

BUSINESS connections



Many Years, Many Memories:

BLUE RIDGE *Parkway*



Connecting Technology & Community: 1951-2021



In this special issue of *Business Connections*, join us on a journey connecting people to nature and yesterday to today.



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BUSINESS connections

We’ve covered a lot of ground with the Blue Ridge Parkway.

SkyLine got started as a member-owned cooperative in 1951 — 16 years after the Blue Ridge Parkway’s groundbreaking — and has provided communications services to the historic linear park for most of the years since. At first this meant only Plain Old Telephone Service. However, as technology grew and our offerings expanded, other SkyLine/SkyBest services were added to some locations along the route, including fiber connections for communications and broadband services to the restored Bluffs Restaurant.

This year SkyLine celebrates 70 years in business. Since the Blue Ridge Parkway crosses four of the five counties in our service area, we felt it was fitting to pay tribute in this special issue of *Business Connections*. Unlike previous issues with articles on a variety of topics, this one takes you on a trip through the Blue Ridge Parkway’s history, attractions and benefits to North Carolina.

The SkyLine/SkyBest connection to the Blue Ridge Parkway goes far beyond our role as a communications provider. As individuals, we’ve traveled with our families on this scenic road and stopped to enjoy its many treasures along the way. As community members, we’ve supported the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and applauded the increased tourism and real estate interest the Parkway brings to our state.

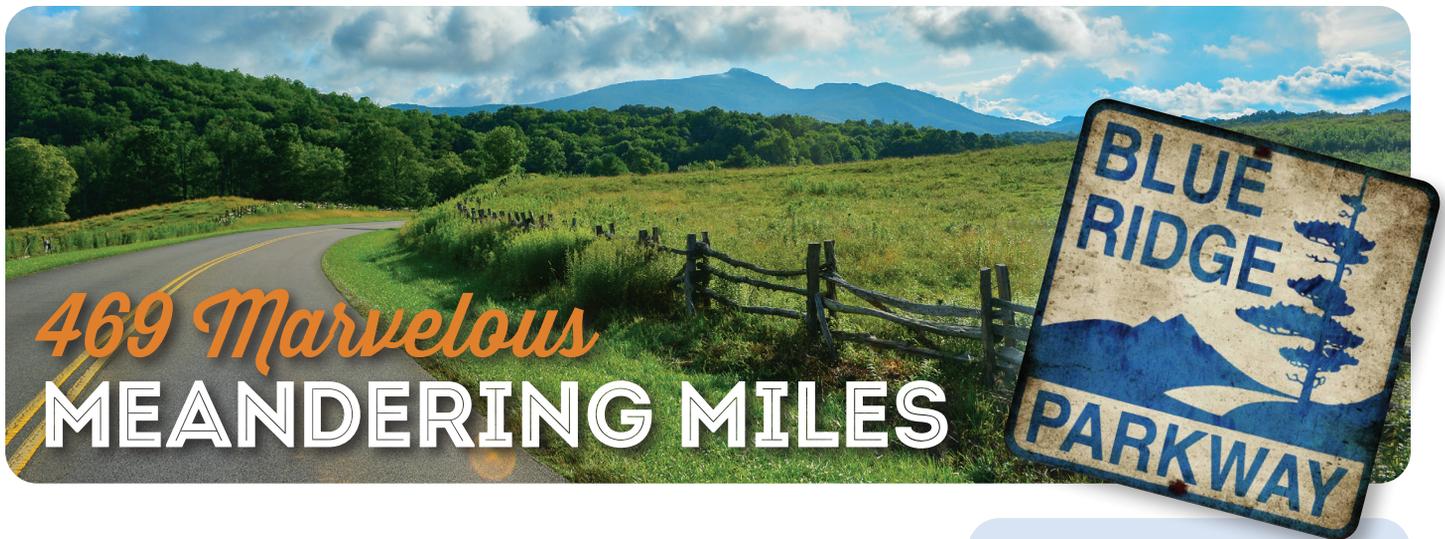
From the challenges of the Great Depression to the current pandemic, the Blue Ridge Parkway has become a journey of recovery and renewal. We’re honored to be on this road together.



