

Luxury of today mixed with raw Appalachian beauty

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If Gatsby were a mountain man, he would have lived in Cone Manor, where early 20th Century luxury meets the raw beauty of the Appalachians. The estate of Moses Cone, located just off milepost 294 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, includes two lakes for fishing, the Parkway Craft Center, and twenty-five miles of old carriage trails that travel the 3,500 acres.

Moses Cone was an entrepreneur who gained his wealth through textiles, which earned him the title "the Denim King." He used his money to build Flat Top Manor, his mansion, on the estate, along with an apple and carriage barn. He planted an apple orchard and built two small lakes stocked with trout and bass. After his death, his family donated the estate to the Parks Service, opening it to the public.

The first visible attraction of the estate is Flat Top Manor, located just beyond the parking lot. The white mansion looks out over the old orchard and toward the town of Blowing Rock. From March 15 - November 30 the Parkway Craft Center operates here from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Local artists showcase their work and perform on the porch of the Manor. Admission is free.

Carriage trails sprawl out from the mansion in all directions. The quickest path is the Figure Eight Trail, which Moses Cone and his wife were said to walk daily. Other trails snake down from the mansion into the old overgrown orchard. All of the trails on the estate are welcome to hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. The easy hike



The estate of Moses Cone, located just off milepost 294 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, includes two lakes for fishing, the Parkway Craft Center, and twenty-five miles of old carriage trails that travel the 3,500 acres. (Photo by Jeffrey Miesbauer)

is great for small children as well as for a leisurely afternoon walk with a friend.

At the bottom of the hill hikers will encounter the apple barn, Bass Lake, and the Maze. The Maze is a two mile trail that zig-zags through a thick hemlock forest and empties onto the banks of Bass Lake.

The Blue Ridge Parkway cuts the Cone estate into two equally inspiring halves. Trails lead underneath the Parkway toward Rich Mountain and Flat Top Tower.

The Rich Mountain trail leads hikers past Trout Lake and up into the high open meadows that stretch all the way to the summit. The trail spirals up to an old fire pit that would be an amazing place for a springtime picnic. The entire trail takes about an hour to hike and has an access point on

Shulls Mill Road.

The views from Rich Mountain are good on a clear day, but they do not compare to what can be seen from the Flat Top Tower Trail. From the meadows here, the Blue Ridge Mountains stretch across the horizon like a sea of rising waves, the biggest of which is Grandfather Mountain.

A mile up the trail is the Cone family graveyard, tucked in a courtyard surrounded by sweet-smelling conifers. A monument casts its shadow over Moses Cone's final resting place, next to his wife.

The trail continues up the meadow into the trees, where birds seek shelter from the wind. For the next half-mile the trail leisurely climbs the mountain to its peak, where a 50 foot high tower awaits the brave. This is the

highlight of the estate. From the tower is a 360 degree view of the High Country. This site is rare and overwhelmingly beautiful. The tower was built by the Park Service and allows perfect views of Blowing Rock, Boone, Beech Mountain, Sugar Mountain and Table Rock in the distance.

The entire estate is a window into the life of a man that loved the beauty of the High Country, with its quiet woods, rolling meadows and inspiring views. In his legacy, visitors can find out why he fell in love with the area by visiting the estate that was inherited by North Carolina residents from one of its greatest conservationists.

Boone and Blowing Rock provide a wide range of restaurants and hotels to accommodate any budget. Call (828) 295-7938 for more information.