

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK ROADS & BRIDGES,  
LITTLE RIVER ROAD  
Between Sugarlands Visitor Center and the Townsend Wye  
Gatlinburg Vicinity  
Sevier County  
Tennessee

HAER NO. TN-35-C

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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,  
LITTLE RIVER ROAD  
HAER NO. TN-35-C

Location: Great Smoky Mountains National Park,  
Tennessee, between the Sugarlands  
Visitor Center and the Townsend Wye

Date of Construction: ca. 1825 (NPS improvement construction,  
1930s-50s)

Type of Structure: Roadway, Bridges, and Landscapes

Use: National Park Transportation System

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

Fabricator/Builder: Various private and public contractors

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

Significance: Little River Road is an extremely  
prominent thoroughfare in Great Smoky  
Mountains National Park, second only to  
Newfound Gap Road. The transportation  
system in this park is representative of  
NPS park road design and landscape  
planning throughout the country. Much  
of the construction work 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; 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; Big Creek Road, TN-35-H; 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

After Newfound Gap Road, Little River Road is the most prominent thoroughfare in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Traveling east to west from Newfound Gap Road at the Sugarlands, the road ascends to Fighting Creek Gap, then descends to the Little River, which it follows to the park boundary near Townsend, Tennessee. Although the Park Service historically referred to the section of the road from Sugarlands to the Little River as Fighting Creek Gap Road, the entire route from Sugarlands to the park boundary will be referred to as Little River Road for the purposes of this description.

Little River Road begins at the bottomlands of the Sugarlands Valley, and begins to climb Sugarlands Mountain at 0.2 mile. Here, the road follows Fighting Creek toward the gap in Sugarlands Mountain of the same name.

An overlook is located on the north side of Little River Road at 3.2 miles, and offers a view to the northeast towards Gatlinburg. However, the mountains hide this town from view, save for one large hotel which was built on top of one of the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in order to give its

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patrons a view of these mountains. Unfortunately, this also gave park visitors a view of the hotel.

Little River Road finishes its ascent to Fighting Creek Gap at 3.7 miles, where it travels through the parking area for the Laurel Falls Trail. Because it is only a 2.5-mile round trip to the falls, this is a popular walk and the parking area is often overflowing. Just beyond the parking area, the road begins its descent to the Little River.

Little River Road reaches the Little River and the intersection of Elkmont Road at 4.8 miles. Elkmont Road leads south from Little River Road up the valley of the Little River to the Elkmont Campground. A large old building, the former Wonderland Hotel, which began operation prior to the establishment of the park, is located on the east side of the road at 1 mile. The entrance to the campground is located on the west side of the road at 1.4 miles. Elkmont Road continues past the campground, crossing the Little River at 2 miles over a four span bridge. At 2.2 miles the section of the road open to motorists ends at a gate, but the old Elkmont Road continues as a dirt road along the Little River for 1 mile. Several vacant

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buildings, former inholdings which were built prior to the establishment of the park, are located to the west side of Elkmont Road in this area.

From its intersection with Elkmont Road, Little River Road follows the north bank of the Little River very closely. A number of rock cuts along the side of the road attest to the difficulty encountered in the construction of this road, as large amounts of rock had to be excavated to make room for the roadway. Retention walls are visible between the road and the river, and support the rock and fill upon which the road bed was built and prevent it from being scoured away by the river.

The road crosses the Little River at 7.3 miles via the Long Arm Bridge, a modern concrete and steel structure. Now, the road is south of the river, and affords the motorist a spectacular view of the Little River.

The area around Little River Road opens to the large expanse of land referred to as Metcalf Bottoms at 9.5 miles. The entrance to the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area and the intersection of the road to the park entrance near Wear Cove is located to the north of the road at 9.6 miles. Remnants of the old settlement

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in the Metcalf Bottoms area are preserved along a short dirt spur road which leads to the east of Wear Cove Road.

