

Hook & Eye trip with Georgia Society of Ferroequinologists

November 12, 2006

1. [GNRR: HOOK AND EYE LINE HISTORY](#)

The Georgia Northeastern occupies the old Louisville and Nashville Railroad's "Hook And Eye" line.

In 1854, it was originally chartered as the Ellijay Railroad. By the time the Civil War started seven years later, there was nothing to show for the line other than paperwork. They had mapped out a route from Elizabeth (Marietta), through Canton, Ball Ground, Jasper, Ellijay, to the Ocoee River northwest of Blue Ridge in Ducktown, Tennessee.

In 1859, the name was changed to the Marietta, Canton and Ellijay Railroad, in hopes that having the names in the railroad would help the cities push money towards the railroad by way of stocks, bonds, and securities. It was also perceived that by the time the line was finished, Ducktown would not be a dead end, since two other companies were planning on getting lines into the copper basin. These two lines, the Western North Carolina Railroad and the Cleveland and Ducktown Railroad, would head into North Carolina and Tennessee respectively.

Two years later the Civil War broke out, and nothing was done on the line until five years after the war. The organizers reformed the company, this time under the Marietta and North Georgia name, and broke ground in 1874 when the company received mortgage bonds in the amount of \$15,000 per mile. While at the time that sum was hefty, it was not enough to cover all costs and lack of finances caused delays in the construction. The state wanted to see the line completed, and started furnishing convict labor to assist in the construction. To keep costs to a minimum, the line followed the contour of the land; bypassing expensive cuts, fills, and tunnels, instead giving the line tight curves and steep grades.

Service first began in 1879 when the line was completed to Canton. At that point, people in Canton had lost interest in seeing the line completed any further north. By 1880, General Phillips, the main force behind the railroad, had gotten enough northern investors to help the railroad push northward. A meeting was held by the northern counties, and Gilmer County, Georgia and Cherokee County, North Carolina both invested \$15,000 and \$20,000 cash

respectively. The line eventually reached Jasper in 1883, Ellijay the next year, and two years later made it up to Blue Ridge and Mineral Bluff.

The 'hook' part of 'Hook and Eye' came from just north of Talking Rock, Georgia, where the line went around a small mountain, creating two tight reverse-curves. This feature stayed with the line until the mid 1950's, when L&N cut into the mountain, taking a shorter and easier managed route. The 'hook' stayed tied into the line and useable, however, until the early 1980's, when the Appalachian Development Highway 515 was built-Georgia SR APD 515. The four-lane highway paved over the 14-degree western most curve. In 2001, the switches leading to the hook were cut-out, the only trace that it existed are two steel paths leading into an overgrown pasture.

At the time, plans had changed to take the line up into Murphy, North Carolina instead of Ducktown, Tennessee. In 1886, the owners of the Marietta and North Georgia railroad started building south out of Knoxville, up the Hiwassee Gorge to meet the Marietta and North Georgia railroad in Murphy at the state line. However, they were unable to secure 500 feet of land in Georgia leading up to the river, so the owners stopped where they ended and placed a depot. They amended the agreement with the city of Knoxville- that would have given \$275,000 upon connection of the two lines if finished by July 1st, 1890- that they could meet up at the state line in what is now Copperhill. Tennessee and McCayesville, Georgia.

The Marietta and North Georgia started a new main line out of Blue Ridge, heading up along the Toccoa river into McCayesville and Copperhill, while the Knoxville Southern was heading down the gorge. Because the time limit was quickly approaching, and while they had met (there was a small problem of about 200 vertical feet they had to reconcile), the crews created a switchback - track that when looked down from the sky looked like a 'W' with extended strokes. The strokes, or spurs, only had room for an engine and three or four cars. A train would have to separate, the engine pull into one spur, throw the switch, and push back to the next spur, where that switch was thrown, and then went back through the process to get the rest of the train. Once connected, the Knoxville and Southern was consolidated into the

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Marietta and North Georgia Railroad, and by 1896, the railroad was bankrupt.

The railroad was renamed to the Atlanta Knoxville and Northern, and drew attention of the Louisville and Nashville (L&N) Railroad. It was eager to keep the railroad going so it would not fall into the hands of its rival, the Southern Railway. To that end, L&N loaned its engineers to the Atlanta Knoxville and Northern to re-grade the line up the gorge. The switchbacks were cut out, getting replaced by full and three-quarter turn around a small hill, looping back under itself on a high wooden trestle. This is where the 'eye' of 'Hook and Eye' came from.

