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# A Capsule of Facts Substantiating Opposition to A Possible Change in The Established Right of Way for The Blue Ridge Parkway At Grandfather Mountain



**ON PRESENT RIGHT-OF-WAY**—Stack Rock Creek Falls on the 1,000 foot wide right-of-way secured in 1939 for the Blue Ridge Parkway. This and eight other waterfalls in beautiful settings would be abandoned if the Parkway should undergo a change in route.

Stack Rock Creek Falls  
Blue Ridge Parkway  
Grandfather Mountain  
North Carolina

HAVE ONE RIGHT OF WAY ALREADY - The right of way several miles long and a thousand feet wide provided by The Linville Company in 1939 for the Parkway is the best and most logical route around Grandfather Mountain. Now that the long in coming construction funds have been appropriated some sixteen years after the right of way was secured, the National Park Service should delay no longer in building this section of the Parkway.

CHANGE IN ROUTE COSTLY - The much discussed higher route for the Parkway across Grandfather Mountain would be a costly monument to a whim and serve no useful purpose. Extra expense to the Federal taxpayer, \$2,000,000. Extra costs to North Carolina and its citizens for added right of way: several hundreds of thousands of dollars and an onsightly gash that would change the whole face and character of its most loved and respected mountain.

PRESENT ROUTE HIGHEST SECTION FOR 350 MILES - The right of way secured in 1939 hovers for its entire distance around 4,250 feet elevation, which will be the highest part of the Blue Ridge Parkway for 350 miles. In the 300 miles to the North to its beginning point in Virginia, the Parkway never reaches such heights, and only after a distance of 44.7 miles South of Grandfather Mountain at a point near Mount Mitchell does the Parkway rise to 4,250 feet again.

HIGHER ROUTE HAS FANTASTIC CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS - Longer construction time and at least \$3,000,000 cost would be involved in the second route, which has among its other short-comings a fantastically impractical tunnel 1700 feet long (five city blocks) through solid rock. The 1939 estimates for reconditioning the already purchased Parkway right-of-way following the Yonahlossee Trail (U.S. 221) around Grandfather Mountain was \$400,000, so even at today's prices the cost of this work would not be likely to exceed \$1,000,000. The one 1700 foot tunnel is more than half as long as all of the Parkway's eight tunnels put together, and the money saved by following the more sensible route could well be spent on one or more of the Parkway's yet to be completed sections in North Carolina.

PRESENT ROUTE COULD BE GOOD ROAD AT ALL SEASONS - The route decided upon in 1939 involves 7.4 miles of Yonahlossee Trail. This road has 76 curves, only 18 of which are necessary, and the entire road is on a relatively even rather than steep grade. When the useless curves are removed and the distance thereby shortened, it will have less than three curves per mile. On the 80.1 miles of Parkway already complete between Grandfather Mountain and Asheville there are 378 curves for an average of 4.66 curves per mile. Even North Carolina's wonderful super-highway U.S. 70 between Old Fort and Ridgecrest has 3.6 curves per mile, so by standards set on the best highways in the mountains, the Parkway across the already purchased right of way properly reconditioned can be the best one of them all from the curves standpoint, and few acquainted with its beauty will deny that it is also the most scenic route. It will not be a section that the Park Service locks up November to April as they do in the Mount Mitchell-Craggy area, but can be a year around road at the logical 4,250 foot elevation.

BETTER ROUTE FOR TRUCK TRAFFIC ALREADY NEARING COMPLETION - The new Linville to Boone super-highway over the general route of the old "Tweetsie" railroad is fast nearing completion and will cut 11 miles in distance between the two towns (19 miles instead of 30). This new road, with connections at Foscoe and Shulls Mills to the Blowing Rock-Cone-Price areas, will provide a better alternate route for the truck traffic than was formerly provided by the portion of the Yonahlossee Trail (US221) to be taken over by the Parkway.

HUGH MORTON

MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA, MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 11, 1955

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## A Battle In Defense Of 'The Mountain'

Understandable is the concern of Hugh Morton over the State Highway Commission's plan to route the Blue Ridge Parkway over Grandfather Mountain, which he owns.

Mr. Morton, whose venerable mountain has been statistically established as North Carolina's "top scenic attraction", carried his opposition to the proposed route to officials of the highway department, and his argument makes a lot of sense. No decision on his appeal has yet been announced.

The State, which must provide right-of-way for the Parkway, has owned since 1939 an adequate right-of-way along the Yohnalosse Trail, which is State Highway No. 221 over which the parkway is currently routed between Blowing Rock and Linville. In anticipation of that route, bridges have been built according to parkway specifications, and the present 76 curves along the Yohnalosse Trail could easily be reduced to 18. The beauty of Highway 221, formerly a toll road, is well known.

