

'It's a quiet, quaint, quality place, and you needn't tell a soul.'

— from *The Critters I've Known that Filled My Heart*, 2002, Charles O. Hearon Jr.,
Saluda resident and a former editor of the *Spartanburg Herald* newspaper



Train rolls into Saluda, pre-1900, with the City Hall building in the background. Today, the train no longer comes through the town.

S All aboard for ALUDA

When Tin Lizzies exemplified state-of-the-art transportation, the major artery connecting Hendersonville and Saluda wound unpaved and knurly. Back then, Spartanburg Highway (U.S. 176) was merely a rutty track posing even more twists and turns than it has now to those early car drivers.

"Along the route, you could count on two or three flats," says local historian Dr. George Jones. "In those days, every car came with a jack, a pump and a tire-patch kit."

Jones should know. He was born nearly 88 years ago on the edge of Saluda. He describes the border separating Polk and Henderson counties as enigmatic.

"Hendersonville was populated with people from Polk County who wouldn't admit they were from Polk," Jones says with a chuckle.

Notwithstanding, many of the original white settlers in what became Polk County stayed on and several of their descendants may be found there today.

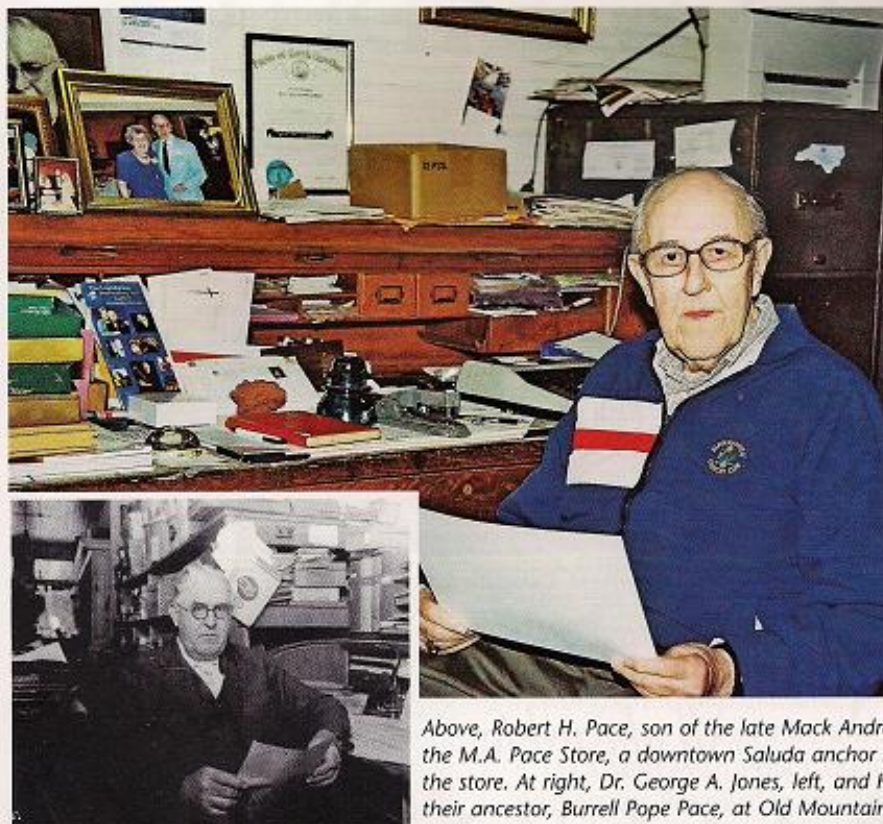
Keeping Pace with the past

One could say Saluda was founded by Paces and Thompsons.

Some of Saluda's Thompsons are descendants of Jonathan Thompson, one of seven brothers who came from Ireland to settle in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Eventually, members of the family moved to Georgia and the Carolinas.

Jonathan Thompson's son, Asbury "Berry" Thompson (1829-1913), moved from Lynn, N.C., and settled near the fork of Holbert Cove and Howard Gap roads and named the area that would ultimately become Saluda, Pace's Gap. Thompson served in both houses of the North Carolina Legislature and his multipurpose home provided a stopover for stagecoaches between Spartanburg and Asheville, a trading post, an election center and the Tryon Post Office from 1863 to 1878. After that, mail came to Saluda by train.

