

## The Messenger.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 1904.

## WILMINGTON AND THE SEABOARD AIR LINE.

Wilmington stands fourth in the list of cotton exporting seaports of the United States. She has a large naval stores market. She has more wholesale houses than any city of its size south of Baltimore. These three facts would indicate that she had a trade and railroad traffic to the interior which was worth competing for by the railroads leading out from this city. Wilmington has but two railway systems connecting her with the interior, the Atlantic Coast Line and the Seaboard Air Line. The former has done much for our city and the adjacent territory in the way of building up new enterprises and improving old conditions. What can be said for the other?

The ears of the officials of the Seaboard Air Line must have been tingling Tuesday afternoon about the time the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce was in session, for some pretty plain words were being used by members of the latter regarding the manner in which this city is being treated by the officials of that railway system. From the statements of facts made and the conclusions drawn from them by some of our best business men present, who knew whereof they spoke, we are forced to one of two conclusions—that the men at the head of this railway system either do not want passenger and freight business in and out of Wilmington or are not competent to manage the company in a way to secure it.

As to the first proposition—Does this system not care for its proportionate part of the passenger and freight traffic of Wilmington? From the manner in which the merchants of this city are now and have for several years been treated, one is led to believe that it does not. But this matter is not optional with the company. It is a quasi public corporation and it is its duty to afford to all patrons the best accommodations possible within its power. That the Seaboard Air Line is doing this for Wilmington no one, outside of its officials, will contend. On the contrary, it is giving our city about the worst service, both passenger and freight, that can be imagined.

The city of Wilmington is one of the Seaboard's three Atlantic Seaboard points, and should be made a big shipping point, but instead, it is nothing more than a way station. Look at the arrangements for receiving and delivering freight on its yards here. A first class railroad would have better facilities at any flag station. The idea of a railroad having to refuse a shipment of four hundred tons of freight because the side track leading to where the desired shipment is located is in such bad condition that the engineer of the shifting engine would not run his locomotive over it. This is a fair example of the condition of the terminal facilities at this, one of the company's three seaports; and when we come to the matter of shipping and receiving local freight the conditions are as bad as to time taken for transportation. Mr. J. A. Taylor, one of our leading wholesale grocers and commission merchants, illustrated this point in the following remarks before the chamber of commerce on Tuesday:

"Freight reached Hamlet in the proper time, but to points beyond Hamlet the time was said to be indefinite. An instance was given where a shipment was made from Rockingham and it took seventeen days to reach here. It was generally admitted that it took anywhere from one to two weeks to get freight to Rockingham, when it should reach there in two or three days."

We know of a merchant here who has a bill of lading for freight shipped from Rockingham in September; the goods have not yet arrived. Instances of this delay in the receipt of freight to and from points beyond Hamlet are of almost daily occurrence. The truth is the road is not properly equipped for handling its business for this city and it does not take the necessary steps to handle it.

The business of the Seaboard Air Line at Wilmington is worth to that road from \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year. The company, were it to inaugurate the same methods as those of other roads seeking business, could have largely increased this sum, but

the cavalier manner in which its chief officials have treated the business men of our city, and the evident disposition to ignore the interests of our merchants has prevented the natural increase of its business with the growth of the city.

While it may be said that this company has not had a decrease in its receipts there has not been the increase that the rapid growth of the business of the port and the development of the contributing section would warrant and which has been secured by its competing line.

The truth is the Seaboard Air Line has sacrificed the port of Wilmington, its business men and the contiguous territory to the up-building of its through lines as feeders to cities to the north of us. For instance, the Atlantic Coast Line has hauled cotton to this port from the southwest which the Seaboard refused to take—whether it had not the rolling stock or for what reason we know not. For the past few years it has sought no new business from this "side tracked town."

We said above that a railroad which treated a city of Wilmington's importance as the Seaboard has done either did not want her trade or its officials did not have the brains to know how to secure it. As to the latter we quote a little by-play in the discussion of the matter in the meeting of the chamber of commerce on Tuesday by men who are probably well acquainted with the ability (?) of the railroad officials:

"Mr. Taylor said the facts should be laid before the new management and if redress was not given, to then carry the matter before the corporation commission, which could compel the road to give adequate service. The speaker said the corporation commission could require better trains; that they could require the railroad yards in this city to be put in the proper condition and that they could compel the S. A. L. to give good service."

