

# Western & Atlantic Railroad Stops East of Ringgold

A Summary of Research to Date

by Roger Bowman

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There has been much discussion and postulation regarding the location of a structure known by many names such as Catoosa Platform, Ramsey's Platform, Catoosa Station, and Catoosa Springs Station. This (or these) structures played a very important role in Catoosa County History and indeed, in the history of the region. By looking at a variety of sources we can begin to piece together the story and conclude with a theory or theories as to the facts.

We know there was a structure built by the Western and Atlantic Railroad (W&A) east of Ringgold for the use of passengers traveling on the railroad to the resort at Catoosa Springs as their destination. This was no doubt built under the influence of the owners of Catoosa Springs which opened in who obviously had some connections since these same people were likely influential in the creation of Catoosa County in

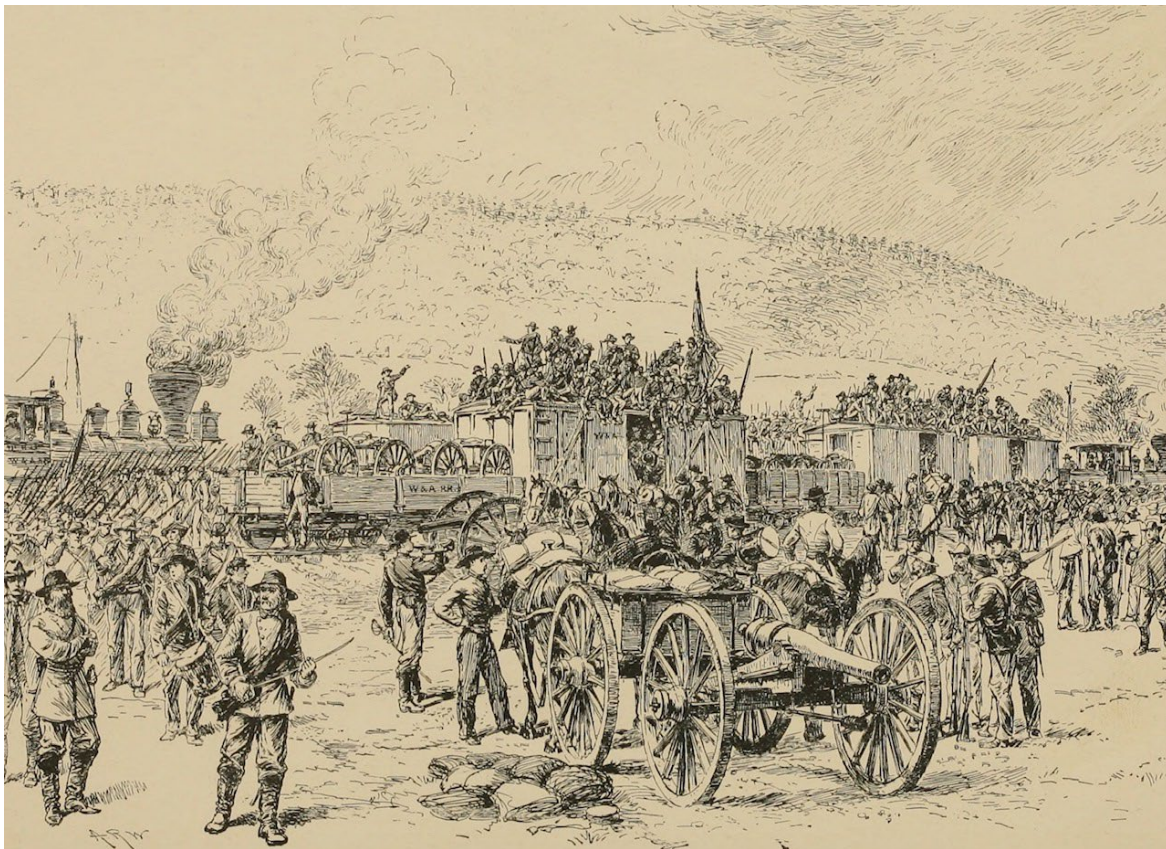
Three highly interconnected events, the opening of Catoosa Springs Resort in the late 1840s, the completion of the W&A Railroad to Ringgold in 1850 and the establishment of Catoosa County in 1853 all occurred in a 6–8-year period. Since coincidence is often overstated, it is likely that these events are inextricably connected. We know the Cherokees occupied and used the springs for many years and obviously gave it the name Catoosa Springs. One could wonder if the owners of the springs after the Cherokee Land Lottery influenced the formation of Catoosa County as well as the new county's name, so that it brought recognition to the name of their business enterprise. It is obvious that the first "structure" east of Ringgold was built for the primary purpose of serving the resort traffic to and from Catoosa Springs. Since the resort value would have been significantly minimized without rail service close by, one could wonder if the resort owners also influenced the construction or route of the W&A.

