

## **The Journal of Frances Anne Kemble and the Stagecoach Line of Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road - Enfield to Stantonsburg**

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The purpose of this study was to determine the route used by the stagecoach line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road, to locate modern roads that closely approximate the stage route, and compare the present landscape along the route with descriptions of that provided in historic documents. Although its service was brief, this stagecoach line is significant because the use of stagecoaches by the railroad illustrates how transportation was organized during railroad construction. Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838 - 1839* is explored because it describes travel on this particular stagecoach line, and places the line in a geographic context.

A combined program of archival research, map analysis, and field study were used in this inquiry. This study concluded that in late 1838 the stage route commenced (going in southward direction) from the area of Fishing Creek below the town of Enfield, passed within the neighborhood of Tarborough, with a stop at Stantonsburg before continuing to Waynesborough. The section of the route south of Stantonsburg was not examined. The modern landscapes fronting the approximate stagecoach route remain rural. Additionally, Mrs. Kemble was not able to observe the established towns of Halifax, Enfield, Tarborough, and Stantonsburg. Her observations of the landscape and people of North Carolina, thus, are hobbled by the limitations for her immediate experience and assumptions.

### **Introduction**

Some problems in historical geography demand a combination of techniques to arrive at a solution. It is particularly true of those problems where portions of the solution may be found in different classes of sources, or in a changing physical landscape. Discerning the nature of specific routes, such as that of a stagecoach, within the context of historic road networks and determining their approximate path on the modern landscape provides an opportunity to employ different research techniques. The example presented in this article involves determining which roads in modern Edgecombe and Wilson Counties (North Carolina) closely approximate the route taken by the stagecoach line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road during its brief existence in the late 1830s.

Historical sources used in this study include the *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* by Frances Anne Kemble, period newspaper articles concerning the building of the railroad, and two historical maps from *North Carolina in Maps* by W.P. Cumming. The *capability constraints* and *coupling constraints* of Hagerstrand's *Time Geography* provide a framework for analyzing the period texts.<sup>1</sup> The probable route that was identified within the road network of the historic maps was reconciled with GIS data sets by establishing control points where the geometry of all sources matched, and where the probable route crossed a local stream. The final element of the research involved a qualitative examination of the landscape aimed at ascertaining whether physical elements (architecture,

for example) along the probable route can be associated with information derived from historic texts and maps.

### Geographic Details in the Historic Texts and Their Time Geography Aspects

The stagecoach line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road (later renamed the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad) existed briefly between 1837 and 1840 as the railroad was being constructed. As the railroad advanced from the north and south, the stage route's length decreased. The southern route from Wilmington to Waynesborough (later Goldsboro) followed roads that paralleled the projected railroad. The northern route, however, traversed areas of Edgecombe County, Wilson County (formed later), and Wayne County that were bypassed by the railroad – particularly, the towns of Tarboro and Stantonsburg.

The history of the stage route is documented in several period North Carolina newspapers.<sup>1</sup> At least three of these pieces of information found in newspaper articles are necessary for this study because they help establish locations along the route that can be associated with the narrative of traveling on the stagecoach line provided by Frances Anne Kemble. A notice from the office of the Petersburg Rail Road dated 27 October 1838 announced to planters and farmers that produce to be sent north could be consigned to their agent (Major B.F. Halsey) or the agent for the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road at Enfield (*Tarborough Press*, 17 November 1838). The southern termination of stagecoach line is established in an article published in a Wilmington newspaper two days before Mrs. Kemble's stagecoach ride.

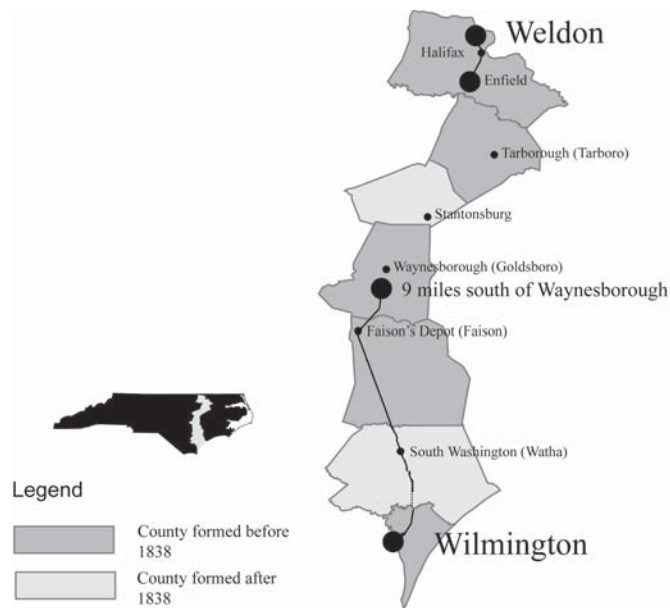
The section of the Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road between Faison's and Martin's, 12 miles long, was traveled over yesterday for the first time by the passenger's train. The remaining section – nine miles – between Wilmington and Waynesboro' is finished, except the iron, which will be nailed down as speedily as possible. (*Wilmington Advertiser*, 21 December 1838)

Mrs. Kemble substantiates what the newspaper reports on the southern extent of the railroad by noting that the stagecoach had traveled about ten miles after a stop in Waynesborough, and that a group of locals had gathered at the place where the stage stop to meet the train from Wilmington to see the locomotive “come up for only the third time into the midst of their savage solitude” (Kemble [1865] 1984, 27-28). An article reporting an example of fish being purchased in Wilmington and arriving in Tarboro the next day by way of the stagecoaches of the WRRR illustrates that the stagecoach line was still servicing Tarboro in late 1838 (*Tarborough Press*, 22 December 1838). The two sections of the railroad that are in operation and towns located on the stagecoach route can be mapped out using the information provided in these articles for Mrs. Kemble's trip on 23 December 1838 (Figure 1).

