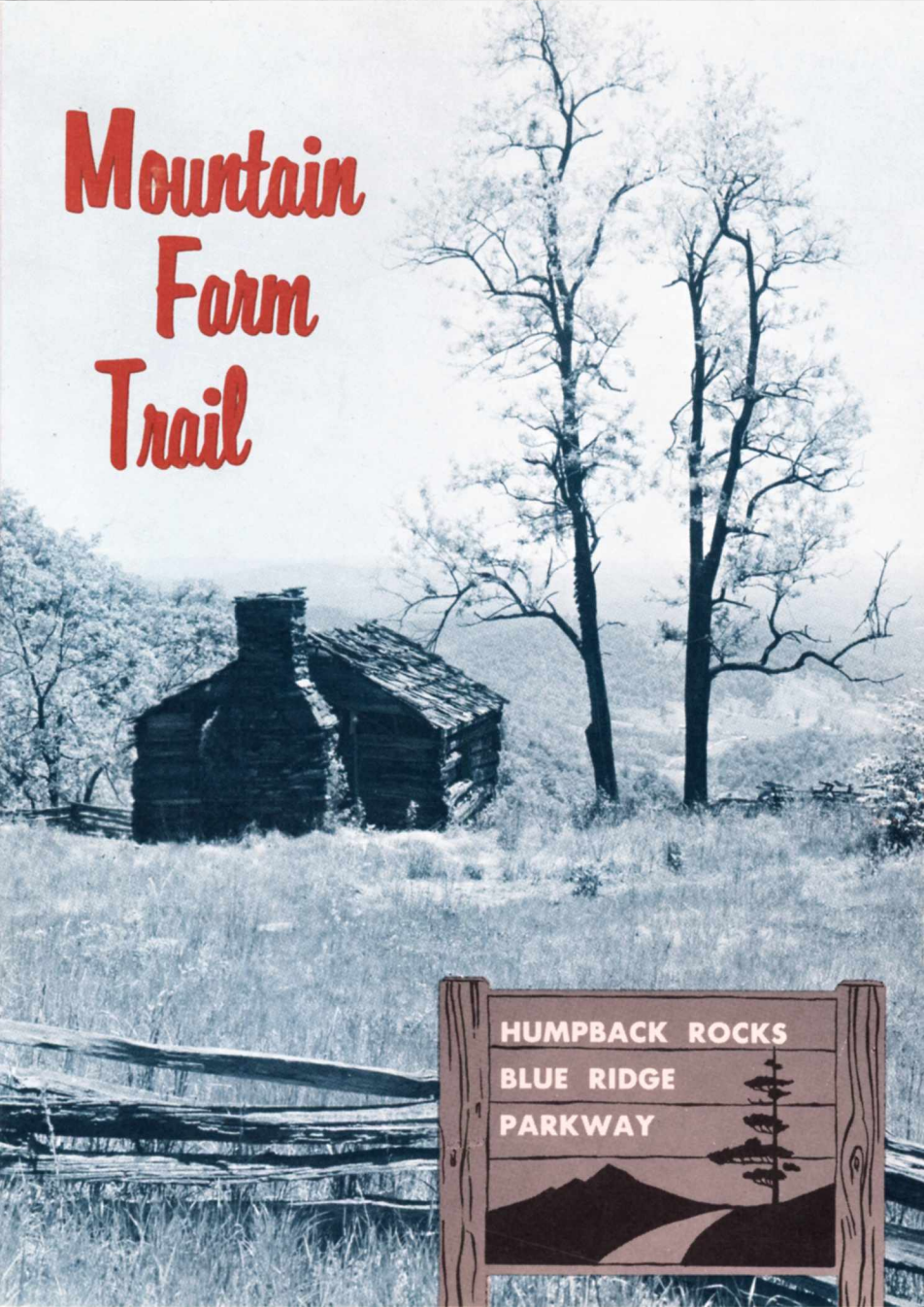


Mountain Farm Trail



HUMPBACK ROCKS
BLUE RIDGE
PARKWAY



PLEASE HELP US KEEP THE PARKWAY CLEAN. The National Park Service administers this area for your use and enjoyment and for the use and enjoyment of others who come after you. Litter scattered along the trail, names written in public places, and natural features vandalized or destroyed distract from enjoyment of the area. This is your parkway. Please help us keep it for you. Thank you.

