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A River of Iron: A History of Mining, Smelting and Transporting Iron in the Virginia Counties of Alleghany, Augusta, Botetourt and Rockbridge

Norman H. Scott

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For over 100 years iron was "king" in the Valley of Virginia. Millions of dollars were invested and thousands of workers toiled in the vast enterprise of smelting iron. But by 1929 it was all over; the last of Virginia's blast furnaces had closed. How did it all begin and what were the forces which enabled the rise and caused the subsequent fall of the iron industry? This 357 page history of four Virginia counties, Alleghany, Augusta, Botetourt and Rockbridge, details the advent of the early bloomery forges, then the cold-blast charcoal furnaces and finally the large hot-blast coke furnaces which transitioned Virginia through its iron age. Transportation and mining techniques are described. Fifty seven furnaces and over 125 mines are listed and detailed. Over 150 photos, documents and maps illustrate this story. Virginia's iron age is over but its history should never be forgotten.

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