

# GEORGIA RAILROAD

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# GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)

The Georgia Railroad Company (GAR) was chartered December 21, 1833, by a group of Athens citizens led by James Camak. Their goal was to build a railroad from Athens to Augusta and its port on the Savannah River. The company changed its name to Georgia Railroad & Banking Company in 1836. This amendment to the company moniker would prove prophetic; when the banking side of the business eventually proved more financially rewarding, the company leased its railroad operations to others.

Construction began in 1835, but it started in Augusta, rather than Athens, and proceeded westward to a spot beyond Crawfordville that would become known as Union Point. By the time the route to Athens was completed at the end of 1841, the State of Georgia's Western & Atlantic Railroad (W&A) project was well underway, with surveys on the newly planned route between Chattanooga and the Chattahoochee River commencing as early as 1837. That same year, the surveyors positioned the southern terminus at the site of present day downtown Atlanta, where the community of Marthasville was founded in 1842. On December 23, 1842, the first train ran from Marthasville north to Marietta.

The W&A's initiation gave impetus to the revision of the GAR's original route plans. Working in close cooperation with the state to help make the W&A project, and railroading in general, a success, the company soon began construction of a westward extension to Marthasville, departing

**Other Names:** "Stone Mountain Route"

**NR Recommendation:** Eligible

**Period of Significance:** 1833-1982

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active, Inactive, or Abandoned, some sections adapted or planned for use as rail-trails, and some segments repurposed as right-of-way for surface streets)

**Current Owner:** CSX Transportation

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Acquisitions, Subsidiaries, and Affiliates:** Macon & Augusta Railroad; Union Point & White Plains Railroad; Lexington Terminal Railroad; Elberton & Eastern Railroad; Washington & Lincolnton Railroad; Walton/Monroe Railroad

**Successors/Lesseees:** Central of Georgia; Louisville & Nashville Railroad; Atlantic Coast Line; Seaboard Coast Line; Seaboard System Railroad; CSX Transportation; Georgia Woodlands Railroad; Great Walton Railroad

**Mainline and Main Branch Divisions:**

Augusta to Atlanta via Thomson, Crawfordville, Union Point, Greensboro, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Stone Mountain, and Decatur

**Athens Branch Division:** Union Point to Athens via Crawford

**Macon Branch Division:** Camak (Warrenton vicinity) to Macon via Sparta and Milledgeville

**Branch Lines:**

**Washington Branch:** Barnett (Crawfordville vicinity) to Washington via Sharon

**Monroe Branch:** Social Circle to Monroe

**Affiliated Feeder Lines:**

**Union Point & White Plains Railroad:** Union Point to White Plains via Siloam

**Lexington Terminal Railroad:** Crawford to Lexington

**Elberton & Eastern Railroad:** Washington to Elberton via Tignall

**Washington & Lincolnton Railroad:** Washington to Lincolnton





*Union Point*

from the original mainline to Athens, and giving rise to a new town there called Union Point. The 39-mile long Athens branch, stretching north and northwest from Union Point to the GAR's originally planned destination, was completed in December of 1841. However, the Athens branch operated with horse drawn cars until 1847. Originally built using five-foot gauge track, it was rebuilt to standard gauge in 1886.

The western branch to Marthasville was completed almost four years later, in September of 1845, the same year that regular train service also began on the W&A. Marthasville was soon renamed Atlanta and would quickly grow in size and scope. The GAR likewise underwent a change from its original identity, for its 171-mile long Augusta-Atlanta connection almost immediately became the GAR's mainline. This major shift in the company's principal focus demoted both the status of the route to Athens and Athens' originally projected prominence as the railroad's intended westernmost



*Crawford depot*

end point. Perhaps the key factor in the elevated importance of the new western terminal in Atlanta was the critical link the GAR now played in a through route that was being developed across the southern states from Charleston to Memphis, and therefore from the Atlantic coast overland to the Mississippi River. This contiguous route was assembled as a network of the connected mainlines of multiple railroad companies. The route was formed by the South Carolina Railroad (from Charleston to Augusta), the GAR, the W&A (from Atlanta to Chattanooga), and the Memphis & Charleston (from Chattanooga west to Memphis).

Early on, and coincident with the redirection of the GAR's mainline to Atlanta, Augustans gained control from Athens interests, with Augusta citizen John Pendleton King serving as president of the railroad from 1841 to 1878. The railroad's original chief engineer was John Edgar Thomson, who assumed that post in 1834. He is credited by some as first suggesting





*Bridge over Monument Street, Crawfordville*

a variant of the name Atlanta. The city of Thomson, in McDuffie County, was named for him. Thomson later became chief engineer of the new Pennsylvania Railroad and, in 1852, its president.

The GAR was one of the four major antebellum railroads

in Georgia that provided direct service to Atlanta at the outbreak of the Civil War. During the hostilities, the GAR provided a critical link in the Confederacy's rail system between Atlanta and Virginia, distributing goods and materials, supplying rations and ordnance, and furnishing troop transport. The only alternate routes were by way of Chattanooga or Savannah. The GAR was relatively well maintained and was capable of hauling 800 tons of freight per day, which put it in the top tier of Confederate rail lines in 1863.

Soon after, on July 22, 1864, the railroad's mainline was the focal point of the Battle of Atlanta, which was fought by opposing forces occupying grounds astride the GAR, in the vicinity of the neighborhoods now known as Little Five Points, Reynoldstown, Inman Park, and others. During and after the eventual capture of Atlanta in September of 1864, Union General William T. Sherman's forces ultimately uprooted and destroyed almost all of the western half of the GAR's tracks between Atlanta and the Oconee River east of Madison, as reported by historian Robert C. Black III in *The Railroads of Georgia in the Confederate War Effort*. Most of the company's shops, depots, bridges and trestles along this section were left in ruins, leaving only the railbed's cuts and embankments.

The collapse of the Confederacy also ended the use of slaves to construct and maintain Southern railroads. The Georgia Railroad & Banking



*Trail Creek Trestle, Athens*

Company had owned at least 162 slaves, according to documentation found by researchers in 2005 and earlier.

Nevertheless, after the war's end, the railroad's mainline was rebuilt and expansion soon followed. The 78-mile branch line between Camak and Macon, completed in 1873 by the Macon & Augusta Railroad, was merged into the GAR system in 1878. This branch, which the GAR had leased in 1867 while it was still under construction, was nicknamed the Macon Road.

The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company also had made early investments in the Atlanta & West Point Rail Road and the Western Railway of Alabama, which together connected Atlanta and Montgomery. By the 1880s, the company owned a controlling interest in the former and a substantial interest in the latter and, as a result, had created a small but important rail system that spanned the width of the Georgia Piedmont and reached as far west as Alabama's capital city of Montgomery.





Social Circle depot



Covington depot

In 1881, the GAR was leased for 99 years to Colonel William M. Wadley, president of the Central of Georgia Railway. Wadley then jointly assigned the lease of operations over the railroad's lines to the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (LAN) and the Central of Georgia (COG).

In 1883, the lessees acquired controlling interests in the Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad and the Walton Railroad, which ran north to Monroe from its junction with the GAR mainline at Social Circle.

In the 1889 edition of *The Official Railway List*, the Georgia Railroad reported operating 307 miles of railroad with 48 locomotives, 53 passenger cars, and 949 freight and miscellaneous cars. By 1894, these figures had increased to 57 locomotives, 74 passenger cars, and 1,079 freight and miscellaneous cars, operated over the same 307 miles of track.

However, the 1890s turned out to be difficult years for the GAR's lessees. The COG entered receivership in 1892 and the LAN struggled to maintain its independence and secure its territory from stronger rival systems. In 1898, the reorganized COG sold its half-interest in the lease of the Georgia Railroad to the LAN, which then briefly controlled the entire Georgia Railroad system. The following year, the LAN assigned this half-interest to the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL). In 1902, the ACL then gained control of the LAN through purchase of its stock, but allowed it to continue operating independently.

In 1967, the ACL merged with the Seaboard Air Line Railroad to form the Seaboard Coast Line (SCL). Despite the merger involving its parent company, the GAR continued to maintain its separate identity, at least for a while. From 1972 until the early 1980s it was marketed as part of the "Family Lines System," a name used jointly by the SCL and LAN and their subsidiaries, including the GAR, the Clinchfield Railroad, the Atlanta & West Point, and the Western Railway of Alabama (the last two previously operating jointly under their own shared nickname, the West Point Route).

In 1982-1983, the SCL and the LAN were fully amalgamated to form the Seaboard System Railroad, which quickly absorbed the subsidiary GAR. In 1986, the Seaboard System became CSX Transportation.

## ACQUISITIONS, SUBSIDIARIES, AND BRANCH LINES

Throughout most of the history of its development and operation, the GAR was defined by and known for its principal mainline from Augusta to Atlanta, but the railroad also included a feeder system of numerous branch lines, subsidiaries, and closely controlled or affiliated lines. Typically,



these branches departed from the east-west oriented mainline, and stretched away on general north-south axes of alignment. They not only facilitated access to the mainline from throughout the Piedmont region of northeast Georgia, they also provided direct and easy connections for previously existing cities and towns that were located to the north or south of the GAR mainline. Examples of such cities and town, already established prior to the railroad's development but bypassed by the mainline, were Washington, Lexington, Athens, White Plains, Monroe, Sparta, Milledgeville, and Macon.

The branches, arranged almost like limbs off a trunk, were variously referred to in the GAR's organizational terminology as divisions or branches, if they were officially owned and operated by the company. The mainline was sometimes referred to as the "Main Stem" in internal GAR documents, such as the company's annual report for Fiscal Year 1900. Status as a division was reserved for the two separate branches to Macon and Athens, those two consisting of relatively significant mileage and numerous station stops along their routes. Some branches were organized as subsidiaries, such as the Monroe Railroad and the Union Point & White Plains Railroad, but they were typically operated by the GAR, utilizing GAR rolling stock, equipment, and perhaps even employees. Others, such as the Elberton & Eastern Railroad and the Washington & Lincolnton Railroad, were physically connected to and closely affiliated with the GAR, usually through majority stock ownership by the GAR, but they maintained their own corporate identities and management, and usually their own cars and locomotives, although some sharing of equipment doubtlessly occurred.

An official timetable published for the GAR, with a schedule current as of December 9, 1917, listed the route and timetable for the "Main Line," as well as the other divisions, branches, and subsidiaries that were presented and defined by the GAR as being integral components of their system. The other system lines officially recognized by the railroad in this timetable were the following: Macon Division; Monroe Railroad; Union Point & White Plains Railroad; Lexington Terminal Railroad; Athens Division; and Washington Branch.



*Decatur depot*

Schedules for the Elberton & Eastern Railroad and the Washington & Lincolnton Railroad were not included in this timetable; the "Washington & Lincolnton R.R." was noted as being a connection at the northern end of the "Washington Branch." Individual timetables for these two associated railroad companies that were likewise published in 1917 reveal some insight on how the affiliations worked, as their listings of company officers and agents show that the two shared their general manager and their auditor, as well as their general offices in Washington.

### **Macon & Augusta Railroad (MCAG)**

After receiving its charter in 1859, the Macon & Augusta (MCAG) began building a rail line from Macon towards Augusta, but progress was slowed by the Civil War and Reconstruction. The 1869-70 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* reported that only two sections had yet been opened, those being the 22-mile link between Macon and Milledgeville and the 8-mile segment from Warrenton to Mayfield.



Using up to 200 convicts who were forced to grade the unbuilt portion of the line, contractor Grant, Alexander & Company finally brought it to completion by 1873. The company, established by John T. Grant, his son William Grant, and Thomas Alexander, had acquired a lease of the state's entire penitentiary and all of its prisoners in 1869.

At Warrenton, the northern terminus, the railroad connected with what had previously been the Warren Branch of the Georgia Railroad, which then joined the mainline at Camak. From there, trains could proceed the remaining 40 miles to Augusta.

The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company leased the use of the MCAG in 1867, well before its completion, and proceeded to buy it outright in 1880. Thereafter, the MCAG was consolidated into regular GAR operations as the "Macon Road," also sometimes referred to as the "Macon Division."

#### Walton Railroad/Monroe Branch Railroad (WALT)

The ten-mile long Monroe Railroad, connecting Monroe to the GAR's mainline at Social Circle, was completed in 1880 as the Walton Railroad (WALT). Despite initially being incorporated as a separate entity, the line was operated by the GAR, which had provided \$42,500 for its construction.

Soon after the WALT opened, COG president William M. Wadley acquired a majority of its stock. Wadley also acquired a lease of the GAR itself, thereby giving the Social Circle to Monroe line an integrated status as the Monroe branch line of the GAR.

Last, Wadley obtained control of the Gainesville Jefferson & Southern Railroad (GJ&S), which ran north from Monroe to Gainesville, thereby piecing together a through route from the GAR at Social Circle all the way north to Gainesville.

In 1884, Wadley's successors officially consolidated the GJ&S and the WALT, but in 1897 the combined enterprise entered receivership and was sold in 1904. Most of the combined railroad was sold to Savannah investors, who reorganized it as the Gainesville Midland Railway. However, William Wadley's efforts at creating operational coordination and logical termini

in the region were, in this case, partially undone, as the WALT was sold separately to Jacob Phinizy. Phinizy once again incorporated the Social Circle to Monroe line as the Monroe Railroad.

The line is still intact and in service. Since 1987, these ten miles of track have been operated by a short line railroad company called the Great Walton Railroad, whose offices are located in Social Circle. The Great Walton Railroad is associated with the Hartwell Railroad and The Athens Line short lines.

#### Union Point & White Plains Railroad (UPWP)

Chartered in 1886, the Union Point & White Plains Railroad (UPWP) began operating from Union Point, on the GAR mainline, south through Siloam to White Plains in 1889. From its earliest years, the 13-mile line was controlled by the GAR, to the point that the railroad served as a de facto branch line, and is outlined as such by an official GAR system timetable from



*Embankment at Alcovy, Newton County*





*Atlanta freight depot*

December 9, 1917. Since Union Point was also the departure point from the GAR mainline onto the northbound Athens branch line, trains could theoretically travel directly between White Plains and Athens. The line was abandoned in 1927.

### Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT)

Incorporated in 1888, the Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT) opened its four-mile road between Crawford and Lexington on October 1, 1889. At Crawford, the line connected with the GAR's branch line between Union Point and Athens, built in the early 1840s. The railroad included a half-mile spur line southward from Lexington to a quarry of the Blue Granite Company.

The lessees of the GAR acquired the Lexington line in 1900, but it was not until 1917 that they finally took over its operations. The LEXT served as a de facto branch line from the GAR's Athens branch line, or "Athens Division," as it was more formally known; it is notated as a component line of the GAR system by an official timetable from December 9, 1917. This short, dead-end line was abandoned in 1947.

### Augusta Belt Railway

Incorporated in 1896 as a subsidiary of the GAR, the Augusta Belt Railway connected several rail terminals and switch yards in Augusta, by way of six miles of track. The subsidiary company was dissolved in 1975, but the tracks were integrated into the Seaboard Coast Line's main operations; almost all of the trackage is still intact and in service.

### Milledgeville Railway

The Milledgeville Railway was incorporated in February 1896 by the lessees of the GAR to operate the former transit line from Milledgeville to the state mental hospital, located just outside of town on the city's southern edge. With branches or spurs, it totaled about five and a half miles in length. The line was earlier operated by the Milledgeville & Asylum Dummy Railroad Company and the Old Capitol Railway. The Milledgeville Railway purchased the latter at a bankruptcy auction. This short line was abandoned in the 1960s.

### Washington Branch Railroad

Currently operated as the Georgia Woodlands Railroad, established in 1988, the 17-mile long, antebellum line from the GAR's mainline at Barnett to Washington has been known and operated, for most of its existence, as the Washington Branch. The present Georgia Woodlands Railroad has been owned since 1992 by OmniTRAX, a holding company with a collection of multiple short line railroads.

### Elberton & Eastern Railroad (ELBE)

Chartered in June of 1911, the Elberton & Eastern Railroad Company (ELBE) built a 22-mile line from Elberton south to Tignall in 1912-13. As is revealed by its very name, which recognizes Elberton as its principal terminal point, the initial purpose behind its construction, and original emphasis of its service, was to serve as a feeder line to the Seaboard Air Line's mainline route (originally constructed as the Georgia, Carolina & Northern) between Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina.

The emphasis on being a feeder line north from Tignall to Elberton was refocused in late 1916, when lessees of the GAR purchased the ELBE and began to extend it the 13 miles south from Tignall to Washington and a connection with the 17-mile long GAR Washington Branch. It was thought that the resulting assemblage could offer new appeal as a 52-mile long, north-south bridge route between the GAR mainline (at Barnett) from Atlanta to Augusta, and the Atlanta to Charlotte Seaboard Air Line mainline. Attesting to the new influence of the GAR and, by extension, of





*Thomson depot*

Washington over Elberton, is a sequence of the route's official timetables. The first, released by the ELBE in 1918, denotes Washington as the location of the railroad's local offices. By 1929, the railroad's general offices, housing its president/general manager and its freight agent, had been relocated to Augusta, where the headquarters of the GAR were located. Despite this more fully developed utility and market reach, the entire line was abandoned in late 1933 and finally dismantled in 1935.

### Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH)

The Washington & Lincolnton Railroad Company (WASH) was incorporated in 1914, and its 20-mile line between those two namesake towns was completed in 1918. It was financed by the GAR, which connected with the WASH at Washington, at the northern terminus of the Washington Branch from the GAR mainline at Barnett. Despite this affiliation with the GAR, the WASH is not listed as one of the designated branches of the GAR system on an official company timetable released on

December 9, 1917. Instead, it is simply noted as a railroad connection at Washington station. The entirety of this short line railroad, which included stops at the communities of Logan, Quincy, Florence, Metasville, Lovelace, and Langston, was abandoned in 1932.

### Abandonments and Other Changes

The UPWP, built in 1889 and owned by the GAR, was abandoned in 1927.

The 40-mile branch line from Union Point to Athens, built in 1841, was abandoned by Seaboard System in November 1984. The 0.44-mile section from downtown Athens east to the crossing at Old Winterville Road remained in service until 1997.

The MCAG's Macon-Milledgeville section was abandoned in 1985. The Camak-to-Milledgeville section remains in service, in part to deliver coal to Georgia Power's Plant Harllee Branch north of Milledgeville; this route includes some trackage rights on a Norfolk Southern line.

The Washington Branch, an 18-mile line between Barnett and Washington, is now operated by the Georgia Woodlands Railroad.

The 10-mile Monroe Railroad, or WALT, which operated as a branch of the GAR, connecting Monroe to the mainline at Social Circle, is now the Great Walton Railroad.

### System Locations:

#### Georgia Railroad Main Trunk Line (MCAG) Augusta to Atlanta

This seminal Georgia mainline railroad (MAIN) between Augusta and Atlanta follows a winding, but generally west-east oriented course, passing through Thomson, Crawfordville, Union Point, Greensboro, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Stone Mountain, Decatur, and other cities along the route. The line is in heavy use by CSX Transportation.

