

Blue Ridge to a point on the Virginia line known as Low Gap.
Taking the route in sections, I will endeavor to describe the
geologic and physical features in order that you may have a clear
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From Low Gap to Calasa Gap a section of parkway approxi-
mately 10 miles in length, unless the negotiations
with the F.E.A. of P.W. for the acquisition of additional park
land southward from the Park to Calasa Gap should be
successful.

Dear Mr. Radcliffe:
In accordance with the Parkway is undertaken. This portion of the
road would be a great improvement. In accordance with our understanding of a few days ago, I am
very glad to submit to you herewith a general statement of the
reasons why I think the route for the scenic Parkway through
North Carolina, as proposed by the State Highway Commission,
should be adopted.

In my conversations with you I have made clear the
reasons for my intense interest in this great undertaking. Of
course, I am interested from the standpoint of an employee of
the Highway Department and as a citizen of North Carolina, but
in addition to this, I have a very deep professional interest
in the accomplishment of what I consider one of the most
important engineering feats of modern times.

I am sure you recall the general character of the country
throughout the area which you investigated and I feel, therefore,
that I need make but a general reference to the topography to
bring before you the picture of the route which we propose
beginning at the western boundary
of the Park at Low Gap and extending via the Polk Mountain
Peak, the Craggy and Black Mountains and the crest of the

Blue Ridge to a point on the Virginia line known as Low Gap. Taking the route in sections, I will endeavor to describe the scenic and physical features in order that you may have a clear understanding of the whole matter.

From Cocco Gap to Balsam Gap a section of parkway approximately seven miles long would be required, unless the negotiations which are now under way for the acquisition of additional park lands extending southward from the Park to Balsam Gap should be completed before the Parkway is undertaken. This portion of the route would be through what is known as the Plott Balsam Mountains and would require some reasonably heavy mountain work, although there is no unusual or particularly difficult construction involved. At Balsam Gap contact would be made with the Southern Railroad, which easily could be crossed with an overhead bridge and the line continued on an ascending grade around the southwestern border of the range, reaching the summit near Coney Fork Bald, the point where we had such a splendid view of the country after driving up Allens Creek from Hazelwood. At this point the Parkway would have reached an elevation of approximately 5500 feet and from here the route would follow closely along the crest of the Balsam Range, retaining an elevation of 5,000 feet or more practically all the way to Duck Springs Gap at the foot of Mount Pisgah, which is the place where we parked our cars and made a short hike to the top of Pisgah Mountain. From Coney Fork Bald to Duck Springs Gap the country traversed by the Parkway would be, in my opinion, the most unusual and worthwhile of any along the route. The character of the country is such that in many

places a road could be built as easily as the one we drove over in the vicinity of Linville Gorge, which no doubt you will recall, while the roughest portions would not, in my opinion, be excessively heavy for mountain work. Generally the cross slopes are reasonably gentle and splendid alignment, with easy grades, can be obtained, while the shrubbery and timber, which include every variety known in this latitude, add greatly to the scenic beauty of the route.

The Pisgah National Forest, which is heavily stocked with deer and other game, extends along the south side of this portion of the route and an unbroken wilderness occupies the north side of the line for a width of ten or fifteen miles. There is no State or county road across this range between Balsam Gap and Route 204 near Mount Pisgah, a distance of over twenty miles, and I think that this large area of wilderness would be a very great asset to the Parkway. It is the largest unbroken area that I know of in this State which could be considered in connection with the Park, and since it is so splendidly adapted to the propagation of game and fish, to say nothing of the splendid timber and shrubbery which by all means should be protected, I feel that it would be a grave mistake to not include this in the Parkway. On the north side of this range, in the area lying south of Waynesville, several splendid locations can be obtained for the construction of lakes, which would add greatly to the beauty, as well as the enjoyment, of this unique region.

From Back Springs Gap to the French Broad River the distance and character of the country is such that it would be quite easy to pass through Bee River Gap and swinging to the east follow up-

to secure a splendid location for a safe and beautiful parkway. This country is high and well timbered and many splendid views can be had from the exposed sections. The crossing of the French Broad River involves no serious engineering problem, since the river does not have an extensive flood plain and the formations are such that rock foundations for the bridge can be secured and the cost would be consistent with many similar structures which we have built in the past few years.

