

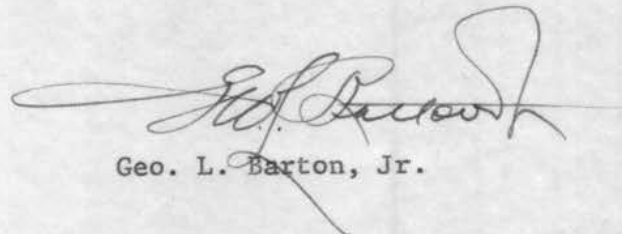
3 Jan 1958

A MODEL RAILROAD (?)

Foreword

One who reads this paper will kindly bear in mind the fact that it makes no pretense of being a complete sketch of the Suffolk and Carolina Railroad. The paper was written to be read before a private club in Lynchburg, Virginia, a group of some twenty-five business and professional men who meet once every two weeks during the fall and winter months to listen to a paper written by one of its members and then to discuss for an hour or more the paper itself or topics suggested by it. In the present instance, the writer has quite deliberately introduced at the end some of his own views on today's transportation problems, hoping that he may thus supply some meat for discussion.

For assistance in the preparation of this paper I am indebted to Miss Elizabeth O. Cullen, Librarian, Association of American Railroads, who has graciously supplied some of the most interesting information in the paper; to Caskie, Frost, Davidson & Watts of Lynchburg, who permitted me to use freely their extensive law library; and to my friend and former colleague, Mr. William L. Wyatt, who has given me both encouragement and some information gleaned from North Carolina records.



Geo. L. Barton, Jr.

Lynchburg, Virginia

December 30, 1957

(Figures in red, circled, refer to a few notes at the end.)

On March 19, 1872, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia passed an act incorporating the Nansemond Land, Lumber and Narrow Gauge Railway Company as a joint stock company and authorized it to engage in the "business of buying, cutting, selling and otherwise operating in lumber, and of constructing, as a means of transporting same to market and for other purposes, a narrow-gauge railway beginning at or near the town of Suffolk and terminating at a place called Somerton <sup>(1)</sup> in the same County (Nansemond)."

This act of incorporation marked the official beginning of a small railway which, within the three score years and ten allotted to human life by the Psalmist, passed through the several stages of growth, prosperity, amalgamation, and decline, finally to disappear completely from the map in the year 1942. Because this little road does show the complete cycle, because it provokes some antiquarian interest in this age of increasingly swift transportation, and because I myself have a sentimental interest in its development and some rather intimate recollections of the road, I am venturing to set forth these recollections in this paper. The older members of the Club may find some parallels in their memories, parallels which I hope they will bring out before the evening closes; the younger members may at least be surprised to learn that certain mechanical crudities which I shall have occasion to mention were still in existence and even in common use within our own enlightened century.

In 1886 one Edward Pollock, who had written inter alia similar books on Petersburg and on Danville, published a little volume entitled "A Sketch Book of Suffolk." This book is the ancestor of the present day Chamber of Commerce publications and I am going to quote at some length from a section of the book which is headed

#### THE SUFFOLK & CAROLINA RAILROAD COMPANY

"This company was organized under the laws of Virginia and North Carolina, in 1884, as follows: President, Chauncey Brooks; Secretary and Treasurer, W. H. Bosley; Directors, Chauncey Brooks, W. H. Bosley, W. N. Camp, Chas. F. Pitt, Jr.,

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John S. Gittings and S. P. Ryland, Jr. The importance of this line, as a feeder to Suffolk's trade, can hardly be estimated. It opens up an entirely new country, through which produce was formerly hauled twenty-five or thirty miles to the point of shipment. It extends now from Suffolk, its northern terminus, to Sunbury, North Carolina, a distance of twenty-two miles, whence it is contemplated to extend the road to some convenient point on the Chowan River, 12 miles further, where direct communication will be opened, by water, to all the rivers and sounds of North Carolina, and thence to the whole world (emphasis supplied, GLBjr). The purpose of the company is to connect Nansemond River, at Suffolk, with Chowan River and Albermarle Sound, and contracts are now being made with a view to completing the work by the coming fall (1886). Over this road there is now a daily passenger and freight service. There are already three large lumber mills situated on the line, and others are in course of construction. Lumbermen would acquire incalculable advantages by locating their mills at the Chowan River terminus, and shipping their produce over this road to Suffolk, by which means they would avoid the risk of breaking up which always attends log-rafts crossing the open waters of Albermarle Sound, and the still greater risk of losing their logs by sinking, after they have been lying for any length of time in the water awaiting the making up of the raft, and being afterwards towed a long distance to the saw-mill. They would also find it cheaper to send their sawn lumber this way than to tow it to any other distributing point to be manufactured." The article goes on to speak of the advantages which the railroad will afford to the truck farmers and to the fishermen; the latter would be able to catch fish in the Chowan River at three P.M. and have them on the markets in Baltimore and Philadelphia the next morning. It also mentions approvingly the railroads waterfront property in Suffolk.

We may now turn back to look for the beginnings of the little road whose fortunes (and misfortunes) we propose to follow.

Very soon after the close of the War Between The States, William H. Gay erected a modest sawmill on the north bank of the Nansemond River, just across from Suffolk, on the west side of the present highway (Route 460), where reasonably firm ground slopes gently down to the riverside. It is my surmise that at first this mill drew its logs from the north side of the river; if this is true, then the location was an advantageous one, for the mill could load lumber from its own sheds and wharves directly on to three-masted schooners for coastwise or foreign trade. The mill prospered under Mr. Gay and, in his search for more logs, he must soon have begun to find them in the large tracts of fine timber, mostly virgin pine, standing in the southern part of Nansemond County. A small tram road was built to bring logs northward to the bank of the Nansemond River, whence they were rafted and, on flood tides, brought upstream to the mill. This tram at first used wooden rails and horse power. Just when it began to use iron rails and substituted steam for horses, I have not been able to determine. This may have been as late as 1884 but I am inclined to believe that it was earlier. By 1872 the tram road had reached a point eight or nine miles south of Suffolk and was therefore approaching the North Carolina line.

One who has any acquaintance with the operation of a logging road prior to the days of automobiles and trucks knows that the people who lived along the line made constant requests to have all sorts of items hauled to them, or from them to town. (I can recall some interesting requests of this sort as late as 1913 on the eighteen-mile road of the Norfolk Lumber Company near Wallace, North Carolina.) This certainly must have been the experience of this tram road for, when it was incorporated in 1872 as the Nansemond Land, Lumber and Narrow Gauge Railway, it was authorized, as I have said above, to construct a railroad to haul timber and "for other purposes." The chief "other Purpose" would obviously be to serve as a common carrier to nearby residents. The original act of incorporation authorized

a capital of not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$25,000. The motive power is not specified in the act of incorporation but at this date we may assume that the use of the word "railroad" implies steam locomotives.

I have not been able to determine the source of this capital. Of the five names occurring in the first incorporation of 1872, three are wholly unknown in Nansemond County history. The other two men bore the name Darden, a common name in that County, but their praenomina are wholly unfamiliar. It is quite possible that the incorporation of 1872 represents the first influx of Baltimore capital, to which we may now turn our attention for a moment.