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(Revised 1966)



THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

Blue Ridge Parkway is a unit of the National Park System, which is administered by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The areas of the System have been set aside to preserve the outstanding scenic, scientific, and historic features of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of this and future generations.

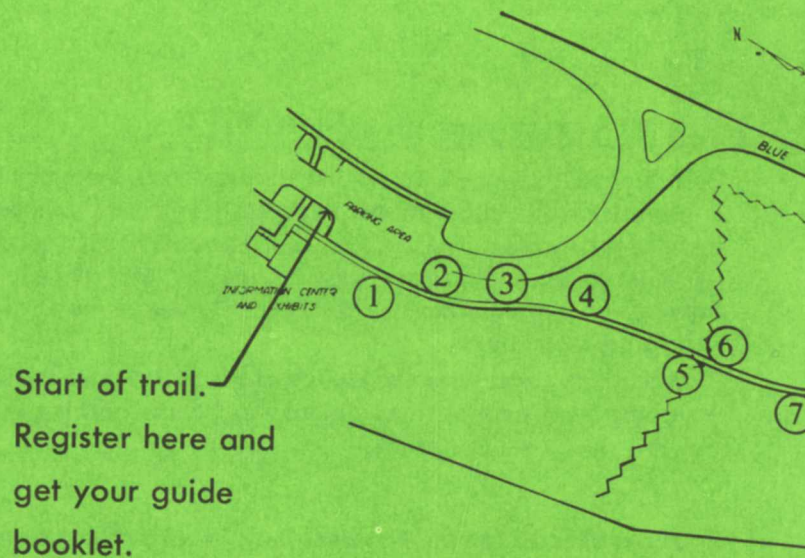
You can help to preserve the beauty of the Blue Ridge Parkway by taking away only pictures, and leaving behind nothing except possibly your own footprints.

WILLIAM CARTER'S FARM

At Humpback Rocks the National Park Service has recreated a typical mountain farm as it might have appeared shortly before the turn of the century. This site was originally the William J. Carter farm, purchased by him for \$3.00 per acre, Confederate money. The original buildings have long since disappeared, but were replaced by other authentic pioneer buildings moved here from nearby and reassembled.

It may surprise you to find that the buildings are really not very old, many of them dating back only 60 years or so. This, however, is one of the most interesting parts of the story of the mountain people, for it illustrates the isolation and primitive conditions under which these people lived—and this at a time so recent that they were practically surrounded and yet not influenced by many of the features of modern life. Actually, it has only been in the last 30 years or so that good roads, electric lights, automobiles, and other conveniences have penetrated many of the coves and valleys of the Blue Ridge. Fifty years ago this was truly the land of “do it yourself or do without.”

The features of interest along the trail are labeled and numbered and are described in the correspondingly numbered paragraphs in this booklet.



THE MOUNTAIN FARM TRAIL

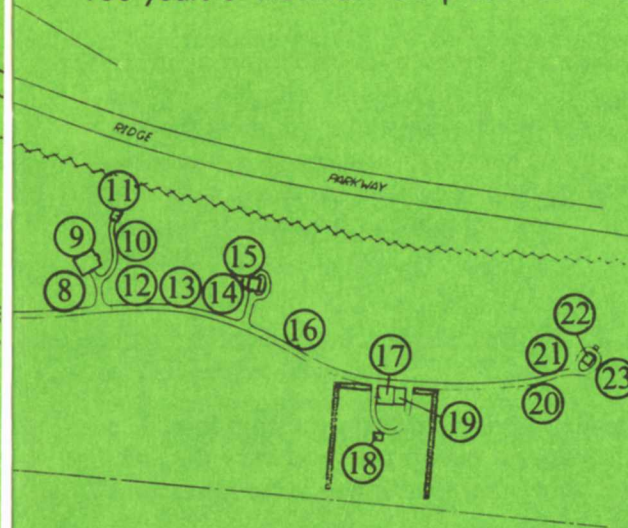
1 WILD GRAPE—*Vitis sp.*

The stout vine twining its way up into the hickory on the right is a wild grape. It is important to wildlife, which eat the fruit and find nesting and protective cover in the vines. Excellent jelly can be made from some species of wild grapes.