Past Metcalf Bottoms, as it follows the Little River, Little River Road enters a gorge which has been cut by the river. Here, vertical rock walls loom close to the south side of the road, and some even hang over the roadway. The road twists and turns around bends in the gorge as it follows the natural course through the rock cut by the Little River.

The road crosses the river at 11.6 miles via Sinks Bridge, another modern concrete and steel structure. As the Little River passes under the bridge there are a series of rapids, which empty into a large pool. This area is known as "The Sinks." Cliffs rising from this pool have become a popular place for park visitors to jump into the river, and the area is often crowded during the summer.

Many pullouts are located along Little River Road, allowing motorists to stop and enjoy the spectacular nature of this area of the park. In many areas, visitors can be seen swimming or wading in the river, and people on inner tubes or sometimes even kayaks can be found in the deeper parts of the river.

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The road crosses the Little River at 13.4 miles via another modern concrete and steel bridge, the Camp Two Bridge. Here, the river is once again on the north side of the road. A large section of the rock walls on the south side of the road hang over the roadway at 14.5 miles. One area of rock resembles a craggy face looking into Little River Gorge. Several other overhangs are found along this section of the road, which travels through the most dramatic part of the gorge. White Oak Branch flows into the Little River at 16.8 miles, and the road crosses it over another modern bridge.

At 17.4 miles, the Middle Prong of the Little River flows into the Little River from the southwest, and the Little River makes a large bend, flowing to the north. Similarly, at this point Laurel Creek Road, coming from Cades Cove in the southwest, intersects with Little River Road, which turns north to follow its namesake river a short distance to the park boundary with Townsend, Tennessee. As Little River Road turns north to travel along the west bank of the Little River, it crosses the Middle Prong via a large rustic style single arch bridge.



This confluence of the Little River and the Middle Prong forms a large "Y," and the area has come to be called the Townsend Wye. The area is a popular place for swimming and wading in the river, and the parking area on the side of Little River Road adjacent to the Townsend Wye Bridge is often filled with cars. From here, the road continues 0.8 mile to the park boundary.

Where the Middle Prong flows into the Little River at the Townsend Wye, a spur road, Tremont Road, travels south along the Middle Prong for 2 miles, where it ends at a gate. The small campus of the Great Smoky Mountains Institute, a center for scientific research, is located here. Although not open to motorists, Tremont Road continues along the Middle Prong as a dirt road for another 2.5 miles.

#### *Pre-Park Era Trails and Roads Along the Little River*

In the period before white settlers entered the Great Smoky Mountains region, a number of footpaths had been blazed through the mountains by the Cherokee. By following the course of rivers and streams, and going through gaps between high mountain peaks,

the Indians were able to circumvent the steep terrain which is characteristic of the Smokies. In the vicinity of the Little River, the Cherokee established the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail, which ran from present-day Sevierville to Tuckaleechee Cove, where the community of Townsend is today. From Tuckaleechee, the trail followed the Little River upstream into what is today Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Then, at the junction of the Little River and Laurel Creek, now known as the Townsend Wye, the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail followed Laurel Creek to Cades Cove, where several branches of it went over the crest of the Smokies.<sup>1</sup> In the 1820s, white settlers journeyed into Cades Cove over the Tuckaleechee-and-Southeastern Trail, which slowly developed into a wagon road.<sup>2</sup>

Although a wagon road existed along the Little River from Tuckaleechee Cove to the vicinity of the Townsend Wye and turned southwest along Laurel Creek, no road ran from the Townsend Wye to the east along the Little River. Blazing a wagon road along

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<sup>1</sup> Lambert, "The Pioneer History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 38.

the banks of the Little River would have required blasting a roadbed out of the walls of the gorge through which the river ran from the Townsend Wye to Metcalf Bottoms. In the nineteenth century, the only access to the Little River east of the Townsend Wye was via a wagon road from Wear Cove south to Metcalf Bottoms. In the early twentieth century, the trip along Wear Cove Road from the Line Springs resort outside of Townsend to Metcalf Bottoms became a popular outing for vacationers.<sup>3</sup>