Mrs. Kemble, after departing Weldon by train between eight and nine o'clock in evening, arrives four hours later at the end of the northern section of the railroad.

Between twelve and one o'clock [in the early morning of Sunday, December 23, 1838], the engine stopped, and it was announced to us that we had traveled as far upon the railroad as it was yet completed, and that we must transfer ourselves to the stagecoaches; so in the dead middle of the night we crept out of the train, and taking our children in our arms, walked a few yards into an open space in the woods, where three four-horse coaches stood waiting to receive us. (Kemble [1865] 1984, 22)

Mrs. Kemble's description of a group of men warming themselves by a fire at the end of the railroad most likely was a work crew, and the opening in the woods suggests that railroad construction had advanced a short distance south of Enfield. The log road that her stagecoach traveled that night was through swampland. The stage arrived at Stantonsburg shortly after sunrise. Though Kemble writes a single paragraph about the night's journey, it would be safe to assume that it was miserable. The cold coupled with the hours of being jostled



**Figure 1.** Map of the progress of construction on the Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road during 1838, as reported in the area newspapers. The Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road was finished in March 1840. The total length of the railroad from Wilmington to Weldon was 161.5 miles. The stagecoach line of the railroad operated during construction. By May 1838, the stage line ran from Halifax to South Washington. A section from Halifax to Enfield was completed in October 1838, and the southern section was completed to Faison's Depot. By the last week of December, the railroad was within nine miles of Waynesborough. Source: Census 2000 TIGER/Line Files. Map by James C. Burke

about in the stagecoach on a rough road must have been excruciating. There had only been a four hour respite at Weldon from the time she had left Portsmouth, Virginia the previous morning. In addition, she was nursing a baby along the way (*ibid.*, 19-23). It is evident from her account that both the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road and the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road had subjected their passengers to an unimaginable ordeal to meet the scheduled connections. When Mrs. Kemble and her family arrived at Wilmington at 5 AM on 24 December 1838, they had been deprived of sleep and adequate nourishment for nearly two days.

Other sources can be employed to determine the duration of the stage ride from Enfield to Stantonsburg and the approximate speed of the stage. The US Naval Observatory in Washington, DC calculates that sunrise at Stantonsburg (W 077° 49', N 35° 36') on December 23, 1838 occurred at

7:18 AM (Astronomical Applications Department of the US Naval Observatory, 2004). Given Mrs. Kemble's observation that her stage trip began around 12:30 AM, the stage ride lasted approximately seven hours. Frederick Law Olmsted, recounted a similar journey by stagecoach through southeastern North Carolina while traveling on the yet to be completed Wilmington & Manchester Rail Road in *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States with Remarks on their Economy*. His stagecoach also traveled during the winter over log roads through swampland. The driver and teams were changed out about every ten miles (Olmsted, 1861, 380).

Applications of the *Time Geography* proposed by Torsten Hagerstrand are most closely associated with transportation planning in the urban context and the concepts of space-time autonomy in describing the mobility of individuals and classes of individuals. Susan Hanson's *The Context of Urban*

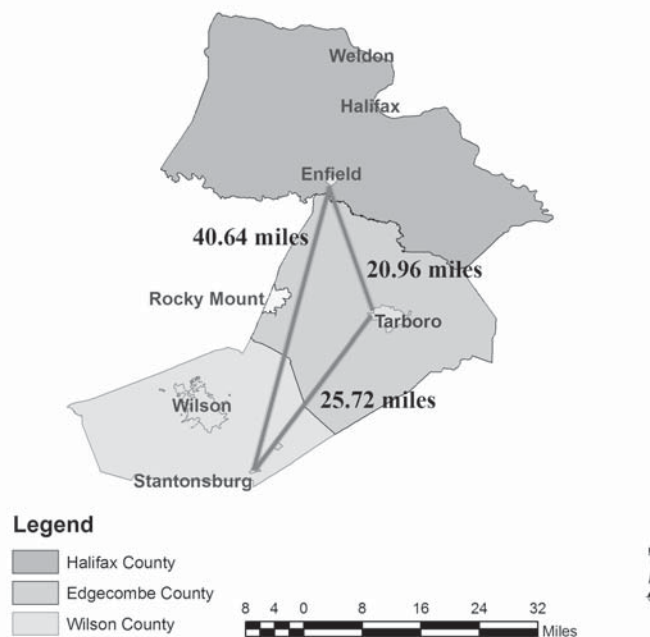
*Travel, Concepts and Recent Trends* list three categories of constraints that limit mobility that are associated with *Time Geography*: 1) *capability constraints* are limitations on what tasks can be accomplished in an interval of time with a specific transportation technology; 2) *coupling constraints* are transportation problems that arise from the need to have coordinate schedules and tasks with others using different transportation during the course of completing a single trip (For example, the tasks of a trip might include having lunch with a friend, picking up a child from school, going to the post office, and buying groceries before returning home – some of these tasks involve being in specific place in space and time with certain individual or classes of individuals; 3) and authority constrains are “the social, political, and legal restrictions on access” (Hanson, 2004, 3-8). *Time Geography* is a valuable tool for the modern transportation planner. However, some aspects of Hagerstrand’s theory lend themselves to the study of historic transportation systems.

