

Grandfather Mountain. Shall It Be Saved?

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"In the morning of the world a mighty convulsion heaved heavenward the Appalachian System—first born of earth's mountain ranges." Some geologists say 140 million years ago, while others claim not less than 200 million years' antiquity; and so Grandfather Mountain, most rugged, picturesque and highest peak in the entire Blue Ridge Range was born.

Today this venerable landmark is clothed with an exquisite virgin mantle of rare forest trees and flowers; cold tumbling brooks cascade down its steep slopes under dense canopies of white and purple rhododendrons and mountain laurel of almost unbelievable size and luxuriance; in May and June on more open ridges the flame azalea, most gorgeous of American shrubs, flashes fire; while charming alpine-like plants in a hundred varieties fill every nook and crevice on its craggy summits.

From the sides of Grandfather Mountain burst forth ice-cold springs, the headwaters of many streams flowing westward by way of the Great Appalachian Valley to water the broad Tennessee and Mississippi basins, and eastward through the Piedmont plains to the Atlantic Ocean. It is surely the "Grandfather of Waters." To the southwest, Grandfather Mountain's jagged cliffs plunge precipitously 2,000 feet into the forest-clad valleys where the Linville and Watauga Rivers, paradises of the trout angler, begin their long journeys to the sea;

while to the north and east, long but-tressed ridges slope away for miles, giving birth to a hundred tumbling streams that in the upper foothills of the Piedmont, join together to form the fruitful Catawba River, whose controlled waters are incessantly turning the powerful turbines that supply the electric energy for a new and amazing industrial Southland.

Just off the Blue Ridge Parkway and but a scant 10 miles to the southeast of Grandfather Mountain, the Linville River suddenly becomes the wildest and most picturesque stream of the Southern Appalachians, the valley culminating in a deep gorge with a descent of 2,000 feet in 20 miles from the beautiful Linville Falls to the foothills.

Grandfather Mountain towers above the surrounding mountains, and from its several summits a glorious panorama unfolds, with peaks and ridges rising one above and beyond another for fifty or a hundred miles to the south, the west and the north, impressing upon the observer in a manner not to be forgotten, the vastness of this region of mountains. "The varying degrees of haziness of the atmosphere, which has found expression in the name Blue Ridge, at times limits the distance of distinct vision, but it combines with the forest cover to soften the details and to render this Southern Appalachian landscape attractive beyond comparison."

This is the "Land of the Sky," where the snowbird nests, and where on the heights in summer cool

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breezes are born, which forever sweeping downward temper the hot valleys and plains far below to the east, south and west. The projection far into the Southland of these lofty ancient Appalachians, greatest masses of mountains east of the Rockies and the highest mountains covered with hardwood forest in America, profoundly affected the civilization that so soon after the discovery of America was to be imposed upon the Atlantic side of the continent.

To the steep mountainsides and into the fertile coves and valleys, came the hardiest and most virile of the invading tides of white men, to battle with Nature and carve new homes out of the wilderness, inspired with the fierce desire for new freedoms, and security to work out their own destiny. And thereafter out of these same mountains have come brilliant statesmen and leaders in every line of endeavor to do their part in the building of a great America.

From the beginning these same energizing mountains have ever been the near and blessed Mecca for countless thousands of heat-weary dwellers of the lowlands of cotton, tobacco and corn, a vast plain spread fan-like from a mountain base to the distant Atlantic and Gulf coastlines; for here in pure untainted air they found in overflowing abundance rest, health and recreation, in a setting of grand and inspiring landscapes.

However with the insistent economic demands of a fast-growing population, the virgin resources of soil and forest have been far too ruthlessly exploited, with little

thought of the future, and today the few remaining primeval wilderness areas are in imminent danger of despoliation. Already many of the choicest gems have been desecrated—some beyond regeneration, by cheap commercial exploitation for the temporary benefit of the few, the inevitable result of fatal complaisance and lack of intelligent forethought and future planning for the good of all.

"The Blue Ridge Parkway is an elongated park with a scenic motorway designed expressly for the tourist, threading the picturesque mountains between the Shenandoah National Park, Virginia, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, North Carolina and Tennessee. The parkway, first of its type and scale, will be 485 miles in length when completed. It averages 3,000 feet above sea level. It affords an unusual opportunity to view the natural beauty of a country heretofore virtually inaccessible—a country of bold panoramas, wild forest and exceptionally beautiful flora."*

At convenient intervals along this now famous parkway, recreation areas of outstanding scenic interest and varying from 500 to 10,000 acres in extent have been reserved, and provided with suitable camping facilities. The land for this unique scenic travelway, together with its protective park-owned right-of-way averaging 1,000 feet in width, was purchased by the States of Virginia and North Carolina, and transferred to the National Park Service in perpetuity, a most unusual and munificent gift to the people of our Nation. The war has halted con-

*National Park Service statement.

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struction, yet already more than 360 miles of the project have been brought to various stages of completion.

The amazing record of visitors to the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, far outnumbering those to our older and larger parks in the West, is convincing evidence of the vital need for setting aside and preserving inviolate before it is too late, every remaining suitable area still available. Thus may be assured, the highest value-use for the health and recreational needs of a congested and increasing Atlantic Seaboard and Mississippi Basin population. State parks answer the problem only in part.

