

East Carolina Railway Mural

Introduction by Bert Smith, and history by Bob Newton

Here we are at the East Carolina Railway station, and we want to welcome Bob Newton, local Farmville historian and renowned expert on the East Carolina Railway.

The East Carolina Railway was incorporated in Tarboro in July 1898, by Henry Clark Bridgers, the nephew of Robert Bridgers, the president of the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad. The E.C. Railway brought a huge economic boost to the area.

It was built by convict construction from the State Prison in Raleigh. The State was paid 75 cents per man a day. The rail line was built from Tarboro, reaching Farmville on July 24, 1901.

On August 1, 1901, Henry Clark Bridgers, then president of East Carolina Railway and a host of other officials enjoyed a reception at the Horton Hotel in Farmville after riding the first passenger train the length of the line.

Around 1910, the East Carolina Railway began operating their passenger service with gasoline powered motor cars known as "Yellow-hammers."

The last steam train run was in April 1957 and this engine, Locomotive #1031, was preserved and is on exhibit at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, North Carolina.

The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad took over the East Carolina Railway in 1935, but continued to operate the line as the East Carolina Railway, which made its last run on November 16, 1965.

The line lay in weeds until the Superior Stone Corporation leased the line in 1969 through the early 1970s. The rails were removed in 1985.

Lewis W. Godwin (1884-1980) was the East Carolina Railway's most senior employee, being the Farmville Agent for over 54 years. He was well known on the railroad as an expert telegrapher and agent.

In 2017, a local businessman bought and refurbished the station and warehouse. It currently serves the town as a handsome event center and salute to our railroad history.