

CREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,  
NEWFOUND GAP ROAD  
Between Gatlinburg, TN and Cherokee, NC  
Gatlinburg Vicinity  
Sevier County  
Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-A

HAN  
TENN  
78-0001  
6A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
MEASURED AND INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS  
XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES,  
NEWFOUND GAP ROAD  
HAER NO. TN-35-A

Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,  
Between Gatlinburg, Tennessee and  
Cherokee, North Carolina.

Date of Construction: ca. 1830 through the present (peak of  
NPS construction - 1930s-50s)

Type of Structure: Roadway, Bridges, Tunnels and Landscapes

Use: National Park Transportation System

Designer: Private individuals, corporations, and  
State and Federal transportation  
authorities

Engineer: U.S. Bureau of Public Roads and National  
Park Service

Fabricator/Builder: Various private and public contractors

Owner: U.S. Department of the Interior,  
National Park Service, Great Smoky  
Mountains National Park

Significance: Newfound Gap Road is the central  
transportation artery in Great Smoky  
Mountains National Park. It is the only  
road to cross the park from north to  
south, connecting the two major  
entrances at Gatlinburg, Tennessee and  
Cherokee, North Carolina. The  
transportation system of Great Smoky  
Mountains is representative of NPS park  
road design and landscape planning  
throughout the country. Much of the  
construction work was undertaken by the

Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. Once established, this road system provided access to the first national park in the southern portion of the United States as well as links to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Shenandoah National Park.

Project Information:

Documentation was conducted during the summer of 1996 under the co-sponsorship of HABS/HAER, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the National Park Service Roads and Parkway Program and funded through the Federal Lands Highway Program. Measured drawings were produced by Edward Lupyak, field supervisor, Matthew Regnier, Karen Young, and Dorota Sikora (ICOMOS intern, Poland). The historical reports were prepared by Cornelius Maher and Michael Kelleher. See also drawings and histories on related structures: Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN-35; Clingmans Dome Road, TN-35-B; Little River Road, TN-35-C; Cades Cove and Laurel Creek Roads, TN-35-D; Foothills Parkway, TN-35-E; Cataloochee Valley Road, TN-35-F; Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, TN-35-G; Big Creek Road, TN-35-H; Northshore Road, TN-35-I; Cosby Park Road, TN-35-J; Deep Creek Road, TN-35-K; Greenbrier Road, TN-35-L; Heintooga Ridge and Balsam Mountain Roads, TN-35-M; Cataloochee Trail and Turnpike, TN-35-N; Rich Mountain Road, TN-35-O; Elkmont Road, TN-35-P; Loop Over Bridge, TN-35-Q; Smokemont Bridge, TN-35-R; Elkmont Vehicle Bridge, TN-35-S; and Lutten Bridges, TN-35-T.

*Introduction*

Newfound Gap Road is the central transportation artery in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, over which most visitors travel at some point during their time in the park. The road is the only one to cross the park from north to south, bisecting it into eastern and western halves, and connecting the two major park entrances at Gatlinburg, Tennessee and Cherokee, North Carolina.

When entering Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the Newfound Gap Road at Gatlinburg, a motorist can not help but take note of the stark contrast between the honky-tonk character of this town, which is probably the most infamous gateway community adjacent to a national park, and the lush forest which begins immediately at the park boundary. As the road enters the park it travels southwest into the rich bottomlands of the Sugarlands Valley, which was an agricultural settlement prior to the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934. A short distance down the road from the boundary is the park entrance sign, which states that this area has been recognized by the United Nations as an "International Biosphere Reserve"

because of its role as a major scientific and educational ecosystem which helps protect the diversity of life in the world. The entrance sign is a popular roadside attraction, and a line of cars is often found near it as visitors stop to pose in front of the sign for photographs.

At 0.9 mile from the park boundary, the Newfound Gap Road intersects the Gatlinburg Bypass of the Foothills Parkway, which allows motorists to enter the park directly from the Gatlinburg Spur of the parkway and avoid the traffic and congestion on the streets of Gatlinburg.

The Newfound Gap Road crosses the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River at 1.5 miles via the Headquarters Bridge. Just beyond the bridge is a side road to the north which leads to the park headquarters, a maintenance area, and a residential area for Park Service employees. At this point, the stone headquarters building built by the CCC is visible on the right side of the road, and the Visitor Center, built during the Park Service's Mission 66 period, is directly ahead. Because this area was historically an agricultural settlement, the land around the

headquarters and visitor center has been maintained as an open field.

In front of the park headquarters, the Newfound Gap Road takes a wide turn to the south, and at 1.6 miles intersects with the Little River Road which travels west towards Cades Cove. From here, the Newfound Gap Road follows the West Prong closely, crossing the river and its tributaries several times. In this river valley, the thick, lush forest grows in close to the sides of the road as it ascends towards the crest of the Smokies.

The Newfound Gap Road visibly begins its ascent of the Smokies just past 2.5 miles. In this area, "quiet walkways" can be found leading from the road in several locations. These short walking trails provide motorists with the opportunity to leave their cars and enjoy the forest, and may help to heal the frayed nerves visitors that can develop on the often congested park roads.

The Campbell Overlook is located on the side of the Newfound Gap Road at milepost 3.8. From here, visitors can look to the east and see Mount LeConte, the second highest peak in the park at 6,593'. At just over 6 miles, the Chimneys Picnic Area is

located on the side of the road along the west bank of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River. This area originally served as one of the primary campgrounds in the park, but was converted to a picnic area as visitation increased and larger camp grounds were built. The loop road through the picnic area and the parking spurs at each picnic site look similar to those in many campgrounds in the park. The stone work in the picnic area, including the fire pits and comfort station, were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s.

The Newfound Gap Road crosses to the east side of the West Prong just beyond the picnic area over the Chimneys Bridge. This single-arch bridge is probably one of the best examples Great Smoky Mountains National Park provides of the rustic style in which most structures were built in the national parks during the period prior to World War II.

After crossing the West Prong, the Newfound Gap Road climbs steeply up the side of a ridge. A cut is visible on the east side of the road and a stone guard wall is visible on the west side. Several pull-offs are located along the west side of the road beginning at milepost 7, all of which offer views of the

Chimney Tops, one of the most dramatic peaks in the park. In this area, the Newfound Gap Road is traveling through a transition zone from the cone hardwood forest natural community found in the lower elevations of the Smokies to the northern hardwood natural community. A roadside interpretive exhibit provides information to motorists on this transition.

At 8.5 miles, the Newfound Gap Road enters one of two tunnels, which allows the roadway to proceed in a generally straight alignment. Without this tunnel, the road would have curved sharply around the ridge, creating a potentially hazardous condition for motorists. The portals of the tunnel are designed to blend in with the natural stone outcroppings around it, thereby presenting the illusion that nature has not been disturbed by the construction of this road.

The Chimney Tops trailhead leads off to the west of the Newfound Gap Road at the 8.7 milepost. This 2-mile trail is one of the most popular in the park.

The Loop Over, one of the most interesting road structures in the park, is located at 9 miles. Here, the Newfound Gap Road makes a 360 degree loop, and passes over itself via a bridge,

thereby climbing a steep slope in one long graceful and safe curve rather than the two tight and dangerous switchbacks which would have been required had this structure not been built.

At 9.5 miles, the Newfound Gap Road travels closely along the east side of the West Prong. A revetment wall along the side of the road prevents the river from undercutting the road. A guard wall sits on top of the revetment wall to protect visitors from the steep drop to the river, allowing motorists to pull to the side of the road for a better view of the river.

The parking area for the Alum Cave trailhead is located on the east side of the road at 10.5 miles, providing access to the most popular trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Alum Cave Trail travels 2.5 miles to Alum Cave Bluff, a dramatic rock outcropping, and another 2.5 miles to Mount LeConte, thereby providing the shortest route to this popular hiking destination. Beyond the Alum Cave parking area, pull-offs line the side of the Newfound Gap Road. At 12 miles, the road once again crosses the West Prong.

At the 13 milepost, steep ridges are visible on the side of the Newfound Gap Road and evidence of landslides are visible from

the overlooks in the area. By the 14-mile point, after the road goes through another tunnel, the motorist has entered the spruce-fir forest natural community. Here, the Morton Overlook, at an elevation of 4,837' offers a view to the northwest and down the valley of the West Prong through which the Newfound Gap Road has traveled.

At almost 15 miles, the road reaches the crest of the Smokies at Newfound Gap, the most prominent overlook in Great Smoky Mountains National Park at 5,048'. A large parking area is located here, allowing motorists to leave their cars and enjoy the view to the southwest. The Appalachian Trail, which travels through the park along the main ridge of the Smokies, crosses the road here, as does the Tennessee-North Carolina border. A large memorial which honors the \$5 million donation by the Rockefeller family towards the purchase of the land for Great Smoky Mountains National Park is also located at Newfound Gap.

Upon entering the gap, the Newfound Gap Road turns slightly west to go around the parking area. It soon turns southwest and begins to descend into North Carolina. Here, the Clingmans Dome

Road intersects with the Newfound Gap Road, and travels west a short distance along the main ridge of the Smokies.

At 16 miles, the Oconaluftee Valley Overlook is located on the right side of the road and offers an expansive view to the east down the valley through which the Newfound Gap Road descends in North Carolina. At 17.5 miles, the Webb Overlook is located on the west side of the road, offering views into the Deep Creek Valley. The Deep Creek Trail heads south from the road in this area, offering the intrepid visitor an opportunity to leave their car and explore the backcountry of the park. However, only 3 percent of all visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park actually leave the roads to hike in the backcountry.

By 26 miles, the Oconaluftee River is visible to the east of the Newfound Gap Road. The Smokemont Campground is located just across the river 27.5 miles. A small wood bridge carries motorists across the river and into the campground at this point.

The vegetation around the Newfound Gap Road opens up to a meadow at 29.5 miles, where the road enters the bottomlands which were used by settlers in the area for agriculture. The Mingus Mill, one of the remnants of the settlement in the park, is

located off the west side of the road at 30 miles. This mill has been restored by the Park Service and offers visitors an opportunity to witness a living history exhibit.

At 30.5 miles, a spur road crosses the Oconaluftee River and travels east to a maintenance area and housing for Park Service employees. A Jobs Corps center is also located here. This federal program provides training for disadvantaged youth at several locations around the country. The Oconaluftee Visitor Center and a restored pioneer farmstead are located along the Newfound Gap Road just south of this spur road.

