

Mapping the Stage Road in Jackson County Between 1820 and 1850

by James T. Sentell

March 2025

This author has made an attempt to research the location of the main stage coach road that ran thru Jackson County, Alabama in its early years. Jackson County was created on December 13, 1819, and need for transportation thru the new county became an important item. The next day on December 14, 1819, the Territory of Alabama became the State of Alabama. Jackson County had been part of the Cherokee Nation until the treaty of February 27, 1819. The Tennessee Valley had been occupied by the Cherokee Nation for several decades and roads were existing in the River Valley area in 1819.

Two items happened the next year in 1820 that created our first major transportation route to be know as the Stage Coach Road. A Mail route was established May 13, 1820 from Huntsville to Ross's Landing (Chattanooga, Tennessee) that was to pass through Maysville, Woodville, Sauta and on to Ross's Landing and Washington in Rhea County, Tennessee. A stage route was directed to be established that year to run from Knoxville to Huntsville via Jackson County.

Our research will be focused on an attempt to discover and document this original route.



The above is a portion of Mitchell's map of Stage Coach routes as published in 1838. By this time, we can see that the Stage Coach Road entered Jackson County north of Rocky Springs, and running thru Bolivar, Oak Grove, Bellefonte, Woodville and exiting the county northwest of Woodville. I have several other old maps that will become exhibits as we go forward in our look into just where did the stage coach travel in Jackson County in the early years of our history.

Many maps from the 1800s are in existence and can be found in several locations thanks to the internet and our public library system, yet the detail of these early maps is lacking for our purpose. They provide a generic idea of connection two dots with one straight line when showing the roads between towns and communities. Our desire is to determine the exact location of these roads and a search for the existence of the roadbed in 2021. Prior to the establishments of State Highway Departments and Departments of Transportation, which began about a hundred years ago, all roads were constructed and maintained by local government and the local citizens. For several hundred years prior to these state agencies, the local authorities would appoint a local citizen to "oversee" a small section of a road in the area of that citizen's residence. This is a valuable resource for research in the field of genealogy and is also about the only detail information we have when searching for the exact locations of roadways in the early 1800s.

It would have been nice to check the minutes of the Jackson County Commission in the early years and just note the various sections of the stage coach road and the local citizens appointed over the years as overseers. We had this small problem in our history in the 1860s of a large political disagreement that elevated to open warfare, which has produced the destruction of the first two books of the minutes of Jackson county prior to 1853. We are luck that Book 3 of the minutes are still around as our first records. This book covers from 1853 to around 1865, and we can be thankful that the person keeping the records of this book did remove the book from the courthouse in the winter of 1863-1864 when the courthouse in Bellefonte burned.

This author has used the work or others in many history books, the record of the overseers that were appointed in 1853 and 1857, a careful review of many existing maps of our county from many sources, field inspections of various sections of the stage road, both by car and on foot, the land patents from the Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office and his fifty plus years as a land surveyor and transportation engineer to arrive at this presented idea of where the original stage coach road traversed the terrain of Jackson County. I do not propose that my location is correct, only that this is my opinion based of the evidence I uncovered and my experience as a route location engineer and surveyor. Others may find evidence that disproves some of the location presented herein or may have other idea.

Going forward, we will present the road as it entered the county at the Tennessee State Line near the present day of South Pittsburg, Tennessee and Bridgeport and exiting at Gurley, Alabama. This is the format that is found within Book 3 of the Jackson County Commission minutes, where the stage coach road is broken into 16 sections of approximately 3 miles in length and the overseers from the 1850s are documented.

Before going to that format, we will look at the history of the road in the western part of the county, as we do have some history of the stage coach road that existed prior to it become the stage coach road of the 1820s.

John Robert Kennamer, Jr. and L. G. Kennamer published an excellent book in 1911 entitled *The Story of Woodville and Community Album*. Thanks to an excellent local library in downtown Woodville, I was able to read this great book which produced the following history.

Most people with current knowledge of our great county know about the Sauta Cave east of Aspel that is now a Federal preserve because of the bats who live within the cave. It is one of our greatest treasures and it has had a huge impact on the development of our county as we see it today.

Madison County, Alabama was created in 1808 as a county within the Mississippi Territory. As people begin to populate this area of the new lands which were west of the Cherokee lands of what is now Jackson County, they began expanding outward from the big spring area of the village of current day Huntsville. John Hunt had build a cabin beside the big spring in 1805. In these early years, pioneers came south from the state of Tennessee and began expanding outward from Hunts place and a few wandered east, crossing the Flint River and after location a small valley between Gurley Mountain and Keel Mountain entered the lower end of Paint Rock valley and going down that area of the Paint Rock River discovered a passageway in the valley to go around the lower end of the Cumberland Plateau, cross the Paint Rock River and a few established residence near a spring that would later become know as Woodville, Alabama. The original town was located at the toe of the slopes of the mountain about three quarters of a mile due east of the current village of Woodville. When the railroad came thru the county in the 1850s, the town begin to slowly move west to surround the railroad tracks in the current location we see today.

This early discovery of a passageway via flat valley land from Huntsville to the area of Woodville established a major transportation route used today by thousands today. As our great country, in its early years, was again assaulted by those guys in red coats, which we had kicked off the land in the 1780s, they came back in 1812. Our country was in much need of gunpowder to once again, hid behind the large virgin forest and shoot those silly guys in red coats who would stand in a group in the opening and offer excellent targets for our boys in buckskins armed with those fantastic Tennessee mountain rifles.

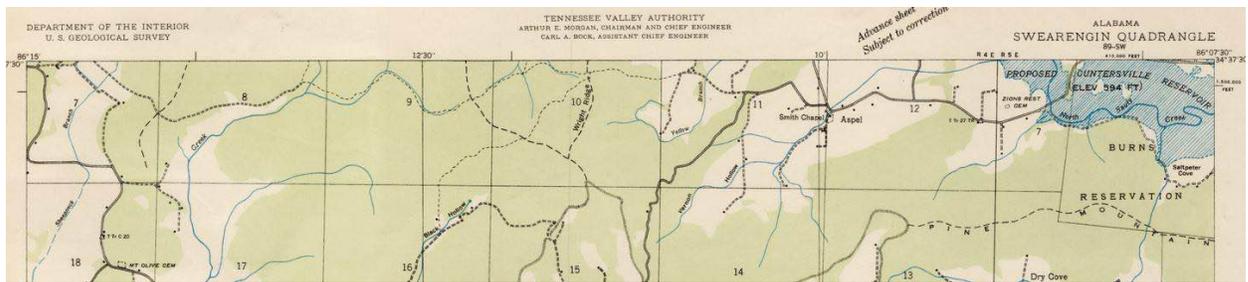
Colonel William Robinson was familiar with the huge cave at Sauta and the fact that large amounts of saltpeter could be obtained from the cave to make gunpowder to enable our guys to shoot round lead balls at those silly red coats. He begins a company to mine saltpeter. The records of the court of Huntsville documents where in 1812, Colonel Robinson filed an action against Argyle Taylor to recover damages because he accused Taylor, as the foreman of the mine, "for taking four hundred weight of saltpetre with force and arms from the plaintiff". The case was found in favor of Taylor in 1818.

Some interesting history is found in this case, which in this authors opinion documents the location of what would become the stage coach road in a few years. One of Taylor's witnesses was Stephen Standifer. who was also a foreman of the Sauta mine at some point in our history. Standifer testified that Taylor used seven men and a wagon and oxen in operating the mine and

that they produced from 70 to 100 weight per day of saltpetre. Robinson had furnished the wagon and oxen in the year 1812. I have concluded the same as the Kenamer authors that this saltpetre would have been removed back to the west, via the community of Woodville and back towards John Hunts cabin at the big spring.

All of the old maps indicate an old roadbed that is located at the toe of the slope in Thomas Cove and runs east up the creek at the bottom of the drainage and crossing in a saddle of the mountains on what is know as Wrights ridge and descending into current day community of Aspel. It is this authors opinion that this road was constructed by employees of Colonel William Robinson and Argyle Taylor as the route to remove the saltpetre from Sauta and that a few years later, was used as the route of the original stage road from the community of Aspel to the original village of Woodville.

The following map shows a six plus mile section of an old road (very north edge of the map) that runs from the east of Aspel westwards to Thomas Cove and traverses across a small saddle in the ridge (on the section line between section 7 & 8) where old Woodville would be just off the west edge of this map. This is a copy of the top part of the 1936 7.5 minute series TVA quadrangle map of Swearingin.



The Sauta saltpetre cave is located in the Burns Reservation on the right side of the above map and you can see the location of the original road around the toe of slope prior to the embayment of Guntersville reservoir in the 1930s. Thanks to the 1836 map shown later, we know the original road ran along the north boundary of the Burns Reservation and most likely crossed Sauta Creek in the location shown on the above map.

We will return to a discussion of this area later in this publication when we discuss the sections of the overseer of the original stage coach road. Also at the end of this article is a section labeled maps that provide additional details to these locations.

The 1820s and the beginning of the stage coach route in Jackson County.

So few records exist dealing with transportation and its exact location that it is difficult to know the exact location of this roadway. The corridor is easily discovered and known. The corridor would have, and is documented as running from Jasper and traversing the Tennessee Valley from the Tennessee state line southwesterly, parallel to and near the Tennessee River to the village of Sauta, near the Sauta Cave, located within the boundary of the Burns Reservation. This roadway would have been on the northwest side of the River as the land south of the river would be known as Cherokee land for another 15 years.

A little history of where our part of the world was as of 1820 on mail and stage routes.

*By 1800 the Southwest territories were growing rapidly. This area had yet to see its first stagecoach line. The unsettled wilderness was a barrier. Stage lines were expensive to build and maintain in areas with barely passable roads. But even then the mail had to go through. The first mail service in Tennessee was extended from **Staunton, Virginia** to **Knoxville** in 1794. The service went on to **Nashville** in 1797 and to **Natchez** in 1800. A decade later stages entered the region. In 1807 Postmaster General **Gideon Granger** contracted with **Benjamin White** for a stagecoach route from **Knoxville** to **Nashville**. An extension line to **Huntsville, Alabama** from the **Nashville** to **Knoxville** line and branching from **McMinnville** was opened in 1820. In 1819 a traveler could ride by connected stagecoach from **Anson, Maine** via **Washington D.C.** to **Nashville**, a distance of 1,448 miles.*

reprinted from Transportation in Early Middle Tennessee by Susan Douglas Wilson.

Most of these stage coaches used a four horse team and had a maximum capacity of 15 passengers. The average speed when underway was about 6 miles per hour and would have a stage coach stop about every 10 miles to provide team changes, this has been reported by others on the stage coach routes of the early 1800s. The roads used to develop the route from the Tennessee line to Sauta is difficult to determine in these early years, but bits and pieces of information provide hints. The Cherokee people had been living here for 30 to 40 years by this time and would have developed a road system or trail system to move around the county. One hint is the location of the reservations that were established by the treaty of March 1819 that were surveyed around 1822. They were permitted to obtain 640 acres of property around their residence. Another hint is the fact that these reservations would have had excellent springs located near the homes for a water source and also that roads were developed along ridges and high grounds were possible to aid in water draining away from the road during rains and wet seasons.

Few maps exist of these very early years that apply any real detail of our new Jackson County. The maps from the 1820 are for the complete state and most of those that have been reviewed only show the major creeks, none of the villages and none of the roadway system are shown. In one of the maps from the late 1820s the first road shows up in Jackson county and it is the other old road that ran from Winchester across the Cumberland Plateau, via what was to later become Larkinsville and continued south to Ft. Deposit on the south side of the Tennessee River. Ft. Deposit was developed around 1813, 1814 by General Andrew Jackson during the war with the red sticks of the creek nations.

The first real evidence we have of the location of our stage road is found in the 1828 ad from the Knoxville Newspaper offering service by a stage coach operated by Michael Smith. Running once a week, leaving Knoxville at 1 PM on Friday, arriving at Huntsville 6 days and 22 hours later at 11 AM on the following Friday. The ad states that the route ran thru the new village of Bellefonte. The stage then turned around after 2 hours at Huntsville and made the same return 7 day trip to Knoxville.

Bellefonte is located in the James Riley native american reservation and near a great source of water. George W Higgins and Stephen Carter had signed a bond for James Riley in Oct of 1820 where Riley had agreed to sell his Reservation to said Higgins and Carter.

On December 13, 1821, in the same act that created Decatur County out of part -of Jackson County, the Alabama legislature appointed seven Jackson County men to choose a temporary seat of justice for the county (Brannon, 1941). Very shortly thereafter, on December 15, 1821, the legislature incorporated the town of Bellefonte inclusive of 60 acres (Acts of Alabama, 1821), and by 1822, Bellefonte had been chosen as the second temporary seat of justice of Jackson County (Kennemer, 1935, The History of Jackson County).

The public records indicate that lots were being sold by Higgins and Carter by 1830 and 1831 for lots in the town of Bellefonte. I think we can conclude that the original road as established in the early 1820's was routed thru the town of Bellefonte. Today's mileage from Knoxville to Huntsville is a little over 200 miles along modern routes. Using the ad from 1828, Michael Smiths coaches would have averaged about 30 miles per day over this trip. We can only estimate the total mileage of the route of the 1820s, and this author would propose the route was more like 250 miles. Using the information obtained by others and presented on page five for the average speed of 6 miles per hour and a total of two changes of horses along the days travel, we can conclude the average stage coach rider would have spent about 6 hours per day riding in the stage.

Using these number, we can propose that those using the Knoxville to Huntsville stage and mail service in the 1830s would have spent their Tuesday nights at the Inn located in Jasper, Tennessee. Leaving for the next night in Bellefonte on Wednesday morning after a breakfast at the inn.

On Wednesday nights after leaving Jasper the passengers would have arrived in the new county seat of Jackson County, Bellefonte. Most would have eaten their evening meal and spent the night in the newly constructed Tavern on the square known as the Manitou Hotel. The Manitou Hotel was owned and operated by the authors third great grandfather, James Turk. After James Turks first wife had passes away in Maryville, Tennessee, he relocated with his family to the town of Bellefonte in the late 1820s, and constructed the Manitou Hotel, which he operated for several years in the early 1830s. James Turk passed away in 1835 and the inn was sold to John S Young who we believe continued to operate the inn. James committed for the sale in August of 1831 to John Young but retained the right to live in the house on the property and to continue to operate the Inn. I can only wonder if he was in bad health as he was gone by 1835. Documentation of this is found in the deed books for 1831 where three of the leaders of Bellefonte when on record to stand behind the money James Turk had borrowed from John McEfer for the construction of the Manitou Hotel. One note for \$ 276.61 was due for payment on May 1, 1832 and the second note for \$ 276.61 due for payment May 1, 1833. David Caulfied, Henry Norwood and Samuel Gilliam signed this document as co signers of the money due to John McEfer, probably as a sign that they were providing for the continuous operation of the Manitou Hotel in the new and booming town of Bellefonte. The lot is missing from this document so we do not have a record of exactly where the Manitou Hotel was located around the courthouse square.

