

The Chatham Historical Journal

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Down at the Railway Depot

Wade H. Hadley, Jr.*

These recollections of activities around the railway depot at Siler City are from the years of the early 1920s. That was a period before automobiles and trucks were in common use. The railroad was the umbilical cord connecting our community with the outside world. People, mail, express, and freight departing from and arriving at Siler City went by rail, for the most part.

On a typical day, at around 1:45 p.m. a man pushing a two-wheeled cart loaded with sacks of mail and parcel post packages could be seen proceeding from the post office to the railway depot. There an assorted group of people was assembling to await the arrival of the 2:00 p.m. Atlantic & Yadkin passenger train from Greensboro. When the whistle of the approaching train was heard, a final contingent came running down the sidewalk from the center of town.

Small clusters of people gathered round the place where passengers were coming out of the cars. Among them was a tout from a local hotel to attract attention of commercial travelers and to put their luggage into his cart. Departing passengers said farewell to relatives and friends who were there to see them off and filed up the steps into the cars.

Up ahead there was brisk activity at the baggage-express and U.S. Mail car. Trunks, express, and bags of mail were being unloaded and loaded. Prominent among outgoing shipments were crates of eggs and of live chickens. Occasionally, there was a crate with a live hog, and on rare occasions a cow

*Wade H. Hadley, Jr., past president of the Chatham County Historical Association and co-author of Chatham County 1771-1971, lives in Siler City, where he continues to explore the by-ways of local history. As a young man growing up in Siler City, Hadley had frequent occasion to visit and observe the railway depot.

going by railway express. While this was going on, the engineer was walking around his locomotive carrying in his hand a can with a long spout and applying oil at critical places.

Soon the conductor shouted, "All aboard," signaled to the engine, and the train was on its way to Ore Hill and the water tank there.

Occasionally, a shipment of ice cream arrived on this train. It was packed with ice in heavy wooden boxes that were covered by a sheet of canvas. The shipment was immediately conveyed to a local drug store. There it was opened before an expectant group of customers. Following this, people nibbling at a cone of ice cream were a common sight on the sidewalks.

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C. F. & Y. V. RAILWAY DIRECTORY. 47

SILER CITY, N. C.

Greensboro 35 miles. Wilmington 144 miles. Charleston 222 miles.

Siler City is one of those towns seldom met with. Its origin and growth is what might be termed phenomenal, while its school would be an ornament to any city in the State. It is altogether one of the most promising stations on the line.

Baptist Church, Rev W F Jones pastor
Brooks Dr T A, physician
Brooks & Hannah, insurance agents
Dorsett Jurd, harness maker
Farmers' Alliance Co-operative Store, R C Siler man'r
Fox D G, general merchandise and produce
Guthrie House, J B Guthrie proprietor
Hadley, Peoples & Co., general merchandise and country produce, also canners of fruit
Hutson W L, saw and planing mill
Johnson C E, blacksmith
Jones J E, photographer
Jordan A C, livery stable and cotton gin
K of P Lodge, being organised
Lambe & Teague, general merchandise
Lutterloh Dr Isaac, physician
M E Church South, Rev W H Townsend pastor

J. A. HADLEY.
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—Wholesale and Retail Dealers in—

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Cotton, Dried Fruits, Grain of All Kinds, and All Saleable Produce.

Also CANNERS OF FRUIT

For Shipment to the Trade,
SILER CITY, N. C.

Schouler's Racket Store, WINSTON,
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Bargains in Every Department.

D. H. King Bottler of Beer, Mineral Waters, Sarsaparilla,
Soda Water and Ginger Ale. Office 309 east
Third street, Winston, N. C.

48 C. F. & Y. V. RAILWAY DIRECTORY.

Mann E D & B N, druggists
Paschal J T, postmaster
Pickett W H, shoe shop
Pugh J M, tan yard
Riddle C D, general merchandise
Siler City Cotton Gin
Siler City Lodge A F & A M, 40 members, D G Fox W M,
A A Lamb S W, O A Hannah J W
Siler A R, furniture and confectionery
Smith & Crutchfield, dry goods and millinery
Snipes A, livery stable
Thompson School, a classical and business school for young
men, J A W Thompson prin
Thompson R S, agent and operator
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GUTHRIE HOUSE

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SILER CITY, N. C.