"Here Mr. Wm. Calder interrupted the speaker and wished to know if it were possible for the corporation commission to instill brains into the heads of the officials of the S. A. L. This question brought forth the suggestion that although the commission might not be able to instill brains into the heads of the officials, they could get what brains the officials do have in better working order."

Whichever horns of the dilemma the chief officials of the road wish to take, we desire to call their attention to the fact that the state corporation commission has jurisdiction. If the company knows how to give Wilmington proper service and want to do it the commission will make it do so. If it does not know how, the commission will show it.

The truth is the Seaboard Air Line system has sacrificed its old friends, the people who gave it life and sustenance for years, and but for whom it would not now be in existence, for the purpose of becoming a great and through line (on paper) from the north to the south and west. It is draining the pockets of its old friends in an endeavor to build up a system to enrich others.

Now let's look at the passenger service this system gives to the most populous and most important city of our state. Branching out to the north, south and west, it gives Wilmington one passenger train a day. As to through travel that is not so important, as the other system gives convenient schedules to all points of the compass. But take up the matter of local travel on the Carolina Central. We quote Mr. C. C. Covington, another of our leading wholesale grocers who has occasion to visit points along the various roads leading out of our city. As to the horrible schedule on the Carolina Central he says:

"The road should be given such freight as they provide facilities for the handling. If the facilities provide for the handling of local traffic, then give them local traffic, and cut the balance out. If this plan was adopted, Mr. Covington said, instead of the merchandise going to the railroad, the railroad would be sending solicitors to the merchants to get their business. Mr. Covington spoke of what extremely poor passenger facilities the S. A. L. afforded to Wilmington and gave an illustration of how much better the service was out of Charlotte. A business man can leave Charlotte in the morning, come as far as Clarkton, transact his business, and return to Charlotte the same day. Take the service out of Wilmington and suppose the point to be reached is Lumberton. One is compelled to leave here at 3:15 in the afternoon, reaching Lumberton too late in the evening to transact any business. Early next morning the eastbound train passes returning to Wilmington, and the result is the Wilmington man has got to be away from Wilmington two nights and most of three days in order to transact his business. This is not only true of Lumberton, but of all the other stations between here and Hamlet. Mr. Covington said a schedule should be put in force that would give the Wilmington business men an opportunity to visit adjacent towns, transact their business and return to Wilmington on the same day."

A Wilmington business man wants to send a representative to a town fifty miles up this road to interview the merchants. He leaves Wilmington early one afternoon; gets to the town too late for business; has to spend the night there; makes his rounds the next day; spends the next night there; takes the train for home the next morning and gets here some

time before late dinner, if the train is on time—two nights, a whole day and the half of two other days consumed in visiting a half dozen customers fifty miles away. And this is not all: The filthy condition of the coach in which he has to ride is such as to make him pray his employer will never send him out on that route again. For this condition of the cars the local authorities are not responsible. These coaches leave Wilmington in the afternoon; reach Charlotte (if on time) after 10 o'clock at night and start back at 5 o'clock the next morning. On reaching Wilmington only the first class coach is allowed to lie over until the next day. The others are started back on the round trip in two or three hours after arrival—hot, dusty, dirty and, who knows not, disease infected.

This is the treatment the people of Wilmington are receiving at the hands of this corporation. They are shown no courtesies, are given no accommodations.

What our people want is an early morning train out of our city and one returning at a later hour, so our business men can go up the road, attend to their business and return to the city. They have it on every other railway line leading out of the city, and every other city in the state has the same. They should force the Seaboard to give it to them. They should not go to the officials of this road asking what the latter will do to improve our passenger and freight service; but should boldly tell them that they must have such and such improvements in the running of its trains, or forfeit every dollar's worth of business that can be sent over another road. Tell them you are determined on this course and stick to what you say. The Seaboard Air Line cannot afford to lose the \$300,000 or \$400,000 it receives on its traffic with this city. Bring it to terms by refusing it your traffic unless it will agree at least to show some disposition to give you just and fair treatment.

Our statement above that the officials of this system are either ignorant of the conditions or incompetent to cope with them is borne out by the following statement of President Williams to a reporter of the Baltimore News of last Monday:

"I know of no reason for selling Seaboard stock. There is no hitch of any kind in the arrangements for financing the needs of the company. . . . The property is in splendid condition and the prospects are all that could be desired."