Thursday nights, the last night on the seven-day journey, would have been spent from the mid 1830s on at John Redmond's Inn, located at Camden, which later became the town of Paint Rock. As the stage passed thru Woodville on Thursdays trip towards Huntsville, one of the stops for exchange of horses would have been at the home of Henry Derrick, which was located at the bend in County Road adjacent to the Stephens Cemetery. This would have been near the center of the town of Woodville as it was in the 1830s. The stop and horse change at Derrick's place in downtown Woodville would have been the second horse change for the day, taking place in the afternoon and departing towards Camden with the next stop being the short stop at ferry on the Paint Rock River. It is the belief of this author that the morning stop on this Thursday would have been at the home of William Maples, another early citizen of Woodville and an owner of a large tract of line near the Burns Reservation and Aspel. This stop would have been at the Maples home which was located just east of the current site of Aspel. We will discuss this potential stage coach stop later in the discussion of the overseer sections of the stage coach road.

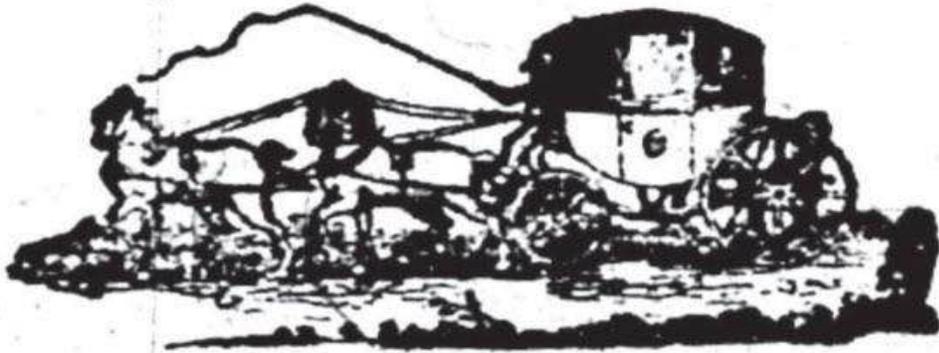
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THE SUBSCRIBER

RESPECTFULLY informs the public, that he now has in operation, a complete **LINE OF MAIL STAGES** from Knoxville to Huntsville. He pledges himself that every attention shall be paid to the comfort of passengers who may favor him with their patronage. The accommodations on the road are generally good, and as cheap as any in the country. His stages are light, tho' substantial are drawn by good horses, carefully managed and strictly attended to. His charges are six and a fourth cents a mile for a passenger. The stage leaves Knoxville every Friday at one o'clock P. M. and passing through Maryville, Tillico, Athens, Washington, Pikeville, Jasper and Bellefont, arrives at Huntsville at 11 o'clock A. M. every Friday; and will leave Huntsville at 1 o'clock, P. M. on the same day, and returning by the same route, arrive at Knoxville every Friday at 11 o'clock, A. M.

MICHAEL SMITH, Contractor.

Nov. 19, '28.—2m

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By the late 1830's, the cartographers of the various maps begin to show roads and towns for Jackson County's portion of the maps. Below is the 1836 maps of the Stage Routes and Steam Boat Routes in Alabama by Mitchell. This is our first map showing the stage coach road passing thru Rocky Springs, Bolivar, Oak Grove, Bellefoute and Woodville.



By this time, David Larkin had begun to develop the town of Larkinsville and a road from Bellefoute to Larkinsville and on to Woodville had been constructed and this road is noted on the above map, along with the original road from Winchester that came south on top of the Cumberland Plateau, descended into Boxes Cove, ran thru Larkinsville and continued south to Fort Deposit in Marshall County. The 1836 map documents the road between Larkinsville and Larkins Landing on the Tennessee River and the site of the Sauta Post Office.

The exact time of the roadway development of the road from Bellefoute, to Larkinsville and on to Woodville is not know to this author, but some hints of its early development are noted as a side note to this study of the original stage road. We know that Woodville's first post office was established in September of 1823 when William Hainey was appointed as postmaster. A postal route was established between Woodville and Larkinsville in 1832 where David Larkin was the post master in those early years. Henry Derrick served as postmaster of Woodville from October 29, 1829 to September 1, 1834. This somewhat documents that the Post Office in Woodville in these years would have been at Henry Derrick's two story log home next to the Stephens Cemetery which was serving as the stage coach stop. The mail was carried as part of the stage service, so mail was delivered from Huntsville every two weeks by the stage on the trip to Knoxville and the mail coming from the east on the same two-week delivery when the stage came by on the trip to Huntsville.

Some hints exist on development of the route, it was in August of 1822 when R J Meigs, Jr, as Postmaster General developed a mail route "from Huntsville to Jackson Courthouse, once in two weeks, forty-six miles". This is to Bellefonte and is additional documentation that the postal service was by the stage coach only in those early days, running on that two-week round trip schedule. Our first documentation of the mileage appears on the 1848 map of stage routes published by Harper. The Jackson County area is shown below. It is not understood why the distance from Bellefonte to Huntsville is shown as 38 miles. Using the current U S 72 route, it is 46 miles from Bellefonte to Huntsville. The distance from Bolivar to Bellefonte of 16 miles is reasonable and an indicator that a stage coach stop existing somewhere between Crow Creek and Mud Creek on the old stage road. The mileage from Jasper to Bolivar is listed as 17 which is an indicator that a stage coach stop may have existing in the area to the Alabama and Tennessee state line.



The first two books of the minutes of the Jackson County commission appear to have disappeared from existence, due either to the occupation of Bellefonte by Union troops in 1864 or by a later fire in the 1880 in the Courthouse at Scottsboro. It is known that these two events destroyed some documents from the public records.

Book three has survived and is used as the basis for this study and report for the 1850s and using the previously documented route, provides a good guide to locating the probable location of the stage coach road. Beginning on page 1 of this book are the minutes from the Feb, 1853 meeting of the County Commission composed of Lorenzo Russell from Stevenson, John S. Eustice of Princeton, Moses Maples from Woodville and Moses Jones from Jones Cove. These county commissioners appointed individual citizens to be responsible for the overseeing of sections of the county road system and the first few pages consist of 16 separate sections of the old stage road, beginning at the Tennessee state line near present day South Pittsburg, Tn. and traversing southerly and westerly thru the county, exiting at the county line near present day Gurley, Alabama. We will discuss the location using this format of Tennessee state line southwesterly and then westerly to the Madison County line.

For a basic orientation of this route, it follows US Highway 72 thru Jackson County. The next section is a list of the men appointed in 1853 and then new men appointed in 1857 which appear around pages 170 of the minutes. Following those pages, each of the 16 sections will be addressed as to this author's opinion of the location of the old stage road based on his research. These minutes call this a grade one road and in one place describes a section as being the stage road. Mile posts are quoted in a few places.

From Book 3 of the Jackson County Commission

Meeting at Bellefonte in February of 1853

People appointed as overseer of sections of the Stage Coach Road (16 total)

- 1) Oliver Neighs (sp?) State Line to Branch opposite Robert Jones.
In 1857 James Weatherspoon is appointed and the end is called the Robert Jones spring branch.
- 2) George Cloud and James E. ? from Robert Jones to Bridge at Widows Creek
1857 appointment of Sidney Price.
- 3) George Cloud from the East bank of Widows Creek to 6 mile post.
1857 appointment of A. D. Lawson and end is called Boliver and not 6th MP
- 4) Marian McMahan from 6th MP to Crow Creek
1857 appointment of J. W. Barren

- 5) William Bogne (sp?) from Crow Creek to Wyley O Taylors old place.
1857 appointment of William Guinn.
- 6) John Starkey from Wyley O Taylors to Mud Creek
1857 appointment of C M ? (last name not legible)
- 7) James Starkey from Mud Creek to the Branch creek near Bellefonte
1857 appointment George Kelley
- 8) H Caldwell from Branch east of Bellefonte to Fork east near Benjamin Hudgens
H Caldwell reappointed 1857.
- 9) William Carlson from Benjamin Hudgens to lagoon west of Roseberry fork.
- 10) Thomas Kirby from Lagoon west of Roseberry to 9 MP
1857 appointed William M Parks and refers on page 171 that this is the stage road.
- 11) William Dulany from MP 9 to William Maples
1857 appointment Robert Toom from MP 9 to MP 11 and William Brown from MP
11 to William Maples
- 12) Andrew Wright from William Maples to top of mountain above James B Wright.
1857 appointment Dabney Wisdom
- 13) Jack D Ledbetter from Top of mt above James B Wright to Woodville.
1857 appointment William Vincent.
- 14) Rufus James from Woodville to Puetts Ferry (assumed on Paint Rock river)
1857 appointment John S Dudley
- 15) John Phillips from Puetts Ferry to gum springs.
1857 appointment Daniel Butler and change termination to Redmonds.
- 16) M Spraggins from gum springs at the beat line to Madison County line.
1857 appointment W C Devine.

This road called 1st Grade Road. The other roads located in Jackson County were called 3rd Grade roads in the minutes

Section One

Section one ran from the State line to the spring branch at Robert Jones. Note that Rocky Springs is near the center of the William Jones Reservation. this is about 3 miles from where the old Mt Carmel road (county road 75) crosses Widows creek and is about 3 miles from the state line along the current location of county road. Referencing the civil war map of existing roads and review of records, it appears the old stage road ran along or very near the existing county roads 74 and 75, running by Rocky springs and Mt. Carmel, probably crossing Widows creek in the current location.

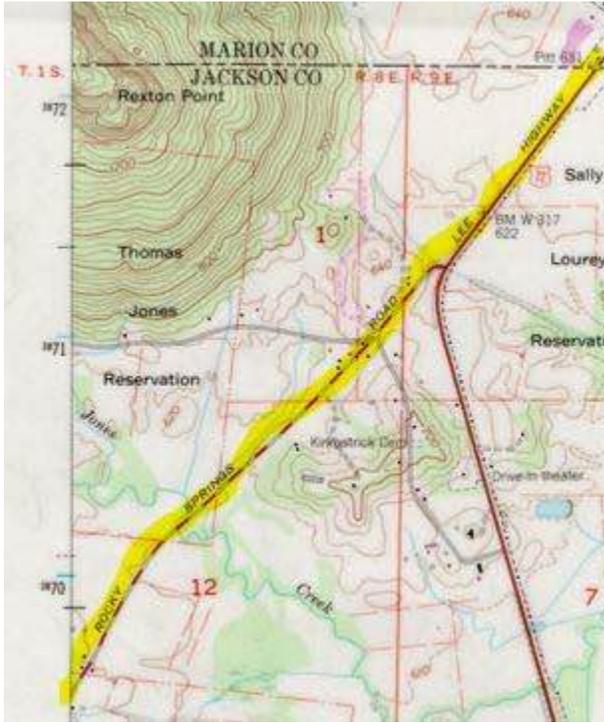
Section one as proposed by this author would have traversed thru the native american reservation of Sally Lourey at the state line, crossed the lower corner of Thomas Jones reservation in Kings Cove, traversing over the middle of the William Jones reservation in which the community of Rocky Springs is located and terminated near the northwest corner of the Thorn reservation. This route, which this author believes in the same as the present day County Road 75, is most likely a road that existed in the indian territory before 1819 that connected the homes of these members of the Cherokee tribe.

Robert Jones, Jr received patent number 13,376 in 1849 for fractional D & F of Section 23. T 1S, R 8 E. These are fractional parts since the Daniel Thorn Native American reservation exist at this location in the Rocky Springs area of Jackson County. It is possible that the spring branch at Robert Jones is the line branch line shown on the 1936 quadrangle map at the north line of Section 23 when the current Co Rd 74 intersects with Co Rd 94. I believe the original stage road entered Jackson county very near the existing location of US Highway 72 or the old location a few hundred feet west and ran southwest along the current location of County Road 74, thru Rocky Springs and the first section ends at the Co Rd 74 and Co Rd 94 intersection, with section two continuing along both Co Rd 74 and 75 at Mt. Carmel and crossed the Widow's Creek at the current location of Co Rd 75.

The 1936 quadrangle map is used as a presentation of this route, and please note that County road 74 today is along the same alignment as displace in 1936 and is also the best possible idea of the path or road that existed prior to 1819. A copy of Robert Jones, Jr's patent is attached on the next page to document that this is the location of the place noted in the overseers records.

Also following is part of the current quadrangle map showing County Road 74 that also shows the Sally Loury reservation and the Thomas Jones Reservation. Rocky Springs is located within the William Jones Reservation which indicates why Rocky Springs developed into an early community, with William Jones being able to sell lots or land after receiving his Reservation. These reservations were surveyed in November of 1820 and title conveyed. It would be 10 more years before land outside the reservations would be available to purchase.

Suggested route of the stage coach road in yellow highlighter.



