

**THIS PROPERTY IS LISTED IN THE
TARBORO MULTIPLE RESOURCE
NOMINATION. FOR FULL FORM,
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RESOURCE NOMINATION.**

Raised late 1990s

TARBORO MULTIPLE RESOURCE NOMINATION

E. Railroad Depot Complex *ED18 & ED19*
(Seaboard Coast Line, formerly Atlantic Coast Line)

West of North Main Street and north of Howard Avenue, Tarboro, NC

ACREAGE:

Owner: Seaboard Coast Line Railroad
500 Water Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Attention: Mr. Robert L. Bullard
Assistant Vice President

Description

The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Complex contains two principal structures, the Passenger Depot and the Freight House, the latter of which includes a brick section and a frame section. The Passenger Depot, built between 1908 and 1913, located along the railroad main line, is a brick structure with a two-story central section that projects as a polygonal pavilion, and flanking one-story wings. The central section originally had the ticket office and other offices, while the flanking sections had waiting and baggage rooms. The building has red brick walls and contrasting white trim with rather eclectic, classical detail, including flat arches with keystones, a bold and heavy cornice, and pilasters. The interiors are very simply finished and now contain only offices, since the passenger train doesn't stop here any more.

Across the spur track, to the south of the depot, is the Freight House. The brick section, the eastern portion, is the oldest and is in fact the oldest railroad building in the town. Seaboard Coast Line records state it was built in 1884.¹ It originally was oriented diagonally (like the present depot), paralleling the tracks. Between 1908 and 1913 it was moved, or reoriented at least, to extend east-west and parallel Howard Avenue. At the same time, the frame extension to the west was added, so that the total freight operation as it now stands dates from ca. 1912. The brick section is a long one-story structure of impressive, functional design, with large arched openings separated by pilasters to create a rhythmic pattern. The doors are filled with handsome wooden doors. The east end of the structure has been painted and slightly remodeled but the main body remains unpainted red brick. The wooden section is of board and batten, also long and low.

Footnote

¹ Letter of February 15, 1979, R. L. Bullard, Seaboard Coast Line Railroad to Catherine W. Bishir.

TARBORO MULTIPLE RESOURCE NOMINATION

E. Railroad Depot Complex (Seaboard Coast Line, formerly Atlantic Coast Line) Page 2

Significance

The Passenger Depot and Freight House in Tarboro are significant as the chief surviving buildings representing the importance of the railroad to the late 19th and early 20th century economic development of the town. The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, built in the 1830s, did not reach Tarboro until a branch was extended to the town in 1860. (Tarboro Daily Southern, Bicentennial Edition). In 1869 the line was extended from Tarboro to Edenton. In the 1890s, when Tarboro was entering an era of rapid growth and industrial development, the Norfolk and Carolina line was run to Tarboro from Norfolk. Both the Wilmington and Weldon and the Norfolk and Carolina became part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad; this became a major line in the coastal region. Robert R. Bridgers of Tarboro was president of the W & W and later of the ACL. The East Carolina Railway was incorporated in 1898; it connected Tarboro with several communities in the region and was led by Henry C. Bridgers.

The rail connections were for Tarboro, as for most communities, crucial to growth and prosperity. Particularly as river traffic was erratic and unreliable, the railroad was critical. Around the depot and along the line that reached southward and across the river, industrial plants grew up.

The late 19th century depot was a frame structure, with a two-story middle section and flanking one-story wings, each with hip roofs, underlined by brackets. A shed extended as shelter toward the railroad. The wooden building was richly decorated in typical mid or late 19th century fashion. This structure served until at least 1908, as Sanborn Maps show, but by 1913 the new (present) brick building had been erected, and the older one was labeled "to be removed." The freight station, the oldest survivor, is dated 1884 and is seen in old photographs of ca. 1895, and the wooden section dates from between 1908 and 1913, the same time the freight station was reoriented. Evidently about 1912 a major renovation occurred, including reorienting the freight building, adding to it, and replacing the frame depot with the present brick structure.

Sources of information: Sanborn Maps (North Carolina Collection),
John Gilbert and Grady Jefferys, Crossties Through Carolina (Raleigh: The Helios Press, 1969).
Marshall Bullock, "The Railroad in North Carolina" unpublished manuscript, 1978, Survey and Planning Branch files.

Verbal Boundary Description:

