

Great Smoky Mountains NATIONAL PARK

NORTH CAROLINA—TENNESSEE

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Creation of the Park	3
The Land	4
The People	6
The Aborigines	6
The White Mountain People	7
Conservation of Mountain Culture	14

THE COVER

Red spruce and balsam forests, stretching endlessly over the rugged terrain, are framed by a hillside bower of rhododendron in full bloom. In these magnificent surroundings, the Southern Highlander settled; cut off from the rest of the world, he wrested a living from the land



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HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE · NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

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The Land and Its People

Creation of the Park

ASTRIDE the Tennessee-North Carolina border, the Great Smoky Mountains, a portion of the Appalachian range, cast a spell of mystery and enchantment. From the lush vegetation of the valleys and extending to the very tops of the lofty peaks, there rises a tenuous mist, a deep blue haze, from which the mountains get their name.

The movement to create a national park in this section was begun in 1899. Establishment was finally authorized by act of Congress, approved May 22, 1926. Since that time the land for the park has been gradually acquired by the States of Tennessee and North Carolina, with some Federal aid, in addition to a contribution of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., through the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, in memory of his mother. When completed, the park will comprise approxi-

mately 440,000 acres, an area of 687.5 square miles. It is 54 miles long, and its greatest width is 19 miles. It is easily accessible from Asheville, N. C., and Knoxville, Tenn.

This vast area, preserved for the benefit of the American people, is now being developed by the United States Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, in order that the visitor may derive maximum enjoyment from a trip through the park. Studies of the mountain people, their civilization and their environment, are in progress so that there will be a better understanding of an early American culture. This booklet gives a few highlights concerning the land and the people in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but it serves merely as an introduction to an area that must be seen to be appreciated.

Low-hanging clouds merge with the haze from which the Great Smoky Mountains get their name. The interplay of light and shade across the hills and valleys provides constant variation for the visitor's eye



The Land

PRIOR to its authorization for establishment as a national park in 1926, this southern Appalachian highland, although it represented an area of surpassing scenic beauty, was comparatively little known even to the people in the nearby cities and towns of Tennessee and North Carolina. Its isolation came as a consequence of the lack of adequate roads and trails, the region being one of extensive high and rugged mountains whose impenetrability was enhanced by an almost unbroken coverage of extremely dense vegetation. Horace Kephart, a student who was long familiar with the land and its people, in 1904, compared the inaccessible Smokies to the mountain regions of northern Africa, Tenerife, and Timbaktu.

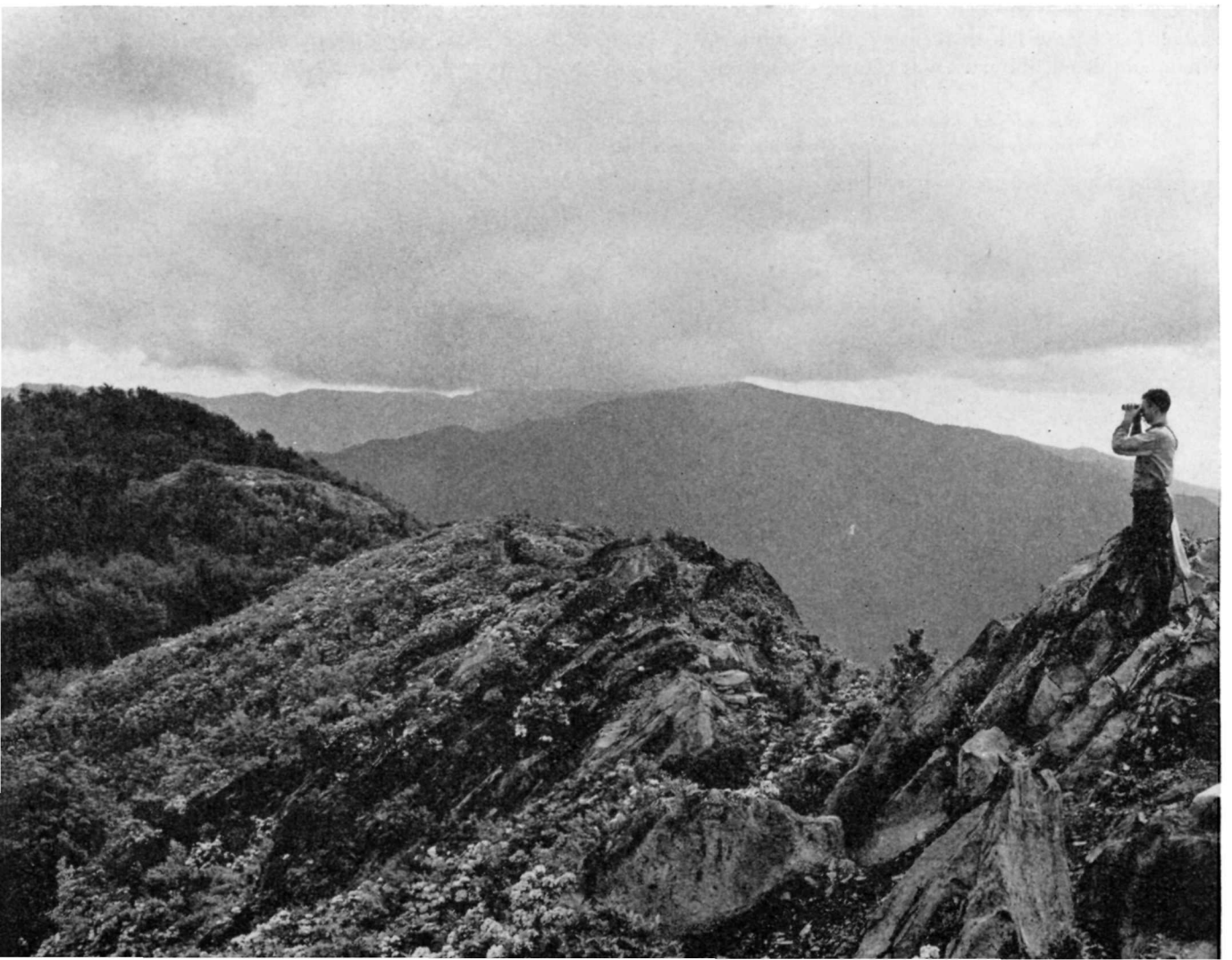
Now that the park has been established and made accessible, one of America's early centers of frontier settlement is visited by more than 700,000 persons annually. Much of the land, along with the culture of the mountain people inhabiting it, has