The aspects of *Time Geography* that are applicable to the problem addressed in this study involve determining what route through the road network of 1830s Edgecombe County would allow a trip by stagecoach that would begin in the neighborhood of Enfield, pass near Tarboro, and terminate at Stantonsburg within the span of approximately seven hours. The *capability constraints* to be considered are related to stagecoach travel in general, and the road conditions particular to the route. The *coupling constraints* are whatever purposes the railroad had to route their stage line near Tarboro (deliver or receive mail, freight, or passengers). The *authority constraints* are those limitations that impact the stage route that originate from the necessity of the railroad as a corporation to fulfill its obligations to other railroads and steamship companies to maintain scheduled connections. The distance “as the crow flies” between Enfield (N 36° 10.858’, W 77° 40.000’) to Stantonsburg (N 35° 36.408’, W 77° 49.401’) is 40.64 miles; the distance between Enfield and Tarboro (N 35° 53.808’, W 77° 32.150’) is 20.96 miles; and, the direct distance between Tarboro and Stantonsburg is 25.72 miles.

Thus, the ideal road network for a route between Enfield and Stantonsburg via Tarboro would be 46.68 miles long (Figure 2). If a stagecoach traveling at an average speed of 7 mph were to take this ideal route, it would take 6.668 hours. At an average speed of 8 mph the trip would last 5.838 hours. If it can be assumed that the historic route between Enfield and Stantonsburg took seven hours (by Mrs. Kemble’s account), the distance traveled for 7 mph would be 49 miles, and for 8 mph would be 56 miles. An examination of historic maps can determine whether the road network of the 1830s in Edgecombe County contained roads that would allow a route that satisfies these time/distance conditions.

### Historic Maps and GIS Datasets

Two historic maps from William P. Cumming’s *North Carolina in Maps* were helpful sources for reconstructing the historic stage route. These were the MacRae-Brazier map of 1833 and the United States Coast Survey of 1865 (Cumming, 1966, Plate X, Plate XIII). I selected nine locations common to the MacRae-Brazier Map of 1833 and the United States Coast Survey of 1865 for the purpose of finding the same using recent GIS datasets of the region’s road network (Figures 3a and 3b). When the sections of the maps containing Edgecombe County (later Edgecombe and Wilson) are examined, common elements of the shortest route from Enfield to Stantonsburg via Tarboro appear, even though more than thirty years separate the two. The road on the south side of Enfield passes over Fishing Creek by Wyatt’s Bridge (Location 1), crosses Swift Creek at Dorches’ Bridge (Location 2), and crosses the Tar River at Teat’s Bridge (Location 3). The road intersects the road between Rocky Mount and Tarboro.<sup>1</sup> The most direct route from Tarboro to Stantonsburg is by crossing Town Creek (Location 4) and continuing to the crossroads at Pitt’s Crossroads (Location 5) and Saratoga. The MacRae-Brazier Map of 1833 names Town Creek, but not Pitt’s Crossroads or Saratoga (Figure 3a). However, Pitt’s Crossroads is mentioned in a newspaper article concerning subscriptions to the stock of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road prior to the es-



**Figure 2.** Map of modern Halifax, Edgecombe, and Wilson Counties. The direct distance between Enfield and Tarboro is 20.96 miles, and the direct distance between Tarboro and Stantonburg is 25.72 miles. The direct distance between Enfield and Stantonburg is 40.64 miles. The total direct distance between Enfield and Stantonburg via Tarboro is 46.68. Mrs. Kemble's stagecoach trip between Enfield and Stantonburg took app. 7 hours. At an average speed of 7 mph, the trip would cover 49 miles during this amount of time. Source: Census 2000 TIGER/Line Files. Map by James C. Burke

establishment of the stage route (*The Wilmington Advertiser*, 25 April 1836). Pitt's Crossroad was the intersection of the Tarboro-Stantonburg Road and the Tarboro-Smithfield Road. The Tarboro-Smithfield Road and the Stantonburg-Nashville (NC) Road intersect at a location that would become Wilson (Location 6). From Pitt's Crossroads the route would have to continue to that crossroads that would become Saratoga (Location 7). At Stantonburg (Location 8), Contentnea Creek could be crossed by passing through town, or bypassing town by way of Peacock's Bridge (Location 9).

Mrs. Kemble's journal entries become problematic because she is unaware that there were established towns along the completed section of rail-

road and the stage route through Halifax and Edgecombe Counties.

