

Jordan Council Hardin

By Mike Hardin

Jordan Council Hardin was born in Boone, North Carolina on August 3, 1830 to the parents of John Hardin and Charlotte Council Hardin.

Both parents were natives of western North Carolina. The Hardin's were descendents of French Huguenots who came to America around 1706 and had settled in North Carolina in the late 1700's. Jordan's great grandfather, Capitan William Everett Hardin had served in the Revolutionary war in the South Carolina militia.

John Hardin had served as a Senator in the NC Assembly from Ashe County in 1828. He had purchase 245 acres of land from Jonathan Boone, the brother of Daniel Boone, in the outskirts of the town of Boone, NC, where he built his home.

On Jordan's maternal side his grandfather was Jordan Council, who owned

the first store in Boone. Jordan Council married Sallie Howard who was the daughter of Benjamin Howard, who built a cabin for Daniel Boone and whom Howard's Knob in Boone, is named after.

Jordan was the fourth child of five and all attended an Old Fields School at nearby Valley Crucis where an Episcopal school had been founded. Jordan learned early the art of surveying, for he "ran lines" all through his life. Many plats that he made can be found.



Survey tools owned by Jordan C. Hardin and used in laying out the ET&WNC right of way. *From the Mike Hardin Collection*



This leather book is inscribed “Jordan C. Hardin’s Day Book, January the 17th 1850, Cranberry School House”. It is full of notes he took about how much money was paid and who attended. *From the Mike Hardin Collection*

About 1850 John Hardin, and perhaps others acquired the Cranberry Iron Mine and operated it until some time during the Civil War. John was assisted by a slave Peter Hardin who was the son of a Creek Indian that had been brought from the battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814, by General Nathaniel Taylor, on his horse, and sold to Major George Duffield, of Elizabethton, TN. At some point Peter was sold to John Hardin and then to Jordan Hardin on Jan. 2, 1852.

The Iron Manufacture’s Guide edited by J.P. Lesley in

1859 states that the Cranberry Bloomery Forge was built about 1820 and rebuilt in 1856. That it was fourteen miles from Taylor’s Store on Cranberry Creek and owned by Twitty, Miller, Bynum and others, and leased to Jordan C. Hardin of Watauga County, NC.

There was a post office at Cranberry Forge in 1861 with John Hardin as Post Master. On December 4th of that same year Jordan married Julia Carolina Williams, who lived in the Buffalo Creek settlement in Carter County, TN. Julia was the daughter of George Duffield Williams and Lucinda Haun. The Duffield Academy, later renamed Milligan College, in Elizabethton, TN is where two of Jordan’s sisters were in attendance in 1850.



The young couple Jordan C. and Julia Hardin *Photo from the Mike Hardin Collection*

The old brick house which stands on the campus of Cranberry High School, is the oldest building in Avery County. It was once much larger than it is now and during its existence it has been used as a commissary, hotel, office building, post office, and residence. Either John Hardin or his son Jordan built it and, standing there all these years, as county borders have changed it has been in Yancey, Watauga, Mitchell and Avery Counties.

The young couple lived at Cranberry and during the Civil War years of 1861 to 1865 Jordan Hardin operated the Forge and worked from forty to sixty men who made blooms and pig iron that were hauled by wagon to Lenoir, Marion, Johnson's Depot, and Camp Vance in Morganton by Peter Hardin, where they were sold to the Confederacy for the manufacture of ax heads.

After the war, in 1866 E. Nye Hutchinson and others purchased the Cranberry Iron Company. A transportation system was needed to get the iron ore out of the mountains to be sold. So, on May 24, 1866 local men chartered the ET&WNC railroad.

In 1867 the Hardin family with their three children who had all been born in Cranberry, Lucy, born 1863, George W., born 1864 and Mary, born 1866, moved to Buffalo Creek, Carter County, TN, where Julia's family was living. Then in 1870 he bought land on Sinking Creek, a little closer to the young town of

Johnson's Depot. In 1867, he had been a signer on both subscription lists to help build the Institutes at Buffalo Creek and Science Hill in Johnson City.



The Hardin Home on Sinking Creek is now part of the Johnson City Municipal Golf Course, with “the hilltop behind the house, where J.C. Hardin raised 100 bushels of wheat to an acre”, one of the present golf greens. *From the Alan Hardin Collection*

The original minute book of the ET&WNC railroad shows that the first stockholders meeting was held in Elizabethton on Feb. 17, 1868 where J.C. Hardin was elected a Director. Soon afterwards the railroad received 150 coupon bonds from the governor of Tennessee and J.C. Hardin motioned that they buy an iron safe.

John Hughes, J.C. Hardin and the president E. Simerley were appointed to an executive committee to transact any and all business while the railroad was getting started.

When the First Christian Church of Johnson City was organized on Nov. 12, 1871, we find listed as No. 17 the name J.C. Hardin, with the note “appointed Elder Feb. 20, 1875 also appointed Clerk and Treasurer”. The church records are in his handwriting from then on for several years. He also served as Treasurer for the ET&SW Va. Co-Operation of Christian Churches for many years. In 1872 their fourth child James H. was born.

The work of the railroad progressed with many hardships and difficulties, until the stock subscription and bond money was exhausted. Being unable to pay the bond interest, the State instituted a proceeding to sell the railroad. On Nov. 15, 1871 the Commissioners reported that on that date they sold the railroad to J. C. Hardin, John

Hughes and others for \$20,000. Thereafter, John Hughes was President and J.C. Hardin was Secretary-Treasurer.

