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Thomas E.
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Jim Hudson

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***The History of the Railroad
in Salisbury
and its Socioeconomic
Impacts***

BY JIM HUDSON

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W Jim Hudson
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The city of Salisbury, Maryland, enjoys a prominent role on the Delmarva Peninsula. Located at the headwaters of the Wicomico River, the city has earned the name of "First City of the Eastern Shore" and "Hub of Delmarva." Salisbury, however, did not always possess this position of importance.

The impetus of Salisbury's significance was the coming of the railroad. Before this transportation revolution Salisbury was overshadowed by other towns such as Snow Hill and Princess Anne, both of which had easier access to the Chesapeake Bay via the Pocomoke and Manokin Rivers respectively. The railroad broke the dominance of these rival towns, giving Salisbury the ability to send its products to the rest of the country and bring in goods from far away markets.

Salisbury's importance grew, spurring the city to become the center of commerce to which the entire Lower Shore looks. But the story begins much, much earlier. . . .

***Salisbury Before
the Railroad***

In order to understand the profound effects of the railroad we must first examine Salisbury as it was before the arrival of the railroad. In those days Salisbury was merely a small crossroads community. The Wicomico River was the single most important factor influencing the development of the town. The river's influence dates back to the days of the Native Americans in pre-Colonial times.

Although the land in and around present day Salisbury was never an area of large Native American population, it did serve another important purpose for them. Since the site of the city is at the headwaters of the Wicomico watershed, many of the Native Americans' paths crossed the river in the Salisbury area. At this location, the Wicomico was shallow and relatively narrow, affording an easy crossing.

The legacy of these "Indian roads" remained after the arrival of European settlers. When the English arrived in the area, they faced the ordeal of cutting out roads to connect settlements. While the first roads bypassed Salisbury in favor of a ferry in Whitehaven, subsequent roads took advantage of the Indian trails and used the Salisbury area as a shallow fording site. These roads followed "a natural north-south corridor through the Salisbury area between the upper reaches of the Nanticoke, Choptank and Wicomico Rivers on the one side and the

Pocomoke on the other."¹

In addition to making Salisbury a convenient place to cross the Wicomico, the river also played a key role in the political formation of the town itself. Local tradition relates that Isaac Handy, who owned a lumber yard at the head of the Wicomico, was the first to conceive the idea of a community at Salisbury's present location. The spot was locally known at the time as Handy's Landing. He envisioned a future need for a town to act as the center of trade for the area.²

Handy enlisted the help of several other influential local landowners and presented a petition to the Maryland General Assembly to pass an act authorizing the formation of such a town. The petition met with success, and the act was passed August 8, 1732. The charter stipulated that the forks of the river would serve as the boundary lines for the infant town. The Act went on to call for the purchase of fifteen acres in the forks of the Wicomico River. The Wicomico River virtually surrounded the site of the new town.

Approximately twenty-five years after Salisbury's creation, records show that the town had begun to grow as a crossroads community. At the time Salisbury boasted the

¹Jane W. Bailey, ed., What's Past Is Prologue (Salisbury: Wicomico County Centennial, Inc., 1967), 27.

²Charles J. Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland (Garden City: Country Life Press, 1932), 18.

only bridges that crossed the Wicomico. A map from December 20, 1756, shows that two bridges had been built across the river by that date. The map, entitled "A Plat of his Lordship's Manor in Somerset and Worcester Counties on the Wicomico River. . ." shows that both of these bridges were located in Salisbury.³ The first was at the present location of West Main Street, and the second was at present South Division Street.

Despite the settlers' early efforts at building roads and bridges to connect themselves with the outside world, land transportation was still virtually nonexistent on colonial Delmarva. Roads were either unbearably dusty during dry periods, blocked with snowdrifts in the winter, or impassable due to mud during and after rainstorms. By necessity, everyone and everything that needed to travel any distance had to go by water.

This reliance on water transportation dictated all of Salisbury's land use patterns. It forced early townspeople to settle directly on the banks of the Wicomico. The first Salisburians were quick to grab all suitable "waterfront property." After the initial lots bordering the river were gone, however, Salisbury was slow to grow beyond its original borders. Because of the town's peculiar geography and the primitive condition of land transportation, the two

³George H. Corddry, Wicomico County History (Salisbury: Peninsula Press, 1981), 9.

meandering branches of the Wicomico River confined the town along their banks for many years.

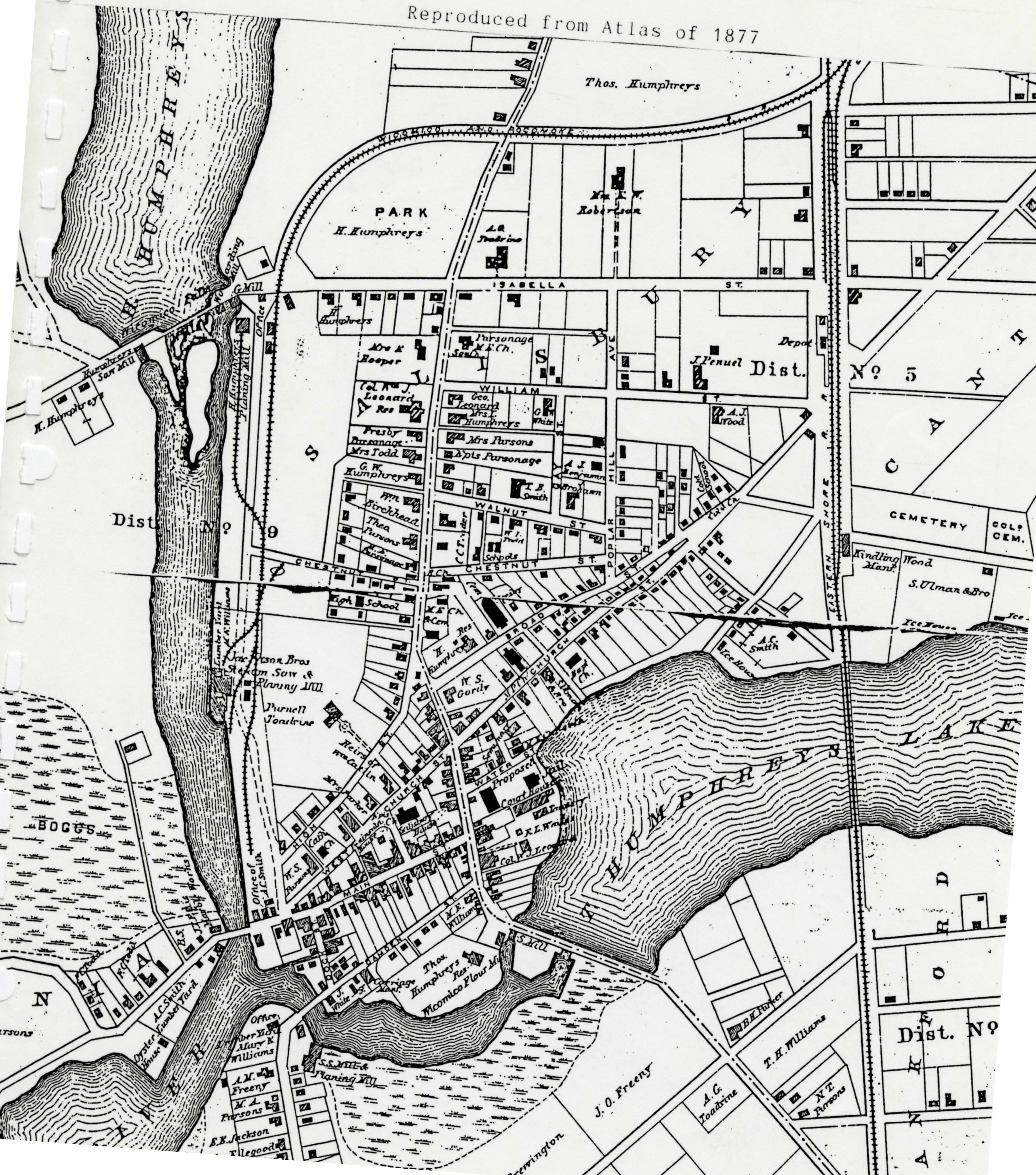
Additionally, any river transportation to the east was blocked in 1741 by the construction of a dam which created a large millpond. Humphrey's Lake, as the millpond was known, was held back by a dam near the Library and covered most of the area on which the hospital and Sheraton are now located. The encircling of the town by water forced any development to take place within the area east of the river where Mill Street/Camden Avenue now crosses and west of Humphrey's Lake.⁴ Expansion further east did not become possible until 1909 when the dam burst. (see map 1)

All of this water might have been a great benefit if it had been deeper. Unfortunately, the shallowness of the water which made Salisbury such an attractive fording place also prevented seagoing ships from entering Salisbury. The ships had trouble getting any closer than two or three miles from the town. Because of this shippers had to build a dock farther down river, about two or three miles south of town. Called Cotton Patch Wharf, it was actually nothing more than "a flat dirt platform, braced with log piling along the water's edge" with a small shanty serving as a warehouse.⁵ Despite its lowly appearance, it was of vital importance to

⁴Richard W. Cooper, Salisbury in Times Gone By (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1991), 83.

⁵Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland, 63.

Reproduced from Atlas of 1877



the town. All of the goods and merchandise entering or exiting Salisbury had to first go through this port before reaching their final destinations.