CONVENIENTLY LOCATED NEAR THE DEPOT.

Table Well Supplied.

RATES MODERATE.

THOMPSON SCHOOL, SILER CITY, N. C.

A CLASSICAL AND BUSINESS SCHOOL

**For Young Men and Boys,
WITH MILITARY FEATURE.**

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Atlantic and Yadkin trains, Numbers 30 and 31, running between Mount Airy and Sanford. He was widely known and popular among the people of the towns served by these trains. When children traveled alone between stations, their parents frequently told Captain Donnell they were placing the children in his charge to assure their arrival at their proper destination. W. C. Donnell died in Sanford on 21 September 1936 after having completed his run from Mount Airy that day.

W. S. ("Mr. Billy") Edwards was the station agent at Siler City from 1892 to 1937, when he retired after forty-five years of efficient and faithful service.

The last passenger train departed Siler City on 30 April 1939. The old wooden depot is gone. The exhaust of the steam locomotive and the sound of its whistle are heard no more. ■

From the Chatham Record...

19 February 1891

A CAT'S INSTINCT.—A wonderful instance of a cat's instinct is told the RECORD by Mr. S. J. Tally, of Matthews township. He says that some time last month his son gave two cats to a negro brakeman on the C. F. & Y. V. railroad, who carried them at night to his home at Fayetteville, shut up in a box on the train. Three days afterwards one of the cats returned to Mr. Tally's, having escaped from its new home at Fayetteville and made its way to its old home, a distance of about sixty miles.

This photograph of the schoolhouse in Gulf was taken about 1932. St. Mark's chapel, now in Raleigh, appears in the background. The November 1994 issue of the Chatham Historical Journal featured a history of St. Mark's chapel and cemetery.

(Photograph courtesy of Nancy McIver Griffin)

These pages are reproduced from Stewart's Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railway Directory, compiled by M. I. Stewart (Winston, N.C.: Stewart's Printing House, [1891]). By 1920 the Atlantic & Yadkin railroad had acquired the properties of the Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railway. The original page dimensions of Stewart's directory are 5" x 8".

At least two freight trains a day served the town, and there were activities at the boxcars parked on the sidetracks. Men could be seen unloading bags of fertilizer into adjacent warehouses and loading crossties from the local yards into boxcars. The crossties usually were loaded by a team of three men. Two men were abreast with a front portion of the tie on a stick between them. The third man walked behind carrying the rear end. They walked up a ramp from ground level into the boxcar.

From time to time, a shipment of Model T Ford automobiles arrived, packed six in a boxcar. After putting the wheels on the chassis, the motor was started and it was driven, by a man seated on the bare gasoline tank, to the garage. The shiny black Ford bodies were loaded on a wagon or truck for the trip to the garage.

Captain Calvin Donnell was a passenger conductor for nearly fifty years on the



An Accounting of the Estate Sale of John Baldwin, 1811

[Editor's Note: Early estate records from Chatham County are stored in loose files at the North Carolina Archives in Raleigh. Dr. Barbara Roth, who has been researching the Baldwin and other Chatham County families, contributes this copy of the estate papers of John Baldwin, father of Samuel Baldwin, whose mill on Terrell's Creek was restored by the Hobbs family.

Estate papers hold an interest both for their references to the people who were present and for insight into household and farm equipment in use. It was common practice for a widow to receive dowers of land and provisions by the court of pleas and quarter sessions, which performed both judicial and administrative duties in early county government.

This transcription of the papers is as faithful as possible to the original. Some of the unfamiliar terms are:

slay: sley, part of a loom

piging or piggan: piggin, a small wooden pail or tub
runlet: a small barrel

clevis: a U-shaped piece of metal used for attaching or suspending parts, such as a cable

hame: part of the collar of a draft horse to which traces are attached.

Numbers listed in columns are for pounds, shillings, and pence, which were in common use along with dollars and other monetary units until about the 1830s.

A copy of these papers has been donated by Dr. Roth to the Chatham Historical Museum.]

