

CADES COVE

Self-Guiding Auto Tour

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

NORTH CAROLINA — TENNESSEE



JOURNEY THROUGH YESTERDAY

Deep in the Great Smoky Mountains lies the isolated valley of Cades Cove. Until the park was established there were about 100 families living in this area, living and working the same way as their fathers and grandfathers. The National Park Service is perpetuating this scene so that you can turn back the pages of time for a little while and forget some of the cares and worries of our more "advanced" age. At the same time, we hope you gain an insight into the way the mountain people lived. Isolated from the outside world by the rugged mountains, this was a land of "make it yourself or do without."

Originally all the cove was woodland, but as the settlers arrived it was cleared for farms. To prevent these farms from returning to woodland, the National Park Service has leased the land to individuals who farm it under conditions of the permit. Please respect the fences, fields, and weathered old buildings that make Cades Cove unique among open-air museums.

This eleven mile auto tour begins at the Orientation Shelter where exhibits and Interpretive signs give a brief description of the valley. Traffic is one way on a surfaced road that follows much of the original roadway with its natural grade and turns used by the mountain people. Fords across the streams have been retained but have been surfaced with concrete aprons to make them passable when the creeks are high. The points of interest have been numbered along the roadside corresponding to those in this booklet.



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Cades Cove Overlook at Beginning of Tour



FIRST VIEW OF CADES COVE. This was an American frontier. To this valley in the early 19th century came the pioneer settlers. Isolated from the outside world, they became self-sufficient.

Sturdy log structures, their timbers hewed with a skill now lost, remain as memorials to a way of life. The fine frame buildings show a slow self-taught advance in construction methods.

Elsewhere the frontier passed on yielding to change and innovation, but here a pioneer culture has persisted, offering to future generations a "sense of the land from which their forefathers hewed their homes."

Cades Cove with its visible record of man's struggle with the wilderness is a valuable heritage of the American people.

THE GEOLOGY OF CADES COVE

The rocks that underlie all the area that can be seen from this point were deposited on the floors of ancient seas. Sandstones and shales, laid down about 600 million years ago, form the mountains. Limestones containing fossil sea shells that were buried 400 million years ago underlie the cove floor. During the ancient upheaval of the earth's crust known as the Appalachian Revolution the older rocks of the mountains were moved northwestward over the younger limestones. Since then running water has been ceaselessly wearing the mountains away, removing several thousand feet of rock that once stood over the cove area.



INDIAN MOUND. The earth mound on your right looks strangely out of place on the flat valley floor. Early residents referred to it as the Indian Mound; however, recent archeological investigations by The University of Tennessee have determined that it is not man made, but simply soil, sand, and gravel deposited here by water. This alluvial deposit was washed down from the mountains north of the cove and eventually eroded into its present shape.



OLD DWELLING SITE. As you travel through the cove you will be able to recognize several former homesites although the buildings are gone. Apple trees and black walnuts, planted by the early settlers for food, still thrive. Daffodils, phlox, periwinkle, and other flowers bloom in season and were planted about the yards to brighten their surroundings.

Some of the lease holders now farming the cove are descendants of the early settlers. A few are members of families which have lived and worked in the cove for more than a century.



CROOKED ARM FORD. Crossing streams on foot or with horse and wagon was difficult for the mountain people. It was often necessary to go up or down the stream looking for a shallow place to cross. Eventually a path was beaten to the best place and a ford or crossing was established.

Streams were usually named for some physical characteristic or for one of the early settlers in the area.



SPARKS LANE. The lane to your left, named for one of the cove's early residents, crosses the cove north to south. It originally connected with the road to Chilhowee, an early settlement on the Little Tennessee River.



JOHN OLIVER CABIN (.3 mile walk). In 1818 John Oliver, a veteran of the War of 1812, made his way across the mountains into Cades Cove to become the first permanent white settler. Here, at the foot of the mountains and sheltered from prevailing winds, he built his home. The original homestead stood close to the present structure. Take this short trail which begins here and walk to the John Oliver Cabin.

John Oliver Cabin





RETURN OF THE FOREST. When the first settlers arrived, the entire cove was covered with a dense primeval forest, which they began to clear immediately for crops. Naturally the early arrivals claimed the rich flat bottom land. As the population of the cove increased, the late comers and descendants of the pioneers were forced to farm the steeper hillsides up the "hollers." Good soil conservation practices were unknown to them and the steep side hills began to erode heavily washing away the productive topsoil until farming became difficult and harvests were lean.

After this area became a part of the National Park, these hilly areas were allowed to return to forest to prevent destructive erosion. Were it not for the present day farmers, the entire cove would soon return to forest.



