

Cliffs Of Neuse To Provide Recreation Facilities For Eastern North Carolina

By HENRY BELK

Goldsboro, Jan. 25 — Ninety-foot cliffs that rise from flat lands to unfold their ribboned sandstone the geologic history of millions of years; rolling hills where the Spanish moss of the semitropics wave gently in trees at whose roots grow the mountain galax; an area unusual in the variety of its plant life; a section famous from Indian days for its health-giving waters.

That is a brief word picture of Cliffs of Neuse State Park at Seven Springs, newest in the State's system. The park will provide, when developed, State recreation facilities for the first time for the heart of Eastern North Carolina. More than 500,000 people live within 60 miles of the park.

The Cliffs are located in Wayne County at a point near where Wayne, Lenoir and Duplin counties join. They are 15 miles from Goldsboro, 25 miles from Kinston, 15 miles from Mount Olive, 41 miles from Wilson, 46 miles from Smithfield, 33 miles from Snow Hill, 46 miles from Greenville, 59 miles from Rocky Mount, and 67 miles from Raleigh. This great area and its people, who produce a large part of the fine-cured tobacco of the nation, had been without a State Park until the establishment of the Cliffs area.

Land which had been picked by national and State park authorities as most desirable because of its unusual scenic value was given to the State in 1944 and accepted by the Department of Conservation and Development. Donors were Lionel Well of Goldsboro and A. J. Davis of Mt. Olive.

Preliminary development of the park has been started. A tenant house on the donated land was converted into quarters for the park ranger, and Roy Sisk assigned to the post. Access roads have been built, park roads have been improved, and a few picnic tables placed.

Increasing in Popularity. Despite the fact that only preliminary development has been done and facilities are wholly inadequate, the Cliffs Park is a spot of increasing popularity for sight-seers and visitors. Each Sunday numbers of automobile loads of people drive to the park to enjoy the thrilling view from the Cliffs or to wander into the dark valleys, marked by trails in dense growth, and to the spot where the earlier settlers brought their corn to the mills now marked by ancient stones.

Impressed by the quiet beauty of the place, members of the Inter-denominational Youth Council last spring staged a sunrise Easter Service on the Cliffs high above the Neuse. Long before dawn a group of some 20 went ahead to prepare breakfast. Several score others joined them, and just as the sun peeped in the east, they gathered reverently for a reading of the story of Easter and for appropriate observance. The group voted to make the Easter event an annual one at the Cliffs.

In accepting the acreage for State park purposes, the Department of Conservation and Development agreed to develop and provide facilities needed. Officials of the department charged with responsibility of such plans blueprinted a program of parking area, quarters for group assemblies, picnicking, overnight camping, sanitary facilities, swimming pool, nature trails and museum. The overall plan represented the least the Department felt should be provided if the crowds sure to visit the Cliffs park are to be accommodated properly.

Budget Recommended. Recommendations of the planners were approved by the Department of Conservation and Development and a budget of \$213,000 for the next two years was recommended.

In their acceptance of the Cliffs and pledge for the park's needed development, the Department acted after considering high endorsements from some of the nation's top-ranking park and recreation experts.

One of the first to point to the

need for preserving the Cliffs area for those who come after was Horace M. Albright, former director of National Yellowstone Park, and later director of the National Park Service. Albright spent some time studying the area. In his formal report, studied by the Conservation Department before act to create the park was made, the national expert said in part: "The Cliffs themselves are interesting as an unusual geological exhibit that will command much attention. But they are of greater value as an outstanding feature of the scenery because they form the promontory from which sweeping and plunging views of the Neuse may be obtained by the observer as he gazes up or down the stream flowing in its ancient court far below."

"The Cliffs too are significant because they have influenced the continued growth of plant life that long since vanished in adjacent regions. They have retained for this section of the Neuse an abundant and varied flora which alone entitles the area to perpetual preservation. . . ."

"The writer regards the preservation of this beautiful section of the Neuse in a State or Regional park as a task of urgent importance. Ellwood Allen, recreation expert, spent several days studying the Cliffs section, and presented a report enthusiastically endorsing it for recreation purposes. At the same time he came to the section, he was landscape engineer with the National Recreation Association. Since then he has established his own office as recreation and planning consultant in New York. "The section must be preserved," he wrote, adding that it was ideal for a "people's park."