remained unchanged, resulting in a living inspiration to the great numbers of Americans who come to see a locale in which folk origins and pioneer customs prevail in their original setting.

The Great Smokies typify one of the oldest mountain masses in America, having been laid down many millions of years before the ancient coal deposits were formed. They lie near the southern limits of that great mountain chain which extends from north of the St. Lawrence River (Labrador) to northern Georgia and Alabama. Within this chain the Great Smokies represent the highest uplift in eastern United States. Here are mountains rising fully a mile above their base and culminating in fir- and spruce-covered peaks more than 6,600 feet high.

Within the United States there is probably no region of comparable size wherein the botanist can find as great a variety of flora, more than 1,200 species of flowering plants and shrubs. The flowering plants in particular are exceptionally well

The Great Smokies, a portion of the Southern Appalachian Highland, rise high above their bases



represented, and their season of bloom extends from late winter until well into the autumn. Most colorful are certain of the shrubs—the mountain laurel (May and June); the flame azalea (mostly June); and the rhododendron (June and July). In April and May the woodlands are carpeted with many flowering herbaceous plants; in July the giant mountain lilies and various other colorful blooms glorify clearings at the higher altitudes; and throughout October the deciduous woodlands present a color spectacle of outstanding beauty, a fitting climax to what has gone before.

