

CLIMAX #5, Lettered for the Boone Fork Lumber Company, c. 1918. B. G. Teams relaxes on the front of the engine. (Photo from the Mrs. B. G. Teams collection courtesy of Allen Curtis.)

Boone Fork Lumber Company Train – this did go on the Whiting Railroad

From Blueridge Stemwinder Vol. 1 No. 3

WHITING RAILROAD RESEARCH NOTES

Tracing the Whiting Railroad from Boone to
Tater Hill

ABSTRACT

This is my research notes tracing the Whiting Railroad through property records, aerial photos and Watauga Democrat Newspaper articles for the 1920 time period.

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Tracing the Whiting Railroad from Boone to Tater Hill

Introduction

When I first moved to Boone I was intrigued by Depot Street which indicated to me that there once had been a railway in Boone. A little bit of research and it was easy to find out information on the Linville River Railroad, (LRR), which had terminated at River and Depot St - River St. and Faculty Drive being built on the old rail bed. In fact the Portofino Restaurant there occupies the Linville River Railroad freight depot.

The Linville River Railroad was part of the Eastern Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad, affectionately known as "Tweetsie," and it operated the railroad from Montezuma NC to Boone, about 22 miles, from 1919 until 1940 when flooding wrecked the rail beds. It was what was called a "common carrier" or in essence a public railroad, and was regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission, (ICC).

There is a great deal of available information on the Linville River Railroad, for one thing the national archives have the complete blueprints of the railroad in its ICC section. There is also a very active historical society:

<http://www.etwnccrrhs.org/>

Chris Ford, www.cfordart.com, the president of the society, after reading my December 21, 2018 version of these notes, sent me a copy of a 1940 USDA photo, 9B75, because my original version had to settle for using a 1955 photo. I replaced the 1955 photos of the beginning of the railroad with 1940 ones from this photo and it made some of my original assumptions moot as the route is clearer at the beginning in 9B75. Chris also told me where I might get copies of the 1940 aerial photos that, as I wrote in the following pages. I did not have for most of the Whiting Railroad. So I assume this will be updated by me as I get new photos.

I was surprised to find out that there were numerous private railroads that connected to the Linville River Railroad. There is the Boone Fork Creek Railroad, which went along Boone Fork Creek from Shulls Mills to Storyteller Rock on Grandfather Mountain, and down to US221 and appears to have had 22.5 miles of track. Parts of this rail bed is used for the Boone Fork Trail in Julian Price Park, and the Tanawha and Nuwati trails on Grandfather Mountain. Other parts are under Sweet Grass Dr. and Sunny Haven Lane as well as the Blue Ridge Parkway. He also built the Moody Mill Creek Railroad that went out of Foscoe up Moody Mill Creek, and this railroad seems to have been forgotten, and planned one down the Watauga River to Beech Mountain.

I was intrigued by the Whiting Railroad which was a spur line off of the LRR somewhere in Boone and went north over Howard's Knob, up to Boone Lookout, along Rich Mountain Ridge, and up to Tater Hill. There was not any visible trace of the railway left in the Town of Boone as urban development seemed to have erased all vestiges of it. So I decided to dig in and see what traces of this forgotten railroad I could find

Research Techniques:

The best way of researching a subject is to find out if someone else has already done it so you just need to read it. I did just that and was lucky to find that Joseph Quinn had done a lot of research on this railroad and the Boone Fork Railroad.:

“William S. Whiting’s Logging Railroads: An Historical Geography 1900-1925” (Master’s Thesis, 2003)

Which is available at the Appalachian State University library in Boone. The thesis covers Whiting’s numerous logging efforts. Whiting built the Whiting RR and Bone Fork Creek RR and others and was the commercial reason that the Linville River Railroad was built to Boone in the first place. He owned substantial logging rights and he was good friends with the people who owned the Linville River Railroad.

This research by Joseph Quinn was very helpful in determining the railroad’s route as it allowed me to geographically focus my search.

My basic research technique is to track legal documents like deeds and right-of-ways. Nobody allows anyone to build a railroad across their property without being aware of it and likely they demand rent from the railroad operator. So the first step was to find deeds that provided for the ROW of the Whiting Railroad.

Next was to look for odd property lines in the path of the railroad. Often I can find property lines that follow the old Whiting Railroad that details the railroad’s exact location.

Other times I had to use historical aerial photographs to fill in parts and sometimes to make educated guesses as to exactly where the railroad went. Of the 12 miles of the Whiting Railroad mainline I needed to guess at about 1 mile in total, and my guess, if not correct, would be very close. I also made educated guesses at where sidings were built to clear the land, one siding, on both sides of Sugarworth Mountain Rd., was detailed in property records.

Here are some of my sources in case the bug to do this type of research bites you:

<http://72.15.246.181/WataugaNCNW/application.asp?resize=true>

<http://gisviewer.townofboone.net/maps/default.htm>

<http://tax.watgov.org/WataugaNC/maps/mapadv.aspx>

<http://digitalwatauga.org/items/browse?collection=14>

- These are three copies of the Blue Ridge Stemwinder Magazine

<http://digitalwatauga.org/collections/show/6>

- This is the USDA aerial photo collections from 1940 and 1955

<http://digital.ncdcr.gov/>

- This is NC state archives

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82007642/issues/>

- This is the local newspaper, the “Watauga Democrat,” archives from 1888-1922

<http://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/watauga-democrat-boone-n-c/>

- This is the Watauga Democrat archives for 1923-2018.

<https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#11/36.2517/-81.6871>

And Google maps.

The Era:

The era of railroad building in the Boone area was a heady time. From 1916 when Whiting built his first railroad in the region until 1921 when he finished the Whiting Railroad over Howard's Knob to Buckeye Knob in Cove Creek, Boone saw:

- 1) WW1, with its share of draft dodgers in Watauga County.
- 2) The Spanish flu epidemic which closed down the precursor of App. State University.
- 3) Prohibition.
- 4) Women suffrage.

In those days voting took place on the courthouse steps, there was no secret ballot. You would be told that all who support a certain candidate raise your hand and they were counted. Men voted the way their employer voted, and women voted the way their men voted. It was a matter of a paycheck and family support.

The public school system in North Carolina was created in 1919 and attendance was made compulsory for the first time, so our state Public School system is not a century old. The County Roads commission began operating in 1918 and only then did the government build roads, before then it was private enterprise, or neighbors. The Boone to Blowing Rock Turnpike was bought in 1919 and the Boone Trail Highway, aka Highway 60 aka US 421, was built from the Tennessee line to the Wilkes county line in 1918-1920 and for the very first time they used power equipment like steam shovels, slashing the per mile cost of making roads.

Problems with Deeds from a century ago:

There are a few problems with deeds from a century ago. For one thing many before 1920 are handwritten and it is hard to decipher the details. For another, the descriptions of the property boundaries are vague and many features, like trees, property lines and roads have moved in the ensuing years. And some just plainly have errors in the description of the lot boundaries.

For example, this is a description of the only property in Boone bought by the Boone Fork Lumber Company in 1921, Deed Bk. 28 Pg. 63:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA—Watauga County

THIS DEED, Made this 11 day of March, 1921, by C.I. Harrison and wife Lela Harrison
of Denton County and State of Texas, of the first part, to
Boone Fork Lumber Company, of Watauga County
and State of North Carolina, of the second part, WITNESSETH:
That said C.I. Harrison and wife Lela Harrison, in consideration of
One Hundred and Fifty (\$150).00 Dollars,
to them paid by Boone Fork Lumber Company, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have
bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey to said Boone Fork Lumber Company
and their heirs and assigns, a certain tract or parcel of land in Boone Township, Watauga
County, and State of North Carolina, adjoining the lands of James Winkler and Mary Ann Person,
and others, bounded as follows, viz.:
Beginning on a stake at the forks of the Turnpike and Deck Hill Road, Runs East to the
branch Mary A. Person's line thence with the branch to the Boone Creek: then with Deck
Hill Road to the beginning, containing one fourth of an acre, more or less.

Stamp 50 cents,

Figure 1: Boone Fork Lumber Land in Boone Deed Bk. 28 Pg. 63

This deed displays at least four of the common problems in trying to place these locations:

- 1) First, the four sided plot only has three sides described. Somehow you get from Boone Creek to Deck Hill Rd. then to the beginning. Likely "Follow Boone Creek to Deck Hill Road" is missing in the description.
- 2) The compass points are sometimes off as the direction of the turnpike is assumed east-west in this case when it is really NW-SE.
- 3) The roads have moved, so today, Deck Hill Road no longer intersects the Boone to Blowing Rock Turnpike, aka US 321.
- 4) The branch mentioned was put in a culvert running underground in 1985 when major renovations of NC 105 extension occurred, and so is not visible today.

It helps to look at historical maps when trying to place these lots. Here is an excerpt from a postal route map of 1920:

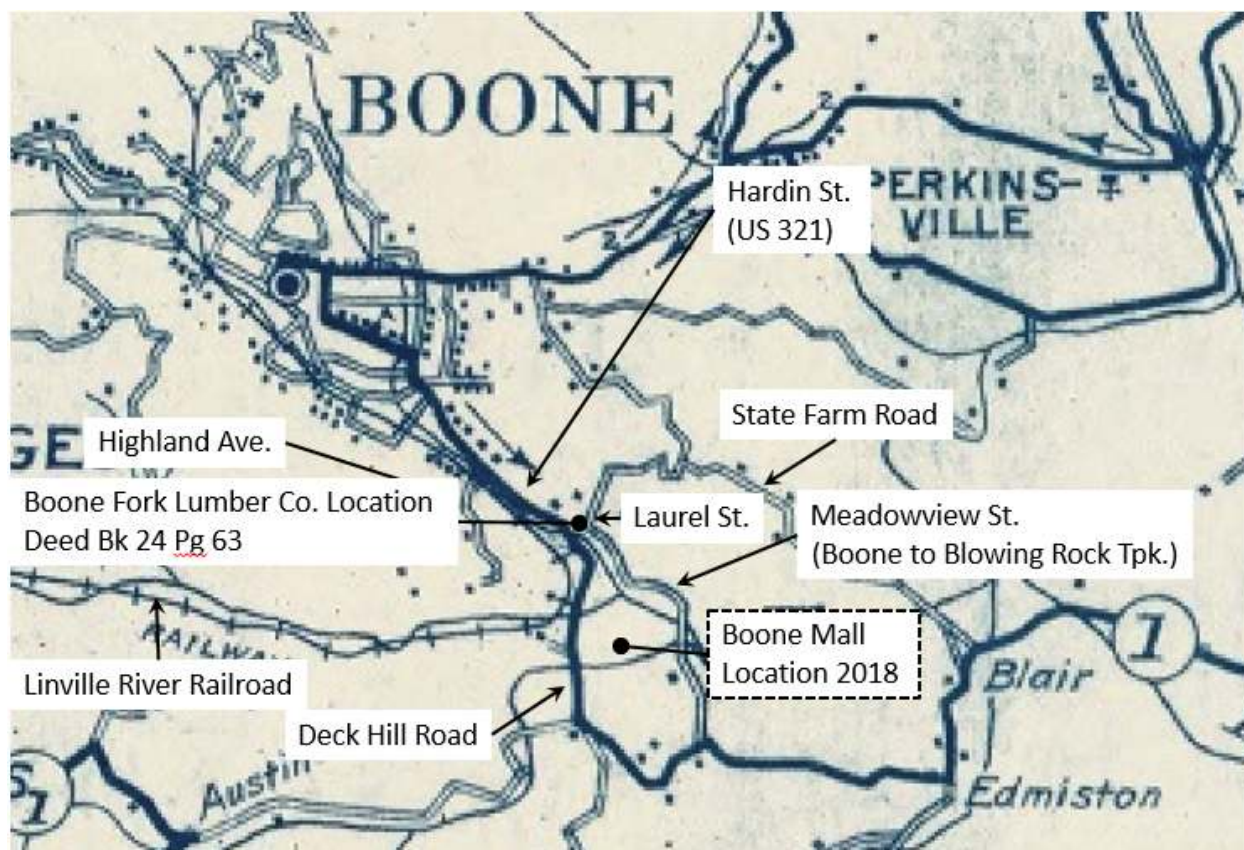


Figure 2: Boone Fork Lumber Company Location in Boone, 1920

An aside about old maps: - they have mistakes and the date that they are supposed to have been made can be wrong as well. This postal map has many correct things about it, but it puts some schools and churches in different places than other maps from the same time period, so beware.

This 1920 map is using the road layout prior to 1919 as Hardin St. is not connected to the Turnpike yet which happened in 1919. The turnpike originally started at what is now US 421 and NC 105 extension, north central in this map, and came down Blair Street aka Sampson Road

aka State Farm Road to Laurel St., as shown on this map, and to Meadowview St. and on to Blowing Rock. US 321 today follows the route to Blowing Rock, although today's US 321 commercial strip from Deerfield Rd. at the south of Boone, shown as Edmiston in *Figure 2*, to Meadowview was not built until about 1950.

It is easy to see where the intersection of Deck Hill Rd. and the turnpike is. This property was resold in 1932 by CT Harrison again, I am not sure how he got possession of it again, to a Ralph Moretz. He sold it to a Keplar who operated a shoe repair store there, and then it was sold a few more times, each using this faulty description for the boundaries. Finally in the 1960s a court case fixed the boundaries. This is not uncommon.

This lot is the northern half of the lot the Wells Fargo Bank sits on at the NW corner of US 321 and NC 105. More about that in upcoming photos.

Whiting Railroad Route Map: Boone to Tater Hill



Figure 3: Whiting Railroad Route Map - Boone to Tater Hill

The Whiting Railroad was a branch railroad of the Linville River Railroad and went 12 miles up around Howard's Knob, climbing the ridge just north of the Town of Boone, along the ridge, and then down to the Flatwoods region beneath Rich Mountain. Four sections will be traced in greater detail below.

Whiting Railroad: Starting at Winkler's Siding and Up Howard's Knob

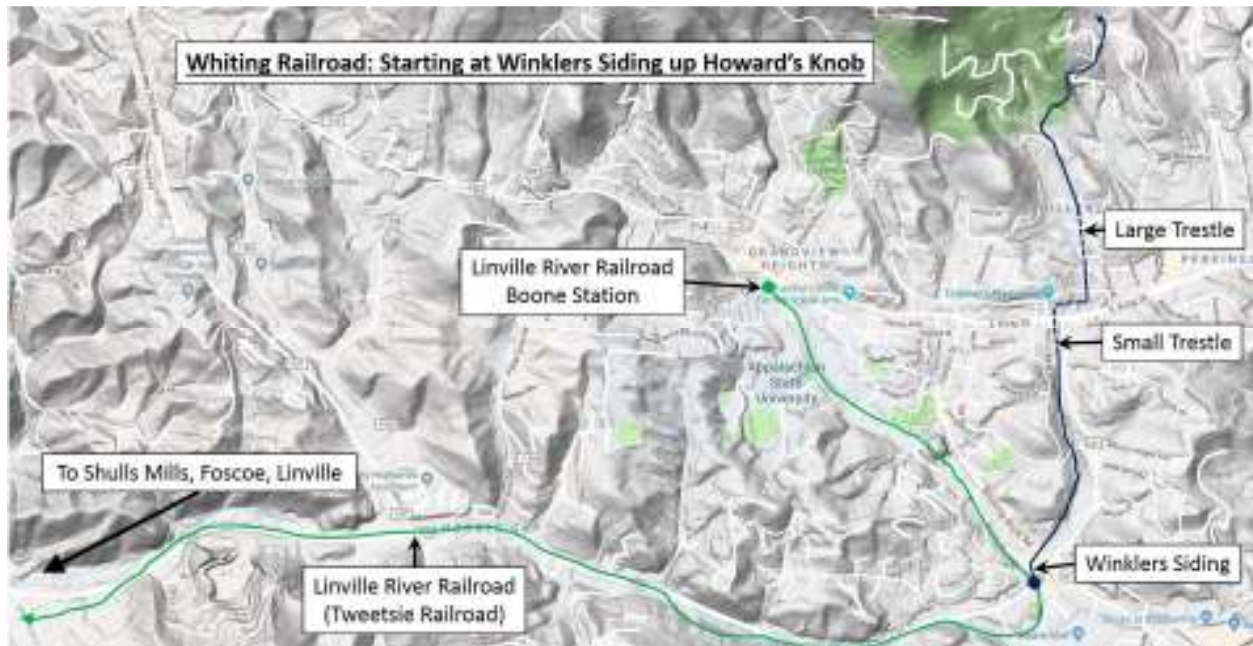


Figure 4: Whiting Railroad Map: Starting at Winkler's Creek and up Howard's Knob

The first half mile or so of the Whiting Railroad was used as the Town of Boone boundary from 1923 until 1964. So we know that it started out at Winkler's siding.

Winkler's Siding:

Winkler's siding is described in Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 2, which details the 1923 Town boundary, as 9 poles long, or 148.5 feet. It is mentioned a few times in the Watauga Democrat:

- 1) Once in 1921 as the place where a Sunday school boarded a train for an outing.
- 2) 8/11/1921 P. 1 article about putting the men to work on the railroad near Winkler's siding.
- 3) 12/18/1924 P 5 article that says the Linville River Railroad may be extended to Blowing Rock from Winkler's siding. This extension never happened.
- 4) 10/29/1931 P1 article about new Highway Department garages built at Winkler's siding. This is the last mention of Winkler's siding.

The Boone Fork Company land at Deck Hill and the turnpike (DB 28/63), was bought in 1921 to allow access from Winkler's siding to the Whiting Railroad ROW which went up parallel to Laurel St, see *Figure 2: Boone Fork Lumber Company Location in Boone, 1920* from Winkler's Siding off the LRR mainline. To gain a better perspective of the route here, this is picture from the 1940 Aerial photo, 9B75, of the USDA series:

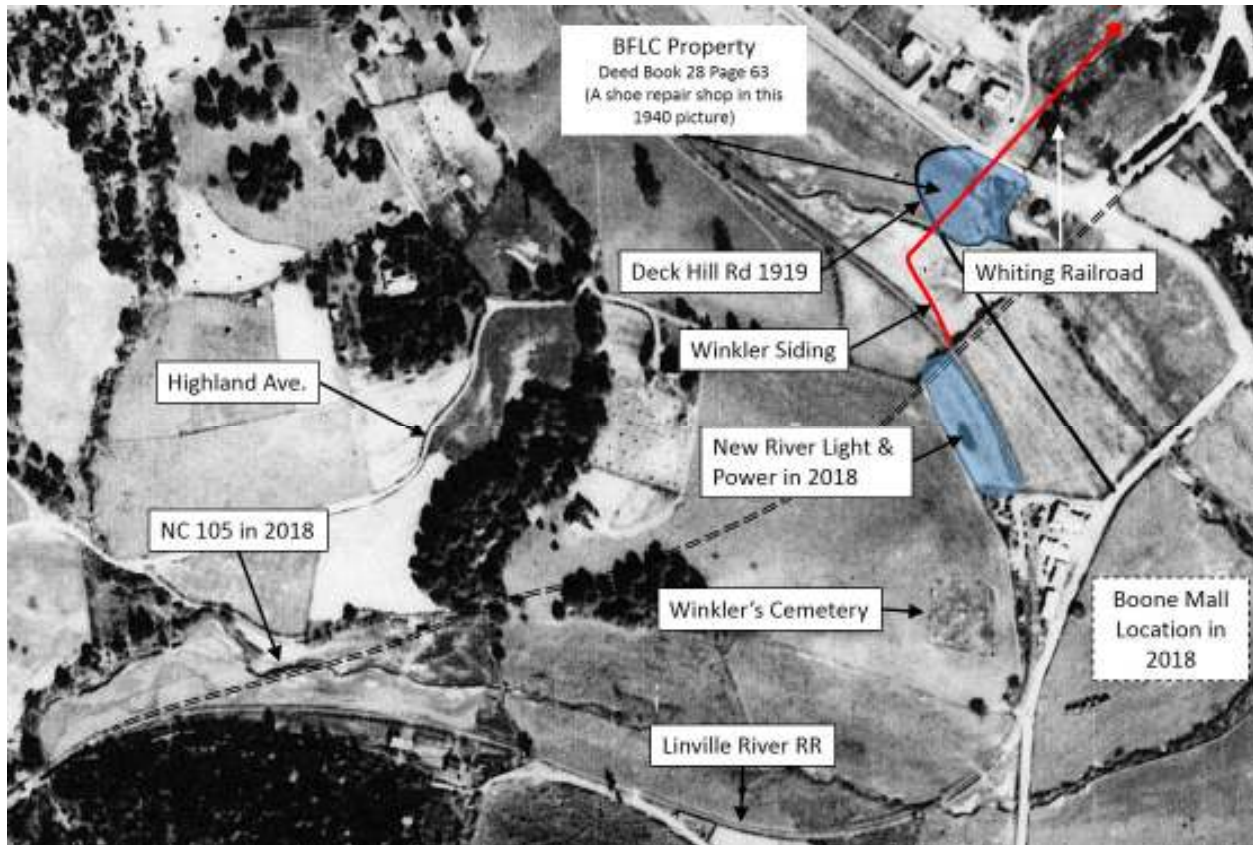


Figure 5: Winkler's Siding 1940 USDA 9B75, courtesy of Chris Ford

This was the earliest relevant picture I could get for Boone, 9B75 of the USDA 1940 series, courtesy Chris Ford. Most of the aerial photos in this series of Boone are restricted on digital Watauga, the research source I used.

This photo was taken about 8 weeks after the August 1940 devastating floods that ended the operation of the Linville River Railroad. It was about 15 years after the Whiting Railroad was pulled up. In this picture the only thing you can see of the Whiting RR is straight lines of trees likely growing along the rail bed, the property line followed the branch that ran alongside the RR path. The Whiting RR rail bed location was not developed at this time, and is visible further up in 9B75. That has changed in 2018.

Here is an aerial photo of the same spot in 2018:



Figure 6: Winkler's Siding 2018, 2018 county tax map.

It is interesting that the property line of the New Light Power buildings follows the old Linville River RR ROW. James L Winkler sold the lot using the Linville River Railroad ROW as a boundary line.

