

Recreation Resources – 1935

Narrator: Mountainous West Virginia is a land of valuable natural resources and pleasant scenic beauty. In the embrace of her mountains on the bank of the graceful Kanawha River at Charleston nestles her gold-domed capital, as grand as any in the nation. Her cities grow large and busy because thousands come to work in her plants as industry puts her resources to use. Out of West Virginia's timbered hills come many of the essentials of civilization: coal, iron, gas, oil, and lumber. And her industrial centers take these resources and give them to the world in raw and treated forms. She is second among the states in the production of coal and lumber, and sixth in the production of steel. Hydroelectric possibilities have been given outlet through the state's Water Power Act. [...] beds in the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers. In the Kanawha is a series of government locks.

For shut-in thousands in the factories and cities, West Virginia has a natural resource of great value: the outdoor recreation resource. And the people within her borders and those from surrounding states turn to her hills and along her streams for rest and play and its scenic beauty, such as this from famed Hawks Nest State Park which gives her the right to be called the Switzerland of America. Elaborate evidence of the presence of this recreation resource is the internationally famous Greenbrier Hotel. It is located at White Sulphur Springs up in the agricultural stock raising county of Greenbrier near the Virginia boundary. Long before this magnificent hotel and its sporting facilities were constructed, people from the southern Lowcountry as far south as Georgia drove in carriages for many days to pass the warmer months near the health giving waters of the spring.

Into West Virginia's mountains within the last few years has gone a new force, the Civilian Conservation Corps, to make this resource available to all people. Development of this resource is being carried on in West Virginia's new state parks under the joint supervision of the United States Department of the Interior and the West Virginia Conservation Commission. Since the Conservation Corps went into the parks much has been done. Roads, bridges, cabins, lodges, and dams have been constructed and precaution has been taken to see that natural beauty is not spoiled.

As development of the parks nears completion, the public is invited to take advantage of what is being provided and folks appear in good numbers. Crowds at Lost River Park represent the quick response. In this area further evidence of the state's history as a vacation spot is found in this old house, built by the father of General Robert E. Lee, who brought his family there in the summer to enjoy and benefit from the chilled waters of Lee Sulphur Spring, now a picnic center. Lost River's bridle trails and sunny meadows make horseback riding a favorite vacation pastime. This group comes down a path and crosses a bridge built by Conservation Corps enrollees whose grandparents were not born when fine old Tidewater families came here to spend the summer.

Under Lost River's old trees have been built rustic tables to hold a picnic lunch until it finds its proper place in the community's stomach. And after lunch and a snooze in the shade, energetic hikers take a trail to the park's unique mountaintop attraction, a stone shelter on the brink of a 3,000 foot elevation from which may be seen the soft blue of the surrounding country.

The little resort town of Berkeley Springs, near the Pennsylvania and Maryland borders, where stands an aristocratic old elm supposedly planted by George Washington, is known for its invigorating water. It is fine for swimming as well as drinking. Here is located a hospital for cripple children rivaling Georgia's famed Warm Springs in human interest and worthwhile accomplishments. Bracing mountain air and sunshine are good for crippled little bodies. To make their days more pleasant some of the children are

provided handicraft facilities. Beds are brought into the warm sunshine and little backs warped by sickness and pain are treated and straightened.

This beneficial climate of Berkeley Springs has found another outlet for good in Cacapon State Park a few miles south of the little community. Lakes are not a part of West Virginia's natural beauty, so one like this at Cacapon is a source of new pleasure. It was created by a dam built by the Conservation Corps. Boats are available and vacation days find the little body of water swarming with visitors. The picnic lunch is inevitable; in fact, that's about all there is to a picnic.

Protection and propagation of wildlife is inherent in this new conservation recreation program. In West Virginia wild turkeys, not quite so wild, and deer are numerous.

Watoga State Park, largest in the state, located in picturesque Pocahontas County, is approached from one end by a ford and an old ferry which are as familiar to some West Virginians as the crossroads store. Access to all park attractions is easy over roads built by the Corps. Important among these attractions is a good size lake with boats and fish. The southern mountains offer superb lake settings, but nature left their provision to man and his artificial dams. Up the creek which feeds the lake, trout fishing is good. This man of skill is the official champion fly caster of West Virginia.

When the fisherman goes away the ducks come out to play! These once-wild mallards paused in flight one day and were fed by a Conservation Corps enrollee. They stayed and had youngsters; now they won't leave! Some folks like to walk around and look at cabins to rent but the recreation genius takes the whittling pose.

A narrow gauge railway with a dizzily whizzing motorcar means Babcock State Park to all who've been to this rugged recreation spot. At one point it careens around a trestle curve, then straightens out, and goes on down in the general direction of the cabin community snuggling in the shadow of rocky peaks.

Carolina rice and milk gravy are no sweeter accompaniment for fried chicken than pretty sun-tanned faces and flashing smiling teeth. They raise 'em lovely in West Virginia's hills and its one natural resource which can't be exhausted and one crop that never fails. On the creek in Babcock's rocky gorge is an old swimmin' hole, with streamline trimmings, and the same old-fashion fun. Some like 'em short, some like 'em tall, and some like 'em big and round. Hold your hats boys, here we go again! Whoa Newt, she's a-backin' up! The sun goes down, and the moon comes up, and the fun goes round and round.