Beyond the visitor center, the Newfound Gap Road turns from a two lane road into a four lane road in order to handle the large amount of traffic which may be encountered here. The southern terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway intersects with the road at the 31.5 milepost, and the park boundary with Cherokee, North Carolina is encountered at 32 miles. Here, as at the north end of the Newfound Gap Road, the park borders on a developed town which caters to the tourist trade with any number of garish attractions.

*Trails and Roads in the Pre-Park Era*

Prior to the arrival of engineers and landscape architects, who blazed gravel and asphalt highways over the Great Smoky Mountains in the twentieth century, Indians and white settlers created simple footpaths and crude roads through this region. The Cherokee were the first to go over the Smokies on the Indian Gap Trail, which crossed the mountains in the vicinity of Newfound Gap. This footpath began in present-day Sevierville, Tennessee at the Great Indian War Path, a major east-west Indian trail. From Sevierville, the Indian Gap Trail ran south along the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River into the Great Smoky Mountains. At the crest of the mountains, the trail went through the gap between Mount Mingus and Mount Collins. This gap, which would be called Indian Gap by white settlers, was 1 mile west of Newfound Gap, with Mount Mingus between the two. The Indian Gap Trail ran down the southern flank of the mountains along the Oconaluftee River to present-day Whittier, North Carolina, where

it connected with the east-west Rutherford War Trace trail,  
another major footpath in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The removal of most of the Cherokee from western North Carolina in the late 1830s led to a large migration of white settlers into the region. However, whites were already living in the area prior to the removal which would later be referred to as the "Trail of Tears," and were already transforming the Indian footpaths into roads. To facilitate such changes, which the whites considered improvements, in 1832, the North Carolina state legislature chartered the Oconaluftee Turnpike Company to build a wagon road over the Indian Gap Trail from the present-day Smokemont area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park up to Indian Gap, From here, travelers would follow the Indian Gap Trail, which was rough but capable of carrying wagons, down the mountains into Tennessee. The Oconaluftee Turnpike was completed in 1839, and improved by Confederate troops in 1862.<sup>2</sup> This road

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Lambert, "The Pioneer History of Great Smoky Mountains National Park," an unpublished report to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent, October 1, 1957, 8; Great Smoky Mountains National Park Library, Gatlinburg, Tennessee (hereafter referred to as GSMNP Library).

<sup>2</sup> Lambert, "The Pioneer History of Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 8. Henry W. Lix, "A Short History of Great Smoky

served the people of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee into the early twentieth century when the need for a road capable of carrying automobiles arose. Today, the Road Prong Trail follows the route of this old road from the vicinity of the Chimney Tops to Indian Gap.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The Indian Gap Highway*

The effort to construct a modern road over the mountains in present-day Great Smoky Mountains National Park began in the 1920s, when residents of the region demanded a more direct route from Asheville, North Carolina to Knoxville, Tennessee. In response, both the North Carolina and Tennessee governments agreed that a modern automobile road over the mountains should be built along the Indian Gap Trail and Oconaluftee Turnpike. Each state took the responsibility for planning and constructing their portion of the road, and were to meet at the border on the crest of the Great Smokies. Even though the new automobile road would

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Mountains National Park," unpublished manuscript, March 1958, 84; GSMNP Library.

<sup>3</sup> Don Defoe, Beth Giddens, & Steve Kemp, eds. *Hiking Trails of the Smokies* (Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, 1994) 485.

follow the route of the historic Indian Gap Trail, and would be called Indian Gap Highway, it was to pass through Newfound Gap, which presented a better grade for the road than a route through Indian Gap.

While the Indian Gap Highway was being discussed by Tennessee and North Carolina, the National Park Service was making plans for a new national park in the Great Smoky Mountains. This followed the December 13, 1924, recommendation by the federal Southern Appalachian National Park Committee that the region was well suited for a national park.<sup>4</sup> Boosters of the Great Smoky Mountains region lent their support to the Park Service's efforts, and the movement for Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which would include the land over which the Indian Gap Highway was to be built, was underway.

If a national park was to be established in the Great Smoky Mountains on the same land which was to be used for the new highway, why would North Carolina and Tennessee incur the expense of a road which would soon be taken over by the Park Service, and

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<sup>4</sup> Carlos Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960) 56.

which the federal government would probably build once the park was established? In a 1927 letter to Willis P. Davis, President of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association (an organization which was instrumental in the effort to establish the park), C.N. Bass, the Tennessee Commissioner of Highways, stated that the people in the area wanted a road as soon as possible for transportation over the mountains, and that "[t]here can be no assurance that the [federal] Government will build the road until after the National Park is established."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, David Chapman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, received a letter from the President of the Gregg Company, a major landholder in North Carolina, which stated that there is no reason to "delay" a road in the area, as it "is very much needed for the use of both States whether a park is created or not." Furthermore, if the states were to begin construction, the federal government might

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<sup>5</sup> C.N. Bass, Tennessee Commissioner of Highways, to W.P. Davis, President, Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, May 23, 1927; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 15; Correspondence May 1927, File 5; Great Smoky Mountains National Park Archives, Gatlinburg, Tennessee (hereafter referred to as GSMNP).

take over the project "if the Park plans progressed rapidly enough."<sup>6</sup>

Sevier County, Tennessee Judge A.M. Paine was of the opinion that if the states built the road there would be no toll for its use and commercial traffic would not be restricted. However, if the Park Service built the road, both a toll and commercial traffic restrictions would be instituted.<sup>7</sup>

Carlos Campbell, a leader of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, states in his history of the park, that the area residents "admitted that they would rather have the road than the park, possibly still believing that the latter would never be a reality."<sup>8</sup>

The Park Service attempted to head off the road, preferring to build one itself after the land for the park was acquired, however, local interest in the road made this impossible.

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<sup>6</sup> William C. Gregg, President, Gregg Company, to Colonel D.C. Chapman, Chairman, Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, November 4, 1925; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Correspondence, Individuals, Box 9; W.C. Gregg, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>7</sup> John O. Morrell, U.S. Department of Justice, to Colonel D.C. Chapman, May 13, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Road Right of Way, 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 72.

Expressing his dissatisfaction with the road through Newfound Gap in a 1936 letter, Park Service Director Arno Cammerer said of his efforts during the period in which the states were building Indian Gap Highway: "I tried to stop it, pointing out that [the Park Service] would like a free hand in putting in a road that would fit into the topography better." Although the federal agency would later reduce the steep grades on the road and attempt to "make it safer and more park-like," Cammerer wrote that the Newfound Gap Road "will never be anything more than a through highway, which is just exactly what the states intended at the beginning."<sup>9</sup>

Why could the Park Service not stop the road? In 1931, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent J. Ross Eakin, received a letter in response to his concern over the placement of the Indian Gap Highway in North Carolina and his suggestion that the state that leave the road unfinished, allowing the federal government complete it according to federal standards. In this letter, Cammerer reminded the superintendent of the Park

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<sup>9</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, to Harvey Broome, May 25, 1936; Box Individuals; File, Broome, Harvey, Correspondence; GSMNP.

Service's "sad experiences, particularly with Sevier County [Tennessee] people when the Indian Gap Road was first started, when committees followed me from Sevierville to Bryson City [North Carolina], and I was upbraided for interfering with a worthy community project." After the Park Service's "efforts...did not result in deferring the project we have studiously kept our hands off of it." Now, "[f]or us to attempt to take responsibility for deferring any portion of construction of the project by promising we would build it ourselves, with all the delays such a promise implies, is full of dynamite...."<sup>10</sup> For proof of this danger, one only has to look at the continuing controversy over the road around Fontana Lake, which the Park Service promised to build in 1943. To this day, local residents continue to criticize the agency for this (see the section on the Northshore Road).

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<sup>10</sup> Arno B Cammerer, Associate Director, National Park Service, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, November 30, 1931; Entry 7; Box 310; File 2; Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79; National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as RG 79 NA).

A survey of the planned Indian Gap Highway was completed by the states in July 1926,<sup>11</sup> and Tennessee issued a \$324,388 construction contract (the name of the contractor is not available) for its portion of the road in July 1927. The North Carolina section of the road, which was 17 miles long and would cost \$240,453 to build,<sup>12</sup> was contracted to Dicus Brothers of Waynesville, North Carolina.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Park Service could not stop the road over Newfound Gap, it could try to have aspects of it altered in order to conform with the agency's vision of the future park. Probably the greatest issue on which Park Service officials spoke out was the location of the road through Newfound Gap, which it feared would ruin the view from what was considered the most beautiful peak in the future park, Mount LeConte. Instead, they hoped that

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<sup>11</sup> Lix, "A Short History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 86.

<sup>12</sup> President, Western North Carolina Associated Communities, to Julius A. Krug, Secretary of the Interior, February 5, 1947; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 12; North Carolina-Tennessee Joint Committee on Great Smoky Mountains National Park, File 10; GSMNP.

<sup>13</sup> John O. Morrell, Management Assistant, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to George W. Fry, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 22, 1965; Morrell, Box 3; Special Reports, Roads, File 7; GSMNP.

the road would be routed through Indian Gap, allowing it to be hidden by Mount Mingus, which lies between Indian Gap and Mount LeConte. In July 1926, Park Service Director Cammerer wrote to C.N. Bass, the Tennessee Highway Commissioner, about Mount LeConte, which Cammerer proclaimed had "one of the grandest [views] in the world." Therefore, the Park Service would like the proposed road to go over Indian Gap, which would "keep this view entirely free of any construction of any kind which would mar its primeval character."<sup>14</sup> The Commissioner replied that the road would have to go through Newfound Gap because of the favorable grade it offered, and only 1300' of the road would be visible where it approaches the Gap itself.<sup>15</sup> Following this exchange, Cammerer sent a Park Service landscape engineer to

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<sup>14</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Acting Director, National Park Service, to C.N. Bass, Tennessee Commissioner of Highways, July 10, 1926; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 14; Correspondence, July 1926, File 10; GSMNP.

<sup>15</sup> C.N. Bass, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Highways, to Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, July 20, 1926; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 11; Correspondence, NPS Officials, Arno B. Cammerer-Chapman, 1926, File 6; GSMNP.

