



# Cone Park Carriage Trails

Moses H. Cone was a self-made man in the best American tradition. His textile mills produced high quality denim fabric, earning him the title, "Denim King." Fond of nature and plagued by poor health, Moses was drawn to the mountainous region of western North Carolina with its moderate climate, fresh spring water, and clean air. In the mid-1890's, Moses and his wife, Bertha, journeyed to Blowing Rock to design and build their summer estate, Flat Top Manor.

The 3,516 acres of the estate included Flat Top Mountain and Rich Mountain. Situated on top of a hill, the luxurious 20-room house looked down across acres of apple orchards leading to Bass Lake. In order to see the mountain vistas, Cone had a lookout tower constructed on top of Flat Top Mountain.

The Cones were "naturalists" before the term became popular, working to preserve and enrich their land. They planted extensive white pines and hemlocks and transported sugar maples directly from New England. The 32,000 apple trees Moses established produced prize-winning apples.

Perhaps the aspect of the estate most appreciated by visitors today is the 25 miles of beautiful carriage roads. They remain an enduring example of the Cones' appreciation of the natural beauty around them.

Formal rhododendron plantings are a feature of nearly all the trails. Purple or Catawba rhododendron and rosebay rhododendron are abundant, blooming in June and July respectively. Mountain laurel, also planted extensively, is admired for the large clusters of pinkish flowers appearing in late spring.

Another spring favorite found along the carriage trails is serviceberry or "Juneberry," one of the first woodland trees to bloom. Hemlock hedges and white pine plantations also are abundant. A somewhat uncommon tree in the Southern Highlands, the transplanted sugar maple flourished in the cool, high elevations and the moist coves of the mountains.

Other trees on the estate include black, white, and red oak, several hickory species, and birch. Autumn color king of the southern mountains, the red maple with its bright red, yellow, and green leaves proba-

bly delighted Cone guests enjoying the fall scenery from the front veranda.

The 25 miles of gently sloping carriage roads in Cone Park offer many opportunities for leisurely hiking. Visit the Cone Cemetery en route to Flat Top Tower, which offers a grand panorama of distant mountains. Wander through what remains of the apple orchards. Stroll around Bass Lake, investigate the Maze and apple barn. Most of the trails are multi-purpose; along the way you may meet horseback riders, joggers, or in winter, cross-country skiers. Please be considerate of other visitors. Help preserve these historic trails by staying on the designated paths.

The magnificent Flat Top Manor now houses the Parkway Craft Center and a National Park Service information desk, open daily from April or May to November. During the summer, artisans demonstrate their skills on the front porch.

## IMPORTANT ADVICE

- Lock valuables in the trunk of your car or take them with you.
- Hiking shoes or boots are recommended for most trails, especially for the more strenuous ones. Steep and rocky areas and slippery stream crossings require extra attention and careful footing. Even for trails marked "easy," it is advisable to wear flat or rubber-soled shoes for comfort and good traction. Wearing sandals, "flip-flops," or high heels can result in accidents.
- Sudden changes in weather are common in these mountains. Even in mild seasons, rapid dips in temperature and unexpected thunderstorms frequently occur, and at higher elevations the wind and temperature can carry a surprising chill. Be prepared for weather changes by bringing along suitable clothing.
- For your safety and the protection of the resources, stay on established trails. Shortcutting at switchbacks causes soil erosion, disfigures the trail, and makes it difficult for other hikers to find their way. Take advantage of log walkways, steps, or other trail construction. They are

there to minimize human impact on the natural environment.

- Do not drink the water in streams or springs. Bacterial diseases can be contracted by drinking untreated "wild" waters.
- Lost and found articles should be reported to a Park Ranger.

## REGULATIONS

- Parking is limited to designated parking areas or road shoulders. All four wheels must be off the pavement.
- Bicycles are not permitted on Parkway trails.
- Camping is permitted only in park campgrounds, or designated back-country sites
- Dogs and other pets must be on a leash or under physical restraint at all times while in the park. The territorial instinct of dogs can lead to fights with other dogs on the trail. Dogs also frighten hikers and chase wildlife.
- Deposit all litter in trash cans or recycling bins.
- Metal detectors are prohibited.
- Natural resources are protected by Federal law. Do not disturb animal and plant life in any way.

Hunting, trapping, and carrying weapons are prohibited. Do not interfere with animals by feeding, touching, or frightening them. Do not cut, deface or damage trees, Leave wildflowers and other vegetation in their natural condition for other hikers to enjoy.

- Historic resources are protected by Federal law. Do not damage, deface, or remove any of these structures, furnishings, or exhibits.

**Help protect and preserve the Blue Ridge Parkway. Be alert for uncontrolled fire, safety hazards, accidents, and emergencies.**

**Please report such conditions by calling:  
1-800-PARKWATCH**

(1-800-727-5928)

*For general Parkway information, call (828) 298-0398 or visit [www.nps.gov/blri](http://www.nps.gov/blri) on the Internet.*