

Mount Mitchell Has Unique Tourist Appeal

By MARIAM BABB
(North Carolina News Bureau)

Towering 6,684 feet above sea level, North Carolina's Mount Mitchell is the highest peak in Eastern America. On its summit is a North Carolina State Park in which no point is less than a mile above sea level.

From many points along the Blue Ridge Parkway there are superlative views of Mitchell and its rugged neighboring peaks. In the Black Mountain range between Asheville and Spruce Pine, and from the Parkway crest of Mount Mitchell is accessible by an easy drive over a five-mile spur of paved state highway. The highway (N. C. 128) terminates in a 250-car parking lot in Mount Mitchell State Park. From the parking lot, it is a pleasant 300-yard walk along a trail through thick evergreens to the observation tower on the mountain's highest point. The tower was built a quarter of a century ago as a memorial to Dr. Elisha Mitchell, who lost his life while conducting explorations which established the mountain's altitude. His tomb is at the foot of the tower.

Mount Mitchell State Park, visited by 346,770 people in 1955, covers some 1,224 acres purchased by the State of North Carolina in 1915 for its first State Park. It is open free to visitors from April through mid-October. Park facilities include picnic areas, refreshment stand, camp grounds, comfort stations and hiking trails. A large stone building completed in 1953 houses a restaurant and a spacious room for club meetings and lectures. Music in the restaurant comes from Radio Station WMIT, built on nearby 6,520-foot Clingman's Peak as the first FM station in the South. There is a State Highway Patrol radio antenna on the Mitchell observation tower.

For many years, the U. S. Weather Bureau maintained a weather station on top of Mount Mitchell, with an observer on duty year around to make recordings of temperature, rainfall and wind velocity every six hours. (Summer temperatures on the mountain have rarely risen above 80 degrees, and usually they are much lower.) The sturdy log cabin which once sheltered the weather observer is now used as a barracks for park personnel in the summer, and is closed in the winter. No human beings live on the mountain top between late October and early spring, but it has a thriving population of black bear, squirrels, woodchucks, wildcat and other small animals. Ruffed grouse and the Carolina Junco (snowbirds) are found here year around, but songbirds are summer residents only.

Plant life on Mount Mitchell, like the climate, is more that of Canada than Carolina. There are magnificent stands of virgin balsam and spruce, with some birch, red cherry, mountain ash and hemlock. Shrubs include rhododendron, elder, mountain maple, and wild hydrangea. Few deciduous trees are found near the top of the mountain.

There are privately owned tracts of land on the east slopes of the mountain, while vast areas of the western slopes are in the Mount Mitchell Game Refuge, under the jurisdiction of the U. S. Forest Service and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Dr. Elisha Mitchell, professor of mathematics at the University of North Carolina, first measured the mountain's height in 1835 and found it to be greater than that of Mount Washington, N. H., then believed to be the highest peak in Eastern America. In 1844, Dr. Mitchell and General Thomas Clingman made further measurements in the Blacks, Balsams and Great Smokies. When General Clingman reported discovery of a higher peak, Dr. Mitchell attempted to verify his own measurements of Mount Mitchell (then Black Dome) and lost his life in 1857 in a fall over the brink of a waterfall. His body was interred in Asheville, but a year later it was removed and buried at the peak of Mount Mitchell. Two mountains are named for his associate, General Clingman—Clingman's Dome in the Great Smokies and Clingman's Peak in the Black Mountains, but neither is quite as high as Mount Mitchell.

U. S. PAY ROLL

The number of civilian employees of the Federal Government increased in April for the fourth consecutive month, according to Senator Byrd. The increase from March to April was 6,954, bringing the total to 2,399,811. The biggest increases occurred in the Agriculture Interior, Commerce Department and in the Air Force.

Increase Seen In Motor Cars

Charlotte. — North Carolina's population of registered passenger cars will increase by more than 317,800 and there will be a gain of 116,000 families in the state by 1960, according to a study by the nation's largest independent automobile finance company.

