



In 1946, the Atlantic & East Carolina Railway was the shortest rail line in the country to operate with 100 percent diesel power. Streamline locomotives like the No. 400 above were the colorful rolling art deco masterpieces of their day.

## **Havelock Station Railroad History**

### *Notes, Nuggets & Details*

**Remarks by Edward Ellis, Havelock City Historian  
Havelock Historical Preservation Society  
Meeting at Trader's Store  
Tuesday, July 27, 2004**

*INTRO: The first settlers arrived here more than 300 years ago. So, boy, do I have a lot to tell you.*

*I am going to make some assumptions tonight. One is that you know all about Sir Henry Havelock; that you know I think he's one of the greatest men who ever lived; and that you are sick to death of hearing me talk about him.*

*Second, I am going to assume that you know the broad strokes about Gen. Ambrose Burnside's Yankee invasion here during the unpleasantness of the 1860s, the one that resulted in the battle of New Bern and the fall of Fort Macon.*

*What I've done is go through all of my material and pull out everything I have related to the railroad here. I think you are going to be surprised by some of things I have to report. I was surprised and it's my stuff!*

*So tonight I offer a series of vignettes about the railroad at Havelock.*

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**Weekly Union newspaper**

New Bern, N.C.

June 3, 1858

“We have learned that the last rail of the Atlantic and N. C. Railroad was laid Monday.”

*The completion came 23 years after it was first authorized by the N. C. General Assembly. It was quite a relief. For years the newspapers were filled with sniping, recrimination, blame, and broken promises regarding the failure to get the job done. Very much like the Havelock bypass. [Laughter]*

**June 12, 1858 newspaper article**

“The first train from Goldsboro to Beaufort (ran on) Monday, June 7, 1858. The train was composed of two passenger cars filled to their utmost capacity with politicians, pleasure seekers, and not a few members of the fairer sex from New Bern, Kinston etc who left the depot for Morehead City.”

*This was the first train to cross Slocum’s Creek and the old Beaufort Road, at the place we now call Havelock. It was an inauspicious start as the two candidates for Governor held a debate in Beaufort that night at which a fist fight broke out.*

The newspaper article declared “Judge E dealt Mr. M a blow that was quickly returned.” Another piece: Said the dispute was “amicably settled.”



*We don't know who won the fight but Judge E, also known as John W. Ellis, and no kin of this writer, a Democrat from Rowan County, won the governorship and served throughout the Civil War that would soon follow.*

Other headlines in same issue of the newspaper:

Bloody battle between Texas Rangers and Comanche Indians

Yellow fever in New Orleans

Progress on the submarine telegraph cable across the Atlantic

*The Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad became known as the "Old Mullet Road" or "Old Mullet Line" due to the large quantities of fish and other seafood hauled up the line from Morehead City.*

Random fact: Slocum Creek is at milepost 75.7 of the A&EC rail line.

### **One of the first actions of the Civil War involved Havelock**

#### **J.M Hollowell**

A Remembrance

Goldsboro, 1909

“On the 13th of April, 1861, the town (of Goldsboro) was full of country people who with the citizens of the town kept close to the telegraph office for news of the firing that was going on upon Fort Sumter at Charleston, S.C., but at sunset no news of its surrender had been received. The result came sometime after nightfall.

There was no telegraph line then to New Bern. When the train for that place left on Saturday the 13th at 3 o'clock p.m., the fort was still holding out. That was the latest from there.

The people of New Bern could not wait until Monday to hear further from Charleston. There being no train on the A. & N.C.R.R. on Sunday, they besought the president, Col. J.D. Whitford, to send an extra engine and coach to Goldsboro, which he did, and it came loaded with the most prominent men of New Bern.

On Monday morning, Gov. Ellis wired Capt. Craton to proceed with his company (the Goldsboro Rifles) to Fort Macon, and take possession of that fortification. But Capt. Josiah Pender, of Beaufort, N.C., anticipated the Governor's desire and on Sunday, April 14th, with a detachment of men from Beaufort went over to the fort and took possession, there being only one man, Sgt. Alexander, in charge of the place.

