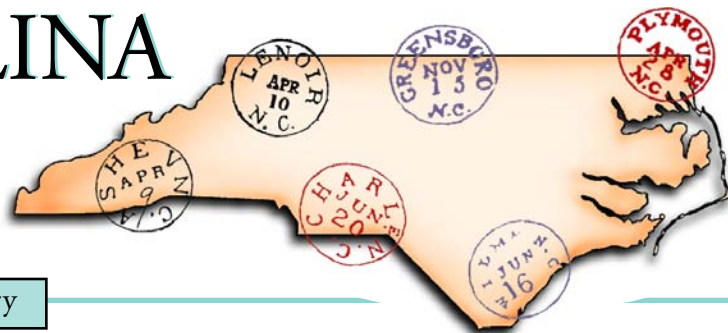


# NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN

The Journal of North Carolina Postal History

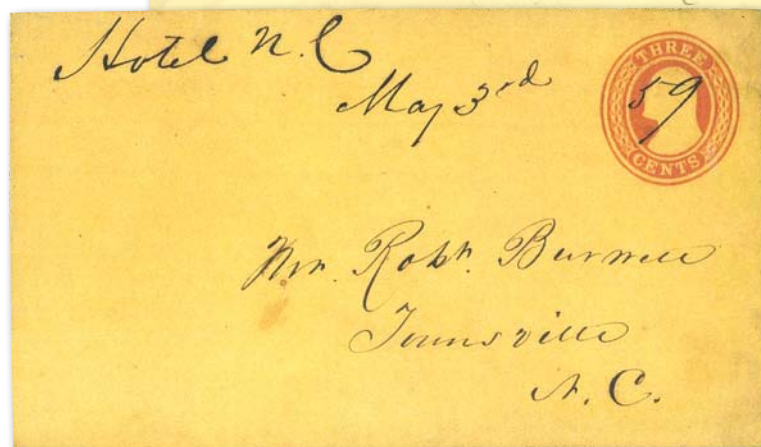
VOLUME 33, NO. 3 SUMMER 2014 WHOLE 127



The Western Railroad  
Company



Siler City, North  
Carolina



Letter to the Editors –  
Bertie County

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**A**s a reminder, the annual meeting of the North Carolina Postal History Society (NCPHS) will be held in conjunction with CHARPEX 2014, on July 26 and 27. CHARPEX will be at the same location as last year, the Worrell Building (formerly Taylor Hall), on the campus of Central Piedmont Community College, 1228 Elizabeth Avenue, Charlotte. It is conveniently located just off I-277 and Route 74. Site location details will be available on the CHARPEX web site, [www.charpex.info](http://www.charpex.info). The show plans to have 17-20 dealers, 50-60 frames of exhibits, a silent auction, and several collector presentations.

The annual meeting of the NCPHS will be at 2:30 PM, Saturday, July 26, 2014. After a very short meeting, Tony Crumbley will present a talk and display titled "Confederate North Carolina Postmaster Provisionals." I hope you will be able to attend.

The NCPHS Board of Directors will meet at 12:00 AM on Saturday in the meeting room arranged by the CHARPEX committee.

By now you may have viewed the new addition to our web site, "North Carolina Postmarks during the Stampless Period." It is located under the Projects page of our web site, [www.ncpostalhistory.com](http://www.ncpostalhistory.com). This updates the listing of the *American Stampless Cover Catalog (ASCC)*, Volume 1, last published in 1997. The format is similar to the *ASCC*, but we have updated the pricing and illustrated all of the handstamp postmarks instead of just a selected few. Since we want to have the best information available for North Carolina postmarks, we need your assistance in keeping this listing current. If you have stampless cover postmark information not shown in this listing, please contact the NCPHS editors.

The status box of the *North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update* (back page) will show more changes. Orange and Pamlico Counties have been added, bringing the catalog update to 69 counties and four cities, all available on-line in downloadable PDF files. Additional changes to previously published counties continue as time is available. Remember, if you want to know

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if a county has had changes made since you last viewed it, check the date in parenthesis after the name of the file posted. Also, the date of a revision appears in the lower left corner of the first page (map page) of each county. Counties that show only a month and year have not had the latest updates. Currently, there are 3,887 pages on-line, with 15,055 markings that were not documented in the original catalog.

This issue contains a fine article by Charles F. Hall, Jr. on the small, but important Western railroad, which operated from 1852 to 1879. It played an important role in the economic development of the Cape Fear Valley. Tony L. Crumbley's article on Siler City (Chatham County), follows, bringing postal recognition to a small post office in the central part of the state, one which had numerous postmarks. Lastly, long-time member, Dr. Steve Jackson, a Wilkesboro veterinarian, sent us a letter in response to last-issue's article on Bertie County postal history. He provides additional information related to the Woodville post office in Bertie County based on his family, who lived there, one of which was the last postmaster of that office. He also introduces us to his great-great-grandfather, Lewis Thompson, a prominent and successful planter and businessman, by sending some family pictures and covers from the family archive.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions for improving the society. Please feel free to call me at home (336 545-0175), send me an e-mail message at [rfwinter@triad.rr.com](mailto:rfwinter@triad.rr.com), or write to me. My mailing address appears at the bottom of this page.

*Dick Winter*



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## The Western Railroad Company, A Postal Perspective 1852 to 1879



by Charles F. Hall, Jr.

This is the story of an early North Carolina railroad whose contributions and place in history have been diminished by the passage of time and overshadowed by subsequent larger railroads. From the late 1850s to 1879, the Western Railroad played an important role in energizing the economic development of the Cape Fear valley and the Deep River coal fields and iron mines, strengthening the city of Fayetteville's position as a transportation center and commercial market. The railroad also played an important role in the story of the Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory, particularly during its final days. During its early years, the Western Railroad was sometimes locally referred to as the Western and Fayetteville Railroad, the Fayetteville Railroad and the Coal Fields Railroad.

Fayetteville is an inland port on the Cape Fear River and is one of North Carolina's oldest cities. It began as Cross Creek, founded in 1736 on Cross Creek near its confluence with the Cape Fear River. In 1783, it merged with Campbellton, a nearby settlement on the Cape Fear River to become Fayetteville, named for the Revolutionary hero, the Marquis de la Fayette. In the antebellum period, Fayetteville was important to the development of the upper Cape Fear and Sandhills areas of the state. It was open to river traffic from Wilmington approximately 90 miles below. A system of locks enabled river connections to the Deep River area of Chatham County and its coal and iron resources. During 1840s and 1850s, the state of North Carolina pursued a policy of internal improvements that included better toll roads, a series of river locks, canals, plank roads and railroads. These improvements were intended to stimulate economic development and often included grants and loans from the state. The Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company had completed a system of locks by 1853 to open river traffic from Fayetteville northwest to the Deep River coal fields in Chatham County. This connection, however, did not prove reliable, mainly because of water fluctuations and lock maintenance.

Plank roads were another form of internal improvements to upgrade the state's transportation infrastructure. Plank roads involved layers of wooden planks set in the roadbed, a soil foundation and a top coat of sand. These roads were better than the previous dirt and mud roads and were popular for the decade after the late 1840s. In 1848, the Fayetteville and Western Plank Road Company was chartered to connect Fayetteville to Salisbury and in 1850, the Fayetteville and Centre Plank Road was chartered to run to Stanley County. In 1854, the Fayetteville and Northern plank road, to connect Fayetteville north to Raleigh, and the Fayetteville and Warsaw

plank road from Fayetteville east to the railroad depot at Warsaw were chartered but not completed.

