



Carolina Mountain Club

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Join CMC Quarterly Trail Maintenance Crew in celebrating National Trails Day on Max Patch on June 1st!

By Paul Curtin

Join us on June 1st - the 51st Anniversary of the National Trails Day Act - on MAX PATCH, one of the iconic jewels of the Appalachian Trail, and a highlight of all trails in Western North Carolina. The Carolina Mountain Club Trail Maintenance Crew members, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Pisgah National Forest Appalachian Ranger District, REI, and Farm to Feet are partnering to offer a unique opportunity to spend the day assisting in the rehabilitation of the A.T. as it traverses Max Patch Bald in the Pisgah National Forest. Last year's event was a great success with nearly 100 volunteers and we expect no less this year. Come see the work done since last year, including a 3-panel kiosk, locust fencing, steps, and tread work. Come this year to contribute more.

Registration is limited, and pre-registration is required. Youth are welcome, but must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Please wear long pants, gloves, sturdy boots, pack a lunch, and bring plenty of water. The meeting place is at Home Depot, Asheville, off of Exit 44 at 8:15 a.m. (127 Acton Circle, Asheville, NC). Please look for the REI tent, where you will check in and sign a work waiver. We will car pool to Max Patch. (This is approximately a one-hour drive time). All minors must be accompanied by an adult who will sign a waiver for them. REI will provide us with a snack for a mid-morning break. We will return to Asheville around 1:30 p.m. Join us after 3:00 p.m. at Sierra Nevada Lower Park to celebrate and receive a pair of MAX PATCH hiking socks manufactured by Farm to Feet (compliments of Farm to Feet and REI). After a grand day on the bald, we will reminisce with the new found friends we have made out on the trail.

A Cool, Moist, (But Warm) Spring Social

by Stuart English

Seventy-five brave souls came to Carolina Mountain Club's 14th Annual Spring Social. Nineteen of them attended the two hikes led by Bobbi Powers and Michael and Kathy Corrn in the rain. The

previous day the area had received an unprecedented amount of rain in less than 12 hours. The French Broad River was creeping onto Highway 191 at the entrance of the Arboretum, where the Social was held. Bent Creek seemed almost Straight Creek there was so much water in it.

But as Les Love pointed out, this event transcends weather. The veteran organizer of the event mentioned several of our older members present: Sherman Stambaugh (98), Lew Blodgett (96), and spring chicken Carroll Koepplinger (not yet 90). Les then identified several Trail Maintainers in attendance including the amazing Rich Evans. Rich has organized three new trail crews, taken on various duties concerning these groups, and has become the renaissance man of trail maintenance for CMC. Les asked for a standing ovation to all the folks who got out and worked on the trails every week. It was delivered.

Bubba Q once again catered the meal. There was no beer or wine this year; but we were all high on life!

The event ended with “An Evening with Brew.” Brew Davis, the husband of Jennifer Pharr Davis, is a talented singer song writer and guitar player, who has recorded several CDs in Nashville. The thoughtful lyrics and mellow chording of his guitar seemed to fit the evening very well.

So as we drove home in the dusk, the waters parted for us, the fog started rising from the wet earth, and we enjoyed the satisfaction of spending time with old and new friends.

Walking to the end of the World: A Thousand Miles on the Camino de Santiago

By Beth Jusino

Reviewed by Danny Bernstein

By her own admission, Beth Jusino was not an outdoor person. Yet, this writer and editor walked about a thousand miles on the Camino de Santiago, from Le Puy-en-Velay in France to St. Jean Pied de Port at the foot of the Pyrenees to Santiago in northwestern Spain, and then to Finisterre, believed to be the end of the world in Medieval Times. Whew! I too walked this route, but it took me three trips.