Also, beginning in 1896, the GAR constructed a six-mile long belt railroad around the western and southern sides of Augusta, thereby bypassing the congested intersections of the multiple railroads from Georgia and South Carolina that convened in downtown and intown. The Augusta



Belt Railway loop linked the GAR mainline at its Harrisonville Yard on the northwestern edge of the city to a junction with the Charleston & Western Carolina mainline at the city's southeastern corner. From the GAR, it traveled southeast through the Turpin Hill and Bethlehem neighborhoods, crossing both the Augusta Southern (later Georgia & Florida) and the COG mainlines, before turning back to the east and northeast to tie into the Charleston & Western Carolina (later Atlantic Coast Line) a short distance west of the Savannah River. The belt railway tracks are still active and in use.

#### **Macon Division Branch Line** (MCAG) Camak (Warrenton vic.) to Macon

This long branch line was purchased from its original developer, the Macon & Augusta Railroad (MCAG), as a complete, fully-fledged route between Macon and the GAR mainline at Camak (or Camak Junction), just north of Warrenton. From Warrenton, the line passed through Mayfield, Sparta, Devereux, Milledgeville, Haddock, and the James community en route to a three-way junction with both the COG and the Macon & Northern (later COG) at the Mogul community. From this small community, the GAR's "Macon Road" actually used trackage rights over the original, antebellum COG mainline to enter Macon itself.

The northern half of the route, from Milledgeville to Camak, is still in full operation by CSX. The southern half, from Mogul to the line's intersection with the COG's Gordon to Eatonton line on the west side of downtown Milledgeville, is now out-of-service. Although its tracks, ties, and ballast have been removed, the right-of-way from Mogul to Milledgeville appears to still be owned by CSX Transportation.

#### **Washington Branch Line** Barnett to Washington

This antebellum branch line was constructed by the GAR, and has thus always been operated as an integral part of the GAR system. From its junction with the mainline at the Barnett community in Warren County, the branch line runs north/northeast through Sharon and the Hillman and Ficklin communities, entering Washington on the western edge of town. Between Barnett and Sharon, the line is now closely paralleled by SR 269/ Barnett Rd. From Sharon north to Washington, the line generally runs



*Trestle over Alcovy River, Newton County*

along the west side of SR 47, except in Washington, where it veers to the northwest to enter the city alongside SR 44. The branch line is now owned and operated by Georgia Woodlands Railroad.

#### **Athens Division Branch Line** Union Point to Athens

This antebellum branch line was constructed by the GAR, and was thus always operated as an integral part of the GAR system. From its junction with the mainline at Union Point, the branch line runs north/northwest through Woodville, Maxeys, and the Stephens and Hutchings communities into Crawford; between Union Point and Crawford, the rail corridor generally runs along the east side of SR 77. Between Crawford and Athens, the line loops up to the north through Arnoldsville and Winterville and then zig-zags westward into Athens. The right-of-way follows the route of Arnoldsville Road/South Main Street into Winterville, and then Spring Valley Road and Winterville Road into Athens. East of Winterville, at the small Dunlap community,



connections were available with the Smithonia & Dunlap Railroad. The entirety of the branch line is now abandoned, but some segments of the right-of-way may still be owned by CSX Transportation.

#### [Lexington Branch Line \(LEXT\) Crawford to Lexington and Shaking Rock](#)

The GAR purchased this short, dead-end line from its original developer, the Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT), but since it never offered any other connections to other railroads at its eastern end, it was always a constituent part of the GAR system. The railroad was initiated to provide rail service to the county seat of Oglethorpe County, Lexington, which had been previously bypassed by the Athens branch. An even shorter, approximately half-mile long spur was then extended southwest from Lexington to the granite quarry at Shaking Rock, but trains would only have run to the quarry on an as-needed basis. The entirety of the branch line is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

#### [White Plains Branch Line \(UPWP\) Union Point to White Plains](#)

The GAR helped develop and fully controlled the short, dead-end railroad branch, which always operated as a subsidiary. Since it never offered any other connections to other railroads at its southern end, it was always a component part of the GAR system. From its junction with the mainline



*Winterville depot*

at Union Point, which was also the point of interchange for the GAR Athens Branch, the branch line traveled, on what was essentially a north-south orientation, through Siloam to White Plains. However, since the railroad followed a winding path to most easily negotiate the area's

topological conditions, long stretches of the route were actually on a northwest-southeast axis. At various points, it ran parallel or close to what is now Cato Road; SR 77/Siloam-Union Point Road, SR 15/77 between Siloam and White Plains, and, last, Eley Road, Crawfordville Road, and East Main Street, on the east side of White Plains. Also in the northeast corner of the outskirts of White Plains, an unpaved county called Railroad Avenue utilizes the former rail right-of-way. The entirety of the branch line is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

#### [Monroe Branch Line \(WALT\) Social Circle to Monroe](#)

The GAR helped develop and originally controlled this railroad branch, which was eventually operated as a subsidiary, after periods of ownership by other railroads. From its junction with the GAR mainline at Social Circle, the branch line traveled, on what was essentially a north-south orientation, north to Monroe. The line generally runs along the west side of SR 11. For decades, the line offered connections at Monroe to both the Bostwick/Greene County Railroad's line between Monroe and Apalachee and the Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad/Gainesville Midland Railway's western leg from Gainesville to Monroe. These possibilities for transfers at the branch's northern end were ended by the closures and abandonments of these two railroad lines, in 1942 and 1947-48, respectively. Now a dead-end branch, the line is now owned and operated by Great Walton Railroad.

#### [Elberton & Eastern Railroad \(ELBE\) Washington to Elberton](#)

The Seaboard Air Line initially helped develop and originally controlled this railroad branch, which, in its earliest incarnation, only extended south from Elberton to Tignall. After the GAR purchased the Elberton & Eastern (ELBE) in 1916 and completed the missing section between Tignall and Washington, it operated as an affiliated feeder line to the GAR's Washington Branch Line. From its junction with the northern end of the GAR branch in Washington, the railroad traveled, along generally a southeast-to-northwest oriented alignment, north to Elberton. The ELBE rail corridor roughly parallels the route of SR 17. In Washington, it also offered connection to the western end of the WASH, which was another affiliated feeder line within



the GAR system. The entirety of the railroad is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

#### Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH) Washington to Lincolnton

The GAR helped finance and develop this short, dead-end railroad branch, which always operated as an affiliated feeder line to the GAR's Washington Branch Line. It also connected to another affiliated feeder line to the GAR system, the ELBE. From its junction with the northern end of the GAR branch in Washington, the railroad traveled along generally a southwest-to-northeast oriented alignment eastward to Lincolnton. The WASH rail corridor roughly parallels the route of County Road 185 through the Metasville and Lovelace communities. The entirety of the railroad is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

#### Milledgeville Railway Milledgeville to Central State Hospital at Midway

The GAR purchased this short, dead-end line from its original developer, the Milledgeville & Asylum Dummy Railroad Company, but it never offered any other connections to other railroads at its southern end after the purchase. The railroad was initiated to provide rail service to the Central State Hospital, or asylum, which was sited in the Midway community south of Milledgeville. The entirety of this branch line is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed.

### SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

Due in part to its position of geographic and logistical importance, and its corresponding usefulness to commercial and industrial enterprises, the entirety of the GAR system's antebellum main trunk line is still in heavy use today by CSX Transportation. The GAR mainline's long-standing importance to travel and commerce through the area between Augusta and Atlanta is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that the designers of Interstate 20 practically copied the basic alignment of the Georgia Railroad over this same distance, placing it parallel and in close proximity to the railroad for almost the full length of its route. Interstate 20 through east central Georgia



*Crawfordville depot*

(and US 278 before that) provides direct access to all the same cities, towns, and communities as has the GAR throughout its existence. Some of these same places, such as Thomson, Union Point, and Conyers, were founded as station stops along the GAR mainline.

Of the GAR system's once well-developed network of branch lines and affiliated feeder lines, only three are still in existence or in operation: the Washington Branch Line; the Monroe Branch Line; and the northern half, to Milledgeville, of the former Macon Branch Line. All the others have been abandoned or are officially out-of-service, accompanied by removal of tracks, ties, and ballast; some sections of right-of-way for these out-of-service lines may still be intact and owned by the principal successor of the Georgia Railroad, CSX Transportation. Those branches that are now out of service include the following lines: Athens Branch; Lexington Terminal Branch; White Plains Branch; the southern half of the Macon Branch; and the two affiliated feeder branches that were once integrated and connected, the ELBE and the WASH.



The various lines of the GAR system are all confined to the north central and east central parts of Georgia, and almost all of its railroad corridors remain above the Fall Line, traversing Georgia's Piedmont region. The Macon Branch essentially follows the sweep of the Fall Line between Augusta, Milledgeville, and Macon. Therefore, the GAR mainline and branch lines traverse more gently rolling or hilly terrain, on a more consistent basis, than many of the other railroad systems in Georgia that traversed the southern part of the state.

The GAR system's main stem line and its branches cross numerous creeks, streambeds, and a few rivers, although most of these rivers are relatively narrow. Between Augusta and Atlanta, the GAR's main trunk crosses the Oconee River, the Apalachee River, the Alcovy River, and the Yellow River. A long and tall steel trestle bridge carries trains on the GAR across the Alcovy River (adjacent to Alcovy Trestle Road), with the original, stacked stone piers of the earlier, antebellum trestle



*Hulsey yard in Cabbagetown-Reynoldstown, Atlanta*

alongside and below. A tall wood-framed trestle bridge formerly carried the Athens Branch over the North Fork Oconee River, and the ELBE corridor crosses the Broad River; a single masonry pier still stands in the middle of the river.

## DETERMINATION OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

The Georgia Railroad (GAR) system, including acquisitions and subsidiaries, was evaluated in total for eligibility for listing in the National Register using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, as outlined in 36 CFR Part 60.4.

The GAR was evaluated under Criterion A and appears to possess a state level of significance in the areas of Transportation and Commerce. The GAR system in Georgia includes, as its centerpiece, the second oldest railroad project in Georgia; it was initiated and chartered in December of 1833, only a few months after the Central Rail Road & Canal Company (the Central of Georgia) was organized. Moreover, it was essentially conceived as an in-line extension of the South's earliest railroad, the South Carolina Canal & Rail Road Company's original line from Charleston, South Carolina to the Savannah River at Augusta. Thus, the Georgia Railroad's alignment soon fit into the chain of railroads that would connect the major Piedmont cities of the Southeast, the northeast-to-southwest oriented sequence of inland commercial centers that followed the general course of the Atlantic seaboard. The railroad was toward the southern end of a patchwork route linking Virginia and the Carolinas with Georgia and beyond. Last, and for much the same reason, the GAR's existence and alignment was critically important to the development, route selection, and ultimate success of the State of Georgia's Western & Atlantic Railroad project, which was initiated in 1837. The concept of the W&A relied on the GAR to provide a logical southern terminus, and to afford connectivity. Once all the lines to the east and west of the GAR were complete, it became a key link in the chain of Southern railroads connecting the Atlantic Ocean (at Charleston, South Carolina) and the Mississippi River (at Memphis, Tennessee).



The GAR, as one of the state's earliest railroads, along with the COG, the W&A, and the Macon & Western, was thus crucial to railroad transportation and rail-based commerce in Georgia in the decades prior to the Civil War. Shortly after the W&A's completion, the GAR reached Atlanta in September of 1845, followed by the Macon & Western the following year, and the Atlanta & West Point in 1854. As one of the earliest of the collection of lines, from all directions, that entered and provided service to the settlement that was to become Atlanta, the GAR was a major impetus and foundation for Atlanta's emergence as a rail center. Therefore, the GAR mainline is especially important, even within the framework of the GAR system, for its historically significant contributions to the commercial development of Georgia and as a historically significant component of Georgia's rail transportation network.

The GAR also helped facilitate the growth of exports of agricultural products from all parts of Georgia, but particularly from the east central and northeast regions of the state. The various lines of the GAR and its affiliates are all located almost entirely above the Fall Line, within what is considered the Georgia Piedmont. Without the luxury of easily navigable rivers found in the southern half of the state, farmers and landowners in this part of the state would have struggled somewhat, prior to the railroad's development, to export their products, thus limiting production. As throughout much of Georgia, cotton was for many years a major agricultural product of these northeastern and east central regions, as were pine and hardwood timber products. Textile mills and saw mills accompanied the harvesting of these products, and many of the mills were sited alongside or near the railroad lines of the GAR system. One example is the former Fulton Bag & Cotton Mill complex beside the GAR mainline at Cabbagetown in Atlanta, and another is the Milstead/Callaway Mills complex that was in operation for many decades near Conyers; its spur line railroad tied into the GAR mainline.

The GAR system railroads have also contributed to the rise of mining in these same parts of Georgia. Some of its lines were ideally placed to help with the export of the state's raw materials. For example, a purpose-built spur of the Lexington Terminal Railroad was built to the Blue Granite



*Bridge over Elm Street NE, Covington*

Company's mine at Shaking Rock, just south of Lexington. Likewise, the GAR's Macon Branch passed through the area of kaolin pits near Milledgeville and Macon, and assisted with shipments of this mineral. Last, the GAR's mainline served as the main trunk line for the short line railroads that carried granite out of the numerous quarries east of Atlanta, near Stone Mountain, Lithonia, and Arabia Mountain. The availability of rail access provided by the GAR system railroads also led to the erection of in-state processing, milling, and refining facilities. Thus, the GAR system contributed to development and growth of new industry in the northeast and east central parts of the state.

Due in part to its position of geographic and logistical importance, and its corresponding ongoing usefulness to commercial, agricultural, and industrial enterprises, the former GAR's main stem remains in heavy use today. For the various reasons noted above, the GAR is considered eligible for its historically significant contributions to the commercial development



of Georgia and as a historically significant component of Georgia's rail transportation network, one of the comparatively small number of railroads completed in the state before the onset of the Civil War.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the GAR system's mainline and some of its branches led to the development of numerous cities and towns in northeast and east central Georgia. Since it was chartered in late 1833, the GAR was initiated less than two decades after the lands of north central Georgia it traverses were opened to white settlers, through treaties in 1818 and 1821. Therefore, the railroad was opened early enough in the history of settlement of the area to be a historically notable impetus to the influx of new residents. Cities such as Thomson, Union Point, Conyers, and of course Atlanta, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of station stops on the GAR. The linear layouts of their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and faced the rail corridor, reflect the critical influence of the railroad's effect on local settlement and community planning. Due to the stimulus that the GAR provided towards the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant and even thriving, the railroad presents a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

As a railroad entity and line that was originally established and constructed primarily during the antebellum period, the GAR system also conveys significance under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage—Black. Manual slave labor was almost universally employed to build Georgia's pre-Civil War railroads, and the GAR mainline's and main branch's remaining and intact grades, cuts, fills, buildings, and other elements constructed during the antebellum period physically convey African-Americans' historically significant contributions to the construction of the state's railroad infrastructure.

The GAR system has been evaluated for its significance in the Military category, due to its significant role, along multiple fronts, within the context of the course of the American Civil War in Georgia, including its prominent role in Union General William T. Sherman's Campaign for Atlanta, and its predominant role in the action of the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864.



*Decatur*

As one of the four major antebellum railroads in Georgia that entered Atlanta at the outbreak of hostilities, the GAR was a critical route for distributing goods and supplying rations and reinforcements throughout Georgia and the other southern states. For the earlier years of the Civil War, before disruptions caused by Union Army incursions, the GAR had been of great importance as a link in the chain of railroads that linked the Atlantic coast port of Charleston, South Carolina with the Mississippi River port of Memphis, Tennessee. The collective assemblage of lines included, in sequence, the South Carolina Rail Road, the GAR, the W&A, the Nashville & Chattanooga, and the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. It enabled the transport of arms, munitions, and food and clothing for the support of the Confederate armies, as well as a means to move troops amongst the various theaters through the course of the war. Accordingly, the GAR holds a state level of significance for its involvement in military activities, operations, and campaigns during the course of the American Civil War in Georgia.





*Coaling Tower, Social Circle*

The GAR system holds no known associations with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified with or documented through this railroad property. Therefore, the rail system is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register under Criterion B.

The GAR has also been evaluated under Criterion C and determined eligible for the National Register based on its significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the GAR main stem line between Augusta and Atlanta

is still fully intact and in active use, as are two of its main branches to Washington and Monroe, as well as the northern half of its main divisional branch to Macon. The railbeds of these lines are thereby representative of the state of railroad design, including alignment, grading, and construction through the nineteenth century. Much or even most of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance or integrity presented by the retained route alignments of these lines. The essential linear quality and continuity of the majority of the historic length of the GAR has been mostly preserved. In the area of engineering, the railroad thus remains a good and generally intact example of nineteenth century rail construction in Georgia, giving it significance at a statewide level.

Also, almost a dozen rail depots along the main trunk line are still extant and positioned either on or near their original sites, adjacent to the rail line. This intact collection includes the GAR depot buildings in Thomson, Camak, Crawfordville, Greensboro, Madison, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Stone Mountain, and Decatur. Adding to the total complement of the GAR system's depots are those in Mayfield and Sparta, along the Macon Branch; at Ficklin, along the Washington Branch; at Monroe, at the north end of the Monroe Branch; at Maxeys, Crawford, and Winterville, along the former corridor of the branch line to Athens; and at Siloam, along the former corridor of the branch line to White Plains. Finally, the roster of twenty railroad buildings still standing along the lines of the Georgia Railroad system is perhaps topped by the Georgia Railroad's 1869 Freight Depot, the oldest building still standing in downtown Atlanta.

This list of depots is remarkable for not only the sheer number of those extant, but also for the wide variety of types and material makeups of the remaining railroad depots throughout the GAR system. Also notable and historically important is the range of time covered between the system's oldest and newest depots, which spans the decades between the mainline's brick depot at Madison, built in the 1840s or 1850s, or the 1848 stone-walled depot along the Athens Branch in Crawford, to Decatur's wood-framed early twentieth century depot. All of these remaining depots together allow the greater railroad system with which they were historically affiliated to present a state level of significance in the area of Architecture, for these are good, representative examples of railroad station and railroad building architecture in Georgia from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

There are no indications that any of the GAR system's rail corridors are likely to yield information on important research questions in history or prehistory. Likewise, the GAR rail system does not appear to have the potential to be the principal source of important information. Therefore, there was no basis for evaluating the property under Criterion D.

Because the GAR system remains substantially intact, it retains integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and



*Bridge over Commerce Drive, Decatur*



*Social Circle*

association; see attached System Feature Inventory Forms for further analyses of integrity. Therefore, the GAR system is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, for the reasons described above. Even though two of its original main branches, two of its affiliated feeder lines, and part of another main division have been abandoned, thereby reducing the area of service from the former full extent of the railroad system, the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, for its historic significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and

Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, and Military, and under Criterion C, in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. Its period of significance is 1833 to 1982, including and spanning the time from the GAR's initial charter through to its full absorption into the Seaboard System Railroad and, soon thereafter, into the system's present owner and operator, CSX Transportation.

## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARIES

For the following component lines of the GAR system that have both sufficient significance and integrity to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the proposed National Register boundaries for listing

correspond to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of all contributing lines and/or sections. Within Georgia, the complement of contributing lines consists of the full length of the GAR's mainline (MAIN), or "Main Stem," from Augusta westward to Atlanta, the full length of the intact and active Washington Branch, the full length of the intact and active Monroe Branch (former Walton Railroad/Monroe Railroad, or WALT), the full length of the now-abandoned Athens Branch, and the full length of the Macon Branch (former Macon & Augusta Railroad, or MCAG), including the intact and active section from Camak Junction to Milledgeville and the out-of-service segment from Milledgeville to the Mogul community.

As described above, the entirety of the Athens Branch and the southern half of the Macon Branch, from Milledgeville to Mogul, are both abandoned, and both are now bereft of tracks, ties, and ballast. However, in both cases, the majority of their original rights-of-way are substantially intact. Most of the lengths of their linear corridors are intact and free of disruption; thus, their proposed historic property boundaries correspond to the historic rights-of-way of each rail corridor. Proposals are currently being developed, as of 2015, to initiate the adaptation of the Athens Branch's remnant corridor for new service as the path of what is tentatively called the Firefly Trail, a multi-use rail-trail concept.

At any locations along the corridor where there are intact depots now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the footprint of the depot, as well as any intact platforms or docks, any affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact sidings or rail yards.

At any locations where there are intact depots that either have been moved away from their formerly affiliated rail corridor, no matter the distance of the move, the depot is still considered contributing, despite its specific circumstance. The proposed boundaries for such depots are also the depot's footprint.



## **CONTRIBUTING FEATURES**

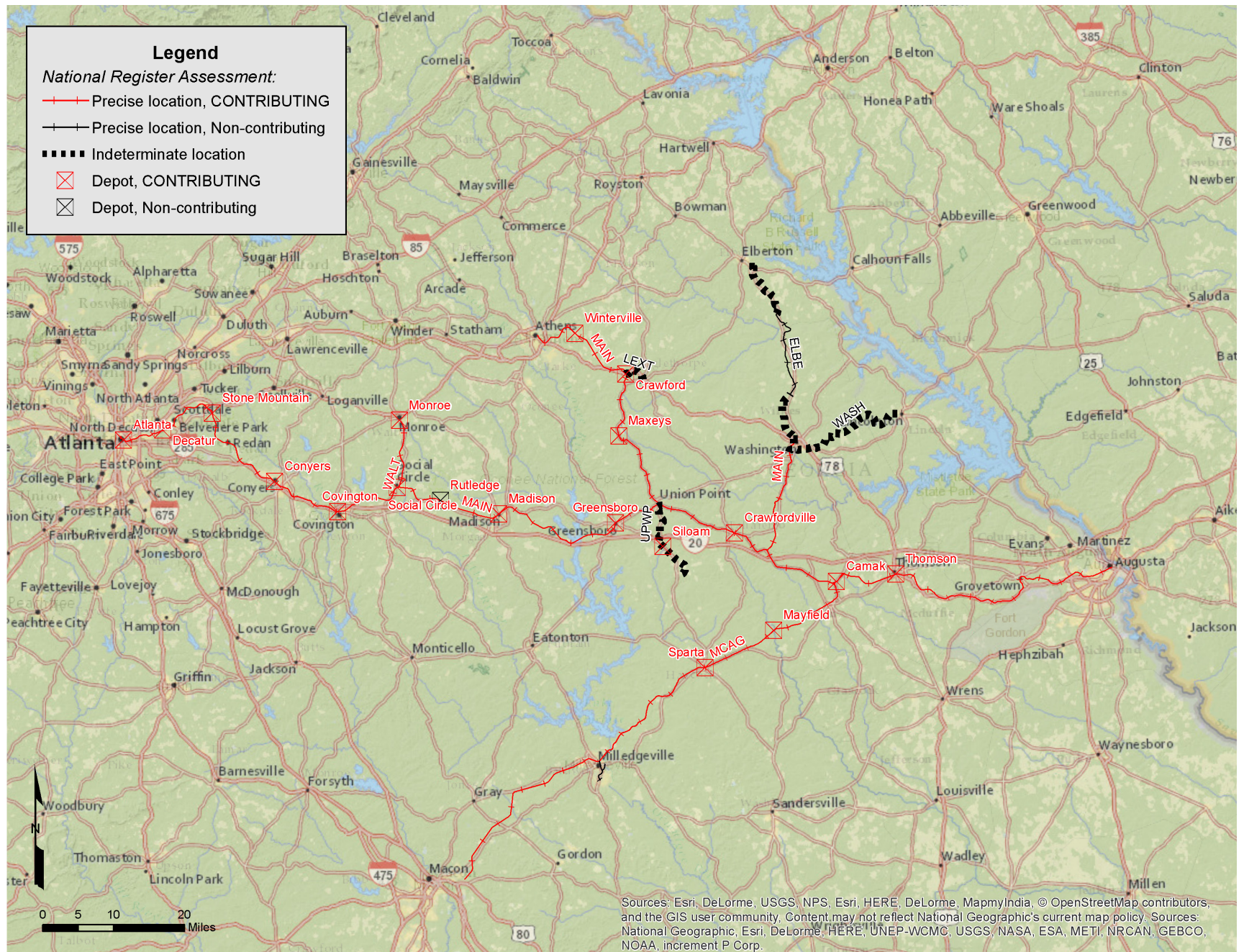
GAR mainline (MAIN), or “Main Stem,” from Augusta westward to Atlanta; the full length of the Washington Branch from Barnett to Washington; the full length of the Monroe Branch (WALT, former Walton Railroad/Monroe Railroad) from Social Circle to Monroe; the full length of the out-of-service Athens Branch from Union Point to Athens; and the full length of the Macon Branch (MCAG, former Macon & Augusta Railroad), including the active section from Camak Junction to Milledgeville and the out-of-service section from Milledgeville to the Mogul community (see attached System Feature Inventory Forms).

## **NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES**

The full length of the abandoned White Plains Branch (UPWP, former Union Point & White Plains Railroad) from Union Point to White Plains; the full length of the abandoned Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT) from Crawford to Lexington and then Shaking Rock; the full length of the abandoned Elberton & Eastern Railroad (ELBE) from Washington to Elberton; the full length of the abandoned Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH) from Washington to Lincolnton; the full length of the abandoned Milledgeville Railway from Milledgeville south to the Central State Hospital campus at Midway (see attached System Feature Inventory Forms).

## **PREPARED BY**

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Mike Reynolds, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mroczka





# GEORGIA RAILROAD MAINLINE (MAIN)

**Other names:** Georgia Railroad “Main Stem”; Stone Mountain Route

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Contributing

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active and Inactive segments)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation; Georgia Woodlands Railroad

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Successors:** Seaboard System Railroad; CSX Transportation

**Location:** Mainline: Downtown Augusta to Downtown Atlanta; Washington Branch Line: Barnett vicinity (Warren County) to Washington (Wilkes County); Athens Branch Line: Union Point to Athens



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Georgia Railroad Company (GAR) was chartered December 21, 1833, by a group of Athens citizens led by James Camak. Their goal was to build a railroad from Athens to Augusta and its port on the Savannah River. The company changed its name to Georgia Railroad & Banking Company in 1836. This amendment to the company moniker would prove prophetic; when the banking side of the business eventually proved more financially rewarding, the company leased its railroad operations to others.

Construction began in 1835, but it started in Augusta, rather than Athens, and proceeded westward to a spot beyond Crawfordville that would become known as Union Point. By the time the route to Athens was opened in 1841, the State of Georgia's Western & Atlantic Railroad (W&A) project was well underway, with surveys on the newly planned route between Chattanooga and the Chattahoochee River commencing as early as 1837. That same year, the surveyors positioned the southern terminus at the site of present day downtown Atlanta, where the community of Marthasville was founded in 1842. On December 23, 1842, the first train ran from Marthasville north to Marietta.

The W&A's initiation gave impetus to revision of the GAR's original route plans. Working in close cooperation with the state to help make the W&A project, and railroading in general, a success, the company soon began

construction of a westward extension to Marthasville, departing from the original mainline to Athens, and giving rise to a new town there called Union Point. The 39-mile long Athens branch, stretching north and northwest from Union Point to the GAR's originally planned destination, became operational in December of 1841.

The western branch to Marthasville was completed almost four years later in September 1845, the same year that regular train service also began on the W&A. Marthasville was soon renamed Atlanta and would quickly grow in size and scope. The GAR likewise underwent a change from its original identity, for its 171-mile long Augusta-Atlanta connection almost immediately became the GAR's mainline. This major shift in the company's principal focus demoted both the status of the route to Athens and Athens' originally projected prominence as the railroad's intended westernmost end point. Perhaps the key factor in the elevated importance of the new western terminal at Atlanta was the critical link the GAR now played in a through route being developed across the southern states from Charleston to Memphis, and therefore from the Atlantic coast overland to the Mississippi River. This contiguous route was assembled as a network of the connected mainlines of multiple railroad companies. The route was formed by the South Carolina Railroad (from Charleston to Augusta), the GAR, the W&A (from Atlanta to Chattanooga), and the Memphis & Charleston (from Chattanooga west to Memphis).

Early on in the GAR's history, and coincident with the redirection of the company's mainline to Atlanta, Augustans gained control from Athens interests, with Augusta citizen John Pendleton King serving as railroad president from 1841 to 1878. The railroad's original chief engineer was John Edgar Thomson, who assumed that post in 1834. He is credited by some as first suggesting a variant of the name Atlanta. The city of Thomson, in McDuffie County, was named for him. Thomson later became chief engineer of the new Pennsylvania Railroad and, in 1852, its president.

Several deficiencies of the original Athens branch seem to illustrate how the GAR's primary attentions had already been diverted to the Atlanta route and destination. Foremost, trips from Union Point to Athens were undertaken predominantly by horse drawn cars until 1847, nearly two years after locomotive-pulled trains had begun running on a regular schedule between Augusta and Atlanta. Moreover, the so-called Athens branch originally did not actually carry trains to the west side of the North Oconee River and into downtown Athens. Instead, the line stopped at Carr's Hill on the river's east bank, in what is now referred to as East Athens. According to Wilbur Caldwell in his book, *The Courthouse and the Depot*, the GAR failed to expend effort to build the necessary tandem structures of a trestle over Trail Creek and a bridge over the Oconee for over four decades, until about 1883. Furthermore, Caldwell adds that the company did not commit resources to construct a depot at the Carr's Hill terminus until 1855. To finally enable the half-mile extension into downtown, the GAR's contractors erected a Howe deck truss bridge of wood and iron over the river and a wooden trestle over the creek. The original Oconee River bridge (at present-day Dudley Park, just east of downtown Athens) stood until 1973, when it was replaced by a deck girder bridge. This second bridge was demolished in 2000, except for its remnant masonry piers of stone and concrete. Originally built using five-foot gauge track, the the Athens branch was rebuilt to standard gauge in 1886, only a few years after the bridges to downtown Athens were finished.

The 18-mile long Washington Branch was initiated and constructed by the GAR in 1852, beginning its operations under the company's full

ownership and control. In an 1855 listing in *Mitchell's New Traveller's Guide through the United States and the Canadas*, this branch route, along with the "Athens Branch Railroad," is included and described as the "Washington Branch Railroad."

The GAR system, including both the Washington Branch and the Athens Branch, was one of the four major antebellum railroads in Georgia that provided direct service to Atlanta at the outbreak of the Civil War. During the hostilities, the GAR provided a critical link in the Confederacy's rail system between Atlanta and Virginia, distributing goods and materials, supplying rations and ordnance, and furnishing troop transport. The only alternate routes were by way of Chattanooga or Savannah. The GAR was relatively well maintained and capable of hauling 800 tons of freight per day, which put it in the top tier of Confederate rail lines in 1863.

Soon after, on July 22, 1864, the railroad mainline was the focal point of the Battle of Atlanta, which was fought by opposing forces occupying grounds astride the GAR, in the vicinity of the neighborhoods now known as Little Five Points, Reynoldstown, Inman Park, and others. During and after the eventual September 1864 capture of Atlanta, Union General William T. Sherman's forces ultimately uprooted and destroyed almost all of the western half of the GAR's tracks between Atlanta and the Oconee River east of Madison, as reported by historian Robert C. Black III in *The Railroads of Georgia in the Confederate War Effort*. Most of the company's shops, depots, bridges and trestles along this section were left in ruins, leaving only the railbed's cuts and embankments.

The collapse of the Confederacy also ended the use of slaves to construct and maintain Southern railroads. The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company had owned at least 162 slaves, according to documentation found by researchers in 2005 and earlier.

Nevertheless, after the war's end, the railroad's mainline was rebuilt and expansion soon followed. The 78-mile branch line between Camak and Macon, completed in 1873 by the Macon & Augusta Railroad (MCAG), was merged into the GAR system in 1878.



The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company had also made early investments in the Atlanta & West Point Rail Road and the Western Railway of Alabama, which together connected Atlanta and Montgomery. By the 1880s, the company owned a controlling interest in the former and a substantial interest in the latter and, as a result, had created a small but important rail system, cohesively marketed together as the “West Point Route,” that spanned the width of the Georgia piedmont and reached as far west as Alabama’s capital at Montgomery.

In 1881, the GAR was leased for 99 years to Colonel William M. Wadley, president of the Central of Georgia Railway (COG). Wadley then jointly assigned the lease of operations to the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (LAN) and the Central of Georgia.

In 1898, the reorganized COG sold its half-interest in the lease of the GAR to the LAN, which then briefly controlled the entire GAR system. The following year, the LAN assigned this half-interest to the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL). In 1902, the ACL then gained control of the LAN through purchase of its stock, but allowed it to continue operating independently.

In 1967, the ACL merged with the Seaboard Air Line Railroad to form the Seaboard Coast Line (SCL). Despite the merger involving its parent company, the GAR continued to maintain its separate identity, at least for a while. From 1972 until the early 1980s, it was marketed as part of the “Family Lines System,” a name used jointly by the SCL and LAN and their subsidiaries, including the GAR, the Clinchfield Railroad, the Atlanta & West Point, and the Western Railway of Alabama (the last two previously operating jointly under their own shared nickname described above, the West Point Route).

In 1982-1983, the SCL and the LAN were fully amalgamated to form the Seaboard System Railroad, which quickly absorbed the subsidiary GAR. In 1986, the Seaboard System became CSX Transportation.

#### **Abandonments:**

**Union Point – Winterville (Clarke County):** abandoned November of 1984

**Old Winterville Road – Downtown Athens:** connected to other Athens lines and in service until 1997

## **DESCRIPTION**

The GAR’s Main Stem (MAIN), so-called in company publications from the turn of the twentieth century, is fully intact and in daily use by CSX Transportation, still fulfilling its consistent and historic role as the principal, most direct connection between Augusta and Atlanta. Although still fully intact and in service, the Washington Branch was not integrated into today’s CSX system. Instead, CSX sold off the 18-mile branch in 1987 to a short-line company called the Georgia Eastern Railroad. Ownership and operation was then transferred to the Georgia Woodlands Railroad in June of 1988, and this company and the line itself are both still intact and in operation.

From Augusta in Richmond County to Atlanta in Fulton County, the MAIN proceeds on a general east-to-west axis through Columbia, McDuffie, Warren, Taliaferro, Greene, Morgan, Walton, Newton, Rockdale, and DeKalb counties, passing en route through the cities and towns of Thomson, Crawfordville, Union Point, Greensboro, Madison, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Lithonia, Stone Mountain, and Decatur, along with numerous other smaller towns and communities. From McDuffie County on the east to Newton County on the west, the MAIN corridor passes from its metropolitan termini across a primarily rural landscape, traveling through many square miles of forests and cultivated fields across the gently rolling terrain of the Georgia Piedmont. Throughout much of the line’s length, it is closely paralleled by both Interstate 20 and the earlier US Highway 278.

The MAIN crosses several rivers, but does so above the state’s Fall Line. Thus, these rivers, including the Oconee, the Apalachee, the Alcovy, and the Yellow, are not navigable, and tend to be relatively narrow, especially in comparison to the waterways of south and coastal Georgia. The Main Stem’s most visually striking and otherwise noteworthy bridge is the long and tall, steel trestle bridge that carries trains on the Georgia Railroad across the Alcovy River (adjacent to Alcovy Trestle Road), with the original, stacked stone piers of the earlier, antebellum trestle alongside and below. Also notable and nearby is the tall coaling tower, constructed of poured concrete, that still stands just east of the GAR depot in Social

Circle. A second coaling tower is also located on the GAR mainline at Camak, a short distance west of its depot.

The MAIN still retains almost a dozen of its depots, all still on or adjacent to their original sites alongside the rail line. The complement consists of those at Thomson, Camak, Crawfordville, Greensboro (including separate passenger and freight depots), Madison, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Stone Mountain, Decatur and, last, the 1869 freight depot in downtown Atlanta.

The Washington Branch diverges from the Main Stem just east of the Barnett community in northwestern Warren County. A community at the junction point used to be known as Cumming, according to maps and timetables from 1859, but it is not confirmed if this former station stop was renamed or is defunct. From the wye junction, the branch line continues north through the Sharon and Hillman communities of Taliaferro County and into Wilkes County, passing through Ficklin and over the Little River before entering the southwestern corner of Washington. Ficklin's depot still stands, although it has been moved a short distance away from the tracks. For most of its length, the Washington Branch now follows alongside the present course of SR 47, but it never crossed north of Washington's Lexington Highway/US 78 or entered Washington's historic downtown. Instead, for its final approach to Washington, the line shifts west to the east side of SR 44's present alignment, and stops just south of the intersection of Depot and West Liberty streets. However, from this area on downtown's west side, the Washington Branch was eventually linked, in the second decade of the twentieth century, to both the Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH) and the Elberton & Eastern Railroad (ELBE).

As mentioned previously, the Athens Branch departs from and connects to the Main Stem at Union Point, the junction itself giving rise to the settlement and naming of the town. At this interchange, a very brief remnant tail of the wye track is still in place veering away to the northwest along Carlton Avenue's south side, but ending at the North Rhodes Street crossing. From this point, the railroad corridor continues on a general northerly course through Greene and Oglethorpe counties to Crawford. Along the way, it frequently or even typically runs close along SR 77's east side, through the towns and communities of Woodville, Bairdstown, Maxeys, Stephens,

and Hutchins. At Crawford, the line begins a turn to the northwest, and assumes a winding path through Arnoldsville and Winterville to Athens. The original depots are still extant at their original locations in Maxeys, Crawford, and Winterville; the walls of the antebellum Crawford depot are constructed of rustic stone, while those at Maxeys and Winterville are wood-frame with lapped siding.