Up to this point - 1884 - the sawmill (or mills) of William H. Gay and the Nansemond Land, Lumber and Narrow Gauge Railway really represent one operation. On this date, Gay's mills may have been cutting between 30,000 and 40,000 board feet of lumber a day. The railway, which by now was some twelve miles in length and had either reached the North Carolina line or was very close to it, was dependent for revenue almost entirely upon its one principal customer, the saw mill. But in the year 1884 both sawmills and railway were reorganized and enlarged, with plans for future expansion, and the funds for these reorganizations came from a group of Baltimore investors, chiefly bankers. From 1884 to 1906 all the officials of the road except the General Manager were residents of Baltimore.

Parenthetically we may note that this same group of Baltimore financiers built and operated the Queen Anne Railroad. This road ran a ferry from Baltimore to Love Point on Kent Island, just north of the eastern end of the present Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The railroad itself crossed the peninsula from Love Point to Rehoboth Beach. The line was absorbed by the Pennsylvania Railroad's Delmarva Division (the old "Nippenen") and has long since been abandoned. Some of its rails may still be seen soon after one has driven off the Bay Bridge. William H. Bosley of Baltimore was for at least twenty years president of the Queen Anne Railroad, the Suffolk & Carolina, and the Gay Manufacturing Company.

In 1884 the sawmill and the railroad became separate corporate entities, although identical directorates and economic interdependence kept them close together for twenty-two years. On February 26, 1884, the charter of the Nansemond Land, Lumber and Narrow Gauge Railway was considerably revised: the Virginia General Assembly authorized it " . . . to be a body politic and corporate under the name and style of the Suffolk and Carolina Railway Company, and that the said company be allowed and is hereby authorized to continue the construction of said railway on the direct line in the direction of Lumsbury (sic) in the County of Gates, in said State of North Carolina and there connect with any railroad chartered under the laws of said state." Its capital was not to exceed \$500,000 but it was authorized to issue bonds.

Less than a month later, on March 19, 1884, the Gay Manufacturing Company was chartered by the Honorable George Blow, Judge of the Circuit Court for Nansemond County; the directors named were Gittings, Camp, Ryland, Pitt and Brooks, all of whom were directors of the railway. The Company was authorized to deal in timber, lumber, to use and operate sawmills and all other machinery necessary, to possess timber lands and rights, and to lay and construct bogy tracks to get timber to mills or to railroads. We note that the use of these tracks as common carriers is carefully excluded.

A little later that same year, the Suffolk and Carolina Railroad Company was incorporated in North Carolina (Sept. 24) by William H. Gay, William H. Bosley and William N. Camp, and was authorized to construct its mainline southward from the Virginia line, and to construct branches connecting with the main line of a length not to exceed twenty miles. It was also authorized to connect and consolidate with other roads. This North Carolina corporation built no railroad itself but was immediately consolidated with the Suffolk and Carolina Railway Company of Virginia.

Two years later, on Feb. 12, 1886, the Suffolk and Carolina charter was again amended. The Company was authorized to increase its capital stock to one million dollars; to alter or reconstruct its line from Suffolk to the North Carolina

line and there connect with any railroad or railroads chartered under the law of that state, and to lease, or consolidate with other lines unless they should be parallel or competing lines. (Note: this may be a reference to the Suffolk Lumber Company's railroad, known locally as the Jackson Road. It ran from Suffolk through Whaleyville into North Carolina and for a while was profitable. It was abandoned about 1898 or 1899.)

From 1886 to 1902 there was no change in the corporate structure of the railroad and little change in its physical properties. The extension from Sunbury to the Chowan River was completed in late 1886 and the road now had forty miles of trackage from the Suffolk station to Montrose Landing. (Note: this appears as "Mt. Rose" on government maps but the spelling is an error. My father, very fond of Scott's novels, gave it the name Montrose.) The main line was laid with rails which weighed fifty pounds to the yard; the ties were mostly pine; there was no ballast in the modern sense of the word. The right of way was not well graded and there were frequent short but sharp dips or bottoms in the numerous swamps. The station stops, as might be expected, were frequent and close together; the timetable of 1900 lists thirteen stops in addition to the two termini.

At the southern terminus, Montrose Landing, there was only a pier jutting out into the Chowan River, one or two side tracks, a wye for turning the engines and the passenger trains, and a company bunk house for the crew of the passenger train. At the Suffolk terminus there were the company's general offices, including the passenger station; these also served as the general offices of the Gay Manufacturing Company. The tracks extended in a northerly direction about two miles to the Nansmond River, where the road had a wharf which would accommodate three large schooners at one time. There were also the necessary sidetracks, a long wye for turning trains, a repair shop and a commissary. The latter served both the railroad and the Gay Company. There was no round house; the locomotives were exposed to the weather at all times. At some time in the 1890's the road had begun to lay a third rail in the Suffolk yard, so that standard gauge freight cars of other roads

could be handled, and by 1896 this third rail had been laid throughout the Suffolk yard, including the trackage to the Nansemond River.

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The motive power at this time consisted of four locomotives, the Three, the Four, the Five and the Eight. The One, the Two, the Six and the Seven had been leased or sold to the Gay Manufacturing Company for use in their logging operations in North Carolina; I never remember seeing them until about 1900 when the One and the Two were brought to Suffolk and sold for scrap. These two locomotives were originally known as the Pitt and the Bosley and were the only two engines to bear names instead of numbers. All eight locomotives were purchased second hand from railroads which were changing from 42" gauge to standard gauge. I have been able to trace the history of only one of them. Engine No. One was built in 1877 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works, being the 4050th engine built by them, and was originally owned by the Philadelphia and Atlantic City Railroad, bearing the number Three on that road.

The Three, the Four, the Five and the Eight I knew well and from their lines and from remarks made by my father, I am sure that they were built between 1875 and 1880, perhaps nearer 1875. The Eight was built by Baldwin, the other three by Porter. The Three was an 0-6-0 yard engine with a swallowtail tender; the others were American type (4-4-0). The Five hauled the afternoon passenger train to Montrose Landing and brought it back the next morning. The Four took a mixed train south in the morning and brought it back in the late afternoon. The Eight took empty log cars south in the morning and came back in the evening with a full load. The Five and the Eight had had air brakes added to their equipment but it was straight air only and did not extend to the cars which they pulled. The Four had vacuum brakes while the Three scuttled around the Suffolk yard with nothing to help her stop except a manual brake operated by a long heavy lever in the cab. (8)

The road had no telegraph system, no means of communicating between stations. The main line engines all had very large whistles, each engine having its own note, and with these whistles they could communicate with each other at a distance of two or three miles. I cannot recall ever having heard of a collision, and derailments

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were remarkably infrequent. Only link and pin couplers were used. The M. C. B. coupler was just coming into general use and even M. C. B. couplers of that day were made with a slot and a hole to receive link and pin if necessary. Inadequate brakes and slack couplings gave the passengers rather a rough and jolting ride.

Nevertheless, with its meagre equipment the little road made money. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1896, its revenue was as follows:

Passengers	\$ 4,764.00
U. S. Mail	1,569.00
Freight	40,952.00
Total	<u>\$47,285.00</u>

In 1899 the total revenue dropped to 45,503.00 but a year later had climbed to \$66,945.00. I have not been able to account for the drop in revenue in 1899.

The Gay Manufacturing Company made some extensive changes in its mills about this time and it may be that its logging operations had to be curtailed for a while; this, in turn, would have lessened the amount of freight (logs) hauled by the road. At any rate, the road's drop in revenue was entirely in freight; passenger traffic had slowly but steadily increased.

