

Visiting the Park



The Blue Ridge Parkway weaves its way for almost 2.5 miles through the forest and meadows of Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. The focus of activity in the park is Flat Top Manor. Inside, the visitor can enjoy the grand sweep of the staircase and its long, curving banister made from a single piece of cherry wood or browse in the craft shop operated there by the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild.

The shop sells handicrafts to the public and also keeps several permanent items on display. An old loom and spinning wheel, tools, baskets, and a churn hark back to an earlier way of life in the Southern Appalachians when women spun

pound upon pound of wool and cotton and men used a froe and a maul to split white oak shingles. Basketry and carvings and the artistry of quilt patterns also recall such craft collectors as Frances Goodrich and Allen Eaton who traveled the highlands encouraging and inspiring a revival of the traditional handicrafts of these hills. No admission is charged at the house.

During the summer, carriage rides are offered on a fee basis from the neighboring carriage house.

A few yards from Flat Top Manor lies Craftsman's Trail, a 20-minute loop walk which the Cones walked each morning. The trail passes between a lining of white oaks, beneath a sprinkling of red maple, mountain magnolia, black cherry, and tulip poplar. The elegant blossoms of the rhododendron appear in late June above the shiny, ground-hugging galax and below the tall eastern hemlocks, or "spruce pines." The sugar maple, its wood valued for dulcimers and other instruments of mountain music, also graces this loop. As with the entire Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, Craftsman's Trail demonstrates both the luxury of nature and the necessity for its preservation.

Camping and picnicking facilities are offered at the adjacent Julian Price Memorial Park. Gasoline, food, and lodging are available in nearby Blowing Rock.

Please Be Careful

We have made efforts to make your visit a safe one, but there are still hazards that require your alertness and vigilance. Be cautious and use your common sense.

Administration

Moses H. Cone Memorial Park is managed as a unit of the Blue Ridge Parkway of the National Park System. A superintendent, whose address is Box 7606, Asheville, NC 28806, is in charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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moses h. cone memorial park

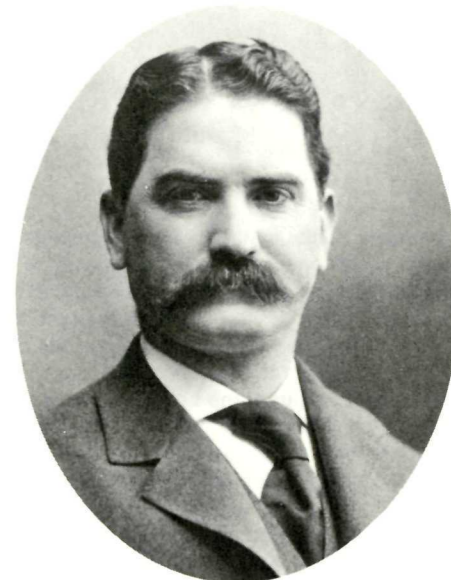
The Denim King Who Went to the Mountains

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately," said David Thoreau in 1847 of his 26 months at Walden Pond. Some 50 years later, at the turn of the century, another man who wished to live deliberately sought out the mountains and went to them in his own unique, grand style. That man was Moses H. Cone, businessman, nature lover, and perfectionist.

The story of Cone's Blue Ridge experience may be traced to the 1840s, when his father, seeking a similar satisfaction, emigrated from Germany to America. Straight-laced, hard-working Herman Cone and his wife settled for 16 years in the small, eastern Tennessee town of Jonesboro. There, Moses, the eldest of their 13 children, was born in 1857. Thirteen years later Herman moved the family to Baltimore, Md., and carefully built up a thriving wholesale grocery business.

By the time Moses Cone had grown into a black-haired, dutiful, seriously intent young man, the ravages of civil war and reconstruction had come and gone. The reunited country began to look again for a surge of business activity, especially a reliable supply of food and clothing necessities. Moses and his brother Ceasar went to work as salesmen for their father's grocery firm. These two older boys—addressed reverently as "Brother Moses" and "Brother Ceasar" by the rest of the children—impressed food buyers, first with their heavy responsibility and second with their ability to carry it out.

Their work took them south into a new textile country. Although not as established as the older mill towns of New England, communities throughout the Carolinas and further south were depending upon small textile mills and their



general stores. The Cone brothers supplied these stores with groceries, often accepting payment in marketable fabrics rather than hard cash, which was still a bit scarce in the old Confederacy.

Little by little, Moses and Ceasar moved from groceries into textiles. As they dealt with more and more mill-operated stores, met mill men and moved in their circles, their ambitions shifted to the merchandising of their new product. By 1891, the brothers established in New York the Cone Export and Commission Company, a firm which acted as the selling agent for southern mills.

A few years later, the Cone brothers decided that henceforth they would concentrate their effort where it counted: on the all-important production lines and the people who made those lines run. They moved their headquarters south to Greensboro, N.C.

The key to the Cones' success was proximity.

Closeness to raw materials and the manufacturers' sweat gave them the opportunity to directly improve a product and diversify its uses. This was the successful idea that brought Moses Cone back to the neighboring state of his birth. And in 1895, with the Cones' position as a textile force assured, the brothers built a mill themselves. They called it "Proximity" because of its nearness to warehouses, railways, and the vital cotton fields. With its single, tall smokestack and its functional, row-like buildings, Proximity churned out the "heavy duty, deeptone blue denim" that was to give Moses H. Cone a reputation as "the Denim King."