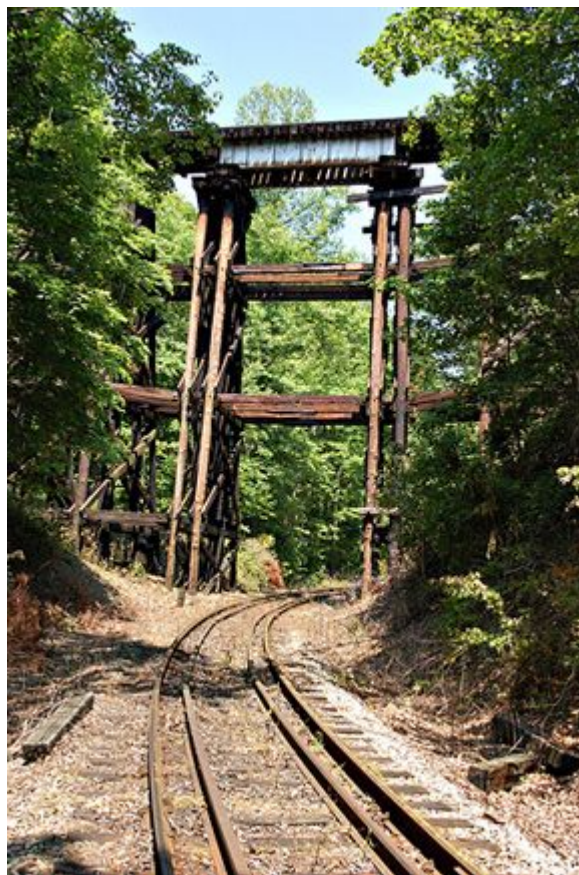
L&N took over the line in 1902, and operated it until 1983. The success of L&N and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad kept it operational until formation of the Seaboard System Lines. In 1906, the line's operating cost was too great, with the Pullman passenger cars and heavy steam engines making the tight curves and steep grades almost unmanageable. L&N created a bypass line, from Etowah, Tennessee to Cartersville, Georgia along what is now US Highway 411. Once the straighter, flatter 'New Line' was finished, the Hook and Eye line was used for freight runs, picking up commodities between Elizabeth and Etowah, and switching them at either end's interchange.

Once CSX bought the L&N Railroad company in 1983, it used the line up until 1987, when the line was sold to investors from Tennessee, which included the 41 miles between Marietta and Tate, and leasing 31 miles from Tate to Ellijay. The line north of Ellijay to Blue Ridge and McCayesville was left unused. The state bought it from CSX to keep the line from becoming destroyed at that time. CSX still operated between Etowah and Copperhill to transport raw materials out of the copper basin. CSX gave up rights to that section of track when the copper mine in Copperhill closed shop in 1989.

The original investors gave the name Georgia Northeastern (GNRR) to the line, and the name still remains. In 1990 the original investors sold all interest in the GNRR to its current owners. In 1996, GNRR leased the rest of the line from Ellijay to McCayesville, cleaned up the tracks, and started the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway. The scenic railroad runs weekend from March to

December, presenting riders with a one-hour long journey along the Toccoa river to McCayesville, where they have an hour and a half to shop and have lunch in the shops downtown before heading back.

The original mainline out of Blue Ridge up to Murphy is still present up to a small town named Mineral Bluff, about 5 miles northeast of Blue Ridge. The remaining line into Murphy was torn up around 1980. The line past Copperhill remains intact, yet unused. The loop, a rather significant feat of engineering and construction, still remains as well. There are negotiations with the state of Tennessee to secure the line for a future scenic railway and to preserve the loop, but nothing has become of the talks yet.



At the "Eye" of the Louisville & Nashville, the track circled Bald Mountain about one and a half times before crossing over itself with a 60-foot high trestle. (Patrick Henson collection)

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2. EASTERN TENNESEE PLACES TO VISIT

This is something I have always wanted to see, but I have never been there.

It is called the Hiwassee Loop. It is on what is referred to as the Old Main Line south (loosely defined) of Etowah TN and comes back into the current main line at Marietta GA. It is in Polk County, Tennessee but jam up against the border with Cherokee County, North Carolina.

This was the original main line of the L&N from Knoxville south to Atlanta. This apparently strange routing was because of the copper mines east of Ducktown TN. I believe the original was built in the 1880s and originally there was a switchback instead of a loop. The loop was built in the late 1890's so that trains did not have to be broken up into short cuts of cars to go north toward Knoxville. In the early 1900's the current main line was built between Etowah and Cartersville GA.

"The Old Line was idled in 2001 after freight traffic halted. CSX then announced plans to abandon the line and salvage the materials. At that time local governments and civic groups from Southeast Tennessee came together and formed the Old Line Railroad Coalition for the purpose of preserving the line and the corridor."

The line is currently owned by the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association.