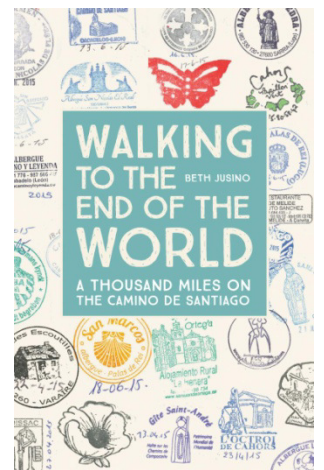
She and her husband Eric, mid-career professionals in Seattle, needed a radical change in their life. Unlike many pilgrims who seem to just hop on a plane, she researched, read blogs and books, while she finished her client projects.

Pilgrims have been walking to Santiago for more than a thousand years. The remains of St. James the Apostle supposedly are buried in Santiago. St. James had spent some time evangelizing in Spain but was beheaded by the Romans when he returned to Rome.

Miraculously his body was returned to Spain, buried and forgotten. His grave was discovered and authenticated in the ninth century and a cathedral was built over the site of the tomb. A scallop shell has come to symbolize the Way of St. James pilgrimage, probably because early pilgrims brought back seashells as souvenirs. Now thousands trek to Santiago, some walking for months, others covering only sixty miles (a hundred kilometers), the minimum needed to get a certificate. Beth’s first walking days were difficult. She didn’t speak French, carried her own pack, and just couldn’t keep up with Eric. Her feet hurt and she was thinking of quitting. But Eric didn’t argue with her.

“We’ll stop in the closer town,” he would say. She walked through the pain, enjoying the gites (French hostels), the friends she made and the food – oh that French food – wonderful, even in the hostels.

“You need new boots and orthotics,” I kept thinking. And finally, in the middle of her agony, she listened to me. Once Beth took a day off the trail to buy new boots, she became a new and enthusiastic hiker. They stopped in almost every open church and noted World War I memorial.



Beth was not afraid of walking alone. She also was a social hiker who enjoyed making friends and keeping track of them.

Beth's writing is funny, relaxing, and honest. The book doesn't harp on her past or her childhood. She obviously kept a journal but also included some backstory of her life.

Then they reached St. Jean Pied-de-Port and the Pyrenees. It was both a wall to climb - the highest climb they would do on the trip - and a wall of people. More walkers, mediocre food, wake-up music in the albergues (Spanish hostels) but no breakfasts - the Jusinos adjusted, practiced acceptance, and noted the difference in culture.

Finally, Santiago. When she went up to get her Compostela, her certificate of completion, the volunteer behind the desk asked,

"Did you walk for religious, spiritual or recreational reasons?"

"For cultural reasons," Beth answered. Yeah!! It was exactly like I answered after both my Caminos. But their walking wasn't over. They continued to Finisterre, the end of the world.

The book includes just the right amount of history and culture, so that the reader understands the significance of her journey. A highly recommended read!

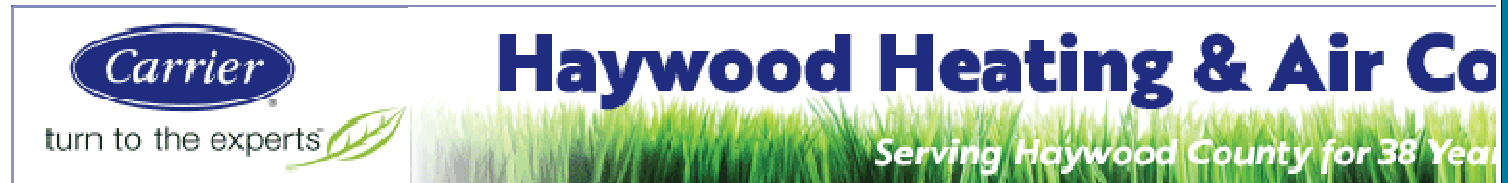
Hiking through history: Little Cataloochee offers a window to the past

ne hundred years ago, the parking area and campground just past the fields in Cataloochee Valley where elk often hang out was better known as Nellie, a remote community in what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

As anybody who's ever driven the steep and narrow access road from Jonathan Creek can imagine, it was hard to get in and hard to get out in the days when horsepower came mainly from actual horses. People didn't have much, partly because of how difficult it was to transport outside goods up and over the ridge.

