

# Catoosa County Railroads That Never Were

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The story of the Western & Atlantic Railroad in Catoosa County represents one of the most historically significant and economically important enterprises in our county. However, there were three other rail enterprises that were conceived and reached various stages of development as projects, which could have added a lot to the history of rails in Catoosa County. A brief summary of these follows.

## **Catoosa's Lost Railroad (1856)**

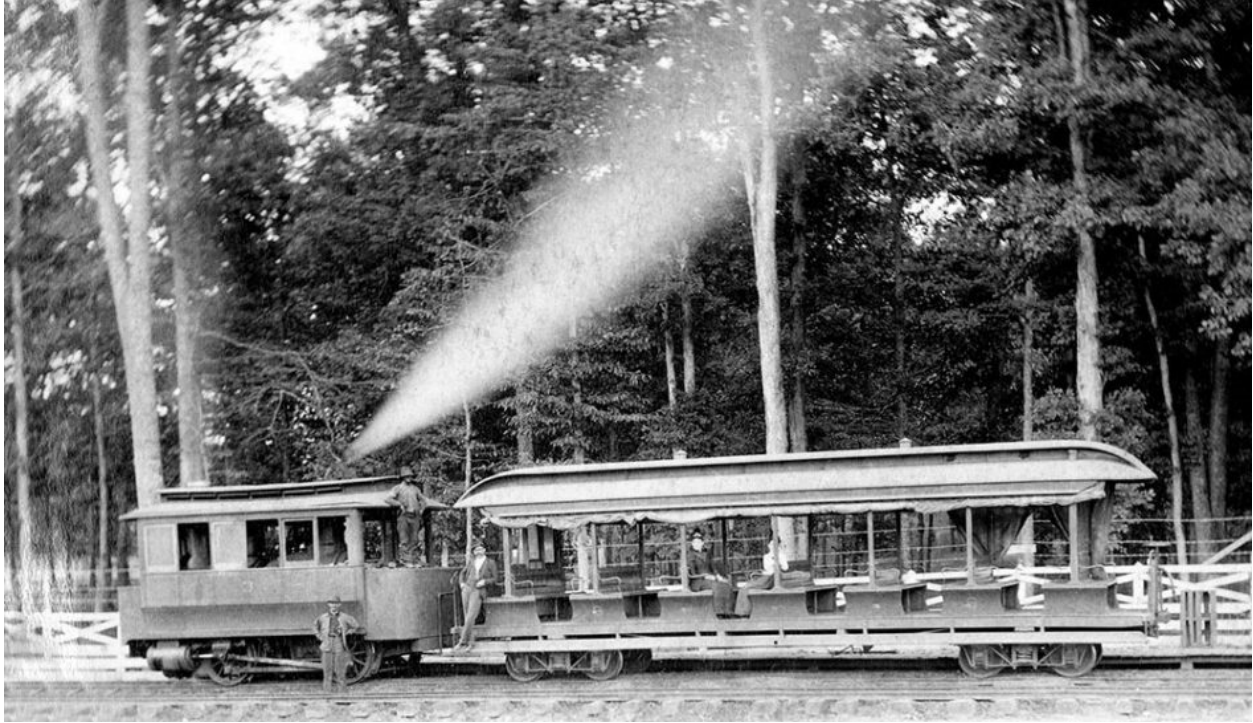
in 1856 or group of men from Walker and Catoosa counties formed a corporation known as the "Lookout Railroad Company". The Georgia legislature gave them a charter to build a railroad from a point on the Western and Atlantic, approximately a mile northwest of Graysville to Lafayette. The charter was approved on March 3, 1856, and authorization of sale of stock was approved and the Corporation given the right of eminent domain.

Practically nothing else is known about the railroad except that construction was started and it followed the general path of Peavine Valley toward Lafayette. Cross ties have been dug up on the south side of the Graysville – New Liberty Church Road and there was an embankment about 100 yards long that can be seen on the west side of Interstate 75 just north of the welcome center. Traces of the roadbed have been reported in the vicinity of Post Oak Church. Miss Pearl Bowman writes, that as a child riding with her father Joshua Hayes Bowman, in a buggy near Noble, he pointed out an embankment and told her that it was the bed of a railroad which was never completed. He had been living at Noble as a 10–12-year-old at the time of the initial construction. The onset of the Civil War destroyed the dream of this railroad.