From Suffolk to Wilmington we did not pass a single town – scarcely anything deserving the name village. The few detached houses on the road were mean and beggarly in their appearance ... (Kemble [1865] 1984, 25)

Can this be entirely attributed to the fact that most of the journey was undertaken in the dead of night? Mrs. Kemble, by her own admission, “endeavored in vain to guess at the nature of the country through which we were traveling” (*ibid.*, [1865] 1984, 22). However, the likely explanation for the





MacRae-Brazier, 1833

1. Wyatt's Bridge (Daniel's Bridge at Fishing Creek)
2. Dorches' Bridge at Swift Creek
3. Teat's Bridge over the Tar River
4. Town Creek
5. Pitt's Crossroads (Pitts Grove)
6. Intersection of the road from Pitt's Crossroads and the road from Stantonsburg to Nashville
7. Crossroads (later Saratoga) between Pitt's Crossroads and Stantonsburg
8. Stantonsburg
9. Peacock's Bridge



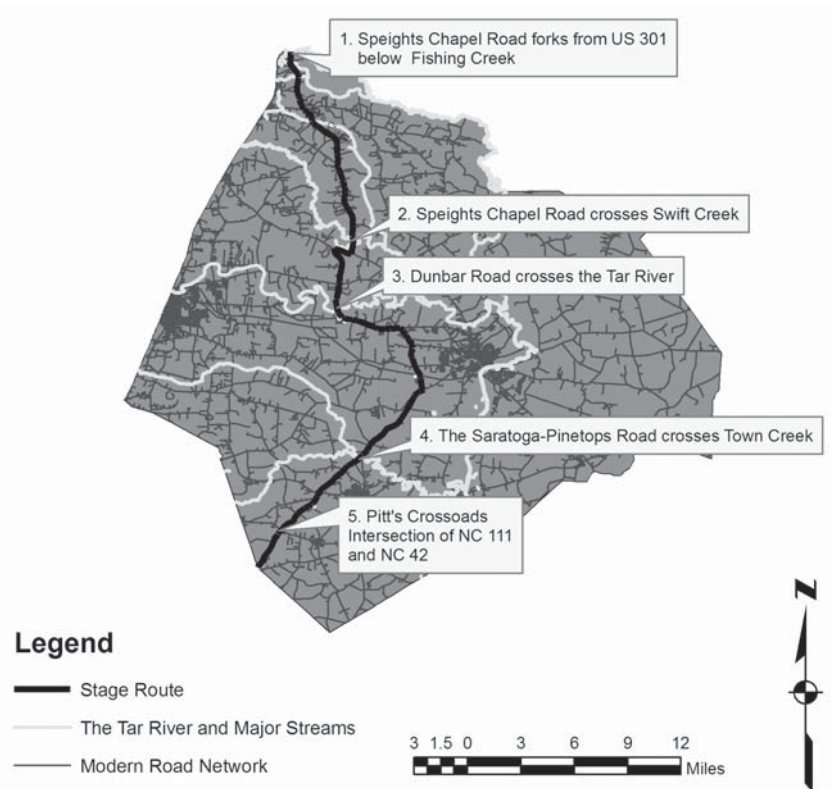
United States Coast Survey, 1865

**Figures 3a and 3b.** The likely stage route through Edgecombe County (later Edgecombe and Wilson counties). Location points placed on the 1833 MacRae-Brazier map and the 1865 United States Coast Survey map. 3a. MacRae-Brazier, 1833. 3b. United States Coast Survey, 1865. Source: Cumming, W.P. (1966). *North Carolina in Maps*. Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Plate X, Plate XIII.

reason that she did not notice towns when the stage made its stops was that the stables for the horse were located on the outskirts of town. Assuming that this was true, the stagecoach route stopped short of entering Tarboro proper and started its southward leg to Stantonsburg. Stantonsburg could be bypassed by way of Peacock's Bridge.

After establishing a general length and duration of the stage route from Enfield to Stantonsburg, examining the historical maps for a probable route, and identifying locations along this route, the author set out to discover the route's approximate path in the modern road network of Edgecombe and Wilson Counties using very modern technology, ArcGIS 9 and US Census TIGER/

Line datasets (SHP files). Because the historic maps identify named streams that are crossed by roads of the likely route in Edgecombe County, the same named streams are selected from the attribute table of the hydrography lines and saved as a new data layer. When the data layer of the road network of modern Edgecombe County is added to the edited hydrography layer, a modern set of roads emerges as an approximation of the historic route. Speights Chapel Road forks from US 301 less than a mile below Fishing Creek and continues over Swift Creek. New Hope Church Road/Dunbar Road is the closest road to Speights Chapel Road that crosses the Tar River. Dunbar Road intersects US 64A between Rocky Mount and Tarboro. McNair



**Figure 4.** Direct distances between Enfield, Tarboro, and Stantonburg. The roads in black include US 301, Speights Chapel Road, Battleboro-Leggett Road, New Hope Church Road/Dunbar Road, US 64A, McNair Road, McKendree Church Road, and the Saratoga/Pinetops-Tarboro Road (NC 111). This set of modern roads cross the stream system of the county at the approximate locations of the roads found on historic maps. Pitt's Crossroad is a location mentioned in the 25 April 1836 issue of the *Wilmington Advertiser*. Source: Census 2000 TIGER/Line Files. Map by James C. Burke

Road, on the outskirts of Tarboro, was selected for its resemblance to a road in the MacRae-Brazier map originating near Teat's Bridge and terminating at the Saratoga-Pinetops-(Tarboro) Road<sup>1</sup> (NC 111). This road crosses Town Creek and passes through Pitt's Crossroads (Figure 4).

