

Old journal is a look at early Mountain Island

ca. 2004, exact date unknown

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Many textile plants have come and gone in Mount Holly, and all have played an important role in the building and history of the community.

The first textile plant in the county was built by Thomas R. Tate at Mountain Island. The plant, later operated by C.E. Hutchinson, was completely destroyed by the 1916 flood.

One of the Mountain Island Mill's claims to fame was an outstanding baseball team. The ace pitcher on the team was Jim Parker. He was said to have a fast ball which tore a catcher's mitt to shreds in a game against a Kings Mountain team.

During the mid 1950s, Parker, a graduate of Elon College, gave parts of his journal to a Mount Holly businessman named Percy Roberts. Parker was 80 at the time and was living in Black Mountain, N.C.

The diary entries cover a period between Jan. 12, 1897 and Oct. 24, 1902, with the exception of a near two-year gap from March, 1897 to Jan. 1899. They are a collection of historical snapshots of that period of time from the community as well as the mill.

Roberts published the journal in a piece he wrote for the News on Jan. 14, 1955.

As part of the city's 125th birthday celebration, the historical journal entries are being printed once again.

- Jan. 12, 1897. I arrived at Mountain Island about 2 p.m. and started boarding with Becky Howard in the old boarding house north of the village. My roommate was Mr. Craig, 73 years of age. Rev. R.L. Owensby, pastor of Methodist church was next acquaintance.
- Jan. 17, 1897. My first Sunday at Mountain Island. Attended the Baptist services in a.m. and the Methodist services in the evening.
- Jan. 18, 1897. My first days work in the cotton mill. Started in the lapper room.
- Jan. 30, 1897. It took four men to keep the ice broken up at the mouth of the intake to run stock.
- Feb. 2, 1897. Received my first wages < 50 cents a day < \$3 a week.
- Feb. 7 1897. Bob Icerman had company in his room tonight and kept the whole house shaking with rough music and dancing until 12 o'clock.
- Feb. 13, 1897. Met Pat Jenkins for the first time.
- Feb. 14, 1897 Mr. Norket, the Baptist minister, preached in the Methodist church tonight. Mr. Owensby is sick.
- March 27, 1897. Played first practice game of baseball.
- Jan. 16, 1899. Will Brinkley is a splendid machinist and Perry McVerf is a splendid blacksmith. He is a colored man.
- Jan. 17, 1899. Mr. Lackey goes to hunt for another job. He has been boss of the spinning room.
- Feb. 4, 1899. First baseball practice.
- Feb. 14, 1899. Three degrees above zero this a.m.
- Feb. 15, 1899. Went skating on the mill pond.
- Feb. 16, 1899. Mill idle on account of ice.
- Feb. 20, 1899. Mrs. Jim Prim has another boy.
- March 3, 1899. Ralph Bingham's entertainment at Mount Holly.
- March 6, 1899. Mrs. Pettus was buried today.
- March 16, 1899. Mr. Eli Lineberger died.
- March 20, 1899. River on rampage. Water nearly to weave room floor and over the wire at the ferry.
- March 23, 1899. Dr. Wallace's horse jumped off the flat at the ferry taking doctor and buggy with him.
- March 28, 1899. Mrs. Lizzie Phelan takes charge of boarding house.
- March 31, 1899. Mountain Island Athletic Association formed.

- April 1, 1899. First game of ball on new ground.
- April 22, 1899. Bathe in river. Some chilly.
- April 30, 1899. Ball game at St. Mary's. Mtn Island 9 St. Mary's 8.
- June 1, 1899. Stewart begins artisan well.
- June 3, 1899. Ball game Mtn Island 29 Tuckaseege 0.
- June 13, 1899. Ball game. Mtn. Island 5 St. Mary's 0.
- June 23, 1899. Jess M. Oldham takes position here in mill office.
- June 24, 1899 Ball Game. Mtn Island 8 Kings Mountain 2.
- July 4, 1899. Ball game. Mtn Island 6 Newton 1.
- July 8, 1899. Ball game. Charlotte 3 Mtn Island 2.
- July 22, 1899. No rain for two weeks.
- Aug. 11, 1899. Mclaughlin takes position in mill office.
- Oct. 4, 1899. Three wild geese killed near Cat Hole.
- Nov. 14, 1899. Much talk about old mill being sold.
- Jan. 1, 1900. Cold and ice everywhere.
- Jan. 30, 1900. Mr. Jordan fired John Rodman after finding him in his room drunk.
- Feb, 10, 1900 Jim Dunn buys Mr. Rodman's horse and buggy.
- Feb. 12, 1900. A letter from Trinity College wanting me to pitch for them. I refused.
- Sept. 19, 1900. Mountain Island fair. The Mtn Island float finest there. Jim Carr was the speaker.
- Oct. 20, 1900. Series of meetings at First Baptist Church.
- Oct. 28, 1900. Revival begins at Methodist church. Mr. Surrentt is preacher.
- Nov. 11, 1900. R.L. 'Bob' Abernathy's home burns.
- Dec. 11, 1900. Rev. R. L. Owensby leaves.
- Dec. 12, 1900. Mr. Bradley, new minister arrives. He succeeds Mr. Owensby. We knew that he comes from the high hill in western North Carolina. He comes here with a light open top buggy drawn by two pony size horses and the buggy's rear wheels were furnished just like a two horse wagon as the roads were rough and very steep hills. He kept a big wad of tobacco in one side of his mouth except when preaching. He did not usually preach over 15 or 20 minutes but he really says something while he was at it.
- Jan. 16, 1901. The mill men of N.C. have enacted the 11 hour work day.
- March 4, 1901. The 11 hour system begins in the mill.
- March 18, 1901. My first day as superintendent of the mill.
- April 20, 1901. High water runs in mill office. River highest since 1877. Ferry wire broke. Bridge at Mount Holly washed away.
- May 18, 1901. St. Mary's 12 Mtn Island 9.
- May 22, 1901. High water again. Catawba on rampage rising rapidly. Highest last night about one o'clock. Water up to top sills of cotton warehouse, dry and warp room. Lots of Indian skeletons washed up in Beatty's Bottoms.
- June 9, 1901. Ball game. Mtn Island 11 Gastonia 6.
- July 29, 1901. Went to McAlls. S.C. with Pat and Rube Jenkins and Will Bentley to play ball.
- July 30, 1901. Wash Icenhour, Fred Prim had a fight. Wash nearly killed.
- Sept. 11, 1901. Mtn Island Mill sold for \$175,000.
- Feb. 20, 1902. I returned from Avondale Mills in Birmingham, Alabama to Mtn Island and found fourteen inches of snow.
- March 20, 1902. Jack Farrar's ankle was broken in a wreck of a run away team.
- April 29, 1902. Mr. W.T. Jordan buys an automobile first in Gaston County. It was called a Loco-mobile steam buggy.
- Oct. 15, 1902. Dr. Brown Wallace and Miss Edna Lowe were married.
- Oct. 24, 1902. Mr. Ramseur, 84 years of age was visiting here today. Says he did his first work in the old Mtn Island Mill. That was the years 1845 to 1850.