

Anniversary Tomorrow

Passenger Train Made First Run to Morehead in 1858

By F. C. SALISBURY

Railroads and politics were engaging the attention and interest of the people of the state in the early part of the spring of 1858. Announcement had been made that the last rail of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, under construction for over two years, had been laid, completing the entire rail system from Goldsboro to Morehead City.

Chief interest in state politics was the race for governor, being conducted between two democratic candidates, John W. Ellis and Duncan McRae, along with an "also ran" Republican, John Pool. Ellis won the election, serving for two years—1859-'61.

Previous to the completion of the road from Morehead City to New Bern, the link from New Bern to Goldsboro had been opened and some traffic had run over this section.

Celebration at New Bern
To celebrate the completion of this first section of the new road, the citizens of New Bern staged one of the most eventful celebrations ever held in the state up to that time. Announcements were carried in the various state papers, stating that free transportation would be furnished over all railroads of the state for persons wishing to attend a three days' celebration that was to start April 29, 1858. An estimated 10,000 persons attended this affair.

No such celebration took place in Morehead City when the first passenger train made the entire run from Goldsboro to Morehead City on June 7, 1858. There was hardly a town, as yet, at the end of the line, for it was only in the fall of 1857 that the town site had been opened up and the sale of lots took place.

On to Morehead
There is little mention to be found in state papers of this event. From the Weekly Union, published in New Bern under date of June 12, 1858, appears the following notice:

"On Monday the 7th, according to previous announcements, a passenger train from Goldsboro to Morehead City was run down to that city to accommodate those who wished to visit Beaufort and listen to a discussion which came off that day between candidates for governor, John W. Ellis and Duncan McRae.

"At 4:30 a.m. the train, composed of two passenger cars, filled to their utmost capacity with politicians, pleasure seekers and not a few of the fair sex from Goldsboro, Kinston and New Bern, left the depot for Morehead City, arriving shortly after noon."

"Arriving at New Bern, the train remained long enough to allow the passengers to get breakfast. A large number of citizens boarded the train at this station. Arriving at Morehead City where a short stop was made in the center of the town, the train continued to the terminal wharf, where awaiting boats transferred the passengers over to Beaufort."

One can readily picture the scene as the train approached the new town, with a roar described as a "fiery monster", sparks drifting from out the large stack of the wood-burning locomotive, setting fire to the woods along the line. Cinders drifted through the open windows to the discomfort of the passengers.

Speed of 15
From its speed of 15 miles an hour, with locomotive bell ringing and the shrill blasts of the whistle, the train came to a halt amid the hurraing of a group lined up along both sides of the tracks. They stood in the deep sand that was later to become the main street of the new town.

Among those who probably were on hand to welcome the arrival of the train were G. P. Evans, in charge of construction work, and contractors Edward Stanley and C. B. Wood. As the population of the town did not reach 165 until two years after, it is doubtful if there were many who could be called citizens in the group of hundreds of workmen who helped to form a welcoming committee.

It is reasonable to presume that John M. Morehead was one of the passengers on this initial run, to travel over a railroad that had engaged his political efforts for several years as well as his financial means to bring the road to completion.

Probably among the group were the three Arendell brothers, William, Thomas and Bridgers Jr., who had sold their holdings of 600 acres of the Shepard Point property (given them by their grandfather William Fisher) to John M. Morehead. These acres comprised the site of Morehead City. Bridgers Jr., served as a locomotive engineer of this road for several years following the civil war, meeting his death in a boiler explosion.

Dr. M. F. Arendell, then living in Beaufort, and an active politician, with other citizens from Beaufort, were no doubt on hand to greet the candidates and notables.

In the 1850's a revival of the issue of distributing to the states



Conductor Allen H. Coward gets help in his book work on the last run of the A&NC passenger train from three-year-old Leroy Arnold of Kinston, who was the youngest person to pay respects to the train and the last to get off at the end of the run.

(Photo copy by F. C. Salisbury)

the public lands, created division in the Democratic party. In 1858, Duncan McRae, a Democrat, ran as an independent for governor on the distribution issue. He was badly defeated by John W. Ellis. John Pool, Republican candidate for governor waged a close contest against Ellis, losing by a small margin.

Politics seems to have been of greater importance than a celebration noting this first passenger run over the entire line. There was little of interest to be seen about the new town of Morehead City as the train came to a halt at a point that later became the site for the station.

Under construction was the Mason House at the corner of 9th and Arendell Streets. Farther along the street, Silas Webb was having a small brick house built, also the Slate house at the corner of 8th street was under construction. Crude wooden structures lined the tracks for the housing of the 600 workmen engaged in grading and track laying.

Many Obstacles

Both the town and railroad, conceived and developed in the mind of John M. Morehead, had a long hard struggle for existence. If an enterprise ever had more hard knocks, more setbacks, more adversities than the A&NC, it would be hard to find.

In the 100 years since the tracks were laid and traffic over the line was started, it met and somehow overcame, one stumbling block after another. First it was the Civil War; then it was the reconstruction period; then it passed from one operator to another, but each in turn threw up his hands.

The downward trend was halted in 1939 when H. P. Edwards and E. R. Buchan leased the road from the state, making it an attractive proposition in connection with the established port. The road was purchased recently by the Southern Railroad system.

With the exception of three years, 1862-65, when the line from New Bern eastward was held by



Conductor Allen H. Coward in his "office" making up his final report covering the run of the last passenger train from Morehead City to Goldsboro. (Photo copy by F. C. Salisbury)

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It was this type of wood-burning locomotive with attached cars that pulled the first passenger train over the new line from Goldsboro to Morehead City, June 7, 1858. Described as a "fiery monster", as it sped along at the rate of 15 miles an hour, the embers setting fire to the woods and ties.

(Photo copy by F. C. Salisbury)

first run in 1858. On arrival at the New Bern terminal George Dees' Cain Jr., aboard for their first train ride. When Kinston was reached again, the original eight sentimental travelers got off, but 13 took their place. Eight of those went to the end of the line.

"The last passenger to get off the last train was 3-year-old Leroy Arnold Jr., in the arms of his banker father. The youngster's

preoccupation on his first train ride was to have Conductor Coward and others draw airplanes for him.

"The last train made all of its regular stops—at LaGrange, Kinston, Dover, Cove City, New Bern, Havelock and Newport. It halted at some of the flag stops—Miller's, Best's, Fields, Falling, Creek, Parrott's, Hine's Junction, Caswell

Wells-Oates, Tuscarora, Hyman's, Clark's James City, Thurman, Riverdale, Croatan, Green Chapel, Wildwood, Edgewater and Camp Glenn.

Among the numerous passenger conductors who served the railroad through the years, A. H. Coward holds the honor of being the conductor on the last run from Morehead City to Goldsboro, along with his crew of H. A. Lewis, engineer; W. H. Peterson, fireman; R. S.

Avery, baggage master and C. E. Herrington, brakeman. The train was made up of nine cars, two for passengers, white and colored; a postal car, three express cars, two for mail storage; and a heater car. All were drawn by a diesel locomotive.

The first conductors to serve over the new road were Denard Hancock and C. D. Jones on the passenger trains and Will B. Lane. See TRAINS, Page 6, Section 2



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