The hydrographic layer is not as useful for examining roads in modern Wilson County for evidence of the relic stage route. NC 111/NC 222 (call the Good News Church Road, Saratoga Road and Pinetops-Tarboro Road at various points between Tarboro and Stantonburg) is the most direct route. However, it is still necessary to prove that the modern roads are built on the path of the nineteenth cen-

tury roads. The MacRae-Brazier map shows the intersection of two important roads near Toisnot Swamp. One of the roads connected Tarboro to Smithfield. The other road connected Stantonburg to Nashville (NC). These roads remain in the United States Coast Survey map three decades later. In this map, the intersection now has the name of Wilson. In the modern city of Wilson, the intersection of Tarboro and Nash Streets preserved the place where the two earlier roads crossed. If Tarboro Street is traced east from Wilson, it becomes NC 42. After this highway enters Edgecombe County, NC 42 divides into NC 124 and NC 42. NC 124 intersects NC 111 at Pitt's Crossroads. If Nash Street is traced

east from Wilson, it becomes NC 58/US 264 and passes through Stantonsburg on NC 58. The town of Saratoga, appearing on the United States Coast Survey map, also connects to Wilson. The modern NC 91 retains the curves of the road depicted on historic map. The relationships between the modern roads and their earlier manifestations suggest that NC-111/NC-222 retains much the same path as it followed in the 1830s. At Stantonsburg, the stagecoach could have passed through the town, but it is more likely to have bypassed the town using Peacock's Bridge (Figure 5).

The total distance of the route between Enfield and Stantonsburg using the modern road network is 49.9 miles. This route is remarkably close to the 46.69 miles of direct distance between Enfield to Stantonsburg via Tarboro.

### The Physical and Cultural Landscape

Hitherto, this article has been concerned with determining the approximate route of the stagecoaches of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road through Edgecombe County (and Wilson County). Roads of the modern road network of the study area appear to allow the reconstruction of the historic route. However, the significance of this route cannot be determined solely from this information. Mrs. Kemble described the North Carolina of 1838 as a vast wilderness populated by an indolent and savage people:

North Carolina is, I believe, the poorest state in the Union: the part of it through which we traveled should seem to indicate as much. From Suffolk to Wilmington we did not pass a single town – scarcely anything deserving the name of a village. The few detached houses on the road were mean and beggarly in their appearance; and the people whom we saw when the coach stopped had a squalid, and at the same time fierce air, which at once bore witness to the unfortunate influence of their existence. Not the least of these is the circumstance that their subsistence is derived in great measure from the spontaneous produce of the land, which yielding without cultivation the

timber and turpentine, by the sale of which they are mainly supported, denies to them all the blessing which flow from labor. (Kemble [1865] 1984, 25-26)

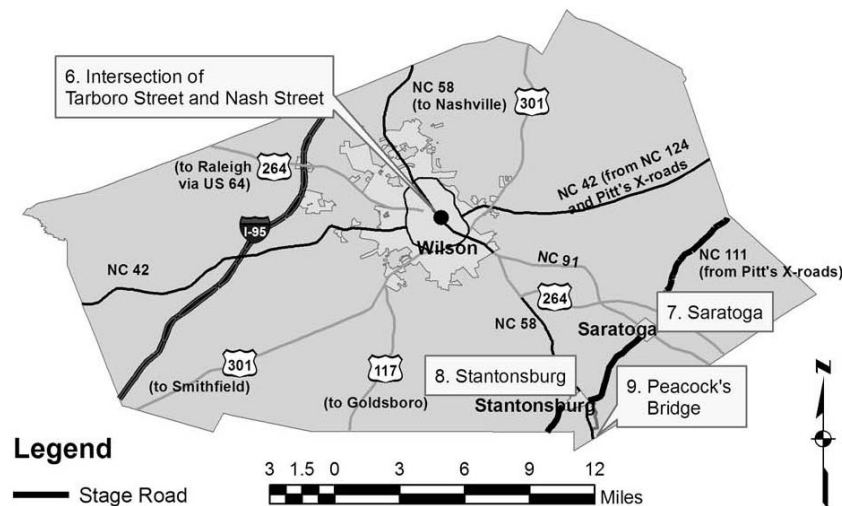
This eloquently worded statement, and others like it in her narrative, should be subjected to scrutiny.