When settlement began in the 1830s, Robert Love, a big landowner in Haywood County, held all the land in Cataloochee. The Cherokee had a presence too, using the land as hunting grounds but not erecting permanent settlements there. Love sold the land to families who wanted to move in, acting as a mortgage holder by allowing them to pay in installments over a period of as many as 20 years. People came, and eventually they outgrew the valley.

"They had 10 and 11 children apiece, and people started looking for new places to go," said Beth Fluharty, who led a hike to Little Cataloochee for Carolina Mountain Club April 10.



Fluharty, an Asheville native with deep family roots in Western North Carolina, has long had an interest in history, and she jumped at the chance to dive into researching Cataloochee's past for the 10.5-mile outing she and her husband Randy led on a sunny-and-70s Wednesday.

When the settlers at Nellie found themselves in need of new land, they looked over the Davidson Divide, to an area known as Little Cataloochee.

If Big Cataloochee, where Nellie was located, was remote, Little Cataloochee was doubly so. Davidson Gap sits 2.6 miles past and about 1,200 feet higher than the parking area, accessed only after some steep uphill and multiple creek crossings. Getting down into the valley where the Ola community once thrived - by 1910, the Cataloochee area was home to 1,200 people, four post offices and five schools - requires zigzagging downhill through a cove that in early April still offered a sweeping bowl-shaped view, unimpaired by leafed-out trees or scrubby underbrush.

In describing the area, the Hiking Trails of the Smokies guidebook quotes Raymond Caldwell's comments about travel between Big and Little Cataloochee in **Cataloochee: Lost Settlement of the Smokies**.

"Well, it was quite a chore to go through Davidson Gap ... it would take more than a day to go over to Little Cataloochee and back ... so, in one respect, it was separated about as much as New York City and California are today (by airplane)."

The trail continues down alongside Coggins Branch, eventually reaching the old Dan Cook place at 3.3 miles. The two-story log cabin was built in the 1850s but taken down in the 1970s. However, in 1999 a grant from Log Cabin Syrup allowed the park to reassemble the stored pieces of wood. In 2017, Asheville-based contractor The Hands of Sean Perry donated labor for another round of restoration. Across the trail from the cabin stands the crumbling stone foundation of an apple house, constructed around 1910.

"People tend to look at these cabins and see it as one point in time, but they were part of this long continuum," said Fluharty. "I find that interesting, how the area changed over the time that people lived here."

When the first settlers crossed the divide, they were mostly just scraping out a living as subsistence farmers. But around the turn of the century they started planting apple orchards, selling apples to the lumbering camps and also obtaining licenses to make brandy from the fruit. The area wasn't really fertile enough to produce more corn than needed to feed livestock, said Fluharty, so it wasn't a hub for moonshine. By the time efforts were underway to create the park in the 1920s and 30s, the area was already turning to tourism, with residents offering guided fishing tours and renting cabins out to visitors.

Dan Cook's daughter Rachel married Will Messer, who operated a mill and was one of the wealthier members of the Cataloochee community. In a time and place when luxuries were few and far between, Messer's home had acetylene lighting and hot and cold running water, Fluharty said.

With the sun shining and the sky as blue as it could be against the green grass covering the cabin lawn, it was easy to imagine the idyllic life these people had led, living out every day amid the peaceful beauty that is Cataloochee Valley. But that illusion lasted only about three-quarters of a mile, shattering upon arrival at the Little Cataloochee Baptist Church.

The church itself is beautiful, flawless white with an A-frame roof and a quaint interior featuring clean white benches circling a pulpit and a woodstove. It's built on a hill, the bell tower visible for quite a distance through the still-bare trees.

Behind the church, though, is a graveyard. It holds the remains of many of its former congregants, and an astonishing number of them died astonishingly young.