These figures for gross revenue seem tiny today but glance for a moment at some of the road's expenses. In its report to the North Carolina Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1896, the Suffolk & Carolina listed, among others

Number	Position	Ave. Daily Wage
7	Station Agents	.83 (9)
3	Engineers	2.10 (10)
3	Firemen	1.01
2	Conductors	1.72
3	Machinists	1.60
9	Section foremen	1.46
22	Other Track Men	.75

The road listed a total of sixty-four employees.

The little road gave good service in an area in which the county roads were all but hopeless because of the frequent swamps. In 1900 the passenger train left Montrose Landing daily at 6.15 A.M. and reached Suffolk at 9.20. It left Suffolk on the return trip at 3.30, arriving at Montrose Landing at 6.00 P.M. This gave the passengers six hours in Suffolk, which for many years had been the nearest and most accessible market and shopping center for that part of North Carolina lying just to the south of Suffolk. The mixed train which left Suffolk every morning except Sunday and returned in the late afternoon did not carry many passengers but served as a local freight. On the return trip, it usually brought some cars of logs, in order to lighten the load on the log train. The log train usually made two round trips a day, stopping only to drop empty log cars on the way south and to pick up loads on the return trip.

In 1896 my father, George L. Barton, became general manager of the Suffolk and Carolina and Executive Secretary of the Gay Manufacturing Company. He had come to Suffolk in 1884 at the age of 21 as an office employee of the Gay Company; two years later he was made treasurer of the Gay Company and office manager for the railroad. Early in his tenure of office as general manager, he scrapped the nearly worn out narrow gauge yard engine (the Three) and purchased, second hand, a standard gauge 4-4-0 which for years thereafter did the yard work at Suffolk. Of course, this engine could not go beyond the yard limits; the third rail had been laid only in the Suffolk yard. The acquisition of this engine broadened the scope of the railroad's work as a connecting link between several of the larger roads which converge at Suffolk. My father's next move was to press for the broadening of the whole road to standard gauge and for its extension southward to Edenton and, by an easterly branch line, to Elizabeth City.

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Several factors supported the proposed changes. The task of transferring all freight from standard gauge cars to narrow gauge, and vice versa, was becoming constantly more costly and time-consuming. <sup>(11)</sup> The road's motive power, its rolling stock and its rails were rapidly approaching the final condition of the Deacon's famous one-horse shay; if the change in gauge were ever to be made, this was the opportune time. Lastly, the road had no southern terminus. There was never any settlement or village at Montrose Landing, and no prospect of any in that vicinity. On the other hand, Edenton and Elizabeth City, growing towns, were tempting twin termini not too far distant. Because of the geography, both these places had always been somewhat oriented towards the Norfolk area and a link connecting them with Suffolk and thence with Norfolk should be profitable. It was profitable for some years.

As early as 1888, a railway company known as the Edenton and Norfolk had been incorporated in North Carolina for the purpose of building a line from Edenton to some point on the Suffolk and Carolina. This company acquired some rights of way but never built any railroad. Fourteen years after its incorporation, it deeded all its property to the Suffolk and Carolina of Virginia; the latter at once began the construction of a standard gauge line from Ryland to Edenton.

In February 1899 the Elizabeth City and Western Railroad Company was incorporated in North Carolina and was authorized to build a line from Elizabeth City to some convenient point on the Suffolk and Carolina. This corporation likewise built no road and in July, 1902, deeded its properties and rights to the Suffolk and Carolina. The latter then built a standard gauge line from Elizabeth City to a point on the Suffolk and Carolina to which was given the name Beckford Junction. (My father named this junction point for an old estate in Somerset County, Maryland, where he had spent many happy hours in his boyhood.)

When the Suffolk and Carolina in 1902 acquired the properties and rights of the two railroads which I have just mentioned, it also made final the decision to widen its own tracks to standard gauge and at once set about preparing to do so.

One new narrow-gauge locomotive, the Ten, had been purchased from Baldwin in 1901 but it had been so designed that it could be converted to standard gauge at minimum expense. Three new standard gauge locomotives were purchased from Baldwin and three more were acquired second hand from the Bowen and Street Equipment Company of Suffolk. <sup>(12)</sup> These, with the yard engine already owned, would give the railroad a total of eight locomotives, all American type 4-4-0's. The necessary passenger cars, general freight cars and log cars were gradually acquired. A round house with a proper turntable was built at Suffolk. An arrangement was made with the Postal Telegraph Company to erect and maintain wires for the length of the road, in order that a dispatcher could give orders to the trains. Preparations were made to eliminate or at least ameliorate some of the sharper curves and grades on the existing line. The entire line from Suffolk to Ryland was relaid with longer ties and heavier rail; the rails were laid narrow-gauge, of course, but were laid nearer one end of the ties than the other. Thus, on the day of change, it would be necessary to move only one rail. Section crews were "borrowed" from several nearby roads. Finally, all preparations were complete and in May, 1904, the change to standard gauge was accomplished within twenty-four hours. Only one mail and passenger service was missed in either direction. The total mileage of the Suffolk and Carolina was now

Suffolk to Edenton	50.23 miles
Beckford Junction to E. City	<u>23.29 miles</u>
Total	73.52 miles

A little later an arrangement was made with the Seaboard Air Line Railway for trackage rights between Suffolk and Portsmouth and for several years thereafter the passenger trains ran without change between Edenton and Portsmouth. A timetable for January, 1906, shows that a passenger could leave Edenton at 7.20 A.M. or Elizabeth City at 7.40 A.M. and be in Suffolk at 9.40, in Portsmouth at 10.15 and in Norfolk at 10.25. Returning, he would leave Norfolk at 4.36 P.M. and reach Edenton at 7.30 or Elizabeth City at 7.45 P.M. This was good service for that day. And so the road entered upon its era of greatest prosperity.

Scarcely had these changes been accomplished in 1904 when a proposal was made to offer the road for consolidation with one of the nearby larger rail lines. The chief reason advanced was that the road had now reached the natural geographical limits of expansion and that it could therefore be more profitably operated as a subsidiary or as an integral part of a larger railroad which reached more populous centers. This proposal was at first sharply rejected by the directors of the Suffolk and Carolina but within little more than a year they had changed their minds and had begun to make overtures to other roads. After nearly two years of negotiations, an agreement of consolidation was reached, under the terms of which the Virginia and Carolina Coast Railroad Company, the Carolina Coast Railroad Company and the Suffolk and Carolina Railway Company were to combine under a new company that would assume the name Virginia and Carolina Coast Railroad Company. Although this agreement was not carried out to the letter, the new company nevertheless acquired title to all the properties on November 26, 1906. This new company, however, proved to be merely a step in another and larger project of consolidation under the terms of which the whole Virginia and Carolina Coast Railroad Company became a part of the Norfolk Southern Railway Company. (The last named was re-organized in 1910 and became the present Norfolk Southern Railroad Company.) Thus, on November 26, 1906, the Suffolk and Carolina ceased to exist as a corporate entity and henceforth was known as the Suffolk Division of the Norfolk Southern. It was for some years a profitable and well maintained branch. The name Suffolk and Carolina was carried in the Official Guide with a cross reference, first to the Virginia and Carolina Coast and then to the Norfolk Southern. In March 1910, the name Suffolk and Carolina disappeared from the Guide and one then looked merely for the Suffolk Division of the Norfolk Southern.

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One Sunday afternoon in the early fall of 1902, in the cab of Suffolk and Carolina locomotive No. 5, waiting for time to back up across East Washington Street and couple to the passenger cars, sat three persons: the engineer, W. Albert Powell; the fireman, Callie Brittingham; and a lad nearly eleven years old.

