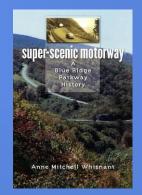


Milepost 303 photo by Anne M. Whisnant

Beyond the Beauty

Thinking about the Blue Ridge Parkway and History

Anne Mitchell Whisnant July 2010 NEH Landmarks of American History & Culture Workshop Appalachian State University

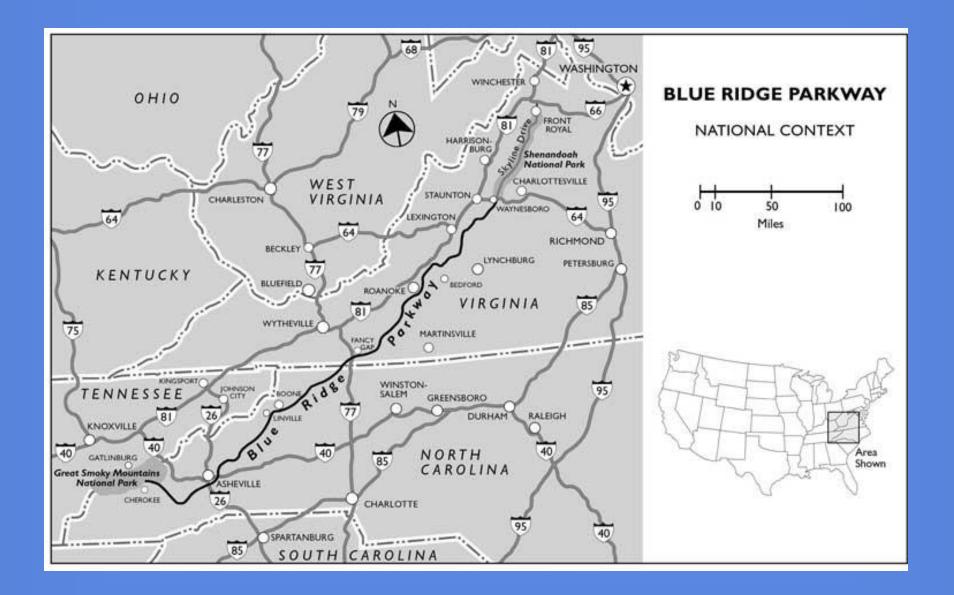


Mission 66 photo from BLRI Collection

TODAY'S AGENDA

PART 1: WHO ARE YOU?

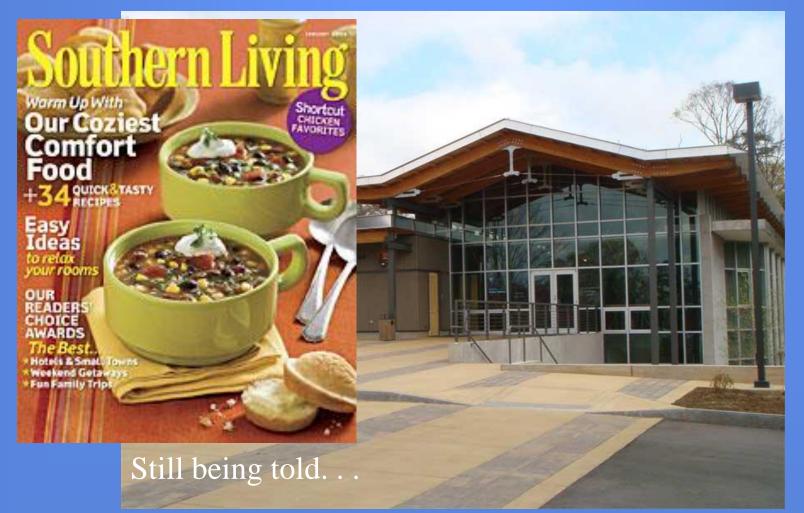
PART 2: A DIFFERENT PARKWAY JOURNEY





View from Craggy Pinnacle, 1960s Photo by David E. Whisnant

Parkway History: The *Southern Living* Version



Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center, 2008

Photo by Anne M. Whisnant

"The idea is to fit the Parkway into the mountains as if nature has put it there."

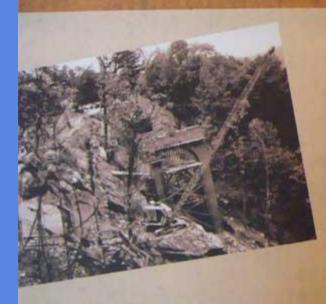
Stanley Abbott Chief Landscape Architect of the Blue Ridge Parkmay First Parkway Superintendent, 1937-1944

> Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center, 2008 Photo by Anne M. Whisnant



The Bluff, n.d. BLRI Collection

Technology and Vision



The Bureau of Public Roads oversaw the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway on behalf of the National Park Service.