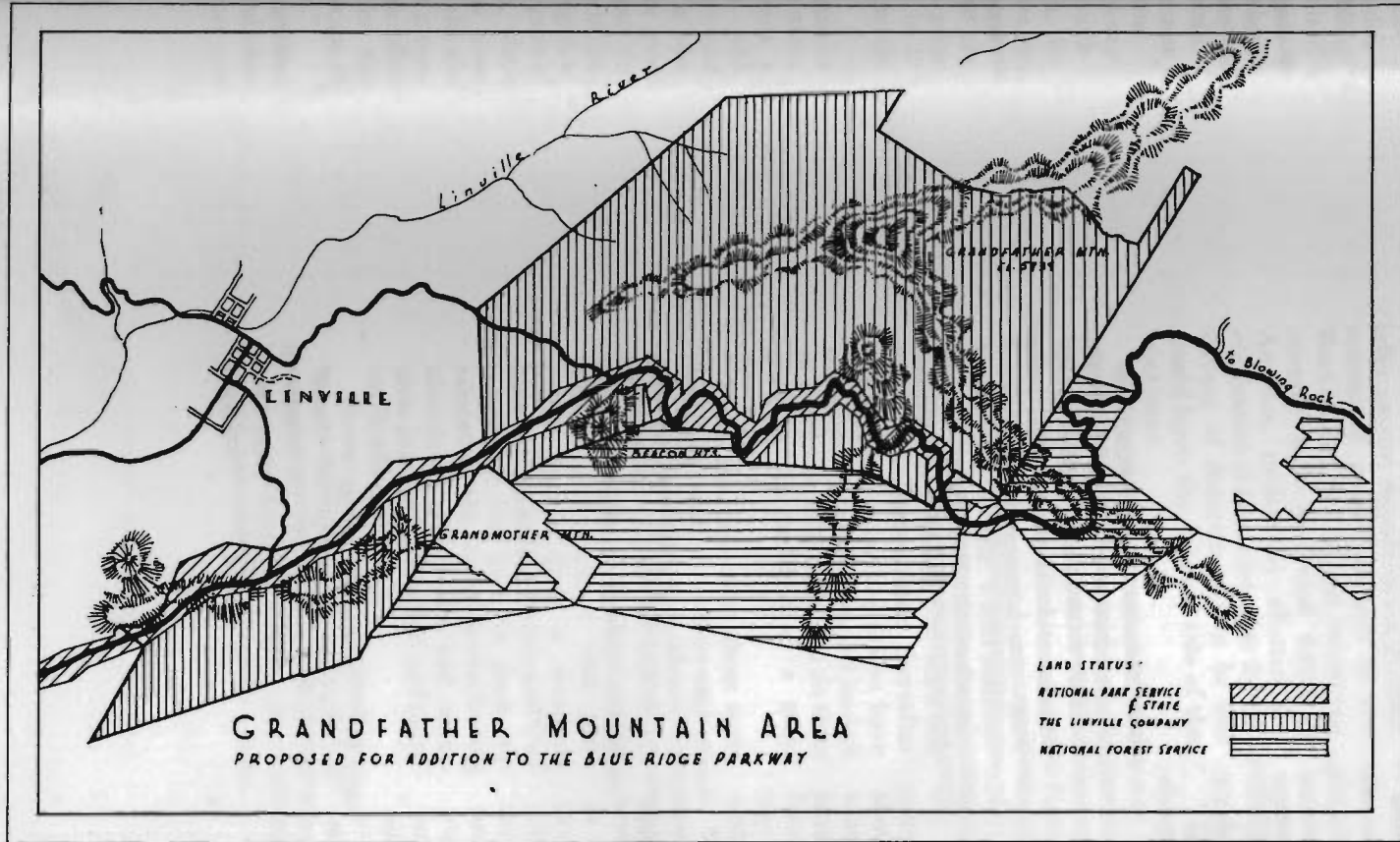
Beyond all question, the most outstanding and superb feature along the entire Blue Ridge Parkway is Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina, about two-thirds of the way from Shenandoah to the Great Smoky Mountains. The National Park Service considers it to be a vitally needed addition to the parkway, it is yet to be acquired and today is threatened with immediate calamitous destruction of its virgin glories by lumbering operations and other commercial exploitation.

The case for Grandfather Mountain is clear-cut and crystal-clear.

At the present time a 12,000-acre tract, including the dominant massif of Grandfather Mountain and its beautiful mate Grandmother Mountain, is offered for sale at a reasonable price. Together with contiguous lands partly now available it would constitute a superlative park of over 20,000 acres, with the highest naturalistic park standards, and be under the perpetual administration of the National Park Service.

If and when public ownership is consummated, the National Park Service plans the establishment of a major wayside rest and recreational camp on Grandmother Mountain in a suitable sheltered location adjoining the Blue Ridge Parkway, where it will in no way detract from or mar the naturalistic features of the park.

This is an urgent challenge not only to Grandfather Mountain's homeland State of North Carolina, but to the entire Nation. Is it not an inescapable duty our citizens of today owe to succeeding generations, to save this masterpiece of Nature intact and unsullied? It is certainly a service which when accomplished, will for all time greatly redound to the honor of those who have had a part in preventing its destruction.



PROPOSED GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN PARK, located on the Blue Ridge Parkway in western North Carolina between Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. The Linville Company property of 5,550 acres shown above and available for purchase is in the heart of the project and includes Grandfather and Grandmother Mountains—the most beautiful and spectacular region in the entire Blue Ridge Mountains. This property is in immediate danger of irreparable despoilment by lumbering and other disastrous exploitation. The total acquisition area, approved by the National Park Service, is approximately 26,000 acres, rivalling Acadia National Park in area and interest. To it belong mountains that with their innumerable varieties of wild life and recreation shall be lost forever to future generations?