The Whiting RR basically went up what is now the driveway into the Panhellenic center for ASU behind the BB&T facing the 105 ext., the big white building in the picture. There is actually a valley up the path of the Whiting RR behind the properties facing the 105 extension that is often overlooked. The Town of Boone maintenance yards on both sides of Horn of the West are sitting right on top of the railroad bed.

Whiting RR up the 105 Extension:

The location of Winkler's Siding and the first half mile of the Whiting Railroad is well fixed, if not well known, because it formed part of the town boundary from 1923 until 1964. Plat book 1 page 2 describes the town boundaries while Plat book 1 page 3 maps the boundaries, as shown below:

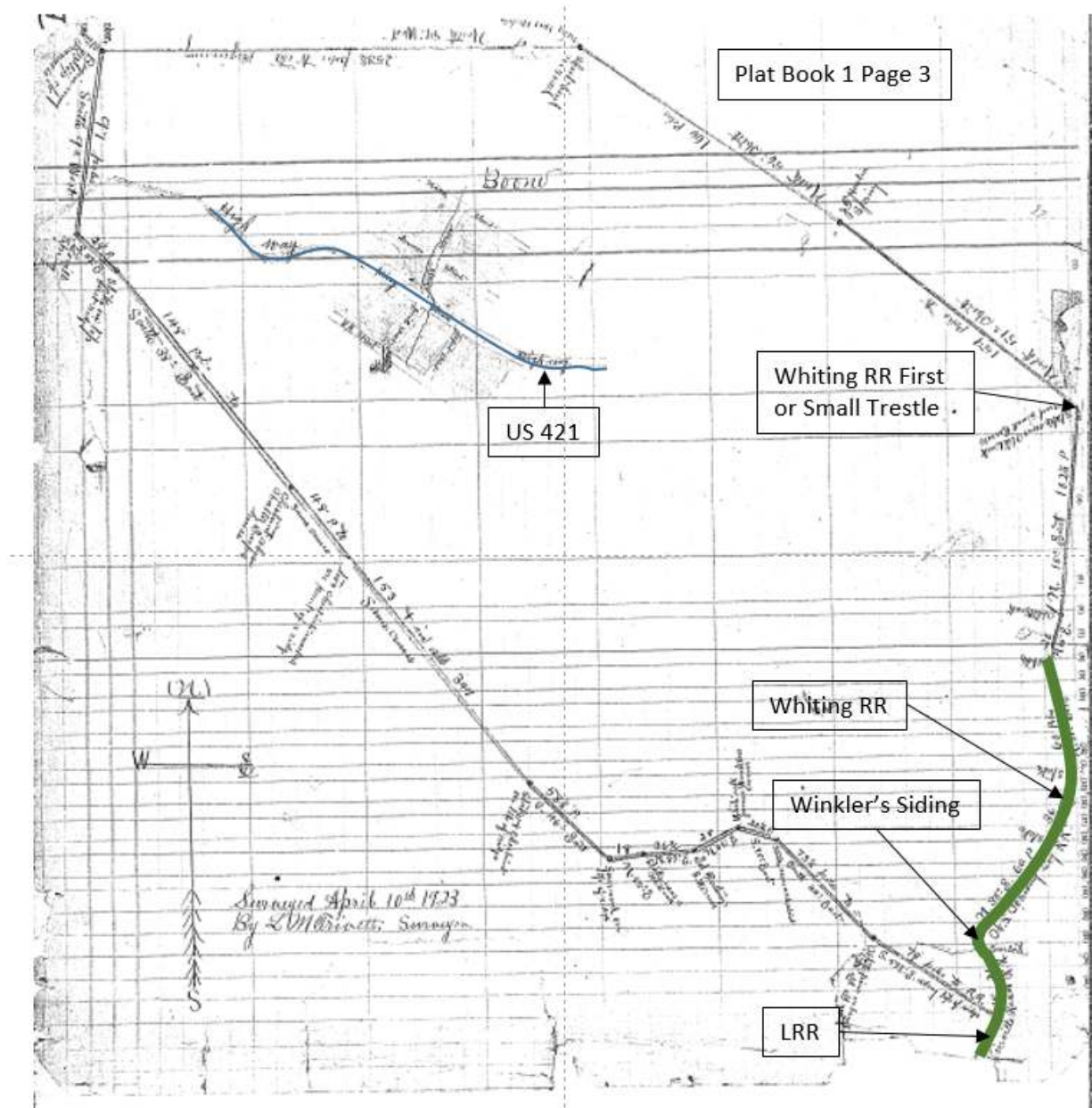


Figure 7: Plat of Town Of Boone Boundary 1923, Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 3.

The town boundaries stop following the Whiting RR after a half mile, but the NE corner of the boundary is at the small or first trestle on the Whiting RR. This plat, in that tiny script, mentions small trestle, the General Assembly Chpt. 75, P 272, of the 1923 Public Private laws calls it the "first trestle" in the line near the "large trestle," as shown in Figure 8:

Here is the 1923 town boundary from the 1964 law changing the boundary, Plat book 3 page 163, to provide a more recent official plot of the Whiting Railroad's path that would be more easily recognized today:

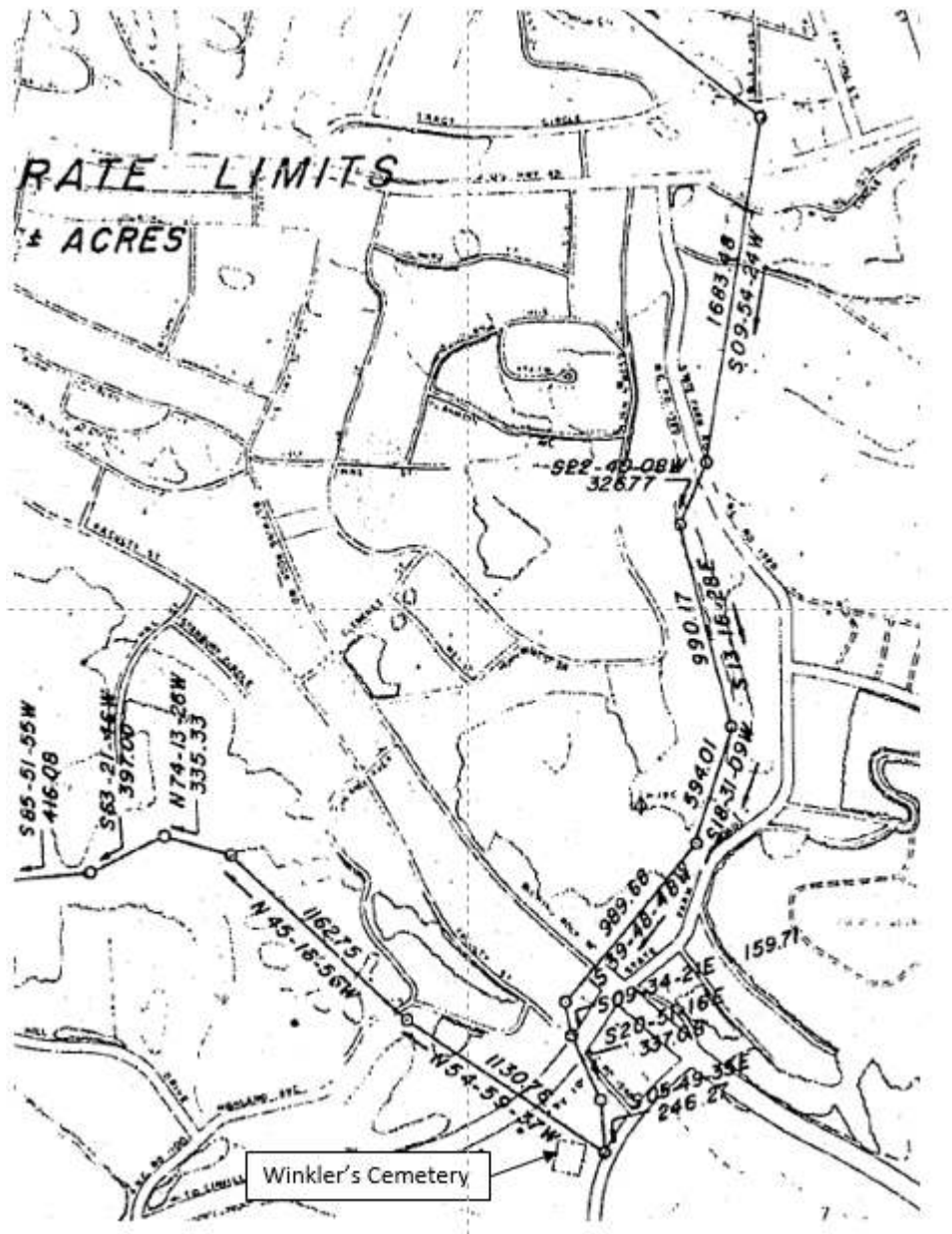


Figure 9: 1964 Map Showing 1923 Town of Boone Boundary, Plat Bk. 3 Pg. 163

Winkler's cemetery gives a good reference point to earlier aerial photos, and by the way, it is still there today. It is about 20 feet higher than the surrounding land as the whole hill has been leveled for development.

The third section going counter clockwise from the cemetery is Winkler's Siding and the next three sections are the Whiting RR. Note that this map shows Winkler's siding as being 159.71 feet long and that is different than 9 poles, or 148.5 feet as detailed in Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 3.

The siding starts right at faculty Drive and NC 105. The NE corner, right south of Blue Ridge Ave north of US 421, is where it is mentioned the small trestle is and that is the northern end of the trestle that crossed US 421 near the intersection with NC 105 extension.

Other deeds that fix the location of the railroad in addition to the town Boundary fixing it, include Deed Book 34 Page 275 where James L Winkler sold a plot of land, which is the northern half of the lot the BB&T bank is on at US 321 and 105 extension, and one corner is 9 feet from the center of the railroad. Deed Book 55 page 509 tract 1 description starts at that branch that is in culverts and what is now US 321, and says the railroad crosses US 321 there.

The other plat I have of the beginning of the Whiting RR was the 1921 plat of the Grove Park Subdivision from James L Winkler. James L Winkler owned the land along US 321 to Faculty drive on the west, and most of what is the Panhellenic center and the Horn in the West today. His northern border with JF Hardin was a line going east-west through Pine St. just north of Horn in the West from Hardin Street to 105 Ext.

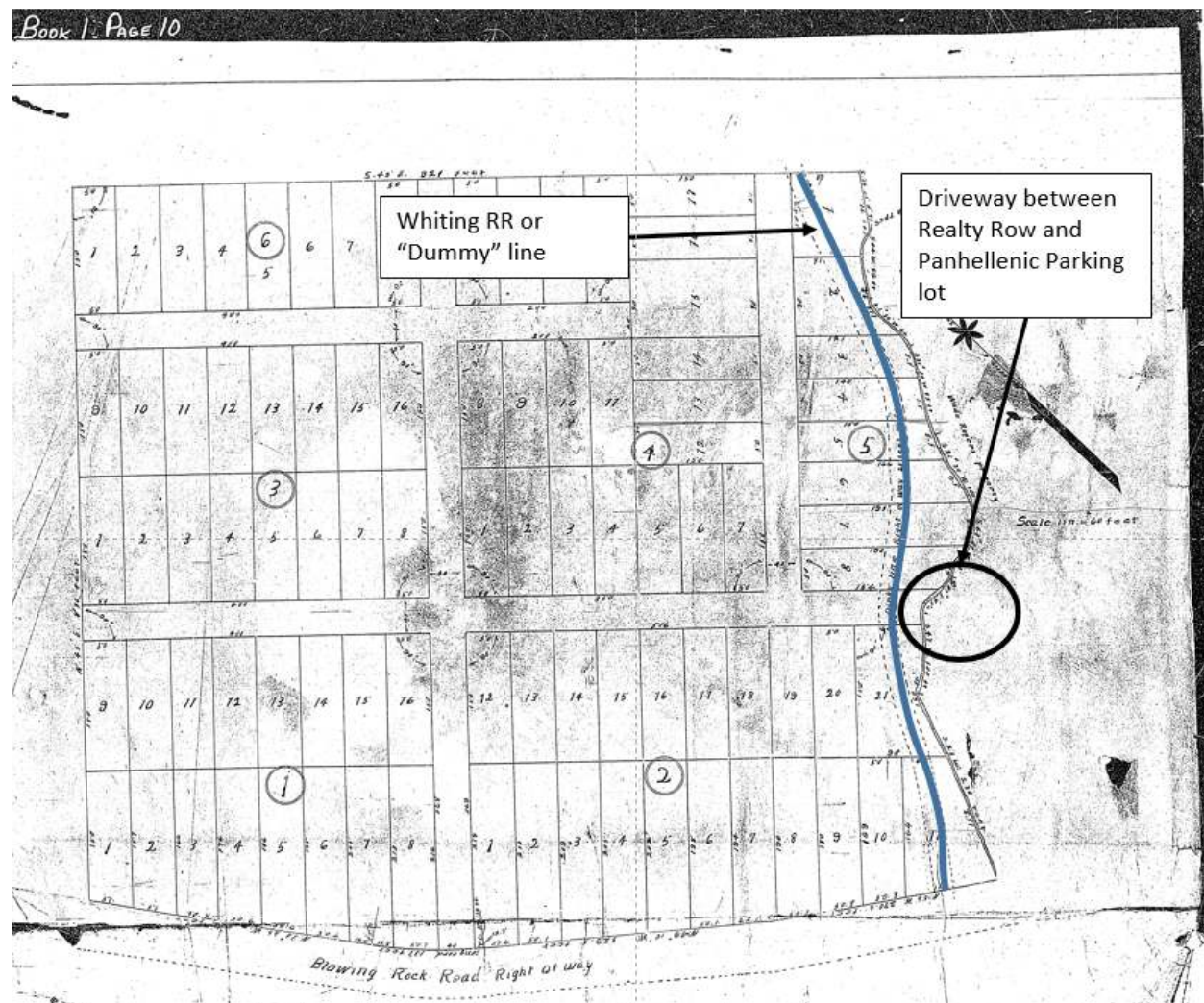


Figure 10: 1921 Grove Park Subdivision Plat Showing Whiting RR ROW, Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 10

The location of a present day marker, the driveway between the Panhellenic center parking lot and Realty Row is shown below in this present day aerial photo:



Figure 11: 2018 Panhellenic Center Showing Park Street of Grove Park Subdivision Location in 1921, 2018 county tax map

This photo shows the end of the Park St. in the Grove Park SD plat and it would appear the Whiting RR was about where the line of trees exist. Just north of that driveway the property lines go over the RR path because the land in the Grove Park subdivision was sold and then re-divided as lots along Laurel St, which is now Realty Row, in 1948. North of that the boundary line reverts to the branch which was the line on the Grove Park SD plat except as this photo shows, it now underground since 1985.

Land Ownership for ROW in Boone.

As I mentioned early in this article someone has to grant the ROW for the railroad and it is likely done in a legal document. At the time of the Whiting RR's construction the relevant land ownership in Boone was as shown below:



Figure 12: Whiting Railroad ROW Land Ownership in Boone, 1920.

These are the lands over which the RR would need to pass to get to the timber deeds to the left of RG Lane's land at Rainbow Trail and Red Fox Drive. Timber deeds also granted a ROW for the railroad.

It is easy to see most of the old farm boundaries in today's property lines. There is no record of any ROW agreement with DE Hartley and I don't believe the RR went on his land. RG Lane (Deed Bk. 25 Pg. 17), JF Hardin, (Deed Bk. 27 Pg. 229), and HJ Hardin, (Deed Bk. 21 Pg. 251), have ROW agreements with Boone Fork Lumber Company or WS Whiting. James L Winkler has the ROW in his Grove Park SD plat so he must be aware, but nowhere could I find anything that said that BB & DD Dougherty had a ROW agreement, yet the RR went over their land along Rainbow Trail. It may have been filed in another county or there may not be anything but a verbal agreement or somehow the Linville River Railroad ROW agreement signed by them, governing their land along faculty drive today, covered all their holdings. James L Winkler also granted a ROW for the Linville River Railroad, while JF Hardin, HJ Hardin and RG Lane did not. So maybe somehow that is the case but it is not obvious from the LRR ROW agreements.

The existence of the ROW agreements led me to believe the path continued right up along the branch that is in culverts parallel to today's NC 105 extension, and then up and across US 421 on JF Hardin's land, and did not go onto other property. That is where I assumed it went, and the recently received photo, 9B75 confirms my assumption.

Whiting Railroad Path up to and Across US 421 Detailed in Property Records

The path of the Whiting Railroad is shown plotted on 2018 property map in Figure 13:

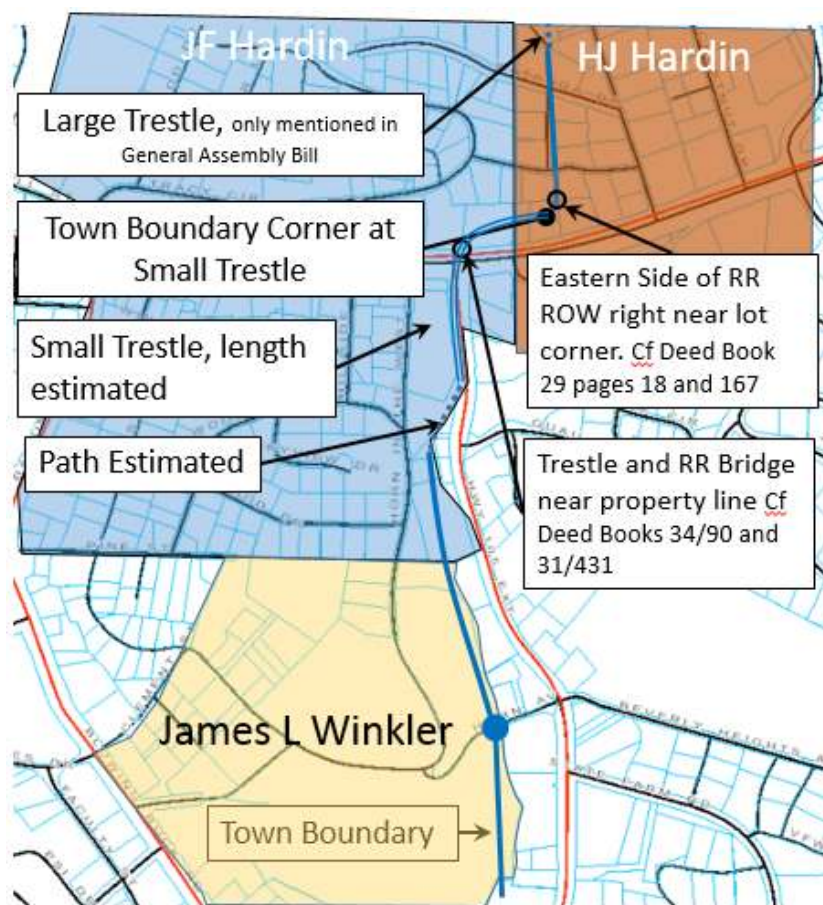


Figure 13: 1920 Property Owners and Whiting RR Path up 105 on 2018 Map, Town of Boone GIS.

The town boundary fixes the Whiting Railroad path up to Horn in the West Avenue. Two deeds (Deed Bk. 34 Pg. 90, Bk. 31 Pg. 41) mention their common boundary line is near the Railroad bridge, obviously the bridge crosses US 421. Two other Deed books (Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 18, Bk. 29 Pg. 167) fix the Railroad's ROW as being at a common corner to the two properties. These fix the location of the Whiting Railroad up to and across US 421 very well, more detailed explanation follows.

Town Boundary to Small Trestle:



After the town boundary stops following the Whiting Railroad, it is assumed that the path continues close to the James L Winkler boundary with the DE Hartley farm in the east. This boundary is the creek that went underground in 1985. It continues up to about where the small trestle is shown as starting.

The following picture is from 1940. USDA 9B75 courtesy of Chris Ford, and it almost seems like the tree line follows the town boundaries as described in Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 3 as three straight lines forming a curve.

Probably a good place to get a feel for the railroad path along 105 extension is to go up Horn of the West Drive off 105, right at the end of the town boundary in the above map, and look at the Town of Boone maintenance sites on both sides that lie on the RR bed.

Going further north up 105 extension the railroad bed is visible up to the bend in the road as seen in Figure 15 below. After that it is not evident exactly where the railroad went until it is over US 421.

But it helps show the state of the railway bed after 15 years. The road to the New River hydroelectric plant, which now is Graham Alley, can be seen clearly near the top of the picture. The loop just above that is now Wood's circle off of US 421, but was the highway path until about 1921 or around when the RR was built. It comes up in a couple of deeds on the next page or so.