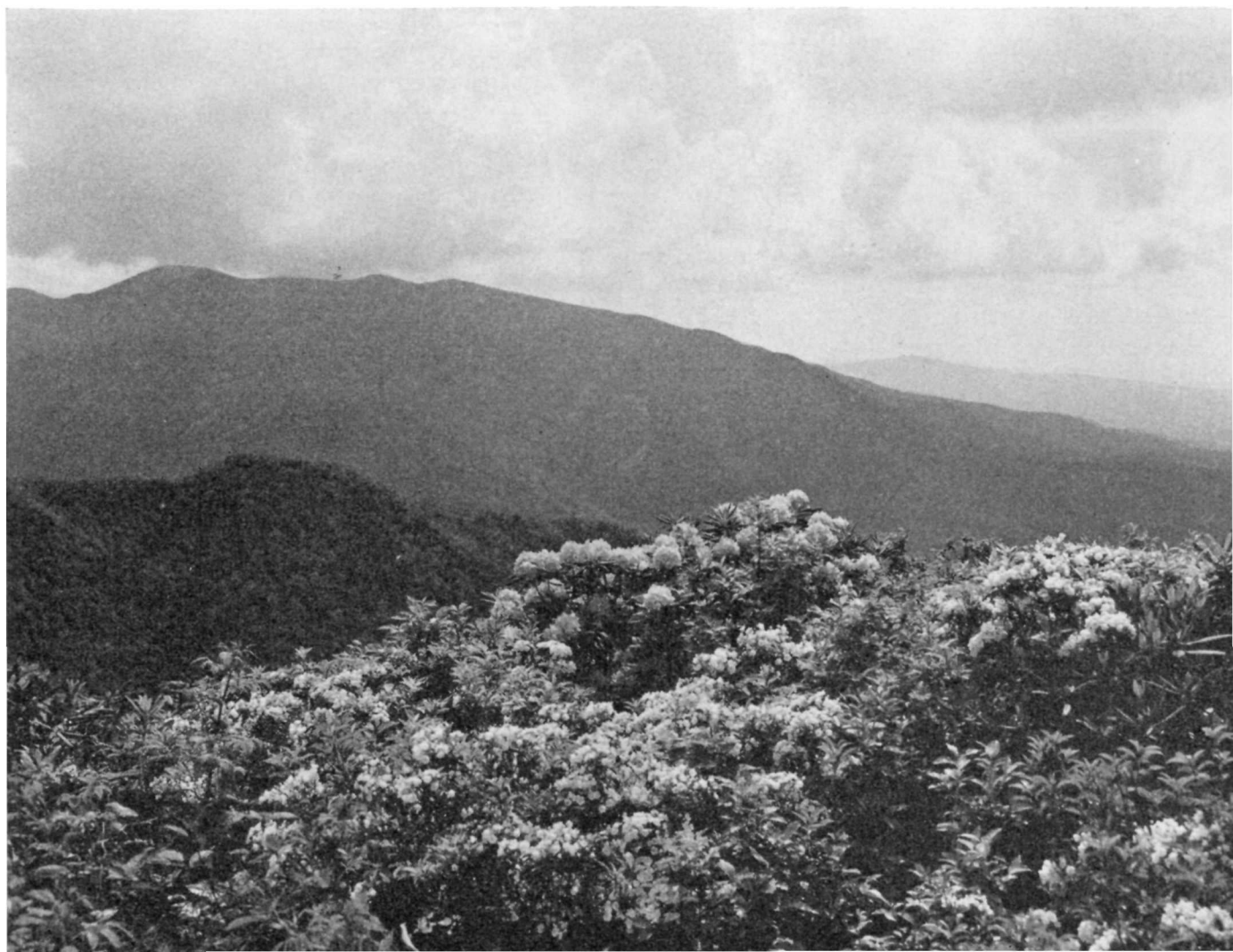
More than 200,000 acres of virgin forests remain within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Occupying the higher, colder reaches are unspoiled stands of spruce and fir, the most extensive in the eastern United States, while at the intermediate and lower limits one finds hemlock and pine and a remarkably large variety of deciduous trees. In all of Europe there are appreciably less numbers of tree species than occur

within the limits of the park. The trees become giants of their kind and certain shrubs assume arborescent growth. In driving from the lower limits (1,000–1,500 feet) to the uplands of the area, one encounters vegetational changes that correspond to those which are met with on the long drive from northern Georgia or Alabama to New England.

Since, like all national parks, the region is a sanctuary for every form of wild animal, many species whose numbers had been reduced by former hunting practices are now returning to a more normal population status. Two hundred species of birds, more than 50 species of fur-bearers, and many other animals are to be found here. In the more than 600 miles of mountain streams, trout and bass are the predominant game species, and fishing is permitted in season.

At the higher elevations one finds more rainfall, greater humidity, and lower temperatures than prevail in the lowlands, and there the park visitor can invariably find relief on summer days.

Virgin forests cover the mountain sides, while rhododendron, mountain laurel, azalea, and hundreds of other flowering plants, in season, color the scene



The People

TWO GROUPS of people, now living in areas adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, once inhabited these lands. Living as close to nature as they did, their lives so definitely influenced by their surroundings, these human beings left behind certain evidences of occupancy which serve to make this region of particular interest to many visitors. The first group was the Cherokee Indians; the second, the white Southern Highlanders.

THE ABORIGINES

In the sixteenth century, the Europeans who were first to invade the Southern Appalachian Mountains found the area inhabited by Cherokee Indians. These aborigines were of Iroquoian stock, whose home had originally been in the country south of Lake Erie, at the headwaters of the Ohio River. Forced to move southward as a result of disputes with neighboring tribes, the Cherokees had been settled in their mountain home for perhaps two or three centuries when the first white men came.

During the period of early white settlement in North America, the British made every effort to maintain friendly relations with the southern Indians. This was necessary in order to hold the frontier against the Spaniards, who had extensive settlements in Florida, and the French, who were pressing in along the Mississippi River and its eastern tributaries. The Cherokees, thereby, were in a strategic position in the subsequent international contest for American soil. Early accounts describe the Cherokees as a reasonably peace-loving tribe. They lived along the larger stream valleys, where villages of considerable size might occupy the more favored locations. Agricultural pursuits, hunting, fishing, and the gathering of wild fruits in season served to satisfy their simple economy. A number of old Indian trails and temporary Indian camp sites occur in what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and various artifacts have been found which serve to indicate that the natives occasionally penetrated even to the higher and more remote sections of the Great Smokies.

At present, about 3,300 individuals constitute what is known as the Eastern Band of the Cherokees. Of these, approximately one-third are full-blooded or nearly so. They are the descendants of refugees who, in 1838, evaded capture by United States soldiers or who, after capture, made their escape before their fellow men were herded together and driven westward to the Indian territories. These refugees were later incorporated under the laws of North Carolina, and the land was purchased for them with funds that accrued by reason of treaty stipulations. The Qualla Indian Reservation, on which they are now settled, adjoins a portion of the southeastern boundary of the park. The chief activities relating to the life of the Indian on the reservation are centered in Cherokee, N. C., where the Government school and other buildings are open to interested visitors, and Cherokee handicrafts are on display in the craft shop.

