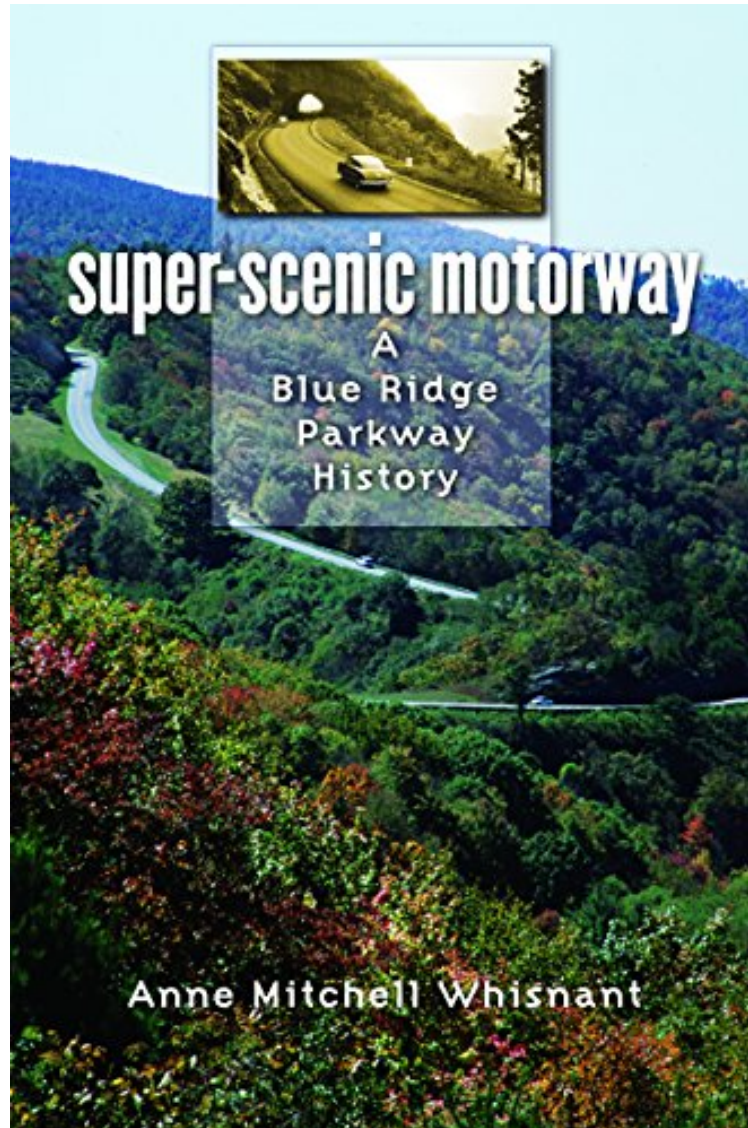


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Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History

Anne Mitchell Whisnant

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#390818 in Books The University of North Carolina Press 2010-03-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1
9.24 x 1.12 x 6.38l, 1.48 #File Name: 0807871265464 pages | File size: 57.Mb

Anne Mitchell Whisnant : Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. FascinatingBy Carl E. Johnson Jr."Super-Scenic Motorway" tells a fascinating history of the Blue Ridge Parkway -- just one small piece of the entire history, but an important and, as the author points out, a neglected one. At the heart of the book, Ms. Whisnant tells four stories to illustrate the impact