Yet, since its 1984 abandonment, almost all of the tracks, ties, and ballast have been taken up between Union Point and Athens, and the bridge over the North Oconee River has been removed, although its masonry piers are still in place. Nonetheless, the mostly rural nature of Oglethorpe and Greene counties and the relatively slow pace of land development in these areas has allowed the rail corridor and its railbed to remain mostly intact. Over this same thirty years, there have been only a few obstacles or obstructions placed within the right-of-way, such as the construction of a now vacant automobile dealership office within Crawford's rail right-of-way, or a few cuts made in the line's embankments for driveway entries. On balance, the comparative recentness of the abandonment has allowed most of the alignment to remain discernable on current aerial imagery as a continuous corridor, to the degree that no lengths are indeterminate or indistinguishable. Other parts of the rail line have already been preserved as public linear corridors, for the section through Woodville is utilized by the town as a walking trail, and the grass covered segments in Maxeys and Stephens serve as de facto public green space. The railbed's almost entire length is still evident within the landscape, and it is sufficiently intact as a continuous facility of transportation origin to stimulate the recent and ongoing development of plans to resurrect and adapt the linear infrastructure as a rail-trail project, tentatively called the Firefly Trail.

## **NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS**

The Georgia Railroad's mainline and two main branches (MAIN) are all component parts of the GAR system; all three segments are original GAR projects and of antebellum origin, constructed between 1835 and 1852. Therefore, the MAIN was evaluated as a complement of component mainlines and main branches, for their potential collective contributions



to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system. The GAR system is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation, Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage - Black, and Military, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The MAIN was evaluated under both criteria and determined contributing in all of the above areas.

The MAIN was evaluated under Criterion A and appears to contribute to the GAR system's state level of significance in the areas of Transportation and Commerce. The GAR system in Georgia includes, as its centerpiece, the second oldest railroad project in Georgia; it was initiated and chartered in December of 1833, only a few months after the Central Rail Road & Canal Company (the Central of Georgia) was organized. The Athens Branch was an integral part of the originally conceived plans and Athens, or at least its Carr's Hill suburb, was the first of the GAR's originally intended western destinations reached, almost four years before the GAR could provide service to Atlanta. The GAR then opened branch service to Washington a mere seven years after completion of the company's "Main Stem" mainline to Atlanta.

This Main Stem itself was essentially conceived as an in-line extension of the South's earliest railroad, the South Carolina Canal & Rail Road Company's original line from Charleston, South Carolina to the Savannah River at Augusta. Thus, the GAR mainline's alignment soon fit well into the chain of railroads that would connect the major Piedmont cities of the Southeast, the northeast-to-southwest oriented sequence of inland commercial centers that followed the general course of the Atlantic seaboard. The railroad was toward the southern end of a patchwork route linking Virginia and the Carolinas with Georgia and beyond. Last, and for much the same reason, the GAR Main Stem's existence and alignment was critically important to the development, route selection, and ultimate success of the State of Georgia's Western & Atlantic Railroad project, which was initiated in 1837. The concept of the W&A relied on the GAR mainline to provide a logical southern terminus, and to afford connectivity. Once all the lines to the east and west of the GAR were complete, it became a key link in the chain of

Southern railroads connecting the Atlantic Ocean (at Charleston, South Carolina) and the Mississippi River (at Memphis, Tennessee).

The GAR mainline and its two antebellum branches, as three of the state's earliest railroad lines, along with the antebellum lines of the COG/Southwestern Railroad, the Western & Atlantic, the Macon & Western, and the Atlanta & West Point, was thus crucial to railroad transportation and rail-based commerce in Georgia in the decades prior to the Civil War. Shortly after the W&A's completion, the GAR reached Atlanta in September of 1845, followed by the Macon & Western the following year, and the Atlanta & West Point in 1854. As one of the earliest of the collection of lines, from all directions, that entered and provided service to the settlement that was to become Atlanta, the GAR mainline was a major impetus and foundation for Atlanta's emergence as a rail center. Therefore, the GAR mainline is especially important, even within the framework of the GAR system, for its historically significant contributions to the commercial development of Georgia and as a historically significant component of Georgia's rail transportation network.

The GAR mainline and the main branches to Washington and Athens also helped facilitate the growth of agricultural exports from all parts of Georgia, but particularly from the east central and northeast regions of the state. These three GAR lines are all located almost entirely above the Fall Line, within what is considered the Georgia Piedmont. Without the luxury of easily navigable rivers found in the southern half of the state, farmers and landowners in this corner of the state would have struggled prior to the railroad's development to export their products, thus limiting production. As throughout much of Georgia, cotton was for many years a major agricultural product of these northeastern and east central regions, as were pine and hardwood timber products. Textile mills and saw mills accompanied the harvesting of these products, and many of the mills were sited alongside or near the GAR Main Stem or its branches to Washington and Athens. One example is the former Fulton Bag & Cotton Mill complex beside the GAR mainline at Cabbagetown in Atlanta, and another is the Milstead/Callaway Mills complex that was in operation for many decades near Conyers; its spur line tied into the MAIN.

The MAIN and its two main branches have also contributed to the rise of mining in these same parts of Georgia. Some of its lines were ideally placed to help export the state's raw materials. For example, a purpose-built spur of the Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT) was built to the Blue Granite Company's mine at Shaking Rock, just south of Lexington; the LEXT itself was a dead-end branch from the GAR Athens Branch, as it provided no connectivity otherwise. Likewise, the GAR's mainline served as the main trunk line for the numerous short line railroads that carried granite out of the numerous quarries east of Atlanta, near Stone Mountain, Lithonia, and Arabia Mountain. The availability of MAIN rail access also led to the erection of in-state processing, milling, and refining facilities. Thus, the MAIN contributed to the development and growth of new industry in northeast and east central Georgia.

Due in part to its position of geographic and logistical importance, and its corresponding and ongoing usefulness to commercial, agricultural, and industrial enterprises, the former GAR's Main Stem is still in heavy use today. For the various reasons stated above, the MAIN is considered eligible for its historically significant contributions to the commercial development of Georgia and as a historically significant component of Georgia's rail transportation network, one of the small number of Georgia railroads completed before the Civil War.

In the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development, the GAR mainline and its branches led to the development of numerous cities and towns in northeast and east central Georgia. Since it was chartered in 1833, the GAR was initiated less than two decades after the lands of north central Georgia that it traverses were opened to white settlers, through treaties in 1818 and 1821. Therefore, the railroad was opened early enough in the history of settlement of the area to be a historically notable impetus to the influx of new residents. Also, cities such as Thomson, Union Point, Conyers, and of course Atlanta, were either entirely or largely the outgrowth of MAIN station stops. Their downtown commercial centers, which typically emerged alongside and faced the rail corridor, reflect the critical influence of the railroad's course on local settlement and community planning. Due to the MAIN's effects

on the development of many communities, almost all of which are still extant and even thriving, the railroad presents a local level of significance in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Community Planning and Development.

As a railroad company consisting of a mainline and two main branches that were originally established and constructed during the antebellum period, these three linear resources also convey significance under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage—Black. Manual slave labor was almost universally employed to build Georgia's pre-Civil War railroads, and the MAIN's remaining and intact grades, cuts, fills, buildings, and other elements constructed during the antebellum period physically convey African-Americans' historically significant contributions to the construction of the state's railroad infrastructure. Almost the entirety of the MAIN's track mileage, including that of the Main Stem and both the Washington and Athens branches, potentially contributes to this significance.

The MAIN has been evaluated for its significance in the Military category, due to its significant role, along multiple fronts, within the context of the American Civil War in Georgia, including its prominent role in Union General William T. Sherman's Campaign for Atlanta, and its predominant role in the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864. As one of the four major antebellum railroads in Georgia that entered Atlanta at the outbreak of hostilities, the GAR mainline was a critical route for distributing goods and supplying rations and reinforcements throughout Georgia and the other southern states. For the earlier years of the Civil War, before disruptions caused by Union Army incursions, the GAR had been of great importance as a link in the chain of railroads that linked the Atlantic coast port of Charleston, South Carolina with the Mississippi River port of Memphis, Tennessee. The collective assemblage of lines included, in sequence, the South Carolina Rail Road, the GAR, the W&A, the Nashville & Chattanooga, and the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. It enabled the transport of arms, munitions, food, and clothing for the support of the Confederate armies, as well as a means to move troops amongst the various theaters through the course of the war. Accordingly,



the MAIN holds a state level of significance for its involvement in Military activities, operations, and campaigns during the course of the Civil War in Georgia.

The MAIN holds no known associations with individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified with or documented through this railroad property. Therefore, the rail system is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register under Criterion B.

The MAIN has also been evaluated under Criterion C, and has been determined to contribute to the GAR's system's significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the GAR Main Stem line between Augusta and Atlanta is still fully intact and in active use, as is that of its Washington Branch. Although abandoned, the Athens Branch is still evident within its setting and surrounding landscape, and maintains its physical continuity and essential linearity, interrupted by only a few minor impediments that constitute a minute percentage of the branch line's overall footprint. Moreover, three of the MAIN's most contributory, character-defining features, the depots at Maxeys, Crawford, and Winterville, are still extant at their original locations.

The MAIN's railbeds are thereby representative of the state of railroad design, including alignment, grading, and construction, in Georgia's antebellum period. Much or even most of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance or integrity presented by the retained route alignments of these lines. The MAIN's essential linear quality and continuity, including the GAR Main Stem and its two antebellum main branches, has been mostly preserved. In the area of Engineering, these three railroad lines, both collectively and individually, thus remain good and generally intact examples of mid-nineteenth century rail construction in Georgia, giving them significance at a statewide level.

Also, almost a dozen rail depots along the MAIN are still extant and positioned either on or near their original sites, adjacent to the rail line. This intact collection includes the passenger and freight depot buildings in Thomson, Camak, Crawfordville, Greensboro (separate passenger and freight), Madison, Social Circle, Covington, Conyers, Stone Mountain, Decatur, and Atlanta (GAR freight depot). The complement of MAIN depots also includes Ficklin, along the Washington Branch, and depots on the Athens Branch, at Maxeys, Crawford, and Winterville. This list of depots is remarkable for not only the number extant, but also for the wide variety of types and material makeups. Also notable and historically important is the range of time covered between the MAIN's oldest and newest depots, which span the decades between the Main Stem's brick depot at Madison, built in the 1840s or 1850s, or the 1848 stone-walled Crawford Depot along the Athens Branch, to Decatur's wood-framed depot built in the early twentieth century. All of these remaining depots together allow the GAR system with which they were historically affiliated to present a state level of significance in the area of Architecture, for these are good, representative examples of railroad station and railroad building architecture in Georgia from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

There are no indications that any of the three rail corridors comprising the MAIN is likely to yield information on important research questions in history or prehistory. Likewise, the GAR rail system overall does not appear to have the potential to be the principal source of important information. Therefore, there was no basis for evaluating these properties under Criterion D.

## **EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY**

The GAR's Main Stem and its branch to Washington have both been determined to possess integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These railroad lines have not been relocated, and their alignments remain substantially unchanged since their construction; therefore, these resources of the MAIN retain integrity of location and setting. As their alignment and roadbeds, including cuts and grades, remain intact, and other materials have been upgraded

to enable continued operation of the lines, these components substantially retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These railroad lines also retain integrity of feeling and association as they convey their physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

The MAIN's Athens Branch has been determined to possess a good level of integrity in the areas of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to retain a fair degree of integrity in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship. This railroad branch's alignment has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As almost all of its alignment and railbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, despite the abandonment of service in 1984 and the subsequent removal of rails, ties, and ballast, this branch line still maintains a substantive level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The Athens Branch also retains integrity of feeling and association, as it conveys its linear and continuous physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

## **PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY**

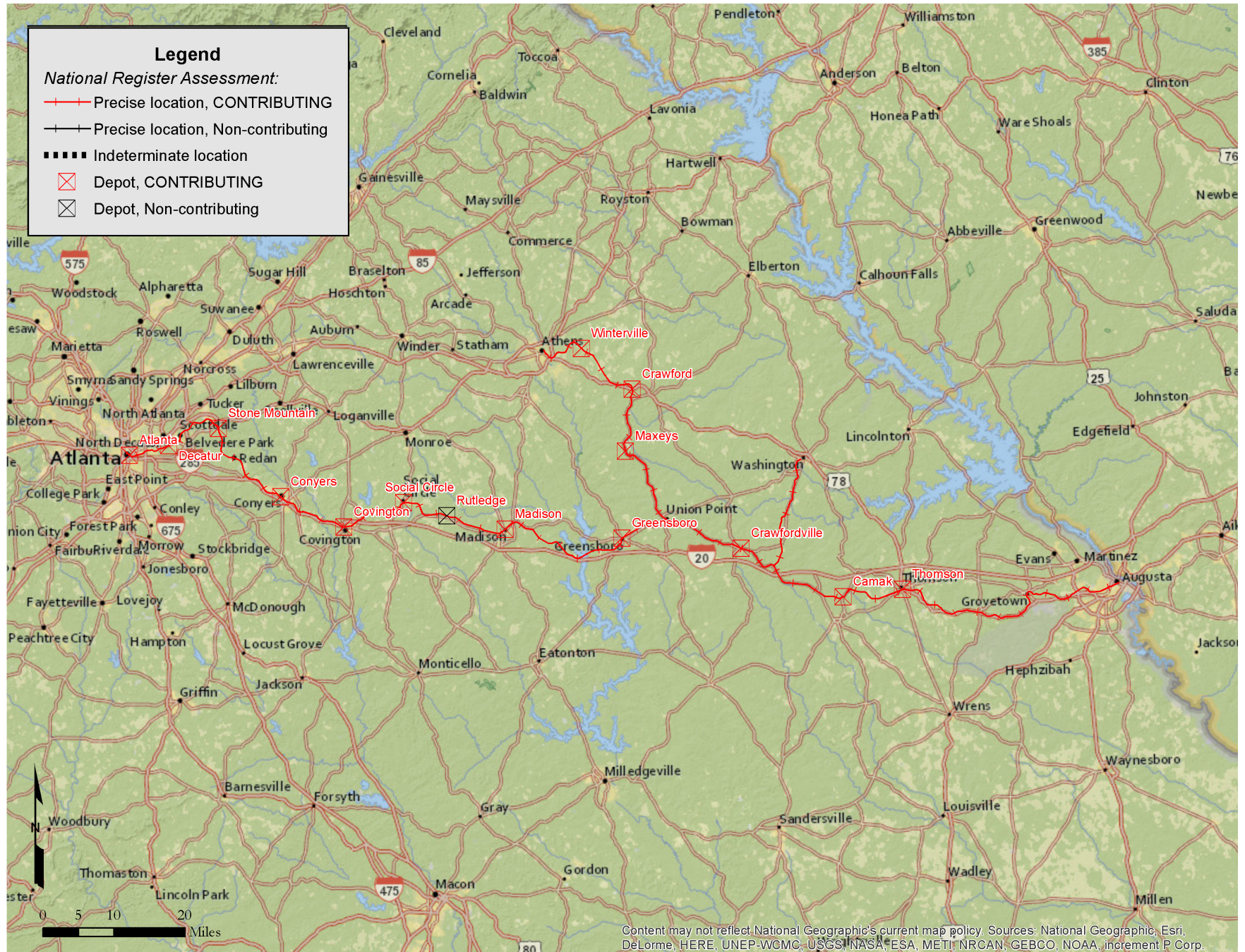
The proposed National Register boundaries for the MAIN, including the GAR's Main Stem corridor and the corridors of the Washington and Athens branches, correspond to the historic railroad rights-of-way, which date from between 1834 and 1852. These antebellum period rights-of-way include both the active and abandoned sections of the GAR's mainline and main branch components. The proposed boundaries contain all National Register qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and include the railroad's currently in-service or abandoned sections of alignment, consisting, in both circumstances, of the railbed and other elements of the rail resource, such as any extant cuts and built-up grades. The proposed boundaries also project out from the rail right-of-way, as applicable, to include all extant railroad depots along the lengths of the three corridors. All either stand at their original sites alongside the respective rights-of-way, or they have been moved back slightly, but remain adjacent to their original sites, and are still oriented parallel to the rail corridors. Two specific depots that have undergone such minor relocations, ostensibly to prevent

threatened demolitions, are those at Ficklin and Decatur. In such cases, the proposed boundary extends the necessary distance to include these depot's footprints.

## **PREPARED BY**

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Mike Reynolds, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mroczka





MAIN: Resource Location Map





MAIN: Wye junction with COG, Sixth Street, Augusta



MAIN: Old Wrightsboro Road, Grovetown, Columbia County



MAIN: SR 47/Louisville Road crossing, Boneville, McDuffie County



MAIN: Boneville Road, Boneville





MAIN: Thomson depot, McDuffie County



MAIN: Baker Street crossing, Camak, Warren County



MAIN: Camak depot



MAIN: Crawfordville depot, Taliaferro County





MAIN: Monument Street, Crawfordville



MAIN: North West Street overpass, Greensboro, Greene County



MAIN: Greensboro passenger depot



MAIN: Greensboro freight depot





MAIN: Oconee River/Lake Oconee, Greene-Morgan county line



MAIN: Buckhead Road crossing, Buckhead, Morgan County



MAIN: Madison depot, Morgan County



MAIN: West Washington Street, Madison





MAIN: Fairplay Street crossing, Rutledge, Morgan County



MAIN: Non-historic 1988 Rutledge depot



MAIN: Social Circle depot, Walton County



MAIN: View from SR 11 bridge to depot and coaling tower, Social Circle





MAIN: Alcovy River, Newton County



MAIN: Elm Street, Covington, Newton County



MAIN: Covington depot



MAIN: Yellow River, Almon vicinity, Newton County





MAIN: Green Street crossing, Conyers, Rockdale County



MAIN: Conyers depot



MAIN: Almand Street crossing, Conyers



MAIN: Rock Chapel Road crossing, Lithonia, DeKalb County





MAIN: Stone Mountain depot, DeKalb County



MAIN: James B. Rivers Drive, Stone Mountain



MAIN: Cut at Church Street, Clarkston, DeKalb County



MAIN: Indian Creek Drive, Clarkston





MAIN: East Ponce Avenue, Scottsdale, DeKalb County



MAIN: Commerce Drive, Decatur, DeKalb County



MAIN: Decatur depot



MAIN: Along Atlanta Avenue, Decatur





MAIN: Pullman yard, Kirkwood, DeKalb County



MAIN: Hulsey yard, Reynoldstown, Atlanta



MAIN: Wylie Street, Cabbagetown, Atlanta



MAIN: Hulsey yard, west entrance, Cabbagetown





MAIN: Atlanta freight depot



MAIN: Washington branch line at Sharon, Taliaferro County



MAIN: Small freight warehouse at Sharon



MAIN: Ficklin depot, Wilkes County





MAIN: Ficklin, Wilkes County



MAIN: Little River, Wilkes County



MAIN: Georgia Avenue crossing, Washington, Wilkes County



MAIN: Mercer Street crossing, Washington





MAIN: Norman Street crossing, Washington



MAIN: Athens branch line, Union Point junction, Greene County



MAIN: Railbed at Woodville, Greene County



MAIN: Railbed at Maxeys, Oglethorpe County





MAIN: Maxeys depot



MAIN: Hutchins, Oglethorpe County



MAIN: Crawford depot, Oglethorpe County



MAIN: Alignment at Arnoldsville, Oglethorpe County





MAIN: Winterville depot, Clarke County



MAIN: Railbed at Winterville



MAIN: Railbed in east Athens, Clarke County



MAIN: Trail Creek, Athens



# MACON & AUGUSTA (MCAG)

**Other names:** Macon Division; Macon Branch Line; “Macon Road”

**System:** Georgia Railroad (GAR)

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Mixed (Active and Inactive segments)

**Current owner:** CSX Transportation

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Acquisitions:** Milledgeville Railway (formerly the Milledgeville & Asylum Dummy Railroad)

**Successors:** Georgia Railroad; Seaboard System Railroad

**Location:** Camak, Warren County to Macon, Bibb County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

After receiving its charter in 1859, the Macon & Augusta Railroad (MCAG) began building a rail line from Macon towards Augusta, but progress was slowed by the Civil War and then Reconstruction. The 1869-70 edition of *Poor's Manual of Railroads* reported that only two sections had yet been opened, those being the 22-mile link between Macon and Milledgeville and the 8-mile segment from Warrenton to Mayfield.

