

ESTATOEE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE YANCEY HISTORY ASSOCIATION
Volume III, Number 2
June, 1988

ESTATOEE (ěs-tă-tô-ě): Also spelled Estootowie in early records. A Cherokee Indian place name, shortened to Estatoe/Estatoah, from which the Toe/Towe River designation is derived.

Officers of the Association (1988):

President: Kenneth Nelson
Vice-President and Program Chair: Lloyd Bailey
Treasurer: Paul Kardulis
Secretary: Theresa Blankenship
Directors: James Byrd
John Young
Parliamentarian: (vacant)

Correspondence with the Association:

Secretary: 108 Town Square,
Burnsville, N.C., 28714

Program Chair: 4122 Deepwood
Circle, Durham, N.C., 27707

Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

The winter meeting of the Association was held at the Yancey County Library in Burnsville on Sunday, March 27, at 2 p.m. The program, presented by Garrett Dixon Bailey, J.D., concerned the history of the courts in the County. Especially interesting was the list of cases which had been referred to the State Supreme Court between the years

1832 and 1880 (attached hereto). It is desirable that the list be updated to the present.

Theresa Blankenship (Secretary) reported on the progress of the Association's financial campaign to purchase the McElroy/Ray house as the site of a museum. Richard Sullins has agreed to serve as Fund Drive Chairman (see Yancey Journal of April 21), and James Byrd will serve on the committee. A conspicuous sign ("Future Site of...") has been designed and placed at the house.

Officers for the coming year were elected, as shown in the previous column.

The problem of prorating annual membership fees was discussed (for those who join at mid-year), and the Treasurer invited to bring a proposal to the next meeting.

Since all members should receive the Newsletter (whether they are present at each meeting or not), and since this will necessitate the availability of postage fees, the Treasurer moved that the basic membership fee be increased an amount sufficient to cover the cost. After discussion, it was approved by the membership in attendance that the basic annual fee, beginning with the next fiscal year, be five dollars (\$5 per person. Notice is hereby given to the membership, in accordance with the Bylaws, of intent to finalize that figure at the next annual meeting.

The Current Program:

The Spring Meeting, to be held on Saturday, June 25, at 7:30 p.m., at the library in Burnsville, will be presented by John Beach of Massillon, Ohio. Topic: "Railroading in Yancey"

Railroads In The Toe River Valley: A Bibliography

- Bailey, Lloyd R. News From Yancey: Articles from Area Newspapers, 1840-1900. Burnsville: Yancey Graphics, 1983. See pages 23, 51, 53, 54, 57, 59.
- Bailey, Lloyd R. The Bailey Family of Yancey County, N.C. Privately printed, 1982.1983; 3 vols., available at local libraries. Contains occasional families memories of preparing food for work gangs, camping sites, compensation, etc. See pp. 821, 1240.
- Beach, John. "To Kona and Back On The Yancey," in Short and Narrow Rails, 1984. Mr. Beach is preparing a volume on the Black Mountain/Yancey Line, in relation to lumbering operations.
- Coletta, Theresa. "'Timber!' Started Railroad Boom," in Common Times, History of Yancey County. Burnsville: Yancey Graphics, 1981, pp. 74-79 (with bibliography). This is followed with articles entitled "Ballad of a Train Engineer"; "Black Mtn. Had Two Wrecks"; and "Next Stop, Lunday!" With photographs.
- Conley, Jack B. "Claude Craig Morgan Was A Railroading Man," in the News-Journal (Spruce Pine, N.C., newspaper), 5/30/1985.
- Harshaw, Lou. Trains, Trestles, and Tunnels. Asheville: Hexagon Company (no date?). Contains a chapter entitled, "Black Mountain Railroad; Yancey Railroad" (with numerous photographs).
- Miller, Harvey. Numerous articles in the News-Journal, among the recent ones being:
1/12/1984: "Yellowed Pages Stir Memories"
? : "Old Time Predictions Point To Bad Winter Weather Ahead"
? : "Transplanted ... Native Recalls 1st Toecane Train Stop"
? : "Railroad Book Recalls Mixed Memories ..."
10/9/1986: "Former Editor Remembers Railroad In Penland"
4/14/1988: "Retired Clinchfield Engineer Writes of Train Wreck"
4/28/1988: "Tragic Boiler Explosion Of Engine No. 740 40 Years Ago"
5/2/1988: "Woodys of Altapass Tell More About 1932 Train Wreck"
[Undoubtedly there are many others, which ought to be cataloged.]
- N.C. Reports (Decisions of the State Supreme Court). "Johnson v. City Southern Railway Company v. South and Western Railroad Company et al.," Vol. 148, pp. 59-77 (filed May 25, 1908). Concerns the conflicting claims of the two lines which were laying track up the Toe River at the same time. (Faint remnants of the Southern bed may be seen across the river just above the trestle at Poplar.) For discussion, see the volume by Way (below).
- Ross, Malcolm. "My Neighbors Hold to Mountain Ways," in The National Geographic Magazine, 113 (June, 1958), pp. 856-880. Discussion of the Yancey Railroad, with photos.
- Sheppard, Muriel Earley. Cabins in the Laurel. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1935. References throughout (not indexed); see esp. pp. 126, 130, 136-146, 312.

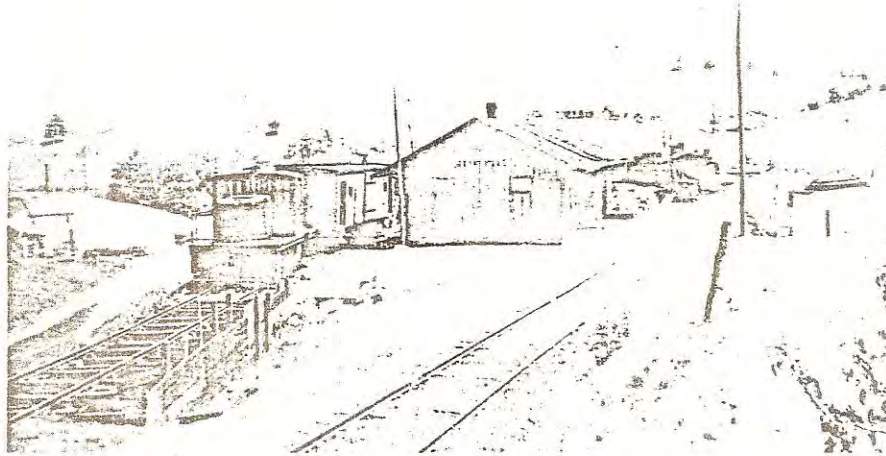
Way, William, Jr. The Clinchfield Railroad. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1931. A full length history, with photos (some of flooding, either in 1901 or 1916). Consult "Yancey County" in the index. (According to Harvey Miller's column [above, "Old Time Predictions..."], there are plans to reprint it, by Clyde J. Dellinger of Charlotte, N.C.)

Possibly related (although I have not seen it) is Clyde J. Dellinger, The Roots of Tweetsie.

Goforth, J.A. Building the Clinchfield. Erwin (Tenn.): Gem Publishers, 1983.

TO KONA and BACK ON THE YANCEY

By John E. Beach



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*Short + Narrow Rail
(Railhead Pub.
2020 - 9th St SW
Canton Ohio 44706*

Burnsville depot area as it looked in May 1955, ten years before the author's cab ride to Kona. Yancy #1 and her boxcar-caboose are at the left, Black Mountain 4-6-0 #3 (ex CRR #99), in the distance, is awaiting shipment to the Casey Jones Museum in Jackson, Tennessee.

Having signed my life away, I left the ancient Burnsville, N.C. depot and hurried to the end of the main track where I found Yancey Railroad Company's iron horse—nay, iron pony—already basking in the feeble sunshine of July 31, 1975. Engineer Tom Hollifield had already wheeled 45-ton #1 out of the tiny enginehouse built for her where the line had been abbreviated in 1926. Surely, I thought, they must have built the house around the tiny locomotive; clearances were so tight that I kidded Hollifield about needing a shoehorn (or maybe an enginehorn?) to put his charge away.