Although the wharf was important, it didn't help the town become a center of trade and commerce. Before reaching the wharf, shippers had to first load their goods onto wagons or specially constructed shallow-draft boats and then drive them to Cotton Patch Wharf. Both the shallow-draft boats and wagons were extremely slow -- the victims of tides and poor roads. Neither could carry heavy loads. Yet, nothing would be done for 150 years until the government undertook the enormous project of dredging the Wicomico.⁶ Salisbury was a long way from becoming the "Hub of Delmarva" of later years.

Although Salisbury was unable to reap direct benefits from the Wicomico as a water highway, the river did, however, contribute to the town in another way. It provided power for Salisbury's first industries: mills. These mills supplied the early settlers with very necessary services. They ground local grain into usable flour or corn, sawed and planed lumber cut from the abundant forest lands to be used in early buildings, and carded wool for use in the townspeople's clothing.

⁶An article in the January 21, 1871, edition of the Salisbury Advertiser shows that in that year Salisbury first asked Congress for \$40,000 for dredging the Wicomico to Salisbury. Unfortunately, it was never completed until 1888.

The sheer number of water-powered mills which popped up in and around Salisbury created a small but bustling colonial economy for the developing town. In 1741, William Venables constructed one of the first dams in Salisbury, creating Humphrey's Lake, and operated a grist mill there.⁷ By 1750, a dam was in place below the present day Isabella Street providing power to a grist mill and a planing mill on the east bank and two saw mills on the west bank.

Large lumber mills also served customers at the intersection of Camden Avenue and the river. Outside of town other mills existed at Tony Tank, Fruitland (then called Forktown), Rockawalkin, Quantico, Rewastico Creek, Barren Creek, Mardela Lake, Naylor's Pond, Connely's Pond, Leonard's Mill Pond, Shumaker's Pond, and Fook's Pond.⁸ (see map 2.)

The importance of these mills (and their subsequent importance to Salisbury) cannot be overstated. The sheer expense and effort necessary to build these dams are almost unimaginable. Richard Cooper, a prominent Salisbury historian, relates,

The building of the dam, today would be quite an undertaking, even with all the modern facilities at hand such as earthmovers, bulldozers, cranes, shovels and massive earth-carrying, multi-axelled trucks; back 230 years ago it certainly must have been a major project. A rough estimate on what we

⁷"Man-Made Lake Was Once Center of City," Daily Times, 13 August 1982, 8.

⁸Bailey, What's Past, 58.



X - MILL LOCATIONS

know about the dam indicates that it involved something around 3,500 cubic yards of compacted fill.... Somewhere nearby a hill had to be found -- and hills of any magnitude were in short supply around Salisbury -- or else a pit would have had to be dug to provide that much embankment. Carts pulled by oxen or horses had to be loaded by hand-shovelling and brought to the site, [which was] then a tidal mudflat. The amount of hand labor involved must have been tremendous and the human effort... hard to imagine.

Since it was impossible to build mills everywhere, the ones in Salisbury brought commerce into the town from throughout the surrounding area.

In addition to the basic services which the mill provided, many people came down to the riverside for social reasons. In colonial days the mill was a center of community activity. "The miller was the neighborhood lawyer and general information bureau. He knew politics. He learned from those patronizing the mill news which he passed on to others."¹⁰ Since the river was the only reliable source of transportation it was also the only reliable source of communication. Those individuals working on the Wicomico River brought news from such far-away places as Princess Anne, Annapolis, and Baltimore -- news which was eagerly hungered for by the isolated colonists.

The status quo remained in Salisbury for over a century. Area merchants continued to struggle with the limitations of the primitive transportation network on the

⁹Cooper, Salisbury, 30.

¹⁰Bailey, What's Past, 59.

lower and middle Eastern Shore of Maryland. Commerce in Salisbury grew slowly since in order to ship goods, Salisbury merchants had to load the goods onto wagons or small boats, transport them to Cotton Patch, and transfer them onto large sailing ships for transport elsewhere.

Merchants had no alternatives but to use the wagons and small boats which were painfully slow and limited in the weight of loads they could carry, roads which were often either bumpy or muddy, and sailboats which were hampered by their speed and tides. Therefore, they soon began looking for better forms of transportation.

A slight improvement came in 1852 when the first regularly scheduled steamboat service linked Cotton Patch Wharf with Baltimore. The first steamboat was the *Wilson Small*, piloted by Captain Moses Smith. It plied the Chesapeake twice a week between the rural port and growing metropolis. While this was better than relying on sail power, it still did not help the merchants of Salisbury who still had to load and unload their goods twice before they could reach the steamship.

An account of the same year sheds light on the Salisbury of 1852:

In 1852 Salisbury was a comfortably, progressive, small town, building wealth thru the sail of grain, lumber and cattle which were shipped to Baltimore by the narrow, crooked river. At this time, of course, there were no other means of outside communication except that done by stage coach or horse back. This was so slow and upon such a small scale as to be scarcely worth cognizance. But in spite of the

advantage of a water highway Salisbury had carelessly settled itself at the head of the river, the shallow, marshy stream was not navigable, making it impossible for boats of any size to dock in the town. Therefore, the wharf was necessarily built more than a mile away, incurring extra expense in loading or unloading cargo and decided inconvenience for the passengers peregrination.¹¹

Within a decade that small town would begin taking its first baby steps towards economic maturity.

¹¹From Neleh, "Cotton Patch Without Cotton Shipping Here in 1852," clipping of newspaper article, likely dating from 1923 and included in the Mary C. Owens Collection at the Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture, Salisbury, MD.

Salisbury's
First Railroad

The year of 1860 marked the beginning of a dramatic change in the history of Salisbury. Two events, the coming of the railroad and the first of the Great Salisbury Fires, represented a break from the old Salisbury and the emergence of the new. The first was an event of triumph, the second of tragedy. Richard Cooper categorically states that the railroad "brought down the curtain on Salisbury's century and a quarter existence as a colonial community and immediately it became a part of mid-19th century America."¹²

The story of the railroad's triumphant entrance into Salisbury truly begins many years earlier on June 26, 1836, in the state of Delaware. On this date the Delaware legislature granted a charter to the Delaware Railroad allowing it to build from the northern portion of the state to the southern boundary with Maryland in a direction towards Cape Charles. The company never completed the project, however, due to the Panic of 1837.

With the return of solvency, the charter was revived in 1849. The state of Delaware agreed to conditionally subscribe to 5,000 shares, and the project was off the ground in 1852. After many fits and starts and the backing of the powerful Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, the line eventually reached the southern limits of

¹²Richard W. Cooper, "Railroad Plays Major Part in Salisbury's Development," Daily Times, 10 June 1990.

the state at present day Delmar on December 20, 1859.

The people of Salisbury immediately began plans of their own. They would not rest until the railroad was extended south of the border into their town. Yet, the Delaware Railroad had no authority to cross the state line. To reconcile this situation a group of leading citizens in Salisbury dusted off a twenty year old charter of a company which was originally intended to build a railroad roughly from Elkton to Crisfield. Although the proposed road would not have even entered Salisbury, the citizens saw their chance.¹³ Using the authority of this charter, they would form their own railroad company.

As soon as construction began in Delaware, the Salisburians revived the charter in 1853. The new company, the Eastern Shore Railroad, was empowered to build a line from the terminus of the Delaware Railroad south through Salisbury and on to Somers Cove (Crisfield). When the Delaware Railroad reached Delmar (then nothing more than a field on the Mason-Dixon line) in 1859, the new company immediately launched its own construction program, building an extension six and one-half miles south to Salisbury, ending on Humphrey's Lake.

The grand opening of the new section of railroad was held on July 4, 1860. An article from May 17, 1923,

¹³John C. Hayman, Rails Along the Chesapeake (n.p.: Marvadel Publishers, 1979, 65.

contains an entertaining remembrance of the company's first day:

For the price of twenty-five cents one had the privilege of making a round trip from the shanty station here to Williams Switch, three and one-half miles north of town. . . . Many of them had never seen a locomotive Hundreds sought passage, though the passenger list was composed almost entirely of men and youths. They were accompanied to the tiny station by anxious wives and mothers who minced no words in declaring that to ride on such a creation of the devil was to openly court death. It is recorded that some women actually cried when amid the shouted farewells of the assembled crowd, the little engine, whistle blowing, iron wheels clanking noisily, black smoke encircling the anxiously important engineer, moved slowly up the track.¹⁴

The train returned safely that afternoon to the relief of those anxious "wives and mothers."

Salisbury became the transportation center for all the lower Eastern Shore. Early morning stage coaches arrived from all the surrounding communities to catch the first northbound train which left at 7 a.m. Stage lines reached out from Salisbury to the east, west, and south. Salisbury's old rivals, Princess Anne and Snow Hill, now found themselves only on connecting stage lines instead of being principal centers of commerce.

Before Salisbury could begin taking advantage of its new position, however, it experienced the first of its two Great Fires on August 9, 1860. Although there are no concrete records of the railroad's importance to the rebuilding effort, one can surmise that the speed at which

¹⁴Salisbury Advertiser, 17 May 1923.

finished goods and raw materials could be brought in greatly aided the townspeople. Without this help, the construction likely would have taken much longer.