Many Species. Dr. B. W. Wells, State College botany professor and an authority on North Carolina plant life, spent a week in making a preliminary study of the flora of the park land. "There can be little doubt that this state area will stand very high in number of species (of plant life) compared to other areas of equal acreage," he concluded. "It is of special interest that here the longleaf pine is in such close contact to the mountain type of hardwood forest which so luxuriantly covers slopes. Such excellent examples of second growth stands of these two extreme types are seldom seen together. The oak species presented by both number twelve which is about half of the oaks in North Carolina," he wrote. "Among the sandhill plants are those two interesting relatives of the honey locust, the dwarf species,

only 18 inches high and the waist high one with the beautiful rose-colored flowers. The sandhill blueberries and huckleberries abound with the goat's-rue or devil's-shoe-string scattered everywhere. The erect poison-oak is common. In places the grass-covered golden aster carpets the ground like a lawn and the weird sandhill milkweed with its pale green leaves reclines on the sand like a sickly-looking plant. Frequently seen is the milky-juiced spurge with its highly variable leaves and its attenuated scientific name — *Tithymalopsis lpeccanahae*. The rarest sandhill plant so far found is the Carolina indigo (*Indioferacarina*), a southern species seldom seen in North Carolina and which here at the Cliffs may reach its northern limit.

"In the transition zone to the hardwood forest the most distinctive feature is the large amount of yellow jasmine spreading over the ground. The visitor treads on a carpet of jasmine. Such a concentrated mass of the vines to be seen in the woods of the upper slope is not common.

"Moving down into the hardwood forest a remarkable mingling of eastern and western shrubs is to be noted. Wax myrtle and horse sugar occur in unusual quantity and the sparkle berry is everywhere. French mulberry and shrubby St. Johns wort are to be seen together along with the lead plant and the strawberry bush. On the lower level near the river is the button bush, alder, pepper bush and the moisture loving yellow root. Higher up on the well drained slopes are the trailing arbutus and the round leaved mountain galax, the latter in places making a solid mat over large areas of the forest floor. Amid these, one easily notes the characteristic odor which will instantly bring to mind a hundred mountain slopes."

Near Seven Springs. The park is located only three miles from the famous seven springs, each with a different chemical analysis in an area of a few feet. It was from these springs that the village of Seven Springs, renowned as a health spot since Indian days, got its name. A "ninth spring" is on one edge of the Cliffs park property. The Tuscarora Indians who inhabited the area called the section where the park is located "Sapony Hills," and it was about the Seven Hills that they gathered to drink the healthful waters and to stage tribal hunts into the wilderness fastness of the Neuse. The early settlers learned from

the Indians the value of the mineral qualities of the Springs, and more than a hundred years ago Seven Springs was one of the most popular health resorts in North Carolina. For many years now the Maxwell family has operated the springs, and numbers of the same

people have been returning each summer to drink from the springs. They will tell you emphatically that they are improved in health by the water. Quantities of the mineral water from the springs are shipped each week to distant points, some as far away as adjoining states. The Maxwell family is reported to have refused offers from Philadelphia and Minnesota health experts who desired to acquire the springs and build there a health spa of national importance.

Along the Neuse river below the Cliffs, the river boats in Colonial days brought their produce for Everettsville — Wayne county village south of Goldsboro fallen to dust many years ago — and even to Smithfield. Sometimes they brought brick from England on the trip upstream. The old Ivey Homestead in the

section is known to have been constructed with brick brought from England. One date of 1802 has been found on the old home, but in the family it is believed that it was built before 1800.

Southern Farm Market Summary

Prices dropped sharply this week



as sagging fresh beef prices in the wholesale markets sent values lower. Choice steers dropped to \$3.00, the lowest since callings were removed.

Hogs were fairly liberal and in line with seasonal production, but demand pushed prices for best weight butchers up 25 to 50 cents per hundred pounds. Lightweight pigs were off at several points.

Country markets improved some as demand for broilers and fryers picked up at prevailing prices.

Orange shipment of Florida oranges dropped off with auction prices in large cities the lowest of the season. Tangerines sold higher. Cotton prices were down further this week, and the average price on Friday for 15-16 inch was 30.91 cents a pound.

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From where I sit . . . by Joe Marsh

Sam Abernathy Holds the Line!

Folks in our town have been making mighty complimentary remarks about Sam Abernathy. In spite of talk about inflation, Sam's prices — (say, on eggs for instance) — are what they were a year ago. "Shucks," says Sam, "Don't give me credit. I get my eggs from Slim Hines' dairy farm. Slim hasn't raised his wholesale prices, because Bert Childers has kept his price the same on chicken feed. It works by mutual agreement!" And there again you have Self-Regulation, doing what no law could ever do! Like Self-Regulation in the Brewing Industry . . . Brewers and taverns keepers get together by mutual agreement to maintain decent, low-shilling standards among places that sell beer. From where I sit, the more you leave things up to the people themselves, the more you get the kind of results America is famous for — co-operation by mutual agreement. Or, if you want another name for it, self-regulation!

Joe Marsh

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