

***Hiking North Carolina's Blue Ridge Heritage* by Danny Bernstein**

Published by Milestone Press

Reviewed by Gerry McNabb

Danny Bernstein has created another highly useful hiking guide for Western North Carolina, but this time she has creatively included a cultural twist. In addition to her solid yet economical trail directions, she has peppered the book with interesting little-known information about people who made history in the hiking areas. This guide will point your way along the trail. It will also expand your vision of the hikes by including information on the settlers who first came to this beautiful part of our state.

In reading the book, you will not only get excited about some of the hikes, you will learn things such as how George Vanderbilt first came here and decided to build his home where he did... or how Mt. Pisgah got its name. The weaving of the area's heritage with the enticing clarity of Danny's hike descriptions make this book a "must have" in any hiker's library.

Most English majors will tell you that you are in full command of the language when you can give good directions. In this book, directions are so carefully crafted that there is no doubt about where the trailhead is or where the trail goes. And if there is doubt, she has provided carefully drawn maps of the hikes pointing out key features. By reading the text and following the maps, the reader will not only have confidence in tackling the trails, but will also be lured forward with tantalizing remarks about the vistas, cabins, waterfalls, geology and flowers along the way. As a result, you will embark on these hikes with a wide-eyed expectation of a joyous day suggested in the Carolina Mountain Club publications' moniker "Let's Go".

As one of the longer-lived hikers in the area, I was surprised to find out I had not really heard all this before. For example, even though I had met Grandfather Mountain's Hugh Morton and knew he was a wonderful photographer, I did not know he had been a World War II photographer. And did you know that Alum Cave in the Smokies was once a mine? Danny also includes the literary and motion-picture heritage relating to the hike areas.

You may take only a few of these hikes after reading, or you may accept the author's challenge to finish her list of 30 of them in the Appendix. Danny is realistic in her descriptions, telling of conditions as she finds them. The hike into Linville Gorge, for example, is described with all its steep ups and downs, rock overhangs, occasional rocky sections, and remoteness. There's no hard sell here. Yet for some, these challenges are the lures. For the less able, she democratically points out alternative, easier variations of her hikes, sometimes emphasizing the advantages of a level treadway.

There is something for everyone in this Guide, experienced hikers and novices alike. And in reading it, you will have a deep appreciation for the amount of work and research Danny did to write it.

Danny Bernstein will be giving a slide show and signing books on Saturday June 27 at 1 P.M. at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center (milepost 384) in the downstairs classroom.

