

RABUN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION





1819
Clayton Baptist Church
 87 S. Church St.
 Clayton, GA
 706-782-4588
 claytonbaptistchurch.com

1830s
Democratic Party of Rabun County
 P.O. Box 1115
 Clayton, GA 30525
 706-782-0374



1871
Rabun County Department of Education
Melissa Williams, Superintendent
 963 Tiger Connector Rd.
 Tiger, Ga. 30576
 706-212-4350
 Rabun.k12.ga.us



1883
Georgia Power
 45 S Main St.
 Clayton, Ga 30525
 706-782-4236
 georgiapower.com



1897
The Clayton Tribune
We Believe in Rabun
 120 N. Main St.
 Clayton, GA 30525
 www.theclaytontribune.com
 www.facebook.com/claytonnews

1900
 Proudly Serving the Financial Needs of Northeast Georgia since 1900.



SouthStateBank.com
 Member FDIC



1903
Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School
 Rabun Gap, GA
 706-746-7467
 WORK STUDY WORSHIP
 www.rabungap.org

1912
Tallulah Point Overlook
 Formally known as "Harvey's Famous Lookout"
 940 Tallulah Gorge Scenic Loop
 Tallulah Falls, GA 30573
 706-754-4318
 www.tallulahpoint.com

INTRODUCTION

RABUN COUNTY AS A TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR

Transportation is everything in today's modern world. With a car in virtually every American driveway, it's hard to imagine life without a way to travel where we want when we want. People are always on the move and they are always going somewhere.

It might also be challenging to think of Rabun County as a transportation corridor. This little piece of Southern Appalachia is certainly no port or layover city and the closest interstate is a minimum one-hour drive away.

Don't let that fool you. A transportation corridor is a linear tract of land containing lines of transportation such as highways, railroads or canals with new lines of transportation built alongside existing ones. From the old Native American trails that became Highway 76, Warwoman Road and other paved avenues of travel to the Tallulah Falls Railroad, Old Highway 441 and the (mostly) four-lane Highway 441, Rabun County meets that definition. These are the routes of transportation that have shaped Rabun County

into what we see today.

As a lifelong resident and board member of the Rabun County Historical Society, Carol Turner remembers how it was when Old Highway 441 was the only Highway 441 and downtown Clayton was filled with gas stations, car dealerships, and other mom-and-pop ventures. Recently, Turner watched traffic back up as tourists flocked to the county to view fall's spectacular colors. She was struck by the notion that perhaps Rabun County had always been a transportation corridor.

Rabun County is home to the only natural gap in the Southern Appalachian mountains. The Native Americans used it. Soldiers in a number of wars used it. Settlers used it. The men who built Old Highway 441 used it and so, too, did the men who built the

Tallulah Falls Railroad.

Imagine for a moment what life in Rabun County would be like today if the Tallulah Falls Railroad had never been built. Without that first step into modern, inexpensive and quick transportation, there never would have been a Tallulah Falls Railway Co. to extend the line through Clayton to Franklin, North Carolina. As Turner noted to me, there never would have been a logging industry in Rabun County without that railroad. Or the Georgia Power hydroelectric dams. And tourism, well, you could probably forget that, too. At least until the highways were built.

Old Highway 441 was the main artery providing for a heyday in the southern portion of Rabun County. When the newer Highway 441 was built, it took business away from towns like Lakemont and Tiger. Without the tourism industry that fueled the need for 23 hotels and boarding houses in Clayton decades prior to the four-lane's construction, Clayton easily could have been just another blink-and-you'll-miss-it town

on an otherwise scenic route from Atlanta to Asheville, North Carolina, or Knoxville, Tennessee.

The histories of these lines of transportation have been chronicled extensively in The Clayton Tribune. Those chronicles include news of the day when these lines of transportation were under construction to historical feature pieces detailing what was. There were reports with first-hand accounts of what it was like to work on or ride the rails through Rabun County, two of which you can find inside reprinted in their entirety.

But, for the first time in The Tribune's publication history, you can find these histories all in one place. From Bartram's maps to Google's maps, we will take you on a journey that begins with trails and fords, became lined with wood and steel rails and ends with asphalt aspirations that transformed Rabun County in a very short period of time.

It once was a five-hour drive from Tallulah Falls to Rabun Gap. Now it's 25 minutes.

Transportation is everything.

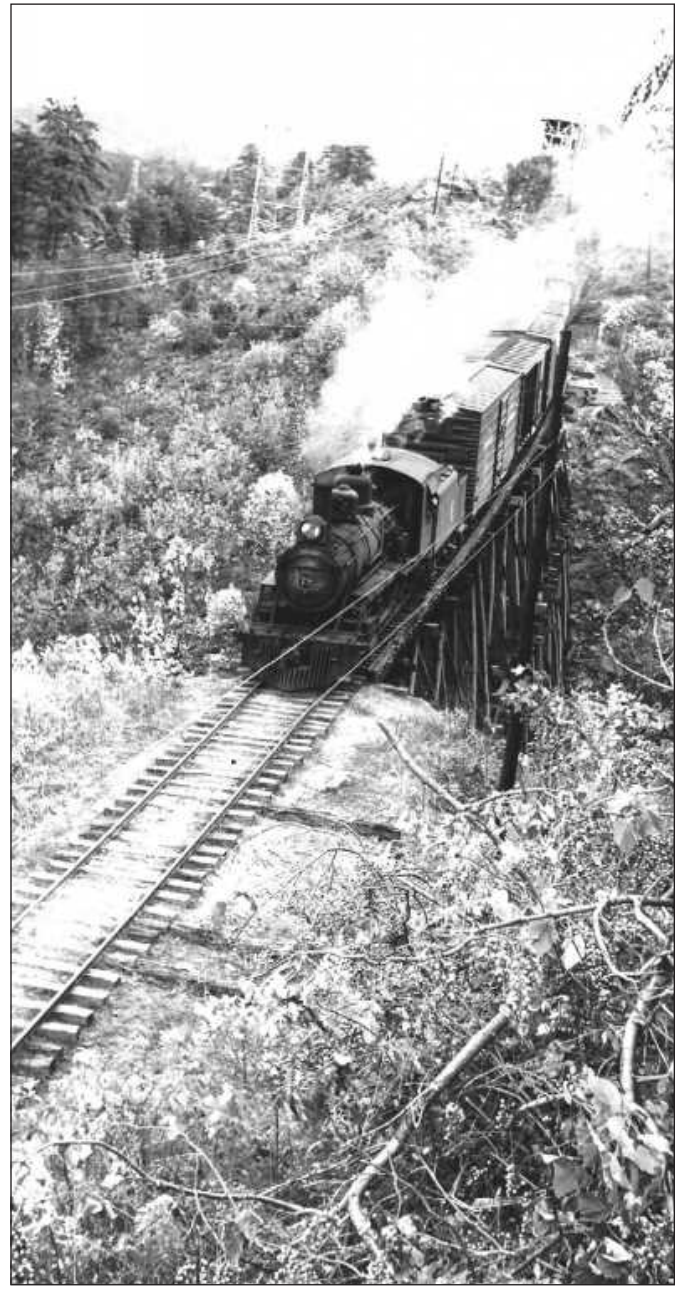


Klark Byrd
News Editor

Hanging out in Tiger

Two men pose outside the Texaco station in downtown Tiger at the intersection of Old Highway 441 and Bridge Creek Road, circa 1950.

Photos courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society



Steaming ahead

The trestle on the edge of Tallulah Gorge with Harvey's Overlook in the background can be seen in this undated image.

ON THE COVER

Crews work to pave Chechero Road in 1961. The rails of the Tallulah Falls Railroad are seen in the foreground, but a decision was handed down that same year to tear the tracks up and sell them for scrap as the railroad went belly up. Photo is courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society.

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Photo courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

The Queen Trestle in Mountain City in 1956 crossed the main north-south highway. The street is now called File Street.





This wooden sign points visitors in the direction of William Bartram's trail at Warwoman Dell.

Photos by Mat Payne/The Clayton Tribune

Trails through time

By Mat Payne ♦ Staff Writer

If a region's geography influences its destiny, then Rabun County's fate was at least in part decided by the discovery of the Blue Ridge Gap and the comparative ease with which it could be traveled to move between South Carolina and Tennessee.

In "Sketches of Rabun County History," Andrew Ritchie wrote that the Cherokee would use the natural gap in the mountains near Rabun Gap and the valley near Warwoman Creek to move between the tribe's more populated areas north of the Blue Ridge Mountains into South Carolina.

At the time, there were at least four Cherokee Villages in Rabun County, which included Tallulah in the southern part of the county, Stekoa near Clayton, Chicherohe near the present day Chechero community and Eastatoway near present day Dillard. Many of the trails connecting the villages came to a crossroads in Clayton, which was referred to as The Dividings.

Though the Native Americans settled the area well before anyone of European descent stepped foot onto Georgia soil, debate over the first Europeans to pass through the county is ongoing.

One unconfirmed and undocumented rural legend recorded by Ritchie suggests that Span-

ish explorer Hernando de Soto traveled north through the county on his way toward Franklin, North Carolina. No official records of this trip exist but it was largely accepted by the mid-20th century and monuments commemorating de Soto's expedition were erected in Clarksville, Franklin and Highlands, North Carolina.

The first widely documented person of European descent to pass through Rabun Gap is Sir Alexander Cuming.

According to "Rabun County Georgia and Its People Vol. 1," Cuming passed through Rabun County in the 1730s with the goal of gaining the respect of the Cherokee for King George II of England.

