

Siler, Jacob ^[1]

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by Maryann Sloan-Farmer, 1994

1 June 1795–21 or 25 Apr. 1871

Jacob Siler, western North Carolina pioneer, state legislator, and Cherokee Indian agent, was born in South Carolina's Pendleton district, of German and Irish ancestry. His grandfather, Plikard Dederic Siler, emigrated to America from Weimar, Germany, and eventually settled near present-day Siler City in [Chatham County](#) ^[2]. Jacob's father, Weimar, fought in the [French and Indian War](#) ^[3] as a boy and married Margaret Rafferty on 12 Mar. 1786, when he returned from service in the [American Revolution](#) ^[4]. One of nine children, Jacob joined the army as a young man but never saw active



Image of Jacob Siler, from *The Family of Weimar Siler, 1755-1831*, [p. 65], published 1951 by Leona Bryson Porter. Presented on Hathitrust Digital Library. ^[5]

In 1817 he left his family in [Buncombe County](#) ^[6] and, with William Britton, headed west to explore land along the Upper Little Tennessee River that had been acquired from the Cherokee a few years earlier. Siler and Britton inadvertently crossed over the boundary line set by the treaty and so returned to settle in what is now [Macon County](#) ^[7]. From a Cherokee chief named Balltown George, they bought land for twenty-five cents an acre and set up a store, stocking it with provisions from their two pack horses.

Siler's brothers and parents soon joined him in Macon County. Siler's Bald in the Great Smoky Mountains is named for Jacob's brother Jesse, and Siler's Bald in the Nantahala Range is named for his brother William. Albert Mountain, also in the Nantahalas, is named for William's son.

Jacob Siler was appointed a magistrate for the newly formed Macon County in 1828, as he held the same position in [Haywood County](#) ^[8], from which Macon was formed. He and Colonel Joseph Cathey of Haywood County were appointed to establish the line between the two counties. Siler was then made county surveyor, a position he held until 1835, when he resigned to represent Macon County in the North Carolina legislature. In 1839–40 he served as a Cherokee Indian agent for the state.

Jacob was an active member of Mount Zion Methodist Church in Macon County. He was married twice: first, on 8 Feb. 1822 to Matilda Swain, sister of [David L. Swain](#) ^[9], later governor of North Carolina. Jacob and Matilda had five children. After her death on 5 Nov. 1858, Jacob married Mary Thornton Highsmith on 18 Dec. 1864 and had two more children.

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