

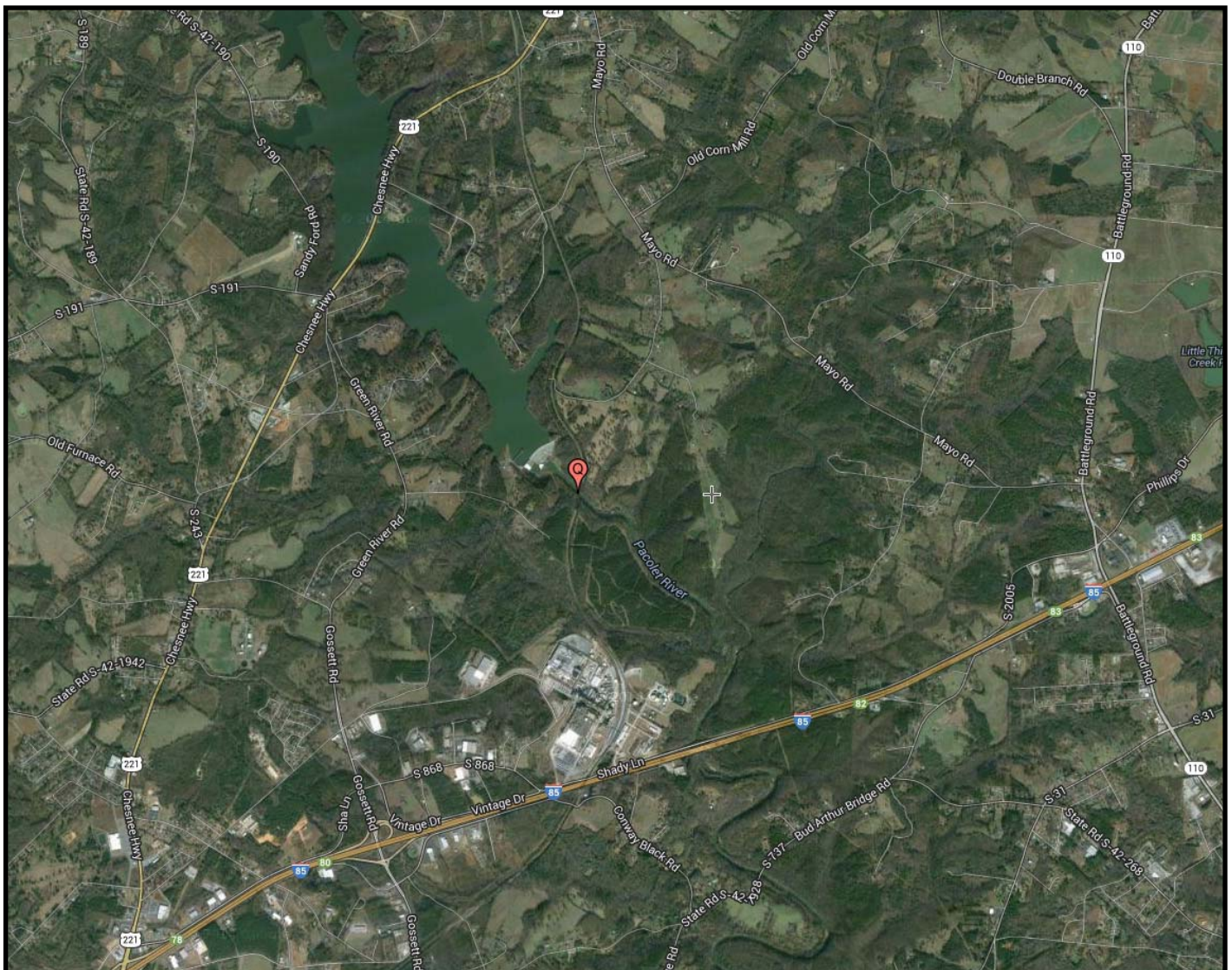
## 1909 Rail Road Bridge over the [Pacolet River](#)

The last railroad line built into Spartanburg was the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad (CC&O) and it was completed on October 29, 1909. The CC&O originally connected Spartanburg with Dante, Virginia via Chesnee, SC and Marion, NC to the north.