But Capt. Craton began to collect his men. Some of them lived several miles in the country, and by 3 o'clock, when the New Bern train left, he had them aboard.

*(On April 16, 1861, three days after the fall of Fort Sumter and the day after President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to suppress the rebellion, Confederate forces, the first NC troops, the Goldsboro Rifles, passed by rail through Havelock.)*

Bless you, those were exciting times. The people were stirred as I never saw them before, nor since. That day I saw the first tears of the war, as the wives, parents, sisters, brothers and friends stood at the train to bid the soldier boys goodbye; but alas, the tears that day were but the beginning of the floods of tears that followed in the next four years.”

*Thus, less than three years after the completion of the rail line, Havelock was in the middle of a war.*

*Interestingly, and despite what I have previously written, I have to date found no reference to a railroad depot from this period. While the place is called Havelock Station, no newspaper article, map, or military record mentions a depot or railroad building of any kind. No depot was built at the time. “Havelock Station” referred to the place, the crossroads, a point of re-supply for firewood and water adjacent to Slocum Creek. A station can be a building, but it can also be a place.*

From a fleet of 60 vessels, Burnside landed his army of 10,000-15,000, depending on your source, near the mouth of Slocum’s Creek near what is now Carolina Pines on March 13, 1862.

**General John G. Parke**, later in life the superintendent of West Point, then in command of the Rhode Island Heavy Artillery wrote:

“At this time the Third Brigade consisted of three and one-half regiments and the task assigned was to invest Fort Macon and guard the railroad as far north as Havelock Station against the small bands of Confederate cavalry that infested the county to the west.”

“On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, most of the brigade was ordered to march along the railroad, which it did, reaching Havelock Station...and there bivouacking for the night. The march proved excessively fatiguing to the men, as they had to step from tie to tie on the road bed, and also run hand-cars containing their supplies.”

*During the two years that the federals were encamped at Havelock, they complained bitterly. They called it “snake-infested...remote...the worst kind of duty...a crossroads with very few people” and claimed that “the only comfort available is the chain lightning whiskey to be had at every house and store.”*

“Every locality in that country which contained as much as a blacksmith shop and a store, the principal staple of which was chain lightning whiskey, was dubbed a city and looked upon as a future metropolis.”

**From the *History of the Fifth Rhode Island Heavy Artillery***

*On March 20, 1862, the soldiers were ordered to build a blockhouse fort at the railroad trestle over Slocum’s Creek to "guard it against Confederate cavalry or guerrilla bands that might attempt to interdict the route."*

*(A hand-drawn map from First Division Headquarters, New Bern, N.C. dating from 1862-63 shows the location of the blockhouse where the railroad tracks at Havelock cross Slocum Creek.)*

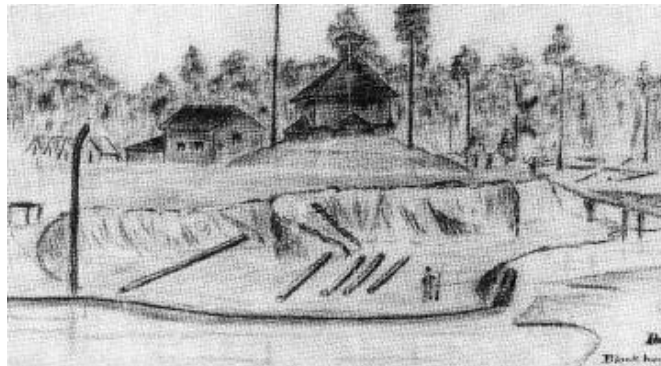
When the rest battalion moved out for the Battle of Fort Macon, “Captain Arnold’s Company E was stationed at Havelock, near an abandoned grist mill, the machinery of which the rebels had attempted to destroy when they left that neighborhood. The mechanics of the Fifth...soon put it in running order again, and it was found very serviceable to the comfort and subsistence of the men.”

