



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

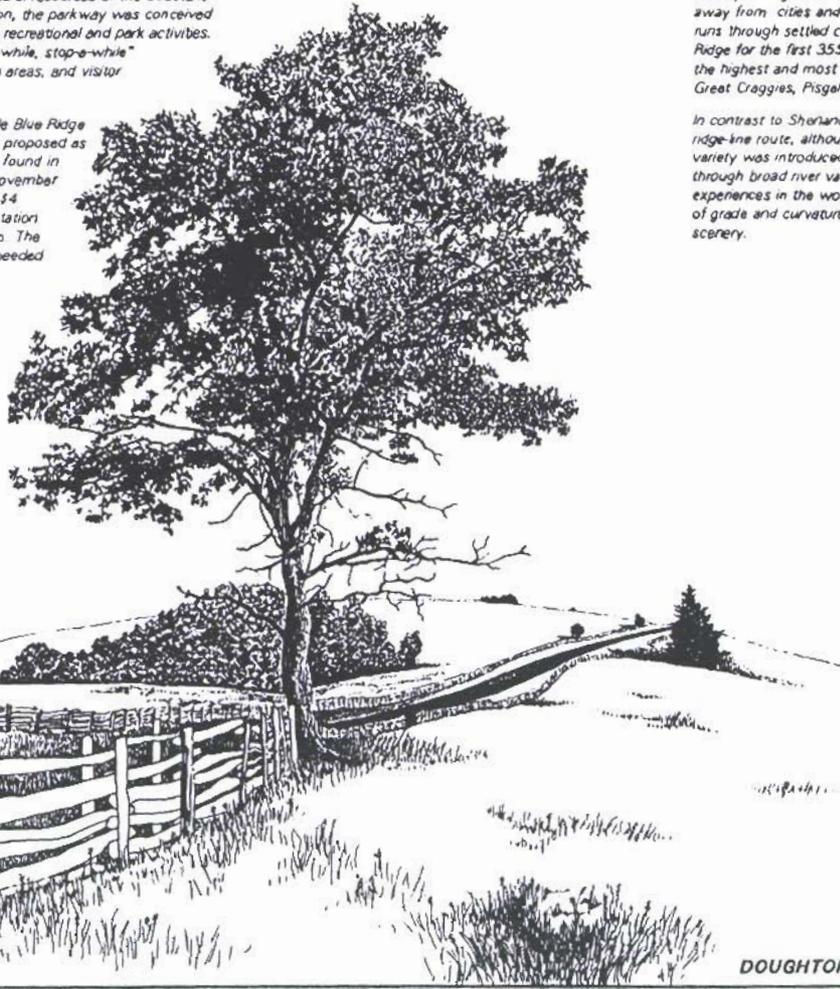
VIRGINIA TO NORTH CAROLINA

1935 TO 1987



The legislated purpose of the Blue Ridge Parkway was to link Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks with a road designed for pleasant motoring as well as to conserve and interpret the unique natural and cultural resources of the Southern Highlands. Rather than just a park-to-park connection, the parkway was conceived and planned as an elongated national park providing recreational and park activities. Traveling the parkway was intended to be a "ride-a-while, stop-a-while" experience complete with scenic pullouts, recreation areas, and visitor contact stations.

The impetus behind the construction of the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway was firmly rooted in the New Deal. It was proposed as a public works project to relieve the unemployment found in the Appalachians during the Great Depression. In November 1933, the Blue Ridge Parkway was approved with \$4 million allotted to begin construction. The implementation of this project developed into a four-way partnership. The states of Virginia and North Carolina acquired the needed right-of-way to construct the road and the Bureau of Public Roads provided the technical assistance and expertise in roadway construction. The fourth partner was the National Park Service (NPS). Under the direction of NPS landscape architects, these partners worked together to plan, design, and construct the parkway. Companies engaged on the project were required to hire as many unemployed local men as possible for parkway construction, often under quotas set in the contract. The first section was contracted in September of 1935, but it would take another 52 years before the road was completed with the completion around Grandfather Mountain in 1987. The parkway was now a unified drive between Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountain national parks.



The parkway was the longest road ever to be planned as a single unit up to that time in America. Following existing practice, the road was designed and constructed in sections, twenty in Virginia and twenty-four in North Carolina. Unlike earlier parkways, it is located away from cities and is in the mountains. In contrast to earlier roads in national parks, it runs through settled countryside as well as wild mountain landscapes. It follows the Blue Ridge for the first 353 of its 469 miles. In the remaining 115 miles it crosses some of the highest and most rugged Southern Appalachians, including the Black Mountains, Great Craggies, Pisgah Ledge, Great Balsam, and Pilot Balsam ranges.

In contrast to Shenandoah's Skyline Drive, the Blue Ridge Parkway was not planned as a ridge-line route, although extensive segments follow the crest of the mountains. Instead, variety was introduced by routing the road along mountain sides, plateaus, streams, and through broad river valleys, providing visitors with one of the most diversified motoring experiences in the world. Likewise, the designers provided the road with a high standard of grade and curvature so that motorists could safely devote their attention to the scenery.

The Blue Ridge Parkway Roads and Bridges Recording Project was undertaken in 1996-97 by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Eric N. DeLony, Chief, a long-range program to document historically significant engineering, industrial, and maritime works in the United States. The HAER program is part of the Historic American Buildings Survey/ Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. Funding was provided by the Federal Lands Highway Office, Thomas Edick, Administrator, through the NPS Park Roads and Parkways Program. This recording project was cosponsored by HAER and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Gary Everhardt, Superintendent; Gary Johnson, Chief of Resource Planning and Professional Services, Allen Hess, Cultural Resources Specialist; and Will Orr, Landscape Architect.

The documentation was prepared under the direction of NPS historian Richard Quin and HAER architect Christopher Marston. The recording team consisted of field supervisor Lia Dakigropoulou, architects Natascha Weiner (Ioremari), Matthew Stormont, and Carlos Jimenez Rosa (ICOMOS, Spain); landscape architects Ian Shankin, Chena Yost, and Lidia Klugez (ICOMOS, Poland); and illustrator Jennifer K. Cuthbertson. The overview history was prepared by Richard Quin, and bridge reports by field project historian Brian Clevon. Large format photography was produced by David Haas.

DOUGHTON PARK milepost 244

ILLUSTRATION BY Jennifer K. Cuthbertson, 1997; edited by Elisabeth Dubin, 1997

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ROADS & BRIDGES RECORDING PROJECT

ASHEVILLE VICINITY

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
BLUNCKOMBE COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

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