Sincerely,

Kim Shepherd
Chief Executive Officer

PHOTO CREDITS: Todd Bush at bushphoto.com took the cover photo, all photos on pages 3-5, and the upper-left photo on page 7. Vicki Dameron took the upper-left photo on page 6.



469 *Marvelous* MEANDERING MILES

Building of the Blue Ridge Parkway began during the Great Depression as a New Deal project under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The primary goals were to create jobs for the unemployed and to bring tourism—inspired by the increasing availability of the automobile—to a region in severe financial straits. It was officially dedicated in 1987, 52 years after the groundbreaking, although various sections had already been in use for decades.

The Blue Ridge Parkway connects Shenandoah National Park, near Waynesboro, VA (Milepost 0) with Great Smoky Mountains National Park, near Cherokee, NC (Milepost 469). More importantly, it connects people to nature and yesterday to today.

Every year since 1946, the Blue Ridge Parkway has been one of the most visited sites in the National Park System, among the 423 unique sites that include Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Gettysburg. This isn't surprising, given all it offers:

- Spectacular panoramic views of the crests and ridges of five major ranges within the central and southern Appalachian Mountains
- A “museum of the managed American countryside,” preserving the roughhewn log cabin of the mountain pioneer, the summer home of a textile magnate and traces of early industries
- Access to 216 overlooks, 910 roadside vistas, 14 visitor centers, 13 picnic areas, 28 tunnels and 175 bridges

An estimated 14,099,485 recreation visitors came to the Blue Ridge Parkway in 2020, despite impacts from road closures and the pandemic. “The 2020 visitation reminds us that the Parkway’s 1930s design approach, to maximize scenic views and recreational access, continues to be relevant today for those looking for respite and renewal,” said Blue Ridge Parkway Acting Superintendent Alexa Viets.

Vision Northwest North Carolina Sets Sights on Tourism

As the top tourist attraction in North Carolina, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a big part of the state’s economy. However, there are other outdoor recreation opportunities in the 12-county region of the Northwest Prosperity Zone. That’s why “Creating a Regional Tourism Framework” was one of the topics in Vision Northwest North Carolina’s Focus On Our Future series presented by the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce.

Wit Tuttle, Executive Director for Visit NC, and Amy Allison, Director of the Outdoor Industry Recreation Office for the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, discussed current trends in the tourism and attraction industries, and how regional collaboration can attract guests who see recreation opportunities beyond county lines. While this region has always been popular, COVID-19 created new pipelines for engagement and exposed our area to new customers. Now we need to work together to keep these travelers coming back.

SkyLine/SkyBest is a presenting sponsor of Vision Northwest North Carolina and the 2020-2021 Focus On Our Future series—part of our ongoing commitment to support economic development initiatives.

What Awaits You DOWN THE ROAD?

It's impossible to adequately cover 469 miles in a few pages. So we decided to feature some of the Blue Ridge Parkway's most popular attractions in the four counties served by SkyLine/SkyBest — Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Avery.

Before beginning this journey, we asked Rita Larkin, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Communications Director, about her favorite spot. She replied, "The Blue Ridge Parkway holds so much natural beauty, history, culture and memories that it's hard to pick just one favorite. But among my top destinations are Doughton Park (Milepost 241.1) for its recreational opportunities, Moses H. Cone Memorial Park (Milepost 294.1) for its fascinating history and gorgeous landscape, the Blue Ridge Music Center (Milepost 213) for sharing the musical heritage of the region, Rough Ridge Trails (Milepost 302.8) for its amazing mountain views and Craggy Gardens (Milepost 364.4 - 367.6) for its wealth of rhododendron blooms each spring."



Doughton Park **Milepost 241.1, Alleghany County**

Jordan Calaway, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Chief Development Officer, commented, "The heart of the Parkway is in Alleghany at around the midpoint of the 469 miles."

Doughton Park is a six-mile stretch, and its open meadows are some of the best locations for viewing wildlife. This area is also rich in preserved Appalachian history. The Brinegar Cabin was part of the farming homestead built by Martin and Caroline Brinegar. When the Blue Ridge Parkway was developed, the Brinegar Cabin was restored as an interpretive exhibit for visitors to gain an appreciation of Appalachian farm life in the nineteenth century.

