Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina: State Aid, Railroads, and the Lower Cape Fear

By Dr. Alan D. Watson

The nineteenth century witnessed remarkable transformations in the economy of the United States, perhaps none so profound as the Industrial Revolution. The changes produced, and their consequent impact upon the lives of Americans, depended on equally startling changes in such areas as finance, agriculture and transportation. A true revolution took place in transportation that embraced the improvement of turnpikes and plank roads, the use of canals and river navigation, and the construction of railroads.

North Carolina participated fully in those efforts to advance the means of travel, communication and trade. Despite North Carolina’s early penchant for Jeffersonian Republicanism and Jacksonian Democracy, with their principles of fiscal conservatism and limited government, the state from the outset played a prominent role in promoting internal improvements.

Of all the improvements in transportation during the antebellum era, the railroad proved the most profound: transforming the landscape, the economy, and eventually the very character of the United States. Although the railroad originated in England in the 1820s, it did not take long for it to become popular in America. The United States felt a desperate need for improved transportation. This, combined with a propensity to borrow and improve upon English technology, cheap land, and the absence of entrenched interests, gave the United States an early and decided advantage. By 1840, only 1,818 miles of track had been laid in Europe as opposed to approximately 3,000 miles of track in the United States. Offering a cheap, fast, flexible, and relatively reliable means of overland transport, the railroad surpassed turnpikes, canals, and steamboats in meeting the demands of agriculture and industry.¹

England introduced its first railroad in 1825 and demonstrated the commercial feasibility of rail travel by the end of the decade. Americans watched with anticipation. In North Carolina, the Raleigh Register editorialized in the spring of 1825, “If the experiment succeeds in England, ... Rail-Roads will soon be introduced here.” The following year the Western Carolinian of Salisbury proposed a system of railroads from Charlotte, Wilkesboro, Salisbury, and Greensboro that would converge on Fayetteville, thus concentrating western trade at the head of steamboat navigation on the Cape Fear River. The editor of the Western Carolinian during those early years of internal improvements concluded, “a well-devised system of rail roads would contribute more than any thing else to brighten the prospects of North Carolina.”²

After several years of discussion the General Assembly moved to make the railroad a reality in North Carolina. Mounting pressure from other states, including neighboring Virginia, was the principal factor buttressed by the annual report of the North Carolina Board of Internal Improvements in 1830, which referred to the railroad as “a species of communication, which ... outstrips in usefulness, all the modes of improvement hitherto known.” The Petersburg continued

² Raleigh Register, April 5, 1825 (first quotation); Carolina Observer (Fayetteville), March 8, 1826, copying the Western Carolinian (second quotation): Taylor, Transportation Revolution, 74-76.
Railroad Company, organized under Virginia charter in 1830, sought to obtain from North Carolina the privilege of running a line to connect Petersburg and the Roanoke River in the vicinity of Weldon. As a result the North Carolina legislature in its 1830-1831 session granted a charter to the Petersburg Railroad to extend its presence into the state, a statute that inaugurated a spaté of railroad legislation in the 1830s.³

During the decade the General Assembly passed twenty-seven laws to establish railroads. The legislation addressed interstate projects as well as North Carolina lines, some merely local connections. The first successful railroad in North Carolina was the Petersburg link to the Roanoke River. Its construction progressed rapidly. The railroad reached the state border before the end of 1832 and Blakely's Landing below Weldon by August 1833. Stung by the competition offered by Richmond and Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth commercial interests obtained a charter in 1832 from the Virginia legislature to construct the Portsmouth and Roanoke Railroad which would run seventy-six miles from Portsmouth to the Roanoke River near Weldon. In its 1832-1833 session the North Carolina General Assembly confirmed the Virginia law. Work proceeded so quickly that the Portsmouth railroad reached Margarrettville in Northampton County in December 1835, and to Gatsby, a few miles from the Roanoke River, in 1836. When a bridge was completed over the river in 1837, the line was finished and trains ran to Weldon.⁴

The legislative session of 1831-1832 found the General Assembly "wonderfully filled with the notice of making Rail Roads," according to William Haywood, Jr., member of the House of Commons from Wake County. He believed that "Unless we can do something of the kind we are gone!" The legislators proceeded to charter three roads, including the Cape Fear and Yadkin Railroad and the North Carolina Central Railroad. The Cape Fear and Yadkin hoped to attract trade from Yadkin Valley to Fayetteville and thence to Wilmington, North Carolina's principal port. The state first offered aid to railroads at that juncture. It directed the Board of Internal Improvements to survey the routes of the Cape Fear and Yadkin and North Carolina Central at a cost not exceeding $4,000 per railroad. Altogether, $7,022.46 was spent for the surveys, almost equally divided between the two roads, but that was the extent of the activity.⁵

