

Mica And Feldspar Mining Were Major County Industries

In 1870, a salesman traveling by horseback noticed a piece of mica (then called isinglass) and he carried away samples and found it had a market.

The salesman, whose name was Heap, returned with E. B. Clapp, and the two succeeded enormously in a mica-mining

venture.

Heirs of Clapp own a large portion of mica property and rights in the Valley today.

Mica mining received a tremendous boost when new uses were discovered for scrap mica, wet or dry ground. Robert R. Dent, associated with the English mica interests, had a son

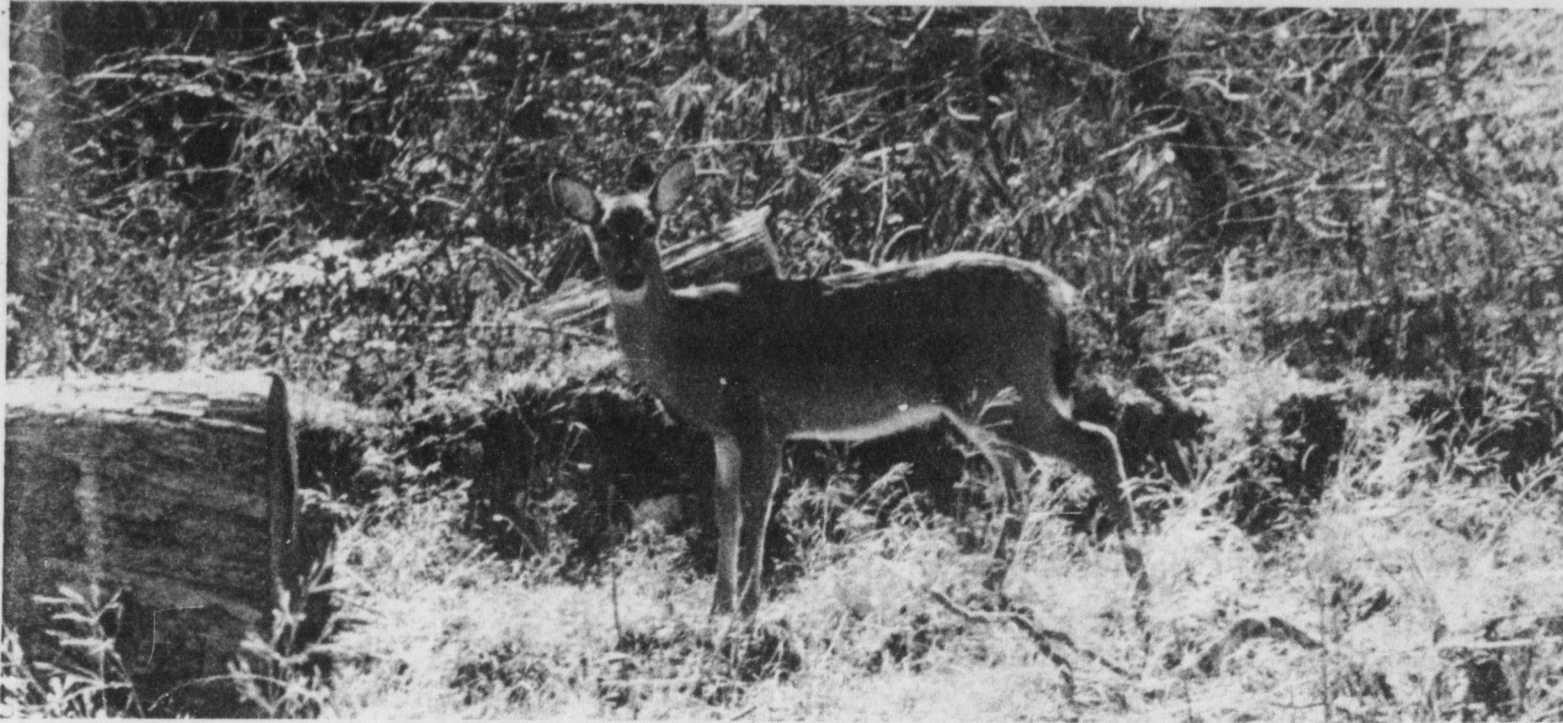
who was changing a bicycle tube, and lacked powder to place between tube and tire to reduce friction and prevent sticking. Instead he used a handful of ground mica. A year later, Denton saw the boy removing this tube and he noticed how easily it slipped from the casing.

Denton went to Akron and

persuaded the Goodrich Rubber Company to try a hundred pounds of mica in their tire manufacture. Within a week they ordered five bags; then a carload.