As they sat there, they heard a series of sharp reports, almost like rapid gun fire, and a clanking noise. Looking in the direction of the sound, they saw coming from the east what appeared to be a red surry. But the horses were lacking. This remarkable contraption chugged and rattled its way across the tracks behind the Five's tender and continued its way into Suffolk. The three people in the cab had witnessed the first Norfolk-to-Suffolk automobile trip. What is more, the noisy contraption made its way back to Norfolk that afternoon. (13)

The improvements in automobiles, trucks and buses and the construction of better roads are subjects which need not be discussed in detail here. Suffice it (14) to say that by 1932 passenger traffic was discontinued wholly on the Beckford Junction-Elizabeth City branch, while the slow schedule on the Suffolk-Edenton line, three and a half hours for fifty miles, indicates that the one train a day was mixed passenger and freight. Later it is designated in the Guide as a mixed train until April, 1938 but from May 1938 to September 21, 1940, freight from Suffolk to Edenton and return was the only service offered by what was once the Suffolk and Carolina, and even this freight service was abandoned in 1940. In 1942 the Norfolk Southern received permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission and from the State Corporation Commissions of Virginia and North Carolina to abandon and remove all its trackage, except the Suffolk yard. This was sold to the Virginia Railway for the munificent sum of fifteen thousand dollars and it is now operated by the Virginian as a belt line, serving the five railways that enter Suffolk.

I think that there can be little room for doubting that the major cause of the decay and abandonment of this railroad is to be found in the bus and the truck and the taxpayer-built roads upon which they operate. A contributing factor, however, was a change in the timber and lumber situation. The dissolution of the Gay Manufacturing Company, some time prior to 1920, must have had a serious effect upon the revenue of the road, and I think it would not be possible to write a satisfactory history of the railroad without including much of the history of the Gay Company.

Another factor may have been a lack of business acumen on the part of the men who controlled the Gay Company and the Suffolk and Carolina. Of course, control of the railroad had passed from their hands long before the use of the automotive vehicle had become common, but the Gay Company remained theirs until it was dissolved - a dissolution which, I understand, was accompanied by a considerable loss. On the other hand, William H. Gay and William N. Camp, both of whom parted company with the Baltimore group early in the game, were successful lumber men. Gay died in retirement, a modestly wealthy citizen of Suffolk. Camp developed his own holdings into the Camp Manufacturing Company, which today is a going concern. Its management has always known how to adapt their operations profitably to changing economic conditions.

Finally, then, the Suffolk and Carolina serves as a model of what may be happening to larger railroads on a far larger scale, and one wonders what the future holds for these lines. One example close at home may serve to illustrate what I mean. Three major rail lines cross our State from east to west, the Norfolk and Western, the Chesapeake and Ohio, and the Virginian. Certainly two of these three are essential to the general economic welfare of Virginia. The Virginian has abandoned all passenger service; the C & O and the N & W have greatly reduced theirs and are reducing it further as rapidly as the regulatory authorities will permit. Local passenger service has been almost wholly abandoned, and now both the Norfolk and Western and the Seaboard Air Line are petitioning the authorities for permission to furnish express service to small stations by means of trucks on highways paralleling their lines. As for freight, one cannot help wondering. The Virginian, the Norfolk & Western, and the Chesapeake & Ohio all derive the major portion of their income from the transportation of coal; deprived of that principal source of income, each of these roads would lead a precarious existence. Yet that is a possibility that must be faced. For as we learn more and more about the efficient transmission of electric power, more and more coal is consumed at or very close to the mines. Railroads themselves have practically abandoned the use of coal as fuel. The use

of belt conveyors for the transportation of coal and ore is increasing. Then, more threatening still, we are apparently on the verge of an era of atomic or nuclear power. These several factors could combine to reduce to a mere trickle the amount of coal flowing away from our mines.

If it seems a bit fantastic and far-fetched to display the now defunct Suffolk and Carolina as a model of what may happen to some of our larger roads, let me remind you that, just as that road was built for the principal purpose of getting North Carolina pine logs to a mill in Suffolk, so the Virginian Railway was built only half a century ago for the purpose - one may say for the sole purpose - of getting coal from the mines of West Virginia to the docks in Norfolk, and that this same coal from the mines of <sup>Western Virginia and</sup> West Virginia was a great factor in the consolidations which have led to the present Norfolk and Western and Chesapeake and Ohio Railways.

Someone has said that the one credo to which all Americans subscribe is "It can't happen here." Three people sat in the cab of the Five that Sunday afternoon in 1902 and watched an early automobile rattle across the tracks. If one of these three had been prescient enough to remark that, exactly forty years later, the very tracks on which that locomotive ran would be taken up, he would have been hooted and jeered at. Yet it did happen. Today our major rail lines are battling for their existence and some of us think that the terms of the competition are not as equitable as they might be. Confronted by the subsidized competition of bus, truck, canal and airplane; maintaining and paying taxes on properties which in many cases are furnished free to their competitors; burdened with regulations which often seem deliberately to favor their competitors, the rail lines continue to be our chief means of transporting freight. If changing <sup>o</sup>technological conditions and subsidized competition should deprive them of much of what I will call their "backbone" freight - and that is what happened to the Suffolk and Carolina - the only alternative to abandonment would be government ownership and operation of our railroads, and from that I for one will join fervently in the ancient litany,

God Lord, Deliver Us.  
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NOTES

1. The road was not built to Somerton but slightly east of it. The Suffolk Lumber Company's railroad was subsequently built through Whaleyville and Somerton into North Carolina but, I think, never as far as the Chowan River.
2. All ~~ewader~~ ~~owndd~~ or controlled by Gay Manufacturing Company.
3. This anticipates a somewhat faster schedule than the Suffolk and Carolina ever maintained.
4. This was well developed. I have one photograph showing three three-masted schooners loading at one time. Each could carry from 300,000 to 400,000 board feet. This was nearly all coastwise trade.
5. This nickname seems to have been rapidly forgotten. The Delmarva Division was once the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk (N Y P and N), which was always pronounced "Nippenen" (accent on first and last syllables). The term was in common use from my earliest recollection (1895) until the late 1920's.
6. Lumsbury is obviously a misprint for Sunbury, although this quotation was copied from the official printed copy of the "Acts of Assembly." The error seems odd in print but could easily be made in handwriting.
7. Note that Gay and Camp, primarily timber and mill men, are incorporators of the railroad.
8. I believe that steam brakes were fitted to the Three a year or two before she was scrapped.
9. The station agents were storekeepers in their home settlements and ~~we~~ did not work a full day for the road. In most cases, the store served as the station.

10. The engineer of the Suffolk yard engine was apparently omitted, perhaps because he never went into North Carolina.

11. For at least the last two years of narrow gauge, the S & C used a double ramp to raise standard gauge freight cars from their trucks; narrow gauge trucks were then run under them and they were taken out on the line. All carload lots were handled in this way. (Note: Ben Ames Williams, in his last novel, The Unconquered, refers to some such device as a possibility for getting a through sleeper from New York to New Orleans immediately after the Civil War. The device is not described and the uninformed reader could be misled by a typographical error (page 503, line 22): tracks is clearly a misprint for trucks.)