When the railroad reached "Pace's Gap," mostly Paces and Thompsons populated the settlement and



Above, Robert H. Pace, son of the late Mack Andrew Pace, sits at his father's desk in the back of the M.A. Pace Store, a downtown Saluda anchor since 1910. At left, M.A. Pace, who founded the store. At right, Dr. George A. Jones, left, and Horace Pace, right, pose with the monument to their ancestor, Burrell Pope Pace, at Old Mountain Page Cemetery.

owned nearly all of the land grants. Then the railroad wielded its mighty powers of eminent domain.

"They just pushed the tracks through as they pleased, regardless of who owned the land," Jones says.

Robert H. Pace, born in 1923 and second-generation proprietor of Saluda's historic M.A. Pace Store, traces his ancestry to the 16th century — to Richard Pace of Wapping, England. Richard and his wife, Isabella Smith Pace, settled in Tidewater, Va., about four miles from Jamestown, some time between 1611 and 1619. They owned a plantation where they grew corn and tobacco and wound up playing a key role in history.

"Richard Pace had a Christian convert in his employ — an Indian boy named Chanco," says Robert Pace. "On the night before the great Indian massacre on Jamestown of March 22, 1622, Chanco warned Pace of the impending attack. Pace rowed his canoe across the

James River to warn fellow colonists, who then prepared for the impending assault. This ultimately saved the colony."

Descendants of Richard and Isabella Pace moved from Virginia to eastern North Carolina and then to the Piedmont of South Carolina. One of their descendants, Burrell Pope Pace of Woodruff, S.C., was the first of his clan to populate Pace's Gap in 1804. The gap was little more than a crossroads of Cherokee trading routes — part of which became Howard Gap Road, where drovers herded livestock for trade from western towns.

"Burrell Pace purchased land from speculators on the extreme western edge of what is now Saluda," Jones says. "His sons, Moses, Cornelius and Jonathan, bought up more and more land until Paces owned most of the territory. The original settlement was on Camp Creek, not where the town is located today."

In those days the region was known generally as the "Outer Blue Ridge." Cherokees were summer residents with no permanent villages in the area. Drovers' livestock roamed the meadows and turkeys roosted overnight in the trees.

Today, dozens of Paces populate Saluda. Not surprising, considering the progeny of Ransom Taylor "Bud" Pace (1858-1939), who fathered 29 children. Married three times, he was known about town as the "Champion Father."

Besides Thompsons and Paces, other early settlers of Saluda included Arledges, Barclays, Holberts, Jacksons, Laughters, Metcalls, Morgans, Morrises, Newmans and Rhodeses.

Boom town

Although trains no longer clamber up the precipitous grade to reach Saluda and points beyond, early railroad culture is evident in this town of 577 year-round and 2,000 summer residents.

STRING OF PEARLS: Saluda

Chartered in 1881, Saluda started out as a mercantile community. Thanks to the railroad — its tracks still parallel Main Street — Saluda soon became a stylish, summer resort. At the height of its prosperity, Saluda supported 37 inns and boardinghouses — big, white clapboard places with wrap-around porches lined with rocking chairs and sofas.

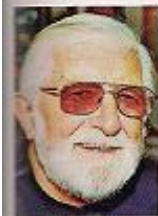
Main Street featured a tea room and a motion-picture theater, the first in Western North Carolina to show talking pictures. And the town boasted two dentists, besides Saluda blacksmith Ibe Davis, who did double duty pulling teeth.

A private boarding school for girls known as the Seminary, founded by the Congregational Church in 1889, drew student-boarders to Saluda from both Carolinas. It was torn down in 1922 and replaced with a public school on a nearby hilltop.

Stores with close kin

Just a few doors from each other on Main Street, nearly identical buildings — the M.A. Pace Store and Thompson's Store — opened in 1910. Thompson's general store added a grill 31 years later after its proprietor moved from one half of the M.A. Pace Store.

Charlie Ward remembers when his family's grill sold hamburgers for 25¢ cents, hot dogs for 15¢ and goose-liver-mush sandwiches, still listed on the board above the grill.



Ward

It was Ward's Grill back then. With its old-time lunch counter, griddle and soda fountain, Ward's Grill looks much as it did when it opened in 1941. Last June, Larry and Debra Jackson of

Hendersonville bought the grill and connecting general store. They renamed the adjoining grill and store Thompson's Grocery Market & Grill, after its original owners.