Only when the removal of timber from the area around the Little River made the expense of constructing a road through Little River Gorge a profitable venture, did such a project go forth. Between 1904 and 1908, the Little River Logging Company built a logging railroad from its mill in Townsend, up the Little River to the Townsend Wye, and through Little River Gorge toward the headwaters of the stream where it founded the logging town, Elkmont. The logging company's railroad carried logs out of Elkmont, and also carried passengers to vacations in Elkmont at the Wonderland Hotel, the Appalachian Club, and a number of

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<sup>3</sup> Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File, GSMNP Library.

summer cabins along Little River.<sup>4</sup> Another railroad line was built from the Townsend Wye up the Middle Prong of Little Pigeon River through the Tremont area in 1920.<sup>5</sup>

In the period around World War I, Sevier County built a wagon road from Gatlinburg west through Fighting Creek Gap to the logging town of Elkmont. The state of Tennessee improved the road, known as Fighting Creek Gap Road, by relocating and widening it to 16', and surfacing the roadbed with crushed stone.<sup>6</sup>

By 1924, the Little River Logging Company's holdings around Elkmont had been depleted of timber, and the Little River railroad was no longer profitable to operate.<sup>7</sup> As a result, in January 1926, the Little River Lumber Company began to donate the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Lambert, "Logging in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," an unpublished report to the Superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1958, 10-14; GSMNP Library.

<sup>5</sup> Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File, GSMNP Library.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

rail lines along Little River and the Middle Prong to Tennessee.<sup>8</sup> Between 1928 and 1931, the state built the 24' wide Little River Road (also referred to as Little River Highway), over the bed of the logging railroad from Townsend to Elkmont, and improved Fighting Creek Gap Road from Elkmont to Sugarlands, where it intersected with the new Indian Gap Highway.<sup>9</sup> The Little River and Fighting Creek Gap roads would later become part of Tennessee Route 73.

*The Improvement of the Little River and Fighting Creek Gap Roads*

With the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934, Tennessee gave de facto jurisdiction over the Little River and Fighting Creek Gap roads to the Park Service. (As was the case with Newfound Gap Road, de jure jurisdiction was not given until 1951.) However, as early as 1933, when the establishment of the national park was eminent, Tennessee claimed

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<sup>8</sup> Vic Weals, *Last Train to Elkmont: A Look Back at Life on the Little River in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: Olden Press, 1991) 115.

<sup>9</sup> Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File, GSMNP Library.

the federal government was responsible for maintenance of the roads, and denied Park Superintendent Eakin's request that the state rebuild five hazardous bridges on Little River Road.

(Although Great Smoky Mountains National Park was not established until 1934, Eakin began his role as superintendent in March 1931 in order to oversee the planning and development of the park.) After Tennessee denied it had the responsibility to maintain the road, the superintendent sought to have the Public Works Administration, one of several new Depression era agencies, fund the bridge reconstruction as a make work project. However, with the road still under the state's jurisdiction, funding was denied and work on the bridges had to wait until the CCC could begin the project.<sup>10</sup>

Federal work on Little River Road and the Elkmont and Tremont spurs began after the May 1933 arrival of the CCC in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In August, CCC enrollees began improving the road around the Townsend Wye and the Tremont

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<sup>10</sup> J.R. Eakin, Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, to the Director, National Park Service, March 22, 1937; Roads, Box 1; Right of Way/Jurisdiction, Tennessee, 1937, File 5; GSMNP.

spur, which ran for 9 miles along the Middle Prong of the Little River to a CCC camp. Using heavy equipment loaned to the Park Service by the Little River Lumber Company, which still held land within the park, these improvements included removing rocks and constructing drainage features on the road.<sup>11</sup> The CCC also began improving the road through Elkmont, which ran along the Little River to the mouth of Fish Camp Prong, as well as a spur road along Jakes Creek. By January 1934, they had completed the reconstruction of two wood bridges on Elkmont Road, and were surfacing both the roads at Elkmont and Tremont with crushed rock.<sup>12</sup>

After taking over Little River Road, the Park Service and the BPR planned to improve and widen the roadbed, but maintain the road's current route. As for Fighting Creek Gap Road, the agencies believed it needed "to be relocated immediately to eliminate dangerous curvature and excessive grades."<sup>13</sup> When completed, the new roadway from Gatlinburg over both Fighting

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<sup>11</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>12</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>13</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1933; GSMNP.