The outbreak of the Civil War brought Salisbury, and its railroad, to the attention of the Union government. The War Department recognized Salisbury's strategic importance as both the terminal of a railroad and the center of a hotbed of pro-Confederate support. The army stationed a garrison, made up of Maryland Home Guards and troops from Massachusetts, on Upton Hill (near today's Wicomico Library) to control the surrounding area and prevent any Confederate infiltration of Delmarva. The railroad, incidentally, brought the troops of Massachusetts soldiers to town.¹⁵

Salisbury's railroad quickly proved to be of use to the Union cause. The railroad had brought the telegraph. The U.S. Army quickly extended the telegraph line south through the Eastern Shore of Virginia to the Union's Fort Monroe near Norfolk making Salisbury the communication hub for the Delmarva Peninsula. This set up allowed for a quick relay of information from the South to Union commanders.

Unfortunately for the Union commanders, maintaining control proved difficult. Much of the Eastern Shore favored the South in the Civil War and thwarted Union control whenever possible. For instance, on one occasion when the

¹⁵Richard W. Cooper, "Railroad Plays Major Part in Salisbury's Development," Daily Times, 10 June 1990.

Union commanders attempted to put down rebel activities in Lower Delaware, a large number of the Salisbury forces were ordered aboard a northbound troop train. A large portion of the soldiers jumped off the train at Delmar. They claimed they were Maryland Home Guard and therefore refused to cross the state line!

Confederate sympathizers also used the railroad to aid their cause. Despite the presence of Union soldiers, contraband goods destined for the Confederacy travelled on the Shore's railroad. There were several reports of contraband being shipped to Salisbury where it would be sent downriver and eventually to the South. This contraband included pistols, percussion caps, quinine in fruit cans, information, and even recruits!¹⁶

The end of the war renewed the Eastern Shore Railroad's expansion schemes. Construction began on the line south from Salisbury to Somers Cove, reaching the latter on November 4, 1866.¹⁷ Originally, Somers Cove -- later named Crisfield in honor of the company's first president -- was to serve as a gateway where steamboat connections could be made with Norfolk or Baltimore. The Eastern Shore Railroad also decided to expand further south. It formed a new company to build a spur from Kings Creek to Newtown (now

¹⁶"Railroad in Delaware aided South," Daily Times, 4 July 1976.

¹⁷Hayman, Rails, 67.

Pocomoke). The company began construction in August of 1871, and by August of the following year had reached the banks of the Pocomoke River.

The growing locomotive roster powerfully expressed the Eastern Shore Railroad's expansion and growth. When the company first began operations it had started with one worn-out second-hand locomotive named *New Castle*. By 1874 the company's roster had grown to include three more engines: the *Somerset*, *Wicomico*, and *Kingston*. Apparently the additions of rolling stock were at the cost of financial health as the Eastern Shore Railroad was sold in foreclosure proceedings on February 19, 1879, to a new group of owners.

During the post-War period Salisbury also welcomed its second railroad company, the *Wicomico and Pocomoke*. The story of Salisbury's second railroad begins very much as the first one did. In the late 1840's a group of merchants, discouraged by the existing transportation system began to look for new methods to convey their goods. While some merchants were planning the Eastern Shore Railroad, which was a north to south railroad route, other local businessmen were considering an east-west route connecting Salisbury and Berlin.

These merchants originally chartered the company, called the *Wicomico and Pocomoke Railroad*, in 1848, but, because of financial problems and the Civil War, they



Scenes such as this were once common on Delmarva
Figure 1

Photo by Author

delayed construction until 1867.¹⁸ They completed the project in 1868. The businessmen envisioned utilizing the railroad as a shortcut between the company's namesake rivers.

Shippers found the railroad much preferable to wagons because of its greater speed and ability to carry heavier loads. Additionally, the merchants no longer had to worry about weather making roads impassable. In 1876, spurred by the company's success, the owners extended the railroad into Ocean City, opening up a new successful passenger business to the fledgling resort town.¹⁹ The Wicomico and Pocomoke Railroad and the Eastern Shore Railroad soon ushered in Salisbury's "Golden Age of Railroading."

¹⁸Hayman, Rails, 87.

¹⁹Hayman, Rails, 88.

***The Golden
Age of
Salisbury's
Railroads***

While the Wicomico and Pocomoke was enjoying success, the Eastern Shore Railroad officials began to entertain notions of further enlargement. Why couldn't the railroad extend down the entire peninsula to Cape Charles opening up a true Southern gateway via steamships to Norfolk? The leading forces in this dream were two Pennsylvania men, Alexander J. Cassat²⁰ and William L. Scott. On September 19, 1882, they formed the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad Company. The company immediately began construction of a line from Newtown (Pocomoke) to Cape Charles.

The Eastern Shore Railroad was a vital link in this rail route. It was acquired by the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk in 1884 for a cost of \$400,000.²¹ Plans called for a rebuilding of the old railroad in order to incorporate it into the new main line down the peninsula. It was formally merged into the company on June 1, 1884.

The final section of the new Virginia line opened on August 18, 1884. The line was an immediate success. Using barges to transport rail cars and steamboats to transport passengers between Norfolk and Cape Charles, the company saw increasing profits. Traffic also increased through Salisbury as more and more cars headed to Norfolk.

²⁰This is the same Cassat who later became president of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

²¹Salisbury Advertiser, 12 January 1884, 2.

Although there was some grumbling about rates²², the reception of the new railroad was fairly warm in Salisbury. The Salisbury Advertiser boasted of the railroad's new Philadelphia and New York express train,

A citizen of Salisbury may now leave home at 12:43 at night and arrive in New York at 7:00 in the morning; Philadelphia about 2 hours and 30 minutes earlier. On the same day he may leave New York and get home at 2:46 in the morning. This train will be furnished with Pullman Sleepers. We are no longer in the far off regions of the "Eastern Shore," but simply on the suburbs of all the great cities. "A day in the city" will be a common thing now.²³

This train represented a profound psychological change for Salisbury inhabitants. They were now connected intimately with the rest of the world instead of isolated on a peninsula.

The new link was undoubtedly a boost to the area's economy. Every day Salisbury resident saw carload after carload of lumber, farm products, and seafood pass northbound through their town. They also saw many manufactured goods arriving from the Northeast or passing through town on their journey further south. On weekends, there was often a backup of several freight trains taking

²²Before passage of the Interstate Commerce Act, railroads often charged more for short hauls than long hauls. An article in the Salisbury Advertiser of February 21, 1885, complained, "It costs more than three times as much to ship a barrel of oysters from Crisfield as it does from Norfolk, and twice as much from Seaford as from Cape Charles City. This arrangement is causing much complaint."

²³Salisbury Advertiser, 22 November 1884.

advantage of a lag in passenger traffic.²⁴ The railroad eventually double tracked its mainline with stronger rails and installed block signals to accommodate all the trains with the greatest speed and safety possible.

The success of the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad also encouraged area merchants to seek a more direct route to the Western Shore. When shipping goods to Baltimore, merchants still possessed only two options; they contended with either the shallow port facilities in Salisbury or a circuitous route through Wilmington. The merchants needed a connection with a deep water port, preferably one closer to Baltimore. The railroad entrepreneurs decided to build from Salisbury to the small town of Claiborne, near St. Michael's. At Claiborne steamboat connections could be made directly to the other side of the Bay.

The Baltimore and Eastern Shore Railroad, chartered in 1886, was the shippers' means of achieving this more direct route to the Western Shore. The company built a rail line from Claiborne, through the towns of St. Michael's, Easton, Preston, Hurlock, Vienna, Mardela, and Hebron to Salisbury.

At Claiborne, the line would have steamboat connections to Bay Ridge, a community on the Western Shore where connections could be made with Baltimore over another

²⁴Hayman, Rails, 84.

railroad.²⁵ At Salisbury it would connect with the Wicomico and Pocomoke Railroad, which the Baltimore and Eastern Shore bought in 1888. The company completed the line and operated the first transpeninsular train on September 15, 1890.²⁶

The Baltimore and Eastern Shore soon became the preferred form of transportation to the Western Shore. The railroad shortened travelling time between Baltimore and Ocean City from an entire day to five hours.²⁷ Additionally, because of Claiborne's geographic positioning on a peninsula jutting out into the Bay, the Baltimore and Eastern Shore was able to make the crossing to Bay Ridge at one of the Chesapeake's narrowest points.

Despite its superiority to other forms of transportation, the Baltimore and Eastern Shore was a financial failure because of mismanagement and bad luck. The railroad's construction budget had provided only a minimum amount of money for construction. The railroad, however, exceeded this budget with a construction cost of over \$20,000 per mile. Consequently, the line was already in debt before operations began.²⁸ Further, the Baltimore

²⁵Hayman, Rails, 89.

²⁶Salisbury Advertiser, 13 September 1890, 3.

²⁷George H. Corddry, Wicomico County History (Salisbury: Peninsula Press, 1981), 194.

²⁸Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland, 104.

and Eastern Shore Railroad lost an estimated \$75,000 during its first year because of the failure of the peach crop, in which it had invested heavily.²⁹ The line then passed into the hands of Captain Willard Thompson, whom the courts had appointed as a temporary receiver.

In 1894, Nicholas P. Bond "and a syndicate of wealthy businessmen" purchased the railroad and transformed it into an even more efficient means of transportation.³⁰ These new owners, who were affiliated with the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad, consolidated four companies (the Baltimore and Eastern Shore Railroad, the Maryland Steamboat Company, the Choptank Steamboat Company, and the Eastern Shore Steamboat Company) into a single new entity, the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway. This consolidation gave the company a near monopoly on transportation to Baltimore from the Eastern Shore.