Building the Parkway was an audacious undertaking that combined innovative technology and human vision.

Road building through the Blue Ridge required clearing land, creating tunnels, and engineering bridges. But the Blue Ridge Parkway was meant to be much more than a road. Roads get people where they need to go. Parkways enhance the view and provide recreational opportunities. This scenic roadway was designed so that it blended harmoniously with the landscape, appearing as if it had grown out of the soil.

> Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center, 2008 Photo by Anne M. Whisnant



Parkway NC 181 Historic American Engineering Record Collection

Framing the View

Parkway views were designed to enhance the natural features of the landscape with other plantings.

Stanley Abbott was the first resident landscape architect for the Parkway. It was his job along with other landscape architects to select and enhance specific view areas. It is perhaps this aspect of the Parkway—roadside pull offs that beckon travelers to slow down

and take in the view—that has captivated so many who travel along the Blue Ridge Parkway. But even Stanley Abbott's planned artistry is no match for the natural diversity and seasonal changes of the Blue Ridge that makes a view different every time.

> Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center, 2008 Photo by Anne M. Whisnant



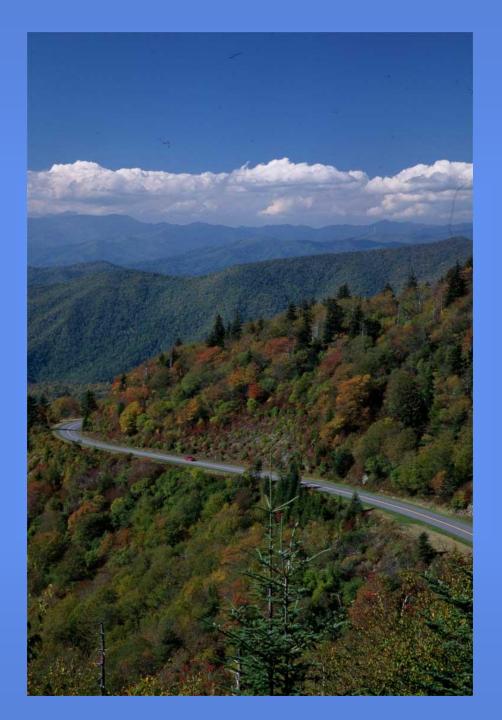
Photo by Mike Booher



Jesse Brown Cabin, 2007 Photo by David E. Whisnant



CCC Boys at Doughton Park BLRI Collection



But how does this history help with . . .



The Different Journey



Rockfish Gap by Rowe, 1948

BLRI Collection



Parkway Construction, Section 2N, 1937

BLRI Collection

THE BORROWED LANDSCAPE



Who have we borrowed it *from*? (A quick trip through the region.) Milepost 150.5, 1936 BLRI collection

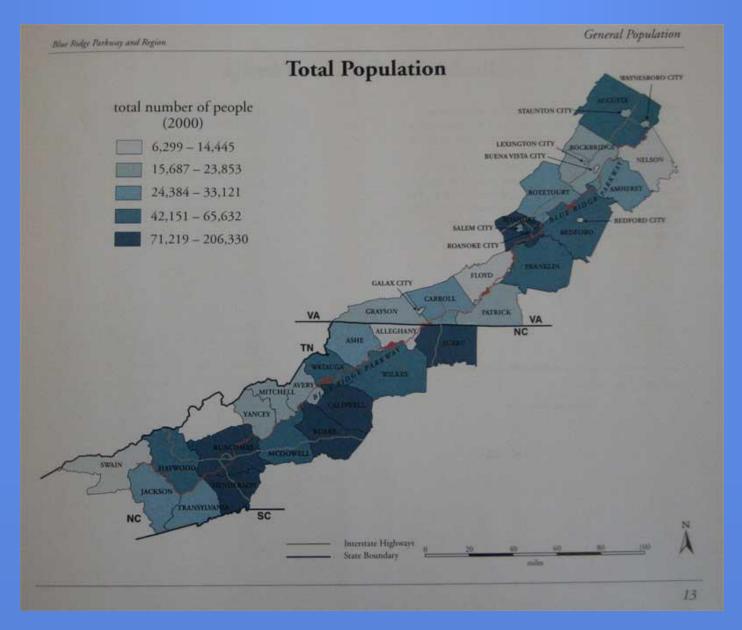
1930 Census Parkway Region

- 29 Counties in Virginia and North Carolina
- Total population in 29 counties = 693,831
- Total population VA + NC = 5,592,127