Creek Gap and Little River roads was to continue west from the Townsend Wye along Laurel Creek, through Cades Cove, and on to the boundary of the park near Chilhowee Mountain.<sup>14</sup>

In 1935, the park established its first "regular road maintenance organization," which included a general foreman, blade grade operator, and two truck drivers. The first work undertaken by the road maintenance division was the improvement of the shoulders of Little River Road, which began on August 19.<sup>15</sup>

The CCC rebuilt four bridges on Little River Road in 1935. The original all wood structures at Long Arm, the Sinks, and Camp Two, which carried the road over Little River, and at the Townsend Wye, which carried the road over the Middle Prong of the Little River, were replaced by new bridges in which the wood decks were supported by metal I-beams.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1933; GSMNP.

<sup>15</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1935; GSMNP.

<sup>16</sup> Inventory and Inspection Report, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, 1950; Roads Vertical File; GSMNP Library.



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Possibly the single greatest project undertaken by the CCC in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, was the construction of the four arch bridge which carries the road at Elkmont over the Little River. Studies for the bridge were begun in January 1936,<sup>17</sup> and the CCC began work in June.<sup>18</sup> In August, a quarry was opened along the Little River to obtain suitable stone for the bridge,<sup>19</sup> and by November, the four corrugated metal arches on the underside of the bridge were being put in place, followed by the construction of the stone arches on the face of the bridge.<sup>20</sup>

A caption on one of the photographs taken during the construction of Elkmont Bridge, which was included in the Superintendent's Monthly Report for November, stated that use of corrugated metal arches in the construction of Elkmont Bridge was "a new departure" in the park. Of the CCC work at Elkmont, Superintendent Eakin commented: "A very nice job of masonry is resulting here, and it is said that many of the enrollees could

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<sup>17</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>18</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>19</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1936; GSMNP.

<sup>20</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1936; GSMNP.

now secure a job of stone cutter in any organization."<sup>21</sup> The Elkmont Bridge was completed by the CCC in July 1937.<sup>22</sup>

In 1934, planning for the new location of Fighting Creek Gap Road included a 525' tunnel to take the road through Fighting Creek Gap itself.<sup>23</sup> However, disagreement among Park Service and BPR planners over the location of the road from Fighting Creek Gap to the Little River led to the suspension of planning on the road in August. Further planning would commence only after an agreement could be reached on the location of the road.<sup>24</sup>

Apparently, it took a quite some time for the various planners of Fighting Creek Gap Road to come to an agreement on the location of the road, as the survey of the new location for the road did not begin until early in 1938.<sup>25</sup> The final plan was for the sections of the road from Sugarlands to Fighting Creek Gap to be relocated to avoid the dangerous curves and excessive

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1937; GSMNP.

<sup>23</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>24</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1934; GSMNP.

<sup>25</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1938; GSMNP.

grades which characterized the earlier state construction. Where the state road had run from Fighting Creek Gap southwest to Elkmont, the road would be totally rebuilt and travel almost due west to connect with Little River Road north of Elkmont at the confluence of Little River and Laurel Branch.

Clearing for the new section of Fighting Creek Gap Road began on June 27. The construction of the two bridges over Laurel Branch, Bridge Number 1 and Bridge Number 2, began in August.<sup>26</sup> Bridge Number 2 was completed in October, and Bridge Number 1 was probably completed in October or November.<sup>27</sup> Fighting Creek Gap Road was completed by January 1939,<sup>28</sup> but was not paved with what was considered a permanent road surface until 1946.<sup>29</sup>

*Post-war Work on the Little River and Fighting Creek Gap Roads*

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<sup>26</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>27</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1938; GSMNP.