Tennessee to review the location of the road with the state highway engineer in charge of the project.<sup>16</sup>

The Tennessee Highway Commissioner's statement that only a small section of the road would be visible from Mount LeConte is supported by a 1927 report written by C.E. Swain, a Tennessee state highway engineer, in which he wrote that "[o]bservation made from New Found [sic] Gap and Mt. LeConte indicates that" a state engineer's estimate that approximately 1500' of road would be visible from the mountain "is approximately correct."<sup>17</sup>

In his report on the Indian Gap Highway, Swain also dealt with the issue of the protection of the forest around the road, and stated that the Champion Fibre Company was supposed to leave virgin timber on the side of the road which might make it "possible to adequately camouflage the road, provided

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<sup>16</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Acting Director, National Park Service, to C.N. Bass, Tennessee Commissioner of Highways, August 4, 1926; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 11; Correspondence, National Park Service Officials, Arno B. Cammerer-Chapman, 1926, File 6; GSMNP.

<sup>17</sup> C.E. Swain, Tennessee State Highway Engineer, to R.E. Toms, District Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, June 21, 1927; File 1; Box 301; Entry 7; RG 79 NA.

extraordinary and exceptional care were taken in the handling and disposal of excavated materials" produced during construction.<sup>18</sup>

Despite assurances that the forest would be protected, the Park Service made it known that it remained concerned about the effect of Tennessee's construction techniques on the forested areas surrounding the road. In response to this concern, A.M. Paine, the Sevierville, Tennessee lawyer, wrote to Director Cammerer in 1927 to inform him that "[s]uch a conclusion is unsound and not supported by the facts of the true situation," as the Indian Gap Highway would be on the site of an old road which passed through a farmed area. Furthermore, the southern section of the road, which would pass through forested land held by the Champion Fibre Company, would not be cut, but preserved for the park. Paine closed his letter by stating that area residents supported the establishment of the park, but they "do not want the park to delay or destroy the proposed road."<sup>19</sup> Tennessee completed the section of the Indian Gap Highway from Gatlinburg

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> A.M. Paine, to Arno B. Cammerer, Associate Director, National Park Service, April 11, 1927; Records of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, Box 15; Correspondence, April 1927, File 4; GSMNP.

to Newfound Gap, which was designated Tennessee Highway 71, in summer 1929.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike its experience with Tennessee, the Park Service received cooperation from North Carolina on issues regarding the construction of the Indian Gap Highway. For example, on a November 20, 1931, trip over Newfound Gap with North Carolina officials, Park Service landscape architect Charles Peterson was dissatisfied with the methods used for clearing the right-of-way for the road, and brought this up with a state highway official who agreed to use the less destructive methods favored by Peterson.<sup>21</sup>

Peterson, who played a major role in the Park Service's planning for Great Smoky Mountain National Park, conferred regularly with North Carolina officials on the development of the Indian Gap Highway as he believed "certain irremediable damages are resulting from the present design and construction policy" of North Carolina. Therefore, "[i]f we cherish the beauty of the

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell, *Birth of a National Park*, 71.

<sup>21</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, November 24, 1931; Entry 7; Box 310; File 2; RG 79 NA.

Smoky mountains road sides we should feel compelled to protest against things the way they have been done."<sup>22</sup> Although he advised the State on a number of occasions, Peterson warned Roswell Ludgate, the landscape architect assigned to the new park, that it "must be remembered that we have no authority on that [North Carolina] project and any suggestions of ours which they may follow are pure profit, and any suggestions which they do not follow should be overlooked."<sup>23</sup>

In 1931, the placement of the last section of the road in what would become the park, the area from Smokemont south to Cherokee, became an issue because it might have despoiled an area known as Floyd Bottoms along the banks of the Oconaluftee River. On August 22, 1931, in a meeting with the North Carolina Governor and Highway Commissioner, Superintendent Eakin suggested that the state defer completion of this section of the road and let the Park Service complete it after the park is established. The

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<sup>22</sup> Charles E. Peterson, Assistant Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to The Director, National Park Service, December 12, 1931; File 2; Box 310; Entry 7; RG 79 NA.

<sup>23</sup> Charles E. Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to V. Roswell Ludgate, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, March 23, 1932; File 3; Box 310; RG 79 NA.

state was more than happy to oblige, as this meant it could use the funding for the road section elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

The following year, North Carolina received federal funding to complete the road from Smokemont to Cherokee, and the state and the Park Service agreed to cooperate on the planning of this road.<sup>25</sup> On June 15, 1932, landscape architect Peterson met with North Carolina officials to look over plans for the road in order to "draw up a recommendation" similar to those which the Park Service usually does for roads built within national parks by the federal Bureau of Public Roads. In this case, Peterson reported the line of the road "was a very good highway alignment such as is built for utilitarian purposes." However, in building roads in national parks, the Park Service strives "to get a long sweeping alignment of flat curves which will fit the topography or natural architecture of the country." With Peterson's assistance, the state highway engineers laid out "a very pleasing

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<sup>24</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, December 2, 1931; File 2; Box 310; Entry 7; RG 79 NA.

<sup>25</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, February 15, 1932; File 2; Box 310; Entry 7; RG 79 NA.

yet practical alignment" for the road.<sup>26</sup> It was because of cooperation such as this that the completion of the North Carolina section of the Indian Gap Highway took longer to complete than Tennessee's. Whereas Tennessee Highway 71 was completed in 1929, the North Carolina section from Cherokee to Newfound Gap, North Carolina Highway 107, was not completed until January 1933.<sup>27</sup>

Although the states were the ones to construct the Indian Gap Highway, the first party to travel over the entire road was made up of Park Service officials. On April 9, 1932, the superintendents of Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountain, Wind Cave, Mesa Verde, and Acadia national parks, and George Washington Birthplace National Monument, accompanied Superintendent Eakin of Great Smoky Mountains National Park over the incomplete road as part of an inspection tour of the new park.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Charles E. Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to E.B. Jeffries, Chairman, North Carolina State Highway Commission, June 20, 1932; File 3, Box 310; Entry 7; RG 79 NA.

<sup>27</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>28</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1932; GSMNP.

*Jurisdiction of the Newfound Gap Road*

Because the Indian Gap Highway had been built by Tennessee and North Carolina prior to the existence of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the private lands surrounding the road were bought by the states and turned over to the federal government for the establishment of the park, the Park Service was faced with questions concerning the legal title of the road over Newfound Gap. At issue were the deeds of conveyance which transferred the land from the private land owners to the states, and from the states to the federal government. When these deeds were turned over to the federal government, there was no question that this land became United States property. However, the Newfound Gap Road (although the states referred to the road as the Indian Gap Highway, the Park Service was calling it the Newfound Gap Road as early as 1932) was state and county property, and it was not clear if the legal procedure transferring this former private land to the federal government included the public road which ran through these areas. This may seem a technicality, but at issue was whether the Park Service could legally spend federal money to improve a road for which the

title was still held by the states, and could this agency charge a toll for traveling on the road or place restrictions on commercial traffic.

In 1932, Park Service Director Cammerer informed Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent Eakin that the deeds of conveyance included the highway right-of-way, which meant the road had been transferred to the federal government.<sup>29</sup> However, by 1935, there were questions about this legal interpretation, and Tennessee and North Carolina, believing they still owned the road, sought concessions from the Park Service before they would consent to its legal transfer. It was rumored that North Carolina would not transfer jurisdiction over the road in the now established park unless it could be assured that there would not be a charge for use of the Newfound Gap Road.<sup>30</sup>

A 1936 opinion by the solicitor for the Department of the Interior stated that the deeds of conveyance for the land

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<sup>29</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Acting Director, National Park Service, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, April 2, 1932; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1932, File 1; GSMNP.

<sup>30</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, September 3, 1935; Roads, Box 1; Jurisdiction Over Roads, 1935, File 2; GSMNP.

acquired for the park did not transfer the Newfound Gap Road and other state roads in the park, which must be done by separate acts of the Tennessee and North Carolina state legislatures, or possibly by the state highway commissioners.<sup>31</sup> The fact that the Park Service had taken over police jurisdiction of the land and roads within the park in 1931 and began to assist the states with their maintenance in 1935 did nothing to negate this need for a legal transfer.<sup>32</sup>

Park Service officials held a conference on the park roads with North Carolina highway officials on April 28, 1936. Superintendent Eakin described the North Carolina officials at this meeting as "anxious to get rid of maintenance of roads in the Park" but reluctant to do so without first taking "care" of North Carolina. This referred to the demands of citizens in

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<sup>31</sup> Document M.28335, Opinion of Nathan R. Margold, Solicitor for the Department of the Interior, to the Secretary of the Interior, March 31, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Jurisdiction Over Roads 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>32</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, April 22, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Jurisdiction Over Roads, 1936, File 3; GSMNP. J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Will W. Neal, Chairman, North Carolina Park Commission, April 20, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Jurisdiction Over Roads, 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

Bryson City and Sylva, North Carolina who wanted assurance that cars from the state would not be charged a fee to use the roads turned over to the park, and light trucks would not be prohibited from them. It was considered important for area businesses to be able to use the Newfound Gap Road, which meant an eighty-five mile trip to Knoxville, versus 155 miles via Asheville. Eakin characterized the North Carolina officials as "rather bitter" because the only new federal road built in the park of several which they expected to be constructed was the short road which ran west from Newfound Gap to an observation point on Clingmans Dome. When Eakin explained that ultimately more money would be spent on roads in their North Carolina than in Tennessee, and the state was also getting the Blue Ridge Parkway, the officials replied "that the Parkway has nothing to do with it."<sup>33</sup>

In response to these latest developments, Park Service Director Cammerer sent a wire to Eakin which read: "Service unwilling at this time to undertake maintenance of NC roads if vacated unless free from all conditions as to future

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<sup>33</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, April 30, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1936; GSMNP.

administration." Therefore, if the state was unwilling to drop any demands, the Park Service would stop maintaining the roads. Eakin conveyed this message to the chairman of the North Carolina Highway Commission.<sup>34</sup> By the end of May 1936, the unofficial word was that North Carolina would no longer assist in the maintenance of the roads in the park.<sup>35</sup>

In discussing the situation in the Smokies, Park Service officials compared it to that in the new Shenandoah National Park, where Virginia highways over the mountains were not transferred to the federal government and remained open to commercial traffic. However, this situation was quite different, as the narrowness of the park allowed for small state controlled corridors across it in order to allow what had been traditional commercial routes to continue to be used by commercial traffic. In the case of the Smokies, the Newfound Gap Road was new and

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<sup>34</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to C.M. Waynick, Chairman, North Carolina Highway Commission, May 6, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1936 File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>35</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, National Park Service, May 26, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

traversed too much of the park for it to be allowed to remain in the jurisdiction of the states.