Cuming traveled from Charleston, South Carolina, through the Native American villages of Keowee, Acconni and Chatuga in the areas that are now Lake Keowee, and the northwestern parts of South Carolina. Cuming then crossed the Chattooga River and traveled through what is now the Chechero Valley to Clayton. He then passed through Dillard on his way to Franklin and then into Tennessee.

Years later, that same pathway would be used by Cherokee war parties to stage raids on villages in South Carolina and by British forces that attempted to drive the Cherokee from their

"Crossed a delightful River, the main branch of Tugilo, when I began to ascend again, first over swelling turfy ridges, varied with groves of stately forest trees..."

— William Bartram

land.

Though Cuming might have beat him to Rabun County by about 40 years, the works of naturalist and botanist William Bartram did more to put the area on the map than anyone who came before.

Carol Turner with the Rabun County Historical Society said Bartram's work in his book "Travels" helped to bring the area's rich biodiversity into the public eye.

Known for his poetic, descriptive writing style, Bartram helped paint a picture of Rabun County that generations of readers would read.

A sample of this can be found in Bartram's May 19, 1775, journal: "Crossed a delightful River, the main branch of Tugilo, when I began to ascend again, first over swelling turfy ridges, varied with groves of stately forest trees, then ascending again more steep, grassy hillsides, rested on the top of Mount

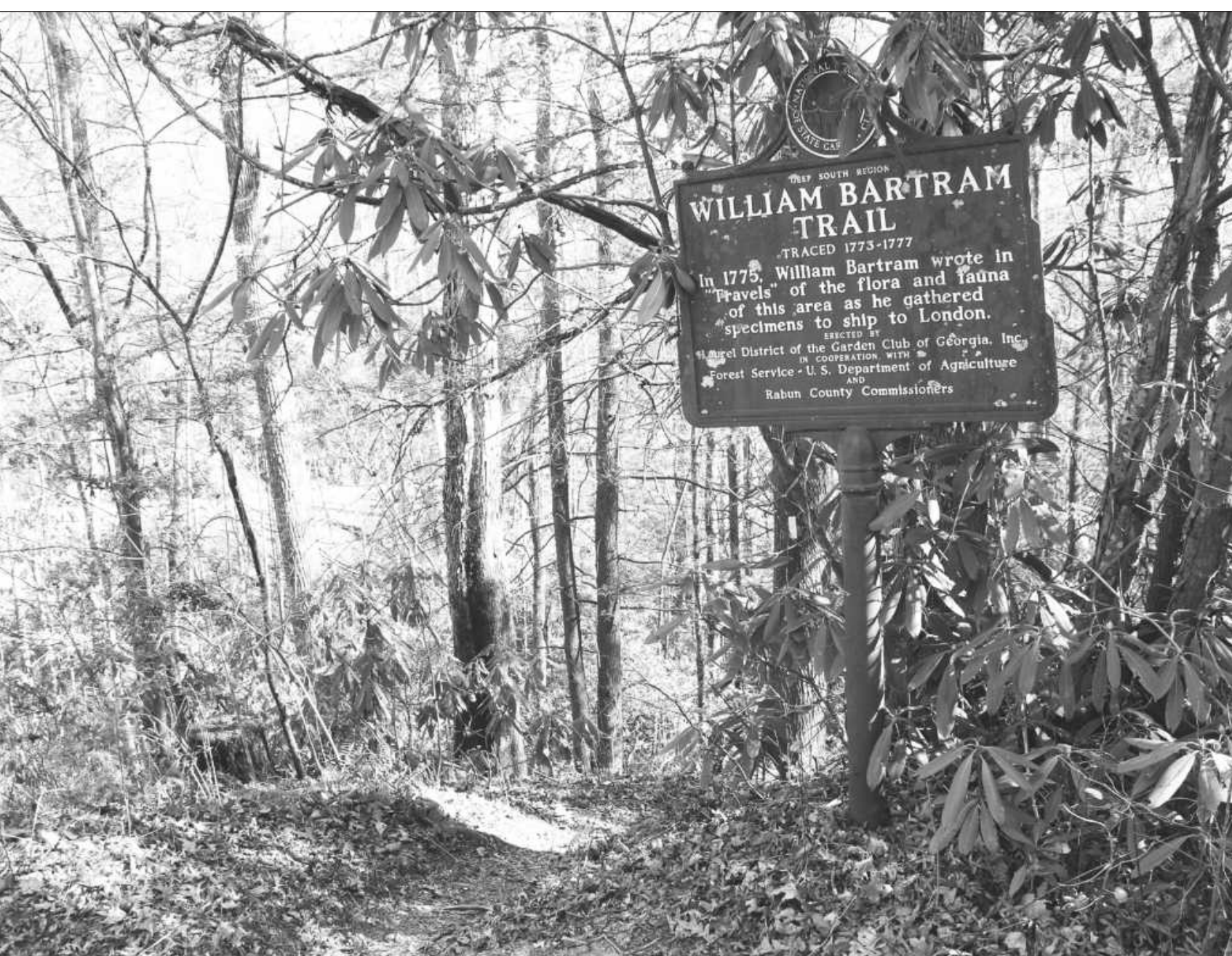
Magnolia which appeared to me to be the highest ridge of the Cherokee Mountains which separate the waters of Savanna River with those of the Tanase."

Bartram followed many of the same paths traveled by the Cherokee and the same ones that would eventually become the county's major arteries. According to "Rabun County Georgia and Its People," portions of Highway 441 and Highway 76 follow these paths.

Bartram's travels through Rabun County can be traced even more accurately along the Bartram Trail which is open through 37.7 miles of the county on U.S. Forest Service land.

Turner said the trail might not be accurate to an exact path, but it follows the descriptions of the county Bartram wrote about in his works.

The full Bartram Trail is about 115 miles and passes through South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina.



An informational sign fills visitors in as they walk William Bartram's trail at Warwoman Dell.



1922

Lake Rabun Hotel & Restaurant

Gwen North, Owner
35 Andrea Lane
Lakemont, GA 30552
706-782-4946
LakeRabunHotel.com



1928

Reeves Hardware

16 South Main Street
Clayton, GA
706-782-4253
reeveshomefurnishings.com
reevesacehardware.com



1929

Hunter Funeral Home

(Formerly R.E. Cannon Funeral Home)
324 Warwoman Rd.
Clayton, GA
Office: 706-782-4243
Fax: 706-782-2546
Lloyd & Helen Hunter
hunterfuneralhome.ga.com

1938

Habersham Electric Membership Corporation

A locally owned, community-minded electric cooperative with high standards of service for their customers.

Clarksville • Cleveland

706-754-2114

800-640-6812

habershamemc.com

1945

Clayton Welding & Supply

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial

70 Year Old Company

Highway 76 West

Clayton, GA

706-782-3431



1954

Tiger Drive-In

Reopened 2004
2956 Old Hwy 441 S.
Tiger, GA
706-782-1611
tigerdrivein.com

1956

Duvall Automotive

Hwy. 441 South
Clayton, GA
706-782-4231
www.duvallautomotive.com

1956

Blalock Meats

Ben Ledford, Owner
193 Ponderosa Road
Rabun Gap, GA
706-746-2822
blalockmeat.com

1959

Rabun County Farm Bureau Insurance

1552 Hwy 441 N
Clayton, Ga 30525
706-782-4422

1963

Security Finance

Your friend when you need \$\$\$
39E. Savannah St.
Clayton, Ga.
706-782-4215



1965

A.W. Adams**Insurance, LLC**

Allen W. Adams, JR.,
Agent

30 Commerce St
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-5100



1966

The Foxfire Fund, Inc.

Ann Moore, President
98 Foxfire Lane
Mountain City, GA
706-746-5828
foxfire.org

1967

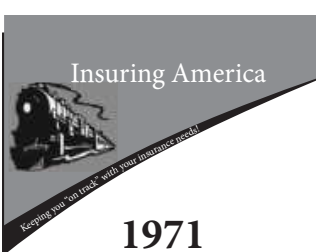
Bobby Welch**Construction**

7836 N. Hwy 441
Dillard, GA 30537
706-746-2423

1968

Edwin C. Poss, Inc.**RE/MAX of Rabun**

809 Hwy 441 South
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-7133
possrealty.com



1971

AIC/Insuring America

800-722-0450
InsuringAmerica.com

3 Locations:

Athens • Lake Oconee
Clayton
706-202-4838

1973

Amrine Equipment & Rental

366 Old 441 South
Clayton, GA
706-782-3157

1973

Diane's Beauty Shop

67 Oak Crescent Dr.
Clayton, Ga. 30525
706-782-5919

1973

Mountain Patrol

Private Security &
Investigations

6 Fred's Place
Lakemont, GA 30552
706-782-5807



Photo courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

The northwest entrance to the Dick's Creek tunnel is one of the few remnants of anything related to the Blue Ridge Railroad that was planned to run through Rabun County from North Carolina and connect with Stumphouse Tunnel in Walhalla, South Carolina. The war halted construction on the line, leaving tunnels like this one unfinished.

THE BLUE RIDGE RAILROAD

By Mat Payne ♦ Staff Writer

An old railroad bed can be seen while walking through Warwoman Dell, abruptly ending in the side of a mountain. The bed has no obvious route of travel as the elevation increases toward Saddle Gap. Other sections of graded land create a forgotten dotted line through the Warwoman Community toward the Chattooga River and serve as monuments to the attempts of numerous companies to create a railway that would have connected Charleston, South Carolina, and Cincinnati, Ohio, via Rabun County.