The businessmen also increased efficiency by changing the steamboat route. Rather than running ships to Bay Ridge and then making a rail connection to Baltimore, the entrepreneurs operated steamships that went directly to Baltimore, eliminating unnecessary transfers. These improvements soon made the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway a second mainline for the Peninsula. The

²⁹Hayman, Rails, 92.

³⁰"B & ES Sold," Salisbury Advertiser, 1 September 1894, 3.

owners owed much of their success to the railroad's profitable passenger business to and from Ocean City which boomed due to the new, easier connections.³¹

In the midst of the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic's successes, it began to experience economic disasters. During the winter of 1903-1904, the frozen Chesapeake Bay immobilized all water traffic, destroying the critical steamship connection to Baltimore. On February 8, 1904, a fire swept through Baltimore, destroying a large section of the city including the dock area. These two disasters delivered a great blow to the railroad since much of its revenue came from Baltimore.³²

A near crippling disaster to company finances came in 1906. In this year, the Supreme Court decided a long court battle between Wicomico County and the railroad over real estate taxes. The court ordered the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway to pay six years of back taxes to Wicomico and the other four counties through which it ran.³³ The case consumed a great deal of the company's fortunes.

Later, two more problems helped worsen the company's economic woes. In 1915, a fire destroyed the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic's locomotive shops in Salisbury.

³¹Hayman, Rails, 96.

³²Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland, 106.

³³Corddry, Wicomico, 194.

Then in 1923, the failure of one of the railroad's subsidiary companies, the Maryland, Delaware and Virginia Railroad, used up most of the road's remaining capital.³⁴

Even with these difficulties, the BC&A was still enormously important to Salisbury and the rest of the towns through which it ran. In 1923 a report by the Eastern Shore Railroad Commission found that the railroad was a "gateway" to the Shore, bringing in fertilizer, manufactured products, coal, and other raw materials. Since Delmarva lacks industrial or mineral resources, this service was of supreme importance to Eastern Shore consumers.

The company's steamships also brought the products of the Eastern Shore to the Baltimore metropolitan area. In 1922 it carried 42,800,000 pounds of "fruits and vegetables, wheat, corn, fish, oysters, poultry, cattle and other food products. . ." to the Western Shore.³⁵ Unfortunately, the company's dwindling fortunes are evident when this figure is compared to the 1913 total of 72,000,000 pounds! The continuing economic hardship of the Eastern Shore's (and America's) farmers began to be reflected in the BC&A's balance sheet. This decline in the railroad's primary freight revenue made the company's money problems deepen.

In 1924, in an effort to regain its lost fortune, the

³⁴Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland, 107-108.

³⁵Eastern Shore Railroad Commission, Report of the Eastern Shore Railroad Commission (Baltimore: Sun Printing Office, 1923), 20.

Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic changed its steamboat connection from Claiborne to Love Point, an Eastern Shore community near the present day Bay Bridge.³⁶ The BC&A hoped to attract new customers by further shortening the bay crossing. The company used trackage rights over the Pennsylvania Railroad to reconnect with its own line in Easton. This move, however, did not succeed, and in 1927, the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic declared bankruptcy. The Golden Age of Salisbury's railroads was ending, but they had effected great change in the town and its inhabitants.

³⁶Hayman, Rails, 114.

***The Railroad's
Effects on
Salisbury***

To the inhabitants of Salisbury the railroads were a lifeline to the outside world. The companies almost immediately endeared themselves to the public. Newspapers of the time heralded the arrival of the transpeninsular railway as our great trunk line. The townspeople also developed pet names for "their" railroads. They gave the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic the affectionate yet ironical appellation "Black Cinders and Ashes." They called the north-south route the Nip 'n' N after the company's initials NYP & N.

The importance of these two railroads to Salisbury cannot be overstated. The Eastern Shore has always possessed a primarily agricultural economy. But a farmer earns no profits if he cannot get his products to large markets. Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century roads were of little use. As late as 1925 the vast majority of farmers lived on unimproved roads. (see Table 1.) The following is a table for Wicomico County farms in 1925:³⁷

LOCATION OF FARMS:	NUMBER OF FARMS:	%
on concrete or brick roads	339	13%
on Macadamized roads	149	6%
on gravel roads	188	7%
on improved dirt roads	352	14%
on unimproved dirt roads	1539	59%
<u>not reporting</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>1%</u>
total farms	2603	100%

The only reliable way to quickly and reliably ship products was via the railroads or steamships.

³⁷Del-Mar-Va Eastern Shore Association, Census of Agriculture 1925 (Salisbury: The Association, 1925), 22.

Not coincidentally, the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic owned and operated the steamship lines. After the government dredged the Wicomico River, the railroad moved the steamship wharf up to W. Main St. adjacent to Tilghman Fertilizer. For many years the firm's steamship *Virginia* was the only alternative to rail travel. Rather than compete with each other, the two modes of transportation worked hand in hand providing service to Salisbury.³⁸

It would be many years before road transportation would end the railroad's supremacy. Until the 1930's most streets in Salisbury were only covered with oyster shells. Only the main arterial roads were paved. Many streets outside of the city limits didn't even have that advantage. Roads in the Salisbury area had undergone little improvement since the Salisbury Advertiser had urged in 1871, "We would like to see the streets shelled, and we hope it will be soon."³⁹

The railroads did much more than simply provide a means of transportation; they actively encouraged the local economy. In 1911 the Pennsylvania Railroad, which had a strong interest in both of Salisbury's railroads, published a book entitled Farming Possibilities of the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia Peninsula. The railroad proudly proclaimed, "there is no more ideal section for agriculture

³⁸Richard W. Cooper, "Changing Face of Downtown," Daily Times, 13 January 1991.

³⁹"Shelling the Streets," Salisbury Advertiser, 21 January 1871, 2.

on the North American continent."⁴⁰ The railroad went on to explain that it provided a "life line" between Delmarva and 35 million people which lived within 500 miles in 84 principal cities. The Pennsylvania Railroad bragged that "it hauled grains, fruits and berries, produce, fresh milk in large dairy cans, potatoes, and the output of numerous small canning houses. Some cargoes moved by the trainload, such was the bounty of Delmarva."

The advertising ploy worked. The Eastern Shore farmers were quick to take advantage of their proximity to the Northeast metropolises. Whereas before farmers were confined to markets in the Maryland area, the railroad expanded markets hundreds of miles. Salisbury saw thousands of pounds of produce pass by on the railroad. In 1912, 1,907 cars of strawberries, 624 cars of cantaloupes, 125 cars of cabbage, and 10 cars of beans were shipped out. By 1932 570 cars of cucumbers originated from Salisbury alone.⁴¹

In this environment, the railroad enjoyed a brisk business, bringing in all the necessities of daily living. It brought in coal to the Farmers and Planters building downtown on Mill Street to help heat city homes.⁴²

⁴⁰Dick Moore, "Booklet Reveals Railroad's Importance to Delmarva," Daily Times, 10 March 1991.

⁴¹Truitt, Historic Salisbury Updated, 90.

⁴²Richard W. Cooper, "Library Located at Town's Historic Site," Daily Times, 11 February 1990, E2.

Likewise it transported barrels of beer and kegs of liquor to the BC&A's Mill Street siding to be sold in nearby downtown saloons.⁴³ The central location of the Mill Street spur made it a busy and convenient spot for shippers.

Another popular place for loading goods was at an old auction block located in the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic railway yards near North Division Street. Long lines of wagons used to line up with loads of produce, especially tomatoes and sweet potatoes, hoping to fetch a good price for their products. The buyers would then ship the vegetables in Fruit Growers Express refrigerator cars bound for the North-east cities.⁴⁴

Although they were primarily concerned with making a profit, the local railroads did not fail to tailor themselves to local needs and concerns. One example of this civic-mindedness is another popular station at William's Switch on the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk's main line. William's Switch was located a mere three miles north of the main station, but the railroad maintained a private

⁴³Richard W. Cooper, "Changing Face of Downtown Salisbury," Daily Times, 13 January 1991.

⁴⁴Ed Hobbs, "Recalling two old auction blocks," Daily Times, 20 December 1991.



A FRUIT GROWERS EXPRESS REFRIGERATOR CAR
FIGURE 2

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

station there for many years in order to meet the needs of patients coming to see Dr. Naylor, a prominent local physician, who lived opposite the switch. The railroad also constructed a loading platform there for the convenience of shippers who could load produce and lumber at William's Switch without having to go into the city itself.⁴⁵

The New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad also came to the service of the town during its second great fire. After the fire broke out on October 17, 1886, a call for help went out to other area fire companies. A train set out from Crisfield with men and equipment. Much of the fire fighting, however, was done by the Wilmington fire company which jumped on a fast train, raced 100 miles south, saved the courthouse, and limited the damage to the immediate downtown area.⁴⁶

The railroads greatly aided the rebuilding process. One of the more striking examples of this may be seen at Asbury United Methodist Church. After the church was destroyed in the second of Salisbury's Great Fires in 1886 the railroad transported the masonry for the new church free of charge. The congregation dedicated a stained glass window to the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad and to its affiliated company the Philadelphia, Wilmington

⁴⁵Richard W. Cooper, "Physician Left Mark on East Side," Daily Times, 24 June 1990, B10.