The proposed Cape Fear and Yadkin Railroad generated excitement. It unfortunately exacerbated the rivalry between Fayetteville and Wilmington, because the former feared loss of trade by a railroad built to the New Hanover port. More than $100,000 in stock was subscribed in the Cape Fear region, about two-thirds of which was taken in Wilmington, but the total was far less than the $300,000 required by law to incorporate the company. The company notified subscribers in the spring of 1833 that they might obtain the funds deposited on their shares, less twelve percent for money expended by the company.⁶

The scheme resurfaced in the legislative session of 1833-1834 in the slightly altered form of the Cape Fear, Yadkin and Pee Dee Railroad, which would extend from Fayetteville to the Yadkin River towards Wilkesboro. Although the railroad would not reach Wilmington, the port stood to benefit from the Yadkin Valley trade that could find its way to Wilmington via Fayetteville and the Cape Fear River. From Fayetteville to Salisbury efforts were made to revive support, but state aid was deemed necessary. If not, North Carolinians "must sink into despondency or abandon their native land," warned a Fayetteville gathering. In 1837 the legislature renamed the road the Fayetteville and Western, and agreed to take two-fifths of the two million capitalization, raising that figure the following session to three-fifths, but reducing the capitalization to one and a quarter million dollars. The Lincoln Transcript praised the legislation, calling the railroad "North Carolina's project: for her use and for her benefit, and will add to her glory as a state."⁷

---

³ Report of the Board of Int'l Improvements, 1830 (Raleigh: Lawrence & Lemay, 1830), 6 (quotation); Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina, 1830-1831, Private, Ch. 56.


⁶ Carolina Observer, February 21, May 1, 29, June 19, 1832; Fayetteville Observer, May 14, 1833; The People's Press (Wilmington), May 1, June 5, 12, 1833; Carolina Watchman (Salisbury), August 4, 18, 1832.

⁷ Laws, 1833-1834, Private, Ch. 72; 1836-1837, Public, Ch. 44; 1838-1839, Public, Ch. 28; Fayetteville Observer, May 13, 20, November 4, 11, 1834; January 19, 1837, copying the Lincoln Transcript (second quotation); North Carolina Standard, November 14, 1834; October 20, 1836; Charlotte Journal, August 22, 1836, copying the Fayetteville Observer (first quotation).
The Board of Internal Improvements deemed the project important enough to hire, in 1839, the Reverend Simeon Colton of Fayetteville as an agent to solicit subscriptions for the Fayetteville and Western. Finding Fayetteville supportive, Colton exerted his efforts principally in the piedmont counties through which the road might be constructed. He managed to raise only $243,000, far short of the necessary $500,000. By June 1840, Colton concluded that further efforts were useless. Hard times following the Panic of 1837, and a belief that stock purchases in the railroad would not be profitable, discouraged investors. As a substitute, Colton proposed connecting Raleigh and Fayetteville by railroad and building turnpikes from both towns to the west, in hopes that “Enough may be done so as materially to improve our condition, gradually wear away prejudices, and prepare the public mind for further exertions.”

In its legislative session of 1835, the General Assembly amended the charter granted to the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad in 1833-1834, permitting the company to connect with the Virginia railroads in the vicinity of Weldon, allowing the road to operate steamships, and increasing its capitalization from $800,000 to $1,500,000 to accommodate the alterations. Wilmingtonians subscribed a quarter million dollars of stock by the end of February 1836. Another $20,000 was subscribed by those living along the prospective route to Weldon. The company intended to start construction at both ends of the line, Weldon and Wilmington, connecting the track with stage coach. By May 1837 it had also purchased a steamboat, and three others were in the offing. At that time the General Assembly agreed to purchase two-fifths of the stock in the company in four installments of twenty-five percent, each payable when the corresponding private subscriptions had been paid. According to the president of the Wilmington and Raleigh, “The confidence imparted to the work by the action of the State, has had the most salutary influence; and individuals, no longer deterred by the apprehension of hazard, have been most free in manifesting that confidence, by large and liberal subscriptions.”