(Today, the mill pond that was the location of the referenced mill is on Slocum Creek adjacent to the Havelock Tourist and Events Center.-- EE, 6/13/2017)

*The mill was built by to Richard Dobbs Spaight, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who lived on the south side of the Trent River near New Bern. Because it appears on an early map of that date, Spaight's Mill is known to have been in operation in 1808, though it may have been built sooner. It was called Master's Mill by 1890.*

**Union blockhouse fort at Slocum Creek, Havelock (1862-1864)**

Herbert Eugene Valentine, private from Massachusetts, a quartermaster, like to make sketches. In 1863 he made a



detailed drawing labeled Fort and Officer Quarters occupied by the 98<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteers at Slocum Creek. He wrote the "Depot" on it but marked it out. The Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill where the drawing was found by the Havelock city historian refers the drawing as blockhouse at Havelock Station.

## The attempt to retake New Bern—1864

**Lt. Col. R.J. Jeffords** of S.C. Cavalry. Dispatches to his commanding general

Feb. 3, 1864

Havelock 12 o'clock

"General—I have reached this place. The fort has been deserted. One brass six pounder gun spiked. The fort is now being burnt with quarters. The enemy (one company artillery) left this morning in the direction of Croatan...troops going toward New Bern."

*Quite a battle took place all along the rail line. Jefford's unit proceeded toward New Bern until the attacked failed and he was ordered to retreat.*

(Note: To "spike" a cannon means to render it useless to the enemy, normally by driving a large nail or spike down its touch hole so it cannot be fired. --EE)

Feb. 4, 1864

Near White Oak River, 9 p.m.

"In obedience to your order I left Croatan at 9 a.m. this day and reached this point via Newport. In my route here I destroyed several road bridges and Railroad bridge and trestle at Havelock..."

(Lt. Col. Jeffords, an exemplary soldier, did not survive the war. --EE)

As referenced below, by the turn of the century a traditional railroad depot for handling passengers and freight had been built at the intersection of what is today Lake Road-Miller Blvd.-Church Road.

**James A. Bryan** (substantial politician and businessman, descendent of R.D. Spaight)  
Prospectus for the sale of 57,484 acres of his land  
1899

Writes of "the railroad accommodations" at Havelock. "They are easy of access to the Northern cities, to wit: if you leave New York at 9 p.m., you reach Havelock; the station by land, at 7 p.m. the next evening. A telegraph station there would put you in communication with outside points."

"FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLONIZATION I know of no place better suited. The property controls magnificent water power, consisting of the lakes, which cover an area of 25 square miles of water, with a dam capable of carrying a head of water 25 feet deep. A railroad station within 400 yards of the mill site, which is just 18 miles for the port of New Bern..."

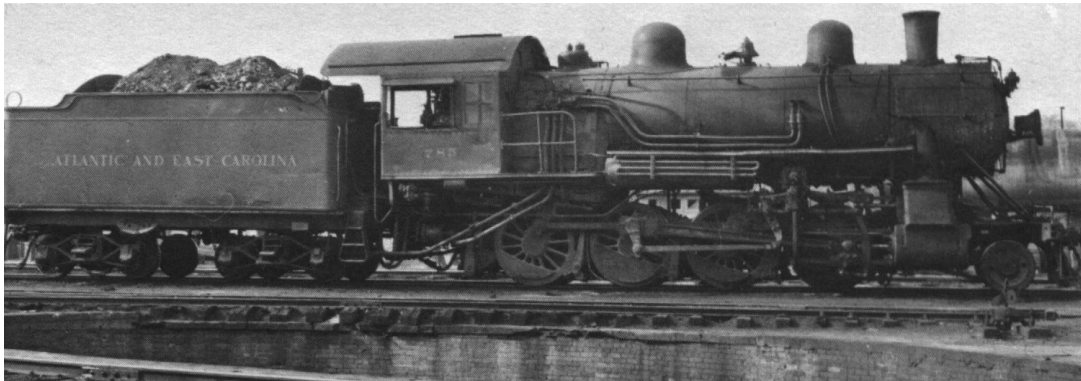
**Edward Jack**, a Canadian  
Author of the Bryan prospectus 1891

(original copy in collection of New Bern historian John Green)

Section on agricultural wealth: "A very large part of Mr. Bryan's tract of 57,484 acres (is) in the vicinity of Havelock station, and below New Bern..."