If the Lookout Railroad had succeeded, it probably would have reshaped the development of Graysville and the Peavine Valley. (This information was extracted from the book "History in Catoosa County" by William H.H. Clark, Third Printing 2012, with some information inserted from Bowman Family History by Roger Bowman, Jr.)

## **Dummy Line (1887)**

Several capitalists, among who are prominent gentlemen from this city, are discussing the feasibility of building a dummy line from Catoosa station, on the Western and Atlantic railroad, to Catoosa Springs, a noted summer resort the length of this line would be about 2 miles and if it should be built it is thought it would be a paying property from the beginning. (From the Chattanooga Daily Times July 25, 1887)



A Typical "Dummy Line" Train from the 1800s

### **Tennessee-Georgia Interurban Railway Company (1905)**

The continuing dream of an expanded rail system through Catoosa County continued on into the next century as detailed in this article from the Chattanooga Daily Times on **January 4, 1905**. This article is transcribed below in its entirety with footnotes added for additional detail.

## Survey for New Road

### Interurban Company to Begin Work

#### Funds Now in Hand and the Preliminary Work to be Started Without Delay – Route Proposed

Yesterday a meeting of the incorporators of the proposed Tennessee – Georgia Interurban Railway Company was held at Ringgold. George C. Cushman of Chattanooga and M.H. Trimmier (1) of Ringgold have been selected to make the preliminary survey of the route from this city to Catoosa Springs, via Chickamauga Park and Ringgold. This work will be started next week if the weather permits. Col. Mann of Ringgold was selected by the incorporators of the proposed electric road yesterday to draw up the charter for the incorporation. The capital stock will be placed at \$300,000 with the privilege of increasing to \$2 million for the purpose of extending the line. J.A. McLain of Ringgold has been appointed Treasurer of the fund for the preliminary survey. All of this money has been subscribed by citizens of Catoosa County Georgia and Chattanooga and the greater part has been paid in.

### The Proposed Route

It is proposed to make a preliminary survey of a line from Chattanooga to Catoosa Springs, a distance of about 22 miles by the route proposed. Negotiations are now pending to secure privileges of right-of-way to the new army post and Chickamauga Park. From the national park it is proposed to take an air line (2) into Ringgold and pass from there to Catoosa Springs. This will be the first section of the proposed electric interurban railway to be constructed. The second proposed, which will be surveyed and built later, is from Catoosa Springs to Ducktown, Tennessee.

### Project Being Pushed

From the manner in which the preliminary steps are being taken and the class of men who are interested in the proposition, it is practically assured that the road from Chattanooga to Catoosa Springs will be constructed. It is estimated that \$300,000 which is set as the original sum of the capital stock will be sufficient to cover the expense of constructing the 22 miles of track between this city and Catoosa Springs, purchase rolling stock and build a power plant. It is proposed to raise funds to build the road from eastern brokers, with whom negotiations have been opened by S. W. Divine (3), who is the principal promoter of the scheme. Some of the bonds will be held for Chattanooga and Catoosa County investors, who are greatly interested in the project.

### May Reach Atlanta

If the first section of the road is completed the next move contemplated is the extension to Ducktown. It is also proposed if the road proves a successful venture, to build a branch line from Catoosa Springs to Tunnel Hill, Georgia and from that place to Dalton. All things working out as planned, the road will ultimately be extended to connect with the present interurban road from Atlanta to Marietta, which is contemplating an extension to a point near Dalton. The United States government is contemplating the establishment of a rifle range near Ringgold, and it is proposed to build the electric Road near this place.