It is on the south side of the Hiwassee River about 2 miles downstream of Apalachia Dam. It is located on the inside of a close to 90 degree bend in the river. The nearest highway to it is Tennessee State Highway 68. The loop lacks about 45 degrees of turning two complete circles. It climbs in a clockwise direction.

Don't know how you will be coming at it, but you can find Hwy. 68 from US 64 at Ducktown TN. Go north on 68. You will cross the railroad four times before you get to the Hiwassee River. It is about 15 miles to Farners. Actually make that somewhere between 15 and 20. I am looking at the area on Mapquest and guessing, and 15 is a little over the straight line distance. Roads in this area are anything but straight lines. A few miles

north of Ducktown the track comes up parallel on the west, then crosses the road after about a mile, stays parallel a short distance then veers off to the east. The next crossing is at about 90 degrees and is about 0.2 to 0.4 miles after you pass Turtletown (don't blink, you'll miss it). Then you cross it again at Farners. This crossing is about 2.5 miles from the upper end of the loop. If you turn right about one block before crossing the railroad, you will follow it for about a mile. This road should be marked as the road to Apalachia Dam. If you go away from the railroad and start downhill steeply, you have gone too far. From the point where this road turns away from the tracks the second time, you have about 1.2 miles to the upper end of the loop.

If you stay on Hwy 68 and cross the tracks in Farners, and it appears that this is an overpass, after about 1.2 to 1.4 miles of going mostly downhill, you will cross the track one more time at the south end of the Hiwassee River bridge. At this point, you are about 1.3 mile from the lower end of the loop. It appears on the map that just after crossing the bridge there is a road that turns right and follows the river. This is about a 140 degree right. Take it and stay close to the river when it forks and it should take you to where you can see part of the loop, but you will be on the other side of the river from the track. It appears that you should be across from the loop when you are about 1.5 to 2.5 miles from the Hwy. 68 turnoff. If you go to the point that you turn away from the river and start climbing, you have gone too far. If you really want to get up close and personal with it I think you would have to park before you cross the river and walk the tracks. I have no idea what the conditions are. You may be going through chest high brush inhabited with ticks, chiggers, and miscellaneous biting and stinging insects, not to mention the possibility or rattlers and other snakes. Or, it may be clear and easily walkable. I just do not know.

Maybe some more later.

George

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3. LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD



Chartered in Kentucky in 1850, the L&N was one of the South's early railroads and one of only a very few to grow into a major system without a name change. The name survived into the 1980s, when it was

abandoned as part of the organization of [CSX](#).



L&N's 185-mile main line between Louisville, Ky. and Nashville, Tenn. opened in 1859. It became the last link in a chain of southern

antebellum railroads connecting the Ohio River with the Atlantic by way of Louisville, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Augusta, and Charleston.

In 1880 L&N acquired 55% of the stock of the [Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway](#), which had opened a line from Nashville to Chattanooga in early 1854.

In 1881, the L&N and the [Central of Georgia](#) jointly leased the [Georgia Railroad](#).

In 1890 NC&St.L leased the [Western & Atlantic](#) from the State of Georgia, giving it, and the L&N, a major presence in the Peach State.

[Atlantic Coast Line](#) gained control of L&N in 1902 by purchasing all of the L&N stock owned by financier J.P. Morgan, who had managed to acquire a majority interest in the company. L&N continued to operate independently, however, with no significant change in management.

L&N acquired the [Atlanta, Knoxville and Northern Railway](#) in 1902. This route between Marietta, Georgia and Etowah, Tennessee was often called the "Hook and Eye Line" because of a pair of unusual engineering features along the route. The "Hook" was a tight double reverse curve at Tate Mountain, Georgia between

Whitestone and Talking Rock. The "Eye" is an [8000-foot loop](#) that climbs Bald Mountain near Farner, Tennessee, encircling it almost twice before crossing back over itself and turning south towards Georgia. It was built in 1898 to replace a set of switchbacks.

L&N constructed the line between Cartersville, Ga. and Etowah, Tenn. in 1906, primarily to bypass the mountainous Hook & Eye Line. The latter became known as the Etowah Old Line.

NC&St.L was merged into L&N in 1957.

In 1967, L&N's parent Atlantic Coast Line merged with [Seaboard Air Line Railroad](#) to form [Seaboard Coast Line Railroad](#). L&N meanwhile continued its separate existence. From 1972 until the early 1980s, the railroad also used the marketing name Family Lines System jointly with SCL, Georgia Railroad, Clinchfield Railroad, [Atlanta & West Point Rail Road](#), and [Western Railway of Alabama](#) (the last two also operating under the nickname West Point Route). This confusing arrangement ended when SCL and Chessie System merged in 1980 to form [CSX Corporation](#).

