

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND RECREATION**

**A Feasibility Study
for the Establishment of
a Park System in
Lee County, Virginia**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 35

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1992**

PREFACE

House Joint Resolution No. 390 of the 1991 General Assembly requested the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Transportation, in coordination with the U. S. Department of the Interior, to study the feasibility of creating a park in Lee County adjoining Cumberland National Park and Hensley Settlement.

The following staff were assigned to the completion of the report: John R. Davy, Jr., C. Derral Jones, James E. Guyton, M. Elizabeth Reed, and Art Buehler, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Contributing from the U. S. Department of the Interior were Charles Vial, Superintendent of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and Jack Collier, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management.

Special acknowledgment is given for the invaluable contributions of Ralph Miner, Ron Flanery, and the Virginia Division of Tourism. The Virginia Department of Transportation provided assistance in holding a public meeting in Ewing, Virginia; provided valuable information regarding Route 58 corridor improvements; and contributed a section of this report regarding the proposed Virginia Visitor Information Center.

This report contains Department of Conservation and Recreation staff findings and recommendations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

House Joint Resolution 390 (HJR 390) requested that the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in coordination with the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), study the feasibility of creating a park in Lee County adjoining Cumberland National Park and Hensley Settlement. (Appendix A)

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has found considerable potential in the development of a **park system** in Lee County.

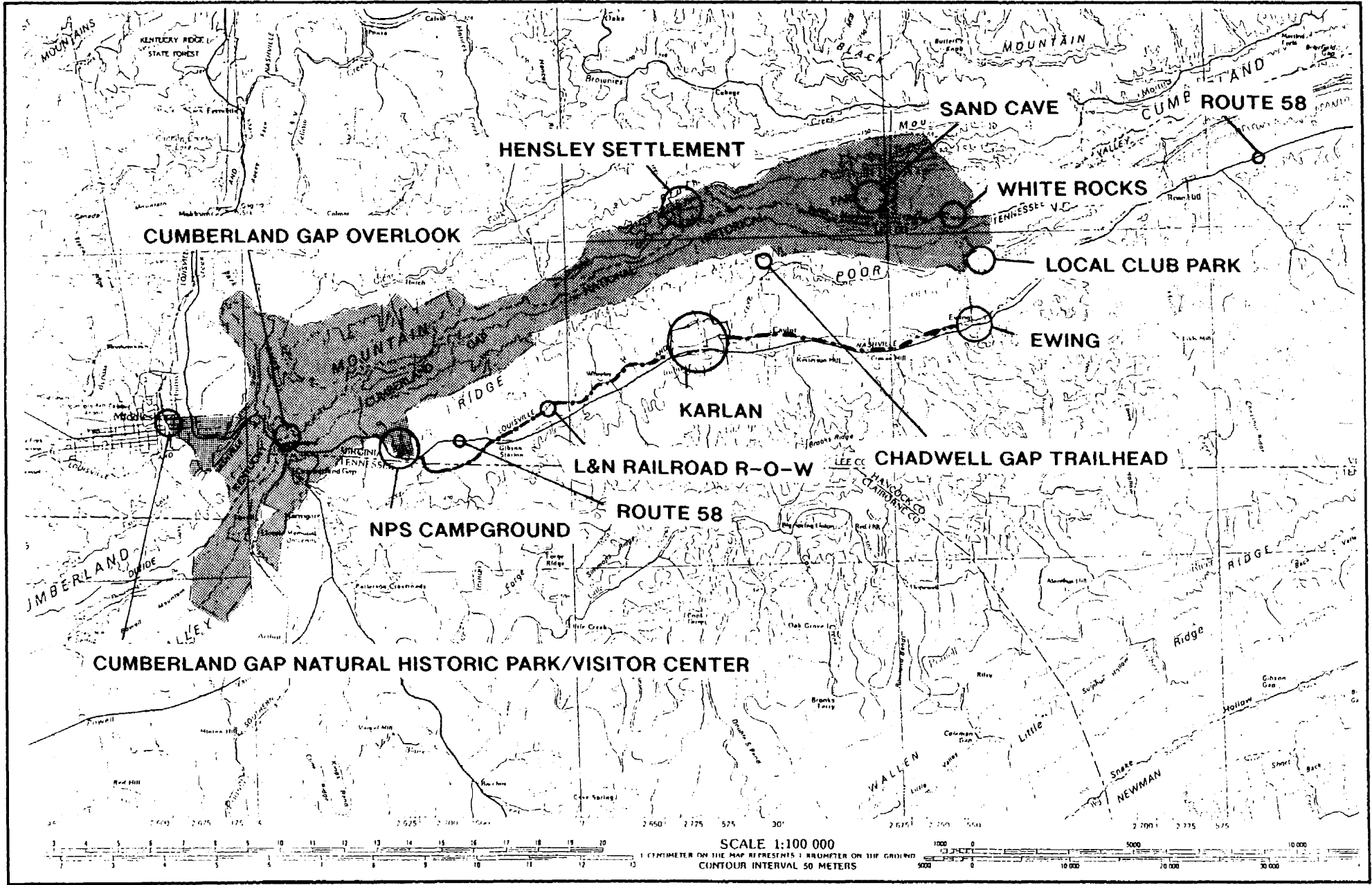
Lee County has an abundance of underdeveloped tourist attraction possibilities, and travel generates more jobs in America than any other industry but health services. Americans last year spent 5.2 billion nights away from home, which led to 5.8 million jobs in the travel industry! The driving force of tourism is attractions, and Lee County has the latent historical and scenic assets and the available labor pool. A **park system** as described in this report fits the requirements of a quality recreational resource that would be based on the beauty and historical significance of an area of Virginia where the citizens are proud of that heritage and eager to share it with visitors.

This **park system** (Illustration 1, Page 2) can be established by linking new and currently underutilized resources with established federal and local public areas. This resulting linkage would form a **park system**, anchored by a Virginia Visitor Information Center, which would be connected to Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (CGNHP) by a linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail. This trail would follow the path of what is historically referred to as the Wilderness Road, which roughly coincides with the Route 58 corridor and/or abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way (R-O-W). (Illustration 2, page 3)

The opportunity exists at this time, in particular, because of many positive conditions that include:

- ❖ The natural beauty of Lee County
- ❖ The historical importance of Lee County, the Wilderness Road, and the Cumberland Gap (the eastern half of the Gap is in Virginia; the western half is in Kentucky). Here the first frontiersmen of European descent found their way through the Appalachian Mountains; their most famous representative is Daniel Boone. Following in the frontiersmen's footsteps along the Wilderness Road were the families who settled on the western side of the Appalachians. By 1800 over 300,000 people had crossed the Gap going west. During the Civil War, the Gap was an important strategic prize, and it changed hands several times.
- ❖ The possible availability of a sizable portion of the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way (R-O-W) not needed to four-lane Route 58. The

