Catoctin Mountain

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Blue Blazes: Nature and History Intertwined

Discovery Awaits

The short Blue Blazes Whiskey Still Trail is a place where nature and history come together in harmony. The sounds of the running water and rustling leaves accent the walk to the site of the Blue Blazes Whiskey Still. Although the original still is gone, a small authentic whiskey still remains to remind visitors of life on the mountain.

Blue Blazes Run



As it rains, water bubbles up from the pockets in bedrock deep within the earth and seeps from the ground. These seeps run down the mountain and merge into a stream called Blue Blazes Run. This water feature has some of the purest water on the mountain and is home to a number of macroinvertebrates such as mayfly nymphs and crayfish.

Mayfly nymphs (pictured left) are highly sensitive to pollution. Their presence is a good indicator of clean water.

Along with aquatic life, humans have used this stream for thousands of years. Archeological evidence found near the stream has proven Blue Blazes Run has been traveled and utilized by American Indians and early settlers alike. Although people still enjoy the healthy stream, a dangerous invader is lurking downstream in Big Hunting Creek.

Aliens in the Water

Didymo is a dangerous, non-native alga that is invading freshwater streams in the United States, like Big Hunting Creek . The alga clings to rocks and begins to spread, leaving a trail of death and destruction in the streams it contaminates.

This alien species covers and smothers macroinvertebrate habitat, diminishing the population of both the macroinvertebrates and the trout that feed upon them. Scientists currently have no way to remove didymo once a body of water is contaminated.



Didymo is commonly referred to as "rock snot" because of its appearance.

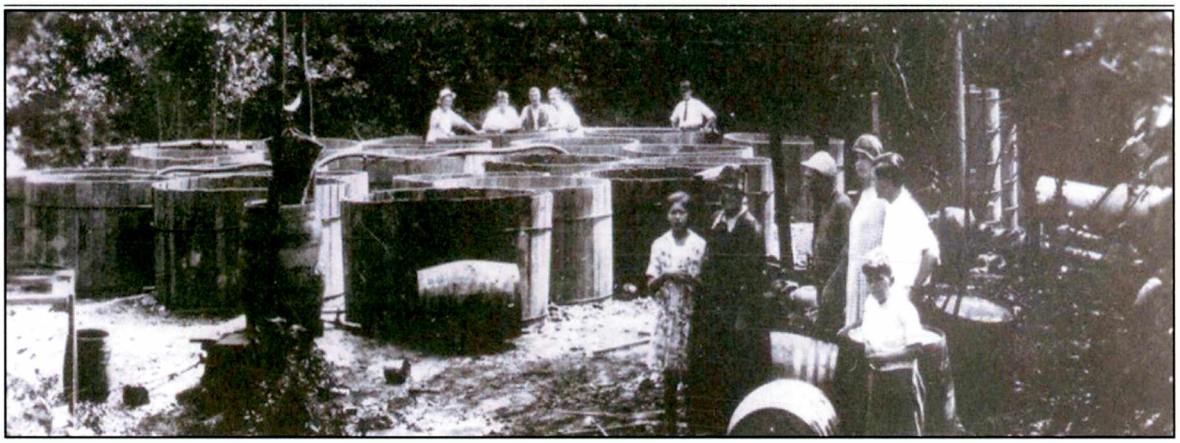
Feeding the Forest

The trees are a valuable asset for the plants and animals that live in this second-growth forest. Their lush canopy provides habitat opportunities to a multitude of flora and fauna. In return for their services, the trees absorb water from the stream that flows down the mountain. Tree roots from the larger trees that cling to the side of the streambed can take up several gallons of water per day for use in the photosynthesis process.

During autumn, the forest erupts in a magnificent display of colors. Visitors from around the globe come to be inspired by the beauty of this park. This trail is often one of the best places to view autumn leaves.



Tulip Poplar and Beech trees turn a vibrant shade of



Locals inspecting the Blue Blazes Whiskey Still after the 1929 raid.

The Raid of 1929

The Blue Blazes Whiskey Still was the largest moonshine still found in Frederick County during prohibition. The still boasted eighteen 500 gallon vats that were used to produce moonshine. In fact, the Catoctin Mountain moonshine was so well known, people as far away as New York knew it by name.

However, everything changed when Charles Lewis, a Foxville local, met with Vernon Redmond, a Frederick County deputy sheriff. Lewis was employed with the Blue Blazes Whiskey Still and, for unknown reasons, contacted Redmond to discuss raiding the still. They agreed on the evening of July 31, 1929.

At 6 p.m., the police drove up the mountain near the site of the still. They got out of their vehicles and walked the rest of the way, but the moonshiners were ready for them. Gunfire erupted as the moonshiners and police exchanged shots. When it was all over the police managed to take the still, but it was not without casualties. Clyde Hauver, a local deputy sheriff, was mortally wounded by a gunshot to his head.



The Blue Blazes Whiskey Still was industrial sized

The Cold Case of the Blue Blazes

With such a tragedy, rumors began to spread. Some said Lewis betrayed his coworkers in exchange for amnesty. Others said Lewis double-crossed the police so the moonshiners could scare police enough to be left alone. Another rumor spread that a love triangle was involved and the target the moonshiners wanted to kill was not Hauver, but another police officer. Some locals said the police were receiving bribes to turn a blind eye to the still, but took action when the moonshiners stopped payment.

The moonshiners claimed Hauver's death was a result of friendly fire, while the police said the moonshiners were the ones at fault. In truth, nobody really knew who killed Hauver or why.

The trial that resulted from the raid and death did not provide many answers. Two of the moonshiners were eventually convicted of murder, but locals believed the trial was rushed and that justice was not served. Rumors still spread about the "cold case" of the Blue Blazes.

Preserving Our Resources

Nature and history come together on the gentle Blue Blazes Whiskey Still Trail. Slightly over half a mile, this trail gives an insight to the diverse ecology of the mountain and a glimpse at stories of the area. By preserving, protecting, and interpreting this area, nature and history can be explored. Whether one wishes to admire nature, or study history, this short, easy trail offers something for everyone.

Please help maintain the beauty of Catoctin Mountain Park by taking only pictures and leaving only footprints.



Today, a smaller still stands in the location of the