1930 Census Parkway Region

- Heterogeneous region
- Two major urban areas: Roanoke and Asheville
- NC Parkway counties more densely settled and growing
- VA Parkway counties more racially diverse
- VA more agricultural, farms more valuable
- NC more industrialized and had greater penetration of tourism

2000 Population



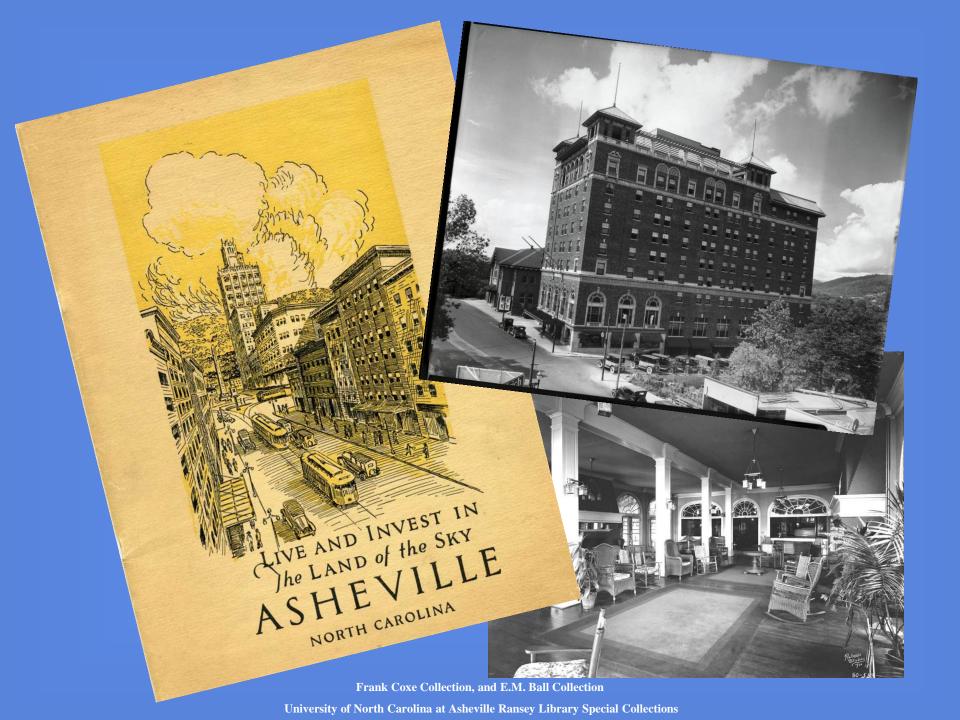


1935 Reconnaissance Group Courtesy Robert C. Browning DESIGN IS POLITICAL: ROUTING & LAND ACQUISITION

Two Viable Routes Two Different Parkways

- Tennessee Route
 - Favored by NPS landscape architect (Abbott)
 - "a variety of mountains, mountain stream valley, and broad river types of scenery"
 - "relatively low elevation"

- North Carolina Route
 - Laid out and favored by NC highway officials and local interests
 - "the most direct, the most economical, and the one which would provide . . .
 the greatest amount of scenery"
 - "a high elevation all the way"





Grove Park Inn

E.M. Ball Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNC-Asheville



Land Acquisition in Two States





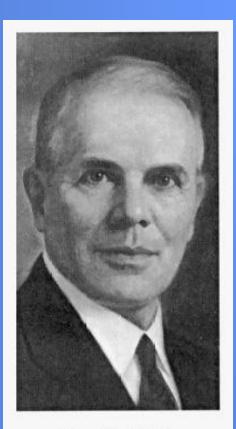
Virginia Legal Context

- Land title transfers after compensation is agreed upon with landowner
- Laws assumed landowner's right of access to the road
- Never accepted the 100 acres per mile in fee/50 acres per mile in scenic easement standard favored by NPS.

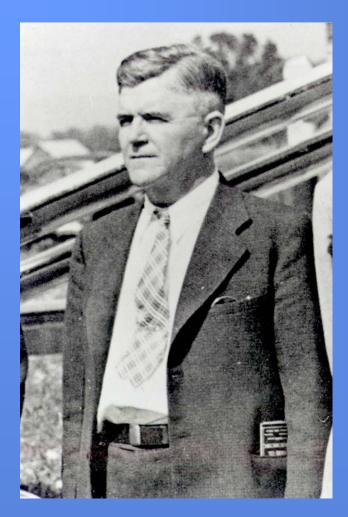
North Carolina Legal Context

- State posts maps, title transfers.
 Compensation worked out afterward.
- No assumed right of access for landowners.
- Ready adoption of 125 acres per mile in fee as Parkway right-of-way.