2 WHITE ASH—*Fraxinus americana*

The tough, springy wood of the white ash has long been highly regarded. Indians used the long, straight branchlets for arrows; today the wood is used for baseball bats, tennis racket frames, and handles of garden tools and agricultural implements. Fortunately, white ash is a rapid grower when given ample space and sunlight, and it is holding its own against the inroads of cutting.

100 years of mountain lore preserved in this 250-yard stroll.



3 HUMPBACK ROCKS

On the skyline of Humpback Mountain, looming above and ahead of you, is a large rock outcrop. This is a landmark known to the local folk simply as "The Rocks." It is an easy hike to The Rocks via a short section of the Appalachian Trail located at the next parking area about one-fourth mile south of here.

The Rocks were quite likely a landmark for wagoners on the old Howardsville Turnpike, in use from some time after 1850 to the 1880's. This old wagon road ran from Howardsville on the James River to points in the Great Valley, and remnants of the old track can still be seen on the other side of the Parkway. The up-mountain freight was mostly bolts of cloth, salt, guns, and ammunition which were towed up the James in barges to Howardsville. There it was loaded into wagons bound for the mountain and valley settlements. The return cargo was usually hides, cured meat, and whiskey.

4 *FLOWERING DOGWOOD—*Cornus florida**

The pioneers valued dogwood for both its wood and its medicinal qualities. Because it wears to a glossy smoothness, the wood was used for shuttles in weaving, and even today the textile industry depends on dogwood for shuttles. As a medicine, the inner root bark was steeped in whiskey and was taken for the “shakes” and “ague”—a rather odd combination, as whiskey has never been noted for its curative effect on some kinds of shakes! During the Civil War naval blockade the bark was used as a substitute for quinine.

5 *RAIL FENCE*

Fences were usually made of rails split from chestnut logs. The wood from this handsome and useful tree was very durable. Chestnut was plentiful until the 1920's when the disastrous Chestnut Blight killed the trees.

Wire fencing gradually replaced split rail fences, but we are fortunate in still having good examples, gathered from far and near, to recreate this traditional mountain scene. There are many different styles of old time rail fences. This one is called a worm fence. You will see other kinds along the Parkway.

6 *BLACK WALNUT—*Juglans nigra**

Pioneers used black walnut for cradles and cabinet work. It was once so common it was even used for rails and railroad ties. Today it is a prized cabinet wood and is used so much for gunstocks that the tree is sometimes called gunwood. It is now so rare that lumber dealers occasionally buy choice black walnuts grown as shade and yard trees. A large tree may produce as much as 90,000 square feet of thin veneer worth as much as \$20,000.

The nuts, although difficult to remove from their hard shells and enclosing husks, are tasty and a favorite of the mountain folk. They are a valued ingredient in ice cream and confections today.

7 GARDENS AND ORCHARDS

Each farmstead usually had its small garden plot and several fruit trees. At this farm the garden might have been located in the cleared area to your right. The common garden crops were corn, potatoes, beans, onions, squash, pumpkins, and cabbages. A few apple trees were generally planted, but the mountain farmer was never much of an orchardist. The trees were often in poor condition, producing second-rate apples as the result of lack of pruning and proper cultivation.

Fresh garden products were often supplemented in the spring with “sallets” or wild greens. Wild fruits such as strawberries, huckleberries, and grapes were gathered when in season. The summer diet of the pioneer family was fairly adequate, but it was poor in the winter due to inadequate storage for perishable foods.

8 EASTERN HEMLOCK—*Tsuga canadensis*

Hemlock bark contains tannin, which the pioneers used in tanning leather and in medicines for treating burns and sores. The common practice was to strip the standing trees of bark and to leave the dead, naked trees standing as a “silver forest.” The bark is still used in the Southern Appalachians as a dyestuff, but fortunately the bark is no longer taken from the living trees. The hemlocks scattered through this farm have probably been planted, for in nature they usually grow in the deep, shaded wood on steep slopes along rushing mountain streams.