North Carolina may have been the poorest state, but not for the lack of having an industrious people. Anti-Federalist politics and sectional divisions had inhibited economic growth in North Carolina since the founding of the Republic (Jeffery, 1978, 114-121). The remedy to this problem was improved transportation, not improved morals. Inland farmers gain little from producing large yields without having access to an affordable means of getting their crops to market. Additionally, the variety of manufactured goods available to coastal dwellers would be costly or unavailable to the same farmer for the same reasons. Mrs. Kemble assumes that timber and turpentine production was preferable to agriculture because they were easy to produce. However, Olmsted described the collection and processing of turpentine as a labor intensive enterprise that required considerable skill (Olmsted, 1861, 338-351). Robert B. Outland III provides an overview of the rise of its production:

A marginally profitable business since the early eighteenth century, beginning in the 1830s, the North Carolina naval stores industry flourished because of a rise in spirits of turpentine prices encouraged intensified production and transportation improvements permitted access to large sections of the state's pine stands. (Outland, 2001, 309)

According to Outland, it was the railroads that made it possible to transport this heavy product to market and the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road cut through the northeastern longleaf pine forest. He also stated that the Panic of 1837 had depressed the cotton market while turpentine remained a profitable commodity; and turpentine production increased when wealthy investors encouraged the expansion of this industry. However, by the 1850s,





**Figure 5.** Map of modern Wilson County. NC 124 and NC 111 intersect at Pitt's Crossroads. NC 124 and NC 42 merge before the Wilson County line. NC 42 becomes Tarboro Street in Wilson. NC 111 (the Good News Church Rd./Saratoga Rd./Pinetops-Tarboro Rd.) continues to Stantonburg. NC 58 connects Stantonburg to Wilson. NC 58 becomes Nash Street in Wilson and intersects with Tarboro Street. NC 58 continues to Nashville. NC 91 connects Saratoga to Wilson. These set of roads approximate the road network represented in the MacRae-Brazier map of 1833 and the United States Coast. Survey map of 1865. NC 111/NC 222 appears to be the best modern road that approximates the stagecoach route of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road to Stantonburg. Source: Census 2000 TIGER/Line Files. Map by James C. Burke.

the introduction of fertilizers made the growing of cotton possible in the sandy soils of the coastal plain. Edgecombe County was one of the first counties to replace turpentine production with cotton (*ibid.*, 2001, 315-317, 330,335-336).

It is apparent from the reconstruction of the route that Mrs. Kemble traveled by train in the dark from Weldon to Enfield without noticing Halifax or Enfield. She traveled by, but not through, Tarboro and Stantonburg. She believed that she "did not pass a single town – scarcely anything deserving the name of a village." However, the National Register of Historic Places contains listings for dwellings in these towns that pre-date Mrs. Kemble's journey. For these, many are substantial homes built in the Georgian and Federal Styles ([http://](http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NC/state.html)

[www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NC/state.html](http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NC/state.html) (30 December 2005)).

The construction of dwelling in a "style" is a good indicator that a town had transcended the "mean and beggarly" of bare necessity to have skilled craftsmen to build it, and a prosperous class to pay for it. In *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, Henry Glassie addresses the implication of these style choices. With the Georgian form, the owner established his identity; and the two-story arrangement, particularly, demonstrated that he was aspiring to prosperity:

Simultaneously, it stated his separation from people unable to build two-story houses – the poorest of the freeholder, living still in single-

story dwellings, and especially, those human beings thrust into rows of one-story squares off from the plantation's big house. (Glassie, 1975, 145)

The cultural landscape that Kemble describes along the road of the stage route appears to be that of the "poorest of the freeholder."

Though 168 years have passed since Mrs. Kemble passed through northeastern North Carolina, some aspects of the rural landscape might reflect the material culture of earlier times. A windshield survey presents the opportunity to investigate the landscape in ways that indirect methods cannot. The modern motorist traveling the approximate stage route and the stagecoach passenger traveling the actual route could share the common experience of travel through a landscape that contains similar fields, farms, lowlands, and woods. The modern motorist might be hard pressed to find food, lodging, or gas along most of highways that approximates the stage route in much the same way the nineteenth century traveler found little or no accommodations. At best, the researcher can explore the landscape with text in hand and connect its physical qualities to the written word.

Mrs. Kemble has left clues in her text concerning architecture and physical geography. Likewise, the material and physical landscape provide clues to the text. At Weldon, she notices a "large millpond that could have been part of the Jabez Smith's mill at the basin for the Roanoke Canal" that best describes the appearance of the Roanoke Canal (Figure 6a). The "old wooden house" where her party rests and has dinner has a "flight of wooden stairs" leading to a large room with a fireplace. Men and women were divided in this room by "large rattling folding doors drawn across the room" (Kemble [1865] 1984, 19-21). An old house in 1838 would have been an eighteenth century house – a two story Georgian floor plan. In the Town of Weldon's application to the National Register of Historic Places, Tom Butchko, states that Major William Weldon purchased 1,273 acres of land on the river in 1752 and built a house. The property passed to his granddaughter, and by 1819 parts of

the Weldon plantation were divided for sale as lots (*Roanoke Rapids Herald*, 28 January 1996). Mrs. Kemble may have lodged for a few hours in this house. When she left Weldon, the late hour prevented her from seeing anything from her car. The motorist notices that Halifax is orientated towards the Roanoke River and the railroad passes to the west of town. Certain stylistic elements are common to the architecture of the area. One house exhibits the Queen Anne style, yet its element are classically symmetrical, with the right wing of the house balanced by the *porte-cochere*. The insets of the eaves further suggest the classical temple pediment. The core of the dwelling is the Georgian four-over-four with a central stairway (Figure 6b).