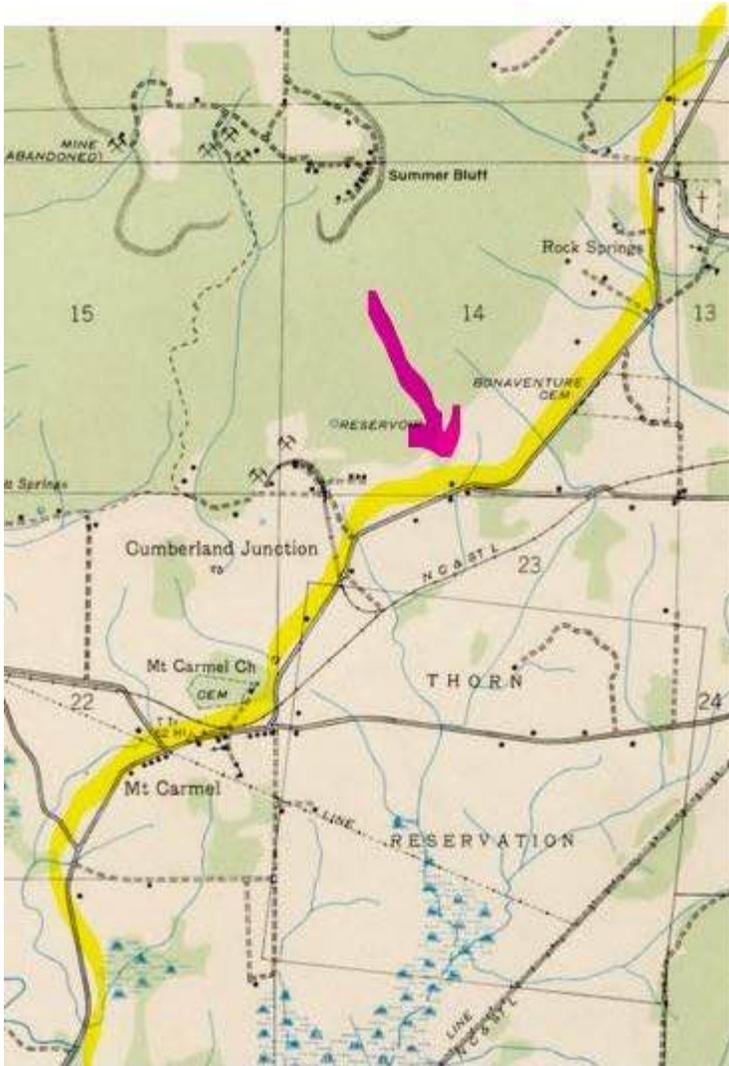
CERTIFICATE } **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,**
No. 13,376, }

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS *Robert Jones Junior, of Jackson County*
Alabama,

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at *Huntsville,* whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said

Robert Jones Junior, according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the East part **F.** of the North West Part, and the South Part **D.** of the North East Part of Fractional Section Twenty-three, in Township One, of Range Eight (East); — and the West part of the South West part, of Fractional Section Twenty-four, in Township One, of Range Eight, (East), in the District of Lands subject to sale at Huntsville, Alabama, containing One Hundred and Sixty Acres and Fifty-seven Hundredths of an Acre;



Old Stage Road and County Roads 75 and 74 show in yellow. Purple arrow points to expected branch and house site of Robert Jones, Jr. This section is three miles in length.

Section Two

Robert Jones to Bridge at Widows Creek

Based on the terrain in this area with the mountains to the northwest and the low area south of the Thorn Reservation, the author believes that the original road is the same or very near County Road 74 from Robert Jones (intersection of current day Co Rd 74 and Co Rd 94), southwesterly to Mt. Carmel and County Road 75. An old road is shown on the map above that continued south from this intersection along the west boundary of the Thorn reservation that could have served as the original road but due to the terrain, I believe it followed the current location of County Road 75 and crossed Widows Creek at the current location or very near the current location. This section is approximately three miles in length.

Section Three

Section three ran from Widows creek to Bolivar which is also about three mile, The village of Bolivar sat in the southeast corner of the reservation of John Benge. This location was logical, just like the placement of Bellefonte. The reservations were surveyed out in the winter of 1820-21 for the native americans and it was not until 10 years later that the government begin selling the land of Jackson County to the settlers. John Benge probably sold lots for the town, as it was the only alternative for purchase of property. Using the available data, it appears the stage road ran due south on the east edge of the John Benge reservation. Once again we see reservations connected by the stage road, so it is believed that the stage road utilized the trail or road that was in place in 1820 that connected these various homes. It is this authors opinion that the stage road is in the same location as today's County Road 75 as it progressed south to a point near the Hackworth Cemetery at Edgefield. At a point near the cemetery, it turned due south and ran along the east boundary of the Benge reservation. only a small part of this roadway exists today, being a private drive way for an existing home near the southeast corner of the Benge reservations. Bolivar today is only found in our history books, as it appears no one knows the exact site of the buildings and the site of the town is now cultivated fields that border the southeast right of way of U S 72 inside the city limits of Stevenson.

Section Four

Section four runs from Bolivar to Crow Creek.

One of the Union officers stationed in Stevenson during the war for Southern Independence in August of 1863, was the cartographer of a map labeled *Sketch or Reconnaissance from Stevenson to Cross Island at mouth of Crow Creek*. It is believed this is the best record of the location of the stage coach road for section four as it is a map covers from a little north of Bolivar to Crow Creek. I did an overlay of this 1863 map to determine which existing roads could be the stage coach road as documented in 1863, which is included, and found that the distances by the cartographer were extremely accurate. Bits and piece of the old stage coach road can be driven today. If one drives from the U S 72 interchange with the older 72 highway now know as 277 north to the first intersection of County Road 129, the private drive way that goes north across the CSX railroad is at the location of the original stage road and the drive that makes it way a few hundred yards thru the woods to the field, is the south boundary of the Benge reservation and the road to the southwest is a great location for the old road shown on the 1863 map that connected Bolivar to Stevenson, which has been erased over the years, replaced with other roads and the end of Bolivar removed the need for a roadway at his location. The road to the south off 277 being County Road 129 is the original stage road. It is a dead end road due to the location of the Stevenson airport, so one has to find County Road 282 south of the airport to continue along the stage road, crossing over County Road 96. The next part of the old stage road for about four tenths of a mile has also disappeared. It probably ran by near the Potts cemetery and the Greer cemetery. The old road bed appears again on the south side of the County Road 85 (the access road to the paper mill) on the first road east of U S 72 and 85 intersections, being County Road 276. The old stage road is the same at this north and south segment of county road 276, and continued south at the curve to the west.

The 1936 quadrangle map is used to show sections 3 and 4 as the road ran through the town of Bolivar in the 1820s.

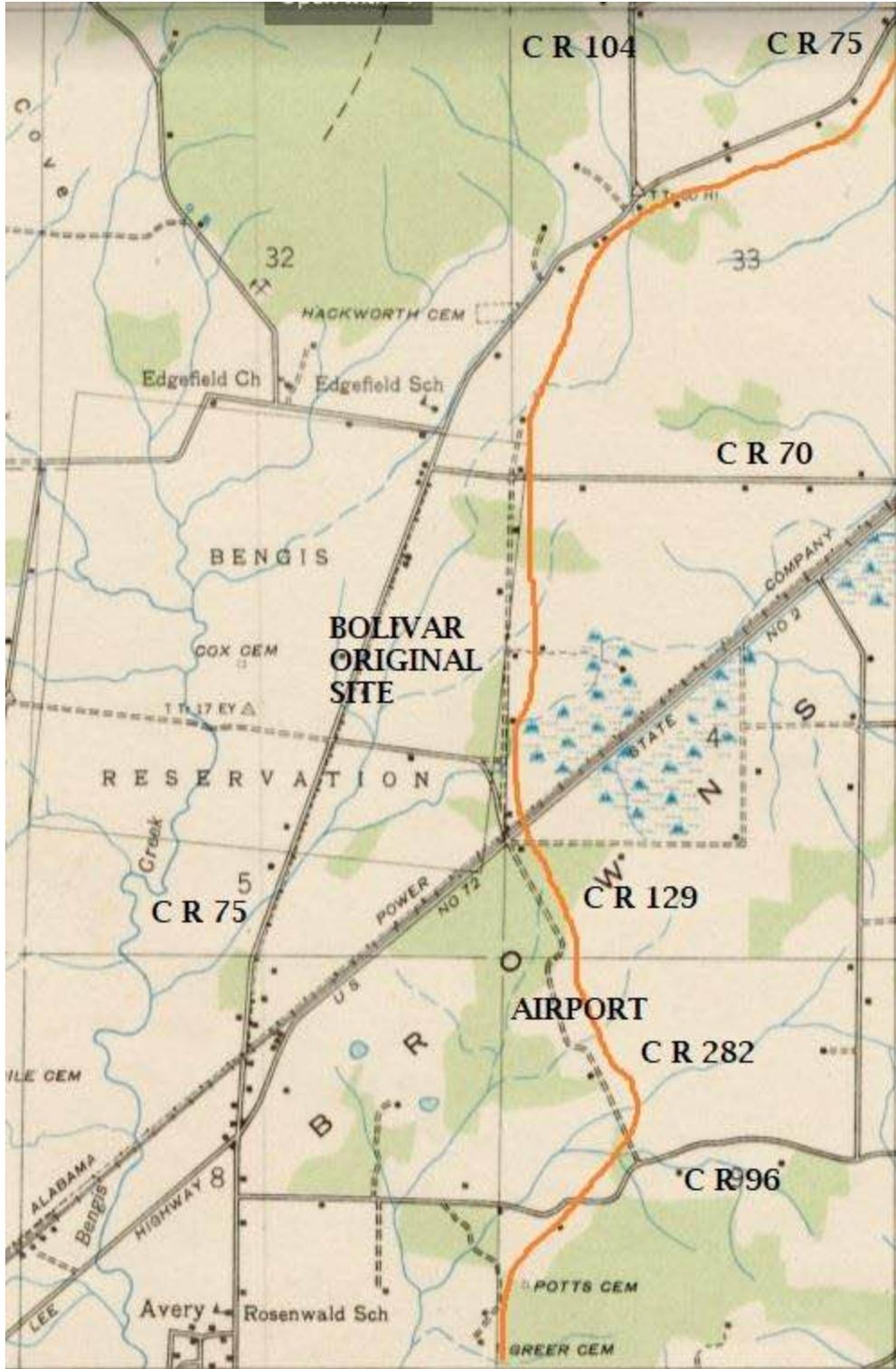


Original stage coach road in yellow and the Blue arrow shows the location of the village of Bolivar as developed in the southeast corner of the Bengis Reservation.

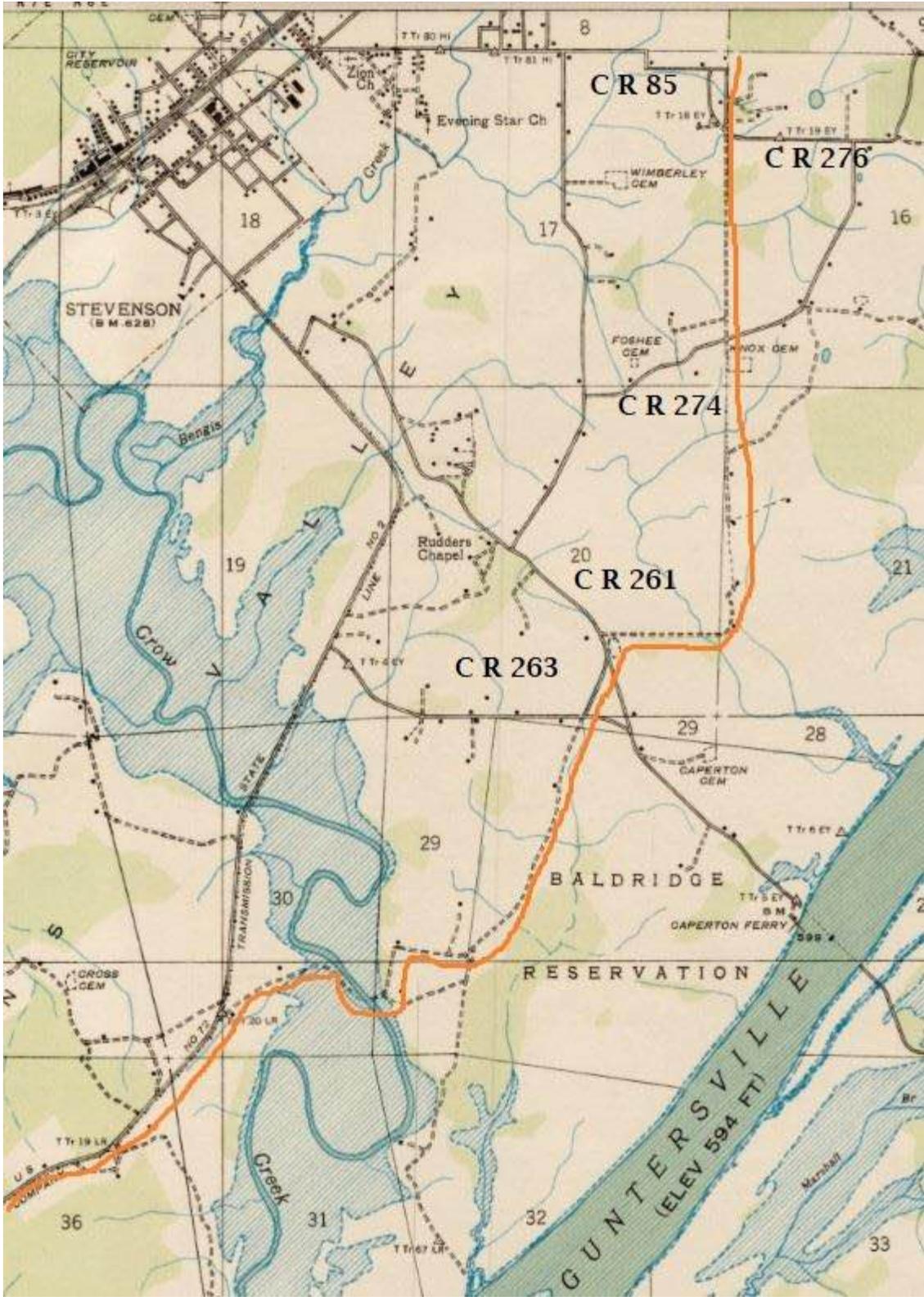
For the next two plus miles of the old stage road, it has been replaced and consumed by private property. It runs the section line, traversing due south, crossing county road 274 at a point where some evidence is noted. The road north on 274 into a subdivision is called Peachtree Lane, this short north south entrance section is on or near the stage road and on the south side is a driveway to the Knox Cemetery, this driveway is the original stage road and some evidence of the roadbed appears at the southwest corner of the cemetery, located in the large tree row on private property. If you review the 1863 drawing, you will note a place called Bell's at the northeast corner of where the stage road crossed county road 274. All other places on the map appear to name owners of residence, so this author believes this may have been the location of a store operated by the Bells in the 1860.

Our stage road today is lost to the private property, as the area south of the Knox Cemetery is the western boundary of the paper company lands. Some evidence shows up on the 1936 topo map as serving homes in the 1930s. The old stage road is mostly in existence for the next three quarters of a mile on the Loyd farm until it reaches the TVA embayment of Crow Creek. Lake Guntersville has covered the old ford that existed here prior to the 1930s. This section of the stage coach road is close to 4 miles in length.