9 THE CABIN

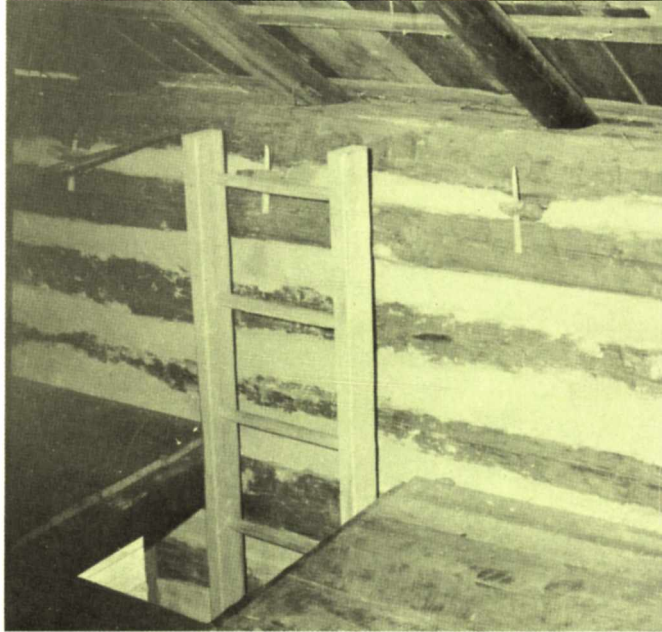
The log cabin, which was the typical early home of the Southern Highlanders, is thought to have been patterned after those common in the forests of Sweden and Germany. Immigrants to this country quickly adopted it as a practical dwelling on the Ameri-



The Mountain Farm Cabin.

can frontier. The architecture of pioneer homes was an ever-changing thing, depending on the remoteness of the area and the coming of the sawmill.

This cabin was moved from the old Ramsey Farm about 45 miles south of here and is thought to be between 50 and 75 years old. Some new material was used in reconstructing the building, but many of the original timbers may be seen. The only nails used in the reconstruction are square nails in the shingles, all other major joints in the framing being fastened with locust pegs. These pegs may be seen in the oak framing around the door. Boards fastened in this manner were extremely tight, as it was the practice to use a green board which shrank tightly around the dry locust peg. The shelf or bench on the front porch held the customary water bucket and dipper.



Farm cabin scuttle-hole and loft.

The most prominent feature of the low-ceilinged room is the large, stone fireplace used for both heating and cooking. You will note there is only one small window, and this is strategically located where the farmer can keep a sharp watch for both two and four-legged marauders around the outbuildings. The walls were usually bare except for pegs on which clothing and household articles were hung. A ladder leads through the "scuttle-hole" to the loft, which was used for storage and sometimes for sleeping.

The yarn reel was homemade, as were the cradle, the banjo, and the box mousetrap just beyond the foot of the cannon-ball rope bed. The muzzle-loading shot gun and shot pouch on the wall above the fireplace were necessary means of stocking the larder. Light was furnished by candles made in the mold on the mantle. A white candle holder hangs on the wall. Later the kerosene lamp was used.



The Chicken House.

10

BROOD COUP

The small, wooden cage is a brood coop in which a mother hen and chicks were kept. The coop kept the hen confined and yet allowed the chicks to forage for food outside and to return to the safety of the coop when danger threatened. Note that the coop is made of rived oak slats on a frame with pegged joints.

WEASEL-PROOF CHICKEN HOUSE

11

The construction of a chicken house presented special problems as it had to be “varmint” proofed to guard against weasels, skunks, and other prowlers. This was done by chinking with pieces of wood held in place by locust wedges. Rocks were filled in snugly between the log and the ground. During the day the doors were open, but in the evening after the chickens had gone to roost the doors were closed and fastened with pegs.

Detail of chicken door and ladder, note chinking to make building skunk and weasel proof.



The rived oak boards on the door should be noted as well as the ingenious wooden hinge. Several distinct types of hinges will be found on the different farm buildings. The roosts are fastened with hickory withes.

12 BEE GUMS

Colonies of bees were kept in hollow sections of trunk from the black gum tree and were called “bee gums.” The pioneer pantry seldom included sugar, so sorghum molasses and honey were the principal sweetening agents.

13 BLACK OAK—*Quercus velutina*

Black oak bark, rich in tannin, is also the source of a yellow dye that was an item of commerce in the old days. This yellow to orange coloring of the inner bark can usually be seen if you scratch a twig with your fingernail, and it helps in identifying this common oak. The low quality wood is used for rough construction and barrel making.