Chatham County

To the Cort of pleas & quarter Sessions this will Shoe that John Baldwin ds^d his Widdow has had Her dowry of provision Laid of as follows-- one 100 lb of Bacon 150 lb of pork 5 Bushels wheat 7 Bushels of Corn 15 lb of Sugar 4 lb of Coffee 1/2 Bushel of Salt 1 lb of Spice 1/2 lb of pepper 1 gallon of Molases

June the 8th 1811 Aⁿ Lindley Jr [Aaron Lindley]
Joh Backer [John Baker]
Henry Lewis
petarpary [Peter Perry]

An Acct. of Sales of John Baldwin Dec_d
By Sam^l Baldwin & Tho^s Steele Sen^r 8th June 1811
Administrators

Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Sickle	-	9	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 round Shave	-	1	8
Tho ^s Jones	1 Plow Shear	-	4	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Jointer	-	2	6
W ^m Curl	1 Cooper Jointer	-	3	9
John Steele	1 foot Addze	-	3	-
Tho ^s Jones	1 Oven	-	11	-

Peter Perry	1 Square & 2 chisels	-	1	6
Tho ^s Jones	Spools & Curry Comb	-	1	1
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 fat Tub & tray	-	1	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Bread tray	-	1	-
Silas Clark	1 Cuting Knife	-	15	6
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Sheep Skin	-	2	-
Ed Jones	7 Sheep	3	16	-
ditto do	1 Keg	-	2	6
Tho ^s Steele Sen ^r	1 Barrel	-	2	-
Tho ^s Jones	1 Barrel	-	2	-
John Baker	1 flat Iron	-	3	-
W ^m Curl	1 milk Strainer	-	1	1
Ed Jones	1 p ^r Stirrup Irons	-	2	6
Tho ^s Steele J ^r	1 Set Knives & forks	-	6	6
Jn ^o Reeves	1 Brand ^s Iron	-	1	-
James Weaver	4 Table Spoons	-	2	8
Ed Jones	1 Piging [piggin]	-	1	6
Isaac Richerson	1 Piging	-	3	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Crose	-	1	2
John Reeves	1 funnel	-	1	-
John Steele	1 hoe & mattock	-	10	-
Tho ^s Jones	1 runlet	-	5	3
John Steele	1 hoe	-	3	2
W ^m Lewis	1 horse Collar	-	7	1
Peter Perry	1 p ^r double trces	-	1	1
John Steele	1 churn	-	1	-
Peter Perry	2 Chairs	-	10	-
W ^m Lewis	2 Chairs	-	11	1
[End of first page]		£	10	12 7

Tho ^s Jones	2 Chairs	-	5	-
W ^m Pickard	1 Reelee	-	14	5
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Sythe & hangings	-	2	-
ditto do	1 large wheele	-	2	6
Tho ^s Jones	1 mortar	-	3	6
John Reeves	1 hackle	-	8	1
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 Slay	-	1	6
Asa Stone	1 bag?	-	4	7
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 crock	-	1	1
John Reeves	2 p ^r Cards	-	3	-
Tho ^s Steele Jn ^r	1 p ^r Chains	1	2	7
Tho ^s Jones	1 p ^r Chains	1	0	7
Widow Baldwin	1 bottle & jug	-	-	6
Surles Lewis	1 Collar	-	5	1
Tho ^s Jones	1 Bar ^l & Sifter	-	1	-
do do	3 Hogs	2	6	-
Peter Perry	2 Sows & 8 pigs	1	10	1
Tho ^s Jones	2 Bar ^{ls}	-	4	-
Henry Martin	1 plow & Shear	1	11	6
Isaac Richeson	1 Bar ^l	-	3	7
W ^m Riddle	1 Cow & calf	4	10	-
George Curl	1 Cow & Yearling	4	4	1
Tho ^s Jones	1 Cow & Yearling & bell	7	-	-
Tho ^s Jones	1 Tub	-	3	-
William Pickard	2 Clevises	-	4	-

Aaron Fike	71 ^b Bacon @1/2	4	2	10
Edward Jones	1 weeding hoe	-	4	-
Widow Baldwin	1 Mare	17	10	-
ditto ditto	1 Bed	-	15	-
ditto do	1 Bedsted & B--	-	1	-
John Steele	1 candle stick	-	1	-
ditto do	1 tub	-	9	-
Tho ^s Bailiff	1 p ^r Sheap shares	-	2	8
Widow Baldwin	7o flax	-	5	6
Sam ^l Glosan	1 Barrel	-	2	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	2 Baskets	-	2	-
to Cash and notes	in hand	16	6	-
		£ 107 3 7		

