

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,
BIG CREEK ROAD
Between State Route 284 and Big Creek Campground
Gatlinburg Vicinity
Sevier County
Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-H

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS AND BRIDGES

BIG CREEK ROAD

HAER NO. TN-35-H

Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
North Carolina, between State Route 284
and Big Creek Campground

Date of Construction: 1933-34

Type of Structure: Roadway, Bridge, and Landscape

Use: National Park Transportation System

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

Fabricator/Builder: Civilian Conservation Corps

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

Significance: The transportation system of Great Smoky
Mountains National Park is
representative of NPS park road design
and landscape planning throughout the
country. Much of the construction work,
including that of the Big Creek Road,
was undertaken by the Civilian
Conservation Corps during the 1930s.

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; Newfound Gap Road, TN-35-A; 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; 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 Luten Bridges, TN-35-T.

Introduction

Big Creek Road is a short, 1-mile dirt road into the northeast corner of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, providing access to a campground, a horse camp, and a picnic area, as well as several trailheads. Although the present-day road ends after 1-mile, prior to the establishment of the park, the Big Creek Road continued another 5 miles to Walnut Bottoms, a large, level area which presently contains two backcountry camping areas. Today, the Big Creek Trail follows the course of this old road.¹

Constructing Big Creek Road

The present route of Big Creek Road was first laid out as a railroad by the Pigeon River Lumber Company in the period 1902 to 1912. When the Champion Lumber Company took over logging operations in this area in 1915, they improved the railroad, and established a mill and the town of Crestmont, both located along Big Creek approximately 1-mile west of the present park boundary.

¹ DeFoe, *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*, 119.

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The town included a railroad station providing passenger service to Newport, Tennessee until the rails were removed in 1928.

Logging on Big Creek, however, continued only until about 1918, when the area became logged-out and the Champion Lumber Company ended its operation in the area.²

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the land around Big Creek was purchased by North Carolina and turned over to the federal government in order to establish Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As part of the effort to develop the park, the CCC set up a camp on the site of the former town of Crestmont in 1933. In July, the enrollees began to construct a new road along Big Creek from the village of Mount Sterling, just outside the park boundary, up to, and past Walnut Bottoms. In order to facilitate this work, North Carolina rebuilt 1.5 miles of Route 284, which ran from Davenport Gap north of Big Creek, through the village of Mount Sterling, and on to Mount Sterling Gap in the south.³

² Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library. DeFoe, *Hiking Trails of the Smokies*, 118.

³ Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1933; GSMNP.

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The CCC probably finished the Big Creek Road in the winter of 1934.⁴ Between April and May 1938, the CCC built a bridge on the road spanning a small stream just inside the park boundary.⁵

⁴ Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1938; GSMNP.
Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1938; GSMNP.

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HAGER, No. TN-35-H-1



HAER. NO. TN-35-H-2.





H&R, No. TN-35-4-3



HAER. NO. TN-35-H-4



HASK. No. TN-35-4-5