Although plank roads were better than unimproved dirt tracks, they could not compete with rail transportation in speed or freight and passenger capacity. For Fayetteville to thrive and remain economically viable, it still needed a rail connection. By the mid 1850s, Fayetteville was literally surrounded by railroads but did not have a connection to one. The Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad was completed in 1840, but only came within 50 miles of Fayetteville at Warsaw. The Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, which ran north from Raleigh to connect with the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad (later the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad) and with the Petersburg Railroad, was 60 miles away. The Wilmington and Manchester Railroad connected the port of Wilmington with the central South Carolina markets but only came within 50 air miles south of Fayetteville at Whiteville in Columbus County. Another railroad, the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad was chartered in 1855. Although 112 miles of track had been laid from Wilmington as far as Rockingham before war conditions halted construction, it still passed well south of Fayetteville.

Another factor driving the need for a rail connection to Fayetteville was the important United States Arsenal located there. Construction began on the arsenal in 1836 and it was virtually complete by 1861. It had been located in Fayetteville to fabricate and store ordnance equipment, materials and supplies to be used by militia and national armies in case of war. Lack of rail transportation was a barrier to the arsenal achieving its full potential. It was actually downgraded from an arsenal of the first order to a lower category. Following North Carolina's secession in May 1861, the renamed Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory became the second most productive Southern arsenal. Only the Richmond Armory surpassed it in production. Even though it took the Civil War to realize the full military potential of railroads, the importance of railroads to the state government already had been demonstrated.

An early example of the importance of railroads was the hurried dispatch of a detachment of the 3rd U.S. Artillery on August 5, 1844, under the command of Lt. S.L. Fremont from Fort Johnson, below Wilmington, to the North Carolina Arsenal at Fayetteville to respond to rumors of a civil insurrection (see "A Forced March to Fayetteville," *North Carolina Postal Historian*, Volume 32, No. 2, Spring 2013). The force was able to reach Warsaw, a station on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad and the closest point by rail from



Wilmington to Fayetteville, in a matter of hours, but they had to make a forced march from there overland to Fayetteville, a distance of 50 miles. Even though the last 50 miles was traveled by land, use of the railroad to Warsaw reduced a three day trip to one day.

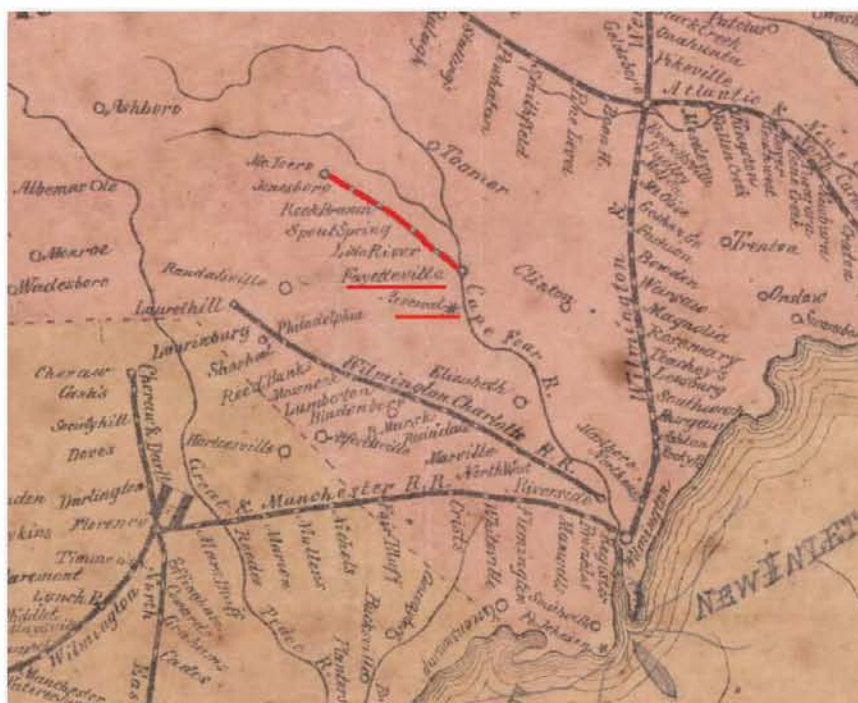
To bring Fayetteville into the railroad age, the Western Railroad was chartered on December 24, 1852, by the North Carolina General Assembly to construct a railroad from Fayetteville to the important coal mine at Egypt in Chatham County, near Sanford, now in Lee County. The course of the track was planned to run northwest through Cumberland, Moore, Harnett and Chatham counties. Figure 1 shows this railroad on an 1863 railroad map, W. Alvin Lloyd's Southern Rail-Road Map. The line began at Fayetteville and by June 1, 1863, reached the Egypt mine. During the Civil War, the depots and stations served by the railroad were Fayetteville, Little River (Manchester), Spout Springs, Rock Branch, Jonesboro, McIver's and Egypt Depot. Swann's Station was added by September 1863. This map was drawn before June 1, 1863, the date the line had reached the Egypt Coal Mine, and a depot had opened there.

The Western Railroad was not Fayetteville's first venture into the new area of railroads. In the early 1800s, railroads were advanced technology and had already proved themselves in England. They connected previously isolated areas to markets in the cities and enabled agricultural and forest products to reach buyers in record time. Passengers were able to travel much faster and trips that previously took days could be finished in hours. It is thought that a short track was built in the 1820s to connect the Cape Fear River docks with the top of the river bank. It has not been verified that this track was actually built, but contemporary references indicate that it may have been. It is documented that in 1828 a temporary experimental two mile track from the Cape Fear River to the Market House in the center of town was authorized to demonstrate the new technology. The track was later removed.

The first successful long distance railroads in North Carolina were the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, completed in 1840, the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad and the Raleigh and Gaston Railroads, also completed in 1840. None of these lines provided a connection to Fayetteville. The economic future of that venerable city depended on modern transportation to link it to the rest of the state. The Cape Fear, Yadkin and Pee Dee Railroad, was chartered about 1830 and construction was

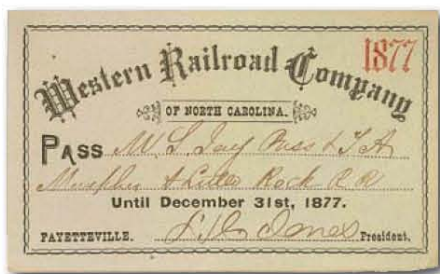
started but never completed. Fayetteville found itself still isolated from its markets.