ILLUSTRATION 1

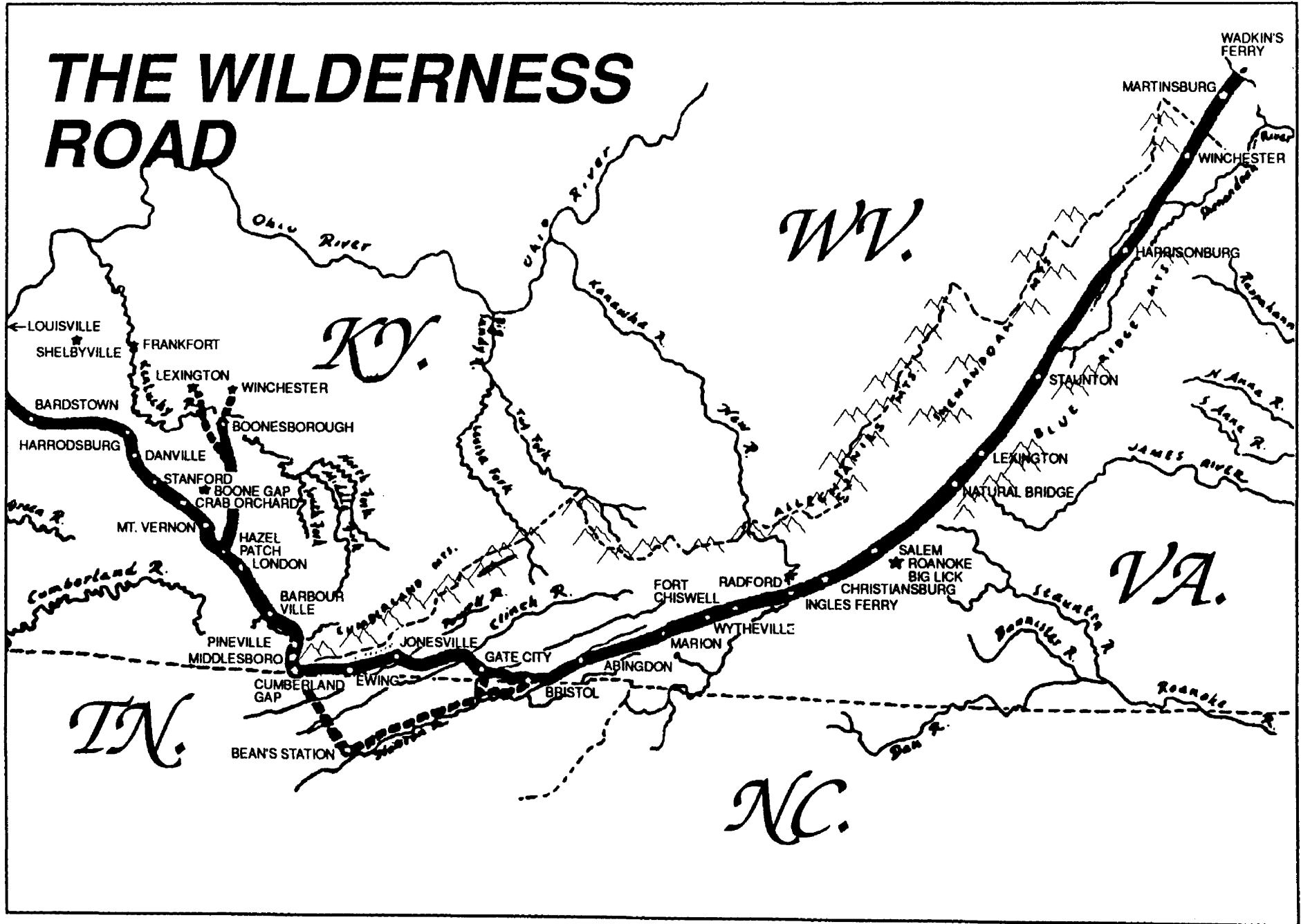


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PARK SYSTEM - CUMBERLAND GAP/LEE COUNTY STUDY AREA

THE WILDERNESS ROAD

ILLUSTRATION 2



property is owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation and may be declared surplus to its purposes. The R-O-W basically follows the path of the Wilderness Road.

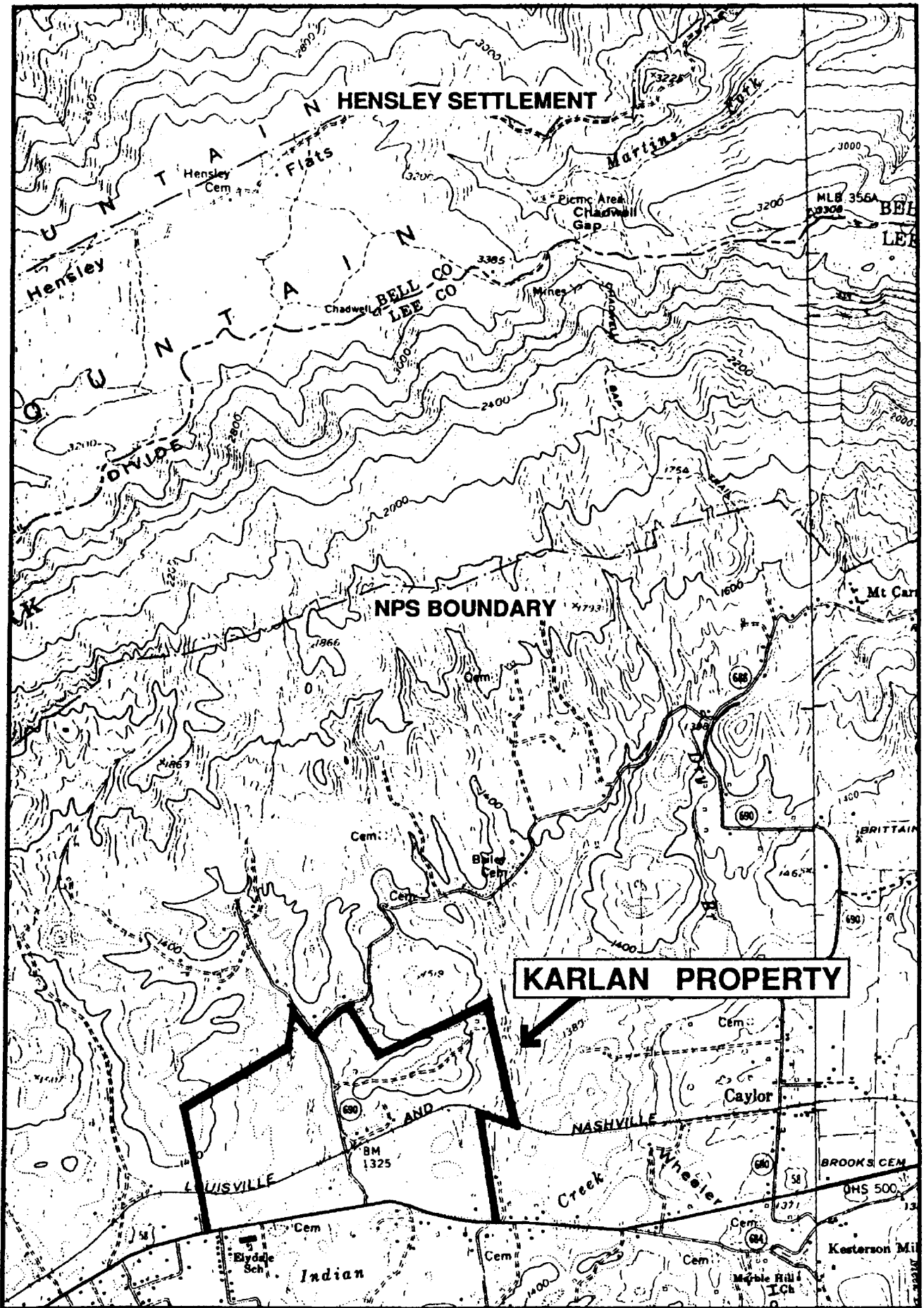
- ❖ Multi-million dollar improvements underway at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (CGNHP) which will focus increased visitor interest on the area and on CGNHP as a destination point for travelers. One park source feels that visitation will double when improvements are completed. Restoration of Cumberland Gap to its 1780-1810 appearance is projected to be completed by 1995-6.
- ❖ The potential for an increase of motorists in Lee County and all of Southwest Virginia because of the improvements to Route 58 that have been initiated. This increase in visitors supports the need for a Virginia Visitor Information Center in the Route 58 corridor.
- ❖ The availability, through purchase, of the Karlan house and property, which consists of an imposing antebellum mansion, several lesser outbuildings, and 180 acres of land. This land fronts on Route 58, is traversed by the L&N R-O-W, and is suitable for the location of quality tourist attractions such as a Virginia Visitor Information Center, Daniel Boone Museum, Pioneer Station, and walking trail. (Illustration 3, page 5 and Illustration 4, page 6) In a staff report prepared by the Virginia Division of Tourism for VDOT, the Karlan house is termed "ideally situated for development of a Virginia Visitor Center."
- ❖ Opportunity for needed economic development and new jobs with minimal impact on existing infrastructure. Lee County's beauty and history are very important economic assets, already in place and only needing to be carefully, selectively developed.
- ❖ Local support, as evidenced by the interest of citizens at an October 2, 1991, public meeting held to discuss HJR 390. Of the approximately 100 citizens present, all of the comments were positive.

