

THE STONE DEPOT

Print this page

The Stone Depot of the Western and Atlantic Railroad is located on the east side of the Railroad track in downtown Ringgold. This area is shown on the Ringgold, GA quadrangle of the U. S. Geological Survey maps.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The coming of the Western and Atlantic Railroad and the construction of an impressive stone depot in 1849 had a great influence on the growing economy of Ringgold and the surrounding area. The railroad business was so good that a second station, or freight platform, called Catoosa Station was constructed just south of the gap. Ringgold was on the way to becoming the most prosperous town in north Georgia.



The Western and Atlantic Railroad Station at Ringgold, commonly called The Stone Depot.

The depot was struck by a few cannon balls during Federal shelling on September 11, and again on September 17, 1863. During the Battle of Ringgold Gap, on November 27, 1863, the depot was in the center of the action. General Joseph Hooker spent the entire battle sitting on a cracker barrel behind the stone walls.

When General Grant left Ringgold, following the battle at the gap, he instructed Hooker to destroy anything of military value to the Confederates, but cautioned against wanton destruction. Hooker passed on the orders to General John Geary. In his official report, Geary mentioned only military targets, but in a candid letter to his wife he stated: I burnt Ringgold because the enemy fired upon us from the houses. It contained about 5,000 inhabitants and was a beautiful place I feel I have performed my duty. We betide the rebels whenever I can get my hands on them.



The stone depot at Ringgold.

The historian of the 149th New York Infantry Regiment provided a detailed account of the manner in which General Geary did his duty. War is a dreadful calamity to any country, he wrote, and inflicts misery, not only upon the soldier and his family, but upon all with whom it comes in contact. It spares not young, nor old, weak, nor strong, and sacrifices public and private property alike to its purpose. The day before the troops were withdrawn from Ringgold the destruction of that village was ordered as a military necessity and the execution of this unpleasant duty was entrusted to Capt. Ira B. Seymour, the provost marshal and his guard. In the afternoon, the families were removed to vacate the buildings in the suburbs and at midnight the fiery torch was applied. When the troops arrived on top of the hill, west of the Chickamauga River, they beheld the flames ascending from the river bridge, the depot, the gristmills, hotel, brick blocks, and public and private buildings and the frantic efforts of the people as they strove in vain to stay the ravages of the fiery element their little belongings. After a little [while] a dense column of smoke, brick and burning debris suddenly ascended heavenward from the court house in the center of the town, followed by a deep intonation on the midnight air, showing that the powder main had taken effect, and the destruction of fair Ringgold completed. It was a sad and fearful sight, yet was only the precursor of others still more terrible to follow before the rebellious people of the South were subjected.

While the powder that been placed in the depot did some damage, the structure did survive. The patches in the walls were damaged stones were replaced can still be seen today. The depot has been fully restored and landscaped and can be viewed by the public.

References: Official Records of the War of the Rebellion
Archive and files Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park
Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment
Bill Clark, *History in Catoosa County*
Raymond Evans, *Cleburnes Defense of Ringgold Gap*

Significant Views: There is an excellent viewshed for this structure from the street. The interior can be seen by appointment.

Setting: The depot is located beside the modern train tracks in the city of Ringgold. The grounds are landscaped to a park like condition.

Documented Structures, Sites and Features: The depot is a large rectangular structure.

Presumed Wartime Features: This was a working train station on the Nashville and Atlantic Railroad during the war. It was a central feature in the battle of Ringgold Gap.

Original Terrain: The general terrain in the vicinity of the depot has much of its wartime appearance.



The stone depot.

Related Sites: Catoosa Station and Ringgold.

Please visit our website at
www.chickamaugacampaign.org