The present-day economic and social status of the Cherokee Indians is comparable to that of the white Southern Highlanders. They are essentially an agricultural people who live in cabins or

Cherokee Indians were the original inhabitants of the Great Smokies. Today, at the Qualla Reservation adjoining the park, there is a large native settlement. Here the wife of a Cherokee chief follows the ancient custom of making meal by pounding the corn with pestle and mortar



in board houses of one to three rooms. Their wants are as few as their homes are simple. As is to be expected, our civilization is generally of least influence in those places where the Indian's dwelling is most isolated and inaccessible.

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

The ancestry of the Southern Highlander is not different from that of the average American of five or six generations ago. The white mountain people are a survival of those early Americans who, in the course of westward expansion, became separated and isolated from their fellows in the fastness of what is designated as the Southern Appalachian mountain region. Their ancestors were true pioneers who, by choice or otherwise, settled here and literally carved an existence out of the forest. Perhaps they were dissatisfied with the "overcrowded" conditions elsewhere and chose to live where isolation made for a greater degree of freedom and independence.

A large proportion of these settlers were of mixed extraction, separated by two or three generations from the English, Scotch-Irish, Irish, and German stock who settled Pennsylvania, western Maryland, Virginia, and along the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge of North Carolina and South Carolina. Some are known to have come to these mountains direct from England, Ireland, and Germany. Habits of thrift, hardihood, independence, and resourcefulness characterized the former group, while the latter, by force of circumstances, adapted themselves to their environment

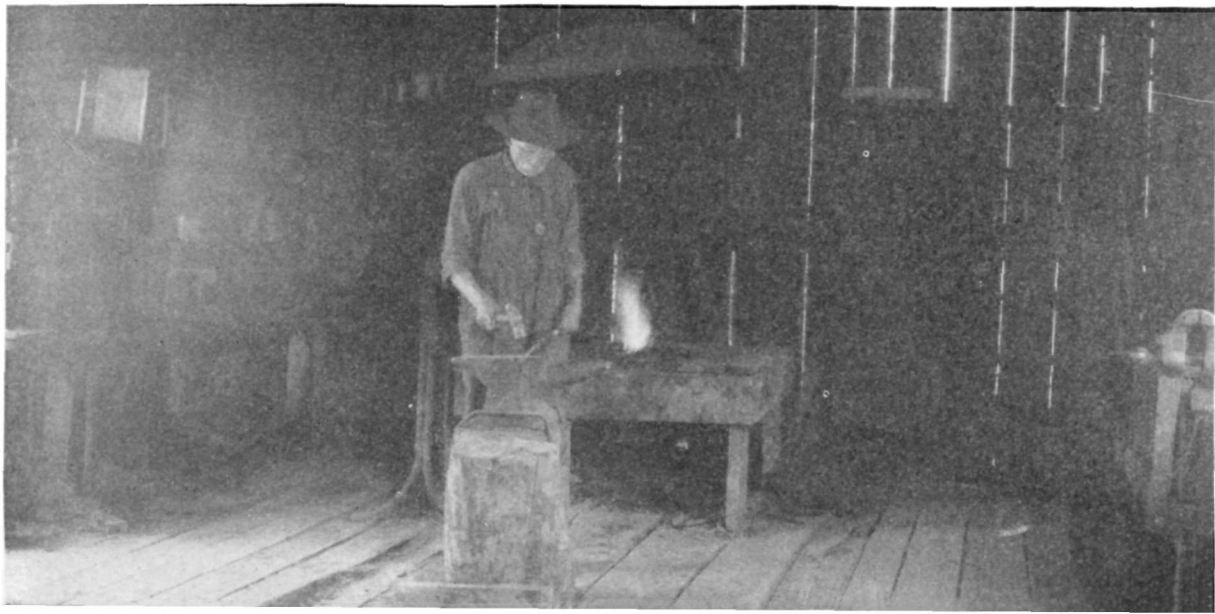
There were craftsmen among the early settlers, and in some instances a manual art was handed down from father to son. Wiley Gibson, last of four generations of famous Smoky Mountains gunsmiths, is shown at his forge