- (1) *Mark Hansel Trimmier (1872-1937), son of Robert Bruce Trimmier (served in Co. B. "Ringgold Volunteers" First Confederate Regiment, Georgia Volunteer Infantry) and Laura Augusta Hunt Trimmer. He was the husband of Nellie Trimmier*
- (2) *Air line – a straight line*
- (3) *S.W. Divine – see footnote (4) below.*

This article is from the Chattanooga Daily Times on **March 3, 1907**. This article is transcribed below in its entirety with footnotes added for additional detail.

## Divine Says It Is a Go

# Work of Construction to Begin on Tennessee-Georgia Road

## Final Surveys in Within Three Weeks

### Line from Chattanooga to Chickamauga Park to be the First Constructed, then on to Ringgold and Catoosa Springs

Sam D. Divine (4), promoter of the stated yesterday that all financial arrangements for his road have been completed and that an organization would be perfected at an early date.

Mr. Devine also stated that work would be commenced about the middle of this week upon the final surveys of his road, and that as soon as the surveys were completed the actual work of construction would be started.

As has been stated in the Times before, preliminary surveys for this line have been made from Chattanooga to Ringgold Georgia, though the exact route has never yet been located. Several routes have been made under consideration from Rossville through the gap to Chickamauga Park, and the survey next week will be for the purpose of deciding upon a final line. It is expected that the surveys will take about two or three weeks as there are several routes to be gone over between Rossville and the park, but it is hoped that the actual construction work at this end of the line can be commenced sometime in April.

The line from Chattanooga to Chickamauga Park will be constructed first, and it is expected that it will be complete and in working order in time for the fall maneuvers at Chickamauga. From Chattanooga the line will be pushed on to Ringgold, and from that point will be run to Catoosa Springs, and in all probability on to Tunnel Hill.

The grades on the road will be no heavier than the ordinary railroad grades, rock ballasted, and the run from Chattanooga to Ringgold will be made in about 50 minutes, and down to Dalton, if the road is built in that direction, in about one hour and a half for the through cars, the locals taking a longer time on account of the frequent stops. The cars will be the latest type of interurban cars with motors capable of pulling three or four large trailers, if necessary, those being provided to take care of the troops when mobilized to Chickamauga Park.

If it is decided to erect a steam power plant, this will be erected at Ringgold Georgia, which is about the center of the line, but there are several waterpowers available, and it may be decided to utilize one of these. It is understood that the Chattanooga and Tennessee Power Company and the Caney Fork Power Company are both figuring on furnishing power for this road, and it may be that a contract will be made with one of these plants. However, these matters will be finally settled at a later date, says Mr. Devine, the entire energies of all those interested being concentrated on the effort of getting the construction work on the line started.

Mr. Devine stated yesterday, in speaking of the line, that nothing now remained except to get the surveys completed before final construction work commenced, and that from now on he would be actively in the field securing rights-of-way and looking after the affairs of the road. In a few days, the company will open

an office in this city and the numerous details incidental to starting an enterprise of this sort gone over and arranged.

## The Project is Dead!

No information is available in newspaper research until **September 24, 1907**, when an article appeared in The Chattanooga News. This, after a two-year lapse since the last report. This article is in reference to a new group seeking franchises from the City of Chattanooga to connect interurban train service to the city lines and proceed to Dalton. The assumption is that these franchises were not granted to Mr. Divine, which would have been required for him to connect with lines in Chattanooga in order to operate his planned route to Fort Oglethorpe-Ringgold-Catoosa Springs. The below excerpt is directly from this news article beginning with Mr. Divine's comments.

From the newspaper article:

Sam Devine, when asked as to the proposed lines from Chattanooga to Dalton said "In reference to the Interurban with Secretary Reynolds of the Chamber of Commerce, in yesterday's News, I want to say that the opportunities of securing valuable rights-of-way and substantial aid to build an interurban road between Chattanooga and North Georgia towns is not new to me, as I have been working to this end for several years and am familiar with the conditions. The citizens of Dalton tendered to me at one time 17 miles of graded roadbed, ready for the ties if I would complete the road. I got capitalists interested in my project, which was a line from Chattanooga to Chickamauga Park, thence to Ringgold, rifle range, and Dalton. Thence over the roadbed of the Dalton and Alacalsy Railroad to a connection with the L&N at Fort Mountain, thus opening up another route to Atlanta and Knoxville and developing a new territory to the merchants of Chattanooga. One important factor in this enterprise was the government concession for the right to build through the reservation at Fort Oglethorpe. This was considered the most important and difficult task, but it was accomplished after considerable work, time, and patience. The route was surveyed several times very carefully at considerable cost to myself and my associates. Everything in the way of preliminary work was done in a painstaking, businesslike way. The financial end of the proposition had also been provided for and reduced to a contract. In fact, everything was in excellent business shape to start the work except the city franchises."