There was to be a delay in getting started on the day's work, however. Upon backing down grade the few hundred feet to the depot, we learned that the other half of the crew had not arrived for work. Just then the conductor phoned in with the news that he was quitting over a wage dispute which had not been resolved to his satisfaction. There would be a delay while a replacement was called off the extra board. Of course, 13-mile roads like the Yancey do not really have an extra board, but a call to Roses branch over on the Clinchfield route brought assurances that math professor and Trains author (see Aug. 1974 edition) Bill Cannon would soon be there to do the work.

Yancey railroad is the short and shrinking successor of the Black Mountain Railway, the Clinchfield subsidiary which once hauled timber from the Mt. Mitchell area, where it had connected with the logging roads owned by two large lumber companies. While exhaustion of the forests had

brought abandonment of that part of the line that served only forest industries, the road continued to haul inbound freight to Burnsville and outbound minerals from Micaville and Bowditch. The operation was not profitable to the Clinchfield, however, and after increasingly fervent threats of total abandonment the Black Mountain was sold to local businessmen on April 1, 1955 and renamed Yancey.

Traffic was very light in 1975, and there seemed little need for train service that day. The only work in sight as we left the Burnsville yard with Cannon and two more passengers aboard was to spot a load of steel that had been left unspotted at the Hickory Springs furniture plant. There had been a question about whether the car could be spotted: with an affirmative answer to that question, we were to sally forth light to Bowditch and return light after spotting the car on the customer's siding.

Between Burnsville and Micaville the weed-grown track rambled as it followed Little Crabtree creek and former U. S. route 19E. The topography is gentle enough for human habitation, however, and the line twisted and turned through front yards, back yards, corn fields, tobacco fields, and at one point it even went down somebody's driveway. At the junction, we reversed and started up the Bowditch branch, hesitating at the main road crossing by the post office in Micaville lest the peanut-roaster whistle failed to sufficiently awaken the motorists. After skirting more front yards, back yards, and yes, even a school yard, we arrived at the end



On July 22, 1980, 50T #2 spotted the NLG boxcar, perhaps loaded with empty paper bags, at the Diamond Mica plant, then drifted down grade (to the right) toward Micaville.

of the line at Bowditch, where another enginehouse (for 50-ton #2) stood over the end of the track. Dismounting, Cannon began his ritual of making the coupling, cutting in the air, releasing the hand brake, and unblocking the wheels of the car. Dropping downgrade to Young's runaround track, he blocked the wheels, set the hand brake, cut out the air, and pulled the coupling in before bending the iron to send us through the passing track to get around the car. After Cannon made the coupling and again released the brake, we dragged it up the steep grade to the end of the track. For some reason never made clear to me, Hollifield kicked the car into the siding, and Cannon rode it to a less than perfect spot. The car stopped far short of where it was to be spotted, apparently from friction between the wheels and the track, and engine power had to be used after all to put it where the factory folks wanted it.

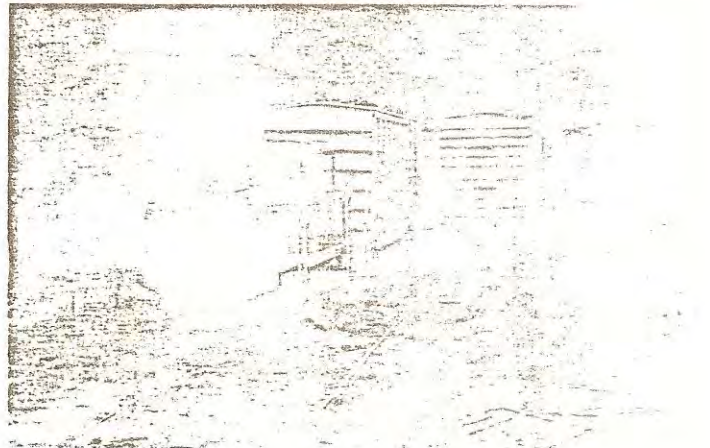
Meanwhile, there was a spectator watching from near the switch. It was not another of the fairly frequent railroad fan visitors but General Manager Jean Cannon with a waybill for a load of mica ready to begin its long journey to Colorado. With a new sense of mission, we left Bowditch and drifted down Ayles creek, skirting the huge corn field that filled the bottom between the track and the highway. Arriving at the Diamond Mica Company plant, we went through the usual rituals of cutting in the air, releasing the brakes, and unblocking wheels as the load was set out on the main and the empty box car (which was first out on the siding) was spotted for loading.

Then at a slower pace than before, we shoved the car to Micaville, where Cannon flagged the backward move over the crossing. The car was on the wrong end of the engine for the five-mile trip to Kona, and to solve this problem we had to run around it at Micaville. There were cars spotted at the Deneen Mica Company's loading dock, however, so we set our train in on the south end of the track and shoved through from the north. Leaving the outbound car on the main, we re-spotted the Deneen cars and came up the main again to the south end where we coupled to the north end of our train. Of course, all of this required Cannon to engage in more of that ritual of cutting in the air, releasing the handbrakes, unblocking the wheels, and throwing switches.

With our one-car train now in order for the run down

the river to Kona and the Clinchfield connection, we paused for lunch. Cannon's guests could not stay all day for the rest of the trip and left with his brother, the general manager. Not having any lunch with me, I was not prepared to stay all day either, but a train ride is a train ride! Now, there are no restaurants in Micaville, not even a sleazeburger stand, but thanks to the general store across the creek from the post office I survived on some snacks, fruit, and a "dope" (local term for soft drink, probably a holdover from the days when Coke really did contain coke).

With lunch over and done with, we went over the hump made by US 19E at the north end of the yard, and started down the river. For a mile or so the track follows a gravel road, crossing it twice within 300 feet. Beyond the houses where the road ends the track begins to follow a narrow path between the South Toe River and the steep hillsides which in places show scars of past mining operations. No tree trimming had been done in a long time, and in most places the vegetation had encroached as closely on the railroad as the passage of trains would allow. It seemed like we were running through a leafy tunnel much of the time. There were a few particularly bad places in the decrepit track structure,



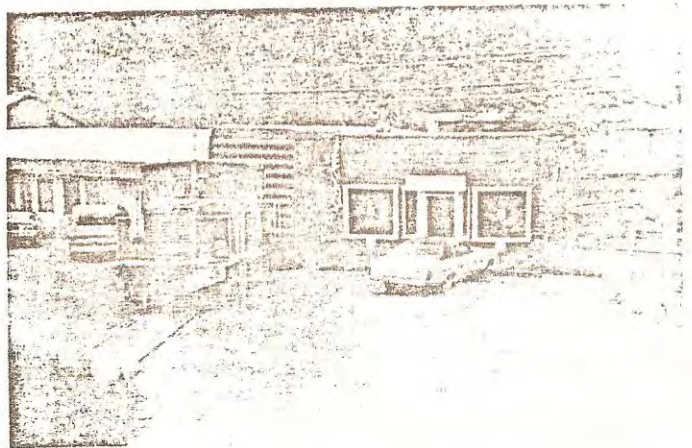
#2 has run around an outbound load from Diamond Mica and is leaving Micaville enroute to Kona on 7/23/80. Line to Burnsville curves to the right beyond Deneen Mica warehouse.

and Hollifield prudently tried to reduce speed from the normally slow pace he had maintained. When he made a modest reduction in trainline pressure at the first of these, however, there was the hiss and trumpeting of emergency air, and the train came to an abrupt stop. After pumping up the trainline again, we went on down the river, with Hollifield and Cannon wondering how well it would work on the next brake application. Sure enough, at the next "slow board," a mild brake application put the train into the "big hole" again. After a couple more sudden stops when we only wanted to slow down, we arrived at South Kona, and when we stopped to run around the car, it once again went into the "big hole."

Switching moves at Kona involved a lot of hard work for the two-man crew, but were a delight to watch. Usually the outbounds would be cut off at the South Kona passing track, and the engine would run light across the river to bring back the inbounds. These would be switched at the south end of the passing track, with the Burnsville cars set out first against the outbounds. Cars for Bowditch would be set out against

the Burnsville cars, and Micaville cars would ride right behind the engine. When the train was finally together in that order, the entire string of cars would be backed across the river, where the outbounds would be cut off on the interchange track adjacent to the Clinchfield's high iron.