Thomas F. Moore of Charlotte, vice-president in this area for Universal C.I.T. Credit Corporation, said his company's analysis of the expected growth in the state's population and in family income—without considering other important economic trends at work—points convincingly to higher levels of prosperity in the future.

Passenger car registrations by 1960, he said, should total more than 1,327,000, a 31 per cent increase over the 1,010,000 now registered.

The finance company official also forecast a population gain of about 11 per cent, or more than 471,000 persons, by 1965. This would bring the state's population to more than 4,771,000. As for families, he foresaw a gain of 11 per cent, raising the total to more than 1,060,000 as compared with about 1,050,000 families now.

"Credit is a major force in maintaining local prosperity, particularly in view of the excellent payment record made by families in the state," he said. "Two out of every three automobiles are sold on credit. Its continued use in the sale of cars and other valuable consumer goods will continue to make for higher living standards, more convenience and greater comfort for American families."

Other encouraging factors in the automobile outlook, he said, are the rapid growth in two-car families, accelerated by the trend to suburban living; the sound record for credit repayment established by families purchasing cars; continued high levels of employment, income and savings, and more aggressive selling by automobile manufacturers and dealers.

Modernization of highways and streets, including relief of city congestion and provision for more parking facilities, the finance company official added, are vital considerations in view of the expected growth in auto registrations.

BABIES

The Census Bureau recently announced that 23,500,000 babies were born in this country from 1950 until April 1 of this year. This was almost as large a number as for the decade from 1930 to 1940.

Slower Speed Is Urged By Colonel Smith

Raleigh. — "Hold your horses!" Col. James R. Smith, commander of the State Highway Patrol used that time honored admonition this week to urge Tar Heel motorists to keep a sensible rein on their speed.

Col. Smith's plea for driver restraint was a part of the Slow Down and Live Campaign now underway in the state and nation.

"Undisciplined highway speed leads to disaster," the patrol chief said. "Such uncontrolled speed played a big part in last year's 1,165 Tar Heel traffic deaths."

Col. Smith explained that the high speed potential of the modern car is there for a purpose—to be kept in reserve for special needs, such as passing.

"There's never any excuse for a driver to unleash this speed full force," he said. "The whole trouble comes when the driver uses this extra power and speed at the wrong time."

Col. Smith advised drivers to cut their speed whenever weather, road conditions, or visibility are poor and also when driving through shopping districts or residential areas.

"And don't relax your control when you're on the open road," he warned. "High speed on long, monotonous stretches of road often tends to produce a somewhat hypnotic effect."

The colonel, who has himself driven well over a million miles without an accident, said that the combination of monotony and speed is a factor in many rear-end collisions, and also figures prominently in accidents in which vehicles roll over or skid off the road.

"Control that urge to cut loose," Col. Smith said. "You'll live longer and get there in good time."

The colonel gave these six points as a guide to drivers in determining safe speeds:

1. Drive at a speed that will enable you to stop in the assured clear distance ahead.
2. Slow down before you get to curves and intersections.
3. At night, drive at the speed which will let you stop within your headlight range.
4. Drive with traffic. You are probably going too fast if you are passing many cars—too slow if many cars are passing you.
5. Where children are playing, be able to stop in a car length or

Too Many Holes In Fence Row

"You may be digging 10 times as many holes on your farm as you need, neighbor," says Jim Andersen, State College extension forestry specialist.

How long do your fence posts last? Two years? Five years? Somewhere in between? Well, that's the average span of life for an untreated fence post in Eastern North Carolina.

Now, what about this "too many" less.

6. When you're tired or inattentive—stop.

holes' business? Just this: a fence post treated with "Penia" or creosote will last from 15 to 25 years, if properly treated, Andersen emphasizes.

If you have to replace your posts every two years, that means that you may well be digging that same hole 10 times oftener than you would have to if you were using treated posts, Andersen concludes.

That the quality of beef cattle in North Carolina continues to improve was shown in a recent fat stock show and sale, where out of 41 steers entered, seven graded Prime, 20 Choice, 11 Good, and only three Commercial.

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