Leaving the French Broad River, the line would rise from an elevation of 2,000 feet to 8,000 feet by passing through the Riceville area, Bulls Gap, Bee Tree Gap and the Craggy Mountains. The ascent to the summit of the Craggy Range, while involving some reasonably heavy mountain work, would not be any more difficult to construct than the road we drove over from New Found Gap to Cherokee, and the scenery along the route is very beautiful and impressive. This section is also well wooded, particularly well covered with the beautiful pink rhododendron and several varieties of azaleas. The peaks of the Craggys are grass covered and free of timber and they would be within a few minutes walk of the Parkway. Here the scenery is unsurpassed at any season of the year and these peaks could, by the construction of the Parkway, be made readily accessible to thousands of visitors who now are unable to reach them due to the steep, rough hiking trails which are the only means of access.

Proceeding from the Craggy Mountains, the route would pass through Balsam Gap to Stepps Gap at the foot of Mount Mitchell, where we had lunch, then winding down the slopes of Mount Mitchell pass through Tee River Gap and swinging to the east follow ap-

proximately the crest of the Blue Ridge to Buck Creek Gap and on to Gillespie Gap near Spruce Pine. Mount Mitchell, having an elevation of 6711 feet above sea level is not only the highest peak in North Carolina, but is the highest east of the Rocky Mountains and it forms the highest point in the Black Mountain Range, being one of fifteen peaks which are over 6,000 feet high within a distance of fifteen miles. At present the only way to reach Mount Mitchell is by means of a toll road from State Route 10 near Black Mountain or over the road which we used from Pensacola to the top. These roads, while passable in good weather, are not well adapted to the handling of general tourist traffic; consequently many people who would very greatly enjoy visiting Mount Mitchell cannot do so, and probably never will, unless the Parkway should be carried through this vicinity. The character of the country from the summit of the Craggy Mountains to Mount Mitchell is especially good for mountain country and I am sure you will recall from your observation of the amount of work done on the Wilson Toll Road and the railroad grades nearby that it would not be very expensive to build the Parkway through this locality and, from my judgment and experience, I would unhesitatingly say that there is no engineering difficulty in the way of building a firstclass road through this area at very reasonable cost.

I would like to call your attention to the peculiar fact that on account of this route being located so closely along the crest of the mountains throughout its length, only two streams requiring bridges are crossed. These are the French Broad River and the National Park standards, but the cost of doing this, as we re-

and the Linville River, neither of which present any serious engineering problem in their construction.

From Gillespie Gap the route would follow generally the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains through easy country via McKinney Gap, Humpback Mountain to Linville River, and from the Linville River the line would bear slightly to the east, contact a ridge leading off from Grandmother Mountain and extending through a splendid forest of old original timber pass Grandmother Mountain a short distance below the crest, reaching the Yonahlossee Trail near Grandmother Gap. You will remember that as we drove from this Gap to Grandmother Mountain we remarked about the easy country which the old stage road followed. The Parkway, I think, would be on very similar ground and consequently, would cost but little to construct. Grandfather Mountain lies just north of the Yonahlossee Trail near Grandmother Gap and its elevation above sea level is 5004 feet. A splendid hiking trail extends from the highway, which is on elevation of approximately 4,000 feet, to the summit and the view from the top of this mountain is excellent. It is unobstructed by any nearby mountains and from its great elevation commands a view as far as the eye can reach of range after range of mountains and many of the larger cities can also be seen from this point. This mountain is well covered with rhododendron, laurel and balsam and has always been very popular with mountain climbers. It is proposed to use the Yonahlossee Trail from Grandmother Gap to Shoving Rock, making such modifications in the existing road as may be necessary to bring it up to the National Park standards, but the cost of doing this, as we re-

marked as we drove over it, certainly would be minimal.

Leaving Blowing Rock, the route would proceed to Deep Gap via Idlewild through country which is well covered with rhododendron, laurel, azalea and many other flowering shrubs and trees. The topography is such that only moderate construction cost would be necessary. Most of this portion of the line would lie along the plateau just north of the crest of the ridge and quite a good deal of it would be through cultivated fields and pasture land.

After reaching Deep Gap, the route would cross State Highway No. 60, leading from Boone to Winston-Salem, and would proceed down the valley lying just north of the crest of the mountains, gradually rising to an elevation of about 3800 feet on Tompkins Knob, which you will recall was the last point we visited before turning back to Winston-Salem. From this knob a very beautiful view of the surrounding country is to be had and there is no difficulty from a construction standpoint in reaching it with the Parkway. There is for a suitable parkway connecting these great

Proceeding from Tompkins Knob, the route would follow along the top of the ridge on easy ground to Walberry Gap, which is at the foot of Little Grandfather Mountain, an outstanding peak which has an elevation of 3800 feet. While the Parkway is not planned to go directly over this mountain, it would readily be carried to an elevation of at least 3800 feet and proceed along the crest to Air Balloon Gap, through a section of country which is very beautiful indeed, most of the way through open pasture lands, well carpeted with grass, and from the proposed Parkway superiority of the route through North Carolina to any other that

location the surrounding country for many miles on both sides lies in full view of the observer.