Ward, 79, grew up with the business that his mother, Lola Thompson Ward, helped run until she passed away last year at the age of 103. It was a hard liv-

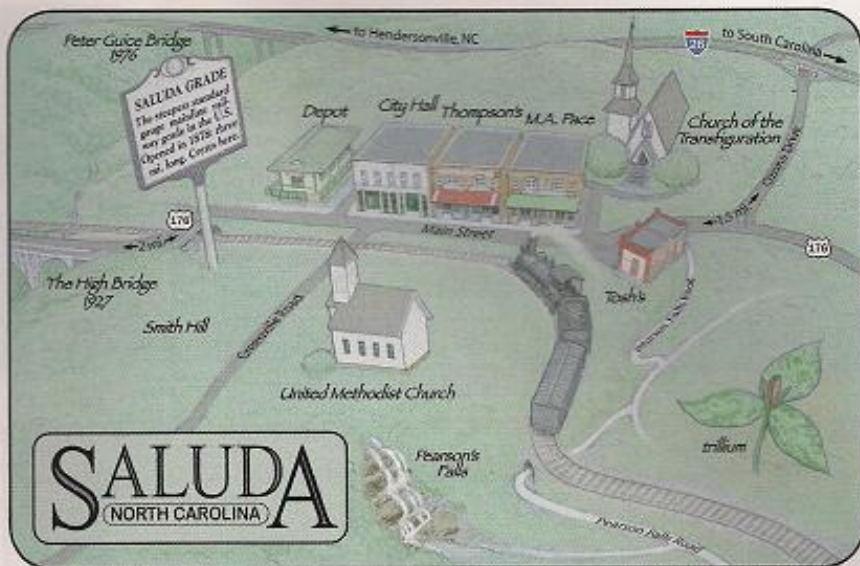


ILLUSTRATION BY KNOX CROWELL



Above, Debra and Larry Jackson bought Thompson's Store and Ward's Grill after Charlie Ward retired. The grill, left, looks much as it did when it opened in 1941. The property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Jacksons renamed it Thompson's Grocery Market & Grill, after the original owners.

STRING OF PEARLS: Saluda



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLENE PACE PEARSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. GEORGE PACE

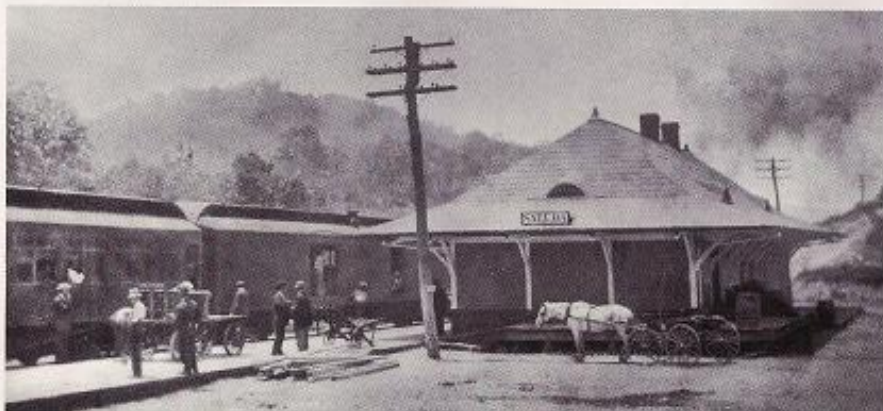


PHOTO COURTESY OF SALUDA CITY HALL



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLENE PACE PEARSON

Clockwise, from left: Saluda's Main Street, circa 1910. The Seminary, one of Saluda's first schools, drew student boarders from both Carolinas. Isaac Means ran Saluda's first boarding shop. The Saluda depot, circa 1910.

ing, but worth it, he says. "There's a quality of life here," says Ward, now retired.

He remembers stocking the shelves and pumping kerosene oil out back. And he loved talking with his lifelong friends at the store.

"We raise some hell during election time," he says. "But other than that, Saluda's a right friendly place ... What I enjoyed most was talking with all the women."

Just down the street is M.A. Pace Store, with roots back to 1899. The president of Saluda's first bank, Mack Pace, and a man who later became the county sheriff, George Thompson, first opened the store. They called it Thompson & Pace.

Mack Pace's son Robert still runs the place today. Robert Pace grew up in the store's second location, which reopened in 1910 as M.A. Pace Store.

"You can blame all of this on me," he

says resolutely.

Inside M.A. Pace Store, the distinctive aroma of oiled wood floors greets shoppers. Country music wafts from a radio. Venerable bead-board covers the lofty ceilings. Pace promptly greets customers, inviting them to browse his wares.