The operation was even more fascinating back in the days when both roads still handled less-carload shipments. These smaller shipments were carried in an unusual box caboose that was usually at the end of the train coming from Burnsville. During the switching at South Kona, the Clinchfield's lcl car, an ordinary box car, would be spotted alongside the caboose, and there in the wilderness the crew would wheel the freight from one car to the other. Then the Clinchfield's lcl car would be set over against the outbounds and given back to its owner. For convenience in spotting cars at Burnsville, the caboose was usually placed right behind the Bowditch cars.



Another outbound load from Diamond Mica is shown here being shoved through beautiful downtown Micaville. Crew will run around the car at the passing track, presently occupied by the boxcar (right) at Deneen Mica. Rear corner of the roof of the post office (center) shows signs of being scraped by 50-foot boxcars.

we stopped and worked on the track at one of the worst places we had encountered on the outbound trip. Unloading jacks and shovels, Hollifield and Cannon raised the track and forced ballast, such as it was, into the voids under the ties. Later a second stop was made, not to fix the track, but to allow passenger and crew to photograph the little engine with the big cars.

At Micaville, we rumbled through the canyon between the post office and hardware store, and bounded across the road to the tune of the peanut-roaster whistle. A short distance above town the creek and the railroad both come down steeply. The grade which we were climbing is compounded by sharp curves, and the laboring of the engines was drowned out by the squeal of flanges. The speed dropped significantly, drawing Hollifield's attention to the temperature gauges. Both needles were creeping into the yellow, and there was concern as to whether we would have to double the hill. The grade soon eased, however, and with cooler engines we continued to the Diamond Mica track, where we set off one car. Off again, we skirted the cornfield again to Young's runaround where we left the other three cars with wheels blocked and brakes anchored firmly.

With the work all done at last, we had only to deliver the engines and ourselves to Burnsville. That was done without incident, and saying goodbye all around, I left tired and dirty, but thrilled over having had such a memorable ride over such an interesting railroad.

For the Yancey, 1975 was not the best of times, nor was it yet the worst of times. There was still the inbound flow of coal for the county schools, poles for the electric company, stone for the highway department, and feed for the local farmers' cooperative. The principal shipper, however, The Feldspar Company, had closed its plant at Bowditch in March 1971. That plant had been the mainstay of the road, shipping 8—10 loads per week. Partially offsetting the loss was the Hickory Springs plant, which started receiving inbound loads of steel wire in July of that year. At about that same time, a builders supply yard opened right behind the Burnsville depot, with a siding leading off from the house

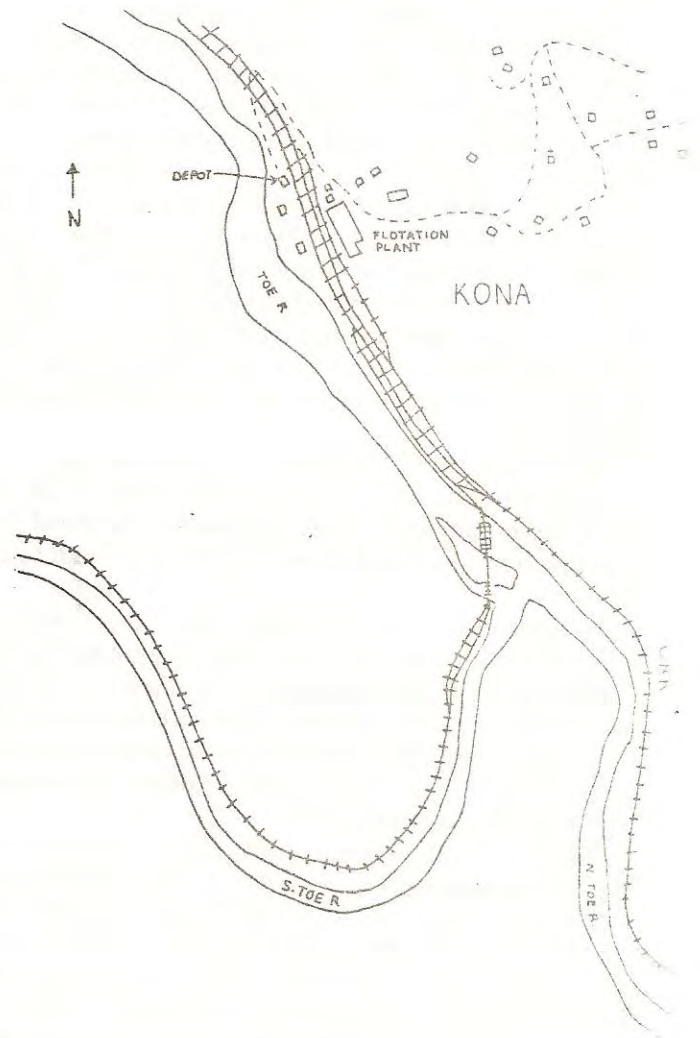
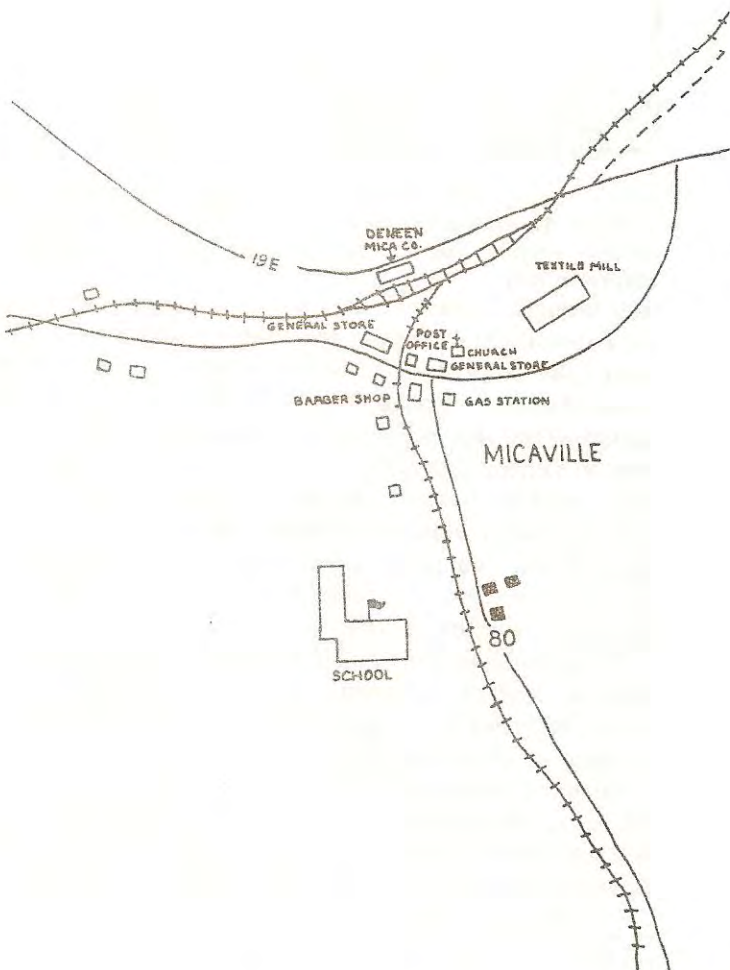
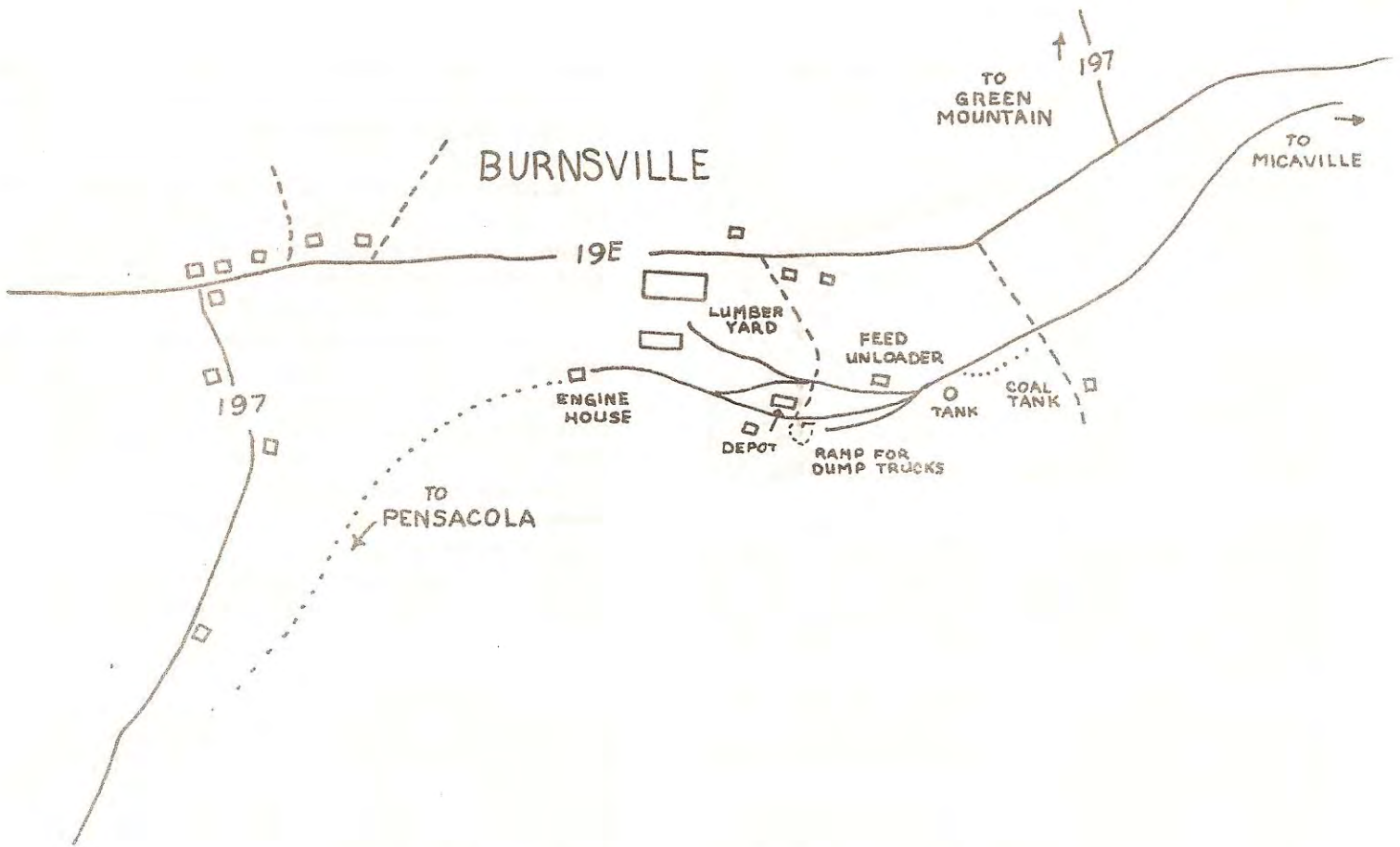