12. When the S & C acquired the Fourteen and Fifteen, prior to the change of gauge, it became necessary to get these two engines to the southern end of the line, where standard gauge track was being laid. The N & W and the Norfolk Southern wanted an excessive freight for moving them over their lines to Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The general manager finally gave in to his insistent chief engineer (his younger brother-in-law), who loaded them on 42"-gauge flat cars and took them safely to Ryland, 22 miles south, where they were unloaded and put to work. I can recall how huge the standard gauge engines looked after they had been run (under their own steam) up on the tiny flats.

13. An actual incident in my own life. (GLBjr.)

14. In a factual history, statistics should here be used at some length. I have not had easy access to them and, even if I had, they would have been a bit boring to the audines<sup>ence</sup> for whom this paper was written. Some of the 1920-1930 passenger service was by gasoline or gasoline-electric cars.

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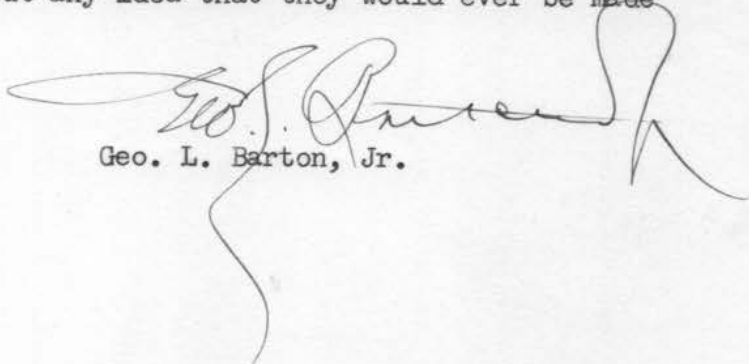
*Gift: Barton.*

Lynchburg, Virginia  
January 27, 1964

To the Jones Memorial Library:

To the Spheer Club paper on the Suffolk and Carolina Railroad, I am attaching these notes.

These notes were written entirely from memory some half a dozen years before I wrote the paper itself. I am including them because they contain some information about the motive power of the S & C which was omitted from the formal paper. The notes are quite personal at times and were written without any idea that they would ever be made public.



Geo. L. Barton, Jr.



## THE SUFFOLK &amp; CAROLINA RAILROAD

I have always supposed that any history of the Suffolk & Carolina Railroad Company must begin with some account of the Gay Manufacturing Company, for it is evident to me that the railroad grew out of the sawmill's demand for logs, an insatiable demand which must be constantly met if the mill is to operate steadily and show a profit. And, since a sawmill naturally cuts trees down faster than they can be replaced by natural growth, it inevitably happens that each day the mill finds itself transporting its supply of logs a greater distance. A day comes when it is economical, or good local policy, to make the mill's transportation system a common carrier; then we get a separate corporation; in years gone by, a railroad. And in the end comes a day when the log haul is too long to be economical. When this stage has been reached, the mill must be moved closer to the trees to be felled or else the company bankrupts itself and the common carrier, deprived now of its main source of revenue, tries to stand alone as a public servant; it totters along for a while and is usually absorbed by some larger carrier system which it adjoins. The latter purchases it for a few cents on the dollar and eventually abandons it when it is no longer able to make a profit even on the meager capital invested. This makes the cycle complete and no better concrete illustration of the cycle can be found than the story of the Gay Manufacturing Company and the Suffolk & Carolina Railroad Company between the years 1870 and 1942. It is my intention to write down here, in simple fashion, what I know of the story. My account is almost wholly without documentary support; I have had no opportunity to consult reports made to the several government commissions or to brows in the files of the local newspapers. These are merely the recollections, written by a man now nearly sixty, of things which he saw as a boy, things of great interest to him then and, sentimentally, through the years which have passed. If anyone should ever compare what I am writing with statements drawn from original sources, I hope that he will discover not too many discrepancies between my recollections and my inferences, and the facts as they actually were.

The Nansemond River has few straight stretches. When a traveler enters its mouth from Hampton Roads and the James River, he travels in general a southerly route to Suffolk but seldom is he sailing due south. When he passes under the Main Street Bridge at Suffolk (what we used to call the County Bridge), he is traveling due west but in a moment he has turned with a bend in the river and is sailing due north. On his left is marshy ground lying at the foot of a low bluff. On his right the ground slopes gently down to the water's edge, affording good riverbank sites for industry and commerce. Here, soon after the Civil War, on a plot of about five acres, one William H. Gay, then a young man, built a sawmill. Why he chose that side of the river, I do not know; perhaps he already owned the land or perhaps at that time he obtained his logs from the north side of the river. Before long, however, the mill was getting its logs from the southern part of Nansemond County, the other side of the river. The logs were brought to a point on the river's bank just west Shingle Creek, dumped into the river and floated up on the tide to Gay's mill. And they had been brought to this point on the river by a small railway which I have always assumed was an integral part of the mill, operated by the mill only to supply itself with logs. If I am correct, this was the origin, the germ, of the Suffolk & Carolina Railroad.

I have seen a note somewhere to the effect that this little rail line was incorporated in 1873 as the Nansemond Land, Lumber & Narrow Gauge Railroad Company and that in 1874 the corporate name was changed to the Suffolk & Carolina Railroad Company. This would indicate that my surmise is correct; that the road was once a part of the mill and that subsequent developments proved to the owners that it was best to have a separate corporation to operate the railroad. How far to the south the little road extended in 1874, I do not know. Ten years later, in 1884, the two companies, sawmill and railroad, were completely reorganized. The following is a fairly accurate description of them at that date.

The Gay Manufacturing Company, which may have acquired this corporate title as late as 1884 but I think somewhat earlier, had been enriched by some Baltimore capital

which thereafter controlled its destinies. In 1884 William N. Camp (afterwards founder of the Camp Manufacturing Company, still a great and progressive corporation in 1950) was president; Charles F. Pitt, Jr., was secretary; George L. Barton, Sr. was treasurer. Camp, Pitt, John S. Gittings, S. P. Ryland, Jr., Chauncey Brooks, and William H. Bosley were directors. All were Baltimore men except Camp. A little later Camp either got out or was squeezed out; my grandfather, C. H. Causey, Sr., thought the latter. Bosley then became president and George L. Barton secretary and treasurer. The company owned and operated the mill at Suffolk, which had a capacity of 30,000 board feet a day; a second mill at Cyprus Chapel which would saw 15,000 a day; and it controlled a third mill nearby which cut 10,000 feet a day. In addition, plans had been drawn as early as 1886 for a fourth mill at Sunbury which was to be equipped with a gang saw and would cut 60,000 feet a day.

This Baltimore capital also took over the railroad. In 1886 Chauncey Brooks was president but he was soon after replaced by Bosley; Bosley was first the secretary and treasurer. The directors were Brooks, Bosley, Camp, Pitt, Gittings, and Ryland. Just when my father's actual connection with the road began, I do not know. The two companies were operated so closely together that I, as a child, never knew any difference between them. At this time (1886) the road extended 22 miles to Sunbury, N. C., and, besides hauling logs and lumber for the mills, it carried some freight and passengers for the people living along the line. Saunders Crossing, Cyprus Chapel, Corapeake, Sunbury, Gates County are all names very familiar to me as a boy.

The plans for the mill at Sunbury were changed. Instead of continuing its policy of having several scattered mills, the Gay Company abandoned the old mill in Suffolk and built a new one on the south side of the river at a point on the S. & C. tracks about midway between the Norfolk & Western and the Seaboard Air Line crossings. As long as it stood, it was known as "The Big Mill" and its deep steamboat whistle was both an alarm clock and in part a fire signal for the town of Suffolk. It had two band mills and a resaw which would cut 100,000 feet of lumber in a ten-hour day. It had adequate dry kilns and lumber sheds but no planing mill. The company sold only rough lumber.