Although M.A. Pace still functions as a general store, it's a veritable living museum of early-20th-century mercantile emporiums.

On the sales counter stands a brass-and-wood NCR cash register dated 1910. The turn-of-the-century store also sports a 1904 produce scale (with an up-to-date, government-issued seal of approval) and an 1889 edition of *An Encyclopedia of Practical Information and Universal Formulary*. Not to mention, a collection of memorabilia from old cartons, canisters and bottles to an enlightening gallery of vintage photographs of

Saluda residents and scenes.

Pace continues to sell Colgate Octagon soap, W.R. Case & Sons jack knives, and such commodities as chewing tobacco, cat litter, postcards, antifreeze, hoop earrings, smoke bombs, sunglasses, regional books, local produce and sacks of stone-ground grits. He can put his finger on anything in the store within a nanosecond of the request.

When asked what one finds in M.A. Pace Store that can't be found in big-box stores, Pace doesn't hesitate.

"Personal attention."

And he's old enough that his business ethics include an oft-forgotten, time-honored tradition: The customer is always right.

What's kept Robert Pace in Saluda these years?

"This store," he says. "What I enjoy most about this business is the customers. I meet all kinds of interesting

STRING OF PEARLS: Saluda

people, from the four corners of the earth."

Catering to lowlanders

As a teenager in Saluda, George Jones tended the landscaping needs of four different homeowners. His family maintained an extensive garden. During summers, the Joneses sold milk, butter, vegetables and dahlias to local hotels and boardinghouses.

"We made our own way," Jones says. "I always had money in my pocket. Even during the Great Depression. Each summertime, planters came up from the lowlands by the thousands."

Jones, whose genealogy includes Henderson County Clerk of Court "Judge" Columbus "Lum" Pace, helped found the Henderson County Genealogical and Historical Society as an adult. He fondly remembers the dances Saluda hosted three or four nights a week in the streets or at the gymnasium and in hotel ballrooms.

"They didn't have square dancing in the Low Country," Jones says. "This style of folk dancing and music was a mountain tradition. Not like the square dancing you see today. Back then, the caller would dance with the group."

Saluda was indeed a swinging town and South Carolinian girls yearned to learn its exotic new style of square dancing.

"And the prettier they were," Jones says, "the more willing I was to teach them."

The Low Country girls would ask the boys in Saluda, "What do you do up here in the wintertime?"

"We work hard all winter," Jones would answer, "devising methods of separating you people from your money when you come up for the summer."

During the winter Saludans fashioned crafts, rugs and furniture to sell to the seasonal residents. Other enterprising locals cut trees, then hauled them by wagon to the depot.

"Pulpwood," Jones says, "mostly pine, chestnut and poplar. Millions of cords were cut and shipped by train

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from Saluda to Canton and other paper-mill towns."

Jones recalls Bale Pace, who lived from 1889 to 1937, one of the wealthiest of Polk County's early residents.

"He started a transfer taxi business with one vehicle and wound up with a fleet of not only taxis, but trucks for hauling pulpwood," Jones says.

Face's taxis transported railway passengers to and from their hotels and on tours — to Chimney Rock, Mount Mitchell and other sight-seeing destinations — and to places of worship.

Going to church

The first church organized within the town limits of Saluda was Forman's Friendship, which became Friendship Baptist Church, organized in 1835 in a log building. It became Friendship Baptist Church and was followed by a succession of six others of various denominations.

Newcomer Rev. Paula Morton, rector of the Episcopal Church of the



Morton

Transfiguration, cherishes the Saluda community.

"In five years, I have yet to go to town to the post office without running into one of my parishioners," she says. "This is an amazingly intimate little town."

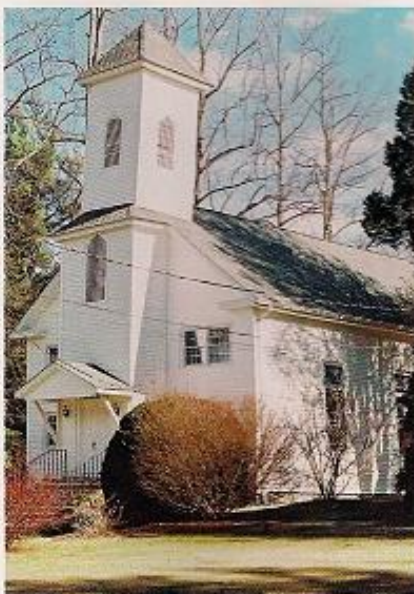
One of Morton's favorite things to do in Saluda is ordering a bacon-and-fried-egg sandwich at Ward's Grill.