Using up to 200 convicts who were forced to grade the unbuilt portion of the line, contractor Grant, Alexander & Company finally brought it to completion by 1873. The company, established by John T. Grant, his son William Grant, and Thomas Alexander, had acquired a lease of the state's entire penitentiary and all of its prisoners in 1869.

At Warrenton, the line's northern terminus, the railroad connected with what had previously been the Warrenton Branch of the Georgia Railroad (GAR), which then joined the mainline at Camak. From there, trains could proceed the remaining 40 miles to Augusta.

The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company leased the use of the MCAG in 1867, well before its completion, and proceeded to buy it outright in 1880. Thereafter, the former Macon to Augusta line, incorporating the former Warrenton branch from Camak, was consolidated into regular GAR

operations as the “Macon Road,” also sometimes referred to as the “Macon Division.”

In February of 1896, the Milledgeville Railway was formed by the lessees of the GAR as a subsidiary affiliate of the Macon Division. It was established to take over operation of the former standard-gauge transit line from Milledgeville to the state mental hospital, located just outside of and to the south of town in the Midway community. Including all its short branches or spurs, this dead-end line totaled about five and a half miles in length, although the length of the main route was about four miles. It ran within the right-of-way of Wayne Street from a junction with the MCAG on the north side of town, continuing south right through the business district, crossing a trestle over Fishing Creek, and continuing south to the hospital.

The line was developed and earlier operated by the Milledgeville & Asylum Dummy Railroad Company, which was founded in 1888, but sold in bankruptcy to the Old Capitol Railway Company in 1893. The newly incorporated Milledgeville Railway purchased the latter company at a second bankruptcy auction, and then leased operation of the line to the GAR.

Although the line was conceived and begun as a street railway for transporting passengers and workers to the state hospital, at some point passenger service ended and the focus became hauling freight. Despite the nuisances of street running within Wayne Street, the GAR saw it as a link



to provide service to the asylum facility's huge campus and physical plant, to which the railroad could haul coal and freight. Finally, in 1962, the City of Milledgeville requested that the rails be removed; the following year, the last Milledgeville Railway train rolled through the downtown streets. The southern half of the GAR's Macon branch, stretching from the west side of downtown Milledgeville to the eastern outskirts of Macon, was abandoned in 1985.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the GAR helped complete and soon thereafter controlled the MCAG. From its junction with the GAR "Main Stem" on the west side of Camak, the MCAG traveled southwesterly to Macon on what was essentially a northeast-southwest axis. Along the way, it passed through the cities, towns, and communities of Warrenton, Mayfield, Culverton, Sparta, Devereux, Milledgeville, Haddock, James, and other small station stops. As such, this railroad travelled approximately on east Georgia's Fall Line, as evidenced by its passage through Milledgeville to Macon, the most inland navigable cities on the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers, respectively. The wood-frame depot at Mayfield and the brick depot at Sparta are the only two that are still extant along the route; both still stand on their original sites, but both are abandoned and dilapidated.

For the most part, the MCAG runs roughly parallel to the routes of SR 80 from Camak south to Warrenton, then SR 16 from Warrenton southwest to Sparta, and from Sparta through Milledgeville to Haddock along the general course of SR 22. From Haddock, the railroad corridor turns south and away from the SR 22 corridor, passing through the James community before more closely aligning with the routes of SR 49 and then, in turn, SR 57 into Macon. In all of the above cases, the state highway roadbeds do sometimes run close alongside or in view of the MCAG railbed, but not routinely. From Camak to Warrenton, SR 80 does follow along the east side of the railroad, and SR 16 between Culverton and Sparta runs beside the rail line, to its south.

The northern half of the MCAG route is still fully intact and in regular use, from Camak to the west side of downtown Milledgeville, by CSX

Transportation, the GAR's successor. There, at the crossing of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, it interchanges with Norfolk Southern's former Central of Georgia (COG) branches to Gordon and Eatonton. In fact, through this short stretch between MLK Jr. Drive (formerly Gwinnett Street) and Garrett Way, it shares a short segment of right-of-way that was first acquired and developed by the COG's two older, antebellum-period subsidiaries, the Milledgeville & Gordon Railroad and the Eatonton Branch Railroad. It is not the only time the MCAG line utilized existing railroad right-of-way or trackage rights on an antebellum COG corridor. The MCAG actually enters Macon on the circa 1843 alignment of the original COG mainline between Savannah and Macon. Along with the COG's own former Macon & Northern branch line from Macon to Athens, the MCAG line ties into the COG mainline at a complicated three-way junction at the Mogul community. Mogul, sited in eastern Bibb County at the railroads' crossings of Masseyville Road, was alternatively referred to as Masseyville or Massey's Mill on early timetables of the MCAG and the Macon & Northern. Just east of Mogul/Masseyville, the MCAG actually crossed the COG mainline, and then tied into the COG on its south side, running between the wye junction of the COG mainline and the COG's Athens branch. Farther east, the MCAG and the Macon & Northern then also crossed each other, in the vicinity of Jones County's Postell community.

Between the MCAG's intersections with COG branches on the west side of Milledgeville and its intersection with the COG mainline and Athens branch at Mogul on the east side of Macon, the southern half of the former MCAG was abandoned by CSX in 1985; the tracks, ties, and ballast for this section of the line were removed some time after. The relative recentness of the abandonment has allowed most of the alignment to remain discernable on current aerial imagery as a continuous corridor, to the degree that no lengths are indeterminate or indistinguishable. For much of its length through this area, the rail corridor follows the Fishing Creek stream valley and, in so doing, stays in the middle of and away from the two Georgia state highway routes from Milledgeville to Macon, SR 22 and SR 49. Hence, the rail corridor can only be accessed at crossing roads. Nevertheless, these multiple crossings, such as those as Baldwin County's CR 72, CR 69, and CR 92 allow the corridor and railbed to be routinely located and viewed. At



each of these crossings and others, the corridor is still clearly evident within its landscape. It is typically kept clear and appears to have been adapted for much of its length to serve as unpaved local access roads, trails, or driveways for the surrounding landowners. It is not known if CSX Transportation may still own all or part of the MCAG right-of-way.

From the west side of Milledgeville to the junction at Mogul, only two obstacles or disturbances were identified that disrupt the linear continuity of the MCAG corridor's original alignment. The first is the recently constructed US 441/SR 29 bypass around the west side of Milledgeville; the four travel lanes and median of this new highway corridor have cut across the rail corridor. The second development that has impacted the MCAG railbed is the expansion of an aggregate mining quarry adjacent to the Lite-N-Tie Road crossing in Jones County, near the Postell community. If still intact, the original route of the line would pass through the middle of the expanded quarry site.

In one respect, the route of the former Milledgeville Railway spur branch was not as evident within its present landscape as the MCAG mainline. From another perspective, its essential linear continuity is nearly as intact, for the surface street right-of-way of Milledgeville's Wayne Street also served as the rail corridor for much of the length of the Milledgeville Railway. South of Wayne Street's crossing of Fishing Creek, where the railway diverged from the street right-of-way, the precise route of the spur line as it approached Midway and the state asylum campus was not clearly evident, or was not accessible. In any event, no traces of the Midway segment of the former Milledgeville Railway were located during ground-level field surveys.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Macon Branch or Macon Road, which originated as the Macon & Augusta Railroad (MCAG), was owned and operated by the GAR for 105 years. Therefore, the MCAG was evaluated as a component line and for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register-eligibility of the GAR system. The GAR is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation, Commerce, Community Planning and Development,

Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage - Black, and Military, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering.

The MCAG was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's Macon branch between the GAR's own Main Stem and Macon, the MCAG does contribute to the significance of its parent GAR system. From its completion in 1873 to the present, this "Macon Road" has played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. It benefitted the region south of the GAR's Main Stem in these areas by giving shippers and passengers located in Warren, Hancock, Baldwin, and Jones counties new outlets and points of connection to the GAR and onward to other connecting lines in Milledgeville and Macon. It thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the "Fall Line" region around Warrenton, Sparta, and Milledgeville. Many of the MCAG railcars undoubtedly carried cotton, once the agricultural staple of the region, but other common freight loads would have likely included felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the MCAG opened up the lands of these four counties to expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mill operations. For all these reasons, it achieved potential significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation for being not only a productive component and major division of the GAR system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of east central Georgia through the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Moreover, the line directly connected three of Georgia's Fall Line cities, Augusta, Milledgeville, and Macon, which were also three of the state's largest and most important cities during the period when the line was conceived and constructed, 1859 to 1873.

The MCAG was also evaluated for its potential to contribute to the significance of the GAR system under Criterion C, in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. Although a substantial portion of the railroad's rails and ties were removed at some point following the abandonment of the southern half of the line in 1985, this part of the alignment remains almost fully intact, and is physically represented by the intact form of the railroad's remnant sections of built up railbed and rail embankments. In



conjunction with the fully intact and in-service section of the original line from Camak to Milledgeville, most of the railbed is physically and visually present in the landscape and still conveys its historically significant design characteristics. In part due to the maintained rural nature of east central Georgia, the essential linear quality and continuity of the MCAG has been mostly preserved, either as undisturbed rail embankments, repurposed trails, or even as active sections of track. The railroad thus remains a good and generally intact example of rail engineering and construction during the second half of the nineteenth century, within the topographic context of the gently rolling terrain and rural landscape of the Fall Line region of east central Georgia. Moreover, the line's extant depots at Mayfield and Sparta are, both individually and collectively, good, intact examples of masonry and wood-frame depot architecture used by railroads in Georgia from the post-Civil War period of the nineteenth century. They both contribute to the GAR system's full complement of remaining depots, and help it present both a state and local level of significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the MCAG contributes to the significance of the GAR system, and thus its National Register eligibility, under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, and under Criterion C in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The MCAG corridor is still able to represent a good example of a major, division-level branch railroad from the second half of the nineteenth century.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

The MCAG has been determined to possess good integrity in the areas of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to retain a fair degree of integrity in the areas of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad alignment has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As almost all of its alignment and railbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, despite the abandonment of service over approximately half its length and the subsequent removal of rails, ties, and ballast from this abandoned section, the resource still maintains a substantive level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The

railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association, as it conveys its linear and continuous physical characteristics as a historic railroad line. An exception is the Milledgeville Railway spur line, which could not be located during field survey and appears to have lost physical integrity.

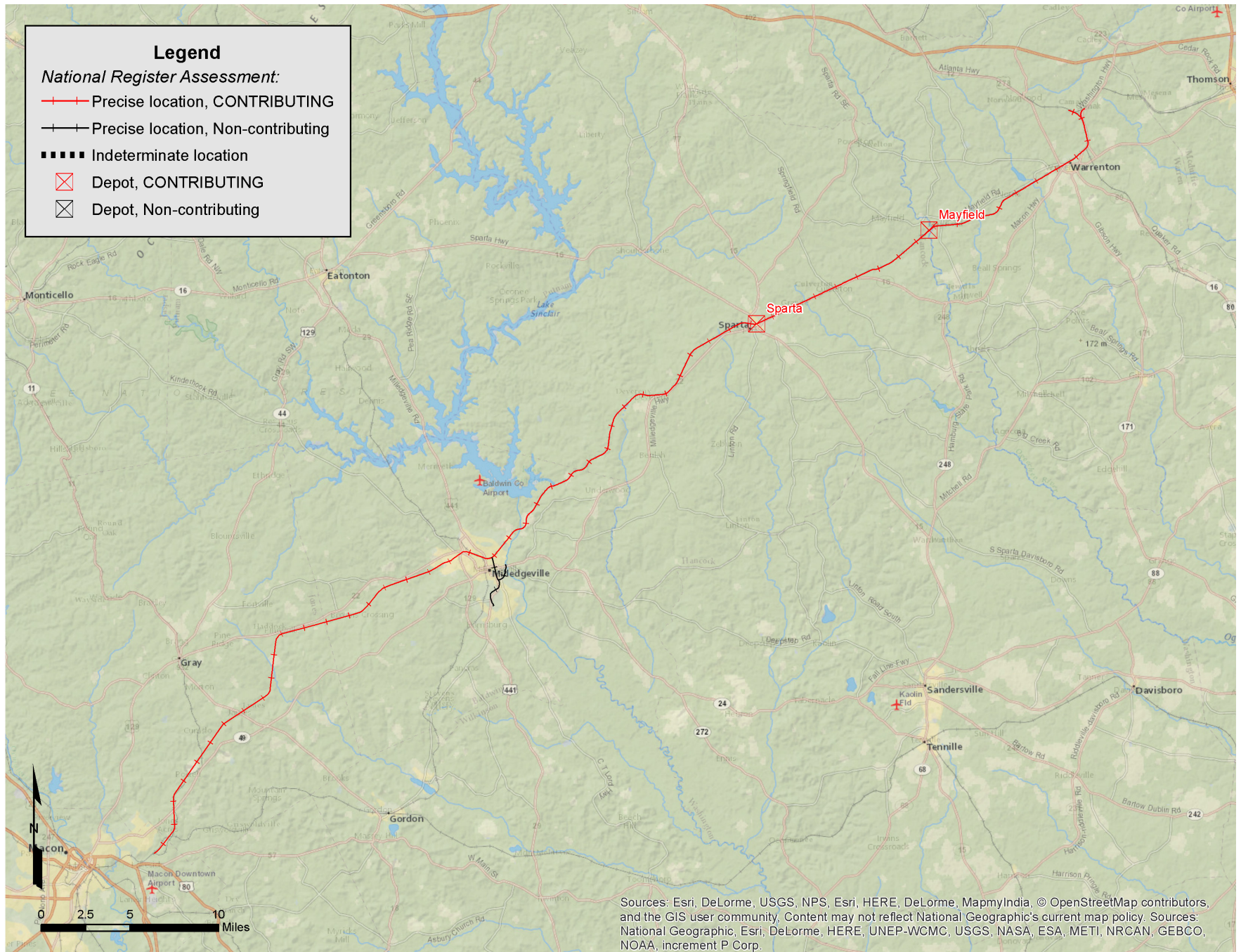
## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

The proposed National Register boundary for the MCAG corresponds to the railroad's historic rights-of-way, and includes both the active and abandoned sections of this former Macon branch line of the GAR system. This proposed boundary contains all National Register-qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and includes the railroad's currently in service or abandoned sections of alignment, consisting, in both circumstances, of the railbed and other elements of the rail resource, such as any extant cuts and built-up grades. The proposed boundary also projects out from the rail right-of-way, as necessary, to include the railroad line's depots in Mayfield and Sparta; both still stand at their original sites adjacent to and alongside the right-of-way of the still active line. The Milledgeville Railway spur line is a non-contributing feature and excluded from the boundary.

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, and Matt McDaniel





MCAG: Resource Location Map





MCAG: Mayfield depot, Hancock County



MCAG: Little Ogeechee River, Hancock County



MCAG: Sparta depot, Hancock County



MCAG: Main Street, Devereux, Hancock County





MCAG: North Columbia Street, Milledgeville



MCAG: North Columbia Street crossing, Milledgeville



MCAG: MLK Jr. Drive, GAR track in foreground, Milledgeville



MCAG: Wilson Road at Browns Crossing, Baldwin County





MCAG: Bowen Hill Road crossing, Haddock, Jones County



MCAG: James Road crossing, James, Jones County



MCAG: Lite-N-Tie Road crossing, Postell vicinity, Jones County



MCAG: Masseyville Road crossing at Mogul Junction, Bibb County



# WALTON RAILROAD (WALT)

**Other names:** Monroe Railroad; Monroe Branch Line

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Eligible (Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Active

**Current owner:** Great Walton Railroad

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Successors:** Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad; Monroe Railroad; Georgia Railroad; Seaboard System Railroad

**Location:** Social Circle to Monroe, Walton County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The ten-mile long Monroe Branch, connecting Monroe to the Georgia Railroad's mainline at Social Circle, was completed in 1880 as the Walton Railroad (WALT). Despite initially being incorporated as a separate entity, the line was operated by the Georgia Railroad (GAR), which had provided \$42,500 for its construction.

Soon after the WALT opened, the Central of Georgia's president, William M. Wadley, acquired a majority of its stock. Wadley also acquired a lease of the GAR system itself, thereby giving the Social Circle to Monroe line an integrated status as the Monroe branch line of the GAR. Last, the GAR obtained control of the Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad (GJ&S), which ran north from Monroe to Gainesville, thereby piecing together a 52-mile long through route from the GAR Main Stem (or mainline) at Social Circle all the way north to Gainesville, where connection was made to the Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line, later amalgamated into the Southern Railway. The Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway's mainline, later consolidated into the Seaboard Air Line (SAL) system, was also crossed at Jug Tavern/Winder.

First chartered on August 23, 1872, the three-foot gauge GJ&S was for several years a railroad only on paper as its promoters struggled to attract investors. Finally, in the spring of 1883, it was able to open from Gainesville to Hoschton. By the following spring its western leg was finished to Monroe,

as was a 13-mile long eastern leg from Belmont (near Talmo) to Jefferson, thus validating the railroad's name. The completion of the two-pronged southern routes of the GJ&S had been accomplished under the control of Wadley's successors and the other GAR lessees (Wadley had died in 1882), which had purchased a majority interest in the GJ&S in 1883. On March 11, 1884, the GAR lessees placed the Walton Railroad under the management and operations of the GJ&S.

In the 1894 edition of The Official Railway List, the GJ&S reported operating 65 total miles of railroad with 4 locomotives, 4 passenger cars, and 37 freight and miscellaneous cars. It was not until 1913 that the tracks of the GJ&S's western leg (the Belmont-to-Monroe branch) were widened to standard gauge.

In March of 1897, the combined enterprise, including the GJ&S and the WALT, entered an extended period of receivership. The GAR's 1900 annual report explains that, in 1881, the GAR and/or its lessees provided endorsements on the bonded debt for both the WALT and the GJ&S, with a second mortgage for the GJ&S from 1883. In 1904, most of the GJ&S trackage was sold under foreclosure to the new Gainesville Midland Railway, which was organized by a group of Savannah investors; the Gainesville Midland would eventually be bought by the SAL in 1959. However, William Wadley's efforts at creating operational coordination and logical termini for a long



bridge route through the region were, in this case, partially undone, as the former WALT was sold separately to Jacob Phinizy. With the GAR's backing, Phinizy incorporated the Monroe Railroad as the new titleholder for the Social Circle to Monroe line. Although once again a semi-independent entity, the Monroe Railroad was operated as a subsidiary of the GAR.