[1895 map](#) (316K)

[1908 map](#) (107K)

[1941 map](#) (45K)

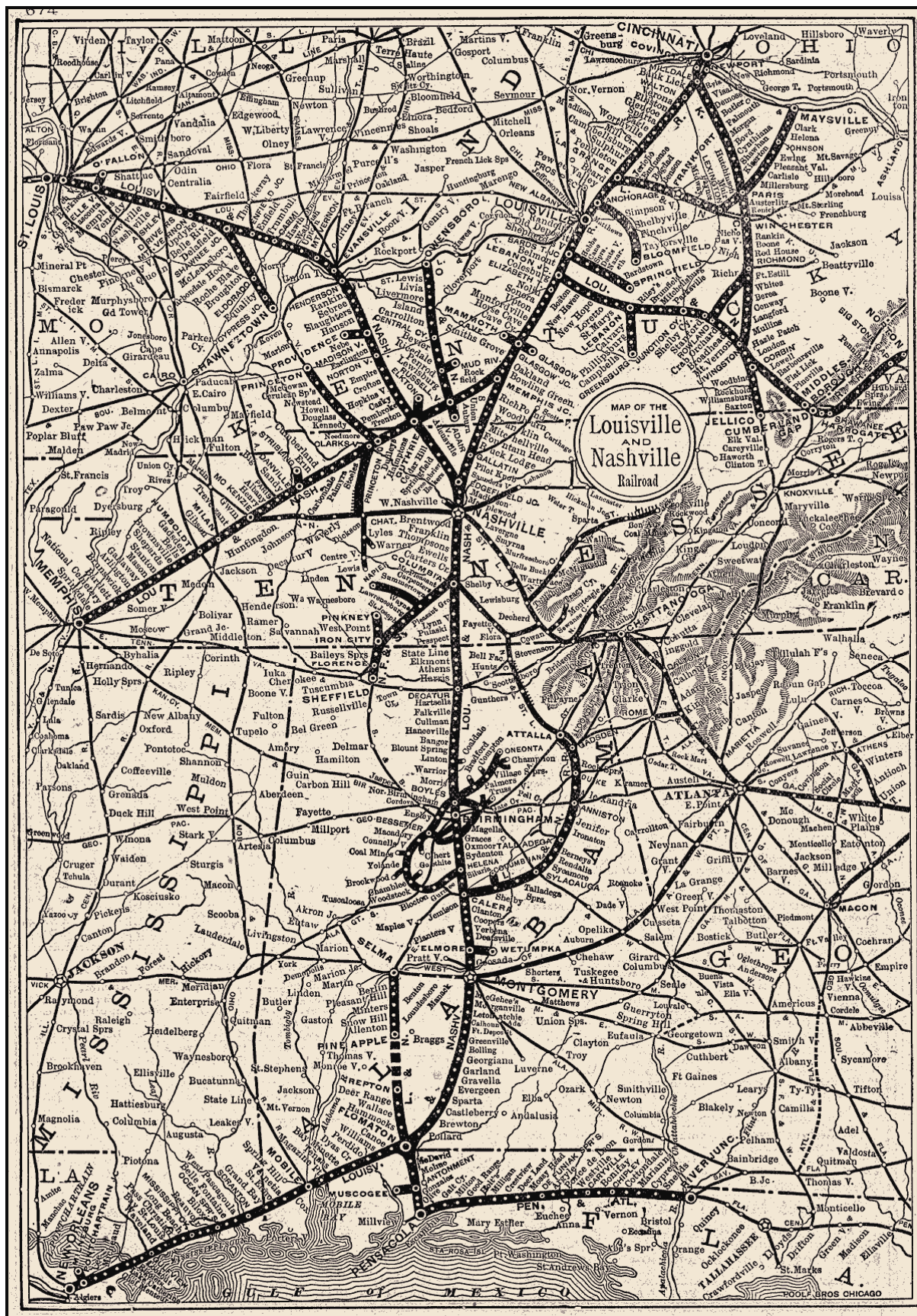
More info at [Louisville & Nashville Railroad Historical Society](#)

The above info and maps were found on: [Georgia's Railroad History & Heritage](#). Copyright, Steve Storey.

Table 58.
ETOWAH AND MARIETTA.