"It seems highly probable that the Phosphate rock may be found in quantity on the land of Mr. Bryan, if so it could very conveniently be reduced to powder at the excellent water power owned by him at Havelock station, just below the point where Slocum's Creek crosses the line of the A. & N.C. Railway."

Refers to Mr. Gorrell, "an intelligent farmer" who owned 500 acres adjacent to Mr. Bryan. Said he had been farming for 35 to 40 years (since the Civil War). "Mr. Gorrell, whose residence is near Havelock station, informs us that he sent by rail from Havelock station 800 bbls of Irish potatoes from the 25<sup>th</sup> of May to the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. For 300 bbls. they received \$4.00 per bbl. And for the balance \$2.50. Their markets were New York and Philadelphia. The freight was 55 cts. per bbl."



**Atlantic and East Carolina steam locomotive with coal car. These trains passed through Havelock twice a day.**

Mr. Gorrell states further: "We planted potatoes, corn, cotton, turnips, beets, peas, beans, onions, cabbages and peanuts on the sandy land underlaid by clay which occurs at Havelock station, extending back toward the pocosin." He gives dates when each crop is shipped by rail. "The railway company has run from one to three trains daily, carrying from 3,000 to 4,000 bushels on each train. The steamer Neuse has made three trips per week carrying 4,000 to 4,500 bushels. He estimated in the same paper that 350,000 bushels (of vegetables) had been carried from New Bern by railway and steamer."

Section on "timber wealth": One (place he measured the diameter of trees) was on Mr. Bryan's land, close to Havelock, where once stood a blockhouse that was burned in 1865 [sic, actually 1864]. On the slope toward Slocum's Creek, on a piece of ground 100 feet long and 28 feet broad, I measure the diameter...

...The size of the mound on which the blockhouse once stood was 41 feet square\* ...U.S. Troops once camped in the rear of the blockhouse."

(\*1,681 square feet.)

Section on "hunting advantage": "The lake(s) are about five miles from Havelock station, on the railway leading from New Bern to Morehead. One can go to the lakes in the morning and return at night, either to Mr. Bryan's farm house, which is three miles from Havelock station, or to the station itself. Mr. Bryan's house, which is surrounded by groves of lofty pine would be preferable. *This place could be a charming sportsman's retreat.* The canal which drains the lakes (a rapid stream) passes less than 100 yards from the house and barns. This stream runs alongside the road leading from the farm house, through the fields, to Lake Ellis, thus securing constantly good roads. There are two barns there. The house is a small unpainted building, good enough of the kind."

"A doctor from Philadelphia who had a shanty on one of the lakeshores, where he had been spending several winters for his health, showed me two Black Bass...."

Mr. Gorrell, mentioned above, gets this season \$10 per ton for crab grass at the station at Havelock, and is unable to fill his orders. This grass grows naturally on the pocosin and this year he had about 40 acres in it which he told me yielded between 60 and 75 tons." (Note--this type silage was used as cattle feed. --EE)

*According to interviews with the Russell and Wynne families, mail came by evening train. All the mail came by train for many years so the Havelock post office was near by the station and at one time there was a tiny building with a hand carved PO HAVELOCK sign on it next to the freight depot on Lake Road. Today, we have the names of all of the postmasters who ever served the area since 1871..*

### **Cherry Trader Roycraft**

Interview

1976

"Dad [Hugh Trader, proprietor of Trader's Store] used to say that most of the illegal liquor left Havelock via the train. They would bring carloads of potatoes up from Beaufort and sometimes a loaded car would be sidetracked overnight. Those moonshiners took their jars of corn and hid them among the potatoes and when the train picked up the abandoned carload and took their cargo to New Bern and northward, they carried the stowaway bottles. too."