The **park system** would be based on three tracts of property —two of these components are already in public ownership —Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way (R-O-W). Part of the R-O-W can be developed into a linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail. A third element would need to be purchased: a site for a park in Lee County that fronts on Route 58 and is contiguous to the L&N R-O-W.

Securing public ownership of Virginia trailhead(s) providing access to Hensley Settlement and the Ridge Trail of CGNHP by means of easements or outright purchase is also a necessary component of the envisioned **park system**.

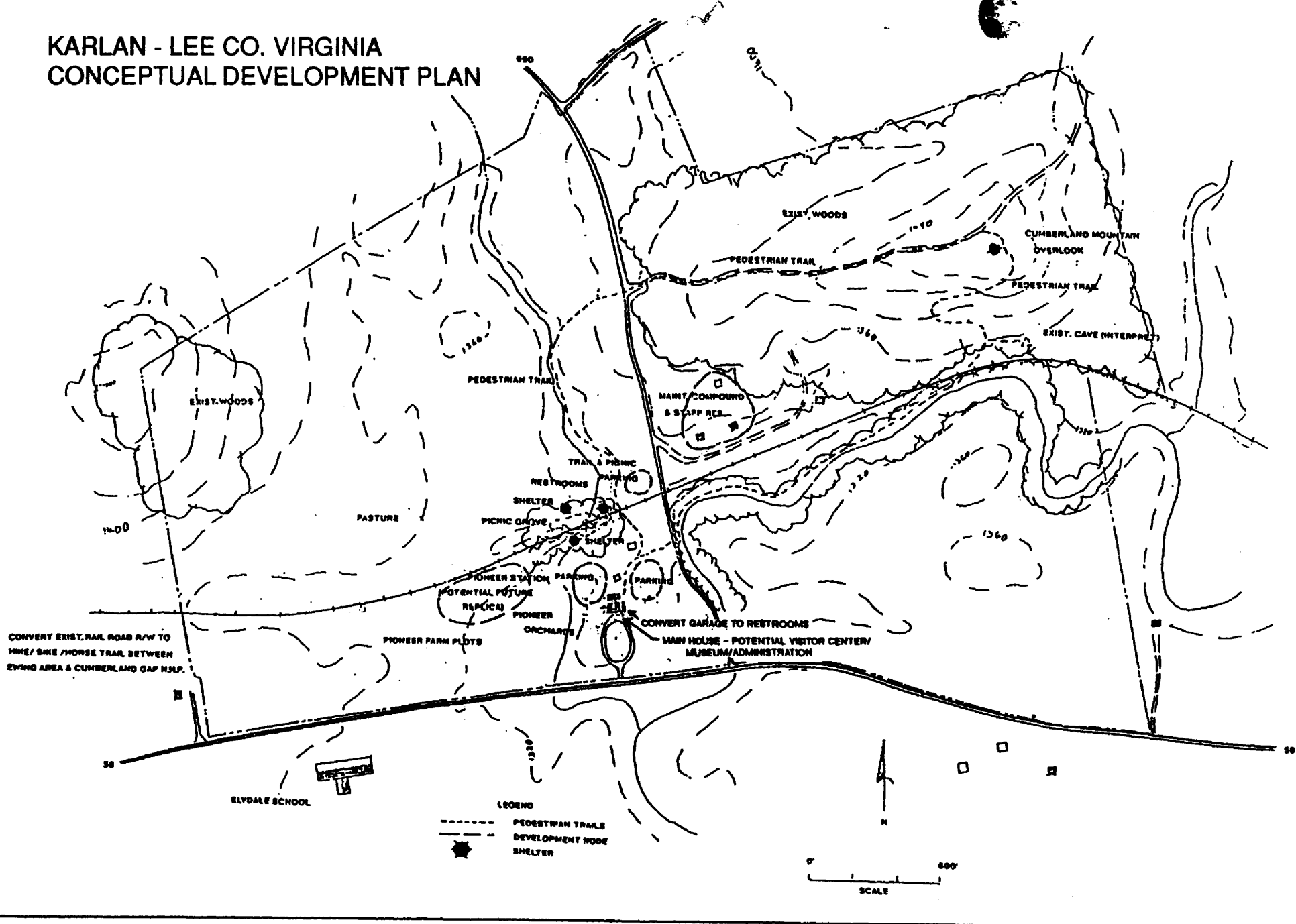
Additional components would include development of a scenic automobile driving tour route/signage/brochure, establishment of equestrian facilities, and placement of outdoor interpretive displays.

ILLUSTRATION 3



KARLAN - LEE CO. VIRGINIA CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ILLUSTRATION 4



RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Phase I be implemented by a government agency, such as a regional authority, Lee County, or possibly a state agency, and that it be initiated as soon as practical.

Phase I 1992-1994

1. Acquisition of an approximately 200 acre park site in Lee County. Estimated cost range \$750,000 to \$1,125,000 (appraisal by certified appraiser available in January 1992).
2. Development of approximately ten miles of the L&N Railroad Right-of-Way into a hiking/biking/equestrian trail. Estimated cost - \$150,000.
3. Acquisition of two Virginia trailheads serving Hensley Settlement and the Ridge Trail in Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. Estimated cost - \$50,000.
4. Securing of operation/maintenance funds and establishment of a caretaker position. Estimated cost - \$150,000 per year.
5. Establishment of a local Advisory Board. Estimated cost — technical advice from DCR.
6. Preparation of park site master plan and renovation/ construction plan for Virginia Visitor Information Center. Estimated cost - \$100,000 (consultant contract).
7. Preparation of park staffing and operation/maintenance plan, including related annual costs. Estimated cost - technical advice from DCR.
8. Identification of driving tour. Estimated cost - technical advice from DCR/VDOT.
9. Initiation and completion of an in - depth study of Virginia history related to the Wilderness Road and Cumberland Gap by volunteers and/or professionals. Estimated cost - none.

Phase II *
1994-1996

1. Partial development of park site.
2. Prepare plan for Daniel Boone Museum.
3. Acquisition of properties connecting park site with trailheads.
4. Funding for park staff and operation/maintenance plan.

Phase III *

Final implementation/completion of park system plan.

* Cost estimates to be determined

I. INTRODUCTION

House Joint Resolution 390 (HJR 390) requested the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), in coordination with the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), to study the feasibility of creating a park adjoining Cumberland National Park and Hensley Settlement. Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (CGNHP) is a 20,000+ acre federal park in the States of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Seven thousand four hundred and seventy-eight (7,478) acres of CGNHP are in Lee County, Virginia. Hensley Settlement is an isolated reconstructed farm settlement in CGNHP that has been partially rebuilt by the National Park Service. It has been determined by DCR that the feasibility of creating a **park system** in Lee County that adjoins Cumberland Gap National Historical Park and Hensley Settlement is realistic and advantageous to Virginia.

HJR 390 states that tourism is vital to the economy of Virginia, and that it has been the Commonwealth's policy to encourage tourism and travel in Virginia. The Resolution further states that the completion of proposed Route 58 and a well-developed historic, cultural and scenic **park system** would aid in developing the tourism industry in the Commonwealth, and that promoting tourism reaps vital revenue with minimal burden on infrastructure and existing services.

Rural areas seeking new sources of income often consider tourism efforts and just as often are hard-pressed to determine what attractions they have to draw visitors. Lee County does not have this problem; it has an abundance of underdeveloped tourist attraction possibilities. The historical significance of the County is its most obvious and central asset. Around this core, and its compatriot, scenic beauty, there seems to be realistic potential for tourism development.