Primitive Baptist Church



ROAD TO PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH. Turn left here for a one-half mile side trip to the Primitive Baptist Church. Return by the same road.

The early settlers in Cades Cove were a religious people. In 1827, shortly after the community was established, the Primitive Baptist Church was organized. The original log structure stood on the rise of ground just to the rear of the present church. This frame building was erected to replace the old log structure.

Much of the history of Cades Cove and its people is recorded on the grave markers in the churchyard. Many of the people lived and died without ever leaving the cove.

As you stroll through this old cemetery notice the surnames on the markers; this part of the cove was settled by Olivers, the Gregorys, the Anthonys, and the Shields and many are buried here. Many of their young children are also buried here. Life on the frontier was a struggle for survival, and sickness, malnutrition, and lack of medical attention all took a heavy toll; many never reached adulthood.



METHODIST CHURCH. Four churches filled the religious needs of Cades Cove residents. Two were Methodist and two Baptist. This church, built in 1902, replaced an old log structure.



OLD HYATT LANE (LEFT). Like Sparks Lane, which you passed earlier, Hyatt Lane also extends across the cove. Built in 1850 it was one of the early roads in the Cove and the first route to the early settlement at Chilhowee on the Little Tennessee River. It was four feet wide!



OLD ROAD TO TOWNSEND. This winding gravelled mountain road follows the same route over Tater Ridge, Cades Cove Mountain through Rich Mountain Gap and into Tuckaleechee Cove and the present City of Townsend that the pioneers travelled. If you have the pioneer spirit, this makes a nice scenic side trip. Distance is 12 miles to Townsend.



TATER BRANCH. This small stream begins on Tater Ridge and flows across the cove into Abrams Creek. "Tater" is short for potato and is easier to say and has been left with us as a place name.



SCENIC VIEW PARKING AREA. This spot offers an excellent view of the rugged mountains that isolated the residents of the cove from the outside world. Elsewhere the frontier passed on but here a pioneer culture persisted. As recently as one generation ago, people lived and farmed the land as did their forefathers; they used a maul and fro to rive boards for shingles, wove their own cloth, and farmed with animals. But that way of life is now gone; it has passed into history, leaving us all a little poorer for its passing.



WILD LIFE. Wild turkey and whitetail deer are among the natural residents of Cades Cove, and visitors should be on the alert for an occasional glimpse of them. Evening and early morning are times when they have been observed most frequently. Look for them in open fields as well as along woodland margins. Except for Cades Cove, these animals are rare or absent throughout most of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Like all wild life, turkey and deer are given full protection here. They are a part of the wilderness which national parks have saved for this and future generations.

Whitetail Deer





COOPER ROAD. Cooper Road (right) was the pioneer route to Maryville and Chilhowee. At first a trail then later a homespun highway, it traversed Arbutus and Stony ridges through the gaps and out to the flats where travel was easier. During rainy weather travel over this route was difficult if not impossible.



Skyline View



SKYLINE VIEW. Looking across the Cove to the horizon we again see the crestline of the Smokies. Thunderhead Mountain is the highest and most prominent peak on the distant skyline. It is often obscured by clouds on warm summer afternoons, hence its name.



ABRAMS CREEK. Abrams Creek drains the cove and was named after Old Abram, Cherokee Chief of the Chilhowee. It has been said Abram's wife was called Kate by the whites and that through the years Kate's Cove became Cades Cove.

Abrams Falls



ABRAMS FALLS. Abrams Falls Parking area (right .3 mile). Abrams Falls is one of the finest waterfalls in the park. Reached only by trail, it is a five-mile round trip from this parking area. Turn right for the trail to the Elijah Oliver Place.





ELIJAH OLIVER PLACE. One half mile by trail from here is the Elijah Oliver homestead. "Leige," as he was called by all that knew him, was the deacon and clerk of the Primitive Baptist Church (post number 8) for thirty-seven years. Many church meetings were held in his home during the winter months. He and his wife were ordained deacon and deaconess in this old home. It was a place of welcome and hospitality for preachers and teachers and all good people.



