

V. PARKWAY RESOURCES

SCENIC RECREATION

The Foothills Parkway, a 71-mile long corridor of land rising from an elevation of 857 feet at its southern terminus to 2,600 feet at Look Rock, Webb Mountain, and Green Mountain, is designed so that auto sightseers may enjoy the outstanding scenic views which are its primary attraction. Superlative views of the Great Smoky Mountains are complemented by vistas of the Tennessee Valley from Chilhowee Mountain and of the Douglas Lake area from Green Mountain. The forest cover and its understory are important elements of the scenery--along with the valleys, mountains, and the low-hanging clouds. During spring, dogwood, azaleas, and numerous other flowering plants attract weekend sightseers in great numbers. In late September and October the colored foliage of the forested slopes and mountains furnishes a resplendent display.

The highly scenic Abrams Creek section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park was relatively inaccessible until the Chilhowee section of the parkway provided access to this west end of the park. Future sections of the parkway will offer scenic drives, specially designed for automobile sightseeing, as alternates to the presently congested Little River and Newfound Gap roads.

## VEGETATION

The Foothills area is within the Deciduous Forest biome. Two forest types predominate here--moist slope and cove, and dry slope and ridge. These in turn are composed of three forest communities: the oak poplar, cove hardwoods, and the pine-oak. Logging and farming have altered the original natural state of the forest. The land now is covered by a second-growth of mixed hardwoods and pines.

There is no sharp boundary separating the three forest communities, but rather an admixture of one with another. Because of the elimination of chestnut by blight, the oak-poplar forest (the community most characteristic of the area) no longer occurs in its original condition.

The cove hardwoods community is made up of some 25 or 30 tree species of which six or eight may be dominants of varying proportions in different stands.

The pine-oak communities are most generally found on the dry south slopes and ridges, usually giving way abruptly to the prevailing oak-poplar at the lower and more moist sites. A number of native flowering shrubs and herbs such as flame azalea, dwarf pink locust, phlox, and fine floral displays of mountain laurel and rhododendron and colorful dogwood trees add to the beauty and attractiveness of the Foothills.

Several exotic species have been introduced into the native plant communities. The most prominent of these are kudzu, tree of heaven, and Japanese honeysuckle. Control of exotic and noisome plants is needed in order to retain a natural appearance of the native flora, to remove poison ivy from heavily used visitor areas, and generally to maintain the parkway in a state of maximum attractiveness.

## ANIMAL LIFE

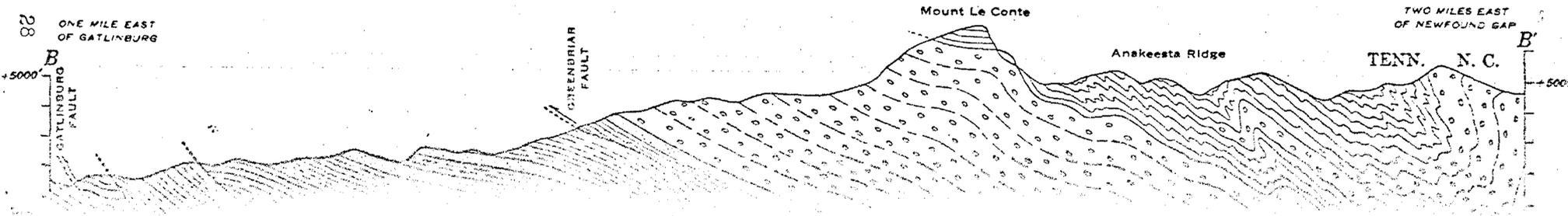
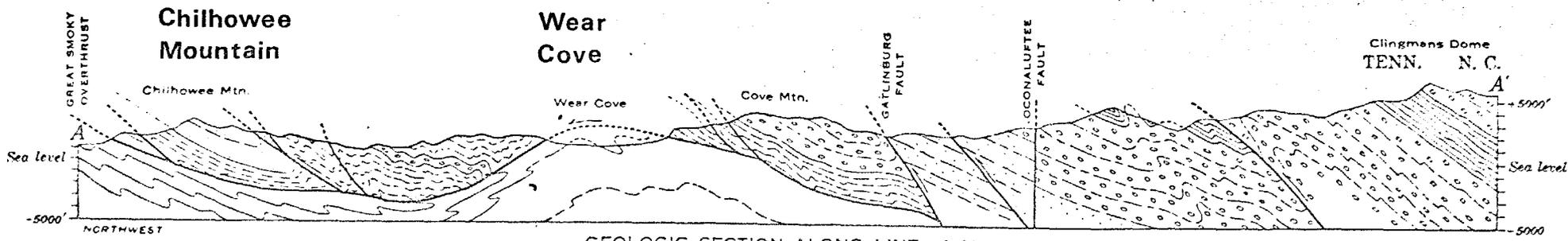
The majority of the wildlife present in the Foothills are members of the rodent family. The largest rodent present is the woodchuck, and numerous chipmunks and tree squirrels are seen. Larger animals occasionally observed are the white-tailed deer, gray and red foxes, and rarely a bobcat or black bear.