Individuals Matter



Henry G. Shirley (1922-1941)



R. Getty Browning

Henry G. Shirley

In Virginia, "we settled for less." – Stanley W. Abbott

11

H

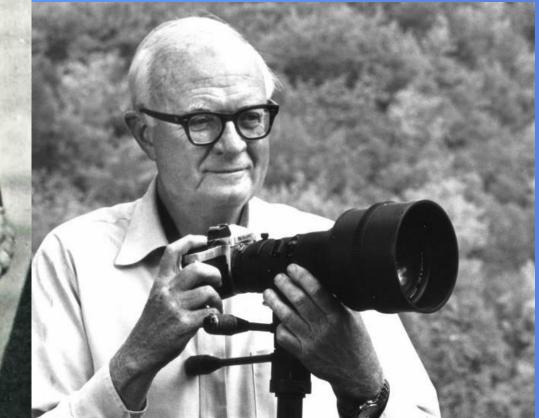
Fancy Gap Cabins, MP 202, 2003 Photo by David E. Whisnant



Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost 140, 2003 Photo by Anne M. Whisnant



Land Acquisition & Powerful Private Interests





Hugh Morton

http://www.grandfather.com

Little Switzerland



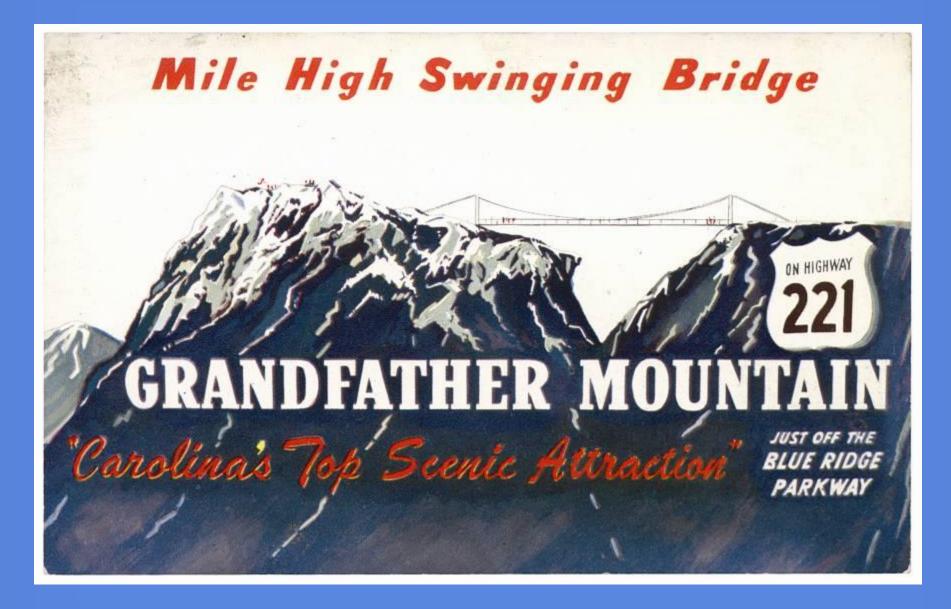
Kilmichael Tower, Little Switzerland, 1935 North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill



Little Switzerland entrance, c.a. 2005 Photo by David Whisnant

Grandfather Mountain





Reprinted from Postcards of Historic Blowing Rock (Blowing Rock Historical Society, 2002)