We know that the first structure was basically a platform beside the railroad. Constructed so the floor of the platform would be generally on a level with the floor of rail cars. It would have been built as close to the tracks as possible so that freight, luggage, and passengers could move from train to platform with a step or small ramp. The platform would have been 8-12 wide and was probably 24-48 feet long and constructed of wood, with no roof but a set of stairs down to the area where horse drawn carriages awaited. This platform might also have served as a place for woodcutters/sellers could deposit wood for purchase by the railroad for use in their locomotive boilers.



*Typical basic railroad platform*

We know that this platform was constructed about the time the railroad through Catoosa County was completed in 1850 and operated as such, primarily serving Catoosa Springs. On September 19, 1863, General Longstreet of the Army of Northern Virginia began arriving at Catoosa Platform. Longstreet and some 15,000 troops traveled from Virginia down through the Carolinas and up from Atlanta to reinforce General Bragg's Confederate Army of Tennessee in anticipation of a major clash, which finally erupted into the Battle of Chickamauga.



*General Longstreet's Troops Arriving at Catoosa Platform.*

This excerpt is taken from General Longstreet's official report *"Our train reached Catoosa Platform, near Ringgold, about 2 o'clock in the afternoon of September 19. As soon as our horses came up (about 4 o'clock), I started with Colonels Sorrel and Manning, of my staff, to find the headquarters of the commanding general."*

It is well to note that the disembarkation had to occur at Catoosa Platform as the bridge over the creek had been burned and trains could not go all the way to Ringgold.

Not much is known about the "platform" after Longstreet's arrival, but it is easy to speculate that it continued to serve as a makeshift terminal until the burned bridge could be repaired allowing train traffic to proceed to the Ringgold Depot.

The exact location of the "platform" is not known, but a theory will be presented later. We do know that the "platform" was sometimes referred to as "Colonel Ramsey's Platform". This was in reference to a prominent citizen, A.R. Ramsey, who owned land along the W & A, and lived in a home about halfway between Old Stone Church and present day I-75, on the west side of the Calhoun Road (present day US-41). It has been reported that Confederate General Bragg spent an evening there while retreating with the army toward Dalton following the defeat at Missionary Ridge.

The next known printed reference to the "platform" comes from a May 21, 1872, newspaper article published in the Atlanta Constitution which states *"the Western and Atlantic Railroad Company is just finishing up a magnificent Depot at the old Catoosa platform site, for the accommodation of visitors on their way to the Springs. It is well and conveniently arranged with washing, dressing, and sitting rooms, etc."*

We can conclude from this that the "platform" no longer exists, and it had been replaced with a "depot" with multiple rooms on the original "platform" site. It is also noted in this article that a telegraph line is being constructed from the new depot to the Catoosa Springs Resort.





*The New Depot Might Have Looked Like This Depiction from the Era*

On May 16, 1883, a news article in the in the Chattanooga Daily Times was published stating *"the frame Depot and platform at Catoosa Springs station, on the Western and Atlantic Railroad, were destroyed by fire yesterday (Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>) about 12 o'clock. The fire was the work of an incendiary. The loss will be about \$1000 with no insurance. The Depot will not be rebuilt until it is decided whether or not the Springs will be opened."*

The frame depot and platform is now openly referred to as Catoosa Springs Station. At this time the operation of the resort was struggling and the necessity for a depot was solely dependent on the operation of the Catoosa Springs Resort. We can speculate that the fire was a result of arson since the claim is made that the fire resulted from an incendiary.

In July of 1883, an article appeared in the Chattanooga Daily Times under Railroad News stating *"the Depot at Catoosa Springs station which was burned sometimes since will be rebuilt."*

We assume that the depot was indeed rebuilt in 1883 and that it operated until 1893 until the below article was published.

On April 12, 1893, an article was published in the Chattanooga Daily Times *"the Depot at Catoosa station which was burned last Friday night will soon be replaced by a handsome new structure to which a long platform to be used as a promenade will be added the loss on the old station was trifling."*

So, the second depot structure has also fell to fire on April 7, 1893.

A follow up article was published a month later on May 21 in the Chattanooga Daily Times *"the old Catoosa Station on the Western Atlantic Railroad was burned some weeks ago, but a new and more convenient one will soon be erected about half a mile this side of the old site this will make the station much nearer to the Springs (Catoosa)"*

Now we see that the site location of the original Catoosa Platform and two Depots has been abandoned and a new location has been selected a half mile east of the original site.