During a time when the United States was slowly growing westward, South Carolina statesman John C. Calhoun dreamed of connecting the developed eastern seaboard to the untapped resources of the western wilderness and the free-flow of refined goods from the East and raw materials from the West.

According to the articles "History of the Blue Ridge Railroad" by former Tribune staff writer Scooter MacMillan and "Calhoun's dream for a railroad still fading into the forest," the line was chartered during a Great Railroad Convention in July 1836. Calhoun, however, disapproved of a prospective route and later that year conducted a survey to find an alternative that would have avoided the steep Saluda grade near Asheville, North Carolina. The Louisville, Cincinnati and Charleston line was a short-lived dream as plans to construct the railroad came to a screeching halt amid the Panic of 1837 financial crisis.

Despite that, Calhoun's vision for the railroad continued to grow and gain support. Though there was no company planning to construct it, Calhoun selected Rabun County in the 1840s to be home to a portion of the prospective railway.

According to Andrew Jackson Ritchie's "Sketches of Rabun County History," the inferior court of Rabun County approved

plans for a railroad to pass through the eastern part of the county, through Clayton traveling north through Mountain City and along the Little Tennessee River.

By 1851, the idea of a major railway garnered enough support in North Carolina for the state to grant a charter for the railroad, 13 years after Georgia granted its charter and one year before South Carolina and Tennessee would as well.

According to Macmillan, a surveying contract for the line was taken out with Anson Bangs & Co. of New York to start Jan. 1, 1854, and to be completed by Jan. 1, 1856.

The Blue Ridge Railroad was planned to span the 195 miles from Anderson to Knoxville, Tennessee, linking with existing lines between Charleston and Anderson and between Knoxville and Cincinnati.

Because of the mountainous terrain, the route was to contain seven tunnels of varying lengths with the longest being the Stumphouse Tunnel near Walhalla, South Carolina, at 5,683 feet long, which, according to MacMillan, would have made it the longest tunnel in the world at the time had it been completed.

According to an interview from the 1990 Fall/Winter edition of Foxfire Magazine, Oliver Ridley caretaker of the Stumphouse Tunnel, said workers came within 12 feet of each other

before construction stopped in 1859 because the company went bankrupt. Ridley added that at such a short distance, workers could hear the hammers from their counterparts working on the other side of the tunnel.

Portions of the tunnel are currently open to the public and are managed by Oconee County, South Carolina.

Two of the seven tunnels were to be constructed in Rabun County, and like the Stumphouse Tunnel, neither were completed. Both are inaccessible.

The Wall Mountain Tunnel is found on Bill and Regina Bleckley's property off Black Diamond Road. The tunnel is currently filled with water from a waterfall that obscures its opening.

Attempts to contact the Bleckleys were unsuccessful by press time.

The location of Rabun's second tunnel, the Saddle Gap Tunnel, is also difficult to access because the roadbed leading toward it abruptly ends.

In his book, Ritchie wrote that about 80 percent of the grading necessary for the railroad was completed in Rabun County and many stone abutments were built to support train tracks.

According to MacMillan, the last construction to be completed in Rabun County was done in 1859 and was completed near the intersection of Pinnacle Mountain Road and Highway 441.

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, the 43 miles of track connecting Belton, South Carolina, and Walhalla were completed and remained operational after work was halted on the remainder of the line.

After the war, the financially destitute South struggled to rebuild itself and in 1868, the Blue Ridge Railroad declared bankruptcy following issues with a New York bond house.

In the mid-1890s, efforts to finish the railroad were made by Col. Albert E. Boone, who hoped to tie in the section to his Black Diamond system. Boone was ultimately unsuccessful.

It wouldn't be until 1901 that the Blue Ridge Railway company was formed as a part of Southern Railway. By this time there were only three sections of the original railroad that had yet to be constructed: the line from Walhalla to Clayton; from Franklin, North Carolina, to Almond, North Carolina; and from Lake Fontana in Swain County, North Carolina, to Calderwood, Tennessee.

A year after completing a horseback survey of the remaining portions, Southern Railway President Samuel Spencer was killed in 1906, ending the company's interest in the line.

In 1940, the construction of the Fontana Dam made completion of the original route impossible and the dream that began with Calhoun died in the mountain lake's waters.

BRINGING THE WORLD TO RABUN

TALLULAH FALLS RAILROAD

By **Klark Byrd** ♦ News Editor

Constructing the Tallulah Falls Railroad, a 58-mile short track line connecting Cornelia and Franklin, North Carolina, was a challenging task physically as well as financially. Keeping it open proved impossible. But during the time of its operation, the Tallulah Falls Railroad played a vital role in the economic well-being of Rabun County and was a key piece of the county's transportation infrastructure that provided this once isolated region with quick and inexpensive access to the world.

Constructing the Tallulah Falls Railroad, a 58-mile short track line connecting Cornelia and Franklin, North Carolina, was a challenging task physically as well as financially. Keeping it open proved impossible. But during the time of its operation, the Tallulah Falls Railroad played a vital role in the economic well-being of Rabun County and was a key piece of the county's transportation infrastructure that provided this once isolated region with quick and inexpensive access to the world. Carol Turner of the Rabun County Historical Society said economic progress in Rabun County came to a virtual standstill in the years following the Civil War. Rabun County denizens took up subsistence farming, Turner said, because goods, wares and

food could not easily be brought into the area. Prior to the war's outbreak, the county was poised to sit along the route of the failed Blue Ridge Railroad. Had its construction been completed — tunnels were dug for the line — Rabun County would have had a direct rail line for transporting passengers and goods into and out of North Carolina and points east and west. At the time of the Blue Ridge Railroad's planning, another railroad further south was proposed. Legislation enacted by Georgia's General Assembly on Jan. 27, 1854, allowed for the construction of a rail line connecting Athens and Clayton. Known as the North Eastern Railroad, the war delayed its construction. The North Eastern Railroad was chartered

on Oct. 17, 1870, and opened between Athens and Lula on Sept. 1, 1871. The track spanned 39 miles. It would never connect Athens and Clayton. Ten years after the railroad's opening, Richmond and Danville Railroad purchased it and immediately began work on the Clayton extension. Construction began 12 miles from Lula in Cornelia. Twenty-one miles of track were laid in a year, bringing the line to Tallulah Falls in 1882. "When the TF ran up from Cornelia up to Tallulah Falls, it stopped there. They had a turntable right across from the station," said Tallulah Falls Railroad Museum director Dess Oliver. "They had two tracks coming into the station, the mainline and a switch." As local historian Brian A. Boyd noted in his 2003 book "Tallulah Falls Railroad a photographic remembrance," the railroad's arrival "ushered in a period of tremendous growth which extended over twenty years." The once long and difficult journey to Tallulah Falls had become a scenic ride toward a booming tourist attraction. The city boasted 17 hotels and boarding houses, among them the famous Cliff House. The Cliff House was positioned directly along the line and was built across the tracks from its owner's summer residence, Pine Terrace. The home belonged to wealthy Athens entrepreneur and railroad tycoon Rufus Lafayette Moss, who at one point owned all of Tallulah Gorge as well as stakes in the companies responsible for the



Tallulah Falls Railroad construction workers are pictured circa 1900.



Excursions from Atlanta and other points south brought tourists on day outings before the railroad was completed to Clayton. This 1903 photo with Tiger Mountain in the background was probably the end of the line at the time.

United States Railroad Administration									
W. G. McADOO, Director General of Railroads									
TALLULAH FALLS RAILROAD									
TIME TABLE NO. 17									
Effective Sunday, Oct. 20th, 1918, 6:00 A. M., Eastern Time.									
SOUTHBOUND					NORTH BOUND				
5	11	Eastern Standard Time			12	6			
2d class	1st class	STATIONS.			1st class	2d class	CLAYTON		
Tuesday	Daily				Daily	Monday			
Thu. Sat.					Wed. Fri.				
A. M.	P. M.	Lv.	Ar.	P. M.	P. M.	Ar.	A. M.	A. M.	
8 50	2 10	58	Franklin	1 55	3 30	71			
9 05	2 25	53	Prentiss	1 20	3 00	19			
	2 38	48	Otto	1 24	2 38	23			
9 40	2 50	43	Orlando, N. C.	1 10					
9 45	2 56	42	Dillard, Ga.	1 05	1 50	17			
10 05	3 00	41	Rabun Gap	1 00	1 35	52			
10 30	3 09	38	Mountain City	12 50	1 16	16			
	3 19	35	Clayton	12 20	12 55	28			
10 50	3 24	33	Bethel	12 10					
10 10	3 29	32	Tiger	12 12	12 12	17			
10 20	3 43	28	Wiley	12 00	11 40	8			
10 20	3 48	27	Lakemont	11 54	11 35	8			
11 48	3 52	25	Joy	11 48	11 25	19			
12 16	4 06	21	Tallulah Falls	11 36	11 00	21			
12 20	4 11	20	Tallulah Lodge	11 31	10 45	18			
	4 16	19	Tallulah Park	11 28					
12 40	4 24	16	Tinserville	11 19	10 20	3			
12 55	4 34	13	Hollywood	11 10	10 00	15			
	4 39	11	Anandale	11 04		8			
1 30	4 44	9	Hills	10 50		5			
	4 52	8	Clarksville	10 55	9 33	42			
1 50	4 56	6	Habersham	10 48		5			
2 25	5 03	5	Demorest	10 44	8 30	25			
A. M.	5 18	0	Cornelia	10 30	8 00	125			
5	11		Ar.	12	6				

Photos courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

This Tallulah Falls Railroad time table was effective for Sunday, Oct. 20, 1918. The railroad's primary source of income for many years came from its passenger service.

construction of the line that would eventually become Tallulah Falls Railroad.