For some local history to stage coach stops and Inns, this author has added some history to one of the stops that was not developed until the 1850s and with the help of our 1863 map, we can see how it was accessed from Bolivar via roads that no longer exist. Meredith Price constructed a two story structure in 1849 to be used as an Inn for a stop on the stage coach line. The brick structure contained four rooms which were 18 feet by 20 feet in size and the kitchen was contained in a separate log structure. This building can be viewed today at 800 County Road 254 (aka McMahan Cove Road) as a private residence. History does not tell us how long this structure was used as an Inn, as James Cargile acquired this property from Meredith Price in 1856 and it has been passed down in the family to the current day. James Cargile's daughter Sarah married R W Troxwell and many of the local citizens of the Stevenson area know this home today as the residence of Mrs. Betty Troxwell Jackson. This Inn can only be viewed from the public road today.



1936 MAP showing remaining part of the original stage coach road as it ran along the east boundary of the Bengis Reservation, as the town of Bolivar was located in the Southeast corner of the Reservation. The airport today cuts County road 129 and County road 282 from joining. Continuing south on page 19 with the join line at top of page.



1936 Map showing original stage road, with the crossing of Crow Creek and tie to CR 590

Section five and Section six

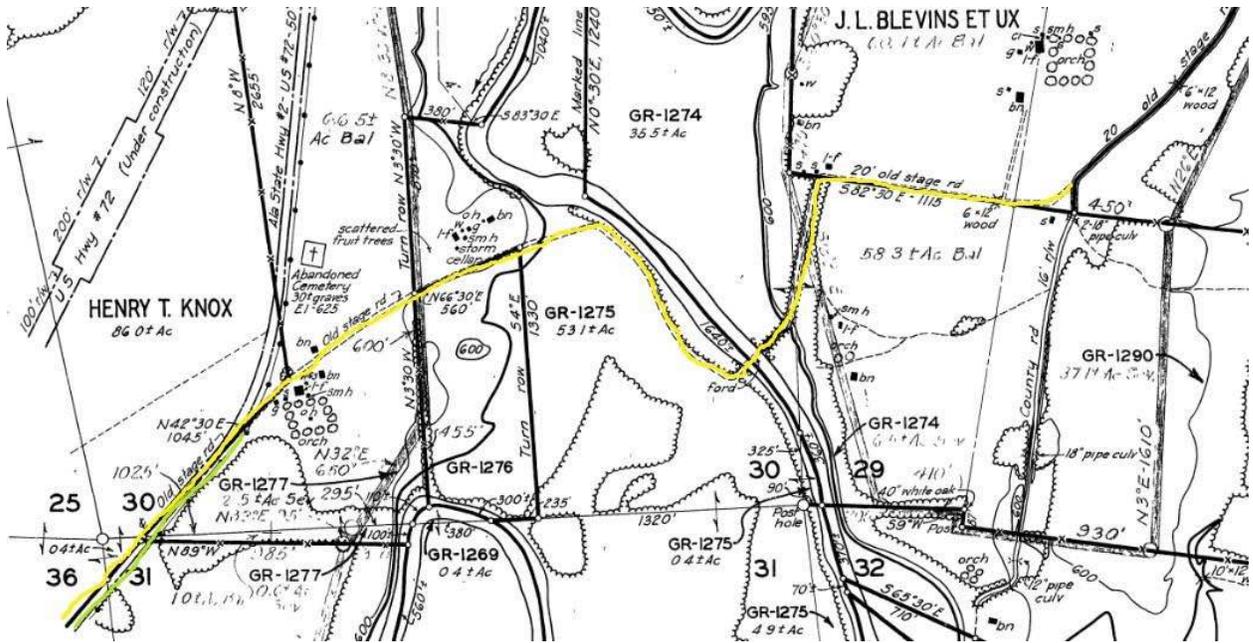
Crow creek to Wiley Taylor old place. (Section 5)

From Wiley Taylor to Mud Creek (Section 6)

Several sections of what this author believes are the original stage coach road in section five and six are in place today, a great deal on private property and some sections on county roads. Looking for the location of "Wyley Taylor's old place", this author found two patents to Wiley Taylor one patent of the NE-SE Sec 34,2-7 in 1835 (at Cedar Grove) and the second for the SE SW Sec 11, 3-7 in 1837. This second patent is only about 1 mile from the river, upon additional research, a deed was located in Book E page 271 where William M Remolds sold to Wiley O Taylor 80 acres for \$ 500 being the East half of the Northwest quarter of Section 10, T3S, R7E which appears to be the location of the Wiley O Taylor's old place" on the stage road. Using this location, it appears the old stage road in section five and six is close to the existing placement of U S Highway 72. After the road leaves the ford on Crow Creek, and rises above the existing lake Gunter'sville, it is about 95% viewable on aerial photography all the way to Mud Creek. The road crossed U S 72 near the top of the hill where Lambert Concrete is located and ran on the northwest side of the existing route and crossed back over to the southwest side of U S 72 at the RV camp park south of the Chevron Station at the corner of U S 72 and Co Rd 42. The Wyley Taylor place was most likely a stage coach stop as it is about half way between Bolivar and Bellefonte. One again, we are probably traveling along an original Cherokee path or road that connected the John Benge and John Baldrige reservation and home to the Harlin reservation and home. By the time we have reached Bellefonte inside the Harlin reservation, we have traversed across six of these original 1820 reservations, which tend to show the original stage route followed roads that were improved and used by the Cherokees in the decades prior to 1820.

Oak Grove shows up on many of the very early maps as a community, it is believed this is also the site of Wyley Taylor and his possible home place at the location in Section 34 as described above.

On the following page is a detail view of the crossing of the old shoals on Crow Creek that was probably used for centuries as the crow creek crossing and detailing the location of the old stage road as it exists at the northwest edge of County Road 590. This area of the old road bed is very evident at the upper end of County Road 590.

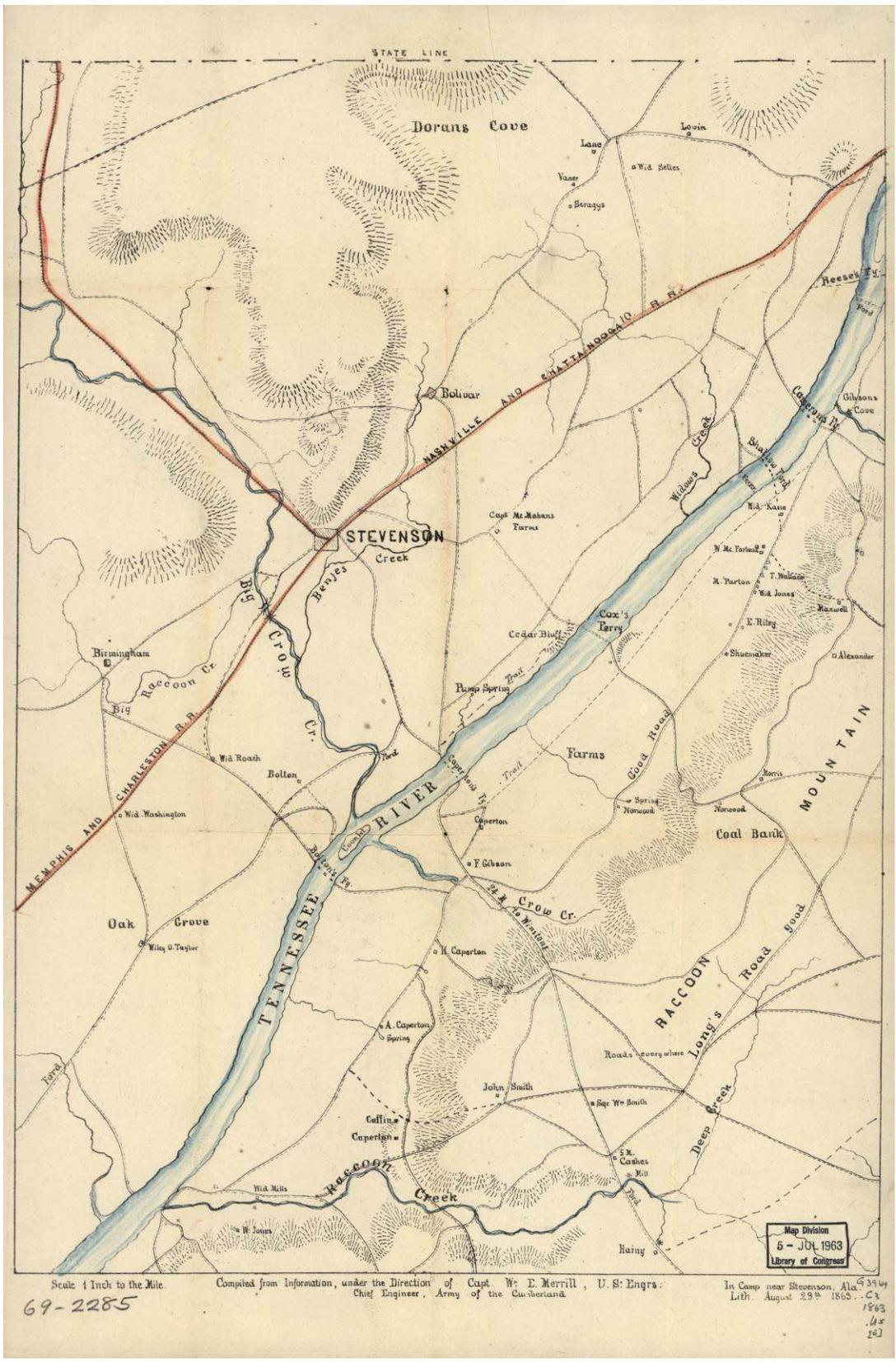


A portion of TVA Guntersville Reservoir acquisition map 81, that provides detail of the location of the original ford across Crow Creek, along with where the old road bed exists at the northeast end of current day County Road 590 (shown in green in the lower left hand corner.)

TVA noted that the road bed was 20 feet wide as they found and mapped these areas in the 1930s. The next page is part of map 74 and is a detail that shows the old road bed as they found it in the area of US 72 and County Road 42, which today is behind the Texaco Truck Stop at that intersection. The TVA maps are very valuable in showing the exact location of the original stage road. Please note that an older and newer version of US 72 are present and the old road is along the same alignment in places and sometime just a few feet away. The old road bed is very visible as it crosses County Road 42, being part of the driveway for the existing RV park.

It is my opinion that the old stage road between where it crossed the current location of US 72 at the southwest end of County Road 590 near the existing Concrete Plant, from this point south to near the Texaco Station at County Road 42, ran along and very near the old location of US 72 as it existed around 1900-1930s. The following three sheets or maps show two sections of the 1936 map that shows this old alignment and then one map for the northern end of a current map that shows the old road in reference to the US 72 four lane of today. I also believe that the Lakeview Baptist Church that sits at the east edge of the Price Cemetery is on top of the old stage coach road and that the road crossed Mud Creek at the location of the existing bridge at the Mud Creek BBQ restaurant on now County Road 213.

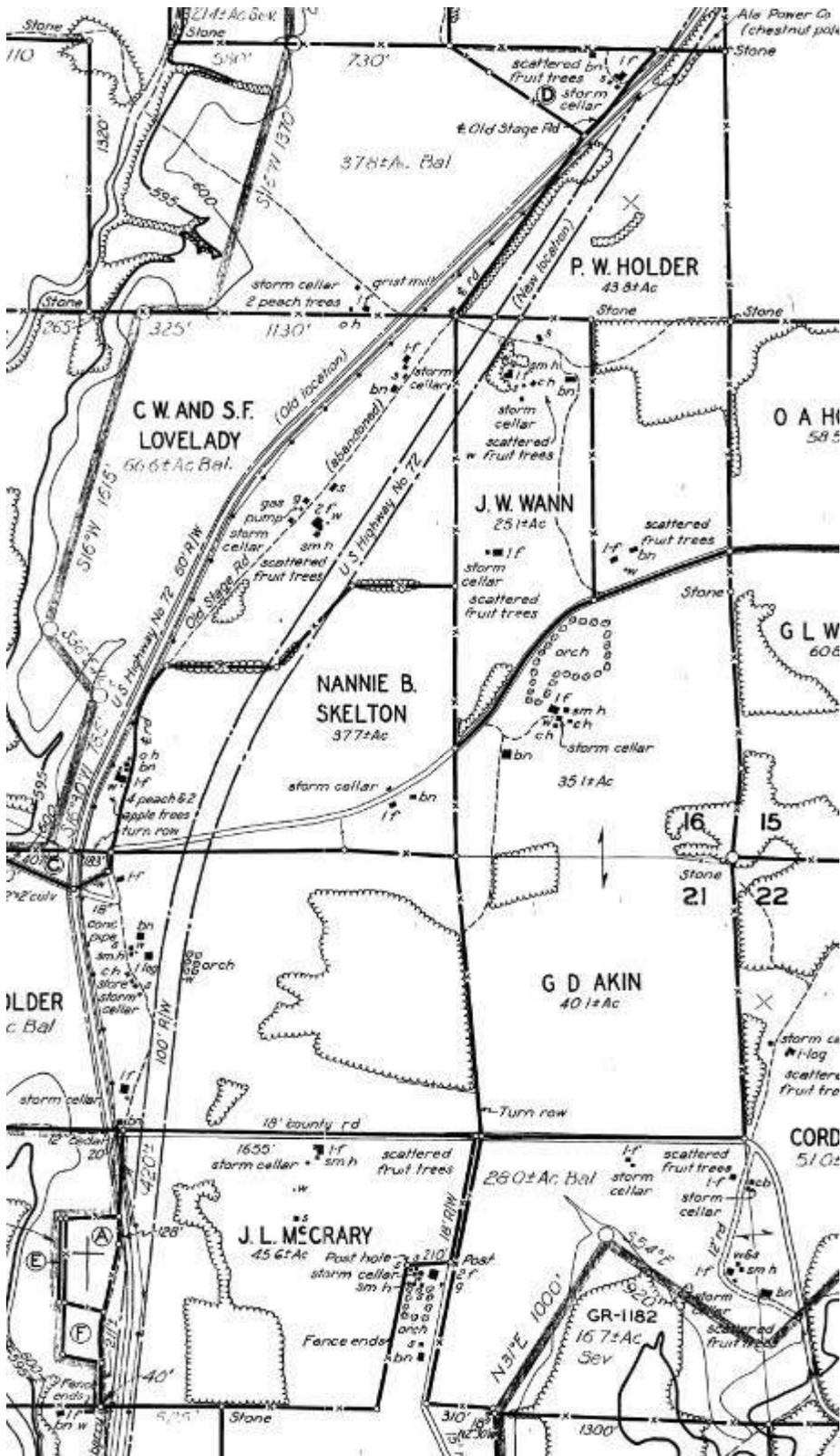
The next page is a Union map from August of 1863 of the area from the Tennessee state line southwest to below Mud Creek. Documents Wiley Taylor was aka Oak Grove and the two fords over the creeks of Mud and Crow, along with location of Bolivar.