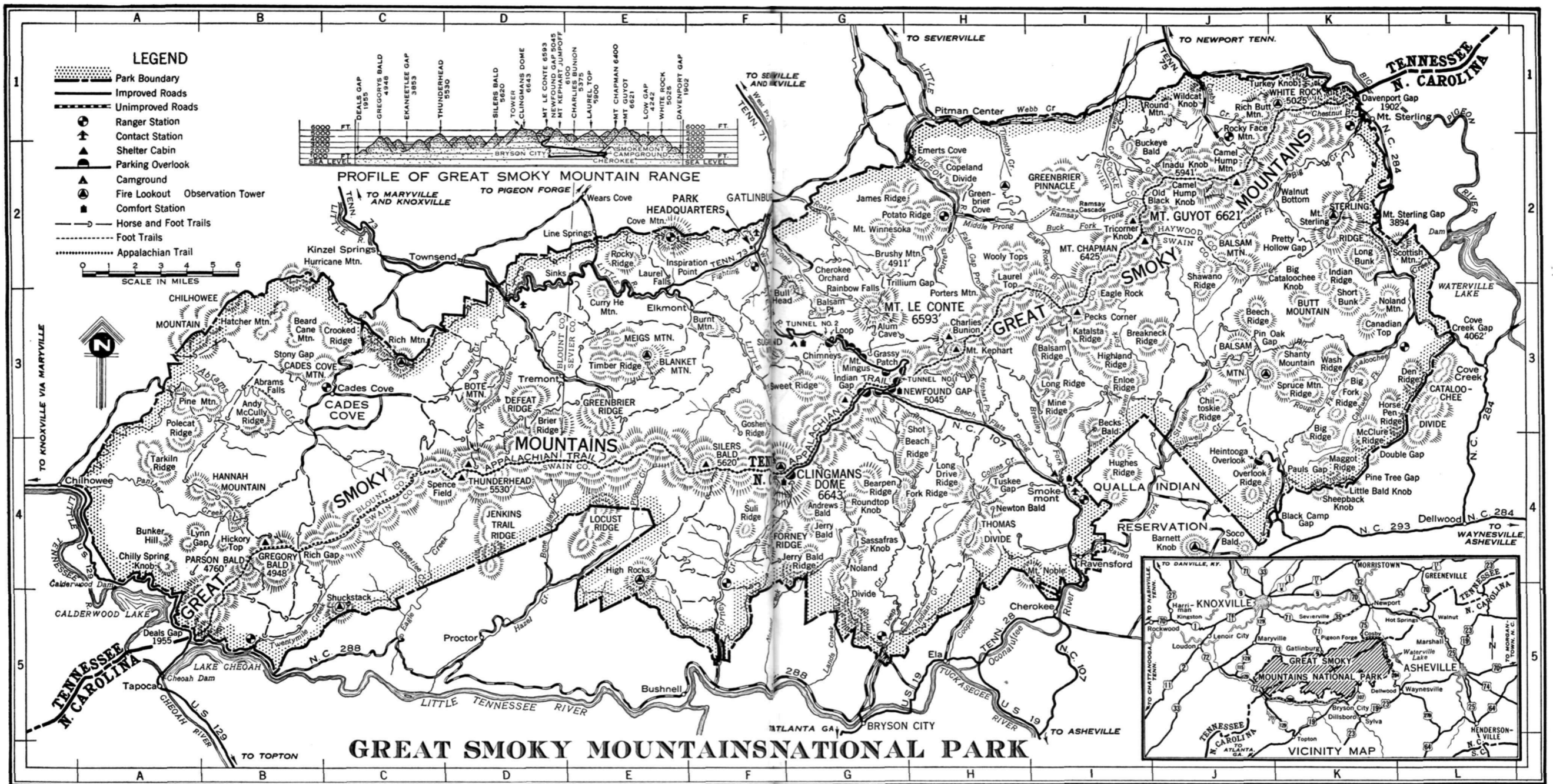


Most Cherokees live in simple cabins or board houses, farming the land to provide their daily bread. This mother and child, in front of their cabin, are but two of about 3,300 Cherokees who now live on the reservation



Descended from early Americans who settled in the wild and isolated fastnesses of the Great Smokies, the Southern Highlanders worked hard to gain a living from the soil. Large families were common, as in most frontier communities. This photograph (made in 1902) shows a family that lived in the Cataloochee area of the park. The mother stated that she had dyed, woven, cut, and sewed every item of clothing the family is wearing, except the eldest girl's "store-bought" apparel





as best they could. Most of these settlers arrived on the scene with but little equipment. An axe, an augur, a long rifle with accoutrements, and possibly a horse, a cow, and a dog, with a few items of domestic nature, such as a pot, an oven, and some clothing, constituted the means of providing a home and a livelihood. Many of these folk were

descended from craftsmen, such as metalworkers and woodworkers. The women were ingenious and were able to supply the necessities of life from the crude materials at hand.

Isolation naturally characterized the white settler's home in the mountains. The inaccessibility must have appealed to many of them, for it gave

rise to a degree of freedom which only the early days of the frontier have known. In but few places did the frontier persist for so long a time as here in the Southern Highlands. Separated from their fellow men and knowing little or nothing about the great nation which surrounded them and which, during the nineteenth century, was growing so

rapidly and undergoing so great a change, the white people of the mountains were living as their forefathers had lived; social and economic stagnation prevailed. At the turn of the present century their way of life represented the type of American civilization on this continent five generations ago. From one generation to the next came little, if any,



In isolated clearings made in the forest, the early settlers erected their cabins and began to farm. In many home lots and gardens like this, a bare living was gained from the soil

The rough hewn logs, the shingled roof, and the massive stone chimney are typical of the mountain cabin in the Great Smokies. There are several such cabins in the park today to be seen by the visitor



change, and this repetition naturally intensified their various characteristics. An attitude of resentment toward outside influences prevailed.