Both as a commercial venture and in order to reach additional timber and to afford a southern outfit for its lumber, the road was pushed twelve miles further to a point on the Chowan River called Montrose Landing. (I suspect that my father named it; he was very fond of Scott's novels.) This is the road and the mill as I first remember them; some of my memories go back to 1896 or 1897. I remember that a passenger train left Suffolk about five o'clock every afternoon for Montrose Landing and returned about nine o'clock the next morning. This schedule gave residents along the line a good day's shopping in Suffolk and even enabled them to spend a few hours in Norfolk if they so desired. A mixed train; passenger, freight, and some empty log cars, left Suffolk every morning except Sunday and came back in the late afternoon. At least two other log trains a day arrived and empties departed. I recall that the No. 8 usually made two trips and frequently did not get in from her second trip until eight or nine o'clock.

I cannot describe all of the motive power since some of it remained in the woods and I either never saw it or had only a casual glimpse of it in the engine shed undergoing repairs. I think that I never saw the "One" and the "Two" until they were brought in to be scrapped about 1900, and I cannot recall ever having seen the "Six" and the "Seven". I believe that the "One" and the "Two" were once known as the "Pitt" and the "Bosley", and were the only engines of the road to bear names. I have recently (1951) learned from R. B. Carneal, of Durham, N.C., that the "One" was built by Baldwin in 1877, construction number 4050, and was originally owned by the Philadelphia & Atlantic City Railroad, their No. 3. This would indicate that all of the motive power that I ever knew was acquired by the S. & C. after the reorganization of 1884 and I have no means whatever of knowing what motive power was in use on the Gay Company's road prior to that date.

The Three, Four, Five, and Eight I knew well. Unfortunately I have no dates and specifications for them. They were all 42" gauge. The 3 was an 0-6-0 shifter or road engine. She had a swallow-tail tender, headlights front and rear, and her boiler dressing was much fluted. She must have been built in the early 1870's, perhaps in the

1860's. I have no idea who built her. She was giving trouble as early as I can remember and one of father's first acts as general manager in 1898 or '99 was to get rid of her. A third rail (56½") had by this time been laid throughout the Suffolk yard, including the track down to the river, and the change to standard gauge for the whole road was already under consideration, so my father, who was now the only resident executive officer of the two companies, bought a second-hand standard gauge 4-4-0 and put it to use as a yard engine, renumbering it 9. I should say that the cylinders of this engine were about 18x24 and the drivers 70".

The four and the five were built by Porter. My guess is that they were built about 1875. I do not know who first owned them or when they were acquired by the S. & C.; the date could not be later than 1890 and I think that 1885 is more nearly correct. Both were 4-4-0, of the long slender build then in vogue. The Four was later equipped with vacuum brakes while straight air was added to the Five. All S. & C. power had Stephenson link motion.

The Eight was my father's pet. It was a Baldwin 4-4-0 and was used steadily in hauling the log trains. She pulled more train and gave less trouble than any of the others, despite the fact that her annual mileage must have exceeded considerably that of the other engines. My father always said that no one in this country knew how to build a locomotive except Baldwin and he refused to buy anything else if he could avoid it. The Eight must have been acquired second hand; I have never been able to trace it back to Baldwin. It was reboilered at the builder's about 1898; a second crack having developed in the boilerhead. She was then over twenty years old and my father was unwilling to trust another patch.

The Ten needs a special note. It is the only engine I knew of whose gauge was changed from narrow to standard. My father did not want to buy another narrow gauge engine since plans were already maturing for the change of gauge over the entire road, but in 1900 the motive power was in such sorry shape that he had to have something to meet the increasing demands. He accordingly had Baldwin build the Ten to his specifications. When the gauge had been changed, the Ten went back to Philadelphia to be converted to standard gauge, but the change never proved satisfactory, for some reason, for after she was returned she never pulled well.

This is all I know of the motive power of the narrow gauge S. & C. The Five was the one I knew best. Albert Powell ran her for years; he was my father's most trusted engineer and my father did not scold too much when he sometimes caught me riding in the cab with Powell. He took much interest in teaching me and what little I know about handling a locomotive I owe to him and my father. The latter was rather appalled the first time he saw the Five moving around the yard with only a small boy's head in the right cab window and he promptly investigated. Powell invited him to reserve his comment until he had ridden around with us a bit. After riding with us for a while, he climbed down from the cab with an admonition to Powell to be careful, but he left me with him.

At the turn of the Century my father thought more and more of changing the gauge of the road. Interline traffic had increased greatly; this meant a large increase in the cost of transferring freight from standard gauge to narrow gauge cars, and vice versa. The loss of time was also a consideration. My father even devised a sort of inclined runway or ramp by which the large cars were lifted from their trucks and narrow gauge trucks run under them. The process of course had to be repeated when the big cars came back empty to Suffolk. Furthermore, the narrow gauge rolling stock as well as the motive power was rapidly approaching the condition of the deacon's one-horse shay, it was about to fall apart. For these, and perhaps some other reasons, he had little difficulty in convincing the directors that the change in gauge was not only advisable but even necessary.

At the same time, a change in the southern terminus was advisable. Montrose Landing had never become anything except a landing, merely a pier jutting out into the Chowan River. The little settlement never acquired any commercial importance. On the other hand, a little to the east lay Edenton and Elizabeth City, two growing towns, both

situated on deep water. A line to each of these towns would not only bring increased commercial traffic, but would also pass near and through some rich stands of timber. For these reasons, among others perhaps, it was decided to abandon the old narrow gauge track from Montrose Landing back to a point not far below Sunbury, create a junction at that point, run one line almost due south to Edenton and another line southeast to Elizabeth City. This junction my father gave the name "Beckford" from an old estate in Princess Anne, Maryland, where he often played as a boy. The two new lines out of Beckford Junction were laid to standard gauge. The line from the junction to the landing was pulled up. I am not sure of the date of the change to standard gauge over the whole road but I think the spring of 1904 is about correct.

Of course, much preparation was necessary for the change of gauge and of termini. I dimly remember much talk of rights of way and timber, of bridges to be strengthened, curves to be eliminated, swamps to be filled or bridged, motive power and rolling stock to be acquired. It was the motive power that interested me. But, before I can describe this, I must mention another industry in Suffolk, one which passed out of existence many years ago.

There existed in Suffolk at the turn of the Century the Bowen & Street Equipment Company, whose shops and offices were located in the triangle formed by the S. & C., the S. A. L., and the long spur connecting these two railroads. Bowen & Street operated a general machine repair shop and dealt in second hand machinery. I can recall seeing locomotives of all sorts and sizes in their shops. Logging and contracting companies in the vicinity sent locomotives, derricks, steam shovels, cars, and hoisting engines to them for rebuilding and Bowen & Street also purchased sundry locomotives and other machinery and, after rebuilding them, sold them. My uncle, James C. Causey, purchased from them one of the little Forney-type engines which had been used on the 6th Avenue Manhattan Elevated and used it in logging operations in North Carolina. This engine was No. 4 of the Norfolk Lumber Company and was used at Wallace, N. C., in the summer of 1913.

