

The Chatham Historical Journal

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WADING THROUGH ERROR AND CONFUSION: An Update of a Study of the Endor Iron Works

by R. A. Weisner

Since November 1988* I have been very fortunate in having been directed to the most significant source of information I have found to date, that is, the manuscripts of correspondence of the builders and operators of the furnace from early 1862 until they sold the works in February 1864, after the furnace had been blown-in only fourteen months. However, even with this excellent data base, my research does not appear to be closing but rather is becoming more nebulous.

When I began the study, the popular notion of the Endor Iron Works was that the works produced railroad car wheels of the finest quality, that its output went to the Fayetteville Arsenal, and that it was the last iron furnace operating in the Confederate States.

A 1959 article in the *Sanford Herald* related that J. W. Clegg and Wm. McClane of Chatham County had had a contract with the Confederate States Navy Department to furnish pig iron and blooms and that the works manufactured rolled, hammered, and plate iron from 1862 to 1864. The entry of the contract I have verified in the Official Records of the Confederate States Navy; the contracted tonnage would have ranked the operation among the four largest in the South.

Unfortunately, in the letters of the builders of Endor there is no mention made of either Clegg or McClane. In addition, no further record of either Clegg or McClane has yet been found in the records of the Confederate Navy or Army.

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[Editor's Note: In November 1988 Robert Weisner presented an illustrated lecture to the Chatham County Historical Association. He described his research into Civil War records and other available documentation on production and distribution of iron ore during the period. He emphasized that his research was preliminary and continued his probe into the historical background of the iron works. Information from readers to further his search for documents relating to the Endor Iron Works may be sent to R. A. Weisner, 202 Tall Pines, Pinehurst, N.C. 28374.]



EARLIEST DATED DEATH ON GRAVESTONE AT NAPTON CEMETERY

by Wade Hadley

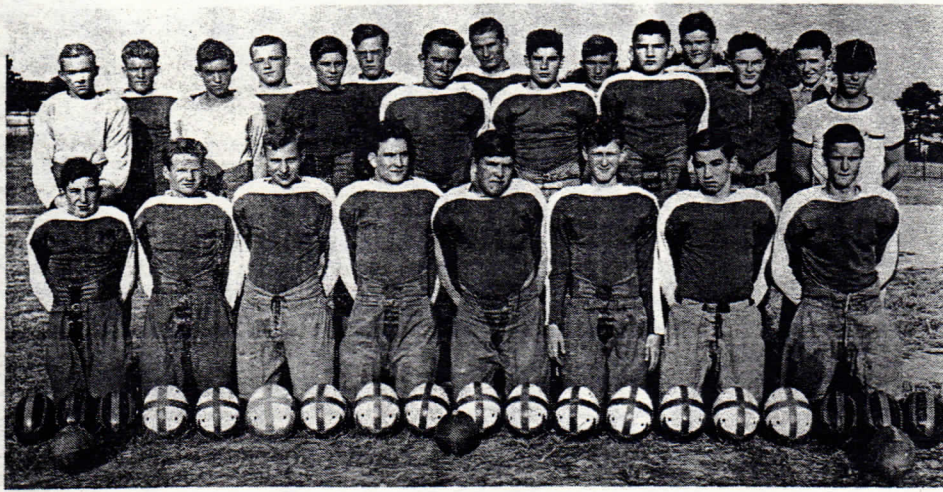
The earliest date of death recorded on a tombstone in Chatham County is of general interest. Up to this time, the earliest such record found by the writer is:

*Hannah White
Born 1756 [or 1758]
Died 1774*

This record is on a small gravestone in the Napton Cemetery, about three miles south of Siler City, near Oakley Baptist Church. Some of the graves there marked by plain stones are in all probability earlier than White's. Records show that people were obtaining land grants and settling within the general area of this cemetery as early as 1754. Hannah White was probably the daughter of Charles and Margaretta Von Cullen White, who settled within the area in 1760 (Rees, 1971).

Evidence of a Quaker settlement in the Oakley area on the headwaters of the northern branch of Tick

(Continued on next page)



The 1939 Siler City High football team was, from left to right, front row: Leon Ellis, Tom Brady, Willis Wrenn, Clyde Headen, Byron Crofts, Tommy Frazier, Jimmy Goode, June Pendergrass; middle row - Welford Goldston, Jonathan Johnson, Lloyd Scott, Jack Marley, Dick Huddleston, Glenn Gilmore, Robert Hedrick, Coach B. D. Howard; back row - Clyde Smith Billy Sharp, Carlyle Dixon, Russell Gamble, John Robbins, Zeb Wicker, Winifred Brady, manager.