The Western Railroad was chartered in 1852 and construction began in 1858 after six years of acquiring rights of way. It was



▲ **Figure 1.** Route of the Western Railroad on an 1863 railroad map, beginning at Fayetteville and by June 1, 1863, reaching the Egypt mine. (Map drawn before the line reached Egypt Depot) Shown on the railroad line in red from Fayetteville are stations at Little River (Manchester), Spout Spring, Rock Branch, Jonesboro, and McIver's. Also shown are Fayetteville and the Confederate Arsenal. Rock Branch was not listed among the stations published in the *Fayetteville Observer* in 1863.

also called the "Coal Fields Railroad." By the time the state seceded from the Union on May 20, 1861, only 40½ miles of the planned 43 miles had been completed, and the line stopped at McIver's Depot. Construction had halted because of large sandstone formations that blocked the route. On August 26, 1861, *The Fayetteville Observer* printed a story headed "The Coal-Fields Railroad," reporting that the Legislature had issued \$200,000 in State Bonds previously and that the Presidents and Directors of the Railroad had resolved to let out contracts for "the immediate construction of 2½ miles of road directly to the Egypt Mine shaft." Until the final 2½ miles was completed from McIver's Station, the coal had to be freighted by wagon to McIver's and then loaded on the cars for Fayetteville. The report continued to say that "Some two hundred tons have been brought down and shipped for Mr. Browne of Charleston, and more will be brought almost daily." Those last few miles were finally completed. On June 1, 1863, *The Fayetteville Observer* carried an announcement that "From today, Freight will be



◀ **Figure 2.** Western Railroad Pass dated 1877. A common professional courtesy for railroads was to grant passes to employees of other railroads. This pass was written for an employee of the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, an Arkansas line that operated from 1853 to 1887. The pass was found in the Fayetteville records of the successor to the Western Railroad, the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, (Courtesy of Fayetteville Area Transportation Museum)

received and discharged at Egypt Station, the present terminus of this Road. The Station heretofore known as McIver's is discontinued." Coal could now be transported directly from the mine depot to the docks at Fayetteville.

By the time the line was completed to Egypt in 1863, one train a day was scheduled. It left Fayetteville at 7:00 A.M. and reached the Egypt Depot at 11:00 A.M. On the return trip, the train left Egypt Depot at 11:20 A.M. and reached Fayetteville at 3:30 P.M., averaging 12 to 15 miles per hour. Stops were made at the stations along the route, and since the train was wood fueled, there were wood racks placed along the way for refueling.

On May 7, 1858, the Western Railroad received its first locomotive, named the "George McNeil," which was shipped to Fayetteville on the steamer "Flora McDonald." The second locomotive, "the Cumberland," arrived on June 29, 1859, on the steamboat "Rowan." The line used a 4'8" gauge track and the rails were of the T-rail type, which was becoming the standard type.

Figure 2 illustrates a Western Railroad pass, a common professional courtesy granted to employees of other railroads. This one was written for an employee of the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad. It was found in the records of the Western Railroad's successor, the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, in Fayetteville. An advertisement for the Western Railroad published in *The Fayetteville Observer*, August 12, 1861, is shown in Figure 3. This provided the following information for passengers from Fayetteville:

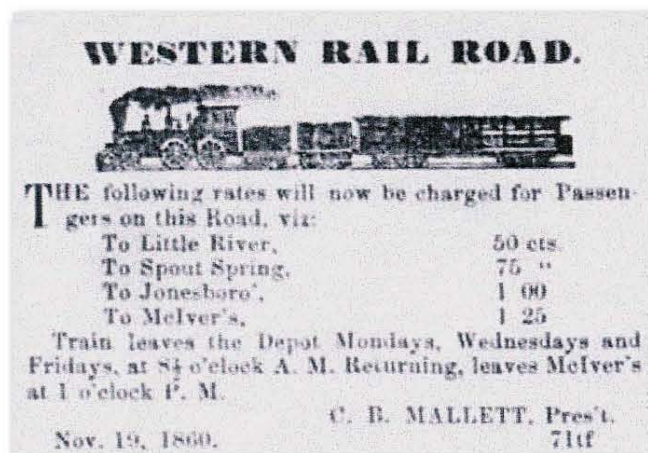
To Little River (Manchester)	50 Cents
To Spout Spring	75 Cents
To Jonesboro	\$1.00
To McIver's	\$1.75

The train left the Fayetteville Depot on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 8:30 A.M. and the return trip from McIver's Depot to Fayetteville left at 1:00 P.M.

The building of the Western Railroad was important not only to the future of Fayetteville, but to the development of the Deep River area. In the mid-nineteenth century, this part of

Chatham County was thought to have significant coal and iron deposits, with the potential for a national foundry. Although some coal was mined as early as the 1700s, the first large scale coal mine was the Egypt Coal Mine. This area of Chatham County also produced good corn crops. The community and coal mine were supposedly named "Egypt" for the area in Egypt in the Biblical story of Joseph that also produced bountiful amounts of grain.

Coal was the primary commodity transported on the Western Railroad. During the Civil War, however, iron became an



▲ **Figure 3.** Western Railroad advertisement from the August 12, 1861, issue of *The Fayetteville Observer* listing the rates to the stations on the line and the train times.

increasingly important product. The railroad transported pig iron produced at the Sappa Iron Works of Ore Hill, on the Deep River in Chatham County. On December 12, 1861, *The Fayetteville Observer* reported that the Western Railroad transported 1,600 pounds of pig iron for a foundry in Wilmington. On October 15, 1862, *The Raleigh Standard* reported that the Western Railroad had contracted to grade the 10 miles of track from Egypt Depot to Ore Hill and had planned to have the grading completed by the next July. No documentation, however, has been located to show that this link was completed during the war.





◀ **Figure 4.** 1861 Western Railroad corner card envelope to C.B. Mallett, president of the Western Railroad, who was in Richmond, Va. Letter paid with 5 cent green, CSA No. 1. Confederate railroad corner cards are scarce as are all Confederate railroad covers.

Second class passenger rates were slightly cheaper.

A Western Railroad Company corner card envelope is illustrated in Figure 4. It was posted in Fayetteville in 1861 addressed to C.B. Mallett, care of William S. Ashe, Quartermasters Department, Richmond, Virginia. Mallett was president of the Western Railroad Company and Ashe was president of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. For one year, Confederate President Jefferson Davis placed Ashe in charge of Confederate railroad transportation. Mallett was in Richmond at the time and possibly had business with Ashe. The letter was franked with a five cent green stamp, CSA No. 1. Confederate railroad corner cards are scarce, as are all Confederate railroad covers.

The Endor Iron works was another important iron foundry in Chatham County. It was established in 1862. Figure 5 illustrates an August 22, 186x, cover from Wilmington (New Hanover County) to Donald McRae, president of the Endor Iron Works. His mail was to be picked up at McIver's Depot, at that time, the closest depot on the railroad to the Egypt Mine and the Endor Iron Works. A vertical pair of CSA No. 6 stamps paid the 10 cent rate. The cover is a blue gray all-over illustrated advertising envelope for the Merchant's Insurance Company. McIver's station was a temporary station and was discontinued when the railroad line was completed to the Egypt Mine by June 1863. It is apparent from this cover that McIver's Station also served as a point for sending and receiving mail even though it never had a post office.