### **Mrs. Hugh Trader**

Interview

1976

There was a brisk business at Trader's Store on the days when all of Harlowe appeared to catch the train to New Bern. The trip took considerably longer than you might expect because the Mullet Line stopped at every crossroads and village. "My children and I used to ride the train the Morehead City to visit relatives. It wouldn't have taken so long to get there if the train hadn't stopped at every pea-patch: Newport, Wildwood, Mansfield...." she said.



**William “Bill” Jackson**

Undated Interview  
(late 1980s)

(When I was young,) the only way out of Havelock was by train which went twice a day to Morehead City, New Bern and beyond...”the Mullet Line” which carried tobacco to New Bern (there were tobacco warehouses there then) and wood which went to Kinston.”

*By 1941 the steam powered train was referred to as the “Shoofly Express”*

**Jack Murphy**

Windsock (Cherry Point base newspaper) writer  
1982

“More than 20,000 military personnel, mainly Marines were stationed at Cherry Point during the four years of World War II.” Many of them came and went by rail and arrived at the Havelock train depot.”

*For many of them, their first stop was Trader’s Store.*

*In addition, millions of tons of material, supplies and equipment, was hauled by rail for construction of the base which was built at a cost of \$85 million.*

Later, Murphy wrote, “The mail trains and “Shoofly Express” of the Atlantic and East Carolina Railroad became “liberty” transportation to such places as the Pavilion at Morehead City (*Atlantic Beach*) where airmen from Cherry Point and its outlying fields will join with comrades in arms from Camp Lejuene to jitterbug to songs played by name band and tell each other sea stories of adventurous battles as yet fought only in their imaginations...Soon these same railroad tracks would ring with the sound of troop trains carrying those new Marines on the first leg of a journey into real battles on the other side of the world...”



*In fact, the railroad IS the reason MCAS Cherry Point was built here. The original plan was to build the base at Wilkerson Point, know known as Minnesott, in Pamlico County. At the last minute the plan was changed to the south side of the Neuse...*

### Lem S. Blades III

Letter

August 26, 1987

“The critical factor was the need for a railroad. (Not only to supply the base but also to connect it to Camp Lejuene.) Of course a bridge could have been built across the river to serve the northeast side (of the Neuse), but a bridge is militarily very vulnerable. (Not to mention expensive and vulnerable to storms.) To put a siding on land would have been very expensive, having to construct and acquire the right of way from Bridgeton to the site around Arapahoe.”



**Havelock Freight Depot on the tracks beside Miller Blvd. in the 1960s.**

### Great Train Robbery

A possibly true story from Lem Blades

The first private railroad in Craven County was built by Blades Lumber Company from Havelock to Blades (near Harlowe). It was a log hauling railroad (taking logs from the timberlands to the sawmills at Havelock where the lumber was sent out on the Mullet Line.) The engine was built on an old Cadillac auto chassis. The greatest train robbery of the day was a \$200,000 plus robbery about 1910 near the Havelock express station. The payroll was for employees of Williams, James, and Charles Blades. The robbers were caught “before sundown.”

*Passenger service existed for 92 year, but automobiles finally eliminated the customer base. The last passenger train ran on March 31, 1950. On the last run of the train all the customary stops were made including Havelock.*

**Article/Peter Sandbeck**

North Carolina Division of Archives and History  
1980

“Old Havelock, located on the high ground between the east and west prong of Slocum Creek, has been encroached upon and nearly destroyed by modern suburban and strip development catering to the military population drawn to the area by the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station. “...the area remained unnamed until 1857 when the Goldsboro to Morehead City line of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad reached this point.

“The *crossing* formed by the Beaufort Road and the railroad tracks was named Havelock...

“The subsequent construction of a railroad freight and passenger depot stimulated development with a post office established by 1884,” according to Branson’s North Carolina Business Directory of the same year.

Branson’s 1890 Business Directory indicates Havelock had a population of 20, one general store and two steam sawmills.

