

History of the Farmer's Alliance Store in Siler City

The Farmers' Alliance Store in Siler City has a unique history, and by the 1990s, it was believed to be the only existing store of its kind in America.



Seeing the need for a central place to trade in the fledgling community of Siler City, a group of farmers from the surrounding area met August 7, 1888, at Loves Creek School House, a one room building located on the ground of the present Loves Creek Baptist Church on Highway 64 just outside eastern limits of Siler City. They organized a corporate body for the purpose of buying, selling, and exchanging goods, wares, merchandise, and farm products. Buying seed and fertilizer in bulk allowed the store to pass the reduced price on to farmers.

Forty Chatham County Farmers' Alliance Lodges were represented, and various members subscribed \$300 each for stock in the new enterprise. The group was interested primarily in providing cheaper prices for its members; thus, the general public's trade was not considered too important at that time. The store had its own constitution, and stockholders were required to be farmers and members of the Alliance Lodge

A lot was purchased from Samuel Siler on the east side of present South Birch Avenue at Beaver Street on August 28, 1888, and a two-story wooden building was erected. A new two-story brick building was built on the site in 1909 with an addition made in 1915 for grocery, seed, and hardware departments. Later, in the front part of the new building a room was furnished with library table, chairs, and crib for a public rest area especially for women and children. On the wall above the table in the rest area hung a Romon's Calendar (Farmers' Almanac planting calendar), a relevant part of the store.

For many years, the store operated on the barter system. Huge containers for the storage of grain were placed in the store warehouse. After unloading his grain, the farmer would exchange grain for articles of clothing, groceries, or hardware. It was a very common sight to see the vacant lots full of horses and wagons.

The store began as a source of agricultural needs—carrying equipment, groceries, wearing apparel, and needs for the farm and home. Later, the store carried lawn and garden supplies, ladies' and men's apparel, western wear, shoes, cowboy boots, galoshes, hats, jeans, bib overalls and coveralls, small food items, stick candy, oil lamps, the famous old Rawleigh Products (salves and remedies). Apiary equipment for local beekeepers was added. Even in later years, hoop cheese could be purchased there, along with scrub boards and ceramic chamber pots.

Until its closure in 2018, the Farmers' Alliance store was the oldest business still in operation in the town of Siler City.

Read more about the store's interesting history and the many Chatham citizens involved in two booklets published to celebrate the 100th and 115th anniversaries of the store:

[History of the Farmer's Alliance Store, Inc. Siler City, NC 100th Year, 1888 – 1988](#)

[Farmer's Alliance Store, Inc., A 15-Year Companion Booklet, 115 Years 1888 - 2003](#)

