

Matthews Train Depot Today

Our best records indicate this depot was constructed in the late 1880s. The first train, Carolina Central Railway, came to Matthews December 1874. At that time, there was probably a shelter in this general location to service the stop. To greet you when you enter the building is a mannequin, wearing an authentic Seaboard conductor's uniform. He has been named "George" for George Shelton, the longest employed Matthews station master and telegrapher, working here from 1909 until 1950.

There was heart of pine floors in the original building. The floors you see here were replaced when the building was restored. Some of the original salvageable floors were made into the cabinets in the back of the dept. The ceiling support system, consisting of beams and pegs, are all original to the building. The depot office and telegraph station is where the Chamber of Commerce office is now. The ticket window and shelf are also original to the building. Located on the wall by the ticket window are authentic reproductions of original Seaboard schedule and information boards.

The four large windows and entrance doors were open areas, to allow ease of freight movement. The large wooden outside doors closed these openings at night. There was a long ramp that ran trackside for freight shipping and receiving. The large wooden water tank to service the steam locomotives was located about a quarter of a mile down the tracks, in the Tanktown area (now Crestdale). The street named Tanktown Road is all that remains from the water station.

The large mural on the back wall is of a Matthews general store. On the back of the original photo is Matthews, 1911. The younger man in the mural is Alexander Morehead Wallace. Matthews Antiques donated the long display case under the mural and the displace case on the right side. Both cases house Seaboard train memorabilia. The sister case on the other side of the depot houses old Matthews photos. It was acquired from Matthews Holiday Haus. The lard oak door and hardware is the original door to the Bank of Matthews, donated by Wayne Haigler. He removed the door in 1978 when the Livery Stable, Bank of Funderburk General Store were being demolished. The picture on the door is a vinyl screen of an old photo of the bank interior.

The sewing machine and rocker were acquired from the House family. One of E. J. Funderburk's daughters married into the Houston family. The handmade wedding dress was donated by Janie Powell Jones from Matthews. It was her grandmother's, Elizabeth Reade who married Rufus Powell July 1914, in Durham, NC. An original freight art with the "SAL" stencil, an antique truck and hat boxes on the flatbed, complete the display. Interestingly, the cart can "turn on a dime" and was designed to operate on either side by switching handles.

Even though the first trains to roll into Matthews were Carolina Central Railway, later to become the Carolina Central Railroad, (they also owned the track), Seaboard was busy acquiring small railroad to become one larger railroad. The Carolina Central Railroad was taken over by Seaboard Airline (SAL) in 1900. Seaboard Airline then owned the Depot and the tracks. Each individual railroad built and owned their own depots and tracks for their own trains unlike airports that are build by cities or municipalities. In 197 Seaboard Airline merged with its longtime rival and became the Seaboard Coastline. Sadly, the heart logo ended. In the 1980s, Seaboard Coastline merged with the Chessie System and became CSX, the train you see on the tracks in Matthews today. The cabooses, their function taken over by electronics and computers, were taken off the tracks and no longer used starting in the 1908s.

Paula Lester, March 5, 2016