In implementing HJR 390, the staff of the Department of Conservation and Recreation researched the history of Cumberland Gap and Lee County; undertook several fact-finding field trips to the area surrounding Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (CGNHP); and held discussions with local citizens, elected officials, and representatives of the National Park Service staff at CGNHP. A public meeting was also held at Ewing, Virginia, on October 2, 1991, to inform the public of HJR 390 and familiarize them with the ongoing study and to accept comments. This meeting was attended by approximately 100 citizens. Public support for development of tourist attractions was very strong.

The HJR 390 Resolution states that the National Park Service is conducting a feasibility study regarding improving and expanding facilities at CGNHP in Lee County; however, at the time this report is being written, improvement work is currently in process. The final restoration of the Gap to its 1780-1810 appearance is scheduled for 1995-6. Federally financed multi-million dollar changes at CGNHP, which are described in detail in the following chapter, will make the area much more of a destination point for travelers than it has been in the past. An NPS staff person said a doubling of visitors is anticipated after improvements are completed. The changes will also focus a great deal of public and

professional interest, publicity and visibility on Lee County. We can maximize the benefit to Virginia by complementing — not duplicating — recreational/ tourist-oriented quality facilities.

In 1790, the American West was in Virginia! Settlers followed the Wagon Road from Philadelphia along what is today Virginia Highway 11 and U. S. 81. At Big Lick (today Roanoke), the Road split, with one fork going south into the Carolinas through Rocky Mount and Martinsville, Virginia. The other fork — The Wilderness Road — went southwest to settlements on the New, Holton, Powell, Watuaga, and Clinch Rivers and then through Cumberland Gap into the West (Kentucky was, at that time, part of Virginia). The Gap itself is of great historical significance as the first of the early passageways through the Appalachian Mountains. (Illustration 2, page 3)

The path of the Wilderness Road was initially laid down by migrating animals, principally buffalo, over a time period of hundreds of years. American Indians followed the animal traces and established their own network of trails. Eventually the colonial frontiersmen discovered these pathways; and they, in turn, were followed by settlers.

For a time, from about 1790 through 1810, the Wilderness Road including Cumberland Gap was the most heavily traveled route for settlers moving westward. It may be hard for the reader to believe, but until the opening of the Erie Canal in the 1820s, it was the easiest route for two-way traffic from the lower Ohio Valley to Philadelphia!

The Wilderness Road roughly followed the same path through Lee County as that presently taken by Route 58 and the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way (R-O-W). At Ewing, Virginia, a landmark on the Wilderness Road was White Rocks, a noticeable outcropping of rock with very little vegetation. This landmark indicated to the settlers that they had about one day's travel to reach Cumberland Gap.

The Virginia Department of Transportation recently purchased the abandoned Louisville and Nashville railroad right-of-way (R-O-W) for use in widening Route 58, but only a part of that right-of-way will be used in proposed improvements. The unused portions of that right-of-way, plus shared roadway with Route 58 or secondary roads 690, 688, or 684, could comprise a linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail connecting CGNHP with Ewing, Virginia. As this linear trail passes through Lee County, it would intersect a park fronting on Route 58. This park would be the location for a Virginia Visitor Information Center and other tourist attractions, including public access to trailhead(s) to Hensley Settlement. This is the **park system** as envisioned in this report, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

What does Lee County have that makes it unique among any tourist attractions east of the Mississippi? Lee County has the "final leg" of the Wilderness Road before entering Cumberland Gap and the eastern entrance to the Gap. Here is the potential for the 20th century tourist to revisit the pioneer experience as it happened, right on the Wilderness Road.

In common with most of Southwest Virginia, the local Lee County economy has ebbed and flowed with the prosperity of the coal industry. Even during periods of relative prosperity, the rural agricultural nature of most of the County has not given it a good economic base for growth. There are currently 24,496 persons who reside in Lee County. However, only 4,700 jobs are available within the County; the total estimated labor potential is conservatively placed at 6,200 persons. At \$10,667, Lee County's per capita income is next to the lowest in the State.

Travel generates more jobs than any other industry but health services — 5.8 million Americans are employed in the travel industry. Lee County has the available labor pool and, as evidenced by interest at the October 2 public meeting, a willingness to welcome the tourist.

Americans last year spent 5.2 billion nights away from home. This translates into a source of income that many areas are interested in. Tourism competition is very, very heavy. But expenditures to encourage tourism can have an excellent "pay-back." The average stay of an American tourist on vacation ranges from 4 to 7 days. With the location of Lee County within a day's drive of many population centers of the East Coast, South, Mid-Atlantic and Middle West, the potential for week-end and close-to-home short trips is excellent. However, it is important to note that Bell County, Kentucky, and Claiborne County, Tennessee, are in competition for the same tourist dollar, and have a much greater investment in tourist facilities. In the past, development to support travelers in Lee County has been meager.

To entice the traveler, a central, distinctive "destination" attraction is a must. Lee County has this in the historical significance of its Wilderness Road and its access to the Cumberland Gap.

The key to a healthy, bonding family or group recreation experience is going somewhere to do something together, something everybody can do. But at this time, Lee County has minimal tourist support facilities in place and few developed attractions that are beckoning the traveler to the County. Much needs to be done — a recommended approach would be the establishment of a citizen group to focus local energy on a tourism plan. A strategic plan must be worked out — a central focus showcased and interpreted, secondary attractions determined and activities developed that will interest and occupy the tourist — both adult and child. The historic significance and scenic beauty are there, but there is a lot to be done.

II. A PARK SYSTEM IN LEE COUNTY AND ITS COMPONENTS

PARK SYSTEM

The natural resources, time and circumstances are opportune for establishment of a **park system** in Lee County. **Park System** as used in this report is defined as a number of components all tied together by one of those components; i.e., a linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail. (Illustration 1, page 2) Proposed components include:

- ❖ **PARK SITE** fronting the four-lane Route 58 and connecting with the available portion of the L&N R-O-W to provide a strategic location for a Virginia Visitor Information Center and the location for a Daniel Boone Museum and recreated Pioneer Station, picnic grounds, and pleasant walking trail
- ❖ **VIRGINIA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER**
- ❖ **HIKING / BIKING / EQUESTRIAN TRAIL** in part on the abandoned Louisville and Nashville railroad right-of-way (R-O-W); i.e., a ten-mile section from the Virginia/Tennessee state line to two miles east of the Karlan tract
- ❖ **CUMBERLAND GAP NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (CGNHP)**
- ❖ **SCENIC DRIVING TOUR**
- ❖ **TRAILHEADS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO HENSLEY SETTLEMENT AND THE RIDGE TRAIL IN THE CGNHP**
- ❖ **EQUESTRIAN FACILITY**
- ❖ **SHUTTLE TRANSPORTATION** to Hensley Settlement — the National Park Service would extend their current shuttle route with the addition of a new pick-up stop
- ❖ **INTANGIBLE ASSETS** — natural scenic beauty and historical significance

Experiences similar to that of the post-Revolutionary traveler can be provided for the 20th century tourist through development of the rich scenic and historical assets of Lee County. As the visitor drives down Route 58 or walks down the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way (R-O-W) in a westward direction, s/he is basically following the route of Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road. In constant view is the impassable face of Cumberland Mountain, the same vista the early settlers faced as they traveled the dangerous trace to the frontier. When they came to the White Rocks (Ewing, Virginia), they knew they had about a day's journey to Cumberland Gap itself.

Recommendations for development of a **park system** in Lee County center around securing this R-O-W for public use in perpetuity and developing it as a linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail.

The **park system** would provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation experiences for citizens of varied interests and skills. Activities would range from a driving tour of the scenic/historic area to a three and one-half mile strenuous hike to Hensley Settlement on the ridge of Cumberland Mountain. Historical outdoor displays and indoor exhibits would provide the educational experiences; camping, the back-to-nature experiences; and picnicking, the relaxation experiences. (Illustration 1, page 2 and Illustration 5, page 14)

A stop at the Virginia Visitor Information Center would provide an opportunity to learn of other tourist attractions in Southwest Virginia and throughout the State. A quality experience in the **park system** will be an incentive for visitors to extend their travel in Virginia and thereby stimulate the Southwest regional and entire Virginia economy.