More than 30 miles of diverse hiking trails run through Doughton Park, accessing forested slopes, streams and backcountry. It also has one of the Parkway's larger campgrounds, a popular picnic area and great spots for fly-fishing and horseback riding.





Price Lake

Robert Lee Doughton

Doughton Park, originally called “The Bluffs,” was renamed by the National Park Service in honor of Congressman Robert Lee Doughton, who played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of the Blue Ridge Parkway and was one of the voices that helped tip the scales in favor of an all-North Carolina route for the parkway south of Virginia.

Doughton, whose family owned some of the land that’s now part of Doughton Park, was known as “Farmer Bob” in his native Alleghany County. He was a landowner, livestock producer and country store proprietor. Doughton was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1911 to 1953, serving as chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee from 1933 to 1947 and again from 1949-53. He used his legislative expertise to ramrod a thrice-defeated bill through Congress that permanently placed parkway maintenance and jurisdiction under the U.S. Department of the Interior. Without him, the Parkway might have become just another Virginia/ North Carolina road project.



Karen Powell, SkyLine/SkyBest Public Relations Administrator; Jordan Calaway, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Chief Development Officer; and Edward Hinson, SkyLine/SkyBest Chief Marketing & Sales Officer

The Bluffs Restaurant

In 1949, The Bluffs Restaurant became the first dining establishment to open on the Blue Ridge Parkway. For 61 years, locals and Blue Ridge Parkway travelers flocked to the restaurant at Doughton Park for fried chicken, sweet potato pancakes, ham biscuits, berry cobblers and more.

Sadly, the restaurant closed on November 1, 2010, after a new concessionaire did not step forward to operate the National Park Service property. Over the years, the building fell into disrepair. Thanks to many generous donors, the restaurant underwent a transformation, including a new roof and kitchen equipment, a

Generous Donors Help Preserve and Protect

There’s no entrance fee to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and budgets continue to remain stagnant. Fortunately, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation’s Community of Stewards generates tremendous support.

Rita Larkin, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Communications Director, said, “Thanks to our donors, we’ve been able to make sure the Parkway not only survives but thrives. It’s because they stepped up with generous support that projects like the renovation of The Bluffs Restaurant are possible. The community came to us and said, ‘This landmark cannot falter. Something has to be done.’ With the help of more than 400 individual donors—as well as the Appalachian Regional Commission, the State of North Carolina, and various community foundations—we’ve been able to save The Bluffs.”

Larkin added, “To those who haven’t yet donated to the Blue Ridge Parkway, we welcome you to learn more about our organization and the national park unit we support. You can help not only through financial donations, but through volunteering, partnerships and participation in community events.

Call (866) 308-2773 or visit BRPFoundation.org to learn more.

freshly painted interior, an ADA-compliant restroom and a rebuilt dining counter.

After a decade dormant, The Bluffs Restaurant at Doughton Park reopened briefly in 2020 but then had to close again due to the pandemic. However, plans call for this beloved dining spot to once again open in spring 2021.



Northwest Trading Post
Milepost 258.6, Ashe County

The Northwest Trading Post historic building is located in Glendale Springs. Visitors especially enjoy the selection of local color on its shelves, hewed from the imagination, skill and perseverance of local citizens. The Northwest Trading Post sells home-crafted products of Ashe and 10 neighboring counties of northwest North Carolina.

This stop also offers food, drink, souvenir items and a seasonal visitor center with valuable information on the Blue Ridge Parkway and the surrounding area. It's a great place to have lunch or a snack at one of the picnic tables and soak up the beautiful mountain scenery.



258.6



Moses H. Cone Memorial Park
Milepost 294.1, Watauga County

A jewel of the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park features the summer home that textile magnate Moses H. Cone built with his wife, Bertha, at the turn of the 20th century. The estate, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was later donated to the National Park Service.

The weathered exterior of Flat Top Manor, a 1901 Colonial Revival home, began to be renovated in late 2020 and this work will continue into 2021. It includes fixing or replacing deteriorating wood siding, shingles, doors and the porch ceiling—paid for by donations to the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and funding from the National Park Service. During construction, visitors to Flat Top Manor will have the opportunity to observe the restoration work from a safe distance outside a fenced area.