Elijah Oliver Cabin



TURN RIGHT HERE TO JOHN P. CABLE OPEN AIR MUSEUM



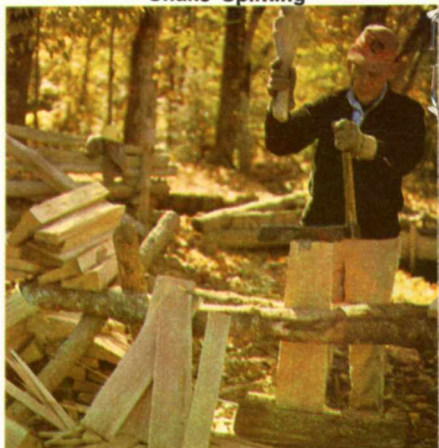
JOHN P. CABLE OPEN AIR MUSEUM (Walk Clockwise Around Historic Buildings)

BLACKSMITH SHOP. This building was erected in 1957 to replace the one that stood here for many years. It is similar to the typical blacksmith shop used by the early residents of the cove. The blacksmith was no mere shoer of horses; tools, hinges, andirons, wagon springs, pots, and pans were but a few of the many items hammered out of red-hot iron on his anvil. In addition to making new items, the smith was a great repairer; iron was expensive and hard to come by and was used again and again. A discarded pair of horseshoes made a good set of hinges as you can see on the door.

The entire Cable Mill area is enclosed with a "snake rail" fence made from split chestnut logs. The fence at the Becky Cable House is known as a "split picket fence."

SHAKES. Using a fro and maul, the pioneers split or rived shakes for the roofs of their buildings. Straight grained white oak was preferred, although other woods were used. You could usually see daylight through a finished roof, but they seldom leaked and would last for years. All the buildings in this group have shake roofs.

Shake Splitting



By walking a short distance along the millrace you will come to the flood-gate and milldam.

FLOODGATE. This device controls the amount of water entering the millrace.

MILL CREEK DAM. This dam was built to bring water from Mill Creek through the millrace, to the overshot wheel at the mill. Because hemlock logs are very durable when submerged in water, they were the most economical and practical material for milldams. Across Mill Creek you can see a canal which brings water from the larger Forge Creek, about a half-mile away, to assure an adequate supply of water at all times. Return the way you came.

BARN. This is an excellent example of the old cantilever-type barn, showing framing typical of many such structures in the cove. Large haylofts were required to store forage for cattle during the winter months. Note the wooden door hinges.

FLUME. The elevated trough carrying water is the flume. The water which powers the mill is channeled by this flume to the top of the mill wheel. The wider ditch upstream is the millrace. The structures with wooden bars placed where the race narrows into the flume is called a "chunk rack." Its purpose is to filter large chunks and debris from the water.

JOHN P. CABLE MILL. There were hundreds of grist mills in the area now included in the National Park. Most of these were small family mills, grinding just enough for their owners, but a few were large community mills such as this one. This type of mill usually operated under a toll system whereby the miller received a gallon of grain per bushel for grinding it. The mill was originally built by John P. Cable and has been restored twice. It uses an overshot waterwheel and is the only one of its kind left in the park.

The mill is operated April 15 to late October as a demonstration by the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. The ground corn meal is sold in the nearby Becky Cable House.

MEATHOUSE. The pioneers didn't have refrigerators, but they did have a way of keeping meat. After a heavy frost, the winter's supply of meat was butchered. The meat was arranged along the shelves, covered with salt and allowed to cure. After curing, the meat was hung from the poles spanning the interior.

BECKY CABLE HOUSE. This was the first frame house in the Cove, built by John P. Cable for his daughter, Becky. Upon completion of this building a general store operated here for many years. Most of the goods were brought from Maryville, 26 miles away, using yoke oxen. The unique construction of this building necessitated a round about entrance to each room by way of the porch. Note the winding stairway inside. Becky Cable lived here until her death at the age of 96, December 19, 1940.

The store is operated (April 15-late October) by the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association. Books, pamphlets, postcards, slides, other informational material, and meal ground at the nearby mill are sold here.



Becky Cable House

CORNCRIB. Corn was the most important food in the lives of the pioneers. Unlike other crops, corn was easy to grow, kept for years without spoiling and had a wide variety of uses. July and August brought fresh roasting ears while last year's crop was being ground for meal. Corn was also used as feed for livestock and some was converted to a rather potent beverage. This crib, one of the better constructed types, has storage space for wagons, sleds, various tools, and equipment.

DRIVE-THROUGH BARN. This drive-through two pen log barn was brought here from Cataloochee in 1957. It was erected here to replace a similar barn which stood near this spot at one time.

SORGHUM MILL. Along with honey, sorghum was the major source of sweetin' used by the pioneers. Powered by a mule or horse, the rollers squeezed the juice from the ripened cane. The juice is then boiled to a thick sirup in a large pan on the nearby furnace. The mill is operated as a pioneer demonstration on weekends in late September and October.

Sorghum Cane Grinding





PARSONS BRANCH ROAD. The road to your right leads to the Henry Whitehead cabin (0.7 mile) A short distance beyond the cabin the road becomes one way and connects with US 129.