⁴⁶Richard W. Cooper, Profile of a Colonial Community (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1986), 239.

and Baltimore Railroad. This is believed to be the only church window ever dedicated to a railroad.⁴⁷ Although the congregation has since moved to a new building, the window moved with them and can still be seen today.

The railroads also affected the town in other ways. They brought several new industries to the area. One of the most important of these industries was the timber business. The area around Salisbury was once densely covered with uncleared timber. Companies such as E. S. Adkins and the Jackson Brothers soon located vast lumberyards and steam-driven sawing and planing mills near the tracks.⁴⁸ Lumbering became a booming business in Salisbury.

Because of the close proximity of an abundant supply of lumber, shooks mills began to pop up as well. Shooks were wood cases used to protect thin metal oil cans. In the days before supertankers, oil was shipped in individual cans on the railroad. These mills used an estimated 50 million board feet of lumber each year and employed 200 men in Salisbury as of 1919.⁴⁹

For many years agriculture and timber remained the dominant industries. Combined, these two concerns accounted for 75 percent of the commerce in town during the first

⁴⁷Hayman, Rails, 85.

⁴⁸Richard W. Cooper, "The Growth and Development of East Salisbury," Daily Times, 15 April 1990, B12.

⁴⁹Richard W. Cooper, "Visionaries Enable Salisbury to be Progressive," Daily Times, 8 July 1990, A11.

twenty-five years of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Other industries, however, also developed because of the railroad. Several of these new businesses were warehouses which sprang up at each siding to handle and store the vast amounts of goods which came to town. Merchandise often came in by the carload and had to be stored until it could be delivered.

Several food industries also appeared to handle the products of the farmlands outside of Salisbury. For example, Wade H. Insley opened a large cannery on the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway near Truitt Street in 1917. The firm, operating until 1955, canned sweet potatoes and tomatoes.⁵¹ Across town on the BC&A, the Webco meat packing company opened a plant on the west end. The firm processed its own brand of scrapple and sausage for many years.

The railroad also encouraged the formation of two ice companies which provided vast quantities of ice to cool all of the refrigerator cars of produce that went through town. These companies iced down the cars using large 200 pound blocks of ice. The use of refrigerator cars began in 1901 on the Shore and further encouraged agriculture on the Shore by enlarging the possible markets for Delmarva produce.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ R. Lee Burton, Jr., Canneries of the Eastern Shore (Centreville: Tidewater Publishers, 1986), 157.

⁵² Richard W. Cooper, "The Changing Face of East Salisbury," Daily Times, 12 August 1990.

Other new businesses opened near the railroad as well. One of these was Grier Brothers which opened a machine shop and foundry in East Salisbury along the tracks. The industrial age spelled the end of the blacksmith. The machine shop was now "the place" to repair all manner of equipment from the steam powered saw mills to the steam powered presses of the city newspaper.⁵³ Similarly, L. W. Gumby soon moved his hardware store near the railroad in East Salisbury. The move was done so that "heavy items such as stoves, furnaces, terra cotta pipes, windmills and such could be handled more economically."⁵⁴

The railroad even affected the population distribution of Salisbury. When the railroad first came to town in 1860 the section of Salisbury east of Newtown was nothing but farmland.⁵⁵ The arrival of the railroad precipitated the appearance of several new businesses along its tracks and consequently the appearance of private dwellings as well. Before the advent of the private automobile, a worker had to be close to his job. So, in an era before zoning, East Salisbury was settled in the mix of residential and commercial buildings which still characterizes it today.

The railroad's importance made the station master one

⁵³Cooper, "Changing Face."

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Richard W. Cooper, "The Growth and Development of East Salisbury," Daily Times, 15 April 1990, B12.

of the most influential people in the town. According to John Hayman, rail historian,

The local railroad agent was one of the foremost townsmen and was well known and highly respected throughout his area. He was the first to receive news and spoke with people travelling to and from all parts of the country. Consequently, his view of things bore weight. . . . The depot was often the finest building in town and community activity centered around it. It became customary for everyone to walk down to the station to watch the Sunday afternoon train come in. It amounted almost to a town meeting.⁵⁶

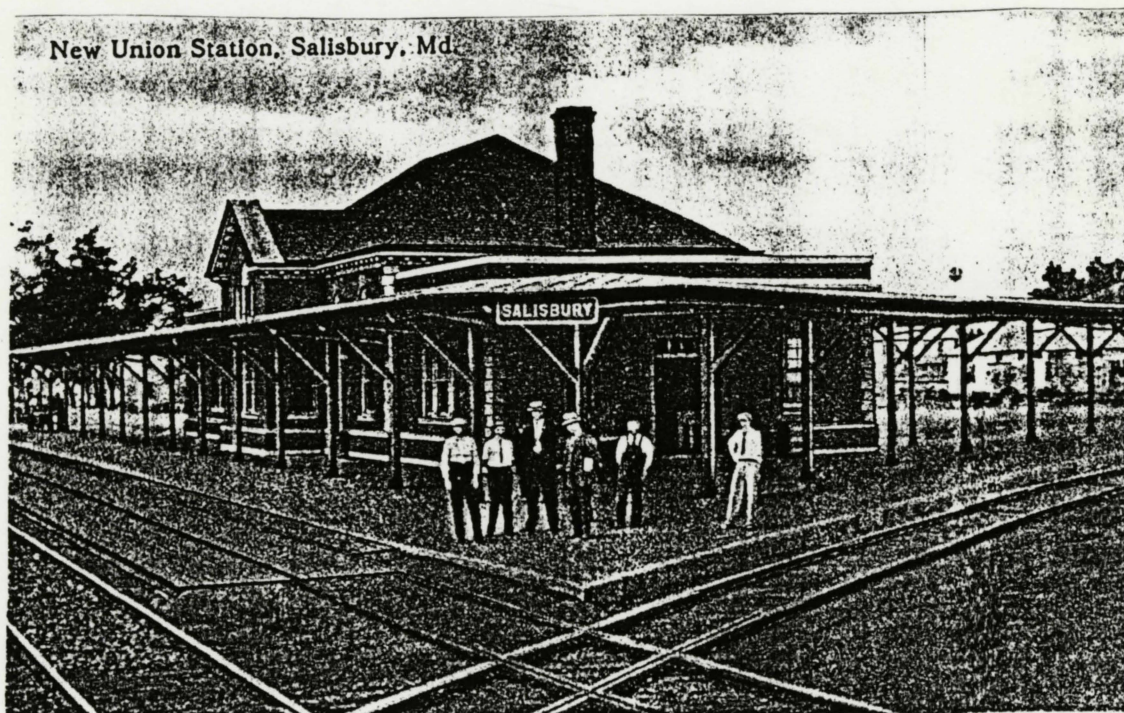
This distinguished post was held for years by Rollie W. Hastings, later mayor of Salisbury.

The companies' train stations became the city's centers of activity. Recognizing the importance of the railroad, the city petitioned the railroads on December 3, 1903, and again in July of 1906 for a union station which would serve both lines. The new station would allow for easy transfers between the city's two railroads. The cornerstone of this structure was laid in 1913. After the station's opening in April 27, 1914, Salisbury had a thirty-two by ninety-six foot state of the art facility to handle all its transportation needs.

In the 1910's and 1920's, there were a dozen trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad and four trains on the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic stopping at the station everyday.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Hayman, Rails, 2.

⁵⁷Bill Cochran, "For Sale or Rent: One Railroad Station," Daily Times, 7 March 1958, 1 and 8.



SALISBURY'S UNION STATION SHORTLY AFTER CONSTRUCTION
PHOTO FROM POST CARD OF THE TIME
FIGURE 3



ENGINE 1223 ONCE WORKED THE BC&A MAINLINE PHOTO BY AUTHOR
FIGURE 4

Up to two thousand passengers a day on trains measuring up to 14 or 20 cars would pass through the town during the railroads' heyday.⁵⁸ Many hotels opened around town to handle the increased traffic. One example of this was the Hotel Orient. George L. Bradley, the proprietor, proudly proclaimed "hacks meeting all trains."⁵⁹ Additionally, the BC&A provided a free bus around Salisbury to its patrons.⁶⁰

The railroad also affected the city's business dealings. Today, Salisburians look most often towards Baltimore when their business needs cannot be met in Salisbury. Since Baltimore is in our own state and only a two and one-half hour drive away it is easy for city residents to do business there. Before the Bay Bridge, however, the bay crossing was a formidable undertaking.

In the early Twentieth Century Philadelphia was the city where many Salisburians went to meet their consumer, cultural, and social needs. Newspapers from these years point towards Salisbury's reliance on Philadelphia. The newspapers contain many advertisements for Philadelphia businesses but relatively few ads for Baltimore firms. Salisbury residents seemed to prefer Philadelphia to

⁵⁸Dick Moore, "Sentimental Journey Closes Passenger Service Here," Daily Times, 13 January 1958, 11.

⁵⁹Richard W. Cooper, "The Wicomico Hotel -- downtown's showpiece," Daily Times, 17 March 1991.

⁶⁰Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railway, [promotional pamphlet] (n.p., 1913).