An abundant and varied bird life is represented in the area. A few species more common to the habitat along the parkway corridor than to the higher mountains are the chuck wills widow, bewick wren, orchard oriole, Backman's sparrow, and the loggerhead shrike.

## GEOLOGY

The geology of the Foothills country is part of the larger geological story of the Great Smoky Mountains. The Smokies comprise a high dissected ridge extending northeast and southwest for approximately 70 miles from the Big Pigeon River to the Little Tennessee River. This ridge maintains an elevation of over 5,000 feet above sea level for 30 miles, reaching a peak at Clingmans Dome (6,643 feet), the park's highest mountain and a close rival to Mt. Mitchell (6,684 feet) as the loftiest peak in the entire Appalachian Mountain chain. This high ridge is visible from many points along the parkway.

The Foothills country is mountainous but of much less overall height, varying in elevation from 857 feet on the Little Tennessee River to 2,600 feet on Chilhowee, Webb, and Green Mountains. Five major rivers drain this area. Three lead out from the high mountains,



GEOPHOTOFILM

605/20,005

features along a line extending from east of Gatlinburg to east of Newfound Gap, and is by J. B. Hadley. Location of sections is shown in figure 1.

GEOLOGIC SECTIONS

source: U S GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

while the Big Pigeon and Little Tennessee Rivers, which border the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and terminate the parkway on the north and south respectively, originate in western North Carolina. The velocity and volume of water flow in these rivers has carved deep valleys perpendicular to the general northeast-southwest axis of the range. The parkway crosses these valleys at right angles. For the most part, the road climbs to as high an elevation as design limits allow before descending to cross streams. Ages of erosion have thus determined the parkway's alignment.

The so-called "coves," like the streams, are in part the result of erosion. These coves are physiographic features of considerable interest. Essentially, they are flat-bottomed valleys surrounded by mountains. Cades Cove, accessible from the parkway, is a major attraction within Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Today in this scenic cove, one can stand almost encircled by mountains composed of rocks 200 million years older than the rocks of the valley floor. It was here that the Ocoee rocks were thrust several miles, causing them to override much younger formations. These younger rocks, mostly limestones, were formed during the Ordovician period of the Paleozoic era. In contrast to the older, lifeless Ocoee series, the younger rocks contain fossil remains of primitive sea animals.

Wear Cove, which the parkway crosses, has essentially the same geological story as Cades Cove. A fine interpretive setting, it is planned as a destination point for overnight visits.

Chilhowee Mountain is a long, narrow ridge that lies between the Great Smoky Mountains and the Tennessee Valley. It is formed of sandstones and other rocks of the Chilhowee group that were laid down before and during the Cambrian period. These Paleozoic rocks contain fossil remains (scolithus or vertical tubes probably bored by worms), indicating sea living invertebrate animals existed at that time. These are the oldest indications of life in eastern Tennessee

The soft rocks of Chilhowee sandstone and of the Ocoee shale, siltstone and slate sandstone weather rapidly. When these formations are exposed in road cuts, slope stabilization problems occur. Consequently, the geology of the Foothills has been a major influence on the location and design of the parkway.