Linn Cove Viaduct, October 2008 Photo by David Whisnant

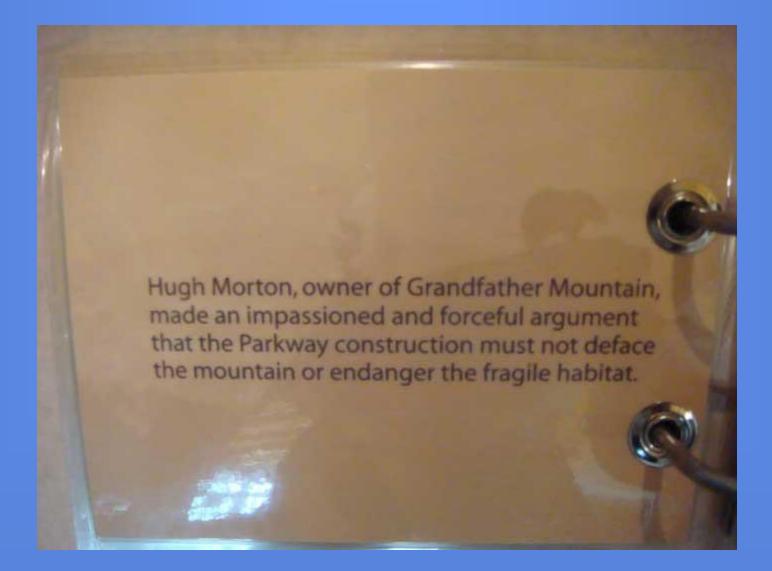


Grandfather Mountain Road, ca. 2006 Photo by David Whisnant



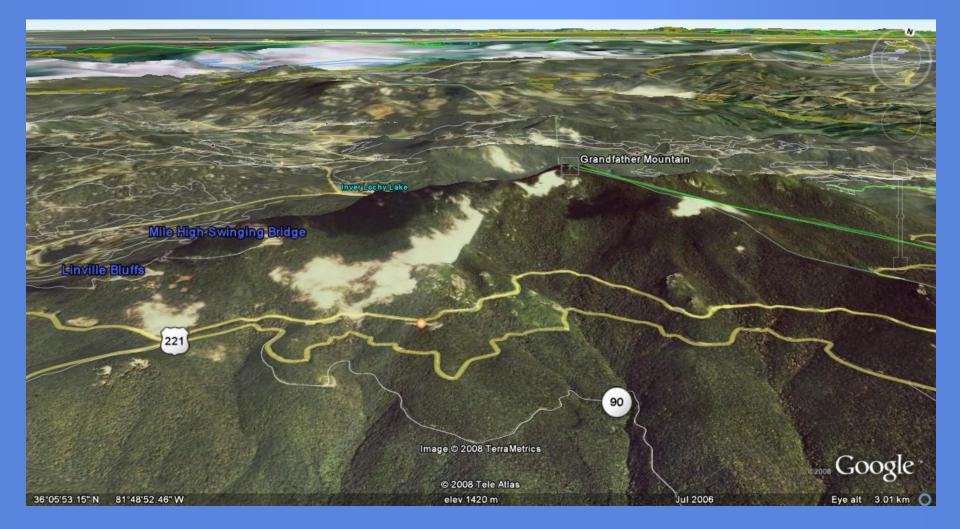
Old "Top Shop" at Grandfather, ca. 2006 Photo by David Whisnant