EARLIEST DATED DEATH ON GRAVESTONE

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Creek by the mid-1750s and somewhat later was given by G. W. Paschal (1951). The Chatham County Court Minutes during the year 1774 mention the "Quaker Road" in several entries relating to laying out new roads. It was thus an earlier road at that time. It is shown to have passed through the areas of Ore Hill and Mount Vernon Springs and the headwaters of Tick Creek.

There was a Quaker church and later a school at the area of Napton Cemetery. Paschal indicates that the church may date from around 1751 and probably had been the first church built within the present limits of Chatham County. A school and church at Napton were active as late as 1864 but abandoned soon after that date. R. B. Paschal (1864) recorded in his diary on April 30, "went to Napton School House to fix seats, etc.," and on May 1, "went to Napton to a meeting. Isham Cox, a Quaker minister, preached."

Napton is one of the oldest cemeteries in Chatham County. Burials continued to be made there well into the twentieth century. Members of the Bray, Dixon, Dowd, Edwards, Fox, Jones, Rubottom, and White families, among others, are buried there.

The name Napton is believed to have been associated with the Quakers of England and to have been transplanted here in Chatham County by them. Napton-on-the-Hill is the name of a town and parish in East Warwick, England, located about nine miles south-southwest of Rugby. It has a church dating from the 13th century. The place is associated with tile and brickwork. ■

REFERENCES

F. C. Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends - The Story of Quakerism in North Carolina*. (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1959)

G. W. Paschal, Letter to Dr. C. C. Crittenden. (Raleigh: N.C. Department of Archives and History, 1951)

R. B. Paschal, *Diaries 1860 - 1864*. (Typescript, copy on file at the Pittsboro Memorial Library, Pittsboro, N.C.)

Rees, Mrs. Samuel, "Early Families and Outstanding People," in *Chatham County 1771 - 1971*, W. H. Wadley, D. G. Horton, and N. C. Strowd, eds. (Durham: Moore Publishing Co., 1971), p. 405

UNDEFEATED SILER CITY TEAM FROM FIFTY SEASONS AGO WAS STUDENT-CREATED

by Robert Hughes

The 1989 football season marked the 50th anniversary of a special high school team formed by its own players in Siler City. The team was special not only because it went undefeated and was unscored-on until a freak play in the season's final game, but also because it was formed when student Dick Huddleston went in front of the school board to see if a team could be formed.

As popular as football was at that time, it had been eliminated for the previous three years because of the hardships of the Depression. But thanks to the efforts of Huddleston, the team was formed anew and experienced a great deal of success despite its small size.

The game was a far cry from its modern version, and it is no small wonder why Huddleston would have instigated the return of the sport to his native Siler City after going through what he described the previous year on a team in Roxboro: "I hadn't gone out for the team because I was told they didn't have any more suits [uniforms]. But one day I was in the coach's office, and he told me to come out the next day."

Huddleston said that what happened that first day almost made him quit the team: "What they did, they used me as a blocking dummy. I would just stand there and they would come full-speed and knock me all over the place. I kept getting back up, and another one would come back at me. I don't know why I stayed on the team after that, but I did."

Thanks to Huddleston's remarkable persistence, the game was reborn in Siler City and one of that high school's most remarkable seasons was made possible. ■

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL: Excerpts and commentary on the letters of Charles S. Brown, a member of Sherman's forces, written in 1865 and an article about Siler City, North Carolina, and the Census of 1900. Another few short articles and the issue will be ready for publication. We can use your help!

MILLWOOD: A Vanished Chatham County Town

by Wade Hadley

The Siler City *Messenger* of January 27, 1898, published a letter headed "Millwood Items, January 24th." The writer described this place as a growing town and said that many people were coming there seeking a location for their future homes. The letter also reported that Miss Ida Campbell was teaching school there.

Millwood was located in Hickory Mountain Township on the north side of Rocky River about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile below the mouth of Tick Creek. It was at the place where County Road 1506 makes a sharp bend just north of Rocky River.

The post office of Millwood was opened in 1885 and continued until 1911. Postmasters during that period were Roderick J. Clark, William W. Dunn, and Charles W. Oliver. (By 1891, sixty communities in Chatham County had post offices.)

Millwood is an example of a considerable number of Chatham communities centered around grain mills and country stores. Enjoying a period of prosperity during the 1800s and early 1900s, they usually had a post office, often located in a general store, and sometimes there was also a sawmill or cotton gin. Most such communities declined or vanished with the coming of the automobile and good roads. Before that time, rural residents limited their travel mainly to a trading center which they could conveniently go to and return home within the course of a day by horse-drawn vehicles.