As we examine the facts we now have, lets first look a chronology:

1850 (+ or -) - Catoosa Platform opens

1863 - Longstreet arrives at Catoosa Platform

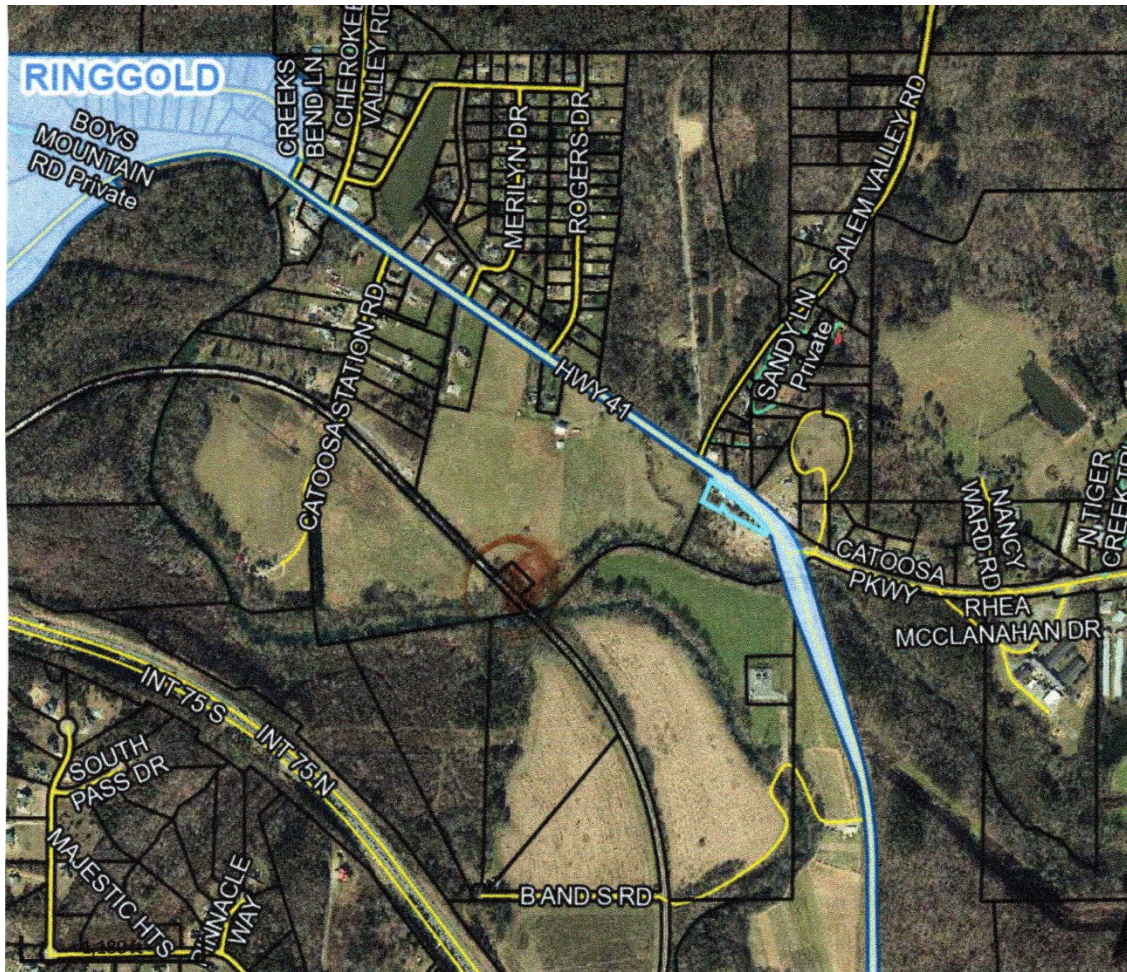
1872 - Depot "A" is built at the old Catoosa Platform site

1883 – Depot "A" burns and is replaced by Depot "B"

1893 – Depot "B" burns and Depot "C" will be built ½ mile east of the previous structures

We know that Depot "C" was built on the W&A near present-day Catoosa Station Road, where the above newspaper article predicted. This is based on the eyewitness recollection of Mr. Joe T. Clark (1911-1981) personally told to his son William Clark, Catoosa County Historian. Mr. Clark remembered the structure which obviously fell into disuse after the resorts closed and was likely torn down.

We use this known location of Depot "C" to look east down the tracks one-half mile for the location of the original Catoosa Platform and two depots.



*Likely Site of Original Catoosa Platform*

This location where the W&A still maintains a right-of-way is shown by the map and located at the junction of Tiger Creek and East Chickamauga Creek. It is also the closest location to Catoosa Springs along the W&A tracks and is very near the Federal Road which provided a route toward Catoosa Springs with only one creek crossing on Tiger Creek between the platform and the resort.

Interesting Note: An ad in the Atlanta Constitution on July 18, 1891, had the W&A Railroad offering round trip tickets from Atlanta to Catoosa Station for \$3.35 round trip. This would be equivalent to \$ 112 today.