NPS Narrative





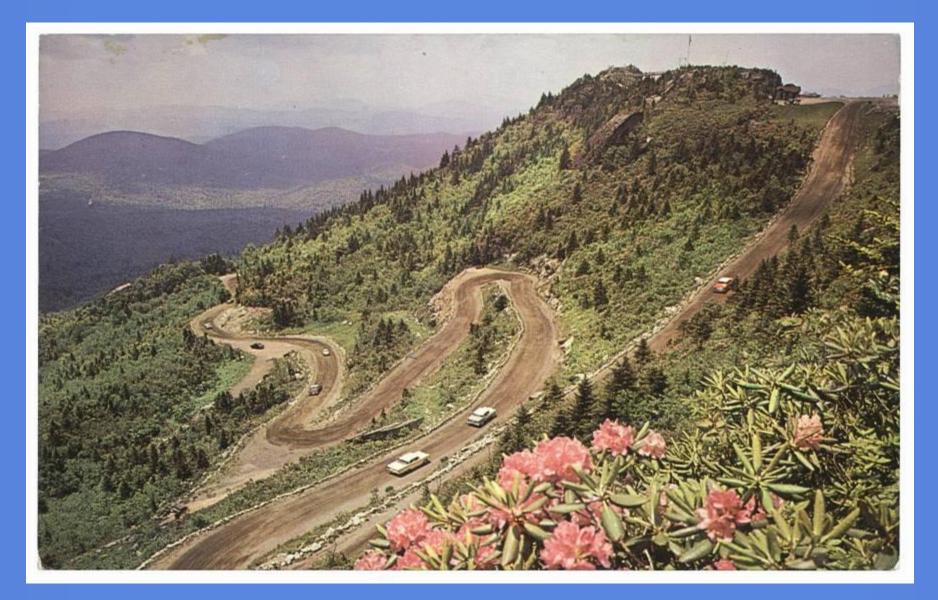
Google Earth Image, 2006







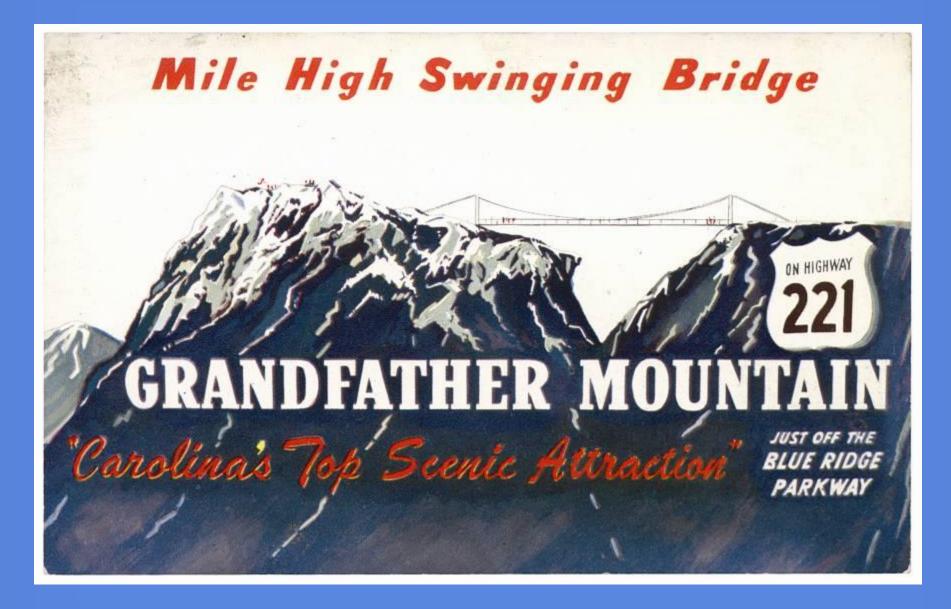
Building road to top of Grandfather, 1952, from UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries Hugh Morton Collection



Published by Hugh Morton, ca 1950s Whisnant personal collection



Early 1970s, Courtesy BLRI



Reprinted from Postcards of Historic Blowing Rock (Blowing Rock Historical Society, 2002)

PART 3: TRANSFERABLE CONCEPTS

All built environments and landscapes have a "politics."

"A Horrible Example," 1957, BLRI Collection

Landscapes are layered.

Nationa Blue Ric 1930s-p

Designe vernacı

Lodge, ı travel, t



National Park Service interpretive landscape _____1960s-present

Telling erroneous history on a compromised landscape

You can "read" the landscape.



Little Switzerland Signs, late 1930s, BLRI Collection



NCSU: Proposed Routing Map

Present conditions are the results of choices among alternatives.



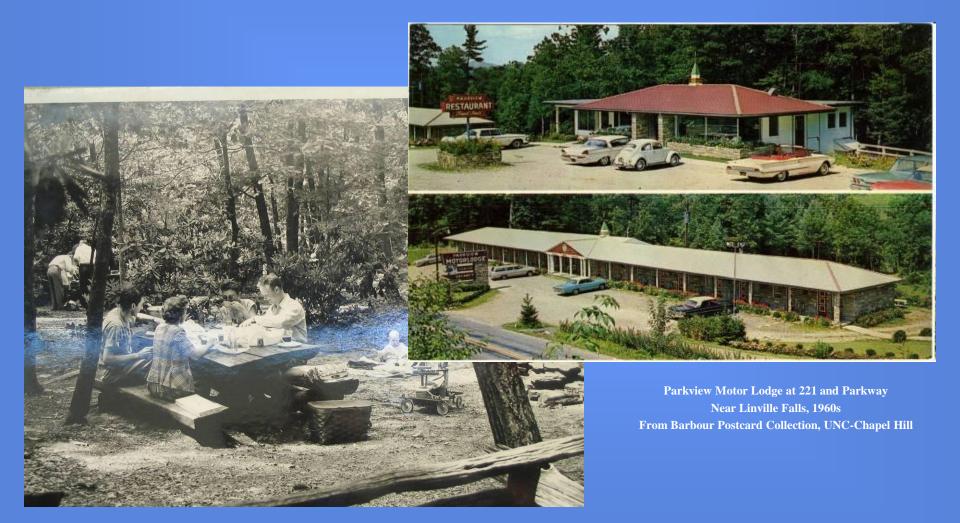
Ohida n.G Mr Franklin Die My dear SirJAN 13 1830 you in regard to m. Jann, on the Blue Bldge mountain, where the Parkto Park high way goes, goes through the middle of my farm, The right of Way takes 20 acres out of The middle of my farm I just have To acres of land in all, just leaves me a small Pice of land on each side, The state don't offer me the worth of my land, not counting the damages any Thing-

Almost any large public project entails costs and benefits.

How can we distribute them fairly?



What is the "public good" and how do we identify and achieve it?



Existing interpretations and stories should always be subjected to critical review.