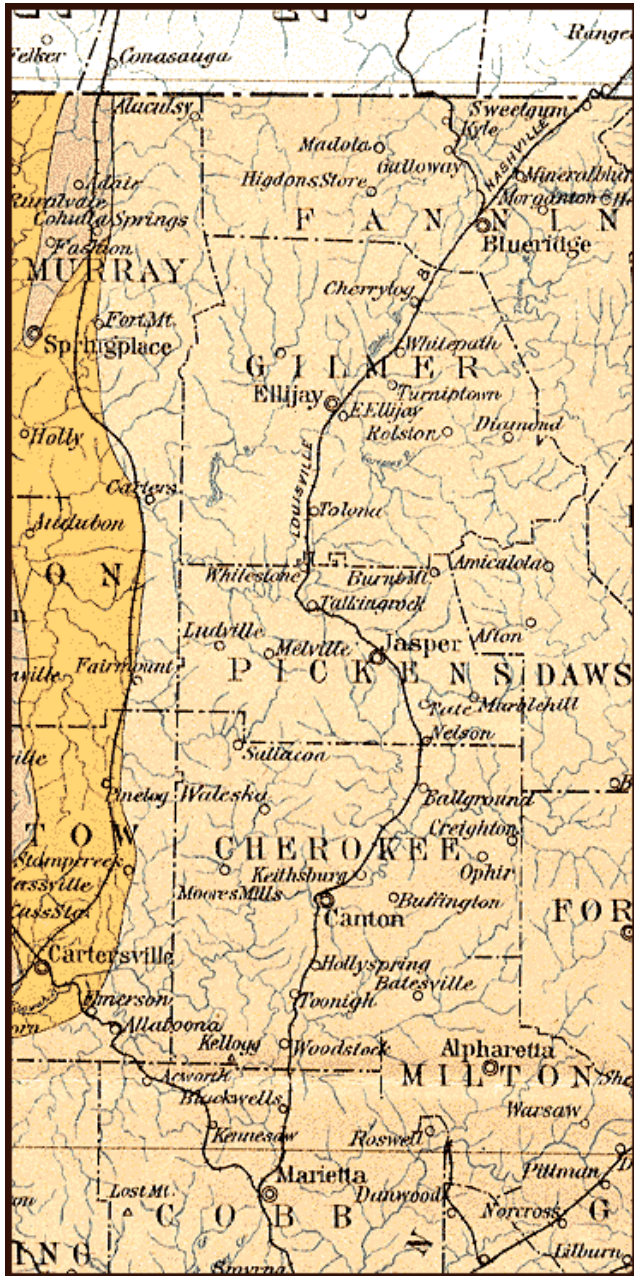
Mls.	STATIONS.
0	.....Etowah.....
32	.....Farner.....
43	.....Ducktown.....
48	.....Copperhill.....
61	.....Blue Ridge.....
77	.....Elijay.....
87	.....Whitestone.....
97	.....Jasper.....
102	.....Tate.....
105	.....Nelson.....
109Ball Ground.....
120Canton.....
126Holly Springs.....
133Woodstock.....
144Marietta.....

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1895 Map

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1.

1908 Map

The L&N's Old Line in Georgia is shown in the center of the map. To the left, running north from Cartersville, is the new line.

From 1908 *Geological Map of Georgia*.

1941 Map

From 1941 Map of the Louisville & Nashville R.R. by Poole Bros., Chicago.

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4. LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE ODDS AND ENDS

Rail Excursion and Tourist Lines

- **[Blue Ridge Scenic Railway](#), Blue Ridge.** Passengers take a 26-mile round trip along the scenic Toccoa River between [Blue Ridge](#) and [McCaysville](#). The route follows an old [Louisville & Nashville](#) line. (241 Depot Street in Blue Ridge). Here's a description of [a trip on the train](#) by railfan Randy Golden.
- **Historic St. Marys Railway.** Georgia's newest tourist train runs between the coastal towns of Kingsland and St. Marys. Motive power is provided by an F-unit built by EMD in the 1940s. The train leaves at 9:00am, 12:30pm and 3:00pm daily. Phone: 866-386-8729 or 912-576-2777. [Photos](#) at RailPictures.net. (Note: recent reports indicate that this tourist railway has suspended operations.)
- **[SAM Shortline](#), Cordele.** The popular SAM Shortline excursion railroad runs from I-75 at Cordele to Plains.
- **[Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum](#), Chattanooga.** TVRR operates special excursions over [Chattooga and Chickamauga Railway](#) lines in northwest Georgia.
- **[Stone Mountain Scenic Railroad](#), Stone Mountain.** Vintage FP-7 diesels circle the base of the 800-foot granite monolith over a five-mile route built in 1962. Stone Mountain Park is located 16 miles east of Atlanta on U.S. Highway 78 and is open year-round, 6am to midnight.

Railroad Museums

- **[Southeastern Railway Museum](#), Duluth.** Extensive collection of railroad equipment on display. SRM [website](#).
- **[Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History](#), Kennesaw.** Houses the famed Civil War locomotive *General* as well as

locomotives built by the Glover Machine Works of nearby Marietta.