Figure 14: Whiting Railroad Beginning Plotted on 1940 Photo, 9B75 USDA 1955, courtesy Chris Ford

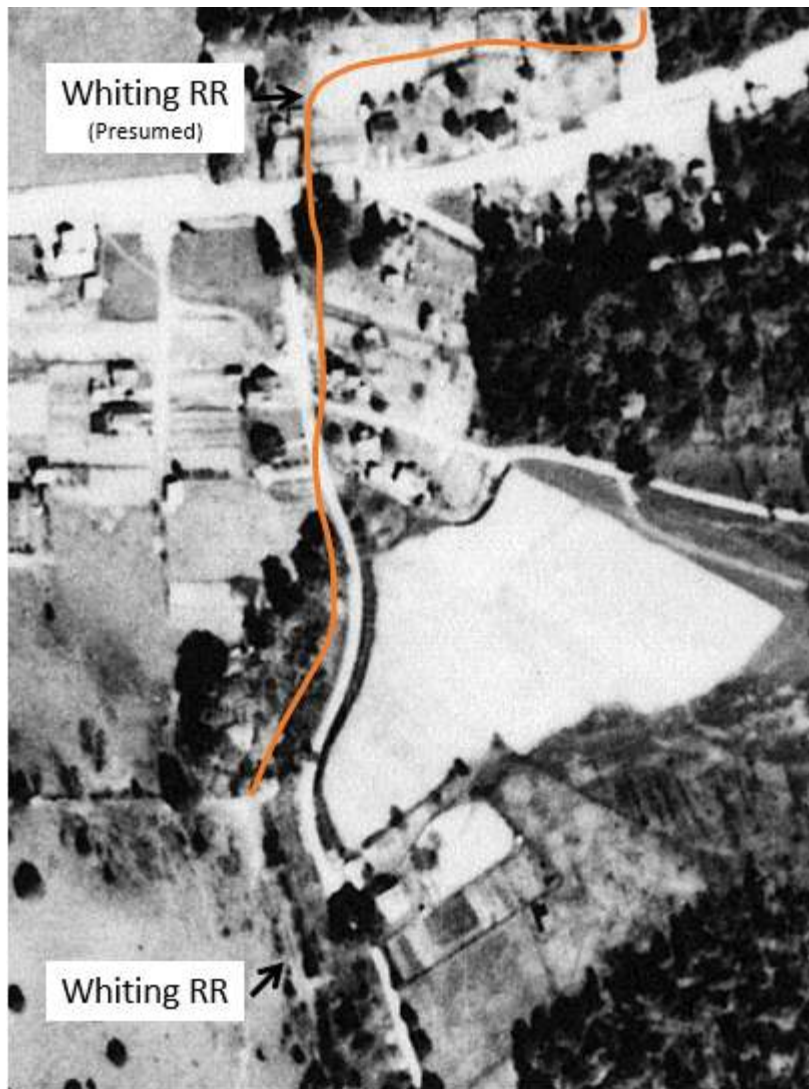


Figure 15: Intersection of US 421 and NC 105 ext. from USDA 9B75, courtesy of Chris Ford.

Figure 15 shows one path of the railroad that is possible. This one is favorable because it lines up directly with the property line that mentions the railroad bridge. For another JF Hardin owned the land on that side of NC 105 ext. down to that road that goes to the New River generating plant and now is Graham Alley in 2018, and thirdly in the picture there is a row of trees indicating they are possibly growing in the rail bed.

It may have stayed on the west side of NC 105 as well. This shown route has the downside of needing to cross what is now 105 ext. rather than remain on the west side of the road and just cross US 421.

By the way, NC 105 ext. runs about 75-100 feet east of where it is shown in this picture. In fact the strip of land on the east side of NC 105 ext. in this photo that I have the railroad on, was put under NC 105 in 1972 during a widening and re-alignment.

Small Trestle Location:

The small trestle is shown on Plat Bk. 1 Pg. 3, it is called the first trestle in the dummy line by the general assembly law defining the town boundaries in February 1923. The law says the northeast corner of the town boundary is at the first trestle and near the large trestle. As shown in Figure 13, the northeast corner of the trestle was very close to what is now the lot line just south of the intersection of Buena Vista Ave. and Blue Ridge Avenue.

Two deed books, Bk. 34 Pg. 90 and Bk. 31 Pg. 431 mention the railroad bridge on the north side of US 421 as follows:

Deed Bk. 34 Pg. 90:

DEEDS—BOOK 34	
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,—Watauga County	
THIS DEED, Made this <u>8th</u> day of <u>April</u> , 19 <u>21</u> , by.....	
<u>John F. Hardin and wife M.C. Hardin</u>	
of <u>Watauga</u> County and State of <u>North Carolina</u> , of the first part, to	
<u>J.F. Harkleroad</u> , of <u>Watauga</u> County	
and State of <u>North Carolina</u> , of the second part, WITNESSETH:	
That said <u>John F. Hardin and wife M.C. Hardin</u> , in consideration of	
<u>Five Hundred</u> Dollars,	
to <u>them</u> paid by <u>J.F. Harkleroad</u> , the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have	
bargained and sold, and by these presents do grant bargain, sell and convey to said <u>J.F. Harkleroad</u>	
and <u>his</u> heirs and assigns, a certain tract or parcel of land in <u>Watauga</u> Boone Township, <u>Watauga</u>	
County, and State of <u>North Carolina</u> , adjoining the lands of <u>John F. Hardin</u>	
and others, bounded as follows, viz.:	
<u>BEGINNING on a stone, planted on the North bank of the Boone Trail Highway, near the</u>	
<u>rail road bridge, that crosses the road, and run s South 86° West 158 feet with the High-</u>	
<u>Way to a stone; thence North 4° East 207 feet to a stone; thence East 158 Feet to a</u>	
<u>stone; thence South 2° West 207 feet to the beginning, containing three-fourths of an acre</u>	
<u>more or less.</u>	

Figure 16: First Mention of Location of US 421 RR Bridge Deed Bk. 34 Pg. 19

That deed describes the lower part of this lot at the intersection of 105 extension and US 421:

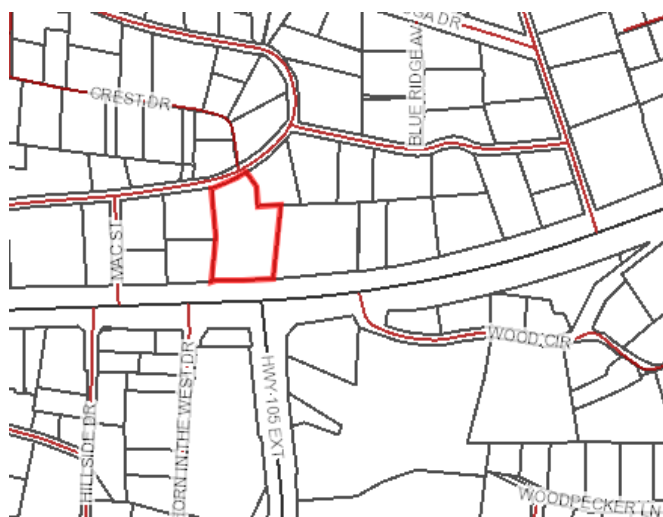


Figure 17: First Lot for RR Bridge over US 421

Deed Bk. 31 Pg. 421 has the second mention of the railroad bridge location:

DEEDS—BOOK 31

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,—Watauga County

THIS DEED, Made this 4th day of AUG. 1924, by Mrs. Nannie Gragg and T.R.Gragg
her husband

of Watauga County and State of N. Car., of the first part, to
S.J.Barnes and wife Stellia Barnes, of Watauga County
and State of North Carolina, of the second part, WITNESSETH:

That said Mrs. Nannie Gragg and husband T.R.Gragg, in consideration of
Six Hundred Dollars,
to them paid by S.J.Barnes and wife Stella Barnes, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have
bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey to said S.J.Barnes and wife Stella Barnes
and their heirs and assigns, a certain tract or parcel of land in Boone Township, Watauga
County, and State of North Carolina, adjoining the lands of John F. Hardin,
and others, bounded as follows, viz.:
Beginning on a stone at the North side of the Boone Trail Highway near the railroad truss bridge
and running North 4° East 107 ft. to a stone, thence East 148 feet to a stone, thence South
2° West 234 feet to a stone at the edge of the Boone Trail Highway, thence to the beginning
containing three fourths (3/4) of an acres more or less.

This deed is made subject to the right of the Whiting Lumber Company and is not
to interfere in the least with their right in running this tram road or otherwise.

Figure 18: Second Mention of Location of US 421 RR Bridge Deed Bk. 31 Pg. 431

Which describes this lot at the intersection of 105 extension and US 421:

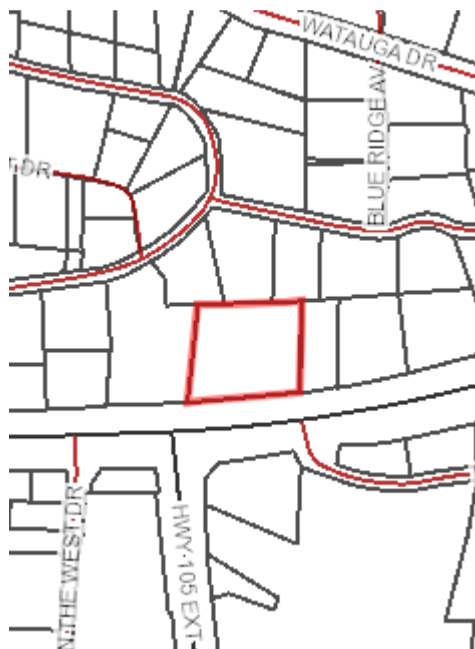


Figure 19: Second Lot for RR Bridge Crossing US 421

So it is a good guess that the bridge lands near that property line on the north side of US 421. It is interesting to note a reference is made to the Whiting Lumber Company which was a successor to the Cherokee Co. which was a successor to Boone Fork Manufacturing Company

which was a successor to Boone Fork Lumber Company that built the RR. All owned by Whiting.

Small trestle Design:

No idea of the design. We know on the north side of US 421 it ran 400 feet according to the town boundary and the deeds. If the RR bridge had 12 feet clearance over US 421 that would be a 3% grade which is good. So it is likely the approach from the South side of the bridge was about 400 feet long as well. But the trestle length on the south side of US 421 seems to be anywhere from 300-600 feet as shown in Figure 15, depending on whether it went on the east or west side of NC 105 Ext. That would give it a 2-4% grade if you think the bridge was 12 feet in clearance.

Turning up Howard's Knob:

The last mention of the RR in deed books on this side of Howard's Knob is in Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 18 and Bk. 29 Pg. 167, although there are mentions in later deeds when these properties were resold. These were both sold by HJ Hardin in 1922 and the reference to the old road is to Wood's Circle today and shows that the route of US 421 changed in about 1920 when they built Hwy 60 to the Wilkes county line.

Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 167:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA—Watauga County

THIS DEED, Made this 9th day of Sept. A. D., 1922, by H. Joe Hardin and wife
Alice Hardin
of said Watauga County and State of N. C., of the first part, to
Thos. R. Gragg of Boone Township, said County
and State of North Carolina, of the second part, WITNESSETH:
That said H. Joe Hardin & wife Alice (Jr.), in consideration of
(a total) of One thousand Forty Three & 1/3 Dollars,
to them paid by said Thos. R. Gragg, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have
bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey to said Thos. R. Gragg
and his heirs and assigns, a certain tract or Lot of land in Boone Township, Watauga
County, and State of North Carolina, adjoining the lands of Said H. Joe Hardin and wife
Alice and Mrs. James G. Cook, and others, bounded as follows, viz.:
Beginning on a chestnut tree on the top of the ridge in the old line between
John F. Hardin and Joe Hardin and a corner to a lot sold to T. R. Gragg by John F. Hardin
and runs N. 87 1/2° East crossing the R. R. 187 feet to a rock near R. R.; thence S 1/2
E. 338 feet to a stake on the bank of said old road; thence 89° W. along the said old
road 130 feet to a stake; thence N. 65° W. with said old road 100 feet to a Spanish
oak in old line & corner to the said Gragg Lot No. 2 in all 233 feet; then N. 1 1/2
E. 284 feet to the Beginning (1 11/20 acres or 1 1/2 a. & 1/20 a)

Figure 20: First Mention of RR Location between Trestles Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 167

This describes this lot on the north side of US 421:



It has been subdivided as this deed includes the plot to the left and went across US 421, to the loop known as Wood's Circle today, and that is why there is mention of the old road as the present route was being created. The Hardin line mentioned is the vertical line between Watauga Dr. and Buena Vista Dr. on this map.

Figure 21: First Lot for RR Path between the Trestles

Deed Bk. 20 Pg. 18:

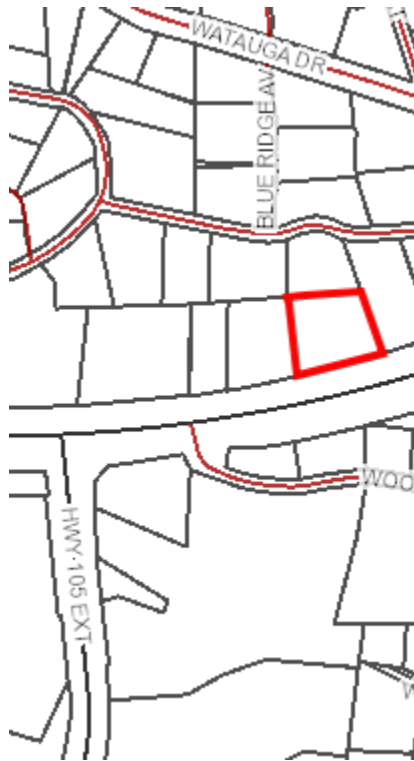
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA—Watauga County

THIS DEED, Made this 19th day of September, 1922, by H. Joe Hardin and Alice B. Hardin,
his wife
of Watauga County and State of North C., of the first part, to
Mrs. James G. Cook of Watauga County
and State of North Carolina, of the second part, WITNESSETH:
That said H. Joe Hardin & wife, Alice for
Three Hundred Dollars,
to them paid by said Mrs. James G. Cook, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have
bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey to said Mrs. James G. Cook
and her heirs and assigns, a certain tract or parcel of land in Boone Township, Watauga
County, and State of North Carolina, adjoining the lands of said H. Joe Hardin & wife, Alice
T. R. Gragg
Beginning on a planted rock (at a stake) corner to T.R.Gragg (and R.R. thence running
N. 87 1/2° E. 65 1/2 feet to a stake; thence South 5 1/2° East 372 1/2 feet to a stake on
the bank of the old road; thence 74° W. with the old road 65 1/2 feet to a stake corner
to the said Gragg lot; thence N. 5 1/2° West with said Lot 338 feet to the beginning
containing one half acre; with the following exceptions to wit a certain mineral spring
called the Colebiate Spring Mineral water on said lot with 10 feet around said spring and
running out to the old road said old road is reserved herein for a pass way.

Figure 22: Second Mention of RR Path between the Trestles, Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 18

This mentions the RR runs on the neighboring lot near that northwest corner of the lot. This point from Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 167, above, is 187 Feet from the Hardin line.

This is the lot location described:



This lot is more than half an acre. Mrs. Cook sold this lot back to HJ Hardin in 1930, (actually Mrs. HJ Hardin, perhaps HJ was deceased by 1930), and there is a mention of an “old railroad” telling us the railroad was gone by 1930.

Now Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 167 says the RR is crossed 187 feet from the JF Hardin/HJ Hardin line. The street “Blue Ridge Avenue” is 164-194 feet from the line with a 30 foot ROW. The ROWs overlap although their centerlines do not line up. I found nothing official to confirm my assumption the railroad bed was where Blue Ridge Ave. now is, but it is on the straight line between the location mentioned by Deeds Bk. 29 Pg. 167 and Bk. 29 Pg. 18, and the first part of RR bed still in existence north up Howard’s Knob, AND from 1950 aerial photos from Palmer Blair in Digital Watauga, Blue Ridge Avenue was a dirt road there before the subdivision was built. More on that later, in the discussion on the large Trestle location below.

Figure 23: Second Lot of RR Path between the Trestles

Whiting Railroad Path Up and Around Howard's Knob Detailed in Property Records

Here is the Whiting RR path from US 421 North to Rainbow trail off of NC 194:

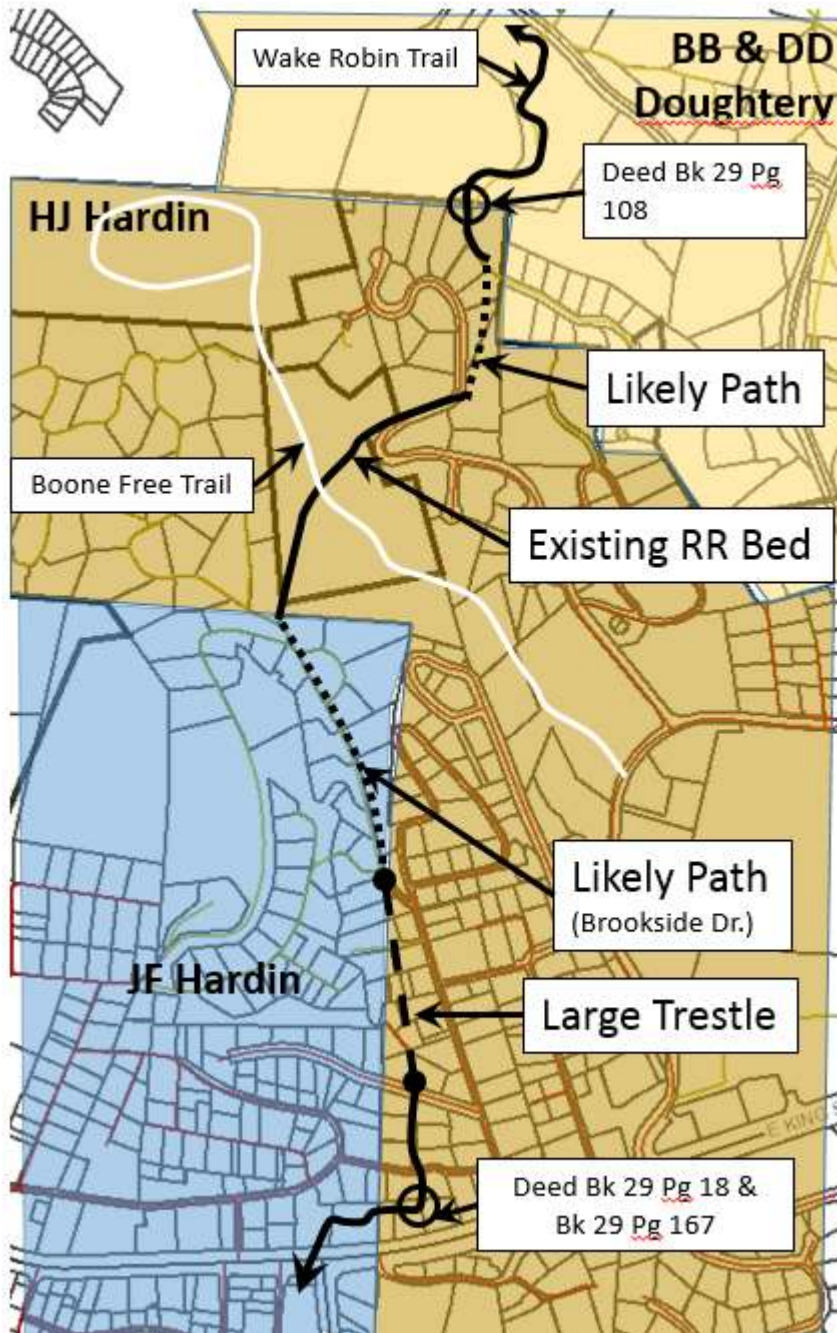


Figure 24: RR Path up Howard's Knob on Landowner's Map 2018, Boone GIS

Two pieces of the path plus the location and length of the large trestle are somewhat assumptions, but they are the most logical routes for the reasons given below.



Large Trestle Location:

The only mention of the large trestle is the General Assembly Law of February 1923 that created expanded town boundaries. It was located near the first trestle, which ended at the boundary corner referenced in Deed Bk. 29 Pg. 18 and Bk. 29 Pg. 167. I think the location of the large trestle becomes clearer when we look at the 1955 USDA aerial photo of Boone as shown to the left in *Figure 25*

Figure 25: RR Path up Howard's Knob 1955, 1M95 USDA 1955, was taken 30 years after the tracks had been pulled up but a straight line from the last location of the RR at the NE corner of the town boundary to existing RR bed behind the homes on Trout Lilly Dr. today is still visible going up Blue Ridge Ave to just past Watauga St. then there is a gap, and then right up a dirt farm road which is now the eastern half of Brookside Dr. This "straight line" was chosen as the most logical path.

Based on the assumption that a RR bed had to be somewhere near here and that they would reuse an existing Rail bed for a road rather than plow through a new one, and because the eastern half of Brookside Dr. exists when there was no other development there, I think it is safe to assume the railroad went where Blue Ridge Ave. and Brookside Dr. are now.

Figure 25: RR Path up Howard's Knob 1955, 1M95 USDA 1955

So the large trestle likely crossed the gap between Blue Ridge Ave. and Brookside Dr., because there is no evidence of a road there in the 1955 photo, 1M95, but also because that is where there is a gully that is 30 - 40 feet deep. And the trestle would be essentially flat in elevation over that stretch from beginning to end.

Large Trestle Design:

I really have no idea. I would assume it was a timber structure and must have been 30-40 feet high as it crossed the gully from the branch coming down Howard's Knob. If it connected Blue Ridge Ave. with Brookside Dr. it would have been about 800 feet long and the elevation at the northern end would be 20 feet higher than the southern end.

At the southern end, if the trestle began just north of Watauga Dr. today, then the RR bed would rise about 20-30 feet as it went south towards the small trestle over US 421. Perhaps the large

trestle started earlier on Blue Ridge Ave, but the dirt road is clear to past Watauga Dr. in 1950 photos, OR the rise was meant to be a “speed bump” of sorts to slow the heavily loaded logging trains down as they came down the knob, before they had to negotiate two right angle turns to get across US 421. This may also be why the southern approach to the small trestle across US 421 was a much gentler grade to slow down before Winkler’s siding when you have a fully loaded logging train.

That being said, the large trestle would likely be shorter than the first or small trestle. So I can only assume when they meant large trestle they were talking about the height reached as the small trestle for the RR bridge over US 421 would likely have only had 12 feet clearance max, this other trestle may have been as high as 30-40 feet. Pictures would help a lot.

Up Howard’s Knob:

As described in the location of the large trestle, it is felt the RR went up Blue Ridge Ave., because it is right in line with the last known location of the RR south, and because it is shown as a road in 1955, and then across the large trestle and then up the eastern half of Brookside Drive.

At the top of Brookside Drive in the back yards of the two Houses on Trout Lilly Rd. there is the railroad bed still today. The grade up Brookside Dr. seems to be a manageable 6% over about 800 feet, since empty trains go up and full ones go down the knob, further enforcing the likelihood that this is the path of the RR.

Around the Knob:

The Whiting Railway bed still exists from the Top of Brookside Dr. where Fire Pink Rd. intersects it, over to Market Hills Dr. In fact an old road is mention at both endpoints of the RR path in the Deed from Beatrice Hendrix, when the land was sold to the United Methodist Church, the present owner. Beatrice Hendrix was HJ Hardin’s daughter. An ASU water department main runs along this route and over to Wake Robin Dr. following the same route as the RR.