About fifteen years ago, only the dilapidated mill was seen in the immediate area of Millwood. ■

The *Chatham Historical Journal* is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. Material, which should be previously unpublished, may include photographs, private papers, church or organization records, monographs, or letters. Items should be of reasonable length and should include source(s) of research material.

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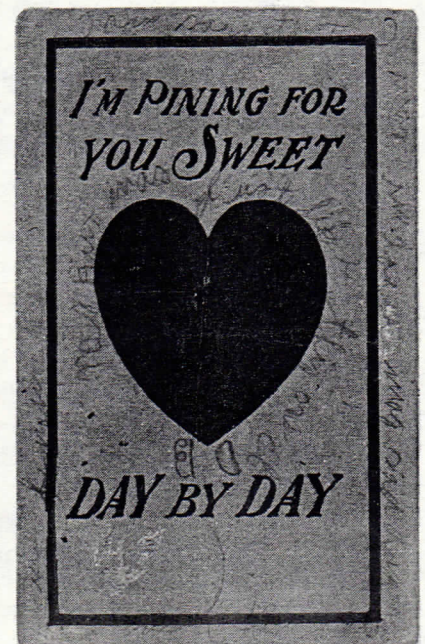
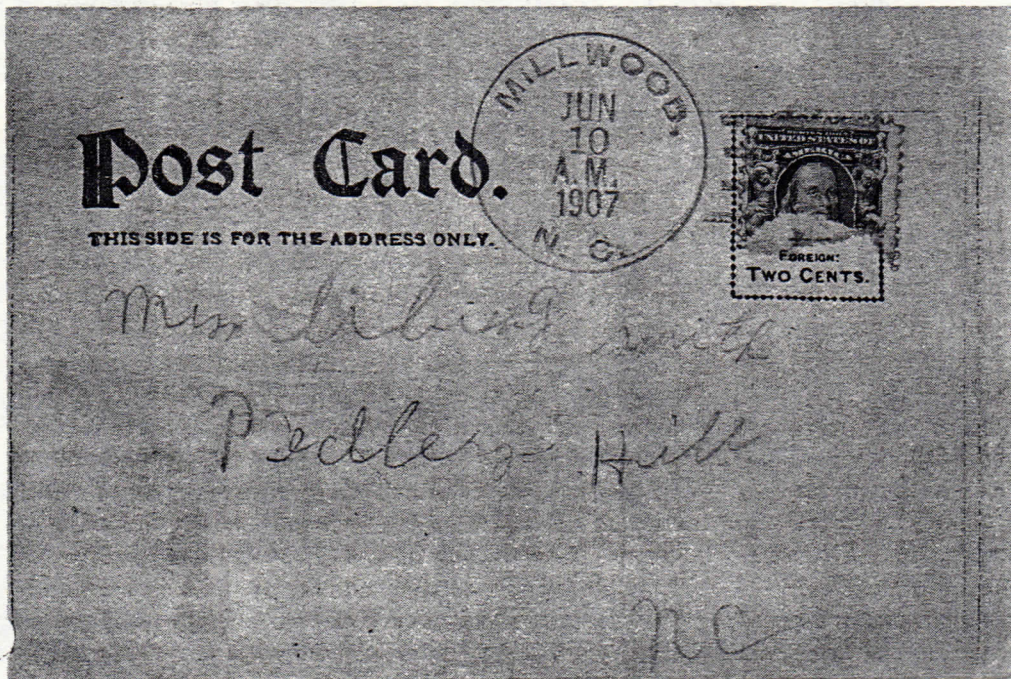
INTENDED CONFEDERATE BAYONET FACTORY IN CHATHAM COUNTY

Near the end of the War Between the States, the Confederacy contracted with a company to manufacture bayonets. The site selected for the factory was in Chatham County on the north side of Deep River about 2,000 feet east of the mouth of Rocky River. The site was named Gorgas for Colonel Josiah Gorgas, a Confederate ordnance officer from Richmond, Va. The factory had not been completed by the end of the war.

About ten years after the war a large mill rock left at the site that was to have been used for sharpening bayonets was hauled to Pittsboro and used as a curb at the town well.

Before 1848 Nathan Clegg had a dam and mill at the water power site later known as Gorgas. In the 1850s the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company built a lock at Clegg's Mill. Fragments of this lock and the stone foundations of Clegg's Mill remain there today. ■

Wade Hadley



This card, postmarked at Millwood, N.C. on June 10, 1907, is addressed to Pedlers Hill, N.C., another rural Chatham County post office located about four miles away to the southeast and active between 1828 and 1915. (Courtesy of Wade Hadley. The message side of the card is shown at 60% of the original.)