Says Morton: "I can't make them that good at home."

Time capsule

Although I-26 will get you from Hendersonville to Saluda expeditiously, sightseers and shutterbugs are wise to opt for the more scenic route, winding U.S. 176, a state scenic byway. At the western edge of Saluda, stop on the bridge that spans the railroad tracks long enough to savor the view of this small town's compact, historic Main Street.

Saluda is a time capsule of late 19th and early 20th-century architecture.



Saluda's United Methodist Church was founded in 1882.

Especially its 5.2-acre commercial district, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Main Street is flanked on one side by railroad tracks and the other by historic structures, including the old train depot and Spring Park, named for a spring that provided water for early residents.

From the sidewalk, fresh local produce and bins of hardware beckon shoppers as in days of old. Artwork, gifts and antiques tantalize through the windows and squeaky screen doors. Fragrant aromas waft from restaurants. And in warmer weather a potter throws clay on a wheel, curbside, on the shaded sidewalk.

Drop into any of the galleries, shops or eateries and experience the friendly atmosphere of this former railroad town. Better still, visit the first Saturday after July Fourth for Coon Dog Day, a fun-filled event started in 1963 that features food, a parade, a dog-judging contest and a street dance.



Fresh, local produce beckons shoppers along Saluda's sidewalks.

Beyond downtown, Saluda's cross streets sport Victorian homes, some of them housing bed-and-breakfast inns. Interspersed among them stand the Gothic-Carpenter-style Presbyterian church and the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration.

Saluda is a state of mind, local folks like to say. A place so steeped in politeness that words like mornin' and evenin', sir and ma'am, slip effortlessly through locals' lips. Folks in surrounding communities — Warrior Mountain, Macedonia, Mountain Page, Piney Grove, Fork Creek and Melrose — proudly say they're from Saluda, too.

On a leisurely stroll down Main Street, the question seems inevitable. Did time pass Saluda by?

Not really, says longtime resident, author and historian Charlene Pace Pearson.

"It just went around us." ▲

Watch for Terry Ruscini's story on Tryon and Columbus in the summer issue of *Mountain Traditions*. Ruscini is also the author of historical non-fiction and travelogues, including *Hendersonville & Flat Rock: An Intimate Tour*. He lives in Henderson County.

A SALUDA TIMELINE

ca. 1611: The first Paces immigrate to America from England and settle near Jamestown, Va. Their descendants eventually settle most of what becomes Pace's Gap

1776: North Carolina becomes a state

1804: Burrell Pope Pace moves to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and settles in a region soon to become known as Pace's Gap

1836: Friendship Baptist Church is founded in Pace's Gap

1838: Pace's Gap becomes part of Henderson County

1847: Polk County is carved out of Henderson and Rutherford Counties

1849: The N.C. General Assembly repeals legislation of Polk as a county

1855: State General Assembly recreates Polk from portions of Rutherford and Henderson Counties



Pearson

1865: Capt. Charles W. Pearson and Col. Thad S. Coleman, civil engineers, scout the Pace's Gap region for a railroad route to link Spartanburg and Asheville

1877: Workers begin the arduous task of building a railroad route up the Saluda Grade.

Col. Andrew Tanner, a contractor for the Asheville-Spartanburg Railroad, buys land in Pace's Gap and builds Mountain House, the first hotel in town.

1878: John P. Tanner is the first postmaster of Pace's Gap. The post office is a space on the counter of Tanner's commissary store.

On July 4, the first train rolls through the corporate limits of present-day Saluda, home to only two houses.

1880: First official post office is built in Pace's Gap.



The abandoned home built by David Pace at Camp Creek, the original settlement of what became Saluda.

1881: Saluda is chartered as a town. Andrew Tanner is elected first mayor.

1882: Saluda's United Methodist Church is founded.

1887: Saluda is considered the best paying train station on the Spartanburg & Asheville line.

1889: Saluda incorporates, according to some, to protect the schools and churches from "whiskey disturbances."

1899: The first Thompson & Pace store opens.

1909: Isaac Means opens Saluda's first barbershop.

1910: M.A. Pace store moves to a new brick building. Thompson's Store moves to an identical building up the street.