- **[Roundhouse Railroad Museum](#) (Central of Georgia Shops), Savannah.** This National Historic Landmark site is now the State Museum of Railroad History.
- **[Tallulah Falls Railroad Museum](#), Rabun Gap.** Exhibits tell the story of the Tallulah Falls Railway which once ran through Rabun Gap. Also, an operating narrow gauge train built by students of the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School.
- **[Roosevelt Railroad Museum](#), Griffin.** A railroad motorcar pulls visitors over Southern Railway tracks traveled many times by FDR on his way to and from Warm Springs. Also steam engines and other exhibits.

See also [Steam Locomotives on Display](#).

Rail-Trails

- **[Silver Comet Trail](#).** Named for Seaboard's Birmingham-Atlanta-New York passenger train, a streamlined member of the railroad's famous "Silver Fleet." The trail winds through much of Polk, Paulding, & Cobb counties on the abandoned Seaboard rail bed.
- **[McQueen's Island Trail](#).** A 6-mile trail on Central of Georgia's old Savannah-Tybee line.
- **[Moultrie Trail](#), Moultrie.** Also known as Tom White Linear Park, this 5-mile trail was built on an abandoned rail line on the south side of Moultrie. (South Main Street in downtown Moultrie. Lower Meigs Road to Municipal Airport).
- **[S&S Greenway](#).** A planned 7-mile bike and pedestrian trail from Statesboro to Brooklet on the bed of the long-abandoned [Savannah & Statesboro Railway](#). In 2006, Georgia DOT provided \$300,000 in Transportation Enhancement funds for the trail.

Railroad Tunnels

- **Chetoogeeta Mountain Tunnel, Tunnel Hill.** The 1,477-foot Western & Atlantic Railroad tunnel was completed in 1849-50. Beside it is a newer tunnel completed in 1928 and still in use by CSX Railroad. [Photos](#). (At town of Tunnel Hill, northwest of Dalton).
- **Silver Comet Trail Tunnel, Rockmart area.** An 800-ft. concrete-lined tunnel through Brushy Mountain built by Seaboard Air Line Railway in the early 1900s. It was abandoned by the railroad in 1988. It now serves the [Silver Comet Trail](#), a 38-mile rail-trail on the Seaboard's abandoned right-of-way. (Off U.S. 278 at Paulding/Polk County line).

Railroad Bridges, Trestles, Viaducts

- [Etowah River bridge](#), **Cartersville**. The stone piers of the old Western & Atlantic Railroad bridge stand upstream of the current bridge, built in 1944.
- [Central of Georgia bridge](#), **Rome**. Preserved rail bridge in downtown Rome.
- [Central of Georgia bridge](#), **Savannah**. This railroad bridge dates back to the early 1850s.
- [Wells Viaduct](#), **Toccoa**. Amtrak's *Crescent* crosses this sky high bridge over the North Fork of the Broad River.
- [Tallulah Falls bridge](#), **Tallulah Falls**. Piers from a 1913 railway bridge.
- [L&N Overpass at Pine Log](#). A rail bridge at a scenic spot in Bartow County.
- [Humpback bridges](#). Fewer and fewer of these will be seen as the years go by.

Railroad Office Buildings

Several interesting old buildings around Georgia once housed [railroad company offices](#). Here's a sampling.

The Great Locomotive Chase

On April 12, 1862, a band of raiders under the command of James J. Andrews stole the Western & Atlantic Railroad locomotive "General" at Big Shanty, now Kennesaw, Georgia. Andrews and his men intended to race north to safety while burning railroad bridges along the way. They didn't make it.

- **The "General," Kennesaw.** The General has been preserved and is on display at the town where Andrews stole it. [Website](#).
- **The "Texas," Atlanta.** The Texas also remains in existence. It can be seen at the Cyclorama in Atlanta's Grant Park. [Website](#).
- **The end of the chase, Ringgold.** Two miles north of Ringgold a monument marks the spot where the chase ended.
- **The details.** Several websites tell the story of Andrews Raid, so there's no need to repeat it here. In particular, check out [andrewsraid.com](#) and [ngeorgia.com](#).

Street Railways

- [Americus Electric Car No. 2](#), **Americus**. The first trolley in town became a kitchen for local prisoners, then a lake cottage.
- ["Toonerville Trolley"](#) **St. Marys**. This curious little vehicle traveled on the St. Marys Railroad before being incorporated into a house.
- [Inman Park Trolley Barn](#), **Atlanta**. Victorian-era maintenance building for Atlanta's first streetcar line.