In October 1936, Superintendent Eakin wrote to the chairmen of the North Carolina and Tennessee park commissions, both of which had been instrumental in acquiring the land to create Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and requested that they have their respective state highway commissions formally transfer the jurisdiction of the roads in the park to the federal government. However, in November, the North Carolina State Highway Commissioner informed Eakin that this transfer was probably out of the hands of the highway commission, and may take an act of the North Carolina General Assembly.<sup>36</sup>

Following this latest development on the transfer of the roads, John Morrell, a United States Department of Justice attorney working in Knoxville who was advising the Park Service, conducted a search of the county registrars offices in Maryville and Sevierville, Tennessee for the deeds of conveyance of the

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<sup>36</sup> W.W. Neal, Chairman, North Carolina Highway Commission, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, November 3, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

land from private property owners to the state and Sevier County which was latter turned over to the federal government. His conclusion was that the right-of-way for the roads were not included in these deeds and were still held by the state and county. This included an 80' wide right-of-way and easements for the Indian Gap Highway from Gatlinburg to Newfound Gap, a 66' wide right-of-way for the Little River Road from Townsend, Tennessee southeast into the park to the Little River at Elkmont, and a 50' wide right-of-way for the Fighting Creek road from Elkmont east to Gatlinburg.<sup>37</sup>

With the beginning of the 1937 sessions of the Tennessee and North Carolina state legislatures, efforts by the states and the Park Service to facilitate the transfer of the roads to the federal government began in earnest. As part of this effort, the Park Service made it clear to the states that it did not intend to impose a fee for the use of the Newfound Gap Road. In March, Superintendent Eakin informed the North Carolina General Assembly

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<sup>37</sup> Abstract of Road and Highway Rights of Way in the Great Smoky National Park Area Which Lies in Sevier County, Tennessee, December 10, 1936; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap Road, Right of Way, 1936, File 3; GSMNP.

that if the transfer could be done without the state placing any "limitations" on the Park Service's management of the roads, then the agency will not find it "particularly objectionable" if the bill transferring the roads stipulates there can not be a toll.<sup>38</sup> However, a transfer bill failed to pass in North Carolina, and the Park Service tried another legal tactic by making a formal request on April 27, 1937, to the North Carolina Highway Commission that the State abandon the roads in the park, which will then revert to United States title "by virtue of [federal] ownership of abutting lands."<sup>39</sup> However, no progress was made, and Superintendent Eakin informed Director Cammerer that it "is believed that certain people in North Carolina area bringing pressure to bear on the Commission to withhold locating roads in

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<sup>38</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Senator A. Hall Johnston, North Carolina General Assembly, March 9, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1937, File 4; GSMNP.

<sup>39</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to E.L. McKee, Chairman, North Carolina State Highway Commission, April 27, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1937, File 4; GSMNP.

the park and use this as a lever in securing a certain location of the Blue Ridge Parkway."<sup>40</sup>

In Tennessee, the state attorney general was of the opinion that if the state abandoned the roads they would revert to the Park Service, which held the deeds of conveyance for the land around them.<sup>41</sup> The state had informally abandoned the maintenance of the roads in 1934, but assisted the park in some maintenance work up to September 1935, after which the Park Service took full responsibility. However, as early as 1933 the state claimed that the roads were the park's after Superintendent Eakin requested that the state rebuild five hazardous bridges on the Little River Road, to which the State Highway Commission replied they were the federal government's responsibility.<sup>42</sup> Following the attorney general's opinion on the roads, the

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<sup>40</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, August 10, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1937, File 4; GSMNP.

<sup>41</sup> Roy H. Beeler, Attorney General, Tennessee, to J.W. Cooper, Special Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice, March 17, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, Tennessee, 1937, File 5; GSMNP.

<sup>42</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to The Director, March 22, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, Tennessee, 1937, File 5; GSMNP.

Tennessee commissioner of highways issued a formal abandonment order on May 20, 1937.<sup>43</sup> Despite this order, the solicitor for the Department of the Interior questioned the legality of this act and maintained that the Tennessee legislature must take action.

In North Carolina, a great deal of progress was made on the issue of road jurisdiction in 1938. In January, Director Cammerer assured the chairman of the State Highway Commission that the Park Service did not intend to charge a fee for the use of the Newfound Gap Road.<sup>44</sup> Then, in April, Cammerer wrote the chairman that the North Carolina section of the Newfound Gap Road was in need of repair, and the Park Service could not begin work as long as the state still held title to the road.<sup>45</sup> This prodding led to the formal abandonment of the roads by an act of

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<sup>43</sup> Abandonment Order, May 20, 1937, M.O. Allen, Tennessee Commissioner of Highways and Public Works; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, Tennessee, 1937, File 5; GSMNP.

<sup>44</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, to Frank L. Dunlap, Chairman, North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission, January 1, 1938; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1938, File 6; GSMNP.

<sup>45</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Frank L. Dunlap, Chairman, North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission, April 19, 1938; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1938, File 6; GSMNP.

the North Carolina legislature on September 1, 1937. Included in the abandonment measure was a quote from Cammerer stating that there will not be a fee on the road, and a clause which held the Park Service to its promises to the state that it would build a road from Black Camp Gap to the Heintooga Ridge in the southeastern section of the park and to extend the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Newfound Gap Road.<sup>46</sup>

No such luck was found in the Park Service's efforts with Tennessee, and John Morrell, the attorney with the Department of Justice who would later join the staff of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, referred to the period from the late 1930s through the 1940s as a "cold war" between the Park Service and Tennessee over the road issue.<sup>47</sup> During this period, bills were introduced in the state legislature to transfer the roads, but either because of opposition within the legislature because of the issues of fees or commercial traffic on the road, or because of

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<sup>46</sup> Abandonment of Highway in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 1, 1938; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, North Carolina, 1938, File 6; GSMNP.

<sup>47</sup> John O. Morrell, Management Assistant, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to George W. Fry, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 22, 1965; Morrell, Box 3; Special Reports: Roads, File 7; GSMNP.

Park Service displeasure with the content of the bills, no progress was made. For example, a 1945 bill included a clause which used the phrase "lands which hereafter may be made a part of Great Smoky Mountains National Park" to define the land to be transferred to the federal government. This was deemed to be "too broad and indefinite" by the Park Service, and liable to open up legal problems in the future, and the agency would not support the bill as written.<sup>48</sup> In addition to issue of the transfer of the roads in the park, the Park Service had to contend with the "Highway 441 Association," which was formed in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1950, and sought to have the federal government designate a United States highway from Knoxville, through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and on to Florida. In 1951, against the wishes of the Park Service, the organization succeed in having U.S. Highway 441 established, with the Newfound Gap Road serving as the section through the park.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> John T. Needham, Acting Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the Director, National Park Service, January 5, 1945; Roads, Box 1; Tennessee Roads, 1943-45, File 10; GSMNP.

<sup>49</sup> John O. Morrell, Management Assistant, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 22, 1965; Morrell, Box 3; Special Reports: Roads, File 7; GSMNP.

As a result of the Park Service's difficulties with Tennessee, it was not until February 23, 1951, that the State officially ceded the rights to state highways 71 and 73, the Newfound Gap and Little River roads, to the United States. However, this was accomplished only with the stipulation that no fees could be charged and commercial vehicles could use the roads only at certain hours. Park Superintendent John Preston commented that "[t]his important piece of legislation clears the way for settlement and handling of many irritating conditions."<sup>50</sup>

In 1963, the Tennessee legislature agreed to allow the Park Service to prohibit commercial traffic on the state's former roads in the park "contingent upon" the completion of Interstate 40, which was under construction at the time, and would provide a faster route through the mountains from Knoxville to Asheville. The interstate was completed, and a prohibition on commercial traffic went into effect in 1965.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1951; GSMNP.

<sup>51</sup> John O. Morrell, Management Assistant, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 22, 1965; Morrell, Box 3; Special Reports: Roads, File 7; GSMNP.

*Planning the Reconstruction of the Newfound Gap Road*

Despite unresolved issues regarding the jurisdiction of the roads in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, in the 1930s the Park Service began the improvement of the Newfound Gap Road in order to bring it up to Park Service standards, both in terms of safety and scenic qualities. However, in doing so, the agency would have to contend with the difficult terrain of the Great Smoky Mountains.

In his first report to the director of the Park Service in March 1931, Great Smoky Mountains National Park's first superintendent, J. Ross Eakin, who had recently arrived at his new post, wrote that in comparison to the mountains of the west, where the Park Service had a great deal of experience building roads, the geologically older mountains of the east are "cut up by many more gullies," and "to secure good [road] alignment along our mountain sides will require tremendous cuts and fills," thereby creating "a terrible scar" on the roadsides. In order to avoid such scarring when North Carolina and Tennessee were building the first road to Newfound Gap, the Park Service had made recommendations based upon federal road construction

standards. However, the North Carolina State Highway Commissioner complained to Eakin that to follow all of these "rigid requirements" would increase the state's construction costs by \$40,000.<sup>52</sup> It can be inferred from this complaint that although the state was cooperating with the Park Service, it selectively implemented the agency's recommendations. As a result, the Indian Gap Highway was characterized by Director Cammerer as "a road of impossible curves and locations."<sup>53</sup>

The actual construction of the roads in Great Smoky Mountains National Park by the federal government was carried out by the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), an agency within the Department of Agriculture which had the task of building the early United States highways as well as most of the roads within the national parks. The first formal federal survey of the roads in the park began on August 27, 1932, following the arrival of H.J. Spelman, Senior Highway Engineer for the BPR, who was in charge of all BPR road work in the eastern national parks, and

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<sup>52</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1931; GSMNP.

<sup>53</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, to Harvey Broome, May 25, 1936; Box Individuals; File Broome, Harvey, Correspondence; GSMNP.

