

## THE RAILWAY THROUGH KNIGHTDALE

In 1900 there was not a place called Knightdale. When the local landowners learned that the Raleigh and Pamlico Sound Railroad Company - *organized as Raleigh & Eastern North Carolina Railroad in 1903, renamed in same year* was laying a track from Norfolk, Virginia, to Raleigh, N.C., they were anxious to have a station in the area. The railroad was the fastest means of transportation at that time and a local station would be a big help to the farmers. Early in 1904 Henry H. Knight and wife Bettie (Smith) and Needham P. Jones and wife E. Meto deeded right of way property to the Raleigh and Pamlico Sound Railroad Company for the sum of one dollar. Tracks were laid in August of 1904. *east from Raleigh, NC to Zebulon, NC* Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company bought out the Raleigh and Pamlico Sound Railroad Company in 1905. Norfolk and Southern built a depot and a section foreman house in 1905, also two small (two room) houses for the section workers. These houses were built right beside the railroad tracks and shared a common well. The railroad station was named "KNIGHTDALE" and the town was begun. Stores, businesses, homes, and churches were soon built, with the depot as the center.

The establishment of a railroad station brought new people and jobs to the area. The depot agent and section foreman had very specialized jobs. The section foreman and his workers were responsible for ten miles of track.

For many years they rode "hand-cars" up and down the tracks. They had to examine the tracks each day and repair any damage to the rails and cross -ties, keep rails in proper position, put ballest (gravel) between the rails and cross - ties so weeds would not grow, and keep weeds and bushes from growing on the right of way to prevent fires from sparks from the engines. All this was done with hand tools.

The first section foreman in Knightdale was Erastus Cain, who served from 1905 until 1914. He was followed by Solomon A. Harrell in 1915, who served until his death in 1934. Arthur King became section foreman in 1935 and served until his retirement in 1968. At that time, the railroad company no longer felt it necessary to provide a home for the section foreman and they leased the house to Mr. King.

Mr. King still lives in Knightdale and the section house is leased to his daughter, Mrs. Ava Lee

Straughn. One of the section workers' house burned many years ago and the other one was purchased by the Town of Knightdale, moved to Robertson Street, and used for storage. Edna Harrell (Kropp) was born in the section foreman house in 1920. Bobby Harrell (grandson of Solomon Harrell) was born in one of the workers' house in 1932. Both Bobby and Edna are still residents of Knightdale.

The depot agents had many responsibilities. The depot had two waiting rooms (one for whites and one for blacks), an office with ticket window, and a warehouse. The agent had to build fires in "pot-bellied" stoves in the waiting rooms in the winter. The office did not have any heat. The agent had to keep records of all trains coming through, even those that did not stop at Knightdale. The agent sold tickets for those riding the passenger trains, check all mail and freight coming in and going out, and notify merchants and farmers of the arrival of their freight. Some merchants built warehouses on the railroad right of way. The warehouse built by Mr. Wiley Robertson (19 ) is still standing. The Postmaster had to meet the trains with the mailbags. Sometimes the train did not completely stop because there was not any freight to unload and the incoming mailbag was tossed out of the moving train and the outgoing mailbag was "hooked" from a pole.

The depot agents serving Knightdale were: Mr. Montgomery from 1905 until 1925; Mr. White from 1925 until 1930; Harvey Harriss from 1930 until 1932, Ray Richardson from 1932 until 1934; Bill James from 1934 until 1939, Ava Lee King (Straughn) from 1939 until 1940; Thelma Robertson from 1940 until 1945, with Gladys Robertson Harrell helping part time; and Mr. Pittman from 1945 until passenger service was discontinued in 1948.

There was a local railcar that ran from Wilson to Raleigh each morning and evening. It carried only passengers and mail. Some Knightdale residents rode the railcar to jobs in Raleigh and many rode it to shop in Raleigh .. The women dressed up, with hats and gloves, to go shopping in Raleigh.