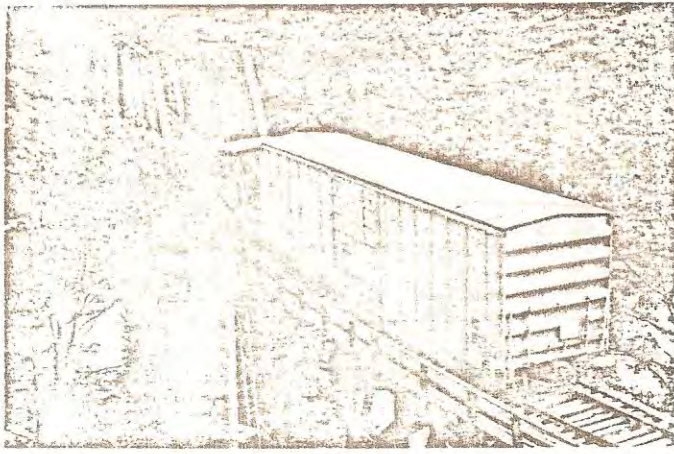
65T #3 is shown here working at the north end of the Micaville yard on 7/24/78. The line to Bowditch turns off opposite the Deneen warehouse, while the line to Burnsville curves to the right just beyond the distant boxcar.

The trip light across the river on the day of my ride confirmed what was already suspected: there was nothing there for us to take back. Even so, getting around that outbound car was no simple task. There were six Pickens RR box cars blocking the passing track, and we had to handle those to get on the other end of that one car. After coupling to them and releasing the brakes, we shoved through the passing track and backed down against the outbound on the main. After cutting off the six empties, we backed across the river where, to our surprise, a moderate brake application brought us to a gentle stop.

There was a short delay while the crew walked over to the depot to deliver the waybill to the Clinchfield agent. I was hoping, of course, that a Clinchfield train would pass while #1 was nicely posed there, but that was too much to hope for. With the work done there, we crossed the river for the fourth time and coupled to the south end of the long string of empty box cars standing now on the main track. Cannon cut off the two rear cars, and we started back toward Burnsville at last.

The return to Micaville was uneventful, with the four box cars rocking gently at the slow speed and pushing aside the walls of the leafy tunnel we were in. Having plenty of time,





The solitary outbound load from Diamond Mica has been run around at the South Kona passing track and is being shoved across the Toe River to the transfer track out of sight to the right. CTC signal is for the Clinchfield main bridge, supported by wood-sheathed timbers, and was built in 1896 by the Canton (Ohio) Bridge Co.

track. Its appearance coincided closely with the disappearance of the dock track used by steam engines #1 and #3, and we can assume that a prudent management had recycled the unneeded switch.

Disaster struck in 1972, in the form of the floods that followed Tropical Storm Agnes. Twelve of the 19 bridges on the line were damaged, and the road was out of business for six weeks. Nearly all of the damage was either to the west or the south of Micaville, isolating #1 in its enginehouse at Burnsville and #2 in its enginehouse at Bowditch. When the road became operationable again, there was a careful watch on the weather, and when storms threatened, one of the engines was kept on the siding at Micaville. In his delightful little book, *Slow Train to Yesterday*, Archie Robertson points out that shortlines often must "root, hog, or die." Careful management is needed, and survival often depends on the ingenuity, initiative, loyalty, and cooperation of everyone associated with the road. Not content to dry up and die from lack of revenue, the Yancey fought for new business.

One of the secrets of success is to look successful, and that may have played a part in the repainting of GE 50T No. 2. Still in navy-yard blue since it had been acquired years before, it now blossomed forth in bright green with yellow trim.

To accommodate the changing needs of customers at Burnsville, some changes in the facilities were made. First a conveyor system was installed for unloading feed from covered hoppers into trucks. That interfered with the unloading of coal from hoppers, so the south end of the siding across the main track from the depot was inclined, with a cut-out for a conveyor.

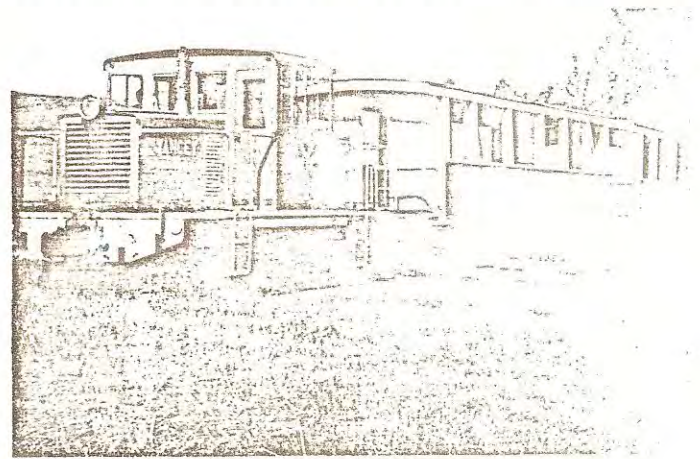
Then the Yancey struck pay dirt, or so it seemed, in the form of a green mineral called olivine. This material came from a mine between Burnsville and Green Mountain, and was being trucked to the Clinchfield's siding at that station. There wasn't much difference in distance, and the trucks had to cross mountains in going to either station, but a low weight limit on a bridge at Green Mountain must have been a problem. The Yancey management induced the mining

company to haul their product to Burnsville, where the inclined track was removed and the ramp was modified so that the trucks could dump their cargo into hoppers spotted on the main track.

The olivine traffic showed great promise. It began in April 1976 with 17 cars delivered to the Clinchfield, and rose to 73 carloads in July of that year. It put a tremendous strain on the small engines, however, and Yancey traded #1 for 65-ton #3, which came in mid-1976.