This section of the Whiting Railroad is accessible from the Boone Free Trail which starts at the Boone United Methodist Church on New Market Blvd. It is closed at dark, but it is a nice hike up close to the top of Howard’s Knob and on the way you cross the Whiting Railroad as it would have been 100 years ago. Evidence of the ties is seen in places where it crosses branches, and in fact if you go much past the branches at either end of this strip you may end up on private property.

After New Market Dr. I assume it follows the ASU water main ROW. The contour of the land actually curves around to the southern end of Wake Robin Rd. as shown on BB and DD Dougherty lands in *Figure 24*, but the water pipeline route I chose is shorter, although a 15 foot hill must be crossed to reach Wake Robin Dr. on the route I show in *Figure 24*.

And also, the deed that mention the Whiting Railroad location, Deed Bk. 96 Pg. 108, which is now Wake Robin Rd., only mentions the one location as shown in *Figure 24*, it makes no mention of where Wake Robin Rd. today crosses the old boundary on the east side of HJ Hardin’s lands when it describes that boundary line. So I think that section of Wake Robin Rd. to the east, was never part of the rail bed.

Deed Book 96 Page 108 mentions the location of the Whiting Railway when Estelle Barnes wills her remaining property in 1965. Stewart J and Estelle Barnes bought the land south of Rainbow Trail from BB and DD Dougherty in 1933. To confuse things BB and DD Dougherty owned the land on the north side of Rainbow Trail up to the lands of HJ Hardin at about Howard's creek road and sold it to Neil Barnes. Many deeds along Rainbow trail give prior deeds erroneously as ones along the northern HJ Hardin-Dougherty boundary and mix up the two Barnes' families. Care had to be taken when tracing deed owners back as there was so many errors. Careful attention had to be paid to the lot description to ensure the two deeds were referring to the same property.

SJ and Estelle Barnes, from BB and DD Dougherty, owned all the land over to RG Lane's land right near Red Fox Trail Lane and Rainbow Trail, but sold off most of the land along Rainbow Trail over the years. There are numerous deeds mentioning the gravel road that went along what is now Wake Robin Rd., it was used as a boundary line between lots, so again I have to assume that people would use an existing rail bed as a road rather than plow in a new one. In addition the road follows a contour so it follows good RR bed design to say that Wake Robin Rd. was the rail bed to Rainbow Trail.

Whiting Railroad: Around Howard's Knob and Up Rich Mountain Ridge

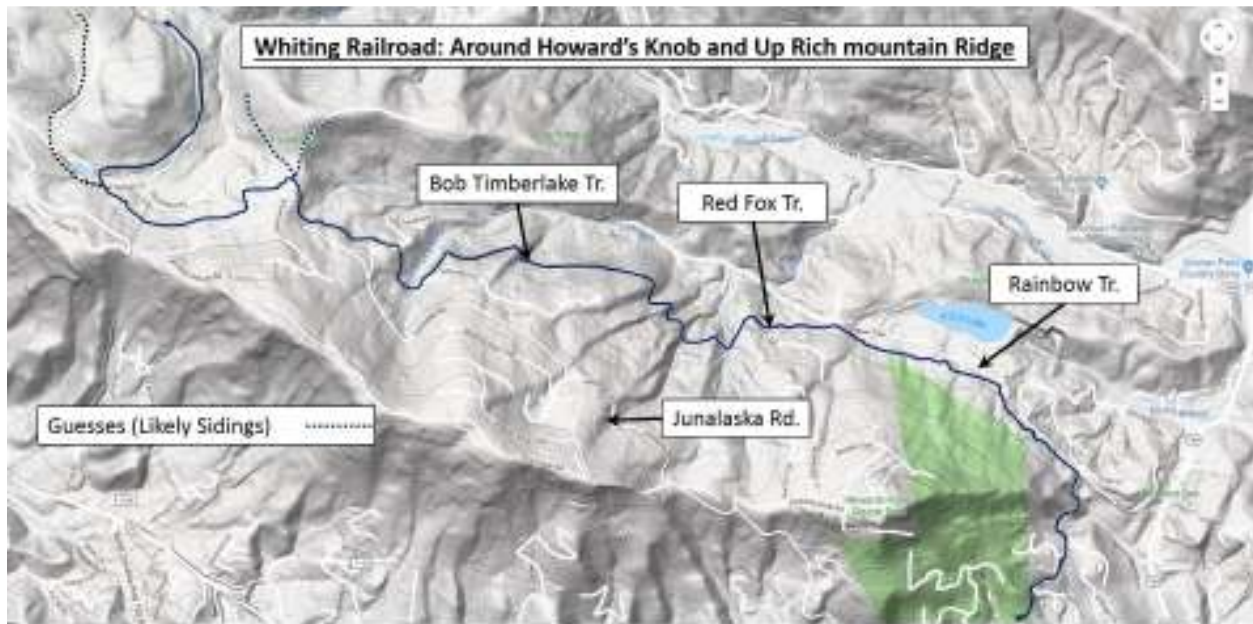


Figure 26: Whiting Railroad Map: Around Howard's Knob and Up Rich Mountain Ridge

After coming around Howard's Knob on Wake Robin Rd. the Whiting Railroad went along Rainbow Trail and then climbed up to Boone Lookout, 1000 feet higher than Winkler's siding.

Whiting Railroad Path to the Top of Rich Mountain Ridge Detailed in Property Records

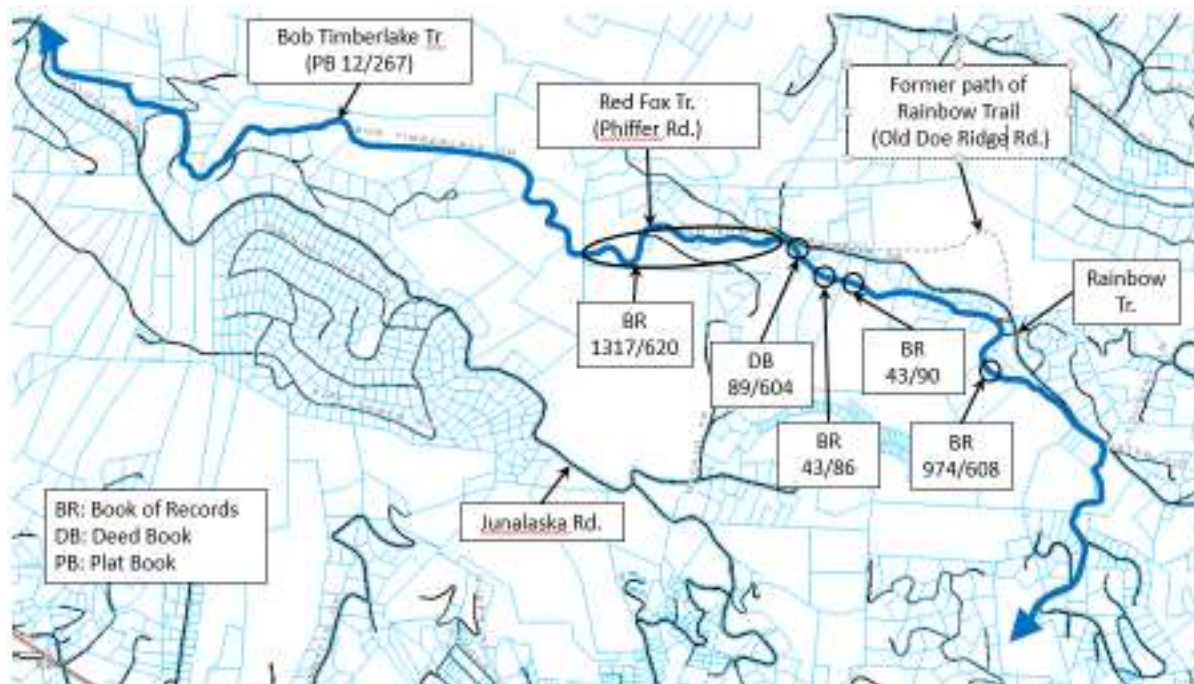


Figure 27: RR Path to Top of Rich Mountain Ridge Detailed in Property Records

One thing about the Whiting Railroad once it leaves Boone and its development, it is easier to find traces of the rail bed both on the ground, in pictures and in property records, as shown in *Figure 27: RR Path to Top of Rich Mountain Ridge Detailed in Property Records*. The railroad is used as boundary lines along Rainbow Trail, fixing its location.

North Side of Howard's Knob

As shown above in *Figure 26* and *Figure 27*, after coming down Wake Robin Rd., the Whiting Railroad follows Rainbow Trail on the south side for about 350 feet climbing from 3450 feet to 3480 feet over that stretch. Then it leaves Rainbow Trail and climbs to 3540 feet, in about 1000 feet and then follows the contour around to the intersection of Rainbow Trail and Red Fox Trail. You can actually still see the rail bed climbing up from Rainbow Trail near Wake Robin Rd. on Rainbow Trail, but subsequent road widenings have sliced the bed in half.

Many property lines use the old RR bed as a boundary. In *Figure 27* the Book of Records, (BR), or Deed Book, (DB) or Plat Book, (PB) that mentions the old RR are shown there for reference and to better locate the exact path of the RR. The very first reference, (Book of Records Book 974 Page 608), is the one reference that seems not to fit the physical topology as it would require the RR to climb another 20 feet and then descend to 3540 feet. This is a 9% grade at the beginning, which seems steep. Maybe, empty trains going up and full trains going down allows this to work over this short distance.

The odd property line that has a long tail along Rainbow Trail on the county tax map, (along Rainbow Trail where Records Bk. 974 Pg. 608 is shown in *Figure 27*), follows an older winding road than that is used now to access the ASU water tower located there today. The curvy road is visible on the center right of the picture (1M93 USDA 1955) shown below in *Figure 28*:

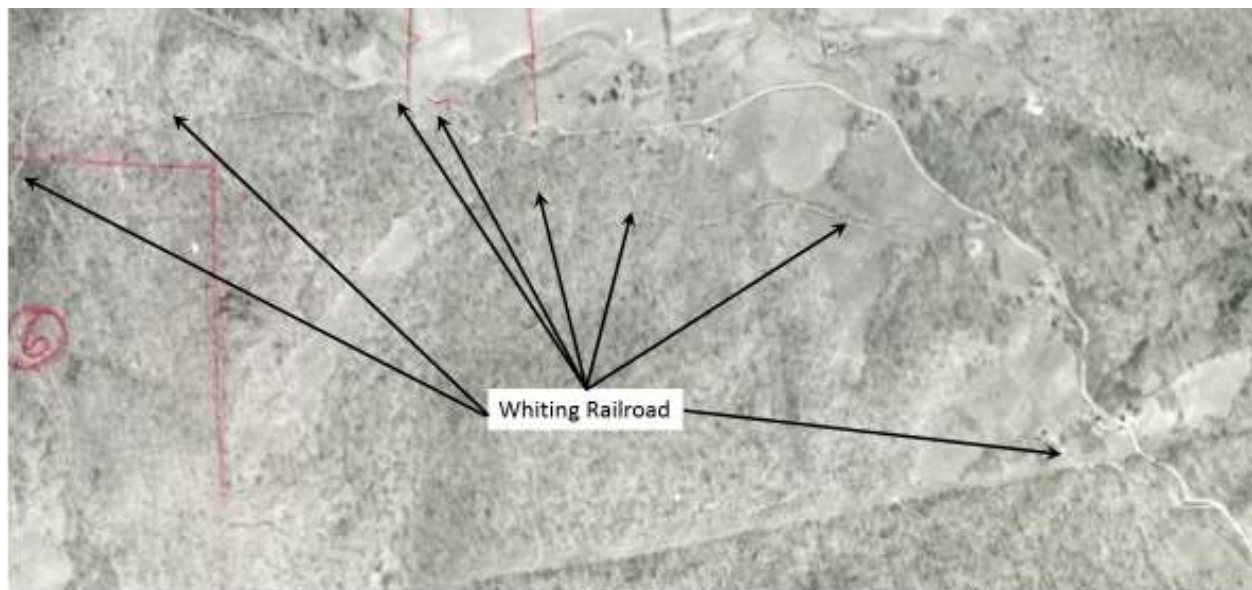


Figure 28: Rainbow Trail Showing Whiting Railroad Path 1955, 1M93 USDA 1955

The white line is Rainbow Trail and notice that it went further north closer to where the ASU reservoir is today, which meant it dropped about 30 feet near where the reservoir is today. 1M93 makes the path of the Railway clear from Robin Wake Trail up close to Trivett Gap at the top of the ridge. This section of 1M93 shows the path from Wake Robin to the end of Red Fox Trail and part of Red Fox Trail. The whole part up Bob Timberlake Trail is visible in the larger picture.

Notice the location of the power line at the lower right. It is still there today and is a good marker.

Up Rich Mountain Ridge

The railway has had Bob Timberlake Trail built on it and it has been widened as well so much has been lost. This section has some very spectacular views of Doe Fork Valley. It follows Bob Timberlake up close to Junalaska Rd and then leaves and is now an old woods road as shown in Plat Bk. 3 Pg. 99. This land was all Lindsay Patterson Tract (DB 21/339) and the path leaves Bob Timberlake about where the Lindsay lands ended, see Plat Bk. 3 Pg. 99.

The path of the RR is very clear to the top of Trivett gap in many contemporary aerial photos like this 2009 one from the Town of Boone GIS link listed at the beginning of this article shown in *Figure 29*:



Figure 29: Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad at Trivett Gap

The RR bed goes from Fall Haven Rd in the lower right up to and along Junalaska Rd. to the intersection with Sunny Chestnut Forest Rd. in the upper left.

There is a road to a house from Junalaska that is close to the RR bed. This is the access road to the lot the house is in the SW corner of. There is a road cut that looks like a switchback, but it

is a road providing a ROW to a lot that is in the center of this photo that the label “Whiting Railroad” is sitting in.

Timber Tracts on Rich Mountain:

Dr. Little, (DB 21/336), George C Winkler, (DB 27/419), and Lindsay Patterson, (DB 21/339), signed timber deeds with WS Whiting for most of the timber along Rich Mountain Ridge as shown in Figure 30:

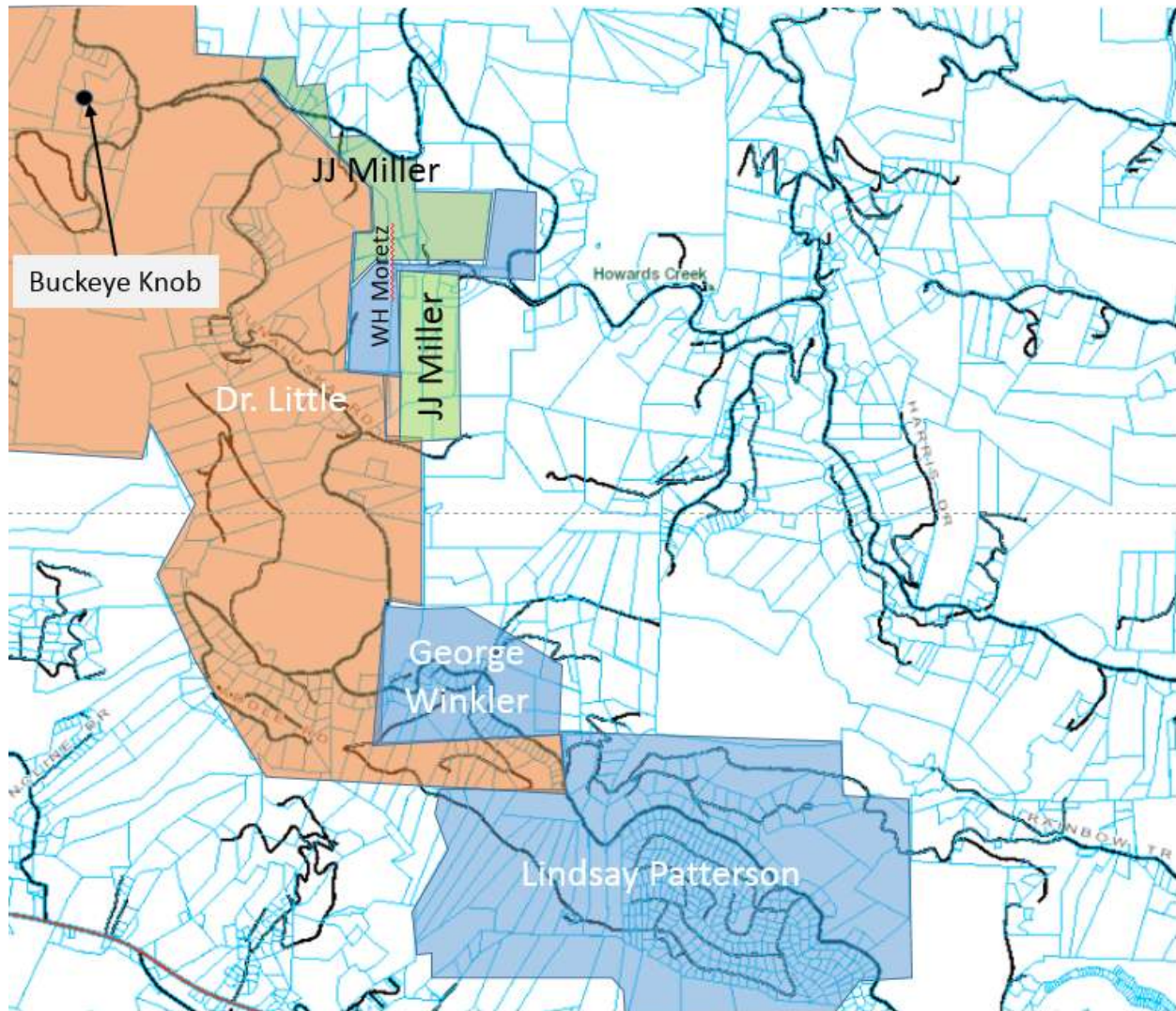


Figure 30: Little, Winkler, Lindsay and Miller Timber Tracts on Rich Mountain Ridge

JJ Miller tracts in Jones Branch valley are also shown, (DB 32/178). WH Moretz did not seem to sign a timber deed with WS Whiting, nor an ROW, BUT the Whiting Railroad went across his land to clear these two tracts belonging to JJ Miller.

Interestingly this strip owned by WH Moretz is because two land grant claims were granted and yet they did not meet, and about 50 years later the leftover piece was granted. Also, the boundaries of the Little property were set when the land was granted to TJ Coffee in 1879! Coffee sold it to Romulus Linney and FA Linney who sold it to Little. FA Linney also had a 1300

acre tract in Flatwoods that was the reason for building the RR there. FA Linney also sold Patterson his tract. FA Linney and Patterson were lawyers, while Dr. Little was an M.D.

All told this was about 2000 acres or about two square miles. The timber deed from Dr. Little specified that priority was to be given to remove the timber south and west of Buckeye Knob which is shown in Figure 30. That is why I feel the railroad mainline was built all the way through to about Curley Maple Rd. and Junalaska Rd. intersection in 1921.

Tragically Dr. Little was elected to the General Assembly, and he fell ill during his first session, returned home and died in 1921. That is why there was a timber deed from his heirs in 1921 for the same land, I think. Also Lindsay Patterson died about this time and the tract was seized from his widow and sold for owed money in 1923. Patterson also owned a lot of land in Bald Mountain Township.

Along Rich Mountain

When the RR reaches the top at Trivett Gap it is 4260 feet high, maybe the highest point, although the very north end of the RR in Flatwoods is close. This is about 200 yards from Boone lookout that is prominent from the Town of Boone today for its radio towers. It goes along the ridge paralleling Junalaska Rd before descending into the Jones Branch valley as shown in *Figure 26 Whiting Railroad Map: Around Howard's Knob and Up Rich Mountain Ridge*.

Whiting Railroad Path along Rich Mountain Ridge Detailed in Property Records

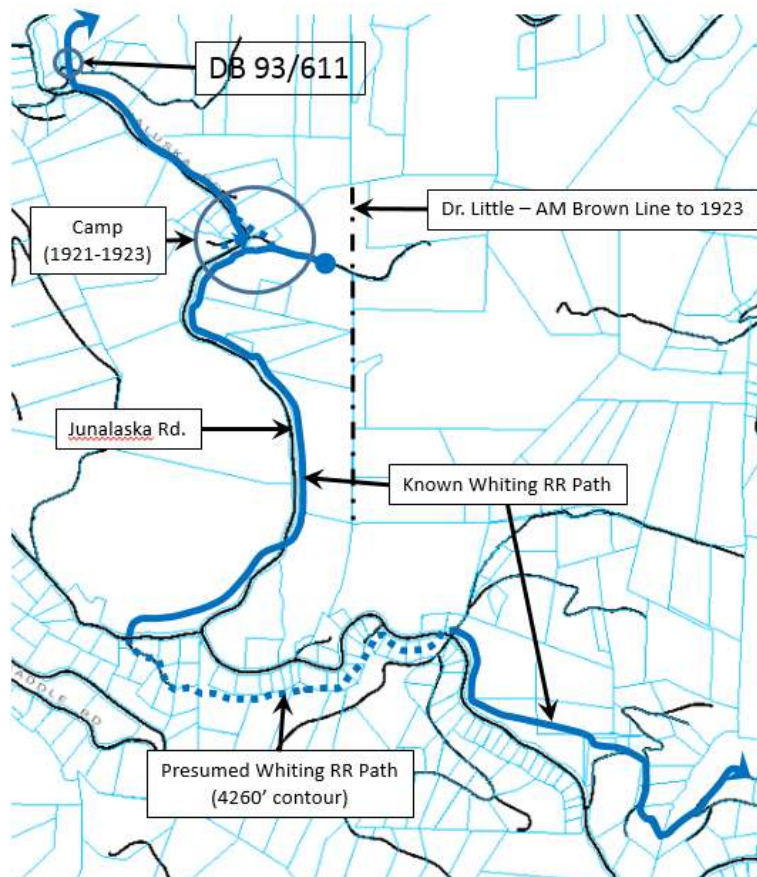


Figure 31: Property Map of RR on Rich Mountain Ridge

Trivett Gap

The path of the Whiting Railroad is known to be up along Bob Timberlake to the woods road and then to the intersection of Junalaska Rd. and Sunny Chestnut Forest Rd as shown in *Figure 31*. This is at the top of a gap. There is no evidence of any path from here up to Woodland Springs Lane where my dotted line ends. The dotted line drawn follows the 4260 foot contour. The last part of the dotted line path goes along Woodland Springs Trail, which also happens to follow the same contour of 4260 feet. Part of Sequoia St. also follows the same contour and since I believe new roads would go on top of old RR beds, and following a contour is good RR design, this is a reasonable path.