WADING THROUGH ERROR AND CONFUSION: An Update of a Study of the Endor Iron Works (Continued from front page)

J. W. Clegg is not identified in the Clegg family genealogy, and the name is not found in the Chatham or Moore County censuses. I now very strongly suspect that J. W. Clegg did not exist. Rather, I conclude that when the manuscript records of the Navy Department were typeset at some time between about 1880 and 1910, the typesetter misread I. N. Clegg, as written on the manuscript, and typeset J. W. Clegg. So much for that item.

I. N. Clegg was a real person with a technical background and was a Commissioner of the Cape Fear & Deep River Navigation Company, which operated the locks on the Deep River that Endor depended upon to get its iron ore from the Buckhorn Falls area of Harnett County. Despite his known existence, his name does not appear in the letters of the Endor builders and operators. There were at the time known businesses of Clegg & Bryan, Clegg & Dennis, and Clegg & Downer; however, their relationships, if any, to Endor are not known.

William McClane was a mining engineer who apparently discovered iron ore near Buckhorn Falls, but he was more active in prospecting for, and mining, coal in the Deep River region. During most of the Civil War he is known to have operated the Egypt coal mine on property adjacent to that of the iron works. But here again: his name does not appear in the Endor letters. One receipt bearing McClane's name has been found for coal delivered to the Fayetteville Arsenal just after its gunmaking machinery arrived there following its capture at Harper's Ferry Arsenal.

The scant information in the Endor letters concerning the destination of iron produced in the furnace appears in itself to be significant: perhaps very little iron was produced. The letters refer to contract negotiations late in 1861, probably with the War Department, during which pressure was exerted by the Department to have the iron company build its furnace at a location other than the one the company had originally planned. Thus it appears that the ruins we now see are not on the site which was the first choice of the Endor management.

There is further reference to prices to be paid by the Secretary of War for pig iron, and several references to having Endor furnish securities in the form of Confederate bonds to offset the receipt of front-end funds with which to build the furnace. But it appears that those bonds were returned to the government later. That could imply that the Endor operation was then no longer under contract to the government. This possibility is enhanced when the suggestion was made by one of Endor's management that the sale of the works should be advertised in Raleigh newspapers. The greater wisdom prevailed, which was to avoid advertisement because if done, it was likely that the works and all the output would then be impressed by the government.

It is expected that much digging will yet be required to explain the Clegg & McClane entity or its

connection with the Endor Iron Company. Still more digging will be needed to explain how Endor could operate in the critical year of 1863 without being obliged to meet the ordnance needs of the Confederacy first, but perhaps that was related to the fact that they produced so little pig iron during the first year of operation. The manuscripts are not fully conclusive, but after the furnace was first blown-in there appears to have been between three and six months of accumulated outages for modifications and repairs during the first year of operation. The investors clearly lost their appetite for the venture in the first year and spent four months trying to sell the works.

The iron works were sold in February 1864 to a group of men from Richmond, Virginia, who resold it six months later to the Lockville Mining & Manufacturing Company. The Richmond group retained the name of Endor Iron Company. Thus, by August 1864 the name Endor officially ceased, but the works continued to be known popularly as the Endor Iron Works.

The composition of the group from Richmond is most interesting, but other than their identification on the purchase deeds, no other documents relating to their ownership or operations have been found. The group consisted of William S. Downer, President; O. H. Chalkley, Thomas A. Chalkley, E. S. Fennybought, Edward N. Spiller, and William Jenkins.

William S. Downer was at that time a major in the Bureau of Ordnance of the Confederate Army. At different times he was the Superintendent of the Virginia Armory and the Richmond Arsenal, both in or near Richmond. Later, as Military Storeskeeper of the Bureau, he approved many invoices at Richmond to O. H. Chalkley who, with E. S. Fennybought, supplied shoe and harness leather to the Ordnance Bureau. T. A. Chalkley and William Jenkins have not yet been further identified, but an interesting lead is that a man named Jenkins was a manufacturer of revolvers in Atlanta. Obviously, this research is not complete.

The prospects for finding additional documentation for the Downer group are now regarded as poor, as are the prospects of finding substantial documentation related to the third owner, the Lockville Mining & Manufacturing Co., and the fourth owner, the Deep River Manufacturing Company. But the prospects are promising for finding documentation related to the fifth owner, the American Iron and Steel Company (George G. Lobdell), for the period from 1870 to 1873. Unfortunately, those prospects lie in Philadelphia and are not connected with the popular theme of activities in the Confederacy. George G. Lobdell bought all the facilities of the iron works for \$1,000 in a sheriff's sale on the courthouse steps in Pittsboro in 1870, and walked away from everything when the ore ran out at Buckhorn in 1873. After that, the furnace was abandoned and has become legend.

Digging for documentation continues actively. ■