The heavy loads put an inordinate strain on the track, however. A track crew was hired, but there was no way they could keep up with the deterioration of the long-neglected track. The bigger engine had difficulty navigating the rickety track, and is said to have derailed as many as four times on one trip to Kona. Reluctantly, the road gave up the olivine traffic; the last of the 238 loads hauled were delivered to Kona in December of 1976.

The Yancey was somewhat more successful in the excursion business. Despite the failure of an outside operator who

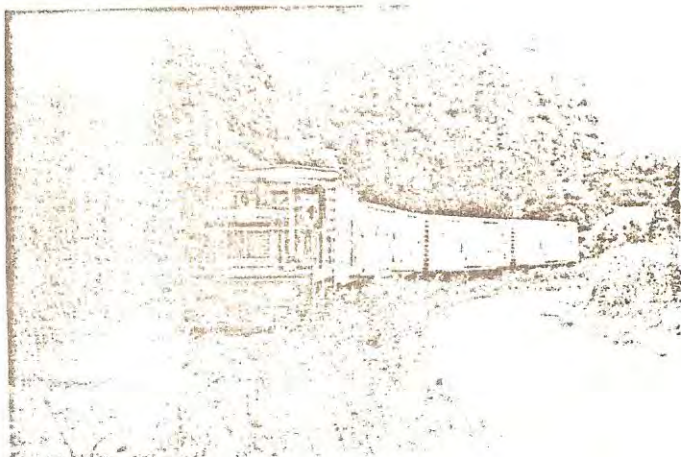


50T #2 crosses US 19E between Burnsville and Micaville on 8/30/76. Tomorrow will be a big day for fifth-graders in Yancey County, who will take a round trip from Micaville to Kona in the excursion cars.

had brought in an ex-BEDT 0-6-0, Yancey brought in an ex-Tullulah Falls caboose and three excursion cars which were little more than flat cars with sides, roofs, and benches. Instead of trying to lure tourists, management approached the local schools, and in time every 5th grade student in Yancey county had a chance to board the green and yellow cars for a ride through the woods to Kona. Sometimes two excursions would be scheduled for the same day, with the morning train meeting the freight train at South Kona. In some months, the modest fares collected from the students made the payroll.

The excursions were pulled by either #1 or #2, although there were plans, apparently, to use steam. There was an 0-4-0T #9 brought in, but was never put into service during the year or two it sat there.

Then the floods of 1977 dealt the Yancey another crippling blow. The culvert which had replaced a low trestle near Micaville was washed out again, and several bridges on the Bowditch branch were destroyed also. Engines #2 and #3 were both safe at Micaville, but most of the customers were on the wrong side of the washouts. Worse yet, there were two boxcars stranded. There was a Clinchfield car being loaded at Diamond Mica, and an ITC boxcar of steel being



Near-tonnage train of 4 empty boxcars made a photo stop near Micaville on the author's epic July 31, 1975 trip. No problem was encountered here, but motors ran hot on portions of the Bowditch branch.

unloaded at the Hickory Springs plant. Eventually the bridges were rebuilt, and the two cars (one loaded) were finally delivered to the Clinchfield on Jan. 30, 1979.

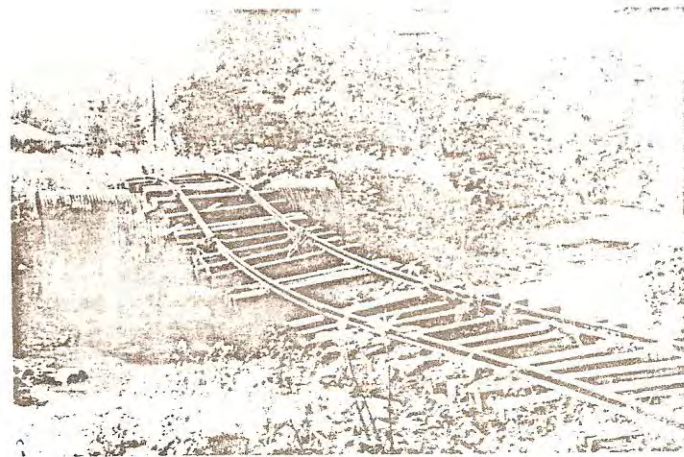
For a time, pulpwood was loaded on the track of the former Feldspar Company plant, but that ended when the Bowditch branch became a storage track for boxcars made surplus by the recession. These cars, with YAN reporting marks, grew in number to a maximum of 115 on the line, with rumors that the number might grow to 300.



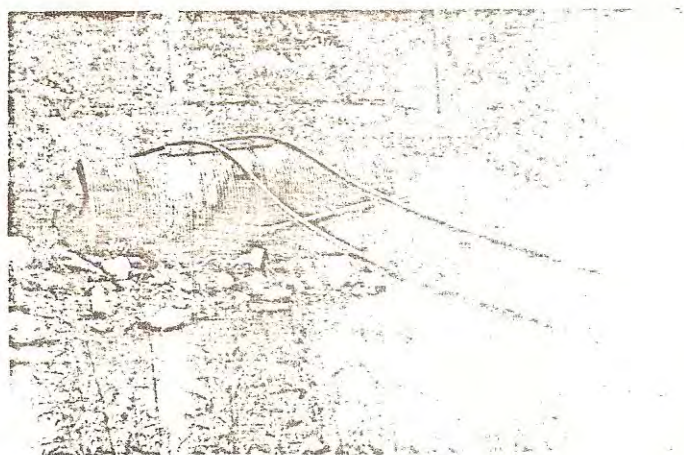
Clinchfield's Kona depot handled interchange records as well as billing for the mineral plant across the track. Old timers say that long ago this structure was laid on its side on a flat car and moved here from a point near the Toe River bridge.

Mechanical difficulties resulted in #3 being stored with some of the boxcars on the stub of the Burnsville line, until it was sold in May 1982 to the Centex Corp. in Texas. Trusty old #2 continued to do the chores, waddling along like a Mallet with side rods flashing. Mechanical problems were beginning to overtake the unit, however. Even as early as 1980, only one of the diesel prime movers would run, and the unit limped along the rest of its days on half power. Traction was sometimes a problem, but that was usually overcome by the conductor dropping sand from a bucket onto the rail.

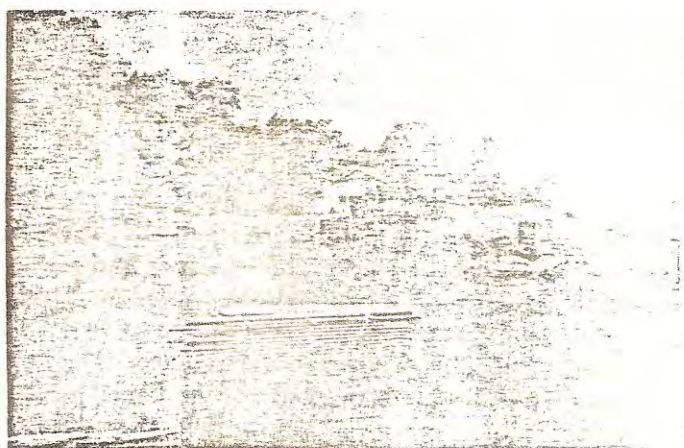
Finally, #2's sad condition came to the attention of Yancey's now-absentee owners. Relief came with the arrival



Floods of November, 1977 washed out this culvert just west of Micaville. The culvert was a replacement for a low-framed trestle which an earlier flood had destroyed.

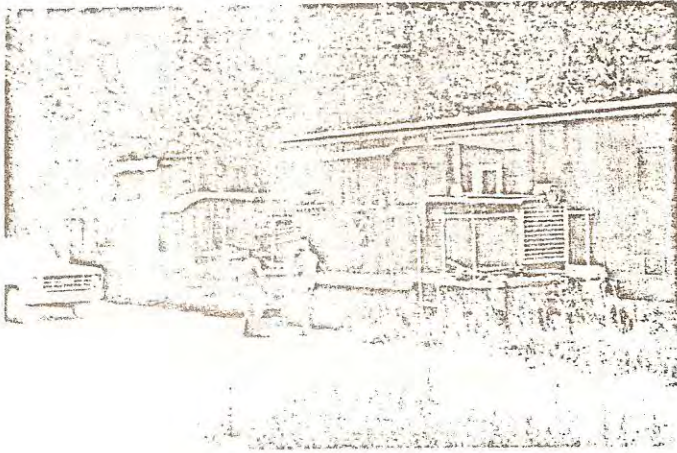


5 years later the rails and culvert remain, but many of the ties have fallen off.