CABLE CEMETERY. Many family cemeteries were established in the cove for their clan. The funeral ceremonies were simple and regarded with deep respect and love. The Cable name has been prominent in the cove since 1825, and many of them are buried here.



PINE - OAK SELF - GUIDING NATURE TRAIL. Throughout the Southern Appalachian Mountains there are thousands of acres of forests dominated by a mixture of pines and oaks. However, the axe and fires have played such havoc with these woodlands that mature trees are now a rarity. Here, because a former owner, "Uncle Andy" Shields, would not permit the cutting of the biggest trees, some large specimens have survived. Now that this is a part of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, forest protection is assured for all time. Here, as in all National Parks, a superlative segment of the American scene is preserved for the enjoyment of this and future generations. Use the self-guiding leaflet to learn more about what you see along this short trail.



Becky Cable Grave



PRIVATE QUARTERS. The people living here farm the cove under a special use permit issued by the National Park Service.



HYATT LANE. This is the southern end of Hyatt Lane (You passed the northern end at stop 10). If you wish to return to the Cable Mill area, turn left here.



PETER CABLE PLACE. This, one of the oldest cabins in the cove, illustrates exceptionally fine workmanship. Peter Cable, the 3rd oldest settler, is said to have taken three years to complete the original building. A smokehouse and granary are standing nearby. Most of the cove's honey is produced here. Bees furnished the main source of sweetenin' for the mountain folk.



PERMITTEE QUARTERS (RIGHT). This residence is occupied by one of the families that farm the land in Cades Cove by special permission from the National Park Service. Except for a small garden, no "row" crops are permitted. Haying and grazing are the principle agricultural activities in the cove today.



SUNKEN ROAD. The high banks along this section of the road were caused by erosion and long use. After each rain a new crop of rocks and ruts appeared in the road bed. Money was scarce in the mountains and to pay taxes on their land, the pioneers would do road maintenance work to satisfy their assessment. The road work, done by hand, was filling the ruts and removing the rocks. Gradually the road bed became deeper and deeper leaving the road banks high.



TIPTON OLIVER PLACE. This house was built by Jackie Stevenson for Col. J. W. H. Tipton, a descendant of early Cades Cove pioneers. Tipton was a colonel in the war with Mexico. Nearby stands a black-smith shop, meat-house, and apiary; across the road is the barn and corncrib.

Cantilevered Barn—Tipton Oliver Place



GREYBACKS. The rocks that underlie the cove area can be seen on the surface from this spot. These boulders, known locally as greybacks, were plucked from the mountainsides by freezing and thawing and rolled to their present positions. Some farmers removed them, but most simply planted their crops around them.



VIEW OF CADES COVE MOUNTAIN. This fine view of the lower end of the cove and surrounding mountains shows the mountain barrier that prevented the people of Cades Cove from having close communications with the outside world. Travel outside was difficult and arduous. Many people never left the cove in their entire lifetime.



FARMSTEAD LANE. This narrow lane lined with rocks and trees led to a site once occupied as a farmstead. These rocks were laboriously cleared from the surrounding fields and placed here out of the way.



LEAD MINE BRANCH. Apparently this name is incorrectly used because no lead deposits have ever been found in the cove. Some iron had been mined from the mountains in the area and a forge operated for some time near Becky Cable House.



CARTER SHIELDS CABIN. Nestled in this delightful setting, the Carter Shields cabin again shows excellent craftsmanship in its construction. Space requirements for the mountain people were meager compared to present day standards. Their possessions were few but essential to their well being.



Carter Shields Cabin



PANORAMIC VIEW. From this parking area, Rich Mountain dominates the scene. Rich Mountain Fire Tower is to the right on the skyline. In the park, there are two fire seasons. The first begins in February when the leaves on the forest floor dry out quickly while the trees are bare. The second begins late in September when the leaves begin to fall adding fuel to the forest floor.



FLOOD CONTROL. See the rock work along this creek. These rocks were placed here to control the stream during times of high water and to protect the fields from flooding.



JUNCTION WITH CADES COVE ROAD. You have now completed the Cades Cove Self-guiding Auto Tour. The people who lived here, isolated from the outside world, struggled to eke out an existence. Their life was hard and their pleasures few and simple. Yet, who is to say that we, in our headlong rush for material possessions, have truly improved upon their way of life.

We hope you have enjoyed your trip and have learned something about the pioneer way of life as it existed for more than 100 years here in Cades Cove.