14 ROOT CELLAR

Many vegetables as well as some fruits were stored in rooms such as this. Smoked and cured meats might have been hung from the ceiling. Root cellars were often dug into a hillside as this one is to make the room both cool and dark, which aided in preserving the stored food. You will notice two doors, each with a different type of hinge. The outer door is the “summer door” and was used in the summer to provide ventilation.

Apple butter is still made in the mountains. The entire family peels and cores apples for long hours to make a full kettle of this delicacy. Before sunup the next day a fire is started under a large copper kettle in the yard, apples are added and the cooking begins. All day long the apples cook over a regulated fire, constantly stirred with a long-handled stirrer so they will not burn. Often it is after dark before the kettle of apple butter is done and safely put away in jars for the winter.



The Root Cellar showing winter door closed and summer door open.



Gear loft door, note locust pegs and method of hinging.

15 GEAR LOFT

The mountain folk sometimes refer to various items of equipment, supplies, and odds and ends as “gear” or “plunder.” Such things were usually stored in a room like this one; hence the name “gear loft” or “plunder shed.”

Here may be seen such common farm items as the hand cradle for cutting grain, and carpenter tools like the wooden plane, broad-axe, auger, and frow for splitting shakes. A flail for threshing grain was also a common item of “plunder” around the mountain farm.

The floor is made of chestnut puncheons—smoothed split-log slabs. Just such hewn and shaped logs as these were used for early-day flooring. Look at the upper door hinge. It consists of a hickory withe that holds the pintle. The ends of the withe,



Bear-proof Pig Pen.

split and tightly wedged in place, extend all the way through the log. The hickory stick was soaked in boiling water so that it could be bent easily.

16 **BLACK CHERRY**—*Prunus serotina*

The small, juicy cherries were used by the pioneers as a flavoring for brandy and rum, resulting in a tasty brew called “cherry bounce.” They also used the bitter bark in cough medicines.

17 **THE BARN**

This barn was built by John C. Clark in 1881 and came from the old Clark farm about 31 miles south of here. On the ends of the original logs you may notice numbers placed there to insure each log being put back in its original position when the barn was reassembled.



Barn and Stone Fence.

The first door opens into the corn crib where ears of corn were stored for stock feed. The next room might have been used for a stable or as a storeroom for items of farm equipment. The pole ceiling forms the floor of a loft for storing hay, and the logs below the loft are chinked to keep out the weather. When filled, the loft itself gave protection from cold above.

Common farm equipment included the wooden "A" harrow, homemade "slide," the "three-foot" plow, and the "lay-off" plow. All these items were home-made—oftentimes even the iron parts.

BEAR-PROOF PIG PEN

Nearly every farmer had razorback hogs. Most of the year these animals roamed wild in the forest, thriving on acorns and chestnuts. The hogs were seldom seen from early spring until fall, but they could be identified easily by markings on their ears. In the fall, a few weeks before killing time, several of these choicest porkers were rounded up and placed in pig pens where they were fed on corn to “harden the fat.” The pigs were placed inside the pens by removing the rails from the top. Once in there to fatten, they were not removed until ready to be butchered.

Pork was a mainstay in the diet of the mountain people, but their meals left a lot to be desired. In the words of one authority, “What the butcher mangled the cook damned.”

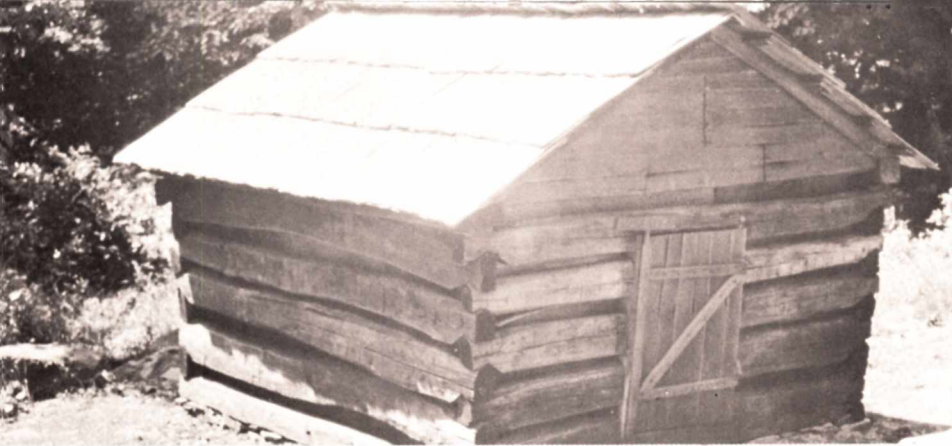
COWSHED

The family cow was probably kept in this small shed on the end of the barn. To the mountaineers “milk” is buttermilk, and fresh milk is called “sweet milk.” Stone fences, such as the one around the barn, were fairly common where rock was plentiful. Miles of stone fences were built in the mountains during the early 1800’s in an effort to control the wanderings of foraging hogs.