<sup>28</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1939; GSMNP.

<sup>29</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1946; GSMNP.

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Following World War II, the entire section of Fighting Creek Gap Road from Sugarlands to Fighting Creek Gap was relocated. Work began on the project on August 28, 1947,<sup>30</sup> and was completed on July 27, 1948. The project prompted Superintendent Blair Ross to remark: "This project is believed to be a good example of what can be accomplished by proper design, the securing of a bid from a good contractor, and efficient inspection by engineering and landscape forces."<sup>31</sup>

In the 1950s, several bridges were replaced on the Little River and Fighting Creek Gap roads and their spurs. In October 1950, the construction firm Troitino and Brown began a \$53,270 project to build new bridge on the Tremont Road.<sup>32</sup> The bridge was completed in July 1951.<sup>33</sup> The following month, Troitino and Brown won a \$34,886 contract for a new bridge to carry Fighting

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<sup>30</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1947; GSMNP.

<sup>31</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1948; GSMNP.

<sup>32</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1950; GSMNP.

<sup>33</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1951; GSMNP.

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Creek Gap Road over Fighting Creek. This project was probably begun in September,<sup>34</sup> and was completed in April 1952.<sup>35</sup>

A reconstruction of Little River Road from the Townsend Wye to the park boundary, including the construction of a new bridge over the Middle Prong of Little River, was begun in March 1952 by the Gatlinburg Construction Company (a \$74,990 contract).<sup>36</sup> The superstructure of the old log bridge was removed in March,<sup>37</sup> and the full project was completed in August.<sup>38</sup>

During the Mission 66 period, the major work carried out along the Little River and Fighting Creek Gap roads was the construction of the Sugarlands Visitor Center, Metcalf Bottoms picnic area, and Elkmont Campground. The construction of the roads and parking spurs in the campground was begun by the

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<sup>34</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1951; GSMNP.

<sup>35</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, April 1952; GSMNP.

<sup>36</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1952; GSMNP.

<sup>37</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1952; GSMNP.

<sup>38</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1952; GSMNP.

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Harrison Construction Company of Alcoa, Tennessee on November 19, 1959,<sup>39</sup> and the project was completed in November 1960.<sup>40</sup>

In May 1960, the Harrison Construction Company began to relocate Fighting Creek Gap Road from the bridge over Fighting Creek at the east end of the road to its junction with Newfound Gap Road. This was only part of the company's \$94,022 project to construct the drives, parking areas, and walks for the new Sugarlands Visitor Center.<sup>41</sup> The dedication ceremony for the Visitor Center was held on October 23, 1960,<sup>42</sup> and the relocation project was completed in May 1961.<sup>43</sup>

The construction of the roads and parking areas of the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area, a \$46,817 project, was begun by the

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<sup>39</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1959; GSMNP.

<sup>40</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, November 1960; GSMNP.

<sup>41</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, May 1960; GSMNP.

<sup>42</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, October 1960; GSMNP.

<sup>43</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1961; GSMNP.

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Hart Construction Company of Sevierville, Tennessee in July 1961.<sup>44</sup> The project was completed on December 13.<sup>45</sup>

Heavy rains on February 12 and 13, 1966, combined with the rapid melting of the snowpack in the mountains, led to intense flooding in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, causing an estimated \$809,000 worth of damage. One of the most heavily damaged areas was Little River Road, where the old railroad ties over which the road had been built were visible where the roadway was washed out.<sup>46</sup>

Back in 1956, as part of its planning for Mission 66, the Park Service had identified the 12.5 miles of Little River Road between Elkmont and the Townsend Wye as having been constructed "on very low standards" susceptible to flood damage.<sup>47</sup> At that time, it was recommended that "base and surface" improvements be made to the road, sections be raised above the high water mark,

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<sup>44</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1961; GSMNP.