By September 1863, first class rates from Fayetteville and other stations along the route were advertised as follows (note Swann's Station had been added and McIver's Station replaced by Egypt Station):

To Little River (Manchester)	\$1.00
To Spout Spring	\$1.50
To Swann's (Station)	\$2.00
To Jonesboro	\$2.50
To Egypt	\$3.00



**Figure 5. ▲** Wilmington, August 22, 186x to Donald McRae, president of the Endor Iron Works in the Deep River area paid with vertical pair of CSA No. 6. Address notation indicates letter sent to McIver's Station, Fayetteville & Western Railroad, a mail receiving and sending destination even though there was no post office there.

WEDNESDAY and FRIDAY. By order JNO M. ROSE Treas'r and Gen'l Trans Ag't." By this time, train trips had increased from three to six days each week.

A Confederate cover sent from Pittsboro to C.B. Mallett [sic], president of the railroad, is shown in Figure 6. The black type 3 circular datestamp of Pittsboro doesn't provide a readable date, but the 5 cent payment indicates it was sent before the July 1, 1862, when the letter postage rate was raised to ten cents. The black handstamp PAID and a separate black handstamp 5 show the letter was prepaid. The 1860 census listed Charles B. Mallett, age 44, as "President Railroad." His worth in real estate was listed at \$15,000 and his personal estate

**Figure 6. ►**  
Confederate cover from Pittsboro (Chatham County) to C.B. Malett [sic], president of the Western Railroad, sent before the rate change of July 1, 1862. Black handstamps PAID and 5 show prepayment of 5 cents.



was \$35,000. He was financially ruined by the war and died in 1872.

During the war, the importance of the Western Railroad to the Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory became apparent as the railroad delivered coal, iron and possibly other commodities. On February 7, 1862, the superintendent of the arsenal, Captain John C. Booth, reported "Then I am building a railroad connecting me with the road to the iron and coal mines, which also gives me communication with the river and steamboats." It is clear that Captain Booth intended to connect the arsenal to the Western Railroad. The arsenal suffered for want of iron throughout the war to fulfill its ordnance contracts, although the Deep River iron and coal deposits promised a near and reliable source of those important strategic materials. On July 9, 1862, Captain Booth paid \$189.00 for 541 cross ties for the "rail road connection." He paid \$334 on October 31, 1862, for another 956 cross ties. No further details have been found to verify if this spur was completed, and if so, where Captain Booth obtained the rails. Based on construction requirements of the day, Captain Booth purchased enough cross ties to build approximately 6/10 of a mile of track, which would have connected him to the Western Railroad in downtown Fayetteville. If the connection between the arsenal and station was indeed constructed, rails would have been purchased. It is possible that the Western North Carolina Railroad had enough rails to sell to the arsenal, but no records have been located to substantiate that sale. Iron rails were in very short supply during the war and surprisingly, no rails were rolled during the entire Civil War in the South.

As mentioned earlier, the president of the railroad during its formative years was Charles B. Mallett. He was a Fayetteville merchant, who owned three cotton mills and was president of the railroad from 1855 to 1868. He and his partners also owned riverboats, the Eagle Foundry in Fayetteville, and managed the Egypt Coal Mine, the Western Railroad's most important customer. During the war period, the Western Railroad Company was the only rail link for the Egypt Coal mine or other concerns in the Deep River area. By the early 1860s, the Deep River area had developed an iron industry, most notably at Ore Hill and the Endor Iron Works. During the Civil War, the Western Railroad superintendent was Leonidas Campbell Jones.

In March 1864, Superintendent Jones' diary records that the railroad had the following types of cars: one 1st class passenger

car, one 2nd class passenger car, one baggage car, at least five box and flat cars, one hand car and at least 24 coal cars. He wrote that on May 9, 1864, the Western Railroad carried 83 tons of coal, "the most the road had ever carried in one day."

The Western Railroad continued to operate during the war but no new stations were added. The depot at Egypt carried freight and passenger traffic but a post office was not established at Egypt until 1867. During the life of the Western Railroad, there were six stations on the line that had post offices. The post office at Manchester on the Little River (Cumberland County, 1852) was the only one in operation during the Civil War other than Fayetteville. Soon after the war, post offices were established in four other stations, Jonesboro (Moore County, 1865), Swann's Station (Moore County, 1867), Egypt Depot (Chatham County, 1867), and Spout Springs (Harnett County, 1870). Even though Spout Springs, Swann's Station, Egypt Depot and the temporary station at McIver's did not have post offices during the Civil War, mail was directed to them because they were central points in the community. They served as de facto post offices. There are no known Western Railroad postal markings, but there is a manuscript marking for the "Egypt Station F & M Railroad" (Fayetteville and McIver's Railroad), which appears to date from the 1862-65 period. This marking may have been a local designation for the Western Railroad, which also had other unofficial names.

Even though the Western Railroad was successful in connecting Fayetteville and the Cape Fear River with the Deep River coal and iron fields, Fayetteville still lacked a rail link with other North Carolina railroads. To meet this need, in 1861 the North Carolina Legislature passed an act to charter the Fayetteville and Warsaw Railroad. Warsaw was 50 miles east of Fayetteville and was the closest depot to Fayetteville on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Completion of this rail line would have connected Fayetteville to Richmond and to Wilmington and its rail connections to South Carolina. It would have particularly benefitted the Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory.

This railroad, however, was not built during the Civil War. The Raleigh and Gaston Railroad had planned a link to the

north side of the Deep River. Grading had begun but due to lack of rails and other resources, this line was not completed.

During the waning days of the Civil War, the Western Railroad made history when its stock and personnel were pressed into service to try to save the arms-making machinery of the Fayetteville Arsenal and Armory from the forces of General Sherman. By early March 1865, Sherman's two army wings were crossing into North Carolina. They were virtually unopposed by Confederate forces, who could only delay the huge Union force. Because the important Confederate arsenal at Fayetteville lay directly in the Sherman's path, it was critical that the irreplaceable ordnance machinery be saved.

On the night of March 10, 1865, the last of the machinery had been loaded onto the Western Railroad cars and was sent to the end of the line, the Egypt Coal Mine. Here the equipment was secreted in the mine with the hopes it could be reused. There is no known inventory of all that was carried to the mine.

The 1st Michigan Engineers Regiment of Sherman's force was ordered to destroy the Fayetteville arsenal before the army left Fayetteville on March 15. They destroyed all they could and dumped much material, including the personal property of the arsenal commander, Colonel Childs, into the Cape Fear River. Later in May 1865, the arsenal machinery location was revealed to the federal forces and the machinery was moved to Raleigh, then lost to history. The arsenal records, which in good military procedure would have accompanied the machinery, also have been lost. Only a few scattered records exist in the National Archives, university collections and private hands.

President Mallett saved the rolling stock from the depredations of the Union Army by moving them north to the Egypt Mine. Although Sherman's forces destroyed 12 miles of track, railroad buildings and other property at Fayetteville, they did not move as far as Egypt. As a result they did not find and

destroy the locomotives or freight and passenger cars. After the war, the remaining stock continued to serve as the company rebuilt its infrastructure, capital and markets.

The Western Railroad Company survived the war. Since the economy was devastated, it was only in 1868 that operations fully resumed. By 1871, connections were being built northwest toward High Point. In the early years of economic recovery when the line struggled to start up again, additional post offices were established at some of the existing depots on the Western Railroad, as mentioned before. The Western Railroad merged with the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad in 1879, which in turn became part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1894.