PIGNUT HICKORY—*Carya glabra*

Few trees were more valued by the pioneers than the hickories. The wood was used in cabin construction and furniture making. It burns with a hot flame, and untold thousands of trees were consumed in the fireplaces of mountain cabins.

In the autumn when frost caused the nut pods to open and the nuts to drop to the ground, nearly all mountain families gathered hickory nuts for winter use. A delicacy in the family diet, hickory nuts were used to flavor pastries, cakes, and candies.



The Spring House.

21 **BEETLIN' BLOCK**

The "beetlin' block," or "battlin' block" as it is called in some sections, was the forerunner of the old-fashioned washboard. Soiled clothes were boiled with homemade soap in large iron kettles and then hammered on the block with a "beetle" or "battlin' stick."

The ash hopper across the trail behind you was filled with ashes. Water was then allowed to trickle through it. The solution which seeped out into the trough at the bottom contained lye. This was then added to old fat and boiled in the iron kettle to make soap.

22 **SPRING HOUSE**

This little house, built over a cool mountain spring, was the walk-in refrigerator of the pioneer. Cold spring water continually flowed through the cooling trough where crocks of milk, butter, eggs, and other perishables were kept. In some spring houses the cooling trough was a hollowed log or trough along one wall.

Churning butter with the "up-and-down" churn was usually a job for the younger members of the family.

23 **END OF THE TRAIL**

Please return by the same trail.



THINGS TO SEE AND DO ALONG THE PARKWAY

Miles

- 5.8** HUMPBACK ROCKS VISITOR CENTER and SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. *YOU ARE HERE*. Wayside museum and reconstructed mountain farm.
- 8.8** GREENSTONE SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. A woodland trail through an oak-hickory forest.
- 63.6** JAMES RIVER CANAL EXHIBITS and SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Restored canal locks, wayside museum and a delightful woodland nature trail.
- 86.0** PEAKS OF OTTER VISITOR CENTER and SELF-GUIDING NATURE TRAIL. Wayside natural history museum and unique woodland trail.
- 168.0** ROCKY KNOB SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. An interesting nature trail to a scenic overlook.
- 176.0** MABRY MILL VISITOR CENTER and SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Exhibits of pioneer mountain industry, including an operating grist mill.
- 238.5** BRINEGAR CABIN. Weaving demonstrations and craft sales.
- 272.0** CASCADES SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Labeled nature trail to the cascades of a mountain stream.
- 294.0** PARKWAY CRAFT CENTER and SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Mountain craftsmen may be seen at work. Sales shop. Exhibit room. Craftsman's trail.
- 308.3** FLAT ROCK SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Nature trail through woodlands to a scenic view.
- 316.5** LINVILLE FALLS SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Nature trail to the spectacular falls and gorge of the Linville River.
- 331.0** MUSEUM OF NORTH CAROLINA MINERALS. Exhibits and study collection of North Carolina minerals.
- 364.6** CRAGGY GARDENS VISITOR CENTER and SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Wayside museum and nature trail, featuring high-mountain flora of the rhododendron "gardens."
- 422.4** DEVILS COURTHOUSE SELF-GUIDING TRAIL. Nature trail through a spruce-fir forest to outstanding scenic view.
- 431.0** RICHLAND BALSAM SELF-GUIDING NATURE TRAIL. Trail through an "island" of the Canadian zone forest.

Be sure to get your copy of the Blue Ridge Parkway folder and the printed "Programs on Nature and Pioneer History." They contain information about:

food	flowering season
gas	fishing
Parkway map	camping
lodgings	hiking
craft demonstrations	campfire programs
guided walks	

Both are free at the Visitors' Centers and Rangers' Stations.