Georg Curl	1/2 Waggon	14	15	6
Henry Martin	1 axe	-	4	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	1 p ^r hames	-	3	6
Tho ^s Jones	1 p ^r hames	-	2	6
W ^m Curl	1 handsaw	-	2	6
Widow Baldwin	1 piggan	-	1	4
Tho ^s Jones	1 1/2 Bushel measure	-	-	6
ditto do	Corn	-	9	-
[End of second page]		£ 53	3	1

John Steele	1 horse	18	12	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	3 Bar ^s	-	3	1
Tho ^s Steele Sen ^r	1 Bar ^l	-	3	3
Ned Buckner	1 Chest	3	7	-
Geo. Curl	1 Crock	-	-	6
Widow Baldwin	2 tins	-	1	-
Geo. Curl	1 Dish	-	-	6
Sam ^l Baldwin	Earthen ware	-	-	10
Tho ^s Workman	-- -- --	-	-	6
Tho ^s Jones	1 hamer	-	2	7
W ^m Baldwin	6 geese	-	6	-
Surles Lewis	1 Dish	-	11	11
Nony Parson	1 pott	1	-	-
Abner Baldwin	1 pott	-	2	6
William Baldwin	12 ^b feathers @4/	2	8	-
W ^m Pickard	1 Table	1	3	8
Rachel Baldwin	1 horse	2	11	-
Aaron Fike	71 ^b Bacon @1/2	4	2	10
Edward Jones	1 weeding hoe	-	4	-
Widow Baldwin	1 Mare	17	10	-
ditto ditto	1 Bed	-	15	-
ditto do	1 Bedsted & B--	-	1	-
John Steele	1 Candle Stick	-	1	-
ditto do	1 tub	-	-	9
Tho ^s Bailiff	1 p ^r Sheap Shares	-	2	8
Widow Baldwin	7o flax	-	5	6
Sam ^l Glosan	1 Barrel	-	2	-
Sam ^l Baldwin	2 Baskets	-	2	-
to Cash and notes	in hand	16	6	-
		£ 107 3 7		

The Initial Minute Book of Hadley-Peoples Manufacturing Company*

This minute book covers a period of 49 years, from 1895 to 1944. The enterprise continues in operation in 1995, with these changes of ownership: The original plant was sold in 1944 to J. A. Baker and Mason P. Thomas, both of Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1958, J. A. Baker became the sole owner when Mason P. Thomas sold his interest in the company to him. In 1994, the Baker family sold the plant to Charles Craft, Inc., of Laurinburg, North Carolina.

The original move to establish this cotton mill at Siler City appears to have been made by the owners of Hadley, Peoples and Co., a general merchandise concern, organized in 1887, which bought and shipped cotton along with its other activities. When Hadley-Peoples Mfg. Co. was organized in August of 1895, its stockholders consisted of the men who owned the above Hadley, Peoples and Co. general store, with the addition of J. C. Gregson.

Hadley-Peoples Mfg. Co. was organized with \$30,000 of capital stock held by the following: J. A. Hadley, 68 shares; F. M. Hadley, 67 shares; J. N. Peoples, 68 shares; D. L. Webster, 67 shares; J. C. Gregson, 30 shares. The Articles of Agreement for incorporation defined the company as "cotton buyers and manufacturers of yarn."

The company was in operation by late 1895 in a 45' by 145' wooden building equipped with 1,000 spindles. The census of 1900 listed the occupation of 64 people at Siler City as "cotton mill workers."

This plant was expanded and modernized repeatedly over the years and has remained on the west side of North Chatham Avenue in Siler City. By the 1980s, this mill was manufacturing yarn using cotton and synthetic fibers as raw materials and had approximately 300 employees.

[This book was donated to the Chatham County Historical Association in 1995. The article was prepared by Wade H. Hadley, Jr.]

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. To be considered for publication, articles or photographs should be previously unpublished, of reasonable length, and include detailed sources of information. Back issues, beginning in 1988, are available while they last. Correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, CCHA, Box 913, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.