This line required the construction of a long trestle and bridge over the [Pacolet River](#) about 12 miles upstream from [Pacolet Mills](#). The location of the bridge is shown in the photo below.

Thanks to Mr. Paul Jermyn, we now have access to rare photos showing the building of the bridge. The Civil Engineer in charge of the bridge was Mr. Willis Vail. Mr. Vail had the fairly new field of photography as a hobby. He made photos of many of his projects including the railroad bridge over the [Pacolet](#). These photos are shown below. Mr. Vail also kept a diary/journal of his daily activity while working on the bridge. Mr. Jermyn has also given us a copy of the journal as it relates to the [Pacolet River](#) project. The journal is in cursive handwriting and is almost 100 years old. The pages are often difficult to read but several pages have been “translated” and are also shown below. Other pages will be added to these once they have been transcribed.

It is very unusual to find both photos and a journal for engineering projects in Spartanburg County at such an early time. World War I was still 10 years in the future when Mr. Vail was working on his bridge.



The site of the bridge is shown by the letter “Q” in the red circle in the middle of the picture, It is just downstream from the Lake Blalock Dam which was not there at the time the railroad was built.



Topographic map showing the route of the railroad and the bridge across the [Pacolet River](#).

The Clinchfield Railroad has had a variety of names. Originally chartered as the Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad in 1886. In 1893 sold by bond-holders to the Ohio River & Charleston Railroad, which reorganized in 1902 as the South & Western Railroad, and in 1908 changed its name to the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad. In 1924 it again reorganized with the final name of the Clinchfield Railroad Corporation. Ultimately bought by CSX Transportation, Inc. who owns it today.



**This is a satellite view of the railroad bridge as it appears today.**



Looking up the [Pacolet River](#) from the bridge location.



Pacolet River bridge masonry from South End (6-8-1909)



[Pacolet River](#) bridge masonry from South side of river (7/7/1909).



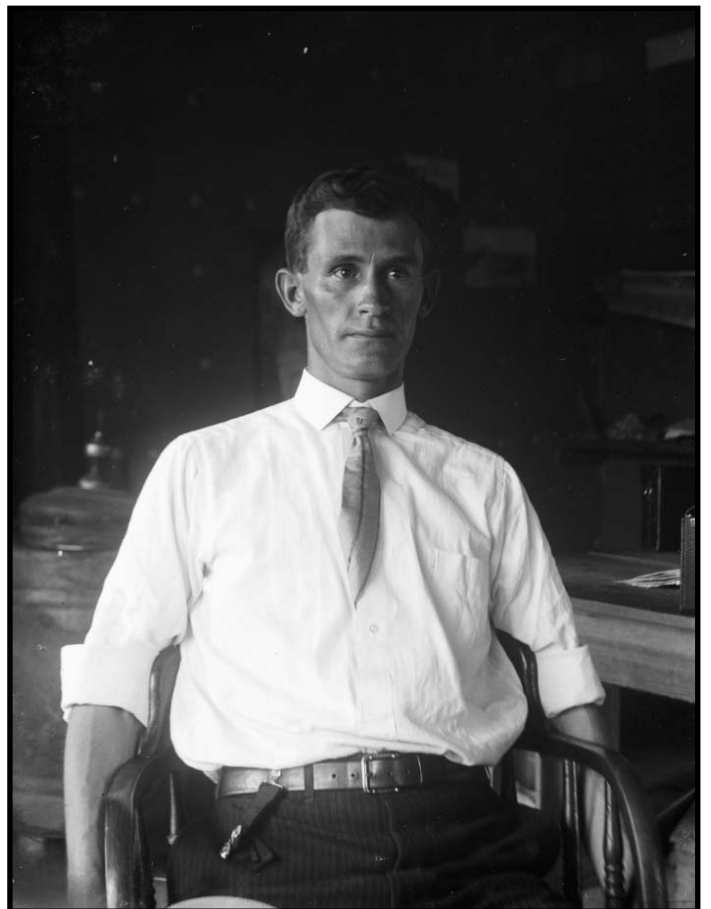
Starting erection of steel on [Pacolet River](#) bridge (7/28/1909).



Small creek that enters [Pacolet River](#) near the bridge location. This is thought to be either Cherokee Creek or Island Creek.