W.I. Lee, Resident Engineer for the BPR, who would oversee the work in the Great Smokies. While the BPR began its surveying work, the park started its first road related project after it receiving an appropriation of \$13,450 to clear the roadsides of debris left by the state construction.<sup>54</sup> This was only the second federal construction allocation to the park; the first came from the Emergency Unemployment Relief Bill, under which the park would soon find itself blessed with workers from the CCC.

As part of the improvement of the Newfound Gap Road, the Park Service studied sections of the roadway and made recommendations to the BPR regarding road design. In making these recommendations, the agency was most concerned with the overlook and parking area along the side of the road at Newfound Gap, which would be a focal point of the park. Commenting in 1933 on the rock cut made at the Gap during the construction there by the states, Park Service landscape architect Charles Peterson wrote that the "Gap at present looks too much like a stone quarry and increasing the cut [in order to increase the

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<sup>54</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1931; GSMNP.

area available for parking] will make this condition worse."<sup>55</sup>

In response to Peterson's concern over the Gap, Superintendent Eakin replied: "When the Tennessee Highway Department made the cut at the Gap the landscape was ruined," and widening the area to increase parking "would not make things much worse." Eakin suggested that the area between the northbound and southbound lanes of the Newfound Gap Road be excavated to accommodate an additional 300 cars.<sup>56</sup> Spelman, the BPR's engineer, stated that his agency's plan for the area was designed "with a view to largely eliminating the scar created by past quarry operations."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to H.J. Spelman, Principal Highway Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, March 8, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>56</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, March 11, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>57</sup> H.J. Spelman, Principal Highway Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, March 15, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

The quarry Spelman was referring to was used to provide stone for the graveling of the North Carolina side of the Indian Gap Highway, and the project contractor, the Nello Teer Company, set up a rock crushing plant at the quarry. In a December 1932 letter, Peterson commented that the quarry operations "have eaten away a great deal of the rock slope on the west side of the cut."<sup>58</sup> The west side of the Newfound Gap parking area is where the large cut is today, and is somewhat similar to the cut seen by Peterson in 1932.

One plan for Newfound Gap, put forth by a Park Service landscape architect, was to have a tunnel carry the planned road to Clingmans Dome from the Gap. By placing the entrance to the tunnel at the existing rock cut, this scar could be nearly

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<sup>58</sup> Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to the Director, National Park Service, December 2, 1932; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1932, File 2; GSMNP.

eliminated.<sup>59</sup> The idea was not approved, as the area was considered too crowded for such a design.<sup>60</sup>

Following a December 1932 inspection of the area, Charles Peterson suggested that the inadequate parking area at the Gap could be expanded by "daylighting" the ridge east of the Newfound Gap Road "as far as one of the [nearby] low gaps." Additional recommendations by Peterson included room be left for a ranger station at the gap, a traffic island be placed where the Appalachian Trail (AT) crosses the Newfound Gap Road at the entrance to the parking area in order to assist hikers and horses crossing the road, or a tunnel be placed just east of the gap to create a grade separation between the road and the AT.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> V. Roswell Ludgate, Assistant Landscape Architect, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, August 11, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to V. Roswell Ludgate, Landscape Architect, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, August 17, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, to the Director, National Park Service, December 2, 1932; Roads, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome Correspondence, 1932, File 2; Box Roads 1; GSMNP.

Differences arose between Park Service landscape architects and BPR engineers over the plans for Newfound Gap. Federal construction to expand the parking area at the site was begun by the BPR's contractor, the Arundel Corporation, in September 1933.<sup>62</sup> By April of 1934, Roswell Ludgate, the landscape architect assigned to the park, was complaining that the BPR had revised the plans for the gap without submitting them for Park Service approval. Ludgate felt there were such great variations between the current work and the original plans that "it may be necessary [for the Park Service] to disclaim any responsibility for the completed construction."<sup>63</sup> The original plans for Newfound Gap were completed by the Park Service's Branch of Plans and Design in May 1933. However, in November, the BPR began to develop new plans in order to shift the location of the parking area. Ludgate received these revised plans on April 2, 1934. According to Ludgate, the BPR went ahead with construction

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<sup>62</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>63</sup> V. Roswell Ludgate, Landscape Architect, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, April 3, 1934; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome Correspondence, 1934, File 4; Design and Construction, Box 1; GSMNP.

according to the new plans without receiving Park Service approval. Under these new plans, the parking area was eliminated on the Tennessee side of the gap and shifted toward the part in North Carolina. The traffic patterns were also altered, thereby "the whole scheme is changed" to create a "radical departure" from the Park Service's original plans, according to Ludgate.<sup>64</sup>

In defense of the changes to the Park Service's plans for Newfound Gap, Jack Arthur, a BPR engineer, wrote to his superior, BPR engineer W.I. Lee, that the original plans were devoid of any information on the distribution of fill, the location of retaining walls, cut or fill slopes, "or overall dimensions of any kind. However, from contours [on the plan] we were able to determine approximately the intent of the layout," and make appropriate alterations. He argued that the BPR's new plans carried "out the same general scheme" as the Park Service's, while moving the parking area "a little more on top of the hill, thereby reducing the cut quantities and increasing the fill to

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<sup>64</sup> V. Roswell Ludgate, Landscape Architect, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, April 11, 1934; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome Correspondence, 1934, File 4; GSMNP.

effect a quality of balance." A copy of this letter was sent from Ludgate to Charles Peterson, on which Ludgate placed a question mark in the margin next to this last statement. At the close of the letter, where Arthur stated that Ludgate approved the BPR's drawings before the work began, Ludgate wrote in the margin: "No!"<sup>65</sup>

The BPR plan accurately described Newfound Gap as it looked after construction according to photographs from the period, with the parking area on the North Carolina side. Based upon this evidence, it can be assumed that the new BPR plans became the basis for construction at Newfound Gap.

In addition to eliminating scars from the road construction carried out by Tennessee and North Carolina, the Park Service and the BPR also sought to eliminate the steep grades and dangerous curves of the Indian Gap Highway. In 1935, three members of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park staff conducted a survey of the road in relation to the geology and terrain it passed through. From the park boundary at Gatlinburg to the junction of

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<sup>65</sup> Jack A. Arthur, to Colonel W.I. Lee, Resident Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, June 1, 1934; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome Correspondence, 1934, File 4; GSMNP.

Tennessee Routes 71 and 73 (roughly the current intersection of the Newfound Gap and Little River roads at Sugarlands) they found "sharp curves which will be eliminated and a better road bed constructed." The surveyors found approximately 1.5 miles of the Indian Gap Highway, which ran south from this intersection and followed the east side of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River, to be in an "unsatisfactory" location, and recommended the road be moved to the west side of the river. However, a bluff close to the river would make this difficult, and the options for accomplishing the relocation of the road were to "blast and cut a roadway out of the bluff" which "would leave an ugly scar," build a bridge to carry the road to the east side of the river to get around the bluff and a second bridge to carry it back to the west side, or divert the river to its old natural channel, which was still visible, in order to give the road room to pass by the bluff. Diverting the stream was considered to be the "least expensive and most feasible plan."<sup>66</sup> The road was later moved to the west side of the river.

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<sup>66</sup> Report on Project 1A4, Tennessee State Highway Number 71, July 19, 1935; Jennison, Box 1; Special Reports, File 12; GSMNP.

*The Reconstruction of the Newfound Gap Road*

The Arundel Corporation began the reconstruction of the Newfound Gap Road in April 1933. At this time, almost all of the work on the road was being done in Tennessee. The only exception was the portion of the road in North Carolina closest to the gap itself, which was being reconstructed as part of the work on the parking area at Newfound Gap. While this work commenced, the BPR surveyed the Tennessee side of the road.<sup>67</sup> After surveying 11 miles of the road from Newfound Gap to where it crossed the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River, BPR engineer W.I. Lee reported that Tennessee had built a "narrow road" using a minimum radius of 35' and a ruling grade of 6 percent. The construction of the road "produced a well defined landscape scar on the mountain side" which the BPR hoped to minimize by constructing a wider road in the same location. However, the current grade of 6 percent would make this impossible, and would have to be reduced.<sup>68</sup> The BPR completed the roughly 15-mile long transverse

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<sup>67</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>68</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1933; GSMNP.

of the road from the Newfound Gap to Gatlinburg in July 1933,<sup>69</sup> and the Arundel Corporation began clearing for the expanded road on September 19.<sup>70</sup>

The preliminary survey of route 1A, the Newfound Gap Road in Tennessee, was estimated at fourteen and a half miles long, of which ten and a half had been located as of November 1933. The road was currently under construction over a 6-mile area leading down from the gap, where the road had a 30' graded bed with a 20' x 6" crushed stone surface. A loop bridge, or Loop Over, was being considered as an alternative to two tight and dangerous switchbacks constructed by Tennessee. Through the use of the Loop Over, as the road traveled up the mountains, it would make a 360 degree turn and then go over itself via a bridge, allowing automobiles to make one long curve in the place of the two tight switchbacks. Work at Newfound Gap itself was begun in November, and included the widening of the area "by excavating certain points and filling at others," as well as the construction of two

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<sup>69</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>70</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1933; GSMNP.

levels to hold the parking area and the right-of-way for the road through the gap.<sup>71</sup>

In December 1933, the retaining wall on the south side of Newfound Gap was completed and fill was being placed behind it. Tragedy struck the project at the Gap that month when three men were killed and three injured on December 12, when a slope slid near a trench the men were constructing. It took four hours to remove the bodies from under the slide.<sup>72</sup>

Other construction underway at the close of 1933 included the preliminary work to lay out the Chimneys Campground on the Tennessee section of the Newfound Gap Road and the Smokemont Campground on the North Carolina side, as well as the start of construction of the uppermost tunnel on the Tennessee section of the road by the Arundel Corporation. Although the reconstruction of the Newfound Gap Road was progressing, Superintendent Eakin reported that work in Tennessee was being "impeded by the necessity of maintaining traffic over the existing highway."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>72</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>73</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

Work on the Newfound Gap Road in Tennessee continued into 1934, and construction was divided into several projects to correspond with the designation of sections of the road, 1A1, 1A2, 1A3, and 1A4, with 1A1 being the uppermost section of the road near Newfound Gap, and 1A4 the lowest section at the park boundary with Gatlinburg.<sup>74</sup> In May, a decision was made to use the Loop Over in place of the two switchbacks,<sup>75</sup> and in August work began on the lower tunnel on the Newfound Gap Road.<sup>76</sup> Construction forced the closure of the Tennessee section on November 1, and the road was scheduled to reopen in the spring of 1935.<sup>77</sup>

Although the Park Service did not feel the need to reconstruct the North Carolina section of the Newfound Gap Road, section 1B, it did have to be paved. Work was begun by the R.B. Tyler Company, Incorporated of Louisville, Kentucky in September and was completed on December 10.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>75</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>76</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>77</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>78</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1934; GSMNP.