"For some reason the city fathers have preferred to look upon my effort as a joke, but if they had carried out the spirit of the joke it would have resulted in another practical joke similar to others I've played on the public, such as building the first electric line, converting and extending the old horse car lines, converting and extending the Belt railway system, building an electric road to Chickamauga Park, and a second line to the mountain. These were all original jokes of mine, and many is the horse laugh I have been handed along with a lemon."

"I am no dog in the manger, however, and if the prejudice of the city council is too strong against me, perhaps I might change my name to Brown, Jones and Company. If the people want this road, they should get behind the city council. It may possibly be claimed by members of the city council that this franchise has been given to me once. In fact, I think it was intimated and one of the city papers that it had been given to me twice and I had never used it. This is a real joke, and thereby hangs a tail which I may have occasion to pull later."

The above article is the last one located on the topic of the Tennessee-Georgia Interurban Railway Company.

(4) Samuel W. Divine (from the Chattanooga Daily Times -December 8, 1892) - *Samuel W. Divine, president of the Chattanooga Electric Railway Company, was born in this city on December 24, 1849. He received his first business education during the war, selling newspapers and candles which he made himself to the soldiers. Immediately after the war he attended Washington and Lee University, which was then presided over by the late Gen. Robert E Lee. He afterwards took a business course at Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Returning to Chattanooga he was for several years engaged in the wholesale trade and later in the real estate business, and in the pursuit of which he had the means of interesting foreign capitalists in the development of Chattanooga. In 1889 Mr. Devine and others purchased the plant and franchise of the Chattanooga Street Railway Company and soon afterwards with the expenditure of a large amount of capital, converted it into an electric railway. It is today conceded to be one of the most thoroughly equipped and most successfully operated conducted electric roads in the United States and is recognized as a model by all electric rail experts. As a local industry it gives employment to a small army of men. Mr. Devine was married to Miss Julia McCallie, daughter of the Rev. T.H McCallie of this city.*

*A brief timeline of major events in his life as extracted from local newspapers and local history sources looks like this:*

*December 24,1849 – Samuel Divine born in Chattanooga to John L. Divine and Rachel Williams Divine*

*Approximately 1866 – Samuel Divine attends Washington & Lee University*

*Approximately 1870 – Samuel Divine returns to Chattanooga*

*March 16, 1887 – Samuel Divine and other local businessmen travel to Nashville to promote an article of legislation.*

*June 30,1887 – Samuel Williams Divine and Julia Alexander McCallie were married at First Presbyterian Church*

*January 1, 1888 – Samuel Divine is listed as a Director of the Chattanooga National Bank*

*1889 – Samuel Divine and others purchase the Chattanooga Street Railway Company*

*December 10,1892 – The will of John L. Divine (Samuel's father) is published in the newspapers and an excerpt states "I have already given a fair share of my estate to my son Samuel and my daughter Mary Key". (The balance of his estate was valued at \$ 400,000, which would equate to over \$ 13 million today)*

*June 30, 1899 – Samuel Divine listed as Secretary and General Manager of the Chattanooga Electric Railway Company*

*1905 -1907 – Samuel Divine promotes the Tennessee-Georgia rail line.*

*November 16, 1915 – Samuel Divine died of pneumonia and was buried in Forest Hills Cemetery*

*July 11, 1954 – Julia McCallie Divine passed away in Chattanooga at the age of 87.*

References:

“History in Catoosa County” by William H.H. Clark, Third Printing 2012  
Bowman Family History Files  
The Chattanooga News  
Chattanooga Daily Times