

Wilmington & Weldon Railroad ^[1]

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by George A. Kennedy, 2006

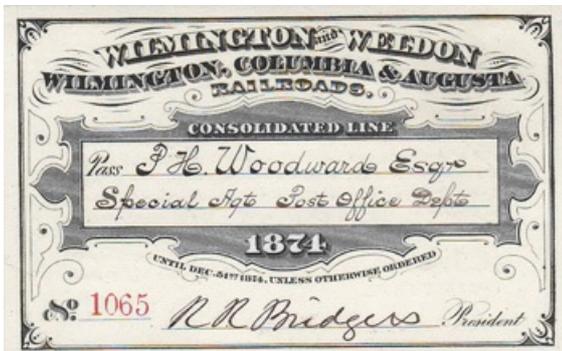
See also: [Transportation: Air and Rail \(from NC Atlas Revisited\)](#) ^[2]



First station house of the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad, at Halifax, N.C., built circa 1835; picture circa 1900. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[3]The Wilmington & Weldon Railroad (W&W) was the new name adopted in February 1855 by the Wilmington & Raleigh Railroad (completed in 1840), which ran from [Wilmington](#) ^[4] to Weldon by way of Goldsboro and Rocky Mount, bypassing Raleigh. As a central rail link along the Atlantic Coast, it carried heavy traffic during the [Civil War](#) ^[5] and made a considerable profit (in Confederate currency) for its owners. Because the W&W had its own facilities for rerolling iron rails and did not lie in the path of military action until the very end of the war, it suffered somewhat less than many other roads of the region and entered the [Reconstruction](#) ^[6] period dilapidated but intact.

For 20 years after the war, Robert R. Bridgers of [Edgecombe County](#) ^[7] served as president of the W&W. With backers including the Walters family of Baltimore, he developed interlocking directorates, leases, and traffic agreements (using the W&W as a base) that led to the formation of the Atlantic Coast Line Company and the eventual merger with the [Atlantic Coast Line Railroad](#) ^[8] (ACL). In November 1872 the W&W had been leased to its southern connection, the Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta, but the lease lapsed when the latter road failed to pay the W&W dividend in 1877. Bridgers and his associates acquired control of the Wilmington, Columbia, and Augusta in October 1879, and in June 1885 they leased it to the W&W for 99 years.



Boarding pass for the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, 1874. Image from North Carolina Historic Sites.

^[9]In 1898, under Henry Walters's plan to develop an Atlantic Coast Line system, the W&W acquired the southern half of the Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railway, with lines from Wilmington to Fayetteville and Sanford as well as from Fayetteville to Bennettsville, S.C. Two years later, the W&W and the Norfolk & Carolina (which connected the W&W at Tarboro with Norfolk), along with connecting roads in Virginia and South Carolina, as well as the Plant System lines in Georgia and Florida shortly afterward, all merged with the ACL, ending the corporate existence of the W&W.

The ACL, however, established its executive and administrative offices in Wilmington, and the northern half of the former W&W (from Weldon to Wilson) became part of the ACL main line. In 1988 a 26-mile stretch of the original W&W from Castle Hayne, north of Wilmington, to Wallace was abandoned, breaking the physical integrity of the historic road. The old freight station on the [Cape Fear River](#) [10] survives as a museum of the history of the W&W, the ACL, and North Carolina railroading, but the old passenger station in Wilmington was destroyed.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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"Photograph, Accession #: [H.19XX.74.1](#) [3]." Circa 1900. North Carolina Museum of History.

"Pass, Boarding, Accession #: [S.HS.2012.1.623](#) [9]." 1874. North Carolina Historic Sites.

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