At Enfield, the railroad passes through the center of town (Figure 6c). The railroad and roads that pass through town diverge near Jarrott Swamp Road near Fishing Creek. The stagecoach route must have commenced near this point. After passing over Fishing Creek on US 301, the motorist notices the site of the Brick School near the intersection of the highway and Speights Chapel Road. This school for African Americans was found by Mrs. Joseph K. Brick in 1895. The building in the photograph, although built at the end of the nineteenth century, retains the Georgian four-over-four plan and inset chimney. The hip roof is also common with many other houses in the region (Figure 7a).

The McKendree Methodist Church near the intersection of McKendree Church Road and McNair Road (8 miles southeast of Tarboro) was built in 1871. This church embodies a form that can be traced back to North Carolina's earliest surviving church – the 1734 St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Bath. The McKendree Methodist Church differs from its Colonial predecessor in its wooden construction and the addition of a classical portico. The inset eaves are a featured on its single gable. This simple design is common to many rural churches in the eastern part of the state (Figure 7b). The most interesting example of rural domestic architecture near the stage route is a farm house located at the intersection of NC 124 and NC 42, a short distance from Pitt's Crossroads (Figure 7c).



**Figure 6a.** Mrs. Kemble observed “a large millpond” at Weldon. It was likely part of the Roanoke Canal. This figure shows the remains of the canal where it joined the Roanoke below Weldon.



**Figure 6b.** A house near the railroad at Halifax. While this house appears to post-date Mrs. Kemble’s journey, the town had existed since Colonial Era.



**Figure 6c.** The tracks leading out of Enfield to the south. Mrs. Kemble began her stagecoach journey in a clearing outside Enfield. Photographs 6a, 6b and 6c by James C. Burke and Cyn Johnson

One section of the farmhouse is built in the hall and parlor form with additions built onto this core structure. This type of house was common in colonial Virginia and North Carolina. Its design is remarkably similar to the Slayden house in Virginia (Glassie, 1975, 68-69) and the eighteenth century McNairy house in Guilford County. Typically, these houses began as log structures and were later covered with lapboard. George Savage, a resident of Tarboro in his eighties, described rural construction techniques in a 2004 interview (Burke, 2004). His father, L. B. Savage (born in 1893), had been a builder who had constructed many houses and barns in the area around Pinetops. Mr. Savage stated that dressed lumber was hard to come by in rural Edgecombe County during the early half the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because carpenters milled much of their own wood, it was used sparingly. The house that he had grown up in had been built in the antebellum period and rooms had been added subsequently. The original section of the house used traditional joinery – mortise and tenon held together by pegs. The ceiling was high to allow for cooling in the summer and it was heated by a large fireplace in winter. A farmer would begin with a modest dwelling and add on to it as his family and fortune grew. Subsequent generations would continue to add to the house rather than pull down the original and start anew. Mr. Savage's description of the nucleus for these dwellings closely matches those of historian Alan D. Watson in analyses of colonial construction techniques in Edgecombe County.

Many were one or one-and-a-half room structures supplemented by lofts, sheds, or porches. Clapboard siding and shingle roofs completed the houses. Some of the humbler may have lived in log cabins; the wealthier occasionally erected brick homes ... The arrangement of the main (and often the only) room of the house was dominated by the fireplace. (Watson, 1979, 14)

Mrs. Kemble describes the interior of a similar hall and parlor dwelling south of Waynesborough as "a rough brick-and-plank chamber, of considerable dimensions, not even whitewashed, with the great beams and rafters by which it was supported

displaying the skeleton of the building" (Kemble, 1861, 30). The hall and parlor house was most likely the typical house fronting the roads of the stage route.

Mrs. Kemble's description of the stage route through Wayne County is sparse although it includes two physical features that contribute to understanding the landscape. The first is a description of the step banks of the rapidly moving Neuse River below Waynesborough. As she walked across a rotten bridge crossing the river, she noted its unusual color through the planking (*ibid.*, 1861, 27). The brown waters of the Neuse River still flow rapidly through step banks under the bridge on Grantham Road at Goldsboro (Figure 8a). She also provided a clue to the spot where the stagecoach route ended.

Toward nightfall, the train from Wilmington had not arrived. The men traveling in the stagecoaches took it upon themselves to seek lodging at the home of a gentleman of the community. The men then impressed the assistance of the railroad work gang to push a flat car loaded with the women, children, and their trunks a distance up the tracks to his plantation. Mrs. Kemble noted that she had to shield her child from the north wind. This suggests that they were facing south and being pushed north. She also noted that the track, supported by pilings, passed over two deep ravines (*ibid.*, 1861, 29). The ravines appear to be two banks cut by Brooks Swamp located on the Old Mt. Olive Road one mile south of Dudley. The piling has now been replaced by an embankment and culverts. The distance between the track and the stream has not changed (Figure 8b).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the route used by the stagecoach line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road, to locate modern roads that closely approximate the stage route, and compare the present landscape along the route with descriptions of the same landscape provided in historical documents. The significance of this short-lived stagecoach line is twofold: 1) the use of stagecoaches by the railroad illustrated how transportation was organized during the period of con-



**Figure 7a.** Many building along the stage route retain elements of earlier styles. Figure 7a shows a building at the 1895 Brick School near the intersection of US 301 and Speight Chapel Road. The hip roof, internal chimney, and two story-double pile arrangement are elements of the earlier Georgian Style.