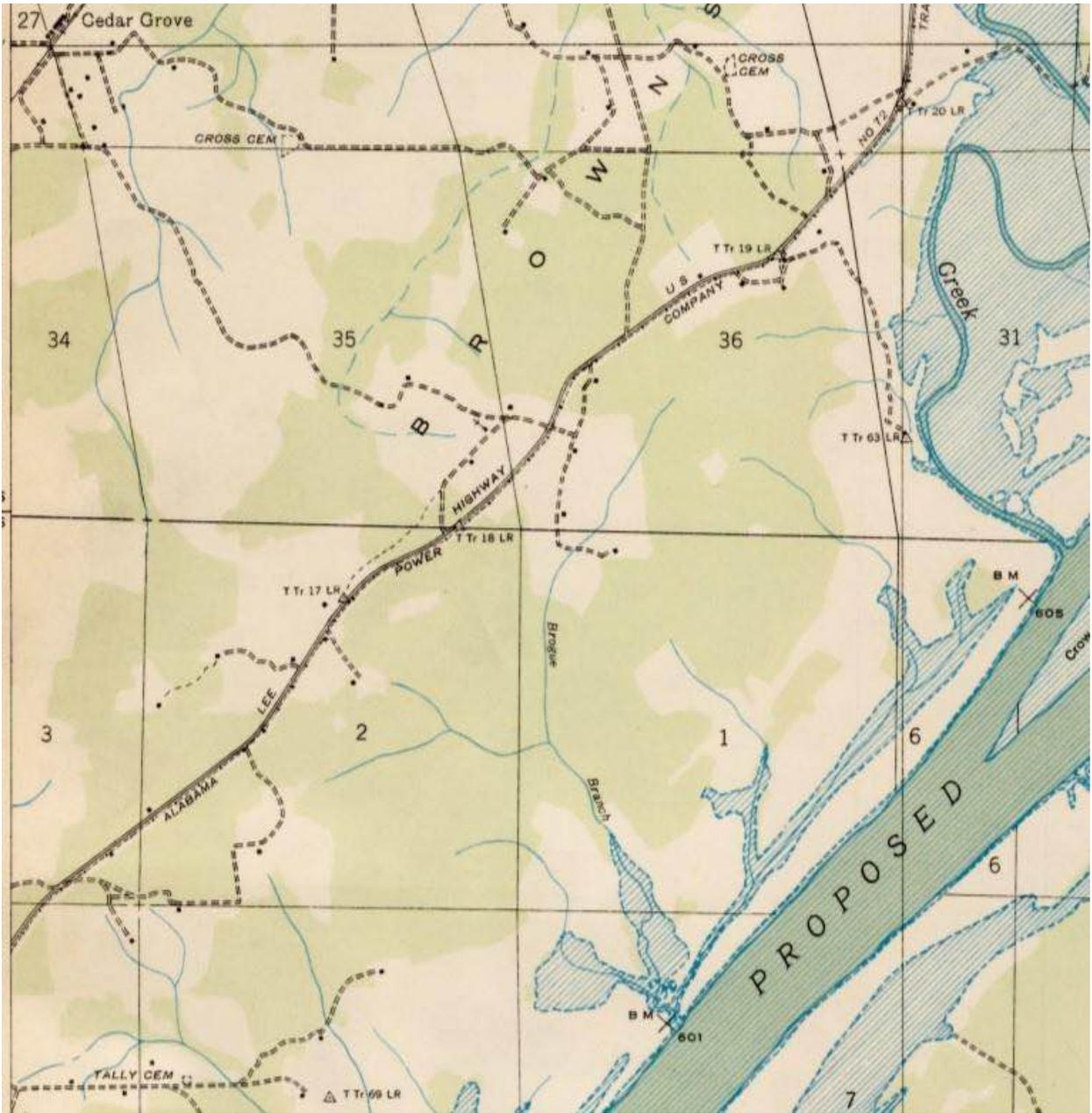
69-2285

Scale 4 Inch to the Mile. Compiled from Information, under the Direction of Capt. W. E. Merrill, U. S. Engrs. Chief Engineer, Army of the Cumberland.

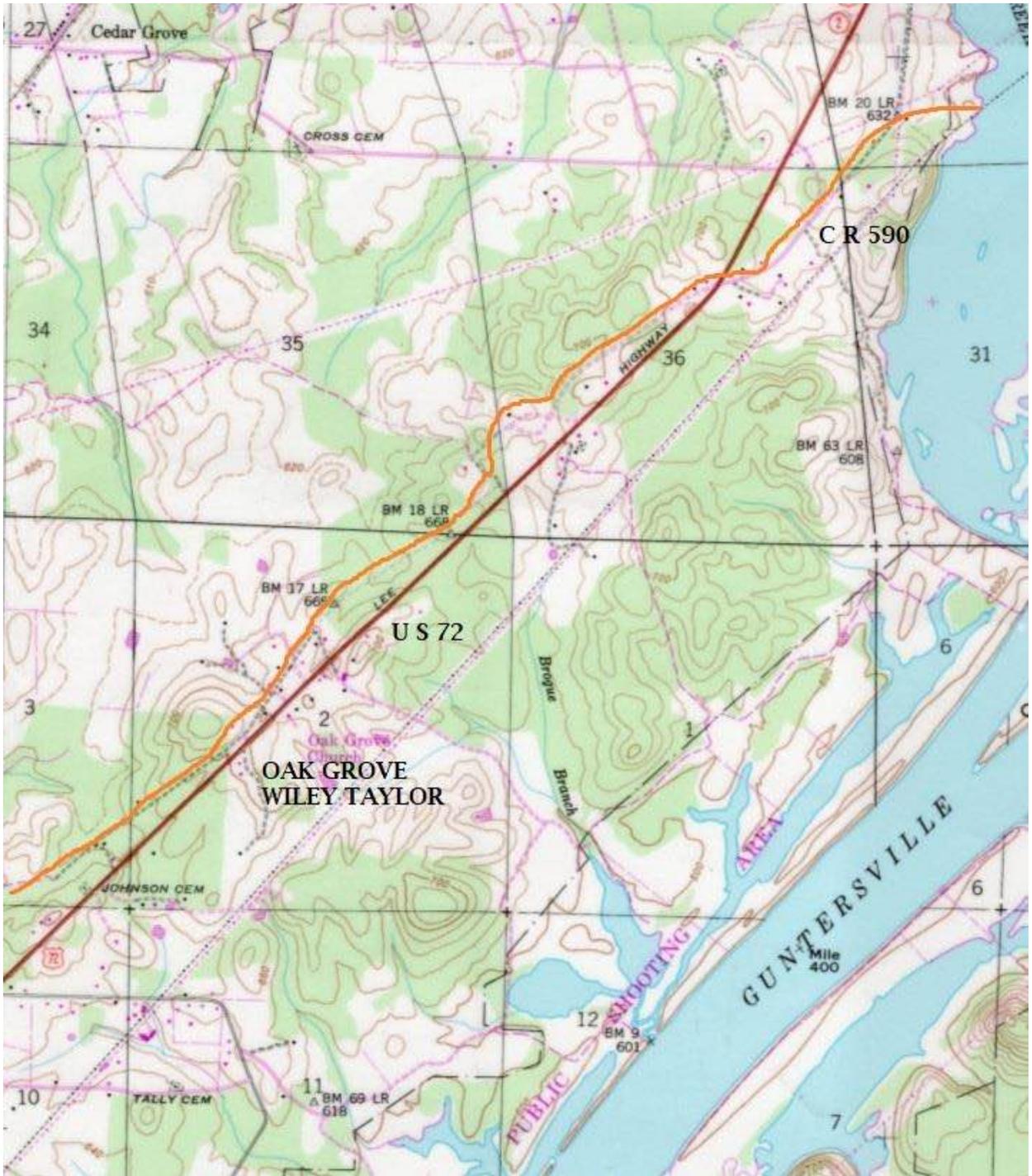
Map Division
5 - JUL 1863
Library of Congress
In Camp near Stevenson, Ala. 5394
Lith. August 29th 1863. C3
1863
115
121



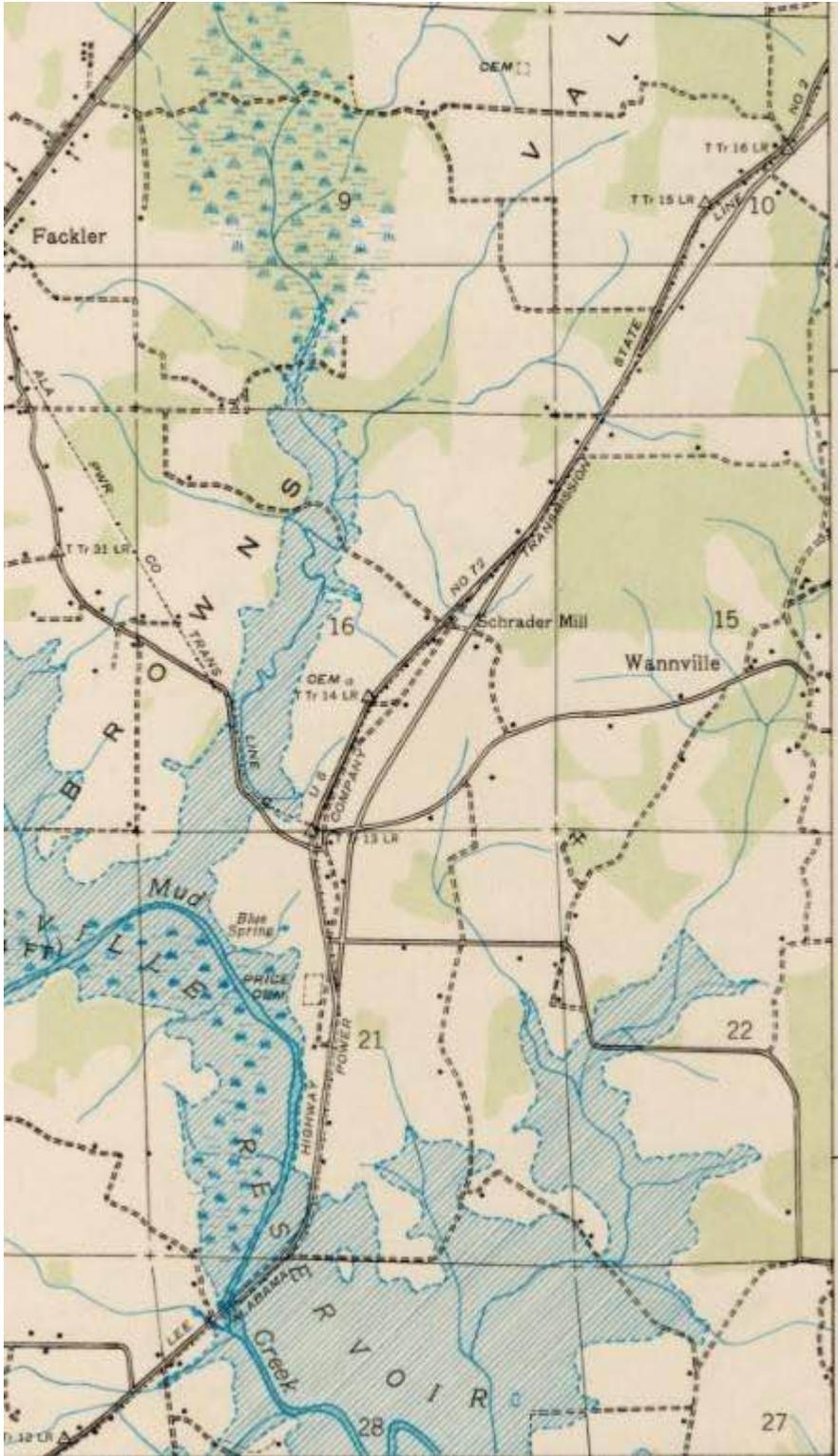
Part of TVA map 74 of the Guntersville Reservoir, showing original stage road near Price Cemetery.



1936 map from Crow Creek to Wiley Taylor/Oak Grove showing early Highway 72



Current map showing existing US 72 and projected old stage road/old US 72 on northwest side



1936 map from Wiley Taylor/Oak Grove to Mud Creek, showing old stage road on the east edge of the Price Cemetery and crossing of Mud Creek at the Co Rd 213 bridge near Mud Creek BBQ.