The crossing of the branch after Woodland Springs Trail intersects Woodland Springs Lane, is taken from the aerial photo in the Watauga County Tax map, the rest of the path follows the contours AND the path of a current power line until it crosses Junalaska Rd. and drops down to about the 4200 foot contour.

Along the Ridge to Camp

The evidence of the Whiting Railroad exists today all along Junalaska Rd. in aerial photos, on Rich Mountain ridge. It can be seen on the east side of Junalaska Rd., but it is about 20 feet down the hill. The railroad hugged Junalaska Rd. until it got to another, nameless gap where Kenneth B Brown Rd intersects Junalaska Rd. I just was not able to get photos that showed me this part of the route from 1940 nor 1955 so all there is are contemporary aerial photos, but it is easy to see the RR bed along Junalaska Rd as is seen in *Figure 32*:



Figure 32: Aerial Photo from Trivett Gap to Camp

Rich Mountain Camp

Joseph Quinn mentioned that this nameless gap where Kenneth B Brown Rd intersects Junalaska Rd is where the Rich Mountain camp was and I read in the Watauga Democrat in April 26, 1923 on P5 a story of the Rich Mountain Camp being opened and the RR is planned to be extended into the Linney lands, at Flatwoods soon. So there was an original terminus, but it was likely near Curley Maple Rd. and Junalaska Rd. as the timber deed from Dr. Little made removing the timber south and west of Buckeye Knob a priority.

Also this camp site is close to the middle of Dr. Little's land, as shown in Figure 30: *Little, Winkler, Lindsay and Miller Timber Tracts on Rich Mountain Ridge*, So Dr. Little, Lindsay Patterson and George C Winkler Tracts could be cleared from this camp. JJ Miller did not sign a timber deed until 1925 and a siding was built over his land. Together this is almost all the land from Red Fox Trail over to Jones Branch on Rich Mountain Ridge.



Figure 33: 2018 Aerial Photo of Rich Mountain Camp Location

As a site it is good. Looking at Figure 33, Kenneth B Brown Rd. follows a contour to the east along the south side of a hill. Junalaska Rd. continues north westward along the side of another hill. There is a gap going northeast from the intersection, but outside the traces of a road going along the boundary, and that would be going directly uphill and a high grade for the railroad, there seems to be nothing that way.

Also Woods Rd., right across Junalaska Rd., appeared as an unimproved road on the 1920 rural route map along with Kenneth B Brown Rd. which seems to have continued east to

connect with Trivette Branch Rd and then to Howard's Creek Rd. So did that provide access to the camp from Howard Creek Rd.? It eventually went a lot further over west but that would be too steep uphill grade for a train as is shown in *Figure 34*. But as is shown this road goes behind a hill that would need the logs pulled to the mainline.



Figure 34: Topographic Map of Rich Mountain Camp Site Location

Junalaska Rd. makes about a 90 degree turn on a minimum radius of 150 feet at this camp site, so a railway could have hugged it around the corner and a wye could have been laid out here as there is enough room as shown by the topographic map of the intersection in *Figure 34*. But no evidence of a wye needed to turn the train around. There is evidence that the RR may have cut the corner and followed the driveway where Woods Rd. is.

So getting either photos or maps or pictures of this region would be nice.

Guesses (Likely Sidings):

Figure 26: *Whiting Railroad Map: Around Howard's Knob and Up Rich Mountain Ridge*, shows three dotted sidings labeled guesses. Two are right where Sunny Chestnut Forest Rd. intersects Junalaska Rd. One goes up what is now Woodland Springs Lane.

The siding crossing JJ Miller land is detailed in land records as will be discussed later. It would have been likely sidings would be built down valleys where it was not possible to drag the logs to the mainline.

The Lindsay Patterson land shown in Figure 30: *Little, Winkler, Lindsay and Miller Timber Tracts on Rich Mountain Ridge*, is one side of a ridge and all the logs can be dragged downhill to the mainline so no likelihood of any sidings in this section of the railroad.

The two sidings off of the intersection of Sunny Chestnut Forest Rd. and Junalaska Rd. would be necessary to clear the George C Winkler land as shown in Figure 30, AND there were old roads there from at least since the 1940s as shown in Plat Bk. 3 Pages 150 and 218, and as shown in Figure 35, a USGS survey from 1936, or just ten years after the Whiting Railroad was pulled up.

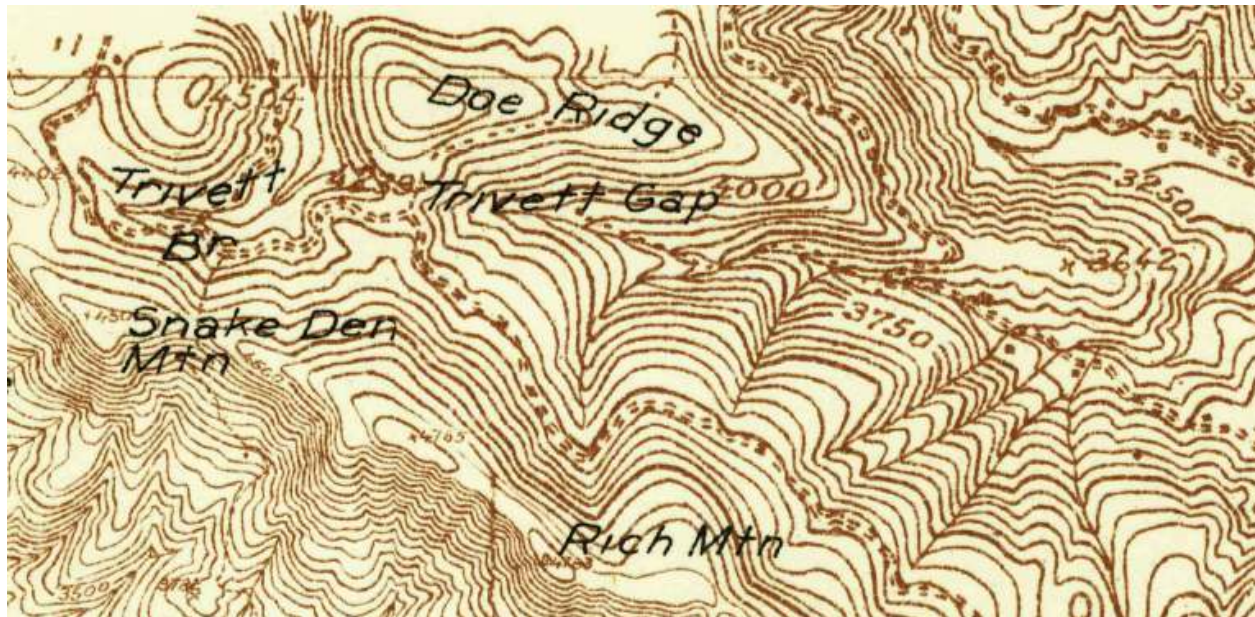


Figure 35: 1936 Topo Map of Trivett Gap, USGS NC_Blowing Rock_163764_1936_48000_geo

Junalaska Rd. is shown in Figure 35, but not the railroad coming up Bob Timberlake Trail. One possible siding off of the intersection of Sunny Chestnut Forest Rd. and Junalaska Rd. is shown. The other is not shown but deeds show it went straight north on the west side of Doe Ridge as shown in Figure 35.

A siding up the gap between the two hills that Woodland Springs Trail is on today would be needed to clear that land, and is visible in this 1936 topographical map in the upper left corner. Going further north off this map it is an old road called Grassy Knob Rd. or "Dr. Little Old Rd.", (DB 17/397) which ran north-south all the way along this ridge up to Wolf Ridge Rd. today as will be shown in a 1934 map below. Not sure the siding went much further north than shown in *Figure 26: Whiting Railroad Map: Around Howard's Knob and Up Rich Mountain Ridge*, as the rest of the ridge further north, including Wolf Ridge, could have the logs dragged down hill to the mainline to the east of Junalaska Road.

Whiting Railroad: Along Rich Mountain Ridge, Down Jones Branch Valley to Flatwoods

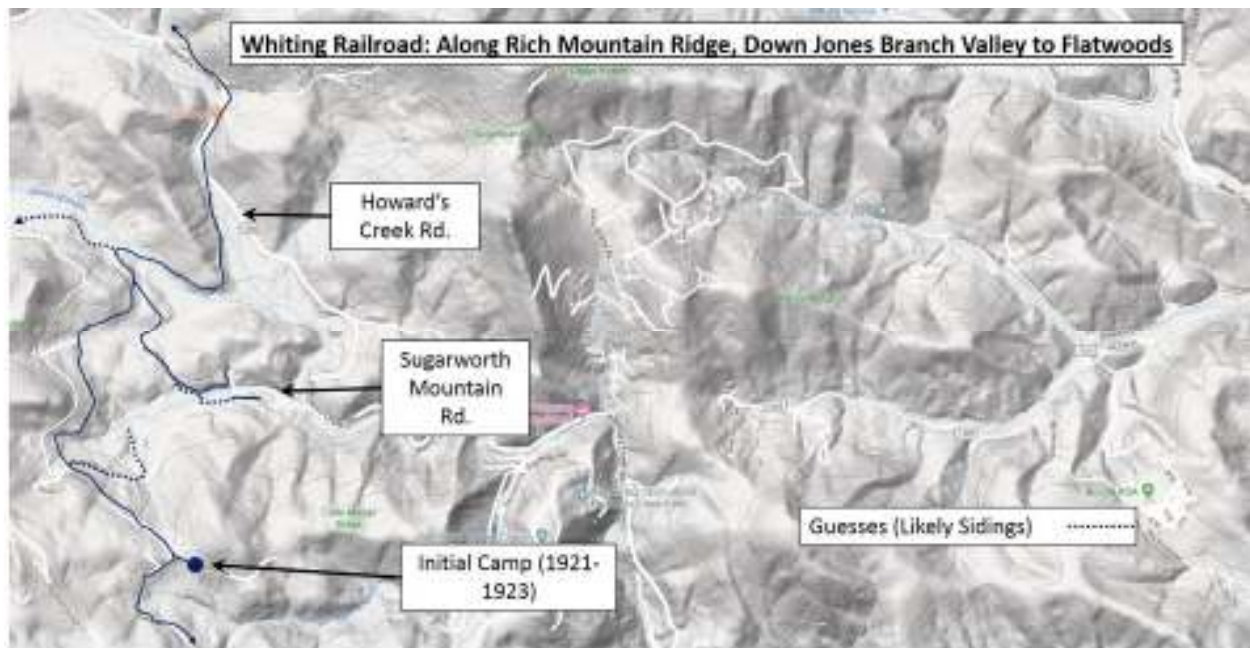


Figure 36: Whiting Railroad: Along Rich Mountain Ridge and Down into Jones Branch Valley to Flatwoods

After Trivett gap the Whiting Railroad followed Junalaska Rd., on the east or downhill side, to North Woods Rd. (aka Curley Maple Valley Rd.), and then left Junalaska Rd. and descended into the Jones Branch valley, made a hairpin turn and proceeded up what has become Curley Maple Rd. to Howard's Creek Rd.

It went up the east side of Howard's Creek Rd. to the intersection with Sugar Loaf Rd. Then it went up behind the Rich Mountain Baptist Church into Flatwoods. The rail bed is still visible there today at the intersection of Howard's Creek Rd. and Sugarloaf Road.

Along Rich Mountain Ridge to Jones Branch Valley

The railroad hugged Junalaska Rd. along the ridge until North Woods Rd. and the RR beds are still visible today as shown in and Figure 38:

Figure 37:2018 Aerial Photo of RR Bed from Rich Mountain Camp



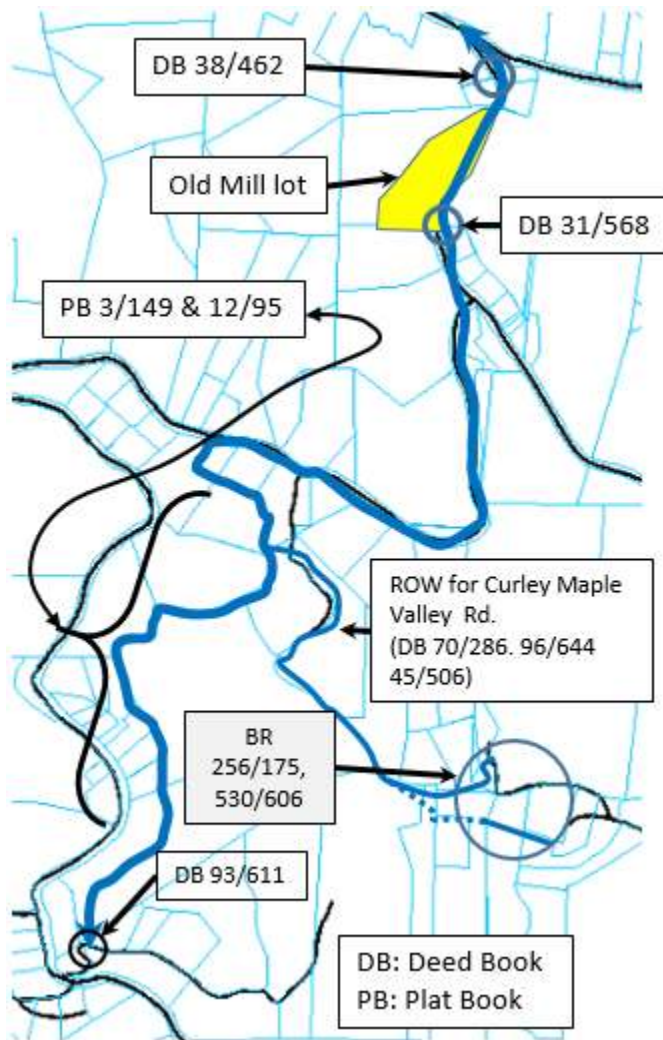
I have suspicions that North Woods Rd. aka Curley Maple Valley Rd. was a siding as shown by a dotted line in Figure 36. This would clear a corner of Little land and a farm road was there in the 1940s.

From this point the Whiting Railway makes its way down into the Jones Branch valley, and leaves Junalaska Rd. although it may have intersected with Junalaska to the west, off the map.

Luckily, the Whiting Railroad was used as a property line for about the next two miles so it is easy to plot its location.

Figure 38: Whiting Railroad bed up to North Woods Rd. and Jones Branch Valley

Whiting Railroad Path in Jones Branch Valley up to Flatwoods Detailed in Property Records



The Whiting Railway leaves Junalaska Rd. and makes it way down into the Jones Branch valley, then up Howard's Creek to the Flatwoods. As shown in

Figure 39.

Figure 39: Property Map of Whiting Railroad Path in Jones Branch Valley and Howard's Creek Rd.

Descent from Junalaska Rd into Jones Branch Valley

The path of the Whiting Railroad coming down into the Jones Branch valley is laid out from Junalaska Rd. to Curley Maple Road in Plat books 3/149 and 12/95. The railroad largely follows the property line, as shown in *Figure 39: Property Map of Whiting Railroad Path in Jones Branch Valley and Howard's Creek Rd.*, and the deeds for these lots mention the railroad as well.

Hair Pin Turn in Path of Whiting Railroad to Connect to Curley Maple Rd.

Plat 3/149 shows the rail bed connecting to Curley Maple Rd. as shown in *Figure 40*.

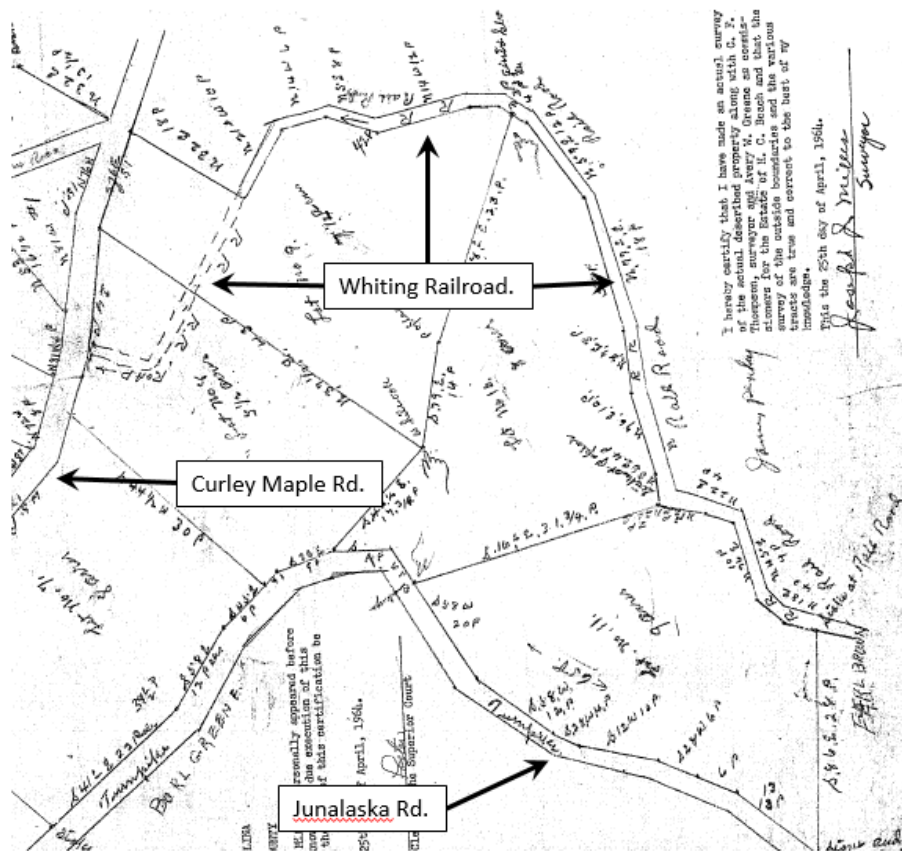


Figure 40: Whiting Railroad Path up to Hairpin Turn, Plat Bk. 3 Pg. 149

The rail bed is about 280 feet from Curley Maple Rd., but the last official distance from the railroad bed to Curley Maple Rd. is 292 feet. It parallels Curley Maple but no official distance is noted on Plat Bk. 3 Pg. 149 where the turn begins. So I assume it is about 260 - 280 feet from Curley Maple Rd., then it does a hairpin turn and runs along what is now Curley Maple Rd. to Howard's Creek Road.

Now it is possible the turn was not here but further west closer to Junalaska Rd. and Curley Maple Road intersection. There likely was a wye there as that was the terminus from 1921-1923. AND trams, like this railroad operated like, could have a radius of curvature below 20 feet in some urban subways.

Assuming a 150 foot minimum radius in the mainline for the narrow gauge track used in the Whiting Railroad, there is enough distance to accommodate this 180 degree bend as there is room on the other side of Curley Maple Rd. before the Jones Branch crosses Curley Maple Rd. So this could be the location of the hair pin turn and it likely easily fit in the available space. Aerial photos are not helpful plotting the hairpin curve, but they do show the RR bed.

Curley Maple Rd.

The eastern half of Curley Maple Road is on 1920 maps as shown in *Figure 41: Topographic Map of Jones Branch Valley and Curley Maple Rd.* Curley Maple is shown as an unimproved road.

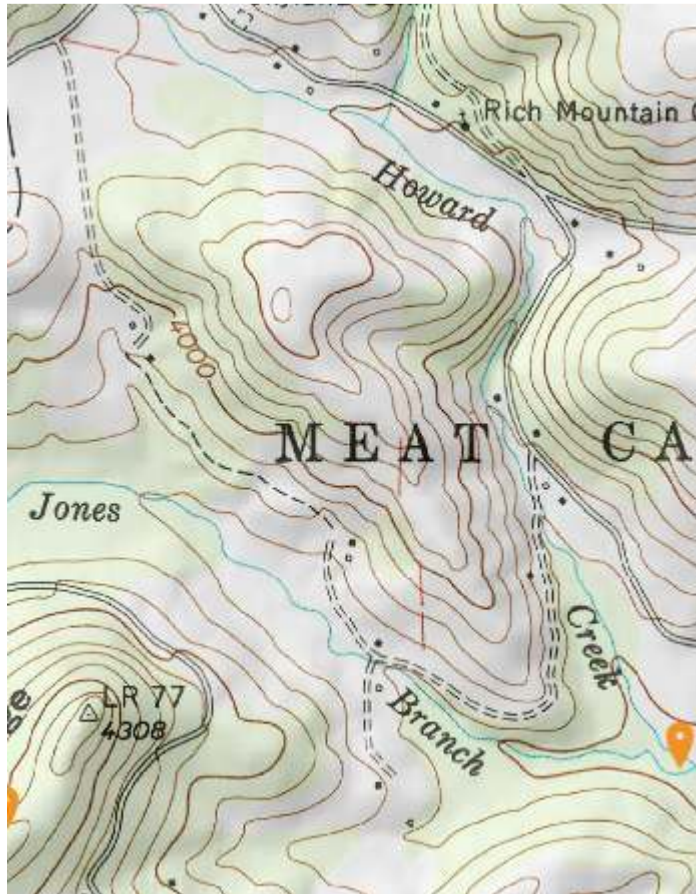


Figure 41: Topographic Map of Jones Branch Valley and Curley Maple Rd.

The unimproved road bed ends at where Jones Branch crosses Curley Maple Rd. today. The Whiting Railroad hair-pin turn was just west of that. Jim Penley, who inherited the land from DC Penley, subdivides his property in 1964 in Plat Bk. 12 Pg. 95. This plat has a very detailed survey of the Whiting railroad bed's location along the property lines.

