

# **The Nearly Forgotten Town of Strasburg**

## **By Derric Scott**

From newspaper research, maps, and information from the Facebook group “U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid,” and other sources.

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Rev. 1.2, November 8, 2021

## The Nearly Forgotten Town of Strasburg

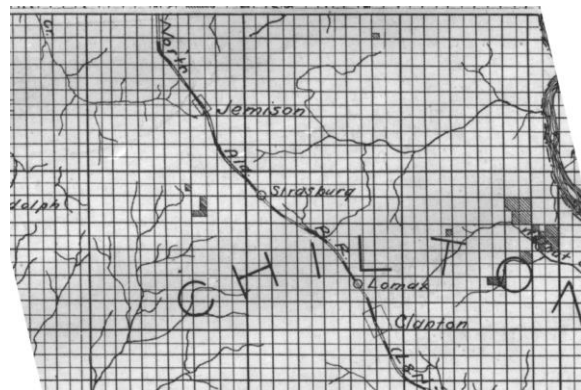
In 1870, a couple years after the formation of Chilton County, the **South and North Alabama Railroad** (later the **Louisville & Nashville (L & N) Railroad**) completed the section through the center of Baker (Chilton) County of their long planned railroad line. At that point the line was complete from Montgomery to Calera. Soon thereafter, in 1875, some German immigrants formed a lumber and mineral company named the **Strasburg Agricultural and Manufacturing Company, Inc.** (possibly named after the German city, Strassburg, which later became a French city, Strasbourg). They located the business in north central Chilton County on the railroad. The community around this railroad station was soon called Strasburg (with frequent alternate spellings of Strasburgh and Strassburg).

The exact location of the town has been mostly lost, except for one street in Thorsby. “3<sup>rd</sup> Street” is the only “numbered” street in Thorsby and is said to have been originally 3<sup>rd</sup> Street of Strasburg. One reference mentioned that Strasburg was located on the “high point.”

One record indicates that the **Strasburg Company** owned land and paid taxes 1877 on property mostly directly west of Strasburg.

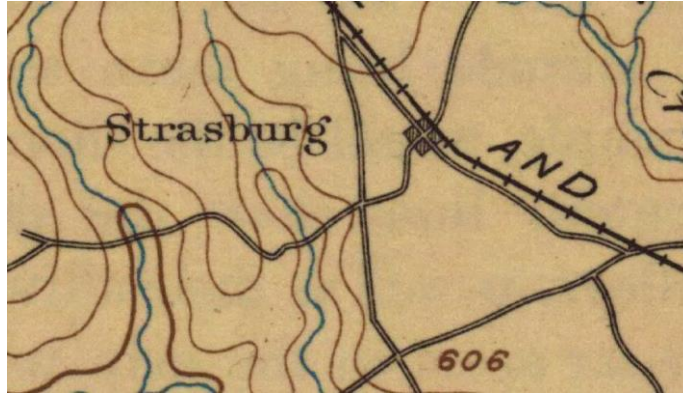
Newspapers from the late 1800s have frequent articles about Strasburg and even a regular “community column” for the area. Thorsby was founded in the mid-1890s and was incorporated in 1901. It is unknown when the Strasburg town lost its identity and was included in Thorsby. However, the community itself and the area to the south of Thorsby continued to be known as Strasburg for many more decades. Newspapers continued to refer to people living in Strasburg and land descriptions continued to reference “3<sup>rd</sup> Street of Old Strasburg” well into the mid-twentieth century.

Below is an early map, 1878, showing Strasburg on the railroad. In 1896 the L & N map also indicates a location for Strasburg.



1878 General Land Office Map (left) and 1896 L. & N. Rail Road Map (right) showing Strasburg.

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1889-1891 USGS Clanton Quadrangle Map showing location of Strasburg



Current map showing some known landmarks of Strasburg.