The Monroe Railroad is notated as a component line of the GAR system by an official timetable of December 9, 1917 and published in the 1918 edition of Official Guide of the Railways. According to this printed schedule, only one regular stop was made between Social Circle and Monroe, at the former Gresham community, now called Whitney.

Not long afterwards, the Monroe Railroad was fully absorbed into the GAR parent organization. The line is still intact and in service. Since 1987, these ten miles of track have been operated by a short line railroad company called the Great Walton Railroad, whose offices are located in Social Circle. The Great Walton Railroad is associated with two other short line operations, the Hartwell Railroad and The Athens Line.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the GAR helped develop and originally controlled the WALT, which was eventually operated as a subsidiary after periods of ownership by other railroads. From its junction with the mainline at Social Circle, the branch line traveled, on what was essentially a north-south orientation, north to Monroe. For the most part, the line now generally runs along the west side of SR 11, except within the cities of Social Circle and Monroe. In both cases, the rail corridor runs along the east side of SR 11, which is referred to as North Cherokee Street in Social Circle and South Broad Street in Monroe. The wye junction with the mainline occurs beside Social Circle's extant depot, and turns north to run parallel to and east of Poplar Avenue.

For decades, the line offered connections at Monroe to both the Bostwick/Greene County Railroad's line between Monroe and Apalachee and the Gainesville, Jefferson & Southern Railroad/Gainesville Midland Railway's western leg from Gainesville to Monroe. These possibilities for transfers at

the branch's northern end were ended by the closures and abandonments of these two railroad lines, in 1942 and 1947-48, respectively.

Now a dead-end branch of the GAR's mainline, the WALT is now owned and operated by Great Walton Railroad. The northern end of the tracks terminate along the east side of Monroe's Georgia Railroad depot, which is still extant at its original site. The depot is located on the north side of Davis Street, between its intersections with South Lumpkin Street and South Madison Avenue.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Walton Railroad (WALT) is a component of the GAR system; the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Military, and under Criterion C for significance in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The Monroe Branch, which originated as the WALT and has operated as a subsidiary feeder line to the GAR system for the entirety of its existence, was evaluated for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system.

The WALT was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's de facto Monroe branch between the GAR's own Main Stem and Monroe, the WALT contributes to the significance of the GAR system. From 1880 to the present, this "Monroe Branch Line" has played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. It benefitted the region north of the GAR's Main Stem in these areas by giving shippers and passengers located in Walton County and beyond towards Barrow and Hall counties new outlets and points of connection to the GAR and other mainlines. It thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the region around Monroe and between Atlanta, Athens, and Gainesville.

It can be inferred from the line's terminus next to large cotton warehouses and cottonseed oil fertilizer plants in Monroe - as is shown on the Sanborn Map Company's Fire Insurance Maps for Monroe from June, 1916 - that



many of the WALT railcars carried cotton or derivative products, such as cotton seeds or cottonseed oil, for much of its early history. The residents of Monroe, which was originally bypassed by the GAR mainline, also undoubtedly enjoyed the rapidity and ease with which items and products could also be imported into the city via train.

For these reasons, the WALT also achieved significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the GAR system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of northeast and east central Georgia through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The WALT has also been determined to contribute to the GAR system's eligibility under Criterion C, due to its significance in the areas of Engineering and Architecture. The trackage for the Monroe branch line is still intact and in regular, albeit somewhat limited, use. The WALT's railbed is thereby representative of the state of railroad design and engineering, including alignment, grading, and construction during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Components of the original rail infrastructure of rails, ties, trestles, and bridges may have been replaced over the years, in the course of regular operational and safety upgrades, repairs, and improvements. Although these general modifications may diminish the integrity and significance of the railroad's parts and components as physical artifacts, they in no way lessen the significance or integrity presented by the WALT's retained route alignment and intact corridor.

Also, the WALT corridor still retains two of its three depots, at Social Circle and Monroe. These two constituted its two most important, terminal stations; the Social Circle depot was sited along the GAR Main Stem, but was also utilized for the Monroe Branch. These two depots are historically significant, not only as examples of the high survival rate of the line's depots, but also because both employ brick bearing walls. Thus, these two depots are, both individually and collectively, good, intact examples of masonry depot architecture used by railroads in Georgia from the late-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. They both contribute to the GAR system's full complement of remaining depots and help that system present both a state and local level of significance in the area of Architecture.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

A ground-level field survey of the area of the WALT, also referenced as the Monroe Branch of the GAR, has determined that the line possesses integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The railroad has not been relocated, and its alignment remains substantially unchanged since its construction; therefore, the resource retains integrity of location and setting. As the alignment and roadbed, including cuts and grades, remains intact, and other materials have been upgraded to enable continued operation of the line, the resource also substantially retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The railroad also retains integrity of feeling and association as it conveys its physical characteristics as a historic railroad line.

## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

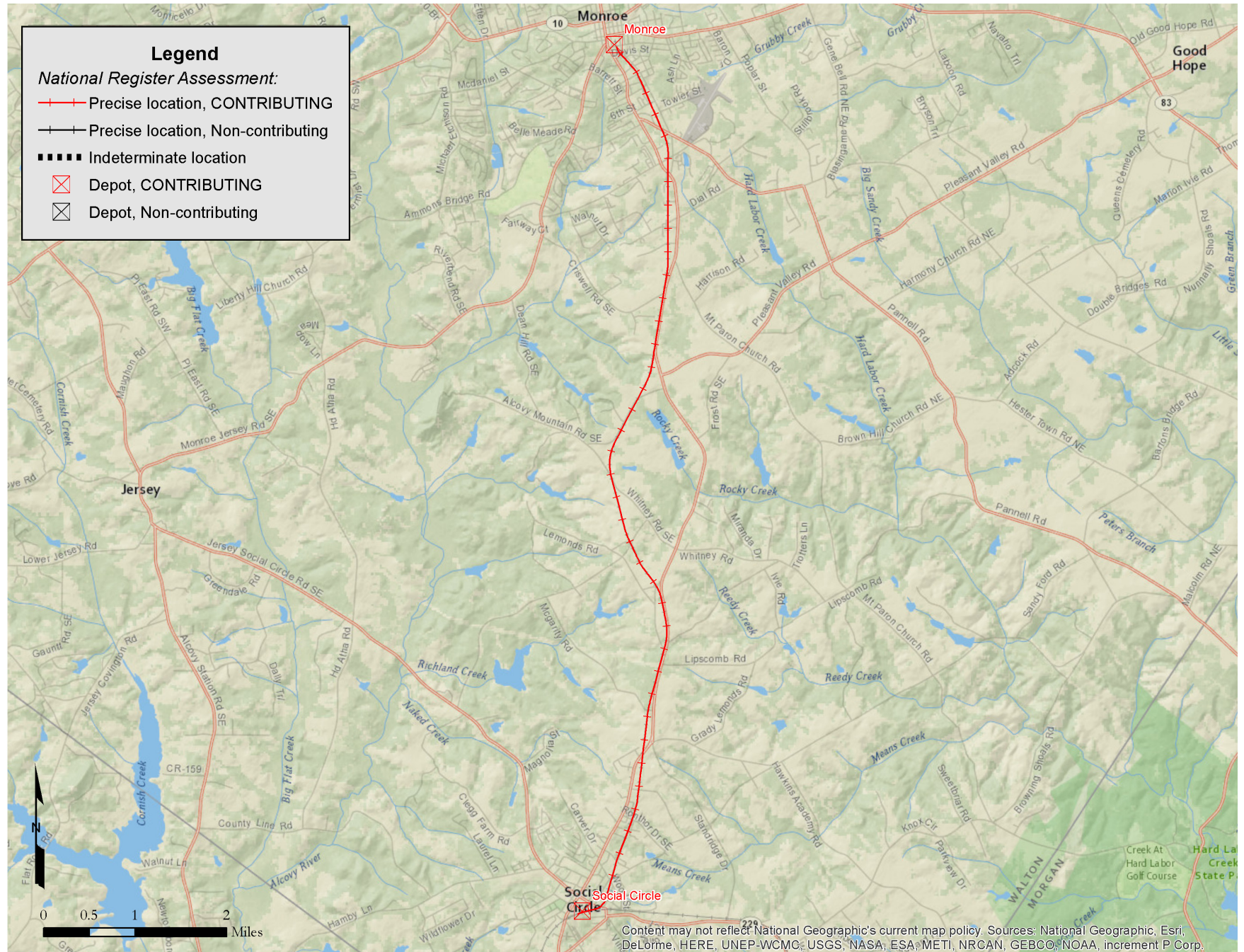
The WALT's proposed National Register boundary corresponds to the current and historic railroad corridor rights-of-way of the line's entirety. These corridor rights-of-way extend the full length of the WALT branch line from Social Circle through the Whitney community to Monroe. The proposed boundaries contain all National Register qualifying characteristics and features of the resource and consists of the WALT railroad corridor's fully intact, unbroken alignment, which includes the railbeds, level crossings, trestles, and other elements of the rail resource, such as cuts and built-up grades.

At locations along the corridor where intact depots are now located outside of rail rights-of-way, but immediately adjacent to them, the proposed boundary projects from the rail right-of-way to include the depot's footprint, as well as any intact platforms or docks, any affiliated structures such as water cisterns or coaling towers, and any intact sidings or rail yards. The Monroe and Social Circle depots are considered contributing features.

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, Erin Murphy, George Rounds, and Chris Mroczka





WALT: Resource Location Map





WALT: Social Circle depot, Walton County



WALT: Hightower Trail crossing, Social Circle



WALT: SR 11 crossing, Social Circle



WALT: SR 11 crossing, Monroe, Walton County





WALT: Monroe depot



WALT: Terminus at Midland Avenue, Monroe



# UNION POINT & WHITE PLAINS (UPWP)

**Other names:** N/A

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Mixed: Eligible (Contributing) and Ineligible (Non-contributing) features

**Physical Status:** Abandoned and dismantled

**Current owner:** N/A

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Successors:** N/A

**Location:** Union Point to White Plains, Greene County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Chartered in 1886, the Union Point & White Plains Railroad (UPWP) began operating from Union Point, on the Georgia Railroad (GAR) main stem, southward through Siloam to White Plains in 1889. Since Union Point was also the departure point from the GAR mainline onto the northbound Athens branch line, trains could theoretically travel directly between White Plains and Athens.

From its earliest years, the 13-mile UPWP was controlled by the GAR, to the point that the railroad served as a de facto branch line, and is outlined as such by an official GAR system timetable from December 9, 1917. The Georgia Railroad's 1900 annual report explains that the UPWP was a subsidiary unit that was not only operated by the GAR, but was also financed in large part by bonds endorsed by the GAR parent (and its lessees). The entirety of the line was abandoned in 1927.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the GAR helped develop and fully controlled this short, dead-end railroad branch, which always operated as a subsidiary. Since it never offered any other connections to other railroads at its southern end, it was always a component part of the GAR system, and served as a feeder line, or extended spur line, to the GAR's so-called main stem. The entirety

of the branch line is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

From its junction with the GAR mainline at Union Point's southwestern edge, the UPWP traveled on what was essentially a north-south orientation through Siloam to White Plains. However, since the railroad followed a winding path to more easily negotiate the area's topological conditions, long stretches of the route were actually on a northwest-southeast axis. At various points, it ran parallel or close to Cato Road, SR 77/Siloam-Union Point Road, SR 15/77 between Siloam and White Plains, and, last, Eley Road, Crawfordville Road, and East Main Street, on White Plains east side. Also, within the outskirts northeast of White Plains, an unpaved county road called Railroad Avenue now utilizes the former rail right-of-way.

From Siloam's southeast corner, the railbed ran right along the north side of what is now SR 15/77, south to its divergence away from the present highway corridor to follow alongside Eley Road. The wood-framed Siloam Depot and a row of three consecutive wood-framed, residential section houses still stand in a line a short distance from the highway's north side, just north and east of the former rail right-of-way. The former depot is sited just north of the tee intersection of English School Circle into SR 15/77, and the sequence of section houses are sited just south of the intersection.



But just as evidence of the railbed can be located and some associated railroad buildings, such as those described above, are still extant along the rail corridor, there are more numerous instances of the railbed's disturbance and/or eradication. The gently rolling to hilly terrain through which the former railroad passed is still rural, but it is heavily cultivated, either for row crops or for pine plantations. In many such cases, the preparation for planting, or the repeated plowing of agricultural fields, have diminished or eliminated the remains of the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the UPWP rail corridor. Certainly, traces can be discovered, but the entirety of the former alignment is now separated into disrupted, non-contiguous sections. On balance, the UPWP railbed no longer clearly and readily conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

### **NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS**

The Union Point & White Plains Railroad (UPWP) is a component of the GAR system; the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Military, and under Criterion C for significance in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The UPWP, which operated as a subsidiary feeder line to the GAR system for all of its forty years of operation, was evaluated for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system.

The UPWP was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's de facto White Plains branch between the GAR's own main stem and Siloam and White Plains, the UPWP has the potential to contribute to the significance of the GAR system. For four decades, this "White Plains Branch Line" played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. It benefitted the region south of the GAR's mainline and north and west of the Macon Branch, in all three of these areas of significance, by giving shippers and passengers located in southern Greene County and parts of nearby

Hancock and Taliaferro counties new outlets and points of connection to the GAR and thus access to other mainlines. It thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the region. Many of the UPWP railcars undoubtedly carried cotton, but other common freight loads would have consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the UPWP opened up the lands of these three counties to greatly expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mill operations. For all these reasons, it also achieved the potential for significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the GAR system, but also a part of the interconnected web of railroads that provided thorough coverage of east central Georgia through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The UPWP was also evaluated for its potential to contribute to the significance of the GAR system under Criterion C. Because the UPWP's rail corridor has been broken and interrupted at numerous places along its course since its abandonment in 1927 and the subsequent removal of its tracks, ties, and ballast, it no longer conveys significance in the area of Engineering. Although the railbed is in place and evident in the landscape at certain specific points along its path, the essential linearity of the UPWP is no longer fully intact or visible. As a consequence, the UPWP no longer readily presents its historically significant design characteristics, and does not represent a good example of either a rural, short-line railroad or of a component branch line from the early twentieth century.

Nonetheless, the UPWP's substantially intact Siloam Depot and its associated section houses are good examples of their type. The Siloam Depot is a good example of wood-framed depot architecture employed by railroads in Georgia during the early twentieth century. It contributes to the GAR system's full complement of remaining depots and helps that system present both a state and local level of significance in the area of Architecture. In addition, the rare and intact section houses are also good examples and demonstrative of worker housing provided by railroad companies during the same era. As such, the UPWP's extant buildings contribute to the GAR's significance in the area of Architecture.



As described above, the former UPWP corridor indicates potential significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, but the current, largely disturbed physical condition and disrupted, disjointed state of significant portions of its former length does not allow it to convey this significance, as most of the line now lacks sufficient integrity, as is described above and hereafter. Due to the diminished integrity of the UPWP railroad corridor, it does not contribute to the GAR system's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, as indicated, the UPWP's Siloam Depot and associated section houses contribute to the GAR system's National Register eligibility under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

A ground-level field survey of the UPWP was conducted, as was a review of available historic and current aerial imagery. Along the abandoned right-of-way that was accessible to the surveyors, some remaining evidence of the railroad's former railbed or infrastructure, including cuts and raised embankments, was found, despite the abandonment of much of its length and the subsequent removal of rails and ties. Also, as detailed above, the former Siloam Depot and a row of three UPWP section houses still stand at their original locations alongside the railbed to help attest to the line's course just southeast of Siloam.

However, this same review indicated that numerous sections of the railroad line have been disturbed and disrupted by active cultivation of fields through which the alignment passed, or by the widespread and ongoing implementation of silviculture. In many such cases, the repeated plowing for the preparation and practice of agriculture, or for the maintenance of pine plantations, has erased or diminished the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the corridor. Although some traces are extant and discernable within the landscape, the former alignment is now separated into many non-contiguous sections.

Accordingly, it has been determined that much of the length of the UPWP does not retain integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, except as relates specifically to the four aforementioned standing buildings. Therefore, on balance, the UPWP railbed, from Union Point to White Plains, no longer conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

Although altered, as components of the GAR system, the UPWP's Siloam Depot and its associated three section houses remain in their original locations and are substantially intact. Therefore, they retain integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship. The removal of the railroad diminishes the buildings' integrity of setting, but they are still discernible as historic, rail-related support buildings and thus retain integrity of feeling and association.

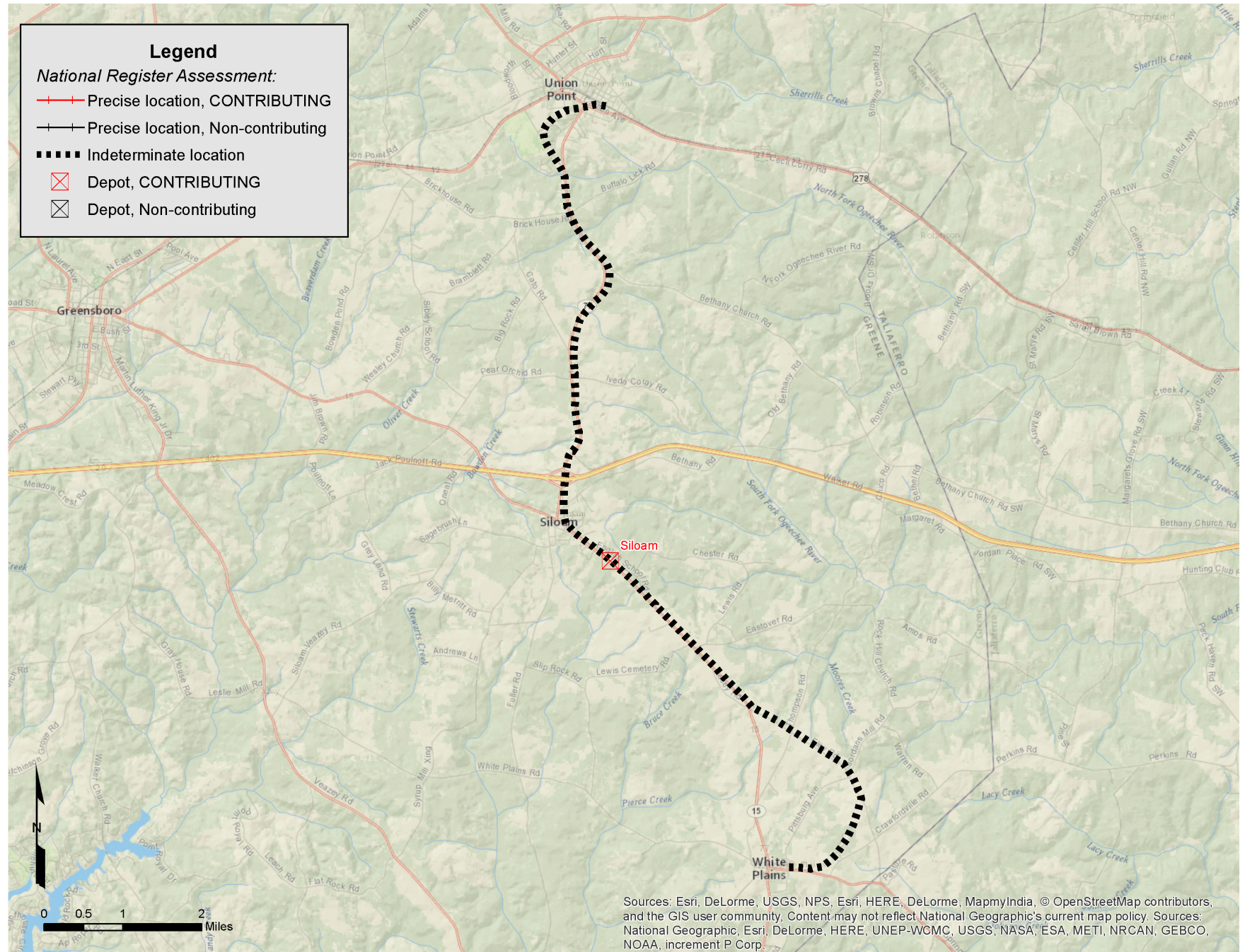
## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

The UPWP corridor has been determined to not contribute to the GAR system's National Register eligibility. Nonetheless, the UPWP's Siloam Depot and the nearby complement of three extant section houses are considered to contribute to the significance and integrity of the GAR system. The proposed discontinuous boundaries for these specific buildings consist of their footprints in plan.