**Mr. B.B. Ezell . Photo taken on 6/24/1909.  
He worked with Mr. Vail on the railroad.**



**Mr. W. F. Tipton . Photo taken on  
6/29/1909. He also worked with Mr. Vail .**





**A photo of Mr. Willis Vail in his office when he working for the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad at Gulfport, Mississippi. The photo was made on January 29, 1905.**

**Information about Mr. Willis Vail - He was born in 1868 just after the Civil War in the town of Quakertown, New Jersey. He graduated from Swarthmore College with a degree in Civil Engineering. His first major job as an engineer was as general Manager of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad at Gulfport, Mississippi from about 1902 to 1905. He went on to work in construction for several other railroads. At the time he was building the bridge over the [Pacolet River](#) (1908-1909) he was employed by the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad. He had a long and successful career and died in 1951.**

**The following pages show some pages in his journal he kept while working on the bridge . Other pages will be added as they are transcribed.**

## 1908

### **Pg. 72**

9/28 (2) - Left Marion on 5 am train for Cowpens having to change and wait a half hour in Blacksburg. Mr. Reed was on, as also an axeman for my party. Arrived at Cowpens about 7:45, got a rig to bring us over to Parris's where the other members of the crew (?) are staying. It was 12:45 when we arrived. Got Mrs. To get is some dinner and finally persuaded them to take us in, too, until we could get a camp built. Went out on the line where we found the party at work. It comprises Jno Hicks - Transitman, D.J. Ball - rodman, P.H. Nash and N.D. Harris - chainmen, and J.W. Swofford - axeman.

10/3 (7) - Been at work all the week on the line running centers, making revisions, etc. Mr. Reed came out night before last and spent the night with us, and the next morning looked on a proposed revision I had in mind, and also at our proposed camp site. Today revised a line across [Pacolet River](#). It has been quite cool nights and mornings, but pleasant or sometimes warm in the day. Hicks and Harris have gone to Spartanburg tonight and the rest to Huckleberry (now Mayo, SC) to take (?), etc.

10/6 (3) - Mr. Jones and Mr. Reed came over to the line this morning to look at proposed revisions, etc.

10/11 (1) - Been all the week since the 3<sup>rd</sup> day on the revision and a party running check leads. This party out today. Raining

### **Pg. 73**

sixth day so was wet out. Am also under the weather today with an attack of diarrhea and fever and headache.

10/18 (1) - Fine weather all the week. Mr. Cafles and Mr. Reed out for the day. We have been referencing, staking the R.W. (Right of Way), making road surveys, etc., finished revisions and Ball finished check leads. Hicks and Harris have gone to Spartanburg, the latter to remain two or three days on account of his sister's wedding.

10/23 (6) - Fine weather up to yesterday when it rained all day and rained all day today also. Let Hicks go home for a visit. Ball taking him to Spartanburg,

10/25 (1) - W. W. Bo (?) came up yesterday afternoon f(?) r(?) 4 to check up the error in the leads and we did it this morning . Three of us went to the Holiness Church to preaching this morning. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (?)

11/7 (7) - Went over with Mr. Parris to Cowpens this morning to bring a lot of our camp stuff over. Mr. Reed staid with us 4<sup>th</sup> day night.

11/8 (1) - It has been cool for the last few days. Heavy frosts in the morning.

11/15 (1) - Coldest morning so far. Ice ¼" thick. Rainey most of yesterday. Cafles, Jone and Reed were on the line a few days ago but I missed seeing them.

11/21 (7) - Yesterday went with Mr. Parris to Spartanburg to get groceries, balance of camp equipment, etc. We started at 6: getting there about 9:30 and did not get away till about 3, and had a big load. It was my first visit to Spartanburg, which seems to be a much nicer town than I had expected to see. During my absence another man reported for work, H. Tiffany as Asst. in Charge of [Pacolet River Bridge](#). This morning we moved down to our new camp and spent all of the forenoon in fixing it up and most of the party did the same also in the afternoon but I went over the reference of the line. On fourth day, an inspector R. H. Martin, reported.

11/22 (1) - Spent part of the day fixing up around camp.