The reconstruction of Newfound Gap Road included the relocation of section 1A4 at the park boundary, and included moving the road from the east to the west side of the West Prong of the Little River. Clearing for this project was begun in August 1935 by the C.Y. Thomason Company of Greenwood, South Carolina.<sup>79</sup> The \$72,770 contract was completed on December 6, one day earlier than scheduled. C.Y. Thomason also constructed the "overloop bridge" between May and November 1935.<sup>80</sup>

At the opening of 1936, the BPR reported Newfound Gap projects 1A1 and 1A3 to be "practically complete except for the retaining wall at Newfound Gap and some finishing work."<sup>81</sup> Apparently, the large retaining wall at the parking area was "showing signs of failing," and work had begun in November 1935 to reinforce it by constructing four stone buttresses.<sup>82</sup>

As work on the Newfound Gap Road progressed under the BPR, the Park Service kept an eye on the manner in which the construction was being carried out. Over the course of the road

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<sup>79</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1935; GSMNP.

<sup>80</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1935; GSMNP.

<sup>81</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>82</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1935; GSMNP.

construction, Willis King, the naturalist at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, advised Superintendent Eakin on aspects of the work which were damaging to the park. King recommended that "slash," or forest debris which resulted from construction activities such as "bank sloping," as well as dead trees which are the result of "blowdowns," which occur when trees are felled by the high winds to which they have been exposed as a result of the removal of the trees around them in the process of constructing roads, be used to cover fill on the side of roads in order to stabilize the soil. By using this debris, the "moss and leaf litter from nearby forests" which the contractors had been collecting to cover the fill would not have to be disturbed. King noted that in most cases the slash had been burned by construction workers.<sup>93</sup> Another recommendation was that the open area near the Alum Cave Trail parking area referred to as "Grassy Patch" be preserved, as "natural openings of this type are

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<sup>93</sup> Willis King, Assistant Wildlife Technician, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, July 9, 1936; Willis King, Box 2; Correspondence, File 2; GSMNP.

uncommon along the Newfound Gap highway at this elevation."<sup>84</sup> In response, the park's landscape architect, Roswell Ludgate, suggested that the sod at Grassy Patch be removed by CCC enrollees working in the park, saved, and placed back down when construction in the area was completed.<sup>85</sup>

In September 1937, final work began on the relocation of section 1A4 of the Newfound Gap Road, which would finish the reconstruction of the road in Tennessee.<sup>86</sup> Although not yet complete, the road was opened to traffic in April 1938. A park document from that month titled "General Information Regarding Great Smoky Mountains National Park," which was used to provide answers to inquiries from the public, stated that the park had 56.5 miles of "[h]igh standard roads" and 25 miles of "secondary" roads, and the "road from Gatlinburg towards Newfound Gap is under construction for a distance of approximately four miles. A

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<sup>84</sup> Willis King, Assistant Wildlife Technician, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, July 5, 1934; Willis King, Box 2; Correspondence, File 2; GSMNP.

<sup>85</sup> V. Roswell Ludgate, Resident Landscape Architect, Great Smoky Mountains National Park to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, July 9, 1934; Willis King, Box 2; Correspondence, File 8; GSMNP.

<sup>86</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1937; GSMNP.

detour is maintained and is in good condition, although dusty at times."<sup>87</sup> Section 1A4 was completed in July 1938.<sup>88</sup>

The final surfacing of the Tennessee section of the Newfound Gap Road (the previous road surface had been considered temporary) was begun in April 1940 by the Breslin Construction Company of Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>89</sup>

In 1941, a revision was proposed for the Newfound Gap parking area, and by November, topography work for this project was underway.<sup>90</sup> However, the entry of the United States into World War II put a halt to this and other construction in the park. On May 15, 1942, gasoline rationing went into effect in the eastern United States, and by June, visitation to the park had decreased 40 percent.<sup>91</sup> Construction in the park declined in 1942 to such a degree that December was the last month until after the war that the park superintendent's monthly report to

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<sup>87</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>88</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>89</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1940; GSMNP.

<sup>90</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1941; GSMNP.

<sup>91</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1942; GSMNP.

the director of the Park Service had a separate heading for "Special Improvements" or "Construction."<sup>92</sup>

*CCC Work on the Newfound Gap Road*

The first federal funds to be spent on the roads in Great Smoky Mountain National Park consisted of \$13,450 allocated in August 1932 to clean debris left on the roadsides during the construction of the Indian Gap Highway.<sup>93</sup> The work began on January 23, 1933, on the Tennessee section of the road, but was put on hold in April in anticipation of the arrival of funding and labor from one of the new Depression era emergency relief programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The aim of this program was to put young men to work on conservation projects around the country, which played an important role in the development Great Smoky Mountains National Park.<sup>94</sup> The first five CCC camps of 200 enrollees each were established in the park

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<sup>92</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1942; GSMNP.

<sup>93</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1932; GSMNP.

<sup>94</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1933; GSMNP.

in May.<sup>95</sup> In August, they began the work of "beautifying" the North Carolina side of the Newfound Gap Road.<sup>96</sup>

Landscape plans for the Newfound Gap Road were completed by the Park Service in January 1934 and work was begun by the CCC soon after. Park Superintendent Eakin commented on the importance of these plans, stating that "[t]his type of work is more apparent to the average tourist than our road and trail construction and affords, at glance, an opportunity for the public to see the value of" the CCC. Nurseries which provided plants for the CCC's landscaping work were set up by the enrollees in the Sugarlands, Tennessee and Ravensford, North Carolina areas of the park.<sup>97</sup>

Throughout the reconstruction of the Newfound Gap Road, the CCC was engaged in various projects related to this effort. These included work such as bank sloping to prevent erosion and land slides on the North Carolina side, and the preservation of the Grassy Patch area in Tennessee. With plans for President Franklin D. Roosevelt to visit the park in September 1936,

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<sup>95</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>96</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>97</sup> Superintendents' Monthly Reports, January 1934; GSMNP.

several of the CCC camps which had been working on projects other than the Newfound Gap Road were temporarily assigned to the task of making the road "more presentable" for the President's visit.<sup>98</sup> This work included grading and mulching slopes and filling and planting the islands at the Newfound Gap parking area. After their work was completed, Superintendent Eakin commented that the area

now presents quite a different picture from what it was like in July. Enough planting has been done and the signs are organized and finished in such a way that the general appearance is commendable. This area has had severe criticism for its bareness and formality before this time, and we hope that this condition has been changed enough so that this area is less objectionable, or better yet, passes by unnoticed.<sup>99</sup>

With the grading and planting completed at Newfound Gap, the CCC returned to work along other sections of the road. In

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<sup>98</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>99</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1936; GSMNP.

September 1937, work went on "sloping, planting and mulching the high bank below Grassy Patch (at the Alum Cave parking area), and seeding shoulders. In sloping, the bank was filled out at the toe as much as possible, reducing the cut to the minimum."<sup>100</sup>

The CCC also did stone work along the Newfound Gap Road. In July 1937, the CCC began excavating an area along the Oconaluftee River in North Carolina in order to construct a dry boulder masonry retaining wall for the road.<sup>101</sup> The wall was completed in December.<sup>102</sup> CCC workers also built "stone barriers" at the Loop Over in March 1938,<sup>103</sup> and in July 1939, worked on the Rockefeller Memorial which was being constructed at the Newfound Gap parking area (see the following section on the Rockefeller Memorial).<sup>104</sup>

The CCC's road related work in Great Smoky Mountains National Park went beyond simply grading and planting the roadsides and building stone walls. The enrollees also built four large bridges and several smaller bridges in the park.

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<sup>100</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Reports, September 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>101</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>102</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>103</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>104</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1939; GSMNP.

Three of the large bridges were on spur roads leading off of Newfound Gap, two of which were near the park headquarters at Sugarlands, and one at the Smokemont campground. The fourth large bridge they built was one of the most striking in the park, a four arch bridge at Elkmont (see the section on the Little River Road).

Excavation for Bridge Number 1 in the headquarters area began in May 1937,<sup>105</sup> and was completed in December.<sup>106</sup> Of the work on this bridge, Superintendent Eakin remarked that "[n]o skilled labor [was] used except for the shovel operator."<sup>107</sup> In June, work commenced on Bridge Number 2 when CCC workers began to construct a channel change to carry Fighting Gap Creek around the area in which they would be working.<sup>108</sup> The following month they began the excavation for the bridge foundations,<sup>109</sup> and in February 1938, the steel was placed in the bridge.<sup>110</sup> In April, completion of the bridge was delayed because the CCC masonry crew

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<sup>105</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>106</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>107</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>108</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>109</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>110</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1938; GSMNP.

which was to finish the project alternated its work between Bridge Number 2 and the comfort station at Chimneys Campground.<sup>111</sup> The completion date for Bridge Number 2 is not available, and the last mention of its construction in the park's records stated that the final masonry work was still delayed in May.<sup>112</sup>

In April 1940, the CCC was working on a stone-faced concrete arch bridge from the Newfound Gap Road across the Oconaluftee River to the Smokemont Campground,<sup>113</sup> and by January 1941, masonry work had begun on the wing wall of the bridge.<sup>114</sup> Despite this progress, when the CCC program in the park was ended in July 1942, the Smokemont bridge had not been completed.<sup>115</sup> At that time, only the south abutment of the bridge was fully complete. The north abutment was approximately 50 percent complete, and the arch of the bridge had not been started.<sup>116</sup>

In the final months of the CCC program, the seventeen CCC camps in the park were closed one or two at a time and the

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<sup>111</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>112</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>113</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1940; GSMNP.

<sup>114</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1941; GSMNP.