The Wilmington and Raleigh began to lay track and tout the advantages of a route from Baltimore to Charleston, using trains, Chesapeake Bay steamers, Virginia railroads, and the Wilmington and Raleigh and its steamers. The next year, a Charlestonian traveled what was already called “The Wilmington Route,” convinced “that this route through North Carolina, will eventually be THE GREAT THOROUGHFARE between the North and the South, and it will make an excursion to the North in summer, and to the South in winter, a mere party of pleasure of a few days.”

English actress Frances Anne (Fanny) Kemble experienced little pleasure in 1838 when she traveled on the half-finished railroad from Weldon to Wilmington on route to her husband’s plantation in Georgia. Her diary recalled that soon after twelve midnight, the train from Weldon stopped, and she and her party were informed that they would have to take the stage, “so in the dead middle of the night we crept out of the train, . . . [and] walked a few yards . . . [to] where three four-horse coaches stood waiting to receive us.” The road traversed marshes “through which we splashed, with hardly any intermission, the whole night long.” Below Waynesborough the next day the passengers were forced to alight to walk over the Neuse River bridge, which was deemed too rotten to support the coach and passengers together. About sunset Kemble reached the point where the tracks had been built from Wilmington. While waiting for the train, she was surrounded by “a troop of gazing boors . . . . A more forlorn, fierce, poor and wild-looking set of people, short of absolute savages, I never saw.” Kemble finally reached Wilmington at five o’clock the following morning. No doubt the completion of the Wilmington and Raleigh in 1840 was as welcome to travelers as to the railroad company.

The last spike in the Wilmington and Raleigh was driven on March 7, 1840, completing a 161 mile railroad, at the time reputed to be the longest in the world. The road’s cost was $1,909,755.54, a figure including the four steamships that connected Wilmington and Charleston. Its total capital was $1,355,450, of which $600,000 was contributed by the state. The company urgently needed money to cover the discrepancy. The legislature in 1840 agreed


9 Laws, 1833-1834, Private, Ch. 78; 1835, Private, Chs. 25, 30; 1836-1837, Public, Ch. 22; North Carolina Standard, February 25, 1836; Wilmington Advertiser, May 5, 1837 (quotation).

10 Fayetteville Observer, December 27, 1837; Wilmington Advertiser, August 24, 1838 (quotation).

to endorse bonds worth $300,000, payable between 1842 and 1847. The difficult economic times of the 1840s forced the Wilmington and Raleigh to seek an extension for paying the bonds’ principal. The General Assembly at first refused, though it permitted the Literary Board to purchase the first $50,000 worth of bonds. Eventually, the state treasurer purchased the bonds as they came due. After a fire in Wilmington in 1843 destroyed the railroad’s warehouse, shops, and other property, the General Assembly in 1845 endorsed an additional $100,000 in bonds for the company to replace the equipment. Two years later the legislature endorsed another $100,000 in bonds to meet the principal payments coming due on the older bonds.  

The state bonds propelled the Wilmington and Raleigh into a profitable enterprise. From May 1 to November 1, 1840, receipts exceeded expenditures by $63,360.60, and net operating income continued to be positive throughout the decade. The company realized profits sufficient to pay the interest on its debt, but not its principal. The railroad depended largely on passenger traffic and mail revenues at the outset, but the freight transport increased during the ensuing decade. Encouraged by improving revenues, in 1849 the Wilmington and Raleigh proposed replacing its entire track with new, heavier T-rail. The General Assembly agreed to a loan of $520,000 for that purpose. By November 1851, the railroad had finished replacing all but fourteen miles of track, had realized net profits of over $118,000 from the previous fiscal year, and had paid a dividend of three percent on capital stock. In 1855 the General Assembly changed the railroad’s name to the Wilmington and Weldon to reflect the true geography of its line. Five years later the Wilmington and Weldon instituted a steamship line between Wilmington and New York to enhance its competitive position vis a vis Norfolk, Charleston, and Savannah, all of which had water connections with northern ports.

After a respite in the early 1840s, North Carolina again succumbed to the lure of railroads. From its 1846-1847 session to the Civil War, the General Assembly chartered thirty-seven railroad companies, several of which organized and survived. Among the unfortunate was the North and South Carolina Railroad. Seeking to revive an earlier attempt to connect the Raleigh and Gaston to South Carolina, the General Assembly in 1847 provided for the incorporation of the North and South Carolina Railroad company to run a line from Raleigh via Fayetteville to the South Carolina line to meet a railroad to be built from Camden. 