Section seven

From Mud Creek to the Branch creek near Bellefonte

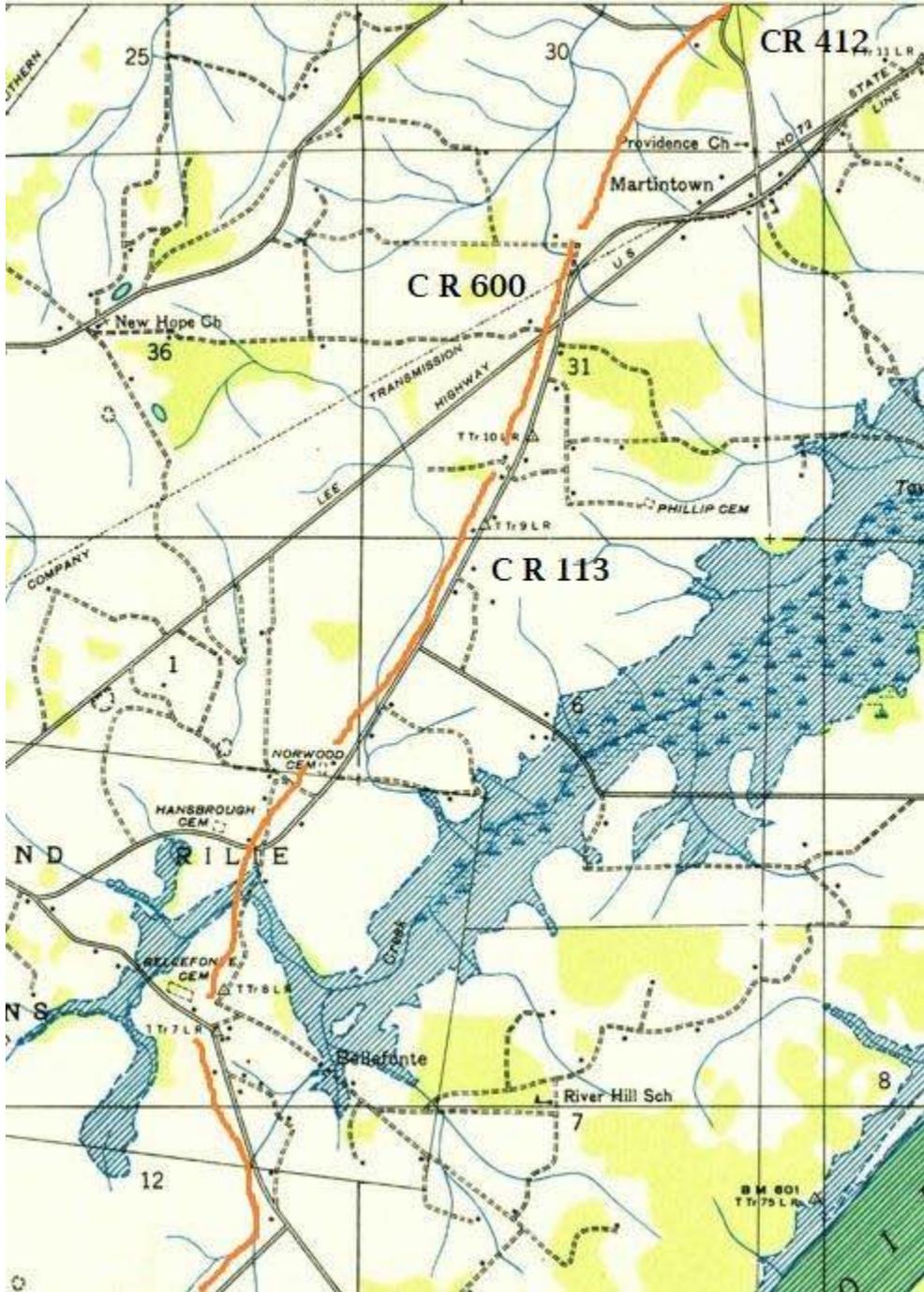
The exact location after the crossing of Mud Creek at the ford is difficult to determine in the area known as the Martintown hill. With the location of the Starkey cemetery along with the fact that the 1850s overseer of the road was James Starkey, the original road may have run due west from the ford on Mud Creek along or near current day County Road 412, turning south, passing by the Starkey Cemetery and picked up at the end of current day County Road 600, as we cross the existing four lane of US 72, the original road on to the Town square in Bellefonte and James Turks' Manatou Inn is along current day County Road 113. The idea of this location would have prevented the stage from rising to the elevation of the current hill on US 72 near the Providence Church and then descending again, but would have gone around this change in elevation.



This proposed location yields a road that is about 14 miles from Bolivar and 21 miles from the State Line to Bellefonte. Assuming the 6 miles per hour and a couple of stops for a change of horses, the journey from the State line to Bellefonte has probably consumed about 5 hours of our day.

Our Passengers would depart the Manitou Hotel on Thursday morning for the next section of the journey, traveling the day to Redmon's inn in current day downtown Paint Rock.

The next page is the 1936 map cut from the Hollywood quadrangle map that runs from the above section, to Bellefonte and then continues south from Bellefonte along current day County Road 33.

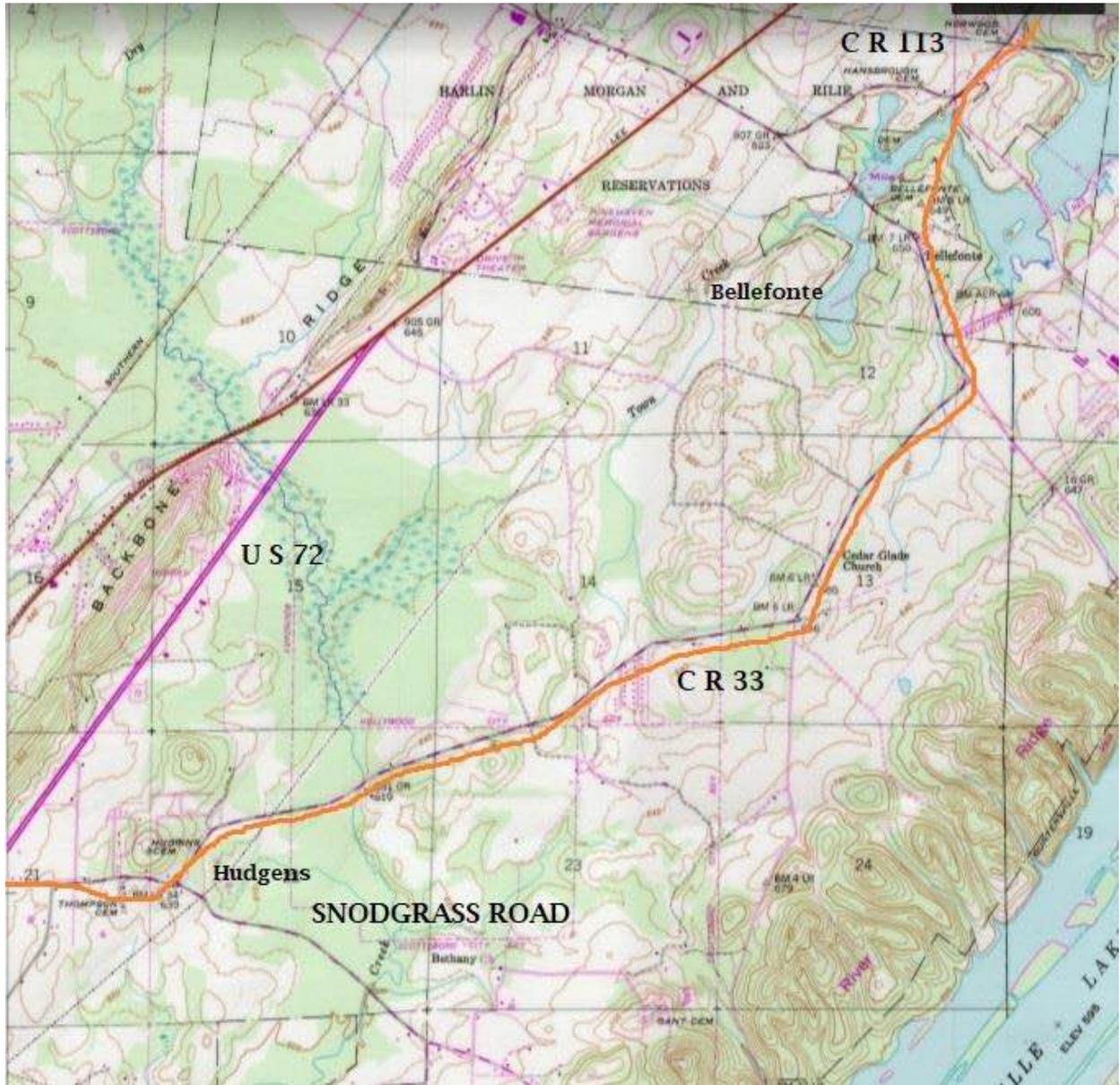


1936 map from Martintown to Bellefonte, along current day County Road 113

Section eight

from Bellefonte to Benjamin Hudgens.

Old Stage Road probably followed the current Co Rd 33 all the way to the intersection with Snodgrass Road. Note that on top of the hill at Sec 22, T 4 S, R 6 E) Hollywood quad sheet is Hudgens cemetery. Notes say at intersection east of Hudgens house so this is same as current roads intersection. Benjamin Hudges received a patent 1852 for SE-NW Sec 22.

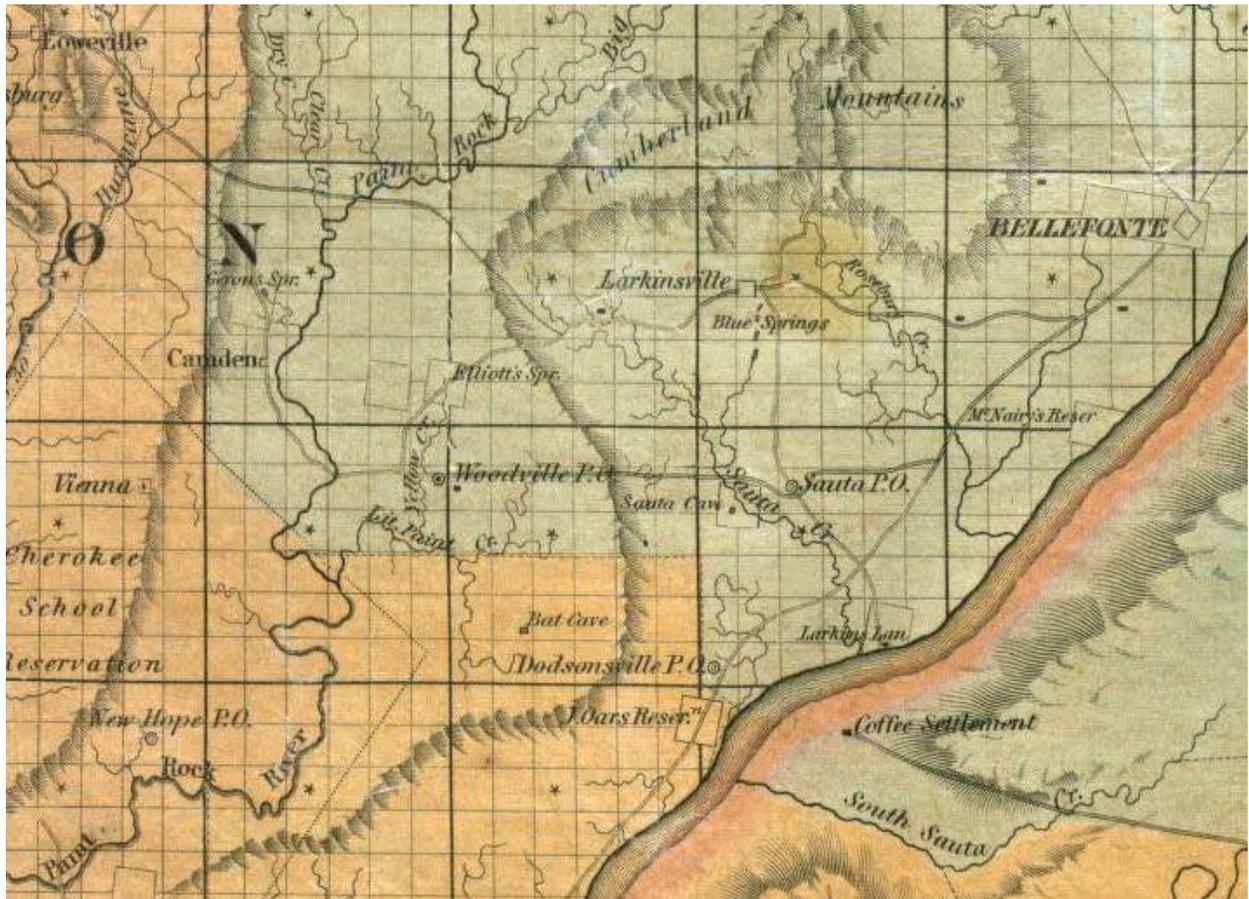


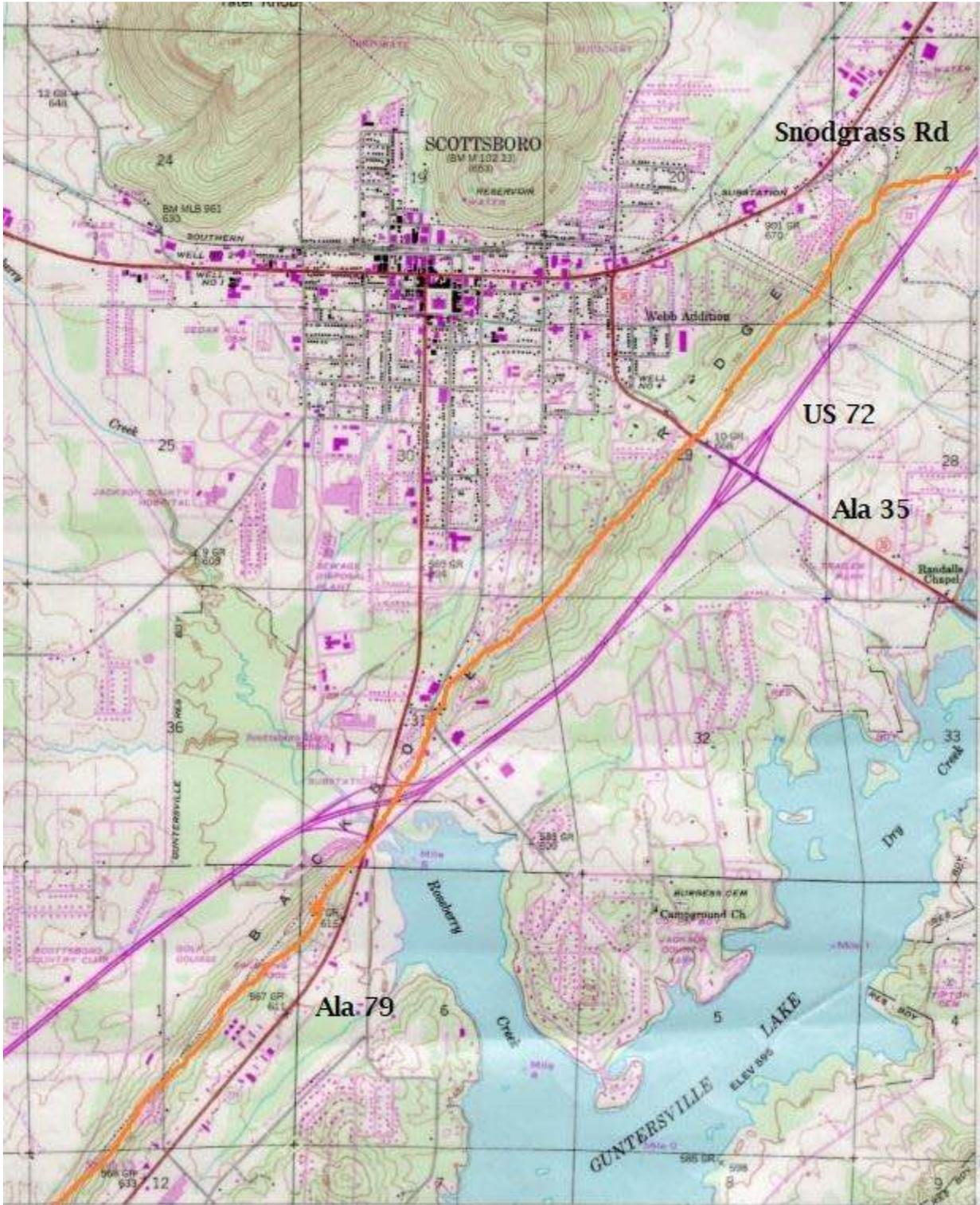
Section nine

from Benjamin Hudgens to Lagoon west of Roseberry Creek.