**Pg. 74**

11/29(1) - Spent the forenoon fixing up in the office and my room. Reading most of the PM. Very warm 71°. At noon. Has been warm for several days.

12/6 (1) - Was quite cold during the middle of the week close to 29° and 28° on two mornings. Mr. Jones and Mr. Reed were on the line on 6<sup>th</sup> day and took dinner with us. Raining this afternoon.

12/13(1) - Had some cold weather again, one morning down to 27°. Rained 6<sup>th</sup> day night. Yesterday a fine day and today also. Hicks got word of his father's death day before yesterday. Lived in Jefferson, Texas and was 85. Harris and Tiffany went to Spartanburg last night. Ball had orders to go on location party near Columbia so left here the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>.

12/20(1) - Has been very warm the last few days but much cooler today. Tiffany got a tent and put it up and his wife came and they are living in it. It is located a short distance back and to the left of the office.

12/23(4) - It rained night before last and most of yesterday. Today has been fine.

12/25(6) - Christmas again. The following presents I have received so far. From Ephraim, a tie and suspenders, from Aunt Annie, two pairs socks, from Florence two handkerchiefs, a toy slate, dust brush, 3 red paper bells, etc., from Annie B(?), a small basket, probably Indian, from Belle (?) a well silver mounted mustache comb and from J.R. Norris, Supt/ MacArthur Bros. Co. a fine shaving glass, silver mounted hair brushes and a comb. Mr. Hicks (?) this morning had a distribution of presents each getting bag containing an apple, an orange, some nuts, raisins and candy, and also each got a little toy, mine

**Pg. 75**

being a horse car. It has been a rather warm day, part of the time cloudy and part clear. A thunder shower passed around about 2 pm. We had turkey and cranberry sauce for dinner with celery, nuts and celery salad, cakes and gelatin. All of us here Nash and Harris and Ezelle went home except that Ezelle was here awhile this morning. This evening, one of the Scott Bros. came in and brought me a fine gauntlet furlined glove and Hicks a loose leaf notebook.

12/27(1) - Having had an invitation from Henry Epton to come over for dinner today I started about 10:30 and arrived at his place a half mile beyond Cherokee about 11:30. Left there at 3 o'clock having had a pleasant visit and a good dinner.

12/29(3) - Received from James and Allien today a pair of suspenders, a tie and two pairs of socks.

**1909**

1/1(6) - Worked today as usual.

1/3(1) - Around camp except that I took a walk down the creek back of our house to the River up that to Buck Creek and up the latter to the road and back here.

1/6(4) - Yesterday and day before raining. Very fine today.

1/10(1) - On 6<sup>th</sup> day our forces increased by W.F. Tipton, an inspector. It was a very cold disagreeable day. Therm. 38° in ?, 30° at noon and 32° at night. Yesterday some better and today fairly pleasant.

1/12(3) - Mr. Cafles and Mr. Reed came and stopped here awhile this afternoon.

1/17(1) - Rainy yesterday and ? day and ? and damp in between.

1/24(1) - It has been fine all the week, warm and clear. Down to 30° one or two mornings but rose to 70° in day time.

**Pg. 76**

1/31(1) - It had been very warm and fine up till 6th day when it rained a little in the morning then cleared off growing colder. Yesterday, cold and windy then 28° in morning, 39° at noon and 21° at 10 PM. This morning 14°, and 34° at noon. Somewhat windy and mostly clear.

2/1(2) - Cold this morning again 15°.

2/7(1) - Has been warm most of the week, although 20° on 4<sup>th</sup> day morning. A thunder shower, sixth day evening. Ball has been laid up with Tonsillitis for three days but much better now. Mr. Reed and telephone line-man Collins spent 4th day night with us. Today had visitors for dinner, a Mr. Smith, an inspector on Residency#2 and a Miss Herring.

2/14(1) - Today is my birthday and am getting old, 41. It has been warm nearly all the week with rain on the Fourth day afternoon. Dull and some rain today. Very dark yesterday forenoon.

2/21(1) - Received a pretty valentine from Aunt Annie on 2<sup>nd</sup> day and a comic one from someone a little later. Quite pleasant most of the week. A thunder shower one day. Down to 26° on 5<sup>th</sup> day. Up to 77° at noon today.