<sup>115</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1942; GSMNP.

<sup>116</sup> Inventory and Inspection Report, Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

enrollees discharged from the program. The remaining enrollees were consolidated in the few camps left and were often transferred to other projects in the park. It is possible that through such transfers the enrollees working on the Smokemont bridge were assigned to projects which were considered more pressing.

In 1950, the BPR reported that the cost of the CCC's work on the incomplete bridge at Smokemont, which it referred to as the "Oconaluftee Bridge," had been \$27,327, and it would cost \$27,645 to complete. Furthermore, the constructed sections were "in good condition for resumption of work and none of the completed work has deteriorated by reason of the suspension of construction."<sup>117</sup> Despite this favorable report on the condition of the bridge, it was probably not completed. Today, a bridge of this type crosses the Oconaluftee River in the Smokemont area, and a wood deck bridge carries automobiles from the Newfound Gap Road to the Smokemont Campground. Rather than complete the bridge begun by the CCC, in the 1950s, the Park Service probably removed what had been built and constructed the current bridge. Just upstream

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

from the current bridge, metal bars can be seen protruding from the east bank of the Oconaluftee River. These may be the remains of the abutment of the incomplete CCC bridge.

The entry of the United States into World War II in 1941 and the subsequent mobilization of the country for the war effort meant the CCC and other Depression era make work programs were no longer necessary, and the CCC program ended nationwide in the summer of 1942. On July 8, 1942, all CCC work in Great Smoky Mountains National Park was halted and several of the enrollees' projects in the park were left unfinished.<sup>118</sup>

From May 1933 to July 1942, the CCC made a major impact on the development of the park. Not only did the enrollees work on the roads and bridges, they constructed trails, campgrounds, fire towers, and administration buildings. As early as September 1935, park engineer Robert White commented: "Undoubtedly, the 17 CCC camps stationed [here] have helped develop this Park at a much more rapid rate than any other Park ever built by the

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<sup>118</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1942; GSMNP.

Federal Government....the Park has advanced at least ten years."<sup>119</sup>

*The Rockefeller Memorial at Newfound Gap*

In the 1926 legislation authorizing Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the United States Congress stipulated that the federal government would not purchase the private land on which the park was to be located. If there was to be a park, Tennessee and North Carolina were responsible for purchasing the land and turning it over to the federal government. Anxious to have a national park located within their boundaries, the states began to raise the funds and purchase the land. However, by 1928, only half of the necessary money had been acquired, and the effort on behalf of the park was in jeopardy. Stepping in to save the movement for Great Smoky Mountains National Park was John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who donated \$5 million, half of the total amount needed to purchase the land. The donation came from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, which had been established by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. in memory of his wife.

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<sup>119</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1935; GSMNP.

To thank the Rockefeller family for its assistance in establishing Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a memorial was proposed for Newfound Gap. Planning for the memorial began in January 1936, and in July, Thomas Vint, the Park Service's chief landscape architect, and Director Cammerer, visited the Smokies to discuss the memorial with the park's landscape staff. As a result of the meeting, it was agreed that the memorial should be placed "on the State line on a slight elevation above the parking area on the north side," which would have placed it near the large rock cut in Newfound Gap.<sup>120</sup>

To pay for the construction of the Rockefeller Memorial, in April 1937, the North Carolina legislature passed a measure stating that it would appropriate \$10,000 for the memorial if Tennessee did the same. Tennessee matched this appropriation in May.<sup>121</sup>

In December 1937, Park Service Director Cammerer wrote Superintendent Eakin that the memorial "cannot be constructed

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<sup>120</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>121</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the Director, National Park Service May 20, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way-Jurisdiction, Tennessee, 1937, File 5; GSMNP.

unless acceptable to us and Mr. Rockefeller," who wants the memorial to be "of the simplest possible form." Cammerer suggested having an "expert" visit the park and make "recommendations" for the memorial. He suggested Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who has "oftentimes been employed by Mr. Rockefeller," and had a long association with the Park Service. Lastly, the memorial should not be built "until the park has actually been established and fully completed."<sup>122</sup>

On April 5, 1938, Henry Hubbard of the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm met with park officials on the placement of the memorial. At this time, the memorial was to include "two informal terraces with the memorial plaque between the two levels," and was tentatively sited on the state line at the east end of the Newfound Gap parking area, where it is located today.<sup>123</sup>

Preliminary work for the memorial was begun in January 1938 by Henry Rice, Jr., who was probably not with the Olmsted firm as

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<sup>122</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, to J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, December 12, 1937; Land Acquisition, Box 15; Correspondence, 1937, File 15; GSMNP.

<sup>123</sup> Superintendents Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.

it was noted by Superintendent Eakin that final "details" still had to be "settled" with the firm.<sup>124</sup> The actual work on the memorial itself began in February.<sup>125</sup> In April, Thomas Vint, now Chief of Planning for the Park Service, and Henry Hubbard of Olmsted Brothers, were in the park to inspect the memorial.<sup>126</sup>

The Rockefeller Memorial was completed in September 1939,<sup>127</sup> and included a plaque which read:

FOR THE PERMANENT ENJOYMENT  
OF THE PEOPLE  
THIS PARK WAS GIVEN  
ONE HALF BY THE PEOPLE AND STATES  
OF NORTH CAROLINA AND TENNESSEE  
AND BY THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
AND ONE HALF IN MEMORY OF LAURA SPELMAN ROCKEFELLER BY THE  
LAURA SPELMAN ROCKEFELLER MEMORIAL  
FOUNDED BY HER HUSBAND  
JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER.

Superintendent Eakin noted that the memorial was built with funds donated by North Carolina and Tennessee, and was "supplemented by CCC work."<sup>128</sup> It was from the memorial that President Roosevelt officially dedicated Great Smoky Mountains National Park on Labor

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<sup>124</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>125</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>126</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>127</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>128</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1939; GSMNP.

Day, September 2, 1940, to a crowd of 10,034 people in Newfound Gap.<sup>129</sup>

*Construction on the Newfound Gap Road in the Post-War Period*

From late 1942 through 1945, the mobilization for World War II prevented any significant work from being done on the Newfound Gap Road. However, planning for after the war was underway as early as July 1945, when Park Service Director Newton Drury, Associate Director A.E. Demaray, the superintendents of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway, and other Park Service staff, met "to discuss post-war road and development problems" for the two parks. On July 22, the group visited the Oconaluftee section of the Newfound Gap Road, which was the proposed southern terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway.<sup>130</sup>

Although the Park Service was planning for new development in the park, the first priority was to catch up on the maintenance work that had been postponed because of the war. Resurfacing the Newfound Gap Road began in June 1946<sup>131</sup> and was completed in

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<sup>129</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1940; GSMNP.

<sup>130</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1945; GSMNP.

<sup>131</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1946; GSMNP.

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October.<sup>132</sup> In 1949 and 1950, overgrown vistas along the road were cleared.<sup>133</sup>

A flash flood on September 1, 1951, caused a great deal of damage in the park, washing out five sections of the Newfound Gap Road, including two sections between Alum Cave Creek and the Chimneys Campground which were completely destroyed.<sup>134</sup> This required the repair of Bridge Number 7, which crossed the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River at the campground.<sup>135</sup> The year following the flood, many of the retaining walls along Newfound Gap Road were rebuilt, and portions of the road were reconstructed.

Despite the fact that post-war planning for the park began in 1945, major work on the Newfound Gap Road did not begin until after 1956, when the Park Service began Mission 66, a major program to provide better facilities and improve the infrastructure of the national parks. Mission 66 plans for the Newfound Gap Road included the relocation of the roadway from Newfound Gap 8.5 miles south to Kephart Prong, the improvement of the roadway from Kephart

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<sup>132</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1946; GSMNP.

<sup>133</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1950; GSMNP.

<sup>134</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1951; GSMNP.

<sup>135</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1951; GSMNP.

Prong 5.16 miles south to Towstring, and repaving the entire North Carolina section of the road.<sup>136</sup> In addition, the Smokemont Campground was to be expanded by sixty sites in an area on the west side of the Bradley Fork which had been set aside for this purpose when the campground was originally developed by the CCC.<sup>137</sup>

Work on the Smokemont Campground began in April 1958, when the existing campground roads and parking areas were resurfaced.<sup>138</sup> The construction of the expansion area on the west side of the Bradley Fork and a multiplate arch bridge over the stream was begun by the Kingsport Paving Company on March 30, 1959.<sup>139</sup> The campground expansion and bridge were completed on August 21.<sup>140</sup>

As part of Mission 66, the lower section of the Newfound Gap Road in North Carolina was also reconstructed and a short spur road was constructed to a bridge over the Oconaluftee River which was to be the end of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The spur road was to be under the jurisdiction of Great Smoky Mountain National Park, but

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<sup>136</sup> National Park Service, Mission 66 Prospectus, April 23, 1956, 40; Foothills Parkway Vertical File; GSMNP Library.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>138</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1958; GSMNP.

<sup>139</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1958; GSMNP.

<sup>140</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1960; GSMNP.

the bridge would be considered a part of the parkway. Because it passed through the Cherokee reservation, the bridge was built by the Indian Service of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The BPR's contractor for the reconstruction of the end of Newfound Gap Road in North Carolina, section 1B, and the spur road to the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Ray D. Bolander Company of Indianapolis, Indiana, began work on May 13, 1958.<sup>141</sup> The transition to the new road section took place on November 19, 1959,<sup>142</sup> but the project was not finished until June 30, 1961, when the removal of the old roadbed for the Newfound Gap Road was completed.<sup>143</sup> The bridge over the Oconaluftee River was begun by the Indian Service in May 1962,<sup>144</sup> and was completed in September 1963.<sup>145</sup> However, as was often the case, traffic was allowed over the bridge before all work was completed, and the section of the Blue Ridge Parkway from Heintooga Ridge to Oconaluftee was opened on April 15, 1963.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1958; GSMNP.

<sup>142</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1959; GSMNP.

<sup>143</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1961; GSMNP.

<sup>144</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1962; GSMNP.

<sup>145</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1963, GSMNP.

<sup>146</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1963; GSMNP.