This is the section from the 2023 intersection of County Road 33 and Snodgrass Road southwest to near Roseberry Creek at the US 72 bridge.

The original road is believed to have traveled due west along the existing Snodgrass Road to the top of Backbone Ridge and then the old road is intact today on private property as it runs southwest along the top of Backbone Ridge to the end of payment at Lakeview Drive at the right of way of US 72 and at the bridge over Roseberry on US 72. Reviewing the 1837 map of the state of Alabama by John La Tourette entitled “An Accurate Map of the State of Alabama and West Florida” has provided a detail location of the old stage road from Bellefonte to the Jackson and Madison County line. This map can be viewed on the University of Alabama’s webpage for historical maps. This map enables us to trace the original stage road through the various Sections of land and compare to current day maps.



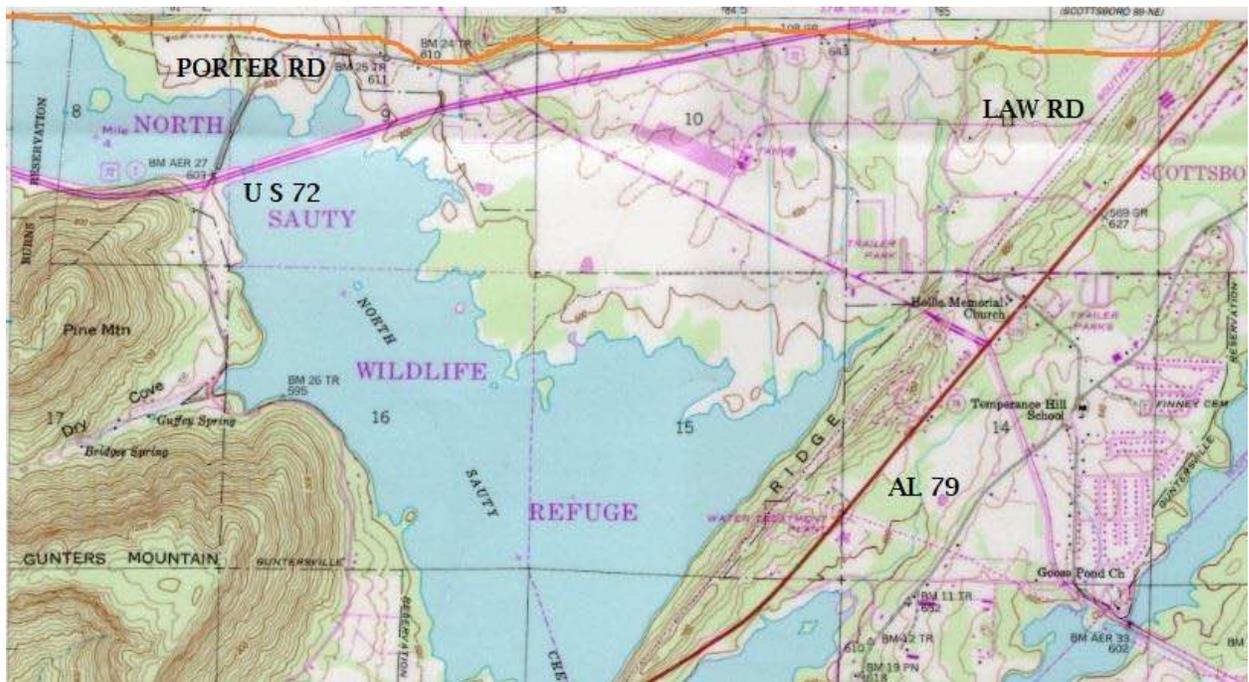


Current day map of Hudgens to Roseberry, Stage road located along the top of Backbone Ridge

Section ten

From Lagoon west of Roseberry to Milepost 9

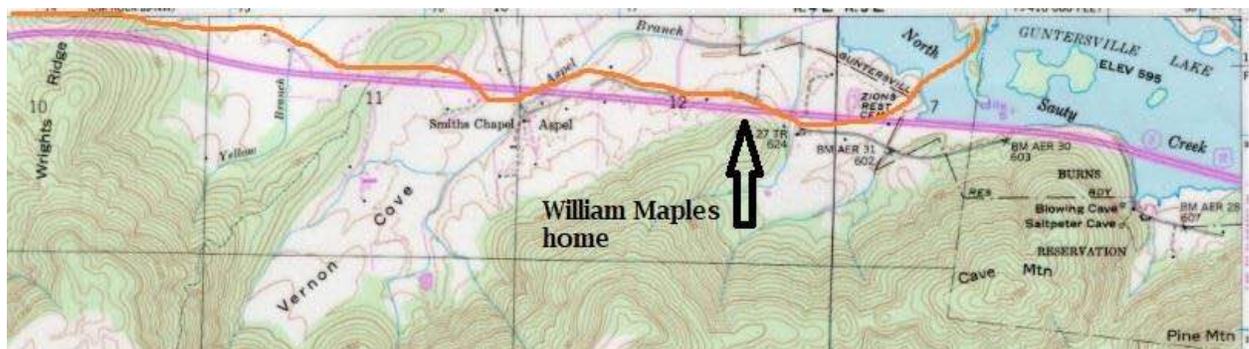
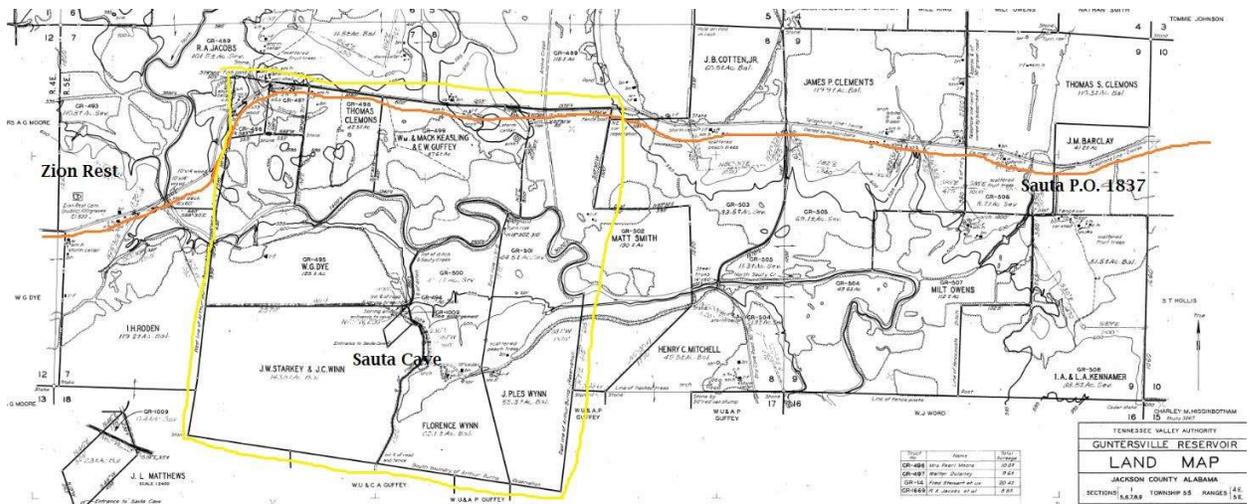
The exact location here is unknown, but accepted as being on Backbone ridge a little south of where Roseberry Creek cuts through the ridge (Current Day US 72 Bridge at intersection with Ala Highway 79). From the 1837 map, the road ran the top of the ridge about one mile, passing over current day Stewart Road and then turning due west, down the ridge and ran somewhere across the Scottsboro Industrial Park until it reached the current road known as Porter Road very near the intersection with Law Road. Porter Road is believed to be on the same roadbed as the 1820s stage road as it runs west to North Sauta Creek. Porter Road is just north of the current US Highway 72 and can be seen just to the right for a little over a mile, beginning at the entrance to Vulcan Quarry, passing over Ala 79 behind the Marathon Oil Station and continuing until a dead end at the property of the TVA. Mile Post 9 is believed to have been located at old cross roads in middle of Section 9 that shows on the 1837 map as the Post Office for Sauta. This would be the cross roads for the road from Larkinsville to Larkin Landing. In later years, this area will become known as Hunts Store for the voting and census records. The exact location now appears to be under the waters of Guntersville Lake and appears to be very close to the current day location of US Highway 72. The current day quadrangle map is shown below. TVA acquisitions maps add a great deal of detail for this area around Sauta for those seeking additional research in this area.



Section eleven

From Milepost 9 to William Maples

TVA acquisition maps have been attached with show the roadway as it existed in the 1930s and a review of the 1837 map indicated that this is most likely along the roadbed of the original stage coach road. William Maples home was located west of the Sauta Cave near the Zion Rest Cemetery and the original home place is believed to have been located within the current right of way of US Highway 72. The road after descending Backbone ridge is almost due west for the several miles. The maps indicated that the original road was at the north edge of the Authur Burns reservation when reviewing both the 1837 and the TVA map number 54 and 49. Below is a part of map 49 with the old stage road again in orange, the Authur Burns reservation is shown in yellow and both the Sauta Post Office from the 1837 map and also the Sauta Cave are noted on this map.



Section twelve

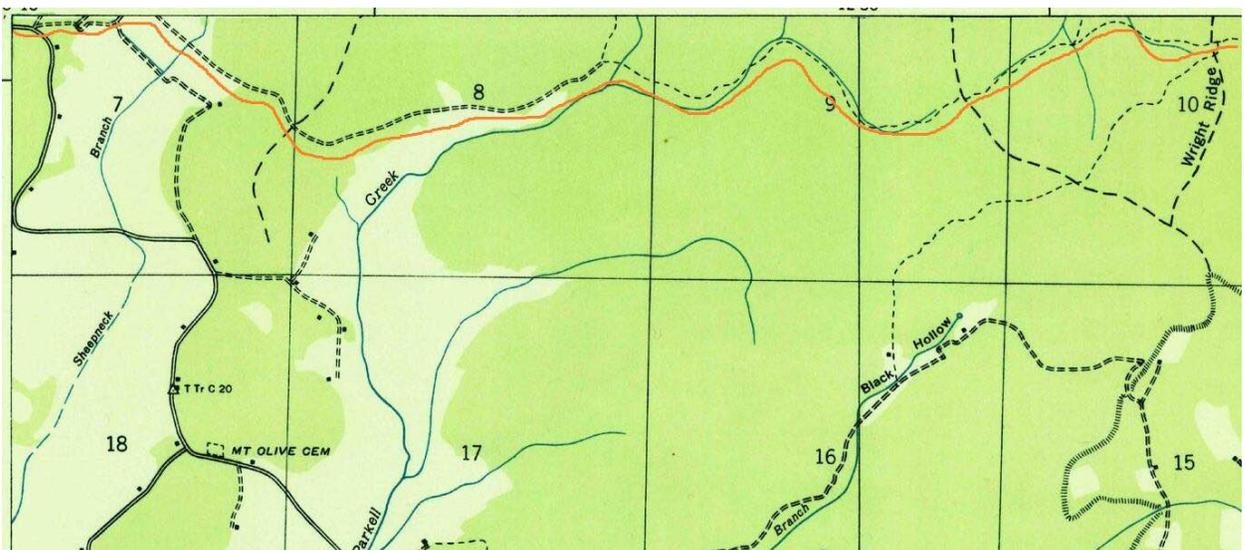
From William Maples to top of mountain above James B. Wright

This section runs thru the community of Aspel and is most likely the same as sections of county roads that parallel US 72 to the foot of the mountain. James B Wright lived at the toe of slope of what is known as Wrights ridge on various maps. Sections of County Road 112 on the north side of 72 are most likely on the same roadbed of our original stage road. See the map on the previous page for this detail.

US 72 traverses thru a saddle on what is know as Wright's Ridge west of Aspel. James Wright obtained patents in 1831 to the W 1/2 - NW Sec 11 and in 1833 to W 1/2 SW Sec 11 in T 5 S, R 4 E which is the valley land that is bisected by US 72 west of Aspel.

Section thirteen

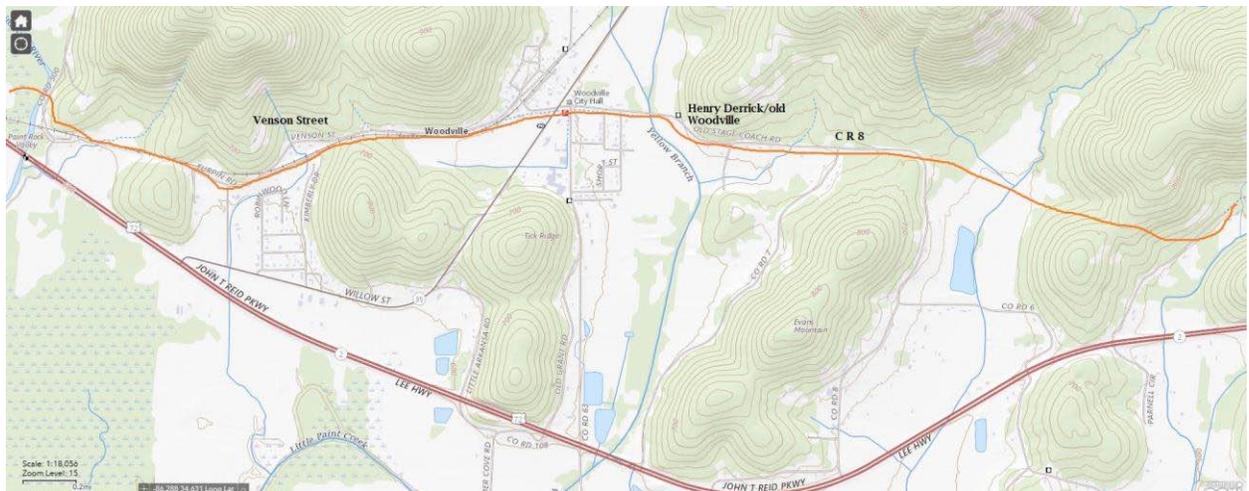
From the top of mountain above James B. Wright to Woodville. See the early discussion of this road way through the mountains that connected Sauta Cave with Woodville, both the current quadrangle map and the 1936 version are shown below.