PARK SYSTEM COMPONENTS

PARK SITE

Establishment of a defined park contiguous with the linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail and fronting on Route 58 is an essential component of the envisioned **park system**. The park would provide interpretation and information on the Lee County sights, history and attractions. Information at the park site would interpret for the visitor what they will see or have seen at the Gap and explain that the route is basically the same one followed by frontiersmen and early pioneers.

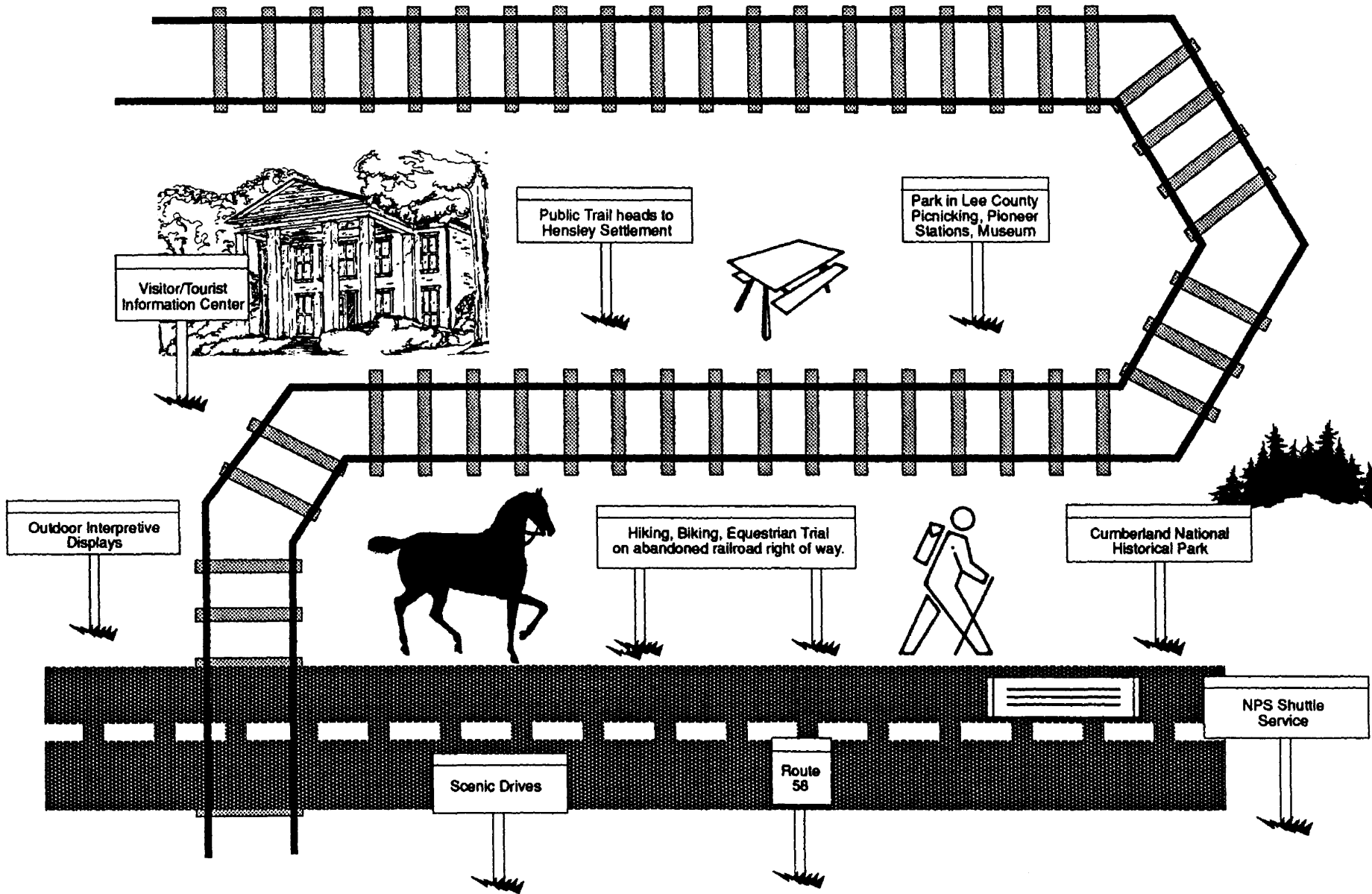
The park can be the site of a Virginia Visitor Information Center, Daniel Boone Museum, picnic grounds, and a pleasant walking trail. A Pioneer Station could also be reconstructed at the park site; a Pioneer Station was a cluster of one or more homesteads that provided food, lodging, and protection for the traveler along the Wilderness Road. (Illustration 4, page 6) Development of these proposed park facilities could result in this park being a destination site for tourists and local citizens who do not intend to engage in other activities provided in the **park system**.

Ideally, this property would also be connected with a trailhead for access to Hensley Settlement and be a starting point for those wishing to make the climb up to the Settlement on foot. In addition, NPS has expressed an interest in extending their current shuttle service from the Virginia Visitor Information Center to Hensley Settlement. This park site may also be a suitable location for the equestrian component described elsewhere in this report.

There has been interest in the establishment of a Daniel Boone Museum in Southwest Virginia for some time according to several residents we talked with, and acquisition of the property could serve as a catalyst for the beginnings of what has been in the talking stage

LEE COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

ILLUSTRATION 5



for years. Others have also expressed interest to us in establishing a recreated Pioneer Station. There seems to be a strong public interest in the establishment of a park in the County that would feature local history. Other facilities on the park site could include craft shop, park staff residence, and maintenance areas.

A 180 acre tract of land known as the Karlan property is on the real-estate market. This property is traversed by the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way and fronts on Route 58. VDOT's widening of Route 58 is south of the Karlan property in recognition of the historical value of the property. On the parcel is an imposing antebellum mansion which served as a Union command post during the Civil War and has been listed on the National Register for Historic Places. The home is in excellent condition and has been evaluated as a potential Virginia Visitor Information Center in a staff report the Virginia Department of Economic Development, Division of Tourism, prepared at the request of the Virginia Department of Transportation.

VIRGINIA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

As noted above, the Karlan property, comprising some 180 acres adjoining Route 58, includes an attractive nineteenth century brick mansion fronting on the highway. There is strong local interest in converting this mansion to a Virginia Visitor Information Center for visitors traveling through the area. Such centers are normally located in conjunction with established motorist rest areas.

The Virginia Division of Tourism, at the request of the Department of Transportation, made a preliminary investigation of the Karlan property to determine its general suitability for a visitor center. This investigation found that "both the interior and exterior of the house are in excellent condition."

Tourism's report goes on to say, "Karlan is ideally situated for conversion into a state visitor information center." There is a possibility that completion of the new tunnel at Cumberland Gap and improvements to Route 58 will lead to increased tourist travel in Lee County. Traffic is projected to rise moderately from 4,200 vehicles per day (1989), to 4,500 (1994), and to 5,500 (2015).

The house cannot be used as is, but must be renovated to some extent for visitor center use. Modifications for handicapped access, fire protection systems, and parking are also envisioned. As no plan has been developed or approved for use of the property, no cost estimate for modifications has been developed.

Water to support routine visitor center use is probably sufficient. A six-inch public waterline lies in front of the property along Route 58. It is unknown whether this line will provide sufficient water flow for fire suppression purposes or for development of additional visitor attractions at this site. Sewer treatment, however, is likely to be a significant expense. The single most negative factor for Karlan's use as a visitor center is the lack of public sewer in this location, combined with soils which are "shallow and generally rated as unsuited or very poor for septic system purposes." The potential of extending public sewer service is considered remote.