Baltimore because of the length of the trip. The journey to Pennsylvania by rail was much quicker than boarding a steamboat bound for the Western Shore. By 1910, the railroad carried over one thousand people a day to Philadelphia from the Eastern Shore.⁶¹

Railroads even affected the daily lives of town inhabitants. A wedding invitation from the turn of the century read, "Miss Jennie Farlow to Arthur Wilmore Shockley on Wednesday morning April 17, 1900, at half past six o'clock." The time, the invitation explained, was in order to "catch the train."⁶² Additionally, according to Rollie Hastings, past passenger agent of Salisbury, two marriages were performed in the passenger station itself.⁶³ Before the days of airlines and transcontinental highways the rails were the only preferred means of travel.

The railroad also affected the way Salisburians spent their leisure time. The railroad opened up the resort of Ocean City to thousands of residents each year. A favorite summer pastime for many Salisburians was packing a picnic lunch and heading to Ocean City on the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic. In the days before air conditioning, fried

⁶¹"Bring Peninsula Trade by Way of Annapolis, Says J.B. Seth," Baltimore News, 3 July 1910.

⁶²J. Howard and Louise H. Adkins, "Early Railroad Almost Bypassed Salisbury," Salisbury News and Advertiser, 13 April 1989, 17.

⁶³Cochran "For Sale," 1 and 8.

chicken and potato salad by the seaside were welcome reliefs from the heat of town.⁶⁴

The railroad played a role in mail delivery in Salisbury. Before passenger service was curtailed in 1958, Salisbury's mail travelled in railway post offices on passenger trains. The city's mail either travelled to Norfolk for points south or to Philadelphia for points north and west. Mail was sorted en route to speed service along. Even the city's newspaper, The Daily Times, had to adjust its schedule to meet the 10:30 a.m. south train and 2 p.m. north train for delivery to other towns.⁶⁵

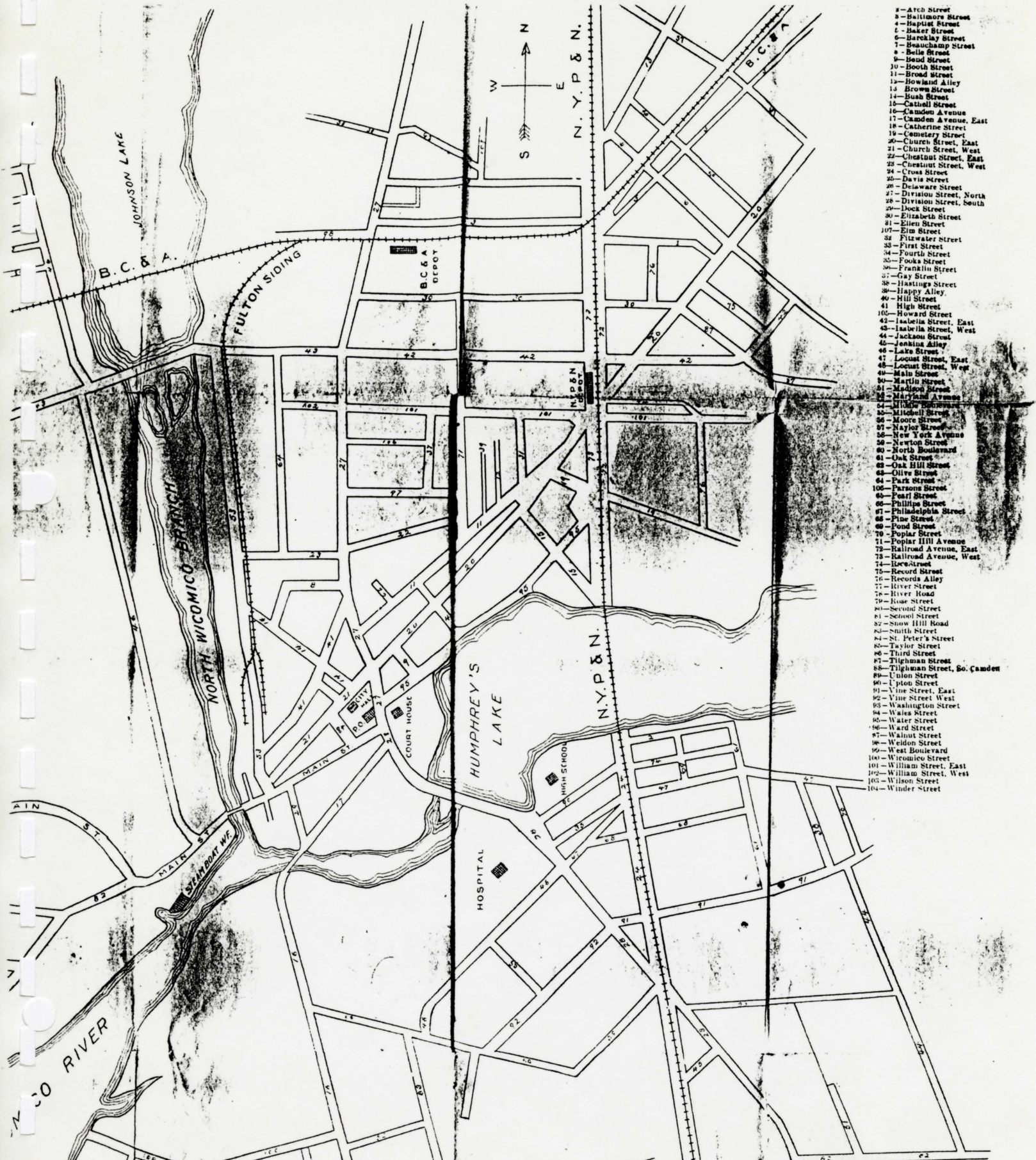
Electrical service made use of the railroad's right of way. After it became possible to generate electricity, the companies needed an easy way to deliver it to far away places. The area's first power companies entered into an agreement with the railroads allowing them to use the railroad's property, the shortest route between towns. At one time Salisbury's power was routed south from Laurel along the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk right-of-way. Later, the present power company went into operation at Vienna and used the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic's right-of-way to route its power east to Salisbury.⁶⁶

⁶⁴"Railroads Crossed Here, Hub of Peninsula Created," Daily Times, 10 June 1967, 35.

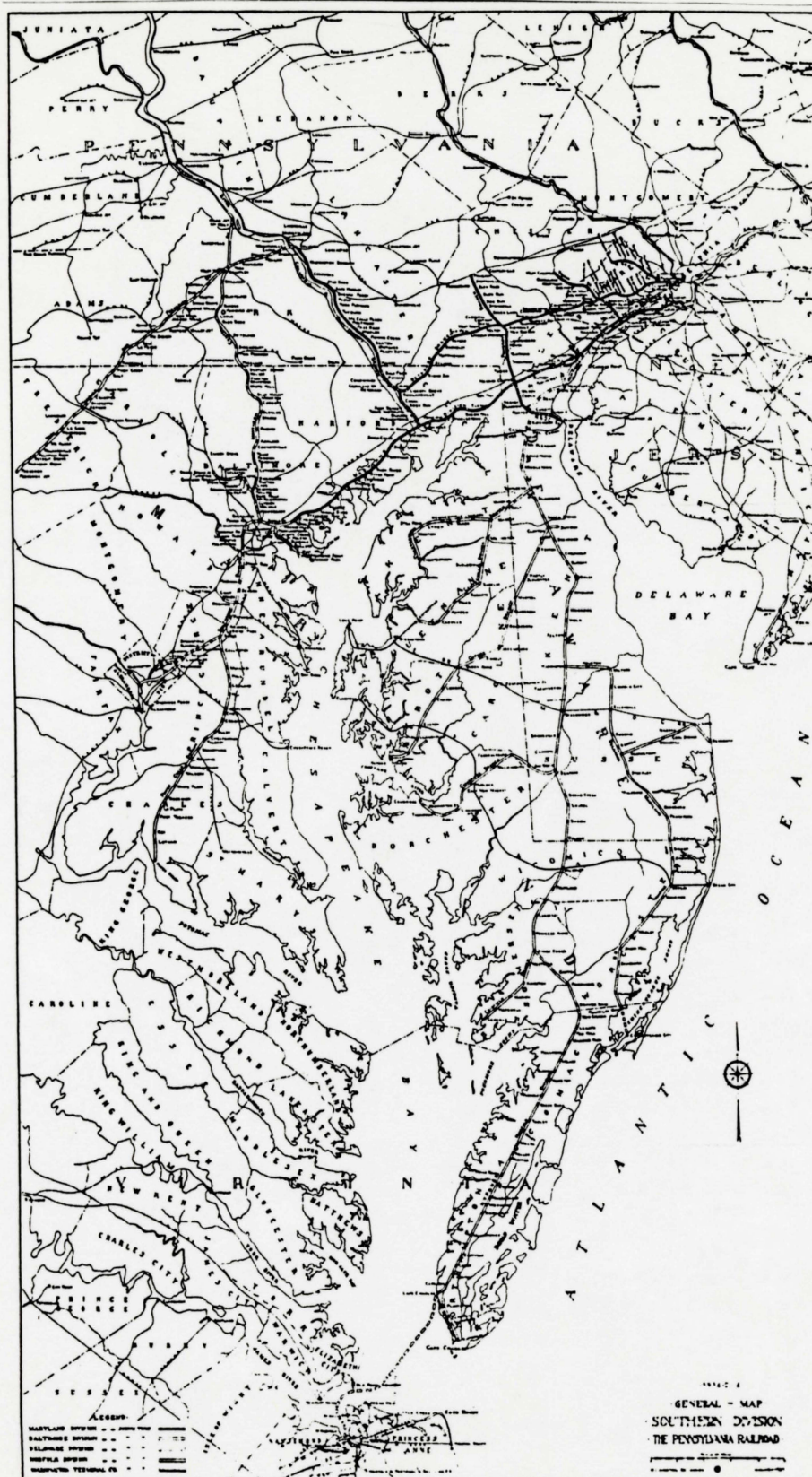
⁶⁵Moore, "Sentimental Journey."