It may not be out of place at this point to mention the fact that the southern mountaineers were in part responsible for the defeat, in 1780, of the British forces under Colonel Ferguson at Kings Mountain during the American Revolution. They came, without cost to the State, with their own arms, equipment, and horses, and assisted in this frontier engagement which contributed to the ultimate defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Finding themselves in a restricted and trying environment, these people proceeded with fortitude and made the best of a difficult situation. Agricultural pursuits were necessarily restricted to the narrow bottomlands along stream courses, and to the hillsides and less steep mountain slopes. The fields were small and frequently were so encumbered with rocks and other obstructions that plowing was impossible, and tillage was accomplished with mattock or hoe.

The tending of livestock often occupied a considerable portion of the time of these early settlers. On the high mountain meadows, known as "grassy balds," as well as on the heavily vegetated mountainsides, cattle, sheep, and hogs found ample grazing during much of the year. Generally several families, and occasionally whole communities,

would use the same grazing area for their livestock, and there would be cooperation in the tending and salting of the herds. Animals would be identified by slits or perforations made in the ears, and infringement upon the pattern or "ear-mark" was looked upon as a heinous crime. At a later date the raising of livestock became a valuable source of income and probably became an important factor in the transition from extreme isolation to frequent contact with the outside world. Sheep yielded the wool which was corded, spun, and woven by the women into clothing for the entire family. Hogs usually found their way to the home smokehouses. Wild animals, particularly bears, became troublesome on occasions, but eventually the wildlife of the area became a definite economic asset.

Hunting, trapping, and fishing occupied no small portion of the mountain man's time, and the entire family engaged in the harvest of wild fruits when these were in season. Such activities brought variety to the relatively monotonous fare of these people. Skins and pelts were tanned for domestic use, and choice furs were sold or were exchanged for needed articles on those infrequent occasions

A tub mill on the Ashley Rayfield Place, Injun Creek, Greenbrier, Tenn. These small mills are usually found in the more rugged and isolated sections of the mountains. Constructed purely for domestic use, the building was simple, and its operation was well adapted to the small, rapid-falling mountain streams





Among the earliest settlers tanning not only supplied leather for shoes, but the tanning of deer hides provided materials for clothing as well. A mountaineer here stands at a tan-bark mill used to shred chestnut and chestnut oak bark; in this way the tannic acid used for tanning is procured

when trips were made to the county seat or to nearby towns.

Dwelling houses were constructed of hewn logs, the spaces between being plastered ("chinked and daubed") on the outside and, in certain ones, covered on the inside with split ("rived") boards trimmed to shape. Roofs were made of shingles ("shakes"), sometimes held in place by poles or stones. Floors were of puncheons (logs hewn on one side). A fireplace and chimney of native stone, daubed with mud, furnished the only heating and cooking facilities.

As already mentioned, the women were as resourceful and as thrifty as the men. In addition to the ordinary domestic duties of preparing food and caring for household duties, they contributed much to the self-sufficiency of their families in various ways. Herbs, fruits, and vegetables were gathered and preserved for future use. An outstanding accomplishment was that of being able to convert

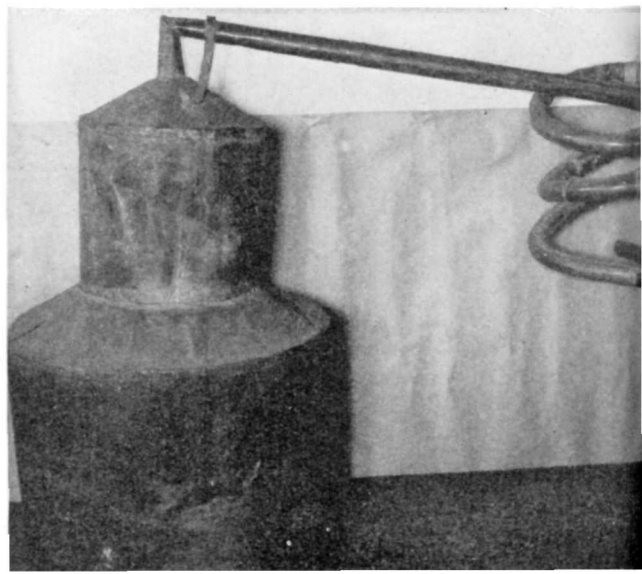
crude fiber wool, flax grown on a neighboring hillside, and sometimes cotton, into finished items of clothing for all members of the family. Simple household draperies and bed clothes received much attention. Considerable time was spent in the weaving of coverlets and the piecing together of quilts; many unique designs and patterns were evolved as a result of the rivalry for artistic accomplishment in these endeavors. An instance is known where, after the death of a childless thrifty old couple, their household effects descended to the next of kin. Among other things was a chest containing twenty fine coverlets, all folded and packed away. Most of them had never been used and were still fragrant with their maple, walnut, and madder dyes.