HUMPBACK ROCKS VISITOR CENTER - FARM MUSEUM

THE EXHIBITS INSIDE THE VISITOR CENTER TELL ABOUT LIFE ALONG THE BLUE RIDGE FROM 1850 TO 1950 THE FARM MUSEUM LOCATED DOWN THE TRAIL TO YOUR LEFT IS A COLLECTION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES THAT WERE BROUGHT HERE AND RECONSTRUCTED IN THE 19505

> U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PART 4: NEW APPROACHES, NEW RESOURCES

Driving Through Time Project



Welcome to Driving through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina

We invite you to take a virtual trip through the history of this beautiful 469-mile "elongated park." Conceived during the depths of the Great Depression as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and completed in 1987, the Parkway continues to evolve through its ever-changing relationships with surrounding communities, landowners, and the public. The park wends its way through 17 North Carolina counties, numerous communities, and countless different southern Appalachian landscapes. Its economic, social, and psychic impact on western North Carolina-where its most fervent early supporters were based-has been profound.

Its hold on the public imagination has been equally strong. Every year since 1946, the Blue Ridge Parkway has been the most visited site in the entire National Park system. Driving it is a physical experience of moving through an unfolding series of often breathtaking spaces. It is a thoughtfully designed landscape of peaceful farm scenes, carefully chosen views far and near, and a scenic road placed on the land so as to appear that it had always been there.



Courtesu-National Park Service-Blue Ridge Parkway

CDLA

DocSouth

DocSouth Home

It is possible, of course, to describe the Blue Ridge Parkway's past in words, and historians have assembled documents and written books that try to do that. But to really understand the road's history, we must take the advice of North Carolina's chief Parkway designer. State Highway Commission locating engineer R. Getty Browning, an "on the spot' highway locating engineer who laid out the Parkway route in North Carolina by walking its length: we must see the situation on the ground. By placing historical materials in their geographic contextplacing time and stories in space-"Driving through Time" invites us to do just that

Help

UNC

Permissions

Privacy



Night Time on the Picturesque Blue Ridge Parkwaut North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives. Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chap

Yet the Parkway landscape conceals the many elements of social conflict and disruption that have marked its history. 'Driving through Time" allows students, researchers, and digital tourists to uncover hidden stories, hear forgotten voices, and understand the often wrenching choices that the construction and preservation of a scenic parkway in a populated region have necessarily entailed.

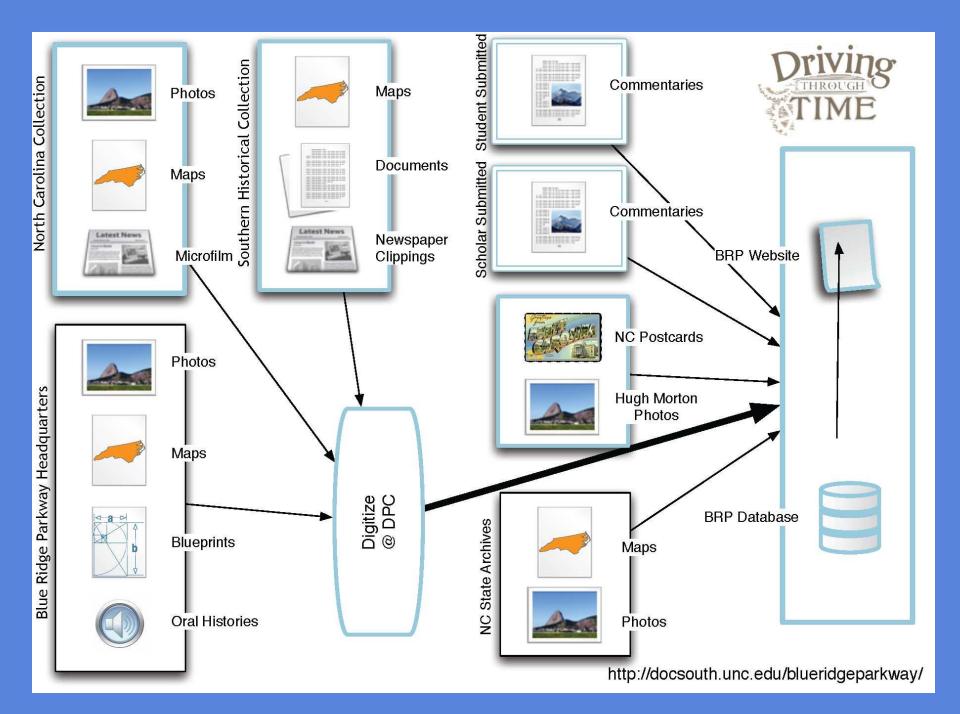
Encompassing over So,000 acres of lands acquired from private owners and other federal agencies, the Parkway's development involved many challenging decisions about spatial matters, including routing, land use, and road access. Relationships between the Parkway and the more than 4500 owners whose lands abut the park have been shaped by conflict and compromise over the configuration of lands and travel routes for both local citizens and tourists. Key elements of the Parkway experience are the rolling vistas "borrowed" from surrounding landowners