## HISTORY

The country through which the parkway passes has no renowned historical heritage. More research will be required in order to make its full story known.

The first persons during historical times to settle in the southern Appalachians were the Cherokee Indians. At its zenith the Cherokee Nation covered most of the area bounded by the Ohio, Kanawha and Tennessee Rivers. Their towns were clustered into three regions: the Lower Settlements on the headwaters of the Savannah River, the Middle Towns on the Tuckasegee and Little Tennessee, and the Over Hill communities on the Tellico and Little Tennessee Rivers. The Over Hill Cherokees who occupied the Foothills region lived in towns and had primarily an agricultural society. When the land became exhausted, they moved to new locations. In all probability no white man crossed the mountains until 1673, when James Needham and Gabriel Arthur, acting as agents for a Virginia trader, visited the villages of the Over Hills. In 1690, Cornelius Dougherty, another trader, settled among the Cherokees. Dougherty married an Indian and became a respected member of the tribe.

An Indian trader named Vaughn traversed the Foothills area in 1740. As traders began pushing westward, the Indians began to use white man's tools and domestic animals. Behind the traders came the settlers and eventually trouble for the Indians. Nevertheless, they

allowed the Americans to erect Wear's Fort (about 1750), later an important settlement in the country west of the Alleghenies, and Fort Loudoun (in 1756) on the Little Tennessee River near its junction with the Tellico. (Restored Fort Loudoun is now a Registered National Historic Landmark.)

Constant irritations ignited open warfare, and the Cherokees massacred the garrison of Fort Loudoun. English retaliations caused the Indians to quickly sue for peace. The British part of the bargain was reflected in the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade settlement beyond the Appalachian divide. The American frontiersmen, however, cared little for proclamations from far across the ocean.

During the American Revolution, the Cherokees became the allies of the British, realizing that the land-hungry American pioneer was a threat to their homeland. An organization of Piedmont patriots initiated a campaign against the Cherokees, destroying several villages, and causing the Indians to sue for peace.

In the Revolutionary War men from the foothills, joining others of the Southern Appalachians, caught and defeated the British regulars at Kings Mountain.

While the Kings Mountain campaign was underway, the Cherokees again took the warpath. As soon as the British had been defeated, John Sevier and his men returned and quickly dealt the Cherokees a major defeat near the present town of Sevierville. The Cherokees

were driven farther west where they flourished until the white man forced them to move to Oklahoma along the "Trail of Tears." A small number of Indians escaped the migration and went into hiding in the Smokies. Late in the 19th century this group was established on the reservation at Cherokee, North Carolina.

The mountain settlers of the Foothills region had selected a location without natural lines of communication. They had no way of knowing that this isolation factor would keep their way of life from changing significantly for the next 150 years. Every man ruled his own house and was his own law in his hollow. Occasionally he journeyed outside his neighborhood for purchases but generally he lived on what his neighbors and environment could produce. People maintained a dialect, music, superstition, and a general way of life closely related to the 18th-century American frontier as the remainder of the United States diversified.

An iron-mining operation in the flat country between Chilhowee Mountain and the Great Smokies in the early 1800's threatened the isolation but was in the end unsuccessful. One hundred years of intensive logging could have opened the area but timber interests were concerned with the forest products and not its people. Not until the latter days of the depression of the 1930's did the people of the region really come into contact with the outside

world. By then, advances in transportation and communication not only took the people out of the mountains but also brought to the mountain people a new awareness of the world outside. Their ways have been described by numerous authors such as Mary N. Murfee and many mountain homesteads are preserved in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, within easy access of the parkway. Also, representative sites to interpret the iron-mining and logging industry can be made easily accessible.