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Train-Watching Sites

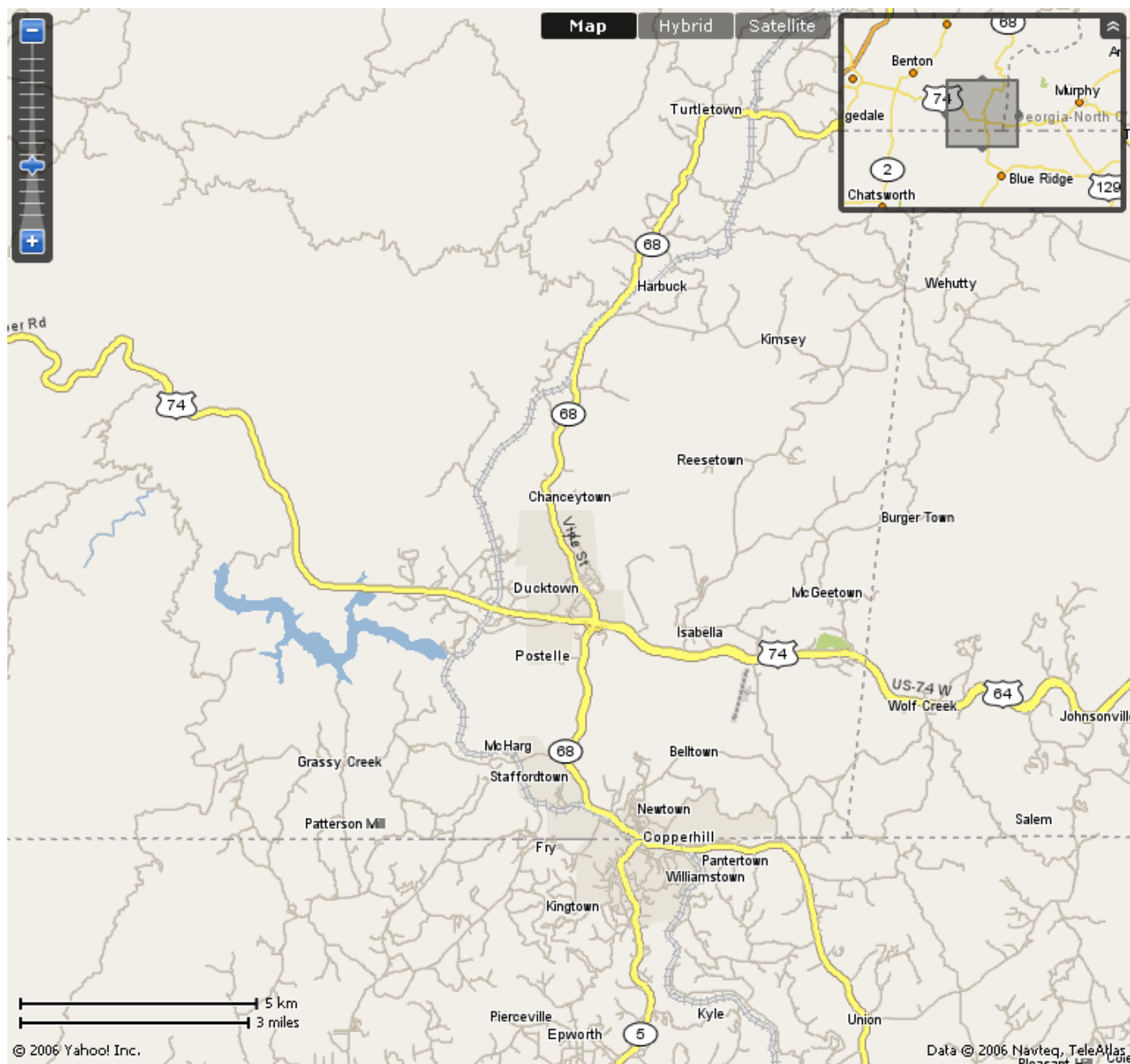
- [Folkston Funnel Train-Watching Platform](#), **Folkston**. Up to sixty trains a day come through the southeast Georgia town of Folkston.
- [Manchester Train-Watching Platform](#), **Manchester**. Located on an important CSX rail junction, Manchester has a platform for viewing the rail action.
- [Dalton area train-watching](#). Info on rail action in Whitfield County, from Dalton/Whitfield County Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- [Cartersville train-watching](#). Friendship Plaza in downtown Cartersville is a fine place to see a few of the 50 trains that pass through here each day. (Info from Cartersville/Bartow County Convention and Visitors Bureau.)

