

The Wilmington and Onslow railroad has recently been completed to Jacksonville, in Onslow county.

The Smithfield Herald, January 10, 1891

In the decades leading to the turn of the twentieth century, Onslowans, as well as their neighboring counties, clamored for a rail line extending from Wilmington to New Bern, and passing through Jacksonville. However, not until 1891 did such a line exist. Numerous efforts were made to charter and fund a rail line, but decades past before work began due to internal disagreements over how to fund the project and how funding would be used. The line from Wilmington to Jacksonville, chartered as the Onslow and East Carolina Railway, connected to Newbern on a line chartered under the East Carolina Land and Railway Company. These two charters, beginning in 1885 did not move forward until Thomas A. McIntyre, a wealthy New Yorker and owner of the Onslow Lumber Company acquired control of them. The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, which became the Seaboard Coast Line in 1967, operated the railroad until 1985 when it was dismantled.

The company of the bills or vote taken at an election held at the different election precincts in Onslow Co. on Thursday, the 12th inst. for the adoption or rejection of appropriating \$50,000 by the Planter's R. Road, and \$50,000 by the Wilmington and Onslow R. Road, was ascertained. Taken up, and the result found to be as follows, to wit:-

Wilmington	Onslow	Total
1	1	2
2	1	2
3	1	2
4	1	2
5	1	2
6	1	2
7	1	2
8	1	2
9	1	2
10	1	2
11	1	2
12	1	2
13	1	2
Total	13	26

On January 12, 1871 Onslow County held its first special election to decide if the County should subscribe \$50,000 to both the Wilmington and Onslow and the Planter's Railroads. Voters overwhelming chose to support the County's funding of a railroad, however it took twenty years to achieve.

The Atlantic Coast Line

The Wilmington, Onslow, and East Carolina Railroad became the Wilmington & Newbern Railroad in 1893, and in 1897 was acquired by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Stops in Onslow included Holly Ridge, Folkstone, Dixon, Verona, Jacksonville, Kellum, Deppe, and Maysville. The ACL continued service, including an additional line to service Camp Lejeune, until 1985, when the rail company abandoned the line and began pulling up the tracks. First steam and then diesel locomotives brought passengers and freight through Jacksonville, often carrying lumber from Onslow. One of Onslow's citizens recalls ordering fireworks from Ohio around 1952 that arrived by steam engine, where he and his brother would retrieve them from the depot.

Men standing around an early steam engine at the Jacksonville train depot, ca. 1890s.



Photo ca. 1895, looking north towards Jacksonville.

Image appears in "North Carolina and Its Resources," published by the State Board of Agriculture in 1896.

Trains Running Over the Bridge.
The Wilmington, Onslow and East Carolina railroad bridge over New river at Jacksonville was completed Saturday evening, and the rails were laid across it yesterday. Trains will be run across it to day and iron and material will be carried over for completing the road into Jacksonville.

The Wilmington Messenger, January 27, 1891

The Dover Southbound

The Goldsboro Lumber Company constructed the Dover Southbound, a rail line operating from Dover to Richlands, by 1905. While lumber remained its primary cargo, the line did include three passenger cars. At Dover connections could be made on the Norfolk Southern to take

LOG TRAIN WRECK INJURES SIX MEN IN ONSLOW COUNTY
(Special to The Star)
KINSTON, March 17.—A report from Richlands, Onslow county, says one white man and five negroes are suffering from injuries received in a log train wreck near that place. The train was running down grade when a cow strolled onto the track and walked for some distance ahead of the train. The engineer applied the brakes but was unable to stop the train. Heavily loaded cars piled into the engine and tender turning them over. They rolled down a five-foot embankment. Several cars were reduced to wreckage. The injured were taken to Richlands for treatment. One of the negroes is seriously injured. The train was carrying logs for the Goldsboro Lumber company's plant at Dover. The cow is reported to have escaped injury. Names of the victims were not given in the report reaching this city today.

The Wilmington Morning Star, March 18, 1921

passengers west where they might head north toward Virginia or south as far as Florida. The depot in Richlands, the current site of the Richlands Community Pool, was centered in the town's industrial sector. Tobacco warehouses and lumber spur lines converged here to take goods and people northward to the lumber mill in Dover.

Rail Today

Portions of the rail line can be seen on the landscape today where trestles crossed waterways and in Jacksonville at the old train depot on Railroad Street. The current rails to trails greenway that runs through Jacksonville follows the path of the rail spur that ran into Camp Lejeune. Highway 17 follows the route the railroad took from Wilmington to Newbern. Today the train depot in downtown Jacksonville serves as a reminder of the bustling activity the railway provided as people and products were moved by steam and then diesel engines across the county.

W., O. & E. C. Railroad.

In Effect November 1st, 1891.

Leave Wilmington daily, except Sunday, for Jacksonville and intermediate stations at 8 p. m.
Leave Jacksonville daily, except Saturday and Sunday, for Wilmington and intermediate points at 9.00 a. m.
Sunday train leaves Wilmington for Jacksonville at 4 p. m.
Trains arrive at Jacksonville daily, except Sunday, at 8.00 a. m., daily except Saturday and Sunday, at 6.25 p. m., and on Saturday at 8.30 p. m. additional.
Steamers on New River leaves Jacksonville daily, except Sunday, for Marine and intermediate points at 6.30 a. m., arriving at Jacksonville on return at 1 p. m.
Steamer leaves Jacksonville for Tar Landing at 1.30 p. m. on Tuesdays and Fridays, arriving at Jacksonville on return at 8.20 p. m.

H. A. WHITING,
General Manager.

J. W. MARTENIS,
Gen'l Passenger Agent.

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The Wilmington Morning Star, January 1, 1892

Remnants of the trestle over New River at Waterfront Park. Satellite images show the remains of eight trestle sites in Onslow County.



Photo by George Swartz