1912: Water is piped in through hollow logs from springs on Heatherly Mountain.

1914: Spartanburg Baby Hospital and Infants' & Children's Sanitarium

founded and run by Dr. D.L. Smith in Saluda.

1921: Dr. D.L. Smith conducts the first of many Southern Pediatric Seminars.

1924: Streets paved and sewer lines added in Saluda.

1929–1939: The Great Depression takes a toll on formerly booming Saluda.

1937–1939: The first Apple Festivals of the Mountains are held in Saluda. (After World War II, the festival was moved to Hendersonville.)

1938: Saluda Mountain Telephone Company boasts 54 subscribers.

1941–1945: The U.S. is involved in World War II.

1949: Dr. D.L. Smith dies.

1957: Blue Ridge Coon Club is organized in Saluda.

Late 1950s–early 1960s: Civic-minded townspeople revive the town.

1950s–1960s: On a small scale, milling industry comes to Saluda.

1963: First annual Coon Dog Day festival and parade are held.

1968: Last passenger run (the Carolina Special) is conducted through Saluda, Dec. 5, by engineer Frank Clodfelter.

2001: Norfolk Southern closes its line through Saluda.

2007: First ATM is installed in Saluda at Macon Bank.

The information for these stories was compiled from interviews with historian Dr. George A. Jones, Saluda residents and Polk County historians and officials. Additional information was obtained by referencing a number of published works.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLENE WACE PEARSON

Saluda's 'Helper' engine and a group of section hands and other railroad workers. Ernest Patterson, engineman, far right, was actor Pat Hingle's grandfather.

Workin' on the railroad

Faintly, in the distance, an undulating whistle moans, then draws closer, resounding off the hillsides.

Suddenly, the resonance of pistons and huffing and chugging together with great clouds of black smoke usher in a black iron horse hauling a queue of Pullmans or freight cars up the Saluda Grade.

As the clacking slackens and the monstrous conveyance grinds to a halt, the sight would literally make your eyes sore. "There'd be cinders spewing all over the place, and the smell of smoke was stifling," recalls Saluda native Lloyd "Tommy" Thompson. "And cinders in your eyes."

In the mid-19th century, Thompson's great-grandfather, the

Honorable Asbury Thompson, ran a post office called "Tryon," a stage-coach inn and a tollgate on Howard Gap Road, many years before the railroad provided more affordable transportation.

Shortly after the Civil War, Col. Thad S. Coleman and Capt. Charles William Pearson surveyed Pace's Gap for Norfolk Southern's Spartanburg & Asheville Railroad, later renamed the Asheville & Spartanburg.

Unfortunately, groundwater jeopardized the terrain through Howard Gap, a navigable grade. That left Coleman and Pearson with the more treacherous, albeit stable, grade from Melrose to what would become Saluda. At great expense — including bankrupt-

cies and lost lives — the task of laying 13 miles of railroad tracks up what locals called Saluda Mountain began in 1877. Ties were laid and rails were spiked along what engineers nicknamed "The King of Hills" — the steepest mainline standard-gauge grade in the United States.

With the help of convict labor, the railway was completed in 1878. On July 4 at 11 a.m., the first train chugged up the three-mile grade from Melrose to Pace's Gap. A year later, the line reached Hendersonville.

A northbound train required a pusher engine — what locals called the "Helper," a locomotive built for traction verses speed, with larger

STRING OF PEARLS: Saluda

cylinders and 10 small driving wheels. The Helper propelled the last car of a train as it lurched up the grade from Melrose to Saluda. Nevertheless, trains experienced wrecks, runaways and the peril of traversing 50 hairpin turns, including Slaughterhouse Curve, where a trainload of cattle was lost.

Residents of Saluda learned to listen for the trains' toots that assured them an engine was completely controlled. By 1903, 27 men had died after engines lost control and jumped the tracks on one of the sharp curves.

Engineers were warned not to exceed 8 mph when making the descent from Saluda to Melrose. Witnesses to the trains' descent describe ear-piercing metal-against-metal squealing and brakes wreathed in smoke.

The railroad's rise and fall

Ultimately, eight trains passed through Saluda daily. Six of them were Carolina Special runs routed between Charleston and Cincinnati with whistle stops at Columbia, Spartanburg, Landrum, Tryon, Saluda, Flat Rock, Hendersonville and Asheville.