The Western Railroad Company was an important first step in the commercial development of the Cape Fear and Deep River regions. It performed important duty during the Civil War, helped raise the state's economy out of the ruination after the war, and was a notable link in the state's modern rail transportation network. Much of the story of the Western Railroad and the men who built and operated it will never be told. History is silent on the early busy days, the frenzy and expansion of the war years, the hurried evacuation of the Fayetteville Arsenal machinery and the railroad rolling stock to the safety of the Egypt mine, as well as the slow rebound from reconstruction. Buried in the financial statistics and annual reports are many human stories. The railroad was very important to the postal expansion of the region since, as the tracks were laid, depots, stations and post offices soon followed. It is hoped that additional research will expand the postal history of the post offices served by the Western Railroad through the stories of the route agents, postmasters and postal customers.

The following are examples of covers related to the Western Railroad and the post offices along the rail line:

**Figure 7. ▶**

February 7, 1862, cover from Manchester to Carthage (Moore County). Confederate manuscript postmark and "Paid/5." Manchester was the first station on the Western Railroad out of Fayetteville. The post office there was established in 1852 as Silver Run, but was renamed Manchester in the same year. In 1948, the post office was moved and renamed Spring Lake. (Courtesy of Tony Crumbley)

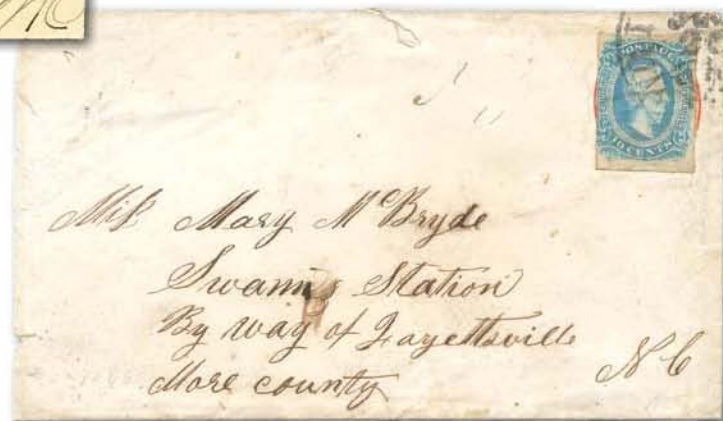






◀ **Figure 8.** July 17, 1887, postal card (UX12) from Spout Springs (Harnett County) to Greensboro (Guilford County). Spout Springs was the next station above Fayetteville on the Western Railroad. A post office was established there in 1870 and continued until 1923. By 1897, the Western Railroad had been absorbed into the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad. (Courtesy Tony Crumbley)

**Figure 9.** ▶  
June 20, 186x, cover from unknown post office to Swann's Station on the railroad line. CSA No. 11 over Federal embossed envelope. Judging from the numbers of examples available for examination by the author, Swann's Station handled a good volume of mail, even though it did not have a formal post office until 1867. It closed in 1925.



◀ **Figure 10.** 1 Mar 186x, Wilmington (New Hanover County) to Fayetteville (Cumberland County), then redirected to Jonesboro (Moore County) via the W.R.R. (Western Railroad), paid with CSA No. 12. Jonesboro or Jonesbough was the next stop on the Western Railroad. It was established on October 20, 1865, and operated until 1948. Originally in Moore County, it found itself in Lee County when that county was created in 1908.

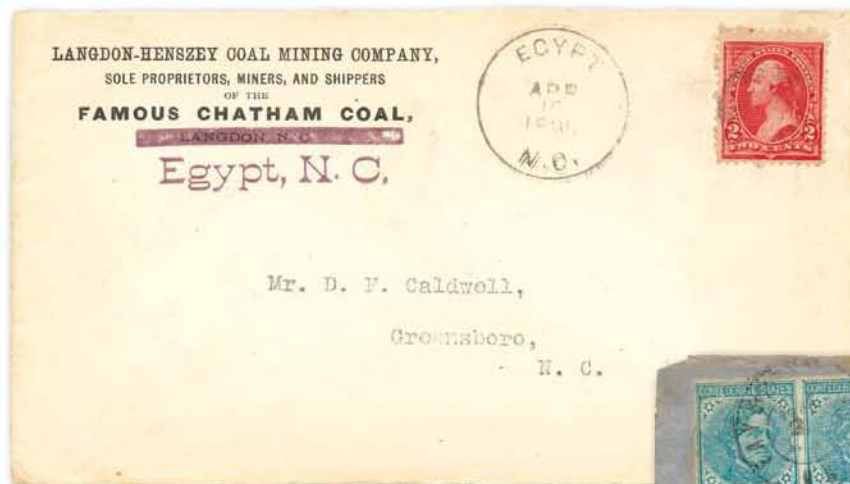
**Figure 11.** ▶  
July 4, 1862, Wilmington (New Hanover County) to McIver's, "care of Western R R Co." via Fayetteville, a temporary depot officially discontinued on June 1, 1863, when the Western Railroad reached its planned terminus at the Egypt Coal Mine. It did not have a post office but like the other stations and depots on the line, mail was left there for pick up. Letter paid with horizontal pair of CSA No. 6 (London printing). (Courtesy Tony Crumbley)





◀ **Figure 12.** March 18, 1879, UX5 postal card from the Western Railroad to Greensboro (Guilford County). A railroad agent struck in blue ink his postmark in the upper right corner, EGYPT DEP. & FAY./AGT. (Egypt Depot & Fayetteville Agent). This was the year that the Western Railroad began to be absorbed by the Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railroad, also headquartered in Fayetteville. By this time there was a postal agent to handle mail on the Western Railroad.

**Figure 13.** ▶ October 4, 1892 cover from Egypt Depot (Chatham County) to Greensboro (Guilford County). Egypt Depot opened on June 1, 1863, with a post office opening in 1867, although mail was directed to and picked up there since 1863. A letter written in July 1864 at Egypt Depot states "I came to this place to see if you sent us a letter....," clear evidence that the depot was a de facto post office. This cover has an "Egypt Coal Company" advertising corner card. (Courtesy Tony Crumbley)



◀ **Figure 14.** April 15, 1895, Egypt (Chatham County) to Greensboro (Guilford County) with corner card advertising "Famous Chatham Coal" at Egypt, N.C. Post office name changed to Egypt on December 13, 1894, and then to Cumnock on 11 May 1895, making this a very short-lived postmark.

**Figure 15.** ▶ 1863 envelope from Fayetteville (Cumberland County) to Gulf (Chatham County) "via Egypt," the closest rail connection to the south of Gulf. Letter paid with horizontal pair of CSA No. 7. This cover shows the growing importance of the Western Railroad since it was certainly carried by rail to Egypt and picked up for transfer to Gulf.



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## Old Mystery Cover

Our last mystery cover was a postal card dated 11 April 1946 from Camp Lejeune to Chicago, Illinois. We asked in which post office was it mailed and where was the post office located?

Surprisingly, we had no responses, although there are marine corps enthusiasts among our members.