Although the North and South Carolina Railroad failed to materialize, the proposal alarmed Wilmingtonians, who realized that the Raleigh and Gaston might ultimately provide a linkage to Charleston and, in effect, isolate Wilmington. According to the Wilmington Journal, it was surprising that such a rail connection had not already been established, because it “would render so much exposure and inconvenience (from the streamers between Wilmington and Charleston) unnecessary.” Thus Wilmingtonians explored the possibility of constructing a railroad from their port to South Carolina for a link to Charleston. South Carolinians meeting in Sumterville enthusiastically greeted the idea to build a line from Wilmington to Fair Bluff near the South Carolina line (62 miles), to Sumterville (70 miles), and to Manchester on the Camden and Gadsden Railroad which was under contract. In 1847, the North Carolina General Assembly chartered the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad.

The Wilmington and Manchester proved a project mainly of Wilmingtonians and South Carolina residents. The legislature allowed the town commissioners of Wilmington to subscribe to $100,000 worth of stock on behalf of the town. It also transferred one-third of the state’s shares in the successful Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad to the Wilmington and Manchester, permitting the sale of that stock to raise money for the latter. Work on the Wilmington and Manchester began in 1849 in Brunswick County west of the Brunswick River ferry. By 1852, twenty-five miles of track were operational; by 1853, sixty miles. The line was finished in 1854, and at the outbreak of the Civil War its eastern terminus had been extended to Eagles Island in the

---

13 Laws, 1854-1855, Private, Ch. 235; Brown, State Movement in Railroad Development, 39-40; Newbern Weekly Progress, October 9, 1860. The calculation of profits (or losses) for railroads during the antebellum era is rendered somewhat moot, for the companies tended to ignore or understate depreciation. See Richard P. Brief, “Nineteenth Century Accounting Error,” Journal of Accounting Research, 3 (Spring 1965): 12-31.

14 Laws, 1846-1847, Public, Ch. 84; 1848-1849, Public, Ch. 87; Fayetteville Observer, February 2, 1847; Carolina Watchman, March 1, 1849. For the adverse impact of the depression, shortage of civil engineers, and disruption of European money markets on Southern railroads before the Civil War, see James A. Walsh, “A New Look at Antebellum Southern Railroad Development,” Journal of Southern History, 39 (August 1973): 409-420.

15 Wilmington Journal, May 22 (quotation), June 12, 1846; Laws, 1846-1847, Public, Ch. 82.
Cape Fear River opposite Wilmington. A report for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1859, revealed a successful road that was paying dividends and reducing its bonded indebtedness. Receipts amounted to $427,000, of which thirty-eight percent derived from freight transport, eleven percent from mail carriage, and most of the remainder from passenger traffic.  

While the Wilmington and Manchester was under construction, the General Assembly chartered the North Carolina Railroad, its eastern (Atlantic and North Carolina) and Western (Western North Carolina) extensions, and several additional lines, among them the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad. As the Wilmington and Manchester neared completion, Wilmingtonians began to contemplate a road to tap the western counties' trade, whose commerce naturally gravitated to South Carolina. Charlotte proved agreeable. A convention in the Mecklenburg town in 1854 promoted the railroad, which was viewed in Charlotte as one link in the grand Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio Railroad. The General Assembly obliged in 1855 by incorporating the Wilmington and Charlotte to run from the vicinity of the port through Lumberton, Rockingham, Wadesboro, and Monroe. In the same session the lawmakers amended the statute to incorporate the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad Company, raising the capitalization from one to three million dollars, and permitting an extension of the line from Charlotte to Rutherfordton.  

Work progressed slowly. Only a portion of the railroad had been finished by the outbreak of the war. The state offered financial support, endorsing company bonds of $200,000 after each twenty-five miles of track had been laid, a subsidy of $6,000 per mile. The town of Wilmington responded generously, taking $100,000 worth of stock. Still, only twenty-four miles of track had been laid from the eastern terminus by December 1859. A year later the road extended beyond Lumberton. Work on the western end was not scheduled to begin until the spring of 1860, no doubt delayed by fears in Rutherfordton that the railroad would hurt the community by taking away its wagon trade, a commerce deemed "necessary to sustain the prosperity of an inland town."  