Mica occurs with feldspar, quartz, kaolin and other minerals, but for a long time, thousands of tons of feldspar went unwanted on the mine

dumps. In 1911 a sample carload of feldspar, drawn by oxen, was shipped out of the county. In 1912 the first commercial load of "spar" from Deer Park Mine No. 1 on the James Bailey estate went to a pottery. Feldspar, once a by-product of mica, became a primary product, often with mica as the by-product.



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Bowman Was Valley Prophet

J. C. Bowman, born in Bakersville in 1862 of a family of pioneers, is an educational pioneer in Mitchell County.

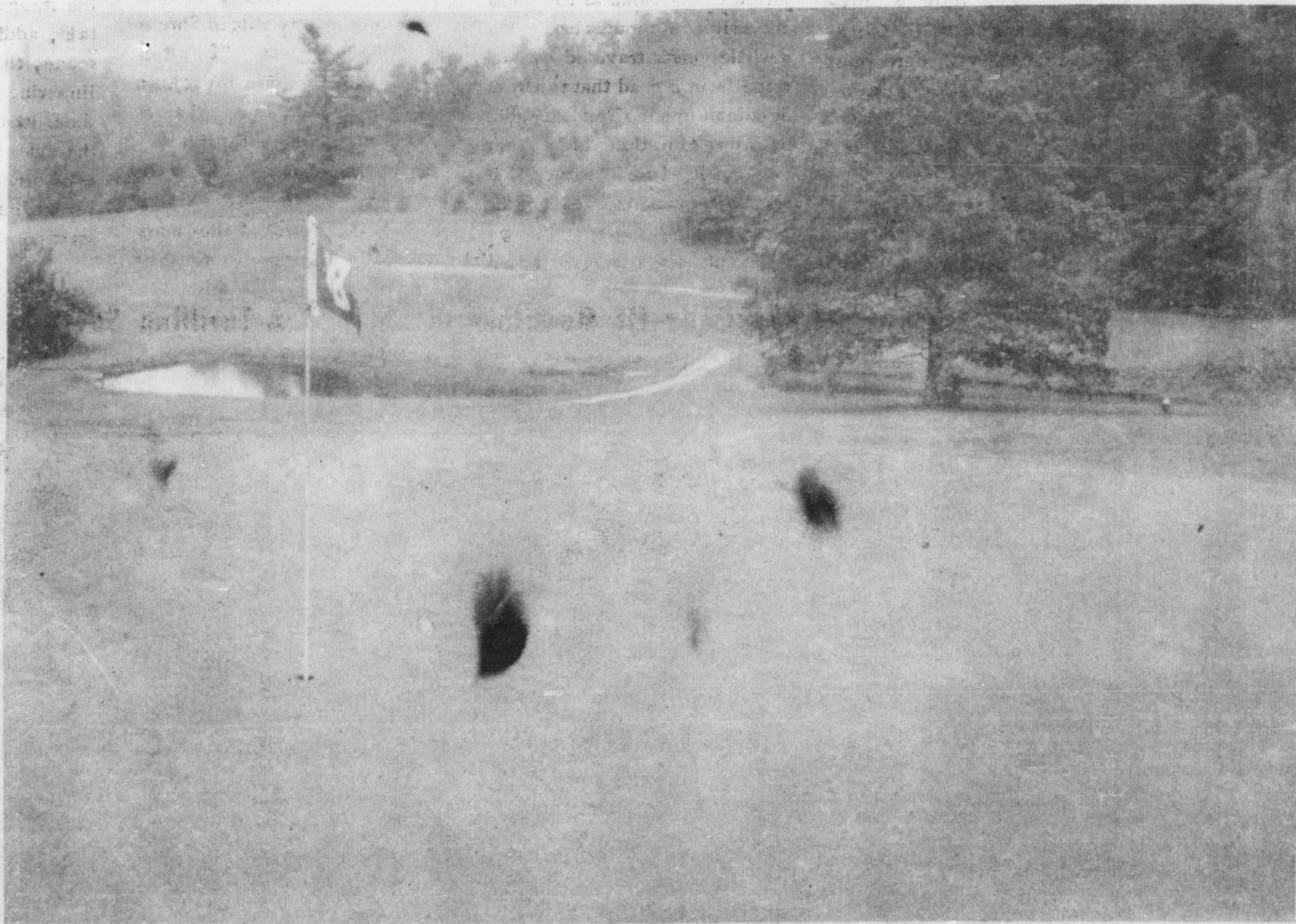
He was a man of determination and vision, largely self educated, and had a keen interest in schooling in this area.

In 1890, Bowman started a little one-room academy--the first public school in the county to offer subjects beyond those of common school which was about the fifth grade.

Bowman was elected to the legislature, but his advocacy of progressive local legislation so enraged his constituents that he was defeated at the next election.

J. C. Bowman, regarded as one of the prophets of the valley, retired to Kentucky, and the high school at Bakersville bears his name.

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