*The Postal Bulletin* No. 18768 of 3 November 1944 reported that the Marine Barracks, New River, an independent branch of New Bern (Craven County), would be renamed the Marine Barracks Camp Lejeune, an independent branch of New Bern, effective 1 November 1944. A few days later *The Postal Bulletin* No. 18769 of 7 November 1944 corrected the name to Camp Lejeune branch. *The Postal Bulletin* No. 19094 of 6 January 1948 reported that, effective 16 January 1948, Camp Lejeune would be established as a branch office of Jacksonville in Onslow County. This post card was posted at the Camp Lejeune branch office of New Bern, which existed by that name from 1 November 1944 until 16 January 1948.



### Have You Checked Our New Web Site?

The North Carolina Postal History Society's web site is located at

[www.ncpostalhistory.com](http://www.ncpostalhistory.com)

Take a look and let us know how you feel about it.



## Siler City, NC – A Postal History



by Tony L. Crumley

Siler City began as a collection of family farms. In the 1750s, the town's namesake, the Siler family, settled in Chatham County in an area known as the "desolate meadows." They built their first home at the intersection of two roads: one running between Greensboro and Fayetteville, and the other running between Raleigh and Salisbury. The Siler home became the center of town and would soon become a store and post office. Figure 1 illustrates the Siler home that was built in the early 1900s. This house was a store and post office. The Siler family members would be postmasters twice, Cincintus in 1880-1884 and Helen in 1934-1966.

Siler City was first incorporated in 1884. Prior to incorporation, the community was known as Energy. Cincintus T. Siler was appointed postmaster of Energy on July 13, 1880. On July 3, 1884, the name of the post office was changed to Siler Station. Cincintus Siler would continue to serve as postmaster until J. George Hanner was appointed on December 10, 1884.

There are no known postmarks from the Energy post office. Figure 2 is a cover posted on January 3, 1885, on which postmaster Hanner applied a manuscript cancel. This cover was addressed to Shaws Mills (Guilford County).

By November of 1885, he had received his first handstamp postmark device. Figure 3 shows an example of this Type 1 marking (the postmark type numbers in this article come from the *North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update*, which can be found on the North Carolina Postal History Society web site). Postmaster Hanner changed the postmark to a new circular date-stamp in January 1886, again showing the name Siler Station (Type 2). Figure 4 shows this postmark on a cover to Brush Creek (Chatham County) along with Maltese cross killers on



the two Scott No. 182 stamps. This marking was used only for a year before the town name changed from Siler Station to Siler City in July 1886, requiring a new device.

There were a few small-scale mills in Siler City, such as the gristmill operated by Samuel Siler from 1870 until the 1890s. Siler City, however, did not really develop until 1884 when the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad completed construction from Sanford to Greensboro. Siler Station was designated as a stop along the way. Figure 5 illustrates an untitled railroad map of North Carolina (circa 1883), a portion of which shows the Cape Fear and Yadkin



**Figure 1.** ▲ Siler City was named for the Siler family who first moved to the area in the 1790s. Cincintus Siler was the first postmaster. This home place built in 1900s housed a general store and the post office.



Valley Railroad from Greensboro southeast toward Sanford. Siler City is the station called "Siler" and marked in red, about 30 miles from Greensboro. With the railroad came progress. Immediately three stores opened and others soon followed. By 1887, seven stores were open. There was a tobacco warehouse, three livery stables, three hotels, a planning mill, a sawmill, and a cotton mill.

◀ **Figure 2.** January 13, 1885, Siler Station to Shaws Mills (Guilford County) on a cover with Scott No. 210, showing manuscript cancel of postmaster Hanner.

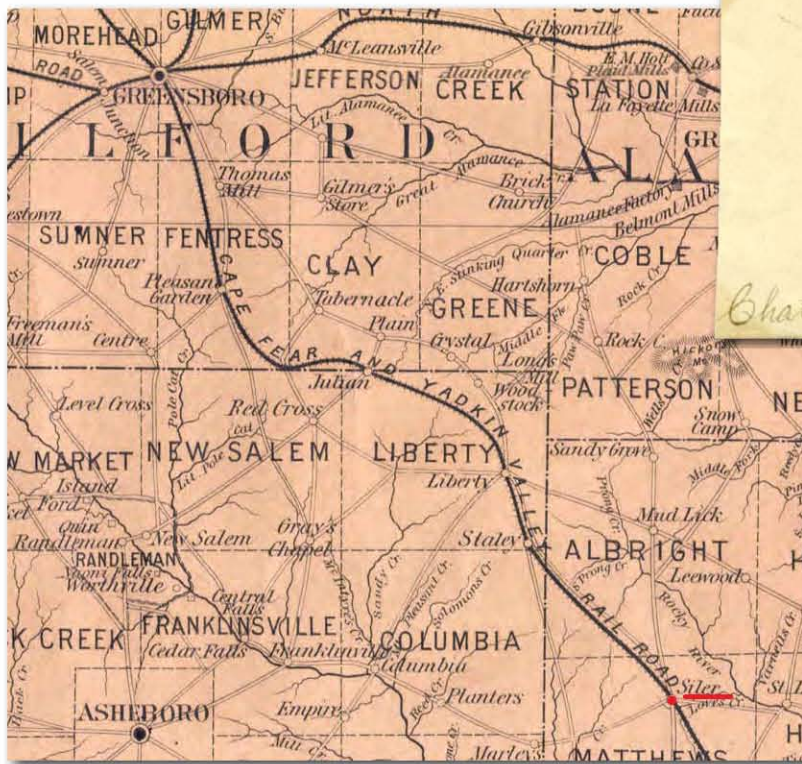
**Figure 3.** ▶

Tracing of first circular datestamp used at Siler City, called Siler Station, a stop on the railroad that came through there in 1884.



**Figure 4.** ▼

November 27, 1886, cover from Siler Station to Brush Creek with Type 2 postmark and Maltese cross killers on horizontal pair of Scott No. 182.



◀ **Figure 5.** Portion of untitled railroad map of North Carolina (circa 1883) showing the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad from Greensboro southeast toward Sanford. Siler City is the station called "Siler" and marked in red, about 30 miles from Greensboro.

By January 1887, Postmaster Hanner had acquired a new, large double-circle circular datestamp with a duplexed Maltese cross killer (Type 3). This marking is shown on the cover in Figure 6, a letter to Gilmer's Store in Guilford County. This handstamp is recorded used only in 1887. The Maltese cross killer in this case is part of a duplexed handstamp.

Along with the economic growth in Siler City came increased educational opportunities. Figure 7 illustrates an advertising cover to Chapel Hill (Orange County) with the printed advertising of the Thompson School, "A first class Boarding School with a Military Organization." The boarding school opened on January 12, 1887. The owner and superintendent was Professor James Alexander Wilson Thompson. Figure 8 illustrates the school's letter head on a letter written March 4, 1887. Note the printed letterhead provides the names of the faculty as well as a notation that the school formerly was Oakdale Academy. Little is known of the history of the school. Figure 9 shows another similar example of an advertising cover of this school used on April 19, 1889, on a letter addressed to Trinity College (Ran-

dolph County). The cover was posted on board the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, where a postal agent struck the MOUNT AIRY & BENNETTS./R.P.O. postmark (Mount Airy & Bennettsville, SC railway post office). This postmark was used from 1888 until 1890. Today, the school bell from the Thompson School has been preserved and mounted at the W.F. Collins Park in Siler City.