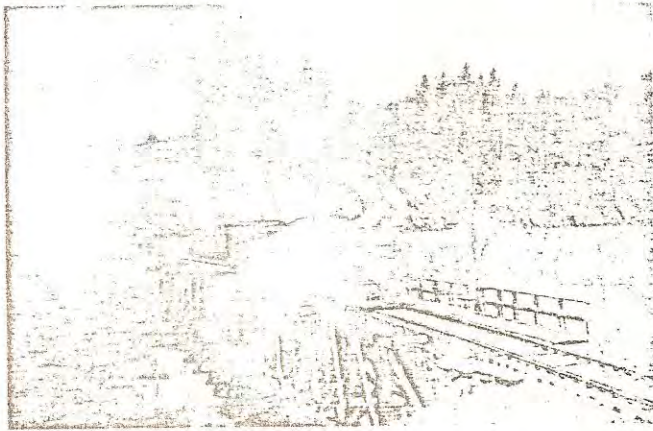


Nature and the sawmill have claimed the Burnsville yard, isolated from the rest of the world of railroading for 5 years in this June 16, 1983 photo. The track is beneath the pile of lumber in the foreground.

of Narragansett Pier #40, which the Clinchfield delivered on June 17, 1981. The 65T Vulcan was towed to Micaville the following day, when the man from Ontario Locomotive, Inc. showed them how to run it and where to spot #2 for scrapping.



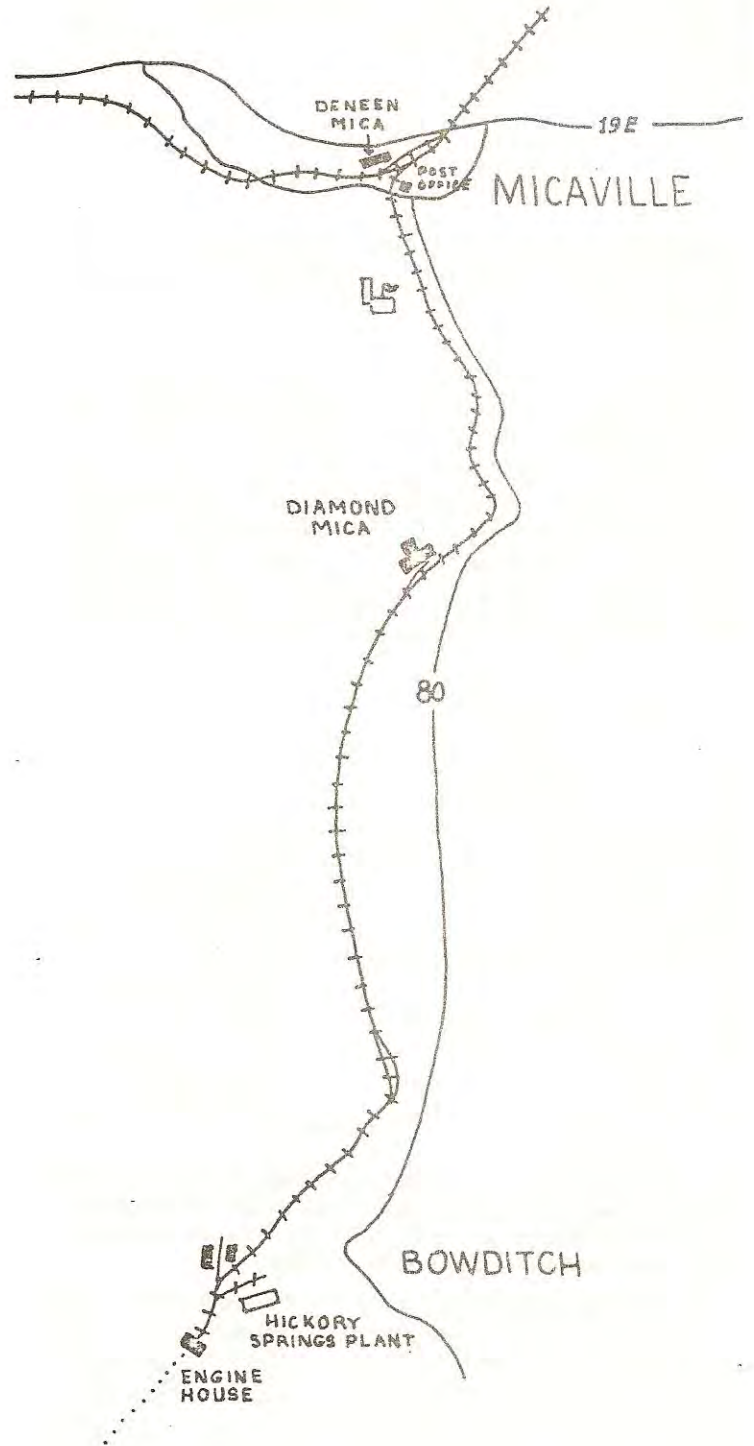
The torch was passed on June 18, 1981 as Narragansett Pier #40, fresh from the salt air of Rhode Island, arrives to replace ailing and failing #2. The first task for the newcomer was to spot #2 for dismantling.



Inbound carload business was nil on March 23, 1955 as Black Mountain 4-6-0 #3 leaves Kona for Burnsville with only the caboose, perhaps containing some lcl shipments. One week later the Black Mountain operation became the Yancey R.R.

Business went from bad to worse after that, and the road suspended operations. At the time of my visit in mid-1983, NP 40 had stood for half a year motionless amid the YAN boxcars on the Micaville siding. There was no sign of activity, except that some railroad fan had trimmed the weeds and bushes for a less-cluttered photo of the maroon unit still lettered for its defunct former owner in faraway Rhode Island.

Will there be a resurrection? The outlook is bleak. Traffic potential is low, and a lot of rebuilding is needed. No doubt the absentee owners have more lucrative matters in which to invest their time and money. We can hope, but the chances are good that we will have to be content with our memories of yet another delightful and fascinating shortline.



A Ride On The Clinchfield Line, 1908

Colonel Fred A. Olds published a report of his ride across the Blue Ridge in the Charlotte Daily Observer, Aug. 30 and Sept. 2, 1908 (reproduced in Way, The Clinchfield Railroad, pp. 172-187). This was the first party of non-Clinchfield personnel to make the trip. Excerpts are quoted below, along with other information in Way.

"Green Mountain was especially picturesque. It is six miles from Burnsville, the county seat of Yancey. A native said people over 100 years old were plentiful there and ventured the assertion that 'mighty few die in these parts.'"

"We crossed the Big Rock Creek, whereby hangs a tale, for it is in the valley of this stream that no negro is permitted to live. The true blue Republicans of that part of Mitchell will have none of their 'brothers in black.' He can't work there or live there though he does both at Bakersville quite near, but sure is the unwritten law along Rock Creek." (p. 184. He goes on to relate the struggle between the Southern Railway and the C., C. and O., which features roadbeds on opposite sides of the river, sometimes on the same side, fist-fights, and a decision by the State Supreme Court.)

"We entered the grand gorge of the Toe... Pile upon pile of rock the cliffs rose, now sloping sharply, now almost perpendicular, all stone with stunted trees. There are eight miles of this canyon...the river is treacherous in the extreme and seven years ago rose 52 feet in this gorge. It took away 16 miles of the railroad and it required some months to replace it." (p. 184)

"On the same date [April 1, 1916], the Clinchfield acquired the Black Mountain Railway by lease, whereby payment was guaranteed of principal and interest of the latter's first mortgage five percent gold bonds. These bonds amounted to \$500,000... It was believed that the earnings of the Black Mountain Railway would be sufficient to care for these payments. The Black Mountain Railway extended from Kona, a point on the Clinchfield in North Carolina, through Burnsville to Eskota. The rails were recently removed from the right of way between Burnsville and Eskota." (p. 118)

A chart showing the tonnage of freight received for the Black Mountain Railway, at Kona for the years 1927-1929 (merchandise and coal) may be found on p. 251. For example, in 1927, 673 tons of merchandise and 88 tons of coal were delivered to The Black Mountain Line and 3,039 tons of merchandise were received from her for shipment out.