Home-made tools and appliances were utilized in building, farming, hunting, trapping, spinning, dyeing, weaving, and other activities of the mountain people. Native carpenters, millwrights, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, tanners, shoemakers, and others were among the dwellers in some of the communities, and occasionally certain individuals were proficient in a number or in all of these trades.

The domestic economy of these people, together with their isolation from the modern world, is aptly evidenced in an extract from the writings of an untutored native mountaineer, a man who had lived in what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and who, in the year 1937, passed out of this world at the age of 75. In what may be called a biographical sketch of the mountain people, he wrote, in part, as follows (spelling, punctuation, and phraseology as in the original text):

"Well I saw the first Lantern I ever heard of that night; it was really before Lamp's and coal-oil were ever in use,

The liquor made in the mountains came to be known as "moonshine," because it was reputed to be made in the still of the night by the light of the moon. It was usually distilled in a home-made, rude apparatus, the copper parts of which are shown here

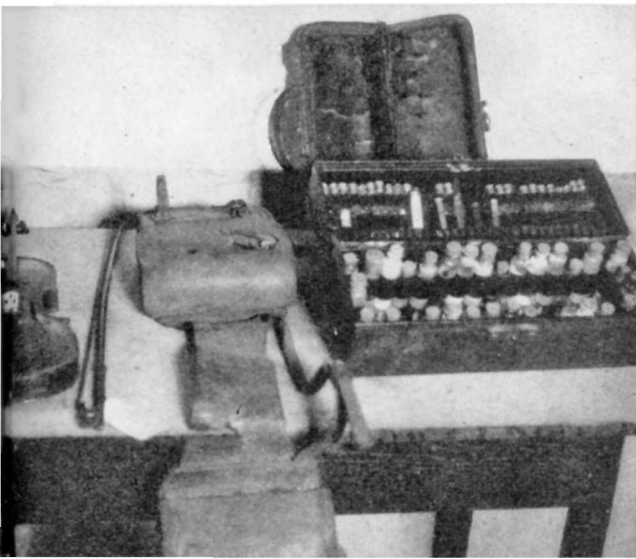


in our mountain country; you cant guess how it looked! it was a prefforated tin globe, with a tallow candle in-side, and the candle shined through those poca-dot holes, to keep one from running over a white cow. but child-like, I thought it was real Modern, as our light-system consisted chiefly of greese-pan's tallow candle's and pine-torches. and Mother, Grand-Mother, and our big sister's would cherfully card, spin, and weave by those light's until 10, 11, and 12 oclock in order to keep their loved one's clothed and respectable, the year-around, while some would hold the torch. well we had a few idle hand's 60 years ago. Us men, and boy'es had the bread, the potatow's and all kinds of vegitable's for the famiely'es use."

This is an accurate transcription of the language of the southern hillman. His speech is of the soil, and its homely earthliness, as represented in dialect stories and fiction, satisfies the inward, wistful longing of the city dweller for that which is close to nature. Smokies' speech has evoked especial interest because of its employment by such well-known writers as Miss Mary N. Murfree ("Charles Egbert Craddock"), Horace Kephart, and Rebecca Cushman. Although it has been, somewhat romantically, referred to as "Anglo-Saxon," "Chaucerian," or "Elizabethan," it is perhaps best described as "early American"—for many of its features were once widespread throughout the country in vernacular speech. Being isolated from the main currents of American culture, it has preserved forms elsewhere outmoded and, along with them, a number of relics from the British dialects. Essentially, however, it is American of the southern variety.

Although removed for several generations from the corrective tendencies of the schools, it shows an inherent vitality of expression, simplicity, and directness, and abounds in local color. Ungrammatical or "awkward" (as the apologetic hillman

Many interesting objects are being collected by the National Park Service for later display in a mountain culture museum. In this picture, a violin and bow, a doctor's saddlebags, medicine and instrument cases, suggest both the arts and the sciences in mountain life



After the bark is shredded, it is placed in a tanning vat. Here it is being dipped with a wooden strainer before the "ooze" is renewed with fresh bark

describes it), it has served the needs of an active frontier civilization and is picturesquely characteristic of the people who have spoken it.

With the extension of educational privileges to the mountain coves and the exposure of the life therein to outside influences, the speech of the Smokies man is losing its old-fashioned and local flavor and soon will be leveled to the norms which prevail generally in the South and the rest of the United States.

