

First train to Chester turned into a party for some 8,000 people

More odds and ends:

Eight thousand people flocked into Chester to see their first railroad locomotive and cars in August 1851. The CC&A (Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta) had just completed laying the track from Columbia to Chester.

The town went all-out to welcome the first train. A big barbecue was prepared and tables laid out in the woods at what would later be the site of the Springsteen Cotton Mill and mill village.

At about 11 a.m. the train whistle was heard. The locomotive, pitifully small by present-day standards and not able to travel any faster than a trotting horse, was decked out in banners and evergreens.

Louise Pettus



NEARBY HISTORY

Dignitaries from Columbia and Winnsboro were on board. The CC&A president, Edward G. Palmer, addressed the crowd "amidst great applause." After inspecting the engine and cars the crowd turned to the largest barbecue ever seen in Chester.

It was the following July before the line was completed to Charlotte. Between Chester and Charlotte the CC&A built two depots. One was called Rock Hill and the other was named Fort Mill.

Recruiting WAACs

During World War II South Carolina had 13 centers for recruitment of women to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). One of the bases was at Chester. Chester's mobile unit went to Lancaster, Rock Hill, York, etc. WAAC officers tested young women for mental alertness. The trainees were eligible for officer training after four weeks. The women were expected to replace men in technical jobs such as radio operator, mechanic, parachute rigger, clerk and telephone switchboard operator.

Margarine licensing

During the 1930s dairy interests (called the "butter lobby"), especially from the Midwest, were very

successful in opposing the sale of margarine. Congress passed a law requiring federal tax and licenses of retail stores that sold margarine. South Carolina had 7,207 retail grocery stores. Only 1,816 were licensed to sell margarine. At that time, almost all margarine was derived from cottonseed oil, and cotton was almost exclusively a Southern crop. The Women's Economic Council was formed to lobby Congress to change the law. The president of WEC was Jessie Huey Lawrence, head of Winthrop College's Home Demonstration office.

It was not until World War II and a severe shortage of butter that Congress dropped the penalties on margarine, but the butter lobby still managed to get a ruling that coloring could not be added to margarine. Food companies then packed margarine in plastic bags with small capsules of food coloring that could be kneaded by the consumer.

Gold in them hills

York County and Lancaster County both have a gold mining history. The Haile gold mine near Kershaw in Lancaster County, discovered in 1828, produced more gold than any other mine east of the Mississippi River (more than \$6.5 million worth).

York County had numerous small operations (23 named and chartered), most of them in the western part of the county. Fourteen mines have operated in Lancaster County. (Mecklenburg County, with its 57 mines, has outproduced any county in the Carolinas.)

During the Civil War Confederate authorities needed copper for ammunition more desperately than gold. Unless the mines (such as Haile) produced both metals, they were abandoned. When Sherman's Union forces marched through South Carolina, a special detachment was sent to destroy the buildings and equipment of Haile Gold Mine.

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