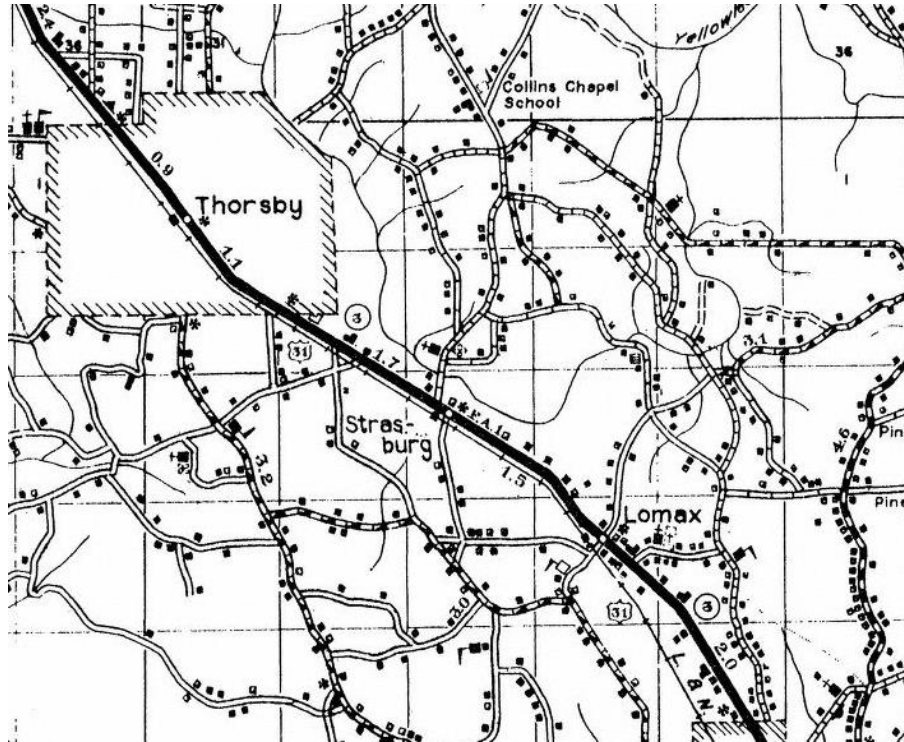
The 1889 surveyed USGS map above put a solid location of Strasburg on the west side of the railroad at the intersection with Baggett Road.

A Facebook post from Vickie Honeycutt gives some interesting details:

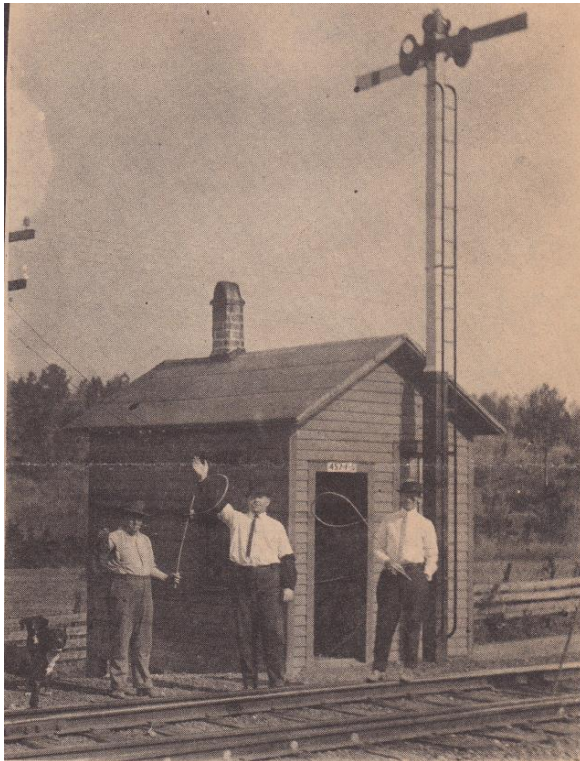
*Our Honeycutt family farm is at the southwest corner where Baggett Road intersects the railroad. I remember from my childhood the dirt road that ran parallel to the railroad track in front of my grandparents' yard. It has since grown over with grass and no longer exists as a road. I think my Dad said there was a water tower somewhere in front of the farm where the steam engines used to take in water. He also told stories of the trains stopping in front of the house and the conductor letting him and his sister get on the caboose to look around.*

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The mid-twentieth century Alabama Department of Transportation maps show the Strasburg community a little farther to the south; at the intersection of County Road 29 and Highway 31.



1937 Alabama Highway Map (same through 1949)



### Old Strassburg Station

This picture was probably made in the 1880's and before the L & N Railroad moved the station from Strassburg to Thorsby, about a mile north of where this picture was made. This was a flag station and Train Order Office of the L & N. The picture was found among some of the old pictures kept and treasured by the late Grover A. Bice who was a small lad

at the time. No names of the three men in the picture can be obtained. The building pictured here, was opposite about where the Bill Collins Garage is built. Strassburg was a thriving little town with several stores, a brickyard, the always necessary blacksmith shop, a postoffice and a number of homes. The area remains an important part of Thorsby with a guano plant, a garage, fruit packing shed and nice, attractive homes. This note was attached to the picture, "A number of agents trained at this station and when the big depot was built and moved to Thorsby others were trained as agents for the L & N." Among those we can name were Ivan Gibbons, Rushon Gibbons, Coy Gibbons, Nels Peterson and later on Elizabeth Belter who learned under her uncle, the late Jim Higgins. All stayed with their railroad jobs until retirement, either by death or number of years of service. These pictures are treasures. If you have one, or more, won't you share them with us? (By Mrs. Grover Bice.) 12-24-75

Mrs. Grover Bice newspaper column photo of Strasburg Station, December 24, 1975.



## References

**Union Banner**, many small items in many issues. Too many to list.

**Facebook groups** “*U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid,*” “*WE GREW UP IN CLANTON, ALABAMA*” and others.

**Thomas Blalock**’s tireless research in old newspapers and Internet archives.

**Bice, Marietta Bice** (1975, December 24), Thorsby community column, *The Union Banner*, Clanton, AL .