Section fourteen

From Woodville to Pruitt's Ferry

The map below begins in Thomas Cove, near the end of the current county road and shows the original road would have cut across the lower saddle in the ridge and picks up County Road 8 at the Sheep neck Branch, Henry Derrick's home, stage stop and post office was located at the bend in the road at the foot of the ridge. The stage road is believed to be along the same roadways through the newer location of Woodville, around the toe of slope on Venson Street and Turpin Road and most likely followed the railroad across the saddle in the ridge, connection today with county road 500. The Pruitt's Ferry was located somewhere here near the railroad bridge, possible on the north side of the current railroad bridge.



Valentine G Pruit received two patents in 1831, NW 1/4 of Section 10 and E1/2- NE Section 10, T 5 S, R 3 E. This is where the existing 72 and railroad cross the Paint Rock River.

Section fifteen

From Pruitt's Ferry to Gum Springs or Redmans

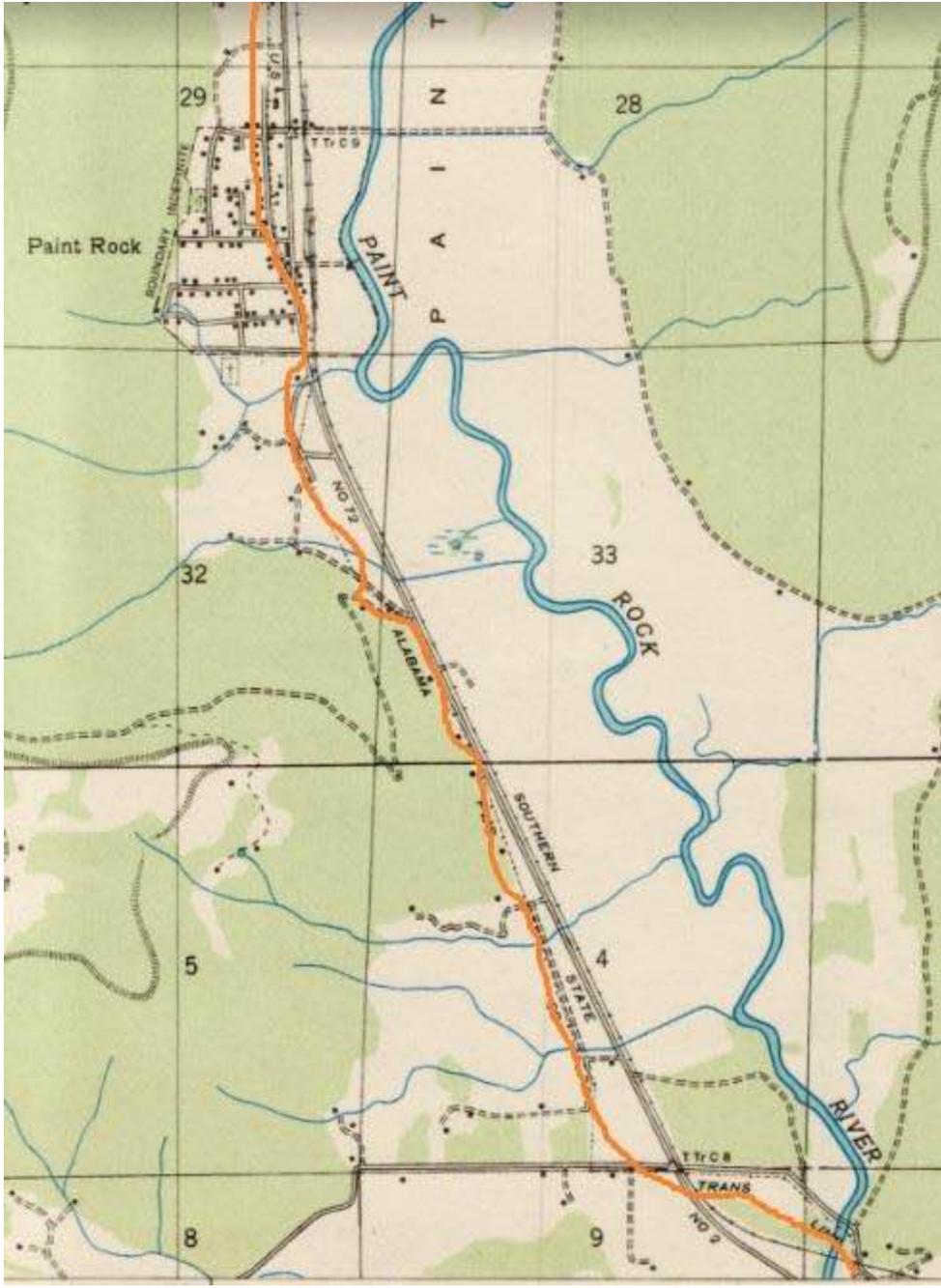
Redmans on Church Street, just to the west of U S Hwy 72. just south of Paint Rock missionary baptist church. Short street to the river and across, to Redman's boat place. and on beyond.

Section sixteen

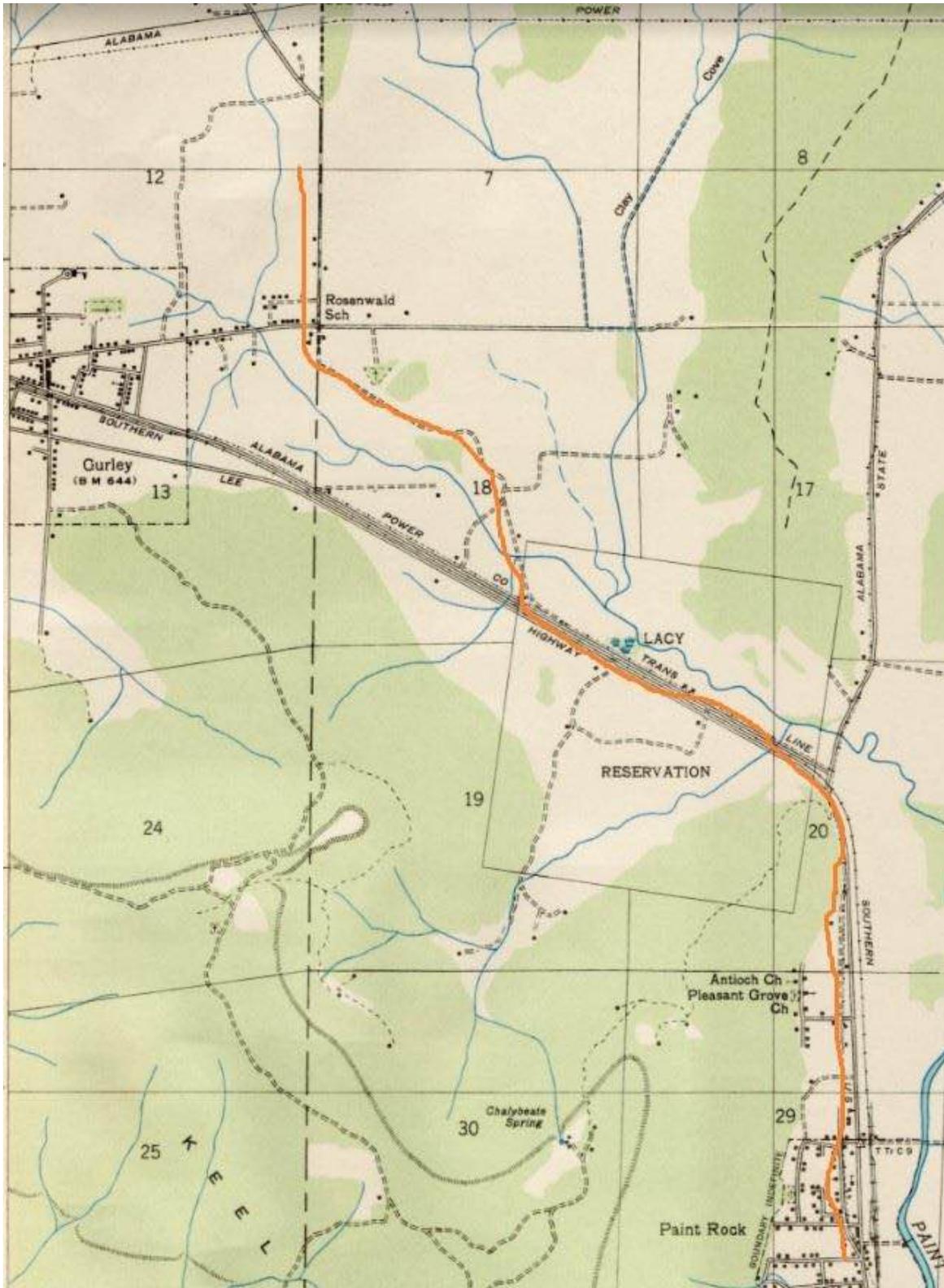
From Gum Springs to Madison County Line.

aint Rock Quad, there is a Cole spring at the Stewart Cove and in the middle of the Lacy Reservation about one mile before county line at Gurley, could this be the gum spring?

Alignment would have been near the current Railroad and U S 72 from the Paint Rock river thru Paint Rock because of "cut" in the mountains, exiting the county at the current site of the town of Gurley.



Paint Rock River at Pruitt's Ferry to Redmonds Inn in downtown Paint Rock



Redmon's Inn in Paint Rock to the Jackson County line.

Conclusion

Today one enters Jackson County on US 72 at mile post 114.2 at the state line at South Pittsburg, Tennessee and drives southwest to mile post 167.2 at the Madison and Jackson County line near Gurley for 53 miles of four lane and 4 red lights. Most of this has a speed limit posted at 65 mph. The average person today passing through Jackson county without stopping would spend about one hour in his travels. In the 1820s, one would have spent two nights on the journey and it would have taken about 48 hours to travel the same route.

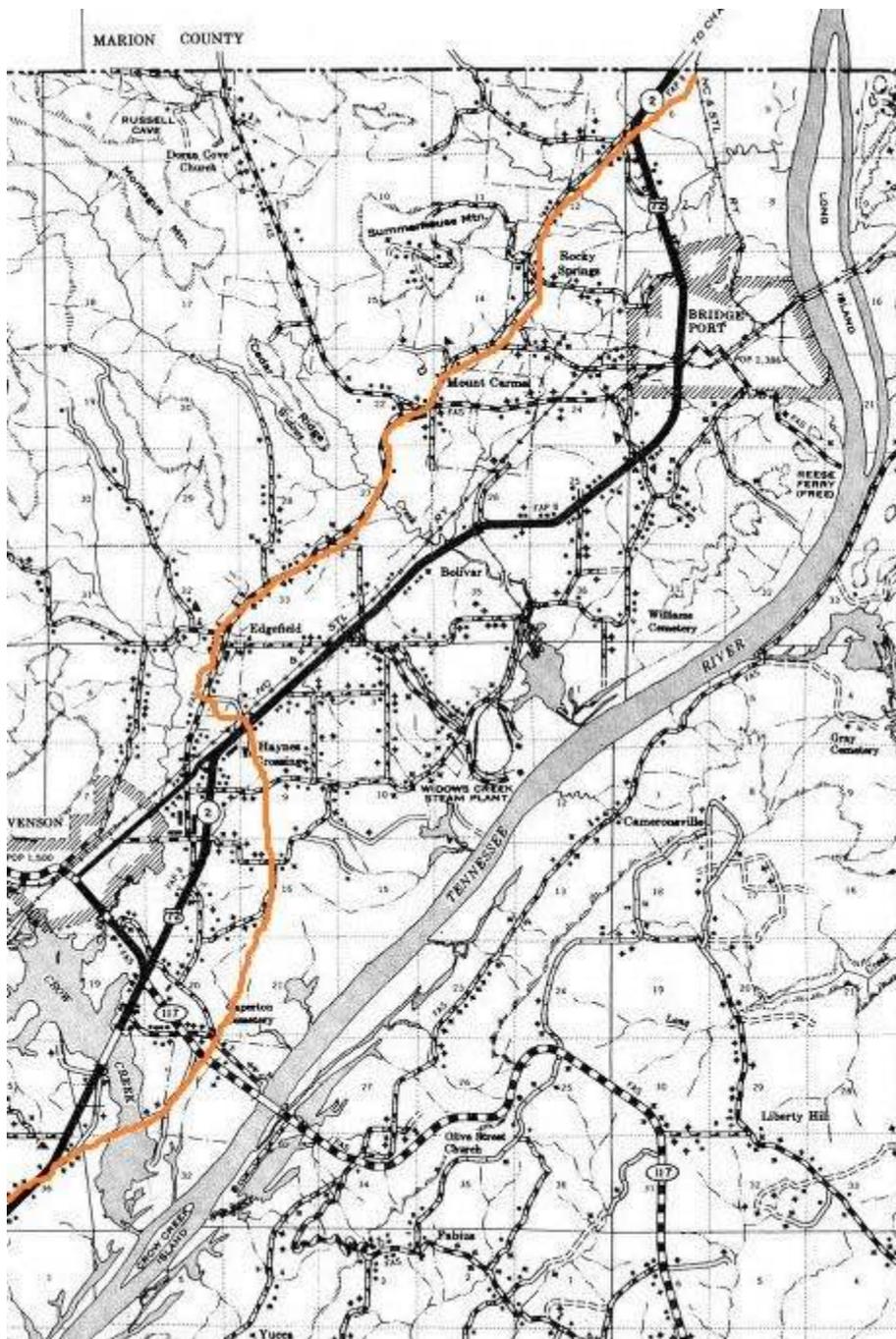
The old stage line was located along the same path as US Highway 72 follows today, as the only change is that a few hills have been cut down, a few curves have been smoothed and sometimes a little more direct route was taken, sometime based on creek and river crossing.

These old maps presented here are my best estimate of the location that was traveled in the 1820-1860s by the stage coach and mail route and have been presented for those who are interested in the details of the exact location of this old route and they are places along the way that old roadbeds are intact for those that may wander our great county.

Just remember, all that wander are not lost.

Additional Maps

**4 parts of the 1960 Highway map showing
Original stage route as documented
In this report**



1960 edition of the Alabama Highway Department Map of Jackson County
Old stage road is shown in orange from the County line to south of Crow Creek
Note: the crossing at Crow Creek was at a shoals area that had been used for many centuries prior to the first stage line.