In a letter from J.C. Hardin to C.W. Russell, one of the original incorporators of the Cranberry Iron & Coal Co., dated February 14, 1872, in which Mr. Hardin states:

“The purchasers of our Rail Road met yesterday at Elizabethton. Your letters of January 8th & 20th were read and considered. Whereupon, the meeting requested Hon. R.R. Butler, Member of Congress, from our district to visit you in New York City and consult with you in regard to the Road from this point to Cranberry Iron Works and on to the Western extension of the North Carolina Rail Road. Mr. Butler is one of the twelve gentlemen that made the purchase. He is to visit your city between this time and 8th March next. He is one of the owners and can consult with you freely on the subject. I think your proposition concurring the completion of said road to the line can be

accomplished if I fairly understand your ideas.”

On Feb. 28, 1873 General R.F. Hoke, who had no doubt been a friend of J.C. Hardin’s during the war, bought the Cranberry works and formed the Cranberry Iron and Coal Co.

In a letter from A. Pardee, Jr. dated Hazelton, Pa. June 22, 1875, to J.C. Hardin at Johnson City, Washington County, East Tennessee, states “In Philadelphia yesterday I met the Directors of the Cranberry I & C Co. and they concurred in the proposition I made to you and the other gentlemen in regard to the purchase of the RR’d property.” Mr. Pardee asks for map and profiles of the road as surveyed and also for the Jonesboro newspaper.

In 1875, the Nashville Chancery Court confirmed the sale of the railroad to A. Pardee and Associates upon the payment of \$25,000. The court appointed A. Pardee Jr. as President and F.A. Comly, William Firmstone, George Richards, R.F. Hoke and J.C. Hardin as Directors. J.C.

Hardin would remain the only director from Johnson City for some time.

A letter from Mr. Pardee to Mr. Hardin dated Oct. 29, 1878; states that arrangements had been made to complete the location of the Railroad from Doe River Cove, the end of the grading, to Cranberry. The letter further states that Mr. Matson the Engineer will probably arrive at Johnson City Saturday next, either in the morning or evening and that:

“Gen. Hoke will come across the mountains from Morganton about the time Mr. Matson will reach the road. If he should be detained we will be obliged to you if you will give Mr. Matson all the information you can in reference to the topography of the country.

We want of course the shortest line with least expense that can be obtained. One point we want settled and that is whether or not a line cannot run thru the gorge – thus avoiding the long route up Little Doe River, over Whiteheads Hill & down

again to the valley of the Doe River.”

In the next stockholders meeting that the railroad held in Johnson City on May 22, 1879, the Directors elected officers, including A. Pardee as President and J.C. Hardin as Secretary-Treasurer.

Another letter from Mr. Pardee to Mr. Hardin, dated June 20, 1879, states:

“On my return I sent O’Connor the map, profiles and estimates, but as yet have not heard from him. I fully expect to hear however in a few days and am inclined to think he will make a fair proposition to build the road.”

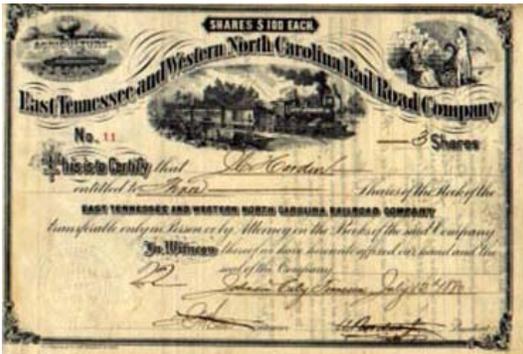
Another letter from Mr. Pardee to Mr. Hardin dated April 3, 1880, says:

“I hope you have rec’d from the various parties in y’r neighborhood the certificates or receipts for money or materials furnished the E.T.&W.N.C.R.R. as origl’y organized. Time and trouble will be saved if this is done properly.”



This photo is Jordan C. Hardin as he appeared in the late 1800's. Photo taken at Cargille Studios in Johnson City. From the Mike Hardin Collection

When the railroad was finally completed in the early 1880's, Jordan was named the first depot agent in Johnson City. He held that position until his death.



This ET&WNC stock certificate, issued to J.C. Hardin, is number 11 and dated July 10, 1880. Ario Pardee Jr. as President signed it. From the Mike Hardin Collection

Milligan College was benefited greatly by the work of J.C. Hardin. In 1881 we see his name listed in their annual as being on their Board of Trustees and under Officers listed as President of the Board.

Julia died on May 28, 1886 and Jordan Hardin passed away on June 27, 1898, and was laid to rest in the Hardin plot in Oak Hill Cemetery in Johnson City. The Johnson City Comet reported "In the death of J.C. Hardin Monday night Johnson City loses one of its oldest and most respected citizens... For many years Mr. Hardin has been the depot agent at the E.T. & W.N.C. depot and has been a faithful and efficient official. His familiar face will be missed by the summer tourist who frequent this section as well as by our people who have business at the depot."



The remains of Julia Williams Hardin and their two little boys who had died in their young years were brought in from the Williams Cemetery along Buffalo Creek and were reentered beside those of J.C. Hardin in Oak Hill. *From the Mike Hardin Collection*

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