Miscellaneous Information

In looking back over notes which I have taken over the years concerning various matters, I found the following concerning railroad construction up the Toe River Valley.

According to Chester Bailey (of Unaka Springs, Tenn.), his father-in-law Wiley Tipton was a foreman. A black laborer was killed at the "Battery Box" (at the Lost Cove) and is buried there.

According to Pauline Laws (Mrs. Willard Collis of Durham, N.C., both formerly from Yancey-Mitchell Counties), Jeff Collis (a tough and mean customer) was a construction foreman and his son Bis worked as a water-boy. At the crossing above the old church at Webb, at the road that came down from the Henry Ayers place, prisoners on the work-gang were beaten to death and buried in the bank of the track line. Children were scared to pass the place, years later.

Dorothy ("Darty") Peterson, of Poplar, recalled that her parents took in boarders who worked on the Clinchfield line up the Toe River...they paid 30 cents a day for room and board. The workers were paid 5 cents per hour and worked 10 hours per day, receiving their pay in gold coin.

Mack Bailey (son of "Little Jimmy" and Elizabeth) of Red Hill supervised one of the construction crews: Chinese, Italian, and Negro. The laborers lived in small shacks near the mouth of Rock Creek. [At this point, comparison might be made with the long story related in Muriel Sheppard's Cabins in the Laurel, concerning the Italian laborers who were killed near the Honeycutt tunnel: pp. 137ff.]

Aaron Stewart (buried at Bear Creek Cem.) was considered a skilled worker with dynamite when tunnels were being blasted beyond Spruce Pine. He would crimp the cap to the fuse with his teeth, being told many times that he "would blow his head off" if he continued the practice.

Woodfin McKinney (according to his grandson Wayne) worked on the line as it came up the gorge of the Toe/Nolachucky. He had to walk many miles each day from McKinney Branch to the work site, where he drove steel (for dynamite holes). This was done with a 10-pound hammer with a flexible handle ("switch handle," which would spring back up after the blow). Two persons drove in rhythm, with a third turning the steel rod (about one-half turn after each blow). The resultant powdered rock was occasionally swabbed out with a wet cloth wrapped around a stick. McKinney was paid \$2.00 for a ten-hour day, and he and his partner could drive the steel 22 feet in that period of time.

Speaking of the Clinchfield line between Spruce Pine and Ashford (McDowell Co.), we are told that "over 200 men were killed or died" from premature blasts of dynamite, land slides, etc., and are buried at Alta Pass (Way, The Clinchfield Railroad, p. 176).

According to Fred Peterson of Hunt Dale, who worked on the railroad most of his life, two workers are buried near the Cane Bottom at the Lost Cove, their graves marked with fieldstones.

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Robert Lee Durham, in his book Since I Was Born (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1953), tells of a journey through Yancey in the early years of the present century. He and his companion Jerome Dowd spent the night at the hotel of "Big Billie" Johnson at Hunt Dale, who also owned the general store. In the course of their conversation about local violence (part of it involving the well known "Mont" Ray), "Big Billie" told about how convicts on the railroad crew were disciplined and how this, on one occasion, led to death (pp. 204-206). Note in particular his mention of how such casualties, and there must have been many, ordinarily were buried.

Mr. Johnston was a man who thought much about weapons and shooting. In the room in which Dowd and I slept was a picture of him with a brace of pistols hanging from his belt, a rifle in hand on one side, and a shotgun in the other. He told us stories of killings in the community which probably accounted for the unusual number of caskets he kept in stock at his general store. His pet narrative seemed to be of the convict gang which the State had hired to the contractors who had done the grading of the road-bed of the Clinchfield railroad in his vicinity. When a convict was unruly and refused to do his work properly, the usual procedure was to tell him to remain in camp when the gang was being assembled for work next morning. Then the State's overseer and two husky Negro trusties, protected by a guard armed with sawed-off shot-guns loaded with buckshot, gave the stubborn one a whipping with a heavy leather strap. It seems that Johnston was always present at this morning formation to see who and what was on the disciplinary program. It explains his extra stockpile of coffins which would give him quite a jump on competing morticians.

One morning a robust young white man was told to stop over when the gang was assembled for starting up the mountain to work. The overseer told the two trusties to give him a whipping for his disobedience of the preceding day. They approached the young fellow to obey their orders in the customary manner, when, Mr. Johnston told us, the convict, using a knife he had concealed somewhere in his clothes, cut both the black trusties almost to ribbons before they could even get a hand upon him. It was evident that one or the other of the Negroes would be dead in short order if something was not done to prevent it. Seeing the speed and deadliness of the young fellow's knife, the overseer turned to his armed guard

and said, "Stop him!" One of the shotguns answered this order and sent a load of buckshot into the convict's back about on the level with his kidneys in a pattern which Mr. Johnston described for us with great detail, and the young convict fell dead.

Johnston furnished the casket for his burial and told the overseer *not* to bury him in a mudhole under one of the railroad fills where it was all a part of the day's work to bury the dead, but to take him across the river and give him a decent interment in one of his (Johnston's) fields on the top of a "heaven-kissing hill" which he pointed out to us. Then Johnston remarked casually to us that this young Davis -- the convict -- had killed a cotton mill boss in Gaston County. This item made the story one of unusual interest to me because I had been employed to assist in the prosecution of the State's case against Davis, who had used a knife with like deadliness and speed to cut the jugular vein of the boss of my brother's cotton mill at Bessemer City.

There can be no doubt that he was guilty of murder in the first degree in that case, as evidenced by his counsel's statement to me after the jury had made it murder in the second degree -- and saved him from the electric chair -- because, the mill boss being dead, we of the prosecution had no means of proving malice aforethought -- realizing which his able counsel -- Judge Frank Osborne, declined to put him on the witness stand.

This young Davis' final activity with a knife on the two Negro trustees, who had been told to whip him for his refusal to do his work as a convict, shows that he was quite a specialist with a knife, the use of which had brought him first to the penitentiary and then to his death from the armed guards of the convict camp. I have often wondered whether it was pride

or depravity which carried him through his short but terrible career with such courage and calculated combativeness. If he had been in the selective service of either World War, doubtless he would have been covered with medals -- for fighting seems to have been running in his blood.

[Does anyone know the location of Davis' grave?? Presumably, it would be in Yancey County. Neither Fred Peterson nor Euphratus Tipton, both in their 80's of age and have always lived nearby, know of this episode.

POSSIBLE LOCAL HISTORY PROJECTS

The following is a limited list of projects related to the history of Yancey County that could be carried out by members of the History Association, students in Appalachian Studies, or any interested person. The finished product could be placed in the Association's files, local libraries, the State Archives, and so on. Please inform the Association's Vice-President (Lloyd Bailey) if you would like to undertake one of them.

1. Church history at the individual congregational level. One would interview members (especially older ones), consult official Minutes and other records, check local newspapers and denominational publications, collect photographs, check deed books for donors and early trustees, and so on. (Several such works, brief or long, are available as models.)
2. Abstracts of Yancey County Deed Books. Deeds provide information on early settlers that the census may miss, location of residence, family relationships (occasional), and so on. Deed Book I has been abstracted and published, and thus is available as a model.
3. Abstracts of County Court Minutes, beginning in 1834. This has never been done in a systematic fashion, and would be of great value. General discussion of "Abstracting" may be found in North Carolina Research (Helen F.M. Leary and Maurice R. Stirewalt, eds.), in Part I, chapter 6. Such Minutes contain lists of county officials, trials, tax rates, family relationships (including illegitimacies), discussion of roads, and so on. Microfilm of the original minute books (now in the State Archives) is available at local libraries.
4. Arrangement and indexing of the Yancey County Cemetery Surveys. The major survey was done by the W.P.A. in the 1930's, with some supplementation since. Returns (incomplete) are in the Yancey Library, some of them faded copies of copies (with errors in the process). (Such a project has been completed for the Mitchell Co. records and is available for use at Mayland Community College in Spruce Pine.) It is an invaluable aid for research in family history.
5. An Index of birth, marriage, and death notices in Yancey newspapers. This would involve seriatim reading of such papers as survive, many now on microfilm at local libraries. A large section, part of the Tri-County News, is not on film but the originals are at the newspaper office in Spruce Pine. There are published models to follow, based upon Asheville newspapers.
6. The full transcript of the 1880 Census of Yancey County. Those of 1850, 1860, and 1870 have been done (although 1870 has not been published). Microfilm of the census may be available at the local library, or could be secured through interlibrary loan.
7. Abstract of Yancey Will Book I. A bonanza for the genealogist. The original is available at the county court house.