The tribulations of the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad stemmed most immediately from the expense of the projects. The enormous initial outlays were reflected in the capitalizations of the roads. The Wilmington and Raleigh, and the Raleigh and Gaston, were capitalized at $800,000, though experience soon revealed that much more money was needed. The North Carolina Railroad, capitalized at $3,000,000, all too quickly required additional support. Shorter routes entailed less money, but $200,000 to $300,000 was, for the most part, the minimum capitalization for any railroad. Share prices, occasionally $50, were usually $100. Even attempting to raise the minimum amount of capital required by law to organize the companies -- for five to sixty percent of total capitalization, but usually fifteen to thirty percent -- proved problematical in a relatively poor state whose limited investment moneys were eagerly sought by many projects. The General Assembly reluctantly but early concluded that public assistance was mandatory to the success of railroads. Despite a state promise to subscribe to three-fifths of the Fayetteville and Western stock, the railroad could not raise the requisite two-fifths from private entrepreneurs to command the state match. On a limited scale the state assisted the Wilmington and Raleigh, and the Raleigh and Gaston, in the 1840s, only to find its involvement led to the purchase of the latter, which then returned to private ownership. In 1849 the General Assembly finally committed the state fully to subsidizing the railroad construction when it chartered and purchased most of the stock in the North Carolina Railroad. Subsequently, the state invested in several railroads, either by subscribing to stock or by guaranteeing bonds issued by the companies. Except for short lines, the only railroads actually constructed -- the Wilmington and Weldon; Raleigh and Gaston; Wilmington and Manchester; North Carolina; Atlantic and North Carolina; Western North Carolina; Western;  


18 Laws, 1856-1857, Private, Ch. 67; 1858-1859, Private, Ch. 168; Wilmington Journal, March 23, 1855; December 2, 1859; March 2, November 15, 1860; Tri-Weekly Commercial (Wilmington), February 17, 1857; John Wilkes to "My dear Father," February 27, 1859 (quotation) Charles Wilkes Collection, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C. For a corollary and fairly common opinion that railroads might adversely affect inland towns by diverting trade to "points possessing greater commercial facilities," see Carolina Watchman, March 8, 1849.
Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford -- were those that received financial support from the state.

In order to ease the financial burden on the state the General Assembly allowed municipalities and counties to invest in railroads. In 1851 Wilmington was permitted to subscribe to $100,000 of stock in the Wilmington and Manchester by issuing bonds of ten to twenty years duration -- securities exempted from taxation to encourage investment. Despite the local involvement in several railroad projects, the state provided eighty-nine percent of all public aid for railroads before the war. 19 As a result state obligations rose rapidly. According to the state treasurer, by October 1, 1860, the state indebtedness amounted to $9,129,505. Seventy percent had been incurred for railroads. That figure did not include the state endorsement of $250,000 in bonds for the Wilmington and Weldon, and $4,699,900 pledged to the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford, the Western North Carolina, and the Western railroads. 20

Given the financial assistance of the state, and the public nature of their business, North Carolina railroad companies were subject to various legislative strictures. General statutes and most corporate charters protected the companies from the malicious destruction of their property. Conversely, railroads were responsible for damages to private property, including wandering livestock that might be injured or killed on the tracks by trains. Moreover, companies were prohibited from obstructing navigable watercourses, being required to provide bridges to permit the passage of boats. 21 Occasionally the General Assembly exempted officers and employees of the railroad companies from militia duty, work on the public roads, and jury responsibility. 22 But in the event of insurrection, war, or invasion, the legislature required certain roads to transport state troops and munitions free and expeditiously. 23

State authorities expressed concern about the competition among roads that were at least partially owned by the public and had been intended to benefit North Carolinians. The North Carolina Railroad often shipped state produce southward through Charlotte or northward by way of the Raleigh and Gaston to Virginia to the detriment of North Carolina markets. Impediments to traffic at Goldsboro led one commentator to suggest that the Atlantic and North Carolina needed to run its trains directly to Raleigh in order to make the connection with the Raleigh and Gaston. A serious rivalry developed for north-south passenger and mail traffic between the Wilmington and Weldon and the Raleigh and Gaston, in which the former enjoyed a distinct advantage. According to the president of the Raleigh and Gaston, since the state owned fifty percent or more of both roads, "the two ought to be so managed as to benefit, or at least, not injure each other." 24