Construction of a package sewer treatment plant on site is the most likely means of serving a visitor center. If additional sewage is generated by other land uses on this property, the necessity of a sewage treatment plant is increased. Construction and operating costs of such a plant are expected to be significant.

Costs of a Virginia Visitor Information Center at Karlan will include property acquisition, renovation of existing facilities, site improvements (parking lots, access road, sewage plant), and personnel for operation and maintenance. If such a facility is to be operated by the Commonwealth of Virginia, additional employee positions should be considered.

HIKING/BIKING/EQUESTRIAN TRAIL

An essential component of the envisioned Park System is the establishment of a hiking/biking/equestrian trail on part of the abandoned Louisville and Nashville railroad right-of-way (R-O-W). Ideally, the trail should extend from the Gap to the vicinity of White Rocks, thereby approximating the last day's journey before making the westward cut through the mountains. The community of Ewing is located just below White Rocks, and a trailhead could be located in this area. The White Rocks area is an alternative site for a Virginia Visitor Center.

The recreational hiking/biking/equestrian trail would also serve as a connector for all other components of the park system in Lee County.

In total, twenty-six miles of railroad have been abandoned from Hagan, Virginia, to Harrogate, Tennessee. All of the right-of-way in Virginia is owned by VDOT and was purchased for the purpose of upgrading Route 58. However, the ten-mile section from the Virginia/Tennessee state line to two miles east of the Karlan Tract is not needed for the road improvement project. VDOT agrees to transfer title of this R-O-W section to an agency for the purpose of establishing a trail. The balance of the trail from two miles east of Karlan to Ewing could be on a shared roadway with Route 58 or secondary roads 690, 688 or 684.

Overall the ten-mile segment of the R-O-W is in very good condition and is currently receiving a fair amount of use from the local population. One significant factor to be considered is bridges. Three to five small bridges that were removed when the rail line was salvaged must be replaced. However, the most formidable problem will be a crossing of the improved Route 58 by the linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail; this needs to be considered when Route 58 improvements are engineered.

Encroachment on the R-O-W by adjacent landowners is minimal. However, a quarry operation is immediately adjacent to the R-O-W and may be a safety hazard. Another commercial enterprise has encroached on the R-O-W for a few hundred yards. It should be possible to work around these two areas via a slight relocation of the trail and/or with fencing. Two other noted problems are that ballast from the R-O-W has been removed from several sections and farmers have been using the R-O-W as access to their fields and, in several cases, have dug barricades.

Physical connection of the trail at the western terminus with CGNHP is a problem to be resolved. The connecting link could be via four miles of abandoned R-O-W in Tennessee or a connector to be designated in Virginia.

CUMBERLAND GAP NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park was authorized by Congress in 1940. It consists of 20,271 acres: 7,477.98 in Virginia and the balance in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Colgate Darden, Jr., Governor of Virginia, participated in the establishment of CGNHP in 1943, and the compact in which the three involved states (Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee) pledged their support is in Virginia's possession. Existing facilities at CGNHP include a park headquarters/visitor center, 160-site developed campground, four primitive campgrounds, picnic grounds, approximately 50 miles of hiking trails, the Pinnacle overlook, designated historic sites and Hensley Settlement — a renovated 12-farmstead community on the mountain ridge and accessible only by foot or an NPS Shuttle. Features include Sand Cave and the White Rocks bluff.

Proposed improvements (some are already funded):

Cumberland Gap, currently accessed via U. S. 25E, will be restored to its relative appearance during the 1780-1810 time frame. The surface of U. S. 25E will be altered by removing the asphalt, guardrails and any sign of modern road construction in preparation for restoration of the 15-foot wide horizontal trace of the Wilderness Road. U. S. 25E will be obliterated where environmentally safe to do so, and the land returned to its original contours with cut or fill and revegetated with native flora currently under propagation. Restoration of the Wilderness Road through the Gap in Virginia and Kentucky (a distance of 1.5 miles) would result in the desired visitor experience of witnessing a scene similar to that circa 1780-1810.

Cudjo Caverns, possibly one of the longest limestone caves in Virginia, is located in the eastern end of the Gap in Lee County. Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) operates a commercial guide service for the cave under a deed reservation. The National Park Service will acquire all interests in the Cave and prepare a cave management plan for restoration to its near-original condition and lantern-only guided public tours. A concrete reservoir, small parking area, and Cudjo Caverns store would be removed from their settings alongside the Wilderness Road.

Interpretative Media proposed for the National Historical Park include:

A total of 13 or 14 wayside exhibits throughout the Wilderness Road Corridor — five would provide orientation to the Wilderness Road Trace and to the back country trail system — eight or nine exhibits would provide interpretation of the natural features and cultural history of the Road/Gap area.

New exhibits in the Park Headquarters Visitor Center.

Exhibits, video programs, information desk and association sales facility will be at a proposed visitor center in the eastern end of the Gap.

Interpretation of Cudjo Caverns via conducted lantern-only tours on-site is in the planning stage.

Parking, Increased Accessibility, and Trails include the following:

A series of side trails are planned for construction.

Public parking for access to the Gap will be provided on the Virginia side near the existing intersection of U. S. 58 and U. S. 25E. Approximately 130 spaces will be provided in two adjacent parking areas for visitors to the Gap and Cudjo Caverns and to the proposed visitor center for CGNHP in the O'Dell House.

A conveyance for the mobility impaired would be staged here. Accessibility by the physically impaired to the upper level exhibit room in the Park headquarters also would be provided.

Power lines relocation will be explored for four existing lines crossing Cumberland Mountain.

According to National Park Service estimates these improvements would be accomplished at an approximate cost of \$4,790,700. Park visitations are projected to increase on an annual basis to 1,033,000 by 1995 and 1,618,000 by the year 2010. The first of these projections has already been surpassed, as 1990 attendance was 1,202,912.

SCENIC DRIVING TOUR

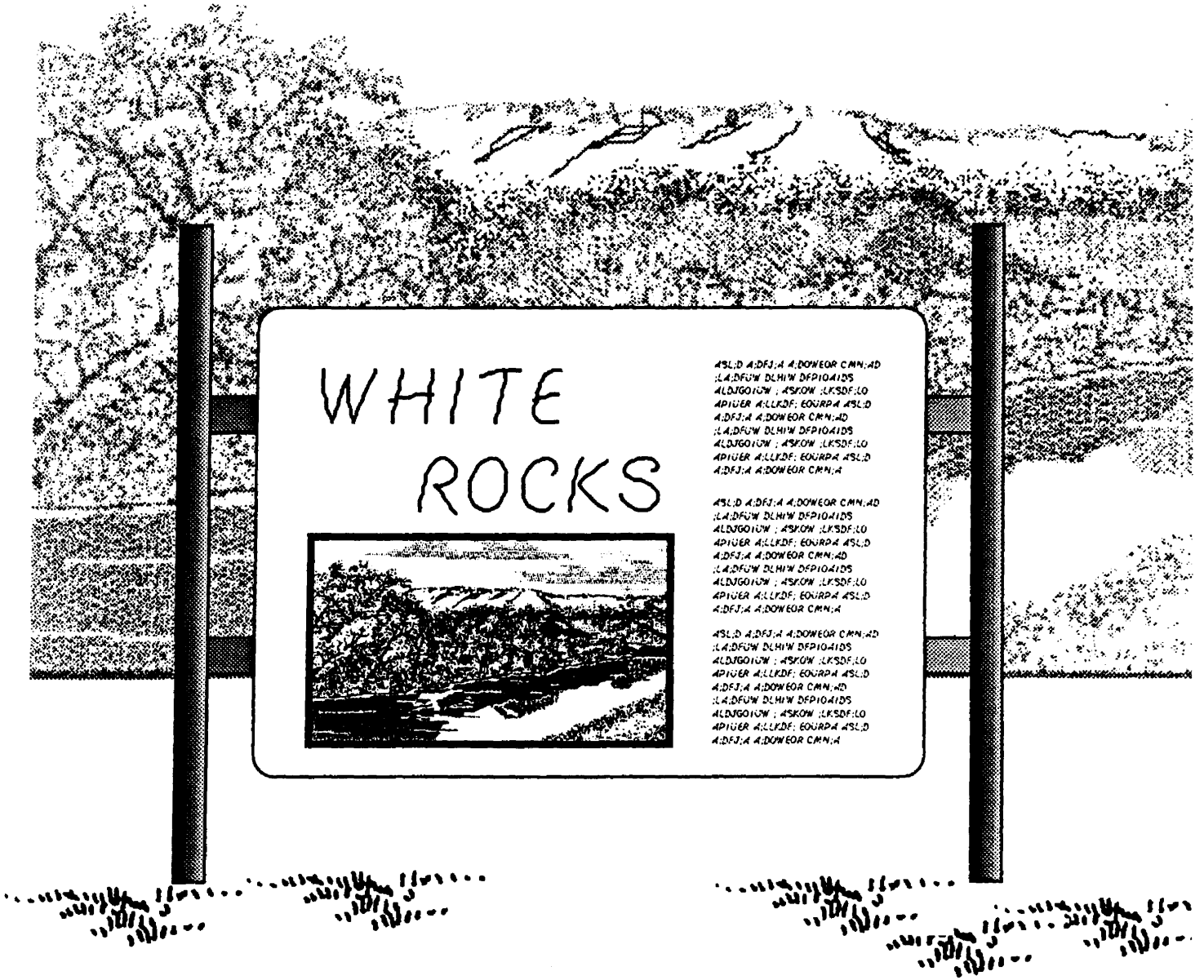
A Lee County scenic driving tour route, signage, and brochure is proposed for development. Since Route 58 basically follows the old Wilderness Road, much of what is seen from the road is of historical interest. The tour would also include secondary roads.