⁶⁶Richard W. Cooper, "Electric Service Makes Suburban Living Easy," Daily Times, 19 September 1993, A8.

Map 3 Reproduced from 1907 City Directory



Map 4 Reproduced from the Research Center For Delmarva
History and Culture Collection



Pennsylvania Railroad Timetable

Author's Collection

Dist.	Eastern Standard Time	WEEK-DAYS									SUNDAYS				
		451	453	455	4885	463	Motor Coach	467	229-447	449	491	455-1455	493	229-447	449
		AM	AM	AM	PM	PM	PM	PM	PM	PM	AM	AM	PM	PM	PM
New York, (Pennsylvania Station) Lv.	12 50	12 50	8 00		1 00	1 00		2 00	8 00	11 35	12 50	8 00	2 00	8 00	11 35
N. Y. (Hudson Terminal) Lv.	12 45	12 45	8 00		1 00	1 00		2 00	8 00	11 30	12 45	8 00	2 00	8 00	11 30
Jersey City, N. J. (Exchange Place) Lv.	12 48	12 48	8 03		1 03	1 03		2 03	8 03	11 33	12 48	8 03	2 03	8 03	11 33
Newark, N. J. (Park Place) Lv.															
Newark, N. J. (Market Street) Lv.	1 13	1 13	8 23		1 23	1 23		2 25	8 23	11 58	1 13	8 23	2 25	8 23	11 58
Elizabeth, N. J. Lv.	1 25	1 25									1 25				
Trenton, N. J. Lv.	2 45	2 45	9 14		2 14	2 14		3 14	9 14	12 49	2 45	9 14	3 14	9 14	12 49
North Philadelphia, Pa. Lv.									9 45	1 20					1 20
West Philadelphia, Pa. Ar.	3 37	3 37	9 55		2 55	2 55		3 55	9 55	1 32	3 37	9 55	3 55	9 55	1 32
Philadelphia, Pa. (Broad St. Sta.) Ar.	3 42	3 42						4 00	10 00		3 42			10 00	
Philadelphia, Pa. (Broad St. Sta.) Lv.	6 21	7 30	10 05		3 00	3 00		4 34	11 00		7 00	10 05	4 10	11 00	
West Philadelphia, Pa. Lv.	6 26	7 35	10 10		3 05	3 05		4 39	11 05	1 38	7 05	10 10	4 15	11 05	1 38
Chester, Pa. Lv.	6 01	7 58	10 29		3 23	3 23		4 58			7 25	10 29	4 34		
Wilmington, Del. Ar.	6 29	8 21	10 47		3 41	3 41		5 16	11 39	2 13	7 51	10 47	4 52	11 39	2 13
Washington, D. C. (Union Sta.) Lv.	3 45	6 50	8 15		1 05	1 05		3 00	8 00	9 30	3 45	8 15	2 00	8 00	9 30
Baltimore, Md. (Penna. Station) Lv.	4 50	6 50	9 15		2 00	2 00		3 55	8 55	11 18	4 50	9 15	2 55	8 55	11 18
Wilmington, Del. Ar.	6 24	8 15	10 39		3 25	3 25		5 20	10 20	1 35	6 24	10 39	4 20	10 20	1 35
Wilmington, Del. Lv.	6 48	8 26	10 50		3 45	3 45		5 33	11 45	2 22	7 58	10 50	5 00	11 45	2 22
Farmhurst, Del. Lv.	6 57							5 43			8 08		5 09		
New Castle, Del. Lv.	7 02	8 40			3 58	3 58		5 47			8 13		5 13		
State Road, Del. Lv.	7 07							5 51			8 18		5 17		
Bear, Del. Lv.	7 13							5 56			8 23		5 21		
Porter, Del. Lv.	7 19	8 49						6 01			8 28		5 25		
Kirkwood, Del. Lv.	7 24	8 53						6 06			8 33		5 29		
Canal, Del. Lv.	7 28							6 10			8 37		5 32		
Mt. Pleasant, Del. Lv.	7 33	9 01						6 15			8 42		5 36		
Del-Mar-Va Express Lv.	7 37							6 19			8 46				
Middletown, Del. Lv.	7 43	9 09	11 27		4 27	4 27		6 25	12 26		8 52	11 27	5 44	12 26	
Townsend, Del. Lv.	7 57	9 18			4 36	4 36		6 32			9 00		5 54		
Blackbird, Del. Lv.	8 01							6 35			9 04		5 58		
Green Spring, Del. Lv.	8 07							6 39			9 09				
Clayton, Del. (Smymna) Lv.	8 21	9 32	11 45		4 50	4 50		6 44	12 43		9 15	11 45	6 12	12 43	
Brenford, Del. Lv.	8 26							6 49			9 19		6 16		
Cheswold, Del. Lv.	8 31	9 40						6 54			9 24		6 21		
Dupont, Del. Lv.	8 35							6 57							
Dover, Del. Lv.	8 44	9 49	12 00		5 06	5 06		7 04	12 59		9 33	12 00	6 29	12 59	
Wyoming, Del. Lv.	8 51	9 55	12 06		5 13	5 13		7 10			9 40	12 06	6 35		
Woodside, Del. Lv.	8 57				5 20	5 20		7 16			9 46		6 41		
Viola, Del. Lv.	9 01							7 20			9 51		6 45		
Felton, Del. Lv.	9 05	10 07	12 17		5 28	5 28		7 25	1 17		9 56	12 17	6 49	1 17	
Harrington, Del. Lv.	9 26	10 15	12 27		5 46	5 46		7 34	1 29		10 06	12 27	7 07	1 29	
Harrington, Del. Lv.		10 22			5 55	5 55							7 12		
Georgetown, Del. ★ Ar.		★11 20			★6 55	★6 55							8 04		
Rahoboth, Del. ★ Ar.													8 47		
Berlin, Md. Ar.		12 22			7 58	7 58				The Cavalier			9 03		The Cavalier
Ocean City, Md. (B. & E. R. R.) Ar.		2 50			11 03	11 03									
Franklin City, Va. Ar.		1 21			8 55	8 55							9 59		
Farmington, Del. (Pa. R. R.) Lv.	9 33				5 53	5 53		7 41			10 13		7 14		
Greenwood Junction, Del. Lv.					6 02	6 02		7 48			10 21	12 39	7 22		
Greenwood, Del. Lv.	9 42		12 39		★6 10	★6 10		7 56	1 47		10 29	12 47	★7 30	1 47	
Bridgeville, Del. ★ Ar.	★9 50		★12 47		★6 15	★6 15		8 01			10 34		★7 36		
Cannon, Del. Lv.	9 55														
Ross, Del. Lv.															
Seaford, Del. Lv.	10 21		12 59		6 25	6 25		8 11	2 03		10 48	12 59	7 46	2 03	
Broad Creek, Del. Lv.															
Laurel, Del. Lv.	10 34		1 10		6 38	6 38		8 23	2 16		11 00	1 10	7 58	2 16	
Bacon, Del. Lv.	10 40										11 06		8 04		
Delmar, Del. Ar.	10 48		1 23		6 51	6 51		8 34	2 29	4 40	11 13	1 23	8 10	2 29	4 40
Delmar, Del. Lv.	11 09		1 30				7 00		2 40	4 55		1 30		2 40	4 55
Salisbury, Md. (B. & E. R. R. Jct.) Lv.	11 24		1 43				7 23		2 53	5 06		1 43		2 53	5 06
Salisbury, Md. (B. & E. R. R.) Lv.			1 46				10 03								

The railroad also affected the architecture of the town. Until the arrival of the railroad all local buildings were hand built of locally available materials. The railroad made it possible to ship in prefabricated parts such as doors, windows, and awnings. The result was a number of houses built in the same style. The row of houses at the corner of Eastern Shore Drive and South Boulevard are very good examples of this new approach to house building. The result was "specialized yet utilitarian" buildings.⁶⁷ These buildings are very similar to houses in other towns along the railroad including Delmar and Laurel.

Today the two rusty rails Salisburians cross on their way to school or work are reminders of what the railroads did for the city. Although the railroad continues to influence the city, it has lost much of its importance. The railroads decline began with the end of the east-west route.

⁶⁷Paul Baker Touart, Somerset: An Architectural History (n.p.: Maryland Historical Trust, 1992, 143.

***The Decline of
Salisbury's
Railroads***

The decline of Salisbury's railroads began with the demise of the BC&A. In 1928, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought the bankrupt Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic and gave control of it to a specially created subsidiary, the Baltimore and Eastern. This company soon began to experience the same types of mismanagement and economic crises that plagued the two preceding companies. The trouble began when the Pennsylvania assayed the viability of the company. It viewed the line as insignificant and reduced service and track maintenance.

Then in 1929, the Baltimore and Eastern received orders from the Department of War to lengthen the span of the Nanticoke River drawbridge from 57 to 80 feet in order to allow larger ships to pass. The Baltimore and Eastern made the mistake of abandoning the bridge in 1932 instead of making the necessary modifications.⁶⁸ The company had effectively split itself in half. The railroad then had to route trains over the Pennsylvania's tracks from Hurlock through Seaford to Salisbury where it reconnected with its own tracks.