Leaving Air Bellows Gap, the route would follow around the crest of the ridge, passing a short distance north of the Roaring Gap Development and continue along the mountain top to Low Gap at the Virginia line. The topography through this section lends itself splendidly to the location of the Parkway and the construction cost, except for a few short sections, would be very reasonable.

In considering this whole route, from Soco Gap to the Virginia line, I would like to call your attention to the fact that no where else in the United States, so far as I know, could such an excellent location for a parkway be found, if splendid scenery, high elevation, profusion of beautiful shrubbery, favorable climatic conditions, reasonable construction cost and accessibility from all sections of the country are to be considered.

In view of the fact that you are faced with the responsibility of selecting a route for a suitable parkway connecting these great National Parks, and knowing the country as I do along all the routes that have been proposed, I do not hesitate to say that you would be making no concession to North Carolina in selecting this route, while if you were to overlook it, I feel that a great injustice would be done, not only to this State, but to all the people of the nation who would thus be deprived of the opportunity of enjoying what can well be made the most interesting parkway in all the world.

I feel sure that it is unnecessary for me to emphasize the superiority of the route through North Carolina to any other that

has been proposed, and I am confident that after your personal investigation, extending throughout this entire region, you cannot fail to see as I do the advisability of including as much of the high mountain country as practicable.

No doubt much of the traffic over the Parkway will be during the summer months and since the visitors to a mountain section are usually seeking cooler weather, it seems to me that it would be a great disappointment to them in traveling the Parkway to find it following the narrow, hot valleys at low elevations, when they might just as well have had the advantage of the cool, beautiful mountain route.

After all, as I see it, this is the problem that must be decided: shall the Parkway be just another highway or shall it be a really outstanding, beautiful driveway through the most delightful and attractive country that the whole region affords? Is it to be a parkway that our great President can take pride in, or one for which he may have to apologise in the years to come?

The building of this Parkway is largely a child of his brain and what more lasting or appropriate monument could he have than an unrivaled National Parkway such as we contemplate! If properly located and built, it seems to me that as the years go on and millions of our people are enabled to enjoy the beauty of these heretofore inaccessible sections of our country, his name would be held in pleasant recollection, and surely we all are justified in doing everything in our power to see to it that this great undertaking is carried out with the dignity and foresight which it so richly deserves.

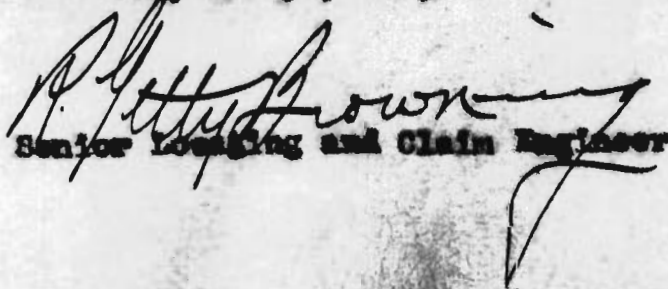
According to our estimate, the distance from Soco Gap to the State line is about 203 miles, and from Grandfather Mountain to the State line approximately 80 miles, and from our experience in building similar roads through the same localities, we estimate the cost of construction from Soco Gap to Grandfather Mountain at, roughly, \$4,000,000, this amount including the bridges over Linville River and the French Broad River.

The cost of securing right of way along the route which we propose would be quite reasonable, since such a large mileage extends through national forest areas and elsewhere along the line the cost of securing right of way would be nominal due to the fact that the Parkway would occupy land along the crest of the mountains, which is of little value for agriculture or pasturage.

In order that you may have before you a complete picture of this situation, I am sending you a map showing the proposed routes between the Shenandoah Park and the Great Smoky Mountain Park, together with the principal highway connections, and if you should desire any further data which I can supply, I would be very glad to have you call on me.

Trusting that the information submitted may be of assistance to you in reaching a decision in this matter, and with kindest personal regards, I am

Very truly yours,


Senior Location and Claim Engineer

ROB:P