Knightdale was known from Charlotte to Norfolk as Knightdale Hill. There is a steep incline from Raleigh to the east of Knightdale. Very often the freight trains had to disconnect part of the cars before they got to Knightdale and park them on the sidetrack, then go back to get the rest of the load. That meant a lot of shifting and whistle blowing in Knightdale. There is no

longer a side-track in Knightdale. There are five crossings in Knightdale as the track runs through the center of town. There was a signal light and gates installed at the Smithfield Road crossing in 1986. *The Neuse River bridge was rebuilt in 1968*

When Southern Railroad Company bought out Norfolk Southern Railroad Company in January 1, 1974, all freight service to Knightdale was stopped. The depot was no longer needed. George Pleasants leased the building and used it as an antique shop.

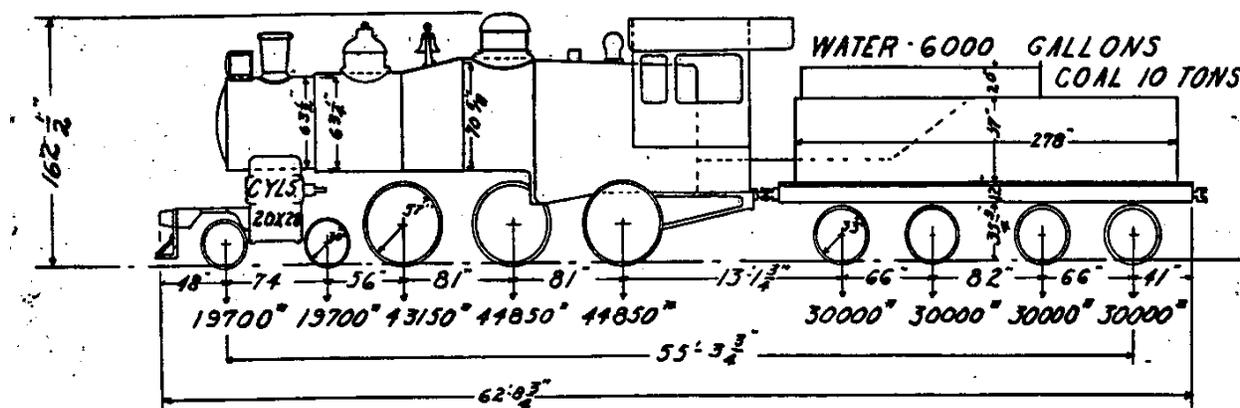
~~Pictures and information about the different types of trains~~ that served Knightdale during this period are attached; Also copies of the deeds from Mr. and Mrs. Knight and Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

Edna Kropp 1987 - Resources: Personal knowledge

*OCR and minor editorial enhancements by - W. Schulz See Gallery for pictures*

*We are also in receipt of a document that states a Mr. A. R. Blow was the station manager for 20 years. The possible connection to Mr. Montgomery, who is only person to serve 20 years is unknown.*

*The water tank for filling the tender was located on Buffalo Creek between Eagle Rock and Wendell. The coal chute was located in Middlesex.*



CLASS - D-6  
TYPE - 4-6-0

NUMBER OF ENGINES - 4  
ENGINE NUMBERS - 131-134

BK000190PG00097

State of North Carolina,  
Wake County.

RIGHT OF WAY.

From, Henry H.Knight & wife,  
To, R. & P. S. R. R. Co.

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THIS DEED, Made this the ---- day of Feb 1904, by H. H. Knight and wife, Bettie Knight of the County of Wake, said state, of the first part, to the Raleigh & Pamlico Sound Railroad Company, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of North Carolina, of the second part, Witnesseth?