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With the infusion of funds from Mission 66, the park repaired a number of bridges and tunnels on the Newfound Gap Road. The upper tunnel on the Tennessee section of the road had new lining and portals installed by Troitino and Brown Construction of Asheville, North Carolina. This required that a detour be built on the road, which was started on December 6, 1957,<sup>147</sup> and began carrying traffic December 31.<sup>148</sup> The work inside the tunnel kept traffic out until July 1, 1958, when it was reopened. The full project was completed on July 11.<sup>149</sup> In December, the BPR provided funds to repair the bridges on the Newfound Gap Road which crossed the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River. Work began that month on the McCookville and Banner bridges.<sup>150</sup>

The reconstruction of 4.29 miles of the Newfound Gap Road from Newfound Gap to Kephart Prong was begun on May 15, 1961, by the H.F. Ramsey Company of Asheville, North Carolina (a \$1,288,945 contract,) and was to include a tunnel at the lower end of the project.<sup>151</sup> However, in July 1962, the BPR began working on a plan

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<sup>147</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1957; GSMNP.

<sup>148</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1957; GSMNP.

<sup>149</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1958; GSMNP.

<sup>150</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1958; GSMNP.

<sup>151</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1961; GSMNP.

to eliminate the need for a tunnel,<sup>152</sup> and this was eliminated from the project in April 1963.<sup>153</sup> The reconstruction work was completed on October 1, 1964.<sup>154</sup>

The reconstruction of 0.470 mile of the topmost section of the Newfound Gap Road in North Carolina, a \$417,889 project, was begun by the Blalock Lumber Company of Sevierville, Tennessee on July 11, 1962.<sup>155</sup> This project included excavation work and the construction of a parapet wall at the intersection of the Newfound Gap and Clingmans Dome roads. The project was completed on November 25, 1963.<sup>156</sup>

The contract for the reconstruction of the Newfound Gap road from Kephart Prong to Towstring road, a \$580,700 contract for 4.9 miles of the road, was awarded to the Clement Brothers Company of Hickory, North Carolina in November 1962, and probably began either in November or December.<sup>157</sup> The project was completed on December 7, 1966.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1962; GSMNP.

<sup>153</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1963; GSMNP.

<sup>154</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1964; GSMNP.

<sup>155</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1962; GSMNP.

<sup>156</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1963; GSMNP.

<sup>157</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1962; GSMNP.

<sup>158</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1966; GSMNP.

Prior to World War II, the Park Service had considered making changes to the Newfound Gap parking area, but the war prevented this from advancing any further than preliminary planning. However, during Mission 66, the area was drastically altered by removing the Newfound Gap Road from the Gap itself in order to expand parking at one of the most heavily visited areas in the park. Whereas the road had traveled from east to west across the Gap, with a parking area to the south and the large rock cut to the north, in the new scheme, where the road entered the east side of the Gap from Tennessee, it would turn northwest over the right-of-way for the Clingmans Dome Road, thereby avoiding the parking area, travel several hundred feet, and then turn southwest to descend to North Carolina. From here, the Clingmans Dome Road would head west along its regular route.<sup>159</sup>

Relocating the Newfound Gap Road involved excavating the new intersection of the Newfound Gap and Clingmans Dome roads. In addition, the sloping rock cut which had existed at the gap since North Carolina and Tennessee built the Indian Gap Highway, was cut

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<sup>159</sup> Plan for Proposed Project 1A16, B9, Reconstruction Newfound Gap Parking Area, 1965; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

back in order to add an additional level of parking.<sup>160</sup> This may have increased the size of the cut, but the project's planners may have agreed with the statement of the park's first superintendent, J. Ross Eakin: "When the Tennessee Highway Department made the cut at the gap the landscape was ruined," and widening the area to increase parking "would not make things much worse."<sup>161</sup>

In September 1965, the Newfound Gap project began with work on excavations and retaining walls.<sup>162</sup> By October 1966, the excavations continued, and work was underway on stonemasonry and the flagstone walks around the parking area.<sup>163</sup> The project continued in June 1967, with repairs on the Rockefeller Memorial.<sup>164</sup> The parking area was completed on November 13, 1967.<sup>165</sup>

The number of scenic overlooks on the Newfound Gap Road was expanded in 1968, at a time when the Director of the Park Service,

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to Charles Peterson, Assistant Chief Landscape Architect, National Park Service, March 11, 1933; Design and Construction, Box 1; Newfound Gap-Clingmans Dome, Correspondence, 1933, File 3; GSMNP.

<sup>162</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1965; GSMNP.

<sup>163</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1966; GSMNP.

<sup>164</sup> Superintendents's Monthly Report, June 1967; GSMNP.

<sup>165</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, November 11, 1967; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

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George Hartzog, was considering making the road one-way because of the large amount of traffic on it.<sup>166</sup> On or around June 18, the Hart Construction Company began a \$49,792 project to build eight new parking areas along the road.<sup>167</sup> The project was completed on November 19.<sup>168</sup> In August 1969, Hart Construction began a \$72,255 project to build the Oconaluftee Valley overlook approximately 0.5 miles south of Newfound Gap.<sup>169</sup> The project was completed on June 1, 1970.<sup>170</sup>

In June 1976, a one lane bridge which carried a spur road from the Newfound Gap Road over the Oconaluftee River to the central administrative area in the North Carolina part of the park was deemed to be "urgently in need of repair" as one of the bridge's

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<sup>166</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, January 23, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>167</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, June 18, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>168</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, November 19, 1968; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>169</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, August 19, 1969; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>170</sup> Monthly Progress Report, June 1970; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

supports was "cracked all the way across." Until the bridge could be repaired it was restricted to a five ton load limit.<sup>171</sup>

The deteriorating bridge was a three span concrete arch bridge built by the Luten Bridge Company of Knoxville , Tennessee in 1921, prior to the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, under the auspices of Swain County, North Carolina (see the section Bridges and Tunnels). The bridge was later closed, as it continued to deteriorate with two of its three spans "cracking and settling" and a 4" to 6" "displacement...in the roadway."<sup>172</sup>

In 1977, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, the successor to the BPR, completed a survey of the bridge site,<sup>173</sup> but a bridge plan was not begun until 1982.<sup>174</sup> A \$573,000 contract was awarded for the bridge in August 1982,<sup>175</sup> and based upon a report that pier footings for the

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<sup>171</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1976; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>172</sup> Section 106 Statement, Removal of Oconaluftee Bridge, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1980; Box Trout, Edward L.; Luten Bridges, File 14; GSMNP.

<sup>173</sup> Monthly Progress Report, February 1977; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>174</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, May 18, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>175</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, August 17, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

bridge were being constructed in November, it can be assumed that work began in either September or October.<sup>176</sup> The Oconaluftee bridge was completed on October 25, 1983.<sup>177</sup>

#### *Bears on the Newfound Gap Road*

The presence of a modern road through a wilderness area such as Great Smoky Mountains National Park is bound to bring about encounters between motorists and wildlife, most notably with bears. Today, "bear jams" are a common occurrence in the park, but they are by no means new. The earliest bear incident on the Newfound Gap Road reported in the superintendent's monthly reports to the director of the Park Service was in June 1939, when a "yearling black bear was the object of considerable attention" at the Newfound Gap parking area. This "obligating animal" had been staying in the area for several days, allowing "hundreds of photographers" to snap pictures. With a humorous touch, Superintendent Eakin wrote:

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<sup>176</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, November 16, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>177</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, October 24, 1983; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

One day in attempting to evade a battery of cameras the bear inflicted a bite on the leg of a venturesome onlooker who became so pleased with the resulting scar that he walked about pulling up his pant-leg and boasting about his good fortune! No one seemed to envy his experience.<sup>178</sup>

Later that summer, Eakin reported that "[b]ears continue to attract visitors along the Newfound Gap Highway. When one appears along the road the highway traffic is nearly tied up by the rush to get out of the cars and see or photograph them." Despite warnings by park rangers and signs about feeding them, the bears along the road "continue to be well fed and petted."<sup>179</sup>

The following year, the bears made "their debut" for the season on the Newfound Gap Road on May 5, 1940. By the end of the month, one "bold" bear had already been relocated to another section of the park. One bear was trapped in a box for relocation on May 29, and "gnawed his way out and escaped fifteen minutes after entrapment." The bear was finally relocated 10 miles away but was back on the road by May 31. One person was also "mauled" on the road in May.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>179</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>180</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1940; GSMNP.

A bear was causing particular trouble along the Newfound Gap Road in the summer of 1940. Given the name "Roscoe," he was referred to as "the bear brigand and freebooter." On June 2, he was trapped and transported 10 miles away but was back on the road June 6. On June 9, Roscoe was trapped and transported 18 miles away and was back on the road June 13. An exasperated Superintendent Eakin reported that "[a]ll further efforts to trap him have met with complete failure. He has, however, been practically broken of climbing into cars by the judicious use of fire rake handles."<sup>181</sup>

Apparently, visitors traveling the roads in the park had no fear of the bears. However, the bears were not on display at a zoo; they remained unpredictable, wild animals, regardless of how acclimated they became to people. In August 1940, Superintendent Eakin reported "perhaps the most serious" bear incident in which a couple with a dog stopped on the side of the Newfound Gap Road to view a bear and two cubs. When the dog barked at the bear, the bear went after it. The dog was rescued, "but Madame Bear, like [Shakespeare's character] Shylock, demanded, and took, her pound of

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<sup>181</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1940; GSMNP.

flesh," which required one of the visitors to receive nine stitches.<sup>182</sup>

To combat bear feeding, the Park Service placed signs along the roads in the park "at points of greatest bear tourist concentration." In September 1941, signs were erected which read:

WARNING  
DO NOT FEED THE BEARS  
BEARS ARE DANGEROUS WHEN FED  
MOLESTED OR APPROACHED CLOSELY  
PLAY SAFE.<sup>183</sup>

Today, signs do not line the roads, but bumper stickers saying "Garbage Kills Bears" are distributed at the park visitor centers. This reflects the Park Service's current emphasis on addressing the cause of bears congregating at roadsides, picnic areas, and campgrounds: the easy availability of food.

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<sup>182</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Reports, August 1940; GSMNP.

<sup>183</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, September 1941; GSMNP.

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ADDENDUM TO:  
GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS &  
BRIDGES, NEWFOUND GAP ROAD  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Between Gatlinburg, TN & Cherokee, NC  
Gatlinburg vicinity  
Sevier County  
Tennessee

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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