The road going south is to JJ Miller's house, and is still there today, as Curley Maple Valley Road. The unimproved road going north to Junalaska Rd in *Figure 41* is the old Miller Public Road and is still a ROW to a farm. In *Figure 41* you can also see the path of the Whiting Railroad up into Flatwoods too, just north of the Rich Mountain Baptist Church in the upper right corner.

Howard Creek Rd.

The Whiting Railroad crossed Howard Creek near its intersection with Curley Maple Rd. Deed Bk. 31 Pg. 568 deals with the old mill lot that was sold in 1924. The old lot is highlighted in yellow in Figure 39.

DEEDS—BOOK 31

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA—Watauga County

THIS DEED, Made this 26 day of September, 1924 by John A Beach
and Melia Beach his wife
of Watauga County and State of N.C., of the first part, to
E. W. Bryan and wife, of Watauga County
and State of N.C., of the second part, WITNESSETH:

That said John A Beach and wife Melia Beach, in consideration of
Nine Hundred Dollars,
to them paid by E. W. Bryan, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have
bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey to said E. W. Bryan
and his heirs and assigns, a certain tract or parcel of land in Meat Camp Township, Watauga
County, and State of N.C., adjoining the lands of M. S. Eggers & James Lewis
and others, and others, bounded as follows, viz:

Beginning on a stake in the M. S. Eggers line corner to James Lewis at the Rail Road and runs with the said road and James Lewis line a North course 38 Poles to a stake in James Lewis line thence North 72° W 4 1/2 P to a stake on the North side of a large rock thence South 36° W 9 P to a pine tree thence South 48° W 18 1/2 P to a stake on west side of Mill Race thence South 37° W 4 P to a stake thence South 15° West 12 1/2 P to a stake in M. S. Eggers line thence then with said line South 84° East 16 P to the Beginning Containing 2 acres more or less containing the buildings and saw mill through mill 3 grass mill thrash box & saw mill

John A Beach is to have a haulway out by the mill from his field

Figure 42: Old Mill Lot Sold On Howard's Creek Rd. 1924 - Deed Book 31 Page 568

The deed is handwritten as shown in Figure 42, but the handwriting is pretty legible. The very first line in the boundary descriptions reads:

"Beginning on a stake in the MS Eggers line and corner to James Lewis at the railroad and runs with said road and James Lewis' line 38 poles to a stake in James Lewis' line..."

This deed states that the SE corner of the mill lot, shown in yellow in Figure 39, starts at the railroad which is in the Lewis line, i.e. east side of the Howard Creek Rd., and goes up the railroad 38 poles which is up to the northern lot line today on Howard's Creek Rd.. So the Whiting Railroad went along the east side of Howard Creek Rd. and this is different than what Joseph Quinn had written.

The Mill Lot has been reconsolidated into other property since 1924.

To reinforce the fact that the railroad had gone along the east side of Howard Creek Rd. there is Deed Bk. 38 Pg. 362 detailing a lot on the SW corner of Howard Creek Rd. and Sugar Loaf Rd., as shown in

Figure 39: Property Map of Whiting Railroad Path in Jones Branch Valley and Howard's Creek Rd.. It describes the property line along Howard's Creek Rd. as being at the "old Railroad," and this was in 1928. So the railroad was here by 1924 and gone by 1928.

And of course as shown in *Figure 41: Topographic Map of Jones Branch Valley and Curley Maple Rd.*, the Whiting Railroad bed went up behind Rich Mountain Baptist Church north of Howard's Creek Rd. from the intersection of Howard's Creek Rd. and Sugarloaf Rd. into the Flatwoods, or Linney land.

Sugarworth Mountain Rd. Siding

Sugarworth Mountain Rd. siding was built in 1925 after JJ Miller signed his timber deed. The deed makes removing the lumber within 6 months a priority. Deed Books 70/286 and 45/506 has JJ Miller and WH Moretz in 1936 agreeing to use the Whiting Railroad as the ingress and egress road to their properties and they donated an acre each which had the rail bed over it. Deed Bk. 96 Pg. 644 has James Penley, JJ Miller and WH Moretz in a ROW agreement to use part of the Whiting Railroad and the James Penley Rd. as a ROW. It is Curley Maple Valley Rd.

The property ownership as it was in 1925 is shown in Figure 43,

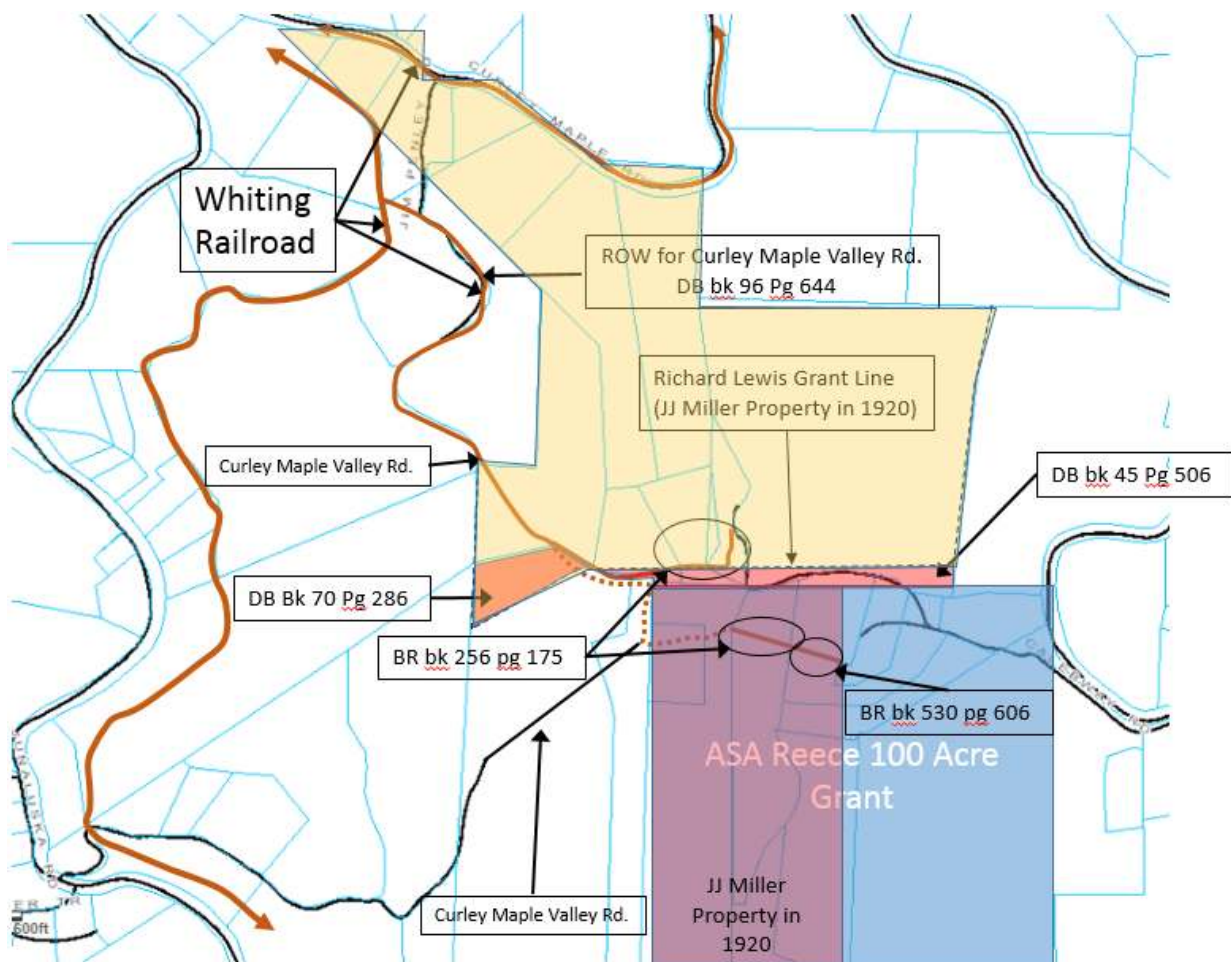


Figure 43: Sugar Mountain Rd. Siding Property Owners in 1920

The ROW for the north part of Curley Maple Valley Rd is between James Penley and WH Moretz and JJ Miller. It states that part of the ROW from Curley Maple Rd. down James Penley Rd. is on the Whiting Railroad.

Deed Bk. 70 Page 286 had JJ Miller deeding land, as shown, to WH Moretz so he could access the Whiting Railroad.

Deed Book 45 Page 506 has WH Moretz deeding a strip of land to JJ Miller so Miller could use the Whiting Railroad as an access road, although the description of the property in the deed is troublesome. It follows the Richard Lewis Grant southern boundary line west until it intersects the Whiting RR, then follows the Whiting Railroad back east until it comes to the northwest corner of the original Asa Reece 100 acre grant.

The problem is that the railroad does not appear to come to the Asa Reece corner. Current property lines follow the railroad east until it is due north of the corner and then leaves the railroad and goes due south 40 feet to the corner. NOW, an old farm road, which is now part of Curley Maple Valley Rd. and shown as a dotted orange line, comes very close to the corner. And the strip of railroad detailed in Book of Records book 256 page 175 and Book 530 page 606 needed to connect back to the Whiting Railroad somehow and I am assuming that that part of Curley Maple Valley Rd. was how it connected. Was this part of the railroad? Did they get confused and draw the boundaries wrong? Should they have followed this more southern branch siding to the Northwest corner of the old Asa Reece grant?

This southern branch siding, including the dotted line back to the known railroad, was at the bottom of Curley Maple Ridge and needed to go east-west across the whole Miller property, so it likely did not go up the driveway shown going due north to the railroad at the northern siding, but went west to Curley Maple Valley Rd. In fact it may have gone further east along what is now part of Calebway Road to clear the Miller land north of this siding. It would be on Beach land, though.

The fact that the farm road, which became Curley Maple Valley Rd. comes within a whisker of the Asa Reece corner and goes along the western boundary of the Miller property, but on WH Moretz land, makes me think that they had thought that they had reached the Asa Reece corner and were on Miller property. This strip of land that WH Moretz owned to connect his two properties means the railroad had to cross it, but again there is no ROW agreement on file.

This disentangling of property deeds was an effort. The Little property had been granted to TJ Coffee in 1879 and the lines are the same as today in this region. The Richard Lewis Grant, which cost Richard Lewis only \$ 5.00 for 100 acres in 1844, had a western property boundary along the Little property that did not make sense. It claimed the line went due north 130 poles or about 2100 feet, although the grant goes 130 poles Northwest at one point. And the east boundary length did not match the west boundary length in the description.

The Asa Reece grant borders were easier to ascertain, but it was vague as to whether or not it was contiguous to the Richard Lewis grant.

Deed Book 13 Pg. 297 in 1912 had David Adams and WL Bryan sell the land northeast and west of the ASA Reece grant, connected by a strip of land, to Martin Moretz who left it to WH Moretz. From that deed the strip of land appears to be 140 feet wide. But the dimensions in

places on this boundary description differs from corresponding boundaries in other deed descriptions.

It seems EB Miller bought the Richard Lewis Grant and the Asa Reece land that JJ Miller owns and gave it to JJ Miller in 1893. It seems he got the Reece land in an auction when a Leander Carmichael defaulted on land sold to him by Asa Reece. Then in 1902, EB Miller buys all the land sold to Martin Moretz in 1912 AND the land he had deeded to JJ Miller in 1893 from Asa Reece, and this piece of land fits like hand-in-glove with the Richard Lewis erroneous grant border description. Not sure of all the twists and turns, and why the same land seems to be sold twice.

Buckeye Knob Siding

The northwest corner of the Little Land goes over into Cove Creek Township. The deed selling the timber to WS Whiting made the land south and west of Buckeye Knob a priority to clear as shown in Figure 44: *Buckeye Knob Sidings on Little Land*. This land is really near the slope from Rich Mountain ridge into Cove Creek.

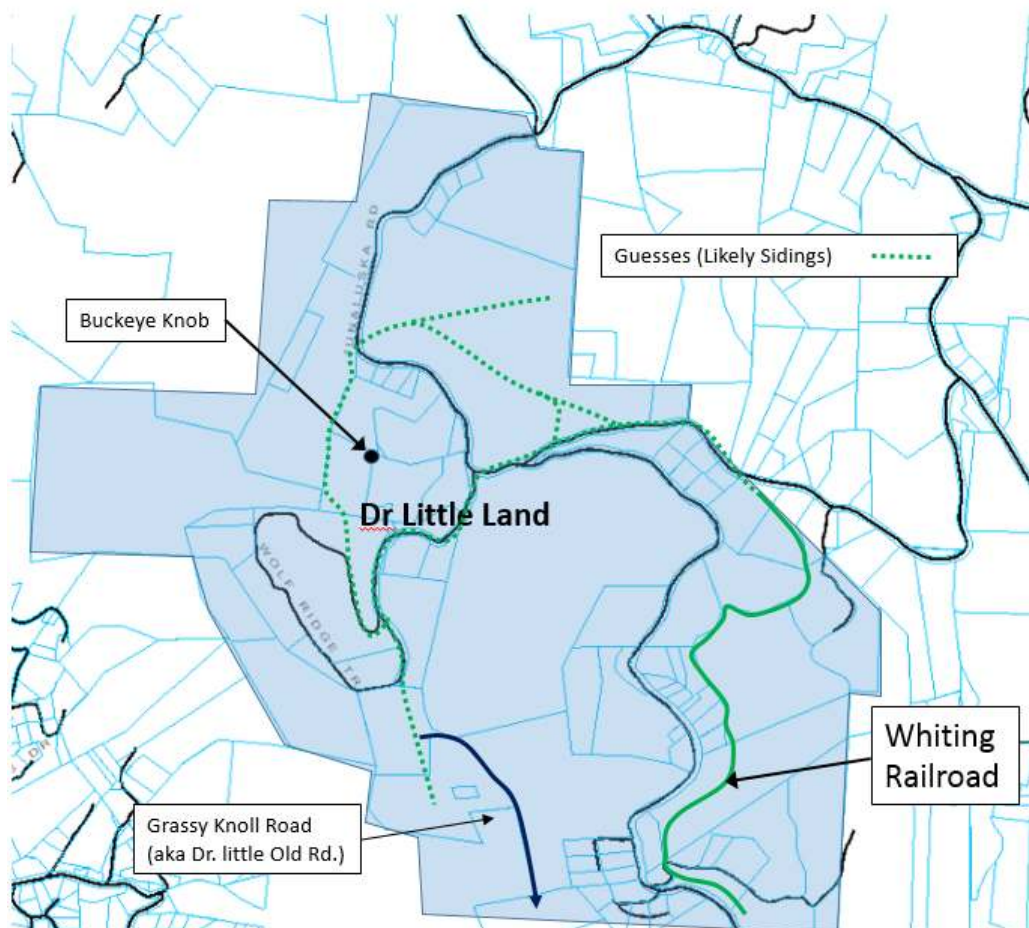


Figure 44: *Buckeye Knob Sidings on Little Land*

Since this was a priority to clear, likely as Dr. Little had plans to turn it into pasture land, the Whiting Railroad was likely built to the far reaches of the Little property by 1921. There must have been a number of sidings in this area and a wye to allow the trains to turn around.

Wolf Ridge is west of Junalaska Rd. on Little land, and Buckeye knob is the peak near the Cove Creek ridge. The sidings going furthest south in Figure 44 is really on the edge of the cliff, but follows a well-traveled road in 1940 that went to Vanderpool Rd. in Cove Creek. With Wolf Ridge to the east I do not see how the logs could get to the mainline of the railroad in Jones Branch valley. The topology of the area is seen more clearly in Figure 45.

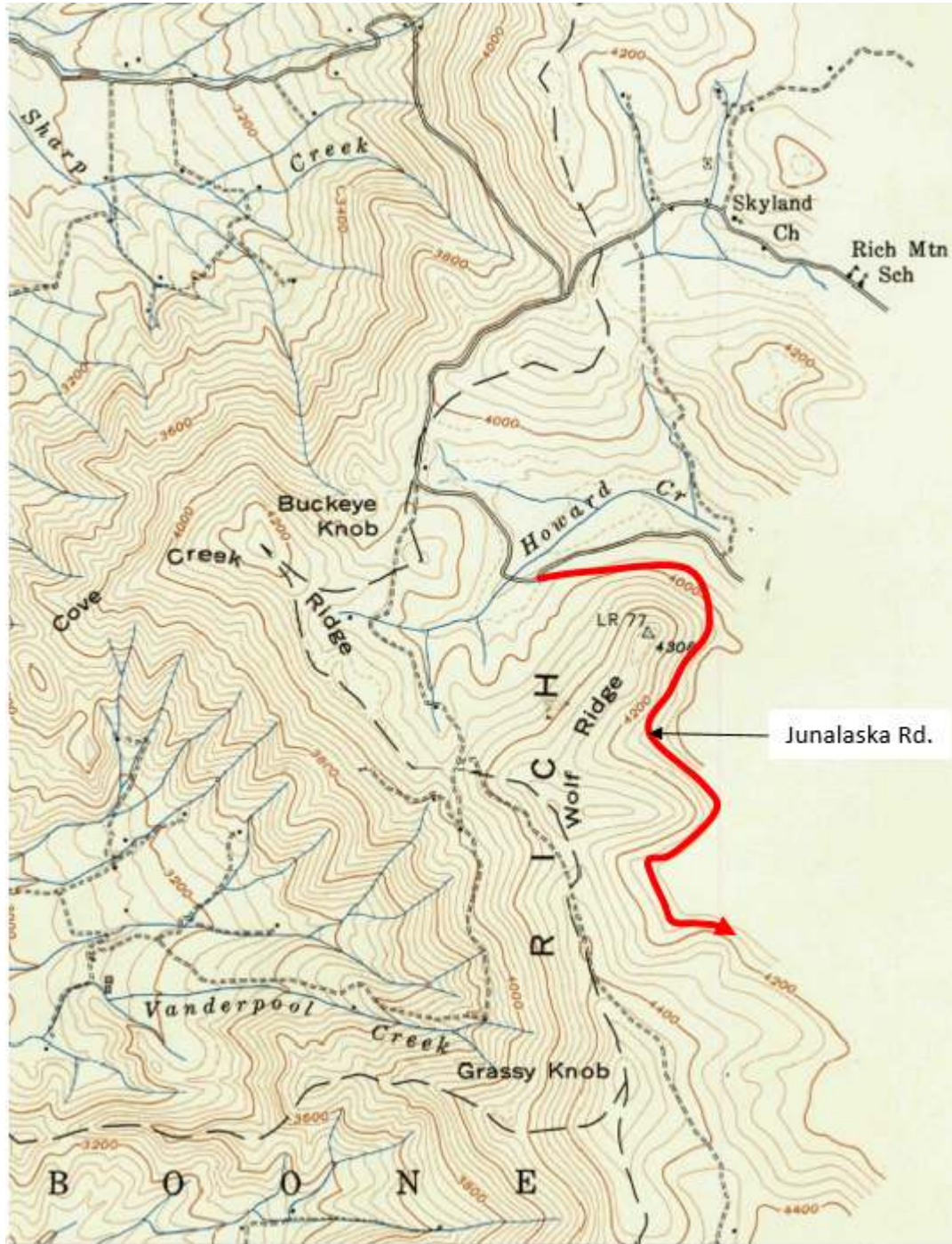


Figure 45: Topological Maps of Buckeye Knob 1939, USGS

Now this 1939 map was only of the TVA part of the region so I guess that is why all of Meatcamp is blank. Secondly, Junalaska Rd. is left off of this map and I drew it in in red, following the contours. Also Jones Branch is labeled Howard Creek in this map.

The road shown connecting to Junalaska Rd. near "Howard Creek" aka Jones Branch, seems to be Curley Maple Rd. from the contours shown here. 1940 photos show that Curley Maple Rd. intersected Junalaska Rd. here, but 1920 maps do not show this portion of Curley Maple Rd, and it did not become a public road until 1960. It is very likely this part of the road is on the Whiting Railroad. This map was compiled from photographs so maybe they saw the railroad and not Junalaska Road.

The 1940 photos show that a road going south and then west to Eagle Ridge Dr. in 2018, was well traveled and this road is show in Figure 45. So a siding may have come this way to allow the clearing west side of Wolf Ridge.

Figure 45 shows that the land south and west of Buckeye Knob is steep. There was an old farm road going along south of the knob from the road and siding shown. Maybe there was a siding there as well.

The land records did mention a Grassy Knob Rd. that comes up the west side of Wolf Ridge from Wolf Ridge Trail and then along the top of the ridge to connect with Woodland Spring Trail further south off of Figure 45, it was also referred to as the "Old Dr Little Rd." This is also shown clearly in *Figure 45: Topological Maps of Buckeye Knob 1939, USGS*.

The Old Miller Public Rd. is visible, and connects to what I think is Curley Maple Rd. just like in *Figure 41: Topographic Map of Jones Branch Valley and Curley Maple Rd*. Also note that Replogle Rd. is shown near the Skyland Church in the north. This may have been a siding from the Whiting Railroad in Flatwoods.