Pine Terrace, known today as the Moss House, is to its owner's knowledge the only building in Tallulah Falls to have escaped various fires that ravaged the town throughout the years. The home was purchased in December 2013 by Dan and Annah Hayes, who have committed themselves to restoring it to its condition when Moss owned it. When completed, the Moss House will be open to the public as a museum.

Initial plans for the line that ran mere feet from the house called for construction through Rabun Gap on the way to a connection with an east-west line in Knoxville, Tennessee. No owner could ever turn the railroad into more than a short line track and it wasn't until after the turn of the century that it would reach Clayton.

Chartered on Oct. 24, 1887, the Blue Ridge and Atlantic Railroad purchased the line from Richmond and Danville Railroad in 1888. It only operated for five years before financial difficulties forced them into receivership.

The sale of the railroad was ordered on March 21, 1897. Eight months later on Nov. 7, 1897, the line was sold at foreclosure. A year after the sale was ordered, in March 1898, the Tallulah Falls Railway Co. was organized to buy the railroad. It's mission was to extend the line to Franklin, North Carolina, and it was successful. In 1904, the Tallulah Falls Railroad reached Clayton. Further north, it connected with the incomplete Blue Ridge Railroad grade and finally reached Franklin, North Carolina, in June 1907.

That final push depleted the company's resources and a receiver was named in January 1908. Southern Railway System took control of the line and allowed it to operate independently.

For 63 years until its closure in March 1961, the Tallulah Falls Railroad used its 58-miles of track to bring passengers and goods into and out of Rabun County. The line boasted 42 trestles that combined totaled nearly 2 miles of track.

Among the passengers who rode the line was the founder of Tallulah Falls School, Mary Ann

Please see TFR, 10



1974

Blalock Insurance
Bob Blalock
117 South Main St.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-5472
blalockinsbob@gmail.com

1974

James Paint & Body Shop Inc.
James & Marie Watts
and Keith Watts, owners
323 N Main St
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-3394
jamesbodyshop@windstream.net



1975

Bethel & Co.
66 N. Church Street
P.O. Box 1056
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-4531
bethelco.com

1975

Pritchett Tire
All Auto Mechanical
Services
81 Seed Tick Rd
Clayton, Ga 30525
706-782-8481

State Farm



1975

State Farm
Ed Grizzle, Agent
91 East Savannah St.
P.O. Box 948
Clayton, GA
706-782-5733
edgrizzle.com



1976

Rabun County Chamber of Commerce
232 Hwy 441 N.
Clayton, Ga. 30525
706-782-4812
gamountains.com

1976

Rabun County Historical Society
81 North Church Street
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-5292
rabunhistory.org



1977

Pizza Hut
Award Winning
WingStreet® Wings
248 Highway 441 North
in CLAYTON
706-782-2111

1978

Jim's Service Center
Hwy. 441 N
Mountain City, GA



1978

City of Sky Valley Incorporated

2012

Sky Valley Country Club purchased by club members

568 Sky Valley Way
Sky Valley, GA 30537
706-746-5304

www.skyvalleycountryclub.com

1979

Five Points Grocery

Groceries · Feed · Horse Equipment
Shayne & Tora Beck, Owners

762 Hwy 76E
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-5413

1982

Clayton Paint & Flooring

404 Old 441 South
Clayton, GA
706-782-2741

claytonpaintandflooring.com

1983

Hillside Orchard Farms

105 Mitcham Circle
Tiger, GA
706-782-4995

Hillside Country Store

18 Sorghum Mill Drive
Lakemont, GA
706-782-2776

hillsideorchard.com



1984

Andy's Market

Andy & Deborah Hunter, Owners

207 Rickman St.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-3631

1984

Greg's Tire & Service Center

- Bridgestone
- Firestone
- Michelin

Hwy. 441 North on the GA/NC State Line
828-524-9881

greetireservice.com

1985

Buds & Blossoms Florist

613 Hwy. 441 South
Clayton, GA

www.budsandblossomsflorist.com

706-782-6876

1985

Guthrie Associates, Inc.

Accounting & Income Tax Services
Profit & Tax Planning
434 Warwoman Rd.
Clayton, GA
706-782-6388

guthrie-associatesinc.com



Photos courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

The Tallulah Falls Railroad was completed to Clayton in June 1904. Passengers posed in front of the locomotive in celebration of the moment just south of town.

Many schemes had Rabun as railroad hub

By Ruddy Ellis ♦ Contributing Writer

Editor's Note: This story, reprinted in its entirety, was first published in the Jan. 22, 1998, edition of The Clayton Tribune.

Before we talk about the Tallulah Falls Railroad, we need to look at the history of railroads in North Georgia; why was the TF ever built in the first place?

Before 1830 America moved by water. Ships traveled up and down our coasts and rivers.

Many schemes were developed to connect the waterways by canals. Lake Erie was connected to the Hudson River by the Erie Canal. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was started to connect the Potomac River with the Ohio River.

Soon after this period, it was found that the newly emerging railroad technology was superior to canals.

The seaport of Charleston, S.C., was connected to the Savannah River at Hamburg, S.C., across the river from Augusta, by the first real railroad in the South by October 1833. Charleston and Savannah were in competition for seaport trade, so it wasn't long before Savannah looked to railroads to bring in goods from the interior. In fact, the Georgia Legislature granted a charter to the Central Railroad and Canal Co. to meet this need. By October 1843, this railroad reached Macon.

Meanwhile, in 1832 a group of men from Athens, tried to bring some imported cotton mill machinery from Augusta. Their wagons bogged down for months in the Georgia mud.

These men thought that there must be a better way, so they incorporated the Georgia Railroad in December 1833 to build from Augusta to Athens. They were successful, but in 1840 the Augusta group gained control and changed the route of the main line from Athens towards a connection with the Western and Atlantic and the Macon and Western at a point soon to be known as Atlanta. The track to Athens became a lightly constructed branch line.

Not to be outdone by Georgia, the Charleston citizens decided to build a first class railroad to connect with the Tennessee River near Knoxville, Tennessee, and with other railroads on to the Ohio River. Two routes for this railroad were debated.

Robert Hayne favored a route from Spartanburg, South Carolina, up steep mountain grade to Asheville, North Carolina, then down the easy French Broad River route to the Tennessee. This route was eventually built, but is still difficult to operate because of the very steep Saluda Mountain grade.

John P. Calhoun favored a more westerly route, perhaps through Augusta and then onto the Mississippi River.

Hayne died and the route chosen was one with easy grades through Rabun Gap, then down the Little Tennessee River to near Knoxville. The Blue Ridge Railroad was started at Anderson, S.C., in 1854. Although there was no steep grade on this route, it did require three tunnels in South Carolina and two in Georgia totaling some 2.1 miles!

Athens citizens then chartered The Northeastern Railroad in 1854 to build from Athens to connect with the Blue Ridge at Clayton. This was the first step in what eventually became the Tallulah Falls Railroad. Nothing was done until after the Civil War.

Around 1871 the Georgia railroad ran a survey from Athens to Clayton but elected not to use it. The Athens citizens went ahead with the project anyway and built the line to Lula through Commerce that is still in operation.

By then the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line railroad had been built from Atlanta to Charlotte, so the Northeastern obtained trackage rights to Rabun Gap Junction (Cornelia).

They then built on to Tallulah Falls, reaching there in 1882.

During the last years of the 19th century, there were many attempts to complete the Blue Ridge railroad, so I think the



A northbound train sits at the Tallulah Falls depot, which would be on the right with the Cliff House Hotel on the left. Tourists pose on locomotive, circa 1910.

builders of the Tallulah Falls always thought that it would eventually connect to a major east-west trunk line. In fact, the TF was one known as the Blue Ridge and Atlantic railroad.

Up in Franklin, North Carolina, there were many rumors of railroads being built to connect Franklin to the Western North Carolina railroad at Almond, North Carolina, and that railroad had hoped to build on west of Murphy, North Carolina, into Tennessee.

The Blue Ridge railroad dream lasted until, perhaps, 1929, but didn't die completely until the Aluminum Co. of America won the right to build dams on the Little Tennessee River in 1940. Fontana Dam in particular blocked the railroad route for good.

All during this period, there were all sorts of railroad schemes and surveys made.

One of the railroads that might have been built into Clayton was the North Georgia and North Carolina. It was to

have been built from Calhoun, through Blue Ridge to connect with the Blue Ridge railroad at Clayton. This was 1871, the same year that the Northeastern railroad was started.

In 1874 a survey was run from Charleston, Tennessee, on the Hiwassee River through Murphy to Clayton. This survey ended at the partially completed Warwoman Tunnel under Saddle Gap. It was intended to finish the old Blue Ridge railroad on into South Carolina from that point.

Another version was the Hiwassee railroad chartered about 1860 to run from the copper mines at Ducktown, Tennessee, to Clayton.

As late as 1903, the Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina railroad talked of building from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to Anderson, South Carolina. This route would presumably come through Clayton.