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, and Matt McDaniel





UPWP: Resource Location Map





UPWP: MAIN at Union Point, Greene County



UPWP: Siloam vicinity, Greene County



UPWP: Siloam depot



UPWP: Section house, Siloam





UPWP: Section house, Siloam



UPWP: Section house, Siloam



# ELBERTON & EASTERN RAILROAD (ELBE)

**Other names:** N/A

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Not Eligible (Non-Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Abandoned and dismantled

**Current owner:** N/A

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Successors:** N/A

**Location:** Washington, Wilkes County to  
Elberton, Elbert County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Chartered in June of 1911, the Elberton & Eastern Railway Company (ELBE) built a 22-mile line from Elberton south to Tignall, in Wilkes County, in 1912-13. As is revealed by its name, which recognizes Elberton as its principal terminal point, the initial purpose behind its construction, and original emphasis of its service, was to serve as a feeder line to the Seaboard Air Line's (SAL's) mainline route (originally constructed as the Georgia, Carolina & Northern) between Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina.

This primary emphasis on being a feeder line north from Tignall to the SAL in Elberton was short-lived. Despite the retention of its original name (apart from a conversion to the appended moniker, 'Railroad'), the ELBE's business purpose was refocused in late December of 1916, when the lessees of the Georgia Railroad (GAR) purchased the existing rail line. They soon began to extend it the 13 miles south from Tignall to Washington, and a connection there with the 17-mile long GAR Washington Branch. It was thought that the resulting assemblage could offer new appeal as a 52-mile long, north-south bridge route between the GAR mainline (at Barnett) from Atlanta to Augusta, and the Atlanta to Charlotte SAL mainline. Attesting to the new influence of the GAR and, by extension, of Washington over Elberton, is a sequence of the route's official timetables. The first, released

by the ELBE in 1918, denotes Washington as the location of the railroad's local offices. By 1929, the railroad's general offices, housing its president/general manager and its freight agent, had been relocated to the GAR headquarters in Augusta.

In Washington, it also connected to another similarly independent but affiliated GAR feeder line, the Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH), which ran east/northeast to Lincolnton. The two companies appear to have shared a general manager and an auditor, and they probably thus shared offices as well. These same parties are named in the two railroads' respective entries in the October 1917 Official Railway Equipment Register, as is the fact that both companies were then headquartered in Washington.

Despite this more fully developed utility, connectivity, and market reach, the ELBE's entire line was closed and abandoned in the midst of the Great Depression, in late 1933, and finally dismantled in 1935.

## DESCRIPTION

Until its abandonment in 1933, this branch line diverged from the northern end of the GAR's Washington Branch Line, which joined the GAR's mainline at the Barnett community. Not only did it enable transfers to and from the WASH at Washington, and tie into the SAL at Elberton,



it also offered an easy connection to the Southern Railway's Elberton Air Line route, which ran northwesterly from Elberton to Toccoa. Due to these connections and its location, the ELBE actually constituted the center section of northeast Georgia's easternmost bridge route. The constituent lines comprising the corridor together stretched, end-on-end, from the GAR Main Stem at Barnett all the way to a junction with the Southern Railway's Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line at Toccoa, passing along the way through Washington, Tignall, Elberton, and Royston. The bridge route's connected lines interchanged with three major, east-west oriented main lines, the GAR, the SAL, and the Southern. Moreover, with a short run eastward to Camak on the GAR Main Stem, from the Washington Branch's southern end at Barnett, this assembled bridge route could afford additional southerly travel to Waynesboro and Savannah, via transfer to the Savannah & Atlanta Railway. Together, this route was, for the fifteen or so years of operation of the ELBE's fullest extent, the most direct route within Georgia running parallel to the Savannah River – and thus near the state line – from southeast Georgia to northeast Georgia.

Throughout its length, the ELBE ran along an alignment similar to that of the SR 17, but, as it wended its way, it crossed back and forth over that roadbed. Although it ran roughly parallel to the path of today's highway, the rail corridor frequently maintains, for much of its length, enough distance apart to stay out of sight of the highway and to remain inaccessible. According to a July 1929 timetable published in the Official Guide of the Railways, ELBE trains made stops at the following six stations between Washington and Elberton: Tignall, Mallorysville, Norman, Bell, Fortsonia, and Cauthen. Two of these stations, at Mallorysville and Bell, were designated as flag stops only.

Throughout the 22 miles of the ELBE's former course, certain sections of its consistently winding route are faint but still discernable on current aerial imagery, marked alternatively by narrow, curvilinear tree lines or the oddly curved edges of cultivated fields that reveal the railbed's long radius turns. For example, the rail corridor ran through the western edges of downtown Tignall, passing beside the cemetery of Independence Methodist Church and continuing across Independence, Anderson, and West Wooten streets on a

northwest-southeast axis that carried it across today's SR 17/South Hulin Avenue south of town. Along Tignall's west side, a variety of cuts and raised embankments were left behind after the railroad's abandonment; although now overgrown, these earthworks can still be found and are recognizable. A short industrial spur line east of downtown Elberton and close to the SR 17/SR 72 junction could be a reused remnant of the original ELBE corridor.

But just as evidence of the railbed and rail corridor can be located, more routine are instances of the disturbance and/or eradication of the railbed. The gently rolling to hilly terrain through which the former railroad passed is still rural, but it is heavily cultivated, either for row crops or for pine plantations. In many such cases, the preparation for planting, or the repeated plowing of agricultural fields, have destroyed the remains of the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the ELBE rail corridor. Traces can be found, but the entirety of the former alignment is now separated into disrupted, non-contiguous sections. On balance, the ELBE railbed no longer convey its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Elberton & Eastern Railroad (ELBE) is a component of the GAR system; the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Military, and under Criterion C for significance in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The ELBE, which operated as an independent but closely affiliated feeder line to the GAR system for most of its twenty short years of operation, was evaluated for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system.

The ELBE was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's de facto Elberton Branch between the north end of the GAR's own Washington Branch and Elberton, the ELBE has the potential to contribute to the GAR's significance. For two decades, this bridge line played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of



Commerce and Transportation. It benefited the region north of the GAR's mainline and its Washington Branch, in all four of these areas, by giving shippers and passengers located in Wilkes, Elbert, and Lincoln counties and greater northeast Georgia outlets and points of connection to the GAR, SAL, and other mainlines, and thus contributed to the overall prosperity of the region.

In the area of Commerce, the ELBE facilitated the growth of agricultural exports from this part of Georgia, especially cotton, but many of the shipments on the ELBE also consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, and other timber products. The ELBE helped open up the lands of Wilkes, Elbert, and Lincoln counties to greatly expanded and expedited operations of local logging companies and saw mill operations, for it offered a faster, more efficient means for lumber companies and other enterprises in these northeast Georgia counties to ship their products to larger metropolitan markets. Although Elberton was already served by other railroads, the ELBE also undoubtedly aided the exportation of the monuments, slabs, and other products of the granite quarrying, processing, and finishing industries in the area that have afforded the city the title "Granite Capital of the World." For all these reasons, the ELBE also achieved the potential for significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only, for a time, a productive component of and contributor to the GAR system, but also for being a part of the interconnected rail web that provided thorough coverage of northeast and east central Georgia.

The ELBE was also evaluated for its potential to contribute to the GAR's significance under Criterion C. However, because the ELBE's rail corridor has been broken and interrupted at numerous places along its course since its 1933 abandonment and the subsequent removal of its tracks, ties, and ballast, it no longer conveys significance in the area of Engineering. Although the railbed is in place and evident in the landscape at certain specific points along its path, the essential linearity of the ELBE is no longer fully intact or visible. As a consequence, the ELBE no longer presents its historically significant design characteristics, and does not represent a good example of either a rural, short-line railroad or a component branch line from the early twentieth century.

Also, since no former ELBE depots are still extant at the former station stops either in or between Washington and Elberton, the ELBE no longer contributes to the GAR's significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the ELBE has the potential to convey significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, but the current, largely disturbed physical condition and disrupted, disjointed state of significant portions of its former length do not allow it to convey this significance, as most of the line now lacks sufficient integrity, as is described above and hereafter. Due to the diminished integrity of the ELBE railroad corridor, it does not contribute to the GAR system's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

A ground-level field survey of the area of the ELBE was conducted, as was a review of available historic and current aerial imagery. Along the abandoned right-of-way that was accessible to the surveyors, some remaining evidence of the railroad's former railbed or infrastructure, including cuts and raised embankments, was found, despite the abandonment of much of its length and the subsequent removal of rails and ties. Also, a single masonry pier still stands in the Broad River to attest to the course of the line's former bridge crossing, just southeast of the Bell/Bells Ferry community.

However, this same review indicated that numerous sections of the railroad line have been disturbed and disrupted by active cultivation of fields through which the alignment passed, or by the widespread and ongoing implementation of silviculture. In many such cases, the repeated plowing for the preparation and practice of agriculture, or for the maintenance of pine plantations, has erased or diminished the remains of the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the corridor. Although some limited traces are extant and discernable within the landscape, the former alignment is now separated into non-contiguous sections. Moreover, it appears there are no depots, warehouses, or platforms in existence.



Accordingly, it has been determined that much of the ELBE's length does not retain integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Therefore, on balance, the ELBE railbed, from Washington to Elberton, no longer conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

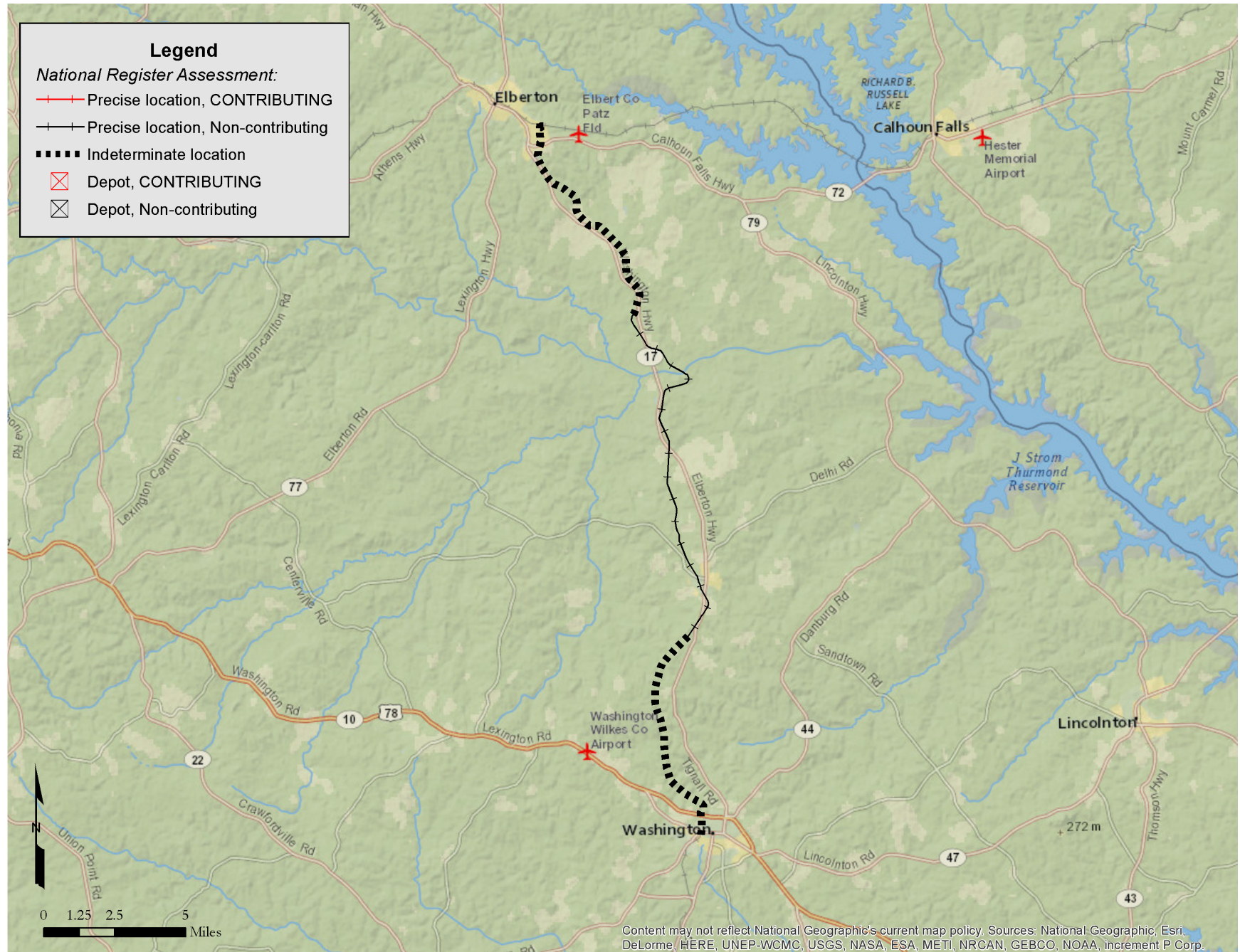
**PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY**

Not applicable

**PREPARED BY**

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, and Mike Reynolds





ELBE: Resource Location Map





ELBE: MAIN at Norman Street, Washington, Wilkes County



ELBE: SR 17 at CR 113/Norman Road, treeline is rail cut, Wilkes County



ELBE: SR17 at CR 113/Norman Road crossing, Wilkes County



ELBE: Railbed remnants, George Albea Road vicinity, Wilkes County



# WASHINGTON & LINCOLNTON RAILROAD (WASH)

**Other names:** Gulf Line Railway

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Not eligible/Non-contributing

**Physical Status:** Abandoned and dismantled

**Current owner:** N/A

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Location:** Washington, Wilkes County, to Lincolnton, Lincoln County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

The Washington & Lincolnton Railroad Company (WASH) was incorporated in May of 1914, and its approximately 20-mile line between those two namesake towns was constructed in two phases during 1916 and 1917. It was financed by the Georgia Railroad (GAR), which connected with the WASH at Washington, at the Washington Branch's northern terminus from the GAR mainline at Barnett. Despite the GAR affiliation, the WASH is not listed as one of the designated branches of the GAR system on an official 1917 company timetable. Instead, it is simply noted as a railroad connection at Washington station. Between Washington and Lincolnton, the line included stops at the communities of Logan, Quincy, Florence, Metasville, Lovelace, and Langston.

The GAR helped finance and develop this short, dead-end railroad branch, which always operated as an affiliated feeder line to the GAR's Washington Branch Line. In Washington, it also connected to another similarly affiliated feeder line to the GAR system, the Elberton & Eastern Railroad, which ran north to Tignall, Fortsonia, and Elberton. After the lessees of the Georgia Railroad purchased the four-year old Elberton & Eastern (ELBE) in 1916, the two companies appear to have shared a general manager and an auditor, and they probably thus shared offices as well. These same parties are named in the two railroads' respective entries in the 1917 Official

Railway Equipment Register, as is the fact that both companies were then headquartered in Washington.

According to the "Cultural Resources Element" of the Joint Comprehensive Plan for Lincoln County and the City of Lincolnton: 2005-2025, the railroad's 1917 completion finally gave the county's logging companies and the associated lumber mills the first ability to easily and efficiently transport their harvested timber products to outside markets. Thus, the railroad initiated a brief, timber-industry fueled economic boom through the 1920s in the county, until the stands of virgin timber began to be exhausted by the end of the decade. The dwindling forests undoubtedly played almost as large a role as the Great Depression in precipitating the premature closure of the WASH. The entirety of the WASH was abandoned in 1932.

## DESCRIPTION

Until its abandonment in 1932, the ELBE diverged from the GAR Washington Branch Line's north end, which joined the GAR mainline at Barnett. The Sanborn Map Company's 1917 Fire Insurance Maps for Washington depict the WASH veering away from a wye junction with the GAR Washington Branch and then running southeast, to loop around the far southern outskirts of Washington, the development of which far preceded the WASH. The WASH wye into the Washington Branch follows along the north side



of the curving alignment of what is now called Maxwell Mill Road, as it approaches Norman Street. A short section of the wye's trackage between the GAR Washington Branch and Norman Street is still present. It appears that the rail line traversed the grounds now occupied by Wills Memorial Hospital. The right-of-way for an as yet unrealized extension of Hospital Drive, cleared and marked on maps but not yet actually built, may utilize the former rail corridor; it stretches between Washington's Spring Street and Baltimore Road, on a southeasterly orientation, and approximates the southeasterly alignment illustrated on the Sanborn maps.

At the southeastern edge of Washington, the railroad crossed the present route of US 78/SR 17 at the Logan community, and followed along the north edge of what is now called Lincolnton Road/US 378/SR 47. At the intersection of Lincolnton Road with Metasville Road/CR 185, the line turned northeast to proceed to stops at Quincy, Florence, Metasville, and Lovelace.

Between Logan and Metasville, a small crossroads community at the CR 185 and CR 190/Metasville-Sandtown Road/Oak Grove Road intersection, the rail corridor stays exclusively on the north side of CR 185/Metasville Road. It generally runs parallel, but at enough distance to remain inaccessible for most of this stretch and stays out of sight of the highway. The long radius curves of its constantly winding route are faint but still discernable on current aerial imagery for most of this length, marked alternatively by narrow, curvilinear tree lines or the oddly curved edges of cultivated fields.

East of Metasville, the WASH's route passes through an area of intensive silviculture and dense forests. Perhaps due to the practices of these pine plantations, the WASH's alignment from the Lovelace vicinity into Lincolnton is generally less recognizable on current aerial imagery or at ground level.