Saluda grew up around the depot because the railroad brought visitors and summer residents, creating a need for inns and services. More than that, the railroad directly provided jobs for

dozens of townfolk: Switch tenders with three shifts a day, firemen, spur-track operators to circumvent runaways, section foremen, coaling and water-station operators, signalmen, general work crews, maintenance and station personnel such as agents, telegraph operators and clerks.

Enter the Great Depression — along with the growing popularity of automobiles and World War I — and railway passengers diminished. Many of Saluda's hotels and boarding houses faced financial ruin and the town experienced a major slump.

The advent of air conditioning accentuating the Depression's blow to Saluda. With air conditioned homes, fewer people traveled to the mountains seeking relief from Southern summer's heat. The hotels went out of business and were torn down. Family homes replaced them.

As interstate highways were built and air travel took off, trains lost more and more business.

Passenger rail service through Saluda ended in December 1968. The vintage "stick-style" depot was relocated 2/10ths of a mile down the street and restored in 1983. Norfolk Southern finally closed the line through Saluda altogether in the winter of 2002.

Across the street from the now-quiet

tracks, browsers find shops, galleries and a salon in the relocated depot and its neighboring Summer House, a former gas station.

Childhood memories

Horace Pace vividly recalls the days when passenger and freight trains were part of the scenery in Saluda. Son of Ransom Taylor Pace and the 26th of 29 children, Horace quickly learned how to make his own amusements.

As a youngster, Horace and his friends gathered up stray chunks of coal between the outskirts of Saluda and Melrose. They sold their boodle to residents to heat their homes.

Pace describes a risky prank the buddies took part in. They would start out at the former Standard Oil service station (now Tosh's Whistle Stop Café).

"Sometimes, we'd go down to the grease pit and find an old oil can," Pace says. "We'd pour the leftover oil on the tracks and hide behind the bushes, thinking we'd enjoy watching the train slip and slide as it inched its way up the grade. But I was always scared, especially when those wheels spun a good bit — that is, until the engineer shoveled sand onto the tracks. This helped him regain traction." ▲▲

— By Terry Ruscin

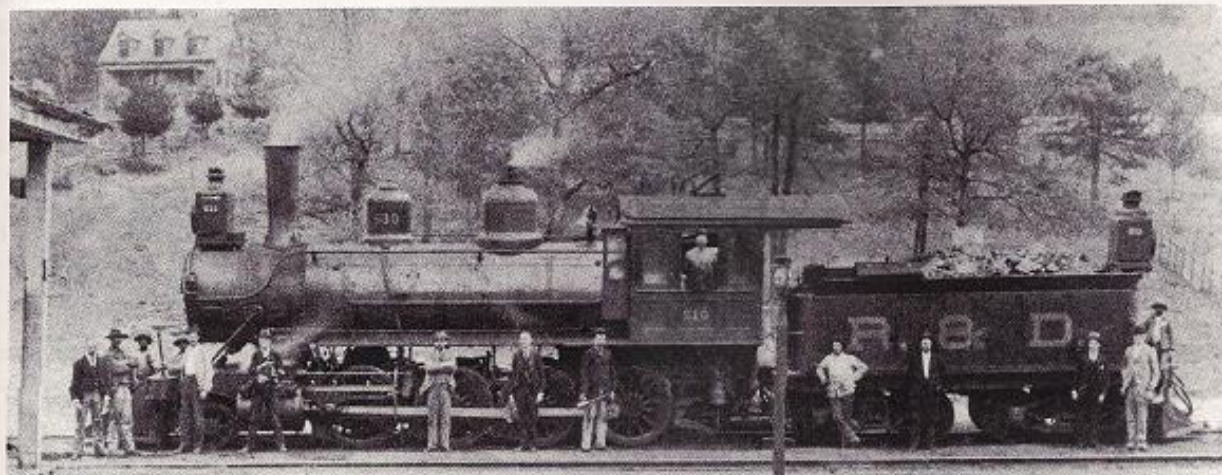


PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLENE PACE PEARSON

A train rolls into Saluda, pre-1900, before Main Street sported a row of businesses.

Saluda's celebrities

Its remoteness has not shielded Saluda. Since the town's railroad days, speculators, settlers and celebrities have discovered its virtues. Some even made Saluda their part or full-time home.

Around the turn of the 20th century, townsfolk thronged Saluda's depot to see if they could spot any celebrities debarking the train.