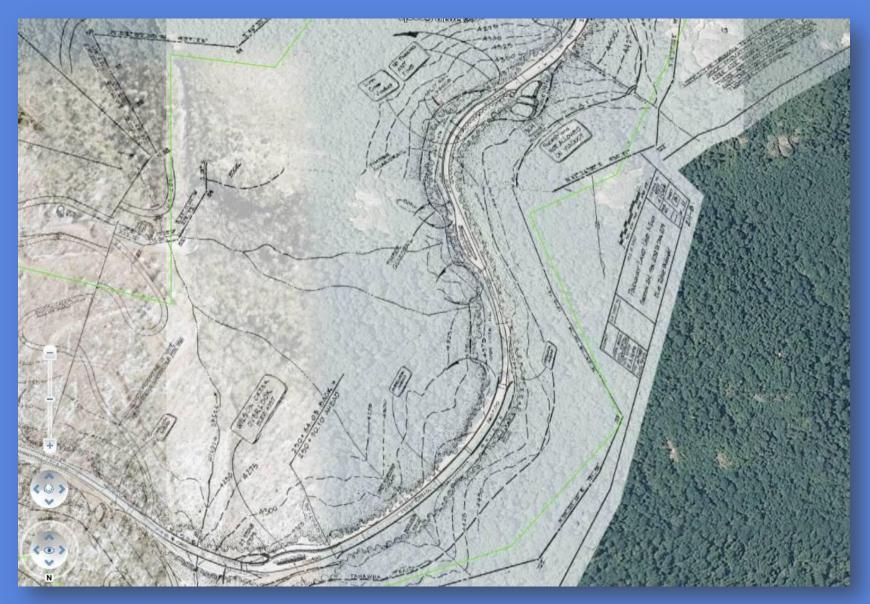


Contact

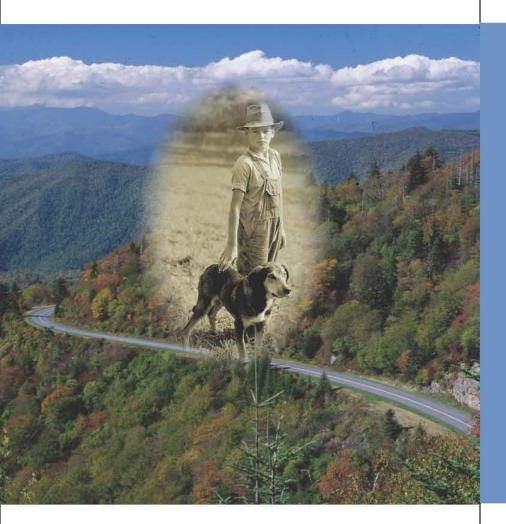
Home







PLUM Map: Section 2H



When the Parkway Came

Anne Mitchell Whisnant & David E. Whisnant

PRIMARY SOURCE PUBLISHERS Chapel Hill, North Carolina

PART 5: THE ONGOING CREATION OF THE PARKWAY







Blue Ridge Parkway News North Carolina/Virginia General Management Plan Volume 5 • Spring 2008

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior



Preliminary Alternatives

Dear Neighbors and Visitors,

As many of you know, the National Service (NPS) is preparing a general management plan (GMP) for the Blue Ridge Parkway. The parkway will celebrate its 75 anniversary in 2010 and this GMP will provide a vision for the parkway's future and help guide our decision-making for the next 20 years. Through this newsletter, you have a great opportunity to learn the latest in our thinking and provide us your comments.

Applying the ideas and comments we have received thus far from the public, state and local agencies, and parkway staff, we have developed three preliminary alternative visions for the future of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Fifteen of the park's large recreation areas are addressed within these three alternatives. When you explore this newsletter, you will see that we have used many maps, particularly of the recreation areas, to give you a clearer idea of the similarities and differences among these alternatives.

I encourage you to become involved in the future of the Blue Ridge Parkway by providing us with your thoughts. You are welcome to comment by using the enclosed postage-paid comment form, sending us a letter, or visiting our website. See the "How to Comment" section of this newsletter for details. Thank you for your continued interest and involvement with the Blue Ridge Parkway. We look forward to hearing from you.





To Learn More

- <u>www.blueridgeparkway75.org</u> (Blue Ridge Parkway 75th Anniversary)
- <u>http://www.superscenic.com</u> (Super-Scenic Motorway website)
- <u>http://www.whentheparkwaycame.com</u> (When the Parkway Came website)
- <u>http://www.blueridgeparkwayblog.com</u> (Blog about Blue Ridge Parkway issues)
- <u>http://www.brpfoundation.org</u> (Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation)
- <u>http://www.blueridgefriends.org/</u> (Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway)
- <u>http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com</u> (National Parks Traveler, excellent park issues blog)