Just as evidence of the extant railbed and rail corridor can be occasionally located, more routine are instances of the railbed's disturbance and/or eradication. The gently rolling to hilly terrain through which the former railroad passed is still rural, but it is heavily cultivated, either for row crops or for pine plantations. In many such cases, the preparation for planting, or the repeated plowing of agricultural fields, have destroyed the remains of the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the WASH rail corridor's continuity. Traces can be located, but the entirety of the former alignment is now separated into disrupted, non-contiguous sections. On balance, the WASH railbed no longer conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Washington & Lincolnton Railroad (WASH) is a component of the GAR system; the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Military, and under Criterion C for significance in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The WASH, which operated as an independent but closely affiliated feeder line to the GAR system through its 15 short years of operation, was evaluated for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system.

The WASH was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's de facto Lincolnton Branch between the GAR Washington Branch's north end and Lincolnton, the WASH has the potential to contribute to the GAR system's significance. For a decade and a half, this "Lincolnton Branch Line" played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. It benefitted the region north of the GAR's Main Stem and east of the Washington Branch in these areas by giving shippers and passengers located in Lincoln County and the greater vicinity of east central Georgia outlets and points of connection to the GAR and onward to other mainlines, and thus briefly contributing to the overall prosperity of the region. Many of these shipments consisted of felled timber, sawn lumber, or other timber products, for the WASH opened up the lands of Lincoln County to greatly expanded operations of local logging companies and saw mill operations. For all these reasons, it also achieved the potential for significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the GAR system, but also of the interconnected rail web that provided thorough coverage of northeast and east central Georgia.



The WASH was also evaluated for its potential to contribute to the GAR's significance under Criterion C. However, because the WASH's rail corridor has been broken and interrupted at numerous places along its course since its abandonment in 1932 and the subsequent removal of its tracks, ties, and ballast, it no longer contributes in the area of Engineering. Although the railbed is in place and evident in the landscape at certain specific points along its path, the essential linearity of the WASH is no longer fully intact or visible. As a consequence, the WASH no longer conveys its historically significant design characteristics, and does not represent a good or intact example of either a rural, short-line railroad or of a component branch line from the early twentieth century.

Also, since no former WASH depots are still extant at the former station stops either in or between Washington and Lincolnton, the WASH no longer contributes to the GAR system's significance in the area of Architecture.

As described above, the former WASH corridor has the potential to convey significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, but the current, largely disturbed physical condition and disrupted, disjointed state of significant portions of its former length do not allow it to convey this significance, as the line now lacks sufficient integrity, as is described above and hereafter. Due to the diminished integrity of the WASH railroad corridor, it does not contribute to the GAR system's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

A ground-level field survey of the area of the WASH corridor was conducted, as was a review of available historic and current aerial imagery. Along the abandoned right-of-way that was accessible to the surveyors, some remaining evidence of the railroad's former railbed or infrastructure, including raised embankments and cuts, was found, despite the abandonment of much of its length and the subsequent removal of rails and ties.

However, this same review indicated that numerous sections of the railroad line have been disturbed and disrupted by active cultivation of fields through which the alignment passed, or by the widespread and ongoing

implementation of silviculture. In many such cases, the repeated plowing for the preparation and practice of agriculture, or for the maintenance of pine plantations, has erased or diminished the remains of the railbed.

The result of these factors is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the corridor. Although some traces are extant and discernable within the landscape, the former alignment is now separated into many non-contiguous sections. Moreover, this rail alignment was not required to bridge any significant rivers during its length, so there are no remnant bridge piers attesting to the course of the former railroad, and it appears there are no depots, warehouses, or platforms in existence.

Accordingly, it has been determined that the WASH does not retain integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Therefore, on balance, the WASH railbed, from Washington to Lincolnton, no longer conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

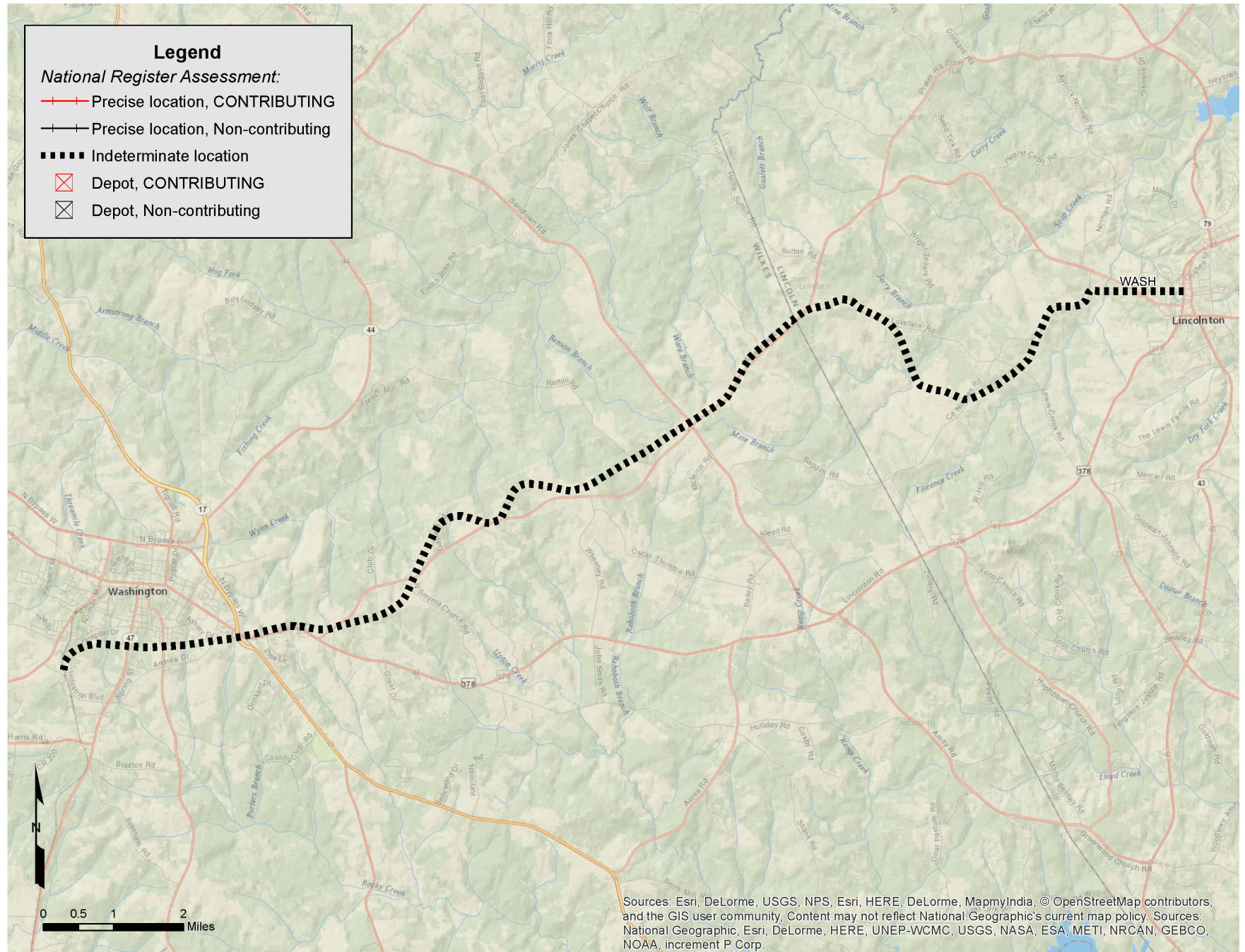
## PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

Not applicable

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, and Mike Reynolds





WASH: Resource Location Map





WASH: MAIN at Norman Street, Washington, Wilkes County



WASH: Extant railbed, CR 185/Metasville Road near US 378, Wilkes County



WASH: Railbed remnant, CR 185/Metasville Road near US 378, Wilkes County



WASH: Remnant railbed near Ware Branch, Metasville vicinity, Wilkes Co.



# LEXINGTON TERMINAL RAILROAD (LEXT)

**Other names:** N/A

**System:** Georgia Railroad

**NR Evaluation:** Not Eligible (Non-Contributing)

**Physical Status:** Abandoned and dismantled

**Current owner:** N/A

**Predecessors:** N/A

**Successors:** N/A

**Location:** Crawford to Lexington and Shaking Rock, Oglethorpe County



**GEORGIA RAILROAD (GAR)**  
System Feature Inventory Form

## DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Incorporated in 1888, the Lexington Terminal Railroad Company (LEXT) opened its four-mile road between Crawford and Lexington on October 1, 1889. The railroad was initiated to provide rail service to Oglethorpe County's seat, Lexington, which had been bypassed by the Georgia Railroad's (GAR's) Union Point-to-Athens branch line, which was built in the early 1840s. At its western end, the short line railroad connected to the Athens Branch by way of a wye junction in Crawford. From its eastern terminus in Lexington, the LEXT also built and operated a half-mile spur line southward to the Blue Granite Company quarry; trains would likely have run to this quarry at Shaking Rock on an as-needed basis.

Since the LEXT never offered any other connections to other railroads at its eastern end, it was always a constituent and dependent part of the GAR system. The GAR lessees acquired the Lexington line in 1900, but it was not until 1917 that they finally took over its operations. Nevertheless, the GAR's 1900 annual report lists the LEXT as a subsidiary unit, and specifically includes the company's track as part of the GAR system's total overall mileage. It is also notated as a GAR component line by an official 1917 timetable published in the 1918 Official Guide of the Railways. According to this printed schedule, no regular stops were made between Crawford and Lexington. The entirety of this short, dead-end line was abandoned in 1947.

## DESCRIPTION

As described above, the GAR purchased this short, dead-end line from its original developer, the Lexington Terminal Railroad, but throughout its history, the LEXT always served as a de facto branch line from the GAR's "Athens Division." The entirety of the branch line is now abandoned; its tracks, ties, and ballast have at some point been removed, and the rights-of-way appear to have reverted to the surrounding owners.

Thomas B. Moss's 1894 Map of Oglethorpe County appears to indicate that Crawford's present Cemetery Drive, south of downtown, may approximate, or possibly even utilizes, the course of the LEXT's approach to the wye junction with the GAR's Athens Branch. This same map indicates that the line generally adhered to the current alignment of today's US 78/Athens Road, crossing back and forth over the present roadbed on the way east to Lexington.

The Sanborn Map Company's Fire Insurance Maps for Lexington from May, 1921, show that the "Georgia Railroad Passenger Depot" then stood within the northwest corner of what was then Penfield Road's intersection into Lexington. The LEXT tracks ran along the depot's west side and, just through the intersection, came to an end alongside the cotton warehouse facilities of the Lexington Bonded Ware House Company.



However, very little evidence of the former rail line is now discernable throughout its route, either at ground level or on currently available aerial imagery. Since the alignment of the short-line railroad closely paralleled the path that US 78 still follows, numerous commercial and residential developments have been built on or along the course of the rail corridor since its abandonment in 1947. These building projects seem to have disturbed or eradicated significant sections of the railbed.

The result of these disturbances and changes in the landscape is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the LEXT rail corridor. Some faint traces can be discovered, but the entirety of the former rail grade is now separated into disrupted, non-contiguous sections. On balance, the LEXT railbed no longer clearly conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

## NATIONAL REGISTER CONTRIBUTING STATUS

The Lexington Terminal Railroad (LEXT) is a component of the GAR system; the GAR system is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Exploration/Settlement, Transportation, Ethnic Heritage-Black, and Military, and under Criterion C for significance in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The LEXT, which operated as a subsidiary feeder line to the GAR system for all of its forty years of operation, was evaluated for its potential contributions to the historic significance and National Register eligibility of the GAR system.

The LEXT was evaluated under Criterion A; due to its status as the GAR's de facto Lexington Branch from the GAR's own Athens Division, the LEXT has the potential to contribute to the GAR system's significance. For almost six decades, this "Lexington Branch Line," as the Sanborn Maps reference it, played a supportive role in the GAR system's overall state and local levels of significance in the areas of Commerce and Transportation. It benefitted the region north of the GAR's Main Stem and east of the Athens Branch, in all three of these areas, by giving shippers and passengers located in Oglethorpe County and perhaps parts of western Wilkes County new

outlets to the GAR system and points of connection onward to other mainlines. It thereby contributed to the overall prosperity of the county and the area between the cities of Athens and Washington. As is illustrated by the line's terminus next to a large cotton warehouse, many of the LEXT railcars undoubtedly carried cotton, but outgoing shipments of granite slabs and blocks from the Blue Granite Company quarry at Shaking Rock would have, for a time, also contributed greatly to the local economy. These materials and mineral resources would have been difficult to export without the transport service offered by this short branch line. The residents of Lexington also undoubtedly enjoyed the rapidity and ease with which items and products could also be imported into the city via train.

For these reasons, it also achieved potential significance in the area of Transportation, for being not only a productive component of the GAR system, but also a part of the interconnected rail web that provided thorough coverage of northeast and east central Georgia through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The LEXT was also evaluated for its potential to contribute to the GAR's significance under Criterion C. However, because the LEXT's rail corridor has been broken and interrupted at numerous places along its course since its 1947 abandonment and the subsequent removal of its tracks, ties, and ballast, it no longer contributes in the area of Engineering. Although the railbed is in place and evident in the landscape at a few specific points, the essential linearity of the LEXT is no longer fully intact or visible. As a consequence, the LEXT no longer presents its historically significant design characteristics, and does not represent a good example of either a rural, short-line railroad or of a component branch line from the late nineteenth century. Also, since no former LEXT depots are still extant at the railroad's former Lexington terminus, the LEXT no longer contributes to the GAR's significance the area of Architecture.

As described above, the former LEXT corridor has potential significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Transportation, but the current, largely disturbed physical condition and disrupted, disjointed state of significant portions of its former length does not allow it to convey this



significance, as most of the line now lacks sufficient integrity, as is described above and hereafter. Due to the diminished integrity of the LEXT railroad corridor, it does not contribute to the GAR system's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

A ground-level field survey of the area of the former LEXT corridor was conducted, as was a review of available historic and current aerial imagery. Along the abandoned right-of-way that was accessible to the surveyors, some minimal remaining evidence of the railroad's former railbed or infrastructure was found, despite the abandonment of much of its length and the subsequent removal of rails and ties.

However, this same review indicated that numerous sections of the railroad line have been disturbed and disrupted by ongoing development along the US 78 highway corridor between Crawford and Lexington, beside which the railroad ran.

The result of this commercial and residential growth is that there are now numerous gaps in the continuity of the rail corridor. Although some traces are extant and discernable within the landscape, the former alignment is now separated into many non-contiguous sections. Moreover, this rail alignment was not required to bridge any significant rivers during its length, so there are no remnant bridge piers attesting to the course of the former railroad, and it appears there are no depots, warehouses, or platforms in existence.

Accordingly, it has been determined that the LEXT does not retain integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Therefore, on balance, the LEXT railbed, from Crawford to Lexington, no longer conveys its former standing as an uninterrupted railroad corridor.

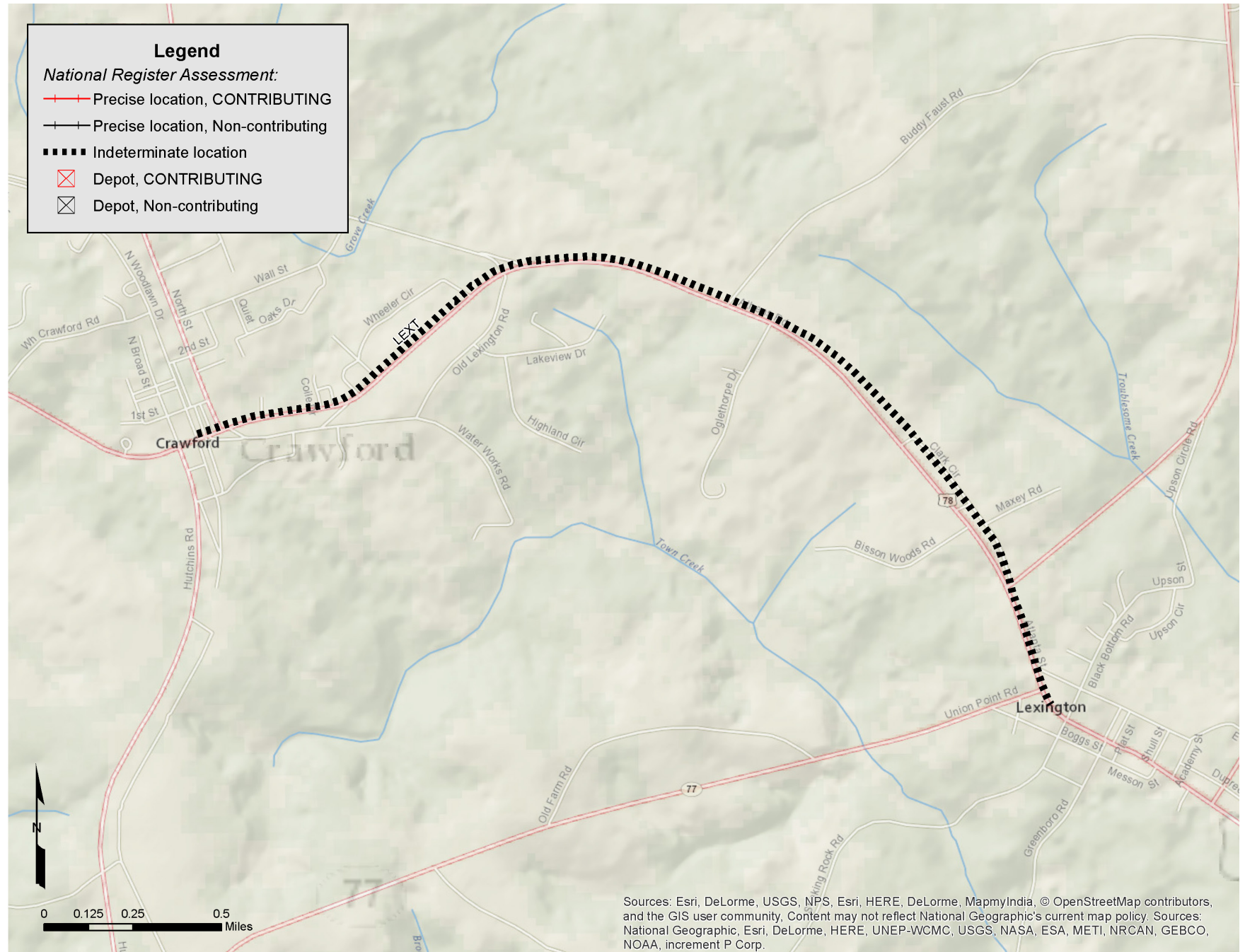
## NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

Not applicable

## PREPARED BY

Steve Storey, David Ray, Matt McDaniel, and Mike Reynolds





LEXT: Resource Location Map





LEXT: Railbed along US 78 at Comer Road, Lexington



LEXT: Shaking Rock Road, former LEXT spur, Lexington