The lucky ones saw such notables as writers F. Scott and Zelda Sayre

Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Lady Astor, Sidney Lanier, William Gillette and David Niven. Renowned journalist and women's-rights pioneer Dorothy Dix was a regular guest of Saluda's Ivy Terrace inn. Old-timers remember spotting First Lady Grace Coolidge riding through town in a chauffeur-driven, open-touring car. And, on one occasion, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt passed through Saluda, enroute from Warm Springs, Ga., to the White House.

Hollywood legend

As a child, the future stage, television and screen actor Pat Hingle moved with his mother to Saluda, which was home to Mrs. Hingle's parents. Pat's grandfather, Ernest Patterson, piloted the "Helper" engine for the railroad.

Born in Denver, Colo., Pat Hingle presently lives in Kure Beach, N.C., though he retains a special place in his heart for Saluda. Hingle once wrote:

"All this and the smell of honeysuckle, the early evening cry of the whip-poor-will, the call of a locomotive's steam whistle from down in the hollow as it echoed across the mountain ridges ... All lovely memories a man has of a little place called Saluda."

Of his many character roles, Hingle is perhaps best known



Actor Pat Hingle

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN



Recording star Perry Como

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN

for playing the bartender in *On the Waterfront* in 1954. Other credits include his movie roles in *Splendor in the Grass* and *Norma Rae*.

America's laid-back crooner

In the 1980s, baritone recording star Perry Como and his wife Roselle chose Saluda for a hide-away vacation home. Native Saludan John Earl Rhodes says of Como, "He was a good friend. I

remember seeing him walking the back streets to the cemetery — his daily routine. He'd wear rubber boots and a floppy hat."

And Charlie Ward, former owner of a general store and Ward's Grill, remembers how happy Como made his mother Lola Thompson Ward.

"After he moved away, Mr. Como sent candy to my mother on her birthdays," Ward says. "One year he phoned her and sang 'Happy Birthday.' When he was finished, Mama said, 'Why, Mr. Como, I didn't know you could sing.'"



Baron Richard Nowak was billed as 'The World's Tiniest Man.'

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN

World's tiniest man

Born to German immigrants, Baron Richard Nowak was a star attraction of the Wallace Brothers Circus in the 1940s. As a boy he was billed as "The World's Tiniest Man." As an adult, Nowak moved to Saluda and served as pastor of Saluda Presbyterian Church in the 1980s. Residents referred to him as the "Little Preacher Man."

Nowak's adopted son Chris of Hendersonville says his father began his

circus career at 10 years old.

"As a child, he stood only 18 inches tall," says Christopher Nowak. "Then he experienced a growth spurt in college, reaching his total height of 44 inches."

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"All this and the smell of honeysuckle, the early evening cry of the whip-poor-will, the call of a locomotive's steam whistle from down in the hollow as it echoed across the mountain ridges ... All lovely memories a man has of a little place called Saluda."

Of his many character roles, Hingle is perhaps best known



Actor Pat Hingle

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN



Recording star Perry Como

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN

for playing the bartender in *On the Waterfront* in 1954. Other credits include his movie roles in *Splendor in the Grass* and *Norma Rae*.

America's laid-back crooner

In the 1980s, baritone recording star Perry Como and his wife Roselle chose Saluda for a hide-away vacation home. Native Saludan John Earl Rhodes says of Como, "He was a good friend. I

remember seeing him walking the back streets to the cemetery — his daily routine. He'd wear rubber boots and a floppy hat."

And Charlie Ward, former owner of a general store and Ward's Grill, remembers how happy Como made his mother Lola Thompson Ward.

"After he moved away, Mr. Como sent candy to my mother on her birthdays," Ward says. "One year he phoned her and sang 'Happy Birthday.' When he was finished, Mama said, 'Why, Mr. Como, I didn't know you could sing.'"



Baron Richard Nowak was billed as 'The World's Tiniest Man.'

PHOTO: COURTESY TERRY RUSCIN

World's tiniest man

Born to German immigrants, Baron Richard Nowak was a star attraction of the Wallace Brothers Circus in the 1940s. As a boy he was billed as "The World's Tiniest Man." As an adult, Nowak moved to Saluda and served as pastor of Saluda Presbyterian Church in the 1980s. Residents referred to him as the "Little Preacher Man."

Nowak's adopted son Chris of Hendersonville says his father began his

circus career at 10 years old.

"As a child, he stood only 18 inches tall," says Christopher Nowak. "Then he experienced a growth spurt in college, reaching his total height of 44 inches."