Now, Mr. Morton says, the State proposes a far more expensive route which will scale the heights of old Grandfather's sides, requiring a 1,700 foot tunnel, more than twice the length of any tunnel on the parkway.

Not only will the route be destructive of his popular spot but it will desecrate with

deep gashes a mountain which is probably venerated more than any other in the State, at a cost which Mr. Morton predicts will be more than a million dollars over the expense of routing formerly planned. And it's a moot question whether the scenery will surpass that of the Yohnalosse Trail route.

As for the Highway Commission argument that closing Highway 221 will cut off commercial traffic which is banned from the parkway, Mr. Morton argues that the new highway from Linville to Boone will adequately take care of that.

Unquestionably our imposing mountains present a challenge to location engineers to undertake colossal and stupendous projects, but it will be hard to overcome Mr. Morton's position on the justification of expense and the arguable question of grandeur.

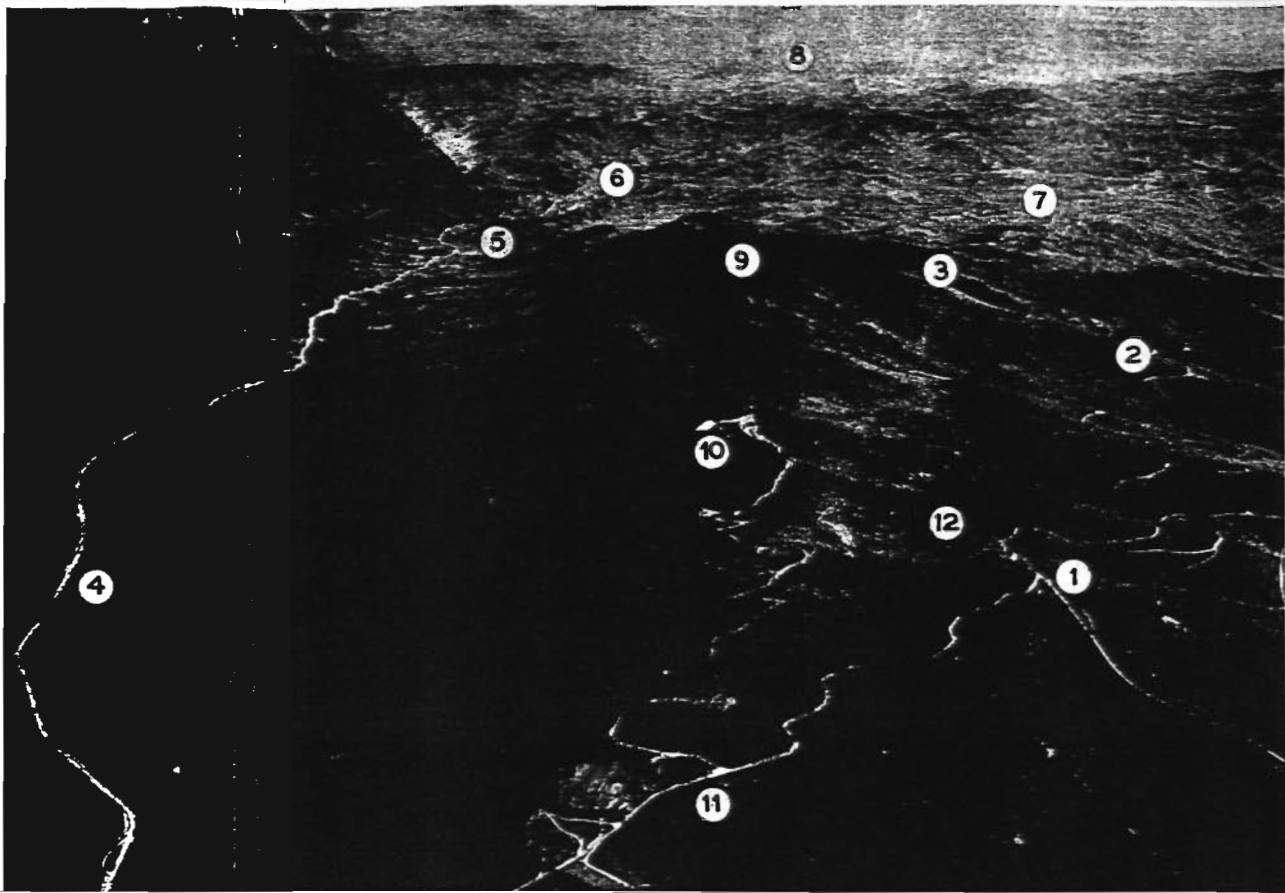
Apart from whatever damage it might do to his Mile-High Swinging bridge, we know that if we owned Grandfather Mountain the desecration thereof would be beyond financial calculation. And if it remained for a jury to place a dollar and cents determination on the loss, the twelve good men and true might make the cost prohibitive if they catch anything of the spirit of folks who have spent their lifetime within sight of old Grandfather.