That the parties of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of One Dollars to them in hand paid by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged have bargained and sold, and by these presents do hereby bargain, sell, and convey unto the said party of the second part, its a certain strip of land extending (50) fifty feet on each side of and at right angles to the center of the track or road-bed of the said Raleigh & Pamlico Sound Railroad Company, as the same is located and established by said party of the second part, upon and over said lands of the parties of the first part in."The State and County aforesaid, and in case of high banks or deep cuts, such additional width as may be necessary, not to exceed a total of two hundred feet. Said lands of the party of the first part are described as follows: situated in St. Matthews Township Wake County, said State, adjoining the lands of the Underhill Estate, N.P.Jones, Sidney Faison, Sank Faison and others and bounded as follows:

Miss Mary Hinton, Mrs. Jennie Watson known as Rance Hodge River place on Mingor Creek also 1 tract of Land lying in Marks Creek on which the Survey Crosses the same Right to cross known as the old Brown land Commencing at station 1723 x 70 on the located line of R.&P. S.R.R..& running to 1941 x 66 also from 1984 to 1996 x 60 also from 2020 to 2050 also from 2133 x 48 continuing to Neuse River.

To have and to hold the said strip of land above described and all and singular the rights, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, or in any wise appertaining unto it, the said Raleigh & Pamlico Sound Railroad Company, and assigns forever. And the parties of the first part covenant with the party of the second part, and assigns, that they are seized in fee of said strip of land and have the right to the same; that the same is free from encumbrances and that they will warrant and forever defend the title to the same against the lawful claim of any and all persons.

In testimony whereof, witness the hands and seals of the parties of the first and second part, the day and year above written.

Henry H. Knight. (Seal)

Bettie Knight. (Seal)

State of North Carolina,  
Wake County

I, E.T. Scarboro, a Justice of the Peace in and for said County and state, do hereby certify that on this the 25 day of Feb 1904, personally appeared before me, H. H. Knight and his wife Bettie Knight the grantors named in the foregoing deed, and duly acknowledged the execution of the said deed as their act and deed for the purpose therein declared; and thereupon Bettie Knight the wife or H. H. Knight, being by me privately examined, separate and apart from her said husband, touching her voluntary consent to the execution of the said deed, states upon such examination that she executed the said deed voluntarily of her own free will and accord,without any force, fear or undue influence upon the part of her said husband or any other person, and that she does still voluntarily consent to the execution thereof.

Witness my hand and private seal, this the 25 day of Feb 1904.

E. T. Scarboro, J. P. (seal)

North Carolina  
Wake County

The foregoing certificate of E.T. Scarboro Justice of the Peace of Wake County is adjudged to be correct. Let the



State of North Carolina,  
Wake County

I, E.T. Scarboro, a Justice of the Peace in and for said County and state, do hereby certify that on this the --- day of Feb 1904, personally appeared before me, Needham P. Jones and his wife E. Meto Jones, the grantors named in the foregoing deed, and duly acknowledged the execution of the said deed as their act and deed for the purpose therein declared; and thereupon E. Meto Jones, the wife of N. P. Jones being by me privately examined, separate and apart from her said husband, touching her voluntary consent to the execution of the said deed, states upon such examination that she executed the said deed voluntarily of her own free will and accord, without any force, fear or undue influence upon the part of her said husband or any other person, and that she does still voluntarily consent to the execution thereof.

Witness my hand and private seal, this the 9th day of Feb 1904.

E. T. Scarboro, J. P. (seal)

North Carolina,  
Wake County

The foregoing certificate of E.T. Scarboro, Justice of the Peace of Wake County is adjudged to be in due form and correct. Let the instrument with certificates be registered. Witness my hand this May 21st, 1904.

W. M. Russ, Clerk Superior Court

Filed for registration at 9 - O'Clock A. M., May 21st, 1904, and registered in the office of the Resister of Deeds for Wake County, in Book 190, page 97, May 21st, 1904.

J. J. Bernard, Register of Deeds.  
Per *His Signature* Deputy.

*Transcription from copies of deeds via OCR – These 2 pages*  
**W.Schulz**