<sup>45</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, December 1961; GSMNP.

<sup>46</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1966; GSMNP.

<sup>47</sup> National Park Service, *Mission 66 Prospectus*, 1956, 40; Foothills Parkway Vertical File; Library GSMNP.

and bridges be replaced.<sup>48</sup> However, no such work was carried out during the Mission 66 period, which probably contributed to the severe damage to Little River Road ten years later.

A rehabilitation of Little River Road, which included a grade raise in order to avoid future flood damage and the reconstruction of several bridges, was begun by Blalock and Sons, Incorporated, of Sevierville, Tennessee on August 23, 1972.<sup>49</sup> This \$1,289,580 project included the reconstruction of 12.5 miles of the road and three bridges over Little River.<sup>50</sup> Work on the project was delayed in September at the request of Park Service Director George Hartzog, who requested that the railings installed on the new bridges be redesigned and use no aluminum.<sup>51</sup> The following month, the Camp 2 Bridge over the Little River was demolished, and the design for the "terminal ends" of the railings for the three bridges spanning Little River were

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>49</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, August 1, 1972; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>50</sup> Monthly Progress Report, June 1972; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>51</sup> Monthly Progress Report, September 1972; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



modified, although aluminum railings were included in the new design.<sup>52</sup> In February 1973, Long Arm Bridge was demolished,<sup>53</sup> and in March the Sinks Bridge.<sup>54</sup> The bridges were probably completed by the fall of 1973.<sup>55</sup> The rehabilitation of Little River Road was completed on May 10, 1974.<sup>56</sup>

The rehabilitation of Little River Road necessitated that it be closed for an extended period of time, which prompted residents of Townsend to complain to the Park Service that the closure was hurting the town's economy.<sup>57</sup> Little River Road was reopened between the Townsend Wye and Elkmont on May 11, 1974,<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Monthly Progress Report, October 1972; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>53</sup> Monthly Progress Report, February 1973; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>54</sup> Monthly Progress Report, March 1973; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>55</sup> Monthly Progress Report, October 1973; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>56</sup> Monthly Progress Report, May 1974; Maintenance Division Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

<sup>57</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, August 21, 1973; Box Staff Meeting Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>58</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, May 21, 1974; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

and the section between Elkmont and Sugarlands was reopened on June 30.<sup>59</sup>

Since the reconstruction of Little River Road and three of its bridges between 1972 and 1974, several other developments have occurred on Little River and Fighting Creek Gap roads and their spurs: in 1976, the Park Service closed several miles of the upper sections of the Elkmont and Tremont roads, converting these unpaved parts of the roads to trails;<sup>60</sup> support walls, referred to as "riprap," were constructed on Elkmont Road in 1981 to prevent the Little River from undercutting the road;<sup>61</sup> the intersection of the Fighting Creek Gap and Newfound Gap roads was modified in 1982;<sup>62</sup> a bridge on the Tremont Road was rebuilt in 1982 by F. and E. Construction as part of a larger project to

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<sup>59</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, July 16, 1974, Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>60</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, February 17, 1976; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>61</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, April 21, 1981; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>62</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, September 21, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

rebuild thirteen bridges in the park;<sup>63</sup> two bridges were rebuilt on the Tremont Road in 1983 by Blalock and Sons as part of a project to rebuild fourteen bridges in the park;<sup>64</sup> and, in order to reduce congestion and provide an alternative to driving in the park, an experimental trolley service from Gatlinburg to the Sugarlands Visitor Center, the Laurel Falls parking area, and the Elkmont Campground, was instituted on June 14, 1996.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, January 21, 1982; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>64</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, February 15, 1983; Box Staff Minutes; GSMNP.

<sup>65</sup> Staff Meeting Minutes, June 24, 1996; Superintendent's Files; Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

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David Haas, Photographer, 1996

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