Of the several attempts to complete the Blue Ridge railroad after the Civil War, the best known to Rabun Countians is Colonel Albert E. Boone's scheme of his "Black Diamond System of Railways" in 1895-1900. Boone tried to raise money all over the eastern United States and Great Britain, but as far as my team of railroad history researchers has been able to determine, he never did any more than talk and perhaps, run some surveys around Knoxville.

I believe that the Tallulah Falls railroad was extended to Franklin, in 1907 with the idea of continuing on to Knoxville, or at least to the Western North Carolina railroad at Almond.

I don't believe that the TF was built just to serve the local area that it ended up serving. There just weren't enough revenue producing customers, like a big copper mine, to justify a branch line.

On the other hand, there were still high hopes of being part of a through route to the Midwest, such as, a junction with a completed Blue Ridge railroad would have provided.



The depot at Lakemont, early 1950s, directly across the road from Alley's Store.

More memories of our mountain short line

By Scooter MacMillan ♦ Staff Writer

Editor's Note: This story, reprinted unchanged and in its entirety, was first published in the Jan. 22, 1998, edition of The Clayton Tribune.

When the Tallulah Falls Railroad closed, Carl Rogers had worked as a depot helper and later as depot agent at the Clayton station, since the 1940s.

He started before the war. He returned to the job after the military sent him to France to help get the railroads running when the Allies took them back from the Germans. On the train's last run he shut the depot station down and caught the last train to Franklin, riding it up and back and then taking care of the final details of closing down the station.

"That was a really sad day," Rogers said. "One of the saddest days I've ever seen."

Hoyt Tench worked as a fireman on the Tallulah Falls steam engines when he started in 1942. He said railroading was a way of life.

"I shoveled enough coal to cover half of Rabun County," Tench said. "Most of us fell in love with what we were doing even though it was such hard work."

Tench and others who worked or had relatives who worked said many worked longer hours than was allowed by regulations and didn't turn them in.

During the 1940s when his railroad career began, some people in the back reaches of Rabun County would be thrilled when Tench talked to them at the stations.

"They would say this is the first train I ever saw," Tench said. The line that had been to Tallulah Falls since 1882, to Clayton since 1904.

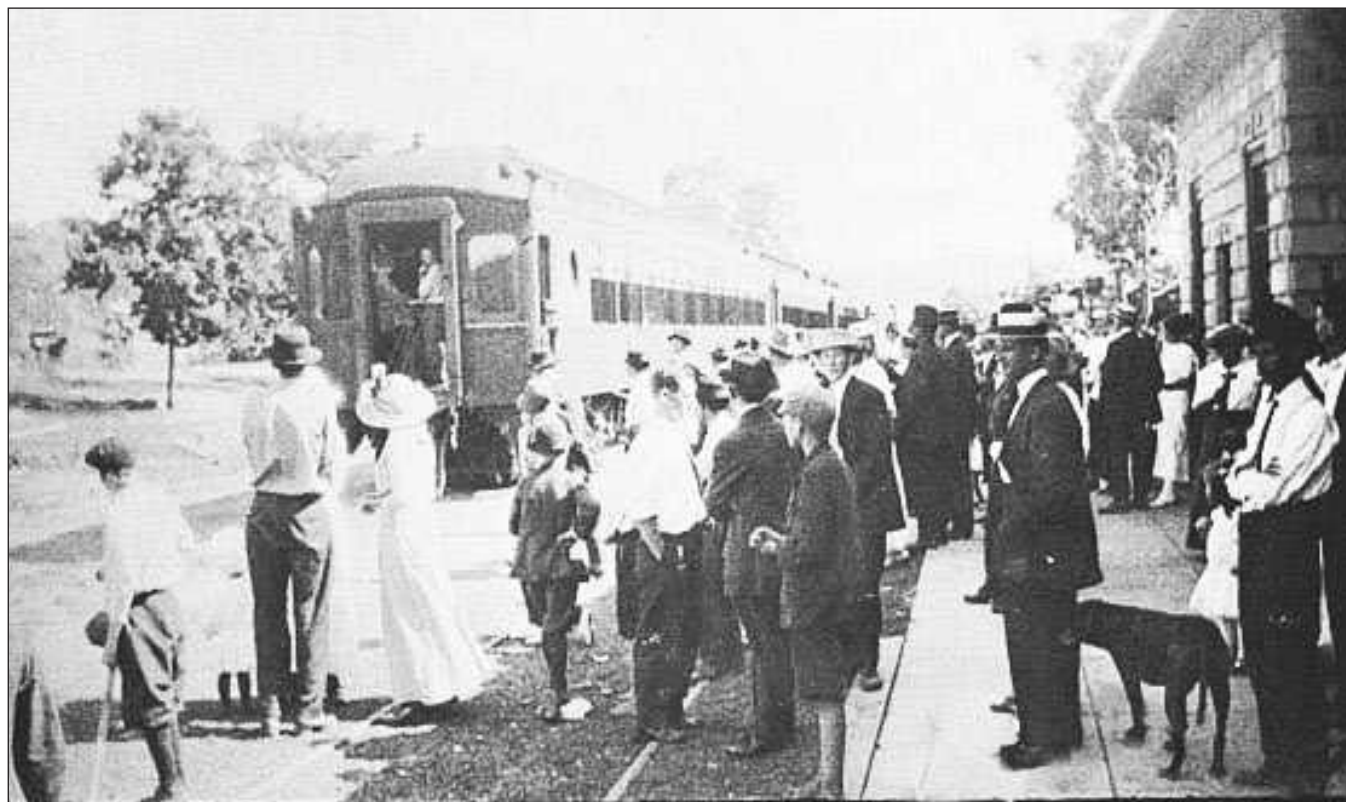
The first day Tench worked on the Tallulah Falls a train car turned over.

"I went home that night and swore I wouldn't go back," he said. But before it was time for work the next day, he changed his mind.

This first close scrape during his two-year tenure on the line was far from his last.

It was a steep pull for the train coming up to Tiger. Normally, Engineer Jim Brown (the father of Tallulah Falls mayor Bradley Brown) would stop and let him build up steam.

"One day Jim didn't stop and get up steam and we melted the stays in the boiler," Tench



Photos courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

The original Tallulah Falls Railroad depot in Clayton burned and the replacement opened in 1913. This photo shows a crowd waiting for the train.

said.

The stays held together the firebox and the water boiler. When the stays melted water could get into the fire and put it out. It could also cause an explosion.

Although the metal turned white, they made that run without mishap.

Another time when they were going up to Tiger the engine threw itself into reverse. Tench had to climb under the engine to fix it. "I got under that thing on a trestle," he said. "I was under that hot engine and if it was to roll it would have killed me."

Trestles were only slightly wider than the trains. Tench said the highest trestle was Wiley's with five decks.

"One day I happened to be looking back and saw the end jump the track. The caboose just dropped on the trestle," he said.

They didn't have jacks or any kind of machinery that would pick a car up and put it back on the rail. Workers would use a re-railer, which was a rising groove the train would pull the car up in hopes it would drop back on the rail.

One night they were headed back south in a terrible thunderstorm coming to the crossing at Lake Tallulah when lightning hit the track in front of them.

"Here comes the lightning running the rail bouncing, bouncing when it hit the engine," Tench said. It lit up anything metal in the engine. "It almost blinded you it was so bright."

From the engine they watched it travel down the rail under the train, sparking up each wheel it hit, headed for



The Mountain City southbound train, circa 1905. The current location of the Black Rock Mountain Parkway would be on the left.

the caboose. It passed through the caboose without hurting anybody or thing.

"It went on out of sight, riding the rail," he said.

One of the constant worries of engineer and fireman was cows.

Tench said there were no cattle laws then. This meant if a cow got in your garden and tore it up, it was your responsibility to build a fence. In that day and time there were no leash laws for cattle.

If the train hit a cow, the company paid the farmer \$75.

"Sometimes farmers would even tie their cow to the rail. Some people, if they had an old, sick cow they didn't want to kill and bury, they'd leave it on the track," Tench said.

In Lakemont there was a big cut in the side of bank and while they were filling up with water one day some cows wandered onto the track. Brown told Tench he thought the cows would

move when the train started.

All of the cows fled, except for one. A bull stayed unflinching until the train hit and knocked it down.

He scrambled to his feet between the bank and the engine. The bull was standing in a narrow part of the engine where the train would kill it if they forward or backwards.

"Throw some coals on it," Tench said Brown told him, so he dropped a few coals from the firebox on the bull.

"First you could smell hair burning then you could smell meat burning then that rascal bellowed and jumped over the cow catcher [the metal guard on the front bottom of a train engine] where it was taller than a man," he said.

The train was memorable for the passengers as well. Real estate agent Woodrow Blalock said, "It'd scare you to death. You'd be driving through Tallulah Gorge and it be

reeling and rocking."

"You didn't lack 18 inches at the gorge and you'd fall for a week before you hit bottom," Tench said.

Blalock said he used to catch the train during the war when he was on leave. He'd catch the train in Tiger around 3 p.m. and get to Cornelia around 4 p.m. He'd hitchhike back to Ft. Jackson at Columbia, S.C.

"I'd catch a ride before dark and I'd be back in Columbia before midnight," Blalock said.

Woodrow said he remembered playing on the trestles, a dangerous activity that would probably have gotten him in trouble if his parents found out.

"I remember playing on the trestle," Woodrow's son Jim said.

Jim also remembered one of the most frequently recalled memories of the Tallulah Falls Railroad. "My fondest memory is the conductor throwing out bubble gum to us."