By January 1889, Postmaster Hanner decided to once again change his handstamp postmark. This time, he decided that his post office would mimic the postmarks of other larger city post offices that were using canceling machines. Ten years before any North Carolina post office had a machine cancel, Siler City used a mimic machine cancel. Figure 10 (Type 4) illustrates a January 26, 1889, cover from Siler City to Alexandria, Virginia with the only known example of this mimic cancel. Only a handful of towns in the state used mimic machine cancels.

The mimic cancel was no longer used by December 1889. Figure 11 is an example of a new circular datestamp provided by the Post Office Department, which was used with a separate



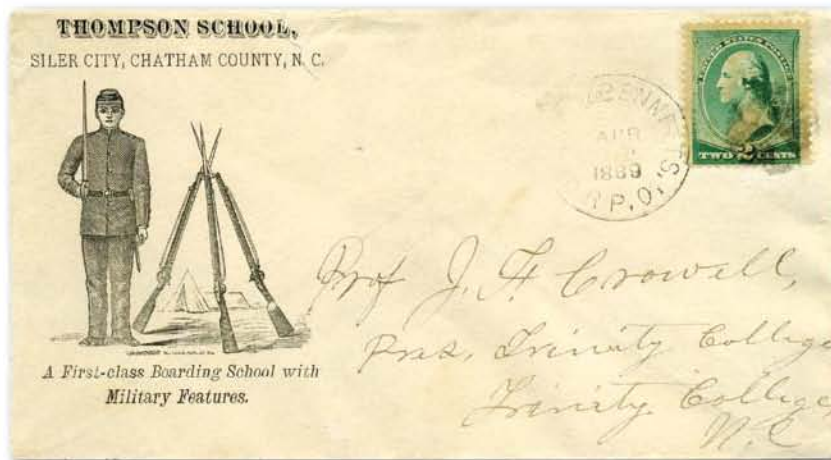
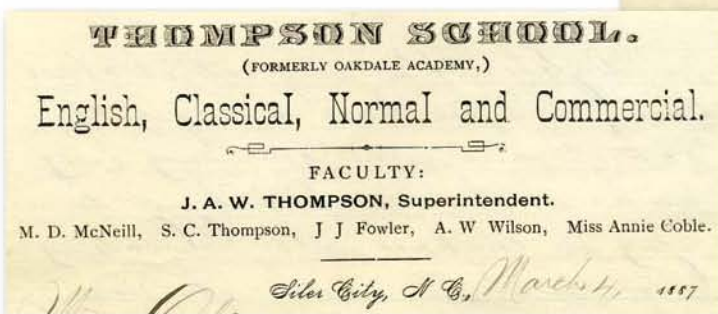


◀ **Figure 6.** The Type 3 CDS was first recorded in January 1887 and last recorded October 1887. This very uncommon 31 mm double circle datestamp is shown here on a January 31, 1887, cover from Siler City to Gilmer's Store (Guilford County). Note, the Maltese Cross cancel on the 2¢ red brown, Scott # 210, is part of a duplex canceling device.

**Figure 7.** ▶ March 5, 1887, advertising cover of the Thompson School, Siler City, to Chapel Hill (Orange County), "A first class Boarding School with a Military Organization." The school opened on January 12, 1887. The owner and superintendent was Professor James Alexander Wilson Thompson.



◀ **Figure 8.** Letterhead of the enclosed letter in Figure 7, dated March 4, 1887, providing the names of the faculty as well as a notation that the school formerly was the Oakdale Academy.



◀ **Figure 9.** April 19, 1889, cover from Siler City to Trinity College (Randolph County), another example of the advertising cover of the Thompson School. This cover was posted on board the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, where a postal agent struck the MT.AIRY & BENNETTS./R.P.O. postmark (Mount Airy & Bennettsville, SC railway post office).



**Figure 10. ▶**

January 26, 1889, cover from Siler City to Alexandria, Virginia with the only known example of this mimic cancel. By December 1889 this cancel had been replaced.



◀ **Figure 11.** May 12, 1891, cover from Siler City to Boaz (Chatham County). This 26.5 mm postmark was used from December 1898 until at least May 1891. A separate target killer canceled the stamp.

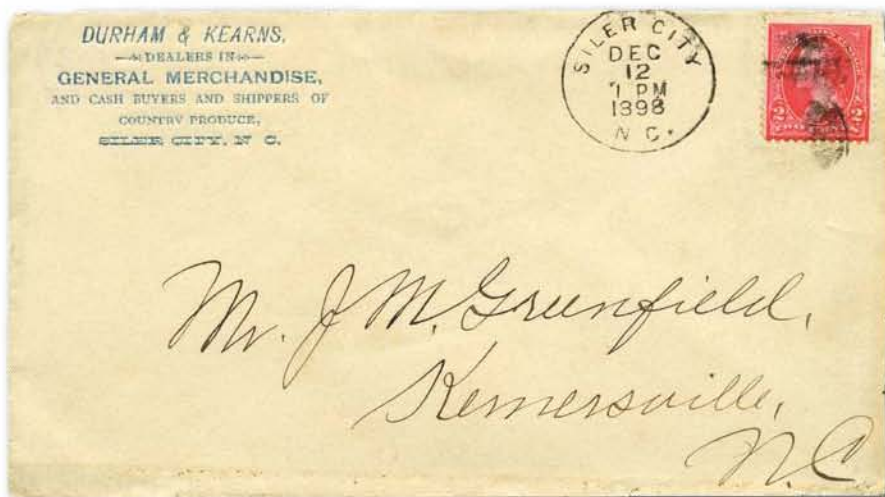
three-ring circular killer (Type 5). The postmark is on a cover to Boaz (Chatham County). This device was used until at least May 1891, when it was replaced by a larger device that had the time of day within the circular datestamp (Type 6). Figure 12 is an example of this postmark showing the date of December 12, 1898, and the time of 1:00 P.M. The cancel was on an envelope with a printed corner card of Durham and Kearns, a general merchandise dealer in Siler City. This handstamp would be used until March 1900.

With the turn of the century, Siler City continued to grow and prosper. People looking for work moved from the farms to town. Most of the housing was provided by mill owners. Between 1890 and 1930, the town grew from 254 people to 1,730, nearly 15% a year growth.

This population growth was fueled by industrial growth, such as Farmers Roller Mill Manufacturing Company which was incorporated in 1893 and the Siler City Milling Company organized by Lossing L. Wrenn in 1910. Wrenn was the postmaster from August 7, 1901 until May 26, 1913.

While Wrenn was postmaster, he introduced more handstamp postmark devices than any previous postmaster of the com-

munity. During his twelve years as postmaster, he would use five different handstamp postmarks. When he took office in 1901, a metal duplex type H2 was in use (Type 7). This postmark, not shown here, lasted until September 1903, when a second metal duplex type H2 postmark (Type 8) was introduced. This post-



▲ **Figure 12.** December 12, 1898, Siler City to Kernersville (Forsyth County) canceled with the 28 mm postmark showing the time added to the postmark. Letter shows printed corner card of Durham & Kearns, Dealers in General Merchandise of Siler City.