Interpretive signage for significant features could be developed; e.g., the White Rocks landmark on the Wilderness Road, locations of the various Pioneer Stations along the Road. (Illustration 6, page 19) The Pioneer Stations were fortified cabins at various intervals along the trail which afforded protection from the Indians and the elements. Historical markers for several sites are presently in place; for example — Indian burial mounds and the site of the killing of Daniel Boone's son by Indians.

The secondary roads in this section of Lee County provide beautiful mountain scenery and pastoral landscapes. Several old mills are also within a short distance of Route 58, and these could be interesting elements of a driving tour. There are many other possibilities, including a log cabin used for Methodist Chautauquas.

A local committee could be formed to spearhead the development of the driving tour. There would be many opportunities for citizens to be involved and "buy into" the initial and

ILLUSTRATION 6



WHITE ROCKS



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4PIUER 4LLKDF: EOURPA 4SLD
4.DFJA 4.DOWEOR CMN:AD
:LA:DFW DLHW DFPI04IDS
4LDJG01W ; 4SKOW :LKSDF:LO
4PIUER 4LLKDF: EOURPA 4SLD
4.DFJA 4.DOWEOR CMN:AD

4SLD 4.DFJA 4.DOWEOR CMN:AD
:LA:DFW DLHW DFPI04IDS
4LDJG01W ; 4SKOW :LKSDF:LO
4PIUER 4LLKDF: EOURPA 4SLD
4.DFJA 4.DOWEOR CMN:AD
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4LDJG01W ; 4SKOW :LKSDF:LO
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4SLD 4.DFJA 4.DOWEOR CMN:AD
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4LDJG01W ; 4SKOW :LKSDF:LO
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continuing development process of the driving tour. There would a chance for many residents with different skills to be involved in determination of the route, establishment of signage, brochure development, and publicity. An important factor is that expenses in developing the tour would be minimal — volunteer time and effort could be much more important in successful development, plus the fact that a driving tour would showcase what is already in existence. In addition, investigation could be made of the process of the Virginia Byway designation for qualifying roads and/or road segments.

TRAILHEADS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO HENSLEY SETTLEMENT AND THE RIDGE TRAIL IN THE CGNHP

Publicly-owned trailhead(s) to Hensley Settlement and the Ridge Trail in Cumberland Gap National Historical Park would comprise another component of the **park system**. This trailhead property could also connect with the Virginia Visitor Information Center, enabling the Virginia Center to become the trail headquarters.

An all-day hike to CGNHP's Hensley Settlement can become a real selling point for Virginia tourism. Public trailhead(s) ownership for a good "day-trip" hike from Virginia is necessary to assure continued access.

To briefly describe Hensley Settlement — it is an abandoned settlement, partially restored by the National Park Service, that survived for five decades on Brush Mountain. Even today, access is very difficult and limited. Sherman Hensley and his family established the community about 1904, and they built 12 farmsteads. At its peak, the population numbered about 100. The settlement was self-contained, with outside contact only possible by walking or riding horseback over steep mountain trails.

Isolation doomed the community in the 1950s. However, since 1965, the Park Service has restored three of the farmsteads, as well as the cemetery and schoolhouse. During tourist seasons, the Park Service employs two farmer-demonstrators. Present access is by shuttle twice daily from the CGNHP headquarters.

Presently, existing Virginia trailheads are privately owned, but the current owners allow parking and access to trail-users. Continued trail access to Hensley in Lee County is dependent upon the generosity of landholders, so future access is clearly uncertain.

An equestrian trail to Hensley from the Virginia side could be a destination point for riders from all over the Mid-Atlantic area. At the present time, Civitan Park in Ewing contains the trailhead for a trail with a grade suitable for horses. However, Park owners do not allow equestrians. Purchase of up to 10 acres near Civitan Park could provide space for horse-trailer parking, a corral, and trailhead access for horses.

The National Park Service and environmental organizations are not in favor of unlimited public access to Hensley, by whatever means. The delicate environment, both natural flora

and fauna and the restored farmsteads, would be jeopardized by an unrestricted flow of visitor traffic. Possibilities of increased, but limited, access to Hensley could be further investigated, however.

A factor to keep in mind when evaluating access to Hensley is the management of that area of CGNHP as wilderness. This factor compounds the difficulty of satisfying environmental concerns and also brings up the likely possibility of negative public opinion regarding development. The difficult terrain would make access improvement of whatever type extremely expensive, if not prohibitive. However, local support for increased access seems to be deep-rooted.

Ewing is at the base of the White Rocks, a landmark on the Wilderness Road. Establishment of a hiking trail from Ewing to the eastern terminus of the available portion of the L&N Railroad right-of-way should be considered. This section of the trail, which could possibly be alongside Route 58 or secondary roads 690, 688 and 684, would complete a Virginia linear path. This completed 14-mile trail would provide innumerable possibilities for tourists to tailor a visit to their own interests and skills.

An opportunity to walk in the footsteps of the early frontiersmen and settlers exists right here on the East Coast. Proximity of Lee County to the East Coast population centers means you do not have to travel 2000 miles to find the American West; it is right on the doorstep of half the population of the United States.

EQUESTRIAN FACILITY

Horsemen from Virginia and neighboring states look for scenic areas with safe, well-marked trails to provide the foundation for an enjoyable recreational experience. There is a need in Lee County for a dedicated location(s) to provide the equestrian with space for unloading, parking, and loading of horse trailers. A corral, shelter and water could also be provided.

The present trail from Civitan Park in Ewing is suitable for horses, but Park access to that trail is forbidden to equestrians. A facility could be established on property purchased adjacent to Civitan Park. This facility would provide the means for horse access for the public to the trail up to Hensley Settlement and the Ridge Trail in the CGNHP.

An additional/alternative site for horse facilities would be the park site to be purchased for the **park system**. This location would provide handy access to the linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail along the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way.

SHUTTLE TRANSPORTATION

Shuttle transportation to Hensley Settlement from the CGNHP Visitor Center is presently provided via a Kentucky route by the National Park Service. Management at CGNHP has expressed an interest and willingness to extend their current shuttle route with the addition of a stop at the Virginia Visitor Information Center that would be established on the proposed park site in Lee County.

