

Beginning about 2008, when I first saw one of the Louisiana RR maps I became intrigued with first Crowell tramway. It was some years before I made the connection with the photo of shay #1 and that it had to have been taken on the ORIGINAL Crowell tram, which I later learned was the line shown on the state RR maps. However, those maps are really no help at all in determining exactly where the tram ran. I asked both Draughon Crowell III and Richard Crowell, and got the the answer to the effect that Allen Crowell had researched the problem for years and had not come up with an answer.

For some reason, I had always assumed that the tramway went south out of Long Leaf, and turned west, crossing the now Union Pacific tracks, where McNary would come to be built and continued on west. Others have made the same assumption, based on the appearance of the line on the Louisiana RR maps, and the fact that nothing could be seen in the McNary area was due to the later construction there.

When the state of Louisiana released its state wide LIDAR data base, I found that many of the abandoned railroad grades were visible on the data, despite its poor resolution, however , that was only the case in rough country. In flatter country, nothing was visible. Once again, I had come to a dead end.

I tried the Union Pacific archives in Omaha, hoping that they might have a map showing the Watkins Road, Iron Mountain trackage and crossings in Glenmora, but there was nothing there either.

All that I knew was that the line went to Ashmore (at the end of Ashmore Road) and crossed the Calcasieu River somewhere and ended up somewhere in the vicinity of the Osborn cemetery on the west side of the river. Over the years since then, I made multiple maps to show where I thought that the tram may have gone, but really they were no better than poor guesses.

I was in the process of digitizing the logging railroads from the 1930-1940 USGS map series when Tony Howe alerted me to the fact that the USGS had recently flown new one meter resolution LIDAR from Long Leaf south to I-10. That data has 5 times better resolution than the old state data. So I started over again, overlaying the topo map and old lidar data on to the new high resolution data.

Just the same, I could find nothing on that data that would show me where the tram ran, at least not where I thought that it ran, at any rate.