**BETTER TRUCK ROUTE**—A new super-highway over which truck traffic may travel cutting 11 miles of the distance between Linville and Boone is now in the advanced stages of construction over the old "Tweetsie" railroad route West of Grandfather Mountain. With connections at Foscoe and Shulls Mills for the Blowing Rock-Cone-Price areas, this road provides a more rapid and in most cases shorter commercial route than the present Yonahlossee Trail (U.S. 221).



**PARKWAY BRIDGES WOULD BE WASTED**—This Parkway-style bridge at Wilson's Creek and several companion structures, built along the Yonahlossee Trail right-of-way in anticipation of it becoming the Blue Ridge Parkway around Grandfather Mountain, would be abandoned by a change in route.



**GRANDFATHER AIR VIEW SHOWING POINTS MENTIONED IN TEXT**

—(1) Intersection of Parkway at Beacon Heights with U.S. 221, Parkway being complete North from Asheville to this point. (2) Yonahlossee Trail (U.S. 221) right-of-way purchased for Parkway in 1939. (3) Pilot Ridge, location of 1700 foot tunnel if higher route is taken. (4) New Linville-Boone highway which cuts distance between points 11 miles. (5) Foscoe, and (6) Shulls Mills, intersections for connections with Blowing Rock-Cone-Price areas for commercial traffic. (7) Julian Price Memorial Park. (8) Boone. (9) Calloway Peak of Grandfather Mountain. (10) Mile High Swinging Bridge and parking area. (11) Grandfather Mountain Entrance, one mile from Parkway no matter which route taken. (12) Location of bridge if Parkway takes impractical high route up cliffs. Bridge would further add to the bypassed condition of Linville and Grandfather Mountain.





**BLASTING ALL THE WAY**—This picture made during construction of the road to Grandfather's Mile High Swinging Bridge is indicative of the terrain that would have to be reckoned with should the Parkway not follow its established 1939 right-of-way along a reconditioned Yonahlossee Trail.

**LITTLE SOIL, TONS OF ROCK**—The most costly construction known to Blue Ridge road building would be a consequence of a higher route. It would produce an unsightly scar and change the whole face and character of North Carolina's most loved and respected mountain.



**OVER TWICE AS LONG AS THIS ONE**—A tunnel five city blocks long (1700 feet) would be chiseled through Grandfather's Pilot Ridge should the Parkway take a higher route. Lighting, ventilation, and safety patrolling of the proposed tunnel would result in high maintenance costs, for it would be more than half as long as all of the eight tunnels on the presently completed Parkway combined. The tunnel pictured here is some 700 feet long, longest on present Parkway.

**ONLY 18 CURVES ARE NECESSARY—**

There are 76 curves on the 7.4 miles part of Yonahlossee Trail that makes up the most logical route for the Parkway at Grandfather Mountain, and only 18 of these curves are essential. A reconditioned Yonahlossee, with vistas opened up and non-essential curves removed, would have less than three curves per mile as compared with the completed Parkway average between Grandfather Mountain and Asheville of 4.66 curves per mile. It would be the highest part of the Parkway for its northern-most 350 mile section, even without taking an expensive higher route.



**ECONOMIC DAMAGES HAVE MANY RAMIFICATIONS —**

Failure to honor the 1939 right-of-way agreement by starting from scratch with a higher route across Grandfather would result in incalculable damages to existing business enterprises, not to mention the harm to abundant shrubbery and growing timber. More than 193,000 persons visited Grandfather during its 1954 season, making it the most visited privately owned attraction in North Carolina.





**HIGH ROUTE BRINGS MORE FOG WORRIES**—The mountain driving in the fog that bothers non-mountain drivers would be sharply increased by following a route higher than the Yonahlossee Trail. On many days the higher elevations of Grandfather are "soaked in" while the Yonahlossee is in the clear. Approval of the high route would not represent the best thinking of North Carolina's Highway Commission.

**ICE MEANS NO WINTERTIME USE ON HIGHER ROUTE**—The Linville to Blowing Rock section of the Parkway would be padlocked November to April by the Park Service because of ice and snow if a route higher than the year-around Yonahlossee Trail is taken. The Parkway is closed in the Mitchell-Craggy section each winter for this reason.



**EXPENSIVE BRIDGE PLANNED HERE**—Plans for a higher route across Grandfather Mountain would be complicated by the need for a bridge to take the Parkway up to the cliffs shown in the upper center of photo. Grandfather Mountain's entrance is one mile from the Parkway and Linville is 3 miles from the Parkway to the left, and the bridge across the intersection would do much to add to the already by-passed condition of these two points.