INTANGIBLE ASSETS

The historical significance and the natural scenic beauty of Lee County cannot be overemphasized in any discussion of the feasibility of establishing a **park system** to encourage tourism.

Scenic Beauty

Natural beauty is abundant in Lee County. The main highway, Route 58, travels through a peaceful valley. Mountains rise on either side of the valley, and as one travels the highway, the impassable face of Cumberland Mountain is on the north. It is this vista that was constantly in sight of the early settlers as they trod down the valley towards Cumberland Gap.

Side roads off of Route 58 pass by farms, pasture and new and old homes of every description. The rural setting is both serene and scenic — there are several old mills alongside country roads, as well as other specific points of interest, such as Indian burial mounds.

The varied, bucolic landscape lends itself to interpretation in the form of a scenic driving tour, as well as providing beautiful vistas for the future user of the linear hiking/biking/equestrian trail. Geography and topography in this region formed the determining basis for the historic events that occurred along the Wilderness Road.

Historical Importance

In addition to being the site of the eastern entrance of Cumberland Gap itself, Lee County was once traversed by the Wilderness Road. This is the trace or trail the frontiersmen and settlers followed to reach Cumberland Gap and cross through the Appalachians. Today it is roughly the path of Route 58 and the abandoned Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way.

The Wilderness Road had its beginnings as animal trails (buffalo traces) through the Appalachians. Buffalo in search of pasture and salt licks wore the original pathways through the mountains. The buffalo traces were then followed by Indians who used the trails for hunting routes and travel between different tribal territories. Lee County was primarily a travel crossroads for much of its early history.

The frontiersmen of European descent naturally gravitated to the same traces for their first explorations into the wilderness. The first white man who traveled through the Gap was Gabriel Arthur in 1673-74, who made the journey as an Indian captive. Dr. Thomas Walker documented his 1750 explorations through the Gap, and this gave us our first written account.

Daniel Boone is the most well-known of the early frontiersmen, and he first used Cumberland Gap in 1769. In 1775, he and 30 men marked out the first "road," and by the end of the Revolutionary War, 12,000 people had crossed into the new territories west of

the Appalachians. By 1800, over 300,000 people had crossed the Gap going west. However, it was more than a one-way route, and busy commercial traffic hummed back and forth across the “road” and Gap. By the end of the first decade of the 19th century, alternative routes across the mountains were being developed, and the Lee County area settled back into the relatively quiet rural agricultural region it still is today.

An exception to this serenity was the Civil War time frame, when the Gap was of great strategic importance, and possession changed from Union to Confederate and Confederate to Union several times. While the battles here were not the famous ones of Civil War legend, there were constant activity and hardship as each side struggled to hold the prize in the mountains. Especially interesting in its Civil War history are the human-interest stories, so poignant because of the varying loyalties of citizens who lived very close together, but had polar opposite political beliefs. Origins of some of the famous mountaineer feuds can be traced back to the divisiveness of the War between the States.

In 1885, James Lane Allen, bent on establishing a literary career, toured the Cumberland Gap area, and was one of the first to write the articles that secured the images of the region and its people in the minds of Americans for decades to come. He wrote of the proud, independent, loyal mountaineers — taciturn, but intelligent. He wrote of fierce men and melancholy women and the isolation and barrenness of the mountain homesteads that formed those personalities.

Upon first seeing Cumberland Gap, he wrote the following paragraph expressing his feelings. It is appropriate today as a description of all that has taken place there:

It was late in the afternoon when our tired horses began the long, winding, rocky climb from the valley to the brow of the pass. As we stood in the passway, amid the deepening shadows of the twilight and the solemn repose of the mighty landscape, the Gap seemed to be crowded with two invisible and countless pageants of human life, the one passing in, the other passing out; and the air grew thick with ghostly utterances — primeval sounds, undistinguishable and strange, of creatures nameless and never seen by man; the wild rush and whoops of retreating and pursuing tribes; the slow steps of watchful pioneers; the wail of dying children and the songs of homeless women; the muffled tread of routed and broken armies — all the sounds of surprise and delight, victory and defeat, hunger and pain and weariness and despair, that the human heart can utter. Here passed the first of all the white race who led the way into the valley of the Cumberland; here passed that small band of fearless men who gave the Gap its name; here passed the “Long Hunters”; here rushed the armies of the civil war; here has passed the wave of westerly emigration, whose force has spent itself only on the Pacific slopes; and here in the long future must flow backward and forward wealth beyond the dream of avarice.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Phase I be implemented by a government agency, such as a regional authority, Lee County, or possibly a state agency, and that it be initiated as soon as practical.

Phase I (1992-1994) includes:

1. Acquisition of an approximately 200-acre park site fronting on Route 58 and adjoining or traversed by the available Louisville and Nashville Railroad right-of-way.

A tract known as the Karlan estate meets these criteria and is on the real estate market. A fair market value estimate by a qualified appraiser will be available in January 1992. Current possible price range is \$750,000 to \$1,125,000. A search for an alternative site near Ewing might be considered.
2. Development of the L&N R-O-W from the Virginia/Tennessee line to two miles east of the Karlan site at a cost of \$15,000/mile. Acquisition cost zero; total estimated cost, excluding Route 58 crossing, is \$150,000.
3. Identification of improved foot/horseback/restricted vehicular access to Hensley Settlement and the Ridge Trail of CGNHP, followed by acquisition of two trailheads of up to ten acres each. Total estimated cost is \$50,000.
4. Securing of operation/maintenance funds and establishment of a caretaker position. Total estimated cost is \$150,000 per year.
5. Establishment of a local Advisory Board or Committee to provide recommendations on future developments and local contributions. Estimated cost is technical advice from DCR.
6. Preparation of the park site master development plan and construction plan for renovation or construction of the Virginia Visitor Information Center. Estimated cost is \$100,000 (consultant contract).
7. Preparation of the park staffing and operation/maintenance plan, including related annual costs. Estimated cost is technical advice from DCR.
8. Identification of driving-tour route. Excellent opportunity for citizen organization and involvement. Estimated cost is technical advice from DCR/VDOT.
9. Initiation and completion of an in-depth study of Virginia history related to the Wilderness Road and Cumberland Gap by volunteers and/or professionals. Estimated cost is none.

Phase II* (1994-1998) includes:

1. Partial development of the parksite; i.e., Virginia Visitor/Information Center, parking, picnic area, walking trail and Pioneer Station.
2. Plan preparation for Daniel Boone Museum and other park facilities.
3. Acquisition of property connecting trailheads with park site.
4. Funding for park staffing and operation/maintenance plan.

Phase III* includes:

Final implementation/completion of the park system plan.

* Cost estimates to be determined

Appendix A

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 390

Requesting the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Transportation, in coordination with the U.S. Department of the Interior, to study the feasibility of creating a park joining Cumberland National Park and Hensley Settlement.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 1991

Agreed to by the Senate, February 12, 1991

WHEREAS, tourism is vital to the economy of Virginia and it has been the Commonwealth's policy to encourage tourism and travel in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, promoting tourism reaps vital revenue with minimal burden on infrastructure and existing services; and

WHEREAS, the completion of proposed Route 58 and a well-developed historic, cultural and scenic park system would aid in developing the tourism industry in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the national park service is conducting a feasibility study regarding enlarging and expanding facilities at Cumberland National Park in Lee County; and

WHEREAS, expansion of facilities at Cumberland National Park would provide an excellent opportunity to increase accessibility to Hensley Settlement, an historic and cultural park located in the Lee County portion of the Cumberland National Forest known as the gateway to the west; and

WHEREAS, federal officials located in this area have expressed interest in a feasibility study of this project to be conducted by the Department of the Interior; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Transportation, in coordination with the U.S. Department of the Interior, be requested to study the feasibility of creating a park joining Cumberland National Park and Hensley Settlement in Lee County.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Transportation shall complete their work in time to submit their findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1992 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.