of the political process, largely (but not exclusively) at the administrative level, on land acquisitions for the Parkway route. As noted in the Epilogue, other examples could have served the purpose, but the four, the Peaks of Otter in Virginia, and Little Switzerland, Grandfather Mountain, and the Cherokee lands in North Carolina, are well chosen, exhaustively researched and documented, and "to her credit" [a phrase I just had to throw in -- you'll have to read the book to find out why], fairly told. Along the way we are also given insights into the evolution of the National Park Service and its approaches to historical interpretation. I should add that the book begins with an explanation of the parks, roads and Western N.C. tourism setting within which the Parkway came about, followed by a cursory look at the roughshod way that state government, particularly in North Carolina, and the NPS treated small landowners and small businesses when acquiring land and building the Parkway. On the other hand, if you're looking for design, engineering and construction details or information about the contributions of the CCC and other New Deal agencies, i.e., the actual work on the ground, you'll find precious little of that here. All that having been said, bear in mind that Ms. Whisnant is a professional academic historian, not a writer of popular histories (e.g., a Stephen Ambrose). Thus, we're frequently told (every couple of pages would be an exaggeration, but it eventually feels like it) that issues of class, culture, the broader society, competing economic interests, etc., etc. played out through the political process that gave us the Parkway. Sample sentence: "The equilibrium of public needs [a concept Whisnant conveniently glosses over] and private interests, local exigencies and broad policy concerns that the often-competing constituencies involved in the project had sought to achieve in the Parkway's first twenty years were knocked askew." Apparently that kind of language is intended to give the book its academic credentials. Ms. Whisnant having gone that route (no pun intended), I only wish that the publisher had opted for convenient footnotes rather than cumbersome endnotes. If you have the same reaction to this book I do, your appetite will be whetted to learn more about the BRP and the NPS. One tiny example: How is it that the "Orchard at Altapass," a treasure near Spruce Pine and Little Switzerland (which predated the Parkway) that is a commercial venture (though possibly organized as a non-profit) of the roadside-tourist variety that the NPS apparently despised, is allowed to continue in business with direct Parkway access? [A disclosure of my particular interest. I've been a North Carolina resident for more than 40 years, and have made substantial personal use of the Parkway and its facilities. For the last 6 years I've lived within a couple miles of the Parkway, which is now my shortest route to the Wal-Mart in Spruce Pine, N.C. Again, you'll have to read the book to find out why this final fact is significant.]

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. History of the ParkwayBy Myra-Delia D. KageyThis history of the Blue Ridge Parkway is the most exhaustive study of the challenging history of this scenic motorway.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Blue Ridge ParkwayBy MatthewThe most visited park in the National Parks system, the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway winds along the ridges of the Appalachian mountains in Virginia and North Carolina. According to popular myth, the Parkway was a New Deal "Godsend for the needy," built without conflict or opposition by landscape architects and planners who traced their uniform vision along a scenic, isolated southern landscape. The historical archives relating to this massive public project, however, tell a different story, which Anne Mitchell Whisnant relates in this history of the seventy-year development of the beloved roadway.Highlighting the roles of key players and stakeholders, Whisnant explores the design and routing of the road; relations among landowners, business interests, and government agencies; environmental impacts; and historical and cultural representation and interpretation. She reveals what the Parkway's seemingly unruffled scenery tends to obscure: the road owes its appearance as much to the negotiated resolution of conflicts as it does to the natural features of the mountains or the work of landscape designers. Whisnant concludes that our debates over how best to preserve and manage the Parkway for the public good within a changing regional and national context will continue for some time to come. The most visited park in the National Parks system, the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway winds along the ridges of the Appalachian mountains in Virginia and North Carolina. According to popular myth, the Parkway was a New Deal "Godsend for the needy," built without conflict or opposition by landscape architects and planners who traced their uniform vision along a scenic, isolated southern landscape. The historical archives relating to this massive public project, however, tell a different story, which Anne Mitchell Whisnant relates in this history of the seventy-year development of the beloved roadway.Highlighting the roles of key players and stakeholders, Whisnant explores the design and routing of the road; relations among landowners, business interests, and government agencies; environmental impacts; and historical and cultural representation and interpretation. She reveals what the Parkway's seemingly unruffled scenery tends to obscure: the road owes its appearance as much to the negotiated resolution of conflicts as it does to the natural features of the mountains or the work of landscape designers. Whisnant concludes that our debates over how best to preserve and manage the Parkway for the public good within a changing regional and national context will continue for some time to come.

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history of the beloved roadway.