Other

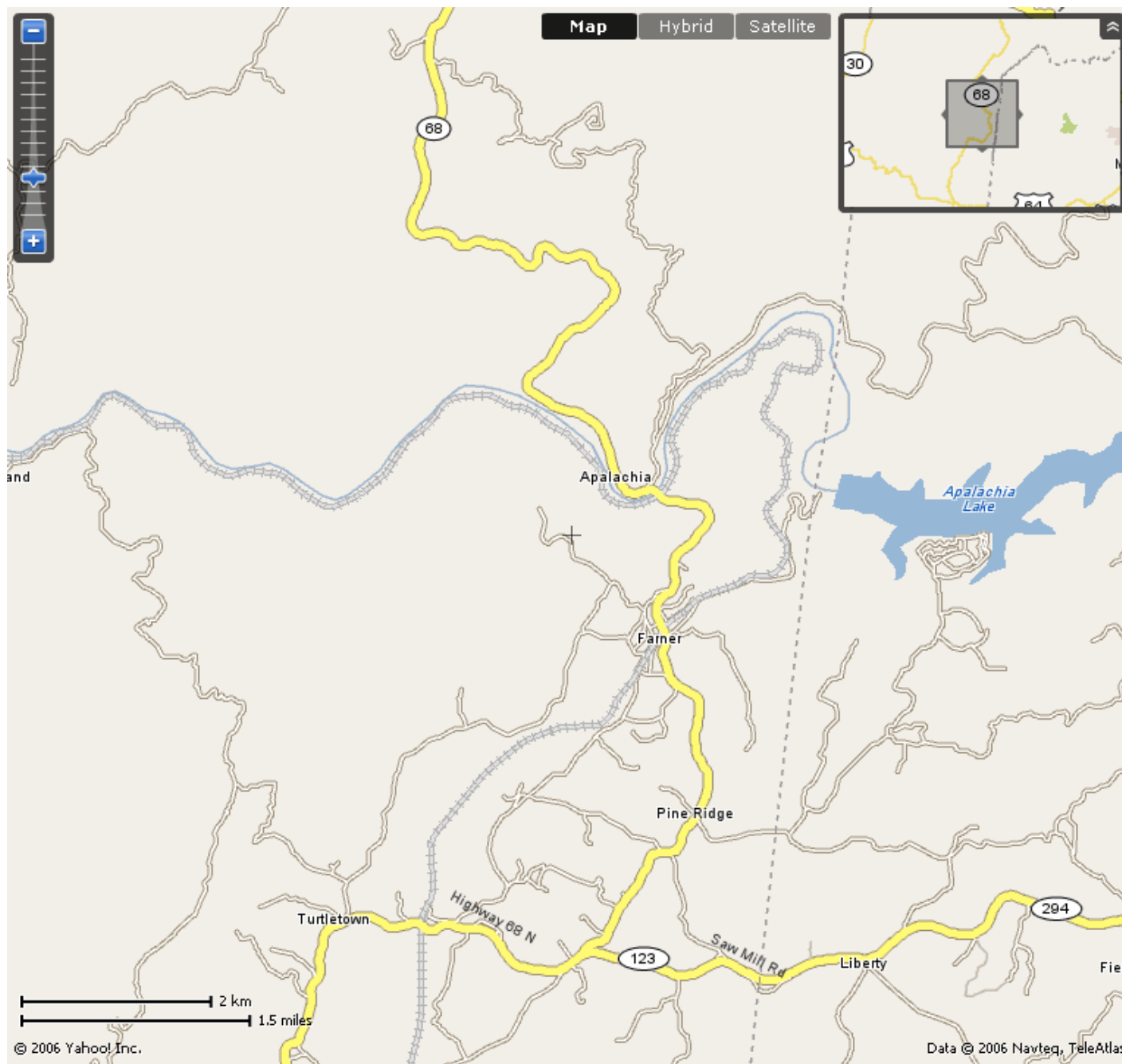
- [Allatoona Pass](#), **Cartersville area**. Dug in the 1840s for the Western & Atlantic Railroad, it was the scene of a bloody Civil War battle.
- [Summerville turntable](#), **Summerville**. In Summerville's downtown Dowdy Park, excursion trains of the [Tennessee Valley Railroad](#) are using a newly installed turntable. Built around 1916, the turntable was moved from Alabama to Summerville with the assistance of federal Transportation Enhancement funds in 2002-2003. (At the other end of the state, Savannah's [Roundhouse Railroad Museum](#) also maintains an operating turntable.)

- [Samuel Spencer statue](#), **Atlanta**. Memorial to the first president of the Southern Railway, sculpted by Daniel Chester French in 1909.
- [Zero Milepost](#). This stone milepost marks the southern end of the Western & Atlantic Railroad and the beginning of Atlanta.
- [Coaling towers](#). A few are still standing.
- [Interlocking towers](#). At least one is still standing.

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