Now to return to the S. & C. I think that the first standard gauge locomotive acquired by my father was a 4-4-0 leased and subsequently purchased from Bowen & Street. I never remember it in the Suffolk yards. It was probably taken to Elizabeth City and used in the construction of the new standard gauge track. This would be Suffolk & Carolina Eleven.

The 12 was a new 4-4-0 purchased from Baldwin, in 1903, I think. This proved to be the best of the new engines and was used to haul the log trains. It was not a stock locomotive but was built to my father's specifications.

There was no No. 13. For the ~~fourteenth~~ and the fifteen my father went to Bowen & Street and purchased two rebuilt 4-4-0's. I still remember the Sunday afternoon he took me with him to the Bowen & Street sheds to inspect these engines and I recall how tired I became as he spent so much time in firebox and smokebox inspecting flues. Flues did not mean much to me then. When these two locomotives had been delivered to the S. & C., the N. & W. and the Norfolk Southern asked a very high price for getting them to Elizabeth City, much too high, my father thought. His chief engineer, James C. Causey, said that he would get them to Beckford Junction if my father would give him permission to transport them on narrow gauge flat cars. My father demurred at first but finally gave in to Uncle Jim's persistence. Jim got the engines and tenders on four flat cars and hauled them safely to Beckford Junction, one engine and tender at a time. My father was very happy when this operation was ended without accident. I suppose there was considerable risk in carrying such a top-heavy load on such a narrow base.

The last locomotives acquired under my father's administration were the 16 and 17. These were built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works and were delivered, I think, in the spring of 1904. They were 4-4-0's but their specifications were a little different from those of the 12. They were similar to locomotives then in use on the Queen Anne Railroad on the eastern shore of Maryland and I think that the president, Mr. Bosley, who was also president of the Queen Anne Railroad, wished them so built. My father never liked them and some years later I recall that he remarked with pride that when the N.S. finally bought the road, it at once transferred the 12 to its own main line, leaving the 16 and 17 on the

branch line.

This about exhausts my slender stock of memories. There are some indistinct recollections of new passenger cars, box cars, and a caboose or two, but these are too dim to be of use here. Perhaps I may close with one personal reminiscence which has remained clearly in my mind these 47 years.

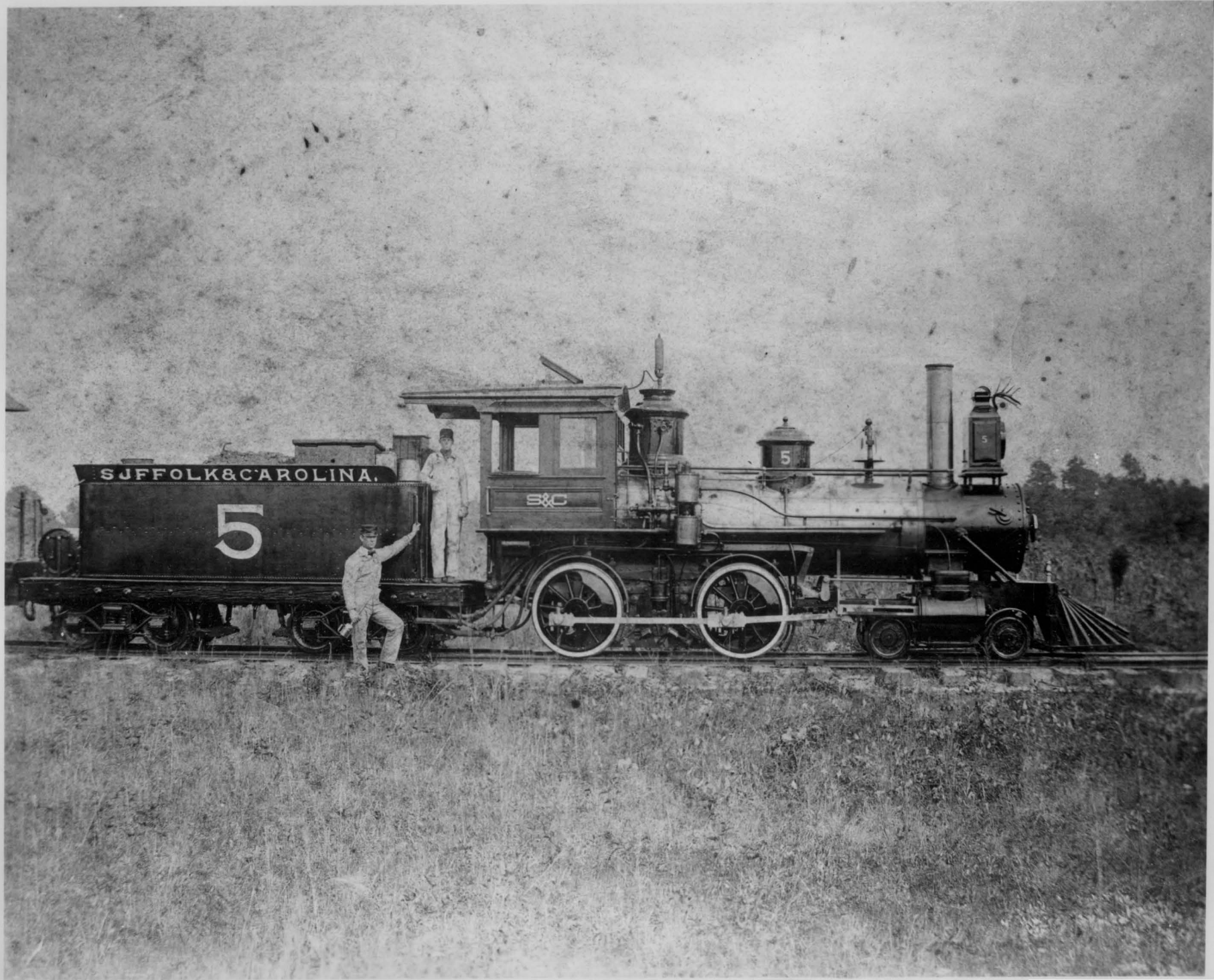
The great Baltimore fire, which destroyed so much of the downtown business section of that city, occurred in the spring of 1904, just after the S. & C. had been changed to standard gauge. The new roundhouse and its turntable fascinated me, before the change I had known nothing except the Y. On that Sunday afternoon I had begged permission from my father to go to the roundhouse while he did some work in his office. I trailed around with Albert Powell while he and his fireman, Callie Brittingham, and a single hostler, got the 16 ready to take the afternoon passenger train out and, when the time came to back the engine out onto the turntable, my patience was rewarded by Powell's pointing to the engineer's seat. Callie was out at the turntable to help the hostler turn us. Someone called Powell just as we were ready to start. He got down from the cab, telling me to go ahead. I backed her out, balanced her on the talbe and set the brakes fast. Just then, there came one of the heaviest rains I have ever witnessed, a real cloudburst. Callie and the hostler ran for shelter, leaving me holding an engine on a turntable with no track at either end for they had already begun to turn me. The men stood under shelter but within my sight--so I could signal them if I wanted them. I kept busy watching my gauges, giving the brakes a little more air once in a while. The rain stopped after a long fifteen minutes and, when we had made up the train and were backing up to the station, my father climbed up to the cab and told us about a telephone message that had just come in about the fire in Baltimore and that he would have to go to Baltimore that night because the directors and other officers of the railroad had had their offices in Baltimore destroyed by fire.