Whiting Railroad: Through Flatwoods and Up Rich Mountain

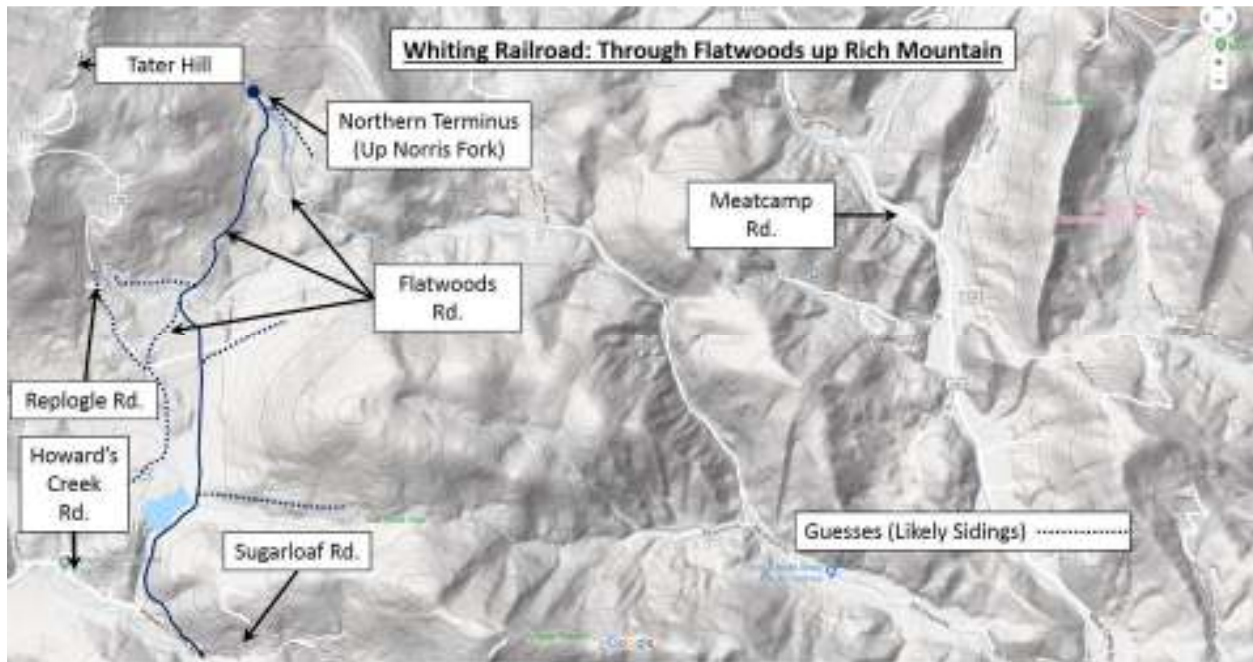


Figure 46: Whiting Railroad: Through Flatwoods and Up Rich Mountain

The Whiting Railroad left the intersection of Howard's Creek Rd. and Sugarloaf Rd. and went up behind the Rich Mountain Baptist Church to Howard's Creek. Then up the creek past where Tater Hill Lake used to be, on the east side. Up about a mile north it intersected with Flatwoods Rd. There was a wye here and possibly a camp from the 1940 aerial photo.

It continued north and Flatwoods Rd. is on it and it appears to have left Flatwoods Rd. near the road's northern most point and then going up the Norris Fork branch at the foot of Rich Mountain.

But there is tantalizing evidence the Whiting railroad may have continued east along Flatwoods Rd across Norris Fork. There are traces of what looks like a wye across Norris Fork near the terminus, and traces of roads or rail beds going south from there.

The land east of Norris Fork on Flatwoods Rd. was owned by JJ Miller who signed a timber deed with the Whiting Lumber Co. in 1925 and the current assumed path of the railroad actually is on his property near the northern terminus. He also owned land in Jones Branch valley on the Whiting Railroad which was logged out by Whiting Lumber Company.

Whiting Railroad Path in Flatwoods Detailed in Property Records

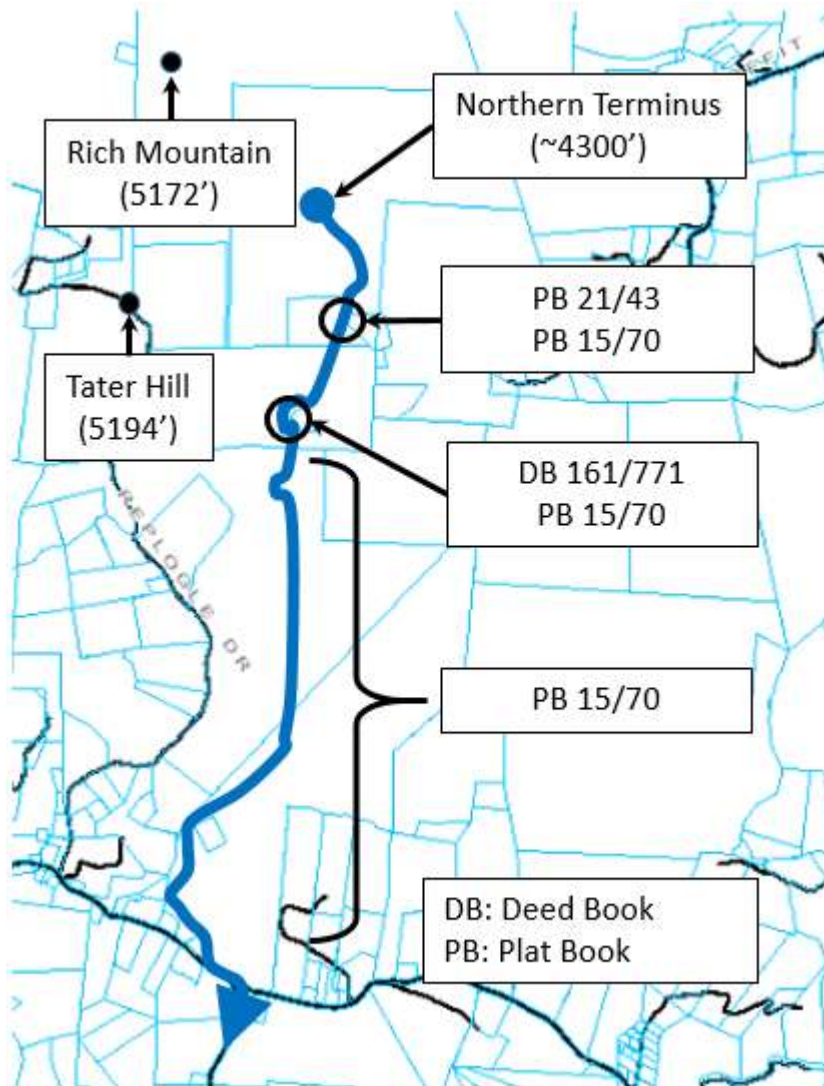


Figure 47: Property Map of Whiting Railroad Path in Flatwoods

The Whiting Railroad went about 2.7 miles north of the Rich Mountain Baptist Church on Howard's Creek Rd. The northern half is still used as an access road called "Flatwoods Rd."

This is the ONLY part of the Whiting Railroad where I could get a 1940 picture and it lays out the path of the railroad in the Flatwoods, very clearly as seen in *Figure 48: 1940 Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad in Flatwoods, 7B145 1940 USDA*.

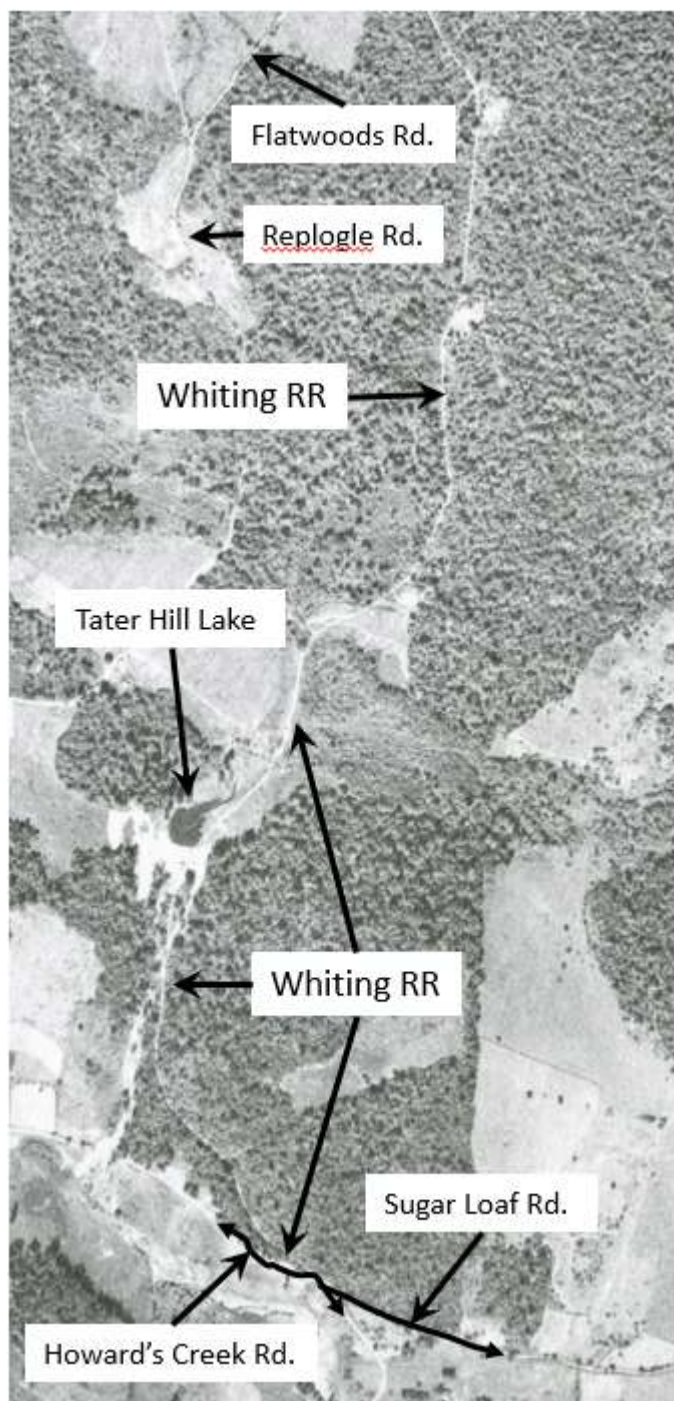


Figure 48: 1940 Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad in Flatwoods, 7B145 1940 USDA.

Interestingly I first looked at this photo to examine the area west of Tater Hill Lake when I first got this picture, because that is where it was written that the Whiting Railroad ended and where many topographic maps had an unimproved road going after starting at the railroad at Howard's Creek Rd. and Sugar Loaf Rd. intersection. I saw this line which is the Whiting Railroad and looked quickly to see if I could find any road that matched it but could only find a match at the

north end. I then ignored this photo for two months thinking one day I would try to figure out what this line on this photo corresponded to.

Two months later while systematically working my way along the Whiting Railroad path examining property records I looked at a deed for this tiny piece of property way up in the middle of the Flatwoods, as shown in yellow in *Figure 49*.

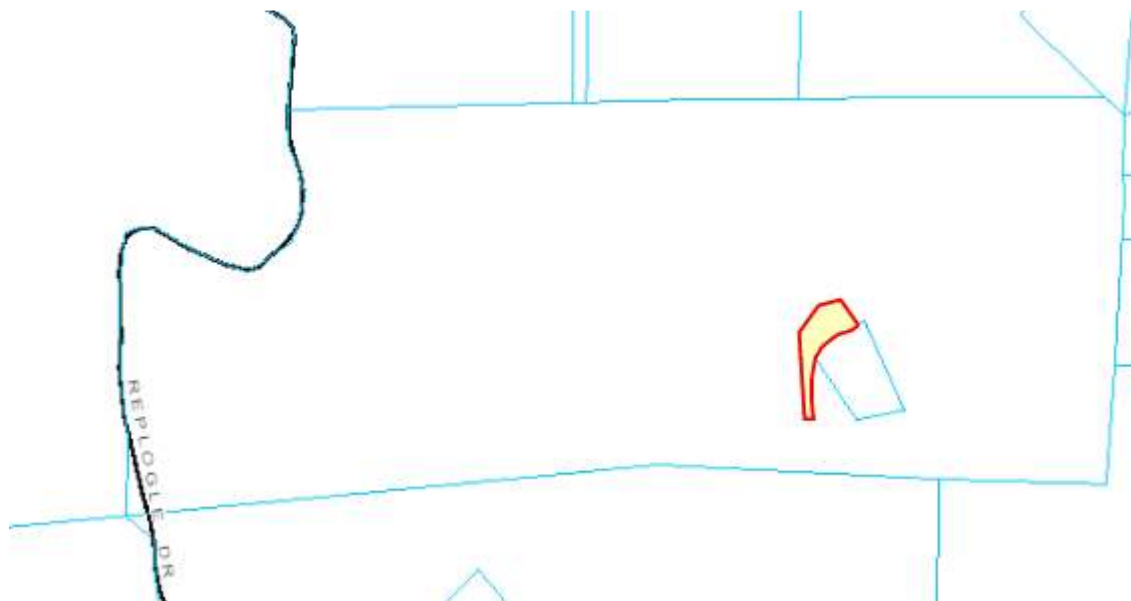


Figure 49: Tiny Lot in Flatwoods on the Whiting Railroad

Tract 1 description in Deed Bk. 161 Pg. 771 is shown in *Figure 50*.

BOOK 161 PAGE 771	
Mail To: _____	
WARRANTY DEED-Form.WD-601 Printed and for sale by James Williams & Co., Inc., Yadkinville, N. C.	
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, <u>WATAUGA</u> County.	
THIS DEED, Made this <u>14th</u> day of <u>October</u> , 19 <u>75</u> , by and between <u>Henry L. Chapman and wife,</u>	
<u>Blanche Amanda Chapman</u> of <u>Lincoln</u> County	
and state of North Carolina, hereinafter called Grantor, and <u>Charles Ray Harkey and wife, Queeta B. Harkey,</u>	
of <u>Lincoln</u> County and State of North Carolina, hereinafter	
called Grantee.	
WITNESSETH: That the Grantor, for and in consideration of the sum of <u>One Hundred (\$100.00) & No/100</u> Dollars	
and other good and valuable considerations to him in hand paid by the Grantee, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, has given, granted, bargained, sold	
and conveyed, and by these presents does give, grant, bargain, sell, convey and confirm unto the Grantee, his heirs and/or successors and assigns, premises in	
Township, <u>Watauga</u> County, North Carolina, described as follows:	
TRACT NO. ONE:	BEGINNING on a White Birch, on the North side of the Will Ellison Road, and runs thence North 18 deg. West 110 feet to a White Birch on the South side of the Whiting Railroad Survey, now a farm Road; thence South 42 deg. West 100 feet, with said Railroad Survey; thence South 2 deg. West 287 feet, with said Railroad Survey, to the line of S. C. Eggers; thence due East 16 feet to the Will Ellison Road; thence North 14 deg. East 246 feet, with said Ellison Road; thence North 70 deg. East 36 feet to the <u>BEGINNING</u> , containing one-half (1/2) of an ACRE, more or less.

Figure 50: Tiny Lot Boundary Description Mentioning the Whiting Railroad, Deed Bk. 161 Pg. 771

The west and north boundaries of this odd shaped property is the Whiting Railroad and the southern boundary is the Will Ellison farm road. This all is all perfectly clear in Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70. So I knew that that line on the photo 7B145 was the Whiting Railroad and it did not just end after entering Flatwoods.

South Flatwoods

At the bottom of *Figure 48: 1940 Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad in Flatwoods, 7B145 1940 USDA*. The Whiting Railroad starts along Howard Creek Rd. Tater Hill Lake is visible although the dam burst in 1970 and it no longer exists. Being built in 1939 it was really new in this photo. Replogle Rd. and Flatwoods Rd., which can be found on topographical maps today, are visible too. The first part right off of Howard's Creek Rd. is shown on topographic maps as well, as shown in *Figure 41: Topographic Map of Jones Branch Valley and Curley Maple Rd.* and the property deed mentions a "woods road" along the northern boundary of the lot east of Rich Mountain Baptist Church north of Howard's Creek Rd. and west of the intersection of Howard's Creek Rd and Sugarloaf Rd..

Along the Whiting Railroad line in *Figure 48* you see white spots. When blown up these reveal a network of paths/rail beds. Some clearly look like wyes, others may be where farm roads cross the railroad bed. This whole route needs exploring on foot as its very existence seems to have been forgotten.

North Flatwoods

The Whiting Railway continues north into Flatwoods about a mile to where it intersects Flatwoods Rd, as shown in *Figure 51* and then continues north until it comes to the north branch of the north branch of Norris Fork. Then it continues up the branch towards Rich Mountain at the top.

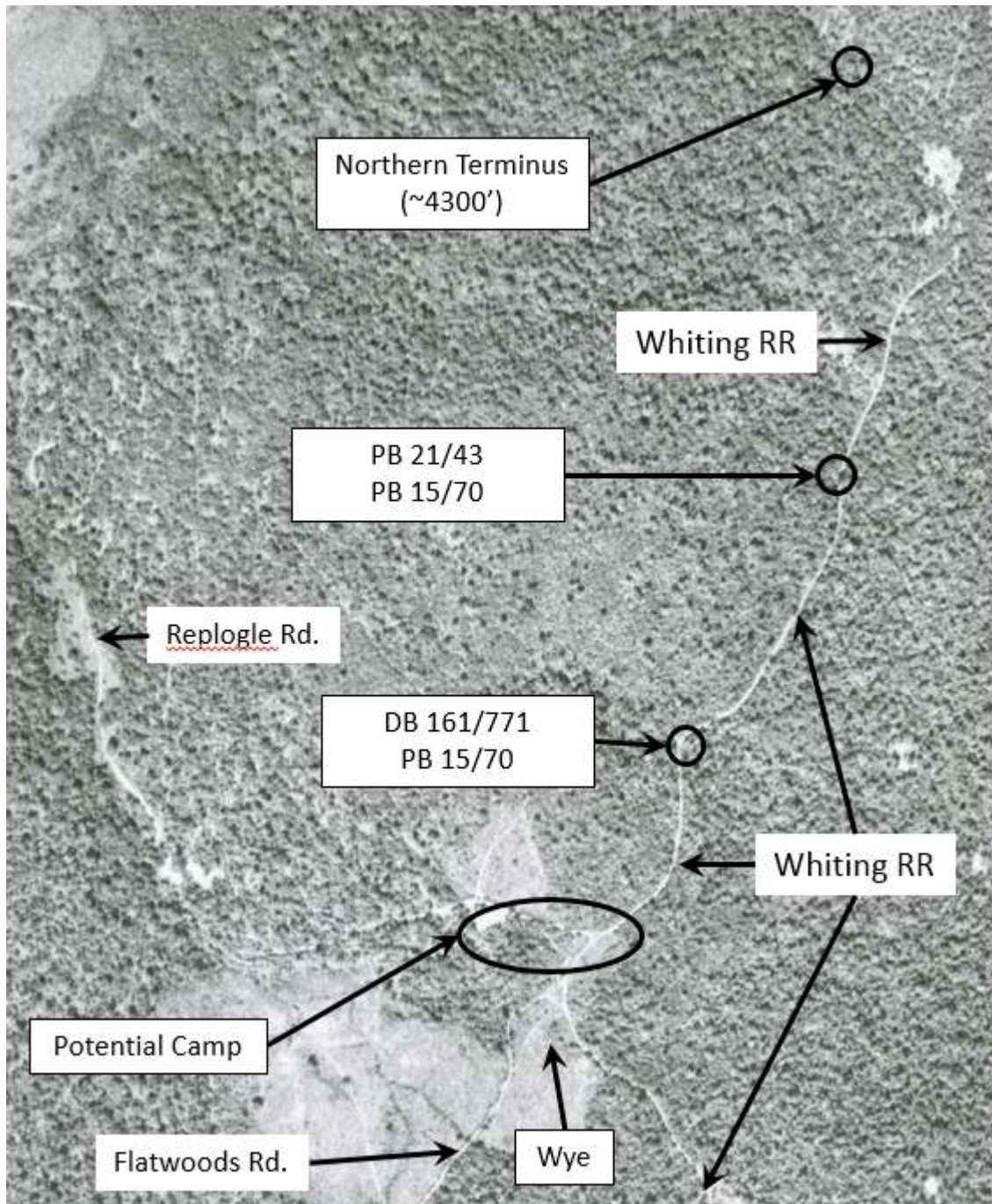


Figure 51: 1940 Aerial Photo of North Flatwoods, 7B145 USDA 1940

The Property listed in Deed Bk. 161 Pg. 771 is right at a little kink in the railroad path. This deed specifically mentions the Whiting Railroad is the western and northern boundary of the property. Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70 details the path of the Whiting Railroad from the wye up to the northern terminus. It is labeled as "Flatwoods Rd." All but the most northern part of this part of the Whiting railroad does appear on topographic maps and google maps as Flatwoods Road.

At one time in the 1950s there were a number of other properties along this part of the Whiting Railroad between the two noted locations with deed and plat references. They were bought up and reconsolidated and then sold to the State of North Carolina who owns all the land but the four properties along Flatwoods Rd. as shown in Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70.

There is a wye in the lower part of *Figure 51*. Right above it there looks like a siding and there may potentially have been a camp here. It needs to be explored. Just like the exact northern terminus up along the Norris Fork branch needs to be explored.