When President Williams says the property is in splendid condition, he either ignores the fact that the road from Wilmington to Hamlet is a part of the line or he is ignorant of the fact that the condition of the track on this part of his system is not only in a bad, but in a dangerous condition. It is natural to suppose that the president of a railroad knows the condition of its lines, therefore it is to be taken that Mr. Williams in his above statement did not consider the line from here to Hamlet any thing but a side track on his system, for he could not have included it in his statement that "the property is in splendid condition."

That is a good plan the board of county commissioners of Guilford county have adopted to put a stop to so many hung juries and mistrials. When jurors who fail to agree on a verdict are locked up in a room in the court house and their vitals handcuffed to them, instead of being fed and lodged at a first-class hotel they will be more apt to come to their conclusions on time.

"The south, and especially Texas, wants the isthmian canal even if the methods used in its getting cannot be approved."—Houston Post.

"The gulf states want the canal, want it badly, want it in a hurry."—Galveston News.

This does not look as if the people of the gulf states were standing back on the question as to why and by whose aid Panama succeeded. They do not want to consume time by an effort to go behind the returns. They want a canal and do not want to keep up a dicker by which route it shall be built.

Two Pitt county towns held local option elections Tuesday and both went wet—Farmville by thirty two and Falkland by nineteen majority.

Philadelphia Team to Practice in the South.

Philadelphia, December 29.—President Potter, of the Philadelphia National League Baseball Club, announced tonight that the team would be taken to Savannah Ga., for spring practice. The players in charge of Hugh Duffy, the new manager will reach Savannah on March 15th, remain there two weeks and then return direct to Philadelphia.

Prominent Tobacco Dealer Goes Into Bankruptcy.

Danville, Va., December 30.—James A. Henderson, a prominent tobacco dealer and exporter of this city filed a voluntary petition in bankruptcy today in the Federal court here. The liabilities are scheduled at \$104,000, while the assets are laid at about \$36,000. The Commercial Bank of Danville is the largest creditor, the amount due it being \$17,000. The People's Savings Bank of Danville is named as creditor to the amount of \$12,500, and the First National Bank of Baltimore, Md., \$6,300.

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**BONEY & HARPER**

MILLING COMPANY,  
Wilmington, N. C.

July 22.

**STREET GAVE WAY.**

Team Fell Into a Hole on Red Cross Street Yesterday.

A mule hitched to a delivery wagon fell into a hole on Red Cross street yesterday afternoon but with the exception of tearing the harness to pieces no damage was done. The boy who was driving the delivery wagon said a section of the street gave way. It was reported that the mule broke through the street and fell into the sewer, but this was not true. It is not known what caused the cavity under the street. The matter was reported to the city officials and red lanterns were placed on both sides of the cavity to warn any who might pass along the street.

The accident happened too late in the afternoon to have anything done about repairing the street.

**THE RUSH OF XMAS**

is now over and we have still a few choice SUITINGS AND TROUSERS, which we are closing out at \$25.00-\$35.00. Our best arrangements—fit, and finish just the same as if you paid first prices. Last of the year and we wish to dispose of them. OVERCOATS—We are offering 5 per cent. reduction on the line consisting of Black Unfinished Worsteds, Cheviots—Blue Meltons. OUR MEN'S—YOUTH'S—BOYS' READY-MADE SUITS in Fancy Cheviots—Cambrics—Blue and Black Unfinished Worsteds are marked way down for these four days. If you would save money, give us a call.

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1450 Bushels Oats.	9611 Pounds Salt Mullet.
1240 Bushels Virginia Meal.	5900 Pounds Smoked Plates.
429 Bales Timothy Hay.	9120 Pounds D. S. Plates.
301 Bales Prairie Hay.	2400 Pounds Picnic Hams.
2100 Bags C. S. Meal.	4500 Pounds Snow Drift.
241 Bags C. S. Hulls.	4250 Pounds Boars Head.

**W. B. COOPER,**  
WILMINGTON, N. C.

**We Greet You!**

Our many friends and patrons, and wish you all a  
**HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.**

Thanking you for past favors, and soliciting a continuation of same. We are Yours Very Respectfully,

**GEORGE R. FRENCH & SONS.**

**To Our Trade! YOU SHOULD CALL**

We thank each and every one for their liberal patronage during this year, 1903, and we earnestly solicit a larger share of your trade during 1904.

Our facilities are unequalled, and our Capital ample to serve you, large or small.

Wishing each and every one a Merry Xmas and a very Prosperous Nineteen Hundred and Four,  
Yours Truly,

**D. L. GORE CO.**

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