1987
Cupboard Café
& Gifts

738 Hwy. 441
Dillard, GA 30537
706-746-5700



1987
Habitat for Humanity
Rabun County

P.O. Box 1394
1164 Old Hwy 441 N.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-212-2059

1987
Rabun ABC
Package Store

Chris Young, Manager
97 Hwy 441
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-6937
Facebook.com/RabunABC

1988
Eagle Cleaning
Service

Since 1988
Larry Cavendar, Owner
247 South Main St.
Clayton, GA
706-782-7646
eaglecleaning.net

1988
Jeff Hunter Electric,
Inc.

312 Smith Street
Clayton, Ga. 30525
706-782-6277

1990
Northeast Georgia
Heat & Air

1104 Old 441 South
Clayton, GA
706-782-7825
negahvac.com

1990
S&S Auto Parts
Great people, products
& prices

Jeff Southard, Owner
1467 Hwy 441 N.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-3490

1990
The Trading Post
Buy · Sell · Trade

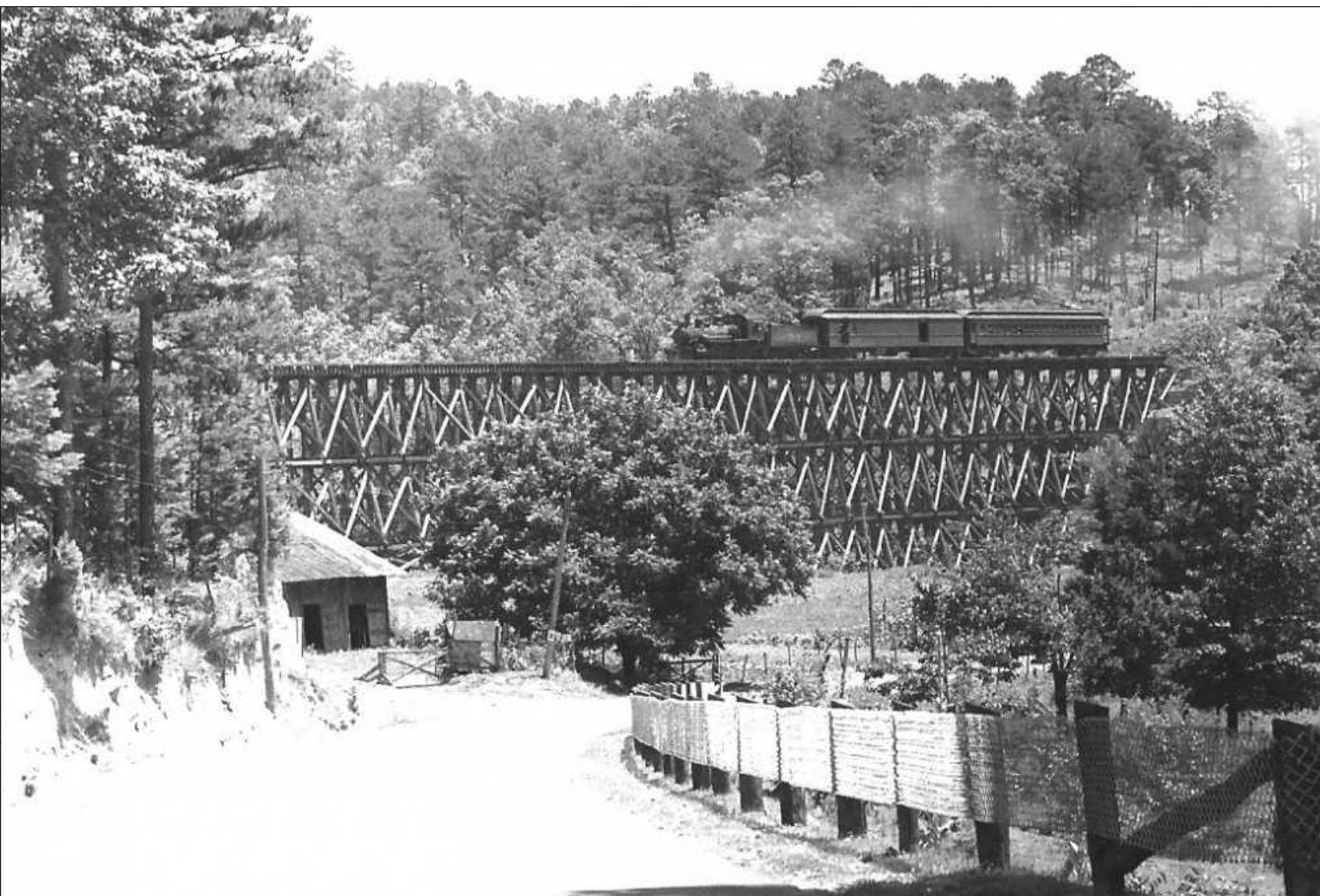
Terry & Angie Watts,
Owners
45 W. Savannah St.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-7787

1991
Smitty's Spirits

681 Hwy. 441 South
Clayton, GA
706-782-7593

1993
F.A.I.T.H., Inc.

Fight Abuse In The
Home
P.O. Box 1964
Clayton, GA
Office: 706-782-1003
Crisis Line
888-782-1338
www.faith-inc.org
Thrift Store
94 North main Street
Clayton, GA
706-782-1867



The Tallulah Falls Railroad's Big Cannon Trestle at Wiley is seen in this 1940 photograph.

1995

Blossman Gas
24 Hour Service
David Deal, Manager
66 Rickman Street
Clayton, GA
706-782-8305
blossmangas.com

1995

Holly's Salon
54 Darling Springs Rd.
Mountain City, GA
706-746-2851

1996

Butler Galleries
Celebrating 19 Years in
Clayton, GA
74 North Main St.
Clayton, GA
706-212-0155

1996

Edward Jones
Est. 1922
Ara Joyce,
Financial Advisor
20 Oak Crescent Circle
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-7936
edwardjones.com

1996

**Home Respiratory
Services & Home
Medical Equipment**
Since 1996
Oxygen • CPAP • BiPAP
Locally owned by
Steve & Jan Hammons
165-B Ridgecrest Cir.
(On the Hospital Campus)
Clayton, GA
706-782-6199

1998

Joel A. Wise, CPA
Accounting &
Tax Services
66 Oak Crescent Cir.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-7538

1998

**La Pachanga
Mexican Restaurant**
12 Hwy. 441 North
Clayton, GA
706-782-7247

1999

**Cornerstone
Memorials**
Located at the
Rabun Flea Market
706-746-9977

1999

Grapes & Beans
42 E. Savannah St.
Beautiful Downtown
Clayton
706-212-0020
grapesandbeans.com

1999

**The Original
Fire Place &
Grill Shop**
Bill & Susan Swager
87 North Main Street
Clayton, GA
706-782-1864
thefireplacrabun.com

2000

Wal-Mart
Store #2753
Jimmy Morin, Store Mgr.
1455 Hwy 441 S.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-3039
Walmart.com



In April of 1928 the main north-south highway had just been hard-surfaced with crushed granite. The Tallulah Falls Railroad can be seen on the left and the newly rebuilt, after a fire, Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in the background.

Photos courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

THE BACKBONE OF RABUN COUNTY OLD HIGHWAY 441

By Megan Studdard ♦ Staff Writer

The backbone of transportation in Rabun County prior to any four-lane highways was the original Highway 441, now known as Old Highway 441. Twists and turns made this mountain road a scenic adventure for locals and visitors alike.

Once ruddy wagon trails became gravel-covered and asphalted gateways to the mountains. The highway built tourism in Rabun's southside at a time when the passenger railroad was dying and vehicles were becoming more affordable. The storied legacy of Old Highway 441 gave birth to a new era in Rabun County history.

Evolution of a road

Marred dirt and gravel marked the initial Old Highway 441. Carol Turner of the Rabun County Historical Society said the first road, then traversed more by wagons than cars, followed the same basic path as the four-lane Highway 441 today. In fact, its path through some parts of Mountain City is almost identical.

Before Highway 441 was paved, it was nearly impossible to get anywhere when weather was poor. Cross county travel was a day-long affair — it would take five hours to get from Tallulah Falls to Rabun Gap.

"It would have to ford every creek (and) go around every mountain," Turner said.

In the early 1910s, North Georgians started looking to improve the road. A Jan. 15, 1915, newspaper article speculates on a public highway that would connect Atlanta and Asheville, North Carolina. A working road had already been established in Habersham County, connecting



This is a look north at the main street in Dillard, circa 1920. The street was also the main north-south highway.

Tallulah Falls and Atlanta. The article states a highway through Rabun County and Macon County, North Carolina, would prevent travelers from having to take a route through Murphy, North Carolina.

"There is a link of some 35 miles from Tallulah Falls to Franklin, which would be all that is necessary to complete a fine highway from Atlanta to the North Carolina city, where it would join with this other highway that goes through the finest scenic section in the eastern belt of the United States," the article stated.

It goes on to urge Rabun and Macon counties to work together on making the project a reality.

Wheels started turning just four months later. According to a May 21, 1915, Athens Banner article, Rabun County officials worked with the University of

Georgia's engineering school to develop plans for improving the road. The road was resurveyed from Wiley to the North Carolina line and the North Carolina Power Co. graded the road from Tallulah Falls to Lakemont, it stated.

Chain gangs and "convict force" were used to update the roads. Other initial improvements included straightening portions of the mountain road and bringing the mileage down to match the railroad.

The curvy road that would become Old Highway 441 passed by waterfalls and ran alongside rivers, "scenery as fine as is to be found east of the Rockies," the Athens Banner stated.