The music of the Smokies people, like their speech, is also reminiscent of the past. The old British ballads, which one may still occasionally hear, were not made for an age of radios, phonographs, and motion pictures. Concerned with the universal themes of love, emotional conflict, and tragedy, they appeal to the dramatic sense of the singer and his listeners and, in former times, provided a type of reflective entertainment, now to an increasing extent supplanted by superficial, ready-made amusement. Besides the songs inherited

from the Old World, various pieces which have come into existence in America tell of events, trials, and joys incident to life in the New World and on the frontier. Songmaking still goes on, despite the diversions of the modern age, and any notable event may be memorialized in song.

Such songs, old and new, are not static. They are constantly being modified and adapted in varying degree to suit new circumstances and conditions, and the taste of the singer. Folk music is thus, to some extent, a function of the locale, circumstances, and interests of its performers. It may retain, nevertheless, a conservative respect for the traditions of the past, and most of the English and Scottish ballads preserved in the Southern Appalachians are not essentially different from their early prototypes of the Old World.

The square dance shows remarkable vitality in the Great Smokies and holds its own despite the introduction of modern forms of the popular dance. In its variegated figures there is suggestion both of old courtly grace and exuberant folk spirit. Its music has similar elements, being characterized by a certain delicate polish, felicitous harmonies and phrases, and abandon to the magic of rhythm.

Unfortunately, the folk music of the Smokies seems doomed to extinction. In the words of the late Dorothy Scarborough, "Folk songs are fast dying of civilization," and with them may pass away the spirited, appealing music of the square dance.

Crude kitchenware, a part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park collection. Household utensils like these were usually made by the Southern Highlanders from local materials

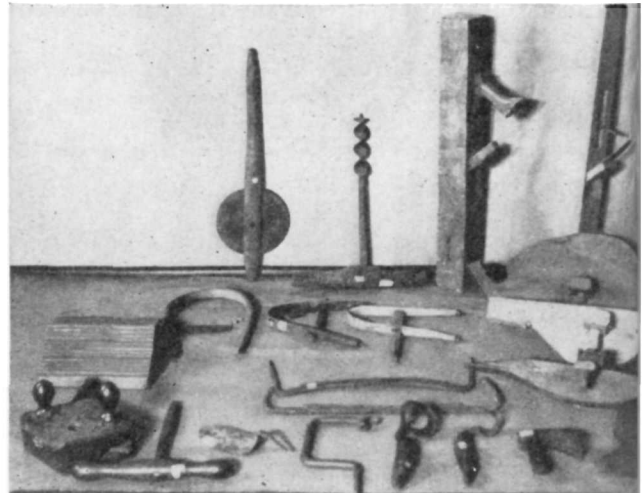


Conservation of Mountain Culture

THE BEWILDERING changes coincident with so-called progress literally swept around the Southern Appalachian Mountains, leaving this region isolated. Little was known of the outside world, and not until recent years did the penetration of a few good roads begin the inevitable drama of change. The native virtues of physical hardihood, rugged independence, ingenuity, and economic self-sufficiency in both individual and community life—traits which characterized our early American pioneers—persisted here for generations.

These traits and the activities of the Southern Highlanders have served to leave their mark upon the lands now within the boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Realizing that the evidence of this early white occupancy are of definite significance and interest to the American people, the National Park Service, charged with protecting and interpreting the area, has taken steps to preserve the mountain culture. Some of the old dwellings and utility buildings are being restored, and the possibility of restoring and exhibiting one or more groups of mountain buildings to illustrate the complete domestic economy of the region is being considered. In certain localities can be found old log cabins, some with all the accessory buildings, such as the barn, corncrib, smokehouse, apple-house, springhouse, pig pen, and poultry house. The cable mill at Cades Cove

Tools were a primary requisite in isolated communities where life depended on individual effort. They were fashioned almost entirely by hand. The picture shows some carpenter's tools in the park collection



and the Mingus Creek Mill can be seen by the visitor to the park. The park naturalist should be consulted about other sites. The Historic American Buildings Survey has measured drawings and photographs of many of these buildings, and they will be preserved permanently in the Library of Congress. Rail fences, picket fences, bridges, foot logs, old trails, and roads are still in evidence.

The National Park Service has been collecting and storing numerous objects used in the home and shop and on the farm, such as the tools of carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, and leather-workers, along with guns, traps, looms, spinning wheels, household furniture, and other artifacts. As yet,

these are not available for public exhibition, but at some future time it is planned to build a mountain culture museum wherein they will be exhibited and the story of the early white settlers will be told.

In addition to viewing the physical objects that depict the way of life of these people, there is still some opportunity, both in the park and in the outlying areas, to observe a type of existence that has changed but little in the past 150 years. Mountain dialects, songs, ballads, and folk tales have not entirely disappeared, and qualified students, working under the supervision of the National Park Service, have made recordings of the speech and the songs of the people.

The forest-clad mountains stretch to the horizon, hiding the land and the people. Only those who tarry long come to know the virtues of these people, imparted by the daily struggle with an unremitting environment



