble was purchased by Jim Walter Corporation, a conglomerate with interests in oil, sugar and many areas of the construction industry. Unfortunately, the takeover came at a time when the soapstone company was crippled by major problems. Much of the the mill's machinery dated from the 1920s. Production was slow, inefficient, labor intensive and costly. Taste in building materials changed to flashy modern products such as glass, plastic and metal which were cheaper and easier to install. Jim Walter Corporation closed the New York sales office in 1969, probably the worst decision during their six years of control. Soapstone sales were integrated with the larger Jim Walter organization. Without the experinced salesmen and their many contacts with architects all over the country, sales plummeted almost overnight.

Nature delivered Schuyler what seemed the final blow during the night of August 19, 1969, when Hurricane Camille smashed into Nelson

County. Four inches of rain fell on a 40-square mile section of the Blue Ridge in just eight hours. Some hollows received as much as 27 inches as over-saturated rain clouds were squeezed up the steep valleys on the east flank of the mountains. By morning much of Nelson County had vanished down the James River, including 127 people and several small towns. Ivy Creek repeated its 1944 performance, filling the mill with mud and choking the block yard with debris. It was two months before the plant was mucked out enough to resume operation.

Although the mill emerged from the flood in better condition than before, Jim Walter Corporation thought they saw the handwriting on the wall for their struggling subsidiary. Rather than modernize the plant and open new markets, they decided to pocket the \$3 million flood insurance settlement and phase out the entire Schuyler operation. Throughout the early 1970s, production was scaled back and the work force reduced. On August 13, 1973, the remaining 250 employees were laid off and the mill locked up.

Plant superintendent Ken Carroll hoped that the mill could reopen to provide jobs for Schuyler. He was afraid that Jim Walter Corporation would scrap the plant if something wasn't done quickly. He interested Vance Wilkins, a businessman from Amherst, in buying the company from Jim Walter. After two hours of phone negotiations, Wilkins became the sole owner of Alberene Stone. He also became owner of some 9,000 acres of stone reserves, plus dozens of company houses scattered along the soapstone belt. On May 6, 1976, the mill reopened with about 60 employees and Ken Carroll as general manager. In 1983, Wilkins sold the plant outright to Carroll who also took several quarries under lease and continued limited stone production.

Ken Carroll realized that for Alberene Stone to survive, he would have to find new owners who could modernize the plant and exploit new markets. Rescue finally came from one of the oldest soapstone producers in Europe, Suomen Vuolukivi Oy (Finnish Soapstone Company), makers of a unique line of contraflow heating and cooking stoves and other products. The stoves, marketed under the name Tuli Kivi (which means "fire stone"), became top sellers in Europe. They were also exported to the United States. An agreement was reached in 1986 and Tuli Kivi became owners of the mill, machinery and the Alberene Stone trademarks. Keenly aware of the company's long history, the American subsidiary was named The New Alberene Stone Company, Incorporated. The name was proudly displayed on the office building.

Tuli Kivi modernized the mill and quarries with state of the art machinery. Stove production began in 1987. By 1990, 75 workers were making stoves for domestic and export markets, as well as filling custom orders for other products. With enough reserves to last 600 years and a booming market for stoves, the future seems bright once again for Alberene Stone.

ALL TIME LOCOMOTIVE ROSTER

NUMBER	TYPE	CYLINDERS	BUILDER	C/N
1 (1st)	0-4-0T		Porter, 1887	836
	Ex-City of Richmond #1; to SI&E, 1920; to Pierce-Williams, 1924.			
1 (2nd)	0-4-0T	7X12	Vulcan, 1905	675
	Ex-Old Dominion Soapstone #1 (possibly 1st #2); to SI&E, 1920.			
1 (3rd)	44-Ton		GE, 1950	30856
	To Georgia Marble, 1963; to Industrial Maintenance Co.			
2 (1st)	Unknown			
2 (2nd)	0-4-0T	11X16	Vulcan, 1909	1436
	Ex-Old Dominion Soapstone; to American Cyanamid, 1942; to Leas & McVitty, 1945; on display at Marion, VA, privately owned.			
2 (3rd)	35-Ton		GE, 1952	31768
	To Georgia Marble, Alabama Marble Division, 1963.			
3 (1st)	Unknown			
3 (2nd)	25-Ton		GE, 1953	31778
	To Georgia Marble, 1963.			
4	2-6-2T	14X20	Porter, 1904	3107
	To SI&E, 1924; to Batesville & Southwestern; to SI&E for scrap as an 0-6-0T, 1942.			
5	0-4-4T	12X16	Pittsburgh, 1894	1510
	Ex-Manhattan Ry. 2nd #60; to Virginia Soapstone, 1905.			
6	0-4-4T	12X16	Pittsburgh, 1894	1508
	Ex-Manhattan Ry. 2nd #56; to Virginia Soapstone, 1905.			
7	2-4-2T	8X12	Baldwin, 1887	8874
	Ex-Proctor Coal; to SI&E, 1920; to A. F. Langford Lumber Co.			
8	Unknown; said to have a tender; bought used about 1905.			
9	2-6-2T	17X24	Vulcan, 1920	3045
	Scrapped 1952.			
10	2-6-2T	15X24	Vulcan, 1922	3278
11	2-4-2T	14X22	Vulcan, 1909	1381
	Ex-Culver & Port Clinton; scrapped 1954.			
12	0-4-0T	12X18	Vulcan, 1924	3426
14	0-4-0T	12X18	Vulcan, 1926	3507
15	0-4-0T	12X16	Vulcan, 1917	2590
	Ex-Rhodes Construction Co.; to Alberoyd Corp. #1; later Alberene Stone Corp.; scrapped 1953.			
Unk.	4-whl		Plymouth	
	Scrapped prior to 1967.			

All steam locomotives were owned by the various soapstone companies. Steam engines, including mill switchers, were lettered "Nelson & Albemarle Railway" (when lettered at all). Only the 44-Ton diesel was owned by the Nelson & Albemarle. The 25 and 35-Ton diesels were owned by the soapstone company and carried their lettering.