The company also refused to make repairs on its once extensive steamboat fleet. The Baltimore and Eastern severely curtailed steamboat connections, allowing only a

⁶⁸Hayman, Rails, 162-163.

single daily Love Point to Baltimore run to be made.⁶⁹ By limiting connections with Baltimore, the railroad also limited its freight and passenger revenue. As a result of the limited connections, the company also had little to offer prospective shippers.

The railroad failed to compete with the growing trucking industry on the Eastern Shore. Because of the limited service provided by the railroad and the improvements made to the roads by the State Good Roads program, the Baltimore and Eastern found many of its shippers switching to the more flexible trucks.⁷⁰

The death blow to the railroad came on August 13, 1933, when a severe storm hit the Atlantic Coast. The storm cut an inlet between Ocean City and Assateague and obliterated the railroad's Sinepuxent Bay trestle. Once again, the railroad decided to abandon what was left of the bridge instead of repairing it.⁷¹ No longer would the railroad have the passenger business to the resort that was once so greatly profitable.

Five years later, the railroad began a process of abandoning sections it considered inviable. In 1938, the line abandoned the Easton to Preston, the McDaniel to

⁶⁹Robert H. Burgess and H. Graham Wood, Steamboats Out of Baltimore (Cambridge: Tidewater Publishers, 1968), 131.

⁷⁰Truitt, Historic Salisbury Maryland, 107-108.

⁷¹Hayman, Rails, 163.

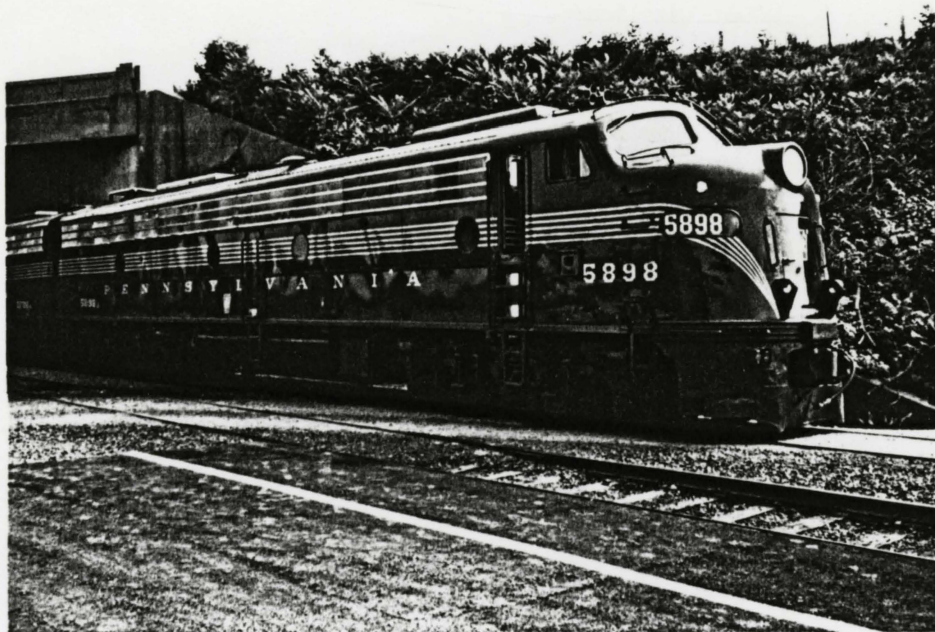
Claiborne, and the Queenstown to Centreville tracks. In that same year, the company discontinued all passenger service. In 1950, the Baltimore and Eastern cut the Mardela Branch back to Hebron. In 1955, the line abandoned the route between Berlin and Willards.

Salisbury's other railroad began its decline a couple of decades later. The independence of the N.Y.P. & N. had come to an end on July 1, 1920. The Pennsylvania, who had always had a large interest in the line, then leased the company for 999 years. The Pennsy formally took over the railroad on November 1, 1922. The Pennsylvania Railroad continued operating the Shore lines profitably for many years.

Unfortunately traffic on the north-south route began to dwindle after World War II. During the War the Pennsylvania transported 1,000 cars a day across the Bay from Norfolk to Cape Charles. By the 1950's the number dwindled to four hundred.⁷² Shippers had largely converted to the more flexible services offered by trucking companies. In the mid-fifties the railroad decided to reduce the double tracked main line to a single track.

Due to dwindling business, Salisbury lost its passenger trains on January 11, 1958. Rollie W. Hastings, then mayor of Salisbury and passenger agent, sold the last ticket. Fittingly, he had also sold the first ticket years earlier

⁷²Hayman, Rails, 143.



A PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD DIESEL AND CABIN CAR
FIGURE 5

PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

SALISBURY'S UNION STATION 1914 AND 1992
TOP PHOTO COURTESY DAILY TIMES, BOTTOM PHOTO BY AUTHOR
FIGURE 6



when the station opened on April 27, 1914. A melancholy Hastings told a reporter, "It's all been a pleasure... the happiest life... if I had my life to live over again I'd like to retrace it."⁷³ The heyday of passenger service had come during World War II when the station took in \$25,000 a month in ticket sales. After the war passengers had deserted the trains in droves in favor of the private automobile.

The railroad's status remained the same until 1968, when the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with the New York Central to form Penn Central. Since the Eastern Shore lines were not very profitable, Penn Central allowed service and track maintenance to fall to even more deplorable levels. In 1970, it abandoned the line between Pittsville and Willards. Then, in 1973, the company removed the tracks from Walston Switch to Pittsville.⁷⁴

The Penn Central struggled for a few years while its finances ebbed. After the company declared bankruptcy Congress stepped in to try to remedy matters. They passed the Regional Rail Reorganization Act in 1973. The Act created the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) to take over from Penn Central and other bankrupt railroads. Conrail assumed control in 1976. The Eastern Shore was low

⁷³Cochran, "For Sale," 1 and 8.

⁷⁴Dick Moore, "Jim Jackson Leads Crusade to Preserve History of Pittsville," The Daily Times, 23 April 1989, A8 and A12.

on its priority list and rail conditions continued to worsen.

Conrail's Final System Plan called for the railroad to operate the main north to south line through Salisbury and the spur to the Perdue plant near Walston, east of Salisbury. Through a joint financing between Perdue and Conrail, this latter spur was upgraded with welded rail. It has become one of the busiest tracks in Salisbury. Conrail also operates at least one north and south train daily through Salisbury with special trains added as conditions warrant.

The Plan, however did not call for the inclusion of the Hebron line.⁷⁵ Although this branch had dwindled to carry only a fraction of what it once had, it was still very important to shippers on the line. Recognizing this, the Wicomico County Council agreed to finance the Salisbury to Hebron rail line when Conrail threatened to cut service in 1978.

They appropriated \$6,500 "as insurance that the track will stay open another year and as an investment in the county's goal of attracting heavy industry here."⁷⁶ The county continued this arrangement until April 30, 1981, when at the concurrence of rail users and the County financing

⁷⁵United States Railway Administration, Final System Plan (Washington: U. S. Government, 1975), 132-133.

⁷⁶"Wicomico to Subsidize City-Hebron Rail Line," Daily Times, 25 March 1978.



A CONRAIL DIESEL PHOTO BY AUTHOR
FIGURE 7

was withdrawn and the line closed.⁷⁷ The State Railway Administration currently owns the roadbed of the line and would rehabilitate the spur if business ever demanded it.

Another section of Salisbury's rails fell under the wrecking ball of progress in 1989. The Mill Street spur had not been used for several years. At one time it was the original terminus of the old Wicomico and Pocomoke. The city purchased the line and dug up the rails as part of Salisbury's plan to revitalize the west side and expand the marina.⁷⁸

Today the railroad continues to have great importance for the Salisbury area. Delmarva's largest industry, poultry production, relies heavily on railroad service. During a brief 1991 rail strike a great cry rose up from the poultry industry. Bill Satterfield, spokesperson for Delmarva Poultry Industries, said in a newspaper article that railroads deliver much needed grain to the Shore. He explained that the Peninsula does not produce enough grain for chicken feed, requiring corn and soybeans to be shipped in from the Midwest. He warned that feed is the highest expense in chicken production and that an interruption in rail service created higher costs for everyone, including

⁷⁷State Railway Administration, Maryland State Rail Plan 1985 (Baltimore: State Railway Administration, 1985), 14.

⁷⁸Rowan Scarborough, "City to Buy Part of Rail Line," Daily Times, 26 July 1989, 8.

the consumer.⁷⁹

Interestingly, the state has begun to look at the possibilities of a light rail line from the Western Shore to Ocean City in order to lessen traffic on busy Route 50. This line would run through Easton, Cambridge, and Salisbury, utilizing part of the old Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic mainline.⁸⁰ Presently there are no plans to follow through with this study. Perhaps, however, the demand will rise, and Salisbury will once again be on the main line of a busy passenger railroad. Maybe, just maybe, the glory days of Salisbury's railroads have not yet disappeared.

⁷⁹Kimberly Holland, "Prolonged Strike Seen Hurting Shore Industries," Daily Times, 10 April 1991, 1.

⁸⁰Dick Moore, "Could Rail System Ease Shore Transportation Demands?" Daily Times, 11 September 1988, A6.

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