2/25(5) - Second and Third days raining, and also more yesterday morning. Fair today, 30° this morning, but 65° yesterday morning. Mr. Reed came over line today. Tiffany left us 2<sup>nd</sup> day morning to go on 1st ?

2/28(1) - Down to 24° on 6<sup>th</sup> day morning. Worked on estimate most of the day. D. H. Harris left us today. Another inspector came named Harmon.

3/4(5) - Today Taft becomes President. A cold and very windy day here.

3/5(6) - This is B.B. Ezell's last day with the company. He leaves to teach at the University of Florida.

3/7(1) - A very fine day. About 50° this morning and 72° at noon.

**Pg. 77**

3/14(1) - Raining all day yesterday. Mr. Reed's office was burnt up night before last and everything lost.

- 5-2-1. Very cool this morning. 50° at 10 last night.
- 5-2-2. Has been very cool every morning ever since last day. Mrs. Cook told me there was frost in P.M. & 2<sup>nd</sup> day morning. I went to Spartanburg to-day after breakfast. Mrs. Cook taking me. She is Mr. Reed's office, also visited the public library. Had a nice day.
- 5-6-5. Went to town yesterday after supper. This being only the second time I had been there. Left there about 6:30 P.M. and got back at 10 P.M. Had a pleasant day although cool in the morning.
- 5-13-5. Mack left this morning to go to Spartanburg, then on a trip on the C.C. & O. Will probably be back here for a few days in a week or so.
- 5-14-7. Swofford left for home to-day to be gone till 3<sup>rd</sup> day. It has been quite cool most of the week, especially at night the first part of the week.
- 5-22-1. Rainsy last three days, dull this morning. A lot much of the time as that fire is needed. Charlie went home last fourth day afternoon as one of his children was sick. Nola advised someone from Keane's camp in his place. Had not show up to-day. Ball went in to Spartanburg yesterday morning, and Nicks & Swofford last night. The latter two came out this morning, bringing Mrs. Nicks & her sister. Mack also returned to-day. Nicks reports that the S.A. L. has bought this road, and that the 1<sup>st</sup> division has been abandoned. Mr. Reed leaves end of this month, Mr. Jones taking his place. All the engineers on Maintenance taken off but three. Got a letter yesterday making all Resident Engineer's 125 & maintenance 480 as maximum.
- 5-29-7. Received to-day Mr. Reed's farewell letter, as he leaves on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Very hot to-day. Working on estimate. Report of B. A. L. getting

- this road probably someone we have heard nothing further. Mr. Copley has not resigned. Work on 1<sup>st</sup> division to be pushed. Mack left yesterday morning for good.
- 6-1-3. Worked on estimate all day yesterday & to midnight last night, and till noon to-day. Hot weather now, about 90° every day. Quite heavy showers yesterday afternoon.
- 6-3-5. Very Rainsy day, and nearly all of last night. Went down to Rabbit Run this morning, but the bottom of the pen is in relation was nearly covered with water & could not do anything. Nicks has been laid up in bed yesterday & to-day.
- 6-6-1. This morning went to Bush Creek Church in company with Swofford and Miss Keane. Had a night good sermon. Ball & Nicks went to Spartanburg last night, and left in evening here on night. This evening B. B. Egell came and took supper with us and stayed till 9. Was glad to see him, as it has been over three months since he left. He is a mighty nice fellow.
- 6-8-3. Mr. Jones, now Division Engineer instead of Mr. Reed came on the line to-day.
- 6-13-1. Mr. Jones & Mr. Steffens came on line yesterday. Had a shower last evening and during the night. Rather hot and close to-day.
- 6-15-3. R. L. Davis, left to-day to take place on morning inspectors on track relations in Chicago for P.R.R.
- 6-18-6. L. B. Parris got tired of working and left to-day. Started measuring up Bennett's field to-day.
- 6-21-2. Took on Jos. Lamm this morning for a few days till Mr. Jones could send someone out.
- 6-22-3. This morning when down up the line, another man arrived, L. O. Rouse, who was to take Ball's place & make leave.
- 6-24-5. This morning laid C. P. Newman off and took Mrs.

This is an example of what Mr. Vail's Journal looks like before it is transcribed.