Exhaustively researchedfascinating--Rocky Mount TelegramThe deliberate, scholarly work promises, in the author's words, to 'take us from a place many think they understand to one few would recognize, along a Blue Ridge Parkway almost no one knows.' Strap in and hold tight." --Mountain XpressThis book honestly describes the often not-so-pretty and not-so-harmonious history of a scenic parkway that seems so very pretty and harmonious today, and should engage anyone interested in the Blue Ridge Parkway and the history of the diverse region through which it passes.--Journal of Appalachian StudiesThe book strips away decades of such myth-making fostered by tourism officials and the park service and details the social, economic, and political battles that shaped a two-lane road that is the most visited place managed by the park service.--Raleigh News Observer[Whisnant's] knowledge of how one of the country's most celebrated roadways came to be trumps anything previously published, many times over.--Carolina Alumni [Whisnant's] research has illuminated a drama surrounding the road that speaks of battles won and lost, economic interests and government intervention. It is a story of power and class and progress that resulted in a national treasure for some and a royal pain for others.--UNC-Chapel Hill University GazetteA definitive history. . . . We get the more colorful and interesting real story.--Atlanta Journal-ConstitutionBrilliantly researched and stylishly written. . . . Readers can rest assured this enormous book packs a wallop.--Appalachian HeritageHistorian Anne Mitchell Whisnant's Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History is a must-read for anyone who frequents the mountains.--Durham Herald-SunBy sifting through various myths and facts, Whisnant reveals the truth behind the Parkway's seemingly undisturbed serene beauty.--Sanford Herald[Super-Scenic Motorway] strips away decades of . . . myth-making fostered by tourism officials and the park service, and details the social, economic and political battles that shaped a two-lane road that's the most visited place managed by the park service.--Associated Press[A] lucid analysis. . . . [Whisnant's] work provides vital lessons on historic and environmental preservation.--The Virginia Magazine of History and BiographyElegantly reveals the Parkway's history. . . . Decidedly revisionist . . . presents a more complex history of the road. . . . Whisnant's engagingly written and carefully researched account brings to light a more accurate picture of how the Blue Ridge Parkway came to be while taking nothing away from the . . . site.--Appalachian Journal"Whisnant tells the history, culture, and politics of building the Parkway in a readable manner.--Blue Ridge OutdoorsThis well-documented and well-researched study, often presented in strident style, provides a new perspective on the parkway's creation. . . . Super-Scenic Motorway's invaluable documentation will help readers better understand the parkway's complex development.--North Carolina Historical [Super Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History] is a valuable book for those of us who would understand how political and commercial pressures affected what many of us believe to be the wonders of the built world. . . . It's a well-researched, richly detailed and thoughtful examination of a monumental public works project that, for all its turmoil, turned out beautifully."--Jack Betts, Charlotte ObserverWhisnant brings the true parkway to light in a skillful demonstration of the historian's craft at the highest level of excellence--thoroughly researched, especially well documented and presented. . . . Highly recommended.--ChoiceWhisnant does an excellent job. . . . After reading the book, your view of Asheville might never be quite the same.--SpeedReaders.infoA fascinating account. . . . Insightful and elegantly written. . . . By far the most thorough and well-researched history of the Parkway to date.--Georgia Historical QuarterlyAn impressive documentation of the creation of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the resultant transfer of considerable acreage from one type of human exploitation (farming, lumber, etc.) to another type (scenic-tourism).--Southern Cultures Super-Scenic Motorway is a thoroughly researched, clear-eyed analysis of the genesis and development of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Righteously revisionist, it provides a most needed corrective to the prevalent romantic vision of both the Appalachian region and the National Park Service.--Dwight T. Pitcaithley, chief historian, National Park Service (Ret.)Exploding one myth after another, Anne Mitchell Whisnant takes readers deep into the hidden history of Appalachia's beloved scenic road. Brilliantly researched and stylishly written, Whisnant's work demonstrates that many of the Parkway's most famous landmarks--Peaks of Otter, Little Switzerland, Grandfather Mountain--are as much man-made as natural, having evolved out of human struggles over power, class, and the elusive meaning of 'public good.' This is must reading for anyone interested in the southern Appalachians, tourism, national parks, and our ongoing struggle to create a place for ourselves in nature.--Timothy Silver, author of Mount Mitchell and the Black Mountains: An Environmental History of the Highest Peaks in Eastern AmericaAbout the AuthorAnne Mitchell Whisnant received her Ph.D. in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is now Director of Research, Communications, and Programs for the Office of Faculty Governance. She has served as a consultant to the National Park Service and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. More information about the book is available online at www.superscenic.com.