Proximity Manufacturing Company expanded and added other plants. Corduroy, flannel, and a variety of fabrics began to appear on the production lines. Much later the renamed Cone Mills would have more than 30 plants and would be manufacturing commodities on a spectrum from towels to dyes to polyurethane foam. But the origin of all this remained with the imagination and energy of two brothers. As these co-founders solidly established their business, Ceasar became the company's first president and Moses turned his attention to the mountains west of Greensboro.

By the turn of the 20th century, better roads into the rugged, isolated wilds around such towns as Blowing Rock and Highlands brought a new, and more numerous, breed of tourist to the mountains of western North Carolina. Health resorts advertising the moderate climate and offering relief from malaria and tuberculosis sprang up around cities and towns like Asheville, Flat Rock, and Warm Springs. The promise of

sprawling, elegant hotels and more popularly priced boarding houses became so grandiose that one surgeon said: "The great Appalachian chain, upon reaching North Carolina, stands sponsor to a section which should be, and I predict will be, the great sanitarium of our eastern country."

Moses Cone evaluated this mountain domain with the same vision and planning he had brought to the world of textiles. Although poor health and a fondness for nature played a part in his move to the Blue Ridge, he desired more than anything an estate of his own construction, a deliberate lifestyle of his own design. At the age of 40, Moses journeyed to Blowing Rock with his wife, Bertha, and began to buy land.

He acquired more than 3,500 acres just north of the town. Purchased in two main tracts, Cone's future estate included Flat Top Mountain, neighboring Rich Mountain, 500 acres of rolling farmland, and patches of virgin hardwoods and evergreens. Other smaller tracts had been the farms and homes of native highlanders. Throughout the acreage, rhododendron and laurel and ridge-top meadows offered a luxurious carpet for the spectacular, rocky rise of nearby Grandfather Mountain.

Once the land was secured, Cone began to implement his ambitious scheme. He built three lakes and stocked them with trout and bass. He allowed the 30 or so small farmers occupying his domain to stay on, befriending them and hiring them as the informal tenants of his new estate. In the center of his holdings he created a mansion: the white, gleaming, 20-room Flat Top Manor. Oxen were needed to slowly haul the



Like her husband, Bertha Cone (top) enjoyed the sweeping views from their mountain estate (shown at right at the turn of the century). Other members of this remarkable family included Moses' brother Ceasar and sister Claribel.

lumber and furnishings uphill from the railhead at Lenoir, a small town 20 mountain miles away.

Moses and Bertha Cone appreciated, conserved, and even enriched the natural beauty around them. Moses imported whitetail deer from Pennsylvania and protected them inside two "parks." An avid orchardist, he supervised the planting of apple varieties that matured from June through November. He replaced any tree that was cut. He obtained the help and advice of his friend Gifford Pinchot, governor of Pennsylvania and a noted conservationist, in planting extensive white pine forests and hemlock hedges. His tenants grazed his sheep and took care of his nearly 20 milk cows.

The venture into the Blue Ridge grew and



became more elaborate. A carbide plant behind the mansion provided gas for lighting and cooking. Stables, barns, carriage and apple houses, and even bowling alleys were constructed. Rose gardens, vegetable plots, boulders, mosses, and ferns surrounded Flat Top Manor. Miles of carriage roads, smoothed out to a point of flawlessness, invited the pleasures of an early morning walk or an afternoon ride. Within a short time, 10,000 apple trees produced 40,000 bushels of fruit in a favorable season.

The Cones, who had no children, rejoiced in their mountain home and took pride in the estate. Moses displayed all the enthusiasm of his boyhood selling days. During the morning hours, Cone—with a full handlebar moustache and his black hair parted in the middle and dressed in knickers—supervised and aided his workers. When evening came, a visitor might have seen him in tie and vest on the porch of his manor overlooking the expanse of lakes

and ridges while entertaining the governor of North Carolina or the president of the Southern Railway Company or some other influential guest.

The Cone family made their mark in other fields. Two of the sisters found a special area for applying their considerable talents and taste. Claribel and Etta, highly educated, made several extended trips from their Baltimore home to Europe during the first years of the 20th century and became intimate friends of Gertrude Stein and her circle of artists and writers in Paris. The sisters gradually gathered an incredible collection of art, the value of which would increase with each passing decade. When a young painter named Pablo Picasso expressed a taste for American comic strips, they traded him their hometown newspapers for his drawings and pictures. The present-day Cone Collection at the Baltimore Museum of Art attests to the judgment and the foresight of Claribel and Etta Cone.

Meanwhile, Moses was using his skills in civic affairs. Almost adopting the growing town of Blowing Rock, he helped the local schools by giving to them "four dollars for every one dollar raised by the citizens of the town." He contributed funds to the beginning of what is now Appalachian State University and served on the school's original board. Education took its place alongside textiles, farming, and conservation; before Moses Cone died in 1908 at the age of 51, he had sown seeds which would bear an increasing harvest of good in a number of crucial fields.

Bertha Cone outlived her husband by 39 years. When she died in 1947, she left to Greensboro's Cone Memorial Hospital an estate that had remained intact and conscientiously sustained. Three years later, the hospital donated the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park to the U.S. Government. Through the park, the memory of a man who went to the mountains and lived so well lives on in us today.

—Jim Stokely