**Figure 7b.** The 1871 McKendree Methodist Church near the intersection of McNair Road and McKendree Church Road. It is built in the simple form of the “meeting house” with a Classical portico.



**Figure 7c.** Part of a farmhouse located near Pitt’s Crossroads at the intersection of NC 124 and NC 42. This early vernacular form was common in Colonial Virginia and North Carolina. Photographs 7a, 7b and 7c by James C. Burke and Victor Galloway.





Figure 8: Mrs. Kemble observed the current and color of the Neuse River as she crossed a rotten bridge south of Waynesborough. Figure 7a shows a view of the Neuse River from the Grantham Road bridge south of Goldsboro. Figure 7b illustrates the height of difference between the railroad track and Old Mt. Olive Road at the Brooks Swamp near Dudley in Wayne County. Originally, this Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road crossed the ravine with trestle work and later filled (WRRR Stockholders Report - Report of the Engineer & Superintendent, 1856, 6-7). A railroad construction gang and the men from the stages pushed the Mrs. Kemble, other women, children, and trunks on a flat car for a mile to seek lodging after the train from Wilmington failed to arrive. She notes crossing one or two deep ravines. Photographs by James C. Burke and Cyn Johnson.

struction; and, 2) it provides missing elements of the geographic context of the narrative of traveling this stagecoach line provided by Frances Anne Kemble in her *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. A direct examination of the landscape fronting the modern road fronts that approximates the likely route demonstrates that the area has remained rural and its domestic architecture possesses elements of earlier styles, and that the earlier structures were augmented and improved over time. Additionally, determining the approximate route also impacts the interpretation of the Kemble text. Her impressions of the ubiquitous poverty of North Carolina were shaped by what she experienced on the rural landscapes of the Coastal Plain. Ironically, the route took her past established towns, but never into them.

An extension of the study is dependent on uncovering specific period documentation - particularly, those documents that identify the individuals contracted by the railroad to stable the teams of horses along the route and those lodging the passengers; and a more detailed history of road building in the may lead to refinements or alteration in the route.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Torsten Hagerstrand identified three categories of limitations that impact space-time autonomy. These limitations are *capability constraints*, *coupling constraints*, and *authority constraints*. *Capability constraints* are those limitations that can be associated with the mode of transportation used to accomplish a task. For example, a bicycle might be the appropriate technology for accomplishing certain tasks but it is not capable of covering the same highway distances in a day as an automobile. *Coupling constraints* involve the need to accomplish tasks in certain place with others. If, for example, a flight from Atlanta to Toronto involves changing airplanes in New York, both airplanes need to be in New York at the same time. *Authority constraints* are social, political, and legal limits that prevent free access to places. For example, the winter hours for visiting the Petrified Forest National Park are 8 AM to 5 PM.

<sup>2</sup> The *Wilmington Advertiser* reported in its 5 May 1837 issue that the topic of acquisition of stagecoaches and horses was mentioned at a meeting of the stockholders of the WRRR held in Wilmington on 1 May 1837. In the 9 June 1837 issue of the *Wilmington Advertiser*, an article notes that double teams of horses had been stationed along the stagecoach route in advance of the arrival of the coaches. The *Wilmington Advertiser* reported the success of the stagecoach line in its 18 August 1837 issue. An announcement in the 3 January 1838 issue of the *North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh) stated that the winter route for the southbound stages of the WRRR started at Halifax and included a stopover at South Washington (later moved and renamed Watha). The 18 May 1838 issue of the *Wilmington Advertiser* and the 9 June 1838 issue of the *Tarborough Press* reported the proceeding of the Second Annual Meeting of the stockholders of the WRRR that was held earlier that month. At this meeting, the director considered and rejected a plan to change the stagecoach route from "Enfield, by Tarborough, to Stantonsburg, to the route by Rockymount." An article in the 27 October 1838 issue of the *Tarborough Press*, reprinted from the *Wilmington Advertiser*, announced the opening of section of the railroad from Halifax to Enfield in the north and a section to Faison's Depot in the south. After the last spike of the railroad was driven on 7 March 1840, the stagecoach line was phased out. The *Wilmington Weekly Chronicle* reports in its 28 July 1841 issue that the stagecoaches were sold to C.W. Hause of Leechville in Beaufort County, NC.

<sup>3</sup> Wyatt's Bridge, Dorches' Bridge, and Teat's Bridge also appear on the 1808 Price-Strother map of North Carolina (Cumming, 1966, Plate IX).

<sup>4</sup> The Price-Strother map identifies an inn at this intersection.

## Acknowledgements

Historic maps from W.P. Cumming's North Carolina in Maps were used by permission of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources. The book and maps are available through the Historical Publications Section online at [www.ncpublications.com](http://www.ncpublications.com).

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