



A picture said to have been taken on January 17, 1932, as the Loganville Branch Railroad made its final run from Loganville.

by horse-drawn wagon. Once the railroad came to town, life changed quickly. In addition to ferrying passengers, seed and fertilizer were brought into town in the spring and bales of cotton shipped out in the fall. Residents would often recall seeing “cotton lined up at the depot as far as the eye could see.” Throughout the year, lumber and bricks for building, coal for heating and manufacturing and dry goods for local merchants were brought in as well.

The establishment of the railroad also connected Loganville to the rest of the world via the telegraph, as the railroad telegrapher could connect with the Western Union Company in Lawrenceville, offering the first instant communications Loganville would have with the rest of the world.

Riding the train was relatively easy for residents, who could flag the train down at almost any point along the route to board and be dropped off.

“I remember by mother had a friend by the name of Nancy Whitworth who lived in Lawrenceville in a house facing what is now State Highway 20,” recalled Julian R. Sellers, in research assembled by Kent Henderson, a local historian. Sellers’ father served as section foreman for the Loganville line for six years before spending 28 years with the city as marshal and chief of police. “Since we could ride on a railroad pass, she occasionally paid her a visit. When the train reached her house, it would stop and we would get off. When the train made its return trip, we would hear the train whistle and we would go down to the tracks and board for our return trip home. One time, we were returning from Lawrenceville in my dad’s 1928 Chevrolet when we drove near the tracks and saw his handcart going down the tracks. There were some high school boys that had sneaked it out for a joy ride, which came to an abrupt end.”

And the train companies were often accommodating to the communities they served, offering specials into Atlanta for special events or to different vacation spots during the summer. Seaboard Air Line, who came to own the entire rail line between Loganville and Lawrenceville in 1902, ran two specials to accommodate the crowd of 500 veterans who attended the reunion of the 35th and 42nd Regiments of the Confederate States of America that took place in Loganville, which drew an estimated crowd of 4,000 people.

The Loganville branch line took local soldiers off to war during World War I, the starting point for a journey to Camp Gordon in Augusta for

training, and was the mode of transportation for the families when permitted for visits. During Prohibition, it was rumored the rail crews brought in whiskey.

The first signs of the Loganville railroads inevitable fate began to surface in 1921, when the decline of business on the branch line forced Seaboard to begin laying off workers. With the arrival of the Great Depression in 1929, things went from bad to worse. And on January 1, 1932, a notice appeared in *The Walton Tribune*.

“The Interstate Commerce Commission has authorized the discontinuance of the Loganville and Lawrenceville Branch of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, a ten mile line in Walton County. The line touches the main line of the Seaboard at Lawrenceville and terminates in Loganville.

“The actions of the federal body in sanctioning the abandonment of the line follows pleas of the road officials who claim the line should be discontinued in order to reduce losses. This action is deplored by the people of Loganville and trade territory, whose nearest railroad facilities will now be at Monroe and Lawrenceville.”

On January 17, 1932, the Loganville Branch Railroad made its last run and four months later, the rails were removed. Some residents today still have railroad ties and other mementos from the railroad that for more than three decades brought the rest of the world to Loganville. **L**

— Special thanks to Kent Henderson whose research into the history of Loganville is the basis for this story

Striking his heavy sledge against the anvil



In the 1930s, George W. Cowser was already past today’s common age of retirement but could still be seen at work at his blacksmith shop working on wooden wagon wheels and putting shoes on horses.

Affectionately known as the Loganville Blacksmith, Cowser’s story was one common for not only Loganville but the larger area of Georgia at the time. It was around 1820 that Cowser’s grandparents were among the “original settlers” in north Georgia.

Cowser’s father, after several

years working as an overseer on a plantation in Morgan County, moved his wife and four children to a new home in Gwinnett County, where their youngest child, George, would be born soon after the move.

While growing up in what was known as the Ozora community, the elder Cowser was called to help “defend against the invading armies of the northern states.” He would not return, losing his life to a bout of the measles the day before Cowser’s fourth birthday. A mother left to raise five children during the Civil War and its after-

math was no easy feat, though it was a time many would struggle.

Cowser’s storied history in Loganville began in 1907. A friend at the time had come to the growing town to attend the quarterly conference of the Loganville Circuit of Methodist churches and, in the *Gwinnett Journal*, wrote, “As we were leaving, we ran across our old friend, G. W. Cowser, who handed us \$1.25 and asked that his *Journal* be changed from Grayson to Loganville. He is making money in a blacksmith and repair shop.”

After living in the Grayson area for 46 years, Cowser thought Loganville presented a great opportunity for himself and his wife, Mary Jane, and their four

children. He became a partner in a blacksmith and repair shop that was located on corner of what is today Logan Drive and Cross Street which at the time was close to the Loganville Railroad Depot. His family’s home was to the rear of the shop across Logan Drive, which at the time was known as Pear Street. The family home was torn down to make way for Chili’s and the shopping center that houses Starbuck’s.

The main entrance to the blacksmith’s shop was on Camp Street, with accounts recording the building being about 20 feet by 30 feet and the forge to the right as a person entered the building. Past the forge was a door leading to an open shed where Cowser

would later build a table-like cot that was “a great place to take his afternoon naps on a lazy summer day.”

Cowser’s oldest son, Thomas Clifford, would work as a clerk at different businesses before opening up his own businesses. He would go on to become a city councilman and mayor for the City of Loganville.

Cowser spent the last 37 years of his life doing what he loved, striking his heavy sledge against red-hot metal on his old anvil, until his death on March 13, 1944.

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