A HISTORY OF CADES COVE

In the 18th and early in the 19th Century many people in Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany became dissatisfied with conditions as they existed and left their native lands. Most of them came to America, seeking freedom from heavy tax burdens; others because their land was worn out; still others for adventure to fulfill a life-long dream of wealth and riches in a new country. Many came with only the personal belongings they could carry. Some had to work for their passage aboard ship to get here. By 1800 the lands along the Atlantic Coast had been claimed and were thickly settled. For the new arrivals it meant moving west into the frontier to find a place to settle. The bottom lands were occupied first because they provided large flat areas that could be farmed. With more arrivals and descendants, areas farther upstream were conquered and claimed from nature to provide new homes and farms. Elsewhere the frontier moved steadily west yielding to change and desires but here in the mountains, which formed a natural barrier, the settlers stayed for several generations perpetuating a pioneer culture they had learned from their forefathers.

The first settlers arrived over an old Indian trace leading from the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River at Wear's first settlement, up Walden and Cove Creeks, Wear Cove, Brickey Valley to Tuckaleechee Cove, then across Rich Mountain Gap into Cades Cove, and was later used by early traders and white settlers.

The first land grant in Cades Cove was one of 5,000 acres made by North Carolina to Hugh Dunlap in 1794. The original grant was mislaid and the record of it lost from the state land office. Dunlap later petitioned Tennessee for a re-issue and obtained a new grant in 1809. Dunlap did not reside in the cove, but he was able to get this grant. Although the region was not legally open for entry until the Cherokee Indian treaty of 1819, a few white people had been living here among the Indians before that time. The first white settler was John Oliver who established his residence in 1818.

In 1821 William Tipton acquired 640 acres which had been granted to William Crowson by North Carolina in 1796. Subsequently, he owned over 3,000 acres in the cove and on the surrounding mountain sides.

Other settlers soon began to arrive. Dunlap, Crowson, Smith, Oliver, Tipton, Cable and Foute, were but a few of the names prominent in the local history. The entire area was cleared of its forest and planted in crops, pastures, and orchards. Some of these pioneers became so dissatisfied from being hemmed in by the surrounding mountains that they joined in a general migration into Georgia in the early 1830's when the Indian lands there became available to white people. The vacated homesites in the cove were soon reoccupied by families who came across the mountains from North Carolina.

In common with other Southern Appalachian communities, Cades Cove was isolated by the ruggedness of the surrounding mountains and distance. Three days were required by horseback to the nearest settlement (Maryville) and return. A pioneer way of life characterized by self-sufficiency prevailed for three or four generations as a result of the extreme isolation.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people and corn was the chief crop. In 1825 corn was worth only 6¼ cents per bushel. Since it was unprofitable to haul grain over the poor mountain roads, it was fed to livestock

which could then be driven to the distant markets. Much of the land was put in grass for pasture and hay. Spence Field, Thunderhead Peak, Gregory Bald and other "grassy balds" on the crest of the Smokies were used as pastures for livestock during the late spring and summer. Cattle herding was a profession followed by a number of residents in Cades Cove.

Schools were built and held in the cove from 1825 until 1934. The first church to be organized was the Primitive Baptist, built in 1827 on the site of the present church building which replaced it. The Cades Cove Methodist Church was built in 1830. Two other churches of the same denominations were established at later dates.

Even though the Great Smoky Mountains were originally called the Great Iron Mountains, very little iron ore is found in this range. However, even small amounts of useable iron ore were valuable in isolated areas. Daniel D. Foute bought land in Cades Cove during the 1820's for the purpose of establishing forges. He was forced to sell much of his land but still owned more than 20,000 acres in the cove and vicinity at the time of his death. One of his forges was built about 1826 on Forge Creek near the John P. Cable Mill.

Foremost on the meager list of items in the mountain people's restricted diet was corn meal. Prepared in various ways it was literally indispensable, and mills for grinding corn were essential. Where there was enough water to operate them large mills developed, such as the John P. Cable Mill, and communities were established around them.

Although the people living in Cades Cove were extremely isolated in that they did little or no traveling out of the area they were not without contact with the outside world. As early as 1832 a mail route was established from Sevierville to Wear Cove, Tuckaleechee Cove, Millers Cove, Cades Cove, Carsons Iron Works, and Chilhowee. The round trip was made once each week. Soon thereafter deliveries were increased to twice a week with carriers meeting at Tuckaleechee, near Townsend, Tennessee. Other communication with the outside world came about through visits to the stores in Maryville and elsewhere. The circuit preachers and tradesmen, school teachers, and the livestock drives across the mountains also brought news. Later on, lumbering brought the people into closer touch with outside communities, and around 1920 the development of automobile roads started the complete break down of the barriers that had imposed for a long time the isolated pioneer conditions of the mountain people.