Of the sale of the S. & C. to the Virginia & Carolina Coast Railroad and subsequently to the Norfolk Southern, I know practically nothing. Since I was not living in Suffolk and my father had no connection with the road after December, 1904, I do not know the steps by which the road was gradually stifled by the encroachment of the automobile, the truck and the bus. Perhaps the ride was crude, cindery, uncomfortable, and the hours inconvenient but to me no bus will ever take the place of the Five and her two little cars starting out for Montrose Landing and no smelly truck, hauling logs on a concrete highway, will ever take the place in my mind of the 8 as she puffed and chugged her long train of log cars across East Washington Street by the light of her big oil headlight.

From 1904 to 1942 is not a great many years but they were enough to see the little road sink gradually from its highest prosperity to complete oblivion. After years of slow strangulation, the end finally came in 1942 when a court order granted permission to the Norfolk Southern to abandon and dispose of all the former S. & C. tracks and right of way. From the southern end of the Suffolk yard to Edenton and Elizabeth City rails were taken up and ties removed or left to rot in the ground. Only the tracks in the Suffolk yard now remain, these were sold to the Virginian Railway for \$15,000.00, which now operates them as a belt line railroad connecting the five railroads passing through Suffolk.

George L. Barton, Jr.

March 13, 1951



"THE FIVE"

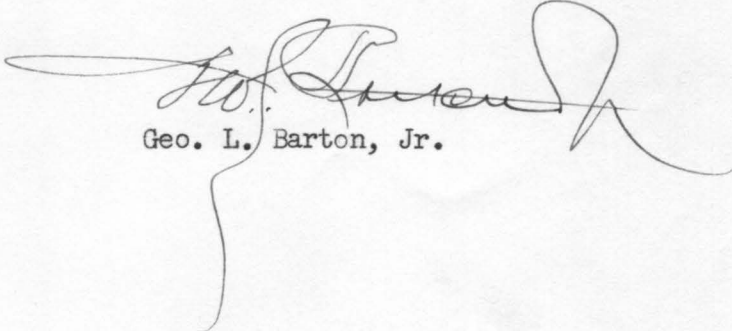
This picture of Suffolk & Carolina No. 5 is a full-sized copy of an original taken in 1899 or 1900. The original print, still in my possession in 1964, was made from an 8 x 10 glass plate negative on Solio paper. Enlargements in those days were almost unknown.

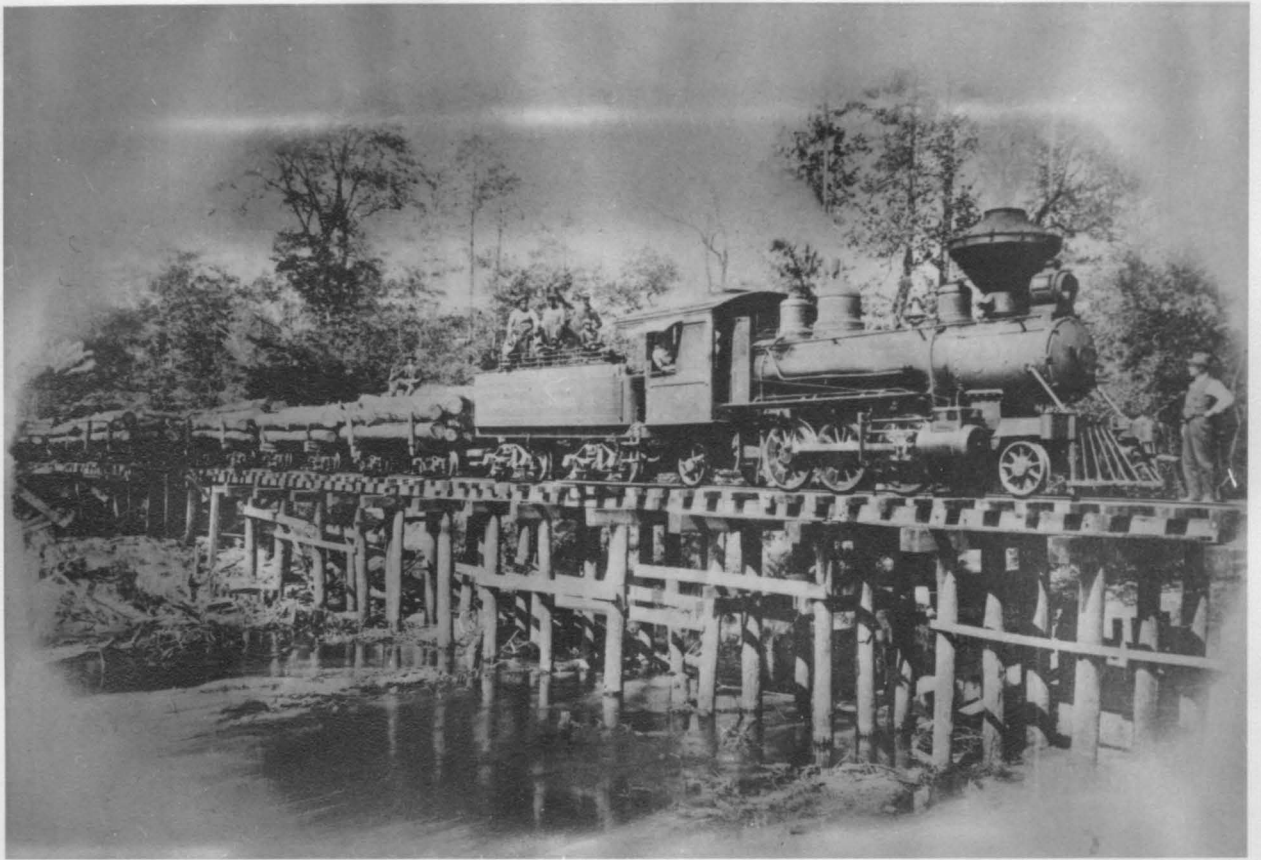
The man standing on the ground was the engineer, William Albert Powell. The fireman was Callie Brittingham. Powell himself killed the deer whose antlers adorn the oil-burning headlight.

The Five was built by the H. K. Porter Company. My best estimate of the date of building is 1875 - 1880, probably nearer the first date. Air brakes had been added; one who knows locomotives will see at a glance that the airbrake equipment looks as if it had simply been "thrown at" the little engine. When this picture was taken, the Five had just come from a thorough overhaul and I suspect that the airbrakes had been added at that time.

This little engine pulled the passenger train from Suffolk, Virginia to Montrose Landing, on the Chowan River in North Carolina. The train - engine and two cars - left Suffolk every afternoon and returned early the next morning. The Five continued in service until the guage of the little railroad was changed from 42" to 56½" (standrad) in May, 1904.

Lynchburg, Virginia  
January 28, 1964

  
Geo. L. Barton, Jr.



The accompanying photograph is an enlargement made from a negative which was, in turn, made from an 8" x 10" photograph taken in 1910 or 1911.

The picture shows the Norfolk Lumber Company's Mainline locomotive, No. 3, with a train of 30 cars bringing logs to the company's sawmill at Wallace, North Carolina, 36 miles north of Wilmington. The man standing in front of the locomotive is James C. Causey, President and general manager of the company.

My personal interest in the picture lies in the fact that, in the summers of 1911 and 1913, I frequently ran this locomotive, bringing two trains daily from the logging operations some 18 miles distant. Mr. Causey was my youngest uncle, who helped me through college, and I worked with him two summers.

George L. Barton, Jr.  
2104 Westerly Drive  
Lynchburg, Virginia

October 5, 1965.