

UP Writer Tells Of New Mountain Road

By WILLIAM A. SHIRES
(United Press Writer)

RALEIGH, Aug. 31.—This is the story of a misty, behind-the-mountain highway finished this month which promises a new way of life for one of the most isolated sections of North Carolina.

The story begins nearly 100 years ago when iron ore was found in the mountain country along Cranberry Creek, in terrain so rugged that only a few trails existed.

Until this day traffic has come over the ridges from upper East Tennessee into Northwest North Carolina only in a trickle. Most of the roads in the area north and west of famous Grandfather Mountain were narrow and crooked, suitable only for local traffic, and as one veteran highway engineer commented "not adequate for that."

But the iron ore a century ago

was a lure, and an ambitious group organized a railroad company. A bit far-sighted, they called it the "Tennessee and Pacific."

Instead of pushing west, however, the railroad went east following the winding streams and narrow valleys into North Carolina. It was a narrow-gauge track, and an undersized train ran up to Cranberry from Johnson City, Tenn., for the iron ore.

The train became known as Tweetsie, and its whistle was beloved by the people who lived in the mountain-hemmed coves. Years later the iron ore played out, and Tweetsie has now become a museum-piece.

It chugs again on a little track built along a mountainside near Blowing Rock, attracting tourists and bringing back memories. Along what was once the Tweetsie line, highway crews have been busy.

Divided Superhighway
A few years ago the new four-lane divided superhighway sweeping over the Blue Ridge from Old Fort to Ridgecrest was completed, and hailed as an engineering and road-building marvel.

The word for the surveying and planning the new road "on the other side" of Grandfather Mountain is "phenomenal," according to Division Highway Engineer J. R. Council of North Wilkesboro.

By using the new road, crossing the Blue Ridge and dropping down on the east side to reach the Old Fort-Ridgecrest highway (U. S. 70) the travel time from the Watauga County seat of Boone to Asheville is now measured in minutes instead of hours. The trip can be made leisurely in 120 minutes.

The principal part of the newly constructed road, designated as N. C. 105, saves only 11 miles in distance from Boone to Linville, in Avery County. But it actually opens an entirely new route out of Watauga, avoiding the bottle-necks of the very crooked Yohanlossee Trail and the heavy grades and even more crooked turns of

N. C. 104 from Vilas to Banner Elk.

Trail Is Utilized
The Yohanlossee Trail is utilized as not only U. S. 221 from Linville to Blowing Rock, but also by the U. S. Park Service as that link of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Yohanlossee Trail hugs the stony eastern slopes of Grandfather, then winds through the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park south of Blowing Rock. With its vistas to the east over the Johns River Gorge, its foggy turns, cascades and mountain streams it is scenic enough—but slow going.

Until a few years ago, apparently no one had envisioned a road "back of the mountain"—on the other side of Grandfather—which would surmount the natural obstacles.

On the "yan" side of Grandfather are the picturesque villages of Foscoe and Shulls Mills nestled in the flat yet high Watauga River Valley.

Road Follows Old Line
From Boone, the road swings down gently through Hodges Gap following the old Tweetsie line. It crosses the Watauga River at Shulls Mills over a slightly curved reinforced concrete bridge and follows the river valley up to once inaccessible Foscoe.

From there it climbs steeply for about one and a half miles and then on a gentle climb for four miles to Linville Gap, elevation just over 4,000 feet. Still on the abandoned Tweetsie line, the road then curves gently on the floor of the high valley at the foot of Grandfather Mountain to Linville. From Linville, the route to Asheville is U. S. 221 and U. S. 70, crossing and re-crossing the Blue Ridge. The Blue Ridge Parkway sweeps up to Asheville atop the mountains, past Little Switzerland, Mount Mitchell, the Blacks and the Craggies.

"Good Alignment"
Council said "unusually good alignment" with a maximum curvature of only six degrees achieved on the road was "almost phenomenal for such elevations." The grades are light, despite the extremely rugged terrain.

There was extremely hard rock encountered in the Watauga River Gorge, unusual quantities of underground and surface water at Linville Gap. Last winter, road crews were plagued with rock and land slides and surface failures because of frosts and, as always in the mountains, winter

Coffee Is Top U. S. Beverage

RALEIGH—Coffee is the national drink here in the United States according to the U. S. Department of Agriculture's nationwide household food consumption survey.

According to their report, we drink more coffee at home than tea or soft drinks. A little over 16 six-ounce cups of coffee a week was estimated to be the per person average. This was considerably higher than the average for tea or soft drinks.

Compared to the average 16 cups of coffee a week, household purchases of tea indicated only 5 3 cups per person, and a little over two cups of soft drinks.

Use of these beverages differed with the size of the household. Those who lived alone—the single-

travel will be more difficult.

But Council said N. C. 105, together with the new link to Banner Elk from Linville Gap, "will be of tremendous service to tourist traffic, and the industrial development of all Northwest North Carolina."


person households—drank more coffee and tea. Larger families used more milk and soft drinks, because these families included children.

Regional preferences in beverages showed up in the survey figures. In the North Central states they drank the most coffee, in the South the least—on the average and per person.

In the Northeast they purchased the most fresh fluid milk, but in the North Central they used more because many of the family farms there had home produced milk. In the South and the North Central regions they averaged highest in home use of soft drinks. The South purchased the most tea, and used most of it for iced tea.

While the United States is officially off the gold standard, at last count the earmarked gold in the vaults totaled \$6,299,000,000. Foreign nations at home or in other strongholds had \$7,805,000,000 more. The United States owns about \$22,398,000,000, which makes the total free world supply of gold about \$36.5 billions, excluding international institutions.

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