Major improvements began about a decade later. A contract was awarded to Sheppard & Williams of Atlanta for \$74,327.70, according to a Dec. 2, 1926, article. The laying of local stone

began in 1927, and by the peak leaf season, the roads were crowded with visitors vying to see the mountains in their autumn beauty.

"There have been more strangers in and around Clayton than ever before at this time of year. The roads are now open and can be traveled in any kind of weather and while dry are in fine condition," a Nov. 10, 1927, article stated. Just a month before, chain gangs began working to grade in Clayton around the Warwoman area. Deeds were then secured for the road to run through south Rabun County.

A gravel surface, including bridges, lined the road before 1930. Andrew Ritchie, in his book "Sketches of Rabun County History," argued that this was one of the biggest improvements in Rabun's road transportation.

"The biggest jobs that has been done with state and federal funds was the relocation, rebuilding and surfacing of the north and south highway through the county from Tallulah Falls to the North Carolina line," Ritchie wrote. "The county voted bonds in the sum of \$175,000 to be retired in 30 years for this undertaking. The work was done (1926-1928) under the administration of Will Smith as Ordinary. It was finally complete with the building of the great Tallulah Falls bridge, which is the crowning piece of highway architecture in this county."

Tourist towns

With a new road and the price of vehicles dropping, a world of travel was opened up for Rabun County. Tourism was already established by the railroads



In the mid-1920s, Clayton's Main Street was paved. It served as the main north-south highway and did not have a traffic light until 1950.

Please see **OLD 441**, 10

FORGING A FUTURE FOR RABUN COUNTY

NEW HIGHWAY 441

By Megan Studdard ♦ Staff Writer

Pastures turned into pavement. Cows once grazed where McDonald's now serves hamburgers. Farms have been transformed into franchises.

In the mid-1960s, an asphalt answer arrived for Rabun County with the construction of a new U.S. Highway 441. This four-lane thoroughfare provides a straight shot from Tallulah Falls to the North Carolina state line, bringing thousands of visitors to the mountains.

However, the journey to a modern highway didn't come easy. With a new route set to bypass Lakemont, Tiger and Clayton, business owners worried that tourists would sidestep them, too. However, the finished product opened up access to the county, making it faster and easier to get to North Georgia while promoting new commerce and industry.



Megan Studdard/The Clayton Tribune

The four-lane Highway 441 is seen Tuesday. The new highway wasn't welcomed by all residents in the towns along its route, particularly in the southern portion of the state where it was believed its construction would bankrupt businesses on Old Highway 441.

Petitions and protests

The advent of a new highway was not without opposition. Residents and city officials on Rabun's south end feared a bypass would cripple their cities. Towns like Tiger and Lakemont relied on Old Highway 441 to stream tourists to the many small businesses lining the road.

An Aug. 9, 1956, a Clayton Tribune article reported on the first official protest of the bypass. Engineers with the Georgia Highway Department had begun surveying from Wiley to Clayton when property owners became upset. One of these was then Tiger Mayor W.F. (Bill) Wilson, who said the proposed route would "bankrupt the southern half of Rabun County." On top of being mayor, Wilson owned the Tween Lakes Motor Court and Tiger Drive-In in downtown Tiger.

Less than a year later, another group formed in Clayton to rally against the bypass. According to a March 21, 1957, Tribune article, a committee headed by Dr. J.C. Dover, Fulton Lovell, Fred Derrick and L.F. Reeves was

appointed to keep the highway running through downtown Clayton.

Their efforts hit a wall in 1958. A Tribune article reported people "stormed the courthouse" in opposition to the bypass.

"Persons opposed to this new route say business will be affected and Clayton will dry up on the vine," the article stated.

There were also backers of the new route. The Tribune article stated many spoke for the bypass simply because it would circumvent heavy traffic out of the city. On busy days, it stated, it would take 10 minutes or more to travel the half-mile through town.

There were also a slew of other benefits to a new highway. Carol Turner of the Rabun County Historical Society grew up in the county and estimated it would take at least six hours to get to the north side of Atlanta on the old highway. Sharp curves and snaky mountain roads would be straightened

with a new route. Four lanes would help traffic flow.

"You couldn't pass anybody, anywhere," Turner said. "If you got behind someone going 10 (mph), you were going 10 for the duration."

Proponents of the new route prevailed over the opposition, and officials confirmed the route was set and it was approved by the federal government. Surveys continued and right-of-ways were obtained. Rabun marched forward toward a new era of auto transportation. In 1959, contracts for the final span of road were scheduled to be approved and the state highway department began building a road that would change everything.

Changing the landscape

Building a new highway that would bypass Clayton to the

east required plenty of physical and economic alterations.

The look of downtown Clayton changed dramatically. A hill once sat at the end of Savannah Street, which ended at the turn to Chechero Street. Atop the hill sat the Bleckley house. Both hill and house were removed to create a connector to the new highway, though it bypassed Rabun's southernmost cities, followed Old 441 almost exactly.

A new highway meant new ways of doing business. Once filled with car dealerships, gas stations and restaurants, downtown Clayton now supports local eateries and specialty shops. Big-name stores made the transition to the highway.

Turner said the construction took place in the early 1960s, with cars ready to make their debut on the new road by the middle of that decade. That's when one of the first fast food

Please see **NEW 441**, 10

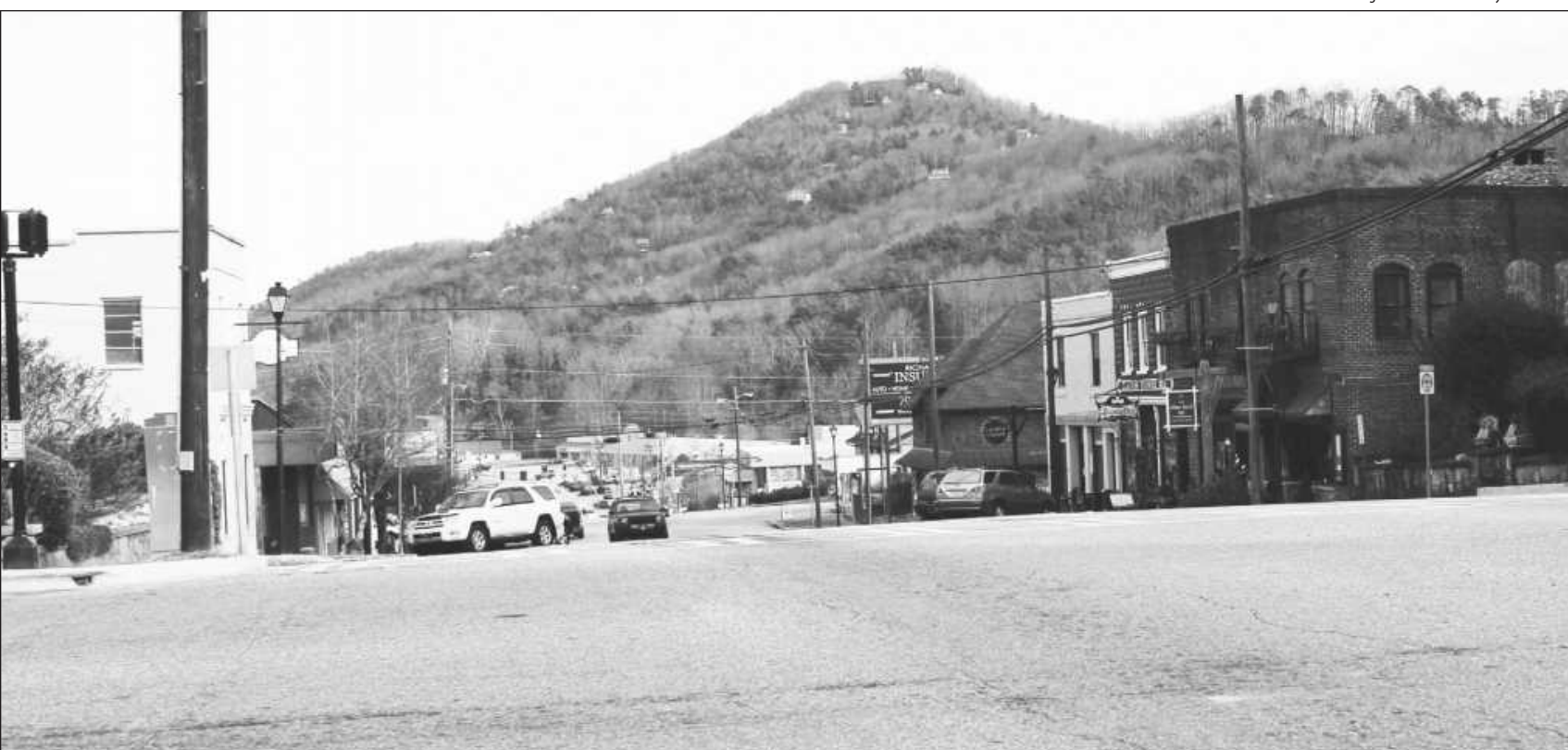


Photo courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

Before and after

Above is Savannah Street, circa 1930. Looking east down Savannah Street, the Bleckley House Hotel sat atop a hill just across from the railroad depot. Compared to Tuesday's view of Savannah Street, below, a lot has changed. In order to connect downtown Clayton and the new Highway 441, the Bleckley House was moved and the hill was taken away.