The Board of Internal Improvements, in 1859, unanimously resolved to authorize Governor John W. Ellis to confer with the presidents of the railroads in which the state had a financial interest in order to promote a coordinated policy by which North Carolina products might pass freely along those railroads and not be diverted from the state. Pursuant to the resolution, Ellis informed the presidents of the companies that the railroads were "not designed to be antagonistic to each other but were only different parts of one system, and as such, their harmonious cooperation in the great business of transportation is thought to be required by the interest both of the

---


20 Noble J. Tolbert, ed., The Papers of John Willis Ellis, 2 vols. (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1964) 2:490-491; Laws, 1860-1861, Private, Ch. 140. For slightly different figures, see Fayetteville Observer, June 25, 1860.

21 Laws, 1838-1839, Public, Ch. 31; 1846-1847, Public, Ch. 51; Trelease, North Carolina Railroad, 76.

22 Laws, 1850-1851, Public, Chs. 124, 127; 1852, Public, Ch. 147; 1860-1861, Private, Chs. 133, 139.

23 Laws, 1850-1851, Public, Ch. 124; 1852, Public, Ch. 137.

roads and the public." The governor expected that "every unnecessary barrier to the transportation of produce to market and the receipt of supplies in return" would be removed. Within three weeks the accord sought by the governor and Board of Internal Improvements was realized, though it probably did little to alter the established routes of trade. 

Despite some continued misgivings about government support for internal improvements, and reservations by others about the adverse impact of railroads on their towns or livestock, the overall positive impact of railroads seemed undeniable. As the Board of Internal Improvements had written in 1841, "The wonderful effects of that species of improvement as a means of intercommunication seems to have shed a magic influence on the energies of the State. Agriculture benefited. Not only did farmers receive higher prices, but they changed their patterns of production, placing greater emphasis on commercial operations. New towns appeared and existing ones were invigorated. Upon the completion of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, Wilmington immediately became the largest town in the state, and more than doubled its population in the two decades before the war. Trade and manufacturing expanded; real estate values rose. Cultural as well as economic isolation began to dissipate as improved transportation brought more North Carolinians within the mainstream of American life. The 834 miles of track in North Carolina in 1860 had already begun to provide incalculable benefits to the state's citizenry. 

By the eve of the Civil War, North Carolina had largely shed its reputation as the "Rip Van Winkle State," due mainly to its improved transportation and communications network that had begun to link its people to the outside world. Instrumental in that transformation was the intervention of the state government whose aid was mandatory in a region where the populace was poor, scattered, and rural. Only the government could offer the financial aid needed to underwrite successful improvements, whether by land grants, stock purchases, or bond guarantees. Although the state always viewed its role as essentially regulatory, and supplementary to private enterprise in an effort to promote the general welfare, the presence of government was critical to the realization of improvements. Many of the principal roads were subsidized by the public, as were all the successful canals, navigation companies, and railroads. The internal improvements movement wrought radical changes. This was reflected in the heightened expectations of the people for their government by the end of the antebellum era.

---

American artist Thomas Sully painted this portrait of Fanny Kemble a year before the young actress married Pierce Butler, a plantation owner of Georgia.

Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Bulletin
Volume XLIV, Number 3   Wilmington, North Carolina   May 2000

Officers
President Constance H. Knox
Vice-President Dr. James Rush Beeler
Secretary Merle Chamberlain
Treasurer Beverly Wilson
Past President Robert W. Martenis
Executive Director Catherine Myerow
Counsel William J. Boney, Jr.

Archives Staff
Dr. J. Rush Beeler Susan T. Block
Merle Chamberlain Dr. Chris Fonvielle
Zita Reitblatt Martha Taylor

Directors
1997-2000
Richard Boylan Sylvia Bowles
Vesta Burroughs Shelagh Hubbard
Wade Wilson Jeanie Lessing
Jan Broadfoot Peggy Perdue
Blonnie Wyche Jean Ann Sutton

Editorial Committee
Editor: Blonnie Bunn Wyche
Diane Cashman Merle Chamberlain
Zita Reitblatt Gibbs Willard

Manuscripts may be submitted to the committee for review.
This engraving from promotional literature in 1884 indicated the briskness of trade on the Wilmington waterfront. The literature noted the following, "Foreign vessels at one compass. In port taking cargoes, 27; for Great Britain, 10; Continent of Europe, 17."