◀ **Figure 13.** November 19, 1906, cover from Siler City to Greensboro (Guilford County), showing a second metal duplex Type H2 postmark (Type 8). The first metal duplex (Type 7) is not shown. This postmark was introduced in 1903 and was used until 1909. It had a wider gap between “Siler” and “City” than the Type 7 marking but the same 7 bars in the killer.

**Figure 14. ▶** September 6, 1912, postal card from Siler City to Goldston (Chatham County) showing a new metal duplex Type H2 handstamp (Type 10), the earliest use of the postmark recorded from 1912 to 1917. This metal duplex has six bars in its killer and measured 30.5 mm, slightly larger than the earlier metal duplex markings.



mark is shown in Figure 13, a November 19, 1906 envelope to Greensboro (Guilford County). This device had wider “N.C.” than the Type 7 postmark and a wider space between “Siler” and “City.” This duplex circular datestamp would be used from September 1903 until August 1909.

For a brief time from June 1907 to January 1908, Wrenn used a four-bar rubber handstamp (Type 9), a 1906 Type A/1 four-bar cancel. By September 1912, Postmaster Wrenn introduced another metal duplex type H2 handstamp postmark (Type 10). This time, the spacing was narrower and there were six bars in the killer. Figure 14 is the earliest known example of this postmark, used September 6, 1912, on a postal card to Goldston (Chatham County). This postmark continued in use until July 1917.

None of the industrial changes could have taken place without the arrival of the railroad. Trains linked Siler City to the rest of the world. Siler City quickly became a center for both agrarian and industrial production. In the early 1900s, the town shipped chickens, eggs, onions, wool, rabbits, and quail all across the state and the northeast. The production of rabbits was a very important business in the first two decades of the

twentieth century. Between 1904 and 1905, Siler City shipped over forty thousand rabbits. From 1908-1916, it would ship 150,000 rabbits, primarily to the northeast. It seemed northeasterners had a taste for Chatham County rabbit. The city became known as the “rabbit center of the world.” One Boston restaurateur requested 3,000 rabbits shipped in lots not less than 100 per shipment. He was willing to pay \$8.00 per 100. The Durham General Merchandise Company was the major distributor of these commodities from Siler City. The Siler City store is illustrated in Figure 15.

The final handstamp used when Wrenn was postmaster was introduced in October 1910. This device also was a metal duplex type H2 but with seven bars in the killer. Figure 16 is an example of this postmark (Type 11) used March 31, 1919, on a letter to Bear Creek (Chatham County), RFD route 1. The latest recorded use of this handstamp was November 20, 1921.

Finally, on July 7, 1930, Postmaster Robert Dixon, who had been appointed in 1923, introduced the first machine cancel to be used in Siler City, one produced by an American Postal Machine Company machine. This postmark (Type 12) was an American machine flag cancel Type A-14, used from July 1930

**Figure 15. ►**

The Durham General Merchandise Company store in Siler City was the major distributor of commodities, which included the shipment of so many rabbits in the early part of the twentieth century that the city became known as the “rabbit center of the world.”



◀ **Figure 16.** March 31, 1919 postmark used at 2:00 P.M. on a cover from Siler City to Bear Creek (Chatham County), RFD route 1. Type 11 metal duplex Type H2 handstamp was introduced in October 1910 and was used until 1921. The circular datestamp was 29.5 mm and the killer had seven bars.



**Figure 17. ►**

March 10, 1931, cover from Siler City to Chicago, Illinois, with American Machine Company flag cancel, Type A-14, used from 1926 to 1935.



until April 1935. Figure 17 illustrates this postmark on a letter to Chicago, Illinois. On June 28, 1934, Helen B. Siler became acting postmaster and was appointed postmaster in March 1935. She would serve as postmaster for the next 31 years until May 20, 1966.

Siler City is still an active community, producing chickens for world consumption. As late as 1996, it was hosting an annual Siler City Chicken Festival. However, little can be found about

the rabbits of Chatham County. One would guess the demand died out. The post office today in Siler City sits in the same location as the old Siler family home. Some might say that little has changed in Siler City. ■

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## Letter to the Editors

Unlike newspapers and major publications, we rarely receive letters to the editors. After the last issue of the journal, we did, however, receive one from Dr. Steve Jackson, a veterinarian in Wilkesboro, a portion of which we would like to share with our members. His letter and pictures follow:

*April 23, 2014*

*Mr. Tony Crumbley*

*Much enjoyed reading your well done article about Bertie County Postal History.*

*It is a small world. My mother was born and raised in Woodville in Bertie County. My mother's cousin Stella Phelps was the last post mistress at the Woodville NC post office. The day Miss Phelps retired was also the last day of service for Woodville PO. The mail service was then incorporated into the Lewiston PO which was only about a third to a half mile up the road. Lewis Thompson (1808-1867) a very successful planter and businessman was my great-great-grandfather. Your article showed a cover with his name on it. Thompson lived in what is now Woodville but back then was called Hotel PO. He also owned 1,400 acre sugar plantation in Louisiana which his son managed. I have an envelope sent to Thompson from a sugar broker in New Orleans.*

*I am enclosing for you a photo copy of an envelope I purchased ten years ago that was postmarked at Hotel in 1859. Also some photo copies of three envelopes I have that were mailed to Lewis Thompson.*

*There is a large collection of Lewis Thompson's papers in UNC-CH library. I have not been there to see what exactly the collection contains. Its on my bucket list. When I go, I will take a portable scanner or a good digital camera.*

*As for me, I have been a member of the NC Postal History Society for maybe 20 years and APS 25+ years. It is also on my bucket list to attend a NCPHS event....*

*Steve Jackson, DVM*

*Wilkesboro, NC*



◀ **Figure 1.** May 3, 1859, Hotel (Bertie County) to Townsville (Granville County), manuscript postmark on a 3¢ Nesbitt embossed envelope. Hotel operated as a post office from 1840 until 1872. Before 1840, the town was known as Turner's Cross Roads and after 1872, it became Lewiston.



◀ ▶ **Figure 2 and 3.** Lewis Thompson (October 9, 1808 - December 9, 1867) and Margaret Ann Clark Thompson (August 31, 1814 - February 26, 1881). They married on January 22, 1833. Pictures provided by Dr. Steve Jackson, their great-great-grandson.



**Figure 4.** ▶

December 6, 185x, Alexandria, Louisiana, to Hotel (Bertie County), paid with 3¢ Nesbitt embossed envelope. Mr. Thompson owned a large farm in New Orleans which his son ran. This is a letter to Mr. Thompson from a cotton merchant in Alexandria.




◀ **Figure 5.** July 12, 185x, Murfreesborough (Hertford County) to Hotel (Bertie County), paid with 3¢ 1857 stamp. Letter posted to Lewis Thompson care of the Hotel post office. Hotel would later become Lewiston, NC.

**Figure 6.** ▶

March 5, 185x, New York City to Hotel (Bertie County) paid with 3¢ 1851 stamp. Each of these three covers was sent to Lewis Thompson, pictured above.





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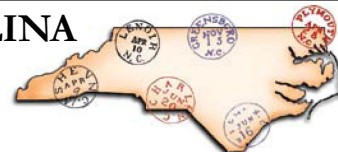
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## NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN



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## North Carolina Postmark Catalog Update

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A number of earlier counties have been updated

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