Megan Studdard/The Clayton Tribune



2000
Friendly's Title & Pawn
 "For your financial emergency."
 Hwy 441
 Mountain City
 706-746-5034



2001
All American Plumbing of Clayton, LLC

Henry & Teresa Radford & Sons
 1983 Hwy 76 W.
 Clayton, Ga 30525
 706-782-9804

allamericanplumbingof-clayton@windstream.net



2001
C&J Automotive
 "Quality Auto Care"
 David Mooney, Owner
 151 Depot Avenue
 Mountain City, GA
 706-746-2126
 706-490-2284



2001
Woodmen of the World
 Emma Chastain, FICF
 "Insurance Protection, Disability, Guaranteed Insurability, Long Term Care, Medicare Supplement, IRA's & Financial Security Since 1890."
 172 N. Main St., Ste. 4
 Clayton, GA 30525
 706-490-4122
 Guaranteed Lifetime Income



2002
Wiley Tire & Automotive
 7770 Hwy. 441 S.
 Wiley, GA
 706-782-9505
 Locally Owned & Operated by
 Scot, Linda & Jordan Benfield

2003
Medlink Rabun Community Health Center
 896 Highway 441 South
 Clayton, Georgia 30525
 706-782-5991
 Your link to Quality Medical Care for the entire family



2006
USAVE it PHARMACY
 Drive-thru Window & We Deliver
 321 US Hwy441 N
 Clayton, Ga 30525
 706-782-3813

2007
Fromage & Other Fine Foods
 Jenny Wilson, Owner
 31 Earl Street
 Clayton, GA
 706-212-7349
 fromageclayton.com



2008

Adams Hearing Aid Specialists

Chris Adams, BCHIS
91 East Savannah Street
Clayton, GA, 30525
706-782-0109

adamshearingaids@gmail.com



Photo courtesy the Rabun County Historical Society

2009

Overhead Door Company

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The Original.

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2010

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Awarded Readers'
Choice 2013
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Clayton, GA
706-782-7005

Modes of transportation

This aerial photograph taken in 1955 shows the Tallulah Falls hydroelectric dam, the Old Highway 441 bridge across the Tallulah Gorge and the Tallulah Falls Railroad. Stuckey's was just south of the dam.

TFR

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Lipscomb.

"Mrs. Moss brought Mrs. Lipscomb up here on the train with her to visit, and that's how she fell in love with Tallulah Falls," Dan Hayes said. "And you had your poor, little kids running around here with no education. She goes, 'These kids need to be educated.' So she started (the school) in her little

cottage they built up here."

Oliver said tourism to Tallulah Falls dried up after the Georgia Railway and Power Co. dammed the Tallulah River in the 1910s. Better roads and the introduction of widespread automobile use in the 1920s and '30s also cut into the railroad's passenger services, which was its primary source of income. Although Georgia Railway and Power Co. was a large patron — it used the railroad to ship supplies and materials

into the area for its six hydroelectric dams — the line began to operate with great financial losses.

A collision with a truck north of Cornelia in 1946 brought passenger service to an "unexpectedly abrupt halt," Boyd wrote in his book. Damage to the passenger coach was estimated at \$100, too steep a price to pay to put it back on the track. "From then on the Tallulah Falls Railroad would be relegated to the relatively unglamorous role of hauling freight,"

Boyd wrote.

The Tallulah Falls Railroad would have one more flash in the pan before its 1961 demise. Walt Disney chose the railroad for principal photography in 1955 for his film "The Great Locomotive Chase."

Disney fell in love with the area and even expressed interest in purchasing the railroad for use as an excursion line, Hayes said. Southern Railway management rejected the notion. On March 10, 1961, the railroad was ordered to

be sold as scrap.

Not much is left today of the Tallulah Falls Railroad, save for a few buildings along its route. One of the greatest collections of the railroad's history can be found along Highway 441 in Rabun Gap at the Tallulah Falls Railroad Museum. Oliver, a retired Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School teacher, once rode the train in the late 1950s.

"It was the most picturesque railroad in the United States, especially in the east," he said.

2011

Universal Joint

109 N. Main St.
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30525
706-782-7116

www.ujclayton.com

2013

The Laurel Bar @ The White Birch Inn

Chuck & Brenda
Patterson, Owners
28 E Savannah St.
Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-4444

Thewhitebirchinn.net

2014

Buchanan's Small Engine Repair

Sales & Service
Chad Buchanan,
Owner

35 Tiger Connector
Tiger, GA 30525
706-782-1871

2014

Wild Bill's Army Navy Store

Bill & Colleen,
Proprietors

We specialize in
genuine
military surplus

6031 Hwy. 441 S.,
Lakemont, GA
865-307-0246

OLD 441

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

running through town, but cars made getting here faster and cheaper.

The improved highway ran through Lakemont, Tiger and Clayton, where thriving downtown districts were the norm. The road then flowed through Mountain City, located where File Street is today, according to Turner. It then meandered through the backside of Dillard.

One thing a national highway fostered was the flourishing small towns on its path. One-time farm towns and rural communities became big business districts. Marvenia "Beanie" Ramey remembers a downtown Clayton and Tiger that rivaled

today's larger cities. Her husband, former Clayton Mayor Tom Ramey, helped run Ramey Super Gas right off the highway. Tiger was lined with small mom-and-pop motels, she said.

"It was real, real busy back then," Ramey said.

Downtown Clayton was a boon for the auto industry. Turner said there were at least six service stations on Main Street alone. Chevrolet, Pontiac and Plymouth dealerships dotted the downtown business district. Turner estimated downtown was paved after World War II, making travel that much easier.

Ramey said Clayton was much different when the old highway was king. She reminisced about going into town as a teenager to hang out with friends at a local eatery.

"You didn't have fast food

places," she said. "When we went to get a cheeseburger, we went to the Snack Shack or to the Clayton Drugstore."

Ramey said the old highway holds a special place for her family, as her husband's father built one of the rock houses on it that still stands today. That's where her husband grew up.

"This highway means a lot to us," she said.

The start of something new

As Rabun County became more popular and people began making the trek to the mountains, the famed Old Highway 441 was bearing the weight. People wanted a faster, more direct route.

NEW 441

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restaurants, Dairy Queen, opened its doors. According to Turner, the local eatery was a popular place for teenagers who enjoyed cruising through town on the new road.

Rabun County was now positioned along a link to a national highway that spanned from Florida to Tennessee, which meant more travelers.

The highway revolutionized travel and vacationing habits in Rabun County, Turner said. Clayton was once home to 23 boarding houses, where families would spend their entire summers in the mountains since it was so difficult to go back home. With the advent of the four-lane highway, visitors could more easily make the

trek to Rabun County and back home in a day.

"There were more hotel rooms in 1900 than in 2000," Turner said, adding that in Tallulah Falls' heyday there were dozens of 50 to 100-room boarding houses.

One of the first of these was Heart of Rabun, owned by Tom Ramey Sr. and his family. They were one of the first families to develop property along the new highway, and it was the first hotel on the main highway.

Marvenia "Beanie" Ramey said the family opened its hotel in 1966, adding extra rooms later. They ran the lodging until 1972. Today, it is Days Inn.

The Rameys were big landowners on the strip of highway near Clayton. They bought farmland which later became the Covered Bridge Shopping Center and McDonald's. They also developed land

across from the hotel, which then became a liquor store and Chick-fil-A.

Ramey said the first years in the hotel business were booming with the new roadway in place. She reminisced about drawing in parents after they dropped off their children from surrounding summer camps.

"We were busy all the time," she said. "We met a lot of nice people from all over the United States traveling through here."

Many other resorts sprang up in the area soon after, including Kingwood and Sky Valley.

441 today

In 2015, Highway 441 is a causeway of commerce. Dozens of restaurants, hotels, gas stations, banks and big-box stores line the highway. Geor-

gia Department of Transportation traffic studies showed that in 2013 a station on Highway 441 north of Chechero Street reported an average daily traffic of 20,450. The road from Clayton to Tallulah Falls was widened to four lanes in 2007.

In addition to providing an avenue for retail businesses and lodging options, the new highway harnesses hope and potential for the future. With a business park waiting to be filled, U.S. Highway 441 is the only mode of transportation for industries coming to Rabun County. Ray Coulombe, executive director of the Development Authority of Rabun County, said the highway is a major selling point when trying to get new industries to consider Rabun County.

"It is the main route to connect us south to

Turner said travel on the old road, though scenic, was troublesome. She estimated a trip to the north side of Atlanta could take up to six hours.

In fact, motor clubs were re-routing tourists away from the road. A March 25, 1954, editorial published in the Atlanta Journal Constitution pleaded for a solution, calling U.S. Highway 23, which ran concurrent to 441, a "stepchild among roads."

"U.S. 23 from the (North Carolina) state line near Dillard south is described — 'old, crooked, narrow and rough.' The traveler can close his eyes and tell when he enters Georgia," the article stated.

Officials and residents began brainstorming solutions, getting the state highway department on board, for a new road that would revolutionize travel and tourism in Rabun.

Atlanta," he said.

Remnants of the old highway's glory days still exist, providing a sense of nostalgia for generations that grew up remembering long car rides to the mountains. Diners can enjoy a hamburger at what once was a service station. Crafts and speciality items now fill old department stores.

"A lot of people still go into Clayton because (they) remember how it was when they stayed there years ago," Ramey said.

Though the streets of Tiger and Lakemont are no longer filled with tourists eager to spend, Ramey assured these towns aren't dead. For her, they provide families a place of peace and respite to call home.

"It's very peaceful. It's very quiet," she said. "People like to live there."