Flatwoods Camp

Here is 7B145 from 1940 with the region around the potential camp blown up:

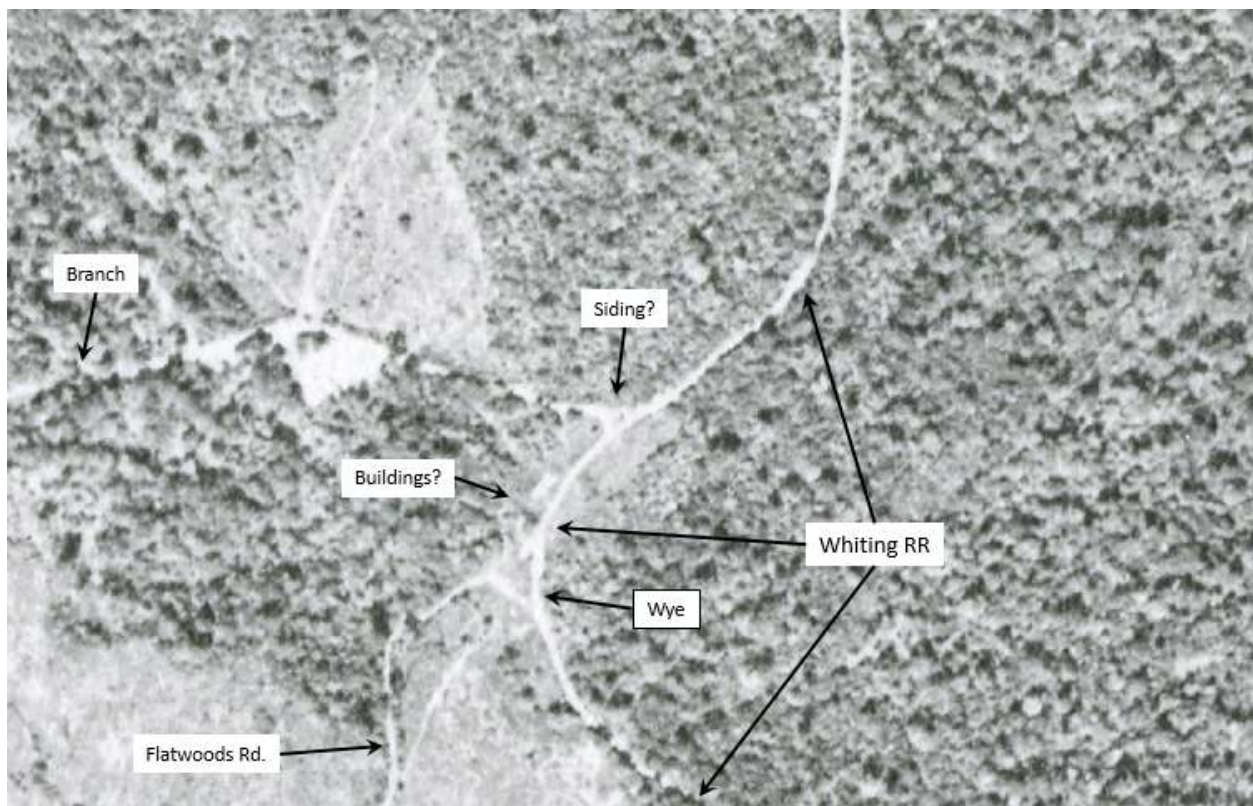


Figure 52: 1940 Flatwoods Camp Possible Site, 7B145 USDA 1940

It is interesting that Flatwoods Rd. intersects the rail bed at the wye. Maybe all of Flatwoods Rd. south of the wye, is on top of an old rail bed. Flatwoods Rd. south could have been a siding off of the mainline to clear out that large part of the tract Whiting needed to clear.

There also seems to be a siding just north of the wye, but it may be an artifact as a branch of Norris Fork runs through there close by. The steep hill west of the railroad along either the

siding or branch shows skid road marks. Not sure why there is a big white spot, or what that is an artifact of. It is a branch to the west, for sure, from topographical maps.

There also seems to be at least one white rectangle beside the rail bed. Is this a cobweb of old buildings from the camp? It needs to be explored.

Northern Terminus – Rich Mountain

Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70 shows the Whiting Railroad went up the north side of the north branch of Norris Fork. The 1940 picture, *Figure 53: 1940 Aerial Photo of Northern Terminus of Whiting Railroad, 7B145 USDA 1940* of the northern terminus, the final path is not clear.

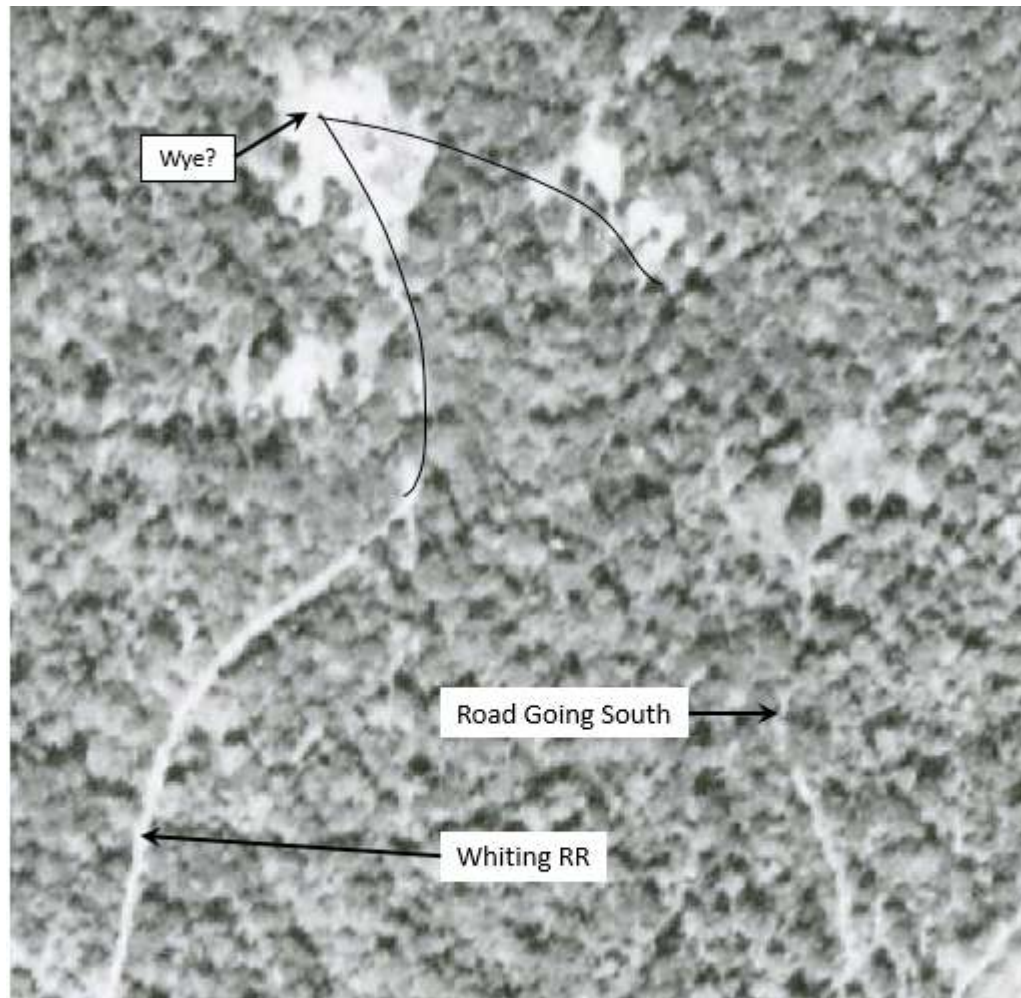


Figure 53: 1940 Aerial Photo of Northern Terminus of Whiting Railroad, 7B145 USDA 1940

The path along the branch is not clear, BUT a farm road from the south which is well marked on aerial photos, comes up and intersects the rail bed. Was it created to use the railway trestle across the branch? It would seem an out-of-the-way route to go. This road also climbs about 60 feet from the bottom of the photo and this would have been a steep grade for the railroad.

The land that the road going south is on was owned by JJ Miller and in 1925 he signed a timber deal with the Whiting Lumber Co. to 126 acres in two tracts. Both tracts are in Jones Branch

valley where Curley Maple Rd. is, but it may have gone on this land to harvest the lumber on the Linney land north.

Also this road south intersects a road coming from the Whiting Railroad close to the bottom of the picture above and then the road follows the 4200' contour east and is called "Flatwoods Rd." as well. Was this a siding to allow logging?

Not even this 1955 photo, 1M116 from the USDA, is much help, but it is the only 1955 photo of Flatwoods I have:

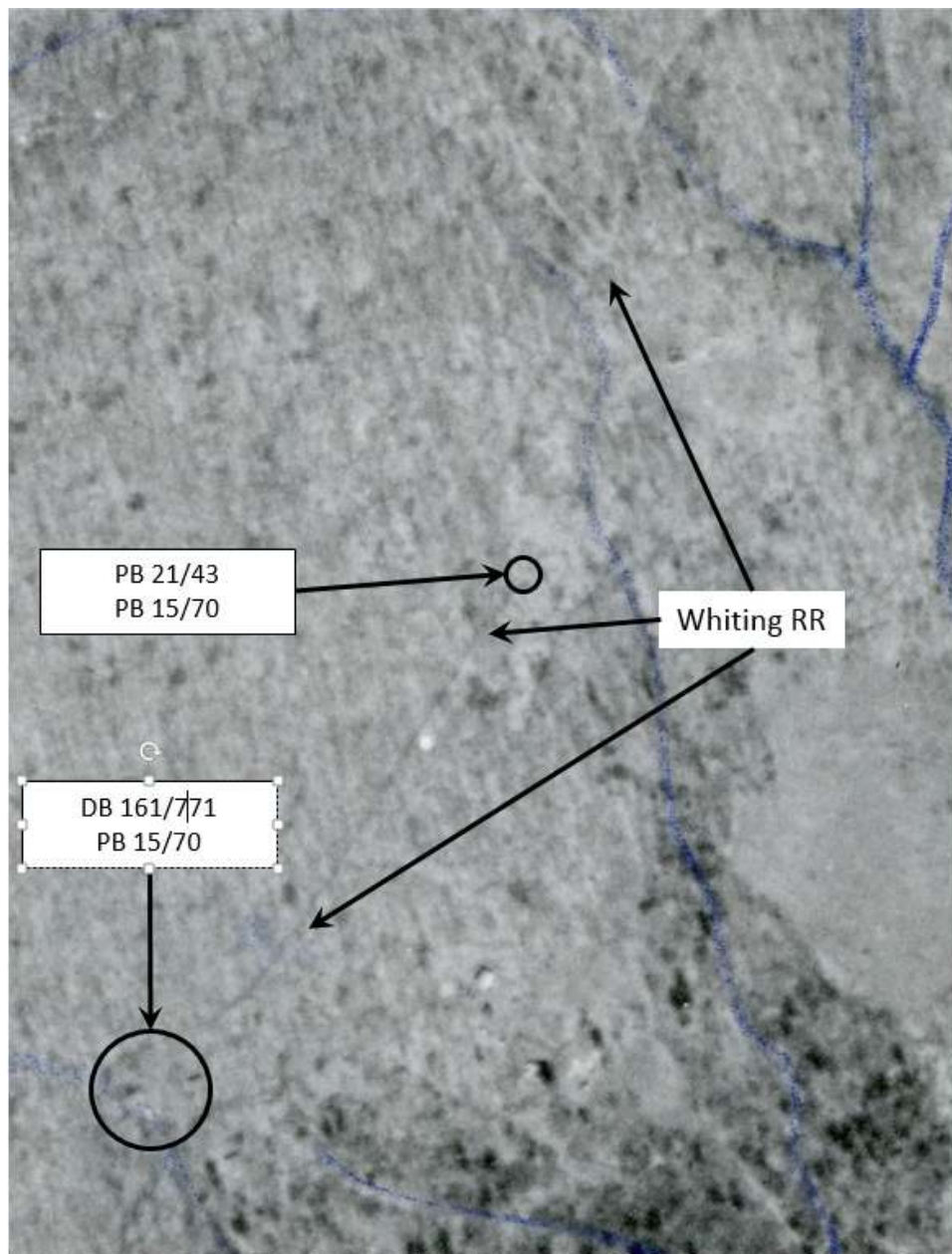


Figure 54: 1955 Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad in North Flatwoods, 1M116 USDA 1955

So I am stuck with using contemporary aerial photos to try and ascertain the northern terminus.

Here is a shot from the Tax map of the County of Watauga, 2018:

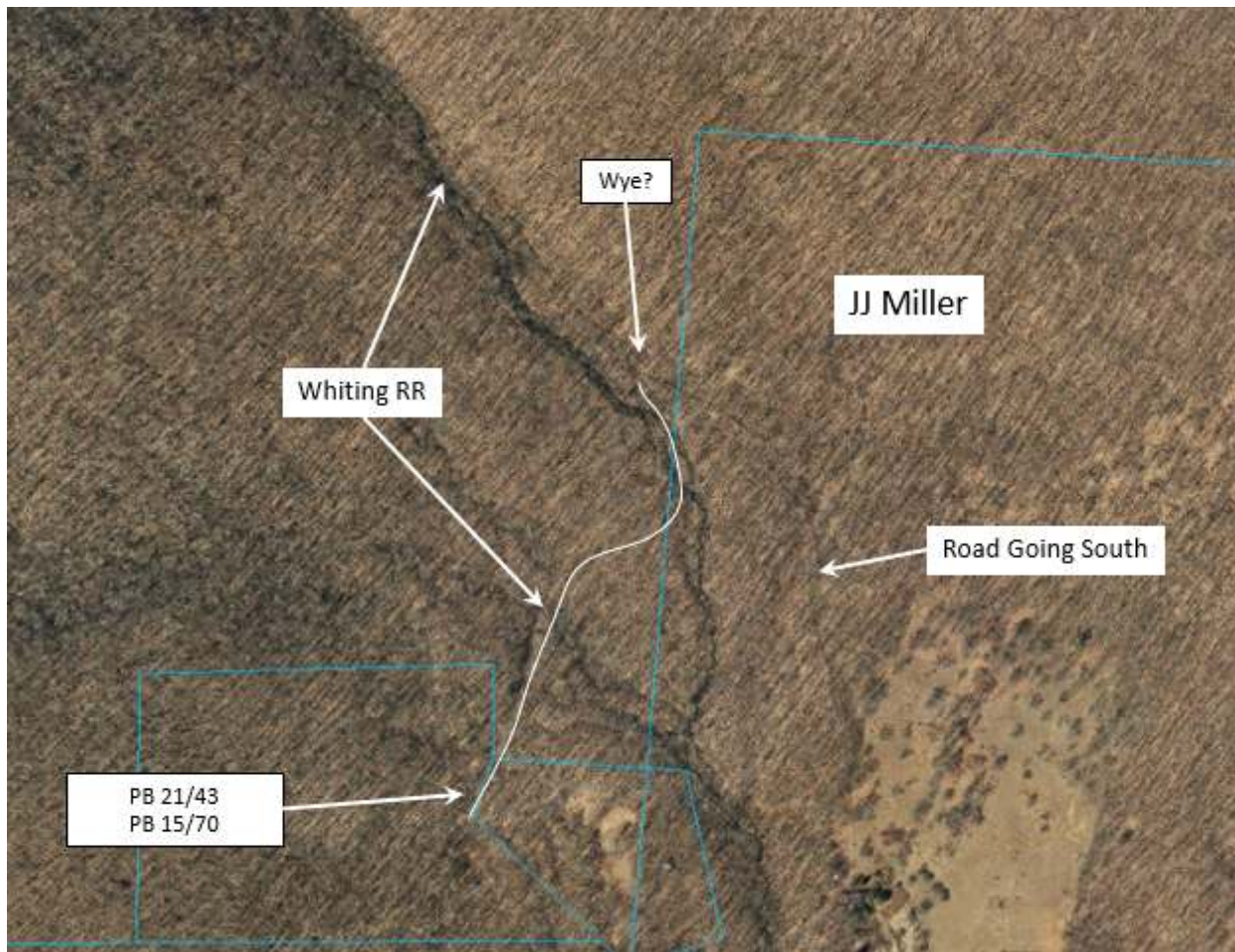


Figure 55: 2018 Aerial Photo of Whiting Railroad Northern Terminus, County Tax map

The property boundaries are in place to give a reference point. Part of the path of the Whiting Railroad has been highlighted in white, the part shown in Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70. The trace of the wye and the road going south is clearer in this photo. It is hard to know if the path up the branch is a skid road, but the plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70 shows it.

Here is another part of the same photo with the wye at the bottom and the complete branch shown:



Figure 56: 2018 Aerial Photo of Northern Terminus and Norris Fork, county tax map

The road going up along the branch is quite visible in this picture. But upon blow up it seems to go all the way up to almost the top of the branch, as shown below:



Figure 57: 2018 Aerial Photo of road up Norris Fork, county tax map

The boundary line at the top of the previous picture can be used as a reference. This is the top of the branch very near the peak of Rich Mountain and a trace of a road on the east side of the branch is faint.

Looking at the northern terminus using the Google maps we get this perspective:

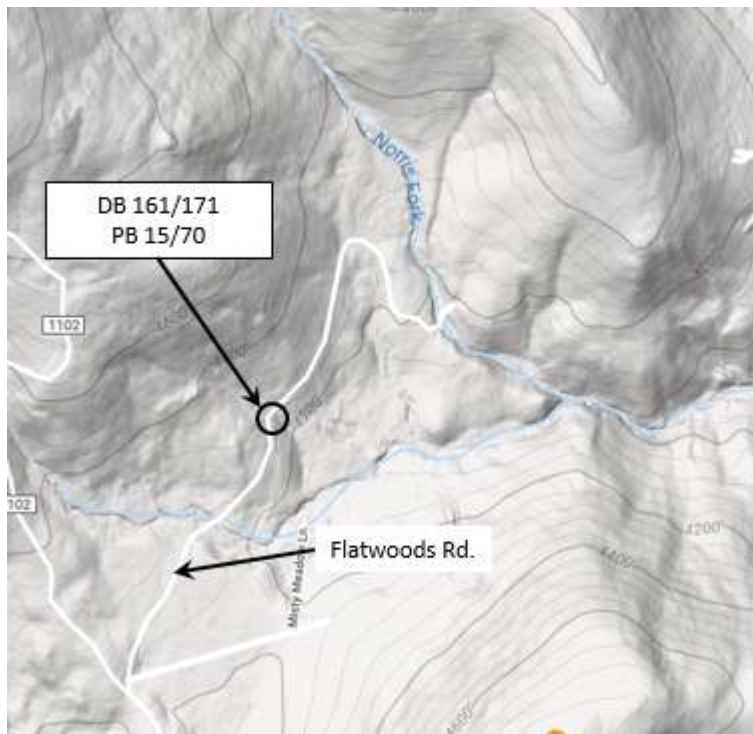


Figure 58: Google Map showing Flatwoods Rd and Norris Fork Topology

The geographic features become clearer. The top of Flatwoods Rd. is at the other two northern lots show in Plat Bk. 15 Pg. 70. The Whiting Railroad continues north across and up what is labeled as Norris Fork, while Flatwoods Rd. continues across from Norris Fork to the east and follows the 4200 foot contour, a dark contour line.

One thing clear is that the Whiting Railroad Northern Terminus was about 4300 feet in elevation and may have gone up the Norris Fork to 4400 feet. Hard to tell when we cannot find the exact terminus.

And blowing up the photo along the Norris Fork in Google maps you still see traces of a road:



Figure 59: Google Map Blowup of Road along Norris Fork

This area needs to be explored to see if the terminus was at the wye across Norris Fork or somewhere up the fork. What is odd is that there is a great deal of land in the lot north of the Norris Fork that is owned by the State of North Carolina, and was a part of the FA Linney tract and could have been logged as well. Flatwoods Rd east around the ridge at the 4200 foot contour is the only evidence of anything getting to the other side of this ridge, and it is not certain that the railroad went east.

Whiting Railroad Period of Operation

The Watauga democrat has articles throughout 1920 detailing the progress of Shaler Gilley, the construction foreman for WS Whiting's railroads, grading up and around Howard's knob to the top of Rich Mountain ridge. It also mentioned in the spring of 1921 that a rail and trestle crew were going to start on the line.

So in deed book 34 page 90 there is a mention in 1921 of a railroad bridge or trestle across US 421. So the Railroad seemed to be operating in 1921. In 1923 the Watauga Democrat mentions that the logging is occurring on Rich Mountain and they were looking at extending the Railroad up to Flatwoods, or FA Linney's land. So the Rich Mountain terminus must have been about Curley Maple Rd. and Junalaska Rd. until 1923.

In 1924 the Mill Lot sale, deed Bk. 31 Pg. 568, mentions that the property line runs along the railroad along the eastern side of Howard's Creek Rd. So it went up to Flatwoods by 1924. In 1925, Deed Book 32 Page 178 has JJ Miller selling the timber on his land to the Whiting Lumber Co. as long as they remove it in a year. This is in Jones Branch valley so the railroad was operational in 1925.

Deed Book 38 page 462 for a lot north of the mill lot on Howard's Creek Rd. mentions in 1928 the boundary is the "old railroad" along the eastern side of the road. So it stopped operating between 1925 and 1928. In the Watauga Democrat, January 7, 1926, on page 1, there is a story about Shaler Gilley, the Whiting railroad construction foreman. The article says he is returning to the mill at Shulls Mills and that they expect the railroad to Beech Mountain is assured and construction will start soon.

This is interesting because it fixes the date the mill moved from Shulls Mills to after 1925, which is when everything I have read said it moved. It also mentions another railroad that I don't believe was ever built but seemed to go down the Watauga River to Cove Creek and Valle Crucis, according to ROWs that Whiting signed for land up to the Watauga River and Cove Creek. So likely the mill moved in 1926 and all the rails were pulled up then as well. Whiting did build a narrow gauge railroad up Watauga River from Butler Tennessee to Beech Creek in about 1928.

Deed Bk. 34 Pg. 275 on May 26, 1926 mentions the property goes within 9 feet of the center of the "old tramway". That would put it in the ROW for the Whiting Railroad. This deed covers a lot that is the northern half of the BB&T lot at US 321 and NC 105 today. This would seem to indicate the rails had been pulled up by May 26, 1926, which would make sense if the mill was being relocated from Shulls Mills to Tennessee at that time.

The first Boone Trail aka Highway 60 was put through in the 1919-1920 timeframe. John H Councill, who joined the state highway department in 1930, said the bridges and ROW were substandard and a reconstruction done by the state in 1930-31 fixed all that. So any trace of the small trestle and bridge over US 421 likely disappeared by 1931.

Much has disappeared under redevelopment or roadways, but there is still almost 6 of the 12 miles of the Whiting Railroad sitting unmolested on private lands.

Possible Next Steps:

- 1) Explore the 6 miles or so of railroad that still exists. This requires getting the property owners' permission.
- 2) Interview the property owners and see if they know where the railroad went. Some property owners appear to be the grandchildren of the people who did business with WS Whiting.
- 3) Search other counties' records. WS Whiting did a great deal of business in Cherokee county and he has deeds in Avery country for his Beech Mountain operations.
- 4) Trace the Moody Mill Creek Railroad and the Boone Fork Creek Railroad also built and operated by WS Whiting in Watauga County. All told these would be about 30 miles of narrow gauge railroad in addition to the Whiting Railroad and the Linville River Railroad.

Revision Notes:

- 1) Initial Release December 21,2018
- 2) Update December 30, 2018 to add 1940 photos courtesy of Chris Ford and add 1939 topo maps of Rich Mountain.