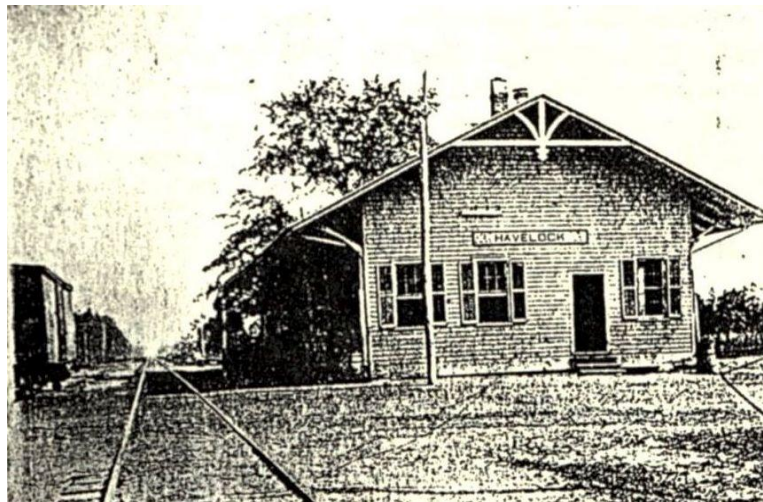
N.C. Division of Archives and History's description of our current railroad depot when in use: *Havelock Station Depot, Havelock, N.C.:* A one-story frame gable-front freight depot, built ca. 1940 on the site of the nineteenth century passenger and freight station. Exposed rafter ends, plain weatherboarding. Infrequently used

**Mrs. Hugh Trader**

Interview  
1976

In those days the train station was located across the railroad tracks from its present site. And the overseers, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Walton, lived inside. The original train depot has since been destroyed and replaced by the gray (one) at the intersection of Nine Mile (Road) and Miller (Blvd.).

*(Note: Mrs. Trader refers to "across the railroad tracks." The circa 1884 station that can be seen in a 1915 photo and to which she is referring was on the Lake Road side of the railroad tracks. When the currently existing depot building was moved to the new site it was placed on the opposite side of the twin iron rails closer to Trader's Store. --EE)*



**Robert Dudley Fisher**, July 26, 2004. Interview w/ Edward Ellis

Principal of Fisher Oil Company and life-long resident of Riverdale reports the current railroad freight depot at Havelock was moved there from Riverdale at the beginning of construction of Cherry Point. In 1954, after military service, he was offered a job by Mr. Edwards, the president of the A&EC railway, working at the Havelock depot. "I thought that was the way to go. My father and grandfather had worked for the railroad, so I thought I would, too." He declined when he learned that the pay was \$35 per month.

His father Earnest Eric Fisher (b. 1900 d. 1944) was freight agent at New Bern and then freight agent at Havelock after the beginning of WWII. One of the few photographs, he has of his father is sitting on the steps of the freight depot when it was at Riverdale. His grandfather Abram Dudley Fisher was freight agent at Riverdale. Said Riverdale was a "thriving little community" for a while with a saw mill, two brick kilns, and a café. During the war a second passenger train was added daily because of all the servicemen coming and going.

Fisher said: (Until passenger service ended in 1950) "I rode that train many a time from Riverdale to New Bern. My daddy had a pass, you know, so I got to ride free. After a while the train got to where it didn't stop in Riverdale any more, but you could stand out there and wave a handkerchief or something and when he saw you he would 'toot-toot' to let you know he saw you, and he'd stop." The train would always stop anywhere along its run if you flagged it down," he said. The freight depot stood on the tracks at Riverdale directly behind the current location of Fisher Oil Company. Fisher's family home is nearby. Fisher does not recall how the depot was moved to Havelock, but believes it may have been moved there by the train.

*(We have since found other examples from the same time period of depot buildings being relocated by transport upon a railroad train flat car and have concluded that's how the Riverdale depot came to Havelock. EE, 6/13/2017)*

Summary of thoughts:

- \* Havelock got its name from the railroad.
- \* Commerce on the railroad was the number one driving force for growth before the coming of Cherry Point.
- \* And Cherry Point is here in large part, because of the railroad.
- \* The existing depot is the last artifact of this rich history.
- \* It should be preserved.

(Update: And it was!)

Note of remarks by Edward Ellis  
Havelock City Historian  
July 27, 2004  
(With updates, August, 2017)

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