There's Leola, daughter of W.M. and Myrtle Messer, whose headstone has just a single date for birth and death - Nov. 12, 1928 - and the inscription "only a bud to bloom in heaven." The grave of Lennis Mae, daughter of C.L. and Flora Morrow, is marked with the same inscription and also bears a single date, Dec. 19, 1921. Owen, son of J.W. and H.B. Burgess, died on May 9, 1911, before his fourth birthday. It was not the first time tragedy struck the family, with J.W. and H.B. also burying sons Reuben and Rufus in 1906 and 1905, respectively, months before their first birthdays. The list goes on.

"It was a hard life," said Fluharty.



The graveyard (above) at Little Cataloochee Baptist Church (below) contains many headstones memorializing lives cut short.



The Cataloochee communities disbanded as efforts ramped up to create the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

“It happened gradually,” said Fluharty. “They (the government) made noise — yes, we’ll buy your property — and some people immediately sold, and others waited until the property was condemned and they were forced to sell and fight for their price.”

It wasn’t easy to carve out a living in Cataloochee, and the fact that some settlers were quick to accept government offers to buy indicates that the chance to relocate somewhere new may have been pretty attractive for some families. But definitely not for all of them.

“The Hannahs were one of the ones who refused to leave and took the park to court and went the whole way trying to not leave this property,” Fluharty said while standing on the steps of the John Jackson Hannah Cabin.

Hannah finished building the cabin in 1864 amid the land on whose slopes he would spend the coming years working to farm. Despite that humble-sounding way of life, the Hannah family went on to breed success, with one of John Hannah’s sons going on to graduate from law school and eventually purchasing the bell for the Little Cataloochee Baptist Church. Another descendent, Mark Hannah, became a park ranger for the Smokies who placed special emphasis on Cataloochee history.

The Hannah Cabin sits about 5 miles down the trail from the parking lot, with the hike back allowing ample time for reflection on both the past and the present of Cataloochee. Water runs its course in streams flowing alongside the trail, likely much as it did back in Hannah’s day, or Cook’s, while moss-covered logs of trees that were rooted and leafy back then absorb sunlight from the same star that lit the earth 100 years ago.

“It kind of reminds you how we live in a modern society and life is a lot easier,” said Elaine Tennen, 67, an Asheville resident who moved from California two years ago. “Then I started thinking about people talking about us 100 years from now and how we lived. That’s kind of what hit me, was thinking about people doing this to us 100 years from now or whatever, saying, ‘They walked in those shoes?’ or, ‘They carried those kinds of packs?’”

The difficulty of life in Cataloochee struck Waynesville resident George Shepherd as well, despite the fact that his lively interest in local history means that the stories weren’t necessarily new to him.

“That probably means we should be more flexible since we’re all the same species,” he said. “They survived all that and found a way to do it, and we shouldn’t bellyache so much about things.”

They managed to build a community in the backwoods of North Carolina, but they lost it, too. And there’s an element of sadness to that.

“They lost their land,” said Tennen. “They had to leave, and that’s always sad to think about that. It’s hard to pick up and leave.”

It’s important to avoid romanticizing it too much, though, said Fluharty. There are all kinds of reasons a person might lose their home to change — an aunt whose home was condemned due to the construction of Interstate 40 comes to mind — and it’s safe to assume that, had the Cataloochee communities been permitted to persist, they wouldn’t still exist as quaint villages of log cabins powered by horses and mules.

“Who knows what it would have been like if it had got sold off to tourism cabins like Maggie Valley,” she said. “That’s where it would have gone. It’s not like there would still be people in here living in their log cabins.”

Nevertheless, it’s a history that can’t help but provoke pensive reflection and conflicting feelings.

"I'm really glad the park's here," Shepherd said thoughtfully. "It was really tough on the families that had to move out, were forced to move out."

Find These Beetles!

Interested in contributing to a conservation study of beetles? Clayton Traylor, a PhD student at the University of Georgia, is studying the conservation of saproxylic beetles - those that are dependent on dead or decaying wood. He is launching an iNaturalist project for target species in need of conservation by determining their habitat requirements. The species are large and noticeable and easy to identify.

When you spot them, drop Clayton an email at clayton.traylor@uga.edu or upload a photo to iNaturalist.org



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