Visitors can also hike the extensive system of trails, enjoy horseback riding or cross-country skiing on 25 miles of historic carriage roads, and check out the popular Bass Lake.

Julian Price Memorial Park
Milepost 297.1, Watauga County

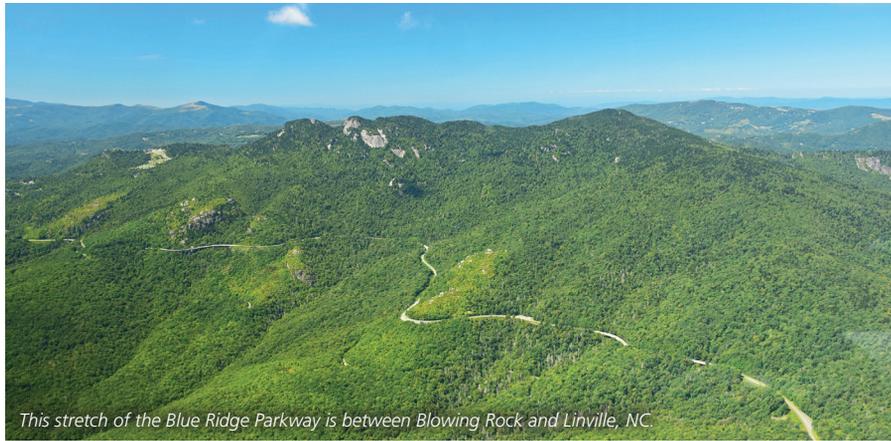
Julian Price Memorial Park lies directly adjacent to Moses H. Cone Memorial Park, and together these parks make up the largest developed area set aside for public recreation on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

This popular park features a majestic 4,200 acres at the foot of Grandfather Mountain and is a haven for relaxation and recreation with the 47-acre Price Lake as its focal point. It's named in honor of Julian Price, the insurance giant who bought the land as a recreational retreat for his employees. After Price's untimely death in 1946, his heirs donated the land to the Parkway as a memorial.

Highlights of Julian Price Memorial Park include the largest picnic areas on the Parkway, along with camping, boat-

294.1

297.1



This stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway is between Blowing Rock and Linville, NC.

ing and fishing on Price Lake, and ample opportunities to explore the mountains on hiking trails. The Tanawha Trail, perhaps the crowning achievement of all Parkway trails, stretches 13.5 miles from Price Park to Beacon Heights, paralleling the Parkway and rising along the slopes of Grandfather Mountain.

Linn Cove Viaduct

Milepost 304.4, Avery County

Featured on our cover, this seven-mile section of the Blue Ridge Parkway was completed in 1987 — the last section to be built. It was delayed for 20 years as environmentalists, adjacent landowners, engineers and architects sought a design that would preserve and protect the fragile habitat of adjacent Grandfather Mountain.

The Linn Cove Viaduct hugs the face of Grandfather Mountain and is recognized internationally as an engineering marvel that marries beauty with utility and habitat protection. It's symbolic of the care that was taken in construction of the entire Parkway, and a model of

the construction technique can be viewed during a visit to the Linn Cove Visitor Center.



Linville Falls

Milepost 316.4, Avery County

Linville Falls is a spectacular three-tiered waterfall plunging into Linville Gorge, the “Grand Canyon of the Southern Appalachians.” It’s the most popular waterfall in the Blue Ridge Mountains, because of its accessibility to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and is probably the most photographed waterfall in North Carolina.



Kids in Parks Encourages Outdoor Activity

Kids in Parks is a network of TRACK Trails outfitted with free activity guides to get children and families active outdoors. The mission goes far beyond fun. Kids in Parks is designed to encourage kids to “unplug” more, be physically active and build meaningful connections with nature. In turn, this will help inspire the next generation of stewards, who will care for all public lands, including the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Each TRACK Trail has a series of self-guided brochures designed to turn an ordinary hike into a fun-filled, discovery-packed adventure. The guides encourage children to truly engage with the outdoors by completing activities such as identifying trees and birds, viewing the forest from the perspective of animals and searching for natural features. Children can record their adventures at KidsinParks.com to earn cool prizes and plan more adventures.



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70  **Years**

Connecting Technology & Community: 1951-2021



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