- 8. An Index of Asheville newspapers after 1900, for articles that relate to Yancey County. Originals available on microfilm. A slow and tedious process, but a highly interesting one, especially as it related to local murders, "moonshine" production, outstanding citizens, and so on. (This has been done for items prior to 1900.)
- 9. Abstracts of county birth, marriage, and death records, each a separate (and substantial) project. Originals available at the county court house. [Consult Paul Kardulis about amount already done.]
- 10. Collections of letters which Civil War soldiers wrote to their family and friends at home. These could be xeroxed, with the owners retaining the originals. Most easily done as a school-wide project.
- 11. Memories of life in Yancey during the Civil War period. Most families have such stories. Most effectively done as a school-wide project.
- 12. Interviews with the surviving veterans of World War I, and especially an attempt to assemble them for a group photo. Some of them still have their uniforms and could wear them for the photograph. (Because of their age, this opportunity will not be available much longer. Perhaps the American Legion could help.)
- 13. By tracing the deeds for the original town lots in Burnsville, one could reconstruct what the town looked like every decade or so from the 1830's onward (E.g., a map with hotels, homes, businesses located on it). (The original town map is to be found at the county library, in a little volume done by Lloyd Bailey as a sesquicentennial project.)
- 14. Little histories (with documents and photos where possible) of how/when certain businesses began (e.g., electricity, from the plant on Swamp Branch; the local telephone line from Burnsville to Bald Creek; gravel/all weather roads; a bowl factory at Bee Log; the cheese house between Riverside and Bald Creek; etc.). How about little sketches of post offices that have long since vanished (e.g., Paint Gap, Dobag, Wampler, Wilhite, Harvard, Toledo)?

Relatively easy projects: Nos. 10, 11, 12, 14

moderate: 1, 2, 7

relatively more difficult: 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13

TABLE OF CASES
(arising in Yancey Co. and decided by N.C. Supreme Court)

(Burke Co.) State vs. Silver	14 NC 332 (1832)	Murder
Radford vs. Rice	19 NC 39 (1836)	Slander
Hamilton vs. Jarvis	19 NC 227 (1837)	Action on debt
Phipps vs. Garland	20 NC 38 (1838)	Seduction
Honeycutt vs. Angel	20 NC 449 (1839)	Malicious Levy
State vs. Wilson	23 NC 32 (1840)	Riot and trespass
State vs. Davis	23 NC 125 (1840)	Assault and Battery
Halcombe vs. Ray	23 NC 340 (1840)	Ejectment
(Burke Co.) Fleming vs. Straley	23 NC 305 (1840)	Action on debt
Griffith vs. Byrd	24 NC 72 (1841)	Distributive share
Gardner vs. Rowland	24 NC 247 (1842)	Trespass
Halcombe vs. Deaver	25 NC 56 (1842)	Action on Bond
Baker vs. Wilson	25 NC 168 (1842)	Duty to work road
Whit vs. Ray	26 NC 14 (1843)	Trover for a bay mare
Wilson vs. Hensley	26 NC 66 (1843)	Trover for a horse
Love vs. Scott	26 NC 79 (1843)	Ejectment
Fleming vs. Halcomb	26 NC 268 (1844)	Action on debt
Stewart vs. Ray	26 NC 269 (1844)	Levy
State vs. Woodfin	27 NC 199 (1844)	Contempt
Edney vs. Wilson	27 NC 233 (1844)	Title to land
State vs. Ledford	28 NC 5 (1845)	Perjury
State vs. Angel	29 NC 27 (1846)	Murder
Rice vs. Ponder	29 NC 390 (1847)	Malicious prosecution
(Henderson Co.) Davis vs. Coleman	29 NC 424 (1847)	Action on debt
Brigman vs. Jarvis	30 NC 451 (1848)	Default Judgment
Fleming vs. Dayton	30 NC 453 (1848)	Ejectment
General Order	32 NC 607 (1849)	Reading for law license
State vs. Ray	32 NC 39 (1849)	Forcible trespass
Brown vs. Ray	32 NC 72 (1849)	Action on promise
Brown vs. Ray	33 NC 222 (1850)	Action on promise
Rice vs. Carter	33 NC 298 (1850)	Action for purchase price
Briggs vs. Byrd	33 NC 353 (1850)	Slander
State vs. Johnson	33 NC 647 (1850)	Failure to maintain road
Piercy vs. Piercy	36 NC 214 (1840)	Injunction
Westall vs. Austin	40 NC 7 (1847)	Lots 24 & 25 Recision of Purchase
Wilson vs. Wilson	41 NC 236 (1849)	Recovery of Slave
Bailey vs. Carter	42 NC 282 (1851)	Recovery of Slave
Anderson vs. Young	44 NC 408 (1853)	Action on debt
Hoke vs. Edwards	46 NC 532 (1854)	Action on debt
Evans vs. Blalock	47 NC 377 (1855)	Action against Sureties on Sheriff's Bond
Tipton vs. Tipton	48 NC 552 (1856)	Petition for Legacy
State vs. Boon	49 NC 463 (1857)	Cheating by false tokens
Stewart vs. Rutherford	49 NC 92 (1857)	Ejectment
McCurry vs. McKesson	49 NC 510 (1857)	Action on Note
John S. McElroy	51 NC 4 (August Term 1859)	Superior Court License
Woodfin vs. Johnson	54 NC 317 (1854)	Action involving Note on recision of pension contract
Blalock vs. Peake	56 NC 323 (1857)	Action to recover on deputies Bond
(Buncombe Co) In the Matter of Finley	60 NC 205 (1863)	Habeas Corpus
(Removed to Buncombe) State vs. Penland	61 NC 222 (1867)	Murder
Edwards vs. Edwards	61 NC 534 (1868)	Divorce
Reorganization of Courts	63 NC 11	
Blankenship vs. McMahon	63 NC 180 (1869)	Attachment

(First Mitchell) Wilson vs. Burleson	63 NC 259 (1869)	Trespass
(Second Mitchell, Removed to McDowell) State vs. Wiseman	63 NC 536 (1869)	Cheating
State vs. McIntosh	61 NC 607 (1870)	Bastardy
Dellinger vs. Tweed	66 NC 206 (1872)	Homestead
State vs. Wilson	67 NC 456 (1872)	Robbery
State vs. Haney	67 NC 451 (1872)	Murder
(Removed to Yancey) State vs. Wiseman	68 NC 203 (1873)	Arson
James L. Henry vs. State	68 NC 426 (1873)	Action to recover compensation for holding Court in Yancey and Macon Co.
N. M. Wilson vs. S.S. Peterson	69 NC 113 (1873)	Sheriff's Election
Sparks vs. Sparks	69 NC 319 (1873)	Divore and alimony
(Removed to Iredell from Yancey) State vs. Sears	71 NC 295 (1874)	Trespass
Young vs. Griffith	71 NC 335 (1874)	Ejectment
Commissioners v Piercy	72 NC 181 (1875)	Action against Tax Collector
(Removed to McDowell) Johnson vs. Ray	72 NC 273 (1875)	Recover land
(Interesting Madison County Case) Trull vs. Commissioners	72 NC 388 (1875)	Injunction
(Buncombe Case removed to Madison) State vs. Cunningham	72 NC 469 (1875)	Murder
State vs. Honeycutt	74 NC 391 (1876)	Murder
State vs. Ferguson	76 NC 197 (1877)	Neglect of official duty
Banks vs. Banks	77 NC 186 (1877)	Possession of land
Wiley Wilburn Wilson	January Term 1878	Licensed as Attorney
State vs. Boon	80 NC 461 (1879)	Murder
Young vs. Young	81 NC 92 (1879)	Recover land
Broyles vs. Young	81 NC 315 (1879)	Execution
Ray vs. Gardner	82 NC 146 (1880)	Recovery land
McCurry vs. McCurry	82 NC 296 (1880)	Slander
Gudger vs. Hensley	82 NC 482 (1880)	Recover land
(Removed to Madison) State vs. Boon	82 NC 638 (1880)	Murder